



(LYRCD 2425)

## **HAL-AN-TOW SONGS OF THE SIX CELTIC NATIONS**

Sandra Reid, Voice,  
Randy Crafton, Frame Drums

Each of the six Celtic song traditions, while certainly related, is unique in both sound and style. Universal themes of love, death, bereavement, struggle against oppression, and the supernatural are prominent. With great respect and understanding, Sandra Reid and Randy Crafton explore the song traditions of the Celtic nations of Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, The Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales.

Sandra was hooked by Celtic music while growing up in Canada's Ottawa Valley, where Scots settlers once mingled with Irish and Bretons from neighboring Quebec. Her own ancestry comprises three ethnic groups, and she feels a deep connection with this collective Celtic heritage. Her life-long exposure to these cultures through a Canadian filter gives her a pan-Celtic outlook that transcends ethnic and national boundaries. Her choice to perform in these languages is a sign of her solidarity with all those who are struggling to preserve their Celtic identity and heritage.

A classically trained singer, Sandra has also mastered the folk singing style of the traditionalist, particularly in regard to ornamentation, rhythm, and phrasing. She has chosen to devote her unique vocal gifts to what might be termed a modern slant on the art-song style popular in the many folk revivals of Celtic music, from the 1800's up to the early 1970's when purely traditional vocal technique came into favor. There is a fascinating history of the interaction between the traditional and art-song presentations of

Celtic songs. Many songs would have been lost to posterity had not art singers and collections of the past preserved and introduced them to audiences around the world.

Sandra, with her sublimely beautiful mezzo-soprano, interprets each song from the standpoint of an educated singer with a deep emotional and spiritual attachment. This allows her to use as much or as little of her trained voice to create the effect she wants for individual songs. As a result, she cannot easily be categorized as classical or traditional; her vocal treatment of each song is somewhere between the two. What is consistently remarkable about her singing is the spirited intensity of her interpretations. They are every bit as powerful and full of life and expression as the best of the traditional singers and revivalists of Celtic songs today.

Traditionally, these songs are sung unaccompanied. In the past, art singers have paired well with pianists and harpists. In her collaboration with Randy Crafton, Sandra is exploring the ancient tradition of coupling the voice with the drum. This is an especially exacting challenge for the percussionist, as the rhythmic pulse of many of the traditional songs is defined by the poetic meter of the individual text.

Randy Crafton brings to this partnership manifold talents and expertise from his extensive background in world music traditions. Together, Sandra and Randy take off on an exciting “now age” tangent offering the listener a magical tonic for the spirit.  
Introduction written by Liam O Caiside and Meg Runsdorf

## TRACKS

### 1. MA ZADIG A MA MAMM – Brittany, (2:25)

(Pronounced: ma zaditch a ma mam)

A young girl inherits a fortune from a sickly, ugly old man her parents have forced her to marry. Although she cannot grieve for him, she decides to hire some musicians to give him a nice funeral so she can get on with having fun.

### 2. ARRANE SAVEENAGH – Isle of Man, (6:01)

(Pronounced: Aran sah-veeach)

This lullaby describes rocking a baby. “In the bed you will sleep, my dear little child. West on the green hill, O child of my heart, while the night grows dark all will be at peace. But from the soft air will come the strands of fairy music. Listen, you will hear them going to and fro.”

### 3. CASADH AN TSUGAIN – Ireland, (3:03)

(Pronounced: CAH-soo an Toogun)

A journeyman worker who fancies a woman’s daughter makes a fool of himself by pestering both women. The old lady plays a clever trick in order to get rid of him by asking the fool to hold one end of a rope she is making while she holds the other. The she simply twists him out the door!

4. LISA LAN – Wales, (2:13)

(Pronounced: Lisa Lahn)

A man is sick with love for “fair Lisa.” As he hears the birds singing in the evening his heart melts like wax at the thought of her.

5. SLIABB NA MBAN - Ireland (4:33)

(Pronounced: shleev na mahn)

The translation of the title of this rebel song from Tipperary is “Mountain of the Women.” This place was the scene of an armed conflict between Irish civilians and English troops. The poorly armed Irish rebels fought a valiant but futile battle. They prayed in vain that the French would come to help them in their struggle.

6. DELYOW SYVY - Cornwall, (1:45)

(Pronounced: DEL-yoo seevee)

The title means “Strawberry Leaves,” which, according to this song, make maidens fair. A man meets a girl by a fountain and questions her suggestively to see if she would be interested in courting him down among the strawberry leaves. Her replies are coy and elusive.

7. ORAN CHALUIM SGAIRE – Scotland, (3:13)

(Pronounced: OH-ra HAH-lum Skyruh)

A sailor worries that his beloved will find another love while he is out at sea. As his ship comes into port he hopes he will recognize him.

8. A PA OAN BIHAN BIBANNING – Brittany, ( 2:19)

(Pronounced: a pow on BEE-hon Bee-hon-eek)

A mother dresses her daughter in fine clothes and instructs her to stand at the edge of the road to see if any prospective suitors will stop to have a look at her. If one stops, she will very likely have found a husband.

9. BENDIR SOLO – New York City, (2:03)

An improvisation performed on a Moroccan-style frame drum, which Randy fashioned from old drum parts. The buzzing sound is produced by snares (in this case, dental floss instead of the traditional gut) across the back of the drumhead. This drum differs from a traditional Moroccan drum in that the synthetic skin on Randy’s drum is tuned very loosely, which makes pitch bending possible in a style similar to the South Indian Kanjira.

10. BEAN PHAIDIN – Ireland, (1:35)

(Pronounced: Ban FAH-jean)

Paidin’s former sweetheart imagines herself taking the place of his new wife. She lays a heavy curse on the bride, wishing first that her legs be broken, and then that she die.

11. YN FOLDEYR GASTEY– The Isle of Man, (2:04)

(Pronounced: Un foldser Gasta)

Translated “The Excellent Mower,” this song is about a Fenodyree, a supernatural being who often performs tasks for people, such as mowing the fields and stamping down the herbs and grass. “He did wonders for us last year, and this year he’s even better!”

12. DIOUGAN GWENCH’LAN – Brittany, (5:18)

(Pronounced: DEW-gon Gwen-klon)

The title means “Gwench’lan’s prophecy.” It is prophesied that Gwench’lan, a bard, will be killed by a French Christian lord. When the sun sets and the sea swells, Gwench’lan sings on the threshold of his doorway, and is sad even though he doesn’t fear death. He knows all things must die three times to come to their final resting place.

13. CHAN E CAOIDH MHIC SHIRIDH – Scotland, (4:09)

(Pronounced: HAHN ya Hee-ree)

A song about a woman whose tears remain on her cheeks, though she is not lamenting over her sweetheart, but for her brother who has drowned at sea.

14. DAVYDD Y GARREG WEN – Wales, (2:51)

(Pronounced: Davithe a GAH-reg wen)

David, a Welsh Bard, is dying and asks to have his harp brought to him so he can play one remaining song. His last desperate wish is “Arise my hands to reach the strings. May God bless you, my widow and my child.”

## CREDITS

Notes by Sandra Reid

Produced by Hal-An-Tow

Photo, Walter Parks and Meg Runsdorf

All frame drums by Crafton Percussion Works

Recorded at Stormy Sky Studios (NYC), Meg Montgomery and Mike O’Brian engineers; mixed at Alfamusic (NYC), Jorge Alfano engineer; digital mastering by Jim Hemingway.

Special thanks: Christopher Caines, Alexander & Lucy Campbell, Paul & Sue Crafton, Alexei Kondratiev, Amy Platt, the Reid Clan (John, Estelle, Brian & Karen), Jan Rohlfing, Jim Runsdorf, and Glen Velez.



**Lyrichord Discs Inc.**

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: [nick@lyrichord.com](mailto:nick@lyrichord.com) Web: [www.lyrichord.com](http://www.lyrichord.com)

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.  
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.