

Joseph Browne Spring School of Traditional Music 2009

C o n c e r t s

Thursday Night 19th February 9 pm (doors open 8 30pm) Lady Gregory Hotel,
Gort, Co. Galway.

**Cathal McConnell, Gerry O'Connor and Gilles Le Bigot
Manus McGuire, Maire O'Keeffe and Garry O'Briain**

Saturday Night 21st February 8 pm Crusheen Church Crusheen Co. Clare
World Premiere of '*An Indigo Sky*', a newly commissioned suite of music
composed by **Neil Martin** and *based on Joseph Browne's musical life*. It will be
performed by the **West Ocean String Quartet**.

Artists:

At 9pm on Thursday night, in the Lady Gregory Hotel, the first of two major concerts to be held during the weekend will take place. This promises an absolute feast of traditional music and song with some of the top names in traditional music including the legendary Fermanagh flute player Cathal McConnell. The theme of the concert is Island Fiddle Traditions and follows on from the 3rd Joseph Browne Memorial lecture titled '*Island Fiddle Traditions – the music of Ireland, Shetland, Cape Breton and beyond*' This will be given by **Dr. Liz Doherty** who will also play at the concert. The stunning line-up includes Cathal McConnell on flute, **Gerry O'Connor** on fiddle and guitarist **Gilles le Bigot** along with fiddle players **Liz Doherty**, **Manus McGuire** and **Maire O'Keeffe** with **Garry O'Briain** on guitar and mandocello.

The legendary flute player and singer, Cathal McConnell of 'Boys of the Lough' fame will perform in the opening concert of the Joseph Browne Spring School of Traditional Music in the Lady Gregory Hotel in Gort, Co. Galway on Thursday the 19th February. The concert promises a unique and very special opportunity to hear this most gifted and talented musician. Cathal will be joined on the night by virtuoso fiddle player from Dundalk, Gerry O'Connor, as well as innovative Breton guitarist Gilles Le Bigot. The concert will also feature 'Island Fiddle Traditions' Music from Ireland, Shetland, Cape Breton and Beyond' performed by fiddle players, Manus McGuire and Maire O'Keeffe, with Garry O'Briain on guitar and mandocello.

Cathal McConnell, Gerry O'Connor and Gilles Le Bigot

Cathal McConnell was born in Bellinaleck, County Fermanagh and can trace flute playing back through four generations in his family. Growing up in musical surroundings, Cathal was playing tin whistle by age eleven and took up the flute at age fifteen. His earliest influences included the great musicians of his home county such as Peter Flanagan, John Joe Maguire, Big John McManus, Tommy Maguire, Tommy Gunn, Eddie Duffy and Mick Hoy. Cathal was also influenced by the music of the 78rpm era and traveled the length and breadth of Ireland collecting unusual and rare tunes from older musicians.

Over the years McConnell has developed his own style of flute playing which at times can feature new heights of technical virtuosity on the flute while at other times displaying his great knowledge of tradition. His incredible repertoire made up of music from so many different traditions makes him a musician without peer in the realm of traditional music. In 1962, he won the flute and tin whistle competitions at the All-Ireland Fleadh. Five years later he was a founding member of the Boys of the Lough, one of the most successful groups playing traditional music for the past forty years. Their refreshing approach to the playing of traditional music reflects the extensive musical backgrounds of the members of the group with tunes from Shetland, Scotland, Cape Breton and Quebec as well as Irish music included in their wide-ranging repertoire.

Despite over thirty years on the road as a performer, Cathal McConnell is still incredibly enthusiastic about playing and singing. He is extremely passionate about traditional music and his undiminished fervor for it never fails to enthuse those around him. One music commentator described Cathal with the following words "It is not uncommon for him to reach for an instrument before breakfast and continue to play well into the evening. On greeting a friend or acquaintance, he will often produce a tin whistle from his pocket and entertain the companion with his latest composition or discovery". Cathal McConnell playing in the Lady Gregory Hotel is not to be missed especially as he will be joined by two of the most renowned musicians on the traditional music circuit today, Gerry O'Connor and Gilles Le Bigot.

"Sparkling" "Immaculate" and with "Dazzling Ability" are just some of the words used to describe the music of **Gerry O'Connor**, one of Ireland's most outstanding fiddle players. His family has played fiddle for at least four generations and Gerry is able to draw on this wealth of music learned from his mother Rose O'Connor and also from hand-written manuscripts passed down through the family. He was also influenced by the music of the legendary John Joe Gardiner the great Sligo fiddle player, who lived in Dundalk for many years.

Gerry's unique personal style and splendidly fluid bow-hand combined with technical virtuosity have brought him to concert stages throughout the world and have earned him international renown. He is a founding member of the band Skylark and recorded four albums with this highly respected band that had toured Europe for ten years. The Brigid's Kiss album of his own band La Lúgh was voted album of the year 1996. His first solo album entitled 'Journeyman' was released to great critical acclaim in October 2004.

For the past number of years Gerry has been playing in partnership with Breton guitarist, **Gilles Le Bigot** who is best known in Brittany as the co-founder of the groups Skolvan and Barzaz. Since the early 1980's his work as guitar-player and composer is characterized by the "open-tuning" style. After having collaborated on several major recordings in the 1990's such as "l'Héritage des Celtes" by Dan Ar Braz, "An Den Kozh Dall" by Barzaz, "Times are Changing" by Skolvan and "Azéliziza" by Le Bagad Kemper, Gilles decided to record his first solo album: Empreintes. He has collaborated on several major recordings in the 1990's such as "The Heritage of the Celts" by Dan Ar Braz, "An Den Kozh Dall" by Barzaz, "Times are Changing" by Skolvan and "Azéliziza" by The Bagad Kemper.

Manus McGuire, Maire O'Keeffe and Garry O Briain

Fiddle player, **Manus McGuire**, was raised in Sligo and is now based in East Clare. His fiddle playing has been influenced by many sources including the famed Sligo fiddle players of the 78rpm era such as Michael Coleman and James Morrison. His duets with his brother Seamus (now playing with the West Ocean String Quartet) caused a huge stir and excitement during the 1980s and Manus has been a member of some of the most legendary groups playing traditional music in the past two decades. These include Buttons and Bows, The Moving Cloud, and the band he is currently playing with, The Brock McGuire Band.

Maire O'Keeffe comes originally from Tralee where she learned her fiddle playing from highly respected teacher and musician, Nicky McAuliffe. Through his influence she was exposed to a wide range of fiddle styles including the music of the major fiddle traditions in Ireland. Maire and Manus have long had a shared interest in the fiddle traditions of Scotland, Shetland and Cape Breton and in recent months performed a concert featuring the music from these areas as part of the KAM Collective series of concerts in Kinvara. For Thursday night's concert they will be joined by one of Ireland's most renowned and sought after accompanist, the legendary multi-instrumentalist, **Garry O Briain**. Garry worked with Manus for many years as a member of the group Buttons and Bows. He also works with accordionist Mairtin O'Connor as well as touring regularly with the Boys of the Lough.

This *'not to be missed'* concert in the Lady Gregory Hotel on Thursday 19th of February will start at 9pm with doors opening at 8 30pm. Entrance is 15 euro / 10 euro concessions. Listeners are advised to come early to avoid disappointment.

Saturday night's concert will take place at 8pm in Crusheen Church in Crusheen Co. Clare and promises to be a very special occasion. It will feature the **West Ocean String Quartet** who will perform a new suite of music commissioned by the Joseph Browne Spring School of Traditional Music. The piece with four movements reflects Joseph's musical life and his skill as a composer. Titled 'An Indigo Sky' it was composed by Neil Martin, cello player with the West Ocean String Quartet whose other members are - Seamus McGuire and Niamh Crowley on violins and Ken Rice on viola. The Quartet formed in 1999 with the intention of exploring and celebrating music both traditional and newly-composed. Their repertoire is eclectic and unique and they have gained a reputation for breaking down the walls between traditional and classical music. The quartet has performed to critical acclaim throughout Ireland, including sell-out performances in Dublin's National Concert Hall and Belfast's Waterfront Hall, and has collaborated on stage and in the studio with many leading musicians.

'The South Galway and North Clare region is an area that has long been renowned for the quality of its traditional music. Names like Jack Mulkere, the highly regarded music teacher, come to mind, as do those of Joe Cooley, the great accordion player, and Kieran Collins, the exceptional tin whistle player. Ceili Bands were also very much part of this tradition, such as the Kilfenora in North Clare and the Tulla in East Clare. These musicians and many more left an indelible mark on the traditional music of this part of Ireland.

This area lost one of its most talented musicians when Joseph Browne died tragically in February 2006. Joseph, the son of Riona and Michael Browne, grew up in Knockmeal, between Crusheen and Gort, on the border of North Clare and South Galway and, in his short nineteen years, he too had begun to leave his mark on the music of the area. Crusheen is well known for its music and sport and Joseph was actively involved in both from a very young age. Indeed he attended his first music class in Crusheen before his fourth birthday. Crusheen is a parish that holds within its boundaries a most scenic area comprising of lakes, drumlins and foothills of the Slieve Aughty Mountains, while enjoying close proximity to the Burren Mountains also.'

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