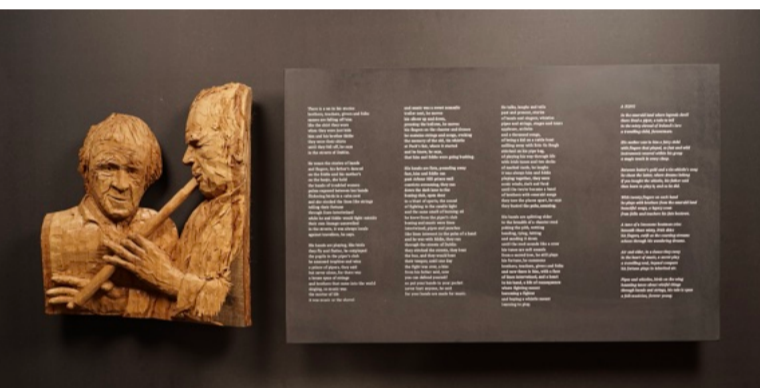


FINBAR FUREY 2023

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There is a we in his stories
brothers, teachers, givers and folks
names are falling off him
like the shirt they wore
when they were just kids
him and his brother Eddie
they wore their shirts
until they fell off, he says
in the streets of Dublin.

He wears the stories of hands
and fingers, his father's danced
on the fiddle and his mother's
on the banjo, she held
the hands of troubled women
palms exposed between her hands
flickering birds in a calm nest
and she stroked the lines like strings
telling their fortune
through lines intertwined
while he and Eddie would fight outside
their own lineage unravelled
in the streets, it was always locals
against travellers, he says.

His hands are playing, like birds
they fly and flutter, he outplayed
the pupils in the piper's club
he amassed trophies and wins
a prince of pipers, they said
but never alone, for there was
a house spun of strings
and brothers that came into the world
singing, so music was
the mortar of life
it was music or the shovel

and music was a sweet nomadic
trailer nest, he moves
his elbow up and down,
pressing the bellows, he moves
his fingers on the chanter and drones
he sustains strings and songs, evoking
the memory of the old, tin whistle
at Puck's fair, where it started
and he knew, he says,
that him and Eddie were going busking.

His hands are fists, pounding away
fast, him and Eddie ran
past Arbour Hill prison wall
convicts screaming, they ran
down the dark lane to the
boxing club, open door
to a blast of sports, the sound
of fighting in the candle light
and the same smell of burning oil
he knew from the piper's club
boxing and music were lines
intertwined, pipes and punches
like lines intersect in the palm of a hand
and he was with Eddie, they ran
through the streets of Dublin
they stitched the streets, they beat
the bus, and they would beat
their temper, until one day
the fight was over, a kiss
from his father said, now
you can defend yourself
so put your hands in your pocket
never hurt anyone, he said
for your hands are made for music.

He talks, laughs and tells
past and present, stories
of bands and singers, whistles
pipes and strings, stages and tours
applause, acclaim
and a thousand songs,
of being a kid on a cattle boat
sailling away with Erin Go Bragh
stitched on his pipe bag,
of playing his way through life
with Irish tunes and two decks
of marked cards, he laughs
it was always him and Eddie
playing together, they were
sonic winds, dark and feral
until the two'er became a band
of brothers with emerald songs
they tore the places apart, he says
they busted the pubs, amazing.

His hands are splitting elder
to the breadth of a chanter reed
poking the pith, wetting
bending, tying, hitting
and sanding it down
until the reed sounds like a crow
his tunes are soft sounds
from a sacred tree, he still plays
his fortune, he summons
brothers, teachers, givers and folks
and now there is him, with a face
of lines intertwined, and a heart
in his hand, a life of consequence
where fighting meant
becoming a fighter
and buying a whistle meant
learning to play.

A SONG

*In the emerald land where legends dwell
there lived a piper, a tale to tell
in the misty shroud of Ireland's lore
a travelling child, forevermore.*

*His mother saw in him a fairy child
with fingers that played, so fast and wild
instruments weaved within his grasp
a magic touch in every clasp.*

*Between butter's gold and a tin whistle's song
he chose the latter, where dreams belong
if you bought the whistle, his father said
then learn to play it, and so he did.*

*With twenty fingers on each hand
he plays with brothers from the emerald land
beautiful songs, a legacy sown
from folks and teachers his fate bestown.*

*A tune of a lonesome boatman cries
beneath those misty, Irish skies
his fingers, swift as the coursing streams
echoes through his wandering dreams.*

*Air and elder, in a dance they sway
in the heart of music, a secret play
a travelling soul, beyond compare
his fortune plays in inherited air.*

*Pipes and whistles, birds on the wing
haunting tunes about wistful things
through hands and strings, his tale is spun
a folk musician, forever young.*