

# Re-Imagining Ireland

## Conference and Festival Wrap-Up

### Introduction

From May 7-10, 2003, Americans from around the country and Irish from across the sea traveled to Charlottesville, Virginia to take part in *Re-Imagining Ireland*. We were honored that President Mary McAleese of Ireland delivered the keynote address at this groundbreaking international “town meeting” of Ireland, out of Ireland—a time out to discuss the past and present and build bridges to the future. The program explored the meaning of Ireland for the world as a modern and prosperous, yet traditional culture. We hope we encouraged new bonds and affirmed old friendships, celebrated the transformative power of culture, and helped support a reflective revisioning of Ireland by our featured guests and participants.

The conference began and ended with extraordinary excitement and enthusiasm. Highlights of the event included the eloquent, humorous, inspiring, insightful, and substantive speech by President McAleese on the opening night of the conference. Tommy Sands’s lunchtime presentation of songs of the peace process on the final day brought tears to the eyes of many audience members.

*Re-Imagining Ireland* could never have happened or been the success that it was without the constant participation and support of the consulting team made up of Angela Bourke, Mary Corcoran, Theo Dorgan, Luke Gibbons, Declan McGonagle, Martin McLoone, Susan McKay, Kerby Miller, Mick Moloney, and Fintan O’Toole.

The VFH is grateful for all of their help and for the generous participation of all contributing organizations, participants, sponsors, and volunteers.

—Andrew Higgins Wyndham  
*Re-Imagining Ireland* Project Director



Tommy Sands practices what he sings. The County Down musician didn’t just deliver songs of wit (“Whatever You Say, Say Nothing,” “We’ll Get Married Then”) and wisdom (“There Were Roses,” “Your Daughters and Sons,” “1999,” “Let the Circle Be Wide”) during the May 10 luncheon at “Re-Imagining Ireland”... In a stirring, spellbinding performance, Sands also delivered on those songs’ promise of inclusion and tolerance by inviting three politicians of different viewpoints to come up and sing.

So when Christopher McGimpsey, the Belfast City councilor representing Loyalist West Belfast and member of the Ulster Unionist Party for a quarter century, sang a song of Orange sentiments before the large luncheon crowd, no dissenting murmurs were heard. The same held true when David Ervine, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, sang on stage. He brought a fragile tenderness to his singing, and that emotion was also coursing through “Se Fath Mo Bhuartha” (“The Cause of My Sorrow”), a song in Irish from Brid Rogers, deputy leader of Northern Ireland’s Social Democratic and Labor Party. She confessed her political wonderment at how Tommy Sands can “get people to do what they don’t want to do.”

— Excerpted from Earle Hitchner’s article in the *Irish Echo*: “Bridges of Understanding: Ireland Re-imagined in the Land of Jefferson,” May 21-27, 2003

# FEATURED GUESTS

Over 100 scholars, writers, musicians, filmmakers, dancers, poets, politicians, journalists and citizen activists gathered together to re-imagine Ireland.

Donald Akenson  
Arthur Aughey  
Ivana Bacik  
William Binchy  
Angela Bourke  
John D. Brewer  
Katharine Brown  
Jean Butler  
Christopher Cahill  
John Campbell  
Nicholas Carolan  
Clare Carroll  
Ciaran Carson  
Marion Casey  
Joe Cleary  
Mary Condren  
Pat Cooke  
Mary Corcoran  
Maurna Crozier  
Kevin Donleavy  
Theo Dorgan  
David N. Doyle  
Roddy Doyle  
John Dunlop  
Marianne Elliott  
David Ervine  
Tony Fahey  
Gerald Fogarty SJ  
Roy Foster  
Luke Gibbons  
Alan Gilsenan  
Henry Glassie  
Len Graham  
Breda Gray  
Patrick Griffin  
Conor Grimes  
Constantin Gurdgiev  
Mick Hannigan  
Martin Hayes  
Ellen Hazelkorn  
Mary Hickman  
Warren Hofstra  
Noel Ignatiev  
Tom Inglis  
Andy Irvine  
Catherine Joyce  
Kieran Keohane  
Peadar Kirby  
Larry Kirwan  
Brian Lambkin  
Joe Lee  
Ronit Lentin  
Edna Longley

Gordon Lucy  
Jacki Lyden  
Margaret Mac Curtin  
Piaras MacEinri  
Malcolm Maclean  
Sean MacManus  
Aodan Mac Poilin  
Catherine Marshall  
Trish McAdam  
President Mary McAleese  
Inez McCormack  
Frank McCourt  
Christopher McGimpsey  
Declan McGonagle  
Susan McKay  
Alan McKee  
Martin McLoone  
Robbie McVeigh  
Peter McVerry SJ  
Paula Meehan  
Kerby Miller  
Ed Moloney  
Mick Moloney  
Bruce Molsky  
Michael Montgomery  
Maureen Murphy  
Tomas O Cathasaigh  
Padhraic O Ciardha  
Seosamh O Cuaig  
Liz O'Donnell  
Rory O'Donnell  
Niall O'Dowd  
Brendan O'Leary  
Nuala O'Loan  
Cathal O Searcaigh  
Michael O Suilleabhain  
Fintan O'Toole  
Jahan Ramazani  
Brid Rodgers  
David Roediger  
Tommy Sands  
Robert Scally  
Helen Shaw  
Lenwood Sloan  
Gerald Stembridge  
Rod Stoneman  
Colm Toibin  
Abel Ugba  
Ed Ward  
Christopher Whelan  
John Wilson  
William H.A. Williams  
Richard White

## **Green Fields of America**

Mick Moloney  
Amy Fenton-Shine  
Dana Lyn  
Jimmy Keane  
Pat Broaders  
Sean Cleland  
Robbie O'Connell  
Jerry O'Sullivan  
Donald Golden  
Cara Butler

## **De Dannan**

Frankie Gavin  
Rick Epping  
Martina Goggin  
Eleanor Shanley  
Alec Finn  
Colm Murphy  
Brian McGrath  
Derek Hickey

## **Cherish the Ladies**

Mary Coogan  
Mirella Murray  
Marie Reilly  
Donald Golden  
Eileen Golden  
Heidi Talbot  
Paul McKeown  
Donna Long  
Joannie Madden

## **Solas**

Jan Elliott  
Deirdre Scanlon  
Wes Delk  
Seamus Egan  
Win Horan  
Mick McCauley  
Eamon McElholm

## **Corn Exchange Theatre**

Andrew Bennett  
Vincent Doherty  
Colette Morris  
Annie Ryan  
Michael West  
Jenny Huston

“In time to come this conference will be seen as the back-stop, the launch pad to the re-imagined Ireland.”

—President Mary McAleese

“It would be an understatement to say that taken all together the conference has changed my thinking about Ireland and its place in both history and the world today. What I gained from the event will no doubt affect my scholarship for years to come. My work in advising the Ulster American Folk Park on a new Ulster-to-America exhibit will certainly take on new depth and perspective from all I learned and experienced at *Re-Imagining Ireland*.”

—Warren Hofstra

“I have never been to a more stimulating conference, or one that was better organized. Possibly your most impressive achievement was to persuade a regiment of Irish academics and intellectuals to keep reasonably close to a timetable. This is something I have never seen before and would not have considered possible. For me, the other great benefits were the opportunity of meeting so many people I had only read before, all the new friends I made, and people, including from my own town, with whom I could never have had a discussion at home.”

—Aodán Mac Póilin

“What a triumph! What a magnificent intellectual party! What a festival of ideas, sensations, and experiences! Congratulations!”

—Jahan Ramazani

# Arts Presentations

Concert with The Green Fields of America and De Dannan

Concert with Cherish the Ladies and Solas

Musical Narrative with Martin Hayes and poet Cathal O Searcaigh

Musical Narrative with Andy Irvine and Rens Vander Zalm

Musical Narrative with Len Graham and John Campbell

Musical Narrative with Bruce Molsky

Musical Narrative with Tommy Sands

Musical Narrative with Mick Moloney

Life Stories with writer Frank McCourt

Short Films Screenings presented by the Cork Film Festival

*Goldfish Memory* Presented by the Irish Film Board

Poetry Reading with Cathal O Searcaigh, Paula Meehan, and Ciaran Carson

*Foley*, by Michael West from Dublin's Corn Exchange Theatre

*Irish Art Today* from the Irish Museum of Modern Art

*Leabhar Mòr Na Gaeilge* from Pròiseact Nan Ealan

"I think that three cheers are in order on foot of the hundreds of conversations that underpinned the sessions, undermined them, interweaved them, acted as substitutes for them, carried on from them or plain ignored them. The variousness of people being thoughtful, witty, reflective and engaged is what I remember... It was a particular pleasure, talking to the professional academics, to see the light dawning; to hear them say that the reason this conference was such a pleasure was that it had music and poetry and art each in its own right standing its own ground. I think some of our colleagues were genuinely shocked to discover a mere musician or singer or poet or (truly shocking, this) arts administrator might be a person of learning and authority!"

--Theo Dorgan, Featured Guest

## Support for *Re-Imagining Ireland* Provided by:

### Major Support

National Endowment for the Humanities

Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland/Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, Dublin

Anne Lee Ueltschi Foundation

Caroleen Feeney

Office of the President at the University of Virginia

The American Ireland Fund

Delta Air Lines

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Belfast

Foras na Gaeilge

Dominion Digital

Gropen Signs and Displays

Charlottesville Transit Service

City of Charlottesville, Virginia/City Manager's Office

### Additional Support

The Forum for Contemporary Thought

The FUNd at the Charlottesville-Albemarle Community Foundation

British Council Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland & USA  
Marty and Richard Wilson

Charlottesville/Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau  
ServerVault

Caterpillar Corporation

Peter Sutherland

Northern Ireland Bureau, Washington

Milwaukee Irish Fest Foundation

RBC Dain Rauscher

Keswick Hall at Monticello

Irish American Cultural Institute

Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Monticello

Anna Lawson

Vinegar Hill Theatre

Barnaby Council for Celtic Studies

J.W. Sieg and Co. – Guinness

Anna Magee

Marie Moriarty

Mary Jo Herriman

Catherine L. H. Peyron

Seanchai Books

James Finnerty

William Rough

John Wilson

### Collaborating Agencies

Irish Museum of Modern Art

Cork International Film Festival

Bord Scannan na hEireann/The Irish Film Board

Glucksman Ireland House, NYU

Irish Centre for Migration Studies

Paul Wagner Productions

Poetry Ireland

Radio Telefis Eireann

University of Virginia Art Museum

University of Virginia Press

"Sincerest congratulations for a truly magnificent conference. It was a life-changing event which I will always remember, with thanks. All of the Irish group were delighted with the week: there was a great atmosphere on the journey home."

--William Binchy, Featured Guest

# Re-Imagining Ireland At A Glance

produced by the

Virginia Foundation for the Humanities

May 7-10, 2003, Charlottesville, VA

<b>NUMBER OF EVENTS</b> .....	53
<b>NUMBER OF FREE PUBLIC PROGRAMS</b> .....	28
<b>NUMBER OF FEATURED GUESTS</b> .....	136
<b>NUMBER OF PACKAGE REGISTRANTS</b> .....	178
<b>NUMBER OF FREE DISCUSSION PANEL REGISTRANTS</b> .....	375
<b>PROFILE OF PACKAGE REGISTRANTS:</b>	
From Virginia.....	35%
Out-of-state.....	57%
(Including AK, CA, CT, DC, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, MA, MD, ME, MI, MT, NC, NJ, NY, NM, OH, PA, RI, TX, WI, and WV)	
Out-of-country.....	8%
(Including Canada, England, Ireland, and Northern Ireland)	
<b>COMPLETE AUDIENCE PROFILE:</b>	
From Charlottesville/ Albemarle.....	37%
Other Virginia.....	21%
Out-of-state.....	29%
(Including AK, CA, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, MA, MD, ME, MI, MT, NC, NJ, NY, NM, NH, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, WI, and WV)	
Out-of-country.....	3%
(Including Canada, England, Ireland, and Northern Ireland)	
Unknown.....	9%
<b>ESTIMATED CUMULATIVE PARTICIPATION</b> .....	8,991

## **PRESS COVERAGE RECEIVED:**

<i>Irish Times</i> .....	Dublin, Ireland
<i>Irish Voice</i> .....	New York, New York
<i>Irish Echo</i> .....	New York, New York
<i>Irish America</i> .....	New York, New York
<i>Sunday Times</i> .....	London, UK
<i>The Herald</i> .....	UK
<i>Belfast News Letter</i> .....	Belfast, Northern Ireland
<i>Irish Emigrant</i> .....	Galway, Ireland
<i>RTE News and Television</i> .....	Dublin, Ireland
<i>Associated Press</i> .....	USA
<i>Times Dispatch</i> .....	Richmond, VA
<i>Daily Progress</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>The Hook</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>Inside UVA</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>The Downtowner</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>Charlottesville Arts and Entertainment</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>Newstalk 105</i> .....	Dublin, Ireland
<i>WWWV, WINA, Z95</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>WVTF</i> .....	Roanoke, VA
<i>WTJU</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>WNRN</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA
<i>WVPT Television</i> .....	Harrisonburg, VA
<i>WVIR NBC Channel 29</i> .....	Charlottesville, VA

## Reflections on *Re-Imagining Ireland*

"This cornucopia of Irish culture and commentary, brought to one U.S. city, was as impressive as anything I've ever witnessed. The far-reaching vision and relatively smooth execution of *Re-Imagining Ireland* stemmed from the strong organization of the non-profit Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (now in its 29<sup>th</sup> year) ..."

– Earle Hitchner, *Irish Echo* "Bridges of Understanding: Ireland re-imagined in the Land of Jefferson," May 21-27, 2003

"I truly marvel at the work of flawless (from my standpoint) organization that you and your team put into making such a success of the conference. It was for me not only a very enjoyable and stimulating week, but an event of exceptional importance, weaving connections out of which I have no doubt great things will flow in time... The quality of inputs and discussion was of such a high standard throughout that all of us present learnt a lot about so many aspects of contemporary Ireland. In particular, drawing the arts together with those of us who labor in more intellectual fields made for a unique mix."

– Peadar Kirby, Featured Guest

"I can't begin to find words to thank and congratulate you for such a memorable week. It was like spending years of travel, meeting the most interesting and interested people without the disadvantages of sleeping on park benches and growing old quickly. Now I must attempt to rewind all the memories or perhaps it has already soaked in and all around to change me in a beautiful internal utterliness.

– Tommy Sands, Featured Guest

"I thought that you might be interested in two anecdotes. The first is a comment I overheard regarding the precise timeframes within which the sessions operated. A person chuckled and said 'it's an Irish conference run by Swiss clockmakers.' The second is something a fellow elevator passenger said to me as we observed that the people on the elevator with us were noted historians, writers, singers, musicians, etc. She said 'it's like looking at my music collection and bookshelf.' "

– Kathleen Rave, Milwaukee Irish Fest board member and package registrant

"At a time when so much of our country seems to be locked in a battle of wills over how to build a society, or perhaps, how to destroy it, this conference was redemptive and encouraging for all kinds of thinkers. I loved the debates, the poetry, the grit of balling up the tiny shamrock at times as well. McAleese's speech alone would nearly have been enough; though I have to confess, jaded globe-trotter than I am, that sitting down to table with [Frank] McCourt on opening night - and [Roddy] Doyle after - was QUITE deliciously fabulous... You are an inspired lot, all of you, to have pulled this off. I just can't imagine the work, the minutiae, the intense thought, the hassles, the pain that went into this."

– Jacki Lyden, Featured Guest

"[T]he Re-Imagining Ireland conference was by far the best such event I've ever attended. Even for a cynic, belief in the magical alchemy produced by the mixture of intellects, personalities and presentations became possible."

– Kathleen Constable, Package Registrant

"It was a truly exciting and informative event, not to mention entertaining and socially stimulating... Thank you also for providing me with a forum to meet people like Nuala O'Loan and others who would not normally cross my path in the course of my work but for whom I have huge respect. It is always fascinating to see the apparent ease with which interaction with people that you might be shy of approaching at home is facilitated at a distance of 3,000 miles."

– Catherine Marshall, Featured Guest

"It was exemplary. Simply put, it was among the finest examples of one type of humanities public programming ever. I'm still commenting on its accomplishments to my colleagues and friends... I don't recall being anywhere where so many disparate interest groups gathered in one place, where the groups were so satisfied with the programming, and where the venues for gathering stimulated cross-group discussions and interactions so amiably and fruitfully... I gathered from some Irish attendees that one very positive outcome of the Conference was to facilitate opportunities to discuss sensitive issues in ways that help to promote peace, understanding, and reconciliation. If what I heard is so, then the event is more than a very successful humanities event – it will be notable for its pioneering impact on promoting political concord and successful self-rule in Northern Ireland."

– Anita Puckett, Package Registrant

# *Re-Imagining Ireland* Post-Conference SURVEY

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**SAMPLE: 107 Respondents**

Question

	YES	NO	N/A
Was the three-part thematic approach to the subject of changing Irish identity useful, and did it work?	<b>85, or 79%</b>	<b>1, or .9%</b>	<b>21</b>
Did the reflective structure of the program—mixing the arts and humanities—add to your overall experience?	<b>92, or 86%</b>	<b>2, or 1%</b>	<b>13</b>
Did discussion extend beyond the formal discussion sessions?	<b>73, or 68%</b>	<b>14, or 13%</b>	<b>20</b>
Was the conference and festival well organized and were staff helpful?	<b>107, or 100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Were meals, lodging, and facilities of good quality?	<b>103, or 96%</b>	<b>1, or .9%</b>	<b>3</b>
Overall, are you satisfied that the conference was worth your participation?	<b>104, or 97%</b>	<b>2, or 1.9%</b>	<b>1</b>

**On a scale of 1-10 (10=Excellent, 1=Poor), how would you rate the program?**

**9-10**

82, or 76.6%

**8-10**

96, or 89.7%

**6-7**

6, or 5.6%

**1-5**

2, or 1.9%