

Stoking tradition's fire through Celtic dancing

By IRENE GENTLE
Special to the Champion

Needfire, a kind of Celtic Cabaret with a strong sense of community, comes to Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre from June 12 to July 12. When it arrives, it will have Milton high school student Patricia Finnegan in it.

Needfire is touted to be an all Canadian showcase of Celtic arts. It features everyone from John McDermott and The Irish Descendants to the oh so au courant Mary Jane Lamond.

In-between and alongside are step, Scottish and Irish dancers, which is where the 18-year-old Miss Finnegan comes in. But more on that later.

Along with capitalizing on the very vogue Celtic trend, Needfire is meant to be about the traditional rituals shared by many cultures. The name Needfire itself stems from the common fire with which a settlement's hearths were lit.

"My family is totally involved in Irish stuff," said Miss Finnegan, who sounds exactly the way an 18-year-old about to be placed on a large world-class theatrical stage ought to sound. She laughs often and speaks in an almost breathless clip. She frequently confers with her mother when she talks.

This is only fitting since it was her mother who helped her on the road that eventually led to Needfire's stage, when she taught her daughter her very first Irish dance steps.

"My mother was my first teacher," said Miss Finnegan. "I was about three years old but she taught me the basic side steps and

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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton teen Patricia Finnegan is set to hit the stage with Needfire, a kind of Celtic Cabaret at the Princess of Wales Theatre.

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