

The Pure Drop

A weekly
round-up
on Irish

Traditional Music
By Tommy Fegan



HARRY BRADLEY: 'The Night Rambler's Companion'



Ceol Camloch has had many fabulous nights over the years but one of the best ever nights was when Harry Bradley came to play. Belfast-born Harry is well established now as one of the great players of this generation. His growing legions of fans won't be disappointed by his latest offering, 'The Night Rambler's Companion'.

Obviously influenced by the great Sligo players and a large dollop of piping influences, Harry treats the tunes with the reverence of someone playing their last tune ever. Whether playing solo, or accompanied by Emmett Gill on pipes or Paul O'Shaughnessy on fiddle, Harry has a secret treat in store on each track.

Mary Corcoran's feisty piano playing on selected tracks propels Harry to incredibly spirited plains. For example, on the glorious "The Green Blanket" he plays at one stage with the grace and delicacy of someone dancing on eggs, and then Corcoran's playing injects him with a passion and urgency of the last set at the Ceilí. He knows a good tune when he hears one, and this CD will not disappoint.

To date Harry has recorded two solo flute CDs 'Bad Turns and Horseshoe Bends' (Outlet) and 'As I Carelessly Did Stray...' and a trio recording with Jesse Smith (fiddle) and John Blake (guitar/piano/flute) titled 'The Tap Room Trio'.

He has been a member of many great traditional groups of recent years, including Cran and Dervish, and appeared as a guest musician with Altan. Harry has generously donated the proceeds from this CD to ROKPA International www.rokpa.org

Q. What's the difference between Uilleann Pipes and an onion?
A. No one cries when you chop up the Uilleann Pipes.

JOHN MCKENNA SOCIETY, LETRIM

Among the most significant emigrant musicians to America of the early twentieth century was John McKenna, a master traditional player whose remarkable achievement was, through his recordings, to establish the flute as a major instrument in Irish music.

The John McKenna Traditional Society in his native Leitrim aims to celebrate the brilliance of his driving, extrovert, rhythmic style. His playing, more than ever today, exerts a huge influence on traditional music. His settings have been reproduced with great fervor by De Danann, particularly on their Star Spangled Molly album.

Frankie Gavin's subsequent solo flute album, 'Up and Away', was designed specifically as a McKenna tribute: the title derives from one of McKenna's best known polkas.

Among other musicians who are exponents of the McKenna style or who have prominently featured McKenna settings on their recordings are Willie Clancy, Charlie Lennon, Séamus Mac Mathúna, Mick O'Connor, Séamus Tansey, and many others. Matt Molloy of The Chieftains has fused many strands with McKenna's to produce his own unique blend.

JESSIE SMITH - MCKENNA ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

The John McKenna Society has recently completed the development work on the house where the legendary flute player was born. It will provide accommodation for an artist in residence who, through their skills will enhance and compliment the existing arts programmes under the direction of the society.

The first John McKenna 'Artist in Residence' is fiddler player Jesse Smith, originally from North America. His background in music is seen as an important connection between Ireland and North America in the history and development of Irish Traditional Music. During his stay in the area Jesse will be spending much of his time working with young musicians. Jesse will also be available to work with similar groups of young people in the county and elsewhere.

At the moment the society is planning to issue a CD of the Music of John McKenna and Jesse will be involved in the selection of suitable tunes and the overall production and completion of this project.

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