

## **IRISH TIMES, Dublin**

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By Charles Acton

### **Enchanting**

It was a true pleasure to be at the U.S. Embassy at Ballsbridge last night to hear Mary O'Hara give a short recital of her own especial art of song and harp. This was, I think, her first recital in Dublin since she left her monastery just over a year ago, although we had the privilege of hearing her in the Wexford Arts Centre nearly six weeks ago during the festival there.

The rotunda of the Embassy has not the happiest acoustics and, unfortunately, there was a persistent hum (on C sharp in the treble clef). Such a drone or pedal itself could have been endured, but Miss O'Hara's art includes a lot of exquisitely soft singing so that, again and again, her dynamic fell below the level of this hum, so that we lost our effortless concentration upon her.

While her late husband Richard Selig was an American poet, and his words of two of her items ("Among

Silence" and "Eros") were American, and the music was her own, I was disappointed that in this context she did not include any specifically American music – one spiritual "Its-a-Me, O Lord," being less than enough.

In the terms of these islands her Irish and Scottish items were a joy to hear, and done with all her extraordinary, individual artistry. Perhaps "Over Here" was a little slow (and, whatever its factual connection with the Famine, it is probably Canadian in location), but to hear her "Sliabh na mBan" or "The Gartan Mother's Lullaby" is to be wholly enchanted.

She has such a unique artistry that one must hope that very many people in Ireland should soon have the chance to hear her again in recital, but she must be willing to provide the audience with a printed programme.