



A taste of Ireland

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An article by Hazel Young

Since the last issue of *The Grapevine*, I've been to Ireland to dance with Stefan and Bethan Freedman and felt so captivated by the magic of Ireland that I've been inspired to write about Irish music sources. Yes! I'm in love with Irish music and have been studying and collecting it since the 1970s. It's a huge subject and to write about it comprehensively would fill volumes - an article of a few hundred words is barely a sentence on page one.

So, a little taste of Irish music; let's begin with a very special dance, appropriately enough one of Stefan's. I have always loved '*Calum Sgaire*' and the music is exquisite. It comes for a 1970s band called the **Bothy Band** from an album called *Old Hag You Have Killed Me!* (Green Linnet CD 3005). '*Calum*' is not very typical of their music, which is predominantly fast, furious and instrumental. Quite simply, the Bothy Band was the best Irish traditional band of them all and a yardstick against which all subsequent Irish traditional music is measured. The Bothy Band is the epitome of Irish music at its most wild and spirited.

At the other end of the Irish musical spectrum there is **Clannad**. In the late 1970s their music was more traditional; since then they have become much more soft, ethereal and atmospheric. Listen to recent Clannad music and your living room slowly fills with Celtic mist! I have rediscovered the magical textures of Clannad thanks to another powerful Stefan Freedman dance called '*Lore*'; the music is entitled '*Croi Croga*' and comes from a CD also called *Lore* (RCA CD 74321 359752) which is fairly typical of the lush soundscapes of more recent Clannad.

Back in 1983 they produced one of their best recordings, *Magical Ring* (RCA CD PD 70003), when they were still making the transition from their traditional roots to their current Celtic Mist-ical style. It contains a song, '*Newgrange*', about the famous ancient burial site, which inspired a great dance of the same name by Mair Smith from Canada (introduced into the UK by June Watts). '*Newgrange*' is also available on the bonus CD that has been packaged with *Lore*.

Even more ethereal perhaps is the music of **Enya** who was once a member of Clannad; her music is certainly the antithesis of Bothy Band music. Traditional musicians tend to hate Enya, her music being constructed in recording studios, rather than having the raw honesty of live pub sessions. Personally I do find her music very same-y, but if you like gentle New Age style music with an Irish flavour Enya has certainly perfected the art. Two dances spring to mind here. First, the powerful but simple Nanni Kloke dance '*Boadicea*' with music of the same name from the CD *The Celts* (WEA CD 4509-91167-2). Second, a slow, meditative dance from June Watts called '*Reflections*'; the music is taken from the CD *Watermark* (WEA CD 2292-43875-2) and is called '*Na Laetha Geal M'Oige*'.

Both *Watermark* and *The Celts* are recommended; or you may prefer to opt for the compilation CD *Paint the Sky With Stars* (WEA CD 3984-20895-2) which contains '*Boadicea*' amongst Enya's best tracks. I know there are many circle dances to Enya music; do write and let me know of others.

So, I've run out of space already and barely scratched the surface of the subject! These recordings should all be available from good music shops - more next time! (Back to Greece maybe?) In the meantime I thoroughly recommend a fascinating and informative little book about Irish traditional music, *Notes From The Heart* by **P. J. Curtis** (ISBN 1-898142-07-6). And some feedback on this column would be valuable; any suggestions or comments?
