

# Mel



Barbara

I like simple things: bread and butter, pancakes with sugar, Yorkshire pudding, French Toast - in fact any combination of milk, eggs and flour—the staff of life!

My pleasures are also simple. I love colour and craft and growing things. I have always wanted to paint but time and circumstances put this on hold to bring joy to my 'third age'. I would love to be able to sing; I'm thrilled by the music of the violin and if I had my life over again I would love to be a dancer! I know I never could have been an artist, singer, violinist, dancer, but I have had the privilege of being a teacher, an enabler, and have enjoyed fostering the creative talents of generations of the young and not so young.

I have always been a reader. As a child, among my favourite books were: 'The Swish of the Curtain' by Pamela Brown and Noel Streatfield's 'Ballet Shoes'. And, so I grew to love the theatre.

When we were young our annual Christmas treat was always a family outing to the pantomime at the Theatre Royal, Dublin. Hugely enjoyable. But a real moment of revelation came for me when I went to see the ballet 'Les Sylphides.' Here was sheer beauty - movement, music, set, costumes – delights hitherto undreamed of. Wonder-filled; I was ecstatic. An unforgettable spiritual experience!

I have always been a 'wonderer' and a 'thinker', inspired, perhaps, by other childhood favourites: 'The Wonder Book of Why and What', a rich mine of information, and Patricia Lynch's 'Tales of a Turf Cutter's Donkey', stories steeped in mythology and mystery. Having spent much of my childhood in rural Ireland I became very alive to the spirit of the land, the Other-world, the world of the Sí, the Myths and Legends which have shaped the psyche and spirituality of the Irish people. I can still experience the shiver of fear when a gust of wind blowing the dust at the side of the road was said to herald the approach of the Fairy Coach. Woe betide anyone who stood in its path! I can remember running past Danny Maurice's 'boreen' where 'the women in white' had been seen combing their long hair and keening the death of a family member! I also remember eavesdropping on old women in shawls, whispering about pishogues and ensuing evils. Another spiritual awakening!

Years later, when I did research at Manchester University, I had the opportunity to become steeped in Celtic lore, gaining invaluable insights into the spirituality of the Celts. Anywhere I travel I like to learn about people and the distinctive culture and practices which mould their minds and hearts.

In prayer, too, I go for simplicity. My favourite prayers are the 'Holy Name', 'Please', 'Thanks', 'Sorry', 'Help', 'Why?' I love the Gloria and the Canticles especially the Benedictus. How often I have prayed, as I faced the highs and lows of the day, 'Lord, guide us into the way of peace.' 'In Viam Pacis' – the motto of Kincora House, my House, when I was a girl in Maryfield.

I love the Creed. The opening words never fail to fill me with awe and wonder;

**'I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen...'**

This is our FAITH. Mind-blowing! ... A lifetime to ponder and an eternity to enjoy.

Eternal life—a time to dance?