

# MidlandsArts andCultureMagazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH **SPRING 2013**

ISSUE

**19**

THE WRITTEN WORD  
MUSIC & DANCE  
THEATRE & FILM  
VISUAL ARTS

**FREE**

carefully and slowly and asked for the  
week of a break in any sense to consider  
the situation. He also said he would  
to freeze shifts to furnish calls for  
Marcella things for this one week.  
washing and informed him that as an  
indication of our good will and willingness  
and sincerity we had decided that either  
tomorrow or Saturday ten men from here  
and ten from HS would wash, shave etc.  
This will now be held back till next  
Tuesday in keeping with AC [Army  
Council] directive to seek a principled  
settlement. The Brits may be stalling. We  
believe they wish to compromise as on the  
principle of clothes and, by a week's  
respite, they may gain some ground.  
However we feel that we could use the  
time to examine our position thoroughly,  
unless of course there are dangers which  
would dictate that we shouldn't stall and  
perhaps we don't see these yet. You can  
let us know your attitude on this.  
Marcella will come you tomorrow in  
detail on today's developments. 'Rat' also  
said to Marcella that 'prison regime was  
not static and was indeed developing'.  
There ye are now! We feel that the best  
thing to do is to pause till next Thursday  
(we just decided this minute on Thursday  
as opposed to Tuesday. Sorry!) We should  
release a statement that morning as to  
what the crack is. Now if families of  
twenty men could be quickly informed on  
Wednesday evening to get clothes ready  
for Friday morning to be left in, that  
would be sound. Incidentally, Marcella  
told the 'Rat' that in the light of what he  
was saying we would give him a week's  
grace. Index [Py Tower, the prison

19.1.91 To James by Lt John P...

21.1.91 From Marcella [Rat]

From Stann [Offen Commanding O...

28.1.91

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# Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine

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## A Word from the Editor

Welcome to the first Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine of 2013. Last year marked a series of debates regarding the role of the arts and for the first time in their history both houses of the Oireachtas had concurrent debates.

And closer to home, the new Luan Gallery in Athlone was creating its own wave of controversy as Athlone Town Council discussed a motion to have *Fragmens sur le Institutions Republicaines IV*, the work of internationally acclaimed Longford artist Shane Cullen, removed from the gallery.

It features messages originally written on cigarette papers by IRA hunger strikers in the 1980s. The papers were smuggled out of Long Kesh by their family members and has been internationally exhibited.

The debate reached national headlines throughout the country and caused discussion, proving that art does in fact invoke emotions, contributes to society and that society is shaped by the ideas and thoughts of everyone in it.

However despite this there was a cut made across the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht of 5.4 percent for 2013, which will result in more fundraising efforts to get arts, cultural events and even buildings into fruition.

Other than the new gallery in Athlone this edition of the magazine sees Arts Officer, Catherine Kelly from Westmeath County Council say a fond farewell to her position. An Offaly film is flying high as Aer Lingus announces they will be showing it, A Grand Experience, on board as part of its 'Gathering' inspired entertainment. Love/Hate star Robert Sheehan makes an appearance in Laois and in Longford a new poetry workshop, which will explore the great outdoors, hopes to inspire.

Angela Madden  
Editor

Athlone's Luan Gallery is pictured on the front cover. Pic taken by Corin Bishop Photography.

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# New Director at Dunamaisie Arts Centre gets special welcome from TV star

Love/Hate star Robert Sheehan has welcomed Birr native Michelle de Forge as the newly appointed Director of Dunamaisie Arts Centre highlighting the role the centre has played in his success.

The Portlaoise actor and rising star spoke highly of his early performances in plays and pantos on the Dunamaisie stage and acknowledged the importance of its local arts remit as well as its presentation of world class professional arts, "right here in our community."

Michelle, who has worked in various management roles including Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, the Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray and Cork Midsummer Festival and, most recently, as Programme Coordinator at VISUAL & The GB Shaw Theatre, Carlow, brings a wealth of diverse experience to Laois' multi disciplinary county arts centre.

Michelle said that she intends to develop "an increased level of community participation and involvement in arts events" at Dunamaisie with artists, performers and audience members alike, from across County Laois.

She said: "My parents always encouraged an interest in theatre and the arts and not just from the audience but hands on. I've always preferred being front of

house rather than on stage myself! I've been keenly involved in the organisation side of arts events in a voluntary capacity over the years; this has ranged from curating exhibitions, event managing opera galas, concerts, youth theatre, street theatre and festivals, particularly through programming Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival and campaigning for the relevant fundraising to ensure events success."

## I've always preferred being front of house rather than on stage myself!

As a founder member of OFFline Film Festival, Michelle also helped develop its successful programme of screenings, professional workshops and an exciting three-day short-film making challenge, growing from strength to strength, with

teams last year coming from all over Ireland, the UK and Holland.

### FUNDRAISING

Fully aware of the changes in levels of state funding and commercial sponsorship, Michelle leads a great team of Dunamaisie staff and volunteer supporters all geared up for the challenge of increasing awareness of programmed events and therefore increasing box office sales, as well as hosting major fundraisers throughout the year, including the upcoming Red or Black, novelty game-show event, in March.

### PROGRAMME

A fantastic, wide ranging programme of events is published for the current season. Highlights include a duo of Tom Murphy plays by Druid Theatre Company on tour following crucially acclaimed runs in London and New York.

### For further information contact:

[www.dunamaisie.ie](http://www.dunamaisie.ie) or call 057 866 3355 for information on exhibitions and events.

M



Actor Robert Sheehan and Louis Brennan, Chairman, welcome new Director of Dunamaisie Arts Centre, Michelle de Forge. Photo by Alf Harvey, taken as Robert launched Red or Black a major fundraiser for Dunamaisie to take place on Friday March 15. Tickets from 057 8663355 or [www.dunamaisie.ie](http://www.dunamaisie.ie).

# Briefs

## Get involved in Laois Culture Night 2013

Laois County Council is calling for participants to get involved in Laois Culture Night 2013, on Friday September 20.

Following the success of Laois Culture Night 2012, the county is set to participate in Culture Night 2013 and is hoping to expand on the range of free activities which took place all around the county last year and including workshops, exhibitions, drama performances and concerts.

The Arts Office in Laois will publish a brochure of events again this year and all culture and arts venues, individuals, groups and organisations are encouraged to organise something in their local area.

Muireann Ni Chonaill, Arts Officer, Laois County Council, said: "Music, dance, literature, history, and much more will be on display for free as locals and visitors to the county enjoy the unique experiences of Culture Night.

"Museums, galleries, churches, historic houses, artists' studios and cultural centres are encouraged to open their doors late into the evening to welcome people of all ages to enjoy the artistic and cultural delights we have in Laois".

If you have an idea or concept for a free event for Culture Night please contact Laois County Council who are available to advise or assist.

The deadline for information to reach the arts office to be included in the brochure is Friday, June 28.

For more information contact:

Tel: 057 8664025 or

email: [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie).

All events must be free of charge on Culture Night. M

# OFFALY DOCUMENTARY IS FLYING HIGH!

Aer Lingus will be showing a documentary film from Offaly on board its transatlantic flights this April and May as part of its 'Gathering' inspired entertainment.

The documentary film A Grand Experience, which was commissioned by Offaly County Council in 2012, follows three artists (writer Eugene O'Brien; photographer Veronica Nicholson and musician Wayne Brennan) on the 68M

barge as it wound its way from Shannon Harbour to Edenderry in Offaly.

Speaking after the announcement that the film is to be shown in flight, County Offaly Arts Officer Sinéad O'Reilly said: "From a cultural tourism perspective this could not get much better. We are

delighted with the news knowing that it will directly showcase Offaly to such a large audience coming into Ireland this year."

The film, made by Mixed Bag Media, was first shown on RTÉ last October to an audience of some 565,000 and is

due to be repeated on RTÉ later in 2013.

A special edition DVD is on sale locally in Trax, Tullamore, from Offaly County Council and online at

[www.mixedbagmedia.com](http://www.mixedbagmedia.com).

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# A new look for Ireland's oldest literary website www.virtualwriter.net



*Someone once said that the invention of the internet caused the "death of distance." If that is true and, many believe that it is, it may yet turn out to be the greatest single shot in the arm to creative writing and literature since Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable print press.*

A sense of personal and creative isolation during the creative process and the extreme difficulty of bringing ones work to the largest audience are the two greatest challenges facing the aspiring writer. The internet provides a solution to both of these difficulties as – a writer may maintain a continuous process of communication with fellow writers by virtue of e-mail and skype, he or she can receive practical technical support and assistance through on-line workshops, mentoring and lectures and finally they can display their finished work to the whole world, at least in theory, by displaying on internet websites.

It is for these reasons the Longford County Arts Office decided 13 years ago to construct what is now Ireland's oldest dedicated literary website www.virtualwriter.net which has received a major overhaul and set to go live at the end of February.

Creative writing is probably Longford's most popular creative activity with five flourishing writers groups in a county with a population of little more than thirty thousand people; it has produced a continuous stream of emerging professional writers over recent years.

However Longford is a small primarily rural county with a dispersed population so the challenges Longford writers share with other writers were somewhat amplified by these factors and this led the County Arts Office to construct a dedicated literary website.

The purpose of the site was twofold: to provide a platform for Longford writers to exhibit their work and to use the site in a pro-active way to provide on-line professional development information and creative mentoring.

## About www.virtualwriter.net

www.virtualwriter.net is a valuable resource for aspiring writers and for anyone with an interest in literature. It accepts submissions in poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction and book reviews and includes information on literary festivals, competitions and workshops. Over the 13 years it has been in existence, the website has published writing from such diverse countries as the United States, Australia, Russia and India as well as the work of Irish writers. However, as it is a Longford-based initiative, the Editor is particularly interested in showcasing writing from the Midlands area.

www.virtualwriter.net has been completely overhauled and is now in it's third incarnation. It is a valuable asset and the Arts Office hopes to see it used as the basis for the development of a distinct community of midland writers. As a result, it is asking for writers to submit their work and any suggestions they might have about how to improve the inventory of supports provided to the emerging writers through multi-media packages. **M**

## Critics laud debut novel The Herbalist as "a must read"

**The much anticipated novel, *The Herbalist* by Niamh Boyce, described as "a must read" by the Irish Independent will be hitting our shelves in June.**

Describing her novel as reminiscent of Joanne Harris' 1999 novel *Chocolat* the Irish Independent said: "already creating buzz in the industry... this is certain to be a must-read for those who want a break from vampire fiction and S&M."

*The Herbalist* is a vivid and atmospheric story set in a midlands town over a summer in late 1930s. An Indian man appears in the market square, sets up a stall and declares himself a herbalist. The people of the town flock to the exotic visitor, who seems to have a cure for everything that ails them. But

the visitor also helps get rid of some of the town's more sordid little secrets and as the summer progresses life becomes complicated and dangerous for the herbalist and his devotees.

The book is a rich multi-layered story of life in 1930s Ireland told through the eyes of four women, each of whose lives is changed irrevocably by the herbalist.

Patricia Deevy, Editorial Director with Penguin Ireland, which will be publishing the book, said: "Niamh vividly conjures both the warmth and the darkness of life in a provincial Irish town during those years before the Emergency. In particular, she handles the now familiar shadow side of Irish life – the rigid social stratification, the fear of sex, the double standards – in a wholly fresh and confident way. Her characters are fascinating women and she has written a thought-provoking, moving and viscerally engaging novel that marks her out as a remarkable

and original new talent."

Niamh works as a librarian in Ballylinan, County Laois and won the Hennessy XO New Irish Writer of the Year award in 2012 for her poem *Kitty*. She has also been short listed for the Francis McManus Short Story competition 2011, the Hennessy Literary Awards 2010, the Molly Keane Award 2010 and the WOW Award 2010.

### Writing workshops Sponsored by Laois Arts Office & Library Service

A series of creative writing workshops with Niamh will run in Ballylinan Library this March from 10.30 -12.00 on Friday mornings. With a relaxed atmosphere and gentle pace, absolute beginners are welcome. You can book a place from Friday March 1 by calling 059 8625007 or dropping into the library. Places limited. **M**



# More than €500,000 for Offaly and Westmeath to make music



Ruairi Quinn TD, Kgomotso Ngwenya(Music Generation Laois), The Edge and Paul McGuinness

## More than half a million euros has been awarded to counties Offaly and Westmeath in a partnership from Music Generation Funding offered by U2 and the Irelands Funds.

Offaly and Westmeath have become the latest counties to benefit from the Music Generation programme. With Laois already the recipients of funding from the previous round of applications, the midland region is now well and truly on the way to providing music education for thousands of school children.

In excess of 7,500 children and young people in Offaly and Westmeath will now have access to music tuition for the next three years. Music Generation has awarded €568,000 to the Offaly Westmeath Music Education Partnership in the third round of funding to help children and young people avail of accessible vocal and instrumental tuition in their own locality.

This funding will be matched by financial and in-kind supports from Offaly and Westmeath County Councils in association with Offaly and Westmeath VEC's, Offaly Local Development Company, Westmeath Community Development Ltd, Offaly and Westmeath Community and Voluntary Fora, Comhairle na nÓg, County Childcare Committees in partnership with Athlone IT and Athlone Education Centre.

The funding application was spearheaded by the arts offices of Offaly and Westmeath County Council under the guidance of arts officers Sinead O'Reilly and Catherine Kelly.

"We are thrilled with this significant announcement which will provide an important opportunity to harness the great wealth of musical talent and

energy that exists in both Westmeath and Offaly and will enable us to create a strong regional partnership over the next three years and beyond," enthused Sinead O'Reilly.

## In excess of 7,500 children and young people in Offaly and Westmeath will now have access to music tuition for the next three years

Rosaleen Molloy, National Director of Music Generation said: "We are delighted to be working with Offaly Westmeath Music Education Partnership and look forward to the exciting developments ahead for music education in both counties. Music Generation, which was initiated by Music Network, has been enabled by a €7m philanthropic donation – €5m from U2 and a further €2m which is currently being raised by The Ireland Funds.

"Music Generation in partnership with The American Ireland Funds... announced earlier this year that it is the beneficiary of a \$1m grant from Bank of America Merrill Lynch through the Bank of America Charitable Foundation Grant forms part of The American Ireland Funds' €2m fundraising target for the programme. The entire €7m donation represents the largest-ever single philanthropic gift to music education in Ireland in the history of the state."

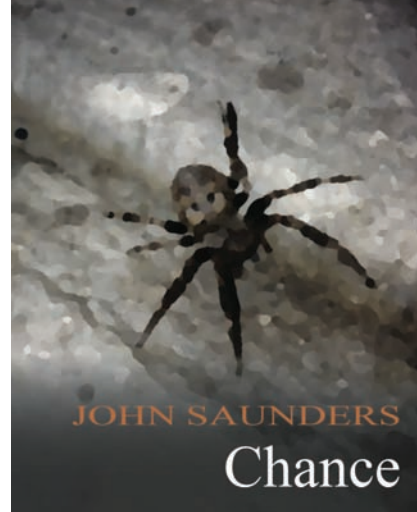
She added: "For Offaly and Westmeath, this opportunity will provide access to many different types of music education for thousands of children and young people who would otherwise not have the chance of participation as well as creating many job opportunities for musicians over the next three years." Pat Gallagher, Offaly County Manager, said: "This represents an important addition to the range of arts programmes already offered by Offaly County Council as well as providing vital employment opportunities for music practitioners working across the region and we look forward to working with our partners on this exciting initiative." **M**

### About the project...

The project will have three distinct strands:

- 1. An Early Years Programme** focused on singing and based on the Kodály teaching method aimed at 4-9 year olds.
- 2. 'Play an Instrument' Outreach Programme** aimed at over 9's which will extend the existing Westmeath VEC Music instrumental scheme into Offaly.
- 3. The 'Midlands: Music in our Lives' Programme** for all ages which will comprise of a three-part developmental intervention comprising workshops, composer in residence & annual showcase day, to interconnect the work of the Music Education Partnership and that of existing music providers.

**For more information Contact Westmeath Arts Office on 044-9332140 or arts@westmeathcoco.ie or Offaly Arts Office on 057 9357400 arts@offalcoco.ie**



## JOHN SAUNDERS Chance

## John Saunders publishes second collection of poetry



County Offaly resident John Saunders has just had his second full collection of poetry published by New Binary Press. The collection entitled *Chance* deals with the coincidences that shape our lives such as the families we are born into and the people we meet.

John's first collection *After the Accident* was published in 2010 by Lapwing Press, Belfast. And, his poems have appeared in *Revival*, *The Moth Magazine*, *Crannog*, *Prairie Schooner Literary Journal* (Nebraska), *Sharp Review*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Boyne Berries*, *The New Binary Press Anthology of Poetry*, Volume 1, *Riposte*, and on line, *The Smoking Poet*, *Minus Nine Squared*, *The First Cut*, *The Weary Blues*, *Burning Bush 2*, *Weekenders*, *Poetry Bus* and poetry 24.

John is one of three featured poets in *Measuring*, *Dedalus New Writers* published by Dedalus Press in May 2012. He is a graduate of the *Faber Becoming a Poet 2010* course and since then has been a member of the *Hibernian writers group*.

### what the critics say...

"John Saunders writes in *Chance* of 'secrets' among 'the shadow of waste' with a formal control and fortitude. There are poems here which share a sympathy with the past, its scars and with people who 'know that tears are only the indulgence / of those who haven't suffered enough.' Saunders' poems 'stand against the pull of the undertow' with a moral integrity and an authority all his own."

*Paul Perry, author and editor of a number of critically acclaimed books including The Drowning of the Saints and Goldsmith's Ghost. M*

**Chance is now available in Kindle or Paperback from Newbinarypress.com.**



Pictured is artwork by Ballymahon native Lorraine Masters who scooped the Limerick Art Society Award for Excellence Shown.

# Cairda na Cruite an Mhuileann to launch website



Pictured are junior members of Mullingar Harp School.

# BALLYMAHON NATIVE SCOOPS TOP ACCOLADE

**County Longford has earned itself a glowing reputation over the years in the art and literary circles.**

The latest in a long line of artists is Ballymahon native, Lorraine Masters who, following her graduation with a BA Art & Fine Painting, was awarded a top accolade for her art work at the University of Limerick after she became the proud recipient of the Limerick Art Society Award for Excellence Shown.

The 22-year-old former student of Mercy Ballymahon Secondary School is currently specialising in Body Image art, and has already caught the eye of experts in the field, because of her unique and creative approach to the subject matter.

Lorraine is currently running her own studio in Limerick with other art

graduates of the local university.

*"Art was always something that I had an interest in, and as I got older I felt that I wanted to pursue it as a career," said Lorraine.*

*"I was very influenced by my art teacher, Rachel Ryan when I was a student at the Convent in Ballymahon, and then when I went on to Limerick, I became a member of the art society, which also gave me great inspiration. My parents have also provided me with a lot of support and encouragement along the way."*

The award that Lorraine received in Limerick is a prestigious accolade, and one, which is only handed out to those with immeasurable talent in their chosen field.

*"It was an honour to receive the Limerick Art Society Award for Excellence Shown, it really was," she explained. "It is an award that recognises hard work and dedication, and I really love what I do. At the moment, I have my own studio, here*

*in Limerick, and currently, the work I am doing centres around the whole area of Body Image.*

*"My aim is to highlight – through this work – the way in which people feel about themselves and how they see themselves. I held a number of shows before Christmas, and I certainly hope that I will be in a position to exhibit my work in Longford some day. It is all starting to come together for me now and that is very exciting for me."*

So, with a bright and creative future ahead, where to from here for Lorraine?

"I plan to work hard practicing my art and hold more shows in the future," she beamed.

"I also want to travel and really perfect my skills. I suppose at the moment, I am in the early stages of developing my art, but when I advance I very much hope to hold an exhibition in my home county."

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**Mullingar Harp School (Cairda na Cruite an Mhuileann) is to launch a website to promote the harp in and around Westmeath.**

The planned website will include the school's history and contact details for prospective students. It will also aim to highlight the school's ethos of making the instrument assessable to anyone who would like to play by providing the necessary equipment.

Tom Maher (RIP), assisted by his friend Pasty Sheridan, founded the Mullingar Harp School in the early 1980's in a bid to promote the love of playing and ensure a new generation of harp teachers for future young students. This dream has now become a reality with many of the school's past pupils now teaching harp both in Mullingar and beyond.

Tom had a love of the harp, its history and actually made the school's first training harps. His book *The Harp's a Wonder* is a testament to his dedication to the instrument, his wish to promote the knowledge and preserve the harping tradition.

Mullingar Harp School classes are held, with the assistance of the Greville Arms Hotel Mullingar, every Saturday during school terms catering for beginners to advanced players. Training Harps are provided to beginners for their first two years with the school. The school also facilitates the ability to take examinations. M

**For further information contact: Bernadette Tyrrell on 087 9745561 or Siobhan Lynam on 087 9262516**



# Briefs

## County Laois based design team to exhibit in France

A husband and wife team with a studio nestled in Vicarstown, County Laois, will be heading further afield in March to exhibit their “no house style, just high standards,” furniture at Le Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris.

“When we design, it’s as if we are at the convergence of two oceans: we make pieces for both the way people desire to live, and how they truly do,” said, self-taught designer/makers, Susan Zelouf and Micheal Bell (zelouf+BELL)

The alliance of Belfast-born Bell and New Yorker Zelouf may seem a collision of cultures and characters. Instead, theirs is a union that has resulted in a portfolio of well-made edgy pieces grounded in practicality.

By merging honest and luxurious materials, sensuous finishes and witty details, they have seduced collectors seeking furniture with quality, vision and provenance.


zelouf+BELL claim “no house style, just high standards”, and cite high fashion as a major influence. Their work is considered the “haute couture” of Irish furniture design, so it makes sense that couturier Peter O’Brien (Rochas) is opening their 21st Century Classics exhibition at Le Centre Culturel Irlandais, March 21 – April 26 2013, curated by Jennifer Goff, Curator of Furniture, Music, Science & the Eileen Gray collection, National Museum of Ireland.

The exhibition will run in Centre Culturel Irlandais, 5 rue des Irlandais from March 22 - April 26, 2013 with a preview on March 21, 6:30 - 8:30pm. The centre is open Tuesday to Saturday 2 - 6pm with a late opening on Wednesday until 8pm and Sunday 12.30-2.30pm. Admission is free. Visit [www.centreculturelirlandais.com](http://www.centreculturelirlandais.com) for more information or call +33 (0)1 58 52 10 30.

More information can also be found by contacting Susan Zelouf on 087 230 5368, [studio@zeloufandbell.com](mailto:studio@zeloufandbell.com) or [www.zeloufandbell.com](http://www.zeloufandbell.com). 



Dragons’ Den was dedicated to the ideas of Ireland’s budding young entrepreneurs. Second Level students from every corner of Ireland were invited to take part in a large recruitment drive to find young entrepreneurs to take part in Junior Dragon’s Den with the chance to receive up to €2,000 to fund their business idea.

Although they were not selected their achievement was one that they are proud of: “It was a lot of fun, frightening in ways, but a great experience. It was stressful and a lot of it was in the run up to exams, so there was a little extra pressure on us. We got a lot out of it as a life experience, we were happy with the way it panned out, but it would have been better if we had won the Jr Dragon’s Den,” Marie-Claire laughs. 

## Longford musician creates awareness about organ donation through song

by Thomas Lyons

**Every day four people die in Ireland and the UK needlessly through lack of suitable donor organs. There are many reasons why donations do not happen, but the main one is because of a lack of awareness about the process.**

Raising awareness about the importance of organ donations is essential to halt these unnecessary deaths. One man who looks to change public perception is Longford man and member of a famous Longford music family, Tommy Flaherty. When his partner found herself in need of a kidney transplant Tommy was confronted with the difficulties experienced by those on transplant waiting lists.

Tommy decided to use his musical talents and experience to address the issue: “I’ve been playing music since I was old enough to hold a set of drum sticks. I also play a bit of guitar and over the years I have been fortunate to have worked with well known names like Declan Nerney, Jimmy Buckley, Robert

Mizzel and Mick Flavin.”

The seed of the idea came to him while he and his partner were in Birmingham waiting on her call for a transplant: “When I was in the hospital I was reading an article on transplants. It said that in Ireland and the UK between four and eight people die every day because of the lack of donors. When you think about it there is no reason for that to happen.”

The Longford musician said that the process of writing The Gift of Life was different to any other he had composed: “The problems we were experiencing were playing on my mind. One night I was finding it hard to sleep so I got up and picked up the guitar. Some songs would take months to come together, this came in half an hour.”

Not long after Tommy was in the studio recording an album of his own music with Paul Gurney. He spoke to the producer about The Gift of Life. From there another musical heavyweight contributed to the song: “I brought the

song into Paul and asked him to have a listen to it. The song is about organ donations. Paul suggested that Charlie McGettigan might have a look at it. I thought that was a great idea.”

Tommy said that the renowned Leitrim singer songwriter was very helpful: “Charlie is the master craftsman. I played it for him and he took it home and tweaked a few things. The song is a slow song, it deals with death, but it is really about hope.”

What happens next to The Gift of Life is up to others, but Tommy hopes it can make a difference to public perception: “I have sent it on to the Irish Kidney Association, I don’t know if they will use it, or what they will use it for, but what I have done this for is to raise awareness. You cannot buy an organ donation. You can have all the money you want in the bank, but if you don’t have a donor it is no use. What I want out of this is for people to carry organ donation cards.”



## SCHOOL GIRLS CREATE IRISH LANGUAGE COMIC BASED ON LOCAL MYTHS

by Thomas Lyons

**Three pupils from Scoil Mhuire in Longford used their Transition Year business project to create something just a little bit different.**

Mary Smyth, Marie-Claire Igoe and Saorlaith Ní Nualláin took their Transition Year business project and created an Irish language comic based on an endearing local myth. The comic tells the tale of Midir and Étaín, a lesser-known legend

from the Midlands region and contains elements of enduring romance, betrayal, magic, transformations and rebirth.

Each girl brought her own distinct flavour to the comic – Mary was very much the creative force; Saorlaith was instrumental in bringing the story to the page and Marie Claire oversaw the administration. Though more than a thousands years old, the story still has a contemporary appeal. Saorlaith explained why they opted for this project: “Our initial thought was to do a colouring book in Irish; that was the seed idea, but as we went through the development it progressed to being a comic book in Irish. We thought it was something unique and the legend we picked is not as well known as some of the more famous legends about say Oisín or Fionn. The style of the comic is vibrant and colourful.”

Mary supplied the artistic direction for the project: “We were thinking about what would appeal to children most. I suppose from a stylistic perspective the

popularity of Pokémon, the Manga style, was an influence for the look of the comic. I tried a few sketches and the girls then gave me feedback on what I had done until we settled on the look of the comic.”

Marie-Claire explained that she got a lot out of the experience: “The enterprise project was a great learning opportunity. The magazine is the end result of a process that taught us a lot, not just about how business start-ups grow, but how to work as a team. We have all been selling them, but in the initial stages before we had a finished product to offer for sale we all had our duties.”

### AWARD WINNERS

Their company, also named Midir agus Étaín, won the Most Creative Business Award at the County Enterprise Student Business Awards. They went on to win the regional final of the Junior Dragons Den held last November in the Hume Hall in Sligo IT. The girls took part in the National Final in December in the Dillon Hotel in Dublin.



Pictured are Mary Smyth, Marie-Claire Igoe and Saorlaith Ní Nualláin



Pictured are children who participated in last year's Pottery Workshop

# LAOIS SUMMER ARTS PROGRAMME 2013

Artist and tutors are now invited to submit proposals for the Laois Summer Arts Programme 2013. Planning is underway for the 2013 programme, which will include a mix of activities such as, arts & crafts, creative writing, dance and music.

The aim of the programme is to inspire imagination and self-expression with a world of hands-on art activities. Through painting, sculpture, dance, drawing, collage, dramatic play and much more. Workshops encourage confidence and support artistic potential.

The programme runs in the month of July and workshops are two hours long and run from Monday to Friday.



Putting their best foot forward at last year's Dance Workshop

## ...inspire imagination and self-expression with a world of hands-on art activities

Depending on demand a workshop for the younger age range runs in the morning from 11am-1pm and for an older age range in the afternoon from 2pm-4pm in the same venue.

Workshops normally cater for up to 20 but may vary according to the type of art activity. Venues are selected by their suitability to the type of activity that is proposed and also to give a good geographic spread of the programme. Tutors are paid at a rate of €30 per hour including taxes.

Artists/tutors must have Garda Vetting, have relevant references and have experience of working with children and young people. A clear costing of a proposal is required but in the case of art classes the Arts Office have a supply of general art materials available- ie: scissors, paint brushes, paints, glues, etc. Additional materials required must be listed and priced. The deadline for receipt of project proposals is Tuesday April 30, 2013. [M](#)

**For more information contact:**  
**The Arts Office, Laois County Council,**  
**Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois**  
**Tel: 057 8664025 Fax 057 8674382**  
**Email: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie**

# LAOIS YOUTH THEATRE WORKSHOPS RECOMMENCE WITH NEW TUTOR



Keith Millar

**Portlaoise Youth Theatre has a new drama tutor taking over the group this year. Keith Millar, a drama facilitator with Kildare Youth Theatre and Crooked House in Newbridge, said he was delighted to be joining Laois Youth Theatre.**

Keith has performed his role as a drama facilitator since 2007 having previously been a member of the youth theatre himself. Throughout this time he has delivered drama workshops for Kildare Youth Theatre's regular groups (including the weekly skills development programme, annual festivals and specialised Improvisation workshops).

For Crooked House he works as part of the Outreach Facilitation Team. Projects of this capacity include Headspace, a 15-week Drama programme promoting positive mental health with three communities of young people in Kildare. He has devised and directed numerous shows mostly involving social issues affecting young people. These include Proper Peggys, an original musical that was staged at the National Festival of Youth Theatre in Scotland. Last summer he devised and directed Shining Stars, which also traveled to this festival. He is currently studying for

**Young people can learn all about theatre, play games, get creative, see how to put on a show and how things run back stage while having fun, gaining confidence and making new friends.**

an MA in Community and Youth Work in NUI Maynooth as a result of his positive experiences with drama facilitation.

**Portlaoise Youth Theatre** meets weekly in the Dunamase Arts Centre on Saturdays from 11am to 1pm for age 13 upwards. Contact Keith on 085 1403938 for more info.

**Stradbally Youth Theatre** meets weekly in St Patrick's Hall, Stradbally on Saturdays from 1pm to 3pm for ages 12 upwards. Contact Siobhan on 086 3300943 for more info.

Young people can learn all about theatre, play games, get creative, see how to put on a show and how things run back stage while having fun, gaining confidence and making new friends.

Laois Youth Theatre is run by the Arts Office, Laois County Council. Call now to book your place. Places can be limited. Check out the Facebook page for all the latest news  
[www.facebook.com/laoisyouththeatre](http://www.facebook.com/laoisyouththeatre)  
 or call 57 8674342/43  
 or email: [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie)  
 or [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie) for more information.





# Frank's Shed

providing high quality, low budget recordings

Mel McCarthy, Host of FranksShedTV.  
Photo by Trevor Byrne.



**Frank's Shed Recording Studio opened its doors in 2012, in Portlaoise, to provide a high quality, low budget option to audio and video recording. It is also the studio that plays host to FranksShedTV.**

FranksShedTV is an online TV show showing the latest and greatest in musical talent from all over Ireland, and beyond. Run by Joe Salmon, a local advocate of original music in Laois, FranksShedTV gives artists another option, for free and high quality music recording, along with video being a crucial component to the whole process.

Joe exclaims: "I shot the first show by myself in mid 2011 with an amazing band called *The Little Smoke*, it's still up for all to see but I soon realized I needed a team of volunteers to pull this project off." The Frank's Shed team consists of Joe

Salmon, Mel McCarthy who hosts the shows, Stephen Murphy on camera and editor of footage and Shane Lewis, who manages the desk in the studio.

The show demands a lot of work with an average of 50 hours work going into each and every show, the sound is mixed and mastered by Joe whilst Stephen takes on the video.

Joe has personally put a lot of work into the structural elements of the recording studio, explaining: "I built the studio from scratch, recorded my own music and produced my own CD's. This studio is completely organic, a place where I help musicians and bands help themselves. I am a jack of all trades and for sure a master of none, but I try pull it all together to produce something nice and easy to hear and listen."

Speaking about the future plans for the space, Joe said: "The show started to get popular and some cool artists came on the

show and now, as if by accident, we are in discussions with RTE and TV3."

Frank's Shed has provided live shows and had a stage at this year's Heyday festival in Portlaoise, where they videoed all the acts, and in doing so took a snap shot in time of the original music scene in Laois in 2012. This footage will soon be available online. Joe is currently running a serious of programmes in the new Portlaoise Youth Café with the aim of transferring the knowledge that he has learned to the younger generation.

With the vision of having young people playing, hosting and recording concerts all by themselves to empower the next generation. After the course, the young people at the Youth Café will host their own concert. **M**

For further information visit:  
[www.franksshed.com](http://www.franksshed.com) and/or  
[www.Franksshedtv.com](http://www.Franksshedtv.com)

# Tullamore Community Arts Centre gets a thumbs up for a grand design

The 2013 spring edition of **A10**, the journal for New European Architecture, highlights Tullamore Community Arts Centre as a "democratic project, hopeful about the future and town life."

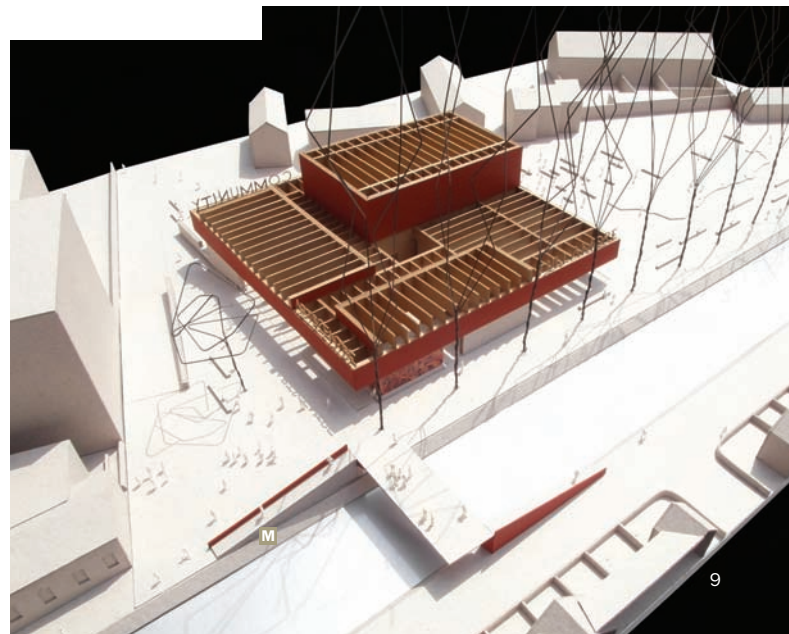
Emmett Scanlon writes: "It is rare in Ireland for a practice the size and youth of A2 to win a major building project such as this. But this is a project with an openness rarely seen in Irish Architecture, reminiscent of open - system projects of the 1960's and 70s, and seems like a democratic process, hopeful about the future and town life."

"This was a beautifully designed and presented project at competition stage and if the architects can sustain the ambition to create this open and democratic arts centre for Tullamore, it will be an even greater achievement than winning the competition in the first place." **M**

The project is currently at construction tender stage and the board of the project is hopeful to have a construction contract signed in time to break ground by autumn 2013. The building schedule is likely to take some 12 months to complete. Meanwhile work is ongoing behind the scenes on the operational side to ensure the centre opens with a full programme of events during the winter of 2014/15.

Fundraising is still continuing as the community element of the capital needed makes the final push to reach the €200,000 committed to the project.

For more information on the centre see [www.tullamorecommunityartscentre.ie](http://www.tullamorecommunityartscentre.ie), follow on Facebook or email [info@tullamorecommunityartscentre.ie](mailto:info@tullamorecommunityartscentre.ie)





# Backstage joint exhibition programme a great success

*In early 2012 Longford Arts Office and the Atrium Gallery at Backstage Theatre joined forces in an effort to provide a more cohesive and efficient support service and exhibition space to artists in the area.*

Construction work in Backstage in the preceding few years had impacted on the gallery space there and the theatre was keen to re-launch this space and give it a greater focus, following renovation work in 2011 to improve the facility. In order to re-launch the programme of exhibitions and indeed raise the standard of supports offered with this exhibition space, the theatre approached the local Arts Office with a proposal to work together to deliver this service. Fergus Kennedy Arts Officer welcomed the proposal, acknowledging the shared interests and objectives of both parties. In 2012 the joint programme hosted exhibitions by Cavan artist Padraig Lynch; Roscommon based artist Anne Rigney; Ceramics Artist Ed Walshe and an exhibition of the work of photographer Shelley Corcoran and the students of

the Longford Photography Schools programme.

In the coming months the programme will feature artwork from two visiting artists from Galway, Anne Harkin-Petersen from Tuam and Ruth Cadden from Spiddal, as well as Cavan artist Elena Duff and James Brady.

The exhibitions programme has worked seamlessly with a joint literary programme already established between both organisations and in fact many of the exhibitions featured have an integrated literary dimension. An exhibition of the work Lucy Brennan from Lanesboro in June 2013 will also feature readings from poet Kieran Furey.

Both the Arts Office and Backstage are keen to introduce an educational outreach element to the programme and are in discussions with artists on the structure and scope of this proposal.

The success of the Arts Office supported Director in Residence Programme at Backstage which is headlined by Seamus O'Rourke in 2013, and the positive outcomes to date on the joint visual artist and literary programmes demonstrate clearly the value of pooling of resources in time of financial difficulties to maximise available resources. **M**

Vases made by ceramic artist Ed Walshe exhibited as part of a joint exhibition along with other works including those of Gary Robinson (pictured above)



# Mark Boylan a young musician making tracks

*MARK Boylan is a 15-year-old musician from Banagher in Offaly who has already made headlines and an impact with his music.*

At the age of 13, he composed a song called *The Festival*, inspired by a visit to Cheltenham with his family, which he then put up on YouTube. It was an overnight hit (31,000 views to date) which resulted in him being invited to play for 60,000 people at Cheltenham; tour with the High Kings; play in Vicar Street and flown to America to perform in front of 70,000 people and millions on TV – as his song became the World Championship theme for Breeders Cup 2011.

He spent the summer of 2012 playing in California and Holland and in Spring 2013, he travelled to The Cheltenham Festival where he did a series of interviews, reports and live performances for a variety of TV and Radio shows.

Mark is currently working on promoting a new project, again inspired by horse racing. Speaking of his new venture Mark said:

*"I was asked to write a song a few months ago in remembrance of a young jockey from Scotland called Campbell Gillies who died last June in an accident in Corfu while he was there celebrating his twenty second birthday. Campbell had become the first Scot in ten years to ride a winner at Cheltenham, just three months previous. I was reluctant to take on this venture given the sensitivity of the subject but when I was contacted by his*

*mother, I couldn't refuse. It was an emotional journey writing the song, especially having been told that Campbell loved my music and played my CD constantly in his car."*

*A Song for Campbell* was released on January 24 on iTunes with proceeds going to the Injured Jockeys Fund (who flew Campbell's body home from Greece) and the reaction was phenomenal reaching Number 14 in the UK Singer/Songwriter iTunes Download Chart in a week.

It featured alongside songs by Jake Bugg, Damien Rice, Boyce Avenue and was positioned a few places ahead of Ed Sheerin's A-Team and Eva Cassidy's Songbird.

*"My song actually spend a period at Number 2 over the first weekend", said an excited Mark. "I have been contacted by many members of the Scottish and English media who are excited by the whole song and story and the family are delighted as it is providing a fitting tribute to Campbell."*

*"I received almost 10,000 views on the You Tube video in 2 days and over 1400 tweets. In fact one fan in Scotland has had my lyrics tattooed on her body!" **M***

**Mark Boylan's song is available to download (with a few others) on iTunes by searching A Song for Campbell and also on Amazon.**

A Song by Campbell by Mark Boylan (pictured) is available to download on iTunes.





Pictured are Georgina Ireland, Nuala Kelly, Vivienne Graham (Photo by Dom Reddin)

**Trio Vocalese are making quite a name for themselves on the music scene in Laois and beyond. In an unbelievably short time-frame they have just finished a session in a recording studio and are now preparing for a CD Launch Concert.**

# Laois Trio to launch CD

The vocal trio, comprising of Vivienne Graham, Georgina Ireland and Nuala Kelly, with their exquisite vocal harmonies have been delighting audiences near and far and have been widely praised in the short time they have been together.

All three singers are well known soloists in their own right and *Vocalese* came about when Nuala Kelly was asked to provide a short musical interlude for International Women's Day celebration in the Dunamais Arts Centre in March 2012.

She explained: "We didn't set out to form a group as such but the blend of the voices was so good and the harmonies came very naturally to us so we just took it from there and went with it and so *Vocalese* was born."

Gathering momentum over the past year, *Vocalese* have performed in such diverse places as Ballyfin House, the Durrow Scarecrow Festival, the International Eucharistic Congress in the RDS, Aherlow Gospel Festival,

Newbridge Musical Society concert, the Cuisle Centre Concert and Abbeyleix Library along with radio slots on Midlands 103.

*Vocalese* are multi-genre in their song choice covering an eclectic mix of songs from Carole King, Crying in the Rain, Neil Young, After the Goldrush, The Police, Every Breath You Take, along with some traditional songs such as Water is Wide and Neidin. They have also been in contact with some singer/

songwriters and hope to cover some original material over the coming months.

The *Vocalese* CD Launch Concert will take place in the Dunamais Arts Centre on Thursday 2nd May. It promises to be a magical evening, and if you have not heard this trio yet, you are in for a real treat.

**M**

## Shannon-side Environmental Poetry Workshops

by Neil Halligan

**The historically rich landscape across south Longford, including the lakes and islands of Lough Ree and the River Shannon, will provide much of the inspiration for aspiring poets later this summer.**

Longford County Council has devised an unique Environmental Poetry Workshop to attract people to sample the beauty of the greater Lanesboro/Newtowncashel areas.

Arts Officer, Fergus Kennedy explained: "The landscape of west Longford is so gentle, unspoiled and beautiful that it is bound to have an impact on anyone who experiences it. Since the original cave artists and fireside storytellers began to express themselves creatively, nature and the environment have always been central to artist's creativity.

"Our objective is to expose contemporary writers to the beauty of our flora, fauna and landscape by taking them on walking tours of the country side. The walks will be followed by workshops facilitated by Noel Monahan where the artists will be encouraged to respond creatively to the

natural stimulation of their morning's experiences."

Award-winning poet Noel Monahan – a native of Granard – will lead the workshops, and while it will include a historical look at the area, he emphasised that those taking part will be writing with a "free hand."

"In the workshops we'll be looking at the landscapes of south Longford, and its beauty, and hoping that a focus on this area will lead to poetry," said Noel.

"The hand must be extremely free; it's not history or geography we're writing. There's something that draws a writer to an area like this, especially when the space is spread over such long period in time.

"Some writers might be interested in the mythological aspect of it, because not too far away you have the Corlea Track way Road, going back to 148 BC and that's a fascinating place. And then you have Brí Leith, the Hill of Ardagh, which is one of the Celtic stories, which goes back to early Celtic times," he added.

While the exact details of what the workshop will entail have yet to be finalise, Noel said the tour may include award-winning Tidy Towns (villages) like Newtowncashel, Ardagh and the current titleholders, Abbeyshrule.

He also said they hope to be able to take in one of the islands.

Given the volume of inspiration, in terms of landscapes, may be vast; Noel said people may respond to something as simple as the flowers or bird life in the area.

At the end of the tour, the workshop returns indoors where Noel will give the more technical side of the day.

"I have given workshops before, but never before with such a focus on an area. I don't want to say you have to write a poem about this or that; I would never do that, because poetry doesn't happen like that," he said.

"I'll start with the structure from the stirring of the poem – where the poem is coming in; then the whole word-farming – the sense of language, finding the words and phrases; the shape of the poem and then editing the poem."

It's the end product that will be entered into the multiple poetry competitions that take place over the summer, including Cork, Listowel and Strokestown.

Noel stressed that the workshop is open to all people from all areas. **M**

For further information, contact the Longford Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy on 086 8517595 or email: [fkennedy@longfordcoco.ie](mailto:fkennedy@longfordcoco.ie)



Pictured is Saint's Island Church and Cemetery, Longford, where those taking part in Longford's newest poetry workshops hope to get inspired.



Catherine Kelly pictured with Minister Jimmy Dennyhan and Miriam Mulrennan at the recent opening of the Luan Gallery.

# CATHERINE KELLY DEPARTS WESTMEATH ARTS OFFICE

**After 11 wonderful years, I am leaving Westmeath Arts Office to take up a new position abroad.**

Over the past decade having worked in tandem with the arts community I have seen a revolution in the energy, the dynamism and the impact of the arts across the county and I have witnessed the increased relevance of the arts in the lives of the people of Westmeath both socially and economically.

Westmeath has a rich cultural life, steeped in the world of arts that infuses the most private of lives as well as the most sociable of communities. The breadth and depth of what is going on in the arts in Westmeath at any one time is nothing short of incredible.

I have been lucky enough to have been involved in high profile public art projects, the development of the Abbey Road artists studios and the Luan Gallery and the recent successful Music Generation application. There have been many changes for the sector; funding has risen and fallen in dramatic fashion but the steadfast conviction and commitment of the artists that I have encompassed remains constant.

The recession has served to galvanise the arts community by allowing them to reinvent how they create work and develop their practise and has led to meaningful collaborations and new partnerships. It has facilitated the sharing of resources, skills and expertise and the arts in Westmeath is ironically stronger due to the downturn and we can all look forward

to a bright future for the sector with vision, energy and hope.

The world of arts is woven so tightly into everyday life in Westmeath and I have had both the pleasure and privilege of working with exceptionally talented people that have inspired me every day. I would like to thank the arts community for their support and commitment to this ever evolving process and for all they do to keep Westmeath curious about the arts and confident in the arts, for bringing the opportunity to participate in and enjoy the arts into the lives of people in Westmeath.

It is with a heavy heart that I leave but I would like to thank the arts community for their continued friendship and support and I wish the sector every success in the future.

Catherine Kelly. 

“It has been with a great sense of admiration and professional appreciation that I have observed from the sidelines of a neighbouring county (Longford) the quietly efficient and effective manner with which Catherine has animated all forms of cultural activity in Westmeath over more than a decade. Being from Westmeath she was always aware of the enormous creative potential of the county, and she more that anyone has been instrumental, in her own quiet way, in developing the arts in Westmeath to the admirable position it holds today.”

Longford Council Council Arts Officer, Fergus Kennedy.

“I have really enjoyed working with Catherine as a colleague across the border (from Offaly) particularly on collaborative projects, such as our recent success with Music Generation funding, but also on others such as this magazine and the Midland master classes. Together with all of the Midland Arts Officers, she is/was a regionalist; innately understanding the benefits of working together, to create a greater cultural identity for the midlands of Ireland. She will be missed!”

Offaly County Council Arts Officer, Sinead O'Reilly.

“Catherine Kelly has been a fantastic colleague to work with as we four midland arts officer strived to forge out a midland arts identity in the last number of years. We have done this through the magazine, masterclasses, literary publications and music initiatives. Catherine has demonstrated great creativity, leadership and imagination in the programmes she devised. We will miss Catherine and we will watch her career path with great interest.”

Laois County Council Arts Officer, Muireann Ni Chonail.



Pictured are photography students from Templemichael College.

# Templemichael College shaping Photography as a fine art

by Shelley Corcoran

**If you look around, the number of exhibitions that showcase photography are more numerous than ever before – from wild life to architectural forms to fine art photography.**

Templemichael College Longford is increasingly becoming a serious centre for the study of photography in the Midlands. The College offers photography as part of its Art

and Design PLC. Photography is increasingly standing side by side with more traditional genres of art such as painting and ceramics in terms of public awareness and in the context of student demand.

According to Paul Anderson, in his book, *The Fine Art of Photography*, fine art is “any medium of expression which permits one person to convey to another an abstract idea of lofty emotion”.

And because the Templemichael College Art and Design students have sought this creative course they are producing conceptual Fine Art photographs that do indeed convey abstract ideas.

The FETAC Level 5 Photography module the students are undertaking has also changed this year, with more emphasis on Visual Diaries which lend themselves to the creative process, the developing of ideas and the conceptual side of photography

as opposed to just the technical. There is also now an emphasis on studying recognised fine art photographers much the same as traditional History of Art recognises the skills of acclaimed painters.

Now in its third year, in Templemichael College as part of the Art and Design Course, the amount of Distinctions received by the Templemichael Students is very high, which only proves that the students are developing their capacity both to perceive and express creatively and that they are able to create visual metaphors to give meaning beyond the image's superficial beauty.

The level of creative development of the students of Templemichael Community College was very evident recently in their contribution to the innovative publication *Bang...Bang She Shot Me (An Introduction to Digital Art Photography)* and in their continued success in the Longford Schools Photographer of the Year Competition in which they participate through the Longford Schools Photography Programme.

The demand for photography to be thought as an art form is increasing each year and Templemichael Community College through its offering of FETAC Level 5 Digital Photography Course, its participation in the Longford Schools Photography Programme and being the location for the Midland College of Photography makes it the centre for the study of photography studies in the Midlands. [M](#)

# OFFALY'S LEAD ROLE!

**Once again, Offaly and the Irish midlands are placed centre of the literary map, in Geraldine O'Neill's tenth novel.**

Her faithful and dedicated fans will be delighted to know that her next book, *Music From Home*, (published by Poolbeg) will be available in local bookshops and on the internet this March.

Often compared with the late, legendary Maeve Binchy, Geraldine continues to claim the hearts of her eager readers who span the globe.

Her books have brought Offaly into readers' homes and sparked curiosity, affection, longing and memories amongst her fans from all ages and backgrounds. Geraldine's books are devoured by teenage girls (who relate to the young heroines and enjoy reading about a different period) and their mothers and grandmothers (who love the nostalgic look back to the 60's they grew up in). She also has a strong male fan base, and receives e-mails from a large number of men including one from France who worked in Ireland and loves reading about the country. *Music From Home* tells the tale of a young girl, Maria Conti, growing up in

Manchester with Leo, her widowed Italian father who owns Leonardo's restaurant.

When tragedy strikes, Maria finds that her comfortable, predictable life is shattered when she has to turn to her mother's estranged family in Ireland.

In the old farmhouse in County Offaly she uncovers a bitter legacy of secrets and lies, and she comes to realise that her mother was not the person she'd been led to believe she was. As new stories and new characters come along with every one of Geraldine's books, one thing remains the same – the leading role of County Offaly! [M](#)




## ARTHOUSE STRADBALLY TO SHOWCASE MAKE GOOD, MAKE BETTER

*Make good, make better* is a forthcoming show by Saidhbhín Gibson at Arthouse, Stradbally comprising of new work produced specifically for the exhibition.

The work marries aspects of man's domesticity with elements of the natural world. This has been executed through delicate mark-making in the drawings and intricate thread based techniques (needlepoint lace) in the made objects. The work is a response to the natural world that exists around us, and our relationship with that which is not man-made.

Rather than being an overt statement of a perceived improvement of nature by the artist, the title *Make good, make better* is purposefully ambiguous. The reflexive title refers both to the artist's adornment of the natural artifact and also to our betterment through close association with nature.

Saidhbhín Gibson has exhibited both nationally and internationally since graduating with a Degree in Fine Art (DIT Mountjoy Square). During 2012 she was selected for a variety of exhibitions including *Common Thread International*, Oakville, Canada, *Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival*, *Winter Open*, *Rua Red*, and *Easter Small Works*, *The Higher Bridges Gallery*, Enniskillen.

*Make good, make better* opens on April 4 and runs until April 24. There will be a talk by John Duffy, gardener at Emo Court, on Saturday April 13 at 2pm at Arthouse and Library, Stradbally, followed by refreshments. All are welcome. 

### OPENING HOURS

**Tuesday–Friday: 1 – 4.30pm**  
**Saturday: 10am – 1pm**

Please contact **Vernon McNicolas** at **057 8641740**, Tuesday–Friday, 1–4.30 p.m. for further information.

Below: A Hot Cup of Fluff by Saidhbhín Gibson



# Encouraging a LOVE of MUSIC



**Kindermusik classes, which promote the belief that music is the best vehicle for early childhood development and learning, are currently running in Athlone and Mullingar.**

Ger Relfh, a musician, teacher and Kindermusik Educator has been playing music since she was seven-years-old. She completed a BA in Music at NUI Maynooth in 1996 and continued her studies at Queen's University, Belfast and completed a Masters Degree in Twentieth Century Music in 1997.

She discovered Kindermusik while researching a way to teach music to her own children while they were very young. She completed her teacher training with Kindermusik International and received her license to teach in 2011.

Kindermusik offers developmentally specific educational programs for children aged newborn to six. The curriculum is based on the principals of Kodaly, Suzuki, and Orff and at its core is the firm belief that music is the best vehicle for early childhood development and learning.

Psychologists, neuroscientists, and experts in early childhood development have demonstrated that music does more for children than bring them joy; it helps their brain cells make the connections needed for virtually every kind of intelligence. Kindermusik's curriculum is built on this research.

When young children are consistently engaged by music in an age-appropriate, socially accepting environment, they benefit at many levels:


**EARLY LITERACY** They gain the phonological processing, spoken language, and comprehension skills that are the foundation of reading.

**QUANTITATIVE** They build the spatial-temporal and reasoning skills required for maths, science, and engineering.

**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL** They develop social and emotional skills that are essential for school readiness – like the ability to regulate their responses and relate to others in complex ways.

**PHYSICAL** By moving and dancing to music and playing simple instruments, children improve their gross and fine motor skills. Activities that encourage freedom within a fun and friendly structure spark their creativity.

**CREATIVE** Activities that encourage freedom within a fun and friendly structure spark children's creativity and provide inspiration.

And of course, they develop a lifelong love of music. 

### CLASSES

**Village** (0–18 months): Takes those special bonding moments between you and your baby and adds a unique blend of musical learning activities that stimulate and engage all the senses and encourage your baby's learning through vocal play, object exploration, instruments and creative movements.

**Wiggle & Grow** (18 months–3 years): Your child will love singing, dancing, and playing instruments and you'll love helping to practice a wide variety of abilities such as gross and fine motor skills, turn-taking, social skills, and active listening.

**Laugh & Learn** (3–4 years): Each week the class combines your child's natural love of music, storytelling, and imaginative play with age-appropriate activities that introduce early music concepts and foster independence, social and emotional skills, language growth, and self-control.

**Move & Groove** (4–6 years): In class your child will be engaged in music and movement activities that also promote language, social and emotional skills, early math and early literacy, physical coordination, creativity, and more. Plus, they will learn basic music vocabulary and notation—all setting the stage for future school success and formal music lessons.

Full details of the music and movement programme for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and young children can be found at [www.kindermusikwithger.com](http://www.kindermusikwithger.com)



Song for Ireland – Brendan Keeley in Geashill National School

# 2,000 turn out in Tullamore for Anthem of Hope

**On a cold Sunday in January, musician Brendan Keeley brought over 2,000 people to Offaly to sing a new anthem of hope for Ireland.**

Despite the awful weather, over 2,000 people turned out at O'Connor Park in Tullamore on Sunday, January 27 to

record their voices onto the single, *We Will be Strong* composed by Tullamore singer/ songwriter Brendan Keeley.

Speaking of his intention for the anthem, Brendan said: *"The anthem has been created to bring alive the message of hope in the people of Ireland and to awaken the sense of survival that lies deep within the Irish people, but has*

*sadly been lost in all the talk of recession and 'doom and gloom.'"*

Brendan spent the weeks leading up to the project, traveling to 82 schools across the Midlands teaching the song to children.

*"Given the day that was in it with wind whipping up the stadium, I thought if we get 100 we will be lucky, and for people*

*to come out and bring small children in that weather was just great."*

Tullamore Gospel Choir kicked off the bitterly cold afternoon with rousing choruses and soon after Brendan was introduced to the crowds by special guest Henry Healy, who had just returned from the inauguration of his eight cousin President Barack Obama.

Brendan's eldest son Sam Keeley who is an up and coming film actor, currently starring in the popular TV series *Raw* was on hand to lend his support to the project, much to the delight of the younger female audience!

The song was mixed at Brytestar Productions in Carlow by Brian Sheil who was nominated for Best Producer at the World Music Awards in London in February. The single is now on sale with all profits going to St. Vincent de Paul. **M**

**For more information please see [www.brendankeeley.com](http://www.brendankeeley.com)**



**Laos-born Declan McGovern has been appointed General Manager of RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra following his position as Chief Executive of the Ulster Orchestra.**

## ORCHESTRATING A MOVE SOUTH

RTÉ recently announced the appointment and he took up the position on a full-time basis on January 1, 2013.

As General Manager, Declan will have overall responsibility for the artistic, organisational and financial management of Ireland's premier symphony orchestra.

Declan was appointed Chief Executive of the Ulster Orchestra in November 2010, a position he held until March 2012 when on secondment from his current position as Executive Producer, BBC Northern Ireland. Previous roles include Editor, Music, BBC Northern Ireland and Senior Producer, Classic FM. Declan grew up in County Laois and is a BMus (Hons) graduate from University College Cork.

As Chief Executive with the Ulster Orchestra, Declan was instrumental in appointing a new Principal Conductor, re-establishing the Ulster Orchestra's recordings with Naxos, securing new sponsors, negotiating a new contract with the musicians and establishing strategic business partnerships with the

Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and the Belfast Telegraph.

Artistic partnerships included a joint performance with the Ulster Orchestra and the Ulster Youth Orchestra at the BBC Proms in London, a collaboration between the Ulster Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, and an annual concert celebrating the music of Scotland and Northern Ireland with the support of the Ulster Scots Agency.

At BBC Northern Ireland he instigated the annual open air Proms in the Park, established a series of St Patrick's Day concerts in collaboration with Belfast City Council, commissioned 15 new works from Irish composers, produced TV programmes on Leonard Bernstein, Steve Reich and The Chieftains and won awards for his radio biography on Yehudi Menuhin and a documentary for BBC Radio 3 on the role of music inside the Maze Prison.

Speaking of his appointment, Declan McGovern said: *"The RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra is a national*

*cultural treasure. It has played a major role in professional music-making in Ireland and in providing important platforms for Irish soloists and composers and international artists. Great economic and social challenges face us in Ireland today. The RTÉ NSO is a reminder of all that is great and strong in Ireland's cultural fabric. I look forward to working closely with the orchestra and with colleagues in RTÉ to help steer its journey over the years ahead."*

Welcoming his appointment, Séamus Crimmins, Executive Director, RTÉ Orchestras, Quartet and Choirs said: *"I am delighted that Declan has accepted the post of General Manager, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. Declan's experience in radio, television, orchestral management and business position him well for the challenges which the orchestra faces. The RTÉ NSO has a unique position within Irish cultural life and I know that Declan will build on its artistic strengths whilst fulfilling the full range of RTÉ's public service obligations."* **M**

# How becoming a self-publisher made life Rosy

**I always thought (absent-mindedly) about the possibility of writing women's fiction. I love a good old-fashioned love story, but there has to be more to the story than a gallop to a romantic end. I want to enjoy the journey along the way and I want a book where every sentence is worth reading.**

For anyone out there who has ever thought about writing a book, the best piece of advice that I ever read was just sit down and do it! If you don't make the time, it will never happen.

I grew up in County Westmeath. I have a Master's Degree in Biomedical Sciences and I work part-time in the field of Solid Organ Transplantation. I now live on a farm in County Longford with my husband and our three children.

I got married in 2000 and continued to work full time in Dublin for another two years; my husband and I 'enjoyed' a weekend marriage – no thought nor time for writing during this period. In 2002 I finally went job-sharing and moved to live full-time with my farmer husband. Sadly, both my parents-in-law had passed away the same year that we married and so Timmy's family home, which was a 1970's bungalow, became our new home. The next year saw me undertaking a lot of DIY and having our first child, but no pen was put to paper; I was far too busy doing other things!

Four years and three children later, and the idea of trying to write something even vaguely interesting was beginning to take hold in my mind again. By that point, I was beginning to realise, and more importantly to fervently hope, that in time, there would be more to my life in the home than worrying about the housework and what was for the dinner.

I also knew that I wasn't the type of woman who would enjoy frittering my time away in the long-term by meeting the girls for coffee and lunch. Besides, my country sisters were far busier than I was – they were not accustomed to a life of idle either!

I eventually started writing about five years ago with little success. I found the demands of three young children incompatible with the task...I could never get a good run at it! When our youngest child started school in September 2010, I was then able to apply myself. I discovered that the more I wrote, the more I enjoyed it – escapism is a wonderful practise! It became less a case of: "I should really sit down and try to write something," and much more a case of prying myself away from the laptop to make the aforementioned dinner before the kids came home from school. Towards the end, I was constantly roping in my ever-supportive husband to pick up the kids and to cook the dinner!

## THE STORY OF ALICE-ROSE

The story of Alice-Rose evolved naturally over time and changed its course quite dramatically from the one I had in mind initially! This was mainly due to the realisation that I needed to add more meat to the bones of the story; otherwise it would have ended up being a boring old gallop to the end. And for that I needed to change the storyline quite a bit!

I think it is very important to write about what you know, and secondly, something that is close to your heart and that you can be passionate about. You must love your characters even if they themselves are hateful individuals – again, you have to feel passionately about them and you have to believe in them.

On the whole, I found the subject matter of Alice-Rose very easy to work with for a number of reasons – I am passionate about old houses; I value family highly and I was lucky enough to have a number of close friendships to draw upon for inspiration when it came to writing about the dynamics, and the rewards, of a long-lasting one.

Unfortunately, getting published didn't prove to be so easy. I sent the first fifty pages of the manuscript to several agents, all were very positive except for one agent who said that my writing style needed work- they was right! I got back down to the job of improving my manuscript and then I left it on the shelf, too weary to think about approaching another agent.

In the meantime, word was spreading among family and friends that I had written a book. Those who read it claimed to love it. Then one day I received two newspaper cuttings in the post from my sister-in-law's mother about the very successfully self-published author Amanda Hocking and



the possibilities of self-publishing. It inspired me. And here I am now, €3,000 poorer but free from the manuscript gathering dust on the shelf. I self-published through Xlibris (an unlikely name in some regards...not as reassuring or as familiar as Amazon) using the premier package and found the experience to be a very positive one.

Lastly, many thanks to all who have bought, or intend to buy, Alice-Rose. I hope you enjoy the story and that it provides a little restorative distraction.

**M**

**Alice-Rose by Caitriona Leslie is available in paperback, hardback and eBook from Amazon and Barnes and Noble, as well as a number of other online book suppliers including the publishers, Xlibris. For further information visit [www.aliceroosebook.com](http://www.aliceroosebook.com)**





# Ceramic Artist Ed Walshe moves to Longford

**In order to work more freely, ceramic artist Ed Walshe decided to move out of the big smoke in order to create more smoke.**

He explained: "At that time I was living in Dublin. I rather like doing smoke-fired ceramics and it's really difficult to do that up in the city because it really annoys your neighbours if you have smoke all over the place.

"Anyway, I wanted a place where I could have a studio, so I bought a house down here, just outside Longford (Killoe). There's a double garage which I converted to a studio. I generally make ceramics and sell them at a Christmas fairs and the like.

**"At that time I was living in Dublin. I rather like doing smoke-fired ceramics and it's really difficult to do that up in the city because it really annoys your neighbours if you have smoke all over the place."**

*"I did a show in Backstage Theatre, which Fergus (Kennedy – Arts Officer) organised for me. At the moment I'm working on a commission for a ceramic wall mural," said Ed.*

The 3ft x 2ft mural will be mounted on plywood, which can be hung on a wall.

Retired at 55, Ed enrolled in a four-year course at the NCAD (National College of Art and Design) in Dublin and graduated in 2006 in ceramics. Having spent 35 years working with IBM as a programme and IT specialist. His interest in ceramics grew from the time he spent in the NCAD.

*"I always had an interest in art and I went to evening classes in NCAD for about 11 years while I was working. In the first year of the four-year course you do a bit of everything – sculpture, print-making, ceramics, glass, metals, everything. The idea is that you get to experience the whole range of techniques and then you decide what you want to graduate in.*

*"I had originally thought I wanted to do sculpture, but then had a go at ceramics, which I thought was cool because I could have my own studio and just work away myself. If you're doing sculpture, you have to cast bronze, and you have pay loads of money to foundries to cast them for you," he quipped.*

Ed says he has been doing quite a bit of raku firing at the moment, it is an ancient and delicate ceramic production process



Niamh Mulligan's bronze medal winning picture from the IPF National Shield Competition A Race In Hand.

## MIDLANDS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB OFFERS CLASSES

**Midlands Photography Club was formed in 2008 by four photography enthusiasts and since then the club has developed and evolved into a diverse mixture of beginners, hobbyists, advanced and professional photographers.**

The club season runs from September to June, every second Wednesday in the Prince of Wales Hotel, Athlone, and the club is always looking for new members of all levels – from absolute beginners to professionals to get involved.

Landscape, macro, nature, architecture, sport, music, portrait and/or fashion are all covered in the classes.

Each September the club runs a photography course for beginners, intermediates and anyone who wishes to up skill their photography. The course is given by two of the clubs professional photographers Liam Kidney and PJ McCormack.

Throughout the club season guest talks are given by professional and award winning photographers, which have included Mick Quinn, Peter Gordon and Vincent O'Byrne. Within the club, members also give talks on certain aspects of photography that they are passionate about. Emilia Krysztofiak (Rua Photography) spoke about photographing live gigs and music festivals and Aaron Sarauer gave a talk on HDR photography. The club also had a workshop photographing a professional model using professional studio lighting recently purchased by the club.

In addition to this the club also organises outings with their members as it is important to get out there and take pictures. Members also get a media pass for entry to shoot some bands at the Prince of Wales and learn a lot about the challenges of photographing live gigs.

Midlands Photography Club celebrated winning a Bronze medal at the 2012 Irish Photography Federation National Shield competition held in Dublin in November. Niamh Mulligan won her medal in the Individual Monochrome Section, for her photograph entitled, *A Race In Hand*. Niamh just joined the Club and won her recent medal using an entry-level camera so its not so much about the camera you use but about the eye to spot and capture a great photograph.

Members Emilia Krysztofiak, Aaron Saurer and Robert Hederer represented the club at the Mid-Western Region Print & Projected Competition in December and their work placed in the top three of several categories.

**If interested in improving your camera skills, sharing your knowledge, or simply joining Midlands Photography Club e-mail [midlandsp photography@gmail.com](mailto:midlandsp photography@gmail.com). For more details about the club and upcoming events visit [midlandsp photographyclub.com](http://midlandsp photographyclub.com) or [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandsPhotographyClub)**

[www.facebook.com/MidlandsPhotographyClub](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandsPhotographyClub).



*"You do it outdoors in a special kiln, and you bring this material up to about 1,000 degrees and bring it out and put it into a bin that's filled with sawdust or straw, or anything that will burn. You usually end up with white glaze, but it's all crackled with these little black lines in it.*

*"One thing about it is that it's very unpredictable; pieces might not come out correct or quite often pieces will break. It's handy for somebody working*

*in ceramics like me because the commercial firms aren't interested in it because it's unpredictable. It means that I can compete. There's no point in making mugs because I can't make them for €1 like you'd pay in Tesco," said Ed. **M***

**Although he doesn't currently have a website, Ed does have samples of his work on the Crafts Council of Ireland website:**

<http://directory.ccol.ie/clients/member/21762>

# Luan Gallery

## has welcomed over 2,500 visitors since opening

*Since November Athlone's multi-million euro gallery has welcomed more than 2,500 visitors and has engaged with over 25 schools and community groups via its education programme.*

Speaking to *Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine*, Aedín McGinn, Visual Art Coordinator with Athlone Arts and Heritage said: *"The schools programme has had an overwhelmingly positive reaction. Pupils from schools from across the region come to the space, enjoy a guided tour and then retreat to the workshop where they are invited to create their own art works in response to the works exhibited. It is so exciting to be part of this learning and we will work to build on this programme of workshops, tours and talks for young and old alike."*

The Luan Gallery is the first purpose-built municipal visual art gallery located in the midlands and marks a significant development for the arts in Ireland.

The gallery, which was opened by Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on November 29, was designed by Keith Williams Architects who also designed the Wexford Opera House and the Civic Offices in Athlone.

The opening, saw almost 400 people including locals, councillors, business people and artists from the region come to celebrate not only the building but also the inaugural exhibition *Borrowed Memories*.

The *Borrowed Memories* theme referenced the memories and associations of the building, and resulted in a selection of work that balanced Luan Gallery's necessity to have regard for local and regional artists, as well as setting out its stall within a national and international context.

IMMA's (Irish Museum of Modern Art) director Sarah Glennie said: *"Borrow Memories has been long in the planning and one of our most successful partnerships to date."*

To accompany the IMMA exhibition, a site specific artistic intervention, guided by the theme of *Red Carpet* was created by local artist Lorna Kincaid – the founder and project director of the Athlone based *Making Space Collective*.

This work, a thread based installation was a symbolic nod to the Athlone Woollen Mill once located across the river (see pg 19).

A total of €3.4 million was invested in the development of the gallery, with funding partners – Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Athlone Town Council.

In September 2011 Athlone Town Council redeveloped a building in Abbey Road (formerly the Fire Station), for use as artists' studios facilities. This ensured that the foundation stones of engagement with the visual arts community were already in place prior to the Luan Gallery project being completed. Abbey Road developed an active programme of community events, workshops, as well as a dynamic range of short courses which are now complimented by the educational activities in the gallery.

M

## “Art can be provocative and controversial”

by Brieghe Madden

When a Fine Gael councillor called for the removal of a contemporary art installation from the new Luan Gallery in Athlone, Co Westmeath it sparked a debate regarding the role of the arts and evoked polar emotions.

In January Cllr Mark Cooney, whose father Paddy Cooney was Minister for Justice 'during the Troubles' in the 1970s, claimed the installation was "offensive" and should be removed.

Created by Longford-born artist Shane Cullen and titled *Fragments sur les Institutions Républicaines IV*, the artwork is based on a collection of Republican prisoners' messages smuggled out of the H-Block prison in 1981.

Cllr Cooney tabled the motion at the monthly meeting of Athlone Town Council. He asked: "This council in congratulating Athlone Art Heritage Ltd's successful opening of the Luan Gallery and noting that art can be

provocative and controversial, requests that the exhibit entitled *Fragments sur les Institutions Républicaines IV* be removed as it is offensive to so many people."

Cllr Cooney acknowledged the fact that art is subjective but in this instance, he said that he objected to and still objects to the content of the art. He felt that all the families of those killed or maimed at that time in history would find this offensive and asked that it be removed.

The Town Council voted to refer Cllr Cooney's demand to the board of Athlone Art and Heritage and the board's decision was not to remove the artwork.

"While the board of Athlone Art and Heritage is aware of the range of views recently expressed and is satisfied that the current programme, entitled 'Borrowed Memories' and including the piece 'Fragments sur les Institutions

*Republicaines IV'* (by Shane Cullen) is within the strategy adopted for the Luan Gallery."

What is for sure is that this debate sparked local public interest and discussion in the arts and from many who may not normally visit a gallery or encounter art such as this– which some might even argue is the purpose of art at its finest.



Hughie O'Donoghue *Blue Crucifixion*, 1993–2003. Oil on linen canvas in 3 panels 330.2 X 823cm. Collection, Irish Museum of Modern Art. Gift, The American Ireland Fund, 2010

Pictured are Shane Cullen, Minister Jimmy Deenihan and Daphne Wright. Photo: McInnes.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

March – May programme is firmly grounded in the work of artists and projects from the midlands. The gallery plays host to two separate exhibitions by local and regional artists.

In residency in the Luan Gallery's New Gallery is **Engaged** a group exhibition comprised of work by artists who have completed residencies in the gallery's sister venue Abbey Road Artists' Studios, among them Laurence O'Neill, Lesley Wingfield and Margo McNulty.

Showing in the Library Gallery space is **A Very Grand Canal**, a multi-disciplinary group exhibition of artistic responses to the Grand Canal in Offaly and the River Gallery will see the next instalment of Shane Cullen's *'Fragments sur les Institutions Républicaines IV'* displayed.

Miriam Mulrennan, Manager of Athlone Art and Heritage said: "...the March – May programme components sit well together as the artists and the artworks are themselves all of – and from the midlands. This is a real celebration of place and practitioner, and we have a breadth of media in these shows which includes print, painting, sound-scape, sculpture, documentary and text all cohabiting across the three spaces."



Patrick Graham  
*Ark of Dreaming*, 1990  
Mixed Media on canvas, 180 x 346cm  
Collection, Irish Museum of Modern Art  
Purchase, 1991

# WovenRed



## A temporary art installation by Lorna Kincaid showcased at Luan Gallery

A temporary artworks existence is brief, *Woven: Red* was showcased during the opening show of Athlone's Luan Gallery. As an outdoor piece it is exposed to the elements and its lifespan is short. But an artwork can be so much more than the finished piece it lives on in the documentation and photographs that are evidence of its existence, proof it was once there.

*Woven: Red* is a site specific thread installation commissioned for the opening of the new gallery. The concept, by artist Lorna Kincaid who was guided by the theme *'Red Carpet'*, was motivated by the idea of revealing and concealing. This abstract composition invades the space and alters the everyday experience of this public walkway. As you walk under the geometric hood its linear patterns creates web like angles. Through these angles the building, its vista and

skyline are slashed, segmented and framed. This interactive public art piece can be viewed from several vantage points – from across the river, from the bridge, from the river gallery, from the boardwalk – it can be walked under, looked down upon and peered through.

*Woven:Red* also lives on in the memories of those who came, saw, and experienced the artwork. As an outdoor piece it became part of the landscape of Athlone, people going about their daily routines such as walking the dog or going for a jog. The piece has a local resonance being situated across the river from the site of the old Athlone Woollen Mills which burnt down in 1940 and installed in the former workers hall. This giant loom with its fiery red colour pays homage to the history of its location.

Lorna; a local artist from Ballymore, Westmeath creates sculptures and installations with a focus on participation and social engagement. Lorna wanted the creation of this art work to be a social experience so she enlisted the help of artists from the *Making Space Collective* who are based in Athlone. The process of collaboration, teamwork and sharing as well as the conversations and arguments all contributed to making this artwork a social sculpture.

M



Éadaoin Fleming amongst Daphne Wright's  
*Where do Broken Hearts Go*, 2000  
Photo by McInnes





# PAUL GUERNEY

## AN ICON OF THE MIDLANDS MUSIC SCENE

### SPEAKS WITH THOMAS LYONS

**Creating music and facilitating the creation of music for over 30 years, Paul Gurney is an icon of the Midlands' music scene. This multi-talented performer, producer and teacher has had chart success, played with some of the top names in the Irish music scene and his work as a producer is much sought after.**


Starting out in the early 1980s there was less opportunities to make a career out of music, but Paul was pretty single minded about what he wanted to do: "I came from a background in electronics and, being a musician as well, this path seemed like a natural way to go. I had my heart set on having a studio from a very young age. I remember being up in Dublin once or twice and going past Windmill Lane and sneaking a look in to see what is going on. It was rare to get a look, so you can imagine the dream of owning my own studio was also rare."

Starting out back in the analogue era things were very different. The technological advancements of the last 20 years have meant that the cost of creating music has come down: "I remember a few of us putting our

money together to get our first studio. With a lot of money back then all you got was a mixing desk and a multi-track. For the same amount of money now you would buy an awful lot of equipment."

Those changes in technology have changed the landscape of music. Coping with those changes is part and parcel of staying viable: "The changes make things less difficult. Most of my job now involves mixing stuff that people recorded in their own bedroom. I have dedicated rooms, for example a live drum room. This provides tools that home recording can't. The technology makes the job a lot easier. When we were doing edits years ago you literally had to take a razor out and splice a tape and if you got it wrong there was no undo button."

A lifetime in music, be it as a session musician or with Rig The Jig, has given Paul many memories: "I suppose doing the Eurovision in 1997 was the highlight that immediately comes to mind. I have also worked with some fabulous people. Being so blessed as to work with the cream of the cream of Irish music. Donal Lunny, Sharon Shannon, Charlie McGettigan and Matt Molloy, I really have worked with some incredible musicians. We've had songs up at number two in the charts. We are still writing songs and using the studio as a creative tool."

With such an impressive past behind him Paul intends to use it in the future: "Right now I am teaching music more than anything else. I will also be handing down the studio knowledge that I have amassed over the last 30 years. For young people with all this technology at their disposal it's one thing having the tools to record a hundred tracks it is another to know what to do with them." 

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN IRISH MIDLANDS CONCERT ORCHESTRA?

**IMCO was founded in 2010 by Vincent Hunt (cellist, teacher, and director of many orchestras in the midland region), who also conducts the group and is assisted by Assistant Conductor John Kenny.**

The members of the IMCO are primarily college and post-college students, semi - and professional musicians, teachers, capable amateurs and retired musicians. The age range varies as well as playing ability with music set for a Grade 5 standard and above.


IMCO members come from all over the midland region such as Portlaoine, Portlaoise, Stradbally, Birr, Mullingar, Dublin and Carlow. There are currently 25 members and they are open to recruiting new members of any part of the orchestra, especially string players.

IMCO has the whole range of instruments; with a very strong wind and brass section.

IMCO works through a varied repertoire of music, from classical orchestral pieces to Irish ballads and airs to modern music from films and musicals. Besides having all of the members play orchestral music as a whole ensemble, they also split the group and perform music specific to the wind instruments and music specific to the string section. Currently the group is working on music from composers such as Correlli, Dvorak, and Offenbach.

IMCO meets twice a month on a Sunday from 10am-1pm Mullingar Arts Centre, Mullingar and are currently working on scheduling a concert for some time in May.

Trip to Tallin: Last year IMCO travelled to Tallin in Estonia to participate in the European Orchestral Festival.

For the future IMCO hope to once again take part in the European Orchestral Festival in 2015 and as it is set for Ireland to be the host of this Festival, IMCO's aim is to have their orchestra be one of the highlighted performances and ensembles of the event. 

**For further information or if you are interested in joining the group check out the Irish Midlands Concert Orchestra on Facebook or contact Kimberly Melia on 0863751604.**

# festivals 2013

LONGFORD

## Artists **LOVE** Longford new festival to show pride in the community

The idea of a community arts festival is hardly either new or very innovative however, Longford artists intend to develop an arts festival this summer from a very important and original stand point.

Longford artists will organise a festival in June to showcase their talents and highlight just how many talented people there are in the community. Most importantly they aim to demonstrate the crucial role the arts can play, in the developing of community pride and community cohesion and essentially show how people can be proud of their home town through the work of their local artists.

### ARTISTS LOVE LONGFORD

Artists Love Longford is one element of a much wider programme entitled **Love Longford** whereby people from every walk of life, every strata of society and every ethnic background will come together to pool their talents and to share their interests with one single purpose in mind – to show pride in their community.

While the precise programme of events are still evolving a series of five solo and group art exhibitions have been scheduled by professional artists and amateur art groups in improvised spaces in vacant commercial units on the town's busy streets. Art students in the secondary schools will create large scale temporary public art features on a theme of Love Longford.

Lens-based artists will organise similar photography exhibitions small scale night-time projections in shop windows, large-scale night-time projections on the facades of buildings and, as yet, a highly secret community film based project.

### WRITERS LOVE LONGFORD

Writers in Longford will use their talents in a variety of ways; poets and prose writers will write imaginary pieces inspired by their home town.

Submissions will be printed in *The Longford Leader* each week and a prize for the winning poem, prose or reminiscence piece will be presented at a literary night during the festival. All the contributors will be video recorded reading their work and the readings will be uploaded to Longford's literary website [www.virtualwriter.net](http://www.virtualwriter.net)

When a requisite number of submissions of sufficient quality have been received they will be collected and published in a professionally edited anthology of creative writing entitled, *The Town I Love So Well*, if that title hasn't already been used for something else!! This publication will be either annual or bi-annual and will be published in partnership with *The Longford Leader*.

### MUSICIANS LOVE LONGFORD

Musicians Love Longford and they will be showing just how much – in a series of small intimate performances in venues throughout the town and also in a number of large scale events such as the *Biggest Choir Ever in the Midlands* which will perform in the Market Square on the Sunday of the festivals and a whole range of local musicians and bands will perform on the Parade Ground of Longford Army Barracks on a family day which ends the festival.

According to the original festival promoter Cllr Gerry Warnock:

*"We have always known that Longford is a creative town, everybody is either friends with, or related to somebody who has talent. There are whole generations of families that have been associated with all forms of art from drama to music to writers. In the past this might not necessarily been seen as a community asset, but is very much so today. We propose to tap into that local reservoir of creativity and talent to make Longford a better place to live."*

Echoing that sentiment Mayor of Longford town Cllr Peggy Nolan MCC also stated:

*"We now live in a creative society where employment follows the creative work-force. Where employers look first and foremost for imaginative, creative, talented employees and where a clean safe environment and a convivial lifestyle are important considerations when investors are considering locating industry in an area. We, the members of Longford Town and County Councils intend to use events such as The Love Longford Festival and to use such assets as our local creative community to improve the quality of life of the people of Longford and to improve the quality of the 'brand Longford' for the betterment of the entire community."* 

## LONGFORD CHILDRENS ARTS FEST



Longford's newest festival will take place in June following a very successful Aisling Children's Festival last year (pictured).

**WESTMEATH**

# What they said about Hilltown...



"Inner Self" (2012)  
Barbara Lüneburg, David Stalling, Anthony Kelly  
Composition for violin, vinyl record, video, lighting, objects.  
Hilltown New Music Festival, performance view

Hilltown Studio Theatre was established in 2005 with its flagship event, Hilltown New Music Festival now in its sixth year. Programme details of this year's music festival, which takes place on July 20 and 21 can be found at [www.hilltown.ie](http://www.hilltown.ie).

This year has seen many new developments at Hilltown – the appointment of Rory Cawkhill as Joint Artistic Director; two new intensive theatre and film training courses and the enhancement of facilities at Hilltown including the creation of new workshop spaces.

In addition, other art/craft groups being invited to apply to use the venue, either to organise their own events or to conduct their own training programmes with the hope that the venue will become a major contributor to arts/crafts events in the north Midlands.

**Q. If I was asked about Hilltown ...?**

**A.** If I were to be asked about Hilltown Festival then I'd like to be given the challenge of explaining how a small rural festival of experimental music can be important and enriching. The answer for me as a participant is quite easy to give: I felt immersed in an inspirational setting, empowered to work in a way that is not usually possible for me because of commitments and context and all the other complexities that prevent us from fulfilling ourselves, and I felt in the company of always interesting, often brilliant people who enabled a fluid, collaborative and environmentally-aware approach to working with sound. To say why this is important

beyond my own experience is less easy, of course, but Hilltown represents a model of how things might happen, a coming together through which there is no ease of slipping into old routines. The venues are not conventional, the living is more or less communal and there is nowhere to run off and take care of some other business. Then it becomes more than music as a habit performed to familiar faces and in standard settings; the music, the soundworks, listening, the weather, eating, conversation, unexpected meetings and the spontaneity of events all conspire to create a more intense idea of how sound work that is demanding can be meaningful and spread its influence out into the world as a lived practice.

British writer and composer David Toop whose recorded output including solo and recent collaborative works is in the vein of experimental ambient. Well known as a journalist and music historiographer, David is the author of two widely hailed books, *Rap Attack* and *Ocean of Sound* as well as a contributing editor and columnist for UK experimental music magazine *The Wire*. He was a featured guest artist at Hilltown New Music festival in 2012 and the sound installation he developed for the festival can be viewed on site.

**Q. What is so special about Hilltown Studio Theatre?**

**A.** Hilltown Arts Centre is special in many ways. Firstly it is located in a very beautiful part of the country in the heart of Westmeath. The house and buildings are of great historical interest and contain beautiful spaces in which to work. Secondly, Hilltown has an easygoing atmosphere that masks a serious desire to create excellent work in co-operation with the local community.

I have found the location and space mixed with the attention to detail of the people at Hilltown to be a special combination. The Westmeath people I have worked with have also contributed to this feeling.

Paul Meade is a writer, director, actor and artistic director of *Gúna Nua* theatre. His work as a writer includes *Scenes From a Water Cooler*, *Skin Deep* (Stewart Parker Award 2004) and he directed the Award winning play *Little Gem*. Paul teaches classical text at *The Lir* (National Academy of Dramatic Art) and acting at *Inchicore VEC*.

**Q. What do I think of The Hilltown Festival?**

**A:** The Hilltown Festival is always a vibrant event. It is set in such an idyllic setting, with a wide variety of spaces and environments and it also occurs at the right time of year,

as its right in the middle of summer term. Performers, composers and artists from Ireland and abroad can come together to listen to new music, exchange ideas, see and hear many innovative installations where exciting visual and sound technologies can be experienced. I have always found it a great source of inspiration for my work, as it has become a festival where no barriers exist and new ideas can be explored. Its success is testament to the vision of Fionnuala Cawkill, joint artistic director of the Hilltown Studio Theatre and the festival curators, David Stalling and Anthony Kelly.

Grainne Mulvey is an internationally recognised contemporary composer and her music has been performed in many countries in Europe. Two of her works have been released on CD by Black Box Music. She is a member of Aosdana and currently teaches composition at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama.

**Q. Describe the Hilltown experience?**

**A.** The openness of the space and the garden in the middle of all different stages facilitate that people talk to each other. Members of the audience can immediately, directly and on a personal level react on the performances.

Often visitors approach the artists after their performances to inquire about the compositions, to share their own perception of it and to learn about the thoughts of the artist him- or herself. In my opinion this immediate personal encounter is one of the main attractions that the festival holds to many of the local visitors. The artist serves as exemplifier for art that is lived and experienced as something belonging to real life. The audience can build a personal relation with him or her. Thus they feel the artist's passion and authenticity on a very direct level, which facilitates their access to new music that otherwise, might not be there. And vice versa it allows the artist to get to know his/her audience in a direct way.

Barbara Luenburg from Germany has established herself with her performances of the violin and the viola as a major interpreter of classical and contemporary music. She has won various European violin competitions and is a founder member of Hamburg based ensemble *Intergales*. She has been a principal performer at Hilltown New Music festival since its establishment. **M**

**For further details about Hilltown email Rory at [rory97@gmail.com](mailto:rory97@gmail.com)**

*Images are by Doreen Kennedy.*

**LAOIS**

## Electric venue to host forestry and bio energy show

**This May Stradbally Hall Estate, the home of the famous Electric Picnic music festival will host The Irish Forestry, Woodland and Bio Energy Show 2013.**

The bi-annual event takes place on Friday, May 10 and Saturday, May 11 and will feature a wide range of forest and woodland machinery with all the ancillary activities that go with tree growing and harvesting. A large part of the machinery section will include chainsaw and fire log equipment with major international companies exhibiting.

**The show will also host the National Tree Climbing Championships. For further information contact: [info@ifwshow.ie](mailto:info@ifwshow.ie)**

*David Wilkinson, organiser of the National Forestry and Woodland Show, pictured here in Stradbally Hall Estate with members of TreeCare Ireland and Husqvarna Ireland, who will be hosting the National Tree Climbing championships at the event in May*



"FLATTIME/sounding>silencing>lightening>darkening" (2012)  
David Toop, Anthony Kelly, David Stalling.  
Drum, light, mechanical devices, nature shavings.  
Hilltown New Music Festival, installation view.

# A SHAKEFEST SHAKE UP

New Acts and Themes announced for Shakefest 2013

Eight years on, Shakefest grows from strength to strength and will be offering much more interactive activities and performances for all ages. Shakefest takes place once again at the beautiful Charleville Castle, starting at 12pm on Saturday, May 25th, with overnight camping available on the castle grounds.

A highlight of Shakefest is international guest instructor Mariel Sitka from Argentina, who will share her knowledge of Egyptian Oriental Dance with a complimentary workshop on finger cymbals. She will be conducting three other workshops on Tunisian, Nubian African and Classical Oriental dance for Irish students.

Also featuring is KHI (Knight Hospitaller Ireland) medieval re-enactors who will be treating audiences to Combat Re-enactments of the Crusaders Knight's Templar as well as providing authentic Medieval tents and full try-on armory and archery for all ages.

Shakefest will also provide an eclectic mix of family orientated workshops ranging from Poi, Irish Dance, African Dance, and Communal Drumming with Fuinneamh Bounce, Hula Hoop, and giant winged friends such as Dragonflies and Butterflies, a wing making workshop, Slam Poetry Tent, Juggling, Stilt walking a Samba parade, a Dance Competition with prizes up to €1,000 and much more entertainment. The above activities (plus more to be announced) are all on offer for kids and families between 12-6pm.

For those camping overnight, or who stay on, evening performances highlighted will be the Multicultural Hafila, followed by a daring Fire Show by The Red Embers and special guests Babylon's Inferno. To finish the evening in a cultural and energetic crescendo, Shakefest hosts Gypsy Kleizmer Band The Underscore Orkestra from the USA.

New to Shakefest this year will be the much-anticipated Gaelic Kilt League International Conference of which

Charleville Castle has been named as official headquarters. Dedicated enthusiasts of the Gaelic Kilt will, as part of The Gathering 2013, meet to discuss the future of the traditional kilt through workshops, activities and discussions. Members from across the globe are expected to attend and will include entertainment from kilt dancers from Scotland.

Tickets for Shakefest can be purchased at the gate or at [www.shakefest.net](http://www.shakefest.net) or [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com) and range from €10 general admission, €10 camping, €20 family day pass or only €15 for evening entertainment. Gates open at 12pm. All proceeds will be going towards Charleville Castle Restoration Fund.

**Shakefest is supported by Offaly Local Development Company, Offaly County Council, The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the European Commission.**



**SHAKEFEST**, A Celebration of Dance and Culture, was formed at Charleville Castle, Tullamore in 2006 with an eclectic mix of Middle Eastern, Cultural Dance and Artistic Workshops that ended with a multicultural evening of dance performances.



**Music lovers in the midlands have an opportunity to experience broad and eclectic musical repertoire this year in Tullamore in a new concert series called Café Music Nights.**

Co-curated by professional musicians Adele O'Dwyer and Dermot Dunne, they have brought together a collection of up to 10 artists per concert and created uniquely designed programmes which offers audiences the chance to hear all

# CAFÉ MUSIC NIGHTS

sorts of musical collaborations such as the hearty and well-established finery of the string quartet, exotic and sensual expressiveness of guitar, voice and accordion, intimate delicacy of solo soprano recorder and the earthy raw power of large ensemble partnerships!

The Cafe Music Nights Project will also support the creation of new music as well as provide a platform for recent commissioned works, which will be programmed comfortably alongside a richly endowed listing of 'greats' from the classical music repertoire. Adding spice to the classical bulk, Cafe Music Nights invites you to come and enjoy a little bit of the musically unexpected too - don't shy away from the electrifying performances of work which herald from the realms of jazz and world music!

The Café Music Nights Project has been created in response to the overwhelming public demand expressed following the success of the first Café Music Night in August 2012 where a sell out crowd of 120 were treated to performances by the ConTempo String Quartet and friends in a diverse and colourful programme of music designed to spark the interest and curiosity of a whole new audience.

Speaking of the programme, Adele

O'Dwyer said: "We are delighted that the Arts Council awarded us funding to build on the enthusiasm of last year. We would like to encourage all music lovers who would like to see this project grow into the future, to please offer your support, by attending the concerts and enjoying the music, by spreading the word to friends, colleagues and family, and by letting us know what you think about the events as they unfold. This concert series is your concert series - grasp it and hold on tightly!" **M**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, TO ORDER TICKETS OR TO REQUEST A BROCHURE:** [CafeMusicNights@gmail.com](mailto:CafeMusicNights@gmail.com)  
Single Tickets €15 purchase in advance or on the door.

**SPECIAL OFFERS**  
'Circle of Friends' (6 tickets for the price of 5) or 'Full Series' Ticket €60 or 'Mini Series' Ticket €40. All events in the Tullamore Rugby Club

## COMING UP MAY 9

**Dreams, Prayers and Arguments in the Dáil**  
A feast of curious combination await those who dare to attend

**Artists:** ConTempo String Quartet Bogdan Sofei violin • Ingrid Nicola violin Andreea Banciu viola • Adrian Mantu cello Paul Roe clarinet • Nuala Hayes actor Alex Petcu percussion • Dermot Dunne accordion • Adele O'Dwyer cello

## AUGUST 22

**Different Trains and a Bird Fancier's Delight**  
Spanning the centuries from Modernism to the Middle Ages, come take a walk through an extraordinary palette of musical colours

**Artists:** ConTempo String Quartet Bogdan Sofei violin • Ingrid Nicola violin Andreea Banciu viola • Adrian Mantu cello Sean Carpio percussion • Helen Hassett soprano • Laoise O'Brien recorder Aoise O'Dwyer viola • Siún Milne violin Adele O'Dwyer cello • Dermot Dunne accordion

## OCTOBER 3

**Razoumovsky to Transfigure the Night**  
A journey of contrast visiting the treasures of Mozart, Beethoven, Schoenberg and O'Carolan with short excursions to delights yet unknown!

**Artists:** ConTempo String Quartet Bogdan Sofei violin • Ingrid Nicola violin Andreea Banciu viola • Adrian Mantu cello Anne-Marie O'Farrell harp • Ellen Cranitch, flute Dermot Dunne Accordion • Adele O'Dwyer cello

## DECEMBER 5

### A Fitting Finale

**Artists:** New Dublin Voices Chamber Choir Director: Bernie Sherlock • Yurodny Leader Nick Roth New Dublin Voices have placed in the top 10 best chamber choirs in the world by Intercultur 2012.

**BOX OFF:** More information can be found on the **Cafe Music Nights FACEBOOK** page, Tel: 087 6855050 and/or email: [CafeMusicNights@gmail.com](mailto:CafeMusicNights@gmail.com)



## HAVE A FLEADH-BULOUS TIME THIS YEAR IN OFFALY

Its Fleadh time in Offaly in 2013 as the county will host both the Offaly Fleadh and the provincial Leinster Fleadh Cheoil.

The Offaly Fleadh, run by Ballyboy Comhaltas under the leadership of Chairman Michael Buckley, will take place in the town of Kilcormac on the weekend of May 10 to 12.

The small town borders the picturesque village of Ballyboy and is located between Birr and Tullamore. Kilcormac has a proud tradition of hosting both county Fleadhs and Leinster Fleadhs in the past along and is home to some well renowned musicians, singers and dancers.

Competitions will be located in various venues throughout the town and include Scoil Mhuire, The Kilcormac Development Association (KDA) Hall and the new GAA centre. A shuttle bus will be provided for those who need to travel between venues speedily. There will also be a gig-rig located in the square in Kilcormac. Here local musicians and dancers (and possibly some not so local) will perform to entertain visitors. It promises to be a great weekend of craic and ceol! Big! ann!


### THE LEINSTER FLEADH CHEOIL

In addition to the Offaly Fleadh, the provincial Fleadh – The Leinster Fleadh Cheoil – is being held in Edenderry and is being run by the local Edenderry CCE branch under the stewardship of Chairman Tom Bourke.

Edenderry has become a real musical powerhouse in the local and provincial scene over the last number of years having hosted some of the most successful county Fleadhs in recent times along with being home to some household musical names and some real up and coming stars.

Having not rested on their laurels, following the successful county Fleadhs, Tom and his committee have gone from strength to strength and succeeded in landing the Leinster Fleadh for 2013 in Edenderry. They have a huge amount of preparation and planning completed already with a great number of events planned. There is great emphasis on this year's Leinster Fleadh as being a week long music festival. There are many concerts, gigs and performances taking place in the town in conjunction with all the competitions that the weekend will bring.

This will really be an action packed week and will provide great entertainment for all ages which takes place in Edenderry from July 6– 14.

For more information on these great events look at the [Offaly Comhaltas website](http://OffalyComhaltas.com) on [www.offalyfleadh.com](http://www.offalyfleadh.com). 

## OFFALY



# Celebrating over four decades and Gathering momentum

Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival will celebrate its 45th anniversary during August and is one of Offaly's flagship festivals for The Gathering 2012, along with Tullamore and Rhode.

The Festival is delighted to be participating in The Gathering 2013 and as part of its contribution has extended the length of this previous seven day occasion to an eight day experience to encompass all the events which will make up the all-inclusive Festival Programme, which promises a dynamic range of vintage and modern events for all ages.

Since the Festival began the arts have played a central role. This year's professionally curated Visual Arts Trail will deliver a high quality, engaging and thought provoking arts programme with up to 100 local and visiting artists showcasing work in all media.

Exhibitions will be located across the town in over 20 non-traditional spaces with plenty of artistic surprises in pop-up shops and studios occupying previously vacant spaces! Artist's talks, demonstrations, hands-on art and craft workshops by actors, filmmakers, dancers, musicians, performers and visual

artists for all ages will also feature.

This year's arts programme will include a performance from international German soprano, Kerstin Doelle accompanied by flautist, Karin Leitner; theatre performances, contemporary dance from Legitimate Bodies Dance Company and School of Rock gig.

One of the undoubted highlights of Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival is the spectacular parade which brings thousands of people onto the streets of the town to enjoy the displays from marching bands, vintage cars, tractors, bicycles and

# BEALTAINÉ THROUGHOUT

## OFFALY BEALTAINÉ 2013

The tenth anniversary of Bealtaine in Offaly celebrates 1963 when the Beatles and JFK came to Ireland

All of Offaly's active, free-thinking, young at heart over 55's are invited to make the 2013 Bealtaine Festival the most memorable one yet.

Organised by the Arts and Library Services



of Offaly County Council, Birr Theatre and Arts Centre and active retirement groups around the county, the 2013 festival is focusing on the year 1963 - the year that US President John F Kennedy paid a three day visit to Ireland; the year The Beatles arrived in Dublin to perform a show and the year Brendan Bowyer and the Royal Showband became the first showband to reach number one in the singles chart with Kiss me Quick.

Bealtaine is a national festival which celebrates creativity in older age, and it has been developed by Age and Opportunity since 1995.

While the national theme this year is Grow Happy – a call to celebrate growth, spring and positivity for ourselves and our

communities, Offaly Arts Officer, Sinead O'Reilly explains why in Offaly, this is being expanded upon: "Last year we undertook an evaluation of Bealtaine in Offaly, knowing that we were coming up to our tenth year and we realised that we needed to take a fresh look."

She explained that a core focus was getting more people involved. "The festival has great participation among active retirement groups and care centres, but beyond that, many people over 55 are not connecting with the festival. When we looked at the demographics of the county, we realised that only eight per cent of those over 55 are involved in a retirement groups while the majority of people over 55 who are working and active don't consider that they are in older age!"



# festivals 2013



thegatheringireland.com

## The Gathering - Ireland's open arms for 2013

Throughout 2013, Ireland is opening its arms to hundreds of thousands of friends and family from all over the world – calling them home to gatherings in villages, towns and cities.

Communities throughout Ireland are showcasing and sharing the very best of Irish culture, tradition, business, sport, fighting spirit and the uniquely Irish sense of fun.

Over 70 million people worldwide claim Irish ancestry. The Gathering Ireland 2013 provides the perfect excuse to reach out to those who have moved away, their relatives, friends and descendants, and invite them home. The Gathering is the people's party. It kicked off in spectacular style at the New Year's Eve Festival in Dublin and is being celebrated through gatherings of the people and Ireland's major festivals during 2013.

For further information and to be part of it visit [www.thegatheringireland.com](http://www.thegatheringireland.com)



machinery along with community floats, equestrian entries and some of Irelands' finest street theatre companies who will also entertain the crowds after the Parade, and add to the festive atmosphere.

Approximately 100 more events will take place throughout the Festival including the Ormond Flying Club's display of aircraft and entertainment at their Spectacular Air Show, the Artisan and Craft Market with its large range of stalls and fantastic variety of sights and aromas and the Festival Mass celebrating the community's activities during the week with choirs of the parish and instrumental music, to mention only a few of the vast events planned.

With annual favorites, new events, vintage flavour and modern entertainment the forty-fifth Annual Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival will be an exciting and vibrant week celebrating Birr's remarkable heritage and culture, inspiring participation and enjoyment in everyone who makes the effort to come out and sample the events. **M**

### BECOME A VOLUNTEER!

The importance of sponsorship, organisation and manpower has greatly increased in recent years with local support and participation the key to the success of this festival. The organising committee is very grateful to all the funders and sponsors who recognise the enormous positive impact of the festival on the towns' commerce and community development and who support the events so generously. Festival patrons are encouraged to acknowledge their generosity and to support those who support the festival!

The Organising Committee constantly welcomes new members and ideas for this Festival so for anyone interested in becoming involved please contact us through our Facebook page, Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival. The festival will run from Friday August 2 to Saturday August 10, 2013.

## LIVE MUSIC FOR FREE AT NATIONAL MUSIC DAY

National Music Day gives people a chance to hear quality live music throughout Ireland and Offaly for free.

Free live music events will be heard in usual and some unusual public places across Offaly as well as scheduled gigs.

Last year audiences in Offaly were treated to jazz in a shop in Birr (Miles O'Bog); a big band in the lobby of Tullamore Hospital (Tullamore Town Band); a chorus at the checkout in Dunnes Stores (Tullamore Concert Choir) and a bagful of bagpipes at Edenderry Town hall (St Cholmchilles Pipe Band) as well of lots of singer songwriter and traditional music events throughout the county

This year National Music Day takes place on Friday, June 21 with the hope of bringing music to more towns in Offaly - so keep an eye in June look for more information on FREE Live Music Events. Also check out [www.offaly.ie/arts](http://www.offaly.ie/arts) or log on to the Offaly Arts Facebook page and/or [www.lovelivemusic.ie](http://www.lovelivemusic.ie) for national events.

**If you are a musician in Offaly and would like to become involved give Offaly Arts Office a call on 057 93 57400 or e-mail [arts@offalycoco.ie](mailto:arts@offalycoco.ie). **M****



## THE MIDLANDS

When asked why the county had decided to theme the event around 1963, she added: "In 1963 (50 years ago) important social and political milestones were achieved, which needless to say impacted on cultural development, nationally and internationally - Martin Luther King delivered his 'I have a dream' speech to over 250,000 people in Washington DC and Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space. It is hoped that looking back at this era will inspire people to explore how far we have come culturally and socially."

Whether you are part of a group or an individual, Offaly County Council wants to hear your ideas and what would make you want to go out and be more involved in the Offaly Bealtaine Festival.

For more information call Offaly County Council Arts Office on 057 93 57400 or see [www.offaly.ie/arts](http://www.offaly.ie/arts) for more information. **M**

## Have your event included in Laois Bealtaine 2013

**LAST year well over 3000 people took part in all kinds of arts activities in county Laois from an intergenerational dance project with young and older people participating together to exhibitions, concerts, writing workshops, theatre performances, and film screenings in venues and centres countywide.**

Confirmed events for 2013 include an exhibition of paintings by the Heath Ladies

Arts Group in Áras an Chontae opening on Thursday May 9.

Also scheduled is an inter-generational dance and writing projects with the 50 plus active retirement association.

Performances by The Carnation Theatre Company and the Laois Federation ICA choir for residents and out patients in St Vincent's Hospital, Mountmellick and in Abbeyleix District Hospital are also programmed.

In addition, the Dunamase Arts Centre's programme will include a packed programme of events including film screenings, dance workshops and talks.

The Arts Office, Laois County Council will publish a comprehensive brochure that will include all events happening in the county in May. If you would wish to have your event listed in the 2013 brochure please contact 057 8664025 or email [artsoff@laiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laiscoco.ie). **M**

# A look at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre as it celebrates 125 years

Nestled in the tree-lined Oxmantown Mall, Birr Theatre & Arts Centre is a dedicated purpose built theatre, which dates from 1888. It is one of the oldest theatres in Ireland; pre dating the Abbey (1899) and the Gate (1928), with the Gaiety being the oldest, still functioning theatre in Ireland (1871).

Originally known as Oxmantown Hall, a cultural landmark in Birr, the building was constructed as a purpose-built concert hall and theatre. The design was based on styles of architecture, which the Countess of Rosse had noted while in Germany.

The hall was constructed from local limestone and took eight months to erect. The building featured Elizabethan-style half-timbering on the façade with brick lining to the side windows, while the interior included tinted windows, hot water pipes for heating, four gasoliers hanging from the ceiling, painted spandrels, and decoration in terracotta and wedgewood blue. The hall was officially opened on January 15, 1889.

The King's County Chronicle reported:

"Oxmantown Hall, standing on the centre of the Mall of the same name peeps out from amongst and avenue of trees, facing north..." the report went on to describe the opening, saying: "By 8.15 the Hall was completely filled, jammed to the door: some 150 who had no tickets having forced the cash into the door-keepers' hands and themselves into the porch."

The hall quickly became a centre of activity in Birr, housing everything from dramatic productions to orchestral concerts and local dances. The Bowyer-Westwood Company, grandparents of Brendan Bowyer presented a week of opera in September 1928. With 30 first class artistes, chorus and orchestra, the people of Birr were treated to Maritana, Carmen, The Lily of Killarney, Il Trovatore and The Daughter of the Regiment - all for the sum of three shillings (15p) per night.

## 1930s

In 1934, the Oxmantown Hall was purchased from the Church of Ireland Board of Trustees by Mr John Murphy of Emmet Square, Birr, who ran, what was then, the old cinema in the town. For the next two decades the hall was to become a major centre of activity and entertainment within Birr town, both under John Murphy's ownership and under the ownership of his son, Mr Henry Murphy.

In 1934, Mr JI Fanning produced several plays there before his Birr Little Theatre was inaugurated in that same year and opened by the playwright TC Murray.

During the 1930's many bands, dramatic shows and traveling companies visited Birr, and all of these would have performed at the Oxmantown Hall. In general, such acts must have enjoyed visiting Birr, as the Oxmantown Hall was at that time one of the best-equipped halls in the country. The stage was large, the lighting good and there was little need for amplification as the acoustics in the hall were excellent. Most of the shows were seasonal, being performed mainly during the summer months. Many of the greatest names of Irish theatre appeared at the Oxmantown Hall, including Maureen Potter, Jimmy O'Dea and Anew McMasters.

## 1954

In 1954, the Oxmantown Hall underwent extensive renovation. The old stage was taken out and replaced by a smaller one, and a new maple floor which is still there today. However, the old bar and supper room - which had been located underneath the stage - was filled-in, and for many patrons this represented a loss for the hall.

## 1968

In 1968 the first of Birr Stage Guild's *Good Olde Days* variety shows was produced during Vintage Week. Subsequently, these shows became a regular feature of the annual festival and were always held at the Oxmantown Hall.

## 1975

Although Birr Stage Guild, founded in 1958, staged most of its productions in the Marian Hall during these years, one notable exception was its 1975 production

## 1990s

In 1992, minor restoration of the hall was undertaken in order to house the temporary *Birr Museum of Childhood and Social History*. Renewed interest prompted Offaly County Council, Birr Town Council and a small group of interested locals to purchase the hall under the 'umbrella' of Birr Scientific and Heritage Foundation.

In 1994 Birr Stage Guild secured a lease on the building and was established as a limited company. A grant was approved in 1996 for the re-development of the hall from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaelteacht and the Islands. Funding also came from LEADER and the Arts Council.

Restoration work began in 1997 and included a new roof, dry-lining for the walls, and retractable tiered seating to a capacity of 220. In addition, the dressing rooms were relocated to the rear of the building. The main frieze was restored, a sophisticated lighting and sound system was installed, and the original gas lamps in front of the building were renovated.

## 2000s


Since opening the doors to the public in July 2000 and renamed as Birr Theatre & Arts Centre the building has played host to many theatrical, music, dance and classical events and more. In those earlier years, Birr Stage Guild played a huge role in the financing of the centre

with proceeds of their annual productions going to pay off the renovation debt. In early 2008, Offaly County Council cleared the outstanding amount of €30,000 allowing the Centre to concentrate on its development of the arts in the town and surrounding region.

The venue has succeeded in attracting acts such as Dixieland clarinetist Acker Bilk, Dubliners legend Ronnie Drew; Bond girl, Honor Blackman; musicians Andrew Lloyd Webber, Rodrigo y Gabriela, Jack L, Duke Special and many more. The many celebrity visitors to the Theatre have included Hollywood actors Holly Hunter and Aidan Quinn.

Legitimate Bodies Dance Company, led by artistic duo Nick Bryson and Cristina Goletti, was established as resident dance company at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre in 2007. In a very short time they have been seen on the international stage having performed in Mexico, Cypress, Vienna, Italy, New York and Brussels (Parliament Buildings), Northern Ireland and the UK, all while flying the faithful flag for Birr and Offaly.

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre was officially opened by President of Ireland, Mary McAleese on June 29, 2004. Employing eight people and with over 135,000 patrons through the doors to date, Birr Theatre & Arts Centre is going from strength to strength. The Centre greatly acknowledges the voluntary input from the Board of Management, Front of House staff and ushers who contribute significantly to its success.

This summer, Birr Theatre and Arts Centre will celebrate its 50th programme of events, so please keep an eye on the programme by visiting [www.birrtheatre.com](http://www.birrtheatre.com) or following them on Facebook. 

Sources: *A Brief History of Birr* by Oisín Deery; *Birr Theatre & Arts Centre Archives*.





# BRENDAN COLLUM BOG OAK SCULPTOR speaks with Thomas Lyons

The wood itself is extremely hard. It has to be dried for a few years before it can be worked on. Like wine you have to mature the wood, otherwise it will crack.

Brendan Collum Bog Oak Sculptor speaks with Thomas Lyons

The artistic works of Brendan Collum are so popular that they have been brought all over the world and grace the homes of many famous names. Thousands of years in the making his pieces represent a link between the artistry of the earth and the guiding hand of the craftsman who creates them.

Using fire, water and wood Brendan creates unique pieces of art that are much sought after. Over the last three decades Brendan has developed his art and his business: "I am over 30 years working with Bog Oak. When I first started it was mostly souvenirs. Items with Irish emblems like harps, Celtic crosses and shamrocks. I started turning different woods at first and the items that were the most popular were those done in Bog Oak."


Brendan's passion for his craft is evident when he speaks about what he does: "I was fascinated with wood turning right from the start. When I started turning pieces of Bog Oak, which is readily available around my area, I was selling it to craft shops.

*As things progressed I realised that people wanted more artistic pieces."*

The self-taught artist has been experimenting and researching with Bog Oak over the years: "It is difficult to work with. The wood itself is extremely hard. It has to be dried for a few years before it can be worked on. Like wine you have to mature the wood, otherwise it will crack. It is hard on tools and it is hard to work on, but it takes a lovely finish."

Over the years his eye for design and the process has changed and developed. Brendan has a great love for the artistic sculpture of the natural roots that suggest the shape of the piece. "It is a pleasure to work on it. I really enjoy it," Brendan explained. "There is a mystery as to what shapes will emerge as I work on the wood, I can get a root and it will be covered clay and fibres before I start. I work with fire and water as well as the wood. Sometimes I would get a big twisted root and initially it would be very unsightly, I would go over it with a gas torch and burn off the dead material, then I would power wash it and the shape would begin to emerge from it. I help the shape along"

The quality of the Drumlish craftsman is such that his work has been presented to many famous names down through the years. Mary McAleese, John Hume, Alex Ferguson and countless sports personalities and community activists have been awarded his work.

**If you would like to know more about Brendan's work visit his website at [www.bogoakart.ie](http://www.bogoakart.ie). **

# Unearthing a local textile tale from the Famine era

by Mary O'Connor, Edenderry

Local cultural traditions, particularly those unique to the Midland's are easily lost in an age of modernity and new technology and through the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine we are delighted to provide a platform to safeguard their stories.

The stitch known as the Offaly Famine Stitch (pictures) was taught to my late mother by the late Mrs Nan O'Sullivan of JKL Street, Edenderry. She was well known being the sister of the onetime parish priest of Edenderry, Fr John Killian who hailed from Rhode, where their parents were primary school teachers.


My mother met Nan when both were patients in the local Cottage Hospital around 1956. Mrs O'Sullivan was also known as an accomplished pianist and gave music lessons in her home.

## ORIGINATION

This stitch originated in an Ireland reeling from the effects of the Famine. In this predominantly agrarian post-Famine society, the agricultural community, particularly farmers wives were motivated by thrift and the "waste-not-want-not" motto was practised with great regularity in everyday life.

The women used worn hessian sacks, which were manufactured locally in Clara and were used by the farmers to hold produce, such as potatoes and vegetables oftentimes loaded on to their pony and carts to sell to the local grocer or were bartered for sacks of flour, tea and sugar.

The women also used remnants of wool which were left over from hand knitting jumpers and socks and caps for their families.

They cut the sacks into suitable shapes and made cushion covers, table centres and covers for the cradle and decorated them using the coloured wool remnants. The bright colours were attractive addition in the white-washed kitchen and the cushion covers in particular were a welcome addition to the hard seat of the settle bed and the hand carved wooden chairs. 



# Face-to-face

Brieger Madden goes Face to Face with Music Generation Laois' Rosa Flannery to find out what the Donegal native thinks about living in the midlands and what it was like meeting U2 legend The Edge!



## Rosa tell us... what is Music Generation?

Music Generation is Ireland's National Music Education programme. It helps children and young people access music education in their own locality. 6 Music Generation projects are now up and running in the Country, Louth, Mayo, Sligo, Wicklow, Cork City and Laois. In Laois, Music Generation provides performance music tuition in a range of contexts – primary and post primary schools, Local Tuition Centres, Youth Clubs and After School Clubs.

## Can you tell me a little about your role as Co-ordinator, Music Generation Laois?

This is a new project, which commenced in April 2012, with eight programme strands; Harp, Brass, Uilleann Pipes, Choral/Singing, an Orchestral programme, a School of Rock, The Music Box – a programme for children and young people with special needs and Stampede Drumming – a world percussion programme.

My role is multi-faceted, recruiting Tutors, developing relationships with schools and other youth organisations in the county and establishing programmes with schools and youth organisations. Once a school or a youth organisation comes on board, Music Generation Laois supplies instruments and lessons – but the

work doesn't stop there. Creating performance outlets and ensembles for students to participate in is key, including commissioning new works that meet the needs of our ensembles.

## How important is the initiative?

Ireland has a wonderful culture of music-making, however, for children and young people there is huge disparity in who does and does not get to participate in music education and music-making. The current recession has heightened this disparity – Music Generation Laois seeks to reach out to children and young people in the county, offering subsidised music tuition in a variety of instruments in a range of genres. For example the Glee Clubs we are offering under the choral/singing programme have been hugely successful – there is great interest in popular music genres like Rock and Pop.

## You have a wealth of experience in arts administration and music education tell me about some of your previous positions.

I completed the MA in Arts Policy and Practice in NUI Galway, and went on to work in Galway Arts Festival and Tulca Festival of Visual Arts. I am no

stranger to the midlands – having worked with NOMAD Theatre Network which tours to various venues in the midlands. Prior to coming to Laois, I worked with the Donegal Music Education Partnership, co-ordinating a large-scale cross border community music project 'The North Wind Blows.'

## What's happening with Music Generation Laois at the moment?

We have six programmes up and running, with 24 schools and centres now participating in our programmes. Our Stampede Drummers performed for The Edge in Dublin in January which was a wonderful experience for those young musicians. We are in the process of setting up our School of Rock – there has been immense interest in the school to-date.

## What has been your stand out memories to date with Music Generation Laois?

Needless to say, the experience of meeting and performing for *The Edge* will go down in Music Generation Laois History! Our Open Evening in September 2012 was extremely exciting. I find that now, 10 months into the role, hearing how the original cohorts of students have progressed, drives me

on to continue the development and expansion of the project.

## Being from Donegal...how are you finding living/working in Laois? What are some of the best/worst things about being based in the Midlands?

I find the heavy fog very strange! But I love the quirkiness of the midlands... the figures of speech, the accents – and I find it hard to resist the fact that the midlands is such a central location.

## What would you say to any young person to encourage them to get involved in Music Generation?

Come, hear, see, try – there are so many instruments out there – try them! There are so many opportunities to sing – join the Choral Revolution! Meet new people and develop skills that you will carry with you for the rest of your life.

## What's next/your ultimate goal?

To organise a large-scale inclusive performance that brings together young musicians from the eight programme strands of Music Generation Laois.

**M**



Siofra Marum (Music Generation Laois) and The Edge

# An Audience with the Edge

The current recession has heightened this disparity – Music Generation Laois seeks to reach out to children and young people in the county, offering subsidised music tuition in a variety of instruments in a range of genres.

Music Generation Laois' Stampede Drummers travelled to the Department of Education and Skills in Dublin in January where the young group of musicians met with and performed for the legendary Edge from U2!

The performance took place at the inaugural Seminar for Music Education Partnerships, presented by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with Music Generation.

Under the direction of drummer Eddie O'Neill, the six young Stampede Drummers performed for an audience that also included Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn and Paul McGuinness, U2's well-known manager.

Co-ordinator of Music Generation Laois, Rosa Flannery, said: "This was a milestone event for Music Generation Laois! The Edge was so responsive and indeed energised by the Stampede Drummers performance, and chatted easily with the group before they took to the stage.

"It was so positive to see the young musicians receive recognition for their musical talents. Performance is central to playing an instrument and for these young musicians to travel to Dublin and perform for The Edge – well that really is a pinnacle moment," she enthused.

The group of performers, who range in age from 9 to 15, enjoyed significant national publicity on RTÉ News, RTÉ Radio and in the national press including The Irish Times, The Irish Independent, and The Irish Examiner.

At the seminar, the Department of Education and Skills, announced their commitment to fund the Music Generation initiative on a phased basis from July 2014.

In response to the announcement made by Ruairí Quinn TD, The Edge said: "We are absolutely delighted that the Department of Education and Skills has committed to the long-term funding of this brilliant Music Generation scheme. The response has been incredible with over 5,000 children and young people getting music lessons. It is a source of great pride for U2 that along with The Ireland Funds we were able to step in and keep it going after Government cut backs put it in jeopardy in 2009".

Between September and December 2012, over 21 schools and centres participated in Music Generation Laois programmes. The Music Box, Stampede Drumming, brass, harp, uilleann pipe and choral programmes are now firmly established, and further expansion is planned for 2013 including the commencement of a School of Rock and an Orchestral programme. Music Generation Laois continues to expand across Laois. [M](#)

**For further information, see [www.musicgenerationlaois.ie](http://www.musicgenerationlaois.ie) or call Music Generation Laois on 057 8674370**

In an exciting initiative aimed at bringing the arts, and specifically the written word in rhyming poetic form, closer to everyday life in the town, Tullamore Rhymers' Club has launched the first edition of its chapbook, *Under The Fading Lamp*.



Rhymers' Club members at the 'Readings From The Pallet' event in Banagher last year. Back row, left to right, Seamus Kirwan and Anthony Sullivan. Front row, left to right, Ken Hume and Thomas Carty.

# writings in rhyme

Written, funded and produced by the Rhymers' Club, the chapbook takes its title from lines in the Thomas Kinsella poem, *Mirror in February*, which reads: "Under the fading lamp, half dressed – my brain/Idling on some compulsive fantasy..."

Speaking on the subject of the title shortly before the launch, rhymers Thomas Carty explained: "As poets, we sometimes find that our minds are never fully turned off from the writing process. Even as we go about the business of our day to day lives, the wheels of rhyme are ever turning and often times it's in the midst of the very ordinary and necessary acts of living where life is actually glimpsed a little clearer, be it for the best or otherwise, and within those moments, poetry is born."

The poet continued explaining: "This is what happened with Kinsella while he was shaving. And of course, all writers have spent late nights and early mornings trying to build and craft

and chip away at the visions they're chasing, so there you have the obvious relevance of the lamp."

What the Rhymers' Club hopes to achieve with *Under the Fading Lamp* is quite simple, as revealed by Ken Hume: "What we want to do is provide people with an opportunity to read poetry from local writers on a more regular basis and in a relaxed, informal way such as when they visit the library or when they're enjoying a cup of coffee in somewhere like Chocolate Brown's [in Tullamore], for example.

"The books are free, so if anyone wishes to take a copy home with them they're more than welcome to do that. If not, the idea is that people will read as much as they want to and then when they're done, just leave it there where they found it, for whoever comes along next to hopefully enjoy, too!"

Another member of the Rhymers' Club, Séamus Kirwan, detailed the groups' plans for future editions of *Under the Fading Lamp*.

"At the moment anyway, we are looking to publish three editions this year. If each can have a lifespan of at least a week or two with a little bit of profile, plus whatever may come beyond that, then we feel we'll have achieved something in the way of making a contribution to the artistic life of the town during the year...How that contribution is viewed, of course, or the response we get, is not something we can think too much about because it's beyond our range of influence really. It will be what it will be."

"All we can do," said Séamus, "is put something out there and see what happens. But I think, in any artistic process, the very act of creation is the most important thing. Any issue of judgment, matters only very slightly in the overall context of events."

The first edition of *Under the Fading Lamp* was officially launched at a low-key, no fuss affair in Tullamore Library at the end of February. Willie Rimes, another poet in the Rhymers'

Club, revealed the groups' reasoning for this approach.

Tullamore Rhymers' Club are: Thomas Carty, Ken Hume, Willie Rimes, Seamus Kirwan, Jillian Britton-Batty, James Delaney, Cormac Lally and Anthony Sullivan. The club celebrated its first official anniversary last January. During that year, members have, amongst other things, published collections, been invited to meet President Higgins, taken part in the Tullamore Arts Festival and helped co-ordinate events to mark National Poetry Day. The Rhymers' hope 2013 is every bit as creatively busy, challenging, exciting and rewarding!

Tullamore Rhymers' Club wish to express their sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone who has supported their *Under The Fading Lamp* project, and in particular, to artist Chris Tyrrell for his fantastic cover illustration. Copies of *Under the Fading Lamp* can be obtained from any member of the club.



PUBLIC ACCESS ARTS  
Ealaíon do Chách



# Creating a daily encounter with the arts in Edenderry

Public Access Arts is Offaly's newest centre for the arts, based in JKL Street in Edenderry with the remit to promote how people encounter the arts in the town, and to encourage arts participation with a strong emphasis on community convergence.

Offering a broad-based programme of visual, performing and literary arts, being accessible and involving the community is its tune!

Public Access Arts is a non-profit organisation that supports the belief that community-based arts provide significant value both to communities and artists. The people behind the project come from a range of creative disciplines but all share a passion for year round and sustained access to culture in the town. The team include: Timothy Mann, a professional artist with a keen interest in community projects who is managing the project; Catherine Mann, an artist and arts educator; Niamh Fitzgerald, a musician and educator; Denis Baker, a graphic designer who runs his own business (Unlimited Design); Aidan Kelly, a journalist working for RTE and Newstalk; Eithne Mooney, a community activist and programme manager with a keen interest in the arts; Danna Davis, an actor and singer who has worked on Broadway and Sinéad O'Reilly, Arts Officer for Offaly County Council who has been advising and supporting the project.

Public Access Arts opened in November 2012 and its first project, entitled *The Crowded Room* invited people to come into the space and make outline drawings of one another onto large sheets of paper, effectively making a portrait of the community. The participants varied from school children, local Gardaí, bank staff, an MEP and many more. This was also documented using time lapse photography by local artist Veronica Nicholson and can be seen on You Tube by clicking on the following link, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGcVdB9yfNc> (or search for Crowded Room).

The project was facilitated by Timothy Mann, who explained: "We wanted to find a fun way to actively engage and encourage the local community to get involved and take ownership of this new creative space in Edenderry.

"It created a great buzz in the town and we had almost 2,000 figures drawn onto the piece. We followed this with an open Christmas show of work by local artists, giving local artists the opportunity to display and sell their artwork in a professional space. Keeping the programme fresh, innovative and varied is important for keeping audiences interested."

The first one-person show was by local abstract painter Louise O'Brien, whose large colourful canvases brought light to the dark December days. They challenged and intrigued the many visitors and expanded the appreciation of

painting in its many guises. They also acted as a useful educational aid, with art teachers in the local secondary schools bringing students in to see the work.

This was followed by *An Duanaire*, a fine art print exhibition by the artists of Leinster Printmaking Studio in Clane and their colleagues from many parts of Ireland (who together include members of the RHA and Aosdána). The theme of the exhibition was based on the anthology of Gaelic poetry from 1600 – 1900 called *An Duanaire* compiled by the Irish scholar Sean O'Tuama and translated into English by the poet Thomas Kinsella. This was a traveling print exhibition, which Public Access Arts were delighted to have hosted. The show also involved poetry readings from the secondary schools and the local community and included Brendan Cummins, a sean nós singer, who performed on the opening night.

But Public Access Arts is more than a gallery space, with theatre forming part of the programme at the Gables in Larkins. The play, *Dead Men Walking*, written by local writer Padraic Seery, was an opportunity for an audience to experience the same one act play performed twice but with a slightly different cast and different endings. This was followed by a critique with the Director Gay Veitch and writer Padraic Seery being interviewed by the playwright Eugene O'Brien. The audience participated enthusiastically in terms of questions and voicing their preferences.

The future is to build on what has already been accomplished in a few short months by engaging the community and collaborating different creative disciplines and by encouraging and nurturing different arts projects that will enrich the cultural life of Edenderry.

Speaking about how the project is being financed, Timothy said: "So far the project has been run on a shoe string, with a lot of voluntary hours put in. Going forward, funding will be a challenge but to be viable we aim to think like a business, and encourage the role of patrons, supporters, sponsors, enthusiasts and volunteers to ensure it can continue and to go from strength to strength. Without art we only exist!"

For more information on Public Access Arts, follow its page on Facebook or email [publicaccessarts@gmail.com](mailto:publicaccessarts@gmail.com) or contact 086 606 5487

An unexpected marriage of art and golf has produced a hole in one for Mullingar's **Lucy Tormey**, as the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine's **Briege Madden** discovers.



# Lucy Tormey



Mexican Dreams

**Following a chat about our travels over breakfast, I soon uncover how playing golf for Ireland as a young child has led Lucy on an unexpected journey... to Bethlehem!**

In 2009 the visual artist went to a major sporting event to rekindle her love of golf, which has created a very successful and somewhat accidental merger between her craft and the sport that can still bring her out in a cold sweat.

And begging the question of whether art imitates life or life imitates art, I find out that the burning question doesn't really matter. According to Lucy: "It's totally intertwined and inseparable."

Lucy explained that she was painting around Westmeath and working on themes of instinct and memory, for a number of years, before hitting on the idea of mingling both art and golf.

"I am a painter and what I produce is fairly expressionist in a way. I love colour. Someone once described my work as 'Mullingar meets Mexico' and that described it well. I love to take an ordinary place and absolutely blast it with colour.

"It is an unusual marriage [art and golf] because the two don't really go together and I had a lot of shame about it too," laughed Lucy.

"I played golf when I was a kid and I played for Ireland but when I went to college in Galway, I was so ashamed

of it. Back in 1985, you just didn't tell people in Art College that you played golf. It didn't work together, so I stopped playing and went off into my new life. I learned to paint and draw and forgot all about golf."

Years later, Lucy started playing golf again and began thinking that maybe there was something she could do with golf artistically and decided in 2009 to go to two golf tournaments.

"The local golf club commissioned one of my paintings as a gift for the bishop and I used the funds from the sale of that painting to go to Bethlehem, near Philadelphia, for the Ladies US Open Golf Tournament."

She then made work based on her experiences from the tournaments and following the same process as her landscape paintings Lucy came back with her strongest memories and then made them in the studio.

When Lucy finished her paintings she sent them to someone she knew who was managing a major golfing event coming to Ireland later that year and "it has just opened a million doors," ever since. She jokes: "Obviously I still harbour some anxiety about golf...but I'm really grateful for it.

"I truly believe that if you are following your path in life, if it feels right, if it seems right doing it and with good intentions then things

"I am a painter and what I produce is fairly expressionist in a way. I love colour. Someone once described my work as 'Mullingar meets Mexico' and that describes it well. I love to take an ordinary place and absolutely blast it with colour."

will happen...My plan has always been to make a living from the arts somehow and I am managing to do it in a nice way at the moment. I am excited and really enjoying the people I am meeting and the fact that I am making paintings regularly."

The former Loreto College student, who has also worked as an art facilitator at Mullingar Resource Centre, a training centre for adults with intellectual difficulties, for the last 10 years explained the importance of making art accessible to all.

"I just think that art is an essential part of everybody's life and is especially important where I work. Everybody should be able to or





Lucy with the Curtis Cup Team 2012

have the opportunity to express themselves, their true self," she said.

The eldest of four explained that delving into a career in the arts was fully supported by her parents and that there was even a kitchen wall dedicated to her and her siblings' doodles.

"My parents [Sylvia and Simon] were very supportive when we were kids. I am lucky to have very free thinking parents and they never stopped me from doing anything."

The artist whose heroes include golf legend Suzann Pettersen, her folks and now her sister's kids told the *Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine* that as well as art being "central" and "part of us all," it is "vital" socially as well.

Commenting on the recent controversy to have artist Shane Cullen's piece removed at the Luan Gallery in Athlone, she said: "Everybody has the right to an opinion but you have to accept that something is one person's creation and not take things too personally around it. The most important thing that a society needs is to have people within that society that shed light on things from a different viewpoint or a different angle. You might not like it and you might not agree with it but it is such an important thing for us all to have in our lives and to have in our society."

When asked about her best memories from 2012 Lucy said that being the featured artist at The Curtis Cup, Nairn, Scotland, was a lovely experience and a standout memory to date.

Lucy who is a big fan of Frida Khalo, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Edvard Munch and the "sublime", yet undiscovered, Christine Foard, told the *Midlands Arts and Culture*

*Magazine* that it is actually the artists at Mullingar Resource Centre that have influenced her most.

"They make art without questioning or with the need for someone to say it's good...they make art in such a natural, true and pure way, to me those guys are just incredible artists."

After spending most of January clearing away the cutter, Lucy explained: "I am in a phrase right now where I just want to reset.

"I have quite a bit of work on, which is great and I have a couple of plans just going quietly in the background, but I haven't got any shows booked yet. Ultimately my greatest wish for myself and in terms of my prayers is that I can survive on what I am doing. It doesn't really matter to me about acceptance, I just would like to make a living out of what I am doing."

M

## ABOUT LUCY...



### 2006

- Tyrone Gutherie Centre Residency.

### 2001 – PRESENT

- Arts facilitator at the Mullingar Resource Centre

### 2001

- Facilitator on ArtReach project, Longford

### 1999 – 2001

- Arts facilitator, Siol Resource Centre, Mullingar

### 1998/1999

- Member of the board of directors CAFÉ

### 1998

- Artist in residence, Westmeath Community Development

### 1997/1998

- Participant on first accredited training for community arts trainers, The Learning Wheel, CAFÉ.

### 1993 – 1998

- Facilitator with various Community Arts groups, VTOS, VEC, HSE, WCD.

### EDUCATION

- NUIM Adult education awards via the Learning Wheel
- City & Guilds in Graphic Design
- Painting and Printmaking, GMT
- Loreto College, Mullingar

### WORK IN PUBLIC & PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

- Westmeath Co. Co.
- Tullamore General Hospital

### PUBLICATIONS

- Frontline Magazine
- Visual Arts Ireland

### 2013

- Work on Ioan Windmill Lane Studios

### 2012

- Limitless Solo Show Inspirational Arts, Dublin
- Curtis Cup exhibition, Featured Artist at the Nairn Book & Arts Festival
- Event artist Curtis Cup, Nairn, Scotland

### 2011

- Event Artist Solheim Cup, Killeen Castle, Co. Meath

### 2010

- Exhibition of work at the Irish Ladies Open, Killeen Castle.

### 2008

- Instinct & Memory Solo show, Visual Arts Studio & Gallery

### 2007

- Collection of group shows involving Midlands based artists.
- Three Colours Love Solo show

### 2007 – 2008

- Proprietor of the Visual Arts Studio & Gallery, Mount St. Mullingar
- Hosted a series of exhibitions and activities.



All Square playing 9th (Curtis Cup 2012)

# The Midlands MOVEMENT WAVE

## AN ALTERNATIVE SPACE TO DANCE

THE Midlands MOVEMENT WAVE (MiMWave) is an initiative started by Nick Bryson of Legitimate Bodies Dance Company, which will commence in Birr Theatre & Arts Centre on the evening of May 3, 2013.

It is a response to an energy across the country and beyond, driven by a desire and a need to provide a more general open space for dancing than a designated space for 'contemporary dance', or other dance form. The aim is to allow for mindfulness in movement.

It is inspired by examples such as Funky Seomra in Dublin, Wicklow Dance Co-op and Galway Dance Project as well as European initiatives such as Lunch Beat. The hope is that the Midlands can become another meeting point, which can also provide a different type of space for dancing for all interested. There is huge benefit to authenticity and self-awareness through dance movement. In summary "ARRIVE, LIVE IN THE MOMENT, MOVE."

MiMWave is an alcohol-free open dance space (for ages 16 -100) lasting for around an hour and a half that does not intimidate by being too 'difficult'. It is not a performative space, rather it emphasises dance as an activity to find yourself, find the group and find social connections. The space is experiential rather than prescriptive and is first and foremost about participation, there is an exchange of frequency between the movers and is therefore a space for change. The event does not have a

goal of 'improving' the dancing of an individual but rather provides an opening for a shared group frequency.

The key ingredients of MiMWave are a welcoming space for self-expression through dancing and moving. A music mix that provides a wide variety of familiar music building and subsiding in rhythmic energy - 'The Wave'.

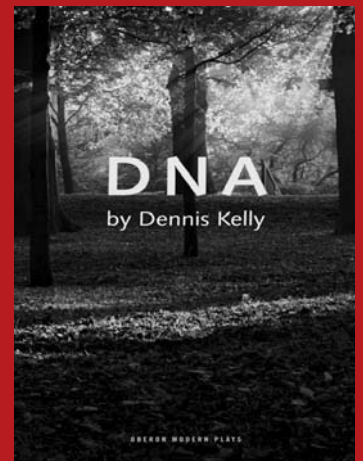
A facilitator who helps the space to happen and then merges into participation.

Payment that is by donation, in other words it comes from the heart if you thought the session has been of benefit to you.

**Stay in touch with MiMWave through Legitimate Bodies on Facebook or legitimatebodies@gmail.com**



Photograph by Connor Buckley"



# DNA

Stradbally Youth Theatre will perform DNA by Dennis Kelly in the Dunamais Arts Centre on Saturday May 4 at 3pm where they will join forces with the Arthouse Artist-In-Residence, Cólín Rush to welcome you to the murky realm of herd mentality, a realm where the menace of what is grimly termed "casual violence" is ever present.

A group of teenagers do something bad, really bad. A "bit of a laugh" at a school friend's expense rapidly descends into something a lot more sinister. When the inevitable happens, there is blind panic and an elaborate cover-up. Recrimination and finger-pointing among the perpetrators soon surface as the trauma begins to affect each of the characters.

They examine the question - could it ever be right to do something bad to one person for the sake of a lot of people?

For more information contact: Laois Arts Office on 057 8664025 or email: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie. Tickets €8 adults €5 for Youth Theatre Members and Students available from the Box Office Dunamais Arts Centre, 057 8663355 or online www.dunamais.ie.

Performance not suitable for under 12s.

# 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

Briege 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. Briege is also an avid poet, short story writer and artist.

For further information contact:  
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briege@tempusmedia.ie • 086 414 0906

## BROSNA PRESS

*Creative Design and Print*

Located in the heart of the midlands, Brosna Press has been providing a nationwide client-base with creative, high quality design and print for over 50 years. Its Irish Print Award acknowledges the company's commitment to the pursuit of excellence in print and creativity in design. Clients in the arts sector include: RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Music Network, Music for Galway, New Ross Piano Festival, County Council Arts Offices, Dunamase Theatre, Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, Tuair Ards Arts Centre. Brosna Press operate their design studio & print works from a state-of-the-art 12,000 sq ft facility in Ferbane, Co. Offaly.

### Creative Director: DIARMUID GUINAN

### Senior Designer: ANN QUINLAN

### Production Manager: CIARAN GUINAN

Creative Director Diarmuid Guinan holds a BDes, and has more than 18 years professional experience in graphic design and printing. He manages a highly creative and experienced design team including Andrew Moore, BDes, Senior Designer, Ann Quinlan, BDes, Senior Designer and the highly experienced Mary Egan. Managing Director Ciaran Guinan holds a Diploma in Print Management and has more than 25 years professional experience in the print industry. The production staff at Brosna Press are all highly skilled press operators and print finishing specialists.

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www.longfordcoco.ie/arts\_office.html



## 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).





# SPRING COURSES AT MCP

The Midland College of Photography, which is now in its sixth year, offers its own selection of courses. It also operates the Longford Schools Photography Programme involving six secondary schools, in Longford, and one in Westmeath as well as organising the Longford Schools Photographer of the Year Exhibition and Awards Ceremony.

The College has unveiled its latest course offerings for the Spring of 2013, which includes the ever-popular FETAC Level 5 **Digital Photography Course**, which is on-going and will not be accepting applications until September.

Other courses taking place are The Introduction to **Digital Photography for Beginners**, which is for anyone coming to photography for the first time and will cater for both compact and DSLR owners and will introduce beginners to subjects such as memory storage and filing and composition techniques.

The course will commence on Tuesday March 12, 7.30-9.30pm for seven weeks and **Improvers Photography** will commence on Wednesday 13 March, 7.30 - 9.30pm for seven weeks.

**An Introduction to Portrait/ Studio Photography** will commence on Saturday April 20, 10.00am-1.00pm for six weeks (double lecture on last week). This will involve an introductory examination of such subjects as: posing subjects, lighting techniques, framing, candid shots, photographer's position and choosing the right location; for the advanced post FETAC Level 5 photographers there is a course available in

**Advanced Digital Photography: Still Life** will commence Saturday April 13, 10am - 1pm for six weeks and finally there is the **Industrial Photography Course** (Post FETAC Level 5) which examines the cameras and materials necessary for photographing subjects for commercial reproduction aimed at intermediate level non-professional photographers who want to improve their knowledge of controlled lighting techniques commencing for 6 weeks on Saturday April 13, 2-5pm **M**

FURTHER DETAILS OF ALL OF THESE COURSES CAN BE FOUND ON [WWW.MIDLANDCOLLEGEOPHOTOGRAPHY.IE](http://WWW.MIDLANDCOLLEGEOPHOTOGRAPHY.IE)

## Laois Arts Awards and Opportunities

Organisations, individuals and groups from the county are invited by Laois County Council Arts Service to apply for the following awards and opportunities:

### ARTS ACT GRANTS 2013

Provision has been made by Laois County Council for the payment of grants to arts organisations and individuals who meet the artistic and financial criteria set down by Laois County Council and who provide adequate information on their proposed activities. Maximum amount payable will not exceed €1000.

### TYRONE GUTHRIE RESIDENCY BURSARY AWARDS 2013

A Bursary is available to enable a Laois artist to spend one week working at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan. The bursary is open to artists in all fields and is selected on previous achievements and project/s in hand.

In 2013 a special Bursary for Printmakers is available and will enable two print artists to spend a week sharing and working in

the new Print Studio at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre. One of the artists must be an experienced printmaker and preferably a member of a recognised print studio.

### ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS SCHEME 2013

Grants are available for artists' residencies in schools, to include all art forms. This scheme gives primary and post primary schools the opportunity to select and work with professional artists and explore new arts media.

**Details and application forms regarding the above schemes are available on request from: The Arts Office, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, County Laois.**

**Telephone: 057 867434**

**Email: [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie) or can be downloaded from the Website: [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie)**

**The deadline for receipt of project proposals is Tuesday 2nd April 2013.**



## MidlandsArts and Culture Magazine

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

