

Athlone Literary Festival

24-26 September 2010



Press Release

A Festival of Firsts

Athlone Literary Festival Friday 24th September to Sunday 26th September

Festival committee chairman, Jarlath Duffy says “This year is a festival of firsts for us, as we introduce new writers and new artists to Athlone, launch new books, bring events to schools and to the Passionfruit for the first time, run a comedy workshop and even launch a new literary cocktail. This eventful and ambitious line-up is so electrifying that it has reawakened the literary greats James Joyce, Maria Edgeworth, Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, Maud Gonne and even John Broderick himself who have already been spotted around Athlone. We wish to welcome all our fond friends and first-time festival goers to the 2010 event.”

Mr. Duffy continued, “We are absolutely delighted to have secured the unique Michael D. Higgins, politician, poet and prophet, who will be interviewed by Donncha O Connell. Michael D. has a formidable reputation in both politics and poetry,” added Jarlath, “and law lecturer Donncha O’Connell is determined to rise above the politics and explore what maketh the man.”

The chairman highlighted that “Michael D. is often a controversial man, who generates a strong reaction in people, you either love him or hate him, agree with him or disagree, but in the end everyone admires and recognises his momentous contribution to Irish life.”

“In honour of the event and to add to the literary inspiration of the assembly the committee have commissioned a complimentary cocktail, called “Willie Ryan”, in memory of John Broderick’s novel, *The Waking of Willie Ryan*” added Mr. Duffy.

This year the Athlone Literary Festival begins with the launch of an Art Exhibition “Loveliest of the Lawn” in Aidan Heavey Public Library, on Thursday 16th September. The literary festival committee welcome local artist Emer O’Connor for her first Athlone exhibition. All welcome. This is an exhibition of narrative art, based on the concept of “the garden in literature”. The inspiration for this series of drawings comes from a variety of literary works by authors including Margaret Atwood and Elizabeth Bowen. The title is taken from Oliver Goldsmith’s “Sweet Auburn”. The exhibition runs from 20th – 25th September

This year the festival weekend kick starts with *Memories into Memoir*” a day long workshop on Friday 24th September by author Irene Graham, back by popular demand. More and more people are writing their memoirs for their families and this is an ideal way to capture your family’s and personal memories and pass down your stories through the generations.

The festival committee is delighted to welcome from the UK renowned author Terence Frisby. Terry is a playwright, actor, director and producer. His most famous play, *There's A Girl In My Soup*, was London's longest-running comedy and a worldwide smash hit. The equally successful film starred Peter Sellers and Goldie Hawn. His latest book published in paperback earlier this year *Kisses On A Postcard* started life as an award-winning radio play, then a stage musical, which is currently being mounted for a West End production. Terry will read from this book in three local secondary schools and recount his first – hand experiences of being an evacuee during World War II. His true account will bring alive the English and History curricula for the students.

The committee worked closely with the Passionfruit Theatre this year and have scheduled two events in the theatre on the opening Friday evening. In the earlier part of the evening at 7.00pm people are welcome to the free reading of an extract from *'Johnnie's Britches'*, a comic play by P.G. O'Dea and a reading of a short story from *'Tell Me Sweet Little Lies'* by Dr. Joe Ducke. This will be followed by the official unveiling of a portrait of the late Joe Ducke, created by Ruth Ryan, daughter of P.G. O'Dea. Later the festival will bring you a late night comedy gig at 9.30pm, straight from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival Abie Philbin Bowman's new comedy show *"Sex, Lies and the KKK"*

The debate this year will be replaced by a very unique and dynamic forum chaired by military historian Dr. Harman Murtagh. Terence Frisby, Roisin Boyd, Col. Colm Doyle will share their personal stories of the effects of war on civilians. This forum has been given the title – *"Oh! what a glorious thing is War"*

Following an extremely popular slot last year, the writers and poets of the Midlands have two open mike sessions to read their own original works on the Saturday of the festival. All writers are very welcome to these events, just come along early and sign up to read.

Award-winning author Claire Keegan will run a seminar on Saturday morning. This is an opportunity for all writers – beginners to advanced – to spend a morning with widely acclaimed short story writer and experienced teacher of creative writing, Claire Keegan. This is followed by a comedy workshop, the launch of Desmond Egan's new poetry collection and on Sunday morning the festival will conclude with Athlone's Sunday Miscellany featuring five local published writers with music and singing.

Season ticket €90 and concessions €70 (includes attendance at two workshops of your choice)
To book email literaryathlone@gmail.com or ring 086 367 1039 or write to Athlone Literary Festival, NIB Building Northgate Street Athlone, Co Westmeath.

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