Down

A new play by Seamus O'Rourke

For the second year in a row, the Corn Mill theatre got an unprecedented third place in Athlone in the RTE All-Ireland Drama finals with a brand new play never performed before. Seamus O'Rourke was again the playwright and in February of 2007, the new play—DOWN, was launched in the Corn Mill theatre in Carrigallen. Speeches were made and then Seamus made his. You'll have to fill in the laughter bits for yourself!

"First of all, I'd like to thank Patrick Mitchell for his speech. I think it was the same one as last year! Last year we had the launch for '*dig*' in Teach Dúchais in Drumeela and I had three people telling me how wonderful I was! It was on that night I said that I'd better write another play.

I'd like to thank my family for putting up with another six months of me looking at a computer and me being in another world and when you see this play you'll wonder what sort of a world was it! I'd like to thank them for their patience. I was told...promised them not to write another one. So I'll have to wait till they grow up and move out and go to university...it's alright, they're not clever enough to do that!

Hubert mentioned about meeting us on the different drama festivals over the year. There's a few people here tonight from Ballinamore and Kiltyclougher in Leitrim, Shercock and Cavan town from Cavan. These are four of the festivals we go to every year and I'd like to especially welcome them. I know they like to see us coming because we're local and we bring a crowd, but its through going to the drama festivals that we have developed over the years and if we have reached any standards, its because we go and put our chin out and see what happens when we go in front of someone who allegedly knows what they're talking about!

Last year, in my *naïveté*, when I wrote 'dig', I said I'm not going to change anything. So, it was decided that no changes would be made and we would do it as it was written.

This year, I decided that this wasn't such a good idea, so I've been changin' and changin'. We built three different sets, added in scenes and took away scenes. And everyone played a part. So I'd like to pay a big tribute to the actors. Normally, I wouldn't thank actors or even talk about them because they are usually self-centred, obnoxious people. And its not that these actors aren't, self-centred, obnoxious people, but they did work very hard! So I'd like to thank them very much. And especially our backstage people: Louí Finnegan built three sets and Philip McIntyre did the lighting with assistance from Stephen Tierney. Úna Ward, Elizabeth McGlynn and Brigid Whitton did the make-up. Damien Reilly & Sean McIntyre did everything else!

Its those people *plus* the people you meet at the door of the Corn Mill when you come in *plus* the people who gave you a cup of tea this evening *plus* the people who were looking for rawl plugs half an hour ago to finish off the lighting and the seating *plus* 200 other people around the village who have done something at some point over the last few years. They're the people that I'd really like to thank. Because, I know we are launching the play and everyone puts my name to it, but this year again, it really is a Corn Mill production. Anyone one who has given a word of encouragement to me or somebody else, its those people that really matter.

As Patrick said to me this evening when everybody was rushing around trying to get ready, it's a little sense of community that we have, that's lost in a lot of areas, a lot of communities have lost that. I know football clubs still have this thing, but the Corn Mill also have it and when I say the Corn Mill, I don't mean the obnoxious actors and directors and snobby ones, but the people who do all the backstage things and make the cups of tea.

Two years ago, when we did win an All-Ireland in Athlone, it was that sense of community and the sense of everyone in it together and nobody thinking that they were anything better than the next guy—that was the most pleasing part of it. I'd like to think that that will carry on into anything that I do through the Corn Mill.

So thank you very much, thanks to everyone. I can't thank anymore tonight or I'll be all thanked up!"

I speak of Kiltyclougher Festival in my speech. It reminds me of going there with 'dig' a couple of years ago. It was our second festival and I was still very worried about what the critics would say. The adjudicator on the night was Ballyshannon man Patsy Croal whom I had known for many years on the circuit (he was the first adjudicator to give me an award for acting). Patsy has devoted his life to theatre and Amateur Drama in particular, and gave the green light on that first production of 'dig'.

It was with great sadness that we heard of Patsy's passing in October 2007. He will be missed on the Drama circuit everywhere. May he rest in peace. SEAMUS O'ROURKE

The keeper of the stairs, Mr Treadstring (Killian McGuinness), falls asleep on the job. Trying to awaken him are Danny (Shane Connolly) and Blossom (Claire Whitton).

"To Infinity & Beyond"

Ronan Ward & Barry McIntyre run security in DOWN

On stage in the Corn Mill after coming 3rd in Athlone: Brian Reilly, Ronan Ward, Barry McIntyre, Killian McGuinness & Gus Ward

Brian Reilly as Mr Bold

Seamus O'Rourke directing DOWN in the Ardhowen theatre, Enniskillen

Seamus O'Rourke, Killian McGuinness & Hubert McMorrow in Athlone

Leitrim Youth Theatre members in Athlone for DOWN: Lee Finnegan, Jessica O'Rourke & Kate Ledwith

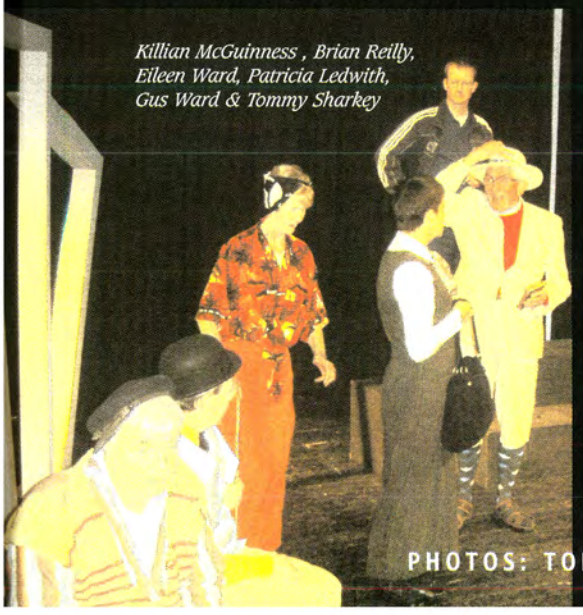
Patricia Ledwith as Miss West

Brian Reilly & Gus Ward, stalwarts of the Corn Mill theatre with Tommy Sharkey in DOWN

Philp McIntyre receives the trophy for DOWN: All-Ireland Best Lighting

Loui Finnegan receives the trophy for All-Ireland Best Set in DOWN

Eileen Ward in her best role since Nora Dan!



Killian McGuinness , Brian Reilly, Eileen Ward, Patricia Ledwith, Gus Ward & Tommy Sharkey

Final Bow at the Corn Mill

Shane Connolly & Claire Whitton

PHOTOS: TONY FAHY