



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 25

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann may not be happening in Mullingar this year – much to the disappointment of thousands of people at home and broad – but all was not lost. TG4 pulled out all the stops to give us a feast of Fleadh entertainment and memories for four nights – six hours in all. Míle buíochas.

Then starting on Sunday, 16th August, TG4 bring us down bóithrín na smaointe with memories of Listowel, Ballina and Enniscorthy.

RTÉ have also been doing their bit and invited Fleadh followers to share their talent and their memories with the broader public.

Dúthracht is dícheall a thug fairsing go fial. Zeal and diligence provided generous plenty!

- Ronan O’ Brien, a good man with a camán, is based at the Brú Ború Comhaltas Cultural Centre in the shadow of the ancient Rock of Cashel. He is the designated Comhaltas contact for COVID-19 issues and has produced some excellent helpful documentation which is widely distributed. Ronan along with Tomás Ó Maoldomhnaigh, Majella Bartley and Liam Guiney have been developing a document titled ‘COVID-19 Guidelines for Comhaltas Units & Activities’. This will be distributed to Comhaltas units shortly. **Lia na heagla an t-eolas.** The cure for fear is knowledge.
- The ever-vigilant Áine Ní Aodha of Inis Cathaigh CCÉ Kilrush tells us that the branch staged a ‘pop up’ session in Kilrush town square. They had 25 branch musicians (4 family units) and provided an hour of top class traditional entertainment.

The beautiful Comhaltas centre in Kilrush was the former Church of Ireland Church. It was generously donated free gratis to Comhaltas. It was restored with generous State help. For the time being, it remains closed due to COVID-19 but hopefully this will change in the not too distant future.

- Speaking of Churches, Ger McDonagh of Ennistymon tells me that they have done a major upgrade to their Comhaltas Cultural Centre which was also donated by the Church of Ireland to Comhaltas. From what I hear, I believe it is beautiful and a credit to all concerned. They received generous assistance from LEADER.

- **Fleadh Cheoil 1995 – 2000**

A six-part series starting on TG4 on 16/08/2020 at 9:30pm.

At a time when large crowd gatherings are restricted due to the Coronavirus this new six part series looks back at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann events from the past.

The first episode is from Listowel, Co. Kerry and was recorded 25 years ago in 1995. Listowel was seen by many as the spiritual home of the Fleadh where the square provided a natural backdrop for spontaneous street sessions for musicians and an ease of listening for Fleadh followers.

The second programme again comes from Listowel with the next two coming from the Fleadh's first visit to Ballina in 1997 and 1998. In 1999 and 2000 the Fleadh visited Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford for the first time since 1967.

Among the featured musicians are Joe Burke, Brendan McGlinchey, Zoe Conway, Brendan Begley, Liz and Yvonne Kane, John and Pip Murphy, John Whelan, Jim McKillop, the groups Danú & Dervish and The Kilfenora, The Bridge and Táin Céilí Bands.

This six-part series starts on TG4 on 16/08/2020 at 9:30pm.

Produced by Forefront Productions.

- The ever-active Kell Chole in Chicago communicated with us regarding the issue of concert flutes and tin whistles and what unintentional impact they may have in relation to COVID-19. This is being further researched by our friends in Chicago and we will communicate the findings to you in due course.
- That talented traditional singer Tadhg Maher is well known at home and abroad. Now Tadhg is ensuring that Michael Hogan – after whom the Hogan stand in Croke Park is named – who was killed on that tragic Bloody Sunday day in Croke Park will not be forgotten. The intention is that the fine song THE BALLAD OF MICHAEL HOGAN by Seamus Doran will be produced, with images, on a DVD.
- It was nice to hear from Comhaltas Melbourne's Mary McBride. Mary shares the Comhaltas Melbourne newsletter with us including a link to Adams Purcell's book 'The People of Comhaltas Melbourne – Music and Friendship'. The newsletter is sent out every two weeks with links to Comhaltas workshops, TG4 and other music and set dance events. Our thoughts and prayers are with all our friends in Australia in these very difficult times.
- Meanwhile in Wexford things are buzzing. Senan O' Reilly tells us that Sunday evening visitors to Wexford's Redmond Park were treated to a feast of traditional music as Craobh Loch Garman of Comhaltas held its second pop-up roving session of the Summer.

Craobh Loch Garman Comhaltas returns to Redmond Park on Sunday, August 16th (3pm) for the final outdoor session of the Summer. Given the continuing need for safe distancing, the park is the ideal location for such an event. Matt Murphy is hoping that the earlier start time will lead to this being a more family-friendly event. He also hopes to see a greater number of young musicians, singers and dancers.

www.craobhlochgarman.ie

- Ireland's first ever traditional music 'drive-in' concert held in Co. Tyrone on Saturday 25th July was an overwhelming success, exceeding the expectations of both the organisers and performers, with over 150 cars in attendance.

The event took place at the grounds of Dún Uladh Cultural Heritage Centre, which is shared with St. Mary's Killyclogher GFC on the outskirts of Omagh town. It was hosted by Ulster Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann on what was to be the Ulster provincial fleadh weekend.

The concert was headlined by the award winning Blackwater Céilí Band from the Clogher Valley area of Tyrone, and they were joined by the wonderful local singer Ciara Fox from Greencastle. This was the first time in months that both the band and Ciara took to a stage to perform in front of a live audience – although a slightly different type of audience than normal.

The drive-in concert was also streamed live on the Ulster Comhaltas Facebook page, providing the opportunity for people to watch from further afield. The footage, which can still be accessed online, has been viewed over 15,000 times and has attracted viewers from all over Ireland and beyond, including, Scotland, England, Canada and the USA.

Chairman of Ulster Comhaltas, Eamon Graham, was thrilled with the turnout and praised everyone involved in the organizing of the event.

“The cars just kept arriving, it was great to see both new and familiar faces driving in to enjoy some traditional music and soak up this new experience, the whole evening was just an unbelievable spectacle to witness. There were people from all over Ulster, with some making long journeys from Donegal, Antrim and Down for the occasion”.

Social distancing guidelines and directives were observed by everyone in attendance, with the cars spaciouly lined out and a team of committed volunteers on-site providing assistance when needed.

- [Branch Membership Packs](#) will be on their way in the next few days. This will provide time and opportunity to plan for [AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN](#). Bí linn, bí dílis, bí díograiseach, bí flaithiúil.
- Jim McAllister and Oisín MacDiarmada have issued a template in [relation to SCT examinations](#), with special emphasis on COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Details will be circulated as required. This is quite an achievement given the challenges posed by COVID-19. Well done to all concerned. [Is maith é an bád a dhéanann amach an caladh a d'fhág sé](#). It's a good boat that finds the harbour it left. Indeed it is!

Well the Comhaltas boat keeps sailing onwards. It touches many harbours worldwide. The crew work unceasingly to make good time and a safe journey. [Is fearr slí a iarraidh ná dul ar iarraidh](#). It's better to ask the way than go astray. This certainly is the case with COVID-19. Observance of the guidelines and restrictions is paramount. Then we will reach a safe harbour, le cúnamh Dé.

Slán go fóill agus go raibh Rath Dé ar bhúr saothar.

Mise, le mór-mheas,

