

Arts

with **Rose Rushe**
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PORTRAITS

The true confessions of a portrait artist

I THOUGHT about heading up this piece as 'Portrait of a Lady' as Barbara Hartigan's book of signed celebrity faces is as much biography and a diary of our times.

But no, let's run with the 'true confessions' line as, by gum, Barbara sure is an effective stalker as well as artist. There are stories to tell.

'Putting Names on Faces – Confessions of a Portrait Painting Stalker' launched a week ago and crowds turned out for the Castleconnell woman and her book of good things. Hardly a solo project – her children brought it together and journalist Dermot Walsh ghosted text – it all began 35 years ago.

'Putting Names on Faces' is a lifetime in print that depicts world favourites Barbara met along the way or prowled after until they signed her painted portrait of them in approval. Or not; there were rejection slips.

She admits cheerfully to lots of standing in foyers and buying tickets to a show the famed subject as giving, as well as letters to America and so on. Jack Charlton, Suzanne Murphy, Mother Theresa, Bill Clinton, Joanna Lumley, Roger Whittaker rate within the 190 pages.

Hartigan either painted them from a photograph she found or got them to send

her on a favourite of theirs to inspire the artistry.

"It has been a real rollercoaster, how to get those signatures. Sometimes if there was a particular photographer I knew if someone [famous] was coming to Adare to play golf or sing at the Point Depot, I'd get a ticket and stand around the foyer or approach back stage."

She tells a good one about mime artist Marcel Marceau who was performing in Bord Gais Theatre. Approaching his people to ask would he look at her collection of portraits and sign his if he liked it, she was told "Mr Marceau sees nobody".

Not done, Barbara burst into tears ... and got her wish. "He gave it back to me with pictures drawn all over it. It was lovely".

Putting the book together was halted by the original printer's recession and sadly, the recurrence of Dermot Walsh's cancer ... which ultimately went into remission.

For her 70th birthday in April, children Shane, Tara and Erin Hartigan put their heads together weeks in advance to share their impressive skillset and produce the goods to top standards.

What a gift, and what testimony to creativity and perseverance all around. Available on Amazon.



Limerick born **Suzanne Murphy**, international opera soprano and teacher of music

Meet the Theatre Makers

■ Belltable:Connect Theatre Makers is a six month programme that fosters emerging playwrights in a mentor-supported environment. It

facilitates artists to stretch their creative comfort zone and "to explore in a safe and stimulating environment". Theatre Makers encourages collaborations with others within the framework of a programme of talks, workshops, masterclasses and demonstration-performances.

These will take place over two days once a month from January into June, at the Belltable, of course. It will enable engagement with a variety of styles, approaches and viewpoints in contemporary theatre from Ireland, Europe and beyond.

The Theatre Makers for this year are Ann Blake, Caoimhe Dunn, Eadaoin O'Donoghue, Fionnuala Gygax, Henry Martin, Joan Somers Donnelly, Joanne Ryan, John Galvin, Liam McCarthy, Maeve Stone, Mags O'Donoghue and Rob Moloney.

They will be led by two main mentors, playwright Deirdre Kinahan and directing legend Lynne Parker. Visiting mentors include Tim Crouch (UK), Théâtre de la Pire Espèce (Canada), Terry O'Donovan (Dante or Die, UK), Rebecca Perry (Canada), with others.

The Theatre Makers can look forward to their new works being performed in June and July next.



Playwright and actress **Joanne Ryan**

HISTORY

Storytime of turbulent decade 1912-1922

Who will