



THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 13

In the midst of the crisis, the good news continues. Comhaltas makes its presence felt in villages, towns and cities and, in fact, across the globe!

- Áine Ní Aodha of the Clare County Board of Comhaltas has kept us up-to-date with the happenings in the Banner County. Áine tells us: 'We in Clare have 6 branches doing daily tunes and videos. We have 15 teachers running free online music and singing classes and giving tunes and songs to be learned each week. Clare County Board are running 5 online virtual competitions – a family competition – 20 ceist as Gaeilge. Singing, Music and Sean-Nós dancing. Kilrush are running a project and competitions in relation to older musicians. Branch members are collecting information on these people.'
Tá sé seo go h-iontach. Ar aghaidh leis an gceol.
- The online music project by Irish Ambassador Adrian O' Neill in London is titled 'Isolation to Inspiration'. Comhaltas were very pleased to be part of this event. Fiddle player Sarah Nevin represented the London and Southern Region of Comhaltas. The Midlands was represented by Uachtarán Vince Jordan. Nathan Carter from Liverpool represented the Comhaltas Northern Region. Patricia and Roisin McArdle from Scotland will be up next.
- Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua is one of the foremost branches of Comhaltas in Ulster. In September 2019, they received the prestigious MUSIC ICON AWARD for their cultural achievements. Fast forward to March 2020 and the group find themselves in Russia to give some star performances. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus emergency they had to cut short their tour and make a speedy departure for home. Buíochas le Dia, they all arrived home safe and well. Details of this great adventure will be in the next issue of TREOIR.
- It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of the legendary fiddle player Brendan McGlinchey. Based in England, Brendan was acknowledged as one of the 'greats' of his generation. He toured extensively with Comhaltas – a true gentleman and a professional to his finger tips. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal ceolmhar.

- Roscrea branch of Comhaltas have used their Facebook page to connect with junior members and keep them playing during lockdown. Each Thursday at 2.00pm there is a live lesson for forty minutes approximately, given by a young teacher of traditional Irish music from the branch. Members receive a text reminder beforehand and the music is put on the page, but the tune is taught by ear. The teachers play a variety of instruments and have selected different tune types.
- Another online resource for music students. This is from James Finnegan who is a tenor banjo/mandolin teacher and Comhaltas Youth Officer with Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan CCÉ. James has started a small YouTube channel to help students practise their tunes. The YouTube channel, called TheBanjoBuddy is focused on providing 100% free traditional Irish musical education for people who have a passion to learn and wish to improve their playing on any traditional Irish music instrument. Each video is either a tune tutorial or a basic traditional Irish music theory class. The tune tutorials include alphabetical notation prompts on the screen, as well as being played at a variety of speeds to suit all levels. Here is the link to the channel.
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4E6jBmxAwvOK9bAPtLqQCg>
- Facebook is alive with music. Our members are very proactive by taking part in a challenge called 'Quarantunes'. A musician records a tune and uploads it to Facebook where they nominate another musician to take part. This initiative has been huge with an amazing amount of musicians taking part. There are also many live concerts and watch parties. You will never run short of music to keep a positive mind.
- Each year before Fleadh Cheoil Luimnigh, Castleconnell/Ahane/Herbertstown CCÉ runs their own Annual Féile. These competitions are limited to branch members but with the size of the branch it is equivalent to a mini-Fleadh! The intention behind this Féile is for anyone entering the Fleadh to use it as a dry-run and to get some constructive feedback from top-class adjudicators while for those who are maybe too young or not entering the Fleadh, it is an introduction for them to the competition environment. Unfortunately, this year we were forced to cancel our Féile considering the health of our members and following government guidelines but that didn't stop us from taking the modern approach and hosting our first ever Virtual Féile! We invited members to submit videos of solos or in groups of family members and we shared these videos on our Facebook page - CAH CCÉ (www.facebook.com/cahcce). There was a great response to the initiative and we featured many great videos of our young members over the course of the weekend that the Féile had been originally scheduled to take place.

- Paul Keating, PRO of Comhaltas in North America, has shared the following interesting story with us:



In mid-March, when St Patrick's Day events were cancelled along with the Mícheál Ó Domhnaill Branch of Oregon's 4th Saturday Irish Seisiún, the community began to realize the impact of COVID 19—not only for those stricken with illness, but for its beloved local musicians whose playing would be missed at concerts, dances, and sessions. The board met via email to discuss what might be done to help and to keep spirits up.

Emily Muldoon, branch PRO and webmaster--responsible for the beautiful graphics on the website and advertisements—came up with the idea to invite musicians and dancers from the community to send in a video of the music they were playing during this time of solitude. Clips would be combined into a virtual concert and donations accepted for a premiere viewing with 100% of the profits distributed to participants. The board enthusiastically agreed and a planning committee was formed of Emily, Committee Leader, with Nancy Jarrell, Janet Trygstad, Phil Meehan and Emma and Niamh Brannigan.

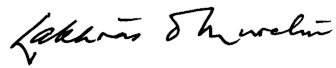
Emily and Nancy then became a creative team tackling the nuts and bolts, and decided on the title "Splendid Isolation." Emily designed graphics, served as videographer, and did all background technical work, including creating the video & enabling donations via the branch website, cceoregon.org. Nancy wrote the script. CCE member and volunteer, local actor Jonathan Zilka agreed to be narrator while member Joe Root donated the audio track of the reel Splendid Isolation, used as background throughout the video. All still photographs came from Emily and Nancy's collections or were found under Fair Use guidelines.

The event was planned for the weekend of April 18th, when Comhaltas North American Convention in San Francisco was scheduled but sadly, also cancelled. Ten local musicians submitted videos to be included in the event: Kevin Burke, Randal Bays, Nancy Conescu, Dan Compton and Fran Slefer, Brian o'Hairt, Maldon Meehan, Bob Soper, Geraldine Murray, and Preston and Dylan Howard-Wilde.

The Mícheál Ó Domhnaill Branch of Oregon is extremely grateful to the musicians for the videos of lovely playing and singing and is humbled by the interest and generosity of not only local branch members and friends, but those all along the West, and East Coast, too. The entire branch offers heartfelt thanks to both musicians and donors for their support of the tradition.

Buíochas!

Mise, le mór-mheas,



Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ