



# BACK WEST MUSIC

## Back West at home: Galway Arts Festival 2018 Munroe's Tavern

'Right so, we'll get stuck into it,' the beautiful Maureen Browne said with lifted brow, eyes and face lit up with joy and anticipation, playing on home turf to a packed house not a mile from where she grew up.

And get stuck in they did. A set of lightning fast jigs. The old adage 'it's not the fall that'd kill ya but the sudden stop,' came to mind when they finished. The second set were from the pen of Tommy Peoples. Their playing gentle, rhythmic, lyrical, the synergy between band members a joy to watch, the sound rich, as full as an orchestra with just a fiddle, accordion, bodhrán and guitar.

Luke Murray took the guest showcase slot, an original Back West concept: keeping the core three stalwarts and inviting other high calibre musicians and singers to perform as a once off, for a concert series or a tour.

Maureen Browne is a very impressive front woman, selflessly aware and grateful to their audience, she introduced Johnny Ringo McDonagh with warmth and graciousness, acknowledging his mentoring role in their earlier lives. Similarly Karl Hession, respectful words of thanks for his influence.

They get stuck in again, the core members flanked by their teachers, their heroes. And when champion dancer Peter Vickers descends on the stage there's a collective whoop from the front rows, his rhythm, the surety of step, the gymnastics, dramatic and breathtaking. Peter Vickers dances in another language.

Fabian Joyce revelled in his role in the lunchtime concert, 'a break from mixing concrete,' he said, endearing himself to all. His version of Gordon Lightfoot's *Morning Rain* beautifully executed, with organic interludes between verses.

And they didn't so much play *Gold Ring* as ran away with it, as tight as can sometimes only be imagined, they ran across all nine parts and brought the house with them. Two bodhráns, piano, guitar, accordion and fiddle, from canter to gallop and back, at breakneck speed and at just the right tempo, perfect in all ways.

*Johnny with the quare thing* and the *Sailor on the Rock* heralded the end, the band with happy faces, smiles wide, the audience genuinely reluctant to let them go, and they didn't.

Brother and sister, Maureen and Brendan Browne took turns thanking all those who contributed, congratulating the Arts Festival, being explicit in their pride at being part of it.

This lunchtime concert was just right, a perfect blend, incredible energy and something else.

Could it be something magical, mythical even?

Back West played their hearts out, back west in Galway city?

Special mention to Eddie on the sound desk.

**Anne Marie Kennedy**  
Freelance music journalist