



An scéal na hÉireann: Festival Bloomsday Montréal

Description

Irish culture at its best through James Joyce, right here and now, until June 16

By Luc Archambault

There are a lot of Irish living in Montréal – descendants from the island, immigrants, and people who just think of themselves in a Gaelic sort of way. For all those who feel drawn to this culture, there exists a festival that explores its rich and storied legacy, through the novelist **James Joyce**, from which the **Bloomsday Festival** takes its name (Leopold Bloom, protagonist of ***Ulysses***, Joyce's masterwork).

This year is a six-day event, with venues as varied as the Jewish Public Library, the Westmount and Atwater libraries, Hurley's Irish pub, and Kafein cafe-bar...

The Festival started in 1954, to celebrate the events occurring on June 16, 1904, the date on which the novel takes place. Then, a group of Joyce enthusiasts organized a pilgrimage through Dublin along the path set forth in *Ulysses*. Nowadays, the Festival has spawned in Hungary, France, the US, Italy, Australia, just to name a few places, and also here in Montreal. The local festival started in 2012 and has grown ever since. This year, it is a six-day event, with venues as varied as the Jewish Public Library, the Westmount and Atwater libraries, Hurley's Irish pub, and Kafein cafe-bar where Tuesday night's event, **An Irish Story**, took place.



On

Wednesday, June 14, at the Jewish Public Library, a keynote speech by **Dr. Michael Kenneally**, the principal and chair of the School of Canadian Irish Studies at Concordia University, entitled **Introducing Mr. Joyce's Ulysses** explained the literary revolution brought about by Joyce and introduced all the nuggets of information binding this work together. Dr. Kenneally explored the Dublin of June 16, 1904 through the eyes of the novel's three major characters: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom. On the same night, there was also a **Community Pub Quiz**, held at Hurley's Irish pub.

On **Thursday, June 15**, the event **Growing Up Irish** will be held at the Atwater Library during lunch hour (from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm), during which storytellers will join a pianist and a soprano for an hour of stories and music, most notably the best loved tunes appearing in the works of James Joyce. Later in the evening, a concert, held at Hurley's Irish pub, will feature music by the **Bluegrazzers** (an eclectic mixture of Celtic, folk and bluegrass music).

On **Friday June 16, Bloomsday Readings** will celebrate Montreal's contribution to this special anniversary for James Joyce. You'll hear dramatic readings from *Ulysses* by local media personalities and actors. Joycean experts, **Maggie Benfield** and **Denis Sampson**, will present each reading with their insights and contextual explanations. This event takes place at the Westmount Public Library. It will immediately be followed by the closing event of the festival, **Come Into the Parlour**, that will combine a repeat performance of the event

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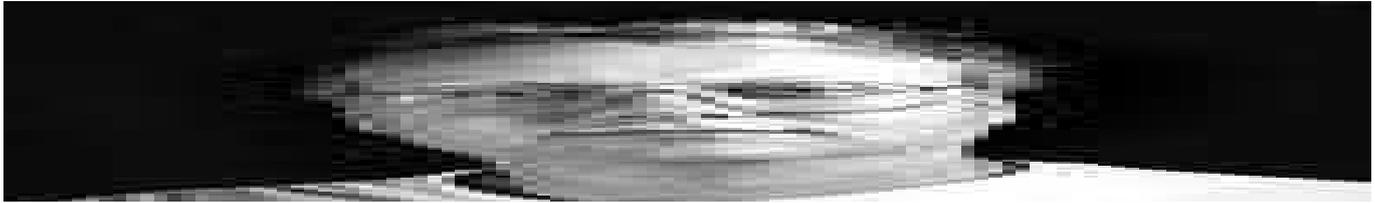
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Now if

the rest of the festival is equal to Tuesday's event, **An Irish Story** (An scéal na hÉireann), which was billed as an evening of storytelling and poetry, hosted by **Donovan King** and the magnificent **John David Hickey**, who thrilled all those in attendance with his great stories (modern adaptations of traditional Irish folklore and legends), then everyone is in for a treat. This is Ireland in Montreal. No need to be Irish to be truly lucky. Just log on to bloomsdaymontreal.com for more information and to register, and you'll be smiling for a good while. Don't forget to (re)read Joyce's masterworks...

Images: courtesy Festival Bloomsday Montréal

Read also [Fringe Festival Report Part 2: June 10 to June 13](#)



Luc Archambault

Writer and journalist, globe-trotter at heart, passionate about movies, music, literature and contemporary dance, came back to Montreal to pursue his unrelenting quest for artistic meaning.

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