

Ciana

Traditional Irish Music

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Ciana is a Northern Nevada Celtic/Irish traditional group featuring fiddlers, Holly Sternberg and/or Tina Carlsen, joined by Joe Bly on Irish flute, pennywhistle, and bombarde and Kathy Bly on hard-driving, acoustic guitar and accordion. They create a musical energy that gets the audience clapping, stomping and hollering.

Ciana treats the audience to lush instrumental arrangements when Kathy Bly swaps the guitar for the Irish accordion and Joe Bly switches from flute to whistle in the middle of tunes. Joe is also one of the very few players of the bombarde on the west coast. The bombarde, a diminutive, oboe-like instrument from the Celtic region of Brittany in France, has a piercing sound similar to the Scottish bagpipe, except that it is significantly louder.

Tina Carlsen, Joe Bly, and Kathy Bly formed Ciana in 2010 after playing together in local Irish sessions. They released their first, self-titled album in 2012 on the Revel Records label, which earned the following review:

"The group's instrumental tunes move with toe-tapping bounce. Kathy's guitar and mandolin playing provides a rhythmic center, and the fiddle, whistle and flute lines provide catchy, intertwining melodies."

—Brad Bynum, *Reno News and Review* 6/21/12

After finishing their second album, *Loneliest Road*, in May 2014, Ciana expanded their tight ensemble sound by welcoming champion fiddler, Holly Sternberg. Holly's laid-back, Sligo-style playing complements Tina's driving Donegal style, and the two of them together weave together lovely, intertwining melodies and variations.

Ciana released their third album, *Rubicon*, in September, 2017, produced by David Brewer of Molly's Revenge. Featuring a lively interplay between fiddlers Holly and Tina, this album highlights the evolution of the band.

After getting Holly dialed into the Ciana ensemble, Tina took a partial leave from Ciana to pursue outside interests, happily jumping back into the lineup to team up with Holly when she's available.

When Holly was four years old, she discovered an old violin in her grandmother's closet and knew immediately that she wanted to play it. Her teacher, Johnny McDonald, introduced Holly to Irish music while ensuring that she obtained a well-rounded education in both traditional fiddle and classical styles of music. Over the last several years, Holly has placed multiple times in the top five at the California state fiddle competition, and in 2015, she won the Young Adult title in the Red Bluff Old-Timey Fiddle Championships, and in 2017, she swept the Nevada State Fiddle Championships.

Kathy boasts a long musical career as a jazz and classical woodwind player before discovering that she was a natural on rhythm guitar. Before she joined Ciana, she performed and worked in the Colorado Springs Symphony, the Tucson Symphony, and the Virginia Symphony as well as several jazz combos.

Although Traditional Irish and Appalachian music were woven into the fabric of Joe's youth, he spent his college years playing slide guitar in a rough-and-tumble blues-rock combo in upstate New York. After his rock-and-roll experience, Joe returned to his traditional roots, learning songs and tunes from many different masters of Irish and Celtic music.

A biologist by profession, Tina was a well-known Irish fiddler in the Modesto, California, area before moving to the Carson Valley. She studied classical violin from 2nd grade through high school, then she jumped into Irish music after getting her PhD. Her skill and repertoire meant that she was welcomed to sit in on Irish music sessions throughout the US and Ireland, where she was known as "Hey, California!"

“Ciana” is an old, Irish word roughly meaning both “distance” and “time,” which evokes the ancient expanse that defines western Nevada. The name, “Ciana,” seemed like a good choice after a particularly long drive across the heart of Nevada’s Great Basin on the windswept stretches of US Highway 50.

With a nod of appreciation to those Irish musicians from whom they learned, Ciana keeps the Celtic tradition of lively tunes and soulful songs alive in the high deserts of Nevada. While Ciana is based in Western Nevada’s Carson Valley, the swirling rhythms of the traditional Celtic music will quickly transport you to another time and place. Be prepared for some serious foot-stomping!