



# Bringing the luck of the Irish to Floyd

Article & Photos by Colleen Redman, March 25, 2018



“Folk music is a voice of the people,” said Jim Sharkey during his St. Patrick’s Day house concert at Bella La Vita Inn in Floyd. It was the fifth time that the singer-songwriter has performed at the award-winning Inn, where he has built a reputation and has made connections that have furthered his musical career.

Sharkey, who grew up in County Roscommon, Ireland, was initially recommended to Inn keepers/owners Lisal Kayati and Matthew Roberts by one of their regular guests. His first performance was a hit, and he was welcomed back. .

Bella La Vita is where Sharkey met Floyd Countian Dave Fason of Windfall Studios. Fason went on to produce two of Sharkey’s CDs, “Misty Morning Rain” and “Sweet Anne’s



Road.” Sharkey has played at The Floyd Country Store and was recently featured on WVTF’s Roots Down show.

“We watched him go from singing karaoke to being a full-time musician,” said Kayati, who has become good friends with the musician. Sharkey, who recently moved with his wife from Roanoke to Salisbury NC, left a teaching job in 2014 to focus on playing music. Kayati reported that he loves playing at Bella La Vita because, unlike some loud pub scenes, people happily listen and “are here just for him.”

The St. Patrick’s Day concert audience of about 30 was mostly dressed in green. They were held in rapt attention by Sharkey’s melodic and emotionally engaging voice, and by his light-hearted storytelling. He played two sets of original and traditional folk music that included ballads, laments, sea shanties and contemporary songs. His rendition of the bawdy Seven Drunken Nights resulted in an uproar of laughter from the crowd.



Sharkey’s original songs included The Enchanted Cap, a melancholic song about longing, taken from a myth of a mermaid that was tricked to live on land “... She had eyes like wine / She had eyes that pine / She had eyes of burgundy...” His Sweet Anne’s Road was inspired by Sweet Annie’s Drive in Copper Hill.



Along with his original songs, Sharkey performed John Prine, Johnny Cash, John McCutcheon and John Denver songs. Requests for the evening included the traditional Star of County Down and Danny Boy. During intermission guests gathered outside when a large rainbow was spotted in the sky. “The luck of the Irish,” someone said. “Should we look for the pot of gold?” said another.

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