

Dáithí Sproule

Dáithí Sproule, a native of Derry in the North of Ireland, is a singer and guitarist and one of the premier accompanists in the Irish tradition. When he played with Skara Brae in the late 60's and early 70's, he was the first person to use and develop the DADGAD tuning in Irish music, a style now widely used in Irish and Celtic music in general. Skara Brae recorded a ground-breaking album in 1971 involving intricate arrangements for guitars and keyboards of traditional songs in Irish -- the other members of the group were Maighréad Ní Dhomhnaill and her sister and brother, Mícheál and Tríona, later of the Bothy Band and Nightnoise. He had met the ÓDomhnaills first in Rannafast in Donegal where he learnt the Irish language and many old Gaelic songs while spending every summer there of his teens.

After the breakup of Skara Brae, Dáithí, who by then lived in Dublin while pursuing academic studies and a career in book editing, became heavily involved with the traditional instrumental scene in Dublin, gaining a great grounding in a broad repertoire of Irish music and styles and playing sessions many nights a week with the legendary fiddler, John Kelly Senior, and his sons, John and James, at the Four Seasons in Capel Street. In that period he also played frequent gigs with other musicians as well as making solo appearances. At the end of the 70's James Kelly and Dáithí and their friend, Paddy Ó'Brien, came to the US to record an album with Shanachie Records and to tour for a few months. This led over the course of the next year or two to all three settling in the States. Minnesota was Dáithí's home for the next 20 years. The Twin Cities provided a good home for Dáithí (and Paddy too) since it had a very active Irish music and dance scene. In that period, Dáithí taught Old Irish, Celtic mythology and Irish music at various times at the University of Minnesota, the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul and University College Dublin. He also, of course, continued his music, playing locally in Minnesota with the Northern Star Ceili Band, touring and recording with Trian (Liz Carroll and Billy McComiskey), Peter Ostroushko (Ukrainian-American fiddle and mandolin virtuoso and long-time star of the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show), and with world-renowned Irish band, Altan.

With Altan, Dáithí has toured the US and Canada numerous times playing concert halls from coast to coast (last year they played the Hollywood Bowl), all the major folk festivals, such as Edmonton, Winnipeg, Philadelphia, Telluride and Milwaukee, and as far afield as Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand as well as many tours throughout Europe. Dáithí has appeared with Altan on a recent Chieftains album, on several Dolly Parton recordings and performed on stage with Ricky Skaggs and Bonnie Raitt. Among his many other recordings are albums with Tommy Peoples and Seamus and Manus McGuire, and a solo recording, "A Heart made of Glass". As well as his actual playing, Dáithí is a composer of songs and instrumentals, some of which have been recorded by Skara Brae, Altan, Paddy O'Brien, Laoise Kelly, Trian and Liz Carroll. He has also published a volume of short stories in Irish and several academic articles on early Irish poetry and legend.

Dáithí now lives in Western Massachusetts and tours regularly with both Altan and fiddler Randal Bays. Their duo recording, "Overland" is available on Foxglove Records. www.foxgloverecords.com