

Pantomime in Mohill

Michael Keane

IT'S FORTY FIVE years since the first panto "Cinderella" was staged in the Canon Donohoe Hall, Mohill and even to this day, people attending the refurbished venue regularly remark "God be with the Great Pantomines" and how true.

From the first panto in 1973, the standard was so high, the casting top class and the talent immense, that the show annually featured on the very popular RTE programme "Newsround". From 1972, under the direction of Mick Casserly, tireless hours were spent over the autumn and the winter months with rehearsals culminating in the many great pantos in February-March, which lifted the spirits of the people, young and old of Mohill and it's hinterland. They came out in their hundreds to the full houses for the matinee and week long shows. The tradition was later continued by Fr Gene Cox, Peadar Flynn and Sandra Vernon.

There was a great cross section of natural and dedicated talent available to put the pantos together from sets, lighting, music choruses, acting, choreography and sound. The bookings were handled by Sean K O'Beirne his family and able staff. The cups of tea, sandwiches, great apple tarts and buns readily available at intervals and after the show by Sr Aloysius and her helpers, were always greatly appreciated. The advertising was provided by the ever ready *Leitrim Observer* and Willie Donnellan's photography—and they are still going strong. Joe Flynn and Michael K Reynolds did the videoing. The "after show" sessions in O'Callaghans and Dolly's were a repeat performance of the show, in the company of many friends from the audience, enhanced no doubt by plenty of gargle, unknown to Sergeant Boyle.



■ (Top): Mohill Music Society: *Snow White and the Seven Buffs* 1975

(Top): Mohill Music Society: *Sinbad the Sailor*

(Top): A typical rehearsal of Mohill Pantomime Troupe



■ John F Reynolds as Captain Prawn Puss

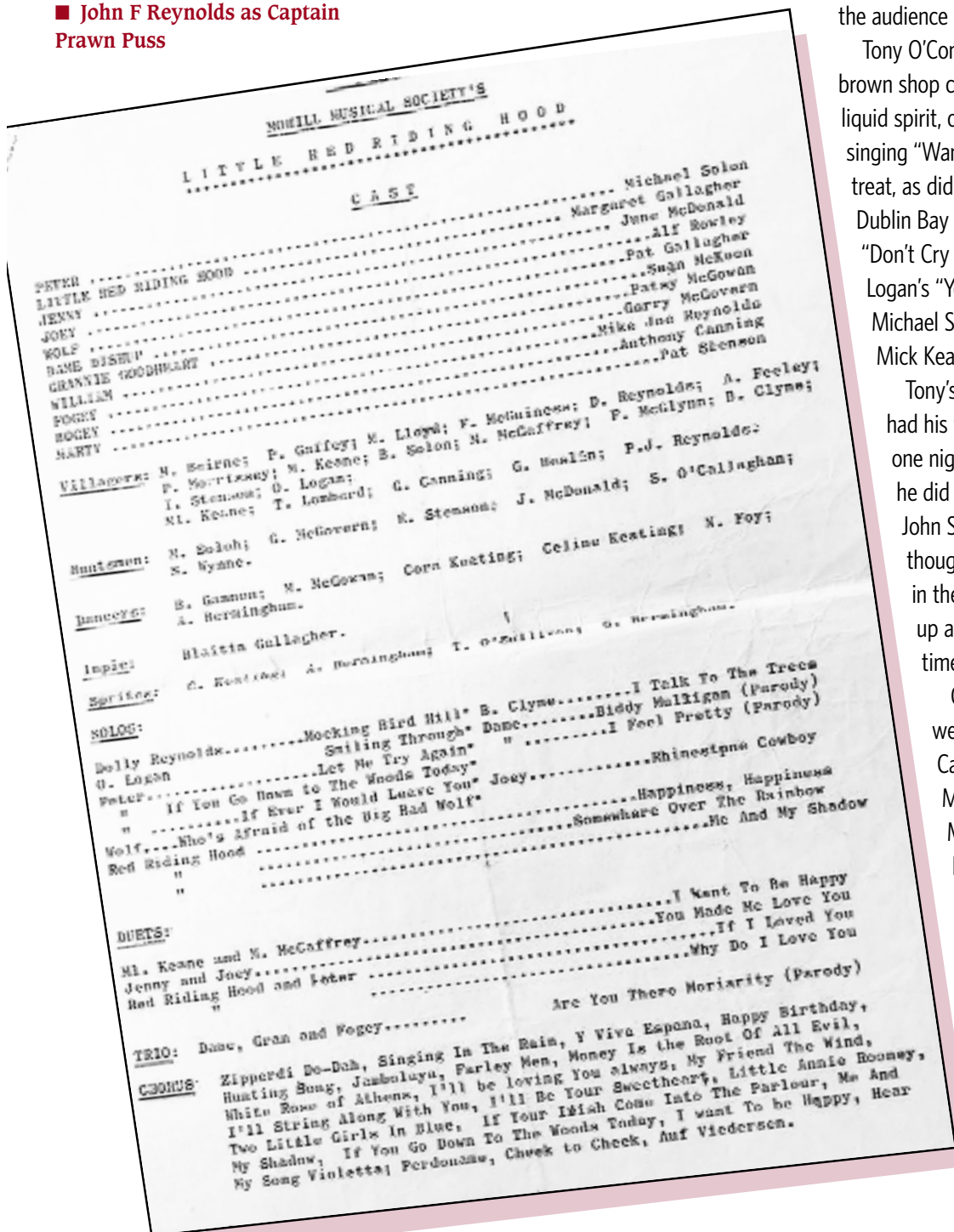
Special mention must go to the late Pat (The Vet) Gallagher, whose Hanleys of Rooskey fan club came in their droves, just to see Pat on stage. As the saying goes “he’d make the cats laugh”. His performance as Long John Silver in Treasure Island was phenomenal considering his big stature. Even though he had one leg tied up under him, he still moved on stage with the agility of a twenty year old. He did however, have a mishap one night back-stage when he tripped and fell, causing his entry to be delayed and as he lay

flat out, Pat could be heard shouting “get Casserly” and sure enough Mick single handedly lifted Pat “upright” and in situ for another grand entry. Mick’s back has never been the same since. Pat’s joviality, mixed with that of Patsy McGowan, Barney McCauley, Vincie Reynolds, Pat Stenson, Gerry McGovern, John F Reynolds, Tommy Fisher, Oliver Higgins, Jim Faughan, Willie Higgins and Mick Keane was hilarious and enjoyed by all the troupe. The banter and craic in general was mighty and there was never a dull moment, the audience could sense this also.

Tony O’Connell’s performance with brown shop coat, tash and hat and some liquid spirit, over and back on stage, singing “Wandering Star” went down a treat, as did Bernadette Clyne’s My Dublin Bay and Margaret McCaffrey’s “Don’t Cry for me Argentina”, Olga Logan’s “You’ll Never Walk Alone”, Michael Solan’s “Let me try again” and Mick Keane’s “The Last farewell”.

Tony’s fellow Galwegian, Art Ridge had his funny moment also, when one night, when slightly inebriated, he did a back somersault down on John Sullivan and piano. John thought for a minute that he was in the circus, but resilient Art was up and away with the show in no time.

Other hilarious performances were by John F Reynolds as Captain Prawn Puss; Sean McKeon as The Dame; Barney McCauley and Vincie Reynolds as The Ugly Sisters; Jim Faughan as The Little Fairy; and Patsy McGowan and Pat Gallagher in Robinson Crusoe—their picture from this Panto has become iconic, and adorns the walls of the Boxty House in Temple Bar, Dublin and many





■ Annette Kivlehan, Michael Keane (the author of this article), Margaret McCaffrey, Phil Casserly & Anthony Canning in "Sinbad the Sailor"



■ Members of the cast of 'Snow White and the Seven Buffs'... Back Row: Tony O'Connell, Phil Casserly, Patsy McGowan, Front Row: Tony Lombard, S O'Callaghan, Gerry Canning, Michael Solan and Michael Keane

other establishments (What a Fine Pair).

The Musical Directors, John Sullivan, Mai Conroy, Ian Lee and Martina McWeeney did an excellent job as did choreographers Marie Beirne and her sister Geri Drummond. Mick Joe Reynolds and boys produced some fabulous sets. Music was high class and provided by the Directors Mick and Shane Woods, Jerry McNamara, Tommy Conroy, Aidan Canning, Christy Armstrong, John Drummond, Sean Fox and Josie Creamer was always on hand with the amplification. Peadar Flynn and Robert Logan were on lighting and the ever reliable Frank Flynn with his hot and cold heating.

Some of the key pantos that caught the imagination of the audience were Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Robinson Crusoe, Sinbad

the Sailor, Little Red Riding Hood, Captain Prawn Puss, Puss in Boots, Little Bo Peep, Humpty Dumpty, Snow White and the Seven Buffs, Treasure Island, Jack and the Beanstalk and the Wizard of Oz.

We remember and cherish the personalities of our deceased members, Sean Colreavy, Mike Joe and Eithne Reynolds, Agnes Feely, Willie and Lily Higgins, Sean K O'Beirne, Jim Faughnan, Art Ridge, John Sullivan, Gernadette and Christy Clyne, Christy Armstrong, Mai Conroy, Tommy Conroy, Patsy McGowan, Sean McKeon, Fr Gene Cox, Sandra Vernon, Nicholas Cawley, Eithne Cawley, Pat Gallagher, Tony O'Connell, Sr Aloysius, Gerry Canning, John Dolan, Tommy Fisher, Mick McGuinness, John McDonald, Francis McGlynn, Jimmy

Reynolds, Barney McCauley, Mary McCauley, Frank Flynn, Joe Flynn, Rose Reynolds, Tom Reynolds, Mick Woods, Aidan Canning, Seamus Wynne, Celine Keating, Monica Scollan, Jerry McNamara, Bernie and Peggy Reilly and Sandra McDermott.

Phil Casserly deserves special mention, as she was there from the start and ever willing and unselfish to play any role that her Producer-Director husband Mick requested her to do and she always performed and sang excellently.

For them all and us left behind:

There is no light without a dawning
 No winter without a spring
 And beyond the dark horizon
 Our hearts will once more sing...
 For those who leave us for a while
 Having only gone away
 Out of a restless, care worn world
 Into a brighter day

Helen Steiner Rice

The panto survivors are numerous. Each and every one of them can feel very proud of their association with the shows.

Annette Kivlehan, Mary McIntyre, Mai Reynolds-Malone, Maura Duignan, Imelda Stenson, Olivia Scollan, Anna Mai Kilraire, Mena Mitchell, Mary Mitchell, Bernadette Clyne, Anthony Canning, Hubie Reynolds, Gerry Stenson, Veronica Foy, Isobel Boyle, Therese Sullivan, Petra Gaffney, Mary Reynolds, David Cooke, June McDonald, Ailish O'Callaghan, Aidan Hackett, Brendan Foy, John Francis Reynolds, Seamus O'Callaghan, Peadar Flynn, Gerry McGovern, Mark Reynolds, Mary Beirne, Geraldine McKeon, Pat Morrissey, Mary McHugh, Geraldine McGarry, Bláithín Gallagher, Deirdre McDonald, Noelene Foy, Tish Dunleavy, Brendan Beirne, Michael Dunleavy, Kevin Mitchell, Stephen Kerr, Margaret McCaffrey, Margaret Gallagher, Mick Solan, George Heslin, PJ Reynolds, Tony Lombard, Sandra Rowley, Keith Rolston, Breege Wynne, Regina McGuinness,

A
Berr



■ **Mohill Music Society**

Little Red Riding Hood 1976

1st Row: A Bermingham, J Bermingham, B Gallagher & C Keating

2nd Row: P Stenson, J O'Sullivan, S McGovern, A Canning, P Gallagher, A Rowley, M Solan, M Gallagher, P McGowan, M J Reynolds, J McDonald, S McKeon & T O'Connell

3rd Row: J Gallagher, I Stenson, M Reynolds, C Keating, G McKeon, N Foy, M McGowan, B Gannon, F McGuinness, M Lloyd, J McDonald, T Lombard, A Feely, D Reynolds, G Heslin, Maureen Keane, S Wynne, P Morrissey & G Tyrrell.

4th Row: G Canning, O Logan, S O'Callaghan, M McCaffrey, E Stenson, B Clyne, M Beirne, B Solan, S McGlynn, P Gaffey, P J Reynolds & M Keane.

5th Row: B Canning, O Logan, M McCaffrey, B Cline, M Beirne, B Solan, F McGlynn, P Gaffey, P J Reynolds & M Keane

Theresa Wynne, Robert Logan, Josie Creamer, Sean Creamer, Philomena Duignan, Veronica Cashin, Oliver Higgins, Enda Stenson, Tom Reynolds, Michelle McGowan, John Drummond, Debbie Lynch, Mick and Maureen Keane, Sean Fox, Mickey and Denis Hughes, Noelle Canning, Patricia Canning, Catherine Wynne, Sharon Lloyd, Doreen Mitchell, Fiona Taylor, Linda Logan, Liz Moran, Peadar Reynolds, Charlene Tyrrell, Francis Gannon, Castlerea, Conor Murphy, Pat Beirne, Regina McLoughlin, Bernie McGovern, Leona Murphy, Declan Conboy, Charles Beirne, Maureen Lynch, Jim Rogers, Mark Murphy, Claire Quinn,

Kim Taylor, Fidelma Conboy, Lucia Tyrrell, Sandra Casserly, Aysha Hanberry, John Gallagher, Gerry Tyrrell, Mary Reynolds, Cappagh, John McGuinness, Anella McGuinness, Cora Keating, Fran McGuinness, Joe Reynolds, Monica Reynolds, Martina McWeeney, Martina Hackett, Sandra McDermott, Sasha O'Brien, Padraig McLoughlin, Mary Stenson, Seamus McLoughlin, Sean Reynolds Charles Canning, Claire Ward, Lisa Canning, Edel Walpole, Christine Clyne, Colm Reynolds, Dermot Murphy, Siobhan Lavin, Angela Malone, Phil Doherty, Aisling O'Brien, Anna Marie O'Brien,

■ **Mike Joe Reynolds as the Demon King, Vincie Reynolds & Barney McCauley as the Two Ugly Sisters and Pat Stenson as Dandini in 'Cinderella'.**



Christine Manning, Louise Canning, Michelle McCrann, Linda Beirne, Joanne Tyrrell, Catherine Gallagher, Kerri Manning.

We salute the Pioneer of Pantomines in Mohill, Mick Casserly who is owed a great debt of gratitude for his foresight and perseverance, we extend our sincere condolences on the sad loss of his great wife Phil, and wish him and his family good health and happiness long into the future.

To all members of The Mohill Musical Society living and deceased thanks for the memories.

Ni bheidh a leithead go deo arís.



■ Patsy McGowan, Cloone and Patrick Gallagher MRCVS Mohill in the pantomime: 'Robinson Crusoe'

SNIPPET

Award for 'Outstanding Contribution to our community'

MANORHAMILTON GIRLS BRIGADE WIN TWO AWARDS

MANORHAMILTON GIRLS BRIGADE is a voluntary Christian youth organisation for girls from the ages of 3 years to 18 years of age. This year we decided to apply for the Environmental and Community awards. We entered under the Social and Inclusion Category.

Our group here in Manorhamilton has emerged as one that is recognised for what our organisation believes in what they offer. We have a membership of 90 girls with a team of leaders and parent helpers. We have the 3rd highest membership in the Republic of Ireland and the highest in the North West. We create a diverse programme to ensure all the girls who are members develop to their own potential. We encourage children with disabilities to take part in all the activities alongside their peers, which creates a positive impact for everyone, including the parents. We endeavour to enrich every girl who is a member and also encourage the pre-teen members to work alongside the younger members as they learn leadership skills, and most of all respect for each other. Our application for the award covered our involvement and participation in creating opportunities for social and inclusion and our involvement in community life.

We were delighted to win the Social & Inclusion award and then later in the evening to be awarded the overall award for our Outstanding Contribution to our community. This is what the judges had to say: "The overall winner for the county literally "blew the judges away" with the group's passion and commitment to their projects and how the group operates on almost fresh air without even a physical base for their equipment. This group has tailored its activities to meet the needs of its users and ensures that every member is valued and can participate to the best of their abilities. Members make key decisions about the plans for the year to come".



■ Manorhamilton Girls' Brigade with members of the PPN & Leitrim County Council

Back: Francie Gilmartin PPN, Tracy Ferguson PPN worker, Philip Rooney PPN, Cllr Finola Armstrong McGuire, Mary McKiernan PPN, Joseph Gilhooly LCC, Mary Quinn, LCC & Michael McGovern PPN.

Front: Sorcha Glynnmartin, Leonie McGuinness, Shirley Hewston & Maureen Kron of Manorhamilton Girls Brigade.