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Last updated 11 May 2009



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Keith Getty Interview, September 2003

While a relatively small number of CelticChristianTunes.com readers may recognize Keith Getty by name, probably very few have gone untouched in some way by his work and ministry. This was made clear to me recently during services at my home church. On a Sunday morning in August 2003, after Keith graciously offered to participate in an e-mail interview and while I awaited his responses to the interview questions I had sent the night before, our worship team introduced a new hymn to our congregation--"In Christ Alone", co-written by Keith and Stuart Townsend. (Townsend is a worship leader and hymn writer who had previously penned "How Deep the Father's Love For Us".)

"In Christ Alone" has quickly become a mainstream worship standard, having been recorded by several popular artists, including Geoff Moore and Adrienne Liesching; Newsboys; and of course, Margaret Becker, Joanne Hogg, and Moya Brennan. It captures the spirit of the hymn--it is both solemn and joyful, it joins worshipers of all ages by bringing a new youth to a long hymn-singing tradition, and it's simple melody draws congregations of believers to praise.

Indeed, although Keith has been involved in diverse projects including producing, orchestrating and live event production consultation, it is his work on "New Irish Hymns" ("In Christ Alone" in the USA) that originally brought him to the attention of CelticChristianTunes.com.

CelticChristianTunes.com (CCT): I suspect many of our listeners and readers may be familiar with you only through your composition and production of the Becker/Brennan/Hogg "New Irish Hymns" project. Before we discuss "New Irish Hymns 2", please take a moment to familiarize our readers with your other projects, such as "Tapestry" and "Operation World".

Keith Getty (KG): "I consider the Irish hymns series my 'premier series' as my biggest passion is to write modern hymns for churches. My only other writing involvements are "Tapestry" and "Operation World" were collections of songs and solos while "Window on the World" was a childrens worship musical.

Currently I am working on a collection of modern hymns co-written with Stuart Townsend for the church based on the Apostles Creed."

CCT: Over the last few decades, many Evangelical churches (at least in the

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USA) seem to increasingly draw on a repertoire of simple choruses, while "old" hymns sometimes go neglected. You are infusing new material into the hymn genre. What motivates you to produce the material found in "Hymns" and "Hymns 2"?

KG: "I had many concerns and struggles with the modern Evangelical church - the shallow content of modern worship songs and how they influenced Christian thought and prayer life to me was a huge issue. The church I went to in Belfast could not even find songs to fit most Bible series so I began to write new material. As a classical musician I also wanted to write material which would last beyond my lifetime - hymns that people could live through their life with. So for those two main reasons I began to try and create modern hymns."

CCT: *Joanne Hogg and Margaret Becker make a second "New Irish Hymns" appearance on "Hymns 2". However, whereas Moya Brennan occupied the third voice of the trio the first time around, her place is taken this time by Kristyn Lennox. While I'm eager to hear Kristyn Lennox's contributions, I found Brennan's absence a bit surprising. Can you shed some light on the reasons for the lineup change? What will Lennox bring to "Hymns 2"?*

KG: "Moya unfortunately signed a new deal with Universal which prohibited her from being involved in the second album. It's such a shame as she is one of the true legends of Irish music. Kristyn Lennox is a brilliant new young Irish artist who we believe will bring a whole new generation of listeners to the material."

CCT: *What do you hope listeners will get from the message of "Hymns 2"-- is its subtitle "Father, Son, & Holy Spirit" indicative of the focus of the album?*

KG: "Much of the material on this album is more trinitarian-based, as modern songs and hymns have ignored this largely."

CCT: *It seems to me that putting together a project like this would be a huge task, even though much of the requisite collaboration can be accomplished over the internet these days. Nonetheless, did the transatlantic nature of the vocal talent challenge you logistically?*

KG: "We worked in Ireland, London, Prague and Nashville so it was a tiring project. Maggie Becker produced most of the vocals in Nashville so that brought a great new dimension to the album."

CCT: *When can North American listeners expect to hear "Hymns 2"?*

KG: "It comes out with Butterfly label group next year [2004] although it is available from the gettymusic.com website."

CCT: *Once we've had an opportunity to digest "New Irish Hymns 2", can we look forward to a third installment? How about other recordings in Celtic styles?*

KG: "If we do a third album it will be the final one."

CCT: *This is way out in left field, but I've noticed that your website uses what appears to be Kirlian photography (sometimes called aura photography) in its logo. What inspired this design?*

KG: "Well spotted - being a composer and conductor my energy comes from my hands so an artist friend of mine drew this illustration."

Clearly, Keith Getty's music will be a part of a new generation of hymns for years to come. Many thanks to Keith for taking a few moments with us.

For more information about Keith Getty, Margaret Becker, Joanne Hogg,

Moya Brennan, and Kristyn Lennox, be sure to visit their websites through our "Artist Links" pages.

--Cory Engel, *CelticChristianTunes.com*

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