

Orla Harrington



Some fact's at first...

- When and where were you born?

I was born on the 31th January 1983 in Limerick City, Ireland.

- Your height?

4' 11''

- What is your favourite food?

I have a few favourites! Indian, Thai, Chinese.

- Your favourite music?

Naturally I love traditional irish music, but I also like blues, jazz, pop, rock, hip-hop and bossa nova / brazilian music.

- Your favourite movie?

My favourite recent movie is „Million Dollar Baby“.

Your favourite city / place in the world, you have visited so far?

My favourite City so far is New York, however I have yet to visit places like Dubrovnik and Vancouver, which I think I would enjoy.

I really like Austria, Salzburg especially and many parts of Germany; Munich, Bremen, Köln, Wernigerode.....



- Do you have any hidden talents, we don't know about?

I'm not a bad singer!!!

- What's the most treasured moment in your life, so far?

It's hard to say, however having spent so much time away from my family and friends at home this past year and a half, I treasure time I spend with them.

About your family...

Please tell us something about your parents - what do they do for their living? Do they dance / are musicians as well?

All my family are very musical. My mother Irish danced when she was younger and still enjoys Ceili dancing. Her uncle was a fine concertina player and my father plays the accordion, so it comes from both sides.

My brother plays the fiddle also, along with guitar and banjo and my sister plays the concertina.



Do you have any brothers or sisters? How old are they? Do they dance / play an instrument, too? What are their jobs?

I have one sister, Einear. She is 27 and is married and living in Winchester, England. She is a Software Engineer.

I have one brother, Colon, the eldest of the family. He is 29. He also works in the computer industry.

- Is it hard for you, to be apart from your family for such a long time while touring? How often are you able to travel back home again?

Yes, it is very hard, at the beginning of a tour especially.

This tour will be the hardest for me as it began on October 1st and I won't be home again until next February.

In general though, a tour is usually no longer than six to eight weeks.

I am looking forward to the English tour as it is close to home, therefore friends and family can visit and come see the show.

What do your family think of your job as a dancer / musician in a Show? Are they proud of you? How often do they visit you on tour and watch you dancing the Show?

Yes, my family are very proud of my achievements over the years, be it music, dancing or college. They are delighted for me to be with Lord of the Dance.

My parents have seen the show in Vienna and Munich! I also had family and friends visit, while on tour in England last year.

- There are a few relationships within the troupe – do you have a boyfriend?

No, I'm not seeing anyone at the moment!

About your beginnings...

- Why did you start Irish Dancing / playing the fiddle and when? Who taught you during all the time?

I started dancing at 3 years, eight months. My mother had learnt as a child and my brother and sister were already learning, so I was keen to start! Patricia Brady Mullins T.C.R.G. / A.D.C.R.G. taught us.

I learnt the fiddle at the age of six from Paula McMahon, Broadford, Co. Clare.

- How old have you been at your first Irish Dancing competition?

Four.

- What do you like more – Show Dancing or doing competitions? Why?

They are very different, in terms of discipline, fitness, posture etc. I miss the practice and build up to competitions, having something to work for, however it is hard work, especially when you reach the twenties, so I'm really enjoying the buzz of show dancing now. It is more relaxed and fun.

I also prefer the costumes for show dancing, in comparison to competition. They're sexy and feminine!! Ultimately, I enjoy the feedback from the audience in the show as opposed to competition.

- What is – in your opinion – the most important difference between Show dancing and competitions?

Show dancing is not just about your dancing. It's the whole performance, appearance, stage presence, and of course entertaining the audience where as in competition your there to compete.

- Did you have any major injuries because of Irish Dancing?

Not really. I sprained my ankle in the All-Ireland Championships one year and had to drop out. Apart from that I've only ever had minor injuries, thank god!



- Do you also play other instruments than the fiddle?

Yes, I play the piano. I have done up to grade eight in exams.

Becoming a Dancer / Fiddler in the Show...

- Have you been with another Irish Dance Show, before you joined LotD?

I danced with a show, "Style", at home for a few years while in school and College. I also performed with "Rhythm of the Dance" in Scandinavia when I was sixteen, for a short period, and performed in New York and Boston with a local show from home.

- Why did you chance? / Why did you choose LotD?

It was always my ambition to join Lord of the Dance, from a young age when it first came out. In competition I looked up to Bernadette Flynn and Gillian Norris, who first starred in the show.

- Have you seen the Show before you applied for auditions for LotD?

Yes, years ago when it was first released on video.



- When did you do your auditions and do you have to wait a long time until they called you to join the Show?

I did my audition in June 2004 and was hired shortly afterwards.

- When did you join LotD? How old have you been?

I joined at the age twenty one, June 2004 for the English Tour with Troupe 4.

- Did you join the Show as a fiddler or as a dancer?

I joined the show as a fiddler.

- How did you get into dancing after playing the fiddle / fiddling after dancing in the Show

They knew I was a dancer also, so I started dancing with the show early this year.



- Have you been called directly to T1 or did you have some training before?

I joined Troupe 1 in January this year. Yes, having joined a new Troupe after the Christmas break, there was training involved of course!

- Did you know some of the other troupe members before you joined?

Yes, some of Troupe four also joined at the same time and I already knew some of the Troupe 1 dancers from competition etc.



- Please describe the feeling, to join an already existing troupe. Were you nervous or afraid not to meet the requirements?

I was never afraid of not meeting the requirements, however, as with any job it always takes time to settle into a new environment.

Like Troupe 4, Troupe 1 are a lovely troupe also, so it didn't take long to settle in. A lot of Troupe 1 have been with the show for many years and have experienced the "big time" so it is nice to be a part of this troupe.

- How much time did you get to learn your routines, until you first danced on stage with LotD? What was the first part you were allowed to dance?

I learnt my routines within a few days. I danced "Run on" ("Cry of the Celts") first, in Mittelhessen-Arena, Wetzlar, Germany! It was actually the opening night of the Arena, I believe.



- How much time did you get to learn the fiddling parts of the Show?

I learnt the music for the show, prior to joining, having been successful with my audition. I was familiar with the music already, having watched the video from a young age.

Through the years with LotD...

- Do you like travelling to all those places around the world or is it hard work?

I like travelling to new places I have not already been, although it is hard work in Germany in particular as we often travel to a new town / city each day for a number of days. It has been worth it though; we have seen and experienced some great cities, landscapes and cultures around the world.



- How much do you have to practice while touring?

There is a lot of practice involved after a long break, for example after Christmas and summer breaks.

While touring, we practice most days to keep the show at its best.

- What is your memorable moment with LotD?

It would probably be my first night performing with the show as a fiddler along with Trisha Hutton. It was in the new theatre, Oxford U.K, June 2004.



- What is your favourite dance in LotD (in Hard-/Softshoes)?

Run on!!!

And Duelling Violines.

- What do you like more – dancing or playing the fiddle in the show – and why

I could not say I prefer one above the other. I love both dancing and playing with the show. It was always my ambition, however to dance with the Show.



- How do you prepare for a show?

Make-up first, then hair, warm up for dancing, dress, tune fiddle, get my ear pieces and sound equipment ready for playing and that's it really! As I share a dressing room with the singer and the other fiddler in the show, there always girly chats and listening to music before the show!

- Are you nervous before going on stage?

Not to much, I guess now that I've here over a year, the nerves have worn off!! I do think however that it's good to be a little nervous before going on stage ... It keeps you on your toes!!

- Have you ever been with another Troupe? If so – when was it and why did you change?

I was fiddler with Troupe 4 from when I started in June 2004 until Dec 2004. I started with Troupe 1 in Jan 2005 and I am presently with this troupe.

There was no particular reason for me joining this troupe, it just suited! It's normal for troupe members to swap around. I started dancing with Troupe 1.



- Is there a special diet, you have to follow?

No, but I like to eat healthily, especially when on tour.

- How do you get so much energy for a show?

I guess Adrenalin!! As I enjoy it so much, it's easy to be energetic on stage!

Costumes & other equipment...

- Is it hard to handle the different sizes of stage in different cities?

Yes, it is always easier and more enjoyable, not only for us performing but for the audience too, to have a full size stage. The show looks most spectacular on a full size stage and set.

- How long does it take to get ready before the show?

Usually about an hour, however I like to take more time for warming up when dancing in the show as well as doing fiddle.

- What is your favourite costume for your dancing and fiddling?

My favourite costume for dancing is our current "run on" dress with Troupe 1. I also prefer my current outfit for fiddle.



- What are your favourite shoes to dance with?

Heavy shoes; I prefer heavy dances.

- Your shoe size?

- What is your favourite fiddle-brand and what kind of fiddle is the one, you are playing in the show

As I'm currently looking at new brands, to purchase a new fiddle; I don't have a particular favourite as of yet!!! The fiddle I use in the show is one I bought from an Irish fiddler from Belfast, "Tommy Robinson".



- How many fiddles do you have with you on tour?

One, I carry a number of bows however.

nowadays & in the future...

- Who do you most admire in the world of Irish Dancing / Music and why?

I have great admiration and appreciation due to my dancing teacher Patricia Brady Mullins and my music teachers Paula McCahon for fiddle and Marian Clune for Piano.

Thanks to their belief in me and encouragement, I've come this far.



- What do you do, when you get a long tour-break?

I spend time at home with my family and friends.

- How long do you plan to stay with LotD? Hopefully a long time!

I plan to stay with Lord of the Dance for most of 2006 at least. Who knows, maybe even longer, depending on summer break etc.



- What are your (dancing and non-dancing / fiddling and non-fiddling) plans for your future?

I plan to sit exams for both teaching music and Irish Dancing.

As I have a Degree in Software Development I would like to work at that for a while, after leaving the show.