



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 23

Anois teacht an Earraigh beidh an lá ag dul chun síneadh.... Those of a certain age may recall those words from their school days. We were reminded that with the coming of Spring the days get longer. We too look forward to Spring and the renewal which it signifies.

We hear now of the plans for classes, Fleadhanna, SCT, TTCT, AGMs, opening of Cultural Centres and so much more. The wheels will be well oiled in preparation for 2021.

Tar éis doininne tig soineann. After bad weather come fine skies.

- I was speaking to Tadhg Ó Maolcatha, Cathaoirleach of Comhairle na Mumhan CCÉ, and he was updating me about the plans for a virtual celebration of Fleadh na Mumhan. Now we have more details from the PRO Seán Walsh which he would like to share with you as follows:

While we won't be able to gather in Newcastle West this July for Fleadh Cheoil na Mumhan 2020, Comhairle na Mumhan invite you to join us online on the Fleadh weekend July 17-19 as we hold a virtual celebration of Fleadh na Mumhan 2020. We will bring you a flavour of the great West Limerick welcome all visitors to Newcastle West would have experienced at the Fleadh by revisiting the 2007 Munster Fleadh which took place in Newcastle West, with a collection of photo and video archives. Other online events will include a virtual edition of our annual Scoil Fonn agus Amhráin workshops, a tutorial in Slide and Polka playing from renowned West Limerick musician Donal Murphy, a singers night, concerts and an online show from each County performed by Comhaltas branch members who would have competed at Fleadh na Mumhan in the past. The virtual Munster Fleadh will be available to view live on www.facebook.com/munsterfleadhcheoil or www.munstercomhaltas.ie

- **60,000 EXAMS IN SCRÚDÚ CEOL TÍRE.** This Comhaltas examination project is hugely successful and popular. There are many queries as to when the SCT may restart following its disruption during the COVID-19 crisis. The Director of the SCT is the well known and highly respected musician Óisín MacDiarmada who together with the SCT Board have prepared initial plans for recommencement of examinations.

The administrative engine for the SCT is based in CLASAC, the magnificent Regional Resource Centre of Comhaltas. The kingpin here is Belfast man Jim McAllister who can now share the SCT plans with us:

Firstly, to apologise for the delay in sending this latest notification regarding the 2020 SCT Exams.

We have been waiting to see if the latest Government guidelines would offer us a window of opportunity to hold exams in late summer or early autumn and, at the same time, ensure that all Teachers would have adequate time to facilitate the exam preparation that is required. The SCT Board are also very conscious of the safety of candidates being brought into an examination room that has possibly not been sanitised to a proper level and the potential exposure of examiners, to 25 or 30 different candidates in any one day.

The SCT Board, after lengthy discussion and having looked at various options have reached the following decision:

- **All Exams from Elementary 1 to Grade 5 will be cancelled for 2020.**
 - **All candidates for these grades will be given a PASS mark and will be permitted to skip to the next level for 2021. Anyone who wishes to undertake the Exam they entered for this year, will of course be permitted to do so in 2021.**
 - **Please note that Grade 5 candidates will only be permitted to undertake a Grade 6 exam if they meet the minimum age requirements as per the syllabus.**
 - **Candidates already entered for 2020 exams will remain on the system and the SCT administration office will enter them for the next level.**
 - **All fees already paid will accrue for the 2021 exams. However, no increase in fee will be levied on candidates for skipping the grade. Any increase in fees for this skip will be borne by the SCT Examination system – e.g. If a candidate was due to sit a Grade 2 exam @€30, they will undertake a Grade 3 exam for the same price for 2021, instead of the normal fee of €35.**
 - **As candidates are not permitted to skip at Grades 6,7 and 8, candidates registered will have their examinations scheduled for mid-September to mid- October 2020. The SCT Board are very conscious that many of these candidates are also undertaking various state exams and have a tight time schedule. As these candidates account for less than 10% of the total number of exams for 2020, it will be possible to complete these exams this year, within the current Government guidelines.**
 - **Detailed information relating to Grade 6,7 and 8 exams will be sent to the appropriate Entrants within the next 14 days.**
- **Great progress is being made with the VIRTUAL FLEADH on TG4 which will be screened on four nights, 6th to the 9th August, to coincide with what would have been the cancelled Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar. The series will span the years past and present. In addition to the nationwide reach of Comhaltas, it will also connect with the Comhaltas global family.**

We are also hearing that there may be further tv coverage from past Fleadhanna. Watch this space.

- **TRAD BY THE SEA.** Craobh Loch Garman of Comhaltas is one of those branches that is noted for innovation and creativity. Nor did the crisis dim the vision and determination of the boys and girls of Wexford. I will let Senan O' Reilly tell you the full story:

Members and friends of Craobh Loch Garman Comhaltas recently had their first musical gathering since the start of lockdown. On the evening of Wednesday, June 24, a large group of musicians and music-lovers converged beneath the old canon at Rosslare Strand. Armed with deck-chairs and instruments they set themselves up in a large circle, tuned up and, with an energetic full tide providing the background sounds, proceeded to make *ceol binn*.

Barbara Walsh: "Having spent circa 4 months as a scientist working on COVID19 I was, like *gach duine eile*, 'ag fáil bháis don cheol'. So one Friday night during lockdown, myself and three fellow musicians, Damien Beatty, Richie Mahony and Jim Lacey, were trading ideas on WhatsApp on how best to meet up safely (social distancing, etc) to play a few tunes. Damien lives in Rosslare and he suggested the beautiful beachside Crimean War Monument area. We met up to survey the site and decided there and then to go for a 'Roving Session' with a difference."

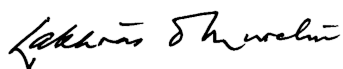
CLG President Paddy Berry was delighted with the success of the evening. He expressed the view of everyone present in saying that it felt great to be back together again playing music and singing songs.

Tá súil ag gach duine sa chraobh go bhfuil an mhallacht briste anois agus go mbeidh siad ag déanamh ceol álainn le chéile ó seo amach.

Aire i gcónaí! Safety first! This will be our motto as we open the shutters to let in the light so we can make our way to brighter times. **Is fearr go cúramach ná go deo.** Better carefully than never. There has been such inspiring leadership and activity throughout the Comhaltas movement over the last four months that the road map for the future is becoming clearer.

Go raibh ceol, aoibhneas agus dóchas agaibh. Go raibh Rath Dé oraibh agus ar bhúr gcúram.

Mise, le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ