

Enya

This essay was one of the winning essays in the Irish Cultural Society's writing contest in 1997. The writer is a student at Roslyn High School; her teacher was Mrs. Marian Goldstein and the English Department head is Dr. Donald Morrongiello.

Lush, delicate arrangements and sweeping vocals softly fill the listener's ear. All seems to be at peace in the world as the reassuring harmonies of Enya's *The Longship* from the album **Watermark** flow forth like a gentle breeze. There is a brief pause and the inspiring and soul-searching laments of *Storms in Africa* pervade the words, giving the listener strength and courage. No matter which album or ballad, Enya's songs always leave a deep impression.

Enya's latest album, **The Memory of Trees**, paints a portrait of nature so worshipful and idealized that heaven and earth seem interchangeable. Even the instrumental tracks seem to carry soothing hidden messages, urging the listeners to seek out the beauty surrounding them. As Enya sings "hope is home, and the heart is free" on *Hope Has a Place*, we are transported to a world free of violence and hate. Enya's records **Watermark** (1988) and **Shepherd Moons** (1991) provide a soothing soundtrack for an overstressed society. They both weave layers of vocals and keyboards into a vision of our serenity. All of Enya's songs combine the calming sounds of New Age with her traditional Irish roots to produce a blend of Celtic-New Age music.



Born as Enya Ni Braonain in Donegal, Ireland, Enya is the daughter of a bandleader and a music teacher. After graduating from convent school, she joined two of her brothers and sisters in the family singing group Clannad and stayed with them for two years. When Enya moved on to do solo music, she carried with her the elements of Irish music.

Songs and poetry are in the Irish heart and on the Irish tongue. The beauty of Irish music has long been universally recognized, as has the equal beauty of its verse. The Irish songs cover the personal experience of men and women, their pleasures and heartbreaks, songs which express their attitudes. Enya continues this tradition with her soul-searching lyrics which can be seen in her hit *Evening Falls* of **Watermark** as she delicately sings, "forever searching; never right! I am forever lost." Irish songs sing the lyrics

quietly and naturally, but tell the story completely. While a great many Irish songs are love songs and folk songs, many are basically laments. All-encompassing vocals and synthesizers that emulate harpsichords are the typical Enya laments.

Perhaps the quintessential example of Irish influence on Enya's Celtic-New Age style is her 1992 album which is, in fact, entitled **The Celts**. The songs of this album are wrapped in smooth vocals which carry strong hints of folk melodies. *March of the Celts* is a resplendent song of Irish pride. **The Celts** is replete with songs which follow the nature of the typical Irish ballad. In the life of eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland, the ballad singer was an important person. Ballads recorded events of local history, acclaimed the triumph of some popular idol or recounted a famous folktale. *Fairytale* tells the story of the Fairy King Midir and his love for the beautiful princess Etain, while *St. Patrick* narrates the tale of the man who was responsible for Ireland's conversion to Christianity. *Boadicia* and *Bard Dance* both describe popular folk heroes of Ireland's history. Enya's love for Ireland is also evident in her music. As she sings in *Exile*, "I'll find a way/I'll find a way home," it is clear that Enya desires to be in her homeland.

Enya infuses all of her music with flowing emotion. As Enya said, "A lot of it sounds melancholy, but that's a reflection of the passion and pride of Irish culture." Enya is at the forefront of the growing popularity in Celtic-New Age music through her tranquil and heavenly melodies. Enya's lush arrangements rarely come off as banal and contrived as the music of some of her contemporaries often does. Enya blends her Irish background with New Age music to create melodies that lull us into a completely tranquil place, a truly beautiful place to be.

(written by Lisa Schwartz, September 1997)

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