



*Thomas D'Arcy McGee  
Foundation*



*The Trial of Pádraig Pearse  
in Winnipeg*



*Information Pack*



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# Press Release



The Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School, in association with Newpoint Players, Ireland, and The Tara Players, Winnipeg, is staging a rehearsed reading of Anthony Russell's new play *The Trial of Pádraig Pearse*. It examines the case for and against Pearse proceeding with the Easter rising.

In this 'Court Of History' Pearse is defended by John Mitchell (1815 - 1875), a physical force republican and former Young Ireland comrade of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. The prosecution is presented by D'Arcy McGee, the Irish rebel, Canadian patriot and Founding Father of Canadian Confederation, who will suggest the 1916 Rising was undemocratic and unnecessary. The tension between the acerbic prosecutor and the loquacious defender makes for riveting drama, interspersed by comic and ironic relief.

Pádraig Pearse was found innocent of charges of treason against the Irish people at a special sitting of the Carlingford Assizes in Carlingford at the Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School in Carlingford, Co Louth in August. The majority innocent verdict of 33 to 28 (the narrow margin raising eyebrows in some quarters) found defense lawyer John Mitchell's persuasive arguments to outweigh those of prosecutor Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

D'Arcy McGee is adamant that the jury was rigged and has lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court of History for a retrial. The good people of Winnipeg have offered to stage the Trial there from 1-5 November. Other communities in Montréal, Ottawa, Newry, Armagh, Omeath, Belfast and Dublin have also offered to enlist a balanced jury for a retrial.

A superbly engaging dimension to the play sees the audience debate the issues in the play as jurors in the jury room. This facilitates a participative role for the audience enabling them to deliberate on the issues as presented by prosecution and defense, as well as voting on the final outcome.

The musical dimension to the theme, based around the motif of *Óro Se do Bheatha Bhaile* (verses of which Pearse wrote, and which he reputedly whistled on his way to the stonebreakers' yard) will be provided by Gerry O'Connor, fiddle player with the Irish Rovers, and Donal O'Hanlon, guitar and songs.



# Cast



## **Donal O'Hanlon; John Mitchel**

Donal studied Drama at 3rd Level and, in the forty odd years since, has taught the subject, acted in over a hundred roles, directed plays, managed theatre companies and made sets. For almost twenty years he has been Chairman of Newpoint Players, producing plays, applying for funding and treading the boards. His recent roles and productions have included: Director 'Once A Catholic'; Chief Bromden 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest'; Bull McCabe 'The Field'; The Player 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead'; Director 'Juno And The Paycock'; Director 'The Hostage'; The Chief Clark 'Metamorphosis'; Film Lead; Actor 'Absolution' (1985); 'The Ghost Of Sugar Island' (2013); 'The Lift' (2016). He is involved with historical groups in a number of contexts: singer in an illustrated lecture on John Mitchel & Jenny Verner; Actor and Director in dramatic representations of The Trial of Charles Trevelyan; Actor and Director in John Mitchel and D'Arcy McGee Debate; He is an accomplished guitarist and for over forty years has played and sung on some seven albums of traditional music.



## **Patrick McGennity; Thomas D'Arcy McGee**

Having set off on a choral tour of India last summer, Paddy imagined this year would hold none of the same excitement, how wrong he was. A late addition to our cast, Paddy is delighted to jump into the bones of Mr Thomas Darcy McGee. A keen young actor, he is determined to put his most persuasive grip on Mr McGee's argument to sway the jury's vote. Paddy is well known throughout Ireland for his performances in musicals but is no stranger to grittier roles: he was an excellent Gerry Devine in "Juno and the Paycock" finding the character's opposing steel and spinelessness; he contrasted that with the spiteful Rio Rita in "The Hostage" last year.



## **Diane Russell; Mrs Pearse**

Following a successful career as a teacher, and in education leadership, where she placed music and drama at the heart of the curriculum, Diane recently returned to the boards as Lady Trevelyan in the 'Trial of Charles Trevelyan' at the National Famine Museum of Ireland. A Director of the Edmund Ignatious Rice Trust, with responsibility for former Christian Brothers' schools in the north of Ireland, she is involved with 'Beat n Drum' a cross community arts programme based on the Shankill Road, Belfast. Aware of the power of the Irish mother in shaping the destiny of her son as priest and/or patriot she has relished the role of Pádraig Pearse's mother.



# Cast



## **Anthony Russell; Author**

A retired academic (Anglia Ruskin University) Anthony worked with Tesco, Ultralab, the National Colleges of School Leadership in England and Slovenia, Anadolu University, Turkey, and World Education. An historical geographer he was academic consultant to Dundalk Institute of Technology and the University of Ulster's Borderlands degree and World Education's Global Border Studies, offering higher education programmes in refugee camps on the Thai Myanmar border. Working with the Canadian Museum of History and Bytown Museum he is the creator and director of the permanent exhibition, 'D'Arcy McGee Irish Rebel Canadian Patriot' and is the author of Merrion Press's recently published 'Between Two Flags: John Mitchel and Jenny Verner.' Having produced multi-media exhibitions for Newry and Mourne District Council on the Great Famine and the 1798 Rebellion he was Co-Director of the 2015 International Famine Conference and was the prime mover in bringing the National Famine Commemoration over the Irish border for the first time.



## **Gerry O'Connor; Musical Director, Fiddle**

Gerry comes from Dundalk, in County Louth and is the product of four generations of fiddle players. His recordings have focused strongly on local music and his work as a soloist and as a band member of Lá Lugh and Skylark is well known across the world. Over the past two decades he has recorded 12 albums and performed with all the leading performers of the Irish music world including members of the Chieftains, Boys of the Lough, Planxty, De Dannan and Bothy Band. His solo album *Journeyman* has been hailed as one of the significant albums of Irish fiddle music. Gerry is also a violin-maker, music teacher and music producer and currently tours as fiddle player with the Canadian Irish legends The Irish Rovers



## **Tommy Fegan; Project Co-ordinator, PRO, Uilleann Pipes**

Tommy plays uilleann pipes and whistles, has performed and lectured on the subject in Ireland, Britain, USA, Canada and Estonia. He organised the first ever tour of Irish traditional musicians to the Soviet Republic of Estonia in 1988, and contracted UTV to make the award-winning of *Tail of Two Cities* on the historic trip. Tommy is, co-author of *Free Spirits-Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music* (2011), and has produced *Coppers and Brass*; a 13 part series of TV programmes on various aspects of Irish traditional music. He also produced a 65 minute documentary on Irish travellers and Irish traditional music as part of his MA thesis (2105). He is the Director of the Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School, Carlingford .





# Photo Library



# Production Team & Info



## **Production team**

**Playwright;** Anthony Russell

**Producer and Director;** Donal O'Hanlon

**Musical Director;** Gerry O'Connor

**Project Manager;** Tommy Fegan

<https://www.facebook.com/trialofpadraigpearse/?fref=ts>

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## **Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation**

The Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation aims to highlight the story of McGee's life, and the relevance of his ideas to our own world. The annual summer school in his name has provided scope for discussion and debate on sensitive issues in Ireland, such as the Great Famine, Revolutionary Republicanism, Orangeism and Fenianism, and is but one vehicle fostering greater mutual understanding and cooperation between Ireland, Canada and Europe.

Canada's reputation as an inclusive, accommodating democracy owes much to Thomas D'Arcy McGee. The Carlingford-born man was one of the greatest orators, journalists and politicians of his generation: colourful, controversial, vivacious and brilliant. He stood for an open, pluralistic society, characterized by generosity of spirit, in which different ethnic groups would strive to bring out the best in themselves and to focus on the positive features of the others.

He was, in many respects, a model for our own time. As Europe struggles with the impact of immigration, D'Arcy McGee's core principle of "unity in diversity" is as relevant today as it was in the mid-19th century.

## **Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer Schools**

The Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation has organised summer schools each year since 2012 in McGee's birthplace of Carlingford, Co Louth. The event brings together academics, historians, politicians, journalists and community activists from Ireland, north and south, Canada, the UK and the United States. The programme is a mix of presentations on different themes as well as employing music, the arts and drama to further engage the audience on relevant issues.

<https://thomasdarcymcgee.com/summer-school-2017/>

## **Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School, 2017, 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August, Carlingford, Co Louth**

### *Canadian Confederation & Irish Fenianism*

The year 2017 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation in Canada and of a Fenian Rising in Ireland. Thomas D'Arcy McGee was deeply involved in both events — as a Father of Confederation, and as an implacable opponent of Fenianism. Canadian Confederation, he believed, could provide a model for Ireland that would undercut Fenian revolutionaries and pave the way for Irish home rule. The 2017 D'Arcy McGee Summer School explores the hidden connections between constitutional change in Canada and revolutionary movements in Ireland, and their significance for both countries. (D.Wilson, Sept, 2016)





# Friends of Foundation

## Donations

You can become a member of the Patron's Council by donating \$250 or more each year to the D'Arcy McGee Foundation. Patrons in Ireland will be

- Invited to prestigious Canadian Irish events
- Offered free admission to the D'Arcy McGee Summer Schools.
- Receive regular bulletins on Canadian Irish affairs

## Subscribe as follows;

- Patron \$250/€250 pa
- Friend \$100/€100 pa
- Supporter \$25/€25 pa
- I wish to make a one off gift

The Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation is a registered charitable institution in Ireland.

<https://thomasdarcymcgee.com/friends-of-thomas-darcy-mcgee-foundation/>



# Thomas D'Arcy McGee



## Thomas D'Arcy McGee Founding Father of Canadian Confederation

McGee expressed the case for Canadian Confederation in memorable, poetic language that none of his political contemporaries could match. He was an important participant in the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences that created the country. And he was particularly proud of the fact that Canada had the first constitution in the world that guaranteed minority rights. "I shall never cease to remember with pleasure that I was the first proposer of that guarantee in the Quebec Conference," he wrote; "a guarantee by which we have carried the principle of equal and reciprocal toleration a step farther in Canada, than it has yet been carried, in any other free government – American or European."

The Thomas D'Arcy Foundation aims to highlight the story of McGee's life, and the relevance of his ideas to our own world. The annual summer school in his name has provided scope for discussion and debate on sensitive issues in Ireland, such as the Great Famine, Revolutionary Republicanism, Orangeism and Fenianism, and is but one vehicle fostering greater mutual understanding and cooperation among Ireland, Canada and Europe.

Former Canadian ambassador, Loyola Hearn, and Pat O'Callaghan have brought together prominent Irish Canadians and local community groups in Ireland, north and south, to celebrate McGee's legacy. The Foundation opened the permanent exhibition to McGee in 2015, will be organising its fifth annual summer school in August 2016, and plans to run a series of cultural tours in Ireland based on McGee's legacy.

A series of public events in Canada and Ireland in 2017 will celebrate this legacy and will finally accord full recognition to the remarkable young politician born on the slopes of the Cooley Mountains in Carlingford Lough in Ireland, and slain by an assassin's bullet on an Ottawa street near the Parliament in Canada.





# Useful Links

## Useful links

<https://www.facebook.com/trialofpadraigpearse/?fref=ts>

<https://thomasdarcymcgee.com/summer-school-2017/>

<https://thomasdarcymcgee.com/friends-of-thomas-darcy-mcgee-foundation/>

<https://thomasdarcymcgee.com/welcome/welcome-2/>

<https://twitter.com/tdmsummerschool>

[www.gerryoconnor.net](http://www.gerryoconnor.net)

[www.facebook.com/taraplayers](http://www.facebook.com/taraplayers)

<http://taraplayers.eventbrite.ca>