



With News & Classifieds From: **CITIZEN PATRIOT**

New listings of local real estate. [CLICK HERE](#) [CLICK HERE](#)

FREE checking with direct deposit and free online bill pay.

Get \$50 Cash Bonus. More details [»](#)
Standard Federal Bank

SEARCH Pick Newspaper Enter Keyword [GO >](#) FIND A BUSINESS Enter Category [GO >](#)

Home News+Biz Travel Sports Forums+Chat Cams+Radio Living Entertainment

CLASSIFIEDS

MUSIC

Kalamazoo Gazette [Click here to subscribe!](#)

» More from The Kalamazoo Gazette

Kalamazoo Music News

Celtic band looks to family for new members

Friday, November 5, 2004

By Mark Wedel

Special to the Gazette

Jim Perkins and Finvarra's Wren is a Celtic band from Farmington that's grown into a family affair.

The core of the group was formed six years ago: Perkins on guitar, his wife, Cheryl Burns, on dulcimer, Marty Somberg on fiddle, and Terence McKinney on uilleann pipes, a smaller cousin of the Highland bagpipes.

But lately Perkins and Burns' children, Asher and Alison Perkins, plus McKinney's daughter Siobhan, have been playing often enough with the group that they're considered a part of the Wren.

Advertisement

[CONTINUE STORY](#)

We make it easier to find a local job.
Because some door frames should never be repainted.



Find a job you love in the place you love.

mlive.com | The Best Local Jobs

- INSIDE **Entertainment**
- » [Arts & Events](#)
 - » [Books](#)
 - » [Dining & Bars](#)
 - » [Fun & Games](#)
 - » [Movies](#)
 - » [Music](#)
 - » [Television](#)

[SEND THIS PAGE](#)
[PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

- SPEAK UP!
- » [Entertainment Forum](#)
 - » [Local Bands Forum](#)
 - » [Ticket Exchange](#)
 - » [More Forums](#)
 - » [Log On to ChatXtra!](#)

Get The Best Local...
[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#)
[All Classifieds](#) | [Place An Ad](#)

» [Win a Frankenmuth Getaway for Four!](#)



Subscribe to **Oakland Business Review** and save **50% Off our regular rate!**



OAKLAND BUSINESS REVIEW

FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

- » [Enter to win a weekend getaway with Phantom tickets!](#)
- » [Want to see a movie? Celebration Cinemas -- Click here!](#)

» [Advertise With Us](#)

In 2003 and 2004, Siobhan McKinney, 12, won competitions from Michigan to Ireland's County Tipperary to be declared the All-Ireland Champion on the Irish harp for her age range.

Both of the Perkins children have won at the 2004 Midwest Fleadh (Irish music competitions) in Fort Mitchell, Ky. Asher Perkins, 14, on button accordion, played on stage with the Chieftains when he was 10. Alison, 16, "plays fiddle, compulsively,"

her father said. "That's all we hear every morning."

His kids got into the act as step dancers, Jim Perkins said in a telephone interview from his Farmington home, but they grew to find the music more exciting than the footwork. Now they're teaching the adults.

"They play on a par with many adults," Perkins said.

Perkins is proud to point out that his daughter can follow Somberg -- who has been playing Celtic fiddle since the '70s and was once her instructor -- on breakneck dance tunes.

"They're learning tunes from each other now."

All members of the band -- which is coming to perform in Comstock Saturday night -- search for rarely heard tunes and songs, Perkins said. Traditional works are a limited resource, and one can eventually get tired of "Danny Boy." But how often does one hear "Brown and Yellow Ale"?

"We try to find stuff that's very representative of the old traditional songs without doing stuff you might have heard too often before," Perkins said.

Finvarra's Wren makes use of four-part harmony vocals and instrumentation that could be considered flashier than what would have been played 100 years ago. The band quotes W. Somerset Maugham on its Web site (finvarraswren.com): "Tradition is a guide and not a jailer."

Folk culture means "preserving and passing on songs," Perkins said, "but we're also dressing them up a little bit for modern tastes, with arrangements that feature a lot of instrumentation."

As heard on song downloads from www.finvarraswren.com, McKinney can speed along on the uilleann pipes in sync with Somberg on the fiddle. Burns adds the American folk tradition with her dulcimer.

The band members make sure to point out the link between Celtic folk and Appalachian folk, Perkins said. "They're different branches of the same tree."

How did the band come up with its name? Finvarra is a common name that goes back to a faerie king of Irish folklore. The wren has to do with Irish boys toting dead birds in boxes door to door for treats on the day after Christmas, St. Stephen's Day. According to tradition, the Christian martyr St. Stephen was hiding in the bushes when a wren began singing above him. This attracted the attention of men looking to stone him. So on his day, Irish boys would try to kill wrens for revenge. This practice has turned into a tradition of boys taking an effigy of the wren in a shoebox door to door, where they perform songs and dances for treats. The musicians of Finvarra's Wren see themselves as these boys, singing for treats.

Concert

Jim Perkins and Finvarra's Wren, 8 p.m. Saturday, Colt Center, Comstock High School, 2107 N. 26th St. \$9, or \$7 for K'zoo Folklife Organization members, \$5 for students and seniors. 349-2033 or 553-9437.

© 2004 Kalamazoo. Used with permission

» Send This Page | » Print This Page

MORE MUSIC

[More Stories](#)

[The Best Local Classifieds: Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Place An Ad](#)

Special Home Delivery Offers!

[Ann Arbor News](#) | [Bay City Times](#) | [Flint Journal](#)
[Grand Rapids Press](#) | [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) | [Kalamazoo Gazette](#)
[Muskegon Chronicle](#) | [Saginaw News](#)



[About Us](#) | [Help/Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#).
©2004 [MLive.com](#). All Rights Reserved.

