

**Traditional Music** / By Daniel Neely

## Dervish's 'Thrush' is 12 tracks of pure class

For those who may not have known, this past week was Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann's big North American Provincial Convention in Bethesda, Md. I'm writing from the hotel as we speak and so far it's a lovely time. The place is awash in music and smiles abound – there are tons of sessions and workshops, there's an Irish film festival, a writers' roundtable, a presentation from the Library of Congress and nightly set dancing. If you're someone loves the music, it's a place to be. You can keep up with what's going on in the world of Comhaltas North America by visiting [ccnorthamerica.com](http://ccnorthamerica.com).

I drove down to the Conference from New York, and on the way I enjoyed a couple of great albums that's I've been digging for a few weeks now, and from what I've heard from the Conference-goers I've been chatting with, I'm not the only one.

The first is Dervish's just-released "Thrush in the Storm." A fantastic album from beginning to end, the album is 12 tracks of pure class. Dervish, of course, is Cathy Jordan, Brian McDonagh, Michael Holmes, Shane Mitchell, Liam Kelly and Tom Morrow, and they are a formidable group of players.

Part of what makes this album so satisfying is the way the band arranges their tune sets. They're masterful at mixing textures, tempos and rhythms, as do here on tracks like "Thrush in the Storm," "The Green Gowned Lass" and "The Harp and Shamrock." The songs also satisfy. Jordan is in fine voice throughout, and she gives us some outstanding



tracks, including "Handsome Polly-O," "Baba Chonraoi," and the dark but cautionary "Snoring Biddy."

Ultimately, "Thrush in the Storm" is full of lovely tracks and will delight trad music lovers – it's one for the collection. For more information, visit their website at

[www.dervish.ie](http://www.dervish.ie).

The other album I've been listening to is Mick O'Brien, Emer Mayock and Aoife Ní Bhriain's latest, "Tunes from the Goodman Manuscripts." Canon James Goodman was a clergyman in the Church of Ireland and was born in Kerry in 1828. He grew up playing

flute and uilleann pipes, and over his life he managed to preserve over 2,000 pieces of music in a series of manuscript books. (These manuscripts are held in the Trinity College Library.) The core of his collection is a group of 500 songs and tunes that circulated pre-1840 and

provide important insight into pre-Famine musical repertory and practice.

What O'Brien, Mayock and Ní Bhriain have done with this source material is remarkable. For starters, the album represents the brilliant realization of scholarly research. The musicologist in me loves to see manuscripts like this brought to life because they tell a great story of the past and speak well of the vitality of the Irish musical tradition. Listening in to these historical settings, we find that Goodman preserved some refreshing touches to well-worn tunes and saved a bunch of other tunes that are little known today.

But beyond being good research, it's just fantastic music. O'Brien is one of the greatest living pipers, and with Ní Bhriain, his daughter, on fiddle, and Mayock on flute and whistle, the three open an impressive and artful window on the past. They're not simply running through the changes, they're exploring the possibilities of these ancient tunes. Tracks like "An Seandúine ag Luasgadh an Chliabháin / ..." or "An Fhinne-Bhean Mhodhamhuil / ..." are (like the rest on the album) really well done and a pleasure to listen to.

Ultimately, this is a deeply interesting album that's a must for anyone with a curiosity about trad's deeper roots. Visit [www.emermayock.com](http://www.emermayock.com) for more information.

Finally: if you're planning on competing in the 2013 Mid Atlantic Region Fleadh, your entry forms and fees must reach the Fleadh secretary no later than April 17 to avoid the \$20 late fee.



### We built it!

Traditional musicians Donie Carroll and Christy McNamara teamed up to provide some of the entertainment at "We Built This City," the recent St. Patrick's celebration of New York City's Irish labor force hosted by NYC Department of Records Commissioner Eileen M. Flannelly.

PHOTO BY PETER McDERMOTT



### Language and resistance

Dr. Feagal Mac Ionnrachtaigh will talk about his book, "Language, Resistance and Revival - Republican prisoners and the Irish Language in the North of Ireland," which tells of events in Long Kesh prison between 1972 and 2000, at William Barnacle's Tavern, Theatre 80, 80 St. Mark's Place, New York City (<http://www.theatre80.net>) on Wednesday, April 24, at 7: 30 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Irish Echo. Belfast native Mac Ionnrachtaigh will also be a speaker at the Famine Tribunal at Fordham University on the previous weekend and will travel to Amherst (University of Massachusetts) where he will be hosted, from April 28-29, by visiting Professor Phil Scraton of Queen's University.