



Herosongs: Where History Meets Song

8x30' documentary series 'Herosongs' – begins Sunday 14th July 2013 at 7pm on RTÉ Radio 1

An Athena Media production for RTÉ Radio 1 made with the support of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound & Vision Fund.



Is our connection with the past, and who we think of as heroes, best told by song rather than by history books? What makes a hero and how important has song been in shaping the popular image of that time, and that hero? And in Ireland does failure rather than triumph define heroism?

Across the centuries people in Ireland have passed on their history story through songs of heroes both political and tragic like Robert Emmet, Charles Stewart Parnell and James Connolly as well as mythical characters like Molly Malone and sporting heroes like the champion greyhound Master McGrath. Some of these songs have been handed down through the generations like '*Mo Ghile Mear*' about Bonnie Prince Charlie while other like '*Bold Robert Emmet*' were written long after the events in the song.

This eight part series is an Athena Media production for RTÉ Radio 1 and is presented by singer and academic Therese McIntyre, who traces the journey of ballads from the 16th century to today and explores how they shape or distort our understanding of history, real events and real people like Henry Joy McCracken in 1798 or Jim Larkin in 1913. In the series we hear from historians including **Diarmaid Ferriter**, **Kevin Whelan**, **Eunan O'Halpin**, **Mike Cronin**, and **Lillis O'Laoire**, song collector and scholar **John Moulden** and traditional music experts **Nicholas Carolan** and **Grace Toland** from the Irish Traditional Music Archive. Therese is joined by singers from the **Goinn Traditional Singers Club**, singers **Iarla Ó Lionáird**, **Nóirín Ní Riain**, **Frances Black**, **Niamh Parsons**, **Derek Warfield** and composer **Eric Bogle** among others, who share their own relationship with history, song and these sung heroes.

Presenter Thérèse McIntyre

Thérèse McIntyre originally from Detroit in the US came to Ireland in 1996 to pursue independent studies of the various aspects of Irish traditional culture - music, song, and dance - with a particular focus on the song tradition. She has spent several years collecting songs, both in the English and the Irish languages, from various areas throughout Ireland and America and worked with individuals who are well known both inside and outside of the tradition. Thérèse's particular area of research allows her to combine her academic strengths in Irish Studies and History with her longstanding personal interest in Irish traditional song and ballad.

Thérèse was part of the first group to graduate from the Centre for Irish Studies with a Diploma in Irish Studies in 2002. She subsequently received her B.A. in History and English from NUI Galway (2008) and recently completed her Masters in Irish Studies, also

at NUI Galway (2009). Her Masters thesis, titled 'Another Martyr for Old Ireland': Historical 'Fact' versus Folk Memory - Kevin Barry as a 'Hero' in the Irish Ballad Tradition', examines the legitimacy of using the narratives contained within songs of the ballad tradition as valid sources of historical information, particularly with respect to figures such as Kevin Barry who essentially have been marginalised by historians and also explores the song's influence on the social memory of modern-day Ireland. In 2009, Thérèse was awarded an Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Science (IRCHSS) Scholarship. Her PhD, which commenced in October 2009, is titled 'Historical 'Fact' versus 'Folk' Memory: The Creation and Representation of 'Heroes' in Irish Traditional Song and Ballad'.

Episodes billings

Episode 1 - 14/07/13 – The Outlaw Herosongs:

'The Forgers Farewell' (William Hill)

'Eamonn an Chnoic' (Éamonn Ó Riain)

'Newryhighway Man' (Young apprentice unnamed)

The oral ballad tradition dates back to the twelfth century but it's not until the introduction of print in Ireland around 1760 that we begin to see a record of traditional songs in both the Irish and English language. In the first episode of Herosongs presenter Therese McIntyre, explores the importance of the hero concept in Ireland, the emergence of the printed ballad-sheets and she explores a genre of herosongs about one of the most romantic types - the outlaw – those individuals who rebel against the norms of society. In this episode we hear from **Grace Toland** from the Irish Traditional Music Archive, historian of NUI Galway **Niall Ó Ciosain**, song collector and singer **John Moulden** and Góilín traditional singers club member, **Máire Ní Chróinín**. Songs include *'The Forger's Farewell'* about outlaw hero William Hill, *'Eamonn an Chnoic'* about Éamonn Ó Riain and *'Newryhighway Man'* about a young apprentice. **Nicholas Carolan**, director of the Irish Traditional Music Archive, shares his concept of a herosong; *"From the very beginning even the continental Celts had herosongs praising their great men, their bravery and the things they did for the community. They did exactly the same thing here in Ireland so it goes back to the beginning of human occupation in Ireland."*

Episode 2 - 21/07/13 - 1798 & 1803 Rebel Herosongs:

'Henry Joy McCracken' (Henry Joy McCracken)

'Bold Robert Emmet' (Robert Emmet)

'Dunlavin Green' (the 1798 rebels)

After the Irish Rebellions of 1798 and 1803 there is an outpouring of songs written about the events and about the executed United Irishmen Henry Joy McCracken and Robert Emmet. In this episode of Herosongs presenter Therese McIntyre, explores the hero behind the songs *'Henry Joy McCracken'* and *'Bold Robert Emmet'* as well as *'Dunlavin Green'* – the ballad bearing witness to the mass execution in May 1798 of rebels on Dunlavin Green. Historians **Maura Cronin** of Mary Immaculate College Limerick and **Kevin Whelan** of the University of Notre Dame, **Dr. Patrick Geoghegan** of Trinity College and archivist and author of *'The Age of Revolution in the Irish Song Tradition 1776-1815'* **Terry Moylan**, share their knowledge of the period and their concept of the songs. Singer **Jerry O'Reilly**, a member of the Góilín traditional singers club remembers how he first heard the song about Robert Emmet with his grandfather singing it; *"It's called The Bold Robert Emmet. And when I sing this song, it reminds me of great evenings spent at my grandparents' cottage in Donnybrook in the late 40s, early 50s."*

We also hear from **Derek Warfield**, singer and member of the Young Wolfe Tones who first recorded the song *'The Bold Robert Emmet'* in 2001.

Episode 3 - 28/07/13 - The Lost Leader Herosongs:

'Mo Ghile Mear' (Bonnie Prince Charlie)

'My Name is Napoleon Boneparte/Farewell to Paris' (Napoleon)

'The Blackbird of Avondale' (Charles Stewart Parnell)

What do Bonnie Prince Charlie, Charles Stewart Parnell and Napoleon have in common? In episode three of Herosongs presenter Therese McIntyre, explores some of the songs in the traditional canon about these three historical leaders often sung or lamented as loss leaders. She visits Parnell's grave in Glasnevin Cemetery with resident historian **Shane Macthomas** and looks at the ballad sheet of *'The Blackbird of Avondale'* one of two songs with the same title written about Parnell with **Grace Toland** in the Irish Traditional Music Archive as well her take on the song *'My Name is Napoleon Boneparte'* also known as *'Farwell to Paris'*. **Felix Larkin**, historian and the

academic director of The Parnell Summer School shares his view on the Parnell song *'The Blackbird of Avondale'*. Sean Nós singer **Iarla Ó Lionáird** shares his memories of singing the song about Jacobite pretender Bonnie Prince Charlie, *'Mo Ghile Mear'* as a young boy; *"I started singing it with the choir when Sean O'Riada was still alive so I've had a long relationship with it"* and we also hear from history lecturer **Maura Cronin** of Mary Immaculate College Limerick and **Terry Moylan** author of *'The Age of Revolution in the Irish Song Tradition 1776-1815'*, about the life of Bonnie Prince Charlie and Napoleon.

Episode 4 - 04/08/13 - 1913-1916 Herosongs:

'The Ballad of Jim Larkin' (Jim Larkin)

'James Connolly' (James Connolly)

'The Lonely Banna Strand' (Roger Casement)

It is a century since these events occurred and our three sung heroes in this episode Jim Larkin, James Connolly and Roger Casement are at the heart of contemporary history and politics. But what of the songs they inspired both at this time and since? In this episode of Herosongs presenter Therese McIntyre, explores the lives and legacies of these three men and the songs written about them. We hear from UCD professor **Diarmaid Ferriter**, author of *'Lockout 1913'* **Padraig Yeates**, tour guide and author of *'James Connolly: Sixteen Lives'* **Lorcan Collins** and James Connolly's great grandson **James Connolly Heron**. **Fergus Russell**, of the Góilín traditional singers club gives his opinion on why he likes one particular song about Connolly written by Paddy Galvin; *"So I sing the song and it would be one of the songs that I most enjoy singing, and am inspired most when I sing it because, Connolly is my hero"* and singer **Frances Black** shares the Black family's version of the song. We also hear from labour historian and traditional singer **Francis Devine** about the song *'The Ballad of Jim Larkin'* while the singer and member of the Young Wolfe Tones, **Derek Warfield** tells us the story of how he added an extra verse to the song about Roger Casement *'The Lonely Banna Strand'* in 1965.

Episode 5 - 11/08/13 - War of Independence Herosongs:

'Kevin Barry' (Kevin Barry)

'Sean Tracey' (Séan Tracey)

'Shall my soul pass through old Ireland' (Terence McSwiney)

Kevin Barry, Terence McSwiney and Sean Treacy are the focus of this week's episode on herosongs from the war of independence 1919-1922. The episode explores why these songs with the exception of Kevin Barry are rarely sung or heard today. **Mark Brennock** reported on the Northern Ireland conflict during the 80's and 90's for the Irish Times, and shares his memories as a child in the 60's listening to these songs being played by the Irish Army Band while veteran journalist **Seamus Martin** shares his mothers memory on the shooting of Sean Tracey. Kevin Barry's grandnephew and history professor of Trinity College **Eunan O'Halpin** shares his knowledge about who Kevin Barry was; *"He seems generally to have been an admirable person, not at all trying to hide behind lawyers or pretend he was a hero let alone a martyr."* Therese visits the Kevin Barry memorial window in UCD with arts facilitator **Ruth Ferguson** and singer **Frances Black** remembers how she first heard the song *'Kevin Barry'* and what it means to her. Historian **Maura Cronin** of Mary Immaculate College Limerick makes the point that these songs are meant to be propaganda. Góilín traditional singers club members **Diarmuid Breatnach** and **Frank Nugent** talk about the two Sean Tracey songs and the song *'Shall my Soul pass through old Ireland'* about the then Lord Mayor of Cork Terence McSwiney who died on hunger strike in 1920.

Episode 6 - 18/08/13 - The Female Herosongs – or lack of them!:

'Grace' (Grace Gifford)

'Óro Sé Do Bheatha Bhaile' (Granuaile)

'One Young Woman and One Young Man' (The Dunnes Stores Anti Apartheid Strike Workers)

How are women represented in the Irish song tradition? In this episode of Herosongs presenter Therese McIntyre, explores this intriguing question and looks at the songs about female 'heroes' including songs like *'Óro Sé Do Bheatha Bhaile'* about sea warrior Granuaile and the song *'Grace'* about Grace Gifford, the Irish artist and activist who married Joseph Plunkett, one of the signatories of the proclamation in 1916. Góilín traditional singers club member **Diarmuid Breatnach** takes us through the song *'Anne Devlin'* written in the 1980's by Pete St. John and we also hear from singers **Iarla Ó Lionáird** and **Frances Black** takes us through the song *'Magdalen Laundry'* which features on her 2003 album *'How High the Moon'*. Singer and song collector **Martin Ryan** discusses one of his favourite

songs *'Ten Young Woman and One Young Man'*. Grace Gifford's grandniece and author of 'Joseph Plunkett: 16 Lives' **Honor Ó Brolcháin**, shares her family story while Granuaile biographer **Anne Chambers** gives an insight into the real Grace O'Malley.

Episode 7 - 25/08/13 - Making History: Invented Heroes:

'No Man's Land' (Willie McBride)

'Cockles and Mussels' (Molly Malone)

'The Fields of Athenry' (Michael)

If Herosongs are about passing on a version of history there is also another strand of songs which create fictional characters who often became confused in our collective memory. Is Willie McBride the sung hero of the song *'No Man's Land'* real or made up? Did Molly Malone exist? Do herosongs create their own version of events?

Some of the most popular songs in the Irish traditional canon feature in episode seven of Herosongs. Presenter Therese McIntyre takes listeners through the history behind songs like the unofficial Dublin anthem *'Cockles and Mussels'* about fishmonger Molly Malone and the song most people associate with sporting events, *'The Fields of Athenry'* about a man called Michael set during the Great Famine during 1845-1850. Therese gets the views of some of these songs from members of the general public in Dublin and in her hometown of Galway and asks **Grace Toland** in the Irish Traditional Music Archive why the song has become so popular. She also explores the song that was a number one hit in Ireland for The Furey Brothers *'The Green Fields of France'* and speaks with the composer **Eric Bogle** about writing the song originally titled *'No Man's Land'*; *"I've tried to get the emotion across the emotion of sorrow and loss and anger, you know and question, why did this all happen and why did all the young men have to die."* In this episode we also hear from professor **Mike Cronin** of Boston College Ireland, song collector and singer **John Moulden** and sean nós singer **Noirin Ní Riain** introduces us to a very different version of the song *'Cockles and Mussels'*.

Episode 8 - 01/08/13 - Sporting Herosongs:

'Morrissey and the Russian Sailor' (knuckle boxer Johnny Morrissey)

'Master McGrath' (Champion greyhound Master McGrath)

'Cuchulainn's Son' (Nicky Rackard)

Songs praising a champion greyhound, a legendary hurler and a bare knuckle boxer all feature in the final episode of Herosongs. Presenter Therese McIntyre explores the songs written about these characters and the stories behind them. Veteran sports commentator and music lover **Jimmy Magee** tells us why sport is so important in Ireland whether it's in the ring, on the track or in the sports arena. Professor **Mike Cronin** of Boston College Ireland offers us an insight into why the dog, Master McGrath could be seen as a hero *"We're in a moment where symbols of Irishness, particularly at the political level are still emerging, therefore people put in their kind of identities, their notions of what Ireland might be into this idea of a dog"*. Góilín traditional singers club members **Fergus Russell** and **Frank Nugent** tell us about the songs *'Master McGrath'* and *'Cuchulainn's Son'* about legendary hurler Nicky Rackard. Singer **James McDonald** shares his recent updated version of the song *'Johnny Morrissey and the Russian Sailor'*, and historian **Lillis O'Laoire** of NUI Galway, discusses how Johnny Morrissey the boxer became a sporting hero and we explore at the ballad sheet of the songs with **Grace Toland** of the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

Herosongs: Where History and Song Meet will broadcast on **RTÉ Radio 1** from **July 14th to September 1st** on **RTÉ Radio 1** at **7pm**.

Further details on the project is available on www.athenamedia.ie and to listen to the series promos click audioboo.fm/athenamediaie.

The producer is Lisa Essuman, the presenter is Therese McIntyre.

Series Producer is Helen Shaw and the audio editor is Amy Millar

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