

Cherish the Ladies

Irish

New York & Ireland

For over 20 years, the name of a time-honored Irish traditional jig has become equally well-known as the name of one of the most engaging ensembles in Irish music today - Cherish the Ladies. The group first came together in 1985, when folklorist/musician Mick Moloney organized a concert series to spotlight women in traditional Irish music. What began as a one-time weekend concert concept has grown into an internationally acclaimed band; Cherish the Ladies become one of the most sought-after Irish-American groups in Celtic music history. With their blend of virtuosic instrumentals, beautiful vocals, traditional and original arrangements, and stunning step dancing, this all female band captures the Irish spirit with extraordinary talent, creativity, and humor.

The past years have seen the group traveling all over North and South America, the United Kingdom and Europe, Australia and New Zealand performing in the finest concert halls and international festivals. They are equally at home in front of a symphony orchestra or in a festival setting. They have been named Best Musical Group of the Year by the BBC, Entertainment Group of the Year by the Irish Voice Newspaper, chosen as the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's International Group of the Year Award at the Celtic Connections Festival in Scotland and voted the Top North American Celtic act by NPR Radio's "Thistle and Shamrock."

Joanie Madden is a native New Yorker, world-class flute player, and the irrepressible leader of the group. Her father, noted accordionist Joe Madden, was from Co. Galway and her mother from Co. Clare. She began taking whistle lessons with National Heritage Fellow Jack Coen and within five years became the All-Ireland champion on both whistle and flute. Joanie became the youngest inductee into the Irish-American Musicians Hall of Fame and is the top selling whistle player in history having sold over 500,000 solo albums.

The group has had a rotating line-up over the years, with most of the top female Irish musicians in the world having served time at one point or another. Their current line-up has original member Mary Coogan on guitar, banjo, mandolin, Mirella Murray on accordion, Michelle Burke on vocals, Kathleen Boyle on piano and Roisin Dillon on fiddle. "We're not Celtic because it's cool. We were Celtic before it was cool," says bandleader Madden. "This music has always been passed down from father to son...I guess in our case we stretched the rules a bit. But passing it down from father to daughter seems to work just as well."