



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**IRISH HARPIST MÁIRE NI CHATASAIGH PRESENTS
THE IRISH HARP: ITS HISTORY, REPERTOIRE AND ROLE IN IRISH
SOCIETY**

HOUSTON (March 17, 2006) – The University of St. Thomas Center for Irish Studies presents Irish harpist Máire Ni Chatasaigh (pronounced “O-Cassidy”) who will offer a program entitled, “The Irish harp, its History, Repertoire and Role in Irish Society” at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 19, in Cullen Hall at the University of St. Thomas. This program is part of the Distinguished Irish Studies Cultural Series, sponsored by Sally and Bill Slick and the Irish American Cultural Institute.

Máire Ni Chatasaigh is one of Ireland’s most important and influential traditional musicians, described by livelreland as “the greatest Celtic harper of our age” and by the late Derek Bell as “the most interesting and original player of the Irish harp today.”

She grew up in a West Cork musical family and was proficient on other instruments by the time she began to play the harp at age 11. Using her knowledge of the idiom of the living oral Irish tradition, she developed new techniques, particularly in relation to ornamentation, with the aim of establishing an authentically traditional style of harping -- “a single-handed reinvention of the harp.” Her originality was quickly recognized. She made a number of TV and radio broadcasts as a teen, and she won the All-Ireland and Pan-Celtic Harp Competitions on several occasions. In 1985, she recorded the first harp album to concentrate on traditional Irish dance music.

In 2001, Chatasaigh received the Gradam Cheoil TG4, the Irish-language TV station’s Award for Traditional Musician of the Year “for the excellence and pioneering force of her music, the remarkable growth she has brought to the music of the harp and the positive

influence she has had on the young generation of harpers” *at a televised ceremony in the Cork Opera House*. The Gradam is the highest, most prestigious honor for a traditional Irish musician.

She holds an honors B.A. degree in Celtic Studies from University College Cork. Old Bridge Music has published two books of her harp arrangements, *The Irish Harper Vols I and II*.

The University of St. Thomas, dedicated to building leaders of faith and character, is a private institution committed to the liberal arts and to the religious, ethical and intellectual tradition of Catholic higher education.

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