

# Boston Irish

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## This is Cork, a County Full of Attitude



St. Colman's Cathedral rises behind Portside buildings in Cobh, Co Cork. The county is home to Oppenheimer actor Cillian Murphy, who is also a musician and co-founder of a biennial festival of music, dance, art and theatre in Cork city. Story, more photos on page 22.

*Tourism Ireland photo*

Boston Irish  
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13TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023  
11:30 AM | Seaport Boston Hotel

### Honoring

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&  
Kieran Jordan

Massachusetts  
Governor  
Maura Healey

Southie's  
Peg Rooney  
and her 11 sons



# Brian Donnelly left us a remarkable legacy

By ED FORRY

BOSTONIRISH PUBLISHER

Brian Donnelly, the Lower Mills guy from St Gregory's parish who served six years as a Dorchester state rep and fourteen years as a member of Congress, will be memorialized this month when the Irish Cultural Centre gathers to present the first "Brian Donnelly Award for Leadership in Public Service" at a reception on Sept. 21 at the Omni Parker House in downtown Boston.

The event will honor Donnelly's legacy, with proceeds to support the cultural programs at the centre in Canton, say the organizers.

The inaugural awardee will be Jim Brett, himself also a former Dot state legislator and, for more than two decades, the head of the New England Council. Brett, a lifelong advocate for persons with disabilities, chairs President Biden's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

"Brian Donnelly's commitment to public service spanned his entire career," the ICC stated. "One of his most passionate projects was creating the Donnelly Visa, which helped many in Ireland to emigrate to the United States to follow the American dream. This program extended to other nations and has had a profound impact on tens of thousands of families who now proudly call America home."

I was fortunate to have known Brian and his brother Paul from early on—they lived a couple of blocks from my house in Dorchester. They were raised in a family of generational ties to politics: In the first half of



Ireland's President Mary Robinson and then-Congressman Brian Donnelly shared greetings during one of her visits to Boston in the early 1990s as then-State Rep Jim Brett, center, looked on.

*BostonIrish file photo*

last century, their mother's family was active in Meetinghouse Hill; an uncle, Francis "Sweepstakes" Kelly, served in the Boston City Council and was elected as the state's lieutenant governor and attorney general. Brian entered politics in 1972, winning election in his first attempt for public office. In 1978, he won a tight race to succeed Congressman Jim Burke, and stayed in the US House through the Carter, Reagan and George H. W. Bush presidencies.

In 1993, after stepping down from Congress, my family and I joined him on our first trip to Ireland, where he was awarded an honorary degree from University College/Galway. Before we left Dorchester, Brian told

me, "You're going to love Galway. It's a wonderful university town, full of life." He cautioned me, though: "You're going to see people there who you will swear you know from Lower Mills. They look just like people we know, but it's not them – it's their cousins."

I knew that he had an aunt who owned a small dry goods store in town, and when we stopped at Brian's favorite local pub, Richardson's Bar at #1 Eyre Square, it was festooned with Boston memorabilia and Donnelly campaign signs, so I imagined I was bound to see faces that looked familiar.

Sure enough, as I was walking down the street near the Spanish

Arch, I saw a guy standing on the corner, smoking a cigarette, and in the early evening twilight, he looked just like one of the Donnellys from Lower Mills. When I get closer, I realized it wasn't a Donnelly cousin; it was Brian himself, out catching some early evening breezes. He clearly loved that city, and he loved the heritage that propelled his career.

Later that year, Bill Clinton appointed him as ambassador to Trinidad & Tobago. On his return to Boston in late 1997, he sought the Democratic nomination for governor of Massachusetts. But he came up short in the '98 primary, and his party's candidate, Scott Harshbarger, lost the election to the interim incumbent, Paul Cellucci.

So ended Brian Donnelly's political life. He settled with his family in his home on Cape Cod, and regrettably, many of his longtime friends lost contact with him.

The memorial event this month will be a bittersweet one for this Brian Donnelly admirer. It was just ten months ago that he made a return visit to Ireland – his "farewell tour" – visiting with relatives, and meeting with US Ambassador Claire Cronin. We reported on his visit, and hoped it signaled a time for him to connect with old friends. But it wasn't to be. He passed away on Feb 28, 2023.

What will long linger with this award is the recognition by his hometown of Brian's legacy of honorable and meaningful public service. To me, that legacy, and a life well lived, adds up to something truly special.

## Some musings on the yearning that faith keeps alive

By JAMES W. DOLAN

BOSTONIRISH COLUMNIST

Is my yearning for something better than what I see around me just an indication of my fretful human nature? Or am I being pulled by a force that draws me toward a destiny beyond my own mortality? Is

it a dream or a promise?

True contentment is unattainable here. Fulfillment is beyond our reach. Why this feeling of disquiet and discontent even when things go well? Love, money, and power never satisfy. Something is always missing. It never is quite what we hoped it would be.

Is our inability to satisfy our own needs no matter how hard we try simply our lot as human beings or is it a message? Is hope a misplaced delusion or the gateway to faith? Faith is the affirmation of hope. It propels us to a belief in the unknowable. It provides a channel for our yearning. It directs us toward that distant yet attainable union with our source.

As the salmon is drawn back to its spawning grounds, so, too, are we drawn by some force beyond our understanding to whence we sprang. Our capacity to understand what draws us back may be like that of the salmon which only knows that it should return.

If the universe was produced by the "Big Bang," what caused that cataclysmic event, what was the space in which it occurred, and what was the matter that made it possible? What caused life even in its most elemental form? Where did atoms come from?

To suggest that existence is all a huge accident – that matter, the universe, life, evolution, and mankind are coincidences – is preposterous. We may not understand the intelligent design behind it all, but to conclude it was a fluke is to suspend judgment.

The salmon does not understand the ocean in which it swims or the river in which it was hatched and to which it returns to spawn. Like salmon, we swim in a larger sea but our understanding of the why and how of it, although on a higher plain, may be comparable to that of a fish trying to understand its own environment.

Having achieved belief, many people stop. They acknowledge the existence of an intelligent life force, a supreme being, or God, but are at a loss to know what to do about it. Offended by the excesses of organized religion, some struggle in trying to establish and maintain a relationship with it.

Faith serves to define the force. In so doing, it reduces that force to human terms that we can know, understand, and worship. It is an expression of our desire to know, love, and worship that created us and maintains us in existence – to establish a relationship with our creator.

To conclude that creation, the universe, and mankind just happened without rhyme or reason, to no purpose, is a leap of faith in the opposite direction. But sometimes the cruelty, evil, and sheer madness that are so much a part of human history makes one question the existence of a benevolent creator.

*James W. Dolan is a retired Dorchester District Court judge who now practices law.*

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# Theater in Dublin: Always more to discover!

*Art is the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures. You use a glass mirror to see your face: you use works of art to see your soul.*

– George Bernard Shaw

This month I am going to steer clear of the major issues of the day: the ever-growing list of Trump indictments that somehow benefit him in the Republican polls, Brexit fallout, climate breakdown, doom loops, and the Ukraine war. Instead, I will share some thoughts on one of the true delights of visiting or living in Dublin: the theater. Discussing “the theater” is a risky business, easily interpreted as conclusive evidence of snobbery, like joining a wine tasting club or using “summer” as a verb. In Ireland, going to the theater is not burdened by the connotation of pretension mostly because live drama is accessible pricewise and people of all walks of life go to a lot of plays.

Live performances, whether a concert, a ball game, or a play are opportunities to share one-time-only experiences with others, to participate in the cultural life of a community and remind us that we are all part of a human family.

I encourage BostonIrish readers planning a trip to Ireland to have a look at what’s playing at The Abbey, The Gaiety, The Olympia, The Gate, or Smock Alley theaters. You might recognize an old favorite by Samuel Beckett, Flann O’Brien, Arthur Miller, or Sean O’Casey. A familiar contemporary playwright like Martin McDonough, Sebastian Barry, or Sonya Kelly might have a new show. More of a fan than an expert, I usually just take a chance, and we have been delighted almost every time.

Why the theater is so robust in Ireland is the source of some debate. Perhaps its origins can be traced to the rich oral history and storytelling tradition practiced by the seanchaithe of ancient Ireland, who preserved the island’s myths and legends. The oldest theater in Dublin is Smock Alley which was built in 1662. During its heyday there were sold out performances for 300 audience members 7 days a week. A turning point for Irish theater was the Gaelic Revival of the late 19th century led by Yeats, Lady Gregory, JM Synge, and others. The mission of the Gaelic Revival was to revitalize and preserve Irish culture: music, dance, sports, language, and literature.



The Abbey Theatre in Dublin’s North City Centre seats 662



The Gaiety Theatre in South City Centre, left, which the couple at right is walking by, seats 749.



The Ambassador Theatre in City Centre hosts theatre, concerts, and movies.

The Abbey Theatre was opened in 1904 as a part of this assertion of Irish cultural nationalism. Catholics of James

Joyce’s generation were the first to gain broad access to higher education and were able to add their voices and stories. During

this period, the Irish became prolific producers of drama, and the public became omnivorous consumers of quality

theater. The good news is that it is still as rich a landscape as ever. The even better news is that the hard-won rights for women in recent times have welcomed many new voices and perspectives.

Shows churn through the city quickly for one or two week runs, so it’s important to keep an eye on what’s playing. In addition to the main halls, there is another layer of smaller venues to discover. Bewley’s Cafe, best known for its tea, scones, and historic stained-glass windows, is located on Grafton Street and has a small upstairs theater. Just a short walk from Bewley’s on Wicklow Street is The International Bar that also has an upstairs theater used for plays, stand-up comedy, and small concerts. In both venues, one-act, 50-minute plays are performed by the writers themselves who also typically serve as the ticket office and ushers for the 20-30 audience members. At the International, you will also have the advantage of enjoying a pint during the play.

The plays invariably have that unique Irish quality of being simultaneously funny and poignant, inspiring laughter and tears in equal measure. A recent favorite was “The Sand Pit,” written and acted by Seamus O’Rourke, who is a mountain of a man and very much the authentic farmer from Leitrim he portrays. It is an intimate journey into rural Ireland: life, death, faith, friendship, family, grief, grievance, loss, loyalty, and love. Seamus has another one-man show, “Mossy Flood,” currently playing in a small theater in Clontarf that I have not seen yet. Always more to discover!

Plays in Dublin will not cost you a king’s ransom. The ticket prices at the main theaters are usually in the 20-25-euro range while the upstairs plays are priced at 10-15 euros. Generous government subsidies for the arts help keep prices affordable, which means that nearly everyone can go and that if you run into something that you don’t like, it’s not the end of the world.

Long-time Dubliners say that the theater has “always been strong” and that the pandemic has not had a lasting negative impact on theater companies. Actor-director-producer Ronan Wilmot, whose roles with the Royal Shakespeare Company and film credits in “The Field” and “In The Name of the Father” make him a fixture in Dublin theater, remarked that the only noticeable change since the



# Theater in Dublin: Always more to discover!

pandemic is that theater goers are more likely to give standing ovations these days, perhaps an expression of pent up enthusiasm and the joy of being back in the theater.

The Irish gift for the written word is long established. This year is the 100th anniversary of WB Yeats's winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature. I attended a free lecture celebrating the anniversary at the National Library and learned that while today we remember Yeats as a poet, his prize was awarded primarily for his plays. His award also represented an invitation to long-isolated and newly independent Ireland to join the world's intellectual community. Shaw, Beckett, and Heaney have received the award since.

Yeats's prize was recognition of his individual genius and more broadly of the success of the Gaelic Revival that he championed. It is also linked indirectly to Irish Republicanism. The person who first nominated Yeats for the prize was the father of Joseph Mary Plunkett, who participated in the Easter Rising and was a signatory of the Proclamation. Plunkett, himself a poet, was executed by firing squad in 1916 seven hours after his marriage to Grace Gifford in the chapel of Kilmainham Gaol, a moment immortalized in the song "Grace."

Irish playwrights have never shied away from controversy. Sean O'Casey's "Plough and Stars" criticized the rebellion and caused riots when it opened at the Abbey Theatre in 1926. A new play, "O Brother!" takes on the issue of Mother and Baby Homes and forced adoption. Irish adults who were adopted only won the right to research and contact their birth families in 2022, so the subject is current and controversial. The central conceit (a

10-dollar theater-word that means 'the underlying fictitious assumption which must be accepted by the audience with suspension of disbelief so the plot may be seen as plausible) of the play is that two newly reunited brothers recount their recent discovery of each other. The dialogue is entirely in verse and explores the themes of brotherhood, identity, abandonment, guilt, loss, faith, love, jealousy, and hope. All of it.

"The Last Return" by Sonya Kelly was staged at The Gate in what was once an auditorium of the Rotunda Hospital. It is a hilarious play about the lengths the five characters will go to obtain the last return ticket to a hot play that is a metaphor for how in all of our lives, there are moments when we plead with the universe for a special favor that we desperately need: the college acceptance letter, the dream job, the marriage proposal, the cancer treatment. "The Last Return" dramatizes what happens when those competing needs collide.

Going to one live performance can serendipitously lead to another. I saw a Roger Doyle concert of original compositions inspired by "Finnegan's Wake" at the James Joyce Center, a restored Georgian townhouse that serves as a museum of Joyce artifacts and as an occasional venue for concerts and plays. My motivation for going was that after several attempts, I cannot make heads or tails of "Finnegan's Wake." I thought the concert might give me a clue or two.

After the concert, which left me still completely baffled by the book, I met Ronan Wilmot, who suggested I might like a new play he was directing called "Nora and Jim" that would be at the Joyce Center for two nights only. The one-act play brings to life the relationship between Nora Barnacle and James

Joyce from their meeting on Nassau Street, self-imposed exile in Trieste and Paris, to Jim's death in Zurich. It was mesmerizing. The theatrical culture in Dublin is intellectual but also casual: "Ach, it's no bother lads, I don't f\$%#@ understand Finnegan's Wake either."

Whatever the secret sauce is to have a thriving theater scene, Dublin has most of the elements. Just as Silicon Valley is a hotbed for software and Cambridge/Boston is a center for pharma and biotech research, Dublin is a magnet for actors, playwrights, directors, and producers. Intentional policies to promote this cultural treasure are constantly reviewed. This summer, larger ticket subsidies for young people confined during Covid were funded. This cohort fell out of, or never got into, the habit of theater going. The Dublin City Council has also scheduled events promoting new productions. For those visiting Dublin soon, there is a theater festival planned from Sept. 28 to Oct. 15. (dublintheatrefestival.ie) The biggest challenge for Dublin generally, and her art community specifically, is the lack of affordable housing.

Today's prosperous, inclusive Ireland, liberated from what Joyce described as "the twin tyrannies" of the British Empire and the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, might herald the beginning of a theatrical golden age. Many of the past great Irish writers and playwrights were forced to leave the island. Oscar Wilde left for France because homosexuality was illegal in Ireland until the 1990s. Joyce's "Ulysses" was condemned by the church as pornography, so the Irish government of the time did not even bother to ban it. Unavailable in bookstores; very few Irish people of his generation read it. Brendan Behan,

who wrote in Paris and found success in London, once remarked that "the Irish are not my audience, they are my raw material."

The bottom line is that going to the theater in Dublin is fun. You can wear jeans and sneakers and will usually have a friendly chat or two with fellow audience members. As WB Yeats famously observed: "There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met."

•••

On a personal note, we traveled to the USA this summer to meet our new grandson, Theo Kirk Hilgart, and his older brother Luka in California. At right, Luka shows his Boston Irish colors.



## Recent news out of Dublin

The Notre Dame / Navy Game took place in Dublin's Aviva Stadium on Aug. 26th. Forty thousand American fans, including many US political leaders, made the pilgrimage to Dublin. Midshipmen and Marines came ashore from the USS Mesa Verde to join the festivities. Dame Street was renamed "Notre Dame Street" for the day and the city center was packed like Paddy's Day in August.

The event generated at least 150 million euros in tourism trade for Ireland. Boston's own Jim O'Brien, who sadly passed away earlier this year, would be proud. His vision and energy created the Emerald Isle Classic first played in 1988 when Boston College defeated Army. May Jim's legacy long endure!

# Keeping language alive: A call to action

By CAMERON DUNN

"Ce chaoi bhfuil tú?" my Irish Gaelic tutor greets me, "How are you?"

My grandfather is from County Waterford, Ireland; my grandmother is from the Isle of Lewis, one of the Scottish Hebrides Islands. When we travel back, visits to our relatives are suffused with Gaelic – on the radio, in animated conversation, during raucous card games – and I'd like to understand and participate instead of sitting on the sidelines. Out of FOMO [the fear of missing out], I have started taking Gaelic lessons. Additionally, I am deeply concerned that this beautiful, unique language is in danger of disappearing, especially if our generation does not pay attention.

The UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages includes six categories of language endangerment, ranging from extinct, in which there are no speakers left, to safe. There are 6,700 languages spoken in the world, 40 percent of which are in danger of disappearing. Irish Gaelic is considered "definitely endangered," meaning that children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue in the home. According to the 2022 Irish census, 40.4 percent of the

Irish population indicated that they can speak Gaelic. Of the 1.8 million people who can speak Gaelic, however, only 10 percent stated that they can speak the language "very well," and just 71,968 do so daily outside of the educational setting.

While Ireland was occupied by Britain, particularly in the 1800s, speaking Gaelic was often punished. Factors such as mass migration stemming from the Great Famine and present-day emigration further contributed to the language's decline.

Languages close to home in Boston are also threatened, such as the language of the Wampanoag Nation of Cape Cod. The Wampanoags were the first Native Americans to develop an alphabetic writing system, but by the 1700s, with colonial infiltration, English was taught in schools where the use of the Wampanoag language was discouraged and even forbidden. By the early 1900s, only a handful of Wampanoag words and phrases could be recalled by elders.

The potential loss of these languages is devastating. Languages are vastly more than assemblages of words and sentences. Cultures, knowledge, and traditions are preserved and transmitted

between generations through language. For instance, language is closely linked to landscape, and certain Gaelic words describe nuances of landscape in ways inexplicable in standard English. There are over 100 Gaelic words for hill or mountain, ranging from meall, a lumpy, rounded hill, to sgùrr, a pointed, high peak. A hill can be mòr (big), riabach (speckled), or maol (bald). These names provide specific intelligence useful for orientation and an alternative lens through which to view the landscape.

We cannot let these ancient, vulnerable languages die. We must cherish the languages of those who came before us. Certainly, we can figure out how to harness technology to understand and perpetuate languages, using artificial intelligence, for example, to document, analyze, and teach endangered languages. Plugging into apps like DuoLingo, we can easily gain familiarity with languages. Rather than relying solely on technology, however, we must make an effort to learn languages for ourselves, as we can appreciate the historical, cultural, and emotional context of languages unlike any computer. No bot can hike up to the top of a mòr sgùrr and be moved by the vivid patchwork of green fields

below. A drone will not gaze upon the Skelligs and marvel at the monks of centuries ago who scabbled out an existence on such inhospitable islands. A robot will not feel the sounds of these places in its mouth, tongue wrapping around the often onomatopoeic words. Let's examine our own roots, engage with our parents and grandparents, and make time to learn their languages. Let's participate in programs like the Wampanoag Language Reclamation Project, which organizes courses and language enrichment activities in Mashpee, or Gaelic classes through Cumann na Gaeilge, the Irish Language Society of Boston. If our parents or grandparents speak Vietnamese, Creole, Mandarin, or Farsi, let's learn from them by communicating in their languages, as fluency is the greatest gift they can pass on to us.

Language represents cultural soul and spirit. It is a vehicle which links generations to the lands of their origins, no matter how far families scatter. If we do not prioritize keeping languages alive, we will lose these vital components of our cultural identities.

Cameron Dunn is a rising senior at Boston College High School who lives in Melrose.



# BOSTON IRISH Letter from Wicklow/Larry Donnelly

## In defense of the commendable Rose of Tralee pageant

At the hour of writing, the New York Rose, Róisín Wiley, has just been named the 62nd International Rose of Tralee for 2023. She was a worthy winner, even if it is instinctively hard for me to congratulate a New Yorker. Over two nights, after in-depth interviews with a three-member judging panel, 32 Roses from across Ireland and throughout the world took part in a nationally televised program of entertainment and conversation with co-hosts Dáithí Ó Sé and Kathryn Thomas, both well-known Irish media personalities.

The Boston & New England Rose, Dorchester's Fiona Weir, shone, as did her Co. Leitrim-born grandmother, Rosaleen, who concluded her video message to Fiona from a Boston area nursing home with "This is Granny, bye!" and stole everyone's hearts in the process. Each in her own way, the 32 women who appeared on the stage excelled and did themselves, their families, and their communities proud. Viewership figures have not been released, but it is consistently one of the most watched events on RTÉ and also draws a massive global audience online.

The Rose of Tralee event is, in my view, a wonderfully unique festival of young women, of Ireland and of the Irishness that so many millions of us share. It is notable that the Roses wear long dresses, have an enviable record of academic, athletic, cultural, and professional accomplishments and demonstrate a special range of talents. It absolutely is not a beauty pageant and is not remotely tawdry.

These facts do not deter its detractors. In August, without fail, the Rose of Tralee is subject to relentless attack on two fronts. First, that it is an embarrassing relic. Second, that it is inescapably



Wiley's parents, Eddie and Majella, were born and raised in Templeglantine and Kilmallock in Co. Limerick.

sexist and arguably misogynist. The *Irish Times* columnist Justine McCarthy was quite harsh this year, writing that while "the contest does have its charm," it is a "spectacle" that is "antediluvian... way past its sell-by date" and "springs from a stubborn, unconscious bias." RTÉ should "pull the plug" on it. Others have written, and said, worse.

As a long-time aficionado of the Rose of Tralee who refuses to skip a second of it – I know, I know. My brother, friends, cousins, colleagues, wife and children all find it slightly odd – I strongly disagree with the detractors. But I will leave the last words on this vexing debate to the new Rose, Ms. Wiley, the daughter of immigrants from Co. Limerick and a vice-president of a marketing company in Manhattan:

"There is nothing outdated about celebrating women and Irish culture and what makes us beautiful and different.

I have never felt more beautiful and strong in myself, and I think the 31 other women would say the same thing. It's not because of the way we look or the way we dress... When you look at the 31 other girls and everything we've brought to the table and the experiences that we've brought... I do believe it represents modern Irish women."

Róisín Wiley's powerful sentiments are more than good enough for me. Critics be damned, I will always be a Rose of Tralee fan!

Another debate that has raged for some time in this country revolves around the ubiquitous use of posters with political candidates' names, faces, and parties emblazoned upon them in cities, towns and villages come election time. Three points should be established at the outset for uninitiated readers:

Aspirants for high office in Ireland cannot purchase time on the airwaves to raise awareness of their bids. For whatever reason, bumper stickers and lawn signs are exceedingly rare. And the duration of campaigns is strictly regulated. They typically run for weeks, not for months or years as in the United States.

The Minister for Local Government, Darragh O'Brien, has asked Ireland's newly created Electoral Commission to consider reducing the number of posters and the places where they may be displayed. Opponents of election posters frequently cite environmental concerns and clutter, as well as the potential for obstructing pedestrians or distracting motorists. Yet election posters can be recycled. Any regulations obviously must have regard for public safety.

In my experience, however, a palpable dislike of politics and politicians animates many who want to rid the landscape of election posters. Especially given the ongoing threats to democracy and the rule of law internationally, election posters are to me important symbols of a vibrant, functioning republic and of free, fair elections. They are not a blight; they are a direct, simple, and vital means for candidates to put the people they wish to serve on notice that they are getting into the arena, which in itself is commendable.

Take election posters down immediately once votes are cast. Recycle them. Ensure they do not endanger anyone. But do not limit their use in Irish elections. That's my short and sweet proposal to the Electoral Commission.

Continuing with the debate theme, the first gathering of Republican presidential hopefuls in Milwaukee ahead of the 2024 primary season is now in the history books. It is a sad reality that perhaps the most prominent aspect of it was Donald Trump's absence. He, possibly at the urging of his advisers, reached the decision that with holding a roughly 40 percent, no good could have come from sparring with his challengers. The conventional wisdom is that this was a shrewd assessment. Yet one wonders if he missed opportunities to humiliate his rivals, to fire up his base and, crucially, to reassure some conservatives beyond the base who have drifted in his direction in the wake of four indictments they deem politically motivated that he was not seeking to bypass the nomination process.

Whatever the comings and goings of the 45th POTUS, the segment from the debate rebroadcast here repeatedly featured the insurgent billionaire Vivek Ramaswamy's loud declaration that "the climate change agenda is a hoax!" To say that the Irish people, at the tail end of a summer rife with horrific weather occurrences and consequential human tragedies, were collectively aghast at such a contention is actually an understatement. Much has been made of the divergence in transatlantic thinking on a host of topics in recent years. Indeed, Ramaswamy is an extremist, but still, the variance in outlook between Americans and Europeans may be most pronounced on what is happening to the planet.

Finally, it will be a tremendous privilege for me to return home to Boston on a short visit to present – on behalf of my family – the first annual Brian J. Donnelly Award for Leadership in Public Service to James T. (Jim) Brett on Sept. 21st at the Omni Parker House. I was delighted when Martina Curtin and Jerry McDermott of the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston approached me with the idea. And I know how much it means to my Aunt Ginny and my cousins, Lauren and Brian, for their late husband and father to be honoured every year in this way.

There is no more deserving recipient of the inaugural award than Jim Brett, my Uncle Brian's long-time friend and fellow native of Dorchester. He has been a tireless advocate, both as a state legislator and subsequently, for people in need of assistance. Jim Brett is a public servant in the truest sense. Details of the event on the 21st, including ticket information, are available at [irishculture.org/whats-on/events/](http://irishculture.org/whats-on/events/).

Larry Donnelly is a Boston born and educated attorney, a Law Lecturer at the University of Galway, and a regular media contributor on politics, current affairs, and law in Ireland and the US. @LarryPDonnelly

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*Kieran Jordan*

Footnotes

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# Sen. Markey's 'Climate Bank' idea turns real at Franklin Field complex

By SETH DANIEL

SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

When Jossie Leon is in her housing unit at the Franklin Field Apartments, she describes the air quality as being so bad it causes her to cough more inside than outside. In the winter months, snow sometimes comes through the windows, a common problem for many living in the public housing development west of the Blue Hill Ave.-Talbot Ave. intersection.

The indoor living environment badly needs investment, said Leon during a press conference last Wednesday (Aug. 23) outside the complex. Officials from federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michaela Regan, US Sen. Ed Markey to Gov. Healey and Mayor Wu were on site to tout the availability of money from the federal Inflation Reduction Act to improve windows, roofs, and heating/air conditioning units in seven of the development's buildings containing more than 500 housing units.

"I would like the children I raised and the children I teach to grow up in safe and healthy housing," said Leon, who is the leader of the Estrellas Tropicales dance troupe. "Today a lot of the discussion is about building, but this occasion is about more than that. It's about us, the residents of Franklin Field and our homes... We need better air quality in Franklin Field. Every level of government should invest in public housing first and not last."

The officials responded that that is what they are doing with the \$21 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Applications now available for money to help communities—particularly low-income communities and public housing developments—improve air quality and heating/cooling efficiency.

Kenzie Bok, the Boston Housing Authority administrator, and the BHA's Joel Wool said they hope to use federal monies to pilot innovations at Franklin Field and the Mildred Hailey Apartments in Jamaica Plain.

"We're in front of seven buildings connected by a central boiler plant," said Wool, noting that it used to be oil-burning, but was converted to gas in 2002. Added Bok: "Our plan was to replace this gas boiler and we decided instead to go fossil fuel free. We're trying to do that before 2030. The best way of going fossil fuel free is not to add more fossil fuel infrastructure."

She and Wool said they are looking at replacing windows, roofs, and updating heating/cooling infrastructure. That could include all new heat pumps (providing heating and cooling), or it could be a new network of geothermal technology on site.

"We're excited about looking into the geothermal opportunity here," said Wool.

For Sen. Markey, the event marked the culmination of decades of advocacy for a funding source called a "Climate Bank." He shared that as a congressman, he got it passed in the House of Representatives in 2009, only to have it cut in the Senate. His advocacy has continued over the years, but it wasn't until the Inflation Act that he was able to get everyone on board. Now, that funding mechanism he dreamed about to help elevate climate and resiliency solutions is at work in places like Franklin Field, he said.

"A vision without funding is an hallucination," he said. "After years of Republican climate denial, we are here to celebrate \$21 billion in funding... that has turned this vision into reality."

Healey was on hand to tell everyone that the state has already taken measures, like starting the new Community Climate Bank, to be ready for the billions available from the federal government for dedicated purposes.

"Our Climate Bank makes us eligible for the new funding at the federal level and our affordable housing focus gives us an advantage," she said. "This is a powerful example of how, if we go all in and work together, we'll see unprecedented returns."

She said she pledged to make sure that Massachusetts would be first in line for the new federal funding, using her newly formed Office of Federal Funds to seek out every dollar the state can get.

Said Wu: "We've been sounding the alarm for so many years on climate and racial disparities and calling people to be at the forefront of the biggest issues. This is an investment unlike any other."

The EPA's Regan congratulated Franklin Field, Boston, and Massachusetts for being ready to quickly jump on these funding opportunities to reduce climate impacts. "We're taking local and state stories here and turning them into a national story," he said. "We know solutions don't start at the top; they come from the ground level up."

Union leaders like Dorchester's Brian Doherty, of the Boston Building and Construction Trade Council, and Darlene Lombos, executive secretary-treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC), were also on hand to advocate and celebrate the use of union labor within the upcoming projects funded by the Climate Bank.

The national clean financing network, which is based on Markey's Climate Bank idea, means to mobilize private capital into clean technology projects to create good-paying jobs and lower energy costs for American families, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities, while cutting harmful pollution to protect people's health and tackle the climate crisis.



State, local, and federal officials were on hand at Franklin Field Apartments last Wednesday (Aug. 23) to hear about the availability of federal funding for air quality and heating/cooling upgrades from the federal Inflation Adjustment Act. *Seth Daniel photo*

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# Eoin's J-1 experience helped him find his own pathway in graphic design field

By RIAN STAFF

Eoin Cantwell is a graduate of the Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT) Dún Laoghaire who utilized the J-1 visa to aid the transition from college studies to full-time work in his chosen profession – graphic design. Eoin chose to live in NYC, as this is the epicenter for the industry where he would be able to try a little bit of everything. In so doing, not only did he gain immeasurable experience in graphic design, but he also gained a whole new sense of independence.

He worked in person at the office for much of his internship, and his commute to work from Ridgwood was an easy a 30-minute bike ride that was good for the city's environment and for his personal health. The most difficult aspect of living in NYC was finding housing; there are many subletters, but not a lot of new leases to be signed. Additionally, some landlords asked for a credit check, which as a recent graduate



A New York city view from the Whitney Museum.

and exchange visitor, Eoin could not provide.

Given that, he recommends that any J-1 who wants to live in New York look for housing before traveling to the

States. That preparation will save a lot of time and stress.

Eoin's J-1 internship experience in graphic design allowed him to further explore career paths and learn more about where his interests lie. In Ireland, many young adults stay at home for college, so for him, his experience of being alone in a different country gave him great autonomy to find himself. Maybe he'll pursue a masters in graphic design; maybe he'll take the opportunity to work at a company abroad, or remotely! Eoin remarked that there would not have been a lot of opportunities similar to this one in Dublin.

As for support throughout this enlightening process, Eoin backs the Rian Immigrant Center's J-1 Visa program wholeheartedly. It is less expensive than other programs, and the help he received showed that Rian was actually invested in his experience. For instance, after he had a slight issue at the embassy in Ireland, Rian was



Eoin Cantwell: One happy camper.

quick to give feedback and support him. Everyone in the organization seemed ready to help and be there – even before he had arrived in the states he received a list of potential employers to apply to.

We wish Eoin the very best and cannot wait to see where he takes himself from here!

Connect with us on social media to see more of Eoin's pictures from his time in NYC! @rianj\_1 on Instagram and Rian J-1 on Facebook.

## What exactly is the Visa Bulletin, and what does it do?

A. Anyone who has had to apply for an Immigrant Visa at a US embassy abroad or has petitioned for a family-member in a foreign country is familiar with the Visa Bulletin, which is used by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services as well as the Department of State to summarize the availability of visas for certain family-based and employment-based categories.

The Immigration and Nationality Act places limits on how many family-sponsored and employment-sponsored visas can be issued in a given year. These limits, especially for family-sponsored immigrant visas, are low – for example, the INA allows only 23,400 unmarried sons or daughters of US citizens to enter in a given year – so more applications are received than visas can be issued, which causes a category to become “oversubscribed.”

This oversubscription means that people must wait until the time comes for their petition to reach the front of the line, then submit their documentation, wait for their application to be adjudicated, and for their immigrant visa or green card to be issued. If the preference category is not oversubscribed, it is “current,” indicating that an applicant will not have to wait a period of time to be able to submit documents.

To put these abstract ideas into concrete numbers, if



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you are a US citizen and want to petition your Irish sibling to come to the United States, then the application falls under the Fourth (F4) family-preference category. Currently, consular officers are inviting individuals in the F4 category to submit documents if their petition was received before March 1, 2008. Those F4 applications are being adjudicated if they were filed prior to April 22, 2007, or when George W. Bush served as president of the United States.

These backlogs also apply to individuals who are applying for their green card from within the United States, if your relative is eligible to use that process.

Although this backlog suggests that approximately fifteen years from now a US consular or immigration officer will make a decision about your petition to bring your sibling to the United

States, such a calculation cannot be made because the visa bulletin does not move consistently forward. In fact, the final action dates and dates for filing can be stuck at the same date for months at a time.

Alternatively, they can even move backwards in time – a dreaded phenomenon in immigration law called retrogression. In August 2023, the Department of State announced that it would do just that: retrogress final action dates for some key immigrant visa categories, including the F2A category for spouses and children of permanent residents. In fact, as of Aug. 2023, the F2A category is backlogged into 2017.

Accordingly, immigration practitioners can never give confident estimates on how quickly an immigrant visa will become available for an employment-based or family-based preference category.

If you are contemplating petitioning for a family member, do not hesitate to contact the Rian Immigrant Center at 617-984-6542 to schedule a legal consultation with an attorney who can help you.

Disclaimer: These articles are published to inform the general public, not to advise in individual cases. All law, including immigration law, is always subject to change. If you seek legal advice you can contact Rian's immigration legal staff at 617-984-6542.



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# UPDATES FROM THE PASTORAL CENTRE



- **The IPC Senior Program will return From September 11th**
- **IPC Toddler Tuesdays, Irish 25s and Supper Club to return in October!**
- **Our Sobriety Groups, Immigration Clinics, Social Work and Case Management Services continue to run as normal. Please call the IPC 617-265-5300 for any queries or info.**

## Deer Island Famine Memorial Mass

IPC Mass of Remembrance at the Deer Island Famine Memorial will take place on Saturday September 16th at 4pm.



ANSEO LE CHEILE - HERE TOGETHER



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## IPC Jim Wall 2023 Golf Classic

The Annual IPC tournament takes place on Friday September 29th at Presidents Golf Course. This year's tournament will honor the memory of IPC Golf Tournament Coordinator Jim Wall RIP who passed away suddenly on March 19th 2023. We are delighted to launch a perpetual trophy in Jim's honor which will be presented by Jim's wife Kathy and their children Kristen and John. Jim was a great supporter of the community and a champion for those in need. He is remembered here for his energy, his warm and optimistic personality and how he paid attention to little things that make a big difference – such as a chat, a coffee, a lift to an appointment or a listening ear. He is truly missed by many.



Thank you for your support again this year and know that we are very grateful. For sponsorship opportunities, please visit [www.ipcboston.org/golf](http://www.ipcboston.org/golf). See below the details for our Grand Raffle for a chance to win a luxury stay at Ocean Edge Resort, Cape Cod.

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# Greenhills cooks up new Adams Corner space

By SETH DANIEL

SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

Greenhills Bakery owners at a meeting Monday night discussed plans to demolish their existing one-story building and construct a four-story mixed-use building that would house a revamped and updated bakery. (Rendering courtesy of Choo & Company Architects)

The owners of Greenhills Bakery in Adams Village unveiled a proposal Monday night that would see the demolition of their existing building and the construction of a four-story building with nine housing units above a new bakery on the ground floor.

During a city-sponsored meeting, abutters heard the owners, Dermot and Cindy Quinn, say it was a chance for them to pump new life into their 30-plus year-old business at 780 Adams St.

Said Cindy: "We've worked hard on this plan to make something that will add to the neighborhood and that people will accept. We'll see what the city says and abide by the rules, but the units are small and efficient... We put a lot of thought into it."

The meeting was attended by 15 people, including presenters, and lasted 18 minutes. The nine for-sale condo units would be housed in three stories above the new bakery, and would include three two-bedrooms and six one-bedrooms, with no parking provided. The units would be sized at between 600 and 800 square feet.

The project would not include any affordable units as the project currently fits under the city policy that has a 10-unit threshold for such housing, a



Greenhills Bakery owners at a meeting Monday night discussed plans to demolish their existing one-story building and construct a four-story mixed-use building that would house a revamped and updated bakery.

Rendering courtesy of Choo & Company Architects

mandate that Mayor Wu has proposed lowering. "We're not there yet [on affordable units]," said project attorney John Pulgini. "We'll be keeping an eye on that proposal."

The proposed building would be 42 feet tall, with the maximum allowed set at 40 feet.

Mark Sullivan of Choo Architecture said the owners plan to use red brick on the ground floor and on the top of

the building, which sits on the corner of Adams Street and the narrow Henderson Street entrance and exit to "create a monument piece on the corner." The remainder of the building would be fiber cement siding, as is commonplace on most buildings these days.

Dermot Quinn said the construction period would last around two years, and added that they have a plan to temporarily relocate Greenhills Bakery

within the Adams Village area.

"We have three offers to accommodate our bakery during the time the building is being erected and they are right in the neighborhood," he said. "Neighbors are really out to help us in that respect."

Mary Swanton, the executive director of the nearby Irish Pastoral Centre, said she hopes the community will support the proposal to keep a keystone business in Adams Village, which she called the "Irish center" of Boston. "To remove Greenhills Bakery or block any project or development hinders what we have here," she said. "Just as we have a Chinatown or the North End in Boston, we are very committed to maintaining this area as the Irish center of Boston. I can't see that happening without Dermot and Cindy."

Greenhills Bakery building in Adams Village.

Abutting property owner Ed Brooks, who lives at 772 Adams St., said he saw no problems with the proposal, but he hoped to work closely during construction to preserve the shared wall and cellar foundations. "I am excited for them and hope everything goes as planned," Brooks said.

An attorney who represents abutting property owners in the 700 block of Adams Street, said his clients currently have "no position" on the proposal.

The project will require Zoning Board variances for maximum floor area ratio (FAR), maximum height, rear setback, and off-street parking (16 spaces required, none provided). The new bakery would also need approval for take-out food.

## Stitching together to bring awareness, empathy about an aggressive cancer

By CASSIDY MCNEELEY

SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

Before he left office, Gov. Charlie Baker signed into law the establishment of a permanent day of awareness for Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC), a rare but aggressive disease. This year, IBC Awareness Day will take place in Massachusetts on Tues., Oct. 10. Leading up to the recognition and education event, Stitch House Dorchester will be hosting two knit-along events, where residents will be invited to crochet and knit hats for chemotherapy patients.

Susan Asci, who once lived in South Boston and now resides in Whitman, is a 23-year survivor of IBC. After completing her treatment, Asci felt that she could help others by establishing support groups and raising money for research. Her most recent project has been collaborating with Stitch House, which is located at 846 Dorchester Ave.

The yarn store will host two events in September to create and collect chemo hats for

donation to the Breast Health Center at Tufts Medical Center in Boston in recognition of IBC Awareness Day. The first will take place on Fri., Sept. 15, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.; the second knit-along will occur on Sun., Sept. 24, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

"Participants are going to donate what they make but they also will have an opportunity to ask questions," said Asci. "We're going to have our educational brochures there and I'll be at those events myself. There are a couple of other survivors who may or may not pop in and be available to talk about their experience or to answer questions. It's a very grassroots way of sharing information and educating people about this disease."

Even though the goal is to collect 100 hats by the end of September, those who do not know how to knit are invited to attend and learn about IBC.

"They can take that information and say, 'My sister needs to know about this, she needs

to know what to look for,' or 'I've got three daughters, I need to share this information with them, so they see these certain signs of what potentially could be cancer and go to a doctor right away rather than put it off,'" Asci said.

When she was diagnosed with IBC over 20 years ago there was little research and awareness of this form of cancer. She hopes that seeing volunteers working with Stitch House will leave women battling the disease no longer feeling isolated but rather supported by a community empowered by knowledge.

"Just knowing that this is a handmade gift, that somebody made from their heart to say, 'I want to help you out,' that expression of kindness goes a long way in healing and comfort during a very challenging illness," said Asci, who still has hats and gloves she was gifted with during her chemotherapy treatment.

The owner of Stitch House, Anissa Essaibi George, is a



Stephanie Fall (left), supporter, and volunteer, reviews knitting patterns with Susan Asci (right), 22-year IBC survivor, in preparation for chemo hat donations for IBC Awareness Day. Tom Hamilton photo

former at-large city councillor and 2021 candidate for mayor who now serves as the president of the board of directors for Big Sister Boston.

"The Stitch House is very much a business, but I believe in the business of being engaged with our community at large,"

Essaibi George said. "We've participated in projects like this in the past - a number of years ago we did scarves and hat-making for individuals experiencing homelessness - so it's not unusual for us ... we're thrilled that Stitch House can be a part of it."





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## Upcoming Events

- 9/10/23 - ICC 5K and Children's Fun Run
- 9/12/23 - Monthly Coffee Morning at 10:30am
- 9/14/23 - Irish Summer Treats Cookery Class
- 9/21/23 - The Inaugural Brian J. Donnelly Award honoring the Honorable James T. Brett
- 9/22/23 - Derek Warfield & The Young Wolfetones live in concert at the ICC
- 9/25/23 - Up Close & Personal on Irish Children's Writing Today at Stonehill College
- 10/6/23 - '3 Bucks Left' live at the Irish Cultural Centre - low ticket availability
- 10/10/23 - Monthly Coffee Morning at 10:30am
- 10/21/23 - The 4th Annual Boston Irish Beer Festival at the ICC
- 11/18/23 - 'Ellen's Boys' A True Repertory Theatre Production at the ICC
- 12/9/23 - Celtic Woman Chloë Agnew and Guests - A Christmas Celebration at the ICC
- 12/17/23 - An Irish Christmas Day with Ishna Ft. Irish Tenor Ciaran Nagle and Tara Novak

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## Class Schedule

### Monday's

Irish Set Dancing with Cait Bracken  
All Ages & Abilities 7:00pm



### Tuesday's

Children's Irish Dancing for Beginners  
with Harney Pender Keady  
Ages 4 & Up  
3:45pm to 4:30pm



### Wednesday's

Children's Irish Step Dancing & Sean Nos  
with Jackie O'Riley  
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Irish Language with Cumann na Gaeilge  
Beginner Class with Pat Clifford  
Intermediate Class with Máire Concannon  
7:00pm to 8:30pm



### Thursday's

Irish History Classes with Sean Murphy  
All Ages & Abilities

32 Counties History Class 6pm to 7:30pm  
Topical History Class 7:30pm to 9pm  
This class takes place online - see our website for current topics

Irish Language with Cumann na Gaeilge  
Advanced Class with Mary Lou Dunworth  
7:00pm to 8:30pm

### Saturday's

Traditional Irish Music Classes  
with Denis Galvin  
All Ages & Abilities



Youth Accordion 8:30am to 9:00am  
Youth Fiddle 9:00am to 9:30am  
Youth Tin Whistle 9:30am to 10:00am  
Tin - Whistle 10:00am to 11:00am  
Fiddle 11:00am to 12:00pm  
Button Accordion 12:00pm to 1:00pm

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# TAKING IT PUBLIC

## Fiddle teacher introduces students to the delights of the session

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

It's a brilliant summer Sunday afternoon, and inside The Cottage Bar in Weymouth a singular moment of anticipation is taking place. Around a large rectangular table in a corner of the restaurant, there are 15 fiddles tucked under youthful chins; 15 bows, almost but not quite touching the strings of the fiddles, are held by youthful hands, poised and ready.

Standing nearby, also with a fiddle under her chin and a bow in her hand, is Cliodhna Field, a native of County Meath who moved to the Boston area more than a decade ago. She looks at the assembled musicians, ranging from elementary to high school age, who have their eyes trained on her. She gives a little smile, then counts off, and all the bows strike the strings to play a Kerry polka.

The CCÉ (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann) Boston Music School kids' session is off and running.

For the past several months, the gregarious, energetic Field – a faculty member at the music school – has been taking her students on a practicum of sorts: She has organized music sessions for them at venues such as the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton and Bunratty's Tavern in Reading as well as The Cottage Bar, where they play in front of customers and complete strangers as well as family members and friends.

A session is not a concert, of course, but intended as an informal gathering that is as much about socializing as it is music. It's an opportunity to try in public what you've been practicing in private, to get inspired to add to your stock of tunes, and to hang around with people who share your musical interests. At the same time, there is a certain motivation to do as well as you can, Field notes, which makes this a useful experience for budding musicians.

"I believe playing in front of a big and/or different crowd every time stimulates the kids to want to keep improving and learning more repertoire," she says. "They get great satisfaction out of the applause and cheers from the crowd, especially when it's coming from people they don't know. It also brings a performance aspect to the playing, too – it'll shake off any nerves or fears at a young age."

Field, along with her charges and their parents, also see the sessions as a means to build camaraderie and community.

"I think we all appreciate having a group of people we like to hang around with and feel connected to, whether they're from work, school, our neighborhood, and so on," she says. "That's part of what the kids enjoy: They all have some kind of Irish ancestry in their families – a parent, a grandparent – and you'll hear them asking one another, 'So, where in Ireland is your grandma from? How far is that from such-and-such place?' So, this is a real connection for them."

(Not to imply that Irish ancestry is any kind of prerequisite to taking CCÉ



Fiddle teacher Cliodhna Field leads her students during a session at The Cottage Bar in Weymouth in August.



These students and others have held sessions at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton, Bunratty's Tavern in Reading and, most recently, The Cottage Bar.

Music School classes, of course.)

"These events have been invaluable for the kids to experience a real session and to gain confidence in their playing," says Katy Barry, whose seven-year-old daughter Nell has been playing for about two years. "They feed off of each other and it motivates them to get better. Plus, we parents have fun, too: It is really something to see this group of little musicians playing together."

Meanwhile, the fiddle students are going through a series of tunes and sets, including a pair of popular session jigs – "The Connaughtman's Rambles/Geese in the Bog" – and a waltz, each time eliciting whoops and cheers from the Cottage Bar patrons and staff. (Whereas most sessions are spur-of-the-moment as to deciding which tunes to play, Field uses a list so as to keep things moving along, although at times she solicits suggestions from the kids.) One onlooker, herself a music teacher, remarks on the good quality of intonation among the young fiddlers, and how well they play in unison.

An event like this involves quite a few moving parts: Certainly the children themselves, who have to put in the work in the first place, and their parents, who have to shuttle them to the music school every Saturday for lessons – from as far away as Lowell and New Hampshire as well as Greater Boston – as well as to the session; the pub owners who give space and time for the kids' sessions,

usually preceding a regularly scheduled adult session, which some of the young musicians participate in, too.

Then there's Field. She arrives early to arrange the seating in the session area, greet the students and their families as they arrive, and make sure that all the fiddles are tuned and the children are sitting where they'll be comfortable and best able to play. As she plays along with the kids, she keeps her eyes open to see if anyone needs help; at one point, she leans over one student to help her with the bowing for a few seconds.

Of course, her most important work is getting them to this scenario in the first place, through the regular lessons as well as pieces of advice and other ways to help the students along: drawing an outline of their feet on a piece of cardboard to help them remember the proper stance, for instance, and taking photos of them to use as a reference for posture and positioning of arms.

"Cliodhna is always pushing me to be better – and to want to be better," says 11-year-old Olwen Davis, who's been studying with her for two years. Having started out as a classical violinist, she's had to get used to playing by ear and memory rather than following sheet music, and she finds the sessions challenging but also enjoyable. "Playing at a session gives us a chance to use our skills in real life but in a way that's different than at a recital. It's a lot of fun."

Says Eileen Weir-Kelly, whose four

children, ranging in age from seven to 13, are studying with Field: "She teaches them the techniques, but just as importantly, she teaches them that playing music is something you can enjoy – instead of just being a 'chore' that you do. Our kids really respond to her: They'll be practicing at home, working on a particular phrase and when they get it you'll hear 'I can't wait to tell Cliodhna!'"

Field, even as she coaxes the musicians to do their best, tries to keep the atmosphere fun and casual, just like at any adult session – maybe tell a joke or a little anecdote, or ask somebody what's new. At one point, indicating the various portraits and photos adorning the walls around them, she tells the kids that her picture is in there somewhere: "Can you find me?"

The children turn their heads this way and that, scrutinizing the images. One girl points with her bow to a caricature of a young blonde woman holding several steins of beer à la the iconic St. Pauli Girl logo.

"Oh, thanks!" laughs Field, treating it as a compliment. "But no."

Finally, a few of her students call her attention to a photo: Sure enough, it's Field – somewhat younger then – giving the camera an exuberant thumbs-up. There are chuckles and "Oh, wow!" reactions from the group; elsewhere around the table, a couple of private discussion are taking place.

"I just want them to enjoy being together, to see this as something fun to do," she says.

There are a few more rounds of tunes, and then Field announces it's time to take a break: "Leave your fiddles on the table!" she says.

The students obey, and after they leave, the table is chock full of fiddles and bows, creating an eye-catching array of various hues of brown. The kids stretch their legs, check in with parents, get a drink of water, and let off a little youthful energy.

Gradually, a few – then a few more – drift back to the table, pick up their respective fiddles and bows, and sit down. There's a buzz of conversation, but some of the youngsters are going over a snatch of this tune or that, and a couple of them begin playing a hornpipe together.

Finally, the group is back at full strength, Field calls them to attention; once again, bows are poised on fiddles.

"One! Two! Three!" she calls out, and once again the fiddles sound together.

In another few weeks, the kids and their families will be gearing up for another school year – and another term of classes at the CCÉ Music School as well – and the pace of life will quicken, as it most always does when the days grow shorter and become cooler. But for now, it's an easy-going, warm summer afternoon in a friendly place, and they're filling the room with music.

*Cliodhna Field and her students will appear at the Weymouth Irish Heritage Day on Sept. 24.*



# CURTAIN GOING UP!

## What's Onstage This Fall in Boston: Choices range from old favorites to new experiences.

By R. J. DONOVAN  
SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

### ASSASSINS

**"Assassins"**  
Sept. 15 - Oct. 15,  
Lyric Stage Company

Not all American dreams should come true. In Stephen Sondheim's dark masterpiece musical, nine of the most notorious figures in our nation's history ignite a chain of monumental nightmares. Examining the distorted plans of presidential assassins (both successful and failed) from John Wilkes Booth to John Hinkley Jr., this complex musical shows what happens when the lines between ambition and madness are blurred. [lyricstage.com](http://lyricstage.com)



**"POTUS: or, behind every great dumbass are seven women trying to keep him alive"**

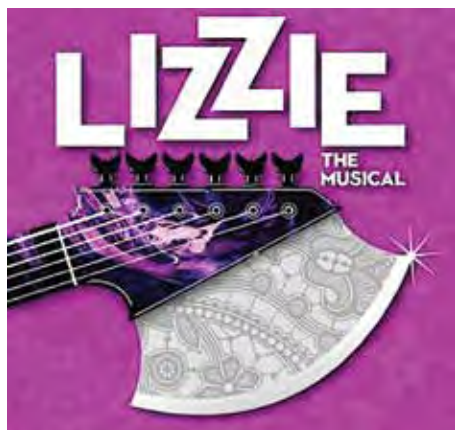
Sept. 15 - Oct. 15,  
SpeakEasy Stage Company

SpeakEasy Stage kicks off its season with the New England Premiere of this riotous comedy where "9 to 5" meets "Veep!" Seven brilliant and beleaguered women in the West Wing's inner circle work to keep things running behind the scenes in (and out of) the Oval Office. They must take increasingly desperate measures to save the country when the president's scandals spark a global crisis. [speakeasystage.com](http://speakeasystage.com).



**"Star Wars: The Story in Music"**  
Sept. 21 - 24, Symphony Hall

Take an intergalactic musical journey with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops! You'll re-live the entire saga of all nine "Star Wars" films in just two hours as narrator Jeremiah Kissel and America's Orchestra bring this epic story and the iconic music of John Williams to life. May the Force transport you to a galaxy far, far away. [bso.org/pops](http://bso.org/pops)



**"Lizzie, The Musical"**

Sept. 22 - Nov. 5, Umbrella Arts Center

Did Lizzie Borden really swing that lethal ax? She was famously acquitted, but the legend — and the question — linger 130 years later. The Fall River story that captivated the world is now revisited as a searing, quasi-operatic rock anthem that finally gives Lizzie her say. Rage, retribution, and betrayal soar in this Drama Desk-nominated explosion defying musical theatre stereotypes. It's totally whacko. [theumbrellaarts.org](http://theumbrellaarts.org)



**"The Full Monty"**

Sept. 26 - Oct. 8,  
North Shore Music Theatre

In this razor-sharp, uninhibited musical based on the hit British film of the same name, six unemployed steelworkers from Buffalo hatch a bold and unclothed plan to make some quick cash with a local strip show. Ultimately, they build new friendships, conquer their fears and overcome self-consciousness to bare it all. [nsmt.org](http://nsmt.org).



**"Misery"**

Oct. 13 - 29, Company Theatre

In this stage version of Stephen King's intense psychological thriller, a famous novelist is rescued from a car crash in the backwoods of Maine by his self-proclaimed No. One fan. He soon comes to realize that his deranged guardian angel has trapped him in

an epic nightmare that's all too real.  
[companytheatre.com](http://companytheatre.com)

**"An Evening with Audra McDonald"**  
Oct. 22, Symphony Hall

Six-time Tony Award-winning Audra McDonald returns to Boston in a one-night-only concert, lending her luminous voice and stage presence to Broadway favorites, standards and so much more. The gracious star of "Ragtime," "Carousel," "Master Class," and "Porgy & Bess" is among the most lavishly awarded performers of our time. [celebrityseries.org](http://celebrityseries.org)



**"Disney's Frozen"**

Oct. 25 - Nov. 12,  
Citizens Bank Opera House

Based on the animated film of the same name, Tony-nominated "Frozen" tells the tale of Princess Elsa, who possesses the magical power to control the ice and snow. When she accidentally traps her kingdom in eternal winter, her unflappable sister, a rugged mountain man, a talking snowman, and a lovable reindeer come to the rescue. So "Let It Go" and join the spectacular journey. [broadwayinboston.com](http://broadwayinboston.com).

**"The Rocky Horror Show"**

Oct. 26 - Nov. 26,  
Central Square Theater

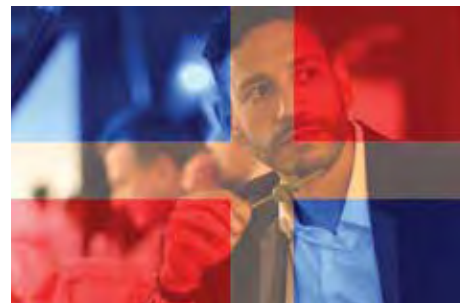
You know the drill. It's a dark and stormy night, and sweethearts Brad and Janet suffer a blowout. (Dammit, Janet!) Without a spare, they enter the eerie mansion of the dangerously charming Dr. Frank-N-Furter who seduces them with his B-movie horror film wonderland, complete with gothic crew. You'll be primed to do the time warp (again!) in this hedonistic, Halloweeny, rock-n-roll promenade. [centralsquaretheater.org](http://centralsquaretheater.org)

**"Celtic Thunder presents Odyssey"**  
Nov. 11, The Chevalier Theatre

Formed in Dublin in 2007, Celtic Thunder is a multi-dimensional musical



and theatrical ensemble celebrated for emotionally powerful performances and state-of-the-art production. The talented gentlemen of Celtic Thunder — Ryan Kelly, Damian McGinty, Neil Byrne, and Emmet Cahill — invite you to join them on a rousing exploration of traditional and contemporary Irish favorites. [chevaliertheatre.com](http://chevaliertheatre.com)



**"The Real James Bond... Was Dominican"**

Nov. 8 - 12, Emerson Paramount Center

Bond, James Bond! What happens when a James Bond-obsessed Dominican boy in Queens finds out the real James Bond was Dominican? Bond creator Ian Fleming drew upon the life and career of a prominent Dominican diplomat, international polo champion, race-car driver, and pilot to develop his classic 007 character. Now, performer Christopher Rivas sets out on an insightful quest to learn everything he can about the man. [artsemerson.org](http://artsemerson.org)



**Immersive Disney Animation Through Dec. 31, Lighthouse Artspace**

Step into an interactive, grand tour of the greatest films of Walt Disney Animation Studios. As you experience the iconic music, artistry and animation of Disney, you'll stand at Pride Rock as Rafiki presents Simba — surrounded by the animal kingdom at sunrise. Go under the sea surrounded by a gazillion bubbles. And take a magic carpet ride with Aladdin and Jasmine. Get ready to explore a whole new world! [lighthouseimmersive.com](http://lighthouseimmersive.com).



# Rockport, Lowell festivals top the agenda

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Highlighting this month's happenings in Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts are two festivals: The Rockport Celtic Festival (September 14-17) and the Lowell Irish Festival (September 24). You can read more about them on page 21.

• Meanwhile, the Burren Backroom series produced by Brian O'Donovan will have a milestone event – albeit a bittersweet one – on Sept. 12 and 13 (with two concerts on each day), as virtuoso accordionist Sharon Shannon comes to town as part of what's being billed as her farewell US tour; she's also playing at City Winery Boston on Sept. 15. Shannon has been a leading innovator for the Irish accordion, bringing it into the realms of Appalachian, country, rock, hip-hop, reggae, African and Portuguese. She has also performed with the RTE Concert Orchestra, Jackson Brown, Willie Nelson, The Chieftains, Christy Moore, and many other luminaries, including Steve Earle, most memorably on his hit song "Galway Girl." Her most recent album, 2020's "The Reckoning," is characteristic of her wide-ranging musical interests and general joie de vivre: Featuring all Shannon originals, the recording includes guest appearances by, among others, Donal Lunney, Jim Murray, Quebecois band La Vent du Nord, Scandinavian trio Dreamer's Circus, and guitarist Justin Adams – with whom she plays the North African-flavored "Unlocked" – and even spotlights Shannon on electric guitar.

In addition to the rescheduled Frankie Gavin-Catherine McHugh concert [see below], this month the Backroom will host Scottish quintet Heron Valley (Abigail Pryde, fiddle, vocals; Keith Morrison, keyboards; Nick Hamilton, banjo, guitar; Alastair MacLean, bagpipes, whistles; Callum Cronin, bass, guitar), on Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. The band plays music of their native Scotland, as well as of Ireland, while also integrating country, bluegrass, and contemporary folk. Much of their 2019 EP, "Erie Storm," was inspired by their US tour – which also included a stop at the Burren. They also have a penchant for high-concept music videos: "Pressed for Time" captured their excursion, by water as well as land, to a gig and some of the performance as well; for "Home," they climbed a steep hill on the west coast of Scotland, with instruments in



The accordionist Sharon Shannon comes to town as part of what's being billed as her farewell US tour. She'll be playing at City Winery Boston on Sept. 15. Sean Smith photo

tow, and played at the top.

Tickets and information at [burren.com/music.html](http://burren.com/music.html).

• After having to cancel their planned American tour earlier this summer, fiddler nonpareil Frankie Gavin and pianist Catherine McHugh will finally make their appearance in Boston this month: Sept. 6 at The Burren [[burren.com/music.html](http://burren.com/music.html)]; Sept. 9 at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston [[irishculture.org](http://irishculture.org)]; and Sept. 14 at the Boston College Gaelic Roots series [[bc.edu/irish](http://bc.edu/irish)]. A co-founder of the iconic band De Dannan, Gavin has been one of the foremost performers of Irish traditional music over the past five decades. He also has shown a great respect for and interest in the Irish/Irish-American styles of James Morrison and Michael Coleman, as well as the different routes Irish traditional music has taken down through time, notably in 1920s America (hence his founding of the Roaring Twenties Irish Orchestra). And his collaborations span all along the musical spectrum: Stéphane Grappelli, Yehudi Menuhin, the Rolling Stones, Elvis Costello. McHugh, like Gavin a Galway native, is a multiple All-Ireland champion who has drawn on some of the foundational Irish pianists like Charlie Lennon and Carl Hession to develop an approach that goes well beyond simply playing rhythm.

• Also at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston will be Derek Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones, on Sept. 22 at 8 p.m. Warfield was co-founder in 1963 of the original Wolfe Tones, who over the next four decades went on to earn

acclaim for their fiery Irish patriotic and traditional songs. That sound lives on, drawing a new generation of listeners as well as older fans, through Warfield – who continues to sing, compose, tell stories, and record – and his bandmates including Damaris Woods (tenor banjo), Andreas Durkin (keyboards, vocals), Cormac McGuinness (guitar, vocals), Wayne Brereton (vocals), and Eddie Kane (guitar, vocals). Warfield – author of "The Irish Songster of the American Civil War" – and the Young Wolfe Tones also frequently provide a historical aspect to their performances, presenting lectures and songs that reflect the Irish experience in the American Revolution and Civil War.

• Harvard Square's Club Passim welcomes the piano-fiddle duo of Neil Pearlman and Kevin Henderson on Sept. 10 at 7 p.m. A native of Maine who lived in the Boston area for a spell, Pearlman's innovative, dynamic piano playing has brought a fresh outlook to Scottish, Cape Breton and other Celtic music accompaniment, adding jazz, Latin, and other modern elements to nudge, push, lead, or gently entwine as necessary. Pearlman, who is part of several ongoing collaborations and directs the Boston Scottish Fiddle Orchestra, recently released his first solo album, "Refractions." Henderson is a leading exemplar of the Shetland fiddle, which incorporates elements of Scottish as well as Scandinavian styles, and a member of bands like the Nordic Fiddlers Bloc, Blazin' Fiddles, and the Boys of the Lough. The pair have recorded an album, "Burden

Lake," comprised mainly of original tunes that are nonetheless strongly tied to tradition.

Another innovator of Celtic fiddle, Boston-area resident Hanneke Cassel, comes to Passim with her band on Sept. 12 at 8 p.m. For more than two decades, Cassel has infused her fiddle music – whether interpreting from Scottish, Cape Breton or other traditions, playing her own material, or covering other contemporary fiddle tunes – with a singular passion as well as technical brilliance, from soulful slow airs to boisterous strathspeys to exuberant reels. Earlier this year, she released her seventh album, "Infinite Brightness," a collection of mainly original pieces that express elements of just about the full spectrum of human experience: birth, death, faith, fellowship, love, endurance, and so on. Cassel will be joined at Passim by fiddler Jenna Moynihan and guitarist-vocalist Keith Murphy.

And then there's Ryan Young, part of the vanguard of pioneering Scottish fiddlers, who'll be at Passim on Sept. 18 at 7 p.m. Young got turned onto fiddling at age 10 after watching Shetland's Aly Bain ("I was inspired by the way he seemed to 'speak' through an instrument," he recalled in an interview. "I was a fairly quiet child and loved the idea that something could speak for you"). An accomplished graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Young infuses his interpretations of Scottish tunes – including some long-neglected ones – with fresh melodic ideas, rhythmic drive and an impressive combination of dynamics and precision. He's had some memorable collaborations over the years – some of them captured on YouTube, fortunately, such as his appearance with Dennis Cahill – and his first album to date, released in 2017, was produced by Grammy winner Jesse Lewis.

Tickets and information for Passim shows at [passim.org](http://passim.org).

• Somebody's Child is the stage name for Dublin indie rocker Cian Godfrey, and of the band he'll be fronting when they perform their first-ever US headline show at The Middle East Upstairs in Cambridge on Sept. 20 at 7 p.m. Godfrey took up music as a five-year-old playing piano in the family apartment when they lived in Paris, but his songwriting reflects more his formative years growing up in Dublin. In interviews, as in his songs,

Godfrey has put forth a less romanticized but, to his mind, more realistic view of Ireland – a place where many of his generation can barely afford to live now. "We Could Start a War," a featured track on the band's recently released debut album, expresses this mix of emotions, as does the accompanying video which, he explained, captures "the juxtaposition between beauty in tradition, and the ugly face of gentrification – of which both are in abundance" in Ireland. Another single, "I Need Ya" – highlighted by a classic '80s-style guitar riff and a throbbing bass line set against Godfrey's vocals – is spare in its lyrics but abundant in emotional vulnerability; this song's video references Ireland's "drift culture," a phrase that necessitates a Google search to fully appreciate.

Tickets and information at [mideastoffers.com/tm-event/somebodys-child](http://mideastoffers.com/tm-event/somebodys-child).

• The Gore Place concert series in Waltham will present a local ensemble, the Moody Street String Band, on Sept. 20 at 7:30 p.m. The group musters fiddle, banjo, guitars, bass, mandolin and accordion for its rendition of Irish, Scottish, English, American, and New England traditional music. Depending on the weather, the show will be in the "Event Tent" or the Carriage House (which is an attraction all by itself).

More at [goreplace.org/whats-on/moody-street-string-band](http://goreplace.org/whats-on/moody-street-string-band).

• Los Angeles septet Flogging Molly will bring their brand of Celtic Punk to Citizens House of Blues Boston on Sept. 20 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Dubliner Dave King formed the band in 1994, marrying his poetic lyrics to hard-edged melodies and rhythms, and drawing on legendary Irish bands like The Dubliners, The Pogues, and Horslips but also with a nod to the likes of Johnny Cash and English punkers The Clash. In addition to King, who plays acoustic guitar, bodhran and banjo, the band includes Bridget Regan (fiddle, whistle, vocals), Dennis Casey (guitar, vocals), Matt Hensley (accordion, concertina), Nathan Maxwell (bass, vocals), Spencer Swain (mandolin, banjo, guitar, vocals), and Mike Alonso (drums, percussion). Last year, saw Flogging Molly put out their seventh studio album, "Anthem."

Tickets, details at [houseofblues.com/boston](http://houseofblues.com/boston).



# Eight Feet Tall: Connecting Music and Dance

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

All well and good when you have an artistic inspiration that seems fascinating in concept and explanation. But can you make it come alive in a way that actually is fascinating?

If you're Jackie O'Riley and Rebecca McGowan, two Boston-area Irish dance performers, choreographers, and teachers, and you have a pair of very willing and able musical allies in Armand Aromin and Dan Accardi, the answer is yes.

Actually, the answer is Eight Feet Tall – the formal name of their collaboration, which has produced live performances and more recently, an album.

For Eight Feet Tall, there is no distinction between music and dance; the former does not simply complement the latter. As sound without a corresponding visual element, O'Riley and McGowan's shoes, Accardi's accordion, and Aromin's fiddle and vocals all occupy the same territory, pull the same levers, and push the same buttons, whether performing traditional Irish instrumentals – reels, jigs, hornpipes – or songs. In that spirit, the collaboration's name is a play on words, the "Eight Feet" referring to the quartet's combined number of pedal extremities, while "Tall" suggests a single, cohesive unit.

"It's really taking a very molecular view," explains McGowan, who like O'Riley favors sean-nós and other older "low-to-the-ground" styles of Irish step dancing focused more on rhythmic patterns than athletic leaps and kicks. "Musicians – a fiddler, an accordionist, a flutist – do more than simply play the music; they think about ornamentation, phrasing, and other subtleties and how to incorporate these in a particular tune.

"Similarly, dancers think about the mixture of sounds and timbre in their steps, and how one step will flow to the next, depending on the texture of whatever piece of music they're dancing to. So, with Eight Feet Tall, we're showing dance as part of the music, where the sound dancers make evokes the music being played."

Adds O'Riley, "Being drawn to this more contained style of dance has inspired us to look inward to its basic elements. We're inviting audiences to do likewise and listen closely – to zoom in aurally, you might say – to appreciate the sounds of dance as a percussive and harmonic component to strings, reeds, and voice, and all the associated sounds of the music: the scuffs, taps, and breaths, the scraping of a bow, the press and draw of the accordion bellows. When you put all that together in one room, you feel an energy, and our hope is that others can experience this, too."

The Eight Feet Tall brand of energy sometimes is a steady, accumulating build, such as on the album's opening track, which starts with the sound of feet as an intro to the hornpipe/hop jig medley, "The Humours of Tullycrine/The Promenade" – the latter in a relentless 9/8 – or the mesmerizing "Tyrone March." On "Maid in the Meadow," with Aromin lilting the melody in unison



**Eight Feet Tall: (L-R) Rebecca McGowan, Jackie O'Riley, Armand Aromin and Dan Accardi.**

*Video capture*

with Accardi's accordion, the quartet deftly transitions from 6/8 to 4/4 time and back again, and you can just sense the collective joy in the room.

Aromin's vocals are out in front on "Katie Cruel," a song with some Scottish ancestry but popular in New England (this version collected from a singer in Newton, Mass., in fact) and a chorus – "If I was where I would be/Then I'd be where I am not/Here I am where I must be/Where I would be, I cannot" – which is awfully tempting to sing quickly. But the quartet takes it at a somewhat slower, more even pace, and the combination of stepping, accordion, and voice makes for a quiet but potent combination.

The album's sleeve notes, meanwhile, display a laudable attention to detail: Much as a fiddler, accordionist, or singer might cite the source of a tune or song, or point to a distinguishing phrase or verse, O'Riley and McGowan offer insights into their selection of steps, listing where appropriate the names of specific tunes and dancers that guided their creative process.

Eight Feet Tall is the latest avenue of deep exploration of dance for the duo, who both have impressive resumé's: O'Riley is an original member of the touring sean-nós dance show Atlantic Steps, runs a non-competitive Irish dance program for children, and was a co-recipient of a 2017 Boston Foundation grant for choreographers. McGowan, co-founder of the contemporary step dance company Rising Step, has appeared at the Kennedy Center, in WGBH's "A Christmas Celtic Sojourn," and at numerous festivals in the Boston and Washington, DC, areas. She has also taught at the Catskills Irish Arts Week, Pinewoods Camp, and CCÉMAD Week, among other places.

In 2019, the two collaborated on "From the Floor," a "visual album" of Irish music and dance comprising six separate but associated videos of the pair dancing in tandem or solo to music. O'Riley describes it as a means "to bring the viewer into the 'small parts' of Irish dance and address how it's

presented" and to convey "the language of sean-nós."

McGowan and O'Riley continued to ponder Irish dance in a granular fashion, with an eye toward arranging a more focused combination between music and dance. In 2021, they obtained support for their project via a Live Arts Boston grant from the Boston Foundation and a Somerville Arts Council Art Assembled Residency (AiR) fellowship. And they found another pillar of support from Aromin and Accardi, former members of the traditional Irish music quartet The Ivy Leaf (Aromin is one-half of the irrepressible duo The Vox Hunters).

"We've known Armand and Dan for years, and they certainly are solid musicians in their own right," says McGowan. "Armand is a dancer as well as a singer and musician, so we felt that would provide some valuable perspective as to what we were trying to do. Also, Dan and Armand have known each other and played music together for a long time, and so they have this strong connection. We felt it would be great to work with another duo that has its own language, just as Rebecca and I do."

Having the grant and fellowship was integral to the collaboration, notes O'Riley, because at the outset there was no clear end-result in mind. "The support enabled us to meet weekly for about a year and gave us the freedom to refine and try out ideas. For us, it was all about the process rather than the product."

Aromin and Accardi also relished the opportunity for a deep contemplation of the connection between music and dance. "I loved being given space – physical, temporal, financial – to focus on the 'what-ifs,'" says Aromin. "Those moments I'd often daydream about while at sessions or in other musical environments where experimenting with particular concepts wouldn't necessarily make sense or be appropriate. What if we meditated on just the one tune? What if I sang a song with percussive dance as an understated groove? What if we played with the timing of a jig and

quoted the reel version in seemingly random measures?"

For Accardi, the most interesting aspect of Eight Feet Tall was the focus on arrangements. "Historically, I'm mostly a 'show up and play your tunes' kind of person, even in the context of a band performance. There are no preconceived notions with Eight Feet Tall: We might start with fiddle and box and feet, in a pretty standard style, but end up with lilting and box-but-only-bass-chords and a totally different relationship between what Jackie and Rebecca are doing with their steps. There's a lot of potential in that fiddle-box-dance combination and it makes the exploration unusual, somehow asymmetrical, and a lot of fun."

Eight Feet Tall made its public debut in June of last year as part of an AIR residency performance, then later that month presented the full piece in a double bill with fiddler Jenna Moynihan in Cambridge. Recording the album – which came out this past spring – was no simple feat, O'Riley and McGowan note: They had to bring in pieces of plywood to provide a dance surface, and it took some experimenting and adjustments to position the microphones so they would capture the dance steps effectively – fortunately, they add, their recording engineer Brad Bensko was up to the task.

The quartet has done several other performances since then and are eyeing more in the months ahead, including a short tour early next year.

Reflecting on Eight Feet Tall, "From the Floor" and other ventures, O'Riley says, "Including dance in any project adds hours and complications, and we haven't quite figured out the challenges that go along with this. Dance really lives in its own sphere. But that's part of what makes it such a fun and rewarding experience, and we're looking forward to coming up with more ideas and concepts that explore the inner workings of dance."

For more on O'Riley and McGowan and their projects, including Eight Feet Tall, see [fromthefloordance.com](http://fromthefloordance.com)



# For Clannad, the End of a Lifetime

## Groundbreaking band comes to Boston's Wilbur Theatre Sept. 22

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Clannad, the Donegal family band that improbably became a worldwide pop music sensation, is calling it quits after more than 50 years, and will bid adieu to Boston on Sept. 22 at 8 p.m. at the Wilbur Theatre [thewilbur.com].

Sadly, Clannad's "In a Lifetime" farewell tour has not been a smooth-running affair. It was originally supposed to take place in Ireland, the UK, and US between March and October of 2020 but got pushed back due to the pandemic. Then last October, guitarist/vocalist Noel Duggan died – six years after his twin brother Pádraig, who also sang and played guitar, mandolin and mandola, had passed away. Ultimately, the tour was split into UK/Ireland and US legs.

So, it will be the Brennan siblings, Moya (harp, vocals), Pól (flute, guitar, whistles, vocals) and Ciarán (double bass, guitar, keyboards, vocals) – Noel and Pádraig were their uncles – fronting the band when the curtain rises at the Wilbur.

Most retrospectives of Clannad focus on their 1980s hits, notably "In a Lifetime" – featuring Moya Brennan's celebrated vocal duet with U2's Bono – "Theme from Harry's Game" and "Newgrange," and their lush, reverb-accentuated, synthesizer-boosted sound often regarded as a prototype of "new age" music. The now-ubiquitous "Celtic" tag also became associated with them in some quarters, which made for pretty lively discussions among pundits and listeners.

Nomenclature aside, by the end of the 1990s, Clannad had become an international success, with record sales of more than 15 million, film and TV soundtracks, and several awards, including a Grammy.

But the 1970s Clannad was a significantly different creature. To be sure, the rock, jazz, and other modern influences were there, but their sound was predominantly acoustic and they played a far more traditional-oriented repertoire – many of their songs in Gaelic – with Moya Brennan's captivating lead vocals and Irish harp in a very prominent role. Their showstopper was an extended version of "Níl Se'n



Clannad in the 1980s.

Lá," with each member taking a solo improvisation, including Pól on flute and Ciarán on double bass; among their other mainstays were "Siúil a Rúin," "Two Sisters" and "Down by the Salley Gardens," and instrumentals like "Eleanor Plunkett" and "Brian Boru's March." Even in the early years, though, Clannad showed a predilection for going outside the traditional realm, what with a haunting cover of Bonnie Dobson's "Morning Dew" and Pádraig and Pól's sprightly pop composition "Liza" – surely one of the earliest examples of Gaelic folk rock.

Yet in a 2011 interview with the Boston Irish Reporter, Moya noted that the band had its share of detractors at the outset. She, her brothers and uncles had been tremendously inspired as teens by listening to pirate radio stations – which they were able to access because they lived on the coast in Gweedore – and incorporated some of the styles and

ideas they heard, including, for example, the harmony singing of the Beach Boys and The Mamas and The Papas. This did not go over particularly well at home.

"When we first began playing, we were shunned," Moya recalled. "At that time, Gaelic songs were just never done with instruments – except the harp – or with harmony voices; it was sacrilegious. That's why we headed off to Europe a lot at the beginning, because they didn't care what language we sang in. We were determined to stick to our guns. When you're true to something, you do it for years because you believe in it, if you're honest."

So the success in 1982 of "Theme from Harry's Game" – written for the titular British TV series – was all the more sweeter: It was the first, and is still the only, British hit single (reaching No. 5 in the charts) to be sung entirely in Irish; several years later, "Harry's Game" was used in a Volkswagen commercial

in the US, where by then Clannad also had made a strong impression.

"Whatever we did, whether it was with traditional music or our own material, it all felt natural to us, it wasn't a stretch," Moya told the Reporter. "We wanted to enhance the music, and we did it with respect. We felt our audience would understand and appreciate that."

Of course, the collaboration with Bono on "In a Lifetime" was a big factor in Clannad's rise to popularity. As Moya recalled, they ran into him at a pub while taking a break from a recording session and were pleasantly surprised to learn that he was one of their biggest fans. This led to his appearance on the recording, and eventually to the making of the "In a Lifetime" video in Gweedore (Bono arrived for the filming in a hearse he had recently bought, Moya noted, and which was used in the video).

Clannad underwent a series of changes beginning in 1990 when Pól left to work with Peter Gabriel and from the late '90s through much of the first decade of the 21st century, the remaining members pursued individual projects as well (although they did reunite for a special surprise concert to honor their parents, Leo and Máire). Pól returned in 2011, in time for the band to record its last studio album, "Nádúr" (2013), and do an international tour that finished up about two years before Pádraig's death; that same year, Moya was diagnosed with a progressive lung disease.

Yet in 2020, they were ready to hit the road once again, in conjunction with the release of their retrospective album "In a Lifetime," with two new tracks including their cover of Sandy Denny's "Who Knows (Where the Time Goes)" – their first new recordings since Pádraig's death. In February of this year, Clannad finally gave its last concert on Irish ground with a show in Dublin, and on Oct. 9 they'll ring down the final curtain in Seattle.

Speaking with RTÉ Guide prior to the Dublin gig, Moya seemed at peace about the long goodbye: "Two of the band have passed away and we want to go out with a bang, rather than just dangle along for a few more years. It's bittersweet but we're ready for it. It's nice to finally put Clannad to bed."

## Checking in for a look at Dropkick Murphy's farm

Newspapers called him the "the man with the cast-iron toes"... "the best drop-kicker in wrestling"... and "one of the mat game's biggest box office attractions," but Dr. John "Dropkick" Murphy's legacy extends far beyond the wrestling ring.

Decades before the Betty Ford Center became a household name – and long before the band the Dropkick Murphys

named themselves in his honor – the phrase "Going to Dropkick's" meant a person struggling with addiction needed help and would soon get some.

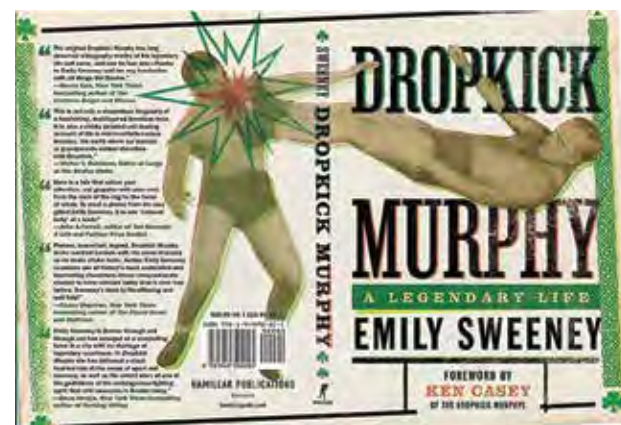
This book chronicles for the first time the fascinating life of a professional wrestler who put himself through medical school during the Great Depression and then opened Bellows Farm, a one-of-a-kind

institution that served as both a facility where elite athletes could train as well as a secluded place where down-on-their-luck alcoholics could go to discreetly sober up.

The celebrities who traveled to Dropkick Murphy's to get help were many, and numerous professional athletes would go there to focus on their training and work out in his state-of-the-art gymnasium.

Bellows Farm featured an unrivaled and revolving cast of colorful characters who brought it to life.

Drawing on years of research and interviews, the book's author, Emily Sweeney, a staff reporter at the Boston Globe and a native of Dorchester, goes behind the scenes to reveal the untold story of Murphy's life, his farm, and the singular events that unfolded there.





# Charitable Irish Society awards 2023 Silver Key Awards to three

John Philip Foley, Leslie MacWeeney, and Denis Moynihan, each of whom has been instrumental in assisting immigrants in a variety of ways, thereby exemplifying the Charitable Irish Society's motto - "With Good Will Doing Service." - will be honored with the Society's Silver Key Award at

the Society's 22nd annual reception at Boston's Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel on Tues., Sept. 19.

In memory of his Irish immigrant grandmother, who arrived in the United States with 25 cents in her pocket, John Foley's legal practice is focused on immigration law. He has received



John Philip Foley



Denis Moynihan



Leslie MacWeeney

numerous compliments and awards for his wide-ranging knowledge of this very technical area of law that affects so many people who are trying to establish themselves and their families in a new country and for his sensitivity to the many concerns and fears of his clients. He has been an active volunteer and Board member of the Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton and other organizations.

Leslie MacWeeney is a Dublin-born artist and illustrator who came to the Boston area over 50 years ago. Her all-volunteer program, Living Art, is dedicated to building community through visual art. She is passionate about using art to enable students to express themselves visually and to develop self-confidence. Most notable is a program in which police officers, fire fighters, veterans, EMT's, and other emergency workers pose for portraits painted by young people with whom they build bonds, and initiate conversations about health, civics, and public safety. This is truly a violence

prevention program.

Denis Moynihan and his late wife Teresa came to Boston from County Cork in 1971. Denis has been a long-time faithful volunteer, most notably with the Irish Pastoral Centre where he has been helping Irish immigrants in Massachusetts since 1996. In addition, Denis held citizenship workshops at St. Mark's parish in the 1980s, has been Santa for the IPC's mother and toddler groups, and has served as regional coordinator for Premium Sports.

The Charitable Irish Society was established in 1737 to assist Irish immigrants. It has been honoring individuals who have been extraordinarily helpful to new immigrants since 1997. All of the funds raised at this reception will be used by the Society to assist immigrants from Ireland and other countries in need of emergency financial support.

For more information and to register for this event, go to [charitableirishsociety.org](http://charitableirishsociety.org) or contact Sandra Moody, Keeper of the Silver Key, 617-304-1076.

For more information see Page 3.



From left, Mary Sugrue, CEO, Irish American Partnership, Leona Maguire, Mary Harrahill, Chairperson Board of Management at Dunsany National School, Suzie Cusack, a junior golfer at Dromoland and student at Colaiste Mhuire in Ennis.

## LPGA champion Maguire hails IAP gifts to 4 primary schools

The two-time LPGA tour winner Leona Maguire joined with leaders of the Irish American Partnership to announce gifts totaling \$25,000 to four primary schools in Ireland. The cash grants were presented recently to the National School in Co. Meath, Feakle National School, Parteen National School, and Fanore National School, all in Co. Clare.

Said Maguire: "Education is huge in my family, and I really value working with the Irish American Partnership to give back to schools and students. Their impact at the grassroots level is outstanding. Together, we want to make sure that every child has the resources they need to learn and grow. By investing in education, we are really investing in the future of Ireland - our young people."

Added Irish American Partnership Chief Executive Mary Sugrue: "To us, Leona's formidable success on the golf course and her commitment to education are equally inspiring, particularly for the young women and aspiring golfers across the island. We are so proud to work with her again this year."

Maguire has championed the charity's mission of investing in Ireland's future, largely by educational initiatives, scholarships, and the Partnership's hallmark O'Neill School Grants program, through

which 35 schools have received \$250,000 in funding so far in 2023.

...

Leona Maguire, a two-time winner on the LPGA tour - and the first woman player from Ireland to win on that major circuit - entered the professional game in 2018 off the back of a record-breaking collegiate career at Duke University. The proud Irishwoman has been a serial winner ever since she took up the sport in Co. Cavan, but it was her decision to move to America, inspired by her life-long ambition to play on the LPGA Tour, that catapulted her into the big leagues.


As an amateur, she was nothing short of sensational. A three-time Curtis Cup player with Great Britain and Ireland, she is a two-time Olympian representing Ireland in the 2016 Rio Olympics and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In 2017 she captured the Ladies British Amateur Championship title. She

sat atop of the world amateur golf ranking for an incredible 135 weeks during her career.

In February 2022, won her debut LPGA title at the Drive On Championship. She recorded her second victory this past June 2023 at the Meijer Classic, shooting a final day 64 to win by two strokes.

### Remembering the Fenians:

### Frank and Mary Byrne



#### INVINCIBLE FENIANS

**WHEN: Saturday, September 30th at 1pm**  
**WHERE: Old Saint Mary's Cemetery**  
**Pawtucket, Rhode Island**

**GUEST SPEAKER: Aidan Lambert, Invincibles**  
**Reinterment Campaign, Dublin**

**ORATION: Sean Whelan, Chairman, National Graves**  
**Association, Dublin**

**In attendance: Descendants of the Byrnes**

*Sponsored by The Fenian Memorial Committee of America*

The Invincible Fenians Frank and Mary Byrne were part of the Irish Land League and followers of Charles Stewart Parnell before becoming avid Fenians. They were eventually arrested and released, under suspicion of helping to plan the Phoenix Park assassinations of the British Chief Secretary for Ireland and his assistant, they fled to France and Ireland, respectively, and then to America, dying in exile in Rhode Island after living in NY. Frank was an Ancient Order of Hibernians member in Rhode Island.





# CELEBRATING 300 YEARS OF THE IRISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

**SEPTEMBER 19TH - 24TH, 2023**

Exactly 300 years ago, in 1723, John Owen O'Sullivan of the Clan O'Sullivan Beare immigrated to Berwick, Maine. His sons would contribute greatly to the State of Massachusetts. All four fought in the Revolutionary War. One, James, became Governor of Massachusetts, while his brother John became Governor of New Hampshire. Special events organized by the Boston Beara Society and Beara Tourism in cooperation with Cork and Kerry County Councils will commemorate this unique anniversary, coinciding with Maura Healey's term as Governor of Massachusetts. Maura's ancestors came from the same corner of Ireland as John Owen O'Sullivan.

## ITINERARY

### **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 - 6:00 PM**

**Meet & Greet Dinner Reception** at MJ O'Connor's in Boston Park Plaza Hotel | **Open to the Public**

**Tickets \$70 pp available via clicking on the [Stripe link](#).**

Vice Consul General in Boston, Paul Rooney, will welcome the Mayors from Cork and Kerry, delegates from Cork and Kerry County Councils, and other special guests.

### **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 - MORNING EXACT TIME TBA**

**Boston City Hall Reception** | **Limited availability**

City Council President, Ed Flynn and the Boston City Council have officially invited representatives of Cork and Kerry County Councils and community representatives from Ireland to a reception at Boston City Hall.

### **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 - MORNING EXACT TIME TBA**

**Massachusetts State House Reception** | **Limited availability**

A reception will be held at the Massachusetts State House, for representatives of Cork Co and Kerry Co Councils as well as community representative from Ireland.

### **Friday, September 22 - 8:00 AM**

**Berwick Historical Society & Master John Sullivan's School House\*** | **Limited availability/Lunch provided.**

Learn about the remarkable family of Master John Sullivan and his wife Margery Brown Sullivan who settled on Pine Hill in today's Berwick, Maine.

### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**

**11:30 AM - USS Constitution Museum & Ship** | **Limited availability/Lunch provided**

Special Guest, Kelly Sullivan Loughren, granddaughter of Albert Leo Sullivan, youngest of the five Sullivan brothers who lost their lives together aboard USS Juneau during World War II; for whom the USS The Sullivans (DDG 6) warship is named.

**7:00 PM - Midnight - Social Gathering at Irish Social Club of Boston** | **Open to the Public**

Club President, Richie Gormley and The Boston Beara Society and the Beara Tourism proudly present a Celebration of 300 years of Irish contributions to the state of Massachusetts. Entertainment by Tommy Byrne and Jerry Bailey and Special Guests include Kelly Sullivan, sponsor of the USS the Sullivans and Councilor Caroline Cronin for Cork Country Council.

**Donation: \$20pp at the door and proceeds will be donated to the West Roxbury VFW Post 2902**

### **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24**

**11:00 AM - Irish Pastoral Center Sunday Morning Gathering** | **Open to the Public**

Come see the new facility at Adams Corner, meet their dedicated staff that have carried on their mission since its founding in 1987, preserving Irish heritage and serving Boston's immigrant community. Coffee, tea, donuts provided.

**1:00 PM - South Shore Irish Heritage Trail\*** | **Limited availability**

Guide Robert Chessia, President, Scituate Historical Society will provide an insightful tour of the historical Irish town of Scituate, home of the Maritime & Irish Mossing Museum and the Easter Rising Memorial. Time will be allotted for lunch.

**\*Bus leaves for Berwick and for Scituate, from Adams Village, Dorchester**

For more information e-mail: Mike Dwyer - [mikedwyerinc@comcast.net](mailto:mikedwyerinc@comcast.net)





# Rockport, Lowell Festivals offer different takes on Celtic music

**BY SEAN SMITH**  
**BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR**  
Two annual festivals taking place this month – each within an hour’s drive from Greater Boston – will offer contrasting presentations of Irish/Celtic music. The Rockport Celtic Festival at the

Shalin-Liu Performance Center (Sept. 14-17) is geared toward exploring the similarities as well as the differences between music traditions, Irish and otherwise, that have become associated with “Celtic,” while also paying tribute to the maritime history of Rockport and

Massachusetts’s North Shore. The Lowell Irish Festival (Sept. 23), held on the grounds of the Lowell Memorial Auditorium, has more of a family-fair vibe to it, with several acts in the crowd-friendly pub/ceili vein on the festival’s three stages (outdoors and

indoors) as well as craft tents, kid-friendly activities, and the like. All of which underscores the point that Greater Boston’s reputation as a wellspring for diverse tastes in Irish/Celtic music is as strong as ever.

## ROCKPORT

The festival, now in its fourth year, has joined the impressive suite of annual events bearing the imprint of WGBH broadcaster Brian O’Donovan, whose long-running “A Celtic Sojourn” radio show formed the basis for the Christmas and St. Patrick’s Day “Celtic Sojourn” stage productions. O’Donovan has long had a fascination with delving into the “roots and branches” of Celtic music, and the connections that bind songs, tunes, and styles associated with the Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton, English, and American folk traditions, as well as those of maritime Canada, Quebec, France (Breton), Spain (Galicia), even Scandinavia. Like its forbears, the Rockport Celtic Festival – now a joint effort by O’Donovan and his co-artistic director, Scottish harpist/vocalist Maeve Gilchrist – offers audiences an invitation to listen with discerning ears and open minds, all the while enjoying music, song, dance, and storytelling from top-rank performers. The theme of this year’s festival centers on music associated with the French diaspora of Eastern Canada. Among the featured performers will be Quebecois trio Genticorum; Newfoundland-born singer and guitarist Matthew Byrne; Cape Breton fiddle-piano duo Kimberley Fraser and Troy MacGillivray – all of whom will be part of the festival’s official opening night concert on Sept. 15, along with Irish singer Éilís Kennedy and the duo of Allison de Groot



Newfoundland singer/guitarist Matthew Byrne will be among the performers at this month’s Rockport Celtic Festival.

and Tatiana Hargreaves, who bring a 21st-century sensibility to old-time American banjo and fiddle music. But that’s only one night, and only part of the roster. Others who’ll be

showing up at Rockport include multi-instrumentalist Seamus Egan – a long-time mainstay of “Christmas Celtic Sojourn”; Swedish fiddler Lena Jonsson, who brings her native music tradition

into Americana/old-timey, bluegrass, rock, pop, and jazz; Shetland fiddler Kevin Henderson (Nordic Fiddlers Bloc, Boys of the Lough, Fiddlers’ Bid); acclaimed young fingerstyle guitarist Yasmin Williams; New York City-based guitarist, composer, and improviser Kyle Sanna, who has worked with the likes of Martin Hayes, Seamus Egan, Yo-Yo Ma, Béla Fleck, and Palaver Strings. There’ll also be a contingent of Boston and New England performers, such as guitarist Conor Hearn – he’ll be performing with violinist Maura Shawn Scanlan as the duo Rakish at the Sept. 14 “festival club,” in addition to other collaborations; Scottish/Cape Breton-style fiddler Katie McNally, and legendary maritime singer David Coffin. The festival’s other event include a post-opening night concert ceiliadh (yes, there’ll be dancing) hosted by McNally, Henderson, and Hearn; a salon session with Byrne, Kennedy, and de Groot/Hargreaves hosted by Gilchrist; an hour of poetry, prose and music with O’Donovan, Gilchrist, and several performers; and the climactic “Letters from the Sea” – a selection of songs written by Kennedy based on letters she found in the New Bedford Whaling Museum, which served as the basis for her “So Ends This Day” album. The festival website is [rockportmusic.org/rockport-celtic-festival](http://rockportmusic.org/rockport-celtic-festival).

## LOWELL

Organizers hope to establish the festival among other major cultural events that now take place during the year in the Mill City, including the Lowell Folk Festival, Southeast Asian Water Festival, and Winterfest. It’s a mid-day to late-night affair, kicking off at noon and going until 10 p.m. (more or less). This year’s acts include singer-songwriter Shelagh O’Brien, who regularly appears locally at Mr. Dooley’s, The Dubliner, and The Black Rose, among other places, putting forth pub favorites (“Fields of Athenry,” “Sean South from Garryowen”) along with contemporary covers (“500 Miles,” “Take Me Home Country Roads” “I Will Wait”) all with the proper dollop of drama and dash; The Joshua Tree, who pride themselves on evoking the magic and majesty of U2 while maintaining artistic integrity; Irish Whispa, a quartet drawing inspiration from The Dubliners, Wolfetones, Dublin City Ramblers, and others, sometimes branching into popular folk and country material; Connecticut-based duo Rogue



March, who focus on Irish rebel songs and maritime ballads; Tipperary native Tony Gahan, a singer-songwriter from the Worcester area who cites Shane McGowan, Christy Moore, Paul Brady, and the Clancy Brothers as among his influences; and local trio Erin Og, who are equally at home with ballad-band classics as well as up-tempo instrumentals. The afternoon will also feature performances by the Heavey Quinn Academy of Irish Dance of Chelmsford, now well into its fourth decade, and athletically inspired family fun and recreation from “Knucklebones.” Also well worth noting: Festival visitors can browse an exhibit in the auditorium’s Hall of Flags, “When the Irish Settled in Lowell,” with historic photos, artifacts, and documents related to the city’s Irish community, and how it overcame poverty and adversity to take a major role in the political, religious, and social activities of Lowell. Go to [lowellirishfestival.com](http://lowellirishfestival.com).



# Discover the music and magic of Cillian Murphy's Cork

Cillian Murphy, star of the hit movie *Oppenheimer*, proudly hails from Cork and co-founded the city's *Sounds from a Safe Harbour* music festival.

All eyes currently are on Cillian Murphy's powerful portrayal of the "father of the atomic bomb" in the recently released movie *Oppenheimer*.

The much-lauded actor, who now lives in Dublin, is originally from Cork and, as well as being hugely successful in the drama arena, is also a talented and passionate musician. In fact, as a teenager he had a band that was offered a record deal but when things didn't work out he turned his attention to acting.

However, Murphy didn't leave his love of music behind and went on to co-found the *Sounds from a Safe Harbour* biennial festival of music, dance, art, theatre and conversation, which takes place in Cork city 7-10 September.

The festival has a particular focus on new works, collaborations and shared experiences. Among the artists performing this year are Chicago band Wilco, Bonny Light Horsemen performing with the RTE orchestra and Crash Ensemble, Ireland's leading new music ensemble who play adventurous, ground-breaking, contemporary music.

It's one more reason to visit County Cork which already has plenty to recommend it.

Cork city is full of attitude and famously considers itself to be the real capital of Ireland. A visit there should take in historic Cork City Gaol and Elizabeth Fort where the turbulent history of the city will be revealed.

Foodies should not miss the English Market, a delicious den of traditional and exotic food specialities. Pair it with a visit to the Franciscan Well Brewery to taste craft lager, ale, stout and wheat beers, as well as various tipples from micro-breweries all round the world.



Above, the National Monument in Cork City; at right the Cork City Gaol; below, a city scene. *Tourism Ireland photos*

Cork Jazz Festival (26-30 October) presents a stellar line-up of top musicians while visitors to the city also have the chance to make their own music by ringing the Shandon bells at St Anne's cathedral.

Beyond the city, County Cork offers stunning scenery, picturesque towns and fascinating heritage attractions. In Cobh you can discover strong connections to Titanic, while seventeenth-century Bantry House and garden overlooking Bantry Bay is a delight to explore.

- ireland.com story, photos





# Feast on award-winning food on the island of Ireland

The island of Ireland has made a name for itself as a world-class foodie destination and there are lots of great ways to discover its culinary charms.

With award-winning restaurants and gastro-pubs, fabulous food markets and tours, and artisan producers around every corner, the island of Ireland should be on every epicure's must-visit list.

**The North:** Northern Ireland's food scene has recently been included in Lonely Planet's *Gourmet Trails Europe* as one of the 40 best in Europe. The guide highlights St. George's Market in Belfast where local specialities abound and also calls out The Sunflower, one of many pubs serving local craft beers.

A great way to get the flavour of the city is on the multi-award-winning Belfast Food Tour, which visits top food and drink spots.

Beyond Belfast there is much more to savour with amazing artisanal produce including traditional bread, wild Irish seafood and a range of farm fresh produce. A trip to the Ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle is a chance to sample the legendary yellow man honeycomb and local dulce (seaweed).

**The South:** County Cork claims to be the culinary capital of Ireland and it has much to boast about including 13 Michelin rated restaurants. The English Market in Cork city is regarded as one of the best in Europe and is a treasure trove of fine food, while Ballymaloe



**Ballymaloe Cookery School in Cork City**  
Cookery School is renowned for its excellent courses. There are food tours to be enjoyed right across the south from the Cork Tasting Trail to Taste Wexford, and Kenmare Foodie Tours in County Kerry. In September, Waterford Harvest Festival showcases the best food from the region including the speciality bread called blaa.

**The East:** Dublin is a hot spot for great restaurants, one of which was recently voted the number six steakhouse in the world. FX Buckley serves steak from Irish traditional heritage breeds, dry-aged for 28 days in state-of-the-art meat lockers.

A great way to sample a range of top-class Irish food is on a Delicious Dublin tour while elsewhere in Ireland's Ancient East there are many opportunities to taste local fare including on a Slane Food Circle tour which visits award-winning artisan producers in the Boyne Valley.

**The West:** The west could be considered the hub of slow food on the island, and this is celebrated in the Burren Slow Food Festival, which advocates sustainable food production and tradition. Other foodie highlights in the region include the famous Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival, described as a gourmet extravaganza.

All along the Wild Atlantic Way, the freshest seafood can be enjoyed and there is even the chance to catch and cook your own fish. And for those who enjoy a spot of foraging, an Irish Seaweed Safari along a stunning west coast beach ticks all the boxes.

[ireland.com](http://ireland.com)



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A couple is seen from behind, embracing on a grassy hill. They are looking out over a large body of water, likely a bay or fjord, with a small town visible on the far shore. A vibrant rainbow arches over the town. The sky is filled with large, white clouds, and the overall atmosphere is romantic and scenic.

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