



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

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Is treise dúchas ná oiliúint. Nature is stronger than nurture. There are many examples of this in Ireland's story of challenge, survival, resurgence and achievement. There are also many examples of 'dúchas' in the Comhaltas story since 1951, down through the years and particularly in this time of COVID-19. Thankfully, we don't subscribe to the seanfhocal **Feiceann súil ghruama saol gruama**. A gloomy eye sees a gloomy story.

- **AGMs**

The Comhaltas branch is the bedrock of our cultural movement. Preparations are now underway for AGMs in the most difficult of circumstances. Like the huge challenges faced by the founders of Comhaltas 70 years ago, our dedicated members will again rise to the challenge in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

Some branches, though few in number, may have a financial struggle. In response to this, we have instituted a Branch Subvention Scheme. Strong branches will also look out for the weaker ones and help them over the line into better times.

- **CULTURE NIGHT**

Comhaltas in the villages, towns and cities of Ireland were again this year celebrating Culture Night in many different ways and at various locations.

NATIONAL FOLK ORCHESTRA of IRELAND

The Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of Ireland performed Tom Doorley's arrangement of "The gold Ring", especially for Culture Night and the reaction has been tremendous. The CLASAC chief Jim McAllister tells us that all 53 members of the Orchestra recorded themselves playing their piece at home and sent the clips to the ever industrious Eddie Murphy. He in turn sent them to CLASAC, where Graham Watson in the studio undertook the compilation and editing of the whole piece. With Kieran Hanrahan running his professional RTÉ eye over the finished product, a video of the highest professional standard was produced, completely in-house.

The video can be viewed on the NFOI Facebook page or on the Comhaltas channel on YouTube so please tune in and enjoy.

NURSING HOMES AND ORANGE LODGE

The accordion maestro himself Martin Donohoe and his talented performers had a busy Culture Night. He tells us that the NYAH Comhaltas Cavan visited three venues – two nursing homes in the afternoon in Cavan Town and then on to Mullaghboy Orange Hall, Co. Cavan. What better way to celebrate Culture Night than with a sharing of traditions and friendship.

THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF WEXORD

Here we let Senan O' Reilly give us the Culture Night news from historic Wexford:

Great Roving Session on Wexford Quays last night. At this strange and disconnected time we are going through, there is nothing like the simple pleasure of live music and song – both for the player and the listener. As the musicians settled into their rhythm one sensed Manannán Mac Lir stirring out beyond the bar as there was a growing swell in the harbour whipped up by a strengthening wind from the east. Matt Murphy raised his hands to the heavens in supplication, the winds abated and he led the crowd in a full-throated and rousing singing of Home From The Sea. Dusk was turning to dark when the last notes were played and the instruments packed away. Oíche iontach ceoil agus amhránaíochta a bhí ann agus áthas ag gach duine agus iad cruinnithe le chéile ag an am aisteach seo. Loch Garman abú!

- **THE CONCERTINA KING**

Ireland has lost one of the finest exponents ever of Irish Traditional Music. Chris Droney to many was the King of Concertina Players. He gave joy and inspiration to generations of musicmakers and to those who cherished our Irish Culture. This noble Clare man has left a legacy beyond compare. For years to come he will be spoken of with pride, affection and admiration. His music will be a reminder of his artistry and greatness. To Margaret and his family we express our heartfelt sympathy. Ar Dheis Dé go raibh an anam uasal.

- **SCT EXAMS**

The SCT exams for Grades 6, 7 and 8 are currently taking place in venues around the country - from Letterkenny to Skibbereen.

The decision to go ahead with the almost 400 Senior Grade exams has proved to be a popular one with Candidates, Teachers and Parents and our thanks goes to them all for their cooperation and understanding in unusual times.

We have followed very stringent Covid protocols in setting up the Venues and ensuring that safety is our first priority and with our 2 most Senior Examiners in the field, Oisín Mac Diarmad and Majella Bartley, we can be assured that they will be properly adhered to.

All examinations will be completed and Certificates issued before the end of October and we wish all the musicians the very best of luck.

- **LONDON EXPO**

Comhaltas will be attending the Music & Drama Education Expo in London 2021. This is Europe's largest conference and exhibition for anyone involved in music & drama education. This event is held in the Business Design Centre in London on the 24th and 25th of March 2021. This time for the first year Comhaltas will be holding an exhibit and will be promoting our current educational programmes. This conference will have over 2500 educationalists attending and it is the perfect opportunity to share ideas, develop contacts and promote our educational structures. Our Archláraitheoir Majella Bartley is in charge of arrangements for Comhaltas.

- **THE LEGENDARY MARTIN MULHAIRE**

Our North America PRO Paul Keating tells us of the passing of one of the 'greats' of Irish traditional music who was domiciled in America:

It must be rarified air around the Slieve Aughty Mountains that overlooks the fertile crescent for traditional music for East Galway and Clare and northwest Tipperary because it has thrived down through families in the region for generations.

An extraordinary number of exceptional musicians and céilí bands have come from there, fortifying both the history of the "ould music" and ensuring that it would carry on for generations to come.

Out of the milieu came a modest, soft-spoken man from Eyrecourt in East Galway named Martin Mulhaire who left his mark on the Irish music scene before he passed away at 83 in hospital on September 12 after a long illness not far from his Pearl River home.

He was born in December of 1936 to a musical household in Eyrecourt in East Galway led by his father Tommy a well known musician in the area who eventually became a valued music teacher in Galway City when he moved there after 1958. Steeped in the music at home, both Martin and his brother Brendan won Junior All-Ireland titles on the button accordion and joined their father in the Tommy Mulhaire Céilí and Old Time Band. As a teenager Martin played with the Aughrim Slopes and Kilimor Céilí Bands before accepting a slot in the Tulla Céilí Band before they competed in and won the coveted All-Ireland senior band championship in 1957.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal ceolmhar.

- **COMHALTAS LIVE BRINGS OUR MUSIC TO THE WORLD**

Comhaltas Live, created and produced by Willie Fogarty, posts a new item every day for many years now. Over the past few weeks musicians from 11 different countries as well as from London, Scotland and USA have been featured.

Incidentally, the item on 15th September 2020 included an audience shot with the late Nora Butler (typically smiling), one of our great traditional singers known and loved by trad enthusiasts all over the world, who sadly departed this life in May 2020.

Over the coming weeks the programme will include many excellent performances from Trad Fests around Ireland, Fleadhanna, etc. including All-Ireland winners and runners-up, as well as the North American Convention in Parsipanny, New Jersey.

Spread the word about Comhaltas Live through branch members and the outside world!

Several new and very interesting features are being planned for the programme over the coming weeks.

- **SPREADING THE NEWS**

Against all the odds, the printing press keeps turning and TREOIR never misses a beat. The next issue will be out in October. It is packed with news, achievements, surprises, songs and tunes, celebrities, community doings and so on and on. This magazine of over 50 years standing has 35,000 readers and is also posted online.

- In the midst of the crisis, TG4 and RTÉ rose to the occasion and ensured that the Fleadh season would not be unmarked and forgotten. It was the opposite, in fact, with hour upon hour of Fleadh festivities, past and present. Well done to all concerned. It was a bright spot in a dark time. It certainly augurs well for the future, particularly 2021. It was an example of what can be achieved through teamwork, vision, creativity and dedication. [Ni neart go teacht le chéile](#). Unity is strength.

- **COVID-19 UPDATE FOR COMHALTAS ACTIVITIES**

The Government's medium-term plan for Living with Covid-19 was unveiled on Tuesday 15th September. The 'framework for restrictive measures' consists of **five levels**.

The lower levels will be activated when there is low incidence of the disease, with isolated outbreaks and low community transmission.

The higher levels will be used to deal with higher incidences of the disease.

It is essential that all units keep up to date on the Level number that their county is currently placed in. All activities must be guided by the guidelines for that level.

Furthermore Comhaltas Guidelines and Communications distributed to Comhaltas units are based on Government Guidelines in the Republic of Ireland. All units should first and foremost adhere to the guidelines issued by the jurisdiction they are governed by.

- **GDPR**

As a result of the current pandemic, and as we move towards the resumption of activities, units will find that they will be collecting larger amounts of personal details from members, students etc.

It is important to note that the collection of any data as in personal details – name, address, phone number, email etc. must be collected and stored in accordance with GDPR guidelines and not be shared for marketing purposes with any person.

However in order to administer classes/events in Comhaltas units, personal data may of course be shared with relevant personnel, such as music teachers. Teachers should be advised to respect having access to personal data and if they send messages via email or text when setting up online classes that they should only use “blind copy” – bcc to protect individuals details.

From now till Christmas and beyond there will be more challenges. There will also be opportunities for positive action. Therein lies our strength. [Dúthracht is dícheall a thugann fairsing go fial](#). Zeal and diligence provide generous plenty! Ar aghaidh leis an obair.

Le mór-mheas,

