

# Strings weave a simple Celtic magic at the Bowl

By **NELDA M. STUCK**  
Our Town Editor

REDLANDS - What is there about Irish music that attracts us? Last year at the Redlands Bowl Summer Music Festival officials had to stop the show and clear the aisles for safety when a record crowd turned out for the Irish step dancers.

Tuesday night, after Friday's lackluster attendance for the symphony pops concert, the Bowl was nearly full once again for Magical Strings with the Celtic harp, hammered dulcimers, pennywhistles and Irish folk tunes and dancers.

The Philip and Pam Boulding family of Seattle is new to the Bowl this year, discovered when Redlands Community Music Association's program committee member Marsha Gebara and executive director Karen Holmes attended the Arts Northwest Booking Conference in Bellingham, Wash., last November.

The Bouldings proved that strings (including son Brenin's cello and daughter Brittany's violin) have magical mesmerizing quality in rendering folk music. Theirs was a low-key program throughout. Just when you looked for more theatrical dash (as we're increasingly accustomed to in today's music groups), you realized that concertgoers can be content with simplicity.

A great deal of the music rendered a plaintive sense of longing and remembrance rather than the snappy precision felt in the current Irish step dancer programming which has captured world attention. A major pleasure in their nearly two-hour program was hearing simple melodies interpreted in various solos and duets, combining Celtic harp and hammered dulcimer, or two hammered dulcimers, or

---

## Review

assorted pennywhistles and small concertina. Variety came from the wire-strung large bamboo tube valiha of Madagascar.

Most important was the simple accompaniment of the cello and of the violin, adding a depth and richness to the forthright brightness of the folk instruments. Brittany, 16, had traveled for this performance from Colorado, where she is studying and performing at Aspen Music Festival this summer.

A change of pace to open the second half of the program was the impressive three-colored-ball juggling by Brenin, who had traveled from Seattle where his wife, Sara Raney, is director of the Raney Irish Dancers. His performance, set to Irish music performed by his father, Philip, illustrated Philip's narrative of family life with five children, when at times he sits down and plays the harp "because sometimes there simply is so much to do."

Philip also spoke philosophically of life, dedicating one song to the Kosovo-Serb tragedy, suggesting "We need to learn to feel the pain of others and then learn to love." Several times he remarked on the Bowl venue, amazed at 76 years of programs and wishing "to see more settings like the Redlands Bowl."

Mother-of-the-five Pam Boulding narrated most of the program, speaking about courtship, their "House on the Hill" overlooking Puget Sound, and their travels to, and songwriting in and about, Hawaii, Japan and Ireland. Their goal was to bring the audience along on their experiences at Cape Breton, Ballyconnell, Inishcahey and Skellig as well as the islands of Hawaii and Jamaica and Japan where the couple have traveled to study world music influences.



Redlands Bowl  
Summer Music  
Festival

July 2, 1999

*Redlands  
Community  
Music  
Association, Inc.*

Grace Stewart Mullen  
(1875-1967)  
Founder

Conant K. Halsey  
President  
& Chairman of the Board

Florence H. Beeler  
First Vice President  
& Program Director

Marsha Gehara  
Second Vice President/  
Fund Development Director  
& Program Co-chair

David B. Raff  
Chief Financial Officer

Janet M. Weder  
Corporate Secretary

*Members of the Board*

Linda Apmadoc  
Mary Jane Auerbacher  
Paul T. Barich  
Joan Benson  
Maurice A. Calderon  
Sheila Cannon  
Mark Cantrell  
Robin C. Cochran  
Allan D. Griesemer  
Glenrae E. Jenks  
Tracy Massimiano  
Myrle R. Petty  
Jessie C. Powell  
Lowenda Rigney  
Marilyn Showler  
Cheri Skubic

*Honorary Life Members*

Glen T. Noyes  
Josephine Reay  
Harriet Talbert  
Irene Vitt

Karen E. Holmes  
Executive Director

P.O. Box 466  
Redlands, CA 92373  
(909) 793-7316  
FAX (909) 793-5086

Pam & Philip Boulding  
Magical Strings  
P.O. Box 4086  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Pam & Philip:

Magical is exactly the word we would use to describe your performance on the Redlands Bowl stage on Tuesday, June 29. The full moon, end of the day coolness, soothing melodies and shared personal impressions wove together to create a sublime evening. Post-concert reviews and audience members' comments have also been very complimentary.

As presenters, we are observers, not only of onstage performances, but also backstage performances. It was as much a joy to work with you "back stage," as it was to view your delightful performance.

Please extend our thanks to Brittany, Brenin, and the Claddagh Irish Dance Company for their exceptional talent and contributions. (The juggling was an unexpected and impressive addition.)

We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Holmes  
Executive Director

Marsha Gehara  
Program Co-Chair