

WINTER SOLSTICE NIGHT

WELCOME FRIENDS TO THE CITY OF DUBLIN WINTER
SOLSTICE CELEBRATION FESTIVAL, 21 DECEMBER 2016.
FÁILTE A CHAIRDE GO DTÍ AN GRIANSTAD.

Slí an Chroí and Smashing Times Theatre Company, supported by ‘...the lives we live’ Grangegorman Public Art and Dublin City Council are delighted to present the 7th annual City of Dublin Winter Solstice Celebration Festival taking place on Wednesday 21 December 2016 from 6pm to 8pm. Bain taitneamh as an bhFéile!

INDOOR FESTIVAL

6-7pm, DIT Grangegorman Campus

On arrival you are welcomed by the Big Bang Festival drummers and dancer led by Brian Fleming. Come indoors and be entertained with the spirit of the Winter Solstice as you enjoy music, craft making, storytelling, poetry, song and refreshments, before joining us at 7pm for the parade assembly.

Foyer/Forhalla

Enjoy craft making activities. Make a seasonal ivy headdress or holly brooch for the parade. Create your own personal ‘withy’ (a decorated twig for your blessings/prayers/wishes that you will place in the Solstice fire when the parade arrives in Smithfield Square).

Céilí Room/Seomra Céilí

Enjoy music and traditional céilí dancing performed by Brian Boru.

Storytelling Room/Seomra Scéalaíochta

Enjoy storytelling, poetry and song as performers from the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama and storyteller Gemma McGowan bring you on a magical journey with introductions by Joseph Ryan, MC.

- *Twas the Night Before Christmas* by Clement Clark Moore performed by Orla Scally, Cian McCann, Kevin McMahon, Alixandra Bailey and Nicole Edgerton

- *Shamanic Santa Story* by Joseph Ryan performed by Muirenn Lyons, Patrick Murphy, Yanika Frank, Sean McManus, Conor Coyne and Joseph Ryan

- *The Story of Angus Óg of Newgrange* performed by Gemma McGowan

- *Winter Song* performed by Rebecca Duff, Aoife O'Rourke and Mark O'Reilly

- *The Yule Faeries - A Winter Solstice Story* performed by Muirenn Mulholland, Paige Leavy, Lir Garrett O'Donoghue and Grace Collender

- *O Darkest Night* performed by Yanika Frank

Restaurant/Bialann

Refreshments are available to buy – tea, coffee, hot chocolate, soft drinks, mince pies, treats - and there is a children's colouring corner for the little ones. Visit the holly brooch and ivy wreath stand, the withy stand, the hat and rattle making stand and the face-painting corner for a Winter Solstice design.

OUTDOOR FESTIVAL AND PARADE ASSEMBLY

7pm, An Croí – DIT Grangegorman Campus

The Parade assembles at 7pm and starts at 7.10pm, moving from DIT Grangegorman Campus to Smithfield Square, culminating in the Winter Solstice Fire Ceremony. MCs for the parade, John Cantwell and Karen Ward, call forward performers from the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama to begin the ceremony with a special movement piece as we all gather in the circle. A child is called forward to light the Winter Solstice Ceremonial Fire. Everybody joins in the parade as we walk together down to Smithfield Square led by the Fire Carriers, the drummers, the Sun Queen, the Snow Queen, the Ice Princesses and the flag bearers, bringing the spirit of Winter Solstice out to the city as we circle Smithfield Square, an historic place of assembly.

At the square we place our withies into the Winter Solstice ceremonial fire which is then lifted up to the city and to the world! Once the Fire Ceremony is complete, some of our wonderful local sponsors who are open, invite you to come and continue your evening with them – The Dice Bar, Mission Bar, Generator Bar, the Maldron Hotel Bar, Cobblestone Pub, Oscars Café Bar and Restaurant and The Barbers Pub.

WINTER SOLSTICE

The tradition of celebrating An Grianstad Gheimhridh – Winter Solstice – is an ancient seasonal rite of passage in the Celtic landscape. In truth it is ageless, for we know not when our Ancestors first stood together and paused in harmony with Mid-Winter, the day of the longest night. True, our sacred sites such as the world famous Newgrange Cairn, aligned to this morning's rising sun, tell us that over 5,000 years ago, Winter Solstice was important enough to build a temple to this poignant solar event. In our first language Gaeilge, Winter Solstice is An

Grianstad, literally translating as “the sun stop”. This accuracy in describing Father Sun's interaction with Mother Earth helps us to momentarily stop and integrate our fast moving modern lives with the plateau of maximum darkness and minimum light. These days of Winter Solstice are precious, the pinnacle of a darkening that calls us to rest, be still, recover and dream. The minutes of sunlight in our days will eventually begin to increase on that other great day of the Solstice season, December 25. This evening's gathering is dedicated to our lives today stopping and harmonising with ‘the sun stop’ hand in hand with our Ancestors, knowing very soon the dark will gracefully give way to the light.

‘...the experience of darkness, such a different condition to light. We are so accustomed to beginning things when the light is turned on, when the sun rises, when we open our eyes and adjust. Yet Nature says the beginnings are in the dark, that life first is dreamed and vibrates in the absence of light. The seeds sown in autumn germinate underground through winter before appearing as shoots in spring. Each one of us reading this lived our first 9 months or thereabouts in our mother's dark womb.

Our Ancestors understood this phenomenon intuitively, acknowledging the new day at dusk and the new year at Samhain (Hallow'een). The time between Samhain and the climax of the seasonal darkness of Winter Solstice is the precious dreamtime of new life. To stir ourselves as courageous and passionate dreamers at this time is to be in sync with the great natural dreaming about us. Birth new prayers, new wishes, new appreciations, new intentions, new manifestations for ourselves, for our world... the time for that is now, says Nature, spinning as we are into the dark dreamtime crescendo of Winter Solstice.’ From Slí an Chroí Writings.



AN EXCAVATION OF THE LIFE COURSE

By Féilim Ó Brádaigh

*The grave-grey limbs of the trees
In their autumn sufferings,
appeared to point;
The wind's invisible zeal seemed to
circle
And lay its fingers on the spot.*

*The boy watched.
Curiosity hatched.*

*Approached the spot –
Listened.*

*The brown earth pulsed, a sonorous
Convulsion of the world's flesh.
The boy's eyes glimmered, reflecting
Stars not in sight.*

*He decided to open, fetched
A shovel from the cobwebbed shed.*

*Stuck blunt edge into the earth.
Dug.*

*Dug time.
Dug seconds, dug the years.
Till under their layers he found –
Barely discernible in the dark
earth –*

*A bulk of feathers.
Black.*

*Two marble eyes
Blacker than blindness.*

*A beak like a black bone
Lost in the bowels of an ocean.
Boy gawked
Recognised omen.*

*Yet to its side, the earth let slip
A light,*

*A glowing penetration.
A sun, bursting from the dirt,
possessed*

*Till it reaped a blindness not black
But gold.
All-illuminating.
An enchantment as ancient as
blood.*

*It released the boy,
Dumbly smiling, forgetful,*

*But instilled, deeply, irreversibly
With a potent hunger for sun.*

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