

The poised, gifted young women of Girsa

Trad group drew a capacity crowd in Pearl River, N.Y.

Miley Cyrus has supposedly grown up, but mainstream music critics are making a Montana out of a molehill talent. They should look instead at the real thing: Girsa.

As amply evident from their June 25 concert at Pearl River High School in Pearl River, N.Y., the octet

has shuffled off the giggles of girlhood and uncertainties of stage presence to emerge now as confident, poised, musically mature young women of undeniable inventiveness to match their exceptional skill, energy, and joyfulness.

Girsa's advancement has been impressive since July 2004, when the band did their first gig at a Gaelic Athletic Association function in Yonkers, N.Y. Each performance now reveals a greater fulfillment of potential, and the concert they gave at Pearl River H.S. before some 780 people, constituting more than a sell-out, offered something else: real risk-taking.

Not many Irish traditional music ensembles would insert into their repertoire of jigs, reels, and polkas a song medley comprising "American Pie," Don McLean's No. 1 hit of 1972 that was mainly inspired by Buddy Holly's death in 1959, and the contemporary hits of Kat DeLuna's "Push Push," Justin Bieber's "Baby," Taio Cruz's "Break Your Heart," and Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance." Girsa's fearlessness and fun made this medley succeed.

Another relatively new addition to Girsa's repertoire is Richard Thompson's "Waltzing's for Dreamers." The song has been covered memorably several times before, including by June Tabor, one of Thompson's greatest song interpreters. Girsa's Deirdre Brennan, however, managed to make it her own, getting inside this poignant, waltz-tempo composition with the choral lines "One step for aching, two steps for breaking / Waltzing's for dreamers and losers in love."

A song falling slightly short of its mark was the band's rendition of U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." Girsa's Emily McShane did an

admirable job of singing it, but this No. 1 hit from 1987 remains stubbornly resistant to new versions unless the approach is significantly different from U2's original. Out-and-out cover bands, like Joshua Tree, obviously try to mimic the original, but Girsa is infinitely more accomplished and imaginative than any cover band. Still, despite expert, mostly acoustic instrumentation, Girsa's rendition was not significantly different, thus making a comparison inevitable.

But what all those new or recent songs indicate is how adventurous and risk-embracing Girsa is. To their credit, they are endeavoring to expand the concert repertoire of what's customarily expected from an Irish traditional band today without diluting or diminishing their strong training in and love for trad itself. While other Irish traditional bands often timorously toss in a modern rock or pop song just to shake up the mix or expectation, Girsa seeks either to integrate it in a general trad framework or to perform it sportively along the rim of trad, as in the case of the "American Pie / Push Push / Baby / Break Your Heart / Bad Romance" medley. The band's effort may not succeed in every instance, but the intention behind it is, literally and figuratively, applaudable. Moreover, they show no sign of forgetting what they do best.

Other songs fairly new to the Girsa repertoire, such as "The Blacksmith" and "Ye Rambling Boys of Pleasure," were delivered with compelling conviction. Of equal impact on stage were songs plucked from the band's debut recording last year, such as "Mary and the Soldier," "This Story I Tell You Is True," "Rhythm of My Heart," and "I Courted a Wee Girl," sung by Margaret Dudasik, Pamela Geraghty, Emily McShane, and Deirdre Brennan, respectively.

All of the tunes played by Girsa revealed a similar leap in self-assurance and were bolstered by Kristen McShane on fiddle and Bernadette Flanagan on bodhran and keyboards. Her sister, fiddle and whistle player Maeve Flanagan, gave a riveting performance throughout, topped by a medley of her own compositions, including the self-confessionally titled tune "I Forget," while button accordionist Blathin Loughran took a stunning solo turn. The



PHOTO: SEAN CONWAY

Girsa in action at Pearl River High School: (l-r) Emily McShane, Bernadette Flanagan, Kristen McShane, Deirdre Brennan, Pamela Geraghty, Maeve Flanagan, Blathin Loughran, and Margaret Dudasik.

versatility of the band — Dudasik played fiddle and whistle, Brennan played fiddle and mandolin, Geraghty played button accordion and guitar, and Emily McShane played keyboards and guitar — kept Girsa's instrumental blend richly diverse. To boot, Dudasik and Bernadette Flanagan steppedanced together.

There was no lag or lull in what the band did, and the songs and humor of emcee Dermot Henry, the guest stepdancing by Catriona Furlong and brothers Brian and Sean Shapiro, the guest set dancing by eight members of the O'Sullivan and O'Flynn families, and the guest guitar playing of Girsa album producer Gabriel

Donahue made the concert all the more enjoyable.

But this night belonged to Girsa, performing in their own hometown before a packed house of appreciative and at times boisterous fans. The evening started with a video, set at Ellis Island, of the song

See CEOL, Page 21

THE IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE



by **FRANK MCCOURT**
directed by **CHARLOTTE MOORE**

musical direction by **KEVIN B. WINEBOLD**
choreography by **BARRY MCNABB**



July 14th - September 5th
www.irishrep.org **212-727-2737**
132 West 22nd Street, NYC

Gaige (cup of tea, biscuits and conversation in Irish). Details, (212) 757-3318 ext. 209.

For details of Irish-American Studies program at CUNY visit www.irishamericanstudies.com. Elementary Irish I and Elementary Irish 2 will be held in July.

TOURS OF IRELAND

For details of Andy Cooney 2010 Musical Tour of Ireland, Oct. 18 - 28, call (631) 499-2010 or 1-800-499-2010.

SPORTS-RELATED EVENTS

The Co. Clare Golf Outing will be held on Thursday, July 29 at Douglaston Golf Course. Details, Martin Devereaux (201) 568-2201 or (516) 312-1965

Spike Hill, located at 184 Bedford Ave. and North 7th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY will broadcast all World Cup games from June 11 - July 11. Details, (718) 218-9737 or www.spikehill.com

The Links at Union Vale in Dutchess County is now open for its 10th season. Located at 153 N. Parliman Road, LaGrangeville, NY 12540. Details, (845) 223-1000.

Ceol

Continued from Page 17

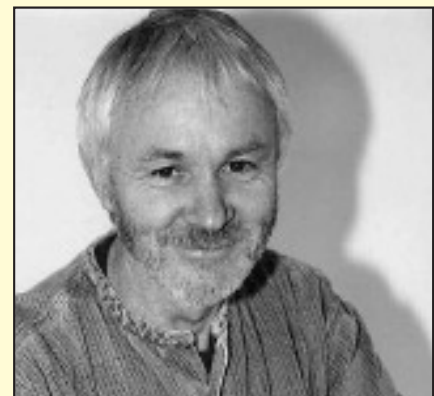
"Immigrant Eyes," the opening track on Girsas debut CD. In retrospect, the video provided an appropriate context for an Irish American band making good on the promise of Ellis Island that drew their own parents or forebears here.

Band manager Pat Geraghty (Pamela's mother), instructor-moms Rose Flanagan and Margie Mulvihill, and other band members' teachers and parents have helped the octet reach the lofty plane of performance so powerfully on display at Pearl River H.S. It's downright scary to think that Girsas, already musically imposing and ever-refining their sound, has an even brighter future ahead of them.

No doubt raising the national and international profile of Girsas will be upcoming performances at the 16th annual Catskills Irish Arts Week in East Durham, N.Y. (July 15 and 17; call 518-



Piano accordionist Alan Kelly will bring his quartet to Dun Laoghaire during July 23-25.



Button accordionist Mairtin O'Connor will lead his band at the Festival of World Cultures.

634-2286 or visit www.irishvillageusa.com), Greater Hartford Irish Music Festival in Glastonbury, Conn. (July 24), Dublin Irish Festival in Dublin, Ohio (Aug. 6-8), Milwaukee Irish Fest (marking its 30th anniversary, America's largest Irish festival takes place Aug. 19-22), and Kansas City Irish Fest (Sept. 3-5).

Festival of World Cultures
During July 23-25 in Dun

Laoghaire, a beautiful seaport about eight miles southeast of Dublin, Ireland, the 10th annual Festival of World Cultures will showcase more than 800 artists from 33 countries in 180 events over the 3 days. Sponsored by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, the festival has become one of the top multicultural attractions on the planet.

This year's lineup is its finest yet and includes Lunasa, the

Mairtin O'Connor Band, the Alan Kelly Quartet, Buille (led by concertinist Niall Vallely), the Unwanted (Cathy Jordan, Rick Epping, and Seamie O'Dowd), Guidewires, brothers Diarmaid and Donncha Moynihan, former Clannad member Pol Brennan, and Afro Celts lead vocalist Iarla O Lionaird.

For more information, visit www.festivalofworldcultures.com.

National

Continued from Page 20

The Carraig Irish Pub at Gaelic Park, 6119 W. 147th St., Oak Forest, presents Irish cultural events and entertainment throughout the week. Details, (708) 687-9323. or www.chicago.gaelicpark.org.

The Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox Ave., Chicago, offers Irish cultural events and entertainment. For details, (773) 282-7035 or www.irishamhc.com.

On Sunday evenings from 7-9, WCEV 1450 AM in Chicago broadcasts news and sports direct from Ireland also latest events and happenings at Gaelic Park. The program can be heard live over the internet on Sunday evenings at www.wcev1450.com. Details, (708) 687-9330.

MICHIGAN

The Crotty-Doran branch (Detroit-Windsor) of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann holds classes in language, music, and dance every Thursday night at the White Heather Club 150 Vester, Ferndale. Details, www.irishmusic.nu or (734) 420-0962.

Irish entertainment, featuring dance, ceili and tin whistle every weekend in the Gaelic League, 2068 Michigan Ave., Detroit. Details, (313) 963-8895.

The Crotty-Doran branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann holds classes in language, music and dance on Thursdays at the White Heather Club, 150 Vester, Ferndale. Details, (734) 420-0962.

OHIO

The Cleveland Irish Cultural Festival will be held July 23 thru July 25 at Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, Berea, Ohio. Featured entertainers, Maura O'Connell, John McDermott, Susan McCann, Scythian, Irish Sopranos, Tommy Fleming, Eileen Ivers, Cherish the Ladies, Seven Nations, Johnny McEvoy, New Barleycorn, Davy Arthur & Fionnuala Gill. Also Pipe Bands, Irish dancing, children's activities, food and exhibits. For info call 1 (800) 485-8013 or visit www.clevelandirish.org

The Cleveland Ceili Club holds set dance classes on Tuesdays, 7:30 pm, at St. Clarence Church Hall, Lorain Rd., North Olmsted. Info. (440) 356-2999

PENNSYLVANIA

Echoes of Erin is broadcast on Sundays from 12:30 pm to 2 pm over WEDO 810 AM, and later in the day at www.wedo810.com Hosted by Diane V. Byrnes. Details, (412) 781-6368.

MARYLAND

Reflections of Ireland on WHFC 91.1 FM, with host Ed McBride, is broadcast Sundays, 5-7 pm, and Mondays 4-6 pm, and also on the web at whfc911.org. Details, (410) 256-1010.

VIRGINIA

Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann hosts the Fairfax Ceili on the second Saturday of the month at 8 pm, at Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. Details, (301) 924-5460.

THE CAROLINAS

The Irish Society of Charlotte, founded in 1986. For info. please call Margaret Shannon, (704) 541-6665.

LAOH Charlotte LAOH in Charlotte Mecklenburg Co. Div. 1 meets third Wed. of month. Website, NCLAOH.com or (704) 554-0720.

The Sons of Erin Div. AOH, Charlotte, meet monthly on second Thursday of each month at K of C, Columbus Hall, 220 E. Kingston St. Details, (704) 942-6345.

GEORGIA

The Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta meets second Thursday of month, 7 pm, at Harp Irish Pub, Roswell. Info. (770) 640-0287 or www.irishatlanta.com.

FLORIDA

The Sons and Daughters of Erin hold monthly meetings the third Wednesday of month at 6:30 PM, at San Marco Parish Center. New members welcome. Details, (239) 394-0229.

The Friendly Sons and Daughters of Ireland meet at 7 pm on the third Tuesday of each month at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Ravenswood Lane, Port St. Lucie. Details, (772) 873-6615; email: portstlucieirish@aol.com

The Irish American Club of Central Florida meets second Sunday of month, 1:30 pm, at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Maitland. Details, (386) 668-0159.

LOUISIANA

Acadian Division AOH The Acadian Division of the AOH meets last Thursday of month at 6:30 pm, in meeting room at Lafayette Motors, 1515 Jefferson St., Lafayette. Details, (337) 856-9001.

TEXAS

For details of Irish events in the Texas area visit the Harp and Shamrock Society of Texas website, at www.harpandshamrock.org or email: Shamrockeditor@aol.com.

COLORADO

The Denver AOH meets second Wednesday of month in Denver Press Club. Details, (303) 439-0924.

ARIZONA

The Irish American Gaelic Society of Tucson meets third Sunday of month at VFW Post 549, 1884 S. Caycroft, Phoenix. Details, (520) 586-4513.

The Irish Foundation of Arizona meets first Wednesday of month, 7 pm, at Irish Cultural Center, 1106 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. Details, (602) 569-3539

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Irish Radio Show hosted by Pat Troy and Kathleen Molloy airs in the Washington DC area on Sundays from 10:30 am to Noon over www.wust1120.com. Featuring music, news and sports from Ireland.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City AOH is forming a division for men and women. Applicants must be Catholic, of Irish birth or descent and at least 18 years old. Details, Hal Cousins, (405) 677-3623.

WISCONSIN

The Milwaukee Irish Festival will be held August 19-22. Details, www.irishfest.com

CANADA

For a full schedule of events at St. Brigid's Centre for the Arts and Humanities, home of the National Irish Canadian Culture Centre, 310 St. Patrick St., Ottawa, visit www.SAINTBIRIGIDS.CA or call (613) 244-7373.

Vancouver Island's Celtic Festival 2010 will be held July 18-23. Details, (250) 758-0208 or www.celtfest.ca

Kevin Westley,
T.M.R.F.
The Irish D.J.
Wakes • Weddings • Birthdays
Christenings • Anniversaries
Irish Karaoke
Call (718) 631-2528
email: IrishDJKevin@msn.com

WILLIE LYNCH TRIO and SHOWBAND
The best in fun & music for all
908-534-6398
www.willielynchband.com
CD 1: Shamrock & The Rose
Double CD 2: Pub Stuff & Good Stuff

EILEEN FOGARTY
THE VERY BEST
formerly known as
the Good Clean Fun Showband
for bookings call Eileen
at: (914) 633-8747
www.thevbest.com

VICTOR CUNNEEN
MUSIC FOR ALL OCCASIONS
Parties and cocktail hours a speciality
(516) 248-9214

CONNOLLY STATION
RESTAURANT & BAR

280 Hempstead Ave., Malverne, L.I.
Exit 17 South off Southern State Pkwy
Tel. 516-887-5160
Sunday, July 11: 6 - 10 p.m.
Black Velvet Band
Music Sundays at Connolly's,
Starting at 6 pm
Restaurant Open 7 Days a Week
Serving Lunch and Dinner
Your Host Gerry "Moe" Hughes (Dublin)

Pig 'n' Whistle on 3rd
922 Third Avenue, NYC (Btwn 55th & 56th Sts)
Telephone: (212) 688-4646 - Established 1969 -
NYC's Best Irish Pub
Lunch and Dinner specials daily
Bar open until 4 A.M. - Kitchen until 3 A.M.
LIVE MUSIC: IRISH TRADITIONAL SESSION
EVERY SUNDAY FROM 6 P.M. - LATE!!
Join us for lunch & brunch every Saturday & Sunday
11:00 A.M. - 4 P.M. Served with a complimentary drink
Visit our website @ www.pignwhistleon3.com