



Girsa

Girsa has captured the hearts of audiences everywhere with their melodious voices, electrifying musicianship and witty banter. Their energetic and enthusiastic performances of Traditional Irish music, song and dance have been met with outstanding acclaim. Maeve, Deirdre, Blaithin, Bernadette, Pamela and Emily bring a creative mix of fiddle, accordion, banjo, tin whistle, bodhran, guitar and piano to their shows. Their individual instrumental and vocal excellence combine to create a powerful force that is breaking into the forefront of Irish music in the US. Their first two CDs received rave reviews and their newest EP *Just a Thought* was released in December 2013.

There's an exciting future ahead for Girsa.

Maeve Flanagan was born into a family with a rich Irish music tradition. Her parents, Mike and Rose (nee Conway) were both accomplished fiddlers who were determined to pass on their musical legacy to not only Maeve but her future sister and brothers. Besides taking up the fiddle at age 5, Maeve also started Irish dance lessons. Her accomplishments in both were outstanding. Through her fiddle lessons from her mom and uncle Brian Conway, her greatest feat came at age 11 when she won the All Ireland under 12 fiddle competition at the Fleadh Cheoil held in Listowel, Co. Kerry in August 2001. She is also an accomplished tin whistle player having learned from Eileen Goodman. Maeve has medals from numerous All Ireland Fleadh Cheoils and over 50 from the U.S. Midatlantic Fleadh Cheoil.

Maeve is an avid tune composer and penned several for Girsa's most recent CD, 'A Sweeter Place.' She loves to blend traditional Irish music with a modern twist, which is evident in her compositions. Besides GIRSA, Maeve has also been an instructor at several Irish music gatherings including the Catskills Irish Arts week in East Durham, New York, the O'Flaherty Youth Camp in Dallas, Texas, and the Augusta Irish Heritage week in Elkins, West Virginia. She currently teaches up-and-coming fiddlers and tin whistler players in her home in Pearl River, NY. Maeve also appreciates the value of a good education, graduating from high school and attending Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, where she earned a bachelors' degree in History in 2011. She is currently a third year law school student at Pace University Law School in White Plains, New York.

Bernadette Flanagan, Maeve's sister, comes from the same musically talented family. From a young age her father urged her into beginning the piano, since the fiddle - the 'family instrument' - did not interest her. She learned from Annmarie Acosta for most of her instruction, and has also taken lessons from the great Felix Dolan. She has won a few awards at the Fleadh Cheoil in New York and she has competed in the Fleadh Cheoil na héireann in Ireland in piano accompaniment and ceili bands. Even earlier on, Bernadette started Irish dancing. She competed in her first Oireachtas at the age of 8 and her first nationals at 9. She also competed in and placed at the all-Ireland and world championships in Ireland. At around 15, Bernadette chose to try playing the bodhran and hasn't put it down since! She has had instruction in the drum from Myron Bretholz and Jackie Moran, two extremely accomplished musicians, over the course of a few years at the Catskills Irish Arts Week.

Bernadette was also a four year undergraduate employee of WFUV Radio at Fordham University, where she worked as a production assistant at one of the most popular Irish shows in the US - Ceol na nGael. She graduated in 2013 with a Communications major and German minor and is now working at an educational/publishing.

Blaithin Loughran (Bla, for short) was born into a family with rich Irish music and dancing traditions. Her mother, Margie Mulvihill, is a well known flute and tin whistle player and music teacher. Margie is from the well-known North Kerry – West Limerick musical/dancing family: the renowned Martin Mulvihill, her music teacher, was a cousin, and she is grandniece of the late

Jerry Mulvihill, a famous NY area dancing teacher. Although Bla's father, Frank Loughran, is not a musician, he is a native of Pomeroy, Tyrone - another area that boasts many famous musicians. Bla's stepdad, John Reynolds, is a well-known fiddle player in the NY-Irish music scene. All of Blaithin's siblings also play music: her sister Erin has a large and growing music school in Woodlawn and Pearl River, Neidin plays the banjo, tin whistle, guitar and writes songs, and her brother, John Paul, plays the fiddle, banjo, mandolin, guitar and even a little tin whistle. Margie and John joke that playing music is a pre-requisite to being in the family! In fact, Bla and her whole family were featured on HBO's series "The Music in Me" in 2005.

It is not too much wonder that Bla ended up taking lessons and turning out to be a gifted musician. She started taking accordion lessons from John Nolan at the age of 7 and later took lessons from Patty Furlong for many years. Bla was a regular winner at the Mid Atlantic regional Fleadh Cheoil in both solo button accordion and group competitions. Aside from her strong musical background, Blaithin graduated from SUNY Cortland with a degree in Political Science. While there, she studied abroad in Galway during her junior year and in her senior year, won the Atlantis Mobility Scholarship to study and intern with an MP in England.

Pamela Geraghty grew up listening to Irish Traditional music as her mom's family took lessons from Martin Mulvihill and Maureen Glynn as children and played at family get togethers. Her father grew up on the Mayo/Galway border - a part of the country that thrives in traditional music and dance. At the age of 8 Pamela began taking accordion lessons with the great Patty Furlong and spending summers studying music at various festivals including Catskill's Irish Arts Week, Scoile Eigse, and Fleadh by the Feale in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. She was privileged to learn from such greats as Billy McComiskey, John Whelan, Seamus Begley, Jackie Daly and many others. Pamela has been singing since she was very young and developed an interest in the traditional Sean- Nós (old style) singing at the age of 9. This style of singing became Pamela's passion and while attending workshops she was lucky enough to meet some of the people that have influenced her the most, including Seamus Mac Mathúna, Len Graham, Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh, and more. Starting at age 10 she went on to compete in numerous mid-Atlantic and All Ireland Fleadh Cheoils winning medals in both button accordion as well as group competitions and is a 10 time mid-atlantic champion in ladies singing. Pamela now teaches Sean-Nós singing in the Woodlawn House of Music and Pearl River school of music. She was also fortunate enough to connect with Mary Coogan, of Cherish the Ladies, who got her started playing the guitar.

Pamela began performing at the age of 12 and has been involved in Rockland's All-County Choir and NY All-State Choir, in Pearl River High School's women's glee club, jazz choir, and founded the school's a cappella group along with holding lead roles in middle school and high school musicals.

Emily McShane is 21 years old, was born and raised in Pearl River New York, and is currently a student at Manhattan College studying Elementary/ Special Education and in the five year masters program of Special Education. She has been surrounded by music all her life. Along

with her mother, who plays the fiddle, and all three of her sisters, Emily has grown up Irish dancing and playing music. Emily started playing the piano when she was about five years old, taking lessons with the fantastic Annmarie Acosta. Since she was very young, she spent many of her summers in Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland visiting her father's side of the family and mother's side in Galway. She has competed in the Fleadh Cheoils in both New York and Ireland for many years and has attended many sessions; her favorite being the Welcome In session in Forkhill, Co. Armagh. Placing third in the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil piano competition U15 is one of Emily's most cherished moments. Singing has also always been a love and passion of Emily's. More recently, Emily has learned to play the bodhran and guitar with Girsá, taking guitar lessons from the wonderful Mary Coogan of Cherish the Ladies. The Catskills Irish Arts Week is one that Emily has been attending since a young age, and is where she eventually learned to play the bodhran from different Irish artists. She has grown up listening to Irish music as well as country music, which is also a big part of her life. Emily has greatly been inspired by many artists such as Deirdre Connolly, Padraic O'Reilly, Luke Kelly, Deirdre Scanlon, Peter Murphy and country artists like Miranda Lambert and the Dixie Chicks. Girsá is a very big part of Emily's life and she knows the memories made with Girsá are ones that will be cherished for years to come.

Deirdre Brennan started fiddle lessons around the age of six with Rose Conway Flanagan. In the years she has been playing Irish music she also has added mandolin, banjo and vocals to her musical repertoire. She spent her summers growing up participating in the Catskills Irish Arts week, competing in the Fleadh Cheoil na héireann and attending Scoile Eigse. Deirdre has a number of All- Ireland medals in both solo and group competitions. She is greatly influenced by Andy McGann, Brian Conway, Mick Moloney, Dougie MacLean and Cathie Ryan to name a few. Deirdre now spends her time from working as a registered nurse in the Neuro Intensive Care Unit to travel and play various festivals and venues with Girsá.