

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES

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IRISH ARTS CENTER TO OFFER SPRING 2020 SEASON OF CLASSES ONLINE

26 Courses in Music, Dance, Language, Playwriting and Storytelling Reemerge on the Zoom Platform after Suspension Due to COVID-19, Allowing People Worldwide to Connect Through Irish Arts and Culture

Irish Arts Center (IAC), based in New York City and renowned for presenting the best in Irish and Irish-American arts and culture, today announced that it will offer a robust spring season of courses online via the interactive video platform Zoom. Over the course of an eight-week term beginning Monday, April 13, experts in Irish music, dance, language, theater, and storytelling—many who have long histories teaching with IAC—will lead 26 different classes comprising six to eight sessions each, providing enrichment, joy, and connection amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time when community, culture, and art are at once crucial and harder than ever to access, the move online makes it possible for people across New York City – and far beyond – to take part in many of the same beloved IAC classes they would usually enjoy. The use of new platforms to continue its educational programs—which have been at the heart of the organization’s vision for sharing Irish culture since its beginnings in 1972—is a fitting step for the organization as it prepares its momentous expansion, looking ahead to the opening of the New Irish Arts Center. This state-of-the-art new permanent home will provide a bigger platform for the institution’s multidisciplinary performance, installations, residencies and special events, as well as for its educational activities.

“This is a time of sadness and fear and loss, but also a time of profound solidarity, of shared humanity, of creativity and opportunity. We are eager to adapt and develop experiences that keep our community nourished and connected, while providing opportunities for those who have lost work due to COVID-19,” said **Aidan Connolly, Executive Director of Irish Arts Center**. “And so it brings us great joy to launch our spring season of classes, providing online learning and engagement experiences for everyone, from anywhere, led by our wonderful core of Irish Arts Center teaching artists.”

IAC is offering instruction in instruments including fiddle, with musicians **James Cleveland** (an IAC teacher since 1999 and member of IAC’s céilí band) and **Caitlin Warbelow** (*Come From Away* on Broadway, Riverdance’s *Heartbeat of Home*); Celtic harp, with composer, improviser, and harpist **Mia Theodoratus** (whose credits include composing for *Flight of the Conchords* and being invited to perform for the Irish Prime Minister and President Obama); the bodhrán Irish drum, by **Siobhan Egan** (a founding member of Cherish the Ladies, who toured worldwide with the band for almost 13 years and recording seven CDs, many of which feature her own compositions); tin whistle, by flute and whistle player **Kieran McCarthy-Fell** (who plays and performs regularly at sessions and gigs in the NYC area); mandolin, by multi-instrumentalist **Benjamin Engel** (who, across his time performing in New York, has played with ensembles ranging from folk and bluegrass, to trad to jazz and beyond); and voice, by singer, composer, and musician **Carrie Erving** (whose singing has been featured on *NPR’s Radiolab* and BBC Radio, and who recently launched her debut EP, *Release*, under her moniker Shrines). There are step dance classes by **Michelle Esch** (who has worked with Syncopated City Dance Company/Swing FX, Flexicurve, Meagan Woods & Company, and EDP Dance Project) and, for kids, by **Niall O’Leary** (All-Ireland and world champion Irish dancer, Director of the Niall O’Leary School of Irish Dance); Irish language courses taught by **Siobhan Ni Chiobhain** (a native Irish speaker who has worked on various Irish and English Language media productions for BBC, RTÉ, TG4, UTV, Raidió na Gaeltachta, Raidió na Life, and more) and **Caomhe Nic Giollarnáith** (who currently teaches Irish language and literature undergraduate courses at Lehman College, CUNY); a playwriting class led by **Beto O’Byrne** (co-founder of Radical Evolution, former Artistic Director of the Austin Latino Theater Alliance, and playwright whose commissions include works for 52nd Street Project, The Foundry Theatre, The Movement Theatre Company, and Watts Village Theater Company); and two storytelling courses from two-time Moth GrandSLAM winner **Brad Lawrence** (who has appeared on shows including *The Liar Show*, *Adam Wade’s Super Stories*, *The Risk*

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Podcast, Story Collider, and How I Learned). Enrollment for all classes is open [here](#). After signing up, registrants receive a link and instructions for how to download the Zoom program and use their online classroom.

Irish Arts Center has suspended in-person activities for the duration of the spring season, which was to be the last in its longtime home at 553 West 51st Street in Manhattan before the opening of the heralded New Irish Arts Center, around the corner on 11th Avenue, this fall. In addition to the launch of the spring season of online classes, IAC begun sharing an array of digital content on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) to offer hope and uplift. “We are also looking to the horizon,” Aidan Connolly said. “A beautiful new Irish Arts Center beckons us on the other side of this crisis. A place for us all to come back together.”

Irish Arts Center is accepting donations to help the institution and its core of artists and teachers endure the COVID-19 crisis [here](#).

About Irish Arts Center

Irish Arts Center, founded in 1972 and based in Hell’s Kitchen, New York City, is a national and international home for artists and audiences of all backgrounds who share a passion for the evolving arts and culture of contemporary Ireland and Irish America. We present, develop, promote, tour, and distribute work from established and emerging artists and cultural practitioners, providing audiences with emotionally and intellectually transporting experiences—the results of innovation, collaboration, and the authentic celebration of our common humanity.

Steeped in grassroots traditions, with a commitment to inclusion that dates back to our founding, we provide education programs and access to the arts for people of all ages and ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, and an international home for the Irish community to come together and engage with a dynamic global diaspora.

In 2018, IAC broke ground on a landmark new permanent home, including a state of the art, flexible, contemporary, flexible performance and arts space for the presentation and development of work across a range of disciplines; a second, intimate performance space—the renovated historic Irish Arts Center theatre—optimized for the most intimate live music and conversation, recordings, master classes and special events; classrooms and studio spaces for community education programs in Irish music, dance, language, history, and the humanities; technology to stream and distribute the Irish Arts Center experience on the digital platform; a spacious and vibrant avenue-facing café lobby that will be a hospitable hub for conversation and interaction between artists and audiences; and a beautiful new courtyard entrance on 51st Street where the historic Irish Arts Center building and the new facility meet.

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