



Tomásean  
Foley's **A Celtic  
Christmas**

*Rekindle the Irish flame*

EPK 2023

# Contact Information

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# Tomáseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas*

A black and white photograph of Tomáseen Foley, an older man with grey hair, smiling and looking to his right. He is wearing a dark shirt and has his hands clasped in front of him.

For the past 28 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 to 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 carols, 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.

*"When I was a child, it was around the fireplace of my neighbors' thatched cottage 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."*

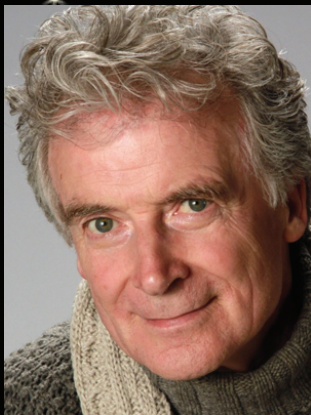
**-TOMÁSEEN FOLEY**

Storytelling was once the most admired of all the Celtic arts, and *A Celtic Christmas* is unique in that it has storytelling at its center. Anchored round that center revolve the more immediately recognizable traditional Celtic arts of music, song and dance.





# Cast Biographies



## TOMÁSEEN FOLEY

Director, Storyteller

Tomáseen Foley grew up on a small farm in the remote parish of Teampall an Ghleanntáin in the West of Ireland - where storytelling 'was as natural as breathing.' Each year from Thanksgiving through the Christmas season, his show, Tomáseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas*, plays to critical acclaim and packed concert halls all over the US. He also tours annually with Brian Bigley's *An Irish Rambling House*. In conjunction with the Omaha Symphony/Edmonton Symphony/Nashville Symphony he features as narrator/storyteller in *A Celtic Journey*. His story, *Parcel from America* was developed into a musical and produced to critical acclaim at Ireland's oldest theatre, the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin in May 2022. He has released several CDs: *A Celtic Christmas: Parcel from America*; a live recording, *The Priest and the Acrobat*, and, most recently *Celtic Knots: An Irish Love Story*. "He is a master of the Irish narrative and a keeper of the flame for a priceless piece of Irish culture." - Rego Irish Records. [TomaseenFoley.com](http://TomaseenFoley.com)



## WILLIAM COULTER

Music Director, Guitar

Music director since 1998, William Coulter is an internationally acclaimed, Grammy award-winning master of the steel-string guitar. He has several Gourd Music label recordings, including his most recent, *The Rolling Waves*, a collection of original arrangements of folk and original music. Coulter has performed with the Santa Cruz Baroque Festival, Grammy-award winning *Apollo's Fire* and many other ensembles. In March of 2016, he debuted *Celtic Journey*, a full-length pops concert with the Omaha Symphony orchestra. Collaborations have been a mainstay of his career and tours have taken him around the states and to Ireland, Europe, Taiwan, New Zealand, Chile, and Australia. Coulter teaches classical guitar at UC Santa Cruz and elsewhere. He has earned music degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. [WilliamCoulterGuitar.com](http://WilliamCoulterGuitar.com)



## BRIAN BIGLEY

Uilleann Pipes, Irish Flute, Whistles, Irish Dance

Brian Bigley has studied the uilleann pipes for over thirty years as a player, as well as a sought-out maker, of the instrument. He has toured North America and Europe extensively as both a musician and a dancer, appearing in shows such as the Omaha Symphony's *Celtic Journey* and Grammy-winning *Apollo's Fire* production *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain* - the recording of which made it to number three on the Billboard Charts. Brian competed with great distinction at the World Irish Dance Championships and has placed second in the senior uilleann piping competition at the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil. He has produced and is touring his show called *An Irish Rambling House* and has several recordings available on CD. Brian lives near Cleveland, Ohio, with his fiddler wife, Kristen, and their dancing children, James and Kathleen. [BrianBigleyMusic.com](http://BrianBigleyMusic.com), [KBBproductions.net](http://KBBproductions.net)



## EIMEAR ARKINS

Multi-Instrumentalist, Singer, Irish Dance

Eimear Arkins is a multi-instrumentalist, singer and dancer from Ruan, County Clare, Ireland. She holds eleven solo All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil titles and has competed in all Ireland, European and World Dance Championships. She has toured with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and represented Ireland in France, Spain, Shanghai, China and Milan, Italy. Eimear was selected to be part of the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of Ireland, and has performed with the renowned show, *Brú Ború*. She has toured and performed with numerous groups, including *Cherish the Ladies*, *The Paul Brock Band*, *Trinity Irish Dance Ensemble* and *Téada*. She teaches at St. Louis Irish Arts and has given many workshops. Eimear was awarded Newcomer of the Year 2019 by *liveireland*, and her debut solo album is entitled "What's Next." "She is a lovely singer, wonderful fiddle player and a truly accomplished step dancer. Triple threat time! Eimear Arkins-remember THAT name!" - *liveIRELAND*. [EimearArkins.com](http://EimearArkins.com)





## NATALIE WAGNER

### Irish Dance

Natalie Wagner started Irish dancing at the age of twelve and immediately fell in love with the art. She competed with great distinction in Regional and North American Irish Dance Championships, including competitions in Canada and Ireland. Her passion for dance led to further education in Ballet and Modern Dance and she is most excited to be dancing in Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas.

*"Mesmerizing... living traditions of song, story, music and dance woven together as skillfully as the most intricate Celtic knot."*



## MARCUS DONNELLY

### Irish Dance

From Ireland to Luxemburg and from Moscow to Paris, Marcus Donnelly's leading performances with shows such as 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 anywhere today.

He started dancing at the age of ten, in second-hand dance shoes his father bought for fifteen shillings on a visit to Dublin, and went on to compete with distinction in the All-Ireland and World Dance Championships before becoming a full-time professional dancer at the age of sixteen.

*"A very large audience turned out and sat rapt for A Celtic Christmas, 2½ hours of jigs, reels and wordsmithing."*

## Videos



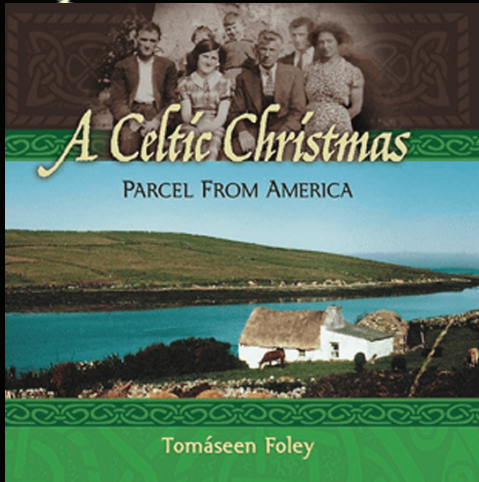
30-Second Promo Video



3-Minute Promo Video

Please view our complete video collection on  YouTube





## A CELTIC CHRISTMAS: *Parcel from America*

Written and narrated by Tomásean Foley over 20 years ago, *Parcel From America* is becoming a classic Christmas story - a story of the joy and innocence of Christmas in rural Ireland in the 1950s.

In his native parish of Teampall an Ghleanntáin in the West of Ireland, in the days before the motor car, the television or the telephone, the first sure sign of Christmas was the arrival of the brightly-colored, gaily-wrapped parcels from America - faithfully delivered on the bicycle of the beloved whistling postman, Davey the Post.

In the weeks before Christmas, the wildly-anticipated parcels arrived into almost every home in the townland, since nearly everyone had a family member in America, but no Christmas parcel ever arrived into the home of the local widow woman, Bríd na nÉan, Bridget of the Birds. This is Bridget's story.

*"Like a cup of Irish coffee in a neighbor's kitchen on a dark night, it was warm, comforting and full of cheer."*

## Photos & Posters

Please view our  
**PRESENTERS PAGE**  
for downloadable  
images and documents.



# Reviews & Accolades

"...everyone no doubt left feeling a little more Irish than before. If you can't cross the Atlantic, at least make your way to "A Celtic Christmas."

**ZACHERY LEWIS**  
*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"Foley runs pictures and thoughts across the mind like shooting stars on a crystalline night, with emotions shaking the ground."

**THE GREEN BAY PRESS GAZETTE**  
*Green Bay, WI*

"How he does this in the enormous barn of a theater like the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza and hold the enormous capacity audience in the palm of his hand is beyond the powers of this reviewer to explain, but hold them he does and his presence alone is worth the price of admission."

**AIDAN RAFFERTY**  
*The Irish Herald,*

"Like a cup of Irish coffee in a neighbor's kitchen on a dark night, it was warm, comforting and full of cheer."

**JUSTINE SUTTON**  
*Santa Barbara Noozhawk*

"Move over, Garrison Keillor. As a presenter of the performing arts who's always looking for a sure bet, I assure Tomáseen delivers. He deserves a world stage."

**CRATERIAN GINGER  
ROGERS THEATER**  
*Medford, OR*

"In the tradition of great Irish storytellers...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*

"1,800 Lied patrons joined the stage musicians for 'Silent Night' to close Foley's warm, intimate and personal look at Irish history and culture."

**THE LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR**

"In between musical presentations by five wondrously talented guest artists, storyteller and Ireland native Tomáseen Foley regaled the sold-out crowd of "good people of Cleveland, Ohio" with poetry, tales and jokes, evoking a quiet evening spent sitting around the hearth."

**THE CLEVELAND PLAIN**

"2000 seats sold out!"

**WEIDNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS**  
*Green Bay, WI*





Tomáseen  
Foley's **A Celtic  
Christmas**

*Program*

The Christmas Rambling House - the traditional meeting place for the neighbors; a place where almost anything can happen, and much of what follows surely will. We're delighted you're joining us!

**Tomáseen Foley** - Director/Fear an Tí (Man of the House)/Writer/Storyteller  
**William Coulter** - Music Director/Guitar  
**Brian Bigley** - Uilleann Pipes/Whistle/Flute/Champion Irish Dancer  
**Eimear Arkins** - Vocalist/Irish Fiddle/Champion Irish Dancer  
**Marcus Donnelly** - Lead Dancer/Choreographer  
**Natalie Wagner** - Irish Dancer

**Act I: 55 minutes**

**Don Oíche úd i mBeithil, (That Night In Bethlehem) traditional**

Eimear Arkins

**In the West of Ireland**

Tomáseen Foley - Storyteller

**New Mown Meadow**

Rambling House Band and Dancers

**The Welcome, composed by Tony Small**

Eimear Arkins & Rambling House Band

**Abbey Reel/Frankie Kennedy's/Red Haired Lass**

Rambling House Band and Dancers

**Traditional Air**

Brian Bigley

**Reel Around the Sun, composed by Bill Whelan**

Rambling House Band

**In The Bleak Midwinter- written by Christina Rosetti/Gustav Holtz**

Eimear Arkins & Rambling House Band

**King of the Fairies, traditional**

Brian Bigley & Marcus Donnelly

**Christmas in Teampall an Ghleanntáin**

Tomáseen Foley

**Quarter Inch Wick/Don Oíche úd i mBeithil/Cregg's Pipes, traditional**

Rambling House Band & Dancers

**ACT II: 50 minutes**

**The Earl's Chair / The Boyne Hunt, traditional**

RH Band & Dancers

**Traditional Irish Toast /Christmas in Teampall an Ghleanntáin**

**The Wren Song, traditional**

RH Band

**The Honeybee, traditional**

RH Band and Natalie Wagner

**Irish fiddle and guitar duet**

Eimear Arkins & William Coulter

**Traditional Christmas Rambling House Deadly Dance Duel**

RH Dancers

**Christmas in Teampall an Ghleanntáin/Heart of Christmas, music composed by William Coulter**

Tomáseen Foley and RH Band

**Oíche Chiúin (Silent Night), traditional**

Eimear Arkins - vocals, Rambling House Band and all the neighbors

**CRÍOCH (END)**

**Sláinte na bfeair agus go mara na mná go deo**





Tomáseen  
Foley's **A Celtic  
Christmas**

*Press Release*

**Tour 2023**

"If you can't cross the Atlantic, at least make your way to "A Celtic Christmas."  
- CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

Drawing on the infinitely rich treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage, *Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas* is a re-creation of a night before Christmas in the West of Ireland in the 1940s, in the days before the motorcar, the television, and the telephone.

Now in its 28th season, this year's show features some of the finest, most authentic, exponents of the Celtic arts performing anywhere today, on either side of the Atlantic.

Traditionally, in the remote parish of *Teampall an Ghleannáin* -Tomáseen Foley's birthplace - the neighbors gathered at each other's farmhouses on the nights leading up to Christmas, bringing with them their fiddles, tin whistles, flutes, bodhráns, *uilleann* pipes, and, perhaps, most important of all, their unshakeable sense of community; they gathered to raise the rafters of the old houses with the joy of their music, to knock sparks off the flagstone floor with their traditional dances - and, of course, to tell stories - they filled the night with the laughter of their stories

**A Celtic Christmas** brings to life just such a night. On stage, the spirit of a Christmas dances to life and glows brightly to create an Irish family feast - direct from the rich table of communal life in the west of Ireland.

For event listings, tickets and pricing, please visit [www.tomaseenfoley.com](http://www.tomaseenfoley.com)

"Great storytelling swept up more than 1,000 listeners . . . "A Celtic Christmas" received a standing ovation at the end. Some people may have been standing to reach for a tissue . . . it was heart tugging. . . Foley runs pictures and thoughts across the mind like shooting stars on a crystalline night, with emotions shaking the ground."

- GREEN BAY PRESS GAZETTE

[ACelticChristmas.com](http://ACelticChristmas.com)

[TomaseenFoley.com](http://TomaseenFoley.com)