

Barrington resident Doyle steps out with ‘Celtic Sojourn’

By Keith Powers / Special to The Journal

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Kevin Doyle, the internationally known step-dancer and Barrington resident, is choreographer for “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” on tour for the 15th season, and coming to Veterans Memorial Auditorium on Dec. 20 as part of its New England tour.

“Brian makes it very comfortable to work with everyone,” says veteran Irish dancer Kevin Doyle, “but it’s still somewhat of a Christmas miracle that it all comes together.”

Doyle, the internationally known step-dancer, and Barrington resident, is talking about “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” on tour for the 15th season, and coming to Veterans Memorial Auditorium on Wednesday, Dec. 20, as part of its New England tour.

Doyle has worked with “Sojourn” founder Brian O’Donovan, the well-known host of public radio’s “A Celtic Sojourn,” since 2003, first as a dancer, and now as dance director and choreographer.

Following the host’s idea that “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” brings about “a gathering of great friends, who are brilliant musicians and dancers,” as O’Donovan puts it, “and then finding a way to welcome the audience into that gathering”— Doyle says that as a choreographer, “I consider myself democratic in the way I create.”

To build the program, Doyle works with Maureen Berry and her Teelin Irish Dance Company in Maryland, as well as the children from the Harney Academy of Irish Dance in Walpole, Massachusetts, longtime “Sojourn” participants.

“I spent a lot of time with the dancers,” Doyle says of the rehearsal process. “I’m not locked into one solid idea. I will create an opening reel, and an entrance. After that you get different ideas working with experienced dancers.

“But it’s the same way with young adults I teach,” he says. “I show them my steps, and then see what they can do.”

“A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” features a lot more than just dance, obviously. Director Paula Plum, returning herself for the 15th year, joins with music director Seamus Egan, assistant music director Maeve Gilchrist, vocalist Mairi Campbell, cellist Natalie Haas, and the fiddling trio of Liz Knowles, Jenna Moynihan and teenage phenom Haley Richardson. Uilleann piper Joey Abarta and guitarist Owen Marshall make their “Sojourn” debuts, as does the harmony group Windborne.

The troupe stages “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” 15 times, with stops in Boston, Worcester, New Bedford and Rockport, Maine, in addition to the performance in Providence.

A decade and a half of performing has instilled lots of tradition in “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” shows, but there’s always room for new ideas to spring up.

“There are certain dances, like Irish Molly, that show up every year,” Doyle says. “It’s a lot like the traditional Irish dance in America — it’s all part of an evolution. I try to find a balance between soft shoe and hard shoe. With eight teenagers, and 16 young ones, it’s a lot of balancing.

“It’s all about the musical arrangements — it starts from there,” he says. “There is so much going on, and so much tech. Everything has to stay in the format — when someone is appearing, and when someone is leaving the stage. It’s an amazing process with lots of highly skilled people.”

— *Keith Powers covers music and the arts for the GateHouse papers and WBUR’s The ARTery. On Twitter at [@PowersKeith](#).*

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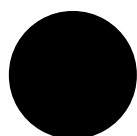
What: “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn”

When: Wednesday, Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence

Tickets: \$58-\$68

Information: (401) 421-2787; thevetsri.com



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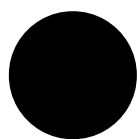
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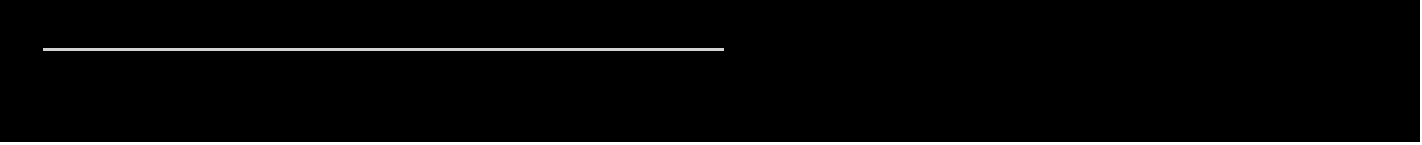
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