



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 31

Christmas holds a message for the whole year. Like music it can be soothing and reconciliatory and influence all on this island to work together in a spirit of friendship. It can further strengthen the bonds between those at home and our loved ones in far-off lands. Our wish for each and every one of you is that the essence of Christmas remains with you and inspire you throughout our lives. *Níl suaimhneas gan saíocht.* There is no contentment without wisdom.

- **FleadhFest** has now entered the vocabulary of Irish cultural traditions. It summons up memories of great Fleadh moments of the past while signalling a celebration in the midst of challenging times. We will be in a position to share exciting **FleadhFest** news with you in the coming weeks. The Buanchoiste has been active in locating a top-class venue for the national **FleadhFest** next August. We can tell you that the venue is no stranger to the Fleadh story! And then there is good television news on the horizon. On the County-front, there could be as many as 15 County **FleadhFests** and several **FleadhFests** with the Irish Diaspora. All of which adds up to a new dawn for our cultural traditions. This unique celebration will be in full compliance with all necessary guidelines and restrictions. *Ní neart go teacht le chéile.* There is no strength until we come together. **FleadhFest** is the essence of this seanfhocal.

AGMs It is encouraging to learn that more Branches continue to hold their AGMs on line. This positions them well for the resurgence in 2021.

There will be many opportunities for renewal as the 'new normal' gradually and safely makes way for life as we knew it prior to COVID-19.

CLASSES Passing on the traditions to the new generations has always been an important part of the Comhaltas mission. Branches are keenly aware of this which has resulted in hundreds of classes already being conducted on-line. This is growing by the day and all are confident that the 1,500 mark will again be achieved and then move back to the classroom setting in due course.

CULTURAL

CENTRES The 18 Cultural Centres, covering the whole island of Ireland, have been cautiously and creatively setting out their stalls for the expected renewal next year. In many ways, these centres will be beacons of hope for many as we embrace the opportunities as they arrive.

2021 SCT

EXAMS The SCT Entry for 2021 Exams is now open. It is our intention to run the 2021 Exams from March to June as normal. Having undertaken Grade 6,7 and 8 exams in venues around the country in October/November, we are confident that we can successfully run all Exams in 2021 as in previous years.

We will have strict COVID-19 safety protocols in place to protect candidates and examiners and we will of course, follow the relevant Government guidelines that will be in place during the exam period.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- All Entrants should log-in and check their entries from 2020.
- All candidates from 2020 have been moved up one Level -there is no additional fee to be paid.
- Any Entrant who wishes Candidates to undertake their Exam at 2020 Level originally entered, should email sct@comhaltas.ie with their details.
- New Candidates should be entered in the normal way – these will be grouped with our existing candidates and will appear together on the Doorsheet.

- Grade 6,7 and 8 Candidates who undertook their Exam in 2020 **MUST** enter as normal and pay the appropriate fee for the 2021 Exam.
- Grade 6,7 and 8 Candidates who did not undertake their 2020 exams are still on the system and **MUST** take their exam at the 2020 Level.

We would like to thank all Entrants, Parents and Candidates for their patience and understanding over the past 9 months and we look forward to what we hope will be a normal and successful Exam session in 2021.

If you have any questions or queries please email to sct@comhaltas.ie and we will be happy to respond.

DEATH OF A LEGEND

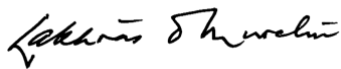
After over 50 years service to Comhaltas, Bill McEvoy, President of Comhaltas in North America, has passed to his Eternal Rest. In years to come, the Comhaltas history will record him as one of the foremost cultural leaders of his generation in North America. Loyalty, dedication, vision and tenacity were hallmarks of his leadership. The fruits of his endeavours are to be seen far and wide to-day. His legacy survives and salutes him to-day and will for many years to come. Many people were proud to call him a friend and colleague in the cause of Ireland and her culture. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal Gaelach. In a touching and affectionate tribute to his grandfather, Kevin McEvoy penned the following lines in the final hours of Bill's life:

My wonderful grandfather, Bill McEvoy, might be in his final hours, at the age of ninety seven. I sat beside him the other night for hours, and he was half sleeping, and fading in and out. My heart was so heavy, but with the pain of loss there was also the commingling of deep admiration for a life well lived. I asked him if I could draw his hand, and he nodded yes. With several of my aunts, uncles, cousins and friends about, I pulled out pencil and paper. This right hand that at twelve years worked the fields in County Laois to help support his parents who were losing the farm; this hand that worked on the railroad in Ireland; this hand that set sail for America with

a wife and three children; these fingers that played the fiddle for other passengers as it steamed across the Atlantic; this right hand that clutched a shovel and dug cesspools twelve feet down to bring in money; this palm that held a spackle knife for thousands of hours as it covered the walls of Long Island; these fingers that held a ballpoint pen and scripted thousands of letters to Irish musicians and poets, to set up international tours of Irish culture around the United States; this hand that fed nine children; this hand that went to a department store and selected and bought his granddaughter a dress for her eighth grade school ceremony; this hand that is credited as playing one of the most important formative roles in bringing Irish culture to North America; this hand that lifted up countless numbers of anonymous immigrants, setting them on their feet in the US and securing them in jobs; this hand that held my son, his first great grandchild; this hand that held his beloved wife Lily's hand as she crossed ahead of him to the other side. This hand, the selfless, giving hand of Bill McEvoy, who I am honored to call grandfather.

SLÁN GO FÓILL. We will be in touch with you again prior to Christmas. Idir an dá linn, bí cúramach. Keep safe as we look forward with renewed hope to 2021.

Le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ