

# COLCANNON

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Authentic, joyous Irish music.... traditional with a touch of chamber music and music hall; Colcannon plays Irish music with panache, warmth and wit. Timeless songs and great musicianship transport the audience to another time and place. Colcannon is equally at home on the stage at a folk music festival or performing with a symphony orchestra.

Colcannon has developed a distinctive, inventive, and contemporary musical style while still keeping in firm touch with the heart and essence of traditional Irish music. Colcannon's concerts are renowned for their energy, for singer/frontman Mick Bolger's irrepressible sense of humor and sly wit, and, of course, for the music; music that expresses flights of joy, deep sorrows, and an unquenchable zest for life.

The band formed in 1984 in Boulder Colorado, USA, and their reputation has grown steadily over the years with the release of eight CDs on the Oxford Road Records label. The band's recent CD 'The Pooka and the Fiddler' received a Parent's Choice Award for its artful interweaving of music and storytelling. The Emmy®-award winning PBS special, "Colcannon in Concert," filmed at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts has aired nationwide.

Colcannon was named ensemble-in-residence at The Colorado College, the first non-classical musical group to be awarded this position.

Other projects include the development of 'Lusanna' a work for Colcannon and chamber orchestra, written by Colcannon bassist Mike Fitzmaurice, with text and lyrics in Irish and English by vocalist Mick Bolger. Earlier collaborations with orchestra featured Fitzmaurice's 'The Red Kite', a three movement concerto for Colcannon and orchestra, as well as symphonic arrangements of some of Colcannon's original compositions.

Colcannon's appeal crosses lines of age, gender and ethnic background. For while the musical focus is on the beautiful wealth of traditional Irish music -- all acoustic instrumentation, traditional as well as original tunes and songs, with some of the songs in Mick's native Irish language -- Colcannon's true message is the story of the resilient and joyous human spirit.



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## Reviews

Colcannon's brand of Celtic style music is packed with subtle touches and fluid interplay.  
fRoots magazine, UK

Colcannon has never drifted to New Age or Celtic rock clichés. They are traditional entertainers, displaying emotional stories, heroic and sorrowful, backed by a precise blend of instruments that characterizes the best of Irish music. Band leader Mick Bolger sings in Gaelic and English, and wins the most diffident crowds with his charm and tall tales. Band members play every instrument associated with Irish music, plus a few ancient oddities. Their newest CD, Trad., maintains a happy balance of rollicking good-time tunes and addictive Gaelic melancholy. Sure, you can expect the soothing refrain of an Irish melody, but be prepared to be blasted from your reverie by original compositions from one of the best acoustic Celtic bands in the United States.

Best of all, they share that name with the tastiest potato concoction on earth.

-Metro Santa Cruz

Colcannon is as tight, polished, and professional a band as I have heard in a very long time. Any singer would sound better backed by Colcannon. (Mick) Bolger is better than just any singer. What he and this band do together is very special. Bolger has a rich singing voice that fills out and enhances any lyric, but there's more to it than that. No rustic, he has a fine-tuned voice through which his accent shines enough to establish the Irishness of his songs while remaining subtle enough for foreign audiences. Bolger keeps the sense of story in his presentation, never sacrificing the story to the music, yet using the music to underline the stories he tells. There is a great sense of balance in Bolger's singing.

This is clearly music intended not for a parochial Irish audience but the world (feel free to read North American) market. The sound is full and rich and avoids the clichés of both simplistic folk treatments and the new so called Celtic and Celtic-rock movements. It is centered just right to appeal to audiences of all ages at every level of society.”

Bob MacKenzie, Sound Bytes

We started the evening as strangers and ended up great friends. The five-member Irish band Colcannon brought their warmth, vitality and unique brand of Celtic music to an enthusiastic audience at the Redlands Bowl Tuesday evening. Those who weren't aficionados of Irish music when they arrived must surely have been so by evening's end.

Band leader and vocalist Mick Bolger sprinkled the group's performance with huge dollops of Irish wisdom and deprecating humor. A great storyteller with a flyaway mane of white hair, Bolger introduced many of the band's numbers with background information or jokes. Often his jibes poked good-natured fun at the Irish, Welsh, Scottish or English, eliciting laughter and hoots from audience members.

From toe-tapping dance tunes to plaintive ballads to humorous ditties, the band offered a full range of Celtic music that lifted the spirits and happily heated up an already warm night. From dirge-like minor keys to lilting and cheerful melodic lines, the music expressed the whole gamut of emotions both instrumentally and vocally.

-The Redlands (CA) Herald

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## **MICK BOLGER**

Mick Bolger is becoming increasingly recognized as one of the leading interpreters of traditional Irish song. He sings in both English and his native Irish (Gaelic), bringing an emotional directness and surprising depth to his material. He also plays the bodhrán (the Irish goatskin drum) and his stories and unexpected flights of humor keep audiences intrigued. After working in a car factory and as a gravedigger Mick moved to the U.S. to pursue a degree in sculpture, but ended up focusing on performing traditional music. He is also an avid reader and a great cook and shares recipes and book reviews on the Colcannon blog.

## **MIKE FITZMAURICE**

Mike Fitzmaurice plays both guitar and acoustic bass in Colcannon. Another former visual artist, he earned a degree in painting before becoming involved in music. His musical past has run the gamut from bluegrass band to blues band to ballet orchestra. Mike's bass playing is unique in the traditional music scene, with the instrument often stepping up as an equal voice in the melodic texture- the "bass fiddle", as it were. He is also a skilled composer, and has written two full-scale works for Colcannon and symphony orchestra, "The Red Kite" and "Lusanna".

## **JEAN BOLGER**

A fiddler of both power and finesse, Jean began playing violin at the age of six: classical music was the 'approved listening' at home. A later convert to Irish fiddle, she brings great control to her fiery playing and a firm delicacy to her subtle, nuanced accompaniments. (On the other hand, she has occasionally been known to play the accordion, and has a weakness for Irish polkas) Jean is also a prolific composer, and at one point undertaking a project of writing a new tune every day for a year.

## **BRIAN MULLINS**

Brian originally joined Colcannon as a guitarist and mandolin player in 1994. His inventive rhythmic accompaniments are a defining aspect of the group's sound. Over the years he has incorporated more and more of his instrumental skills into the band's arrangements, playing mandocello, cittern, erhu (Chinese spike fiddle) and flute. His collection of odd instruments is an ever-growing phenomenon. Brian is a prolific composer, and has performed and recorded with more projects than we can list. He has also toured extensively with a residency program, bringing his enthusiasm for world music and instruments to elementary school children.

## **CYNTHIA JAFFE**

Colcannon's newest member, Cynthia has been performing in the Celtic music scene since 2002, most notably in the Colorado-based trio "County Boulder." A multi-instrumentalist with classical roots, she hails from New York and lived in New England, Denmark, Amsterdam, India, and various places between, before settling in Colorado. Long intrigued by world music, she studied classical Indian music (flute and kanjira) at Wesleyan University's World Music Program and with master teachers in Madras, India. Somehow though it was inevitable that the Irish flute would eventually capture her heart.

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## **CONCERT PERFORMANCES**

Colcannon has developed a distinctive, inventive, and contemporary musical style while still keeping in firm touch with the heart and essence of traditional Irish music. Colcannon's concerts are renowned for their energy, for singer Mick Bolger's irrepressible sense of humor and sly wit, and of course, for the music; music that expresses flights of joy, deep sorrows, and an unquenchable zest for life.

## **SYMPHONY PERFORMANCES**

Colcannon has two original pieces (20-30 minutes each) for performance with orchestra, both composed by Michael Fitzmaurice. "The Red Kite" is a three movement instrumental concerto featuring the band. "Lusanna" incorporates spoken word and song (in English and Gaelic) into a multi-section symphonic poem. Both pieces manage to be challenging, yet listenable, and both have been eagerly received by symphony and folk audiences. Performances can feature one or both of these pieces. An orchestral pops program is available as well.

## **KIDS' SHOW**

Although Colcannon's regular performances are popular with all ages, the latest addition to Colcannon's offerings is aimed particularly at children and families. "The Pooka and the Fiddler" is a riveting original tale, told in verse with musical accompaniment. Loosely based on an old Irish folktale, it tells the story of a young musician who learns some valuable lessons from his involvement with a Pooka. What's a Pooka? Listen and find out!

## **EDUCATIONAL RESIDENCIES**

The members of Colcannon all have extensive teaching experience and enjoy sharing with students at all levels. Equally comfortable with kindergardeners and graduate students, they were the first "non-classical" group to be appointed artist-in-residence at the prestigious Colorado College.

## **CHRISTMAS SHOW**

Colcannon's Christmas show is a relaxed and wry look at the season we all love. No bright lights and production numbers here- instead this show features traditional music, prose and poetry both silly and serious from writers such as Ogden Nash and T.S. Eliot, and some wonderful lesser known Christmas songs. Imagine sitting around a Christmastime fireside for a night of music and laughs with your good friends.

# COLCANNON STAGE PLOT

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**Mike is here**

**plays:**

Acoustic bass,  
bass harmonica,  
guitar

**needs:**

xlr for bass  
preamp,  
phantom power

**Jean is here**

**plays:**

Fiddle,  
concertina

**needs:**

XLR and AC  
for fiddle  
wireless

**Mick is here**

**plays:**

lead vocal,  
bodhran (drum)

**needs:**

just the  
microphones  
here

**Brian is here**

**plays:**

Guitar, Cittern,  
mandolin, 2nd  
flute

**needs:**

XLR for guitar  
preamp, XLR for  
cittern, phantom  
for both

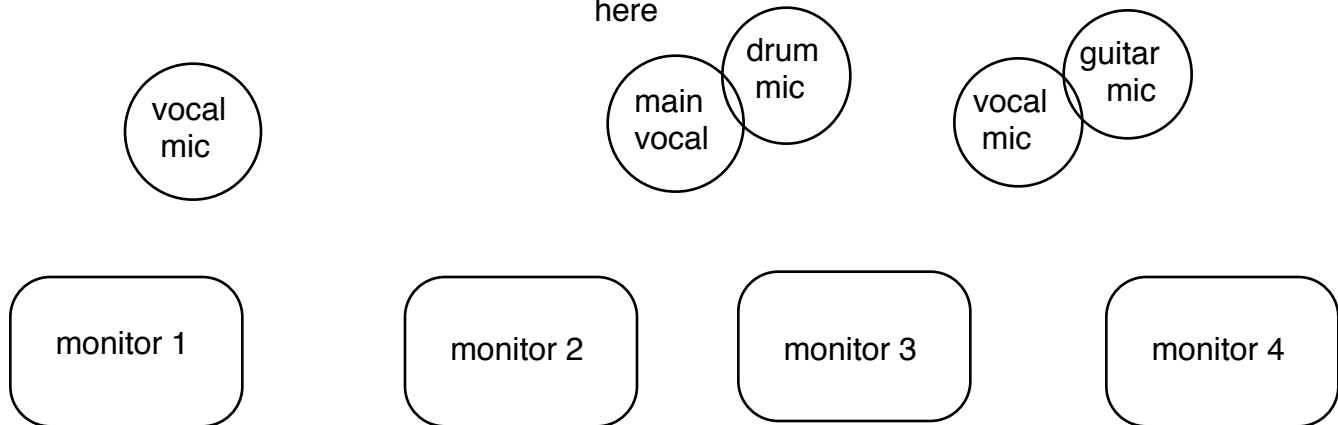
**Cynthia is here**

**plays:**

flutes, whistles

**needs:**

XLR and AC  
for headset  
wireless



**Summary:**

5 microphones (3 vocal, 2 instrument)

5 XLR lines

4 monitors

4 separate monitor mixes are preferred.

If only two mixes available, group monitors 1 & 2 and 3 & 4

(We bring the wireless mics for fiddle and flute, and the preamps.

Wireless receivers can be placed at the soundboard if you prefer, rather than at the stage.)

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