celebrating creativity as we age

Bealtaine Festival 2012

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Promoting greater participation by older people

bealtainefestival
celebrating creativity as we age

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Cover image is 'Cruitne - Daughter of Lochan' (841mm x 594mm) by Jim Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick's two-tone portrait of Che Guevara and his album art for Thin Lizzy became part of Ireland's youth culture, along with his representations of Irish legends.

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‘Blow the Dust off Your Trumpet’ orchestra at the National Concert Hall, photo: Jeff Harvey

About the festival

The Bealtaine festival celebrates creativity as we age. In this European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, we are asking you ‘What kind of old do you want to be?’ Do you want to be a dancer? A painter? A film-maker? A poet? A historian? Get started during Bealtaine, no matter what age you are; there’s hardly a moment to lose.

Bealtaine is co-ordinated by Age & Opportunity, the not-for-profit organisation which promotes greater participation of older people in society. It invites us, as we age, to get involved with arts and cultural activity. It gives us the chance to reignite the flame of creativity and unlock hidden talents through everything from music, art, theatre, photography, singing, craft, cinema and literature.

This newspaper gives you a flavour of some of the events and tours that are happening around the country and a list of all the organisers so far, along with their contact details so that you can find out what’s going on in your area. Many counties produce their own listings; keep an eye out for them. Event listings are also on the bealtaine.com website and are updated regularly during the festival.

Share your Bealtaine experience with us. Like us on Facebook to share photos and comments with us. Follow us on Twitter **@bealtainefest** and keep an eye on **bealtaine.com** for updates and news.

A Message from the President

In my inaugural speech, I spoke of every age having its own aisling, a dream of a better, kinder, happier, shared world. The Bealtaine festival is already part of that dream. In its celebration of creativity through communities across Ireland, over its seventeen year history, Bealtaine is changing perceptions and challenging misconceptions and stereotypes of, and around what it is to be, 'old' in Ireland. The participants and communities involved in Bealtaine are actively 'Creating the New Old'.

Edward de Bono remarked that "creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way." Those who are newly involved in this festival will experience great creative impulses simply by their involvement in something new and different. I, too, in my new role as President of Ireland, am being creatively charged and challenged.

Falling into habits that cannot be questioned is the enemy of creativity. By diversifying, exploring different art forms, meeting new people, visiting new environments, for example, we ignite our creativity.

Ageing can be anything but a barrier to creativity and, indeed, many of our citizens only take, or have the opportunity to take, their first creative steps after retirement or in their latter years. Many artists flourish or have flourished as they have aged. We are all familiar with Picasso but, closer to home, Limerick-born Joe Quilty, who painted most of his life, established his reputation and found acceptance as an artist at the age

of sixty-four. In 1978, at what in those days might have been considered a late stage in life, he made his first, tentative approach to an art gallery, Kenny's in Galway. Impressed with his work, Kenny's agreed to host an exhibition of Quilty's work to great acclaim. Proving that age is no barrier to creativity, Quilty had an impressive total of four one-man exhibitions in Kenny's between the ages of sixty-four and his sad passing at eighty-one. His work continues to be exhibited worldwide.

The joy of creativity lies in pushing personal boundaries, gaining new knowledge, feeling new experiences, experimenting and leaving one's comfort zone. In the quest for a more creative society, I encourage Irish people of every age and across generations to break out of their comfort zones, their old routines and, by doing so, ignite their creativity.

By taking part in Bealtaine, you join a community, you are part of a new network, you are already expanding your boundaries. This year, in light of 2012 being European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, you are focusing on bringing different generations together in exploring your theme of 'What kind of old do you want to be?'. During my campaign for the Presidency, I saw intergenerational solidarity in action, with older and younger people expressing concern for the suffering of other generations. We now need to put practical programmes and actions in place to encourage this solidarity. For example, during the month of May, I would like to see teachers, educators and active citizenship leaders throughout Ireland borrowing the question 'What kind of old do you want to be?', putting it to their students (both young and old) and exploring their answers. This small action could, I believe, lay some groundwork in fostering what I have referred to as 'intergenerational intelligence' or the process of putting oneself in the shoes of a different age-group. This 'intergenerational intelligence' will, in turn, create and enhance solidarity as generations learn to respect and admire each other.

Ireland can, with inclusive citizenship and a creative society, be a beautiful, peaceful and magnificent country within which to grow older. We are privileged in that we have not experienced extreme climatic events such as earthquakes or tsunamis. We have been through the Celtic Tiger and are now dealing with the consequences of a society that became, at times, focused on valuing people on the basis of their ability for amassing material wealth. We are, however, lucky to be in this country and, as a result, enjoying certain levels of freedom that other cultures can only dream of. Nevertheless, we can improve the situation of older people in Ireland by embracing a vision of a society for all the ages - a society that strives to create the best possible environment for growing older, a truly 'age-friendly society' in the fullest sense and meaning. This is the kind of society within which I wish to grow older. Focusing every member of society, communities, policy makers, our old and our young on the answers to the question 'What kind of old do you want to be?' is the first step in the process of creating that vision.

President Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann

Wandering in Rathfarnham Castle

Time in Print Project, photo: Anand Chhabra

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has a responsibility to protect and conserve Ireland's built heritage. While heritage is something that people implicitly value, it also has something to tell us. Every cut stone, every piece of old furniture, every cloth and curtain can tell us something about who we are and where we came from. This is the starting point for a fascinating project running in Rathfarnham Castle.

Artists Linda Florence and Maeve Clancy are working with a group of people who live in the Rathfarnham area on a project called 'Wandering Methods: Explorations by Slow Craft'. The group are learning craft skills from the two artists, as well as delving into the history of the Castle building and their own associations and histories of the Rathfarnham area. The shared creative process will animate the historic building, exploring the layering of time, history and heritage.

Taking its cue from the 'slow food' movement, this is a 'slow art' project, taking time to get people thinking, questioning and reflecting collectively. It also honours the resurgence of making and crafting for pleasure. This project has been developed by the Bealtaine festival and Craftspace in Birmingham in association with the OPW.

An exhibition emerging from 'Wandering Methods' will be shown in Rathfarnham Castle during Bealtaine. The exhibition will run from 23rd May and is free to the public. The opening hours of the Castle are Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays from 10am to 5.30pm. Last admission is 4.30pm. Please note that parts of the Castle are not suitable for people with limited mobility. If you have any concerns, contact the Castle before visiting on (01) 493 9462.

OPW
The Office of Public Works
Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí

Craftspace

Linda Florence produces bespoke hand-printed wallpaper and installation artwork using a mixture of traditional and new technologies. Clients include the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Jerwood Space, Swarovski, The National Trust, Ted Baker and Penguin. She has won multiple design awards including a British Design Award and is currently visiting professor at Weißensee Kunsthochschule, Berlin and senior lecturer at Central Saint Martins, London.

Maeve Clancy is a Dublin-based artist and writer. She produces comics, illustration and animation in cut paper, ink and pop-up. She has created paper cut-out artwork for music video, exhibition and once-off installation. She writes and draws a weekly webcomic 'Flatmates' and is currently working on 'Inheritance', a graphic novel set in Dublin and Berlin.

Craftspace is a crafts development organisation based in Birmingham, pushing boundaries and perceptions of crafts practice, presentation and learning. They build relationships between artists, people and organisations, and their ideas explore crafts in diverse social and cultural settings.

Songs at Sunrise

Imagine waking up and heading to a scenic spot nearby where you can raise your voice in joy and celebration with others. Sound good? Well you can join the groups all over the country taking part in the annual Bealtaine Dawn Chorus.

The Dawn Chorus is about taking part. It happens all over Ireland where a local active retirement group, a choir or even just a group of individuals come together in their area to sing early on the last Sunday of May. It's not about divas or even being a stalwart of the local choir; it's about joining with others in your community and just being part of something special. Dawn Chorus groups choose a scenic spot in the locality, ideally beside water, as the setting.

Lana McNamara is based outside Donegal Town and was the organiser for the last two years of her local Bealtaine Dawn Chorus. Why did she get involved in Dawn Chorus? "I love a sing-along and what better way to do it."

The location chosen was the Harvey's Point Hotel on the shores of Lough Eske and at the foot of the Bluestack Mountains. This setting inspired the choice of nature songs such as 'The Lark in the Clear Air', 'The Mountains of Mourne' and 'The Hills of Donegal'.

Over 70 people from all over Donegal took part including choir members from the Donegal Tenors, Abbey Singers and local church choirs as well as willing individuals who came along and were given song sheets. "It's fulfilling, seeing how others got involved," said Lana.

"Each year, about midway through the preparation, I swore to myself - never again," says John O'Keeffe, Chairman of Carlow Active Retirement Association, "but the positive response makes it all worthwhile and I wanted to do it again; the bug gets into you". Carlow's 2011 Dawn Chorus featured African drummers, a pipe band, a 50-foot water feature created by the Carlow Fire Brigade, the straw boys, local children dancing around a maypole as well as singing. People came for the party atmosphere: "Singing on your own is nice, with a group can be uplifting but, with such a large group, is something really special, a wonderful feeling".

This year, The Royal Irish Academy of Music has worked with Bealtaine to help you warm up and improve those vocal chords. Look out for videos appearing on bealtaine.com that will lead you through vocal exercises.

Dawn Chorus at Terminal 2 in Dublin Airport, photo: Photocall Ireland

On Sunday, 27th May, locations include:

Cork - Kinsale Dawn Chorus at the Spanish Galleon, opposite Acton's Hotel on Pier Rd at 7am; Fota House Dawn Chorus in the gardens at the front at 8.30am.

Donegal - Donegal Town at Lough Eske at Harvey's Point at 7am.

Dublin - Dollymount Dawn Chorus on the strand accessed via the wooden bridge at 7am; Rathcoole Dawn Chorus in Rathcoole Park at 7am; Ringsend Dawn Chorus at Ringsend Library (on 23rd at 10.30am); Dublin Airport Dawn Chorus Terminal 2 at 8am.

Louth - Ardee Active Retirement and Moorehall Lodge Retirement Village on the grounds of Moorehall Lodge Retirement Village at 9am; Carlingford Harbour at Carlingford Sailing Club at 6-7am.

Mayo - Ballina's Moy Singers at the New Bridge overlooking the River Moy at 5.15am.

Waterford - Dunmore East on patio at side of The Strand Inn, also at Harney's Hill at 8am; Waterford City Dawn Chorus at William Vincent Wallace Plaza on the quay at 7am.

Wexford - Crossabeg Over 55 Club Dawn Chorus on the riverbank at the Ferrycarrig Hotel at 7am.

Wicklow - Avoca Dawn Chorus at 7am.

For more locations, see bealtaine.com

Cultural Companions

"It's been great being part of something like Cultural Companions. I can't believe it hasn't been done before... For me, it's just great now knowing what's going on from month to month. When I think of all the shows that I've missed over the years because I didn't know they were on. I've met some really nice people over the past few months and there is a small group of us who now phone each other all the time and go to various shows together or even meet up for a coffee sometimes. What I wanted to get from Cultural Companions was to meet new people and get out more. It's that simple for me."

Marie Ryan, Cultural Companion

Cultural Companions began only last year as a pilot in Cork and Dublin and yet it already has over 200 people, like Marie Ryan, taking part. Its nomination for an Allianz Business to Arts Award within its first year is a signal of its success so far. The energy and excitement that has built up around Cultural Companions keeps driving the project forward and has ensured that Bord Gáis Foundation is supporting the project for a second year. "It is vitally important, as the country inevitably gets older, that we concentrate on what is good for the community. I hope that Cultural Companions is the start of something very special, very new and, for us in Bord Gáis and in the Foundation, we're delighted to be associated with it" says Chief Executive John Mullins.

Age & Opportunity, who instigated it, put its success down to the fact that the people who get involved have a lot of say in the project. From the beginning, participants help to guide and shape how the project proceeds and what kinds of events people can attend.

At the same time, the project is bringing the Companions to events and venues that they've never been to before. It is getting people to cinemas, galleries, festivals, concerts, musicals as well as to tours of monuments and cultural institutions. Many of the Companions are developing a 'let's give it a go' attitude, which is good news for venues that are attracting this new audience.

Bealtaine Ambassador Paddy Moloney has been an enthusiastic supporter of Cultural Companions. He sees making the effort to connect with other people as fundamental to the whole cultural experience and it has been something he, personally, has done throughout his career: "A lot of musical friends I knew would never come out of the house. I used to love to go and find these people to see how they played, what was their musicianship". His cultural life has been the better for going and finding these people: "Over my fifty years of buzzing around the country, I've managed to hear some great stories and I think of the great characters I've met." It has been that chance to connect to other people that has made such a difference. Paddy and the Chieftains are playing the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre on the 29th.

People get involved in Cultural Companions for different reasons. Some would attend events on their own but they find the chance to go with others a different kind of pleasure. There are others, of course, who admit that they

Paddy Moloney at The Union League of Philadelphia, Photo courtesy of James Higgins Photography

are very uncomfortable about attending events alone. They concede that they probably miss lots of things because of the lack of someone to go with. For them, Cultural Companions is a godsend.

The first step to getting involved is to talk to someone in the Cultural Companions office. "Even when people ring up making general enquiries about Age & Opportunity, when they hear about Cultural Companions, they nearly hop at it they're so keen,' says June Welsh from Age & Opportunity, who takes many of those calls. "After that, they fill out a form to become part of Cultural Companions and we send them out a Cultural Companions Event Guide and general information sheet. They can get back to us and book events from there. It's very straightforward and has worked very well so far."

"This year, it's all about moving from a small pilot project into a more established network, so it's a busy and exciting time for us," says Cultural Companions Programme Manager Emma Connors. "We've been planning and working with our new Advisory Panel to launch our next phase in the National Concert Hall with a 'welcome back' event, a lunchtime concert on the life of Edith Piaf. With over 50 Companions already booked in, it should be quite the celebration."

Cultural Companions is an Age & Opportunity initiative funded by Bord Gáis Foundation. To find out more about Cultural Companions, contact June Welsh on (01) 805 7709 or go to bealtaine.com for more details.

BORD GÁIS Foundation

Let's Talk About It

We've all had to face a 'talking to' from our parents at some point in our lives. Staying out late, the smell of cigarettes or "You're not going out in that!" have usually been the prelude to some difficult words. For many of us, we have become that parent, trying to keep our own children on the straight and narrow. But what about the words we now have to have with our own parents as they age?

This is something writer and performer Donna Rutherford explores in her play, 'Kin', which will be touring as part of Bealtaine. 'Kin' looks at the fear, sorrow, anger, guilt and frustration but also the love, trust and laughter to be found as adult children negotiate the changes with their ageing parents. As she is in her early forties, Rutherford talks about what it feels like to be a child who is no longer one of 'the young ones' and how this has changed the dynamic in her relationship with her parents.

Six actors, including Alison Peebles and members of theatre companies Forced Entertainment, Reckless Sleepers and Quarantine, chat intimately with the audience about their family dynamics, with video clips interspersed depicting each of them spending time with their parents.

'Kin' began as an audio project in Glasgow, where Rutherford erected 'listening posts' in doctors' waiting rooms. The posts played clips of conversations between parents and their adult children. The snippets were used to prompt listeners to spark up conversations on topics which may have previously been discreetly avoided. "It's looking at the unspoken and the unsaid, or the small things that are difficult to broach," says Rutherford.

The play does bring up what constitute difficult topics for people in this situation as either the parent or the adult child. While we can all think of the issues around death and serious illness, conversations also start with things like "How much are you spending on scratch-cards?" or "Did you even see that traffic light?" or "What do you mean you are moving in with such and such? I didn't even know you were seeing each other."

Topics around sex, mental health, gambling, drugs need to be handled sensitively, no matter what age people are at, but when and how do you start the conversation? What approach should you take? One thing is for sure, these conversations need to happen and it is best not to bury our heads in the sand. While nobody wants to feel uncomfortable or cause upset, some conversations need to take place. Seeing 'Kin' might be a good place to start. As George Bernard Shaw put it: "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

In May, 'Kin' is touring as part of the Bealtaine festival to the following venues: Roscommon Arts Centre (3rd); Half Moon Theatre, Cork Opera House (4th); Áras Éanna, Inis Oírr, Aran Islands (6th); Liberty Hall, Dublin (8th); Droichead Arts Centre, Drogheda (9th).

The 'Kin' tour is supported by Creative Scotland, the Arts Council and Age & Opportunity. 'Kin' was originally created with support from Creative Scotland's Partners Fund in collaboration with CCA & NHSGGS.

'Kin' by Donna Rutherford, photo: Roddy McIntosh

Poetry

Two established Australian poets, Paul Hetherington and Petra White, have been selected to represent Australia and participate in the Bealtaine festival. This initiative is presented by Australian Poetry and is due to the generous support of the Australia Council.

Hetherington has eight collections of poetry. He is a former director of publishing at the National Library of Australia, is a founder and former Chair of the ACT Writers Centre. He publishes the online poetry journal 'Axon'.

White's first published collection, 'The Incoming Tide', was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and the ACT Poetry Prize. She co-edits 'So Long Bulletin'.

They are running three workshops (Dublin's Pearse St Library, 17th and 18th) and reading in the National Library of Ireland (21st), the Red Stables, St Anne's Park (22nd) and the Central Library, ILAC Centre (23rd). Contact Bealtaine on 01 805 7709 for more details.

Also of interest during the festival, Poetry Ireland, in association with the OPW, is running a series of Bealtaine workshops in the beautiful surroundings of Farmleigh for unpublished poets.

Over 80 libraries are taking part in Bealtaine. Find out more at your branch.

Scorpion

Our difficulties lighted us as we were swayed
from the path we had adhered to for so long.
You claimed, 'However hard, this makes us strong,'
and light danced whimsy in your crying eyes.

We had found love again, as underneath a stone,
come upon unlooked-for, like a scorpion,
beautiful and dangerous that thrilled
dancing in the sunlight, tail curled.

Paul Hetherington

From 'The Dancing Scorpion' (Molonglo Press, 1993).
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Australian Government | Australia Council for the Arts | Australian Poetry

Here's One We Made Earlier

Fruitcake at Ballyfermot Library, photo: Jeff Harvey

Alice Barry, writer and director of Fruitcake, talks about the play and her experience of touring with it during Bealtaine 2011.

"I was commissioned by Meath County Council in 2010 to write a play specifically for Bealtaine to tour to libraries, care settings and community centres. The idea of having a cookery demonstration fitted all criteria and I set about writing a piece that would show how to bake a fruitcake, a recipe that my mother handed down to me.

The character of Della Dolan took on a life of her own, and her strong character and the ingredients led me along a storyline that I didn't have in mind when I started. The character of Cora Casey, who really drives the play, is loosely based on a nanny I had as a child. We called her Nana and I still have great respect for her, even though she is long dead. If I ever question my conscience and wonder about a decision I must make, I ask myself what Nana O'Brien would do.

The play has toured to over 25 venues. Every venue was a unique experience, and the positive feedback and audience reaction is motivating us to bring the play to an even wider audience.

Mary McEvoy is superb in the show and was onboard immediately after reading the first draft of the script. In some cases, it seemed that the audience were expecting a cookery demonstration by 'Biddy' but it is testament to Mary's great skill as an actor that, very soon, they are only aware of Della and the intriguing story she is weaving.

In May, Fruitcake will travel to Civic Theatre, Tallaght (8th); Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire (10th); King House, Boyle (11th); St John's Theatre and Arts Centre, Listowel (18th); Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare (19th); Tech Amergin, Waterville (19th).

Silence is Golden

Who would have predicted that silent cinema would come back into fashion? 'The Artist' has become one of cinema's unlikeliest critical hits of the last twelve months. Showered with awards including prizes at Cannes, the Golden Globes and, of course, five Oscars including Best Picture, it has already made over three times its budget. It's hard to believe that 85 years after Al Jolson's 'The Jazz Singer' launched the age of the talkies, this silent film is the toast of Hollywood. What brought people to the cinema was a tale without words, beautifully told.

Now, as part of the Bealtaine festival, you can see Theatre Ad Infinitum's award winning play 'Translunar Paradise'. Like 'The Artist', it avoids words and uses live accordion music, mime and mask to tell the story of a long love affair, happy marriage and the bittersweetness of its end.

Taking its title from Yeats' 'The Tower', 'Translunar Paradise' is about loss and memory. The company's skill and delicacy makes silence speak volumes about the love and loss of the main character.

The play begins with an older man, now alone after the death of his wife, moving back in time to their lives together, from first meeting to final parting.

So, what is it about both 'The Artist' and 'Translunar Paradise' that have appealed to audiences? One theory is that their counterintuitive successes is not in spite of what they have left out but because of the removal of clutter in order to focus on a good story well told, with winning performances and ample charm. They champion values such as simplicity and authenticity.

The skill of the artists that made these works demonstrate that going back to basics in this way can result in something that transcends its particular origins to achieve universal appeal.

In May, 'Translunar Paradise' will travel to the Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo (21st); Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire (22nd); White Memorial Theatre, Clonmel (23rd); Cork Opera House (24th); Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge (25th); and the George Bernard Shaw Theatre, Carlow (26th).

Described by The Guardian as "a beautiful miniature", 'Translunar Paradise' is a co-production with The Lowry, Salford Quays, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) & BE Festival, Birmingham and The Ustinov, Bath.

Scene from 'Translunar Paradise', photo: Alex Brenner

Bridging the Generation Gap
– Robert and Rachel Ballagh

In this European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, we spoke to Irish artists Robert and Rachel Ballagh, who are also father and daughter. In conversation with Bealtaine, they talk about creativity, their relationship and, for Rachel, what it was like growing up in a 'creative household'.

An only child, Robert says he had a "conventional, happy childhood". His was a sporty family. His father played tennis and cricket for Ireland, as well as rugby for Leinster. His mother represented Ireland in hockey. As a young boy, Robert's first taste of art came from trips to the library with his father, where he liked to spend his time on books with pictures, which were mostly about art. So, by the age of 12, he had picked up a basic knowledge of art history.

Rachel remembers their home as very creative, but Robert is keen to explain that "creativity was not compulsory in our home but, due to my profession, my children, Rachel and Bruce, were constantly exposed to art and conversations about art. We always encouraged our children's endeavours and, if they were cultural or otherwise, so much the better." Rachel says that, for her, it meant "a lot of gallery visits, exhibition openings, and meeting various members of the creative community". She feels that her family provided her "with a great sense of freedom; self-expression was always encouraged". But she didn't feel her upbringing was any different from her friends: "I think most children assume that their life is perfectly normal – I was no different in that regard."

Rachel believes her father provided her with great "support and access to materials which I was always borrowing, sometimes to my father's great annoyance". Rachel was always interested in art; however this did not mean that it was inevitable that she would become an artist herself. "As a child, I wanted to work in the monkey house in the zoo, and the list changed every week".

It was obvious to Robert that Rachel possessed artistic ability from a young age. He could see that she drew very well, "and she still does" he is quick to point out. "When she was very young, she entered a drawing of monkeys for an art competition run by Fota Wildlife Park. She won a prize and we went down to Cork for the prize-giving. She received the prize - a bike - which was presented to her by the

Robert Ballagh, 'Two People with an Adolphe Gottlieb', courtesy of the artist.

then Taoiseach. However, she hated it, and said it was a silly girl's bike so she sold it and got one she really wanted."

Rachel reckons that being the child of an artist can offer "both difficulties and opportunities of equal standing". Being exposed to visual arts and the arts community from a young age can bring its own pressures compared to someone who grows up without a family background in art. Rachel says her father has been a great influence on her. In particular, Robert has passed on his "attention to detail". Father and daughter are in constant contact; as Rachel says, they have "great chats about their interests, artists and books". Robert agrees that they "talk a good deal about the visual arts, often giving out!"

Robert Ballagh is a Bealtaine Ambassador.

Taking part in 'Meet Me at MoMA', photo: Jason Brownrigg

Azure

"I sat down and critiqued one of the paintings that I saw. And that brought back things that I had studied, and that made me start thinking that at least I didn't lose everything that I was afraid I was losing."
Quote from a participant from 'Meet Me at MoMA'

In Ireland, dementia currently affects one person in twenty over 65. That's one family in every street coming to terms with and dealing day-to-day with the realities of some stage of dementia. According to Maurice O'Connell, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, "20% of carers find their role 'soul destroying' which makes the need for broader help and support from society for people and their carers so vital." One practical example of how society can help is to adapt services and experiences to meet the particular needs of people with dementia and their carers. A convivial, calm environment that accepts and aims to understand someone affected by dementia, and one that tailors its service as appropriate is the simple idea at the heart of 'Azure', a pilot project inspired by the New York Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) 'Meet Me at MoMA' programme.

"Within Bealtaine every year, we focus on specific groups of older people to encourage their increased access and participation. Last year, the Cultural Companions programme targeted less-connected older people and, this year, inspired by the worldwide success of the 'Meet Me at MoMA' programme, we have brought together key Irish partners to work on a project to reach older people with dementia and their carers. Access is a right, not a privilege. If you enjoyed something in the past, there shouldn't be any barriers to your continuing to enjoy rich and fulfilled cultural experiences in your later years, or to develop new interests. The arts provide fertile ground for imagination and 'real time' moments," says Age & Opportunity's Rebecca McLaughlin.

'Azure' is a partnership between Age & Opportunity, the Irish Museum of Modern

Art (IMMA), the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny and the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, to create an event for people with dementia and their carers. The Butler Gallery will host guided visits using specifically trained facilitators so that people with dementia and their carers have a positive, meaningful and enjoyable experience. The aim is to treat people not as 'patients' but as 'participants' in a safe, responsive and welcoming space. IMMA is hosting an international round-table discussion on what issues this type of working brings up.

While being more 'dementia aware' is a good thing for all services, from restaurants through to the social welfare office, 'Azure' is aiming to do more than that. As with 'Meet Me at MoMA', the project is about stimulating engagement and memory. It is about valuing what people with dementia think and what they have to say. It is also about providing something emotionally uplifting that can contribute not just to the person's quality of life but to improving the relationship between people with dementia and their carers. The arts can make that difference. As Francesca Rosenberg of MoMA says: "Part of our goal is to act as a catalyst for change. We would like to help people affected by the disease think differently about the possibilities for a life with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia." She explains that "we have learned that engagement with art offers participants an opportunity to enhance their quality of life through mental stimulation, communication, personal growth and social connectedness." Rosenberg supports the possibilities of 'Azure': "MoMA commends the Bealtaine festival for developing 'Azure', as it will enable cultural institutions to develop programming that meets the needs of individuals with memory loss."

To find out more about 'Azure', contact Rebecca McLaughlin in Age & Opportunity on (01) 853 5179.

Anne Basting has been working in creative engagement with people with dementia since 1996 in the US. Basting believes that this "enables you to tap immediately into the core of emotional human connection". When asked what impact this work had on her work as an artist and educator, Basting says "It is profound work, from which I have benefited enormously as an artist and a human being. I am more observant. I am more deeply connected to people in the moment. I am less worried about the future."

Basting is a key speaker at the Bealtaine Conference 'Creating a New Old', where she will be discussing 'The Penelope Project', 2009-2011. The project involved a series of intergenerational improvisational and creative discussions, about the myth of Penelope, which took place across an entire care setting. The discussions led to a collaboratively devised and performed play, called 'Finding Penelope', staged inside the care setting for an outside audience.

Creating a New Old:
A global conference on creative ageing

The Bealtaine festival is an Irish success story - a unique and groundbreaking celebration of creativity as we age. Its success has inspired similar festivals around the world. The most well-established is Gwanwyn in Wales, which will be joined by Scotland this September. Parts of Germany and Australia are also developing festivals based on the Bealtaine model. It is, therefore, appropriate that people are looking to Ireland for a place to come and share their ideas about creative ageing as part of 'Creating a New Old', the Bealtaine conference.

The conference is running over three days, 8th to 10th May, in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin, and is one of the Irish flagship events celebrating EY2012: the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It is showcasing international best practice, innovation and opportunities relating to ageing from the arts and culture sectors.

The question of how we age is up for discussion all over the world. According to the United Nations, life expectancy is projected to increase globally by 10 years over the next 50 years. In Ireland, if present trends continue, it is likely that the average life expectancy for men and women will be 85 years before 2050. It is clear that the role of older people in our society will be significant.

The theme of the conference, 'Creating a New Old', asks us to think about the kind of world we want to grow older in and how creativity can make a difference. The key speakers, including Susan Langford, Liz Lerman, François Matarasso, Eamon O'Shea, Susan Perlstein and Mike White, are experts in creative ageing and will be giving talks based on their particular areas of interest.

At the heart of the conference are the two key topics for discussion: the potential that creative activity can provide in offering people dignity and independence as they age; and how this creative activity can contribute to society.

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon funding the arts artscouncil.ie
bealtainefestival celebrating creativity as we age
age & opportunity Promoting greater participation by older people
meetinireland.com

Mary Russell from the 'Blow the Dust off Your Trumpet' orchestra, photo: John Ohle

The conference will also look at: the health benefits of the arts and creativity to the older person; how a creative approach will be needed when designing and planning our living environment in the future; ways to develop and maintain partnerships between older people and creative professional groups, policy makers and service providers; building an international network that deals with creative policy in response to an ageing demographic.

To find out more about the conference, check out bealtaine.com/conference.

Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme
OPW The Office of Public Works Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí
Fáilte Ireland National Tourism Development Authority
ASHLING HOTEL DUBLIN
Supported by The Baring Foundation
European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012

Liz Lerman

Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, educator and speaker. Described by the Washington Post as "the source of an epochal revolution in the scope and purposes of dance art," her dance/theatre works have been seen throughout the United States and abroad. She is the author of 'Teaching Dance to Senior Adults' and 'Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process'.

Liz on...

... personal change

"It's an interesting time as I recently handed Dance Exchange to the next generation of artists. This has provided me with an opening to new ways of working. It is interesting to see someone of my age doing that and this is what I want to talk about at the conference. I don't know if there are misconceptions about older people but, in my experience, I think there's a riskiness that people are willing to take at an older age and I also want to look at that."

... 'high art'

"Certainly some people in the arts can look down on the whole idea of working with older people and making them part of the artistic experience, seeing it as 'a good thing to do but not really art'. I think that's shifting as there are so many more people doing it. In the US, there are a large number of working artists in their 60s, 70s and 80s and I think that is having a big impact.

I actually think artists do live in tiered systems - we're trained that way - but I operate as if we don't. We don't have to live that way; we are better off if we don't behave that way. I have flipped that tiered system on its side my whole life and will keep doing. To explain, when my company performed in special theatres such as the Kennedy Centre, some people might say that's 'up on top' and say 'down at the bottom' is my work in nursing homes. Or they would flip and say that the work in nursing homes is great work and put the Kennedy Center at the bottom and say 'why does anyone want to do elite arts anymore? It's old, it's nonsense!' I look at both of those pictures with enormous distress, because I don't want to choose and I don't think I should choose. What I do is flip it on its side and make a big long horizontal line. I put the Kennedy Centre at one end and put the nursing home at the other but they each enjoy my respect and my commitment. It turns out, when I do that, all kinds of very interesting things happen. I am able to see that my art has tremendous impact in so many more ways."

... on learning from that 'horizontal line'

"It has meant that I understand and experience my own art much more deeply because, if you keep yourself in the concert venue, you can, to some extent, be enslaved by the trends, style and aesthetics of that genre and that cuts out a lot of what's powerful in art. But if you only spend your time in nursing homes, you can find yourself not necessarily challenging yourself over time. I like to do both."

… on 'Creating a New Old'

"There isn't anything like it in the United States. I think it's pretty rare. There's gatherings and conferences but bringing together so many practitioners is unique. It's way ahead of its time. I feel there are going to be more conferences like it around the world if the demographics keep going like they are."

François Matarasso

François Matarasso is a writer interested in how people create, receive and interact with culture. His current work, 'Regular Marvels', explores the margins of contemporary cultural life, such as amateur music and the experiences of artists in older age. He has worked with cultural organisations in 35 countries and undertaken influential practice-led research into participation in the arts. He is a Council Member of Arts Council England.

François on…

… agency

"I'm interested in older people as artists, as creators, as autonomous agents in the world. Much of the discourse around ageing is explicitly or implicitly concerned with need, loss, lack and demand. No one should be defined only by what they need: everyone has something to give. We can take art with us, even when we let go of, or are failed by, other parts of what makes us who we are: a job, wealth, health, family or social networks. We may become physically dependent but we can remain creatively, imaginatively independent."

… what the arts do

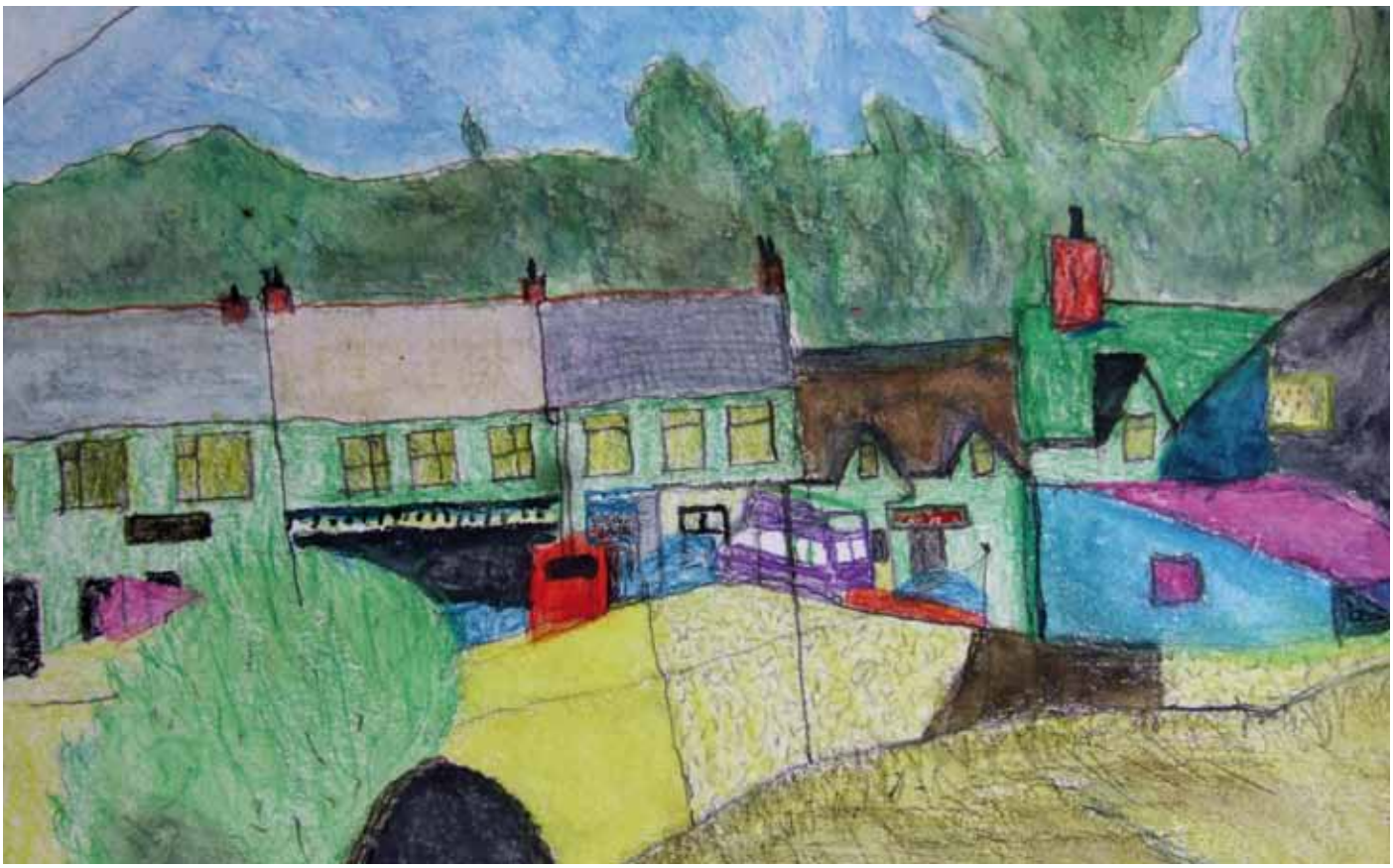
"The arts allow us to explore our experiences, to compare and test them with other people's experiences and perceptions. They stretch our imaginations and build our capacity for empathy. They entertain and amuse us. They challenge us to do more, better than we thought we could. They inspire and move us. They give us speech and something to say. They accompany us on our journey through life, enriching every step, providing comfort when we want it and something more abrasive when we need it. Isn't that enough?"

… on the impact of the arts

"I have used the word 'impact' in the past but I now think it's an inappropriate concept for the arts. It implies an active thing changing a passive thing, or worse, a force striking an object. I don't think art is ever like that. Art is always an interaction between a creator and re-creator. Creativity and the arts only exist in people. Society only exists in people. They interact, constantly, in infinite, complex, unforeseeable and not always understandable ways."

… on Bealtaine

"I'm looking forward to experiencing, at first hand, one of Ireland's – and Europe's – great cultural events."



Artwork by Paddy McGrath, 2011, taken from the book 'HEARTH - Art for Older People at Home' by Breda Mayock

Bringing It All Back Home

In her encounter with ninety-year-old Peter in a care setting over ten years ago, Deirdre Walsh realised that "age or infirmity do not hinder creativity".

"Peter inhabited a silent world. Words were lost. When he was given an opportunity for creative expression through painting, in a safe non-judgemental environment, he made a powerful statement." Many people like Peter, who are in care settings throughout Mayo, found a voice through artistic expression. Their work was fuelled by a lifetime of experience and observation. Painting opened a window where they could look back and look forward with new eyes. Their work was treated with dignity and respect. Quality artist materials and professional framing were paramount. The powerful creative voices in these settings were the inspiration for a project called 'Hearth'.

Circumstances can put many older people into a solitary place where time is long and loneliness can breed. Rural Mayo is home to many people who now find themselves alone. For some, the isolation

may be welcome after a busy life. For many, however, confined to the house, some days and nights go on forever. The 'Hearth' project aims to address this isolation through creativity.

In 2009, artists Breda Mayock and Deirdre Walsh set up 'Hearth'. It was funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies and South West Mayo Leader and based at Ballina Arts Centre. Three artists, who had already been mentored by Walsh on previous programmes with older people, were employed to work in people's houses. They were introduced to older people with the help of Community Care Teams which comprised of GPs and Public Health Nurses.

Introducing art to older people's lives within their own homes can transform days and nights into a positive and meaningful experience. Their own hearth can become a space to explore creativity and embark on a new journey. A weekly visit from the professional artist enables the older person to face 'a blank canvas'. They become artistic comrades, sharing the ups and downs of the creative journey. The experience is enhanced by the use of professional materials. The work is treated with dignity and it is raised above the notion of a mere 'pastime'.

'Hearth' suggests a place that is safe from the judging eye of the world. It is a place where imaginings leap from the fire, where stories, dreams and hopes have woven their way into the fabric of life. It is a place of quiet reflection, where life can be dismantled, contemplated and put back together again. It is a safe place, a natural studio where the visiting artist and the new artist's paths cross.

Bridie Quinn, one of the project's participants, had this to say about 'Hearth':

"The involvement in the process of painting increases one's awareness. Each time you make a mistake, it enhances your critical mind. Each time I look out at the sky and horizon, I see things that I never noticed before."

She adds that **"the programme has enriched my life and increased my awareness of creation. It makes me reflect. I become tranquil - observing nature and using colour makes me calm. I realise that education is a seamless garment. There is so much learning in looking around you. If I feel fed up on a Sunday morning, the first thing I do is take out the paints. I become absorbed. You can't be sad when you look at nature. The painting makes you focus. You discover new colours in the land. Once the mountains seemed to be brown – now there is a myriad of colours. The painting never lets you be sad."**

A number of people recovering from stroke now focus on what they can do as opposed to what they can't do. This is evident in the words of Paddy, who had a stroke: **"I never believed I could do this with my left hand. When I finish a piece, I wonder how I did it. It breaks the monotony. There is always an element of surprise. It takes my mind off what I can't do."**

Copies of the book 'HE**ART**H' are available by contacting bredamayock@gmail.com

As I Roved Out Online

Michael Fortune and Aileen Lambert have always been good at finding solutions to obstacles they might face in their work. During the Wild Bees' Nest, a Bealtaine festival project that invited traditional singers to research old songs and write new ones, they needed a solution. Singer Michéal Marrinan was based down in Dungarvan and yet they needed him to attend meetings with the other singers. They used internet phone system Skype so that he could 'attend' the meetings without leaving Waterford. Both Fortune and Lambert are au fait with technologies and with building online communities, but they're also interested in traditional media, in heritage and the other older forms through which we connect.

'As I Roved Out' is a project that emerged out of that link between technology and tradition. It is based on researching and composing new songs in the traditional style on the theme of roving and rambling. Due to the geographic spread of the singers, an online blog has been used by participants so that they can share their song ideas, research and progress, and provide feedback between meetings. The singers also met up face-to-face to research in the National Library of Ireland and the Irish Traditional Music Archive, and to discuss the development of their songs and airs with their peers. Singers involved include: Jerry O'Reilly, John Tunney, Brigid Tunney, Cliona Ni Suilleabhán, Brendan Kennedy, Larry Joy, Roisín Gaffney and Dick Hogan.

The resulting songs will be premiered at a Bealtaine festival concert in May in the National Library (30th) as well as in the Góilín Traditional Singing Club in June. For further information on the project please visit the As I Roved Out website www.asirovedout.ie. The Wild Bees' Nest CD is being launched in the Góilín www.goilin.com (11th) and is also available from the Wild Bees' website www.thewildbeesnest.ie. The Wild Bees' Nest CD was supported by a Deis Recording Award from the Arts Council. 'As I Roved Out' is supported by the Arts Council in conjunction with Bealtaine, the National Library of Ireland and the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

Mick Fowler singing on Oulart Hill, Co. Wexford, March 2011 photo: Michael Fortune

Dance

Cassie Meador, Artistic Director of US Company Dance Exchange, in an interview last year, explained how their work in Portlaoise during Bealtaine 2008 influenced her own work: "We worked with about thirty active seniors and also worked with a lot of farmers and different people in the region... The questions that emerged there about how land had changed over time led me to [develop a dance piece about] my own community where I grew up in Georgia." Thanks to Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, as well as the MetLife Foundation, they will participate in 'Creating a New Old' and will have 'An Evening with Dance Exchange' in Liberty Hall, Dublin (10th) a free event where you can find out what all the buzz is about them.

CoisCéim Broadreach are creating a new show 'Wild & Wonderful'. The show, and the open dance classes that precede it are a partnership project between CoisCéim Broadreach, Dublin City Council's Arts, Sports & Leisure and Community Development Sections and Age & Opportunity's Go for Life.

Check out Best Foot Forward's intergenerational production in Waterford. Chrysalis Dance bring their dance performance exploring dementia to Lisburn, Blanchardstown, Carrick-on-Shannon and Galway. Go along and get involved with Creative Dance for Adults in Limerick, Myriad Dance in Wexford or Macushla in Dublin; these could be your dancing days.

Bealtaine Film Tour

access>CINEMA and the Irish Film Institute present the 2012 Bealtaine Film Tour. The tour has always brought great cinema to audiences all over the country. Here are the three treats you have in store for Bealtaine 2012:

My House In Umbria (2003)

Based on the novella by William Trevor, 'My House In Umbria' is set in the sprawling Italian countryside. After a tragic train accident, four survivors find solace in the villa of an English writer, Mrs Delahunty (Maggie Smith). The other survivors - an American girl, a British general and a young German - struggle to come to terms with the disaster, as an inspector tries to figure out exactly what happened. It was filmed on location in Tuscany and Rome.

Cork - Crosshaven Film Club (7th). **Dublin** - Bluebell Community Centre (16th); Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre (17th); Pictures Film Club (28th); Dolphin's Barn Library (30th). **Galway** – Cinemobile Portumna (27th). **Kerry** - Tralee Library (10th); Caherciveen Library (12th); St John's Theatre (15th). **Kildare** - Maynooth Film For All (1st); Riverbank Arts Centre (24th). **Laois** - Dunamaise Arts Centre (15th). **Limerick** - Belltable Arts Centre (2nd); Friars' Gate Theatre (25th). **Louth** - Droichead Arts Centre (29th). **Mayo** - Áras Inis Gluaire (11th); Ballina Film Club (18th); Linenhall Arts Centre (23rd). **Meath** – Solstice Arts Centre (23rd). **Monaghan** – Iontas Theatre (2nd). **Offaly** – Birr Theatre (22nd). **Roscommon** - King House Boyle (3rd); Roscommon Arts Centre (29th). **Tipperary** - Excel Arts and Cultural Centre (10th); Cloughjordan Cineclub (16th); County Museum (24th). **Waterford** - Garter Lane Arts Centre (29th). **Westmeath** - Tuar Ard Arts Centre (8th). **Wexford** - Wexford Arts Centre (9th). **Wicklow** - Courthouse Arts Centre (9th); Mermaid Arts Centre (21st).

Last Chance Harvey (2008)

A romantic drama, it focuses on two lonely people who tentatively forge a relationship over the course of three days. Divorced musician Harvey (Dustin Hoffman) travels to London for his daughter's wedding, and finds himself an outsider in his own family. At the same time, Kate (Emma Thompson) is on a date with a younger man, feeling out of place among his friends and contemplating a life of solitude, until a chance encounter...

Dublin - Irish Film Institute (2nd & 4th). **Kerry** - Tralee Library (9th). **Tipperary** - Cloughjordan Cineclub (20th). **Wexford** - Wexford Arts Centre (13th).

An American In Paris (1951)

In perhaps the greatest dance musical, Gene Kelly stars as a young artist who finds love on Paris' Left Bank. As well as the Gershwin songs and score, including the blissful ''S Wonderful', 'An American in Paris' is memorable for its famous climactic ballet sequence inspired by the work of Renoir, Dufy, Utrillo, Rousseau, Van Gogh, Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec. It was directed by Vincente Minnelli and winner of six Academy Awards including Best Film.

Donegal - Regional Cultural Centre (16th). **Dublin** - Dolphin's Barn Library (9th); The Base Ballyfermot (11th); Bluebell Community Centre (23rd); Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre (31st). **Galway** - Galway Film Society (April 30th); Gort Vibes Film Club (5th & 6th). **Kerry** - Kerry Film Club (3rd); Classic Cinema Listowel (11th); Caherciveen Library (11th). **Kildare** - Maynooth Film For All (22nd). **Limerick** - Belltable Arts Centre (9th). **Louth** - Droichead Arts Centre (1st); **Roscommon** - King House Boyle (25th). **Tipperary** - Cloughjordan Cineclub (30th); Nenagh Arts Centre (23rd); County Museum (17th). **Wexford** - Wexford Arts Centre (20th).

Above: Maggie Smith in 'My House in Umbria'; Below from left: Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson in 'Last Chance Harvey' and Gene Kelly in 'An American in Paris'

Further venues will be added. Look out for local listings or check bealtaine.com.

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Beauty is Skin Deep

'Ink' is a Bealtaine-commissioned photographic exhibition by Aidan Kelly which began in 2010 and explores why people tattoo their bodies. Kelly continues to add new subjects to the exhibition as it tours. He shares some thoughts here.

Above all, I'm in the storytelling business and this project is covered in great stories and characters. For me, the tattoo is only the start and it ends with listening and learning from someone that was once a stranger. All you have to do is have the courage to ask. Nine times out of ten, people will talk to you honestly when they see that you care and are interested.

Now that I've seen a great deal more tattoos during the course of 'Ink', I have found that I started getting more interested and, of course, noticing older people too. I'm more inquisitive than before; I now have a good reason to approach these older people. I'm recording a part of the world that is fascinating to me as an outsider.

There is a fascination on my part, as a photographer, about why people get markings. Look at the extent that the Japanese or Maori go to in order to mark their bodies; changing themselves for battle or coming of age. This includes large coverage, sometimes right across the face and beyond the 'cuffs and collars'. These marks are completely integral to their culture, a rite of passage in the hierarchy of the group.

Yet, even when I stand in the sunshine (and rain) on Hill 16, I see tattoos with incredible statements - they shout! "We are real Dubliners! This means everything to me, so much so I have marked the message onto my skin". These, too, are marks of belonging.

Through the 'Ink' exhibition, Kelly has also contributed to an intergenerational project as part of the LiFT Youth Arts Festival 2012, bringing together secondary school students and older people from the Ballymun area for workshops and discussions.

'Ink' is showing at the Axis Arts Centre, Ballymun from 26 March to 10 May with a workshop on Wednesday, 2 May. It will then move to the Old Markethouse Arts Centre, Dungarvan, Waterford 17 May to 27 June with a workshop on Wednesday, 23 May.

‘Philip McCarthy’ by Aidan Kelly.

Don't get it right, just get it written!

Rita Normanly has some sound advice for those of you longing to start writing.

"Don't get it right, just get it written" was how the writer James Thurber put it and I don't think it can be said any clearer. If you have a hankering to write, to try writing, to find out where to start, then I suggest you take a step towards it. If you know what it is you want to write, all you need is a pen and paper, or the electronic equivalent, and a quiet space. You may not even need the quiet space. I knew a woman with five young children who wrote regularly for a broadsheet, using a typewriter on the kitchen table. She used to cover it when she was making bread but, otherwise, it never left the table. I also know of a blind man who dictates poetry to a friend.

The point is, there's no magic about writing; a writer is simply someone who writes. As in everything, some people will do it with more ease or flair than others; some people will approach it with more self-belief or ambition. That doesn't mean that others cannot write. Some of the best writing I've heard will probably never be published but, because people wrote and shared their truths and I was lucky enough to hear, my experience of life is richer.

If you consider the view that our creative dreams and longings come from a divine source and that exploring our creativity is part of our purpose in life, then what a pity it would be not to push aside the fear and doubt a little and take a peek at what could lie beyond. Fear of getting it wrong, of making a mistake, of not being good enough, has stopped many a person from expressing themselves. It's sad to think that, for many people, their childhood experience of education has left them with that fear. But, as adults, we have choices and we can choose not to hide our light. Just think of how many stories and insights have been lost because someone thought their personal experience of life and their thoughts on it weren't worth recording.

Everybody doesn't have to be a Roddy Doyle or a Maeve Binchy, some people hide their private scribblings in the attic for future generations to find and

in between there are a hundred other ways to write. Emily Dickinson, the great American poet, had a very matter-of-fact view of her literary ability - "I don't profess to being profound," she said, "but I do lay claim to common sense."

Everything that you have seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled is yours to write about, to play with and rearrange as you wish, from your grandmother's shawl to your first kiss, from the smell of dancehall sweat to the ticking of a clock in a quiet room. If you are willing to explore, then find the space that feels right for you and begin.

Finding a few like-minded people can be a very good way to start and a good support. But, be aware that writing groups and writing workshops vary widely in their approach and structure. Some, in the name of being constructive, can in my view, be destructive for some people by taking apart new work and subjecting the writer to too much criticism too soon. On the other hand, some groups can be so safe and cosy that nobody dares to write anything other than nice pieces about new shoes or family Christmases where the only tension was about the gravy being a bit runny. There's nothing wrong with either group as long as that's what you want. What works for me lies somewhere between the two with clear rules and boundaries.

So don't be daunted. Remember that writing belongs to everybody. If you want to write, find the way that works for you or the group that works for you, and begin. And if you're still worried about getting it right or finding a starting point, you could try the advice of the poet Anne Sexton: "Put your ear down close to your soul and listen hard."

In Search of Kate O'Brien

Book-lover Eileen Griffiths shares her love of the work of Kate O'Brien.

My memories of Kate O'Brien are filtered through those of my mother, who, though five years younger, had grown up in the early decades of 20th century Limerick. In my youth, it was a source of wonder to me that so great a literary figure had had contacts, however tenuous, with our family. I loved to hear stories of this famous novelist: "Ah, did you once see Shelley plain".

Kate's sister Nance was married to Stephen O'Mara, Chairman of O'Mara's, where my grandfather, a booklover, worked as Company Secretary. Family lore had it that Kate discussed her early novels with him but, alas, only one of those precious volumes survives – 'The Ante Room', which I shall always treasure.

I loved the stories of life in Limerick in the Twenties, the musical evenings, the 'thé dansants', the tennis parties, the amateur dramatics. My mother showed me Kate's family home, Boru House and recalled a meeting once with Kate's father, Thomas O'Brien 'a fine figure of a man with lovely leather riding boots'. Another memory was when Nance, a teacher, married Stephen O'Mara, the small boys in her primary class, including my uncle Phons, collected some money for a small wedding present. The gift was duly dispatched together with a card 'To Miss O'Brien from the boys who paid' with the name of the payers duly listed. My mother who was an amateur actress spoke also of the time Kate came to see her play Mary Magdalen and told my grandfather that his daughter should be in the Abbey. Unfortunately, he did not agree!

As I grew older, I came to learn more about Kate through her books. My first encounter, however, was a disaster when my aunt discovered me, aged 9, absorbed in the opening pages of 'The Ante Room'. I had, of course, no understanding of the content but my poor alarmed aunt decided to consign the book to the highest bookshelves until I was older.

Since then, my admiration and enjoyment of her literary skills have increased over the years. 'Without My Cloak', published in 1931, but set back in the Limerick of 1860, is undoubtedly my favourite. Many Irish novelists have written of the Big House, the small town shopkeepers, the people of the countryside, but Kate O'Brien, uniquely, created an entire new social world in her depiction of the opulent higher middle class Catholic merchants of the late 19th century Limerick (Mellick). She chronicles their enclosed wealthy world in her portrayal of the wealthy Considine and Mulqueen families together with their world of riches, carriages, mahogany, gleaming silver, fine wine and costly jewellery. The rise of Anthony Considine and his progress to prosperous business echoes the career of Kate's own grandfather Thomas O'Brien, and her pride in his rise from dispossessed tenant farmer to an admired citizen of Limerick is expressed in 'Presentation Parlour'. She paints the Considine family with affection and is not afraid to portray their frailties with gentle irony but the humour is suffused with love for her characters and acceptance of their failings. Her love of family and city permeates the book.

In 1922, Kate spent a year in Spain as a governess, an experience recalled in her

Image courtesy of the Kate O'Brien Papers at the University of Limerick Glucksman Library

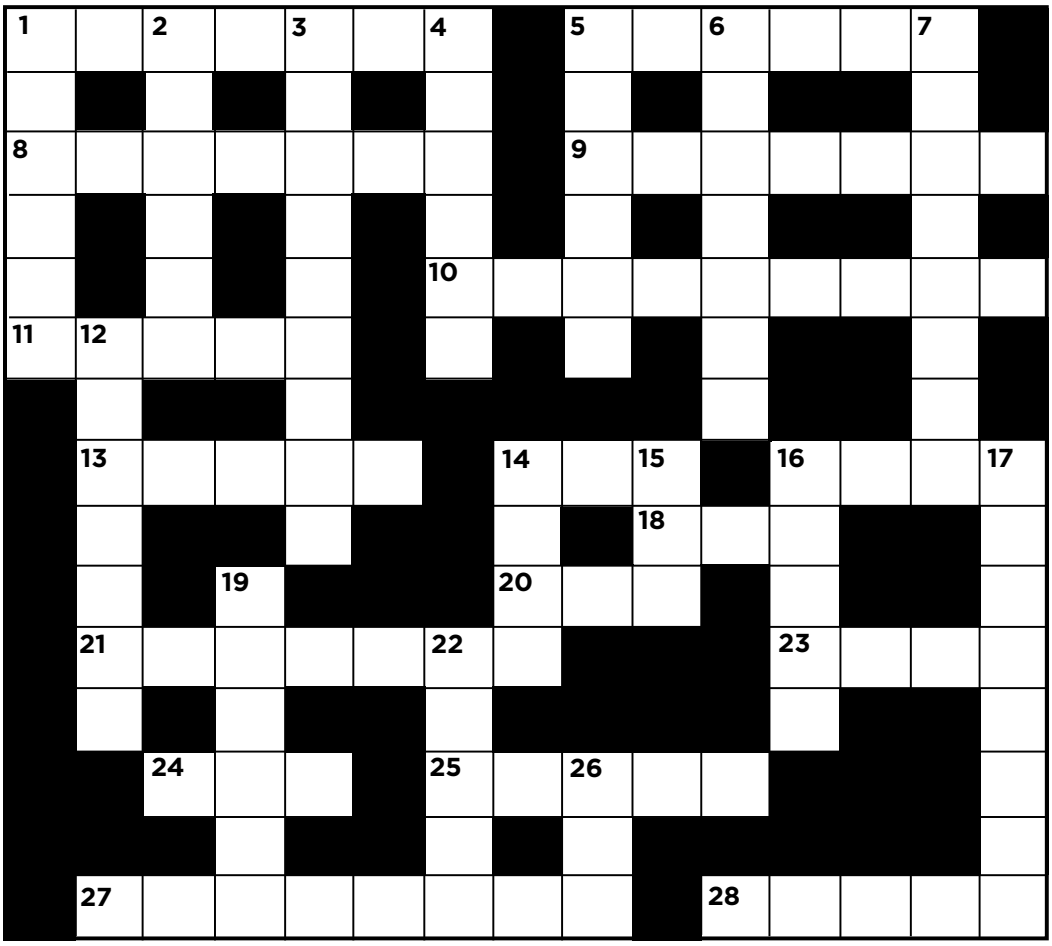
book 'Mary Lavelle'. Her love of Spain shines through again in 'Farewell Spain' and in the wonderful novel 'That Lady' set in the Spain of Philip II. This was adapted for the stage and was produced in the Gaiety Theatre in 1950 with Sheelagh Richards and Eddie Golden. My friend and I were released from our cloistered convent school to sit an examination in Dublin and, naturally, spent our one afternoon of liberty at the play. The raw passion displayed by Ana de Mendoza and her lover was an enlightening experience for us. I still remember our awe and elation on emerging from the theatre.

Her last novel, 'As Music and Splendour' (1958), brings us into the world of Rome and Italian Opera. My mother remembered being taken as a child to opera performances by the Joseph O'Mara Opera Company. Kate may have seen these performances also, particularly because of the family connection. Her sister Clare had a beautiful voice and she performed, as did one of my uncles, at charity functions in the city.

'Presentation Parlour' (1960) is a delightful insight into the family background and world of her youth and 'My Ireland' (1962) a paean of praise and love to her 'country and to her dear native place' – Limerick. Her literary works have created for her 'a monument more lasting than brass'. You will find the real Kate also in her beloved Limerick, in the sweep of the lordly Shannon past her sister's home near Sarsfield Bridge, in the gray stone of misericords of St Mary's Cathedral, in the brown brick Georgian terraces of Pery Square and adjoining streets, in the gentle golden curve of the Crescent, its symmetry unmarred by the recent closure of the much loved Jesuit Church and in the stately slope of O'Connell Avenue up to the Mount Convent, passing the road to Laurel Hill Convent and the Fathers' Church on the right.

Kate O'Brien's love of her family and of her native city is encapsulated in her musings in 'My Ireland' - "When I grow tired of stravaiging about Ireland, either in imagination or in my too, too solid flesh, I can turn towards Limerick, and feel relieved. I suppose that in relation to one's birthplace one has no sense of responsibility? Indeed, perhaps I might say that the shoe is on the other foot and that if Limerick made me and made me love her that is Limerick's funeral ... It was there that I began to view the world and to develop the necessary passion by which to judge it. It was there indeed that I learnt the world, and I know that wherever I am it is still from Limerick that I look out and make my surmises."

Crossword



Across

1. To refrain from (7)
5. Unit of depth, get to bottom of (6)
8. To direct or supervise (7)
9. 'Prometheus...', play by Shelley (7)
10. Exaggerate (9)
11. Fury (5)
13. '..... House', novel by Dickens (5)
14. Carriage for public hire (3)
16. Husks of cereal grain (4)
18. Brother of George Gershwin (3)
20. Permit, allow (3)
21. Uppercase letter (7)
23. 'Hey ....', Beatles song (4)
24. Lively dance (3)
25. Greek god of the underworld (5)
27. Setting for work of art or literature (8)
28. Should (5)

Down

1. Single-cell organism (6)
2. Looking (6)
3. Capital city of the Netherlands (9)
4. Ballymena-born actor Liam (6)
5. Long, straight woodwind instruments (6)
6. Hot sauce (7)
7. Province of Canada (8)
12. Opera by Verdi featuring Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves (7)
14. Beckon (4)
15. From the horse's mouth (3)
16. Stringed instrument (5)
17. Writer of fiction (8)
19. 'John .....', American author(6)
22. Detest (5)
26. Two music or entertainment performers (3)

Using the Directory

Here are the organisations involved at time of going to press. Look out for your county listings, go to bealtaine.com or call the Bealtaine office on 01 805 7709 to find out more details of events.

Antrim

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Age on Stage
Jane Waugh
0044 788 903 9520

Island Arts Centre
Box Office
048 92 509 254

Carlow

Arts / Culture / Heritage
George Bernard Shaw Theatre
Box Office
059 917 2400

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre
Marie McAssey
059 972 2028

Carlow Active Retirement Association
John O'Keeffe
059 914 3937

Carlow Older Person's Network
Valerie McDonald
059 972 0209

Cavan

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Cavan County Council
Savina Donohoe
049 854 4070

Libraries
Bailieborough Library
Fiona Burke
042 966 5779

Cootehill Library
Sinead McArdle
049 555 9873

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Blacklion and Belcoo ARA

Cavan Social Services
Sr Ursula O.S.C.
049 433 1154

Mountnugent ICA
Chrissie Murray
049 854 0376

Clare

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Clare Arts Office
Siobhán Mulcahy
065 689 9091

St Joseph's Hospital Arts Project

Libraries
Clare County Library
Brian Doyle
065 689 9090

Sean Lemass Public Library, Shannon
Carmel Daly
061 364 266

Active Retirement / Community Groups
West Clare Family Resource Centre
Eliza O'Mahony
065 905 2173

Care Centres
Ennistymon Community Hospital

Cork

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Cork Opera House
Box Office
021 427 0022

Cork Printmakers
Frances O'Connor
021 432 2422

Crawford Art Gallery
Emma Klemencic
021 490 7862

Fota House
Debbie Walsh/Mary Malone
021 481 5543

Pyke Theatre Group
Charlie Conway
087 690 9433

Snippets Historical and Cultural Drama Group

Tigh Fili
Kathy D'Arcy
086 882 2012

West Cork Mental Health Services & Music Alive
Kevin O'Shanahan
086 787 2481

Libraries
Cork City Libraries - Frank O'Connor Library
Eileen O'Sullivan
021 492 4935

Cork County Library and Arts Service
Sinead Donnelly
021 434 6210

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballyphehane/Togher Community Development Project
Siobhan O Dowd/ Teresa Mc Carthy
021 431 9085

Bandon Family Support Group
Jane Killingbeck
085 781 8137

Bandon Network of Social Groups

Bantry Active Retirement Association
Charles Coombs
027 61 567

Blackrock Community Association
Carmel Hatchell
021 436 2219

Castlelack ICA
Mary Murphy
087 237 4688

Crookstown Golden Years Group
Shelia Delaney
026 46 164

Cumann na Daoine
Eleanor Barry / Nikki Bray
024 92 598

Douglas ICA Guild
Eleanor O'Connor
087 930 8499

Gateway Friendship Club
Joy Scanlon
021 477 5270

Horgan's Buildings Senior Citizens Centre
Joan Goggin
086 331 7373

IRD Duhallow's SAOI Network
Triona Murphy
029 60 633

Killeagh/Inch Monday Club
Finbarr Motherway
024 97 210

Macroom Senior Citizens Active Retirement Group
Pat O'Connell
026 41 698

Moving Age
Pauline O'Leary/Margaret Cahill
021 430 1030

Na Saoithe, Ballymacoda Ladysbridge Community Council Ltd
Mary Colbert
086 078 4508

Retired People's Network Cork

Riverstown/Glanmire Seniors Community Centre
Ann Holland
086 194 8584

Rosscarbery ARG
Jane Barclay
028 23 226

Sacred Heart Parish Senior Citizens Social Club
Jerry Murphy
086 618 3332

Schull Community Care
Alyn Fenn
028 28 255

Tacaois
Brid Cranitch
026 45 733

Care Centres
Abbeylands Nursing Home

Conna Nursing Home

Deerpark House Nursing Home
Bernie Cronin
027 52 711

Elderwell
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Beaumont Residential Care
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Darraglynn Nursing Home
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Douglas Nursing Home
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Dunmanway Community Hospital
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Maryborough Nursing Home
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Mount Carmel Hospital
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Elderwell/Nazareth House Nursing Home
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Mallow Day Care Centre
June O'Connell
022 22 398

McAuley Day Centre

Oaklodge Nursing Home
Theresa Horgan
021 464 6080

Rosenalee Care Centre

SHARE Day Centre
Catherine O'Brien
021 733 9210

St Vincent's Centre

Teach Altra

Donegal

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Donegal County Museum
Caroline Carr
074 912 4613

An Grianan Theatre
Daithi Ramsay
074 20 777

Libraries
Donegal Central Library
Frances Crampsie
074 916 1818

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Care of the Older Person
Philomena Gallagher
086 861 7145

Clonleigh Social Services
Neil Gallagher
074 914 5338

Club 50 Ghaoth Dobhair
Maire Ni Chnaimhsi
074 953 1290

Cumann Cairdeas Chloich
Cheann Fhaola
Rosemary Grain
074 918 0111

Donegal Carers Association
Ann Kavanagh
074 914 5336

Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd
Kathleen McHugh
074 972 5337

Friendship Club
Muriel Perry
074 914 7519

Radharc na Cille Residents Association

Rosbeg and Downstrands Care of the Aged
Kate Morgan
074 954 5879

Care Centres
Aras Ghaoth Dobhair
Moya Mac Niallais
074 956 0624

Buncrana Community Hospital
Fiona Lavery
074 936 1500

Carndonagh Community Hospital
Sally Mc Sheffrey
074 937 4164

Carrick Day Care Centre
Eithne O'Donnell
074 973 9354

Glenties Day Centre
Fiona McDwyer
074 955 1766

Killybegs Community Hospital Day Group
Margaret Sweeney/
Bertie Johnston
074 974 1063

Lakehouse Nursing Home

Lifford Day Unit, Lifford Hospital

Residents Group, Ramelton Community Hospital

Smart Grannies & Grandads
Marion McGee
071 985 1901

Day Centre,
St Colmcille's Village
Mary Devlin
074 937 6603

Dublin

Arts / Culture / Heritage access>CINEMA
Maeve Cooke
01 679 4420

axis, Ballymun
Niamh Fitzpatrick
01 883 2123

Bealtaine Writers' Group
Rosy Wilson
01 286 4728

Butterfly Company
Emma Joyce
085 158 6047

Carnation Theatre
Mairead Devlin
086 836 2820

Chester Beatty Library
Justyna Chmielewska
01 407 0772

CINE-CAFE/Picture Show
Howard Linnane
085 235 0530

Civic Theatre
Brid Dukes
01 462 7460

CoisCéim Broadreach and Dublin City Council Arts, Sport and Leisure and Community Development Sections
Philippa Donnellan
01 878 0558

Draíocht Blanchardstown
Emer McGowan, Director
01 885 2622

Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
Jessica O'Donnell
01 222 5558

Dublin City Council - Arts Office
Victoria Kearney
01 222 5455

Dublin International Piano Competition
Ann Fuller
01 272 1523

ECAP Community ArtGroup
Sheila McShane
01 845 3148

Fighting Words

Gallery of Photography
Trish Lambe
01 671 4654

Glasnevin Museum
Ann-Marie Smith
01 882 6550

Instituto Cervantes Dublin
Laura Martin
01 631 1533

Irish Film Institute
Alicia McGivern
01 679 3477

Irish Museum of Modern Art
www.imma.ie

Kilmore West Art Group
Denise Cassidy
01 837 7076

Liberty Hall
c/o axis
01 883 2100

Macushla Dance Club
Ríonach Ní Néill
087 412 1775

National Concert Hall
Box Office
01 417 0000

National Gallery of Ireland
Dr Marie Bourke
01 663 3504

National Library of Ireland
Brid O'Sullivan
01 603 0259

National Print Museum
Carla Marrinan
01 660 3770

Newbridge House and Farm, Donabate
Brenda Comerford
01 843 6534

National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology
Mary-Jane Fitzsimons
01 648 6332

National Museum of Ireland -Decorative Arts & History
Kathy Conlan
01 648 6453

Pavilion Theatre
Box Office
01 231 2929

Rathfarnham Castle (OPW)
Catherine O'Connor
01 493 9462

Royal Irish Academy of Music
Ciara Higgins
01 632 5300

South Dublin County Council - Community Services Department
Maria Finn
01 414 9270

Libraries
Balbriggan Library
Assumpta Hickey
01 870 4401

Baldoyle Library
Catherine Keane
01 890 6793

Ballyfermot Library
Vincent McManus
01 626 9324

Ballymun Library
Rosemary Walton
01 842 1890

Blanchardstown Library
Ann Byrne
01 890 5560

Cabra Library
Ann Piggott
01 869 1414

Central Library
Bernadette Cogan
01 873 4333

Charleville Mall Library
Noreen Herlihy
01 874 9619

Coolock Library
Mary Dempsey
01 847 7781

Dolphin's Barn Library
Adrienne Gilmartin
01 454 0681

Drumcondra Library
Emma Kelly
01 837 7206

Dublin City Library and Archive
Nina O'Brien
01 674 4806

Inchicore Library
Sharon Walshe
01 453 3793

Pearse Street Library
Susan Flood
01 674 4888

Pembroke Library
Elizabeth Turley
01 668 9575

Raheny Library
Marie Daly
01 831 5521

Rathmines Library
Helen O'Donnell
01 497 3539

Ringsend Library
Aisling Kerwin
01 668 0063

Rush Library
Charlie Quinn
01 870 8414

Swords Library
Fergus O'Reilly
01 840 4179

Terenure Library
Hazel Foster
01 490 7035

Walkinstown Library
Helen Moloney
01 455 8159

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballyogan Young @ Heart Group
Helen Fox
01 295 3219

Coolock Library Art Group
James Michael Harpur
086 810 6259

Evergreen Old Folks Club
Suzanne Rush
01 490 2512

Claremont, Sean Chara and Clare Haven

Clontarf Seniors Group

Irish Wheelchair Association, Clontarf
Helen Murphy
087 203 1235

Lucan ICA

Older & Bolder
Diarmaid O'Sullivan
01 878 3623

Portmarnock Guild ICA

Rathcool Active Retirement Association
Bróna Uí Loing
087 645 7350

Retired Active Men's Social/R.A.M.S
Matt Dowling
086 844 3820

Ringsend ARA
Olive Farrell
01 660 0962

Ronanstown Community Development Project - Diversity 55

Swords Senior Citizens Club
Doreen McKittrick
01 840 7589

Templeogue and District ARA

Care Centres
Ashford House
Anne Moore
01 280 9877

Beechlawn Nursing Home

Dalkey Community Unit for Older Persons

HSE - Odin's Wood Day Care Centre

Irish Wheelchair Association Lucan
Janet Healy
01 630 2414

Lorcan O'Toole Day Centre
Susan Dunne
01 455 4532

Lusk Community Unit (Day Care)

The Marlay Nursing Home

Newpark Care Centre
Rita Gallagher
01 864 3465

Raheny House Nursing Home

Shankill Old Folks Association
Gill Tipton
01 282 2947

Simpson's Hospital

St Clare's Nursing Home

Activity Department
St Mary's Hospital

St Michael's House

Galway

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Chrysalis Dance
Paul Hayes
086 408 9074

Galway County Council
Caitriona McQuillan
091 476 510

Generations in Action
Isabelle Gaborit
087 279 3819

Libraries
Ballybane Library
Siobhan Arkins
091 380 590

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Abbeyknockmoy I.C.A Guild
Patty O'Brien
093 41 446

Ballybane Active Retirement Association
Lilly Mooney
087 906 0386

BARA
Deirdre Hogan
086 382 4556

Clann Resource Centre
Leanora O'Halloran
091 557 633

Eyrecourt / Mellick / Clonfert Active Retirement Association
Martin Staunton
086 889 8554

Galway Simon Community
Lorna Flanagan
091 381 828

Kilconnell Art Group
Maura Warde
086 165 7491

Knocknacarra ARA
Grace Sherratt
087 274 0719

Portumna Active Retirement
Margaret Boland
090 967 6133

Riverciders - IWA
Peggy Lee
087 779 4794

Sonas Senior Citizens, Moycullen
Geraldine Clancy
091 555 128

St Jarlath's Court Residents (Cluid Housing Association)
Deirdre O'Donnell
093 26 308

St Joseph's Court Residents Association
Kathleen Aspell Mortimer
095 30 951

Care Centres
Clifden Day Care Unit

Flannery's Nursing Home
Rose Mullins
087 134 3338

Kilcolgan Nursing Home - Mowlam Healthcare
Deirdre Hartman
091 776 446

Kerry

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare
064 664 8701

St John's Theatre, Listowel
068 22 566

Tech Amergin
066 947 8956

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballybunion ARA
Martina Reid
068 27 542

Club Ide Active Retirement Association
Patrick Brosnan
066 712 3986

Fáilte Ladies Probus Club
Phil Hussey
066 718 0315

Knocknagoshel Over 55's Social Club & Women's Group
Bridget Scanlon

Sliabh Luachra Women's Group
Peggy Reidy
066 714 1803

Care Centres
Castleisland Day Care
Marcella Finn
066 704 3865

Cúil Dídin
Catriona O'Connor
066 711 9090

Kildare

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Crooked Sixpence
Kate Connaughton
086 256 6399

Riverbank Arts Centre
Linda Geraghty
045 448 327

Libraries
Kildare Library and Arts Service
Gillian Allen
01 606 0050

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Celbridge Community Centre Day Care Club
Sylvia Cummins
01 627 5518

Care Centres
Craddock House Nursing Home and Care Centre
Daphne Wright
045 876 873

EVE Harvest Centre
Edel Murphy
045 522 537

St Vincent's Hospital, Therapeutic Activities Dept
Siobhan Minchin
059 863 1614

Kilkenny

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Butler Gallery
Bairbre-Ann Harkin
056 776 1106

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Thomastown and District ARA
Stasia Heafey
087 990 8575

Care Centres
Gowran Abbey Nursing Home
Natasha Griffin
056 772 6500

Laois

Active Retirement / Community Groups
50+ Active Age Group Portlaoise

Borris-in-Ossory Social Service Council 2012
Sr Regina Delaney
086 361 5701

Portarlington Active Retirement Assoc.
Happy Hearts Club
Ann Knight
057 864 3727

Leitrim

Arts / Culture / Heritage
The Dock
Box Office
071 965 0828

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Drumreilly Active Age Group
Frances O'Reilly
049 433 3265

The Golden Age Group
Colleen Guckian
087 767 0788

Care Centres
Carrigallen Community Care

St Patricks Community Hospital

Limerick

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Creative Dance for Adults
Lisa Cahill
086 408 5877

The Hunt Museum
Dr Dominique Bouchard
061 312 833

Knockpatrick Gardens
Helen O'Brien
069 65 256

Libraries
Glin Library
Peg Prendeville
068 26 910

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballyhahill/Loughill Going Strong Group

Croom Communities in Action
Colm O'Regan
061 397 299

Foynes Community in Motion
Mary Franklin
069 65 850

ICA Limerick Federation
Mary Moloney
061 450 909

Care Centres
Arty Crafty Ladies
Drombanna Day Care Centre
Esther Hayes
086 348 3335

Good Shepherd Day Care Centre

Milford Care Centre

St Paul's Nursing Home, Dooradoyle

Longford

Libraries
Longford County Library, L.C.R.L., Longford V.E.C. and Longford Older Persons Network, supported by Longford Community Guards, St. Joseph's Day Care Centre and Longford Sports Partnership
Fiona Cooney
043 334 1124

Louth

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Droichead Arts Centre
Box Office
041 983 3946

An Grianán Centre for Lifelong Learning
Audrey Delaney
041 982 2119

Highlanes Gallery
Hilary Kelly
041 980 3311

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Moorehall Lodge and Ardee Active Retirement Group
Frances Byrne
041 685 6990

Dundalk Town Centre Commercial Manager Office
Ann Murray
042 935 2842

Mayo

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Áras Inis Gluaire
Lorraine Wilson
097 81 079

'Cois Tine' Heritage Group
Breege Moran
086 864 1738

Mayo County Council
Ann Marie McGing
094 904 7558

National Museum of Ireland - Country Life
Lorna Elms
094 903 1751

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballina Active Retirement

Bellacorick Women's Group

Charlestown Active Retirement Association
Kathleen Ryan
094 925 5057

Cúram Family Centre
Dorothy Campbell
094 936 2096

IRD Kiltimagh
Joe Kelly
094 938 1494

Moy Valley Over 55 Club
Corina Deehan
096 70 905

Providence Active Retirement
Mary Ruane
094 925 6431

Tacú - Ballinrobe Family Resource Centre
Mary Langan
094 954 2908

Westport Family & Community Resource Centre
Maureen Scott
098 24 419

Care Centres
Sacred Heart Arts Programme
Tom Meskell
086 150 8141

St Colman's Care Centre
Maureen McGreal
098 43 248

St. John's Rest and Day Care Centre
Sr Catherine MacSweeney
094 938 8100

Meath

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Brú na Bóinne (OPW)
Clare Tuffy
041 988 0300

Millbury Nursing Home

Silverstream Healthcare Group, Ratoath

Libraries
Meath County Council Library Service
Sharon Flanagan
046 902 1134

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Dunshaughlin Friday Club
Yvonne McEntaggart
087 783 9858

Trim ALPS (Adult Learning & Leisure Programme)
Brigid Madden
046 943 6214

Care Centres
Knightsbridge Nursing Home
Lohi Ako
046 948 2700

Monaghan

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Castleblayney Social Services
Maura O'Reilly
042 974 6311

Care Centres
Castleross Nursing & Retirement Community
Sheila O'Donaghue
042 969 2630

Offaly

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre
Sarah Jane Cleary
057 912 2893

Active Retirement / Community Groups
B.L.C. Developments Ltd. Active Age
Ronnie O' Connor
057 933 6283

Banagher Active Retirement Group
Bridie Mahon
057 915 1228

Birr Active Retirement Group
Dolores Hegarty
087 412 3970

Shannonbridge Active Retirement Association
May Duffy
090 967 4143

Care Centres
Riada House Day Care Centre

Roscommon

Arts / Culture / Heritage
King House, Boyle
071 966 3242

Roscommon Arts Centre
Box Office
090 662 5824

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Elphin Day Care Centre

Monksland Active Age Group
Ray Fallon
090 649 4454

Care Centres
Shannon Lodge Nursing Home 'Residents Circle Gathering'
Marian Harris
071 965 8667

Sligo

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Cos Cos Sean Nós Festival
Brenda O'Callaghan
086 192 5988

Hawk's Well Theatre
Marie O'Byrne
071 916 1518

The Model, Home of the Niland Collection (Art Gallery)
Lara Byrne
071 914 1405

Sligo Arts Service
Rhona McGrath
071 911 1131

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Ballymote Active Retirement Association
Catherine Finn
071 918 3541

Calry ARA
Christopher Davis
087 977 6475

Skreen/Dromard Community Care
Mary McCarthy
071 916 6846

Sligo & District Active Retirement Association
Mary Ryan
071 914 5935

Tubbercurry Active Retirement Association

West Sligo Young @ Heart Club
Alice Clark
096 49 766

Young At Heart, Cliffoney
Mary Gillespie
087 637 0559

Care Centres
Easkey Health Centre
Jaime Sloyan
096 49 022

Nazareth Nursing Home

Tipperary

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Tipperary Bealtaine Festival
Melanie Scott/Sally O'Leary/ Emer O'Brien
067 44 860

White Memorial Theatre
Box Office
052 23 333

Libraries
Carrick on Suir Library
Orla O'Connor
051 640 591

Cashel Library
Suzanne Brosnan
062 63 825

Clonmel Library
Carol Anne Delaney
052 612 4545

Nenagh Library
Eileen Bourke
067 34 404

Templemore Library
Margaret Looby
050 432 555

Tipperary Libraries' Headquarters
Emer O'Brien
050 421 555

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Gortagarry Ladies Art Group
Maura Tierney
067 26 120

Lower Ormond Active Retirement Association

Rathkeevin ICA

Care Centres
Cappawhite Day Care Centre
Mary Buckley
087 205 9888

Elderwell/Melview Nursing Home
Mary Ahern
087 418 9860

Greenhill Nursing Home
Anne Fraher
051 642 700

St Vincent's Day Care Centre

Templemore Day Care Centre
Anne McNamara
050 43 1291

Willowbrook Lodge
Noelle Killeen
087 652 3587

Waterford

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Garter Lane Arts Centre
Evelyn Power
051 877 7153

Old Market House Arts Centre, Dungarvan
Margaret Organ
058 48 944

Waterford Healing Arts Trust
Gavin Barr
051 842 664

Libraries
Waterford City Council Library Service
Debbie Johnston
051 849 975

Waterford City Council Library Service - Ardkeen Library
Mary Foley
051 849 755

Waterford City Council Library Service - Brown's Road Library
Mary Foley
051 849 755

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Best Foot Forward Intergenerational Group
Libby Seward
087 996 0485

Comeragh Active Retirement Association
Marie Walsh
051 855 705

Dolmen Active Retirement Association
Seán O'Brien
087 624 4319

Kilrossanty Active Retirement Group
Donal Purcell
087 992 2187

Old Parish ICA
Bernie Hurley
086 384 1179

Care Centres
Cappoquin Day Care Centre
Kathleen Barron
058 52 018

Dungarvan Care of the Aged
Margaret Coffey
058 44 556

Killure Bridge Nursing Home
Mary Burke
051 870 055

Maypark House Nursing Home
Jean Nolan
051 301 848

St Patrick's Hospital

Westmeath

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Westmeath County Council Arts Office
Catherine Kelly
044 933 2140

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Collinstown/Fore ICA Guild
Teresa Doyle

Sonas, Mullingar

St Mary's ARA Athlone
Margaret Franklin
090 647 5592

St Peter's Active Retirement Club, Athlone
Sr Gabrielle McManus
087 643 0305

Care Centres
St John's Day Care Centre, Mullingar

St Vincent's Care Centre, Athlone
Pauline Quast / Julie Molloy
090 647 5301

Wexford

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Myriad Dance
Deirdre Grant

Libraries
Bunclody Library
Trish Keenan
053 937 5466

Gorey Library
Hazel Percival
053 942 1481

New Ross Library
Dearbhla Ní Laighin
051 421 877

Wexford Town Library
Nicola McGrath
053 912 1637

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Co Wexford Age Equality Network
Marie Louise Byrne
053 915 5864

Gorey Active Retirement Association
George Harmon
053 938 3918

Kilrane and Rosslare Harbour ARA
Lynn Byrne
087 204 7471

New Ross Active Retirement
Maura Kidd
051 448 346

Rosslare Strand Active Retirement Association

Senior Citizens Concern Ltd/Ramsgrange ARA
Linda Ryan
051 389 509

South West Wexford CDP
Jane McWilliams
051 389 418

Taghmon Community Groups for Older People

Westland's Young at Heart Group

Wicklow

Arts / Culture / Heritage
Klawitter Theatre Group
Hedda Kaphengst
01 286 1576

Libraries
Wicklow County Council Library Service
Noelle Ringwood
01 286 6566

Active Retirement / Community Groups
Co Wicklow Network for Older People
Anne Kavanagh
087 150 0234

Laragh Glendalough Active Retirement & Brockagh Resource Centre
Bernadette Tyrrell
040 445 600

St Joseph's Active Retirement Group
Liz Sharkey
087 982 1745

Wicklow Active Retirement Association
Peggy O'Sullivan
086 874 1812

Care Centres
Baltinglass Hospital
Josie Dooley
087 639 4531

Carnew Community Care
Sr Mary Crosbie /
Sheila Kirwan
053 942 6510

Greystones Nursing Home
Eve Byrne / Zephra Johnson
01 287 3226

Health Service Executive - St Colman's Hospital
Chyrstal Dowd
040 446 109

HSE Portview Day Centre/ IWA (Arklow)
Pearse Egan
040 233 844

Kylemore Nursing Home and Daycare Centre
Christina G. Tauro
01 286 3255

Tara Care Centre

Centra
Brighten up your day

The Bealtaine festival wish to thank our distribution partner Centra for stocking the Bealtaine newspaper in all Centra stores around the country.

Centra

Brighten up your day

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- Save fuel
- Save money
- Less hassle
- Less temptation

...Support Communities

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- **We support over 600 local producers**
- **We employ 10,000 people across our store network**
- **75% of products sold are either sourced or produced in Ireland**

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ENTER TODAY

Win this exclusive prize for 2 people to the vibrant & dynamic city of Cork...

...enjoy 1 night B&B in a superb city location with tickets to see the award winning play **Translunar Paradise** in the Cork Opera House on Thursday the 24th May 2012.

Closing date for entries: Noon on Wednesday, 16th May 2012
Winner will be chosen by an independent adjudicator and contacted on May 17th.
Full Terms & Conditions available on request from the Bealtaine Office.

Finish this rhyming couplet in 12 words or less:
What kind of old do I want to be?... .....

.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

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To enter please finish the rhyming couplet above and return your entry by post only to the following address: **Centra Bealtaine Break Competition, Bealtaine Festival Office, Age & Opportunity, Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9.**

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What I know about Bealtaine....

By Catherine Rose, CEO of Age & Opportunity

Excitement can light a fire

I remember the sense of excitement at the IMMA meeting in 1996 when, together with representatives of arts institutions, like Helen O'Donoghue, and a number of older people 'activists' like Mamo McDonald, Teresa Egan, Eileen McDermott and Pat Egan, we tentatively agreed that it might indeed be time to celebrate ageing and older people with a May festival. In order to counteract the often accepted view of older people as disengaged and lacking in enthusiasm for life, Eileen McDermott said that the festival should put forward an image of older people as vibrant and creative and energetic and 'why not call it Bealtaine.'

Creativity can transform

What I didn't know when I set out but firmly believe now is that meaningful engagement in the arts provides the possibility for transformative change in us as we age. I cannot imagine any other learning experience having quite such a radical effect. My role was, from the start, to encourage older people to remain engaged with the world and to persuade the community at large that older people should not be written off. Once I experienced the openness of the arts community and, indeed, the sense of excitement and commitment that they brought to the work, I knew that they were going be vital allies.

Views are changing

When Bealtaine began, a typical approach to arts activity for older people was characterised by 'doing things for' people. The suggestions that we made about providing meaningful participation were, at the start, mistakenly seen as burdensome and adding to an already heavy workload, particularly in the overworked health services. It took time to see that what we were suggesting was not more 'doing things for' rather a completely new way of looking at people's needs as we age. That 'new way of looking' is having a ripple effect; John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course in the World Health Organization has described Bealtaine as a festival that **'changes the way organisations interact with older people as well as challenging attitudes about what it means to age in Ireland. The Bealtaine festival is truly inspirational'.**

I have been very fortunate

I was able to see, first hand, the effect that Bealtaine had on people's lives: I saw Teresa Egan evolve as an artist in her older age, having spent a lifetime as a committed trade unionist and campaigner on behalf of her shopfloor fellow workers; I saw Pat Egan move seamlessly in her retirement from librarian to creative library user, dreaming up hundreds of events and activities that brought so much joy to people. I have been a part in those events myself, right up to singing in the rain on Dollymount strand in the Dawn Chorus 2011, though I'm sure the sun will shine on us this year.

Our dreams need to be ambitious

We have always worked in partnership because we are small in numbers and in resources, and yet we have always had big dreams. Working with others who share the dreams means that we achieve more than we ever could alone. Together, we have done so much and now, together, Ireland can dream of things that will change how the whole world grows older.

YOUR NEXT PHASE
COULD BE
YOUR BEST PHASE

Now that you are a bit older, what do you want to do next?

In Ireland, we're living longer, healthier lives. At 50, we now have the chance to live a whole second lifetime. At Age & Opportunity, we believe it can be a time of exploration, of reinvention, of discovery and of adventure. For sport and physical activity, we have Go for Life, for arts and culture we have the Bealtaine festival and Cultural Companions, for making a difference in your community, we have Get Vocal and we are piloting a new course called On TRACk (Turning Retirement into Active Citizenship) and, if you're not sure what you want to do, our Ageing with Confidence courses can help you to explore where you are now and what you want to do next.

Find out more by calling us on (01) 805 7709 or email June on info@ageandopportunity.ie

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