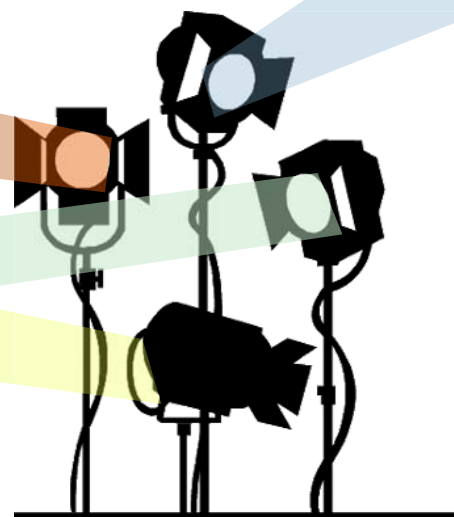


# THE BREFFNI PLAYERS CELEBRATE 75 YEARS OF AMATEUR DRAMATICS

ANNE MAXWELL



Above: Angus Dunne  
Set Designer & Director.  
Right: The cast of "The  
Communication Chord"

*The Breffni Players*, an amateur dramatic society, was formed in 1943 at a public meeting held in the Labour Hall on the Dublin Road, Carrick on Shannon. The hall once belonged to the British Legion Club but was passed to the local branch of the Labour Party in the early 1940s. It was the rehearsal room and venue for the first production, *Nothing in his Life* by Louis J. Walsh, in the spring of 1944. One of our founder members, Pat Murtagh, sadly passed

away this year. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam. The group went on its first tour with the play, *The Golden Priest* by Aodh De Blacam, in December 1944, performing in such far-flung places as Jamestown, Strokestown, Elphin, Leitrim Village, Drumshanbo, Keadew, and Ballyfarnon. In 1946, the first Annual Dinner Dance was held in the Gaiety, Carrick on Shannon, featuring *Jim Bacon and his Famous Orchestra*. Admission was 7/6. *Ices, minerals, teas, and*





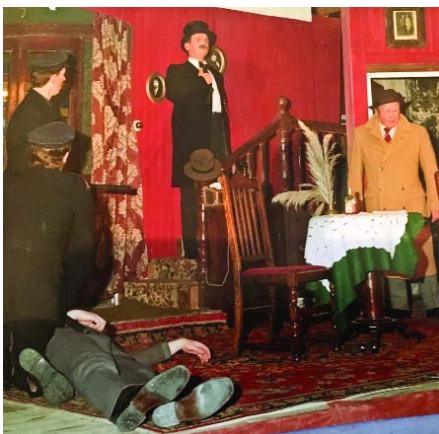
Above: Cast of Philadelphia Here I Come

Left: Brendan Kieran and John Conway



Left Below: A Scene from "Arsenic and Old Lace"

Bottom: The three Stalwarts — Angus Dunne, Jim Gorman and Brendan Kieran



refreshments were provided by the Gaiety. The poster also included the words, *Dress optional*, which certainly make one wonder!

The Labour Hall changed ownership and underwent renovation, so the group had no fixed abode for a considerable amount of time, rehearsing in various venues around the town. Because of the numerous moves, the society's earlier records have been lost.



In 1952 a rehearsal space was established in The Shambles in the Market Yard. This was thanks to T P Flynn, who placed spacious clubrooms at the

disposal of the group for rehearsals, set-building, and storage.

In 1955 the 'Breffs' staged their first musical, Gilbert and Sullivan's, *The Gondoliers*. There have been numerous other musicals over the years, the last one being, *South Pacific* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Directed by Joe Moore it starred, among others, Edwina McNulty, our current Chairperson. The Breffs have been fortunate to have had Monica O'Gorman, choir-mistress extraordinaire, and singers from St Mary's Choir and the Millennium Choir to participate in our shows over the years.

Set design has always been a much-lauded feature of Breffni Players' productions. The man responsible for most of those since 1961 is Angus Dunne. Angus is also a talented director. He made his directorial debut with the Breffs in 1973 with *Billy Liar*, by K Waterhouse and W Hall. Lighting was by Jim Gorman. It was staged in St Mary's Hall. Admission was 30p and 40p.

The first dinner theatre was held on Sunday, February 28th, 1983 in The County Hotel. The play was

Sean O'Casey's *Shadow of a Gunman*. That production won numerous awards on the All Ireland Drama Festival circuit. To celebrate our 75th anniversary there will be a dinner theatre with a performance of *Not with a Whimper*, directed by Pat Reid, in the Bush Hotel on Saturday, December 1st, 2018.

In 1986 the Breffs went on tour to the Manx Amateur Drama Festival in the Isle of Man with J. Kesselring's play, *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Perhaps the time has come for another trip abroad?

Our current premises, now a permanent home for the society on the Leitrim Road in Carrick on Shannon, was purchased for £11,500 in 1996, thanks to the foresight of John McDwyer. It was funded by our supporters through a monster draw and also by a grant from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund. The premises was officially opened by playwright Bernard Farrell in April 1998.

Upcoming productions include *The Plough and the Stars* by Sean O'Casey, directed by Angus Dunne. It will run in The Dock from February 26th-March 1st. This play was first staged by the Breffs in 1969. Angus Dunne played the part of Uncle Peter in that production. In 1983 he directed the play for the Breffs. That production featured Brendan C Kiernan, who played Fluther Good. It won awards on the All Ireland Drama Festival circuit for Best Production, Best Actress, Lighting, Best Producer and Best Setting. We eagerly await Angus's take on it this time. Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming*, directed by Sinead

Quinn, will be staged in The Dock from March 26th to 29th.

Incredible stalwarts who have been part of the Breffs for many a year, and who are on our current committee are Angus Dunne, Jim Gorman, and Brendan C Kiernan. We owe these gentlemen a great debt of gratitude. They have encouraged us, nurtured us and inspired us.

The Breffni Players are proud of their contribution to the community of Carrick on Shannon and very grateful for the wonderful support of local sponsors, patrons, and audiences over the last 75 years. Here's to the next 25 years!

*Top: John Conway, Brendan Kieran, Cyril Cullen and Angus Dunne*

*Above Right: Angus Dunne and John Conway*

*Middle: Jim Gorman getting an All Ireland Lighting Award for "Shadow of a Gunman"*

*Right below: Angus Dunne and Cyril Cullen*

*Bottom: Siobhan Talbot and Gabriel Allen in "Lovers"*

