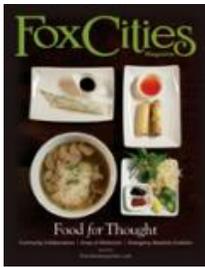




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# Web Exclusive: Interview with Irish rockers Jeans 'n Classics

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By Kaitlin Springmier

## Get classy this St. Patrick's Day by attending the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra's Performance of Irish rock favorites with Canadian band Jeans 'n Classics.

Last time Canadian Peter Brennan was in Green Bay, he threw beer on Green Bay Symphony Orchestra's guest conductor Andrew Sewell. "I was talking with my hands, as I usually do, and lost control of my drink," Brennan recalls. "It just went right at him." Throwing beer might be expected from rock stars, but not a classical symphonic arranger like Brennan. Luckily for the founder of Jeans 'n Classics, "[Sewell] forgave me instantly."

And lucky for us, as well, that he was forgiven. Thanks to Sewell's pardon, GBSO concertgoers will be able to enjoy a repeat performance from Brennan's unique band. Michelle Nikolai, manager of communications & community engagement for the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra (GBSO) has invited Jeans 'n Classics to perform on March 17 for a rockin' Irish concert. Jeans 'n Classics, along with the GBSO, will be performing hits from Irish bands like The Cranberries, Van Morrison, U2, Sinead O'Connor and Thin Lizzy. As Nikolai predicts, it will be, "a really high energy, exciting show."



Jeans 'n Classics is a rotating collection of approximately 20 musicians who travel around the US and Canada and perform rock and popular music with local orchestras. In preparation for these concerts, Brennan arranges the rock and pop tunes for a symphonic orchestra. The result is a fuller musical experience that encompasses, as Nikolai says, "So many different tambours and flavors that lend well to rock shows."

Jeans 'n Classics performances hearken 70s-era rock shows when classic bands like Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd would perform with full orchestras. "It enhances the music, certainly, because you have 50 to 60 people onstage," Brennan explains. Simply put, in Brennan's words, "there is all sorts of music going on."

Arranging rock songs for symphonic orchestras has taught Brennan a lot about music and the adaptive progress. "It has been a learning process for us, adapting popular music," he says. "Orchestras can play anything, but there's quite a bit of difference in producing the sound in an orchestra versus in a studio."

By recreating popular songs symphonically, Brennan gets the opportunity to see orchestral instruments create sounds that he never knew they could make. "I was surprised to learn that the violin section can produce fabulous guitar solos," Brennan says. "Look over to the strings section during a 'guitar solo,' and you will see them just flying."

And in his preparation for his upcoming concert with the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra on St. Patrick's Day, Brennan has developed a new appreciation for Irish rockers, especially Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees U2. "I really like U2," he says. "I like them even more since we've done the orchestra show. They've got great songwriters. There are layers and layers of sound work that are really fun to break down."

Hopefully, concertgoers enjoy U2 as much as Brennan does. "The entire second half of the show is U2 songs," Nikolai dishes. "It is a overview of their whole career."

Even though Brennan is excited to perform again with the GBSO, he is even more excited to sight-see around Green Bay. The first time that Jeans n' Classics played in Wisconsin, the band didn't get much of an opportunity to be tourists. "The first time we played here, it was a whirlwind experience," Brennan recalls. "We came in the night before, had one rehearsal, played the show, and then left."

The concert this St. Patrick's day promises to rock the house down while remaining a very personal experience for the musicians and concertgoers alike. Brennan attributes the intimacy of the show to the GBSO's friendly musicians, saying, "The Green Bay Symphony Orchestra is a terrific orchestra, not only musically, but personally to work with. They made us feel so at home, it felt very welcoming to be in Wisconsin."

Let's just hope he doesn't give any beer showers this time.