

# Glens Centre Manorhamilton

*Susan McKay* Artistic Director of the Glens Centre

IT HAS BEEN a great year for the Glens Centre in Manorhamilton, with this autumn having been particularly fruitful, and a fantastic programme lined up for 2018.

Our Fierce Moon festival in September saw some of Ireland's best known writers, actors and artists gather to celebrate the legacy of the late Dermot Healy, who was for a time the Centre's writer in residence. Pat McCabe, Vona Groarke, Michael Harding and the dazzling young novelist Sally Rooney were among the writers performing to capacity audiences, which included local celebrities such as Adrian Dunbar and Eoin MacNamee, while Seamie O'Dowd mesmerized us with a virtuoso guitar set including a jazz versions of Dirty Old Town, which many agreed was the best they'd heard. I was joined in organizing the festival by acclaimed writers Vincent Woods, from Drumkeeran, and Brian Leyden from Dromahair.

We collaborated with our friends in the Leitrim Sculpture Centre across the road in presenting a Fierce Moon photographic exhibition including works by John

Minihan, Brian Farrell and Mike Bunn. (Mr Bunn dubbed our administrative manager, JoAnne Neary, "la Passionnata" on the basis of a brief encounter at the opening). Many of the photographers had contributed to Force 10, the literary journal edited by Healy to showcase the amazing artistic talent to be found in this mountainy hinterland of the wild Atlantic. We ventured into publishing, too, with a special commemorative programme designed by Daragh Stewart and featuring new writing alongside photographs and paintings by the likes of Sean McSweeney and Nick Miller, who generously allowed us to reproduce them. (This limited-edition collectors item is on sale through our website or from reception at the Glens.) The Dermot Healy International Poetry prize, which had attracted over 500 entries from local, national and international poets, was won by Breda Wall Ryan. Sculptor Jackie McKenna from Manorhamilton presented her with the lovely barnacle goose bronze which she created in 2014 for this now renowned prize. The image for the festival was a beautiful etching of



■ Novelist Eoin MacNamee in front of Mike Bunn's portrait of the late Leland Bardwell in the Leitrim Sculpture Centre during the Glen's Centre's Fierce Moon Festival

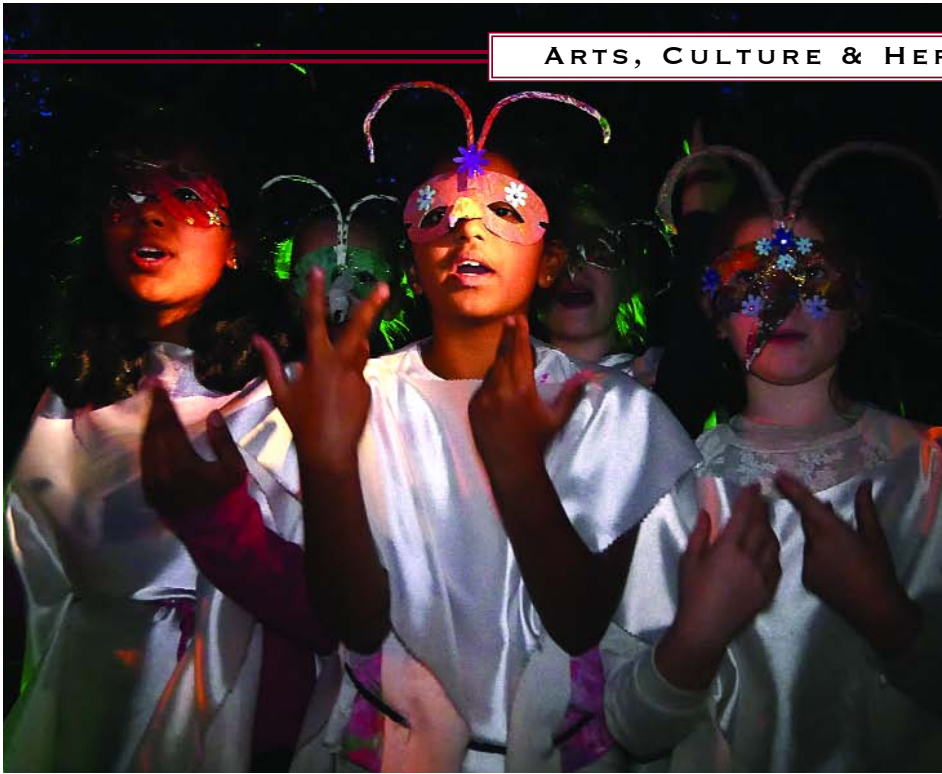
the moon by locally based artist Crona Gallagher, who runs children's arts classes at the Glens and is one of the organisers of the poetry prize.

There was a buzz in Manorhamilton around the festival weekend, with an exhibition of Healy's books in the library, courtesy of librarian and friend to the arts Orla Parkinson, and another photographic exhibition in McKenna's shop, which has, since then, become home to the FabLab. We also took our guests on a scenic bus trip through the Glens to the Ballroom of Romance in Glenfarne, where the Cavan Hacklers performed Healy's On Broken Wings. Outgoing Glens board member Hubert McMorrow provided a guide to the historic sites while airing local grievances, from ancient battles to recent council decisions: "Another bone of contention was..."

We had hardly recovered when it was time for Culture Night—and what a triumph that was. Our brilliant technical manager Ray Duffy illuminated Glencar Waterfall while the award winning Rabbits Riot theatre company, led by Treasa Nealon, our marketing and media person, and director Sonia Norris, presented their version of W B Yeats' The Stolen Child on the paths and among the trees, "by the waters and the wild". Tori Lee, our junior youth theatre leader, led a troupe of

■ **Dermot Healy Poetry Prize Award:** Joel Smith, Jackie McKenna, Helen Gillard, Breda Wall Ryan (winner) and Cróna Gallagher





■ Leirrim fairies performing in Rabbits, Riot's production of the 'Stolen Child', presented by the Glen's Centre at Glencar Waterfall on Culture night



■ Sean McSweeney & Tess Gallagher  
*Photo by Susan McKay*

25 real Leirrim fairies in their abduction of her own human child, Minnie. They wore masks they designed under the guidance of Rachel Webb, the Benbo based artist who is currently running a highly original series of workshops for children at the Glens on the theme of migration. About 300 people attended. We were supported by Helen Siberry and her husband Jonathan Hay at the Glencar Teashed where a magnificent fairy cake was presented and devoured by the little people.

In early October Kate Mawn, self-confessed leader of the Leirrim Bad Backs Brigade launched the new seating rake. "It's fabulous," she declared, settling into her seat for a celebratory glass of prosecco, while our new multi coloured stage lights turned our old black curtains from glorious red to purple and back again. The auditorium has always had superb acoustics. Now it also looks fantastic, there will soon be a really excellent green room — our current one is like a police cell and only the kindest of performers tell us they've "seen worse" — and we will have a new coffee bar and toilets. The outside of the building will also get a major face lift with the

demolition of the current porch so that the lovely old church building takes centre stage again. Our next plan is to secure funds to commission a sculpture from Jackie McKenna.

We will have more rooms for creative people to use when the work is complete — and this autumn also brought the great news that after a series of consultations with musicians and including one here in the Glens Centre, and hard work by arts officer Phillip Delamere and Leslie Ryan of Creative Frame, Leirrim has beaten off stiff competition to become one of the counties to get into the Music Generation programme. This will give children in Leirrim access to musical instruments and training. It will also provide work for local musicians who can teach. North Leirrim's vibrant history of traditional music will be recognized at the Glens in December when Vincent Woods interviews musicians including Michael O'Brien, Lorraine Sweeney and Dave Sheridan during a series of gigs spread across a wonderful weekend of music.

Ruth Moore has joined our team, leading an exciting International Fund for

Ireland programme which will deliver creative projects on a cross border, cross community basis. There will be many opportunities for creative training and activities for all who wish to become involved.

Poet Mary Branley, who is from Glencar, is our current writer in residence. I asked her how the course she is running is going. She told me that one young woman who is taking part has already told her that the course has made her realise that she is a writer. North Leirrim is a place in which creativity thrives.

*The Glens Centre, backed by the Arts Council, supports and encourages this flourishing, nurturing great work and presenting it. Come to our pantomime, Little Red and the Black Dog. Watch out for our 2018 programme, and prepare to sink into our plush red seats for sessions of life enhancing imaginative adventures.*

[www.theglenscentre.com](http://www.theglenscentre.com)