



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS Communication No. 26

[An ceart do dhaoine a thuill é](#). Give due to the ones who have earned it. You know them. They are in every village, town and city in Ireland and in many places worldwide. They have been the visionaries, initiators, innovators and doers. In Comhaltas, we saw the fruits of their endeavours on television and the many social media platforms. [Molann obair an duine](#). Work certainly praises the doer.

- MEMBERSHIP

These are the same people who will plan and work unceasingly to keep the wheels oiled and turning. We will again experience this at the Branch AGMs. The doers will not ask why but why not. They will do everything possible to overcome the logistical challenges, to keep our membership intact for better days. [Nuair a stadann an ceol stopann an rince](#). When the music ceases the dancing stops. This won't happen, le cúnamh Dé, in Comhaltas. Perhaps this is because we experience that old seanfhocal [Spléachadh isteach i bhflaithis Dé an ceol](#). Music is a glimpse of heaven!

- Following on from the most recent set of guidelines issued by the Government it is important to highlight the following: at present all Comhaltas indoor activities are confined to 6 people attending, this includes classes.

It is imperative that all units follow the guidelines of no more than 6 people attending an indoor event while also adhering to current social distancing guidelines.

We hope that there will be some positive developments on these guidelines post 13th of September.

- Our visits to Listowel, Ballina and Enniscorthy, as we look back on Fleadhanna of other years, is a reminder of the treasure we possess. TG4 are transmitting the wonderful Forefront programmes – full of talent, vitality and community celebration. [Bia don chorp, deoch don bheol, comhrá, damhsa agus ceol](#). Food for the body, drink for the lips, chat, dancing and music. Who could want more?
- It was Stephen Conroy – that doyen of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Camross, Co. Laois – who first brought Robert Harvey to my attention. He was then a young boy taking his first tentative steps into the wonderful world of our traditional music. Robert's journey since then has been marked with many milestones of achievement and academic success.

It came as no surprise to me that Robert Harvey would be the one to delve into the unique realm of whistling – that much underestimated musicianship. Yet, whistling like lilting and sean-nós dancing fascinates audiences and very often gets rapturous applause. Robert, through his own impressive knowledge of our native music and his keen observation and respect for what is unique and special, was the one to place whistling on the pedestal it justly deserves.

I have always cherished whistling as it can be so spontaneous, without encumbrance, and very often reflects the mood of the whistler at a given moment. When I was young, I thought I was destined for whistling greatness. An Bráthar Bric heard me whistling in the school yard and must have thought – as no one else did – that I had some special talent. He reported his discovery to An Bráthar Ó Nualáin, the music teacher. I was summoned to his class to give a grand performance but not a note would pass my lips! So ended my dream but not my regard for whistling.

Comhaltas, from its earliest days, recognised the significance of whistling and included it in Fleadh competitions. Dublin County Board and Meitheal also appreciated whistling and knew that Robert Harvey was the one to give it due and scholarly recognition.

Tá sé fíor nach féidir a bheith ag feadaíl agus ag ithe mine! Ach tá sé fíor freisin go dtugann an feadaire an-phléisiúr do dhaoine go bhfuil meas acu ar ár gceol traidisiúnta. Tá éacht déanta ag Robert Harvey agus táimid go léir faoi chomaoin aige.

- Our North America PRO Paul Keating tells us that CCÉ North America had been invited to participate in a big online day focusing on the Irish Community and the impact of the Coronavirus organized by the Irish Echo newspaper published in New York (the oldest Irish American newspaper). We submitted a brief video of CCÉ activities and members here for inclusion in the virtual conference called “The Big Irish Campfire” and also our Provincial Chairman Frankie McCormick was invited to be a panellist discussing what the future will look like for major Irish events.

Last fall, Paul was invited to give a presentation on Comhaltas in North America at the O’ Flaherty Retreat held outside of Dallas Texas. The four day weekend is one of the most ambitious and highly regarded events in the USA devoted to promoting and participating in traditional Irish music, song and dance and like everyone else this year, they have moved online for the 2020 event featuring a wide range of classes, lectures or talks and concerts with a stellar group of artists and instructors.

As the last major instructional camp slated to begin in late October, they have observed other examples at online programming and incorporated some new wrinkles to reflect how the world has mastered its virtual pathway. Full details at: <https://oflahertyretreat.org/>

- **CCÉ response to Covid-19 delivered by Informed Minds Training and Consultancy with Dún Uladh Cultural Heritage Centre**

A programme has been initiated by the Comhaltas Dún Uladh Cultural Heritage Centre alongside Informed Minds Training & Consultancy as a CCÉ response to COVID-19 with a focus on family mental health and wellbeing. It is primarily focused on promoting connection, communication and positive mental health within the CCÉ family across Ireland.

COVID-19 has meant many families have faced challenges and whilst everyone has adapted and coped in their own way, many of us have felt a sense of loss in the connection and belonging that we have benefited from as CCÉ members and attending its events and Fleadhanna. The aim of the programme is to recreate some of the connection, fun, laughter, belonging and joy that is always at the forefront of the All-Ireland Fleadh and CCÉ activities in general.

Informed Minds Training & Consultancy will be sharing and exploring simple tools and techniques which promote positive mental health wellness with a healthy dose of challenge and competitiveness which is at the core of our All Ireland and regional Fleadhanna. This is an opportunity to reflect, refocus and reconnect with yourselves and each other but most importantly smile, have fun and reengage with CCÉ.

If you are interested in signing up to the six week program or would like further information, please get in touch at info@dunuladh.ie or call 028 8224 2777.

- **MILLIONS 'ATTEND' FLEADH**

Global, Irish and Fleadh Ceoil communities celebrated a virtual fleadh in style with TG4 and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. Under normal circumstances, Fleadh Ceoil na hÉireann would have been in Mullingar with thousands travelling to enjoy 'The Homecoming'. **Fleadh2020** instead was a 4-night celebration of the Fleadh Ceoil broadcast on TG4 in partnership with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, and online communities around the globe participated on social media using the hashtag **#Fleadh2020**.

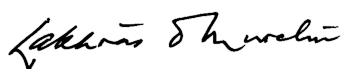
Fleadh2020 presented by Dáithí Ó Sé, Doireann Ní Ghlacáin and Kieran Hanrahan was recorded in Mullingar in late July to ensure compliance with Covid-19 guidelines. Irish traditional music giants, **Four Men and a Dog**, reunited for the special occasion as did legendary duo, **Steve Cooney** and **Séamus Begley**. Céilí bands featured in each programme, from Tyrone to Tokyo, **The Blackwater, The Moylurg, Crossfields and Tokyo Céilí Bands**. From Carna, in Connemara, siblings, **Séamus** and **Caoimhe Uí Fhlatharta's** haunting performance of the sean-nós song 'Eleanóir a' Rún' was the most talked about performance of the four nights with over 430,000 views on social media. Millions of people tuned in to the programmes on TG4 tv and social media platforms.

Director General of TG4, Alan Esslemont congratulated the success of the Fleadh saying 'TG4 congratulates the production team, musicians and participants who made 'Fleadh2020' happen this year, and to the Fleadh community who engaged online to make Fleadh2020 a vibrant celebration of music and culture, despite restrictions. Fleadh2020 reflects the partnership between TG4 and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann to showcase the community of talented musicians across the globe who participate in Fleadh Ceoil and we look forward to working together in 2021. Leanann an ceol.'

- The Buanchoiste and the Ardchomhairle have been meeting regularly via zoom. The camaraderie and solidarity at these meetings has been inspirational. **Brostaíonn aire intleacht**. Need hurries the intellect. As we said in a previous Communication, **Ní neart go cur le chéile**. Unity is strength. At our upcoming zoom meeting of the Ardchomhairle we will have Ceol an Fhómhair **AUTUMN SERENADE** conducted by an tUachtarán Vince Jordan! Members are advised to have their instruments nearby. **Is minic gur fearr ceol ná comhrá**. It is often that music is better than chat!

In closing Communication No. 26, we salute all those fine and generous people who refuse to be negative in the midst of crisis. They seize an opportunity and in positive response give of their time and talent to lift the spirits of our people in these difficult times. Bail ó Dhia oraibh go léir.

Mise, le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ