
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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For Rome's Weed and Seed Program, All Roads Lead to The Elders

Kathy Stockbridge, Rome Weed and Seed coordinator, certainly found a friend of the cause when she contacted The Elders in 2007 to enlist their help in raising money for the "Prudy Ellinger Scholarship Fund." Their successful performance in January 2008 began a symbiotic relationship that has resulted in their returning to the Capitol Theatre every January since then. And on January 29th 2011, they'll be back again to raise money, awareness... and the roof.

The Elders – front man Ian Byrne, 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. The concert will also include a performance from the YMCA Center for the Creative Arts (YCCA), a talented group of local musicians, and a performance by dancers from the Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance (and you don't want to miss Bethany Roczen's amazing footwork as she matches the pace of "Buzz's Jig" step for step!)



The Elders: Brent, Steve, Ian, Tommy, Norm and Joe

Proceeds from this concert will go towards the "Prudy Ellinger" scholarship fund to benefit a local youth who wishes to further his or her education. Funds will also be applied towards projects that cannot be funded through the Department of Justice Grant. In addition, a portion of all ticket sales will be applied towards the renovation fund of the historic Capitol Theatre. The Theatre is raising money to rebuild the marquee that once adorned the front of the building.

General admission tickets are \$25 in advance (\$35 at the door), \$17.50 for students (children 6 or below are free) and seniors 60 years young and up. There is also a \$2 per ticket discount when purchasing 10 tickets or more. Tickets are available at the Capitol Theatre, 220 West Dominick Street, Rome; the Celtic harp, Varick Street, Utica; Rome Federal Credit Union, 937 Seneca Street, Rome, or online at www.romecapitol.com. For more information please visit www.romeweandseed.com or contact Kathy Stockbridge, Weed & Seed Site Coordinator, at (315) 838-1713 or kstockbridge@romecitygov.com.

Kirkland Art Center Welcomes Back Cathie Ryan



On Friday, January 14th, 2011, Cathie Ryan makes her long-awaited return to the intimate performance atmosphere of the Kirkland Art Center, for a very special 8 PM show. The original lead vocalist for Cherish the Ladies, Cathie has been hailed as one of the leading voices in Celtic Music by the Los Angeles Times and was named Irish Female Vocalist of the Decade by the Irish American News. Her "honey-pure" crystalline soprano voice "...turns even simple songs into gems." General Admission tickets for this very special night are \$18; \$15 for KAC Members. The Kirkland Art Center is located at 9 ½ East Park Row in Clinton, NY.

Book Review:
“Collusion”
By Mark Sisti

Stuart Neville’s stunning first novel, “The Ghosts of Belfast,” (reviewed in last month’s newsletter – go ahead, I’ll wait) was one of the most powerful debuts in years. Neville’s follow-up, “Collusion,” shows no sign of a sophomore jinx, as the sequel is every bit as riveting as the first book, if not even more so. While I generally don’t review authors in consecutive months, in this case it seems appropriate, for “Collusion” is not as much a sequel to “Ghosts of Belfast” as it is the second part of the same story. (Anyone who’s ever heard an Irishman tell a story shouldn’t be surprised that Neville couldn’t do it in one volume!) Despite that, “Collusion” works as a stand alone work, although there are numerous references to people and events in the previous book that would make a reading of “Ghosts” beneficial in understanding the motivation of the characters.

When last we left Neville’s “hero,” ex-IRA assassin Gerry Fagan, (spoiler alert) he had rid himself of the ghosts of those he had killed by eliminating those who were ultimately responsible for their deaths. By the time the novel is finished, the only combatants left alive are Fagan and Belfast crime boss Bull O’Kane, who Gerry leaves alive after the bloody gun battle that closes “Ghosts.” Leaving O’Kane alive, while seemingly at odds with Fagan’s character, serves two purposes: first, it shows Gerry’s spiritual evolution; but more important, O’Kane was not a supporter of any faction in the Troubles; he was simply a criminal who would work with anyone he could use to make money. As a result, despite being the head of almost all criminal activity in Belfast, he had no part in any of Fagan’s killings and therefore, in his mind, did not have to die. However, this decision proves costly, as O’Kane hires a professional killer to find Gerry’s former lover Marie McKenna and her daughter Ellen, who Gerry has sworn to protect and with whom he has an odd psychic connection.

O’Kane’s assassin, known only as The Traveler, is trying to locate Marie and Ellen for one reason, to flush Fagan out of hiding, for Fagan, now living in New York, is “the only man Bull O’Kane ever feared” and therefore can’t be allowed to live. The character of the hired killer, The Traveler, is a fascinating one, and serves as a doppelganger to Fagan. In fact, one gets the impression that The Traveler takes on the job to pit himself against the legendary Gerry Fagan as much as for the money. Of course, as we learned in “The Ghosts of Belfast,” (and as those who seek to kill him learn along the way) Fagan is not an easy man to kill. Gerry survives attempts to kill him in New York, but as word of the threats to Marie and Ellen reach him he realizes he must return to Belfast to finish what he started. As Ellen keeps telling The Traveler in a chilling mantra, “Gerry is coming.”

Marie’s ex-husband, Detective Inspector Jack Lennon, a peripheral character in the first novel, shares center stage in “Collusion,” as he struggles to protect the daughter he has never known. Lennon’s character, of which we learned very little in the original story, is considerably fleshed out and we grow to understand and sympathize with many of the things he had done. The novel’s title quickly becomes appropriate, as circumstances bring together enemies as allies in a number of different fashions, cops and criminals, British and Irish, Catholic and Protestant and, ultimately, Lennon and Fagan, as Lennon comes to realize that the unstable (OK, crazy) killer’s devotion to Marie and, particularly, Ellen, gives him the best chance to save them. While both characters can be brutal, Lennon realizes that Fagan is not shackled by the same moral precepts that prevent him from doing what is necessary. At one point, while trying to get answers out of an informant, Lennon asks, “If he won’t tell me, why in God’s name would he tell you?” Fagan replies, ‘Because I’ll ask harder.’ Eventually, they put their suspicions and mistrust aside and form a reluctant team, Lennon to redeem himself and try to become the father he never was, and Fagan to finish what he left unfinished at the end of “Ghosts.”

“Collusion” benefits from a much simpler plot than “The Ghosts of Belfast,” in which the need to explain much of the political back-story occasionally slowed the plot down. The narrative structure, utilizing terse dialogue and short chapters, imposes a perfect pace, more controlled than that of “Ghosts” but still racing at a breakneck clip. The tighter pacing allows Neville to build the tension against that backdrop, rather than through graphic violence (although there’s plenty of that in there as well.) And make no mistake about it, the tension builds to almost unbearable levels. As he did in the debut, Neville brings all the divergent characters together in a perfect setting for a dynamic conclusion.

Craobh Dugan “Tune of the Month” – by Skip Mansur

This month, Skip Mansur’s Tune of the Month is neither a tune, nor was it written by Skip. Instead, we’ve decided to reprint an article that Skip’s fellow Craobh Dugan mate Mark Sisti wrote a few years back, inasmuch as a) the local Irish Sessions have gained a renewed popularity of late, b) we have picked up hundreds of new subscribers since its publication, and c) recycling is good for the planet. And for people who sometimes don’t feel like writing new stuff. Anyway, here is the piece on playing rhythm guitar that he wrote for the May 2005 issue of MVICE (Vol 2, Issue 5):

OK, listen, let’s be serious. You’re not going to learn to be a master guitarist in the few minutes it takes to read this article. It would take at least an hour.

What this lesson/workshop can do is give those of you with a basic knowledge of guitar chords the rhythmic vocabulary to help you play along with some of your favorite Irish songs. For those of you who don’t have a knowledge of chords, I would suggest getting any basic guitar book to learn the few chords needed to get started. If you learn a C, G, D, Am, Em, perhaps an A or an F, there are relatively few tunes in traditional music you can’t play. Even if you learn just one chord it would be enough to get you started on this rhythm discussion while you learn the others.

One you get past the “Kumbaya” idea of just strumming a chord on every beat, the most important strumming technique to learn is what we’ll call (for want of a better term) the “boom-chuck” beat. Literally thousands of traditional Irish tunes can be accompanied adequately using this strumming style, and it is the easiest pattern to use when accompanying a double-meter song or a reel. In this strumming method the player begins with a bass note on the root of chord (the “boom”) followed by a full strum of the chord (the “chuck”). The root of the chord is the note for which the chord is named; that is, on a C chord, the root is the C or the third fret on the A string.

There are obviously numerous variations on this pattern, and you should try them all once you’ve mastered the basic pattern, but the only variation we need to concern ourselves with here is what we’ll call “boom-chuck-chuck,” used for songs with a triplet meter, like “The Wild Rover” or “Black Velvet Band.” This would be, to belabor the obvious, a pattern of playing the root followed by two strums of the chords, all three parts being of equal duration.

For jigs, it’s a little more problematic. This is going to get a little bit technical, but stay with me. Jigs and slip jigs are triple-meter song forms, which simply means they are based on a three-beat feel instead of a two-beat feel. All traditional music can be broken down to a double meter or a triple meter, whether the song is in 3/4 (triple), 4/4 (double), 6/8 (triple), 9/8 (triple), 2/4 (double) or whatever. The interesting thing about jigs is that, as a form in 6/8, it has elements of both double and triple meters, in that a measure consists of two sets (double) of three beats (triple). Therefore, in order to capture this feel in rhythm guitar, a measure should be strummed (D = downstroke, U = upstroke) D-U-D D-U-D. This feels awkward at first and will take some practice to play it smoothly and evenly, but it is very difficult to get a true jig feel with any other strumming pattern. Don’t worry about changing chords while working on this pattern; simply finger a chord and start strumming. It’s the right hand we’re working on here; the left hand can come later.

There are countless variations on these rhythm patterns, but one very important one to keep in mind is that a chord does not have to be played on every beat. The jig rhythm above, for example, is more effective when a pattern of D-X-D-D-U-D is used occasionally (X meaning don’t play). Also keep in mind that when fingering a chord with your left hand, you can think of the chord as either “on,” in which the notes ring, or “off,” where your fingers are still in place but are lightly touching the strings, deadening the sound. Deadening the sound on certain chords in the pattern can be very effective. Experiment. You’ll find what works and what doesn’t. In future workshops you’ll get actual songs to play to put these patterns to work.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Chieftains to Play Troy Music Hall** Bringing in a musical act as legendary as the city for which it was named, the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall proudly announces a February 17th concert by the fabulous Chieftains. The Chieftains -- Matt Molloy (flute/whistles), Sean Keane (fiddle), Kevin Conneff (bodhran and vocals) and the iconic Paddy Moloney (Uilleann pipes and tin whistle) -- boast a career that spans forty-eight years, resulting in forty-five albums and having earned them six Grammy nods, and are Ireland's premier musical ambassadors and a creative and influential force in Celtic music. "We're still unique," says founding member Moloney of the group's staying power. "A lot of bands have come and gone, but we're still here." Tickets for the 8 PM show range from \$48-\$69, and are available at the Box Office, (518) 273-0038, via email at info@troymusichall.org, or on-line, [here](#). The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall is located at 30 2nd Street, on the upper floors of the First Niagara Bank building.
- ✚ **"Nuacht as Craobh Dugan"---news from the Dugan Branch** Chris Hoke of Craobh Dugan reports: "GREAT NEWS!! We have been offered the opportunity to host the Comhaltas Tour Group this October, although the date has not been confirmed yet. We are very excited by this!! The Comhaltas Tour Group is a group of All-Ireland Champion musicians and dancers who will tour the US in the fall. Our branch has hosted this concert several times but not since 2003. It is a wonderful show and a great representation of traditional Irish music and dance. I have asked Mike Hoke to be the Venue Chairman as he has experience in this role from our past concerts. We will need to have several committees and will need people to head these. As soon as the date is confirmed, we will start the planning process. So watch for more info on this and please be ready to help!" Comhaltas' January calendar looks like this: Jan. 4: Open Session Nail Creek Pub, Varick St Utica, 7:30 PM; Jan. 19: Open Session The Mill, E. Dominick St. Rome, 7:30 PM; Jan. 21: Ceili with musicians, Seton Center, Barton Ave Utica, 7:00 PM; Jan. 7,14, 28 Ceili Dance Classes, Seton Center, Barton Ave, 7:00 PM. And as always, Comhaltas gladly welcomes new members.
- ✚ **Syracuse AOH/LAOH to Hold Andy Clooney Concert** Syracuse's AOH Division 2 and LAOH Division 1 are bringing in Andy Cooney and His Band to McNamara's Catering Hall in Camillus, on Friday Feb 25, 2011 to benefit the chapters. With his outstanding voice and dynamic stage presence, Cooney has become a favorite with audiences worldwide. Tickets for the 8 PM concert are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. McNamara's is located at 5600 Newport Rd. For more info, call (315) 468-0036.
- ✚ **Tartan Terrors Take Schenectady by Storm** Take the blistering piping of a Two Time World Champion Bagpiper, the driving tones of drums from around the world, a guitar played unlike any you've ever heard, and add a healthy dose of comedy and dance, and you've got a recipe for an evening of entertainment you're not likely to forget. Internationally recognized comedic performers, the Tartan Terrors have performed on four different continents, including some of the most prestigious venues in North America. On January 8th at 7:30 PM, you can catch the music and the mayhem at the Eighth Step at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady. \$25 general admission tickets are available by calling (518) 434-1703, going online [here](#), or by sending an email to eighthstep@aol.com. Proctor's Theater is located at 432 State Street, Schenectady.
- ✚ **Andrew & Noah Band Returns** Already seasoned musical performers when most kids their age were learning to tie their shoes, Andrew and Noah VanNorstrand are really hitting their stride in 2011, with no less than four appearances in the general listening area. The Andrew & Noah Band, a six-piece ensemble featuring the brothers, Rachel Bell on accordion, Kevin Dorsey on bass, Dana Billings on drums and the vocals of Noah's wife Kailyn Wright, offers a finely crafted blend of old-time Country and Bluegrass, Celtic and Contra, Swing and Jazz, alternative folk rock and various world music influences. Check the event calendar at the end of this newsletter for dates and places of their shows.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for January:

Jan 3	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 4	"Nail Creek Sessions"	Nail Creek Pub	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
Jan 6	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 7	"Mostly Irish" Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Jan 8	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Jan 8	Tartan Terrors	Proctor's Theater	Schenectady	7:30 PM	\$25
Jan 9	Kitchen Party	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 9	Andrew and Noah Band	Robinson Memorial Presbyterian Church	Syracuse	3 PM	\$7
Jan 10	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 12	Dancing on the Air w/Andrew and Noah Band	The Linda WAMC's Performing Arts Studio	Albany	8 PM	\$10
Jan 13	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 14	Cathie Ryan	Kirkland Art Center	Clinton	8 PM	\$18, \$15 for KAC members
Jan 14	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 14	Andrew and Noah Band w/ Joy Telepathy Project and Rusty Doves	Funk 'n Waffles	Syracuse	7:30 PM	\$7
Jan 15	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res. req'd
Jan 15	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	8 PM	Free
Jan 15	Andrew and Noah Band	Old Songs Community Arts Center	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$20
Jan 16	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 16	Donal O'Shaughnessey and Bryan Hyland	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 17	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 19	Traditional Irish Session	The Mill	Rome, NY	7:30 PM	Free
Jan 19	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 22	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Jan 21,22	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res. req'd
Jan 23	Blarney Rebel Band	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 24	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 27	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 28	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 28,29	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res. req'd
Jan 29	The Elders	Capitol Theatre	Rome, NY	7 PM	\$25 in adv., \$35 at the door; Students and 60+, \$17.50
Jan 30	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 31	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free

If you have anything you want to share with us, feel free to send it to us (sistia@roadrunner.com, bloftis@gmail.com or marksisti@roadrunner.com), and we'll be happy to include it. As always, while we try to get things – prices, places, genders, etc. -- as accurate as we can, sometimes Mark makes mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips. Finally, from our homes to yours, we would like to say (but can't, without the pronunciation guide that follows): *"Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh"* (pronounced AH vlee-ihn fwee WAH-shuh gHeev); literally: "You have a Prosperous New Year."