

Music, dance,  
and storytelling  
from Ireland.

Tomásean  
Foley's **A Celtic  
Christmas**

Rekindle the Flame



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EPK

# Tomáseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas*



For the past 25 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 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.

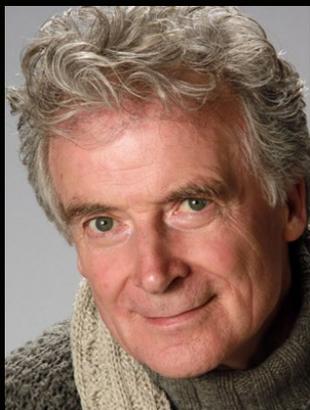
*"When I was a child, it was around the fireplace of my neighbors' thatched cottage that I experienced the last remnants of the old communal way of life. The family was the center of the community then, and the community was the center of life itself; the shining axle around which the great wheel of 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.



# Meet the Neighbors: Cast Biographies



## TOMÁSEEN FOLEY

Director, Seanchaí

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 - from California to Maine. He also tours annually with Brian Bigley's An Irish Rambling House. In conjunction with the Omaha Symphony and other orchestras, he performs in Celtic Journey - as well as occasional performances with Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra. 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 William Coulter is an internationally acclaimed master of the steel-string guitar. In 2005, he won a Grammy for a track he contributed 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*. [WilliamCoulterGuitar.com](http://WilliamCoulterGuitar.com)

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



## BRIAN BIGLEY

Uilleann Pipes, Irish Flute, Whistles, Irish Dance

Brian Bigley has studied the uilleann pipes for nearly thirty years as a player, as well as a 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 the 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. Recently, he has produced and is touring a brand new show called Rambling House. Brian now 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 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*.

[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



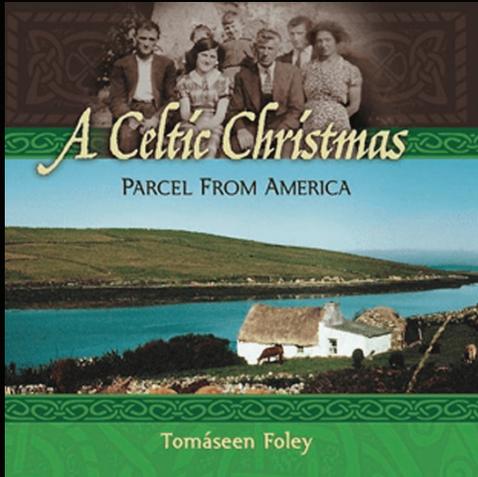
30-Second Promo Video



3-Minute Promo Video

Please view our complete video collection on





### 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.

## Photos & Posters

Please view our  
[PRESENTERS PAGE](#)  
for downloadable  
images and documents.



# Reviews & Accolades

"A very large audience turned out and sat rapt for A Celtic Christmas, 2 1/2 hours of jigs, reels and wordsmithing."  
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER, SPRINGFIELD, IL

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

ZACHERY LEWIS, CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

"2000 seats sold out!"

WEIDNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS, GREEN BAY, WI

"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 the audience every night. All six concerts were sold out!"

JEANETTE SORRELL, MUSIC DIRECTOR, APOLLO'S FIRE BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

"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

"A good storyteller . . . can carry (his) audience to another time and place. It's an art—and a gift—and Tomáseen Foley has it in spades. Grammy Award-winning guitarist William Coulter provided sublime background . . . 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. Vocalist Marianne Knight beautifully delivered Irish songs—in both English and Gaelic."  
THE SANTA BARBARA INDEPENDENT

" . . . charmed a sold-out house at the Lied Center for the Performing Arts."

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR, LINCOLN, NE

"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, ME

"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

"Like a pint of Guinness, Tomáseen Foley's "A Celtic Christmas" is going down rich and smooth with . . . another packed house . . . at the Keith-Albee Performing Art Center."

THE HERALD-DISPATCH,  
HUNTINGDON, WV

"A rousing success . . . a magnificent performance."

WEST VALLEY FINE ARTS,  
LITCHFIELD PARK, AZ



"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

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

"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

"...a masterful weaver of a good tale... 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

"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 DEALER

"His warm voice wraps you with vivid imagery and stealthy Irish humor."

DIRTY LINEN MAGAZINE

"With dramatic impact, Foley brought his tales to a fitting close. He has captured the charm of the wit and wisdom inherent in a locality where people lived within the shelter of their neighbours."

PAUL KEATING, THE IRISH VOICE, NEW YORK CITY, NY

"Foley had people rapt and delighted . . . he has an engaging manner, a lightness of wit and a silver-tongued way of unwinding a tale."

GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE, GREEN BAY, WI





# Tomaseen 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)/storyteller

**William Coulter** - music director/guitar

**Brian Bigley** - Uilleann Pipes/whistle/flute/Champion Irish Step Dancer

**Eimear Arkins** - Vocalist/Irish fiddle/Champion Irish Step Dancer

**Marcus Donnelly** - Lead Dancer/choreographer

**Alyssa Reichert** - Champion Irish Step Dancer

### Act I: 55 minutes

**Seach nDolas Na Maighdine Muire (Seven Sorrows of Mary)**, traditional

Eimear Arkins - vocals

**In the West of Ireland**

Tomáseen Foley - storyteller

**The Green Mountain, traditional**

Rambling House Band and Dancers

**Cead Mile Failte! (One hundred thousand welcomes!)**

Tomáseen Foley - storyteller

**The Kerry Christmas Carol, traditional**

Eimear Arkins - vocals, and Rambling House Band

**Abbey Reel/Over the Moor to Maggie, traditional**

Rambling House Band and Dancers

**Traditional Air**

Brian Bigley - uilleann pipes, and Rambling House Band

**Slán le Maighe (Farewell to the Maigue)**, traditional

Eimear Arkins - vocals, and Rambling House Band

**Christmas in Teampall an Ghleanntáin**

Tomáseen Foley - storyteller

**Quarter Inch Wick/Don Oíche úd I mBeithil (That Night in Bethlehem)/Cregg's Pipes**, traditional

Rambling House Band and Dancers

**ACT II: 50 minutes**

**Come West Along the Road**, traditional reel

Rambling House Band and Dancers

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

Tomáseen Foley - storyteller

**The Wexford Carol/Slip Jig**, traditional Irish Christmas carol + jig

Eimear Arkins - vocals, and Rambling House Band and Dancers

**Irish Fiddle and Guitar Duet**

Eimear Arkins - Irish fiddle, and William Coulter - guitar

**Here We Come a'Wassailing**, traditional

Eimear Arkins - vocals, and Rambling House Band

**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 - storyteller, 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**

(Good health to the men and may the women live forever)



# Tomaseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas

## PRESS RELEASE Tour 2021

"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

For the 26th season, Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas takes to the road immediately after Thanksgiving. This year's show features scintillating traditional Irish musicians and dancers - 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, Tomáseen Foley.

A Celtic Christmas springs from the infinitely rich treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage. It is a re-creation of a night before Christmas in the West of Ireland in the 1940s, before the advent of motorcar, the television, and the telephone.

Traditionally, in the remote parish of Teampall an Ghleanáin--Tomáseen Foley's birthplace - the neighbors gathered at each other's 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 - by taking us back rural Ireland of the 1940s and 50s, a time when the neighbors gathered at each other houses and brought with them -- not gold frankincense or myrrh, but gifts equally precious -- their fiddles, tin whistles, flutes, bodhráns, uilleann pipes, and, perhaps, most important of all, their unshakable sense of community, for a night of traditional music, song, dance and, of course, storytelling.

On stage, the spirit of A Celtic Christmas dances to life and glows brightly when these artists - 'the neighbors' - gather to create a wholesome, cultural, family feast directly from the rich table of communal life in the west of Ireland

It was in such places and on such nights that the delightful treasury of Irish culture was created, expanded and preserved. By recreating just such a night on stage, Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas brings the timeless tradition to American audiences.

"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