



# THE LIVING TRADITION

Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

Newsletter of the O'Neill-Malcom Branch <http://www.ccepstomac.org/>

December 2007

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## *BEANNACHTAÍ NA NOLLÁG AGUS ATHBHLIATIN FAOI MHAISE DHAOIBH*

BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL

**Join the Branch mailing list for news and announcements:**

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nova\\_cce\\_members/join](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nova_cce_members/join)

## **BRENDAN MULVIHILL SELECTED FOR THE CCE MID ATLANTIC HALL OF FAME!**

Joining a long list of the finest traditional Irish musicians in the United States, fiddler extraordinaire Brendan Mulvihill was recently selected to be inducted into the Mid-Atlantic CCE Hall of Fame along with a posthumous recognition of the great composer and fiddler Larry Redican (1908-1975). The induction and ceili and massive session with many of the past inductees will take place in Mineola NY on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 (see details below).

Brendan Mulvihill's roots in Irish music run deep. Brendan's grandmother Bridgid Mulvihill, nee Flynn, was a fiddler and her brothers were all musicians as well. Brendan's father, the late National Heritage Fellow, Martin Mulvihill of County Limerick, Ireland, was a renowned fiddle player and one of the most highly respected Irish music teachers in America. Even with these powerful influences, Brendan's style is uniquely his own.

Brendan's strong tone, remarkable bow work and unsurpassed musicianship come from a deep love of the music and from a surprising influence. Though inspired by many traditional Irish musicians, Brendan also developed a passion for classical music. This classical influence can be heard most clearly perhaps in his playing of the baroque music of Turlough O'Carolan. The final distinctive result of Brendan's many influences was best summed up by a quote printed by the Washington Irish Folk Festival, "It's often said that the difference between a fiddle and a violin lies not in the instrument but in the player. If that's the case, then Brendan is not the player one should look to when trying to draw such distinctions. Here is a man whose heritage, background and

training epitomize that of the fiddler, but whose full, firm tone, exquisite bow work and subtle, sensitive musicianship bear all the hallmarks of the classical violinist."

Brendan immigrated to New York with his family in 1965. In the '70s he traveled to Ireland playing throughout the country with his contemporaries and building a huge repertoire of tunes. During this time, he won the **All Ireland Fiddle Championship**. Later, Brendan moved to Birmingham, England where he played in *céilidh* bands and with the many Irish musicians who had also settled in the English Midlands.

In 1975, Brendan returned to New York, where he soon began playing with accordion player Billy McComiskey and singer/guitarist Andy O'Brien. The three eventually made their way to Washington, DC, ostensibly for a week-long gig in The Dubliner pub as **The Irish Tradition**. The Irish Tradition became a seminal influence in traditional music, helping to establish it as a permanent and integral part of Washington's musical fabric. During this same time period, Billy and Brendan traveled back to Ireland to win the **All Ireland Fiddle/Accordion Duet Championship**.

After recording several albums, the Irish Tradition disbanded. Brendan remained in the Washington, DC/Baltimore area. Brendan appeared at the **Éigse na Laoi at University College, Cork, Ireland** in 1993 and again in 1995, where he played sets with uilleann piper Paddy Keenan, fiddler Martin Hayes, and accordionist John Williams. Brendan and pianist Donna Long toured the country in 1994-95 as part of the **Masters of the Folk Violin** tour sponsored by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. In 1995, the duo was featured in the **Washington Irish Folk Festival's evening concert**, which was broadcast worldwide. In 1998 Brendan played in the PBS broadcast, **Performance at the White House**, for President and Mrs. Clinton and their guests. Brendan is an original member of **The Green Fields of America all-star Irish concert tour**. Brendan has also been interviewed by Noah Adams on NPR's *All Things Considered* and has appeared on **Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion**.

More biographical information on Brendan can be accessed at <http://www.brendanmulvihill.com/>



## WEEKLY SEISIUNS

### DC/VA SEISIUNS

#### Sunday 6:30 - 9:30

Jim Wade & Betsy O'Malley  
**O'Faolain's Irish Pub**  
20921 Davenport Dr, Sterling  
VA 703-444-9796  
\*\*\*\*\*

#### Sunday 3-7 & Wed 7-11

Philippe Varlet & Rob  
Greenway, **Riras**,  
4931 Elm Street, Bethesda,  
MD 301-657-1122  
\*\*\*\*\*

#### Tuesday 8-11

Dennis Botzer & Patrick  
Kavanagh **McGinty's Public  
House**, 911 Ellsworth Dr,  
Silver Spring, MD 301-587-  
1270.  
\*\*\*\*\*

#### Saturday 12-2

CCE Slow Session  
**Auld Shebeen Irish Pub**,  
North St. & Rte. 123, Fairfax  
City. [www.novasession.org](http://www.novasession.org)  
\*\*\*\*\*

### BALTIMORE SEISIUNS

#### Sundays 5pm-8pm

Laura Byrne, Pat Egan &/or  
Julia Fitzgerald, **Ryan's  
Daughter**, 600 E Belvedere  
Ave, 410/464-1000,  
[www.rdirishpub.com](http://www.rdirishpub.com)  
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#### Mondays 8-10 pm (Slow)

#### Tuesdays 9-Midnight

#### Thursdays 8-9 (Slow)

#### Thursdays 9-Midnight

Donna Long, Laura Byrne,  
Jim Eagan, Peter Fitzgerald  
**J. Patrick's** 1371 Andre St.  
410/244-8613

## CCE SEISIUN FERTILE GROUND FOR NEW MUSIC

The O'Neill-Malcom Branch has long sponsored a Northern Virginia session aimed at bringing new people to the music. Several years ago the session moved from the John Woods Center to the Auld Shebeen in Fairfax, where it has become a regular Saturday event. Over the years the session has been the first home for many new Irish musicians and continues to be a welcoming place for beginner and intermediate musicians. More information on the session can be found at [www.novasession.org](http://www.novasession.org).

The session has also "graduated" many musicians into Irish bands that can be found performing all around the Northern Virginia area. The granddaddy of them all is **Síor-Óg**, which was founded in 2002 by session leader Howard Rhile. Síor-Óg performs traditional music and songs from Ireland and around the Celtic world including Wales, Scotland, The Shetland Islands, Isle of Man, Northumbria and Asturias. Síor-Og is Jim Clark on Irish bouzouki and guitar; Loralee Óg Culbert on vocals, tin whistle and piano; Ahnika Emery on violin, mandolin and bodhrán; Tom Lennhoff on guitar; Jean Mulherin on violin and vocals, and Howard Rhile on low and high whistles. For more info, contact Síor-Óg at [Sior\\_Og99@Compuserve.com](mailto:Sior_Og99@Compuserve.com) or (703) 591-4058.

**Celtic Marc** formed as a group in 2006, but most of them have been session regulars for many years. Their sound is a high spirited blend (or, as they put it, "Celt with kick") of driving tunes and gentle songs played on fiddles, whistles, uilleann pipes, guitar, bodhran and that most ancient of instruments, the human voice. The members of the group are: Ray Sheehan, Ahnika Emery, Mike Schaefer, Stuart Neel, and Kate Kane. Celtic Marc recently released their first CD, "*Another Jig Will Do*," which has been featured on Mary Cliff's Traditions and can be heard on their website, <http://www.celticmarc.com>.

**Kieran & Iseult** are the stage personae of Keith Carr and Rosemary Gano, who are a duo who perform Irish traditional music in the "pure drop" manner. The pair met at the session in 2006, and quickly recognized that their playing styles and musical interests meshed well. Rosemary ("Iseult") plays the Irish wooden flute and tin whistle; Keith ("Kieran") plays the ten-string Celtic cittern, bouzouki, guitar, and bodhran. Their distinctive sound derives in large part from their renditions of instrumental tunes, but both members also sing and a portion of their repertoire consists of traditional songs. In the year that they have been performing publicly they have worked a full schedule of engagements, usually with several appearances each week. They have held several extended engagements at local Irish restaurants, and are currently performing every Friday from 6:00 to 8:30 pm at Ned Devine's Irish Restaurant in Centreville, VA. Further information about the duo is available on their website, at [www.kieran-iseult.com](http://www.kieran-iseult.com).

The latest band to come out of the CCE Seisiun is **Mad for the Road**. Members include Maddy O'Neill-Dean, T.A. Coons, Joel Zlotnick, Elaine Wolin, and Patrick Dean. The forte for this fresh, new band is fun, lively performance of old Irish favorites. With whistles, bass, banjo, and guitar and lots of great Irish songs there's plenty of music to sing and clap to. The band will be performing Saturday, December 22 at the Auld Shebeen a 7 PM. Put down the wrapping paper and come out for some dinner and a pint! More information and schedules can be found at [www.MadfortheRoad.com](http://www.MadfortheRoad.com).

### Irish American Genealogy

A local dancer, Mike Healy, recently launched his Ballycastle Enterprises Irish family document retrieval services business to help Irish Americans find their ancestors' birth, baptism, and marriage certificates for their family genealogy records, "connecting the present with the past". Mike's Ballycastle Enterprises web sites are: [goballycastle.com](http://goballycastle.com) and [myancestorsrecords.com](http://myancestorsrecords.com).

### O'Neill-Malcom CCE Ceili

The O'Neill-Malcom CCE ceili is intended to be both family and beginner friendly, while encompassing a mix of dances from the spectrum of Irish traditions, including 2 and 3 hand, ceili and set dances. Each dance program includes both easy and more challenging dances, with more of the easy dances early in the evening. A workshop is offered at the beginning of the ceili each month, and all dances are called. In addition, CCE offers Saturday morning classes for those who are interested in improving their footwork and learning the more challenging dances.

Upcoming dates for the Saturday classes are January 5, 12, and 19. The January Ceili will be held January 12<sup>th</sup>.

### Celtic Juice

Many of you know Jeff Cook from his videography work going back to the Glen Echo Irish Festival days. Cook Studios, his professional outlet, has a new project that's outstanding, cutting-edge video. It's called "Celtic Juice" and it's a video podcast that will host a series of short pieces on a variety of subjects. The first installment features our Branch Irish Officer, Beth Benedetto singing and discussing the sean-nós style.

Go to: <http://www.celticjuice.tv/blog/archives/5>

You can also subscribe to the series through iTunes and the entries also appear on YouTube.

## Cuimhneachán Cásca i nGleann Cholm Chille Easter Commemoration in Glencolmkille

Translation from the recent article in *Treoir*

by Beth Benedeto

Níl an-tóir agam ar na deasghnátha, go hiondúil. Bíonn siad laidreanach ar fad do na daoine againn nach mbíonn ag baint leo, agus rómhinic bíonn, gan d'aon turas, greannmhar, ag déanamh fabhanna dúinn gan a bheith gáire a dhéanamh os ard mar sin. Sin é an fáth a bhí mé a fháil ar faill leis an gCuimhneachán Casca san bhaile bheag Glen Cholm Chille, Co. Dhún na nGall, an t-Aibreán seo cáite.

Ag fágáil an t-Aifreann Casca ar maidin sin, d'fháil mé féin ina measc saghas mórshiúl den bpobal Aifreann, an cuid is mó, agus ag leanúint meirge nach raibh soléite ar chúl. Síos an bother linn b'fhéidir caoga slata chuig leacht beag, áit an bhfuil cupla clocha cinne ann i cuimhne beirt fhear áitiúil an bhfuil faoi chré san reilig, mar a cheapim, dháirire: Donncha Mac Niallais agus Micheál Ó hEigeartaigh. Sheas an Sinn Féin áitiúil ina íine, leis an meirge, bratach Éireannach agus bratach ghorm eile a raibh seacht réalta uirthi; bhí mé fiosrach fuithi ach níor chur mé ceist ar dhuine fuithi. (Bhí brón orm ina dhiaidh sin, mar níor tugadh leid dá laghad do duine ar bith eile fuithi.) D'fháil mise mé féin i mo sheasamh faoin mbratach Shinn Féin, ag tabhairt mothú orm go raibh mise i mo bhréagadóir.

Tugtar óráidí in ómós Mhic Niallais, fear a bhaint go mór leis an Éirí Amach agus an gCogadh Cathartha mar Óglach na hÉireann, ach thainig sé slán go seanaois mar sin féin; agus in ómós Uí hEagartaigh, Óglach eile nach

I'm not much of a person for the ceremonies as a rule. They tend to be boring for those not directly involved, and too often they're unintentionally funny, making it difficult for some of us to keep from laughing out loud in the wrong places. That's why I was somewhat taken off guard by the Easter Commemoration ceremony in the small town of Glencolmkille, Co. Donegal, this past April.

Coming out of Easter Mass that morning, I found myself in a parade consisting of pretty much everyone who had just been the congregation, and following a banner I couldn't read from the back. We processed all of fifty yards down the street to a little memorial area, featuring headstones for two local men whom I think are actually buried in the church cemetery, Donncha Mac Niallais and Micheál Ó hEigeartaigh. The local Sinn Féin branch lined up there with the banner, Irish flag and a blue flag with seven stars about which I was curious but didn't ask. (I was sorry for this afterwards as it turned out no one else had a clue what it was.) I found myself parked under the banner, which turned out to be a Sinn Féin one, making me feel somewhat of an imposter.

There were speeches paying tribute to Mac Niallais, who was quite active in the Uprising and subsequent civil war as an Irish Volunteer but lived to an old age anyway; and to Ó hEigeartaigh, another Volunteer

dtainig slán mar scaoil na Dubh agus Crón é i gcúl, ag dó a theach ina dhiadh sin. (Seasann an teach ina fhothrach fós, síos an bother i Mailin Beag.) Ansin, óráid eile le TD Shinn Féin as Fear Manach, bean uasal a raibh beagán orlaí ach a lán misneach aici. Choistear a hóráid ó leadránach mar gheall ar go na tagairtí a rinne sise do gníomhartha uafáise éagsúla, agus do dhaoine a bhí i lathair, marthanóirí de príosúnacht Sasanach agus pianadh. Leag dhá chinn na bhfear bláthfhleasca ar na gclocha cinne Mhic Niallais agus Ó hEigeartaigh. Ansin, bhí sé thar am ag amhrán ar ndóigh, mar sin chur siad cuireadh d'fhear ó Mhailin Beag a chum amhrán in ómós Uí hEigeartaigh; agus ar ndóigh, mar a mba Éire í, bhí na focla agus an fonn thar barr agus chomh leis sin, bhí an t-amhrán é féin croíbhriste ar fad.

Mar sin, bhí sé sin an chéad dheasghnáth a bhaint deora asam ariamh.

who did not live to an old age owing to being shot in the back by the Black and Tans, who then burned down his house for good measure. (It still sits in ruins in Malin Beg, down the road.) Then a speech by a Sinn Féin TD from Fermanagh, a lady who more than made up in feistiness what she lacked in inches. Her speech was prevented from becoming boring by her references to various atrocities, and to people present in the crowd who were survivors of British imprisonment and torture. Two of these men laid wreaths on the headstones of the two Volunteers. Then it was high time for a song, so they called up a Malin Beg man who'd written one in tribute to Ó hEigeartaigh; and this being Ireland, the song was not only remarkably fine in terms of lyric and tune, but heartbreaking.

So that's the first ceremony that ever moved me to tears.



## The Starry Plough

In 1913 police in Dublin attacked a demonstration by striking workers, killing two people. Trade union leaders then formed the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) with the intention of providing protection for labour demonstrations. The ICA developed into an armed and uniformed force and in 1914 it adopted the starry plough as its flag. In 1916 the ICA took part in the rebellion of that year. The original Starry Plough was captured by British forces but was returned to Ireland in 1966 on the fiftieth anniversary of the rebellion and is now preserved in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

The Starry Plough later gave its name to "The Plough and the Stars," a play by Sean O'Casey based on the Citizen Army's role in the Easter Rising, a 1936 movie of the play by director John Ford, as well as the famous San Francisco and Berkeley pubs.

## CELEBRATION

In our world, nothing compared  
with Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.  
God's power surging through the congregation,  
from altarboys in our stiff collars and big red bows,  
to the solid men of the parish in their finest array:  
Blue suits, gold wrist watches, crisp white shirts.  
The women perfumed and girdled, lipsticked  
and bejeweled. Enough incense  
in the air to do the Wise Men proud.

The procession wound through the church,  
organ honking, voices lifted in the special  
Christmas sense of the slate wiped clean  
and the universe beginning anew.  
The tree in the house lit with fat colored bulbs  
that looked good enough to eat. The old suitcase  
full of fragile decorations, buried treasure found  
every year on Christmas Eve and set free again.  
The baby Jesus alive and well! Herod thwarted!

This called for presents. Toys, games, maybe  
a watch or a knife. Along with Jesus came the whole  
cast of Yuletide characters—Santa, Rudolph,  
the Chipmunks, Bing Crosby, Frosty, Scrooge.  
I'm surprised the Easter Bunny didn't crash  
the event. My father put out apple pie  
and a glass of milk for Sanny, the remaining traces  
of which on Christmas morning were proof enough  
for me and my brother Jimmy of the entire  
supernatural infrastructure of Bronx Irish culture.

But it was the party after Midnight Mass  
that I remember most. Relatives and neighbors  
would pour into our apartment for an all-nighter.  
My mother would get the percolator going,

and start making breakfast for half the parish.  
Bacon, eggs, blood pudding, plates of fresh rolls  
with poppy seeds bought that day  
in the Treat Bakery on Tremont Avenue.

Eating breakfast at two in the morning!  
This was a miracle for a ten-year-old boy.  
Bottles of Seagram's and Canadian Club  
stood at attention on the kitchen table,  
silver ice bucket ringed with penguins  
awaiting duty beside them. Ladies smoking  
and gossiping. Glasses clinking. Laughter  
throughout the house. The smell of pine,  
the delicious aroma of sizzling bacon,  
all welcoming Jesus back for another year.

Then the music and singing would start up,  
my father on the banjo, P. J. Conway on the box.  
The Stack of Barley, The Lakes of Sligo,  
medleys of marches, waltzes, and polkas.  
Theresa McNally, from my mother's own town  
in Galway, would sing Galway Bay. Steps would  
be danced, jokes told, more drinks mixed and gulped.

I would go to bed so filled with the spirit  
it seemed impossible to believe that life could  
ever return to normal. Lying there exhausted,  
but anxious to sneak down the hall at the earliest  
opportunity and tear open the tantalizing packages,  
I believed in everything: Jesus our Lord, Santa  
our magic benefactor, my parents the immortal source  
of the ongoing celebration that could never end.

From *Boy Drinkers* by Terence Winch (2007,  
Hanging Loose Press)

### Bo-ho-ho-hola!

Irish music's accordion virtuoso Jimmy Keane and the remarkable bouzar player and vocalist Pat Broaders, comprise Bohola, Irish music's newest "supergroup" as penned by *The Irish Herald*. Bohola play a driving, muscular, and yet very emotive style of Irish music with deep roots in the 'pure drop' tradition, infused with the raw and gritty urbanized musical vernacular of the Irish and Irish-American experience. The Chicago-based group has just released its new Christmas album, *Bo-ho-ho-hola*, featuring their version of Terry Winch's Christmas poem "Celebration." You can find it through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and other web sources.