



Whangarei Pipe Band Society

(Incorporated)

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NEWS RELEASE

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Brilliant blend of sharp performances

Sell-out audiences enjoyed a superb Celtic experience at Whangarei's Forum North on August 11 and 12.

The Whangarei Pipe Band Society has hosted top shows in the past but this year's concert *Road to the Isles* set new standards of excellence.

The stand-out feature of the concert was the variety in the offering. The programme included old and new pipe band favourites, blends of pipe and brass bands, singing, dancing, drumming and several novelty items.

The performances were backed by the keyboard and guitars of Andrew Garratt and The Jets. The backing was unobtrusive yet gave another rousing dimension, and the stage settings combined to give a truly memorable experience.

An encouraging feature of this year's concerts was the number of talented young performers who took part. The youngest of these were the wee tots performing a sword dance and the highland fling -- essential parts of any Celtic show. Slightly older, but not by much, were the group of youngsters who performed a hornpipe dance with interesting embellishments.

A polished performance by the Whangarei Junior Pipe Band, followed by a foot-tapping drum fanfare and salute by 20 young drummers of the Whangarei and Waipu bands led by Drum Sergeant Graham Ryken, confirmed that Celtic culture is alive and well in the Whangarei district.

A solo medley by Mark Sander's on the Uilleann pipes was a rare treat that gave another change of pace to the programme. Described as a "Celtic rubic cube", the Uilleann pipes are a complicated type of under-arm bagpipes designed by the Irish and are capable of producing a wide range of tunes.

The beautiful voice of soloist Helen Geddes, singing *Fields of Gold*, also provided a change of pace and the fiddle band "Fiddle Lore" delighted the audience with a lively medley. This band obviously enjoyed what they were doing and the crowd enjoyed their music -- a fine performance.

Most impressive was the item *Steam train to Maillaig* the Whangarei band's senior pipers led by pipe major Bain McGregor and the 'Tartan Teddy'. This was a successful experiment with the harmonic possibilities of the bagpipes -- simulating the syncopated rhythm and sounds of a steam train. The music was synchronised with images on the stage screen. Another creative item by the band was *Fiddlers Rally* where the pipes mimicked the sounds of fiddles.

The programme built to a powerful finale with the combined might of the district's pipe and brass bands playing traditional favourites such as *Scotland the Brave* and *Amazing Grace* and ending with a rousing performance of *The Flower of Scotland* which, after a standing ovation, was followed by *Highland Cathedral* as an encore.

The performance was skilfully linked with humour and banter by Master of Ceremonies Colin Caddick. He showed some of his own musical talent with an impromptu item on a medieval horn-type instrument. In keeping with his sense of humour the medley he played ended with the theme tune for the show *Black Adder*.

Without doubt, *Road to the Isles* was a very professional performance. It combined a wide range of musical talent with mood-setting visual effects to provide top-class entertainment.

Highlights of the concert are to be repeated at the Kerikeri RSA on Saturday September 1.

For further information contact:

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(Photos available - copy via email if required.)