



Museum of
Newport Irish History

30 Years
— 1996-2026 —

First talk of our 25th Annual Lecture Series

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The NYPD Pipes and Drums' Line-Of-Duty Funeral: How an Irish-American Musical Rite Started and Spread

Guest Speaker:

Scott Spencer, PhD

Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Wyndham Newport Hotel
240 Aquidneck Avenue, Middletown, R.I. 02842
and Live-Streamed on Zoom

The sonic presence of bagpipes has become a ubiquitous and necessary aspect of line-of-duty funerals and 9/11 memorials, much like “Taps” in military ceremonies honoring fallen soldiers. But the direct line between Irish or Scottish musical traditions and recently invented traditions for those in public service is blurry or imagined.

This presentation will discuss areas in which the porous nature of Irish or Celtic identity – especially in musical settings – allows for a personal identification with the performed identity of a bagpipe band, regardless of one’s ethnicity or heritage, in moments of ceremony, memorialization, and pageantry.

With an eye to the material (bagpipes, kilts, balmorals) and an ear to the sonic spectacle (drone, marches, drums), this discussion will explore the changing nature of identity in this musical performance. The results will include a new perspective on how public traditions form and become vital to different groups of people; the role of performance in assembling and demonstrating heritage; and the importance of sonic spectacle in performing ethnicity and identity.

SCOTT B. SPENCER is an Assistant Professor of Musicology (World Music) at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music, and a Fellow in the USC Society of Fellows in the Humanities. His latest book, *Pipers for the Fallen: The NYPD Emerald Society Bagpipe Band*, will be published in the Oxford University Press “American Musicspheres” series in the near future. We welcome Scott back to his second talk for our members and friends.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Light hors d’oeuvres & Cash Bar available

The \$10 Lecture Fee is payable at the door in cash or by check to “MNIH.” No fee/\$0 for Zoom participation.

Reservations Required for In-Person and Zoom Participation

To reserve, visit www.NewportIrishHistory.org, click “Lectures,” then the appropriate link to reserve under the Sept. 23 listing (In-person or Zoom). You will receive an email confirmation. If you do *not* see it, check your spam folder. The talk will be videotaped, and a link will be available on our website’s “Lectures” page afterward.

Questions/Assistance with Registration: Contact Ann Arnold at (401) 841-5493, (917) 270-3372, or tpm1@earthlink.net

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List as of August 1, 2026