

## • IRISH AMERICA •

**Irish Heritage On Display In The Old Mint Bank Vault**

by Eileen Mize

THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL Center's Keepers of the Steps program opened their latest exhibition to great acclaim and fanfare aptly on Leap Day and on the eve of Irish American Heritage Month—February 29, 2024. The exhibit entitled, Irish Dance—Celebrating the Roots, Rhythms, and Rituals of the San Francisco Irish is a special collaboration with the San Francisco Historical Society and is housed in the lower level of their museum located in the original SF Mint in the heart of the Financial District. The special exhibit explores how Irish dancing has fostered community and celebrated culture since the city's inception, with stories, images, and ephemera going back to the Gold Rush days some of which are serendipitously displayed in a bank vault from that era!

The Opening Night Reception drew a healthy crowd of people both new and familiar with Irish Dance, which is one of the goals of the program. As UICC Vice President and "Keepers" Committee Co-Chair Anne Cassidy Carew shared in her opening remarks, "San Francisco is a small city, and even smaller in the dance world. These are the stories that connect us and keep our heritage alive."

Vice Consul Jennifer Chadwick commended the group's efforts and under-



UICC Board Member Leo Cassidy; UICC Marketing Volunteer and Keepers Co-Chair Eileen Mize; Keepers Committee member and dance instructor Noreen Boyle Heavey, TCRG; Keynote Speaker Captain Jack Hart, SFPD; UICC Vice President and Keepers Co-Chair Anne Cassidy Carew; Vice Consul Jennifer Chadwick; UICC President Liam Reidy.

scored its important role in the Irish diaspora. The Consulate, which facilitates grant applications for the Government of Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme—of which the Keepers of the Steps program is a beneficiary—remarked on the impressive rate of growth of the program. The commit-

tee attributes this to an unmet need. Organizers say, "There is very little written about the history of Irish dance, and so it is incumbent upon us to record these stories—and with a sense of urgency before stories are lost."

The keynote was an animated and inspired address

from Captain Jack Hart of the SFPD who shared his own Irish dance story in the context of embracing his proud Irish heritage and how it has shaped his life. He delighted the crowd with his personal accounts, a quick song reminiscent of his dancing days with the Murphy School of Irish Dance at the Ethic Dance Festival, and concluded with a quick, and rousing step or two—spry as ever!

The evening was marked

by fine entertainment from the Boyle Irish Dance Academy—instructor Noreen Boyle Heavey, TCRG is a member of the Keepers committee and brought some dancers to add to the evening along with San Francisco's newest Rose, Maggie Baglin on pipes.

The 100 gathered guests had plenty of time to take in the exhibit and view the dress collection in the old bank vault. Stories were exchanged, memories made—and shared! Irish Dance has touched so many lives over so many decades—the theme alone provides a common ground and connects us all. The committee, led by Anne Cassidy Carew and Eileen Mize, consists of Noreen Boyle, Anne Baglin, Jamie O'Keefe, Kathleen Martin McKeon, and Jennifer Drennan.

The Keepers of the Steps Exhibition will be on display at the San Francisco Historical Society Museum, 608 Commercial Street, in San Francisco's Financial District through May 2024. The Museum hours are Thursday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm—the historic building alone is worth a look. And while you are there, you'll find that the Irish Dance history exhibition pairs nicely with the SF Historical Society's concurrent exhibit featuring the Museum of Performance and Design's, San Francisco On Stage with historical artifacts from the SF Ballet and Opera.

To learn more about the program and collection efforts visit <https://irishcentersf.org/programs/keepers-of-the-steps>.

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## Bay Philharmonic Presents Celtic Celebration

St Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17

CELEBRATE ST PATRICK'S DAY with an exciting, lively, soulful, educational, and entertaining experience when Bay Philharmonic brings Celtic Celebration to Chabot College Performing Arts Center in Hayward, CA, on Sunday, March 17.

Bay Philharmonic's artistic director and conductor, Jung-Ho Pak, will share colorful stories about the Celtic culture and traditions with notable performances by Annie Dupre (vocals/violin), Caroline McCaskey (award-winning Scottish fiddler), Culann's Hounds (Irish band), San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers (beloved Bay Area fiddle group), Todd Denman (Irish uilleann pipes), Bill Wolaver (piano/arranger), Kennelly School of Irish Dance (Irish dancers), and Dunsmuir Scottish Dancers, and the entertaining 50-piece Bay Philharmonic orchestra.

"We are pulling out all the stops to bring you an extraordinary and unique St Patrick's Day celebration with wonderful Celtic musicians, singers, dancers, and storytellers," says Jung-Ho Pak. "Along with engaging video, gorgeous lighting, and stunning sets, concertgoers will get a true immersive Celtic experience. If you're looking for luck o' the Irish, this show will fill your pot of gold!"

The festivities start at 2 pm when the doors open, welcoming all guests to enjoy pre-show Celtic entertainment and festive

beers (including Dokkaebier's Milk Stout), beverages, and snacks (available for purchase). The primary performance begins at 3 pm.

Bay Philharmonic's renowned and esteemed Artistic Director and Conductor Jung-Ho Pak has been described by *The New York Times* as a conductor who "radiates enthusiasm" and the *LA Times* as "a real grabber." Jung-Ho Pak is known for his unique approach and vision for symphonic music. Pak brings over 35 years of experience conducting acclaimed professional and conservatory orchestras worldwide. As with every show, Pak will infuse his style of creativity, knowledge, connections, passion, and enthusiastic conversational personality.

Individual show tickets are \$25 to \$67 (\$10 for students, must show student ID at the door) and are available on the Bay Philharmonic website, [BayPhil.org](http://BayPhil.org). Ticket purchasers are automatically entered into a raffle to win a pair of round-trip tickets to Ireland, courtesy of show sponsor Aer Lingus. Tickets are round-trip tickets from SFO to Dublin (Blackout Dates Apply). Additional Raffle tickets will be available for purchase at the Celtic Celebration show.

Chabot College Performing Arts Center is at 2555 Hesperian Blvd, Hayward, CA 94545. There is a large parking lot with ample free parking.