

# Blas International Summer School of

## Irish Traditional Music and Dance



Irish World Academy of Music and Dance  
University of Limerick

### DANCE TUTORS

#### COLIN DUNNE



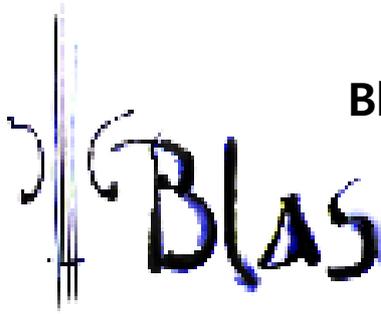
*Colin Dunne is a leading figure in the world of traditional Irish dance, who has made the cross over into contemporary dance and theatre. Best known internationally for his performances and choreography in Riverdance and Dancing on Dangerous Ground, he has been forging a new creative path since his time as artist in residence at University of Limerick where he completed an MA in contemporary dance in 2002. In 2007 he was nominated for a UK Critics Circle National Dance Award (best male: modern dance) for performances at The Barbican in Fabulous Beast's production of The Bull. His first solo show Out of Time premiered in January 2008.*

*Colin Dunne was born in 1968 in Birmingham, England to Irish parents. He took his first lesson in Irish step dance at*

*the age of three with the locally based Comerford School. At the age of 9, he won his first World Championship title and was the first dancer to win the World, All England and All Ireland titles in the same year. From the age of 12 he was taught by Marion Turley in Coventry and when he retired from competition at the age of 22, he had won a total of nine World, eleven Great Britain, nine All Ireland and eight All England titles. He was influenced from an early age by tap dance – Gregory Hynes in particular – which contributed to his often complex approach to rhythm within the structures of traditional Irish music. His musical approach to dance was also aided by his ability to play piano by ear. For years he played as a dance accompanist at competitions in the ragtime style of Irish dance piano music.*

*At the age of 19, he was the youngest person ever to receive an Irish Post Award in recognition of his achievements in Irish dance. Fellow award winners that year included poet Tom Paulin and theatre director Declan Donnellan. Previous winners included Bob Geldoff, Daniel Day Lewis and Brenda Fricker.*

*Colin graduated from Warwick University in 1989 with a B.Sc in Economics before going on to work as a trainee accountant at the Birmingham offices of Arthur Andersen. At the same time he had gained his dance teachers exam (T.C.R.G.) and was teaching successfully with Marion Turley in Coventry and giving workshops in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. He resigned from Arthur Andersen on the day he became a qualified Chartered Accountant to go on a month long tour of Canada with The Chieftains. He has worked as a dancer ever since.*



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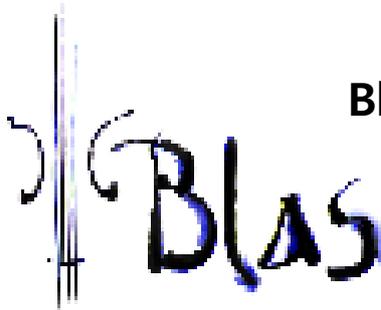
*Between 1992 and 1995 he toured regularly with musical groups The Chieftains and DeDannan. The former saw him begin a dance partnership with Jean Butler. The latter led to a memorable performance with Frankie Gavin and Stefan Grappelli at Belfast's Ulster Hall, and then to a collaboration with American tap dancer Tariq Winston for the Irish Society St. Patrick's Day Ball in New York in 1995. Six months later, Dunne would find himself working with both Butler and Winston in Riverdance.*

*Colin joined the cast and creative team of Riverdance in October 1995. He was initially invited to choreograph and perform the newly commissioned number Trading Taps with Tariq Winston. However with the departure of original male lead and choreographer Michael Flatley the day before the re-opening of the show at The Hammersmith Apollo in London, he found himself taking over the principal role at short notice. He toured with the production for three years, taking the show to its USA premieres in New York (Radio City Music Hall) and Los Angeles (Pantages Theatre), and also to Australia. His performances were recorded for the Riverdance – Live from New York DVD in 1996. Further choreography credits for the production followed; Firedance (with Maria Pages), Heartbeat of the World (with Maria Pages) and Heartland Duet (with Jean Butler). Special TV appearances during these years include The Royal Variety Show (The Dominion London), The Kennedy Honours (Kennedy Centre Washington D.C), and **The Grammy Awards** (including a duet with Savion Glover) at Madison Square Garden, New York.*

*In June 1998 Colin left Riverdance to begin work on a new project with Jean Butler. Dancing on Dangerous Ground was based on the myth of Diarmuid Agus Grainne, and was produced by Harvey Goldsmith and Radio City Music Hall. The show received its World Premiere at The Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London in December 1999 and went on to perform to full capacity at Radio City Music Hall in March 2000. Although the show received critical acclaim in New York, it had failed to capture the imagination of audiences and critics in London. It closed in June 2000.*

*After an eighteen month period living in New York, Colin returned to Ireland in 2001 to take a position as dancer-in-residence at the University of Limerick at the invitation of Micheal O'Suilleabhain. In that year, he took the Masters in Contemporary Dance Performance under the guidance of Mary Nunan, studying with contemporary practitioners such as Mark Baldwin, Wendy Houston, Yoshiko Chuma and Yvonne Rainer. He began focusing on the creation of short solo works, interrogating the space between his traditional dance roots and contemporary arts practice. Short solos were presented at The Vail International Dance Festival, Colorado, Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton Canada, and The Queen Elisabeth Hall, London. As part of his final MA he choreographed "Headfoot" for the Daghdha Dance/Yoshiko Chuma production of 10,000 Steps which closed the first Dublin International Dance Festival.*

*Since finishing his Masters in 2002 he has sought collaborations with contemporary choreographers in parallel with his own solo creative work. In 2003 he worked again with Yoshiko Chuma in the Daghdha production of The Yellow Room (with dancers Mary Nunan and Olwen Grindly and actor Padraic Delaney). In 2005 he joined Michael Keegan Dolan's Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre for their production, The Bull which controversially played for two weeks at The Dublin Theatre Festival, in a role which many saw as a self-parody. His performances in The Bull at The Barbican in 2007 earned him a nomination for a UK Critics Circle **National Dance Awards** (best male: modern dance). Other work during this period includes choreography for The Abbey Theatre (The Shaughraun 2004), and performances with The Irish Chamber Orchestra*



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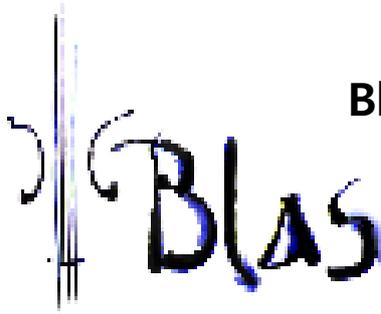
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*(Carna, written by Bill Whelan. Tour of Ireland 2004 and Carnegie Hall 2005). A recording of the chamber piece can be found on the album The Connemara Suite*

*Since 2002 Colin has been a regular guest tutor at the University of Limerick, on the MA in both Traditional and Contemporary Dance, and the BA in Traditional Dance and Music. He has also toured his Masterclass series to the USA, Europe and Russia. In 2004 he was invited to teach in Shanghai and Beijing during a two week residency as part of the China-Ireland festival. Later that year he returned to Birmingham to teach 6 National Express coach drivers for the Granada TV production, For One Night Only. In 2006 and 2007 he was a regular commentator and judge on the RTE show, Celebrity Jigs and Reels. He has also written and presented a four part radio series for Lyric FM called The Story of Tango (2003).*

*His first full-length solo show **Out of Time** premiered at Glór Irish Music Centre in January 2008. This multi-disciplinary work (dance, text, sound technology and archival film footage) sees Dunne return to the question of his traditional dance roots from the perspective of a contemporary practitioner. His ongoing work is supported by The Arts Council/An Comharail Ealaion; since 2004 he has received 2 bursary awards, a commission award and a project: new work award.*

*He currently lives in County Clare, Ireland.*



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University of Limerick

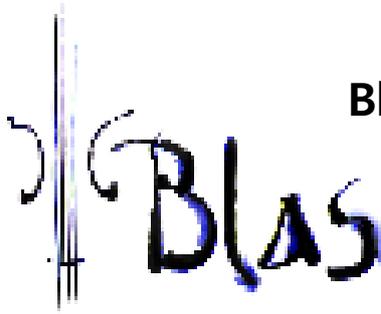
## LAUREN SMYTH



*Born in Co.Down, Northern Ireland, Lauren started dancing at the age of 4 with the Festival tradition of Irish dance. This tradition of dance is mainly based in Ulster. Throughout her competitive career Lauren won many regional championships with the St.Patricks School including the Ulster and Northern Ireland titles numerous times. She transferred to the Reilly School of Irish dance in her late teens where her success in competition continued.*

*Touring the world following her passion had always been Lauren's dream and in 2007 she joined the Irish dance show Rhythm of the Dance where she toured the world extensively performing the lead role for 3 years. In 2010 she then went on to fulfil her life long ambition in joining Riverdance. She is the first female from the Festival tradition to become a principle dancer with the show and has been proudly leading the troupe around the world since 2011. The highlight of her career to date was when she stepped out on stage as the principle female in Belfast's Odyssey Arena to a home crowd.*

*This is Lauren's first year teaching with the Blas Summer School. Lauren loves teaching and finds it extremely rewarding working with and inspiring the next generation of dancers. She particularly loves to see the passion and energy that each dancer brings with them to the summer schools like this and she is really looking forward to each dancer's take on the Festival Slip Jig this summer.*



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## EDWINA GUCKIAN



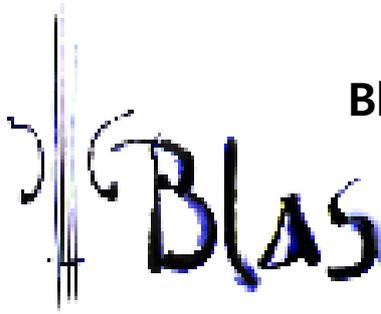
*Sean Nós dancer Edwina Guckian hails from outside the village of Drumsna in Co. Leitrim. She learned her dancing from her mother and the local dancers of Leitrim and Roscommon. Her style is greatly influenced by the style of local music she grew up listening and dancing to.*

*Music plays as much an important role as dancing does in Edwina's life. "As much as I love dancing, it would be nothing without the music". She began learning the fiddle from Irene Guckian and her grandfather Ned Lee at the age of 9. She then picked up the tin whistle learning from local man, Padraig Sweeney and Tipperary's Seán Ryan and in recent years she has taken up the concertina. Edwina decided to further her love of music by studying it in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra where she later achieved a degree in Music, English and Education and graduated as a primary school teacher in 2010.*

*Having started teaching dancing at the age of 16, Edwina has now taught her steps and toured with shows and bands in every continent all over the world. She has shared the stage with some of Ireland's most influential acts such as Altan, De Danann, Dervish, Mairtín O Connor, Frankie Gavin,*

*Kíla, Martin Hayes, Séamus Begley, We Banjo 3 and Beoga to name a few. Edwina worked as choreographer on director Ken Loach's latest film, Jimmy's Hall, nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival. She also worked as a guest presenter on RTE's children's arts programme The Beo Show.*

*Edwina is the sole force behind her dance club "Sean Nós ar an tSionann". She has singly revived the old style of dancing in her area and believes there is not a house in any parish in Sligo, Leitrim or Roscommon now that a child can't get up and knock sparks out of the floor with a few steps. The club, which is now in it's 13th year, has over 500 members, 11 teachers and is based in Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo and Longford with pop up weekend workshops around the rest of the country. Sean Nós Dancing is the main style of dancing taught at the club but throughout the year the dancers also learn set dancing, 2 hand dances, Lindy Hop, Tap Dance, Jiving, Flatfooting and contemporary dance.*



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Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

University of Limerick

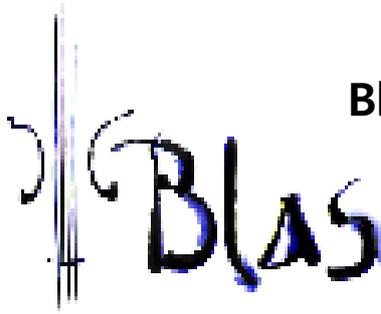
*In 2006, she was awarded Leitrim County Council Arts person of the Year and in 2015 awarded Leitrim Business Person of the Year by the Irish Enterprise Board with a €20,000 award fund for her latest project "The Dance Movement" which launched in April 2017. It is an online learning hub for dancers worldwide with courses in all styles of Irish dance with the modern day dance masters of Ireland.*

*In 2015 Edwina left her full time primary school teaching career to focus on her personal development in dance and business. In July 2015 she launched her first Sean Nós Dance tutorial and performance DVD "Second Nature" which she has sold more than 2500 copies worldwide to date. For the past 7 years she has been the dance teacher in residency at the Joe Mooney Summer School and annually teaching at the South Sligo Summer, O' Carolan Summer School, Scoil Gheimhridh Ghaoth Dobhair to name a few. August 2016 saw her launch the first of her children's summer camps at Sean Nós ar an tSionann in Sligo and Leitrim which were a huge success.*

*Most recently she has collaborated with Zogma Dance Company from Quebec, a project supported by Culture Ireland and the Arts Council and commissioned by The Dock Arts Centre for it's 10th anniversary. The show "Sokalo" toured Ireland in September 2015 and March 2016 and Quebec in May & Sept 2016. Zogma's interest in Irish dance stems from the links between their form of percussive dance, and indeed Quebec folk dance, that specifically traces its roots back to traditional Irish and French-Canadian dancing. The show also features Irish artists Laoise Kelly, Caitlín Nic Gabhann and Liam Scanlon.*

*In 2015/2016 Edwina has been involved in a project she is very passionate about; The Leitrim Equation – a performance in music, words and dance. Working with artists Eleanor Shanley, Vincent Woods, Pdraig McGovern, Donal Lunney, Dave Sheridan and John McCartin.*

*In 2016 and 2017, with the aid of The Arts Council of Ireland and Leitrim Arts Office she hosted a hugely successful, week long dance residency at the Dock Arts Centre with artists Nic Gareiss, Ultan O' Brien and Danny Diamond. This led to Edwina setting up The Leitrim Dance Project which runs many dance events monthly across Co. Leitrim, open to all cultures and communities to partake in, including the Lough Allen Dance Weekend and Effrinagh Crossroads Dance.*



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Irish World Academy of Music and Dance  
University of Limerick

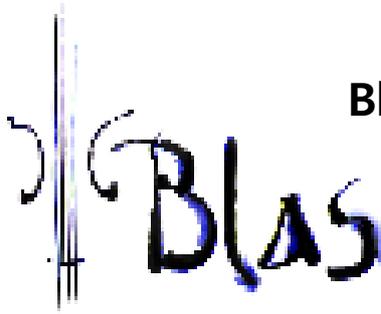
## CIARA SEXTON



*Ciara Sexton is an internationally known Irish dancing professional who possesses multiple skills as a Lead Dancer, Choreographer, Lecturer and Television Announcer/Presenter for major shows and events throughout the world.*

*She is a five time World & All Ireland Champion. Show experience includes; Lead dancer with Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance, Lord of the Dance 3D, Lead dancer in both Riverdance and Heartbeat of Home.*

*She has also served as a television broadcaster and network personality for various Irish dancing sporting events throughout the world, working with the following television stations: 4IrelandTV, JTV and IrishTV. In 2017 Ciara is proud to have joined the Irish dancing Magazine team as a senior editorial contributor.*



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University of Limerick

## ALAN KENEFICK

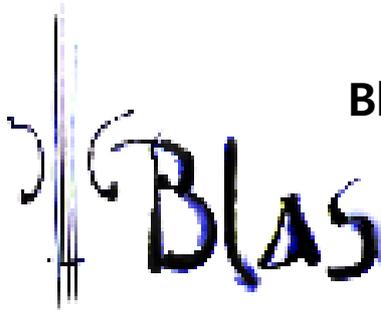


*World Champion Irish dancer Alan Kenefick's unique and spectacular style has been thrilling audiences globally since winning Sky's Got to Dance in 2012. Founder of trailblazing Irish dance troupe ProdiJIG, his dynamic blending of urban and contemporary culture with traditional Irish music and dance has seen him become one of the most highly respected and sought after dancers and choreographers in the world.*

*Since cutting his teeth touring as lead dancer with the international phenomena Riverdance, Celtic*

*Tiger, Magic of the Dance and Ragus, and special guest performances including Strictly Come Dancing, Alan has gone on to become a giant in the world of Irish dance. He has performed in front of huge crowds all over the world, danced with Irish music legends The Chieftains and has been commissioned by Bill Whelan to choreograph a dance piece in celebration of the Grammy award winner's music.*

*His passion for creating new works and collaborating with influences of Irish culture has seen Alan develop his own genre of Irish dance, combining his incredible individual dance talent with a brave and exciting new form of choreography. An exciting blend of old world and new, his new show ProdiJIG: The Revolution is an exhilarating showcase of a tradition revitalised.*



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University of Limerick

## LIAM SCANLON



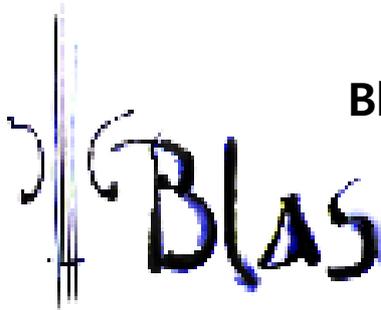
*Mayo born Liam is an award winning and accomplished Sean Nós performer, collaborator and teacher, working nationally and internationally.*

*A recent graduate of the MA in Traditional Dance Performance at University of Limerick, Liam has performed extensively throughout Ireland, the UK, France, New Zealand and the United States, with among others Damhsa Dance Company, and on shows including Ragús, Avalon Celtic Dances, Atlantic Rhythm. Currently Liam is working on Sokalo Remix in collaboration*

*with Zogma Danse Collectif, Montreal on Irish and Canadian tours. Liam has also performed alongside an eclectic range of traditional music artists, including Altan, Goitse, De Dannan, Kíla, We Banjo 3.*

*A winner of Corn TG4 at Oireachtas na Gaeilge (2008) and winner of senior Sean Nós dancing at the World Fleadh (2009), Liam frequently adjudicates at competitions including All Ireland Fleadh, An tOireachtas, Féile Pan Cheilteach and Féile na Mí. In addition his extensive teaching engagements, include Le Bono Winter School, Ballyshannon Folk Festival, Tokyo C.C.É and summer schools in Birmingham, Westport, and Irish Dance Festival, Carlingford. TV work includes TG4 An Jig Gig, Poball and Féilte.*

*Liam was commissioned to choreograph Patrick by Westport Town Hall Theatre (2016) and has contributed choreography to shows including Legend of Grainne Mhaol, The Admiral and Wild Atlantic Show. Most recently, Liam was named Dance Ireland's Associate Artist for 2016-2017.*



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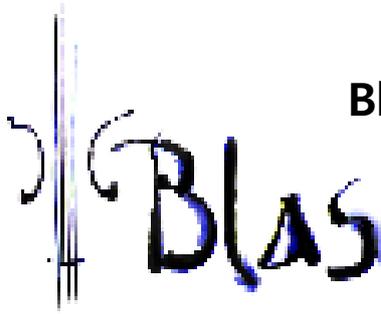
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## Dr. CATHERINE FOLEY



*Course Director of the MA in Ethnochoreology and the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance. Dr. Catherine Foley designed and is course director of both the MA in Ethnochoreology and the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. The MA in Ethnochoreology was the first programme of its type in Europe; the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance was the first programme of its type in the world. In 1997 Catherine established Tráth na gCos, an annual traditional dance festival of workshops, lectures/seminars and concerts to develop an awareness of, and to record, the diversity and richness within Irish and world dance traditions. Catherine remained the director and co-ordinator of Tráth na gCos until 2005. In 2003, she was the local Chair for The Society of Dance History Scholars 26th Annual International Conference, hosted at the University of Limerick. Catherine was the founder of Dance Research Forum Ireland in 2003 and was its first Chair; she was the local Chair for Dance Research Forum Ireland's 1st International Conference, hosted by the University of Limerick in 2006. Catherine is a founding member of Enarta (European Network for Research and Teaching of Ethnochoreology).*

*Catherine has spent many years working as a collector of Irish traditional music, song and dance. She was a member of the board of the Irish Traditional Music Archive for many years, and is a member of many professional organisations, including the Congress of Research on Dance, the International Council for Traditional Music, An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha, the Association of Professional Dancers of Ireland, and the Society of Dance History Scholars. Catherine has taught music and dance studies at all levels within the education system, from primary level to doctorate level, within both an academic and performance capacity. She has presented and published articles internationally within her areas of expertise and has performed, lectured and given dance workshops in different countries in Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States.*



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University of Limerick

## Dr. MATS MELIN

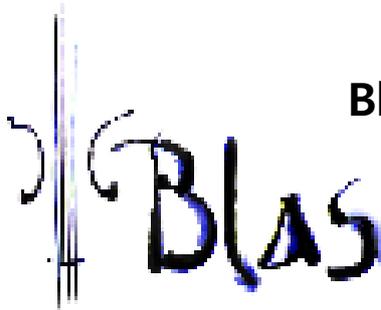


*Swedish born Traditional Dancer and Researcher Mats Melin was based in Angus, Scotland until early 2008. He has worked and performed extensively in Angus, Sutherland, the Scottish Highlands, the Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland, in their schools and communities promoting Scottish traditional dance. He has also taught and performed in Sweden, Canada, USA, Russia, and New Zealand. Mats has a vast knowledge of all aspects of the Scottish Traditional Dance scene, but specialises in Cape Breton Step dancing and the old social dances such as the Scotch reels and Quadrilles. He has worked both with traditional and contemporary artists in Scotland.*

*Mats have been Traditional Dance Artist in Residence in Scotland for both Shetland (1995) and Sutherland (1996-97). Between 1998 and 2001 he was working as the Traditional Dance Development Officer for the Angus District and the same for Perth and Kinross between 2002 and 2003 on behalf of The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust (STDT). He managed the Step 2000 Project in Inverness during 2001.*

*Mats started, and was part of the dynamic performance group DANNSA, and he was also the choreographer of Vesterled (1998) – a show making a journey in music and dance from Scandinavia to Scotland. Choreographed 'Generating Heat' in 2003 – a commissioned piece by the STDT, and later 'Elements' together with Frank McConnell for the St Magnus Festival in Orkney. He also performed and taught as part of CeilidhMakers together with traditional Scots singer Christine Kydd.*

*Mats was a member of the Scottish Arts Council's Dance Committee until March 2003. He served as a member of the Scottish Governments Traditional Arts Working Group 2009-10 ([Report 2010](#))*



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University of Limerick

*Mats has lectured and taught dance at the BA in Scots Music at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly RSAMD), Glasgow since 2001.*

*During 2004-5 Mats studied for an MA degree in Ethnochoreology at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Ireland.*

*Mats was appointed Lecturer in Dance in 2007 on the BA Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance.*

*Mats completed his PhD: "Exploring the Percussive Routes and Shared Commonalities in Cape Breton Step Dancing" in May 2012. He subsequently published the book "One with the Music: Cape Breton Step Dancing Tradition and Transmission" in 2015 (<http://cbup.ca/books/melin-one-with-the-music-cape-breton-step-dancing/>).*

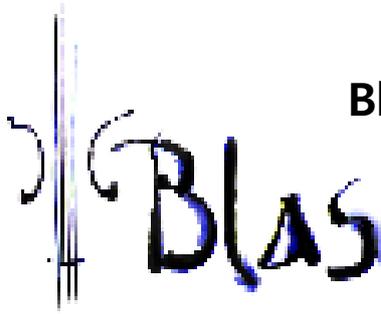
## **Dr. ORFHLAITH NÍ BHRIAIN**



*Orfhlaith Ni Bhriain lectures on the BA in Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. In 1998 she completed a Masters in Ethnochoreology at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. In 2010 Orfhlaith completed her doctoral thesis at the University of Limerick. Her research interests include, Irish Dance among the Diaspora and examining creative processes in the context of Competitive Irish Solo Step Dance. She is a registered Irish Dance teacher T.C.R.G. and adjudicator A.D.C.R.G. with An Coimisiún le Rinci Gaelacha. She has traveled extensively to workshops and Step Dance Competitions throughout Europe and North*

*America as a tutor from the renowned Scoil Rince Ui Ruaric and dance accompanist. Recently she completed a residency at Williams College MA where she was employed as guest artist in dance. Orfhlaith is a former Co-Director of Blas International Summer School of Traditional Irish Music and Dance held at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and is Dance Co-ordinator on the BA programme. She is currently vice- chair person of Dance Research Forum Ireland and Treasurer of I.C.T.M. Ireland. She has authored a book entitled *The Terminology of Irish Dance*.*

*Cuireann sí spéis freisin in imeachtaí a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge agus i ngach gné de chultúr na hÉireann.*



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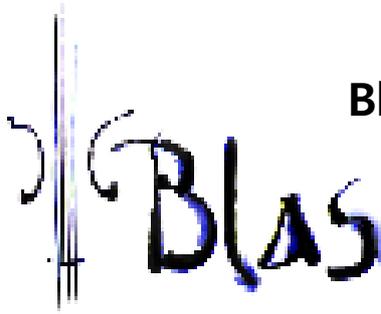
## MICHAEL RYAN



*Michael Ryan, a native of Co. Tipperary has been teaching Irish-dancing for over 20 years throughout Waterford, Cork and Tipperary. With a school of dedicated and accomplished pupils his is recognized internationally as one of the premier Irish-dancing schools. As well as having pupils ranked and title-holders of major championships such as All-Ireland, Munster, Great Britain, British Nationals, All-Scotland, and of course the World Championships he encourages and directs his pupils to pursue performance Irish Dance.*

*Michael is also a valued member of the faculty at The University of Limerick where he is a tutor of the B.A. and M.A. programme in The Irish Academy of Music and Dance. When not in class in Ireland, he is often invited to teach master classes in Australia, Canada and the U.S.A, to name a few.*

*Michael is also renowned for his choreography of such well-known shows as Flames of the Dance, The Booley House, Draíocht, and of course Ragus. Ragus has been touring the world for the past 13 years and is notably one of the best live shows to date.*



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Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

University of Limerick

*Michael believes in encouraging his pupils to take part in shows when they are not busy practising for dance championships. "Shows and events like Take The Floor help keep dance alive and are a great showcase for the student's talents", comments Michael. As a result, many of his former pupils have gone on to have very successful dance careers in their own right.*