
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 10

October 2008

Elders to Take Over The Capitol in January, 2009!!

No, not that Capitol (but wouldn't that be nice??). On January 17th, 2009, Central New York's favorite non-alcoholic import, The Elders, come back to the Historic Capitol Theater, located at 220 West Dominick Street in Rome.

The Elders, from Kansas City, who burst into prominence on the east coast due in no small part to their inaugural appearance at the Great American Irish Festival last summer, are coming back "home" for a very special 7 PM show, to help raise funds in support of Rome's Weed and Seed program.



The Elders after last year's Weed and Seed show

The Elders -- fronted by Ian Byrne from County Wicklow, and backed by guitarist Steve Phillips, bassist Norm Dahlor, violinist Brent Hoad, drummer Tommy Sutherland, and keyboardist Joe Miquelon -- 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 topnotch song writing; burrowing their way into the hearts of Central New Yorkers as well. If you were there last year, you saw an amazing metamorphosis take place, as over 1000 people -- most of them strangers to Celtic music/genre in general, let alone the Elders -- went from "Well, it's a good cause, but that doesn't mean I have to like it" to being active (and loud!) participants and rabid fans by the time the night was done.

The concert will also include a performance from the YMCA Center for the Creative Arts (YCCA), a talented group of musicians who have performed and recorded with many famous performers (including a truly memorable goosebumps-raising performance at last year's Elders show), as well as a performance by dancers from the fabulous Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance (more on them later in this newsletter).

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 \$25 in advance, \$17.50 for children under 12 and Seniors (over 60... you know, just about the age where you're loath to admit it, except when it saves you money), and -- if they're still available -- the price that evening will be \$30 at the door. For more information please visit www.romeweandseed.com or contact Kathy Stockbridge, Weed & Seed Site Coordinator at (315) 838-1713 or kstockbridge@romecitygov.com.





Tommy Sands Brings Music, Message to Central New York

At 8 PM on Saturday, October 4th, the [Eighth Step at Proctors](http://www.eighthstep.org), 432 State Street, Schenectady, plays host to one of Ireland's most powerful songwriters and best loved singers, **Tommy Sands**, in the first of two area shows over the next month. Tommy has been lauded for "...his outstanding work as a musical ambassador for peace and understanding," and his songs, including "There Were Roses," have been recorded by major artists and translated into many languages. From the pioneering days with the highly influential Sands Family, bringing Irish Music from New York's Carnegie Hall to Moscow's Olympic Stadium, he has developed into one of the most powerful songwriters and enchanting solo performers in Ireland today, prompting respected US magazine "Sing Out" to regard him as "the most powerful songwriter in Ireland, if not the rest of the world." Maybe more meaningful to Tommy is this quote from Frank McCourt, author of "Angela's Ashes": "He is - and the world knows this - the bard of peace." Also appearing with Tommy will be his talented children, Moya and Fionán Sands. Tickets for this rare area appearance are \$25, and can be bought by calling (518) 434-1703 or (518) 346-6204, or by going on-line (<http://www.eighthstep.org>, then follow the "tix" button).

The second show, 28 days and thousands of miles after the first (including a stop at that stepping-stone to political notoriety, Alaska!), finds Tommy and his children at one of the fastest growing venues for high-caliber entertainment of all types: [The Center for the Arts](http://www.center4art.org) in Homer, NY. Tickets for the show -- 8 PM on Saturday, November 1st -- are \$25, with seniors paying \$20, and there is no charge for children under 14 or students with I.D. Tickets can be purchased at [center4art.org](http://www.center4art.org), by calling (607) 749-4900, or by visiting Bev and Co. in Homer, Jodi's Hallmark and Sheridan's Jewelers in Cortland, Ithaca Guitar Works in Ithaca, or at the door. Beer, wine and desserts will be offered at 7 PM. The Center for the Arts is located at 72 South Main Street, Homer; just 30 minutes south of Syracuse, and 80 miles southwest of Utica.

Butler-Sheehan Academy Of Irish Dance to Hold 2nd Annual Pub Night

Join **The Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance** in an evening of dancing, music, food and plenty of fun at the Academy's **Second Annual Pub Night**. Pub Night is set for **Saturday, October 18th, 7-11 p.m.**, at the Rome Polish Home, 415 S. George Street in, uh, Rome (note the change in location from last year's well-attended – in fact, over-attended – event). **The Blarney Rebel Band** – including their latest member, fiddler Amanda Straney -- will be playing all of your favorite Irish tunes and no doubt selections from their new CD, "Buy My Soul" (hey, when you write your own newsletter, you can put in your own plugs too. It's in the Constitution), while the students of the Academy will entertain with traditional Irish dances. Light food, beer and wine are included in the cost of admission, and there will be raffles and door prizes. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 on the day of the event; children 6 and under are free. They (tickets, not children) are available at the following locations: Gary's Music in Rome; the Rome Art and Community Center; Accents of Ireland, New Hartford Shopping Center; and the Nail Creek Pub and Brewery in Utica.

The dancers are all students of Ms. Patty Sheehan, Director of North America's oldest continually-run traditional Irish dance school, and herself a world champion dancer. They've performed throughout Central New York and many of the dancers have won honors statewide; and of course, the Blarney Rebel Band is guaranteed to have everyone dancing, clapping and singing with their rousing renditions of all types of traditional Irish music. From their rollicking pub tunes, lively sea songs, moving ballads and stirring rebel songs, to hand-clapping jigs and reels, they are the perfect complement to the Butler-Sheehan dancers! Bring your whole family to an evening that even the Leprechauns won't want to miss!

“Old Songs Concert Series” Continues with Guitarist Ged Foley



Ged Foley is well known for his guitar playing and singing with Scotland's **The Battlefield Band**, England's The House Band and, more recently, Ireland's **Patrick Street**. He is a member of The Celtic Fiddle Festival and has accompanied many of the top modern Irish musicians including Kevin Burke, John Carty, Paddy Keenan, and Kieran O'Hare. Ged also plays fiddle in the Midwest based Ceili band, Tessera. His reputation for musical excellence keeps him busy on all fronts at all times. And on Thursday, **October 9** at 8:00 PM, you can experience Ged Foley for yourself, when he brings his rare artistry to the “[Old Songs Concert Series](#),” 37 South Main Street in the town of Voorheesville, NY; a mere 10 miles west of Albany. Old Songs, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving traditional music and dance. Tickets for the show are \$17, with kids 12 and under paying \$5, and may be purchased [on line](#), click “tickets.”

Dancer James Devine Visit the Egg

On Friday, **October 10th**, dance James Devine will be performing an evening of “Celtic Tap” at the Egg's Swyer Theater in Albany. I did a little research and discovered that Celtic Tap is not what they use to pour Guinness... what it is is a kind of Irish dancing! Who knew? And James Devine is the Guinness (hey, there's that word again!) World Records' “Fastest Dancer in the World,” who clocks in at an astounding 38 taps per second; “... an incredible dancer who infuses Celtic Tap rhythms with fiddle, electric harp and percussion played live on stage to blast traditional Irish dance feet-first into the 21st century.” All this comes together in a show called **Tapeire: Celtic Tap - An Evening with James Devine**, part of the Egg's [Dance The World](#) series. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$24 (adult), \$20 (senior), \$12 (child), and can be bought online at <https://www.theegg.org/events>, or by calling (518) 473-1845.



Celtic Thunder Roars Into Albany

What do you get when you put out an open call for male Irish singers from every end of Ireland, irrespective of age or experience? What you get is... Celtic Thunder (apparently McNudo and Backstreet Bhoys were taken), and you get them at the Times Union Center, 51S. Pearl St., Albany, on **October 30th**. The concept -- created by producer Sharon Browne and musical director Phil Coulter -- presents the music of Ireland, Scotland and America as writ large, with a full orchestra and theatrical sets rivalling many Broadway shows. Traditional and original songs are performed by five vocalists - Keith Harkin, Ryan Kelly, Paul Byrom, George Donaldson and Damian McGinty - from Ireland and Scotland, ranging in age from 14 to 40. Celtic Thunder is known for its eclectic style with songs ranging from a soloist to ensemble focus. The group is backed by the Celtic Concert Orchestra, and their live shows are known for the use of dramatic effect via lighting and choreography as well as a specifically constructed stage that resembles an ancient stone pathway, similar to Celtic lore. Tickets for the 8 PM show range from \$37.50-\$57.50. You can get tickets by going [online](#), or from [Ticketmaster](#).



Book Review:

“The Killing of Major Denis Mahon – A Mystery of Old Ireland”

by Mark Sisti

The literary conceit of using a single isolated incident as a microcosm to give readers a clearer view of a larger picture is a common one, but rarely has it been used as effectively as in Peter Duffy’s “The Killing of Major Denis Mahon.” Duffy looks at a single incident – the assassination of a prominent Roscommon landlord – and from that killing manages to bring across a story that is fascinating by itself, yet at the same time recognizes and acknowledges the complexity of the forces at play during the most tragic and turbulent time in Irish history. Most Irish-Americans (in particular, those who read this newsletter’s three-part series, *An Gorta Mor* last year) are familiar with the famine caused by the potato blight that devastated Ireland in the mid-1800’s. The circumstances of that tragic period have all been thoroughly explored, but Duffy’s book goes behind the facts to present a true sense of historical perspective into the underlying attitudes held by people on all sides.

Duffy tells the story of Major Denis Mahon, who had inherited a large estate around Strokestown, just before the famine. Finding the estate deeply in debt in the spring of 1847, Major Mahon (spurred by his calculating land agent) sought to rid his property of nearly 1,000 destitute tenants through emigration and, if necessary, through eviction. Major Mahon was neither particularly harsh nor overly magnanimous in his treatment of his tenants. While his correspondence reveals unquestionable empathy with and sympathy for his tenants, he allowed the urging of his land agent to overcome his reluctance to “put such a number of starving creatures loose on the world without any means whatever of feeding them.” Similarly, while he paid for the emigration of thousands of his tenants, in an effort to save money he used an untrustworthy shipping agent, contributing to the death of a third of those who shipped out from his estate. So, as Duffy notes, while he may have been responsible for much suffering, Mahon’s action showed “that he possessed a conscience.” However, these actions naturally caused extreme bitterness on the part of the already frustrated and suffering peasantry, and six months after the evictions began, Major Mahon was shot dead as his carriage traveled a country road on his estate. His murder was greeted with widespread elation, and shocked newspaper accounts describe the lighting of celebratory bonfires within hours of the shooting.

Following the ensuing arrests and three trials, two conspirators were convicted and hanged, but those who would look for a solution to the mystery alluded to in Duffy’s subtitle will not find it in the trial results. Prosecutors based their case on a slew of unreliable witnesses who had all given false evidence to the police originally and, while there remained little doubt that the executed men had some involvement, there is also little doubt that many co-conspirators escaped unscathed, including the alleged ringleader, reported to be “in the neighborhood of New York” a few years later. And, as Duffy points out, the killing itself “was another disaster for the starving paupers,” as evictions increased and more restrictive legislation was passed in the aftermath of Mahon’s death and that of another landlord shortly thereafter.

The reactions to Mahon’s death show the clear delineation between oppressor and oppressed. To those who sided with the impoverished peasants, it showed the inevitable consequences of the brutal evictions. To the other faction, “the assassination of such an exemplary landlord revealed that the Irish peasant was beyond the reach of civilization.” Even in the upper echelon in England this dichotomy was felt. Queen Victoria took the incident as proof that the Irish “really ... are a terrible people,” while her prime minister felt the murder to be no more atrocious than the “ejectments” that led up to them.

Duffy’s probing account of this tumultuous period gives no easy answers, but is a complex, absorbing and, most important, fair-minded, portrayal of the times that allows readers to arrive at the answers for themselves.

Did you know that Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in)? Well, actually, if you read the October 2005 issue of the Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events newsletter, you did. If you did not, or if something has happened to you since October 2005 that was important enough to have replaced that knowledge with something else (yeah, I know, right?), here it is again. Now as it was copied directly from a newsletter we wrote, you wouldn't think we'd be so concerned about plagiarism ... but it turns out that we sto... liberally quoted the History Channel's web site. We acknowledged it then, and that apparently was enough to keep us out of jail... and so we do it again.

The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1. This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31, they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter. To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities.

During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes. When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter. By A.D. 43, Romans had conquered the majority of Celtic territory. In the course of the four hundred years that they ruled the Celtic lands, two festivals of Roman origin were combined with the traditional Celtic celebration of Samhain. The first was Feralia, a day in late October when the Romans traditionally commemorated the passing of the dead. The second was a day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. The symbol of Pomona is the apple and the incorporation of this celebration into Samhain probably explains the tradition of "bobbing" for apples that is practiced today on Halloween.

By the 800s, the influence of Christianity had spread into Celtic lands. In the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV designated November 1 All Saints' Day, a time to honor saints and martyrs. It is widely believed today that the pope was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related, but church-sanctioned holiday. The celebration was also called All-hallows or All-hallowmas (from Middle English Alholowmesse meaning All Saints' Day) and the night before it, the night of Samhain, began to be called All-hallows Eve and, eventually, Halloween. Even later, in A.D. 1000, the church would make November 2 All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. It was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels, and devils. Together, the three celebrations, the eve of All Saints', All Saints', and All Souls', were called Hallowmas.

*“Dance the ring,
luck to bring,
When the year's aturning.
Chant the rhyme
at Hallowstime,
When the fire's burning...”*

From the Irish Kitchen (recipes suitable for clipping)

This month's recipe – “Apple-Oatmeal Crisp with Irish Whiskey Cream”

Just in time for the cool weather, and well worth trying it until you get it right.....

INGREDIENTS:

1 stick 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

METHOD

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.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

☘ **Craobh Dugan Open Session** Reader Ed Campbell wanted us to remind you that Thursday, Oct 23, is the monthly Craobh Dugan Open Session, held at Cafe Domenico, Utica from 7:30-10:00 PM. In fact, the Craobh Dugan open session – which is free -- is always the 4th Thursday of the month, at least from September through June, EXCEPT for the months of November and December, as the 4th Thursday usually falls on or near the holidays. Most often, though, says Ed, “we arrange another open session date during the holiday months based on everyone’s availability.” If you’re interested in learning more, you can reach Ed at 738-1495.

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

Oct 4	Tommy Sands w/ Moya and Fionán	Eighth Step at Proctors	Schenectady	8 PM	\$25
Oct 4	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	8 PM	Free
Oct 5	Syracuse Irish Session	Nibsy's Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 5	Pat Kane	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 9	Ged Foley	Old Songs Concert Series	Voorheesville, NY	8 PM	\$17; 12 under \$5
Oct 10	Tapeire: Celtic Tap - An Evening with James Devine	The Egg	Albany	8 PM	\$24 (adult), \$20 (senior), \$12 (child)
Oct 10-11	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 10-11	The McKrells	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9 PM	\$8
Oct 11	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:00-5 PM	Free
Oct 12	Cliudan	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 17	The Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Oct 17	Causeway Giants	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 18	Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance Pub Night, w/ Blarney Rebel Band	Rome Polish Home	Rome	7-11 PM	\$12 adv; \$15 at the door; 6 & under free
Oct 18	Cassidy McCale	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 19	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 19	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 23	Craobh Dugan Open Session	Cafe Domenico	Utica	7:30-10:00 pm	Free
Oct 24	Vince Colgan	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Oct 25	The McKrells	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 25	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:00-5 PM	Free
Oct 25	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.
Oct 26	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 30	Celtic Thunder	Times Union Center	Albany	8 PM	\$37.50-\$57.50
Oct 31	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 31	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.

That wraps it up for this month. We would like to thank local Irishman John "Foxy" Fox for recommending "The Killing of Major Denis Mahon" (the book, not the killing itself... I mean, that would've pretty much wrecked the mystery for you) for Mark's monthly book review. If you have a book you'd like Mark to review, or a recipe to share, or a festival, concert or CD review of your own, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@roadrunner.com. And as always, while we try to get things – prices, places, times, etc., -- as accurate as we can, sometimes we make mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips. Finally, a wish from our homes to yours:

*May you live as long as you want,
And never want as long as you live.*