



House Concerts

Jamie O'Reilly's Roots Salon: Art That Digs Deep



JAMIE'S ROOTS - the O'Reillys, Chicago, early 20th c, approx 1909: (left to right) Nell O'Reilly Tucker, Mary Ann Murphy O'Reilly (center) Mame O'Reilly (back row) Edward "Tex" O'Reilly, James Daniel O'Reilly (Jamie's Grandfather)

In 2006, Jamie started the Roots Salon that was based on the family model, continuing a century-old tradition of the O'Reilly clan. She adapted the living and dining rooms of her Ravenswood home into a performance, gallery, and creative development space where artists and audiences can gather together.

Jamie found information about her family's history of hosting house concerts, more commonly referred to then as salons, in the family archives at the Library of U of I Chicago. The O'Reillys were (and continue to be!) a vivacious clan of 'Bohemians' - newspaper writers, poets, activists, music and theater folk who came to Chicago at the end of the 19th century. Jamie's grandparents and later her aunt and uncle, hosted performers in their Northside homes, beginning in 1909, including the family home on Evergreen Street in Chicago's Humboldt Park. An aunt's memoir says that among the performers were Fenians from Ireland, and Russians who were fleeing the Czar, labor union organizers and School of the Art Institute students - all who recited poetry, played music, shared stories from "The four heavens and the four hells."

Today's Roots Salon programming is about fine aesthetics and building community. The venue serves the community at large - people who are interested in art that "digs deep." Events are not published for the general public - Roots is a word-of-mouth animal, with postings via Facebook and the e-news Jamie sends once a month." Invited audiences are exposed to a fine lineup of talented artists.

Musicians who've appeared at Roots include Michael Smith, Anne Hills, Jon Spiegel, June Shellene, Peter Swenson's Baroque ensemble, Paul Amandes, Jenny Magnus, Crooked Mouth String Band, James Lee Stanley, and Al the Liar from California. Sad Brad Smith (heard in the film, Up in the Air) was this year's RootsFest headliner. The 'house' band is The Jamie O'Reilly Trio with Jamie on vocals, Bob Weber (cello), Michael Smith and Peter Swenson (guitars).

Want to know more about Roots events?

Get on the e-mail list: roots@jamieoreilly.com
Or become a fan of Jamie O'Reilly, Musician on Facebook.

