

TRADITIONAL MUSIC & SONG

# fomm

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THE ART OF JB VALLEY  
JOE HEANEY: SINGING &  
COMMUNITY

NEWS • REVIEWS • PREVIEWS



**fonn** is the Irish for an air or a tune. But it can also mean desire or enthusiasm.

This magazine is enthusiastic about airs and tunes – traditional music and song. Our approach to traditional music and song is respectful. We respect those who work to preserve the tradition. Equally we respect those who explore the boundaries of the tradition by collaborating with musicians in other genres and styles. We believe in parity of esteem for both of these movements within traditional and folk music. They are complementary – not incompatible.

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## New year New direction

The New Year brings new beginnings and new challenges in many aspects of life – political, cultural and social. For **fonn** the New Year marks a change in direction.

Since **fonn** began its existence seven years ago, the coverage of traditional music and song in mainstream and social media has grown substantially. So **fonn** now operates in such a crowded landscape that we have to ask whether we have a unique selling point or are we simply echoing material that is readily available elsewhere. At the same time, we have to consider how best to use our limited resources so that they can be most effective.

After much reflection, we have decided that in future **fonn** will focus on long-form pieces – based on research and extended interviews with performers and practitioners, with occasional opinion pieces. Future issues of **fonn** will have far less emphasis on news items, reviews, previews and listings. As a result of this change in direction, **fonn** will be less date-dependant. So its frequency will change to twice a year.

We will continue to welcome proposals for articles or suggestions for themes and/or subjects we might pursue.



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**fonn**  
backs  
FairPlé





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## grace notes



▲ **Rhiannon Giddens:** Bidding for a third Grammy.

## Recognition for Rhiannon!

Double Grammy-award winner, Rhiannon Giddens, has been nominated for a third gong for *The Ballad of Sally Anne*, a track on her album, *My Black Country: The Songs of Alice Randall*, released earlier this year.

Shortlisted in the Best American Roots Performance category, Rhiannon has been widely acclaimed for her interpretation of the song, written over thirty years ago by Alice Randall – along with Mark O'Connor and Harry Stinson.

Randall made use of the murder ballad format to discuss the issue of lynching – previously considered to be off limits in country music.

“The ugliest fact of southern life went missing from the country canon,” Randall told the *Rolling Stone* earlier this year. “This erasure perpetuated a particular fraud...without addressing the ways in which southern white lives across class lines and ages were involved in the terrorising of black families.”

“*The Ballad of Sally Anne* gets people who don't want to think about lynching thinking about lynching,” she said, “and wondering in a new way what they

think about their grandparents attending a lynching like it was a party.”

Alice Randall was amazed when she heard what Rhiannon Giddens did with the song. “When Rhiannon sings she is embodying Sally Anne, herself,” she told *Rolling Stone*. “It takes this song up another level – to sound as lived resistance.”

Normally resident in Ireland, when she is not touring, Rhiannon was awarded her first Grammy in 2011 for *Genuine Negro Jig* as a member of the ground-breaking trio, the Carolina Chocolate Drops – who will be reuniting for a celebration gig at Rhiannon's Biscuits and Banjos Festival in April 2025.

Her second Grammy was achieved with Francesco Turrisi for their album, *They're Calling Me Home*, in the Best Folk Album Category. She has also a further eight Grammy nominations to her name.



▲ **The Fureys:** (from left) Camillus Hiney, George Furey, Adam Kelly, Eddie Furey and Tony Murray.

## Fureys set date to retire from touring

The Fureys have announced that they will formally cease touring at the end of May 2026 – bringing the curtain down on a professional career that began in the 1960s.

Beginning as a duo, Finbar and Eddie Furey, the band expanded in the 1970s with the inclusion of two more brothers, George and Paul, along with Davey Arthur. This became the established line-up until Finbar left the band in 1996. Paul died suddenly in 2002, while Davey suffered a stroke in 2014.

In an extensive repertoire their most popular songs include Ralph McTell's *From Clare to Here*; *The Red Rose Café*; *I Will Love You*; *When You Were Sweet 16*; *The Old Man*; *Leaving Nancy*; Gerry Rafferty's *Her Father Didn't Like Me Anyway*; and *The Green Fields of France*.

Announcing their intentions in December, the band said that they wished to provide advance warning to their fans because “we only play in each theatre every second year with the exception of about six venues where we perform every year: so for most of the theatres we

will perform in from here on, it will be the final concert there.”

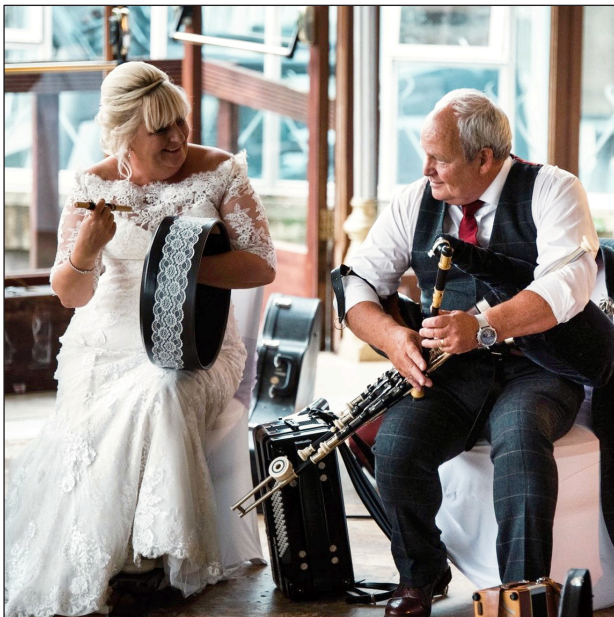
The band also pointed out that their manager, Joe McCadden, will also retire after 56 years – including 39 years with the Fureys.

Looking ahead to the next 17 months, the band spoke of the mixed emotions of knowing that their working lives – as they have known them – will be coming to an end.

“We know we have been among the luckiest people on earth having a ‘job’ we love and enjoy, traveling the world to places we would never have been to, meeting people and making many friends, we would never have met.

“However, time catches up with us all and we will look to a new future from the middle of 2026 playing at the odd music session and seeing the younger Furey generation playing their music.”





▲ Piping: Gina and Eddie Brophy.

## Scholarship to attend piping weekend in Wales

Gŵyl Uilleann Glanyfferi, the Ferryside Uilleann Pipes Festival, is to award a special scholarship to a young musician to support their attendance at the festival from May 16-18 in the South Wales village.

Among the performers already confirmed for the festival are Blackie O'Connell, Peter Browne, Rita Farrell, Siobhán Peoples and Ceri Rhys Matthews.

The award covers full weekend registration plus a £100 contribution towards travel

expenses and is open to musicians aged 21 and under who play one of the instruments for which the festival provides tuition (uilleann pipes, fiddle, flute and unaccompanied singing).

The scholarship is named in honour of Eddie and Gina Brophy, two long-standing supporters of piping in Wales.

The closing date for the receipt of applications for the scholarship is February 1.

For more information, see <https://sites.google.com/view/uilleannglanyfferi/home>.



▲ Doctor: Iarla Ó Lionáird

## What's up, Doc?

One of the latest to join the ranks of the musical doctors in the traditional singer, Iarla Ó Lionáird.

But unlike some of his fellow musicians – like Martin Hayes and Dolores Keane – who have received honorary awards, Iarla has done it the hard way by submitting a major thesis and 'defending' it under interrogation by academic experts in order to achieve a PhD in Arts Practice from the University of Limerick.

His thesis, entitled *Aphelion*, examines Ó Lionáird's relationship with his practice as an

artist: it is a study on connection and distance, on the mutability and persistence of memory and on the skill sets and pre-occupations that maintain the connection to an original practice while also triggering a powerful yearning for further exploration.

Iarla's latest journey in education began back in 2003 in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick when he completed a Masters in Ethnomusicology during a break from touring with his former band, Afro-Celt Sound System.



▲ Baton: Mary Lou Philbin-Clarke and Charlie Clarke

## New owner to lead Ossian USA

One of the leading distributors of Irish and Scottish traditional music in America – Ossian USA – has a new owner.

Ruarri Serpa from New Hampshire, who describes himself as "a fiddle player with an accordion habit," has taken on the baton from Mary Lou Philbin-Clarke, who, with her late husband, Charlie Clarke, has run the operation since 1993.

Serpa aims to develop Ossian USA's website, [ossianusa.com](http://ossianusa.com), including digital album downloads, alongside its physical inventory of CDs and books.

Ossian USA was originally established to distribute the output of the Cork-based record and publishing company, Ossian, created by John Loesberg and his wife, Therese, in the late 1980s.

While the Cork company's back catalogue was subsequently

acquired by Cló Iar-Chonnachta in 2005, the US operation has continued in existence – not only as a key distributor of albums, videos and books for a number of Irish labels, artists, composers and writers – but also a promoter of concerts and other events with support from a number of important figures in traditional music including Paddy Keenan, Don Meade and the late Frank Harte.





## And the winner may be...

**I**TMA's co-production, *Brendan Gleeson's Farewell to Hughes's*, has been nominated for Best Feature Documentary at the 2025 Irish Film and Television Academy Awards.

An unassuming pub on a side street behind the Four Courts in Dublin city centre, Hughes's was a mecca of traditional Irish music for musicians, dancers, singers and listeners for over 35 years. But in 2021, the pub closed its doors for the last time.

In January 2022, actor, fiddle player and former Hughes's regular, Brendan Gleeson, met musicians, dancers and singers in and around the pub as they

gathered one last time to recreate the magic of the iconic venue and to commemorate its remarkable legacy.

The resulting film, *Farewell to Hughes's*, was produced by the Irish Traditional Music Archive and Keynote Productions, featuring contributions from the Brooks Academy Set Dancers, along with musicians from the Fanny Power Sessions, the Sunday Night Sessions and others.

## MUI appointment for NI

**T**he UK Musicians' Union has appointed its first-ever Regional Officer for Northern Ireland, marking an important development for members in the region..



▲ Charlene Hegarty

Charlene Hegarty, known for her previous work at the Oh Yeah Music Centre in Belfast, will work as part of the MUT's Scotland and Northern Ireland team.

Charlene is a natural advocate for working musicians by nature and a passionate member of the local music scene.

"I will work tirelessly," she said, "to make sure the working musicians of Northern Ireland feel the full power of the Musicians' Union on their side."



▲ Eleanor Shanley: celebrated in Denmark.

## It's official: Eleanor is famous!

**E**leanor Shanley has been formally inducted into the Tønder Festival Folk Music Hall of Fame at a special celebration in the southern Danish town recently.

Shanley, who is the lead singer with Garadice as well as one half

of a duo with Mike Hanrahan, is the fourth artist to be honoured since the Tønder Hall of Fame was established in 2021 and follows in the footsteps of last year's inductee, Finbar Furey.

The two previous winners were Danes Povl Dissing (in 2021) and Niels Hausgaard (in 2022).



▲ Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh: receives Féile award from Arts Minister, Catherine Martin.

## Onóir do Mhairéad

**A**ltan band leader, fiddler and singer, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, has received a Lifetime Achievement Award at Féile Liam O'Flynn.

Based in Naas, Co. Kildare, the Féile is an annual celebration of the musical legacy of the great uilleann piper, Liam O'Flynn.

The third instalment of the Féile took place in October with Altan headlining the event along

with Cherish the Ladies, Jackie Daly and Matt Cranitch, Kevin Conneff, Cormac Begley and Rob Fell, the Friel Sisters and the Shandrum Céili Band.

Last year's recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award was Lousie Mulcahy, who achieved the historic triple crown of the All-Ireland senior uilleann pipes, flute and tin whistle titles in 2001.





▲ **Doctor in the house:** Dolores Keane flanked by University of Galway President, Peter McHugh and Professor Méabh Ní Fhuarthain, following the recent conferring ceremony in the college.

## Dolores by degrees

Further recognition for the acclaimed traditional singer Dolores Keane, came recently in the form of an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the University of Galway.

At the formal conferring ceremony, the University's Head of Irish Studies, Dr. Méabh Ní Fhuarthain, traced Dolores' musical journey from modest beginnings in Carragh Cottage

in Caherlistrane, Co. Galway, to international recognition on the world stage – bridging the gap between sean nós and modern songs.

In particular, Ní Fhuarthain highlighted Dolores' highly successful collaborations with De Dannan, John Faulkner and the Woman's Heart tour – referencing her unique interpretations of songs like *Lion in a Cage*, *The Island* and *Caledonia*.



▲ **On location:** In St. Mary's Cemetery, Enniscorthy, local historian, Dan Walsh, speaks to documentary film-maker and singer, Aileen Lambert, about William Grattan Flood – who popularised the centuries-old Christmas song, *The Enniscorthy Carol*.

## New documentary on *The Enniscorthy Carol*

Wexford-based singer and educator, Aileen Lambert, has begun work on a documentary film about *The Enniscorthy Carol*.

While the origins of the song are uncertain, it is generally reckoned to be at least 400 years old. It received renewed recognition after William Grattan Flood (1859–1928) – organist and musical director at St. Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, transcribed it from a local singer circa 1912 and submitted it for

publication in *The Oxford Book of Carols*.

Among the first contributors to Lambert's documentary was local historian, journalist and broadcaster, Dan Walsh, who provided insights into the life and work of William Grattan Flood, who, in addition to his musical exploits, was himself an avid local historian and researcher. He is buried in St Mary's Cemetery, Enniscorthy.

The documentary project is being supported by Creative Places Enniscorthy.

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# Festival Interceltique

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LES COUSINS D'AMÉRIQUE

1-10 août 2025

Original communication





▲ **Aidan Connolly:** The Dubliner with deep Kerry roots has been appointed as the new Sliabh Luachra Musician in Residence.

## Aidan 'resides' in Sliabh Luachra

**A**claimed fiddle player, Aidan Connolly, has been appointed as the Sliabh Luachra Musician in Residence for the next year.

Though born and reared in Rathfarnham in Dublin, Aidan absorbed much of the music of Sliabh Luachra through his mother Eileen Moynihan, a Co. Kerry native.

Playing the fiddle since the age of eight, Aidan took classes at the local Craobh Naithí

Comhaltas branch as well as playing with his mother and his uncle, Con Moynihan, also a fiddle player. Aidan quickly developed into a fine musician and began to be influenced by the recordings of fiddle masters like Denis Murphy, Paddy Cronin, Paddy Canny and many others.

The aim of the residency – which runs from November 2024 – is to support and develop the renowned musical culture in Sliabh Luachra, which includes parts of Northwest Cork, East Kerry, and West Limerick.

The scheme was established in 2018 with fiddler, Eoin O'Sullivan, from Newmarket, Co. Cork, as the first appointee. He was re-appointed in 2021.

As well as developing various educational projects, his residency included collaborations with

local festivals – such as the Patrick O'Keeffe Traditional Music Festival in Castleisland, World Fiddle Day in Scartaglin, and Fleadh by the Feale in Abbeyfeale – as well as the promotion of sessions and other initiatives to encourage young people to engage with their local musical heritage.

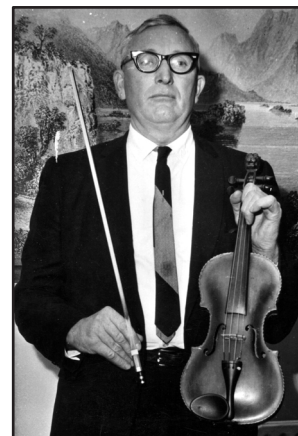
The initiative has also included the development of the Sliabh Luachra Music Trail connecting venues, pubs and festivals. Eoin also launched a record company

to promote the music of Sliabh Luachra, releasing albums by Pat Fleming, Maura O'Connor and Bryan O'Leary.

The residency is supported by the Arts Offices of Cork County Council, Limerick City and County Council and Kerry County Council, along with the Arts Council.



▲ **Denis Murphy:** Major influence on Aidan Connolly.



▲ Denis Murphy

## Denis Murphy recordings now online

**T**he Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA) has launched a new online collection of tunes played by Sliabh Luachra fiddle legend, Denis Murphy, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his untimely death.

One of the most beloved heroes of Irish music who exemplified the Sliabh Luachra fiddle style. Denis Murphy was the embodiment of an artist living his art daily and his jovial larger-than-life personality has been an inspiration to many.

Curated and edited by fiddle player Anton Zille, #Project Denis features high-quality recordings of Denis Murphy in Sliabh Luachra in the late 1960s and early 1970s, along with catalogue cards featuring transcriptions of tunes and handwritten notes collected by the late Breandán Breathnach.

The collection can be accessed at: <https://www.itma.ie/collections/denis-murphy/>



▲ Anton Zille



▲ **Wham, iBAM, thank you, Ma'am:** Altan's Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (right) with fellow award recipient, Conal Creedon, at the present of the iBAM cultural awards by Celtic Arts Rising at the Irish American Heritage Center in Chicago.

## Culture award for Altan

**D**onegal band, Altan, are the recipients of the 2024 year's iBAM award for music.

The US-based Celtic Arts Rising organisation's iBAM awards celebrate books, arts and music with an Irish connection.

Other award winners for 2024 include Conal Creedon (Literature), Ciarán Hinds (Performing Arts) and Fintan O'Toole (Media/Journalism).

The awards were presented at a gala event in the Irish American Heritage Center in Chicago in November.

Altan join an impressive list of iBAM alumni. Previous recipients of the imusic award include Jimmy Keane, Martin Hayes and Dennis Cahill, Joanie Madden, Maurice Lennon, Paddy Reilly, Sharon Shannon, Liz Carroll, Maura O'Connell, Kevin Henry and Pete St. John



▲ **Constance Markievicz:** Prominent member of Cumann na mBan and of the Irish Citizen Army.

## Markievicz awards for Zoë and Muireann

**M**uireann Nic Amhlaoibh and Zoë Conway have been named among the ten recipients of the Markievicz Awards for female artists in 2024.

The Markievicz Award scheme, which began in 2019, aims to support artists to develop their craft and ultimately produce great art that recognises and celebrates the role of women in the historical period 1912-1923 covered by the Decade of Centenaries Programme, and beyond.

Named in honour of the revolutionary leader, Constance Markievicz, the awards have been made each year to up to ten female artists (either individual artists working alone or in collaboration with others), to a value of €25,000 per individual or group.

The scheme is administered by the Arts Council on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media through the Cultural Institutions and Commemorations Unit.



▲ Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh



▲ Zoë Conway

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## The art of J.B. Valley

**T**he Séamus Ennis Arts Centre's Easter Snow Gallery is hosting a major exhibition by the visual artist and musician, J.B. Valley, for three months in 2025.

The exhibition will open in the North County Dublin venue on January 16 – under the auspices of Dublin Tradfest – and continue through until March 16,

Born in Armagh in 1941, J.B. Valley studied at the Belfast College of Art – where he was taught by Tom Carr – and completed further studies at Edinburgh Art College before coming home to Armagh where he has lived and worked since.

An avid supporter of Irish heritage in terms of both sport and music, J.B. (Brian) founded the Armagh Piper's Club in 1966 along with his wife, Eithne.

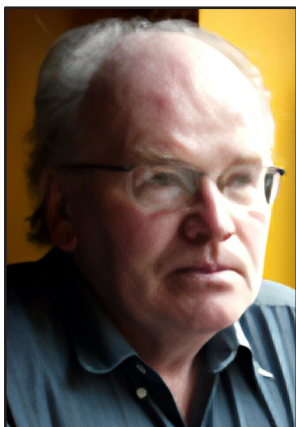
The Club has not only developed a deep love of Irish traditional music and song among generations of former students – including many award-winning professional musicians; it has also established remarkable and enduring relationships with players of pipe instruments throughout Europe, North America and Western Asia, through its annual William Kennedy Piping Festival.

The Club has also served as an important intersection between

Brian's twin passions of art and music – as images of performers have constituted a major theme throughout his career as a painter.

The exhibition will be formally launched on January 16 by musician, writer, lecturer and researcher, Dr. Fintan Valley, who also happens to be John's nephew.

Fintan will reflect on the artist and his paintings with particular reference to their connection to traditional music. The launch will also include live music by Caoimhín Valley – one of Brian's three musician sons – who will be joined by friends in the arts centre coffee shop



▲ J.B. (Brian) Valley



▲ Fintan Valley



▲ Caoimhín Valley



Pfeiffer the Piper: Lars Pfeiffer

## Piping from the Parlour series still running on NPU site

**N**a Píobairí Uilleann's series of short online piping recitals, **Piping from the Parlour**, continues to be available on the NPU website, [pipers.ie](http://pipers.ie).

The series was originally initiated in 2020 following the Covid 19 outbreak to provide a platform for public performance.

Each month a different piper would record themselves playing a set of tunes which would then be posted on the NPU website.

Although opportunities for live public performances have thankfully returned, the series has continued – though on a quarterly basis rather than monthly – offering a platform for younger pipers – especially from overseas – to share their interpretations of tunes from the piping canon.

The most recent addition to the series, made in November, features Lars Pfeiffer from Biberg in Germany, playing a set comprising a highland and reels, *My Little Pet Dog*, *Mayor Harrison's Fedora* and *The Fair Haired Boy*.



# Geantraí returns with Pauline at the helm



▲ Pauline Scanlon in the doorway of An Sean Síbin in Ballina, Co. Mayo – one of the venues featured in the new TG4 series of *Geantraí*. (Photo: TG4)

A new 13-episode season of TG4's acclaimed traditional music series, *Geantraí*, is about to launch on the Irish broadcaster, hosted by singer, songwriter and activist, Pauline Scanlon.

The flagship series kicks off at Cryan's Pub in Carrick-on-Shannon in Leitrim, and then continues across Ireland – from Kilcar in Donegal, to the Midlands, to Mayo, Limerick and Cork, visiting lesser-known venues where local talent flourishes in regular sessions.

Speaking about the new series, Pauline said: "*Geantraí* has always been about the living tradition of Irish music. This series continues to celebrate that,

bringing the music and its creators into the spotlight. We've focused on capturing not just the music, but the environments where these sessions happen – places where the heart of Irish culture beats strongest."

Paschal Cassidy, Director of Hedgerow Films, who make the series, added: "*Geantraí* has always been about community and connection, particularly between the musicians and their listeners.

"Through modern film and audio technology, we're capturing that magic in a way that will resonate with both traditionalists and new audiences alike."

The series will air on TG4 every Sunday night from January 19.



▲ Damien Dempsey looking forward to headlining the Rock Against Homelessness concert for Focus Ireland.

## Damo to play housing gig

Singer-songwriter, Damien Dempsey, will headline the tenth instalment of the annual Rock Against Homelessness concert in aid of Focus Ireland, at the 3Olympia Theatre in Dublin on February 7.

The Rock Against Homelessness concert series, sponsored by *The Sunday Independent* has so far raised over €450,000 for the charity.

With around 15,000 people currently homeless in Ireland Damien Dempsey said that the

scale of the housing crisis "makes me angry to my bones".

"It is beyond words of anger or sadness that this issue has not been fixed. What are the so-called people in power doing about it?" he said. "Not a lot, as far as I can see."

"I often wonder about the fact that they can do nothing about homelessness now, but in the 1930s and 1940s – when Ireland was on its knees as a nation financially – they could still manage to build massive housing estates around Ireland for people to live in," he observed.



▲ Eamon Graham, Chair of CCÉ's Ulster Council presents the Gradam na hÉigse medal and certificate to Mairéad Walls (Photo: TG4)

## Awards for Mairéad Walls and Kevin O'Kane

Two long serving tutors at Portglenone branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) – Mairéad Walls and Kevin O'Kane – have been honoured with the CCÉ's Gradam na hÉigse award in recognition of their ongoing commitment to teaching students over many years.

Mairéad is a two-time Ulster Ladies Singing Champion (in 1987 and 1988). She has also served as singing tutor at the Ulster Traditional Singing Festival for a number of years and was awarded the festival's Keeper of the Tradition Award in 2011.





**RTÉ Folk Awards Nominees**  
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**North Atlantic Song Convention**  
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## on beat

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▲ Cathy Jordan



▲ Christy Moore

## RTE Radio 2 Folk Awards Nominations Announced: Christy and Cathy in head to head

**C**hristy Moore and Cathy Jordan go head-to-head in two categories in the seventh annual RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards. Both have been nominated as Best Singer and for Best Album.

Other dual nominees are Macdara Yeates as Best Singer and for Best Traditional Track; Alannah Thornburgh as Best Instrumentalist and for Best Original Track; and Sinéad McKenna as Best Instrumentalist and Best Emerging Artist.

Also in the Best Emerging Artist category there is a nomination for Niamh Bury – who like Macdara Yeates is one of the organisers of ‘The Night Before Larry Got Stretched’ monthly singing session in The Cobblestone in Dublin.

Other shortlisted artists include Lankum, Ríoghnach Connolly, Altan, Landless, John Spillane, Róis, Keane Connolly McGorman, Cuas, Diarmuid Ó Meachair, Lemoncello, Macdara Ó Faoláin, Fiach Moriarty, Joshua Burnside, Diane Cannon, Natalie Ní Chasaide & Iarfhlaith Ó Domhnaill, The Half Room, Sinéad McKenna and Séamas Hyland.

The winners will be announced at a special show hosted by RTÉ’s John Creedon at Vicar Street,



Dublin, on February, 26 to be broadcast live on RTÉ Radio 1, with a television highlights programme on RTÉ One and RTÉ Player from March 1.

In the Best Album category, Christy Moore’s *A Terrible Beauty* is shortlisted alongside Cathy Jordan’s *Crankie Island Song Project*, John Spillane’s *Fíoruisce: The Legend of the Lough* as well as eponymous albums from Keane Connolly McGorman and Lemoncello.

Christy Moore and Cathy Jordan, are also in contention in the Best Singer category along with Ríoghnach Connolly and Macdara Yeates, who has also been nominated in the Best Traditional Folk Track category along with previous winners, Lankum, Diane Cannon, The Half Room, and Natalie Ní Chasaide and Iarfhlaith Ó Domhnaill.

Listed in the frame for Best Instrumentalist are four younger musicians: bouzouki player Macdara Ó Faoláin; harpist Alannah Thornburgh; accordion player Diarmuid Ó Meachair; and fiddler Sinéad McKenna, who is also nominated as Best Emerging Artist(s) along with Cuas, Niamh Bury, Róis, and Séamas Hyland.

Cuas are also nominated in the Best Group category along with Altan, Landless, and Keane Connolly McGorman.

As well as Alannah Thornburgh, nominees for the Best Original Track category consist of Fiach Moriarty (featuring Damien Dempsey) Lemoncello, Joshua Burnside and Róis.

### Hall of Fame

Róise Rua, a renowned singer from Árainn Mhór, Dún na nGall, will be inducted into the RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards Hall of Fame. Róise, who was also known as Róise na nAmhrán, passed on a rich heritage of folk music and preserved many songs that would otherwise have been lost, but have now travelled far beyond her home county.

### Lifetime Achievement

The winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award will be announced in early February, in advance of the awards. Previous winners include Tríona Ní Dhomhnaill (2023); Mary Black (2022); Christy Moore (2021); Steve Cooney (2020); Moya Brennan (2019); and Andy Irvine (2018).





▲ Alannah Thornburgh



▲ Macdara Yeates



▲ Sinéad McKenna



▲ John Spillane

The awards ceremony will also feature live performances from a number of performers including Landless, John Spillane's folk opera, *Fíoruisce*, Niamh Regan, and five-time Grammy award winner, Mary Chapin Carpenter and many more.

The awards event will be open to the public and limited tickets for the night are available.

## RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards - The Nominees 2025

### BEST SINGER

Ríoghnach Connolly  
Cathy Jordan  
Christy Moore  
Macdara Yeates

(2024 winner: Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin)

### BEST INSTRUMENTALIST

Sinéad McKenna  
Macdara Ó Faoláin  
Diarmuid Ó Meachair  
Alannah Thornburgh

(2024 winner: Aoife Ní Bhriain)



### BEST TRADITIONAL TRACK

Diane Cannon for *Bean an Fhir Ruaidh*

The Half Room for  
*Helen of Kirkconnel Lea*

Lankum for  
*The Rocky Road to Dublin*

Natalie Ní Chasaide &  
Iarfhlaith Ó Domhnaill for  
*Welcome Home Gráinne*

Macdara Yeates for  
*Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye*

(2024 winner: Piaras Ó Lorcáin &  
Bláth na hÓige for 'Seán Gabha')

### BEST ORIGINAL TRACK

Joshua Burnside for *The Good Life*

Lemoncello for *Old Friend*

Fiach Moriarty (featuring Damien  
Dempsey) for *I'm for Gallipoli*

Róis for *Caoine*

Alannah Thornburgh for  
*Chasing the Hare*

(2024 winner: Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin  
for 'Anáil na hOíche')

### BEST GROUP

Altan  
Cuas  
Keane Connolly McGorman  
Landless

(2024 winner: Lankum)

### BEST EMERGING ARTIST

Niamh Bury  
Cuas  
Séamas Hyland  
Sinéad McKenna  
Róis

(2024 winner: Séamus & Caoimhe Uí  
Fhlatharta)

### BEST ALBUM

Cathy Jordan for  
*Crankie Island Song Project*  
Keane Connolly McGorman for  
*Keane Connolly McGorman*  
Lemoncello for *Lemoncello*  
Christy Moore for *A Terrible Beauty*  
John Spillane for  
*Fíoruisce: The Legend of the Lough*

(2024 winner: False Lankum - Lankum)



▲ Altan



▲ Landless





## North Atlantic Song Convention in April

**T**his year, the Traditional Music Forum's North Atlantic Song Convention (NASC) will take place from April 11-13 at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh.

Bringing together singers, educators, industry professionals and traditional song enthusiasts from across the North Atlantic region, NASC 2025 offers a rich programme of concerts, workshops, talks, panels, and song circles.

This year's keynote address will be delivered by Professor Susanne Rosenberg, a pioneering folk singer, educator, and researcher from Sweden's Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

"NASC 2025 is a unique opportunity to celebrate our shared song traditions, exchange knowledge, and build connections that will strengthen our singing communities for years to come," said Brian Ó hEadhra, NASC Co-convenor and Director of the Traditional Music Forum.

"We encourage everyone — from seasoned singers to those new to traditional song — to join us for this inspiring weekend."

NASC Co-convenor, Emma Björling of the Swedish vocal group Kongero, added: "The diversity and richness of traditional song across the North Atlantic region are truly remarkable.

"NASC 2025 is a space where we can come together to share songs, stories, and ideas, while also fostering a sense of community and collaboration. We hope to see singers from all walks of life — whether you're a performer, educator, or

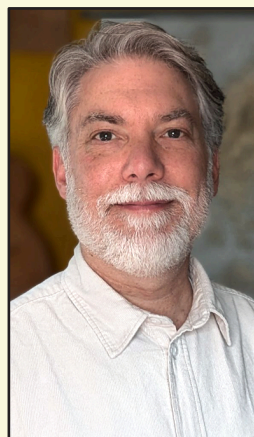
simply someone who loves folk song, join us for what promises to be an unforgettable event."

The programme includes a wide range of events:

- ▷ workshops on Scots song, Swedish mouth music, and Scottish Gaelic song.
- ▷ panels exploring topics like community singing, songwriting and tradition, and curating spaces for folk singing.
- ▷ open song circles, including themes like maritime songs.
- ▷ concert performances featuring internationally acclaimed singers Robyn Stapleton, Ruth Keggin, Nuala Kennedy, and Emma Björling.
- ▷ informal networking and discussions.

For more information on the programme, visit the Scottish Storytelling Centre website. Full weekend passes, tickets for individual events, and concession prices are available.

For further enquiries about the event, please contact: Brian Ó hEadhra, Co-convenor of NASC and Director of the Traditional Music Forum: [northatlanticsong@gmail.com](mailto:northatlanticsong@gmail.com)



▲ Brian Ó hEadhra  
(Photo: TMF)



▲ Emma Björling (Photo: Danylo Bobyk)



## Elphinstone Institute launches new website

The Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen has relaunched its website.

The Elphinstone Institute is a centre for the study of Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology at the University of Aberdeen. Established in 1995, the Institute researches and promotes the culture of the North and North-East of Scotland in context.

Using ethnographic methodologies, staff, research fellows, and students research ideas of identity and belonging, meaning and function, drawing on an exceptional heritage of traditional music, song, story, lore and language, alongside the dynamic creativity of those who live and work here today.

► The Fionn Mac Cumhaill team: (from left) Mhairi Hall, Mairi MacMillan, Grainne Holland, Martin MacIntyre and Eamon Doorley.



## New podcasts highlight shared traditions of Gaelic Scotland and Gaelic Ireland

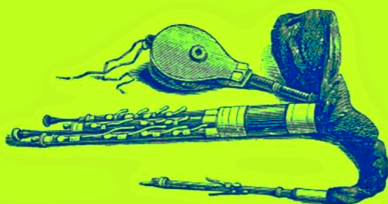
Since 2022, TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland) has been supporting an interdisciplinary, trilingual project to re-interpret the songs and stories of Fionn Mac Cumhaill and the Fianna and to present them in an accessible way to a modern day audience.

Leading musicians, singers and storytellers Mhairi Hall, Mary MacMillan, Grainne Holland, Eamon Doorley and Martin MacIntyre, have used a variety of sources from the oral and written traditions of Gaelic Scotland and Gaelic Ireland to create ambitious new pieces

together, showcasing these songs and stories through their original mediums of Scottish Gaelic and Irish.

The group premiered this work with live performances of their collaborative show, *An Ceòl air Feadh na Fèinne*, at the Scottish International Storytelling Festival in 2023 and at Celtic Connections in 2024.

The group are now releasing a preview recording of the story of *An t-Amadan Mòr/The Great Fool*, as a preview of a new audio book to be released in 2025, aiming to make all of the songs and stories accessible to a trilingual audience.



## Comharchumann píobaireachta Bhéal Feirste – Píobairí ag cuidiú le píobairí

Belfast Piping Cooperative – Pipers helping pipers  
Fáilte roimh chách/All welcome

26/01/25

12 – 3pm. Saor in aisce / Free entry. Ionad / Venue: An Droichead

12-1pm

Ceacht le  
Piping Lesson with

Patrick O'Hare

1-1:45pm

Craic leis na  
píobairí

Craic with the Pipers

1:45-2pm

An chéad ghluin eile  
The next generation

Piarras Mac Maoláin

2-3pm

Aoi Píobaire : Robbie Hughes  
*Caoga bliain de phiobaireacht an Tuaiscirt*

Guest Piper: Robbie Hughes  
*Fifty years of Northern Piping*

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# OUNDS OF KILFENORA

## KILFENORA MUSIC ARCHIVE

2025 PROJECT TO CREATE A FREE ONLINE ARCHIVE  
OF KILFENORA MUSICIANS, MUSIC & HOUSE DANCES

## WE ARE LOOKING FOR

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FROM THE 1950s & BEFORE

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PROJECT WILL BE LAUNCHED ON FRIDAY 25<sup>TH</sup>  
APRIL 2025 IN KILFENORA COMMUNITY HALL  
AS PART OF THE KILFENORA TRAD FEST

arts  
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TAKE ONE  
EVERY MONTH  
WITH WATER

## Participation in arts is quantifiably good for your health – research

**M**ost people are familiar with the sense of euphoria that comes from attending a memorable concert, play, film or art exhibition. But now the benefit of participating is not only anecdotal: it has been carefully researched, analysed and quantified by a major British study – which has found, among other things, that the resulting improvements in people's quality of life and higher productivity is worth £8bn a year in the UK.

According to Frontier Economics, taking part in an event or activity of a cultural nature confers an array of benefits on the participants such as alleviating pain, frailty and depression and lowering dependence on medication.

"Engagement with performance-based art such as plays, musicals and ballet, and particularly participation in music, is linked to reductions in depression and in pain and improved quality of life," according to one of the co-authors of the research, Matthew Bell of Frontier Economics.

Conducted as part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Cultural and Heritage Capital (CHC) Programme, and delivered in partnership with University College

London's Social Biobehavioural Research Group, the research breaks new ground by creating a methodology which enables a monetary value to be assigned to the health and wellbeing benefits of cultural and heritage engagement.

The Frontier research team created thirteen separate models – each corresponding to existing evidence produced by the Social Biobehavioural Research Group and other researchers, investigating the impact of specific types of cultural or heritage engagement on general health in older adults – especially in terms of the health and social savings that come from improved health and wellbeing, and the wider benefits to society from improved productivity.

"Improving workforce participation and the role of prevention in health care have emerged as priority areas for the UK Government," explained Sarah Karlsberg of Frontier Economics. "There is also a growing body of evidence that demonstrates how engaging with culture and heritage can help to prevent, treat, and manage physical and mental health problems.

"Our new research is important as decisions made in the absence of appropriate evidence may assume that the monetary value of some



▲ Sarah Karlsberg  
of Frontier Economics



▲ Professor Daisy  
Fancourt

investments is zero. This has historically encouraged investment away from areas such as culture and heritage where the wider impact on the economy has been difficult to monetise."

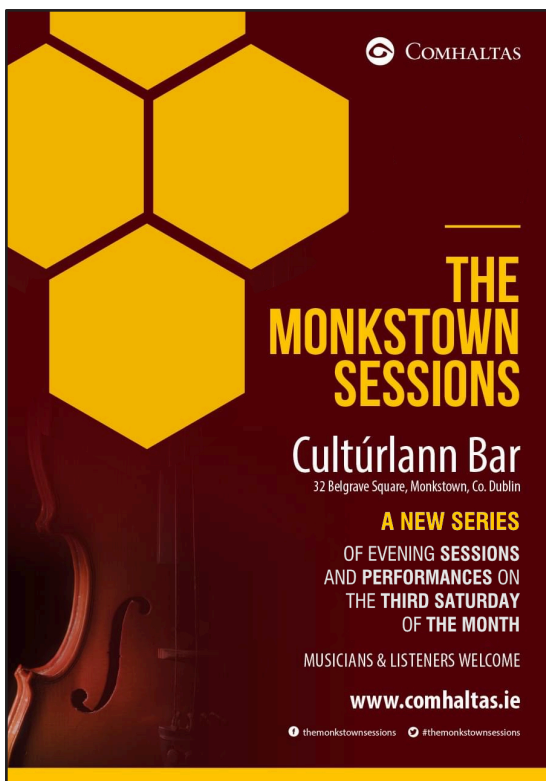
Frontier estimates that the health and wellbeing benefits associated with an individual adult engaging with culture and heritage every few months or more (such as visiting a museum, gallery or watching a concert) are worth over £1,000 per year.

At the population level, societal benefits, which also include increased productivity due to better health, are estimated to be worth just over £8bn per year in Britain.

Professor Daisy Fancourt, head of the Social Biobehavioural Research Group at University College London, added: "Scientific research is increasingly demonstrating that the arts are a fundamental health behaviour, just like physical activity, diet and sleep.

"As individuals, if we want to live happier and healthier lives, engaging in the arts is an evidence-based way of achieving this aim.

"As a society, when we're thinking about how to shift to preventative models of health, investing in arts and cultural training, activities and community venues should be considered a priority."



COMHALTAS

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## NEW RESEARCH DUE ON BASIC INCOME FOR ARTISTS

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) is to commission research into the economic impact of the Basic Income for the Arts (BIA).

The research will include a cost-benefit analysis of the current pilot scheme as well as a comparison with “other national policies with similar goals.”

The three-year Basic Income for the Arts pilot – which was launched by outgoing Minister Catherine Martin in September 2022 – is due to conclude in August 2025.

Over 9,000 applications were received for the scheme with around 2,000 artists and arts workers being selected to take part on the basis of receiving a weekly payment of €325.

The BIA scheme has been collecting data from participants throughout the scheme as well as from a control group who are not receiving the payment. The interim assessment of the scheme reported improved life satisfaction among participants, increased productivity, and a decrease in depression and anxiety.

The new research will use data drawn from BIA participants in order to examine the impact of the scheme on particular subgroups, such as specific art forms or particular household types.

While other public projects may be on hold awaiting the completion of the current process of Government formation, the officials in the DTCAGSM had no hesitation in moving ahead on this matter – not least because all of the main parties in the General Election gave commitments to continuing the scheme.

In its manifesto Fianna Fáil said that it would “retain the Basic Income for the Artists scheme and address access issues for disabled artists,” while Fine Gael declared that it would “continue the Basic Income for Artists” and “advance and assess the... pilot to maximise its impact, supporting financial stability for artists and fostering a thriving cultural sector.”

The Department has allocated €80,000 towards the research and has issued a call for tenders from researchers with qualifications in economics, public policy or related disciplines.



# KILA

## The Chambers Bar

Mount St, Mullingar

Friday 7 February 2025

Doors 9pm

Ticéidí: [Kila.ie/shows](http://Kila.ie/shows)





Ómos:  
Meaití Jó  
Shéamuis

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Ómos:  
Geordie  
McIntyre

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## legacy



# AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR MUSIC MANUSCRIPTS AND TEXTS

**A**mong the many resources of the National Library of Ireland is its music collection which includes manuscripts as well as printed material.

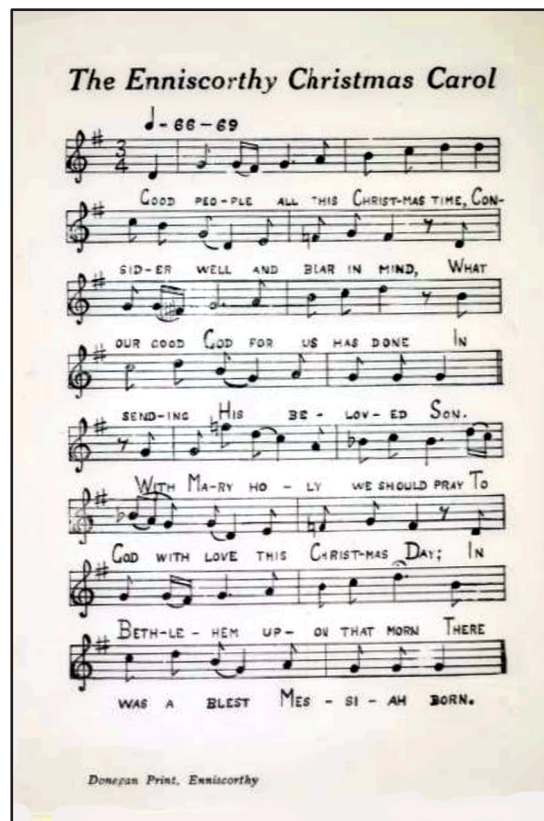
Printed music comprises mainly printed scores, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as broadsheet ballads and popular music printed for general circulation.

The Library's manuscript holdings include the papers of many figures and organisations in Irish music.

### Notable collections

The Joly music collection forms the core of the Library's music collection and contains over 6,000 items dating from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. It includes vocal music, popular songs like those by M.W. Balfe and Thomas Moore, produced for domestic and entertainment purposes.

The collection also contains instrumental music relevant to the army, instrumental music for piano and harp, collections and arrangements of Irish airs and variations.



The Library's Additional Music Collection contains over 13,000 items and dates from the mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century. It includes printed sheet music, vocal music, piano music, ballads, piano arrangements of opera numbers, instrumental music for piano and harp, Irish country dances, collections and arrangements of Irish airs and variations.

The Bryden Thomson collection consists of 700 items and includes music scores with personal notes and details of recordings and performances by the late conductor Bryden Thomson (1928-1991).

The Peggy Dell collection was gathered by Margaret Tisdall (1906-1979), better known by her stage name Peggy Dell, during her long career as a pianist, singer, and music hall entertainer. The 500 items include printed sheet music, vocal music, arrangements (some with instrumental parts included), ballads, instrumental music for piano and miscellaneous items.

Printed and manuscript music are located in the online catalogue and may be consulted in the Manuscripts Reading Room.



# ÓMÓS: BRENDAN MULVIHILL

The renowned fiddle player, Brendan Mulvihill died in December at his home in Glin, Co. Limerick.

Born in Northampton, England in 1954, Brendan emigrated with his family to New York City in 1965. He was taught to play the fiddle by his father, Martin Mulvihill, originally from Co. Limerick who was acclaimed as a National Heritage Fellow and one of the most highly respected Irish music teachers in America. Brendan's grandmother, Bridgid Mulvihill was also a fiddler.

In the early 1970s, Brendan travelled to Ireland playing throughout the country with his contemporaries and building a huge repertoire of tunes. He then moved to Birmingham, England where he played in céilí bands and with the many Irish musicians who had also settled in the English Midlands.

Early in his career, he won both the junior and senior All-Ireland Fiddle Championships and the All Ireland senior duet with Brooklyn-born button accordion virtuoso, Billy McComiskey.

Returning to New York in 1975, Brendan formed the band The Irish Tradition along with McComiskey and Kerry-born singer/guitarist Andy O'Brien. A booking for a week-long residency at The Dubliner pub in Washington, DC, was extended for several years. The band became a key focal point for traditional music in the capital.

The trio also toured beyond the District and were frequent visitors to the Eagle Tavern in New York in

the 1980s where the sessions in the bar after the gig were almost as hotly anticipated as the concerts. The band recorded two albums, *The Corner House*, in 1978, and *The Times We've Had*, in 1985 – both produced by Mick Moloney, who often joined the band during performances. Mick also produced Brendan's solo album, *The Flax in Bloom*, in 1979.

When The Irish Tradition disbanded, Brendan remained in the Washington/Baltimore area, as a base for further travels in the USA.

Brendan released a duo album, *The Morning Dew*, with pianist, Donna Long, in 1992 and an album of Irish dance music, *One More Time*, with Billy McComiskey and Zan McLeod, in 1999.

He took part in Mick Moloney's The Green Fields of America All-Star Irish Concert Tour and the Masters of the Folk Violin Tour. He performed at festivals around the world and at major concert venues.

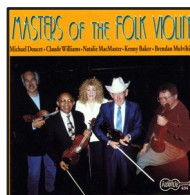
In 2018 he released another solo album, *The Journey*, a collection of live recordings of performances in a small old church in Virginia.

The late Micheál Ó Súilleabháin described Brendan as "a rare genius" saying "Brendan's music displays a sweetness of tone matched by an intuitive sense of variation."

Brendan also excelled as a teacher. His role in passing on the tradition to younger musicians earned him the Maryland Traditions Folk Arts



▲ Brendan Mulvihill 1954-2024



◀ Three for the Road: Brendan Mulvihill (centre) with Angelina Carberry and Dan Brouder – who toured America together in 2024.

and Culture Apprenticeship Award in 2005. He was inducted into the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Mid-Atlantic Region Hall of Fame in 2008.

After 47 years in the Washington area, Brendan, who had retained his Irish citizenship, returned home to County Limerick in 2012 to the farm in Glin where his father was born.

In 2013 Brendan published his first tune book, *Brendan Mulvihill's Irish Scroll Volume One*, with an instructional CD, containing 93 tunes. This was followed in 2021 by *Brendan Mulvihill's Irish Scroll Volume Two*, containing 234 tunes and accompanying CDs.

In 2023, Brendan released the full collection of his father's manuscripts – contained in four volumes that include over 2,300 tunes. *Martin Mulvihill's Collection of Irish Traditional Music* is the largest collection of Irish traditional music ever printed and it contains more tunes written after 1920s than any other traditional music collection. The publication also tells the story of where Martin played and of the many musicians he encountered.

In his personal life, Brendan was an incredibly loving father to his daughter Ciara, according to the tribute from his family. "They had many adventures together around the DC area, from trips to the Smithsonian, walks to the mall, and many visits to Asian supermarkets. Ciara cherishes the travel she was able to do with her mother and father to places like Iceland, Canada and Scotland.

Brendan is survived by his mother Olive Mulvihill; his siblings Brian, Gail, and Dawn; his daughter Ciara from his marriage to Abbie Mulvihill; and his partner Clara Poffenberger.





# ÓMÓS: DINNY McLAUGHLIN

**T**he influential Inishowen fiddler and composer, Dinny 'White Harra' McLaughlin, died in December at the age of 89.

Born in Shandrum near Buncrana in Inishowen in 1935, Dinny grew up in an era of house sessions involving music, dancing and singing. With his father, James, as a musical model, Dinny took lessons with local fiddle player, Pat Mulhern – eventually getting his own fiddle at age 14. His friendship with Pat Mulhern continued until the latter's death.

After Dinny began playing in music houses all over Inishowen and East Donegal, he became a member of the Buncrana Céili Band and played with the Clonmany Ceili Band for some years along with fiddle player Séamus Grant.

With the band, Aileach, Dinny achieved international recognition alongside Bernard Heaney, Pat McCabe and Brian McGrory.

Dinny began teaching in 1958 at the age of 23 and continued for over 40 years. He taught dancing and music in nearly every primary school in Inishowen, as well as other parts of Donegal and Derry, producing many fine solo musicians and groups for fleadh competition – winning All-Ireland titles in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Among his legion of fiddle pupils were Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Liz Doherty, Ciaran Tourish, Róisín and Damian Harrigan, Brenda Barron,

► **Tradition Bearer:** Dinny McLaughlin (Photo: Inishowen Traditional Music Project).

▼ **Buncrana Céili Band:** (from left) standing Father McGlinchey, Pat Mulhern (fiddle), Dinny McLaughlin (fiddle); sitting John McCracken, Rita Cutcliffe (piano), Paddy Kelly (piano accordion) and Frankie Doherty (drums) (Photo: Inishowen Traditional Music Project).



Michael Carey, Teresa McClure (nee Doherty) and Jimmy McBride, who died prematurely in a car accident.

Dinny also served as chairman of Craobh na h-Inse, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

He was the subject of a book by Liz Doherty, published in 2005, called *Dinny McLaughlin: From Barefoot Days – A Life Of Music Song & Dance In Inishowen*.

Among the many tributes that followed Dinny's death, came this from the band, Altan:

*Dinny McLaughlin was a huge influence on us growing up in Donegal. He was an inspirational teacher, a mentor and, most important, a true friend.*

Inishowen band, The Henry Girls described Dinny as “a true musical legend.”

*His contributions to the tradition will never be forgotten, here in Inishowen and far beyond. His legacy will continue to inspire generations to come, and we are so grateful for all he taught us over the years.*

The Inishowen Traditional Music Project (ITMP) said:

*We have had the privilege and fun of working with Dinny on many projects over the years from his film and album recording Ark of Tides in*

*2013 to having Dinny present to hear his suite of music performed by the Inishowen Trad Orchestra and Choir in the National Concert Hall, Dublin in January 2023.*

*Through his devotion to teaching, collecting and composing the music, song and dance of the peninsula is alive and all the richer for his nurturing.*

Expressing his condolences, Seán Doherty, composer and Assistant Professor of Music at Dublin City University, recalled how:

*My wee brother and I had great craic in his lessons. The Jinkin' Mermaid is one of my top tunes of all time.*

The January 2023 concert in the National Concert Hall also featured a poem written by Dinny entitled *Music*:

*I cradled it when in the dark  
And woke it from its sleep,  
I coaxed it through the feeble years  
To see a new dawn peep.  
And then, my love took root and grew,  
And bloomed a summer's day,  
May many reap the harvest,  
When I am long beneath the clay*

Dinny is mourned by his sisters, Annie and Bridget, and a wide circle of family and friends.



**S**ean-nós singer, musician, collector and broadcaster, Meaití Jó Séamuis Ó Fátharta, died peacefully in Áras Cois Farráige Nursing Home in Spiddal, Co. Galway, on January 3.

From Na hAille in Indreabhán in Connemara, Meaití was an award-winning sean-nós singer, a highly accomplished musician, lilter and storyteller – and a far-sighted collector whose work laid the foundation for Raidió na Gaeltachta's traditional music and song archive.

Born in 1947, the third of four children of Jó Séamuis Ó Fátharta and Nan Peaidí Nic Dhiarmada, Meaití grew up surrounded by songs and music.

The songs were inherited principally from his mother's family. Meaití's mother, Nan Pheadaí, was a great singer, and his uncle, Tom Pheadaí, was a great storyteller and singer.

The first song he learned was *Cailleach na Scribe* composed by Pádhraicín Chóil Bhile Ó Fátharta, from Teach Mór. Meaití's favourite song – which was to become his signature piece, *Bóithriní an Locháin*, composed by Pádraig Learaí Ó Féinneadha – was learned from his mother who was born near Lochán Beag.

From these modest beginnings, Meaití would go on to win the Comórtas na bhFear at the Oireachtas twice in 1992 and 1998 followed by the Corn Uí Riada at the Oireachtas in 2001 before releasing an album, *Bóithriní an Locháin*, in 2003.



## ÓMÓS: MEAITÍ JÓ SHÉAMUIS Ó FÁTHARTA

▼ Meaití Jó Séamuis Ó Fátharta (left) with Johnny Connolly (Photo: Mary Tobin).

The album contains a fine mix of music and songs, including local versions of *An Bhó Bhán* and *An Sagart Ó Domhnaill*, one track of lilting and three instrumental tracks: a flute duet with Neansaí Ní

Choisdealbha; and two sets of reels and jigs played by Meaití on uilleann pipes with Neansaí Ní Choisdealbha (flute), Johnny Connolly (melodeon), Aisling Ní Neachtain (harp), Luisne Ní Neachtain (fiddle), Tommy Ó Méalóid (accordion) and Micheál Deáirbí Ó Fátharta (melodeon).

Meaití also played on the album, *Subhóró*, released by Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge and on Neansaí Ní Choisdealbha's album, *Draíocht na Feadóige*.

His songs and music brought him around the world with Oireachtas na Gaeilge. He went to Canada to the "little Oireachtas" and to the US. He went to the Lorient Festival in Brittany several times, as well as Scotland.

His love of music was nurtured by his father's brother, Máirtín Séamuis Ó Fátharta – an accordion player – who was Meaití's first music teacher.

He started learning the flute when he was eight – before taking up the uilleann pipes. As well as two





## legacy: meaití jó shéamuis

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flutes, Maití had three sets of pipes – a D set, given to him by his cousin, Pádraicín Darby, and two B sets. His favourite piping tune was *Lord Gordon's* reel and his favourite piper was Willie Clancy.

Meaití also played the mouth trumpet like his uncle, Máirtín Séamuis, and the mouth organ – taking second place at the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

Meaití was also a regular participant in sessions in Tigh Chualáin and a few other pubs in the area along with Michael Mheáirt Ó Coisdealbha and Seosamh Ó Braonáin.

As for the day job, Meaití taught for a few years at Scoil Chuimhistí Chiaráin in An Cheathrú Rua after completing a degree in Irish and French at NUI Galway in 1969.

But most of his working life (twenty-eight years in total) was spent with Raidió na Gaeltachta.

He was one of seven presenters who started work there in 1972. He originally covered news, sport and entertainment before devoting more of his time to music.

In 1995 he was appointed Music



Organiser and travelled the country collecting and recording songs and music which now form part of the Raidió na Gaeltachta archive. He

▲ Meaití Jó an píobaire

put together a number of music programmes, including *Lán a Mála*, which provided important initial exposure for many younger musicians, including Máirtín Ó Connor, Póil Uí Kenabháin, Neansí Ní Choisdealbha and Johnny Óg Connolly.

His unique expertise was also put to use by both RnaG and TG4 as a contributor to programmes discussing music and songs. He also wrote many album liner notes for other artists as well as participating in music and singing festivals at home and abroad.

The impact of his visits to North America was reflected in the many tributes that followed his death from James Keane, Joanie Madden, Billy McComisky and many others.

Maití leaves an enduring legacy in music and journalism.

Predeceased by his eldest son Tadhg, who died in 2021, and by his parents, Nan Péaidí and Joe Séamuis, Maití is survived by his wife Jean, son Aengus, daughters Sinéad and Aedín, and their families, by his sister Máirín, and brothers Jimí and Pádraic.

**C**ork Singers Club stalwart, Mags Creedon O'Shea, died earlier this month. Mags was also a member of the Cork Songwriters Club – writing songs for, among others, the Mother Jones Festival and the Cork Libraries. She was also a regular performer with *Ó Bheal*, Cork's monthly poetry event. She was a Pan Celtic finalist in 2018 and 2019.

*This tribute to Mags was written by her cousin – the novelist and playwright, Cónal Creedon.*

My attempt at describing Margaret will fall far short – such a magnificent multi-stranded multi-talented woman.

Margaret was creative to her core – a poet, a singer, a songwriter, a performer, an artist – and significantly, a recurring theme in the many messages I received since her passing, remembered the encouragement that emanated from Margaret's very being. Margaret continues to be a source of great encouragement to so many, her live sketches of poetry readings (particularly attached to *Ó Bhéal* - Cork Poetry Events) stretching back well over a decade now live



## ÓMÓS: MAGS CREEDON

on as a most brilliant snapshot archive testament of a whole generation of writers in this town.

Such a very special person, of course, Margaret will be lovingly remembered as wife, mother, sister,

▲ Mags Creedon  
(Photo: Cork Singers Club)

aunt, cousin ... But to a whole generation she will be remembered as a friend.

And though, I have focused on Margaret's creativity, I was pleasantly surprised by the great number of messages remembering Mags as a healing person – in her chosen vocation as physiotherapist. It rekindled the many personal memories of meeting Margaret in Paddy Galvin and Mary Johnson's house – must be twenty years ago.

[Paddy Galvin was an era defining writer in Cork – and Mary Johnson championed writers when it was neither popular nor profitable].

At the time Paddy was elderly and recovering from an extremely debilitating stroke and Margaret would regularly call by their house to help out in any way that she could – how very typical of my cousin Mags.

My thoughts and sympathy go out to Bobby – and Dominic, Miriam and Robert.

I am blessed with so many happy memories shared with my cousins, memories that will see us through the sad days ahead. Mags will be sadly missed.

Ní beidh a leithead ann arís – never a truer word spoken.

# ÓMÓS: TIMMY O'CONNOR

The acclaimed Sliabh Luachra box player, Timmy O'Connor, died peacefully on December 14 at University Hospital Kerry, Tralee, in the company of his family.

Aged 89, Timmy from Toureen-darby, Newmarket Co. Cork, was an outstanding accordion player in the Sliabh Luachra style as well as being an acclaimed composer.

A stalwart of the annual Patrick O'Keeffe Traditional Music Weekend in Castleisland since its foundation in 1993, he was the recipient of the festival's Dedication to the Music of Sliabh Luachra award in 2018, presented by musician and broadcaster, Peter Browne.

In the citation for the award, local musicians, Raymond and Eoin Stan O'Sullivan, wrote:

*"As a young boy Timmy O'Connor loved to listen to music at the road-side dances on his aunt's gramophone and at the dances at his neighbours' houses. When an accordion was left behind after one of those house dances Timmy discovered that he could also play music."*

*As a fledgling musician his enthusiasm was so infectious that many retired players from the area around dusted off their instruments to share their tunes with him. Timmy in turn shared those tunes with anyone he played with.*

*Through his friendship with musicians like Jackie Daly, music that may otherwise have been lost has made its way into the repertoires of players all over the world.*

► Timmy O'Connor

▼ Timmy O'Connor playing with his three neices, Julianne, Karen and Eleanor Barry at one of the concerts to celebrate the launch of his album, *The Man from Toureen-darby* (2013).



In a statement of condolence issued after Timmy's death, the Patrick O'Keeffe Traditional Music Festival noted that "Timmy's music, both as a highly regarded Sliabh Luachra accordion player and as a composer, will be remembered forever. His impact on Sliabh Luachra music cannot be overstated."

Timmy was not only universally acclaimed as a gentleman, he

was also completely natural and unaffected as a performer. Once on stage during Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, he was about to start to play when his mobile phone rang. Unperturbed, he answered and apologised to the caller as he was "a bit busy at the moment!"

Five years before receiving the Sliabh Luachra award, Timmy launched a solo album, *As It Was in Toureen-darby* in which he not only captured the musical style of his own area but also included some of the repertoire he had learned from local musicians in order to preserve it for future generations

Timmy also contributed to Larry Lynch's set dancing tapes, *Set Dances of Ireland* (Vols II, III, IV) with Denis McMahon and Paudy Scully. And, of course, his final recording, *Tunes from Toureen-darby*, released earlier in 2024, with his box-playing partner, Pat Fleming, supported by Steve Cooney.

For almost seventy years he kept the musical flag flying along the eastern frontier of Sliabh Luachra, observed Eoin Stan O'Sullivan, while also touring in Britain, mainland Europe and the USA.





# ÓMÓS: ROBERT KELLY

"In his time he played with all the 'greats,' and was a link with a golden era in Sliabh Luachra music.

"A humble and grámhar gentleman, Timmy seemed as happy playing music with children as with the 'stars,' and over his long career he helped many young aspiring musicians and dancers. He had an amazing repertoire which he was always willing to share freely.

"Some of his tunes stretched back to Tom Billy, whose music he picked up from his friend and neighbour, Johnny Mickey Barry," he added.

Among the many tributes paid to Timmy after his death was this from fellow box-player, Damien Mullane:

*So encouraging and kind to all the young musicians. He will never be forgotten. A true legend.*

Local publican, Mary Jones of The Rambling House/Charlie Horan's Bar in Castleisland, who was one of the founders of the Patrick O'Keeffe Festival, added:

*A great supporter of the Patrick O'Keeffe Festival from day one. He was always smiling and a fantastic musician and person. A very proud Sliabh Luchra man.*

The Irish Traditional Music Archive recalled a recent interview conducted with Timmy and Pat Fleming during Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy in 2023.

Timmy was predeceased by his parents, Julia and Tim, and brothers, Dan and Bill, and sister Joan. He is survived by his sister Sheila Barry and by a number of nieces, nephews and their families.

**R**obert Kelly – a popular and well respected presence at singing circles in many parts of Ireland – but especially in the Greater Dublin area – passed away earlier this month.

A proud Mayo man from Ballyhaunis, Robert had been living in Cabinteely in South County Dublin for a number of years with his wife, Eileen, and their five children.

A fine singer with a rich voice, Robert was not only acclaimed for his sensitive rendering of many songs from the traditional canon – but also for his own compositions, including many which showcased his ready wit and wry sense of humour.

Among the many tributes that followed Robert's death, the Bray Singing Circle – where Robert was a frequent attendee – noted that he was a "stalwart of Bray Singers' Circle and other singing clubs for many years."

"Everyone loved him for his wonderful songs, his infectious humour and his generosity," the Bray group added, "We'll miss him sorely. It really does feel like the end of an era."

Describing him in similar terms, An Góilín Traditional Singers added that Robert was "a true gentleman," while Góilín and Sean-Nós Cois Life veteran and broadcaster, Antaine Ó Faracháin, noted that "he was such a lovely man, it was indeed a privilege to have known him. Go raibh suaimhneas síora aige."



▲ **Robert Kelly:** singing Robbie O'Connell's *Zozimus* song on the first Frank Harte Festival Walking and Singing Tour in 2009 (Photo: An Góilín).

In addition to all the memories of Robert's singing, songwriting, storytelling and engaging personality, members of the Howth Singing Circle have a more tangible reminder of his participation in its activities in the form of a solid wooden replica of the Singing Circle's ship's wheel logo – which Robert, a master carpenter, skillfully crafted and presented to the Circle.

"You never left Robert's company without a smile and a lift in the heart," observed Francy Devine from Howth, "though you might be a step of two away before the irony or subtle humour of his last remark struck you. At that point, a look back was rewarded with a nodded grin or thumbs up."

Robert is survived by his wife, Eileen, and by his children, Alma, Bridget, Susan, Robbie and Laura and their families; by his sisters, Angela, Kitty and Rita, and by his brothers, John and Aidan, and their families.



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**Saturday  
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## A Cup of Kindness



featuring  
**The Friel Sisters**



# ÓMÓS: GEORDIE McINTYRE

**G**eordie McIntyre, the renowned Scottish singer, songwriter, collector, concert promoter, folk club organiser, record producer and author, died on January 7.

Traditional music was a pivotal influence in Geordie's life. His commitment to conduct research into the background to songs and ballads meant that, even though he had left school at fifteen with no qualifications, he was accepted as a student at Strathclyde University and Jordanhill College where he qualified as a teacher. Then his imaginative use of song in his teaching eventually led to a parallel career in broadcasting.

Born in Govanhill, Glasgow, in 1937, Geordie grew up with his mother and maternal grandparents in a house that had no electricity until 1948. An evangelical preacher, his grandfather sang religious songs, which formed the soundtrack of Geordie's childhood along with the music of the entertainer, Al Jolson, and the country-gospel singer, Tennessee Ernie Ford.

On leaving school, Geordie initially became an apprentice radio repair engineer. At weekends, he often tried to escape from the city



– either by cycling or by joining friends on climbing trips to the Cairngorms and Glencoe.

On one such trip, he heard one of the company sing the old bothy ballad, *The Barnyards of Delgaty* and even though Geordie didn't fully understand the words, he was enchanted by its melody and lyrical patterns.

A subsequent chance encounter in Killin, resulted in an invitation to sing and play his recently acquired guitar at a party that turned out to

▲ Geordie McIntyre at the Inishowen Traditional Singing Weekend in 2011 (Photo: Paul Eliasberg Collection, Irish Traditional Music Archive).

▼ Geordie McIntyre and Allison McMorland (Photo: Charlie West).



be a meeting of Glasgow Folk Song Club – where Geordie would meet a number of singers including Flora MacNeil and Davie Stewart along with the influential folklorist Hamish Henderson.

Geordie formed first the Folk-song Workshop with fiddler Bobby Campbell and singer-musician, Gordon McCulloch. Among the guests at the Workshop were Joe Heaney, Luke Kelly and Lou Killen. Three years later, Geordie was instrumental in the establishment of the Folksong and Ballad Club, which brought singers like Ewan MacColl to the Grand Hotel in Charing Cross.

As Geordie became more involved in the English and History studies that took him into teaching, singing took a backseat for a while but Geordie kept his hand in by producing albums, including *Streets of Glasgow* and *Glasgow Horizons*, and writing sleeve notes for Topic Records.

## HAMISH AND ALISON

While he was teaching at Castlemilk School in Glasgow, Geordie met BBC radio producer, Donald MacDonald, and became a regular contributor to BBC Radio Scotland's current affairs programme, *Crossfire*, for which he wrote songs on topical subjects.

Arguably his best known song, *Inveroran*, was composed during the 1980s (and appeared on the album, *Glasgow Horizons*, in 1990).

In 1989, he organised a ceilidh to celebrate Hamish Henderson's seventieth birthday and a concert to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War.

At this concert Henderson re-introduced Geordie to the traditional singer, Alison McMorland, and the two hit it off. Although both were essentially solo performers, Alison and Geordie developed a joint repertoire based on a fine sense of personal harmony.

Together they have sung at concerts and festivals across Britain, Ireland and North America, and have recorded albums including *Where Ravens Reel* and *Rowan in the Rock*.

Geordie also contributed to various publications on the life and influence of Hamish Henderson.

Both Geordie and Alison were inducted individually into the Hall of Fame at the MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards 2018 in Perth.



## major scéal

*Joe Heaney:  
Singing & Community*

In this issue of *fonn*, ethnomusicologist Virginia Blankenhorn provides the third instalment of a three-part reflection on the life and times of the iconic Connemara singer, Joe Heaney/Seosamh Ó hÉanaí, who died on May 1, 1984.

This article is a substantially revised, updated and expanded version of an essay first published in 2010 on the website [www.joeheaney.org](http://www.joeheaney.org); hyperlinks to that and other sites are included here. All four essays originally written for the website are now located at [https://www.academia.edu/60674188/Joe\\_Heaney\\_and\\_His\\_Tradition](https://www.academia.edu/60674188/Joe_Heaney_and_His_Tradition), where readers will also find a comprehensive, hyperlinked listing of the singer's repertoire in both Irish and English; transcriptions and notes on several items not presently included on the site; a list of items recorded from and by members of the Heaney family in the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin; and a summary of Joe Heaney's English-language repertoire in the *Roud, Laws and Child* indexes.

**G**iven the time that Joe Heaney spent in academic settings in the United States, it's no surprise that his cultural heritage, singing style, repertoire, and performance practice have been thoroughly scrutinised by academics on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, in the years since the folk music revival of the 1960s and 1970s the study of ethnomusicology has blossomed in places – including Ireland – where its presence in university curricula had previously been limited.

Some of this scholarship will be reflected here. For the most part, however, what follows will highlight Joe's own thoughts and opinions about his songs and stories, how they should be performed, and how he chose to present them to different audiences from Connemara to the Pacific Northwest.





## An Audience with Joe Heaney

**B**efore we can approach that topic, however, we need to be clear about who these audiences were, for singing is a form of communication, and communication is a two-way street. Crucial to our understanding of Joe's choices will be his understanding of the term 'community' – a term that today carries connotations that would probably have baffled him.

These days the word is often used to indicate people who identify with particular groups or who share interests and attitudes in common, people who may never have met 'in real life', but who nonetheless feel attuned to one another by virtue of a shared experience or identity, or through having interacted online. These uses of the word 'community' are all useful and necessary in today's world.

For Joe Heaney, however, and for all generations prior to our own, 'community' meant the people among whom one lived from day to day, the group that included family members, neighbours, and – by extension – the wider circles of people, wherever they lived, to whom one felt connected by genealogy and shared history.

We earlier noted how people in Connemara use by-naming to distinguish among individuals of the same surname. This system also allows them to trace connections with people they have not previously met. In Connemara, meeting someone for the first

time – assuming that the stranger is another Connemara Irish-speaker and not an obvious incomer – is less likely to provoke the question 'where are you from?' (Cé as thú?) than 'who are you from?' (cé dhár dhíobh thú?, literally, 'who are the people you are descended from?'). The ensuing conversation then goes on to trace known relationships until the participants feel that they are on solid ground.

When Joe Heaney was growing up in Carna, everyone knew everyone else. While they might not always get along – fallings-out and grudges being as common in Connemara as in any other close-knit locality – they nonetheless shared the same assumptions about how things worked.

Crucially for our discussion here, they also shared a common repertoire of songs, stories, proverbs, aphorisms – all reflecting memories, traditions, belief systems and habits of mind that might have seemed mysterious to an outsider, but that were the bedrock of their identity as a people.

Performing this traditional repertoire at home, singers knew that those listening were familiar with it already, knew the story behind the particular song and possibly the name of the poet who had composed it. Such songs fitted snugly into the minds of both singers and listeners, because their themes and concerns reflected their own lived experience. Explanations were unnecessary, and commentary was well-informed.

Listeners might comment upon the quality of a singer's performance, and excellent singers were celebrated; but it was the songs themselves that the people prized, which provided opportunities for listeners to contribute their own understanding of what they had heard, recall stanzas that the singer had left out, discuss lines that the listener knew differently, critique and encourage young singers, and reminisce about characters mentioned in the song or singers who were strongly identified with it. In this fashion the traditional repertoire functioned as a self-reinforcing bulwark of the people's communal identity.

Once Joe Heaney left Connemara, however, he could no longer assume that his audiences could follow him in this fashion, because most of the people listening to him were strangers – and likely to remain so, given the distancing effect not just of his authority and status, but of stage and microphone. He had the steep task of understanding a shifting variety of new audiences and the communities from which they came – from the

eager attendees at English folk clubs to the ethnomusicologists, students and folk revivalists that he encountered across the United States and even Australia – so that he could help them make sense of what he was doing.

How he successfully navigated this challenge and mediated his own tradition to these new audiences – and the impact of those adjustments upon his repertoire and his singing style – is the subject of what follows.

▼ **Song of Granite:** Micheál Ó Conphaola as Joe Heaney working as a doorman at the Langham Building in New York City in Pat Collins' recent film, *Song of Granite* (Photo: Allstar/Marcie Films)





▼ The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem (Photo: Columbia Records).



## Joe Heaney and the Ballad Boom

**W**hen Joe Heaney returned to Ireland from England in 1961, the folk music revival was getting into its stride worldwide. In the United States, the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem had acquired an agent and a recording contract and were enjoying phenomenal success. At home, Ronnie Drew was forming the ballad group that subsequently became known as the Dubliners.

The 'ballad boom' encouraged the formation of groups like the Wolfe Tones, the Johnstons, and Sweeney's Men in the 1960s, the same decade that saw the emergence of Seán Ó Riada's group, Ceoltóirí Chualann; these were followed in the 1970s by 'super-groups' like Planxty, the Bothy Band, the Chieftains and many others. All of these groups relied on musical instruments – initially, the guitar and banjo were favoured – to maintain a strong rhythmical beat. Even slow, contemplative songs were sung to the accompaniment of a guitar.

It's hard to remember now just how innovative all of this was. Prior to the 1960s, Irish dance music was played by solo performers, or by céilí bands in which everyone played in unison, supported by a piano and drum-kit. Singing never came into it.

▼ Ronnie Drew Photo: *The Dubliners*.



The sort of ensemble playing that emerged in the '60s represented a total departure from what had gone before; and the involvement of singers alongside musicians in such groups was nothing short of revolutionary.

As a solo singer, Joe Heaney represented the old guard. Despite his friendship with the Clancys and the Dubliners, he didn't really approve of the groups and what he called their 'gimmicks,' which included the guitar. He was critical of the show-off tendency of younger musicians to play the dance music much too fast. He spoke wistfully about the Ballinakill Ceilí Band.

Like many others, Joe felt that the presence of any accompaniment reduced the respect owing to the song and to the singer, and that a regular rhythmic 'beat' turned the song into something light that no longer required the listener's close concentration. In short, he saw the tradition being hijacked, and he was upset about it.

He saw it as his job to guard the tradition, to see that it got the honour and respect that it deserved, given the hardships endured by those who had created and preserved it through the worst of times in Ireland.







## Creating meaning

In retrospect, it's hardly surprising that Joe's attempts to become part of the ballad scene in Dublin met with difficulty. Even when he was singing in English, his style of singing – unaccompanied, rhythmically subtle, melismatic, vocally expressive – was simply too different from what people had come to expect.

Connemara singing requires a truly attentive audience. Unlike the songs favoured by the balladeers – punchy rebel songs, comic songs, drinking songs, sentimental songs that don't demand much serious thought – the native repertoire of someone like Heaney requires an imaginative and open-minded listener, someone willing to encounter a complex musical idiom and to engage with poetry that is both verbally and historically nuanced.

Listeners need to co-create the song in their own minds, to work along with the singer to bring the imagery and meaning of the song home. Such an audience was available to Joe at home in Carna, where his listeners had been familiar with the songs all their lives, and their everyday speech bore much in common with the rich language of the song-poetry.

Unfortunately, the sort of concentration required by unaccompanied traditional singing is difficult in a noisy concert hall where most of the audience want to hear the ballads. As Joe himself told Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, 'The old songs aren't meant to be sung on a stage. They're meant to be sung in a country house, or on the same level as the people listening. ...'<sup>1</sup> The fact that Joe often sang in a language understood by only a small minority of listeners raised the bar even higher.

<sup>1</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 110. Translated from Irish.

▼ **Proinsias Mac Aonghusa**  
(Photo: Creative Commons  
Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0)



## What is sean-nós?

These days, the singing style of Connemara – now commonly referred to as sean-nós – is widely recognized, and has influenced singing in both Irish and English well beyond Connemara. But questions about its character and origins still come up, and for this reason it may be useful to offer some basic explanations.

The Irish expression sean-nós ('old style') came to be used in connection with traditional unaccompanied singing in Irish in the early days of the Oireachtas competitions, where it was used to differentiate the traditional singing of the Gaeltacht areas from the sort of thing that would be heard in polite drawing-rooms round the piano.

In the century since, the term has become shorthand for a prescribed set of stylistic features governing vocal quality, rhythmic character, melodic variation, and a multitude of other factors – so many, in fact, that people's minds have refused to hold them all, and the term has come to be used and abused to the point of meaninglessness.<sup>2</sup>

Joe Heaney, like many of his contemporaries, rarely used the term sean-nós. Indeed, traditional singer Siorcha Ní Ghuairim disliked it so strongly that the Oireachtas in 1943 featured a discussion entitled *Symposium on the Singing of the Gaeltacht* in which, among other topics, the appropriate terminology was discussed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>For a list of all the criteria along with a good summary of the history and development of this term, see Anthony McCann, *Sean-Nós Singing: A Bluffer's Guide* in the online magazine, *The Living Tradition* (June/July 1998).

<sup>3</sup>See Róisín Nic Dhonncha, 'An tOireachtas agus an Amhránaíocht ar an Sean-Nós: Cruthú agus Sealbhú Traidisiúin' in Ruairí Ó hUiginn and Liam Mac Cóil (eds.), *Blainiris* 2004, 57-71.



▼ **Edward Martyn** (Image: Courtesy of the Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, donated by Sarah Purser [the Artist], 1924).

**major scéal:**  
**joe heaney**

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It's easy to understand why the word was objectionable: the word *sean* ('old') term implies the existence of something 'new'; but in Connemara this 'new' thing – the parlour-singing that the organizers of the Oireachtas wanted to rule out – was unheard of. There was only ever one kind of singing there, and its character was understood and transmitted from one generation to the next without any need for analysis or definitions or comparisons with other genres – an understanding reflected in the fact that many people, especially in Iorras Aithneach, prefer the term *fonnadóireacht*, which simply means 'singing'<sup>4</sup>

Today, western societies – including the Gaeltacht areas of Ireland – are increasingly multi-ethnic, acutely conscious of cultural differences, ready to make comparisons and trace influences and draw conclusions. But when Joe Heaney was growing up, cultural differences, while they might be acknowledged in the wider political and social context, did not significantly impinge upon the social and artistic life of the community.

So much for the terminology – but what of the singing itself? Are there ways of listening to the native singing of Connemara, and ways of thinking about it, that will make it more comprehensible to those of us – and today, this includes Gaeltacht residents – who have grown up with all the mainstream musical choices that radio, TV and the internet now make possible?

<sup>4</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 51-2.

## 'Music' and 'Singing' in Ireland

**I**reland as a whole is a musically conservative country. While Ireland has its share of mainstream popular music festivals, traditional music is still widely popular, with many people still going out on a Saturday night to hear eighteenth-century dance music played on fiddles and uilleann pipes. Such music remains a huge tourist attraction and an important source of revenue.

Even so, it's worth remembering that musical instruments are relative newcomers to Ireland. For most of time, there has been only one source of melody: the human voice.

Singing is a natural human activity that brings people together, and that helps us express feelings that otherwise might not find a voice. In the history of all music, in every society on earth, this was the starting-point. At one time, the type of singing native to Connemara would not have seemed strange at all, because something like it would have existed everywhere. Over centuries, however, musical life began to assume greater variety. In addition to mourning one's dead or lulling one's child to sleep, singing became part of preparations for battle, victory celebrations and religious rites. In many societies, singing became a group activity, or it began to accompany dancing, or both.

For those societies that developed group singing, particularly as an accompaniment for dance or group ritual, the regularisation of rhythm became necessary in order to maintain group cohesion. Rhythm is intrinsic to being alive, and the first rhythmical accompaniment was probably provided by people's feet and hands. Next came the idea that a rhythmical device – like a plucked string – could also carry a pitch.

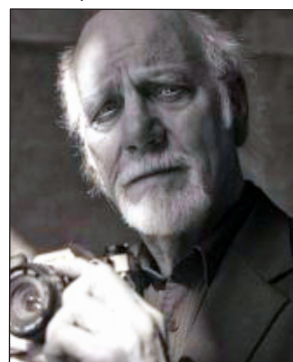
In time, the accompaniment of the human voice with musical instruments came to be seen as part of the natural order. And because instruments could do things that the human voice could not, instrumental music began to develop its own forms, functions, and traditions.

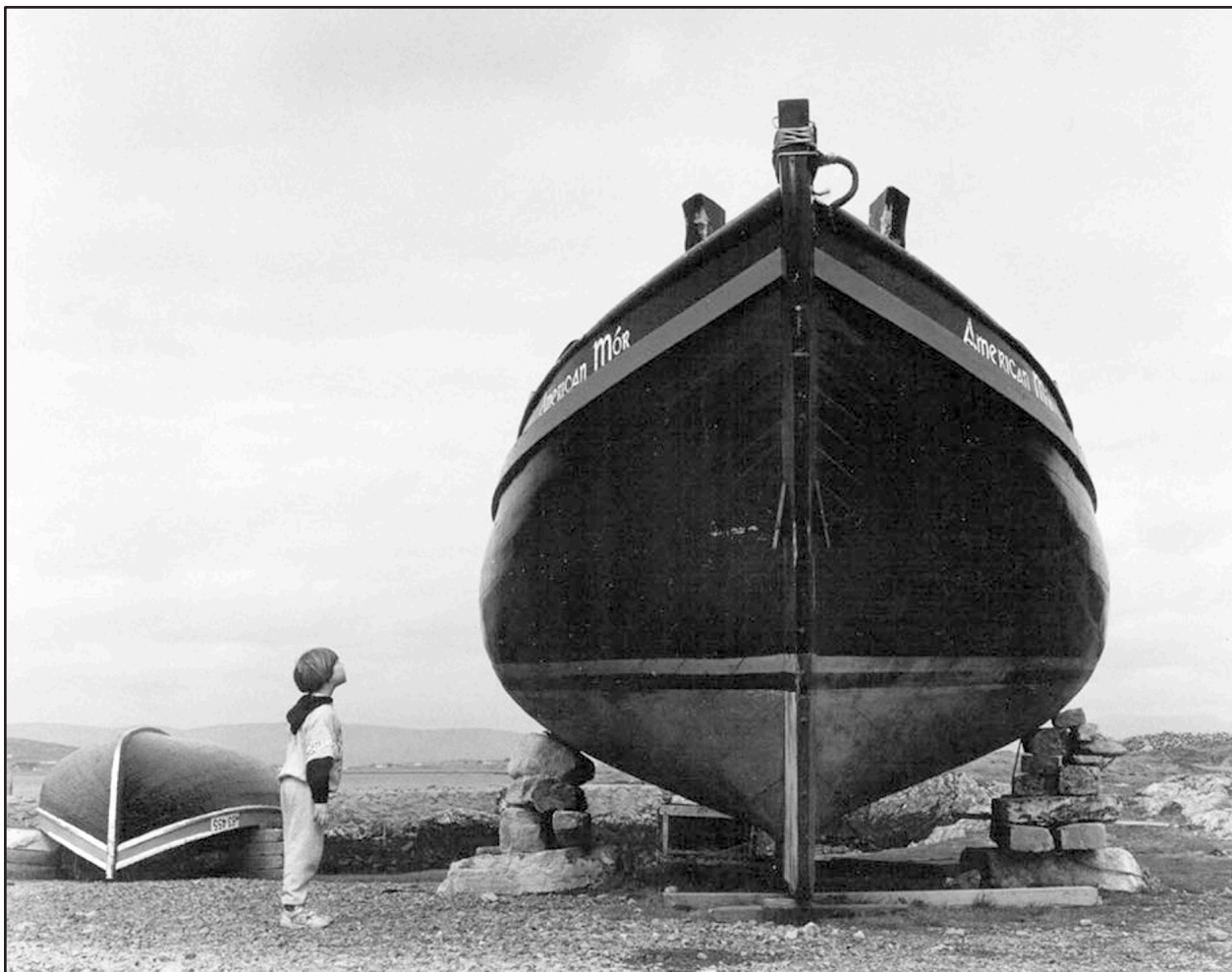
Traditional singing in Irish has long struck the ears of those outside the tradition as something exotic. Edward Martyn, an early member of Conradh na Gaeilge and contemporary of W. B. Yeats, wrote in 1902 that it reminded him 'of beautiful Gregorian singing, or of Orientals chanting in old mysterious tonality'<sup>5</sup>

More recently, Irish film-maker, writer and photographer Bob Quinn has gone further, arguing that Connemara's native singing tradition can only be explained by reference to non-European models.

<sup>5</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 129.

▼ **Bob Quinn** (Photo: Hugh O'Connor)



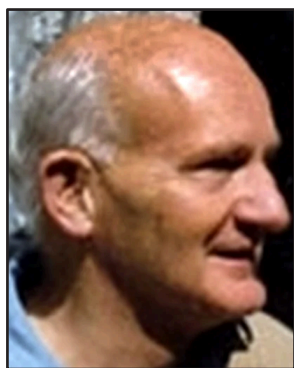


In his [documentary film series \*Atlantean\*](#) (1983), Quinn proposed that Connemara was part of a cosmopolitan seafaring culture that ranged as far as the Mediterranean, and that the similarity (as he hears it) between the melismatic Connemara singing style and that of Arabic-speaking north Africa is no coincidence.

It is more probable, however, that Irish-language song-culture is simply a remnant of an earlier time, when the human voice was still the principal means of creating musical sound. Rather than developing a choral tradition or a singing tradition closely allied with dance, the people of Ireland viewed singing as a solo activity. (Indeed, Irish people still distinguish between ‘musicians’ and ‘singers’, and do not – at least in the traditional context – consider the latter as a subset of the former.)

Because there was no ensemble to maintain, singing did not require regularisation in rhythmical terms, the singer was free to improvise melodic elements at the moment of performance, and the regularisation of tonality was unnecessary. Indeed, its flexible tonality is one of the least noted but most distinguishing features of singing in Joe Heaney’s community. If you need to be convinced that tonality – like so many other variables in the performance of this repertoire – is a slippery concept, try taking down in staff notation Joe’s performance of [An Sceilpín Droighneach](#) or [The Yellow Silk Handkerchief](#).

▲ A still from Bob Quinn’s 1984 documentary film, *Atlantean* (Photo: Cinegael)



► Prof. Seán Ó Tuama (Photo: RTÉ)

## A word about song-structure

So, if rhythm, melody and pitch are all variable, what if anything is invariable? What gives form and structure to the songs in this tradition? What anchors all this variability to the ground?

In terms of both thematic content and musical form, the majority of Irish songs reflect – *pace* Bob Quinn – centuries-old European models. With regard to themes, Prof. Seán Ó Tuama has convincingly demonstrated that those found in traditional Irish love poetry can be traced to the *amour courtois* (‘courtly love’) rhetoric developed by the troubadour and *trouvère* poets of the High Middle Ages in France – themes which likely entered Ireland at the time of the Anglo-Norman settlement in the late twelfth century.<sup>6</sup>

Other themes attested in Irish poetry for many centuries include panegyric – along with its dark side, satire – and lament. From about 1600, the

<sup>6</sup>Seán Ó Tuama, ‘Love in Irish Folksong’, in *Repossessions: Selected Essays on the Irish Literary Heritage*, Cork: Cork University Press (1995), 134–58.



▼ **Joe Heaney at the Newport Folk Festival 1966** (Photo: Diana Davies/  
Ralph Rinzler Archive, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC).

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joe heaney

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settlement of large numbers of English-speakers in Ireland widened the thematic range while retaining the rhetoric of panegyric, which remains a mainstay of both the Irish and English language song traditions, and accounts for the large number of songs of praise and dispraise in the Irish repertoire. Narrative song represents an important strand of the English-language repertoire, reflecting the wide currency of broadside and classic ballads among the English-speaking population. By contrast, songs in Irish tend to dwell upon the emotional content of a situation, and an accompanying story (*údar*) is either summarised for listeners beforehand, or assumed to be well-enough known already to need no explanation.<sup>7</sup>

As regards the airs, many of those used in connection with songs in the Connemara tradition can also be heard to songs sung in English, and belong to a common stock of melodies used throughout Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> Most of them contain no more than two melodic elements, which most often occur in the familiar configurations ABAB, ABBA, or AABA, and the end of a stanza always coincides with the end of the melody. In respect of both thematic content and musical structure, therefore, the Connemara repertoire presents no unusual challenge to the listener.

In structural terms, it is the poetry which provides the solid foundation for the airy filigree of melodic and rhythmic variability characteristic of the Connemara style. Like songs in the English-language tradition of Ireland, the Connemara repertoire consists largely of songs composed in two- or four-line stanzas, with all lines in a stanza of equal length and all stanzas constructed on the same pattern.<sup>9</sup>

This arrangement provides a predictable framework for the listener, allowing the singer to weave a rhythmically flexible and subtly variable melodic tapestry within a clearly-defined matrix without fear of losing the listener, for whom the text's meaning is enhanced by the singer's variations.

To borrow an analogy from another musical genre, it is as if the predictability of the poetic structure functions as a 'ground bass' for the singer. Indeed, the singer must remain 'grounded' by the text if the song is to have any meaning, as we shall hear from Joe's own comments presently.



## Pace, rhythm and 'ornamentation'

**F**or most people not born to it, the difficulties presented by Connemara singing – or the singing of any Gaeltacht area, for that matter – are stylistic rather than structural.

Rhythmically, it may be helpful to think of these performances not as songs, but rather as slow, deliberate recitations, with melody used to heighten the normal flow and emphasis of speech. Such a concept may lie behind the expression *abair amhráin* which – as Joe never tired of pointing out to his students – does not mean 'sing a song' but rather 'say a song.'

In any case, an understanding of how speech and verse operate in Irish is crucial for anyone hoping to learn these songs, which may explain why one so often hears the argument that *sean-nós* style cannot be learned by someone who is not a native Irish speaker.

### 'Pulse' and 'beat'

Considering these songs as elaborated recitations may also help us make sense of a statement Joe was fond of making to anyone who would listen. Speaking with journalist Frank Ahern, Joe made what he considered a fundamental distinction:

In that type of singing there is no 'beat' – it's only got a 'pulse.' And the minute you put beat to it, it's dead. You can't get the same feeling out of it anymore. And in *sean-nós* there is a very deep feeling; and without that feeling, the song is lost, especially on the audience.<sup>10</sup>

How does Joe differentiate between 'beat' and 'pulse' – two words that, in some sense at least, are synonymous? Here's what he said on one occasion to James Cowdery:

JC: And by 'pulse' you don't mean something regular?

JH: Something that goes evenly, more or less, you know, with no sort of loudness all the time, no sort of (thumps table-top) 'down' all the time. It's a thing that keeps going; and when it stops, then... whatever they're doing is dead.<sup>11</sup>

### And again, to Cowdery:

A lot of the old songs were destroyed by the present ballad groups, you know... the balladeers. They're taking good songs and they're strumming guitars and knocking hell out of them, you know. I mean, [if] you're going to a funeral, you should go slowly, you should be sad, and they go to a funeral... so fast you'd think they were running a race or something.

▼ **James Cowdery, City University of New York** (Photo: James Cowdery)



<sup>7</sup>Virginia Blankenhorn, 'Irish Song and the Idea of Tradition' in M. Haslett, *The Oxford Handbook of Irish Song*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2021).

<sup>8</sup>Compare, for example, the air to which Joe sings '[An Tiarna Randal](#)' with that of '[The Star of the County Down](#)'. There are, of course, airs in the Connemara repertoire that do not turn up elsewhere and were probably composed locally.

<sup>9</sup>There are exceptions in terms of stanza-length – see '[Eileanóir a Rúin](#)' – but they are rare. At the linear level, the importance of the metrical character of Irish verse in governing the musical expression of the poetry is considerable; see Virginia Blankenhorn, *Irish Song-Craft and Metrical Practice Since 1600*, Lampeter and Lewiston, NY (2003).

<sup>10</sup>From an [interview](#) videotaped in San Francisco in 1983 for the television programme *Irish Magazine*.

<sup>11</sup>UW 850105. Recorded by James Cowdery, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, between 1979 and 1981. Cowdery recalled this conversation in his book, *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press (1990), 35.

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You get me? Feeling – you got to have feeling in the song. Without the feeling – It all depends on the song. You're singing a drinking song, you got to have a jolly feeling. You're singing a sad song, you got to have a sad feeling. That's the way it should be done. If you don't bring that out in the song, nobody can enjoy it.

Two issues appear to be important for Joe here. On the one hand, it's a question of tempo: Joe objects to the speed at which certain guitar-wielding ballad groups are playing songs that he thinks should be sung more slowly. At the same time, he clearly objects to the whole foot-tapping aspect of the balladeers' performances, with the guitar being used to enforce a metronomic musical 'beat' that obliterates the integrity of the poetic line and overrides the subtly-varying speech-rhythm of the verse, i.e., the 'pulse'.<sup>12</sup>

Joe believes that it is the singer's job to express the rhythm of the lines based on his interpretation of them, thereby revealing his understanding of the emotion expressed in the song. If we are correct in identifying the rhythm of the poetry as the anchor of the whole performance, then Joe's statement that songs have been 'destroyed' by the eradication of such poetic rhythm becomes easier to comprehend.

A revealing contrast can be heard in a recording that Joe made with Scottish revival singer Geordie McIntyre in the 1960s, on which he and Geordie sing alternative verses of the Napoleonic War anti-recruiting song, *Mrs McGrath*. While this is not a song that Joe would ever have sung in a slow, melodically-ornate style, it is much easier to tap one's foot to Geordie's stanzas than it is to Joe's, because Joe's phrasing reveals his subordination of the musical 'beat' to the rhythm that would be natural if the lines were spoken.

**'Ornamentation'**

If one question arose more than any other in Joe's teaching career, it doubtless involved the subject of 'ornamentation'.<sup>13</sup> People wanted to know how he could tell where the 'ornaments' should go. The difficulty he had in providing an answer points to the fact that the question took him somewhat by surprise, and revealed that his questioners came from a different starting-point, a different set of assumptions.

To talk of 'ornamentation' implies a belief that, to the singer, there is a basic air to which 'ornaments' are then added – like the flourishes on a wedding-cake. Tim Robinson, writing about the process of creating a map, wrote:

In devising symbols for different terrains such as rocky shore, sand-dunes, craggy hillside and blanket bog, I looked for visual equivalents of their feel underfoot, the internationally standardized ornaments being unknown in practice and *a priori* unacceptable to me; even the term 'ornament', with its connotations of

<sup>12</sup> Joe's well-known dislike of the guitar undoubtedly stems from its use as a metronome, as discussed here. But there may be more to it than that. Joe told his friend Gerry Shannon, 'I don't like guitars accompanying me because I don't know who is accompanying who! They could be trying to be following me and I'd be trying to follow them!' (Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 250).

<sup>13</sup> See Williams and Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West*, 47–68.



superficiality and redundancy, was quite inappropriate for these textures that were to be the very substance and ground of the drawing.<sup>14</sup>



▲ **Esther Warkov:** researcher  
(Photo: Esther Warkov)

Joe Heaney did not think of his artistry in terms of 'ornament' – at least, not until persistent questioning required him to do so. Indeed, for many of Joe's airs, such as, *Dónal Óg* or *Úna Bhán*, it would be difficult to identify a 'basic' melody in any case. What he inherited was an organic whole. Even considering the text separately from the air was difficult for Joe, since the shape of the air depends upon that of the text. In a 1978 conversation, *Esther Warkov asked Joe* how he worked out where to place the ornaments in a song:

EW: When you learn a song, do you learn the ornaments with it, or do you learn the song straight and then just – ?

JH: First of all you got to learn the song and develop your own style. I mean, as the saying goes, you've got to walk before you can run. The main thing is to learn the song, and what the song is all about. That's the main thing. And then, develop your own style in doing it. And then, there's nobody living can tell anybody where to put the grace-notes in a song – you just do it yourself. It takes years.

EW: But a pattern kind of has developed over the years, that makes...

JH: Oh, yeah. You develop your own style, and do it, but it takes years and years of doing it. ...

EW: ...The slower songs, then, would be more highly ornamented than the faster songs.

JH: Oh, yes, much more. Much more. Much more. ... Yeah, well, see, the point is that the ornamentation came from, you see, that the people wanted to hold



▲ **Sean Williams:** One of Joe Heaney's former students  
(Photo: Sean Williams)

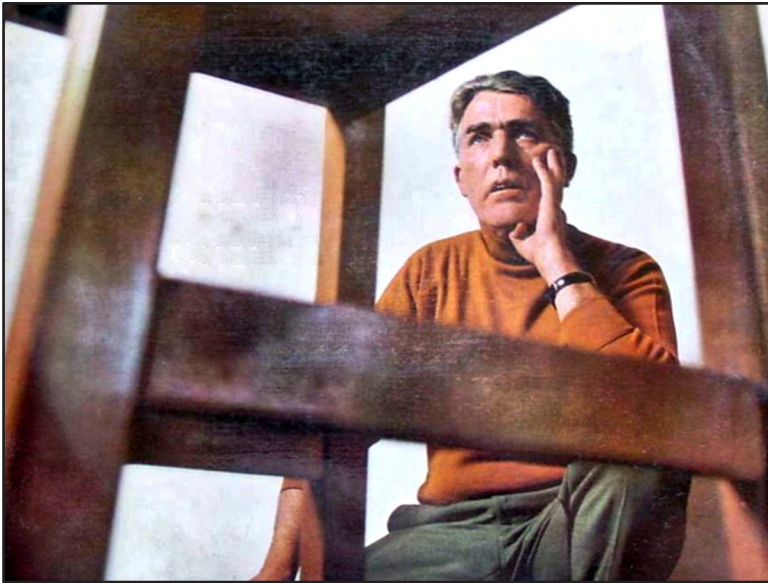
<sup>14</sup> *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara and Other Writings* (Dublin, 1996), 76–7.



▲ Joe Heaney (Photo: James Maguire/Gael Linn).

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onto this particular line. They didn't want to let it go; they wanted to hold onto it as long as they could. Every (sic) different lines in a song are different, sung differently to other lines in a song. Some verses tells of the tragedy, and other verses tells why did it happen, and they vary.

Significantly, Joe's answer focuses not on the 'how' question that Esther has asked him, but upon the 'why' of it. And in addressing the 'why' question, Joe tells us that ornamentation represents a singer's emotional response to the poetry, a means of dwelling on the line and the feeling it represents. This may explain why Joe so often stressed the importance of variation from one line to the next, from one stanza to the next, and from one performance to the next of the same song. Sean Williams, one of Joe's students at the University of Washington, recalled how he reacted to her attempts to ornament a line in [An Tiarna Randal](#):

One of the reasons that he spent a long time on that is because he tried to teach me about varying ornamentation and he used that song as an example. ... There's that terribly long ornamentation at the end of the first line, on a *dhriotháirín ó*. And he heard me do that in two verses in a row and he said, 'Aw, Jaysus, you've burned out the bog on that one!' And I felt so terrible! He asked me was I going to take a cookie stamp and just stamp each verse with the exact same ornament, or whether I was going to give the song life by changing the ornaments by every single verse. And that song has seven verses and I had to sing that again and again to practice variation. He said the only way to make a song burst into life was to have that variation.<sup>15</sup>

For Joe, 'ornamentation' – which might be better be termed 'melodic variation' – is an important way of advancing the song's essential meaning in the mind of the listener. Joe's responses to questions about ornamentation reflect his holistic view of the process of singing. In another [interview](#), Esther Warkov asked how Joe would know if something

he was doing was good or not:

JH: I judge it by the way I feel. Now, 'Do I feel this, or don't I?' That's the question I ask myself all the time. 'Do I feel this song? Do I put myself in the man's name that this particular song was written about? Am I suffering the labours he did? Can I go through that, and have that picture before me?' If I can't follow that man – the journey he took, whether he was in bondage or slavery – I don't follow the song and I don't do it justice. And I know I don't, if I don't do that. ...

EW: So in the process of developing your style, the main emphasis was on how well you could really picture the whole. ...

JH: How well I could live the song. It's like drawing a picture. If you don't have the blueprint for what you're doing, you see, you'll never never get anywhere. ...

EW: When you were learning or working on a song, would you ever take one line out of the song and sing that over and over, or –

JH: No.

EW: – straight from the beginning to the end.

JH: No, no, no, no. You've got to do the whole. ... The first important thing about a song is, know the story, what the story's all about. And that's very, very important. And then, you're doing the song the same as if you were telling the story. Each line varies, but you've got to put them all together so they'll make sense. I mean, it's no use trying to get one line, because one line follows the other, and it's before another line, so they've got to knit into one another.

EW: That's interesting. You never took out one little part to practice it. Straight through.

JH: It's got to be. That's the way it's got to be.

This exchange is revealing not only for the light it casts on Joe's approach to learning a song – the question posed by Warkov – but even more for the insight it gives into how he called up the song from his memory.

<sup>15</sup> As quoted in Liam Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 382.



The late Donald Archie MacDonald of the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh has written about how traditional Gaelic storytellers in the Highlands remembered their long tales, telling him that they visualised the events of the story occurring before their eyes – like watching a film – and described the action in what today we would call ‘real time’.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Joe gauges the success of his performance on how closely he identifies with the feelings and hardships of the person whose point-of-view is portrayed in the song, and his need to ‘have that picture before [him]’ suggests strongly that he employs the same sort of process when singing a song.

Sean Williams, Joe’s former student who now teaches in a department of ethnomusicology in Washington, has written that Joe generally ornamented unstressed syllables in Irish texts.<sup>17</sup> Her study provides a practical and insightful overview of Joe’s techniques insofar as melodic variation is concerned.

We must ask ourselves, however, if ‘ornamentation’ should be defined solely in terms of melismatic passages – what Joe learned to call the ‘grace-notes’ – or should also include the rhythmic variability, tonal ambiguity, stretching of notes, subtle changes of tempo, pauses, timbre, and other techniques that singers in this tradition use to enhance what Joe calls ‘feeling’ – the emotional meaning and impact of their singing, particularly of sad songs. It may well be that Joe Heaney would never have considered the question of ‘ornamentation’ at all, were it not for the questions posed to him by academics. If we ourselves are to consider Joe’s style of singing, we need to consider all aspects of it.

<sup>16</sup>D.A. MacDonald, ‘A Visual Memory,’ *Scottish Studies* 22 (1978), 1–26; also ‘Some Aspects of a Visual and Verbal Memory in Gaelic Story-telling,’ *Arv: Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 37 (1981), 117–24.

<sup>17</sup>‘Melodic ornamentation in the Connemara sean-nós singing of Joe Heaney,’ *New Hibernia Review* (Spring 2004), 122–45; she revisits the same ground in Williams and Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West*, 58–68.

## The influence of the academy

Even if he was baffled by some of the questions from academics, however, Joe remained interested in them.

In her introduction to *The Road from Connemara*, Peggy Seeger remarked on Joe’s interest in and intellectual understanding of the craft of singing:

Shortly before Joe left for the USA [Ewan MacColl and I] invited him to stay for several weeks so that we could record him in depth. He would sit, glass or teacup in hand, and sing, talk, tell stories and jokes for hours.... It was at these sessions that I began to really appreciate the intellectual status of the man, how purposeful and planned was his singing, how careful was his choice of repertoire, pitch, pace and decoration. He had learned from the masters and knew that he was a master himself. ... [He] really enjoyed having a chance to talk about the craft of singing as opposed to just singing the songs.<sup>18</sup>

Steve Coleman recalls that this interest remained with Joe later in life:<sup>19</sup>

We called what Joe was teaching ‘sean-nós,’ but he himself didn’t use that term very often. I wrote about... the learned understanding that he had of the music around him. I think he was learning the whole time, from the time he was in England with Ewan MacColl, looking for anything that would help him gain a greater understanding of what he had.

Certainly Joe acquired a certain amount of terminology from his contact with academics, and he can be heard using terms like ‘grace-notes’ when talking about ornamentation, or ‘macaronic’ in connection with *One morning in June*, or ‘broken-token’ in discussion of songs like *The Lady in her Father’s Garden*. He also developed [set-piece speeches about the ‘drone’ and ‘the nyaah’](#) – terms of art that emerged from [one of Joe’s conversations](#) with Ewan MacColl in 1963–4, and that may reveal more about MacColl’s perspective than about Joe’s.<sup>20</sup>

▼ Peggy Seeger (left) and Ewan MacColl in 1957 (Photo: Peggy Seeger)



<sup>18</sup>Accompanying booklet to *The Road from Connemara* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta CICD 143 / Topic TSCD 518D), a selection from Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger’s 1963–4 recordings of Joe Heaney.

<sup>19</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 389.

<sup>20</sup>See also Cowdery, *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*, 36–9.



## Stylistic accommodation

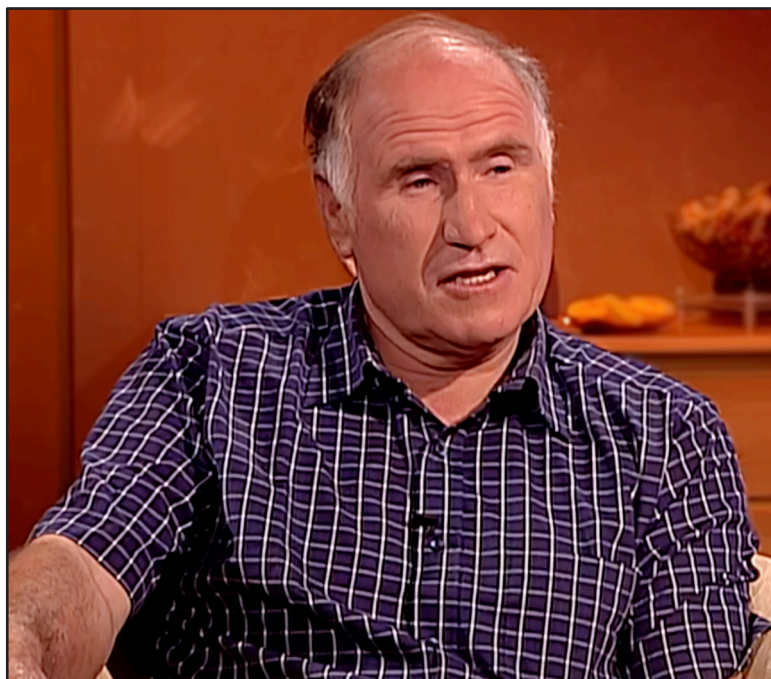
As we noted earlier, the communication involved in singing is a two-way street, a collaborative effort between singer and audience. One of the most fascinating aspects of listening to this material is the opportunity to trace his development as a singer in light of his experience of many different audiences.

Compare, for example, Joe's recording of *Amhrán Rinn Mhaoile* with [that](#) of Josie Sheáin Jeaic Mac Donncha, who lived his entire life in Iorras Aithneach. While the exact nature of the differences is hard to pin down, singer Peadar Ó Ceannabháin, who has studied Joe Heaney's singing extensively, sums it up well:

When Joe sang in the beginning he was kind of rough. He had a beautiful voice, very strong! But since he went to America, with the travel and everything, his singing became more finished, more polished. With all the travelling he did – Dublin, Scotland, England, and then America – I think that what he saw and heard affected him, consciously or unconsciously.

The style he had in the beginning was simpler, I think. He was more like the old people at home, more like Dara Bán [Mac Donnchadha, son of Seán Choilm] and Michael Mháire an Ghabha [Ó Ceannabháin]. He was a lot more like them. And then, probably, to move an audience – when he'd observe other people moving an audience – he began doing other things as well. When you go on stage, it's another kind of presentation, and he would have picked that up. I would think he was trying to put more into it. And sometimes he'd slow down the song at the end, and there would be more ornamentation. I think, oddly enough, that his voice was becoming sweeter.<sup>21</sup>

While Joe may have been unaware of some of these changes, there were several practices that he must have consciously adopted in an effort to accommodate what he took to be the needs of his audiences. The first of these – noted by Peadar Ó Ceannabháin in the passage just quoted – was his habit of slowing down during the last few words of a song to let listeners know that he had reached the



▲ Josie Sheáin Jeaic Mac Donncha (Photo: TG4)

end. A similar practice was that of repeating the first stanza at the end of a song, something that he probably picked up from other folk revival singers. Neither of these are features of Connemara singing, but both can be noted in, for example, the version of 'Dónal Óg' that Joe recorded for Gael-Linn on the second of his two LPs *Sraith 2: Ó Mo Dhúchas*. By contrast, many people with experience of the Connemara tradition will recognise what Joe tells Jim Cowdery about the way singers at home would have typically brought a song to a close:

JH: I used to do this, you know, but just in case they'd think I was mad here if I did it... The sean-nós singer always speaks, you speak the last few words of the song, you know.

JC: I've heard that on some...

JH: They do it in Connemara, but – I'd like to do it, you know.

JC: Do they always do that?

JH: Always. I'd do it here, but they might think I was crazy or something.

▼ Michael Mháire an Ghabha Ó Ceannabháin (Photo: TG4)



Then there was Joe's occasional practice of creating loud-and-soft contrast in his singing – the use of crescendo and decrescendo, to use the musical terms – from one phrase to another for dramatic effect, as he does [in this example](#). Like his habit of slowing down at the end of a song, this dynamic variability was not native to Joe's tradition, and has generally been regarded as overdramatic and inauthentic.<sup>22</sup> But while Heaney would never have employed such devices at home, he found that they suited his purposes abroad, and given that most of his performances were for non-Irish audiences, he felt free to adapt them to his needs.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Liam Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 176. Translated from Irish.

<sup>22</sup>Williams and Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West*, 57–8.

## A changing world

In the past century, the traditional world of the Gaeltacht has been transformed. Radio and television now fill the evening hours at home in Gaeltacht areas, just as they do everywhere else. Better roads enable people to get out more. While English has been the principal language of northern Connemara since the Famine, it has inexorably penetrated the Gaeltacht areas of southern Connemara over the past half-century, and especially so since the early years of this one. It is therefore no surprise that the Irish language and its culture are under pressure in today's world.

But while the society that created the traditional arts has passed on, many still seek to nurture them. While the great storytellers and the tradition they upheld have largely passed away, the old songs are still attracting singers from both within and outside the Gaeltacht; many of these are very much committed to perpetuating the tradition of unaccompanied singing in Irish.

A children's singing competition, organized as part of the Joe Heaney Festival in Carna, has attracted young singers of a remarkably high standard. The explosion of enthusiasm for *sean-nós* dancing, ignited by the phenomenon of *Riverdance* in the mid-1990s, has focused attention on the traditional arts of the Gaeltacht, and has doubtless brought the singing tradition to the notice of some who might otherwise have paid little heed to it.

Today, although venues appropriate for unaccompanied singing remain hard to find, determined groups of singers still manage to create opportunities to share this repertoire, even if – as was the case during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 – many such opportunities are now 'virtual' ones.

Such changes were anticipated. Indeed, it was because the Irish Folklore Commission saw what was coming that they sent Séamus Ennis and other collectors out with the urgent task of gathering traditional songs, lore and tales while the communities that supported them were still vibrant. Today, it is in response to such changes that educators, writers, language activists and government departments are doing all they can to protect and strengthen the Irish language.

Oireachtas na Gaeilge has undeniably played an important part in this activity. Over a century ago, the Oireachtas was founded by Conradh na Gaeilge to support and encourage the development of literature and the arts in modern Irish. Since the late 1930s, the traditional singing competitions have been the main attraction for people attending the Oireachtas, and with the establishment of the dancing competitions in 2000, a new generation of young people began flocking to the festival. The idea behind such competitions was – and remains – that they will encourage interest in the perform-



ing traditions of the Gaeltacht areas, particularly among young people.

Increasingly, however, some commentators have deplored the focus on competition. Despite the fact that it was Conradh na Gaeilge that first brought him to prominence, and despite having himself won prizes at the Oireachtas in the 1940s and '50s, Joe Heaney was himself dismayed by the bad-feeling that the adult singing competitions tended to foster. Joe told Mick Moloney:

If I had anything to do with Oireachtas myself I wouldn't have any competition, because it breeds animosity sometimes, because you cannot give the prize to everybody. I think if they invited one or two from each Irish-speaking district and have them all in the one room doing a concert, and pay them all the same thing on the same stage, I think it would be much nicer.<sup>23</sup>

Carna singer Sorchá Ní Ghuairim, in addition to expressing her distaste for the term *sean-nós*, also appeared to take a dim view of competitions.

Ríonach uí Ógáin summarised her views:

She was worried that the old style of singing practiced in the Gaeltacht was dying, and this was a great sadness to her. She understood that there was a danger that singers would be trying to please everybody, and she said that the mental collaboration between the listener and the singer was essential. She had noticed that songs were being sung, as it were, 'on stage,' and it's likely that she had in mind the competitions and other formal occasions of that kind.<sup>24</sup>



▲ Sorchá Ní Ghuairim: singer from Carna (Photo: Folkways Records/Smithsonian Institute)

<sup>23</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 463.

<sup>24</sup>Ríonach uí Ógáin, *Sorchá: Amhráin Shorchá Ní Ghuairim*, Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann/Gael-Linn (2002), 5.



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More recently, Peadar Ó Ceannabháin has laid out an eloquent critique of the competitive ethos, and of the ill effect that the Oireachtas competitions have had on singing in the Gaeltacht. His views are worth quoting at length:<sup>25</sup>

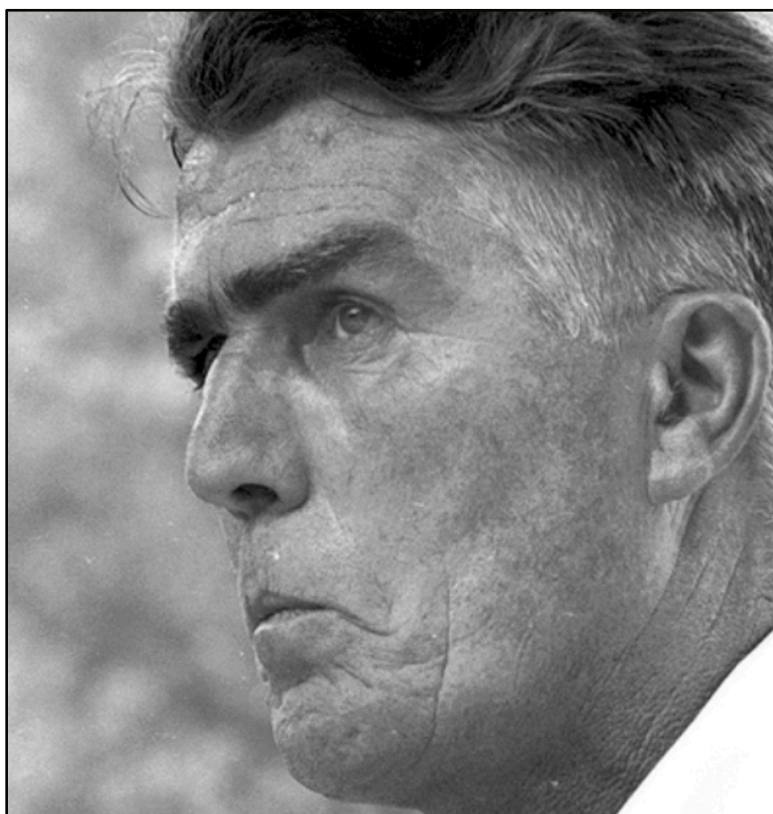
Nowadays the competition is the big thing, if the number of competitors and the size of the audience at the Corn Uí Riada event is anything to go by; but even so it is having little impact on singing in the Gaeltacht areas, where for a number of years the craft has been on its last legs, regardless of the Oireachtas, even in those areas where it was formerly robust. The nature of the competition is to recognize a couple of singers once a year, to give them name recognition and high status ever afterward, wherever they sing. ... The competition isn't focused upon community values or upon the role of the singer in the community – indeed it's the very opposite that it's after, as it promotes and inspires tension and rivalry not just between the singers, but also between communities and regions. To me, the Oireachtas is more like an All-Ireland cup final in gaelic games than an arts festival....

'The Oireachtas is the showpiece of the Irish language,' declared the President of Conradh na Gaeilge [in 1997] – and the sean-nós is the most valuable jewel on display in this annual show. Symbols can be important if they bring people together; but far more important are vitality (as opposed to revival), creativity (as opposed to imitation), celebration (as opposed to commemoration). Since the Oireachtas got hold of it, traditional singing has seen little in the way of innovation or composition; rather it has become brittle and underfed, a valuable little symbol of one aspect of our heritage that we have now abandoned to academics and adjudicators so that they can drag the guts out of it.



▲ Peadar Ó Ceannabháin:  
master singer from Connemara  
(Photo: Cló Iar-Chonnacht).

▼ Joe Heaney at the Philadelphia Folk Festival 1968  
(Photo: Diana Davies/Ralph Rinzler Archive, Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC).



...[F]or many of today's performers, singing is clearly a struggle. They wrestle and fight with the song, stress bursting off them, singing inside their mouths, striving mightily to maintain control and to project their voice strongly – especially in the presence of an adjudicator. Where ease and steadiness marked the singing of older generations, singers of recent years are plagued by anxiety and unease.... The most appropriate atmosphere for the singer is sustained in the Gaeltacht, which provides a supportive, familiar, understanding environment. Competition, by contrast, creates the most hostile, crude, tense atmosphere for the singer who, isolated on stage and with no assurance of a sympathetic audience, is subject to formal and stylistic criticism. This isn't singing – it's a test or trial of the competitor's strength and self-control. ... Traditional singing is a sensitive, intimate art, and live singing is the most valuable part of it, as the singer sweeps the listener in a moment from worldly concerns and provides a sparkling glimpse into our ancestral heritage. Today such singing is balm to far-flung speakers of Irish, and helps reconnect them to their true birthright. It is a balm for the soul of the one who drinks deep, and who endeavors to renew it in accordance with its own nature.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of this culture of competition has been the shift of aesthetic focus from the song to the singer. Instead of celebrating

<sup>25</sup>An Sean-Nós: Caithréim Chráite nó Iocshláinte Anama? in Áine Ní Chonghaile (ed.) *Deile: Iris Mhuinir Chonmara i mBaile Átha Cliath* (1998), 15-21. Translated from Irish.

<sup>26</sup>By contrast, Lillis Ó Laoire writes that his experience in Tory Island revealed that submission to the judgement of others was a normal part of becoming a public singer in Tory, and that tension and anxiety were part of that rite of passage; see *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean: Songs and Singers in Tory Island*, Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta (2007), 80-87 and 94-96.

## major scéal: joe heaney



the art of a community, a song repertoire constantly renewed over many generations, songs with stories behind them, songs that people spent long winter nights discussing in small groups, songs that it didn't matter who sang them as long as someone did – instead of rejoicing in this remarkable heritage, competitions focus on minute differences between individual singers, and make media stars of those who have the vocal skills and mental fortitude to endure the test. In order to win, singers must differentiate themselves from their competitors. It is no longer about sharing, but about prevailing.

For Joe Heaney, however, the principal value of the songs was that they gave a voice to the community, a means of teaching and calling to mind the history of the community and all that it had endured. For him, the song was much more important than the singer, and singing was about sharing. If you were singing, you were taking part in the life of the community, you were strengthening and reaffirming that life, and you deserved to be heard. Josie Sheáin Jeaic Mac Donncha said that Joe:

was a man who could put a song across to people. You had to listen to him. If you didn't, Joe wouldn't

▼ **Joe's last resting place:** in Maíros/Moyrus cemetery near Carna – looking out towards the Atlantic (Photo: Fonn).

be too happy, God knows! He had great respect for the songs, and he felt that they should be listened to, whoever was singing. He wasn't the only person who deserved to be listened to.<sup>27</sup>

Following his death, Joe's friend Lucy Simpson tried to express her feelings about him. Her remarks reveal not only how deeply she appreciated Joe, but how clearly she understood what was centrally important to him:

I have tried countless times since Joe died to come to an understanding of what knowing him meant to me. The songs and stories were only part of it. Some people say it was the voice, the singing skill, the respect for the songs, his love of the 'old ways', his integrity, etc. I treasure them all, but there was still something beyond all those things. I think that what I shared with him was some common feeling, maybe unconscious on both our parts, about why we do this, why we learn songs and sing them for and with other people.

At heart, it's not about performing or preserving the tunes and texts. It's about preserving the kind of contact that takes place through the songs and stories, between people when they simply open their mouths and sing, without rehearsal, songbooks, props, costumes, arrangements. I've heard people say that he didn't like to see people using instrumental accompaniments with the old songs; that he disapproved of altering lyrics, or that he was critical of some performers for other reasons, but I saw him make many exceptions to those 'rules' he seemed to have.

I think he instinctively recognized people who know, consciously or not, that real folk music is not about being a good singer or entertainer, having a good memory, or never changing a word. I think the songs and stories were for him a link to some ancient way of being together on this earth, connecting person to person in a most simple, universal way, directly, with a 'naked' song or story. There was something very earthy and rooted about him.<sup>28</sup>

Joe Heaney was a complex character; his relationships with other people were complex; his relationship with Ireland was complex. His art was the way in which he reconciled all of this complexity in favour of humanity – his and ours.

<sup>27</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 226. Translated from Irish.

<sup>28</sup>Mac Con Iomaire, *Seosamh Ó hÉanaí*, 407-8.

### About the Author:

California native, Dr Virginia Blankenhorn received her BA in music from Wellesley College (1969); her MA in Celtic Languages and Literature from Harvard University (1975); and her PhD in Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh (1987), where her doctoral dissertation examined Irish accentual verse-practice.

After coming to Ireland in 1975 and spending a year as an unmatriculated student at University College Galway, Dr Blankenhorn held a two-year scholarship at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (1976-78), where she studied and wrote about intonation in the Irish of Connemara. In 1978 she was appointed to a temporary lectureship at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh (1978-81), where she specialised in Scottish Gaelic poetry and song, and subsequently to a lectureship at the University of Ulster (1981-88), lecturing in Irish language, Scottish Gaelic language and literature, Irish folklore and traditional song, and the art of translation.

Dr Blankenhorn returned to Ireland in 2007. In 2009 she held a temporary appointment in Irish Folklore at University College Dublin, where she lectured in traditional song and song-collecting in Ireland. Later the same year, she took on a postdoctoral fellowship at the National University of Ireland, Galway, where she curated a website devoted to the career of the great Connemara sean-nós singer Joe Heaney ([www.joeheaney.org](http://www.joeheaney.org)). In 2011 Dr Blankenhorn rejoined the University of Edinburgh where, in addition to pursuing long-held research interests in Scottish Gaelic and Irish song, she also teaches Irish literature from 1600 to undergraduates.



▲ Virginia Blankenhorn





**New book  
on Mícheál  
Ó Súilleabháin**

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**The Art and  
Craft of  
Mumming**

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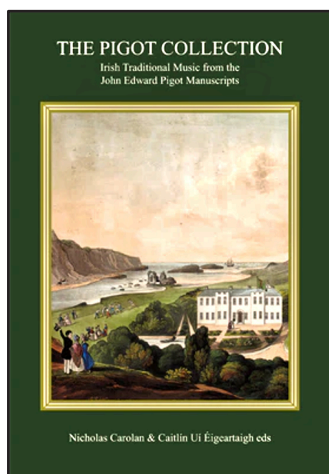
## sight reading



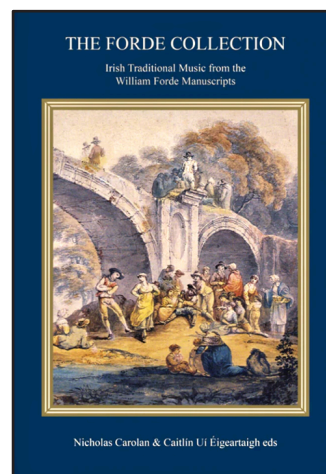
# THE PIGOT COLLECTION

## ITMA LAUNCHES NEW PUBLICATION OF PRE-FAMINE MUSIC WITH ESSAYS

The latest publication from the Irish Traditional Music Archive is *The Pigot Collection - Irish Traditional Music from the John Edward Pigot Manuscripts*, a collection of over 620 pieces of pre-Famine Irish traditional music recorded in staff notation in the 1840s and early 1850s by the barrister and amateur musician, John Edward Pigot, assisted by his wife, Annie Prendergast, a musician and collector in her own right.



▲ **Editors:** Nicholas Carolan and Caitlín Uí Éigeartaigh at the launch of *The Forde Collection* in 2021. (Photo: ITMA)



Edited by Nicholas Carolan and Caitlín Uí Éigeartaigh, the 300-page hardback also includes essays on the collector and on the editorial procedures of the edition, along with illustrations, facsimiles, appendices and indexes.

John Edward Pigot (1822–71) was born in Co. Cork but spent most of his life in Dublin. His father was a colleague and neighbour of Daniel O'Connell while John Edward was a leading Young Irelander and a close associate of Thomas Davis.

A pianist and probably a violin player, Pigot edited traditional music for publication and was the driving force behind the 1851 Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland.

While he collected airs from uilleann pipers, fiddle players and singers, most of his music collection was given to him for copying by around a dozen other collectors – many of them women.

So it is, in fact, a collection of collections – most of which would most likely have been lost had they not been transcribed.

His manuscripts were unpublished at the time of his premature death. They are now held in the Royal Irish Academy and the National Library of Ireland.

The ITMA edition of Pigot's Irish collection includes all the melodies he noted from live performance along with all those from the manuscripts given to him by friends and colleagues. They are arranged by source and chronologically as far as possible.

Around half of the melodies are the airs of songs in Irish and English; almost as many again are jigs in 6/8 and 9/8 time, with a variety of other tune-types.

The music from Pigot's network of contributors provides valuable evidence of oral-print relationships in the music.

The new volume is a companion to *The Forde Collection - Irish Traditional Music from the William Forde Manuscripts*, published by the ITMA in 2021, again edited by Nicholas Carolan and Caitlín Uí Éigeartaigh and including 922 pieces of pre-Famine Irish traditional music noted by the Cork classical musician, William Forde, in the 1840s.

# NEW TUNEBOOK TO CELEBRATE THE MUSIC OF SLÍABH LUACHRA

A new tunebook highlighting the music of Slíabh Luachra for learners has been published by the Slíabh Luachra Music Trail.

*Tobar Luachmhar*, produced by Aidan Connolly, Pat Fleming and Paul De Grae, features approximately twenty tunes gathered from the repertoire of three highly respected musicians from the area: fiddler Emma O'Leary, and two box players, Mick Culloty and the late Timmy O'Connor.

In addition to biographical information about the three musicians, the tunes are presented in both staff notation and in letter form, along with QR codes which link learners to recordings of the tunes at two speeds – slow and fast.

While the tunebook will be used for the Slíabh Luachra Music Trail Learners' Sessions, it will undoubtedly benefit both novice and experienced players who are keen to expand their repertoire.

Accordion and melodeon player, Mick Culloty from Currow, Co. Kerry is one of the founder members of World Fiddle Day in Scartaglin. Having learned music by ear from Johnny O'Leary, Dan Jeremiah O'Connor, Ned O'Connor and others, Mick has developed his own distinctive style and draws from a remarkable repertoire of rare tunes, as well as writing a number of acclaimed compositions.



▲ Aidan Connolly



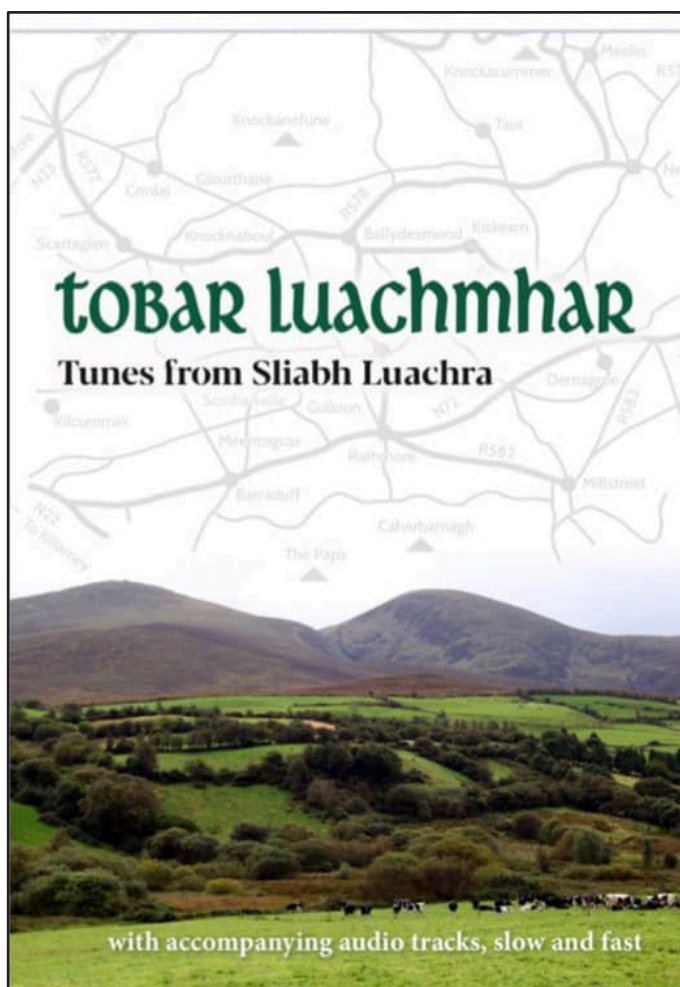
▲ Emma O'Leary:  
(Photo: Liz Galwey).



▲ Mick Culloty:  
(Photo: Liz Galwey).



▲ Timmy O'Connor:  
(Photo: Raymond O'Sullivan).



All Ireland senior whistle champion, fiddle and banjo player, Emma O'Leary from Mount, Scartaglin, is a former pupil of Nickie McAuliffe and one of the gifted younger generation of Slíabh Luachra musicians. With an extensive collection of locally collected tunes – some of which featured in her recently released album, *Mo Cheantar Féin*.

Veteran accordion player, Timmy O'Connor, was recognised for his dedication to the music of Slíabh Luachra over seven decades with a special award in 2018.

A sociable musician, Timmy was a willing recipient of the tunes shared by older players in his youth, and has been willing to transmit them on to other players ever since.

His long-standing reputation as a musician brought to the music of Slíabh Luachra to concert and dance venues in Britain, Europe and North America.

He numbered all of the leading exponents of Slíabh Luachra music among his friends and has been

described as "a living link with a golden era in Slíabh Luachra music." Some of his tunes stretch back to Tom Billy, whose music he learned from his neighbour, Johnny Mickey Barry. Timmy also composed new airs in the traditional style to general acclaim.

Timmy recently released an album of Slíabh Luachra music, *Tunes from Toureendarby*, along with fellow box player, Pat Fleming, and multi-instrumentalist, Steve Cooney, recorded in his kitchen.



▲ Pat Fleming





▲ The late Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin

## THE MANY LIVES OF MÍCHEÁL Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

**Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin:** *A Life in Music* is a wide-ranging collection of essays and reflections on the remarkable career of musician, composer, researcher, educator, Irish language enthusiast and innovator, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.

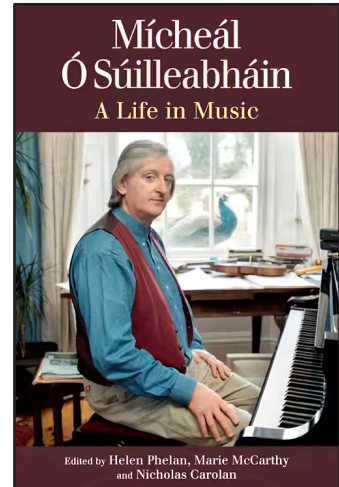
Edited by Helen Phelan, Marie McCarthy and Nicholas Carolan with contributions from almost one hundred musicians, artists, dancers,

scholars, students, poets, politicians and media personalities – ranging in style from the academic to the personal, the poetic and the anecdotal, the book offers a comprehensive perspective on the late founder of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick.

This volume brings together the voices of those who knew him best – many of whom were suggested by Ó Súilleabháin, himself – including Martin Hayes, David Brophy, Joseph



▲ Co-editor: Helen Phelan



O'Connor, Brian Kennedy, Paul Muldoon, Philip King, Sinéad Hayes, Lillis Ó Laoire, Áine Uí Cheallaigh, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Paddy Glackin, Nóirín Ní Riain, Mel Mercier, Gerard Keenan, Sandra Joyce, Finbarr Bradley, Paula Meehan, Fintan Vallely, Mary Nunan, Susan Motherway, Harry White, Mark Patrick Hederman, Peter Sirt, Sunniva O'Flynn, Toner Quinn, Elizabeth Sweeney, Christian Dupont and many more.

Divided into three sections, the first part of the book considers Ó Súilleabháin's role as a musician, composer, performer and recording artist; the second part focuses on his work as an educator; while the third part examines his love of the Irish language and poetry and reflects on his wider influence on Irish cultural life.

The book also contains a discography as well as a list of writings and selected scores.

Priced at €59/€55/ \$65, the 576-page book is available from Cork University Press at [www.corkuniversitypress.com](http://www.corkuniversitypress.com).

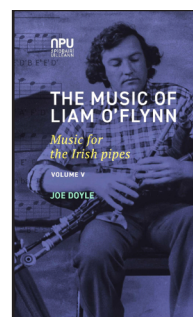
## THE MUSIC OF LIAM O'FLYNN

**N**a Piobairí Uilleann's latest publication is *The Music of Liam O'Flynn: Music for the Irish Pipes Volume V*.

This new book is a comprehensive collection of music transcribed from recordings of Liam O'Flynn – spanning a period of more than fifty years, from the 1960s to the 2010s. The book features 259 tunes transcribed by piper, Joe Doyle.

Universally recognised as a master of the uilleann pipes, Liam O'Flynn's distinctive playing style demonstrated both an artistic virtuosity and his own very deep affinity for traditional Irish music.

His piping was a fusion: an artist's individual voice mixed with the great tradition of his instrument – informed by friendships with three of the most revered pipers of the mid twentieth century, Leo Rowsome,



Willie Clancy and Séamus Ennis.

Introducing the uilleann pipes to new musical genres and to international audiences – most significantly through his work with Planxty and through his later collaboration with Shaun Davey along with a number of recording projects, Liam O'Flynn demonstrated the versatility of the instrument whilst retaining the integrity of his own sensibility.

Joe Doyle draws on years of listening and playing to transcribe the music of Liam O'Flynn.

sight reading:  
whistling

► Whistler's author: Robert Harvey at the Fleadh Cheoil.

## MORE THAN LIP SERVICE

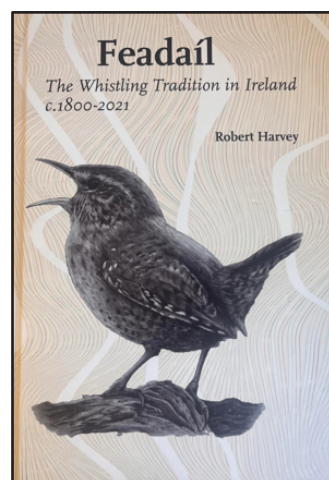
*Feadaíl: The Whistling Tradition in Ireland c.1800–2021* is the first major study to consider the history, performance styles and exponents of whistling in Irish traditional music – not the tin whistle but the non-instrumental variety, executed through pursed lips.

Tracing the development of the tradition through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Robert Harvey tells the story from the ploughman's whistle in pre-famine Ireland through the Gaelic Revival to its present manifestation as a competitive artform.

After considering the many contributions of the great collectors of traditional music to our understanding of the practice, the book reflects on the inter-relationships between whistling and the instrumental, singing and dancing traditions – along with the role of the Gaelic League – in shaping the direction of contemporary performance practice.

Drawing on interviews with All-Ireland champions, as well as archival and newspaper sources, the social, historical and folkloric elements underpinning the tradition are also discussed.

Published by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the book contains a comprehensive list of feis



and fleadh results from c.1901–2021 as well as 212 transcriptions of tunes collected from whistlers. The two accompanying CDs contain archival material recorded between 1899–1999, as well as new studio and field recordings made in January–March 2020.

*Feadaíl* seeks to establish whistling as a vital – though often overlooked – medium for the transmission and continuity of traditional music.

Co-sponsored by the Wexford Fleadh Executive Committee, Wexford County Council, Wexford Credit Union and the Dublin County Board CCÉ, the book is a fitting legacy of the Fleadh Cheoil in Wexford.

# Afro Celt Sound System



March 15 **MANDELA HALL** Belfast 8pm  
March 16 **THE GUILDHALL**, Derry 8pm





▲ Mum's the Word: Some members of the acclaimed Armagh Rhymers.

## THE ART AND CRAFT OF MUMMING

A new handbook – designed for teachers or community groups to start their own mumming group – has been produced through a collaboration between The Armagh Rhymers, Lough Erne Landscape Partnership and Aughakillymaude Mummers from Co. Fermanagh.

Along with an outline on the origins and history of the mummy tradition in Ireland, the handbook provides a range of resources and guidance for anyone wanting to revive this tradition with their class or community group. The chapter headings are as follows:

- What is Mumming?
- The Origins of Mumming
- Mumming Today
- Cultural Significance of Mumming
- Mumming in Fermanagh
- Characters
- Character lines
- Costumes
- Song and Dance
- Scripts

The handbook is not designed to be an academic text on the history of mumming; it is about sparking the imagination and encouraging creativity through practical advice and examples – including child-

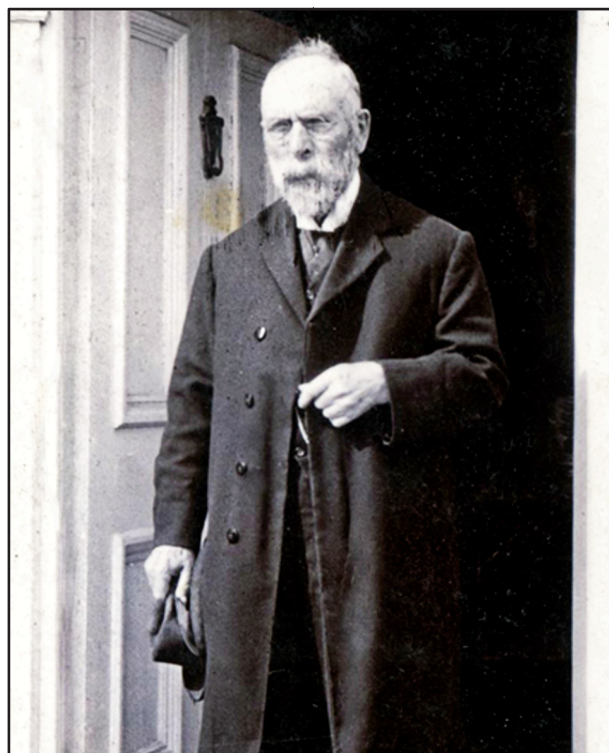
friendly resources on creating characters and costumes with an introduction to straw craft.

By its very nature, of course, mumming is a changing and evolving tradition with every area and group interpreting it as they see fit. So the handbook offers a palette of ideas rather than a prescriptive blueprint.

The handbook is available to download for free on The Armagh Rhymers Digital Classroom (<https://armaghrhymers.com/subjects/>) – complete with supporting teacher notes and learning objectives for the Northern Ireland school curriculum.

Further reading resources are listed at the end of this booklet should you wish to explore the history of mumming in further detail.

This project was made possible with funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.



▲ P. W. Joyce

## THE OTHER JOYCE

The remarkable life of Patrick Weston Joyce (1827–1914), also known as P.W. Joyce, is the subject of a new publication, *P.W. Joyce and the Educational Shaping of the Emerging Irish Nation, 1827-1914*, by Prof. Teresa O'Doherty of Marino Institute, Emeritus Prof. Tom O'Donoghue of the University of Western Australia, and Liam O'Connor, Director of the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

A prominent figure during the final years of British rule in Ireland, P.W. Joyce was a polymath who made significant contributions to music, education, history and language.

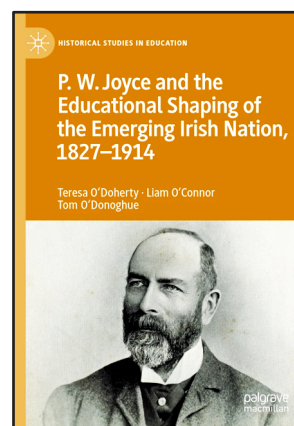
In traditional music circles he is best remembered as an avid and authoritative collector of songs and tunes.

Published by Springer Palgrave Macmillan, this new book examines how Joyce's early life, family background, and education influenced his role as a passionate Irish patriot and innovative educator. His involvement in shaping the Irish national

school system from 1845 to 1893 played a key role in promoting Irish cultural heritage through education.

Thus positioned, Joyce was in many ways a significant choreographer of a slow revolution in which education, in both formal and informal settings, was used to educate the Irish people regarding their cultural heritage.

Joyce's legacy has had a profound impact on the cultural landscape of Ireland, making this publication essential reading for those intrigued by Irish history, education, and cultural evolution.







▲ Eddie Butcher

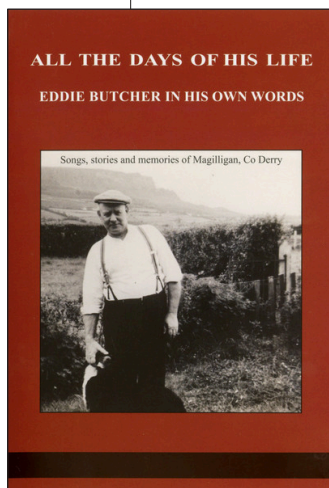
## EDDIE BUTCHER BOOK NOW FREE ONLINE

**H**ugh Shields' *All the Days of His Life* – the illustrated account of the life and songs of the acclaimed Eddie Butcher (1900–1980) from Magilligan, Co. Derry – brings back a vanished way of rural life and verbal entertainment.

Hugh Shields (1929–2008) was teaching in Coleraine when he first met Eddie in Magilligan in 1953. Their musical friendship continued until Eddie's death. During this period Hugh recorded and published a large number of Eddie's songs which came from the Irish, Scottish and English traditions. He made his first commercial recording in the 1960s, but by his death in 1980, over 200 recordings had been made.

The words and notated music of 67 songs, together with stories and recollections, edited by Hugh and Lisa Shields, were published by the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA) in 2011 in a book with three accompanying CDs – all of which are now out of print.

With the permission of the Shields family, the ITMA has posted an online digital version of the original 2011 book and the accompanying albums – which are all downloadable from the ITMA website free of charge.



▲ From the heart: John Faulkner

## JOHN'S PASSIONATE JOURNEY IN MUSIC

**F**or more than six decades John Faulkner has been at the heart of British and Irish music-making, as a singer, songwriter, composer, musician, producer and film-maker.

*Storm in My Heart* is John's highly personal account of his life in music, from his childhood in wartime London, through his years in the English folk explosion and on to life in Ireland as a significant player in the traditional music scene.

In a lifetime's journey John covers his association with Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger; his marriage and musical partnership with Dolores Keane; as well as his move to County Galway.

He has an international number one success with *Lion in a Cage*, his

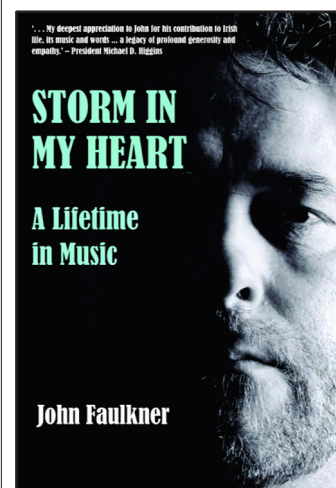
John Faulkner's journey through the world of music has been made with passion, showing a creativity that has a profound dedication to justice at its heart. . . My deepest appreciation to John for his contribution to Irish life, its music and words . . . a legacy of profound generosity and empathy.

President Michael D. Higgins

stirring tribute to the imprisoned Nelson Mandela, whom he subsequently meets.

In this honest and witty memoir John recalls his work with Frankie Gavin, Alec Finn, John Prine and others, revealing the dark arts of the Irish music business while revelling in the freewheeling delights of a life devoted to performing.

*Storm in My Heart* is a clear-eyed chronicle by one of Ireland's finest artists. The book includes QR codes to a curated selection of Faulkner's music.





**Christy's  
Beauty**

Page 51

**John Spillane's  
Cork Folk Opera**

Page 52

# sound check

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▲ **FourWinds:** (from left) Caroline Keane (concertina), Tom Delaney (pipes and whistles) and Robbie Walsh (bodhrán and percussion).

## FROM AN AWESOME FOURSOME TO A TRIO WITH BRIO NEW ALBUM FROM FOURWINDS

A long awaited release from FourWinds and their first since they down-sized to a trio – with Alan Murray opting to pursue his musical career in the USA – *Allta* is an album of predominantly instrumental tracks – drawn largely from the canon but with some fine original compositions, especially from Caroline Keane.

Murray, who guests on the album along with the brother-and-sister duo, Laura and Barry Kerr, is the likely source of *The*

*Snows of France and Holland* followed by *The Bridge of Athlone* via The Battlefield Band and the Séamus Mór Ceilidh Band. Alan is also responsible for bringing *The Blue Cockade* – a version of *Pat Riley* he collected in America.

Piper, Tom Delaney, and percussionist, Robbie Walsh, composed the title tune of *The Falcon's Rest* set, which also includes Junior Crehan's adaptation of the traditional song, *Anach Cuain*, followed by *Peter Byrne's Fancy*.

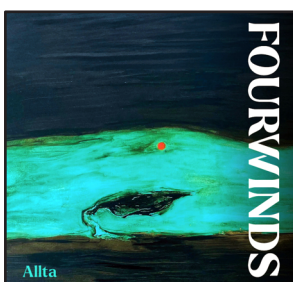
*McKinney's of Chicago* – the first tune in a set of the same name – was written by Caroline following a commission from the late Maryann McTeague Keifer (the “godmother of Irish music” in the US) to celebrate the musical legacy of the owners of Chief O'Neill's pub in Chicago.

The album includes a number of tunes from Clare. But with Caroline and Tom

Delaney based in Kerry, the band is almost contractually obliged to include at least one tune from Sliabh Luachra. After two tunes from the Sliabh Luachra adjacent area of North Cork – and *Allistur's March* in the *Delia Keane* set – they get to the heart of Sliabh Luachra with *The Humours of Mountcollins* (previously recorded by the incomparable Denis Murphy) as part of *The Slide to Lisdoonvarna* set which closes the album.

### Track Listing:

1. The Road to Cúl Ros
2. The Snows of France and Holland
3. Up and Away in the Morning
4. Men of the Sea
5. Delia Keane's
6. The Falcon's Rest
7. Mighty Keith
8. The Great Big Roaming Ass
9. McKinneys of Chicago
10. The Blue Cockade
11. The Slide to Lisdoonvarna

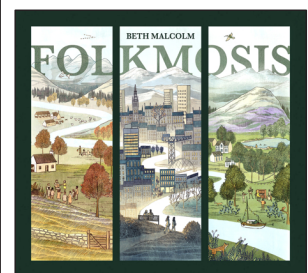


## SIDE TRACKS



### TIME AND TIDE

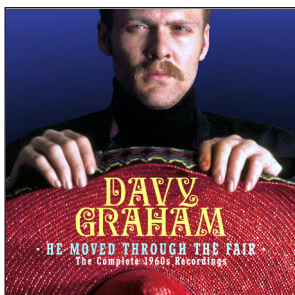
*Tunes of Tide and Time* is a new album from Dúo El Mar. Ella Zlotos and Maria Nikola include three tunes from Ireland, two from Galicia, one from Scotland, one from Brittany and an American sea shantey. Recorded over a period of four years (2020-2024), the tracks document different stages in the pair's development, both in combination as Dúo El Mar and also as individual artists.



### HER STORY

*Folkmosis*, the stunning new album from Scots Singer of the Year in 2022, Beth Malcolm, is a musical autobiography tracing her life in music from her childhood to her discovery of traditional Scottish music and immersion in the Scots language. Originally commissioned by Celtic Connections, *Folkmosis* has been developed as a multi-media performance in association with Perth Theatre and Concert Hall.

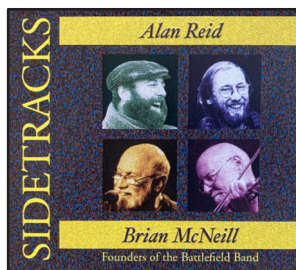


SIDE  
TRACKS

## THE FULL DAVY

*Davy Graham: He Moved Through The Fair - The Complete 1960s Recordings* has just been released featuring eight discs, bringing together all of Graham's 1960s studio recordings along with a number of demo and live recordings.

The comprehensive collection includes an extensive sleeve note essay with original liner notes and a rare 2000 interview with Graham.



## BETWEEN BATTLES

Founder members of Battlefield Band, Brian McNeill and Alan Reid, have re-released their long-lost duo album, *Sidetracks*, recorded in 1980 during a hiatus in 'Batties' activity before the reconstituted band released its acclaimed *Home is Where the Van is*. As the band enjoyed a significant upturn in its career trajectory, the duo album went on the back burner and in 1984 Topic deleted it.

After 40 years, the album has been re-edited and remastered. With a mix of lesser known songs and tunes from the Scottish folk tradition, the album presaged the daring approach to music which became the Batties' hallmark.



## CAROLAN'S CONCERTOS

## NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR PIANO BY DAVID VESEY

A new album by pianist, David Vesey, offers a fresh perspective on the music of one of Ireland's national composers, blending classical piano with traditional Irish influences.

*Carolan Reflections* is a re-imagining of the timeless works of Turlough Carolan, arranged and performed by Vesey.

The project began during the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was a time to reflect, and I had a desire to create something new from this situation," says David.

"I composed five initial arrangements of O'Carolan's work during that time. This

album is the result of these reflections."

The pandemic also coincided with the 350th anniversary of Carolan's birth in 1670. For Vesey, the album is not only a tribute to the past but also an exploration of Carolan's unique place in the nexus of Irish traditional music and the European baroque tradition.

"His music bridges the gap between the Irish traditional and classical worlds," he adds.

As a pianist equally at home in the traditional and classical worlds, David has been keen to explore the relationship between these distinct yet interconnected traditions.

Known for their captivating beauty and emotional depth, Carolan's compositions remain instantly recognisable to traditional musicians and beyond.

Vesey's arrangements – and precise execution – offers more than a reconnection with familiar melodies: he manages to infuse them with a sparkling fresh energy while maintaining their timeless essence.

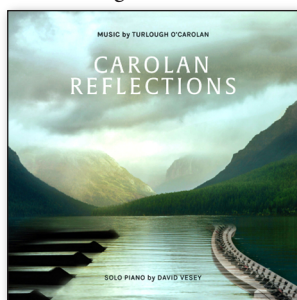
"I hope these arrangements will bring his music to new audiences and continue his legacy in a modern context."

Graduating from the MTU Cork School of Music with First Class Honours in 2021, David has won national prizes for his performances in both classical and traditional genres.

As a traditional musician, he has achieved many successes at the Fleadh Cheoil competitions and played with the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of Ireland and on Comhaltas concert tours of Ireland and Britain.

## Track Listing

1. Eleanor Plunkett
2. Carolan's Draught
3. The Princess Royal
4. Captain O'Kane
5. Baptist Johnston
6. Blind Mary
7. Carolan's Receipt
8. Lord Inchiquin
9. Carolan's Welcome
10. Sí Bheag Sí Mhór
11. Planxty Irwin
12. Carolan's Concerto





▼ Hydra heads: Nuala Kennedy and Eamon O'Leary

**sound check:**  
kennedy & o'leary

49



# TALENT, TASTE, TECHNIQUE

## ACCLAIMED ALBUM FROM KENNEDY AND O'LEARY

A remarkable album from Nuala Kennedy and Eamon O'Leary – two thirds of The Alt – *Hydra* offers a consummately tasteful take on a well chosen selection of traditional songs – along with one beautiful self-composed piece.

The album opens with *I Will Hang My Harp on a Willow Tree*, a song learned from Anita Best from Newfoundland. Although the subject matter is sad, the duo's thoughtful treatment and execution "sparks" joy, as Marie Kondo would say.

For the second track, *The Dark-Eyed Gypsy*, the duo pair a melody from Sam Henry's

*Songs of the People*, with the lyrics from *The Gypsies* learned from Cathal McConnell who got the song from Len Graham and Joe Holmes who learned it from his mother. For the accompaniment Eamon on guitar and Nuala on flute is joined by fiddle maestro, Liz Knowles.

Recorded on the Greek island of Hydra, the album also includes two instrumental sets: the first entitled *Two Jigs* comprises with Eamon on bouzouki, features two jigs: *Mary of Inisturk* and Martin Quinn's *Road to Tully*; while the second, *Breton Tune and Reels* features piper Patrick Molard's *Porz Kloz*, followed by Patsy Touhey's and *The Eel in the Sink*.

Composed by eighteenth century Oriel poet Art Mac-Cumhaigh, *Ag Bruach Dhún Réimhe* is a lament to a song thrush. Nuala's spare but effective lead vocals are supported by Eamon's equally spare harmony, supplemented by the mandolin of Brian Mac Gloinn (Ye Vagabonds) who lends similar

support on Eamon's own composition, *As We Rove Out*.

The final track, *Liffeside*, is a traditional love song – with Nuala on lead and Eamon adding harmony on the chorus, with instrumental support from Liz Knowles before the arrival of the Liffeside Chorus made up of Will Oldham (aka Bonnie "Prince" Billy); Grammy- and Tony-award winner, Anaïs Mitchell; and Cathal McConnell – Nuala's 'musical mentor' from whom she got the song after he had learned it in turn from a 78rpm record of Delia Murphy

### Track Listing

1. I Will Hang My Harp on a Willow Tree
2. The Dark-Eyed Gypsy
3. Willie-O
4. Two Jigs
5. The Bonny Green Tree
6. Ag Bruach Dhún Réimhe
7. The Dark-Eyed Sailor
8. Breton Tune and Reels
9. The Night Visiting Song
10. As We Rove Out
11. Liffeside

## SIDE TRACKS



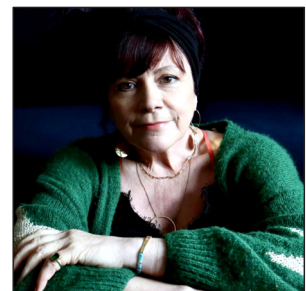
## AROUND IRELAND IN SONG

Featuring a selection of music from an archive of thirty-two songs, one from each county in Ireland, *The Crankie Island Song Project*, led by Cathy Jordan, is a musical atlas of the island, highlighting themes of love and loss, rebellion and revelry.

During the pandemic, Cathy began a journey to archive songs from her native Roscommon, before expanding her mission to all 32 counties. She teamed up with visual artist, Peter Crann, to bring the songs alive using a Crankie box – a unique 19th-century storytelling device featuring hand-cranked illustrated scrolls that unfold as the songs play.

The song collection – animated by the illustrations in the Crankie box – became the basis for a remarkable multi-media show with an illustrious supporting cast of musicians and singers.

Jordan's collaborators include Mike McGoldrick, Lisa O'Neill, Steve Cooney, Nuala Kennedy, Máirtín O'Connor, John Doyle, Donal Clancy, Rick Epping, Claudia Schwab, Andrew Hendy, the band Réalta and many more – a total of thirty-two musicians.



▲ Project Work: Cathy Jordan





SIDE  
TRACKS

## REILLY FINE DEBUT

Widely regarded as one of foremost tenor banjo players of her generation, Elaine Reilly recently released her remarkable debut album, *Epiphany: Irish Traditional Music on the Tenor Banjo*, bringing a thoughtful selection of old and new tunes played with great expression and attention to detail.

Backed by Daithí Gormley on accordion and melodeon, Brian McGrath on piano and Brian Mooney on bouzouki, Elaine has already earned warm plaudits for the album from banjo maestri, Angelina Carbery and Kieran Hanrahan.



## AULD MADE NEW

Scottish duo, Morag Brown and Lewis Powell-Reid, have been performing together for over a decade, both as a duo and as part of larger ensembles.

On their latest album, *Auld Springs New*, they draw from a rich repertoire of traditional instrumental music from the Scottish Borders to the Balkans, played on fiddles, accordions, guitars and cittern. Their shared intuition and love of spontaneity allows them to move freely between melody, harmony and improvisation.



▲ Talisk: (from left) Charlie Galloway, Mohsen Amini and Bene Morris

## TALISK: LIVE AND KICKING

Scottish instrumental trio, Talisk, were each widely acclaimed as individual artists before coming together in the band. While Talisk has always been a trio, it has had six members since its formation in 2015 – with Mohsen Amini as the one remaining founder member.

The current line-up sees concertina virtuoso, Mohsen Amini, joined by Bene Morris on fiddle and Charlie Galloway on guitar.

Through its various iterations the band has sold over 10,000 albums worldwide and over 15 million streams with concert performances and headline

appearances at festivals around the world, garnering a number of traditional music awards – both individually and collectively.

Headlining Glasgow's iconic Barrowland Ballroom at Celtic Connections in Glasgow in 2024, the band performed a set-list based largely on their previously recorded output: *Abyss* and *The Millhouse* from their 2016 *Abyss* album; *Farewell* from the 2018 *Beyond* album; *Aura*, *Surya*, *Lava*, *Echo*, *Beast*, *Dystopia Part 1* and *Dystopia Part 2* from the 2022 *Dawn* album; and two recent singles, *Farewell* (2022) and *Maverick* (2024).

The concert also featured an array of international dancing talent including Morgan Bullock, Keeva Corry, Brian Culligan, Amy Mae Dolan, the Gardiner Brothers, Zoe Talbot, Mairead Trainor and Ellie Mae Wheeler.

"After our show in the iconic Barrowlands in Glasgow," explained Mohsen, "we thought it was just too good to not relive forever so here it is – perhaps our best album yet!"

The reason why many people are inclined to agree with the band's verdict on the album is because it is live – capturing the unique X factor that makes a Talisk concert such a memorable experience for anyone lucky to witness them.

The previous albums faithfully record the musicianship and the creativity – but the latest album brings the energy and the excitement of the band in full alchemical flow.

## Track Listing

1. HWFG
2. Aura
3. Surya
4. Abyss
5. Millhouse
6. Lava
7. Echo
8. Are you ready, Glasgow?
9. Beast
10. Farewell
11. Dystopia Part 1
12. Dystopia Part 2
13. Encore
14. Maverick





▲ Christy Moore's new album, *A Terrible Beauty*.

## CHRISTY'S BEAUTY

The title of Christy Moore's latest album, *A Terrible Beauty*, is inspired by a painting by his friend, Martin Gale, which adorns the cover – suggesting not only beauty but a sense of fiery foreboding inside.

The album delivers in spades with a carefully curated and well-balanced tracklist.

Christy's passionate engagement with the consequences of conflict and injustice at home and abroad, shows that even as he enters his eightieth year, the fire in the belly has not dimmed. the genocide in Palestine and the war in Ukraine (through Mark Harding's *Sunflowers*) both command Christy's attention.



*"She confronted soldiers on her street. Ignoring guns, grenades and gibbering headsets, she offered them a handful of sunflower seeds."*

Equally the tragic death of Ann Lovett is remembered (in *Life and Soul*) as is the murder of the journalist, Lyra McKee.

At the same time, Christy reflects on the fall-out from more personal issues: *Black & Amber* by Brian Brannigan of A Lazarus Soul deals with the tragedy of alcoholism and domestic abuse.

"This song brings me back to a time in life when the pub was a central part of my life," Christy writes in the liner notes. "Thankfully the day came when I closed that door behind me, never to return, one day at a time."

Balancing the darker tones on the album is Christy's eye for satire – brilliantly executed in *Cumann na Mná*, which castigates the bumptious Sky Sports presenter, Rob Wotton, for his hysterical conniptions over the Ireland women's soccer team's singing of the Wolfe Tones' song, *Celtic Symphony*, after victory at Hampden Park in 2022.

After Christy's cutting riposte, cataloguing the sins of empire, Mr. Wotton may think twice before dipping his uninformed toe into political commentary with displays of *faux* outrage.

The album also includes Christy's tribute to the annual big Cork summer gig, *Live at the Marquee* – which he has played on all but one of its eighteen years in existence:

*"On the banks, the banks, the beautiful banks/ On the banks of the River Lee / Saturday night we're packed in tight / All together in the Big Marquee."*

### Track Listing:

1. Boy in the Wild
2. Sunflowers
3. Black & Amber
4. Lemon Sevens
5. Broomielaw
6. Cumann na Mná
7. The Rock
8. The Life and Soul
9. Lyra McKee
10. Darkness Before Dawn
11. The Big Marquee
12. Palestine
13. Snowflakes

## SIDE TRACKS



### GAR DON CHLADACH

Drawn from a family in which music and song have always been central, Ulster traditional singer, Diane Ní Chanainn, won first prize in traditional singing at an tOireachtas in 2015.

In this album of songs in Irish and English (including the Scottish classic *The Broom o' the Cowdenknowes*) Diane is backed on the album by an impressive array of supporters including Mairead Ní Mhaonaigh, Mike McGoldrick, Donald Shaw, Neil Martin and Manus Lunny.



### MORE THAN A JOURNEYMAN

The scion of the famous family of singers from Derrytresk in Co. Tyrone, Niall Hanna is a traditional folk singer and songwriter, who launched his first solo album in 2018.

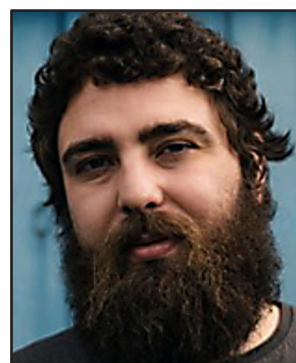
His acclaimed second solo album, *The Roving Journeyman*, features six traditional ballads and five newly-penned songs, with support from Damian McKee, Liam Bradley, Rachel McGarrity and Niall's brother Ciaran.



▲ Niamh Farrell  
▲ Nell Ní Chróinín



▲ John Spillane



▲ Riognach Connolly  
▲ Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin

## SPILLANE'S CORK OPERA

Throughout the history of classical music, composers have not only taken inspiration from folklore tales but have also adapted forms of folk music, itself. But far less frequent have been movements in the opposite direction when folk artists have adapted classical forms – like opera – to deliver folk narratives.

Of the latter, the stand-out examples are Anais Mitchell's *Hadestown* and Peter Bellamy's *The Transports*. However, these have now been joined by a new work, *Fíoruisce – The Legend of the Lough*, a three-act 'Gaelic folk opera' composed by John Spillane and performed on this double album by a cast of leading singers and musicians.

Sung variously in Irish and English, *Fíoruisce* is, according to Spillane, his "magnum opus." It is a highly creative musical re-imagining of the folk tale, *Fíorusga*, collected by Cork-born Thomas Crofton Croker and published in his three-part book, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825–28).

*Fíoruisce*, which means spring water, is the name of a princess, whose story culminates in the flooding of a kingdom,

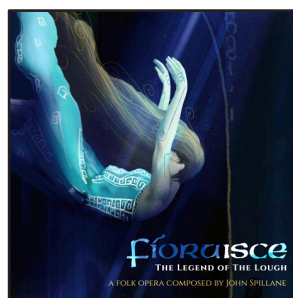
which became the Lough in Cork City. The story was translated into German by the Brothers Grimm as *Springwasser*.

The cast of highly talented folk and sean nós singers at Spillane's disposal includes Riognach Connolly as the Queen, Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin as the King, Niamh Farrell as the Princess, Nell Ní Chróinín as Honeymouth the Bard, Aisling Urwin as the Fairy Woman; and John Spillane, himself, as both the Minstrel and the Prince (Mananán Mac Lir).

Among the musicians performing on the album are Alan Doherty (flute), Aisling Urwin (harp), Lea Miklody (cello), John Spillane (guitar), Billy Mag Fhloinn (hornblower, bullroarer), Andrew O' Sullivan (percussion) and Brian Casey (additional instrumentation).

*Fíoruisce – The Legend of the Lough* is a highly ambitious and imaginative project – developed by a master storyteller, songsmith and musician.

Its twenty-four tracks are a highly impressive testament to the strength of Spillane's lyrical and musical creativity across a number of genres, but also to the range of his supremely talented cast in delivering Spillane's artistic vision.



### Track Listing

1. Réamhcheol/Overture
2. Tobairín/Little Well (Act 1 Sc. 1)
3. Rí/King (Act 1 Sc. 2)
4. Aon Láthair/One Place (Act 1 Sc. 3)
5. Fíoruisce/Fíoruisce (Act 1 Sc. 4)
6. Tromlui/Nightmare (Act 1 Sc. 5)
7. Crosántacht 1/Foolsong 1 (Act 1 Sc. 6)
8. Saol Aoibhinn/Life Delightful (Act 1 Sc. 7)
9. Fadó 1/Long Ago 1 (Act 2 Sc. 1)
10. Cogadh/War (Act 2 Sc. 2)
11. Dún an Dún/Close the Keep (Act 2 Sc. 3)
12. Mallacht/Curse (Act 2 Sc. 4)
13. Coiscéimeanna/Footsteps (Act 2 Sc. 5)
14. Síothal/Chalice (Act 2 Sc. 6)
15. Crosántacht 2/Foolsong 2 (Act 2 Sc. 7)
16. Fadó 2/Long Ago 2 (Act 3 Sc. 1)
17. Fleadh/Feast (Act 3 Sc. 2)
18. Prionsa/Prince (Act 3 Sc. 3)
19. Fíor Flathemon/True Lord (Act 3 Sc. 4)
20. Rince/Dance (Act 3 Sc. 5)
21. Deoch Uisce/A Drink of Water (Act 3 Sc. 6)
22. Lochmhaidhm/Lakeburst (Act 3 Sc. 7)
23. The Lady of the Lake
24. One Mile Round



▼ Restoring Gordon: Alison McMorland (Photo: Barbara McDiarmand)

**sound check:**  
alison mcmorland**53**

## GORDON'S BALLADS

*Some Ballads of Anna Gordon, Mrs. Brown of Falkland* is a major event for ballad scholarship:

Classic versions of twelve ballads from one of the earliest and most famous Scottish sources in a double album, with notes and commentary by leading singers and scholars.

The repertoire of Anna Gordon, collected in the closing years of the eighteenth century, has been a standard reference-point for folklorists for many years but never before has it actually been heard.

Commissioned to accompany Ruth Perry's landmark new biography, *The Ballad World of Anna Gordon, Mrs. Brown of Falkland*, these historically-informed performances by Scots traditional singer, Alison McMorland, with Jo Miller

(fiddle) and Kirsty Potts (vocals), open a fascinating insight into the ballad artform.

The sensitive direction of Alison McMorland, using occasional doubling of voices and gentle instrumental interjections, beautifully recreates the informal domestic circumstances in which these ballads were originally learned and sung. The results should surprise and delight even the most experienced ballad enthusiast.

Eight of the tunes come from the transcriptions made by Robert Eden Scott, of his aunt, Anna Gordon, singing – three of these, as amended by Bronson who supplied conjectural readings that he felt better fitted the words.

Another comes from the notebook of Walter Scott's daughter, Sophia Scott. Three of the texts came down without tunes, but Scotland's contemporary ballad-singing tradition supplies two of the airs and the third comes from the eighteenth-century Blaikie manuscript cited by Bronson.

"I have long been fascinated by the ballad as a form," says Alison McMorland, "and in arranging for the recording of these ballads was frequently reminded of the belief of my

old friend and mentor, Hamish Henderson, that performance 'breathed new life into ancient memorials'.

"Peggy Seeger and Ewan Mac Coll's testimony in their *Blood and Roses* ballad project perfectly echoes my own experience: 'a ballad is not a ballad until it is sung.'"

The double album also includes a 60-page booklet, with introduction, extensive notes and bibliography by William Donaldson, Geordie McIntyre and Ruth Perry, plus a singer's perspective by McMorland.

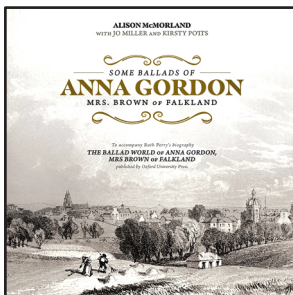
### Track Listing

#### Disc 1

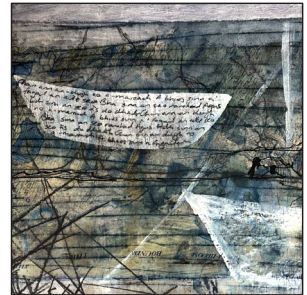
1. Thomas Rymer & Queen of Elfland
2. Kempion
3. Lady Elspat
4. The Cruel Sister
5. Clark Colven
6. Young Bekie

#### Disc 2

1. Lamkin
2. King Henry
3. Brown Adam
4. The Gay Goss Hawk
5. The Baron of Braikly
6. Lady Maisry



## SIDE TRACKS



### ANNA BHÀN

On their new album, *Anna Bhàn*, cousins Rachel Newton and Mairearad Green celebrate the spirit of their great-great-grandmother, Anna Bhàn, one of a group of young women at the forefront of the Coigach Resistance of 1852-53 during the Highland Clearances in Scotland.

Newton plays harp and viola while sharing vocal duties with Green who also plays accordion, small pipes, piano and shruti.



### BLOWING HOT

The US-based trio, Open the Door for Three, is fiddler, Liz Knowles; piper and flute player, Kieran O'Hare; and Pat Broaders on bouzouki, bodhrán and vocals. Their music is a rare combination of unearthed tunes from vintage collections; newly composed melodies; fresh arrangements of songs old and new; along with homages to some of the musicians and bands they listened to in their formative years.

Their newly released album, *A Prosperous Gale*, showcases this acclaimed trio at the height of their powers.



SIDE  
TRACKS

## SOCKS' FIFTH

The Clare trio, Socks in the Frying Pan, have just released their fifth album, *Waiting for Inspiration*, aiming to capture the raw energy and enthusiasm of their live gigs on disc. That energy was recognised with the title, Live Band of the Year, at the Celtic Music Awards in 2020.

Among the highlights of the new album are newly composed tunes like *Willy Anne's Waltz*, *The Ballerina Reel*, *Shoot the Arrow* and *Beetlejig Beetlejig Beetlejig*.



## AINSLIE'S POOL

*The Pool* is Ross Ainslie's sixth solo album. He is joined again by the Sanctuary Band and by guests, including Damien O'Kane, Katrina Lee and Georgia Boyd.

The album's twelve tracks – all written by Ainslie – cover a range of musical styles yet hang together as a complete suite.

In the modern streaming age where audiences are encouraged to “consume” music track by track, *The Pool* bucks the trend by demanding to be heard as a complete work – a “concept album,” as they were once known.



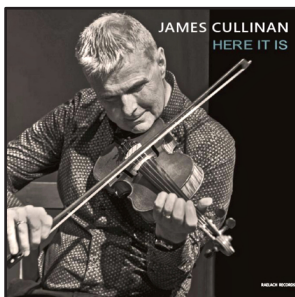
▲ At last: James Cullinan releases long-awaited album, *Here It Is*.

## HERE IT IS FROM JAMES

The long-awaited début solo album from veteran Clare fiddler, James Cullinan, entitled *Here It Is*, has just been released on Raelach Records.

A former pupil at Toonagh National School where the renowned Frank Custy taught him to play the fiddle from the age of 9, James joined the Toonagh Céili Band and later Gearóid Ó hAllmhurain's Disirt Tola Band which recorded an album, *Traditional Music from Clare and Dublin*, in 1983.

A regular performer on radio and television, he has also taken part in numerous music festivals and released a highly acclaimed duet album, *Happy to Meet*, with flute player, the late P. J. Crotty and James' wife, Carol, in 2002.



Influenced by Clare greats like Junior Crehan, Joe Ryan, Tony Linnane and (by adoption) Tommy Peoples, James has been acclaimed as much for the modesty of his bearing as well as for the sweetness and lyrical quality of his playing. He has always made time for both accomplished and aspiring traditional musicians.

Produced by the ubiquitous Jack Talty in Lissey Casey – with additional recording by Steve Cooney, Garry Ó Briain and Martin O'Malley – the new album features fourteen tracks with tunes selected from James' extensive repertoire, with tasteful support from some of his many friends in music.

Along with wife, Carol (piano), James is joined by Steve Cooney (guitar), Kevin Crawford (bodhrán), Mick Conneely (bouzouki), and for the final track, Cullinan family members: Noelle (concertina), Caoimhe (concertina) and Cyril (banjo).

## Track Listing:

1. Dancing Eyes/Old Man Dillon/The Banks of Newfoundland
2. Murphy's Hornpipe/Eleanor Neary's
3. The Peeler's Pocket/The Old Wheels of the World/Lad O'Beirne's
4. Nia's Barndance/Lord McDonald's/Ballinasloe Fair
5. Charlie Mulvihill's/The Meelick Team Jig
6. Galway Bay / The Happy Hornpipe
7. Eddie Kelly's/The Happy Man/The Boy on the Hilltop
8. Paddy Fahy's
9. Bill Black's/The Pleasures of Hope/The Wily Old Bachelor
10. Maud Miller/Seán Reid's
11. Caisleán an Óir/Crehan's Banbhs
12. The Woodcock Jig/The Luachrachán
13. Atlantic Wave/Lough Mountain/The Fourpenny Bit
14. The Fiddler Mick Hoy/Tiny Hearts /Over the Bog Road





▲ Fire and passion: MacDara Yeates (Image: Fonn)

## DARA'S STUNNING DEBUT

Macdara Yeates wears many hats – singer, collector, promoter and producer – all of which he wears with great commitment and style. His vocal prowess has been celebrated for many years – as a member of the creative powerhouse, Skippers Alley, as a founder member of The Night Before Larry Got Stretched, the monthly session at the Cobblestone Pub in Dublin's Smithfield, and as a welcome guest at singing sessions and festivals around Ireland and further afield.

Dara's voice is a wonderful instrument: he can sing with remarkable sensitivity and feeling and seamlessly turn on the power to reach Stentorian levels of volume, when required.

After his former Skippers Alley bandmates – John Francis Flynn, Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin and Ultan O'Brien, released acclaimed albums – garnering awards as well as critical acclaim, Dara was finally persuaded to record some of the repertoire of traditional songs with which he had been delighting audiences in recent years.

The result is a stunning debut album, showcasing a collection of ten songs – mainly traditional with a nod to one of Dara's influences, Seósamh Ó hÉanaí, as well as compositions by two more singing heroes, Liam Weldon and Dominic Behan.

Dara's familiarity with the largely unaccompanied settings of many singing clubs around Dublin is reflected in the fact that half of the tracks on the album are unaccompanied, while the others feature minimal guitar or bodhrán accompaniment.

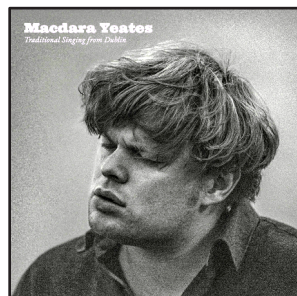
In what has been described as a "golden age for traditional singing in Ireland," Dara's gem of an album adds to the burgeoning florescence of emerging musical

talent that not only includes the aforementioned Skippers Alley alumni, but also Larry Session regulars like Ye Vagabonds, Lisa O'Neill, Landless, Lemoncello and, most recently, Niamh Bury.

With *Traditional Singing from Dublin*, Dara has now moved firmly centre-stage. After such an auspicious beginning to his recording career, the pressure is on now to meet the challenge of the "difficult second album."

### Track Listing

1. Johnny I Hardly Knew You
2. The Irish Navigator
3. The Shores of Lough Bran
4. One Starry Night
5. The Herrin'
6. The Blue Tar Road
7. Rocking the Cradle
8. The Kerry Recruit
9. Our Last Hope
10. Boys from Home



### SIDE TRACKS



### APE HOUSE FIRST

The first full-length album from Glasgow-based trio Ape House tells a story of the band's early years, including their explorations of contemporary traditional music which evolved into their signature style.

Clare fiddler, Craig Harrison, along with Highlander Lachie Robinson and Wallace Calvert from Dunbartonshire, met in Glasgow – most notably at The Drum and Monkey, which inspired the band's name and has become one of the top sessions in the city centre.

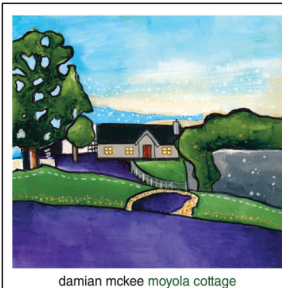


### WINTER WEAVERS

A collection of seasonal music from the Tannahill Weavers, who have been at the forefront of the Scottish traditional music scene since the 1970s, this album showcases the band's musicianship and creativity in approaching well known melodies in such refreshing arrangements.

Traditional carols along with old standards like *Winter Wonderland* and classical favourites like *The Nutcracker March* are transformed. The band is also joined by Scots Gaelic singer, Annia MacGillivray, on two tracks.



SIDE  
TRACKS

damian mckee moyola cottage

## COTTAGE MUSIC

*Moyola Cottage* is the debut solo album of 10 original tracks from button accordion player, Damian McKee, featuring tunes ranging from melodic slow airs to moody marches and a plethora of reels, jigs and polkas.

Produced and arranged by McKee and Liam Bradley, the album includes contributions from Niall Hanna, Rachel McGarrity, Brona Graham, Anthony Davis, Chris McGlone and Eamon Murray.



## IN GOOD SHAPE

The latest album from harpist, Alannah Thornburgh, is due for release in February. *Shapeshifter*, features a collection of mainly instrumental compositions inspired by the rich tradition of fairy folklore and mythology in rural Ireland – sourced from almost fifty interviews with storytellers, historians, family and friends.

Snippets of some of these conversations are interspersed throughout the album.

Among the artists supporting Alannah on the album are Joshua Burnside, Laura Quirke and Aoife Kelly.



▲ Walking: Jack and Angela Plunkett.

## COMFORT AND JOY

Jack and Angela Plunkett have been popular contributors and guests at singing sessions and folk clubs throughout Ireland for many years. Originally from Coatbridge – about 14 km from Glasgow, the couple are well established in Bray – where they have been pillars of the Bray Singing Circle since its earliest days.

As performers, the duo are known for their easy singing style complemented by distinctive harmonies backed by tasteful guitar accompaniment.

Their repertoire consists of songs drawn mainly from Scotland, North America and Ireland – along with a number of Jack's own compositions which offer thoughtful and often moving observations on the highs and lows of human existence both at a personal level and in terms of wider social concerns.



Jack and Angela Plunkett

Jack's compositions demonstrate a talent for writing simple but effective lyrics alongside tunes that become instant ear-worms – quickly inducing listeners to sing along as if they had known the songs for years.

Their album, *Walking Each Other Home*, opens with two of these: *Yours Aye*, a gentle and sincere love song, and *The Scattering*, inspired by the plight of a young couple forced to emigrate when they could no longer meet their mortgage repayments.

From their Scottish repertoire, the duo draws *The Broom of the Cowdenknowes*, *Yellow on the Broom* by Adam McNaughton and Robert Burns' tribute to women, *Green Grow the Rashes*.

From Canada comes Wade Hemsworth's joyful celebration of the lumber workers, *The Log Drivers' Waltz* while Phil Ochs' sixty-year-old classic, *There But For Fortune*, gets a gentle makeover from Jack.

The title track which closes the album is not only a celebration of the ties that bind the couple as partners: but also of the ties that bind humanity.

*Walking Each Other Home* captures their live performance perfectly.

Proceeds from album sales are being donated to the Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

## Track Listing:

1. Yours Aye
2. The Scattering
3. Yellow on the Broom
4. Dancing at a Hundred and Two
5. The Brig
6. Green Grow the Rashes
7. Greater Love
8. All the Rivers
9. The Log Driver's Waltz
10. The Broom of the Cowdenknowes
11. The Angels and Me
12. There But for Fortune
13. Walking Each Other Home



**sound check:**  
side tracks**57****DESIDERIUM**

Originally from Dallas, Joseph Carmichael has been acclaimed as an accompanist within the traditional and folk world. His debut solo album, *Desiderium*, was mostly recorded in early 2020 just before the start of the pandemic, and finished over the course of the last four years.

With Carmichael himself on whistles, flutes, guitars and vocals, backed by an impressive line-up of guest musicians, he also produces along with Seth Russell. The album includes a number of his original compositions alongside the English classic, *Sovay*, and another tune, *Fechin Inn*, composed by his greatest musical influence, Brian Finnegan.

**BACK TO ROOTS**

*Amongst The Wild Rowans* is the second album from award winning Gaelic singer Rachel Walker and renowned singer and musician, Aaron Jones. It sees the acclaimed duo celebrate their roots with an intimate collection of twelve traditional songs. The album pays tribute to many of the songs that shaped them both as traditional singers.

Inspired by the expression 'Dig Where You Stand', the duo decided to search for songs with deep personal significance, songs they heard and learned at the beginning of their musical journeys, songs that were important at different times in their lives, songs that inspired, broke hearts or raised a smile.

**TAKE ME BACK**

Jess Collins is a London-born folk musician, dancer and choreographer, well known for her exceptional skills as a percussive dancer, vocalist and fiddle player.

*Take Me Back to London* is a collection of her favourite English and Irish folk tunes, songs and stories.

Supported by Charlie Wheatley and others, the album balances percussive dance, fiddle, voice, box, sax banjo and guitar to create a unique blend of sound in its treatment of rhythmic traditional dance tunes, along with songs from the canon like *Polly Vaughan* (Molly Bawn), *Barbara Allen* and *The Night Visiting Song*.

**IN GOOD SHAPE**

*Songs of Northeast Scotland* is the latest album from Scottish-based duo, Allan Carr (guitar/mandola/vocals) and Janie Rothfield (fiddle/banjo/vocals), who have been popular guests at festivals around the world for over forty years.

Supported on this album by Bernie Nau on piano and Indian harmonium, the duo offer a tasteful take on a number of well-known songs and tunes popular in the Northeast and also well-known in Ireland – including *Bonny Ship the Diamond*, *The Scolding Wife*, *The Burning of Auchindoun*, *Lament for Owen Rowe* and *The Downfall of Paris*.

# the o11lam



**SUNDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2025**  
**MANDELA HALL BELFAST**

## DOIRE - DERRY



**26 Eanáir - 1 Feabhra 2025**  
**26 JANUARY - 1 FEBRUARY 2025**

**ANNA MASSIE, ARCHIE MOSS & MOYA SWEENEY, CONOR MALLON BAND,**  
**CÓRAS TRIO, CORNER SHOP PROPHETS, DANDER, DARA COLLINS**  
**EVE BELLE, JACK WARNOCK TRIO, JOSEPH LEIGHTON BAND,**  
**LORCÁN MAC MATHÚNA, MARTIN TOURISH, & ÉAMONN GALLDUBH,**  
**MARY & JOE MCGUIGGAN, NIAL HANNA & DAMIAN MCKEE BIG BAND,**  
**PILOSA, SCOL, ORLA NÍ CHORRAGÁIN, UUM TRAD SOCIETY,**  
**THIRTEEN NORTH LE RYAN MOLLOY & SEAN ÓG GRAHAM**

**CATH NA mBANNAÍ, CEOLCHOIRMEACHA, CEARDLANNA UIRLISÍ,**  
**CLUB FÉILE, IMEACHTAÍ TEAGHLAIGH, IMEACHTAÍ POBAIL,**  
**SLÍ NA SEISIÚN, IMEACHTAÍ DAMHSA, AGUS GO LEOR EILE...**

**BATTLE OF THE BANDS, CONCERTS, INSTRUMENT WORKSHOPS,**  
**FESTIVAL CLUB, EVENTS FOR CHILDREN, COMMUNITY EVENTS,**  
**SESSION TRAILS, DANCE EVENTS, AND MUCH MORE...**

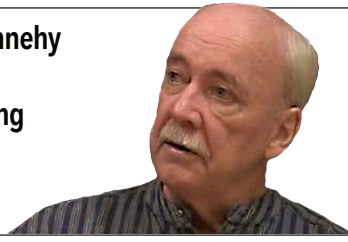


**Peggy at Tradfest**

Page 67

**Tim Dennehy at The Gathering**

Page 68

**59****concert pitch**

▲ Malinky: (from left), Mark Dunlop, Fiona Hunter, Steve Byrne and Mike Vass (Photo: AMD Photography).

**MALINKY TO MARK 25 ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup>**

**L**eadng Scots band, Malinky, will mark their twenty-fifth anniversary with a special concert during the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow – with a number of guests joining them at the Royal Concert Hall on January 25.

For the past 25 years, Malinky have been at the forefront of the Scots song and ballad tradition. The band features the outstanding voices of leading Scots singers of their generation, Fiona Hunter and Steve Byrne, composer and multi-instrumentalist, Mike Vass, and noted Ulster

singer and musician, Mark Dunlop.

Continuing on their distinctive mission as contemporary champions of traditional Scots song, for this special 25th anniversary concert, Malinky will be joined by a number of their singing friends to perform favourites from the Malinky repertoire from their six acclaimed albums since their debut LP, *Last Leaves*, was released at Celtic Connections in early 2000.

Among the special guests joining them in Glasgow will be former bandmate, Karine Polwart, as well as Eliza Carthy, Jim Malcolm, Paul McKenna, Shona Donaldson, Mairead Walls, Amy Lord, Chris Wright and Lucy Pringle.



▲ Guest: Karine Polwart

Running from January 16 to February 2, Celtic Connections boasts an extensive range of international performers covering traditional, folk, country, blues and bluegrass, including Karan Casey, Frankie Gavin and De Dannan; Rhiannon Giddens and Dirk Powell; Cara Dillon; Tim O'Brien and Jan Fabricius with Dermot Byrne and Seamie O'Dowd; Julie Fowlis, Éamon Doorley, Zoë Conway and John McIntyre; Lyle Lovett; Ímar; KT Tunstall; Femi Kuti; Kris Drever; Brighde Chaimbeul; The ollam; Dervish; Mec Lir; Kinnaris Quintet; Four Men and a Dog; Peat and Diesel; Kíla; Catrin Finch and Aoife Ní Bhriain; Breabach; Dermot Byrne, Ross Ainslie, Tim Edey and Éamonn Coyne; Brian Finnegan; Peatbog Faeries; Transatlantic Sessions; The Friel Sisters; Nuala Kennedy and Eamon O'Leary; Michael McGoldrick and Tim Edey; Iona Fyfe; Leonard Barry Trio; Ross Ainslie and The Sanctuary Band;

Oysterband; Lindisfarne; Eric Bibb; Elephant Sessions; The Seeger Sessions Revival; Steve Wickham and Ray Conn; No Crows; Gretchen Peters; Magic Numbers; Allison de Groot and Tatiana Hargreaves; Zawose Queens, Furrow Collective; Niamh Bury; and Beth Malcolm.

The closing day of the festival will also feature the final of the BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year.



▲ Rising: Karan Casey

60

concert pitch:  
martin hayes

# MARTIN HAYES



with the  
National  
Symphony  
Orchestra

FRIDAY 14 MARCH  
SATURDAY 15 MARCH  
TUESDAY 18 MARCH  
7.30pm

Tickets from €15  
[nch.ie](http://nch.ie)

 NATIONAL  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Ceoilte,  
Ealaíon, Cluichleirí, Spóirt agus Meia  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

**NCH**

NATIONAL  
CONCERT  
HALL \ AN  
CEOLÁRAS  
NAISIÚNTA



▼ **Gradamacha agus ghradamacha:** (from left) Yvonne Kane, Macdara Ó Faoláin, Liz Kane and Derek Hickey (Photo: Music Network).

**concert pitch:**  
**gradamacha**

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## GRADAM WINNERS TOUR

**F**our of the 2024 TG4 Gradam award winners will take part in a twelve-date tour in February under the auspices of Music Network. Musician of the Year, Derek Hickey, will be joined by Young Musician of the Year, Macdara Ó Faoláin, and Group of the Year, the Kane Sisters (Liz and Yvonne). The tour promises to be not only an exciting collaboration by musicians of the highest quality but also an experience full of positive energy and irrepressible good humour generated by the chemistry between the four personalities.

Acclaimed as one of Ireland's leading accordion players, Derek Hickey from Adare in County Limerick, began playing at the age of ten and started lessons with Dónal de Barra at twelve. Three years later he was playing with the Shannonside Céilí Band.

A member of Arcady along with Johnny McDonagh and Frances Black, he subsequently joined De Dannan, recording two albums and touring extensively with the band until it disbanded in 2003.

His 2022 solo album was described as "a recording of pure genius" by accordion player Dermot Byrne. Derek also teaches at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick.

Fiddle duo, Liz and Yvonne Kane from Letterfrack in Co. Galway were taught music by Mary Finn and by their grandfather, Jimmy Mullen.

They have been deeply influenced by the traditional music of Sligo and East Galway, particularly the work of the great composer and fiddler Paddy Fahey.

The Kanes have recorded and collaborated with many well known artists including The Chieftains, Cherish the Ladies and Steve Earle.

Following two years touring with Sharon Shannon's band, The Woodchoppers, Liz and Yvonne recorded their first duo album, *The Well Tempered Bow*, in 2002.

Subsequent releases *Under the Diamond* (2004) and *Side by Side* (2010) were followed by their highly acclaimed fourth album, *In Memory of Paddy Fahey* (2022), featuring fifteen of his compositions along with newly composed tunes from the duo.

Bouzouki player, Macdara Ó Faoláin, from An Rinn in Co.

Waterford, is noted for his highly innovative approach to traditional Irish music – collaborating regularly with Victoria Adiiye and Cormac McCarthy.

He also performs in a trio with Pádraic Keane (uilleann pipes) and Páraic Mac Donnchadha (tenor banjo). Their debut album, *Beo*, is a compilation of live recordings from performances across the country.

Macdara recently released a solo EP entitled *Do Shamhlaigh Mé Tír Nua...* as a prelude to a highly anticipated debut album. Both the EP and forthcoming album are produced by composer and pianist Cormac McCarthy.

Macdara's compositional work draws inspiration from a wide array of genres. As a native Irish speaker he is also writing new songs in Irish.

### Dates and Venues

February 11: Station House Theatre, Clifden, Co. Galway

February 12: Belltable, O'Connell Street, Limerick

February 13: Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire

February 14: Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

February 15: King House, Boyle, Co. Roscommon

February 16 Feb: glór, Ennis, Co. Clare

February 18: The Sugar Club, Leeson Street, Dublin

February 19: National Opera House, Wexford

February 20: Triskel, Christchurch, Cork

February 21: Ionad Cultúrtha, Baile Mhúirne, Co. Chorcaí

February 22: St John's Theatre, Listowel, Co. Kerry

February 23: St. Micheal's Church, Waterville, Co. Kerry

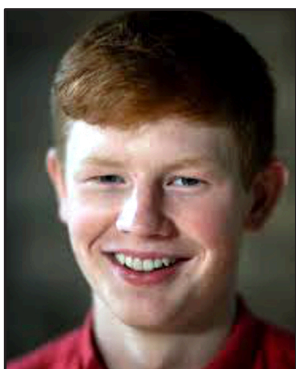




▲ Tutor: Enda Scahill



▲ Tutor: Stephanie Keane



▲ Guest: Piaras Ó Lorcáin



▲ Guest: Aisling Lyons



## FÉILE NA TÁNA JANUARY 26- FEBRUARY 3

**F**éile na Tána – the Co. Louth traditional music festival curated by Zoë Conway and John McIntyre – returns to Carlingford at the foot of the Cooley mountains for its eleventh edition – with over forty eminent musicians, singers, poets and dancers, and over a hundred young musicians in attendance.

Kicking off in the beautiful surrounds of Carlingford Heritage Centre on Sunday January 26, the opening concert will feature a celebration of the music of Oriel, with Mícheal and Mac Dara Ó Raghallaigh on concertina and fiddle, singer Piaras Ó Lorcáin, Zoë Conway

on fiddle with Dónal Lunny on bouzouki, and local historian and storyteller, Séamus Murphy.

On Thursday January 30, the headline concert features the acclaimed duo of Mick O'Brien (uilleann pipes, flute, whistle) and Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh (fiddle, hardanger d'amore) – with support from the award-winning multi-instrumentalist and composer, Donnchadh Mac Aodha (harp, flute, whistle) at Carlingford Heritage Centre.

The Carlingford Heritage Centre will also host one of the highlights of this year's festival: a performance of a newly commissioned piece for four Irish harps written by *Riverdance* composer Bill Whelan. The concert on Friday January 31



▲ Curator: Zoë Conway

will feature harpers from the four provinces of Ireland – Aisling Lyons, Cormac de Barra, Éilis Lavelle and Séamus Ó Flatharta,

The concert will also include a duo performance by Caoimhe and Séamus Uí Flatharta on vocals, whistles, flute and harp. They will be joined by poet Moya Cannon to perform the Harp Ireland commission, *Bunting's Honey* with Clare harpist Aisling Lyons.

Complementing the headline concerts, the Féile will also offer expert workshops for students of all ages on a wide range of instruments at Bush Post Primary School on the Cooley Peninsula on Saturday February 1.

Among the virtuoso players on hand to provide tuition will be Noel Hill (*concertina*); Mary Bergin (*tin whistle*); Enda Scahill (*banjo*); Liam O'Connor (*fiddle*); Seán McKeon (*uilleann pipes*); Zoë Conway (*fiddle*); Damien Mullane (*accordion*); Éilis Lavelle (*harp*); Maighread Ní Dhomhnaill (*singing*); Barry Kerr (*flute*); Stephanie Keane (*sean-nós dancing*); Tristan Rosenstock (*bodhrán*); and Des Cafferky (*tin whistle*).



▲ Guests: Mick O'Brien (left) and Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh



▲ Guest: Maighread Ní Dhomhnaill





▲ Tutor: Noel Hill

The workshops are intended for players with three or more years' experience on their instrument. But even beginners will be able to join the easy tin whistle, singing or sean-nós dancing classes.

There will also be plenty of sessions, singing circles, young musicians' concerts, lectures, exhibitions, céilís and more throughout the festival.

These leading musicians, singers and dancers will come together in a unique concert at St. Michael's Hall, Carlingford for the main festival concert on Saturday February 1.

One of the most eagerly anticipated events on the festival programme is the Mól an Óige Young Musicians' Concert – featuring solo and group performances from over sixty young musicians from around Ireland – including 'Nasc' led by Lisa Canny, Music Generation Cavan/Monaghan, Louth, Meath and CCÉ Dun Dealgan, the Music Generation Harp Collective from Laois, Louth, Mayo and Waterford, Scoil Naomh Lorcan and many more.

To book tickets, or for more information, see [www.feilena.tana.com](http://www.feilena.tana.com)



▲ Tutor: Mary Bergin

**THE GATHERING**  
FESTIVAL OF MUSIC & ARTS

**THUR 6TH FEB 2025**  
UNDER 18'S MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

**CONCERT**

**NIAMH NÍ CHARRA & KEVIN CORBETT**  
With Aidan Connolly and John Daly

**GLENEAGLE**  
BALLROOM ★★★★★

[WWW.THEGATHERING.IE](http://WWW.THEGATHERING.IE)

**MUIREANN NIC AMHLAOIBH**  
LE  
**DÓNAL O'CONNOR & GERRY O'BEIRNE**

**Tionól Nioclás Tóibín**  
Dé hAoine 31ú Eanáir | 20:00 | Halla Pobail na Rinne

[muireann.ie](http://muireann.ie)





# TONNTA TO CELEBRATE IRISH LANGUAGE, CULTURE IN GALWAY

Building on the incredible success of last year's event, Tonnta, Galway's one-of-a-kind festival celebrating the Irish language and Galway as a bilingual city, is back. Running from January 30 to February 2, the festival promises an eventful lineup of events to inspire, entertain, and involve the whole community.

Among the traditional music events listed for the festival are concerts by:

- Jiggy at the Róisín Dubh on January 31;
- Ríoghnach Connolly – joined by An Chéad Ghlúin Eile – in An Taibhdhearc on February 1 to mark Brigid's Day; and
- the Máirtín O'Connor Trio – supported by Padraig Jack – at the Town Hall Theatre on February 2.

A free programme of engaging events has been scheduled for the PorterShed a Dó in Market Street, on February 1, including bilingual yoga, Brigid's cross-weaving, Irish language conversational sessions and much more.

Meanwhile, Eyre Square will host a free Céilí Mór on the afternoon on February 1, with spectacular fire performances at 5pm and 7pm.

On February 2, the festival's Lá na bPáistí moves to Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh, Knocknacarra, where families can enjoy, workshops, games, circus skills, face painting, and a kids' disco.

Young people will also be able to meet presenters from the TG4's Cúla4 to explore television production skills.



## Ríoghnach Connolly

### 01/02

Ticéad: <https://tonnta.clr.events/event/137225:rioghnach-connolly>



ST PATRICK'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

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# Cara Dillon

## COMING HOME

+ special guests PIARAS Ó LORCÁIN & JACK WARNOCK

**17 MARCH 2025 | ULSTER HALL, BELFAST**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT [BELFASTTRADFEST.COM](http://BELFASTTRADFEST.COM)



## NPU'S LEO ROWSOME EVENT

The annual Leo Rowsome Commemorative Event takes place in Na Píobairí Uilleann's headquarters in Henrietta Street, Dublin on February 22.

The event celebrates the life and achievements of Leo Rowsome, who was one of the most significant figures in uilleann piping in the twentieth century, as a piper, pipemaker, organiser and piping teacher.

The events of the day reflect all aspects of Leo's piping legacy and include piping tuition, pipemaking and reedmaking tuition, a lecture and piping performance, followed by a social gathering with informal music.

The event will include piping classes in uilleann piping with Mikie Smyth and Colleen Shanks. There will also be a class on reedmaking with Eugene Lambe.

The evening's activities will include a lecture by Helena Rowsome, entitled *Leo Rowsome and the Uilleann Pipes*.

The formal events of the day will finish with a recital featuring Robert Fell, Síofra Ní Mhoráin and Michael 'Blackie' O'Connell.

To register for classes, contact [info@pipers.ie](mailto:info@pipers.ie) or call 01-8730093.



▲ Colleen Shanks

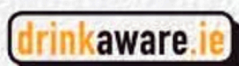


# Russell Festival Weekend

20th - 24th | FEBRUARY | 2025 | DOOLIN



**Noel Hill & Jack Talty • Caoimhe & Séamus Uí Fhlatharta**  
**James Cullinan, Dermot Byrne & Steve Cooney**  
**Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh & Donál O'Connor**  
**Céim ar Chéim • Sorcha Costello • Liam O'Brien**  
**Conor Crimmins • Conor Connolly • Bríd Kiveen**  
**Charles Monod & Rachel Reid • Christy Barry**  
**Gary Shannon & more**



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR  
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL



[www.russellfestivalweekend.ie](http://www.russellfestivalweekend.ie)



concert pitch:  
dublin tradfest

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▲ Kila



▲ Systir



## TRADFEST AT TWENTY

**D**ublin TradFest will celebrate its twentieth anniversary with over 100 events at over thirty venues featuring over 150 artists over the course of five days from January 22-26.

While Tradfest is best known for its stunning concert programme featuring an array of premier artists in historic locations throughout the city and county of Dublin, it also offers a range of other events.

The Smithwicks Sessions offer free intimate gigs in some of the watering holes of Temple Bar – the festival's original heartland.

Tradfest's Showcase Nights offer opportunities for new performers to shine while TradFringe provides a range of music-related activities, talks and workshops.

The extensive cast of headliners includes former TG4 Gradam award winners and All-Ireland senior champions in a variety of musical disciplines including Daoiri Farrell, Laoise Kelly, Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, Frankie Gavin, Tara Breen, Louise and Michelle Mulcahy, Liam O'Connor, Derek Hickey, Josephine Marsh, Liz and Yvonne Kane and Edwina Guckian.

From the emerging generation of traditional performers are RTÉ

Folk Award winner, Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin, his former Skippers Alley bandmate, Macdara Yeates, Landless, Varo, Lisa Lambe, Muireann Bradley, and Séamus and Caoimhe Uí Fhlaharta.

The festival will also feature performances by long established favourites like Peggy Seeger, Moya Brennan, Karan Casey, Tríona Ní Dhomhnaill, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Kíla, Scullion, Maura O'Connell, Mick Hanley, Gerry 'Banjo' O'Connor, Stockton's Wing and British artists, Ralph McTell, Julie Fowlis, Lindisfarne and Martin Simpson.

Dublin Tradfest will also offer a rare opportunity to see the

acclaimed Irish-Icelandic female choral ensemble, Systir, conducted by Anúna's creative director, Michael McGlynn.

Among the other artists performing during the festival are Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh, Seán Keane, Niamh Dunne and Seán Óg Graham, The Henry Girls, Aoife Scott, Eric Bibb, Dee Armstrong, John Blake, Kieran Goss and Annie Kinsella, Emma Langford, Macalla, Eleanor Shanley and Mike Hanrahan, Paudie O'Connor and Aoife Ní Chaoimh, Diarmuid Ó Meachair, Eoghan O'Neill, The Pride Céilí Band, Clare Sands, Steo Wall, The String Sisters, Jacqui Martin and Alannah Thornburgh.



▲ Peggy Seeger



▲ Daoiri Farrell



concert pitch:  
the gathering

▼ Gathering at The Gathering: Danú

▲ Fiddler player,  
Niamh Ní Charra▲ Traditional singer,  
Tim Dennehy

## DANÚ SET TO GATHER

**D**anú will play at The Gathering Festival in Killarney in February.

Hailing from counties Waterford, Cork, Dublin and Donegal in Ireland, Danú was formed in 1995 as part of Ireland's delegation to the Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival in Brittany, (an

annual event that is the biggest gathering of 'Celtic' nations in the world).

The band's eponymous debut album was released in 1997 to huge critical acclaim. Two decades and eight albums later, Danú's virtuosi players on flute, tin whistle, button accordion,

fiddle, bouzouki, and vocals (in Irish and English) have delighted audiences worldwide.

During its thirty years on the road, the band has been fronted by four exceptional vocalists: two men – Cárthach Mac Craith, Ciarán Ó Gealbháin – and two women – Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh and (since 2016) Nell Ní Chróinín.

Ní Chróinín is the winner of multiple awards including the TG4 Gradam for Singer of the Year in 2012 and the highly prestigious Oireactas Corn Uí Riada award in 2014.

The Gathering Festival takes place the Gleneagle Hotel from February 5 to 9. The festival programme is packed with concerts, céilís, sessions, workshops, and the late night festival club.

Among the other performers appearing during the festival are Dervish, Pauline Scanlon, Jackie Daly, Niamh Ní Charra and Kevin Corbett, and Peadar Ó Riada. The festival will also include a Traditional Singers' Concert with Róisín Ryan, Tim Dennehy, Jim Walsh, Ella Marie O'Dwyer and a number of other singers.

**THE GATHERING**  
FESTIVAL OF MUSIC & ARTS

**FRI 7TH FEB 2025**  
UNDER 18'S MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

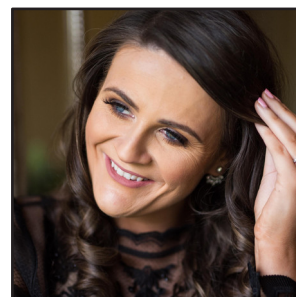
**CONCERT**

# DANÚ

With Support by Peadar O'Riada & Gearóid Ó Duinnín

**GLENEAGLE**  
**INEC CLUB**

WWW.THEGATHERING.IE



▲ Ella Marie O'Dwyer

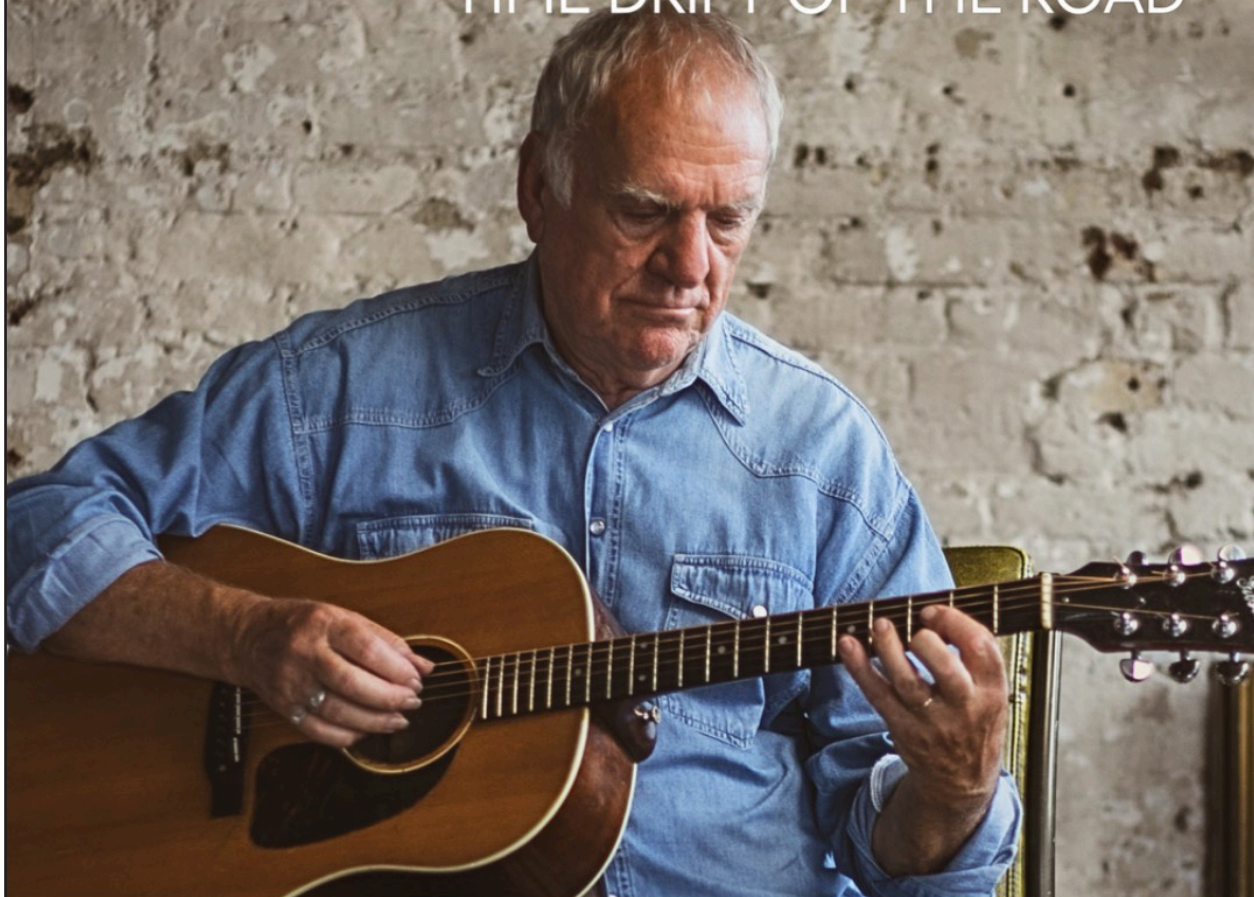


concert pitch:  
ralph mctell

69

# RALPH MCTELL

'TIME DRIFT OF THE ROAD'



**C** CORK  
OPERA  
HOUSE

Sunday, 11 May 2025

**Kilfenora**  
Traditional Music Festival

**FRIDAY APRIL 25 –  
MONDAY APRIL 28**



70

## concert pitch: solas

▼ Nuala Kennedy (*far left*) is to join Solas for their thirtieth anniversary tour in February.



## NUALA JOINS SOLAS FOR 2025 TOUR

**S**inger and musician, Nuala Kennedy, is to join Solas in February for their 2025 Anniversary Tour.

Since forming in New York City in 1995 the band has been a major focal point on the Irish music scene in the US.

Over the course of twelve critically acclaimed albums and endless international touring,

Solas brought their love and respect for the traditions of Irish music, and their sense of melodic and instrumental adventure to the world.

Hailed by *The Boston Globe* as “the finest Celtic ensemble this country has ever produced,” the band was described in *The Wall Street Journal* as “an Irish traditional band bearing all the marks of greatness.”

Traditional singer and flute player, Nuala Kennedy, grew up in Dundalk but now lives in Ennis, County Clare, with her Appalachian singer husband, A. J. Roach, and their two young children.

Recorded as a duo with Eamon O’Leary, Nuala’s recent release, *Hydra*, is an atmospheric album of songs which has met with wide acclaim.

Sunday Independent ♡ presents  
**ROCK AGAINST  
HOMELESSNESS**  
in aid of Focus Ireland

# DAMIEN DEMPSEY

**3**OLYMPIA  
THEATRE

FEBRUARY 7 2025

**TICKETS €40**

Phone & Internet Bookings are subject  
to 12.5% service charge.



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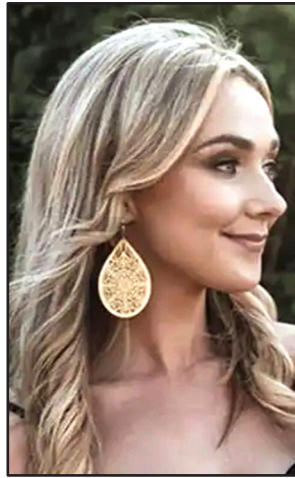




▼ George Murphy (left) and Tara Howley

**concert pitch:**  
dockers

71



## DOCKERS RETURN TO AMBASSADOR

After a sell-out show in Liberty Hall in 2024 where it received rapturous standing ovations, *Dockers* is set to open at Dublin's Ambassador Theatre in April.

Directed by Joe O'Byrne and written by Gary Brown, *Dockers* is a historical musical narrative of Dublin docks, its people and its places. It is a way of life consigned to history, but full of culture and tradition brought back to life on stage.

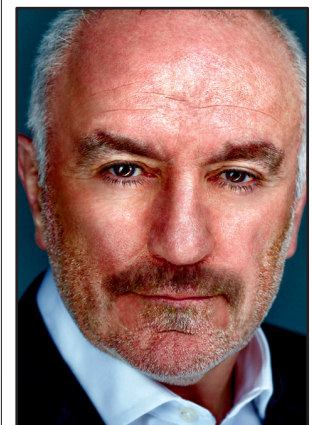
Acclaimed singer and musician George Murphy (Rising Sons) plays Jacko Dunne, a Dublin docker, recounting his working life on the Dublin docks through songs and stories, while singer and multi-instrumentalist Tara Howley, plays the part of Nora, a bar manager and Jacko's cousin.

As Jacko, George Murphy brings his powerful presence and voice to new songs and ballads written by singer songwriter Damien Dempsey; playwright, Gary Brown; and George Murphy, himself.

Damien Dempsey's music and songs are authentic, strong, and searingly honest.

George Murphy's powerful tones – counterbalanced by Tara Howley's melodic voice and playing – recounts the work practices, tools, and dockland landmarks as well as the carousing, loving and leaving through strongly delivered ballads and music.

In *Dockers*, we are presented with an image of life on Dublin docks that is hard, witty, soulful and poignant. It also serves as a timely reminder of the remarkable history and culture of Dublin Port and its significance in the development of the economic, social and cultural history of modern Ireland.



▲ The play's the thing:  
Gary Brown

SONGS AND STORIES OF DUBLIN'S DOCKS

# DOCKERS

BY GARY BROWN  
DIRECTED BY JOE O'BYRNE

STARRING  
**GEORGE MURPHY & TARA HOWLEY**

FEATURING NEW SONGS  
BY DAMIEN DEMPSEY  
GARY BROWN  
& GEORGE MURPHY

**AMBASSADOR THEATRE**

PREVIEW TUES 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL  
WEDS 9<sup>TH</sup>, THURS 10<sup>TH</sup>, FRI 11<sup>TH</sup>, SAT 12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL  
DOORS 7.30PM

Tickets: Preview €23.65 including booking fee (12.5% service charge may apply)  
Show €39.20 including booking fee (12.5% service charge may apply)

PAT EGAN PRESENTS

COMMUNITY CONSULTANT  
STEWART LLOYD  
DUBLIN PORT COMPANY

Ticketmaster.ie





## O'CONNOR TRIO BOUND FOR GLÓR

The Máirtín O'Connor Trio is set to make a hotly anticipated appearance at glór in Ennis on Friday, February 7.

The dream trio of traditional virtuosos – Máirtín O'Connor, Cathal Hayden and Séamie O'Dowd – are each highly acclaimed soloists in their own

right. But together, they become much more than the sum of their parts.

Máirtín is one of the most consistently respected and best loved musicians ever to emerge from Ireland. As a member of the first Riverdance orchestra, through his work with De Dannan, Midnight Well and Skylark and also as a soloist, he

has changed the perception of the range of the accordion not only among the public but also among his fellow musicians. A prolific composer, Máirtín has heard his tunes performed on record and at sessions by many artists around the world.

A multiple All-Ireland champion, Cathal Hayden achieved international recognition as a

founder member of Four Men and a Dog. Not only is he one of Ireland's top fiddle players, he is also a highly accomplished banjo player.

Séamie O'Dowd has long been recognised as one of traditional music's top guitarists. He toured the world during the late 90s and early 2000s as a member of the acclaimed Sligo band, Dervish, before going on to play with Christy Moore, The Chieftains, the late Liam O'Flynn and many others.

An all-round Renaissance man, Séamie's experience as a soloist, sideman and session player on a range of instruments has also informed his work as producer.

### MORE AT GLÓR

Among the other upcoming musical highlights at glór is the concert by Tulla fiddler, Sorcha Costello, and her mother, Mary MacNamara on concertina on April 4.

Their music is deeply rooted in the East Clare style, with their trademark steady rhythm and swing.

Sorcha has just released a solo fiddle album, *The Primrose Lass*, to consolidate her recent recognition with the TG4 Gradam for Young Musician of the Year in 2021.

Mother Mary's concertina playing is highly respected both nationally and internationally. Mary has recorded three solo albums and two duet albums – the most recent of which was *The Lady's Cup of Tea* recorded with Sorcha.



# HOMETOWN GIG FOR S.J.

Contemporary Drogheda folk artist Stephen Joseph McArdle returns to the Crescent Concert Hall in Drogheda on February 8.

S.J. is a songwriter, musician and curator, acclaimed for his most recent album, *Old Ghosts In The Water*, and its accompanying song cycle/stage show *Port*, featuring Carol Keogh, Dermot Byrne and Graham Henderson.

S.J. was also the songwriter and lead vocalist with the Louth trio Kern (along with Brendan McCreanor and Barry Lynch) from 2013 to 2020.

He is currently a member of Long Woman's Grave, an occasional trio with Nuala Kennedy and Trevor Hutchinson.

Stephen's songs and performances have been featured in radio, film and television and he has toured recorded extensively in Ireland, Europe and North America, gathering a loyal following and critical accolades along the way.

For this hometown show, he will be accompanied by Trevor Hutchinson (double bass player with Lúnasa, The Waterboys, and Natalie Merchant) and by Graham Henderson (keyboard player with Moving Hearts, among others).



**PIPING HEAVEN  
PIPING HELL**  
Ennis, Co. Clare

**Join Blackie O'Connell and Friends**

**Every Friday from 4.30pm in Lucas's Bar, Parnell Street, Ennis**



**MCGOLDRICK  
MCCUSKER  
DOYLE** + SPECIAL GUEST RÓIS

**MON 17 MARCH 2025  
THE MAC, BELFAST**

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## JOHN CARTY SET FOR WORLD FIDDLE DAY IN MAY

**F**iddle, flute and and banjo master, John Carty, has been announced as the host of the World Fiddle Day recital in Scartaglin, Co. Kerry, on May 17.

World Fiddle Day is an annual celebration of the fiddle and traditional music and song of the area surrounding Scartaglin, Cordal and Castleisland in Co. Kerry, and of those who enriched it by visiting and playing.

The event is celebrated each year on the Saturday nearest to May 19. In 2025 this will fall on May 21.

John Carty is one of Ireland's

finest traditional musicians – having been awarded the 2003 TG4 Gradam Ceoil as Musician of the Year.

Born in London, Carty was encouraged to master the fiddle, banjo and flute by his father, a multi-instrumentalist with the Glenside Céilí Band in London in the 1960s.

Settled in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, John has many highly acclaimed albums to his name. He is also a tutor at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in Limerick and has recently been appointed joint director of the Leitrim Youth Trad Orchestra.



## IARLA Ó LIONÁIRD & TIM EDEY

11-03 DUBLIN - WHELANS

12-03 DUNDALK - SPIRIT STORE

13-03 DONEGAL - THE SOCIAL GWEEDORE

14-03 CORK - THE WHITE HORSE BALLINCOLLIG

15-03 KERRY - 10 BRIDGE STREET KILLORGLIN



## IARLA, TIM TO TOUR

Two virtuoso performers, Iarla Ó Lionáird and Tim Edey, are joining forces for a five-date tour taking in Dublin, Dundalk, Donegal, Cork and Kerry.

Grammy-nominated artist, Iarla Ó Lionáird, has captivated audiences around the world, from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House, with his stunning singing.

Known for his collaborations with the Afro-Celt Sound System, The Gloaming and This Is How We Fly, his performances have been acclaimed for their transcendent power and sensitivity.

Joining him on tour is the remarkable Tim Edey, a two-time BBC Folk Awards Musician of the Year, who has widely recognition as one of the finest melodeon and acoustic guitar players around.

Having performed with iconic artists like The Chieftains, Sharon Shannon, and Natalie MacMaster, Tim's awe-inspiring musical brilliance promises to bring an unforgettable dynamic to the show.





▲ Flook

# FLOOK READY FOR 2025 TOUR

## BAND'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY TO BE CELEBRATED AROUND WORLD

**F**look will mark the thirtieth anniversary of their existence as a band with an international concert tour beginning in Germany in January and ending thousands of miles later in Ireland in November.

"We'll be celebrating in Flookably joyous style," the band members announced recently.

"While Mel Gibson was working on his mullet and Scottish accent back in 1995, we were tentatively crafting the music for our first ever concert in November 1995 in a tiny upstairs room in Manchester.

"We've been locked away creating again lately and it is difficult to overstate how excited the Flook camp are about our new release, *Sanju*,

which is currently in Berlin being mastered; five extended tracks, recorded in north London in early October, and produced by Stevie J. Jones and John Calvert."

The band is also planning to produce the first ever Flook tunebook to coincide with the anniversary.

The first tranche of tour dates have now been announced – with further dates still to be confirmed – especially for the second half of the year.

### 2025 Tour Dates

January 15	Kulturforum, Offenburg, Germany
January 16	Barakuba, Basel, Switzerland
January 17	Alte Kaserne, Winterthur, Switzerland
January 19	La Cappella, Bern, Switzerland
April 22	Minami Aoyama Mandala, Tokyo, Japan
April 23	Shibuya WWW, Tokyo, Japan
April 26	Toyosu Bunka Hall, Tokyo, Japan
April 27	Thumbs Up, Yokohama, Japan
April 28	Tokuzo, Nagoya, Japan
April 30	Taku Taku, Kyoto, Japan
May 4	National Centre for Early Music, York, UK
May 15	Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, France
May 16	Centrum, Dranouter, Belgium
May 17	Pasveerzaal, Zaandam, Netherlands
May 18	Muziekclub 't Ey, Besele, Belgium
May 19	Arts Centre, Colchester, UK
May 20	The Cornerhouse, Tolworth, Surbiton, UK
May 21	The Fleece, Bretforton, Worcs, UK
May 22	The Lantern, Bristol, UK
May 23	The Gate, Cardiff, UK
May 24	Arts Centre, Stamford, UK
June 4	Music Room at Liverpool Philharmonic, Liverpool, UK
June 5	The Met, Bury, UK
June 6	Brewery Arts, Kendal, UK
June 8	The Glasshouse, Gateshead, UK
November 27	Union Chapel, London, UK
November 28	The Empire Music Hall, Belfast.
November 29	Opium, Dublin.

## CORMAC BEGLEY TO PLAY VICAR STREET

Award winning concertina player, Cormac Begley, is to headline Dublin's Vicar Street for the first time on April 23.

Cormac's career has gone from strength to strength over the past year; winning Best Folk Instrumentalist 2022 at the RTÉ Folk Awards and *Irish Times* Album of the Year 2022, for his second solo album, *B*, which celebrates the bass concertina, and features two Dipper-made bass concertinas on all twelve tracks.

His bold choice to concentrate solely on the bass and baritone register – the first album of its kind in any musical genre – earned him a wide range of plaudits – with Donal Dineen describing it as “album of the decade,” RTÉ Arena calling it “groundbreaking,” and *The Irish Times* acclaiming it as “the musical gift that keeps on giving.”

Both the album and two individual tracks from it were nominated in three categories at the 2022 RTE Folk Awards: Best Folk Album, Best Original Folk Track and Best Folk Track.



Andy  
Irvine  
&  
Quilty



### DOLANS WAREHOUSE

3 - 4 DOCK ROAD, LIMERICK

### WED APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup> 2025

Tickets: €29.50 incl. BF from [dolans.ie](http://dolans.ie) & Ticketmaster

Doors: 8pm | Over 18s only | I.D. required | R.O.A.R.

☎ 061 314483 | Find us on [f](#) [X](#) [i](#) [d](#)

**DOLANS**



## SINGING SESSION DIRECTORY

The directory lists regular weekly and monthly singing sessions with the day they *usually* meet. You are advised to check by logging on to the organiser's website or social media account. If you have a session for inclusion in the directory, please send details to [info@fonn.online](mailto:info@fonn.online).

**Amhrán Session**, The Commercial, Catherine St., Limerick. *First Sunday*

**Athy Singing Session**, Paddy Dunne's, Woodstock St., Athy, Co. Kildare. *Alternate Mondays*

**Ballincollig Singing Session**, Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig, Co. Cork. *Last Thursday*

**Ballinrostig Singing Session**, Poc Ar Buile, Ballinrostig, Whitegate, Co. Cork. *Third Monday*

**Ballyboughal Singing Session**, Oldtown House Pub, Ballyboughal, Co. Dublin. *Every Tuesday*

**Ballybrittas Singing Session**, The Final Furlong, Main St, Ballybrittas, Co. Dublin. *Every Tuesday*

**Ballycotton Singing Session**, The Blackbird Bar, Ballycotton, Co. Cork. *Third Thursday*

**Ballyhahill Rambling House**, Community Hall, Ballyhahill Co. Limerick. *Third Wednesday*

**Ballymurn Singing Session**, Dan Nolan's Bar, Ballymurn, Co. Wexford. *Last Friday*

**Ballynagree Rambling House**, The Laine Bar, Ballynagree, Co. Cork. *Last Wednesday*

**Banagher Singing Session**, Lyon's Pub, Main St, Banagher, Co. Offaly. *Third Monday*

**Bandon Singers Club**, Ray O'Mahony's Bar, Bandon, Co. Cork. *Second Sunday*

**Belfast Singing Session**, American Bar, Dock Street, Belfast. *First Wednesday*

**Birr Singing Session**, The Thatch, Crinkill, Birr, Co. Offaly. *First Monday*

**Blackbird Singing Session**, *Second Tuesday on Zoom*

**Blarney Rambling House**, Blarney Castle Hotel, The Square, Blarney, Co. Cork. *First Monday*

**Boosterstown Singing Session**, The Old Punchbowl, 116 Rock Rd, Boosterstown, Co. Dublin. *Every Wednesday*

**Boyle Singing Session**, Wynne's Pub, Main St, Boyle, Co. Roscommon. *Third Saturday*

**Bray Singers' Circle**, Tennis Club, Vevay Road, Bray. *Third Sunday*

**Brosna Rambling House**, Josie McCreesh's, Brosna, Co. Kerry. *Second Thursday*

**Carlow Singing Session**, Carlow Town Hurling Club, Oakpark Drive, Carlow. *First Tuesday*

**Carrigallen Singing Session**, Charlie Farrelly's Bar, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim. *First Friday*

**Carrignavar Rambling House**, Community Hall, Carrignavar, Co. Cork. *First Saturday*

**Cashel Singing Session**, Brú Ború Heritage Centre, The Kiln, Cashel, Co. Tipperary. *Every Tuesday*

**Castleconnell Singing Session**, Bradshaw's Pub, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. *Every Tuesday*

**Chapel Gates Singers Club**, Tubridy's, Cooraclare, Co. Clare. *Last Friday*

**Ciorcal na nAmhráin**, Shamrock Bar, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. *Third Wednesday*

**Clé Abhaile**, Zoom session of the Clé Club. *First Monday* [www.cleclub.org](http://www.cleclub.org)

**Clé Club**, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1, *Third Wednesday*

**Clew Bay Folk Club**, Matt Molloy's Pub, Bridge St. Westport, *Second Sunday*

**Clondrohid Singing Session**, The Local, Clondrohid, Macroom, Co. Cork. *Alternate Mondays*

**Clounmacon Rambling House**, Community Centre, Clounmacon, Listowel, Co. Kerry. *Second Friday*

**Connolly Session**, Carney's Bar, Connolly, Co. Clare. *Last Saturday*

**Coppeen Rambling House**, Barrett's Bar, Coppeen, Co. Cork. *First Friday*

**Cork Singers Club**, An Spailpin Fánach, Main St, Cork, *Every Sunday*

**Croonerista Social Club**, CIE Sports & Social Club, Inchicore Sq. North, Inchicore, *Second Friday*

**Crossabeg Rambling House**, The Forge, Crossabeg, Co. Wexford. *First Sunday*

**Crown & Shamrock**, Crown & Shamrock Inn, Antrim Rd, Belfast. *Second Monday*

**Dan & Molly's Singing Circle**, Dan & Molly's Bar, Ballyboy, Kilmacmac, Co. Offaly. *Third Wednesday*

**Donnelly's Session**, Donnelly's of Barna, Co. Galway. *First Wednesday*

**Donoughmore Rambling House**, Pat Barry's Pub, Lackabane, Donoughmore, Co. Cork. *Second Wednesday*

**Doon Singing Session**, Moore's Pub, Doon, Co. Limerick. *Every Tuesday*

**Down Singers' Circle**, Imperial Bar, Bangor, Co. Down. *Third Saturday*

**Drinagh Singers Club**, Connolly's Gaelic Bar, Drinagh. *First Sunday*

**Drogheda Singers**, Fairgreen Bar, Drogheda. Hybrid live and Zoom. *Every Wednesday*

**Dromagh Rambling House**, Sandpit House, Dromagh, Co. Cork. *First Tuesday*

**Dundalk Singing Circle**, The Wee House, Anne St, Dundalk. *Every Tuesday*

**Dunmanway Singing Session**, The Greyhound Bar, Dunmanway. *Last Friday*

**Eblana Sessions**, Eblana Club, Eblana Ave, Dún Laoire. *Third Saturday*

**Ennis Singers Club**, Café on the Green, Lifford, Ennis. *Second Friday*

**Ennistymon Singing Session**, Cullinan's Bar, Church St, Ennistymon. *Third Tuesday*

**Feakle Singing Session**, Shortt's Bar, Feakle, Co. Clare. *Second Saturday*

**Ferbane Singing Session**, Hiney's Pub, Ferbane, Co. Offaly. *Second Tuesday*

**Ferns Singing Session**, The Thatch Bar, The Square, Ferns, Co. Wexford. *Third Thursday*

**Galway Singing Session**, Dew Drop Inn, Mainguard St, Galway. *Every Wednesday*

**Glin Rambling House**, Barrett's Bar, Main St, Ballygiltinan North, Glin, Co. Limerick. *Fourth Tuesday*

**Góilín Traditional Singers**, Teachers' Club, Parnell Sq, Dublin. *Every Friday* [www.goilin.com/](http://www.goilin.com/)

**Horse and Jockey Singing Session**, Horse and Jockey Hotel, Horse and Jockey, Co. Tipperary. *Last Tuesday*

**Howth Singing Circle**, Abbey Tavern, Howth, Co. Dublin. *First Thursday*

**Hughes' Bar Session**, Hughes' Bar, Ballinamore Bridge, Co. Galway. *Third Friday*

**Inchicore Singing Session**, Small Changes, 120 Emmett Rd, Inchicore. *First Saturday*

**Inishowen Traditional Singers' Circle**, alternating between North Pole, Drumfries, Inishowen and McFeeley's Bar, Clonmany, Inishowen. *Second Friday* [www.inishowensinging.ie/](http://www.inishowensinging.ie/)

**Jim O' The Mills**, Upperchurch, Co. Tipperary. *Every Thursday*

**Killala Bay Folk Club**, Lynn's of Killala, Co. Mayo. *First Friday*

**Kilmaley Singing Session**, Bogdale House, Kilmaley, Co. Clare. *Third Saturday*

**Kilmallock Rambling House**, Deebert House Hotel, Deebert, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick. *First Tuesday*



## coda: come list while I sing

**Kiltealy Rambling House,** Kiltealy Hall, Kiltealy, Co. Wexford. *Second Sunday*

**Kinvara Singing Circle,** Green's Bar, Kinvara, Co. Galway. *First Monday*

**Knockanure Rambling House,** Community Centre, Knockanure, Co. Kerry. *First Thursday*

**Knocklougha Rambling House,** Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry. *Third Tuesday*

**Lackagh Session,** The Cottage, Heritage Museum, Lackagh, Co. Galway. *First Monday*

**Limerick Singing Session,** The White Horse Tavern, Limerick. *Third Monday. On Zoom on second and fourth Monday*

**Liscarney Rambling House,** Community Centre, Liscarney Co. Mayo. *Every Thursday*

**Listowel Rambling House,** Kerry Writers' Museum, The Square, Listowel, Co. Kerry. *Last Thursday*

**Lord Edward Session,** The Lord Edward Bar, Christchurch Pl, Dublin. *Second Tuesday*

**Malahide Singing Circle,** St. Sylvester's GAA Club, Malahide, Co. Dublin. *Last Thursday*

**Mallow Rambling House,** GAA Centre, St. Joseph's Rd, Carrigoon, Mallow, Co. Cork. *First Tuesday*

**Muine Bheag Singing Session,** Lawlor's Bar, Kilcarrig St, Muine Bheag, Co. Carlow. *Third Friday*

**Mullagh Singing Session,** Moroney's Bar, Mullagh, Co. Clare. *Third Friday*

**Mullingar Singing Circle,** Daly's Bar, Oliver Plunkett St, Mullingar. *First Sunday*

**Myshal Rambling House,** Myshal Hall, Myshal, Co. Carlow. *First Friday*

**Navan Singing Circle,** The Lantern, Watergate St, Navan. *Second Tuesday*

**Newcastlewest Rambling House,** Desmond Complex, Gortboy, Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick. *Third Friday*

**Newmarket Rambling House,** An Cultúrlann, Church St, Newmarket, Co. Cork. *Second Saturday*

**Night Before Larry Got Stretched,** The Cobblestone, King St North, Dublin 7. *First Sunday except January, July and August*

**Nightingale Singing Session,** American Bar, Dock Street, Belfast. *Third Tuesday*

**North Wexford Traditional Singing Session,** French's, Main St, Gorey. *Last Tuesday*

**Oilgate Singing Session,** The Slaney Inn, Oilgate, Co. Wexford. *Second Friday*

**Port Laoise Singing Session,** Ramsbottom's Bar, Main St, Port Laoise. *First Thursday*

**Portumna Singing Session,** Curley's Bar, St. Brendan's St, Portumna, Co. Galway. *Every Thursday*

**Rainbow Singing Session,** McHugh's Bar, Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim. 5pm-8pm. *Fourth Sunday*

**Robbie's First Friday,** Cnoc na Gaoithe CCE Cultural Centre, Tulla, Co. Clare. *First Friday*

**Scartaglin Rambling House,** Heritage Centre, Scartaglin, Co. Kerry. *Second Monday*

**Séamus Ennis Arts Centre,** The Naul, Co. Dublin. Hybrid live and Zoom. *Third Thursday*

**Shanaglish Singing Session,** Whelan's, Shanaglish, Gort, Co. Galway. *Last Friday*

**Shannon Singing Session,** Wolfe Tone's GAA Club, Shannon, Co. Clare. *First Wednesday*

**Singing in the Crane,** Crane Bar, Sea Rd, Galway. [www.facebook.com/david.larkin.3975](http://www.facebook.com/david.larkin.3975)

**Skerries Folk Club,** Upstairs in Joe May's Pub, Harbour Road, Skerries. *Last Sunday*

**Skibbereen Singers Club,** The Corner House, Bridge St, Skibbereen, Co. Cork. *First Friday*

**Slabh Liag Singing Circle,** Evelyn's Central Bar, Carrick, Co. Donegal. *Last Monday*

**Sligo Traditional Singers' Circle,** Durkin's Bar, Ballinacarrow, Co. Sligo. *Second Wednesday*

**Song Central,** Chaplin's Bar, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2. *Second Sunday*

**South Roscommon Singers Circle,** Murray's Bar, Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon. *First Thursday*

**Sperrins Traditional Singing Circle,** Ponderosa Bar, Glenshane, Co. Derry. *Third Friday*

**Sunflower Folk Club,** Sunflower Bar, Union Street, Belfast. *Every Thursday*

**Tarbert Rambling House,** Community Centre, Tarbert, Co. Kerry. *Last Saturday*

**Tarred & Feathered Folk Session,** Clontarf Golf Club, Donnycarney Rd, Dublin. *Second Monday*

**Templemore Singing Session,** O'Sullivan's, Killea, Templemore, Co. Tipperary. *Second Monday*

**Tuam Singers Club,** Reapy's Bar, Tullinadaly Rd, Tuam. *Third Monday*

**Waterfall Singing Session,** O'Shea's Bar, Waterfall, Co. Cork. *Last Thursday*

**West Limerick Singing Club,** Ramble Inn, Main St, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. *First Friday*

**Wexford Traditional Singers' Circle,** Mary's Bar, John's Gate St, Wexford. *Third Friday*

## Inishowen Singing Weekend 21–24 March 2025

35th Inishowen International Folk Song & Ballad Seminar



featuring

**The McKeaney Sisters  
Cahalen Morrison  
Selina O'Leary  
Ken Wilson  
Eamonn Hunt  
Len Graham  
Scott Gardiner  
Alan Woods**

**Drumfries National School  
Conn Doherty  
Inishowen Trad Choir**



[inishowensinging.ie](http://inishowensinging.ie)



## SINGING SESSION PLANNER

Most – though not all – of the regular singing sessions around Ireland take place on a particular day of a specific week of the month. So this planner provides an indication of where a session may be taking place on any day of the month. But of course you should always check with the session organisers. All sessions listed below are in person unless followed by <sup>(2)</sup>.

### WEEK 1

**Monday:** Birr; Blarney RH; Clé Abhaile <sup>(2)</sup>; Kinvara Singing Circle; Lackagh.

**Tuesday:** Ballyboughal; Ballybrittas; Carlow; Cashel; Castleconnell; Doon; Dromagh RH; Dundalk Singing Circle; Kilmallock RH; Mallow RH.

**Wednesday:** Belfast Singing Circle; Booterstown; Donnelly's Session; Drogheda Singers; Galway; Shannon.

**Thursday:** Howth Singing Circle; Jim O' The Mills; Knockanure RH; Liscarney RH; Port Laoise; Portumna; South Roscommon Singers Circle; Sunflower Folk Club.

**Friday:** Carrigallen; Coppeen RH; Góilín; Robbie's First Friday; Killala Bay Folk Club; Myshal RH; Skibbereen Singers Club†;

West Limerick Singing Club.

**Saturday:** Carrignavar; Inchicore.

**Sunday:** Amhrán Session; Cork Singers Club; Crossabeg RH; Drinagh Singers Club; Mullingar Singing Circle; The Night Before Larry Got Stretched.

### WEEK 2

**Monday:** Crown and Shamrock; Limerick <sup>(2)</sup>; Scartaglin RH; Tarred & Feathered Folk Session; Templemore.

**Tuesday:** Ballyboughal; Ballybrittas; Blackbird <sup>(2)</sup>; Cashel; Castleconnell; Doon; Dundalk Singing Circle; Ferbane; Lord Edward Session; Navan Singing Circle

**Wednesday:** Booterstown; Donoughmore RH; Drogheda Singers; Galway; Sligo Singers' Circle

**Thursday:** Brosna RH; Jim O' The Mills; Liscarney RH; Portumna; Sunflower Folk Club.

**Friday:** Clounmahon RH; Croonerista Social Club; Ennis Singers Club; Góilín; Inishowen Singers' Circle; Oilgate.

**Saturday:** Feakle Session; Newmarket RH

**Sunday:** Bandon Singers Club; Clew Bay Folk Club; Cork Singers Club; Kiltale RH; Song Central

### WEEK 3

**Monday:** Ballincollig; Banagher; Limerick; Tuam Singers Club.

**Tuesday:** Ballyboughal; Ballybrittas; Cashel; Castleconnell; Doon; Dundalk Singing Circle; Ennistymon; Knocklougha RH; Nightingale Session.

**Wednesday:** Ballinahill RH; Booterstown; Ciorcal na nAmhráin; Clé Club; Dan & Molly's Singing Circle; Drogheda Singers; Galway.

**Thursday:** Ballycotton; Ferns; Jim O' The Mills; Liscarney RH; Portumna; Séamus Ennis Arts Centre; Sunflower Folk Club.

**Friday:** Góilín; Hughes' Bar Session; Muine Bheag; Mullagh; Newcastle West RH; Sperrins Singing Circle; Wexford Singers.

**Saturday:** Boyle; Down Singers Circle; Eblana Session; Kilmaley Singing Session.

**Sunday:** Bray Singing Circle; Cork Singers Club

### WEEK 4

**Monday:** Limerick <sup>(2)</sup>

**Tuesday:** Ballyboughal; Ballybrittas; Cashel; Castleconnell; Doon; Dundalk Singing Circle; Glin RH.

**Wednesday:** Booterstown;

Drogheda Singers; Galway.

**Thursday:** Jim O' The Mills; Liscarney RH; Portumna; Sunflower Folk Club.

**Friday:** Góilín

**Sunday:** Cork Singers Club; Rainbow Singing Session.

### LAST WEEK

**Monday:** Sliabh Liag Singing Circle.

**Tuesday:** Ballyboughal; Ballybrittas; Cashel; Castleconnell; Doon; Dundalk Singing Circle; Horse & Jockey; North Wexford Singing Session.

**Wednesday:** Ballinagree RH; Booterstown; Drogheda Singers; Galway.

**Thursday:** Ballincollig Singing Session; Jim O' The Mills; Liscarney RH; Listowel RH; Malahide Singing Circle; Portumna; Sunflower Folk Club; Waterfall.

**Friday:** Ballymurn; Chapel Gates Singers; Góilín; Shanaglish Singing Circle; Skibbereen Singers Club†; **Saturday:** Connolly Session; Dunmanway; Tarbert RH.

**Sunday:** Cork Singers Club; Skerries Folk Club.

† The Skibbereen Singers Club usually meets on first Fridays but occasionally it meets on the last Friday of the preceding month.

The Singing in the Crane Session in Galway meets frequently but not on a specific day each month.

The Athy Session meets on alternate Mondays. The Clondrohid Session also meets on alternate Mondays.

### The Wexford Traditional Singers' Club

## Traditional Singers Weekend

**Friday February 7 - Sunday February 9**

**SESSIONS IN:**

**Cushen's, Tagoat**

**Friday from 9pm**

**St. Martin's GAA Centre, Piercetown**

**Saturday from 2pm**

**The Farmers Kitchen, Drinagh**

**Saturday night and Sunday from 12noon.**

**Singers and listeners most welcome**

Contact Phil Berry, Hayestown, Wexford at 053-9142909 or John O'Byrne, Orchard Lane, Ardavan, Wexford at 0539155997.



# Wild Atlantic Music Tours

## TOUR DATES 2025

### MARCH

**DAVE GUNNING**

March 8th - March 15th

### APRIL

**KEVIN CRAWFORD  
& COLIN FARRELL**

April 12th - April 19th

**EILEEN IVERS**

April 19th - April 26th

### MAY

**THE ENNIS  
SISTERS**

May 17th - May 24th

### JUNE

**THE ENNIS  
SISTERS**

May 25th - June 1st

**SOCKS IN THE  
FRYING PAN**

June 6th - June 13th

**EILEEN IVERS**

June 21st - June 28th

\* join waiting list

Follow us and stay updated with all the news and offers



info@wamt.ie



www.wildatlanticmusictours.com

### JULY

**EILEEN IVERS**

June 30th - July 7th

**SOCKS IN THE  
FRYING PAN**

July 12th - July 19th

### SEPTEMBER

**SULLIVANS  
SONGHOUSE**

Sept 20th - Sept 27th

### OCTOBER

**KEVIN BURKE**

Oct 4th - Oct 11th

**KEVIN CRAWFORD**

Oct 11th - Oct 18th

### NOVEMBER

**TALISK**

Oct 25th - Nov 1st

**SOCKS IN THE  
FRYING PAN**

Nov 1st - Nov 8th

**BULA BUS**

Nov 15th - Nov 22nd