



Tomásean
Foley's **A Celtic
Christmas**

Rekindle the Irish flame

EPK 2024

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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



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



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, 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



LAUREN BEADLE

Irish Dance (Dec 1-16)

Lauren has been dancing since she was seven, and professionally for the past nine years. She has competed with great distinction at the World Championships, the American Nationals, and the New England Oireachtas. Her experience ranges from touring all over the world with traditional Irish dance shows, including Lord of the Dance, to interactive theater incorporating multiple dance disciplines. She is excited to be joining this year's production of *A Celtic Christmas* and comes to us courtesy of JiGGiG.



JOSEPH HARRISON

Irish Dance (Dec 1-16)

Joe has toured all over the world - from Las Vegas to Dubai - with shows such as Riverdance, Feet of Flames, Magic of the Dance, where he played the lead role of the Devil, and Lord of the Dance - with Michael Flatley. He has competed with great distinction at the regional, national and world level and has won nine New England Regional titles. He has graduated from Northeastern University with a degree in Architecture. Joe is also a dancer on JiGGiG's roster.



BELLE BRENTON

Irish Dance (Dec 18-23)

Born in Helsinki, Finland, Belle tours the world with iconic dance shows such as Riverdance, Gaelforce Dance, Lord of the Dance, Dangerous Games and Feet of Flames. She graduated from The University of Kent with a degree in Sport and Exercise Science. She comes to *A Celtic Christmas* courtesy of JiGGiG.

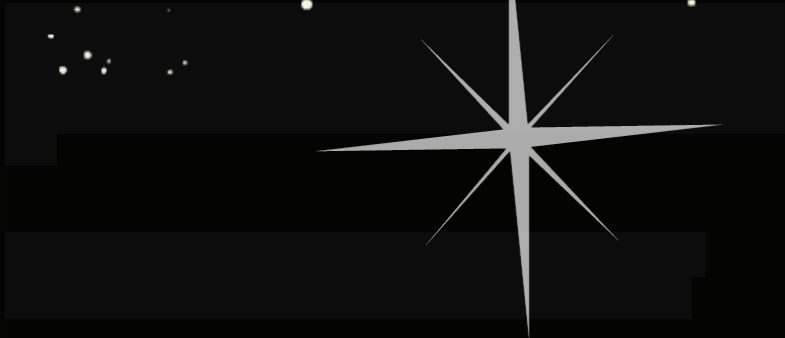


BRANDON ASAZAWA

Irish Dance (Dec 18-23)

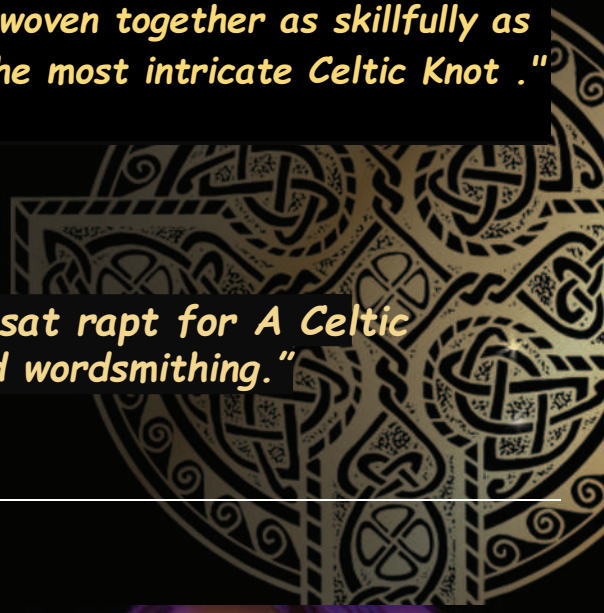
In his years of competing in the World Irish Dance Championships, Brandon also became a five-time regional champion and National champion. Since 2015, he has toured as lead dancer and dance captain with Riverdance and Heartbeat of Home, performing extensively across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, and appearing on tv programs such as America's Got Talent and Good Morning America. In 2024, he co-founded JiGGiG





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

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




Videos

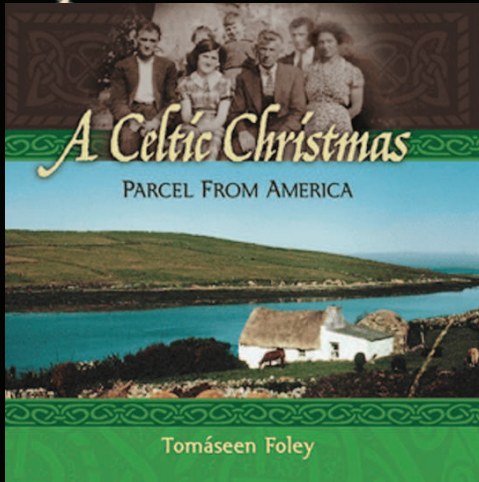


30-Second Promo Video



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

Joseph Harrison - Irish Dance (Dec 1-16)

Lauren Beadle - Irish Dance (Dec 1-16)

Brandon Asazawa - Irish Dance (Dec 18-23)

Belle Brenton - Irish Dance (Dec 18-23)

Act I: 55 minutes

Oft In The Stilly Night - Thomas Moore (1779-1852)

Eimear Arkins

In the West of Ireland

Tomáseen Foley - Storyteller

New Mown Meadow

Rambling House Band and Dancers

The Kerry Carol

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 Rossetti/Gustav Holtz

Eimear Arkins & Rambling House Band

King of the Fairies, traditional

Brian Bigley

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 / Castlekelly, traditional

Rambling House Band & Dancers

Traditional Irish Toast /Christmas in Teampall an Ghleanntáin

The Wren Song, traditional

Rambling House Band

The Honeybee, traditional

Rambling House Band and dancers

Irish fiddle and guitar duet

Eimear Arkins & William Coulter

Traditional Christmas Rambling House Deadly Dance Duel

Rambling House Dancers

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

Tomáseen Foley and Rambling House Band

Oíche Chiúin (Silent Night), traditional

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

CRÍOCH (END)

Sláinte na bfear agus go mara na mná go deo





Tomáseen
Foley's **A Celtic
Christmas**

Press Release

Tour 2024

"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 Ghleanntáin*-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

"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

TomáseenFoley.com