



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 41

Looking back over the 40 communications which we issued since the start of the pandemic, one realises the unprecedented challenges which affected us all – and Comhaltas was no exception. With the good news announced by the Government on Friday, 21st January, 2022, we are now well and truly at the other end of the tunnel. The hope and exultation are palpable. Our Ardchomhairle has decided that it is business as usual with a mixture of caution.

We will keep in our thoughts and prayers all those who suffered and lost loved ones during the pandemic.

Through almost two years of uncertainty, Comhaltas guided its ship in turbulent waters. Safety, vision, tenacity, action and determination all blended together in a clarion call the response to which we can all be justly proud. **An té nach gcuireann san Earrach ní bhainfidh sé san Fhómhar.** The one who does not plant in Spring will not reap in The Autumn! Our movement and cultural programme nationwide and internationally are intact. **Táimid réidh don todhchaí.** We are well positioned for the return of the ‘good days’. **Nuair a thosnaíonn an ceol bíonn na rincoirí réidh.** The dancers are ready when the music starts. **Ar aghaidh linn le chéile!**

ASHLING

All of us in Comhaltas and the world of Irish traditional music are shocked at the untimely death of Ashling Murphy. She was an exceptionally talented young lady who made an unforgettable impression on all who had the good fortune to know her.

Ashling was among the finest exponents of the concertina and fiddle and was also learning the uilleann pipes. She has featured in our Comhaltas Concert Tours and was also a valued member of the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of Ireland.

We know that she and her family are at the heart of her local community. She was a much-loved school teacher and had so much to offer in so many ways. Her school principal is James Hogan, another Comhaltas stalwart.

The brutal manner of her death – in the middle of the day – as she jogged by the banks of the peaceful canal in Tullamore has left us numbed and bewildered. The suffering of her family at the loss of

such a young and beautiful person is beyond understanding. We share their grief with them and we will always remember Ashling as one who enriched our lives with her warm personality; uplifting musicmaking; compassionate, outgoing and generous friendship.

Ashling, you will always be in our thoughts and prayers as we cherish the memories and friendship of your short but exceptional life. Ar dheis Dé go raibh do anam uasal ceolmhar.

To perpetuate Ashling's memory, Comhaltas is planning CEILIÚRADH ASHLING; a Scholarship Scheme and a reenactment of MACALLA NA hÉIREANN, the Irish Concert Tour of which Ashling was a much valued member.

FLEADHANNA

There is an obvious spring in the steps of Comhaltas County Boards and Provincial Councils since the Government's announcement of lifting restrictions in relation to the pandemic. This will have a huge positive impact in the making of arrangements for the Fleadhanna this year. This is ATHNUACHAN (Renewal) in action. This is beyond the light at the end of the tunnel which we have been waiting for the last two years. **Faigheann rún daingean an chraobh.** The steadfast purpose wins the laurels. How true and all the young people who vie for laurels at the Fleadhanna will appreciate those who make it possible.

Our Fleadh Action Team who have been monitoring and responding to the pandemic restrictions will now give urgent appraisal to the Government's announcement and be in touch with the counties and provinces.

MULLINGAR

Our friends in Mullingar, who have been diligently oiling the wheels in preparation for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2022 in the cradle-town of Comhaltas, are overjoyed at the prospect of 'business as usual' and the third time lucky. Thousands of Fleadh followers from every corner of Ireland and from around the world will converge on Mullingar for this historic Fleadh celebrating survival and renewal. **Chomh fhad an oíche tiocfaidh an lá.** However long the night, the day will come. FLEADH DAY is at hand!

To help our colleagues in Mullingar, Branches and Fleadh fans are asked to support the Fleadh Draw for which there is a car to be won. It could be you!

A STRONG LINK

In an exceptional effort on the part of all concerned, the first issue of TREOIR for 2022 will shortly be making its way across the country and to our friends worldwide. All are asked for that little extra push to the wheel to get our magazine to members and others as soon as possible. It is a bumper issue of almost 80 pages with news, views, personality profiles, music, songs, tributes, poetry, customs and much more. **Tarraingíonn scéal scéal eile.** One story attracts another story.

COTHROMAÍOCHT

Comhaltas have expressed their appreciation to Minister Catherine Martin TD and her Department for making the development and implementation of the COTHROMAÍOCHT programme possible. This reflects RESPECT, EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY.

OIDEACHAS	<p>With the Government's announcement on the lifting of COVID restrictions, there will be a resurgence of the hundreds of classes throughout the country of which there was 1,500 pre-pandemic. This is a timely opportunity to prepare for upcoming Fleadhanna and other activities.</p> <p>As in 2021, SCT examinations will again be held in 2022.</p>
SCOIL ÉIGSE	<p>The Scoil Éigse, which has over a half-century of experience and achievement, has been described by many as the jewel in the crown of the Comhaltas multifaceted education programme. Almost 40,000 students have availed of this powerful medium to fine tune their skills. The Scoil Éigse was sustained online during the pandemic but now it's back to basics. Kieran Hanrahan and his team are now planning for a tour de force in Mullingar to coincide with the Fleadh.</p>
ORCHESTRA	<p>The Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra is fine-tuning their preparation to once again take their place centre stage in 2022. Composer/Conductor Tom Doorley and the production team of Kieran Hanrahan, Jim McAllister and Eddie Murphy tell us that there is a palpable expectation among these talented performers post-pandemic restrictions. They all too have fond memories of their much-loved orchestra colleague Ashling Murphy whose spirit will inspire them in the coming years.</p>
AWARD	<p>A new award GRADAM NA hEIGSE has been initiated by Comhaltas to acknowledge those men and women who have made a particular contribution in the fields of education, scholarship, planning, vision, etc.</p>
FÁILTE	<p>We extend a céad mile fáilte to that renowned traditional musician Clare Walsh who has joined our team at Cultúrlann na hÉireann.</p>
BUÍOCHAS	<p>We express our heartfelt appreciation to Mary Doddy who has retired from her post at Ceoláras Coleman in Gurteen, Co. Sligo. Gael den scoth isea Mary. A true Gael who will continue to help in her local branch.</p>
AN SCÉAL	<p>Paul McKay of Gifted Empire has been commissioned to produce a promotional video on Comhaltas. This will highlight the story of our cultural movement.</p>
AGMs	<p>Through the dedication of many people, Branch and County AGMs have been held at home and abroad. This was a trojan undertaking when one considers the restrictions created by the pandemic. Now that we have reached the 'new normal', the efforts made to sustain the structures and activities in the difficult times will stand to us as an ród seo rómhainn. It is a new road but with many familiar milestones.</p>
AN RÓD SEO RÓMHAINN	<p>In response to the Government's announcement on the lifting of restrictions, Ardchomhairle meetings - which have been on zoom for almost two years - will return to Cultúrlann na hÉireann. Also, the annual Comhdháil will return next May. In fact, virtually all Comhaltas activities will, le cúnamh Dé, return to pre-pandemic format.</p>

**CULTURAL
CENTRES**

The seven Comhaltas Regional Resource Centres and eleven outreach Cultural Centres are poised to recommence their cultural programme and also provide back up assistance where required.

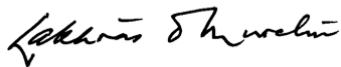
DIASPORA

We wish our friends in San Francisco a very successful and safe North American Convention next April.

To all in our network in 18 countries, we express our appreciation for your steadfastness and solidarity throughout the pandemic.

Is fusa gabháil lár báire. It is easier to take the middle way. This has been the story with Comhaltas during the last two years. We didn't fold up or rest on our laurels yet we observed all the restrictions and guidelines relating to Covid-19. There are countelss stories of creativity and innovation. These are the future. Más fada ag teacht an t-ádh tagann sé faoi dheireadh. Luck may be slow to come but it has come eventually! At times it required a little help from ourselves! We now salute all our members and friends throughout Ireland and in countries far afield who were so supportive of us and inspired us in the Buanchoiste and Ardchomhairle. We look forward to meeting many of them next August at the worldwide gathering of the Gaeil when Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann returns to its home in Mullingar where Comhaltas was founded in 1951. Bí linn agus go raibh Rath Dé ar ár saothar.

Le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ