

THE Irish EXAMINER

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artsexaminer

An Irish Colloquy

By Gwen Orel

The regional premiere of *Acallam na Senorach*: "An Irish Colloquy," performed by the Irish Chamber Choir, under the direction of conductor Paul Hillier, will take place at the Alexander Kasser Theater, in Montclair, New Jersey on October 16 at 3pm.

The English language work by Tarik O'Regan describes St. Patrick's encounter with Cailte and Oisín, the last of Fionn mac Cumhaill's legendary band of warriors.

It fuses ancient folklore and religious history with music that draws on Irish and North African sounds.

A Colloquy, Composer Tarik O'Regan explained, is "a discussion in public."

The medieval narrative is about the summoning of the newly-arrived Patrick

and the two warriors of ancient Ireland.

The narrative is not really about proselytizing, it's a cultural handshake. "It's a bit like a summit, but it's in Ireland. It takes place in the entire island of Ireland. The book is made up of 200 tiny stories. It's a narrative map. Each story takes place somewhere in particular."

Acallam na Senorach dates from the 12th century, though the sources date from the 16th.

O'Regan says it is the most important of all the Fenian narratives, a combination truth and fiction.

There was a real Patrick, who had discussions. But this story became a frame to write down the hundreds of other stories.

O'Regan's heritage is North African on his mother's side, and Irish on his father's: "I was very inter-

ested in the relationship between North Africa and Ireland."

He used some influences of Irish traditional music: the bodhrán is called a bendir in Morocco.

The guitar writing is influenced by the North African oud, and even "Morris dancing" which is "Moorish dancing." So there are two cultures musically in the piece.

Guitar player Stuart French points out that usually, one sees harp and choir together. The guitar part is unusual.

"The storytelling draws you in," he says. ☺

The National Chamber Choir of Ireland is the country's flagship choral ensemble. Under the artistic directorship of internationally celebrated and multi award winning choral conductor Paul Hillier, the choir is known for its unique approach to programming and has gained a reputation for the high artistic quality of its performances.

The choir remains a thriving force on a very active choral scene both at home and abroad.

To learn more about National Chamber Choir of Ireland, please visit www.nationalchamberchoir.com.

Since its inception, the National Chamber Choir of Ireland has made a significant contribution to the growth of the choral music repertoire repository in Ireland through its commitment to commissioning new work. The choir's repertoire extends from early to contemporary music, regularly commissioning pioneering vocal work by composers such as Gerald Barry, Andrew Hamilton, Siobhan Cleary, Kevin Volans and Tarik O'Regan.

Given its strong commitment to touring in Ireland, the choir is keen to keep developing its touring network in order to present high quality choral concerts to audiences all around the country. Internationally, the choir has toured extensively in Europe, Asia and South America and will embark on a tour of the US in the fall of 2011 with conductor Paul Hillier.

TICKET, TRANSPORTATION AND DINING INFORMATION

All tickets are \$15 and are available at the Alexander Kasser Theater Box Office, by calling 973-655-5112 or online at www.peakperfs.org.

Charter bus service is provided from New York City's Port Authority Bus Terminal - arcade on 41st Street between 8th and 9th Avenues - to the Alexander Kasser Theater (\$10 per person, roundtrip) for all Saturday and Sunday performances. Bus reservations may be made by calling 973-655-5112 or by visiting www.peakperfs.org.

For restaurants close to the Alexander Kasser Theater, visit www.destinationmontclair.com.

Montclair State University is located at 1 Normal Avenue, Montclair, New Jersey 07043.

