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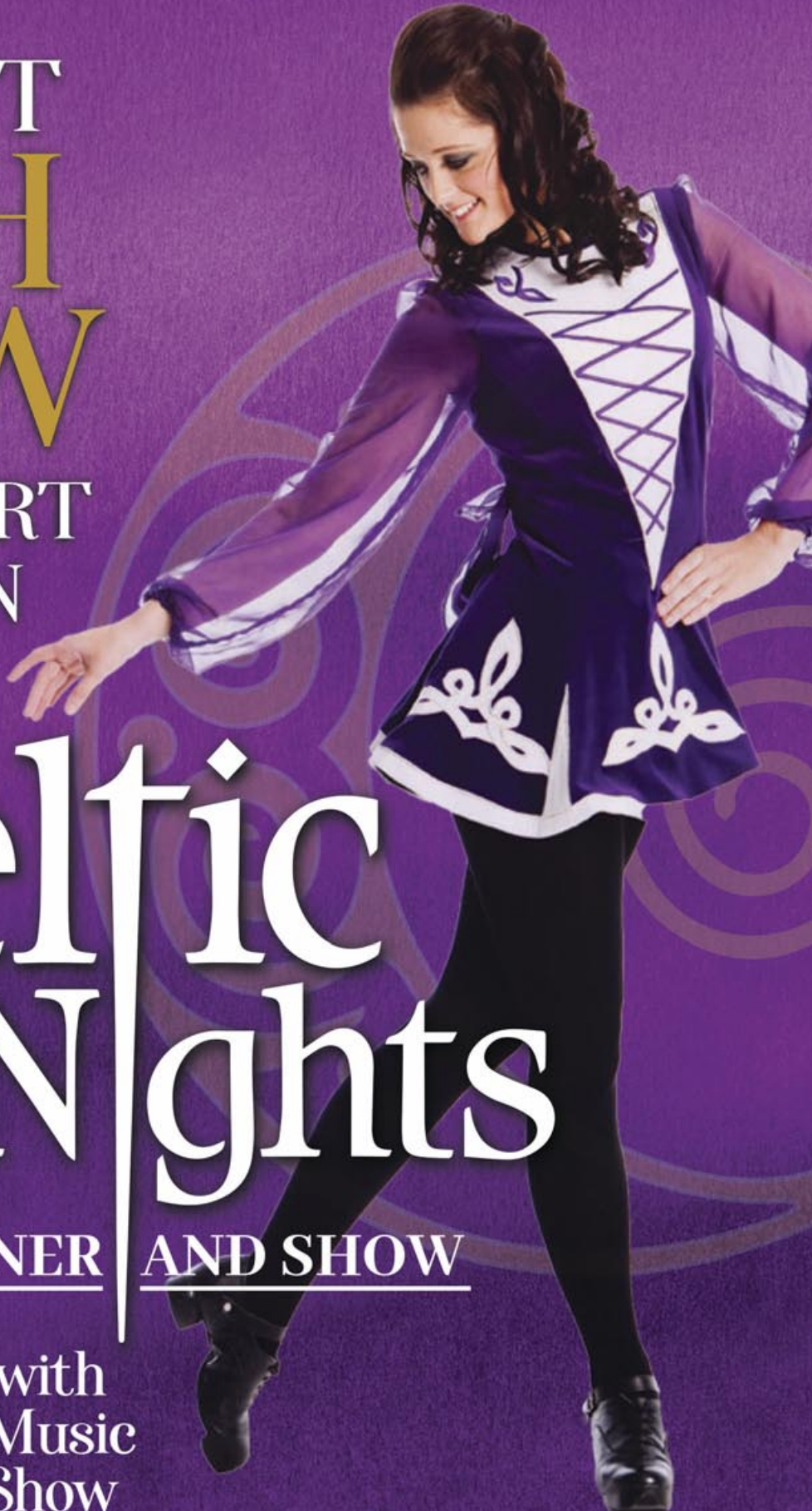
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FOREWORD

DONEGAL CONNECTIONS

The music of Donegal features in a number of our stories this month, particularly as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Altan with a call to founding members Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Ciarán Curran and their latest recruit Clare Friel. In the early 1980s when Mairéad and Frankie Kennedy began playing Donegal music in the clubs and sessions around Dublin, this was exotic music. Now thanks to ambassadors like Altan it is known and loved the world over.

Twenty years ago Rolf Wagels set up www.bodhran-info.com, an online hub for bodhrán enthusiasts. The key moment was when he met the innovative drum maker Séamus O'Kane in Gweedore. Rolf now works with Christian Hedwitschak, and runs bodhrán workshops around Germany and Inis Oírr's Craiceann bodhrán summer school on at the end of June.

Back to Donegal where in May you can visit the Cup of Tae Festival in Ardara, which always honours a local tradition bearer. We also preview the Penn-Mar Irish Festival in Pennsylvania and the Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering in the Isle of Man, to name but a few. One key distinction regarding Irish and Celtic festivals is their emphasis on workshops, master classes and passing on the tradition to the next generation. In that regard Chloe McGregor says July's Belfast TradFest caters for all ages and you'll find music across the city from the Titanic Slip Way to the Cathedral Quarter.

Wherever you enjoy your traditional music this month, enjoy sharing the tunes and making lifelong friends.

Slán
Seán L

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Front Cover Main Image (Altan)
Linda Cunningham

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34 SIANSA GAEL LINN FINAL (THE RESULTS)

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36 VIENNA'S SESSIONS GOT SPINNING WHEEL SPINNING

The sounds of the Austrian trio Spinning Wheel belie their continental location. That is because their music nestles neatly into the nooks and crannies of the Irish folk tradition, writes John O'Regan.

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

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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.**

HANNAH HARRIS : AT THE CORE<https://hannahharrisceol.com>

At the Core is the latest release from Michigan-based fiddler/singer Hannah Harris, and marks her second full contribution to the Irish traditional music scene. The album was inspired by a literal gut feeling — that feeling at a session when the music and camaraderie is so tight you can feel it in your core.

Each of the musicians contributing to the album have been a part of these types of sessions. It all started with Randy Clepper (bouzouki) playing polkas late into the night at Tune Junkie weekend, then continued on with Jacob McCauley (bodhrán) at the O'Flaherty Irish Music Retreat. Soon after Harris set down new roots in the Detroit area, she met Ciarán O'Connell (button accordion) visiting from Limerick

and teamed up with Alberto Whitmer (guitar), who she now plays with regularly in their duo, Shannon Lee.

For the tracks, Harris continued her theme from her first album, *Tea for Tunes*, combining old favourites from time spent studying in Cork City, tunes she's composed, and still more tunes collected from mentors and other workshops. Harris weaves her humour in and out of the arrangements, playing ("Cousin") Charlie Harris' as both a polka and a reel, offering 2 key interpretations of a well-known Paddy Fahy jig, and introducing a new hop jig, *The Dog Who Chased the Ducks*, which was inspired by an amusing scene witnessed from the ferry deck about to depart Beaver Island.

Listen to Harris' full discography on bandcamp at <https://hannahharrisceol.bandcamp.com/>

ERIN RUTH<https://erinruthfolk.com/>

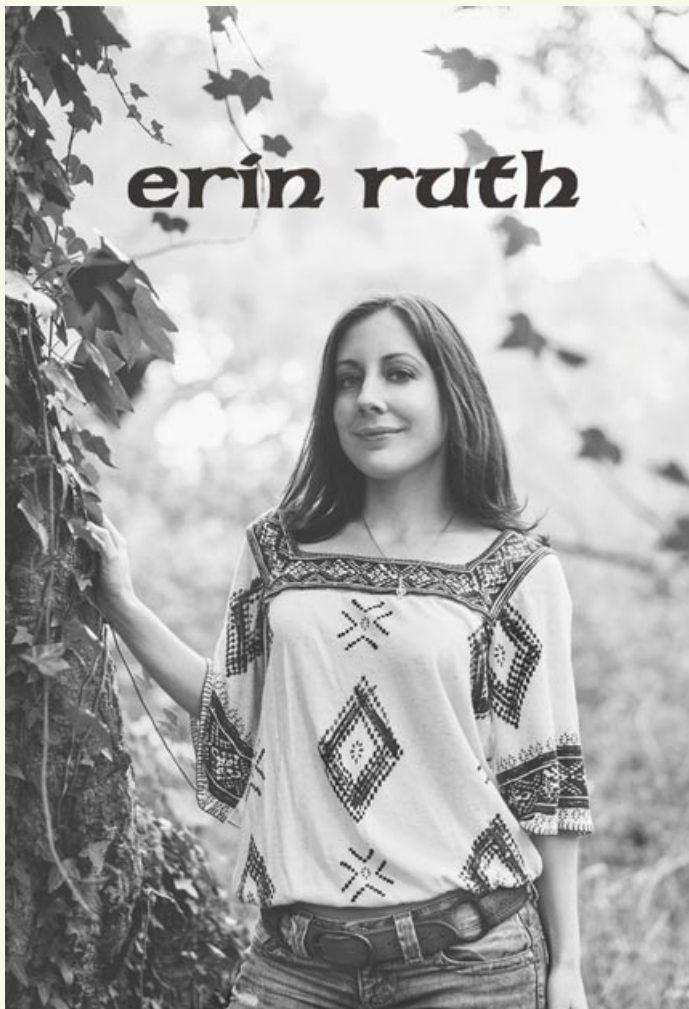
"There's New World enthusiasm in Erin's voice here, a different take on the ballad than we'd know at home. Her Irish songs come with a dash of California sunshine." — *Seán Laffey of IMM.*

"There's a rich purity to Erin's voice. A room-silencer, confident and earthy, her style is self-assured. She takes confident ownership with vocal ease and versatility." — *Anne Marie Kennedy of IMM.*

"Erin sings with an alluring exuberance that allows her to interpret an Irish ballad's lyrics with meaning, insight, sentiment and historical perspective." — *Roots Music Report.*

Erin Ruth Thompson arrived in San Francisco from Tucson, AZ in 2012 with a background in performing, sight-reading, & auditioning both her voice & clarinet. She also possesses ability with piano, guitar, saxophone, & songwriting. Erin's mother is Scots-Irish American, and her father is from Spain. During childhood, her mother brought home Celtic films & albums, along with Flamenco music. Upon moving to SF, Erin gained further exposure to Celtic music — and began performing alongside artists such as The Black Brothers & The Gas Men.

Erin released a self-funded album of Irish & American classics in 2020, with limited outlets for exposure during the pandemic. She



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will release another self-funded album this year. It will brush on Irish, Scottish, American, & even Galician folk songs - as well as a few folky originals. Erin contributes a good deal of her own piano & guitar for the album. She is particularly excited that the project will also engage a variety of revered Bay Area musicians - including Darcy Noonan, Kyle Alden, David Brewer, Cormac Gannon, Autumn Rhodes, & Malcolm Robertson. Gifted vocalist Sara Remington also returns to duet with Erin, as she did on the first album.

Watch Erin's website, below, for further updates.

<https://erinruthfolk.com/>

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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

on Facebook at Mulligans Irish Bar Amsterdam, and on Instagram at [@mulligans_irish_bar_amsterdam_](https://www.instagram.com/mulligans_irish_bar_amsterdam_).

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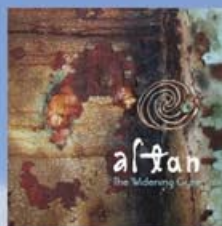
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September 26 - Féile Átha Léim, Black Sod, Co Mayo
September 27 - Irish Cultural Arts Centre, Hammersmith, London
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AMELIA HOGAN : TRADITIONAL SINGER, INSTRUCTOR

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On *Burnished*, Amelia Hogan sings with lilting grace and subtlety, reviving songs both old and new, giving them a fresh, polished feel. The 14-track album features one original, *Rolling in the Gold* and a number of traditional, public domain songs and interpretations of songwriters including Dominic Behan, Gordon Bok, Karine Polwart, and Trevor Peacock, with sources from Ireland, Scotland, Canada, England, and America.

Produced by Hogan at Foxtail Sound in Dixon, CA, *Burnished* explores the deep connections between people and the places they inhabit within the living world. The album highlights familiar, often overlooked folklore about real places, sharing the hidden magic found in connecting with the natural world and its spirits of place, or Genius Loci. Through this, she encourages us to approach our relationships mindfully - with people, nature, and the world we co-inhabit.

This is Hogan's third solo project. Her previous albums include the critically acclaimed 2023 release *Taking Flight* and her first solo album, *Transplants: From the Old World to the New*.

Named by FAI as a top ten charting global folk artist and top 40 album with *Taking Flight* for 2023, Hogan's star is rising and she is taking bookings now. Hogan has performed and collaborated with Molly's Revenge, Richard Mandel, Noctambule, Autumn Rhodes, Niamh Parsons, Shay Black, and more.

<https://ameliahogan.bandcamp.com> & <https://ameliahogan.com>

DON "BANJO" SMITH
www.donbanjosmith.com

In the spring of 2016, Don "Banjo" Smith set out to make a follow up album to *The Rose Sessions* that he and Marty "Moonshine" McKernan released the year before, not necessarily of the same vein, but of the same quality. In order to achieve that goal, he again recruited Marty as his Co-Producer/multi-instrumentalist, and song contributor, and Bob Both (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Both), of Twain Recording Studio in New Jersey, as Recording Engineer and Co-Producer.

The album is/was to be a Concept Album, similar to the one Earl Scruggs did in the early 70's (Earl Scruggs with Family and Friends), whereas Don would be featuring many of the very talented people he has performed with over the years. This has proven to be quite an undertaking with so far up to 14 different musicians, and several have been lost over this time, before they could be brought to the studio to record for this album. There are one or two more Don would have liked to have brought in, but you can't have everything.....

Don features the likes of frequent collaborator Marty McKernan, Jack Driscoll, Mike Griffin, Randy Shenise, Greg Jowaisas, Terry Kane, Jeanie Cassels, et al, playing a variety of instruments on a variety of songs, many of them Irish in origin, but also some original songs (all really good!) by Marty, Randy, Jeanie, and Greg, and a few by some well-known songwriters. It was slated to be finished in early winter 2019, but a break was taken in late Feb. to start playing

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during the busy season, and then Covid struck, and everything came to a grinding halt.

We got back to work in the autumn of 2020, and all the mixing and overdubbing was finished by summer of 2021, and just recently the artwork was attended to, and we launched the new album just before Saint Patrick's Day, 2025.

I believe that the results will have been worth the wait!

Find Don at www.donbanjosmith.com

ICC LIVE MUSIC EVENTS & MORE (APRIL – MAY 2025)

Spring Music at The Irish Cultural Centre Irishculturalcentre.co.uk

The Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, London is excited to announce a vibrant lineup of events this Spring, showcasing the finest in Irish music and featuring iconic performers.

Kieran Goss and Annie Kinsella make a rare UK appearance on 05 April, with songs from their critically acclaimed debut duo album, *Oh, The Starlings*.

Poet and singer-songwriter Peter Doolan will launch his brand new album, *I am a Tree, Rooted to the Spot and a Snake Moves Around me, in a Circle*, at the ICC on 24 April.

Andy Irvine joins forces with Sweden's finest, Quilty, for a night of Irish and Swedish traditional music magic on 26 April.

Kicking off May, the Irish Cultural Centre's seasonal new Irish music showcase event, Glór Nua, is celebrating the ancient Celtic summer festival of *Bealtaine*, with award-winning traditional music innovators HUARTAN and CAOIMHÍN. Both bring a unique blend of Irish songs, electronica, nu-disco, psychedelia and nature-based Celtic spirituality to the ICC on 01 May.

On 03 May, CEOL will take inspiration from The Dubliners, The Chieftains, and Mumford and Sons, as they bring folk music to a new generation.

The Eilís Kennedy Trio—featuring Eilís Kennedy, Jeremy Spencer and Matt Griffin—will deliver a magical night of music at the ICC on 17 May.

Rounding out May, Iarla Ó Lionáird brings his 2025 tour to the ICC from 30 May to 01 June, showcasing his extraordinary career from Aisling Gheal to groundbreaking collaborations with Crash Ensemble and Alarm Will Sound.

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For media enquiries, contact:

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Browse our Events Programme:

<https://irishculturalcentre.co.uk/whats-on/>

ON THE LASH : FIRESIDE


<https://onthelashbandofficial.bandcamp.com/album/fireside>

"A hotly anticipated release, On The Lash's debut EP, *Fireside*, is finally here! The development of this work is inherently tied to our roots, not only as individual musicians, but as collaborators in this powerful quartet known as OTL. When we formed the band in 2022, each of us brought to the table a unique set of talents, experiences, and influences. From classical technique and precision, to a host of folk and pop musical endeavours, to a creative hunger for the new and original, our goal in joining together was to deliver a project that would both encapsulate the breadth of our musical journeys and honour the influences that brought us here.

Every tune on the album is an adaptation from a band, writer, or player who has, in some way or another, shaped our musical direction and development. Naturally, most of this music is derived from the traditional Irish heritage, which has been our primary aim and influence. However, much like the diversity of our backgrounds, we haven't been afraid to branch out into a variety of world styles.

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Fireside is available for pre-order

at <https://onthelashbandofficial.bandcamp.com/album/fireside>

Follow On The Lash at onthelashband.com or

<https://www.facebook.com/onthelashbandofficial>

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF BODHRÁN-INFO : PASSION FOR THE BODHRÁN SINCE 2005

www.bodhran-info.com

bodhrán-info is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, marking two decades of dedication to the Irish frame drum. Founded in 2005, bodhrán-info remains a small, two-person business, offering personal assistance based on over 30 years of professional bodhrán-playing experience.

What started as a small information website has grown into the world's leading specialty shop exclusively focused on bodhráns and all related accessories, including tippers, cases, learning materials, books, and CDs. Customers worldwide value the expert advice, high-quality instruments, and carefully selected accessories that reflect a deep understanding of the instrument and its players' needs.

"The past 20 years have been an incredible journey," says Rolf Wagels, founder of bodhrán-info. "Our goal has always been to share the fascination of the bodhrán, provide information about Irish musicians,

the instrument, and offer musicians the best possible bodhráns and accessories for their style. I provide truly personal service and expert guidance based on decades of playing experience. We thank our loyal customers and partners who have made this success possible."

To mark this milestone, bodhrán-info is launching a special edition bodhrán to celebrate its 20th anniversary—keep an eye out for further announcements.

For more details, visit www.bodhran-info.com

SHASKEEN WELCOMES NEW MEMBER DEIRDRE SCANLAN

www.shaskeen.net

Deirdre is originally from West Limerick but now residing in County Clare for over 20 years. From a young age Deirdre was very involved in the traditional music scene being close to the Sliabh Luachra area and immersed in West Limerick Music, while attending sessions and never missed "hunting the wren".

She holds several All Ireland titles for traditional singing in both Irish and English. Her love of the culture, music and language encouraged her to study "Performing Arts/Folk Theatre Studies in Tralee Institute of Technology in conjunction with The National Folk Theatre Siamsa Tire. Following this Deirdre travelled extensively for a number of years as the main vocalist in a number of shows including Booley house, Sessions from the Hearth, Hup na Houra and has performed on a number of occasions with The Kilfenora Ceili band and many more.

She has made numerous TV appearances and has recorded an album *Faces* and two singles *Forever Part of Me* and *Guardians of the Peace...* Deirdre is thrilled to be joining Shaskeen and is looking forward to bringing her own style to some old ballads and traditional songs....

For more on Shaskeen go to www.shaskeen.net and www.facebook.com/shaskeen/

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Dr Liz Doherty's brand new ONLINE course is designed to get Irish traditional musicians reading music quickly and easily!

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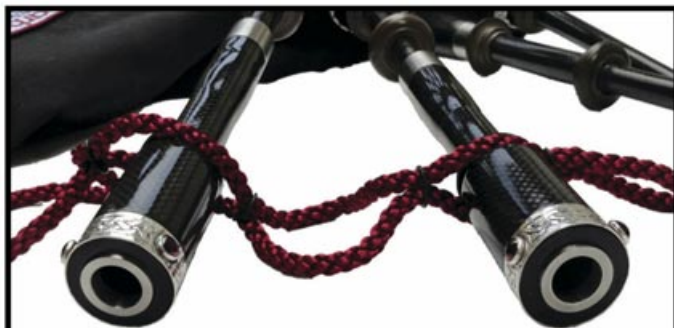
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THE KILT LIFTERS : A CELTIC ROCK FORCE

www.kiltlifters.com

Volcano, Hawaii — The Kilt Lifters, the dynamic Celtic Rock ensemble have been making waves with their infectious tunes and captivating performances.

Fronted by the charismatic Chris Carr, The Kilt Lifters have carved out a unique space in the global music scene, seamlessly blending traditional Celtic melodies with the raw power of rock. Their distinctive sonic palette, showcased in songs like *Friends Old and New* and *Pour Another Round*, has not only garnered them a dedicated fan base but also acclaim for pushing the boundaries of musical fusion.

“We’re thrilled to share more about who we are and the journey we’ve been on,” said Chris, the lead vocalist and founder of The Kilt Lifters. “Our music is a reflection of our passion, and we’re excited to connect with our fans on a deeper level.”

As The Kilt Lifters continue to blaze a trail with their energetic performances and boundary-pushing music.

For booking inquiries, interview requests, or additional information, please contact: Chris Carr, email : chris@kiltlifters.com tel: 808.298.7254.

About The Kilt Lifters:

Formed in 2015, The Kilt Lifters are a dynamic Celtic Rock ensemble celebrated for their fusion of traditional Celtic melodies with the vigor of contemporary rock. With an electrifying stage presence and a sound that transcends conventional boundaries, the band has captivated audiences globally. Their latest album, *Pour Another Round*, has garnered critical acclaim, and The Kilt Lifters continue to make waves with their infectious tunes and high-energy performances.

NUALA KENNEDY & BRENDA CASTLES : ‘SAMHAIN’ COACH TOUR OF IRELAND

October 28th - November 4th, 2025

www.nualakennedy.com/irish-cultural-tours/

We talked to singer and flautist Nuala Kennedy who is currently touring as the singer in Solas about her new coach tour which she runs with concertina-player Brenda Castles.....

“The idea for the tour came about really organically,” says Nuala. “I was inspired by the late Mick Moloney who recommended I try running my own one. Around the same time, I was chatting to my friend Brenda and she used to work with Mick on his tours, so it seemed natural to join forces.

We want to share our favourite places and people in Ireland, as well as our love of our native song, music, history and mythology. We delve into the lore of Samhain/Hallowe’en and limit places on our tour to 25 - as a smaller gang means that we can access unique locations and enjoy more spontaneity!

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“I loved the mix of traditional music, folklore, archaeology, history and mysticism that made this a very special spiritual journey for me as I research my ancestral roots in Ireland” - *Shelby, Arizona*.

“Thank you for a fantastic tour! Songs fill my head, memories fill my heart and gratitude abounds! I appreciated the intimate experiences you curated for us – this was deep and wonderful time!” - *Diane, Massachusetts*.

2025/2026 Enquiries to:

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TRAD ON THE PROMwww.tradontheprom.com

Trad on the Prom is a unique and unforgettable intimate theatre experience taking place in the heart of Galway.

It is the number 1 show in Ireland, a cultural highlight of the Wild Atlantic Way and a MUST for every Irish holiday adventure.

Since 2005, Trad on the Prom has been thrilling visitors from home and abroad with its electrifying energy and world class performances – showcasing traditional, Irish music, song and dance with a brilliant contemporary edge. Trad on the Prom is a unique Irish Cultural experience for all.

The world class cast features virtuoso fiddle player Máirín Fahy (featured soloist for many years with Riverdance and The Chieftains). Máirín is joined on stage by her brother Ger Fahy (Composer of Lord of the Dance, Dangerous Games), sister Yvonne Fahy (Multi-instrumentalist, prolific composer and member of BackWest), Padraig Rynne (Notify), Colm Henry (Keyboards), Marc Roberts (Eurovision star) and Chris Kelly (Producer and Presenter, Reeltime).

Trad on the Prom showcases a stunning line-up of world champion Irish Dancers who have amassed an amazing 30 world titles including Claire Greaney (6 times World Champion), World Champions Sylvia Carroll, Evan O'Brien, Owen Gaughan, and champion dancers Anne Marie Keaney (Velocity), Laoise Dunne, and Róisín Francis. Completing this amazing array of dancers are TikTok dance sensations Dara Kelly and Rónan O'Connell from Cairde.

Trad on the Prom, a 'must see' for visitors to Galway, is suitable for all ages and nationalities and takes place in Leisureland Theatre, Salthill, from May to September 2025.

Book Now online at www.tradontheprom.com

FLOOK : CELEBRATING 30 YEARS IN 2025<https://flook.co.uk/>

Flook's enduring class shines bright as they step into their 4th decade with their exhilarating new release, *Sanju*.

When Flook were formed back in 1995 there was nothing to compare them to; they were a flute driven phenomenon, not Irish nor English, perfectly comfortable in their own musical skin and free to go as the wind goes. So boldly go they did. If their music was a challenging brew to label for the trad cognoscenti, to many it made heart strings quiver. The musical freedom of having no fixed abode, married with the obvious joy they were creating onstage saw new fans flock to their shows in droves.

One third of their flute front line would leave in 1997 and ever since they have remained unchanged, their formidable musical prowess marked through the years with a quartet of acclaimed studio albums; *Flatfish* (1999), *Rubai* (2002), *Haven* (2005) and *Ancora* (2019).

After 30 years Flook show no sign of letting-up in their brilliance, their dynamism, or their inventive flair. *Sanju* was released on CD/vinyl/digital on 21/3/25. Recorded in North London over three days with cutting edge producers Stevie J Jones and John Calvert, *Sanju* is a timely reminder at this landmark juncture of what a potent artistic force Flook still remain, in their perpetual push to grow creatively - fondly acknowledging where they've come from while reaching outward and forward, their hunger for innovation burning brighter than ever.

More information and tour dates: <https://flook.co.uk/>

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ALTAN ARE STILL TRAIL BLAZING FORTY YEARS ON

Seán Laffey had a zoom call with two of the original members, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh and Ciarán Curran and new girl Clare Friel. They talked about four decades of the band that has brought Donegal music onto the world stage.



Photo : Linda Cunningham

June 2025 is a significant date in the band's history, it marks forty years since the founding quartet first performed on stage. Of course Donegal music was well known to Donegal musicians, however, in the 1980s, the rest of Ireland was just beginning to notice its distinct character. In fact it was music from a relatively small area of the County that was giving rise to Clannad, Skara Brae, Altan and Enya, with Altan carrying the torch for traditional tunes and songs of the region.

Mairéad considers that economic developments in the county were key to bringing the culture initially to a national and eventually an international audience, as she outlines for us. "In the 1960s there was a successful drive to bring factories into Donegal. The result was that for the first time in a generation or two, there were good

prospects for young people in the Gaeltacht and many of the emigrant Diaspora returned home for this new opportunity. Their children learned Irish at school, and when we played outside we spoke Irish, it was the natural thing to do. Consequently the culture became imbedded very quickly."

Mairéad's father Proinsias Ó Maonaigh was a National School teacher and became Principal of the primary school in Luinneach in 1967. She recalls his wider contribution to life in the area. "There was great respect for teachers back in the 1960s, and they were pivotal in the cultural and social life of small rural communities. Teachers were capable, organised and enthusiastic, they had been educated to degree level and they stayed in Ireland. I know my father would often be asked by adults to help then with official forms and communicating with the Government. It was an age when that sort of thing was done by letter, and my Dad would happily give his time to help people."

Altan's backstory is well known; there's a huge Wikipedia entry on the band, and having sold over one million albums, theirs is a true

Irish success story. We'll take a side step and briefly précis their history.

In the early 1980s Mairéad and her young husband Frankie Kennedy qualified as teachers and moved to Malahide. She remembers her time teaching with great fondness. "When I was working at St. Oliver Plunkett National School in Malahide, teaching was a great profession to be in. I'd been lucky enough to have had music and the Irish language in my home growing up and to be able to pass on those treasures to a young generation of primary school children, was a gift." Based close to Dublin, the pair would play at various sessions, folk clubs and the like, and their mix of tunes and songs in Irish from Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone went down so well, they began to get noticed and offers of gigs and festival appearances started to come in.

As the proto-band formed, working with Nicky Ryan was perhaps a game changer for their recording career. As Ciarán explains: "Nicky was undoubtedly the finest live-sound engineer in the country at the time, he helped create the Clannad sound for example and his work with Enya is legendary. Nicky liked the sound of my Sobell bouzouki and he had some innovative ideas about how to mic it up and how to record in the studio, and it was a privilege and a joy to work with him."

Getting comfortable with the studio environment began in 1979 when Mairéad and Frankie played on a Gael Linn recording by the Belfast songwriter Albert Fry; this was their gateway into becoming recording artists themselves, as Mairéad outlines. "Albert was Belfast's Irish language version of Donovan, a kind of latter day troubadour. Working with Albert gave us a taste for the studio and more importantly it gave us some kudos within the industry. At that time the whole process and finances of making a record were tightly tied up by the Record Labels. If you were already on a label then there was an assumption that you were investible." In 1983 Frankie and Mairéad released *Ceol Aduaidh* (Music of the North) on Gael Linn.

"If you were already on a label then there was an assumption that you were investible"

The fuse had been lit. The album gave them an opportunity to tour in America, which they did and they got a taste for the life of professional musicians.

The fledgling and as yet un-named band of Mairéad and Frankie with Ciarán Curran (on bouzouki) and Mark Kelly (on guitar), performed their first live concert as a four-member ensemble on 1 June 1985 at St. John's Church in Listowel, County Kerry. Mairéad tells us how Altan became an official recording band.

"One summer shortly after *Ceol Aduaidh* came out, we shared a house in Miltown Malbay; it was during the Willie Clancy week. We were sharing with Mícheál & Éamon Ó Domhnaill - this was a little while after Mícheál had made the *Portland* album with Kevin Burke. Also in the house was Green Linnet records owner Wendy Newton. There were endless late night sessions, you know how it is in Miltown, there's music 24 hours a day. Wendy took a great deal of interest in our Donegal style and suggested myself and Frankie make a duet album for Green Linnet. We were inclined to record as a band, but Wendy was looking for a duo. The band did join us in the

studio, but only myself and Frankie were pictured on the cover. We called the album *Altan*, named after *Lough Altan*, which sits below Mount Errigal and on the edge of Glenveagh National Park."

The rest as they say is history. Altan were on a trajectory that would take them around the world, and result in 14 albums to date. Their first album under the name Altan was *Horse with a Heart* (1989). It wasn't all sunshine and roses. Tragedy visited the band when Frankie Kennedy passed away from a rare form of cancer, Ewing's Sarcoma, in 1994; he was 38 years old. It was Frankie's determination that they continue, and he had negotiated an album deal in 1994 with Virgin Records before his passing. His vision was prescient as their fortunes and influence grew, so much so that by the 2020's they had a huge fanbase, which they called upon to crowdfund their *Donegal* album. Having formed when record labels were the arbiters of a band's success or failure, they have now become masters of their own creativity.

The current line up of Altan is: Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (lead vocal, fiddle), Ciarán Curran (bouzouki), Mark Kelly (guitar), Martin Tourish (accordion), Clare Friel (fiddle). Clare is their newest recruit having

joined Altan as a guest on a 6 week US tour in 2022. Ciarán tells us that she fitted in so well with their USA tour of 2023 that they made the decision to ask her to join permanently. Clare was no stranger to Altan's music as she explains. "I'd known their songs and tunes all my life. My family were over and back to Donegal most weekends to visit family, and then to our home where we became regulars at the session in Hiúdaí Beag's. On those trips I'd often get to sit in at sessions with Mairéad. Joining Altan is a dream come true, and it has taught me so much, for example working in the studio, which initially can be daunting and scary. You are exposed, your music is under intense scrutiny, not by the band, but yourself. Playing with Altan counters those nerves and it seems so natural to be part of the group these days."

We end the interview with best wishes for their USA tour and look forward to seeing the band when they return home. After forty years criss-crossing the globe they have surely put Donegal music on the map.

Look out for Altan at the Baltimore Fiddle Fair in May, and see where Altan are heading next by visiting www.altan.ie



Photo : Linda Cunningham

ALTAN TOUR DATES, SUMMER 2025

April

12 Patrick Byrne Festival, Monaghan

May

8 Draíocht na h-Óige, Fleadh Dhún na nGall, An Clochán Liath

9-11 Baltimore Fiddle Fair, County Cork

24 Féile Bonn Eadair, Hawthorne

June

7 The Lark, Balbriggan

11 Early's, Aranmore, County Donegal

July

13 Bruckless, County Donegal

17/18 Normandy, France

August

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30 YEARS OF FLOOK

From a tentative beginning to 30 years together; how have the mighty Flook prevailed? Instigator Becky Morris, and band members Sarah Allen (flute), Ed Boyd (guitar), Brian Finnegan (whistle/flute) and John Joe Kelly (bodhran), all took time to talk about Flook's story, including their new album *Sanju* with Dave McNally for Irish Music Magazine.

Photo : Eddie Kavanagh



In 1995 Becky Morris was running a music management agency, and supporting flute, whistle and uilleann pipes player Michael McGoldrick take his first steps as a solo artist after he'd spent his late teens and early twenties playing with Manchester's Toss The Feathers. "A man at Jackson's Lane Community [Arts] Centre in London rang me to say he was doing a festival called Big Flute Dynamite and ask if I could think of anybody that would work for that. Mike was the obvious choice, but it needed to be more than a soloist."

Morris knew Allen from working with bands she was in - The Barely Works and Bigjig. Allen grew up in St. Albans playing classical flute, did a Master's in music, played some jazz, then learned accordion. She knew Finnegan after she'd "gone to help my friend Sally Barker set up a PA for a gig by Brian's band Upstairs In A Tent and we became friends." Finnegan had grown up playing Irish

being a one-off, so we put together five gigs to see if it would work." The first gig was, Morris said, "at my mum's folk club" in Chorlton in Manchester. Morris gave the trio a name. "Three Nations Flutes we called it initially," she said, even though the trio's connections were limited to England and Ireland. Their differing musical backgrounds was no barrier to them finding a way to play together. "It was very organic," Finnegan recounts. "I decided," Allen realised, "that there was no point in me trying to do all the fast bits with Brian and Mike." Consequently, as Morris puts it, "Sarah was at the beginning the glue that stuck it together". During the tour though they felt that something was missing. In Allen's words: "it was quite nice with three flutes and the occasional accordion, but it was a bit of a flute overkill."

Ed Boyd grew up in Bath playing oboe, with guitar as his "fun instrument" and when he went to university in Manchester he "started playing in the [Irish trad] sessions that happened to be close to the halls of residence" and got "really sucked into that world". He was back home in Bath when he got a phone call from McGoldrick asking if he'd "drive to Walthamstow and play some backing" for the final date for the tour at Chestnuts Folk Club. Before that evening Finnegan said, "we all thought this is it, we're not going to do anymore. And then the reaction of the crowd that night was enough for Becky to think that it could definitely go somewhere." For Allen, "then it all came to life really."

When three became four, a name change was necessary, Whistle On! was considered but they decided on Fluke! but that didn't last due to a clash with a longer standing techno band of the same name. Finally, they settled on Flook! – exclamation marks were

"We had a glorious time over the three days we recorded *Sanju* in London"

traditional music in the Pipers Club in Armagh. In 1995 he was teaching English in a school in Budapest. "I was coming home on the tram across the River Danube one night, freezing cold, dead of winter and I saw this poster for Shooglenifty. I took a minibus full of the students to the gig and just stood transfixed, on fire with music again and doubting why I was there, teaching. I needed to get back home and make music. The very next day the phone went, and it was Becky Morris. 'Do you want to come home and do some gigs?' The timing was spooky."

The Big Flute Dynamite festival gig, in November 1995, was Morris recalled "meant to be a one off, but there was no point in it just

obligatory early on – and they recorded a live album at Sidmouth Folk Festival in summer 1996. Solo work and joining Capercaillie led to McGoldrick leaving in 1997, to be replaced, not by another flute player, but instead by bodhran player John Joe Kelly, who had played with McGoldrick and Boyd in Manchester. Before joining, Kelly said, he'd been "dipping in and out" after receiving a call from Morris to play with them at a gig in Manchester. Finnegan told me, "it just seemed that if anything was going to work, it was him. It went from being this kind of circus act with three flutes, all competing with each other, to being more considered and thoughtful." Musically "it became," Allen said, "more well-rounded."

Photo : Dave Peabody



Flatfish, Flook's first studio album, released in 1999, was Boyd remembers, "just the four of us playing live in a funny little studio in Rochdale where our cars got broken into outside." For Allen it "absolutely encapsulates Flook and is so raw", because, Kelly explained, "there's not lots of extra production on it." When it came to the next album, *Rubai*, three years later, there was a new engineer, Mark Tucker, and a new studio in Devon. "Meeting Mark Tucker was" to Finnegan's mind "a major threshold in Flook's life". The album was, Allen said, "made with an enormous amount of love". This time others added instrumentation, including acquaintances of Boyd's from Bath: "I got my friend Martin Craddock to do something and Sekou Keita." *Rubai* was Finnegan said, "full of warmth and excitement. I'll never forget that week in Devon. It was so easy to record. The place was blessed, and it felt like the music was blessed."

It was more or less a repeat exercise with *Haven* released in 2005 and with *Ancora*, again with Tucker in Devon, albeit 14 years later in 2019, though Boyd said, *Ancora* "was more ambitious production wise, soundscape wise." In-between the band had a five year break, occasioned primarily by the impossibility of having small children and touring constantly. The break was, Kelly said, "sent from the heavens because we were doing so much it was crazy. When we

came back it was more a gentle - we'll just do a bit here and there." About the gaps between albums, Finnegan said: "We used to drive agents round the bend because they would ask, 'when's the next album coming?' We'd only record when we had enough material and we still do that, even with the new album *Sanju* - that's why it's only five tracks."

Reflecting on recording *Sanju*, Allen recalls: "we had a glorious time over the three days we recorded it in London. We all had our hearts and our heads in it." Electronic and indie producer Stevie J Jones had, Allen said, "put some sonic stuff on a couple of tracks on *Ancora*" but getting him and John Calvert to produce *Sanju* was "a real risk" because "these two guys are from a completely different world". Finnegan said that Jones "is like a druid in a studio. There are blue lights coming out from underneath his door and he doesn't tell anybody what he's doing." The album will, Kelly said, "probably surprise a lot of people because it's mostly at a slower tempo. There's a lot of low end with Sarah's flute, the drum with soft brushes, and the bass ukulele." Allen added that "It's definitely got a different sound, but I think they've very much still made it sound like Flook."

Reflecting on how they've stayed together for so long, Finnegan told me: "There's so much life that happens in 30 years, great stuff, really difficult stuff. You find out who your closest friends are. Flook is just that. It's four very unique people who, when they're on stage together, move as one. It's a kind of weird symbiotic energy."

For Allen: "I think it's incredible and we feel genuinely proud of what we've done. We know how to give each other space and exactly what annoys us about each other. It's like marriage."

Kelly said similarly: "It's a real achievement and the key element is friendship."

That collective cohesion and working at their own pace has helped Flook make the absolute most of their exceptional abilities, unusual instrumentation, engineers/producers and studios, whilst always keeping their unmatched sound at the core of everything they do for three decades.



Photo : John Sofie

ON THE LASH



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GENTICORUM

Seán Laffey talks to Deirdre Moynihan who previews Music Network's May tour, which will feature the award-winning Quebecois trio Genticorum.



Photo : Dylan Ladds

Music Network presents multi-award-winning folk ensemble Genticorum. Their name stems from a word used by their fiddler, Pascal Gemme's grandfather, meaning "a gentle quorum".

I began by asking Deirdre about the appeal of Quebecois music for Irish audiences. "We've presented traditional ensembles from Quebec such as Le Vent Du Nord and De Temps Antan on tour with Music Network in the past and their music has been a major hit with our audiences. There's a strong musical connection there with immigrants from Ireland and Scotland influencing the music of Quebec over the centuries. It's partly the reason why the folk music of Quebec is so relatable for Irish audiences; this combined with gorgeous close harmony singing, call and answer style songs and fantastic instrumental playing makes the music really appealing to listen to. Of course, the foot percussion of Quebecois music adds to the overall energy of the tunes!"

"Gorgeous close harmony singing, call and answer style songs and fantastic instrumental playing makes the music really appealing to listen to"

Genticorum will be on an extensive tour on this side of the Atlantic, their Music Network tour brings 10 gigs on the island of Ireland. The trio will play 7 concerts in the Republic and then complete their tour schedule with 3 gigs in Northern Ireland presented in partnership with Moving on Music.

One welcome aspect of such promotion, is that ticket prices are very reasonable for the Genticorum gigs, as Deirdre explains. "It's always a priority for Music Network to ensure our tour concerts are accessible and affordable. This is something our partners are also mindful of. We try to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to experience phenomenal bands like Genticorum perform live in concert in great venues."

One audience however, won't need to buy tickets or spend time travelling to the gig, the concert will come to them. For the first time, Music Network will bring live music to Midlands Prison in Laois. Deirdre says, "we are excited to have embarked on a new relationship with Midlands

Prison. Everyone should have access to live music and bringing performances to as broad a range of communities as possible is part of what we do."

One gig on the tour had been pencilled in for at least a year, and that's an annual Music Network May tour highlight, at the Baltimore Fiddle Fair. "We have worked closely with Declan McCarthy at Baltimore Fiddle Fair for a number of years now, discussing our May tour programme in advance to ensure that the concert will be suitable for both a Music Network tour and The Fiddle Fair. The Fiddle Fair is definitely a highlight of Ireland's festival calendar and has an excellent reputation worldwide for the quality of its annual programme."

Genticorum is a trio made up of founders Pascal Gemme (fiddle, mandolin, foot percussion, voice), Yann Falquet (guitar, jaw harp, voice) and Nicholas Williams (accordion, flute, voice) who joined to form the current trio in 2015. They have recorded 10 albums to date, their most recent one *Au coeur de l'aube* was released in 2023. They were the winners of Ensemble of the Year at the 2024 Canadian Folk Music Awards, and are celebrated as being among the foremost champions of Quebecois traditional music. Their unique blend of lively, foot-stomping energy, masterful musicianship and captivating stage presence has won them fans worldwide. Audiences will be in for a wonderful upbeat treat this coming May."

It is well worth a visit to YouTube to see samples of Genticorum in action. Their website has an Anglophone section at www.genticorum.com/english and you can find out more about their Music Network tour at www.musicnetwork.ie

MUSIC NETWORK GENTICORUM TOUR 2025 Dates & Venues

Wednesday 7 May – 7:30 PM

Music Network, The Sugar Club, Leeson Street, Dublin 2

Friday 9 May – 8:30 PM

Baltimore Fiddle Fair, Fiddle Fair Marquee, Baltimore, Co. Cork

Saturday 10 May – 8:00 PM

Ionad Culturtha, Ionad Cultúrtha, Baile Mhúirne, Co. Chorcaí

Sunday 11 May – 8:00 PM

Éigse na Brídeoige, St. Micheal's Church, Waterville, Co. Kerry

Tuesday 13 May – 8:00 PM

Clifden Arts Society, Station House Theatre, Clifden, Co. Galway

Wednesday 14 May – 8:00 PM

Hawk's Well Theatre, Temple Street, Sligo

Thursday 15 May – 8:00 PM

Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Friday 16 May – 8:30 PM

An Coire, 132B Tirkane Road, Maghera, Co. Derry, BT46 5NH

Saturday 17 May – 8:00 PM

Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre, Market Street, Armagh, BT61 7BW

Sunday 18 May – 7:00 PM

Moving On Music, The Duncairn, Duncairn Avenue, Belfast, BT14 6BP

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HANNAH HARRIS : AT THE CORE IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LILT

Seán Laffey talks to Hannah Harris about her time in Ireland and her innovative online method of teaching the true lilt of Irish music.



Hannah begins her backstory. “I started with an introduction to classical music through the Suzuki method, which is great for ear training. When I was 8 my violin teacher introduced me to Irish music and so began my obsession to learn as many fiddle tunes as I could. Around that time I saw Celtic Woman in concert, which hooked me into the Irish music scene and eventually led me to more of the traditional side of the genre. Then in college, I started taking fiddle classes at the Swannanoa Gathering in North Carolina, which runs a Celtic music week in the middle of July every year; there I got exposed to some amazing professional Irish and Scottish musicians. Andrew Finn Magill was particularly invaluable in helping me make the crossover from classical to fiddle music. From those taster weeks I went on to Blas at the University of Limerick and then completed an MA at University College Cork.”

There is a Cork connection on Hannah’s most recent album, *At The Core*, the opening set of polkas is straight from Sliabh Luachra: *Johnny*

“I always have to have a Martin Wynne tune on my recordings”

O’Leary’s 2 / Toureendarby / Maurice O’Keeffe’s. She also sings a version of the *Mountains of Pomeroy* that was part of her MA final performance exam at UCC.

A canine’s fowl behaviour gave Hannah the inspiration to compose a new tune. It was on a ferry ride in Lake Michigan. “I was a member of Liz Carroll’s Patreon community for a number of years. Earlier, that week Liz challenged us to write a hop jig. As we were about to leave Beaver Island (a great spot for music retreats), we were entertained by a dog leaping in and out of the waves chasing a flock of ducks. The scene screamed “hop jig” and I knew I had to write *The Dog who Chased the Ducks*. The ferry ride is about two hours long, which was plenty of time to write the tune and commit it to memory! I’ve paired it with a Martin

Wynne tune in the Key of F on the album; I always have to have a Martin Wynne tune on my recordings.

“Hanging around landscaped gardens in Atlanta GA gave me the inspiration to create a moody version of the *Dunmore Lasses* in B-minor.” It is a standout instrumental on *At The Core*, where she is joined by Randy Clepper (bouzouki), Jacob McCauley (bodhrán), Ciarán O’Connell (button accordion) and Alberto Whitmer (guitar), all of whom have embraced a traditional Irish style in their music.

I asked how she approaches online teaching. “Creating video lessons for my students is great fun. I have a relatively simple setup, which allows me to produce video tutorials regularly for my students. It’s all recorded via the camera on my laptop with a little post editing afterwards.

“I play the tune up to speed so they can hear it in full context, as well as go back and play along with the fast version once they’ve learned it. Those lessons are uploaded to my studio site, and studio subscribers can access them in any order. You could learn Paddy O’Brien’s *Coming of Spring* and the *Little Diamond Polka* all in a day if you like! My underlying philosophy is for my students to acquire the authentic sound, the lilt or the nyah of the music.”

Hannah teaches a new tune into stages which helps the player develop a feel for the true tempo and accent of the music. She describes her method as:

“I split the tune into roughly 2 bar phrases and play each phrase through twice. The first time through, players are encouraged to listen and be thinking of the notes they need. The second time through, they get to play along with me! At the end of each part we play through all the phrases just learned to put it all together. Once you’ve learned the phrase by phrase section, we play the tune all together nice and slow. Finally we play the tune at a more medium pace if you’re feeling comfortable with the slow version and feeling ready to speed up a bit.”

You can watch a virtual lesson with Hannah at <https://learn.hannahharrisceol.com/> and listen to her back catalogue on bandcamp at www.hannahharrisceol.bandcamp.com



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BURNISHED AMELIA

Californian, Amelia Hogan's new album *Burnished* follows up on *Taking Flight*, which emerged from a time of fear and sadness. She spoke to Anne Marie Kennedy about her musical journey between the albums.



Amelia admits how previously she had a singularly focused vision on ideas and themes, whereas she now has "more of a sense of maintaining flexibility for happy accidents and inspiration with my collaborative process and collaborators. While I still drive the progress and vision, this album is taking me to places where I listen more closely and engage more fully with my colleagues' creative input. I invite them to share their own voices, to inspire and shape the songs."

There are elements of folklore, hidden magic found in connecting with the natural world, explorations on 'place', and her deep connection to Irish music. "The Irish music tradition is deeply rooted

always known that the land itself is the treasure and in my words, my narrative, I am sharing subtle ways in which the land teaches us how to interact with it. As another example *Home By Beara*, gives us a litany of the dangers in taking shortcuts, metaphor perhaps for our current culture. People may no longer believe in the Good Neighbour way of life and their ability to make our lives pleasant or difficult, but running afoul of ones' more prosaic neighbour and his dog should make us reconsider the reasons for doing things, existing in traditional folkloric ways that carry some legitimate wisdom."

Another thought provoking, evocative song is *Little Yellow Roses*, which she says is a "song in the classic tradition, the story of a young man reflecting on saying goodbye to his life. There's a challenge directed to his legacy, also in the same set of traditions, to remember him both in thought and deed by continuing the good fight. There's also hope and if not exactly satisfaction, then at least a declaration that he lived a passionate and ethical life, a life that made a difference to the place he's leaving as a freedom fighter. Perhaps we all hope that the places we leave behind will miss us the same way we miss him."

Burnished is a contemplative, slightly melancholic album but also optimistic, hopeful, a solid piece of work from a highly accomplished artist. It was launched on April 1st. *Home by Bearna* is released as a single for radio and podcast play from March. Amelia will be launching in Ireland, previewing some of the songs from *Burnished* at the Inishowen Traditional Singers' Conference in Donegal, followed by a tour of the US West Coast in April, May and throughout the season.

"*Burnished* is a project about the importance of rekindling a love of place in the American experience of immigrants"

in specific places, authentic ways of interacting with place, the songs in particular feel real and emotionally true because they're so much about the concrete, solid and tangible, ongoing relationships with real places. Every song on this album reflects an aspect of a place I have known, and been, and loved."

One of her ongoing observations in engaging with American song culture is that "so many of us are relative newcomers to where we live in the generational sense. So few of us have any idea of a sense of belonging to a place. *Burnished* is a project about the importance of rekindling a love of place in the American experience of Immigrants. This perspective of approaching traditional songs contains a tenuous understanding of our relationships with places as real, rooted and informed. If we treat the places where we live as alive, we are required to maintain ongoing relationships, be part of our communities, and encourage us to listen to all the voices of that place, human, natural and other. There is a different conversation we can then enter into when we engage fully with the natural world, treating its mysteries and lore mindfully, respectfully. In the end we get to explore and know our own selves more thoroughly through such an Animist lens."

A songwriter, composer, teacher, one of her own original tracks featured on the album *Rolling in the Gold*, is described as a love song to her home. "When people write about my home as outsiders, they often miss the treasure to be found here. It's something that I've always thought was obvious. Despite the stories and songs of the potential wealth of California, dramatic land and seascapes, I've

The full album will be available on major streaming services, digital and physical copies will be available on Bandcamp, iTunes and from ameliahogan.com



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ROLF WAGELS : THE BODHRÁN MEISTER

Seán Laffey chats to Hannover based Rolf Wagels about the deep influence Donegal had on his journey into the world of the Irish frame drum.



First off the bat, a few notes to give our readers some context. Rolf has been playing the bodhrán since 1993 and he runs the website, www.bodhran-info.com, a central hub for the drum's enthusiasts, which in 2025 celebrates 20 years in business. He has partnered with the Bavarian bodhrán builder Christian Hedwitschak and we'll look at that relationship in more detail later. Rolf has played, recorded and toured with the band Cara among others, and has, for over 20 years run bodhrán workshops in Germany with Guido Plüschke. And, he has been a leading teacher and organiser of the Craiceann bodhrán summer school, that takes place annually over five days at the end of June on Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. The bodhrán is his passion, his day job is as a Vet with the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover.

instruments. Particularly his CoreLine series and my signature line RWE version of the drum. Initially he started making bodhráns in his parents' basement, he has grown his business into a specialised workshop where his craftsmanship and attention to detail is, without over emphasising the point, superb."

Christian and Rolf's, latest joint venture is The Express ConfigurHEDor, Rolf explains the concept. "It combines the advantages of a standard model with the possibilities of a custom-made instrument: a wide range of features to choose from, reasonable prices, and short delivery times, it is usually ready for shipping within three weeks.

"The internet is all about choice, so I thought this should also apply to bodhráns, why not let the player select and design their own dream instrument? The constant is the drum diameter as this allows for interchangeable heads to be fitted in future. Christian said he could manufacture drums to order and I got to work on the website to make the ordering process simple. The design parameters can then be sent to Christian to make up the bespoke bodhrán. The online tool allows you to choose from nine different categories including type of skin, tuning rim, frame depth and inner and outer frame design. The selection of designs is constantly being expanded and new woods added. When it comes to the skin: various natural skins and a synthetic skin are available. There is even a vegan option, where not only the skin, but also the glue and wax are processed without animal components."

Rolf takes the same care over Stevie Moises tippers. "Stevie is a master woodturner, based in Bavaria and has been working with Christian since 2002. He is concentrating his time on making really high quality tippers; he asked me could I handle the sales and marketing through www.bodhran-info.com and I was very happy to do so. His tippers are exceptionally well made and are way above the usual quality you'd find in a regular music store."

So there you have it, a brief introduction to Rolf Wagels, all things bodhrán. It is his passion project, from playing to designing, to testing, marketing and teaching; he truly is a bodhrán Meister.

"Talking with Séamus O'Kane in Gweedore, gave me a deeper insight into the bodhrán..."

Rolf begins with his backstory. "In the early 1990s I took up the bodhrán seriously. I had a Brendan White drum from Holland and an Eckerman bodhrán from Vienna. Then in 1996 I attended the Frankie Kennedy Winter School in Gweedore, Donegal for the first time. There I met and became great friends with Séamus O'Kane who was a real bodhrán innovator; he used Lambeg skins on his drums, taped the rim to cut out unwanted overtones and was developing a tuning tensioning stem. He was really supportive of my playing and he'd invite me up on stage at concerts during the Winter School. Talking with Séamus I learned a lot about the pulse and he showed me what's really important in bodhrán playing.

"My first introduction to a Christian Hedwitschak bodhrán was in 2005 when a packaged arrived at my flat in Hannover; it was one of his prototype bodhráns, and he asked me for some observations and advice. I could see he had potential, and there were things that could be improved and tweaked, and we arranged to meet and I gave him my player's perspective on his instruments. We got on well and since then we have collaborated on the development of a number of his



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We continue our new series of stories, songs and poems titled *Let The Memories Be*, brought to you by the legend of Irish Music that is Johnny McEvoy.

Illustration and Images courtesy of Johnny McEvoy



A few words with Commandant Pearse!

Excuse me Commandant Pearse.
But you see I come from a different time and place
And I have just been observing the proceedings taking place here in the G.P.O.
and they seem to be a total disaster!
There's a fire at the back of the hallway
and the roof is about to cave in.

There are dozens of young lads
lying on shards of broken glass
beneath the smashed-out windows.
The whole place is a shambles!
And Mr. Connolly is lying wounded
on a stretcher on the floor.
Are you sure you know what you're doing?

The way I see it is that no matter
what they may think of you
or how much they love you!
you are not a military man.
You may think you are, but you are not
You know nothing of war or insurrection.

You are a poet, a teacher and a scholar.
And on top of all that,
You are a dreamer!

And you should stick to that
For dreamers can climb the highest mountain
and make the impossible happen!

When I was in school, I read something you said
once.
And it's pertinent to what is happening here
today.
You said, and I quote!

"What if my dream comes true?
What if my dream comes true?
And millions unborn shall dwell in the house
I shaped in my heart
The noble house of my dreams!

Well, you see, Commandant Pearse!
This is not the end!
But it's the beginning of the end!

You see your dream will come true!
Johnny McEvoy



De Valera

The Easter sun was shining down
On our sad and broken Dublin town
We had fought to end our shackled days.
Without a prayer or word of praise

Through smoke and grime that Easter tide
With De Valera by our side
Thin as a rake walking head held high.
While above the Liffey seagulls cry

Heads in windows scoff his name.
As down Sackville street the soldiers came.
Two Tommy's marching by his side
They cursed him for their boys who died.

We watched and saw our young men die.
While an uncaring world stood idly by
We saw our flag fall in flames.
And wondered who'd recall our names.

**"You are a poet, a teacher
and a scholar. And on top of
all that, You are a dreamer!"**

From Boland's Mills we are now gone
There's none left to sing "The Soldiers Song".
In Frongoch camp we wait in line
For there will come another time.

Now old man your work is done.
Now we're the ones to carry on.
"Have my dreams come true?" you say!
"Or must we wait for another day?"

Now we are free, and we are strong.
We'll separate right from wrong.
The sun now shines in our Irish sky.
To warm the clay where our heroes lie
Johnny McEvoy



Me Ma

"Haz any of yuz seen me Ma?
I was holden her hand
When the ructions broke out"
"God save us all," she said
"We'll all be kilt"

"We were feedin the ducks
In the Green is all we waz doing
When there came a big, big bang
And then a roarin amount of
cursin and swearin,
from the soldiers"

"That's terrible language,"
Me Ma said
"And yuz the King's Own Rifles
A crowd of bowsies
Is all yuz are"

Bang! Bang, Bang!

Ma, whoze that oul wan
in the funny hat?

"Haz any of yuz
seen me Ma?
I'm fed up askin yuz!
Some of yuz musta seen her!

If she doesn't turn up soon I'll
Be shanghaied!
Coz, I don't know me way home!

Mam where are yaz?
I'm in a terrible fright!
Hold on a minute there you are!
What are you doing lying in the duck pond?
And your face as white as a swan.

Johnny McEvoy

**What now?**

There you are boys
We've done it again!
And what for?
Nothing!

Just a bunch of Dublin gutties
Throwing stones at an elephant
And the crowd on the street
Cursing up
And calling us traitors
To the King

I was hit in the face with a
Head of cabbage
Thrown by an owl one in a fur coat
She had robbed from Cleary's windows.

"That'll shake yez up me brave Irish heroes
See how brave yez are
When they hang yez

And she's right you know!

I saw young fellows
No older than eighteen
With mausers in their hands
And they had never fired
A shot with before

They may as well have had shovels
They would have got more use
Out of a shovel

I hear they shot Mister Pearce
And Mister Connolly
And only a handful of the people
Had ever heard of them

And us, what of us?
We'll be all forgotten in six months!

God! What a bloody mess.

We may as well have been
In France fighting the Keiser
With hurleys
For all the chance we had

And look at the city
Why did they have to destroy
Half of the city?
With their howitzers and cannon
Sure, they knew there was only a few of us
And were of no match for them.

Jesus, Glasnevin will be full tonight!

They tell us we are to be put on a
Cattle boat for England

"And that's where ye belong
"Ye ignorant bunch of Irish Tin Soldiers"

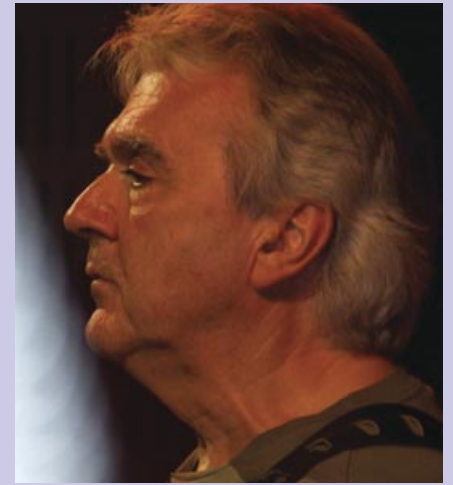
And how about that me big Cork hoor
Where were you when Dublin came out

"Ah! Me young Jackeen
Our turn will come soon enough
And then they'll have
Something to worry about."

Ah! You're all talk!
What's your name anyway?

"Mick," he said. "Mick Collins."

Johnny McEvroy



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SIANSA GAEL LINN FINAL 2025

Irish Traditional Music was alive and well at the Siansa Gael Linn Final in the National Concert Hall on March 23rd. Photos : Seán Ó Mainnín



'Seoda', Siansa Gael Linn Champions 2025! Stephen Doherty, the group's mentor, Aoife Nic Pháidín, Oisín Ó Domhnaill, Aoife Ní Shearraigh, Piaras Mac Céide, Réamonn Ó Ciaráin (Gael Linn CEO), Hannah Pittendrigh, Kellie Ní Mhóráin, Noel de Faoite, Niamh Ní Dhochartaigh, Edel Fox (Head adjudicator) agus Wayne Mac Feilimí (Gael Linn Chairperson).

The Siansa Gael Linn Champions 2025, 'Seoda', hail from Co. Mayo and Co. Sligo! 'Seoda' were the deserving winners of the final of this Irish traditional music competition, where they competed with seven other groups in the National Concert Hall in Dublin on Sunday, 23 March. They were awarded the distinguished Gael Linn trophy as well as €2,500.

Siansa Gael Linn is one of the most prestigious Irish music and singing competitions in the country, fostering the strong relationship between the Irish language, music and youth. The competition was founded in 2001 and is organised in association with RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, Irish Music Magazine and Molscéal TG4. The standard of musicians and continued growth of the competition are a great source of pride for Gael Linn.

“Irish traditional music and the Irish language are safe in the hands of this new generation of young musicians”

Molscéal TG4 livestreamed the event on Facebook and on Gael Linn's YouTube account. Each of the eight groups, 'Streacán', from Longford, 'Athbheochan', from Dublin, 'Beomhar', from Laois and Offaly, 'Sáile', from Donegal, 'Loinnir', from Limerick, 'Stranach', from Wexford, 'Teorainn', from Cork and Kerry, and 'Seoda', from Mayo and Sligo, were delighted to have the opportunity to perform in the National Concert Hall. The some 1,000 spectators were spellbound by the talent of these young musicians and showed their support and appreciation throughout the evening adding immensely to the special atmosphere.

The competition was stiff for the prize fund of €4,500, and it fell to renowned traditional musicians Edel Fox, Dónal O'Connor and Bernadette Nic Gabhann to choose the prize-winners. There was great excitement among their supporters when 'Seoda' were announced in first place! There are eight young musicians in the group – Niamh Ní Dhochartaigh, Aoife Nic Pháidín, Aoife Ní Shearraigh, Hannah Pittendrigh, Kellie Ní

Mhóráin, Piaras Mac Céide, Oisín Ó Domhnaill and Noel de Faoite.

Second place went to Co. Limerick, and €1,250 was awarded to the group 'Loinnir'. Third place and a prize of €750, went to 'Stranach' from Co. Wexford.

Each young musician who took part in the final was also presented with a memento of the occasion by Wayne Mac Feilimí, Gael Linn chairperson.

Tristan Rosenstock, broadcaster with RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, presented the concert for the first time following the retirement of Aine Hensey last year, and the station broadcast the event live on the radio once more.

Gearóid Mac Donncha, Ceannaire RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, said: “We are delighted to be able to support this competition and these young musicians. RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, Gael Linn, Irish Music Magazine and Molscéal TG4 serve the same communities, and we are strongest when working together.”

In his address at the end of the night, Réamonn Ó Ciaráin, Gael Linn CEO, said: “Tonight's Siansa Gael Linn final was a feast of music once again. Irish traditional music and the Irish language are safe in the hands of this new generation of young musicians. This national competition showcases the central values, tradition and mission of Gael Linn.

He expressed his gratitude to Gearóid Mac Donncha for the ongoing support from RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, Tristan Rosenstock for presenting the occasion, Robert Heuston from Irish Music Magazine, Molscéal TG4, the three judges, the National Concert Hall and Gael Linn staff.

The performances of each group who took part in the Siansa final on the National Concert Hall stage will be available to view on Gael Linn's YouTube account shortly.



'Loinnir' from Co. Limerick, who took second place, with Gearóid Mac Donncha, Ceannaire RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta.

Orlaith De Barra, Marcus Ó Murchú, Gearóid Mac Donncha (RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta), Liam Mac Giobúin, Louis Ó Murchú, Tove Byers, Emma Sinéad Ní Choileáin, Páidí Mac Gormáin and Serena De Paor.



'Stranach', from Wexford, who were awarded third place at the 2025 Siansa final, with Robert Heuston from Irish Music Magazine and with their mentor, Áine Ní Chinnéide.
Róisín De Bhál, Grace Ní Chuinneagáin, Billy Ó Cuinneagáin, Florence Ní Dhonnchú, Robert Heuston (Irish Music Magazine), Ciara Ní Choilféir, Evan Ó Grádaigh, Lily Ní Cheallaigh, Tomás Ó Murchú agus Áine Ní Chinnéide.



'Sáile' from Donegal who took part in the Siansa National Final 2025 in the National Concert Hall.



The group 'Athbheochan', who represented Dublin in the Siansa final in the National Concert Hall.



'Beomhar' from Co. Laois and Co. Offaly following their performance in the National Concert Hall in the Siansa final.



The 'Teorainn' band, from Co. Kerry and Co. Cork who took part in the Siansa Gael Linn Final 2025.



'Streancán', from Co. Longford, who competed in the Siansa Gael Linn final 2025.

VIENNA'S SESSIONS GOT SPINNING WHEEL SPINNING

The sounds of the Austrian trio Spinning Wheel belie their continental location. That is because their music nestles neatly into the nooks and crannies of the Irish folk tradition, writes John O'Regan.



The band Spinning Wheel, founded in 1997, has created its own niche in the local folk scene. The current trio consists of founding members Danika Ruso (vocals, accordion, harp) and Bernhart Ruso (flute, nyckelharpa, bodhran), along with their newest member, Fabio Mancini (fiddle, vocals, guitar).

Reflecting on the band's early days, Bernhart shares: "We first met through LARP events, and during that time, we spent a lot of time at medieval markets, surrounded by historical and folk music."

I asked about the band's experience with Irish music, -how they initially heard it, and what it meant to them? Danika replies: "After listening to Enya on the radio during the 80s, our next contact with Irish music was at Irish sessions in Vienna. I was completely blown away. The fact that they were simply playing for the sheer joy of making music together was incredibly inspiring. I had never encountered anything like it before. Of course, in the 90s, Riverdance and with it, Anúna came along, and I was fascinated by the crystal-clear voice of Katie McMahon. Although the orchestral sound didn't resonate with us as much, it created a broader interest in Irish music among audiences here, which worked in our favour."

What albums has the band recorded and what types of songs and tunes are included on them, I asked Danika?

"Over the years, the band has released nine albums, starting with their 1997 debut. In March 2025, we released a vinyl edition, and hopefully, another new album in October. Our material has evolved over time. In the early years, we were drawn to Child Ballads and Breton dance songs. Later, we also explored a wider range of traditional music, tentatively starting to include songs in Irish and Scottish Gaelic. With my background in linguistics and fascination of languages, we must have touched every branch of the Celtic language tree by now. Over the last few years, quite a few Scottish songs have found their way into our programme, including several waulking songs. I'm always on the lookout for new songs for my annual song and waulking workshops at a local festival; some of them eventually find their way into Spinning Wheel's repertoire. It's a wonderful way to keep the tradition alive and evolving, and it keeps things fresh for us, too."

I wondered if Bernhart could tell us where the group sources its material for its shows and albums from? "Originally, finding new material was a slow and sometimes painstaking process. We relied on our own CD

"Vienna has had a very lively Irish folk scene since the early 1990s, with up to three Irish trad sessions per week"

Their personal story is an interesting one; Danika spent her childhood in London and has carried a deep connection to the UK ever since moving to Austria. Bernhart, on the other hand, studied in Manchester and experienced the lively folk scene of the mid 1990s.

Being based in Austria, what was the live music scene like in Austria when Spinning Wheel began playing? "Vienna has always been a city where music is greatly appreciated. Now and also back then, people enjoy going to concerts of all genres. Vienna has had a flourishing Irish folk scene since the early 1990s, with up to three Irish trad sessions per week," Bernhart notes, adding, "there was always an exchange with Irish musicians who lived in or frequently visited Vienna. In recent years the University of Limerick has had a huge influence on the development of traditional Irish music all over the world. In Austria alone, there are four musicians who have studied at IWA."

collections or those of folk-interested friends, and lyrics often had to be transcribed by ear. Today the internet constantly introduces us to new songs that catch our attention and the search for lyrics has become infinitely easier. Our list of songs we'd love to perform grows longer and longer, and inspiration is never in short supply."

Their performances are equally diverse. "We are based in Austria but play throughout Europe, wherever our music finds a home. Festivals, cultural events, gallery openings, and intimate folk clubs all shape our sound and inspire our creativity."

With Spinning Wheel gaining momentum in the cultural scene, their reputation continues to grow, positioning them as one of Europe's notable Irish-influenced folk bands. See more at www.celticsong.at

tim staffell aMIGO



New Remastered Special Edition CD of Tim Staffell's classic 2003 album aMIGO. Eleven tracks, including 'Doin' Alright', 'Earth', and 'Night Moves' plus new bonus live-in-the-studio track.

Tim Staffell first came on the scene in the '60s with **The Railroaders**, then went on to blues-rock band **1984**, he then formed **Smile** with Brian May and Roger Taylor. He (famously) departed from Smile, moving on through **Humpy Bong** before becoming singer of progressive rock outfit **Morgan** formed with Morgan Fisher and Maurice Bacon from Love Affair and Bob Sapsed, then a stint with **Jonathan Kelly's Outside** alongside Snowy White and on...

timstaffell.com

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MEET GEAROID McCARTHY

Robert Heuston in conversation with the West Limerick Folk singer for Irish Music Magazine.

Photo : Shannon Farrell



Robert: Tell us a little about Gearoid McCarthy growing up in West Limerick and how your journey into music began?

Gearoid: My journey into music began when I was very young. I was born into a very musical family, the McCarthys from Limerick and I started playing accordion at the age of about 11 and then started playing guitar age 12, so I suppose that's where you could say it all began for me, and I learned a lot of songs from the singing of my dad, my uncles, my brothers and my sisters. It's been an amazing journey so far.

Robert: How was your time at Raglan Road, Orlando and with the show, Celtic Legends?

Gearoid: My time over in Disney World in Orlando working in Raglan Road Irish bar was incredible. When I was driving to work in Disney every day as a lad from West Limerick, it always felt like an achievement every time I went through the doors. When I left Disney I ended up going touring the world for 2 years with a great

“When I was driving to work in Disney every day as a lad from West Limerick, it always felt like an achievement every time I went through the doors”

Irish band called Celtic Legends and the experience that gave me was invaluable. I toured the world with over 40 musicians and Irish dancers, it really was an incredible time. I got to tour in 50 countries, being in a different venue every night, and it could be anywhere in the world playing to anywhere between 4,000 and 20,000 people per night. It is probably one of the greatest musical experiences of my life.....so far!

Robert: What musicians have inspired the progressive musical career of Gearoid McCarthy?

Gearoid: The musicians who have inspired me from a very early age would have been Luke Kelly, the Dubliners and Ronnie Drew. As I got older my musical influence went in a very folk-based direction with the likes of Mumford & sons, Christy Moore and I was always massively influenced by Irish traditional music. I'm also a big fan of country music which would have been my father that got me interested in that side of the music business. There are only 3 of my family into folk, the rest of them are all into country.

Robert: *Irish Music Magazine* are looking forward to reviewing your forthcoming album later this year. What can we expect?

Gearoid: So for my upcoming album, obviously with my dad passing away recently I have changed some of the songs. There are going to be a few songs added to the album now as a tip of the hat

to my Dad, songs like *My Old Man*, *Sam Hall* and *Sonny's Dream*. The journey I have been on over the past year has given me much to choose from, many songs have gone viral for me so you can expect to hear *The Irish Pub Song* and *Seven Drunken Nights* along with many other great songs, and you can be rest assured that I will be absolutely pouring my heart into this album because they are the songs I love, the songs my dad and my family love. I'm very excited to bring the album out because it's going to be my first fully produced studio album, I'm going to have my full band with me for it and it will be produced by the mighty Bill Shanley. The album will come out on the Trad Nua label in October.

Robert: How have you found the experience of working with Dan McCabe?

Gearoid: I found the experience of working with Dan McCabe to be fantastic. He's got a great team around him, some of whom I would know from past experiences. Myself and Dan have become close friends, he has given me some great opportunities of recent and we are hoping to build on that; I would say watch this space! Darren Farrell who manages Dan has been very good to me over the last couple of months. We first met 10 years ago when I was at a very different point in my life, he has given me a lot of opportunities and I'm delighted to be back working with him again. Between both of them I've gotten to play in some of my dream venues in Ireland, so I'll be forever grateful to both of them.

Robert: What are the future plans for Gearoid McCarthy?

Gearoid: My future plans are to continue making music and working alongside some great people and meeting a few more along the way. I'd like to take my music all over the world and go as far as it will take me. I want to sing Irish songs everywhere, songs I have written

myself along with all the back catalogue of great Irish songs that have formed the back bone of Irish culture worldwide. I really want to represent my musical journey in a very strong way and I can't wait to get my own show on the road. I want to wake up with something new and exciting happening every day. I just want to take it all in, take a deep breath and do the thing I love the most, which is playing music.

For upcoming concert dates and to support the Artist
<https://www.ticketmaster.ie/gearoid-mccarthy-tickets/artist/5504909>



Photo : Shannon Farrell

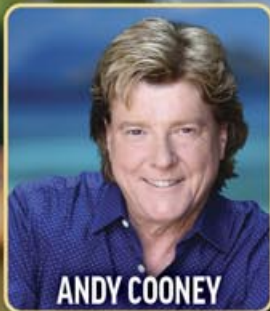
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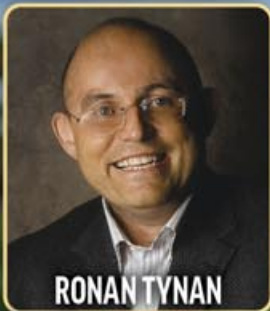


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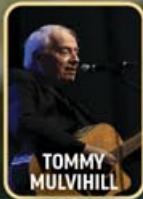
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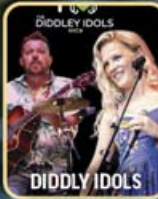
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BELFAST TRADFEST 2025

Sunday 27th July - Sunday 3rd August

Seán Laffey makes a call to Chloe McGregor to find out what Belfast has in store for us this coming July.



Photo : Tim Jarvis

Chloe is the Marketing Manager for the festival and she opens our conversation with the statement: "Belfast is buzzing with traditional music and not just at festival time; if you know where to look you'll find it in bars across the city centre and there's a healthy teaching community ensuring the next generation have access to high quality tuition from a very young age."

I began by asking Chloe about the scale of the Belfast TradFest. "Last year over 20,000 people attended the festival, which had over 360 separate events in the week, such as concerts, talks and workshops. We use a variety of venues across the city, with the vibrant Cathedral Quarter being our central hub. For example our Summer School runs at Ulster University's York Street, Campus and is easily accessible by public transport. Our concert venues include The Ulster Hall, The Empire Music Hall, The Mac, Black Box and The Mandela Hall at Queen's University. Our highlight concert will be held in the Ulster Hall on July 27th; it's special concert with a double bill featuring Dervish, and the ground-breaking ensemble NOTIFY, who will be joined by the Irish Concertina Orchestra, Cormac McCarthy, and



years of age. Here is a flavour of what is on offer at this year's summer school and you'll find more details on our website. Set Dancing will be taught by Ronán Eastwood, he'll be busy with a morning and afternoon session each day, and for solo step dancers Stephanie Keane will be teaching Sean Nós Dancing. Suitable for all ages and experience levels.

"Andy McGregor is the tutor for our Bagpipes for Beginners classes. If the piano's place in traditional music is your thing, then Jack Talty has the course for you. The fiddle of course is perhaps the most popular of Irish traditional instruments, and we have a raft of excellent fiddle tutors this year: Kevin Burke, Zoe Conway, Chris Stout, Tom Morrow, Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, Sinead McKenna and Conor Caldwell.

"Belfast has a long established flute tradition and you can learn from two of the island's finest players Liam Kelly & Brendan Mulholland. Our other tutors include: John Carty (banjo), Brighde Chaimbeul (Smallpipes), Catriona McKay, Gráinne Hambly & Ciara Taaffe (harp), Mick McAuley & Shane Mitchell (button accordion), Aimee Farrell Courtney & Siobhán O'Donnell (bodhrán), Brian McDonagh will

"The summer school and teaching is at the very heart of the festival, it is what it was initially created for..."

the MGCE Concert Orchestra. It should be an unforgettable night of the finest music. There will be lots of other amazing concerts with Iarla Ó Lionáird, Ríoghach Connolly & The Breath, Matt Molly, John Carty & lots more."

Talking of the Summer School, Chloe explains that: "teaching is at the very heart of the festival, it is what it was initially created for and that mission to pass on the tradition is still at the core of the festival today. The classes are designed to ensure that each student gets the most of their tuition.

"The Summer School's team of tutors is made up of internationally renowned performers with proven track records as teachers and educationalists. Beginner instrument classes, Whistle & Sing, Traditional Singing (with Cathy Jordan), Amhránaíocht, Sean-Nós Dancing and Set Dancing are suitable for all levels, including beginners. All other classes are designed for intermediate to advanced (minimum 2 years instrument experience) adults and children over 6

teach bouzouki and accompaniment, Mary Bergin tin whistle and John Doyle guitar accompaniment. Uilleann Pipes will be taught by Louise Mulcahy & Pdraig McGovern and the concertina by Caitlín Nic Gabhann.

"We have had tremendous community buy-in across the city with ongoing partnerships with music schools, music venues and traditional music establishments. Local businesses and individuals also contribute to the festival through our bursary scheme which supports students of social disadvantage to attend our summer school. It's a process that bears fruit when those youngsters who joined just a few years ago are now sharing concert stages with some of the stars of traditional music or leading sessions around the city."

To find out more, including tuition fees and accommodation booking, please visit www.belfasttradfest.com

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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 (May 2nd-4th). With headline acts, a fantastic session trail plus much more. 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**. 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.

A 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). 2025 recipients are Connie O Connell (Munster), Dinny Leonard (Ulster), Sean Montgomery (Leinster), Sheila O Dowd (Connaught), Brian Rooney (UK), Rose Flanagan (USA).

Eight pub venues will host a series of full-on sessions over the three days and nights. There will be a few surprise musicians of note "showing up" unannounced... which always adds extra excitement and music gusto to the sessions. All musicians are welcome to join in the sessions.

There will be a new **Busking** competition on Saturday 3rd. (u18 groups). Also there will be a two-day schedule of events for na deagoirí agus páistí beaga le linn na deireadh seachtaine, buíochas le Muineachain Le Gaeilge.

Another new feature of the festival this year is "**Songs Yet Unsung**", which the organisers promise will be a very unique and memorable event. More info on our website.

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

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

BLAS INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND DANCE**June 23rd – July 4th, 2025****www.blas.ie**

The Blas International Summer School of Irish Traditional Music and Dance is celebrating its 29th year this summer from 23rd June – 4th July. Over the years we have welcomed thousands of visitors from all corners of the globe to our boutique style festival at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick.

Residential guests can stay for the whole festival or a single week in the bright and comfortable student accommodation. The university is connected to Limerick city centre via easily accessible walking and cycling trails and has a variety of restaurants and shops on campus. The festival takes place in our iconic Irish World Academy building, The House of Light, with modern teaching rooms and two theatres which will host the various classes, concerts, lectures and screenings taking place throughout the festival.

The tutor lineup for 2025 is headlined by our artists in residence Louise Mulcahy (music) and James Greenan (dance). They will be joined by some of the greats of the tradition including John Carty, Siobhán Peoples, Enda Scahill and Bríd Harper. Also joining the teaching staff this year are Alec Brown (cello), Alannah Thornburgh (harp) and Steph Geremia (flute/whistles).

The Blas Festival has a cap of five students per class to ensure a bespoke learning environment for all students.

For more information visit www.blas.ie or email blas@ul.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

TUNEFEST DUNGARVAN**June 20th – 22nd, 2025****<https://www.facebook.com/tunefestdungarvan>**

TuneFest Dungarvan is a vibrant celebration of traditional Irish music, taking place from the 20th to the 22nd of June in the picturesque town of Dungarvan, County Waterford. This annual festival offers a rich lineup of concerts, workshops, pub sessions, and community events, bringing together music lovers and performers for an unforgettable weekend.

The festival begins on Friday evening with a fantastic concert featuring Cherish the Ladies, an internationally acclaimed group known for their exceptional musicianship and engaging stage presence.

Saturday is packed with musical workshops at Ard Scoil na nDéise, led by a talented group of musicians including Tara Breen, Keelan McGrath, Conor O'Loughlin, Brian O'Loughlin, and Keith O'Loughlin. After the workshops, the streets will come alive with a busking competition and an open-air gig rig, offering a chance to enjoy live performances in a relaxed, outdoor setting. Throughout the day, pub session trails will also be held across the town, providing opportunities to enjoy impromptu traditional music in cozy local pubs. In the evening, The Rising and Talisk will take the stage at a concert in Creation, offering an exciting night of music.

On Sunday, the festival offers intimate performances at the Old Bank, providing a more laid-back atmosphere to enjoy traditional tunes. The weekend concludes with a thrilling concert featuring Taobh na Mara and Danú at the Park Hotel, bringing the festival to a spectacular close.

TuneFest Dungarvan is the perfect destination to immerse yourself in the best of Irish music and culture.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/tunefestdungarvan>

23rd ANNUAL PENN-MAR IRISH FESTIVAL SET FOR JUNE**June 21st, 2025 PennMarIrishFestival.com**

The Penn-Mar Irish Festival returns June 21 with a brand new layout as the festival moves to Pheasant Run Greenhouse & Garden Center.

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

The lineup is finalised with the recent announcement of the Tartan Terrors joining Albannach, Cas Ceol, Clann Redmond, Cassie and Maggie, Diddley Idols, Enda Reilly, and Runa, along with Susquehanna Pipes & Drums, McGinley School of Irish Dance, Ni Riain School of Irish Dance, and Oh! Gills Irish Dancers.

Also new this year: "Blazing a Trail: The Lives and Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women" exhibit, courtesy of EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum, highlighting the lives and legacies of 21 Irish diaspora women in the fields of politics, humanitarianism, women's suffrage, the arts, the sciences, and sport.

Some festival seating is provided, but lawn chairs and blankets are welcome. Pets and smoking are prohibited.

Pheasant Run 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 and parking info. Shuttles will run a continuous loop between two nearby off-site lots and the venue. Handicapped parking available on site.

For discounted advance festival tickets and details, visit PennMarIrishFestival.com. You can also follow updates on social media (#PennMarIrish).

For all inquiries, please email PennMarIrish@gmail.com

SCOIL SAMHRAIDH WILLIE CLANCY

July 5th – 13th, 2025

www.scoilsamhraidhwillieclancy.com

On Tuesday, 8th July, the Summer School will remember Tommy McCarthy and other musicians who created a dynamic environment for Irish traditional music in London after World War 11. Places like Camden Town, Cricklewood, Islington, Shepherd's Bush, and Kilburn became predominantly Irish communities, where the pubs and social clubs were vital hubs for the transmission of traditional music as immigrants from all counties gathered and exchanged tunes. Names like Bobby Casey, Brendan Mulkere, Roger Sherlock, Paddy Taylor, John Bowe, Liam Farrell, Brendan McGlinchey and Tommy McCarthy dominated the traditional music scene in the capital from the 1950s onwards.

Tommy McCarthy was born in Kilmihil, West Clare, and came to London in 1952 where he worked as a carpenter. A proficient whistle, concertina and uilleann pipe player, he was very committed to promoting piping and was at the foundation of Na Píobairí Uilleann in 1968, and co-founded the London Pipers Club in 1980, which became an important focal point for pipers in Britain. As well as the Irish centres, he and his family were regular performers at the folk clubs in the 1960s and 70s, then an important part of the folk/traditional music circuit in Britain. They also performed regularly with the Chieftains on their London concerts. Among his many recording credits are contributions to albums by Kate Bush and Horslips and various London theatre productions.

The Tuesday celebration will feature reflections and music from the McCarthy family and people who were part of the London scene at that time. They will recall a time long past that has an important place in the narrative of Irish traditional music.

www.scoilsamhraidhwillieclancy.com

CATSKILLS IRISH ARTS WEEK

July 13th – 19th, 2025

<https://www.mjquirishcentre.com>

The Catskills Irish Arts Week enters its 31st year as a week-long summer school devoted to the preservation and promotion of Traditional Irish music and dance under the auspices of the Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural and Sports Centre in East Durham, New York, the heart of the Irish Catskills. The CIAW will take place July 13-19 with classes scheduled Monday to Friday and a closing day-long festival on Saturday, July 19, 2025. Of special interest this year we will open the CIAW on Sunday evening, July 13 with a special Catskills Concert presentation marking 40 YEARS of CHERISH THE LADIES led by founding members Joanie Madden and Mary Coogan with Mirella Murray, Nollaig Casey and Kate Purcell and special guests at the Quill Festival Grounds. Later in the week we will also welcome the return of The Yanks who formed at the Catskills Irish Arts Week.



UPCOMING EVENTS

www.irishmusicinlondon.org

SLIABH AUGHTY SET DANCING CÉILÍ
 HOLY TRINITY RC CHURCH HALL
 BIRMINGHAM, B74 2NU
SAT 05 APR 2025 | 8PM-11PM
 LONDON IRISH CENTRE,
 LONDON, NW1 9XB
SUN 06 APR 2025 | 1PM-4PM
 £14/FREE U18S



TOMMY MAGUIRE TRIBUTE CONCERT
 LONDON IRISH CENTRE, NW1 9XB
FRI 18 JULY 2025
 DOORS 7.30PM | £15/£7 U18S



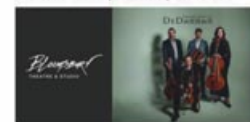
DAMIEN MULLANE AND THE LAADS
 KINGS PLACE, N1 9AG
THU 22 MAY 2025
 DOORS 7.30PM | £20/£10



MUSIC NETWORK TOUR: CAOIMHE AND SEAMUS O FLAHERTA WITH RYAN MOLLOY
 IRISH CULTURAL CENTRE, W6 9DT
FRI 26 SEP 2025
 DOORS 7.30PM | £15



IRISH HOOLEY IN BLOOMSBURY THEATRE WITH FRANKIE GAVIN AND DE DANNAN
 SUPPORT BY THE TRAD GATHERING BLOOMSBURY THEATRE
THU 26 JUNE 2025
 DOORS 7PM | £22.50 / £7 U18S



CONCERT AT KINGS PLACE: ARTISTS TBA
 KINGS PLACE, N1 9AG
THU 11 DEC 2025
 DOORS 7.30 | TICKETS TBA



Return to London Town Festival 2025

RETURN TO LONDON TOWN FESTIVAL 2025 LAUNCH CONCERT
 IRISH CULTURAL CENTRE, W6 9DT
FRI 25 APR 2025
 DOORS 7.30PM | £15/£7 U18S



RETURN TO LONDON TOWN FESTIVAL 2025
 THE CROWN HOTEL, NW2
FRI 24 OCT - MON 27 OCT
 EARLY BIRD TICKETS AVAILABLE IN APRIL - RETURNTOLONDONTOWN.ORG



Find out more about what we do, who we are, and upcoming events on our websites:

www.irishmusicinlondon.org

www.returntolondontown.org



IMDL would like to thank its current funders, sponsors and partners for supporting their work throughout the year



Our Irish teachers and performers include Mary Bergin, Gerry O'Connor, Mirella Murray, Nollaig Casey, Kate Purcell, Jack Talty, Dan Gurney, John Paul Reynolds, Bryan Murphy, Keelan McGrath, Deirdre Cronin for creative writing, Vincent Woods for poetry and Pdraig McEneaney for the Sets and more to be confirmed.

Stateside staff features Joanie Madden, Mary Coogan, Rose Conway Flanagan, Brian Conway, Siobhan and Willie Kelly, Larry Nugent, Eileen Clune Goodman, Pauline Conneely, Jackie O'Riley, Isaac Alderson, Eimear Arkins, Eileen Gannon, Annmarie Acosta Williams, Patty Furlong, Loretta Egan Murphy, Brendan Dolan, Margie Mulvihill, Michelle Bergin, Alan Murray, Colin Harte, Regan Wick, Brenda Dowling, Aoife Griffin, David Healy Dowling, Caitriona Fee, Sean Earnest, David McKinley Ward, Ivan Goff, Katie Linnane and Erin Loughran (Children Program Coordinator) with more to come.

Morning and Afternoon Classes daily from Monday July 14 to Friday July 18 along with late afternoon topical lectures from the staff, Evening Concerts and Barn Dance on the Quill Festival Grounds, Ceilithe all week in the famed Shamrock House with Fear A Tí Pdraig McEneaney with nightly Irish Pub Sessions Galore in famed Irish resorts and roadhouses.

Finale Festival on Saturday July 19th on the Quill Festival Grounds from noon to 7 pm.

Online Registration will be open soon
at <https://www.mjqrishcentre.com> (Look for Early Bird discounts).
Contact: CIAW Artistic Director Paul Keating, Phone 201-965-6598, Email: paulkeating@aol.com

SOUTH SLIGO SUMMER SCHOOL

July 13th – 19th, 2025

www.southsligosummerschool.com

The people of Tubbercurry and South Sligo eagerly await the second week of July and the arrival of friends old and new for the 39th Year of the South Sligo Summer School, being held in the town centre from 13th to 19th July. With the 40th Year less than a year

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FÁILT ERRIU
ALL WELCOME!

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THE MCGOLDRICK FAMILY - SCRAN
TREE NY KIARE - RACHEL HAIR & RON JAPPY - AVANC
THE MEGA MANX CEILI - CELTIC MYTHS & LEGENDS
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and a half away, the excitement is already mounting as we prepare to celebrate all we have achieved since 1987.

We will greatly miss our colleague and founding member, Rita Flannery, who sadly passed away on 22nd November 2024. Rita loved the uilleann pipes and so we are delighted this year to put the Uilleann Pipes in the spotlight on Thursday 17th July when Na Píobairí Uilleann will give a presentation on the important work they do to promote uilleann piping at their headquarters on Henrietta Street in Dublin and in their outreach work both nationally and internationally. As part of their visit to Tubbercurry this year, they will host a 'Try the Pipes' session and all are welcome to come along and 'do what it says on the tin'.

Our main uilleann pipes tutor Leonard Barry has done trojan work in recent years in raising the profile of the instrument in our county and region and we know that Rita would be thrilled with our plans for this year in this regard. Other highlights of our 2025 programme include the Tuesday night Céilí with the young, All Ireland winning ten-member Piper's Cross Céilí Band from neighbouring East Mayo for their much anticipated first visit to St Brigid's Hall.

South Mayo features also this year at the Monday Night Tribute Concert when we are delighted to be honouring mother and daughter, multi-instrumentalists and music teachers of the highest calibre, Bernie & Holly Geraghty.

Bígí linn – registration link and full programme details:
www.southsligosummerschool.com

YN CHRUINNAGHT CELTIC GATHERING : A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC, DANCE & CULTURE

July 21st – 27th, 2025

www.celticgathering.im

This summer, immerse yourself in the heart of Celtic music and culture at Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering, taking place from 21st – 27th July 2025 in the picturesque town of Peel and the Island's capital, Douglas. The festival brings together outstanding musicians from across Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, and the Isle of Man for a week of concerts, ceilis, sessions and the chance to explore this enchanting island.

The 2025 lineup is set to be one of the most exciting yet, featuring powerhouse performances from RURA, Calum Stewart Quartet, The McGoldrick Family, Rachel Hair & Ron Jappy, Avanc, The Annie Baylis Band and The Brim. Festival favourites The Mega Manx Ceili Band return to get everyone dancing, while the Celtic Myths & Legends showcase will weave magical storytelling through Celtic language, music and song.

For those looking to dive deeper into their craft, festival workshops offer an opportunity to learn from top musicians, with sessions in traditional music, song and dance led by this year's stellar lineup.

Beyond the festival, the Isle of Man is an explorer's paradise, offering breathtaking coastal walks, scenic cycling routes, and a fantastic food scene. Whether you're wandering ancient castles or soaking up the festival atmosphere in Peel's lively pubs, there's something for everyone.

Just a short flight or ferry ride from Dublin, Belfast and the UK, Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering is the perfect summer escape.

Find out more and book your tickets: www.celticgathering.im

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, Rioghnach 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

22nd Annual O'Flaherty IRISH MUSIC RETREAT

October 23-26

HOBLITZELLE CAMP AND
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Calum Bell
Flute/Whistle Fundamentals



Peter Erico
Singing



Darragh Carey-Kennedy
Mandolin/Tenor Banjo Fundamentals



Joanna Clara
Fiddle Fundamentals



Anna Colliton
Bodhrán



John Coyne
Bouzouki



Francis Cunningham
Concertina



Liz Doherty
Fiddle



Mickey Dunne
Uilleann Pipes



Danielle Enblom
Sean-Nós Dancing



Nicole Fig
Bodhrán Fundamentals



Caoimhe Uí Fhiatharta
Fiddle



Séamus Ó Fhiatharta
Harp



Cliona Halley
Concertina Fundamentals



Brian Hughes
Whistle



Finn Magill
Fiddle



Adrian McAuliffe
Tenor Banjo



Sean McComiskey
Button Accordion



Gerry O'Connor
Fiddle



Conna Ó Gráda
Flute



Richard Osban
Mandolin



Daini Sproule
Guitar



Grace Broadhead
Melody Player



Evan Powell
Melody Player

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

Fiddle, Singing, Guitar, Uilleann Pipes, Anglo Concertina, Tenor Banjo, Mandolin, Flute, Harp, Bodhrán, Bouzouki, Whistle, Button Accordion, and Sean-Nós Dancing.

Also: Enrichment Classes • Informances • Workshops

**Five Classes and Workshops Offered Daily • Instrument and Song Sessions Nightly
Instructor Concerts Each Night • Special Guest Concerts During Meals
Vendor Booths and O'Flaherty Retreat Store**

Major Sponsor:



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**\$350 for Adults Ages 18 & Older • \$250 for Youth Ages 12-17 by Invitation Only
On-site and Off-site Motel Rooms, Dorms, Cottages
Official Retreat Hotel: Courtyard by Marriott Midlothian**

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

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, Iarla Ó Lionáird, John Doyle, Cathy Jordan, Brian McDonagh, Stephanie Keane, Mary Bergin, Sinéad McKenna, Caitlín Nic Gabhann, Conor Caldwell, John Carty, Gráinne Hambly, Pdraig McGovern, Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, Aimeé 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

IMDL 2025 Events

irishmusicinlondon.org

IMDL has lots of exciting events lined up for 2025. Next in line is the welcome return of accordionist Damien Mullane to launch his second album *Evoke* with 'The Lads': Seán O'Meara (guitar and vocals), Conor Broderick (keys) and Ben Wanders (Percussion) in concert at Hall Two of Kings Place on Thursday 22 May plus a second date in Oxford.

June brings IMDL's 'Irish Hooley in Bloomsbury Theatre' with Frankie Gavin and De Dannan, plus support by The Trad Gathering, on Thursday 26th June plus a second date in Cambridge.

July sees IMDL hosting a special concert evening in tribute to North Leitrim musician and renowned Irish music teacher in London, Tommy Maguire at the London Irish Centre. The Concert will take place on Friday 18th July and will feature a number of Tommy's students.

IMDL's continued collaboration with Music Network brings Connemara's Caoimhe (fiddle/ vocal) and Séamus (harp/ vocal) Ó

Flaharta with Tyrone's Ryan Molloy (piano/ fiddle) to the Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith on Friday 26 September.

London's annual Festival of traditional Irish music, song and dance returns for the 27th time from Friday 24th – Monday 27th October. Return to London Town is based at The Crown Hotel, Cricklewood and other local venues.

The year's programme comes to an end with an album launch concert for Dublin's fiddler, Aoife Ní Bhriain debut solo, with Cormac McCarthy (keys) in Hall Two of Kings Place.

For more information about all of these events and more, see irishmusicinlondon.org

IOWA IRISH FEST

August 1st – 3rd, 2025 lowalrishfest.com

The 19th annual Iowa Irish Fest is jam-packed with entertainment all weekend long! You don't want to miss the Celtic musicians and groups that travel from all over the world to dazzle Fest goers with their talent.

Friday's headliner Skerryvore, are three-time winners of Scotland's 'Live Act of the Year' award. This group represents the best in contemporary Scottish traditional music! With a mix of bagpipes, fiddles, accordions, whistles, guitar, drums, keys and vocals, the group brings a unique fusion of folk, trad, pop and rock.

Saturday's headliner Doolin' is France's premier Celtic band! After touring some of the biggest festivals in the United States and Canada, they released their newest album *Circus Boy*. Powerful and full of emotion, Doolin' is poised to take their career to the next level!

Fest favourites are also making a return for the 2025 Iowa Irish Fest! The Elders, Screaming Orphans, The Byrne Brothers, Aoife Scott, Colm & Laura Keegan, Seo Linn, Blame Not The Bard, Sorcha, Ballyheigue, Crowfoot Rakes and so many more will be travelling to Waterloo, Iowa for the Fest! We are also excited for our new acts such as Michael Darcy & The Atlantic Tramps, Bernadette Morris, George Casey – Irish Comedian, Marita May O'Connell & The Lads of County Linn and more!

Make sure you follow Iowa Irish Fest on Facebook to check out the full band list. We hope to see you August 1 – 3 in downtown Waterloo 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. This year, the Dublin Irish Festival has been named the "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.

Save some green and buy your tickets before the price increase on July 19.

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

COMHALTAS FLEADH CHEOIL NA HÉIREANN 2025

Wexford

August 3rd – 10th, 2025 <https://fleadhcheoil.ie/>

Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann returns to Wexford Town this August 3rd - 10th for yet another spectacular session of traditional Irish music, song and dance. Hot on the heels of the wonderful

SCOIL SAMHRAIDH WILLIE CLANCY

Miltown Malbay, Co Clare

53rd Annual Willie Clancy
Summer School
5th - 13th July, 2025



Photo: Eamon McGivney

Tuition on a large range of instruments and on Set Dancing, Old-Style Step Dancing and Conamara Sean-Nós Dance.

Seminars/Workshops on the Irish and English language song traditions.

Dúchas an Cheoil/The Scope of Irish Music: a week-long Course on the history of Irish traditional music, song and dance. Accredited through the University of Limerick. For further information on the Blas-UL and Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy accreditation programme see www.Blas.ie and Scoil Samhraidh website.

Read Music the Trad Way. A pioneering Course offered in partnership with I Teach Trad and designed for traditional musicians and teachers. Certified by the Royal Irish Academy of Music and recognised by the Dept of Education for EPV purposes. Sign up at readmusicthetradway.com. For further information contact liz@iteachtrad.com.

Lectures, Recitals, Concerts, Céilithe

Online Registration now open



Information on Registration and Programme:

086-8773747/087-9500006/087-9264256 / scoilwclancy73@gmail.com

Accommodation: 089-2320498 / kilduffmg@gmail.com

www.scoilsamhraidhwillieclancy.com



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BANDS

10
STAGES

success of Fleadh 2024 where some 650,000 people descended onto the banks of the river Slaney in Wexford to enjoy what has been regarded by many as one of the greatest Fleadhanna ever.

The people of Wexford, in August 2025, will once again open their doors and open their arms to the people of the world who will visit the ancient and historic Viking town for what promises to be another hugely successful instalment in this festival of fun, tradition and talent.

Competitors, supporters and visitors from Ireland and beyond will be treated to another spectacle of excellence from traditional Irish music performers from across the globe.

The people who experienced Fleadh Wexford in 2024 were certainly of the view that this wonderfully located town was the perfect venue to host one of the biggest events of its kind in the world. Fleadh 2025 will be no different.

The Fleadh Executive Committee look forward once again to welcoming lovers of traditional Irish music, song and dance to Slaneyside to enjoy and revel in what promises to be yet another wonderfully joyful experience.

We look forward to the sun shining once again in Wexford and bringing the experience of traditional Irish music to a new level. We look forward to welcoming you all to the second instalment of FLEADH FOR ALL.

Bígí Linn! Loch Garman Abú!

Find out more at <https://fleadhcheoil.ie/>

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.

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 MacMaster Leahy Family are joining the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival lineup for ONE NIGHT ONLY – Saturday, August 9th! With decades long careers, extensive world tours, platinum recordings, multiple awards including JUNOs and the Order of Canada, Canadian fiddle royalty Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy share a special night on the stage with their 7 children. To see and hear this family together onstage is an experience that leaves a lasting memory.

We also welcome for the week of teaching and to the Festival: Alan Reid, Benoit Bourque, Conor Mallon, Fiárock, Friends of Fiddler's Green, David Howley, James Keelaghan, Rachel Davis & Darren McMullen, Rachel Hair & Ron Jappy, Ryan Young, Sophie & Fiachra, The Kane Sisters and More!

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!

SPARTA CELTIC FESTIVAL

August 8th – 9th, 2025 www.spartacelticfest.org

<https://www.facebook.com/SpartaCelticFestival>

<https://www.instagram.com/spartacelticfestival/>

The Sparta Celtic Festival is excited to announce its 15th Anniversary Celebration, taking place on Friday, August 8th, and Saturday, August

23rd ANNUAL

PENN-MAR

IRISH

Festival



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September
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featuring

Skerryvore

Socks in the Frying Pan

Lúnasa ⌘ **Old Blind Dogs**

Seamus Kennedy ⌘ **Goitse**

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One for the Foxes ⌘ **Colm Keegan**

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Ironwood ⌘ **Toby Bresnahan** ⌘ **Whorled**

Ruth & Max Bloomquist ⌘ **Shannon Lee**

and more!



9th, 2025, at Rogers Park and Balyeat Field in Downtown Sparta, Michigan, USA.

Festivities begin Friday at 5 PM and continue until 10 PM, featuring three fantastic Irish/Celtic music acts, two Irish dance performances, a food court, beverage tents, and various vendors. Admission is free both days, ensuring family-friendly fun for everyone.

Saturday's events expand into Balyeat Field with a Car Show, Highland Games, and even more vendors. Details for these events can be found on their website. Entertainment in Rogers Park starts at 10 AM and runs until 10 PM, with six additional music acts and up to eight Irish and Scottish dance performances. You'll also encounter some strolling performers. There will be crafts, vendors, clan and heritage booths, a food court, beverage tents, a children's playground, and a splash pad. Activities, demonstrations, workshops, and a dedicated kids' area open at noon, providing enjoyment for the whole family.

A free shuttle service will be available Saturday from the Sparta High School parking lot to and from the festival, making parking hassle-free.

The Sparta Celtic Festival invites you to join their 15th Anniversary Celebration and explore your Celtic heritage. Discover why their event embodies their hashtag: #1village7nations.

Watch for entertainment announcements and event updates on their Facebook page and website as they become available!

MILWAUKEE IRISH FEST ANNOUNCES ELECTRIFYING ENTERTAINMENT LINEUP

August 14th – 17th, 2025
irishfest.com

Experience the magic of Milwaukee Irish Fest at the Henry Maier Festival Park August 14-17! Nestled along the shores of Lake Michigan, the four-day festival boasts over 16 stages of nonstop music, dance, and entertainment.

This year's lineup blends the best of traditional music with the contemporary sounds of Ireland and Scotland today. Cherish the Ladies, Skerryvore, Red Hot Chilli Pipers, The Fitzgeralds, Emma Langford, and more will headline Milwaukee Irish Fest. And don't miss the return of Gadan with banjo virtuoso Enda Scahill. They'll be joined by renowned

bluegrass fiddler and dancer Hillary Klug, together creating a fusion of traditional Irish, folk, bluegrass, and Appalachian music.

Milwaukee Irish Fest is proud to spotlight emerging talent, giving festivalgoers a chance to discover the rising stars of the Irish and Celtic music scene. Viral social media sensations the Gardiner Brothers, comedian and musician Garron Noone, and traditional Irish music duo LÉDA are just a few of the many artists making their Irish Fest debut. Continuing its partnership with Dublin's renowned TradFest, Irish Fest will also welcome TradFest artists Bog Bodies and SuperCéilí to Milwaukee, further bridging the musical connection between Ireland and the Midwest.

Don't miss this unforgettable celebration of Irish music and culture. Make plans to attend Milwaukee Irish Fest this August.

View the full festival lineup and secure your tickets today at irishfest.com. Get ready for a live and legendary experience!

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

PEORIA IRISH FEST

August 22nd – 24th, 2025

www.peoriairishfest.com
www.facebook.com/peoriairishfest/

Peoria Irish Fest is all about the music. Yes, and the dance. And the culture. But first and foremost, our event is a music festival. We offer a cross section of music, from traditional pub songs and session tunes to genre bending performances highlighting the many ways in which artists are expanding on traditional forms.

This year the Fest is excited to welcome The Red Hot Chilli Pipers, The Kilkennys, Gadan, The Byrne Brothers, Conor Mallon/Unearthed, Síomha, Colm & Laura Keegan, RUNA, Hadrian's Wall, Elias Alexander, Enda Reilly and On the Lash. And, we are always proud to showcase our local and regional bands – Turas, The Bogside Zukes, The Roundstone Buskers, Broken Brogue, Skibbereen, Still Shine, The Morning Larks, Barry Cloyd and The McDowell's.

A unique feature of our Fest is our unplugged stage. Our touring artists are invited to perform, demonstrate, talk, or teach in a small-scale setting, and each year the result is pure magic.

We also present a variety of Irish and Scottish dance, an ever-changing lineup of cultural exhibits and interactive events, sessions, highland games, sheep herding, a children's area, storytellers, whiskey tastings, Gaelic lessons, axe throwing, a 5K race and more.

The Fest is held at the Peoria Riverfront Park, on the banks of the Illinois River, in downtown Peoria, Illinois. Free parking is available. Gates open at 4:00 p.m. Friday, noon on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. Sunday for Mass.

www.peoriairishfest.com www.facebook.com/peoriairishfest/

MICHIGAN IRISH MUSIC FESTIVAL UNVEILS NEW LOOK, ANNOUNCES DATES FOR 2025

September 11th – 14th, 2025 michiganirish.org

The Michigan Irish Music Festival, presented by Family Financial Credit Union, will be held September 11-14, 2025 at Heritage Landing in downtown Muskegon, Michigan. Join the festivities as we roll out a new look!

THE 39th YEAR

Ar ais arís! Bígí linn!

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

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

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Enquiries to: anseo@southsligosummerschool.com or 089-6111375 / 086-0566383

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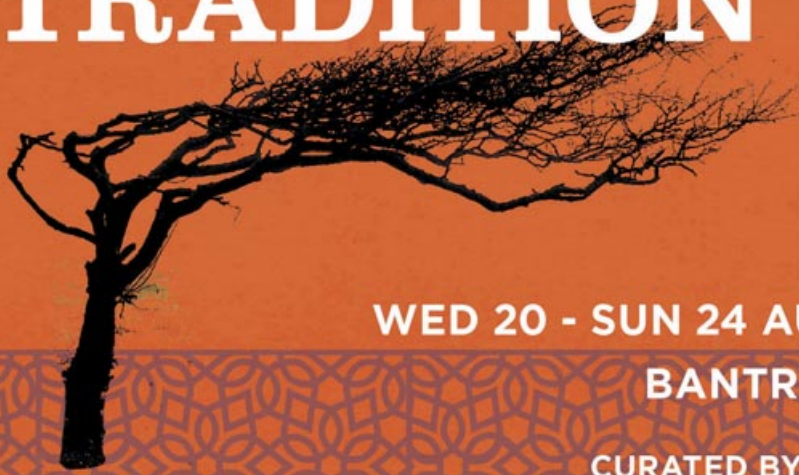
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Christy & Valerie Moore



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www.westcorkmusic.ie



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www.centerforirishmusic.org



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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.

Sponsors include:



38th International Feakle Festival of Traditional Irish Music



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



"Our festival has been bringing a slice of Ireland to West Michigan for over 25 years, creating connections that last far beyond our annual celebration," said Chris Zahrt, Past President and Founding Board Member of the Michigan Irish Music Festival. "Our new brand identity reflects who we are - a welcoming community that celebrates authentic Irish culture while remaining true to our volunteer-driven roots."

Morgan Witmer, Marketing Director for MIMF, explained the vision behind the rebrand: "This refresh represents our commitment to being both authentic and accessible. While we're proud to showcase genuine Irish culture and heritage, we want everyone to know they're welcome here, whether they're Irish or not. The new look captures that spirit of inclusion while honouring the traditions that make our festival special."

Additionally, the festival has demonstrated its commitment to community enrichment, having donated more than \$450,000 and over 20,500 pounds of food to local charities since 2008.

Major Sponsors include: Langlois Home Furnishings, Budweiser, G&L Chili Dogs, and The Sand Docks. Host hotels are Delta by Marriott Muskegon Convention Center and Shoreline Inn.

For more information, visit michiganirish.org and follow Michigan Irish Music Festival on social media.

GALWAY BAY'S CELTIC MUSIC FEIS

October 13th – 19th, 2025

www.celticmusicfeis.com

2025 will herald the 22nd year of Galway Bay's Celtic Music Feis, celebrating Irish songs, ballads, players and bands that will be flooding Ocean Shores, WA with music and fun for six days this October.

Again this year the festival begins: Tuesday October 13th, 2025 and lasts until Sunday, October 19th, 2025. An eclectic mix of Irish bands, choirs and dancers hailing from throughout the United States, Canada and, of course, Ireland will be rounding out this year's entertainment.

Check out our music line-up on our website listed below.

Buy tickets at www.celticmusicfeis.com. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/GalwayBayIrishPubOS.

Galway Bay Irish Pub - 880 Point Brown Ave NE - Ocean Shores, WA 98569 - 360-289-2300.

O'FLAHERTY IRISH MUSIC RETREAT

IRISH MUSIC IMMERSION

October 23rd – 26th, 2025

oflahertyretreat.org

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; Danielle Enblom – Sean-Nós Dancing (Advanced); 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



PEORIA IRISH FEST

AUGUST 22, 23 & 24
PEORIA, ILLINOIS • ON THE RIVERFRONT

with live performances from:
RED HOT CHILLI PIPERS
THE KILKENNYS
 GADAN FT. ENDA SCAHILL • THE BYRNE BROTHERS
 CONOR MALLON/UNEARTHED • SÍOMHA
 COLM & LAURA KEEGAN • RUNA • HADRIAN'S WALL
 ELIAS ALEXANDER • ENDA REILLY • ON THE LASH
and more

PeoriaIrishFest.com
VISIT OUR SITE FOR MORE INFO




CATSKILLS IRISH ARTS WEEK

31st Annual Catskills Irish Arts Week
Keeping the Tradition Alive

Sponsored by the MJQ Irish Cultural & Sports Centre
In EAST DURHAM, NEW YORK
 Only 2.5 hrs North of NYC and 3 hrs from Boston
 "The Irish Catskills"

July 13th - 19th, 2025

The Catskills Irish Arts Week is a week-long summer school devoted to the preservation and promotion of Traditional Irish music and dance under the auspices of the M. J. Quill Irish Cultural and Sports Centre in East Durham, New York, the heart of the Irish Catskills.

We will open the CIAW on Sunday evening, July 13 with a special Catskills Concert presentation marking 40 YEARS OF CHERISH THE LADIES led by founding members Joanie Madden and Mary Coogan.

Our Irish teachers and performers include Mary Bergin, Gerry O'Connor, Mirella Murray, Nollaig Casey, Kate Purcell, Jack Talty, Dan Gurney, John Paul Reynolds, Bryan Murphy, Keelan McGrath, Deirdre Cronin for creative writing, Vincent Woods for poetry and Padraig McEneaney for the Sets and more to be confirmed.

Stateside staff features Joanie Madden, Mary Coogan, Rose Conway Flanagan, Brian Conway, Siobhan and Willie Kelly, Larry Nugent, Eileen Clune Goodman, Pauline Conneely, Jackie O'Riley, Isaac Alderson, Eimear Arkins, Eileen Gannon, Annmarie Acosta Williams, Patty Furlong, Loretta Egan Murphy, Brendan Dolan, Margie Mulvihill, Michelle Bergin, Alan Murray, Colin Harte, Regan Wick, Brenda Dowling, Aoife Griffin, David Healy Dowling, Cairiona Fee, Sean Earnest, David McKinley Ward, Ivan Goff, Katie Linnane and Erin Loughran (Children Program Coordinator) with more to come.

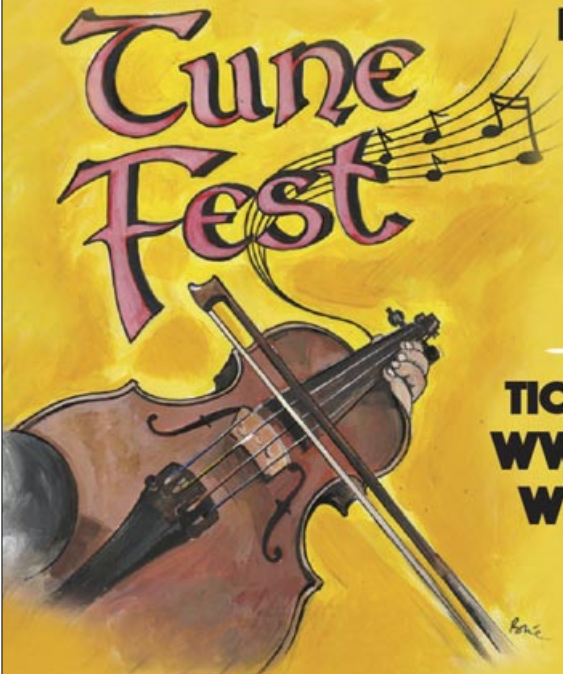
Morning and Afternoon Classes daily from Monday July 14 to Friday July 18 along with late afternoon topical lectures from the staff, Evening Concerts and Barn Dance on the Quill Festival Grounds, Ceilíe all week in the famed Shamrock House with Fear A Ti Padraig McEneaney with nightly Irish Pub Sessions Galore in famed Irish resorts and roadhouses. Finale Festival on Saturday July 19th on the Quill Festival Grounds from noon to 7pm.

Online Registration will be open soon at
<https://www.mjquirishcentre.com> (Look for Early Bird discounts)
 Contact: CIAW Artistic Director Paul Keating, Phone 201-965-6598,
 Email: paulkeating@aol.com



TUNE FEST

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JUNE 20TH-22ND



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FRIDAY 20TH & SATURDAY 21ST JUNE
CHERISH THE LADIES



SATURDAY 21ST JUNE
TALISK & THE RISING



SUNDAY 22ND JUNE
DANÚ & TAOBH NA MARA CÉILÍ BAND

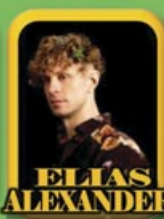
motor city irish fest



www.motorcityirishfest.com www.facebook.com/motorcityirishfest

FRIDAY JUNE 6 - SUNDAY JUNE 8
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SCAN FOR INFORMATION

THE CUP OF TAE KEEPS FIDDLING ON THE BOIL IN ARDARA

Gráinne McCool talks to Stephen McCahill from The “Cup of Tae” festival in Ardara, County Donegal.



It was decided in 2002 that people should be honoured for their contribution to music during their lifetime. That year the festival celebrated John “The Tae” Gallagher, who was the only Donegal man alive to win the Oireachtas fiddling championship. Since then, the festival, which bears his name, has become an annual event, attracting the very best of traditional musicians to this scenic area, and continuing the famous Donegal style of fiddle playing.

a daily basis teaching the music, and 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. Kevin is quite a talented Fiddle Player in his own right.”

Gráinne: “Do people travel from all over Ireland and further afield, for the festival?”

Stephen: “Yes, each year we have visits from musicians from various parts of the world. This year a group of fiddle players from France plan to be at the festival and of course musicians from all over the world join us each year on an individual basis.

“The festival is known as the biggest little festival in Ireland, and that is a very appropriate title as the festival punches well above its weight with musicians from Japan and Far East regularly visiting. Indeed, we have all parts of the world represented throughout the weekend.

Music, like its mountains, go hand in hand in Donegal: it is so common for a session to blast off at any time in a pub in Donegal.”

Gráinne: “Is there lots for visitors to do and see outside The Cup of Tae music event?”

“This year we honour Kevin O’Donnell with a special concert in his honour on the Friday night in The Beehive Bar”

Gráinne: “Why was there a need to establish the festival back in 2002?”

Stephen: “At the time there was a concern that South Donegal fiddle playing was in decline. A group of interested people got together to look at what could be done and the answer was staring us in the face. The greatest of South Donegal Fiddlers was living amongst us in the great John ‘The Tae’ Gallagher. So we decided to build a festival around John with the focus on schools of music in many instruments but particularly the fiddle.”

Gráinne: “What is it that keeps this festival going so strong?”

Stephen: “The festival is based on learning with our schools being the key. Also, the town is alive with music for the weekend with spontaneous sessions popping up everywhere. The focus is also on family value with the majority of events free.”

Gráinne: “How significant was John ‘The Tae’ Gallagher?”

Stephen: “He was the first and I think only Donegal Fiddler to win the All-Ireland Oireachtas twice, in 1956 and 1959 in Nenagh. It was a huge achievement for John, but he also gave hours and hours of his time helping young budding musicians: that’s why the schools of music are so important to the festival.”

Gráinne: “What can we expect from The Cup of Tae this year?”

Stephen: “This year, like others will host various music sessions, music classes and concerts over the weekend. This year we honour Kevin O’Donnell with a special concert in his honour on the Friday night in The Beehive Bar. Kevin works in the schools on

Stephen: “Ardara is one of the true beauty spots in Ireland, and certainly in Donegal. The beaches are so clean, there are many good and scenic walks, horse-riding is popular here too, and you will certainly be pampered here in Ardara. There is a secret with how we advertise this festival, we have many surprises, and you never know what famous musician you might see at the Cup of Tae Festival May bank holiday in Ardara Co. Donegal.”

The Cup of Tae Festival runs this year from Friday 2nd May to Monday 5th May. Find out more of the festival’s backstory and keep up-to-date with the 2025 edition at www.thecupoftaefestival.ie



MOTOR CITY IRISH FEST

Celebrating 15 years in 2025, Festival Director, Kevin Murphy in conversation with Robert Heuston for Irish Music Magazine.



Robert: When did Motor City Irish Fest commence and how has it evolved over the years?

Kevin: The Motor City Irish Fest started in 2010 in the parking lot of our local Hibernian Hall. The first year drew a few hundred people but planted the seed for what it is today. We moved the next year to a local field where we continued to grow and eventually to the beautiful Festival grounds we now reside at, the Historic Greenmead park drawing over 5000 patrons.

Robert: Tell us a little about your Entertainment line-up for 2025?

Kevin: This year's line-up includes from Ireland, The Kilkennys, Sina Theil and Enda Reilly, and an amazing talent Elias Alexander, the former Piper from Seven Nations mixing Techno along with his many instruments he plays. We will have 16 Michigan bands to fill in the lineup of our two stages.

Brothers and Enda Reilly several times. Both clubs are always open for bands to come in. The Ark in Ann Arbor which is a 40 minute drive from Detroit is a beautiful spot for touring bands to perform as well. There are also traditional sessions held at various locations around the area on a regular basis.

Robert: What does being a custodian of the Irish Music and Cultural Tradition mean to Kevin Murphy and the team at Motor City Irish Fest?

Kevin: It means the world. My father is from Dublin and instilled a strong love of everything Irish. I think Detroit is under-estimated on how rich our Irish Culture is. We have over 50 Celtic Bands, many performing around the country at other Irish Festivals. We have 7 schools of Irish Dance, and an incredible, almost 2 hour long St. Patrick's Day Parade. Our Festival gives us the opportunity to show how special our Celtic talent is.

“I think Detroit is under-estimated on how rich our Irish Culture is”

Robert: What other Cultural activities can visitors expect for 2025?

Kevin: This year for the first time we will be hosting an Irish Football Match, bringing in a team to compete against our Detroit Wolfetones Team. We will have six schools of Irish Dance, an Irish Cultural Tent, Irish Tea room, Irish Whiskey Tastings and a Parade of Champions for the winners of our local Detroit Feis. We have a very well run Wee Folks area where our younger patrons learn beginning Irish Dance, Irish Tin Whistle lessons, make St. Brigid's Crosses and so much more.

Robert: Irish Music Cafe on Monday nights every week serves as a wonderful resource. What other opportunities are available in Detroit for Irish visiting musicians?

Kevin: Detroit has two venues that host many Irish Entertainers, The Hibernian Hall and The Gaelic League. In the last year, our AOH club has brought in the Druids, Derek Warfield & The Young Wolfe Tones, Sina Theil, Andy Cooney, The Byrne

Robert: What are the future plans for the Festival post 2025?

Kevin: This being our 15th Anniversary, we have really went all out to try to put on an amazing show for all our patrons and sponsors. We hope every year to add a little more to make it even more special.

Motor City Irish Fest 2025 runs from June 6-8. For more details <https://motorcityirishfest.com/>



ISLE OF MAN YN CHRUINNAGHT CELTIC GATHERING

Seán Laffey talks to festival organisers Chloe Woolley and Jo Callister.



Photo : Sam Hurt

Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering celebrates the Isle of Man's vibrant Celtic heritage and its deep connections with Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. Set in the picturesque coastal town of Peel on the Island's west coast, with some events in the capital city, Douglas, the festival runs from 21st – 27th July 2025.

Chloe gives me a little history lesson about the festival. "We are now in our 47th year, the current format was set up in 1978 as part of a major revival of Manx Gaelic culture. This in itself echoed a similar movement before the First World War when the Manx language and its associated folklore and music were being preserved. One of the events we are running at this year's Celtic Gathering is based on a Manx traditional produce competition that was first presented in 1926. It will be a community day with music and song of course but also traditional Manx cuisine and home baking."

This exploration of all elements of Celtic culture ties in with a major exhibition of visual arts that is opening this Easter in Douglas, the Island's Capital. Called Order & Beauty it will feature over 200 pieces

Cathedral." Chloe says that the Myths and Legends performance was inspired by "the success the festival had last year with our Celtic Year variety concert and Saint Bridget's presentation. The logistics will be similar this summer, with the audience in a cabaret setting, and the performers presenting Celtic Myths and legends from their home regions.

"We are proud that the festival takes a Pan Celtic view of culture," adds Chloe and continues, "we will have Annie Baylis from Cornwall who is at the leading edge of modern Celtic folk music. She is an award-winning singer-songwriter; her roots are in traditional Celtic folk of Cornwall and her original songs are a passionate fusion of raw emotion, intricate storytelling, and a sharp critique of modern society; stories built on tales of rebellion, resilience."

Jo whets our appetite with a few more musical treats. "We will have the McGoldrick Family from the Irish Diaspora of Manchester (without uncle Mike unfortunately). Rachel Hair and Ron Jappy will travel from Scotland to entertain us with her harp and his guitar. Rachel is no

"We are proud that Yn Chruinnaght takes a Pan Celtic view of culture"

from collections across the British Isles, including rare pieces of silver, pewter and jewellery from iconic collections including the V&A, The Peartree Collection, Titus Omega, Manx National Heritage and major private collectors.

Chloe tells us about its significance: "This is all from the designer Archibald Knox, who was born in the island in April 1864, he passed in 1933. He is famous for his work for The Silver Studio and Liberty & Co, London's leading homewares shop of the early 20th century. Knox was a prominent exponent of the 'British Celtic Revival' design style. His metalwork designs with their distinctive interlace patterns, are seen as iconic examples of early 20th century design. He also embraced Arts and Crafts, British Art Nouveau and Modernism, very much inspired by the Celtic and Norse heritage of his ancestral island.

Jo brings us into the twenty-first century when she tells me: "That visual tradition is represented today by the work of Julia Ashby Smyth, who creates artwork based on Manx folk tales and Celtic mythology for the Island's Fynoderee gin distillery, who are one of the festival's key sponsors."

Jo tells us that "among the highlights of this year's festival alongside the 160th anniversary of Archibald Knox, is a variety of concerts and sessions. One show in particular will celebrate Celtic Myths and Legends, and then there is the famous Mega Manx Ceilí inside Peel

stranger to the Isle of Man, travelling over regularly on the Steam-packet to teach a growing number of pupils here. Talking of young talent, one of our acts is Wales' first national Youth Folk Ensemble, AVANC. Tutored by Calan's Patrick Rimes, they have created a touring show that will be eagerly anticipated on the island."

As we went to press, the line up was being finalised with the Calum Stewart Quartet and RURA on the bill and a range of home grown groups lined up to perform. I also noticed a long time friend of IMM's, Jamie Smith set to appear during the festival. It will be some Celtic Gathering.

For more details and to see the final line up please visit www.ynchruinnaght.com



Noa session

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IRISH MUSIC TO THE FORE IN PENNSYLVANIA

The Penn-Mar Irish Festival in Pennsylvania takes place on Saturday 21st June. Mary Yeaple from the Festival tells Gráinne McCool what to expect from this year's very full day, of all things Irish music and culture.



Runa



Cassie and Maggie

Cas Ceól



Tartan Terrors

Mary: "This will be our 23rd annual festival and it continues to thrive due to our hard-working team of volunteers who are dedicated to celebrating Irish and Celtic culture."

Gráinne: "I believe the festival is at a new location this year?"

Mary: "We learned last year that our festival site would not be available going forward, and we hoped to stay in the same general vicinity since we have a wonderful hotel partner and were fortunate to find a new nearby home in a lovely rural setting. *Pheasant Run Greenhouse & Garden Centre* is providing a lot of possibilities for us. The festival will have a totally new layout this year, with an additional stage and a new cultural barn."

Gráinne: "Who do you have in the line-up to play this year's festival?"

Mary: "Our stages will have a nice mix of returning favourites and new crowd-pleasers. Returning are Cas Ceól, three south-central PA based women playing harp, fiddle, flute, and keyboard; Cassie and

Gráinne: "What is the key to the continued success of the festival?"

Mary: "It's all down to our dedicated committee operating in a fiscally prudent manner and with community support. We've been careful not to expand too quickly, and to keep the focus on being family-friendly and presenting high-quality entertainment."

Gráinne: "What can first-time visitors expect from the day?"

Mary: "They can expect to find a warm welcome and cheerful environment. We'll again have our giant colouring page for all ages to colour, a variety of photo op areas, and top-notch entertainment at great value. It's a wonderful way to spend a summer day. Although some seating is provided, we do encourage guests to bring chairs or blankets if they wish. Pets and smoking are prohibited."

Gráinne: "How important is Irish music and culture in Pennsylvania?"

Mary: "Irish music and culture is extremely important to continue sharing. An addition to this year's festival that we're very proud of is

"We're very proud to be presenting an exhibition: Blazing a Trail: The Lives and Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women..."

Maggie, two sisters from Nova Scotia with magnetic energy who seamlessly weave their deep Celtic heritage with contemporary influences; and Dublin native Enda Reilly, whose intricate guitar playing, vocal prowess, and cross-cultural sensibility brings the essence of Ireland to American audiences. Cassie and Maggie and Enda Reilly will both give cultural talks in addition to their musical performances.

"New to our stages are Albannach, a high-energy Scottish band with bagpipes, drums, and didgeridoo; The Diddley Idols, a super fun New York based duo with a full band sound; Runa, who combines traditional Irish tunes with folk and jazz; Clann Redmond, a York based family band playing Irish trad with fast fingers and youthful exuberance; and The Tartan Terrors, a wildly popular Canadian band who have travelled North America blending the energy of a rock show with humour and step dance. Susquehanna Pipes & Drums, McGinley School of Irish Dance, Ni Riain School of Irish Dance, and the Oh! Gills Irish Dancers will round out the day's entertainment.

"Thanks to a kind corporate sponsor, we are again able to present a variety of free children's activities to keep youngsters entertained throughout the day, including games and crafts, face painting, balloon twisting, jumbo bubbles, and more."

the "Blazing a Trail: The Lives and Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women", exhibit on loan to us courtesy of EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum. The Blazing a Trail exhibition highlights the lives and legacies of 21 Irish diaspora women in the fields of politics, humanitarianism, women's suffrage, the arts, the sciences, and sport. They represent just a fraction of the many women who made lasting contributions in their areas of work, but who have rarely received recognition."

Gráinne: "Why should folks travel to York County for the Penn-Mar festival this June?"

Mary: "York County, Pennsylvania, is a fantastic location for a weekend getaway that can be planned around our festival. In addition to an amazing festival, you'll find an award-winning history museum, dozens of larger-than-life colourful murals in Mural Park, state and county parks, historic trains, and so much more. Tourism info is available at www.YorkPA.org."

Discounted advance festival tickets are available online. Free for ages 15 and younger. Visit PennMarIrishFestival.com for more details.

BLAS INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Hosted at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, Blas is one of the flagship events in the festival calendar and marks out the start of the summer season.

Visitors are treated to a unique and boutique festival experience with small class sizes and unrivalled access to some of the very best performers, teachers and academics in the tradition. Events are scheduled throughout the day with masterclasses, lectures, Irish language classes, concerts and sessions going late into the evening.



James Greenan

Blas International Summer School is delighted to welcome acclaimed dancer James Greenan as Artist-in-Residence for 2025. Former lead in *Riverdance*, his focus for the Blas Artistic Residency Week will be on commercial sector dancing, bringing an exciting and dynamic perspective to the programme. He will be teaching material from his renowned show, *Rhythm of the Dance*, offering participants a unique opportunity to engage with and learn from his expertise in this high-energy performance style. Places in this class are already selling quickly.

Dr Breandán De Gallaí, co-director of Blas said, "We are delighted to welcome James as the Blas Dance Artist in Residence. As one of the most talented and accomplished Irish dancers of our time, he will undoubtedly provide an enriching and inspiring experience for Blas students."

On the music side of the festival, the star-studded tutor line-up includes past Gradam Ceoil TG4 awardees Derek Hickey and Diarmuid Ó Meachair (accordion), Ryan Molloy (piano) and Macdara Ó Faoláin (accompaniment) and John Carty (fiddle), as well as RTÉ Folk Award nominees Alannah Thornburgh (harp) and Fiachra Meek (pipes) and BBC Radio 2 Folk Award winner Chris Stout (fiddle). Beyond the masterclasses, Irish World Academy faculty members Dr Niall Keegan (flute), Dr Sandra Joyce (voice) and Dr Róisín Ní Ghallóglaigh (voice) will also offer their expertise in the wide-ranging lecture series that will feature talks on music therapy, song-writing, global music styles, and much more.

Blas co-director Dr Conor Caldwell said: "We are keen to make Blas more diverse this year in terms of music learning opportunities for students. For example, we are excited to welcome Dr Alec Brown on board as our first ever dedicated cello tutor for the first week of the festival. This is a unique opportunity for cellists who have never experienced Irish traditional music before to develop their skills in an immersive and supportive environment with an innovative master of their craft."

For further information, please see www.blas.ie



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37th ANNUAL FOLK ALLIANCE

February 2025 saw the return of Folk Alliance to Montreal, Canada. Austin Comerton reports for Irish Music Magazine.

The Culture Ireland delegation with His Excellency, John Connannon, Irish Ambassador to Canada



Photo : Austin Comerton

The Annual Folk Alliance International Conference is the largest gathering of folk musicians and music industry professionals in the world. Registration for 2025 exceeded 3,000.

This is an experience like no other. Music is around every corner. Legends, rising stars, and industry innovators share career-boosting insights.

The conference brings together an international crowd of artists, venues, labels, DJs, agents, and organisations come together for five days of professional development, networking, and music.

Culture Ireland annually present a number of Irish Artists that have submitted their application to Folk Alliance and are selected by a FAI panel of adjudicators. This process offers an independent evaluation by a team from, mainly North America, that is familiar with the local audiences.

This year Culture Ireland presented Bernadette Morris, Conor Mallon, David Howley, Niamh Bury, Padraig Jack and Tulua. His Excellency, John Connannon, Irish Ambassador to Canada welcomed the delegation. Other Irish Artists were there under a variety of banners.

The Quebec trio Grosse Isle includes uilleann piper Fiachra O'Regan. England based Ranagri was formed by Dónal Rogers whose family

amazing. To wander the corridors and walk into a room and find Ron Sexsmith perform is a unique experience.

Meanwhile, back at the Culture Ireland Mission, Sharon Barry talked about the importance of helping Irish Artists get a break on the international stage and that the Irish brand is so strong. Breaking into the Festival circuit requires strong networking connections and Culture Ireland has built a high reputation in the music sector.

It is especially gratifying, as an emigrant, to witness a very discerning audience, set the time aside to attend the Irish Showcase and then to see the relationships develop with the Artists.

Bernadette Morris is preparing to launch her latest album *To the Well for Water* recorded with Ben McAuley. The recording has an array of talented musicians including Seán Óg Graham and Gerard Thompson on guitar. The album is a stunning mix of self-penned songs and co-writes with Johnny Brady, Declan Sinnott, Cormac Neeson and Matt McGinn, amongst others.

As Bernadette performed, you could hear a pin drop in the room.

Conor Mallon is a multi-award winner uilleann piper from Co. Armagh. Conor brings an atmosphere of fun to his performance. He uses his charm to connect with his audience while seducing them with his music.

Ardrahan native, David Howley's songs resonate emotionally with a wide range of audiences, taking them to places undiscovered. With soulful vocals, evocative storytelling, and enchanting melodies, he creates an otherworldly, time-bending magic. A modern poet deeply inspired by his home landscape of the West Coast of Ireland.

Dubliner and RTE Folk Award Nominee, Niamh Bury brought her very distinctive style to the stage. Niamh has shared the stage with Ye Vagabonds, Dermot Kennedy and Martin Hayes. Niamh's debut album *Yellow Roses* centres around ideas of womanhood, folklore and memory. She has recorded her work with RTE Concert Orchestra and is one of the first artists in two decades to sign with Ireland's most culturally important label, Claddagh Records.

From the Aran Islands, Padraig Jack provided a totally engaging performance which comprised a series of moments which are supported by his disarming charm, wit, perspectives on society, Irish history and of course top quality songs in both English and Irish. The ease with which Padraig switches between Irish and English makes our native language appealing.

“To wander the corridors and walk into a room and find Ron Sexsmith perform is a unique experience”

emigrated from Rathnagrew, Co Carlow. San Francisco based Ciaran MacGowan showcased his trio, Irish Soul. Dubliner Liz Pomeroy with Stella and Seán Bradley from Cavan and Newfoundland based, The Dandelion Few.

The experience of Folk Alliance is difficult to put into words. Days are devoted to peer sessions, speed “dating” Festival Directors, DJs, Booking Agents and Promoters.

Each evening there are a series of simultaneous “Official Showcases”. These run from 6pm to 10pm. It is in this forum that Culture Ireland presents the Irish Artists and the industry gets the opportunity to experience the performers. The constant challenge is trying to select which showcase to attend.

Then the fun really begins. About 100 bedrooms on three floors of the hotel are opened as Private Showcases until 3:30am. There is a pocketbook guide to the schedule, where each artist performs for 20 – 30 minutes. Over the course of the conference, a performer may play at four or five private showcases. The intimacy of such performances is

Tulua are a young traditional Irish music band hailing from Ireland. Since their establishment in 2019 they have garnered a strong following, and before their album release in 2023 they managed to play at some of the biggest festivals in the world including Milwaukee Irish Fest, La Crosse Irish Fest, CastleFest Holland and Temple Bar TradFest. Since their album release they are becoming one of Ireland's finest emerging traditional music bands. Undoubtedly Tulua are rising stars.

The traditional music group Grosse Isle is the result of an “absolutely magical” collaboration between exceptional musicians from Quebec and Ireland. Together, Sophie Lavoie from Quebec and Roundstone native, Irish champion piper Fiachra O'Regan shine with their rich, enveloping music. Grosse Isle's new show, *Homérique*, is an epic tale of legendary characters from Ireland and Canada.

Folk Alliance 2025 was a success for the Irish contingent, with bookings for the future in the bag. Folk Alliance 2026 is scheduled for January 21-26 in New Orleans and the 2027 conference will be held in Chicago.

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IRISH MUSIC MAGAZINE : Celebrating 30 Years in 2025!

TERN**Flyway****Own Label, 9 Tracks, 42 Minutes****www.ternfolk.bandcamp.com**

A new instrumental quintet combining Scottish and Scandinavian musicians, Tern are Rose Logan and Kristina Leesik on fiddles, Lea Søndergaard Larsen on bodhran, Portuguese guitarist Miguel Girão, and Scots Young Traditional Musician of the year Amy Laurenson bringing her Shetland piano skills. Their sound is compelling, enthralling, often exciting and always entertaining.

Most of the material on *Flyway* is traditional, arranged in Scots or Scandi contemporary style. *Smackpolskan*, *Storpolska* and *Blodomloppet* feature newly composed Scandinavian tunes, everything from powerful, chilling reels to gentle flowing airs, with a touch of classical piano behind the twin fiddles. Kristina's driving *Bordunpolskan* slips nicely into the jaunty *Living Stream*, a jaunty Sliabh Luachra polka by Jackie Daly followed by two traditional polkas. Ireland is represented by a couple of jigs too, including *The Orphan* which features a nice guitar solo, and a pair of old *Gan Ainm* melodies taken slow here.

Tern mix and match tempos with abandon. Slowest is the song air *Tha mo Ghaol s' aig Dònal*, perhaps learnt from Caithness accordionist Carol-Anne Mackay. Another Gaelic title, more well known, is the strathspey *Nighean Donn na Gobhar*, played here as a blistering reel with an imaginative dynamic arrangement before settling into the more familiar snapped strathspey timing. *Flyway* gives each member space to shine and experiment, while also offering big ensemble pieces. A pair of Norwegian Hallings features another guitar break, and the bodhran beats strongly to link pieces together. The final trio of Shetland reels delivers a strong finish on *Come Again, You're Welcome*, a title which sums up my thoughts on this album.

Alex Monaghan**COUNTERCURRENT****Flow****Own Label, 15 Tracks, 56 Minutes www.countercurrentmusic.com**

A real melting pot of traditional music, *Flow* is the fourth full album from this Washington State duo enhanced by Juliet Terrill on upright bass. Most tracks centre on the fiddle and guitar of Alex Sturbaum and Brian Lindsay, but several layers of other instruments are often added. Between them, Alex and Brian can cover everything from bluegrass to céilí band and back again. They have three previous full albums on Bandcamp, and all of them are more Irish-flavoured than this one: they describe album number four as "a cohesive moment of our original tunes and musical ideas", and it certainly hangs together nicely. *Flow* is probably going on my 2025 Top Ten list.

The American contra scene where Countercurrent started out is a mix of Irish, French, Scottish, and various American styles. Tunes from Paddy Fahey, Ed Reavy and Andy May sit alongside oldtime classics *Devil in the Strawsack* and *Little Billy Wilson*. The other thirteen tunes here are Countercurrent compositions. Of the two songs, one is by Sturbaum and the other is by Northumbrian musician Nancy Kerr. Lindsay and Sturbaum combine all these ingredients into a coherent whole which makes me think of bands like The Fretless, Socks in the Frying Pan, early Nickel Creek, Saltfishforty or even Patrick Street.

The playing is excellent, and many of the new pieces on *Flow* are truly memorable. I particularly liked the upbeat *Brighter*, the funky swing of *Curiouser*, the sparse grinding arrangement on *The Reptile Room*, and the full-on finish with three sparkling new reels. Check out Countercurrent online: you won't be disappointed.

Alex Monaghan**AMELIA HOGAN****Burnished****Own Label, 14 Tracks, 54 Minutes www.ameliahogan.com**

Amelia Hogan sings traditional Irish, Scottish, British American, and Contemporary folk music. If you are a fan of simple, effective and

authentic folk song, this album will be on your keepers shelf. Based in California, Amelia is joined by Richard Mandel, Jimmy Murphy, Marla Fibish, Skyler Blakeslee, Maureen Brennan, Lewis Santer, Steve O'Neill, Ray Frank, and Christa Burch. The album was produced by Amelia at Foxtail Sound in Dixon, California.

Readers of this magazine know the work of Marla Fibish intimately, and here her mandolin shines with the right amount of grace and tinkling sparkle on track after track; her accompaniment is more Denis Cahill than tarantella tremolo. The Celtic Diaspora's experience runs through *Rolling in the Gold* like marbled intrusions in granite, sitting into a narrative tradition explaining the pull, the power and the potential of riches way out west.

There's a look we carry down the generations that stares at us whenever we look in the mirror, Amelia catches the glimpse on *Blue is The Eye*. A mother soothes her child to sleep, assuring her that she will watch over her. There are two tracks that dip into a darker kind of folk song. We all know the *Wayfaring Stranger*; Amelia sows this with a deep respect, honouring its Appalachian roots. The other is called *Snow Hare*, which I immediately thought would work in Lankum's songbook.

Her voice on the *Patriots Game* reminded me so much of the late lamented Mary McPartlan. The tempo lifts on *Dh'eric Mi Moch Madainn Cheitein*, a waulking song first collected in the 1970s in Scotland, according to the *Tobar an Dualchais* website.

The track that had the biggest impression on me, was the final one: *Who Will Watch The Home Place?*, sung in close harmony with her bandmates. It asks a question we all must face. What will happen to what I've built when I'm gone? It may sound like a sad ending, but it makes this album a grown up experience, and it left me wanting to hear more of Amelia Hogan.

Seán Laffey**GABRIEL MORENO****Nights in the Belly of Bohemia****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 37 Minutes****www.gabrielmoreno.co.uk**

The Cultural Ambassador of Gibraltar, poet, singer-songwriter, Gabriel Moreno has just launched *Nights in the Belly of Bohemia* with themes that explore boundaries, identity, relationships, belonging and meditations on the unfathomable rhythms of human existence.

With gravelly, baritone vocals, all original songs, the opening one *On the Edge of a Dream* lays out his literary stall, evoking the lover, friend, stranger, listener to the edge and asking them "stay here with me".

Half Way House uses liminal spaces, unknown, dark (like the portal to the 'otherworld' of Celtic mythology, a world where a hero might enter upon the invitation of a king or beautiful woman), elements of shape-shifting, transformation. Moreno's lyrics are philosophical, deeply personal with universal appeal.

Slightly accented, a spoken word poet, delivered in a Leonard Cohen-esque timbre, *When you kill the thing you love*, the author asks pertinent, poignant questions of a relationship, in dramatic monologue.

Coming from a Latin background, he melds a variety of tastes and cultures to achieve uniqueness, with violins, electric guitars, bass and percussion. His warm vocals and the lack of urgency in the songs has quiet appeal, juxtaposed with the huge emotional swings from celebratory to despair. This is an unusual album, asking big questions, recurring themes where the writing insists that art, culture, literature and earthy connections between people are the most fundamental, rewarding and fulfilling paths to enrich the experience of living.

The cover art is simple yet arresting, a womb like image, smoothed marble bowl encasing a human head, the mind encased, safe on a bedrock, simultaneously open and closed.

In collaboration with Pablo Campos, Pablo Yuptom, Juampi Mauro, Richard Moore, Dave Burns and Ty Watling, Moreno has created a genre-defying piece of work, contemporary but rooted in other worlds, other cultures, other vibes. It should be captivating in live performance.

Anne Marie Kennedy

HARTWIN**Unfolding****Trad Records, 9 Tracks, 36 Minutes****www.hartwin.be**

Flanders based accordionist Hartwin Dhoore's latest album is a collaboration with conductor Gabriel Hollander and a classical string trio, consisting of Nicolas Dupont (violin), Clément Holvoet (viola) & Julius Himmler (cello).

We previously reviewed Hartwin's album *Valge Valgus*, which in retrospect hid the beginnings of a music trajectory that on *Unfolding* blends the boundaries between folk music, classical music, and film music. If I were to find a single adjective to describe this album, it would be "calming". Coming from a tradition where the accordion is called upon to strike the tinder of dance tunes, Hartwin's music is an invitation to leave the dance floor and chill as you watch the world go by.

Unfolding is the opening track, it makes a slow beginning, echoing the album's cover image, a blurred yellow burst of an opening flower, perhaps it is a lily? The music here is as seductive as Pachelbel's famous canon. There's a doleful cello and a deep sadness at the start of *When at Ease*, bowed long notes usher in the accordion, which adds a sympathetic melody. It is anything but an abrupt entrance, the effect is to be cocooned in comfort. *Floating* begins with a gentle repeated phrase with the strings rumbling in their lowest register, again the bass comforts and caresses us. On *White Light* it is as if we are waking from a restful slumber, the moon surrendering the darkness to a slowly lightening grey, like lifting the mists of a Benelux morning. This is not the scary sunrise of Edvard Munch; parts of this track sound like they were inspired by Scottish slow airs. This gentle pathway keeps on to the end of the album and *Nightfall* looping us into quiet contemplation.

For the times that we live in, spending just over half an hour in Hartwin's company could just be the antidote to the modern madness of our 24/7 online lives.

Seán Laffey**PETER KNIGHT'S GIGSPANNER BIG BAND****Turnstone****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 65 Minutes****www.gigspanner.com/gigspanner-big-band**

For our younger readers, Mr Knight has quite the pedigree, he's the former fiddler with Steeleye Span, arguably England's most successful folk rock band of all time (OK Fairport fans, but did Swarb get a TV series?). I had the pleasure of seeing the original Gigspanner trio perform before the pandemic, and now they are back with an expanded line up of: Peter Knight (violin), Roger Flack (guitar), Sacha Trochet (drums), Hannah Martin (violin, banjo & tenor guitar), Phillip Henry (Dobro & harmonica), John Spiers (melodeon). Phillip Henry and Hannah Martin (who perform as Edgelarks) joined Gigspanner in 2016.

There is an underlying musical genealogy here, particularly the songs of Martin Carthy who brought to life the collections of Francis James Child and created a new kind of old-English folk song. There are distinct echoes of Carthy's style in songs such as *Solvay*, *Suffolk Miracle*, and *Hind Horn*. Knight will also be forever associated with Maddy Prior and her characteristic folk-soprano voice; Gigspanner have dropped down an octave and found an alto in Hannah Martin.

A device the band uses in a number of tracks is the long intro, for example, on the American song *Fortune Turns Her Wheel*. There is a blend of percussion and electric guitar on *Betsy Williams* and then *Stephen Foster's Hard Times Come Again No More*, which Knight closes with his new composition *Arthur Peter's Reel*. The final track is a live recording, Spiers playing *Northern Frisk* on his melodeon, Henry's harmonica gives a blues shuffle to the old Irish tune *The Red Haired Boy* and Knight finishes with a flourish with his new tune *Moth From Upstairs*.





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Gigspanner's music is at once modern and I suspect soon it will be hailed as classic English folk rock. Knight has been around for at least four decades and his musical mind and his fiddling dexterity are as nimble as ever they were. The Gigspanner Big Band might just be the force he's been waiting to turn over to the world.

Seán Laffey

TERENCE BLACKER

Misfits' Jamboree

Own Label, 11 Tracks, 48 Minutes

www.terenceblacker.com

Terence Blacker is a man of many talents. He shares his potted bio on his website, saying: "Most of my life I have earned my living by writing books and newspaper columns. Since the age of eight, I've played a stringed instrument, first a ukulele and then a guitar."

In the context of this magazine, he's a singer-songwriter with a quirky way with words and a left field look at life. Let us explore some of his tracks. From the outset Blacker is an accomplished guitar player and his lifetime of writing to tight deadlines gives him an edge when it comes to making memorable songs dotted with well-chosen phrases.

His first salvo is *No, Sorry, It's Gone*, a visit to our future world where our memory is not as good as it used to be. His future self still knows all the words to *American Pie* but when he contemplates a trip to heaven, he forgets the name of the gatekeeper. *The Crying Game* considers the cult of celebrity and the media's obsession with a bad backstory. Being good at the task in hand is not enough, you have to have a sob-story to dance in the glitter ball's transient stars. It's snake oil persuasion, becoming a celebrity yourself eases the pain of your past, as if! He argues the flip side on *Just like James*, creating a conversation with James Taylor, who he imagines would swap the public prison of fame and notoriety for an ordinary life.

Blacker brings us into his world, especially where music is enjoyed as a simple pleasure, on *Singers' Night*. He calls the regulars at an open mic session "the old folk army, the foot soldiers of the Blues". They gather once a week to step away from their not so wonderful everyday. I think Blacker would agree with all of us, music makes the everyday that bit easier to navigate. *Misfits' Jamboree* is a hoot of an album.

Seán Laffey

SUE HARDING

The World

Own Label, 10 Tracks, 43 Minutes

www.suehardingsongs.com

Following on from her debut album of original songs, *Flight*, Sue Harding's *The World* continues in her signature folk style, hints of the 60's and 70's in her compositions. This album is named for the last card in the tarot deck, a symbol of reinvention, regeneration, new beginnings, mirrored here in the songs' subjects.

With lyrical ease, *The Bloody Rose*, ostensibly a road trip narration, is a deeply dark, gothic journey, gripping imagery, exploring uncomfortable territory with confident writing, the aftermath of domestic abuse, a "papa" who was a "shit filled snake", until his own child became victim and "they took him down", a cinematic piece, gripping. With more shades of the American mid-west than the west country, gripping in detail, the lonesome fiddle and strings superbly arranged, situational mood music and a superb showcase of her vocal range, enchanting quivers and harmonies.

Then there's the upbeat *Barflies*, the not-so-young woman with the youthful mindset in "snake skin shoes", who comes vividly alive on the late night dance floor, though she's got "the wrinkly blues and no time to lose", a playful number, jazzy-bluesy accompaniment, soulful, lovely, thematically aligning with the Latin *carpe diem*.

Old Glass is an introspective look at life with all its quirks, the warped glass a metaphor for haphazardness, irregularity, like Harry Chapin's "flowers are red and green leaves are green", the imperfect, crooked glass allows the viewer to see other possibilities, because straight lines are restrictive to this poet, "straight lines hold the world in". A soul-searching song, melancholic and melodic with superb accompaniment on guitars, ethereal, intricate harmonic touches, a delicate song, subtle, thought-provoking message.

Produced by Will Angelero, featuring Gemma White, Al Cosnett, Steve Ricketts, Sarah Vian and Jane Langley, *The World* is released in April 2025.

Anne Marie Kennedy

EDEL MURPHY

Jolene

Own Label, Single, 3 Minutes

www.edelmurphy.com

Edel Murphy is an acclaimed singer, actor and musician, originally from Dublin, she's toured extensively with Celtic Woman and has been a featured soloist with *Riverdance*. She's also recently starred in a show called *Motherland Songs*, a musical jukebox of unforgettable anthems drawn from a wide variety of genres.

Her new single *Jolene* takes a much-loved Dolly Parton classic and succeeds in transforming the song into a haunting and deeply emotional Celtic-tinged lament, slowing the tempo and embellishing the vocal with a haunting low whistle figure. Edel has a beautiful soprano voice which invests the lyric with a fresh authenticity, full of subtle twists in her interpretation of a song which is often performed as a copycat of the original – here she has totally re-invented the arrangement, and the audio production is first-class. She also plays guitar on the track.

She operates in close collaboration with producer Ewan Cowley, they've worked together since her Celtic Woman days and the two have a deep artistic connection which shines through on this latest offering. On this evidence, Edel will become a much more prominent figure in Irish music, as she has the natural talent and creative vision to make a real impact.

Mark Lysaght

NIALL TEAGUE and PADRAIC JOYCE

Homegrown Potatoes

Own Label, Single, 3 Minutes

www.niallteagueandpadraicjoycemusic.com

This single mashes witty lyrics with deft musicianship, featuring fiddle playing from Neil Fitzgibbon (Susan O' Neill), percussion from Jim Higgins (Christy Moore, The Stunning, Paul Brady) and foot-tapping double bass from Kelvin Busher (Sharon Shannon, The Whileaways).

If you are lucky enough to have a quarter acre at the back of your house, St. Patrick's Day isn't about small town parades and dressing your dog in a tricolour. No, for people of a rural persuasion it's the green light for the planting season, the time when the potatoes go in the ground. Despite their tragic Irish backstory, there is always hope in late March. A future promise that your homegrown potatoes will be a treat, whether they be the sweet first earlies of June or the substantial main crops of September.

Would you join the debate? Roosters or British Queens, floury or waxy, would you try Sarpro Mira? (Those Hungarian varieties don't get blight and grow until the first frost, but take what seems like hours to boil). Then the question? Are you a traitor to tradition if you peel the spud before they go into the pot? And why would you? They are delish in their jackets (surely a leftover from the Lumper days?). And Forget Parmentier or Dauphinois, bacon and cabbage sits nicely with a steaming floury spud or three.

Solanum tuberosa in all its varieties is happy food and Niall Teague echoes this with a catchy chorus. And his lyrics will make you chuckle, set to a tune served with a touch of country from the fiddle, you'll dig that (sorry pun intended). You can see a live recording of the song from Niall's Galway base on YouTube and the track is available on Bandcamp. It's clever and catchy and absolutely not serious; it will put a smile on your face months before the vegetables grace your plate.

Seán Laffey

ADVANCED HARP TECHNIQUE with Eimear Coughlan

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

Tim the Turncoat
Hone your harp skills with **Eimear Coughlan**

HORNPIPE
KEY: G MAJOR (F#)
TIME SIG: 4/4

1ST PART (X2)
BD' G'- B'G' (3E'G'E' D'C
DGBG DGBG D'CBC A- BD'
G'- B'G' (3E'G'E' D'C BCD'B G'
FGAB CBCE' [1 D'CAF G- BD'
[2 D'CAF F- BC]

2ND PART (X2)
D'#D'E' D'BGB C- BC AFD F
GABC D'E'FG' A'G'FE' D'- BC
D'#D'E' DBGB C- BC AFD F
GABC D'G'FG' [1 E'CAF G- BC]
[2 E'CAF G- BD']

14 day free trial

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from Tulla, Co. Clare and continues in the musical heritage of her grandfather, the much esteemed East Clare fiddle player Paddy Canny. She has accumulated many All Ireland titles at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and has performed and taught at numerous Traditional Irish Music festivals throughout Ireland and abroad, including with the prestigious 'Irish Harp Orchestra'. Not only is she a talented harpist, but also an accomplished fiddler who plays with the highly acclaimed Tulla Céilí Band. Eimear's harp playing can be heard on the album *Úrnua* with Carl Hession and Francis Cunningham.

In Eimear's course 'Advanced Harp Technique', thirteen tunes have been specifically chosen to help improve and master different techniques on the harp. Trebles, finger placement, dampening of the strings and nimble lever changes are all examined and demonstrated. A wide array of tune types are presented, including Jigs, Reels, Slipjig, Barndance, Slow Air, Hornpipe, Planxty and a Waltz. Each lesson consists of the tune's melody taught slowly, phrase by phrase, followed by the chordal accompaniment. The final part of the lesson is called 'Whole Tune Practice' where the tune is played in its entirety at a slow and steady pace. Downloadable sheet music and mp3's are included, as are our wonderful and unique play along backing tracks features, which have proven to be really popular with our students.

HERE ARE THE WELL KNOWN AND LOVED TUNES TAUGHT IN EIMEAR'S COURSE:

Tim the Turncoat
The Humours of Ennistymon
The Boys of Ballisodare
Tabhair Dom Do Lámh
Danny Meehan's Barndance
The Emigrant's Jig
Cailleach an Airgid
Cook in the Kitchen
Planxty Baptiste Johnston
Miss Hamilton's
Taimse Im' Chodladh
The Newcastle Hornpipe
The Crib of Perches

By the end of the course, you will have a fine repertoire of harp tunes, and improved technique that will ultimately help

“Trebles, finger placement, dampening of the strings and nimble lever changes are all examined and demonstrated”

the harp continues to be a popular instrument in traditional Irish music, as well as in contemporary folk music. Its distinctive sound, intricate playing techniques and rich history make it a beloved symbol of Irish culture.

In Ireland the harp tradition continues to thrive, with many talented harpists that are dedicated to preserving and promoting this rich legacy. It is in this vein that we introduce to you a new OAIM harp tutor, Eimear Coughlan. Eimear hails

you to play with greater speed, stronger tone and clearer ornamentation.

If you haven't already, make sure to check out our other harp courses we have at OAIM taught by the fantastic Lisa Canny. Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced are all covered!

Learn to play *Tim the Turncoat* with Eimear in this video:

<https://youtu.be/oTouDkoZRLQ>

FROM GWEEDORE TO GLASGOW THEN ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Seán Laffey delves into the history of a song that is now associated with Altan.

Irish songs are often about place. We are a nation with a long history of emigration, and one way of preserving the feeling for home and locality has been through the medium of song. Visually recalling place before Fox Talbot invented photography in the 1840s relied on painted landscape pictures, something which required skill, was costly and often not that accurate due to the conventions of 'artistic license'. There were crude wood cuts on ballad sheets, but these didn't mesh with the cultural and social landscape that a song can conjure so vividly.

In the 1950s Proinsias O'Maonaigh was a national school teacher in Donegal, where he was involved at all levels of the community, especially in arts, theatre and sport, but he was never insular and that is one of the main reasons he wrote. Its exact date of composition is unclear. What is known is that he took a number of young people on a cultural exchange to Glasgow in the early 1960s and they brought with them, this song from their home place.

The first act to record the song was the Johnstons in 1969 on their LP *The Barleycorn*; it featured both Paul Brady & Mick Moloney. Brady has become something of a torch bearer for the song. That Glasgow connection wasn't lost either; in 1976 The Battlefield Band (named after a district in Glasgow's East End), took the melody and adapted the lyrics of *Paddy's Green*

Shamrock Shore to it, and that song would come back to Ireland with Paul Brady at its helm. Paul Brady suggested to Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh that she ought to sing her father's song about emigration from Gaith Dobhair and it is now one of the best loved songs in Altan's concerts.

GLEANNTAIN GLAS' GAOTH DOBHAIR

By Proinsias O'Maonaigh

Céad slán ag sléibhte mairga Chontae Dhún na nGall,
Agus dhá chéad slán ag an Earagail ard ina stua os cionn caor is coll;
Nuair a ghluais mise thart le Loch Dhún Lúich' go ciúin sa
ghleann ina lúí,
I mo dhiaidh bhí gleanntáin ghlas' Ghaoth Dobhaor, is beag nár
bhris mo chroí.

Ag taisteal dom amach trí chnoic Ghleann Domhain 's an
Mhucais ar mo chúil

Ní miste dom 'rá le brón 's le crá gur frasach a shíl mise súil;
Go Meiriceá siar a bhí mo thriall i bhfad thar an fharráige mhór
D'fhag mé slán ar feadh seal' ag Dún na nGall is ag gleanntáin
ghlas' Ghaoth Dobhair.

Slán, slán go fóill, a Dhún na nGall, a chontae shéimh gan smál,
Is do d'fhéara breath' in am an ghá nár umhlaigh riamh roimh
Ghall;
Tá áit i mo chroí do gach fear 's gach mnaoí, 's gach páiste beag
agus mór,
Atá beo go buan gan bhuaire gan ghruaim fá ghleanntáin ghlas'
Ghaoth Dobhair

Here is the translation from the Irish

THE GREEN GLENS OF GWEEDORE

Farewell to stately mountains of dear old Donegal,
And twice farewell to Erigal hill as it towers o'er ash tree and rowan,
As I passed through the glen by Dunlewey Lake, with water so
peaceful and calm,
With an ache in my heart, I was forced to depart, from Gleanntáin
Ghlas' Ghaoth Dobhair.
As I journeyed on through Glendowan's Hills, with Muckish to the
rear,
With a heart full of pain, I felt no shame, 'twas there that I shed bitter
tears,
I was bound for the shores of America, far across the wild raging
foam,
I bade farewell for a spell to Donegal, and Gleanntáin Ghlas'
Ghaoth Dobhair.
'Twas never my play to travel afar from my own beloved land,
But the intrigue and the guile of the tyrant's hand forced me to leave
my home,
'Twas the wish of heart to return again if I could get money in store,
And my days there to end among relations and friends around
Gleanntáin Ghlas' Ghaoth Dobhair.
Farewell, farewell to Donegal that County sweet and fair,
And to her brave men when the enemy came never covered or
bowed to the Gall,
I hold in esteem all those women and men and all children big and
small
That dwell there in peace, without worry or grief, in Gleanntáin
Ghlas' Ghaoth Dobhair.



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