



COMHALTAS

THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

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Oidhreacht na smaointe i seanfhocail sinsear (A heritage of thoughts is to be found in the proverbs of our ancestors). There are so many seanfhocail (proverbs) at our disposal to connect with so many positives in the midst of crisis. One that recommends itself to us at this juncture is **Is fada an bóthar nach mbíonn casadh ann** – It is a long road that has no turn in it. There is a sense now that we may be approaching with caution that turn in the present crisis.

The Buainchoiste keeps the wheels turning at present so that we are well positioned for **ATHNUACHAN** (Renewal) when we emerge from the tunnel to **AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN**. We have also managed to keep in touch with our worldwide movement who are an inspiration to us all.

- Great news from St. Louis. Our Meitheal Cathaoirleach Helen Gannon reports that the St. Louis Irish Arts branch of Comhaltas Summer Camp was ‘pure magic’. ‘We had kids from Chile and Argentina (thanks to Fernando), kids from around North America joining our SLIA kids’, said Helen. ‘We had tutors from Ireland on line. I was able to monitor all the classes. The credit for our success goes to Eileen Gannon and Eimear Arkins.’ Well done. Yes, we know Eileen and Eimear well – a wonderful duo. Míle buíochas.
- I would like to share with you a Report prepared for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by our Diaspora Officer Patrick Morrison and our Príomhriarthóir Siobhán Ní Chonaráin:

Irish traditional musicians, singers dancers and storytellers, worldwide, have risen to the challenges of recent times, harnessing their passion and creativity to lift their communities; finding alternative ways, in a digital world, to continue to nurture links with Ireland and Irish culture. Comhaltas is providing direction, support and resources to its followers, members and the Irish Diaspora through:

An address by Comhaltas President Vince Jordan & ongoing communications from CCÉ’s Director General Dr Labhrás Ó Murchú: <https://www.comhaltas.ie>

CCÉ’s periodical *Treoir* available online: <https://treoir.comhaltas.ie/>

ComhaltasLive weekly programmes: <https://www.facebook.com/comhaltas.ie/>

SCT Tutorials, based on CCÉ’s Traditional Music Examination Syllabus.

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

Comhaltas’ Fleadh Nua, attracts international visitors to Ennis annually. The 2020

Fleadh Nua Facebook posts world-class performances from previous Fleadh Nua concerts. <https://www.facebook.com/FleadhNua>

North America Comhaltas branches have continued teaching young Irish American musicians through online classes and sessions. Chicago's Murphy Roche Branch successful eComortas attracted entrants from across the continent. St Louis Irish Arts Virtual Summer Camp is underway with 100 pupils+ engaging in an intensive virtual music course.

In Britain, Comhaltas branches have linked with GAA clubs and Irish welfare organisations to support the Irish community through volunteering, maintaining contact with older isolated Irish people and providing mental health first aid training focused on supporting the Irish community during this difficult period. Other new initiatives include 'a tune a day', an online storytelling competition and 'Never too late to learn' online whistle classes – for those who 'always wanted to start playing but never had time'.

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

Comhaltas in Britain is gearing up for FÉILE 2020 – The Comhaltas in Britain Big Virtual Weekend with 30+ hours of free online-streamed content during this annual All Britain Fleadh weekend. <https://www.comhaltas.co.uk/feile>

Comhaltas JAPAN has started 'let's practice' online sessions with Irish music, song and storytelling videos, step-dancing lessons, and lectures on O'Carolan and The Irish Harp Tradition. <https://www.facebook.com/comhaltas.jp>

Chair of Comhaltas Brazil, and Fleadh 2019 Bardic Awardee, Alex Navar's passion for Uilleann Piping and Irish Traditional Music is evident in his interviews in Brazil and abroad, live-streamed on:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/592979837721415/>

Melbourne Comhaltas' 50th Anniversary year is celebrated through online music sessions and participation in the, now virtual, Portarlinton National Celtic Festival 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ComhaltasMelbourne/>

Comhaltas branches worldwide are embracing technology to join with musicians in Ireland and with their local Irish communities, keeping the Irish flame burning brightly, examples include;

Video Clips:

CCÉ Japan musicians optimizing Online SCT resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6IdDTswelo&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3B95WyYT2PEIo3pvN1yhUC6gN14ymTTmHN45ri8ZOtN7cpECxIHjYZuPA>

Glasgow's Irish Minstrels CCÉ, St Rochs Under 15 group <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1399875663545768>

Liverpool Comhaltas teaming up with former members Nathan and Jake Carter <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2715825272028176>

- The Fleadh Nua held each year in Ennis, Co. Clare, for over 40 years is one of the 'big events' on the Comhaltas calendar. Like so many events, it had to be cancelled this year. Never daunted, Frank Whelan and his team created a virtual Fleadh Nua which was a sight to behold. In Frank's own words, here is a story not just of survival but of extraordinary celebration in these times of crisis:

With many events and festivals being cancelled and postponed this year, Fleadh Nua in Ennis was no exception. However, not wanting to disappoint our thousands of loyal followers at home and abroad that have been built up over 46 years of the festival, Fleadh Nua decided to go digital and bring a flavour of the Fleadh to thousands of music lovers in the comfort of their own homes!

The Cois na hAbhna Archive has film and video footage of Fleadh Nua down through the years, and we decided to draw on this for our on-line Facebook Fleadh which coincided with the dates of the postponed event from Sunday 24th May to Monday 1st June. And so we uploaded several videos each day at 8pm featuring musicians, singers and dancers who had performed at the Fleadh down through the years. We also thought it would be nice to give our viewers an opportunity to support a good cause and so we included a link on the facebook posts where, those who wished, could make a donation to 'Trad For Trócaire'.

With our 'Facebook Fleadh' we brought back memories to many of the huge Fleadhs in the 1970's and also the cultural parades through the town which were always a highlight of the festival in the 80's and 90's.

Fleadh Nua has always attracted the best of traditional musicians from all over Ireland and abroad, and the videos were a nostalgic trip down 'bóthrin na smaointe' for some and also a golden opportunity for our younger viewers to see and hear such greats as Kitty Linnane and the Old Kilfenora Céilí Band, Micho Russell from Doolin, Chris Droney from Bellharbour, Tony McMahon and Barney McKenna, Robbie McMahon, The Tulla Céilí Band, Paddy Canny, Brendan McGlinchey, Nora Butler, Joe Burke, Des Mulkere, Charlie Harris, Vincent Griffin, Sonny Murray, Seamus Connolly, dancer Willie Keane and also a host of younger musicians who have gone on to become national and international performing artists.

The response to our on-line 'Facebook Fleadh' was amazing, as was the response to our appeal for support for Trócaire, with many viewers clicking on the Trad for Trócaire button to make a donation. The fantastic footage from Fleadhanna through the years is still available to view, and you will have an opportunity to contribute to 'Trad for Trócaire' until the end of June. All you have to do is go to the Fleadh Nua Facebook page and click on the link with each video, to make a donation, no matter how small.

Each year Fleadh Nua prides itself on introducing something new and different to the programme and although 2020 was certainly different, we're now looking forward to seeing you all, off-line, in Ennis in 2021!

- **Next Saturday night 13th June - after the 9pm news on RTE 1 radio - the very popular Céilí House programme will pay a moving and musical tribute to our much-loved Queen of Song, the late Nora Butler. Presenter Kieran Hanrahan and Producer Aidan Butler - against all the odds in these difficult times - pulled out all the stops to do justice to the memory of one of Tipperary's and Ireland's cultural icons.**

Is mór an inspioráid agus spreagadh dúinn go léir an obair iontach atá ag tárlú na laetha seo sa bhaile agus ar fud na cruinne ag saothrú an chultúir Ghaelaigh. Tugann sé seo dóchas agus misneach dúinn in am seo an ghátair. Is cinnte go mbeidh lá eile ag an bPaorach! Nuair a bheidh deireadh leis an galar uafásach seo, beidh An Comhaltas láidir, dílis, díograiseach agus réidh don todhchaí. Bí linn ar [AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN](#).

Mise, le mór-mheas,

