
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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December 2007

Elders Set to Rock Rome's Capitol Theater January 12

The Elders, who cemented their status as the hottest band on the Irish music circuit with an explosive performance at the Great American Irish Festival last summer, are coming to the Capitol Theatre in Rome on January 12, 2008. Tickets for the show, presented by Rome Weed & Seed, are now on sale.

Since forming in 1998, The Elders have set the American music scene on its ear, thanks to a skillful mix of amped-up roots rock, augmented with powerful vocals, blazing instrumentals and top-notch song writing. Described by one radio program director as "simply the best contemporary Irish band in America," The Elders are a six-man group that melds the energy of rock with respect for Irish musical traditions. The Kansas City-based group has become famous for their high-energy rock shows that exude a fiery Celtic-influence and comical story telling that is true to the culture they represent. The Elders, the number one Celtic band throughout the Midwestern United States, were relatively unknown here in the Northeast until last summer's electrifying appearance at the Great American Irish Festival made them the area's favorite Celtic band.



The Elders are fronted by Ian Byrne from County Wicklow, and backed by guitarist Steve Phillips (The Rainmakers), bassist Norm Dahlor (Tommy Shaw Band), violinist Brent Hoad, drummer Tommy Sutherland, and keyboardist Joe Miquelon (Asleep at the Wheel).

The concert will also include a performance from the YMCA Center for the Creative Arts, a talented group of musicians who have performed and recorded with many famous performers and who have competed in and won international competitions, as well as a performance by dancers from the Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance.

Proceeds from this concert will go towards Rome Weed & Seed's "Prudy Ellinger Scholarship Fund" that was established in memory of one of Weed & Seed's founding members. The scholarship fund is designed to benefit a local youth who wishes to further his or her education.

Looking for a great holiday gift for friends and family? Tickets to The Elders concert will satisfy young and old and the difficult to buy for. Tickets are available at the following venues: Gary's Music, 229 West Dominick Street, Rome; Accents of Ireland, New Hartford Shopping Center; Rome Federal Credit Union, 937 Seneca Street, Rome; Rome YMCA, 301 West Bloomfield Street, Rome; Oneida YMCA, 701 Seneca Street, Oneida; and online at www.ymcatrivalley.org. General admission tickets are \$20 in advance, \$15 for students and seniors and \$25 at the door.

For more information please visit www.romeweedandseed.com or contact Kathy Stockbridge, Weed & Seed Site Coordinator at (315) 838-1713 or kstockbridge@romecitygov.com.

Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul Comes to the Egg

Fiddler extraordinaire Eileen Ivers has been called a “sensation” by Billboard magazine and “the Jimi Hendrix of the violin” by The New York Times. On Saturday, December 15th, the nine-time All-Ireland Fiddle Champion brings her eclectic band Immigrant Soul to the Egg in Albany for a very special Christmas concert. Her virtuoso playing electrifies crowds wherever she plays, and she is matched every step of the way by her all-star band, as they seamlessly blend African and Latin percussion and bass, Irish instrumentals, and American soulful vocals. Tickets for the 7:30 PM show, which also features the Albany Pro Musica choir, are \$24. Make plans to attend this special show that “...captures the spirit and magic of a Celtic Christmas.” The Egg is located at the Empire State Plaza. For more information, call (518) 473-1845.

Irish Cultural Center in Utica Nears Reality

You’ve heard about it in passing, you’ve discussed it in coffee shops and taverns, you’ve read about its being the goal of the Great American Irish Festival, and if you’re like us, you’ve dreamed about the day the doors finally open to the Irish community. Well dream no more; Utica’s Irish Cultural Center is closer than you think to coming to fruition. Festival Director Matt Sullivan recently wrote the following, an open letter to all supporters of local Irish culture:

As most of you know, five years ago we embarked on our journey to accomplish two main goals:

- 1. To establish and grow the most successful annual Irish festival that we could, and*
- 2. To raise the funds necessary to build a new Irish Cultural Center*

I would argue that we've done a pretty good job with goal #1, and we are well on our way to goal #2. That's the purpose of this message. We have been negotiating with the City of Utica in an effort to purchase the property at the corner of Columbia and Varick Sts., which was formally the St. Patrick's Church property. This parish was the first Irish Catholic church ever established in this area. It was established in 1850 to accommodate the Irish population that was working in the mills in West Utica. A fire on Nov. 8, 1889 destroyed the first church and a new, larger church capable of accommodating 800 people was dedicated in 1895. There was also a school capable of accommodating 300 students, a garage, and a convent constructed on the site. A decision was made by the diocese to consolidate with St. Joseph's across the street and the last mass was held at St. Patrick's on August 28, 1966. The city expressed a desire to build a west side fire house on the site, and in October of 1968, the parish paid to have the St. Patrick's property demolished to clear the way for this project.

Obviously, the city never did build the fire house and the lot has remained vacant until this day. The City of Utica Urban Renewal Agency has recently purchased this property and the GAIF has been negotiating to purchase it for the Irish community once again. The U.R.A. recently approved the sale to GAIF unanimously, and it now goes to a public hearing before the Common Council on Wednesday December 5th at 7 pm.

Here's where you come in. We need EVERYONE who supports our efforts to establish an Irish Cultural Center to attend this Common Council meeting. We wouldn't be asking if we didn't feel it to be necessary. They need to see the amount of community support for this effort. We will be asking a few people to speak in favor of the project. Feel free to bring friends.

Again, it's: Wednesday December 5th, 2007 at 7 pm in the Common Council Chambers at City Hall.

Please be there if you can. If we can get this purchase approved that night, we'll finalize the terms with our board and the city, and hopefully be able to start the construction process in short order.

Nominations Sought for St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshal

For the first time in the storied history of Utica's St. Patrick's Day Parade, the public will have a hand in choosing the parade's Grand Marshal.

This year the Grand Marshal for the March 15th Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Utica will be chosen from a list of nominations submitted by the general public. Nominations are currently being sought for individuals to be considered for 2008 Grand Marshal. After careful consideration, the Grand Marshal will be selected from the list of nominees by a committee of past Grand Marshals.

The nominee, male or female, need not be of Irish descent, but should be someone recognized by the community for his/her commitment and contributions to the Irish in the Central New York area. The letter of nomination should detail reasons why the nominee would be the proper choice for Grand Marshal. A brief background of the person and qualifications should be included.

The deadline for nominations is December 31, 2007. The Grand Marshal will be announced to the public on January 27th at the Great American Irish Festival Halfway to Festival Hooley, to be held at Harts Hill Inn in Whitesboro. This year will mark the first year the Great American Irish Festival will serve as organizer and presenter of the Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade, the third largest in New York State. The Parade Grand Marshal will also serve as honorary chairperson of the 2008 Great American Irish Festival. Nominations should be sent to: St. Patrick's Day Parade, c/o Charles Thomas, PO Box 165, Marcy, NY 13403. For more information, contact Charley at (315) 796-9916, or email charleyt311@gmail.com.

Gráda's Irish Christmas Tour

Of the great band **Gráda**, *Sing Out* magazine once said "If this talented group appears anywhere within 100 miles of you, hie thee hence!" Well, get ready to hie, because they will be... three times!

On Saturday, December 8th, the Earlville Opera House presents "**Gráda - Irish Christmas Tour**," with performances at 4:00 and 7:00 PM. This is a special offsite concert taking place at the **Cazenovia College Theater**, located on Lincklaen Street in Cazenovia. Gráda, bringing "...an infectious, modern take on Irish music," is led by "Lord of the Rings" lead soloist Alan Doherty (flute), along with Colin Farrell (fiddle and whistles), Nicola Joyce (vocals, bodhrán, guitar, whistle and fiddle), Andrew Laking on double bass, and Gerry Paul on guitar. Also joining the group for this always-popular show are special guests Matt Mancuzo (on trumpet and fiddle), and Kristin Andreasson, an award winning multi-instrumentalist and dancer. Tickets, which are \$22 for adults and \$18 for youths, may be ordered by calling the Earlville Opera House at **315-691-3550** (with your Visa or Mastercard) or may be picked up at all three Cazenovia Jewelry locations (Cazenovia, Hamilton, and Manlius). Last year's concert sold out, so you might want to consider ordering early.

Then, on Sunday December 9th, Sterling Auditorium at Cooperstown Middle/High School will be the site of "**A Grada Christmas in America**," a 7 PM performance as part of the Cooperstown Concert Series. Tickets are available at Ellsworth and Sill, The Sage Center, and The Fly Creek General Store. Tickets may also be available at the door, although concerts often sell out in advance. For tickets and/or more information, you're asked to call 607-547-1812.

Finally, on Monday, December 10th, the Irish American Heritage Museum in East Durham presents "**Gráda: A Christmas from Ireland**," at The Egg in The Empire State Plaza. Tickets are \$20, with museum members receiving a discount of 10%. For more information, call the museum at (518) 432-6598, or visit them from 8:30 AM – 4 PM, Monday through Friday.

Save The Hill of Tara, the “National Monument of Ireland”

During the month, we received the following email: “Dear Friends, I have just read and signed the online petition “Save The Hill of Tara, the National Monument of Ireland,” hosted on the web by PetitionOnline.com, the free online petition service, at <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/hilltara/>. I personally agree with what this petition says, and I think you might agree, too. If you can spare a moment, please take a look, and consider signing yourself. Best wishes, Roseann DeLuca.”

What Roseann refers to is the plan to route the M3 motorway through the Tara-Skryne Valley, passing within less than a mile of the Hill of Tara and destroying 141 known sites of archaeological importance. If you’re not familiar with the Hill of Tara, the following description comes from the website “[Mythical Ireland](#)”: “The Hill of Tara, known as Temair in gaeilge, was once the ancient seat of power in Ireland – 142 kings are said to have reigned there in prehistoric and historic times. In ancient Irish religion and mythology Temair was the sacred place of dwelling for the gods, and was the entrance to the otherworld. Saint Patrick is said to have come to Tara to confront the ancient religion of the pagans at its most powerful site.” But it’s hard to describe it in pure historical or archeological terms. It’s the most sacred spot in all of Ireland (more so than any of the St. Patrick sites) and considered by some to be the most mystical spot in the world. It is, more than any other single place, the thing that makes Ireland Ireland. One can only imagine what priceless sites buried there (and currently undiscovered) will be destroyed by the construction of the M3. While the outcry has been a daily item in Ireland since the 2000 study that recommended the route, construction continues fairly unabated. While we rarely try to use these pages to promote a cause, it seems evident to us – as Irishmen and citizens of the world, if not newsletter editors – that this is simply wrong. If signing an online petition is not your style, there are other ways to make your voice and opinion known; a great place to start is at <http://www.tarawatch.org/>.

From the Irish Kitchen (*recipes suitable for clipping*)

This month’s recipe – “Apple-Oatmeal Crisp with Irish Whiskey Cream” [*from www.fooddownunder.com*]

INGREDIENTS:

1	stk	cold unsalted butter cut into pieces	1/4	tsp	cardamom
2	lb	Rome Beauty or Winesap apples peeled, cored and sliced	1	pch	salt
2	tbl	fresh lemon juice	1/4	cup	Irish oatmeal
1	cup	light brown sugar - (packed)	1/4	cup	chopped walnut pieces toasted
1	cup	all-purpose flour	----- IRISH WHISKEY CREAM -----		
2	tbl	Irish whiskey	1	cup	heavy cream
1	tsp	cinnamon	1	tbl	sugar
			2	tbl	Irish whiskey

PREPARATION:

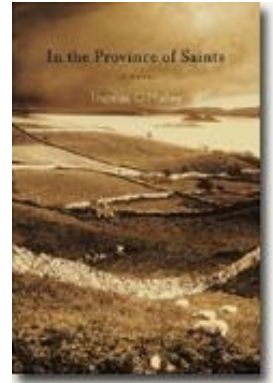
Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Lightly butter an 11- by 7-inch baking pan and set aside. In a large skillet, melt 3 tablespoons of butter over medium-high heat. Add the apples, lemon juice, 1/2 cup of the brown sugar and 1 tablespoon of the flour. Stir well, and cook for 5 minutes. Add the whiskey, cinnamon, cardamom and salt, stir well, and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat. In a large bowl combine the remaining flour, oatmeal and remaining 1/2 cup sugar. Add the remaining 5 tablespoons of butter, and with your fingers or a pastry blender, work the mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs. Add the walnuts and mix well. Place the apple mixture in the greased pan and sprinkle the crumb mixture evenly over the top. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 35 to 40 minutes. Serve hot with the Irish Whiskey Cream. For Irish Whiskey Cream: Whip the cream until it begins to form soft peaks. Add the sugar and whiskey and beat until stiff peaks form. Cover and chill until needed (makes about 2 cups). This recipe yields 4 to 6 servings.

If you try this recipe, feel free to share your experience with all of us; and of course, if you have a recipe you’d like to share, please contact Beth Loftis at bloftis@verizon.net.

Book Review:
“In The Province of Saints”
Submitted by Mark Sisti

Every once in while, you begin reading a book that tells you, almost immediately, that you are in for a special experience:

It was the same night that Mag Delacey died quietly in her sleep as her heart ruptured but continued pumping and spilling her blood throughout the cavity of her body while her husband, John, slept beside her, only awakening when he heard a long final death rattle from her lungs and noticed the blood about her mouth, while the children down the hall, Cait, the youngest, her two sisters and four brothers, and the rest of us in the parish slept in a world of dreams, numb and oblivious to death during the soundless fall of snow covering the land beyond our curtained windows.”



When you encounter this paragraph on the first page of Thomas O'Malley's debut novel, “In The Province of Saints,” there is no doubt that this will not be your standard boy-becomes-man story, and what follows more than lives up to that promise, as O'Malley's brilliant narrative powers brand him clearly as a writer to be watched.

There must be something in the water in Ireland that makes it such an ideal breeding ground for the coming-of-age novel: “Paddy Clarke, Ha Ha Ha,” “Reading in the Dark” and, of course, “Angela's Ashes” all tell the same story in their own way, and “In the Province of Saints” more than holds it own with those books, which is high praise indeed.

The plot, such as it is, deals with Michael McDonagh, who is nine when the novel begins and in his mid-teens by its conclusion. He lives in the countryside just outside the town of New Rowan, and that part of Ireland comes fully alive, with its fields and bogs and rivers. But nature is the only thing of beauty here, as Michael's family is dirt-poor and his childhood is fraught with trauma. His mother, Moira, is sick most of the time with cancer, but she also has bouts of mental instability. His father has gone to America to try to earn a living there, but, if he does, the family sees none of results of his efforts. The structure is episodic, but the episodes themselves – Michaels' shame at having to go to collect the dole; a doomed teenage love affair; saving a calf during a difficult birth; stealing food when the family can get no more credit and many other, much more serious incidents – all coalesce into a single unified story. And underlying everything that happens are secrets that everyone seems to be in on but Michael. Even the troubles in Northern Ireland, though far off, have devastating ramifications.

All the usual elements of the coming-of-age archetype are here, but they all take on a different edge in O'Malley's masterful hands. By the end of the book, Michael feels betrayed, whether deliberately or unintentionally, by almost everyone he had trusted or looked up to, but these betrayals have made him stronger. Two scenes between Michael and his father, during two of the father's infrequent returns to Ireland, illustrate just how much Michael has changed and how much things have changed between them.

This is not a book to be devoured; it is a book to be savored. Every paragraph, every sentence, almost every word is a revelation. O'Malley's descriptive powers are unmatched, mostly in his ability to stimulate all the senses. When he describes a mildewed piece of cloth, you can't just see the cloth, you feel it, you smell it, you hear it rustling. His dialogue is almost as impressive, as characters speak with a lilting Irish brogue laced with profanity and the occasional sprinkling of Gaelic, and every character, no matter how minor, is vividly portrayed. I was recently taken to task by someone who criticized the books reviewed as always being too heavy, and with this novel, I will again plead guilty. But while there is sadness and tragedy here, there is no sense of self-pity, just unrelenting and fearless honesty. If you're looking for nice light read, you might want to pass on this one. If you're a fan of great writing, pick up two copies, one for yourself and one to give to a friend. It's that good.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ❁ **A Piggy Pat's Christmas** Save the date Dec 21st on your social calendar, and make plans to attend the 3rd annual Irish Happy Hour Christmas Party at Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub. What better way could there be to go into the final weekend before Christmas, to celebrate getting your shopping done (hey, it could happen), or just to get together with friends and family over laughs and libations? Time's up, I'll have to give you the answer: There is no better way. This year, Pat's house band, **The Blarney Rebel Band**, hosts the festivities for the third year; promising a night of music and madness, harmonies and humor, and singalongs and something else that starts with "s." And of course, this special night would not be complete without their infamous set of traditional and classic Christmas music. Also returning for their third year will be Irish Dancers from Syracuse, who once placed 6th in the world in Dublin. And if that isn't enough, Pat promises to have enough corned beef on hand to fill any jolly bearded fat man who might show up (no comments, please). That's Friday, December 21st from 6-9 PM.
- ❁ **Win a vacation in Ireland** Looking for that perfect Christmas gift for family, friends, yourself or three newsletter editors? Want to help raise funds for a good cause? Well, you're in luck. The Committee for the Restoration and Preservation of St Mary's Church in Florence New York has put together a terrific opportunity for you to address both. That's right, for a mere \$100, you can purchase one of only 400 tickets to be sold for a chance to win an Ireland vacation! Imagine, a one-in-400 chance to spend 7 nights (May 4-11, 2008) in one of the beautiful Galway Bay Cottages AND \$1500.00 for airfare. You can purchase a ticket by sending your check payable to "St Mary's Church" to: Dorothy Fey, 9180 Bones Road, Taberg NY 13471; please annotate on the check "Ireland Vacation." Your ticket will be mailed upon receipt of your payment. The winner will be drawn on February 16, 2008, and the winner need not be present.
- ❁ **Out Of Ireland** If you're tired of hearing about every arrest, rehab stint and bowel movement that define the lives of Britney, Lindsay and Paris, why not expand your horizons... specifically, to the Emerald Isle? Every Sunday at 4:00 PM, WCNY (check local listings for the channel) presents "Out of Ireland," a weekly half hour television show created for the large Irish-American and Irish born populations living in the United States. Out of Ireland is a news, culture and entertainment program presenting the best of modern Ireland in a magazine format, including interviews with Irish and Irish-American celebrities and politicians, and showcasing Irish music and entertainment.
- ❁ **Freedom For All Ireland Fundraiser** On Friday December 14th, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Albany will host a fundraiser for Freedom For All Ireland, featuring the music of fan favorites Hair of the Dog. This event takes place at the Capital District Irish American Center (aka Albany AOH) at 375 Ontario St. in Albany. Reservations are required, and all tickets are \$20. For information, or reservations/tickets, contact Steve Downs (518-872-0953 or downspower@aol.com), Blake Washington (518-588-2328), Liam McNabb (518-489-1752, or email liammcnabb@hotmail.com), or the CDIAA/AOH Hall (518-438-8230).
- ❁ **"First Night Saratoga": A New Year's Eve celebration of the Arts** The relatively new "holiday" known as "First Night" originated in Boston in 1976 as a way of bringing the neighboring communities of the city together as an alternative way of ushering in the new year. It has spread since then to cities around the country, including, ten years ago, to Saratoga Springs. And on Monday December 31st, the 11th annual Saratoga First Night will take place from 5:00 pm to midnight, at over 40 buildings, churches, and storefronts throughout downtown Saratoga Springs. Brought to you by the YMCA, First Night Saratoga offers an impressive slate of performers throughout the night; including such Celtic entertainers as Kevin McKrell's Hard Road Ceilidh Band, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, Hair of the Dog, and indie Celtic rockers, Seven Nations. For more information, check out the First Night Saratoga website, at <http://www.ymcasaratoga.org/firstnight/>.

☘ **New Year's Eve Show at Beck's Grove** On New Year's Eve, Beck's Grove (4286 Oswego Road, Blossvale, NY) presents "a great night of fun, frolic, and food (and perhaps a wee drop or two, too)," beginning with the fabulous Beck's Grove Chateaubriand Buffet, then it's on to a special Chatham Theatre 3-act funfest of song, dance, and comedy that will take you right into the new year with complimentary hats, favors, and champagne. Returning to help bring in the new year as part of the troupe is area favorite, Donal O'Shaughnessy. The show runs from 8 PM to 1 AM. For more information, call 315-336-7038, or email: info@becksgrove.com.

☘ **Volunteering in their blood** We would like to extend our appreciation to GAIF volunteers Diane O'Donnell and Nancy Coleman, who were part of the American Red Cross Mohawk Valley Chapter contingent who traveled to southern California during the recent wildfires. Diane and Nancy and other volunteers from the Chapter dropped everything when the nationwide call for help came out, and were on the scene within 24 hours to lend a hand to the disaster relief efforts there. Well done, ladies...

☘ **"Thistle & Shamrock"** Shows scheduled for NPR's "Thistle and Shamrock" program for December are as follows: December 6, "Flute and Whistle," December 13, "Longest Night," December 20, "Celtic Christmas," and December 27, "New Year's Revolution." "Thistle and Shamrock" can be heard on Sunday mornings from 11AM to noon on WAER (88.3 on the FM dial) and on Sunday evening, from 7 to 8 PM, on WRUN-AM; 1150 AM.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for December.

Dec 1	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 2	Syracuse Irish Session	HalfPenny Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 7	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 7	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Dec 7	Old Friends	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 8	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 9	Blarney Rebel Band	Airport Ramada Inn	Oriskany	5-8 PM	Free
Dec 9	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 9	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 14	TBD	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 14-15	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 21	A Piggy Pat Christmas with Blarney Rebel & guests	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 21	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Dec 21-22	TBD	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 28	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 28-29	TBD	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Dec 28-30	Seven Nations	Katie O'Byrnes	Schenectady, NY	8 PM	TBD
Dec 31	First Night Saratoga	Various stages/venues throughout downtown	Saratoga Springs	5 PM-midnight	\$13 (under 5 - free)
Dec 31	New Year's Eve Show	Beck's Grove	Blossvale, NY	8 PM to 1 AM	TBD

That wraps it up for this month. If you have anything you want to add, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. Finally, from our homes to yours, we wish you a season of peace, love and health.

***Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Duif
(Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year)***