



COMHALTAS

THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS - CORONAVIRUS

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Táimid go mór faoi chomaoin ag na daoine a sheasann an fód in am an ghátair. Tugann siad dóchas agus misneach dúinn. Táimid go léir ag súil le 'fáinne geal an lae' nua, le cúnamh Dé. Idir an dá linn, bí dílis, díograiseach agus flaithiúil ar an ród seo romhainn.

Yes, the journey to the end of the tunnel may have taken longer than some people had anticipated. But many great and positive people are still working assiduously towards the light of better days. These people are an inspiration to us all. A new dawn awaits us.

- **AN INSPIRATION**

We have also been inspired by the initiative and creativity of many Comhaltas branches. The vacuum is being filled by large numbers of classes online. Major projects like the San Francisco Christmas Carol linking Comhaltas branches worldwide; Chicago's world musical dialogue; Britain's connecting of home with those who couldn't travel home for Christmas; the St. Louis Summer Camp online; all these and many more displaying the dedication of the Irish diaspora.

- **THE IRISH DIASPORA**

Patrick Morrison, our diaspora officer, brings us the good news as follows:

Across generations, and continents, few things have connected Irish communities abroad to Ireland and each other as closely as Irish traditional music. Emigrant communities have spread Irish music to all corners of the world and created fan bases on every continent.

As the largest group involved in the preservation and promotion of Irish traditional music, with hundreds of local branches around the world, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann plays an instrumental role in this thriving global movement.

Irish traditional musicians, singers, dancers and storytellers, worldwide have risen to the challenge of Covid-19. Harnessing their passion and creativity to lift their communities, they have found alternative ways to continue to nurture links with Ireland and Irish culture in a digital world.

Many local branches have found ways to move their music education into the digital realm. North American Comhaltas branches have continued teaching young Irish American musicians through online classes and sessions. Chicago-based Murphy Roche Branch's successful eComórtas attracted entrants from across the continent. St. Louis Irish Arts Virtual Summer Camp had 100 pupils+ engaging in an intensive virtual music course.

Comhaltas Japan has started 'let's practise' online sessions with Irish music, song and storytelling videos, step-dancing lessons, and lectures on O' Carolan and The Irish Harp Tradition.

Concerts have also had to adapt to new formats, which is resulting in a treasure trove of content available online. Comhaltas in Britain had 'FÉILE 2020 – the Comhaltas in Britain Big Virtual Weekend' with 30+ hours of free online-streamed content during this annual All Britain Fleadh weekend.

In Australia, Melbourne Comhaltas' 50th Anniversary year is celebrated through online music sessions and participation in the, now virtual, Portarlinton National Celtic Festival 2020. Music fans can also access world-class performances from the 2020 Fleadh Nua concerts on the event's Facebook page.

Finally, apart from their role in promoting Irish traditional music, Comhaltas branches are also central to Irish community life, and have joined in efforts to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic. In Britain, Comhaltas branches have linked with GAA clubs and Irish welfare organisations to support the Irish community through volunteering, maintaining contact with older isolated Irish people and providing mental health first aid training focused on supporting the Irish community during this difficult period. Other new initiatives include 'a tune a day', an online storytelling competition and 'Never too late to learn' online whistle classes – for those who 'always wanted to start playing but never had time'.

Further support and resources Comhaltas is offering to its followers, members and the Irish Diaspora, include its periodical *Treoir*, available online; the ComhaltasLive weekly programme and SCT Tutorials, based on CCÉ's Traditional Music Examination Syllabus. Comhaltas branches worldwide are embracing technology to join with musicians in Ireland and with their local Irish communities, keeping the Irish flame burning brightly.

- **FLEADHFEST**

This unique feast of Irish culture, which is planned for 2021, has certainly captured the imagination. 29 counties have already registered for this extravaganza where they will display the richness and vitality of their cultural heritage and legacy. Provinces likewise will have their own 'shopwindow'. The Irish diaspora will again be en fete for the occasion. Sligo, of course, will host the National FleadhFest with 12 hours of television coverage by TG4. The bandwagon rolls on and the band is in fine tune!

- **FLEADH TEAM 22**

The Ardchomhairle are considering and appraising the prospects for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in 2022. The consensus emerging is that there will be an All-Ireland Fleadh, together with County and Provincial Fleadhanna, next year. Among the aspects being considered – always with safety and prudence to the fore – are the different scenarios which may prevail and how they may impact on flexibility for adjustment even at short notice; the importance of competitions; our overseas supporters; and other considerations as they may emerge in an ever-changing environment.

The Ardchomhairle has appointed a specialist committee **FLEADH TEAM 22** to consider the foregoing and other relevant matters and report to the Ardchomhairle. The first meeting of **FLEADH TEAM 22** will be held on the 20th February.

- **TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE**

With volunteers in mind, Brendan McAleer of Dún Uladh has the following good news:

As we enter into the spring of 2021, we find ourselves now in an all too familiar setting, we are asked to stay at home and to do our part to help society. But as we know, there is a new dawn coming and we will soon be back out doing what we love. As this new dawn breaks, we must be prepared to meet the new challenges that branch life in our changed world will bring. With this in mind, Dún Uladh, the Comhaltas Regional Resource Centre in Omagh, are currently developing a series of training courses for Comhaltas volunteers everywhere.

Comhaltas is blessed with a wealth of enthusiastic and experienced volunteers across the organisation and we must continue to invest in these volunteers and arm them with the skills needed to secure the organisation now and into the future. Over the next few months training courses will be delivered online via webinars alongside downloadable resources. The training will cover good governance, fundraising, managing and recruiting volunteers, marketing and engagement and branch planning. These courses will allow volunteers to not only connect and engage with other volunteers, but also to develop their branch and create branch development plans for the incoming years.

While we know many branch committees are currently busy ensuring their membership and communities are safe and well, this hiatus of face to face activities is allowing us to develop our people, plan for the future and to build back stronger.

- **SLÍ na FÍRINNE**

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the many friends and supporters who have lost loved ones during these very difficult times.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.

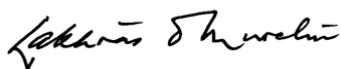
- **SLÁN GO FÓILL**

Our next issue of TREOIR, which is due in early March, will carry many stories of achievement, anecdotes, reminiscences, triumphs, an ród seo romhainn, music, songs and much more.

In the meantime, keep safe as we eagerly await a new dawn.

The Buanchóiste, who are 'minding the house' during the pandemic, extend their appreciation and best wishes to each and every one of you. Bail ó Dhia oraibh i gcónaí.

Le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ