

Mary Byrne hopes her ballad can woo Europe

MARY Byrne is hoping that a big ballad will help her represent Ireland in next year's Eurovision.

The Mail can reveal that the singer has submitted a song for consideration at Eurosong 2015.

Written by Karl Broderick, civil partner of TV3 presenter Alan Hughes, the track is a return to the days of Johnny Logan and Linda Martin, and Ms Byrne believes it has the quality to help restore Ireland's reputation in the competition.

In Copenhagen earlier this year, pop star Kasey Smith failed to make it out of the semi-

Eurovision dream: Mary

By **Eoin Murphy**
Entertainment Editor

finals. And now Ms Byrne, who became a national celebrity on the X Factor in 2010, is bidding to win the much-coveted title.

Speaking to the Mail, she said: 'We have written and recorded the song and submitted it. I think it is a great song. It is a ballad, a bit more contemporary than what I am used to singing but it is very good. If you look at what won last year with Conchita Wurst, it was a big glitzy ballad. I think the competition

has gone back to basics a bit. So hopefully RTÉ will like it and we can have a go.'

RTÉ have this year changed the format of how Ireland's Eurovision entry is chosen. Previously five experts each picked an act, and these were put to a public vote. Now anyone can submit an entry, and an RTÉ-picked shortlist will sing for the Eurosong Ireland title next year.

Songwriters have until the end of the month to enter a song.

The winning act will go on to represent Ireland at the Eurovision in Vienna next May. Ms Byrne said: 'I'm a big Eurovision fan and I think it would be great.'

'I am off the cigarettes five months now so I feel great. I have a lot more energy and I think I could give it a good shot.'



Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Our blessed family ritual of the roast

IT is my favourite time of the day, the moment when I light the lamps in preparation for the evening meal. This is not feeding time but a ceremony to celebrate our togetherness. The candle, the music and the tincture of wine are all symbols of belonging, of our deep desire to unite as one.

Ceremony involves time and care, preparation and planning. It demands beauty and attention to detail - small things, such as setting the table, signify that this time is precious beyond compare.

A long time ago, I made a conscious decision that we should sanctify each day just as we would Sunday. I decided that no matter what we had scheduled, the evening meal was sacrosanct.

It would be a period set aside to bless the day, to give thanks for our lives and our loves.

That is why, each evening, we peel, chop, boil and roast. We take the gifts of the earth and render them edible. In so doing, we become aware of our dependency on creation and on each other.

It never struck me as strange that Christ ordained that the Mass should take the form of a meal. Nothing has greater power to bind people than the sharing of bread. It is communion of an everlasting kind.

I have witnessed sworn enemies embrace across a table. I have seen families reunited and love rekindled. In binding us to time and place, the meal signifies our common need to belong where roots are strong.

Slowly, the house fills with the scent of a roast.

It is as if we are being summoned by our senses to draw a curtain on the day.

It is as though we are being called to lay down our tools and to raise a glass for the gift of existence.

This is neither costly nor extravagant. Indeed, it costs substantially more to eat takeaway or fast food. It is true that it costs a lot in terms of time and energy but the long-term benefits of slow food are worth it all and more.

I put the flame to the wick and the great gathering begins. Our boys drop what they are doing and head for the table.

As I mash, carve, dish and serve, I am aware of the banter in the background. 'But will you speak like the Viceroy of the Trade Federation on Halloween night?' Before he can answer, a song breaks out and the question is quickly forgotten.

The table has been perfectly set by our middle boy who, with his big brother, is enjoying a wine glass half filled with blackcurrant cordial. Even now, they want this experience to be as authentic as possible.

As they raise their little glasses,

their parents glance at one another and gently smile.

I collapse into my chair and take a settling sip after all the serving. We give thanks, make a little toast and then take turns telling our news.

Not to be outdone, each of our sons gives a minute-by-minute account of his day.

This is not to say that we don't have evenings when they refuse to eat what is placed before them. It is not to say that we don't have the odd argument as we sit at table.

We do, but the fact that it is also resolved around the table means it is soon history.

I cannot imagine an evening without this beautiful experience. I cannot imagine how different our lives might be were we to abandon this blessed ritual. It is our moment to savour those things that rescue life from the mundane.

The sad truth is that many children nowadays grow up without ever enjoying such sacred moments. Mrs Dooley recently conducted a survey among her students on the subject of the family meal.

Barely any, she discovered, gather each evening with their parents to eat and talk.

Not surprisingly, those who do tend to be the most confident and outgoing. In a world of chaos and commotion, they have something that roots them to home, family and love.

They know what it means to share and care, what it means to be bound to something greater than the self.

TONIGHT, it is roast chicken, creamed potato and a selection of seasonal vegetables. Mrs Dooley and I shall enjoy a small tincture of our favourite Bordeaux - a cheap substitute for the vintage blackcurrant also on offer.

All of which will be the culmination of a process that usually commences in early afternoon and concludes only when the night has fallen from the sky.

Nothing gives my life more meaning than sitting around that table, savouring the chit-chat, the joy and all the news from the day that was.

For I know that my children have learned more about life and love on those little chairs than they possibly could anywhere else.

And years from now, when I am all alone again with Mrs Dooley, we shall stare at those empty chairs, glance at one another and gently smile. We won't say anything, for nothing will need to be said.

Elsewhere, three families will be gathered around their respective dinner tables, enjoying the food and the news and giving thanks for all their blessings.

In preparation for that day, I must go now and put on the oven.

mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie

PAT EGAN presents

CELEBRATING THE JERSEY BOYS

The Music of FRANKIE VALLI and the FOUR SEASONS

SHERRY ● BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY ● MY EYES ADORED YOU ● RAG DOLL ● WALK LIKE A MAN LET'S HANG ON ● WORKING MY WAY BACK TO YOU ● I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN NIGHT ● WE CAN WORK IT OUT ● GREASE ● DEC 63 (OH WHAT A NIGHT) ● SILVER STAR



featuring **THE RAG DOLLS (UK)**

Saturday 25th October 2014

LIME TREE THEATRE, Limerick

Ph: 061 774 774 / www.limetreetheatre.ie

Sunday 26th October

NATIONAL CONCERT HALL, Dublin

Ph: (01) 417 0000 / www.nch.ie

Tuesday 28th October

GALWAY TOWN HALL

Ph: 091 569 777 / www.tht.ie

Wednesday 29th October

PAVILION THEATRE, Dun Laoghaire

Ph: (01) 231 2929 / www.paviliontheatre.ie

Thursday 30th October

WEXFORD SPIEGELTENT FESTIVAL

www.wexfordspiegelent.com

Friday 31st October

AN GRIANAN THEATRE, Letterkenny

Ph: 074 91 20777 / www.angrianan.com

Saturday 1st November

MULLINGAR ARTS CENTRE

Ph: 044 93 47777 /

www.mullingarartscentre.ie

Sunday 2nd November

CORK OPERA HOUSE

Ph: 021 427 0022 / www.corkoperahouse.ie