

The legacy

The Remarkable Story behind the CD

Colum Sands (BBC Northern Ireland)

This album reaches across the years and musical styles to bring together the talents of three outstanding musicians in a truly remarkable story.

Although very much an album of the 21st century, the story begins in Kells, Co. Meath in the 1950s. Dick Farrelly, a songwriter who was as quiet and unassuming as he was talented, was working as a policeman in Dublin when suddenly fame was thrust upon him. The famous film director John Ford heard his song "Isle of Innisfree" and chose it as the theme music for his legendary film "The Quiet Man".

Suddenly, at the turn of a reel of film, a song that had been written on a short bus journey was travelling around the world at the speed of light. "The Isle of Innisfree" became a world wide hit for Bing Crosby in 1952, it continues to enrich the repertoires of innumerable artistes and, above all, it endures in the hearts of many to this day as one of the great songs of Ireland.

Had Dick Farrelly never written another verse in his life, his reputation would have been ensured. Fortunately, he continued to write fine songs - more hits followed for artistes like Anne Shelton ("If You Ever Fall in Love Again") and Joe Lynch ("Cottage by the Lee") and the story could very well have a happy ending there.

But great songs sing and live across the generations and it was Dick's son Gerard who unveiled the next chapter when he discovered an old suitcase at home that had belonged to his father. Himself a gifted musician, Gerard's eye was quick to catch sight of the treasure trove that lay within that ancient case - a bundle of old hand written manuscripts of his father's, almost 200 songs and poems, most of them resting quietly and unrecorded in that suitcase - the legacy of a quiet man!

Already at this stage in the 1990s a vital third strand had entered the story that is woven together in this album. Through his work as a professional musician, Gerard had met the superb Dublin singer Sinéad Stone and, within a short time of discovering those songs, they both set out on a labour of love to arrange them, select their favourites and record them.

Eleven of them appear on this album and include two beautiful songs written in Irish, along with an interpretation of the traditional song "Black is the Colour". Dick Farrelly would surely have nodded in approval at the way this recording was made. Sinéad and Gerard brought the studio to the songs rather than the other way round and the recording was made in their home using a real piano and the expertise of sound engineer Billy Robinson who has worked with top acts like Mary Black and Altan.

The result is nothing less than magical. Gerard's musical backing is creative, sensitive and understated, allowing Sinéad Stone the space to wrap the full tonal range and colour of her truly exquisite voice around each song. From heartfelt ballads such as "Annaghdown" and the "Isle of Innisfree", through to the more up beat and catchy "People Like You and Me" and the sublime "We Dreamed our Dreams" - written by Dick Farrelly just a few years before he died - this collection captures an unforgettable performance which salutes quite superbly the legacy of a quiet man.

Guest musicians include:

Gerard's brother, guitarist Richard Farrelly, who has worked with (Delores Keane & Mary Coughlan), Colum Sands of (The Sands Family) and Brendan Monaghan of the (Phil Coulter Orchestra) on uilleann pipes and whistle.