

Vol. 29 No. 5 | \$5.95 CDN/USA | October 2015 | celticlif.com

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INSIDE!

Celtic Studies

Kristyn Murphy

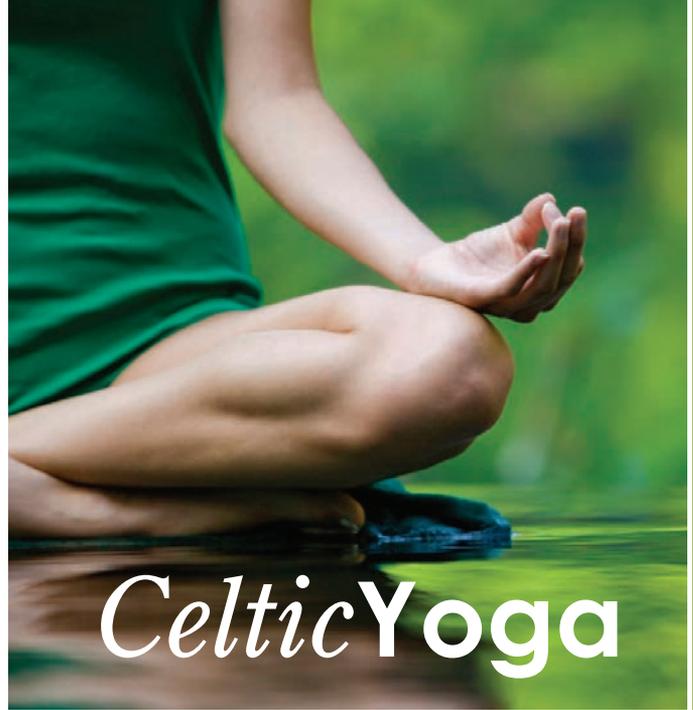
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Celtic Yoga, Ken McGoogan
Fall Fashion, Irish Wine, Blair Atholl
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CelticYoga

A bit of Irish wit and whimsy can only enhance the restorative powers of yoga, according to Yogi Therese Fleischman

As the owner and operator of Celtic Spirit Yoga in Sandy, Oregon, Therese Fleischman draws on her own background and experience to bring an Emerald Isle flare to her busy practice.

"In my studio I share stories of my family, Irish culture and spirituality," says the renowned Yogi. "The Irish are known for their wit and wisdom, so the students learn lots of Irish words and phrases such as 'oxters' instead of underarms, and all the various phrases that involve 'craic.' It seems I've got my father's gift for storytelling."

Along with that Celtic heritage, she puts her own positive spin on life to place her students at ease, and help them to feel at home.

"I try to create an atmosphere of lightness and fun, as we all get enough of a dose of the serious side of life every day."

Born and bred in working-class Ballina, County Mayo, yoga was totally foreign to Fleischman as a youngster.

"I grew up in a poor neighbourhood with hard-working parents who were devoted to their family. They realized the importance of a good education and they sacrificed their whole lives to provide proper schooling for 11 kids."

Her mother was a talented dressmaker, and her father was a bricklayer.

"My mother took the time to learn the craft before she was married. And I laugh when I hear all the talk about organic food these days, as everything we had to eat was cooked from scratch, including all kinds of homemade bread baked daily."

Her father, whom she credits as being a great singer and a master storyteller, cycled up to 50 miles a day for work in Ireland, but often had to take various jobs in England to support the family.

An older sister, Veronica, first encountered yoga in secondary school.

"I got the bug from her," recalls Fleischman. "There was very little information about yoga back then. Even books were hard to find. I remember I found a book in London once on a visit there. It was a rare find at that time, and it was mostly photos of an old guru doing really complicated postures. I still have the book in my library."

She and her sister later took their teacher training together. Fleischman then left Ballina to work in Dublin, before immigrating to the United States in her thirties.

"Initially, my yoga practice was for my own interest, but when I discovered the infinite spectrum and wisdom of yoga and the benefits that came - not just to the physical body but to the mental and spiritual body as well - I wanted to share my passion with others."

The rewards of teaching yoga, she adds, have been greater than she ever imagined.

"The students share themselves and their lives with me. So many special relationships are created, and the blessings the students bestow on me are infinite. It's an incredible and inspiring experience to watch the students improve in their practice and see them blossom into greater aspects of themselves."

Her clients come from all walks of life and for different reasons.

"I like to think their lives are enriched because of what they experience at Celtic Spirit. My slogan for the studio is 'Coming Home to Yourself' and, in a way, it is a place where they can be themselves. Whether they come with heavy hearts or filled with the joys of life, they find a sanctuary where there are no judgments, no expectations to be different or something they are not."

Her studio has also served as a sacred space for her students to create supportive and sustainable relationships.

"They find a sense of community where they get to know each other through the ups and downs of life. Of course, they get all the benefits of yoga too."

On the verge of returning to Ireland to reconnect with family, friends, memories and the landscape of her youth, Fleischman considers herself a work in progress.

"There is an Irish phrase - 'Ni thagann ciall roimh aois' - that means sense or wisdom comes with age. I hope that my intuition will keep guiding me on the right path and that the wisdom I acquire will inspire me to inspire others."

www.celticspiritoyoga.com

