

# arts/entertainment



Photo by MaryAnne Golon

Paddywhack tunes up . . . from left, Dan Newton, Jim Versch, Chris Sayre and Dave Marsh.

## Local band offers old Irish tunes

By Bill Graf

Since last St. Patrick's Day, Paddywhack, a Lincoln-based band, has been flavoring local barrooms with a taste of old Ireland.

"Most of the tunes are out of 17th, 18th and 19th-century Ireland," band member Chris Sayre explained.

Sayre, 25, sings and plays guitar and the English concertina. To play the concertina the player holds the instrument between his hands and presses buttons on either end while expanding and contracting the bellows.

"The tunes we play are descended from the old Irish clans," band member Dan Newton said. "Each clan had a story teller and historian who sang their tales."

The songs and skills to play them were passed down through the generations from father to son, he said.

Newton, 23, sings and plays piano, mandolin, tin whistle and hammer dulcimer.

The hammer dulcimer is a trapezoid-shaped instrument three inches deep, with 98 strings that the player hits with two felt covered hammers, he explained.

"It works a lot like a piano," he continued. "Except with a piano you push a key which in turn causes a felt-covered hammer to strike the string."

The tin whistle, or falgoleet, is a recorder-like instrument, Newton explained.

The other members of Paddywhack are: Dave Marsh, 23, who sings and plays the five-string banjo, bodhran (a sheepskin drum), accordion, tin whistle, spoons, and bones; Jim Versch, 22, who sings and plays mandolin, mandola, four-string banjo and vocals, and Terry Keefe, 25, plays the fiddle, mandolin and vocals.

"MOSTLY WE PLAY what are called contra-dance tunes, which are made up of jigs, hornpipes and reels," Newton said. "We also do a few bluegrass tunes and some original music. The original music is written in the 19th century tradition."

"They're all dance tunes, but there isn't anyone around here that knows the traditional dance," Versch said. "It's hard to get people in to see us unless they've heard us before, it's so unique."

"But the bar owners love it," Marsh said. "The music gets the people drinking a lot. Also, there are more people drinking Guinness Stout, (An Irish dark beer). The bartenders love to ring up a buck and a quarter on the register when they sell a bottle."

Newton said they usually draw 75 to 150 people at a job.

"It's a small but loyal following," Sayre said.

Newton and Versch were the first ones to take an interest in forming Paddywhack. In December 1978 Sayre joined them.

"At this time (December 1978) we had no plans of playing in bars," Sayre said. "We weren't sure there would be a crowd. It was mostly for our own enjoyment."

Early the next year, Sayre said he learned that an Omaha bar was in need of an Irish band for St. Patrick's day.

"DAVE JOINED the band and from January to March we got ready for our first gig," Sayre said. "After that, we started getting regular jobs in Lincoln and Omaha. Since then we've found that there is no generation gap with Irish music."

"It's really neat to see people of all ages together having fun," Versch said.

However, more varied than the crowds that see Paddywhack are the backgrounds and early influences of its members.

Marsh, a baker by trade, said his father is responsible for his early interest in music. Marsh's father is a classical pianist and nationally published composer.

"Most of my playing experience prior to Paddywhack had been playing classical piano and percussion," he said.

Keefe, affectionately called a small-time farmer by the other members, says his roots are in bluegrass.

"I feel kind of out of place. I've only been playing Irish music for a few months, but I like it, and I plan to stick with it," he said. Keefe spent a year and a half in Minneapolis playing fiddle with the Pocono Mountain String band.

Versch, an underground sprinkler serviceman, also said he has played mostly bluegrass in the past.

Versch said it was about a year ago, when he saw Kenny Hall, a blind mandolin player, that he became interested in Irish music.

"HE WAS PLAYING all these great Irish tunes and it sort of tickled my fancy," he said. Versch's four-year interest in bluegrass included some time with American Standard, a local bluegrass band.

Besides playing with Paddywhack, Sayre does a single act a few times a month.

"It wasn't until I moved to Boston in 1974 that I got a real interest in folk music," he said. "I used to hang out around Harvard Square where there were some very good street musicians. It was in a bar in that area that I saw someone play the concertina for the first time."

## 'Intense' concert pleases reviewer

By Penelope M. Smith

Many people went to the Zacher-Albright organ concert expecting neo-Bach, perhaps electrified or a little abstruse, but recognizable nonetheless. They expected a pleasant evening settled in their seats with spiritual strains wafting overhead.

### review

What the audience experienced was shocking, intense and, to some extent, esoteric. Zacher once said that a good sermon results in a scandal—the audience is forced to develop a "new orientation" to deal with the music.

Before his performance of Gyorgy Ligeti's "Volumina," Zacher directed the audience to, "listen to the different kinds and types of volumina (sounds) possible on the organ. There is a little trick—there is no melody, no harmony or rhythm in this piece, there is nothing to distract."

"Volumina" was the most fascinating piece of the evening. It presented the organ as a God machine with an omnipotent ability to manipulate an audience that could

not predict but was forced to wait. The tones varied from a soft, foggy resonance to an unbearable pitch. Unconstricted, they were released into a void where they penetrated, rather than surrounded, the audience. The power Zacher creates can be either positive or negative, depending, he says, on the individual.

After the cataclysmic effect of "Volumina," Zacher's "Szmaly" was an anticlimax. The audience was restless, not because the work lacked merit, but because Zacher was asking for an intense reaction from an already drained audience.

The evening was considerably lightened by Albright's performance of three excerpts from C. Curtis-Smith's "Masquerades." Albright fulfilled the promises of his introduction when he said, "The organ can be lyrical, smooth, witty and urbane, things that hadn't occurred to avant-garde composers twenty years ago."

"In Dulci Jubilo: Like a Carousel," a carousel gets stuck and begins to play backwards, slowly winding down to silence. "Scherzo (Jig for the Feet)" was a comical sort of gargyle jazz as perhaps a sly poke at horror-movie musical accompaniment.

More than an aesthetic experience, the Zacher-Albright concert was a "trial of Faith." There was a Brechtian appeal to the intellect and a reevaluation of music—what it is and when technical experimentation is art.

## Art experts appraise area heirlooms at Sheldon Art Gallery fund-raiser

By Bill Graf

Few treasures were found at the Nebraska Art Association's Heirloom Discovery Day, unless the treasure was a good time.

As a benefit for Sheldon Art Gallery, the Nebraska Art Association brought five art appraisers to Sheldon Saturday. For a five dollar donation, a wide variety of art objects could be appraised.

The day's appraisers were from Sotheby Parke Bernet of New York, experts in Oriental art, furniture, miniatures, paintings, prints, porcelain, pewter, silver and gold.

Jim Lally, an expert in Oriental art, said, "I haven't seen anything here today that is outrageously rare, but there have been one or two nice Japanese prints."

Their owners had acquired the prints for a relatively small amount of money some time ago, he said, but their values had increased considerably.

However, at Lally's table, one gentleman discovered that his two Japanese vases were worth much more than he had thought.

David Pumphrey, an expert in 19th-century furniture, said the most exciting pieces he had seen Saturday were a pair of 18th-century side chairs (armless chairs) worth about \$2,000.

Helen Lally, an expert in 18th and 19th century prints, said she hadn't seen anything of extreme value. But she was quick to add that this is usually the case.

"Most people that have nice prints or paintings know it," she said.

An expert on porcelain, pewter and glass, Barbara Deisroth, also said she hadn't seen anything at the Sheldon appraisals that was of great value but added that she had appraised a 19th century silver English mirror for about \$3,000 the evening before at a similar appraisal fair at the Lincoln Country Club.

Gerald Hill, an expert in silver, gold, antique jewelry, and watches, said he couldn't remember seeing any treasures.

"It's hard to pick out any one item when you appraise one item after another non-stop," he explained.

Martha Richardson, a Nebraska Art Association trustee also said that there were few surprises.

Another trustee, Joanne Kirkpatrick said, "the appraisers know geographically what sort of item people collect. Usually it's something that has been passed down through the family."

Richardson said that "even if their items aren't as old as they had hoped, they're still happy."

Appraising has been educational, she continued. "Everyone has a story to tell about their particular item." While they waited for appraisals people exchanged stories about where they acquired the items, where they were from, and what they thought they were worth.

Thomas Pearce had such a story to tell. While he waited for Helen Lally to return, he said that an art appraiser at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha had told him that his painting was an original Grandma Moses worth several thousand dollars.

But Lally said the painting was a silk-screen reproduction. Like most people there, Pearce went away with a smile.