

ALTAN

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Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh – Lead Vocals, Fiddle

Ciarán Curran – Bouzouki

Dáithí Sproule – Guitar, Vocals

Martin Tourish – Accordion

Martin Nolan – Manager

David Nokken – Tour Manager, Front of House Engineer

Booking Agency/Tour Direction – SRO Artists, Inc.

(Set list to be announced from stage and include a mix of music from the new album, The Gap Of Dreams, as well as songs spanning three decades of Altan's career. There will be a short intermission.)

Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (the 2017 recipient of the TG4 Gradam Ceoil/Traditional Musician of the Year, one of Ireland's highest musical honors) is a native of the Donegal Gaeltacht of Gaoth Dobhair. Her first language is Gaelic and she has learned many of her songs from family and neighbors as well as sourcing older material from archive facilities. She is renowned as one of the leading exponents of Donegal fiddle music and likes to promote the music which she has inherited from her late father Francie, whenever possible. She is a founding member of Cairdeas na bhFidléirí, which was set up 25 years ago to preserve and facilitate the development of the Donegal fiddling tradition for future generations. Mairéad's musical inspiration initially came from her family and neighbors, her father being a great fiddle teacher with a wealth of unusual local tunes, many learned from his mother, Róise. She also received tuition and inspiration from Bunrana fiddle player, Dinny McLaughlin, who was a frequent visitor to her home when she was growing up. Mairéad founded Altan along with her late husband, Frankie Kennedy; from humble beginnings they brought their music to the world arena without compromising the deep musical tradition they loved. Along with her work with Altan, Mairéad is always in demand for solo work or presenting traditional music programs on radio or television; past projects include the classic radio show The Long Note and the television series The Pure Drop and The Full Set on RTÉ1. Mairéad has recorded with other musicians such as Enya, the Chieftains, Dolly Parton, The String Sisters, T With the Maggies, and many more. Mairéad's first solo project, Imeach, was released in 2009. <http://www.mairead.ie/>

Ciarán Curran is a native of Kinawley, Co.Fermanagh, an area rich in music, song and folklore and brings his strong family musical tradition to bear on an instrument relatively new to Irish traditional music – the bouzouki. Ciarán's late uncle, Ned Curran, was a great fiddle player and has given the band many tunes from his unusual repertoire. Ciarán was introduced to a lot of traditional music and musicians by his friend Cathal McConnell (Boys of the Lough) from whom he learned many tunes. Ciarán has also played with Co. Leitrim fiddler, Ben Lennon, to whom he attributes his strong backing rhythm and bounce. Ciarán has worked with Co. Antrim singer, Len Graham, Enniskillen singer, Gabriel McArdle, Derrygonnelly fiddler, Seamus Quinn and Belfast flute player, Gary Hastings. With Ben Lennon, Seamus Quinn and Gabriel McArdle, he recorded the classic "Dog Big Dog Little" album, named after two mountains on the borders of County Fermanagh and Co Leitrim. Ciarán has also produced the critically acclaimed Slán le Loch Éirne, a duet album from Gary Hastings and Seamus Quinn. Ciarán Curran has developed a unique, personal and subtle style on the bouzouki using counter harmonies and melodies that let the music breathe and show its most melodic strengths without conflicting with the essence of the melody.

Dáithí Sproule of Derry, whose first group was legendary Skara Brae, has lived for many years in Minnesota. Dáithí was one of the first guitarists to develop DADGAD guitar tuning for Irish music. As well as playing and singing with Altan, he has performed and recorded with two highly influential traditional music trios; Bowhand (with James Kelly and Paddy O'Brien) and Trian (with Liz Carroll and Billy McComiskey) and has played on recordings of Tommy Peoples, Seamus and Manus McGuire, Peter Ostroushko, and many others. In recent years he has been playing with another great trio, Fingal, with Randal Bays and James Keane, and performing locally in Minnesota with friends such as Laura MacKenzie and Jode and Kate Dowling. Dáithí's original compositions have been recorded by Skara Brae, the Bothy Band, Altan, Trian, Liz Carroll, Aoife Clancy and others. In 1995 he released his first solo album "A Heart Made of Glass" with songs in English and Irish. In 2008 he released an instrumental guitar album "The Crow in the Sun", featuring 13 original compositions. In addition to performing and recording Dáithí is a teacher and lecturer in subjects ranging from guitar styles and traditional songs to Irish language and myth. <http://www.daithisproule.com/>

Martin Tourish is an accordionist, composer, producer and musicologist from Co. Donegal and now based in Dublin. His ancestors were collectors of dance music whose manuscripts date from 1896. Martin's debut album *Clan Ranald* with bouzouki player Luke Ward was released in 2005 and listed by music critic Earle Hitchner of the *Irish Echo* and *Wall Street Journal*, as being in the top 20 albums of 2005. From the success of the *Clan Ranald* album, Martin is listed in *The Rough Guide to Ireland* as a piano accordionist of note while a track from the album appears in *The Rough Guide to Irish Folk Vol. 2*. In 2008, he became the first piano accordionist to win TG4's prestigious 'Young Musician of the Year' award which a subsequent article in *The Irish Times* regarded as "the Irish Music equivalent of an Oscar". In 2008, Martin was commissioned by TG4 to compose, produce and perform the music for their brand television advertisement 'The More You Look, The More You See' which won many national and international awards and earned the piece of music national recognition. In 2010 he composed the theme tune to a national marathon festival Rith2010 to promote the Irish language and in 2011 composed the trad style variation on a theme for the nationwide Love Live Music festival. A song he composed entitled 'An Gealóg' appears on Altan's latest album *The Poison Glen* whilst a virtuosic piece entitled 'The Seventh Degree' is being performed by Triona Marshal on harp during The Chieftain's 50th anniversary tour..

About ATLAN's new release, *The Gap Of Dreams* (Compass Records. Street Date: March 2, 2018)

After thirty years of playing on stages all over the world from Dublin to New York, Tokyo to Sydney, the premier traditional Irish band, **Altan** came back to the hills of Donegal to record their new album, ***THE GAP OF DREAMS***. The 13 tracks transport the listener to the lifestyle of rural Donegal, to a time before electricity when folks would gather together in the mists of winter to tell stories, sing songs and dance into the wee hours of the night. The music lifted the locals' spirits and helped elevate them beyond the hardships of the day like famine, conflict, and emigration. It is this spirit that informed the development of the band through their many phases of growth from a duo performing in pubs to international touring and recording artists.

The album title, ***THE GAP OF DREAMS***, is borrowed from a poem by **Francis Carlin**, *The Ballad of Douglas Bridge*, in which he writes: "The Gap of Dreams is never shut," referring to the gap between this world and the Otherworld. The Otherworld has always exerted a large influence on the fiddling tradition of County Donegal and has served as inspiration for song, music, and folklore.

The album features many sets of traditional Donegal reels, such as **Néilidh Boyle's** provocative composition, "Seán sa Cheo" (John in the Mist), as well as original compositions. **Martin Tourish** wrote two lively reels in the Donegal style: "Tuar," which translates to "omen or sign," and "Oíche Fheidhmuúil," meaning "a spirited night."

Singer and founding member **Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh** became the 2017 recipient of the TG4 Gradam Ceoil/Traditional Musician of the Year, one of Ireland's highest musical honors, recognizing her prominent role in supporting, nurturing and strengthening Irish traditional music. One of Mairéad's compositions for this album is a slip jig, which features the title track, "The Gap of Dreams," and is followed by two more. Mairéad's daughter Nia Byrne wrote the first titled "Nia's Jig," and plays fiddle on the track. **Mark Kelly's** son Sam penned the second, "The Beekeeper," (logically named because it's in the key of B!), and plays concertina on the track. Four of the songs are in Irish (Gaelic), which is Mairéad's first language, and the language of the northwest of Donegal.

Back in Donegal, at Attica Studios in the townland of Termon, it seemed as if the inspiration of the beloved landscape spilled into the studio. With producers **Michael Kenney** and **Tommy McLaughlin**, the new album captures the essence that has continued to represent the hallmark of Altan's music.