



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

Robust Performance In 2022 Augurs Well For 2023

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

HAVING FINALLY WRANGLLED loose from the stop-start nature of the post pandemic reopening in April, the Center has been fully open and at full capacity for the past eight months. I am happy to report that we had another strong year of activity and am delighted to see that our cultural programming offerings were enhanced as well. Several highlights come to mind as we look back on 2022. The kids music program commenced in January and continued into the second half of the year. We hosted “The Keepers of the Steps” history of Irish Dance exhibit, and the Annie Holland photographic exhibition. A spectacular St Patrick’s Day season of festivities raised our spirits. A well-attended summer music fleadh, Rock the Gates, and performances by a variety of acclaimed Irish and Irish American artists including Eileen Ivers, Gregory Harrington, Ardal O’Hanlon, and Derek Warfield entertained our members and visitors from the community. Well done to all those who helped make it a strong year of recovery in our arts and culture department.

The end of this month marks the four year anniversary of the closure of the Center at the end of December 2018. At the time the Bay Area Irish American community was still reeling from the announcement the previous October that the

facility was closing. Heading towards insolvency, the Board had the most difficult task of shutting down UICC operations. Declining restaurant, bar, and banquet activity forced the closure without much fanfare, despite last minute widespread opposition.

Truth be told, we were all shocked and hugely disappointed at the time. I still miss the restaurant; the availability of potato leek soup with corned beef and cabbage in any month of the year that was not March is hard to come by anymore! The once great meeting, celebrating, and eating place for the Irish had fallen on hard times. As with all commercial enterprises, if you don’t have enough regular customers providing support to your business, you will fail no matter what you do, even if you try to cut back on expenses.

Much of the recent great work in the turnaround story at the Center has been driven by new members who joined the Board in the spring of 2019. Driven by a decades-old connection to the Center, many of the new faces on the board grew up at the UICC. Losing the restaurant was a blow to the community, especially to the generation that built the Center. These new board members knew what it meant to their families in the Sunset. There was little other motivation needed to help right the ship.

Now as we enter 2023 and five years on since the Center temporarily closed, we are in a much better financial position to meet any future economic headwinds and are building towards the 2025 Project. Over the last few years we have developed and installed a financial framework that will serve the Center well into the future as we build out a self-sustaining UICC. While the restaurant remains shuttered, almost all other aspects of the Center are back and open to the community.

There are transitions occurring this month at the Board level. We are thankful for all those who have served in various capacities during their term and also glad to have other people ready to step up to serve on the Board. Come to the UICC Christmas social on Wednesday, December 14 to see a review of 2022 and thank the Board members stepping down and those starting their term. Refreshments will be served. Festivities start at 7pm, and the social will be followed by a wonderful talk by Gregory Crouch on John Mackay, a miner that struck it rich in the Comstock Lode, Nevada in the latter half of the 19th century.

2022 Annual Appeal

Many charities are busy fundraising at this time of year, and the Center is no different as we appeal for philanthropic support to broaden our Irish arts and culture offerings in

2023. Next spring we will host three theater productions and several new musical acts in the pipeline for the Center. Kids music classes return in January, as does the annual summer camp next June. Annual appeal donation forms arrive at UICC member households this month.

Library and Scholarship Raffle

Many thanks to all those who have purchased and returned raffle tickets in support of the Patrick J Dowling Library and Leo T Walsh Scholarship programs. The lucky winners will be announced on December 8.

Keepers of the Steps Roadshow

There was great interest in the history of Irish dance traveling exhibit among visiting dancers and teachers at the Western Regional Oireachtas Irish dance championships held downtown at the Hotel Marriott Marquis last month. An invite from the 2023 Phoenix, AZ, Oireachtas organizing committee ensures more exposure for the Center next year.

Membership

Our member rolls continue to grow. Looking for a Christmas gift idea? Give a UICC membership this year! See ad in this month’s bulletin.

Festive Shows

We hosted the Kerry Irish Production “An Irish Christmas Show” on Thursday, December 1 which played to an apprecia-

tive audience and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. People traveled from as far away as Santa Rosa, San Jose, Sausalito and Walnut Creek to kick off the festive season at the Center. Our holiday concert series continues with “The Fire’s Very Scottish Christmas” on Friday, December 9.

Tickets at irishcentersf.org

Annual Boutique

Local artisans, vendors, chocolatiers, and crafts people will have plenty of Christmas gifts to offer at the Holiday Boutique on Saturday, December 17. Santa Claus will make a special appearance. Festive holidays music by David Melamed & Friends. The Irish Shoppe will be fully stocked and Irish meats will be available in the run up to Christmas.

Rest In Peace

Sympathy is extended to the family and friends of William Shaw (predeceased by his wife Elaine). Elaine and William were huge UICC supporters and proud members of the Ulster social club. William was a former member of the band “The Irish Connection” who played for many years at the Center. We also lost Julia Gowen (predeceased by her husband Michael) who passed away recently.

Merry Christmas

On behalf of the Board of the Center, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Derek Warfield And The Young Wolfe Tones Delight Audiences

Large crowds gathered at the Center on November 12 and 13 for the visit of living musical legend and balladeer Derek Warfield and his Young Wolfe Tones band. Two performances of wonderful night of music, song and dance enthralled those who attended, and many were out of their seats dancing to the well known Irish ballads. Derek and his band kicked off their 2022 fall tour at the Irish Rose Saloon in Honolulu, Hawaii on October 27 and the tour ends on January 1, 2023 in Castleblayney, County Monaghan. Below are some photos of those who attended the Center shows.



Maureen Cavan, Rose O'Connor.



Monica Murphy, Máire Galvin.



Kevin Buckley and Maeve O'Reilly.



Cathy Mibach, Connie Lynch Sorensen.



Don and Bridget West.



Finn, Mike, and Dan Cotter.



Josephine Brogan and Maureen Brady.



Mags Gogarty, Derek Warfield, and Frances Doherty.



Mary Power, Andreas Durkin, and Brian Lynch.

• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

Cultural Programming Gets Boost At The UICC

Two important new positions will build on the Center's strong foundation of Irish cultural activities

by Liam Reidy

THE CENTER IS PLEASED TO announce the recent hiring of Emma Hanley and Aidan Stone as Directors of Cultural Programming, Education and Community Outreach. The positions aim to continue our promotion of Irish arts and cultural programming which is set to expand its footprint at the Center in the coming year. Now that we are on solid financial ground we can devote more attention and energy to our core mission as a non-profit. Several new initiatives and programs are coming online next spring, including theatre productions (local, national and international productions), music sessions, kids music lessons, and additional kids activities centering around education and movie nights. Funding from the Irish government through the Emigrant Support Program has allowed the Irish Center to fund these positions.



Emma Hanley
Emma Frances Hanley was raised in San Francisco and is lucky enough to have parents and siblings still in the city (even a brother across the street). Emma worked for five years in the arts in New York City, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Christie's auction house, and at the Jack Hanley Gallery (her father's gallery). In 2017, she returned to the Bay Area for a masters and began working at Amazon on Whole Foods grocery delivery after graduation. This month, Emma is starting a new product marketing job at a new company

called Lumafield. She holds a BA in History of Art from University of California, Berkeley and an MBA from Stanford University. Emma is thrilled to join the UICC as a Cultural Programmer to be more connected with her father's Irish heritage/nationality, and to expand artistic and community outreach.



Aidan Stone
Aidan Stone is a writer and director, born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, with a wide array of interests and experiences. Manager of Feldman's Books in Menlo Park, Director of New Media at the Magic Theatre, and head of his own production company, Stone Film Production, Aidan balances several gigs and projects. In 2021, Aidan produced his first feature film, You'll Lose A Good Thing, starring John Flanagan and Jimmie Fails; it is currently in post-production. Otherwise, Aidan has produced animations for Aleksandr Petrov Studios in Yaroslavl, Russia, he co-wrote a screenplay called Hombrecito, currently in production in Mexico, and he has sold multiple original scripts. Recently Aidan shot a documentary in Galway focusing on the release of Vincey Keenan's album Great Highway. He holds a BA in English from UMass Amherst and a Masters in Education from University of San Francisco. Aidan is glad to join the UICC as a Cultural Programmer. His grandmother, Frances Hughes, was a founding member of the UICC, and many family memories and milestones took place there.

Keepers Of The Steps Oireachtas Roadshow

THE KEEPERS OF THE STEPS Committee was delighted to bring a special pop-up exhibit celebrating the history of Irish Step Dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area to the Western Regional Oireachtas held November 18-20 in downtown San Francisco. Guests from near and far were invited to step back more than 150 years to explore the roots, rhythms, and rituals of one of the most enduring traditions of our rich

Irish heritage. The items displayed were curated from the larger collection as was seen at the January 2022 at the Irish Center.
Keepers of the Steps is a special collection maintained and organized by United Irish Cultural Center of San Francisco volunteers that celebrates the origins of Irish step dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area dating back to the 1850s and the Gold Rush Era.
Did you know? The San

Francisco Bay Area is the birthplace of the Western Region and as such played host to the first Western Regional Oireachtas in 1974 which was organized by the O'Growney Branch of the Gaelic League.
Special thanks to the KOTS committee: Eileen Mize (Chair), Anne Cassidy Carew, Ann Baglin, Noreen Boyle Heavey, TCRG Jennifer Drennan (Dowling Librarian), Kathleen Martin-McKeon, and Jamie O'Keefe.



Marie Woods, Tricia Feeney, and Mary Jo Murphy Feeney



Lauren Edberg of the Rohan-Murphy School and her grandmother.



Shelia Whelan-Gallagher, Marie Woods, Kathleen Smith, and Eileen Mize.



Ann Baglin, Jamie O'Keefe, Anne Cassidy Carew, and Eileen Mize.



Patty Dowling.



Patricia Prendergast Martig, a TCRG in Pacific Northwest.



Aubrey Shelley, TCRG from Utah, trained by Kathleen Deely.

Local YMI Chapter Provide First Donation For The Annual Appeal 2022



Liam Reidy, UICC President accepts the first donation for the 2022 UICC Annual Appeal from the Bob Fiorito, President of the Young Mens Institute, St Don Bosco Chapter #613, at a recent YMI monthly meeting at St Cecilia's church in the Parkside. Left to right; YMI President Bob Fiorito, Fr Joe Landi, Liam Reidy, Mike Amato, Mike Baglin and Dominic Painia.

ANNUAL APPEAL 2022

Inspiring the next generation of Irish Americans through cultural programming

Join us!

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UICC is a 501c3 organization