

Tomáseen Foley's A CELTIC CHRISTMAS



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Tomáseen Foley's *A CELTIC CHRISTMAS*

For the past 13 years, with a world-class ensemble of musicians, dancers and singers from both sides of the Atlantic, *Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas* has played to packed concert halls and critical acclaim nationwide, recreating on stage the now-famous *Rambling House*, that remote cottage in the West of Ireland where the neighbors gather every year for a communal night before Christmas.

There, the rafters ring with fiery traditional music, Irish Christmas songs, riveting traditional dance and, of course, stories of life in the remote parish of *Teampall an Ghleanntáin*, *Tomáseen's* birthplace. The show invites its audience to come into that cottage, into that world, into that era, with us, and be our neighbors for the night.



Storytelling was once the most admired of all the Celtic arts, and *A Celtic Christmas* is unique in that it is the only nationally touring show that has storytelling at its center: around that center revolve the more-immediately recognized traditional Celtic arts of music, song and dance.



“When I was a child it was around the fireplaces of my neighbors’ thatched cottages that I experienced the last remnants of the old communal way of life. The family was the center of the community then, and the community was the center of life itself, the shining axle around which the great wheel of the universe revolved. Stories, music, song and dance were the spokes of that slowly turning wheel. “ Tomáseen

The Neighbors... THE CAST



Marianne Knight
vocals, box, bodhrán,
whistle, guitar, dance



Tomáseen Foley
Native Irish storyteller
Producer, Artistic Director



Brian Bigley
uilleann pipes, whistles,
flute, dance



William Coulter
Musical Director
guitar, vocals

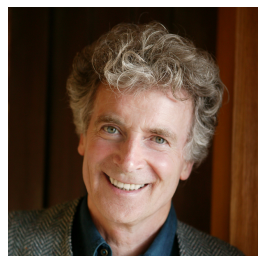


Marcus Donnelly
dance

"The troupe did not so much speak parables and sing hymns as fashion an imagined moment in time co-existing peacefully with the spirit of Christmas, recreating the innocence and charm of times gone by --- defining moments when family gathered around a hearth to share tales, exchange gifts and reflect on the passing of the days."

The State Journal Register, Springfield, IL

The Neighbors... 2010 CAST information



Tomáseen Foley: Storyteller/Director

Tomáseen was born on a small farm in the remote parish of *Teampall an Ghleanntáin* in the West of Ireland. Each year from Thanksgiving until Christmas Tomáseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas* plays to critical acclaim and packed concert halls around the US. Tomáseen Foley's *Irish Times* tours throughout the remainder of the year. The Oregon Cabaret has developed a hit musical from his story *Parcel From America*. He has released two CDs: *Parcel From America*, and a live recording, *The Priest and the Acrobat*.

www.tomascenfoley.com



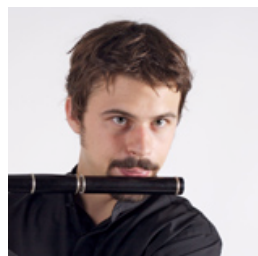
William Coulter: Musical Director, guitar, whistle

William is an internationally acclaimed master of the steel-string guitar. In 2005, he won a Grammy for a track he contributed to a solo guitar compilation of Henry Mancini tunes, called *Pink Guitar*. He has been performing and recording traditional Celtic and American folk music for 25 years. The most recent of his seven CDs on the Gourd Music label is the acclaimed solo album, *The Road Home*. www.williamcoulter.com



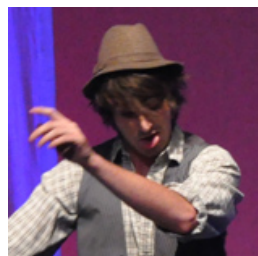
Marianne Knight: Vocals, multi-instrumentals, Irish dance

Marianne comes from the rich traditional- music environment of Co. Mayo, in the west of Ireland. *Hotpress Magazine* says, 'Her clear, bright voice and crisp ornamentation make her one of the most exciting vocalists to come along in years.' In addition to her singing, she is a musician of renown on several instruments -- the button accordion, wooden flute, whistles and bodhrán. As an Irish dancer, she has won the American Nationals and Scottish Nationals, and competed with distinction in the British, Canadian, All-Ireland and World championships.



Brian Bigley, *uilleann* pipes, whistle, flute, Irish dance.

From the age of eight, Brian Bigley studied the traditional, rarely heard, *uilleann* pipes with Achill Island (Co. Mayo) piper Michael Kilbane -- with whom he also studied flute, whistle and low whistle. Brian has toured extensively throughout North America, Europe and the UK, has been guest artist with the Contemporary Youth Orchestra of Cleveland, and competed with distinction in the World Championships in Glasgow in 2002 and in Killarney in 2003. www.brianbigleymusic.com



Marcus Donnelly, Irish dance

From Ireland to Luxemburg, from Moscow to Paris, France and Paris, Texas, Marcus's leading performances (*Ragús, Rhythm of the Dance, Celtic Legends*, and most recently in the U.S. with *Celtic Crossroads*) have created one of the most exhilarating, truly creative Irish dancers performing today. Marcus competed with distinction in the All-Ireland and World Dance Championships before becoming a professional dancer at the age of sixteen. When he is not touring, he works with his own dance company, *Furious Feet*, in Galway, Ireland.

THE PROGRAM

Act 1, 55 minutes; Act 2, 55 minutes; 15 minute intermission.

PROGRAM (2010 - update to follow)

The Rambling House - the traditional meeting place for the neighbors; a place where almost anything can happen, and some of what follows probably will . . .

Ar Éirinn Ní Neosfainn Cé Í (Traditional song in the Irish language)

Marianne Knight - vocal solo

Brian Bigley- uilleann pipes

William Coulter-guitar

“In the West of Ireland...” Tomáseen Foley

Dance solo

Céad Míle Fáilte - One hundred thousand welcomes Tomáseen Foley

Christmas Eve / The Abbey Reel / Over the Moor to Maggie Irish reels

Dance solo

Johnny’s Tune (Paddy Keenan, composer) / **The Humours of Ballyloughlan / Mayo Girls** (air /jig / reel)

Brian Bigley – uilleann pipes, flute solo

The Kerry Christmas Carol Marianne Knight – vocals

Story Tomáseen Foley

The Rambling House Chair Dance Brian Bigley and Marianne Knight

INTERMISSION

Brush Dance solo Marianne Knight

Traditional Irish Toast Tomáseen Foley

The Wexford Carol (Traditional Irish carol) Marianne Knight – vocals

Fahey’s / Don Oiche ud / Cregg’s Pipes (reel-air-reel)

Dance solo (slip jig)

Ned of the Hill Marianne Knight - vocals; William Coulter - guitar

Traditional Christmas Rambling House Deadly Dance Duel

Story – The Heart of Christmas Tomáseen Foley

Silent Night

All of the neighbors. . .

Sláinte na bfeair agus go mara na mná go deo
Good health to the men and may the women live forever

CRÍOCH

REVIEWS and ACCOLADES

“Tomaseen Foley’s *A Celtic Christmas* has captured the charm of the wit and wisdom inherent in a locality where people lived within the shelter of their neighbors.” The Irish Voice, New York City, NY

“We had to move the performance to a venue with twice as many seats... the mix of stories, music and dance was perfect.” Rockport Opera House, Rockport, ME

“A rousing success... a magnificent performance.”
West Valley Fine Arts Council, Litchfield Park, AZ

“1,800 patrons joined the stage musicians for “Silent Night” to close Foley’s warm, intimate and personal look at Irish history and culture.”
Lincoln Journal Star, Lincoln NE

“2,000 seats sold out!” Weidner Center for the Performing Arts, Green Bay, WI

“... a genuine seanchai in the person of Tomáseen Foley – his presence alone is worth the price of admission.” The Irish Herald, San Francisco, CA

“One of the great charms of the evening was Tomáseen’s skill in relating a story . . . a gentle and easy humor made his tales fascinating and eminently human.” Palm Beach Daily News, Palm Beach, FL

“Dancers Knight, Bigley, and Linnane showed their superb talents as world-class Irish step dancers, moving their feet sometimes faster than the eye could follow. .. Grammy Award-winning guitarist William Coulter provided sublime background .” The Santa Barbara Independent, Santa Barbara, CA

“Tomáseen Foley is a master of the Irish narrative and a keeper of the flame for a priceless piece of Irish culture.” Tom Horan, Rego Irish Records



“... with many frustrated and disillusioned by the materialism of the holiday season, the evening at the theater [was] like a cup of Irish coffee in a neighbor’s kitchen on a dark night, it was warm, comforting and full of cheer.”
Noozhawk e-zine

PRESS RELEASE

"The troupe did not so much speak parables and sing hymns as fashion an imagined moment in time co-existing peacefully with the spirit of Christmas, recreating the innocence and charm of times gone by --- defining moments when family gathered around a hearth to share tales, exchange gifts and reflect on the passing of the days."

The State Journal Register. Springfield, Il

The American humorist H. L. Mencken said there was little reason to be confused by life, that merely making the decision to go always in the opposite direction of whatever way the world was going, ensured that one would not go wrong.

For the past fifteen years *Tomáseen Foley's **A Celtic Christmas*** has been doing just that by rescuing its audiences in concert halls all over the country from the bloated electronic bog of blogging, Twittering, Googling, Facebooking, iPoding and iPading, and transporting them back to the days before the motor car, the telephone and the television.

The show takes us back to small cottage in the West of Ireland, where the neighbors have just arrived to celebrate Christmas. And they arrive bearing gifts. Not gifts of gold, frankincense or myrrh, but gifts equally precious: the gifts of music, of song, of dance, and of story, all drawn from the infinite treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage. It was said that without these communal forms of communication, there would be no community.

These neighbors bring with them their fiddles, whistles, flutes, accordions, guitars, *bodhrán*, and the rarely-heard, mesmerizing *willeann* pipes, to rekindle the flame in the Christmas hearth, and to raise the rafters with their fiery music and the laughter of their stories, and to knock sparks off the flagstone floor with traditional dances. There is magic in the air then, indefinable but unforgettable.

These neighbors in *Tomáseen Foley's **A Celtic Christmas*** are, in fact, some of the finest and most authentic exponents of the full register of the Celtic arts performing anywhere today, on either side of the Atlantic. And, by inviting the audience into the cottage for the evening, the communal spirit of Christmas dances to life and glows brightly, and, together -- audience, musicians, dancers, singers and storyteller -- they reveal, and revel in, the full register of human emotion.