

FROM THE ACADEMY AWARD®-NOMINATED DIRECTOR OF
'THE SECRET OF KELLS'



SONG *of*
 the SEA

CARTOON SALOON, MELUSINE PRODUCTIONS, THE BIG FISH, SUPERPROD & NORLIM PRESENT
 A FILM BY TOMM MOORE PRODUCED BY TOMM MOORE, ROSS WURRAY & PAUL YOUNG, STEPHAN ROELANTS, SERGE & MARIE LIME, ISABELLE TRING, CLÉMENT CALVET & JÉRÉMIE FAJMER, FREDERIK VILLUMSEN & CLAUD TOSVING KJÆR. ART DIRECTOR & PRODUCTION DESIGN ADRIEN MENEGAZ
 SCREENPLAY BY WILL COLLINS BASED ON AN ORIGINAL STORY BY TOMM MOORE. VOICES BY DAVID RAWLE, CECILIA CALZADILLA, FIONNULA FLANNAGAN, LISA HANNAHAN, PAT SHORRITT, JOHN KENNY, LARA HODURKAL, COLM Ó SINDGAIR, LUCA O'CONNELL, KEVIN SWICKSZZ. HEAD OF STORY NORA TWOMEY
 LINE PRODUCER THIBAUT RUBY. ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED AND ORCHESTRATED BY BRUNO COULAS IN COLLABORATION WITH KILLA SINGS INTERPRETED BY LISA HANNAHAN, NOLAN WENNY, LEROI. EDITED BY DARAUGH BYRNE. PRODUCTION MANAGERS KATJA SCHUMANN, FABIAN PELLELLI
 IN ASSOCIATION WITH BOND SCANNAN NA HEIANNA, BRUSH FILM BOARD WITH THE SUPPORT OF FILM FUND LINGERING, EURIMAGES FUND OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY OF IRELAND, THE FILM AND AUDIOVISUAL CENTRE OF WALLONIA BRUSSELS FEDERATION
 AND YOO & WALLONIA, INKBA INVEST, VERSUS PRODUCTION, MAGELLAN FILMS, TAX SHELTER PROGRAMME OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF BELGIUM, BELCATION WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE & WEST DANISH FILM FUND
 WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF OCS, HAUT ET COURT, DISTRIBUTION, STUDIO CANAL & TCA INTERNATIONAL. SALES BY WEST END FILMS



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SYNOPSIS

SONG OF THE SEA tells the story of Ben and his little sister Saoirse – the last Seal-child – who embark on a fantastic journey across a fading world of ancient legend and magic in an attempt to return to their home by the sea. The film takes inspiration from the mythological Selkies of Irish folklore, who live as seals in the sea but become humans on land.

SONG OF THE SEA, directed by Tomm Moore (*The Secret of Kells*) features the voices of Brendan Gleeson, Fionnula Flanagan, David Rawle, Lisa Hannigan, Pat Shortt and Jon Kenny. Music is by composer Bruno Coulais and Irish band Kíla, both of whom previously collaborated on *The Secret of Kells*.

SONG *of the* SEA

Ireland/Luxembourg/Belgium/France/Denmark • 93 min. • Aspect Ratio 16x9: DCP

TECHNICAL CREW

A Film by Tomm Moore

Presented by:

CARTOON SALOON (Ireland)

MELUSINE PRODUCTIONS (Luxembourg)

THE BIG FARM (Belgium)

SUPERPROD (France)

NØRLUM (Denmark)

Produced by: Tomm Moore, Ross Murray & Paul Young, Stephan Roelants, Serge & Marc Umé, Isabelle Truc, Clément Calvet & Jérémie Fajner, Frederik Villumsen & Claus Toksvig Kjaer

Directed by: Tomm Moore

Art Director & Production Design by: Adrien Merigeau

Screenplay by: Will Collins

Based on an Original Story by Tomm Moore

Head of Story: Nora Twomey

Line Producer: Thibaut Ruby

Original Music Composed and Orchestrated by

Bruno Coulais in collaboration with Kíla

Songs Interpreted by: Lisa Hannigan, Nolwenn Leroy

Edited by: Darragh Byrne

Production Managers: Katja Schumann, Fabien Renelli

In Association with: Bord Scannán Na Héireann/
Irish Filmboard

With the Support of:

Film Fund Luxembourg, Eurimages Fund of the Council of Europe, The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, The Film and Audiovisual Centre of Wallonia Brussels Federation and VOO & Wallonia, Inver Invest, Versus Production, Magellan Films, Tax Shelter Programme of the Federal Government of Belgium, Belgacom

With the Assistance of:

The Danish Film Institute & West Danish Film Fund

With the Participation of:

OCS, Haut et Court Distribution, Studio Canal & TG4

International Sales: West End Films

Distributed in North America by: GKIDS Films

CAST

David Rawle (*Ben*)

Brendan Gleeson (*Conor & Mac Lir*)

Fionnula Flanagan (*Granny & Macha*)

Lisa Hannigan (*Bronach*)

Lucy O'Connell (*Saoirse*)

Jon Kenny (*Ferry Dan & The Dreat Seanachai*)

Pat Shortt (*Lug*)

Colm Ó'Snodaigh (*Mossy*)

Liam Hourican (*Spud & Bus Driver*)

Kevin Swierszcz (*Young Ben*)





A CONVERSATION *with Tomm Moore*

Given a similar emphasis on Irish themes and folklore, do you consider *SONG OF THE SEA* to be a continuation of your first film, *THE SECRET OF KELLS*?

Song of the Sea grew from ideas I had during the making of *Kells* and was developed with many of the same artistic team members, so it is in many ways a spiritual follow up rather than a real sequel or anything like that. It's got a similar feeling in that the art style is again very handmade looking, 2D animation and the music is also again by Bruno Coulais and Kila. Also the story is based around Irish folklore and legends, but this time I wanted to focus on a younger audience, and tried to make a more personal film based on my memories of being a child in Ireland in the 1980s.

I really worked hard this time to make a film that would appeal to as broad an audience as possible. I'm pretty sure that adults and teenagers will enjoy the visuals and the music and story, but I wanted make a film like *The Jungle Book* or *My Neighbor Totoro* that younger audiences could enjoy and then come back to again and again as they grew up.

What was the inspiration behind the story of *SONG OF THE SEA*?

Near the beginning of production on *Kells*, I went on holiday to the west coast of Ireland with my wife and son Ben, who was 10 years old at the time. We were sketching on the beach near the town of Dingle where we had rented a cottage when we came across a disturbing sight... there were the decaying corpses of seals on the beach. We asked the lady we were renting the cottage from about it and she explained that the local fishermen had taken to killing the seals out of frustration with the falling fish stocks. It is of course crazy that they blame the seals, when human overfishing is what's really to blame.

She said that this would never have happened years ago, as there used to be a widespread belief in the supernatural and that seals were seen as mystical creatures that it was bad luck to harm. Many fishermen in those days believed the seals could contain the souls of people lost at sea or could even be Selkies, people who can transform from seals into humans. I had heard stories about Selkies when I was younger and I started to remember them as the holiday continued.

I was talking about all this to the art director on *The Secret of Kells*, Ross Stewart when I got home. He lent me a book called *The People of the Sea*, that was a collection of old stories from Ireland and Scotland about the Seal People.





I started thinking about how we are losing so much more than just stories when we lose our folklore—a respect for the balance of nature and the old traditions was being lost, too. So I started to think about when these old beliefs began to die out. I imagined it may have been when I was as young as my son was then, 10 years old, and I began to dream up the story then, weaving together the various influences and ideas from that trip to the West coast and my nostalgia for the pre-“Celtic Tiger” Ireland.

National themes always seem central to your work. Why?

This is the unique viewpoint I feel I can bring to the animation medium. I don’t rule out eventually making a comedy set in outer space or something like that, but for now I am exploring the culture I grew up in, and trying to offer not only Irish children but children everywhere an insight into our stories and legends, and to offer an alternative to the American animated films that dominate our screens.

I am always intrigued by films such as the work of Hayao Miyazaki, that offer an insight into an unfamiliar culture while communicating universal themes. I hope *Song of the Sea* or *The Secret of Kells* can offer something similar.

How did the scriptwriter William Collins get involved in the project?

Originally, I wanted to write the story as a comic book and create it all myself, as an antidote to the highly structured collaborative process of making an animated feature. But I soon realized that music and movement were too important to the story, and it was more suited to the feature film format.

We had development funding from the Irish Film Board, and the development executives there recommended that I work with a screenwriter to shape the story into a film structure.

They recommended many accomplished Irish screenwriters but none seemed quite the right fit, until Will Collins wrote me an email out of the blue while we were working on the concept trailer. He said he had just finished a script for a live action film that was in production, and it was a story about children making their way across Ireland on Halloween night 1987 – the same date my story was set in! He also said his favorite film was *My Neighbor Totoro*, and that he had always wanted to work in animation.

I read the screenplay he wrote for his first film, and since we are around the same age it resonated with a lot of my own memories of Ireland at that time. My wife joked that maybe he had been going through our trash, as he seemed so perfect for the job and knew exactly the right things to reference!





It was a good collaboration; we revised and rewrote the script together for four years, between different projects, refining our initial ideas down to as simple and clean a structure as we could. I would often illustrate our ideas as small thumbnail storyboards and Will would write draft after draft based on our story meetings, as the script evolved.

You worked with Adrien Merigeau, who was the artistic director. What was his role?

One of my closest collaborators was Adrien Merigeau, the art director who is French but who has lived in Ireland for a long time, and worked with me before on *The Secret of Kells*.

We worked together closely for four or five years developing the look and style of the film, so he was able to help me greatly by taking care of the background team and helping me work with the compositing team in Belgium.

His style and artistic taste is all over the visuals of the film. I have been a fan of Adrien's work for years, and was very inspired by his directing style when he made a short film with our studio called *Old Fangs*.

I was eager to include his way of working with watercolors and his talent for atmosphere and lighting, as well as his sense of design in the film. He did a huge amount of concept art during the writing and storyboarding phase and came on several research trips with me to the west of Ireland. This allowed him to really come into the world of the film even though he grew up in the south of France!

I feel very lucky that he was willing to lend his artistry and filmmaking sensibilities to the project so whole- heartedly for so long.

Could you describe the visual influences that went into the film?

My influences were similar to those on *The Secret of Kells*, which has a style that I took so long to develop with the team here that it has become second nature to me. It is basically only possible in 2D animation. The main thing we tried to add was a sense of the ever-changing light and skies and the damp atmosphere in Ireland.

A painter I looked at a lot was the Irish landscape painter Paul Henry, and we were lucky to have my old friend Ross Stewart contribute a lot of the early concept art especially focused on the Irish landscape. Art director Adrien Merigeau also brought not just his personal style but also all of his influences from the fine art world, and his experience with photography and illustration.

We combined our approaches as we developed the style, and included some new research into pre-Celtic stone carvings. These Pictish markings reminded Adrien of modern artists such as Klee and Kandinsky and Jean Michel Basquiat, which he incorporated into the style as well.

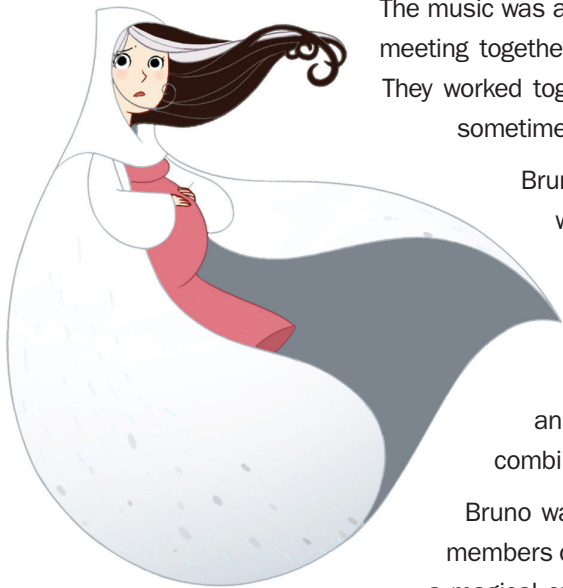




The soundtrack is a mixture of Bruno Coulais' original compositions and of Irish traditional music lead by the band Kíla. Can you tell us about this choice? How did Bruno Coulais and Kíla work together?

Bruno and Kíla worked together on *The Secret of Kells*, and both Bruno and the members of Kíla were enthusiastic to continue the collaboration and indeed expand on it.

The music was always thought of as such an important part of the film that we all began meeting together very early on, even before the script and storyboards were finished. They worked together to explore themes, sometimes with original pieces by Bruno, or sometimes with his adaptations of Kíla tunes or traditional airs.



Bruno then made a demo track of the complete score to our storyreel and worked with Colm Ó'Snodaigh of Kíla and our team here in Cartoon Saloon to place it and "spot" the necessary moments for the final score to be recorded to. He then recorded the traditional instruments, plus some music from French cellist Jean Phillipe Audin, and the vocals by Lisa Hannigan and Lucy O'Connell in Ireland. Later he recorded with an orchestra in Sofia and worked with Slim Pezin and Maxime Le Fevre to combine everything into the final score.

Bruno was very generous and open to input from everyone and Colm and the members of Kíla were much more involved from the very beginning this time. It was a magical experience for me to hear the combined talents of some of my favorite musicians all working together.



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

TOMM MOORE

Tomm Moore was born in Newry, Northern Ireland, and studied animation at Ballyfermot College in Dublin. He co-founded the animation studio Cartoon Saloon and has written, produced, animated and directed short films and commercials. He directed the animated feature *The Secret of Kells*, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. *Song of the Sea* is his second feature, and he also directed a short film portion of *Kahlil Gibran's the Prophet*.



THE FOLKLORE in *Song of the Sea*

Song of the Sea is an original fictional work that features creatures and characters from Irish folklore, which may be lesser known to some international viewers.

In Irish mythology, *Selkies* are seals that can transform into humans, and stories featuring *Selkies* were often allegories for the grief of losing someone to the sea. Mac Lir (or Manannán Mac Lir), is a sea deity in Irish mythology. In *Song of the Sea*, Ben tells his sister stories of Mac Lir's adventures, and the sad face of Mac Lir can be seen entombed on the side of an island near their home. The idea of mythology and storytelling is central to the film.

"A *seanachai* is a traditional storyteller in Ireland," says director Tomm Moore. "He is someone who learns the stories from the old generations and passes them on to the next one. It's a tradition that is fading here like it is everywhere."

"But one *seanachai* that I grew up listening to on Irish television is Eddie Lenihan, who continues the tradition to this day. He often mixes up his stories with characters from other legends or reinterprets the old stories with a modern twist. When I asked him about this, he said something interesting to me, that the stories will die if they become canonical and fossilized and sacred. That we own them as much as previous generations did and that we can adapt them to our audiences to keep them alive."

"So in *Song of the Sea*, we took elements of Irish folklore such as *selkies*, and the Sea God Mac Lir and even the character of the Great *Seanachai*, and wove them into a new narrative and setting based on our own understanding of these stories. My hope is that this will inspire some of our audience to research the old stories and then reinterpret them themselves for another generation, hopefully holding the truth at the core of them in the retelling."

ABOUT CARTOON SALOON



Cartoon Saloon is an Academy Award®-nominated animation studio formed by Paul Young, Tomm Moore and Nora Twomey in 1999. From award-winning short films such as *From Darkness*, *Cúilín Dualach/Backwards Boy*, *Old Fangs*, *The Ledge End Of Phil*, and *Somewhere Down the Line*, to TV series like *Skunk FU!* and *Puffin Rock* (in production), Cartoon Saloon has carved a special place in the international animation industry. Currently in development is a co-production with Aircraft Pictures to adapt the award-winning novel *The Breadwinner*, written by Deborah Ellis.

www.cartoonsaloon.ie

ABOUT GKIDS



GKIDS is a distributor of award-winning feature animation for both adult and family audiences. The company has scored four Best Animated Feature Academy Award® nominations – the most for an independent distributor – with *The Secret of Kells* in 2010, *A Cat in Paris* and *Chico & Rita* in 2012, and *Ernest & Celestine* in 2014. Upcoming releases include *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* from Studio Ghibli cofounder Isao Takahata, and Tomm Moore's highly anticipated *Song of the Sea*. GKIDS also handles North American theatrical distribution for the Studio Ghibli library of films, one of the world's most coveted animation collections with titles *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Grave of the Fireflies* and others. GKIDS is longtime producer of the New York Int'l Children's Film Festival, an Oscar®-qualifying event and North America's largest festival of film for children and teens. NYICFF jury members include Uma Thurman, Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis, Gus van Sant, Christine Vachon, Henry Selick and James Schamus.

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