

Comrades Come Rally!

A tremendously evocative, emotional but also uplifting evening was enjoyed by over 80 comrades who rallied to the call to celebrate brigaders from the UK and Ireland who fought to defend democracy in Spain during the Spanish Civil War.

Housed in the Holywell Music Room, Oxford, the first purpose built 18th Century concert hall in Europe, professional actors Alison Skilbeck, Time Hardy and Jeff Robert, held the audience spell bound with their renditions of brigaders' poems, correspondence and memoirs of their battles and the heroism of their comrades.

Interspersed between readings from Cecil Day Lewis, John Cornford, Charlotte Haldane, Frank McCasker, John Dunlop, Thora Silverthorne, Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit, Jason Gurney, Rev. Robert Hilliard, Gilbert Taylor, Jack Jones, Nan Green, Jim Brewer and Bob Cooney, were music and songs by Na Mara with "The Bite", "Only for Three Months" and "The English Penny"; "La Carmagnole" and "The Minstrel Boy" by Brenda O'Riordan; "Song for Charlie Donnelly" and "If My Voice On Earth Should Die" by Manus O'Riordan – with both singing "Viva la Quinta Brigada" and a medley based on the flamenco palos of seguiriyas, tangos, taranta and rumba by Marcos, professional flamenco guitarist.

The audience gave full vent to their sympathy in singing "The Valley of Jarama" led by Na Mara before the interval and the evening concluded with la Pasionaria's iconic farewell speech to the International Brigades, read initially in Spanish by Alison, but reading the whole speech in English. Finally, all joined in with a rousing rendition of "The Internationale".

Marlene Sideway, President of the IBMT, thanked the Oxford IB memorial Committee for organizing the fundraiser on behalf of the IBMT.

Look out on the IBMT website for the film of the event by Alice Roth from Spain, whose Great Uncle, Gilbert Taylor, featured as part of the readings.

See "The Minstrel Boy" sung by Brenda O'Riordan at the Ebro river as well as many other recordings by Na Mara and others on the IBMT web site.

John Haywood, IBMT Trustee and member of the Oxford IBM Committee.