

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

*presents*

# The High Kings

*featuring*

**Finbarr Clancy  
Brian Dunphy  
Darren Holden  
George Murphy**

Saturday, March 17, 2018  
Concert Hall

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

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The Forbes Center 2017-2018 Masterpiece Season  
is sponsored by Kathy Moran Wealth Group.

# Program

Songs will be selected from the following:

ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN  
MARIE'S WEDDING  
KELLY FROM KILLANE  
NANCY SPAIN  
EARLY MORNING RAIN  
BLACK VELVET BAND  
SPANCIL HILL  
*A CAPPELLA*  
GRACE  
BRENNAN ON THE MOOR  
TOWN I LOVED SO WELL  
FINNEGAN'S WAKE

## 15-Minute Intermission

RISING OF THE MOON  
OH MAGGIE  
STAR COUNTY DOWN  
RIDE ON  
IRISH PUB SONG  
ON RAGLAN ROAD  
HAND ME DOWN MY BIBLE  
THE FIELDS OF ATHENRY  
FOUR GREEN FIELDS  
THE LEAVING OF LIVERPOOL  
WHISKEY IN THE JAR  
DIRTY AULD TOWN  
PARTING GLASS

Patrons are reminded to turn off all pagers, cell phones, personal computers, and any other electronic devices.

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## The High Kings

Ten years ago, four Irish singer-songwriters decided to take a calculated risk. Members of The High Kings had a wealth of history in the music business, but knew that in order to maintain any level of creative interest, they would have to boldly go where no other Irish ballad group had gone before. In truth, back in the mid-late '90s, Ireland needed a group like The High Kings. The heyday of ballad groups such as The Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners was a distant memory for generations of music fans. To have another group of Irish performers continuing the tradition was great news to thousands of Irish music fans worldwide. The four members immediately knew that something special was taking place and within months had clicked as a creative unit as well as becoming friends.

The High Kings self-titled debut album, released in 2008, reached No. 2 on *Billboard* magazine's World Music Chart. It was during the members' second U.S. tour in 2011, having graduated from playing small venues to larger halls as they promoted their follow-up album *Memory Lane*, that everyone realized the fan base was growing beyond anyone's expectations. The group's tour of Ireland sold out within hours. Members of The High Kings had achieved what many had thought impossible: they had moved the Irish ballad tradition into the here and now, reaching both their steadfast older fans and new audiences.

The group's third studio album in 2013, *Friends For Life*, featured both original songs and traditional fare. With this album, The High Kings embarked on a new chapter. Stepping out of the shadows inevitably highlighted the band's own original songwriting talents.

To say that The High Kings are charting a new course for Irish ballad music – equal parts rousing and reflective – is an understatement. The group is leading a new era for Irish folk music and aiming to bring a broad demographic along for the journey. With its 2016 album, *Grace & Glory*, the band continued to widen its appeal internationally.

The year 2017 marked The High Kings' 10th anniversary, celebrating a decade of outstanding songs and performances. The departure of original High King Martin Furey and the arrival of singer George Murphy has brought a new edge to The High Kings and its audiences alike. The November 2017 release of *DECADE - Best of the High Kings* garnered rave reviews and reached record sales with the band again topping the Irish Album Charts and returning to the *Billboard* World Music Charts.

# Biographies

**FINBARR CLANCY** was born in County Waterford to Moira and Bobby, a member of the famous Clancy Brothers. Growing up in the Clancy dynasty, F. Clancy was plucking the banjo and playing the bodhrán from the age of five, went on to learn the guitar and flute, and began writing songs at the age of 17. F. Clancy began touring North America with his father and uncles in 1995. As part of The Clancy Brothers, F. Clancy played all over the world and had many TV appearances as well as recording credits. It was when F. Clancy decided to move back to Ireland after touring the United States that he joined The High Kings. The music of the Clancys was integral to F. Clancy's musical education, and he hopes to continue this strong ballad tradition with The High Kings.

**BRIAN DUNPHY** was born in Dublin. His father was a popular singer in Ireland, so he realized early on that the musical path would be the one he would follow. Dunphy's biggest break came when he won the lead singer role in *Riverdance: The Show*, traveling extensively throughout America, Canada, China, Australia and Europe. He spent two years singing at the Gershwin Theatre on Broadway in New York and as lead vocalist in Radio City Music Hall. While in New York, he had the honor of performing the American national anthem at Madison Square Garden and appearing on *The Today Show*. Throughout his career, Dunphy has had the honor of recording with many artists including world-renowned violinist Vanessa-Mae, Celtic Woman, Bill Whelan's Riverdance on Broadway and Riverdance - The 10th Anniversary. Dunphy is never fazed by the wisecracking comments thrown at him from a sometimes raucous audience member. Being of a gregarious nature, he immensely enjoys meeting fans of The High Kings after a show and hearing their stories. Although Dunphy loves touring, he loves his family life as well—and sees no conflict between selling out to a 1000-strong crowd one night and serving up breakfast to his son the next morning, as he feels that roles as both performer and father are a good fit for him.

**DARREN HOLDEN** is not only a prolific songwriter and musician, but a master interpreter of lyrics as well. Originally from Mooncoin County Kilkenny, he is comfortable performing all genres of music from pop

and jazz to country and Celtic. Holden starred as Piano Man (Billy Joel) in the Tony Award-winning hit, Billy Joel/Twyla Tharp musical *Movin' Out* both on Broadway and on tour for four years, receiving unanimous critical acclaim throughout the United States, Canada and Japan. He was lead singer with Riverdance on Broadway and on tour for more than three years. A “top 10 recording artist in Ireland,” Holden toured with Boyzone on its first major tour of Ireland and the United Kingdom, and had numerous chart hits on his own. Holden relished the opportunity to join The High Kings, and is happy to add his songwriting skills to the band. Although his schedule is hectic, he manages to balance his work and home life; he finds time to help out many worthy charities and frequently uses his talents to help others raise funds.

**GEORGE MURPHY** was born in the north Dublin suburb of Beaumont on the second anniversary of the death of The Dubliners' Luke Kelly. Murphy has a remarkable, unmistakable voice; his familiar yet unique and audibly magnetic tone is clear from the first note he sings. Murphy burst onto the Irish music scene over a decade ago as a 17-year-old contestant on the Irish TV show, *You're a Star*. Performing in public for the first time, his audition for the program was The Dubliners' song, “Raglan Road.” Irish composer Phil Coulter, one of the shows judges, went on to work with Murphy and produced his first album. Murphy's young yet powerful voice led him to perform the ballads of the great Irish musicians who went before him and the opportunity to sing and share the stage with people he had only ever dreamed of meeting, The Dubliners, Ronnie Drew, The Fureys, The Wolfe Tones, Aslan and Paddy Casey. After his second album, Murphy initiated a tour of the United States, which was widely received and acknowledged. His connection with the Irish diaspora in the U.S. made him stay focused on the traditional Irish music genre that is close to his heart and that more closely reflects his personal musical style. Murphy was in and out of the studio working on his music when he got a call from The High Kings' management with an offer—that he jumped at—to join the band. The future promises to be even more dynamic as Murphy fills his role as vocalist and multi-instrumentalist in front of whole new audiences.