

CCE MUSICAL ARTS & DANCE WEEK
TRADITIONAL IRISH FIDDLE, FLUTE, GUITAR, SEAN-NOS & SET DANCING
FORMERLY CCE FIDDLEWEEK
JULY 6-10, 2009

BRENDAN MULVIHILL, FIDDLE

Michael

Stewart



Fiddler extraordinaire Brendan Mulvihill, recently inducted into the Mid-Atlantic CCE Hall of Fame, will be one of the principal teachers at CCE MAD(for Trad) Week again this year.

Brendan Mulvihill's roots in Irish music run deep. Brendan's grandmother, Bridget Flynn, was a fiddler, and her brothers were all musicians as well. Brendan's father, the late National Heritage Fellow, Martin Mulvihill of County Limerick, Ireland, was a renowned fiddle player and one of the most highly respected Irish music teachers in America. Even with these powerful influences, Brendan's style is uniquely his own.

Brendan's strong tone, remarkable bow work and unsurpassed musicianship come from a deep love of the music and from a surprising influence. Though inspired by many traditional Irish musicians, Brendan also developed a passion for classical music. This classical influence can be heard most clearly perhaps in his playing of the baroque music of Turlough O'Carolan. The final distinctive result of Brendan's many influences was best summed up by a quote printed by the Washington Irish Folk Festival, "...It's often said that the difference between a fiddle and a violin lies not in the instrument but in the player. If that's the case, then Brendan is not the player one should look to when trying to draw such distinctions. Here is a man whose heritage, background and training epitomize that of the fiddler, but whose full, firm tone, exquisite bow work and subtle, sensitive musicianship bear all the hallmarks of the classical violinist...."

Brendan immigrated to New York with his family in 1965. In the '70s he traveled to Ireland playing throughout the country with his contemporaries and building a huge repertoire of tunes. During this time, he won the All Ireland Fiddle Championship. Later, Brendan moved to Birmingham, England where he played in ceilidh bands and with the many Irish musicians who had also settled in the English Midlands.

In 1975, Brendan returned to New York, where he soon began playing with accordion player Billy McComiskey and singer/guitarist Andy O'Brien. The three eventually made their way to Washington, DC, ostensibly for a week-long gig in The Dubliner pub as The Irish Tradition. The week turned into several years, and The Irish Tradition became a seminal influence in traditional music, helping to establish it as a permanent and integral part of Washington's musical fabric. During this same time period, Billy and Brendan traveled back to Ireland to win the All Ireland Fiddle/Accordion Duet Championship.

After recording several albums, the Irish Tradition disbanded. Brendan remained in the Baltimore/Washington area, using the region as a home base for his travels. Brendan appeared at the Eigse na Laoi at University College, Cork, Ireland in 1993 and again in 1995, where he played sets with uilleann piper Paddy Keenan, fiddler Martin Hayes and accordionist John Williams. Brendan and pianist Donna Long toured the country in 1994-95 as part of the Masters of the Folk Violin tour sponsored by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. In 1995, the duo was featured in the Washington Irish Folk Festival's evening concert, which was broadcast worldwide. In 1998 Brendan played in the PBS broadcast, Performance at the White House, for President and Mrs. Clinton and their guests. Brendan is an original member of The Green Fields of America all-star Irish concert tour. Brendan has also been interviewed by Noah Adams on NPR's All Things Considered and has appeared on Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion.

MITCH FANNING/9824 ROSENSTEEL AVENUE/SILVER SPRING MD 20910

[HTTP://WWW.CCEPOTOMAC.ORG](http://www.ccepotomac.org)
MITCH.FANNING@SEMPERFIDILS.COM

CCE MUSICAL ARTS & DANCE WEEK
TRADITIONAL IRISH FIDDLE, FLUTE, GUITAR, SEAN-NOS & SET DANCING
FORMERLY CCE FIDDLEWEEK
JULY 6-10, 2009

The Washington Irish Folk Festival published the following about Brendan's current playing style, "...The raw, unbridled energy of his youth has given way to a seasoned, sophisticated and mature immersion in an art form in which each individual note can speak volumes." In the current and past few years Brendan has been leaving this impression on people at such venues as the Milwaukee Irish Festival; the Dublin, Ohio Irish Festival; the Kansas City Irish Festival; the annual St. Patrick's Day concert at Gaston Hall, Georgetown University; the Baltimore Irish Festival; the National Folk Festival; the Friends of St. John's College concert series; the Washington Folk Festival; the Smithsonian Festival in Washington, DC; the Celtic Colours International Festival in Nova Scotia; the Philadelphia Irish Festival; the Washington Irish Folk Festival; the Institute of Musical Traditions; National Geographic; and the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage. He has also toured with Billy McComiskey and guitarist Zan McLeod at The Prism Coffeehouse in Charlottesville, Virginia; the Tir na nOg pub in Somerville, Massachusetts; the Celtic Trader concert series in Charlotte, North Carolina; and many others. Brendan currently plays Wednesday nights at Nanny O'Brien's pub in Washington with singer/guitarist Brian Gaffney.

Michael O Suilleabhain referred to Brendan as "...A rare genius..." This same thought has been shared by others and that is why so many have sought him out as their teacher. Sharing his talent with students of Irish music, Brendan has emerged as a highly respected and sought-after teacher. He taught for several years at the Augusta Heritage Irish Week in Elkins, West Virginia, the Ceilidh Trail Summer School in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the Milwaukee Irish Festival's summer school and most recently at the Catskills Irish Arts Week in East Durham, NY. Brendan has also taught several rising young fiddle players in the Washington, D.C./Baltimore area. Brendan received the 2005 Maryland Traditions Folk Arts and Culture Apprenticeship Award for teaching the art of traditional Irish fiddle playing.

MITCH FANNING/9824 ROSENSTEEL AVENUE/SILVER SPRING MD 20910

[HTTP://WWW.CCEPOTOMAC.ORG](http://www.ccepotomac.org)
MITCH.FANNING@SEMPERFIDILS.COM