

## **CHERISH THE LADIES**

### ***CELEBRATING 32 YEARS OF MUSIC MAKING***

“It is simply impossible to imagine an audience that wouldn’t enjoy what they do,” says the *Boston Globe* speaking of Cherish the Ladies, the long-running, Grammy-nominated, Irish-American super group that formed in New York City in 1985 to celebrate the rise of extraordinary women in what had been a male-dominated Irish music scene. Over the past three decades, they have toured the world, played the White House and the Olympics and recorded 17 critically acclaimed albums including their Emmy winning special, “*An Irish Homecoming*,” which was broadcast on PBS.

Under the leadership of All-Ireland flute and whistle champion Joanie Madden, named by The Irish Voice Newspaper as one of the Top 25 most influential Irish Americans of the past quarter century, these ladies create an evening that includes a spectacular blend of virtuoso instrumental talents, beautiful vocals, captivating arrangements, and stunning step dancing. Their continued success as one of the top Celtic groups in the world is due to the ensemble's ability to take the best of Irish traditional music and dance and put it forth in an immensely entertaining show.

The *New York Times* calls their music “passionate, tender, and rambunctious,” and the *Washington Post* praises their “astonishing array of virtuosity.” They’ve won recognition as the BBC’s Best Musical Group of the Year and named Top North American Celtic Group at the Irish Music Awards and not to mention having a street named after them in the Bronx! They’ve collaborated with such musicians as The Boston Pops, The Clancy Brothers, the Chieftains, Vince Gill, Nanci Griffith, Pete Seeger, Don Henley, Arlo Guthrie and Maura O’Connell as well as being the featured soloist with over 280 nights of symphony orchestras.

The level of artistic, historic, and purely enticing entertainment is unlike any in its genre. As their reputation and admiration from both fans and critics alike continues to grow, Cherish The Ladies blazes forward into another decade of music making.

**JOANIE MADDEN** Born in New York of Irish parents and raised in a musical household, her mother hails from Miltown Malbay, County Clare and her father Joe, an All-Ireland Champion accordion player was a native of Portumna, County Galway. At a very early age, Joanie was exposed to the finest Irish traditional music listening to her father and his friends play music at family gatherings and social events. She began taking lessons from legendary flutist and National Heritage Award winner Jack Coen, and within a few short years, she had achieved great success winning the world championship in Irish music on both the concert flute and tin whistle. During that time, Joanie also became the first American to win the coveted Senior All-Ireland Championship on the whistle.

Madden has sold over 500,000 solo albums and has performed on over 200 recordings, including three Grammy-winning albums running the gamut from Pete Seeger and Sinead O'Connor to the Boston Pops. Throughout her musical career, she has amassed a plethora of awards and citations. Her merits include being the youngest member inducted into both the Irish-American Musicians Hall of Fame and the Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Hall of Fame, she was chosen for the Wild Geese award, where she joined an impressive list of previous honorees, including: Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt, Tony award winning playwright Brian Friel, Nobel prize laureate Seamus Heaney and Irish dance sensation, Michael Flatley. Irish America Magazine selected her twice as one of the Top 100 Irish-Americans in the United States and she was also named Traditional Musician of the Year by the Irish Voice newspaper, all for her contributions to promoting and preserving Irish culture in the United States. In 2010, Joanie was forever immortalized on the streets of her native Bronx when a street was named after her on the Grand Concourse: "Joanie Madden and Cherish the Ladies". In 2011, she was bestowed one of the nation's highest awards as she was chosen for the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, joining an illustrious list of distinguished American citizens, including six United States Presidents as well as Ambassadors, Senators, Congressmen and Supreme Court Justices, all singled out for their exemplary service to the United States. In 2012, she was a recipient of the esteemed USA Artist Fellowship grant, singled out as one of the most innovative and influential artists in America, becoming the first Irish traditional musician to do so. In 2013 she won a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Irish Music Awards and also named Grand Marshal of the Yonkers parade in New York. 2015, Joanie was named Clare Person of the Year by the County Clare Association in New York and also the recipient of the Turlough O'Carolan Award for her musical legacy. In 2016, Irish America Magazine named Joanie as one of the Top 50 Most Powerful Irish Women in the world.

**MARY COOGAN** was born in New York and raised in a musical household. She is a founding member of Cherish the Ladies. Her mother came from Castlerea in County Roscommon and her father Jim was a great accordion player whose parents emigrated from County Waterford. Her father passed down his love of Irish music to Mary and she became a self-taught guitar, mandolin and bouzouki player. In addition to her outstanding musical talents, Mary also holds her masters degree in education and was named in Who's Who among American Teachers. She has a number of recordings including a beautiful solo album entitled; "Christmas" and also one with her father called "Passing Time", but her close ties to children pushed her to make a wonderful collection of music with her great friend Kathy Ludlowe for our young fans entitled, "The Big Ship Sails." She continues to teach music to children in New York and is a highly sought-after accompanist. Acoustic Guitar Magazine named Mary one of the top four Celtic guitarists in Celtic music.

**MIRELLA MURRAY** grew up in Claddaghduff on the north west coast of Connemara in County Galway. Her father John Joe, a notable sean nós dancer, came from Inishark Island and had a deep understanding and love for traditional music. Mirella studied the piano accordion with Mary Finn and it was at music classes that she met up with fiddler Liz Kane from Letterfrack. Mirella won the accordion All-Ireland championship and duet All-Ireland championship with Liz Kane.

Mirella teamed up with the great fiddle player Tola Custy from Co. Clare and they recorded, "Three Sunsets", which was voted one of the top five albums of the year by The Irish Times Newspaper. Mirella performed at the International Women's Day Festival in Moscow; was featured in the Galway Arts Festival

and toured Austria, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Spain and France. She was a featured soloist in the off Broadway production of the late Johnny Cunningham's theatrical production, "Peter & Wendy", an adaptation of J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan" which garnished two OBIE Awards.

Mirella also has an incredible flair for teaching, and it is a credit to her musicianship that twenty-two of her pupils have gained All-Ireland titles. She has accumulated a vast store of tunes from her travels, and musicians such as Sharon Shannon, Lunasa and the Bumblebees credit her as a source for many uncommon melodies.

**KATHLEEN BOYLE** from Glasgow, Scotland comes from a family steeped in the traditional music of Donegal. Her father Hughie is a talented musician and handed down his love of music to her. Kathleen is a talented pianist and accordion player and has won All-Scotland and All-Britain titles on both instruments.

In 1999, Kathleen made history as the first graduate gaining a degree in traditional music from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. She is in great demand as a teacher and lecturer on both accordion and piano at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music and The Irish Academy of World Music in Limerick University.

She has performed at Holyrood Palace for His Royal Highness Prince Charles and for Irish President Mary McAleese; Kathleen's travels with Cherish the Ladies and Dochas have taken her around the world with tours of the UK, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Austria, Germany, Sweden, America, Canada and China. Dochas, were voted best new comers at the 2004 Scots Traditional Music Awards and nominated as best folk band in 2006. Kathleen's first solo album "An Cailin Rua" or "The Red Haired Girl" was released to rave reviews in 2008. Her latest recording, "Back to Donegal", is an album she recorded with her father and family members.

**NOLLAIG CASEY** is one of Ireland's most gifted musicians, with her own unique way of playing traditional Irish music on the fiddle and has such a distinctive sound that it would be impossible to mistake it for that of anyone else. This "sound" is so attractive to other musicians that there exists hardly any major Irish artist of the last thirty years with whom she has not worked – and many international artists have been equally entranced.

A graduate from University College Cork with a Bachelors in Music Degree at the exceptionally early age of nineteen, she embarked upon a professional career first joining the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra where she remained for three years until she joined the ground breaking Irish band, Planxty.

In addition to her work with Cherish the Ladies, Nollaig has recorded and worked with Enya, Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor, Nanci Griffith, Ricky Skaggs, Rod Stewart, Dónal Lunny, Mary Black, Tommy Makem and Liam Clancy, Carlos Nuñez, Jim Rooney, Andy Irvine, Moving Hearts, The Indigo Girls, Spandau Ballet, Christy Moore, Liam O'Flynn, Dan ar Bras, Sharon Shannon, Maura O'Connell, Dick Gaughan, Paddy Keenan, Máirtín O'Connor. She can also be frequently found performing with her husband, legendary guitarist Arty McGlynn and along with her sisters, Máire and Mairéad as the Casey Sisters.

Nollaig has toured the globe with a wide variety of artists in Ireland, the UK., France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Libya, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Japan, the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand.

**DON STIFFE** is one of the most powerful and unique singer/songwriters to emerge on the Irish Folk Scene in the past decade. He hails from Galway City and the clarity and richness of his voice and the emotion with which he delivers his songs, has been compared with the best ballad singers that Ireland has ever produced. Don's award winning debut solo album "Start of a Dream" was released in 2006 to critical acclaim and his version of Richard Thompsons classic song, "Dimming of the Day" won vocal cut of the year from the 2010 Live Ireland awards. His passionate singing and majestic voice guarantees a most impressive performance

in front of a live audience as those who have seen him perform in Ireland, Europe and the USA can attest to. 2011 was a year to remember for Don, as he was one of the finalists in one of Ireland most watched TV programs, The All Ireland Talent Show. His continued popularity and support from viewers provided him with many weeks of performing to live audiences of up to 800,000 tuning in weekly. Irish American super group; Cherish The Ladies invited Don to join them on their summer tour of Ireland and Scotland and also further touring consisting of 18 States in America as part of their Christmas Tour. The band's leader Joanie Madden introduces Stiffe as, "One of the greatest singers Ireland has ever produced". In December 2011 Don released his second album "Lifes Journey" and one of Don's own songs from that album, Somebody Special, was recently awarded Song of the Year from the Live Ireland Awards. Noted artists; Sean Keane, Cherish the Ladies, Kate Purcell and Matt Keane, have also showed their respect for Don's prowess as a songwriter and have covered his self-penned songs.

## **DANCERS**

**JASON OREMUS** has been heavily involved in Irish dancing and the dance industry his entire life. Originally from Sydney, Australia, he won 5 consecutive State and National Solo Irish dancing titles from 1999-2003. Jason performed in the Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony alongside Tap Dogs in 2000 at just 15 years of age.

In early 2004, Jason joined the international dance phenomenon "Riverdance". After a short period of time, he was invited to take over as the lead and to star as the principle male dancer. His travels as the principal dancer took him all around the globe where he performed to standing only crowds in over 30 countries. Jason has recently been developing a new concept of Irish dance that attempts to break the barriers and traditional restraints that have been placed on this engaging art form.

**GARRETT COLEMAN** As a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Garrett was trained in traditional Irish step dance at the Burke School under the tutelage of the internationally renowned Theresa Burke. Despite his traditional background, Garrett has consistently found himself drawn to rhythmically innovative types of movement that push the boundaries of athleticism through dance. In addition to Irish Step, he has trained in hip hop, tap, and contemporary movement.

Competitively, Garrett was named the two-time World Champion (2004, 2005) and All Ireland Champion (2004). He is also a nine-time Mid-American Champion and has held the North American title six times. In 2006, he was a silver medalist and scholarship winner with the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts, and was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. In June of 2006, he met President Bush at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. and performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Garrett has toured professionally with Riverdance and Trinity Irish Dance Company and has performed with various other groups, including Cherish the Ladies, The Chieftians, Eileen Ivers, Gaelic Storm, Marvin Hamlisch and the Pittsburgh Symphony, David Dorfman of NYC, and Pittsburgh's Attack Theatre.

**JULIE FITZGERALD** is an accomplished fiddle player and step dancer from Bancroft, Ontario. She is a 2-Time Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Champion, as well as 2-Time Open Step Dance Champion. Since her early days of old-time fiddle, she has diversified and become an accomplished fiddle player of many styles. She is a member of the family group "Everything Fitz: The Fitzgerald Family." Julie has been in high demand for both her fiddling and dancing as a performer in various groups across North America. In addition to touring with Cherish the Ladies, she has had the opportunity to perform internationally with many of her lifelong musical 'idols' including Leahy, Natalie MacMaster, Stepcrew, Bowfire, Troy MacGillivray, Sharon Shannon, We Banjo 3, Carlos Nunez, Solas and Eileen Ivers.

Julie recently graduated from Humber College in Toronto from their Bachelor of Music program. Julie's love of passing on the Canadian traditional music and dance led to the creation of an instructional step dance

DVD. Whenever she is taking a break from touring, Julie teaches private dance and fiddle lessons to students at home and at music festivals.