

HISTORY OF CLANE MUSICAL SOCIETY

Affiliated to AIMS (Association of Irish Musical Societies) since 1984

Clane Musical Society owes its history to the talent and vision of a very special person – the Society’s founder **Marie Hickey**. The Society’s achievements over the last thirty years are nothing short of amazing. The first production was of “The Boyfriend” (1983) on a makeshift stage set up in the GAA hall on the Prosperous Road, followed by “Fiddler on the Roof” (1984) in Scoil Mhuire and “Guys ‘n Dolls” in the now demolished Behan’s Ballroom (1985). Since 1986 home for CMS is the wonderful Abbey in Main Street, Clane, courtesy of Clane Community Council. In the intervening years the Society has produced a musical every year except 1987. Shows have included The New Mikado (reprised as “The Hot Mikado”) and The New Pirates of Penzance (reprised as “The Pirates of Penzance) Oklahoma! (staged twice) Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Sweet Charity, My Fair Lady, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Hello Dolly to name a few. The shows have been received by our patrons to great acclaim and the number of AIMS nominations and awards garnered by the Society and its members, for musical and acting performances, set design and stage management speak volumes for the standard achieved by the Society. Our most recent production “Sweeney Todd” proved a huge hit not only with our audiences but also with the AIMS Adjudicator who awarded the “Best Actress” accolade to Helena Begley for her role of Mrs. Lovett – Rory Dunne in the lead role of Sweeney Todd was voted Best Male Singer and our Musical Director David McGauran completed the hat trick by being adjudged the best M.D. The icing on the cake was the Society achieving third place overall the “best overall show” category.

Our fantastic award winning productions are only possible with the dedication and commitment of our casts, the input and talents of our Directors, Musical Directors and Choreographers and especially of our “in house” members – people like Marie Cusack who has been our Set Designer/Builder/Stage Manager for more years than she cares to remember – her work in Clane and further afield has earned her well deserved nominations and awards for both Set Design and Stage Management and we are particularly grateful that she continues to make her time and talents available to her home Society. Brigid Loughlin is our dedicated in house Lighting Designer and Operator. In recent years our annual concerts and plays have been lit by Tom Kennedy, who first trained with CMS. Trish Fusco from 1988 until 2011 ensured our costumes were perfect every night and more recently the mantle of Wardrobe “Mistress/Master” has been donned by Andrew Reddy. Fran Styles and her team embellish those costumes with impeccable attention to make-up and hairstyles, all of which accurately

reflect the era of the show and play.

Let us not forget our ladies and gentlemen at Front of House – they at times are the forgotten folk who meet and greet, always with a smile, and who rarely get to see a full show – they deserve their own ovation!

Drama in CMS

In 2001 the Society decided to foster the talents of its members in another direction – apart from musical theatre, members would be encouraged to perform in stage plays which would be directed by fellow members.

The venture has proved very successful. Plays have included “Many Young Men of Twenty” “The Cavalcaders” “Juno and the Paycock”, “The Playboy of the Western World” “Death of a Salesman”, “Steel Magnolias” “The Importance of being Earnest” three one act plays – “The last Pantomime at Little Grimley”, “After Midnight and Before Dawn” and “Small Box Psychosis”, “Blithe Spirit” “The Year of the Hiker” “Big Maggie” and “Wyrd Sisters”. The experience gained by two of our Directors gave them the confidence to go on and direct CMS musicals – Shane McGrath, who directed “Juno and the Paycock” subsequently directed “The Pirates of Penzance” and Art McGauran who directed “Small Box Psychosis” directed “Hello Dolly” and “Sweeney Todd”.

Since 2012 the Society also runs monthly play readings, which assist in choosing a play for future productions – not an easy task with either musicals or plays!

CMS is run by a committee, which is elected at the end of June each year, in accordance with the terms of the Society’s constitution. The Society’s year commences on the 1st July and the calendar of events is as follows:-

1. The Society stages its annual musical in Autumn – this year the production will be “Little Shop of Horrors” which will run from the 19th to 23rd November 2013.
2. We stage a concert “Sing into Spring” in February – next year it will be on 28th February 2014..
3. A play is produced in late Spring (2014’s production to be decided). In the meantime play readings take place in Manzor’s Pub each month.
4. Numbers permitting, members participate in the AIMS Choral Festival in New Ross in May.

5. Socially, the Society runs fundraising events such as table quizzes and race nights throughout the year,
6. Society members also support neighbouring Societies in Naas, Newbridge and Kilcock and indeed further afield.

New members are always welcome – why not contact our PRO Sadie O'Reilly at 087 7916989 or at clanemusicalsociety@gmail.com for further information.

MARIE HICKEY (1947-2012)

As mentioned previously Marie Hickey, together with Musical Director Maureen McCormack founded the Society in 1983 and both watched with pride as the Society grew and developed over the years. It was with deep sadness and indeed great shock that we learned of Marie's sudden death on the 13th July 2012. Marie was survived by her husband Niall and their three sons Donal, Garret and Owen and Niall wrote the following synopsis of Marie's varied and accomplished theatrical career – the synopsis is a wonderful testament to her immense talent - a talent she so willingly shared, bringing her professionalism to otherwise amateur productions - always with a smile and often exhibiting a wicked sense of humour!

“Marie's career started in her teens, when she directed “Pirates of Penzance” for her hometown Greystones Operatic and Dramatic Society. In the 60's she produced, acted and sang in a wide variety of plays, concerts and musicals in Greystones, Bray and Carnew. The 70's found her forming MPC Productions in the Eagle Theatre, Glasthule. MPC was notable for staging the Irish premiere of “Half in Earnest”, by Vivian Ellis, a musical based on Wilde's “Importance of Being Earnest”: the production was invited to Waterford AIMS Festival. MPC swept the boards at Fleetwood Drama Festival in Britain with “Playboy of the Western World” in which Gabriel Byrne and Don Conroy played father and son, Old Mahon and Christy, under Marie's always expert direction.

The 70's and 80's brought marriage, three sons and a move to Clane, then a small village. Marie focussed on family, but found time to direct school and ICA productions in Kilcock, Maynooth and Rathcoffey and for Fr Reilly's Allen Theatre Group. She won awards for acting and for writing and directing a one act ICA play. In 1983 she founded Clane Musical Society, setting it on the road by directing early productions - “The Boy Friend”, “Fiddler on the Roof” and “Guys ‘n Dolls”.

The 90's brought new directions: Marie taught French in local schools, but also managed the Shelbourne Hotel dinner cabaret, her outstanding memory being that of Luciano Pavarotti, as a hotel dinner guest, kissing her hand in congratulation! Into the new century, she spent eleven tireless years working for Vincent de Paul in Maynooth, Blanchardstown and Celbridge, but also found time to accept an invitation from Clongowes College to direct memorable productions of "Joseph" and of "Oliver": the Rector told us at her funeral mass that it was his firm intention that Marie would direct the opening production in their new college theatre. Sadly this was not to be." **NIALL HICKEY**

It is a truly fitting epitaph to Marie's memory that the Society she founded in October 1983 will celebrate its 30th Anniversary this year and that Marie's ideals and vision of community theatre continues to thrive in Clane Musical Society.

SADIE O'REILLY (PRO)