

# CREATIVE LEITRIM

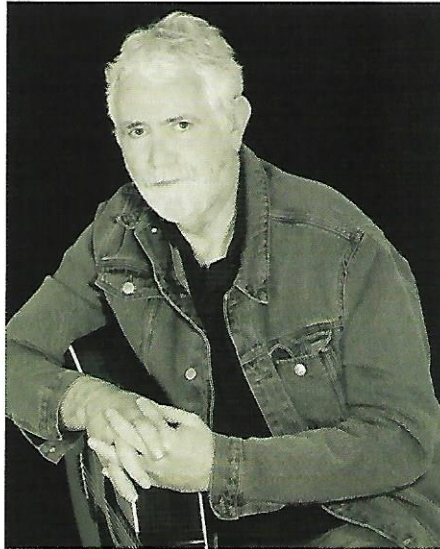
## Charlie McGettigan

*Charlie McGettigan is a well-known singer, musician and songwriter. He and Paul Harrington won the Eurovision Song Contest for Ireland in 1994. He has recorded numerous albums and has performed many times on tv and radio, at home and abroad. He presents two programmes every week on Shannonside/Northern Sound Radio.*

LEITRIM IS full of creative people. Recently, I took an imaginary journey around the county to take stock of some of these people. Leaving Drumshanbo, I pass Arigna on my left where Michael Harding lives. Michael is a regular visitor to Leitrim places in his writings as is Brian Leyden, also from that neck of the woods. Soon I'm passing Tarmon and thinking of the man with the smoothest voice on the airwaves, Vincent Woods. I recall his plays 'At the Black Pig's Dyke' and 'The Song of the Yellow Bittern' as well as his wonderful poems in 'The Colour of Language'.

Next stop, Drumkeerin, where internationally renowned singer/researcher Mary McPartlan comes from. Here, also, I think of the renowned flute player John McKenna and the fiddler Joe "Lucky" Gallagher. On my way to Manorhamilton, I pass through the small village of Killargue. Multi-instrumentalist and great character Dave Sheridan comes from here. In Manorhamilton I remember meeting sculptor Jackie McKenna for the first time this Summer when her magnificent sculpture of Danu was unveiled in Drumshanbo. Here also I find the Glens Centre—a small theatre and exhibition space—and I recall many great nights of music and drama there. Proinn Duignan and his bilingual drama company, Splódar, also spring to mind here.

On my way to Kinlough I pass where the corrugated iron shed that was Glenade Hall stood and recall playing there in the 1960s (although what that has to do with creativ-



■ Charlie McGettigan

*Photo: Shirley Corcoran*

ity, only Heaven knows). In Kinlough I think of Colin Regan and his weekly column in the *Leitrim Observer* that always has something interesting to say. On to Rossinver where the unique music of The Lennon Family is still played regularly.

Soon I'm in Kiltyclogher where one is always welcomed with a smile at the their annual Drama Festival. Here I also imagine the childhood days of musical genius Paul Gurney as he played with another highly regarded musical family—the Shanleys. Soon I'm on the winding road to Glenfarne and the famous 'Ballroom of Romance' which inspired William Trevor to write his story, later made into the wonderful film of the same name.

Back in Drumshanbo I think of its wonderful choirs directed by Mairín O Keeffe, Michael McKenna and Orla Daly. Orla and her husband Eamonn have in recent years been performing themed concerts which are a joy to attend. Here also I think of accordion players Paul Wynne and the ever

jolly Kevin Dowler. Flute players Padraig Sweeney and Mick Woods spring to mind, and the legendary flute player Packie Duignan was a regular visitor here. Thanks to Nancy Woods and her committee, the town fills to the brim each July with aspiring musicians at the Joe Mooney Summer School.

On my way to Carrick I think of musician, singer and songwriter Mick Blake who lives in Leitrim Village. Mick released his album "Oblivious" to huge critical acclaim recently. Mick's wife Mary is heavily involved in the promotion of South Leitrim youth drama. In Carrick I visit the Dock Arts Centre and the Leitrim Design House. Treats for the eyes and ears abound here. I think of Angus Dunne, now in his nineties up a ladder painting scenery for the next Breifni Players production. John McDwyer is probably putting the finishing touches to the next Beez Neez play as I leave for Mohill where the comedienne Katherine Lynch grew up. On my way I think of Edwina Guckian whose choreography lit up Ken Loach's film "Jimmy's Hall". Onwards to Fenagh! John McGahern lived quite close to Fenagh in his latter days and I can't help but wonder if he gleaned many of the people and places in his "That they may face the rising sun" from Fenagh and its environs.

In Ballinamore I think of Tommy Moran as he tells a story like only he can. The Ballinamore Amateur Drama Festival is always a great week and the town hosts a wonderful Musical Society and a couple of Drama groups if you include Aughawillan as part of it's locality. I swing right for Carrigallen

passing the Glenview Museum with its over 20,000 artefacts from bygone days. I love Carrigallen's Corn Mill Theatre where writer and theatre director Killian McGuinness and the inimitable Seamus O'Rourke learned their art. I recall Killian's play about Tom Clarke and am always amazed at the huge output of Seamus O'Rourke and wonder "What kind of an eejit is he?". Certainly no eejit, Of course here dwells Maura Williamson who tirelessly fosters Leitrim Youth Drama. Tom Morrow has travelled the world as a member of the highly acclaimed Trad band Dervish. His brother

Robert is no slouch either and his other brother Andy is a member of the Irish/American crossover band "New Road". John McCartin, fiddler, guitarist and member of Leitrim County Council is a regular at Trad sessions in Carrigallen.

Carrigallen also hosts the monthly music sessions at Charley Farrelly's Folk Club under the guidance of Tony Fahy. Although I don't make it to Ballymcgauran, Uileann piper Pdraig McGovern's wonderful rendition of Handel's "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba" puts him among the top uileann pipers in the world.

I pass through Aughavas, home of another great musical family the—McNamaras, on my way to Keshcarrigan. Eleanor Shanley lives here and I recall playing with her both here and all over Europe where five and six standing ovations regularly greeted her performances. After a quick detour to Aughnasheelin where the multi-All Ireland Fleadh winning Ward Sisters live, tired and weary I make my way home.

*So here I am, back in Drumshanbo. I hope you enjoyed your creative trip around Leitrim.*

## THE CORN MILL THEATRE

**Patricia Ledwith** Chairperson

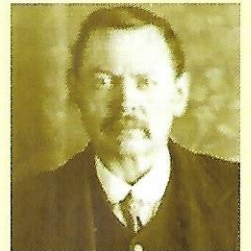
*We wish the Leitrim Guardian a Happy Birthday in 2018 celebrating 50 years in existence. We at the Corn Mill Theatre are celebrating 100 years treading the boards in Carrigallen.*

THE TRADITION AND enthusiasm for Drama in Carrigallen date back to the late 1880's. The original performances were staged in Clooncorrick Castle, owned by the O'Rourkes of Breifne. From there the Cosgrove brothers with their successors entertained audiences in successive locations in and around the village of Carrigallen right up until the opening of the Corn Mill Theatre in 1989. The present group was founded in 1963 as The Community Players and there has a continuation of drama productions annually since that time. The group has competed on the festival circuit since 1970 and has reached the All-Ireland Open Finals in Athlone on twenty-one occasions. In 1989 the group opened their own theatre—the Corn Mill Theatre and Arts Centre with the help of a grant from the Arts Council and the Community Players became know as The Corn Mill Theatre Company. In that year the name of the group was changed to the Corn Mill Theatre Company. In 1999 major renovations took place when the foyer, new dressing rooms, rehearsal and storage areas were built. In 2004 the company hosted the All-Ireland One Act Finals, and have continued to host an annual One Act Festival which continues to grow from strength to strength each year.

The group has won the All-Ireland Open Drama Finals in Athlone on three occasions—in 1998 with *Belfry* by Billy Roche, in 2005 with *Stolen Child* by Yvonne Quinn and Bairbre Ni Chaoimh and in 2014 with *The Devil's Ceili* by Philip Doherty & Kevin McGahern.

The love of the arts continues at the Corn Mill and the future is destined to be bright with many young people in the area involved in the Leitrim Youth Theatre Group.

We can only be grateful to our ancestors for their great foresight, hard work and determination to provide a platform for the arts that has lasted to this day. We, as a community, will strive to continue to uphold the proud tradition of drama in Carrigallen and its environs.



■ **Johnny Cosgrove**  
*Directed The West's Awake in 1918*