



See You at the Hall: Boston's Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance

Susan Gedutis

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From the 1940s to the mid-1960s, on several evenings a week, thousands of Irish and Irish Americans flocked from miles around to the huge, bustling dance halls -- the Intercolonial, the Hibernian, Winslow Hall, the Dudley Street Opera House, the Rose Croix -- that dotted Boston's Dudley Square. For the city's Irish population, the Roxbury neighborhood, with its ballrooms and thriving shopping district, was a vital center of social and cultural life, as well as a bridge from the old world to the new.

See You at the Hall brings to life the rich history of the "American capitol of Galway" through the eyes of those who gathered and performed there. In this engaging look back at Boston's golden era of Irish traditional music, Susan J. Gedutis deftly weaves together engaging narrative with spirited personal reminiscences to trace the colorful dance hall period from its beginnings in 1940s Roxbury, when masses of young Irish flooded Boston following World War II, through its peak years in the 1950s, to its decline in the 1960s, when reduced immigration, urban social upheaval, and a shift in neighborhood demographics brought an end to the heyday of Irish dance hall music in Boston. After the last dance hall closed, Dudley Square musicians moved from the big ballrooms to pubs, social clubs, and private parties, preserving the music and passing it on to younger generations of Irish performers.

Today, Irish traditional music is experiencing a major revival, and Boston still boasts a lively Irish music scene. This vivid portrait of the enduring and vibrant heritage of the dance hall era will rekindle memories of the good times in Dudley Square, and it will fascinate the legion of fans around the globe interested in the roots of the Irish music they hear today in concert halls, pubs, and clubs. The book also recounts an important period, as yet unchronicled, in the history of Irish music in America, and of the Irish in the diaspora.

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