

The World's Trusted Resource for Irish Dancing in North America!

# FEIS AMERICA

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## Team Talk!

Plus...



### To Trinity & Beyond!

*Midwestern champs take center stage.*

### • Oireachtas Survival

### • The Day The Feis Stood Still

*— new serial fiction by Rod Vick*



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## ON THE COVER:

Photo: Shamrock Photo. Front to back, left to right:

Front Row, left to right: Madison Amoriello, Sierra Donovan, Darin Carlin, McKayla Boyd, Kaylie Amoriello, Riely Cronin and Caitlin Conly.

Row 2: Douglas Lyon, Caroline Lee, Tierney Carlin, Christiane Rathstack, Kate Donovan and John Dinelli.

Row 3: Sydney Olney, Katherine Facelle, Jacqueline Sheridan, LuAnn O'Rourke-Boyd, Kaleigh Bryden and Sara Welch.

Row 4: Jessica Sheridan, Maeve Harris, Erin Bond, Erin Convey, Maura Zipf and Jacqueline Winters.

Row 5: Shannon Hodges, Emma Roithmayr, Mary Broderick Ryan, Lindsay Ryan, Cindy Dermody and Julia Wall.

Back Row: William Lee, Michael Facelle, Maureen Ryan, Maureen Dolan, Karen Hanley and Eileen Eustace.



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# Feis

Girls Under 11 8-Hand, 4th Place North American Nationals 2010.  
Back Row L to R: Caroline Lee, Tierney Carlin and Christiane Rathsack.  
Middle Row L to R: Kaylie Amoriello, Riley Cronin and Caitlin Conly.  
Front Row L to R: Sierra Donovan and Madison Amoriello.  
Photo: Shamrock Photography.

# Team Talk



WITH LUANN  
O'ROURKE-BOYD, TCRG, ADCRG  
O'Rourke School of Irish Dancing  
New York

*By Kate Eberle with Kathleen O'Reilly-Wild*

LuAnn O'Rourke-Boyd, ADCRG, TCRG, is the energetic and inspiring woman responsible for four successful ceili teams out of her dance studio in White Plains, New York. Considering that ceili dancing nearly disappeared in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland, the O'Rourke School of Irish Dancing's team achievements are an outstanding example of teamwork alongside a solo dance program. O'Rourke-Boyd, who has been teaching at her school for 15 years, was kind enough to chat with Feis America about her hard-working ceili teams, her proudest moments, and how she knew that teaching Irish dance was the only career for her.



Adult team dancers:  
William Lee, Karen Hanley  
and Michael Facelle.

**Feis America:** *Some Irish dance schools don't even have ceili teams, while yours appear to be very successful, especially in recent years. Why do you think ceili dancing is important? Is it really worth all the effort?*

**LuAnn:** I think Ceili dancing is important to maintain the traditional aspect of Irish Dancing and it brings a tremendous amount of school spirit to the table. The dancers have to work together in order to be successful so it creates a bond and friendship that they may not get through solo dancing. It's important to me to pass on the tradition of Ceili dancing and I believe the dancers are more well rounded Irish Dancers for it. If they go on to take their exams to become Teachers and Adjudicators they will be more knowledgeable and prepared. It's also a lot of fun and very different than solo dancing so very worth the effort.

**Feis America:** *How long have you been teaching ceili?*

**LuAnn:** I started teaching my adult students Ceili first in 2000 and didn't push the kids until 2004 or 2005. We had a good couple of years at the Oireachtas learning from the "school of hard knocks" and then started to get into medals. The adults won their first Nationals in 2002 and their first Regional in 2003. I've had children's teams in the top 2 and 3 spots in



*Photo:  
Shamrock Photography.*

*Adult Ladies and Mixed Ceili Teams 1st Place North American Nationals, 2010.  
Back Row L to R: William Lee, Karen Hanley and Michael Facelle.  
Middle Row L to R: Maureen Ryan, Lindsay Ryan, Maureen Dolan and Eileen Eustace.  
Front Row L to R: Mary Broderick Ryan, Julia Wall and Cindy Dermody.*



*Photo:  
Shamrock Photography.*

*Girls Under 16 Team North American Nationals 2010.  
Back Row L to R: Shannon Hodges, LuAnn O'Rourke-Boyd and Jessica Sheridan.  
Middle Row L to R: Maura Zopf, Jacqueline Winters, Erin Convey and Sara Welch.  
Front Row L to R: Erin Bond and Maeve Harris.*

Regional's and National's. We also have an amazing workshop teacher, Michael Smith, who works with our teams as well and that really helps us tweak and polish.

**Feis America:** *What would you say has been your proudest moment in teaching ceili?*

**LuAnn:** Oh my goodness! That's such a hard question because there have been so many but if I had to narrow it to just one it was at last year's Mid Atlantic Oireachtas when my daughter's u9 4-hand ceili team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> out of about 50 teams. I was so proud of them and her, not only as a teacher but as a parent. That was pretty amazing.

**Feis America:** *Who can join your ceili teams? What would you say are requirements for people who want to participate?*

**LuAnn:** Dancers have to demonstrate a good understanding of the basics and technique. They have to be able to get along well with others and the parents do too. Dancers also have to show dedication and have good attendance in class. We typically have an alternate and if someone is injured they are still expected to show up and observe. I have a great bunch of dedicated dancers that have formed strong friendships and bonds both in class and out. The biggest challenge is reconfiguring teams when kids age out. Our team dancers sign a con-

tract at the beginning of the year so they know the commitment involved.

**Feis America:** *How much practice and preparation go into a ceili team's efforts? How do you choose the team's dances?*

**LuAnn:** We practice Ceili all year round once a week and about two months before a major we practice two times a week if needed and one weekend a month in workshops. I like to choose dances that you don't see that often in competition and will help us stand out. We are not a big name school so I try to do something that will remain in the Adjudicators and audience's memories.

**Feis America:** *What are some differences between your experience teaching for ceili teams and teaching other Irish dancers?*

**LuAnn:** I am pretty strict with the teams and they know this going in because what one person does affects the whole team. The worst part about being the TCRG is that if someone is not living up to the standard then you have to replace them. It's my job to ensure that the strongest dancers are on the team and that means making tough decisions sometimes. In their solos they are dancing for themselves and if they don't put the effort forth the bottom line is that they are affecting themselves and just themselves. Both ceili and solo are similar in that we spend a great deal of time on drills but its different types of drills. In ceili we focus a lot on sevens and threes or over's and arms whereas in solo we focus our drills on rhythms and tricky movements.

**Feis America:** *Do you think that ceili dancers have a different attitude towards dance/competition than with solo dancers?*

**LuAnn:** I don't think I would call it an "attitude" but maybe a greater sense of the whole. I don't force kids to be on teams. They have a choice. If they are invited they can accept or decline. I think the dancers that are on the team know that there is something special in teams when sharing in a goal as a group and not just for oneself. I don't begrudge those dancers that don't want to do ceili and sometimes kids need a break or want to focus on solos. That's totally understandable and I respect them for their decisions.

**Feis America:** *You teach both children and adults - what differences do you see in how different age groups learn? Do you need to use very different teaching methods for different ages/skill levels?*

**LuAnn:** In the beginning I did find it easier to teach the adults ceili dancing. They were eager to compete at the Oireachtas and were quick to pick up the movements. I was new to ceili dancing and teaching so I learned a lot with them. When I first started teaching the children ceili the majority of my base dancers were in Novice and Prize Winner so they didn't look polished. Over the years though that has changed and the majority of my team dancers are now in Prelim and Open Champion except for the under 9 team which is a mixture of Novice through Open Champion. We also drill, drill, drill. I did start a new under 9 8-hand this year so that has been a challenge but fun. The little ones don't always get it right away but they are so darn cute. I tease them and tell them they can visit me in the loony bin the day after the Oireachtas is over. They think that's hilarious.

**Feis America:** *You danced competitively for years before becoming a TCRG, but dancing and teaching can be very different. How did you know that you wanted to pursue a career teaching Irish dance?*

**LuAnn:** I actually knew I wanted to teach Irish Dance when I was very young, probably when I started and I knew I wanted to judge too. It's like when people find their future husband or mate. I used to ask all the time, "How did you know that he's the One?" and they used to reply "I just knew". Well, it was like that for me with Irish dance, "I just knew". I am thankful I am able to do both teaching and judging because I really love it.

**Feis America:** *Teachers often say that they not only teach, but also learn a lot from their students. Do you think this is true for you? How so?*

**LuAnn:** Absolutely. My students have taught me that no matter how big your dreams you can achieve them with perseverance.



Photo:  
Shamrock Photography.

Mixed Under 13 Team North American Nationals 2010.  
Back Row L to R: John Dinelli, Kaleigh Bryden, Kate Donovan and Douglas Lyon.  
Front Row L to R: Christina Taylor, Katherine Facelle, Sydney Olney and Jacqueline Sheridan.