



CELTIC THUNDER BIOGRAPHIES

CELTIC THUNDER, a brand-new show created and produced by Sharon Browne, made its debut in the U.S. with a public television special airing on local stations nationwide in March 2008. Filmed in the Helix in Dublin last August, the show features five male vocalists (Damian McGinty, Keith Harkin, Ryan Kelly, Paul Byrom, and George Donaldson) performing an eclectic mix of songs, ranging from the traditional “Mountains of Mourne” and “Come By the Hills” to international hits such as “Brothers in Arms” and “Desperado,” as well as original compositions by **CELTIC THUNDER**’s musical director and composer Phil Coulter and one track *Lauren & I* penned by Keith himself. The ensemble songs reflect the power of the soloists, who range in age from 14 to 40 and share a common Celtic heritage. Meet the men of **Celtic Thunder**:

Keith Harkin

From the age of four, Keith has been wowing audiences with his beautiful voice and musical virtuosity. As well as possessing a voice spun from gold, he is also an accomplished songwriter and guitarist. Now 21, Keith has played at the Tavistock Festival in the UK and was the lead in BBC’s “Dha Theanga” in 2006 – also composing and recording songs for the show. Keith has shared his talents by opening for acts such as John Martyn and David Kitt in 2007. It was a serendipitous day when Keith returned from London one afternoon (where he is currently recording a solo album) and heard about the auditions for **Celtic Thunder**, as they were already in progress! He called into the auditions on spec just as they were finishing, auditioned and was very happy to be asked then and there to attend the final auditions in Dublin, and was ultimately selected as one of the five soloists for the **Celtic Thunder** show.

Ryan Kelly

Ryan has been singing since the age of seven in various choirs but most enjoys singing Irish Traditional and Folk Music – and became singing champion at the SCOR competition in March 2007. Ryan, now 28, finished second in the BBC television “Country Cool” competition in 2003, and performed alongside Westlife, Girls Aloud and Simply Red in the televised “Children in Need Live Charity Concert” at the Odyssey in Belfast to an audience of over 8,000. Ryan is actively involved in Amateur Dramatics and has played the lead in “Blood Brothers” and the role of “Judas Iscariot” in “Jesus Christ Superstar.” Auditioning for **Celtic Thunder** and being chosen as one of the five successful vocalists has taken Ryan’s passion for Traditional Irish Music to a professional level.

George Donaldson

As a self-taught and accomplished musician, George plays guitar, flute, mandolin, bodhran, and banjo. George's love of Celtic music stems from his childhood in Glasgow, where his main influence was his late father Bernard, who had a love and appreciation of all kinds of live music played from the heart. Nothing pleased his father more than seeing George becoming a successful musician and playing at his beloved Celtic Park in front of 65,000 fans at the opening match of the 2000/01 Season. Now at 40 years of age, George is a well-established singer in the vibrant Glasgow and West of Scotland Folk scene. He has recorded folk sessions for BBC Scotland and made appearances at Glasgow's own Celtic Connections and the Glasgow West End Festival. To date, George has toured in America, Canada and Europe, and has developed a fondness for Germany, where he has a great following. He is looking forward to his travels with **Celtic Thunder** – marking his most exciting musical adventure to date.

Damian McGinty

Rounding out the group as the youngest member, Damian was only 14 years old at the time of filming, and is in his third year of middle school in Derry, Northern Ireland. He lives with his parents, and his brother and sister, and when he's not singing he loves playing football. Damian began singing at a young age, winning his first music competition at the age of six. Currently, Damian is in a drama society and the City of Derry Choir. After winning a singing competition in 2006, Damian's public profile was significantly boosted and he made appearances at various concerts: the Millennium Forum for Derry City football team, and for the Red Cross. Damian recorded a solo CD and sent a copy of it to Phil Coulter, who passed it to Sharon Browne. As a result, Damian was invited to audition as a singer for **Celtic Thunder**. Damian's excitement and enthusiasm for **Celtic Thunder** is infectious, and after seeing him sing, there was no way he would not be part of this stellar group of young men.

Paul Byrom

Dublin born, Paul has been hailed as Ireland's premier young tenor and it is easy to see why. Singled out at an early age as having a special vocal talent, Paul was encouraged to pursue his dream and began voice study and training at the tender age of seven. He studied under Dr Veronica Dunne, Ireland's leading lady of opera and a renowned vocal teacher. A professional singer by his early teens, Paul recorded his first album as a boy soprano when he was 14. He released his album VELVET in Ireland in 2005 to great critical acclaim, placing him firmly at number two in the music charts. Since then, Paul has gone on to sell out concerts at the prestigious National Concert Hall in Dublin in 2006 and again in 2007, while also performing at major sporting events in Ireland and abroad. When the auditions for **Celtic Thunder** were announced, Phil Coulter contacted Paul and invited him to audition for Sharon Browne, and he was naturally selected as one of the five brilliant members of Celtic Thunder. "I am thrilled to be part of the **Celtic Thunder** project and to work with Sharon and Phil," says Paul. "We had so much fun making the show, and it is very exciting to think about bringing it to US audiences."

CELTIC THUNDER was filmed in Dublin in August 2007 for broadcast on public television in the USA. The CD and DVD were released by Decca (Universal) on March 18th 2008. A 48 City tour of the USA starts on the 3rd October this year.

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