

Press Release

Eurochild '12 Launch set for Backstage after Over-whelming Number Entries from Longford

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 Filí 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 net 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 (Geoghegan) 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 Melvin Geoghegan, 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 begins to explain. "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," said Mary.

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

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