

# CARRICK

## WATER MUSIC FESTIVAL *Mary Dolan*

THE 'FEEL GOOD FACTOR' around the town was almost tangible in early August in anticipation of the wonderful mix of quality entertainment, upmarket ambience and great food on offer for the first-ever Carrick Water Music Festival.

Shop windows were decorated, a fabulous marquee in place, tickets for the various events were selling, programmes, performers and last-minute details being attended to, the town being spruced up, and a buzz of activity evident throughout the town.

And then it all happened—a fantastic inaugural Festival held over five days and culminating in a fabulous fireworks display following Opera A La Carte's "Don Giovanni" and topped off by the most glorious, perfect day for a Jazz garden party that one could ever imagine. Leitrim natives returned to enjoy the extraordinary undertaking, while the curious from different parts of the island came to see what this talked about town of Carrick-on-Shannon was all about.

On Wednesday the first of the key events was a wonderful explanation of opera by RTE lyric FM's John Allen ("Operascope") in the Landmark Hotel with an equally fine wine tasting presentation organised by Slattery's in conjunction Gleeson's, which many people said could have been an evening's event in itself.

On Thursday evening, the brilliant setting of St Mary's Church on Main Street played host to the Sligo Early Music Ensemble, for a lovely chamber orchestra presentation of works with a 'water music' theme by Handel, Telemann, Corelli and Vivaldi, with Guest Leader Niamh Crowley and Soprano Elisabeth Goell.

A Cabaret Evening devised by the UK's Opera A La Carte on Friday night gave us all a great mix of opera favourites in an imaginative setting, and included pieces from Carmen, La Boheme, The Pearl Fishers, Rigoletto and Die Fledermaus, among others. It received high praise for being light-hearted and



enjoyable and a good first taste of opera for many in the audience.

On Saturday, a variety of free 'fringe events' throughout the town were on offer, from stilt walkers to a children's art competition, two photographic exhibitions, two book readings (Harry Potter's latest adventures at The Book Shop and Carrick's own Angela & Pdraig McGinn's new book at Trinity Rare Books), two classical performances by the excellent Llobet Guitar Trio, and magnificent organ and soloists recitals all afternoon at St Mary's Church, while a big hit was the Alpha & Omega Drama & Mime Group from Finland & Sweden.

The Gala Presentation of Mozart's 'Don Giovanni' by the renowned Opera A La Carte Company was 'brilliant', 'a masterpiece' - comments heard from among the 450 attendees-an unparalleled number for a venue not an opera house- many of whom came dressed in evening and period costume. The evening started off with an elegant pre-event dinner in the large marquee, followed by the opera, and ended with a brief but spectacular fireworks display over the Shannon.

Sunday's Jazzy Garden Party with pre-event lunch in the Festival Marquee was an amazing afternoon of classical

*Juliette Farrell & Eimear Fitzgerald playing their violins at the Carrick Music Festival.*

PHOTO: DAVID KNIGHT

jazz and bossa nova music by the Yvonne Cunningham Quintet. The overflow crowd took advantage of the brilliant sunshine in a cloudless breezy sky to settle in at the garden tables and chairs provided and spread blankets and picnics on the lawn. Children romped about on the grass with ice cream cones and candy floss. The gods were very kind to us, and a more glorious afternoon could not have been arranged to show off Carrick-on-Shannon's sparkle!

Visitors and locals alike were amazed, delighted, enthralled and downright gobsmacked that a first-time festival of such quality and professionalism could be put together in a few short months by people without experience of organising a festival of this calibre.

Carrick-on-Shannon's already fine reputation as a great place to visit, to live and to work was enhanced that much more and brought repeated promises and acclamations of "we'll be back next year!"