



Time for a French Revue

THE 12TH PERCY FRENCH FESTIVAL

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22ND-24TH JULY 2020



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THE 12TH PERCY FRENCH FESTIVAL 2020

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100TH ANNIVERSARY PERCY FRENCH 1854–1920

Time for a French Revue

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The Percy French Festival has taken place annually since 2009 at Castlecoote House, the home of the festival founder, Kevin Finnerty, whose father was a founder member of the Percy French festivals of 1957 and 1958

The Percy French Festival 2020 acknowledges the major support of Roscommon County Council, Creative Ireland Programme; Excel Industries, Dublin. A full list of our many supporters can be seen at www.percyfrench.ie

The Percy French Festival, registered address Castlecoote House, Castlecoote, Co. Roscommon. Brochure created, compiled and edited by Kevin Finnerty © 2020



Clooneyquinn

I was born to my parents, Michael and Joan Flanagan (née McGoldrick). Michael, my father, was the son of Patrick Vincent (1890–1974) and Annie Flanagan (Attaballa, 1887–1969). Patrick Vincent, my grandfather, was the son of Michael (1857–1937) and Margaret Flanagan (née Carney, Curracreigh) who owned Clooneyquinn post office and shop. Clooneyquinn was of course the birthplace of the renowned, artist, engineer, singer, songwriter, William Percy French. While many years separated our lives growing up in Clooneyquinn, we were always regaled with the many stories concerning Percy French's life, his extended family, his nearby estate, his music, all of which made him a fascinating character for me.

My earliest memories, however, centered primarily on Percy's songs, heard occasionally on the radio even though pop culture was in full swing and getting most airplay. Then, suddenly and surprisingly, in the early 1970s, the famous American singer-songwriter, Don McLean recorded one of Percy French's songs, *The Mountains of Mourne*, and catapulted him into centre stage once again.

We lived one mile from where Percy French was born. I never saw the house in its full glory as it was demolished in the early 1960s. However, my connection with the Percy French family goes deep. My great-grandparents, Michael and Margaret Flanagan, knew Percy French personally. So did my grandparents, Patrick Vincent and Annie, as Clooneyquinn post office and shop was a hub of activity for the parish, community and big house way back then. However, after the sudden death of Percy French in 1920, life in the big house became somewhat less vibrant.

Immediately after the Second World War, Major Harry St. George French, a nephew of Percy's, moved to the unoccupied French estate and life began all over again. Harry returned to live in Clooneyquinn after fighting with the British army during the war, when my father Michael got to know him very well. We continued with the post office and shop and further my father had a hackney service owning one of the first cars, a Ford Popular (pictured opposite), in County Roscommon.



Michael Flannagan with his Ford Popular



Parked in front of Clooneyquinn Post Office, 1948

Major Harry, like his uncle Percy, cycled everywhere as he couldn't drive himself. Very often my father delivered groceries, the post, newspapers, and telegrams to Major French and his very many distinguished guests and visitors at the big house in Clooneyquinn.

When Harry needed to travel anywhere—to the train, the Church, Garvey's snug bar in Elphin, or sightseeing with his many visitors—my father and his immaculate Ford, were always called upon and as a result Harry and my father became very great friends.

Major French loved rural Ireland, its people, the countryside, and its many pursuits. He particularly liked fishing and shooting and especially going out on his boat on Lake Drinane, in nearby Elphin where he brought many celebrities, lords and ladies over the years.

In August 1951, two such visitors, Mr Anderson and Mr Smyth, arrived down from Dublin to stay with Harry for the start of the fishing and duck shooting season. Their day began at 5 am, and on a beautiful, misty, sunny morning, a terrible tragedy occurred on Drinane Lake. It appears that Mr Anderson was toppled overboard from the recoil of his gun and this together with the extremely cold water caused him to panic. In a desperate attempt to rescue him, Mr Smyth, himself a strong swimmer, made valiant attempts to drag his friend from the deep lake. In the ensuing struggle, further compounded with their heavy clothing and Wellingtons, panic would cause one to pull the

other down and tragically both lost their lives. Later that evening Mr Smyth's body was recovered and nine days later Mr Anderson's body was dragged from the lake, in front of a very large crowd who had gathered from far and near to watch the rescue divers daily.

This incident would have a profound effect on Harry French, and shortly afterwards he moved to Co Louth, selling the house and its lands to a Mr Derrig, a businessman from Co Mayo. The new owner hoped to develop the house as a small hotel or a convent for religious sisters. However, nothing materialised and the house began to fall into disrepair.

Harry would not return again until the two major carnivals were held in the grounds of Clooneyquinn House, in 1957 and '58. My father and my uncle, John Finnerty, formed a committee and as the then *National Irish Press* would later write 'even in their most optimistic dreams the organisers of the Percy French Festival week could scarcely have dared to expect that the venture would be the outstanding success it proved to be'. The article continues 'success it was with a capital "S" and the thousands who patronised it were well rewarded for their journey'. It was to be the first of its kind held on this scale since Percy French's death. His two daughters, Ettie and Joan, attended and his banjo was brought from Dundalk and played with gusto.

The funds that were generated from these events were later used to set up a Scholarship for local national school students, to help them complete their Secondary education. The first examination was held in 1967, and Percy's two daughters attended the prize-giving ceremony. My father was secretary of this committee up until the early 1990s and then I took over that role. The examination has been held every six years right up to the present day.

My father was a member of the Roscommon Percy French Society, which in 1984, erected a memorial to Percy French at the site of the French's house in Clooneyquinn. In 2004, a major celebration was again organised marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Percy French, 1854, where an exhibition of all his paintings was on display in King House, Boyle. Over the years my father remained friendly with members of the French family, Percy's daughters only died in the 1990s. My father sadly passed away in 2005.

A few years intervened and in 2009, a new development appeared on the horizon with arrival of the Percy French Summer School at Castle-

coote House. This was a unique approach to Percy French, created by my first cousin, Kevin, son of the aforementioned John Finnerty, which took Percy French's views and commentary on his own life and times and brought them to the bigger questions we are faced with today. Together with his music in the afternoons, this approach has proved to be a marvellous success and amazingly this is the 12th successive year of the Percy French Festival.



After my father died it sadly fell to me, in 2006, to sell Clooneyquinn post office and shop, thereby closing a very long tradition, a joyful and memorable history of the Flanagan family involvement in life at Clooneyquinn which began as far back as circa 1880. In the photo above of my family, in Clooneyquinn post office, I am standing second from left with my sister Bridget to my right, my brothers Vincent and Patrick to my left, and my sister Dolores on my far left; my father, Michael, and my mother, Joan, at the front.

Today I am in living in Co Galway, with all my siblings nearby, still listening, still looking, still travelling to wherever I can see, hear or encounter anything of that marvellous, joyful and ebullient character, William Percy French who burst into our family lives way back in the 19th century.

Noel Flanagan

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JULY 22ND

WEDNESDAY

- 10.00 AM **Maria Steen**
The Sad Demise of the Moderate Man
- 10.50 AM TEA/COFFEE
- 11.20 PM **Mary Kenny**
Journalism Evolving?
- 12.10 PM **Kevin Myers**
The Death of Journalism
- 1.00 PM LUNCH
- 2.30 PM AFTERNOON RECITAL
Eileen Coyle (Soprano) and **Frasier Hickland (Piano)**
A Vision of Ireland
- 3.15 PM GARDENS OPEN
- QUESTIONS & ANSWERS TO FOLLOW EACH TALK

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JULY 23RD

THURSDAY



10.00 AM

Vincent Pierse

**From Cloonyquin to the Clogherbrien:
Stories to warm your heart**

10.30 AM

Declan Ganley

Title Awaited

11.10 AM

TEA/COFFEE

11.30 AM

Jayne Barry

Irish Watercolours

12.15 PM

THE SEAN FREYNE MEMORIAL LECTURE

Dr Fáinche Ryan

**Politics, Truth, and Theology:
Conversations with Hannah Arendt**



SEAN FREYNE 1935–2013

1.10 PM

LUNCH

2.30 PM

AFTERNOON RECITAL

David Larkin

With a Toot on the Flute and a Twiddle on the Fiddle

3.15 PM

GARDENS OPEN

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS TO FOLLOW EACH TALK

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Indoors, Cavan County Museum is a treasure trove of fascinating artefacts from our past, such as ancient arrowheads that our ancestors used to hunt, or the mysterious three-faced Corleck Head.

When finished your tour visitors can enjoy refreshments in our Coffee Shop and browse around our beautiful Craft Shop.

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and Saturday from 10am–5pm
Sunday 2pm–5.30pm (June, July, August and September)

Cavan County Museum, Virginia Road
Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan
Tel: +353 49 8544070
www.cavanmuseum.ie



JULY 24TH

FRIDAY



- 10.00 AM **Professor Gerard Casey**
How Free Should Free Speech Be?
- 10.50 AM TEA/COFFEE
- 11.20 AM **Professor Ray Kinsella**
This time it really is different:
why we need to build an alternative to Globalization
- 12.10 PM **Professor Gerard Casey & Kevin Myers**
Presumption of Guilt?
- 1.00 PM LUNCH
- AFTERNOON RECITAL
- 2.30 PM **Michael Banahan**
As French as Dylan
- 3.15 PM GARDENS OPEN
- QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WILL FOLLOW EACH TALK

PERCY FRENCH FESTIVAL 2020 TICKETS

INDIVIDUAL LECTURES €10 each

AFTERNOON RECITALS €12 each

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Three Lectures, Afternoon Recital, Tea/Coffee & Homemade cakes

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Don't miss out, Festival tickets sell out quickly!

Time for a French Revue

The Big House was, according to W. B. Yeats, where order and beauty meet to bring great art to its community. This, in short, is what we have been engaged in at Castlecoote house for the past 15 years.

With the moral collapse of many of our traditional institutions; the demise of a large number of rural community structures; the eclipsing of many parish churches as centres of community activity; the 'rationalisation' of post offices and other traditional services; the severe reduction in the numbers of Garda stations; the dehumanising of banks and libraries; the closure of rural public houses and local shops, all centres or fora of local leadership and collective conversation, have now disappeared and may be lost to rural Ireland forever. As a result, a great vacuum exists.

Technology and new and untested forms of communication have altered the very nature of human connection and communication, redefining the nature of civic relationships and priorities. As a consequence it has become clear that we need to find a new hermeneutics of discussion, to provide a coherent cultural and intellectual map of human reality going forward.

It so happens that at Castlecoote House we have been attending to and addressing these areas of human need and activity for a number of years. At our annual Percy French Festival, for instance, while illuminating the neglected historical and socio-logical context of French's life and work, we have tentatively been teasing out such questions as had become most urgent for our society in the emerging moment.

In our style of approach we raised many of the bigger questions; examined them through the prisms of French's comic genius, his connectedness to the grass roots culture of the people of Roscommon and the wider country in his own time. Building on these understandings, we have each year, conducted a study of the cultural undergrowth of French's time and our own. Year-on-year, post-event surveys show a public appetite to expand on the issues raised, particularly the bigger questions of truth, morality, and ethics.

Alongside the big attraction of the music and entertainment, people who travel to the Festival come from a wide range of backgrounds and were a very thoughtful and reflective audiences. In matters dealing with the press and political governance it was clear they had become very weary of partial truths and their integrity being challenged on a regular basis. Mainly because some of the media presume that their readers have the same value system as they have, whereas in reality the opposite is the case, worse still the media continue to perpetuate it.

The Sean Freyne Memorial Lecture took up the challenge of issues of faith and morality and became a way of reaching out to people, from all walks of life, who on a very deep spiritual level were searching for a coherent faith and an undiluted approach to the Traditions. Truth and religion was a way of engaging with the world, a living relationship with the Transcendent, not a set of beliefs, dogmas and practices and it was clear they were more at ease when these bigger questions were raised in a secular setting. They saw faith as a way of living, thinking and being

in the same reality as other people. They had a misgiving too about who takes ownership of these value system(s) that constitute their beliefs or that make up their spiritual well-being. Consequently they were looking for a neutral, objective, unbiased interpretation and approach to the Traditions and these bigger questions.

It was in this context, four years ago we successfully launched our *Myth & History* series which, alongside Classical Hebrew, has now become part of the intellectual cultural conversation at Castlecoote House.

What now for Castlecoote House?

The growing hunger and longing for issues of truth, faith, morality, and beauty in society are very pertinent issues and advanced the notion that maybe we have to reframe our thinking in order to reach a deeper truth.

Go back to the texts again and take an historical and archaeological approach to the biblical narrative. Look, for instance for the Jesus of history in the narrative, examine the historical, political, and social landscape in which this extraordinary, charismatic, figure lived and moved. Likewise, with the great Classical prophets—Jeremiah, Amos and Isaiah—taking a literary and archaeological approach to these giant literary works, may in fact bring us to a deeper understanding of their story, the world in which they moved and enrich our faith in a more wholesome manner. This approach strains the biblical narrative of its supernatural language in an attempt to make it more accessible and compatible for us today. It examines the setting in life in which the texts were created and asks the very pertinent question 'does the biblical story that created the paradigm shift for the community in which it evolved, originally, have any meaning for us in today's very secularised society?'

Some of these ideas may make us feel very challenged or uncomfortable, however, familiar certainties of belief today may no longer be able to stand up to the scrutiny of the challenge of faith combined with reason. Notwithstanding these challenges our hunger to think and talk about the moral and the transcendent will never be satisfied, never sated, especially now when our worlds have been arrested from its hurtling pace.

Now may be the time to look again at life, at the narratives that shaped our worlds, the biblical stories that shaped the people who mean and meant so much to us. Our ancestors, our grandparents, great, great hard-working people who built up our country with their bare hands; some of whom are now suddenly and cruelly, it seems taken away from us without any family around them to thank them and say goodbye. It should always be remembered we are here, only because of them.

Till recently we felt we had many choices in life. That has now been punctuated and at a deeper level it prompts us, to ask the reason why. Now may be an appropriate time to rekindle the light we all have been bestowed with, or is our hope placed in a long wait for things to start up as before and lose ourselves again in the fray?

The approach to the Traditions outlined above may be the bridge to help us cross over and return to base camp so when we do go forward the next time, we will, as Bob Dylan said, 'have God on our side'.

Kevin Finnerty

DR FÁINCHE RYAN



Fáinche holds a doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome. In 2006 she became Director of Teaching and Learning at the Margaret Beaufort Institute (a member of the Cambridge Theological Federation) and was an Affiliated Lecturer at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge 2006–8. In 2008 she was appointed Lecturer in Theology at the Mater Dei Institute, Dublin City University, and in 2013 was appointed Assistant Professor in Systematic Theology at the Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin. In July 2016 she became the Director of the Loyola Institute. Her research and teaching interests include: new thinking in the theology of leadership and ordination; the role of church in a pluralist society; eucharistic theology; medieval theology; and the theology of Thomas Aquinas. She is currently working on the virtue of truth telling, with particular focus on how the theology of Thomas Aquinas might be brought to engage in current debate in what might be termed the concept of ‘post-truth’. Since joining Trinity her research interests have expanded to include an interest in the early Irish church, and in particular the theology of the Book of Kells.

PROFESSOR RAY KINSELLA



Ray received his PhD in Market Structure and Competition in Banking from Trinity College, University of Dublin. He was appointed Professor of Financial Services at the University of Ulster and served on a number of Government bodies including the Northern Ireland Economic Council and the Industrial Development Board. He returned to the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business (where he was previously a Visiting Professor). Ray has taught on undergraduate and post-graduate programmes in the fields of banking and insurance and developed a specialized programme in Regulation, Corporate Governance and Ethics for the Smurfit MBS. For the joint UCD/RCSI Programme he has taught on Masters programmes in healthcare. He has published widely, his latest book, co-authored with Dr Maurice Kinsella, is *Troikanomics: Autonomy, Austerity and Existential Crisis in the European Union*, (Palgrave MacMillan, London, 2018).

DECLAN GANLEY



Declan is Chairman and CEO of Rivada Networks which designs and deploys broadband public safety communications networks for governments. He founded and operates wireless broadband networks and cable TV businesses in ten EU countries and an extensive cable multimedia network in Eastern Europe. He is Chairman of the Forum on Public Safety in Europe & North America (where senior leaders confer to provide policy and implementation recommendations to governments, legislators, public safety and defence entities). He is an adviser on technology and terrorism to the Club de Madrid (the largest forum of democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers), and has served as a member of Futures Group of the Irish Government's Information Society Commission. He serves on the boards of the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the University of Limerick Foundation, and is a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Declan is the founder and president of the Libertas Institute, a pan-European think tank committed to debate on the future of the European Union and campaigning for democratic and economic reform. He is married to Delia and they have four children and homes in Galway and Washington DC.

PROFESSOR GERARD CASEY



Gerard is a Professor emeritus in the School of Philosophy at University College Dublin; Associated Scholar at the Ludwig von Mises Institute (Auburn, Alabama, USA); and Fellow of Ludwig von Mises Centre, UK. He taught at the University of Notre Dame (1980–1) and at the School of Philosophy in The Catholic University of America (Washington, DC (1983–6). He is the author of *Born Alive*; *Murray Rothbard*; *Libertarian Anarchy*; *Freedom's Progress?*; *ZAP*; and *After #MeToo*. He has been a member of the Royal Institute of Philosophy; the Association for Political Theory; the American Philosophical Association, The Independent Institute, and The Aristotelian Society.

KEVIN MYERS



Kevin was born into a family of Irish emigrants in Leicester, where his father was a GP. After studying history at University College Dublin, he became a journalist. He reported on the Northern Troubles from 1971 to 1978 before returning to Dublin, where he joined the staff of *The Irish Times*, where he wrote 'An Irishman's Diary' from 1981 to 1996, changing it from a chatty, social, column to one that was political and controversial. In particular, he championed the then-forgotten cause of the Irish soldiers of the two world wars—so well that it is now part of the official Irish narrative. During this time, he wrote regularly for *The Spectator* and also became a columnist for *The Sunday Telegraph*, and presented the television college quiz, *Challenging Times*. He joined *The Irish Independent* in 2006, and from 2013 to 2017 he was a columnist with *The Sunday Times*. He lives in Kildare with his wife Rachel, who is a musician, horsewoman, and professional paramedic.

MARY KENNY



Mary is an experienced journalist, author and broadcaster working in England and Ireland. She has written for over 30 newspapers and magazines over the course of her career. Her books include *Germany Calling*, a biography of William Joyce, 'Lord Haw-Haw', (currently commended by the University of the Third Age for the original exploration of Joyce's Irish background); *Crown and Shamrock: Love and Hate between Ireland and the British Monarchy* (which was used as an information template for Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Irish Republic in 2011); and *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland*, a social history of Ireland over the lifetime of her parents. Her play *Allegiance*, about Winston Churchill's private meeting with Michael Collins in 1921, was performed at Edinburgh (and since toured Ireland). Mary's talks have included: *Churchill and Ireland* (Imperial War Museum, London); *Ireland and the Abdication of Edward VIII* (Royal Dublin Society); *What Yeats Means to Me* (National Library of Ireland); *Heritage of Irish feminism* (Microsoft Ireland); *Catholic Ireland's relationship to a Protestant monarchy* (Catholic Central Library, Dublin). Currently she is working on a new book *Why Ireland was Catholic—Essays on the cultural deposit of Catholicism in Irish life*.

MARIA STEEN



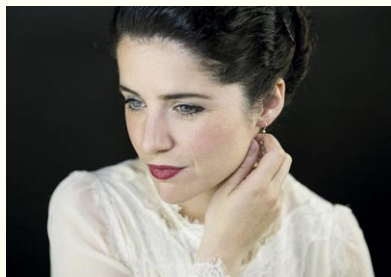
Maria is an Irish conservative campaigner. She is a qualified architect and barrister. She campaigned against the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Ireland and represented the Iona Institute at the Citizen's Assembly campaigning for a No vote in the abortion referendum. She often participates in TV debates and writes for *The Irish Catholic* newspaper. She worked with a leading firm of architects for a number of years. Maria is also a qualified AMI Montessori teacher. She is married to Neil Steen SC and they have four home-schooled children.

JAYNE BARRY



Born in Cork, Jayne was for many years a Montessori Director with the Southern Health Board. She began painting in water-colours as a hobby, and found it to be an instant love. Her talents led her to membership of the Water Colour Society of Ireland (WCSI). Unable to find a Montessori school for her youngest child, Jayne opened her own in Kinsale and shortly followed it with a second. Though very busy, she continued painting and participating in group shows—including at the RHA—and had several one-woman gallery exhibitions that received much acclaim. When her last child went to college she closed her schools, since when she has established herself as a successful photographer of children and families. Her love of painting continues unabated and she is now a committee member of the WCSI and has been its secretary for the past six years. Her paintings can be found in collections in the USA, Sweden, Germany, England, and Ireland.

EILEEN COYLE



Eileen is a native of Cavan now based in Dublin. She began her choral education over ten years ago as a choral scholar with Dr Ite O'Donovan and the Lassus Scholars. She has been studying classical singing with Dr Imelda Drumm for the past six years and has completed the Diploma in Teaching and Performance at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She is a Lay Vicar Choral at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and also sings with many professional ensembles in Ireland. Eileen has performed in the *Dublin Fringe Festival*; *New Music Dublin Festival*; *Cambridge Early Music Week*; *Speaking of Music*; and the *11:11 Concert Series* at The Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin. She has sung as a soloist with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra; The RIAM Baroque Ensemble; The Orlando Chamber Orchestra; The Longford County Choir; West Wicklow Voices; Setanta Choir; Christ Church Baroque Ensemble; and The Irish Memory Orchestra. She has toured America, England, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, and the Netherlands, and performed as a soloist at the National Concert Hall; St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin; The National Gallery of Ireland; Cork Opera House; Kilkenny Theatre Royal; The American Embassy; Áras an Uachtaráin; and regularly at Christ Church Cathedral.

FRASIER HICKLAND



Frasier is a Dublin-based pianist who studies with Professor Anthony Byrne at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. He has given many performances—most notably on BBC Radio—to commemorate the Jane Austen Bicentenary. He has played in some of the most prestigious venues in Ireland, including the National Concert Hall, Dublin; Ulster Hall, Belfast; and Blackwater Valley Opera Festival, Waterford. He performed with the Ulster Youth Orchestra in their 2019 summer season and has worked in a residency with the distinguished composer Sally Beamish, giving the Irish premiere of her piece *Wild Swans*. He was the Peter Rankin Piano Intern for the Northern Ireland *Opera Festival of Voice* 2018 and 2019, and has since worked on projects and recitals with the company, including performing in Hillsborough Castle for HRH The Prince of Wales during his visit last year. Répétiteur roles include Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (FAVA Opera, Salzburg); Offenbach's *Daphnis et Chloé* and *L'île de Tulipatan* (NI Opera); and Seán Doherty's *Waking Beauty* with The Linen Opera (Linen Biennale Northern Ireland, 2018).

MICHAEL BANAHAN



From an early age Michael, a Roscommon native has been singing and collecting songs. With many years involvement in the music business he has released a number of critically acclaimed albums: three solo; one with Irish folk duo The Baileys; and five with the internationally renowned folk group Ríge the Jig of which he was a founding member. Michael has a passion for writing story songs. He is the founder of GoodWood Music, a record label set up to support original Irish talent from all genres of music. The label releases records worldwide through partnerships developed in the UK and the USA.

VINCENT PIERSE



Vincent developed his skills of story telling listening to his local storytellers and stories made famous by seanachais like the late great Ramon Kelly. He has performed at festivals all over Ireland, the UK, the USA, and Canada and has hosted his show, *The Open Door*, on Shannonside FM called. He is a member of the South Roscommon Singers Circle where he regularly spins yarns.

DAVID LARKIN



David was born in Ballygalda, Co. Roscommon. His mother Ann, a fine singer, was a frequent. His repertoire consists mainly of comic songs, with a particular affinity for the songs of Percy French, and he also plays mouth-organ and fiddle. Many of his influences come from hearing such fine singers as Tim Lyons, Dick Hogan, Terry Smith, Willie Green, Éamonn Brophy, Seán Ryan, Pat Conneely, and many others in Galway's traditional music pubs. David has become a well-known in the myriad of singing sessions and festivals in the west of Ireland. Every July he makes an annual pilgrimage to *The Willie Clancy Summer School of Traditional Irish Music, Song and Dance*, Milltown Malbay, where he is a popular contributor to the daily singing sessions. He regularly attends sessions in Galway as well as visits to all counties west of the Shannon. He shares his passion for traditional Irish music through his weekly radio programme, *Larkin About*, on Flirt FM, Galway's student radio station that has gained an international audience through being podcasted on Mixcloud. David is currently in the process of recording an album of Percy French songs with the backing of traditional musicians, working title *With a Toot on the Flute and a Twiddle on the Fiddle!*

PERCY FRENCH



Percy French was born in Clooneyquinn, Co. Roscommon, the son of an Anglo-Irish landlord. While studying at Trinity College Dublin, he wrote *Abdul Abulbul Amir*; it became hugely popular but having sold it for £5 to a music publisher he received no royalties. In 1881, on graduating as a civil engineer he became 'Inspector of Drains' for Co. Cavan's Board of Works. A prolific painter of watercolour landscapes, he considered art to be his vocation. However, he first became celebrated for his songs, including *Phil the Fluther's Ball*, *Slattery's Mounted Foot*, and lyrics of *The Mountains of Mourne*. He ridiculed the Co. Clare railways in *Are Ye Right There Michael?* and a libel action ensued. Arriving late for the hearing French was questioned by the judge as to why. His explanation, 'Your honour, I travelled by the West Clare Railway', resulted in the case being dismissed. On becoming a well-known entertainer his paintings became sought after; they remain so today, attracting high prices at leading auction houses. In 1920, in Glasgow, Percy French took ill while performing and died some days later. He was 65.

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IRELAND'S FAVOURITE WATERCOLOUR PAINTER



WILLIAM PERCY FRENCH (1854–1920) *BOG LAKE*, sold for €4,000 at Whyte's on 27 May 2019

Whyte's have a reputation for finding and auctioning fine examples of Ireland's favourite watercolour painter, and are the holders of the world record, at €44,000, for an example of his work. The latter was a large work in its original Belfast pokerwork frame, originally in the Earl of Iveagh (Guinness) collection. Whyte's are especially careful to check the authenticity of all Percy French pictures consigned and give a guarantee on all works sold.

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