



Something for everyone at The Percy French Summer School



arts news

■ With Pauline Scott

Athlone Choral AGM

The AGM of Athlone Choral Society will take place on Monday, June 28th at 7.30 pm at Coosan Cottage Eco Guesthouse, Coosan Point Road, Athlone. New members welcome.



Resurrection Fern in Passionfruit Theatre

June 18th In Passionfruit Theatre will be a special night. It is the start of a 2010 double bill tour for UK based group Jukebox Gypsy, and Athlone based folk group Resurrection Fern. The night will be made extra special by the blending of these two engaging groups. Over the last few tours in Ireland a chemical bond has occurred between Jukebox Gypsy & Resurrection Fern, involving the members of both bands to interchange, yet keeping each others distinct styles true and vivid. As a result, all members will be playing in both lineups.

Having a sound all to their own, Resurrection Fern are trying to push boundaries in the alternative folk genre. Formed in the summer of 2008, they have played across Europe and Australia, and feature a lineup that can be anything from a solo show with lyricist and frontman Bean Dolan, to a seven piece harmony-based group complete with drums, guitars and a menagerie of other instruments. Resurrection Fern Have been played on radio stations from Ireland to Australia, and have sold albums all over the world from iTunes and other online providers.

Resurrection Fern was formed in May 2008 by Bean Dolan, it was a project to see where a non-percussive instrumentation with no 'electricity' involved might have taken his songs, as seen on their first album, 'Earth Rising'. The new album, 'Transcend Mortality' out on the 18th June 2010 (Digi Release 1st June) has moved on from this to include both elements in the songs. The new songs have strayed from the sound of the debut album by taking in a lot more sounds and percussive elements but the familiar alternative acoustic style of Resurrection Fern is still scattered throughout. They have been branded with several genres including alternative folk, minimalism, indie, acoustic earth tones!, experimental and many more... but they all hold folk very close to heart. It's apparent underneath the flow of the songs, both on their debut album, 'Earth Rising' and in their live shows. Stay tuned for more tracks from the upcoming album which is released this month.

Bean Dolan writes the lyrics and song structures, but almost everyone else has their own projects on the go as well. As a result, some live shows can end up having a three or four band bill, and never need to stray outside a core group of musicians, as all musicians seen here in Resurrection Fern, also feature in the other groups and projects. Resurrection Fern are available on iTunes, as well as a whole host of other online sellers too.

Whether you're a fan of Percy French favourites such as 'The Mountains of Mourne', 'Phil the Fluther's Ball' or 'Are you Right There Michael', or simply someone with an interest in history, either local or national, then you'll learn lots about the man behind the lyrics and the social realities of his era at this year's Percy French Summer School, which takes place in Castlecoote house from July 14th to 21st.

The school has something for everyone and admission to individual daytime events is just €7, or €5 with concessions, or €20 for the evening concerts.

Honorary President of the Percy French Summer School, Michael D. Higgins, in his foreword to this year's brochure, notes the importance of the fact that Percy French recorded the language as he heard it and his ear remained open to sounds.

"Percy French was born in 1854 and it is interesting what happened in Ireland in that period and in the decades before he was born.

"That century was very significant in terms of the loss of the language and it is credible to suggest that the music was surviving through the new words and through the new language. Music, if you like, expressed a form of culture that had been driven down through the new language, which is English.

"What happens in many cases is that one language does not neatly replace the other. The Irish used the long words of the new language, English, to help capture it and in doing so were inventing something entirely new. It is a great tribute to Percy French that he had that intelligence to be able to relate to the musicality in the language around him. He recorded it as he heard it. Yeats for instance is wishing and seeking to create a kind of noble heritage for the peasantry, the language if you like becomes straightened to suit the ideological purpose. It is therefore

of the utmost significance that Percy French decided to leave the language as he heard it."

A taste of what's on offer at The Percy French Summer School - Thursday, July 15th, begins with a lecture by the eminent Dr. Caitriona Clear her talk entitled 'The songwriter as social historian: Percy French and Irish everyday life in the latter part of the 19th Century'. This is followed by the Beresford Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History Dr. John Scally with his talk entitled 'Finding our Future in our past: The enduring inspiration of Percy French'. This will be followed by a lunchtime recital featuring poems, monologues, recitations and songs of Percy French called 'Pardon the French'.

Friday, July 16th sees an illustrated talk on Percy French's paintings by Phyllis Arnold and a lecture on Thomas Moore and Percy French by Dr. Mary O'Donnell. A lunchtime recital by harpist Dr. Mary O'Donnell will feature music of the bards.

An address by Honorary President Michael D. Higgins will be given at 7.30 pm on Friday and this will be followed by a concert entitled 'An Evening of Wit and French Polish'.

Brian Leyden returns on Saturday morning with a lecture entitled 'Above the Briar Line'. Berrie O'Neill from The Percy French Society of North Down will give a lecture entitled 'Experiences and perspectives from my Journey with Percy French' on Saturday afternoon. Saturday concludes with a concert entitled 'Moore and French The Entertainers: A celestial meeting of the minds and music of Thomas Moore and Percy French'.

Sunday sees the conclusion of the summer school with a commemorative service.

For more information on the Percy French Summer School, contact Castlecoote House on (090) 66 63794 or email info@percyfrench.ie

Enchanting portrait of Irish women features local ladies

'His & Hers', an award-winning documentary described as an enchanting portrait of Irish women, will be screened at Roscommon Arts Centre on Friday 18th and Saturday 19th June to coincide with its national release.

The documentary by director Ken Wardrop, features interviews with 70 women from the Irish Midlands in their own homes, including Stokestown's Miriam Gunn and Nuala McGowan.

'His & Hers' is cut precisely in short, individual bursts, even if the overall effect is gentle. In effect, it's a cradle-to-grave look at women, from a red-haired baby in a cot to a 90-year-old lady staring out of the window of a nursing home. It's an enchanting portrait of Irish women as they share in a frank, funny and gracious

story of their relationships with men from childhood to dating and marriage to old age.

"A man loves his girlfriend the most, his wife the best, but his mother the longest," is an old Irish proverb. From kitchens, living rooms, and hallways across the Irish midlands, His & Hers delightfully combines observation and charm to tell a 90-year-old love story through the voices of 70 women. This intimate gender and cultural snapshot explores a woman's relationships with the men in her life—father, boyfriend, husband, son. Following sequentially from little girl to old woman, each character portrait is woven with the others into one perfectly crafted cinematic quilt.

His & Hers is an enchanting and affectionate



appreciation for woman in all her versatility. Award winning short film director Ken Wardrop (Undressing My Mother, The Herd) has

applied his signature style, marking an accomplished feature debut.

Over 80 minutes, the short interviews come in

waves: from the little girl who would like a dog but tells us 'my daddy prefers fish because they don't make any noise', and on to the teenager whose father is teaching her to drive. 'I haven't knocked no-one down yet', she says proudly. It's only after you've left their front rooms, their cosy pine kitchens, that you realise you have watched the whole of life fly by, with its biggest hopes and dreams there, naked to the eye. These capable women, the ladies of the Irish midlands, are an easy lot to be around. One elderly lady talks about what she'd do if she won the lottery, before admitting, 'well, I can't win the lottery, because I don't do it'.

For booking and future information call Roscommon Arts Centre on (090) 66 25824.