Jack’s theatrical and army archives enrich Limerick

by Marie Hobbins

NOBODY would ever describe the man three times elected Mayor of Limerick, a “bloody” to this city, but the former Fianna Fail Councillor, Jack Bourke, who comes from the widely known Dublin Bourke family, whose theatre costume business was next to the Olympia Theatre on Dame Street, has fondly and loyally adopted Limerick as his home for over half a century now.

Earlier this week, Mr Bourke, who brought showbusiness, serious theatre, glitz, glamour, uproarious comedy and glorious music to Limerick through the City Theatre on Sexton Street, which he ran for a couple of decades, made a valuable and significant donation to the city’s School of Music on Mungret Street.

“I handed over to the school principal, David O’Connell, seven bound volumes of the Music Treasury which contains sheet music of leading musicals, piano solos, operas and musical plays of the 1920s and early 30s which are now out of print,” Mr Bourke told the Limerick Post.

“The volumes come from my father’s library and I recently realised that if left too long, the quality of the paper and print etc would deteriorate. I’m very happy to give them to Limerick, being the great musical city that it is, especially in the realms of opera. I’m certain that there must be other people in Limerick who have old manuscripts, sheet music and memorabilia, and I’d urge them to consider donating these to the School of Music or the city museum, where they can be looked after and will be of value to posterity”.

The son of Lorcan Bourke, who was chairman of the Gaiety and Olympia Theatres, and the grandson of PJ Bourke, proprietor of the now demolished Queen’s Theatre, Dublin, Jack Bourke has also donated over 30 historic army uniforms to Sarsfield Barracks.

“These uniforms come from various world wars, and including one Young Ireland uniform, came from my father’s costume business in Dublin. The only other Young Ireland uniform in existence is in the National Museum in Dublin. I first loaned them to the War Museum in Collins Barracks and have now handed them over to our own Sarsfield Barracks, which is currently constructing a military history museum,” he said.

“I believe that the war uniforms were sold by soldiers who had survived the wars and short of money, they would have sold their uniforms to my father’s business. I’m delighted to hand them over to Sarsfield Barracks.”

Former mayor, councillor, theatre impresario and adopted son of Limerick, Jack Bourke’s civic spirit is truly commendable.

Jack Bourke presented “The Music Treasury” in seven volumes to David O’Connell, head of Limerick School of Music. This collection came from Lorcan Bourke’s private library also included in our photo is Niall Bourke.