



## ArtSmarts

2004-2005 Wells Fargo School Matinee Series

TRINITY IRISH DANCE COMPANY

*with*

DIFFERENT DRUMS OF IRELAND

March 16, 2005      11:00am  
Jackson Hall, Mondavi Center

Dear Teacher:

We hope you find this CueSheet helpful in preparing your students for the Trinity Irish Dance Company with Different Drums of Ireland school matinee. This guide, which is intended to be used in conjunction with the Multicultural Music and Ethnic Dance curriculum guides, provides information about the performance companies, as well as background on traditional Irish dance and musical instruments. Also included in the guide is a review of audience etiquette.

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# A New Generation of Irish Dance and Music



Appearing at Mondavi Center, UC Davis the day before St. Patrick's Day, these two percussive companies have joined forces in a revolutionary take on Irish performing arts. Trinity Irish Dance Company's reinvented Irish dance and Different Drums of Ireland's tribal beat result in a new show of unrivaled power, grace, and beauty. A perennial UC Davis favorite and 22-time world champion dance company, Trinity Irish Dance exhilarates audiences with its vigorous power, daring compositions, and staggering proficiency. Different Drums of Ireland combines bagpipes, guitars, and many other instruments with the indigenous drums of Ireland: the Protestant Lambeg and the Catholic Bodhran. Due to historical conflict, these two drums are not often heard together. Here they combine with Trinity Irish Dance for a thunderous music and dance experience.

Your class will discover a new generation of Irish performance: dance, as it has evolved from the traditional step dance—which involves precise, fast footwork—to an art form influenced by modern dance, ballet, and the dance traditions of many other cultures; music, as it has developed from indigenous instruments, and in combinations which now, symbolically, unite Ireland's historically warring factions.

## The Founding of Trinity Irish Dance Company



Born in Yorkshire, England, and raised in Chicago, **Mark Howard** began his dancing career at 9 years of age at the Dennehy School of Irish Dance (the same school that produced Michael Flatley of *Lord of the Dance* fame). A North American champion Irish dancer himself, he launched the **Trinity Academy of Irish Dance** at age 17. Two decades since its inception, the Trinity Academy has grown from a dozen students practicing in a church basement to the largest Irish dance program in the world. Together, dancers from this school have won an unprecedented 18 world titles for the United States at the annual World Irish Dance Championships in Ireland.

Mark Howard wanted to find a way for his dancers to do more than just compete for trophies and prizes. In 1990, he founded the **Trinity Irish Dance Company** in order to showcase Irish music and dance as an art form. Considered an “American Treasure” by critics and enthusiasts worldwide, this company of 18-25 year olds has received great critical and popular acclaim from audiences throughout the world. The company has danced on such stages as New York’s Joyce and New Victory theaters and Washington’s Kennedy Center. Each show shares the same passion, flair and precision that has made many Trinity dancers world champions of Irish dance. Over the past decade, the company has collaborated with many notable contemporary choreographers and musicians, developing more diverse movements and new genres of dance. Trinity’s dancers have toured internationally and have been invited guests for such dignitaries as the Royal Family of Monaco and Ireland’s President Mary Robinson.

Trinity holds a unique place in the dance world, offering both a highly skilled presentation of progressive Irish step dance and a brilliantly engaging interpretation of contemporary world vision.

Mark Howard continues to choreograph new works for the company as well as to expand his independent career to work in theater, television, concert and film. In 1994 and in 2001, he was named one of Irish American Magazine's Top 100 Irish-Americans for his innovative work in Irish dance. In 1991, his PBS production of *Green Fire and Ice* aired nationally; and in 2002, PBS began airing *One Step Beyond*. His early work found a common rhythm and movement between African and Celtic dance, which was an integral part of the 1993 Emmy Award-winning PBS special, *World Stage*. Mark Howard has also been awarded numerous Choreographer Fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts. His energy and unique vision have significantly changed the direction and scope of Irish dance, reintroducing the form as the phenomena it is today.

To learn more about Trinity Irish Dance Company, visit: <http://www.trinitydancers.com/>

For video clips of the performance, visit:

[http://www.mondavicenter.org/events/1supplemental\\_info.lasso?id=1385&supplement=1](http://www.mondavicenter.org/events/1supplemental_info.lasso?id=1385&supplement=1) and

[http://www.mondavicenter.org/events/1supplemental\\_info.lasso?id=1385&supplement=2](http://www.mondavicenter.org/events/1supplemental_info.lasso?id=1385&supplement=2)

## **Dance as an Expression of Culture**

Every culture expresses its identity and values through distinctive music and dance forms. In the United States, dance is as diverse and multi-cultural as the history of its original peoples and those who immigrated later.

Consider Native American ceremonial dances like the Ghost Dance, the Grass Dance and the Hoop Dance. Settlers from Europe brought court dances, like the minuet and the ballet, and folk and country dances, like the waltz, polka, clog dance, and reel. African-Americans contributed the minstrel, the cakewalk, and other “plantation” dances, and developed an early form of the tap dance, set to West African rhythms. Mexican-Americans combined indigenous and Spanish traditions to develop the folklorico style. And when the people of Ireland immigrated to the United States, they too brought cultural traditions to share and develop.

### **Traditional Irish Dance**

Irish dancing is an old art form with strong ties to the community, religious ceremonies and rituals, and national pride. The Irish people created music and dances for weddings, fairs, saints’ days, annual festivals and harvests. In the late 19th century, many Irish people immigrated to the United States and brought their music and dance to share with American audiences.

In Irish step dancing, the dancers hold the upper body very straight and the arms close to the sides. The emphasis is on the footwork – the speed of the quick changes of position, the height of the jumps – and the uniformity of the dancers. Dancers wear hard shoes (called “jig shoes”) when they wish to use their feet like an instrument to beat out the rhythms, and soft shoes (ghillies) for swift jumps and crossover steps. Often, the dancers’ costumes highlight Irish culture in the use of decorative lace and embroidered designs.

### **History of Irish Dance**

Irish dance dates back to traditions in Ireland in the 1500s and is closely tied to Irish independence and cultural identity. Throughout history, these ancient dances were never documented or recorded due to Ireland’s occupation by England, which tried to make Ireland more “English” by outlawing certain traditional practices. Many Irish cultural traditions were banned by the English authorities during the 400-year period that came to be known as the “Penal Days.”

Despite this ban on cultural traditions in Ireland, Irish dancing continued behind closed doors. Because their musical instruments had been confiscated by the authorities, Irish parents taught their

children the dances by tapping out rhythms with their hands and feet and making music through “lilting” (or mouthed music somewhat similar to “scat singing” in jazz). Irish dances came from Ireland’s family clans and, like tribal Native American dances in this country, were never formally choreographed or recorded.

The Penal Laws were finally lifted in the late 1800s, inspiring Irish nationalism and the Great Gaelic Revival – the resurgence of interest in Irish language, literature, history, and folklore – and its accompanying *feis* (essentially a gathering that included various forms of competition). The *feis* was typically held in open fields and included contests in singing, playing music, baking, and, of course, Irish dancing.

### **Emigration to the United States**

This renewed emphasis on Irish dance would come in handy for many of the millions of Irish who immigrated to this country in the 19th century. As these Irish immigrants encountered discrimination in finding jobs (signs reading “No Irish Need Apply” were a common sight in some eastern cities), many resorted to careers in show business. On Broadway during the days of vaudeville, the interaction between African-American “boot dancers” and Irish “step dancers” created American tap dancing.

In the early 1900s, Irish show bands traveled the country and entertained their audiences with music and Irish dancers. With Irish dancing being presented as on-stage entertainment for audiences, it began to move away from its roots in competitive contests. Vaudeville offered Irish dancers a new alternative to competition.

*Ceili* (say “kay-lee”), or “figure dancing,” took root and flourished in Appalachia during the 1930s, when the first of the great Irish dance masters came to America to teach. In the 1950s, Irish dancing continued to make inroads as a performance medium, being featured on such popular TV programs as *The Ed Sullivan Show*. At the same time, however, Irish dancing began a slow return to its competitive roots with the proliferation of the *feis*.

In 1969, the Irish Dance World Championships started in Dublin, and competitive Irish dancing continued to gain momentum. As the students of the first generation of dance masters became established in America in the 1970s, the first American Irish step dancing champions began to emerge, among them, Mark Howard, who would go on to form the Trinity Irish Dance Company and change the art form forever.

## **Different Drums of Ireland: *The Sound of New Northern Ireland***

Different Drums of Ireland has been challenging traditional Irish rhythms since 1992. The company brings together the indigenous drums of Ireland, the Lambeg and the Bodhran, and a new drum of their own design, the Long Drum. Different Drums also features the pipes of Ulster, the Uilleann or elbow pipes, the Scottish small pipes, the Highland bagpipes, along with an eclectic mix of whistles, guitar, and other small percussion instruments. Initially inspired by the Kodo drummers of Japan, Different Drums offers a *mélange*, with roots in the Northern Irish tradition but innovations from the 'World Music' scene. In concert, Different Drums present traditional reels, jigs and marches, world rhythms, songs with a reggae beat, African Djembe, traditional Lambeg chants, and Bodhrans playing with Long Drums. Because of political conflict in Ireland, the Protestant-associated Lambeg and the Catholic-identified Bodhran have rarely played to the same beat...until now.

Different Drums has played at festivals and concerts all over Ireland and appeared on BBC TV, UTV, RTE and Radio Ulster. The band toured the United States as part of the 'Both Sides Now' tour with Phil Coulter, James Galway, Roma Downey, Gregory Peck, Aidan Quinn, and Edna O'Brien. They made an historic appearance at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, and on St. Patrick's Day performed for President Clinton at the White House.

To learn more about Different Drums of Ireland, visit: <http://www.differentdrums.co.uk/ddi.htm>

## **Indigenous Drums of Ireland**

### **The Bodhran** (*excerpted from an article by Stephen Matier, 2002*)

The Bodhran, (pronounced "bow-ron") comes from the Irish verb *bodhr*, to deafen, and means literally 'the deafener'! The Bodhran is a round drum of the frame drum family, with a wooden frame and an animal skin head. The skin is usually goat but other skins can be used, such as deer, calf and dog. The frame drum can be found in many ancient cultures, from the Persians to the Native Americans, and it is widely found in the Middle East and Africa. These drums were believed to have spiritual properties, and were used extensively by shaman, medicine men, and witch-doctors in tribal cultures.

The frame drum is played in many ways, mostly by hand or with a single headed stick. In Irish music, the use of the double-headed stick is most prevalent. This technique, which involves striking the drum in an up-and-down fashion, enables the player to provide a very fast, highly ornamented, and continuous rhythm which is particularly suitable to Irish traditional music and dance. One of the benefits of playing the drum in this manner is that it allows the musician to play rolls with one hand, as both ends of the stick are used in the playing technique, so that fairly complex rhythms can be provided. Another benefit is that the other hand can be used to mute the skin and change the tone and pitch of the drum, allowing a wide variety of sounds to be produced.

### **The Lambeg Drum** (*excerpted from an article by Stephen Matier, 2002*)

The Lambeg is a descendant of the European military drum. There are different theories as to how this drum came to Northern Ireland: in one, the drum arrived with the Scottish planters in the early 1600s, and in another, it came with the armies of William of Orange in the late 1600s.

The drum is approximately 3 feet - 1 meter in diameter, and about 2 feet (60cms) wide. It is constructed of very fine goatskin on each side in order to get as identical a sound from each head. (Only female goatskins are used as it is thought only these skins are fine enough and unblemished enough to give the best sound.) The skins are attached to hoops, called flesh hoops, and these fit over the shell or barrel of the drum. Two outer hoops are then fitted on top of the flesh hoops and are roped tightly together across the drum to provide tension. Due to the size and tension these drums require, it takes at least two men to tighten them and up to two weeks to get the drum ready for competition.

The drum is carried like a bass drum in a marching band. Indeed, the Lambeg started off as a bass drum until, around 1896, someone employed canes to play the drum and to produce the unique sound it offers. It is thought these canes were imported to Northern Ireland to be used by jockeys. When played with canes, the drum can be tuned very high in pitch and the sound will become extremely loud. Given

this volume, the drum is designed to be played outdoors and can be heard over vast distances. At one Different Drums outdoors performance, the Lambeg was heard about 6 miles away (without amplification)!

Due to the history and political situation in Northern Ireland, the Lambeg drum has become closely associated with the Protestant/Unionist community while the Bodhran has become associated with the Catholic/Nationalist community. This segregation is not complete as nationalists have used the Lambeg and Protestants do play and make Bodhrans, so there is a degree of blurring; still, the drums are perceived as belonging to one community or the other.

## About Ireland

<b>Official name:</b>	Ireland (English); Éire (Irish)
<b>Population:</b>	3,643,672
<b>Monetary Unit:</b>	Irish pound
<b>Major cities:</b>	Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Sligo
<b>Capital:</b>	Dublin
<b>Total area:</b>	27,137 square miles
<b>Religious affiliation:</b>	91.6% Roman Catholic; 2.5% Church of Ireland, 5.9% other
<b>Date of Independence From England:</b>	December 6, 1921



-map taken from <http://lonelyplanet.com>

## **Think About It!**

Talking with your teacher, friends and family about a performance after attending the theater is part of the experience. When you share what you saw and felt, you learn more about the performance. You can now compare ideas and ask questions and find out how to learn even more. Here are some questions to think about:

1. How would you describe Irish dancing to a friend?
2. How would you describe Irish music to a friend? Describe any non-traditional (unique) sounds that you heard.
3. What feelings did you have while you watched the dances and listened to the music?
4. What did you like best and why? Was the program different from what you expected? How?
5. Did you have a favorite dance selection? A least favorite? Explain.
6. Do your parents or grandparents celebrate holidays with special music and dance traditions? What are they?
7. Discuss how traditional Irish dance became a U.S. art form.
8. Did you recognize cultural influences other than Irish in any of the dances?

This CueSheet was co-written by Anett Jessop, Graduate Researcher, Davis Humanities Institute, and Merlyn Potters, Academic Program Advisor, Agronomy and Range Science, UC Davis.

## **Attending the Theater**

### ***What is expected of student audiences at the matinee:***

- \* Enter the auditorium quietly and take seats immediately;
- \* Show courtesy to the artist and other guests at all times;
- \* Demonstrate appreciation for the artist's work by applauding at the appropriate times;
- \* Refrain from making unnecessary noise or movements;
- \* Please eat lunch before or after the performance to avoid disruption;
- \* Please turn off cell phones and pagers;
- \* Flash photography is strictly prohibited;
- \* Relate any information acquired from the pre-matinee discussion to the new information gained from the matinee.

### ***What you can expect of your experience in a performing arts theater:***

A theater is a charged space, full of energy and anticipation. When the house lights (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, the excitement level goes up! Theaters are designed so that the voices of the singers and actors and the music of the musicians can be heard. But this also means that any sound in the audience: whispering, rustling of papers, speaking and moving about, can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Distractions like these upset everyone's concentration and can spoil a performance.

The performers on stage show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their very best possible work. The audience shows respect for the performers by watching attentively. Applause is the best way for audience members to share their enthusiasm and to show their appreciation for the performers. Applaud at the end of a performance! Sometimes the audience will clap during a performance, such as after a featured solo. Audience members may feel like laughing if the action on stage is funny, crying if the action is sad, or sighing if something is seen or heard that is beautiful. Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form and the culture(s) of the people in the audience. While the audience at a dance performance will sit quietly, other types of performance invite audience participation.