

URBAN SPACES



L-R: Students at the Aroon Academy of Irish Dance, school director Eileen Westernacher in 'Riverdance.'

## More than meets the Irish: The guide to a splendid St. Paddy's in York Region

Some people are content doing the same thing year after year on St. Patrick's Day — getting festive with some friends down at the old pub, sporting some gaudy green threads and pretending to be Irish for a day.

Not that there's anything wrong with going classic, but if you feel like trying something different, there are a few alternatives.

The Irish dance production *Heartbeat of Home* has been making waves in Toronto. If you've seen the show and are perhaps feeling a little inspired to try your hand at Irish dancing, you'll have your chance.

On March 19, the Aroon Academy of Irish Dance in Richmond Hill will be hosting two free open house classes for first-timers to try out Irish dancing. A children's workshop will be

held at 7 p.m. and an adults' workshop at 8 p.m.

Aroon is a brand new studio. Director Eileen Westernacher performed in *Riverdance* in 2007. Westernacher says she loves the buzz that *Heartbeat* is bringing to Irish dance.

"Having something new and exciting might refresh the spark that people have for Irish dancing," she says. "Hopefully it helps people see it in a new light."

Be forewarned — Irish dance is exhausting. An hour of hopping, skipping and shuffling across a floor just may be enough to burn off a few pints.

For a more typical take on St. Paddy's Day, one might be inclined to head down to an Irish-themed watering hole. But don't let names and signage deceive you.