

Celtic Trio Celebrates 20 Years

Rediscovering the true spirit of the season

BY CHRISTINE MATHIAS

For the past 20 years David Stuart Bull has been performing a dramatic reading of Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales" to intimate audiences.

With each passing year, what started as a small gathering of friends grew until now, seeing Bull's performance is as much a part of the pre-holiday season for some as getting tickets to *The Nutcracker*.

Two years after his first solo performance, Bull's reading evolved into a magical experience of Celtic music and spoken word. Bull met fiddle player Linda Danielson while sweeping her chimney, and guitarist Chico Schwall came tumbling after. It didn't take long for these intriguing performers to create a Eugene holiday tradition that left the audience begging for more.

If Santa Claus quit his day job and became a chimney sweep, he'd be David Stuart Bull. They both have a laugh that seems to tumble through their belly before rolling into your ears. They share a few physical attributes in the best kind of way and both carry on traditions that bring a sort of satisfaction to the lives they touch.

For years Bull said audience members clamored for a recording of the performance.

"This year we actually did it!" says Schwall before Bull bellowed, "I guess we figured we'd better do it before one of us croaks." Bull let one of those deep laughs roll into the room.



**A CELTIC HOLIDAY CD release performance
Sunday, Dec. 5 • Lord Leebrick Theater, \$10**

"I guess we just got sick of hearing, 'When are you going to record?'" from the audience," Danielson said. End of discussion.

A Celtic Holiday is a CD compilation of song and story that highlight the performance. "It's about poetry, it's about family and history, for some it's religious or seasonal. That's what this celebrates," said Schwall.

Many people who've seen the show

agree. It isn't really about any particular religious experience; it's about sharing the beauty of "ice-cream hills" and "wind-cherried noses" with those close to you. It doesn't involve shopping carts and plastic reindeer, or baby Jesus or a menorah, but it is a holiday tradition everyone can enjoy.

Bull estimates that about half the audience members come back year after year. "That means it's become a tradition," he said. But more than a tradition, the thing that keeps the audience hooked is the warm, magical feeling the performance brings to the holidays.

Roanne Bank has not missed the opportunity to see the performance in 20 years. The one year that Bull was away for the season, she tried to get other performers to carry on the same holiday spirit, but said "it felt like something was missing." When Bank reminisces about an animated Bull showering Dylan's story upon an intimate audience, her eyes glow. "It just feels like the holidays," she said. Just being near her as she speaks makes you feel warm. "It's about holidays being a time to connect with family and friends; that's what the story is about, and that's what people are doing as they listen."

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