Randal Bays - Irish Traditional Fiddling

"Bays is the genuine article." - The Rough Guide to Irish Music

Randal Bays is an American musician whose mastery of the intricate art of Irish fiddle playing has earned him an international reputation among fans of Irish music. He's known as an exciting and dynamic performer whose music grows out of a deep respect for the ancient wellsprings of the Irish tradition.

As one reviewer put it, *"Bays's playing is light and fluid yet still has a sense of power and passion. He's simply a joy to listen to*." (Dirty Linen Magazine, April 2001*)* His 2005 release, "House to House" was selected by the Irish Times as one of the top five traditional recordings of the year, and the Cork Examiner called him *"a rare beast, a master of both the fiddle and the guitar."*

Randal was born not in Ireland but in Indiana, where he started on trumpet at age eight, and then took up the guitar at age twelve. A year later he had his first paid gig and went on to play in several popular rock and blues bands around the Midwest while learning to play the classical guitar. Randal attended two years of music school in Indiana, where he studied music theory and composition before emigrating to the Pacific Northwest at the age of twenty. He's made his home there ever since, and now lives on Whidbey Island, near Seattle.

After wandering into a wild session on a rainy night in Portland, Oregon in 1978, Randal took up the fiddle and started teaching himself to play Irish traditional music. He was influenced by many of the Irish musicians in the Northwest, including Kevin Burke, Michael Beglan, Michéal O'Domhnaill, and many more who passed through, including James Kelly, Joe Burke, etc. He eventually met the Clare fiddler Martin Hayes in Seattle and agreed to provide guitar accompaniment for Martin's landmark debut recording in 1993. This led to the first of many trips to Ireland, where Randal's fiddling found great acceptance among fans of traditional music.

In recent years Randal has toured and recorded with many of the finest Irish musicians, including James Keane and Daithi Sproule (in the band FINGAL), James Kelly, John Williams, Martin Hayes, Tony McManus, Aine Meenaghan, Roger Landes. His most recent recording, *"Dig With It" (2009)* features the brilliant Canadian guitarist Dave Marshall, with whom Randal now tours in North American and Canada.

Bays has performed all over the U.S., Europe and Canada, including appearances at major festivals such as the Gaelic Roots Festival in Boston, the San Francisco Celtic Music and Arts Festival, the Festival Des Musiques-Vivantes in France, the Willie Clancy Summer School and Festival in Ireland, Catskills Irish Arts Week in New York, the Swannanoa Gathering in Asheville, North Carolina, Augusta Heritage Week in Elkins, West Virginia, the Friday Harbor Irish Music Camp, the Alaska Irish Music Festival, California's Sebastopol Festival and many more.

Randal Bays is a dedicated and thoughtful teacher of Irish fiddling, often in demand for workshops and music camps, and is a co-founder of the Friday Harbor Irish Music Camp. He's also composed original scores for several award-winning films and documentaries.

Selected Discography:

"Dig With It" – 2009 with Dave Marshall (Foxglove Records)
"Fingal" – 2007 with Daithi Sproule and James Keane (New Folk Records)
"Masters of the Irish Guitar" – 2006 Shanachie Records (compilation)
"Katy Bar the Door" – 2006 (Foxglove Records)
"House to House" – 2005 (with Roger Landes) (Foxglove Records)
"Overland" - 2004 (with Dáithí Sproule) (Foxglove Records)
"The Salmon's Leap" - 2000 (Foxglove Records)
"Out of the Woods" - 1997 Solo album (Foxglove Records)
"Pigtown Fling" - 1996 with Joel Bernstein (Foxglove Records)
"Wind on the Water" - 1995 (Foxglove Records)
"Under the Moon" - 1995 with Martin Hayes (Green Linnet Records)
"Steam" – 2002 with John Williams (Green Linnet Records)
"John Williams" - 1995 with John Williams (Green Linnet Records)
"Martin Hayes" - 1993 with Martin Hayes (Green Linnet Records)