A review by Nancy Matchton Owens

Knights of Ballymun was a special event that took place at The Compassion Centre in Ballymun on July 11th 2017. Personally, I attended to support Róisín Jenkinson, who was launching her book of poems called *Where We Come From.* Róisín invited friends and acquaintances to help her celebrate creativity and diversity. By creating an open mic session coupled with reading some of the work from her book, it was a most interesting passage of time. The photograph on the cover of the book is very inviting. It is a lush green forest scene with a small clearing of blue sky that Róisín took herself. The book is a small selection of thought provoking poems which address birth, death, loyalty and the old and new in a sensitive way. Her performances of the readings were pure in nature and she spoke with clarity, setting the precedent for the evening. One particular poem, *The Knight*, inspiring the name of the event, Róisín refers to herself as a knight defended and defenceless equipping herself for the battle of life. Referring to friends as allies in the journey, she bleeds and makes reference to hurt and burned bodies. In between the reading of her selected poems, the small gathering was invited up to share a piece of themselves through the use of art in one form or another.

The event took place in a spacious conference room in The Compassion Centre, Ballymun industrial estate. I was pleasantly surprised to find all the very best soundboard mics, projectors and live instruments. Though there was a Christian ethos flowing through the event, it was more about a spiritual homecoming and a gathering of a diverse community connecting in a meaningful way. The house lights were on to present a kind of informal setting.

The first of the artists was Anton Cullen on piano and his partner, Monique Cullen, singing and harmonising in a beautiful song, *Come as you are*, and joining them subtly on the bongos was Guitar. Along with them Brian Millar danced freely from side to side in a place from the audience. Brian Millar eventually followed with his own poetry and sermon, *Realm beyond*, and talked about the spiritual power of words. Paul arrived with guitar and spoke of the tree of knowledge and his relationship with God and his guitar, which he seemed to have found again in his life. I shared my rendition of *Streets of London* on piano and vocals and spoke of how we are all on the same journey and our connection and sometimes the irrelevance of the destination. Laura Howard presented an audio visual presentation with her ukulele and her metronome clock image and proceeded to smash time in a spontaneous, improvised way. She elaborated that it was a work in process. Christina Molloy spoke to us about truth and moved us with her sad poems that had a particular sting to wounds we often bury. Miguel Crozzoli sat down and played a colourful piece on the saxophone. I was amazed at the slow romantic notes that arrived into one another so easily. Then out of nowhere the hums and drones of background noise and rhythmic pleasure. To add to this, Róisín Jenkinson and Jack Beglin rattled a long transparent piece of plastic that visually took on a prism of light. They crossed over one another and rolled what was like a carpet over my head while I took notes for the review. It was an interactive part of the show I was not expecting but found quite relaxing.

This is the second celebration of creativity that I have attended of Róisín's and I have to say that it was very uplifting. Róisín will be launching her poems in different places in Dublin along with her collaborative effort of different artists. It is more peaceful then religious I can assure you, and food for the soul, so watch out on facebook for the events to follow.

Nancy Matchton Owens is from Long Island, NY. She is a writer and a facilitator of the Ballymun writers group in Ballymun Library. She works in Beneavin College as a Special needs assistant, teaches drama and is part of a duo called *Small and Fancy* that sing and play in different venues.