

An Irish Christmas

Saturday, November 30, 2019; 2 & 7 pm

Sunday, December 1, 2019; 2 pm



AN IRISH CHRISTMAS

Conceived, produced and directed by Margaret O' Carroll.

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A special thank you to the Kerry Irish Productions team of artists and crew members! Thank you all for your hard and detailed work. We would also like to thank the theater staff and theater crew members. It is a pleasure working with you!

PROGRAM

(Additional songs and dances to be performed are not herein listed)

"Carol of the Bells" (traditional Christmas Carol)

"An Gréasaí" (The Shoemaker) – ("shoemaker's song" – traditional work song)

We honor the Irish tradition of shoemaking in this rhythmic song that suggests: the airy shoemaker's rhythm is the dance of his craft: heels, toes, soles are newly made! Those who wear these shoes are indeed great dancers!

"Tá dhá ghabhairín bhúí agam" ("Children's Song")

I have two little yellow goats and one for milking!

They break the very heart in me as we go home.

All I have to guide them with is a stick.

Way down the road they go from me

"Si Do Mhaimeo" (traditional work song from the west of Ireland)

It asks the question whether the young Sean Seamais Mor will marry the much-older "rich old woman"

Maire Ní Chathasaigh.

"In Dulci Jubilo (traditional Christmas Carol)

"The Boar's Head Carol" (traditional Christmas Carol)

"Wexford Carol" (traditional Irish)

"Gaudete" (traditional Christmas Carol)

"Silent Night" (traditional Christmas Carol)

INTERMISSION

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continued

“What Child is This?” (*traditional Christmas Carol*)

“Ave Maria” (Bach-Gounod)

“The Twelve Days of Christmas”

“Brush Dance”

“Half Door Dance”

“The Wren Dance”

“The Wren Song” (*traditional Irish*)

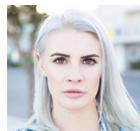
ARTIST BIOS



KORAL AAKRE (*Soprano*). Koral moved to Los Angeles from Coos Bay located on the beautiful southern Oregon coast. She comes from a family of singers and began voice lessons with her father at age seven. Koral is well known in Oregon's Bay area. She was a dancer and singer in Oregon's Little Opry on the Bay. Upon graduation from high school she toured the East Coast for one year with Lutheran Youth Encounter's Christian Rock Band, "Captive Free." This was her opportunity to dive into the world of performance and touring to see if this was really where her heart was. She did follow her heart and returned to Oregon to earn a degree in vocal performance from Southern Oregon University where she studied opera. She performed with the Rogue Opera, Opera in the Streets, Brava Opera Workshop, SOU Chamber and Concert Choir and the Southern Oregon Repertory Singers. Prior to moving to Los Angeles, she worked as a campaign manager and legislative assistant for Senator Arnie Roblan. She was honored to sing multiple times for the Oregon State legislative assemblies. Working in the Oregon Legislature was an honor and a privilege, but singing was her passion so she headed to Los Angeles where she auditioned for her first season with *An Irish Christmas*. She loves performing with Kerry Irish Productions and is excited to perform in other projects with the company. Koral is the great great-granddaughter of Bridgette Conlon who emigrated from Ireland as a mail order bride. Koral has become more rooted in her Irish heritage since joining the company and her grandmother, Bernyce, would burst with pride to hear her sing today! Koral is the 2019 recipient of The Ireland Agency Award which recognizes hard work and dedication in the pursuit of excellence in the arts.



MARK ALFRED (*Percussion*). Mark, a native of Monaghan, Ireland began playing drum set at the age of four. He studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and the Performing Arts College. He is now one of Europe's most highly regarded drummers and is in demand from a host of international acts. His individualistic and energetic style has seen him play with Lionel Richie, Josh Groban, The Corrs, The Divine Comedy, Mary Coughlan, Ronan Keating, Westlife, Girls Aloud, Donnie Osmond, Christy Hennessy, Riverdance and Heartbeat of Home.



CAITLIN ARY (*The Kerry Voice Squad*) Caitlin Ary was most recently seen on the Netflix Original docu-series, *Westside*, following the lives of singer-songwriters in Los Angeles. Other credits include: *Postmodern Jukebox* – (Scott Bradlee, Holland America), *Opium* (Cosmopolitan, Las Vegas), *Baz: Star Crossed Love* (Palazzo Theatre, Las Vegas), *St. Jimmy – American Idiot* (West Coast Regional Premiere), *Basketcase – For The Record: The Brat Pack* (Norwegian Cruise Lines), *For The Record: Tarantino* (Wallis Annenburg), *Ilse – Spring Awakening*, Sally Bowles – *Cabaret*, Peter Pan – *Peter and Wendy*. She is delighted to be returning to *An Irish Christmas* for the 2019 season!



COLIN COTTER (*Guitar, Vocals*). Colin is a multi-instrumentalist who began fiddling at the age of four as a continuation of his family's tradition in Finnish fiddle music. A few years into his life as a fiddler, he dove into the world of Scottish and Irish fiddle music, never looking back. In addition to being a fine fiddler, he is a self-taught guitarist, mixing influences from around the world to craft a unique rhythmic style that he brings to collaborations with artists from across the musical spectrum. Colin has toured internationally as a bandleader, guitarist, fiddler, and singer-songwriter in groups such as MAC (featuring Ryan McKasson on fiddle) and A Thousand Years at Sea, and in collaboration with Adrianna Ciccone (2015 Canadian Folk Music Awards Solo Instrumentalist of the Year), Zach Brock (Snarky Puppy), Sumaia Jackson, Mari Black, Neil Pearlman, Galen Fraser, and more. In addition to touring, Colin is a regular faculty member at Alasdair Fraser's Valley of the Moon Scottish Fiddling School and the Mike Block String Camp. This is Colin's first season with *An Irish Christmas!*



CATERINA COYNE (*Principal Dancer*). Born in London and raised in Connemara Ireland Caterina always had a keen interest in Irish Dancing. Having competed at the highest-level Caterina won numerous major competition titles and was ranked in the top five in the World. Having joined the troupe of *Riverdance* it wasn't long before she was made Principal Dancer, a position she held for ten years. Caterina danced on some of the most prestigious stages in the world such as Radio City Music Hall, NYC, and the Gaiety Theatre Dublin and in front of royalty, dignitaries and celebrities. Her years with *Riverdance* took her all over the World and she has been lucky enough to teach and hold workshops for hundreds of aspiring dancers along the way. Caterina is a qualified T.C.R.G.



MITCHELL DESIMONE (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*). Mitchell DeSimone began Irish dancing at the age of 12 at the Millennium School of Irish Dance, and spent most of his competitive career dancing with Kevin Broesler of the Broesler School of Irish Dance. Mitchell has performed with Michael Flatley's *Lord of the Dance* and *Lord of the Dance: Dangerous Games* on Broadway and in over thirteen countries worldwide, as well as touring Europe and North America with

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many independent dance and music shows. Mitchell retired from competitive Irish Dance as a five-time New England Regional Champion of Irish Dance and ranked among the top ten dancers in the world. He was named the 'Best Role Model' by *Irish Dance and Culture Magazine*, and now enjoys performing and teaching Irish Dance. He founded Mitchell DeSimone Irish Dance Workshops, LLC and works with Irish dancers and teachers worldwide to improve performance, development and satisfaction through dance instruction and mental coaching. He holds a Master's degree in Sports Psychology, specializing in Irish Dance, which allows him to offer unique insight through workshops, professional development and cognitive training.



ROSA EVANGELINA (*The Kerry Voice Squad*). Rosa is a versatile vocalist based in Los Angeles. She has recently performed with Pacific Opera Project, Brown Fist Productions, Center Stage Opera, Santa Monica College Opera Theater, and the West Valley Playhouse in productions of *Die Zauberflöte*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Carmen*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *Utopia, Limited*. Recent highlights in her performing life include premiering the role of Lota in the sci-fi opera *The Dream Maker* by John Haukoos and singing the role of Xochiquetzal in the new opera *El Circo Anahuac* by David Reyes. Rosa holds a Bachelor's degree in History and Literature from Harvard University, where she sang with the Radcliffe Choral Society and Mariachi Veritas. She is an alumna of Opera NEO, OperaWorks, and the Los Angeles Valley College music program.



BILLY KANALY (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*). Billy Kanaly was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. He found his life's passion at the age of six when his parents took him to see the Broadway show, *Riverdance*. From that point on he was hooked on Irish dancing. He began taking classes at the

Reed School of Irish dance and quickly advanced to competing at the highest level. Two weeks after turning 18 he traveled to Dublin, Ireland where he auditioned for the show that started it all for him, *Riverdance*. A few months later Billy's dreams came true and he began touring with the show. After five years with *Riverdance* he had performed on four continents for hundreds of thousands of people. In between tours Billy studied film and television at the University of Colorado. Since graduating, he has worked on numerous film projects, including the television show "Building Alaska."



CARRIE MALLOY (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*). Carrie Malloy grew up in Milwaukee, WI — known worldwide for its great Irish dance, music and culture. She began Irish dancing at the age of six and has since toured both the US and competed in Ireland, Netherlands and Scotland. She's a

five-time qualifier for the World Championships and is the current US Champion with WIDA as well as placing 4th at the 2018 World Championships in Maastricht, Netherlands. She has toured the world with the renowned Chicago-based Trinity Irish Dance Company, performed in *Battle of the Dance* out of Anaheim, CA and toured with *An Irish Christmas* for four years. Carrie now resides in Los Angeles with her husband and 2-year-old son, where she started the Malloy Irish Dance School In 2018.



EMILY MACCONNELL (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*). California girl Emily MacConnell danced for the Butler Fearon O'Connor School of Irish Dance and achieved competitive highs of 8th in the world, 3rd nationally, and 1st regionally (Western US and Southern England). Since

earning a B.A. from the University of Southern California's School of Dramatic Arts, she has danced and toured in the US, UK and Germany with *Gaelforce Dance*, *Dance Masters*, *Rockin' Road to Dublin*, *Magic of the Dance*, *The Celtic Gift*, *An Irish Christmas* and Busch Gardens' *Celtic Fyre*. She is very happy and grateful to be back with *An Irish Christmas* this season.



RYAN MCKASSON (*Fiddle. Musical Director, An Irish Christmas*). "The bow drives across the strings, thick and throaty, creating a pulsing sound that feels more of muscle than tendon...a compositional sophistication that is cinematic, transporting, and tantalizingly modern", wrote

The Boston Globe. Ryan McKasson has gained a reputation as a performer, composer, collaborator and teacher. In 1996, he was the youngest to win the National Scottish Fiddle Championship. In 1997, he was awarded a Merit Scholarship for Viola Performance from the University of Southern California. During his studies at USC he co-founded the Southern California based contra dance band, Syncopaths with Jeff Spero and Christa Burch, and later joined by Ashley Broder. They have released two albums together, *Rough Around The Edges* (2005) and *Five Gears* (2010). After his studies at USC, Ryan co-founded The McKassons, with his sister, Cali McKasson, wife, Brooke McKasson, and her brother, Matt Jerrell. The McKassons released two albums: *Tall Tales* (2004) and *Tripping Maggie* (2006). Ryan has also been a member of a baroque/celtic/fusion combo, Ensemble Galilei. He helped co-write *First Person: Seeing America*, a multi-media stage production that was a collaboration between Ensemble Galilei and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also recorded with Ensemble Galilei on *A Change of Worlds* (2012), and *Surrounded by Angels: A Christmas Celebration With Ensemble Galilei* (2013), *From Whence We Came* (2015), and *Flowers Of The Forest* (2018). In 2016, Ryan began playing with guitarist and singer Eric McDonald. They recorded *Harbour* in 2017 and were joined by Jeremiah McLane for that album. In 2019, Ryan, Eric and Jeremiah founded a trio together. They are currently working on a new album that will be coming out in summer 2020. Ryan has also recorded with Hanneke Cassel on her albums *Silver* (2006), *For Reasons Unseen* (2009), and *Dot The Dragon's Eye* (2013), and also with Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas on their album *Highlander's Farewell* (2011). He collaborated with Isaac Alderson, Jackie Moran, and Jesse Langon on an album of Irish music called *Hole In The Hedge* (2017). Ryan has taught at fiddle camps around the US and New Zealand, most notably: Boston Harbor Scottish Fiddling School, Southern Hemisphere International School of Scottish Fiddle, Valley of the Moon Scottish Fiddling School, Festival of American Fiddle Tunes, Rocky Mountain Fiddle Camp, Swannanoa Gathering, and Lark In The Morning.

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MEGAN O'CONNELL (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*)

21-year-old Megan is from Lighthouse Point, Florida. She started Irish dancing at the age of three. She danced with Tir Na Greine School of Irish dance. Megan has been dancing professionally since 2017 with the Raglan

Road Irish Dancers in Disney Springs, Orlando, Reel Irish Entertainment in Orlando and Irish Dance Theatre in Colorado. Megan's highest accomplishments competitively include becoming the Southern Region Champion, placing top 15 at the North American Irish Dance Championships, and placing at the World Championships and All-Ireland Championships. She also studies Health Sciences and Event Management at the University of Central Florida. This is Megan's first tour with *An Irish Christmas!*



KELLY PEARSON (*The Kerry Dance Troupe*).

Kelly hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has been Irish dancing for 17 years, first with Scoil na dTri Irish Dance Academy and then with Corda Mór Irish Dance. During Kelly's competitive career she qualified for the World

Championships five times, achieving multiple placements in the top 10 in Mid-America and the top 20 in North America. While pursuing her competitive goals, Kelly also attended the University of Minnesota and graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Philosophy. In 2016, she was chosen as an original cast member of the American Company of Irish Dance, a unique non-profit dance company directed by former *Riverdance* performers Shane McAvinchey and Paula Goulding. Kelly has toured the U.S. and Europe with multiple productions, and was thrilled to be part of Kerry Irish Productions' new show, *Celtic Wings*, in the fall of 2018. Most recently Kelly performed in her second season with *Celtic Fyre*, an award-winning Irish dance show at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, VA. She also became a certified Irish dance teacher (T.C.R.G.) earlier this year and looks forward to encouraging the next generation of Irish dancers. Kelly is honored to be returning for her third season with *An Irish Christmas*, and is excited to share her passion for dancing (and the holiday season!) with audiences and performers alike.



CONNOR REIDER (*Principal Dancer*). For 14

years Connor danced under the direction of the late Ann Richens and John Timm, competing at local, regional, national and world levels. In his final year of competitive dancing he placed in the top five in Mid-America, top 10 in

North America and top 20 in the World Championships. Connor graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2014. He has performed with the Chieftains and in 2015 with *Celtic Fyre* at Busch Gardens Williamsburg. Connor joined *An Irish Christmas* national tour in 2015 and returned for *An Irish Christmas* 2016, 2017 and 2018 tours. In March 2017, Connor became principal dancer for the new Kerry Irish Productions Concert Tour: *St. Patrick's Day in Ireland*. He also served as principal dancer in Kerry Irish Productions' *Celtic Wings*. Connor is currently based out of Manhattan and is honored to be a part of this year's show. "Performing brings me such joy because I get to share my passion with others both on stage and with those in the audience. I am very honored and excited to return to *An Irish Christmas 2019*."



TYLER SCHWARTZ (*Principal Dancer*). Tyler

Schwartz is the 2013 Senior Men's World Champion. He has also won championships all over the world, such as the All-Ireland, All-Scotland, Great Britain, and North American Championships. Most recently, Tyler has been

named "Man of the Year" by *Irish Dance Magazine*, was the first Irish dancer to be a sponsored athlete for Capezio Dancewear, and has been a featured dancer on Instagram, NowThis, and Buzzfeed. He has been the lead dancer in many productions, including *Rockin' Road to Dublin*, Busch Garden's *Celtic Fyre*, *Celtic Wing* and *Gaelforce Dance*. This is Tyler's second year as principal dancer with *An Irish Christmas*.

TRADITIONS EXPLAINED

An Irish Christmas: Conceived, produced and directed by Margaret O' Carroll, owner of Kerry Irish Productions Inc. Central to her work is the forging of the path between the old and the new; incorporating old Irish traditions reflecting various aspects of Irish life into her stage work, creating an unbreakable bond between the old ways and the new — one emerges from the other! "It is extraordinary how closely connected we are to our past. We are a product of so much that came before us and our traditions are part of that inheritance. There is a value to these traditions. We are craftsmen and craftswomen who carry the stories to the next generation through everyday events such as storytelling, song, music, dance and our daily rituals. Folk theatre is the protector, the interpreter, the narrator the pulse, the heartbeat of these traditions." Margaret O' Carroll

The Kerry Dance Troupe: The Kerry Dance Troupe was established by Kerry Irish Productions Inc. with the intention of promoting and celebrating Irish culture and its rich traditions through the medium of dance, and introducing these often forgotten Irish traditions to new audiences. These 'ambassadors' of Irish dance work with KIPI on various aspects of Irish folk-dance, incorporating old Irish dance styles into modern Irish dance styles and thus forging the path between the old and the new. Through this process, the best of ethnic and modern Ireland is represented, exposing audiences to the beauty, value, passion, and uniqueness of our traditional ways that play such an important part in the life of the community.

The Dance Master's Shoes: A pair of dance shoes become the embodiment of not only all that was lost in Ireland's long and troubled history, but everything that was saved — everything that is still cherished in the Irish folk traditions. The dance master's shoes, in a sense, symbolize the wealth of Irish culture. These are magical shoes; they have a life of their own and they take us on our journey.

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EXPLANATIONS

Fireworks Dance: The great Irish tradition of the dance-off is expressed in this dance. The male and female dancers display their "wares" and brilliance in the dance and finish with a common step reminding us all that both are equally skilled!

Shoemaking: Every village and town in Ireland had a shoemaker (An Gréasaí Bróg). The shoemaker worked from morning 'til night protecting the feet of all! He lengthened the life of shoes and boots, made new shoes and boots to order and prided himself on his fine workmanship as would any craftsman. Traditionally in Ireland, leather was the principle material used. We honor their rhythmic craft tonight and in so doing remind you too that the airy dancer who wears these shoes is indeed a great dancer!

Butter making: In times gone by, butter making was a cottage industry in Ireland and an important task for many farming families. It played an important role in the household economy. During the churning, everybody, young and old who entered the farmhouse, had to take a turn at the churn which lightened the labor of churning. There were many customs associated with the production of the butter: salt or a drop of holy water was added to ensure that the butter was protected from those that would like to "steal the butter" for their own use. Work songs were an essential part of the magic of the ritual performed to ensure the success of the butter making (to get more butter, of course), and dances were danced around the churn in a joyful expression of that success! Of note: Ireland was the leading exporter of butter to the known world in the 18th century.

Straw Boys: This ancient tradition of acting out old stories and songs had the men dressing in disguise and using stylized straw hats to hide their faces. They would randomly appear at celebrations to perform their songs and dances and they usually requested and received food, money, or some token of gratitude in return. In former times when house weddings were the norm, it was common for Straw Boys to appear. They were always welcomed and the captain of the Straw Boys might well "kidnap" the bride, demanding a ransom of porter!

Bodhrán/Dance: This dance is a two-way display of rhythm. The intense bodhrán rhythms challenge the intricate rhythms of the dancer's feet. Both bodhrán player and dancer enter a joyful competition where "fun" is central to this friendly but intense competition. Again, in the great Irish tradition more dancers enter the moment and it now becomes a "dance-off" between male and female...! In the final analysis, all are deemed to be equal and a common dance brings peace and equality reigns supreme!

Sean Nós Dance: The term *sean nós* means "old style." It is impromptu, rhythmic and low key with arms loose, feet low to the ground and a focus on percussive beats battered out by the feet.

Dancing on the half door: The "half door" was an important part of Irish social life. Placed in front of the front door it possessed no latch. It would swing back and forth in free movement! It admitted light and kept animals out. It was a wonderful center of "gossip" and was no doubt the bearer of many secrets. It became the 'stage' when an evening of fun or competition was called in the community. The half door would be removed from its position and dropped to the floor whereupon the dance challenge was delivered! Sometimes the half door was soaped to make the competition more challenging! It is said — 'a good dancer could dance on a tray, and an excellent dancer could dance on a half-penny.' The best dancers danced as it were, underneath themselves, trapping each note of music on the floor, and as each dancer attempted to outdo the other with more intricate steps, the fun knew no end. The dancers always gathered at the end of the dance in one friendly step, much to the joy of the observer!

Lá an Dreoilín: "The Day of the Wren" celebrates the old custom of 'The Wrenboys' — groups of boys, girls and adults who, on the feast of St. Stephen (26th December) went about from house to house dressed in various disguises, playing music and performing dances. They carried with them a wren tied to a holly bush. The hunt for the wren sparked much fun and excitement leading up to "The Day of the Wren" when the celebrations began before dawn and continued until late into the night. All houses in the district were visited and all welcomed the Wrenboys who would dance, sing and make merry in exchange for a "penny to bury the wren."

The North Kerry Blackbird: The wren begins this dance and is joined by the Kerry Dance Troupe. "The Blackbird" is the oldest known solo set dance. The dance steps you will see in the "Blackbird" dance are the original Jerry Molineaux steps. From North Kerry, he was a well-known dance master in the *sean-nós* tradition. These steps were gathered from Fr. Pat Ahern, founder of The Irish National Folk Theatre, who learned the steps directly from Jerry Molineaux. These steps are close to one hundred years old!

Bodhrán: The *bodhrán* takes its name from the Irish word *bodhar* which means "deafening." It is a frame drum which stretches back to the 14th century. The *bodhrán* was used as a work implement for many years and it was used particularly in the mumming traditions of Kerry and Cork, to chase out the wren on the 26th of December (*lá an dreoilín*). The *bodhrán* has changed in the last century from a primitive frame drum played with the hand, to a very complicated tonal and rhythmic percussive instrument. It was first popularized by the group Ceoltóirí Chualann, under the leadership of Seán Ó Riada.