



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS - CORONAVIRUS

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The wheels are turning and there is a steady focus on the coming months as we move towards the Summer. Counties are preparing for their virtual celebratory FLEADHFEST. Branches in villages, towns and cities are filling the vacuum caused by the pandemic with online music classes and other creative activities. Our worldwide Comhaltas colleagues continue to inspire us. There are many shoulders to the wheel. *Is fearr beagán cuidithe ná mórán trua.* A little help is better than a lot of sympathy!

- **FLEADHFEST**

More good news for Sligo. Almost 600 qualifiers have registered for the new FLEADHFEST championship. These performers are the cream of the crop which should make for an interesting friendly encounter. In Sligo, next August, most of the competitions will be streamed live. So, sit back and enjoy the Fireside Fleadh.

- **MINISTER HAS 'MINI COMHALTAS' IN HER HOUSE**

Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Deputy Catherine Martin responding to a debate on Tourism in Seanad Éireann said:

'With regard to Senator Burke's comments on the connectivity right across my sector, it is often said that there are so many sectors under my remit. To me it makes perfect sense and culture, arts and tourism are a really good fit. On Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, I have a mini Comhaltas Ceoltóirí in my house every Thursday when my children do harp, mandolin and button accordion by Zoom. It works. I am aware of the rich heritage of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and tapping into that. Indeed, when speaking of the connectivity right across my sectors, I will be making that connectivity part of my upcoming Department strategy.'

Senator Paddy Burke, former Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, in the Tourism debate said:

‘All members in both Houses received a brochure from Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, which has also gone through a very difficult period. The brochure states the challenge taken by Comhaltas in 1951 of reversing the fortunes of the cultural traditions was, by any yardstick, truly ambitious and that from the outset, Comhaltas reorganised to be the fundamental link between these traditions and the community and recognised the importance of providing a comprehensive response to the needs of the traditions. It started in 1951 and grew from strength to strength. It faces a crossroads again. In his letter to us, Labhrás Ó Murchú, a former member of the House who is the Ardstiúrthóir of Comhaltas, states the exceptional response of many people and branches to keep the music playing has left us with a memory and legacy that lifted our spirits and will, le cúnamh Dé, sustain us in our efforts for 2021.

This is a golden opportunity for the tourism industry to use Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.”

[Ina dhiaidh a chéile a tógadh na caisleáin.](#) One after the other the castles were built!

- **AMERICA IS UPBEAT**

Frankie McCormick is an Armagh man domiciled in America. He is the ever-active visionary Cathaoirleach of Comhaltas North America. In his recent missive, he strikes an upbeat chord which will find a resonance throughout our global cultural movement. Here he is in his own words:

“Spring is now upon us and the green shoots are everywhere to be seen, the days are longer and sunshine abounds. It sounds like a page from a novel and it could well be but thankfully it is our imminent reality. To add to our happiness, we find ourselves with glimmers of hope to be out and about thanks to all the vaccine opportunities and this is what has people excited. It has been a long year and especially long for those who found themselves without employment or homebound but we expect things to change for the better. We can now eat out, the music is starting up in some lucky neighbourhoods, movie theaters are opening, and the winter boots are put away for the season (hopefully).

It is still important to reach out and check on people. Who have you not seen in a while. Make a call or send a card. The art of writing letters has died out for most but everyone still loves to sit down to read someone’s words who have taken the time to write. Go to your local store and pick up a few cards so you can send a little note. Tomorrow is never promised, my friends, so don’t have any regrets.

The Pandemic has taken a toll on some of our Branches while others have weathered the storm and we hope that the effect of people getting vaccinated giving them the freedom to move around will help to stir some action there. As always, you have my phone number and my email address so don’t be afraid to reach out.

We find ourselves once more with no physical Convention but instead of laying down we have figured out a halfway point, a Virtual Convention. Now it won't have the normal trappings of a face to face weekend but it will have brilliant workshops, your regular Regional and Provincial Meetings and some memories of Conventions past. The news even better than that is that Convention 2022 in San Francisco has been locked in and we will have an update on our Facebook Virtual Convention page over the weekend of April 10th & 11th. You will find us at <https://www.facebook.com/cceconventionNA> .“

- **COUNTY SESSIONS**

In Northern Ireland, our Regional Resource Centre Dún Uladh and our Provincial Council Comhairle Uladh have accessed funding from the Education Authority to hold nightly County Youth Sessions via Zoom. Through the work of Comhaltas, there are thousands of young traditional performers throughout Ulster.

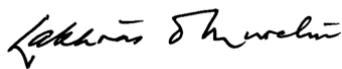
- **MÚINEANN GÁ SEIFT**

Necessity is the mother of invention! Perhaps the Comhaltas National Draw falls into this category. A few extra hundred euro may help to bring a project to fruition. The Draw could be the answer. The Ardchomhairle have decided that all the proceeds from the new Draw 2021 will remain with the selling units. [Tosach maith leath na hoibre](#). A good beginning is half the work.

- **SLÁN GO FÓILL**

[Sabháil an fómhar fad is a bhíonn an ghrian thuas](#). Save the harvest while the sun is up. Sin mar a bheidh sé linn-ne amach anseo. [Nuair a thosnaíonn an ceol bíonn na damhsóirí réidh](#). The dancers will be ready when the music starts. Táimid ag súil go mór le Samhradh lán de cheol, caidreamh agus cairdeas. Bí linn ar an ród seo romhainn.

Le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ