

## THE LIVING TRADITION

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### **COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS**

#### **Communication No. 15**

In compliance with Government guidelines and restrictions in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, Comhaltas announced at an early stage that Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, scheduled for Mullingar next August, was cancelled. The Fleadh is one of the biggest cultural events in the world. It attracted 750,000 people from all over the world last year and generated over €50 million for the region.

In addition to the Fleadh, Comhaltas also cancelled a major part of our cultural programme including:

- County and Provincial Fleadhanna;
- 40 community festivals;
- Annual Congress;
- SCT examinations for the present;
- Classes for the present- except online;
- Summer SEISIÚN programme;
- Closure of 18 cultural centres.

This is a severe blow for the cultural and economic life of many communities.

However, Comhaltas is already planning a programme of renewal and enhancement for all our activities and events at home and abroad. Fleadh 2021 is again scheduled for Mullingar – ‘bigger and better’. Ar aghaidh leis an gceol!

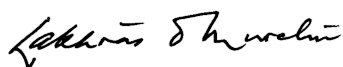
- The Buachoiste has received many suggestions for ways to keep the wheels turning in the uncertain times ahead. There are many examples at home and abroad of Comhaltas initiatives and creativity in these difficult times. Peter Denmead has suggested that, when we emerge from the crisis, CEOL AN GHEIMHRIDH is a ready-made and entertaining event to provide a platform for young performers, particularly during the winter months. This is operated successfully at present by Comhairle na Mumhan. Perhaps other provinces would like to join. We are sure that the ever-efficient Rúnaí na Mumhan, Assunta, would advise where required. Is fearr rith maith ná drochsheasamh!
- Is there an opportunity these days to add to our ‘cúpla focal’ of spoken Irish? Could we add a new word, phrase or sentence each day or even a seanfhocal? Do we need help or, as they say in ‘Who wants to be a millionaire’, could you phone a friend? As the Chinese proverb reminds us ‘a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step’. Beatha teanga í a labhairt.

- In the last few days, I had an interesting phone call from Bill McEvoy in America. The 97 year young Bill, like ourselves, is in lock down but he is still planning for Comhaltas in the future. He is very impressed with all the young musicians who are coming to the fore in recent years. Bill is one of the main architects of Comhaltas which is now vibrant throughout North America.
- The North American Comhaltas Convention is one of the big cultural events of the year. Unfortunately, like many of our events, this year's Convention, scheduled for San Francisco, had to be cancelled at very short notice. I know that the ever-dependable Joannie Scanlon, Josephine Brennan and their team will leave no stone unturned to restart the engine and provide an even bigger and better cultural experience. Comhaltas in America is one of the brightest jewels in the crown.
- The determined and efficient duo Patrick Morrison and Siobhán Ní Chonoráin are burning the mid-night oil to help keep the diaspora flame burning brightly. Our people and the friends of Ireland throughout the world – who are facing severe challenges – deserve all our support. They are an important cog in the cultural wheel and central to the story of Ireland. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are very supportive of our work and it is hoped that a mechanism can be devised to fill any gaps which require attention. Sa chás seo, tá sé fíor gur glas iad na cnoic i bhfad uainn – indeed, far away hills are green!
- A virtual Fleadh! The idea is gaining momentum. Not the Fleadh as we know it but an unique celebration of what places the Fleadh at the very heart of our cultural legacy. Watch this space!
- Bernard O' Sullivan is truly a man for all seasons – ready to fill the bearna baol as with the present crisis. While observing all guidelines and restrictions, the Tipperary man keeps an eye on Cultúrlann na hÉireann and fields the ball as required! Sa chás seo nil an t-íománaí is fearr ar an gcláí.

The Buanchoiste send their best wishes and appreciation to all our members, families and supporters who in these critical times display such tenacity and unity of purpose. CEOL AGUS GAOL – music and friendship. This has stood us well in the past and will again in the future. As we approach our 70<sup>th</sup> birthday which we will celebrate, le cúnamh Dé, in Mullingar next year, we are inspired by all the great stories of service by thousands of people in the villages, towns and cities of Ireland and among our diaspora throughout the world – a culmination of which was 750,000 people at Fleadh 2019 in Drogheda.

Níos mó ná riamh, beidh beart de réir ár mbriathar ag teastáil. Tuigimid go maith gur ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas sinn. Amach anseo, beidh daoine in isle brí agus beidh easpa dóchais chómh maith. Is féidir linn sa Chomhaltas daoine a spreagadh len ár gcultúr lárnach san ath-neartú. Is féidir linn daoine a spreagadh agus dóchas a chothú. Sin mar a bhí agus sin mar a bheidh arís. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Mise, le mór-mheas,




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Labhrás Ó Murchú  
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ