

# Perspectives

The  
Music,  
Dancing,  
Poetry  
and

## Celebration of the



BY JAY CRIDLIN

PERSPECTIVES EDITOR

MARCH 13 - 18, 2000

When Candide Jones, the manager of the Wake Forest University Press, was making preparations for the 1999 Irish Festival, she expected to find a medium-sized attendance at the Festival's Community Day at the Reynolda House. Along with her co-chairwoman Susan Murphy, Jones helped organize the day's events and prepare enough sandwiches, smoked salmon, ham and scones for a crowd of about 400.

When over five times that many people showed up, Jones knew that the festival would certainly be bigger by this year.

With a year's worth of momentum behind her, Jones, Murphy and the Wake Forest University Press have put together the largest Irish Festival in the celebration's three years. Among the events scheduled for the week of St. Patrick's Day are sessions of Irish dance, music, poetry and storytelling, and Jones believes this year's attendees won't be disappointed.

"Part of the reason for this is we try to have something fun during the week of St. Patrick's day, because there is a large immigrant population here, like there is in other parts of the country, but there's not much going on for St. Patrick's day around here," she said.

The event is organized by Jones and

the WFU Press, which, according to Jones, is "the premier publisher of Irish poetry in North America, is very well-known outside this country, and also very well known in New York and other large places."

"I think the combination of things is very good - it's a good time of year because we will have gotten midterm stuff out of the way, so it might be a good re-entry week for students coming back from break," said Dillon Johnston, the director of the WFU Press and a professor of English who teaches a course in Irish literature. "It'll be very nice to start our second half of the term that way."

Some of the events that the university can look forward to during the week are performances by university musical groups and Irish bands; a music-and-spoken-word performance by the Irish group Selkie; performances by university acting groups; and plenty of Irish food and spirits at what will be known throughout the week as "O'Shorty's."

Although there will be traditional music, dance and storytelling, the focus of the Festival will be on Ireland's poetry. "The oral tradition in Ireland - that whole tradition of storytelling - is very, very, very strong there, and so therefore poetry is very strong there, and poets have always been held in higher esteem there

than they have in a lot of other countries or cultures. A lot of the focus of the festival - not all, but a lot - is poetry," Jones said. "We've got poetry recitation contests, guerrilla poets, we hope to have a poetry slam at Shorty's and we have Conor O'Callaghan, who is the first new poet that Wake Forest has signed in more than a decade."

Indeed, O'Callaghan is the centerpiece of the Festival. His appearance on March 15 coincides with the launch of his book, *Seatown and Earlier Poems*, and Johnston says O'Callaghan is "a remarkable poet in combining formal skill with a very postmodern outlook."

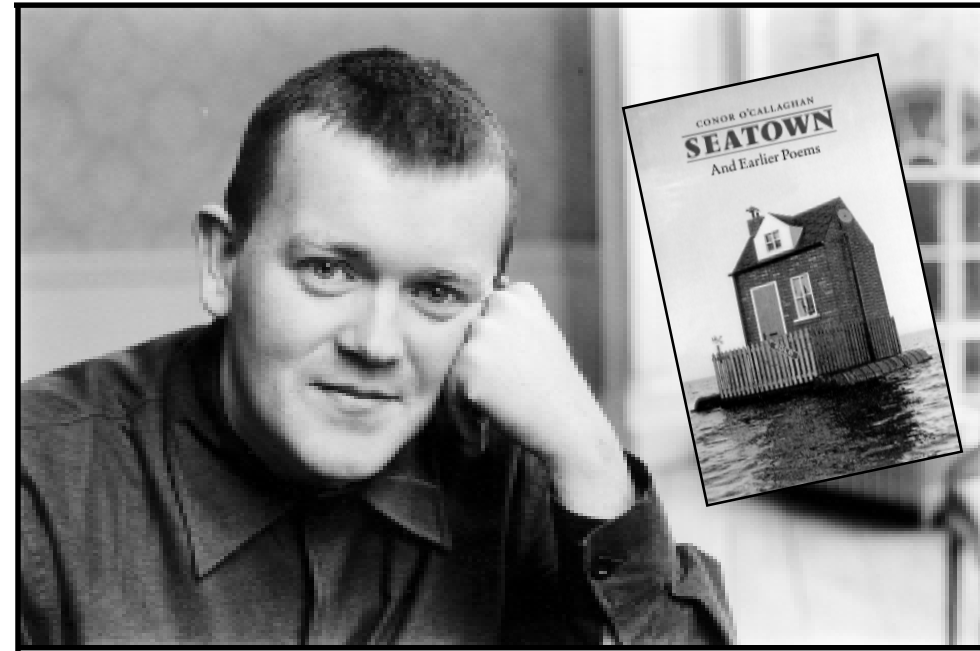
Johnston said he believes that Ireland is experiencing a "renaissance" of sorts when he looks at its cultural landscape. "I think that there's some kind of renaissance of arts going on in Ireland itself, and I'm thinking certainly of poets, but beyond that filmmaking, music and you might even say dance," he said. "I don't know whether that parallels some sort of enthusiasm here or if it affects it at all, but I think that some of the people that will be present this week will be Irish Americans, bringing a tradition that they've lived with for some time. Others just enjoy that there's a sense of fun, I think, associated with all things Irish."

Jones believes part of this renaissance is due in part to Irish artists' rediscovery of a cultural heritage that has been dormant for some time.

"From my limited viewpoint, it is a country with an extraordinary oral tradition," she said. "You've got the issue of people's language being taken away from them - Irish was quite efficiently eliminated from that country and people were punished from speaking it. ... You've got this resurgence - it's a small resurgence, but it's a resurgence - of people speaking and writing in Irish."

Part of the reason the university has tried to encompass a wide range of cultural events in the festival is to help dispel common perceptions of Ireland. Jones said one point that everyone involved in the festival wishes to stress is that a celebration of Irish culture is more than a wearing of the green. "You don't have to put on a Shamrock hat and drink green beer necessarily to celebrate St. Patrick's Day," she said.

The program has experienced such growth in the past three years that Jones sees no reason why it will not continue to get bigger. "The Secest Series is interested in perhaps having Eileen Ivers come



On March 15, Irish poet Conor O'Callaghan, the first new poet in ten years to be published by the Wake Forest University Press, will recite poetry from his forthcoming book, *Seatown and Earlier Poems*. "Nobody You'd Know" is a poem from the collection.

### Nobody You'd Know

Light-headed; wearing the last week in May like a new dress for no real occasion; staying on late; careless; thinking forwards as though the verb *to love* has no past tense; barely back just as the city rises, the kitchen lamp turned on; lying by me; hot; post-coital; smelling of roses; unchanged; breathing too easily for words. Miles away since; haunted by a slow march on a long wave; kept awake now by the lost earring of a special pair and mail trains all night behind the flat; tired chasing; taken these days for granted, or at least given to silences that say as much.

Conor O'Callaghan, "Nobody You'd Know," *Seatown and Earlier Poems*. Reprinted with permission from the Wake Forest University Press.



Photos courtesy of Wake Forest University Press

The children of the Triad Irish Dancers, a traditional dance group made up of members of the community, were one of several groups that performed at last year's Irish Festival Community Day at Reynolda House.

over - she's quite a fiddler - and to try to integrate that into the festival," she said. "That was nice for us, because it was the first time some other part of campus has said, 'Yes, this is happening and we'll tie into it.'"

For now, though, the Irish Festival is content to simply offer a great time and a rich cultural experience to all those who

are interested.

"This is not a dour proceeding - we're not talking about anything dour," Jones said. "The Irish are great partiers, and we are planning to have a party. ... A lot of it really is about the language, and a love of language, and a love of song and poetry, and we want to include that in the celebration."

# 2000 Irish Festival Schedule of Events

Below is a calendar of events taking place during the 2000 Irish Festival, which will be held March 13-18. All events are free unless otherwise noted.

## Monday, March 13

7 p.m. - Irish Film Festival: *The Nephew*, Pugh Auditorium.

7:30 p.m. - Live Irish music with the So-Be-It Union Band, O'Shorty's.

## Tuesday, March 14

11 a.m. - Irish dance lessons with senior Kerry O'Hagan and members of Rinse na h'Eireann (the Triad Irish Dancers) as part of the Benson Discovery Series, Benson Center.

1:30 p.m. - Irish drama by students of Sharon Andrews, a professor of theater, on the stage at O'Shorty's.

7 p.m. - Irish Film Festival: *The Quiet Man*, Pugh Auditorium.

9 p.m. - *Lilting Banshees*, Pugh Auditorium. Admission is \$2.

## Wednesday, March 15

7 p.m. - Irish Film Festival: *Some Mother's Son*, Pugh Auditorium.

8 p.m. - Poetry reading by Irish poet Conor O'Callaghan at Reynolda House.

## Thursday, March 16

11 a.m. - Poetry recitation contest in the second-floor reading room of Carswell Hall. Irish music by the university Flute Choir and

junior Krista Duran, a Celtic harpist.

1:30 p.m. - Irish drama by students of Sharon Andrews, a professor of theater, on the stage at O'Shorty's.

5 p.m. - Irish folk tunes by senior Matthew Phillips, a carillonneur, Wait Chapel carillon.

7 p.m. - Irish Film Festival: *The General*, Pugh Auditorium.

7:30 p.m. - "The Struggle for Freedom in Ireland, in Music and the Spoken Word," performed by the Irish group Selkie, in Carswell Hall's second-floor reading room.

## Friday, St. Patrick's Day

4:15 p.m. - Music by SOUL and junior Krista Duran, a Celtic harpist, on the steps of Wait Chapel.

6 p.m. - Irish food and poetry slam at O'Shorty's.

7 p.m. - "A Few Irish Tales," presented by storyteller Andrew Leslie, at O'Shorty's.

8-11 p.m. - Live Irish Music with Irish group Selkie in O'Shorty's.

## Saturday, March 18

Noon-3:30 p.m. - Irish Festival Community Day at Reynolda House. Featured activities will include:

- Irish food for sale.
- Traditional band Naomi's Fancy
- Dance performances by Daniel Tighe Rinse na h'Eireann (the Triad Irish Dancers) and senior Kerry O'Hagan
- Children's Activities, including hands-on crafts and featuring "Stories from the Emerald Isle," by storyteller Andrew Leslie