

Road to the Isles

The Traditional Music, Dance, & Folksongs of Ireland and Scotland.

Featuring: George Balderose: *Highland Pipes & Smallpipes*; Oliver Browne: *Irish Fiddle*; Melinda Crawford: *Scottish Fiddle*; Brittany Maniet: *Scottish Dance*; Caroline McCarthy: *Irish Dance*; Richard Hughes: *Great Flute, Guitar, vocals*.

Drawing from a wealth of experience and study, Road to the Isles performs the instrumental music, dance, and folksong traditions of Ireland and Scotland. Comprising five talented performers representing years of experience in their respective fields, Road to the Isles will take you on a journey to the lochs and glens of the Celtic lands of old. Their performances include the sword dance, highland fling, sean triubhas, Irish reel and jig, slip jig, and hornpipe, complemented by songs, stories, and instrumental solos, duets, and trios. The ensemble portrays a unique view of the similarities and differences between the music and dance traditions of these fascinating and ancient cultures.

About their CD release, *The Way Home*, it has been said: "Excellent traditional Irish and Scottish music" (*Celtic Heritage*, Halifax, Nova Scotia); "The musicianship reflects the high-level training, attainments, and year's of experience of the ensemble's members" (*Piping Today*, Glasgow, Scotland); "A top quality introduction to genuine Scottish and Irish traditional music..." (*Common Stock. Journal of the Lowland and Borders Pipers Society*, Edinburgh, Scotland)

Dancers **Brittany Maniet** and **Caroline McCarthy** represent two different traditions of dancing, and each has successfully competed at Irish Feis and Highland Games throughout the Northeast US. Their performances will highlight and contrast the dance styles of their respective traditions.

The Musicians

George Balderose

A New York Times reviewer described piper **George Balderose** as having a "virtuoso's gift" and in the words of another he is a "virtuosic piper". George for more than 30 years has studied with many of the world's great piping masters. He is an instructor, a founder, and the executive director of the Balmoral School of Piping, the foremost summer school in the USA for the learning of the bagpipes. In 1981 he received the degree of "Senior Piper" from the College of Piping, Glasgow, Scotland. As a competitor George has won the Grade I trophy at the Ligonier Highland Games four times, three consecutively. He has performed as a soloist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh, and three times as a guest artist in concert with the Pittsburgh Symphony at Heinz Hall. His piping has been recorded on H.K. Hilner's Dream Cathedral, Dewar's Bagpipe Festival recordings, A Celtic Christmas on the KRB label, The Way Home (w/Road to the Isles), and his own recording, Bagpipe Music Selections: Great Highland Pipes and Smallpipes. www.PittsburghPiper.com

Oliver Browne

Oliver Browne was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland in a musical household. His brother Peter and his cousin Ronan are well-known Irish pipers. Oliver has been playing Irish fiddle since he was seven years

old, and his early lessons were with Padruig O'Keefe and Denis Murphy. As a teenager he took 2nd place in the All-Ireland fiddle championship for his age group. During the 1970's he played and recorded with the Irish ensemble, Blackthorn. In the 1980's he immigrated to the US. He won the West Virginia State Fiddle Championship at Glenville in 1985, and has been playing the fiddle for many years at Irish Step Dancing competitions in the US.

Melinda Crawford

A U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Champion, Melinda Crawford performs frequently for Scottish highland games, Celtic festivals, and concerts throughout the United States. She began playing the Scottish fiddle when she was eleven years old, and has won numerous awards for her solo playing and her original compositions at regional and national Scottish fiddle competitions. She has achieved fiddling titles such as the Allegheny Mountain Fiddling Champion and the Potomac Valley Fiddling Champion several times prior to winning the 2003 U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championship and becoming a sanctioned Scottish fiddle competition judge. Melinda is an instructor at the Jink & Diddle School of Scottish Fiddling in North Carolina, frequently judges Scottish fiddle competitions at highland games, and has been a judge for the national championships. www.melindacrawford.com

Richard Hughes

Richard Hughes first started playing traditional Irish music almost 50 years ago on the flute and tin whistle for dances in Pittsburgh, and he has been playing music ever since. When a young man he regularly performed at Carnegie Mellon University's ceilidhs (kay-lee's), and for festivals and concerts throughout the Eastern US and Canada. Now a retired railroad man, Richard's singing has been called a celebration of traditional working life. He has developed and cultivated for more than half a century a mastery of traditional flute and tin whistle music, as well as songs from Scotland, Ireland, America, and Australia.

In 1991 while on a trip to Ireland his singing was recorded by the Irish Traditional Music Archives in Dublin for posterity's sake.

The reality of traditional folk songs enables you as the performer and you as the listener to leave the time you're in and experience in concert that period of history. – Richard Hughes

The Dancers

Brittany Maniet

Brittany Maniet started Scottish dancing at age six. She has performed at Tartan Day celebrations, Robert Burns Dinners, and many other Scottish events in the Western Pennsylvania area. She has competed at the premier level, placing in many competitions, such as Ligonier, Edinboro, Anne Arundal, McHenry, and was a finalist in the Northeast US Regional Championships.

Caroline McCarthy

Caroline McCarthy began Irish Dancing when she was 10 years old. In 6 years she moved from a Beginner to the Championship Level. When she was 17 she traveled to Killarney, Ireland and competed in the All-Irelands 2007. That fall she qualified for the World Championships by placing at the Mid-West Oireachtas. In March 2008, she competed in the Irish Dancing World Championships in Belfast. Irish dancing has always been a major part of her life and she feels very passionate for the music, dance and culture.

The Road to the Isles brings together the fiddle, bagpipe, and flute music, dance, and folk songs of Ireland and Scotland for a performance that breathes vibrant life into the ancient traditions of celtic cultures. In the words of a presenter: "From virtuoso piping, fiddling, and Irish flute playing, to championship quality dancing and songs that carry the taste of heather, Road to the Isles is a fabulous program."