

Q: Manus, exactly what are you doing with George?

A: Well the basic idea is to get the songs recorded more or less correctly so that singing of that type and standard should be recorded and easily available to anybody who wants to listen to it. It's sort of an opinion that a couple of us, Daithi Connaughton, myself and my brother have come to the conclusion that nowadays there is so much in the way of commercialisation even on the best of Irish music, a lot of less publicised music just isn't being heard and I think it's a good idea that more or less non profit organisations should publicise good singers who are not professionals.

Q: Well this is your own Company you're now starting?

A: Yes. Daithi and myself and my brother Sean have started this Company, it's called Gilbert Dolphin Records, it sort of goes on Gilbert Dolphin books.

Q: So in two ways you're following the Da here aren't you, you're coming to teach music in the College next year and you're recording music?

A: I don't like to look at it as exactly following the Da.

A2:

No it shouldn't be because I have been hanging around this poor fellows nick like an alabtross and it's about time that alabtross was shot.

A:

As far as the music is concerned it's just a matter of getting the best of good music recorded and available. I think a lot of the good music has been recorded before which hasn't been available. I find that a lot of the big Companies, it has collected it has still got it collected and is probably going to stay collected.

Q:

Sean, it's certainly a change recording nowadays from the days you went round with Jimmy Connolly in the bread van, isn't it?

A:

It certainly is.

Q:

What years were those?

A:

About 1952.

Q:

And where did you go?

A:

I went all over the six counties and into Donegal and I never got the length of Monaghan but we went all over and we recorded songs in every county and Gaelic ones in Donegal of course because that was my first love.

This was for BBC?

For the BBC yes. They were collecting folk songs all over England, Scotland and Ireland. Seamus Ennis was working in the South.

Q: Of course on your travels you discovered an interesting young mechanic in Keady, didn't you?

A: An interesting young mechanic? Tommy Makem. I'll tell you about the first song that ever was recorded of Tommy Makem. His mother was there and we were recording the mother and the mother said 'you know Tommy is a good singer too' and I said 'I'm sure he is because God forgive us says he you wanted the mothers recording but anyway we recorded Tommy and Tommy sang a song called The Cobbler. Now that wasn't the kind of thing I was looking for at all - The Cobbler, so when we left the house I said to Peter Kennedy who was with me I said 'Peter, scrub that thing of Toms. Well do you know what happened years afterwards, Tom went around the world singing The Cobbler and everybody thought it was the best Irish song.

Q: What was the story about the raw bar you told me?

Oh the raw bar. That was an expression used by Joe Branning. Joe Branning was a cattle dealer, I'm sorry a drover at that particular time and I was told he could sing and I went up into the Mournes from Rostrevor up into the Mournes and discovered him anyway and I said after a few words of introduction I said 'joe, I believe you're a bit of a singer'. 'Oh, aye I sing, do you want me to sing with piano accompaniment'. I nearly died. 'No Joe no, just sing'. 'Ah you mean you just want me to give you the raw bar'. 'I said yes indeed' and that's what I got everywhere I went afterwards - the raw bar.

Q: You spent most of your musical life looking for the raw bar?

A: I did since I started that it was the raw bar all the time. I had been reared with piano accompaniments, orchestra accompaniments, all that you know and these concerts where people came out to sing..... you know that sort of thing but I think really although we didn't intend to do it we effectively killed that sort of thing.

Q: But suddenly now Sean what was unpopular and hidden in your days which you had to dig out is now terribly popular when you think of things like Slogadh and the Fleadh Ceoils, what caused the tradition of folk music boom?

Well I think the whole thing started in America recording the songs of the people and that sort of thing. Then in America people got in on the folk idea that Johnny was talking about going producing this sort of thing on the stage and all that and then it had come across to us on Radio and suddenly the Clancy Brothers appeared in the country and really that was the beginning of the interest of the general public in folk song but people gradually grew out of that too and people with discrimination made good distinctions between the like of the singing of Geordie and the singing of the these folk groups. Two different worlds altogether, we just shouldn't worry now about it.

Q: But in Armagh you have The Pipers Club run by the Vallerys don't you?

A: Yes.

Q: And you have a lot of people playing uilean pipes and harps and so on, so in a sense what you set out to do thirty four years ago you succeeded in?

A: I should think so. At least we give a feeling of self respect to people who were more or less ashamed of their own great station. They wouldn't sing a traditional song because nobody wanted to listen to them and now people do.

Q: What advice have you for Manus setting out in this career now?

No advice ~~fr~~ Manus whatever. He can go out as his Da went out - green, no advice, let him find out.

I'm trying to get my own back on him. I think I'm rubbing shoulders more easily with experts than you probably were in your day than mine.

Q: You were reared by next birth weren't you?

A: But I've only begun to realise that now. It's only television ment that come and tell me that.

Q: And a last word about this man George Hannah?

A: A last word? You tell us all about George.

A2: Well just that George is probably among the two or three big singers in the country, hé'd have to be recorded and the more recordings of singers of that calibre we get - maybe it will mean people from a town like Armagh where there is no tradition at all of singing anyway might eventually learn to use if they have any voice at all to use it right to sing traditional music. Perhaps it's a wee bit unfair to think a traditional singer must be brought up in the tradition in order to sing it but with the proppagation of the actual right sound maybe people with talent and no tradition would at least learn to sound like a traditional singer if not be an actual one.

Q: Of course you have heard George many times Sean, how would you sum him up as a singer?

I think George is wonderful. I was really amazed to hear such decorative singing here in the heart of Ulster where the Gaelic has been dead for years.

Q: What do you mean by decorative?

A: Well you notice all the decorations he puts on to every note nearly - that's what you call decorative singing. It's characteristic of the sean nós for instance and George is continuing the tradition in English, in the English language naturally that is characteristic of the sean nós. The only other man I know who sings in such a decorative way is Paddy Tunney and Paddy Tunney of course another lad that I came across in my travels.

Q: Sorry for interrupting your recording Manus, we'll let you get on with it.

SINGS

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