

## H'Upyaboya, and Cailíní Too: "An Nollaig in Éirinn" with Danú

By Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew

On December 2nd, Danú ushered in the Christmas season with a holiday concert, *An Nollaig in Éirinn*, at the Annenberg Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

In addition to songs and tunes, the audience was treated to what we in Philadelphia could only call "the Straw Boy strut," a traditional Old World prototype of modern-day mumming.

The selections included ethereal classics like "Oíche Chiúin" (Silent Night, sung in Irish) and the rollicking "Mrs. Fogarty's Christmas Cake."

The said cake, perhaps the precursor of the American fruitcake that allegedly keeps getting regifted, should be delish, with ingredients like cherries, citron, raisins, "cinnymon," and nutmeg, but somehow, as a result of eating it:

Maloney was took with the colic; McNulty complain'd of his head.

McFadden laid down on the sofy, and swore that he wish'd he was dead.

Perhaps it was from the crust, which was "nail'd on with glue"

One redeeming feature of the typical Irish Christmas Cake, though, as Danú explained, is that it is steeped in whiskey for a good two months, starting after Irish Halloween.

These songs and many more were dished up with a generous helping of jigs and reels, some with such tasty titles as "Apples in Winter" and "The Praties are Done and the Frost is All Over."

Leading up to the post-prandial moment, they regaled the audience with "The Parting Glass." That was a nice segue to the actual post-prandium, a celebratory toast in the lobby to the Annenberg Center's 40th Anniversary.

In their inimitable style, the band members inspired boisterous enthusiasm from the audience. They offered a crash course in Irish terms of encouragement, which are an integral part of the singing tradition.

Unlike the pin-drop quiet atmosphere that surrounds opera

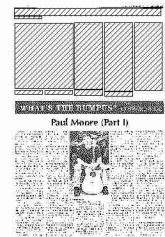
and classical music, Irish singers expect audience responses, such as "Dia leat" or "Bulaí fir." So the audience was coached through "H'Upyaboya," a sort of one-word version of "Up you boyo."

A few more cheers had no discernable words but would give Cornell's Ornithology Lab's field recordings a run for their money. Such concentrated chortling, warbling, and vocalizing has probably not been heard on Penn's campus before.

If you missed this delightful evening, you can follow Danú's tour schedule online at [www.danu.net](http://www.danu.net) or check out their latest CD, *Seanchas*. We hope they'll be back soon.

Meanwhile, remember you can get your next Irish fix at the Annenberg on April 15, when Penn hosts "Masters of Tradition: Celebrating Irish Music in its Purest Form."

Kudos to the Annenberg for its long-running Irish culture series, a great boon to the Delaware Valley Irish community.





***Danú inspired boisterous enthusiasm from the audience especially from their performance of the rollicking "Mrs. Fogarty's Christmas Cake."***

Photo Credit John Kelly