

For immediate release

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"Irish Christmas in America" brings Ireland's top young traditional musicians in captivating show

Award-winning Irish band Téada and acclaimed vocalists Karan Casey and Cara Dillon headline holiday tour

"Captivating" Irish Music Magazine

"Lively and reflective...a powerful evocation of the season" Folk Wax

"A celebration of family and good times at the winter season" Gather.com

Now in its fourth year, ***Irish Christmas in America*** returns to the USA this holiday season with some of Ireland's top young traditional artists, in a lively and fascinating presentation of Irish cultural traditions. The 12-city tour includes performances in Tucson, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington DC.

Called "captivating" by *Irish Music Magazine* and "a powerful evocation of the season" by Folk Wax, *Irish Christmas in America* is produced by **Oisín Mac Diarmada** of award-winning traditional Irish group **Téada**. Joining the tour this year are two of Ireland's leading female vocalists, **Cara Dillon** (for the first half of the tour, Nov 29 – Dec 6) and **Karan Casey** (Dec 7 – Dec 17). The cast also includes Téada band members **Damien Stenson** on flute, **Sean McElwain** on guitar and **Tristan Rosenstock** on bodhrán (Irish drum) and narration. The Irish harp and pipes, from leading exponents **Gráinne Hambly** and **Tommy Martin**, augment the exciting Irish dancing of newcomer **Brian Cunningham**.

Irish Christmas in America takes the spirit of Christmas on a distinctively Irish journey. The family-friendly performance features beautifully sung Irish ballads and holiday carols, lively fiddle tunes and thrilling Irish dancing. The cast brings to life seasonal customs and stories both humorous and heartfelt, and a backdrop of evocative photographic images gives a rich historical context.

Téada (pronounced "tay-da," meaning "strings" in Irish) are one of Irish music's leading exponents, preserving the timeless energy and expressive force of traditional jigs, reels and hornpipes. *Living Tradition Magazine* calls them "brilliant young musicians who present Irish music as it really is: the joy of it, the full breadth and depth of it, the power and pace of it."

"One of the most heartfelt themes of Irish Christmas is emigration," says Oisín Mac Diarmada, an All-Ireland fiddle champion from County Sligo. "Music was a way that people stayed close to home."

"Christmas is a time to spend with your family," adds vocalist **Karan Casey**. "Now that I've two children it makes me appreciate the holidays even more. It's really a magical time – kids are just enamored and bowled over by Christmas, and it's one of the few times in our lives that we're truly hopeful, even in today's world."

Casey, a founding member of Irish-American supergroup Solas, has just released her latest album *Ships in the Forest* on Compass Records. She's been called "the most soulful singer to emerge in Irish traditional music in the past decade" by The Glasgow (Scotland) Herald.

"Growing up, we'd go caroling for charities," continues Casey, who hails from a small town in County Waterford. "I'll be singing some of my favorite carols, as well as an Irish song or two that's older and not so well-known. I'm looking forward to working with Téada," she adds. "They have a strong sense of tradition, especially for such young musicians. They dig very deep, and get great enjoyment from the tunes in their natural form."

Multi-award winning singer and recording artist **Cara Dillon** is described by the BBC for "her crystalline, angelic voice...an instrument of rare beauty." An All-Ireland champion vocalist, she has recently released the live DVD *The Redcastle Sessions*, and her new album *Hill of Thieves* is due for in January 2009.

"Christmas was a really special holiday in my family," says Dillon, who grew up in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, an area steeped in traditional music. "There was plenty of house-visiting which inevitably led to songs or tunes. You couldn't go up the main street of the town without hearing music sessions in the bars. Christmas is always a great excuse to have a tune or song with friends!"

"I'm really looking forward to working with Téada," she adds. "They are an amazing, vibrant bunch of fellas with one goal only...to make great music!"

23-year old dancer **Brian Cunningham** is also a new feature of the show this year. From Connemara, Co. Galway, Brian is one of the most exciting 'sean-nós' or 'old-style' dancers to have emerged from Ireland in quite some time. Pronounced "shawn-nohs," it's an older style of dance that includes percussive steps and self-expressive improvisation, every bit as entertaining (if not more so!) than classic competition-style step dance.

A bright new tradition among holiday events, Irish Christmas in America is a special show to see this season. For more information visit www.irishchristmasinamerica.com.

IRISH CHRISTMAS IN AMERICA with TÉADA 2008 TOUR

featuring Cara Dillon Nov 29-Dec 6, Karan Casey Dec 7-17

Sat Nov 29th [Fox Theatre](#), Tucson AZ, www.foxtucsontheatre.org

Sun Nov 30th Freight and Salvage, Berkeley CA, thefreight.org

Tue Dec 2nd [Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts](#), Cerritos CA

Wed Dec 3rd Kuumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz CA, www.kuumbwajazz.org/

Fri Dec 5th State Theatre, Kalamazoo MI, www.kazoostate.com

Sat Dec 6th Central Michigan University, Mt Pleasant MI, events.cmich.edu

Sun Dec 7th University of Wisconsin, La Crosse WI, www.uwlax.edu/

Tue Dec 9th Commodore Barry Irish Club, Philadelphia PA,

www.philadelphiaceilgroup.org/

Wed Dec 10th The Strand Theatre, Lakewood NJ, www.strandlakewood.com/

Thu Dec 11th & Fri Dec 12th -National Geographic, Washington DC,

www.nationalgeographic.com/nglive

Sat Dec 13th East Rochester High School Auditorium, Rochester NY,

www.irishrochester.org/

Sun Dec 14th Old Town School of Music (2 shows), Chicago IL

www.oldtownschool.org

Mon Dec 15th Old Town School Teaching Workshop, Chicago IL

Concerts with Karan Casey and Téada:

Tue Dec 16th [Fenian's Irish Pub](#), Conklin MI

Wed Dec 17th [The Ark](#), Ann Arbor MI

Reviews of *Irish Christmas in America*

"Captivating" *Irish Music Magazine*

"*Irish Christmas in America* is a sharing of connection grounded in music, and a celebration of family and good times at the winter season, whatever your tradition or national heritage." Kerry Dexter, gather.com

"Lively and reflective...a powerful evocation of the season...the theme of hope and connection makes *Irish Christmas in America* a fine choice for the season. The audience clapped and stamped their way through a high flying Christmas reel and encore, giving a standing ovation for this holiday celebration." FolkWax

"The energy and musical mastery truly celebrates an Irish Christmas."

Rhythm & Roots

"The audience loved it...the response was ecstatic" Southwest Celtic Music Assoc

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***Irish Christmas in America* Cast Biographies**

Téada

Meaning "strings" in the Irish language, Téada is one of Irish music's leading exponents, preserving the timeless energy of traditional jigs, reels and hornpipes. The band's latest CD, *Inne Amerach* on Compass Records, was named a Top 10 album of 2006 by RTE (Radio Television Eire), The Irish Times, and MOJO Magazine. *Irish Music Magazine* calls Téada at "the cutting edge of the next generation of Irish musicians...among the youngest but with a fierce familiarity with the old ways...a deeply authentic sound."

Oisín Mac Diarmada – producer/fiddle

From Co. Sligo, a part of Ireland famous for its rich fiddle tradition, Oisín Mac Diarmada, is widely regarded for an individual and subtle stylistic approach to Irish fiddling. In 2003, following the release of his solo album, 'Ar an bhFidil' (On the Fiddle) on the Green Linnet label, the Irish Echo's Earle Hitchner called him "one of the most gifted and creative traditional fiddlers playing today." A graduate in Music Education from Trinity College Dublin, Oisín went on in 2001 to found Téada, currently one of Ireland's best-known internationally touring bands, and currently is pursuing postgraduate research studies in the area of "Political Identity and Movement to Music".

Karan Casey - vocals

One of the most influential voices in folk music, Karan Casey is a natural innovator. More than a decade ago American audiences were introduced to Casey fronting the Irish "supergroup" Solas. Following their groundbreaking early releases Casey struck out on her own. As well as touring constantly throughout North America and Europe with her own band, Karan has been involved in many other varied projects and collaborations. A frequent guest on Garrison Keillor's 'A Prairie Home Companion', Casey joined their December 2006 broadcasts from New York's Town Hall. Karan has just completed her fifth solo album entitled "Ships in the Forest". Produced once again by Donald Shaw, the new album focuses largely on the traditional repertoire. The album features the members of her current touring band, Caoimhín Vallely (piano), Kate Ellis (cello) and Robbie Overson (guitar) along with some special guests, including Kris Drever and Niall and Cillian Vallely, and is available in the US on the Compass Records label.

Cara Dillon - vocals

Cara's enviable reputation has brought regular performances to appreciative audiences at major festivals throughout Europe and as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore. She has featured in a sell out tour of the USA with 'A Woman's Heart' featuring Mary Black, Sharon Shannon and Maura O'Connell and also performed with the Ulster Orchestra for a BBC television special. Cara performed at the opening ceremony of the 2006 Ryder

Cup at The K Club in Ireland in front of a TV audience of more than 300 million people. May 2008 saw the release of a duet with singer-songwriter John Smith called 'If I Prove False' to promote the release of her first live DVD, 'The Redcastle Sessions' (June 2008). The DVD was filmed entirely on location in Co. Donegal and Co. Derry, Ireland and features outstanding live performances of some of her best loved songs in a breathtaking location on the shore of Lough Foyle. Cara's gentle charm and natural personality combined with a mesmerizing gift to relate a great story through song and has helped her to defy borders, cultures and even languages. She is an emotive and captivating performer at the very top of her field. Cara's new album "Hill Of Thieves" is due for record store release in January 2009.

Seán McElwain – guitar

Seán McElwain from Monaghan brings a strong string dimension to the show through his dynamic contributions on guitar and bouzouki. In recent times, touring performances with Téada have seen Seán gaining growing accolades for his accompaniment and melodic skills from many quarters. He is actively involved in the organising and running of an annual weekend of music 'Scoil Cheoil na Botha' in his native county Monaghan. Seán is pursuing postgraduate studies under Dr. Fintan Vallely in DKIT exploring the music of North Monaghan.

Damien Stenson - flute

Hailing from the rich musical environment of Co. Sligo, 29-year-old Damien Stenson is noted for his extensive repertoire and flowing style of playing, honed by many years of extensive musical activity. He has featured on a number of albums including the compilation "Wooden Flute Obsession Vol. 2", and a recent bodhrán album by Junior Davey, and will appear on RTÉ's upcoming television series 'The Reel Deal' in the Autumn.

Tristan Rosenstock – bodhrán/narration

From Glenageary in Co Dublin, Tristan's bodhrán playing encompasses a distinctive musical sensitivity. Having recently completed a Masters in Film & Television Studies from Dublin City University, Tristan brings an educational yet entertaining narrative element to the show through his colourful references to Irish Christmas themes.

Gráinne Hambly – Irish harp

Gráinne (pronounced Grahn-ya) Hambly from County Mayo in the west of Ireland is an internationally recognised exponent of the Irish harp. In 1998 she completed a Masters Degree in Musicology at Queen's University Belfast, for which her main research topic was music collections and the harp in 18th-century Ireland. Since then, Gráinne has toured extensively throughout Europe and the United States, giving concerts, workshops and masterclasses.

Tommy Martin – uilleann pipes/whistles

Originally from Dublin, now resident in St. Louis MO, Tommy's rare musical talent

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and experience has brought diverse performances throughout the world varying from tutoring in New Zealand to performing with Riverdance in New York to recording with past members of rock band "Thin Lizzy". In January 2004 Tommy had the honour of performing a newly composed piece of music with the Chicago Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra.

Brian Cunningham - dancer

Brian Cunningham is one of the most exciting 'sean-nós' or 'old-style' dancers to have emerged from Ireland in quite some time. At 23 years of age, he has won all the major dance competitions in Ireland, and was honoured with an invitation by the President of Ireland to perform during an Official State visit to Japan and South Korea in 2005. He has toured North America with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and performed in the UK, Denmark and Turkey. Brian recently appeared on Ireland's most popular television show, 'The Late Late Show' along with vocalist Seán Keane. Expect him to light up 'Irish Christmas in America' audiences with his energetic and engaging performances.

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