

Russian Irishophiles Set Up Easter Event

By [Diarmaid Fleming](#)

April 20, 2011



Pauline Scanlon will sing songs about the 1916 Easter Rising on Sunday.

Two of Ireland's top singers, Mickey MacConnell and Pauline Scanlon, will perform in Moscow on Sunday in the first-ever concert dedicated to the Easter Rising, the 1916 revolt in Dublin against British rule, where they will tell the story of the rebellion in song, 95 years to the day after it began.

Irish poet W.B. Yeats famously wrote, "All changed utterly, a terrible beauty is born," of the Rising, a military disaster at the time, but one that is credited for eventually sparking interest in republicanism and leading to an independent Ireland.

But why a gig in Moscow to remember historical events far-away both in distance and time? The man behind the concert — Muscovite and Irish-language speaker, Yury Andreichuk — explained.

"There is huge interest in Irish culture in Moscow, through dance and music, which is performed regularly here. But Ireland's culture and history are interwoven, something not

always clear on St. Patrick's Day for example. Part of the cultural story is therefore missing — a gap this concert will try to fill, showing the role music and song played in a key time in Irish history. The songs are like an emotional snapshot of that time — and they're wonderful music, too," he said.

"And there's a Russian connection: The first country to recognize the underground Irish Republic after the Rising was the emerging Soviet Union, in 1919," he added.

Back in Ireland the Easter Rising remains an event that is not celebrated as it should be, MacConnell and Scanlon said.

Violent conflict in the north of Ireland between 1969 and 1997 saw the Irish State largely abandon public celebration of the revolt of its birth. A one-off military parade in Dublin in 2006 for the 90th anniversary showed, however, that 1916 is still a source of inspiration to many, MacConnell said.

"People are hugely proud of it, 100,000 lined the streets of Dublin. Yet the ideals of the leaders of 1916 — a republic in which the children of the nation would be cherished equally — have not been fulfilled, so perhaps it's rather uncomfortable for some in the establishment to remember them," he said.

MacConnell's legendary song, "Only Our Rivers Run Free," lamenting the loss of Ireland's patriotic heroes, is just as relevant today, he said. Ireland's new terrible reality — after years of apparent boom — is a country mired in gargantuan debt.

"Ireland's disastrous economic situation is because politicians transferred the huge private debts of banks to ordinary people. Paying for the gambles of the rich does not square with the dreams of 1916. The Irish people back then had nothing but their spirit — which shines through in the songs of those times. Ireland needs to rediscover that same spirit to get it through today," he added.

A program on Irish television of 1916 songs by Scanlon brought a huge response from viewers, said the award-winning singer.

"People loved it. Many people feel inspired by our history. Yet we don't celebrate 1916 properly officially at home," she said.

At the concert Sunday, Russian groups will also sing songs about the Easter Rising. Andreichuk will sing songs with his Moscow band Slua Si, while from Rostov-on-Don, the group with the name of perhaps the most famous Easter Rising song of all, The Foggy Dew, completes the lineup.

The "Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week" concert is Sunday at 8 p.m. at club B2, 8 Bolshaya Sadovaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 1. Metro Mayakovskaya. Tel. 650-9918.

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