



## A Fresh Portrait

Of the many great events on offer at Fermanagh's Flive festival, one spectacle in particular stood alone in the limelight. *Young Stephen*— an energetic, one-man dramatisation of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Adapted for stage by Prin Ó Duigneáin, Paddy McEneaney stars as Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's own semi-fictional avatar.

The performance provides a fresh interpretation of Joyce's work, focusing on the childhood of Stephen Dedalus. Set mostly during Stephen's first term at boarding school, the play examines the influence of two major factors in Joyce's early development; religion and politics.

Keeping to one setting and limiting the themes helps reel in Joyce's chaotic style. True to the spirit of portrait, McEneaney's performance gives a strong sense of perspective through his narrative voice. A simplistic and immature vocal tone opens the play, showing us a world through the eyes of an infant, then a sharp change to clear and serious dialogue shows us the trials of adolescence. His mastery of voice eases the understanding of this fast paced play, with frequent time skips and multiple characters. These subtle changes in accent and tone aid suspension of disbelief in a way that makes it easy to forget this is a one man show.

It isn't just the acting talent that holds the staggered story together, but a minimal yet effective attitude towards stage props. A simple dressing panel serves to hide a small number of clothing items, the various hats and jackets which help discern between Stephen and the other characters, while a wooden box serves as table, school desk, bed and pulpit. A certain amount of imagination is still required to picture the changing locations, or believe that our bearded protagonist is a teenage boy, but the small touches can make all the difference, especially the iconic glasses that serve an important role in the plot and help us see Joyce brought to life on stage.

There is no better time to revisit Joyce's formative work, with the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising earlier this year, exploring the art of that era gives us an important first-hand account of the period. The political and theological upheaval of the time had a huge impact on Joyce, as evidenced by his bringing up these themes repeatedly in his semi-autobiographical work.

One of the vital parts of transitioning to adulthood is the epiphany that adults have differing beliefs, and are not always right. We see Joyce

beginning to form his own beliefs and opinions, as he challenges the authority of the priests in his Catholic boarding school and sees the disruption caused by secular politics discussed at a family dinner.

Snippets of these themes are present from the opening lines of the play, with dialogue cleverly chosen from the source material to strengthen them. The climactic final scene, so expertly weaved by McEneaney, takes on a life of its own as Stephen's family clash on the stage. Where the protagonist himself disappears behind other characters, in a sense he is embodied by the audience, who get to experience his anxiety instead.

This surreal feeling really adds to its magic of the play, but sadly it is over too soon. Despite McEneaney's talent, no one could be expected to give such an energetic and heartfelt performance for a longer running time.

*Young Stephen* is an easy performance to view, but slightly less so to digest. Fans of Joyce's work will relish it, but may be left disappointed they can't witness *more* of the powerful rendition. As McEneaney says of performing Joyce's work, 'great writing will always speak for itself,' but in this case great acting has helped it speak volumes.

### ***Caimin O'Shea***

*Young Stephen* was performed at Blakes of the Hollow on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, and again late October in the Columbian Hall Theatre, Galway, with further dates to be confirmed.

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## **Election Perfection for Debut Author**

With the U.S elections nearing their conclusion and Brexit talks in full swing, there is no better time for some political satire, to invite conversation and perhaps lighten the mood on this troubling political climate.

Cue Belfast author Andy Luke, whose debut novel *Axel America and the U.S Election Race*, captures the surreal spirit of current politics. A comedic take, the novel follows Axel America, a paranoid radio DJ, as he attempts to singlehandedly take on multi billionaire media mogul Morgan Rump. The stakes are high, as Rump is in the running for the United States presidency.

Starting out as a self-taught graphic novel artist, Andy Luke spent over a decade producing his own comics before branching into prose and script-writing, penning television comedy sketches and award winning short stories.

In 2011 Luke produced *Hold the Phones it's Alex Jones*, a comedic series of graphic novels taking on political conspiracy and mainstream media. When Donald Trump announced his bid for the presidency Andy knew he had to take up

the reins once more.

After a discussion with publisher Andrew Gallagher at Enniskillen comic fest, Luke began work on *Axel America*, but the election wasn't the only race at hand. Luke found himself in a race against time, as real world political landscapes constantly shifted throughout his drafting period. The real life election race provided new plot twists and inspirations on a weekly basis.

With a first draft swiftly finished in May, Luke began his hectic process of real-time redrafting. Fresh drafts were produced weekly until late August, just in time for its September release.

An independent radio DJ battling a figure backed by the mass media is the perfect plot to discuss the nature of our media. *Axel* tackles the rise of independent journalism and blogging culture against an increasingly unreliable mass media that seems intent on distributing negativity and fear mongering. These themes tie in well with Luke's passion for conspiracy theories, with the book championing some popular theories whilst challenging others. Luke describes his mix of comedy and conspiracy as a new genre – *Sitcomspiracy*.

In an effort to capture the political zeitgeist, almost no stone was left unturned in Luke's intense restructuring of plot. The advent of Brexit inclined him to give his characters differing opinions on the referendum too, yet the choice was made to avoid more raw subject matter that wasn't appropriate for a comedy, like ISIS or recent incidents of police violence.

An intense look at the absurdity of politics, *Axel America* jokingly asks; who is really in charge?

***Caimin O'Shea***

*Released 5 September through Fermanagh based AG Publishings, Axel America is available in ebook format from Amazon and Smashwords priced £3.99, or paperback from Belfast based stores The Thinking Cup and No Alibis bookstore priced £9.99.*

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## **From Russia with Calf**



In keeping with the time of year, many of our articles this issue have to do with heritage and tradition – memories and ghosts. Respect for tradition is not always inward-looking: it can lead to the most surprising connections, as in the case of how this drawing came to me.

It begins with a young Russian who was writing a story set in Ireland, and was seeking a suitable placename for the home town of her hero. The name that caught her eye was – Ballinamallard.

For a writer, the name alone is not enough. She wanted to know its meaning, and what she found led her to send a speculative email to the village website:

*My name is Anastasiia, I am very interested in Irish history and culture. According to the site Place Names NI St Columcille placed a curse on the roosters in Ballinamallard in the sixth century. I was very intrigued but could not find any further information. Could you please tell me what was the case if it is known?*

In a roundabout way that such things happen in villages, the email came to me.

There is no further information, but that never stops a writer. (By chance, Columcille also features in two other stories in this issue – in the curach that inspired *Row the Erne*, and in a stained glass window by Wilhelmina Geddes). I replied with some background on the Saint's legend. Much as I do with the Brontë's grandfather, I imagined the Saint passing upriver in a currach towards the headwaters of the Strule, on his way into exile on Iona, and perhaps grounding on a gravel bank at cock-crow.

Anastasiia is a graphic artist, working under the name of Lea Daniel. Her portfolio shows influences of Beardsley, Rackham, and Morris yet is distinctively Russian. (William Morris has his own tenuous connection to Ballinamallard through the family of Rudyard Kipling, but that's another story).

The conversation continued:

*Thank you for your wonderful letter! History is full of rumours and unproven tales, maybe that is what makes it so charming and captivating.*

...

*Thank you for your kind words about my art. I dream about illustrating Irish folktales and fairytales (Ireland makes my heart melt though I'm Russian and don't speak or understand Irish Gaelige). I would like to illustrate something. Maybe a series of stories about local saints or heroes? I'm new to all this, I'm at the beginning of my artistic path (I hope, it'll be successful) so if you have any ideas, I'd be glad to discuss them!*

In return I set her my story of *The Old Woman and the Calf* which I gave at the Lisnaskea Islander Festival two years ago, and this is the result. My story was an imaginative fusion the name of the Lough in which the Erne rises (Lough Gowna, or Calf Lough) with the the legend of its overflowing from a magical well. A similar legend of the origin of Lough Neagh is found in Lady Jane Wilde's book of 1888 *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms & Superstitions of Ireland*

Such stories may seem insignificant. They are not facts or even history, but they are the reason why this drawing exists. Thanks to Saint Columbcille and people like Oscar Wilde's mother and countless others who listened to such tales and passed them on, you have now been introduced to the work of a young Saint Petersburg artist.

Every story has an echo that defies time and space. If you follow it, who knows where it may lead?

**Jenny Brien** Editor



## Lough Erne Landscape Partnership

The *Lough Erne Landscape Partnership* is one of 90 such groups throughout the U.K. which have received Heritage Lottery funding to promote projects that will:

*...protect, conserve, restore, raise awareness of and celebrate the built,*

*natural and cultural heritage...*

Just over £2 million has been set aside for projects that will enhance the landscape of Lough Erne, or that have a direct connection with it.

LELP is now ready to assist communities and organisations to develop proposals for such projects. This phase will end in early autumn of 2017, when a Landscape Conservation Action Plan will be submitted for consideration to Heritage Lottery Fund.

Initial outline proposals (with LELP guidance if needed) will be submitted by October 31st 2016. Project proposals will need to be well developed by the end of January 2017 to be included in the draft Action Plan.

Between January and early summer 2017 the LELP team will refine, adjust, combine and maximize the project submissions. The final plan including the detailed project bids will be completed and submitted, along with the in Autumn 2017.

The delivery phase will begin in Spring 2018 and last for five years.

## **What About Your Project?**

Projects may come under one or more of four themes:

1. Co-Ordinated Management of the Landscape
2. Built Heritage at Risk (may include archeology )
3. Natural Heritage; protecting habitats and species
4. People and Their Culture

And should be designed to achieve some of these outcomes:

- Heritage will be identified/recorded, better managed and/or in better condition
- People will have developed skills and/or learnt about heritage
- Environmental impacts will be reduced
- More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage
- Your local area / community will be a better place to live, work or visit

If you wish to express an interest please contact [info@lelp.org.uk](mailto:info@lelp.org.uk) or by phone 028 66327109. The team will arrange a convenient time to discuss your ideas/proposals.

Support information and a template for online submissions can be downloaded from the LELP website.

LELP is holding a Built Heritage open evening on Wednesday 19th October at 7.30pm at Enniskillen Museum. This will be an opportunity to share your project ideas and network with other groups, as well as to find out more about the Partnership. There will also be two support sessions in the LELP

offices in Waterways Ireland, Sligo Road Enniskillen from 1.30 – 4.30pm on Monday 24th and Tuesday 25th October.

Links:

The Heritage Lottery

The Mourne Landscape Partnership is well through its delivery stage.

Ring of Gullion (Armagh) developed a wide range of projects

Glens of Antrim Landscape Partnership

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## Radio Days

When Fermanagh Writers were first contacted by Owen McFadden, a BBC radio producer working in Belfast, the original brief was for some of our older members to write reflections on their past experiences for a Sunday afternoon programme on BBC Radio Ulster called *The Time of our Lives*.

I was probably one of the first to pitch in. Being twenty years older than the qualifying age, I wrote a piece called *My First Love*, about my childhood in war torn Liverpool.

It was all about food.

I was hungry right up until I was sixteen years of age, when I joined the Royal Navy. That was the first time I could ever remember walking away from a table that still had food on it.

When I was selected to take part the next ordeal was to go into the studio in Enniskillen and record while Owen listened in over at he BBC in Belfast.

I found the experience of talking into a microphone while wearing headphones listening to myself to be quite unnerving. It was a bit like talking inside my own head and the result was quite alarming as the headphones boomed while I was speaking. Anyway the recording person soon fitted me up with a quieter pair of headphones and I only had to read through the piece twice before they were satisfied.

At the end of my piece I finished with the line –

*My next true love was cigarettes; but that is another story.*

I felt that might give an opportunity for a second recording session but so far they haven't rung me back.

When I listened to the transmission I was quite surprised at how I sounded.

On the day of recording I had felt as though I had won the 'monotonous voice of the month' award, but it sounded quite good on the radio, apart from my rather odd accent.

I say 'odd accent' because I was raised as a child in Liverpool, Glasgow and Limavady in more or less equal portion, and so would claim that I was beaten up in the playground in three different dialects. Kids can be very unforgiving.

Owen realised that there was a wealth of talent in the group and started to invite more writers to take part, both as readers and as guests. Wayne and Louise Hardman talked about his career as a sports reporter and their handweaving business *Wove in Hove*; Catherine Vallely about her encounter with a man who kidnapped himself; Trish Bennett about her mother's obsession with a potato peeler – and there were many more.

So, the whole BBC experience has been good for a number of the writers in the group and Owen McFadden has promised to come down to Fermanagh give us some tips on how to write for the radio, and perhaps collect some more stories.

Another early memory of mine was remembering seeing a bronze 'death penny' on the wall at both of my Grandfathers' houses which commemorated deaths in the First World War. Neither of the families would talk about them.

It took me quite a lot of ferreting with the help of Natasha Martin at Enniskillen Castle Regimental Museum (another one of Fermanagh Writers) for me to eventually root out the facts.

They were two men who had grown up together as kids in Limavady and had met up again when they signed up with the 10th Battalion of the Inniskilling Fusiliers. They were yards from each other when they were killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

When they died they were no relation to each other, but the nephew of one married the other's niece – my Mum and Dad.

My mothers' uncle's body was never found. His name is on the monument at Thiepval. My father's uncle's body was only found in 1934 when the War Graves Commission were creating the long term cemeteries that we know today. So it was over seventeen years after his death that they informed his mother that he was now accounted for.

**Bob Baird** is a Rotarian, a Paul Harris Fellow and Director of the Westville Family Resource Centre in Enniskillen

Bob's article about the fate of his great-uncles was published in the July 1 edition of the *Newsletter*.

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## Row the Erne

In 2014 the Row the Erne Project began with the building of a 33ft, 10 man, traditional Irish boat called a Curach. This is the kind of boat in which Irish people traded with Britain and Western Europe for more than 3,000 years, bringing back not only goods but also new ideas, technologies and fashions.

There is only one curach of a similar type in Ireland, called the *Colmcille*. This is a sea-going craft (like most large curachs) based on the North Coast and is mainly used for an annual expedition to Iona, so the general public have limited access.

*Row the Erne* named its curach *The Menapian*, after the Menapi tribe, who first came to Fermanagh in the Bronze Age. The project is unique in Ireland as the curach is used all year round (weather permitting). It rows in the evenings, at weekends (for picnics, day trips and overnights) and on longer expeditions throughout the Erne system, often staying overnight on uninhabited islands that it can easily reach because of its shallow draught. It is an ideal platform for observing wildlife.

Over 60 people volunteered 2,500 hours in all to build the curach. We researched across the island of Ireland to develop skills that would be of use in the future and to share with others. We invited a wide range of groups to help design, build and row the curach. Our youth section designed and built our website.

The curach was launched by walking it up through the streets of Enniskillen led by a procession of the oars, carried by the Emergency services, funders and supporters. The streets were lined with well-wishers, many seeing it for the first time. It was blessed by Fr Brian Darcy and Rev Ruth Watt and made its maiden voyage with a flotilla that included Waterways Ireland, the RNLi, The Police, Erne Paddlers and Local tour provider, the Kestrel.

[https://www.youtube.com/embed/7R0II\\_PyI0k](https://www.youtube.com/embed/7R0II_PyI0k)

Over 700 local people have rowed with us on Lough Erne, many getting out on the water for the first time. Rowing a 10 person, 33ft long, 8ft wide boat is very empowering. People with disabilities, or who are simply 'scared' of the water can instantly enjoy it. Surrounded by fellow crew members of similar levels of inexperience (with a core number of experienced crew), they

are supported, yet they are pulling together, enabling the curach come alive on the water.

The Curach has something for everyone. Young children from two-and-a-half years old love to go pirate-hunting and mermaid-watching while retired elderly folk, up to 94 years, have realised they can row and get exercise in a social environment.

Row the Erne led the celebrations in Fermanagh commemorating the St 1,500th anniversary of the death of Saint Columbanus. The Saint, widely regarded as one of the most influential individuals of his era, began his monastic life on Cleenish Island on Upper Lough Erne and not in Bangor, Co. Down, as many believe. *Friends of Columbanus*, a group from Bangor, joined us in a day of celebration that involved re-enacting the life of his day. Participants dressed as monks rowed to Cleenish where they enjoyed the foods of that time cooked on an open fire and storytelling in the ruins of the Abbey.

We have taken part in several events on behalf of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. These included providing rows at food festivals and building an outdoor cinema on the curach that allowed us to row participants to unusual locations in the dark of night to enjoy a movie.

The *Menapian* is docked at the secure jetty of Waterways Ireland Headquarters in Enniskillen, and they have provided funding to run open days and events, opening the building to the local community.

Row the Erne has now inspired and is mentoring another group in Belfast to build a boat of their own. They are calling themselves *Row the Lagan*.

Like the curach, Row the Erne is a living breathing thing. As we continue to develop and push the boundaries of what is happening on the local waterways, so too will attitudes to accessing and enjoying it change and grow. We look forward to that challenge!

***Olivia Cosgrove*** is Chairperson of Row the Erne

Featured Image: Mark Marlow/pacemaker press



# Wilhelmina Geddes – A talk by Dr Nicola Gordon Bowe

Early this year a sumptuously illustrated and sharply written book was published, celebrating the life of a female artist who is more famous abroad than in her native Ireland. Admirers such as John Piper noted that she was a master of colour who should be compared to Braque, Rouault, Kandinsky and Matisse. She is so highly regarded by the international community that when names of great artists were given to craters discovered on the planet Mercury, she was honoured alongside Shakespeare, Beethoven and Picasso.

The artist was Belfast-born Wilhelmina Geddes and she was one of the greatest practitioners, anywhere, in the currently underrated art of stained glass, in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

The newly-published book has been written by the greatest authority on stained glass in Ireland, Nicola Gordon Bowe, who very kindly agreed to come and talk to us in front of the two examples of Geddes' work which we are blessed to have in Fermanagh. We began at Inishmacsaint Parish Church (Derrygonnelly) to study her *Angel of Resurrection* and then drove to Devenish Parish Church (Monea) to see her *Innocence Walking in the Fields of Paradise*.

These are early works, and give little indication of the strength and verve of her later work, but both were covered in Dr Gordon Bowe's slide presentation. In both churches William McBride, organ, and Stephen Magee, trumpet, kindly agreed to heighten our enjoyment with well-chosen music.

After being trusted, as an unknown artist, with the two commissions in Fermanagh, Geddes went on to have a worldwide practice. Probably her largest commission was in Ottawa, Canada, where she created the three-light, heroic Duke of Connaught Memorial Window, *The Welcoming of a Slain Warrior by Soldier Saints, Champions and Angels* (from which the top image is a detail). In St Luke's, Wallsend-on-Tyne, Northumberland, there is the 1922, tragic yet dramatic five-light *War Memorial Window*, showing the Crucifixion bedecked with sparkling colour.

But it is, of course, much more interesting to see any great art work "in the flesh" and the only other set of Geddes' windows that I have seen, apart from the two in Fermanagh, are those portraying St Patrick and St Colomba in the Church of Ireland, Larne.

They are the subjects of the two photos below. You can see how strongly and unsentimentally she portrays, in these later works, the faces of the two great men of the early church in Ireland. I was bowled over. There's also a small window in Our Lady of the Universe Church in Curran, Achill Island, if you happen to be there on holiday.



Wilhelmina Geddes was a complex character. She suffered a mental breakdown in her late thirties and spent six months in a mental hospital. She had fears of contact with comets or dead stars. Indeed, she began to include coloured shooting stars in her windows from 1914.

She was defensive and vulnerable. But she was honest and could see herself for exactly what she was and her personal diaries, expounded in Dr Gordon Bowe's book, give a telling insight into the mind of this extraordinary artist. We are very privileged to have part of her story on our doorstep in Fermanagh.

*Richard Pierce is a retired architect who has exhibited his watercolours, has written a novel, climbed Kilimanjaro, swims a mile a day and spends half the year in Finland with his partner.*

Book Reviews: Times Higher Education Irish Times



## Michael Brown – Image and Sound

Michael Brown has been a resident of Fermanagh for twenty years, recording documentary films and interpreting landscape through paintings, photography and print making, working from his studio near Ballinamallard.

Enniskillen Castle recently had an exhibition of his work, a catalogue of which can be seen at <http://michaelbrownlandscapes.org>, and he has also exhibited in Dublin, Belfast, and the West of Ireland.



Farm Track up Cuilcagh

His landscapes are sparse and often barren, but even his black and white photographs of the wilder parts of Fermanagh in winter are never bleak. There are no humans in his landscapes, and little evidence of their work, except in the snowy untrodden blankness of *Farm Track up Cuilcagh*, with a wire fence silhouetted against it. The elements are carefully composed, like rocks in a Zen garden, and their textures exquisitely detailed. Michael gives the same love and attention to marginal land as he does to marginal people. This can be seen at once in his photo etchings of more domestic landscapes – *Charlie's Field* and *Willie's House* – you feel at once you know the men who work this land.

He uses several different printmaking techniques:

In **Monotype** he lays ink freehand on a zinc plate, creating expanses of peatland in black and umber, the white stalks of bog cotton picked out in negative by the flick of a palette knife – their frothy blooms, scattering of French chalk to absorb the ink. Only one print can be pulled from each inking – hence the name *monotype* – and you can never entirely control the effects.

Sometimes you are rewarded by happy accidents, as in the subtle shading of *Cuilcagh in Mist*.



Bog Cotton III

**Photo Etching** is done by drawing onto transparent material, then laying photosensitive film onto zinc plate, covering it with the image and exposing it to ultraviolet light. The areas exposed to light harden, and remain when the plate is washed, protecting those parts from being etched out by acid. The etched plate is then inked and printed in the normal way. There is still for opportunity for variation in inking, but this allows runs of near-identical copies. Michael limits each print to a run of five.



Willie's House

The dark outlines and smudgy shadows of his photo etchings are echoed in some of his earlier paintings. Later paintings have a simplicity and monumental

quality reminiscent of the work of Paul Nash.

In **Screen Printing** the photosensitive resist is applied to a fine mesh screen through which ink is squeezed onto the paper. A separate screen is used for each colour. This makes the tone more consistent throughout – the colour is either there or it is not – but less subtle blending is possible. The fine hatching and spattering on *Cuilcagh Mountain* shows what can be done in that respect.



Cuilcagh Mountain

In **Digital Collage** the separate masks are produced much as for screen printing, but instead of being applied to a screen they are digitised and used to produce a composite image with the help of an inkjet printer. Some artists produce detailed collages of photographic images in this way, but Michael uses the technique to good effect with solid colour.



Reed Bed III Lough Erne

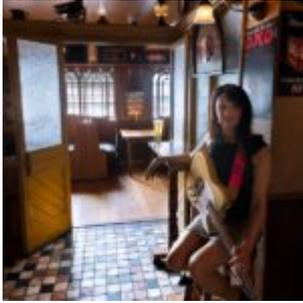
Michael is regularly seen locally in his role as a film-maker recording cultural events, but his work and his concern for social and environmental issues has taken him around the world. He has this advice for anyone just starting out in that field:

- It is not well paid. You may even make a loss on the projects that you really want to do, but it is important to do them anyway.
- You do not need a large camera or lots of equipment to get started. Use what you have, and you will discover what you need with experience.
- Sound is even more important than pictures. People would sooner watch a film with poor quality visuals than one with poor sound (and it may always perhaps be suitable for radio). You don't need an old-fashioned boom microphone (you can even get by with just the microphone built-in to your camera) but you will need a fluffy hood to reduce wind noise if working outdoors. A good hand-held mike is useful for face-to-face interviews, as is a radio mike to pick up sound from people being filmed at a distance.
- Remember you are telling a story. Get the shots that tell that story, and you will find editing a lot easier.
- In documentary work you may find that your idea of what the story should be may not correspond with the facts that you discover. Be prepared to change the story.

*By the time this article is published Michael will be in Nepal, documenting the conditions under which children and donkeys are taken from India to work in heavy industry.*

**Jenny Brien**

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## Maeve Dunphy – an interview by Trevor Hodgett

Omagh singer-songwriter Maeve Dunphy's debut album *Scarlet*, which was released in 2012, was distinguished by her exceptional songwriting, with lyrics which were arresting and often startling and music which ambitiously contained elements of blues, jazz, reggae and country.

Her current CD *Don't Wait Up For Me*, a five track EP, represents a change of direction for on it she collaborates with Artie McGlynn and *The Grooveyard Shift*, on a repertoire which contains only one original, alongside interpretations of four songs by other writers.

*We've captured the essence of how we sound live. Some people record very well but in the past I wasn't always one of them but I think I've done it right this time. We didn't do take after take – it was, generally speaking, quite a live recording.*

Included are two tracks that Dunphy picked up from listening to Aretha Franklin – *Nobody Like You* and *Muddy Water*, a song of course which has also been covered by the likes of Jimmy Witherspoon, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and Lou Rawls.

One wonders though if Dunphy might have felt intimidated interpreting songs which had been recorded by the sainted Aretha, knowing that her versions would have to bear comparison to Aretha's.

*You have to put that intimidation aside because there's nobody like Aretha. Her versions are gorgeous and I love listening to them but I thought, "I'll never be as good as that but I'll have a go at them anyway."*

More surprisingly there is also a Spanish-language song on the album, 'Amapola', sung by Dunphy in what to my monolingual ears sounds like the most perfect Spanish.

*I don't speak Spanish but I found some videos on YouTube and wrote the lyrics down phonetically for myself. I didn't get them checked out by anybody who does speak Spanish – so I could be asking for a bag of kittens!*

Another track *In My Girlish Days* was originally by the great, guitar-playing American blues singer Memphis Minnie, whose career lasted from the 1920s to the 1950s. The legendary Maria Muldaur, who Dunphy supported on a memorable tour of Ireland, turned her on to Memphis Minnie.

*When I first met Maria she was going, "Oh, darling, I think you should do some of her tracks." And she gave me a CD and I did learn two of the songs and put that one on the EP.*

Dunphy regards her experience touring with Muldaur as transformative. Indeed her admiration for the New Yorker, who originally performed on the Greenwich Village and Boston folk scenes with the *Even Dozen Jug Band* and the *Jim Kweskin Jug Band* before becoming a rock superstar with her hit record *Midnight At The Oasis*, is palpable.

*The tour was brilliant. Maria was amazing, not just as a performer but as a person. I travelled for a week with her and her band, who were lovely people, and the craic was just brilliant.*

*Whenever we stopped for meals I would try and sit beside Maria to hear some of her stories but not only was I interested in her, she was interested in me too. It wasn't just one way. She was asking about myself and about my family so we had great talks.*

*And I never tired of listening to her and her band and how they did their show and the way it could change. You could listen to them over and over and you'd never get bored. It was very uplifting and that rubbed off on me.*

Trying to make a living in Northern Ireland playing blues and jazz-influenced music can be depressing and frustrating. Dunphy acknowledges that she has struggled with that reality and the feeling of being an outsider but believes that working and hanging out with Muldaur and her band revitalised her.

*Sometimes I get a wee bit disillusioned and feel disconnected from why I chose the music that I do in the first place.*

*You can feel a wee bit alone in your choice at times. In my teens I was listening to old, old stuff and music from New Orleans and jazz and blues and soul and Otis Redding and I was the only girl at my school that liked anything like that. Everybody else was listening to Bros so it was a lonely choice for a teenage girl and it can still be a lonely choice as you get older. You need to be surrounded by it to feel connected to it again, to make it come alive again and to remember everything that you liked about it in the first place. And that's what was really, really good about that week because they were the real deal and I was soaking it up, the whole week. It did me the world of good.*

Remarkably, Muldaur has also declared that she regards Dunphy as 'the real deal.' Dunphy, not surprisingly, is thrilled with the compliment.

*I was absolutely chuffed. And I don't like blowing my own trumpet but I'll tell you this wee thing: Maria's piano player heard me do a Robert*

*Johnson song and I was telling the audience that I got it from [celebrated New York blues singer-guitarist] Rory Block and he said, "We've worked with Rory Block and I prefer your version!" So that was a huge compliment.*

The Grooveyard Shift are led by guitarist Artie McGlynn, long regarded as one of Ireland's greatest and most influential musicians. Dunphy acknowledges McGlynn's greatness and his crucial role in developing the one original song on the EP, the title track *Don't Wait Up For Me*:

*He's a master and we are only at his shoulders in comparison. And he really helped me shape that song. Jerome [McGlynn, Artie's son and co-guitarist in the Grooveyard Shift] and I had worked on it and we were missing something when Artie came along and sprinkled Artie magic on it and brought to it what was missing and made it so much better. And I went, "Aha, now it's happening!" He's brilliant.*

The Grooveyard Shift frequently play on Monday nights in McCann's Bar in Omagh. The unassuming local provides the perfect, low-key home base for the band. "It's a great music bar and there's a great atmosphere," says Dunphy, "It doesn't have great space and there's no stage so we're all squished into a corner on top of each other but we love playing there."

*Updated by **Trevor Hodgett** from an interview first published in June 2014 on Culture Northern Ireland*

Maeve Dunphy and her band will soon be gigging in Enniskillen.

More information from her Facebook page.



## The Ghosts Inside Me

John Llewlllyn James used this quote by Robert Montgomery as a prompt for our writing at a recent meeting of Fermanagh Writers and I couldn't get it out of my mind.

It got me thinking about the ghosts inside me and how they have influenced

me. I have written (maybe inadvertently) on this topic in my poetry many times over the years.

The first and most obvious was in my tribute to my friend Ken Walton who died in 2001 and when I wrote these lines I didn't truly realise how prophetic they would be:

*Now I am sure and certain that in his Afterlife out there,  
our Ken has found his corners in some great Celestial bars,  
where he's regaling friends with stories of his journeys round the stars.  
But if you think he's gone forever, you are in for a big surprise,  
for when you're least expecting it, you won't believe your eyes:  
his Spirit will come whistling and strolling down the wind,  
and when he turns the corner towards the glad part of your mind,  
he'll whisper you a story, through a haze of memory's tears,  
of things you had forgotten, which will echo down the years.*

Ken has visited me many times over the years since 2001. The visits can be triggered by the most insignificant things; the smell of a barbecue can remind me of some of Kenny's stories related late at night in the semi-dark of suburban London, a tale of some of his escapades on board ship, or a funny story of some rascally sailor on leave. When he visits my mind I can still hear his cheery whistling as he strolled from his car to our door.

I wrote a whimsical piece about ESP in which I describe it as a ghost:

*They say that ESP is a ghost inside your head  
who invades your private space.  
But thank the gods it happens to so few  
of the whole damn human race.*

*That ESP is a weirdish thing  
it upsets your balanced state;  
to find another person has got your  
thoughts inside their pate.*

*It buggers up your thinking  
about all your private things  
to find another person seems  
to be pulling all your strings.*

And of course I've written about my Dad and he is very much a ghost inside me. Earlier this year as I sawed some wood for the patio garden I was building, I could hear his voice, "Let the saw do the work, not your arms."

That took me straight back to my childhood when I'd help him with some woodwork and he'd say, "You've got to work with the wood, John, not against it."

I had no idea until years afterwards what he meant.

I also find myself regularly repeating favorite sayings of my mother's. I'm sure some of you have received this reply from me when you asked how I was,

*"Oh, I'm pullin' the devil by the tail."*

There are many more.

*My ghosts are many, loud and quiet  
ready to call at any time  
but the time I need them most of all,  
is when I'm trying to find a rhyme.*

*They always somehow come to me  
when I am sorely puzzled  
and they will always rescue me  
when that poetic muse is muzzled.*

**John Monaghan** is a former Maynooth student and London cabbie, and currently chair of Fermanagh Writers