

Press Release

Joint Winners of Michael Hartnett Poetry Award announced

Two of Ireland's new generation of Irish language poets have today (Tuesday, 31 March 2015) been announced as joint winners of the annual Michael Hartnett Poetry Award 2015.

Marcus Mac Conghail for his first collection *Ceol Baile* and Caitríona ní Chléirchín for her second collection *An Bhrídeach Sí*, both published by Coiscéim, will be presented with their award on the opening night of *Éigse Michael Hartnett* in Newcastle West, County Limerick, on April 16.

This annual award is jointly funded by Limerick City & County Council Arts Office and The Arts Council to mark Newcastle West native Michael Hartnett's contribution to literature in English and Irish. The €4,000 annual prize is presented to the winning poet on the basis of a first or second book of poetry, published during the previous three years.

Previous winners of the prestigious award include Julie O'Callaghan, Vona Groarke, Kerry Hardie, Sinead Morrissey, Paddy Bushe, Maurice Riordan, Aine Ni Fhoghlu, James Harpur, Peter Surr, Stiofán O'Cadhla, Mark Roper and Jo Slade.

County Monaghan native Caitríona Ní Chléirchín, whose winning collection is dedicated to her late mother, said her award success will inspire her to continue writing poetry in Irish and that she was "deeply honoured".

"I have devoted my life to Irish-language poetry as a poet, lecturer and critic and I have a great love of and affinity with Michael Hartnett's poetry, especially the collection *Necklace of Wrens*, and the poem 'An muince dreolíní'. I was honoured to have one of my poems featured in the collection 'I live in Michael Hartnett' which was launched at *Eigse Michael Hartnett* 2013. Winning this award means an immense amount to me," said Ms. Ní Chléirchín

2015 joint winner Marcus Mac Conghail, who was the instigator and editor of the poetry collection *Línte Leictreacha*, produced for *Electric Picnic* in 2014, described his success as "an unexpected honour."

"I never met Michael Hartnett but growing up I remember the talk about his 'A Farewell to English'. That artistic act left a great impression on me so to be a co-recipient of an award set up in his memory is hard to believe," added the Dublin-born poet, songwriter and singer.

The 2015 joint winners have been described by the judges as "two emerging poets with distinctive voices" whose poetry is "powerful, courageous, sassy and important."

"*An Bhrídeach Sí*, Caitríona's second collection, showcases a poet with a mature confident voice. Her mastery of Irish and sense of being at home in both tradition and modernity is evident throughout the book, in poems set in the seventeenth century, poems framed by Gaelic mythology and in intensely personal lyrics. The poems are full of passion and also quiet reflection on life and love and death."

"Léiríonn *An Bhrídeach Sí*, an dara cnuasach de chuid Chaitríona Ní Chléirchín go bhfuil an file seo tagtha in inmhe. Tá Ní Chléirchín os cionn a buille sa teanga sna dánta soléite dodhearmadta seo a bhfuil an traidisiún agus an nuálaíocht ag obair as lámh a chéile iontu, bíodh sí ag plé le scéal ón seachtú haois déag, miotaseolaíocht na Gaeilge nó a saol féin. Tá paisean agus mothúcháin mhóra anseo anuas ar mhachnamh séimh ar an mbás agus ar an ngrá."

Commenting on Mr. Mac Conghail's work in their citation, the judges stated: "Marcus Mac Conghail's poetry is rooted in contemporary life and influenced by his own experience as a musician. His collection *Ceol Baile*, his first, includes energetic Beat riffs, quiet gently lyrics and good-humoured poetic snapshots. The poems are articulated in an Irish which merges a rich Gaeltacht idiom with a confident metropolitan twist.

"Tá filíocht Mharcuis Mhic Chonghail fréamhaithe sa cheol agus sa saol nua-aimseartha. Tá dánta fuinniúla Beat, liricí áille ciúine agus véarsaí dána dea-ghiúmaracha ina chnuasach *Ceol Baile*. Tá dúchas na Gaeltachta agus scóp na nua-Ghaeilge cathrach ag saibhriú a chéile ina chuid dánta," the judges concluded.

The Mayor of Limerick City and County Council, Cllr Kevin Sheahan will present the joint winners with their award at the official opening of *Eigse Michael Hartnett* on Thursday, April 16. Both poets will perform from their winning work and this will be followed by a keynote address from award-winning author Joseph O'Connor who will speak on "Memories of an evening with Michael Hartnett."

The three-day festival continues until April 18 with internationally-acclaimed musician Martin Hayes in concert with David Power and a line-up which includes poets Peter Fallon and Doireann Ní Ghriofa, *Fishamble's Underneath* by Pat Kinevane and award-winning novelist and short story writer Kevin Barry.

More from www.eigsemichaelhartnett.ie.

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Michael Hartnett Poetry Award 2015 Winner Biographies:

Caitríona Ní Chléirchín is an Irish-language poet and critic originally from Gortmoney, Emyvale in Co. Monaghan. Her début collection *Crithloinnir* won the Oireachtas Prize for New Writers in 2010 and her second collection *An Bhrídeach Sí* published in 2014 has won the Michael Hartnett Prize 2015. She has published poetry in *Comhar*, *Irish Pages*, *Cyphers*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Feasta*, *Blaiseadh Pinn*, *An t-Ultach* and *An Guth*. She also writes reviews, academic and journalistic articles in *The Irish Times*, *Comhar*, and *Taighde agus Teagasc* and others. She is also an Irish-language and literature lecturer at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra and Queens University Belfast. Her doctorate was a psychoanalytical body-centred reading of the Irish-language contemporary poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Bidy Jenkinson. She was a lecturer in Irish-language poetry and language in UCD between 2005-2013 and also holds a masters in French Literature for the Université de Lyon.

Marcus Mac Conghail was the instigator and editor of the poetry collection *Línte Leictreacha* produced for last year's Electric Picnic. Released late last year, he had a poem and a song on the album *Amhrán do Phádraig* which was produced to support Pádraig Schaler. In addition, he has a couple of new tracks on the forthcoming CD *IMLÉ* which will be launched at *Féile na Bealtaine* in Dingle this year where he will also perform. Most

recently Marcus performed as part of the inaugural night of REIC, a bilingual spoken word/song/rap event.