



## THE LIVING TRADITION

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### **COMHALTAS - CORONAVIRUS**

#### **Communication No. 38**

**Is fearr rith maith ná drochsheasamh. A good run is better than a bad stand! We are ready to start our journey back to classes, Fleadhanna and other events. The light at the end of the tunnel has certainly got brighter. The long-awaited 'new normal' is at our doorstep. FleadhFest and other initiatives have prepared us well for this day. Bí linn ar an ród seo romhainn. Join us on this historic journey. Bí aireach agus cúramach. Be alert and careful.**

#### **CLASSES**

Our Covid Officer Ronan O' Brien, operating from the Brú Ború Cultural Centre in the shadow of the ancient Rock of Cashel, has issued up to date guidelines and these were sanctioned by the Ardchomhairle on the 4<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **ROAD MAP**

As we approach the end of 2021, Comhaltas can reflect with confidence on the many stories of challenge, creativity and reconfiguration of our comprehensive cultural programme in the midst of the pandemic. The pandemic years could have consigned us to a lethargic state of inactivity. This was not the case and the road before us is now much clearer but still very challenging.

The 'new normal' will require from us a roadmap for every aspect of our work programme. The way that this can be achieved is (a) early response; (b) focused specialised Action Teams; (c) prompt and relevant communication internally and externally. It will form part of ongoing informed dialogue and emphasis at all levels of our cultural movement. This will be assisted by the Communication series which we employed since the start of the pandemic. Our motto might well be 'is féidir linn'.

#### **FLEADHANNA**

In relation to competitions, one of the first Action Teams will be in relation to County and Provincial Fleadhanna. Based on the FleadhFest experience, this will be headed up by our Ardchláráitheoir Majella Bartley together with Séamus MacCormaic and Michael Brennan assisted by knowledgeable and experienced activists in this area. This requires early consideration with a view to providing options for different scenarios. It should be borne in mind that these Fleadhanna in many ways underpin Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

We recommend that each County and Province set up an experienced Fleadh Team 22. Also, the FleadhFest Support Team, under Cathaoirleach Pádraig Ó Flanagáin, will continue as a Fleadh Support Team.

Subject to the availability of funding, we will have a subvention scheme to help County and Provincial Fleadhanna to adapt to the 'new normal'. This will be €5,000 per County and €10,000 per Province.

## **FLEADHFEST**

Following a very challenging but successful year, our firm focus is now on 2022. In 2021, our main aim was to sustain and enhance, as far as possible, our comprehensive cultural programme at home and abroad. Virtually every aspect of our programme was reconfigured and delivered with a sense of experiment, adventure and creativity. The highlight of this was the innovative FLEADHFEST by counties, provinces and internationally which has given us a veritable archive treasure of the pandemic era. This culminated in FLEADHFEST na hÉireann in Sligo during August

FLEADHFEST – the first ever online event of its kind – had 9 days of live concerts, sessions, competitions and Ard-Ollamh and Ceanródaithe Awards, which were streamed to audiences worldwide. The festival – the only traditional music festival taking place in Ireland this year – was watched by thousands of people every day and the response to the live music was both positive and widespread. TG4 also delivered four provincial tv programmes and three national programmes.

It was a credit to the people of Sligo and to the FLEADHFEST team. Every aspect of FLEADHFEST was carried out in the most professional manner – with safety as a priority – and it was an important new chapter for us to use the virtual world to bring our native culture to people in many different countries.

We commend the exceptional leadership of Bartley Gavin and his meitheal of cultural activists in Sligo. Míle Buíochas. To all who made a contribution to the success of FLEADHFEST na hÉireann we say go raibh míle maith agaibh. Bartley not only crafted the wheels but turned them with precision and effect. He was ably assisted by Michael Brennan, Peter Farrell, Micheál Ó Domhnaill, Martin Enright, Oisín MacDiarmada, Margaret McConnell, Margot Farrell and Anne Gorby.

The initiative and creativity of so many counties, provinces and the Irish Diaspora in telling their stories is a source of inspiration to us.

**CEOL NA CRUINNE** When the roadmap for FleadhFest na hÉireann was being crafted, the mission was to have it live and virtual at the same time! This was a gigantic challenge, particularly in the pandemic era.

This was new territory, a new vision and a new opportunity. The programme delivered was creative and exciting in the conducive environment of Musical Sligo. The next step was how to share it with the world. Up stepped Micheál Ó Domhnaill who is native of

Gaeltacht na Rinne in County Waterford and now domiciled in Sligo. You will know him as a commentator on Gaelic games with TG4.

Micheál set about his task with all the fervour of a cultural visionary and with all the tools of his profession. He created the possibilities and circumvented the many obstacles. He weaved his plan into the dialogue on the emerging new festival. Mission accomplished. The world became our global cultural village.

**Tá éacht déanta agat, a Mhichíl. Tá An Comhaltas agus an náisiún go mór faoi chomaoin agat. Bail ó Dhia ort agus ar do chúram.**

#### **MOL AN ÓIGE**

‘Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí.’ This might well be paraphrased as acknowledge the ‘new generation’ and they will respond. Never was this more apt than on the FleadhFest journey.

The County and Provincial FleadhFests had an abundance of youthful creativity and input. We saw this in the areas of production, interviews, performances and presentation. Tá an óige molta go mór.

Again at FleadhFest na hÉireann in Sligo we had a model of ‘new generation’ involvement. These are surely the ‘Young Irelanders’ of this generation. In Sligo, they were everywhere to be seen turning the wheels of the FleadhFest vehicle. They were a sight to behold and salute. This was in many ways epitomised by Dúlra Hanley and Tom Gavin who presented the extravaganza to the world.

#### **BUÍOCHAS**

**The annual Government grant for 2021 was central to the successful outcome of our ambitious cultural mission for this year. It augmented, motivated and energised the vast volunteer community movement which is the hallmark of Comhaltas. We wish to express appreciation to Minister Catherine Martin and to her Department for their support, guidance and encouragement.**

**Again, the grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs for our international network has helped to deliver many positives abroad. We thank Minister Simon Coveney and his Department for their consistent support.**

**Membership fees and the Ciste levy are also an integral element of our funding strategy. Míle buíochas.**

#### **PASSING THE BATON**

Colmán Ó Muimhneacháin is one of most respected advocates of Comhaltas and our Irish cultural heritage. Through his knowledge, ability and tenacity, he has left an indelible mark on the cultural movement. He has given long and fruitful service to Comhaltas which included a long term as Trustee General. He has now deemed this to be the right time to step down from this position.

At a recent meeting of the Ardchomhairle, many tributes were paid to Colmán. His mother Cáit and father Éamon were founder members of Comhaltas and Cáit was its first Uachtarán. We wish Colmán, his wife Sheila and family every good luck and happiness in the future. Bail ó Dhia ortha.

The new Trustee General is Kathleen Nesbitt, a native of Roscommon but now living with her family in Loughmore, Co. Tipperary. Kathleen is Ceannaire of the Coiste Oideachais of Comhaltas and plays many significant roles in the cultural movement. She is a noted teacher with many achievements in education. She has been selected for Gradam an Chomhaltais, the highest accolade to be bestowed by her peers. We extend best wishes to Kathleen, John and family. Go n-eirí go geal libh.

## COMHALTAS LIVE

COMHALTAS LIVE continues with a new item posted every day (for nearly 20 years now!). The programme features the best of traditional material from all over Ireland, Britain, America, etc. from current recordings and recordings spanning nearly 40 years. Spread the word! Hats off to ace accordionist Willie Fogarty an All-Ireland champion in his own right.

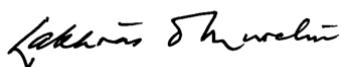
## TG4

Is mór an chabhair agus an misneach a thugann TG4 dúinn agus bhí siad chun tosaigh arís le FleadhFest. Bhí an ceol agus na scéalta acu ó na cúigí agus ó FleadhFest na hÉireann i Sligeach. Tá todhchaí an cheoil in ann dúinn go léir sa bhaile agus thar lear. Bain taitneamh as. TG4 had the stories and the music from the Provinces and from FleadhFest na hÉireann in Sligo. The future is bright for our rich cultural heritage.

**Sábháil an fómhar fad is a bhíonn an ghrian thuas. Save the harvest while the sun is up. Sin mar a bheidh sé linn-ne amach anseo. Nuair a thosnaíonn an ceol bíonn na damhsóirí réidh. The dancers will be ready when the music starts. Táimid ag súil go mór le todhchaí lán de cheol, caidreamh agus cairdeas. Bí linn ar an ród seo romhainn. Beidh lá eile ag an bpíobaire!**

From our new Uachtarán Éamonn Ó hArgáin and the Bunachoiste, míle buíochas agus Bail ó Dhia ar an obair.

Mise, le mór-mheas,



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Labhrás Ó Murchú  
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ