



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 21

Yes, it is hard to believe that we have reached No. 21 covering almost four months of challenge and achievement. Now we can all see the light at the end of the tunnel. Together we will navigate this final journey until we emerge into brighter times. **Is fearr mall ná go brách.** Better late than never. The Buanchoiste will now meet on the 30th June to consider the way forward for Comhaltas based on the most up-to-date information. Hopefully, we will then be in a position to provide specific guidelines for recommencement of some activities.

The crisis, for all its intensity, has demonstrated the tenacity, positivity and initiative of our members and units. This is something of which we can be justly proud and it will stand us well on **AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN.**

- On our extraordinary journey, the Buanchoiste have met some remarkable people who have encouraged and inspired us in our efforts to keep the boat floating. Recently, an tUachtarán Vincent Jordan and Ardchomhairle member Séamus Brogan introduced me to another one of these remarkable and inspirational young people. Here, I will let Ellen tell you the story:

At our convention in February we had an interesting discussion on the importance of mental health and how Comhaltas in Britain could build on the work they have done with Dr Josie Nugent regarding dementia. With the announcement of lockdown and the cancellation of the Fleadhs, Comhaltas in Britain were looking at alternative opportunities for members. Michelle O'Leary contacted me as she knew I delivered Mental Health training and asked if I would be willing to put something together for Comhaltas. I was able to do this as the awarding body I certify the training through had announced that courses could now be delivered via distance learning and through zoom. Everyone who successfully completes the course will be awarded a Level 3 (Ofqual regulated) Award in Supervising First Aid for Mental Health. As I have added a module specific to Comhaltas and how Comhaltas can support members through a mental health crisis the certificates will also have the Comhaltas logo included.

First Aid for Mental Health is about raising awareness and understanding of mental health, living with a mental health condition and how to support someone through a mental health crisis. Participants learn about the most common mental health conditions and signs and symptoms that might indicate the conditions. We also explore what people can do in their families, workplaces and of course Comhaltas branches to support someone during a crisis. Participants are encouraged to actively participate in the course and I have been humbled by the emails, text and phone calls I have received from participants sharing part of their story and thanking me for sharing mine. Throughout the course misconceptions, myths and social stigmas around mental health are addressed to ensure that participants have accurate information and can support correctly and signpost them to additional help and support. The full list of topics can be found at: <https://1staid4everyone.co.uk/supervising-first-aid-for-mental-health> and is for everyone over 16.

In addition to the adult course I am aware of the importance of ensuring that our young people understand the importance of talking about how they are feeling and how to ask for help, for themselves or a friend. For this reason I have designed a course that is aimed at 12-16 year olds to understand mental health, how to live a healthy lifestyle (including educating them about alcohol, drugs and eating disorders) and how to cope with life stressors, including exams. At present young people learn about these things through experimentation or internet searches and some of the information that is available is worrying. It is important, therefore, that young people are properly educated to ensure the best mental health possible. Full details of the youth course are at: <https://1staid4everyone.co.uk/youth-mental-health>

In the mental health world, I am considered to be a 'lived experience practitioner'. This means that I have diagnosed mental health conditions and understand what happens during a crisis, including being admitted to hospital. I have experience of the mental health services in both the UK and Ireland. At present I can deliver and certify both courses world wide through the wonders of zoom and hope, when things return to normal, to be able to offer them as face to face courses.

When in Ireland I was a member of Cleary Coyne Comhaltas and youth officer for Mayo and now am the secretary for the North London branch. Comhaltas has played a big role in rebuilding my mental health and has given me an incredible network of people whom I can call on and that I know have always been at the other end of the phone if needed. It is brilliant to be able to give something back to a community who has given me so much. If any branches, counties, regions or provinces are interested in the training they can contact me at 1staid4everyone@gmail.com and I will be happy to discuss everything with them.

I am sure you will, like me, be so proud that we have young people of the calibre of Ellen in our cultural movement. Míle buíochas, Ellen, agus go raibh Rath Dé ort i gcónaí.

- Áine Ní Aodha, Rúnaí Coiste Chontae an Chláir has more good news for us:

“An update on Comhaltas activity from Clare County Board.

This past weekend Fleadh Cheoil an Chlair was to take place in Lisdoonvarna. However, due to Covid-19 this did not happen so instead we held Fleadh an Chlair Virtual Fleadh online. From 10am Saturday until 7pm Sunday, we had 122 Video clips of excellent Music, Song and Recitation. Last weekend we had 22 dancing clips so a total of 144 video clips were published on Clare Comhaltas Facebook page. We had thousands of hits on the page and are delighted with the response. Since March we have also held a family music competition, 20 Ceist as Gaeilge competition and a singing competition, all of which had good entries and were well received by the public.

“We now look forward to returning to normal Comhaltas activity in the near future and to Fleadh an Chláir 2021, Fleadh na Mumhan and Fleadh na hÉireann 2021.”

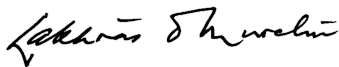
Up the Banner! Is fearr an t-aon ghníomh amháin ná míle focal. Action speaks louder than words. Well done.

- On top of all its other commitments and activities – nationwide and worldwide – Comhaltas co-operated with ‘Cruinniú na nÓg’ and ‘Ode to Joy’. Our units delivered many fine and creative contributions and Mary Kelly (CCÉ) joined with uilleann piper Neilidh Mulligan (NPU) to commence the performance with orchestra representatives at the launch of ‘Ode to Joy’. Comhgháirdeas.

We may have passed the longest day in the year on the 21st June but, as we see light at the end of the tunnel, there is an obvious spring in our step. We are all looking forward in anticipation to the music making, camaraderie, creativity and friendship which characterise Comhaltas. But we will be ever-conscious of the wellbeing of all participants and supporters.

Is maith an scéalaí an aimsir. Time is a good storyteller!

Mise, le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ