

March 16-18, 2007

After 'Riverdance'

Irish dancing takes center stage in 'The Pirate Queen'

MICHAEL BRACKEN
michael.bracken@metro.us



PREVIEW. "You never really leave 'Riverdance,'" according to Carol Leavy Joyce, whose gently lilting brogue would evoke shamrocks and leprechauns even if Saturday weren't St. Patrick's Day. She should know. Joyce grew up — professionally — with the international step-dancing troupe, graduating over 10 years from performer to dance coordinator, assistant director and ultimately choreographer.

Joyce is currently the Irish dance choreographer for "The Pirate Queen," the latest Broadway offering (now in previews) from Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil, the creators of such epic, and epically successful, musicals as "Les Misérables" and "Miss Saigon."

Unlike "Riverdance,"



From left, Sean Beglan, Timothy Kochka, Kyle James O'Connor and Padraic Moyles in "The Pirate Queen."

"The Pirate Queen" has a narrative based on the story of Grace O'Malley, a legendary Irish chieftain and contemporary of Queen Elizabeth I. "We wanted to tell Grace's story using dance to describe her place and time, while showcasing the precision, technique, and virtuosity style that Irish dance is," Joyce says. "So we fused

dance we knew, from our research, existed then with today's Irish dance and gelled the result with the loose acrobatics of modern [read: Broadway, not Martha Graham] dance."

Dancer Padraic Moyles says the choreography, which Joyce created in collaboration with Broadway veteran Graciela Daniele, is

easy to dance because it enhances the music so that the energy just flows. He and Joyce agree that with the complementary "Irishness" of the orchestra, which includes such exotic instruments as the Irish fiddle, pipe, whistle, Irish harp and bodhran (a small drum made with sheepskin), it's a unique Broadway phenomenon.