

THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

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There is an interesting seanfhocal (proverb) 'Is olc í an ghaoth nach séideann maith do dhuine éigin' (It is an ill wind that doesn't blow good to someone). It is true that the present crisis, for all its terrible tragedy and devastation, has revealed the goodness, kindness, selflessness, charity and courage of so many people. This has inspired communities and countries to even greater and exceptional effort in the battle to combat the common enemy.

In Comhaltas, too, we have been impressed and inspired by many acts of generosity of spirit; initiatives at home and abroad that keep the lines of communication open; on-line projects to fill the vacuum and help to keep the music – and the mind – in tune. It seems to be business as usual but in a different way. This is the new normal at least for the present and those who make it possible will long be remembered.

- Birr is the hometown of our Ardchisteoir Pádraig Ó Dufaigh. Here he relates what Craobh Biorra have been doing in these difficult times:
Having been deprived of the opportunity to get together for their regular monthly session of music, due to the Covid19 virus, the musicians of the branch, not to be outdone, hit on a novel idea. Drawing on the technical expertise of David Kinsella and Richard Kennedy they put together a virtual session which featured many of the musicians who contribute to the monthly gatherings and recorded it on video. This can be accessed on the Birr Comhaltas Facebook and the title of the clip is "The Sallygardens in Lockdown". In addition, David has put up a number of tuition pieces for the benefit of the pupils of the music class on the branch web-site "birrcomhaltas.net".
- Hey seanachaí, tell us a story! During this time of isolation, Comhaltas in Britain is calling storytellers and seanachaíaithe to keep the tradition of Irish storytelling alive. While we might all be at home and gathered around our own fireside during this time, through modern technology we can still share a story or two to keep friends entertained and while away the hours.

So, Comhaltas in Britain are organising 2 competitions for Irish storytellers of all ages – one competition in the English language and one competition for stories as Gaeilge.

- If you would like more information on LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN by Dún Uladh – the Comhaltas Regional Resource Centre in Ulster – just email music@dunuladh.ie. Brendan McAleer will be delighted to hear from you and tell you of the online traditional music classes.
- The upcoming issue of TREOIR – which has 35,000 readers and is also available online – will be a bumper issue. Included will be features such as: 'Mullingar promises Bigger and Better'; 'Ború meets Buddha in Bangkok'; 'Musical Memories of the Garda Céilí Band'; 'Eternal Poetry of the Hill Farmers';

'The Bard of Cullybackey'; 'The Story of an Immigrant'; 'Michael Wallace – Prince of Pipers'; 'Who would be an adjudicator'; 'The Doolough Tragedy'; 'The Russian Connection'; 'A Renewal of the Old Gaelic Spirit'; 'Songs of Emigration'; 'Aiseirí na nGael'; 'A New Golden Age'; and much more. This issue will be published in June.

- An tArdrúnaí Tomás Ó Maoldomhnaigh has an excellent idea of one new SEANFHOCAL each day so Comhaltas is now posting one SEANFHOCAL daily on www.comhaltas.ie to promote Gaeilge as well as the other aspects of our traditions and we would like to assist students and learners of Gaeilge by drawing your attention to the “**FOCAL AR FHOCAL**” series – a language learning programme by Craobh Chualann, which is available as on www.comhaltas.ie/pressroom/downloads.
- We have received the sad news that Billy Greenall, the much respected Irish traditional musician, has passed away. A native of St. Helens in Britain, Billy came to live in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, some years ago. He collaborated with the late Nora Butler on one of her CDs. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal ceolmhar.
- Limerick CCÉ PRO, Séamus Ó hAirtnéide has issued an invitation to all musicians, singers, dancers and storytellers, past and present, members of Limerick Craobhacha to record and submit video clips for posting to the Limerick Facebook page www.facebook.com/LimerickCCE in the run-up to what were to be the Limerick Fleadh dates at end of May.
- The ever-enthusiastic Joe Connaire, Cathaoirleach of Fleadh 2020/2021 in Mullingar, has sent a message complimenting Chicago's Kell Chole and her team for creating an excellent event to fill a gap due to the cancellation of the Midwest Regional Fleadh. Uachtarán Vincent Jordan also shared the same sentiments. Joe and Vincent participated in this most successful Zoom call.

Joe said that due to the disappointment of so many musicians, dancers, singers and storytellers worldwide following the cancellation of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Kell and her team decided to invite the world to participate in an eComórtas Cheoil and the response was overwhelming. It showed the strength of Comhaltas worldwide, Joe said.

“It was a joy”, Joe said, “to be involved in a Zoom call that lasted over two hours. I pointed out how important the Diaspora is to Comhaltas and to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and I welcomed each and everyone of them across the globe to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Comhaltas in Mullingar in August 2021.

- Fleadh Nua Goes Online to Raise Funds for Trócaire. Like many other events around the county, this year's Fleadh Nua in Ennis has been cancelled due to Covid-19. However, not to disappoint the thousands of regular Fleadhgoers from around the country and overseas, the organisers of the festival are putting together an online programme, of traditional music, song and dance and seeking to raise much needed funds for Trócaire in the process.

“When people heard that this year's Fleadh wouldn't be going ahead we received many messages from those who attend the event every year, saying how sad they were not to be able to come to Ennis for Fleadh Nua 2020, especially since this year's event had been scheduled for the June Bank Holiday weekend.” said Frank Whelan, Cathaoirleach of Fleadh Nua.

But to ensure that fans of the festival will not miss out on the Fleadh Nua experience, the event will take to Facebook, with highlights of some of the best of the festival over the years.

“Fleadh Nua has been running in Ennis for over forty years now and we are fortunate in the Cois na hAbhna Archive to have video and film of some of the Fleadhanna down through the years.”

“Everyone of a certain age remembers the huge Fleadhs in the 1970’s and the cultural parades through the town were always a highlight of the festival in the 70s, 80’s and 90’s. And of course Fleadh Nua has always attracted the best of traditional musicians from all over Ireland and abroad and we are fortunate to have recordings of some of these performances going back over the years”, according to Frank Whelan.

Scheduled to coincide with the planned week of the festival from Sunday 24th May to Monday 1st June, the videos will be uploaded daily at 8 pm and will feature recordings of musicians and singers who have performed down through the years including Fleadh favourites such as Chris Droney and Kitty Linnane, Joe Burke, The Liverpool Céilí Band, The Kilfenora and The Tulla, The Chieftains, Des Mulkere and Charlie Harris, Vincent Griffin, Seamus Connolly, Noel Hill, the legendary Robbie McMahon and many others.

“It’s a great opportunity to relive some of the magic moments of Fleadh Nua from the early days right up to the present but you’ll also have the opportunity to support a great cause by making a voluntary donation to ‘Trad For Trócaire’ to support the great work of the charity around the world, especially at this time. Since it started, ‘Trad for Trócaire’, in association with Comhaltas, has raised hundreds of thousands of Euro to support their work throughout the developing world. This year, because the schools have been closed, Trócaire’s annual Lenten Campaign, with the Trócaire boxes, has been badly hit, so we’re hoping that visitors to our Facebook Fleadh, if you can, might contribute a bit to help out with what is a very good cause”, added Frank Whelan.

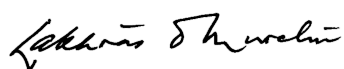
The online Fleadh can be found on the Fleadh Nua Facebook Page from Sunday 24th May to Monday 1st of June. Bigí Linn!

For more information contact Frank Whelan on 086 8260300.

Is iontach go deo an ghníomhaíocht atá ar siúl agus an ceol atá á sheinm ar fud na cruinne ag muintir An Chomhaltais na laethe seo. Ní ceol amháin atá a shaothrú acu ach chomh maith tá amhránaíocht, scéalaíocht, damhsa agus Gaeilge freisin. Tá sé cosúil le Fleadh na Cruinne gach lá! Beidh an gaisce seo go mór faoi bhláth ar AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN.

Slán go fóill.

Mise, le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ