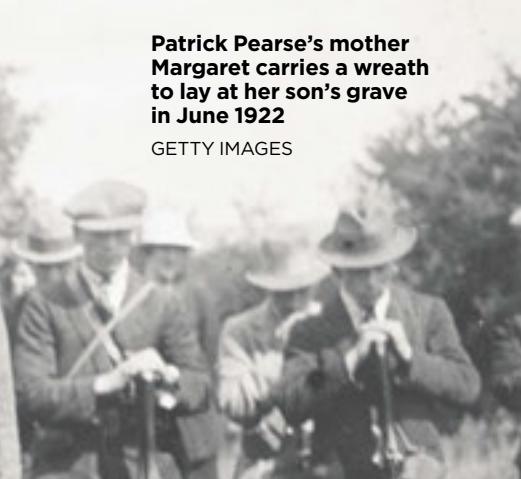


IRELAND IN 1916

Patrick Pearse's mother Margaret carries a wreath to lay at her son's grave in June 1922

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'The Mother'

By Patrick Pearse

*I do not grudge them: Lord, I do not grudge
My two strong sons that I have seen go out
To break their strength and die, they and a few,
In bloody protest for a glorious thing,
They shall be spoken of among their people,
The generations shall remember them,
And call them blessed;
But I will speak their names to my own heart
In the long nights;
The little names that were familiar once
Round my dead hearth.
Lord, thou art hard on mothers:
We suffer in their coming and their going;
And tho' I grudge them not, I weary,
weary
Of the long sorrow — And yet I have my joy:
My sons were faithful, and they fought.*

PEARSE THE POET

DR LUCY COLLINS

The voice in this poem is both personal and universal – it is the voice of Pearse's own mother yet it speaks too for all those torn between grief and exultation. The poem interweaves opposites: strength and brokenness; failure and triumph; sorrow and joy. In simple language it indicates the complex emotions aroused by the Rising and evokes the shared experiences that bind nation and family together.

The lasting significance of the rebellion is claimed in religious terms, reflecting Pearse's vision of blood sacrifice as essential to renewal. Yet the feelings expressed here are also private ones: recollecting the men in childhood, the speaker hints at their purity and idealism.

Like the actions of the revolutionaries themselves, the poem links the new and the ancient. It speaks of the immediate impact of the rebels' actions, yet it also expresses the suffering that is at the heart of the human condition.

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Before recordings, music was still a large part of life

Fergus Cassidy on an era before the arrival of the gramophone, when music, comedy and variety acts were all about performance

IN James Plunkett's novel *Strumpet City*, Rashers Tierney and Hennessy are minding a barrel organ, and a monkey, for the Italian owner who collapsed on the street. Had their luck changed for the better?

"It's very tempting," Hennessy admitted. "We'll be set up for life," Rashers urged.

"Yes — until the police catch up with us."

In the years leading up to 1916, recorded music had not arrived in Ireland. Music was performed. Sung, played, in private, in public. On the streets in towns and cities it was characters like Rashers playing his tin whistle, and the odd barrel-organ grinder sifting for donations. A Dublin witness mentioned the "singing and whistling of music hall favourites and excerpts from operas by messenger boys on their rounds". Makeshift stages were built with beer kegs and wooden planks, and songs from come-all-ye sessions spilled from public houses and shebeens.

Music halls were popular, with programmes of songs, comedy, speciality and variety acts. In the early 1900s Dublin had two big music halls — The Empire Palace (now the Olympia) and the Tivoli Theatre of Varieties. The Theatre Royal opened in 1897 and was noted for opera and musical comedy. In 1906 Charlie Chaplin, aged 17, performed there as part of an act called The Eight Lancashire Lads. The Gaiety hosted a Christmas panto every year since 1874 and also staged opera.

The Dublin Orchestral Society, founded 1898, was a professional co-operative orchestra. By 1913 it had given over 200 performances, including new work such as *Harty's Irish Symphony*. In 1914 the Dublin United Tramway Company engaged bands to play in the Phoenix Park Hollow on summer evenings. From 1910-1913 concerts were also given by the Dublin Amateur Orchestral Society on Sunday evenings on the esplanade in Bray, Co Wicklow.

In Cork City Hall in 1913 a Grand Home Rule concert took place. On 26 December 1915 a production of *The Fairy Queen* took place in the Carnegie Hall, Killorglin, Co Kerry. Aged 19, tenor John McCormack joined the Palestrina Choir founded in Dublin's Pro-cathedral in 1903.

There were many bandstands, such as St Stephen's Green, Dublin, Green Park, Youghal, and the People's Park, Waterford, and no shortage of bands to play in them. In 1902 there were more than 20 Fife and Drum bands in Dublin with a similar number in the rest of the country. In 1912 the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band was founded and the O'Connell Fife and Drum Band were All-Ireland champions. The St James's Band and the Emmet Choir played in the Rotunda rink at the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913.

The Gaelic League set up the Féis Ceoil Association in 1897 and held competitions for song composition, unaccompanied and accompanied solo and choral singing, solo and group dancing and instrumental music. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* praised the Féis Ceoil "...for giving better examples of Irish music than the popular music



A promotional poster for Dublin's Theatre Royal (left) and renowned Irish tenor, John McCormack (above)

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hall ballads which delight in portraying the average Irishman as a maudlin drunkard". At the first Féis Ceoil in May 1897 the competition for performance on the Irish harp received no entries. John McCormack was a gold medal winner as a tenor in the 1903 Féis Ceoil and the writer James Joyce won bronze the following year.

Traditional, or folk music, was rooted in the passing of songs and tunes from one generation to the next. The vocal tradition had become weak after the Famine but

THE 'HITS' OF 1916

"O Sole Mio" by Enrico Caruso

"Somewhere a Voice is Calling" by John McCormack

"Where Did Robinson Crusoe Go With Friday On Saturday Night?" by Al Jolson (inset)



"I Love A Piano" by Billy Murray

"I'm Gonna Make Hay While the Sun Shines in Virginia" by Marion Harris (left)

"Keep the Home Fires Burning ('Till the Boys Comes Home)" by James F. Harrison

"Ireland Must Be Heaven, For My Mother Came From There" by Charles Harrison

the instrumental side continued to grow. The main instruments played were: fiddle, uilleann pipes, tin whistle, flute, melodeon, concertina and accordion. In 1904 the Irish Folk Song Society was founded. From 1900 to 1912 at least nine piper's bands were started and Piobairí na HÉireann began in 1912. The music was preserved, however, by collectors like Francis O'Neill, who published *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* (1903) and *The Dance Music of Ireland* (1907). He has been referred to as "the greatest individual influence on Irish traditional dance music in the 20th century". Abroad, especially in the United States, songs like *Macushla* (1910) sung by John McCormack were hugely popular.

By October 1915 the mood of that time was reflected in a letter to the papers. The writer admonished the Cork School of Music committee for its unsympathetic attitude toward traditional music: "Our rights are: Our native music first and above all other music in the School". In November of the same year the St James's Band played a "stirring selection of National airs" at half-time during the All-Ireland football final between Kerry and Wexford. Four months earlier the band played at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa.

Five months after the Rising, the *Limerick Leader* carried an advertisement for P McCarthy & Sons announcing: "It is now within the power of everyone to have Music in their homes.... You can make this coming Winter the happiest you ever spent by having a Gramaphone. Don't hesitate. Get one".

Rashers would have turned in his grave.