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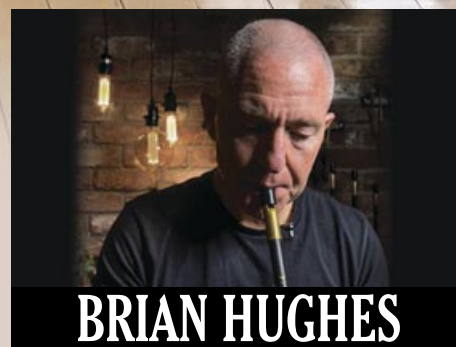
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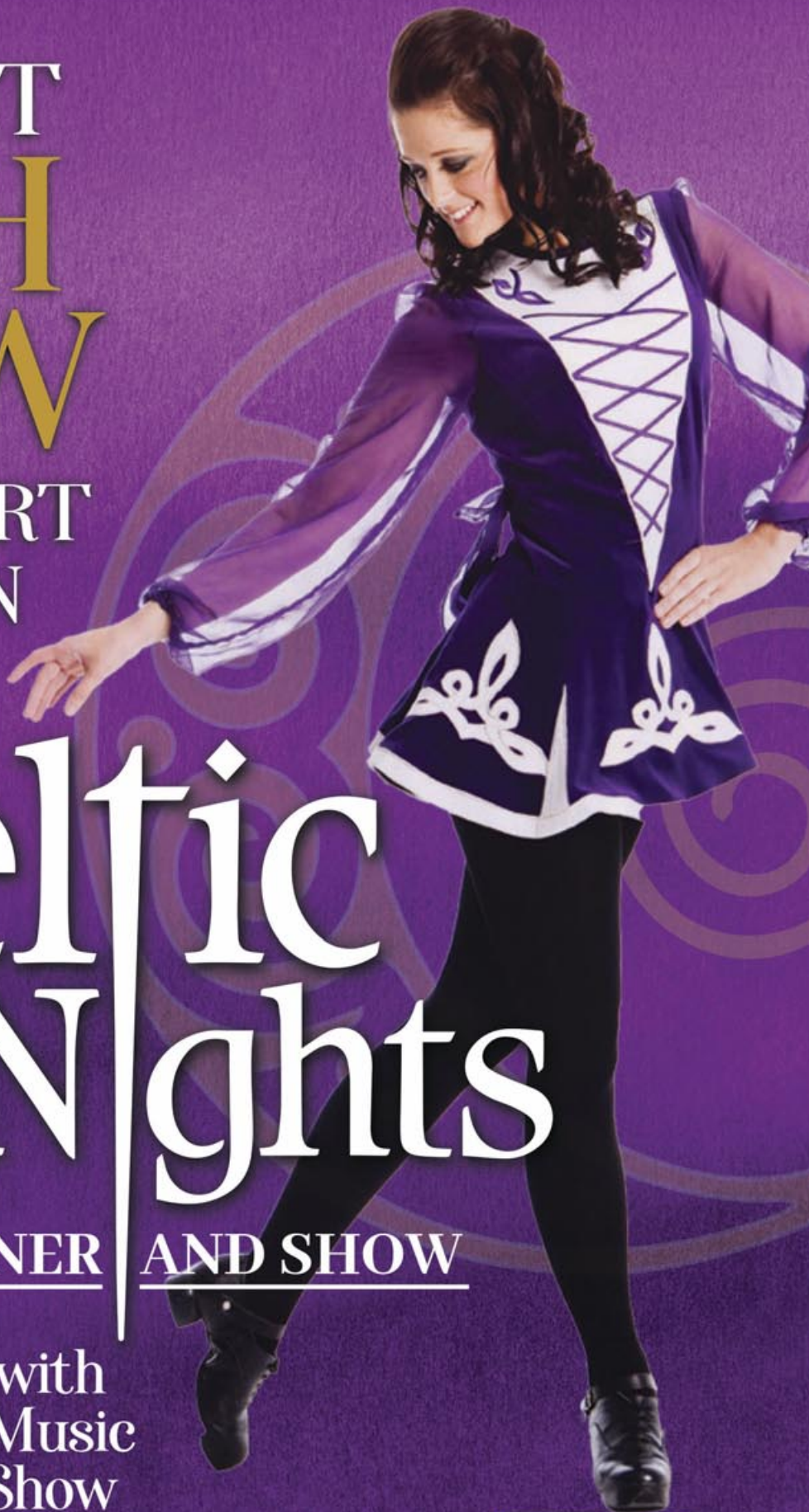
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Issue No. 347 March 2025

FOREWORD

SIT DOWN, LET'S SHARE SOME MEMORIES

You probably know that 2025 is a year of milestones, not least of which is the 30th anniversary of Irish Music Magazine. Three decades ago the wider-world was becoming aware of Irish and Celtic music and this magazine began its mission of giving Irish musicians a platform and a voice in print. That ethos continues to this day; our interviews are always focused on the music makers, who are given every opportunity to tell their own stories.

This month you can read about the early days of Danú, a band who are celebrating their Pearl anniversary in 2025. Frances Black will be on tour soon with Sharon Shannon and Mary Coughlan; she gives us an insight into her *Anthology* album, 52 tracks from her early recordings to a hard hitting song that is right up to the minute. We have book reviews: on 45 years of the Cork Folk Festival, and the definitive guide to whistling over the past 200 years from Dr. Robert Harvey.

It's not all history and nostalgia. Read about the new album and line-up from FOURWINDS, and we preview the Music Network tour in February featuring recent TG4 Gradam winners. I chat with uilleann piper Fiachra O'Regan about the trio Grosse Isle and their blend of Irish and Quebecois traditions, which we also visit in an interview with Robin LeBlanc of La famille LeBlanc, who were showcasing in Killarney this past January.

If you've been with us from the start, a huge thanks for your support, if you are new to the magazine, welcome aboard.

Slán
Seán L

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Seán Laffey takes a drive to rural Waterford and meets Benny McCarthy at Doon Studios.

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To mark Frances Black's 30th year as a recording artist, Dolphin Music Group have released a 52 track triple-CD, *Anthology*. Seán Laffey calls Frances to discover more.

22 ALLTA IS A TOUCH OF WILDNESS FROM FOURWINDS

The new album *Allta* from the augmented trio FOURWINDS was released in early November 2024. Seán Laffey interrupted piper Tom Delany as he was making dinner; let's find out what's been cooking with Allta.

24 MUSIC NETWORK INVITES GRADAM WINNERS TO COLLABORATE IN CONCERT

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26 HOMERIQUE FROM GROSSE ISLE

Seán Laffey has a transatlantic call with Fiachra O'Regan, the piper with the Quebec based trio Grosse Isle.

28 TIME FOR LA FAMILLE LeBLANC

The current generation of La famille LeBlanc band are the sixth to carry the precious mantle of traditional music in New Brunswick. Anne Marie Kennedy spoke to Robin LeBlanc about their achievements.

30 THE FAMINE FIELD HAUNTING

A new series of stories *Let The Memories Be* brought to you by the legend of Irish Music that is Johnny McEvoy.

36 A NEW ERA AT MULLIGANS OF AMSTERDAM

John O' Regan talks to Michael Sweeney, the new man at the helm of the Netherlands's iconic Irish music bar.

CEOL & ÓL

Celtic Concert Series



2025 LINEUP

FEB 14	GUINNESS & CHOCOLATE ft. THE DROWSY LADS	APR 26	CASSIE & MAGGIE
MAR 1	JIGJAM	OCT 10	ANDY IRVINE
APR 11	DANNY DIAMOND & BRIAN MILLER		

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Interested in performing at CelticMKE Center? Reach out to concerts@celticmke.com.



38 BRIAN HUGHES : WHEN THE WIND BLOWS WILD

Brian Hughes talks to Seán Laffey about his new album played exclusively on Wild Irish tin whistles.

57 THE MIDNIGHT

Fans rally round to help a fantasy folk band from Tuscany, writes John O' Regan for Irish Music Magazine.

FESTIVALS

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Brought to you in association with the Online Academy of Irish Music (OAIM).

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58 THE HAAR IN LONDON

Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre, Saturday December 14th 2024. Heather Laffey reports for Irish Music Magazine.

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60 CORK FOLK FESTIVAL 1979 to 2024 : Reeling Down the Years

William Hammond. Hard Cover, 384 Pages. Cork Folk Publications 2024 ISBN 09526081 38. Seán Laffey reviews.

61 FEADAÍL : The Whistling Tradition in Ireland c.1800-2021.

Robert Harvey

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. 592 Pages. 2 CDs. ISBN 978-1-80517-875-0. Seán Laffey reviews for Irish Music Magazine.

CD REVIEWS

62 Another selection of CD Reviews from the International World of Folk and Traditional Music.

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The Irish Music Café Radio Show based near Detroit Michigan is providing a worldwide platform for Irish music and artists. The Irish Music Café plays all genres of Irish music from the legends of Irish music as well as Irish singers and songwriters that are just beginning their professional musical careers.

"As an Irish musician in Detroit, the Irish Music Cafe is a great resource for getting my music out into the world. The welcome in-studio is second to none with great fun and banter from hosts Pat, Erin and Dave. It's always great craic. The genuine love of Ireland and our culture is palpable and like a great Irish pub it's a place to hear the news, connect with friends and listen to the music." - Enda Reilly.

The Irish Music Cafe Radio Show plays a great mix of Irish songs and tunes including weekly interviews with the artists, singers and songwriters from Ireland and beyond.

Please submit your music for airplay consideration to pat@irishmusiccafe.com

Listen live every Monday 9–11 pm (Irish time) and 4-6 pm (US ET) on www.CRBRadio.com and www.IrishMusicCafe.com with podcasts available anytime on www.IrishMusicCafe.com. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/irishmusiccafe

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Check out the full line of products at www.Carbony.com and shots of our appearances at www.facebook.com/CarbonyCelticWinds

MULLIGANS IRISH MUSIC BAR, AMSTERDAM

A Haven for Traditional Irish Music in The Netherlands www.mulligans.nl

Nestled along the picturesque Amstel River, Mulligans Irish Music Bar stands as a beacon for lovers of traditional Irish music and culture. Established as the oldest and most authentic Irish pub in Amsterdam, Mulligans offers a unique blend of live music, friendly atmosphere, and a diverse selection of drinks.

Mulligans is renowned for its vibrant live music scene, featuring performances by both local and international musicians. The bar's intimate setting allows for an up-close experience with talented artists, making every visit memorable. Whether you're a fan of lively jigs, soulful ballads, or spirited reels, Mulligans has something for everyone.

In addition to its musical offerings, Mulligans boasts an impressive selection of Irish, Belgian & Dutch beers on tap, including Guinness, Kilkeny, and Magners. The bar also offers a wide range of Irish whiskeys, spirits, wines, soft drinks, and snacks such as the famous Tayto crisps!

The welcoming staff at Mulligans are known for their professionalism and friendliness. This camaraderie extends to the bar's patrons, creating a warm and inclusive environment where long-lasting friendships are formed.

For those who enjoy sports, Mulligans broadcasts Irish sports such as Gaelic football, hurling, camogie, and rugby on multiple screens throughout the bar.

Visit Mulligans Irish Music Bar at Amstel 100, 1017 AC Amsterdam. For more information, check out their website at www.mulligans.nl, follow



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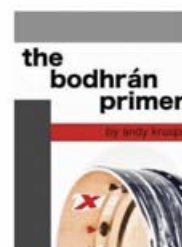


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Experience the magic of traditional Irish music and hospitality at Mulligans Irish Music Bar – where every night is a celebration!

MISE GRÁINNE

Gael Linn

Written by Louis de Paor with music composed by Dana Lyn

Mise Gráinne is a music-audiobook in the Irish language. The text has been prepared and recorded beautifully by Louis de Paor and team. This is a new development for the iconic Gael Linn label. One of the best stories from Irish mythology will now be available around the globe in audio format. The author is a well-known poet and academic. Dana Lyn based in Brooklyn, New York, composed the inspirational musical accompaniment.

Among the actors who were involved in *Mise Gráinne* are; Bríd Ní Neachtain, Dónall Ó Héalaí, Louis de Paor, Marcus Mac Conghail, Domhnall Ó Braonáin, Ciara Ní É, Aodh Ó Coileáin and Darach Mac Con Iomaire. *The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne* is one of the best-loved mythic stories from the Fenian Cycle and it is great that this new version is available, written by an author of the highest quality, with music by a superbly gifted composer & narrated by some of the finest actors. An image by artist Rita Duffy, *Solitary Forest*, is used for this audiobook.

Réamonn Ó Ciaráin, CEO of Gael Linn, said, "The main digital platforms need more audiobooks in the Irish language. You can listen to them while you are on the move in the car, on the train or even out for a walk. The Audiobook market will grow by up to 25% annually in the next ten years. We must make sure that the Irish language is part of this growth."

Mise Gráinne is available on digital platforms such as Spotify, Google Play, Kobo, Walmart, Audiobooks.com, NOOK Audiobooks, Libro.FM etc.

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The 2025 lineup includes:

February 14: Guinness and Chocolate featuring The Drowsy Lads. Attendees spent Valentine's Day enjoying Irish folk music, Guinness beers, and chocolate samplings from local artisans.

March 1: JigJam. Experience this powerhouse band's high-energy fusion of Irish traditional music and Bluegrass, delivering a foot-stomping performance.

April 11: Danny Diamond and Brian Miller. Enjoy soulful performances ranging from romantic waltzes to lively reels, showcasing impeccable arrangements of traditional songs from this Minnesota duo.

April 26: Cassie and Maggie. These talented sisters from Nova Scotia bring spellbinding harmonies and virtuosic instrumental prowess, infusing rich traditions with contemporary vitality.

October 10: Andy Irvine. A living legend in Irish music, don't miss Andy Irvine's performance in Milwaukee as part of his farewell tour.

December: To Be Announced. Stay tuned for an exciting Celtic holiday performance to conclude the series.

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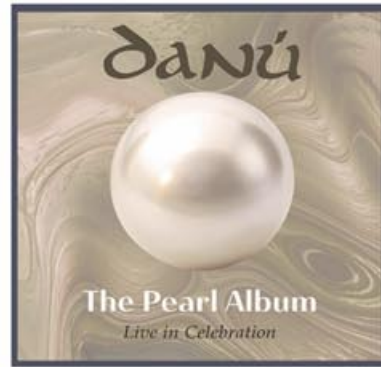
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Feb 08 Kilkenny (IRE)
Mar 01 St.Marys City MD (USA)
Mar 06 Utica NY (USA)
Mar 07 Troy NY (USA)
Mar 08 Rockport, MA (USA)
Mar 10 Chicago, IL (USA)
Mar 12 Menomonie, WI (USA)
Mar 14 Decorah, IA (USA)
Mar 15 Madison, WI (USA)
Mar 17 Logan, UT (USA)
Mar 20 Irvine, CA (USA)
Jun 20 London (UK)
Jun 21 London (UK)
Jun 22 Dungarvan (IRE)



RELEASES

St.Patricks Day-17th March
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www.danu.net

PHOTO BY JOHN D. KELLY

performances, the Spring Music Series promises a triumphant celebration of traditional Irish music, culture, and renowned talent.

On Thursday 20 February, experience A Night of Music, Songs and Words with **Tommy Sands and Irish Civil Rights icon Bernadette Devlin McAliskey**. Then, on Saturday 22 February, join **Ryan Molloy, Fergal Scabhill, and Shauna Mullin** for a captivating evening of traditional music.

March opens with a stunning collaboration on Saturday 1 March, as **Mary Dillon, Dónal O'Connor, and Neil Martin** bring their critically acclaimed artistry to the ICC stage. On Friday 7 and Saturday 8 March, folk legends **Mike McGoldrick, John McCusker, and John Doyle** grace the Centre as part of their exciting 2025 tour.

Sunday 9 March welcomes **Ainsley Hamill, accompanied by Sam Kelly and Toby Shaer**, showcasing her remarkable voice and storytelling. On 15 and 16 March, **Four Men and a Dog** deliver their electrifying fusion of traditional Irish music and diverse genres to mark the St Patrick's Day Weekend.

Further into March we welcome rising star **Meadhbh Walsh** with her powerful voice and contemporary folk sound, amongst other music events still to be announced.

Join us to celebrate 30 years of the Irish Cultural Centre's commitment to showcasing the vitality and diversity of Irish music and culture in the UK and beyond.

For more information, visit: www.irishculturalcentre.co.uk or follow us on social media: @IrishCulturalCentre and @myicclondon.

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BRIAN HUGHES : WHEN THE WIND BLOWS WILD
www.mcneelamusic.com

Featuring 15 carefully curated tracks—sets of polkas, slides, Slow Airls, and more—this collection firmly establishes Brian as the premier whistle player of our time. His artistry shines through in every note, capturing the essence of Irish music with unparalleled passion and skill.

Recorded on the stunning Flaggy Shore at Garry Ó Briain's renowned

Creg na Vagabones studio in County Clare, this album showcases Brian's mastery of the whistle and uilleann pipes, alongside the extraordinary talents of featured guest musicians Garry Ó Briain, Conal O'Kane, Colm Phelan, Dave Sheridan, Lexie Boatright, Dan Bodwell, and Paul McNally. Together, they create a seamless fusion of instruments, blending the whistle with the rich tones of harp, concertina, fiddle, bodhrán, guitar, mandocello, piano, Scottish small pipes, and double bass to produce a truly unique sound.

The McNeela Wild Irish Whistles feature prominently on the album, with Brian's expert playing allowing the full, natural resonance of the instruments to shine.

When the Wind Blows Wild is not just an album; it's a standout project in the world of Irish whistle music. The collaboration of Brian and his fellow musicians is nothing short of magical.

Where to Purchase: This highly anticipated album is available exclusively from McNeela Music on CD. Visit www.mcneelamusic.com

DAMIEN QUINN'S FLEADH TOWN
damienquinnsfleadhtown.bandcamp.com

Damien Quinn has recorded and toured with some of the main innovators in Traditional Irish Music including Donál Lunny, Van Morrison, The Chieftains, Andy M. Stewart, Elvis Costello, and Riverdance. *Damien Quinn's Fleadh Town* featuring Aiden Flanagan, Brian McGrath, Cathal Hayden, Pádraic Keane, Seamie O Dowd, Alan Kelly, Derek Hickey and Dónal Clancy is a collection of tunes chosen by Damien from across his long career. Recorded in Kinvara, County Galway over the summer, it highlights the bodhrán as the pulse of Traditional Irish Music.

"It was the golden age for the wee drum... Tommy Hayes, Johnny McDonagh, Kevin Conneff and Big Jim Sutherland were our heroes and then we experienced an explosion with one of the shining lights being Damien Quinn. My favourite track is Track 1 *Reels: Cameronian/ Tailor's Thimble/ The Lobster.*" - *Mossie Griffin, The Irish Bodhrán.*

Also featured is a version of *In A Big Country* sung by Seamie O' Dowd featuring *Bill Collins' Jig*: "... O'Dowd clearly captures the spirit of the original, but Quinn, McGrath, Hayden and Hickey give it their own spin. It's a distinctive approach that works and I believe will have pretty wide appeal." *Daniel Neely, The Irish Echo.*

This is one of the most anticipated records of the year, a must have for

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SAT 22 FEB 2025
RYAN MOLLOY, FERGAL SCABHILL & SHAUNA MULLIN
 DOORS: 7.30PM | £17/£15

SUN 09 MAR 2025
AINSLEY HAMILL + SAM KELLY & TOBY SHAER
 DOORS: 7PM | £15/£13

SAT 01 MAR 2025
MARY DILLON, DÓNAL O'CONNOR & NEIL MARTIN
 DOORS: 7.30PM | £15/£13

SAT 15 - SUN 16 MAR 2025
FOUR MEN AND A DOG
 DOORS: 7.30PM SAT, 7PM SUN | £25

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FEST HIGHLIGHTS

Live Music on Seven Different Stages

Celtic musicians from all over the world travel to entertain Fest goers and be part of the fun that is Iowa Irish Fest. We are also celebrating the 4th annual *Battle of the Iowa Irish Bands!* Join us this August to jam with Celtic Musicians from near and far!

Family Fun & Learning Area

Iowa Irish Fest offers a variety of activities that will entertain the entire family from dawn to dusk. Whether you're scaling the rock-climbing wall, having your face painted or trying your hand at axe throwing, the whole family will be a part of the fun that is the Fest. In addition to games, families can immerse themselves in Celtic instruments and music. No matter what you choose, memories will be made that will last a lifetime.

Highland Games

The Highland Games are an ancient event that can be traced back to 1040 AD. The Highland Games are composed of events such as the Sheaf Toss, the Stone Put and the Weight Over the Bar. Are you the strongest warrior in the land? Prove it by being a part of the Highland Games!



Workshops for Irish Dance, Music, Language and Culture

Learn the Irish language from a multi-award-winning Irish singer, play guitar with internationally renowned guitarists and even join the Trinity Irish Dancers for their thrilling Dance Workshop. However you decide to participate, Iowa Irish Fest is an event you don't want to miss!

Whiskey Workshops

Do you enjoy whiskey, malts and mimosas? If so, you don't want to miss the Whiskey Workshops! The Whiskey Workshops offer an opportunity to learn about Irish culture, paint while drinking whiskey and learn how to create a stellar charcuterie board all while staying hydrated.

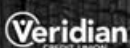
ShamRock N' Run | High Nelly Bicycle Rally Celtic Cruise Motorcycle Ride

To learn more about other iconic Iowa Irish Fest events and reserve your tickets, visit IowaIrishFest.com. The 2025 Iowa Irish Fest will take place August 1-3 in the Lincoln Park area of downtown Waterloo. Don't forget to download our app to see the full list of scheduled events and the Fest map, as well as manage your classes and workshops. The app is available for download in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

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lovers of Traditional Irish Music. *Damien Quinn's Fleadh Town* is available for digital download on bandcamp. CDs available through mail order and selected record shops.

Email: damiembodhranquinn@yahoo.com

Bandcamp : damiembodhranquinn.bandcamp.com

Facebook: [Damien Quinn's Fleadh Town](https://www.facebook.com/DamienQuinnFleadhTown)

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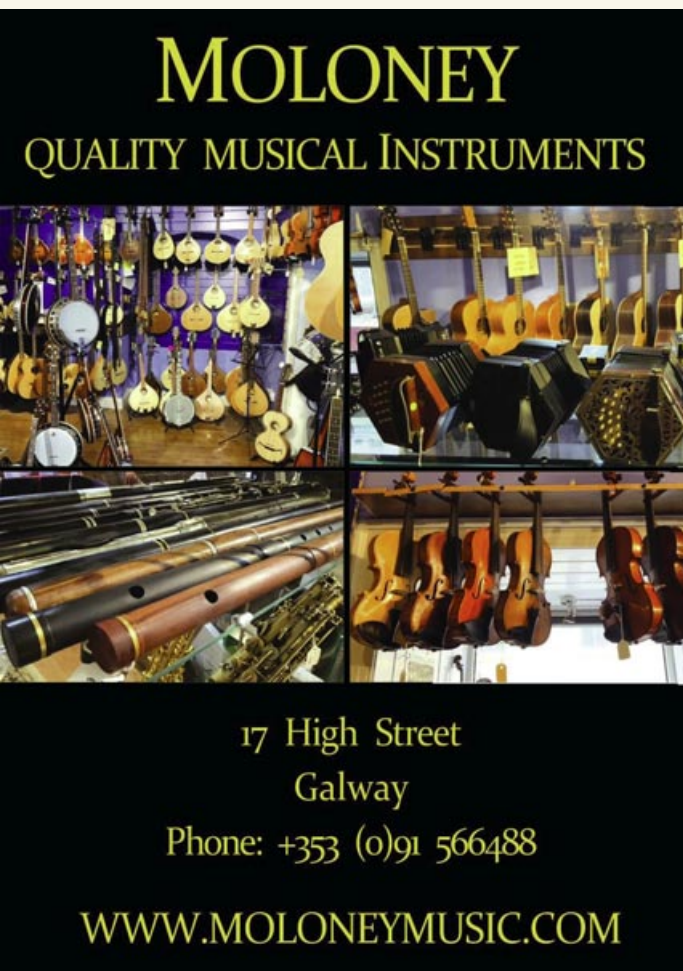
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DANÚ CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF IRISH MUSIC MASTERY

www.danu.net

This year, Danú, one of Ireland's premier traditional music ensembles, celebrates 30 years of sharing their wonderful music with the world. Founded in 1995 in County Waterford, Danú rose to prominence as part of Ireland's delegation to the Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival in France. Since then, the band has captivated global audiences with their high-energy performances and innovative yet faithful interpretations of Ireland's lovely rich music and culture.

To commemorate their 30th anniversary, Danú proudly unveils *The Pearl Album (Live in Celebration)*. This exceptional live album features 30 tracks, each capturing the raw energy and profound artistry of the band's acclaimed performances across North America and Europe. Symbolizing wisdom and endurance, the pearl is a fitting tribute to Danú's legacy and dedication to preserving Irish traditions.

The band's lineup includes celebrated musicians Benny McCarthy (accordion), Nell Ní Chróinín (vocals/whistle), Éamon Doorley (bouzouki), Oisín McAuley (fiddle), Tony Byrne (guitar), Ivan Goff (uilleann pipes/flute), and Billy Sutton (bodhrán/mandolin). Together, they deliver a rich blend of traditional tunes and contemporary arrangements.

Releasing on St. Patrick's Day, *The Pearl Album* invites fans to relive unforgettable moments from Danú's three-decade journey. Available on digital platforms worldwide, this album is a testament to the band's enduring artistry and love for Irish music.

Visit www.danu.net for album details, tour dates, and more.

bodhrán-info TAKES OVER EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION OF STEVIE MOISES SERIES TIPPERS

<https://www.bodhran-info.de>

bodhrán-info, the world's only specialist shop exclusively dedicated to Bodhráns and accessories, is now the exclusive distributor of all series tipper models by Stevie Moises.

Stevie Moises' products are renowned for their high-quality craftsmanship, excellent balance, and precision tailored to the needs of bodhrán players. This partnership further expands bodhran-info's range of premium products, catering to both professional musicians and dedicated beginners alike.

"We are delighted to exclusively offer Stevie Moises' series tippers, reinforcing our commitment to providing top-quality products and outstanding service," said Rolf Wagels, who runs bodhran-info and is a renowned bodhrán player and teacher.

The tippers are now available in the bodhran-info online shop. The selection includes a variety of models designed to suit different playing styles and personal preferences.

About bodhran-info: bodhrán-info is the world's only dedicated specialist shop for bodhráns and accessories. With a wide range of instruments, tippers, and other related products, alongside a comprehensive information hub and worldwide shipping, bodhran-info has established itself as a key resource for the global bodhrán community.

<https://www.bodhran-info.de>

KINNFOLK : STAR ABOVE THE MOUNTAIN

www.kinnfolkmusic.com

Virginia-based Celtic folk duo, Kinnfolk, have released their newest studio album, *Star Above the Mountain*. The album—a collection of original music exploring the history, geography, and folk legends of Roanoke, Virginia—began in 2022 as a grant project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the City of Roanoke. The resulting body of work debuted to a live audience in June 2023.

Since forming Kinnfolk in late 2018, Josh and Julie Kinn have played at festivals and listening rooms with a quickly growing following across Canada and America. In 2023 Kinnfolk won the Robinson Emerging Artist Showcase, earning them a Main Stage appearance at Canada's premiere Celtic event, the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival. The pair weave octave mandolin, bodhrán, and smooth vocal harmonies into their Celtic folk music from the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, spinning yarns steeped in Appalachian charm. From sea shanties and working songs, to trad tunes and old-time favourites, Kinnfolk's fresh take on classics blends seamlessly with their original compositions.

The new album, *Star Above the Mountain*, released on February 28, 2025. Visit Kinnfolk's website and social media pages to stay up-to-date with the project and other goings-on!

www.kinnfolkmusic.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kinnfolk.music>

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Instagram: @kinnfolk.music

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE3iCa3te-Z26XM-_YBy3Xg

FRANCES MORTON : SLIOCHT

www.francesmorton.com

Traditional Irish flute player, Frances Morton, has released her debut album, *Sliocht*. Born and raised in Glasgow, Frances has been an active part of the traditional music scene there as well as her adopted home of Gaoth Dobhair, in the Donegal Gaeltacht.

Meaning 'trace' or 'lineage', *Sliocht* reflects both Frances' family and musical heritage from Scotland and Ireland. She has compiled selections of jigs, reels, strathspeys and marches from her extensive repertoire of Irish and Scottish music, representing the music of place - where her family origins lie in Ireland, and where Frances herself has played and shared music with other musicians over the years.

Produced by guitarist Eamon McElholm (of Solas fame), the album also features Ciarán Tourish (previously Altan) on fiddle and sean-nós singer from Gaoth Dobhair in the Donegal Gaeltacht, Doimnic Mac Giolla Bhríde.

The foreword to the album was written by renowned flute player and academic, Dr Fintan Vallely, who said about Frances: "Here is a tremendous player in her prime, terrific tune selections and mighty collaboration from accompanists."

The album was launched officially by Maireád Ní Mhaonaigh at Scoil Gheimhridh Gaoth Dobhair on 30th December. Frances will continue to promote her album at several other concerts across Ireland and Scotland in the coming months. Check the website for details.

The album is available digitally from iTunes, and the CD can be purchased from www.francesmorton.com or



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SPINNING WHEEL – TWO RELEASES IN 2024 : HANDSPUN AND THREADBARE

<https://hyperfollow.com/spinningwheel>

The trio has been performing traditional music for over two decades, earning recognition for their profound passion and expertise in the genre. Spinning Wheel's unique and captivating sound is shaped by Danika Ruso's compelling vocals and the group's elegant acoustic arrangements.

Handspun brings together twelve pieces from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and the Isle of Skye. A special focus on the album is given to the genre of Waulking Songs. "I find it fascinating how singing transforms what would otherwise be a monotonous and time-consuming work process into an enjoyable and sociable activity," says the trio's singer Danika.

The second new album, *Threadbare*, is a collection of well-known songs. "These songs are so overplayed because they resonate with people and accompany them through life. We aimed to arrange these songs in a more understated way, to bring them closer to their musical origins just as with worn clothing or weathered furniture, where the underlying fabric or structure is revealed once again."

Reactions to the new releases:

"With its thoughtful arrangements of songs, powerful vocals and rich instrumentation, this album is a must-listen for those who truly appreciate Celtic music." - Susan Ní Cholmáin, *Musician (IRL)*.

"Their skill, soul, deep commitment to the music and professional production is nothing short of amazing!" - Peter Damashek, *World Music Radio (US)*.

"It's also lovely to hear so many Gaelic inflections and reflections. A fine honest body of work that has a place on every shelf fit for a fireplace." - Shane Ó Fearghail, *Singer-Songwriter (IRL)*.

"It is wonderful to hear the languages of the Celtic nations being sung so clearly and heartily. The recording, mixing and standard of mastering is done to a very high quality." - Patrick McMullan, *Singer Songwriter (IRL)*.

"Spinning Wheel's phenomenal new album *Handspun* is overflowing with lovely melodies, masterful musicianship and catchy songs that explore a variety of traditions from the Celtic world." - Jacob Edgar, *Putumayo Records (US)*.

Find out more at <https://hyperfollow.com/spinningwheel>

THE FRIEL SISTERS : NORTHERN SKY

www.frielmusic.com

The Friel Sisters, featuring sisters Anna, Sheila and Clare Friel, alongside Cathal Ó Curráin and Marty Barry are traditional musicians, known for their powerful music and rich unison singing. The Friel Sisters have performed in various venues and festivals all over the world and deliver performances full of energy, heart and warmth.

Anna, Sheila and Clare are traditional musicians from Co. Donegal in the northwest of Ireland and were brought up in the Donegal diaspora of Glasgow in Scotland. They credit their musical development to trips over and back between their homes in Glasgow and Donegal and have remained deeply connected to their Donegal roots, playing a mixture of music interspersed with songs in Irish and English, many from their family repertoire. They are now based in the Donegal Gaeltacht.

The Friel Sisters also features Marty Barry, guitar player and singer from Banbridge, Co Down and Cathal Ó Curráin, bouzouki player and singer from Gaoth Dobhair.

The Friel Sisters have toured and performed all over the world, performing alongside acts such as Altan, The Chieftains and

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For more information, please visit www.celticfestival.ca or e-mail us at festival@celticfestival.ca

Lúnasa. The band has been awarded many prestigious titles over the years, including Trophée Loic Raison at Festival Interceltique de Lorient and Clare receiving the huge honour of TG4 Young Musician of the Year/Ceoltóir Og na Bliana.

Their latest release *Northern Sky* was recorded by the hugely talented Seán Og Graham at Bannview Studios in Portlengone, Co. Antrim.

For more information, go to www.frielmusic.com or find The Friel Sisters on Facebook and Instagram. Listen to *Northern Sky* by The Friel Sisters on Bandcamp.

SOLAS RETURNS! NEW SINGLE, EXCLUSIVE ALBUM, AND 30th ANNIVERSARY TOUR solastheband.com

Solas, praised by *The Boston Globe* as “the finest Celtic ensemble this country has ever produced,” is back! After an eight-year hiatus, the legendary band is reuniting to celebrate their 30th Anniversary with new music and an exciting U.S. tour.

The journey begins with the **release of their latest single, *Tell God and the Devil*** live from Celtic Connections 2016, featuring Moira Smiley. This newly-remastered track, now streaming on all platforms, perfectly captures the passion and brilliance that has defined Solas for three decades. But that’s not all—this single offers a taste of an exclusive live album featuring rare recordings from some of their most iconic performances. This special collection will only be available at their 30th Anniversary concerts.

Solas’ **30th Anniversary Tour** kicks off in February 2025, promising the same energy and innovation that earned them acclaim from *The Wall Street Journal* as “an Irish traditional band bearing all the marks of greatness”. Founding members Seamus Egan and Winifred Horan will reunite with John Williams and Moira Smiley, and welcome new-to-the-band Nuala Kennedy



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and Alan Murray, to bring their groundbreaking sound back to audiences across the U.S.

Don't miss this unforgettable celebration of Solas' musical legacy.

Visit solastheband.com for tour dates and tickets, and stay connected on Facebook and Instagram (@solasmusic). The musical adventure continues in 2025!

IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC COURSE AT CORK COLLEGE OF FET tramoreroadcampus.ie

Now in its second year, the Irish Traditional Music course at Cork College of FET, Tramore Road Campus is a one-year level 5 programme based in the heart of Cork City. This dynamic course affords students the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and understanding of traditional music while placing a strong emphasis on practical musicianship, complemented by opportunities to perform, manage events, and learn about the music industry.

A central element of this course is the opportunity to undertake practical work experience, helping students establish themselves within the performance community by building links with musicians in the industry. As well as ensemble performance classes, students will be afforded weekly one-to-one instrumental tuition from experienced performers. Regular guest workshops will be presented by some of the finest exponents of traditional Irish music as well as industry practitioners, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of performance and music business. Whether students seek to utilize this course as a pathway to higher education or to establish themselves as accomplished musicians, they will acquire hands-on experience and a comprehensive understanding of Irish music, performance practice, music theory and the workings of the music industry that will stand to them throughout their careers.

Tramore Road Campus has a long-established history of music education and is a vibrant hub of performing arts with the department supplying top quality professional performers and sound engineers to the music industry for over thirty years.

Find out more at tramoreroadcampus.ie

DISCOVER IRELAND THROUGH MUSIC : JOIN ENDA REILLY'S EXCLUSIVE TOUR THIS MAY www.endareilly.com

Immerse yourself in a unique Irish experience led by renowned singer-songwriter Enda Reilly and his wife Anne Marie.

Renowned Irish balladeer Enda Reilly, celebrated for his performances at festivals across the USA, is now offering an unparalleled opportunity to explore Ireland through his music and stories. Together with Triskel Tours, Enda invites you on an 11-day, 10-night group adventure designed for music lovers and cultural enthusiasts alike.

This carefully curated, easy going tour limited to just 30 participants, features exclusive performances by Enda and friends in iconic venues such as The Joly Theatre, The National Library of Ireland, and St. Finian's Church. Participants will also enjoy a live show at the Nighthawks @ United Arts Club. Plus Enda's Songtour of Dublin.

Beyond the music, the itinerary offers a deep dive into Ireland's heritage, including visits to Kilkenny Castle, Teeling Distillery, Smithwick's Brewery, and ancient sites like Clonmacnoise and the Hill of Tara. Guests will also experience unique activities such as a GAA sports match, a Shannon River cruise, and a final celebration party on the Grand Canal.

Tour highlights include:

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For full details visit www.endareilly.com and to book your spot contact Marc 810-599-2558 or Michelle 517-223-7255 at Triskel Tours. www.triskeltours.com Act fast—spaces are filling up!

THE LILIES OF THE MIDWEST : CATS' CÉILÍ

Lotm.band

The Lilies of the Midwest, a rising traditional Irish music trio, will release their highly anticipated debut album *Cats' Céilí* in March 2025. The album's cover, designed by local artist Alicia Rheel, captures the whimsical spirit of the project, featuring a serene Irish countryside overrun by four musical felines with a tendency toward mischief!

Cats' Ceili brings together a blend of original and traditional Irish music, showcasing the unique talents of fiddler Charlene Adzima, who contributes both original compositions and serves as the album's sole vocalist. Joining Charlene are Kara Rogers on concertina, whose melodic solos and chording add depth to the music, and Jeanna Schultz on mandolin, offering a texture that completes the trio's distinctive sound. Ohio-based guitarist Rick Nelson, who has collaborated with Charlene for over 25 years, ties everything together, echoing the stylings of Mícheál Ó Domhnaill with tasteful rhythmic and harmonic support. Completing the house party vibe is guest dancer Theresa Murray on footwork.

This release follows the band's pandemic-era EP *Flora*, and both albums are available on Bandcamp, and as a limited-edition USB drive in the shape of the band's iconic logo.

Website: Lotm.band

Bandcamp: <https://theliliesofthemidwest.bandcamp.com/>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/77Ki7iWfjLKtnNMRX2DNhU>

Pandora: <https://www.pandora.com/artist/the-lilies-of-the-midwest/ARv9xZhcV7rddlq>

Amazon Music: <https://music.amazon.com/artists/B0DS471S1B/the-lilies-of-the-midwest>

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheLiliesOfTheMidwest>

Instagram: @theliliesofthemidwest

Media Contact: theliliesofthemidwest@gmail.com

TIMMY O'CONNOR (1935-2024)

SLIABH LUACHRA TRADITION BEARER PASSES

Accordion player Timmy O'Connor of Toureendarby, Newmarket, County Cork passed away peacefully on December 16th.

Timmy O'Connor was a living link in a chain that stretched back over two centuries. As he told me in an interview I carried out with him and his protege Pat Fleming last year, he said:

"When I was a young lad there was music back up the road, it wasn't in pubs then but in houses, the music was for house dances. Before I was playing I was listening all the time..."

"Jack Keane was the main musician, and before him it was Paul Lenehan and Mikey Walsh. When I got the melodeon, the musicians used to come to my house just to see the instrument. It got passed from person to person, it was going all day and all night."

In 2018 Timmy's importance to the region's music was acknowledged when he received the 'Dedication to the Music of Sliabh Luachra Award' at the Patrick O'Keefe Festival. The ceremony was held in Scully's Bar in Newmarket, a pub that hosted many Monday night sessions with Timmy and his friends over the decades.

Eoin "Stan" O'Sullivan recorded that special community for the album *Scully's Traditional Music Weekend 2013* which is on Bandcamp. Timmy also made two albums (both are on Bandcamp); *As It Was In Toureendarby* (2013) and *Tunes From Toureendarby* (2024) recorded in Timmy's kitchen with Pat Fleming and Steve Cooney. They are key sources of Sliabh Luachra tunes, many of which are native to Timmy's home place of Toureendarby.

Timmy's generosity to younger players was legendary. His legacy is assured and his music will certainly live on for generations to come in their capable hands.

Seán Laffey



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DANÚ AT 30

Seán Laffey takes a drive to rural Waterford and meets Benny McCarthy at Doon Studios.

Photo : John D. Kelly



Benny and I have known each other for years now, ever since he and Tom Doorley turned up at the IMM Clare Street offices one summer's day over 25 years ago and said they had a new band called Danú, and would we be interested in hearing about them? We went off to the park in Stephen's Green and I took a few photographs.

We've met many times over the years, at gigs, at festivals at home and in the USA, and I've been a fly on the wall at a couple of Benny's other projects. When it comes to formal interviews, we'd meet halfway, usually Clonmel or Cahir on the Tipperary side of the Comeragh Mountains. This time Benny wondered if I'd like to meet him in his Doon studio; I jumped at the chance and set off for Ballinamult.

It was the week before Christmas and road signs are not much of a feature of the landscape near Doon. To be sure I was on the right road, I pulled into the Ballinamult Creamery. It looked deserted. I spotted a lad who could easily pass for Santa, he was loading up a battered white pickup truck. I asked was I on the right road for Doon studios. "Ah!" says he, "you'll be looking for Benny McCarthy then?" I discovered I was talking to John Dunne who just happens to be a piper, and well, every musician in the parish knows where Benny's studio is. Directions were offered and in a few minutes I arrived at Benny's place.

His studio, where a great deal of the Danú recording magic happens, is a converted cow shed, big enough in its agricultural days to house 16 heifers. Benny has done a tremendous job of converting the space. The entrance hall is double height with a stone floor and a blazing log fire. Under the mezzanine are a number of bedrooms where visiting musicians can stay. Around the corner is a long low room, which doubles up as a kitchen and the studio's nerve centre. There's a wall of CDs, many of which were produced in the space and I notice on the desk a glass salver, a prized possession of Benny's. Its engraved text reads "Irish Music Magazine, 2000, Danú, Best Live Traditional".

Benny takes us back a further six years to the formation of the idea. "Before there was Danú, we were all mad for tunes and happy to play sessions whenever we could. The pivotal moment came at the Oireachtas in Dungarvan in 1994. I was 19 and was competing in the button box and melodeon competition, which I won. Afterwards there was a Céilí in Lawlors Hotel and when the band had finished, myself, Daire Bracken, Dónal Clancy and Donnchadh Gough stayed on stage and had an impromptu session. We were spotted by Tomás MacRuairí, who organised the Irish contingent to travel to Lorient; he asked us would we like to represent Ireland at the next Inter Celtique Festival? We said sure why not? We hadn't a clue about Lorient, its size, its duration

or its importance. So we had a few months to think about appearing in Brittany and by then we had Trisha Hutton on board as our fiddler player. It was she who suggested the name Danú, after an ancient Celtic goddess, and we all agreed that it would make a good name for the Inter Celtique Festival.

"As it got close to the Lorient trip, Trisha got caught up with her gigs in Ireland and could not go so we invited Daire Bracken onboard. We went up to Dublin the night before our flight and had a session in Monkstown with Daire and also with Tom and Éamon Doorley. We clicked musically and it was obvious that they'd be part of the band if we got a return visit the following year (1996). As it happens we had a blast there, playing on huge stages to crowds in excess of 3000 at a time. It was something of a culture shock too, as we were seen as ambassadors for Irish music and we were interviewed alongside some of the big names of Celtic music like Capercailie and Carlos Nunez. After this 1995 trip, the 4 piece Danú went into Liam Clancy's Studio in Ring and recorded some demo tracks, which gave us a nice introduction to studio recording. In 1996 we returned to Brittany as a 6 piece band and Danú won the Boules Des Korrigans, the prize for the best up and coming band at Lorient."

Awakened by this accolade, other festivals and promoters became interested in the band. One person in particular who saw the potential of the young group was Christine Wilson as Benny explains: "She suggested we should try our hand at coming over to America in 1997, so we went over for a holiday and played some shows, which went down very well. By this time we had our debut album simply called *Danú* which we self-released."

The band were getting more work, by 1997 they had played at Tonder in Denmark and Saint Chartier in France. Tom Sherlock was very supportive of the band and Claddagh Records were distributing the band's first album around Ireland and Europe. They came to the attention of Shanachie Records through Joe McKenna who was the Irish representative for the label. "That was a major moment for us. Shanachie were doing great things with traditional music, they wanted to keep it pure and they were looking for new talent. The two principals in the company, Dan Collins and Richard Nevins came to Ireland to meet us and see us play. That recording deal really opened up North America for us."

Thirty years on from their foundation, Danú are still a big draw in North America. Benny points out two important factors that have sustained their enduring touring careers. "Firstly, having a good

booking agent in North America is a crucial asset. We have had a few great companies work for the band over the years and today we have a great New York based agency *Alliance Artist Management*. Being with them has widened our audience appeal, we are very focused nowadays appearing at fine theatres in the Performing Arts circuit of the USA. It also allows us to plan well in advance; they book tours nearly two years ahead, which means we have a healthy diary of gigs for the foreseeable future.

"Secondly from the start we have a fantastic travel agent. It may seem old fashioned these days, but having Caroline Kelly in Waterford arrange our flights has been key. If something goes wrong when we are on tour, for example a flight might be cancelled, having a dedicated

"Our new *The Pearl Album* features 30 live unforgettable moments from more than 25 great concert halls"

travel agent at home who we know will get things sorted out takes a huge amount of pressure off us."

Danú's personnel has shifted over time and Benny is keen to acknowledge the contribution that past members have made to the ongoing success of the band. "People's circumstances change, we have families to raise, other opportunities arise, no one is locked into Danú, and I think that's our big strength. Having a flow of new talent into the band keeps us fresh and we can develop our musical sound around them."

Looking ahead to their next USA tour this March, the Danú line up will be: Benny McCarthy (button box), Nell Ní Chróinín (vocals & tin whistle), Oisín McAuley (fiddle and backing vocals), Éamon Doorley (bouzouki), Tony Byrne (guitar), Ivan Goff (pipes, flute & Whistle) and Billy Sutton (bodhran, mandolin & backing vocals).

Back to the studio for a moment, Benny invites me to listen to some archive recordings, he says he has hundreds of hours on dozens of hard drives. It's an archive that Benny has tapped into to create *The Pearl Album (Live in Celebration)*. "We've learned so much over the past 30 years, and this album is a celebration of those experiences. The tracks were selected from performances on recent tours across North America's most renowned concert halls."

The album offers a mix of traditional Irish and English songs, featuring the voice of Nell Ní Chróinín. Each piece is intricately arranged, blending Danú's signature instrumental tones with Nell's remarkable vocal artistry. Instrumental sets, an integral feature of Danú's live show are prominently showcased. Danú's commitment to sound production is second to none. With several members owning studios and decades of experience in audio engineering, the band, along with their sound technician Ivan O'Shea, has crafted a state-of-the-art touring setup. This expertise ensures pristine sound quality throughout the album's two-plus hours of live recordings. As Benny explains, "These tracks were recorded live, capturing the raw, unedited essence of Danú's stagecraft. It's an artistry we have refined over 30 years of touring. For me this album is proof that legacy and experience truly matter in music."

The Pearl Album features 30 unforgettable moments spanning more than 25 great concert halls, celebrating Danú's journey through thousands of live performances. This album invites fans old and new to join in honouring their 30-year legacy. *The Pearl Album (Live in Celebration)* will be released internationally on all digital download and streaming platforms at noon (Irish time) on St. Patrick's Day for all to enjoy!

For more information, visit Danú's official website (www.danu.net) or follow them on social media for updates and download instructions for *The Pearl* album.

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FRANCES BLACK ANTHOLOGY

To mark Frances Black's 30th year as a recording artist, Dolphin Music Group have released a 52 track triple-CD, *Anthology*. Seán Laffey calls Frances to discover more.



It seems I couldn't have called at a better time, it was just after Christmas and there was excitement in Frances' home. As she explains, "My daughter, Aoife Scott, has just got engaged to Andy Meaney; they've been a couple for eleven years and we are over the moon with the news."

Siblings Mary, Frances, Shay, Michael, and Martin, individually or collectively are singers. "Songs are central to the Black family. "Songs are in our DNA and they will never leave us." Their first album called *The Black Family* came out on Dara Records in 1988, Dara was owned by two brothers Paul and Joe O'Reilly, Joe being her sister Mary's husband. Family runs through all their music.

Frances takes us back to her early whirlwind success, it began with joining the band Arcady in 1988. She featured on the album, *After the*

on radio, more people willing to help you and promote you. It's such a full time task now. I see it with all the effort Aoife puts into her music. Managing your gigs, your social media and your own recordings. I sometimes wonder does it leave the current generation any time left to enjoy their music?"

Outside of music Frances Black is an Independent Senator. She was elected to the Seanad in 2016. There she is a voice for the vulnerable, she continues to work with organisations in the voluntary and charitable sectors alongside her work in Seanad Éireann. In 2009 she founded the RISE Foundation, a charity helping family members of those with addictive behaviour. (RISE stands for Recovery In a Safe Environment). It has been her driving passion for over 15 years and has brought about positive change in people's lives.

The hardest hitting song on the anthology is by the writer Michael Heart; it is called *We Will Not Go Down (Song for Gaza)*, one verse runs as follows:

A blinding flash of white light Lit up the sky over Gaza tonight
People running for cover Not knowing whether they're dead or alive
They came with their tanks and their planes
With ravaging fiery flames And nothing remains
Just a voice rising up in the smoky haze
We will not go down In the night, without a fight

This resonates with Frances, who most famously created the *Occupied Territories* bill in 2018. Having visited Gaza and the West Bank a long time before the current war, she has first hand experience of what life was like for ordinary families in those Palestinian enclaves. Frances introduced the OTB in January 2018. Both the Dáil and the Seanad have voted in favour of the Bill, but unfortunately it has been blocked since 2019. On 22 October 2024, the government announced that it will send the Bill to the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs.

At the heart of Frances' music is a deep respect for family and humanity. She is a brave woman who has stood tall for her beliefs, and

"Frances is a brave woman who has stood tall for her beliefs"

Ball, in 1991. Frances subsequently embarked on a successful collaboration with acclaimed singer-songwriter, Kieran Goss, with whom she released the album, *Frances Black and Kieran Goss*.

In 1992, Frances really took the music scene by storm when *Wall of Tears*, which she had recorded with Kieran, and the rousing *After the Ball*, which she had recorded with Arcady, were placed on the album, *A Woman's Heart*. This album also featured Eleanor McEvoy, Dolores Keane, Mary Black, Sharon Shannon and Maura O'Connell, and it went on to become the biggest-selling album ever in Ireland.

This reaction led to Frances releasing her first solo album, *Talk to Me*, which was the number 1 best-selling album in Ireland for 10 weeks. She had a massive hit single with *All The Lies That You Told Me*, penned by the late, great Christie Hennessy. Frances released six more best-selling solo albums, *The Sky Road*, *The Smile On Your Face*, *Don't Get Me Wrong*, *How High the Moon*, *The Best Of Frances Black*, and *This Love Will Carry*, all of which contain beautiful melodies and stirring lyrics delivered with passion and feeling.

She toured with Kieran Goss and was in demand, both as a live act and a recording artist, as you will hear on listening to *Anthology*. It is a mixture of contemporary songs, old ballads and new compositions, each one having a backstory to fill this page. I wondered about Mike Batt's *Bright Eyes*, originally sung by Art Garfunkel as the theme song for the *Watership Down* film. "That was the favourite song of Cecil Nolan who was a great friend of ours that passed away. He worked for Dolphin Music Group, I recorded that song for him."

Frances reflects on her formative years: "Somehow it seemed easier back then, there were more places to play, more chances to be heard

whose songs resonate with thousands of her fans around the world. She is a multi-dimensional person whose passions can't be pigeonholed, she is a performer and a politician and she approaches each role with all her heart and soul.

To commemorate *Talk To Me's* 30th anniversary, Frances will be performing with her band doing solo gigs around Ireland from March to April. She will also be doing a few gigs with her two great friends Sharon Shannon and Mary Coughlan.

For more details on *Anthology* and details of the song words and upcoming concerts, please visit www.frances-black.net



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MUSIC. ARTS. CULTURE. DANCE.

ALLTA IS A TOUCH OF WILDNESS FROM FOURWINDS

The new album *Allta* from the augmented trio FOURWINDS was released in early November 2024. Seán Laffey interrupted piper Tom Delany as he was making dinner; let's find out what's been cooking with *Allta*.



It didn't come as a surprise that Tom was composing food in his kitchen. After all he was brought up in France, combining ceol with cuisine must be as natural as breathing to him.

If this music was cooking it would be a tasty organic foraging. "Allta" translates from Irish to English as wild or untamed, and on hearing the album, there were times when I muttered "Bothy Band" and if you know what that 1970s band were capable of, you'll be intrigued by a similar edgy rawness in this recording. This is the band's second album. Their debut album came out in 2015, although Tom admits to having made five albums since then.

FOURWINDS are Tom Delany on uilleann pipes, whistles, and vocals, Caroline Keane on concertina, whistles, and vocals and Robbie Walsh on bodhrán and vocals. They are joined on *Allta* by guests Alan Murray (guitar, bouzouki, vocals), Laura Kerr (fiddle), and Barry Kerr (flute and artwork). The tracks were recorded at Black Mountain Studios in Dundalk, County Louth, by engineer Alex Borwick. The album also features recordings made with Donogh Hennessy as the sound engineer in Dingle, County Kerry as well as Alan Doherty who recorded two tracks in Dublin.

"That sense of energy that we had on our first album is still with us ten years later"

Tom guides us through the process of making the album. "Firstly we wanted to play traditional music. We weren't looking to make something dark and avant-garde, we like the idea that Irish traditional music is timeless. The tracks we put down on *Allta*, we hope, will still move people in 100 years time, just as we are moved by music from O'Neill's collection or archive recordings of the great players of the past. We are huge fans of Irish traditional music that was being made in the 1970s, such as Noel Hill and Tony Linnane's album from 1978; they also played on Christy Moore's *Iron Behind the Velvet* in 1978 and their *The Newly Mowed Meadow* set is a classic.

"We begin by making ghost tracks, we record the shape of the tunes as rough demos and share them, so we can develop them and work on possible arrangements. For example Alan lives in New York and the Kerrs live in Armagh, naturally there was a good deal of file sharing before we met in the studio. Doing our homework and being comfortable with the tunes was key to us relaxing and really going for it in the studio. I think listeners will realise that energy we had on our first album is still with us ten years later."

The album consists of four songs and seven instrumental tracks. There are some old favourites such as *The Rainy Day* and *The Rakes of Clonmel*, which sit side by side with new tunes that don't sound new, which is truly a compliment, notably *The Road to Cul Ros*, *The Falcon's Rest* and *McKinneys of Chicago*.

Songs: *The Snows of France and Holland* was written by Brian McNeill of The Battlefield Band. It tells of the modern day troubadour's life touring the folk circuit of Europe. *Men Of The Sea* by John Conolly & Bill Meek (the team who wrote *Fiddlers Green*) has a lively sing-along chorus. Then there is *The Great Big Roaming Ass* sung by Robbie Walsh, whistling and playing the bodhrán. It's an old song that was on Robbie McMahon's *The Black Sheep* recording; it's a comic song, a Fleadh favourite about 30 years ago and deserves a reprieve. Alan also sings *The Blue Cockade*, a version of *Pat Reilly*, which we find more about in our Story Behind the Song column in this issue.

Tom and Caroline will be celebrating the arrival of a new baby soon, so there are no immediate plans to tour the album, perhaps later in the second half of the year that may be possible. They are looking to tour the USA in 2026, by which time *Allta* will have established itself as a class recording. There's no rush. It's taken them nearly ten years to bring *Allta* to fruition, and the band believes it is more than good enough to have a life of its own.

Get acquainted with FOURWINDS at www.fourwindsirishmusic.com. You can also hear their full *Allta* album on Bandcamp.



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MUSIC NETWORK INVITES GRADAM WINNERS TO COLLABORATE IN CONCERT

Seán Laffey talks to a quartet of TG4 Gradam Ceoil winners who are set to tour this February as part of Music Network's Spring concert season.



This curated line-up features Derek Hickey (TG4 Gradam Ceoil 2024 *Musician of the Year*), The Kane Sisters (TG4 Gradam Ceoil 2024 *Group of the Year*) and Macdara Ó Faoláin (TG4 Gradam Ceoil 2024 *Young Musician of the Year*). They will play a dozen venues across Ireland from the 11th to 23rd February with stops in Galway, Limerick, Dublin, Kildare, Roscommon, Clare, Wexford, Cork and Kerry.

Gradam Ceoil TG4 recognises the absolute best in traditional music performance, acknowledging the achievements of the awardees and celebrating the outstanding talent that our country has to offer.

Liz and Yvonne Kane hail from Letterfrack in County Galway. They came to prominence when they toured with Sharon Shannon as members of The Woodchoppers. In 2002 they released their debut album *The Well Tempered Bow*. They are respected champions of the music of Paddy Fahey, having recorded *In Memory of Paddy Fahey* on Dawros Music in 2022.

Derek Hickey comes from Adare, County Limerick. As a teenager, he joined the Shannonside Céilí Band. In 1991 Frankie Gavin invited him to play a regular session in Kinvara, County Galway, and at eighteen Hickey joined Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh's band, Arcady. In 1995, he joined De Dannan and recorded two albums with the group. He is the button accordion tutor on the BA Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy and in 2022 released his own solo album.

Macdara Ó Faoláin is a multi-instrumentalist and instrument maker from An Rinn, County Waterford. He has recorded and performed on bouzouki with Derek Hickey, The Friel Sisters, Nell Ní Chróinín, Cormac McCarthy and Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh. He

is also a professional luthier, building fretted instruments, primarily bouzoukis and mandolins, for clients internationally from his studio at An Sean Phobal.

It is clear from the very start of our Zoom chat that these four are going to have a lot of fun with their music and their audience. The interview was peppered with jokes and laughter.

I began by asking them when did they get the call from Music Network and how have they responded to the request. "Deirdre Moynihan from Music Network suggested we get together and begin planning a show, that was back in October," says Derek. "We met up in Limerick at the Irish World Music Academy," Liz explains, adding, "we brought in a pile of music books and shared tunes between us. Myself and Yvonne had a number of tunes from the likes of Joe Liddy and Richard Dwyer, for example."

Derek says some of those tunes were new to him and working through a possible repertoire was an exhilarating experience. "Some tunes are simply gorgeous, tunes that I wouldn't normally feature in my own sets." Macdara stresses how much they have to thank Music Network for this opportunity saying; "I can echo Derek's sentiment. We've played in sessions with each other on and off over the years, but the discipline of having to work out a performance schedule is really very enjoyable."

"Yes," says Derek. "Everything was on the table during those two days of our first rehearsals. Who knows what more will happen when we rehearse in January?"

I wondered if the process of selecting tunes might result in bruised egos? Liz is upbeat. "The music takes precedence, it's what works best for us as a quartet that determines what to include in the

"Some tunes are simply gorgeous, tunes that I wouldn't normally feature in my own sets"

shows. We didn't want this to be a series of pasted together solo performances, we are working hard to bring something new and fresh and a genuine collaboration to our shows."

"We know the shows will develop as the tour continues and we can guarantee that no two shows will be the same. We will be reacting not just to ourselves, but to the physical spaces and the way the audience reacts to us," Derek explains, whilst Yvonne chips in with, "in the words of John Spillane, will we be brilliant or what?" At which point Zoom erupts with laughter and I can't help but join in.

There's talk too of some of the performances being recorded for a future TV broadcast. That was "up in the air" when we had the chat, but if it does happen, and you are in the audience, how brilliant will that be?

Tickets for the February tour are on sale now at [MusicNetwork.ie](https://www.musicnetwork.ie)

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HOMERIQUE FROM GROSSE ISLE

Seán Laffey has a transatlantic call with Fiachra O'Regan, the piper with the Quebec based trio Grosse Isle.



Homerique tells the stories of legendary characters from Irish and French-Canadian folklore. The album, featuring songs in three languages (French, Irish & English), introduces new guitar player François-Félix Roy to the group Grosse Isle, alongside founders Sophie Lavoie on fiddle, piano and vocals and Fiachra O'Regan on uilleann-pipes, whistles, banjo & vocals. François-Félix joined the group in mid 2024.

"All three of us released solo albums in 2023," says Fiachra. "We began to work on new material for Grosse Isle's *Homerique* remotely while François-Félix was studying in Sweden. It wasn't difficult as he was very familiar with the group's sound. The three of us are very much aligned in terms of our musical taste."

The last time we spoke Sophie was finishing her Masters degree at the University of Montreal, studying the older fiddlers in her home

area of Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean. She's now taking that research further with a PhD, documenting music and dance from the region. Fiachra likens the dance scene there to the Showband era in Ireland in the 1960s, "with a mix of traditional music and dance, social dance and other popular numbers".

Fiachra tells us a little about *Homerique*. "The album includes 3 songs written by Sophie. The first is inspired by Óró 'Sé Do Bheatha 'Bhaile, Pádraig Pearse's adaptation of an older song. Here Sophie's lyrics detail the famous meeting between the Irish 'Pirate Queen' Gráinne Mhaol and Queen Elizabeth I. *Mathilde La Dame Blanche* is the legendary ghost who haunts the waterfalls of Montmorency in Québec. *Étienne Hébert d'Acadie* tells of the resilient Acadian who, after being deported during the Grand Dérangement, spent the following 10 years of his life in search of his 3 brothers and his friend, with success.

"The remaining songs come from the traditional repertoire of Québec and Ireland. *Johnny Seoighe le Survenant* is an adaptation of the sean-nós song from Connemara set during the Great Famine. *Louis Riel l'exilé* is a bilingual adaptation of a text written by Louis himself, in which he describes his longing to see his beloved sister Henrietta, he having been exiled to the USA for 5 years. *White and*

Murphy is a wood-shanty song taken from the singing of Jimmy Kelly (RIP) from Shannon, Québec. It tells the story of one of many tragedies that occurred in the logging camps around North America.

"The tunes and songs on the album blend traditional and original material composed by Sophie. *Le Roi Renaud* is an instrumental version of one of the oldest songs in the Québécois repertoire, dating from medieval France. It recalls the death of King Renaud who returns from war gravely injured. The *Padraic Pearse* set is a tribute to the poet and political activist who had very forward thinking views on education and who went on to play a large role in Ireland's independence.

"Both Louis Riel and Pádraig Pearse were poets and writers, they had an overwhelmingly strong belief in preservation of their respective cultures and both became political activists and leaders, Pearse for the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Riel for the Métis National Committee. Both were involved in drafting a proclamation for their respective causes and sadly both were executed at a young age.

"The album also includes compositions from John Carty (*Seanamhac Tube Station*) and Paddy O'Brien (*The Coming of Spring*), as well as Sophie Lavoie's *Pleine Lune* and *Victor Delamarre*. Victor was a weightlifter from Lac-Saint-Jean. His idol was Louis Cyr, named as the strongest man in the world. Despite his height of 5'5", Victor set many records, which include defeating Louis Cyr at a weightlifting contest in 1914. The tune is fittingly followed with *Louis Cyr en 6/8*, Sophie's jig adaptation of Jean-Claudes Mirandette Reel *Louis Cyr*."

"The tunes and songs on the album blend traditional and original material composed by Sophie Lavoie"

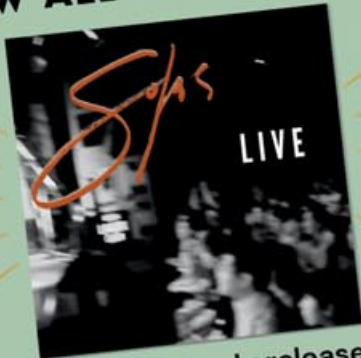
Grosse Isle would like to thank La Compagnie du Nord, their management company and agency and Canis Major music, their USA agent. Also thanks are due to the Canada Arts Council for funding for the album and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec for their ongoing support. Grosse Isle will showcase at Folk Alliance in Montreal, which runs from February 19th - 23rd 2025.

Find out more about Grosse Isle at www.grosse-isle.com





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TIME FOR LA FAMILLE LeBLANC

The current generation of La famille LeBlanc band are the sixth to carry the precious mantle of traditional music in New Brunswick. Anne Marie Kennedy spoke to Robin LeBlanc about their achievements.



Robin: “Until the age of 21, I played only piano and percussion, but after a year of study in France and travels through fifteen countries, including Ireland, when I returned home, as if by fate, I stumbled upon a “Kitchen Party” on Prince Edward Island. It was there that I first picked up the fiddle, and I’ve never put it down since. My last relative who played the old tunes, Ira LeBlanc, lived in the United States and when he came to visit, I recorded, not just the music, but also the stories that came with it.

“These recordings became the bridge to the next generation, my daughters, and it’s those tunes and stories that I’ve passed on to them, hoping they too will carry it forward. And now they play, beginning with fiddle, two of them later chose the whistle and concertina. My spouse and I are public school teachers, but music is an integral part of our daily routine. Another reason why music has taken root in our family is perhaps where we live, a small farm called, “Murphy’s Homestead”, built in 1877 and surrounded by an area locals call “Kinsale Meadows”. The stories of the place are still told, but the music that once echoed here has nearly vanished. That’s one reason we composed a three-piece set called *Kinsale Meadow* on our last album.”

“Looking ahead, we’re excited we showcase in Killarney, Ireland, in January 2025. As a folklorist and collector I have met with and recorded some of the oldest fiddlers from Magdalen Islands to Cape St. George in Newfoundland, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, the Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick, and the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec. Tunes I’ve collected and times spent playing with them has often influenced the choice and style of music we record.”

AMK: “Your signature sound is Acadian/Celtic, how is it achieved on the new album?”

Robin: “Take for example, *Suite en vièle acadienne*, a set of three old Acadian tunes played in AEAE tuning on the fiddle, giving the instrument a resonant, drone-like quality. Each tune in the set comes from a different fiddler, all from northeastern New Brunswick. *Prudent Robichaud* was learned from Claude Austin, *Vénus Fournier* from Robert Lavoie and *Le vieux Raduel Saulnier* by Claude Benoit. *Fille que moi*, first heard in 2020 when Emmanuel Bouthillier visited the Acadian Village in Bertrand and sang it for us. It became a staple of our repertoire, so we decided to record it, woven into three instrumental tunes: one from the repertoire of Edmond Savoie (Évangeline, N.B.) and two reels from Firmin Mallet.

“Our arrangements highlight the playfulness and energy of traditional Acadian music, and a music video for *Fille que moi* was also released online, giving the song an even wider reach. *Saulnierville* is a playful take on a very old and humorous French song, which many may recognize as *Les Filles de La Rochelle*. Our version adds a lively, fresh perspective, blending the lighthearted spirit of the original with our own stamp, a crowd favourite because of its catchy, sing-along feel and mischievous energy. We also released a video clip of this piece. The song’s origins and various adaptations are fascinating as it has been sung in different forms across French-speaking communities for generations.”

Their new album is available on major streaming platforms and Bandcamp. They have many concerts planned for 2025, and a new album will be released in the fall. All concerts and tours will be announced on their Facebook page, 'La famille LeBlanc'. Subscribe to stay informed!

Follow La famille LeBlanc on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram. There is an active link at <https://linktr.ee/lafamilleblanc>

“Our arrangements highlight the playfulness and energy of traditional Acadian music...”

AMK: “You’ve taken part in some prestigious events down the years.”

Robin: “We performed initially at a world tradition festival in Gannat, France and then at a UNESCO intangible heritage partner festival in South Korea. In 2020, we released our first family album, *Trois Jolies Demoiselles*, which was later nominated for Traditional Album of the Year at the East Coast Music Awards (ECMA). We toured France twice and have played in Louisiana. In 2023, we released *Would I be losing my time...*, nominated for Traditional Album of the Year at the ECMAs, the same year our daughters were nominated for “Young Artist of the Year” at the Canadian Folk Music Awards. Our biggest milestone so far has been 2024, when we toured extensively across Western Canada, Louisiana, Wisconsin, New York, France, and throughout Eastern Canada.





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THE FAMINE FIELD HAUNTING

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Two young hale and hearty men walked briskly along a country road, lost in their thoughts, in the gloom of the evening, their hands in their pockets, and their coats pulled tightly around them, to shield them from the twilight chill.

Dark clouds were beginning to obscure the setting sun, and the songbirds were growing silent as the evening drifted into darkness.

They walked past an old famine burial ground lying lonely and forgotten between the fields and the mountains.

Never once casting an eye, or sharing a fleeting thought for the nine thousand famine victims that lie mouldering there, as they walked homeward, down the winding road, looking forward, no doubt, to a warming drink in the presence of a roaring fire.

“On a moonless night, these troubled spirits wandered, aimlessly, through the ancient burial ground”

Unaware of the changing atmosphere that disturbed the cool air of the evening, they were oblivious to a stirring, in the field below them, and the appearance of spirit figures, slowly exiting the famine grave, through an unseen opening in the mound.

The figures walked in a slow procession, through the old neglected graveyard, crying out to God in heaven, through their dry cracked lips, to release them from their agony.



A hoar frost was now descending on the field, as more and more souls shuffled their way from the mound and across the graveyard.

Old men, with rheumy eyes and stubbled chins, staggered through the now frozen grass, their shoulders stooped from years of suffering and degradation.

A woman with a naked child grasping to her shrivelled breast, tears rolling down its ancient face as its mother knelt on the ground, scratching, with her long black broken nails, for something now no longer there.

Angry young men, with pale and sunken faces, grieving for the loss of their only chance of survival: America and the coffin ships!

For the blighted potatoes had long rotted away in the lazy beds of a forsaken Ireland.

Whereas the pompous and conceited gentlemen and genteel ladies in high places, with their criminal indifference, had neglected the welfare of the eight million starving people of whom they were responsible for.

They had continued with their extravagant parties and balls, as if that would ease their guilt, while sitting at a majestic mahogany table overflowing with rows of pure silver tableware glistening under the light of a hundred candles, and a profusion of the richest food and the finest of Spanish wines and French claret, all of which the God forsaken people of the country would never taste.

After dinner they would frolic and dance with their fancy ladies, weighed down by their pearls and diamonds, dressed in their delicate crinoline dresses, their large bosoms popping out much to the pleasure of their bedazzled partners, as they tripped through a Gay Quadrille in the ballrooms of the “Big House”.

“For after all,” they said, “these troublesome peasants have long outlived their usefulness, and the right thing to do is to clear the land of those ignorant indolent simians, and leave them to fend for themselves by the roadside, or in the workhouse, or even better still, let them leave this cursed land forever.”

They died in their millions, from starvation and fever, with the smell of putrid disease burning in their nostrils, and the stain of grass on their broken lips.

Like creatures from another world, they wandered, lost and lonely, through the naked trees, withered flowers, and fallow grass that had overgrown their blighted spuds.

A fox screeched from across the fields, to be answered by the growl of a badger foraging in the undergrowth, paying no attention to the horror above him.

High upon a withered tree, a coal-black raven sat watching, through his jaundiced eyes, the ghostly parade below him calling out in rage at the hopelessness of it all.

A one-legged crow limped slowly along a dry-stone wall, ignoring the sorry sight before him.

The hunch-back figure of a fiddler stood alone, beside a furze bush, as he played his ancient fiddle, sending notes high into the fading light, while a thin girl, in a mud-stained tattered dress, with tears streaming down her pale and haunted face, danced on a gravestone to his jarring melody.

On a moonless night, these troubled spirits wandered, aimlessly, through the ancient burial ground.

No one would hear their grieving songs, no priest would pray for the release of their tortured and restless souls, or free them from their never-ending desolation.

Then, as the rising sun appeared above the top of the mountain, and the frost began to retreat slowly from the cemetery, the one-legged crow, standing on the dry-stone wall, turned his scrawny blue-black head towards the stumbling figures: he raised his long grey beak to the sky, and screamed out a terrifying death rattle that shook the frozen ground around him.

The morning crept slowly over the hill, and it was time for the poor souls to return from whence they came.

In a single line, they began their slow and mournful way back to the dark place from where they had come, their cries slowly drifting on the morning breeze.

Then they were gone!

But their final pleading cries could still be heard drifting slowly away on the morning breeze.

Then from the depths of the mound, came a voice calling out in despair. "Why, in the name of God, did this happen to us? We have caused no harm to anyone! Can anyone answer the question?"

Then from across the vast expanse of the universe, a voice, unheard since the day of creation said:

"I am sorry my beloved children, but even I, don't know the answer to that question."

THE FAMINE SONG

In the year of forty seven
I saw an end to what had
been
Saw my neighbour's friends
and loved ones
Fade before me like a dream

Chorus

On the ship I cross the ocean
Sailing on the raging foam
To the land of my tomorrows
Far from my native home

Now the land is cold and
blighted

Now the crop has failed
again

There's no food upon the
table

Fear lives in the hearts of men

Chorus

There's a cloud upon the
mountain
And the rain is falling free
There's a shadow in the
valley
Where my cabin used to be

Chorus

All my comrades they have
fallen
By the roadside they have
died
In the fields and the
hedgerows
Their hungry bones lie side
by side

Chorus



MEITHEAL 2025

Meitheal to run in Limerick and Ennis this year PLUS Meitheal na Gaeilge Irish language College!

Meitheal Orchestra in Glór Ennis conducted by Lisa Canny



Photo : Key

Twenty one years ago, with the support of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Co. Clare Arts Office, Meitheal Irish Trad Music Summer School advertised an innovative programme and attracted a modest cohort of students for their first iteration in July of that year 2004. The festival gradually grew in stature and scope over the following years, involving the University of Limerick, the National Concert Hall, the Arts Council, Fleadh Nua, NYAH, Corofin Tradfest, Kilfenora Tradfest, Consairtín, the Ed Reavy Festival, Dungarvan Tunefest, FleadhTV and many others as collaborators. St. Flannan's College, Ennis and Villiers School, Limerick have consistently been the base venues, with ancillary concerts taking place in venues such as Dánlann an Chláir, Glór, the Limetree Theatre, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and the Millennium Theatre. Enrolment has grown dramatically but is unfortunately capped due to the logistics of campus accommodation and the space restrictions governing the staging of an orchestra.

Due to ever-increasing demand, last year, 2024, the team took a leap of faith and ran Meitheal concurrently in the two venues, Villiers, Limerick and St. Flannan's, Ennis. The plan was to manage two separate student cohorts, including two orchestras. This year, 2025, it will work along the same lines, so kickoff in Ennis will be

Reciprocation With Other Organisations

The Meitheal project grew out of a Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann initiative in 2003 which encouraged branches to reach out to other community bodies and businesses to foster collaboration for mutual benefit. That spirit of working in tandem with others still permeates through Meitheal and a glance at the array of partner logos on their site gives a sense of the emphasis they have on connectivity and partnership. They retain reciprocal arrangements with many of the bodies mentioned earlier above and also Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Raidió na Gaeltachta, Gael-Linn, Irish Music Magazine, Cork ETB and Limerick ETB. They enjoy the support of Comhaltas in several aspects of their programme. They value very much their links with the University of Limerick, which manifest as performance opportunities in the Irish World Academy for Meitheal students and participation on the BA (Irish Music) programme.

Last year was the first taste of their link with Ennis Trad Fest, which resulted in a very well received performance by the nominated fiddler, Jack Dilleen at the Sunday evening concert in the Old Ground Hotel. Jack also was awarded the title of Up and Coming Fiddler of London in 2024.

“There has been a big step up in promotion of Meitheal na Gaeilge, the Gaeltacht-style Irish language course for teens who share a musical background”

Sunday night July 20th - after the Munster Fleadh and the second student cohort will assemble in Limerick on Monday night July 21st. The finale concerts will be staggered, with Ennis winding up on Friday night 25th and the curtain will fall in Limerick on Saturday the 26th.



There also has been a big step up in promotion of Meitheal na Gaeilge, the Gaeltacht-style Irish language course for teens who share a musical background. Brochures were distributed to 500 secondary schools in the autumn, along with an email promotion. There

is a separate site www.meithealnagaeilge.ie with all the details and application forms and Meitheal na Gaeilge also has independent social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram X and TikTok with easy access via this QR code.



Jack Dilleen won an appearance at Ennis Tradfest and the Ed Reavy International Fiddle Competition 2024

Photo : Key

SOME OF THIS YEAR'S TUTORS:

Alannah Thornburgh is an award-winning harpist and composer from the west of Ireland. Alannah's music explores melodies from the Irish harping and American folk & jazz traditions. This cross-genre interaction is interwoven throughout her music, described as being "unforced, fluid and utterly at home in her own sound".



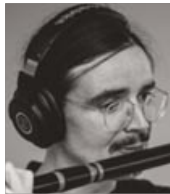
Denis Liddy (fiddle) has been captivating audiences for over 40 years. A sought-after performer and ferocious session musician, he has inspired thousands of students through his music school, and has led tours to China, the US and Australia. Denis' virtuosic recordings reflect his dedication to Irish music traditions.

One of our finest exponents of traditional flute, **Brendan Mulholland** has 6 critically acclaimed albums to date. Summer 2024 saw the launch of his highly anticipated new solo album *Bartins Bay* to wide acclaim. He is a member of Tempest who have released their debut album *TEMPEST* in 2025.



Killian Shannon (banjo) developed his banjo & bouzouki expertise with dance shows and band residencies in the US and Europe over the past 10 years. He now regularly performs with the Fureys and the Sharon Shannon band. He is Irish music liaison with the talent casting company Premier Entertainment.

Charlie Le Brun (flute) is a flute player, singer, and composer from Brittany. Now based in Ireland, Charlie performs traditional Breton and Irish tunes on the flute and Uilleann pipes. He has collaborated on numerous projects with artists such as Ryan Molloy, Gráinne Holland, and Mike McGoldrick.



Rebecca McCarthy Kent (fiddle & orchestra) achieved a First Class Honours in the MA in Traditional Irish Music in the University of Limerick. As well as numerous All-Irelands, she is the 2019 Sean O Riada fiddle champion. She is composer and co-director for Tramore-based orchestra 'Tradchestra' and tours with 3 on the Bund.

Éadaoin Ní Mhaicín (harp) is a founding member of the folk bands Astro Bloc and LÉDA and has performed on some of the world's most prestigious stages, including 3Arena, the OVO Hydro, and Broadway with various shows and bands, including as one of the lead violinists in Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance and with The Corrs.



Mohsen Amini (concertina and orchestra) co-founded Talisk, a globally-renowned trio selling thousands of tickets worldwide, and Ímar, whose viral performances and chart-topping albums have earned multiple awards. Among many accolades, he was named Musician of the

Year at the BBC Radio 2 Folk awards in 2018.



Danny O'Mahony has won many awards, including the Top Button Accordionist from the Irish Music Association in America in 2013. He was traditional artist-in-residence at UCC in 2019.

His most recent project is the groundbreaking theatre show *Bellow* which fuses trad music, electronic sound design and dance.



Highly regarded among his peers, **Michael Curran** is a distinguished Tyrone button accordion player with a unique musical style firmly rooted in the Ulster tradition. He travels and performs extensively around Europe and the USA. A previous All-Ireland Senior Button Accordion champion, Michael also plays with the Blackwater Céilí Band.

Ciarán FitzGerald (concertina) serves as conductor and composer for The Misneach Orchestra, which recently debuted their album featuring The Misneach Suite at The National Concert Hall. He is a fourteen-time All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil champion. In 2024, he was lead delegate on a month-long cultural exchange in Japan.

**AWARD WINNERS FROM 2024**

One of the more interesting aspects of Meitheal is the performance opportunities given as awards to students who show exceptional promise during the week. Many of the performances turn out to be the first step of what develops into a fine career. Many of these opportunities comprise appearances at venues and festivals, sharing the stage with seasoned professionals. Several of the 2024 recipients have already played at their events but the majority are yet to come, in the spring and summer.

Conall D'Arcy (concertina) and **Emily Murphy** (banjo) were awarded a full scholarship to Meitheal 2025 (value €800) for excellence in composition.

Timmy Keane (banjo) and **Cillian Gallagher** (accordion) were awarded half-scholarships to Meitheal 2025 (value €400) for excellence in composition.

Bhuaigh **Oisín Ó Floinn** agus **Holly Ní Bhraonáin** dhá scoláireacht i gcomhair cúrsa Samhraidh i gColáiste Gaeltachta *Ghael Linn* de dheasca líofacht a gcuid Ghaeilge.

Evan O Grady, **Oisín Flynn**, **Nell Kettle** and **Ronan Hynes** will be sampling life in 3rd level this spring as they get a taste of the BA Irish Music programme at the IWAMD in University of Limerick, having displayed excellent musicianship and maturity beyond their years.



Conall D'Arcy - Winner of a full scholarship to Meitheal 2025

Molly Pittendrigh (*flute*), was awarded a performance as support act at Corofin Trad fest (February 27th to March 2nd) – a superb fluteplayer with a very bright future!

Aoife Connolly (*concertina, harp, fiddle*), a young lady with already a wealth of experience will be making a guest appearance as support act at Kilfenora Trad Fest in the spring (April 25th to 28th).

Conall D’Arcy (*concertina*) will fulfil a valued exhibition slot at Consairtín 2025 in Ennis (April 24th - 27th).

Ruadhán Collier Ó Briain (*flute & pipes*) garnered many new admirers through his superb performance slot on *Fleadh 2024* on TG4 last August.

Eimear Clancy (*accordion*) and **Éabha Ní Mhurchú** (*concertina*) were awarded solo performance slots at the Presentation Concert Hall, Wexford during *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* – which they carried off with aplomb.

Jack Dilleen was awarded entry to the Ed Reavy International Fiddle Competition (October 17th to 20th) and also was given the opportunity of a concert performance at Ennis Tradfest 7th to 11th of November and played out of his skin.

Beidh **Cathal Ó Loingsigh**, **Cillian Carey O’Dwyer** (*bainseo & fidil*), **Niamh Landale** agus **Róisín O’Connor** (*flíúit & fidil*) ina n-aoianna ar chlár raidió ar *RnaG* i rith an Earraigh le cúnamh Dé.

John Elwood & Niamh Morris (*accordion & pipes*) will perform a gig as a duo at *Fleadh Nua* in Ennis (May 24th to June 2nd).

The Meitheal group, **Cróga** won a cash prize of €250 and gave a performance at Presentation Concert Hall, Wexford during *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*.

The group **Dreóite** had an acclaimed performance on *Fleadh 2024* on TG4 from Mullingar and a fee of €250. They will also appear at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick in the spring of 2025 and will be given an expert workshop on the day.

Banjo player, Conall D’Arcy from Salthill, Galway composed **Lá Caille**, a two-part jig in the key of G. Conall is 16.

The other winning composer was also a banjo player, Emily Ní Mhurchú from Fenit, Co. Kerry. Her tune is a barndance called **The Road to Knocknagoshel**. Emily is 16.

**“That spirit of working in tandem with others
still permeates through Meitheal”**

The group **Sí Gaoithe** are very much looking forward to their exhibition slot at Dunganvan Tunefest 2025.

Most of the above awards and more will be offered again to the 2025 students this July and represent impressive aspirations again for this year’s Meitheal applicants.

There are further partnerships and opportunities in the pipeline, so keep an eye on www.tradweek.com and Meitheal social media for details.

TWO WINNING COMPOSITIONS

The most valuable awards at Meitheal are the scholarships offered for the winning compositions, each valued at €800.

These are the 2024 winners.

BURSARIES

Bursaries to summer schools such as Meitheal is a progressive initiative which may well be adopted more frequently in time to come by County Arts offices who wish to promote excellence in trad performance in their areas. One County Arts Office alone granted nine bursaries last year to students from their county who wished to attend Meitheal. In the past, local music schools have offered similar incentives. Interested candidates should contact their local Co. Council Arts Office or their local Comhaltas branch or Co. Board and make a pitch for a bursary.

SCHOLARSHIPS TO MEITHEAL 2025

As previously, half-scholarships to Meitheal 2025 (value €400) are available to prizewinners in the following categories at last year’s *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*. These are:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd in Harp 12-15 and 15-18
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd in Flute 15-18 only



Dreóite - Awarded a slot on Fleadh 24 TG4 and a lunchtime concert at The Irish World Academy, UL

Photo : Key



Cróga - winners of a concert slot at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Aaron O Gorman, Oisín Flynn, Tara Lynch, Orla Walsh, Aoibhinn McGovern

Photo : Key

- 1st & 2nd in Uilleann Pipes 15-18 only
- 1st & 2nd in Button accordion 15-18 only
- 1st in Fiddle 15-18 only
- 1st in concertina 15-18 only
- 1st in banjo 15-18 only

This does not apply to winners of slow air competitions. A half-scholarship to Meitheal will also be awarded to a concertina player chosen at the Consairtín weekend in Ennis (April 24th to 27th).

Applications Close March 21st

All applications are online at www.tradweek.com/applicationform

Part of the application involves uploading an audio clip to verify

competence and to help stream applicants into classes. Even those who attended previously must furnish a recording as part of their application. The date of application is the date both elements have been received:

1. Application form completed and submitted online at www.tradweek.com/applicationform
2. Deposit (€200) paid by EFT or posted to Meitheal, c/o Garry Shannon, Ruan, Co. Clare.

Meitheal runs from July 21st to 25th in St. Flannan's College, Ennis and July 22nd to 26th in Villiers School, Limerick.

Applications close Fri. March 21st.

Contact

Ph. Garry Shannon at 0876704465. Email meitheal1@gmail.com

MEITHEAL NA GAELIGE IRISH COLLEGE

Cuir feabhas ar do chuid Gaeilge. Beatha teanga í a labhairt!

Running for just six days, Meitheal na Gaeilge will be an excellent option for teens who are so busy with activities or part-time jobs and aren't available for a longer stint in the Gaeltacht. With an eye on the State exams where 40% of the Irish exam in Leaving Cert is for the Oral, this should be an excellent opportunity to enjoy life through Irish in the company of friends who share musical interests.

Meitheal na Gaeilge will run just after Meitheal Ceoil, with students arriving on July 27th. The course starts on the 28th. It will take place in St. Flannan's College. There will be a full timetable of activities every day. All aspects of life at Meitheal na Gaeilge are as *Gaeilge*. Emphasis is on the spoken language, oral Irish and there will be a number of activities along the lines of Comprehension, Music, Radio & TV Presenting, Song, Dance, Sport, Competitions, Quiz, Disco and more.

Full details at www.meithealnagaeilge.ie

As a taster, here's a short exercise to help chat about the summer to come.

Freagraí

1. Beidh 2. Gheobhaidh 3. Déanfaidh 4. Rachaidh 5. Tioctaidh 6. Feicfidh 7. Seinnfidh 8. Féachfaidh 9. Seinnfidh 10. Beidh

It is in the **future tense** (aimsir fháistineach).

Fill the spaces with the correct verbs from this random list.

Briathra:

Déanfaidh, Tioctaidh, Beidh, Rachaidh, Seinnfidh, Beidh, feicfidh Féachfaidh, Seinnfidh, Gheobhaidh

An samhradh seo...

1. _____ mé sé bliana déag d'aois.
2. _____ mé fidil nua i Mí Mháirta.
3. _____ mé cleachtadh gach lá.
4. _____ mé go dtí Fleadh an Chontae.
5. _____ mo chairde freisin.
6. _____ mé ceoltóirí óga eile ann.
7. _____ mé ag na seisiúin.
8. _____ mé ar LUNASA ar an stáitse.
9. _____ mé le banna ceoil sa chomórtas.
10. _____ an bua againn, le cúnamh Dé.

A NEW ERA AT MULLIGANS OF AMSTERDAM

John O' Regan talks to Michael Sweeney, the new man at the helm of the Netherlands's iconic Irish music bar.



Mulligans Irish Music Bar looks out on the river Amstel, from which Amsterdam was named eight centuries ago. Founded in the summer of 1988, Mulligans is the oldest Irish Pub in the country. Over the years its central location, casual atmosphere, friendly staff and its blend of quirky characters has made Mulligans a legendary meeting place for musicians, writers, and artists. Mulligans is to Amsterdam what The Cobblestone is to Dublin.

For many years, Miriam Feuth was the main organiser of events in Mulligans, now it is in the safe hands of Michael Sweeney from Killygordon, Donegal. Michael outlined the significance of Miriam's contribution.

"Miriam Feuth was truly a pioneer in bringing the heart of Ireland to Amsterdam. When she opened Mulligans in 1988, she envisioned more than just a bar, it was a home for Irish culture and music. Her love

Bands have travelled regularly from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and all over the world to play gigs there. Michael outlined the importance of Mulligans for visiting Irish acts; "Mulligans plays a crucial role for Irish acts on tour as well as for many other musicians across different genres. Its significance on the European music scene cannot be overstated, with a performance here being highly sought after. This is largely due to Miriam's dedication and hard work in building the venue's reputation over the years, a legacy that I aim to continue. For many performers, playing here feels like performing for family, thanks to the intimate and authentic atmosphere.

"Mulligans offers a unique opportunity for touring musicians to collaborate with local talent. Regular performances from a diverse mix of Irish, Dutch, and UK musicians foster lasting connections that musicians cherish long after their shows. This sense of community and collaboration is one of the many reasons Mulligans remains a vital stop for touring artists. It provides an excellent platform for emerging acts to grow their presence in mainland Europe."

Michael Sweeney (brother in law of ex-Oige singer Maranna McCloskey) has a long connection with Mulligans. "My first experience of Mulligans was as a patron. I was immediately drawn to the pub by its vibrant music scene, welcoming atmosphere, and, of course, the best pint of Guinness in Amsterdam! My personal experience of the unique atmosphere at Mulligans played a significant role in my decision to take on the responsibility of running the venue. Having felt the magic of the place first-hand, I wanted to be part of preserving and building upon what makes it so special. Managing the venue is not merely a job for me, it's a passion and a privilege. I feel a strong responsibility to continue the legacy that Miriam Feuth established and to ensure that Mulligans remains a cherished hub for Irish music and culture for years to come."

Michael's vision for Mulligans is to both honour its cherished traditions and introduce new ideas to keep the venue evolving. "We plan to expand our event offerings, including the continuation of our popular monthly beginner session and Irish Set Dance Céilí, while also exploring the possibility of hosting Pop-Up Gaeltacht events. Additionally, we've recently partnered with the Amsterdam GAA club,

"A sense of community is one of the many reasons Mulligans remains a vital stop for touring artists"

for Irish traditional music and her desire to share it created a space that has become legendary. Over the years, Miriam's warmth and vision established Mulligans as a cornerstone of the Irish music community in Europe.

"The traditional Irish Sunday Session has been going since day one. Although the emphasis has always been on Traditional Irish music, during the later years the gigs have also extended to other styles, ranging from Bluegrass, country, pop, Americana and old time American. A recent initiative, the 'Beginner Session', has been particularly successful in supporting emerging musicians. Led by Dundalk native Fiachra Meek, an accomplished uilleann piper, singer and bodhrán player, the session is designed for those still developing their skills in a supportive, non-judgmental environment."

Mulligans regularly hosts cultural events that highlight Irish heritage, providing a rich and immersive experience for both locals and visitors, contributing to the lively atmosphere and sense of connection within the community.

which is a cause close to my heart. We're always eager to hear from talented musicians who share our passion for Irish music."

Bands or solo artists interested in performing at Mulligans can contact us through our website <https://www.mulligans.nl/> or directly via email : michael@mulligans.nl





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BRIAN HUGHES : WHEN THE WIND BLOWS WILD

Brian Hughes talks to Seán Laffey about his new album played exclusively on Wild Irish tin whistles.



Last autumn, Brian along with bouzouki player Zach Leger, flagged up this new album aboard a cruise ship heading up the coast of Maine. Playing music in America has become something of an annual pleasure for Kildare based Brian Hughes.

The album, however was made on home ground, recorded at Garry Ó Briain's Creg na Vagabones studio in County Clare. Brian is joined by Garry Ó Briain (guitar, mandocello, piano), Conal O'Kane (guitar), Colm Phelan (bodhrán, percussion), Dave Sheridan (fiddle), Lexie Boatright (concertina, harp), Dan Bodwell (double bass) and Paul McNally on Scottish small pipes.

The album came about through Brian's work with McNeela Music, where he regularly reviews new instruments. "I was struck with the quality of the Wild Irish whistles and the range of keys that they are made in. Paraic McNeela suggested we make an album featuring those whistles and I agreed as I've become so happy with them that they are now my instrument of choice. For me they have a quality

has a magical sound and there is an element of suspense in the arrangement where the pipes come in after the Strathspey has been established. Brian also works with a number of other musicians, one of which is long time musical friend Dave Sheridan, a seasoned fiddle player who is absolutely at home with Brian's often laconic style.

Brian tells us about playing with Lexie Boatright from the USA. "We'd both been teaching at the O'Flaherty Music camp in Texas and we had many a session after the classes were over. Last summer Lexie was on tour in Ireland playing at festivals and teaching, she had her concertina with her and we hired in a harp for the recording session. The recording was done in one day at Garry Ó Briain's studio; as you know Garry has made and played on probably hundreds of albums at this stage in his career and he is the consummate professional to work with."

Working with Paraic McNeela has brought another dimension to Brian's music. "Paraic's business is all about musicians, you'd see him repairing concertinas in his pop-up-shop at the Willie Clancy week. For this album he commissioned five short videos (with fifth and final episode to be released early in the new year), which take the viewer on a journey into how the album was made. Yes it is a way of marketing the Wild Irish whistles but it allows me to connect with fans and players of traditional music and they can get an appreciation of what I am doing when I play my tunes. You can see the videos at www.youtube.com/mcneelamusic or mcneelamusic.com."

Having heard it, *When The Wind Blows Wild* is a whistle album that will be talked about for many years to come. You can hear Brian play live in Denmark in April and in Texas and Holland in the Autumn. He will be playing some of those gigs with Alan Costello, the accordionist from Limerick, so expect some exceptional musical conversations when you catch him on stage.

The album is exclusively available at McNeelaMusic.com where you can purchase a CD or digital version of the album.

"As I've got older, I've realised that traditional music isn't all about speed and technique"

not unlike the classic Generation tin whistles of old. I can't really put my finger on the sound but I know when I play them, they have a truly traditional voice."

Brian has a fondness for tunes in flat keys (he plays the pipes in C); when I asked him what he found so attractive in those key signatures he said, "I find when I am playing in those flat keys there's more emotion in my music. It is something that has developed as I've got older. I've realised that traditional music isn't all about speed and technique. Perhaps we all became aware of that years ago when Martin Hayes took a fresh take on fiddle tunes, we realised that slowing down a tune can bring out its inner character. I find this works really well in duet playing where a conversation between the musicians comes to life as they explore the colours and textures in the music. Why rush a good tune to its ending, it is another way of thinking about traditional music."

This is especially true on the Strathspey, *The Iron Man*, which Brian has re-imagined as a slow air. He's joined on the track by Paul McNally who plays Scottish smallpipes. Brian says this combination



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NYAH FESTIVAL OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC**March 14th – 17th, 2025****www.cavanarts.ie**

NYAH Festival of Traditional Music will be held from 14th -17th March throughout Co Cavan. Check for NYAH on www.cavanarts.ie

NYAH is the oldest festival of traditional music in County Cavan and since its inception in 1999 has programmed artists of excellence and distinction.

The Festival is committed to two of the core priorities of Cavan County Council and the Arts Council in the Framework Agreement, supporting professional artists and ensuring that more people have access to quality arts provision locally.

Highlights include Jig of Life Awards Concert in Town Hall Cavan Saturday 15th. Jig Of Life Awards to James Kelly Fiddler who travels from USA for the Award. Piper Peter Maguire, Mullahoran, Co Cavan. Mick O Connor, Dublin on Flute & Marian Crowe, Co Cavan, Dance master. Our Belfast friends Rainbow Reels is a LGBTQIA+ traditional Irish music group. They have attracted musicians of all levels, some of whom in the past didn't feel welcome in the trad community when they came out. Along with regular LGBTQIA+ session players, the group has facilitated people to dust off their instruments in a supportive and fun environment reducing isolation and creating connections. They host a Session on Sunday 16th March in Farnham Arms Hotel, and we have Indian, Ukrainian & Irish evening of song, dance & Music on the 17th also in Farnham Arms.

Alongside all this we have one to one masterclasses, recitals, a St Patrick's Day Parade float and sessions.

Every Sunday 3pm NYAH CCE session is held in Farnham Arms Hotel Cavan and all welcome to join & share the Living Culture.

NYAH Website www.cavanmusic.org for CCE event news.

NYAH Festival is supported by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon FIS Scheme, Cavan Co Council Arts Office, Mary & Rich Brautigam USA, Sheridan Insurance College St Cavan, Widows bar Belturbet, Felix & Sharon Mc Quaid Opticians & Farnham Arms Hotel.

FÉILE PATRICK BYRNE**April 10th – 15th, 2025****www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie**

Féile Patrick Byrne, Monaghan's premier traditional arts festival returns from 10th to 15th April 2025 with its usual mix of concerts, workshops, sessions, a sets céilí, annual lecture and heritage walk. We have picked out a few festival highlights below with more acts to be confirmed.

St. Finbarr's Church: Friday 11th April will see the ever-popular recital in the beautiful and atmospheric venue of St. Finbarr's Church of Ireland church. The Casey Family from South Armagh are one of the confirmed acts. This five-piece family band featuring Michael (piano accordion) and Ciara (guitar, vocals) and their children Ciara (banjo, whistle), Ellen (flute, bodhrán) and Dearbhla (button accordion, guitar, vocals). Other acts to be confirmed soon.

Altan to Headline: Saturday 12th sees a first for Féile Patrick Byrne when traditional music icons Altan make their first visit to the festival. This is sure to be a sell out event so check in at our festival website www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie for ticket details.

Celtic Cousins Concert: Monday 14th will feature visiting traditional musicians and dancers from the L'École de Musique du Pôher in Brittany. They will be joined by the local Carrickmacross Comhaltas musicians and there will also be a performance by the Cavan Monaghan Music Generation Harp Ensemble.

Míle Buiochas: Carrickmacross Comhaltas, organisers of the annual Féile Patrick Byrne, would like to take the opportunity to thank the Arts Council, Monaghan County Council, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in association with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media for their support.

In addition, we wish to thank festival sponsors Carrickmacross Credit Union, the Shirley Arms Hotel, Deery's, Markey's, and Farney Printers for their support.

Further information at www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie

24th MAURICE O'KEEFFE SLIABH LUACHRA TRADITIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL**Kiskeam and Ballydesmond Throughout Easter Weekend****April 16th – 21st, 2025****www.mauriceokeeffe.com**

Pub sessions will be taking place in both villages with top class musicians scheduled for each of the evening /night-time slots. A young people's session was held last year and it was a huge success and will be on the schedule of events again.

For the energetic people who love to dance the night away, there will be lively Céilís organised which take place in Ballydesmond Community Centre. Great nights of dancing assured to well-known Céilí musicians.

There will be Fiddle & Duet Competitions with prizes and an overall winner of Maurice O'Keeffe Perpetual Cup for Fiddle & Perpetual Trophy for duets.

Dance workshops and Music workshops will be taking place as well as an information session about the musical history of Sliabh Luachra.

On Easter Sunday night, a talented array of musicians and other performers will be taking to the stage. Concert commences at 8pm sharp.

Back For 2025! 7 Day Festival & Sightseeing Tour Experience. Book now!

Everyone is welcome to the Festival, and if you play an instrument, be sure to bring it along with you and join in the sessions. The Festival Committee wishes to thank everyone for their continued support and look forward to seeing old friends and some new friends at Easter.

Check out our Facebook, Instagram, Twitter pages

@mauriceokeeffe festival and our website

www.mauriceokeeffe.com for upcoming details of our Launch night & Easter Programme of Events.

FÉILE ORIEL**May 2nd – 4th, 2025****www.feileoriel.com**

Féile Oriel Monaghan, the trad festival which pays homage to the Irish Fiddling tradition returns this May bank holiday weekend (May 2nd-4th). With headline acts, a fantastic session trail across town and two villages. The **Mullan Fiddler of Oriel** is the central focus point of the weekend.

Headlining this year's event will be the high-octane **Bow Brothers** (featuring Cathal and Stephen Hayden, Niall Murphy, Seamie O Dowd, Brian McGrath and Kieran Leonard on percussion). Given that five of the six band members are "almost" local who all hail from short distances across the border, there is a great flavour of the Ulster traditional music styles in their performances. Without doubt, the Bow Bros are the HOT TICKET of 2025, and their set is guaranteed to raise the roof on Sunday 4th.

Peter Street, the new "Young Guns" and must-see group featuring John Paul Reynolds (fiddle), Keelan McGrath (box), Simon Crehan (guitar) and Fionn O Hanlon (bouzouki) will hit the main stage on Saturday 3rd May. This will be their first outing in this part of Ireland and a much-anticipated event. We expect a capacity crowd which will attract their dedicated fans from all across the country.

Another unique feature of Féile Oriel is the dedicated **Elders of Fiddling** awards. This inaugural award (in 2023) celebrates and salutes the gatekeepers of the Irish Trad fiddle tradition from the four provinces, UK and the USA. Previous recipients include Charlie Lennon (RIP), Seamus Connolly (USA) and Eilish Byrne Whelehan (UK). See the website for details of this year's recipients.

Six town-based and two village pubs will host a series of full-on sessions over the three days and a few surprise musicians of note will appear unannounced... which always adds extra excitement and music gusto in the sessions. Everyone welcome to join in at all venues.

NYAH (Not Your Average Hooley) Happy St Patricks Weekend

NYAH Co Cavan Traditional Music Festival
14-17th March 2025



Among the Highlights:

Saturday 15th March Town Hall Cavan, Four NYAH Jig Of Life Awards to James Kelly Dublin Master Fiddler flying from USA, Peter Maguire Uilleann Piper Mullahoran Co Cavan. Mick O Connor Dublin Flute player & Historian, & Marian Crowe Dance Master, Moynehall Cavan. Invited Concert artists include Mick O Connor Family Dublin Inc Aoife on Concertina Liam on Fiddle. Neansaí Ni Choisdealbha Flute Co Galway. Duffy Brothers Sean-nós Dancers. Cavan Set Dancers. Brian McNamara Leitrim piper joined by Roisin & Aine. Lamond Gillespie Fiddler from UK. Barry Conaty Flute. Fintan McManus Fermanagh Guitar. Sean & Niall Curran pipes /Flute. Eamon McGivney Longford Fiddler. Hannah O Reilly Singer. Padraig Conroy Cavan Button Accordion. Martin Donohoe accordion, Karen McMahon Guitar & Philip Clarke Piano. Cd Launch of Talbhsí Oiriall - music and song from the Oriel tradition with Séamus Ó Rócháin, Alan Hughes, Hauke Steinberg & Cathal Lynch. Adm €20 Conc €15 Book tickets via the Venue. [Check the website https://townhallartscentre.com/](https://townhallartscentre.com/) By Phone Box Office: (049) 4380494.

Sunday 16th March

4.30 pm Open Session in Farnham Arms Hotel Cavan With Rainbow Reels group. A LGBTQIA+ traditional Irish music group which has attracted musicians of all levels, some of whom in the past didn't feel welcome in the trad community when they came out. Along with regular LGBTQIA+ session players, the group has facilitated people to dust off their instruments in a supportive and fun environment reducing isolation and creating connections.



Rainbow Reels photo Ellen Blair

The group has its home in The American Bar, Belfast and has played across Northern Ireland at various Pride events in Mid Ulster, Causeway and Fermanagh.

17th March Farnham Arms Hotel Cavan 4 pm With Indian,

Ukrainian & Irish musicians Sharing Culture. "Carnatic music", one of India's oldest classical music traditions, traces its roots back over two millennia. Artists include Sruthi Ravali* an accomplished singer, violinist, composer and educator. Abhishek Vasu* is a mridangam artist from Mumbai India. Mridangam is a double sided drum which is used as main percussion in Carnatic classical music. Ukrainian accordion master Sergly Balan and friends.



NYAH Traditional Irish Music Festival is 25 years Old. Supported by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon FIS Scheme, Arts Office, Cavan County Council & Mary & Rich Brautigam USA, Farnham Arms Hotel, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Sherdian Insurance Cavan & Shannonside / Northern Sound Radio. Festival updates on The Wind That Blows Radio Show Every Saturday 8pm with the Cavanman on Shannonside Northern Sound Radio.

Check www.cavanarts.ie for info.

NYAH Info Martin Donohoe 0862342270 cavanmusiclive@gmail.com



ALL WELCOME!

Maurice O'Keeffe Festival 2025

24th ANNUAL



Easter Weekend

Easter Weekend Sliabh Luachra
Music Festival
Kiskeam - Ballydesmond
- Co. Cork
April 16th - 21st



www.mauriceokeeffe.com



Weekend Overview

- Sessions
- Concerts
- Céilí
- Youth Session
- Singing Sessions
- Album Launches
- Music Workshop
- Set Dancing Workshop

HUGE LINE-UP!

Log on to our website & visit us on Facebook & Instagram for full details of Artists, Musicians & Sessions taking place in 2025!

A WEEKEND NOT TO BE MISSED. EVERYBODY WELCOME....

See website for full list of events, concerts, album launches and all accommodation requirements.

www.feileoriel.com 353 868931953 Tickets on Eventbrite (via website).

KVMR CELTIC FESTIVAL

Grass Valley, CA USA

May 2nd – 4th, 2025

www.kvmrcelticfestival.org

The 2025 KVMR Celtic Festival & Marketplace will be in full force at the Nevada County Fairgrounds in California for its 27th anniversary! First founded in 1996, the KVMR Celtic Festival includes a three-day musical celebration with multiple performance areas, a youth arts program, open sessions, magic, art, dance and singing.

The Festival is the main fundraising event of the year for KVMR Community Radio which operates as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) entity. Drawing over 5,000 attendees over the two and a half days, it also has a large audience of radio listeners all around the world. KVMR includes this festival in their schedule of live broadcasts so you can tune in online from www.kvmr.org.

KVMR Celtic Festival brings international and regional performers to Nevada County to present a cadre of talent at the celebration. Living history guilds, session players, jugglers, falconry, story tellers, highland athletics and more are showcased throughout the grounds, as well as food and craft vendors selling unique and inspired items. Friday opening the festival showcases a free Youth Arts Program, and a ticketed Ceilidh. Camping is available.

Headliners: Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy, Téada, San Miguel Fraser, the Andrew Finn Magill Trio, and more!

Mark your calendars and join us for this unforgettable event! Social media on Facebook at KVMR Celtic Festival and on Instagram at [kvmrcelticfestival](https://www.instagram.com/kvmrcelticfestival).

Tickets and details at the KVMR Celtic Festival website www.kvmrcelticfestival.org

"CUP OF TAE" FESTIVAL

May 2nd – 5th, 2025

www.ardara.ie

The Annual "Cup of Tae" Festival in Ardara, Co. Donegal, takes place again this year on May Bank Holiday Friday 2nd May to Mon 5th May, 2025. This year is a special year for the committee as we honour someone who on a daily basis contributes so much to the development and enhancement of traditional music in Donegal.

This year we honour Kevin O'Donnell with a special Concert in his honour on the Friday night in The Beehive Bar. Kevin on a daily basis works in the schools and teaching the music and then in the evenings continues to run hugely popular and successful schools.

Influenced by his family who have dominated traditional music in Donegal for years, Kevin has very much delighted and dominated a niche in the whole area of the development of traditional music. Kevin will of course be one of the master class teachers at this year's popular school of music as part of the "Cup of Tae" festival.

In the past, wonderful teachers like Jim McKillop, Brid Harper, The Campbells, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Michael O'Rourke, Martin McGinley, Tara Connaghan, Denise Boyle to name but a few have been teachers at the festival. Bookings for the schools of music are well in advance as space is always limited.

The "Cup of Tae" festival, often affectionately known as the biggest little festival in Ireland is a must for lovers of traditional music with a spontaneous session at all times throughout the festival.

Accommodation can be secured by contacting the accommodation page on Ardara.ie

For more information on the festival contact Ardara.ie or thecupoftaefestival.ie

THE CENTER FOR IRISH MUSIC, ST. PAUL MN PRESENTS

The 17th Minnesota Irish Music Weekend

June 5th – 8th, 2025

<http://www.centerforirishmusic.org/mim/>

Presented by the Center for Irish Music, Minnesota Irish Music Weekend is a unique festival that pairs world-class traditional Irish musicians and teachers with learners of all ages for a weekend of workshops, lectures, sessions, and concerts.

Each of our visiting artists is recognized for their musical mastery and will offer insights and techniques to help learners tap into the deep roots of traditional Irish music. This year's featured artists include musicians Mick Conneely – fiddle, bouzouki; Pauline Conneely – banjo; Sorcha Costello – fiddle; Mary McNamara – concertina; Brian Mullen – song; Conal O'Grada – flute; Danny O'Mahony – accordion; and Dáithí Sproule – guitar, song!

The 2025 weekend includes a rousing **Kick-Off Celebration** at a local brewery. **The Great Session Experience** is free and open to all! Featuring all visiting artists, the much anticipated **Master Artists Concert** is a must-see event that will also be broadcast live.

Programs include:

- Irish Trad Immersion Camp for 9-12 year-olds
- Intermediate-Advanced Teen Program
- Adult Workshops, Lectures & Classes for intermediate to advanced-level students

Workshops are offered in accordion, banjo, bouzouki, concertina, fiddle, flute, harp, whistle, uilleann pipes, and song, along with fascinating in-depth talks and lectures with visiting artists on the Irish musical tradition.

Lecture, workshop, and concert prices range from \$10 to \$250 for a weekend package. Find more information at

<http://www.centerforirishmusic.org/mim/>

The Center for Irish Music, 836 Prior Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104. Telephone: +1 (651) 815-0083.

www.centerforirishmusic.org

23rd ANNUAL PENN-MAR IRISH FESTIVAL ON THE MOVE

June 21st, 2025

PennMarIrishFestival.com

Plans are coming together nicely for the 2025 Penn-Mar Irish Festival — with an entirely new layout and additional stage as the

YN CHRUINNAGHT
Celtic
GATHERING 2025

FAILT ERRIU - ALL WELCOME!



21 - 27 July / Jerrey Souree 2025

CELTIC MUSIC, SONG & DANCE FESTIVAL
CONCERTS / WORKSHOPS / CEILIS
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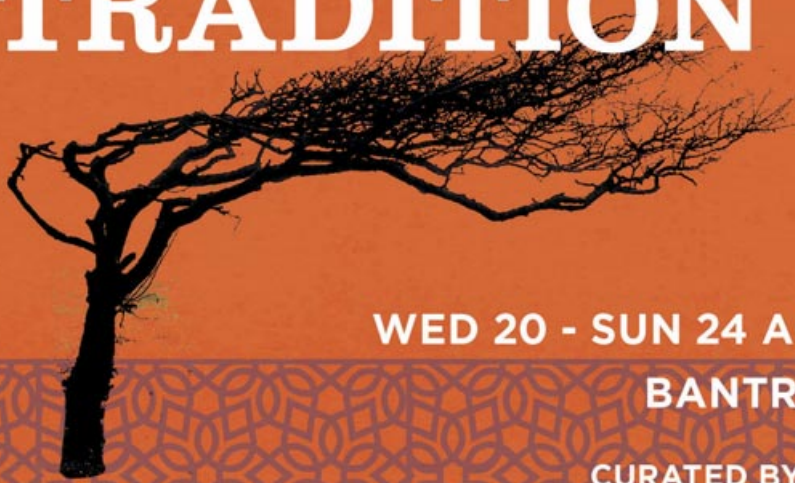
Peel & Douglas, Isle of Man
Line-up to be announced soon!

WWW.CELTICGATHERING.IM TEL. 07624 302200

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www.westcorkmusic.ie



The
"CUP OF TAE"
"Traditional"
Music Festival
2025

Concerts,
workshops
& Sessions



Fri 2nd to Mon 5th May, 2025

ARDARA, CO. DONEGAL FAMOUS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

This is the 22nd "Cup of TAE" Festival
We welcome all our international musicians back to
the 22nd "Cup of TAE" Festival

This year's Guest of Honour is Kevin O'Donnell, one of the
country's top fiddle players and teachers.

Ireland's top teachers will be on hand to tutor at the famous Schools of Music
Come to the famous schools of music in fiddle, flute, whistle, accordion,
with Ireland's top teachers open air recitals free
entertainment, spontaneous sessions a weekend not to miss CUP OF TAE
MAYBANKHOLIDAY WEEKEND

For info email - gleopardfish@gmail.com
Website - www.ardara.ie
Tel Stephen (087) 2424590 or John 083 4191983



38th International Feakle Festival of Traditional Irish Music

FEAKLE Co. Clare festival
Our 2025 Festival takes place this August to celebrate our
38th festival from Wednesday 6th to Monday 11th

Discover the heart of Irish culture at the Feakle Festival in Co. Clare!
Immerse yourself in six incredible days of music, song, and dance,
featuring unforgettable concerts, lively ceilis, workshops and sessions.
Explore the richness of poetry, storytelling, and captivating talks,
while children enjoy their own magical events.

Whether you're a seasoned
performer or a curious listener, the Feakle Festival offers
something for everyone. Don't miss this extraordinary celebration
of tradition and creativity in the surroundings of Feakle!

Tel: Gary Pepper 00353 61 924322
& 00353 87 9678020
or Tina Nelson 00353 87 6473537

www.feaklefestival.ie

E: feaklefestival@gmail.com



festival moves to Pheasant Run Greenhouse & Garden Center. Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 21, 2025.

This volunteer-run community celebration of Irish heritage features traditional and contemporary live Irish music, dance groups, cultural talks and living history exhibits, Irish food, a children's area, and a variety of quality vendors offering Irish goods including gifts, clothing, jewellery, music, books, pottery, photography, stained glass, and more.

Announced performers to date include Albannach, Cas Ceol, Cassie and Maggie, The Diddley Idols, Enda Reilly, and RUNA, with more to be revealed, including several Irish dance groups.

The children's area will again offer free crafts, games, face painting, balloon twisting, bubbles, and fun.

Some festival seating is provided, but lawn chairs and blankets are welcome. Please, no pets or outside food and beverages.

Pheasant Run Greenhouse is located in southern York County, Pennsylvania, near I-83 Exit 8. Look for parking signs along Susquehanna Trail and visit the website for a map of the parking areas. Shuttles will run a continuous loop between the two lots and the venue. Handicapped parking will be provided on site.

For discounted advance festival tickets and complete details, visit PennMarIrishFestival.com.

You can also follow updates on Facebook, Instagram, and BlueSky (#PennMarIrish).

Marketing and volunteer opportunities are available.

For all inquiries, please email PennMarIrish@gmail.com.

53rd SCOIL SAMHRAIDH WILLIE CLANCY

July 5th – 13th, 2025

www.scoilsamhraidhwillieclancy.com

Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy was founded in 1973 to commemorate the musical legacy of the Miltown Malbay uilleann piper, Willie Clancy, and to preserve and promote Irish traditional music. There is no doubt that the music has been preserved and over the past half-century has flourished, nationally and internationally. The

Willie Clancy Summer School - the first of its kind and the template for many similar-type events that followed - has made a significant contribution to this revival. The current enthusiasm is reflected in the huge annual attendance at the school and this dynamic was well portrayed in the recent four part documentary series on TG4, broadcast over November-December, 2024. The programmes captured the interaction between students, tutors, locals and visitors and showed the impact of the festival on the local community.

When the school started it was an unknown quantity. Local people were accustomed to the fleadhanna and Miltown had hosted two very successful county fleadhanna in 1957 and 1961. Summer schools were seen as places for academics, historians and literary figures; but not for traditional musicians. So there were no great expectations that this new initiative for a traditional music forum was going to have any great impact, locally or otherwise; and the question of its staying power was often raised, negatively. And that was not surprising because here was a journey into uncharted territory.

Therefore much credit is due to the vision of the founders and the resilience of successive organising committees who have made the vision a reality.

www.scoilsamhraidhwillieclancy.com

MEITHEAL ENNIS AND LIMERICK PLUS MEITHEAL NA GAELIGE IRISH COLLEGE!

July 21st - 26th (Meitheal) & July 28th – August 2nd (Meitheal na Gaelige)

www.tradweek.com

Meitheal Ceoil will be held in St. Flannan's College, Ennis and also in Villiers School, Limerick from July 21st to 26th. Marvellous tutors are already lined up. Reaction to Meitheal 2024 was marvellous and the Finale Concerts in Glór and the Millennium Theatre were unforgettable experiences, as was the Reunion event in Wexford and the TG4 slots.

Some of the award-winners have already played at the events for which they were chosen and many more will soon appear at Ennis

June 5-8, 2025

Minnesota Irish Music weekend

Featuring world-class traditional musicians

Mick Conneely - fiddle & bouzouki • Pauline Conneely - banjo
 Sorcha Costello - fiddle • Mary McNamara - concertina
 Brian Mullen - song • Conal O'Grada - flute
 Danny O'Mahony - accordion • Dáithí Sproule - guitar, song and more!

Music Programs for Teens, Children and Adults
 KICK-OFF CELEBRATION • Thursday
 GREAT SESSION EXPERIENCE • Friday
 CONCERT • Saturday

Early bird registration discounts available.
www.centerforirishmusic.org

THE 39th YEAR

Ar ais arís! Bigí linn!

Face-to-Face Classes, Workshops, Céilithe, Concerts, Talks, Practice Sessions & much more

Fiddle (including Sligo Style), Flute, Whistle, Uilleann Pipes, Harp, Banjo, Button Accordion, Concertina, Traditional Guitar, Traditional Singing & Liting, Sean Nós Singing, Bodhrán, Sean Nós & Set Dancing, Mixed Melody Instruments for Adults

Information, Registration & Pre-Payment:
www.southsligosummerschool.com
 Enquiries to:
anseo@southsligosummerschool.com
 or 089-6111375 / 086-0566383

2025 JULY 13th to 19th

TUBBERCURRY, CO. SLIGO, IRELAND

Department of Education & Skills Approved Course for Primary Teachers in Traditional Music, Song & Dance

SUMMER SCHOOL OF IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC, SONG & DANCE

THE CENTER FOR IRISH MUSIC
 836 Prior Avenue North, St. Paul, MN 55104

Sponsors include:
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 An Rann Ceoil na hEireann
 An Rann Ceoil na hEireann
 Department of Foreign Affairs

This activity is funded, in part, by appropriations from the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the State's general fund, and its arts and cultural heritage fund that was created by a vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.

Tradfest, Ed Reavy festival in Cavan, the Fleadh Nua in Ennis, at the Corofin and Kilfenora Trad festivals, Consairtín and so on.

Preliminary tutor list: Alannah Thornburg, Brendan Mulholland, Éadaoin Ní Mhaicín, Denis Liddy, Killian Shannon, Rebecca McCarthy Kent, Danny O Mahony, Charlie Le Brun, Mohsen Amini, Ciarán Fitzgerald, Michael Curran. The list will expand in due course.

Meitheal na Gaeilge Irish College – a Gaeltacht experience in a musical setting (total immersion in the Irish language) will run from July 28th to Aug 2nd, just after Meitheal Ceoil. Details and application at www.meithealnagaeilge.ie.

Information and application forms from Garry Shannon, Ruan, Co. Clare, Tel: 087 6704465 www.tradweek.com or via email: meitheal1@gmail.com Closing Date: March 21st.

SOUTH SLIGO SUMMER SCHOOL

July 13th – 19th, 2025 www.southsligosummerschool.com

As we plan for the 39th Year of the South Sligo Summer School in Tubbercurry, 13th to 19th July 2025, we remember our founder member, Rita Flannery, who died on 22nd November 2024.

A native of Carrigart in County Donegal, Rita was one of four forward thinking people to establish the summer school in July 1987 alongside Michael Severs, Marie Flannery and the late Geraldine Murtagh. Rita's contribution to the school over the following four decades was immense. She was the first point of contact for enquiries about the school and its activities, and her enthusiasm, work ethic and no nonsense approach helped in no small measure to ensure the viability and success of the week long annual event, now firmly established as one of the key 'go to' weeks of the summer, especially for musicians interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding of Sligo and North Connacht style and repertoire.

Rita had the foresight to encourage new ideas and today the expanded South Sligo Summer School programme reflects the eclectic nature of musical talent and expertise in our locality with

workshops as varied as Sligo style fiddle, singing & liling and traditional guitar playing all included, amongst many other elements, not least a full dance programme, concerts, recitals, practice sessions, afternoon talks and much more. Rita's passing on the feast day of St. Cecelia, the patron saint of musicians, reflected the central role the South Sligo Summer School played in her life and it certainly was her wish that it would continue to thrive into the future.

Tubbercurry is situated in the heart of South Sligo on the N17 Galway – Derry route, just minutes from Ireland West International Airport and the nearest train station in Ballymote. The surrounding area is steeped in tradition and we are very lucky to have a team of excellent tutors, many of whom have themselves come through the ranks of the summer school as former pupils.

We are very excited about our plans for July 2025 and will be updating our website www.southsligosummerschool.com in the coming months. Contact us: anseo@southsligosummerschool.com / 00-353-89-6111375 / 00-353-86-0566383.

YN CHRUINNAGHT CELTIC GATHERING

July 21st – 27th, 2025 www.celticgathering.im

Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering celebrates the Isle of Man's rich Celtic heritage and its close ties with Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. Held in the charming coastal town of Peel on the west coast of the Isle of Man, with some events in the capital city, Douglas, this year's festival will take place from 21st – 27th July 2025. Featuring a vibrant mix of music and dance performances, family-friendly ceilis, fascinating films, talks and workshops, the gathering highlights Celtic folklore, language, literature, artisan crafts and community activities for all ages.

The eagerly awaited 2025 line-up, soon to be announced, promises an array of renowned acts from across the Celtic nations. Festival-goers can join in the fun, whether it's at lively pub sessions, ceilis or participating in workshops, and the annual Manx Gaelic language summer school and 'Peel Seafest' run alongside the festival, ensuring there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Féile Oriel

2ND - 4TH MAY, 2025 | MONAGHAN

BOW BROTHERS PETER STREET

mullan
Fiddler of Oriel



COMHALTAS
2025 Elders of Fiddling

- Ulster: Dinny Leonard
- Munster: Connie O'Connell
- Leinster: Sean Montgomery
- Connaught: Sheila O'Dowd
- UK: Brian Rooney
- USA: Rose Flanagan

- Guinness session trail
 - Busking competitions
 - Singing sessions
 - Album launches
 - Special guests!
- ...and much more...



The  GUINNESS, The Fiddle, The Place is the Middle of Oriel

More info on www.feileoriel.com or call/WhatsApp +353 86 893 1953

The Isle of Man is easily accessible from Dublin, Belfast and various UK airports, with ferry services from Heysham and Liverpool. Alternatively, boat owners can sail directly to the picturesque Peel Marina.

Founded in 1978, Yn Chruinnaght (meaning “the Gathering” in Manx Gaelic) offers a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, ensuring an unforgettable experience for both performers, locals and visitors alike.

Those interested in the Manx Gaelic language summer school can find information at www.learnmanx.com and travel information from www.visitisleofman.com/

To discover more about Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering, visit www.celticgathering.im and stay connected through www.facebook.com/CelticGatheringIOM/

BELFAST TRADFEST

July 27th – August 3rd, 2025 www.belfasttradfest.com

Belfast TradFest, the pinnacle of world-class traditional music concerts, fiery pub sessions, and Ireland’s fastest growing summer school of traditional music, is set to celebrate its 7th edition this July across Belfast UNESCO City of Music. The internationally renowned festival will mark this milestone with its most ambitious programme of music yet between Sunday 27th July – Sunday 3rd August 2025.

Featuring Dervish, Matt Molloy & John Carty, Ríoghnach Connolly & The Breath, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Chris Stout & Catriona McKay, Notify with Cormac McCarthy & MGCE Orchestra, Mick McAuley & John Doyle, Flutopia, Seán Maguire Fiddle Concert, Belfast Harp Festival concert, the annual TITANIC Céilí which attracted 10,000 to the Titanic Slipways last year and which the festival hopes to build towards a Guinness World Record attempt during a future Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast.

The week-long Summer School of Traditional Music which takes place in the stunning Ulster University campus in Belfast city centre, this year features tutors of the calibre of Louise Mulcahy, Brighde Chaimbeul, John Doyle, Cathy Jordan, Brian McDonagh, Stephanie Keane, Mary Bergin, Sinéad McKenna, Caitlín Nic Gabhann, Conor Caldwell, John Carty, Gráinne Hambly, Padraig

McGovern, Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, Aimée Farrell Courtney, Tom Morrow & many many more...

Also featuring one of Ireland’s premier session trails with the best musicians from all over the country, a solo highland piping competition, afternoon lectures, talks, céilís, film screenings and taster sessions. There’s something for everyone from beginners and seasoned listeners to professional musicians.

Sign up now for early bird rates and fantastic accommodation offers of £349 for 7 nights in Belfast city centre. Group bookings are also available.

More information at www.belfasttradfest.com

IOWA IRISH FEST

August 1st – 3rd, 2025 [lowaIrishFest.com](http://www.lowaIrishFest.com)

Clear your calendars the first weekend of August! Iowa Irish Fest is the Midwest’s premiere Irish cultural event. Join the celebration of Irish culture, history, music, dance and so much more during August 1 through 3 in downtown Waterloo, Iowa USA! The Fest features live music on seven stages from Celtic musicians from all over the world.

With the Family Fun & Learning Area, the Fest offers a variety of activities that will entertain the entire family. From the rock-climbing wall to trying your hand at axe throwing, everyone can be a part of the fun. Start your Fest day off right by getting active in the ShamRock N’ Run 5K or the High Nelly Bicycle Rally.

You can also learn all about the Irish language, Celtic instruments, Irish whiskey and more in the Irish Fest workshops. Don’t forget about the wide variety of delicious food you can try! This three-day event is jam packed with events for Festgoers of all ages!

You can purchase your tickets for the Fest or learn more about what all Iowa Irish Fest has to offer by visiting [lowaIrishFest.com](http://www.lowaIrishFest.com).

Make sure to follow @IowaIrishFest on Facebook, so you don’t miss any Fest updates or promotions!

We hope to see you August 1 through 3 in downtown Waterloo, Iowa for the 19th annual Iowa Irish Fest

DUBLIN IRISH FESTIVAL

Dublin, Ohio, USA

August 1st – 3rd, 2025 <https://dublinirishfestival.org/>

Save the date to attend the 38th Dublin Irish Festival this summer, August 1-3. Explore one of the top Irish festivals in the U.S., drawing over 90,000 guests to Dublin, Ohio each year with 7 music stages, 60 acts, and more than 800 performers. For the past two years, the Dublin Irish Festival was voted in the top five for “Best Cultural Festival” by USA Today Readers.

The 2025 Festival promises an extraordinary lineup of international performers, Irish dancers and cultural experiences. All three days are full of Irish entertainment, welcoming back your favourite headliners along with brand new incredible acts. This jam-packed schedule of music includes cultural workshops led by many of our talented artists.

Kick off your weekend with the Dublin Irish Festival 5K and end it with the Festival Finale, in-between there is something for everyone. There are a variety of learning experiences available for every guest who attends. Learn about Irish history, genealogy, instruments or Irish language. Animal lovers have the opportunity to meet Irish breeds and their owners at the Celtic Canine area. Bring your own instrument and find the sessions tent to play a reel with other aspiring musicians. Children have their own area at the Festival featuring crafts, games and entertainment. The Festival is complete with over 90 shopping vendors and 30 food vendors.

The 2025 entertainment lineup will be announced in March. Follow Dublin Irish Festival on Facebook to stay up to date.

Visit <https://dublinirishfestival.org/> for more information.

GODERICH CELTIC ROOTS FESTIVAL

August 4th – 10th, 2025 <https://www.celticfestival.ca/>

Now in its 33rd year, the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival is an annual celebration of the music, craft, and culture of the seven Celtic nations. The Celtic Roots Festival has grown to include a week-long school of music, dance and craft art for adults, known as the Celtic College, and a parallel school for children called the Celtic Kid’s Camp, along with the traditional outdoor festival held in beautiful Lions’ Harbour Park on the shores of Lake Huron, in Goderich, Ontario, Canada.

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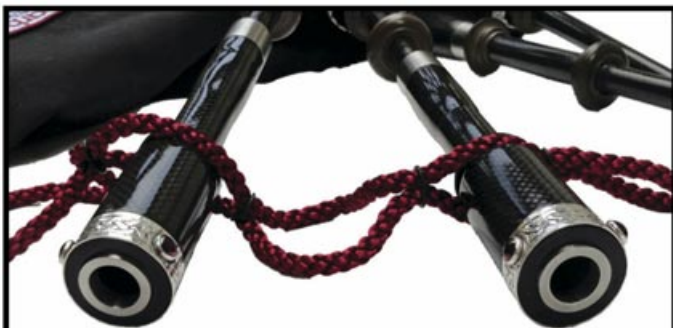
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5th - 13th July, 2025



Photo: Eamon McGivern

Tuition on uilleann pipes, whistle, flute, fiddle, concertina, button accordion, melodeon, banjo, harmonica, harp, step dancing, set dancing, Conamara sean-nós dance.

Workshops on the Irish and English language song traditions.

Dúchas an Cheoil/The Scope of Irish Music is a week-long course on the history of Irish traditional music, song and dance and accredited through the University of Limerick. For full details see www.blas.ie

Know the Score: Read Music the Trad Way. This CPD Course, designed for traditional musicians and teachers, is offered in partnership with I Teach Trad and certified by the Royal Irish Academy of Music. To register go to: <https://www.riam.ie/short-courses/know-the-score-read-irish-traditional-music>. The Course runs at St. Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point, Monday 7th July-Friday 12th July, 10am-2.30pm. For further details contact liz@iteachtrad.com

Lectures, recitals, concerts, film documentaries, céilithe.

Online Registration Opens on Monday 3rd March at 10am.

Information on Registration and Programme:
086-8773747/087-9500006/087-9264256 / Scoilwclancy73@gmail.com
Accommodation: 089-2320498 / kilduffing@gmail.com
www.scoil samhraidh willie clancy.com

With five stages, varying from small intimate performances to the high-powered Main Stage, the Festival is a unique musical experience in Canada and on the world-wide stage. Fresh local food, high-quality craft artisans, art demonstrations, children's activity area, and over 60 hours of live music – make this an unmissable weekend in Goderich.

The Celtic College is a four-day immersive event the week before the Celtic Festival that teaches the ins and outs of many types of Celtic music, dance, and craft art, taught by the artists who will be appearing at the Festival. This is your opportunity to learn from some of the very best musicians and artists from around the world. There are course levels for everyone from beginner to advanced, all are welcome to participate.

We hope you will join us for a full week of events including classes, nighttime concerts, Ceili dancing, sessions, and our weekend festival, in Canada's prettiest town, Goderich, Ontario, August 4-10, 2025.

Website: <https://www.celticfestival.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/goderichceltic>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/goderichcelticroots/>

Email: festival@celticfestival.ca

FEAKLE FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 38 YEARS OF TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC, SONG, AND DANCE

August 6th – 11th, 2025 www.feaklefestival.ie

The Feakle Festival returns this summer for its 38th year, promising six unforgettable days of Irish traditional music, song, and dance in the village of Feakle, Co. Clare. Taking place from Wednesday, August 6th, to Monday, August 11th, 2025, this much-loved festival continues to draw top-tier talent and dedicated audiences from across the globe.

Year after year, the Feakle Festival strengthens its reputation as a cultural cornerstone, bringing together the finest Irish traditional musicians, singers, and dancers for a week of world-class performances and unique collaborations. From lively ceilis to intimate sessions, the festival captures the very essence of Ireland's rich musical heritage and offers an unparalleled experience for all who attend.

The 2025 Feakle Festival will feature a rich and diverse lineup of events, including workshops led by acclaimed artists for musicians, singers, and dancers, as well as lectures and recitals that delve into the depth of Irish culture. Attendees can enjoy guided walks through the stunning landscapes of East Clare, energetic ceilis, mesmerising concerts, and spontaneous pop-up sessions. The festival also offers family-friendly activities, such as puppetry for children, and immersive Gaeilge events celebrating Ireland's native language, ensuring something special for everyone.

Whether you're a passionate fan of traditional Irish music or a curious newcomer, the Feakle Festival offers something for everyone. It's a unique opportunity to connect with Ireland's vibrant cultural traditions in the heart of East Clare, where music and community spirit go hand in hand.

Stay Connected: For the latest updates, follow Feakle Festival on Instagram and Facebook or visit www.feaklefestival.ie

Don't miss this extraordinary celebration of Irish music, song, and dance—mark your calendars for August 6th–11th, 2025, and join us in Feakle for an unforgettable week of cultural discovery and joy!

MASTERS OF TRADITION FESTIVAL

August 20th – 24th, 2025 www.westcorkmusic.ie

Masters of Tradition takes place from 20 – 24 August 2025 in Bantry, Co. Cork. Its mission remains the same as every other year – to journey to the heart of Irish music and provide a platform where subtle elements of the music can be heard.

As ever, the Festival is headlined by its Artistic Director Martin Hayes, the fiddler from East Clare, whose distinctive touch and extravagant virtuosity has brought the tradition to new levels.

The Masters of Tradition opened its doors in 2003 and since then it has welcomed such renowned names as Christy Moore, Bill Whelan, Scullion, Lisa O'Neill, Donal Lunny, Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, Altan, Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Moya Brennan, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, John Spillane and many more.

Masters of Tradition is generously supported by the Arts Council and Cork County Council.

Full programme will be announced on www.westcorkmusic.ie

O'FLAHERTY IRISH MUSIC RETREAT

October 23rd – 26th, 2025 oflahertyretreat.org

O'Flaherty Retreat – Irish Music Immersion. The 22nd Annual O'Flaherty Irish Music Retreat, organized by the Traditional Irish Music Education Society and supported through a grant from the Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme, will be held October 23-26, 2025 at the Hoblitzelle Camp & Conference Center in Midlothian Texas. The retreat is internationally renowned for instruction in Irish music and dance by highly respected teachers from Ireland and the United States.

Students can choose from a wide range of courses on acoustic instruments, singing and Sean-nós dancing. Additionally, workshops explore topics ranging from Irish music history to music theory. At every meal there are guest concerts and each evening instructor concerts followed by sessions. A céilí is held on Friday evening.

The instructors for this year's retreat are: Calum Bell – Flute/Whistle Fundamentals; Peter Brice – Singing; Darragh Carey-Kennedy – Mandolin/Tenor Banjo Fundamentals; Joanna Clare – Fiddle Fundamentals; Anna Colliton – Bodhrán; John Coyne – Bouzouki; Francis Cunningham – Concertina; Liz Doherty – Fiddle; Mickey Dunne – Uilleann Pipes; Nicolle Fig – Bodhrán Fundamentals; Caoimhe Uí Fhlatharta – Fiddle; Séamus Ó Fhlatharta – Harp; Clíona Halley – Concertina Fundamentals; Brian Hughes – Whistle; Finn Magill – Fiddle; Adrian McAuliffe – Tenor Banjo; Sean McComiskey – Button Accordion; Gerry O'Connor – Fiddle; Conal Ó Gráda – Flute; Richard Osban – Mandolin; and Dáithí Sproule – Guitar. Our melody players for the accompaniment classes will be fiddler Grace Broadhead and flute player Evan Powell.

Tuition is \$350 for participants 18 and older and \$250 for youth 12-17 years old (admitted by invitation only). Meals and lodging are separate.

For more information and to register, go to oflahertyretreat.org



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22nd Annual O'Flaherty IRISH MUSIC RETREAT

October 23-26

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(30 MILES SOUTH OF DALLAS)



Calum Bell
Flute/Whistle Fundamentals



Peter Brice
Singing



Darragh Carey-Kennedy
Mandolin/Tenor Banjo Fundamentals



Joanna Clare
Fiddle Fundamentals



Anna Colliton
Bodhrán



John Coyne
Bouzouki



Francis Cunningham
Concertina



Liz Doherty
Fiddle



Mickey Dunne
Tin Whistle



Nicolle Fiy
Bodhrán Fundamentals



Coimhe Di Fhuatharta
Fiddle



Séamus Ó Fhuatharta
Harp



Ciara Bailey
Concertina Fundamentals



Brian Hughes
Whistle



Finn Magill
Fiddle



Adrian McAuliffe
Tenor Banjo



Sean McComiskey
Button Accordion



Gerry O'Connor
Fiddle



Conall Ó Gráda
Piano



Richard Osban
Mandolin



Déirdre Sproutie
Guitar



Grace Broadhead
Melody Fiddle



Evan Powell
Melody Fiddle

The Retreat opens with a Texas BBQ Dinner followed by a Kick-Off Concert on Thursday evening
October 23rd. Classes begin October 24th.
Online enrollment begins June 14th, 9am CST.

Classes Offered for

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O'Flaherty Irish Music Retreat is produced by the Traditional Irish Music Education Society (TIMES)
For more information, call (469)215-1840 or e-mail to info@oflahertyretreat.org or visit www.oflahertyretreat.org

THE MAURICE O'KEEFFE ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Kiskeam and Ballydesmond, County Cork. Easter: April 16th-21st, 2025. Seán Laffey talks to Festival organiser Pat Fleming.

Photo : Seán Laffey



This Easter, two villages on the Cork side of the Sliabh Luachra triangle will resound with excellent Irish music as once again the Maurice O'Keeffe Festival celebrates the vibrant living tradition of the area.

There's something very special about the Maurice O'Keeffe Festival, now in its 24th year. It draws from a large pool of outstanding local talent, bringing together a local musical community that is active all year round. The festival runs in four pubs in two villages, a GAA sportshall for Céilí dancing in Ballydesmond and a Community Hall in Kiskeam for intimate evening concerts on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Accordion player Pat Fleming heads up the Festival, which is named after Maurice O'Keeffe, the notable fiddler, teacher, composer and tradition bearer. The festival was named in his

“Timmy O'Connor's music wasn't just a part of him, it was a gift he shared with the world”

honour while he was alive, and he knew that his music and his legacy would live long after he had gone.

Maurice O'Keeffe (1919 – 2017) played regularly into his 90s in Kiskeam and in Scully's bar in Newmarket, County Cork. Scully's was a formidable focal point for Sliabh Luachra music and in 2013 Eoin “Stan” O'Sullivan spent the months of July and August visiting the bar's Monday night session with his recording gear. The resulting CD gave the world an entry into an easygoing gathering. There was a sense of ease in the music, nothing was hurried, nothing was rushed, and it was obvious from anyone listening, either live or from those recordings, that the people playing music in the bar were simply there for the music. One leading musician in 50 years of those Monday night sessions was Timmy O'Connor, who passed away last December.

Pat Fleming warmly remembers his friend and mentor. “Timmy was more than a master accordion player; he was the heartbeat of the Sliabh Luachra tradition, a man whose music and spirit will forever resonate in the hearts of all who knew him. Timmy's compositions will live on forever, immortalizing his genius and passion for music. Each tune he crafted carries the essence of Sliabh Luachra, its rich history, its heartfelt joy, and its quiet beauty. His music wasn't just a part of him; it was a gift he shared with the world, a legacy that will continue to inspire and uplift generations to come.

“Timmy's impact wasn't limited to his incredible talent. His smile could light up an entire room, a beacon of warmth that instantly made you feel at home. His presence brought life and energy to every session, every gathering, and every corner of the world where his music was played. He had a unique ability to make people feel seen, welcomed, and cherished.

“Timmy's generosity knew no bounds. He loved to share his music, not as something to be admired from a distance but as an invitation to join in. His encouragement was unwavering, inspiring countless musicians to pick up their instruments and play. Whether you were a seasoned player or a nervous beginner, Timmy had a way of making you believe in yourself. He lifted you up with his words, his music, and his unwavering support, always reminding you that the joy of playing was what mattered most.

“His deep connection to the Sliabh Luachra tradition, his unmatched talent, and his selfless spirit have left an indelible mark on the world of Irish music. But beyond all that, Timmy was a dear friend. A man of kindness, humility, and humour, he made life richer for everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

“Though we mourn his loss, we celebrate the incredible legacy he leaves behind. Timmy's music, his smile, and his unwavering generosity will live on in every tune played, every session shared, and every heart he touched.”

I am sure there will be many tales told of Timmy at this year's Maurice O'Keeffe Festival, his music will live on, side by side with other Sliabh Luachra greats. Visit this Easter, sit in on a session and

watch the multiple generations, each in their own way carrying the tradition. And those who were lucky to have met, known and played with both Timmy and Maurice, will no doubt carry their burden of transmission lightly, as there is nothing in the world more enjoyable than a night of slides and polkas in Kiskeam and Ballydesmond.

Imagine how good a whole weekend is!

For more details please visit www.mauriceokeeffe.com and find the festival on Facebook.



Photo : Seán Laffey



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FÉILE ORIEL RETURNS

Gráinne McCool writes it was a delight to find out more about this Féile Oriel from organiser Elizabeth McGuinness.



Féile Oriel returns again this May to Monaghan. The event which promotes all aspect of Monaghan's native culture is looking to grow and attract an ever-expanding audience.

Gráinne: "What was the inspiration to bring Féile Oriel back again?"

Elizabeth: "This is the third revival of Féile Oriel. From 1969 to 1983 Féile Oriel was considered by many to host the most prestigious Fiddle award nationally. The first Fiddler of Oriel (and only woman in 15 years) was Kathleen (nee Collins) Burke.

"In 1995, I was asked by a group of local vintners... given my established reputation as a musician, All-Ireland harp winner in the Fleadh and Slogadh in 1981 and '82, teacher, arts organiser and theatre board member, to bring back the Fiddler of Oriel.

"Guinness were keen to sponsor a trad fest along the border. At the time,

myself and a great Donegal flute player based in Monaghan, Colm Herron, were both off on sick leave, both of us having had spinal surgery in Dublin the same week at the start of 1995 (and the same surgeon), so we had the time to put the festival together.

"In 1995, we had 22 venues hosting sessions over three days and a main stage with Mairtin O Connor band (including Jimmy Faulkner, Garry O Briain etc.) headlining the festival. In 2009 Tiamán Dinkin and my brother Charlie brought *Feile Oriel* back for four amazing years. Funding issues brought the Feile to a sudden halt in early 2013."

Gráinne: "What can we expect this year in the line of music?"

Elizabeth: "Similarly to previous years we will have our session trail based at eight pub venues across town and surrounding villages (see current website for details). Musicians from every county we hope will be part of



the Guinness session trail, including some from USA and UK. There will be concerts in church settings and main stage acts.

"Headlining the festival will be The Bow Brothers featuring Cathal and Stephen Hayden, Niall Murphy, Seamie O Dowd, Brian McGrath and Kieran Leonard on percussion. Then we have the young firebrand that is Peter Street, featuring Fionn O'Hanlon, John Paul Reynolds, Keelan McGrath and Simon Crehan. Other events will be announced nearer the time.

"I must mention The Elders Of Fiddling awards; for the third year running, we celebrate six gatekeepers of the trad fiddling tradition. One each from each of the four provinces and one from UK and USA. Previous recipients include Charlie Lennon (RIP), Seamus Connolly (USA) and Eilish Byrne Whelehan (UK)."

Gráinne: "Will there be any new features in the Féile Oriel 2025?"

Elizabeth: "Yes! Big news. We have tied in with Milwaukee Irish Festival in Wisconsin and the home of trad in the city of Chicago, Chief O Neills. So... next August as part of the senior Fiddler of Oriel prize, the lucky winner will have a paid trip to USA to attend (and perform) three gigs at Milwaukee Irish Fest and then headline at Chief O Neills on Sunday 17th August. This along with the bespoke Brass Mullan Fiddler of Oriel prize will be a huge incentive for top fiddle players to enter the competition.

"Other new features will be the busking competitions which will take place on Saturday 3rd May at various locations around Monaghan town. Please check our website for more details."

"We have some big news about the senior Fiddler of Oriel prize"

Gráinne: "Why is this Feile important to you?"

Elizabeth: "It brings back to life a wonderful high quality trad fest that has only happened 7 times in 40 years until we got it back up and running in 2023. There is so much talent here in Monaghan and this is the perfect opportunity to showcase it. Monaghan County Council recognises the value of having a quality trad music festival to grow inward tourism year-on-year to Monaghan.

"The return of Féile Oriel makes people remember how important it was to the town, to showcase regional trad talent, to showcase and respect our local and regional trad music heritage and celebrate how much more elevated the trad music scene has become over the past 40 years.

"In 2022 we ran a song contest to find an anthem for County Monaghan (written by Tim O Riordan from Cork). We plan to launch this anthem (recorded and performed by Brendan Monaghan in Monaghan) in both Irish and English versions."

Find out more and keep up-to-date with the festival programme at www.feileoriel.com





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Neil Fitzgibbon

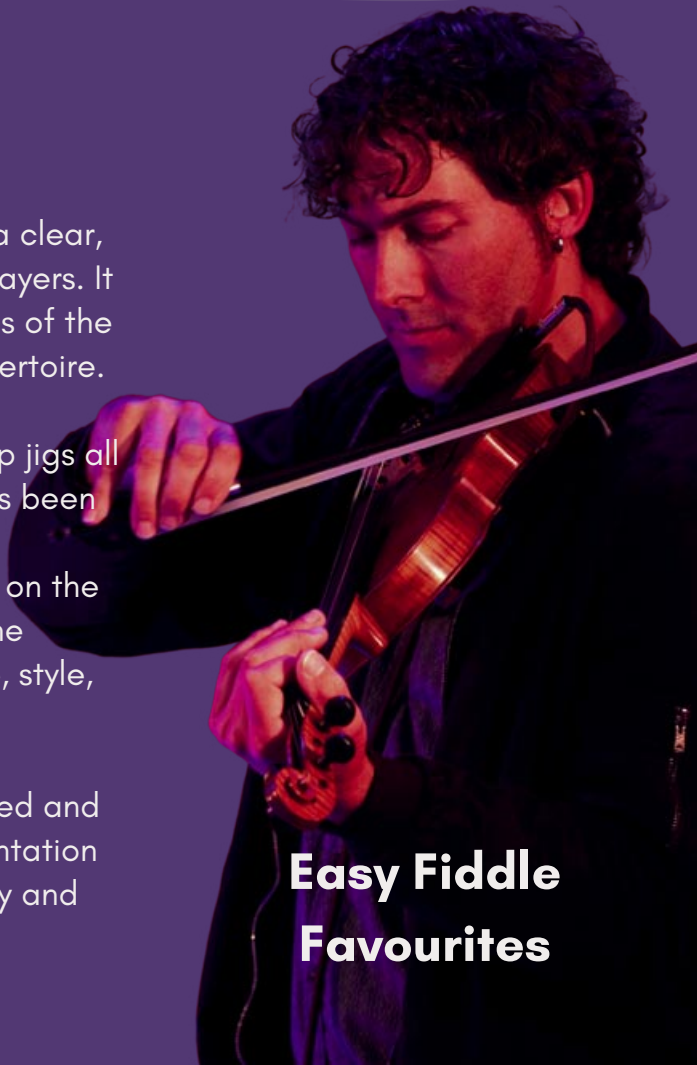
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Prepare to delve into rolls, double stops, slurs, bowed and slurred triplets, cuts and slides, all exciting ornamentation techniques that will help you bring some personality and dare we say allure to your fiddle playing!

**Easy Fiddle
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The course is essentially a 'bag of tools' to have in your belt to help create variety and personality when playing the concertina. These 'tools' include the use of long notes, staccato notes, ornaments, upbeats, double octaves, chords, stops and emphasis. Ornaments and triplets are clearly broken down and demonstrated effectively.

Caroline accentuates using the whole concertina, not being stuck in rows but moving from either side of the concertina for optimal flow and personality. Her teaching is a breath of fresh air as she breathes new life into this reed instrument encouraging you to get more out of your playing all the while masterfully taking you to a new level of skill.



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By the end of this fantastic course, you will have a wealth of technical tips and tricks to use with your current repertoire, as well as thirteen new, quirky flute tunes.



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THE MIDNIGHT

Fans rally round to help a fantasy folk band from Tuscany, writes John O' Regan for Irish Music Magazine.



If you go down to the woods today ...you might meet with The Midnight, that's a possibility and one that is worth pursuing. The Midnight are an octet that come from Italy, Tuscany to be precise. Their new single *Willow Trees* celebrates the *Salix* species. The willow, a symbol of feminine energy, has a mystical past, linked to the moon and used in crafting witches' brooms in the Middle Ages.

The single is one aspect of the story of the Midnight, and their forthcoming album due for release in 2025 will add considerably to their exploration of ancient myth through music.

Who are these midnight souls whose minds and hearts blend into heavenly harmonies and musically inspired exchanges? Individually they are: Federico Vannucchi, Giulia Del Bravo, Massimo Paggi, Luca

Musically, what separates The Midnight from other folk bands in Tuscany? "Well, in Tuscany there are no groups that offer our musical genre. This is why we are also unique in Italy and Europe. Ours is a mix of genres, including folk, Celtic folk, traditional music, medieval, renaissance and ancient music influences, all in a more pop vein we would say. We would call it 'Fantasy Folk'."

Has The Midnight played live much in Italy and outside? "Yes, we play regularly in Europe, for example in Germany but also in Holland and Belgium. Even in Scandinavia, recently in Finland, and also in the East, in Belarus for example. We had the opportunity to share stages at important festivals with great international artists such as Corvus Corax, Poeta Magica, Omnia and many others. In Italy we gained our experience performing on the stages of the major popular, Celtic and medieval festivals, like Montelago Celtic Festival and Triskel to name a couple."

Recently an event happened that would have derailed lesser mortals. The band's studio was flooded. Massimo takes up the story. "The flood that hit our city in November 2023 was very hard. Even our rehearsal room was practically swept away with almost all of our musical instruments. Thanks to generous help and crowd funding from our friends and fans we managed to start again. We will never be grateful enough to those who helped us on this occasion."

Friendly Folk Records owner Kathy Keller confirmed the enthusiastic response, saying, "It was so heart-warming to see all of the fans pitching in on the crowd funding and volunteers cleaning the mud and water out of the rehearsal room."

Looking ahead, what plans have The Midnight for their album for a 2025 release? "My hope is that an album will be released by the end of 2025. We have enough material for a new complete album, but in the last year we opted to release a couple of digital singles and we believe that this will still happen during the next year too."

"It was so heart-warming to see all of the fans pitching in on the crowd funding..."

Floridi, Savino Pantone, Gaspare Bartelloni, Chiara Becherini and Graziano Ridolfo. Federico handles guitar, bouzouki, mandola and hurdy-gurdy while Massimo is the bassist, drummer Graziano Ridolfo, Gaspare plays flutes & reeds, and Chiara supplies the backing vocals.

They formed in 2003 as a Folk-Medieval-Fantasy band of minstrels. Massimo Paggi took up the story of their beginning. "The Midnight was formed by Federico Vannucchi (guitars) and myself (bass guitar). Our main influence was the music of Blackmore's Night but also Loreena McKennitt and some medieval, renaissance, folk and Celtic music. Also, Amazing Blondel, Pentangle, John Renbourn and much more from English folk. Our music and lyrics derives mainly from the acoustic guitars of Federico Vannucchi, but I also write in collaboration with Federico."

In 2016 The Midnight linked up with the Netherlands based Friendly Folk Records label run by Kathy Keller. How did the link with Friendly Folk records happen? "We came across Kathy Keller and Friendly Folk on the internet while searching online for the label best suited to our particular genre of music. And we were very happy to collaborate with such talented and professional people."

The Midnight and Friendly Folk Records are eager to take part in Celtic Festivals in Ireland and elsewhere and provide a treat for open ears.

Find out more at Friendly Folk Records
www.friendlyfolkrecords.org



THE HAAR IN LONDON

Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre, Saturday December 14th 2024. Heather Laffey reports for Irish Music Magazine.



Photo : Andrew Weggs

Folk band The Haar played an entrancing set at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre in London in December. Following a variety of festival gigs during the summer and appearances across the UK in November, the group returned to London bringing their exciting show, which features fresh takes on traditional classics.

Formed in 2019 after meeting at a trad session on Inis Oírr, The Haar began recording largely improvised tunes, often in just one take, and that love of spontaneous music making has extended to their live performances.

The Main Hall at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre is an intimate concert venue seating just under 200 people. There is a bright and welcoming front of house space with a bar and box office for guests to mingle and buy refreshments while they wait. The venue serves as a home away from home for Irish folks in London and is a valuable space to reconnect with our culture. The auditorium was quickly filled in time for guests to admire the artwork on the walls of the room before the show.

The artistic programme at the Centre taps directly into the 21st century Irish zeitgeist; for example to mark the 100th anniversary

shine. We were informed in advance that the band's ability to produce reactive and interesting new musical ideas each time they play means that no two shows are the same. We all revelled in the fact that this Hammersmith gig was in effect a pre-Christmas present for everyone in the audience.

Throughout the evening the audience heard familiar classics such as *Carrickfergus*, *Wild Mountain Thyme*, *Whiskey in the Jar* and *She Moved Through the Fair*, peppered with unfamiliar twists and turns. The mixture of improvised instrumentation and Molly Donnery's beautiful vocals brought the stories within each song to life and painted a "musical landscape" for the audience.

The Haar's fresh take on *The Wild Rover* used a minor key to add a dark and haunting air to the old favourite, along with the addition of a surprising new final verse written by Adam Summerhayes. This unpredictable style held the attention of the room palpably for the duration of the show.

Towards the end of the set, Molly enlivened the room with a rendition of *Home Boys Home*. She had the audience singing along, bringing the show to a close with a wonderful energy. The Haar received a standing ovation and huge cheers from the crowd

"Molly Donnery's beautiful vocals brought the stories within each song to life..."

year of the publication of James Joyce's masterpiece *ULYSSES*, the Irish Cultural Centre are currently presenting "Painting Ulysses" by Aidan Hickey, a vibrant reinterpretation of the classic novel, and that willingness to widen the envelope of Irish culture extends to music, and the Haar fit perfectly into a space between the traditional ballad repertoire and its modern re-imagining.

The band opened with Paddy Tunney's *The Creggan White Hare*, an intriguing and dark ballad, originally composed in the 1930s by a Tyrone man Barney Conway, who features in the song itself. The story had the audience encapsulated from the first note. Adam Summerhayes is an incredible talent on the fiddle, which he showcased by the improvised intervals in each piece. Bodhrán player, Cormac Byrne and Murray Grainger on accordion also compose and adapt the tunes, on the fly, each night, and they do this masterfully, creating the perfect backdrop for Molly's vocals to

before they left the stage for the evening. Guests then had the opportunity to purchase merchandise and chat with the band in the bar area; for many that personal connection was the icing on a delicious cake. We departed the Irish Cultural Centre assured that the future of traditional music is in safe hands with these innovative musicians.

If you would like to hear more from The Haar, they currently have two records available, the self-titled, *The Haar* and *Where Old Ghosts Meet*. They also have a slew of gigs lined up for April and May 2025 across the UK and Ireland. Do not miss the opportunity to catch them live if you can as you will be in for a truly unique and mystical experience! Just like at Hammersmith, every night will be unique to the venue and its audiences, actually it won't be just-like-Hammersmith, but you know what I mean.

Keep abreast of The Haar's gigs at www.thehaar.ie

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CORK FOLK FESTIVAL 1979 – 2024 : Reeling Down the Years

William Hammond. Hard Cover, 384 Pages. Cork Folk Publications 2024 ISBN 09526081 38. Seán Laffey reviews.



William Hammond has been a key link down the many years of the Cork Folk Festival. That longevity is clear, not just in Hammond's ability to collate material from past festivals: artist rosters, song lists, posters and the like, but through his intimate knowledge of the triumphs and the trials of running a major international festival. Anyone involved in an annual event will

pages in and we learn of the lean year of 1988, when there wasn't a festival - the cost had risen from £150 in 1979 to £50,000 in 1987 and the sole sponsors pulled the financial plug. It looked like the end, only two gigs ran: Christy Hennessey and Noel Hill. Festival Treasurer Jim Walsh told the *Southern Star* that he did not see the festival being resurrected.

One of those makeshift gigs in 1988 was held in the Phoenix Bar. Over the winter of 1988/89 a financial plan evolved, keep it local, keep it small scale, a case of watching pennies to make pounds, advertisements were sold in the programme, new venues were found, the line-up was locally focused; the 10th festival was a success.

William Hammond explains this success was in no small measure due to the vision of Timmy "The Brit" McCarthy, the accordion player and set dance teacher. He had established a template in 1981 "four concerts, a céilí mór. And five workshops". With this core intact the festival was set to grow, but do so with some caution.

A feature of the book is the sections of coloured pages, each block an individual year's programme. For example in a dark shade of pink we find the programme for 1993, the colour is a buff orange for 1983 and so on. Each section acknowledges the organising teams and that year's chief sponsors. There's a wealth of detail. Venues are listed, if you have a street map follow how the festival has criss-crossed the city in its 45-year history. Hundreds of artists are listed too with their main instrument and the year in which they appeared. There are dozens of quotes from local, national and international media. The book is a testament to magpie minds intent on keeping an archive in good shape for when the big story is ready to be told.

If you have ever been to any of the gigs at the Cork Folk Festival, you'll no doubt find a reference here, perhaps even a photograph taken on the very same evening you were swept away by the music. I've been an infrequent visitor, and now I know what I've been missing, I'm jealous of all those Corkonians who have this quality of music gifted to them by William Hammond and the team each year.

Is the book a homage? Yes. Is it a blue print? Perhaps. The how of

"The book is a testament to magpie minds intent on keeping an archive in good shape..."

recognise the pattern: create the best with restricted funding and repeatedly make the case for the festival with various external sponsoring bodies.

What shines through here is the sheer grit needed to critically assess the current year and build with enthusiasm for the next. Hammond and his collegiate staff have done so with humour and dogged determination, and it is all chronicled in this book.

Articles are arranged in chronological order with highlights selected from each year, for example Stockton's Wing at the Festival in 1981, Emmylou Harris at the City Hall in 1992, the festival's place in Cork's European Capital of Culture in 2005. There are dark moments too, 100

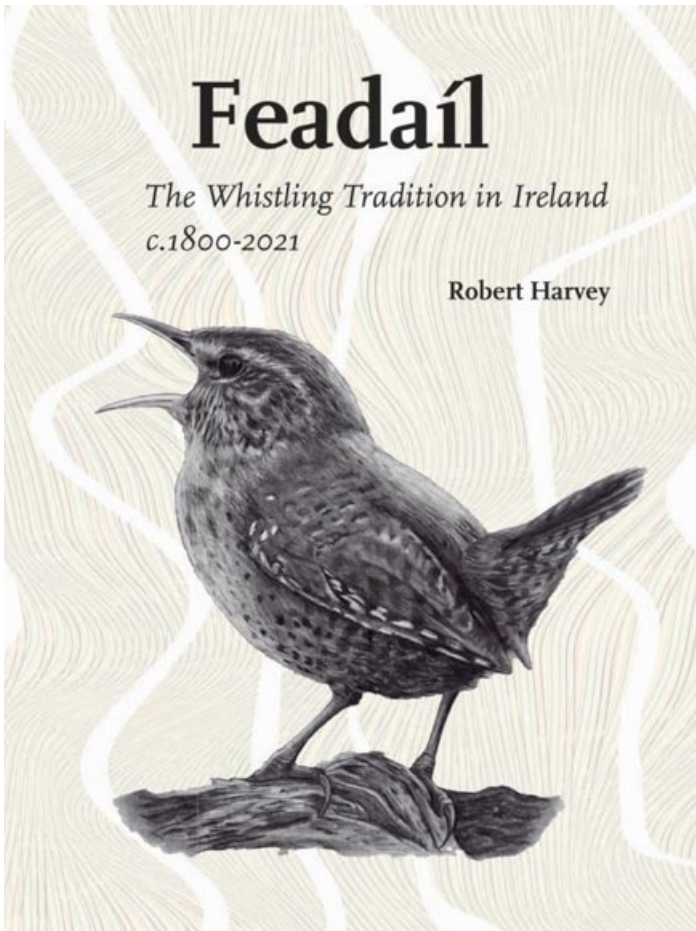
running a festival is a subtle dance of social etiquette, involving artists, venues, sister organisations, sponsors, your own team and more. I got the feeling it's not the "how to" that is important. The folks who run the Cork Folk Festival love folk music. What has driven the team for 45 years is a shared passion to bring the best of folk to Cork every Autumn and to let the world of folk see the best of the city.

The best of Cork city is the passion of a handful of people who won't let this festival down; fair play to them, they've been keeping it buoyant and reeling down the years. This book is both their legacy and a marker for generations of festival organisers to come.

Well done, William.

FEADAÍL : THE WHISTLING TRADITION IN IRELAND C.1800-2021. ROBERT HARVEY

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. 592 Pages. 2 CDs. ISBN 978-1-80517-875-0. Seán Laffey reviews for Irish Music Magazine.



You may be familiar with the Johnstons' old song *The Lark in the Morning* and its line: "Roger the Plough-boy he is a dashing blade, he goes whistling and singing down by yonder long shade..."

Seven times All-Ireland Champion, Dr. Robert Harvey studied at Trinity College Dublin and DIT. He doesn't actually start the book with

"Harvey has a genuine love of the art form as he casts a critical eye over its development and its doldrums"

Roger, he begins the long history of whistling by considering the ploughman's whistle in pre-Famine Ireland and follows this by taking us through the role it played in establishing a national identity when allied to the Gaelic revival, to the modern day, where it is a respected art form. Master it and you can achieve the status of All Ireland Champion.

The Fleadh movement and Comhaltas are pivotal both in the key audience and the production of this book. Robert Harvey has extensive interviews with revered champions of the skill: Liam Gaul, Michael McCann, Bill McEvoy, Michael Rafferty and Liam White. The book is sponsored by the Wexford All Ireland Fleadh Committee 2024, who note "In 100 Years time, *Feadaíl* will stand testament to the Cultural Investment made by the FEC in 2024."

Indeed a work of this scale and scope required the resources of such an august institution; the sheer size of the book at over 500 pages would

cause many a commercial publisher to blanch. The content is unashamedly thorough, 38 pages listing performances, a comprehensive catalogue of all the Over-18 Fleadh winners since 1954, when Felix McKenna of Monaghan placed first, pipping Micheal Cealachain of Cavan into second.

There are 212 transcriptions of tunes that have been collected from whistlers, tunes in standard notation and schematic diagrams to help you develop an embouchure. There are two CDs of archive recordings from as early as 1899 (David James O'Donohue whistling the air to *The Paddy Mouse*). There are recordings from some of the major mid-century collectors, Alan Lomax and Séamus Ennis who recorded Seán ac Dhonnacha in a pub in Cavan. All those archives have been digitised to be compatible with modern equipment. There are some 120 tracks from the collection available on Robert Harvey's Bandcamp page too.

The scholarship is exemplary, we'd expect nothing less from Robert Harvey. It is never dry nor pompous, Harvey has a genuine love of the art form as he casts a critical eye over its development and its doldrums. He notes that it wasn't always acceptable in polite society and ladies were discouraged from engaging in the creative practice. Yet before the dawn of the 19th century, whistling contests were held with competitors coming from ploughman beggars and soldiers, the prizes were substantial, a guinea for a winner, about two weeks' wages.

A century later, whistling was an element in the annual Feis Ceoil. Factors in its early pre-Feis acceptance within the Gaelic middle-class is explored in the section "Whistling as a Performance Art in Urban Ireland 1880 -1901". There's an illustration from the *Evening Herald* of 1912 showing two fashionable young ladies with the headline "Whistling is the Latest Fad of Society Folk."

This is a book to dip into, absorb and enjoy. A page turner in respect of its lively design thanks to the skill of Martin Gaffney who has curated its many illustrations from local newspapers and old *Treoir* magazines. There are key photographs of notable whistlers and the contexts in

which they were recorded, including a picture of the BBC recording outside a cottage in 1947 at the start of the post-war folk revival.

Is whistling archaic? Definitely not. Does it have its own heroes and modern-day champions? Yes of course, and Robert Harvey acknowledges those in generous measure here. If you have the grá for the music, don't be embarrassed to pucker up, when it's done well this music stands shoulder to shoulder with any piper or fiddler. Thanks to Robert Harvey's sterling work, we can tell our readers that there are over 200 years of evidence of the importance of whistling to Irish culture. As Sherlock Holmes might have said..."once the whistle blows the game is afoot".

Don't wait a hundred years to read this book. Appreciate it for what it is now, a milestone in music communication and a throwing down of a cultural gauntlet to Fleadh committees for years to come.

BRIAN FINNEGAN**Shepherds****Own Label, 8 Tracks, 43 Minutes****www.brianfinnegan.bandcamp.com/album/shepherds-3**

Readers of a certain age may recall a series of books *Learn to Play the Tin Whistle*, produced by The Armagh Pipers Club. On the cover of one of those books is a photograph of tousled haired, freckle-faced children playing tin whistles, and that image has been reworked as *The Three Whistlers* by Lorcan Vallely for the charming cover of this CD.

Brian Finnegan is a past pupil of Brian and Eithne Vallely, who have been the driving force of the Armagh Pipers Club since the 1960s. The club has produced dozens of professional traditional musicians, and Brian Finnegan is one of the finest players to not only come out of Armagh but to come out of Ireland. His work with Flook over the past 28 years is without doubt on the very leading edge of traditional music. However, he had to start somewhere, and on this album he revisits some of those formative tunes he learned so many years ago. He says in the liner notes these are: "Tunes I picked up from my mentors and musical heroes."

The personnel on *Shepherds* is a tight minimum of three: Brian Finnegan (whistles/flutes), Seán Óg Graham (guitars, bass, button accordion, bouzouki, moog, cavaquinho, programming) and young Ollin Roa Finnegan (drums/handpan). Seán Óg recorded and mixed the album at his Bannview Studios in Portlengone.

The album begins with the *Holly Bush* impelled on with an opening guitar riff. Brian enters with a sprightly triplet-filled rendition of one of the most popular tunes in the tradition. *Hanley's Tweed/The Long Drop/The Flooded Road to Glenties* follow with Brian leading the melody and Seán matching with his accompaniment, stressing the dominant beats, until the piece ends with even more energy (is that double tracking of the whistles?).

The *Langstrom's Pony* set is less hurried. Here the attention shifts to long notes, articulating the phrasing, the guitar here is lyrical rather than percussive. *Dobbins Flowery Vale/Bánchnoic Éireann Ó* are two slow airs, the latter named for an Armagh beauty spot. Here Finnegan's whistle is emotional, as if longing for a lost summer.

Brian switches to the low whistle on the set *The Humours of Ballylaughlin/The Mystery Jig*. The ensemble sound fills *The Mystery Jig* with long notes held over the running melody. The longest track at 7 minutes is *Ar Éireann Ní Neosfainn Cé Hí/Cait's Jig*. Sean Óg takes the lead here on a very resonant guitar with some subtle hammer-ons. We have to wait for over 2 minutes for the whistle to join in and the wait is worth it; the synergy between the two instruments is magical, right down to an unexpected cadence. Its final two minutes are devoted to *Cait's Jig*. Brian Finnegan is a maestro and the success of this part is in its laconic swing.

The album closes with *Tom Billy's/Winnie Hayes'/The Luachrachan's/Seanamhac Tube Station*. The first tune will be for ever associated with DeDannan and maybe this selection is a nod to Brian's myriad influences. What is certain is that he makes these tunes his own. He's been around the world a few times since his formative years at The Armagh Pipers Club, and this album proves how good you can get when you get the best of starts.

Seán Laffey

JOSEPHINE MARSH**Music in the Frame****Own Label, 11 Tracks, 51 Minutes www.josephinemarshmusic.com**

Josephine Marsh released her previous solo album in 1996 and on this follow up's eleven tracks, we get a flavour of the music she's been making over those intervening three decades. There are old tunes, which you'd find in O'Neill's 1001 such as *The Old Pensioner*, which she couples with Joe Liddy's *The Garravogue* and Liz Carroll's *Ricky White's Face*.

Josephine is joined on this, her fourth album by Seamus Cahill on guitar, Mick Kinsella on harmonica, Pat Marsh on bouzouki, Angelina Carberry on banjo, Blathnaid Marsh on piano, Andrew Kinsella on banjo, Jack Kinsella on pipes, Steve Larkin on fiddle and Gerry Madden on mandolin. The artwork on the cover features an original painting by Josephine herself.

She has the deft ability to merge old and new tunes into seamless presentations, for example *Tomgrany Castle* and *The Stack of Pancakes*. This album opens beautifully with Josephine's original planxty: *Anna Foxe*. It trips lightly off her accordion and is the perfect welcome to this collection of her original compositions, new tunes from a raft of respected composers and

solid traditional sets. There are a couple of waltzes, the Canadian *La Valse De Beau Canton* by Andy de Jarlis, and *Waltz Genevieve* by Pat Costello. You can hear all these tracks on her website (What are you waiting for? Get clicking).

For some full-on immersion check out the eight-minute long dramatic track, the Scottish air, *Roslyn Castle*; to me it has a feeling of a Breton "Complainte Maritime" about it. She segues this track into Offaly's Paddy O'Brien's *O'Reilly from Athcarne*, an O'Carolan tune. The last track on the album is a double header of the *Jig For The One Row* followed by *Paddy Marsh's Jig*, both written by Josephine, and to be frank *Paddy Marsh's* could soon become my favourite jig of 2025.

All the tunes are accessible and paced perfectly for learning. With this album Josephine has not only reaffirmed her standing among the country's finest box players, she is also up there now with the foremost modern composers in the tradition. You could say she is now firmly in the frame!

Seán Laffey

JAMES CULLINAN**Here It Is****Raelach Records RR 024, 14 Tracks, 50 Minutes****www.raelachrecords.com**

The Clare fiddle tradition has had its share of legendary names associated with its hallowed ranks from PJ Hayes to Paddy Canny to Tony Lennane and Martin Hayes among others. Now comes James Cullinan's turn. This is not James Cullinan's first recording, he has previously featured on the seminal 1984 vinyl LP *Disirt Tola*, the brainchild of Gearoid O hAllmhurain and also made a trio album with his wife Carol and flautist PJ Crotty. However now comes *Here It Is*, his debut solo album, and thanks to Jack Talty's Raelach Records, it emerges proud and shining and ready for inspection.

It's a beautifully hewed piece of work with the concentration clearly on fluent playing and exemplary execution, based around a repertoire peppered with subtle nuances and homage to such greats as Galway's Paddy Fahy, a set of whose fine jigs occupies one track and older tunes such as *Murphy's Hornpipe*, a favourite of the Lachtan Naofa Céilí Band whose line-up included Willie Clancy. The backings are subtle and unobtrusive while Mick Conneely, Carol Talty, Steve Cooney and Kevin Crawford to name a few, add to the backdrop. The main feature though is James Cullinan's playing, which is both expressive and fluent on sets like *Nia's Barndance/Lord McDonald's/Ballinasloe Fair and Charlie Mulvihill's/The Meelick Team Jig*. These are typical examples of the Derula, Kilnamona natives' approach to traditional music and its presentation. Adjectives such as sweet and eloquent often creep into the consciousness when listening to *Here It Is*.

This album creates an atmosphere of a musician completely at home with his repertoire and approach. Clare fiddle playing doesn't come any better than here with 14 tracks of pure delight for the ears and a great addition to the annals of recordings of the county's music.

John O'Regan

SEÁN GAVIN & COLM GANNON**The Boys of 25****Own Label, 13 Tracks, 38 Minutes www.SeanGavinMusic.com**

Two fine young Irish musicians based in America, Seán Gavin and Colm Gannon play flute, pipes, melodeon and button accordion on a selection of lively dance music from vintage sources. Reels and jigs are spelled with hornpipes and flings, and there's even a barndance: Dermot Byrne's composition for his daughter Nia. With the exception of *Barndance for Nia*, the material here is from the 20th century or older. Much of it is well-known, but perhaps not in these versions.

Seán's flute and Colm's accordion open with *The Ash Plant* and *Woman of the House*, two old favourites, the second drawn from John McKenna's New York recording around 1930. John Blake accompanies on piano, jumping to guitar on other tracks, with bouzouki from Mike Gavin and a touch of percussion from Cecil Morton. The lead duo is energetic throughout as in their exuberant treatment of the hornpipe *Bantry Bay*: they bounce off each other and stretch the tunes between them, which makes for exciting and dynamic music.

Gavin switches to uilleann pipes for the title track with fine regulator work alongside flying fingers on the chanter, and then it's back to flute for *Breeches Mary* and *Tom Billy's Jig*. Both musicians perform with flair and technical brilliance, and highlights are numerous. I'd draw your attention to Chicago fiddler Johnny McGreevy's version of *The Kid on the Mountain* and the

hornpipe *The Few Bob* learnt from Joe Ryan. The pair round off this most enjoyable collection with a trio of old Kerry jigs starting with one I know as *Dan the Cobbler* and two jazzy show-piece reels with no holds barred.

Alex Monaghan

FOURWINDS

Allta

Own Label, 11 Tracks, 38 Minutes

www.fourwindsirishmusic.bandcamp.com/album/allta

FOURWINDS are Caroline Keane: concertinas, tin whistle, vocals, Tom Delany: uilleann pipes, whistles, vocals and Robbie Walsh: bodhrán, percussion, vocals. They are joined on *Allta* by Alan Murray: bouzouki, guitar, vocals, Laura Kerr: fiddle and Barry Kerr: flute.

There is a comic song from Robbie Walsh, whistling and playing the bodhrán on *The Great Big Roaming Ass*. Whilst New York based, Glaswegian Alan Murray sings the remaining three songs: *The Snows of France and Holland*, John Conolly's *Men of the Sea* and a version of *Pat Reilly* he calls the *Blue Cockade*, set during the Crimean War. Each song has a character all of its own and this variety is a measure of the care and craft FOURWINDS bring to their opus.

Considered as an instrumental band, there are tracks here that snap crackle and pop, referencing the energy and wildness of some of the finest music made in the 1970s. The way Tom Delany's pipes enter in the second section of *The Road to Cúl Ros* reminded me of Paddy Keenan at his most expressive. No wonder, the album's title *Allta*, translates into English as *Wild*.

There are some thoughtful passages too, such as *Delia Keane's / Planxty Browne / Allistrum's March*. The bouzouki establishes the first melody, closely followed by the concertina and then the pipes with Walsh's bodhrán adding a deep bass, simple, but so effective. *Allistrum's March* dates to the early 1860s; one version was in the repertoire of Maurice O'Keefe from Kiskeam, County Cork, others came down to the present day from Willie Clancy. I'm sure Maurice O'Keefe would have been familiar with the first tune in the selection they call *The Slide to Lisdoonvarna*, made up of *The Humours of Mountcollins / Sleamhnán Sheáin Dan Neil / The Road to Lisdoonvarna / Finbarr Dwyer's*. Like many of the tracks on *Allta*, this is lively happy music, destined to get your toes tapping. Caroline has composed a new tune, part of the set *McKinneys of Chicago*, commissioned by the late and much missed Maryann McTeague Keifer for the owners of Chief O'Neill's pub in Chicago.

FOURWINDS may revere the music of 50 years ago, but they are not a pastiche tribute act. The core trio has a sound that belongs to them and them alone, and it fits squarely in the zeitgeist of this century. *Allta* is an album to search for and enjoy. Stop by their Bandcamp page, it has all the tracks with information on the tunes and songs. You'd be wild if you missed it.

Seán Laffey

MACDARA YEATES

Traditional Singing from Dublin

Own Label, 9 Tracks, 38 Minutes

www.macdarayeates.bandcamp.com

Macdara Yeates is one of a crop of young artists associated with the recent resurgence of traditional singing in Dublin, alongside acts such as Lankum, Ye Vagabonds and Landless. In 2012, Macdara became a founding member of "The Night Before Larry Got Stretched", a unique monthly singing session based in The Cobblestone pub, which has spawned some notable vocalists since its inception. From 2013 to 2017, Macdara was a member of the acclaimed traditional/folk band Skipper's Alley, touring internationally.

This is his debut album under his own name, and he takes the opportunity to evoke the raw and unadorned beauty of solo ballad singing with minimal accompaniment from guitar or bodhrán, or simply a-capella. The tone is set on the opener *Johnny I Hardly Knew Ya*, a well-known anti-war song as relevant today as it ever was. His baritone voice is strong and assured, but unadorned with niceties, which just adds to the authenticity of his delivery.

Here, he has compiled a master list of those songs which have engaged him most, and they are presented with the care and attention associated with a true connoisseur of the fine art of balladry. Many of the tracks will be





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familiar with powerful renditions of classic songs such as *The Shores of Lough Bran* and *The Kerry Recruit*. He includes a great version of the humorous Dublin ballad *The Herrin'*, and I was particularly drawn to ballads with beautifully sparse guitar accompaniment – *One Starry Night* is wonderfully atmospheric, and *Boys From Home* captures the sadness of the forced emigrant.

This recording is unashamedly sparse, raw and authentic, capturing the true spirit of the singing sessions which have become such a feature of Irish traditional music. Macdara Yeates can be proud of his initial offering, which is sure to enthrall his many admirers.

Mark Lysaght

MARLA FIBISH & REBECCA RICHMAN

Playdate

Noctambule Music, 11 Tracks, 48 Minutes

www.marla-becca-music.com

Mandolin and fiddle mostly, combined with many other things, this duo plays new and old material with a lightness of touch and a togetherness which is a joy to hear. Listen to the effortless step into *Arthur Darley's* or *The Swedish Jig*. Smile at the sweetness of *Spring Forward*. Gasp at the grinding old-time groove on *Old Maids of Galway*. Gourd banjo, tenor guitar, concertina, harp, piano and more are fused into musical sculptures, seven guests contributing to the arrangements of two dozen pieces. Half the tunes here are Fibish compositions, a mix of Frisco and Irish influences: the melodies are transcribed in the detailed sleeve notes which can be downloaded from the duo's website.

Jigs and reels, polkas and slow airs, *Playdate* is a varied and surprising collection of moods and tempos. The silky harp on *Carole Jean*, the driving rhythm of *Connie the Soldier* and the cheeky swagger of *James Kelly's* cover all bases in Irish music. The delicious waltz *My One and Only* by California fiddler Laurie Rivin is a clear highlight, soft and lyrical with a hint of growling fiddle. The sprightly polka *Weekend with Christa*, a composition of Marla's, is perfect for mandolin. *The Sport of the Chase*, one of several traditional slip jigs here, is a final burst of energy. Also known as *New Claret*, it precedes the achingly slow *Requiem for David*, which ends this absorbing and rewarding album.

Alex Monaghan

TRIP

In Terra's Keep

Trip Music Records Tmrcd002, 10 Tracks, 43 Minutes

www.trip-music.com

The stand-out line-up of Trip features: Michael Biggins (accordion), Tiernan Courell (flute), Craig Baxter (bodhran), Isla Callister (fiddle), Alasdair MacKenzie (guitar & voice) and Rory Matheson (piano). They have been playing together since they were 18-year-old students at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. This is their second album, its title and themes relate to the land.

Trip employ a driving high energy attack for a number of their tunes such as *The 50 Reels*, which is their ebullient opener. Their lead singer and talented song writer is Alasdair MacKenzie; his *Sadness Passed* is musically wrapped in a rolling piano riff, giving the song forward momentum. That same synergy is felt on *Not A Cloud* with the piano's interspersed blocked chords, a distant but distinct bodhrán at double speed and Tiernan Courell's flute overtopping it all with the main melody. There is an interconnection on a pair of tracks in the middle of the album. The first is Trip's interpretation of Seamus Egan's *Tune for Roan*, written for his young niece; this is followed by *An Ghrian ar Bhinn Ghulbain*, evoking the rising sun on Benbulbin in Sligo.

If you are looking for a surprise, then listen to *Blessed Are The Meek*, an old Status Quo number, here given a fresh simulation by Alasdair MacKenzie, who brings out far more in the words than you'll find in Francis Rossi et al's original recording.

The album finishes with *August Ascent*, flute, piano and accordion taking the main honours; the tunes are new to the Scottish tradition, *Laa Luany's* and *WD-50*. It is an upbeat way to end a first-class second album. The production of *In Terra's Keep* was financially supported by Creative Scotland and Culture Vannin. *In Terra's Keep* will be available on all digital platforms on April 11th 2025. *In Terra's Keep* may be grounded but Trip are looking at the stars.

Seán Laffey

ROBERT ZIELINSKI

The Day Dawn

Own Label, 15 Tracks, 43 Minutes

<https://robzielinskimusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-day-dawn-2>

Robert Zielinski grew up in Karragullen in the Perth Hills of Western Australia. He first heard the fiddle when he was seven and recalls being transfixed when hearing his Polish grandfather play the violin. His grandfather bought him his first violin and thus began an odyssey that runs to this day and his immersion in traditional music of the Celtic countries, particularly that of Ireland and Scotland.

Robert came to Ireland at the age of 17 and moved to Feakle in East Clare and met such mentors as PJ Hayes, Martin Hayes, Martin Rochford, Francie Donnellan, John Naughton and Joe Bane, all of whom became friends and fellow players. He remained there for 14 years and the rhythmic, relaxed quality of East Clare music has remained with him.

The Day Dawn is a revised version of his second album released originally in 2018. Here it is revamped and renewed with ten new recordings added to five of the original album's cuts. Among the friends taking part are Tim O'Shea and Paddy Jones and his Australian mentor Mick O'Doherty. The opening set *Andy McGann's /The Humours of Scariff* has a profound East Clare influence, while the duet *The Sprig of Shillelagh* sounds straight out of a kitchen session. The title track *The Day Dawn*, a favourite of Shetland fiddler Tom Anderson, has its honourable regal qualities, while *Neilidh Boyle's Highland*, a Donegal tune, is rendered with suitable subtlety. *The Drunken Piper* is a heads down, one minute Donegal reel. *The Man of the House /The Tap Room* are excellent slow reels while *Garret Barry's* again heads for East Clare. Finally *Flax in Bloom* sends the album home happy in its laid-back beauty.

Quality, relaxed East Clare music played with poise and precision, *The Day Dawn* pulls its weight mightily.

John O'Regan

JENN BUTTERWORTH

Her By Design

One in Ten Records 110CD001, 8 Tracks, 39 Minutes

www.jennbutterworth.co.uk

In 2019, Jenn Butterworth was named Musician of the Year at the Scots Trad Music Awards and after listening to this album you can hear how well-deserved that accolade was.

Many of the songs on *Her By Design* are old, modernised and rejuvenated by Jenn and her crew of 9 musicians. This is 21st century folk music with arrangements and orchestration that comes at us straight out of the box on *All Our Days*. She has her own way with classic American folk songs too, such as *Little Sparrow*, her version of *Fair and Tender Ladies*.

Jenn takes a feminist perspective on this album; women are the central characters, not always heroines, sometimes at the mercy of society and economics. For example in *The Housewife's Lament*, the original was written in 1872 by Eliza (Sproat) Turner in her book *Out-of-Door Rhymes*, a case of plus ça change:

Life is a toil and love is a trouble,
Beauty will vanish and riches will flee,
Pleasures will dwindle and prices they double,
And nothing is as I would wish it to be.

Irish listeners will recognise Jenn's *Jeanie*, known here as *Anarchy Gordon*, made famous in Ireland by Mary Black. From the same era, Jenn dips into Robin Dransfield's *Fairmaids of February*, an old country name for spring daffodils.

Her record label is *One in Ten*, its significance revealed in a song of the same name, she explains as follows: "I wrote this song recently about Endometriosis, a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows in other places in the body, causing a great deal of pain. Although one in ten women are affected by endometriosis, there hasn't been a lot of research into causes and treatments." This is an original song that will wear its style well in the years to come.

The final track, *Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still*, was collected by Frank and Anne Warne from sisters Eleazar Tillet and Martha Etheridge on the Outer Banks, North Carolina in 1951. Its original text is by W.T. Wrighton and J.E. Carpenter in 1864. Like many of the tracks on *Her by Design*, it is an old song in Jenn's new style and so fitting for the times we live in.

Seán Laffey

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Hag at the churn

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JIG | KEY: D MIXOLYDIAN (F#)
TIME SIG: 6/8

1ST PART (X2)
A- G ADD A- G AD'C
A- G ADD EFG EFG

2ND PART (X1)
AD'B C- B AD'D' E'F'G'
AD'B C- A G-- GED
AD'B C- B AD'D' E'F'G'
F'_E' D'CB GEF GEG

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Club in Henrietta Street, Dublin. As a teacher, Mikie has worked for many piping organisations and traditional summer schools, including the Willie Clancy and Joe Mooney summer schools. He is currently the pipes tutor at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick where he teaches on both the B.A and M.A. programmes. Mikie has performed both as a soloist and with shows (Riverdance and Ragus) in over 5 countries. Mikie has recorded a solo album, *The Wild Keys*, and has also recorded with Donal Lunny, Maurice Lennon, and Sean Keane to mention a few.

THE COURSE

Uilleann Pipes Technique looks into a lot of technical aspects of uilleann pipe playing. If you have a handle on the basics of piping and want to push the boundaries of your ability, then this course will be a real treat for you.

The course opens with the tune *The Hag at the Churn* which the tutor uses to introduce his teaching methods and discuss piping ornamentation and technique. Over the course of the next twelve lessons, four Irish tunes are examined in detail with three lessons dedicated to each. The first lesson in each set of three introduces the tune with the basic technique. This is then followed by a lesson looking at tune-specific technique and variation. And finally a basic approach to regulator and drone playing is demonstrated; some chanter exercises are included for those without drones and regulators. Lessons are not designed to increase repertoire but rather to focus on the technical aspects of piping.

By the end of the course, you will have really honed your piping technique, a crucial foundation on which to begin to build a repertoire.

The course has 13 lessons, the tunes covered are:

The Hag At The Churn
An Sean Duine
The Fall Of Dunboy
The Braes Of Busby
Higgins

It's worth noting that Mikie also teaches *Expert Whistle Skills #3* where he teaches slick piping moves on the whistle, a real treat for advanced whistlers.

So, if you're partial to the beautiful uilleann pipes, you could do worse than spend time with Mikie where, rather than take a broad-stroke journey out into the musical landscape of different

“Uilleann Pipes Technique looks into a lot of technical aspects of uilleann pipe playing. If you have a handle on the basics of piping and want to push the boundaries of your ability, then this course will be a real treat for you”

OAIM have two courses for uilleann piping enthusiasts: *Uilleann Pipes Basics*, a beginners' piping course from Tom Delaney, with a bounty of 18 lessons to get the absolute beginner up and running with the pipes; and *Uilleann Pipes Technique*, an advanced course, which is more like a master class, from master piper Mikie Smyth.

Mikie Smyth began playing the pipes at the age of nine. His first teachers were Colm De Brun and Andy Conroy in the Pipers

piping tunes, he brings us on a deep-dive into the world of mastery where only the truly dedicated virtuosos dare venture. Armed with these advanced skills, surely learning new piping tunes will be a walk in the park.

In this YouTube video Mikie uses the tune *The Hag at the Churn* to demonstrate some advanced piping techniques:

<https://youtu.be/nLJ7YMzICjk>

WHITE OR BLUE COCKADE?

Seán Laffey clears up a bit of colour confusion.

Alan Murray sings a song *The Blue Cockade* on the new album *Allta*, from FOURWINDS. He says, "The lyrics are very close to *Pat Reilly* that Andy Irvine did with Planxty, but with a melody more suited (in my opinion!) to the bitter, resentful tone of the lyrics and story of the song." The two songs are very similar, a young man regrets being recruited into the army when his regiment sees action in a foreign war. In this case the siege of Sevastopol of 1854-55.

Now the colour conundrum. FOURWINDS call the song the *Blue Cockade*, and that got me researching online military archives. A cockade is a small rosette, usually made of ribbons and

"A cockade is a small rosette, usually made of ribbons and worn on the side of a soldier's cap"

worn on the side of a soldier's cap, which would have been a Shako in the middle of the 19th century. The problem is there were no blue cockades worn by Irish and British troops in that period. The blue cockade had been adopted by anti-Catholic Gordon Rioters at the end of the 18th century and it would be taken up by troops in the South before the American Civil War. But there is no connection to the Crimean War (1853-1856).

The officer in charge of the allied troops at Balaclava was Field Marshal FitzRoy James Henry Somerset, 1st Baron Raglan, he died near Sevastopol from dysentery, not enemy fire. He was

posthumously honoured by having perhaps the swankiest street in Dublin named after him: Raglan Road (yes of that love song). It was the de facto city home of the Anglo Irish aristocracy in the 19th century.

Alan Murray told me he had the song from the English singer Ian Worpole who now lives in Upstate New York where he plays guitar with The Wild Swan band. Ian gave me some of the song's background, which it seems has undergone a recent evolution via the infamous "folk process". He writes: "The song is actually called *The Black Horse*. I found it on the album *A Job of Journey Work* by Robin Williamson (Pig's Whisker Music PWMD5010

released in 1998). Alan sings the lyrics as I have written here for your readers, including the Blue Cockade in the last verse."

You may see that in this version the young lad is recruited into the White Horse, unlikely as that was Scottish regiment (there are of course Scots versions of the tale). The Black Horse was stationed in Ireland on and off from 1718. It was not always a fighting force, having been reduced to a troop size of just 24 men in 1748. Manpower could be augmented in time of war with vigorous recruiting drives, which is at the heart of this song.

The Black Horse became the 4th (Queen's Own) Regiment of Light Dragoons in 1818 and under that official name served at Balaclava. Now 170 years later the region is still a war zone, and we suspect that some recruits may once again question their foolish enlistment.

Alan Murray and FOURWINDS have a version of this song on YouTube. Their album is available at <https://fourwindsirishmusic.com/product/allta/>

THE BLUE COCKADE (THE BLACK HORSE)

It was on a certain Thursday, to the markets I did go.
I met a small officer there who proved my overthrow.
He said to me Pat Reilly you could do something worse,
than leave your native country and enlist in the White Horse.

At Balaclava they landed us quite sound.
Cold wet and hungry we laid upon the ground.
Next morning for action the bugles loudly called.
They gave us a hot breakfast of powder and of ball.

It's not in the evening that I do sing my song,
but in the cold and frosty night as we do march along.
With my rifle over my shoulder, how bitterly I weep.
When I think of my own sweetheart who now lies home asleep.

Blessings on my mother, who raised me neat and clean.
And curses on my foolish pride that made me serve the Queen.
For had I been a smart young lad and learned some decent trade,
I'd never would have enlisted nor worn the blue cockade.



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