

raged by the Arts Council the impulse for this dramatic decentralisation has come from the grassroots. Limerick in particular has given a lead with the success of its Exhibition of Visual Art (EVA), which has rapidly established itself as Ireland's major annual showcase for new art. With the breakthrough of EVA and the enlightened approach of both Limerick City Gallery under Paul O'Reilly and the Belltable Arts Centre, founded in 1981 by Brid Dukes and now run by Emer McNamara, in bringing contemporary art to Limerick and providing an outlet for artists emerging from Limerick School of Art, the city now has now developed a market for contemporary art which three years ago led to the launch of Riverrun Gallery (which proved so successful that it opened a Dublin gallery earlier this year). Limerick Civic Trust, established in 1983, has set an example to the rest of Ireland by working with Limerick Corporation to recycle many of the city's

Manager Jack Higgins and Senior Executive Architect Jim Barrett have proved particularly sensitive to this artistic dimension and have encouraged the policy of allocating one per cent of all new building developments to public art. Attendances at Limerick public library have jumped over 30 per cent following its move to a converted old mill known as The Granary. Limerick's new professional theatre company has been given a base in the restored St Munchin's Church. 10 plus All Sorts gal-

event and help integrate all the city arts activities. She is now busy drawing up a five-year cultural agreement and putting together an arts programme for Limerick's celebration of the tercentenary of the Treaty in 1991. With rock bands proliferating through the city, the old Theatre Royal has been reopened by Seamus Flynn for live gigs and a the 24-track Xerich recording studio is increasingly in demand for demmo tapes. So much so that Deegan is organising a one-day rock seminar early

Batman, Belltable Sunday night film club and the new Limerick University's film club ensure that more serious movies like *Bagdad Cafe* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* find an audience too. The strong involvement of city educational institutions in the upsurge in the arts is highlighted by the fact that Limerick University has its own arts officer (John Hargaden), that the new multi-denominational school was launched with a massive mural, that at a time when dance is in the doldrums in Ireland Thomond College

very delicately balanced. "The Arts Council will have to take account of the fact that the more that happens, the more it will have to invest. Things are happening in the regions that weren't even conceived before. But the Arts Council is just putting down droppings. They put funds into one place, then they go on to the next. They don't seem to realise that what they have left behind is the need to do more, the need to expand." She feels very strongly that the Council's investment in regionalisation

£36,000 budget. "But what we really needed was £150,000." She's managed to get an additional £36,000 sponsorship this year from Shannon Development. "But we've no idea whether we'll get that again next year. You can't plan ahead on that basis."

She's also worried by what seems to be a policy of encouraging greater specialisation in the arts. "The whole idea of Belltable is not to be just a theatre or just a gallery but to have all the arts together. Anything else can lead to elitism."

## Hitting A True Note

JUST as American and English plays can't be brought into Dublin without the say-so of West End theatre impresarios who claim that Irish rights are included in their British rights, British agents have long assumed a similar monopoly over top concerts coming to play in Ireland.

But Limerick Music Association's John Ruddock won't have any of it. "Ireland is not part of the UK," says the former Villiers School headmaster. "Why should they tell me I can't bring in x, y or z musician without their permission. They've no control over Ireland."

Since the 1970s he's made a practice whenever he can to bring performers direct from the continent without paying British agents. "I've fought this single-handed," he says, "usually getting my way." His defiance has enabled not just Limerick but Irish audiences generally to enjoy top world musicians they wouldn't otherwise have been able to hear. "Often it mightn't be worth someone's time coming for one concert, so we've organised concert other concerts in Dublin as well."

Since Limerick Music Association was launched in 1967,

it's presented over 450 concerts. "Chamber music was at a dead end in Limerick. You had to drive to Dublin if you wanted to hear a concert. So when Limerick Gramophone Society turned down a chance to book the Berlin Philharmonic Quartet; I put up the money myself rather than have Limerick miss out on a chance to hear them. We've never looked back."

Ruddock was the first to bring the then little-known James Galway to Dublin for a concert in 1972. When he first put pianist Barry Douglas on at the National Concert Hall "we couldn't give the tickets away." Other notable first include Kyung Who Chung, Hakan Hagegard, Torleif Theede and Andras Schiff. His current season includes the Panocha String Quartet with clarinetist Michael Collins, who have just packed 400 into an afternoon recital at Wexford Opera Festival, the Bulgarian pianist Mincho Minchev who plays at the RDS tomorrow following last night's concert in Limerick, the 19-strong Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra from Budapest which gave concerts at Limerick's St Mary's Cathedral and the Royal Hospital Kilmainham last week, and the young Polish pianist Krzysztof Jablonski, runner-up to Philippe Cassard in the GPA, who plays in Limerick tomorrow. Still to come are the American Alexander String Quartet, the Salzburg Piano Trio and the East German Vogler String Quartet.

"Although we've put on concerts by greats like Isaac Stern and Vladimir Ashkenazy, I don't like the adulation of celebrities," says Ruddock. "Our idea really is to get people interested in chamber music. The sad thing is that too many people are only interested in celebrity performance. They don't realise what wonderful concerts they miss by not coming to lesser-known artists."



● Krzysztof Jablonski: playing on 13 November

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