



## THE LIVING TRADITION

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**PLEASE SPREAD  
THE NEWS!**

### AN NUACHT – 47

2023 has got off to a great start. Plans for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2023 in Mullingar – following on from the cultural extravaganza that was Fleadh 2022 – are now at an advanced stage. The 500,000 Fleadh fans from last year will be pleased to learn that 2023 is promised to be even bigger and better. The dates are the 6<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> August.

We are also planning ahead. At a meeting of the Ardchomhairle on the 11<sup>th</sup> March, Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2024 was allocated to Wexford. The dates for your dairy are the 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2024.

**Tarraingíonn scéal scéal eile!** One story attracts another. SEISIÚN, the nationwide entertainment scheme, will again be making its way to villages, towns and cities right across the whole island. Over 400 shows!

**An té ag a mbíonn an toil bíonn an tslí.** Where there's a will there's a way. This is the motto of our 19 nationwide cultural centres who are planning an enhanced cultural programme for 2023.

**FOCAL BUÍOCHAIS.** We wish to express our appreciation to Minister Catherine Martin and Minister Micheál Martin and their respective Government Departments for the financial subvention which we received.

We salute our 50,000 volunteers. They are the ones who make it all possible at grassroots level in Ireland and in 18 countries worldwide. They are the dreamers and the doers. **Maith sibh! Tá an náisiún go mór faoi chomaoín agaibh.** The nation is indebted to you.

#### **FLEADH 2024**

After seven years campaigning to bring Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann to Wexford, their mission has been accomplished. There were jubilant scenes at Cultúrlann na hÉireann on the 11<sup>th</sup> March when the decision was announced by the Ardchomhairle. That singer supreme from Comhaltas Paddy Berry and the CEO of Wexford County Council Tom Enright – and their respective teams – said that an effective partnership is already in place to deliver a Fleadh worthy of the cultural movement, our supporters and our country.

## **DIASPORA**

This year Diaspora will be the theme of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar next August. Our emigrants are the people, who down through the years, brought our Irish cultural traditions to the countries of their adoption, promoted and enhanced those traditions which they introduced to our non-Irish friends. With a visit from the iconic Liverpool Céilí Band; a bardic awardee uilleann piper from Argentina; performers from across the globe; an extra-special Overseas reception and concert; a Scoil Éigse Diaspora salute; a special suite by the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of Ireland; the inclusion of our Ukrainian friends and other cultural groups, 2023 will certainly be remembered as the Year of the Diaspora and our 'new Irish'.

## **BELFAST IN WAITING**

Belfast was the other applicant for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2024. They too had an exceptional strong bid from the Ards Branch of Comhaltas and the City Council. They were very magnanimous in their response to the result and promised Wexford their full support. Our Belfast colleagues promised to be back!

## **FLEADH NUA IN ENNIS**

*'If you got a 2023 Diary for Christmas, be sure to enter the dates for this year's Fleadh Nua – 27<sup>th</sup> May to 5<sup>th</sup> June. And what a celebration of traditional music, song, dance and language we have in store for you.'*

Knowing their outstanding record of having the Fleadh Nua in Ennis for almost 50 years, you can be confident that they will live up to their promise of another spectacular festival this year.

## **A LIFETIME OF SERVICE**

Pádraig Ó Riain has stepped down as Oifigeach Ceoil. His contribution to Comhaltas for almost half a century has been immense. He has left an indelible mark on the cultural fortunes of Comhaltas, being a trusted custodian of the traditional characteristics of our native music. His contribution to education, tradition, standards, broadcasting, and the promotion of the cultural traditions of Ireland has been highly significant. Comhaltas and the Irish nation are indebted to him. We wish him and Mary every happiness in the years ahead.

Many tributes were paid to Pádraig at the recent meeting of the Ardchomhairle and he will continue as a mentor on the Coiste Cheoil. Míle buíochas, a Phádraig.

## **THE NEW GENERATION**

Kathryn Browne has joined the ranks of the 'new generation' who are stepping up to take positions in our cultural movement at home and abroad. Kathryn will be the new Oifigeach Ceoil in Comhaltas. She is an accomplished musician, teacher and scholar with an enviable track record. [Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí!](#)

## **SCOIL ÉIGSE**

Thousands of aspiring young musicians have come through the ranks of Scoil Éigse – the Summer School preceding Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann – and have gone on to be household names in the world of Irish traditional Music.

Scoil Éigse 2023 will be in Mullingar from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> August. The Director is Kieran Hanrahan. Book early!

## **EDUCATION**

The unique 5-strand Education Programme of Comhaltas – from local class (1,500 weekly) to world stage – was widely acknowledged at the MUSIC & DRAMA EDUCATION EXPO in London in February. The Comhaltas stand at the EXPO was inundated with queries and interest. Comhaltas was represented by Majella Bartley, Oisín MacDiarmada and Paddy Callaghan.

## **FÉILE LÁ**

### **FHÉILE PÁDRAIG**

Comhaltas units throughout the world will be celebrating St. Patrick's week in their adopted countries. Minister Catherine Martin met up with our Comhaltas colleagues in San Diego. Comhaltas will also send a star group to Brussels for their festivities. They are Siobhán Ní Chonoráin (flute), Pádraig Donlon (uilleann pipes), Fionula Donlon (harpist), Maura Walsh (concertina) Liam Guiney (dance and bodhrán), and Caelainn McGrath (Dance).

The group will link up with our branch in Brussels and also perform at the Irish Embassy.

## **JAPAN AND ST. BRIGID**

You may have seen online the wonderful pictures of our Comhaltas colleagues in Tokyo displaying the St. Brigid's Crosses which they made for the St. Brigid's festivities this year. Is it a case of 'being more Irish than the Irish themselves'?

Our Tokyo Comhaltas branch is one of the foremost branches in the world. Do you remember when they sent two most impressive Céilí Bands to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Ennis and got a historic prolonged standing ovation from the 2,000 strong audience.

## **TTCT**

A reminder that the TTCT Diploma Course for teachers will be held at Cultúrlann na hÉireann on the 23<sup>rd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Over 850 teachers from Ireland and abroad have now qualified to date. Their work and influence can be seen throughout the community. It is an intensive course with accomplished instructors and assessors.

## **COMHDHÁIL 2023**

The Annual Congress of Comhaltas will be held at Cultúrlann na hÉireann on the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> May. Delegates from Ireland and abroad will assemble to assess progress and plan for the future.

**ANNUAL REPORT** The Annual Report of our cultural movement is now available. The 128 page document is an acknowledgment of the achievements delivered by a dedicated corps of volunteers.

As Uactarán na hÉireann Michael D. Higgins says in the Foreword:

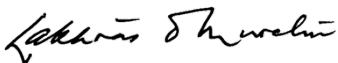
*'Volunteerism and generosity of spirit are the cornerstones of Comhaltas, and such values are manifest at the Fleadh. Its network of branches and events are underpinned by a corps of upwards on 50,000 volunteers. Each of these individuals plays a part in ensuring the vibrancy of the traditional living arts and sharing its appreciation with the upcoming generation of performers.'*

**PROSPECTUS** A dedicated team have for the last number of months been working on a Comhaltas Prospectus which sets out the Comhaltas cultural journey since 1951 and provides a roadmap for the future up to 2030. It is now at an advanced stage and it is expected that it will be launched in April of this year.

**AN GHAEILGE** Tá an Ghaeilge lárnach in obair An Chomhaltais. The Irish language is central to all Comhaltas activities. Our national Coiste Gaeilge are now planning a further extension of our work in this area. Bí linn. Labhair Gaeilge linn. [Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam](#). A country without a language is a country without a soul.

**SLÁN AGUS BUÍOCHAS** Míle buíochas as ucht bhúr dtacaíochta. We are so appreciative of all the support and assistance which we receive from so many people. [Is i dteannta a chéile is fearr sin](#). Unity is strength.

Le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú  
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ