O'Neill School of Dancing

St Patrick's Day trip to New York & New Haven

Marcella Conboy

Pictured on their St. Patrick's Day trip to New York and New Haven are members of the O'Neill School of Dancing

Among the many guests at the 105th annual Leitrim Society Dinner Dance held on 11 March in Queens, New York, were a group of Irish Dancers from South Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon.

This group of young people had arrived from Ireland on the previous day to participate in the various celebrations leading up to the St.Patrick's Day Parade on March 17 as well as attending the New Haven, Connecticut Parade on March 12.

Their performance at the Leitrim Dance had the audience captivated as they entertained a gathering of between 600/700 people who had travelled from all parts of the U.S.A. to join their Leitrim friends on this very special night.

Following that, they went to New Haven where they received tremendous applause as they marched behind the Leitrim banner down by part of the Yale University campus, down to Church Street and continued on to a welcome reception at the Church Hall.

Among their numerous performances throughout the week was a visit to St. Thomas Aquinas School in the Bronx where a cultural exchange programme took place.

This was a wonderful experience for all involved and one could only be amazed at how quickly the children adapted to each others cultures and became friends.

Following an extensive interview on Westchester TV with the dancing teacher Tracy O'Neill, other TV channels followed suit and for the remainder of the week the School of Dancing could be seen throughout the New York and surrounding states every hour on the hour on the TV screens.

Such was the interest shown by the various TV channels and newspapers that at almost every venue where the children were to perform, the press and cameramen had to join the queue.

Rory Dolan's was packed to capacity for their farewell dance on the eve of the Parade which along with many other events had been organised by the New York Committee of the O'Neill School of Irish Dancing.

The snow on March 17 did nothing to dampen the spirits as they proudly marched up Fifth Avenue with the Leitrim contingent.

To be requested by the New York St. Patrick's Day Ball Committee to attend their annual function at the famous New York establishment, 'The Waldorf Astoria', put the finishing touches to a wonderful week not only for the children but their teacher Tracy O'Neill, their parents and the extended families in New York and New Haven.

These children were a credit to their parishes, their county and to the entire island of Ireland as they were true ambassadors to the Irish dance and our unique cultures. Whenever they performed the enthusiasm and support that was bestowed on them was second to none and it was a week they will never forget. In fact, one felt the week was too short as the requests came pouring in to see them perform in and outside New York.

Leitrim Society President – Jim Keenan, Carmel Redican and Tracy O'Neill pictured with the O'Neill Dancers in New York.

Of course, this trip owes a debt of gratitude to all those people in New York and New Haven who helped make it possible for the School of Dancing to travel to the USA.

To our sponsors, supporters and all those who attended the various fundraisers and to our special friends and committee members firstly in New York, our Chairperson Carmel Redican, President of the Leitrim Association Jim Keenan, Past President and Leitrim Dance Chairman Willie Reynolds, Lucy O'Connor, Seamus Clarke, Albert Clarke, Trudy Redican, Bernadette Burns and Elizabeth Daly. A special thank you for all your help.

To our committee in New Haven, Gerard Roddy who started our fundraising and all the other members who worked so hard on our behalf. Patsy McGloin, Sean Canning, Lily and Eileen Mulvey, Jim McCabe, Kevin Fox, Maureen Wrynne and Bridie Canning, thank you one and all.

Proud to carry the Leitrim banner overseas