



Dreams of green pastures sent saxophonist Tim Moher in new musical directions

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WATERLOO REGION - Inspired by his Irish heritage, Tim Moher has created a unique sound that fuses jazz, classical and Celtic music.

Moher's great-grandfather left Ireland during the potato famine in the late 1840s, and about 167 years later Moher started to have vivid dreams about the homeland of his ancestors.

"I just remember the green pastures," he said of those dreams.

Born and raised in North Bay, Moher studied music and education at Western in London. He settled in this region to teach for the Waterloo Catholic District School Board.

He's no mystic, but he kept dreaming about Ireland.

He started writing music inspired by the dreams, and he visited Ireland in 2016 after retiring from his teaching career. He performed in Ireland, and recorded a music video there on Wicklow Mountain.

As part of the Irish Real Life Festival in Waterloo Region, Moher will lead an 11-piece Celtic jazz ensemble through the music of his CD-"Clefs of Moher." Writing the music, recording and producing it became a compulsion.

"This one was really beckoning me to pay attention to my Irish heritage," said Moher. "The CD is really the fruits of that yearning for me."

It took him about six years to finish what is his fourth CD.

"I think one of the things that happens as you grow older you want to learn about your heritage, identify with it, explore it. And this was my outlet," said Moher.

"If I were a writer I would probably be writing about it," says Moher. "I am a writer of music, so I wrote music about it."

His Irish roots took him down musical lanes Moher never travelled before. Until he started working on "Clefs of Moher" he was all about performing jazz standards with small ensembles at private parties and corporate events.

The CD includes "Child of Immigrants," by the singer Michael Kelly Cavan. Moher wanted Cavan and his song on the CD, in part, because of a rising tide of anti-immigrant attitudes.

"This whole anti-immigrant thing and our fear of immigrants, it's just so bizarre because I realize more and more how much I am connected to that," said Moher. "To me there is no controversy, this is what we do, we migrate as people and here we are."

His ancestors came here for a better life, and the country should continue to take in migrants, he said.

Shannon Kingsbury of Guelph is also on the CD. Kingsbury, who is also a harpist, sings "Down by The Sally Gardens," by W.B. Yeats. Yeats published that poem in 1889.

Moher's Celtic jazz ensemble includes a French horn, trumpet, sax, two fiddles, cello, uilleann pipes, two percussionists, bass, keys and guitar. His upcoming show will feature an Irish dancer as well.

He created his CD with help from the Waterloo Region Arts Fund. It was recorded at Cedartree Recording Studio in Kitchener. He credits the arranger and producer Richard Hutt with helping shape the sound.

"I believe I have created a niche that is cool and new," said Moher.
"Here's some Celtic jazz but I am going to redefine it in my own way."

After visiting a country Moher said he seldom wants to go back-been there, done that, on to something new. But after returning from Ireland in 2016, Moher said he was already thinking about going back. His enthusiasm for it comes through right from first track-Wicklow Mountain.

"What I liked best about it, to be honest, was the landscape," said Moher. "The landscape is just spectacular."