

IRISH AMERICA

“The Hard Way Home”



Paddy Homan

By Robert Lyons, Contributor
April / May 2014

Paddy Homan’s newest CD reflects the Irish tenor’s philosophy of life.

In the tradition of a lively rambling house, Irish tenor Paddy Homan has been presiding for six years every Sunday night at the Galway Arms Pub, in Chicago, where he is often joined by a retinue of outstanding musicians and performers from the greater Chicago area. He is a regular performer on the stage at all the usual Irish and Celtic festivals in the Midwest.

His album, *The Hard Way Home*, offers several ancient Irish ballads and brand new ones. A sprightly “Reel in the Flickering Light” leads the way and will move feet and hearts of all ages. The title track, “The Hard Way Home,” sounds a plaintive tone but with Paddy’s passionate delivery, strikes a hopeful chord: “There’s only grace and miracles, and learning how to dance the dance.”

Meanwhile, “John O’ Dreams,” set to a Tchaikovsky tune, portrays all people as being “equal in sleep,” while “The Bonny Bunch of Roses” – featuring Paddy and his bodhrán – is a ballad related to the old Irish Air, “An Binsin Luachra” (The Bunch of Rushes).

This gem of a recording, produced by Dennis Cahill and Victor Sanders, features Paddy’s voice accompanied by some of the best of the Chicago-based musicians: Dennis Cahill on guitar, bass, and mandolin, James Moore on guitar and bouzouki, Maurice Lennon on fiddle, Ben Lewis on piano, John Williams on accordion, Sheila Doorley on accordion, Teresa Shine on fiddle, Steven Houser on cello, and Sue Demel on backing vocals.

Other songs on this CD include the lament “Cill Chais.” Sung in Irish, it describes the aftermath of the destruction of Ireland’s forests in the 18th century: “Cad a dhéanfimid feasta gan adhmaid?” What will we do for timber, with the last of the woods laid low? Stephen Foster’s “Slumber My Darling” finds poignant expression in the cadences of Paddy’s delivery. Another tune, “Gentle Maiden,” comes from the ancient canon of Irish songs, while the popular “Song of Bernadette” is dedicated to Paddy’s mother and to all faith-filled mothers. The album concludes with “The Holy Ground,” a lovely sea shanty from Cork, the singer’s native country.

Paddy, who I first met many years ago through the stirring sounds of Four Green Fields in Tighe Pheig’s Pub, Ballyferriter, on the Dingle Peninsula, combines the life of musician with social work. He’s foundation regional director for two Lutheran life communities: St Pauls House, Chicago and Wittenberg Village, Crown Point, Indiana, and says, “I am a huge advocate of the role of music in engaging with people.

Many of our residents need a guiding light to be that beacon of hope by which they can live out their days with dignity and respect.” This theme permeates his life’s work. “Music,” he says, “goes right down to the fabric of the human person. We all have a song that needs to be shared.”

His own guiding lights have been John McCormack, Seán Ó Riada who revived Irish traditional music, and his mother, Lizzie who says: “Paddy’s been singing since he was bawling in his crib.”

More information on the album and a set of informative sleeve notes on the twelve tracks is available at paddyhoman.com.

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