

Music Notes / By Colleen Taylor

O'Hanlon's career has taken off

After a lot of hard work, singer Emmett O'Hanlon is finally indulging his guilty pleasure. Having recently earned a master's degree in voice from none other than Julliard and having established an international career as one of the five members of Celtic Thunder, it's high time this young talent did something for himself. And that's just what his latest tour and solo EP is: a foray into the 23-year-old's musical interests outside his niche as a classical musician. For the first time, the young baritone is embarking on a solo tour and career, in which he will be at liberty to explore the other sides of his musical identity, his "guilty pleasure music" as he terms it, from Elvis to Motown and American pop, circumnavigating back to his core classical and Irish signatures.

Emmett O'Hanlon is a native of New York City, but his second home is Ireland. The son of Irish parents, O'Hanlon spent a lot of time in Ireland visiting family when he was growing up. "I feel very at home when I'm there," O'Hanlon told me, "and I miss it when I'm gone." It's no surprise, then, that his Irish heritage informs a key facet of his musical interests. O'Hanlon says his influences involve everything from traditional music to Irish rock: "the Clancy Brothers, Black 47, growing up there was a lot of Irish music played in the household."

The American part of his nationality has been equally informative of O'Hanlon's musical development. Alongside the Irish music, his parents often encouraged his interest in the American songbook. Now O'Hanlon has reapplied those early interests to his solo tour. He calls his set list a "balanced hodgepodge"—one that in-



Julliard graduate Emmett O'Hanlon feels at home with the music of his parents' native land.

cludes classical musical theatre, Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra and Elvis, all of whom he identifies as his musical heroes.

O'Hanlon has been training as a musician since the age of 6 when he first picked up the guitar and piano, and he officially began singing lessons as young as 8—a start which eventually led him to a bachelor's degree in voice from University of Cincinnati. But it's really the last two years that have seen his career take off. He became the newest member of Celtic Thunder in 2014. "One of the great things about Celtic Thunder," O'Hanlon said, "is everyone has their own spot in the show, character-wise and vocally, so we're all put in a particular style. I'm the classical style." The tour with Celtic Thunder allowed O'Hanlon to apply skills he picked up at Julliard, where he not only learned classical vocal performance and composition, but grew some thick skin as well. "They don't baby you [at

Julliard]," he said, "They give you what you give them... They totally changed the way I thought about what it took to be a musician." Clearly, O'Hanlon is a quick learner.

In his break from the Celtic Thunder tour, O'Hanlon decided to pursue the longtime dream of a solo career with the support of musical director David Munro. "It's always something I've wanted to do, and hopefully I'll be able to keep it up," he told me excitedly. As opposed to the large venues and dramatic scale of the Celtic Thunder shows, O'Hanlon's solo tour offers a more intimate, personable setting. "I'm using [the tour] to do all the music that I love. The fans get to hear a side of my voice and see a side of me you'd never see in a Celtic Thunder show," Emmett said. The tour isn't just about hearing O'Hanlon's voice outside of its strict classical boundaries, it's also about learning who Emmett is

as an Irish-American music fan. He defines his "guilty pleasure" music as those genres he's always loved since he was young: his show is an organic, personal account of what the eclectic melting pot of Irish-American culture sounds like, interpreted by a well-trained, passionate, and talented young voice.

O'Hanlon is living, audible proof that age is deceptive. You wouldn't expect a twenty-three year old young man to have the poise, acumen, and musical intelligence this Julliard graduate has. And as for his voice: it soars well beyond his youth. I confess, I was happily flabbergasted when I first listened to O'Hanlon's EP. His voice enraptured, captivated me to a degree I did not anticipate: its

ease, velvety emotion, and depth are truly extraordinary. There are scores of great singers in this country and abroad, scores of accomplished classical vocalists—visit any university and you'll see the numerous extent of the talent. It takes a special something for a voice to stand out from the talented crowd, to leave a lasting impression, and O'Hanlon's does.

That Frank Sinatra is a musical hero for O'Hanlon doesn't surprise me: when he sings, he emulates that secret, magical ingredient Sinatra did. It's an unnameable quality that puts the listener into an instant state of calm, that quietly moves her, so that she can listen to the same track over and over again without fatigue or boredom. I wouldn't generally enjoy listening to the song "Cry Me a River," for instance, but I do when O'Hanlon sings it. His rendition of "Falling in Love with You" is pure, old-time romance.

This tour is only the beginning for the young Irish-American crooner. I can promise Emmett O'Hanlon is a name worth flagging for future reference. O'Hanlon will be finishing his summer tour off with a bang in his hometown of New York City on August 24th at the Cutting Room, where he'll be joined by original Celtic Woman member Chloe Agnew. Don't miss O'Hanlon take the stage on his own, in the more intimate, engaging setting of the Cutting Room. He's bound to enchant you.

Tickets at: emmettohanlon.com

The Irish Echo Quiz

1. What was the title of the 1934 novel by John O'Hara (the 1960 screen adaptation starred Elizabeth Taylor) that referred to a telephone answering service?
2. Complete the name of this North American bird: "Ruby-throated_____."
3. Dr. Patrick Hillary, the Irish president from 1976-1990, was a native of which Irish county?
4. Glen Frey and Don Henley are members of what American rock band that was formed in 1971?
5. Which Leinster county won the All-Ireland hurling championship in 1981 and the All Ireland football championship the following year?
6. Ann Richards was governor of which U.S. state from 1991-1995?
7. Name the Christian minister whom Coretta Scott married in 1953.
8. North Chungcheong is one of the eight provinces in which Asian country?
9. CIA U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was captured in the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960, 1961 or 1962.
10. Singer Mary O'Brien, who was born in North London in 1939 and died in 1999, was better known by what stage name?

Answers are on Page 17

RECIPES

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3. To serve, put a spoonful of sour cream or crème fraîche on top of each cake. Put a piece of rolled salmon on top, sprinkle with pepper, and garnish with chives and caviar or roe.

SMOKED SALMON PÂTÉ

Serves 4

This easy smoked salmon pâté is lovely served on wheat crackers, oat biscuits, or brown soda bread

12 oz. Burren smoked salmon
1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese, at room temperature
4 tbsp. heavy (whipping) cream
1 tbsp. chopped fresh chives
1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
1 tsp. lemon pepper
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 tsp. prepared horseradish

Pinch cayenne pepper
1 tbsp. minced fresh dill
Chopped red onions for garnish (optional)

1. In a food processor or blender, combine all the ingredients; process for 20-30 seconds, or until smooth. Transfer to a serving dish, cover, and refrigerate for 4-24 hours.

2. To serve, remove the dish from the refrigerator about 1 hour before serving to soften. Serve with crackers, biscuits, or bread and garnish with the onions (if using).

Margaret M. Johnson's latest cookbook, "Favorite Flavors of Ireland," will be released October 8. She will also be leading her second tour to Ireland in May 2016. For details, see the ad in this week's Irish Echo or visit www.irishcook.com.



Cliffs of Moher. MARGARET M. JOHNSON