

Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH **WINTER 2012**

ISSUE

18

THE WRITTEN WORD
MUSIC & DANCE
THEATRE & FILM
VISUAL ARTS

FREE



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A Word from the Editor



Welcome to our latest edition of the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine, which highlights arts and cultural events around the Midlands.

There has been so much going on around the counties of Laois, Westmeath, Offaly and Longford that again we have had to up the pages from 32 to 36 just to fit everything in.

This edition of the magazine see an American publisher snap up a Longford writer's novel, an Offaly director who is following up the success of his previous film *The Moment* with the release of another short film entitled *Runner* and a brand new gallery opening in Westmeath while Laois teens explore life through a lens.

With everything that is going on around the Midlands it is difficult no to laud the work of the arts officers in each of the counties, who despite evaporating budgets are able to continue to showcase and host wonderful events - and so many for free.

A big highlight for me from around the counties of Laois, Westmeath and Offaly was Culture Night 2012. Again Westmeath took part and for the third year held a staggering number of events and even managed to secure national coverage on RTE's Six One and Nine O'clock News.

Similarly locals and visitors alike embraced the day and night of free entertainment in Offaly and Laois, with both counties taking part for the second year in succession with great success.

As well as this Longford who although didn't take part in Culture Night have just recently held the Aisling Children's Festival - a weeklong festival dedicated to children and also absolutely free.

To discover just what a valuable contribution the Arts make to our society check out the National Campaign for the Arts on www.ncfa.ie

YOUR LOCAL ARTS OFFICERS



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TOY SOLDIERS

wins at Galway Film Fleadh

The FilmOffaly/Filmbase-funded film *Toy Soldiers*, which was shot on location in Tullamore last winter, and premiered locally in May has just won Best First Short Drama at the Galway Film Fleadh.

This is great news for the cast and crew, which includes writer, Matthew Roche, Director Mike Hayes and producer Clara Gillan. The cast includes young actors Darragh O'Toole, Robert Donnelly and Mollie McCann alongside Una Kavanagh.

The win also represents two successes out of three for FilmOffaly at the Galway Film Fleadh, with Noreen winning Best Short in 2010. For FilmOffaly, this is extremely important and a message to the film industry, nationally and



internationally, that it is serious about filmmaking, has high standards and is more than open for business.

Toy Soldiers will continue to be submitted to film festivals. Anyone on Facebook can follow progress on the following pages: **FilmOffaly and Toy Soldiers Short Film** 



Over two decades of art and culture celebrated with Presidential visit

In his first official appointment to Laois, the President of Ireland visited two art venues which jointly celebrated over two decades of art and culture.

To kick off his Laois visit President Higgins visited the Dunamais Arts Centre to celebrate its thirteenth anniversary and Laois School of Music's (LSM) tenth anniversary.

And his visit was imbued by a common theme – the importance of the arts. He commended the Dunamais Arts Centre and the Laois School of Music saying that it was important to instil a love of the arts in the nations youth. "The young musicians behind me, it will be something that will stand to them for their lives, enriching not only their lives but the lives of the community," he said. Seventeen year old LSM pupil Benn Hogan said that music had opened many doors for him and he had performed in the National Concert Hall and at Electric Picnic. Chairperson of the centre's Board of Management, Louis Brennan, said to the Minister: "Your decision taken in 1995, then as Minister for Arts & Culture, to proceed with the development of the arts centre in Portlaoise was a seriously important decision for Portlaoise town and our area of influence."

Mr Brennan said that approximately 250,000 people had gone through the doors since it opened. The visit included a tour of the building where President Higgins chatted with art, craft and design students of Abbeyleix Further Education Centre (FEC), who were exhibiting there. He was given a guided tour of their recent works by students Regina McGinley and Stacia Kilroy.

On behalf of the Dunamais Arts Centre, Mr Brennan also presented President

Higgins with a specially commissioned gold and silver shaped lapel pin designed by Portlaoise based goldsmith Helena Malone.

Special Olympian turns out to welcome President

THE Knockmay community turned out in force to welcome President Michael D Higgins to Treo Nua Family Resource Centre and Suaimhneas Community Childcare during his visit to Laois in June. Public representatives, members of the local community, including Special Olympian Patrick Doyle, turned out to welcome President Higgins to the centre on his second of three engagements in Laois. President Higgins officially opened the Family Resource Centre and Suaimhneas Community Childcare.

President inspires at Stradbally Arthouse

The final part of President Higgins' trip to Laois was a tightly packed affair in the Stradbally Arthouse and Library. Ratheniska Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann provided a vibrant flourish welcoming President Higgins, while he was also treated to a drama performance by Laois Youth Theatre. President Higgins took a particular interest in activities at the Arthouse, which opened last year, chatting with resident and exhibiting artists including Karen Hendy, Coloin Rush, Gemma Guihan, Lorraine Walsh and George Burland. President Higgins lauded the €1.2 million facility saying: "This is creating an atmosphere for people to reinvent themselves and reflect on oneself.



"This is a country full of creativity. There is nothing small about a country that prides music, prides art and prides culture," he said.

The burgeoning Laois Songwriters Collective also come together at the rehearsal space in the centre and members Michael McCauley, Ross O'Meara and Barry Hayes explained their work to President Higgins.

County Manager Peter Carey said that Laois County Council was proud of its wide array of arts and recreational facilities in the county. Mr Carey said President Higgins' acknowledgement "inspires us to do more". Stone suppliers McKeon Stone presented a seat on the occasion of President Higgins' visit. Mason tools are carved on the front of the seat, which denotes the stone working heritage in Stradbally over the years and it is inspired by the famous sculpture The Thinker.

Glenbarrow Slieve Blooms, a painting by Stradbally based artist Gemma Guihan, was presented to the President. Portarlinton Youth Theatre also presented a handcrafted book entitled Our President, with Harry Watson (11) doing the honours. Fellow theatre member Luke Melvin (11) had also created a portrait of President Higgins' and presented it to him. 



Loreto College Mullingar

INVITATION FOR SUBMISSION

Loreto College, Mullingar invites submissions from artists, sculptors, lighting designers, craft designers etc. for a public art commission, funded by the **Per Cent for Art** scheme under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills, on the occasion of a major extension to the school. Loreto College has been in Mullingar since 1881.

Applicants should be mindful of the spiritual, cultural and historic tradition of the school, whose mission springs from the Loreto philosophy of education.

The preferred commission may be sited in the interior and/or the exterior of the school, and the selection panel reserves the right to select the work of different artists for the different spaces. A substantial budget has been made available by the Department of Education and Skills.

Interested parties are invited to submit on or before **November 10, 2012** a cover letter with CV and samples of work that may be relevant to this project to Ms. Marése Bell, The Principal, Loreto College, Mullingar

Laois native to tread the boards at the Gaiety Theatre

A native of Mountmellick, County Laois, will play the role of Amneris in Verdi's *Aida* for Lyric Opera at the Gaiety Theatre in mid November 2012, which follows close on the heels of her debut role of Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* for Wide Open Opera at the Bord Gais Energy Theatre.



Imelda Drumm, currently in her third year pursuing a Doctorate of Music in Performance with Dr Veronica Dunne at the RIAM and DUC, was a student at the Presentation Convent Secondary School (now Mountmellick Community School) and always had an interest in singing and accompanied her father Jim to the local choir in Mountmellick each week for Sunday mass.

It was Sr Dolores-Marie Murphy and Sr Bernard who fostered Imelda's talent for singing at school. And Imelda was championed at home by her late sister Mary Drumm-Lynch and won a scholarship to study voice with Ann-Marie O'Sullivan at the DIT at the mere age of 14.

Some years later she progressed to the Leinster School and Dr Veronica Dunne. She graduated with honours from DUC

completing a BBS in 1992. And in 1997 she was sponsored by Glyndebourne Opera to attend the National Opera Studio in London. Her fellow classmate that year was another Laois girl, Soprano Franzita Whelan.

In the intervening years since becoming a soloist, Imelda has developed a highly successful international career and has achieved particularly strong relationships with both Glyndebourne Opera and Welsh National Opera. She was a principle mezzo at Welsh for over a decade performing over 12 principle roles. The title role of Carmen is one of her signature roles and she performed this to great acclaim at the Royal Albert Hall in London with Raymond Gubbay in 2002 and 2005.

A winner of many competitions at Feis Ceoil, including Contralto Solo and the

Margaret Burke Sheridan for Best Female Voice, Thomas Moore, German Government, Peter Tattan, Leider Prize and Percy White Head, Imelda was also finalist twice in the Veronica Dunne international singing competition.

International Awards include the Esso and Richard Lewis/Jean Shanks Glyndebourne Awards. Recordings include Hansel Channel 4 Tv, Jenufa with Sir Charles Makerras, Falstaff S4C with Bryn Terfel and Mozart's Coronation Mass with the Dublin Choral Foundation.

More recently as a result of her portrayal of Azucena, in Lyric Opera's 2011 production of *Il Trovatore* at the National Concert Hall, Andrew Johnstone of the *Irish Times* described her performance as "Utterly engrossing...she made the part sound

as if Verdi had written it for her." Fergus Sheil wonderfully conducted these performances.

During the last few years Imelda has also developed a strong teaching record in St Patrick's College Drumcondra where she teaches vocal technique and prepares students for their performance examinations. Imelda will commence instructing the junior Opera Classes in the Academy as part of her doctoral studies next semester. Relocation back home to Ireland was necessitated by the growth of her two daughters, Laura 11 and Rachel six. Currently the family lives in Bray, County Wicklow. Combining a busy schedule of work performing and studying for her doctorate as well as caring for her two girls keeps Imelda busy and she is grateful for the assistance and support from her mother Johanna. **M**

Offaly composer celebrated for international success

The works of a Shinrone composer will be showcased by the National Symphony Orchestra next February at the National Concert Hall in what has been described as "a dream come true."

A programme of work by Ann Cleare will be played followed by a conversation between Ann and Evonne Ferguson, Director of the Contemporary Music Centre. The south Offaly woman describes the opportunity to showcase her work at the National Concert Hall as a composer's dream, saying: "The opportunity to curate an orchestral concert of my own work, and other music that has inspired it, with such a prestigious Irish organisation as The National Symphony Orchestra is an absolute honour and privilege.

"As I have been studying and working abroad for many years now, in France, Germany and the US and my music has mainly been performed outside of Ireland, it is so exiting to bring this work to an Irish audience. I visited the National Concert Hall as a curious eight year old, already obsessed with playing and thinking about music and looked at the orchestra with wonder and amazement, listening in awe to the sound that can be created from 90 musicians on one stage. To have the opportunity to write for this group on this same stage twenty years later is a dream come true."

Reflecting on her upbringing in the Midlands, she said: "There is a strong

connection in my work between where I am from and how that manifests itself through sound: I see my work as intrinsically Irish, related to the complexity and density of the Irish language and accent, to the geographical and textural landscapes of Ireland, to following from veins of writing by Joyce, Beckett, Freil, McGovern, McPherson, inspired by and aiming towards their depth of thought, questioning and detail, albeit through sound not words. Like the cracked mirror as the beginning of Ulysses, it evokes what it might mean to be Irish: what language, communication, tradition, and identity can mean in the 21st century." **M**

About Ann Cleare

Ann Cleare graduated with a BMus from UCC where she was awarded the Mary V Harte Memorial Prize in 2005. Three years later, she received an MPhil in Composition from UCC, where she studied with John Godfrey and Jesse Ronneau, and where she also worked as a tutor for two years. She is currently undertaking a PhD in Composition at Harvard University, Boston under the supervision of Chaya Czernowin and Hans Tutschku. Her music has been performed internationally across Europe, New Zealand and America by ensembles such as Ensemble SurPlus, The Crash Ensemble, The Callithumpian Consort and The International Contemporary Ensemble.

She has received many honours and awards including: The IMRO/Feis Ceoil Composition Competition (2007), The West Cork Chamber Music Festival Composer Awards (2008), Bank of Ireland Millennium Scholar (2009), a research grant at The EXPERIMENTAL STUDIO Freiburg des SWR, as well as various grants and bursaries from The Arts Council Ireland. Her piece, *I am Not a Clockmaker Either*, was short listed for the 2010 Gaudeamus prize.

HORIZONS 2013 free lunchtime concert featuring composer Ann Cleare Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 1.05pm

National Concert Hall
Tickets: FREE TICKETED EVENT
Booking (no fees) Tel: 01 417 0000 or see www.nch.ie
For further information visit: www.annclarecomposer.com **M**



American publisher snaps up Longford writer's novel

By Neil Halligan



Ballymahon artist Lorraine Masters with author Lorne Patterson.

Two witch-hunts - one set in Scotland in the 16th century, one in contemporary Scotland and what happens when the two collide provides the storyline for a new novel by Lorne Patterson.

The Longford-based writer returned to his Scottish roots for the story, but drew inspiration for the storyline from an unusual source.

Having worked at Longford Women's Link (a women's centre in Longford providing support for women across a range of areas) for many years, it was an anti-feminism speech that created a spark for *Witches*.

"A couple of years I stumbled across a diatribe by this American religious leader called Pat Robertson," Lorne explained. "He came out with statements in which he said that 'feminism turns women into man-hating lesbians who practise witchcraft, and a bunch of other nonsense."

"Initially I thought it was hysterically funny, but then when I got to think about it - the fact that you've got a religious leader calling a group of women witches - it's actually not funny at all.

"That was the start of the book, and the catalyst for it. I didn't come up with it from thin air; it was actually provoked by that specific diatribe."

A member of the local writers' group in Ballymahon, Lorne was able to get feedback as he was going through his creative process during *Witch*. "I read out bits to them (group) and used the feedback in actually polishing my work quite considerably," said Lorne.

However, it was the services put on by the

County Arts office and local library that gave Lorne valuable sources of information. "I have been using resources put on by Fergus Kennedy, County Longford Arts officer and Mary Reynolds, the County Librarian, for a good many years, a decade. That has been of enormous importance to me.

"They liked my style; they were looking for quality horror, regardless of whether that was sci-fi, classic horror, or some of the variations like paranormal horror."

"They were workshops primarily, but they have also had readings where you can meet up with authors and publishers. It's a fairly wide net that they cast," Lorne explained.

"I can't speak highly enough of value of the supports that I'm sure they have struggled to put together. For a local writer, I think it has been priceless."

The story itself probably took about a year, all in all to write, and thankfully found a willing publisher to bring his work to the public.

"I found Dark Hall Press, which is an American publisher. They liked my style;

they were looking for quality horror, regardless of whether that was sci-fi, classic horror, or some of the variations like paranormal horror. They were looking for horror in the widest sense. They thought my piece was perfect for them, so it was a happy relationship," said Lorne.

The interesting cover of the book features an excellent portrait, painted by Ballymahon artist Lorraine Masters. Having read the book, Lorne said that Lorraine painted the 'Witch' in the book.

Another book in the offing is the sequel to *Witch*, which is "well under way", and he believes it will be another year before it's close to hitting the shelves, which is normal for any novel. The process, from ideas to getting it down on paper and print, has been very much a labour of love.

"It has been a wonderful experience and being accepted for publication at this time has been incredible. Everything that comes with publishing, having a book launch, a seeing reviews and reader feedback has all been tremendous but for me it's a labour of love, but it's not a job. I wouldn't look to it to be a job."

The hard copy of is available in Grafton Court Bookshop, Longford or in Longford Library. The book is also available for download from Amazon (where it has received five-star reviews from people who have read the book).

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Briefs



Leaves Literary Festival 2012 celebrated the literary arts in Laois on November 9 & 10

The Leaves Festival was a wonderful opportunity to listen to the best of writing emerging from Ireland with the programme including readings, classes in creative writing, book launches, children's events and music.

The festivities commenced on Friday, November 9 with the official launch in Áras an Chontae at 7.30pm. The event also incorporated the launch of exciting new poetry collections by Ann Egan, Kathy D'Arcy, Jamie O'Connell and Pat Boran with James Ryan chairing the readings. Readings by all the authors were interspersed by music from guitarist Conal Rae from

Laois School of Music. Admission was free and books were on sale on the night. The festival also included a Children's Programme. On Friday November 9, award winning author and illustrator Niamh Sharkey, Laureate na nÓg, visited schools in the County to create a Monster Doodle and then on to Abbeyleix Library for a reading at 3.30pm. Children's author Roisin Meaney also paid a visit to some lucky schools in Laois and gave a reading in Portlaoise Library at 3.30pm. Admission to the children's events were free of charge.

Adult writer's workshops also took place in the Dunamais Arts Centre. Hennessy award winner Niamh Boyce held a workshop titled *Poems Beget Poems* on November 9 running from 10am to 4pm. This workshop was suitable for writers who have begun to write poetry and would like to explore it further. Also for adults, well-known writer John MacKenna held a workshop entitled, *Seasons of the Heart*, exploring the ways in which we can draw on nature and our own life experiences to create fiction and memoir. The workshop ran from 10am to 4pm on November 10 in the Dunamais Arts Centre. The final event on Saturday evening was an exciting mix of readings and music featuring Christine Dwyer Hickey, Niamh Boyce and Nuala Ní Chonchúir, Chaired by Seamus Hoseney with music by harpist Claire O'Donnell. This took place in the Arthouse & Library, Stradbally at 8pm on November 10.

For more information on the Arts Programme contact: The Arts Office, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois. Tel: 057 8674344/42 Fax: 057 8674382 or email: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie.

Irish Iranian collaboration results in documentary production

Portarlington filmmakers **Carla and Delwyn Mooney** have just completed the documentary production *The Secret of Permanency/Raz-e Mandegari* an Irish/Iranian collaboration. They spent six weeks in Esfahan in Iran last summer and three days in Dublin which included filming at the Chester Beatty Library.

Secret of Permanency follows the steps of a western girl (played by Carla Mooney) on a spiritual journey to Iran. The journey begins in the Chester Beatty Library, home to one of the most significant collections of arts and artefacts and continues onwards to Esfahan. Wandering through the Bazaar mosques and palaces the journey awakens the echoes of ancient Persian history and civilization.

Carla said: "Travelling to Iran was an opportunity of a lifetime. I felt privileged and honoured that we were granted permission to access the most majestic mosques in the world. Much of what I

experienced in Iran can be seen and felt through this creative documentary. My reality and the fiction of the character are fused together into the same experience.

"When I first arrived in Tehran, I have to admit I felt a slightly apprehensive as did my Portuguese friend and production associate Ana Catarina Margarido Ferreira. I felt more secure that we were travelling together and that my brother Delwyn (Producer) was with us. Of course we hear of stories of Iran, mainly negative ones but with the assurance of our director and through time, growing knowledge and understanding of Iran, not for one moment did we feel unsafe.

"I felt uneasy not knowing where to direct my gaze and if we were appropriately dressed. This world was completely new to us, a new culture, a new environment. I have many fascinating stories about my journey in Iran but I wish for the audience to wait and see this visual feast. Each shot of



this film feels like a moving painting thanks to the expertise of a vast qualified team of hard workers and the vision of our extraordinary director Khashayar Mahmoodabadi.

"We hope to publish a book as an accompaniment for the film as the on-set photographer Arshia Sobhan Sarbandi took many beautiful photos." The feature documentary is written and directed by Khashayar Mahmoodabadi and edited by Bahman Kiarostami, son of legendary filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

It is produced on the Irish side by Co-Producers Carla Mooney and Delwyn Mooney of Cardel Entertainment, and on

the Iranian side by Executive Producer Seyed Mehdi Seyedainnia, Art Center Chief of Isfahan, and Seyed Mohsen Tabatabaei of Barg Sabz Productions.

The collaboration has led to the development of another co-production called *Some Day, My Death/Marge-man, Roozi*. The story is of a Persian girl who aims to revenge her father's death by the Mongol soldiers who captured Persia in 1220. The co-production will be between Cardel Entertainment and Producer Amir Hossein Sharifi of Afagh Films, Iran and will be written by Delwyn Mooney and Khashayar Mahmoodabadi. It is due to start production in Iran early 2013.

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BACKSTAGE PROJECT SEES NEW ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Following on the success of the 2011 Artist in Residence project with Director Padraic McIntyre of *Livin Dred Theatre Company*, Longford Arts Office and Backstage Theatre joined forces yet again in July for a new Artist in Residence project with Leitrim Writer Director and Actor Seamus O'Rourke.

Seamus was an obvious choice for the latest Backstage project. As a writer he is best known for *Victor's Dung* (which toured to sell out audiences) and *Ride On* (touring nationwide in Nov/Dec 2012) as well as *Dig* and *The Trappe Family* which were both short listed for the Warehouse Theatre, (London) International playwrighting Competition in 2008.

There was no doubt that the opportunity to work this new Director in Residence was a huge draw for the many talented actors that chose to audition for the 2012 production of Seamus' own play *The Halfway House Hotel*.

Over 70 people from Longford, Westmeath Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Galway answered the call to audition as everyone vied for the opportunity to work with this comedy genius. After three rounds of auditions a cast of 11 comprising of some of the finest amateur actors from across Longford, Roscommon and Cavan was assembled

After two months of intensive rehearsals the production, which took a satirical look at human behaviour, layered with comedy and thought provoking parallels with everyday life, opened on Thursday, July 5 and ran for three nights to full houses.

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Fear Sean Chruacháin (Old Croghan Man)

Curtha,
Ar theorainn ríoga
Faoi scáth
Chnoic Chruacháin.

Ceilte,
Trí theacht na Críostaíochta,
Trí chíor thuathail na
Normannaigh
's na Plandalaithe.
Trí ghéarleaniúint na bPéin
Dlíthe;
Trí bhuillí chróga '98, 1916,
'S cogadh cróga na Saoirse.

Meáchain móna,
Donn, dubhach,
Dom bhrú,
Dom chlúdach,
Dom chaomhnú.

Rún m'éachta,
'S m'éiric'
'S diamhaireacht
M'imeacht;
Séanta om shliocht:
Breithiúnas na mBreithiúin.

Spríd gan saoradh
Gafa
Idir an bheatha
'S an síoraíocht.

M.Ni Chonchúir 01/01/07



Something for every child at the Mullingar Arts Centre

Participation in the performing arts provides children with benefits you might never have considered. Aside from the immediate advantages gained by social interaction and working in an ensemble environment, children learn to improve their language and memorising skills, with obvious benefits to their general education.

Children develop their creative skills through the process, which exposes them to the world of art and culture, permanently enriching their life experience. Because of the physical nature of the performing arts, self-discipline and self-motivation are nurtured, by spending private time practising and rehearsing. For a child who might suffer from an anxious personality, there can be no greater thrill than going out on stage, successfully performing an item which has been painstakingly rehearsed and receiving the applause and approval of

friends and family – the rewards are profound.

One of the more surprising areas in which children can benefit from the performing arts is that of problem-solving. Naturally, things can and do go wrong from time to time, but accepting and overcoming these problems provides the children with a sense of pride, proving that they were able to succeed in spite of the challenges.

Perhaps the most valuable single benefit, however, is the enhanced self-

confidence which a child experiences from participation in the performing arts. Being able to stand up in front of an audience and present yourself with pride is a skill towards which many adults aspire. To acquire and perfect that expertise as a child is an invaluable asset in life.

For further information contact:
Sean Lynch, Director,
Mullingar Arts Centre,
slynch@westmeathcoco.ie

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What's available for children

Mullingar Arts Centre Youth Academy for the Performing Arts

Several years ago the Youth Academy for the Performing Arts was founded in order to fulfil the creative aspirations of the teenagers in the Mullingar area. Incorporating the disciplines of Musical Theatre, Drama, Dance and Samba Drumming classes take place on Saturday afternoons from 2.15pm to 5.30pm. Ages 13 – 17.

Mullingar Arts Centre Junior Academy for the Performing Arts

Due to the unprecedented success of the Youth Academy, there was such demand that a Junior Academy for the Performing Arts was founded, which incorporates the disciplines of Music, Drama and Dance. Classes take place on Saturdays from 10am to 12pm and 12pm to 2pm. Ages seven to 12.

Mullingar Arts Centre Kinder Academy for the Performing Arts

Our aspiring performers are getting younger so from September 2012 we proudly present the Kinder Academy for the Performing Arts featuring tuition in the

disciplines of Musical Theatre as well as Speech and Drama. Created specifically for children between the ages of three and six, it will perfectly prepare them for the Junior Academy. This means that there will be a structured programme of performing arts to nurture the talents of our children right the way through from three to 18. The Kinder Academy will operate on Tuesday afternoons from 3pm to 5pm. Ages three to six.

Mullingar Arts Centre Academy of Rock

Catering for the children who wish to focus entirely on contemporary music, the Academy of Rock provides tuition in drums, keyboards, bass guitar and electric guitar; classes take place on Mondays, from 4pm to 8.30pm.

Dionysus School of Dance

Dionysus School of Dance will be well-known to many for its glittering show which is presented at the end of each year. The school operates from the Mullingar Arts Centre under the direction of Siobhán Murphy. Styles covered are a fusion of jazz, contemporary, classical, musical theatre and hip-hop dancing. Classes as follows: Tuesdays, 5pm to

7pm; Wednesdays, 4pm to 6pm; Fridays 3.30pm to 8pm; and Saturdays, 10am to 12pm. Ages: from five up.

Ballet School

Ballet classes at the Mullingar Arts Centre are given by Patricia McDermott. The syllabus followed is that of the Royal Academy of Dance and pupils are prepared for examinations which are conducted by the Academy. Grace, elegance and beauty can be seen each week at the Arts Centre, as children are schooled in this classic art form. Classes take place on Thursdays, from 3.15pm to 8.45pm. Pre-primary to Grade 8.

Street Dance

Street dance is an art form which has exploded onto the scene in the last few years. It might have been a discipline unfamiliar to many, before the advent of *Got To Dance* and *Diversity*. This exciting and contemporary dance form is immediately identifiable by its energetic, acrobatic and athletic moves. Meghan Stasinowsky has an impressive background in dance and tuition, with experience gained in Dublin and Australia, and will have you popping, locking,

crumping and jumping in your own unique style!

Street Dance classes are being introduced for the first time in September, on Mondays, from 4pm to 6pm.

Apollo School of Dance - disco and tap

The revival of the fashion, films and music of the 70s has been accompanied by a renewed interest in the disco moves which were so much part of that era. Riverdance and its various spin-offs – including the Michael Flatley phenomenon – have also sparked new interest in the moves of tap-dancing. Apollo School of Dance has been founded in response to the demand for tuition in these art forms. Meghan Stasinowsky will also be tutoring this group. Classes will take place on Mondays from 7pm to 9pm.

For further information about the new initiatives please ring Sean Lynch on 044 934 7777 or call into the Mullingar Arts Centre.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday from 9am to 9.30pm and on Saturdays from 9am to 6pm. M

COUNTY LONGFORD WRITERS HONORED

By Majella Reid

Longford and creative writing are undoubtedly synonymous with each other. The prestigious works of literary legends Maria Edgeworth, Oliver Goldsmith and Pdraic Colum, have greatly influenced many writers throughout the world - and none more so than the prolific writing community now present in the county today.

Such is the calibre of creative writing in Longford that the Irish Writers' Centre (IWC) recently honoured County Longford writers in a special evening at their headquarters in Dublin's Parnell Square.

"In a very small county we have over 100 people actively writing for various reasons. I am convinced that per head of population we have more writers than any other county," said Fergus Kennedy, Longford Arts Officer, speaking at the gathering of Longford writers.

He continued: "Writing is the predominant art form in County Longford and there is a need for further structural supports to assist, in particular, emerging writers. This is where an institution such as the IWC can play a pivotal role."

Jack Harte, Chairperson of the IWC, agreed. Addressing the large number of Longford writers, the former Lanesboro resident announced that the IWC would be launching courses and mentoring services online at its website this summer (www.writerscentre.ie).

During a discussion session, the writers were invited to express their opinion on how the relationship between the IWC and rural writers could be improved. Areas discussed included; the establishment of regional outreach centres, multiple micro-events and the increased use of IT.

Another potential key link between the IWC and rural writers was seen to be the local writers' groups. Longford county has five such groups, the importance of which could not be overstated, according to Mr Harte.

"The structure of the local writers' group is a very good one. Maybe we should set up a closer link between these groups and the IWC," he said.

Mr Kennedy agreed saying, local writers' groups should be looking for ways to promote their work (to a wider audience).



The IWC, which boasts almost 400 members, is home to one of Ireland's most highly valued single art collections - that of Frank Buckley.

Following the discussion, the Longford writers were treated to refreshments. This was followed by a series of readings of self-composed works. Poems, short-fiction and novel extracts were read to great applause.

At the interval, a musical interlude was provided by Longford Larks, a duo comprised of Kevin Farrell from Ardagh and Aisling McCarthy who hails from Newtownforbes. Together, the musical pair sang songs such as *Summertime* and *She Moved Through The Fair*.

Following the event, those gathered stepped out into the late Dublin night air and there one writer summed the night up perfectly. He said: "Tonight made me very proud to be from County Longford."

COVER STORY

Laois teens explore life through the lens

By Aishling Hennessy, Youth Arts Worker, Youth Work Ireland Laois

As far as I am concerned, taking photographs is a means of understanding which cannot be separated from other means of visual expression. It is a way of shouting, of freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one's own originality. It is a way of life.

- Henri Cartier-Bresson - French Photographer - Father of modern Photojournalism

Youth Work Ireland Laois in Partnership with Laois Partnership has been delivering photography workshops throughout Laois since April 2012. Youth Work Ireland Laois is working together with Photographer John Lalor to facilitate the workshops with funding from Laois Partnership.

- The fundamentals in studio photograph
- The elements involved in taking a landscape/portrait photograph
- Exploring the world around them creatively through the use of a camera.
- How to curate a group exhibition.

The main aim of the workshops with young people from towns and villages throughout Laois is to allow them to explore the world around them in a new and profound way - to allow them see the world in a different light and discover an inner appreciation for their own individual world.

The young people have also:

- Gained self esteem, personal development and confidence from participating in the project through an ability to communicate their visual ideas in relation to their theme.
- Demonstrated an awareness of the theory, technical elements and processes involved in taking a photograph.

As photography is also a universal language the workshops teach the youth how to speak in a visual language so they can learn how to make sense of the world that surrounds them.

The workshops use themes that the young people develop themselves to echo their own youth culture.

Young people have been given the opportunity to learn and gain insight into:

At the end of the workshop series of sessions there will be an exhibition to showcase the learning that took place throughout each workshop and the subsequent photographs that were created through this process in **Laois County Council, Aras an Chontae on Thursday, December 6, 2012.**



Portlaoise, O'Moore's Place Portlaoise and Kiln Lane Portlaoise have completed the workshops with Stradbally and Rathdowney/ Abbeyleix to be the next areas to be offered in these experiential workshops. The young people participating in the workshops vary in ages from 10-17 years with maximum of 12 young people participating in each workshop.



For more information relating to upcoming Photography Workshops in Stradbally and Rathdowney/ Abbeyleix, please contact Joe Thompson, Project Coordinator, Youth Work Ireland, Laois on 086 1756714 or Aishling Hennessy, Youth Arts Worker, Youth Work Ireland Laois on 087 6478677



Some comments made from the young people participating in the workshops include:

"Amazing, great experience, excellent"

Aisling O'Shea, Lisa Kerry, Zoe Maher, O'Moore's Place, Portlaoise

"I definitely would come back and do this again, it was brilliant!"

Chloe Houlihan, O'Moore's Place, Portlaoise

Janine Wilson talks to a Midlands musician making inroads in Nashville

introducing Pete Kennedy

Pete Kennedy is the real deal - a young man from Offaly making music that's capturing audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

So how does someone from Birr in County Offaly (and Carrig in County Tipperary) make it to Nashville, Tennessee? "I took an airplane—two actually," said Pete, with a straight face. "It all happened about a year ago, when Lee William of CMR, Europe's Country Music radio station, heard a song of mine. He invited me to go to Nashville with him and be a part of the International Showcase, held the night before the CMA Awards." That appearance led to coverage on *Inside Music Row*, a TV show streamed around the world.

Kennedy recorded his first EP, *Nashville Sessions Volume 1* in January 2012. The single, *Yellow*, reached number-25 on the International Hot-disc chart and landed in the top-10 on the British and Irish Independent Hot-disc charts. He returned to Nashville in May for an intense two weeks writing with some of Nashville's most in-demand songwriters, and again in June, just prior to the beginning of CMA Music Festival, to record his *Nashville Sessions Volume 2*.

During CMA Music Festival, Kennedy performed at The CMA Global Artist Party,

Hard Rock Café Nashville and Bridgestone Arena (accompanied each time by Grammy Award-winner Brad Davis on guitar), The Commodore Grille, Whiskey Bent, That's Cool, and Puckett's. And that was just the music! The visit included a photo shoot—wearing clothing designed and created by iconic designer-to-the-stars, Manuel; the CMT Awards; interviews with press from around the world and an autograph session with fans. There was also some time to sign a sponsorship deal with Nashville's Music City Taxi. The commercial can be seen at www.musiccitycab.com

What were the highlights?

Drawing a deep breath, Pete exclaimed: "Wow, where do I begin?! It's all been fantastic. A couple of things really knocked me for six. One was being presented with a letter from Ireland's Consul General, Paul Gleeson, thanking me for representing Ireland and joining the ranks of all of the great artists from our country. The other was a VIP behind-the-scenes tour of the Tennessee State Museum where I was shown artifacts from Irish regiments that took part in the American Civil War. During the tour I was presented with an official letter from the museum, thanking me for my contribution to Irish culture in Tennessee. Both presentations took my breath away."

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre was delighted to welcome Pete home to Birr for an unforgettable night of music at the end of September. This was an amazing opportunity to see and hear Pete before he set out on the road again.

About Pete Kennedy

- Pete Kennedy appeared at the UK's biggest country music festival, Wolvestock, this summer.
- He was nominated for Best Song and Best Album in the British Country Music Awards 2012 and was thrilled to walk away with the prize for Album of the Year at this awards ceremony in London in early September.
- He returned to Nashville to shoot a video later that month.
- He then joined legend Neil Sedaka for his UK tour in October.
- Pete will hook up with Philadelphia soul outfit, The Stylistics for their UK tour through November and early December.

For further information on Pete Kennedy, visit www.petekennedy.net. Contact Lee Williams (Manager) Tel: 01252 514549/07956 888587 or Email: djangoproms@btinternet.com

Briefs

THE DOCTOR OF POETRY

Dr Philip Brady from Edenderry has just launched his fifth collection of poetry. Originally from Edgeworthstown in Longford, he has managed to be a prolific writer of poetry while maintaining his career as a family doctor.

Dr Brady's poetry is laden with the most searching expressions of our feelings, our appreciation and awareness of existence and how we see and shape the intricate tapestry of our lives. It delves into local topography and history as well as into the humour and emotions of local people. It carries thought-provoking comment on all aspects of contemporary living in, the good and the not so good.

His poetry takes us gently by the arm and invites us to look a little closer inside our deeper being. It offers inclusive alternative thinking to our perception of part events in our lives wither at a close personal level or on the wider stage of our existence. The collection is an engrossing tapestry of reflection, nostalgia, reminiscence and romance blending with medical, family and community experiences.

Spring's passing

I couldn't carry the bucket
In one hand,
And spread the seeds
With the other,
The way I did it before,
Because the stick was in the way
It was such a little thing
But I got frustrated
For I did it before,
Every spring.

MAKING 'FRIENDS'

Shoppers at Laois Shopping Centre were wowed one Saturday in May when Laois Youth Theatre presented a flashmob around the fountain.

A flashmob is when a number of people converge in a public location to participate in an unexpected activity for a short amount of time.

Laois Youth Theatre was joined by Clare Youth Theatre on the day and the choreography was created by Portlaoise and Rathdowney Youth Theatre Co-ordinator Áine Caulfield with the help of Laois Youth Theatre members and staff.

The flashmob began with six teenagers carrying a sofa in through the front entrance of Laois Shopping Centre with shouts of "Pivot!" and "Ross, this is heavy!" to draw in the attention of the shoppers.

Then they posed for photos on the couch in front of the fountain. When the familiar opening notes of *I'll be there for you* by The Rembrandts sounded, the six hopped up and began to dance. Within seconds around 20 other teenagers from nearby shops joined the dance and soon after there were about 60 youth theatre members shimmying to the music.

In the final moments everyone posed around the fountain and held up signs and a banner reading 'Make New FRIENDS join Laois Youth Theatre'.

Laois Youth Theatre would like to thank all those involved in the exchange programme and the

flashmob including Laois Arts Office, the National Association of Youth Drama, Laois Community Development Board, the staff at Laois Shopping Centre, parents, leaders and the young people themselves for their help, support and creativity.

For more information on Laois Youth Theatre contact the Arts Office, Laois County Council. Tel: 057 8674342/41 or log on to www.laois.ie/LeisureandCulture/Arts/Drama/LaoisYouthTheatre/ or find us on facebook www.facebook.com/laoisouththeatre





EYEON: Offaly based glass artist Michelle O'Donnell recently worked with the students of Scoil Mhuire Fatima and St Marys Boys National School in Drogheda to make EYEON. Michelle combined the drawings from students in both schools to make the piece which is now in their new school.

Eurochild launch set for Backstage Theatre after overwhelming number of entries from the county

By Neil Halligan

The latest production of children's artwork and poetry is due to hit the shelves this November. Now in its seventeenth year, Eurochild continues to produce the very best in creative writing and art from all over Ireland and beyond.

Based in Tigh Fíli Cultural Centre in Cork city, the Eurochild programme started off in 1995 as a series of workshops promoting cultural literacy, integration and dialogue between children from different cultures through art and poetry.

The programme culminates each year in the publication of the Eurochild anthology of children's artwork and poetry, comprising the work of young poets and artists from all over Europe.

"It will be our most successful book in that we have over 500 entries in art and poetry from Ireland, across Europe and from the USA as well. We cast a very wide and we

have got a lot back," said Eoin Hurley, Eurochild Project Co-ordinator.

Eoin admits that the quality in this year's publication is once again of a very high standard, with another strong entry from Longford – second only to the book's home county of Cork.

"We get most entries from Cork, but Longford is our second highest entrant rate. Mary Melvin Geoghaghan does magnificent work with the schools up there and sends huge amounts of work every year, all of it very high quality. It's always a tough thing to have to go through it all and to have to choose the best work because there's just

so much of it, of such high quality."

Once again, there will be a launch in Backstage Theatre of the Eurochild book in November this year such is the level of Longford's entry. Most of that is down to the work of local poet, Mary, who travels around to various national schools in the county, giving workshops to children in poetry. Armed with a topic each time she visits, she seeks to engage the children in a creative process, in a fun and interesting way.

"It's a bit like osmosis," Mary explains. "I'm a writer. There's something going on between us (children); we enter an imaginative space together. For example, I

was doing a workshop on the Olympics in Ardagh National School. Anish Kapoor did a tower for the Olympics (ArcelorMittal Orbit sculpture at the Olympic Park) and I brought a photo of it in and out of that came poems. "I come with an idea, and I get them to draw an image. I'm able to read the image and it gives me an idea of where their first line is, and then the poem arrives.

"You know the way, as a journalist words are your tools, and you're thinking about stories and you'll see stories where nobody else will see stories. I just think that it's because I'm in that space, children pick it up," Mary explained.

"I think poetry is in everyone and I'm only tapping into an imaginative awareness that may not have come to their consciousness," she added. The prospect of having their work published is a significant incentive for the young writers. It is a great carrot. It gives a great emphasis. When you're writing a story yourself, when you know it's going to be published, you have a different attitude yourself."

Jane O'Hanlon, Education Officer with Poetry Ireland, will launch the Eurochild book in Longford's Backstage Theatre on November 6.

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I Needed More Detail by Ryan Kidd

I opened his mouth the better to see the beauty of my creation. Even though the fire was dangerous warmth and safety filled me. He went to the stream and I could see how his colours changed in the moonlight, he finished his drink and prepared to soar taking to the skies. It was clear this creature could kill but, no person could destroy my work of art.

I Opened a Snow Flake by Áine Kieley

I opened a snow flake and found Christmas. I stuck my tongue out and caught a reindeer. It fell from the sky like a bright white flake.

Where Did The Money Go? by Aaron Farrell

Was it the hole in our pockets I don't know, where did it go?

Did it grow wings and fly away if so, where did it go?

Did the money monster have a snack I hope he'll put it back.

If it rocketed off to the moon I'll wait for it to zoom back soon.

I know why the money's not here it grew legs and ran away.

But, I know it will return some day!

Bluebell and Rasher by Megan Noonan

Bluebell is galloping with me through a field of happiness. Rasher, my other horse is all alone by the wall. Thinking of the good times he says to himself - "she doesn't love me anymore" But, that's NOT TRUE!

In One God Particle by Claire Shaw

In one God particle an eyelash falls and an ear grows wide. A mouth looks like it's to one side, and the face is waving like the tide.

I'm Going to be a Pilot by Tommy Daly

I really want to fly so I can see the clouds the birds and the view. I built a model plane

and sketch them all the time. Up at the airport I watch the planes take off and land. I've read about different aircraft my favourite is the Airbus A380 and the F-35B. At home I see them fly over the estate and in school I watch them as well. When I grow up, I'm going to be a pilot. In a dream about planes I'm in the cockpit, flying high above the clouds and touching down in London.

He Came Running Down to Me by Thomas Mooney

I lost my dog Smiley out on a hunt one day. I hoped he would return went out searching with my father. We were about to hop in the jeep when we heard gods barking, Smiley might be there so we waited and there he was running down to me like the speed of lightning. We looked glad to see each other.

The Anchor of Recession by Frankie Donlan

The anchor of recession began with building houses that no longer can be sold. A year later we're in recession. Everyone in the country has

to pay higher taxes and put up with an increase in V.A.T. The Germans agreed to help us out, we have to do what they say.

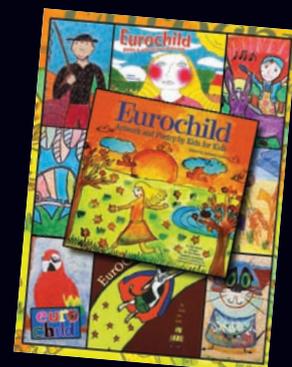
In Striking Memorial by Kevin Lynch

There are no speeches. There are only names. There's no happiness. There's no talking only tears.

I Was Going to Draw a Parachute by Luke McEntire

I was going to draw a parachute when the wind was on my face. Halfway down I can see the ground. Leaving the clouds I'm sorry my parachute is just an idea.

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AWARD-WINNING POET PUBLISHES FIRST COLLECTION IN OVER A DECADE

Following his acclaimed memoir *The Invisible Prison*, Pat Boran's first full-length collection of poems in over a decade entitled *The Next Life* sees him explore questions of love, belonging and connection, recognising that small and great challenges alike may be entry points to new beginnings and that the instinct to sing and praise has never been more relevant or crucial.

Pat Boran was born in Portlaoise in 1963 and has long since lived in Dublin where he has worked as a writer-in-residence, festival organiser and, more recently, broadcaster and editor.

The recipient of the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 1989, he is the author of five collections of poems, as well as *New and Selected Poems* (2005). His prose memoir, *The Invisible Prison*, was published in 2009 and his many other publications include the popular writers' handbook, *The Portable Creative Writing Workshop* (1999, updated 2005). He is a member of Aosdána and was the 2008 recipient of the US-based Lawrence O'Shaughnessy Award for Poetry.



'Offaly' good to see first tall ship exhibition set sail

IT WAS all aboard the Waterways Ireland Visitors Centre in Dublin last August as an Offaly project kicked off the exhibition events at Dublin's Tall Ship Festival.

The launch of **A Very Grand Canal** - an exhibition focusing on the Grand Canal commissioned by Offaly County Council under the Per Cent for Art scheme and facilitated by Waterways Ireland - was part of Dublin Tall Ships 2012 programme. The exhibition, which features the work of Geraldine O'Reilly, Las Cosa Preziosa, Mixed Bag Media, Eugene O'Brien, Veronica Nicholson and Wayne Brennan embraces a range of mediums from prints, sound, film, music, photography and literature - all inspired by the Grand Canal in Offaly.

Speaking at the opening Eanna Rowe, Waterways Ireland said: "We are very

excited to welcome this exhibition, which celebrates one of Ireland's greatest canals. There is no more appropriate place for it to be open for viewing in Dublin than here in the Waterways Ireland Visitor Centre, which celebrates all of Ireland's navigable waterways."

Work from the exhibition made waves throughout the country with Wayne Brennan's *Roots of These Lands* proving to be an instant hit, after winning the Sean McCarthy Ballad Contest in Listowel and reaching #2 in the download charts five days after its release.

Arts Officer with Offaly County Council, Sinead O'Reilly said: "Our hope

with this project is to reach and showcase it to as many people as possible and to highlight the Grand Canal in Offaly for its multiple cultural values."

The exhibition consists of three main projects, one of which is *A Grand Experience* shown on RTE in October and reached an audience of 565,000 people, coming in closely behind Prime Time.

This film documentary follows three artists - writer, Eugene O'Brien, photographer, Veronica Nicholson and musician, Wayne Brennan over five days on the barge 68M as it wound its way from Shannon Harbour to Edenderry.

Eugene recalled: "I had a very special

week on the boat and will always remember and treasure the memories from the trip. It was invigorating and it was a great break from normal life and opened up new ways of writing and making work."

The exhibition will continue to tour as a body of work and each element will also have its own journey and avenues of how people experience it.

The collection will next be on exhibit in Waterways Ireland Headquarters Enniskillen from November 22 to January 31.

The Very Grand Canal Projects

1. **A Grand Experience** - Mixed Bag Media
Martina McGlynn & Garret Daly run Mixed Bag Media, a production company in Daingean County Offaly. They have produced a number of films and documentaries including the award winning *Who is Dervla Murphy?* and the short film *Bogman*. For this project they filmed three artists on a barge from Edenderry to Shannon Harbour, on a journey for inspiration.
Eugene O'Brien is a writer and actor. His play *Eden* was produced by the Abbey Theatre on the Peacock stage before transferring to the theatre's main Abbey stage. *Eden* won the *Irish Times* and the Stewart Parker Awards for Best New Play in 2001 and was subsequently staged at the Arts Theatre, on London's West End. Eugene O'Brien has also written for television, including the IFTA-winning RTÉ series *Pure Mule* in 2005. He is from Edenderry.
Wayne Brennan is a critically acclaimed musician from Offaly, whose debut album *In my Hands* is the

perfect introduction to the life and mind of someone who lives and breathes music. He has toured extensively and been featured on RTE numerous times. He currently lives in Spain.

Veronica Nicholson is a freelance photographer and artist living and working in Offaly. She has travelled extensively and has worked on numerous residencies. In 1999 Nicholson visited the Middle East and Pakistan to photograph Irish emigrants for a book entitled 'The Scattering' which was published in 2000. She has exhibited in numerous major group and solo exhibitions and is a recipient of many awards from the Arts Council of Ireland. She has recently graduated with Masters in Art in the Digital World from NCAD.

2. **A Grand Canal Commission** - Geraldine O'Reilly
Geraldine O'Reilly is a visual artist working in the mediums of painting, drawing, print-making and photography. She has received many awards for her

artwork and in 2004 she was elected a member of AOSDANA for her contribution to the arts in Ireland. She is a long time member of the Graphic Studio Dublin, of which has been a board member since 2004 and chairperson in 2008.

3. **Six moorings and a silent thread** - La Cosa Preziosa
La Cosa Preziosa (Susanna Caprara) is an award-winning sound artist originally from the south of Italy and based in Dublin. She produces original work in the form of aural soundscapes and experimental organic tracks. She is a recipient of the prestigious Europe: A Sound Panorama juried prize for soundscape art. In addition to her soundart work, Susanna is the Founder and Director of the first international Artists' Residency to open in her native Basilicata, Palazzo Rinaldi.

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All go at the Arthouse and Gallery, Stradbally

Following a jam-packed summer programme, the Arthouse and Gallery Stradbally will complete the year with resident artists holding a collective group exhibition showcasing some of their work during the year.

Artists Gemma Guihan, Coliin Rush, Karen Hendy, Lorraine Walsh will showcase their work following a successful run of Summer Workshops with resident artists including Lorraine Walsh and Cara Byrne.

Lots of fun was had by the many young art lovers who came and worked with the artists on the series of weeklong summer camps in July which included workshops for National Drawing Day, a series of Mother and Toddler group meetings and an exhibition of work by the children of Corrig Kids Playschool in aid of Chernobyl Children International. In August a wonderful photographic exhibition by Fiona Saunders showed

exciting and vibrant images taken in Buenos Aires, Argentina entitled, Buenos Aires – Desde el Alma.

Also in August the artists in the Arthouse were involved in creating the **The Honeycomb Art Installation Project** for the Electric Picnic - a 'light recycling' installation involving six artists and helpers from the Arthouse, with everyone bringing a strong feel of their own practice to the project. Using recycled plastic bottles, to make up the honeycomb sections of vivid colour which were then lit by hundreds of led lights creating a specific vibrant colourful display and design.

September saw the return of **Culture Night** to Laois and a full programme of events took place at the Arthouse including artists' workshops, exhibitions, music performances and drama giving free entertainment from early till late. Following on from the success of the

Summer Arts Workshops, in October, Shadow Play - a series of five workshops - ran in The Arthouse, Stradbally. Resident artist Lorraine Walsh who holds a MFA from NCAD and has many years of experience in delivering quality workshops facilitated the workshops - a fun exploration of light and shadow for young adventurers.

Another highlight during November (TBC) in the Gallery is **The Art of Sound** - presented by the Contemporary Music Centre. This multi-media exhibition looks at new music making from the first idea through to the final performance. The creative process usually takes place behind closed doors, but this exhibition brings it to life through striking photographs of the composers and images of their work.

The Art of Sound exhibition will feature photographer Eugene Langan's dramatic and perceptive photographs of Irish

composers. An audio-guide narrated by Eamonn Lawlor, RTÉ lyric fm, brings to life the music that will be on display, leading to a truly unique and rich experience for the visitor.

During the **Leaves Literary Festival 2012** the Arthouse and Library will play host to a wonderful evening of music and readings featuring Christine Dwyer Hickey, Niamh Boyce and Nuala Ní Chonchúir and chaired by Seamus Hosey, with music by harpist Claire O'Donnell on Saturday, November 10th

Bookings can be made by calling the Dunamais Arts Centre on 057 8663355.

For further information please contact The Arts Office, Laois County Council on 057 8674342/43 or e-mail artsoff@laoiscoco.ie.

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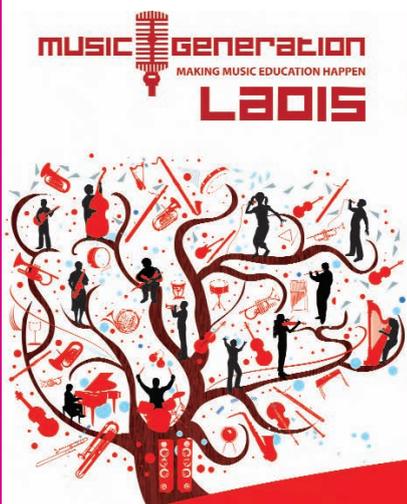
Aisling Children's Art Festival a big hit with Midlands youth

2012 hailed the 15th year of the Aisling Children's Art Festival - one of the greatest national children's art festivals in Ireland and it takes place right here in Longford.

In these recessionary times, Aisling provides free and value for money artistic experiences for the county's children. It has always been Aisling's goal to nurture and develop the artistic expression and appreciation of our children by introducing them to a wide range of artistic disciplines through the medium of workshops and performances. This year's theme was Celebrating Difference, which is apt given Aisling's continuing commitment to bring the arts to a diverse range of young people in Longford.

Aisling is managed and operated entirely by a volunteer committee and is a non-profit organisation. A spokesperson said: "We would not exist without the support and goodwill of a host of Longford's businesses, organizations, and individuals, and we would like to thank you all!"

For more information see www.aislingfestival.ie.



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Adela & the Meanits hit the headlines with 32 county tour in a month

After three years gigging together, Laois-based band Adela & the Meanits has finally manifested its unusual combination of genres and styles into a tangible form – in other words created a CD!

The band traces its origins back to a time long ago when singer Adela and percussionist Ros shared the stage on a St Patrick's Day parade float in Portlaoise. Some years after this chance encounter Adela needed a drummer to start a new band so Ros got the call. Soon after this Ros introduced Adela to bassist Barry who in turn introduced everyone to violinist John... and so the Meanits was born.

After temporarily disappearing from the scene to concentrate on finishing the recording of their debut album *Kinda Wild* Adela and the Meanits returned to the road with an almost impossible sounding but genius tour idea thanks to their manager; the notion of playing a gig in all 32 counties of Ireland in just one calendar month.

The Long Road Home Tour began on August 1 and it took the Meanits over

6000 kilometers in two packed cars through winding country boreens, over misty mountain bogs "and some motorway too, thank jaysus!" with pitstop gigs at such diverse locations as a coffeeshop in Carlow, a church/arts theatre in Athy, Co Kildare, a shopping centre in Monaghan, a visitor centre in Tyrone, a sports festival in Fermanagh and a golf awards night on Achill Island, Co Mayo (at which Santa showed up early to present the prizes) before finally ending up in Whelan's music venue in Dublin 28 days later.

The highlights of the tour included playing to full houses at Crane Lane in Cork City, Castlepalooza Festival at Charleville Castle, Co Offaly and The Rose of Tralee Festival in Co Kerry - not forgetting the two brilliant home gigs at the Scarecrow Festival in Durrow and later that evening in Kavanagh's Music Venue, Portlaoise.

The tour was such a success and hitting headlines all over the country in national and local outlets that after a brief rest the band is already busy preparing to return to all corners of the country to promote their

debut album with high-profile gigs lined up such as the GiftedLive.com TV showcase, playing alongside some of the biggest acts on the scene in the north of Ireland.

Adela said: "I've a strong feeling we're in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. The more you play, the better you get. It's as simple as that."

The band members said they would like to thank those who made the tour and album possible including "the beautiful Anna Duff and everyone connected to her for the warm beds and hospitality"; friend Mark Healy "for coming up with the tour idea and his help along the way"; Madhu and Paul "for recording and engineering the album" as well as Goodseed PR promotion company.

"Thanks to our friends and family for putting up with us being away... and being home!" the members all chimed in unison.

For further information see:
www.facebook.com/adelaandthemeanits
www.adelaandthemeanits.com **M**

LONGFORD'S NEW PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK CREATES A BANG!

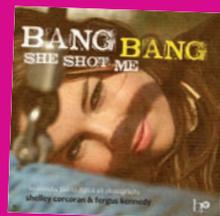
Bang, Bang, She Shot Me – a photography book with a difference has just been launched in Longford. The 100-page book is different in its emphasis on fun and creativity, and is initially aimed at second level students, but can be used by anyone looking to take photography up as a hobby. There's also a strong emphasis on photography as an art form, which only adds to its uniqueness. The book emerged from the success of Longford School of Photography Programme, which is now entering its third year.

Programme Director Shelley Corcoran devised a course to work with transition year students in the county, with support from the County Arts Office and VEC, who previously established the Midland College of Photography. Shelley spends two hours in each school every week during the school year, going through various photography techniques, technical aspects of photography and photography as an art form.

She said: "It is kind of a text book where students can go and have a look at techniques and understand how to take a photo, but it's also a showcase of their work from the past two years as well." County Longford Arts Officer, Fergus Kennedy, added: "There's a particular emphasis in the book as well; we didn't want to write another manual on how to take a photograph with a DSLR camera. "The emphasis in this book is on art photography; it's on developing students' visual awareness and encouraging them to express themselves through the medium of photography. We take a kind of fun approach where chapters are a little left field in topic.

"The whole idea is to reach out and engage young people in the fun of photography in the hope that they will take it more seriously and acquire the technical skills in greater depth afterwards. It's detailed enough for people to know what aperture, ISO, shutter speed is, and there are photographs to illustrate what the technical side is, but there are probably a larger amount of chapters that are art-based, like exploring different themes, emotions, moods and that kind of thing. The technical aspect (of the book) is just a means to an end. The book really emphasises that photography is an art form."

The book will be used as a curriculum support for the future students taking part in the photography module tutored



by Shelley, but will also be available for general sale through the Midland College of Photography website. The book, which was designed by Noel Strange, was launched in Backstage Theatre in October.

For more details visit
www.midlandcollegeofphotography.ie



OFFline

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Mr. Jimmy Deenihan TD who formally launched the OFFline Film Festival programme at the Centre for Creative Practices pictured with Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD (Chairperson of the OFFline Film Festival). The festival took place from Oct 10-14 in Birr, Co. Offaly
www.offlinefilmfestival.com

LAOIS YOUTH THEATRE presents: It Only Ever Happens In The Movies

It Only Ever Happens In The Movies devised by Mikel Murfi & John Taite along with the cast of NYT 2011. Directed by Áine Caulfield

are the girls behaving so weird? And who is this appearing in his dreams? Come along and find out!

This production was supported by the National Association For Youth Drama through it's New Stage programme and took place in Dunamais Arts Centre on Saturday, November 3. For more information see www.nayd.ie

"Summer Holidays. Crap weather and me with no-one :(Girls everywhere but just can't seem to talk to them. Only good thing about summer is the 99's :) and the new blockbuster movie :D ...Oh, I'm such a loser"

Find us on facebook:
www.facebook.com/laoisyouththeatre

Will Derek get the girl, just like in the movies? Can his friends help? Why

M



St Peter's Portlaoise the perfect venue to showcase the arts

The Rector of St Peter's Portlaoise, Church of Ireland, is keen to see the church used as much as possible for the arts and is urging people interested in scheduling an event to get in touch.

Over the last few months, St Peter's has hosted concerts by the Irish Youth Chamber Choir, Cologne Chamber Philharmonia and the Herbert Lodge Summer School. Also, lunchtime organ concerts took place during July and August.

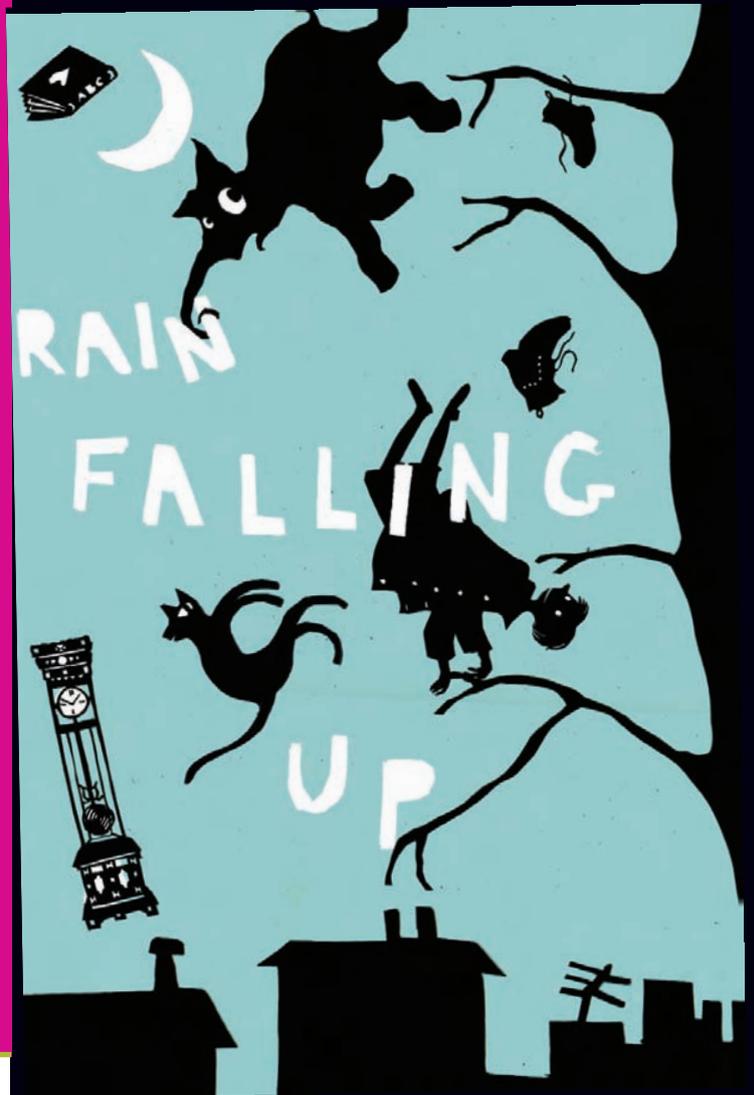
organ itself, though small, is perfectly suited to the building and is of high quality.

The Irish Baroque will perform on Friday, November 23 and the 2012 Laois School of Music Christmas Concert is scheduled for Saturday December 11.

Anyone interested in using the church please contact Rev Monkhouse on 057 862 1157, 087 365 2365, or at stanleymonkhouse@gmail.com

M

Another series of concerts will run next summer and Rev Stanley Monkhouse would be glad to hear any young singers and/or instrumentalists who would like the opportunity to play in public. The



Rain Falling Up sees schoolchildren perform at Captial's Convention Centre

Five primary schools across Offaly and Westmeath are participating in a new national children's choral project in conjunction with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and conductor Fergus Sheil which takes place in the Convention Centre in Dublin on Saturday, November 10.

Orchestra and has subsequently been performed in Belfast and in Italy. It was short listed for the British Composers Award in 2010. The composition is about 50 minutes in duration and involved several hundred school children across Ireland. It tells the story of a young boy called Jake who discovers how to make a gravity switch and manages to turn off gravity in the world - with some unintended consequences.

Some 250 students from St Kenny's National School, Kilpatrick, Mullingar; St Colman's National School, Mullingar; Scoil Mhuire CBS, Mullingar; Scoil Naisuinta Mhuire Naofa, Rhode and St Mary's Girls National School, Edenderry spent the first term of the school year rehearsing for a performance of a major new work by Belfast composer Brian Irvine and writer John McIllduff entitled *Rain Falling Up*.

This was a fantastic opportunity for primary schools in the Midlands to be involved in a high profile and memorable experience involving top Irish artists, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and a unique top quality venue. It provided the participants with a unique artistic challenge while also equipping them and their schools to meet this challenge.

The piece is a modern oratorio for massed singing children, a choir of senior citizens, orchestra, narrator and live shadow puppet animation. The piece was written initially for the Ulster

M

Seamus Kirwan, *Ravings of Mad Irish Man*.
Pic: Paddy Tubritt.

Tullamore Rhymers welcome release of a madman

October was a memorable month for Tullamore Rhymers' Club as it celebrated the launch of one member's first book. Seamus Kirwan's *Ravings of a Mad Irishman* - a most welcome and illuminating addition to Offaly's literary scene.

To label it a collection of poetry, although it is such, simply does not do this publication justice, for it is so much more. As well as possessing one of the most creative and innovative cover images, this deeply personal and revealing collection of poetry, reflective prose and thought-provoking opinion pieces, will resonate with many readers.

While held together by a playful undercurrent of humour and wit, *Ravings Of A Mad Irishman* never shies away from some of life's tougher issues, touching as it does with an intense honesty, on subjects such as the loss of a loved one, the author's own struggle with depression and the political chaos of the last few years.

Kirwan says that the book "deals with the use of writing and poetry as a therapy in dealing with, and surviving depression.

It traces my path in life over a 10 year period of dealing with and finding solutions to surviving depression, culminating in the reaching of a brighter outlook and place through the use of humour and fun and satire. It is also my contribution toward helping to eradicate stigma attached to mental illness. I never set out to write a book at all, it just accumulated over the years as I explored ways of dealing with bouts of depression and getting to that brighter place. About a year ago I decided to put all my work in book form, in the hope that it might be of help to others in dealing with what life throws up at every and anyone."

The book was launched on Friday, October 19 at Clonamore House Hotel, in Tullamore and is available locally for €10.

The Rhymers' Club, which, along with Seamus consists of Thomas Carty, Ken Hume, Jill Britton Batty and Anthony Sullivan, also plan to publish the first of what they hope will be a series of chapbooks entitled *Under The Fading Lamp* before the year's end. **M**



Briefs

OPENING THE WINDOW ON 20 YEARS

by Majella Reid

"A great man that, Sweeney,
Between two places,
Between two countries, between two minds,
Looking at himself in a water mirror,
By the lakeside, on the river bank.
And he all delighted with himself."

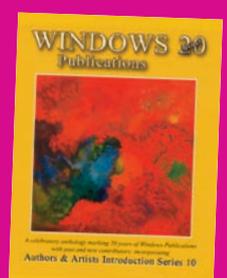
An extract from *Sweeney Under A Full Moon* by Noel Monahan.

When Granard man Noel Monahan puts his heart and soul into a task, he delivers. This is especially true of Windows Publications, a publisher founded 20 years ago to provide a platform for established and emerging writers. It was successfully established by Noel Monahan and his colleagues, Heather Brett and Simion D. Supported by Longford, Cavan and Monaghan County Council, Windows Publications has recently released an anthology titled, *Windows 20 Years*.

In describing the publication, Noel and his colleague Heather Brett write: "Surrender to its currents of thoughts. Fall under its spell." Speaking from his home in Cavan, Noel said: "To reach 20 years is an achievement. While we have published established writers over the years, we have also supported emerging talent too.

"This year our publication features three other Longford writers, namely Margaret Nohilly (Lanesboro), Kieran Furey (Curraghroe, County Roscommon) and Mary Melvin Geoghegan (County Longford)." Incorporating artists and authors from across the country, *Windows 20 Years* provides an insight into Irish literature today. Paintings are published alongside short stories and remarkable pieces of poetry. Noel himself has five collections of poetry all published by Salmon, Ireland - *Opposite Walls* (1991), *Snowfire* (1995), *Curse of The Birds* (2000), *The Funeral Game* (2004) and *Curve of the Moon* (2010). His poetry has been translated into Italian, Romanian, French and Russian and he has read his work and given workshops at numerous summer schools and festivals throughout Longford and Ireland. He is also the recipient of many prestigious literary awards. Having been involved in a number of workshops in Longford, Noel is currently working on a sixth collection of new poems, alongside two plays, all of which he hopes to complete this coming year. "I'm looking forward to the year ahead and to giving more workshops in Longford in the future, I hope," said Noel.

Windows 20 Years is available in Eason's in Cavan. The publishers hope to distribute it to outlets nationwide in the near future.



Music Generation Laois and Laois School of Music Open Evening

The Music Generation Laois and Laois School of Music Open evening in September in Portlaoise College brought school teachers, principals, parents and young people together to find out more about current musical activity in the county.

Uilleann Piper Gay McKeown, harpist Una Ní Fhlannagáin, Choral Master, Martin Barrett and the Ontoni Brass ensemble provided an insight into the Music Generation Laois programmes through performances and practical demonstrations. Music Generation Laois creates access to performance music education to children and young people and the project delivered a range of successful summer camps.

Music Generation Laois has now launched a series of programmes for schools and community groups including brass lessons, uilleann pipe lessons,

harp lessons, a choral music programme which can enable schools and communities to establish a choir and The Music Box, an access and music tuition programme for children with special needs. Students can also sign-up to attend evening classes in Brass, Harp, The Music Box and Uilleann Pipes in Portlaoise College.

Rosa Flannery, Co-ordinator of Music Generation Laois, was delighted with the response to the event. "There is fantastic enthusiasm among young people and the wider community about the music programmes being offered by both Music Generation Laois and Laois School of Music. Many of the instruments being offered by Music Generation Laois are not currently widely available to young people in the county. The Open Evening gave children, young people and the

wider community a chance to explore a range of instruments, from trumpet to uilleann pipes to harp." Laois School of Music has been providing music tuition in the county for over 10 years. Laois School of Music tutors and Music School Co-ordinator Nuala Kelly, provided information on their classes at the Open Evening, including classes in violin, viola, cello, clarinet, saxophone, flute, piano, keyboard, guitar, drums and recorder. Laois School of Music also offer 'Kindermusic' which is an introduction to music to children aged four to six. Laois School of Music also provide a series of ensembles for students to join, including a junior and senior orchestra and a woodwind ensemble.

For further information on Music Generation Laois or Laois School of Music programmes and music lessons, contact Laois County Council Arts Office on 057 8674343 or artsoff@laoiscoco.ie **M**





Runner BTS Crew: **Front row, left to right** - David Foley, Tristan Heanue, Paddy Slattery, John Phillipson, Nichola MacEville, Lorcan Dunne. **Middle Row, left to right** - Claire Tobin Dunne, Ellis Abbot, Ciara O' Donnell, John Desay, Jass Foley, Lorna Weightman, Carmen Reig. **Back Row, left to right** - West Connolly, Grace Coughlan, Mark McCauley, Karl Doyle, Paul Noble, Dave O' Sullivan. (NOTE: Other crew members were stationed either end of the road controlling traffic access when this photo was taken) Pic: Jass Foley

Runner BTS Kiloneen Road: Setting up for an Overhead Crane shot. Pic: John Phillipson

Doing a runner!

THIS YEAR WILL SEE THE RELEASE OF A SHORT FILM TITLED RUNNER FROM OFFALY BASED WRITER/DIRECTOR PADDY SLATTERY (STAND MANTRA PRODUCTIONS) AND PRODUCER/EDITOR JOHN PHILLIPSON (TUSK PRODUCTIONS).

Runner is a paranormal drama about a young successful man who tragically kills a girl in a 'hit and run' accident and foolishly attempts to carry on with his life as though nothing has happened. However, this proves to be impossible when he finds himself haunted by a mysterious female presence. Eventually his life spirals out of reality and into a surrealistic nightmare as he soon discovers that you cannot outrun a guilty conscience.

The film stars Tristan Heanue and Nichola MacEville, two emerging Irish actors who not only immersed themselves in their characters but also managed to take this story to a whole new level of intensity.

Following the previous success of Paddy's last short film *The Moment*, he has decided to try something a little different this time.

Paddy explained: "I like to write stories that I myself would be interested in

reading or watching; something with a bit of depth or substance. Something with an unexpected twist in the tale, and this certainly has those ingredients. I've grown fond of Hitchcock's work over the years and always wanted to make a film that's not necessarily scary, but has the intelligence to affect you on a deeper psychological level. Finally, I have that opportunity, which is one of the reasons I'm so excited about this project.

"The other reason is that I get to collaborate with John Phillipson, an exciting young filmmaker whose work includes the award winning alternative music show *Under Ether* which ran for two successive seasons on RTE, and music videos for bands like O Emperor and James Vincent McMorrow, which have been broadcast on MTV worldwide, picking up a prestigious IMTV Award in the process."

Runner didn't get off to a quick start as it was initially rejected by the Irish Film Board for funding. So, Paddy and John

decided to raise the money independently and following the advent of online crowd-sourcing, they successfully reached and exceeded their target of €5,000. Not only did they receive support from family and friends but some notable Production Houses stepped in and lent a hand also; companies like Studio Solas, Ardmore Sound, Screen Scene and Production Depot, the latter providing a state of the art RED One MX camera while John Desay, a filmmaking colleague provided the RED Scarlet (*a first for Irish short productions at that time*).

With Mark McCauley, BAFTA Award winning Cinematographer at the helm, shooting got underway in locations around Offaly and after a hectic but productive five day schedule in April, the film was finally 'in the can'.

Dave McCune of Ventry Recording Studios will be composing the music on *Runner*. After his beautiful score *The Moment* there was always a desire to

collaborate with him again. So, as Post-Production comes to a close, Paddy and John will prepare *Runner* for the film festival circuit, which can be a daunting task.

But Paddy insisted: "Although it was tough getting our film to this point, it was also fun and rewarding, so the idea of a screening at a film festival is an added bonus. We will treat this process very professionally though and do everything in our power to show off our film to the world. This was the reason we made it, after all. Whether it turns out to be as successful as our previous film remains to be seen, but one thing is for certain, when all is said and done, we will look back on this film with pride and celebrate a job well done."

For more details on *Runner* or to keep up with its journey around the film festival circuit, you can log on to its Facebook page - [Runner-Short-film](#)

Ways of Seeing Contemporary Art Residency

An Account by Artist in Residence Ursula Meehan
Contemporary Art, 2012, St Mary's National School Collinstown County Westmeath is funded by Westmeath County Council Arts in Context Scheme.

At St Mary's NS Collinstown from Easter until the end of the term, 34 girls and boys from fifth and sixth class took part in a residency that introduced them to aspects of contemporary art.

As the Artist in Residence my aim was to develop a way in which children could acquire an appreciation of and confidence in looking at contemporary art through their own experiences of art making.

Each week I introduced the pupils to artworks by either Irish or international contemporary artists. The pupils then participated in a workshop related to the approach and materials used by the artist(s) they had viewed. They were encouraged to use everyday materials found in their own environment, which included string, salt and plastic

objects. Through experiential and creative learning, the pupils began to develop an awareness of contemporary art. Gradually words such as installation, ephemeral, temporary and concept were becoming part of their vocabulary.

With the Principal and staff supporting and accommodating the developing residency I asked the pupils to create their own temporary installations in the grounds of the school. In this period of time I no longer directed their learning but facilitated their progress in developing their artwork. Some pupils worked on their own individual art works, others collaborated together creating group artwork. They developed their own ideas, choose where their artwork would be placed and sourced found objects and materials for



Ephemeral Art



War

their pieces. Their experiences in the previous workshops gave them a solid platform from which to create and develop pieces. They were inventive, enthusiastic and industrious in their art making. They worked independently and proved to be resourceful when dealing with problems in construction, sourcing materials and for those with pieces outside on the school grounds persevering against inclement weather!

The artworks they made were created very much from their own perspectives. Some were linked to fun and play whereas others showed an awareness of their environment and world issues.

Their pieces were exhibited to parents, friends, teachers and fellow pupils on a showery afternoon. The visitors moved

around the school grounds encountering a 'Girls Hut' and a 'Boys Hut' and 'The Maze of Wonder' which younger pupils sat in and crawled through whilst viewers were also invited to break the 'Strings of The Recession' created on a temporary sculpture. Inside the gym they were met by a depiction of War, a celebration of Sport, Pizza and invited into a thought provoking installation in which they viewed The World Turned Upside Down. They then could take part in making an 'Ephemeral Artwork' which was swept away after being created. The pupils spoke with confidence to the visitors about their artworks, who included Arts Officer, Catherine Kelly who admired their creativity. And whilst there were a few puzzled faces as there often is at a contemporary exhibition, it was well received. **M**

MINISTER FOR ARTS VISITS OFFALY

It was a busy day when the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan TD came to Offaly as he launched two Public Art Project commissioned by Offaly County Council.

His first port of call was St Joseph's Hall, Kilcormac to launch the Kilcormac Cantata CD which was composed by Vincent Kennedy. The CD was the culmination of a year of work by Vincent along with the schools, local choirs, singing groups, poets and musicians all of which was recorded during the project finale last November. The students of St Kieran's National School in Broughal and Scoil Naofa agus Chormac gave rousing renditions of *Steal Away* and *Silver River* conducted by Vincent Kennedy.

Speaking at the launch the Minister spoke of the importance of music in children's lives and that he hoped the community of Kilcormac would keep Vincent's music alive and encourage the children to carry music with them always.

The County Manager, Pat Gallagher, paid tribute to Vincent Kennedy for bringing the community together in such a celebratory way and reiterated the councils commitment to using the per cent for art scheme in more imaginative ways around the county.

The Kilcormac Cantata went onto be shortlisted for the prestigious 2012 Allianz Business to Arts Awards.

Aras an Chontae

Later that afternoon, the Minister travelled to the launch of *A Very Grand Canal*, a collection of artistic responses to the Grand Canal commissioned by Offaly County Council.

The exhibition includes work by Geraldine O'Reilly, Susanna Caprara (La Cosa Preziosa), Martina McGlynn, Garret Daly, Eugene O'Brien, Veronica Nicholson and Wayne Brennan. The collection of prints, film, photography, soundscapes, music and literature form a multi layered approach to celebrating the Grand Canal. From archival material to an illuminated sign saying GRAND, the work is intended to travel beyond the county boundaries and promote the Grand Canal nationally as a cultural corridor.

The Minister paid tribute to all the artists involved, for rising to the challenge set by Offaly County Council and surpassing it. He also commended the council for using the per cent for art



Declan Costello, Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD, Vincent Kennedy (Composer), Minister for Arts, Jimmy Deenihan TD, Sinead O'Reilly Arts Officer and Cllr. Peter Ormond, Cathaoirleach

scheme to create work that is rooted in the county but has the capacity to travel nationally and internationally. The event was rounded off by Eugene O'Brien reading an extract from his short story *the Greaser*, and Wayne Brennan gave a

rendition of *Roots in these Lands* to a rousing reception.

For more on A Grand Canal see page 11.

M

CLOSE HARMONY a Cappella Chorus launched in Athlone



Athlone A Cappella Committee 2012 Pic by Terry O'Neill, Back Row: Membership Secretary: Majella Mc Neice, Assistant Musical Director and Librarian: Ann Bradbury, Secretary: Bríd O'Flaherty. Front Row: PRO and Media: Ursula Daly, Liaison Officer: Maura Dillon, Treasurer & Musical Director: David Farmer, Chairperson: Dympna Binchy.

The ladies of **Athlone A Cappella** are delighted to announce the official launch of their *Close Harmony A Cappella Chorus* which started with small beginnings and which has now developed into a 43-strong Chorus – and still growing.

Chairperson: Dympna Binchy; Secretary: Bríd O'Flaherty; Treasurer and Musical Director: David Farmer; PRO and Media: Ursula Daly; Assistant Musical Director and Librarian: Ann Bradbury; Membership Secretary: Majella Mc Neice and Liaison Officer: Maura Dillon.

An initial group of four ladies first met and decided to set up a new chorus in Athlone. They held their first rehearsal in January this year and in the weeks and months that followed more and more members were recruited and put through their paces under the tutelage of their newly acquired Musical Director, David Farmer.

Rehearsals take place in the Athlone Springs Hotel and the chorus is extremely grateful to the management and staff of the hotel for their constant support, co-operation and kindness.

Athlone A Cappella made its debut performance at the Official Opening of the Athlone Literary Festival at the start of October in the Shamrock Lodge Hotel in conjunction with the renowned award winning poet, Paul Durcan. They will also perform competitively for the first time in the Sligo International Choral Festival, in November.

The Chorus is currently still looking for additional bass (low alto) singers, so if you love to sing and can get way down the register - or know someone who can - this is the chance for you to join a great group of ladies and use your talents. If you are interested in becoming part of the Chorus please contact David on 087 694 1220 or email .

The Chorus will be available for various outings and corporate functions and if you would like any further information, please contact Dympna on 087 2894095.

M

David has been singing and coaching four-part a cappella barbershop harmony for many years, and still performs with his award winning Quartet Cambridge Blues and his UK Champion Chorus Cambridge Chord Company, which appeared on the *Late Late Show* performing the hilarious version of *Teddy Bears' Picnic*?

Although founded in Athlone, the group's membership spans all the adjoining counties of Longford, Roscommon, Offaly, Galway and even as far as Kilkenny representing all walks of life from teachers, doctors, nurses, accountants, civil and public servants as well as active and retired home-makers.

The group, affiliated to IABS, (the Association of Barbershop Singers) boasts a wide variety of beautiful singing voices.

The newly founded committee members of Athlone A Cappella are:



New Gallery set in stone

A newly opened art gallery which focuses on exhibits made of stone has recently opened in Kilbeggan, County Westmeath and already has had sculptures from some of the country's finest stone carvers including Barry Wrafter who created the statue that stands outside Belvedere house in Mullingar, Jason Ellis a world renowned Sculptor, and many others.

Gallery 52 located on Main Street, Kilbeggan, will also feature fine paintings from artists locally and from all over Ireland but their passion lies in the art of stone carving.

The space is a modern, clean gallery and features another very unique feature, in that there is also a shop attached to the gallery called Tools4stone where you can buy a large range of stone carving tools.

Owner of Tools4stone, Dale Weston said: "This is something no other stone tools supplier has in either Ireland or the UK - a shop where you can buy the

best quality stone tools and view the best sculptures in the country whilst keeping the two areas separate to give people space to view the sculpture and fine art. We supply the country's best stone workers and encourage beginners to call in as well."

Gallery 52 will be holding bi-monthly exhibitions of local and up-and-coming sculptors and artists, to keep the space fresh and exciting.

Already local sculptors and painters have exhibited and will be working with local art groups and community colleges to promote stone carving and bringing sculpting to a wider audience.

Open from Monday until Friday from 10am to 6pm and on Saturday from 10am to 2pm, the gallery is open to all visitors.

For further information visit <http://gallery52.webs.com> or Tel: 057 9333335.

M

Briefs

TOP CLASS ENTERTAINMENT AT DUNAMAISE ARTS CENTRE

For an opportunity to see a feast of top class entertainers look no further than Dunamaisé Arts Centre which has a banquet of entertainment lined up for the autumn season.

Some top class entertainers and events include the likes of Sharon Shannon and Vladimir Jachokov, the sensational opera series coming from *The Met Live in HD* as well as wonderful theatre, comedy and dance productions and the annual Portlaoise musical and pantomime.

With captivating Halloween and Christmas shows for families and schools also featuring in the Dunamaisé autumn schedule and much more, including a performance by Laois Youth Theatre in their production *It Only Ever Happens in the Movies* it really is a feast for culture vultures not to be missed.

Other events include:

- Portlaoise Musical Society's latest production, *Singin' in the Rain*, November 17 to 24, 2012
- Portlaoise Panto Group's *Jack & the Beanstalk*, January 9 to 26, 2013; Ballet Ireland's beautiful presentation of *The Nutcracker*
- Sharon Shannon
- Comedy group The Nualas
- *The Tempest* (Thomas Adès)
- *La Clemza di Tito* (Mozart)
- *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Verdi)
- *Aida* (Verdi)
- *Les Troyens* (Berlioz).

There is also a great mix of films to be screened at the arts centre.

Art lovers will be captivated by the gallery's line up of exhibitions including an exhibition by artist Carol Booth from November 9 and a craft exhibition from December 7.

The full programme of events with dates can be seen on the Dunamaisé website. Tickets for all events are on sale now from or from the box office. Tel: 057 8663355.



Thomas Frye

(1710-1762)

He was an extraordinary Edenderry man who should be commemorated writes Mary O'Connor

The name of Thomas Frye is virtually unknown in Edenderry yet this talented man was one of the foremost eighteenth century portrait painters of his day. He was commissioned to paint senior British Royals and to quote from his epitaph was "the inventor and first manufacturer of porcelain in England". His paintings, prints and mezzotint engravings are on exhibition in such prestigious surroundings as the Royal Collection and the Tate Gallery, London, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Library of Australia in Canberra, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin while his porcelain figurines feature in the Curator's Choice Section in the Museum at Collin's Barracks and in the Burrell Gallery in Glasgow.

Thomas Frye was born in Edenderry, County Offaly in 1710 in a house reputed to have stood on the site of

Groome's Butchers on O'Connell Square. As a young man he went to England where in accordance of the custom of the time he became an apprentice artist to James Latham.

It appears that his talent was recognised in royal and aristocratic circles and in 1734 he was commissioned by the Worshipful Company of Saddlers to paint a full-length portrait of Frederick, Prince of Wales which he completed in 1736 and subsequently engraved in mezzotint and published in 1741. He painted the portraits of numerous members of the aristocracy, the merchant classes and that of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham and also became a life-long friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

By 1744 Frye was aware that the British upper classes purchased their porcelain directly from China and he toyed with the idea of manufacturing porcelain in England on a mass production basis for the less well-to-do. He carried out experiments with various types of clay and finally decided that the most suitable kaolin was that found in the territory of the Cherokee Indians in Virginia with whom he drew up a contract and in 1749 he was involved in the establishment of New Canton a porcelain factory in Bow, London where he spent the next fifteen years of his life. Amongst his products were figurines of the top show business personalities of the day such as the popular actor and actress Woodward and Clive which can be seen in Collins

Barracks. However, the heat and dust of the furnaces seriously affected his health and he retired from the business in 1759.

He spent a year recuperating in Wales, appears to have recovered, returned to London and resumed his work as a portrait painter in oils and crayon but now he concentrated on his speciality which was mezzotinting. Frye added his own touch of individuality to this technique and produced a number of almost life-sized heads from his own drawings which he published in 1760 and 1761. Yet, the years spent at the furnaces took their toll and Thomas Frye died of consumption on April 2, 1762.

There is evidence that members of Thomas Frye's family are buried at Monasteroris Cemetery, Edenderry where headstones bear the inscriptions of John Fry, who died December 14, 1701 aged 59 and who is likely to have been his grandfather. It also appears that Thomas Frye and his brother Joseph contributed towards the erection of a headstone for their father John Fry who died June 28, 1752, aged 70 years.

Surely the time has come for Edenderry to commemorate in an appropriate manner the life and achievements of Thomas Frye who "...had the correctness of Van-Dyck and the colouring of Rubens..." (An Epitaph, *Gentlemen Magazine*, 1764)

M

Three Years of Creative Engagement at Birr Community School

ST BRENDAN'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN BIRR HAD EMBRACED COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE WITH ARTISTS AND RECENTLY CELEBRATED THE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS WITH ARTISTS PAUL FINCH AND JOHN MCCARTHY.

Flow Forms

Flow Forms is a sculptural water feature designed and constructed by artist Paul Finch along with students from Transition Year (TY 2) 2010/2011 and three other classes. This project was funded by the NAPD Creative Engagement Art Grant and Offaly Arts Council. The students participated in workshops with the artist to plan and create a permanent feature

in the Sensory Garden for the new extension to the school.

The students' creativity can be seen in the coloured ceramic jigsaw pieces incorporated into the piece. The inspiration for *Flow Forms* is based on Goethian Science which is a form of study pioneered by Rudolf Steiner and Victor Schauberg in the 1940's and

1950's. *Flow Forms* are vessel systems that create rhythm like processes within the water.

Art on Entry

All Transition Year students worked with Stain Glass Artist, John McCarthy in 2012 to create two permanent stain glass light boxes which are on permanent display in the entrance of St. Brendan's.

This project was funded by NAPD Creative Engagement, Offaly County Council and St. Brendan's Community School. Each student plus staff members had the opportunity to design and create their own individual stain glass panel and these in turn were put together to create this beautiful and colourful permanent exhibit at St. Brendan's Community School. **M**



Ka Yu Chan, Yvonne Claffey, Ming Loughnane (Principal), Brona McDermott, Sharon McConnell, David Carroll, Damien Breslin, Front Row: Aisling Middleton, Emma Harte, and Jeremy Alexander



Conor Bracken, Dillon Patel, Leanne Dooley, Kiera Dooley, Caroline Kealey, Eleanor Heagney and Conor Guinan.

Hats off to Eileen

Eileen Maher, an artist from Birr, talks about making the transition from video art to millinery.

One of the advantages of being a creative individual is that you have the ability to approach a challenge from multiple perspectives and apply your creative skills to numerous different applications. Recently, I have diversified in my practice and benefited greatly from the experience.

I started my artistic career by studying Fine and Applied Art Practices, with a specialisation in video art. However, in recent years I have found myself craving other, more practical, applications for my creativity.

And so, to hats....

"You shouldn't ask, why do you wear a hat? What you really should be asking is why you are not?" It was this quote from John Galliano that I found myself considering after I visited *Hats: An Anthology* by Stephen Jones at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

"Following my visit to this inspiring exhibition, hats took on new form for me; no longer were they merely accessories but multifunctional sculptures and objects that I wanted to create myself. My creative juices in full flow, I applied to study millinery at London College of Fashion. And, although the course was challenging, I found it to be an extremely exciting new diversion.

Upon completing my course I designed and produced a collection of eclectic vintage hats, which were exhibited during the 2012 Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival. The exhibition allowed me to demonstrate not only the craftsmanship required to create bespoke hats, but also that millinery has surpassed the level of craft and can be considered a form of artistic production.

Like artists, milliners take inspiration from a variety of sources. I take inspiration from the things that interest me most, including architecture, film and fashion. As I do in my visual art practice, I use millinery not only to experiment but also to express my ideas. When I create

a headpiece, I go through a process of enquiry not dissimilar to that which I would undertake to produce video art. However, I must also take into account the fact that my artwork will be worn and must function.

Passion and a strong sense of curiosity, the core motivations for my practice, are the drivers that lead me to experiment with a range of fabrics, from more traditional and high quality textiles to non conventional materials. What I have discovered, is that millinery provides endless sculptural, textural and technical possibilities. When creating a hat I use my master-crafts skills in sculpture in conjunction with the traditional millinery techniques that I have recently learned. The work is precise; shaped by hand on wooden blocks and each hat is entirely hand-stitched.

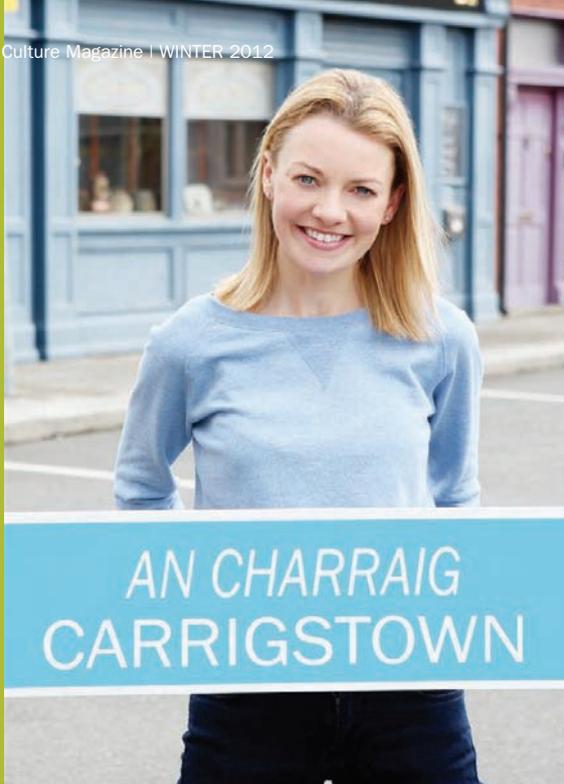
Through my exploration of millinery, I have found ways of diversifying creatively. This has allowed me to contextualise my own production of work and furthermore, it has provided me with a greater understanding and appreciation of other practitioners and their disciplines.

Perhaps what is most gratifying is that my practice of millinery has allowed me to discover within myself a new well of creativity. Although currently I am focusing on millinery, I know that I can draw upon this well and apply my artistic resources to a range of new challenges."

Designer, Sculptor and Milliner Eileen Maher creates hand crafted hats and headpieces. Eileen spent five years studying Fine and Applied art Practices in the UK and qualified with a Distinction Masters. She uses her master craft skills in sculpture combined with her experience studying Millinery at London College of fashion to design and produces inspiring, original hats.

To view Eileen's website visit:
www.eileenmaherhats.com Tel: 0857055771 **M**





From Longford to Carrigstown

Actress Lorna Quinn speaks to Briege Madden about her Fair City character Lucy Mallon, what it's like being on a national soap, her stand-out career moments to date and the ultimate dream!

Longford native Lorna Quinn, who is currently playing the character of Lucy Mallon in Fair City, went to National School in Newtownforbes and Secondary School in Longford Convent. Her character Lucy, who left Carrigstown early last year, after borrowing 5K from Dolores, is back with a vengeance and trying desperately to conceal a mysterious and troubled past.

The daughter of Frank and Rheda talks about Lucy's first appearance to Carrigstown: "We first meet Lucy at a donor seminar in the local community centre. She reveals to Dolores that her life was transformed in her twenties when she received a cornea transplant. She claims that she lost her sight due to illness and regained it again thanks to this transplant. Dolores is fixated on the notion that Jessica (*her daughter who died and donated her cornea's at the same time Lucy received her transplant*) may have been Lucy's donor. Lucy neither confirms nor denies this. One thing is for certain though, the two women form a strong bond that will ultimately see them become firm friends, with Lucy moving in with

Dolores and eventually winning the heart of Dolores' son Wayne."

Sitting in the Longford Arms Hotel over a coffee, Lorna told me that she loves the experience of playing Lucy and working on Fair City. "I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to play this character. The story-team on Fair City have worked so hard on this story and I think they have done a wonderful job in building the suspense and mystery so strongly associated with it."

She explained that her character has developed a lot since her first appearance to Carrigstown. "She has moved in with Dolores and is going out with her son Wayne. She has a part-time job in The Hungry Pig. There is a sense that this girl is firmly establishing herself within this little town – eager to move on from her past and start afresh."

"When we first meet Lucy, she is very nice, sweet and innocent. However, as time goes on we see another side to her character and realize there is much more to this girl than meets the eye. For

me playing the part, it has been hugely exciting. I love how she has many different faces for the various people she encounters – kind and thoughtful with Wayne, nasty and manipulative with Pete, heartless and cold with Laura, efficient and hard working with Bob – She is the ultimate actress, fooling everyone in order to get what she wants."

"It is a great storyline and I am working with a great team of actors - Martina Stanley (Dolores), Victor Burke (Wayne) and Enda Oates (Pete). I am really enjoying the transition from stage to screen. It is totally different and requires far less in terms of expression, voice and performance. The camera picks up everything, so we are directed to keep it contained and intimate in terms of performance."

"Longford people have been very supportive and I have been receiving lovely feedback from family and friends. People are excited that a local girl is on Fair City and I am very proud that I have had the opportunity to work on this national soap," she enthused.

"People are excited that a local girl is on Fair City and I am very proud that I have had the opportunity to work on this national soap."

Even at a young age performance was beckoning Lorna. When she was 13-years-old she attended Evelyn Kelly's Speech and Drama Classes, taking part in improvisation games, scene work, acting in short plays and studying for her grades in Speech and Drama.

During her secondary school years, Lorna was an active member of St Mel's Musical Society, taking part in four musicals – Annie Get Your Gun, Me and My Girl, Calamity Jane and Anything



Goes. Also during this time, Lorna was a member of Backstage Youth Theatre, performing in many plays at The Backstage Theatre, whilst also continuing to study her grades in Speech and Drama. It was during this time that Lorna was discovering a real love for performing on stage.

She was about to make another transition into the field of stardom during Transition Year at Longford Convent, when friends Gráinne Fox and Shaunagh Connaire formed the girl-group As3 with Lorna. The group wrote their own songs and recorded them with Paul Gurney in Longford. They had songs played on local radio stations across the Midlands and performed at many local venues in Longford including supporting Sandy Kelly at The Longford Summer Festival.

"This gave us great confidence from a young age, as we were performing regularly on stage throughout Longford and across the country at various events. It was a fantastic experience and one we all look back on with fond, fond memories - particularly when we were voted Song of the Week on Mike Mulvihill's Power Hour slot on Shannonside radio!"

During her Leaving Cert year, performance took a back seat as Lorna focused on her studies. In 2002, Lorna went to UCC to study for a BA in English, Drama and Theatre Studies. She joined the Drama Society and performed in many plays throughout her college years including *The Odd Couple* (the female

version!) by Neil Simon and *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn, for which Lorna was nominated Best Actress at the ISDA Awards.

Having studied Drama and Theatre Studies for three years at UCC, Lorna decided she would like to train professionally to become an actress. With this in mind, she auditioned successfully for the two-year full-time course at The Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin.

She explained: "The only practical requirements for classes at The Gaiety School of Acting were for you to turn up on time, be dressed in black clothes, be barefoot and be ready to engage with the work. Having spent the three years in UCC studying the theories behind acting, performance and theatre; I was now ready to leave the books behind and focus solely on training myself to become a professional actress."

Once Lorna had completed her actor training she remained in Dublin to get her acting career off the ground.

"I was very excited about graduating. I couldn't wait to get started and land my first job! I was aware that this was not necessarily going to come easy, and that I would have to remain patient, work hard, market myself and be proactive."

She told the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine that she immersed herself within the Dublin theatre scene at this time. "I attended many plays, became

familiar with theatre companies based in Ireland, observed the work of my peers on stage and took part in many acting classes and workshops."

"I remember seeing *All My Sons* at the Gate Theatre and just being totally blown away by the whole production. I immediately stood to my feet when the play was over - It was just amazing and so inspiring."

"Having spent the three years in UCC studying the theories behind acting, performance and theatre; I was now ready to leave the books behind and focus solely on training myself to become a professional actress."

Her first break was a play reading during Dublin's Fringe Festival (*How to Make a Mountain* by Stephen Kennedy). Not long after this, she worked on *I, KEANO* and had a fantastic time touring the popular musical to Cork, Limerick and Dublin. During this time Lorna also completed her Speech and Drama exams with The Leinster School of Music and Drama and qualified as a Speech and Drama teacher.

"I have had the opportunity to work with many fantastic theatre companies so far in my career." These companies include Public Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*), City Theatre Dublin (*Jane Eyre*), Painted Filly Theatre Company (*100 Minutes*), Carpet Theatre (*50 Ways to Leave Dún Laoghaire & Ferry Tales*), Spilt Gin Theatre Company (*Andy Warhol's Nothing Special*), Corcadorca (*PLASTICINE*), TEAM Theatre (*Skin and Blisters*), No Worst, There Is None (*The Stomach Box*), Éala Productions & Focus Theatre (*Walnuts Remind Me of My Mother & TIC*) and The Gate Theatre (*Little Women*).

When asked about her ambitions for the future, Lorna tells Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine that her ambition is to continue working with professional actors and directors in theatre, TV and film.

"I take each job as it comes and strive to give it my all. In this profession, having an optimistic outlook and positive nature helps. There will undoubtedly be rejections, near misses, bad auditions - but this is often balanced with lucky breaks, chance meetings or being in the right place at the right time. It is an exciting profession, and when the rewards come, it is hard to beat that feeling of euphoria when you are successful in landing a role that you have worked so hard for. Like anything in life, when you want something badly enough, you will work hard to make it happen. Perseverance is the key to success after-all!"

Lorna has concluded her work with *Bedroom Farce* by Alan Ayckbourn in the New Year. She will be playing the role of Kate. It opens on February 5 at The Gate Theatre, Dublin and will be directed by Alan Stanford.

M

I.F. O.N.L.Y.

(International Festival Of A Necessarily Lonely You)



Cristina Golletti, Artistic Director I.F. O.N.L.Y and Co-Artistic Director Legitimate Bodies Dance Company describes how making-do becomes an important aspect of artistic direction

I.F. O.N.L.Y. is a dance festival dedicated to contemporary dance solo authors, which was initiated in 2007 as one of Legitimate Bodies Dance Company activities to increase and promote contemporary dance in the Midlands. This year I.F. O.N.L.Y. celebrates its fifth season this year and as a way of paying homage I would like to take a closer look at some of the aspects that make this festival such a unique reality.

Why I.F. O.N.L.Y.?

In my early twenties I travelled to Mexico City with an Italian dance company to perform in a festival called Soliloquios Y Dialogos Bailados. The festival's mission was to present solos and duos from both Mexican and International artists.

The Artistic Director of this festival, Isabel Beteta De Cou, a legendary figure in Mexican modern dance, told me something I never forgot. She explained how the festival was a way of utilising the main studio of her dance space in downtown Mexico City; how it became a perfect example of how content followed form. Her space was small and really well positioned in the city. She knew the space would be perfect for solos or duo as the atmosphere of the location was intimate and there was no real separation between the proscenium and the audience.

This idea of utilising resources to their best stayed with me while I was performing in companies around Europe. Once I became the Co-director

of Legitimate Bodies Dance Company at Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, I started thinking more as an entrepreneur than just a dancing body. I was curious of how to make the most of what we had and how to make contemporary dance more visible and accessible in rural Ireland. My imagination ran wild as I contemplated big dance events and big companies touring to Ireland. However the reality soon curbed my enthusiasm.

I knew the stage of our theatre wouldn't suit large group work and that our meagre financial resources would have made programming larger companies impossible. Our technical support was limited and we were still developing an audience for dance. My initial frustrations faded away as the words of Isabel Beteta came to mind. I.F. O.N.L.Y. was conceived out of the desire to put Birr on the map of contemporary dance and make this often elitistic art form more accessible and available to audiences in rural Ireland, but more than anything as a way of 'making-do' with the reality I was in.

Actually, I believe my limited resources and the reality of my residency helped me shaping a stronger and more specific identity for the festival. And...so we started.

The first year (2008) I asked my dancing buddies, people I knew and trusted but also people I knew could afford coming to Ireland without really getting paid. We did everything in such a naive and casual way! However I began

to feel very attached to the project. The following year we received a small award from the Arts Council under the Small Festivals Scheme. Having a bit of money meant the festival shifted from a one-day evening performance to a more organic event with workshops for the community and a master class for professional dancers. The 2010 festival was a landmark year, because I had enough resources to produce a festival brochure, to have an administrator and to invite people I actually respected artistically and I wanted to see dancing. I also scheduled workshops a two-week residency. Unfortunately, the weather that year turned really bad and the event was not very well attended. Yet it still gave me the courage and knowledge to continue.

In 2011, thanks to increased support the festival arrived, and was an incredible event for both the professional dance community and the local community. It featured an incredible line up of artists like contemporary dance star Trajal Harrell from NYC, as well as Liv O'Donoghue (IRL), Madalina Dan (ROM) and Shamita Ray (UK). I received 45 applications from artists all over Europe to take part in the I.F. O.N.L.Y. residency!

2012 promises to be an incredible year with more artists, more activities, more workshops, more spaces (including a shopping window on Main Street, Birr). As the festival grows and partners up with a screen dance festival from

Mexico called 'Agite Y Sirva', to show short dance films around Birr, I can't help but think at the incredible journey I have lived over the past 5 years, thanks to this festival.

Of course I.F. O.N.L.Y. expansion is also the result of a considerable increase in the financial support I received as the festival is now funded not only by the Arts Council, Offaly County Council but also by the Local Development Agency and Dance Ireland.

However I feel the biggest reason the festival is growing stronger and stronger is that I had the time to engage deeply with the reality I live in, to create connections with the public library, the retirement groups, the schools and the local artistic community. I also believe I'm growing in confidence as a curator and as an artistic director and I can only thank the perceived restrictions my residency posed me, as it forced me to think outside the box.

Look out for

I.F. O.N.L.Y. International Festival of A Necessarily Lonely You (The only festival in Ireland dedicated to Dance Solos)

November 23-25, 2012, Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, Birr Public Library and other venues.

Performances, Workshops, Screenings, Exhibitions, Public Talks, Residency. For further information see www.birrtheatre.com





Darren Campion, 2012 discusses



Theatre of Self: *Presence/Presents* by Seamus McCormack

We all perform, we inhabit certain roles. In many ways, the whole drift of Western thought has been to grapple with this very complexity – the volatility of self and the mechanisms of its projection are contemporary obsessions. But performance is also a social category, and therefore it is a mistake to assume that the masks we speak out of – or through – are not in some fundamental degree the “selves” that are said to inhabit them.

These themes occur forcefully in the work of Seamus McCormack, where the formal devices of theatrical space, with their uncanny suspensions of time and slippages of character are repurposed to questioning effect. He traces a line

between the popular conception of an actor as protean self, disappearing into a role, and the equally uncertain convergence of postures and attitudes that define us individually.

By approaching the relative positions of spectator and performer as a set of opposing territories, categories of dramatic performance are shifted into the social realm – identity is constructed as performance, fictive economies of self. For McCormack these elements supply the means to probe whatever dissonance that might arise between the roles we take on and how they are performed, directing the supposed interiority of performance outward and onto the means of its reception.

These gestures of formal disturbance are exemplified by the work *Presence/Presents*, which is a double projection arranged so that the viewer

can potentially enter the space of the image. From one side an actor on a bare stage reads a text, as if for a rehearsal and on the other is the same stage, minus the actor this time, with a series of light changes. Crucially, both projections are overlaid to create a single frame, while the narration combines the text of the performance with a reflection on the technical process of its visibility.

We are seeing not only the scripted enactment of a character, but also seeing through its articulation – the notion of “performance” is taken apart. Even while inside the role McCormack has the actor describe (via the narration) the apparatus of projection, which is connected symbolically to both the “projection” of a character and also to the image of those empty spot-lights, suggesting identity is only what falls in to our view, carried by the structures that make it visible, and around that is

an impenetrable shadow, the darkened stage a multiplicity of unconscious selves.

Ours is an age of theatrical self-impersonation; we can move with unprecedented ease between roles and personas. But the self is also subject to deep and inevitable conflict. It is perhaps in light of this that we seek the mediation of fictionalised experience as a way to direct the turmoil that might otherwise overwhelm us. The conclusion of McCormack’s work seems to be that the individual as the measure of identity is a chaotic play of forces, as well as being the often reluctant surface upon which they are inscribed – both performer and performed.

For more information visit www.seamusmccormack.com



“Laois Youth Theatre gave me my start”

By Trevor Mulhare

“I completely underestimated my abilities and doubted myself hugely.”



Eleven years old; I sat in a restaurant with both my mother and her friend when my mother produced a flyer from her handbag and passed it across the table to me. Portlaoise Youth Theatre Auditions was printed across the top and the following Saturday I was full of curiosity and excitement on the way to my first ever drama workshop.

From that one workshop I was hooked and for the next five years I woke up, earlier than I would have liked, each Saturday to attend youth theatre. PYT introduced me to so many amazing aspects of theatre and truly made me fall in love with the world of drama, so much so that when I was filling out my CAO form every choice I made was drama studies. In September of 2009 I moved up to Dublin to study Drama and English in UCD.

I would have been nervous had it not been for the years of drama workshops and different NAYD training courses around the country that had conditioned me for new experiences.

As prepared as I was to embrace everything in Dublin, when I was offered a job as a facilitator's assistant in Stradbally Youth Theatre I was glad to have a reason to come home every

week. I really have to stress how helpful the Arts office in Laois has been ever since I was that nervous 11 year boy first made an appearance and I owe many of my successes in life to their continued support.

Under the excellent guidance of Siobhan Coffey I gained priceless, practical experience and had the opportunity to put into practice everything I was learning.

The transition from member to leader was more difficult than I predicted, as I was so used to enjoying youth theatre it was hard to think of it as a job and except that I was an authority with responsibility. I do have to add, however, that being a facilitator is definitely the most entertaining job I've had and the teenagers that attend every week both excite and inspire me so much that I never look forward to the time for me to leave.

Although I loved my university experience and feel it instilled a great work ethic within me alongside a great understanding of the theory involved in performance which was brilliantly comprehensive, like any other creative route, you're always going to learn the most from putting theory into practice. I can't say that college was the be all and

end all of my success so far and I'd definitely say that youth theatre was far more beneficial to me and a great preparation.

Through my involvement in theatre here in Ireland I've made a lot of amazing friends which has really stood to me. For example, during the summer I met up with a friend of mine who I met many years ago when we represented Ireland in the European Children's Theatre Encounter. She told me about the Edinburgh Fringe Festival mentioning that I should apply for a role. It was to be the first job I have achieved based on my university qualifications alone when I found out I had been given the role of Deputy Theatre Manager of a venue and, at the same time, learned that I had but five days to move over and begin my new adventure.

I felt quite nervous initially, I completely underestimated my abilities and doubted myself hugely. I dived straight in though and was genuinely surprised albeit overjoyed to realise that there was no task or situation that I wasn't prepared for.

Daily tasks involved managing box office staff, front of house staff, dealing with customers queries and complaints,

set production and the directing of eight spaces during the festival period. The festival itself was incredible and over the 25 days of the festival I managed to see 71 shows, some breath taking and some time wasting but nevertheless I came home exhausted but filled with ideas.

One show I stumbled upon was called Milk and Mucus and was a collaboration of modelling and performance to convey a message about disabilities and how we view ourselves. I have just started modelling this year so was delighted to witness modelling holding its place at the world's most important arts festival.

Although, I am relatively new to modelling I have been fortunate enough to work with some of the best photographers including Perry Ogden and Barry McCall, both of their work instills in me a feeling that I am still contributing to the creative world.

I don't have a structured plan as to where I see my involvement in theatre going, but I never have and the journey so far has been completely amazing so it's not something I feel like I can guide, it's just something I'll enjoy exploring organically.

M

Making Space in Athlone

The Making Space collective is an interdisciplinary group made up of artists, designers, musicians, writers, social architects and other academics. We are a multifunctional collective and are fluid by nature, participating in a wide range of projects within the community – writes Aoife Doolan, Making Space.

Our aim is to encourage creative progress within the greater social spectrum, to demonstrate artistic practices to those within the community who seek a platform to create and we aim to transform the way in which we look at our everyday surroundings. Making Space is not just a collective - it's a movement, one that celebrates the constant flow of artistic energy within the spaces that we occupy on a daily basis. "Central to Making Space, I think, is the idea that you don't simply have to accept the reality that is handed down to you every day, be it in terms of streets without joy, a townscape that frustrates your desire to marvel, whatever. Making Space is about rethinking the space

around you and getting involved in changing it. The movement is open to everyone. Like all revolutions, we have no clue how it will all end, we can just enjoy being along for the ride. 'Power to the people.'" - Jason Gill (Playwright)

Another aim of Making Space is to support individual artists and their practices; to create networks and resources for artists living in the Midlands and to create opportunities for artists to exhibit their own body of work. Within the past year, it has become imperative that Making Space also has the tools in which to facilitate the needs of these individual artists so that they can reach their full creative potential. In May of this year, with the support of Athlone Chamber of Commerce and Hynes Real Estate, Making Space began occupying an empty commercial unit above Burgess Stores in Athlone. Since then a number of local artists have been working steadily within the space. The two floored unit contains studios occupied by the following artists: Sam Sutton, Rose Finerty, Lorna Kincaid, Denis McCormack, Aoife

Doolan, Tadhg Kelleher, Louise Shanagher, Anthony Doyle and Rois Ni Dhochartaigh. The space has been of enormous benefit to these individual artists, to all members of the collective and to the community.

On August, 17 Making Space officially opened its studio at number 15 Custume Place in Athlone Town. At this event the public were offered the opportunity to visit the studio and engage with the studio artists as well as other members of the artistic community. The studio received a warm, enthusiastic response, as did the art work on display, which was inclusive of painting, sculpture, photography and experimental sound. Playwright Jason Gill officially opened the space with an inspiring and heartfelt speech where he talked about the importance of creative action and an artistic revolution in Athlone town and the greater Midlands. The Making Space studio is a non-commercial space providing artists with space facilitating contemporary visual art practices. As well as working on

projects collectively we encourage individual art practice and are committed to furthering the visibility and value of art in Athlone.



The studios are open to the public upon appointment. For visitor's information contact us at MakingSpacePublicArtEven@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.



Cóilín Rush

shares his thoughts about the Artist in Residence programme 2012/13 at Arthouse, Stradbally

My residency which commenced on April 17, 2012 has developed thus far in three strands, reflected in three weekly workshops which I run studio no.5 in the Arthouse.

On Monday from 7.30pm to 9pm I run a workshop with a small group constituent of a painting group from Portlaoise who had previously attended a VEC class which was cut short and a local man and stonemason who has developed an interest in painting. This group deals exclusively with oil painting and was assembled on request by the Portlaoise group on the basis of the sudden cancellation of their previous class. It began with sessions of my describing the technical means by which I conduct my own oil painting in regards of grounds, extenders, mediums and specific techniques and now takes the form of me facilitating their endeavours with their own painting projects by way of advice and hands on practical help.

Second workshop

The second workshop I conduct meets on Tuesday evenings from 7.30pm to 9pm and is populated by those who attended a public talk I gave on my work and my intended interaction in the local community shortly after beginning my

residency in the Arthouse. The members of this group are largely those who worked with the previous Artist in Residence, Vera Mac Evoy, under the name Cultúrbug, and a few other members who are new to the process.

Thus far the workshops have been one off or double roll over workshops on different mediums and kinds of art practice with a view to initiating a larger ongoing thematic project after the mediums and techniques that I consider constitute the fundamental tools that should be available to any artist have been covered.

There is a strong element of art appreciation to the workshops and most of them have begun with a short presentation on an artist who exploited the chosen medium or technique to its greatest capacity historically speaking.

So far we have engaged in stencil modules by looking at Warhol and Banksy, Collage by way of Max Ernst, Foam sculpture in reference of Henry Moore, Left brain drawing techniques, Markmaking, Charcoal and ink tonal studies, Mixed media works in the vein of Anselm Kiefer, Clay modelling, Wireframe 3d works and papier maché sculpting.

Also, to date, there has been 17 workshops and the atmosphere has become very expansive with different ideas and personal dimensions becoming apparent. After a brief break towards the end of the summer to facilitate my own holiday break we will initiate the beginnings of the larger thematic project.

Third workshop

The third workshop I facilitate occurs on Fridays from 12 midday till two in the afternoon and is a video based workshop with a small group of teenagers from Stradbally Youth Theatre. This began through me sitting in on the rehearsals of the youth theatre on Saturday afternoons and then filming a performance they did for their end of year show and in preparation for a performance for the visit of president Michael D Higgins to the Arthouse in July. Shortly before the group broke for the summer I asked them to act in a short piece I wrote that worked as part of a series of video works I have been making since 2007. As they were breaking for the summer I offered a weekly workshop for any interested parties with a view towards video as a medium as opposed to theatre. We have had some great success -

particularly with a series of 'La Jettée' inspired works, all of which have been posted on the same youtube channel that hosts my other video works along with the other works we've engaged in

as a group. The youth theatre will be meeting again for another academic year shortly and I intend to coalesce with their activities throughout that time.

Collaborative sculpture

Separate to this I have been involved in a collaborative sculpture for the Electric Picnic Arts festival in Stradbally. The group working on the project is composed of all of the artists working in the arthouse: Myself, Karen Hendy, Gemma Guihan, Lorraine Walsh plus former Artist in Residence, Vera McEvoy and Artist and former Arthouse Administrator Cara Byrne. It has been my remit amongst other things so far to build the substructure and façade walls of the eventual piece which forms an octagon standing eight feet tall and approximately ten feet wide. The structure has been painted to a design which emphasises its structure and will eventually be covered with 1500 plastic bottles which will house the same number of self lit LED lights which will represent the painted pattern in light during the darkened hours of the festival. **M**

Face-to-Face

MIXED BAG offers something for everyone



“There is great satisfaction when a production works well, because you are getting to share it with the person closest in your life. That makes it very rewarding.”

Face-to-Face with **Martina McGlynn** and **Garret Daly** who run **Mixed Bag Media**, a production company in Daingean County Offaly. They have produced a number of films and documentaries including the award winning *Who is Dervla Murphy?*, the short film *Bogman* and they tell **Briege Madden** that a feature film is on the cards for 2013!

Garret/Martina tell me a little about yourselves?

Garret: I'm originally from County Meath, near Tara. After school I went to England to study film, completing a degree and a masters. My career to date has taken me from Kerry to Canberra. I have deep interest in radio, film and television and so far I've been blessed to work in these industries here and abroad.

Martina: I'm from Daingean in Offaly and started working in radio when I was still in school. I've lived in France, Australia, Limerick and Dublin. I love traveling and will do more. We've two kids now so I'm back living in my hometown again, but the backpack awaits.

I've been fortunate to have had a varied and interesting career in radio. I've always had an interest in film and documentary. I consider myself as an ideas person.

When did you decide to join forces and create Mixed Bag Media?

Garret: The company was started in 2001. The idea was to create a

platform from which we could develop and produce projects that we felt passionate about. It's always difficult to work independently but through this method we felt that no matter what the medium was, we could have a shared vision to make programmes that we'd be happy with, and hopefully audiences would follow suit. To date it has worked well. We are lucky that it is just the two of us, because in this business the work does ebb and flow, and trying to sustain employment would be difficult at times when you are in development of projects. So hiring tends to be seasonal based on projects and their timing.

What's it like working as a husband and wife team?

Garret: It's great. The business is always difficult to navigate and trust is one of the most important qualities you need in a partner. Making creative films etc is also a very emotive business, so I think the combination of these understandings make it work well. There is a history of some very successful husband and wife teams in the media business, and I think this is common because

the industry is difficult and taxing.

Martina: There is great satisfaction when a production work wells, because you are getting to share it with the person closest in your life. That makes it very rewarding.

Was there a person/thing which influenced you most?

Martina: I've had many influences, too many to mention. Our recent film on Dervla Murphy lead me to a person that really inspires me. Against all the odds she followed her dreams and carved out a career without compromise.

Garret: Its fair to say my parents have been a massive influence in my life. Knowing how difficult this business is, they still encouraged me to pursue it, and are always supportive. They've definitely instilled in me a great work ethic and I'd like to think we conduct our work with the same energy and dignity.

Your documentary A Grand Experience is getting a lot of attention why do you think that is and tell me how it came about?

Martina: When Offaly County Council announced that they were looking for projects to respond artistically/culturally to the Grand Canal Corridor in County Offaly we were delighted, and we felt that there was so many possibilities in terms of how the canal could be portrayed. I grew up in Daingean which is on The Grand Canal, so for me the researching and conceptualization of the project was a pleasure. The idea was so simple really – three artists take a weeklong journey through Offaly on the Canal and respond to it artistically. The choosing of the three artists to participate in the film was very much due to the fact that they all live or have lived near the canal. Eugene, Wayne and Veronica all participated wholeheartedly in the experience, and that's vindicated by the quality of the artistic responses that they created. Also, I had a very specific idea about how the finished film would look and Garret absolutely delivered. There's a beauty about the film that is difficult to ignore. No fancy effects, just beautiful images, and a slowness of pace that is so rare nowadays. I think that's why people are interested in it.

A Grand Experience

an artistic response to the Grand Canal in Co.Offaly

featuring

Eugene O'Brien
Veronica Nicholson
and Wayne Brennan



Tell me about any other current and past films/awards/success etc?

Garret: We've achieved a lot of our goals, with many more to come. We've been lucky at times, and we've worked incredibly hard for some of our successes. Awards are nice, but are not the ultimate goal. However to date, we've had documentaries broadcast on all the major Irish broadcasters, and some abroad. We've had screenings at many Irish film festivals, with some awards along the way.

In radio there have been one off documentaries, series and a few PPI awards. One of our more successful documentaries was one on the great Irish travel writer, Dervla Murphy, called 'Who is Dervla Murphy?' It has won some awards, but more importantly it was received very warmly by fans and critics, allowing the film to travel the world for screenings. It continues to make an impact.

Can you be based in the Midlands and have a global reach?

Martina: Absolutely. Technology is just amazing these days and there are so many platforms that can be used to promote your product. Garret - Without a doubt. Companies in Ireland find a way to reach a global market, and that is in spite of an awful broadband infrastructure in the

midlands. Small business makes up such a vital part of Ireland's economy, however the internet services on offer in rural areas is downright laughable, especially for such a small country. I've spoken with friends who stand at the back of their garden just to get a mobile broadband signal, and they are less than 10 miles from a big town centre. But in small business we do find ways and we do reach our global markets.

What are some of the best/worst things about being based in the Midlands?

Martina: Living in the Midlands has many advantages. Firstly, it's beautiful! Mountains, river and lakes and brilliant walking trails. Another distinct advantage is that most of Ireland is accessible from here. This is helpful when organizing meetings etc

For us - The Bog, and The Grand Canal have been very influential in a creative sense.

Garret: Lots of the business of TV and film takes place in Dublin and Galway. So it is a struggle at times to be part of the networking scene, and attending conferences etc can be tough. Even though everywhere is accessible, you do find yourself doing lots of traveling. And at times when the travel gets tough, you think about getting back home to our view of

Croghan Hill, which to me is much more satisfactory than looking out over Merrion Square.

What would you say to a young person who has expressed an interest in film as a career?

Martina: I'm quite a cautious person, so my advice would be to always have something else to fall back on in case the film thing doesn't work out. Very few people survive on filmmaking or writing scripts alone! And, whilst it's very admirable to be a 'filmmaker' - the reality is quite different. Unless you're incredibly talented or incredibly lucky!

Garret: Get busy. Technology has become so accessible that it is now possible to express yourself in film. Production values do not need to be high end, you just need to find a way to tell stories. Even your basic smart phone has cameras and editing functions. That gets you making things, which in turn can open doors, help you meet people and after that, who knows.

What's next/your ultimate goal?

Martina: A Feature Film is in the pipeline for next year, and that's all I can say about that for now!!!!

Garret: We'll keep telling stories.

M



EUGENE, WAYNE, VERONICA

Striking a high note - the International Summer Music School in Offaly

As summer slowly drew to a close and the routine of another academic year began so too did the International Summer Music School close its doors for another season.

Under direction of cellist, composer and educator Adele O'Dwyer at Durrow National School in Offaly there were participants from Europe, the UK and the US as well Irish musicians based both locally and nationally. The summer school brought together performing artists and participants of all ages for an intensive period of mentoring and performance.

The programme included opportunities for the public to hear both participants and professional musicians in a series of concert events presented in venues throughout Offaly.

International Summer Music School Director and founder Adele O'Dwyer said: "The International Summer Music School programme has grown significantly over the past four years and provides an opportunity for local and international students to work with Irish as well as international professionals on both solo and ensemble music. Participants have the opportunity to perform regularly in informal and formal settings and to hone their skills with the mentoring of top-class performing artists. The International Summer Music School is a great opportunity for aspiring musicians to engage with high-calibre artist-performance professionals and it is my hope that we will see more local participation in coming years."

The opening concert of 2012 took place in

the beautiful village of Geashill with the internationally acclaimed ConTempo String Quartet and virtuoso classical accordionist, Dermot Dunne at the helm. The programme was devised to showcase the talents of eight fine string players aged eight to 17 from both Ireland and abroad and featured works by Bach, Massenet, Bruch and Elgar, to name but a few.

The audience was treated to an electrifying performance of *Adios Nonino* music written by the famous Argentinean composer, Astor Piazzolo, for string quartet and accordion. Adele commented that "the cross-fertilisation between young musicians and mature, seasoned professionals is an absolutely essential step in the process of acquiring both the love and the skill of performance - the International Summer Music School is designed to give participants that necessary contact - the concerts were a wonderful collaboration between aspiration and wisdom."

The sellout Café Music Night performance in the Tullamore Rugby Club followed with a dazzling programme of music from around the world which included the wonderful full-throated singing of sopranos Helen Hassett and Deborah Hadley in the music of Mozart and Puccini to the fiery gypsy-inspired execution of the Popper *Hungarian Rhapsody* from cellist Adele O'Dwyer and accordionist Dermot Dunne, rounded off by the soulful sounds of the uilleann pipes played by Offaly's Joe Finn.

The final concert of the 2012 Summer School took place in Birr Theatre with a family-



International Summer School - Dermot Dunne and junior composers

oriented programme of a collection of musical items which demonstrated the extensive variety of work produced during the summer music school sessions.

The concert included the 'premier' performance of two new musical compositions created by summer school participants with the guidance of internationally recognised Irish composer Elaine Agnew and veteran performing artist, Dermot Dunne.

Inspired by the visual images of and contextual associations with 'the moon', participants were called upon to create a collective dialogue in sound from their own musical thoughts and instrumental resources. Participants even made their own moon masks

to add a visual flavour to the evening.

Adele O'Dwyer explained: "Without the support of the Offaly Local Development Company and the Board of Management of Durrow National School and in particular Principal Frank Kelly, the International Summer Music School 2012 would not have been able to provide the environment necessary for participants to access the depth of experience, professional expertise and creative artistry of the exceptionally talented staff of artist-performers who took up residence in County Offaly for the duration of the Summer School." Pic by Kevin O'Dwyer

M

Their stories in our place

In its present, a landscape holds the resonant energies of its past gatherings. Whether those were synods or feasts; games or skirmishes; weddings or funerals; famines or harvests, the rhythm of seasons and daily living has been imprinted into the slow beat within the earth we walk on now.

Gathered in Birr to absorb the atmosphere of the Midlands and thus to participate in creating a new contemporary dance piece, inspired by our region, were four inspirational young people from Ireland and abroad. They worked with and through the choreographic guidance of Legitimate Bodies Dance Company, whose regular beat is Birr Theatre & Arts Centre. This is the company's latest drawing-in of strong national and international talent to Birr, bringing subtle and specific benefits to the town, as apparently our place is bringing to them.

Living in Birr as artists over the past few weeks has been a different experience for each and for all of them involved. Having the privilege of extended time to research and develop movement, is not least due to generous, first-time funding by the Arts Council. However, the four dancers also cited the 'lack of distractions' as a significant benefit! In the house they rented, there was neither television nor internet; no pictures are allowed to be hung by nail on the walls, and that includes mirrors. "The absence of these has helped coax me into the present moment," considers Karen Gleeson, who also took joy in regular riverside walks with her new friends. "It gave me time in the evenings to reflect and I feel it has influenced my working creative process. I am inspired to be more honest and present. I feel more in tune with myself and my surroundings."

Karen is Irish and from Dublin. The three other young dancers are Isabel Oberländer from Austria, Jadd Tank from Lebanon and Mollie

Wolf is from the USA. Their vocabularies are sprinkled with the names of countries they have danced in, for festivals and conferences and the nationalities they have collaborated with, in workshops and performances, both abroad and in Ireland. Add 'Switzerland' into this mixing bowl, with Offaly-based, internationally renowned artist Therry Rudin as designer, and German born musician Joachim Hein (now of Banagher) who is helping with the soundscore, and you have a taste of the multi-cultural backstory to the very local inspiration for this new production.

The contemplative effect also touched Mollie, who feels that Birr has a dynamic she has had to ease into. "It has a subtle magic to it that I didn't quite understand until I had been here for a month or so. There is access to a quiet concentration in this place - the environment of Birr provides rich grounds for deep artwork and creativity: the type of creativity in which you can lose yourself and find yourself at the same time." "Might it be the damp weather?" she pondered. Or is it the, "Repetitive, ritual quality of the culture here?" But something about Birr inspired her to "deep investigation and diligent creativity." Jadd and Isabel are also big city dwellers who enjoyed being brought back into the fold of a small community which was interested in, and helpful to them.

The dance is entitled, *Second Hand Landscapes*. Its inspiration and development was 'informed' by the choreographers and dancers as they continued to absorb the essence of the Midlands into their movements. The finished pieces of the whole have a universal relevance, for they have created a dance which will tour Ireland and far beyond. Directors Bryson and Goletti describe it as a 'poetic and thought-provoking series of

interludes and images'. It is a series of solos and partnerings in a meld of dance, music and video, and will have a 'visually arresting set'.

"There are so many different layers that can pull the whole piece together or pull it apart again", says Jadd. "Dance always wants to be true - you yourself have to be genuine." Isabel knows that after putting a lot of hard work into a particular sequence, you can't get too attached to what you have done as it may not ultimately work with the whole piece. "You have to be adaptable, flexible; not hang on too much to things. It's a blessing in some sense but also a pain!" she admits. "I am constantly learning from others - it is a very collaborative process."

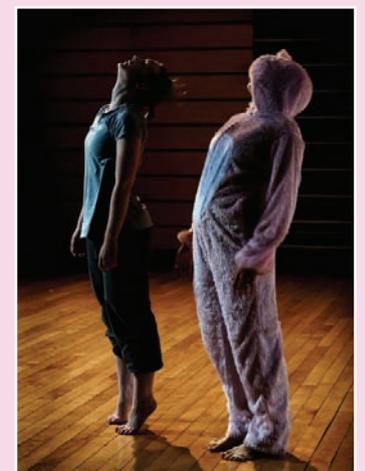
While the dance form may have been unfamiliar to many in the local audience who attended the premiere in early October, the images of familiar sites, projected on screen during some of the sequences presented a connection. But in an instance of our places conjoining with their stories, when Therry Rudin was spending a couple of days filming the dancers at indoor and outdoor locations, Mollie had a catharsis. In the remains of a once popular pub, broken glass and charred beams under foot, it was only then that the full force of the news from her brother in Colorado, engulfed her: forest fires had entirely consumed their family home. Her solo thus speaks volumes of a child in pain and disjunction; and so the audience shared an emotional experience.

The reactions to contemporary dance are often likened to going to a gallery filled with abstract art for the first time, an conceptual movement conveying the fitfulness and trivialities of modern life. The emotional effect can be powerful. Jadd and the others, have a strong conviction that art - and dance in particular, can create change in the world. They believe that it provides a commonality in

seemingly disparate nations, far more effectively than politics will ever do. One of his university degrees is in Politics and International Affairs. Karen gave up studying science to keep along her artistic path for as long as she is able. Isabel had recently "danced algorithms" with a mathematician. That there is a strong link between this art form, maths and the sciences is a revelation. Apparently physicists, such as those working on the Hadron Collider, are seeking ways to put description to their new discoveries by immersing themselves in the expression of contemporary dance.

These four strikingly intelligent young people are modest and highly articulate when given an opportunity to open up. Their morality, their openness, their fresh and mostly optimistic views, present their lack of interest in excessive materialism and their courage to keep on the path of creativity, which expresses their love of life and learning.

Their chosen dance form is curious to many in rural parts of Ireland. But we, being curious by nature of our fellow men and women, might make the effort to assuage that inquisitiveness and go a little more boldly beyond our boundaries and take on a trip into our own inner rhythms. By Rosalind Fanning M



Athlone Dancer Orla Shine talks about her practise and reveals that dance can be more than a hobby

Researching dance as a possible career choice when I was a transition year student in school in Athlone revealed something to me...that dance can be more than just a hobby. I started to think about dance very differently; I wanted to train as a professional dancer! I discovered ways in which I could pursue this ambition and I then made the decision to make it happen. The following year, I was fortunate to meet dance artist, Niamh Condrón who was dancer in residence in Roscommon and Westmeath. My experience with Niamh proved to be vital to my progression as it was with Niamh that I discovered and engaged in



Step Up Dance Project

contemporary dance.

Sallynoggin College of Further Education in Dublin was my first step into professional dance training. Inevitably I had to leave Ireland to continue my training and studies. I completed a BA (Hons) in Dance, achieving first class honours at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in 2012. I attained a prestigious award for Academic Excellence in the contemporary arts department and I received a dance excellence award for my choreographic work in my second and third year.

During my final year of University, I questioned where I would base myself when I completed my degree. I planned to stay in the Manchester area as I had already built some connections as a dance artist there. Coming home to Ireland was a consideration I chose to neglect, as immersing myself into the Irish contemporary dance community and practice seemed unpredictable after spending three years away in the UK. However, I received information about a project that aims to bridge the gap between dance education and professional contemporary dance practice in Ireland. I applied and I was one of six contemporary dancers that were selected for Step Up: Dance Project 2012.

The project is a partnership between the Arts Council, Dance Ireland and the University of Limerick. I gratefully accepted my place as the project would enable me to improve my professional opportunities in Ireland.

We functioned as a dance company, working intensively for an eight-week period. We resided at the University of Limerick and utilised state of the art studios at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. Each day commenced with morning class facilitated by one of our guest teachers: Elena Giannotti (IT/IRE) and Lindsay Clarke (US). Working under the direction of choreographers Liz Roche (IRL) and John Jasperse (USA) the culmination of the project resulted in the production and performance of two original choreographic works, which were performed at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, in DanceHouse, Dublin and the Firkin Crane in Cork.

In addition to the enriching and unique practical experience that was realised through my participation in the Step Up project, a greater affect has manifested in the context of my emerging contemporary dance practice here in Ireland. I am now connected to five other fantastic Irish contemporary dancers that are at the same stage in their emerging careers. I feel informed

Maurice Gunning
1 Step Up 33



and supported, owed to the selection of dance practitioners whom I encountered in Limerick. I look forward to availing of the support structure and facilities that Dance Ireland provide and I feel confident and more exposed to pursue a contemporary dance practice in Ireland.

For further information visit www.orlashinedance.com **M**



Step Up Dance Project

Watching Through My Fingers

By Laois' Thomas Byrne, an aspiring thespian, writer, film-maker and is interested in all manner of artifice. He likes to wax lyrical on a range of subjects including anomalous phenomena, film, folklore, literature, science/technology, visual art, and video games.

It's an oddly dissociative experience to be present at the screening of a film in which one features – akin to being a shade at one's funeral service, I'd wager. 'Pshaw! You might say, 'solipsistic, egocentric actors with their gaping existential lacunae that require constant praise and attention'. And yes, it's easy to level this accusation at one whose task was – ostensibly – as in my experience circa September 2011 – to run about a wooded area garbed in period dress while wearing the contents of a pot-plant on my head (and thus providing the basis for some contemporary folklore in the process) but the seeming simple, passive act of viewing a finished piece of filmic artifice can be, shall we say, a white-knuckle ride. That said, the Universal Studios animated logo sequence was once a source of near motion-sickness for me and had it provided backing for the film, I may have been reduced to a writhing mess in the central aisle of the theatre.

Indeed, the pre-show nerves are

almost on-par with that of a theatrical performance and coupled with the fact that you are actually amongst the audience this time and denuded of any ability to control how the work will play out – that has bequeathed to the editors and special effects bods in post-production (I had been made privy to a making-of effects sequence shortly before the premiere that featured my eye-balls being removed and remodelled in 3-D with some form of supernatural cataracts added so there was some understandable trepidation on my part!) Of course, having agreed to feature in the film in the first instance should indicate some level of trust on my behalf – although whenever a release form is signed, the spectre of an eventual Soupy Norman-style Eastern European comedy re-dub lingers for some time thereafter. Those fears are usually unfounded, though.

Once the screening commences, however, a strange fascination develops and I am transfixed by the unfolding spectacle – muscles locked and eyes unblinking. Like a Kubrickian Clockwork Orange aversion therapy session, I'm doomed to process and assimilate what is before me. Paranoid ideation follows presently and with hypersensitivity in full swing, every cough and murmur from the crowd during my character's time on

screen is conferred with special significance – usually that of disdain, mock or ridicule. My character does scream and flail around a lot at the end though so I brace myself for the onslaught of the peanut gallery and return to the womb-like embrace of the hollow in the golf course where we filmed those final scenes. Emerging from my reverie as the credits roll, I am aware of a distant sound – rhythmic and pleasing – it's actually applause! I don't need to shield myself or assume the foetal position! I join the rest of the production team and cast and we all file out as the theatre gradually empties. The story has been told and the spirits exorcised – for now. Reality beckons.

The new supernatural chiller He Moved Through the Fair, directed by John Hennessy and produced by Trench Entertainment in collaboration with Kerbute Productions was screened at this year's Galway Film Fleadh and nominated for a Tiernan McBride Award in the Best Short Drama category. Follow the film's journey at www.throughthefair.com

The creation of narratives and mythologies within the experience of daily life is a continuing source of intrigue for him.

Follow his musings at <http://idioskoinos.wordpress.com>

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The Midlands showcases a variety of talent during Culture Night

Offaly

Legitimate Bodies Dance Company at Sculpture in the Parklands Offaly.



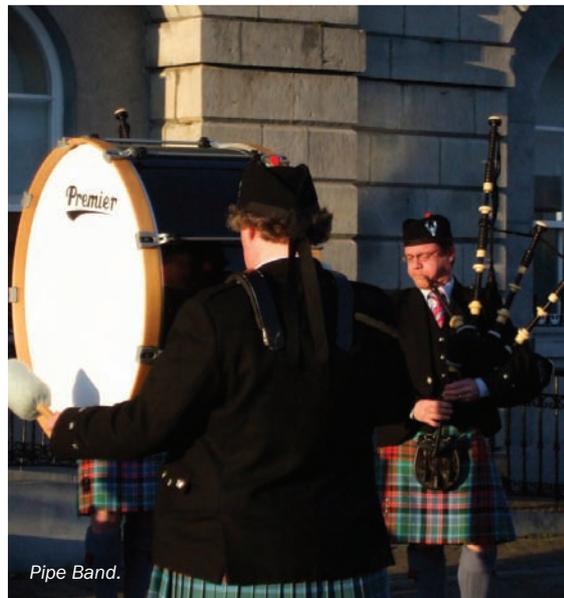
Crztof



Jack Crztof and friends.



Edenderry Groupa Ceoil



Pipe Band.



Neil Des McGonigle and Mark Cunningham.

THE Midlands came alive on September 21 when a day and night of free entertainment was offered up as part of Culture Night.

Offaly, Laois and Westmeath County Councils took part in the event, with all three counties drawing huge crowds to the many events that were held around the counties.

Events around Laois included singing group Vocalese who appeared in the Library Portlaoise and enthralled the audience with a variety of songs from their wonderful repertoire; Portarlinton Library hosted a very successful workshop with writer Jean O'Brien and there was a talk on the works of Samuel Beckett by Arthur Broomfield in Mountmellick Library.

Westmeath events included The African Connection, which secured national coverage on RTÉ; presentation of prizes for photographic competition in Castlepollard Library; Mullingar Comhaltas Branch, Market Square and a lunchtime recital from a selection of musicians from the Midlands Youth Orchestra.

Offaly events included, performances from Legitimate Bodies Dance Company, the multi award winning St Colmchille's Pipe Band, Mark Cunningham, Jasango Theatre Company, Wayne Brennan, Eugene O'Brien, Jean O'Brien as well a performance from Jack, Crztof and friends a fusion of Polish and Tullamore Musicians, Clara Concert Band, Comhaltas sessions, a photography exhibition at Birr Theatre and Arts Centre and poetry at Edenderry Library.



Laois Westmeath



Choir Group Vocalese performing at Portlaoise Library



Participants in the Stampede Drumming Workshop with Eddie O'Neill at the Dunamaise Arts Centre



Students visiting Helena Malones Studio for the Design your own Ring competition and exhibition.



Shirley Nugent and Dominique Foley who attended the Studio 93 Exhibition, as part of the Moate Art Trail for Culture Night 2012.



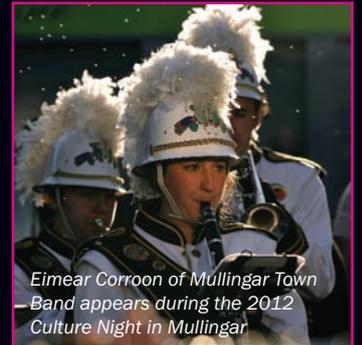
Mullingar Student players present *Comic Potential* by Alan Ayckbourn at Mullingar Arts Centre, pictured are: Daniel Egerton (as Adam Trainsmith), Ben Mulligan and Pearse Murphy (as Weiteers) and Orla Tubridy (as JCF 31333, Jacie Triplethree, a male actoid)



◀ Viking Tours River Sailing with Historical and Environmenttalk with Michael McDonnell, River Shannon, departs from rear of Castle during Westmeath Culture Night



Molly McCarthy pictured during the 2102 Culture Night in Mullingar.



Eimear Corroon of Mullingar Town Band appears during the 2012 Culture Night in Mullingar



Lorna Farrell, Christopher Foley, Darren Doyle, Alan Nagle and Niamh Kelly at Studio 93 Exhibition of the Moate Art Trail.



Exchange students from Athlone, Marena Malies, Ruth Maria Pelesen and Aura Castrein pictured at the Viking tour in Athlone.



Tina Adagun of The African Connection giving an interview for RTE at the Bringing Africa to Ireland event that took place in Athlone Shopping Centre during Westmeath Culture night 2012.



Celtic Blondes, Rose and Daisy Carey at P. Egan Bar, Moate.

Putting best foot forward Longford girl heads to Germany to pursue ballet dream

Home to one of Ireland's leading ballet schools, Longford has earned itself a reputation for producing world-class dancers.

Based just outside the rural village of Legan, Shawbrook School of Dance has continually developed some of the leading dancers, some of who have grabbed the headlines at the world stage. Added to that, Longford-based Michael Keegan Dolan and his Fabulous Beast Company have developed some of their award-winning shows there, including *Giselle*, *The Beast* and most recently, *Rian* which was a collaboration with Liam O Maonlai. One of the latest crop of dancers from Shawbrook, Orla McCarthy (19), is about to embark on a career in dance. Having performed exceptionally well in her Leaving Cert, which included top marks in a number of subjects, Orla is to follow her ballet dancing dream in Germany.

"I was delighted with my Leaving Cert results; I was dancing throughout the Leaving Cert year and I suppose initially I felt that it would be an extra stress, but I auditioned for about six schools of

dancing during that time," she explained.

As well as proving to be a welcome break from her studies, ballet provided Orla with a choice of career, as she embarks on a course at Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts, where she will study dance – one of the first from Ireland to be accepted to study at the institution.

The intensive three-year degree programme will include contemporary dance, improvisation and technique, ballet, anatomy and choreography.

Dancing since the age of six, Orla started out with the Shawbrook School of Dance under the guidance of Anica Louw, Founder and Co-Director of the school, which has theatre, rehearsal rooms, dance studios and accommodation in a converted dairy farm, surrounded by a forest of oak, lime and ash.

Anica plays a major role in developing the young dancers from an early age, and understandably has been a huge influence on Orla's career to date. "Anica has been such a help to me and to be honest with you; I wouldn't even have found out about the dancing schools

were it not for her," she said.

In the past month, Orla got a taste of the big stage, performing in one of Scotland's famed theatre venues. "Through the Shawbrook Youthdance Company, Anica picked 10 people to dance at a youth festival in Aberdeen and I was lucky enough to have been selected. We had to raise money to go on the trip and the theme was a mix of music and dance.

"We performed in His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen; it was my first major performance and the first time that I performed outside of Ireland, so it was very exciting." Earlier this year, as she was making her post secondary school choices, Orla made contact with another former student of Anica, Marguerite Donlon, whose Donlon Dance Company in Saarbrücken, Germany, is now a renowned contemporary dance company.

"It was she (Marguerite) who suggested that I apply to the dance school in Frankfurt," Orla said. "The course is done through English, but I will study German and that is also a great opportunity for me to learn a new



language. I will study classical and contemporary dance and it is a degree course."

While the move to a new country will create a distance between the local dancer and her family in Newtownforbes, she finds it hard to hide her excitement at the prospect of the challenges that lie ahead. "I am apprehensive about being away from home and I will miss my family, but there is Skype. At different stages throughout the last couple of years, I did think about doing something more normal and I tried to find courses that I would like, but I always came back to dance.

"If things don't work out in Germany, then I can always come back home and look at other options."

But Orla is keeping her options open. "With regards to where I'll be in five years time, I have no idea; I would hope to get into a dance company eventually, but we will just have to wait and see."

Poetry of self and place

by Noel Monahan

“Once the initial charge of poetry has started, words pop in and out of lines to shape images and I am happy at what I love to call “Wordfarming”, gathering words into clusters and shaping them into the form of a poem to be.”

Since poetry by its very nature is self reflective, I have decided to deal with my own personal thoughts on poetry at the start of this essay and conclude by giving a brief overall view of poetry in its present state in the Midlands and in particular County Longford.

Poetry for me is a flow of psychic energy where chance ideas linger and demand to be written down. The ideas flow and wherever I am and whatever I perceive enters me. In *Diary Of A Town* a long poem in my most recent collection, *Curve Of The Moon*, I gathered scattered memories of my childhood that lingered on. Some of these images were full of fog and particles of rain. I wrapped them in clouds of imagined events and turned some of them on their back and let them chase the shadows of the night. All of this playfulness is an example of the fun you can have writing poetry.

Poetry for me brings about transformation. It is a matter of tuning into the moment and waiting. I do not create my thoughts about a field or hill. I have them given to me. I leave myself open to whatever chances to appear. In other words, I work at dethroning the everyday ego and allow my mind to go empty. It happens in a meaningful way and has a presence and a belonging like moss growing on a ditch. The common breathing in all of us gives my lines a sense of rhythm, a natural rhythm. Sometimes pathetic fallacy, invented by John Ruskin often rushes me when I am out on my walks about Longford or Cavan. All things seem to be in sympathy with my own feelings. I feel poetry is an attempt to discover some pre established harmony. The stones in the field and by the roadside are not dead and lifeless. I console myself that all of this is not madness. I rely a lot on modern discoveries in quantum physics and the universal principle that energy is constantly changing into something else and that the observer affects what is observed as Wolfgang Pauli has stated.

Once the initial charge of poetry has started, words pop in and out of lines to shape images and I am happy at what I love to call “Wordfarming”, gathering words into clusters and shaping them into the form of a poem to be. I listen for the melody and colour of words. Finding the right words and shape of a poem often happens by chance. It sometimes

reminds me of the Ice Age, where the ice is dragging stones along and shaping them into hills and drumlins. These are the drumlins I love. The drumlins are my region of the soul. Poetry opens inquiry for me. I realise I have grown tired of the empiricism of the education system and that Cartesian philosophy of total commitment to cause and effect, the cue hitting the billiard ball and the result. Over the last three hundred years we have lost our sense of wholeness and the mythic world. We banished our gods into space and named the planets after them. We have become too scientific, too fond of proving everything, in a world as I have already stated, that is constantly changing.

Poetry has to have a much more open sense of inquiry for me and a sense of self discovery. I love to break free of the conventional way of looking at things, I love to shake hands with ghosts, hear poltergeists hammering away in the bookcase and look out for the hidden secrets in things. It is that sort of attitude that lead recently to my work on the Medieval story of Buile Suibhne, Mad Sweeney, a manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy. It is a story that has fascinated many Irish writers over the ages right down to Brian O’Nolan (“Myles na gCapaillín”) in his novel *At Swim Two Birds* and of course Seamus Heaney’s *Sweeney Astray*. According to the ancient legend, St Ronan banished Sweeney to the trees to live as a wild bird and he now inhabits the In-between Realm of his imagination awaiting redemption. The story is full of psychic energy, that energy I referred to at the opening of this essay.

You must remember I came through the Irish Education system of the 1950s and early 60s. It was a formula, a dogma and there was no place for your own thinking and certainly your own creativity. You were caught in the collective wisdom of the parish. You thought and acted as everyone did. I felt trapped as a child. I felt a great urge to escape from the chapel of my childhood in Granard. I needed new tunings, transformation and a sense of self discovery. My trip to New York in 1970 to work as a student helped me on my way. It opened doors and windows. Poetry is a border zone activity. It should be life changing for the writer and the reader. The fun with poetry now is my



Noel Monahan signing

ability to delve into something new beyond the norm and accepted modes of learning. As a poet I want to be in communication with the unconscious, bringing messages up from deeply felt archetypal levels.

Poetry gives you a licence to enter the apocalyptic world where cause and effect are not prevalent. It is a beyond place, hearing colours, tasting shapes, reading smoke from the fire. Poetry is a “Staying Alive” as Neil Astley has illustrated in that wonderful anthology published in 2002. Poetry prepares me to live in a world that has changed all too quickly for my liking. When I finish a poem the world feels brighter, more vivid and alive for me. My thoughts walk slowly back to sleep. I feel transformed, with a sense of

healing and discovery. Sometimes I feel I write poetry for the great sense of relief when the poem is finished and complete.

I am lucky to be living in an age that nurtures creative writing locally. Poetry is thriving in the Midlands since the appointment of Arts Officers. All this has happened over the last 20 years. As a native of Granard, County Longford, I have worked with Fergus Kennedy, Longford Arts Officer, on several literary projects in the county and acted as facilitator to poetry workshops. With this emphasis of the arts in the Midlands we can continue to challenge reality as we know it, to move beyond the distinctively local vision and create new mappings of our journey through life.

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Longford fostering creativity

There are five Writers Groups in the county, in Granard, (the longest established), Ballymahon and Lanesboro and two in Longford.

The county has produced a great number of anthologies showcasing emerging writers.

It also has a most valuable internet site: Virtual Writer, www.virtualwriter.net. On this site you have all the information you need to get started in whatever genre of writing you choose. In keeping with Longford’s proud literary history a number

of novelists have arrived on the scene: Belinda McKeon, Anne Collins, Lorne Patterson and Kathy Rodgers.

“Poetry For Pleasure” is a most recent success story that awakened a love of poetry in the hearts of second level students in counties Offaly, Westmeath and Longford. This project was organised by the librarians in the same three counties and it involved poets Jean O’Brien, Nuala Ní Chonchúir and myself. The programme was supported by Poetry Ireland and it culminated in a visit to Áras an Uachtaráin, to meet the president. **M**

LAOIS ARTIST PATRICK FITZPATRICK SHARES SOME THOUGHTS AS HE GETS READY FOR HIS FIRST SOLO SHOW



Being the recipient of the Laois Patronage Award 2010 was a wonderful gift and a total surprise. It came at a crucial time, I had just finished my BA in Printmaking at the Limerick School of Art and Design and doubting if I could start my Masters there. The prize enabled me to be financially secure to take my Masters in Printmaking and to further my work into Memory and Nature. My work concerns the place where memory and nature resides. My theme and work lie in the earth and earths matter, which for me contains infinite value and mystery inherent in even the most humble matter of things. For me the earth holds memory and existence, concepts and contexts, value and meaning and a spirituality expressed through the material world. Through drawing, print, photography and video I connect my work with nature's processes to find a profound sense of human existence and the fecund emergence of new creative possibilities through art.

I would like to take you through my work that the Laois Patronage Award enabled. Firstly, with the Laois Patronage I had the opportunity to buy a good camera -a Nikon D90- to help to photographically record my experience and impressions in the landscape. I got shortlisted for Showcase at The Gallery of Photography Artists Award where I was one of the six shortlisted. I choose six images from walking through various Irish landscapes.



With photography I try to capture Nature's deep spring of memories and emotions and the beautiful and enchanting melancholy that interweaves all things and to capture Nature's and man's transience and change. Photography's 'decisive moment' can on reflection show the profoundness of life's ephemerality in Nature. I search for where photography opens a visual silence, a silence to 'set the darkness echoing' [Heaney] and the power of the fragility of place and memory as in *'the lady and the lark'* and *'kind of blue'*.

Memory Matters was a joint exhibition, midterm in my Masters, with Evelyn Glynn in Dunamais Arts Center, December 2010. I focused in on earth's matter and the memories that grow from there, inspired by the words of George Santayana -'Not the poetry of a poet about things, but the poetry of things themselves'. I remembered the ground I walked on in the Slieve Bloom hills, my local bog, or Emo forest full of gnarled roots, delicate tendrils, leafy clumps and mossy vegetation forming a rich and riotous undergrowth flowering memories. This deep resonance and profundity in earth's matter became a metaphor for the fragile nature of memory and regeneration. My drawings which have calligraphic markings through layers of earth as the first markings of memory are made with earth holding wild flowers, seeds and detritus specific from a site, with natural



Memory box home and away, 2011... right- memory box footsteps [for maura], 2010-11



The Lady and the Lark - Portumna Forest Park, Co. Galway

touchstones such as a wasps entrance nest, such as *'on a sunday evening'* and *'everyone thinks this is nowhere'*.

remain[s], -the title of my Masters show in Ormston House, Limerick, in December 2011- opens memory to many meanings and ambiguities. The remain[s] of a powerful emotion of a place; the remains of light; the remains of the day, the effervescent spirit that can be found in earth's grace. And then remain[s] of something that can't be held, the hint of knowledge, of the living day, slipping, as if imbued into earths matter, somehow graspable, somehow understandable.

I decided to create **'Memory Boxes'** to deposit and open a space between Nature, Memory and culture for associations, allusions and reminiscences inspired by places. The **'Memory Boxes'**, which people could rummage through, were full of drawings,

prints, photographs, and bouquet of wild flowers, which kicked started memory from a site. I would like to think that the history of personal and artistic roots recasts memory into something else, imbued with Natures regenerative beauty and hope.

There is the old Irish word *rosc*, which translates into a 'poetry of vision' of where our ancestors joined our physical and spiritual worlds, our loves, our joys and deep connection to nature to express a new vision creatively. And through my Masters this is what memory and nature opened: the fecund myriad bounty of growth, associations and juxtapositions that opens new ways of seeing and thinking.

I would like to thank Laois County Council for their support over the last couple of years. This year Laois County Council has continued to support my artistic path in offering myself and Evelyn Glynn their Award in Printmaking at The Tyrone Guthrie Print Studio in Annaghmakerrig and we are looking forward to experiment and continuing to grow artistically as professional artists. In the Bourne Vincent Gallery in University of Limerick, November 2012, I have my first solo show provisionally titled **common ground**, a more immersive digging into nature finding memory. You are all invited to the opening! **M**



remain[s] exhibition image.



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VISUAL ARTIST AMANDA JANE GRAHAM DREAMS OF DESIGNATED GALLERY SPACE IN LONGFORD

Visual artist Amanda Jane Graham, like many city dwellers, made the move from bustling Dublin to the Midlands and the quiet, rural surrounds of Ballinalee, Co Longford.

It's a move that many people have made over the years, in search of the peaceful, countryside life, and Amanda is no different in that respect.

"We have small children and were looking around Westmeath, and ended up in Ballinalee. We just wanted to get out of the city; not that far, but enough," recalled Amanda. "There's a lot more space and a lot less pressure, and more time to think."

She operates out of studio space in Manorhamilton, and when the drive is too much, she works from home in Ballinalee.

Her work is described as both biographical and autobiographical. It revolves around family history, narrative and childhood memories, where the viewer completes the experience. She utilises her memory of past events and combines this with humour, to create quirky and enticing characters and scenes.

"I work with personal narrative, oral

histories, collective memories, I use humour a lot. I work with drawing, print-making, sculptural installations – a kind of varied practice. I deal a lot with collective memory where the viewer kind of takes ownership of the work. I hand it over to the viewer, they're very important to it," she explained.

By way of illustrating her point, Amanda explained about an installation she had at Ktcontemporary, a pop-up space in a former gym in Donnybrook. "I did a piece, a giant hand-knitted Aran bobble hat. It was seven foot tall and about eight foot wide, and the title of it is 'I'll Never Forget That Fucking Hat'. It has enlivened anyone that has encountered it. It was in a gallery in Donnybrook and bus drivers were slowing down, having a look at it in the window," said Amanda.

"I have a piece on oral history that goes back from my grandmother in Butte, Montana, where she was born and grew up. She was part of the Irish community there; they were Fenians. Her stories and also what my mother told me – she filled in the gaps – from all this I did an exhibition 'A Tribute To The Irish Community Butte Montana' in Kilkenny."

The detailed artwork in those pieces took a seemingly painstaking amount time, but she loves it. "Each of the Butte

Montana works could have 70 prints on each, not including drawings or embroidery. Everything I do has an awful lot of detail in it. It mightn't look like it – like the hat was a monumental piece of work," said Amanda. "Every piece would be incredibly detailed, even drawings, and I actually enjoy that."

At the moment she's working on an etchings and drawing collage of a smaller versions of the Butte Montana works. She also working on murals for an upcoming show entitled 'Back alley, trying to get into my mother's shoes', one of which depicts a little girl in a big pair of swing-backs.

"I grew up between Drogheda and Scotland, and when I return to these places I notice that chunks of where I grew up disappearing. I feel that playgrounds are very necessary, but they don't allow for creative play. Because adults, politicians are intimidated, back alleys are being destroyed and gotten rid of, but they were private stomping grounds for kids, where imaginations flourished. I think if they were looked after they could be beautiful."

While the support has been excellent from the local arts office, Amanda would like to see more space available for creative display. "Fergus (Kennedy,

County Longford Arts Officer) is brilliant. It's a bit lonesome for a visual artist, I have to admit, but Fergus has been really supportive. It would be lovely to have a bit more of a community going on – there's a lot of writers, but not a lot of visual people."

Amanda says while there is a gallery space available in Backstage, she feels it's quite limited and would love to see someone take an initiative and open a designated gallery space and possibly a workshop of some kind. "You see what the sculpture centre has done for Manorhamilton and the north Leitrim area. It does bring very creative minds to an area. It's a focal point and a reason to come. It would be wonderful to have something like that (in Longford)."

Some of Amanda's work was recently on display at an exhibition in the markets area in Smithfield, entitled Dublin Contemptions Gentrify This.

She has another booked from December to January in Temple Bar Gallery as part of a group showing and another solo show next May in Aras Inis Gluarie in Belmullet.

For more info see: www.amandajane-graham.com

MidlandsArts andCultureMagazine

Meet the team

Tempus Media and Brosna Press, using their combined expertise in journalism, marketing, design, print and production have created a new-look Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine.

TEMPUS MEDIA

There's never a wrong time to do the right thing

Tempus Media was established at the height of the recession in September 2009 as the founders saw an opening for a top quality, good value media company in a challenging marketplace for business and Government. Midlands-based Tempus Media specialises in five key areas - Publishing/ Copywriting, Public Relations, Media Training, Lobbying, and Business Crisis Management.

Editor: ANGELA MADDEN

Angela has more than 15 years' experience in the publishing industry as a Journalist, Foreign Correspondent, Editor, Group Editor and General Manager for trade, local and national press in Ireland and the UK. Angela has excellent local knowledge as she was previously Editor of the Athlone Voice and has an enviable list of contacts throughout the country, built up during her time as Group Editor for 13 River Media newspaper titles. She also has a wealth of experience launching new publications responsible for content, layout and templates having brought a number of new River Media titles to market in '07.

Deputy Editor: BRIEGE MADDEN

Briega is a trained journalist who has worked for local newspapers for close to four years. After attaining her BA Creative Writing & Media Studies degree she started her career at The Athlone Voice before taking up a more senior role at the Cavan Post. She is Communications & Marketing Assistant for Tempus Media and is the lead consultant on a number of important Public Relations contracts. Briega is also an avid poet, short story writer and artist.

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Have your story covered...

If you have a story or news relating to the arts in the Midlands that you would like to see covered in Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine, contact your local Arts Officer (details opposite).





The Nylon Angel

I am five years old. My bible was called "101 Things To Make And Do" but my mother had little enthusiasm for crafts-- and less ability. Nevertheless, I persuaded her to give me one of her nylons and a button, on which she drew the permanent marked features because I was not allowed to use permanent markers.

Although I was disappointed with her rendition of the face I was thrilled to be able to make the angel out of pipe cleaners, wire, a nylon stocking and a button-- and delighted to have five minutes of her collaboration. I think it was the first and last time.

After 50 years, the glitter snow looks more like after-the-snowplow snow but it is still my favourite Christmas decoration -- my idea of heaven.

Gemma Mathewson USA

www.themeaninginthings

The meaning in things

Artist Rowena Keaveny discovers that putting her projects online is increasing her audience and saving her money.

"As an artist trying to make new work in a time of continuing economic constraint I've increasingly integrated the use of new technologies, particularly the internet into my working process.

Also frustrated by trying to attract and build an audience for 'challenging' or 'theme' based work I've found that by placing projects on-line not only is the collaborative capacity greatly increased but also the 'footfall' of viewers. For example my self-initiated on-line project 100:WORDS which asks people describe the life they have experienced using 100 words or less has to date attracted approximately 84 participants from 16 countries as diverse as Russia, Lebanon, Venezuela, South Korea, Canada as well as Ireland, Canada and the U.K. It has been viewed over 7,000 times which wouldn't have been feasible in a gallery context given the on-going nature of the project.
(www.lifein100wordsworthless.wordpress.com)

Encouraged by this on-line collaborative method of working I have recently started a new project, "the meaning in THINGS" which examines the emotional and physical meanings of objects to their owners.

How and why do particular objects hold significance to the person who owns the 'THING'? Does the object represent an event of fundamental importance in the owners' life or does it represent the importance of a social or historical relationship? Is there any significance in where the 'THING' is located within the owners living environment be it on display in a public space easily accessed by anyone entering the building or is it protected from view in a confined private space such as a specifically dedicated 'memory box'?

Through submissions to the project I want to examine on what level do, people interact with their 'THINGS'. Are they a talking point within the living space or vehicles for personal/private meditations such as USA contributor Michael J Solenders' Japanese Daruma doll? On obtaining one of these papier maché figures the owner sets themselves a personal goal and colours in the left eye, the right eye can only be coloured in following subsequent completion of the goal. Having owned his doll for almost 20 years Michael says, "Hardly a day goes by where I am not under his watchful gaze. I nod back in a daily ritual of acknowledgement."

To participate in the project please email a photo of your chosen object and a short description of it's meaning in your life to paintpolitik@live.ie.

To see the project visit www.themeaninginthings.wordpress.com



MidlandsArts andCultureMagazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD
OFFALY AND WESTMEATH