

Joanna Clare is a violinist and fiddler from Central New York, esteemed for her brilliance in Irish fiddle playing, tune composition, and tutelage. As a former student of the great Sligo-style fiddler, Brian Conway, Joanna has won multiple competitions at the Mid-Atlantic Fleadh Cheoil in dance tunes, slow airs, and newly composed tunes and has qualified for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (All-Ireland) in Ireland most years since 2012. Most notably, Joanna was awarded runner-up for the 2021 All-Ireland FleadhFest senior fiddle slow airs championship in Sligo, Ireland.

When Joanna was just two years old, her mother brought her to an Ithaca (New York) Talent Education concert featuring children who were just a bit older than her playing violins. Joanna was so inspired by them that she ran up to the stage and would have crawled up to join them if her mother hadn't restrained her. At the age of three, she started taking Suzuki violin lessons at The Hochstein School of Music in Rochester, NY. She continued her involvement with private lessons, youth orchestras, and chamber ensembles throughout much of her schooling, notably receiving training from Maggie Mercer, Harumi Rhodes, and Dr. Peter Rovit. Joanna often hyperbolizes that until her years reached double digits she only knew of classical music, folk music, and The Beatles. After growing up listening to Mick Moloney, Eugene O'Donnell, Seamus Egan, The Chieftains, Eileen Ivers, and Cherish the Ladies, it comes as no surprise that Joanna wanted to play Irish music. In grade school, Joanna began to learn Irish and American fiddle tunes— briefly under Dick Bolt, and then at The Kanack School of Musical Artistry, where she studied group fiddle lessons with Liz Hirshorn. As a young girl, Joanna also began to learn the tunes by ear while sitting in front of a CD player. At the age of six, she joined The Great Groove Band at the Old Songs Festival under the instruction of Donna Hébert, among others. From then on, she was a loyal member of the Great Groove Band at the annual Philadelphia Folk Festival, performing on the Martin Guitar Stage each year. Donna Hébert, The Great Groove Band, and The Philadelphia Folksong Society were critical in nurturing the love Joanna developed for folk music and her early development as a fiddler. Sligo fiddle master Brian Conway taught Joanna for nine years, and he, along with her diligent mother, Cynthia Hill, deserves much praise for Joanna's musical training. Brian was a fabulous teacher and mentor to Joanna, with his intense focus on phrasing, bowing, and precise ornamentation. He often invited her to perform with him around St. Patrick's Day and trained her for her Mid-Atlantic Fleadh Cheoil and Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann competitions. Encouraged by Brian, Joanna attended workshops at Catskills Irish Arts Week and Scoil Éigse and received mentorship from many tutors including Oisín MacDiarmada, and MacDara Ó Raghallaigh.

Joanna has always loved performing and has appeared at The Celtic Fling Festival, The East Durham Irish Festival, The Friendly Gathering, The Maryland Avenue Fall Festival, The Maryland Folk Festival, The Maryland Irish Festival, The New York Trad Fest, The Philadelphia Ceili Group Traditional Irish Music and Dance Festival, and The Philadelphia Folk Festival, The Rochester Irish Festival, The Springwater Fiddler's Fair, and The Syracuse Irish Festival. She has also performed at many libraries, nursing homes, and schools across New York and Maryland. Joanna has been privileged to perform with Myron Bretholz, Peter Brice, Tim Britton, Laura Byrne, Deirdre Connolly, Andrew Caden, Brian Conway, David Deacon, Brendan Dolan, Felix Dolan, John Doyle, Eileen Estes, Kieran Flanagan, Donna Long, The Green Fields of America, Donna Hébert, Lunasa, Billy and Sean McComiskey, Mick Moloney, Matt Mulqueen, Richard Osban, Jerry O'Sullivan, Haley Richardson, Tommy Sands, and Solas.

Having written her first tune, "The Mouse Catcher," at the age of thirteen, Joanna has penned over 50 Irish tunes. Beginning in 2019, she has received critique for her tunes and composition mentorship from her friends Billy McComiskey (composer of "The Commodore" and "The Diamond") and Myron Bretholz.

Joanna's tunes "The Mouse Catcher," "Amédée," "The Upshot," and "Homeland" were featured at the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann's newly composed tune competition in 2014, 2018, 2022, and 2024 respectively. Quoting legendary tunesmith Carl Hession, "Joanna is not only a brilliant fiddle player, but also a composer whose tunes are quite different, as there is an originality factor in her compositions. Having accompanied Joanna playing two of her reels, the structure and melodic writing was so impressive."

In 2020, Joanna started her own violin and fiddle studio, teaching beginner and intermediate students who range in age from three to their 80s. She also appeared as a guest fiddle instructor in virtual Suzuki group classes. Previously, Joanna gained experience as a fiddle instructor of The Great Groove Band at the Philadelphia Folk Festival and Spring Thing, both run by the Philadelphia Folksong Society. From 2021 – 2023, Joanna attained certification for the courses *Every Child Can!* and *Suzuki Violin Units 1 – 4, Suzuki Early Childhood Education Stage 1 and Stage 2; Play!: Exploring Creativity, Developing Autonomy, and Finding Meaning in Music Lessons*; and *Inclusive Group Class Teaching* through the Suzuki Association of the Americas. She also uses techniques from Creativity Ability Development, which is an improvisation-based learning method. As a teacher, Joanna prioritizes physical technique to direct her students' playing and emphasizes what to practice, but more importantly, how to do it. She currently teaches Irish fiddle, Suzuki Violin, and improv to adults and children online and in person, as well as group classes including a general music class for babies, toddlers, and their caregivers.

Joanna released her debut album, *To Keep the Candle Burning*, on February 25th, 2022. *To Keep the Candle Burning* is dedicated to the many traditional Irish musicians who inspired Joanna throughout her childhood. While the album includes some original tunes, it is primarily comprised of tunes she learned either directly from these musicians or from their recordings. The album features All Ireland champions Brian Conway, Josh Dukes, and Billy McComiskey, along with Myron Bretholz, Sean McComiskey, Matt Mulqueen, Catherine O'Kelly, and Liam Presser and was recorded and engineered by Dave Nachodsky at Stages Music Arts in Cockeysville, Maryland.

Joanna currently lives in Baltimore, Maryland, where she earned her degree in materials science and engineering with a minor in music from Johns Hopkins University. She is the fiddler and dancer in Celtic Corridor with Laura Byrne (flute and whistle), Donna Long (piano), Eileen Estes (bodhran, guitar, and vocals), and Billy McComiskey (accordion); and the fiddler and a vocalist in The Mount Clare Connection with Peter Brice (accordion and vocals) and Richard Osban (clawhammer banjo, tenor banjo, guitar, and vocals).