

THE CLEFS OF MOHER VOLUME 2

Seán Laffey asks the Canadian saxophonist and bandleader Tim Moher about the many Dublin references on the tracks on his recent CD.



Tim Moher is based in Kitchener, Ontario, where he runs the Clefs of Moher band, a flexible ensemble, mustering anything from 6 to 11 players on stage for their live shows. Tim's pieces go way beyond a decoupage of trad tunes over a jazz background, and as he tells me his ideas reach their final expression through collaboration.

"I've been working with Rick Hutt for many years now. I come up with the melodic ideas, and Rick works out the band's parts; he was really invested in this project and his arrangements are stunning. We need written parts, as there's a jazz and classical discipline that is applied to the pieces. Rick has the ability to arrange the music so that it all sounds seamless and spontaneous. With a complicated score it's essential that the music is written down, allowing the members of the group to deliver top notch performances."

Tim has a number of traditional players in the ensemble and I asked him to tell us something about the fiddler Shane Guse and their uilleann piper Spencer Murray.

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"Shane is the principle fiddler in the band, he is a National Award winning fiddler here in Canada and is master of various styles, especially Western swing and Old Time fiddling. Spencer Murray plays uilleann pipes and flutes on the album. He is originally from Winnipeg but now lives in Toronto where there is a healthy session scene. He also plays in the stage musical *Come From Away*, the story of how the population of Gander helped airline passengers during 9/11 when dozens of aircraft were stranded in the remote corner of Newfoundland."

There are two singers on the album; *Wonders of Life* is sung by Michael Kelly Cavan, a singer songwriter who is well-known in Ontario. Tim has co-written a song with Paul Stouffer called *Irish Lullaby*, which is sung by Shannon Kingsbury. "She's based in Guelph, which is 20 minutes drive away from me in Waterloo. She has as rich, deep voice which works extremely well on *Irish Lullaby*."

I asked Tim why all the Dublin references in *Volume 2*? "At one stage it was going to be called District 8," he laughs, referring to Dublin's central D8 postcode. "On reflection I thought that might be just too

much of an in-joke. Not all the tracks are named with Dublin in mind, for example *The Children of Danú*. Nevertheless one Dublin name nearly delayed the album's production.

"The draft of the liner notes had a typo with reference to the book collection at Dublin's Trinity College, it was erroneously called *Marsha's Library*. We spotted the glitch at the last minute, and we were lucky, the printer was in Vancouver and the designer in Ontario. The time difference gave us a short window to correct the copy to 'Marsh's'. Anyone who knows how printing is set up will know that's not an easy task once the proof has been flattened for production."

Tim's next project will be a musical about the 19th century immigration of the Irish into Canada. "The working title is *An Gorta Mor*, and it will tell the story of a family who escape the potato famine and make it to Eastern Canada. On the ship's arrival at Grosse Isle (the infamous quarantine station on the St. Lawrence), there's a problem with de-embarkation and a priest goes ashore, where he succumbs to

disease, which was rampant on the island. The story does end happily; we see the families' great grandchildren thriving in their new home. It's a story that resonates with millions of Canadians."

Back to the present, Tim would like to thank The Waterloo Arts Fund for financial support for *Clefs of Moher Volume 2*. The album was officially launched on November 5th at The Registry Theatre in Kitchener. The Clefs of Moher are looking forward to performing with the Stratford Symphony Orchestra in the New Year.

I sign off with a thought that maybe Tim should ring up a certain Mr Brophy in Dublin to see if there's a night or two available at the National Concert Hall in 2023.

