

IRISH MUSIC TO THE FORE IN PENNSYLVANIA

The Penn-Mar Irish Festival in Pennsylvania takes place on Saturday 21st June. Mary Yeaple from the Festival tells Gráinne McCool what to expect from this year's very full day, of all things Irish music and culture.



Runa



Cassie and Maggie

Cas Ceol



Tartan Terrors

Mary: "This will be our 23rd annual festival and it continues to thrive due to our hard-working team of volunteers who are dedicated to celebrating Irish and Celtic culture."

Gráinne: "I believe the festival is at a new location this year?"

Mary: "We learned last year that our festival site would not be available going forward, and we hoped to stay in the same general vicinity since we have a wonderful hotel partner and were fortunate to find a new nearby home in a lovely rural setting. *Pheasant Run Greenhouse & Garden Centre* is providing a lot of possibilities for us. The festival will have a totally new layout this year, with an additional stage and a new cultural barn."

Gráinne: "Who do you have in the line-up to play this year's festival?"

Mary: "Our stages will have a nice mix of returning favourites and new crowd-pleasers. Returning are Cas Ceol, three south-central PA based women playing harp, fiddle, flute, and keyboard; Cassie and

Gráinne: "What is the key to the continued success of the festival?"

Mary: "It's all down to our dedicated committee operating in a fiscally prudent manner and with community support. We've been careful not to expand too quickly, and to keep the focus on being family-friendly and presenting high-quality entertainment."

Gráinne: "What can first-time visitors expect from the day?"

Mary: "They can expect to find a warm welcome and cheerful environment. We'll again have our giant colouring page for all ages to colour, a variety of photo op areas, and top-notch entertainment at great value. It's a wonderful way to spend a summer day. Although some seating is provided, we do encourage guests to bring chairs or blankets if they wish. Pets and smoking are prohibited."

Gráinne: "How important is Irish music and culture in Pennsylvania?"

Mary: "Irish music and culture is extremely important to continue sharing. An addition to this year's festival that we're very proud of is

"We're very proud to be presenting an exhibition: Blazing a Trail: The Lives and Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women..."

Maggie, two sisters from Nova Scotia with magnetic energy who seamlessly weave their deep Celtic heritage with contemporary influences; and Dublin native Enda Reilly, whose intricate guitar playing, vocal prowess, and cross-cultural sensibility brings the essence of Ireland to American audiences. Cassie and Maggie and Enda Reilly will both give cultural talks in addition to their musical performances.

"New to our stages are Albannach, a high-energy Scottish band with bagpipes, drums, and didgeridoo; The Diddley Idols, a super fun New York based duo with a full band sound; Runa, who combines traditional Irish tunes with folk and jazz; Clann Redmond, a York based family band playing Irish trad with fast fingers and youthful exuberance; and The Tartan Terrors, a wildly popular Canadian band who have travelled North America blending the energy of a rock show with humour and step dance. Susquehanna Pipes & Drums, McGinley School of Irish Dance, Ni Riain School of Irish Dance, and the Oh! Gills Irish Dancers will round out the day's entertainment.

"Thanks to a kind corporate sponsor, we are again able to present a variety of free children's activities to keep youngsters entertained throughout the day, including games and crafts, face painting, balloon twisting, jumbo bubbles, and more."

the "Blazing a Trail: The Lives and Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women", exhibit on loan to us courtesy of EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum. The Blazing a Trail exhibition highlights the lives and legacies of 21 Irish diaspora women in the fields of politics, humanitarianism, women's suffrage, the arts, the sciences, and sport. They represent just a fraction of the many women who made lasting contributions in their areas of work, but who have rarely received recognition."

Gráinne: "Why should folks travel to York County for the Penn-Mar festival this June?"

Mary: "York County, Pennsylvania, is a fantastic location for a weekend getaway that can be planned around our festival. In addition to an amazing festival, you'll find an award-winning history museum, dozens of larger-than-life colourful murals in Mural Park, state and county parks, historic trains, and so much more. Tourism info is available at www.YorkPA.org."

Discounted advance festival tickets are available online. Free for ages 15 and younger. Visit PennMarIrishFestival.com for more details.