



## Winnipeg Comhaltas Newsletter

Welcome to the May newsletter! In the interest of public health we are offering an important public service announcement.

<https://youtu.be/wVs5AyizwRM>

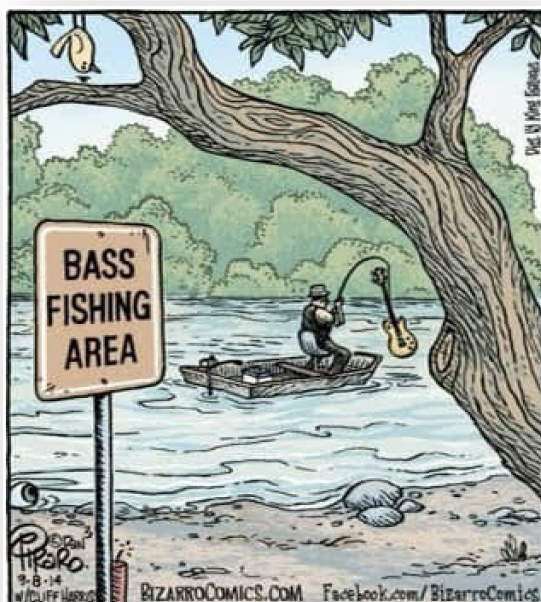
In the words of Adley Stump: "During the pandemic you may not leave the house for any reason unless of course you have a reason and then you may leave the house. All stores are closed except those that are open, and all stores must stay closed unless of course they need to stay open. This virus is deadly but don't be afraid of it. We should stay locked down until the virus stops infecting people. It will only stop infecting people if enough of us get infected. Stay home! I don't know how many more celebrities we need to have tell you how important it is to go outside and take care of your mental health." And finally a word from our Government: "No businesses will go down due to the Corona Virus except those businesses that go down due to Corona 19."

### Meet Our Members

### Randall Flower



Submitted by Virginia Lockett



Randall is an active member of our community, playing in sessions and volunteering at Folklorama. Here, in his own words, is a brief description of his adventures in Irish music.

In grade four or five I was overwhelmed by recorder practice and music theory. Worse than Phoenix. Later, in high school, a couple of friends got me doing some chords on the guitar which was tough but fun, and I learned lots of Gordon Lightfoot and Cat Stevens. That's about it for me, musically, other than I had a crush on Grace Slick. About six years ago I took in a workshop that Susan Hammer ran, for Irish drum, in the Exchange District. A quiet pivot in my life took place there. Susan let us know about the Irish Traditional activities in the city, and I actually went to Traicy's house where I met the slow session group, which was an amazing experience.

## Randall's Autobio

I attended every slow session (Tuesday's) I could. The musicians were very friendly, and I enjoyed taking in their musicianship, as well as seeing their instruments. Playing along with them helped me develop my skills on the bodhran. As time went on, I became interested in playing tunes, and the pennywhistle was the economically available choice, plus the pennywhistle sounded fabulous in the hands of the players I heard. It turned out that Susan was offering classes in it, and to this day I'm still hearing all kinds of fancy musical terms such as "arpeggios", "fifths" etc.

Sometime after taking lessons and meeting with fellow keeners, The Folklarama Festival asked for volunteers to play in the foyer, in between shows, while the audience checked out the hand crafts, trinkets and food. Even players of my caliber were welcomed to play, but I needed support, so I talked to my fellow whistle partner, Linda. Luckily, she was interested. Then suddenly, Johanna's harp and accordion were there as well. Soon, Wayne joined us with his mandolin, and then Mary-Ann joined in with her fiddle, bringing along her quick study talents. We all energized each other. The group created set-lists of tunes, practiced several times and performed for our allotted time. It was a fantastic experience. At one point we were actually told to play less loudly! And to this very day (you can say it in deep Grandalf tones), we still play together.

The Thursday night sessions have provided a larger circle to play in, and the slow session practices continue to take place in homes, parks and at the Irish Club. All of these activities have given the feeling that music is a sort of living organism of learning, playing and trying. That feeling of openness and encouragement is found all over this field of Irish music in Winnipeg. Randy, Mark, Ruth and Pam have given me little nods of "carry on" which I have appreciated in amongst my flounderings. Something Linda said about liking to sit by me, because she figured if she ever played an off note, people might think it was me, and not her: that's the comradery I'm taking about, and the group we formed during Folklarama time is the essence of all that. The group is a mixed bag of backgrounds and personalities. Lisa and Katy are important figures in the gang. Paul once referred to the group as "The Southenders."

As an adult learner I must say that these music gatherings, as well as the courses that have been offered, have all been very helpful. It's not easy to stick with the newness of learning music. Susan's passion for educating and helping is a pretty special generosity, which this brain sometimes resists, unnecessarily. Leaders in the community have come forward in various ways: Daniel and Traicy (who has provided her home), as well as music teachers in our community.

Music has taken us all over this city and beyond the perimeter: Johanna's home, Winnipeg Beach, city parks and especially Bensen Park. I've played 'the slides' in the Field Pub in Kyoto Japan, where I met an Irish concertina player, and an American violin player, both of whom had Japanese wives, which is why they were there. Irish music is surprisingly popular around the world. There are regular session nights in Kyoto and Tokyo, as well as celebrations, and competitions.

Here we are in Winnipeg, carrying along, learning new tunes, slowly, and practicing older ones. As other people have noted, music has enormous positive affects on our neurological systems, and nowadays scientists can make graphs and tracings of all manner of studies. In the words of philosopher Alan Watts, "**You don't listen to music just to hear the last note. You don't eat a meal just for the last bite. You don't just read the last page of a novel. You don't just watch the climax of a movie. The process – the ups, downs, challenges and triumphs – is what makes everything beautiful, worthwhile and fun. The same goes for life"**

**Plus, there is usually beer and cider present at sessions. Looking to the future I do muse. I hear that famous musicians get groupies, and I hope I'm not allergic in case that happens.**

## Covid Activities

Eric Borley is Comhaltas' resident photographer. He photographs Irish Fest and other major events, on a volunteer basis. Eric's photographs can be viewed on the Winnipeg Comhaltas Website, which he created.

<http://www.comhaltaswinnipeg.ca/>

During Covid, Eric has been developing his astronomy photography skills. Recently Eric took this professional-quality, highly detailed photograph of the moon.

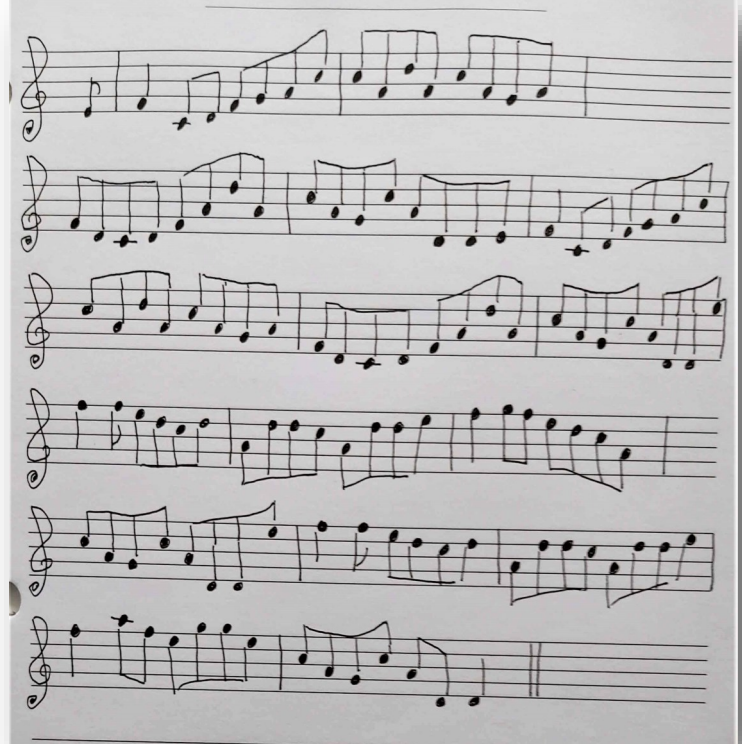


## Tune of the Month

Taught by **Martin Hayes**

<https://youtu.be/-1DZY8BV5Ok>

## *Martin Rochford's Reel*



### **From: CCE WINNIPEG IRISH MUSIC SCHOOL**

Despite the snowfall in Winnipeg Beach yesterday, it is Spring in Manitoba.

Vaccines are rolling out and starting to show results, inspiring optimism that we will be able to resume sessions, learning in classes and enjoying the craic together! In the meantime, here's links to some excellent videos.

Some I have sent before, but are worth reviewing. Using the "slow-down" function on YouTube allows us to carefully study and learn from great Irish musicians.

**Boston University:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/BurnsLibraryIMC/videos>

**Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (Altan):** <https://www.itma.ie/blog/saothar/mairead-ni-mhaonaigh>

**OAIM** Instructional videos and sessions to play along with: <https://www.youtube.com/c/irishmusicacademy/videos>

**BODHRAN TECHNIQUE:** <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2574A8E6A7F7064C>

**Standard vs DADGAD Guitar:** <https://youtu.be/oqbl7XiXqtY>

**DADGAD Guitar Instruction:** <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXeKkuE-o2H0EJQZkZfSXXFYb3GqqaL3a>

*Looking forward to a great Summer and Fall, full of Irish Music!*

*Susan & the CCEWIMS team*