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Cherish the Ladies

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THE CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS

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CHERISH THE LADIES

February 20, 1999

Governors State University
University Park, Illinois
In a little more than ten years, the name of a time-honored Irish traditional jig has become equally well known as the name for one of the most engaging ensembles ever to hit the Irish music scene - Cherish the Ladies. Formed in 1987, this group of extremely talented women, can trace their formation to three sold-out concerts organized by folklorist/musician Mick Moloney and sponsored by Manhattan’s Ethnic Folk Arts Center in 1984.

The union of these first generation Irish-American musicians, singers and stepdancers was to last for one two week tour in May of 1987. Those two weeks grew into a decade, and has seen the group traveling all over North America, the United Kingdom and Europe performing two hundred dates a year in the finest concert halls and international festivals. No one could possible foresee that this group would become the most successful and sought after Irish-American musical ensemble in Celtic music!

They have been named Entertainment Group of the Year by the Irish Voice Newspaper and received the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall’s International Group of the Year Award at the Celtic Connections Festival in Scotland. They have shared the stage with such noted entertainers as James Taylor, Joan Baez, Emmy Lou Harris, The Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem and fiddle virtuoso, Mark O’Connor. They have been the featured soloists with numerous orchestras including the Boston Pops and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras and have recently collaborated with the Boston Pops on their first Celtic album. As a group, they have recorded five highly acclaimed albums and have appeared on CBS This Morning, PBS-TV and National Public Radio in the United States and on BBC and RTE radio and television overseas. At the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, they were chosen to represent Irish music and culture at the Official Cultural Olympiad. Their rising star continues to blaze forward with their latest album, “Threads of Time,” their first release on RCA Victor.

Cherish the Ladies is at home in a festival or folk setting, performing arts center or with a leading symphony. They are simply, a powerhouse group - offering Irish music, dance and humor of rare, enduring quality that is enjoyed by audiences and critics alike.

JOANIE MADDEN the leader of the group, was born in New York. Her mother is from County Clare and her father is from County Galway. She received her musical training early in life by listening to her father Joe play accordion around the house. She began taking whistle lessons from Jack Coen, and within five years became the World Champion on both the whistle and the concert flute. In 1984, Joanie became the first and only American ever to win the Senior All-Ireland Championship on the whistle. She has been awarded many honors including being the youngest member ever to be inducted into the Irish-American Musicians Hall of Fame, recipient of the Wild Geese Award and voted One of the Top 100 Irish-Americans in the country for her contributions to promoting and preserving Irish culture in America. She has performed on over fifty albums but, in 1994, she released her critically acclaimed solo debut “A Whistle on the Wind” on the Green Linnet Label. She has followed that up with her 1996 release “Song of the Irish Whistle” on the Hearts of Space label (which has sold over 160,000 copies). “More Songs of the Irish Whistle” is to be released in the coming months.

MARY RAFFERTY was born in New Jersey in 1969. She was actively encouraged to play Irish music by her father Mike who comes from Ballinakill, County Galway. Mike is an outstanding exponent of the east Galway style of flute playing and he provided an environment which nurtured Mary to learn the music almost by osmosis. She has attained a remarkable level of virtuosity on both flute, whistle and accordion, placing her in the rare category of Irish musicians who excel on multiple unrelated instruments. Mary and Mike have recorded two albums together: “The Dangerous Reel” and a new collaboration which is to be released later this year.

MARY COOGAN was born in New York and also raised in a musical household. Her mother is from County Roscommon and her father is a first generation Irish-American accordion player. Mary is a self taught guitar, mandolin and banjo player. She began playing at an early age listening to various types of acoustic music and now she is one of the most sought after accompanists in America. Mary was recently featured in Acoustic Guitar Magazine where she was named one of the top four guitarists in Celtic music. In addition to her musical talents, Mary also holds her masters degree in education.
CONTINUED

DONNA LONG was born in Los Angeles, California. When she was five years old, she began taking piano lessons with her father; a jazz/classical pianist who instilled in Donna a love for music. In 1978, she moved to the Baltimore/Washington, DC area and heard fiddler, Brendan Mulvihill playing Irish music. He inspired her to pick up the fiddle and gave her a solid foundation in style and playing. She then began to accompany him on the piano and now Donna is considered one of the finest pianists playing Irish music. Along with Brendan Mulvihill, they recorded two duet albums together: “The Steeplechase” and “The Morning Dew.” Donna has now passed her music on to her son Jesse who is one of the up and coming young Irish fiddlers in America. She recently accompanied Jesse on his first solo project entitled “The Hurricane.”

SIOBHAN EGAN was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her mother’s parents hail from County Donegal, and her father is from County Mayo. She also comes from a very musical family: her sister RoryAnne is a fine concertina player, and her brother Seamus is one of the most talented musicians in the Irish music scene. Her family split their upbringing between Ireland and Philadelphia, but Siobhan now resides in Brooklyn, New York. Not limiting her talents to just the fiddle, Siobhan also plays the bodhran (drum), tin whistle, and was an All-Ireland Champion on the flute. In recent years, she has begun to compose melodies that are sure to become staples in the tradition.

AOIFE CLANCY comes from the small town of Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary. Her singing career started at an early age performing with her father, Bobby Clancy of the legendary Clancy Brothers. In 1991, Aoife decided to move to the United States and pursue her singing career. She has recorded two solo albums: “It’s About Time” and “Soldiers and Dreams.” She continues to delight audiences with her performances, and as one Australian music critic has cited, “Her singing would melt packed ice with it’s warmth and richness.”

SINEAD LAWLER was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York of Irish parents. Her mother is from County Longford and her father is from County Kildare. At her mothers encouragement, she began to study Irish dance at an early age, training with legendary dancer and teacher, Donny Golden. Through many years of training, she went on to win numerous dancing championships including a National title. Last May, Sinead graduated from Iona College with a degree in math. She decided to pursue her love of Irish dancing and has performed with the group full time ever since.

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