

"Lord of the Dance"

By Ana Rusness
Contributing Writer

During recent years, Celtic dance and music have become an international craze. That craze comes to Fargo Thursday, June 4. The Fargodome will host Michael Flatley's "Lord of the Dance" at 7:30 p.m. The Celtic dance phenomenon features over 40 dancers performing numbers inspired by Irish folk legends and medieval mystery.

Among these dancers and others involved in the production of "Lord of the Dance" are many unique personal stories of success and fulfilled dreams. Michael Flatley, who recognized international fame in his performances with "Riverdance," created "Lord of the Dance" after a falling out with producers of "Riverdance." Flatley is also the holder of a Guinness Book world record for tapping speed. One week after the premiere performance of "Lord of the Dance" in Dublin, Flatley collapsed half-way through a performance because of a chest infection.

Flatley remains artistic director for "Lord of the Dance" and oversees all aspects of the touring show. He is also dancing again, starring in the Troupe One "Lord of the Dance," which is touring Europe. Flatley's understudy, 20-year-old John Carey, replaced him for the second half of the show and has been performing the lead ever since.

"Dancing the role of the Lord in this production is a dream come true and the highlight of my career thus far," Carey said.

Prior to his dancing career with "Lord of the Dance," Carey was a student at Oxford University in England, studying chemistry on a scholarship. When offered a position touring with "Lord of the Dance," Carey decided to postpone his studies for the different experiences that go with dancing and touring.

"People think, 'Wow! You have a brilliant job!' But sometimes when I'm on tour, I haven't seen the outside for three days. It's hard work, you don't have any time when you get there and you pack your suitcase and leave."

These stressful conditions and strenuous demands take their toll on the dancers' bodies as well as their personal lives.

"Everyone has aching legs. You just learn to put up with it. At the end of the day you do some strengthening and have a hot bath and by the next day, you snap back," Carey said.

Ronan Hardiman has found a way to achieve his dreams without undergoing the stressful life of touring. Hardiman was chosen by Flatley to compose the score for "Lord of the Dance" in March of 1996. Hardiman found this opportunity to be the chance he had been waiting for to test a new style of music that had yet to be attempted in Ireland, but was provoking inspiration for Hardiman.

Prior to meeting Flatley, Hardiman had worked on scores for numerous documentaries for film and television, including "My Friend Joe," "My Riviera," and "Waterways." He also composed scores for the commercials of Guinness products and the Irish National Lottery. The score for "Lord of the Dance" was composed in 10 weeks, and was chosen because of the emotional response it



triggered.

"Of all the tapes Michael heard, he got the most visual impact from my music," Hardiman explained. "He saw images immediately."

The "Lord of the Dance" soundtrack has obtained a gold and silver status in Australia and the United Kingdom. It also received the award for "Best Traditional Album" at the Irish Recording Music Association awards in 1997. This level of recognition and success is a far cry from Hardiman's original job as a teller at the Bank of Ireland, where he worked for 12 years. Now he is working on his true passion — music.

Patrick Woodroffe is also centering his attention on his passion, which is lighting. Woodroffe has designed lighting for many top name musicians, including ABBA, Elton John, Michael Jackson, and the Rolling Stones. International festivals and musical productions as well as architectural structures such as the gardens at Highgrove House of the Prince of Wales have been illuminated by his lighting designs. The con-course of Pepsi also showcases Woodroffe's talents.

His latest lighting project has been on the stages of "Lord of the Dance." For this show, Woodroffe has employed lights of many colors to emphasize certain parts or characters of the stories told on stage. Combined with the costuming and stage decoration, the audience's attention is directed through the elaborate surrounds from one moment in the story to the next. Some have questioned whether there has become an overly showy extravaganza, detracting from the main story line and the techniques of the Irish dance. Woodroffe's lighting, however, provides a narrative for the audience, and adds much liveliness and color.

All of these amazing individuals have interwoven their unique skills and backgrounds with many others to form this acclaimed production. "Lord of the Dance." Sara Granger of the Fargodome hopes people realize that "this performance is actually like a story with music and dance. It's a tale told through these elements. It's fast-paced, beautiful and colorful...something different."

Tickets to the performance can be purchased by calling the Fargodome box office or TicketMaster.



Lord of the Dance

Thursday, June 4

Fargodome, Fargo

It didn't take long for Riverdance to take center stage and bring traditional Celtic folk dancing into the lime light. It only took a few years for the show's lead dancer, American Michael Flatley, to fall out of grace with the show's producers. It took him even less time to get back to the stage with his own show, "Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance." Flatley has since left the stage to his one time understudy John Carey who will be dancing the role of the Lord when the show comes to town next Thursday. The show is more like a big budget Solid Gold spectacle than a dance recital. The dancing itself is sometimes a mixture of traditional Irish step and flamenco stomps on a stage that looks like the set for a heavy metal Celtic band, complete with strobes and flashpots. Both the reserved \$45 tickets and the \$35 tickets are still available at Ticketmaster outlets and the Fargodome box office. If you go to one Celtic dance spectacle this year at the Fargodome this had better be the one. (JL)