



IN PRAISE OF SIÚN

THERE HAS been an awful lot of praise heaped on recently resigned RTÉ chairwoman **Siún Ní Raghallaigh**, with TV and movie producers lobby group Screen Producers Ireland (SPI) quick to wade in.

After the *Irish Times* referred to Ní Raghallaigh's "impeccable CV", **Susan Kirby's** SPI issued an update expressing its "regret" over the chair's exit, pointing out that she "has always been a keen supporter of the Irish independent production sector through her own production company, her work in Ardmore and Troy studios... The industry has valued this support across the years."

Media minister **Catherine**

Martin's press release at the time of Ní Raghallaigh's Montrose gig stated that "Siún has gained recognition as a leader in the creative sector", noting her roles in Ardmore and Troy and as managing director of **Moya Doherty's** Tyrone Productions, as well as the founding of Ní Raghallaigh's own independent TV company, Ikandi Productions.

That official *précis* doesn't do justice to her ceaseless lobbying of public officials on behalf of Ardmore and Troy studios, including a meeting with Taoiseach **Leo Varadkar** in 2019 and another with recently retired arts mandarin **Katherine Licken**.

The lobbying register states Ní Raghallaigh gave Licken "a tour of Troy studios and held a meeting with her afterwards".

It certainly looks a tad cosy that the chair of a state entity, TG4, should actively lobby politicians and senior civil servants when wearing her hat as CEO of a commercial entity.

Moreover, while Ní Raghallaigh's

laugh's Ikandi outfit was mentioned in the release, it represents pretty small potatoes when assessing the career of the canny business operator, as first outlined in Goldhawk's 2015 profile of the woman he described at the time as being "well on the way to becoming the most powerful woman in the Irish film and TV business" (see *The Phoenix* 18/8/15).

Certainly, Ikandi was overshadowed by the highly successful Moetion Films animation business that Ní

Raghallaigh set up in Galway with **Moe Honan**, with projects plucked from the ashes of **Ralph Christians's** Magma Films, where Ní Raghallaigh had been brought in as a consultant ahead of that company's collapse. (Magma ended up in liquidation owing €5m to Screen Ireland and a further €3m to assorted creditors).

The company had some valuable projects in development, however, including *Oops... Noah is Gone!* That ended up under the control of Moetion, which went

on to co-produce the animated film – one of the most successful Irish-developed films ever, grossing over €20m internationally before streaming and DVD revenue is taken into account.

Looks like Siún will land on her feet post-RTÉ.

FANS OF Goldhawk will be aware of Irish Times radio reviewer Mick Heaney's drooling admiration of Drivetime presenter Sarah McInerney (see The Phoenix 26/2/21). He was back in fawning form last month, highlighting Sarah's "lethally loaded questions" that left her guest "flummoxed for an answer".

Mick was bowled over by the presenter's "uncompromising inquisitorial tone" as well as her "devastating conversation" with an Irish-based Palestinian woman along with her ability to "calmly quiz" an Israeli military spokesman with "well-informed" questions.

The reviewer went on to highlight "McInerney's tenacity, as well as her composure" but spare a thought for co-presenter Cormac Ó hEadhra, whose "wanton bellicosity" just doesn't cut it with Mick.



JP McMANUS'S BAD DREAM

BRED BY **Brian and Claire Gleeson's** Brucetown Farms and ridden in all his starts by their son, **John**, *A Dream to Share* was last week awarded the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association's (ITBA) Young National Hunt Horse of the Year. The timing may have been significant.

Unbeaten in his five bumpers last year, including at the Cheltenham and Punchestown festivals, the nag was sold to zillionaire Swiss-based tax resident **JP McManus** after his second win. Maybe the ITBA voting had taken place before *A Dream to Share's* unplaced odds-on flop last month



JP McManus

behind the subsequently injured *Jeroboam Machin* in the recent Grade 2 bumper at the Dublin Racing Festival at Leopardstown.

Withdrawn from his intended debut hurdles start in the BetVictor Predictor Maiden Hurdle at Punchestown in November due to a stone bruise, *A Dream to Share* had been expected to emulate the lofty achievements of previous winners of that race, such as *Labaik* (whose part-owner, **Anthony O'Sullivan**, recently appeared in court in relation to a Criminal Assets Bureau motion to freeze two of his properties); *Samcro*; and **Barry Connell's** recent steeplechase flop, *Marine Nationale* (last week's winner of the ITBA's Hurdler of the Year award!)

McManus's racing manager was "unsure" whether the horse qualified for the Punchestown bumper but was adamant that he was unlikely to run again this season, suggesting he would return to schooling over hurdles again shortly.

Punters who had previously backed him into *ante post*

favourite for the Supreme Novice Hurdle will be left counting the cost. It appears the dream gelding is developing nightmarish tendencies for his minted owner.

CATHAL BEALE'S NEXT MOVE?

CATHAL BEALE'S tenure as boss of the Irish National Stud (INS) looks set to end in July this year, having been seven years *in situ*. It will be interesting to see where he pops up next.

Beale had previously been assistant manager of Forenaughts Stud, co-owned by the **Smurfit** family and **John Osborne's** sister, **Meta Osborne** (who recently picked up the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association's Hall of Fame award with hubby **Dermot Cantillon**), so he would have been familiar with the going.

Beale replaced John Osborne in the INS saddle in 2017, following the latter's decision to

dismount after seven successful years at a time of significant controversy over **Brian Kavanagh** landing a state contract of apparent "indefinite duration" as a result of his reappointment to the top job in Horse Racing Ireland (HRI).

Following his departure from the INS, Osborne secured the role of CEO of the racecourses division of HRI, where his sister was on the board. John was later appointed to the newly created post of director of equine welfare and bloodstock at HRI, where he remains.

Beale recently announced that the INS and the EM Normandie business school in France are to offer a certified course in equine industry management – but it won't come cheap.

The Equine Management Executive Certificate will be attained

over eight months, mostly online, with two weeks spent in Kildare and Normandy.

The course will cater to between 15 and 20 students and will cost no less than €8,000 a head.



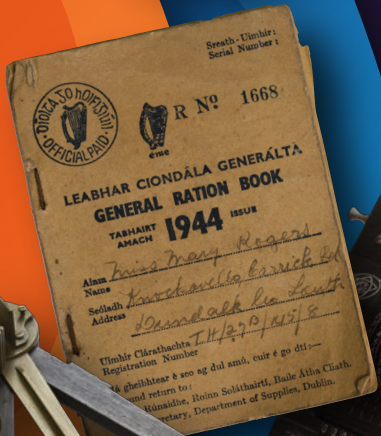
Cathal Beale



Siún Ní Raghallaigh



every single
ARTIFACT
tells a unique
story



8 Jocelyn St, Townparks,
 Dundalk, County Louth, A91 EFY9

+353 (0) 42 93 92 999

www.facebook.com/countymuseumdundalk

design: www.ph7.ie