

# **Coole Park Spring Programme 2008**

The launch of the Spring Cultural and Heritage Programme 2008 took place on Tuesday, 15th January 2008, at 3:30pm at the Visitor Centre, Coole Park, Gort, Co Galway.

Once again The Friends of Coole in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Galway County Council, Galway Rural Development, Galway Education Centre, Fáilte Ireland West and the community of Gort hosted the official launch. The 2008 Spring Programme Brochure is now available from Coole Park and also it is widely available locally in Gort.

The Coole Park Cultural Programme aims to provide a series of high quality multi-disciplinary arts and heritage events to as wide and inclusive local audience as possible in a site that has national and international cultural status. The programme events in Spring and Winter yearly, endeavours to showcase locally based artists and lectures on locally based topics. The programme was initiated in 2005 on a pilot basis and its success to date is largely due to the strong partnership of agencies and active community involvement in its organisation, delivery and support.

The Coole Park biannual series of cultural events continues this Spring with a feast of culture for the upcoming Spring Cultural and Heritage Programme 2008. The programme aims to integrate arts, culture and education with a series of events for adults, young people and families. Drama, Heritage, Music and Poetry features in this exciting new programme of events taking place between now and March. The programme has something for all ages.

Ronnie O'Gorman, Chairperson of the Friends of Coole compeered the event. Guest speakers at the Launch were Adrian Feeney, Friends of Coole local representative from Gort and Raymond Stephens, District Conservation Ranger National Parks and Wildlife with special responsibility for Coole Park.

Adrian Feeney stressed the importance of having such a facility locally for both children and adults as it served as a focus for the area. He said that the haven that is Coole Park Reserve, on the doorstep of Gort that serves both Galway and Clare is a marvelous educational facility for both children and adults. The Spring Arts, Cultural and Educational Programme 2008 continues this tradition. He complimented the partner organisations involved in the Friends of Coole as it is their contribution to the programme that facilitates free admission to the various events.

Raymond Stephens was complimentary of the schools educational programme and all those that make it such a success. This programme takes place at the Visitor Centre during the school year. In the last three years over 2000 schoolchildren from primary schools in Counties and Clare attended the Coole Park education programme. The programme involves both indoor and outdoor activities: a guided tour of the exhibition at the Visitor Centre with Hilda Mac Lochlainn, an audio visual on Lady Gregory, outdoor field trips in Coole Nature Reserve with Gordon D'Arcy or Dolores Keegan. The other great announcement of the day that was greeted by a

big applause by all present is that the admission fee to Coole Park is now abolished by the NPWS. Coole Park of course is open during the summer months to the public and will open at Easter.

Ronnie O’Gorman brought the event to a close by thanking the delightful Junior String Quartet from Coole Music for entertaining all present with their music and also to Cepta for her exquisite catering – both playing a vital role in the success of the Coole Park Launches.

The 2008 Spring Programme at the Visitor Centre, Coole Park, Gort, is now underway. Admission to all events is free.

## **The 2008 Spring Programme of events**

The 2008 Spring programme of events began with a very successful Puppet Show for Children by Your Man’s Puppets on Saturday 5th January 2008.

For the remainder of January we are treated to a feast of local drama from The Wild Swan Theatre Company who present The Drinking Companion on Thursday 24th January at 8.00pm. The Wild Swan Theatre Company, Gort, is in existence since the 1940’s in a number of guises most notably the Gort Drama Group. For many years the group has been at the forefront in presenting plays of Lady Gregory.

The Tungsten Theatre Group present The Wayfarer on Thursday 31st January at 8.00pm. This one act drama is written by Lorcan Mannion. Lorcan, will be available for a ‘questions and answers’ session after this show.

February brings a delight of events in music, poetry, film and sean nós.

On Sunday 3rd February Coole String Quartet are back to present another night of beautiful String Quartet Music, this time with the emphasis on music by the Romantic Czech Composer Antonín Dvorak (1841-1904).

On Thursday 7th February at 8.30pm (not 8.00pm as listed in programme) Dordán return to Coole Park to perform in concert. Dordán’s music is an interweaving of the traditions of Ireland, Europe and other cultures with musicianship on tin whistle, guitar, fiddle and harp as they play a mixture of traditional jigs and classical Baroque music.

Thursday 14th February at 8.00pm brings a night of poetry and sean nós with Mary O’Malley and Micheal Ó Cuaig. Oíche Filíochta agus sean-nóis le Mary O’Malley (file) agus Micheál Ó Cuaig (amhránaí). Mary and Micheál entertain us with a night of poetry and sean nós. This event is sponsored by Poetry Ireland.

The Dog and String Theatre return to present the Wishing Tree for children on the 17th February at 2.30pm. The Wishing Tree consists of three stories woven together by a common theme. This production explores a broad range of puppetry from life size puppets to animated objects and shadow puppetry. This production is suitable for the 5 – 10 age group.

A second poetry event takes place on Thursday 21st February, 8.00pm. Moya Cannon will read from *Carrying the Songs* and will be accompanied by Kathleen Loughnane.

The film series in the Spring Programme 2008 consists of the Screening of the Gael Linn film "Saoirse?" on Thursday 28th February, 8.00pm. An dara scannán stairiúil a rinne Gael Linn faoin gcaoi ar baineadh féinrialtas amach in Éirinn, tosaíonn SAOIRSE? le bunú Dháil Éireann sa bhliain 1919. SAOIRSE? (freedom?). The second historical film by Gael Linn depicts the Irish struggle for independence in the period from 1919 to 1922 as recorded by the newsfilm camera operators of the time. Le caoinhead Gael Linn. With the kind permission of Gael Linn.

The last of the arts events occurs on Saturday March 1st at 8.00pm. RIRá, a Tuam based band who have performed internationally and also with the Saw Doctors on the renowned song "Joyce Country Ceilí Band". Their contemporary interpretations of traditional songs and tunes coupled with their imaginative take on modern pieces, has earned them a strong following.

A Heritage Course entitled *The Living Landscape of Coole Park and its Environs* takes place from Monday 21st January to Saturday 1st March. The aim of this course is to present South Galway – Coole Park and its environs as an integrated cultural landscape. This course has been organised by the Friends of Coole in partnership with County Galway Heritage Forum, Galway County Council and the NPWS. This is an action of Galway County Heritage Plan 2004-2008. This course is a follow on from the Reading the Landscape course of the Spring Programmes of 2006 and 2007. The lecture series consists of a series of lectures and workshops / field trips. Topics include: *Studying Maps of South Galway* by Paul Gosling; *How to Conduct a Heritage Audit* by Zena Hctor; *Hedgerows of East Galway* by Janice Fuller; *Archaeological Monuments and Farming Practices* by Christy Cunniffe; *Graveyards of South East Co. Galway* by Zena Hctor and Christy Cunniffe.

A literary / poetry weekend takes place Friday 14th March – Saturday 15th March. This event will celebrate Lady Gregory and the poets who visited the Gregory Estate at Coole Park. This weekend will also celebrate thirty years of Poetry Ireland. Details on this weekend event will be announced at a later date. This two day event will consist of a series of poetry readings, music and dance and a walk in Coole Park. This event is organised by the Friends of Coole in association with Fáilte Ireland.

Contact Coole Park Visitor Centre to get a programme or for details on any of the events.

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