Birr Festival of Music & Voice

4TH - 7TH MAY 2018

Incorporating

The Trench Award

Birr, Co. Offaly

057 9122911 www.birrtheatre.com

The Trench Trust

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon funding festivals artscouncil.ie

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Birr Theatre & Arts Centre

Birr Festival of Music & Voice 2018

Following the highly successful Birr Festival of Music & Voice in 2017, it is with great pleasure that we bring four days of wonderful and diverse classical music to you this May Bank Holiday. The Festival this year has once again gathered singers and musicians of international renown to perform in Birr, and sees an expanded programme of events, thanks to the generous support of The Trench Trust and new funding from The Arts Council of Ireland.

The Trench Award, which is the centrepiece of the Festival, attracts young emerging professionals of the highest calibre who are supported through valuable bursaries, masterclasses and performance opportunities. We welcome eminent conductor David Brophy this year, who together with Cara O'Sullivan and Enda O'Connor will act on the adjudication panel.

We hope you will enjoy hearing the music in cafés, shops, in businesses and on the streets. We are delighted to bring you the Midlands only dedicated classical music festival and hope you'll enjoy music at every turn across the weekend.

The Trench Award 2017 - Finalists, Adjudicators & Steering Committee

Festival Steering Committee: Maureen de Forge, Enda O Connor, Emma Nee Haslam, Tommy Lyndon, Rebecca Kelly, Michelle de Forge.

Festival Volunteers: Anne Coughlan, Anne O'Callaghan Rowan, Patt Grogan, Mary Butler, Rachel Corboy, Niamh Nettleship, Lauren Doonan, Laura de Forge, Maeve Larkin, Pascal Kennedy and Kate Garahy.

Graphic Design: George Dempsey Flanagan

Festival Events

FRIDAY 4 MAY

Songs in the Square
Emmet Square, 4:45pm
Cara O'Sullivan in Concert
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 8pm

SATURDAY 5 MAY

Masterclasses
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 10.30am – 2.30pm
Lunchtime Café Concerts
Dooly's Coachouse Coffee Shop, 1pm & Woodfield Café, 2pm
Finghin Collins *Piano* **& John Finucane** *Clarinet*
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 8pm

SUNDAY 6 MAY

Liturgy of the Eucharist featuring music by William Byrd & Thomas Tallis
St Brendan's Church of Ireland, 11.30am
Music in Birr Castle
Carolyn Holt *Mezzo Soprano* & Triona Marshall *Harp*
Recital for Festival Patrons/ Sponsors, 2.30pm
The Trench Award Gala Concert, 2018
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 7.30pm

MONDAY 7 MAY

Lunchtime Café Concert
Birr Castle Courtyard, 1pm
Birr Young Voices and Guests
St. Brendan's Church of Ireland, 3pm

Trench Award 2017

Richard Thomas, violin,
with members of the Trench Trust
and adjudicators.

Cara O'Sullivan

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 8pm

Cara O'Sullivan, Soprano, has become an artist with an impeccable operatic pedigree and has risen to prominence as one of Ireland's leading sopranos. She is an instinctive performer with a remarkably full voice, exciting and dramatic, yet always sings with great sensitivity. She has shown herself to be a fearless vocal artist whether singing Mozart or Mascagni.

Cara's operatic engagements have taken her all over the world, highlights include; **Donna Anna** *(Don Giovanni)* for Glyndebourne on Tour, Welsh National Opera & Opera Ireland. **Fiordiligi** *(Cosí fan Tutte)* for Welsh National Opera: Garsington Opera & English National Opera. **The Queen of Night** *(The Magic Flute)* for Opera Ireland; English National Opera & Cork Opera. **Norma** and **Lucia** *(Lucia di Lammermoor)* for Lyric Opera; **Amelia** *(Un Ballo in Maschera)* for Opera 2005; **Dido** *(Dido & Aeneas)* Cork Opera House; **Nedda** *(I Pagliacci)*; **Marguerite** *(Faust)* for Everyman Theatre Cork.

Cara's concert career spans an impressive and wide ranging repertoire. She has appeared at The Palau Musica, Barcelona, The Royal Albert Hall, The Royal Festival Hall, The Barbican London, The Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, The Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, The Bermingham Symphony Hall, and in Singapore, Perth and Sydney Australia.

PROGRAMME

Per la gloria d'adorarvi	Bononcini
Amarilli, mia Bella	Caccini
O del mio dolce ardor	Gluck
Die Forelle	Schubert
An die Musik	Schubert
Lachen und weinen	Schubert
Au bord du l'eau	Faure
Si mes vers avaient des ailes	Hahn
Dans les ruines d'une abbaye	Faure
Song to the Moon *Rusalka*	Dvorak
O Mio Babbino Caro *Gianni Schicchi*	Puccini
The Jewel Song *Faust*	Gounod

INTERVAL

The Spanish Lady	arr. Hughes
The Gartan Mother's Lullaby	arr. Britten
In Happy Moments Day by Day *Maritana*	Wallace
Granada	Lara
Like a Golden Dream	Toselli
The Pipes of Pan	Monckton
We'll Gather Lilacs	Novello
Dream Valley	Quilter
Waltz of my Heart	Novello
Love's Philosophy	Quilter

Tom Doyle *Accompanist*

SATURDAY 5 MAY

Masterclasses

Vocal Masterclasses with Cara O'Sullvan
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 10.30am – 1pm

Woodwind Masterclasses with John Finucane
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 1pm – 2pm

Piano Masterclass with Finghin Collins
Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 2pm – 3pm

The six finalists in the Trench Award will participate in these masterclasses. They are open and free to musicians, singers, teachers and the public.

Lunchtime Café Concerts

featuring Deirdre Higgins, Breffni Fitzpatrick, Mollie Wrafter & Brigit Leitner
Dooly's Coachouse Coffee Shop, 1pm
Woodfield Café 2pm

Finghin Collins & John Finucane

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, 8pm

PROGRAMME

Sonatina Malcolm Arnold
Selection of Preludes Chopin
Sonata in F minor Op. 120 no. 1 Brahms

INTERVAL

Preludes Op. 23 Nos 1 - 7 Rachmaninov
Sonata Bernstein

FINGHIN COLLINS *Piano*

One of Ireland's most successful musicians, Finghin Collins studied piano at the RIAM with John O'Conor and at the Geneva Conservatoire with Dominique Merlet. He took first prize at the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition in Switzerland in 1999. Since then he has enjoyed a flourishing international career that takes him all over Europe and the United States, as well to the Far East and Australia. He has performed with such orchestras as the Chicago Symphony, Housten Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic and numerous others. He has collaborated with many of the world's leading conductors and performed in all the world's most prestigious Concert Halls. Finghin Collins has been Artistic Director of Music for Galway since 2013 and is also the founding Artistic Director of the New Ross Piano Festival. In October 2017, the NUI conferred on him an honorary Degree of Doctor of Music.

JOHN FINUCANE *Clarinet*

Described by Gramophone magazine as 'an outstanding virtuoso', on the release of his CD *Clarinet Variations,* John Finucane is Principal Clarinet with the RTE NSO. He is a regular recitalist and soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra and has recently recorded three CDs with pianist Elisaveta Blumina. *French Holiday* (2017) *Irish Holiday* and a premier recording of the recently discovered 3 sonatas by Russian composer Gregori Frid.

SUNDAY 6 MAY

Liturgy of the Eucharist

featuring music by William Byrd & Thomas Tallis

St. Brendan's Church of Ireland, 11.30am

Members of the Cantata Choir sing music by William Byrd (1539-1643) and Thomas Tallis (1505-1585), two of the greatest Elizabethan composers of choral church music, whose music could well have been sung in the pre-Reformation church here in Birr.

Music In Birr Castle 2.30pm

Carolyn Holt *Mezzo-soprano* & Tríona Marshall *Harp*

Richard McGrath *Accompanist*

Recital for Festival Patrons/Sponsors, 2.30pm

Carolyn Holt *Mezzo-soprano* Carolyn recently graduated with Distinction and a Dip RAM for outstanding performance from the Royal Academy of Music London, and is now a member of the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Carolyn, winner of The Trench Award in 2015, has performed internationally and is in demand as a soloist and recitalist both at home and abroad. She has won the inaugural Irish Heritage Bursary, Audience Prize at the NI Opera Festival of Voice and awards at the ESB Feis Ceoil. She has performed with Opera Theatre Company and Wide Open Opera and has played a number of roles both home and abroad including - **Prince Orlofsky** *(Die Fledermaus)*, **Sesto** *(Giulio Cesare)*, **Minskwoman** *(Flight)*, **La Zia Principessa** *(Suor Angelica)*, **Bridesmaid** *(Der Freischütz)* and **Zweite Dame** *(Die Zauberflöte)*.

Future performances include **Sea Pictures** with Lambeth Orchestra, **Mrs. Jones** in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* (AGOS), **The Voice** 'Mother' in (*Tales of Hoffman)* with Irish National Opera and soloist in Duruflé's **Requiem** (Hutcheson's Choral Society) and Saint-Saëns **Requiem** (Choeur de Lux Aeterna, Normandy)

Carolyn is generously supported by the Arts Council of Ireland.

PROGRAMME

SEA PICTURES *Elgar*
Sea Slumber Song
In Haven (Capri)
Sabbath Morning at Sea
Where Corals Lie
The Swimmer

HARP SELECTION - Tríona Marshall

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen *Mahler*
Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht
Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld

Les nuits d'été *Berlioz*
Villanelle
L'Île Inconnue

Samson et Dalila *Saint-Saëns*
Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix

HARP SELECTION - Tríona Marshall

Irish Songs
The Last Rose of Summer *arr Britten*
The Stuttering Lovers *Hughes*
The Mother *Kelly*

"Arias in the air & Strings in the Streets!

Tríona Marshall *Harp*

One of Ireland's foremost harpists, Tríona has been playing the harp with The Chieftains for over a decade. Her music has been hailed by critics as both sensitive and revelatory. Drawing from the centuries-old harp tradition her performances are renowned for their depth, virtuosity and flair. Her years spent performing with orchestras and The Chieftains have brought her all over the world.

The Trench

David Howes *Bass-baritone*

David (Limerick) studies with Robert Dean and is a graduate of the distinguished Young Artist Programme with Northern Ireland Opera. In opera, David has performed the roles of **Jack and Flynn** in the world premier of Andrew Synott's *Dubliners.* Other roles include those from *Rigoletto, Madame Butterfly, La Boheme, A Midsummer Night's Dream, La Traviata, Silent Night, Tosca,* and *The Marriage of Figaro* with companies such as Lyric Opera, OTC, Buxton Opera Festival, Irish National Opera, and Wexford Opera Festival. David covered the title role and **Masetto** in *Don Giovanni* (NI Opera) directed by Oliver Mears, the newly appointed Artistic Director of The Royal Opera House, as well as covering the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Ireland's new Opera Company, Irish National Opera. Highlights in *Oratorio* include Baritone solo in *Puccini's Messa Di Gloria* and the Bass solos in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio, Requiems* by Saint-Saens, Mozart, and Faure, Mozart's *Coronation Mass in C,* Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and *The Creation,* and Handel's *Messiah, Dettingen Te Deum* and *Dixit Dominus* with the Irish Chamber Orchestra.

Leah Redmond *Soprano*

Leah (Kildare) is currently in her final year of the BA in Vocal Studies at the RIAM, studying under Dr Veronica Dunne and Dearbhla Collins. She is a multiple prize winner in the ESB Feis Ceoil and has performed in The National Concert Hall, Kilruddery House and Gardens and The John Field Room. Operatic Roles include **Helena** in Purcell's *Fairy Queen,* **Peasant** in Siobhan Cleary's *Vampirella* at RIAM and sang with Lyric Opera in Puccini's *La Bohème* and Verdi's *La Traviata.* Leah was the soprano soloist in Saint Saëns *Oratorio de Noël,* Faure's *Requiem,* and has also performed in the ESB Prizewinners Young Platform Series. Concert performances include Britten's *War Requiem* and *Rejoice in the Lamb,* Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* with the RIAM Chorale. Leah recently performed the role of **Constancy** in RIAM's production of *Scipio's Dream* by Judith Weir.

Ben Gannon *Oboe*

Ben (Longford) age 18, is in his first year of degree studies at the RIAM under Ruby Ashley. He began oboe tuition at age 15 and progressed at an enormous rate. Making his Carnegie Hall debut with the New York Concerti Sinfonietta, he won first prize in the International Shining Stars competition in 2017. He has performed with the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland and Dublin Youth Orchestra both at the National Concert Hall and on tour. Ben also plays Cor Anglais with the RIAM Philharmonia and Chamber Orchestra, and has performed under conductors Fergus Sheil, Geroid Grant, Christoffer Hartmann and Paul Hofstetter.

Award 2018

Philip Keegan *Tenor*

Philip (Offaly) graduated with a BA in Music Performance (Vocal Studies) degree from RIAM where he received the Briscoe Cup, awarded for the Outstanding Student of the Year 2016/2017, studying with Lynda Lee and Dearbhla Collins. Roles performed by Philip include **Hero** in the World Premiere of *Vampirella* by Siobhan Cleary, **Second Priest** *The Magic Flute*, as well as the tenor role in Monteverdi's *Tirsi e Clori*. In 2016 he was selected to perform in the Irish *Drums and Guns* project, devised by Iain Burnside and directed by Conor Hanratty. Recently, he performed Gounod's *Missa Solemnis* and Mendelssohn's *Lauda Sion* as tenor soloist with Wexford Festival Singers and Orchestra. He has sung tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*, as well as Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. Philip was a prize winner in the ESB Feis Ceoil 2017 as a tenor, violist and pianist, winning the Tenor Solo cup, the John McCormack cup, the Senior Viola cup and the Milne cup for singer/piano duo as the accompanist, as well as being a finalist in the Gervase Elwes competiton.

Aisling McCarthy *Soprano*

Aisling (Kildare) has just completed a BMus at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama under Colette McGahon Tosh. She has sung with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra Chorus, performing in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and many more in the National Concert Hall. With Lyric Opera, Aisling has performed in *Madame Butterfly, Carmen, La Traviata, Rusalka,* and *Tosca* at The National Concert Hall and The Gaiety Theatre. She has taken part in the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival at Buxton Opera House performing *The Mikado* and *HMS Pinafore*. Aisling played the role of **Fiametta** in the Rathmines and Rathgar Musical Society's production of *The Gondoliers* at the Gaiety Theatre. She won the Soprano Solo cup at the ESB Feis Ceoil in 2013.

JJ McNamara *Piano*

JJ (Meath) age 18, is completing his first year at London Guildhall Scool of Music studying under Martin Roscoe. JJ has won 1st prize in many national competitions, including the Junior Piano Concerto Competition in the Feis Ceoil 2014. He was awarded the World Piano Teachers special prize at the Junior Chopin International Competition in Poland in 2016 and in 2017 he was a prizewinner in the International Spanish Piano Competition, Xabia Concurso. JJ was selected by Barry Douglas for the young musicians programme at Clandeboye in 2015. In 2017 JJ was invited by the National Symphony Orchestra of Moldova to perform as soloist in Tchaikovsky's 1st piano concerto in a live radio and television broadcast (Broadcast in 73 countries). He will take part in the Dublin International Piano Competition this May as one of only six Irish pianists selected by the jury.

The Trench Award 2018 Programme

David Howes *Bass-baritone*

The Roadside Fire	*The Songs of Travel*	Vaughan Williams
Ich bin der welt	*Ruckert lieder*	Mahler
Aprite un po	*Marriage of Figaro*	Mozart
She is Far From The Land		Lambert

Leah Redmond *Soprano*

Deh Vieni, Non Tardar	*Marriage of Figaro*	Mozart
Apparition		Debussy
Allerseelen		Strauss
Ah! Je Veux Vivre	*Romeo & Juliet*	Gounod

Ben Gannon *Oboe*

Oboe Concerto in D minor *(Adagio)*	Marcello
Gabriel's Oboe	Morricone
Oboe Concerto in C major *(Allegro Aperture)*	Mozart

Philip Keegan *Tenor*

Vainement, ma bien-aimee	*Le Roi D'ys*	Lalo
Silent Noon		Vaughan Williams
Erlkonig		Schubert
The Stuttering Lovers		Traditional

PAUSE – 7 minutes

Aisling McCarthy *Soprano*

O wär ich schon mit dir vereint	*Fideleo*	Beethoven
Nous voulons une petite soeur		Poulenc
L'énamourée		Hahn
Dirty Work		Nelson

JJ McNamara *Piano*

Sonata in C minor Op 10 no. 1 *(1st movement)*	Beethoven
Waltz from Gounod's Faust	Liszt

INTERVAL – 20 minutes

Presentation of The Trench Award 2018

Followed by presentation of Birr Lions Club Bursary, Canto al Serchio prize and Birr Stage Guild's Audience Choice Award.

Selection Panel David Brophy, Cara O'Sullivan & Enda O'Connor

David Brophy

David was born in Dublin and is a graduate of the Dublin Institute of Technology and Trinity College Dublin. He became the first Assistant Conductor with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. A former Principal Conductor of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, David now enjoys a close relationship with both RTÉ orchestras in addition to regular appearances as guest conductor with the Ulster Orchestra. His career has seen him conduct throughout Europe, Africa, the United States, Canada and China.

David has collaborated with many internationally acclaimed soloists, among them, Tasmin Little, Barry Douglas, Willard White, Lesley Garret, Sir James Galway, Lang Lang, Danielle de Niese, Nicola Benedetti, Kim Criswell and Chloë Hanslip. He has conducted in the US with the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra and the Naples Philharmonic, in Spain with Orquesta Nacional Clásica de Andorra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, and at home with all major Irish orchestras.

His work with specialist new music ensembles, among them Vox 21 and Crash Ensemble, has led to numerous premieres including the Irish premiere of Steve Reich's Music for Eighteen Musicians and Andre Previn's A Streetcar Named Desire. David's operatic work has led to acclaimed partnerships with Lyric Opera Productions, Opera Theatre Company, Opera Ireland, Glasthule Opera, NI Opera and and with Ballet Ireland. Aside from his work as a musician, David presented the RTE1 award-winning TV series **Instrumental** and most recently fronted the IFTA award-winning **High Hopes Choir** for Tyrone Productions and RTÉ1 TV.

Richard McGrath *Accompanist*

Richard holds a first class honours degree in Music and French from NUI Maynooth and a Masters in Performance (Piano Accompaniment) from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Richard was a trainee repetiteur at English National Opera and since then he has worked with companies including Northern Ireland Opera, Wide Open Opera, Opera Theatre Company and Lyric Opera.

He plays regularly in recital, predominantly with singers, and has played with the orchestra of English National Opera, Irish National Opera and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. He currently works as a repetiteur in the vocal department at the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. Upcoming engagements in 2018: a production of Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* and a revival of *The Second Violinist* by Donnacha Dennehy, both with Irish National Opera.

MONDAY 7 MAY

Lunchtime Café Concert

Castle Courtyard Café, *1pm*

Birr Young Voices

St. Brendan's Church of Ireland, 3pm

Choir

Natasha Cahalan
Beatrice Copland
Adam Cwiklik
Abi Deane
Sarah Delahunty
Isobel de Forge
Anna Maria Florea
Emma Gallagher
Tara Kennedy
Julia Klisiewicz
Sion Leitner
Diarmuid Liffey
Clodagh Loughnane
Grace Mahon
Isabelle Mahon
Cara Mannion
Sarah Morris
Stephen Nolan
Eleanor O'Meara
Eve Pey
Vanessa Pioirowska
Ava Reams
Sean Scully
Oksana Shpuryk
Alexa Sinkevic
Katie Smyth
Andzelika Strujeva
Reece Swanepoel
Ace Anthony Thekkan
Leanne Toner
Janya Vishwakarma
Viktorija Voitenko
Thomas Walsh

Ailbhe Kelly Director - Birr Young Voices

Ailbhe holds a BMus(Hons) from NUI Maynooth and a Dip.Ed.(Music) from UL. A native of Ballycumber Co. Offaly, Ailbhe's background is in music education and performance. Currently teaching with Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath. She educates children weekly in Kodaly Music Education, Group Instrumental Tuition and Choral Programmes whilst studying a MA Arts Policy and Practice part-time.

Andrew Yau Director - Birr Young Voices

Andrew is a music teacher, multi-instrumentalist, singer, conductor and composer based in the Midlands. He completed a BMus in Maynooth University in 2012 where he specialised in composition and piano performance. Andrew sings baritone with the Irish Youth Choir and Chamber Choir and is also an experienced flautist, clarinettist and cello player.

Birr Young Voices & Guests

PROGRAMME

Siyahamba	*South Africa*	Birr Young Voices
Kimineero The Carrion Crow	*Nova Scotia*	
Sonata No 2, Andante	*Bach*	Mollie Wrafter
Caprice No 13	*Paganini*	
Johnny	*Britten*	Deirdre Higgins
The Vagabond	*Williams*	Andrew Yau
Die Lotusblume	*Schumann*	Breffni Fitzpatrick
How Far I'll Go *(Moana)*	*Miranda*	Birr Young Voices
One World In Harmony	*Albrecht & Althouse*	
Marchenbilder Op.113, Allegro	*Schumann*	Brigit Leitner
Rondel chinois	*Debussy*	Deirdre Higgins
Youth & Love	*Williams*	Andrew Yau
The Girl With The Flaxen Hair	*Debussy*	Mollie Wrafter
Syncopation	*Kreisler*	
El Cielo Canta Alegria	*Sosa*	Birr Young Voices
Sing	*Weber & Barlow*	

Accompanists: Ailbhe Kelly, Andrew Yau & Richard McGrath.

Mollie Wrafter

Violinist Mollie Wrafter from Geashill, Co. Offaly is currently pursuing a BMus Degree in Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester on the Gladys Emily Woolston scholarship. She is studying under the direction of Leland Chen, internationally renowned soloist and winner of the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition.

Since recieving the Trench Award Musical Futures bursary for 2016 and 2017 Mollie has participated in masterclasses with Mauricio Fuks and the RTÉ Contempo Quartet. She has performed with the RNCM Symphony Orchestra and Piccadilly Symphony Orchestra. Mollie has been a prize winner at Feis Ceoil, Midlands Feis and Feile Luimni, and has performed regularly with the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, touring in Abu Dhabi and Lisbon as well as nationally.

Mollie is currently playing a Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin from 1844, which has been kindly loaned to her from the Music Instrument Fund of Ireland.

The Trench Trust

Julia Trench who died in 2007 at an advanced age left the residue of her estate to create a Trust Fund, the income from which she designated should be used for educational, religious, welfare and social and community purposes. The Revenue Commissioners approved that such a fund with charitable status should be established and so the JVM Trench Trust has been supporting community projects mainly but not exclusively in the Midlands of Ireland.

Julia Trench with her husband, Patrick had an abiding love of music both to make and to appreciate. Julia sang, played the piano, the organ, the flute and the drums. Patrick played a similar range of instruments and in addition the harp. He also made many of his own instruments and built a concert hall at their home and brought together a range of instrumentalists from South Offaly and North Tipperary to create the Sopwell Light Orchestra. Both Julia and Patrick, had a profound desire that children and young people should have expert introduction to the skills of listening to and making music.

As Trustees of Julia's Trust we are endeavouring to give expression to what we know would be her heart's desire. It is therefore a matter of very great delight to us that The Trench Award has evolved over five years and grown to now include an elaborated competition Concert, Voice and Instrument Masterclasses open to the public, a Children's Choir, visiting musicians in concert, recital and street music in the town. This is altogether a remarkable achievement about which the Trench Trustees are most enthusiastic and are very happy to acknowledge and indeed encourage support from other sources, particularly Birr Lions Club, so that this project remains a viable and growing enterprise into the distant future.

Both Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and St. Brendan's Church of Ireland had great meaning in Julia's later years and it is entirely appropriate that they should be the venues for musical events associated with this Festival of Music.

Salters Sterling:
The JVM Trench Trust

Julia & Patrick Trench at home in Sopwell Hall

The Canto Al Serchio Award

Following their hugely appreciated performance, masterclasses and adjudication for the inaugural Birr Festival of Music & Voice in 2017, renowned baritone Bruno Caproni and pianist Julian Evans continue to mentor young singers from The Trench Awards, with an invitation to the Canto Al Serchio, their summer Acadamy.

This will be awarded to a singer in the Trench Award final, and is a residency at the Villa Irlanda, where she/he will join a small group of international singers for vocal coaching, Italian lessons, performance opportunities, visit Puccini's birthplace in nearby Lucca and generally immerse themselves in Italian culture.

Birr Lions Club Bursary

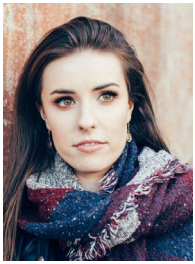
Birr Lions Club is delighted to be associated, for the past four years, with the Trench Award, and with its expansion to Birr Festival of Music & Voice. Congratulations are due to the organising committee for promoting professional performing careers of young singers and musicians. Birr Lions Club is pleased to award a generous bursary and we look forward to following the career of the recipients with deep interest.

Since being formed in 1974 Birr Lions CLub has been very active in the community supporting dozens of clubs, organisations and cultural events. The annual Birr Review is one of it's major projects - an outstanding success as a social record of Birr town and area and is sent far and wide to our relatives and friends abroad.

Birr Stage Guild Audience Award

Birr Stage Guild, established in 1958, encompasses a wide diversity of cultural activities and stage productions in many forms. Workshops in drama, voice, directing, production, choreography, dance, lighting, design, make-up and mime. The Guild members worked with St. Brendan's Community School, from its foundation in 1980, to support and build the strong musical/drama department there, and, together, set up the Birr Youth Dance Company in the 1990's. Birr Stage Guild worked in partnership with Opera Theatre Company in the production of the childrens' opera *Bug Offlll* (2008), with Legitimate Bodies Dance Company on the childrens' dance-drama *Pinnochio* and with Midland Musical Youth's highly acclaimed production of *Les Miserables* (2013). Birr Stage Guild is pleased to sponsor the Audience Choice Award..

Previous Trench Award Recipients



Heather Fogarty *2014* Mezzo Soprano
Carolyn Holt *2015* Mezzo Soprano
Sarah Brady *2016* Soprano
Richard Thomas *2017* Violin

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre

At Birr Theatre & Arts Centre we are, once again, delighted to be part Birr Festival of Music & Voice. Over the past 18 years we have been the catalyst to the establishment of so many festivals. In the early years Jazz in Birr and Birr Puppet Festival, then IF ONLY Dance Festival and Birr One Act Drama Festival and now the well-known Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival, OFFline Film Festival and Scripts - Ireland's Playwriting Festival.

We pride ourselves on being an incubator for many local festivals now well established in our town's calendar, all of which complement the long running Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival and extend our tourism season while expanding the arts engagement with our audiences. The importance of having a theatre in the town should not be underestimated – nor its value to the community as a whole, local businesses as well as emerging and established artists.

HULLABALOO! OFFALY'S CHILDREN'S ARTS FESTIVAL

OFFLINE OFFALY FILM FESTIVAL

Scripts Ireland's Playwriting Festival

057 9122911
www.birrtheatre.com

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A special thank you to the business community of Birr for promoting the Festival with live and recorded music on their premises.

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