

Celtic Solstice Concert for Seamen's Bethel



The Committee to Restore the Seamen's Bethel on Dec. 21 will present the second program in a concert series to raise funds for urgently needed repairs to the historic house of worship. The New Bedford Port Society and its Ladies' Branch are presenting the concerts.

At 7 p.m. Dec. 21, Robbie O'Connell and Aoife Clancy will present "A Celtic Christmas." Here's a chance to celebrate the winter solstice with two renowned Celtic musicians in the intimate setting of the Seamen's Bethel.

Aoife Clancy (pronounced "Eefa") brings a refreshing new voice to folk music, one that ranges from traditional Irish songs to ballads and contemporary folk. Aoife comes from the small town of Carrick-on-Suir, in County Tipperary, Ireland, where her musical career began at an early age. Her father Bobby Clancy, of the legendary Clancy Brothers, placed a guitar in her hands at age 10, and by age 14 was playing with her father in nearby pubs.

A former member of the acclaimed group Cherish the Ladies, for the past four years the SouthCoast resident has toured extensively, doing no fewer than 200 dates a year throughout the United States and Europe. She has been a featured soloist

with orchestras such as the Boston Pops and Cincinnati Pops. Now with seven recordings under her belt in the last decade, Aoife has clearly established herself as one of the divas of Irish and contemporary folk music.

As Mike Jackson of the Canberra Times remarked, "she has a breadth of styles that make her concerts fascinating. Her singing would melt packed ice with its warmth and richness."

Robbie O'Connell, Aoife's cousin, has been described as "a national treasure" by Ireland's top music magazine, Hot Press, which calls him "... a man blessed with an enviable turn of phrase and a gift for melody bestowed on only the few."

Robbie was born in Waterford, Ireland, and grew up in Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, where his parents had a small hotel. He began to play guitar and sing at 13 and soon became a regular performer at the hotel's weekly folk concerts.

He has performed solo; with groups such as the Clancy Brothers, Mick Moloney and Jimmy Keane, and The Green Fields of America; and with his cousins Aoife and Donal Clancy as The Clancy Legacy. He has taught songwriting at a number of workshops and festivals, and is currently working on a new solo CD of his own compositions.

Concluding the series at 3 p.m. April 3 will be a chamber ensemble of New Bedford Symphony Orchestra Musicians performing a concert of baroque works to welcome Spring.

The 1831 building, renowned as the Whalemens' Chapel in Melville's "Moby-Dick," is suffering from water and insect damage, and costly rehabilitation is required. Thanks to the sponsorship of Isaksen Fishing Corp., New Bedford Ship Supply and the Ladies' Branch., 100 percent of the proceeds will go to the restoration fund.

Tickets, priced at \$25 each, are available online at <http://seamensbethel.eventbrite.com> , from EUR0/Phoenix in Fairhaven, Baker Books in Dartmouth, or from Peter Haley,

director of the Seamen's Bethel and Mariners' Home, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays by calling (508) 992-3295.

All tax-deductible donations for the project are welcome. Checks can be made out to the Port Society, 15 Johnny Cake Hill, New Bedford, MA 02740 and marked Building Restoration Fund.

For more information, visit www.portsociety.org or call (508) 992-3295.