



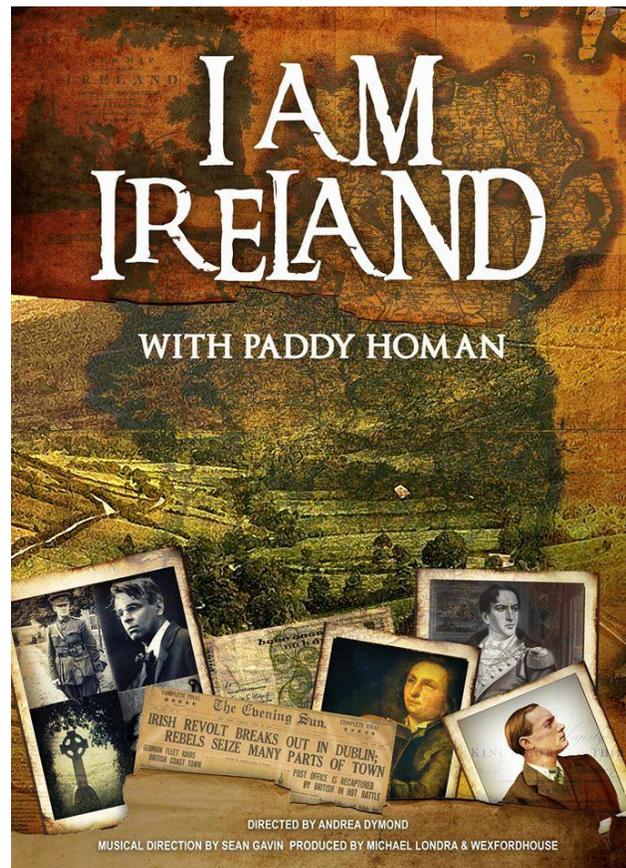
July 2015

**The Voice of Chicagoland's Irish American Community.**

### **Mike Hooligan, Irish American News**

**T**he other night I glimpsed a revelation of Irish revolution through music and songs hundreds of years old. Seated in an ancient mansion along the lake I watched an Irishman stand in half-light to tell us the story of our nation. With three musicians behind him, and a bodhrán in his grasp, he led us through the darkness along the path to freedom that Michael Collins spoke of so long ago.

Everybody in the room was spellbound by this seanachi peeling the onion on our legacy and culture as he took us back to 1798 and the birth of the Gaelic spirit fighting against oppression. Many of us in the audience had heard the songs before, sure hadn't we sung them ourselves as our grandparents taught us. But tonight the man in our midst gave us the back story of each of these Irish treasures and they took on a new and more fervent meaning for all of us and by the end of the evening all the folks in the room were on their feet singing in full throated response to the fella leading us in "A Nation Once Again".



We'd been intoxicated already with renditions of "Róisín Dubh", "Skibbereen", and "The West's Awake" and a dozen more. Rain splattered the roof above us and in the garden just outside the room we sat, lightning and thunder punctuated the tales of patriots, famine, and lovers in anguish over their native land.

I've been to Ireland several times but I never felt more Irish than the night Paddy Homan pierced the tempestuous night with his crystal clear tenor and sang the story of Ireland. I'd been invited by Paddy to the home of Devon and Yvonne Bruce for a preview of his new show "I Am Ireland", which will premiere in Chicago at the Beverly Art Center on October 10th for one night only before embarking on a cross country tour to celebrate the Easter Rising Centennial. See it.

In October you can watch Paddy deliver Robert Emmet's speech from the dock on the eve of his execution. Listen to Paddy Homan recreate Padraic Pearse's oration at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa and you too will be "re-baptized in the Fenian faith." Watch this man from Cork as he performs a one-man show that takes us all back in time to hear Michael Collins talk of Thomas Davis and how he "spoke to the soul of a sleeping nation drunk with the water of forgetfulness." Feel the hair on the back of your neck curl as Paddy Homan tells the real story and then sings "The Rising of the Moon."

If you have only one drop of Irish blood, see this show and you will feel that drop of blood replicating throughout your soul and stirring your heart to sing along with Paddy. Paddy tells us, "In singing these songs, we make the spirit of that person, who in writing the song or story, come alive. So it's not about the person singing it but the immortal story within this song. And so I think that all those years ago, as people fought, died, and starved; one abiding mode of survival were songs and stories. It was the people's connection to their past, passed down from generation to generation, or to put it another way it was their mode of Social Media!"

When you see the show onstage you'll have the advantage of full screen projections of the Irish heroes Paddy portrays, the brilliant Irish musicians and a professional lighting design to capture the dramatic arc of the evening. Although it will be tough to top the special effects of the claps of thunder and lightning provided by the man upstairs that night in Lake Forest.

This show, **I AM IRELAND**, is one we can all be proud of and claim as Chicago's gift to the Irish Centennial celebrations in 2016. For more information on the show and to check for upcoming dates go to <http://www.paddyhoman.com/i-am-ireland>.