

Salon Diary / By Karen Daly

Memorable Salon night at Thalia

The early November IAW&A Salon, a mix of monologues, fiction, poetry and song, featured three first-time presenters in the private Studio at Bar Thalia. Adding to the enjoyment, the Belfast artist Brian James Spencer delighted several participants with his fast portraits.

First on the program, Kathleen Rockwell Lawrence read from her novel in progress about a family dealing with an aging matriarch. And it's sharply funny, as you can tell from its working title "O The Places Mom Went!" Visiting her mother in the hospital, the narrator Clare challenges the nonagenarian's delusion that she's just had a baby: "Mom! Mama! You had your last baby 50 years ago." Leaving the hospital, Clare receives an impertinent offer from a sexy maintenance worker 20 years her junior. After a long sad day with Mom, Needy Clare considers it. But does Wise Clare prevail? Kathleen says: "Stay tuned!" Kathleenrockwelllawrence.net

Tennessee Williams admits to spying on his parents and sister, "the family he was damned and blessed with" in this

fine portrayal of the playwright's last days by actor/writer D.J. Sharp. D.J.



Brian John Spencer.

was just nominated for Best Supporting Actor (World Music & Independent Film Festival) for his role in "The Watchtower," which he calls "an Irish story of love and survival in Manhattan's notorious Hell's Kitchen."

Thom Molyneux performed a selection from a solo show he's developing, "Me and the Monologue." Tonight he gave us "Bernie and the Britches" by the North Carolina author and Pulitzer Prize-winning play-

wright Paul Green. It's a low-key, charming Southern tale of love, betrayal and money, in which the good guy wins, sort of.

A distinguished visitor from California, poet Linda Norton read a lyric essay "The Soul Must Stay Where It Is" as well as a section from her "Brooklyn Journals." From her book *The Public Gardens: Poems and History*, Linda chose "Patterns to Arans."

Green from the mosses, brown from the seaweed, grey and cream color from the stones and pebbles

Native New Yorker Karen Bermann has been writing and drawing all of her life and she teaches architecture. In her Salon debut, she painted a vivid portrait, in words and illustrations of her late father, a post-war Jewish émigré from Vienna.



Kathleen Lawrence.



Jim Cullinane.

John Munnely brought three new songs to the Salon. He composed "Automatic Fire" to help process, and respond artistically to the shooting of concertgoers in Las Vegas. "It Was A Long Time Ago" reminisces about past relationships which still have meaning. And by popular demand, John reprised his hopeful song for these fraught times, "It's Going to Be All-right."

In a short, but stunning piece, Rosina Fernhoff performed a monologue from Brian Friel's play "Faith Healer." As Grace, the wife of the charismatic, egomaniacal faith healer, she reveals the effects of his behavior on her life.

"Accidental Murder," Tom Mahon's dramatic story, tells of gun horror. A drunken man finally extracts revenge on his better educated, harder working and far smarter brother-in-

law. Watching the Super Bowl together, he takes out a shotgun, and in the ensuing struggle, kills the better man, who leaves a 7-year-old son.

A welcome new member, playwright and poet Jim Cullinane read his very short story "Wilma" and an inspirational essay "Why I Write." After working and raising a family, Jim got an

M.A. in Creative Writing from Manhattanville College, and has written two books, including a memoir of growing up in Ireland, *Arses & Elbows*. More at jimcullwriter.com.

Salon producer and tonight's host John Kearns read an excerpt from his multigenerational novel, "Worlds." His character Seamus Logan has a vision of a now abandoned Connemara village as it was transformed and devastated by the Great Hunger. In this moving excerpt, an old widow is evicted from her home.

The grand master, Salon godfather Malachy McCourt, praised the power of storytelling, comparing the voice to a pen or brush that paints a picture. And he noted how the Irish "injected life and poetry and ecstasy into the English language." To make his point, he told a hilarious anecdote about Daniel O'Connell and a fishwife who murdered the language. Malachy ended the night with the song

"Come Back, Paddy Reilly, to Ballyjamesduff."

See you next time, November 21, 7 p.m. at the Cell, for the Salon and book launch for Kathleen Hill's "She Read to Us in the Late Afternoon."

PHOTOS BY GORDON GILBERT JR.



SCANLON IN DC

Galway City native and New York resident Seamus Scanlon pictured recently at the Irish Embassy in Washington reading his award-winning flash-fiction piece *The Long Wet Grass*, which was made into a short film that featured at this year's Irish Screen America festival in New York.



Karen Bermann.