

Living in the vicinity of Ballinrobe, I am familiar with - and an admirer of - the work of the Ballinrobe Musical Society, whose annual show is one of the highlights in the region. But this group, which stages performances of the highest quality, is severely hampered by the lack of a proper theatre and the accompanying production facilities. I strongly support the community initiative to build a new Town Hall which will also incorporate a performance theatre and so encourage further local, cultural and education-linked performances

Rural Ireland is afflicted in so many ways by the flight from the land, through either external or internal emigration and the centralising pull of major towns. There is, too, the loss of services at every level for those of us who live here. With so much being lost, this cultural initiative to serve Ballinrobe and its surrounding hinterland presents an opportunity to show support for the sustaining of cultural life in the rural west...and would go some way towards the reversal of the current erosion of services and support.

The West *is* Awake.

Brendan Graham

7 March 2015

---

*Brendan Graham, is a best-selling novelist and internationally renowned composer, with the Sunday Times, Canberra, declaring his documentary novel, The Whitest Flower, "an important addition to the Irish national story". The Irish Times dubbed him a 'Musical Midas', and his song, You Raise Me Up, with almost one thousand different recordings and one billion internet views, has become one of the most successful songs in the history of popular music. He is also the composer of Ireland's last two, winning Eurovision songs - 'Rock 'n' Roll Kids' and 'The Voice' and his songs have been translated into over 40 languages and recorded by artistes across the genres, from folk to pop to classical.*

*He lives in Co. Mayo.*