

Yeats Poems Reimagined as Songs

FROM THE HOB

Paul Keating



In this space you have often heard me opine on the symbiotic relationship between Irish dance music and the dance that is inspired by it, elevating both artistic expressions simultaneously.

The same could be said for Ireland's literary tradition which can also reflect the native instincts of the Irish people in their music and song that owe much to its lyrical prose and poetry.

In the latter vein, a new production entitled *I Am of Ireland/Yeats in Song*, co-produced by Raymond Driver and Paul Marsteller and released on July 23, makes that case most magnificently in the digital-only album on Merrow Records.

I suppose when you start with poetry of William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), proclaimed by more literary-minded folks than I as Ireland's greatest national poet, you are building the right foundation. The prolific literary genius delved into "mysticism and politics, aging and death, nature and art, his love of Ireland and romantic love" emphatically through his writings, we glean from the press release attached to sound files on a CD sent to us.

The lyricism in his work captured the fancy of a life-long Yeats fan, Driver, a retired illustrator who embarked on a mission to record 24 Yeats poems to music he newly composed.

Notably, one of Yeats's most prom-

inent love poems, the oft-recorded "Down By the Sally Gardens" already set to an old Irish tune "The Maids of Mourne Shore," is not part of this collection of poems. But it won't be missed thanks to the extraordinary collaboration between Driver and his co-producer Marsteller in rounding up a wealth of talent in three countries to tackle the worthy task of setting Yeats's imaginative and vivid poetry into song, some very familiar in the Yeats canon already plus some that will be new to the casual follower.

Thirty-two singers and musicians were brought into the project that has been underway for over two years across three countries (U.S., Ireland and the U.K.), most of it during the challenges of the pandemic which is remarkable in itself.

Like many other efforts we have witnessed while our world turned virtual, these artists stepped up to the challenge of interpreting Yeats's work with great clarity and feeling which characterizes their approach in more mainstream career work. The result is an edifying record that reflects a thoughtful and successful collaboration between the producers and artists that will be of interest to wide array of listeners.

The singers from Ireland are Seamie O'Dowd from Sligo along with John Doyle with his own Sligo roots, Cathy Jordan, Eleanor Shanley, Dave Curley, Mick McAuley, Fergal McAloon, Brid O'Riordan. From the U.K. come Christine Collister and Jackie Oates, and from America's heartland Ashley Davis.

The vocal roster is thoroughly enhanced in Driver's compositions and arrangements by an equally star-stud-

William Butler Yeats.



ded array of musicians like Kevin Burke, Cillian Vallely, Trevor Hutchinson, Colin Farrell, Mick O'Brien, Cal Scott, Niall Hanna, Gabriel Rhodes, Laura Zaerr, Rick Richards, Dana Lyn, Cormac de Barra, John Spiers, Jack Rutter, Natalie Haas, Danny Levin, Derek O'Sullivan and Philip Begley.

Since this is a digital recording, you

can order downloads through the website www.yeatsinsong.com. You can and should download the PDF document with all 24 poems which you can savor along with the vocal renderings in your own time, space and mood which digital recordings allow you to do.

Like the horseman, do not pass up this great Yeats recording.

Reynolds Family Stars in Sligo

THE Reynolds family from Pearl River enjoyed their first week back in Ireland this summer attending the FleadhFest 2021 in Sligo Town organized to uphold the annual August celebrations associated with Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann which once again could not be staged as in pre-pandemic days.

This past weekend was especially meaningful as "Dado" John Reynolds was duly recognized last Friday with a Ceanródaí 2021 presentation for his multiple roles serving the Comhaltas MidAtlantic Region at the Glasshouse in Sligo. It is also known as the Bardic Awards as Bearla notably given to U.S. musicians Brian Conway, Joanie Madden and John's wife Margie Mulvihill in the past.

On Sunday, 18-year-old John Paul Reynolds won his fiddle competition for his FleadhFest na hEireann 2021 title capping a memorable week before he heads back to the University of Limerick Irish World Music and Dance Academy for his second year in its traditional Irish music performance academic course.



John Reynolds, a recipient of a Ceanródaí (Bardic) 2021 Award in Sligo. (Photos by CCE-Ena Doocey)



Celebrating John Reynolds's Bardic Award are CCE Director General Labhras O'Murchu and CCE Uachtaran Eamonn O' hArgain flanking Reynolds in back row and John Paul Reynolds (son), Margie Mulvihill (the missus) and Martina Hamilton (a cousin).



John Paul Reynolds, FleadhFest 2021 na hEireann winner in the fiddle competition in the under-18 group.