

CHRISTMAS MUSIC & FUN

Here in New England, the Christmas season ushers in a holiday soundtrack of the most luscious melodies and voices, the sounds of humanity rising together to give thanks and to reflect on love, family and good fortune.

Our favorite concert venues offer a mix of music, from the Celtic traditions of Ireland, Scotland and the Canadian Maritimes, to sacred church music, classical, jazz and popular melodies we cherish from childhood.

The Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport, MA is a case in point. On Dec 5, jazz pianist David Benoit performs *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, a heartwarming holiday homage to Vince Guaraldi's iconic

Blackstone River Theatre in Cumberland, RI, opens the season early with *Hildaland* / Liz Simmons with Casey Murray on November 22, followed by *Le Vent du Nord* on November 24.

Then the Christmas calendar opens on December 1 with Tipperary born harpist Áine Minogue performing her annual concert, *To Warn the Winter's Eve*, a spell binding journey through Celtic lore and tradition. Blackstone's holiday mood is



soundtrack. On December 6-7, Cape Ann Big Band brings joy to the world with its annual concert of Christmas favorites. Ireland's traditional ensemble Lúnasa has two performances of its Irish Solstice show on December 8. On December 12, the PBS show, *Christmas with the Celts*, offers ancient Irish carols, lilting humor and thrilling dance numbers. On December 13, Boston's famous Handel & Haydn Society, performs Handel's masterful *Messiah* for the 170th consecutive year. Talk about tradition!

always amplified by its annual Holiday Craft Fair and Festival, falling on December 7 this year with 25 artisans and great local bands. On December 8, multi-instrumentalist Séamus Egan performs his exquisite show, *Good Winter: A Celtic Christmas*, featuring vocalist/banjoist Moira Smiley and singer/guitarist Yann Falquet. On December 14, Lúnasa gives two performances of its show, *Irish Solstice*, honoring the ancient winter solstice.



Groton Hill Music

Center in Groton, MA, starts its holiday season on December 6 when bluegrass ensemble Mr. Sun plays *Ellington's Nutcracker*, Duke Ellington's sublime urban reinterpretation of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite. On December 7-8, Vista Philharmonic Orchestra performs three concerts of *Christmas Magic*, then on December 15, the Groton Hill Big Band presents *Holiday Swing*. The concert venue ends its holiday season on December 21 in style with Lúnasa's *A Celtic Holiday*.

Spectacle Live is bringing eleven premier Irish and Celtic Christmas shows to New England for the holiday season, starting in November with Celtic Thunder *Odyssey* and Donegal singer Daniel O'Donnell. Then in December, Spectacle shows include the Irish Tenors: *A Family Christmas*, Lúnasa *Irish Solstice*, Sean Heely's *Celtic Christmas*, Eileen Ivers; *Joyful Christmas*, *Christmas with the Celts*, Celtic Woman: *A White Christmas*, *Celtic Christmas in America*, *Irish Christmas in America* and *Fairytale of New York*, described as the ultimate Irish-inspired Christmas concert. In addition, Spectacle is presenting the Vienna Boys Choir, Mannheim Steamroller Christmas, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and Judy Collins: *Holidays and Hits*. See more details on Spectacle Live shows on pp. 8-9.

The Irish Pastoral Centre of Boston (IPC), located in Adams Village, Dorchester, offers year-round programs for the city's Irish and immigrant communities. On November 21, the annual Thanksgiving mass and luncheon takes place at Florian Hall with music by Erins Melody. On November 23, IPC's Christmas Craft Fair, presented by the

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("Christmas Music" continued)



Ladies Knitting Club, has great holiday gifts such as blankets, sweaters, trinkets and other artisan products. Then on December 15, the Centre hosts its monthly traditional Irish music session, free and open to all.

Irish fiddler Rose Clancy hosts her annual Celtic Christmas Concert with two shows on December 14 at the Chatham Drama Guild on Cape Cod. Songs, tunes and poetry mark this holiday gathering, and Rose is joined by her dad, Gene Clancy on guitar and vocals, Max Cohen, guitar and vocals, Clayton March, fiddle and clarinet



and John Alden, bass and vocals. This year's special guest is National Heritage Fellow and champion Irish dancer Kevin Doyle.

The **Newport Irish Museum** holds its Christmas Open House on December 14 with live music, dancing and food plus Celtic Christmas ornaments for sale.

The Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston starts the Yuletide season on December 6 with its annual Christmas Tree Lighting. Irish singer Chloë Agnew leads the carolers, and afterwards, Chloë presents her Celtic Christmas concert. The stunning vocalist gained fame as one of the original, and at 14, youngest member of Celtic Woman.

On December 7, ICC hosts its annual Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and its Christmas Seniors Appreciation Luncheon is on December 10.

ICC's annual 50/50 raffle takes place on December 14, a day of live music and dance and good cheer, with musicians Dave Try and harpist/multi-instrumentalist Ciaran McKenna. Also that day, the Centre

celebrates its 25th Anniversary, with toasts, speeches and stories.

On December 15, famed Irish tenor Paul Byrom, formerly of Celtic Thunder, performs his Christmas from Ireland show.



Finally, popular husband-wife duo Irish Tenor Ciaran Nagle & fiddler Tara Novak perform *An Irish Christmas*, complete with the excellent band Ishna on December 22.

For even more concerts and cultural events in December: 2024, see page 10 or visit irishboston.org/december.php



Family and Friends rejoice this Christmas Season at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston.