

Tabs on Theatre



Waterford Artiste/Producer Wins Tops Aims Award

In what was one of the most popular wins of the entire series of awards for theatrical prowess by the Association of Irish Music Societies, Waterford-born Brian Merriman took the Dick Meany Trophy for the Best Producer at the annual Awards dinner in the Ardree Hotel last Saturday night.

And then with a crowd of more than 500 packing the function room, the tension was almost unbearable as everybody waited for the announcement of the winners of the top awards, the Jim Molloy Trophy for the Best Overall Show and the Joe Smyth Trophy for the Best Show "All Amateur Cast", which had been combined for the occasion. And a roar went up, when it was announced that Brian Merriman's West Side Story for the Dublin Amateur Youth Musical Society were the winners, with Renmore Musical Society of Galway and the Marian Choral Society of Tuam in second and third places with On The Twentieth Century and Jesus Christ Superstar respectively.

West Side Story also took the Eastern Region Aims Trophy for the Best Choreography and the Father Foley Trophy for the Best Chorus, so it was a night of triumph for the young Waterford producer and his youthful group. This same society, with the same show, took the Phoenix Trophy and third place in the 1986 Waterford Festival and will be returning here this year with *Godspell* and, who knows? - the possibility of moving up a couple of places to take the Blue Riband of first place and the Waterford Glass International Trophy. And what a brilliant climax to the incredibly successful start of this young society, who are only three years in existence, that would be!

LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

But it wasn't the only Waterford success of the night. The inimitable Des Manahan won the Odie Keogh trophy for the Best Comedian Award for his performance as the pedlar, Ali Hakim, in the Edmund Rice Musical Society's production of *Oklahoma* in the Spring. Des, who was practically bred to the boards, as the saying goes, is one of our most accomplished of local actors/musicians and has yet to fill any role, which he has not enhanced by his talent. Belatedly, he has been seeking other sources than the local scene as a stage for his gifts, but more about that another time. Suffice it is to say that this was a very popular victory and a boost for the Rice Society, who, in my opinion, produced their best-ever show in that *Oklahoma* and, now that they have realised the strength of their talent, will go on to bigger and better things.

SOUTH-EAST DOES WELL

It was a good night for the South-East - Carrick-on-Suir Musical Society who got the award for the Best Comedienne, the Best Actor and were runners-up in the Best Overall Performance, while St. Mary's, Clonmel, took the Best Male Singer Award and the Best Musical Director. Liam Butler, who won the Best Actor Award, is one of the most versatile artistes on the amateur scene. He has played a diversity of roles for his society and it was a well-merited reward for great service to the amateur theatre. His role was Danny, in the Wesley Burrowes' musical *Carrie*. He was also a runner-up in the Yule Dugdale, Alan Dyas Trophy for the Best Overall Performance, which is confined to winners of other categories, but for which only three are nominated. The other Carrick Award was Loreto O'Connor Trophy for the Best Comedienne, which went to youthful but experienced Irene Walsh, for her role as Biddy in *Carrie*, which was one of the funniest performances I've seen this year. Colm Fennessy took the Sylvia Leahy Award for the Best Male Singer for his perfor-

mance as Curley in the St. Mary's, Clonmel, production of *Oklahoma*, and he was also one of the three nominated for the Best Overall Performance.

The Gerry Moran Award for the Best Musical Director Award went to Danny Carroll for his direction of the same show for St. Mary's. Danny is as well-known around here as any of the residents. He is the regular Musical Director of the Carrick-on-Suir Society and this is his fourth time being nominated for the AIMS Best Musical Director Award, which he previously won in 1976 for Carrick's production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He also musically directs Dundrum, Tipperary and Thurles societies and is bandmaster of Banna Cluain Meala, of which he is a founder member.

To put these awards into perspective, it should be noted that no less than 67 societies were adjudicated from all 32 counties so the competition is very keen and, as I said last week, this makes for higher standards for the companies themselves and better value for the paying customers. For this, a great deal of credit must go to Irish Life Building Society, who have been the sponsors for the last eight years and who announced via the person of General Manager, Des Byrne, that they were continuing the sponsorship for the next four years. This is a very big boost for the Association, which is now soundly and strongly in place to do for Irish Musical Societies what the Automobile Association does for motorists.

BREVITY AND WIT

When you're waiting for the results of a competition, all speeches seem tedious. But the after-dinner contributions at the AIMS dinner proved to be the exception that proves the rule. All the speeches were notable for their brevity and wit. A very fine introductory note was struck by AIMS president, Marion Eddery, who paid tribute to the sponsors and a particular word of gratitude to Patricia Campbell, the AIMS travelling adjudicator, for what is so often a thankless task. Patricia must have travelled 10,000 miles in all kinds of conditions into all kinds of auditoriums, which, in itself, was a fearsome task, but then to sit down and sift out the good and the bad in 67 different shows borders on the "above and beyond the call of duty" category. Our own Mayor, Cllr. Brian Swift, T.D., in what must be one of his last public functions, contributed his droll humour and coupled it with, in his office as Chief Citizen, a warm welcome to all the delegates and guests, to this city.

But the hit of the evening was National Operatic and Dramatic Association president, Harold Courtman, who cheerfully administered kicks in the behind to many of our sacred cows and then, for a Welshman, had the audacity to present a Wooden Spoon to Marion Eddery. Admittedly it

was a fine piece of workmanship, but a Wooden Spoon from a Welshman to an Irish lady - no way! At the end, he received thunderous applause - an ovation in fact - and cries of "encore". And when you consider the circumstances, with everybody on tenderhooks, waiting for the results, it was about as warm a welcome as any honoured guest has received into any function. It was certainly a hard act to follow for Des Byrne, but he always manages to have a few good and original ones. He didn't fail us in this respect and I loved the one about the wife who begged her husband to make love to her in the kitchen and when he asked her why the sudden rush of passion, she replied that she wanted to time the boiling eggs. I like it! My personal plaudits to National Secretary, and next-door neighbour, Harry Cousins from Kilkenny and our own Gus Barrett, who did such a fine job of organisation. Any hiccups were completely beyond their control and, in the end, everybody had a good time.

THE OTHER AWARDS

The other awards were: Best Gilbert & Sullivan, Greystones O. & D. Society - *Gondoliers*; Best Overall Performance, Irene Gaffney, Sandymount M.S. - *Seesaw*; Best Choreography, Brian and Sean Power, Renmore M.S. - *On The Twentieth Century*; Best Stage Manager, Lakeland Productions, Mullingar, Sean Lynch - *West Side Story*; Best Female Singer, Niamh Murray, Coolock M.S. - *Die Fledermaus*; Best Actress, Irene Gaffney, Sandymount M.S. - *Seesaw*; Best Supporting Female, Collette Heaney, Renmore Musical Society - *On The 20th Century*; Best Supporting Male, Vivian Coates, Greystones O. & D. - *The Gondoliers*; Best Wardrobe, Renmore Musical Society - *On The 20th Century*; Best Sets, Lakeland Productions - *West Side Story*; Best Lighting, Lakeland Productions; Best House Management, Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe; Best Programme, Tallaght M.S. - *Little Mary Sunshine*; Adjudicators Special Award, Marian Choral Society, Tuam - *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

BOOST FOR FESTIVAL

Jimmy Hassey, Chairman; Billy Burke, Executive Secretary; Sean Dower, House Manager and Paddy McManus, Fringe Events Chairman of the Waterford International Festival of Light Opera were in attendance and must have been pleased that the show which won third place in the 1986 Festival took the Best Overall Show Award and that D.A.Y.M.S. would be coming again to the Festival in the Autumn. And just as pleased that Carrick-on-Suir's *Carrie* won the Best Comedienne award and the Best Actor award and were nominated for the Best Overall Performance - because this show will be playing on the first Sunday of the Festival, 21st of September in the Theatre Royal.

CONDOLENCES

At the AIMS dinner, there was one really sad note. I learned with deep regret that the daughter of my good friend, Cyril Bowen of Swansea, a regular visitor to the Festival and one who is very popular with the other habitués, had died rather unexpectedly at the early age of 33 years. My sincere condolences to Cyril and the whole family. May the sod rest lightly on her.

"GRAND" CABARET

The Grand Hotel resumes its Summer Sunday Cabaret on Sunday night, 21st June, with some old faces and some new. On the bill are two stars from the excellent Nokia Tops Of The Town show, which many feel should have reached the Gaiety this year. They are John Corcoran and Enda Jackman, whose fine voices won the enthusiastic admiration of audiences in the recent competition. They will be joined by Noel Kerwick, who also played a big part in the competition, with the Tramore Parish show. Noel is a great favourite on the cabaret scene with his excellent repertoire of popular numbers, old and new. Mary Dower, one of the national finalists in the Smiling Irish Eyes competition last year, is another entertaining vocalist. There will be Brian Flynn on the accordion and a novel *Seanachai* act by Michael McNema and the Kelly Sisters will provide the



Picture shows Mr. Gerry Grogan, (right) chairman and managing director, John Player presenting the runners-up trophy of the National Final of the John Player Tops to Michael Grant (left) producer and Dando Kelly, (second from right) group leader, both of the Waterford Crystal Group with Cllr. Brian Swift, Mayor of Waterford also in the picture.

Letter To The Editor

Buskers Angry Over Organisation of Tramore Festival

Dunmore East, Co. Waterford, 7th June, 1987.

Dear Sir,
It started on Friday, 29th May. Musicians came from around Ireland to take part in the first Tramore Busking Festival. They were drawn by the promise of a first prize of £700, a promise of accommodation, hospitality and a few breakfasts and dinners to keep the wolf from the door. So they came. Many acts from dancers to pavement writers to one-man bands. Mainly they came for the promise of a fair deal. Not one of them got it.

On the Friday it was overcast and cold. Tramore was deserted. The organisers' caravan was locked up. Even the pubs were deserted apart from one where the local buskers were playing. So most of the buskers went away again to Kenmare. Saturday came with a bit of sunshine. Our spirits brightened up. Things were going to get better? No way! The caravan didn't open 'til after lunch, so nobody got a breakfast. I myself went into Sheehan's Hotel, which wasn't even involved with the Festival, though I didn't know it and they took pity on me and fed me with a fine breakfast.

So we played through the day and that evening we were all assigned a pub to play in for two hours while the judges went around and made their decisions. Everyone was told that the same judges were from outside Tramore. We all believed it. There were twelve participants at that stage. Two of them were not allowed to play in the pubs they had been assigned to. Again, no accommodation or food that night, apart from the odd begrudgingly given sandwich. I know of one player from Waterford who had to sleep in a toilet that night and many more including the winners, who were husband, wife and baby, who were forced to spend their precious few pounds on taxis to Dunmore East to stay with friends. I slept on the floor of a flat - and lucky to get it. Sunday morning I went looking for a bath. I was given permission to use the bathroom in one of the hotels, but there was no hot water so I had to have a cold bath. Afterwards, I went down to the caravan to find out the line-up for the stage appearance that afternoon. There, I was told that there were going to be late entries for the stage shows and we were to get eight

Irish stepdancing to set the blood boiling in the veins. Only £2 admission, bar facilities and it commences at 8.30 p.m. on each Sunday night until the end of the season. Make a date to be "Grandly" entertained by those experienced and talented artists. You'll certainly come back for more.

BERNADETTE GREEVY HONOURED IN WATERFORD

Each year, at the Annual Awards Dinner of the Irish Association of Musical Societies, a special award by the Irish Life Building Society is given to individuals or organisations, who have made a special contribution to music. The Waterford International Festival of Light Opera was a previous recipient in 1983. This year the choice fell on internationally-famous mezzo-soprano, Bernadette Greevy. She was born in Dublin and has travelled the world, including recently the People's Republic of China, where she was received with acclaim. She will be remembered for her singing at the open-air Mass in Dublin on the occasion of the visit of Pope John Paul II, when she had a live audience of 1.3 million people. She is a regular singer with the Royal Ballet in Covent Garden and is one of Ireland's most noteworthy ambassadors of music. But her contribution to the advancement of young Irish artists in her Master Class series is the most noteworthy facet, in many minds, of her outstanding contribution to music. The presentation was made in the Ardree Hotel, Waterford last Saturday night.

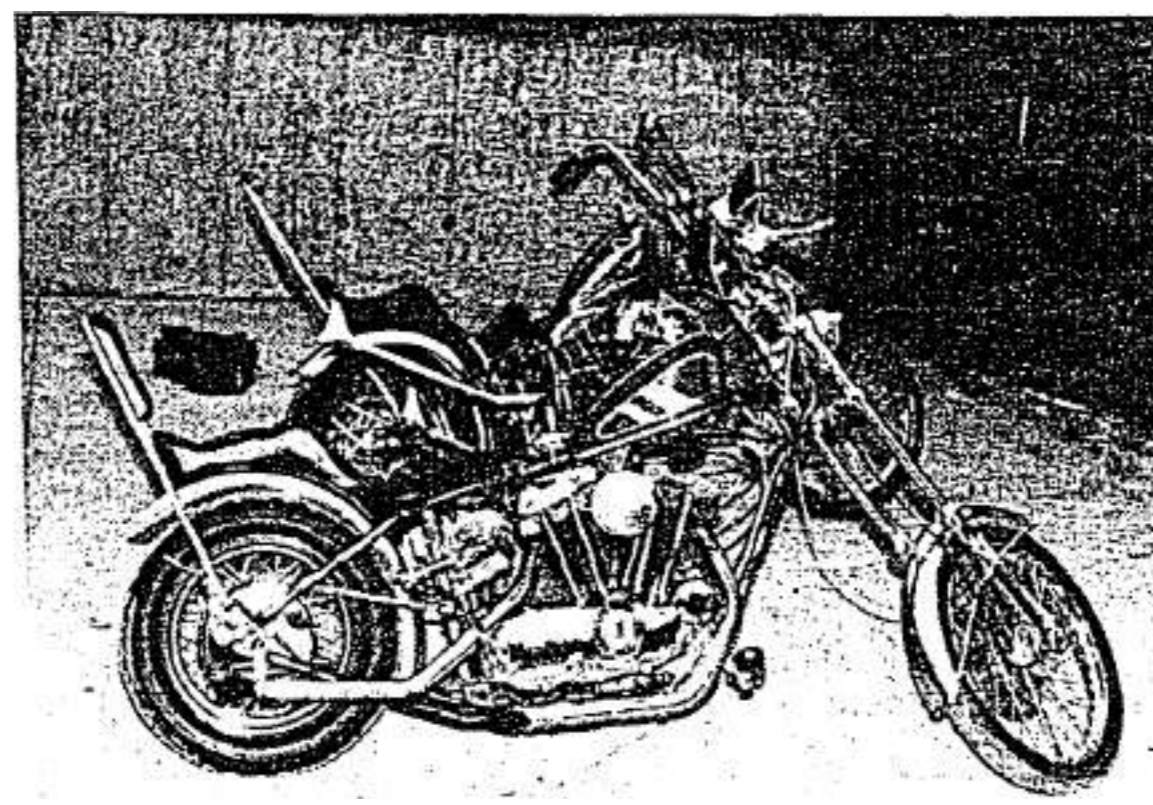
Monday most had left. I went to see about a food voucher, to the chairman of the committee, who was also one of the publicans. I was told that there had been vouchers available for all the weekend and that a marquee had been erected as accommodation. Both of these statements were entirely untrue.

So to summarise the Tramore Busking Weekend, nothing at all was done for the buskers. No food, almost no hospitality and no accommodation. It was organised by the publicans for the publicans and the very people who made it all happen were treated like two-legged dogs. I wish however, to mention Sheehan's Hotel as an exception because they, though not involved, did look after any buskers who went in their door looking for a feed.

There can be no possibility of another Busking Festival in Tramore, because I and all the others who were there will definitely not be there again next year - nor any buskers we meet between this and then.

Yours, etc.,

Siomon O Duibhir (busker).



Two of the many custom-made machines

Bikers may have an image for violence! The 3-day extravaganza of leather clad bikers, awesome Harley-Davidsons and BMW machines and sharp blues band music certainly did not live up to that image.

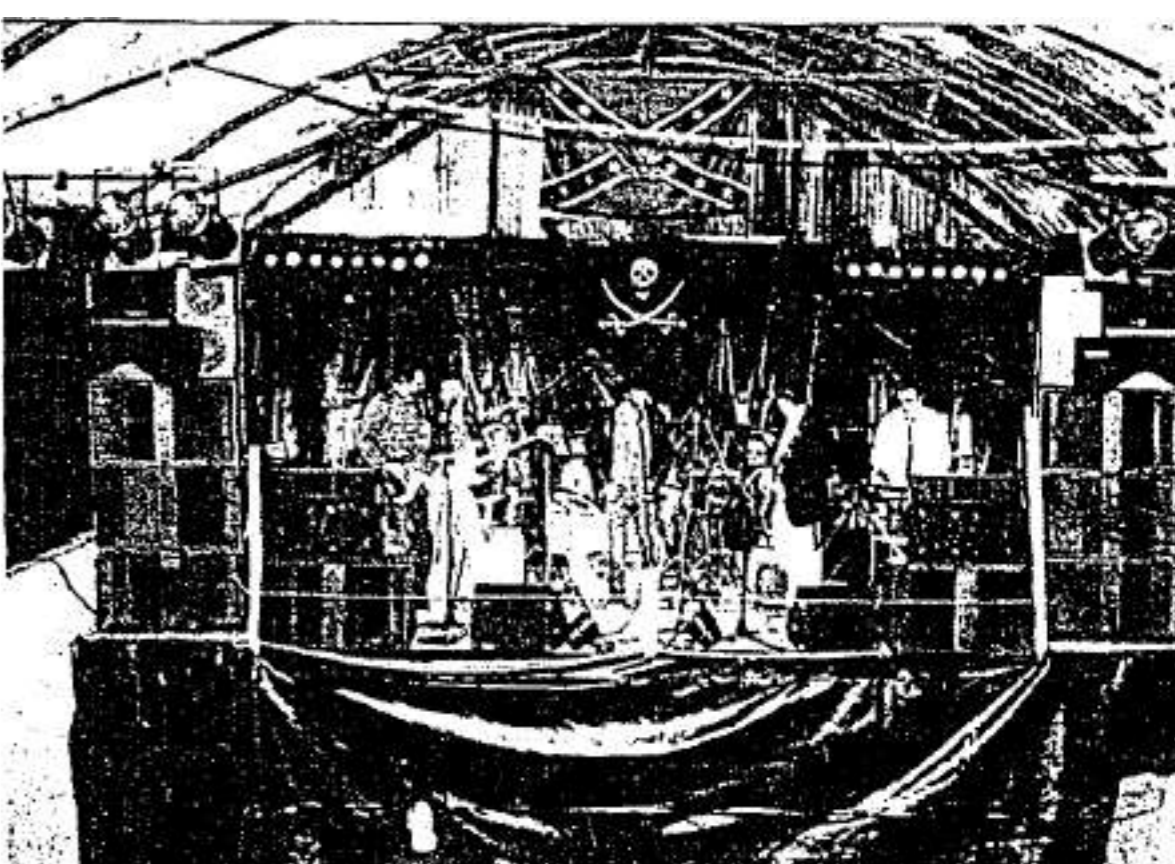
The event, a "happening" by local standards was hosted by the Waterford Freewheelers on a farm in Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford owned by Tom Hayes. A true spectacle with machines roaring and bike lovers arriving from all over Ireland, U.K. and across Europe provided a mass attendance of over 1500 on Whit Sunday, the last day. For the classic and custom show, a total of 57 machines were entered, some pieced together from the U.S. with parts from the 1950's.

Among the groups from Ireland were the "Cossacks" from Cork and Tipperary; "Road Tramps" from Tyrone and a few "Hell's Angel" chapters. The "Berserkers" and "Road Rebels" were part of the U.K. contingent and others quite unpronounceable arrived from Europe. Entertainment was well laid on by the cream of Rhyth'n' Blues bands from the South-East which included the ever popular Back Door, Blues Ark, Hot Guitars, to mention but a few. The light system was fantastic and the sounds were amplified through 4,000 watts of vibrant power producing an electrifying atmosphere to which the bikers danced through three long nights. Chris Tyler from England was responsible for the electronics. He is now a local resident whose previous engagements were for Chris De Burgh and Howard Jones.

Despite the numbers and intimidating appearance to the community countywide, it is fair to say the entire 3-day event passed without a single incident. Security was tight, and entrants were well screened. Even adequate refreshment and

toilet facilities were well laid on, almost reminiscent of a major "Boy Scouts' Jamboree".

Everyone got together for a good time and true spirit of camaraderie pervaded this underground world of leather clad affiliates - a true Bank Holiday weekend that went off with a bang, bikes, booze and blues music - but most importantly with no "blood"!



The group Back Door, performing on stage



Des Manahan (centre), Edmund Rice Choral and Musical Society, Waterford, receives the award for best comedian from Des Byrne (left), general manager, Irish Life Building Society and Marion Eddery, President of the Association of Irish Musical Societies at the I.L.B.S. / A.I.M.S. Awards in Waterford.