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Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas

For the past 20 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.

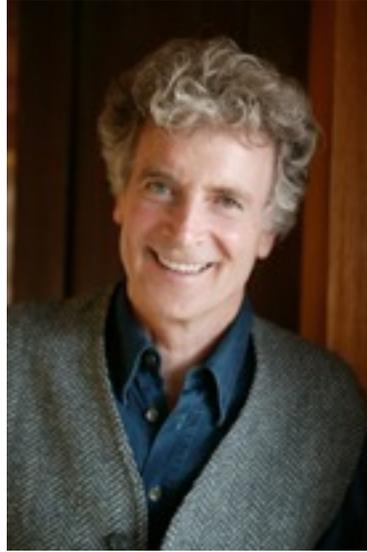


“When I was a child it was around the fireplaces of my neighbors’ thatched cottages that I experienced the last remnants of the old communal way of life. The family was the center of the community then, and the community was the center of life itself, the shining axle around which the great wheel of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

Meet the Neighbors: the Celtic Christmas cast



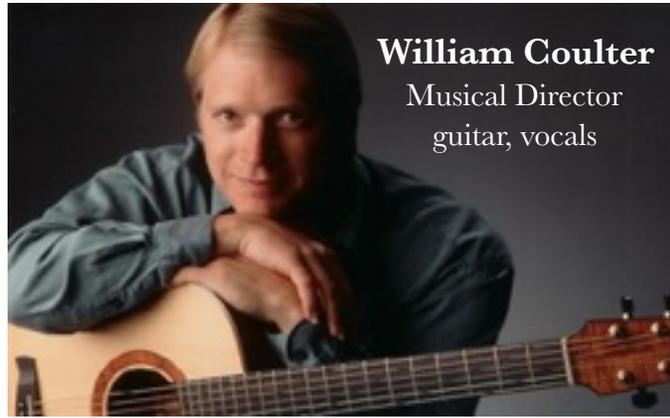
Eimear Arkins
Fiddle



Tomáseen Foley
Native Irish storyteller
Producer, Artistic Director



Brian Bigley
Uilleann Pipes, Whistles,
Flute, Vocals



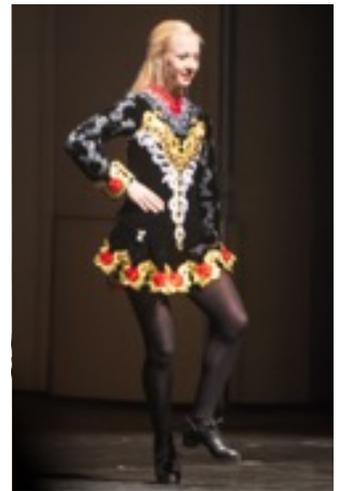
William Coulter
Musical Director
guitar, vocals



Bríd O'Donnell
Accordion & Irish Dance



Marcus Donnelly
Irish Dance



Alyssa Reichert
Irish Dance

Meet the Neighbors:

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. Tomáseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas* and Tomáseen Foley's *Irish Times* play to critical acclaim and packed concert halls around the US. 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.tomaseenfoley.com



William Coulter: Musical Director, guitar

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 30 years. The most recent of his eight CDs on the Gourd Music label are the acclaimed solo album, *The Road Home* and *Be Happy* with guitarist Ben Verdery. www.williamcoulter.com



Brian Bigley: Uilleann Pipes, Irish flute, Whistles & Traditional Irish Dance

Brian Bigley comes from a musical family on the west side of Cleveland, Ohio. Studying with Achill Island piper Michael Kilbane from the age of eight, Brian's sensitivity to the art of uilleann piping has developed into a high level of understanding and virtuosity. He is currently making pipes in the style of the late Dave Williams and is an accomplished reed maker. Brian is also a world-class Irish step dancer, having competed at the World Championships in Glasgow and Killarney. He has toured extensively throughout North America and Europe as a pipe, flute, and whistle player, and dancer.

www.brianbigleymusic.com



Bríd O'Donnell: Accordion and Irish dance

Bríd O'Donnell, from County Mayo in the west of Ireland, began playing tin whistle and button accordion at the age of five and later took up singing. She graduated with honors in Irish Music and Dance from the University of Limerick and has competed with great distinction at All-Ireland level *fleadh* competitions. She is a member of the Irish band Billow Wood and has spent the past four years performing nationally, and internationally in Europe, Northern American and Africa.

www.billowwood.com

Meet the Neighbors:

cast information



Eimear Arkins: Fiddle

Eimear Arkins is a multi-instrumentalist, singer and dancer from County Clare, in the west of 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 throughout Ireland, Britain, North America and Canada, and represented Ireland in France at Rennes Expo; in Spain in La Noche Negra, in Shanghai, China at World Expo 2010, and in Milan, Italy at World Expo 2015. Her new solo album is entitled *What's Next?*

www.EimearArkins.com



Marcus Donnelly: Irish Dance

From Ireland to Luxemburg and from Moscow to Paris, France and Paris, Texas, his 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 today.



Alyssa Reichart: Irish Dance

Alyssa has been dancing since the age of five. She competed with great distinction in North American Irish Dance Championships and in the World Irish Dance Championships in Scotland in 2015.

As well as touring with A Celtic Christmas and Women of Ireland, last year she toured China with Riverdance.

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

Program

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

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

Seacht nDolas Na Maighdine Muire -Traditional, Gaelic
(The Seven Sorrows of Mary) Vocalist - Eimear Arkins

In the West of Ireland . . . Tomáseen Foley

The Green Mountain - Traditional, Irish
The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

Céad Míle Fáilte - One hundred thousand welcomes . . .
Tomáseen Foley

The Kerry Christmas Carol - Traditional, Irish
Vocalist - Eimear Arkins

Abbey Reel/Over the Moor to Maggie -Traditional, Irish
The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

Marbhna Luimni (Lament for Limerick)Traditional,Irish **Riverdance**
Brian Bigley, *uilleann* pipes - The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

Slán le Máighe - -Traditional, Gaelic
(Farewell to the Maigue) - Vocalist - Eimear Arkins

Parcel From America - Tomáseen Foley

Quarter Inch Wick/Don Oíche úd I mBeithil/(That Night in Bethlehem) Cregg's Pipes - The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

I-N-T-E-R-M-I-S-S-I-O-N

Come West Along the Road - -Traditional, Irish
The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

Traditional Irish Toast/Parcel from America (continued)
Tomáseen Foley

The Wexford Carol/Slip Jig - Traditional, Irish
Vocalist - Eimear Arkins - with The Rambling House Band and traditional Irish dancers

Irish Fiddle/Guitar Duet - Eimear Arkins and William Coulter

The Wren Song - Traditional, Irish
Vocalist - Eimear Arkins - with The Rambling House Band

Traditional Irish Christmas Rambling House Deadly Dance Duel - The Rambling House Dancers

Parcel from America/(continued)/The Heart of Christmas -Tomáseen Foley and The Rambling House Band. Music composed by William Coulter.

Oíche Chiúin/Silent Night - Vocalist - Eimear Arkins - and all the neighbors

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

CRÍOCH - (END)

Reviews

“Tomáseen 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

“Tomáseen is the Irish equivalent of Garrison Keillor, and in fact the entire troupe puts on programs that are much like *Prairie Home Companion* - storytelling, music, audience interaction, dance and song that delighted our audiences every night. All six concerts were sold out! “

Jeannette Sorrell, Music Director *Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra* *Cleveland, OH*

“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

"The Celtic Christmas concert here was so well received - people told me that they LOVED it, that it was just what a Christmas show should be, that it fit in beautifully with our Arts Series and that we should have you back every year!"

Arlene Shaw, *Olin Fine Arts Center* *Washington and Jefferson College* *Washington PA*

“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*



“ . . . like a cup of Irish coffee in a neighbor’s kitchen on a dark night, (the show) was warm, comforting and full of cheer.”

Tomaseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas Tour 2018

Now in its 23rd successive year, **Tomaseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas** hits the road immediately after Thanksgiving. This year's show features some of the finest and most authentic exponents of the Celtic arts performing anywhere today, on either side of the Atlantic. At its center is native Irish storyteller, **Tomaseen Foley**.

A Celtic Christmas is a re-creation of a night before Christmas in the West of Ireland in the 1940s, before the motorcar, the television, and the telephone. In the remote parish of *Teampall an Ghleanáin* - Tomáseen Foley's birthplace--the neighbors gathered at each others farmhouses and brought with them their fiddles, uilleann pipes, flutes, whistles, *bodhráns*, for a night of traditional Irish music, traditional carols, traditional Irish dancing, and, of course, storytelling. *A Celtic Christmas* brings to life just such a night – a wholesome, cultural, family feast directly from the rich table of communal life in the west of Ireland.

* “Long, long before *Riverdance*, Tomáseen says, “ordinary country people knocked sparks off the bare flagstone of their neighbor’s floor as they danced jigs, reels, and hornpipes with their hob-nailed boots, and the rafter rang with the fiery music of the fiddle and the pipes.”

The show’s Music Director is Grammy Award winner **William Coulter** - an internationally recognized master of the steel-string guitar. He has been performing and recording traditional Celtic and American folk music for more than 20 years - www.williamcoulterguitar.com

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