

GAA star said he'd name people at swingers party

By Olivia Kelleher

A FORMER GAA star has admitted he told a Sunday World reporter that he would give him the names of other people who attended a swingers party if they agreed not to run a story about him.

Brian 'Spike' Nolan, 49, of Goatstown in Dublin, who played senior football for Kildare in the 1990s, is claiming he was defamed by articles published in the Sunday World in July 2012 and March 2013.

The stories claimed he was involved in organising swingers or 'wife-swapping' parties, which he denies. At day two of a High Court sitting in Cork yes-



Party-goer: Brian Nolan

terday Mr Nolan said he panicked when reporter Niall Donald approached him outside his home but that he ultimately did not give him any names.

Mr Nolan previously told the court that he attended four swingers parties staged in Dublin, Meath and Cavan, but that he did not organise the events and only went as his partner was into them.

Mr Nolan rejected suggestions from Rossa Fanning SC, for the Sunday World, that by agreeing to pose for pictures at a party in front of strangers he had given up his right to privacy. Mr Nolan said the photos were just 'pure craic'.

He said of the parties: 'Herself was into it - I wasn't very happy. I was in love with that woman, no one else... I didn't want anyone else touching her.' The case will resume on March 24.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Tears of pride for my son's stage heroics

HE walked on stage, paused and slowly began to sing:

*'Stars
In your multitudes
Scarce to be counted
Filling the darkness with order
and light
You are the sentinels
Silent and sure
Keeping watch in the night
Keeping watch in the night'*

OUR eldest was dressed in the full costume of a 19th-Century police inspector. He was performing Stars from Les Misérables and posing as the puritanical yet tragic Inspector Javert.

Somehow, without any accompaniment, he managed to capture the beauty of a song that sounds incongruous coming from a man intent on vengeance.

The occasion was our annual outing at the poetry and music fests organised by Paul Cullen and Ciara Phelan of Arclight Drama Studio in Dublin. It's not the first time I have mentioned Paul and Ciara here, and if I do so again it is because I am overawed at the opportunity they give so many children. In opening up the arts to our aspiring thespians, they give them so much more than an outing on stage.

Earlier in the day, our boys competed in the poetry competition. Each little poet stood alone facing a multitude of proud parents. And then, as if guided by the spirit of Shakespeare himself, they worked their magic with words. This was much more than entertainment: it was heart speaking to heart, soul touching soul. For that is what theatre is: a place where literature adopts a human face and smiles to us from elsewhere.

We see real people imbuing with life our favourite characters, our much-loved verses and our well-sung songs. And in the moment the weight of life rises like a feather on the breeze.

Never is this more the case than when children appear on stage. For some, it's to confront their worst fears and to discover why they need not be afraid. For others, it is a chance to show off their natural aptitude for acting.

For us, their nervous parents, it is a moment of such intense pride. As they stand beneath the spotlight, we feel each little heartbeat, each tiny tremor of excitement. In the twinkling of an eye, it's over and we realise they are different people. As

I said to Paul: 'You are the gardener and they are your blooms.' In standing on that stage, our children lose their fear, acquire confidence and learn how to engage with the world. They see just how important literature and music is for guiding you through life.

In choosing to sing as Inspector Javert, our son found himself drawn to learn more about the French Revolution. He has managed to get through the first volume of Victor Hugo's Les Misérables in a fortnight. It has also forced him to grapple with the vexed issues of vengeance, punishment and forgiveness.

I can say with absolute certainty that were it not for his drama classes, this rich and beautiful world would not be his today. But now, the tragic figure of Javert has enlivened his imagination to the point where our son fully understands the morality of mercy. Javert, a puritanical man intent on retribution, ultimately discovers nothing can withstand the power of compassion and kindness.

*'Stars
In your multitudes
Scarce to be counted
Filling the darkness
With order and light'*

The contrast between Javert's fury and the sweet majesty of those words is hard to reconcile. As my son sang them, I held back a tear knowing hidden in such beauty there must be a heart. That sublime song betrays one man's battle to suppress his instinct for love.

AS he walked from the stage, I found myself feeling pity for this man who would eventually fall on the sword of his own misplaced righteousness. Anyone who could describe the stars as 'the sentinels, silent and sure' must have a soul, despite believing that 'those who falter and fall must pay the price!'

My tears were not so much for my son as for Javert.

Only then did it hit me: this young boy, inspired by his teacher, has mastered the sublime art of theatre. Aristotle tells us that the purpose of theatre is, by identifying with the characters, to come away with empathy for even the most flawed. Javert was deeply flawed, yet one boy taught us to weep for his redemption. Stars: 'each in your season... is always the same'. Thanks to an inspired gardener and his beloved blooms, the same cannot be said for us.

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