



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

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The dictionary definition of ‘Think-Tank’ is ‘a group of people expert in some field, regarded as a source of ideas and solutions to problems’. Never was this more appropriate than on the 19th June. Here we had the leadership of our cultural movement bringing their experience and vision to the table.

The Comhaltas Think-Tank na nGael didn’t disappoint. It was focused, positive and energising. The combined experience and responses to challenges was a lighthouse in these troubled times. Well done to all concerned.

- **FLEADHFEST ‘ A BRILLIANT IDEA’** It is nostalgic, uplifting and inspirational. Here is how Comhaltas stalwart Joannie O’ Leary of San Francisco Comhaltas puts it: ‘I cannot tell you how excited we are at the release of the FLEADHFEST videos for our West Region this week. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to present our story, which was greatly enhanced by our West Region Vice-Chair Mary Carey and her daughter Diana in Oregon...What a brilliant idea which has enticed us to start our own branch archives. Congratulations on a wonderfully successful project and thank you.’
- **SCOIL ÉIGSE...Briseann an dúchas....** We are delighted to announce that this year the Comhaltas Scoil Éigse will be delivered online via Zoom from Monday August 2nd to Thursday August 5th. The Director again is Kieran Hanrahan and Administrator Liza O’Shea.

We were accepting **online applications only** from 10am, Monday 5th July.

Classes fees are €25 per individual or €50 for a family household.

2 hours tuition per day are being offered, broken up into 2 classes of 60 minutes duration: 10am-11am & 11.30am-12.30pm (Irish time/UTC +1) via the zoom platform. The minimum age is 8. No beginner classes available.

Classes are being offered as follows:

Adult Mixed Instrument, Amhránaíocht, Banjo, Bodhrán, Button Accordion, Comhrá Gaeilge, Concertina, Fiddle, Flute, Harp, Piano Accompaniment, Piano Accordion, Uilleann Pipes, Rince ar an Sean-nós, Tin Whistle, Traditional Singing.

Where classes are full, please email scoileigse@comhaltas.ie to express an interest to join a waiting list. You will need to include your name, class preference, level and date of birth if you are under 18. Priority will be given to members of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

We will also be offering a series of afternoon Master Classes from Monday to Thursday. Tutor recitals and Club Éigse are also part of the unique Scoil Éigse experience.

There will be a dance and movement class for students with disabilities. There is no registration fee for this class. Email scoileigse@comhaltas.ie for registration information. Places are limited in this class so please register early to avoid disappointment.

- **SEISIÚN WILL BE BACK!....** The national entertainment scheme SEISIÚN is the longest running scheme of its kind. It has a huge appeal for visitors and locals alike. It provides a platform for young up-and-coming performers and it promotes community participation with emphasis on local traditions. It also leaves a lasting memory with the visitor who has participated in the cultural richness of the host country.

SEISIÚN is to be found in varying locations across the whole island of Ireland with the Comhaltas cultural centres very much to the fore.

The pandemic interrupted this long standing 'shop window of Irish culture'. But this will soon be remedied. Comhaltas is determined to get the show on the road again with a five-week season in the Autumn with emphasis on the prevailing health guidelines and safety. Bí ceolmhar. Bí linn.

- **FAMILY SESSION ON ZOOM....** The children of the Wicklow/Dublin area have been enjoying a weekly online session on Sunday afternoons and come from different branches including Bray, Roundwood, Beaumont, Pipers' Club and Craobh Naithí. We are extremely grateful to Sinéad and Alan Bailey who organise the bilingual event each week. The children have a chance to share music, song and dance. Each week one family organises a tráth na gceist also. It has proven invaluable in the encouragement of the young musicians to continue with their practice and sharing of music, and has also given them a chance to make new friends, albeit in a virtual sense at the moment.
- **AIRGEAD GAN STRÓ....** Tickets are now available for the upcoming Comhaltas national draw, which will take place in December 2021. There are thousands of euros in prizes to be won and the opportunity for branches to find that extra thousand of two thousand euro for some eagerly awaited project. Of course, engaging with the general public provides the opportunity to spread the 'cultural gospel' to a broader community. Bí i lár an aonaigh. The good news is that there is no cost to branches. The Ardchomhairle foots all the bills. And wait for it! The selling branch may keep the total proceeds collected! This is certainly the best show in town. Bí linn ar an ród seo romhainn.

- **THE UNSUNG HEROES....** Do you have good news or a special story you would like to share with the readership of the Comhaltas journal - TREOIR – 35,000 readers and also online? Perhaps there is a special innovation or achievement which could inspire others.

Every village, town and city is special with its own personalities. What about the unsung heroes? Has your branch an unsung hero whose praises you would like to sing? In many areas there are talented musicians, singers, dancers and storytellers who deserve a place in the spotlight. Why not shine it on them. They deserve it.

Then there is the up-and-coming young star who may be the household name of tomorrow. Mol an óige. These are just a few of many ideas for your TREOIR contribution. Ar aghaidh leat.

- **COMHGHÁIRDEAS, JOANIE....** The National Endowment for the Arts based in Washington D.C. has announced that Joanie Madden will receive one of its prestigious National Heritage Fellowships in 2021. The distinction is considered one of the top awards that a folk artist in the USA can receive and it with a \$25,000 honorarium in recognition of tradition-bearing work over her lifetime for the Irish American community by the New York City native.

The daughter of Helen Meade Madden from Miltown Malbay and Joe Madden of Portumna, County Galway, a much beloved accordion player who emigrated to America in 1960 and became one of the leading traditional musicians and band leaders in the Big Apple.

Joanie won a Senior All-Ireland Championship in 1984 on the whistle, the first American to accomplish that feat, was inducted into the CCÉ Mid-Atlantic Regional Hall of Fame in 2007 and received a CCÉ Bardic Award in 2016 is one of the foremost and recognizable women in Irish Traditional Music today.

- **EJIRO'S STORY....** Ejiro Ohare Stratton has been living in Ireland for over 30 years and Drogheda is now very much her home. She has a high-pressure job in our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, where she works as an Assistant Director of Nursing. In 2019 Ejiro volunteered at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the largest traditional Irish music and culture festival in the world, which was held in Drogheda. Despite the fact that she was working night shifts Ejiro still managed to make herself available across multiple shifts at Fleadh Cheoil and enjoyed it thoroughly. She spoke to a colleague down-town while on her volunteer shift.

'They thought I was crazy, they knew I had just come off a night shift. I told them the highlight of my day was putting on that volunteer t-shirt and I was having such a good time volunteering. I wouldn't miss it.'

Ejiro spoke about how volunteering at such a big community event was a great leveller.

'We are all the same when we are wearing our red t-shirts, all are equal, it doesn't matter what we look like or what we do, we are all volunteers together. The experience of inclusion and community integration was felt by everyone who came to celebrate this great festival. When I am in my volunteer t-shirt I am just a member of the team same, the same as everyone else, no matter what my colour or nationality, I am there to help the people who come up to me. I love it!'

- **COMHALTAS NA BREATAINE: MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS....**

Comhaltas na Breataine is currently running another Mental Health First Aid Course for members; interest in the current and previous course has been high from a broad range of committed participants including CCÉ's newly elected President, Éamonn Ó hArgáin, Uachtarán an Chomhaltais.

The course is a level 3 qualification (UK)/Level 6 (Scotland) and is run by 1st Aid 4 Everyone, led by an experienced instructor who is also a Comhaltas member. The course is subsidised and is open to Comhaltas members in Britain and Ireland as well as non-Comhaltas members of the Irish community.

Comhaltas na Breataine is also preparing wellness packs to be distributed to young members – to help raise spirits and provide a boost after the long lockdown period.

- **I LÁR AN CHEOIL....** You would find him in the middle of a session at the Fleadh Cheoil and other events. With piano accordion in his capable hands, his obvious love of Ireland's native music is infectious and inspires many to be part of the global cultural movement. We are, of course, referring to Vince Jordan who has just completed his second three-year term as Uachtarán of Comhaltas.

Vince, who lives in Birmingham with his wife and family, travelled extensively as Uachtarán to meet with the Comhaltas family, where there was always a céad míle fáilte for him. His gregarious and warm personality permeated many a musical gathering. He was noted for the 'cúpla focal' demonstrating his love for the Irish language.

Ann too is special. She graced many a company like the lady she truly is. Family is at the heart of Comhaltas and this is very true with the Jordan family, Bail ó Dhia ortha i gcónaí.

We look forward to meeting Vince and Ann ar an ród seo rómhainn. Music, friendship and camaraderie are the oxygen of our lives.

- **FLEADH CHEOIL NA hÉIREANN 2022....** It was the unanimous decision of the Comhaltas Ardchomhairle that the historic Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2022 would be hosted by Mullingar where the cultural movement was founded in 1951. Fleadh 2020 and Fleadh 2021, which were to be held in Mullingar, were cancelled due to the pandemic. Tributes were paid to the Westmeath FEC and County Council for their resilience and tenacity in bouncing back with such confidence and determination. Fleadh 22 will be a celebration of renewal and renaissance and promises to be a national and international gathering par excellence.

The Ardchomhairle has set up a specialist group FLEADH TEAM 22 to co-operate with and support the Fleadh Executive Committee and the County Council in delivering what promises to be one of the most memorable Fleadhanna of all time. Ceol agus cairdeas gan sárú. Bí linn.



- **SAN FRANCISCO IS BACK!**

It's happening and we're back on course. The CCE North American Convention is finally coming to San Francisco in April 2022.

Time to leave social distancing and days and months of mask wearing behind us as we prepare for the 2022 event, and we know you'll want to be part of it all, ready to sign up and to enjoy one of the U.S.'s favourite cities at the same time. Our Convention runs from April 21st to 24th, 2022.

San Francisco Cooley-Keegan Branch has been planning since 2017, (as most of you know we had to cancel in 2020 due to the pandemic) and now that life is moving back to normal, we're on schedule for next year's event. We, of course, remember those who passed or who lost loved ones as a result of the dreadful pandemic and share our continued love and support for everyone who endured through it all.

So, now we're getting ready to welcome you all, with open arms, helping hands and hugs at the ready, to an amazing weekend lineup of music, song, dance and above all "craic".

Our venue is the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Foster City, just 7 miles south of the San Francisco International Airport. The hotel offers complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport, along with free parking.



So, let's look at the lineup we're preparing. We have legendary Irish dance master, Pat Murphy, who will lead the set dance workshops. He will also lead the céilis on Friday and Saturday nights and on Sunday afternoon.

The wonderfully warm, talented, witty and seven-time All-Ireland champion accordion player, John Whelan, and his band will play for the céili after our Saturday night Banquet.

You can check out much more of our packed schedule on the Convention website: <https://cceconvention2022.com> and on the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cceconventionNA>

The hotel will be bustling with sessions throughout the day and into the early hours of the morning, late night set dancing on Friday and Saturday nights, the usual mix of vendors selling a variety of goods and musical instruments, and of course, there'll be a wealth of fun with song, dance and laughter filling all corners of the hotel.

On Sunday morning we'll have our traditional Mass, followed by brunch, a set dance workshop and a farewell céili. There'll be so much "ceol agus craic", you'll need a week or a month to recover.

Add to all of this, the chance to take a specially planned guided bus tour of this Golden Gated city, as you drive through Golden Gate Park and, of course, cross that mystical, magical Golden Gate bridge as you slide into Sausalito, just to be "sitting on the dock of the bay". Indeed, it's the city that inspired that great song. By the time you return home from this wonderful weekend, you'll most certainly leave "your heart in San Francisco". Make your bus tour reservations when you register for the Convention. Pick up and drop off at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

To make this a successful Convention, we need your participation, by purchasing a Convention package and booking your hotel room at the Foster City Crowne Plaza. Several registration packages are available, along with à la carte workshops, and a meals-only package. It is easy to register online using the link in our website: <https://cceconvention2022.com> A printable PDF version is available for those who are unable to register online, and all Branch Secretaries have access to the PDF. If you need assistance with Registration, please email our Registrar, Michael Jones at: mj@ieee.org (preferred method) or phone him at 1-831-596-8495 (after 10:00am Pacific Standard Time).

You can book the hotel at the discounted Convention rate via the link on our website - <https://cceconvention2022.com> - or by calling the Crowne Plaza Central Reservations at 1-888-233-9527. To get the Convention rate when calling you must specifically ask for: "**SF Cooley Keegan Rate.**" This rate is only valid if booked by March 31, 2022.

We encourage you to book as early as possible, but please only do so if you are confident that you are coming. We guaranteed the hotel that we will fill a certain number of room nights. If we fall below that number due to last minute (any time after March 31st) cancellations, our Branch will be held financially responsible.

For any questions relating to the Convention, you can email our Chairperson, Josephine Brennan at: chair@sfcooleykeegancce.com

Please help us out. We know you want to!

Cooley-Keegan Convention Committee and Branch members are eagerly awaiting your arrival at our CCE North America Convention in San Francisco from April 21st to 24th, 2022.

So, have you booked yet? Why wait? It's set to be the most exciting Convention in years, with loads of wonderful musical, dancing, singing and fun events, happening in one of America's, if not one of the World's, most beautiful and invigorating cities. See you all soon with our open arms, helping hands and hugs at the ready!

Convention Planning Committee with contribution from our great friend and supporter Donagh McKeown.



- **MEITHEAL - 'A BAND OF REAPERS OR TURF CUTTERS'**. That was then, now it is a band of volunteers who unite and plan the cultural road forward – ATHNUACHAN AR AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN. There are seven Comhaltas MEITHEAL teams covering the whole island of Ireland – and also a MEITHEAL team in America. They identify potential and assist in its delivery. **Brostaíonn airc intleacht.** Need hurries the intellect. Sin meitheal an lae inniu. That is the Comhaltas MEITHEAL to-day. Ar aghaidh leis an obair.

Bí linn ar an Ród Seo Romhainn. Let dóchas (hope), díograis (fervour) and dílseacht (sincerity) be our motto as we renew and enhance our cultural heritage. Ar aghaidh linn le chéile. Together we are strong.

Go raibh Rath Dé oraibh.

Le mór-mheas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Labhrás Ó Murchú'.

Labhrás Ó Murchú

Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ