
Bray Arts Journal

Issue 4

December 2007

Volume 13



15TH CENTURY CHRISTMAS - FRA ANGELICO



The front cover of this December issue of Bray Arts Journal is a fresco of the Nativity painted about 1440 on the wall of cell 5 in the convent of San Marco in Florence. It was painted by Fra Angelico.

“...it is impossible to bestow too much praise on this holy father, who was so humble and modest in all he did and said and whose pictures are painted

with such facility and piety. In their bearing and expression, the saints painted by Fra Angelico come nearer to the truth than the figures done by any other artist.”

Lives of the Saints (Giorgi Vasari)

During the Christmas of 1407 at age 20, after hearing a sermon by the great Dominican Fray Manfredo da Vercelli, Giovanni Pietro, a young artist, decided to enter the Order of the Preachers. He was admitted as a novice at the Monastery of San Domenico in Fiesole in the province of Florence. He is better known today by the name Fra Angelico.

The young man already showed great artistic aptitude, but he judged it his duty to sacrifice it for God. His brothers in the Order, however, dissuaded him from this idea and encouraged him to continue developing his skills. To that end, the Prior ordered him to illustrate the manuscripts and choir books in the Monastery library. Giorgi Vasari described these illuminations as “breathtaking.”

As a good Dominican, Fra Angelico had a great enthusiasm for the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, which he knew quite well. With it he nourished his piety, and over it he constructed the foundation for his own future work. It was in the *Summa Theologiae* that he discovered the correct reasoning for his aesthetic ideas.

Three elements are needed for beauty, said St. Thomas: *first*, integrity in the perfection, since things that are not complete lack form; *second*, proportion and harmony among the parts, and *third*, clarity and splendor; things considered beautiful also have clear, bright colors.

Fra Angelico made this reasoning his golden rule.

More recently Roberta Smith reported on the “sublime exhibition of the Renaissance painter Fra Angelico” in New York’s Metropolitan Museum (Oct 2005). “Sure,” she said “its images are populated by figures with halos, wings or both” but “these motifs create a veritable mirage of grace and elegance, colour and light, serenity and perfect form.”

The Nativity fresco is a wonderful example of this grace and serenity and exudes a deep sense of reverence and wonder at the extraordinary story of a baby born in Bethlehem in the reign of Herod the Great, king of Judaea.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS AT MERMAID

Amongst the many happenings at Mermaid this December we selected a couple that particularly caught our eye:

Music : Boban Markovic Orchestar
Friday 7 December @ 8pm•20 / •18 Conc



Led by Boban Markovic, a much celebrated and major award-winning trumpeter from Serbia, The Boban Markovic Orchestar are a Balkan/Rom brass band renowned for reinventing their own traditional Eastern European music with injections and adaptations of sounds from around the globe. Widely considered to be the best Balkan trumpeter in the world today, Boban Markovic can count his son Marko, who joins him here, among the few who come close to his high standard of playing. This 13-man-strong brass orchestra has astounded audiences around the world.

Music : Bray Concert Band
Saturday 15 December @ 8pm•12 / •10 Conc



Come let’s fly a Christmas kite with Bray Concert Band, Kilmacanogue Choir & Orchestra featuring the music from Mary Poppins, the Wizard of Oz, Spider Man, E.T plus all your favourite Christmas songs. A Christmas Show for 9’s to 90’s

Children : Dressing the Christmas Tree
Saturday 15 December @
2pm Free

Bring your home-made decorations to hang on the Christmas tree. Mermaid will come alive with festive spirit - as well as the aroma of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, mulled wine (for your parents) and freshly baked mince pies.



FLAMENCO IN BRAY ARTS:

Review of Garcia, Flamenco Guitarist, at Bray Arts November Arts Evening.

As I came into the Martello Hotel at 8:00 pm on Monday 5th of November anticipating a marvellous evening of young film makers, songs and a unique musical experience I was struck by the unusual excitement of the receptionist who assured me that a great evening was in store.

When I came to the top of the stairs and entered the room I was greeted by the sparkling sounds of Paco Garcia and his colleagues warming up with heart-thumping riffs of flamenco scales and flourishes of rasqueado to the accompaniment of base and bongo rhythms.

The atmosphere was electric and the show had not even begun yet. The flamenco performance was to be the last act of the evening.

Garcia comes from the ancient city of Cadiz in Spain where he grew up in a world of true flamenco. What is true flamenco? It is a combination of dance song, guitar and audience. This music is traditionally performed as a combination of solo performances. In the late seventies a new mode of music hit the Spanish flamenco scene. Paco de Lucia emerged to take over the baton from the aging Manolo de Huelva as the leading guitarist in flamenco circles. Paco, like our guest Garcia, grew up in the world of traditional flamenco dance and song but developed a great interest in modern Jazz. He had a natural agility

in his fingers that enabled him to produce runs of notes that blister down the keyboard of the guitar and light a fire in the blood of anyone listening. With his unique technique, Paco de Lucia revolutionised the interpretation of the flamenco and “modernised” the form so that Spanish audiences who knew nothing about Flamenco started listening and buying his records. It might be thought that traditional players would spurn this modern style but Paco del Lucia’s style was so skilful and so sensitive to the original flamenco form that he achieved the highest accolades wherever he went.

Garcia has devoted himself to a life long study of the music of Paco d Lucia even playing in concert with him! He brought us a dramatic programme that caught all the brilliant qualities of



Derek Kennedy Pepe Rodriguez Joseph Wearen Garcia

the music and left the audience spellbound. The music was enhanced by the very fine guitar playing of **Joe Wearen**, the sparkling rhythms on the bongos from **Pepe Rodriguez** and the guitar of **Derek Kennedy** providing a rich bass accompaniment.

After playing several different songs which provided some magical solos taken in turn by the Bass , the bongos the backing guitar who turned out to be another wonderful player, and Garcia himself. the enraptured audience did not allow Garcia to leave the stage until three encores had been performed .

Garcia is now living in bray and we look forward to hearing him on many more occasions.

Cearbhall E. OíMeadhra

Also playing at the November Arts Evening was **Mary Fogarty**. Mary has the distiction of performing for a Bray Arts Mid-Summer Show which was the very first show ever in the Mermaid Theatre. On this occasion she accompanied herself on the guitar with a very entertaining set ending with a really fine version of **I WISH YOU LOVE**.

The audience insisted on an encore and were treated to Mary’s own unique version of Bob Dylans **IT AIN’T ME BABE**. Bray Arts is delighted to announce that Mary has also joined the committee and will be making an equally impressive impact behind the scenes as she does, out front, on the stage.



Mary Fogarty relaxing after her fine performance at Nov Arts Evening.

Further reviews on Nov Arts Evening on page 7.

A Dress For Insanity

by Bernie Alexander

She sewed the dress by moonlight, not a stitch was wasted,
Once she gave her mind to it, her heart and soul embraced it.

She choose the fabric of her life and checked her sewing chest,
For the spirit level needed to maintain her in her quest.

She recruited pins and needles with the promise that their points
Would be supported by the cushions in her agile finger joints.
And stopped a common thread that had been running through her dreams,
Convincing it, its path in life, was running up her seams.

She took her barest bones from a quiver in her shoulder
To add body to a gown that she feared would never hold her.
And sprinkled crystal tear-drops, she had shed the previous night,
In places that she felt were most deserving of their light.

The intensity of labour caused her addled brains to spin,
But she pulled her thoughts together and secured them with a pin.
For closure she used hooks and sighs and purse strings from her lips,
With elusive strands and ribbon bands to fortify their grip.

She finished as the full moon raised itself up off the floor,
And limboed through the space beneath her flimsy cabin door.
In the half light of the morning she gazed at her reflection,
Hoping she had finally touched the hemline of perfection.

It was clear to her the dress would never grace her slender frame,
Still her spirit level deemed it more than worthy of a name.
So she called it Human Frailty and when reason asked her why,
She said "I feel it has the courage to look life in the eye."

The Panel in the wardrobe she'd electd to encase it,
Concurred its wooden arms should not exclusively embrace it.
So she laid it on her trestle bed, mindful of its pleats,
And with feline grace she curled up at her masterpiece's feet.

A vacuum salesman found her with a sun slice on her face
Coiled up like a hose in his vacuum sample case.
He looked down at her brainchild and despite himself he cried,
To bear witness to the suffering of her life dressonified.

Its fabric was unyielding and awash with salted tears,
The boning in its bodice little more than brittle spears.
Its hooks and sighs were stressed and strained in seams she'd misaligned,
It was clear that its creator had misplaced a piece of mind.

He could see the bloodied footprints of a common running thread,
In every aspect of the gown she had laid out on her bed.
And removed it from her presence, for fear the knife edge of its pleats
Touch the beauty of the human frailty curled up at its feet.



Waiting

By Martha Woodcock

Bending the black blinds with my index finger
I look out to see the car pull up.

Bumps and wear and tear of farm life, my
father struggles on two sticks that make him

four legged. Mam more lively, her 81 years
pound on my doorbell though I wait at the door.

My uncle, stickless, bounds in smiling, hello, hello,
hello as though I did not hear it the first time.

Metal tips on his heels clicking on my
wooden floor herald his entry.

They settle at the table waiting,
meat, potatoes, no surprises please.

Waiting for the dinner to land just after sitting down
-
busy myself with plating, only two hands,

three mouths waiting. Small talk stops,
cutlery busy clearing loaded plates, of Sunday beef,

weather topic can wait for the break.
Dessert required promptly

THE KACHINA DOLL

By Jim Corcran

Rory had never seen a rain storm like it before, all the more bizarre, as he was driving through the middle of the Arizona desert, a spot he associated more with drought, than deluge. Despite it being two in the morning and black as pitch he felt disappointed. He had been looking forward to witnessing the desert sky at night, with its myriad of twinkling stars, seeping like the lights of Heaven, through the black velvet, pin cushioned, canopy of the sky. Gazing upwards, he shook his head in resignation.

Money was running low, he needed to get back to New York on the cheap, catch his flight to Dublin, and begin his final year at Trinity, so volunteering to drive a 'Rent A Car' back to the East coast seemed the ideal solution. Not only would he get to see some of Middle America, but save money into the bargain. All had been arranged, when out of the blue Sonny stepped in at the last moment and offered him five hundred dollars cash, plus expenses to drive a car to New Jersey containing a kit of drums. Sonny was a small wiry guy, more intriguing than attractive, yet infectious and charming. He claimed a Polish, Chinese background, but only the latter was apparent. Rory didn't feel right about taking Sonny's money, but he was insistent and patted him on the back.

'I trust you dude!' 'You'll be doing me a huge favour! There're not many cats out there I'd trust with my drum kit, or my woman, know what I'm saying?'

Rory smiled a little awkwardly. He wished Sonny had mentioned it sooner.

'What do you say man?'

'Well', replied Rory a little hesitantly, if you really want me to, I'll do it.'

'Cool man!' 'You'll have to toss your stuff on the back seat, I've already packed the drums in the trunk!'

That evening Rory took a taxi to Sonny's and off loaded his luggage.

'I appreciate it. You're a good mate' Sonny said, opening the door of the car and tossing Rory's stuff inside. A Kachina doll fell out of a bag and Sonny picked it up a little surprised.

'Kiccho gave it to me as a present' said it would bring me luck!'

Sonny held the cottonwood figure in his hand for some moments.

'Her Grandfather carved it for her when she was a child!' 'She loved that doll! His smile was laboured as he placed it on the seat. 'Thanks again, for everything' he said, his voice tapering.

Sonny counted out twelve hundred dollars in crisp notes.

Rory felt embarrassed.

'That should cover everything' he said, hugging him.

'Thanks mate! Say good bye to Kiccho for me! If you guys ever get over to Europe, look me up!'

'Will do', he said, avoiding eye contact. Safe journey!'

Sonny worked at Digital Enterprise Inc. A company specializing in surveillance equipment. Rory had a summer job there. Outside working hours he played drums in a Rock band, a little crazy, like most drummers, but a sweet person when you got to know him, as was his girlfriend Kiccho. She was stunning, tall, elegant, with long shiny black hair, brown almond eyes and flawless tanned skin. 'I'm the only true American amongst the lot of you; she would joke, when in company. Mostly, she was right, few could claim direct decadency



from the Hopi Indian.

Often when the band was gigging, Rory would accompany her and when they were out of town sometimes he would take her to a movie or a show. In the past ten weeks they had become great friends. She liked his Irish charm. He liked her laid back manner. She reminded him, of the Irish contribution to the building of America. He reminded her it was the Hopi Indians, who sent grain to help the starving Irish during the famine. It was the mutual admiration society; there was a bond between them, even before they met. He felt sad she had left without out saying goodbye.

'Her mother's taken ill' Sonny had informed him.

Rory found it a little strange, she hadn't called to tell him.

Outside the rain was teeming down in heavy squalls diffusing the headlights of the car, reflecting them back into his eyes to such an extent he could hardly see two yards in front of him. He wanted to stop but the next service area was nearly fifty miles away. Reluctantly, he struggled on, wipers swishing rhythmically with a 'shush' 'shush' sound, as if vainly trying to calm the outburst. A bolt of lightning lit the sky ripping the heavens apart like a piece of tissue and in that split second he thought he spotted something out there, something moving, lurking in the darkness. He felt his blood run cold as again he glimpsed the indefinable shape. The Heavens

rumbled, rupturing into an almighty crash of thunder that scared him half to death. White knuckled, he clung to the steering wheel. A massive discharge of lightening marbled the skies and he spotted it again. It seemed pale, ghostly, drifting in his direction. Another rumble, like the roar of a thousand wounded beasts and the skies lit up again. This time, he could see it. It was a woman, dressed in nothing but a white negligee running barefoot through the scrub, her garment wet and clinging, her hair dark and matted, hanging across her face. He felt the hairs on his neck stand on end.

No! It was impossible, it couldn't be! Kiccho, out here, alone, in the middle of the storm, surely he was mistaken? She was practically upon the car when the skies lit up again. Startled he rammmed on the brakes, the car skidded to a stop. It was Kiccho! He could see her now lit by the headlights, naked beneath her negligee, her skin paler than he had remembered, standing hand outstretched, as if bidding him to stop. She rushed to the passenger door.

'Kiccho', he blurted, what's happened, your soaking, what you doing out here, dressed like that!'

'I thought I'd never find you' she said sitting in.

Her voice was soft, her breathing as calm as if she had just woken up.

'My God, what's happened?' he asked anxiously.

Slowly she turned to face him, though he could not see her properly, something stopped him from switching on the interior light.

'Sonny found out about us!'

'But that's not possible!'

'Yes! He caught us on Video two days ago in your apartment. He planted a video camera in your bedroom!'

She turned away.

'He watched us making love'

'No!' You must be mistaken!' He hugged me tonight before I left!'

Lightening struck some nearby rocks, he could hear the hiss of sizzling earth. In that flash, an indelible image of her blood-stained face was imprinted in his mind. He froze in his seat.

'Rory, take care!'

She opened the door, the wind and rain poured in.

'Kiccho, wait we've got to get you home!'

'I am home, I'm with the spirits of the Hopi!'

The door closed and she was gone.

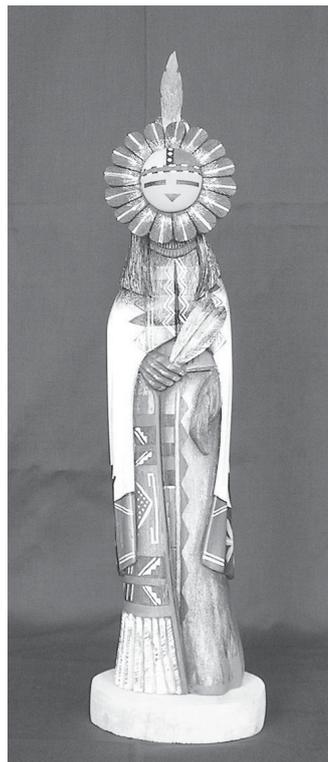
He rushed from the car, blinded by the rain and battered by

the wind, calling her name.

'Kiccho! Kiccho! Wait! Where are you?'

Dazed and confused he returned to the car, trying to make sense of what was happening. Reaching for his cell phone he called her number. He could hear it dialing out, then a muffled ringing from within the car. Spinning in the seat, he frantically searched its whereabouts. Soon he realized it was coming from the trunk.

Grabbing a torch he rushed to the back of the car and tried opening it, but the key did not fit, nor could he force it open. Frenzied, he climbed into the back of the car and began tossing his bags onto the passenger seat. He yanked at the rear seat, and tossed it out. Manically he pulled the backrest, till it snapped from its anchors. With trepidation he reached for the torch and directed the beam of light inside and recoiled in horror. Kiccho stared blankly back at him, her brown eyes unseeing, glazed in death, her hair matted with congealed blood, in her gaping mouth a blood smeared silver 'Baoding' ball. For a moment he was paralyzed, unable to move, unable to breathe unable to think. It was only when his eyes strayed from the body that he noticed the gasoline cans wired to a digital clock. The alarm was set for three a.m., it was now two fifty two. He clambered out of the car grabbing as much of his belongings as he possibly could and was about to leave when he returned for the 'Kachina' doll.



Shell shocked, he began to hurry from the car. He had scarcely managed three hundred yards when he heard the explosion. A fire ball rose high into the sky. He stood shaking, tears mingling with the rain, reflecting the flames and the horror in his eyes. 'Kiccho he sobbed, before finally turning away. As he walked the rain began to ease. Ahead he could see a break in the clouds and a sliver of moon peeping through. Something caught his eye. He dropped his bags.

'Kiccho 'is that you?'

A warm dry wind swept from the south, whistling through the valley. In the distance he could hear the fading thunder. Raising his head he took a deep breath and gazed upward, upon a canopy of twinkling stars. He grasped the 'Kachina' doll tightly.

'Kiccho, where are you?'

He heard nothing, nothing but the echo of his own dying voice, reverberating down the valley.

Nov Arts Evening contd. from page 3.

Teeth : That's the name of Ruairi O'Brien's prize winning film which had the Bray Arts audience laughing uproariously and squiming in mock disgust at the hilarious shennannigan's of actor's Niall O'Brien and Niall Toibin, two 'auld cute hures', one smarter than the other. I am still laughing at the 'good' of it. It should be bottled and sold as a pick-me-up.



Bridget Clover & Ruairi O'Brien

Adam Ozmin's film was also of the humorous variety. It was called *Lost Socks* and inspired no doubt by the universal problem of never finding two matching socks when you want them. This quirky and rib-tickling film sustained the great humour of the audience and kept the 'laughometer' needle banging off the end-stop.



Adam Ozmin with MC Carmen Cullen

Running out of funds :

This year, as you know, Wicklow Co. Council reduced our grant to 500 Euro for the year and Bray Council, it would appear, will not be offering grants anytime soon. Our committee is exploring other sources of funding but as things stand right now we can just about afford one more issue of the Journal. We'll keep our fingers crossed.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT THE RACKER - OUR RACKER!(PETER DONNELLY)

Sunday Tribune

James Joyce himself would have loved this.

Clever, humorous, articulate, marvellous.

BBC RADIO 4

Brilliant. Genius. Lovely stuff.

WICKLOW PEOPLE

The spellbound audience never took their eyes off Donnelly.

IRISH WORLD

Getting to the end of his CD, I played it all again.

I have grown to love it. Fabulous.

ARDAL O'HANLON

This guy blew me away!

Yes they are talking about our Racker Donnelly and lest any impresario claims sole rights to The Racker and all his Works let it be known that he has a life-long contract with Bray Arts and it will cost big bread to release him from that. Peter and wife Maggie spend the bulk of their time in London but always drop into Bray Arts when they are home in Bray (see preview below for Dec Arts Evening).



ARTS EVENING MONDAY DECEMBER 3RD

8:30 Heather House Hotel, Admission: 5 Euro / 4 Euro conc.

The MC for the evening will be **The Racker**. He will be joined by a great line-up including:



The Barbara Donnelly School of Dancers.

The last time Brabara and her ladies danced at Bray Arts they were brilliant and a huge hit with the audience.

Barbara was the choreographer for the recent Sondheim musical *Company* in Mermaid theatre and a lot of people remarked on what a superb job this talented lady did.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad is a hugely successful young composer who has won the Wicklow Per Cent Music Commission. She is composing a piano concerto for **Bobby Chen** and the Greystones Orchestra. It will be premiered in 2009 at three venues in Co. Wicklow. Cheryl will talk about the commission and the challenges it presents. She has just been awarded her PhD in Composition from Kings College London, where she studied with Dr. Silvina Milstein.

Bray Arts is particularly delighted that **Loreto School** is providing the obligatory choir to sing some Christmas Carols and they have also prepared a little surprise performance. I also hear, through the grapevine, that **Zan** our chairperson has her own little surprise for the night. Coming to a Bray Arts Evening is like opening a Christmas stocking: you never know what you are going to find there.

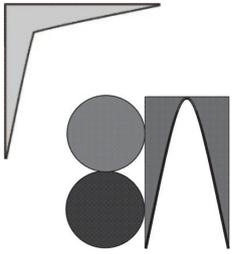
Message from Harold Chassen our Video Voyeur:
DVDs in the local library

Instead of reviewing a film this month I thought I'd pass on some information about a source of DVDs that you might not be aware of. I was browsing through the Bray branch of the County Wicklow library and noticed that they had some DVDs in stock. I looked through them and found some films that I hadn't seen before and some old classic films that I thought were unavailable. I took out Eisenstein's October 1917, Red Dwarf (Series 1) and the recent film Broken Flowers. They do not have a massive supply but are slowly building up their stock. They are not in competition with video rental stores. The next time you are in your local branch library have a look at what they have. You might find some hidden gems.

Submission Guidelines

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Creative Writing Prose/Fiction Editor : Anne Fitzgerald :
afitzgerald3@ireland.com
Poetry Editor : Eugene Hearne : poetrybray@yahoo.ie
website : www.brayarts.net

Email submissions to any of the above or post typed submissions to
The Editor BAJ 'Casino',
Killarney Rd. Bray,
Co. Wicklow
Visual material: Photographs by Post. Digital Images by Email or CD in JPEG format.
Deadline 15th of each month.



*Arts Evening Monday 3rd December 2007
at the Heather House Hotel Strand Road 8:00 pm
5 Euro / 4 Euro Conc. Everyone is welcome.*

The Racker : Brilliant, genius, lovely stuff
BBC Radio 4
Cheryl Frances-Hoad : Composer and winner of Wicklow Music
Commission

Loreto School: Delightful Christmas Carols plus 2 surprise performers.

Barbara Donnely School of Dancing: It's like watching fireworks indoors: just scintillating.

Bray Arts is grateful for the support of Bray Council, Wicklow Council, CASC and Heather House Hotel.
Printed by Central Press

If undelivered please return to :
Editor, Bray Arts Journal
'Casino'
Killarney Rd.
Bray
Co. Wicklow