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ALL THINGS MUSIC

LIVE
MUSIC FOR
THE WEEK
p.6

Five Pint Mary's Michael Holmes was humble, passionate about music

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY • The Bulletin

Michael and Sarah Holmes, co-leaders of Irish folk-rock group Five Pint Mary, visited Ireland in June 2019 with their kids, Evan and Wynona. While there, they stayed at a hotel across the street from Trinity College Dublin, near the busy shopping district on Grafton Street. The hotel, like many in Ireland, had a bar, and one night, the family heard singing.

“We thought, ‘Wow, I guess it’s true, people really do sing at the bars here,’ Sarah said. “And we both come around the corner, and here’s this group of guys — mostly young men — all singing around a big, giant pub table. We were just awestruck by that; they were a wonderful choir, just the eight-part harmonies and really a lot of Irish music, and kind of popular world music as well. We just got to know them because we stayed there in that hotel for four days, and a couple of them actually worked in the bar as well. And then on our last night in Dublin, we went to what was their first big concert at a place called Liberty Hall in Dublin.”

Michael died March 13 when his heart stopped in his sleep. An exact cause of death was not known at the time, Sarah said. He was 63. Sarah was lying next to him, she said, and Evan was in the house at the time.

Just days before, Five Pint Mary teased

a return to live performance with a St. Patrick’s Day busking set at O’Kanes at McMenamins Old St. Francis School. The band had performed at the venue annually for the St. Patrick’s Day and Halfway to St. Patrick’s Day celebrations since at least 2011.

Condolences poured in over the next couple of weeks, many from friends and fellow musicians in Central Oregon. Sarah also received a note from Kevin Roche, a member of The Ramparts, the singing group they met in Dublin:

“You inspired me with your passion for music and Irish culture, he was a more patriotic Irishman than the best of us. You know you’ve lost something special when it touches hearts all over the globe.”

“I guess for myself, I had no idea that Michael had made such an impact on people,” Sarah said. “And they all have so many wonderful things to say just about his kindness

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Submitted photo

Michael Holmes performs at The Dublin Pub in Portland.

“You inspired me with your passion for music and Irish culture, he was a more patriotic Irishman than the best of us. You know you’ve lost something special when it touches hearts all over the globe.”

— Kevin Roche, a member of The Ramparts, speaking about Michael Holmes

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