

An Irish Christmas

Saturday, December 22, 2018; 2 & 7 pm

Sunday, December 23, 2018; 2 & 7 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"

"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 bhuí 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.

"Gaudete 16C (rejoice, rejoice!)

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

"Wexford Carol" (traditional Irish)

"In Dulci Jubilo" (traditional Christmas Carol from the Middle Ages)

In sweet rejoicing

Let us our homage show

O that we were there!

Intermission

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“What Child is This?” (19C)

“Ave Maria” (Bach-Gounod)

“The Twelve Days of Christmas”

“Brush Dance”

“Half Door Dance”

“The Wren”

“The Wren Song” (traditional Irish)

ARTIST BIOS



KORAL AAKRE (Soprano). This is Koral’s fourth tour with *An Irish Christmas*. 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 from 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.” She 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 Reparatory 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. Between vocal performances and rehearsals, Koral manages a skincare spa in Santa Monica and nanny’s an energetic precocious two-year old boy and an intelligent talented twelve-year old girl. 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 three years ago and her grandmother, Bernyce, would burst with pride to hear her sing today.



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 5 in the World.

Having joined the troupe of *Riverdance* it wasn’t long before she was made Principle 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.



MILENA GLIGIĆ (Soprano). Milena, from Belgrade, Serbia, is a classically trained pianist and singer. She is a recent alumna of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program at the LA Opera, as well as a recent graduate from the University of Maryland, with a doctorate in Collaborative Piano. Milena is a regular member and soloist with the choir of St. James in the City in Los Angeles, and she is on the auxiliary roster of the LA Master Chorale. Her experience with vocal repertoire allowed her to collaborate as a pianist on numerous productions with LA Opera, LA Philharmonic, Maryland Opera Studio, Opera NOVA and others. She will join the Pacific Opera Project this season as well. As a member of Contemporaneous ensemble in NYC, Milena premiered more than 20 works in 6 seasons and took part at the “Bang on a Can” Marathon. She was a collaborative piano fellow at the Bard College, at the Music Academy of the West, and at the Aspen Music Festival. This summer she will be a vocal fellow at the American Bach Soloists Academy in San Francisco and a soloist at the Narnia Festival in Italy. Milena is also a folk dancer and she performs with Horotroptzi, a Bulgarian Folk Dance group in Los Angeles.



CARRIE MALLOY (Kerry Dance Troupe). Carrie grew up in Milwaukee, WI — known worldwide for its great Irish dance, music and culture. She began Irish dancing at the age of 6 and has since toured both the US and competed in Ireland, Netherlands and Scotland. She is a 5-time qualifier for the World Championships and is the current US Champion with WIDA and placed 4th at the 2018 World Championships in Maastricht, Netherlands. Carrie has toured the world with the renowned Chicago based Trinity Irish Dance Company, performed in *Battle of the Dance* and toured with *An Irish Christmas* for four years. She now resides in Los Angeles with her husband and 1-year old son. Carrie recently started the Malloy Irish Dance School based in Lincoln Heights.



JESSE LANGEN (Guitar). Jesse is a guitarist from St. Cloud, Minnesota who currently lives in Chicago. He is equally comfortable on classical, electric, and steel string, and plays professionally in a wide range of styles. Jesse and his brother Tim grew up learning traditional fiddle tunes from their grandfather Clarence; his childhood guitar influences were the classical playing of his father, Bill, the playing of Daithi Sproule and Paul Brady, and the playing of delta blues legend Robert Johnson. He can be heard regularly in Chicago, throughout the US, and abroad as a soloist, as the guitarist for Ensemble Dal Niente, in the trio Pesejet, in Hasco Duo with Amanda Deboer Bartlett, and in duo

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with harpist Ben Melsky. He is also a passionate and committed teacher of young musicians; his students have won multiple prestigious awards and have been placed in international festivals, both as composers and as performers.



RYAN MCKASSON (Fiddle). Ryan McKasson has gained a reputation as a performer, composer, collaborator, and teacher. In 1996, he was the youngest musician to win the National Scottish Fiddle Championship. In 1997, he was awarded a Merit Scholarship for Viola Performance from

the University of Southern California where he studied with Donald McInnes. Ryan started learning the violin at the age of four. One of his early fiddle teachers was Carol-Ann Wheeler who encouraged Ryan to joined the Seattle Scottish Fiddlers, headed by Calum MacKinnon, where he first began to play Scottish fiddle. In 1994, he started attending Valley of the Moon Scottish Fiddling School (VOM), where he met fiddler and teacher Alasdair Fraser, and joined a rather remarkable generation of musicians, many of whom have gone on to be notable performers and teachers. In 2004, Ryan and his sister, Cali, formed a band, The McKassons, that eventually included Ryan's wife, Brooke, and her brother, Matt Jerrell. Ryan has also been a member of a baroque/celtic/fusion combo Ensemble Galilei. He helped co-write and co-produce *First Person: Seeing America*, 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). Ryan has recorded with Hanneke Cassel on her albums *Silver*, *For Reasons Unseen*, and *Dot The Dragon's Eye*, and also with Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas on their album *Highlander's Farewell*. 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, and Swannanoa Gathering.



ALEX MOWATT-LARSEN (Kerry Dance Troupe). Alex started dancing at the age of six, and competed with the McTeggart School in Houston, Texas until moving to Cork, Ireland in 2012. While getting a Bachelor's in business at University College Cork, he competed with the

Kiely-Walsh Academy. He has won several regional titles, as well as top 10 placings in national and world championships. His performance highlights include lead roles in both *Flames of the Dance* on their China tour, and *Magic of the Dance* on their German and Taiwan tours in 2017. Alex is delighted to perform with Kerry Irish Productions Inc. for the first time in *An Irish Christmas Tour 2018!*



KEARA OSBORNE (Dance Director, Kerry Dance Troupe). Keara has been an Irish dancer for 26 years. She has competed numerous times at the local, regional, and national levels. Now retired from competitive dance she enjoys performing regularly with world touring bands such as The

Young Dubliners and The Fenians. In 2012, she was delighted to be a part of the Irish dance ensemble in *Battle of the Dance* in Anaheim, California. Keara has made several television appearances as an Irish dancer, including the Disney XD show

Crash and Bernstein in 2013 and the DJ Tommy Trash "Lord of the Trance" music video in 2014. In May 2013, Keara completed her Masters of Social Work at the University of Southern California. Kerry Irish Productions Inc. is thrilled to welcome Keara as a returning member of The Kerry Dance Troupe and as dance director for the company.



SIENA ROSE O'REGAN (Kerry Dance Troupe).

Siena began Irish dancing at the age of six. For as long as she can remember, Irish dancing has been her passion and it continues to be the biggest influence in her life today. Siena is one of the top dancers in the Western Region U.S. having qualified for the World Championships seven times, Nationals eight times and has recalled and medaled at the All Scotland Championships. Siena dances competitively with Celtic Irish Dance Academy in Los Angeles. She has performed on stage with the Chieftains the past three years, danced on television for the Miss California pageant, and was featured on the Disney Channel show *Shake it Up*. Siena was recently principal female dancer in Kerry Irish Productions Inc. *St. Patrick's Day in Ireland 2018* concert tour. She is a proud recipient of an award from The Ireland Agency in support of her travels to Dublin this past summer to attend the *Riverdance* Summer School and in recognition for her dedication to her craft. Siena is very excited to be rejoining the cast of *An Irish Christmas* for her third straight year!



TESSA ANTONIA O'REGAN (Kerry Dance Troupe).

Tessa began Irish dancing at the age of five and has been dancing for eight years now. Competitively, she reached Championship status by the age of seven. Tessa has consistently been in the top 10 regionally and is a two-time World Qualifier, a two-time top 15 Nationals dancer, and a four-time NAFC Minor Belt qualifier. At the World Irish Dance Championships in 2016 in Glasgow, Scotland, Tessa was one of only thirteen Americans to recall and the only dancer from the Western Region US to recall and place catapulting her to the number one dancer in the West. She dances competitively with Celtic Irish Dance Academy in Los Angeles. Tessa loves being on stage! For the past three years she performed as a featured dancer with the Chieftains on their southern California tour. She also recently performed on television during the Miss California pageant. Tessa is honored and excited to be returning for her third year as a featured dancer in *An Irish Christmas 2018*.



KELLY PEARSON (Kerry Dance Troupe).

Kelly hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has been Irish dancing for 16 years. She began dancing at age eight, first with Scoil na dTri Irish Dance Academy and then with Corda Mor 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

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Goulding. Kelly has danced with multiple US and European tours, performing most recently in *Celtic Fyre*, an award-winning Irish dance show at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, VA. Kelly is honored and thrilled to be joining *An Irish Christmas 2018*, and is excited to share her passion for dancing (and the holiday season!) with audiences and performers alike.



ELIYA RACCAH (Kerry Dance Troupe). Born in Los Angeles, California, Eliya began dancing at the age of six. From the moment she laced up her first set of dance shoes, a deep love and joy for the Irish culture and dance blossomed. Eliya has had the privilege of sharing the stage with

artists that include Cara Butler and the Chieftains and she toured with Michael Londra's *Celtic Fire* in 2017. Eliya continues to dance competitively and has competed in the regional and national levels of Irish Dance. She studies at Celtic Irish Dance Academy in Los Angeles. She joined *An Irish Christmas Tour* in 2017 and is delighted to rejoin the ensemble for the 2018 season.



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 5 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 Tours*. In March 2017, Connor was principal dancer for the new Kerry Irish Productions Concert Tour: *St. Patrick's Day in Ireland*. 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 2018*."



AMY RICHTER (bodhrán). Amy is a two-time Midwest Fleadh Cheoil champion on the bodhrán. She has been performing Irish music since 2003 and teaching since 2007. Amy recently wrapped up her second U.S. National Tour with one of the leading traditional Irish

ensembles of today, Danú. She is featured on their latest album, *Ten Thousand Miles* and will be heading back out with them in March of 2019. Amy is a founding member of áthas, a Milwaukee based band. She is a highly sought-after instructor and has been teaching bodhrán at the Milwaukee Irish Fest School of Music since 2007 and the Milwaukee Irish Fest Summer School since 2008. She has also taught for the Junior Davey Bodhrán Academy in Ireland, The Irish Music School of Chicago, and The Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. Amy would like to thank her family and friends for their endless love and support with a special shout out to her husband, Logan Penington who is currently touring with Mannheim Steamroller. They both feel extremely blessed to be spreading the Christmas cheer during this festive season of the year!



TYLER SCHWARTZ (Principal Dancer). Tyler Schwartz has been Irish dancing for the past 20 years; competing, performing and spreading the art form. He was most recently named *Irish Dancing Magazine's* "Man of the Year"! A World Champion, Tyler has also competed and won

the All-Ireland, North American, Great Britain, and the All-Scotland Championships. He has been the lead dancer in many productions, including *Rockin' Road to Dublin*, Busch Gardens *Celtic Fyre*, and *Gaelforce Dance*. Most recently, Tyler gained global attention as Instagram's St. Patrick's Day featured dancer. Since then, he has been highlighted in a "NowThis" video, as well as "BuzzFeed," and others! He is a brand ambassador for Capezio, taking Irish dance to the mainstream stage! This is Tyler's first season as principal dancer with *An Irish Christmas*.



KATHERINE TRIMBLE (Mezzo Soprano).

Katherine Trimble is a Bay Area based mezzo soprano who has portrayed the Mother/Witch in outreach performances of *Hansel and Gretel* and *Lilas Pastia (Carmen)* with Opera San Jose where she was noted by the *San Jose Mercury News* for her "agile" performance. Other operatic roles include *Ormindo (L'Ormindo)*, *Public Opinion (Orpheus in the Underworld)*, *Olga (Eugene Onegin)*, *Zita (Gianni Schicchi)* and *Petra (A Little Night Music)*. Along with operatic performances, she has been the alto soloist in Mendelssohn's "St. Paul," Bach's "Mass in B minor," Mozart's and Durufle's "Requiem," and Saint-Saen's "Christmas Oratorio." She has taken first place in competitions held by the SAI Music Fraternity, San Jose Woman's Club, and San Jose Study Club. Katherine was also honored to be the first recipient of the Irene Dalis Memorial Award from San Jose State University. She is the alto vocalist/soloist of the New Choir and for Kerry Irish Productions Inc. national touring shows *An Irish Christmas*, *St. Patrick's Day in Ireland*, *Celtic Wings*, and *Heart of an Irish Woman*, that celebrate traditional Irish music, song and dance. She also loves sharing the joy that singing has brought to her life with others through teaching and coaching.

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

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'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.

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 'till 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-nos 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 bodhran 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.