



# STUDY GUIDE



Abhann Productions

present

**Riverdance™**  
ON BROADWAY

Set Design

**ROBERT BALLAGH**

Lighting Design

**RUPERT MURRAY**

Costume Design

**JOAN BERGIN**

Sound Design

**MICHAEL O'GORMAN**

Orchestration

**BILL WHELAN, NICK INGMAN  
AND DAVID DOWNES**

Executive Producer

**JULIAN ERSKINE**

Press Representative

**MERLE FRIMARK ASSOCIATES**

Music and Lyrics

**BILL WHELAN**

Producer

**MOYA DOHERTY**

Director

**JOHN McCOLGAN**

# What is *Riverdance*™?



*"Where the river foams and surges to the sea  
Silver figures rise to find me. Wise and caring,  
Following the heart's cry."*

*- from Riverdance*

You're about to go on a journey — a journey through time, history, music, song and dance. Sometimes your journey will be peaceful and easy, other times, it'll be rough and bumpy, but it's always sure to be exhilarating. Along the way, you'll see some of the most exciting dance ever put on stage, and you'll listen to beautiful music. You'll learn how early people feared and worshiped the different elements like fire, water and the earth; you'll learn how people had to leave their loved ones in hard times. You'll explore how they always remembered the songs and dances of their homeland, and how they traded their knowledge with other peoples, making something exciting and new. You'll learn how dance can bring people together, and you'll discover how music can ease an aching heart. Your final stop? You'll never get there; it's the *journey*,

and what you learn along the way that counts most. Welcome to *Riverdance*!

*Riverdance* combines music, song and movement into a joyous mixture that will send educators and students dancing back to the classroom! A rich study in diversity, *Riverdance* explores Irish culture and how it helped to shape world culture. In deciding on the name of this new show, composer Bill Whelan compared Irish culture to a flow of mighty water: "It was based on the life of a river: quiet at source, it would interact with the land, feeding it and nourishing it, and rush out to sea..."

*Riverdance* is grounded in tradition, but it is not a history lesson. Rather, like the best art, *Riverdance* uses traditional forms to create new traditions, new ideas. Seamus O'Se writes that *Riverdance*, "has shown that innovation and imagination need not damage a living tradition, but can actually enhance it." This is the power of *Riverdance*, and its great attraction for young people: to understand the nature of culture and tradition in this quickly changing world, and then how to preserve and build on it.

By exploring how cultures change and interact, *Riverdance* can be a compelling way to show young people how to appreciate how we are similar and take joy in our differences and how we can learn from each other. In one particularly exciting scene, Irish step dancers square off against African American tap dancers; friendly competition leads to a greater appreciation of differences. Growing up in a nation of immigrants, American students will be fascinated with *Riverdance's* exploration of how cultures mix and interact.

*Riverdance* producer John McColgan writes, "There is a shared experience in all cultures, a common suffering of oppressed nations, and audiences tap into the truth." Let your students tap into that truth this season — at *Riverdance*!

LIFFEY RIVER, DUBLIN, PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD



# Culture

What is a culture? Throughout this guide, you'll see the word "culture" used in many different ways, so it's probably a good idea to lay out what we mean when we speak of a "culture." Webster's Dictionary defines "culture" as: "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations."

Whew! Let's try to make that a little easier to understand: an "integrated pattern" is how things fit together, in this case, "knowledge, beliefs and behaviors." So "culture" is everything we know, everything we believe, and everything we do. It's how our music, our dance, our songs, our poetry, our beliefs and our traditions all fit together. Fine so far. But there's more to that definition. It continues by

stating that culture depends on our "capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." Which means culture can't stay still; it changes the more we learn and experience. And that means we can "transmit" or give more to our children.

*Riverdance* is about the most exciting dancing you'll ever see; it features some of the most haunting, beautiful music you'll ever hear. But in a very real sense, *Riverdance* is about culture: how cultures grow, and how they expand outward to influence other cultures. When he was writing the music for *Riverdance*, composer Bill Whelan was inspired by Ireland's Liffey River, which originates in the Wicklow Mountains and runs through the Republic of Ireland's capital, Dublin, before emptying into the Irish Sea. He imagined that the river, like Irish dance, music and culture, flows out from its origins, touching many places and people before finally running out to the sea. At *Riverdance*, you'll be able to see how cultures flow together, and how they flow through you.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *Riverdance* Study Guide is broken into sections that will suggest to educators and students different ways to use *Riverdance* in their lesson plans. *Riverdance* explores many different themes - from dance and music of early history to the trials and joys of immigration, from how cultures preserve their traditions to how they interact and build for the future, from the simple joys of music to the exhilaration of dance. This study guide can easily be used to create an interdisciplinary curriculum with such varied subjects as English, Language Arts, Social Studies, History, Communications and, of course, Music, Dance and Theatre.



## STEPS

Whether it's the thundering beat of a jig or the graceful kicks of a reel, *Riverdance's* performers communicate their emotions through dance steps. The STEPS sections throughout this guide offer activities, ideas for research and discussion and interactive questions to enrich your experience at *Riverdance*. The STEPS sections are broken down into questions and activities for English/Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Dance/ Music/Theatre.

## RESOURCES

This section offers texts, recordings, web sites and other resources to help you further explore the themes of *Riverdance*. Start your journey on page 31!

# Map of IRELAND



## IRISH HISTORY TIMELINE

In many ways, *Riverdance* is about the relationship between all cultures, but it uses Irish culture as its launching point, the beginning of the river's journey. Ireland has had many connections, for good or bad, with other cultures throughout its long history.

### 2000 BC

First stone shelters and burial places are built, called "Megaliths." These are still seen today along the Irish fields and countryside.

### 700 BC

People known as the Celts come to the islands of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland from Northeast Europe. The Celts bring the advances of the Iron Age to Ireland. The Celts' artwork is known for its complex, spiral, intertwining designs, which are used as an inspiration for the sets and costumes of *Riverdance*.

### 150 BC

The Celts have become the dominant force on the island, and remain so for more than a thousand years. While later historians would call the people who inhabited the British Isles "Celts," these people who came to Ireland call themselves "Gaels." Their language, still spoken in Ireland today, is called Gaelic. They break Ireland into small kingdoms called "tuatha." The religion of the Celts is Druidism. The Druids, scholar-priests, serve as advisors to the head of the tuatha. Leaders of tuatha are very independent; alliances were rare at this time.

## CREATING *Riverdance*™

*"We begin with a lonely band of musicians  
on a big empty stage..."*

*"From a point of darkness..."*

*enter row upon row of hard-shoe Irish dancers  
and they pound their way downstage  
towards audience and camera..."*

With these notes, producer Moya Doherty began the creation of *Riverdance*. The show would become a worldwide sensation and eventually change the way we see dance and theatre. *Riverdance* is a breathless, brilliant and life-affirming musical, bringing 80 dancers, singers and musicians together on one stage in a spectacular celebration of Irish music, song and dance.

*Riverdance* began as an intermission act in the Eurovision Song contest in 1994. Seen by nearly 300 million viewers, the seven-minute presentation of wild and passionate Irish step dancing was so popular that the creators decided to expand it into a larger show. The result was a full production at Dublin's Point Theatre in 1995, which began *Riverdance's* journey around the world. Propelled by Bill Whelan's original music, *Riverdance* mixes traditional Irish culture with the music and dancing of other peoples and societies, so Irish dancers reel on the same stage with African American tap dancers, Russian folk ballet dancers, and a Spanish flamenco dancer.

From its birth at Dublin's Point Theatre, to London's West End, three international touring productions, then on to New York's Radio City Music Hall, and even the David Letterman Show, *Riverdance* has thrilled and moved audiences all over the world. *Riverdance* breaks down the barriers between countries, languages and cultures. As director John McColgan says, "We wanted to open up the new vision of Irish dance, to have it share a stage with other world dancing. We dreamed that, by doing so, these dances would mingle and spark off each other so as to create a performance with its own identity. It would be a performance rooted in the folk memory and arts of the Irish people, yet fresh, unique and exciting, and accessible to people everywhere."



# Meet some of the creators of *Riverdance*™

The famous lyricist Oscar Hammerstein III said that the most important word in the theatre is "collaboration." To put on any show, especially one with the size and scope of *Riverdance*, takes many people with different skills, all working together to bring the show to you, the audience. On stage, you see the brilliant dancers and the wonderful musicians. But hundreds of people work behind the scenes to make the show run smoothly. Let us introduce you to some of them —



## BILL WHELAN — COMPOSER



Bill Whelan has written a number of orchestral suites including *The Seville Suite*, the centerpiece of Ireland's national day celebration at Expo '92 in Spain. Whelan's recent CD release, *The Roots of Riverdance* chronicles the musical history and cultural influences which inspired him to write the acclaimed *Riverdance*. His work in international feature films varies widely, from co-composing *Lamb*, starring Liam Neeson, with Van Morrison, to his emotive score for the Jim Sheridan/Terry George film *Some Mother's Son*. Bill composed the original score for the film version of Brian Friel's award-winning *Dancing at Lughnasa*, which starred Meryl Streep. *Riverdance* was com-

posed for the interval act of Eurovision '94. The album of Bill Whelan's music from *Riverdance The Show* has been a huge chart success, reaching double Platinum status in Ireland, the U.S. and Australia, and debuting at No 1 on the Billboard World Music Charts on its release in the USA. Bill Whelan is the winner of the 1997 Grammy Award for "Best Musical Show Album" for the *Riverdance* CD.

### *How did Riverdance begin?*

The difficulty with *Riverdance* is finding out exactly when it all began! Moya Doherty, who is now the producer of *Riverdance*, commissioned me to write the short 7-minute piece for the Eurovision Song Contest. Her brief to me was to write a piece of music that would be a celebration of Irish music and dance. That year, the Eurovision Song contest was in Dublin, and the theatre was beside the River Liffey, the Dublin River. Moya asked me to write something about the river. So I wrote a piece which traced the life of the river from its early beginnings, which I did with the invocation sung by the choir at the start of *Riverdance*. They sing, "Hear my cry and my hungry search for you. Taste my breath on the wind." Which was really supposed to be rain falling on the river, into the source of the river. Then the river springs into life, and rushes down through the land. I tried to have that sense of a movement in the piece, from an early, quiet almost somber beginning, to the final rush of the river out to the sea.

### *Can you describe how you combined traditional and modern sounds to create the music of Riverdance?*

When it's played in its purest form, Irish traditional music is really meant to be played unaccompanied. Only the melody is expected, played on fiddle, or whistles, or the uilleann pipes. The most accompaniment that one could expect would be a drum. So I gave the music a more contemporary feel by interposing the excitement and energy of percussion, drums, guitar, electric keyboards on tunes usually played by traditional instruments. Also, harmonic accompaniment, writing chords for traditional tunes, is usually not done. It does leave us open to criticism from the purists, but my belief is that the music evolves, and each generation brings something new to Irish traditional music. I felt that I had to use the kind of mechanisms and

350-405 A.D.

During the 300s, many chiefs begin to expand their power. There is much fighting and no clear leader until 380 A.D., when Niall of the Nine Hostages becomes the accepted first king of Ireland. During his reign, Niall leads his warriors on many raiding trips into Great Britain and Europe.

432 A.D.

St. Patrick (389-461) comes to Ireland from England to convert people to Christianity. Patrick had been born in Wales. As a teenager, he was captured by Irish raiders and made a slave in Ireland. In 411, he escaped and fled back to England. He studied religion in Gaul (France), became a priest and later a bishop. In 432, he returns to Ireland, determined to convert people to Christianity (during this time, the only form of Christianity was Catholicism). He has great success; within a few decades, most of Ireland's population is converted. A system of monasteries, or isolated places of study for monks and priests, is created throughout Ireland. The Druids had passed down knowledge orally, but with these new monasteries, the written word becomes powerful in Ireland. They become centers of learning for Ireland and the West. These became centers of learning and the recording of history. So while the rest of Europe was going through what later became known as "The Dark Ages," Ireland is having an era of increased learning and respect for knowledge. St. Patrick later becomes Ireland's patron saint, and his holy day, March 17th, becomes the national day.



*"That is really what a composer of music for theatre and dance has to do: to be a storyteller."*



techniques I am familiar with as someone who grew up listening to rock and roll!

***You made the decision to bring the musicians up on stage. Why?***

This comes from a personal experience. I began my music career as a theatre musician, so I knew what went on in the pit. Most of my colleagues were highly evolved musicians, but they rarely had the opportunity to engage with the audience. So one of the things I wanted as we designed the

show was that my musicians should be seen! I wanted them to not suffer from the things I had seen so often as a pit musician — that remoteness from the audience and the inevitable boredom that arrives from playing the same music every night and not having that intimacy with the people who are receiving the music. I wanted the musicians to develop a relationship with the audience.

***Composing for dance — how is it different from composing just for the sake of the music?***

Well, Irish dance was never seen as a theatrical dance. It was something done in kitchens, in taverns, on crossroads, it was never done on a large stage, meant to move an audience. Irish dance had not arrived at that stage. And if *Riverdance* has done one thing, it has taken the development that had been ongoing in Irish music for many years, and suddenly brought the dance up to date with its whole presentation in a theatrical way.

**795 AD**

**Vikings from Norway and Denmark invade Ireland in great numbers. For a period of 150 years, the Vikings are a major presence in Ireland, destroying many churches and monasteries. They founded such cities as Dublin, Wexford, Cork and Limerick.**

**1002 AD**

**Finally, an alliance between Irish leaders — two brothers, Mahon and Brian Boru, and Malachy — comes together to defeat the Vikings. After many battles, and more in-fighting between allies, Brian Boru becomes the King of Ireland in 1002. He founded many churches, rebuilt towns and bridges. He is king until 1014, when he is killed at the Battle of Clontarf, although the battle was a great defeat for the Vikings. Malachy becomes the king until 1022, after which several others become king, but never with full support.**





In terms of writing for dance, I tried to come up with internal rhythms that would be interesting to dance to. While holding on to the basic forms of traditional Irish dance, I also tried to mix in some interesting, modern rhythms, because I felt that that would change the nature of the dance in some way. Irish dance is principally in  $\frac{6}{8}$  or  $\frac{12}{8}$  time, but I mixed in rhythms not natural to Irish dance. While this did give the choreographers some trouble in the beginning, it was deliberate since it did push the dance forward.

The music had to have theatricality to it: it had to have build, it had to have dynamics, to present moments in a theatrical way. That is really what a composer of music for theatre and dance has to do: to be a storyteller.

### ***What do you think young people can take away from Riverdance?***

There's a tremendous amount of truth in traditional music forms and dance forms: they help you to see both where you come from and where other nations come from. When you strip back a lot of what surrounds those "national" characteristics and look into the heart of the music and the heart of the dance, I think what young people will find is that there is very little that really separates nations. Everyone's concerns are the simple concerns of living, of loving, of eating and sleeping and having a spiritual life. It's when you start to wear your nationality as a weapon that you stop being a person of the world. What young people can look for in *Riverdance* are common points that people are actually connected by rather than divided by.



### **JOHN MCCOLGAN — DIRECTOR**



A former Controller of Programs at TVAM, London and former Head of Entertainment in RTE, John is a television production executive with an international track record. He is now a Director of Tyrone Productions, a leading independent television and film production company. He is also Chairman of the national radio station, Today FM and a director of the Abbey Theatre. While committed to the television industry, John has always maintained a great love and respect for the theatre and has produced documentary tributes to some of Ireland's greatest living actors. In 1994 he produced and directed *Templewood*, a highly successful murder mystery drama series.

***You are the director of the show, but you were also very involved with the creation of the show. When did you first know that Riverdance was unique?***

It really started when I produced a show that featured two Irish dancers, which was called Mayo 5000. Moya, my wife and a television producer, and I had talked loosely about doing a show based on Irish dance and its influence on other dancing throughout the world. And within a month, she was asked to produce the Eurovision Song Contest. Moya decided to do something that hadn't happened in Irish dance which was to have sort of a Busby Berkley style chorus line of 30 dancers in hard shoes, and to take them from the very old-



**1066 AD**

**The Normans, an off-shoot of the Vikings who had, during the 9th and 10th centuries, established power in Normandy, a region of France, invade and defeat English forces. The Norman leader, William the Conqueror, becomes King of England as William I. The Norman Empire expanded over several decades, until Henry II, great grandson of William I, became king in 1154. Henry wants to make Ireland part of his empire.**

**1169 AD**

**The Norman conquest of Ireland begins. Remember that the Irish chiefs were not unified after Brian Boru's death, so the Normans easily took over.**

**1172 AD**

**The Normans create many cities throughout Ireland, although in the North and West, Irish chiefs keep their territories. In 1172, Henry II of England is proclaimed the feudal lord of Ireland.**





fashioned Irish dance costumes, the green velvet embroidery and so on, and to get them in black short skirts and modern costumes. She wanted to do something that would say something very modern, and bring Irish dance to a new level.

On the night of that show, at the Point Theatre in Dublin, there were 4000 delegates from all over Europe, from Germany and France, etc. and when this entertainment piece came on, the entire audience of these multi-cultural people jumped to their feet as of one, and cheered and stamped their feet. Now I had been in the television business for 30 years and I had never seen anything like that. We knew right away that you didn't need to be Irish to enjoy Irish dance.

### ***Describe expanding Riverdance into a larger show —***

Bill Whelan, the composer, Moya and I had very involved meetings dealing with what we wanted to hear on stage and what we wanted to see on stage, how we would tell this story. And from those series of meetings, a running order evolved, describing what we would like to see in each scene to make a coherent two-part theatrical production. From that perspective we went to auditions where we put our cast together. The composer would play us the music, and we would discuss it, adapting it, changing it. When we got into the early stage of rehearsals, some of the principal dancers would also work with the music

before it was finally set. Dancers need to have input on rhythms and tempos. It's a process of evolution with input from the producer, the composer, the director and the dancers.

### ***It sounds like a real collaboration —***

It is. In Dublin we had four different rehearsal halls going on at the same time. The Russians were rehearsing in one, the African-American tap dancers in another, the Spanish dancers in another! Then, ten days before we opened, all the elements were brought together in a large rehearsal room. When we had our first rough run-through in the order they were to appear in the show, there was a real sense of excitement. It was the first time that all the artists had an opportunity to see the level of talent we had assembled and what this show could really be like. That was a really memorable day. We knew we had something special.

### ***Why was the decision made to include the dances and music of other cultures in Riverdance?***

We wanted Irish dancing to be seen on the world stage. People were familiar with Russian ballet or Spanish flamenco, but before *Riverdance*, Irish dancing was not as recognizable. Also, we had a theory that Irish dancing was one of the older forms of folk dancing in the world and with the Irish immigration, the dancing influenced and was influenced by other cultures over hundreds of years. We focused on the commonality of dance and the commonality of rhythm — how all forms of folk-dance take from each other and give to each other. In the finale of our production, all the different nations come together.

### ***What can young people take from Riverdance?***

People ask me why the show has this impact. One of the reasons I give is that all of our performers come from a deep-rooted tradition and they present their nation's music and the folk dance with pride and dignity. When you have 40 dancers in hard shoes starting at the back of the stage moving to the front with this very percussive music, people get very emotionally involved and moved. We encourage our performers to remember who you are, what you are and what you represent, and to represent your culture, your skills, your craft with pride and dignity.

#### ***1189 A.D.***

Henry II dies, and his son Richard the Lionhearted becomes King for a short time. In 1190, Richard's brother, John, is made Lord of Ireland.

#### ***1199 A.D.***

John I becomes King of England. The Norman/English introduce their system of laws, their money system, and their jury system, to Ireland. But Gaelic culture was very strong. Although they were better equipped, Normans were outnumbered by the Irish, and through cultural assimilation and well-placed military battles, the Gaelic lords slowly, over the next two centuries, took back much of the island. This is known as the "Gaelic Resurgence." Assimilation is how people blend in with a country's culture, losing some aspects of their former traditions and taking up the customs of their new home.

*“We focused on the commonality of dance  
and the commonality of rhythm —  
how all forms of folk-dance  
take from each other  
and give to each other.”*



## JOAN BERGIN — COSTUMES



Joan Bergin is one of Ireland's best known film costume designers working at home and abroad. Her film credits include *My Left Foot*, *In the Name of the Father* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. She began her career in Theatre and Architectural

Design winning awards in both areas. Last seen on Broadway with Brian Friel's *Translations* starring Brian Dennehy, she was back at Lincoln Center for their Friel season. Her work can be seen in *David Copperfield*, a four part series for Hallmark Classics starring Sally Field and Michael Richards of *Seinfeld* fame, and also *An Everlasting Piece*, filmed at the end of '99 in Ireland, North and South.

### ***How did you conceive of the costumes for Riverdance?***

I was looking at the show and it suddenly occurred to me that one would wonder where this whole concept of Irish dancing came from, to tell where we came from as a nation. So we start in a Celtic look, then when they go to America, we're in longer dresses and petticoats, and then, in the finale, we're in a very Celtic Irish modern look.

### ***What is a “Celtic look”?***

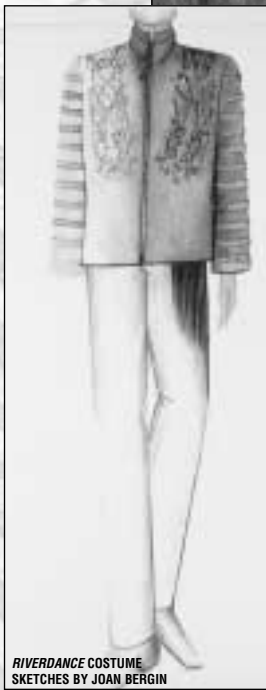
One of the things about the Celts is that they used these wonderful colors, they dyed everything with berries and grasses and parts of trees. They favored these very rich oranges and wonderful green-blues like the sea, which also, they claim, matched their eye color. So I have started off with the singers wearing these kind of clothes, which suggest that they stepped out of a mist, because the set has this very strong indication of rocks and stones, and that these were the people who peopled that land many, many years ago. The dancers start in this very strong orange, with embroidered Celtic gold emblems on it, because the Celts were masters of gold.



1366 A.D

Afraid of the influence of the Gaelic culture, the English Crown creates the Statutes of Kilkenny. These Statutes tried to stop assimilation by outlawing Normans in Ireland from speaking Gaelic, dressing as the Gaelics did, or marrying Gaelics. But Gaelic culture was too strong; the statutes were not enforced for another 128 years!





1509 AD

Henry VIII becomes King of England.

1533 AD

The Protestant Reformation comes to England when, in an attempt to ease his marital difficulties, Henry VIII breaks away from the Catholic Church and sets up the Church of England with himself as the head. Henry joins others throughout Europe who are leaving the Catholic Church, creating religions of protest (or "Protestant" religions) against what had been the established religion for centuries. Now Ireland, which had always been a strongly Catholic country, is suddenly under Protestant rule.

1537 AD

The Irish Parliament, under the control of Henry VIII's government, declares that the Church of England (called the "Anglican Church") is the official religion of Ireland.

## ***Describe how you design costumes for dancers —***

One of the most interesting and difficult things to design for dancers is that however great your ideas are, they are no good unless the dancers can move comfortably in the clothes! You have to be so careful that they are fabrics that are light, with some stretch in them, so their movement is fluid. You have to make the dancers look as lithe and as fit as possible. Dancers are always complaining that they work so hard to keep their bodies fit — they're always looking for something that will show off their bodies to the best possible advantage.

## ***I imagine there is a great deal of wear and tear on these costumes —***

Absolutely, the strain with dancing, particularly in *Riverdance*, because they are just pounding the floor. There are just *buckets* of perspiration pouring off the dancers every night! So it all has to be fabric that washes easily, that won't make them feel too hot and clammy. It all has to be very comfortable to wear.

## ***The show does explore other cultures through their music and dance. How do you show this in the costumes?***

I have tried to find a link between the cultures, and it has been fascinating, because I have found symbols in Spanish, Russian, and even in early African-American art, and I'm using these symbols to link them all. And often the symbol has to do with the sun, the circle, and around this circle are different shapes interpreted through the different cultures. And I'm putting a little of this into everybody's clothes, to show that although they were different, early man worshipped the earth and sun and water, no matter where they came from.

*"There are just buckets of perspiration pouring off the dancers every night!"*



## **CAROL LEAVY JOYCE — IRISH DANCE COORDINATOR**



Carol joined *Riverdance* from a career in sales and marketing. She started her dancing career when she was four years old and continued competing until she was 21, when she won the Senior Ladies' World Title. She qualified as a teacher of Irish Dance in 1990 and has conducted dance workshops all over the world. Carol was the subject of a BBC Northern Ireland documentary entitled *World At Your Feet*.

## ***How did you start working with Riverdance?***

I started in September, 1996. At that point they were just starting their second company, and they needed a dance captain. I was dance captain for that company until January, 1998. After that I came back home and I was dance coordinator until July of 1999, when I became Irish Dance Coordinator for the show.

## ***What's a dance captain?***

The duties of a dance captain are rehearsing and training the dancers, and the constant upkeep of the standard of the show. A dance captain is literally, on a day-to-day basis, rehearsing all the time with the dancers.



### ***And how is that different from your job now?***

Well, my job now deals with all of that and a little bit more. My role starts with auditioning, then holding workshops with people from auditions to see how well they do. Then they come on board in what we call a flying squad team. We have one flying squad team in Ireland and one in North America. Then when places become available in the different companies of *Riverdance*, they fly out and take those places. I'm also very involved with the general well-being of the dancers in the show. I try to be the link between the companies and our doctors in Dublin.

### ***What is a day like for one of the dancers in Riverdance – they look like they're having such a good time up there, but the way you describe it, it seems like constant work!***

A typical dancer would get up in the morning, have some breakfast, then some will go for a swim, some will go to the gym. Then so many afternoons in the week, you might have a rehearsal, going through the different steps. In most companies, twice a week you'd have a body control class, which is a really deep stretching class. Now that has nothing to do with the actual performance on stage, but everything to do with the well-being of the dancer. Then they might go have a massage, and before you know it, it's time to go to the theatre for the performance that evening. Then they go through troop checks, which is literally going through the rotations, making sure everybody knows where they're going. Then it's into make-up and hair, then into warm-ups again. So by the time you see them at 8 o'clock, no wonder they're in tip-top shape!

### ***They really are like athletes, aren't they?***

Yes, they have become athletes, because they are expecting their bodies to do eight performances a week, week in week out, year in year out.

### ***What would you advise for young people who would be interested in Irish dancing in America?***

Irish dancing has always been very strong in America and has really grown since *Riverdance* started. Usually Irish dancing in America was confined to people with Irish roots, but now *Riverdance* has made people more aware of it. Throughout America there are people who teach Irish dance. Many towns and cities in America have a Comhaltas Center, which is an

**1509 A.D.**

**Henry VIII becomes King of England.**

**1533 A.D.**

**The Protestant Reformation comes to England when, in an attempt to ease his marital difficulties, Henry VIII breaks away from the Catholic Church and sets up the Church of England with himself as the head. Henry joins others throughout Europe who are leaving the Catholic Church, creating religions of protest (or "Protestant" religions) against what had been the established religion for centuries. Now Ireland, which had always been a strongly Catholic country, is suddenly under Protestant rule.**

**1537 A.D.**

**The Irish Parliament, under the control of Henry VIII's government, declares that the Church of England (called the "Anglican Church") is the official religion of Ireland.**

**1541 A.D.**

**Henry VIII of England proclaims himself King of Ireland. He outlaws all Catholic monasteries.**

**1547–1553 A.D.**

**Reign of Henry's son, Edward VI. He makes Protestantism the official religion of Ireland. People who protested this had their land taken away and given to English Protestants.**

**1553–1558 A.D.**

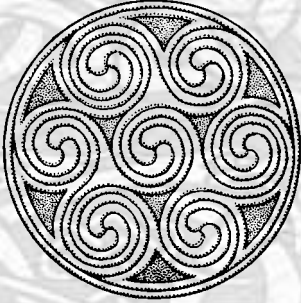
**Reign of Mary I, Edward's half-sister. Mary is a Catholic, who tries to make Catholicism the religion of Ireland again.**

**1558 A.D.**

**Beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I, Henry VIII's daughter. She re-**



establishes the Anglican religion in Ireland. Although relatively tolerant in the area of religion, she retaliates harshly against Irish lords who might be against her. Many see Elizabeth's reign as the beginning of complete British control of Ireland. She reigns over England and Ireland until 1603.



Irish center, which can find a teacher for you. Or you can contact me through the *Riverdance* Web Site. I'm a teacher as well as Irish dance coordinator, and I'd be glad to help!

*"So by the time you see them at 8 o'clock,  
no wonder they're in tip-top shape!"*



## ROBERT BALLAGH — SET DESIGNER



Robert Ballagh is one of Ireland's foremost painters and designers. He has also designed over 60 Irish stamps and the current Irish bank notes. He is involved in the thick of political and social debate, frequently on issues related to the North of Ireland — particularly the search for justice and peace. He is a member of Aosdana (a fellowship of eminent Irish artists), a fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, Honorary President of the International Association of Art (a UNESCO affiliate), the current Chairman of the Irish National Congress and a shareholder of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin



THE SET OF RIVERDANCE

### *Talk about working on Riverdance from the beginning —*

It was very exciting at the beginning, because one of the design features of the show was that the scene changes should be done through projections, so my task right at the beginning was to paint projected images. But at this stage hardly any of the music had been written. So I would have a meeting with Moya and Bill Whelan and John McColgan, and we'd talk about what it would be when it was actually written and choreographed. The deadlines were very tight, and we were working up until the opening at the Point Theatre in Dublin. I was in my studio, and a messenger would arrive with a cassette from Bill Whelan of the latest number, and I'd listen, and I'd say, "Hmmm, that sounds a bit BLUE, or that chord sounds a bit GREEN..."

Sometimes I got it right and sometimes I got it wrong. All the projected images are actually hand-painted oil paintings. I suppose I made up to 50 or 60 oil paintings for *Riverdance*, which we project in the course of the show to create different moods for the different dances.

### *Talk a little bit about the challenges of making a set for a dance piece like Riverdance.*

My main focus was to keep the performance area almost entirely free from clutter or any stage architec-



THE SET OF RIVERDANCE

PHOTO OF NEWGRANGE, COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD





DETAIL OF NEWGRANGE ENTRANCE, PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD



DETAIL OF NEWGRANGE INTERIOR, PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD

ture at all. Particularly the big numbers in *Riverdance* — there's so many of them — there's just no room for any scenery. So that kind of reinforced the decision to use projected images, because by doing that we left a lot of the space free for dance.

### ***What were some of your sources for the set in Riverdance?***

Right from the start of my involvement, one of the sources I drew on was the Megalithic Passage Tombs in Ireland, like the famous site in Newgrange. We tried to echo the decoration in these graves — these spiral decorations that they cut into the stone. They used what was called a corbeling architecture, in which you place slanted stones one on top of the other until you create an enclosure. So that's why in *Riverdance*, all the sets have this slanted edge to them. These were built before the pyramids, a thousand years before Stonehenge. So in one sense it was very primitive but, in the other, it was very sophisticated.

One of the interesting things I just read in the paper yesterday was that these passage graves were aligned so that they would be in line with the sun, and they are created in such a way so that the first beam of light from the sun on the Winter Solstice will come through a hole over the entrance, and the beam of light goes up through the narrow passage and illuminates the central chamber. This only happens once a year, for only literally a few minutes.

The first time the female lead dances with the female troupe, she does a sequence on the steps, and a Celtic pattern builds behind her, and the completed image recreates the image at the base of the Ardagh Chalice. That's a famous piece of Celtic gold and silver work which is in the National Museum in Dublin. The fascinating thing about it is that the image behind the dancer, which is about 20 feet across — it's an extraordinarily complicated design, is in fact only about an inch across on the chalice!

When you think about it, our Neolithic ancestors five thousand years ago were very sophisticated. One of the things we've wanted to touch on is the inherent spirituality in Celtic beliefs.

1607 A.D

**"Flight of the Earls." From fear of Elizabeth's aggression, many Irish leaders secretly leave Ireland on one night, and never came back. Now there is no more Gaelic leadership in Ireland; English forces rule over all.**

1609 A.D

**The "Plantation System" begins in Ireland, in which most of the land in Ireland is seized from native Irish people (mostly**







Catholics) and given over to new-comers (mostly Protestants). In many cases, native Irish are allowed to stay on the lands, but have to pay high rents to English landlords. Many of the native Irish population become wretchedly poor. Catholics have no legal or religious rights.

1641 AD

In response to crushing policies of the Plantations, Sir Phelim O'Neill, an Irish lord, leads a rebellion against English settlers. This conflict lasts for several years, but was eventually quashed in 1649 by Oliver Cromwell.

1649 AD

Cromwell comes to Ireland with 20,000 troops, savagely quelling the rebellion. Even more land is taken from the Catholics. Cromwell had led the Civil War against Charles I of England, which ended in Charles being beheaded. The Cromwell Era in Ireland, from 1649 to 1660 is especially hard on Catholics, as Cromwell was a Puritan who hated the Catholic religion. This is a terribly repressive time against Catholics.



"I was in my studio, and a messenger would arrive with a cassette from 'Bill Whelan of the latest number, and I'd listen, and I'd say, 'Hmmm, that sounds a bit BLUE, or that chord sounds a bit GREEN...'"



## JULIAN ERSKINE—EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



*"If you have something that you love to do, and do well, you should strive to keep doing it, because there's nothing more rewarding."*

Born in Dublin, Julian has worked in the entertainment business since 1970. Prior to *Riverdance*, he has already worked extensively in North America and Australia, as well as Europe. As a freelance executive producer he produced several major revivals of classic Irish plays, all of which were box office sell-outs in Dublin and abroad. He was event coordinator for the 1995 Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin, having started working on *Riverdance — The Show* shortly after the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest.

### *Can you describe your job?*

My role is the day-to-day producing of the show. We're touring all the time. We're looking for places to perform all the time; we're looking for hotels, we're looking for transportation. It's all logistics. We're trying to keep a cast together, trying to keep a crew together. We have over 100 hundred people in each company, and we have 3 companies touring the world now so, every weekend, we have over 300 people on the move all around the world!

### *It sounds like trying to run an army!*

Yes, we work with maps of the world on the wall, to work out who goes where. Not only are we moving the three companies independently, we often move performers from one company to another. We have illnesses; we have injuries. Suddenly we might have to move a tap-dancer from Hong Kong to Tucson, Arizona. Or we might have to move a Russian dancer from Florida to London!

And apart from moving people, we're also moving a huge amount of equipment. We have 11 forty-foot trucks with each production. Last winter on the way from Chicago to Minneapolis, we had two trucks slide off the road into the snow. We ended up having to get cranes to lift them back onto the road, but we ended up starting the show on time. We didn't skip a beat!

### *There seems to be a real feeling of collaboration, of family, within the company —*

That's part of our job — to keep it as a family, but to keep it a well ordered family. It needs to run smoothly, it needs cooperation, it needs everyone pulling together, from the performers, the crew, to the people in my office. Here in Dublin, as the "parents," we try to keep the three companies running as elements of the same family. Of course, there's sometimes competition between them — that's sometimes healthy — but we would never have a favorite "child"!

### *What do you think young people can take away from Riverdance?*

For the Irish dancers, this is a phenomenal thing that has happened. I mean, for years and years, Irish dancing was practiced as a competitive hobby. Now, they are able to do what they love professionally, and to audiences all over the world! They're representing themselves, they're representing Ireland, but they're also representing their traditions, and the thing they love doing. And I suppose that's the lesson for young people: if you have something that you love to do, and do well, you should strive to keep doing it, because there's nothing more rewarding.

# Irish HISTORY

*"Out of the dark we came Out of the sea  
Where the long wave broke on the shore  
As the day broke And the night rolled back  
There we stood in the land we would call home."  
- from 'Riverdance*

In his book "A Singular Country," J.P. Donleavy calls Ireland a land where "The dead are forever living and which is at once magical, illogical and mysterious and infuriating — a land that is mostly, and perhaps always will remain, a condition of the mind, in which dreams can be your only reality." This section will take you through Irish history, from the misty land of the Celts to the turbulent present. As you read about Irish history, think about the connections between a country's history and its culture. How do they support and affect each other?

Ireland is a large island in Northwestern Europe in the area near Great Britain. As you can see on the map on page 3, Ireland is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on three sides, and the Irish Sea on the east side. Over the centuries, Ireland has suffered several invasions from different countries that have changed its history.

You may have heard Ireland called the "Emerald Isle," and certainly you have heard of the tradition of wearing green on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, Ireland's national day. Ireland's mild and moist climate has created a lush and green land dominated by plains, fields and farmland. The shamrock, or clover leaf with 3 leaves (or 4 if you're lucky!) has become the national symbol of Ireland. You'll see later in this guide that when farming was threatened, Ireland was shaken to its core.

The island of Ireland is broken into two different countries. The northeastern part of Ireland, called Northern Ireland, is still united with Britain. Its capital is Belfast. The rest of Ireland, called the Republic of Ireland, has been independent of Britain since 1921. Its capital is Dublin. The Republic of Ireland takes up  $\frac{5}{6}$  of the entire island, with Northern Ireland taking up the last  $\frac{1}{6}$ .

Today, the population of the island of Ireland is about 5 million people. Gaelic is the official language of the Republic of Ireland, and is taught to all children in school, but English is used on a day-to-day basis.

As mentioned, the island of Ireland is split into two different entities. Political philosophies in Ireland are broken into two cultures, which are also called traditions or identities. Unionists are those who appreciate Ireland's ties to Britain, who appreciate the "union" between the two countries. Nationalists are those who think Ireland should be a wholly autonomous country, cutting all ties to Britain.

These two ways of thinking dominate much of Irish history. The clashes between these two philosophies boil down to conflicts over land and power, but the fact that most Unionists are Protestant and most Nationalists are Catholic has created religious prejudice that has clouded negotiations for years.

*But what does this have to do with dancing?* Everything. Because a culture does not spring out of thin air; it is created by a country's history, just as you help to create your culture every day.



1658 A.D.

**Oliver Cromwell dies. Without a strong leader, the Puritans compromise with those in England who want the royalty back.**

1660 A.D.

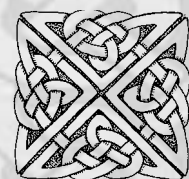
**"The Restoration." The Monarchy in England is restored, but without as much power as before. Charles II, Charles I's son, returns and becomes King.**

1684 A.D.

**Charles II's brother, James II becomes King. James, a Catholic, gives more civil rights to Catholics, and begins to build up an army of Catholics in Ireland. Some English nobles ask James II's granddaughter, Mary and her Protestant husband William of Orange to take the throne.**

1688 A.D.

**William invades England with his forces, and James II flees**





without battle. William and Mary become the heads of England and Ireland. The Plantation system continues. Catholic ownership of land in Ireland is reduced to only a miniscule amount.

1692 AD

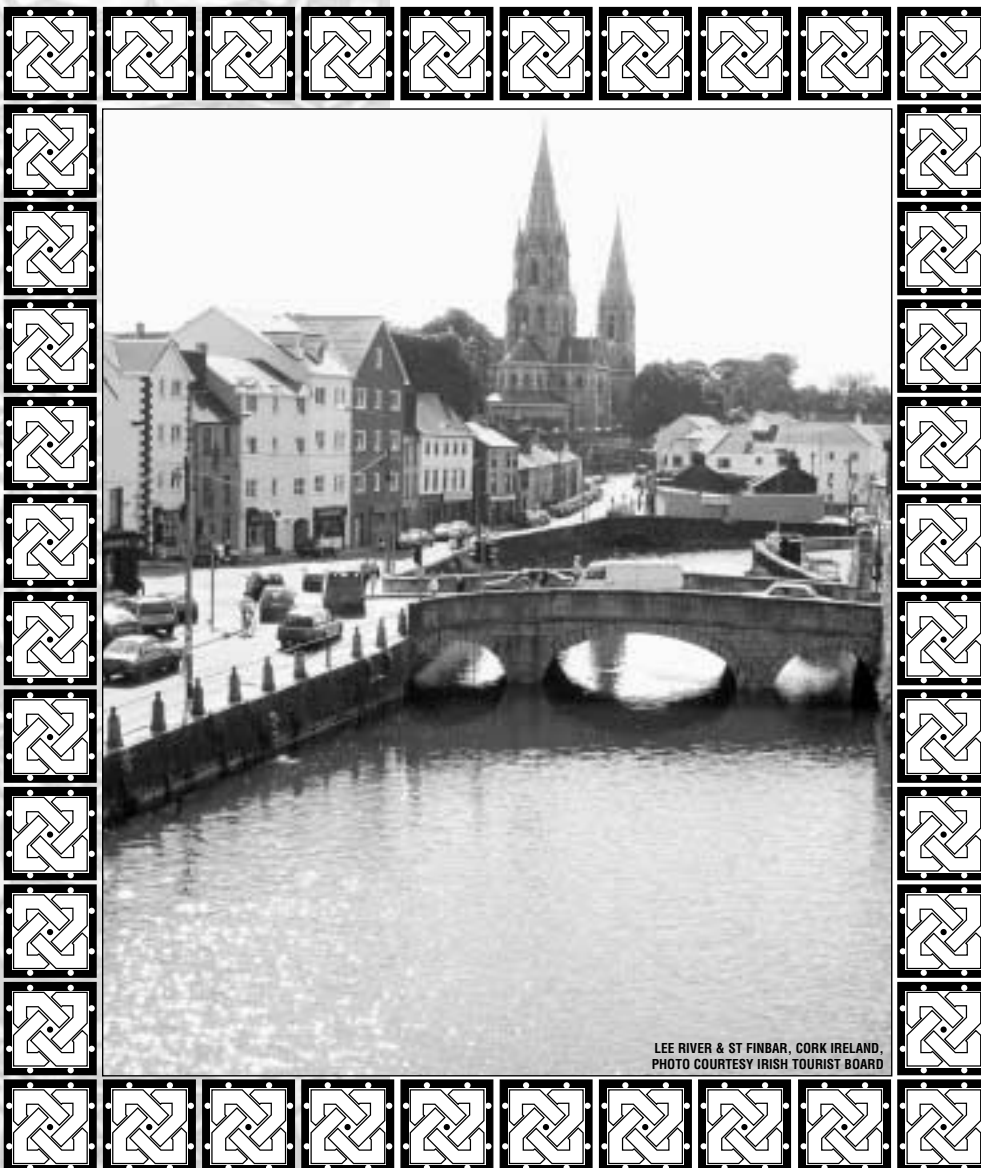
"The Protestant Ascendancy" begins. An "ascendancy" is a rising, and during this time the Protestants in Ireland were rising to power. The Anglican church strengthens its position in Ireland by creating Penal Laws in which Irish Catholics are denied civil rights such as



- Compare the Potato Famine of 1845-49 to other famines throughout history. In essay form, lay out your findings: What causes them? What can prevent them? Who do you think was to blame for the horrors of the Potato Famine? The British? The Irish? No one? Prepare to defend your answer in detail.
- Create a debate in your class or group on one of these topics: 1) "The British should have done more to prevent the Great Hunger" 2) "The Great Hunger: A Tragedy, but No One's Fault."
- Since St. Patrick created a system of monasteries to record Irish culture and history, Ireland has been known as a land where the written word holds great power. Just look at this list of famous Irish authors: James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, Samuel Beckett, Jonathan Swift, Brian Friel, George Bernard Shaw, John Millington Synge, Seamus Heaney, and on and on. Research the life and creations of one of these authors, or another artist you are studying. How is their art related to their native land? How has the history of Ireland influenced their art?

## SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

- Research Ireland's geography, size and place in relation to other countries. How have these factors affected Ireland's people? How do you think they have affected Ireland's music and dance?



LEE RIVER & ST FINBAR, CORK IRELAND.  
PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD

## ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

- The Great Hunger only helped to fan the flames of resistance to British rule. Although millions left Ireland, those who had stayed home were determined to hold on to their heritage. In 1893, the Gaelic League was formed to promote the preservation of Irish culture. How can a people forget their culture? How can a people prevent this from happening? Use examples of other embattled cultures (African slaves, Native Americans) when discussing this question.
- What was happening in other countries during the Irish Potato Famine? In England? The United States? France? Russia? Compare the system of discrimination against Catholics in Ireland to other systemic practices of bigotry such as South Africa's Apartheid and America's Jim Crow laws.

## THEATRE

- During early English rule of Ireland, taking pride in Irish arts could be seen as dangerous (for instance, Queen Elizabeth I tried to ban all Irish dancing and was reputed to have said, "Hang all the harpers."). Why do you think this was? How could dancing and music be dangerous? Research other times in history when the arts have been banned. Relate national pride with national culture.
- In story, poem, skit, song or rap form, describe a moment in Irish history.



# Irish DANCE

In 1569, Sir Henry Sydney wrote to Queen Elizabeth about the Irish people: “They are very beautiful, magnificently dressed and first class dancers.”

Throughout Irish history, dancing has been done for pleasure, for performance, for joy and for mourning. At many times during Irish history, the Church tried to condemn or out-

law dancing, saying, “In the dance are seen frenzy and woe.” Exactly right: in Ireland, people have danced for every emotion, from great joy to utter sadness. The Druids danced to worship the sun and the oak tree; when millions left Ireland during the Great Hunger, they danced before they journeyed on.

The Gaelic word for dance, “damhsa” shows the mixed quality of Irish culture; its origins are from the French word “danse,” brought over by French-speaking Normans.

Until the 18th century, most Irish dancing was *communal*, that is, danced by large groups of people. In a time before television, movies and the Internet, dance parties in houses or at the crossroads were often a community’s sole form of entertainment. Solo steps were first developed by dance masters (see below) in the 1900s. Many of the dances you will see at *Riverdance* — the reel, the jig, the hornpipe — were developed at this time.



## THE DANCE MASTER

Dance styles were extended through Ireland during the 18th and 19th centuries by travelling teachers and performers known as Dance Masters. Dance Masters would wander from town to town, staying in a village for up to six weeks, sleeping in the kitchen or barn of a kind farmer, teaching the children of the village how to dance. The people of rural Ireland knew the folk dances taught by their parents, but people wanted the Dance Masters to teach them the new dances from far away places like France. It was considered a great honor for a town to host a dance master. Dancing was so popular among peasants and farmers that the coming of a Dance Master was a time of celebration for the whole village.

Flamboyant, colorful characters, Dance Masters wore bright colored hats, knee breeches, shoes with large silver buckles and held staffs while they walked. Dance Masters would usually have their own territories, usually not more than 10 square miles. Often Dance masters would meet at fairs and compete to see who was the best dancer. The winner would take over the loser's territory.

During this time, places for competitions and fairs were always small, so there was little room for the Dance Masters to perform. They would dance on tabletops, sometimes even the top of a barrel! Because of this, the

voting, holding weapons, having property, getting an education. Laws ban the education of Catholic children — many secret schools, called “hedge” schools were created; Irish culture had to be practiced in secret.

Historians have compared the Penal Laws to repressive systems like Apartheid. Catholic lands were distributed to 10,000 Protestant families; by 1778, only 5% of Irish Catholics owned land. Irish Catholics endure horrible living conditions; they ate mostly potatoes, grown on their own small plots of land, while growing other people's food.

### 1775–1783 A.D.

Another British colony rebels: the American Revolutionary war begins. Most British soldiers leave Ireland to fight in America. The ideals of the American (and the French Revolution in 1789) inspire many in Ireland.

### 1793 A.D.

The Protestant lawyer Theobald Wolfe Tone, leads a rebellion against English rule of Ireland with his group The Society of United Irishmen, but the revolt is quickly put down.



1800 AD

The Act of Union. Ireland becomes part of the United Kingdom along with England, Scotland and Wales.

1823–1843 AD

Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), an Irish Catholic lawyer, creates the "Catholic Association." During the next twenty years, he fights for Catholic civil rights. He is extremely popular among farmers and the poor, and dominates Irish politics during the first part of this century. He tries to work within the system, advocating non-violent protests and rallies.

1829 AD

Catholic Emancipation Act is passed by the British

dancing styles were very contained, with hands rigid at the sides, and a lack of arm movement and traveling across the stage. As time went on, larger places for dance competitions and performances were found, so styles grew to include more movement, more dancing across the stage as you see in *Riverdance*.



## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF IRISH DANCING?

### STEP DANCING

This lively, agile dance is perhaps the most well known Irish dance. First seen at the end of the 18th century, Step Dancing was created by the Irish Dance Masters. The emphasis in step dancing is on foot percussion, or *battering*, and a rigidity in the upper body. Breandán Breathnach writes in his book, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, "A remarkable feature of step dancing was the control or restraint which underlay the vigor and speed of the performance. The good dancer kept the body rigid, moving only from the hips down and with arms extended straight at the side...the good dancer, it was said, could dance on eggs without breaking them and hold a pan of water on his head without spilling a drop..."

### FOUR TYPES OF STEP DANCES DONE AS SOLOS ARE:

**REEL** — Danced in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time, the word "reel" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "rulla," or "to whirl," and the motion of the reel is indeed a whirling, spinning dance.

**JIG** — Danced in  $\frac{6}{8}$  time, in a jig, the feet serve as percussion instruments, creating a drumming rhythm on the floor. This is called "battering." As Carol Leavy Joyce, Irish Dance Coordinator for *Riverdance*, says, "That's the type of dance that *Riverdance* is best known for — 30 kids rattlin' out this rhythm..."



IRISH TRADITIONAL DANCING AT CROSSROADS GLENDALOUGH CO. WICKLOW,  
COURTESY OF THE VALENTINE COLLECTION, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND  
(REF# VAL 96436)



**SLIP JIG** — Danced in the unusual  $\frac{9}{8}$  time, the slip jig has a lighter step, with hopping and sliding motions. The Slip Jig is usually danced by two couples. The dance is alternated by a procession around the stage, returning to the beginning again when the music indicates. In *Riverdance*, the dance called “The Countess Cathleen” features 8 girls dancing in slip-jig time.

**HORNPIPE** — Danced in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time, the solo dance is usually done by a lone man.

## CEILI DANCES

A *ceili* (pronounced kay — lee) is a grand party, a celebratory dance event. Communal dances adapted from group set dances and French quadrilles, set to Irish music that were danced at these events became known as “ceili” dances.

## SET DANCES

About 150 years old, Set Dancing is a form of social dancing in which four couples in a square make up a “set” — usually 3 to 6 parts of the dance separated by pauses. Set dancing comes from French dances called *quadrilles* — brought to Ireland by English troops during the 19th century. The Irish Dance Masters adapted these dances and made them their own. You'll see an example of set dancing in *Riverdance* in the dance “American Wake.”



PHOTO LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Government, in large part because of the power and urging of Daniel O'Connell. Most of the Penal Laws are repealed. O'Connell tries to get Britain to repeal the Act of Union of 1800, and let Ireland be more independent, but he does not succeed. He dies in 1847; many of his methods of non-violent protest are used throughout the 20th century.

### 1845–1849 A.D

Imagine having one thing to eat every day. Only one thing. Sounds boring? Now imagine that one thing being taken away from you. 1845 began perhaps the most defining and tragic period in Irish history: The Great Hunger or, in Gaelic, An Gorta Mór. This era is often called “The Potato Famine,” but calling it a “famine” is not exactly accurate since a famine suggests that there is no food available. There is other food being grown and exported out of Ireland during this time, but the food that the poor people lived on, the potato, is wiped out.

Most of the people in Ireland are

completely dependent on the potato crops. Even with the potato crops healthy, life is hard for Irish farmers; since the potato is their main food staple, many starved between harvests. In 1845 and 1846, the potato crop in Ireland is struck with a blight, a disease that destroys plants. The potato blight, or *phytophthora infestans*, completely destroys the Irish potato crop. For millions, there is no other food.

**Remember the Plantation System:** others own the land, which most of the Irish have only small potato plots for their own needs. Throughout the four years of the Hunger, large amounts of food are being exported out of Ireland, but none fed the starving Irish. Imagine being surrounded by food and not being able to eat it!

People can't pay their rents, so during the time of the Hunger, half a million are evicted from their homes. Many develop diseases like typhus and cholera, and when the people wander around the country looking for food, they spread the diseases. Medicine is not advanced enough to keep up with the hunger and the diseases that come with it. Many starve to death in their houses, or by the side of the road.

British aid to the starving Irish is seen today as sporadic and indifferent; too little, too late. British politics at this time is dominated by the teachings of economist Thomas Malthus, who believe that the government should not interfere in the hardships of the poor. Some aid is given, but as the head of the Treasury, Charles Trevelyan, writes in 1846, "the only way to prevent people from becoming habitually dependent on the government is to bring operations to a close." Or as the London Times writes that the Hunger was "a valuable oppor-



feelings on the dancing in *Riverdance*. How did they make you feel? How do they compare to other dances you have seen? Would you recommend *Riverdance* to your readers?

## SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

- The Irish word for dance, *damhsa*, was first recorded in the early 16th century. When did dance begin? Research the cultures of other countries and find out when the concept of "dance" first began.
- In your research of other countries, gather information about their dances, using photos, written descriptions, drawings, videotape, etc. Compare your findings with your classmates. How do the dances differ? How are they the same? How has the creation of the dances been influenced by the country's history? Create an atlas of dance, pinning your findings on a large map of the world, or collecting your information on a class web site. Be sure to include a link or suggestion box for others to offer you their thoughts on dance.

## DANCE/MUSIC/THEATRE

- Ask an Irish step dancer to visit your class or group, and perhaps hold a workshop. How were they trained? How did they become interested in Irish dance?
- How are the dances you see in *Riverdance* like the dances you dance? Use a Venn diagram to compare the dances in *Riverdance* to the dances you enjoy.
- As you watch the dances in *Riverdance*, consider how dance is broken into basic movements like hops, skips, walk, run, slide, jump, etc. Using basic movements as your notations, write



a moment-by-moment break down of one of *Riverdance's* dances.

- If you can, play the *Riverdance* music before seeing the show (flip to page 31 for recording information). Improvise a dance around one piece of music on the recording. How does the music make your body feel? What gestures and movements come from listening to the music? After seeing *Riverdance*, compare what you created to the dances in the show.
- Using the Irish history timeline in this guide, improvise and create a dance piece based around a moment or era in Irish history. What movements and gestures will you use to communicate your thoughts on the time you choose?



# The MUSIC

When you see *Riverdance*, you'll not only see the dancers and singers working (and, as you've read already, as fun as it is, it is work!) right in front of you, you'll also see the musicians right up on stage. Usually in a musical or opera, the band is in the area just under the lip of the stage called "the pit," but composer Bill Whelan made the decision to bring the musicians right up on stage. Whelan comes from a rock and roll tradition, having worked with artists such as Van Morrison, Hothouse Flowers and U2. And just as rock bands play their music on stage, Whelan insisted that the *Riverdance* band be very visible, to interact with the performers and the audience.

In *The Rough Guide to World Music*, Nuala O'Connor writes, "Kept alive by a combination of historical, political, and cultural forces, Irish traditional music remains today one of the richest music cultures in the western world." Traditional music in Ireland has always been tightly joined to dance, with the four types of dancing - set dances, horn-pipe, reel, jig — also the four types of traditional instrumental music. In creating the music for *Riverdance*, composer Bill Whelan mixed his rock and roll roots with traditional Irish music, making something haunting, memorable, and entirely new. So in the band, you'll see traditional Irish instruments, like the uilleann pipes and the bodhrán alongside a saxophone, synthesizer and full drum set. Remember the definition of culture: "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." In the music of *Riverdance*, Bill Whelan has taken the knowledge of music from the past, added what we have learned up to now, and created a sound and a music for the future.



## SOME TRADITIONAL IRISH INSTRUMENTS:



PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD

**UILLEANN PIPES:** Pronounced "il'yun" pipes, this instrument evolved from ancient Irish war-pipes. "Uilleann" is the Irish word for "elbow", and it is the elbow that moves the pipes' bellows. The uilleann pipes is a very complicated instrument, with the potential to create a very multi-layered, complex sound. The instrument consists of a blow pipe; a bag made of sheepskin; a bellows to regulate air flow; the chanter, or the pipe on which a melody is played; the drones which are three pipes playing a continuous underlying accompaniment to the chanter's melody; and three regulators fingered with the player's bottom hand which can create chords to accompany the chanter. Seen by many as the classic Irish instrument, the uilleann pipes takes years to learn.



PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD

tunity for settling...the vexed question of Irish...discontent." This attitude only helps to intensify the anger and hatred that many in Ireland feel for England. Many now feel that the non-violent philosophies of Daniel O'Connell can no longer work, and begin to advocate violence.

In his 1855 book, *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, George Petrie wrote of *The Hunger*: "The 'Land of Song' was no longer tuneful; or, if a human sound



PHOTO COURTESY  
IRISH TOURIST BOARD



The master player Seamus Ennis wrote, "Tradition has it that it takes 7 years practicing and 7 years playing to make a piper. After 21 years I wasn't as able as I am now, and if my father were alive today I would still be learning from him." Bill Whelan calls the uilleann pipes, "both primitive and sophisticated, their evocative abilities are boundless, but the piper's terror is that they may decide to desert him in the midst of his most ardent flight, like some haughty lover — sweet, mysterious and unpredictable."

**THE BODHRÁN** — A slender one-sided drum covered with goat skin, the bodhrán is meant to be played very loud — the Irish word means "deafener." Played with a stick or the hand, the tone and pitch of the open-ended drum can be changed by the placement of the hand on the inside of the skin.



met the traveler's ear, it was only that of the feeble and despairing wail for the dead." One million people die during The Hunger; two million people leave Ireland for other countries, looking for a better life.

1858 A.D.

James Stephens, a Protestant who longs for Irish independence, creates the "Fenian" movement, dedicated to independence from England.

1863–1865 A.D.

The American Civil War. More than 200,000 Irish immigrants fight on both sides.

1865–1867 A.D.

The Fenian Movement attempts several revolts that are quickly crushed by British troops.

1875 A.D.

A young man named Charles Stewart Parnell joins Parliament at the age of 29. Though an Irish Protestant, he works for political independence for Ireland. Parnell worked with Michael Davitt in



## STEPS

- How are music and poetry related? Take the lyrics to *Riverdance* (for information on the song book, flip to page 31) and analyze them as you would a poem: what words are used to create the effects the writer desires? How does the writer use metaphor and simile? What words are used to evoke emotions?

## SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

- In his book *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, Breandán Breathnach quotes Thomas Moore who says, "Perhaps we may look no further that the last disgraceful century for the origin of most of those wild and melancholy strains, which were at once the offspring and solace of grief." How can music come from sadness and help alleviate sadness? Compare the growth of Irish music to the creation of the Blues in America.
- Discuss the relationship between music and history. First, an easier question: how does history change music? Give examples of how events, trends and historical developments can change a culture's music. Now, here's a harder problem: Can music change history? See if you can come up with an example of how a trend in music, or even a single song, has changed the course of history.

## MUSIC/THEATRE/DANCE

- What came first, the dance or the music? Remember that most of the music in *Riverdance* was created to be danced to. Discuss the different arrangement and give-and-take both the dancer and the musician must work through to create music for dance.
- Using the Irish timeline in this guide, create a song or an instrumental piece based on an event in



PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD

Irish history, or in the history of another culture you are studying. Listen to some of the music from *Riverdance*. Describe how the composer uses these musical elements help to create the overall presentation of the music: melody, rhythm, timbre, harmony, dynamics, tone, volume, tempo.

# Have your own CEILI

A *ceili* (pronounced kay — lee) is a grand party, a celebratory dance event, originally a gathering of people from your town or village for dance, music and storytelling. Later the name came to mean an informal night of dancing. To celebrate your visit to *Riverdance*, have a *ceili* in your class, at your school, or with your group.

Make sure music from *Riverdance* is playing (see page 31 for recording information); read from the works of William Butler Yeats, James Joyce or other Irish writers; invite Irish dancers to perform; serve delicious Irish food! Make sure everyone at your party is wearing green and teach them some Celtic phrases (get these from [www.ireland.org](http://www.ireland.org))!

The Gaelic League supported the first Irish ceili in 1897, which began the tradition of a piper opening the ceili. If you can have a piper, grand; otherwise, you can open the proceedings with some recorded Irish music.

## FOR SOME IRISH FOLK SONGS, CHECK OUT:

<http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~declaris/ballads/songs.html>

## CLICK HERE FOR SOME DELICIOUS IRISH RECIPES:

<http://www.ncf.carleton.ca/~dc920/HomePage.foodal.html>

<http://www.hylit.com/info/Recipes/Irish.htm>



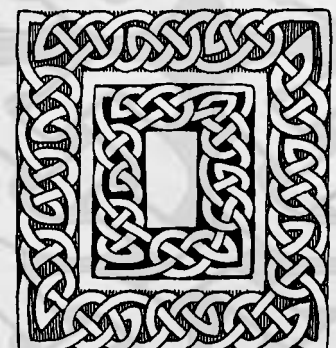
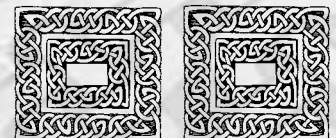
the Land League, an organization formed to fight for the rights of Irish farmers.

1879–1882 A.D.

In attempts to reform land ownership concerns that still lingered from the days of the plantations, Michael Davitt and Charles Parnell organize protests against landlords. After winning several political battles, Parnell promotes Irish home rule for Ireland, if not to be completely independent, to have its own Parliament and law-making body.

1885 A.D.

Home Rule for Ireland is a



# Against the ELEMENTS

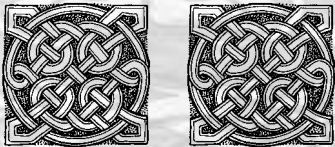


"Lifting our hearts we sing his praise  
Dance in his healing rays"  
- from *Riverdance*

"In Act One, the show deals with the themes that are at the heart of a lot of early music and dance, songs in praise of the earth, sun, fire, the moon and other elemental forces that are common to all cultures." — Bill Whelan

Your journey at *Riverdance* begins in pre-history, where we worshiped, praised and feared the elements. As you see in the history on page 5, written history in Ireland began when monks, inspired by St. Patrick, began to record Celtic culture. Before that, the scholar-priests of the Celts, the Druids, looked down

upon writing; they kept their histories through oral history; songs, dances, rituals. These were passed down from generation to generation. All cultures sing and speak of this early time, when the earth, sun, fire, the moon and other elemental forces ruled our lives. In *Riverdance's* first act, the dancing and music reflect the power of the elements. So the opening dance sequence, "Reel Around the Sun," celebrates the sun's great power with a vigorous reel. The dance "Thunderstorm" features a hard-shoe, unaccompanied dance by the male troupe, in which the beating "thunder" of their feet echoes the power of one of nature's most dramatic forces. We fear it, but we can't live without it. In "Firedance," the lone dancer uses gestures and hand movements to show the beauty and danger of that contradictory element.



major part of the election this year. Tensions flare up between Protestants and Catholics.

1886 AD

The British Parliament defeats the Home Rule Bill, and does it again when it comes up in 1892.

1893 AD

The Gaelic League, or "Conradh na Gaeilge" is formed with the mandate to preserve Gaelic culture and traditions, suppressed for so long.

1905 AD



## STEPS

### ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

•Brainstorm your own story of how a natural event occurs (for instance, why does the sun come up every morning? What is the thunder?). Write the story in story, poem, song or play form. Now translate your story into a dance: what movements will you need to convey the actions of the story?

•Bill Whelan says that *Riverdance* was based on the life story of a river. Create your own life story of a river, through story, play, song or dance format. What is the river's life like? How does it affect those who live near it? Why is a river important to those who live near it?

### SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

- What are folktales? Make a list of all the folktales you know.
- The anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote, "Real community is based on memory, on shared experience over time, continually revived by comment, by reference, by telling the story over and over again." Describe the concept of oral history. How are stories and legends of nature passed on from generation to generation?
- How are folktales different throughout the world? Make a list of ways folk tales are the same throughout the world, and how they are different. What factors will create those differences?
- Even today, when we know so many scientific facts about it, the sun still remains the central natural force in life on earth. Compare and contrast legends and folktales about the sun from different cultures.
- Research Irish myths and folk tales, like the story of Cú Chulainn and the Sidhe, both of which are inspirations for dances and music in *Riverdance*.

### DANCE/MUSIC/THEATRE

- Create a song, dance or skit based on the folk tales you have created about the sun and natural occurrences.



# Leaving Home

*"lift the wings  
that carry me from here and  
fill the sail  
that break the line to home"  
-from Riverdance*

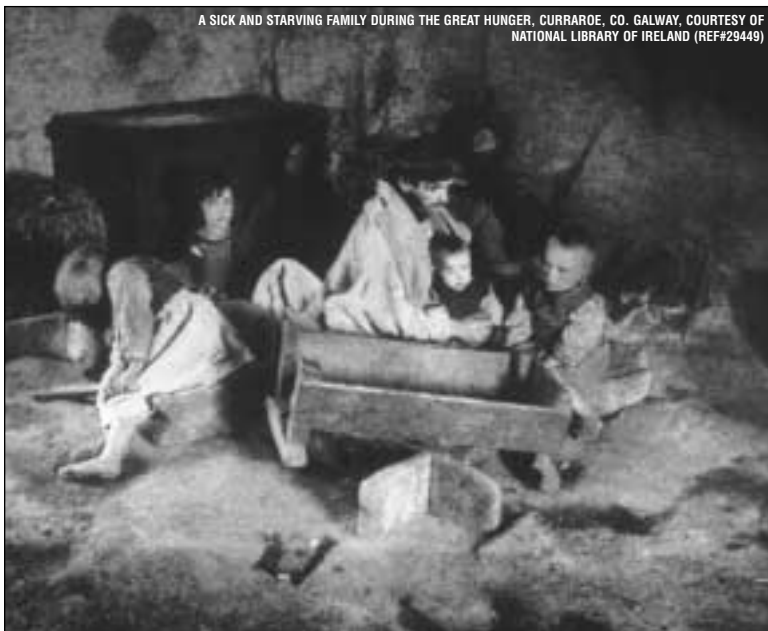
*"Act Two tells how the native culture has been forced to emigrate and, by so doing, is exposed to the forms of expression of other cultures, both in dance and music."  
— Bill Whelan*

Leaving home is always very difficult. Perhaps your parents or grandparents came from other countries to your new home. Perhaps you have taken that journey yourself. In one way or another, we are all the ancestors of immigrants. The writer Robert Coles said, "Every place I've been on this planet, children ask fundamentally the same questions. They want to know where did we come from, where are we, and where are we going?"

Between 1845 and 1850, the time of the Great Hunger, nearly two million people left Ireland for other lands, a great distribution of people and culture. Irish culture spread out around the world, learning new ideas and influencing other cultures. As John McColgan writes, "It is a credit to the Irish that they held their cultural heritage so close to them wherever they traveled."

Most of those who left Ireland during the Great Hunger traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to America. Between the 18th and 20th centuries, 7 million people came from Ireland to the United States. Thousands of Irish people already living in America sent money to relatives for boat tickets to come to the New World. Today 40 million Americans can look back on their family tree and see a link to Ireland.

Coming over to the United States was often a horrifying experience. In many ships, Irish people were housed in quarters below deck so cramped that adults couldn't even stand up. Journeys could last up to twelve weeks, and disease and starvation were rampant. So many ships had people die on route, or were lost at sea, that they were often called "coffin ships."



A SICK AND STARVING FAMILY DURING THE GREAT HUNGER, CURRAROE, CO. GALWAY, COURTESY OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND (REF#29449)



A WOMAN EVICTED FROM HER COTTAGE DURING THE GREAT HUNGER COURTESY OF THE LAWRENCE COLLECTION, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND (REF.# R2151)

## 1919 A.D.

**Emboldened by their victories in the Parliament, Sein Fein members create their own law-making body in Dublin, which they call the Dail Eireann. Eamon de Valera is declared President, Arthur Griffith the vice president, and Michael Collins is made Minister of Finance, and Commander of the new government's army, called the Irish Republican Army, or IRA. The British Prime Minister at the time, David Lloyd George, sends troops to Ireland against this new government. Clashes begin between IRA forces and the British forces, called Black and Tans because of the color of their uniforms.**

## 1921 A.D.

**de Valera sends Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins to London to negotiate a treaty with the British. The treaty they brought back split the island of Ireland into two separate countries. The southern country, consisting of 26 counties, would mostly govern itself. England would still govern the 6 counties of the northern country. This treaty causes great controversy in the Dail. Many believe that all of Ireland should be free; several objected to the requirement in the treaty that all Irish elected officials would have to take an oath of loyalty to the British government.**



**1922 AD**

**On January 7th, The Dail narrowly approves of the treaty. The Free State of Ireland is created, but tensions continue to build. The IRA is split over the merits of the treaty.**

**1922–1923 AD**

**The Irish Civil War breaks out between "Free Staters" and Republicans. The war lasts 14 months. The war ends on May 24, 1923. During the war, Michael Collins is killed in an ambush. The Free Staters win, but resentments still linger.**

**1932 AD**

**The Irish Free State takes on the name Eire, the Gaelic word for Ireland. Eamon de Valera is named Prime Minister.**

**1935 AD**

**Anti-Catholic persecution continues in Northern Ireland, with riots breaking out in Belfast.**

**1945 AD**

**On April 18, the southern 26 counties of Ireland becomes a full, independent country, The Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland, or Ulster, stays part of Great Britain.**

**1969 AD**

**Conflicts between nationalists, those who believe that Ireland should be totally free, and unionists, those who still appreciate Northern Ireland's "union" with the British, collapse into rioting. The Belfast government calls in British troops.**

They came to escape hunger and poverty. They came with great determination and hope, looking for opportunity. And many did find that dream, but many more found things even harder than it was in Ireland. Many native-born Americans, mostly Protestants, forgetting that their own ancestors were immigrants, saw the new Irish as invaders, taking away jobs from "real" Americans. Many Irish immigrants came with no skills, some speaking only Gaelic, and so were given the lowest paying jobs. Many Irish Catholics came to America and learned that prejudice against them was not confined to Irish borders.

No wonder many Irish immigrants felt that they were not voluntary comers to America, but that the conditions in Ireland had forced them to leave. They saw themselves as "exiles." They were disillusioned. "Disillusion" is the loss of a dream, and for many, the dream of a new land was dead.

But the Irish prevailed in America, and around the world, spreading their culture, and re-creating the cultures they encountered. In their book *Out of Ireland*, Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner quote the politician Richard O'Gorman who wrote, "There seems to me nothing in the Irish nature to indicate a worn out, a moribund race. The moment it touches this soil, it seems to be imbued with miraculous energy for good and evil, so that something Irish is prominent everywhere, and you have to praise or blame, to bless or curse it, at every turn."

### **"AMERICAN WAKE"**

Can you imagine going to your own funeral? In Irish tradition, the term "going west" was another phrase for dying. No wonder then, that those Irish people who sailed westward for the United States were given parties called "American Wakes." A "wake" is a party given to honor someone who is dead. And those who left Ireland never expected to return again. The American Wake was at once an event of great joy and a release of deep sadness. Many songs were sung, dances were danced, food was eaten, and tears were shed. The American Wake was a way to say good bye to your old life and embrace the new.



NEARLY 200,000 IRISHMEN FOUGHT ON BOTH SIDES IN AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## TAP DANCE

As harsh as their lives were, the Irish still left their land voluntarily. Some came to the New World in chains. The Africans who were forced to American shores during the horrible time of slavery brought nothing with them of their old life — only the knowledge of what they had been before being forced into chains: their culture. The songs and dances of Africa were passed on from parents to children, adapting and changing in America to become something new. In the early 17th century, drums among slaves were outlawed after slaves led a revolt using drums for communication. But the slaves used other methods to create rhythmic music. One of those was through dance.

Today, many believe that the origins of tap dancing in America came from mixing African rhythms with Irish dances like the jig. In the early 1800s, a free black man named William Henry Lane gained great fame by combining the quick steps of the Irish jig with African beats. Although we have no video or even photos of Lane dancing, written descriptions of his act seem to suggest that his dancing created the foundation for modern tap dance.



## FLAMENCO

Flamenco is the name for both the music and the dance of the Andalucian province of Spain. Its origins are a patchwork of roots from India, Arabia and European gypsy music. Like the music and dance in *Riverdance*, flamenco music and dance are tightly joined. *Cante*, the song, *Baile*, the dance, and *Guitarra*, guitar playing, are the three parts of flamenco, and while they can exist separately, they flourish when mixed together.

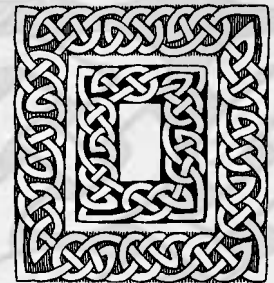
Ireland and Spain have long had a deep connection. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English in 1588, Spanish soldiers landed on Ireland's shore and settled there. Also, in 1607, the Irish soldier Red Hugh O'Donnell and his army fled to Spain after a great defeat; Bill Whelan composed his first large-scale orchestral work, *The Seville Suite*, about this story (for information on this recording, see page 31). Whelan says, "I was very attracted to the rhythmic connections between the two. There is a big strong connection between Ireland and Spain, both historical and cultural. Northern Spain is, in fact, a Celtic nation!"

## 1970 A·D

**Great turmoil in Northern Ireland as British troops try to crush the IRA. Nationalist neighborhoods were subjected to house-by-house searches.**

## 1971 A·D

**Operation Internment: British troops imprison those suspected of inciting riot or terrorism. Most of those interred were believed to be innocent. Many believe that this is only an excuse to quell all dissent.**

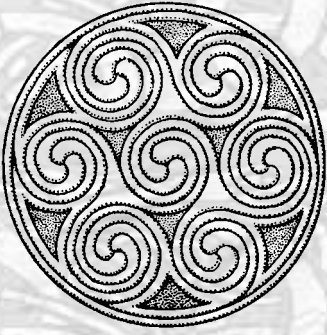


## MOSCOW FOLK BALLET

With their mixture of the movements of the classical ballet that Russia is so well known for with the more energetic and passionate dances of the Russian countryside, the Moscow Folk Ballet Company combines the old and the new in an exciting, dynamic way. Just as *Riverdance* mixes the more classic traditions of Irish music and dance with newer sounds and movements, so the Moscow Folk Ballet creates a unique style of dance with strong foundations in the past. As Bill Whelan said, "I was very interested in this type of music because it has such complex rhythms naturally danced to by people from Bulgaria and Macedonia."







1972 AD

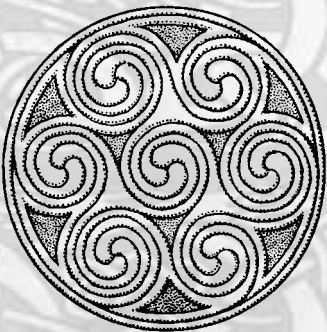
On January 30, British troops fire on an illegal but peaceful march against Operation Internment. Fourteen are killed, thirteen wounded. This later became known as "Bloody Sunday." Tensions increase even more; support for the IRA grows. The British Government disbands the Northern Irish Parliament and assumes direct rule from London. Terrorism against British targets by the IRA continues through the 70s and 80s.

1994 AD

The IRA announces an end to "military operations."

1998 AD

Good Friday Agreement, which promises "devolution," or the transfer of governing power from England to a new Northern Irish assembly.



## ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

•Imagine you are an immigrant coming to a new country. Make a list of things you would bring with you to a new land. Write a story, poem or short play about your first day in a new country. Why do you think so many people from different countries and cultures journeyed to the United States?

Read this quote from *Riverdance*:

*'Whole generations lift Now to depart.  
The land has failed us. The dark soldiers appear  
Against us. In dance and song  
We gift and mourn Our children.  
They carry us over  
The ocean in dance and song.'*

•Analyze this passage. Who are "the dark soldiers"? Who is speaking in this passage? How can they both "gift and mourn" their children? How are they "carried over the ocean in gift and song"?

Now read this quotation from *Riverdance*:

*'Out of the Night We come, out  
Of the sea. On a new shore,  
Lights blaze in the dawn.'*

- Who is speaking now? How is the tone different?
- Write a letter from a new immigrant to people at home. Do you convince them to come? Do you tell of prejudices? How do you describe the New World?

## SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

- Where did you come from? Interview your parents, grandparents, go as far back as you can to create your family tree. How did your ancestors immigrate to this country? Did they come voluntarily or were they forced? Once you are done with your tree, compare them to the family trees of your classmates. Where do they fit together?
- What is a culture? What makes up your culture? Make a list of all the aspects of your culture you can think of (dance, music, food, religion, etc.) Can a state have a culture? A town? A neighborhood? A family? How has your culture been influenced by other cultures?
- Listen to excerpts of music from different cultures. How are they the same? How are they different? What would life be like if all music were the same?
- Split up your class or group so that several smaller groups can each study a different country and its dance and music. Put your findings (facts, images, etc) alongside your country on a large map of the world and create an Atlas of Music and Dance.
- Take your Atlas and, with string connecting countries, mark off how different cultures have affected each other.
- How did the large immigration to the United States from Ireland change the American political system? Discuss the power of Tammany Hall, and men like Richard O'Gorman.
- Did you know that the first person to set foot in 1892 on Ellis Island, America's famous gateway into New York and America, was an Irish woman? Research Ellis Island and its importance to the history of immigration to America. How has immigration to America changed since 1892?
- Compare the lives of American slaves and the lives of Irish immigrants. Consider this quotation from Dennis Clark, as cited by Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner in *Out Of Ireland*, "When the builders of canals wanted a labor force to build the Chesapeake Canal in Virginia, they went to the local plantation owners and said, 'Rent us your slaves.' But the planters replied, 'No way, these slaves are worth money. Get Irishmen instead. If they die, there's no monetary loss.'"

# Coming home: DANCE, MUSIC AND CULTURE

*"You can honour the past best by giving it a future. You can preserve a tradition only by letting it live, breathe and change."*

— Fintan O'Toole.

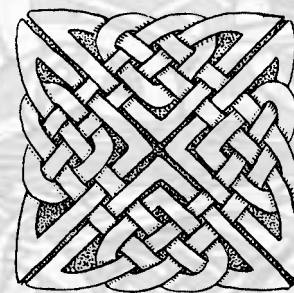
*from the Riverdance Souvenir Brochure*

*"I know that for the Irish dancers and all the other performers the thrill of the dancing itself is magnified by an inner pride. It is the pride that comes from knowing that they are bringing the dancing and music of their own countries, their own people, to the world at large."*

— John McColgan.

*from the Riverdance Souvenir Brochure.*

These quotations show the essence of *Riverdance's* message: that the way to preserve culture is to explore it, then use it as a foundation for further growth. The creators of *Riverdance* — dancers, singers, musicians and those working behind the scenes — collaborate during every performance to create a new way of looking at dance and song, while preserving and expanding their cultures. How do you work with your friends, your family and your teachers to create your culture every day?



1999 A.D.

Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist Party votes to form a new Protestant-Catholic government, allowing the Good Friday agreement to go into effect. Queen Elizabeth of England signs a devolution order that places power in the hands of the Catholic-Protestant government of Northern Ireland.

2000 A.D.

Northern Ireland's new government is suspended when the IRA refuse to disarm to the agreed timetable. February 2000, Britain assumes direct rule of Northern Ireland. The process continues...



WEXFORD, PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD



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NEOLITHIC DETAIL, PHOTO COURTESY IRISH TOURIST BOARD



## STEPS

•What is prejudice? (Here's a clue: break down the word "prejudice" to its parts. "Pre" means prior or before, and

"judice" is like the word "judicial" or "judging." So "prejudice" is judging before you know all the facts. In her book *The Spirit That Moves Us*, Laura R. Petovello, J.D. defines prejudice as "a negative judgment without basis." How can misunderstanding about culture contributing to "pre-judging"? How can understanding different cultures help to destroy prejudice?

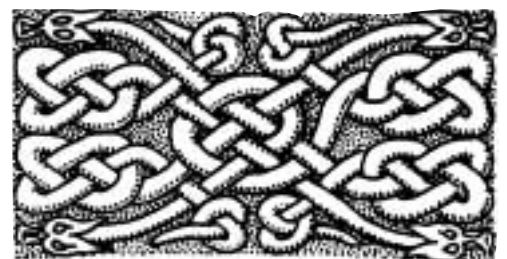
•Research the lives of the Irish who came to the United States during the 19th century and describe the hardships they faced because of prejudice.

•Brainstorm ideas about how you can diminish prejudice in your classroom, your school and your community.

•How does prejudice hinder the growth of a culture? What is a tradition? Make a list of five traditions you share with your classmates — five traditions of your culture. Find out how these traditions originated. How do they honor the past? Do they mean the same thing to you, or are they old and stale? How can they be changed, adapted to give them meaning for the present while still retaining their original power? How has the advent of the Internet changed the way we see tradition? Culture?

•How can the Internet be used to preserve culture and traditions? How can the Internet change culture and traditions? With your class, create a web site that explores what you have learned about culture, using photos, maps, stories, songs, video clips, etc.

•An old song goes, "Everything old is new again." How can we both preserve culture and keep it vital? In your studies of different cultures, discover how cultures have changed over time. How have cultures forgotten their past? How have they preserved their traditions?



# RESOURCES

## TEXTS

### ***On Riverdance:***

- *Riverdance, the Story* by Sam Smyth (Andre Deutsch, 1997)
- *Riverdance: Music from Riverdance* by Bill Whelan (Music Sales Corporation, 1998)

### ***On Irish Music and Dance:***

- *The Complete Guide to Celtic Music: From the Highland Bagpipe to Riverdance to U2 and Enya* by June Skinner Sawyer (Carol Publishing Group, 1999)
- *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* by Breandán Breathnach (Ossian Publications, Cork, Ireland)
- *Toss the Feathers* by Pat Murphy (Irish Book Company, 1996) (About the history of set dancing, includes 64 set dances)
- *Irish Dancing* by Arthur Flynn, illustrated by Anne Farrell (Pelican Publishing, 1998)

### ***On Ireland and Irish History:***

- *The Troubles* by Tim Pat Coogan (Random House, 1995)
- *The Irish Rebellion — 1916-1921, The Wearing of the Green* by Clifford Lindsey Alderman (Julian Messner, 1972)
- *Ireland...In Pictures* (Visual Geography Series, Lerner Publications, 1997)
- *Northern Ireland...In Pictures* (Visual Geography Series, Lerner Publications, 1997)
- *Northern Ireland* by Mary Jane Cahill (Chelsea House, 1987)
- *How the Irish Saved Civilization* by Thomas Cahill (Doubleday, 1996)
- *A Family in Ireland* by Tom Moran (Lerner Publications, 1986)

## ***Recordings***

### ***Riverdance and Bill Whelan Recordings:***

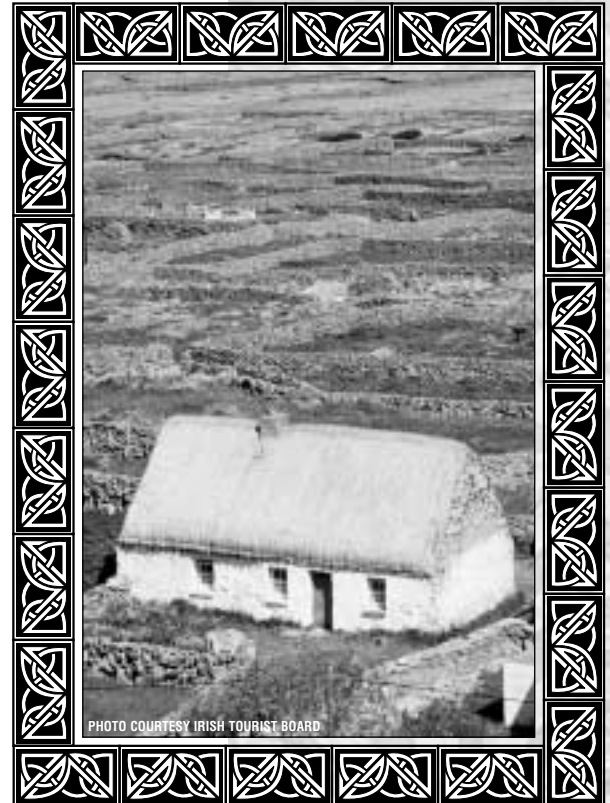
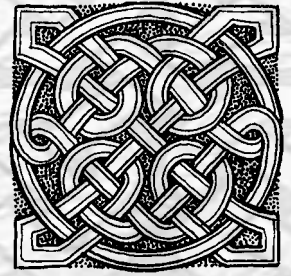
- *Riverdance Music from the Show* composed by Bill Whelan (Celtic Heartbeat/Universal Records, 1995)
- *Roots of Riverdance* composed by Bill Whelan (Celtic Heartbeat/Universal Records, 1997)
- *The Seville Suite* composed by Bill Whelan (Celtic Heartbeat/Universal Records, 1992)
- *Dancing At Lughnasa* Original Motion Picture Soundtrack composed by Bill Whelan (Sony Classical, 1998)

### ***Well-known Celtic Recordings (as cited in The Rough Guide to World Music):***

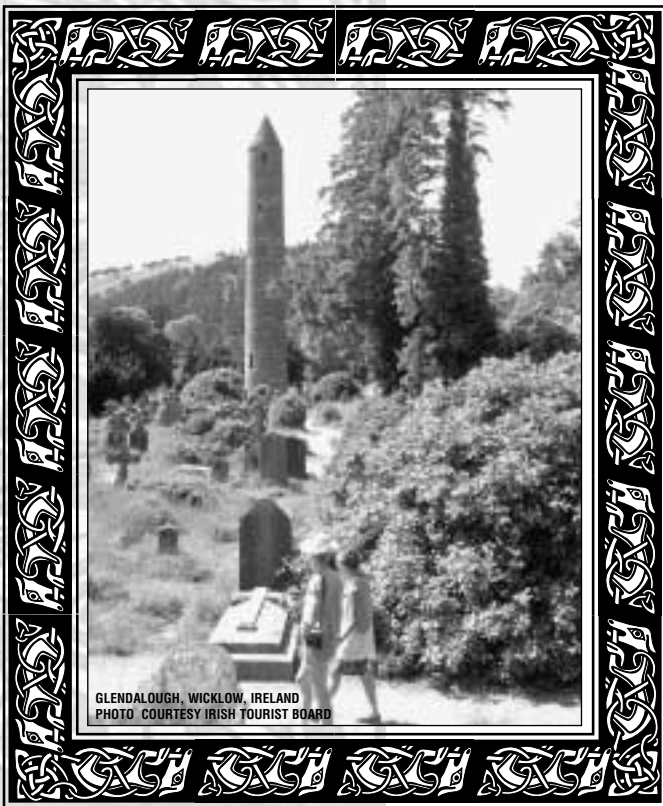
- *Our Musical Heritage* (Fundúireacht an Riadaigh, Ireland)
- *Dear Old Erin's Isle* (Nimbus, UK)
- *Altan: Island Angel* (Green Linnet, US)
- *The Chieftains: Chieftains Four* (Shanachie, US)
- *Clannad: Dúlaman* (Gael Linn, Ireland)

## ***Web Sites***

*Riverdance* has an informative and







entertaining official web site at [www.riverdance.com](http://www.riverdance.com). Interesting essays and links!

- For a great site on Irish culture, history, a way to research your Irish ancestry and a link to daily Gaelic proverbs, click on [www.ireland.org](http://www.ireland.org)
- Information on the Celts at Celtic Heart:  
<http://celt.net/celtic/menu.html>
- Ireland's Eye is an online magazine on Irish culture. Check them out at :  
<http://www.irelandseye.com>
- Irish Myth and Art links at:  
<http://www.luminarium.org/mythology/Ireland>
- For a list of Irish dance teachers and schools, click on  
<http://tigger.cc.uic.edu/~aerobin/irteach.html>
- For New York Area Irish Traditional Music and Dance Events, point to:  
<http://www.inx.net/~mardidom/rcnycal.htm>

### ***Newsgroups on Irish culture and Irish music:***

soc.irish.culture  
rec.music.celtic

*(As with all newsgroups, students should only participate with adult permission and/or supervision)*





## CREATORS OF THE *RIVERDANCE* STUDY GUIDE

**Peter Royston** (*Author*) is the Educational Sales Manager for Theatre Direct International, a Broadway ticket sales and marketing agency. He is the author of study guides for *The Lion King*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Rent*, *Swan Lake*, *Martin Guerre*, *The Civil War*, *A Christmas Carol at Madison Square Garden*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Picasso At the Lapin Agile*, *Magic On Broadway*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *A Chorus Line*, *Jam On The Groove*, *Gross Indecency*, *Forever Tango*, *Mindgames*, *Les Misérables* (co-author), *Miss Saigon* (co-author), and *The Diary of Anne Frank* (co-author). He is co-author of the *Les Misérables* Web Site (<http://www.lesmis.com>) and the *Miss Saigon* Web Site (<http://www.miss-saigon.com>) and contributing author for *The Phantom of the Opera* Web Site (<http://www.thephantomoftheopera.com>). He is the author the souvenir brochures for *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *The Civil War*, and he writes the newsletter and web site for Theatre Direct's educational program, Broadway Classroom.

**Design Management** (*Art Direction & Design*) is a New York based firm who design and create advertising, marketing, educational, direct mail and souvenir materials for the entertainment industry. They are the designers of the Theatre Direct International Magazine, as well as the designer for Theatre Direct's co-operative travel industry marketing campaign which has been awarded the Travel Industry Association of America's 1997 Odyssey Award in the "Innovative Domestic Travel Marketing" category. Design Management has art directed and designed study guides for *RENT*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Gross Indecency*, *Les Misérables*, *Forever Tango*, *Swan Lake*, the *Mind Games Feed Your Mind* Guide, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *The Civil War*, *Moon For The Misbegotten* and *Riverdance*. Design Management creates many of the Broadway and Tour souvenir books. Broadway: *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Civil War*, *Amadeus*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Kat and the Kings*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Minnelli on Minnelli* and *Swing*. Tour: *Evita*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Annie*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Minnelli on Minnelli* and *The Civil War* books. Design Management also art directed and designed the Top Of The World, World Trade Center Observation Deck entrance lobby's "Broadway Gallery."

Alexander Ngo, designed the *Riverdance* Study Guide for Design Management, under the art direction of president, Sally Cato. Alexander is a graduate of Dickinson College with a BA in fine art.

## PHOTO CREDITS:

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