

## James Kelly Long Bio

James Kelly, a native of Ireland, is one of the greatest Irish traditional fiddlers of our time. Born in Dublin, James grew up listening to and playing traditional Irish music. His father, John Kelly, the renowned fiddle and concertina player from Co. Clare, began teaching James to play at the age of 3. James' father was also a founding member, with Sean O'Riada, of "Ceoltoiri Cualann", a traditional group that, in many ways, was responsible for the modern revival in Irish Music. James' love of the music and his ability as a player launched, at age 14, his performing and recording career with several broadcasts for R.T.E. (Irish National Radio and T.V.).

At the age of 16, he won first place in the prestigious Fiddler of the Year competition and he also recorded his first album, a fiddle duet with his brother John. During that time, he joined the group Ceoltoiri Leigheann (Leinster Musicians), that included his father John, Paddy O'Brien, Mary Bergin, and Paddy Glackin. He recorded 2 albums with this group before emigrating to the U.S. in 1978. He spent the next three years touring the U.S with Paddy O'Brien and Daithi Sproule and recorded two albums for Shanachie records.

James has toured Europe, the U.S., Canada and South America and was a member of many groups, including: "Kinvara" (Dolores Keane, John Faulkner, Jackie Daly); "Bowhand" (with Paddy O'Brien and Daithi Sproule, later with Paddy and Bernie Mc Donald); "Patrick Street" (Kevin Burke, Andy Irvine, Gerry O Beirne, Triona Ni Domhnaill and Declan Masterson); and the legendary Irish folk group, "Planxty" (Liam Flynn, Andy Irvine, Dolores Keane, Bill Whelan, Arty McGlynn). He has appeared several times with the Grammy award winning Irish group, "The Chieftains." In recent years he received the prestigious "Florida Folk Heritage Award" as well as the "Florida Individual Artist Fellowship in Folk Arts Award." James is currently the TG4 Irish traditional musician of the year, having been awarded the "Gradam Ceoil TG4 2006 Irish Musician of the Year" award in recognition of his outstanding musicianship and contributions to Irish music (TG4 is Ireland's Irish-language TV station).

In addition to his performing career, James has composed over 800 tunes and has considerable experience in teaching Irish music. He established weekly fiddle classes at Na Piobairi Uilleann (the Piper's Club) in Dublin in the early 1980's, he has taught for many years and continues to teach at the prestigious Willie Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare as a master fiddle teacher; and he has participated in the student-teacher program sponsored by Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, giving fiddle exhibitions. He has twice been awarded grants to teach as a master artist in the Florida Folklife Apprenticeship Program. In the field of research, he was a co-worker with the late Breandan Breathnach, the great authority on Irish music, in compiling his complete index (over 10,000) of traditional Irish dance tunes. In 1983, James wrote a review of a publication on Sligo fiddle styles in the Irish journal "Ceol".

Although he has played and recorded with some of Ireland's premier folk groups, it is as a solo performer that James has made his reputation. He has played many of the major U.S. folk festivals, including the Philadelphia Folk Festival, Wheatland, the Milwaukee Irish

Festival and more. Additionally, James has appeared a number of times on Garrison Keillor's national radio program, "A Prairie Home Companion." In 1988, James was a presenter of the "Pure Drop" series for Irish T.V. hosting six shows of this 12-part series about the traditional music and musicians of Ireland.

James recently released his third solo CD, is compiling his 800+ compositions for publication, as well as recording an instructional DVD for fiddle students. James continues to tour the U.S., Canada and Europe with some of Irish music's leading accompanists.

Two of the major influences on his playing are the Clare and Sligo styles, named for two counties in Ireland long famous for their fiddle music. The Clare style is even-flowing and highly ornamented, while the Sligo style, though equally ornamented, is bouncier. These influences along with many others have helped create a style which, to the ears of aficionados, is unmistakably James' own.

"James is one of the most outstanding Irish musicians of this or any generation." (Dr. Mick Moloney, Musician and Folklorist, New York University)

"As a virtuoso violinist and exponent of Irish traditional music, James ranks among the very best in Ireland today." (Tony MacMahon, Senior Producer, Radio Telefis Eireann)

"James Kelly is widely recognized as one of Ireland's leading traditional fiddle players." (Dermot McLaughlin, Traditional Music Officer, Irish Arts Council)

#### ALBUMS FEATURING JAMES KELLY

- 1) "John & James Kelly" (fiddle duet) Tara 1008.
- (2) "Crooked Road" (with "Ceoltoiri Leigheann") CEF.046 Gael-Linn.
- (3) "Star Of Munster" (with "Ceoltoiri Leigheann") CEF.047 Gael-Linn.
- (4) "Is It Yourself" (with Paddy O'Brien & Daithi Sproule, Bowhand).
- (5) "Spring In The Air" (with Paddy O'Brien & Daithi Sproule, Bowhand) 29018 Shanachie.
- (6) "Words And Music" (with "Planxty") 451 Warner Bros (WEA).
- (7) "Sail Og Rua" (with Dolores Keane & John Faulkner) Gael-Linn.
- (8) "Up The Airy Mountain" (with Sean O'Driscoll) 001 Green Linnet.
- (9) "In Our Time" (with Danny McGinley) Bui-001B Bunnan Bui.
- (10) "Capel Street" (Solo Album) Bow.0001 Bowhand.
- (11) "Irish Times" (with "Patrick Street") 1105 Green Linnet.
- (12) "My Love Is In America" (with 16 Irish Fiddlers in Boston, MA, 1990) 1110 Green Linnet.
- (13) "The Ring Sessions" (duet album with Zan McLeod) SPINCD 999 Claddagh Records (Ireland) / Rounder Records (U.S.A.).
- (14) "Music In The Meadow" (live from Wolf Trap, festival C.D.) Greater Washington Ceili Club.
- (15) "James Kelly" (Solo Album) CD896012 Capelhouse Records.

- (16) "Gaelic Roots" (Boston College Gaelic Roots Festival 1996) KM-9514 Kells.
- (17) "Handprints" pianist Donna Long's new solo CD.
- (18) "Melodic Journeys" James' new CD release (JKM 0147).