

**Appeal of teen group's sound spans the ages**

October 30, 2005

**The Cottars***Bromfield School Cronin Auditorium, Route 111, Harvard**Tuesday, 7 p.m.**Tickets: \$15, \$8 students and seniors at door; discounted prices available by ordering in advance 978-456-3641*

Word travels fast in Harvard. Soon after Terry Symula and Sue Robbins, who are members of the Harvard Schools Trust, began offering tickets for a performance by the Celtic music prodigies The Cottars, phone calls started pouring in.

"I got a call last night from an elderly woman in town who used to live in Nova Scotia and wanted to buy a ticket," said Robbins. "She had heard of them from being in Canada and was glad she did not have to go far to see them."

The Cottars, consisting of two brother-sister pairs, formed in late 2000 on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. Jimmy and Roseanne MacKenzie make up one pair, Ciaran and Fiona MacGillivray, the other. Ranging in age from 15 to 18, each member is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and step-dancer, and the group has performed across North America, Europe, and Japan.

Although members grew up with an affinity for Celtic music traditions, the band also incorporates American folk, Irish air, and Scottish fiddle into its sound. Their debut CD in 2002, "Made in Cape Breton," was recorded under Irish tenor John McDermott's label, Bunnygee Music, and was released to critical acclaim.

This Tuesday, they come to the Bromfield School's Cronin Auditorium in Harvard.

"Massachusetts is almost like a second home to us," said Ciaran. "Faneuil Hall is our favorite spot. Plus, my dad is a great Bruins fan."

Ciaran, who lists folk artists Gordon Lightfoot and Peter, Paul and Mary as some of his musical inspirations, said he is open-minded about music and tries to gain something from every genre. "I also love traditional Celtic music and will listen to it even in my spare time," he said. His father, Allister MacGillivray, is a Canadian singer/songwriter/composer himself.

The Cottars need finesse to balance their rehearsal, travel, performance, and school time. Ciaran explained that the members play music individually all the time, but, as a band, they usually rehearse every Sunday.

When it comes to school, the four try their best to buckle down, taking packages of work with them on their performance trips. "Sometimes we have some packages waiting for us when we return," said Ciaran.

"When the kids see a picture of [The Cottars], they look just like them, like kids," said Symula. "They are not used to seeing that kind of event come to their hometown."

The event may be taking place at a school, but both Symula and Robbins said the performance is a community event, geared for everyone in Harvard and the surrounding area.

"Even the Council on Aging has made arrangements for buses to come to the auditorium," said Symula. "They have a sort of universal appeal. We're thrilled to have them coming and are excited to see them."

The Harvard Schools Trust, which is not directly affiliated with the town or its schools, has been active since 1989 in promoting enrichment in the schools and in the community, said Symula and Robbins. Both are on the board of the trust, which includes 13 other townspeople.

In addition to stopping at Harvard, The Cottars have dates planned in Newburyport, Woodstock, Vt., and Buffalo.

ROCCO B. COLELLA ■