

# *Irish Heritage*

AGM Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Europe House, 22 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU

## Chairman's address

Good evening Friends and thank you for turning up this evening for our Annual General Meeting. I intend to keep this address brief and to focus on a few key points from the past year's programme and on some highlights of our future programme.

We have already made the apologies for members of the committee, who cannot attend this evening, but in their absence may I thank all our committee members for their hard work and dedication to Irish Heritage and the high standards set from the start by our founder, Ethna Kennedy. I would like to express, on your behalf, my great appreciation of Ethna's artistic leadership and unflinching commitment to the work of Irish Heritage. I would mention that Yvonne Fitzpatrick-Grimes resigned from the Committee in June, due to pressure of study and other commitments. I would like to record our appreciation of the work that Yvonne did for Irish Heritage in the 3 years that she served on our committee.

I will not single out any other committee members, it is a team effort but everyone worked incredibly hard during the past year despite so many other personal commitments which you all had. I would also like to say a special thanks to Yvonne Kerswell our part-time administrator who came on board in September 2009 and has made a significant contribution to the running of this organisation and to greatly improving our communication to members and the public.

I would like to thank those – outside the committee who gave us so much support in the past year. Our patrons, Mr. Bobby Mc Donagh, the Irish Ambassador, Lady Mary Clancy Hatch, Mr. Seamus McGarry and Mr. John Gilhooly. In addition to the patronage of the Ambassador, the officials of his Embassy, particularly Ciaran Byrne, are of great assistance to us at all times. Through the Embassy we have over the past few years received vital and generous support from the Irish Government, through its Emigrant Support Scheme, and I am delighted to say that this support has continued for our 2011-2012 programme. I would like to thank a team of "special advisers" who, in addition to our patrons, have given us practical support and advice and have agreed to help us with a medium and long-term development plan; Cormac Cawley, Keith Raffan and Antony Lewis-Crosby in particular.

I would like to thank our media supporters, The Irish Times, and its commercial representative in Britain, Paddy Lennon who has given us considerable advertising support in its International

edition and who made the arrangements for our visiting speaker this evening Eileen Battersby. The Irish World, in particular Shelley Marsden, Arts and Entertainment Reporter and the now “silent” Irish Post and the Catholic Herald and Catena magazine who, through the efforts of Laurence Cahill gave us excellent coverage for our April Tribute to Monsignor O’Flaherty. I would also like to put on record our appreciation of the support received from the Kerry Association London and Monsignor O’Flaherty Memorial Society in Killarney and the O’Flaherty Family, all of which resulted in a very successful Tribute to the Monsignor in April last.

The highlights of the 2010/2011 programme were:-

- The tribute concerts to the late Professor Aloys Fleischmann in November and to Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty in April, both of which directly involved the families of those great people and both of which were part of the programme of events celebrating their achievements in Ireland and internationally.
- The Young Musician Programme (of which there were two outstanding performances in The Irish Club and one in The Swiss Church)
- The debut concert by Dean Power, accompanied by Brenda Hurley, in St Bride’s in Fleet Street, a wonderful venue, new to Irish Heritage.

In all cases we had outstanding young performers and very professionally managed events, demonstrating that Irish Heritage has the capability and the ambition to keep alive our important mission of supporting young artists in the early stage of their career **and** in highlighting significant people and events central to the cultural heritage of Ireland.

We also intend to step up our efforts at attracting additional funds, grants, donations and legacies, in particular, since we cannot be confident of maintaining the Irish Government funding. Our special advisers – as mentioned above under the chairmanship of our Treasurer, Laurence Cahill, will help us to pursue this necessary development and fundraising. I hope to be able to give you some information on the steps we are taking in this respect as the year goes on. We have planned an exciting programme for the coming year – with 6 events already in the schedule. I need not go through them in detail as we have distributed our attractive bookmarks with the information of the programme. It will also be on our website.

As you can see we have outstanding young talent to present in fine venues with fascinating themes. The Music of Ireland, Ceol na hÉireann will be an evening devoted exclusively to Irish Composers and Irish Music. Appropriately, the concert will take place in the beautifully restored St Patrick’s Catholic Church, Soho Square, London significant to Aloys Fleischmann in October (15<sup>th</sup>) and the story of Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty in war-time Rome (8<sup>th</sup> April 2011) provide an historical background against which to present great music and fine performers. We hope you will again actively support our programme and spread the word with your friends and contacts. We have flyers available for you

and please take some as you leave this evening. The story of Wexford Festival Opera which we are staging in April will be another major event in this 2011/2012 programme.

We will continue to keep you regularly informed through our monthly Newsletter and our website [www.irishheritage.co.uk](http://www.irishheritage.co.uk). In turn we would be very grateful to you, our friends, for any feedback you may have and particularly additional contact you can provide for us.

Finally I would like to thank Jeremy O'Sullivan and his team at the EU Cultural Office for providing the facilities of Europe House.

I will now hand you over to Laurence Cahill, our Treasurer, who will talk you through the accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

Thank you again for your support, tonight and throughout the year.

Niall Gallagher, Chairman