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Issue No. 332 October 2023

FOREWORD

MUSIC IN THE MOMENT

Music is a transient art form and yet it is one of the most enduring. Songs and melodies circulated before technology and were transmitted within communities without written notation. A fact that the late Aidan O'Hara discovered in the 1970s when he found hundreds of old Irish songs still in the folk memory of the Cape Shore inhabitants of Newfoundland. Aidan passed away in June, and this month we fondly remember his contribution to both this magazine and the wider Celtic culture.

Our Cover Story celebrates Dolores Keane at 70 Years, one of the greatest ever female Irish Folk singers, who is known the world over for her deep, melodic voice.

Take a moment to reflect on Sinéad O'Connor who we remember for her *Sean-Nós Nua* recording. Réalta have opted for an in-the-moment recording and a number of guests on their latest album. We bring you up-to-the-minute features on Seamie O'Dowd, Steph Geremia, Ironwood, and Beltaine.

Festivals are filling the autumn weekends with wonderful live music. Pat McGill tells us about the Johnny Doherty Festival in Ardara and how it was inspired by a piece of debris on a pub floor. We also bring you a preview of the 44th Cork Folk Festival, which has had more or less the same team organising the late September event for over four decades. That's some time to be living in the moment; congratulations to William Hammond and the Folk Festival team on Leeds.

As we all move in for the winter season I hope your best moments are filled with music.

Slán
Seán L

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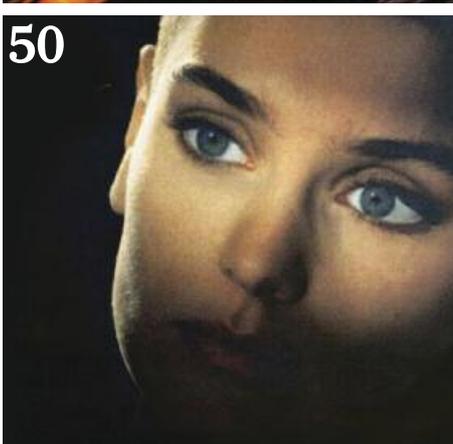
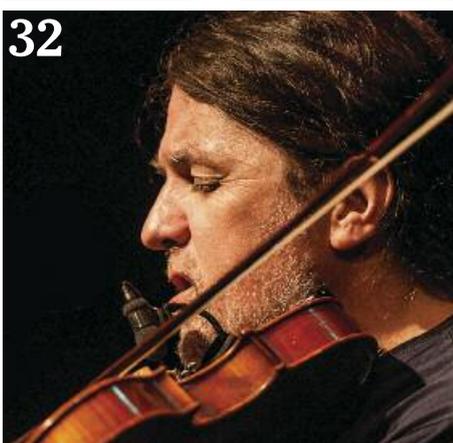
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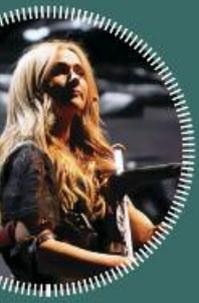
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SEAMIE O'DOWD: FURTHER DOWN THE LINE**seamieodowd.net**

Sligo musician Seamie O'Dowd is releasing his long awaited first solo fiddle album. Seamie's reputation as a singer and one of the top guitarists in Irish music often obscures the fact that his first instrument is actually fiddle.

Encouraged on many occasions by people like Martin Hayes, Dick Gaughan and the late Seamus Tansey to record and keep his fiddle playing in public view, Seamie decided after working on last year's release of some private recordings of his father Joe to take the initiative and release his own fiddle album, which features tunes newly composed by Seamie as well as traditional music from Sligo, around Ireland and elsewhere.

Seamie's family background is steeped in the musical traditions of south Sligo. He made his first radio and TV appearances playing fiddle and established himself back then in competition and elsewhere as one of Connacht's top fiddle players of his generation.

Previous recordings that have featured Seamie's fiddle playing include RTE's Masters Of Tradition releases, both albums released by The Unwanted, The George Fenton composed soundtrack of Ken Loach's film Jimmy's Hall and a number of recordings that Seamie played on and produced for other musicians and singers such as Tony Reidy, Mary Mac Partlan and others.

Entitled *Further Down The Line*, the release will be officially launched on October 20th in Sligo's Hawk's Well Theatre and at other events over the coming months including a launch in Castlebar's Linenhall Arts Centre on November 16th.

For more information visit seamieodowd.net, [facebook.com/seamieodowd](https://www.facebook.com/seamieodowd) or email seamieodowd@gmail.com

PATRICK CASSIDY : CRUIT**www.gael-linn.ie**

Patrick Cassidy is Ireland's most renowned living classical composer. In addition to classical music, he also writes film scores such as the aria *Vide Cor Meum* originally composed for the film 'Hannibal', directed by Ridley Scott and starring Anthony Hopkins.

In 1988 Cassidy teamed up with Gael Linn to produce a beautiful album featuring the enchanting harp music of Ireland.

During the early part of the eighteenth century a splendid tradition of classical harp music, dating back to antiquity, was drawing to a close, following the dispersion of most of the Irish nobility who had been providing the harpers with patronage.

All credit is due to Bunting and others who wrote down as much of that harp music as they could. In their notation, however, they confined themselves, for the most part, to the melody line of what were, by all accounts, beautifully structured compositions with flowing basses accompanying the melodic strains of the upper register. This has left us with an inadequate testimony to these great harpers and their music according to Cassidy.

On this album, Cassidy endeavours not alone to examine the underlying harmonic texture of Irish harp music but also to explore its contrapuntal possibilities in the environment of a Baroque ensemble. There is ample evidence to suggest that the Irish harpers were greatly influenced by the Baroque composers.

How fitting it is therefore that the music of Carolan and other Irish harpers should be arranged for a Baroque ensemble with Irish Harp.

The album is available as CD from www.gael-linn.ie & also on digital platforms.

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Custom work is also a specialty, so if there is a project or an instrument that needs carbon fiber replication, Carbony Celtic Winds can help. The selection of the material also creates flutes, whistles and pipes that are virtually indestructible so all instruments come with a lifetime warranty. Carbony Celtic Winds are used by professional musicians around the globe.

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

RUNA : NEW ALBUM!!**www.runamusic.com**

At long last, we are over the moon to announce that RUNA's new album is finished!!!

After working on it for the past two and a half years, we have, FINALLY, put on the final touches!!

Creating this album has been a true labour of love and we have put all of ourselves into each and every note! The past few years have been difficult for so many, and, while our journey in putting this project together has had plenty of ups and downs, we feel so unbelievably fortunate to be able to continue making music and performing together. We wanted this album to be a celebration and we wanted that joy to be palpable!

We hope you enjoy listening, dancing, and singing along as much as we enjoyed creating it together!! We are beyond excited to share it with our RUNAtics! We will be sending the album off to press and



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For more information, visit RUNA's website: www.runamusic.com

RUNA Tour Dates

Pittsburgh Irish Festival (Pittsburgh, PA) – September 9th & 10th

Walnut Valley Folk Festival (Winfield, KS) – September 14th – 17th

Lake Wales Arts Council Concert Series – Bok Tower (Lake Wales, FL) – October 6th

Scottish American Society of Dunedin – Dunedin, FL – October 7th

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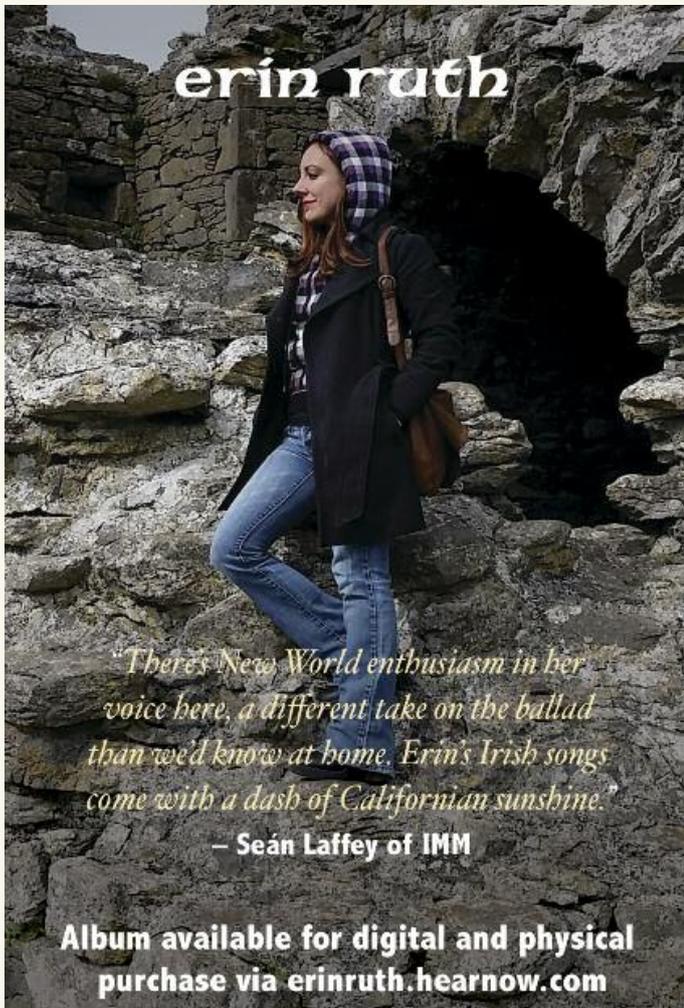
The Irish Music Café Radio Show based near Detroit Michigan is providing a worldwide platform for Irish music and artists. Now broadcasting in its eighth year, the Irish Music Café plays all genres of Irish music from the legends of Irish music as well as Irish singers and songwriters that are just beginning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

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

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

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

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



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

Equipped with a background in clarinet and voice lessons (performance, sight-reading, auditioning), piano, guitar, tenor saxophone, choir, jazz band, theory courses, and songwriting - Erin Ruth Thompson arrived in San Francisco in 2012. It was here where she gained exposure to Celtic music – and began performing alongside artists such as Culann's Hounds.

Erin's hometown of Tucson, AZ is enriched in Mexican tradition, but not a great deal of Celtic culture. However, as a child she was aware of her Celtic heritage. Erin's mother (a classical pianist and songwriter) brought home Celtic albums and films. Even at a young age Erin was fascinated by the sounds of Celtic music.

Erin released her self-funded album with noted guitarist Richard Mandel during the pandemic, when there were limited options for exposure. Now she can display the album in a live setting with her music as the backdrop. Erin can now express the album fully as a celebration of finding a long-lost part of herself: Celtic music.

Find out more at erinruth.hearnow.com

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

Email: e_songgirl@yahoo.com

IRISH FIDDLE STUDIO MEMBERSHIP - HANNAH HARRIS

<https://hannahharrisceol.com>

This membership is an online learning experience for adult Irish fiddlers looking to develop the real feel for Irish fiddling. If you are classically trained and looking to develop the right feel for a new genre, self-taught in fiddling and struggling when it comes to playing with good rhythm and groove, or wanting to join or be more of a leader in your local trad session, this membership is the accountability and skill-development element you've been looking for!

While there are plenty of tune tutorials involved, your development as a musician and Irish fiddler goes so much further than that. So while you will learn tunes, you'll also develop strength in areas like bowing, personal expression, learning how to blend with other trad instruments, confidence and ease in your playing, and much more! When you focus on a more holistic picture, you start to embody these concepts more subconsciously. Imagine learning a new tune, and because you know the notes + how to make a reel sound like a reel, it sounds like you've been playing the tune for years rather than minutes! It's a great feeling.

To get you to this point, as a member you'll receive access to a private video chat channel with Hannah for 1:1 feedback, a library of pre-recorded video tutorials, as well as group lessons to connect with a community of fellow fiddle enthusiasts. There is also an option to book online lessons with Hannah for an added fee outside of the basic membership package.

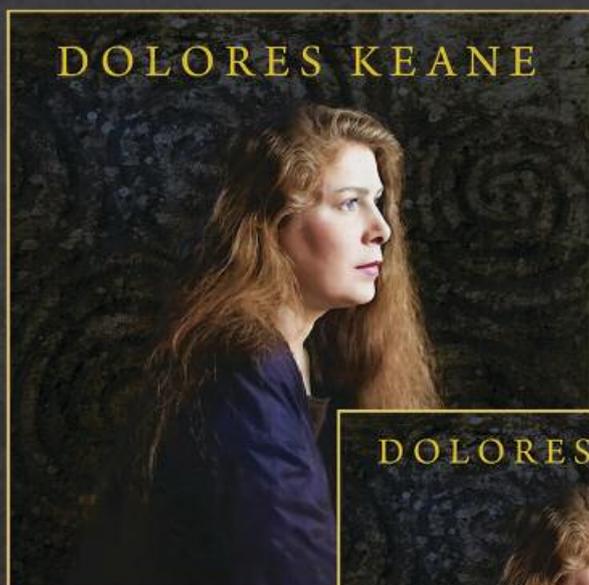
Start your two week free trial for the membership by visiting <https://learn.hannahharrisceol.com/studio>

Get to know Hannah through her online fiddle tips: <https://www.youtube.com/@HannahHarrisCeol>

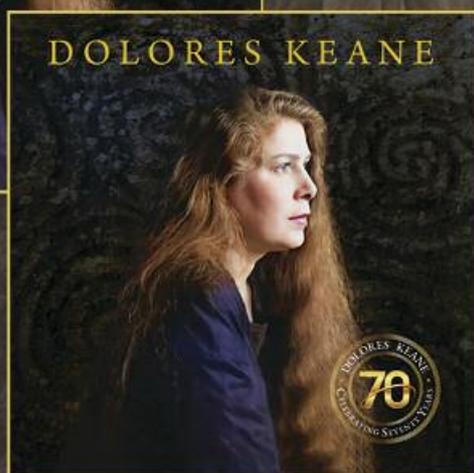
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industry luminaries, the conference also delves deeply into the rich tapestry of storytelling, and folklore.

We're thrilled to announce our first keynote speaker, the legendary Peggy Seeger. An iconic figure in the folk music world, Peggy's illustrious career has spanned decades, enchanting audiences with her poignant lyrics and soulful melodies. She stands not only as a testament to the enduring power of folk music but also as an inspiring figure for new generations of artists.

Mark your calendars for what promises to be a significant addition to the global music scene. Some of the esteemed participants include representatives from Milwaukee Irish Fest, Music City Irish Fest, Raglan Road at Disney World, WOMEX, Rounder Records, the Arts Council of Ireland, Grammy Award Winner Ron Block, Sligo Live Festival, IMRO, Celtic Colours, and Tönder Festival with more being added regularly. Their presence guarantees insightful perspectives and enriching discussions.

Experience a Music Trail through the heart of Dundalk, where melodies from gifted artists entertain in venues like An Tain Arts Centre and the Spirit Store. Revel in the spirited music landscape, promoting unity among participants and leaving all invigorated.

More than 100 talented artists are ready to guide you through an immersive sonic experience during our nightly Official Showcase performances. Notably, representatives from top festivals, venues, and record labels will be attending, offering artists unparalleled networking opportunities to shape their musical careers. "Your Roots Are Showing" also features a Gig Fair, where talent buyers and artists have a chance to meet one on one. Additionally, we have a Trade Fair that brings together industry experts, local businesses, and attendees to delve into the latest in folk music products and innovations.

Don't miss this opportunity to immerse yourself in a celebration of folk music and folklore. Register now at www.showingroots.com or reach out at contact@showingroots.com. For continuous updates, keep an eye on our social media channels or sign up to our newsletter!

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CHLOE MATHARU : TOWARDS THE HEBRIDES NEW SINGLE <https://www.chloematharu.co.uk/>

"Absolutely Incredible" - *BBC Woman's Hour*.

Towards the Hebrides is an original song about escaping the city heat and travelling out to the space and light of the Hebrides for a fresh start, narrated in this bright and airy track. This piece is an exciting collaboration with Bafta Award Winner and Producer, Lomond Campbell, recorded at his studio in the Scottish Highlands. Chloe has created her own music video documenting her journey from Glasgow to Hosta Beach on the Isle of North Uist, having travelled by ferry to perform at Eilean Dorcha Festival on Benbecula.

Chloe is a multi-Award-winning singer songwriter and harpist on the West Coast of Scotland. She draws inspiration from the natural environment around her as experienced at sea as a Navigational Officer in the Merchant Navy. Her purpose in music is to lend a voice to the modern day seafarer; to write a new chapter in maritime folk music.

Chloe is Scottish Indian with cultural roots in the Punjab, Scotland and Wales. She has won Celtic Music Radio's Album of the Year in December 2022, a Danny Award at Celtic Connections in February 2023, was nominated in the Wales Folk Awards in April 2023, was a finalist in Canada's Goderich Celtic Music Festival Emerging Artist Showcase, and won the Greenock Telegraph's Live Music Award in May 2023.

***Towards the Hebrides* is available on all streaming platforms 8th September.**

Website: <https://www.chloematharu.co.uk/>

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

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

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/girlmatharu>

DON "BANJO" SMITH NEW RELEASE COMING SOON www.donbanjosmith.com

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

The album is/was to be a Concept Album, similar to the one Earl Scruggs did in the early 70's (*Earl Scruggs with Family and Friends*), whereas Don would be featuring many of the very talented people he has performed with over the years. This has proven to be quite an undertaking with so far up to 14 different musicians, and several have been lost over this time, before they could be brought to the studio to record for this album. There are one or two more Don would like to bring in before this is over.

Don features the likes of frequent collaborator Marty McKernan, Jack Driscoll, Gary Oleyar, Mike Griffin, Mike Kobetitsch, Greg Jowaisas, Terry Kane, Jeanie Cassels, et al, playing a variety of instruments on a variety of songs, many of them Irish in origin. It was slated to be finished in the winter of 2019-20, but a break was taken in late Feb. to start playing during the busy season, and then Covid struck, and everything came to a grinding halt. Just as things were beginning to look up, new restrictions were put in place, keeping production stalled...but we didn't give up...on and off during 2021-2022, we put our noses to the grindstone, and with the help and encouragement of Bob Both, we finished recording, and started mixing in January of 2022.

We finally finished all of the mixing, and now the pre-production work (liner notes, credits, Album Cover Artwork) are in process prior to manufacturing, and we should be done and have the product in hand by late September/early to mid October. Look for it!!! – Don Smith.

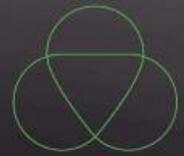
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TRADFEST 2024 LINE UP ANNOUNCED**January 24th – 28th, 2024 www.tradfest.com**

Ireland's largest gathering of trad and folk music takes centre stage as one of the most exciting cultural events to take place in Dublin this Winter.

On the back of a hugely successful festival in 2023 TradFest is going bigger and better than ever, with a rich and ambitious showcase of the very best of trad and folk music. Running from January 24th-28th, audiences can enjoy cosy pub sessions across Temple Bar, and concerts throughout Dublin City Centre and County.

Confirmed artists for 2024 include and many more to be announced: Carlos Nunez, Julie Fowles, Transatlantic Women with Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Women of Note with Aoife Scott, Altan, Stockton's Wing, Kíla & Yankari, Máirtín Ó Connor Trio, Maurice Lennon Trio, Freddie White, Liam Ó'Maonlaí, Cathy Jordan & Feargal Murray, Laoise Kelly, Pdraig Rynne, Tara Breen & Jim Murray, Lumiere, Nuala Kennedy, The Raines, Steo Wall, Síle Denver, Zoe Conway & John McIntyre, Michelle Mulcahy, Sive, Farah Elle, Niamh Bury, Niamh Farrell & Varo, Cinderwell, The Remedy Club, Strange Boy, The Deadlians, Cuas & Pdraig Jack, Bridget Mae Power, David Howley, Niamh Bury, Angelina Carberry, Tara Howley, Emma Corbett, Oisín Morrison, Alannah Thornburg, Niwel Tsumbu, Anna Tavnir & Maninder Singh, Dagogo Hart and many more....

TradFest continues to enthral audiences with its day and nighttime concerts in spectacular venues, with the 2024 programme seeing the festival explore new spaces such as Malahide Castle, Swords Castle, Skerries Mills, Draíocht, The Millbank Theatre and The Lark. Concerts will also return to staple venues such as the majestic St Patrick's Cathedral, historical landmarks Collins Barracks, The National Stadium and Dublin Castle, as well as vibrant live music venues such as the Button Factory and the Grand Social. For fans of live music, trad and folk connoisseurs and the culturally curious - TradFest is the music and cultural event to be at in January 2024.

Tickets for TradFest 2024 are available from www.tradfest.com

Follow TradFest Temple Bar on Social Media: Instagram

@tradfesttemplebar, Twitter @templebartrad, Facebook @ TradFest Temple Bar.



CHLOE MATHARU
TOWARDS THE HEBRIDES

"Absolutely Incredible" - BBC Woman's Hour

From Award winning Scottish Indian singer songwriter and harpist, Chloe Matharu, *Towards the Hebrides* is an original song about travelling out to the space and light of the Hebrides for a fresh start, narrated in this bright and airy track.

Available on all Streaming Platforms from September 8th

www.chloematharu.co.uk • Facebook @ChloeMatharuMusic
Instagram @chloematharumusic • Twitter @girlmatharu"

TradFest Temple Bar is produced by The Temple Bar Company with support from The Arts Council, Diageo, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Fingal County Council, Dublin City Council, Culture Ireland, The OPW and RTE Supporting the Arts.

A VERY SUCCESSFUL FLEADH & YEAR FOR SHASKEEN**www.shaskeen.net**

Traditional Irish Music and Song has been at the forefront with Shaskeen for the last fifty-three years. Shaskeen is now a recognised cornerstone in the Irish Traditional and Folk scene.

With a musical line up with 8 people of vast experience, sporting four front line singers, *Katie Theasby*, Vocals, Flute & Whistles, *Mary Liddy* Concertina & Vocals, *Johnny Donnellan* Bodhran & Vocals, *Dave Sanders*, Fiddle, Viola, Mandolin & Vocals, *Patsy McDonagh* on Accordion, *Geraldine Cotter* on Piano, *Eamonn Cotter* on Concert Flutes and *Tom Cussen* on Banjo & Mandolin.

There are hardly any bands playing traditional music and songs in Ireland today that has the heritage, cultural context, longevity and experience of SHASKEEN, a band of genuinely skilled musicians, no gimmickry, just instrument wizards, great variety in the tunes, straight-forward arrangements, beautiful songs, a fierce and collective drive, mighty energy. *The versatility from this band is unlimited.*

2023 has been very exciting for Shaskeen with lots of concert gigs around Ireland with highlights including *The All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil* in Mullingar and *The Electric Picnic* in Stradbally. The band has enjoyed a successful Fleadh and year so far, with more gigs yet to come.

Our Concerts are jam packed and entertaining from start to finish, with a host of reels, jigs, barndances and our Songs are of a wide & varied genre with delicate arrangements from Katie, Johnny, Mary & Dave.

Look out for Shaskeen's new single & video coming soon. Please check out a few more recent video links etc.

https://www.shaskeen.net/video/Shaskeen-in-Cois-na-hAbna_39

https://www.shaskeen.net/video/Katie-Theasby_29

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9g-hnt3Nqg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0foBmD7c2_M

Check out www.shaskeen.net &

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

THE HAAR**thehaar.ie/gigs**

Anglo-Irish quartet The Haar take their "mesmerising impromptu arc of artistry" (*Irish Music Magazine*) on tour to the SW and NW of England this October. It's an opportunity to hear four musicians, each at the pinnacle of their respective fields, whose spontaneity thrives on the trust they put in each other to create their unique and "splendid balance of swirling instrumental magic and beautifully sung narratives" (*Folk Radio UK*).

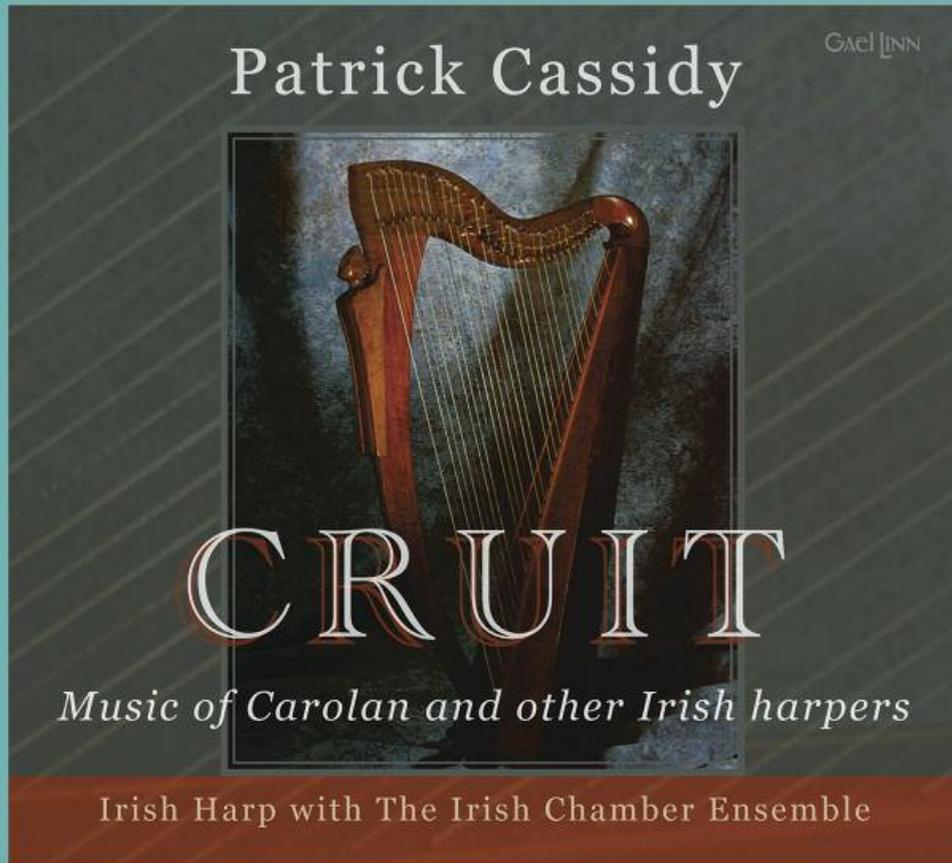
Adam Summerhayes (fiddle), Cormac Byrne (percussion) and Murray Grainger (accordion) all acclaimed, high level improvisers, well used to producing ever-changing, flowing soundscapes, while vocalist Molly Donnery lets her vocals flow – naturally adapting to the varying demands of music made on the spot.

The quartet are known for breathing new life into well known traditional songs. As the band themselves say: "We let our imaginations run free with these old favourites," and the result is breathtaking and ambitious.

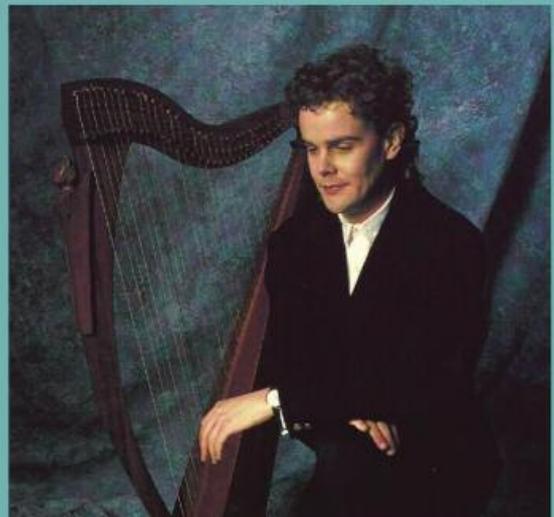
"This is not a dyed-green-Guinness-and-a-bit-o'-craic Ireland, this is the coast of Connemara Ireland, this is watching the fog roll in around The Skellig Islands Ireland... Devastatingly beautiful" - *Bristol 24/7*.

Tour dates: thehaar.ie/gigs

Gael Linn



**The album is
available as CD
from www.gael-linn.ie
& also on
digital platforms**



www.gael-linn.ie

HORSLIPS : MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW - BOX SETwww.horslips.ie

50th Anniversary – 35 Disk Super Deluxe Box Set. Over 350 audio tracks with 16 hours of unreleased material and 4.5 hours of unreleased video. (Available now).

Fifty years after their debut on vinyl, Horslips take one more curtain call as they emerge with the release *More Than You Can Chew* – the ultimate collection of their recorded work, spanning more than 500 audio tracks on a staggering 33 CDs and 2 DVDs of filmed performances. In all, that's over 20 hours of previously unreleased band-related content.

- 33 CDs with 506 audio tracks – 252 of which (16 hours) are previously unreleased
- 2 DVDs with 60 video tracks and 2 documentaries – 43 of which (4.5 hours) are previously unreleased
- 2 books – *On The Record* (a lavish new recording history of Horslips) and *Lyricography*
- 5 signed vintage 8 x 10 photos
- A collection of fan club facsimiles from the '70s and a National Stadium, Dublin 1972 poster

PLUS : Deluxe Edition Bundle. Alongside *More Than You Can Chew*, there will also be available a unique limited edition frameable reprint of Horslips' second-ever poster from a show at the Talbot Hotel in Wexford in June 1971.

As Barry Devlin has highlighted, "Even back in the day when 25p got you 90 minutes of high - concept, low - rehearsal Horslips toons, there was no doubt about the band's commitment to getting the image right. This quirky, striking design is a monument to Charles O'Connor's hard graft hand drawing. Every line and circle painstakingly inked in.. and all of it a foretaste of design elements and memes that would crop up throughout Charles's series of ground breaking record covers".

Limited to 250 copies, and only available online, the posters are numbered and individually signed by Charles O'Connor and measure 514mm x 672mm.

www.horslips.ie<https://www.celticnote.com/merch/horslipsdeluxeboxset>**SHARON SHANNON : NOW & THEN - BOX SET****Release Date: 27th October 2023****CelticNote.com**

The Daisy Label is proud to announce a comprehensive 30 year career spanning box set by inimitable Irish music icon Sharon Shannon, arriving this October. The release is to be called *NOW & THEN*. One of Ireland's finest, and best-loved multi-instrumentalists and composers, Sharon Shannon has played a distinctive role in the history of Irish music. A gifted artist with a string of best-selling albums and concert tours behind her, Sharon has also enjoyed a diverse range of successful collaborations with legends including The Waterboys, Christy Moore, Sinéad O'Connor, Kirsty MacColl, U2's Adam Clayton, Jackson Browne, Steve Earle, John Prine, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Dónal Lunny, Imelda May, Shane MacGowan, reggae dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, and many others.

The stunning collection of Sharon's work since her debut album release in 1991 includes a 7" vinyl version of *The Galway Girl* featuring Mundy, which has been remixed by rising DJ/producer Jen Payne just as the original surpasses 20 million Spotify streams. The set also features 12 of Sharon's studio albums on reformatted digisleeve CDs, a career journey coffee table photo book over 100 pages, Sharon's renowned debut LP with remastered audio on bespoke coloured vinyl, and finally a brand new album called *NOW!* (also on coloured vinyl) including recent collaboration with The Scratch called *The Diddle Doo*.

***NOW & THEN* BOX SET is released Friday 27th October 2023. The box set and a signed limited edition version can now be pre-ordered exclusively from CelticNote.com**

CALUM STEWART : TRUE NORTHwww.calum-stewart.com

Acclaimed Uilleann Piper and flautist Calum Stewart has released his highly anticipated new album *True North*. A testament to the Speyside native's exceptional talent and strong connection to his heritage in the North of Scotland, the record intertwines traditional Celtic influences with heartfelt compositions, delivering an authentic musical experience which is sure to resonate with audiences worldwide.

True North brings together a trio of masterful musicians which Calum leads, showcasing his unrivalled skill on the Uilleann pipes and wooden flute. He is joined by Sylvain Quéré on the bouzouki and Yann Le Bozec on the double bass, whose combined musical voices and styles create an enchanting and evocative sound.

Drawing inspiration from the north of Scotland, its music, legends, people and landscapes, *True North* follows the theme of Calum's previous album, *Tales from the North* (2017). The opening title track of the album *True North* is a poignant solo slow air, recorded in Calum's family home in Garmouth in Speyside, and evokes a powerful sense of home and belonging.

Calum Stewart said: "I aim to pay tribute to the traditional tunes that have stood the test of time, while also expressing my personal connection with the north of Scotland through self-penned melodies which reflect the memories, encounters and experiences which have shaped my *True North*."

***True North* is available to buy, download and stream now. For further information on Calum Stewart, including upcoming live performance dates, please go to: www.calum-stewart.com**

Instagram: @calumstewartmusic**Facebook: @CalumStewartMUSIC****YouTube: @calumstewartmusic**

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SCREAMING ORPHANS : PAPER DAISIESwww.screamingorphans.com

Paper Daisies is the new Folk/Irish release from Screaming Orphans, a genre-breaking, chart topping all-sister band from Bundoran, Co. Donegal. Angela, Gráinne, Joan and Marie Therese Diver are well known for their modern take on traditional Irish music and song inherited from their family roots and this 10-track album could be best described as another eclectic amalgam of traditional and modern. They are one of the most sought after Celtic bands and continue to actively tour across America, Canada and Europe.

The album includes songs pulled from every corner of the Irish song repertoire, from the well known ballads *Sweet Forget Me Not*, *Will Ye Go Lassie Go*, *Shanagolden*, to a piano led cover of the Rory Gallagher song *I Fall Apart*. Also included is a contemporary, re-imagining of *Home to Donegal*, a modern take on *The Blacksmith* and *The Limerick Rake* complete with newly written choruses, a lively fiddle based cover of the Amy Macdonald song *This is the Life* and a wonderful version of the Robbie O'Connell song *Hard To Say Goodbye*. The band in the past have recorded Percy French songs and this album is no different with a modern indie/pop version of *Darling Girl From Clare* complete with old school girl group backing vocals.

This album offers up a feast for fans and newcomers alike. With a mix of songs to suit every age and musical style there should be something for everyone to enjoy.

Paper Daisies is available now on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify and other digital media platforms.

Screaming Orphans Links:www.screamingorphans.comwww.facebook.com/screamingorphanswww.instagram.com/screamingorphanstwitter.com/screamingorphanswww.youtube.com/screamingorphans**FILL YOUR HEART WITH IRELAND....AND ITS MUSIC**ireland.com

Music is everywhere in Ireland but quite often the most spectacular experiences can be found at our great festivals such as the Galway International Arts Festival (July), the Belfast International Arts Festival (Oct), TradFest (January), The Cork Jazz festival (Oct), and of course, the Fleadh Ceoil.

This summer from August 6-14 the town of Mullingar in County Westmeath welcomed musicians, dancers, and performers from across the globe for a glorious traditional music celebration. At Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world's largest annual festival of Irish music, we saw street performers, intimate concerts, big-name acts and over 150 competitions showcasing the very best of traditional music talent.

Tourism Ireland is also delighted this year to again partner with hit PBS TV show *Ireland with Michael* as it returns to Ireland to film season 4. The series follows world-renowned Irish tenor Michael Londra as he takes viewers on an intriguing journey to popular and lesser-known destinations on the island of Ireland - to learn about Irish history; meets local artisans; experience small-town pubs and food; and enjoy unique musical and cultural experiences. Viewers can see *Ireland with Michael* on PBS stations across the US, and it will also feature as part of Aer Lingus inflight entertainment offerings this summer on transatlantic routes.

Alison Metcalfe, Tourism Ireland's Executive Vice President, North America and Australia/NZ, said, "Music offers a great insight into what makes us tick and all these great musical events are wonderful examples of the unique nature of what visitors can expect when they visit the island of Ireland. From the traditional to the contemporary we are blessed with a musical heritage that will form a truly special part of an Irish vacation."

Find out more at Ireland.com

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DOLORES KEANE AT 70 YEARS

Dolores Keane 'The Queen of the Soul of Ireland' in conversation with Frank Grealley for Irish Music Magazine.

Photo : Melissa Mammion Photography



On the cusp of her 70th birthday (September 26th), Dolores Keane has a friendly twinkle in her eye and a lively, warm welcome for me when we meet on a rainy August evening in the Claregalway Hotel.

"It's bad weather for my arthritis, but I've survived many more serious challenges in my life," Dolores says, with a broad smile, as we sit down to chat about her recent widely acclaimed performances at the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar, the song *My Refuge* by Johnny B Broderick & Ger O'Donnell, due for release on her birthday, the treble CD set for launch on September 15th and the double vinyl LP set that will be released on October 27th.

"It's been a long and often very challenging road that I've travelled up to now, but I have a lot of good memories to sustain me from my life in music," Dolores said. "I feel that I'm in a good place now and getting stronger all the time.

"I'm delighted to be back performing and recording and the wonderful warm reception I received at the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar gave my spirit a great and timely lift in the run up to my 70th birthday."

Dolores's live performance on TG4 of *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* with Emmet Cahill was widely acclaimed - as well as her soulful singing of *Teddy O'Neill*, a perennial favourite with her legion of fans the world over.

Many years have slipped by since Dolores and Tommy Sands performed *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* on a special 39-track album to honour the work of singer/ songwriter Pete Seeger - an album that included Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Judy Collins, the Indigo Girls and Roger McGuinn.

She has recorded, too, with other music legends like Emmylou Harris, John Prine and The Chieftains and toured the world taking in England, America, Canada, Australia, Russia, China, Japan and a host of other countries where audiences and press have showered her with accolades for her deep melodic voice and unique interpretation of classic songs like Dougie MacLean's *Caledonia*, Paul Brady's *The Island*, Donagh Long's *Never Be The Sun* and Frank A Fahey's *Galway Bay*.

"It was no different in Mullingar than the first time I ever performed on stage. I was in a nervous state all day until I got up and started to sing," Dolores said.

"Even back in the early days when I sang with De Dannan, I always struggled with nerves, even to the point of being physically sick before going on stage."

The song *My Refuge*, clearly and poignantly illustrates the struggles that Dolores has waded through in her personal life; including depression, alcoholism and breast cancer. The words survival, resilience and redemption also define the woman of whom the American Singer Nanci Griffith once said: "Dolores Keane, the Queen of the soul of Ireland, has a sacred voice."

"We had a family gathering in Carragh Cottage, the home-place of my late aunts Rita and Sarah Keane," Dolores said. "It took me a while to get my head around the words of *My Refuge*, but I was greatly helped by the guitar accompaniment by Ger O'Donnell and I eventually felt comfortable singing it.

"*My Refuge* is very autobiographical and I feel it has a very powerful message," Dolores said.

"Music has been my refuge all my life, and even now it motivates me to get up and sing, no matter what I am struggling with."

That gathering at Carragh Cottage also brought together an assembly of

My Refuge

By Johnny B Broderick/Ger O'Donnell

I was drawn to the bright light
To see the cobwebs on the wall
I sang on stages world over
From the famous to the small
The songs that I was singing
I was singing from the heart
But the life that I was living
Complicated from the start

Chorus

I sang through my troubles
I drank through my pain
Music was my refuge
Music kept me sane
People thought they owned me
To do what I was told
Music was my rainbow
My constant crock of gold

dear friends - Tommy Sands, Mick Hanly, Paul Brady and John Faulkner, whom Dolores was once married to.

Dolores was born in Caherlistrane, Co Galway, and was from an early age influenced by the deep musical tradition of the area. She developed a great love for the Irish music and songs that were passed on by her family, especially her aunts, Rita and Sarah Keane.

Her early link-up with De Dannan at age 18 happened by chance when she met up one evening with Alec Finn, Frankie Gavin and Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh in Mrs Cullen's Pub in Galway. "Ringo said: 'We're starting a kind of a group and we need a singer'," Dolores recalls.

"I wasn't sure how they would react at home to me going on the road with a bunch of wild lads, but anyway I agreed to join the band. Although I had won All-Ireland medals for traditional singing on three occasions, I had never performed with a backing band until I joined De Dannan and I found that a wonderful and liberating experience. We had a lively and successful time together as a band and it was a new sense of freedom for me as I felt



Photo : Melissa Mammion Photography



Dolores Keane with Emmet Cahill at Fleadh 2023 on TG4

I was always hemmed in a bit by my aunts; sitting between the two of them and always being told what to do. They were wonderful to me growing up, but I always felt very restricted and needed to find my own voice.

"I kept a good face on any troubles I had; like the way I was brought up and it was only when I toured with Mary Black that I was able to confide in someone and open up a bit. Even when I went through a hard time with breast cancer, the only time I was able to cry was when I got the all-clear. I grew up in an Ireland where one was encouraged to stay quiet about any personal troubles and that stayed with me a long time."

Dolores recalls a time when she hit a rock-bottom low of spirit when she was in Nashville doing a recording in 1991 for the RTE/BBC *Bringing It All Back Home* TV documentary. "I was on my own a lot while in Nashville and I never felt so isolated or low in spirit as I did for a while during that trip," she said. "I remember I went into a little church one day and prayed that my awful depression would lift from me."

But Dolores found a welcome friend in the legendary producer and songwriter Jack Clement whose studio she was recording in. "One day after recording, Phillip King told me that there was someone who wanted to see me and it was Jack Clement, who told me that he had heard me sing and that he was intrigued by my unique voice. He kissed me on both cheeks and gave me a great big hug that greatly helped to lift my spirits at the time."

"When I looked over the road I could see my name up in lights on Carnegie Hall. That remains a special memory"

And she has another story to tell from that Nashville experience. "We were recording in a studio that looked like an old shack right out of *Little House on the Prairie*. One day when I finished recording I went outside for a cigarette and sat down on a sack of corn that was outside the front door. I was soon joined by another man who took up position on a sack on the opposite side of the door. We got to talking and then a big limousine drew up and a man got out and started to head in to the studio. He said hello to me and asked if I would like a beer and I said I would. He came out with my beer and asked me my name and I asked his. 'I'm Don Everly, he said. Then the other man spoke up and said, 'I'm Phil Everly' and we all got to talking and laughing - me and the famous Everly Brothers who had been estranged from each other for a long time. It's something I will always remember and the memory always brings a smile."

Dolores also remembers her first performance in New York's *Carnegie Hall*. "I was scared stiff and feeling totally overwhelmed as I sat alone in a dressing room," she said. "The New York Mayor's wife came to my rescue and helped me comb my long hair and get me ready for my performance. She even got me a drink to steady my nerves. I remember the long walk to the stage and how frightened I was until I started singing. I remember too the innocent delight I felt when I went. I crossed the street in New York and when I looked over the road I could see my name up in lights on Carnegie Hall. That remains a special memory."

Dolores will have plenty to celebrate on her birthday with a newly released song, LPs and Vinyl Record Collection. She wants her birthday to be a quiet celebration. Dolores knows that she is much-loved and she sings these few lines from *My Refuge* with great heart, spirit and hope

I know people love me/And that has kept me strong/ But it's not about me anyways/ The hope is in the song.

Happy 70th Birthday to You, Dolores!

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STEPH GEREMIA'S IF TOMORROW

Steph Geremia in conversation here with Anne Marie Kennedy.



If Tomorrow is a song album from renowned Galway flute player Steph Geremia. A multi-talented performer, she has joined forces with, among others, folk and trad luminaries; John McCusker, Eddi Reader, Kris Drever, Phil Cunningham, Alan Kelly, Michael McGoldrick, Ian Carr, John Doyle and Donald Shaw.

With one original song, composed during lockdown, the material is unusual, thought provoking, her singing voice is delightful, harmonies and arrangements, all top class, an album that will travel well and find new fans.

possibility of prematurely losing someone very close to me. That unquestionably affected my final song choices, but I don't think in a negative way. The album is not intended to be mournful and I hope that the listener finds it uplifting."

AM: "Flute, whistles, ukulele, you're also composing and singing in Irish."

Steph: "I wrote *Galway's Sweet Bay* during the pandemic, when we could only walk 5k, and luckily from where we live, I walked the same stretch of shoreline every day, grateful to be close to the Atlantic, in a quiet area of the city, no traffic then. I looked across at the Burren skyline and imagined how foreign it would seem to someone who had never travelled more than 5km from their birthplace and I got thinking of Irish women of previous generations, women unlike me, who had no opportunity to ever leave their homes or pursue their dreams or passions as I have, so it is an homage to them. I chose *Aird Uí Chuain* for both the story and haunting melody; the poet is missing his birthplace, being displaced, talking about the beauty of Erin's isle, a tapestry in words. It all resonated with me, perhaps because I've made my home in so many places. I'm a sucker for a song like this and I'm delighted to have the wonderful Dónal Clancy singing harmony with me!"

AM: "You have a deep connection with Scotland, the music, culture, people, no surprise there's a Scottish song on here."

Steph: "Being a member of the Alan Kelly Gang, we've collaborated and recorded with Eddi Reader, Ian Carr and others for years now. We feel part of that Scottish community of musicians and singers. I chose *Garden Valley*, written by Dougie Mc Clean, his telling of the highland clearances, people cleared away from rural, idyllic places, into the cities. Again, I found a connection here with my own peripatetic lifestyle, and making connections in new places, something I'm privileged to do through music and song."

"Choosing a song for me is like falling in love at first sight!"

Steph: "Having established my reputation as a flute player with two solo flute albums, I thought the time was right to focus more time and energy to singing. 2020 was supposed to have been the busiest year for me as a solo performer and in March 2020, my regular touring partner, Aaron Jones was on the boat over from Scotland for some performances and then to meet at my home to start working up new song material, the very day the first lockdown was announced! I had a year and half then to let the ideas percolate, waiting until we were all safely vaccinated so I could go to Scotland to begin recording. I asked the great John McCusker to come on board to produce the album, knowing he would be a great fit, providing a missing link for me, also the fact that he was close to the wonderful musicians I was working with and having Phil Cunningham, whose studio we used in Queensferry, on the grounds of an historic castle. There was definitely some magic created in those initial recording sessions!"

AM: "You have some unusual, lesser-known songs on the album."

Steph: "There's a mix of Irish, folk, and Americana traditions, but honestly, I have to say that choosing a song for me is like falling in love at first sight! I feel it instantly, and the lyrics or melody has to grab me. This album is deeply personal, themes of love, longing, loss, all the emotions I was experiencing at the time. In January 2021 when I was making the final selection I was also coming to terms with the

If Tomorrow launched at the end of July in Galway and Dublin. Steph Geremia will tour Ireland with Eddi Reader & Alan Kelly Gang in September and perform at Cork Folk Festival on September 30th.

For more details visit stephgeremia.com / facebook.com/stephgeremiamusic / instagram.com/stephgeremia



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- Dovetailed reed slots
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The Vintage

- Riveted Brass Concertina Reeds
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- Dovetailed reed slots
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RÉALTA THING OF THE EARTH

Seán Laffey talks to Deirdre Galway and Conor Lamb of the Belfast-based band, Réalta, about their latest album, a cranky box and collaborating with some special guests.



We ran this interview a couple of days before the release of *Skidoo*, the second single from their upcoming album *Thing of the Earth*. Written by Steve Cooney for the 1983 TV documentary on the first Irish expedition to Ellesmere Island in the Canadian Arctic. I commented on quality of the bodhrán on *Skidoo*, which is a very strong opener to the whole album.

Conor says, “we’ve had great feedback about that. Dermot Moynagh is playing the bodhrán and tambourine on the track; he establishes the opening groove and this becomes the heartbeat of the track as the rest of us weave in and out. It’s great fun to play and it’s loaded with energy.”

Réalta have made a few changes for this album, surely a sign of a growing maturity and a greater confidence in their unique sound. Deirdre Galway (guitar) and Conor Lamb (uilleann pipes / whistles) were among the founding members when they released their first album in 2012. Dermot Moynagh (bodhrán) and Dermot Mulholland (bouzouki / double bass / vocals) joined for their second release, *Clear Skies*, and they have recently welcomed Loïc Bléjean from Brittany into the band on uilleann pipes and whistles. Loïc’s distinctive style of piping, and the addition of banjo from Dermot Mulholland, are both given space to shine on this third album.

There are guest musicians too. Conor tells us about guest singer Myles McCormack. “We’ve known, admired and played music with our friend Myles for a long time. His voice is full of character and he is an excellent writer and arranger of songs. He also plays mandolin across the album.”

Deirdre tells us about another collaborator, Cathy Jordan. “We met Cathy at the Cáceres Irish Fleadh in Spain. It’s a very special place, the Fleadh is held in a walled medieval town. We also met Peter Crann at that festival, he is an artist from Sligo who creates crankies. It’s an old way of story-telling where a long scroll of paper is illustrated and unwound. He is working on a project with Cathy to create a musical map of Ireland by illustrating one song from each county. We played Peter and Cathy our arrangement of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, and were delighted they were interested in it being the Wexford entry for their Crankie Island project, as well as the first single from our new album. Cathy added her stunning vocals and Peter animated the song’s story. He made a cranky box

with a hessian cover and filmed the roll moving across as the song played in the background - you can see the result on YouTube. It’s a fairly old tech way of making a music video but a huge amount of work goes into it, it’s all hand drawn and coloured, and we are delighted how well it works with the song.”

Talking of old tech, Réalta have bitten the bullet and released *Thing of the Earth* on vinyl as well as CD and digital. Conor says, “there’s something deliberate about listening to a vinyl album, it becomes an event in your day, and there’s more space to enjoy the artwork. We worked with a number of visual artists on the album: Kerrie Hanna, Susan Hughes and Lizzy Doe. We commissioned the cover art’s centrepiece; it is a stained glass panel and it looks fantastic on the LP sleeve.”

With its mix of classic trad tunes, folky vocals and some new compositions, such as *The Red Rock* (inspired by the band’s visit to the Garden of The Gods national park in the USA), Réalta approach each set as a dynamic experience. Conor explains, “we try to explore the music with variations, instrumentation, harmony and to give tunes the time and space to breathe.”

“There’s something deliberate about listening to a vinyl album, it becomes an event in your day”

Réalta would like to thank Arts Council NI for funding support as well as Seán Óg Graham at Bannview Studios and Ben McAuley at Start Together Studios who recorded the album. Réalta will be performing a series of launch gigs in Brittany and Ireland this autumn.

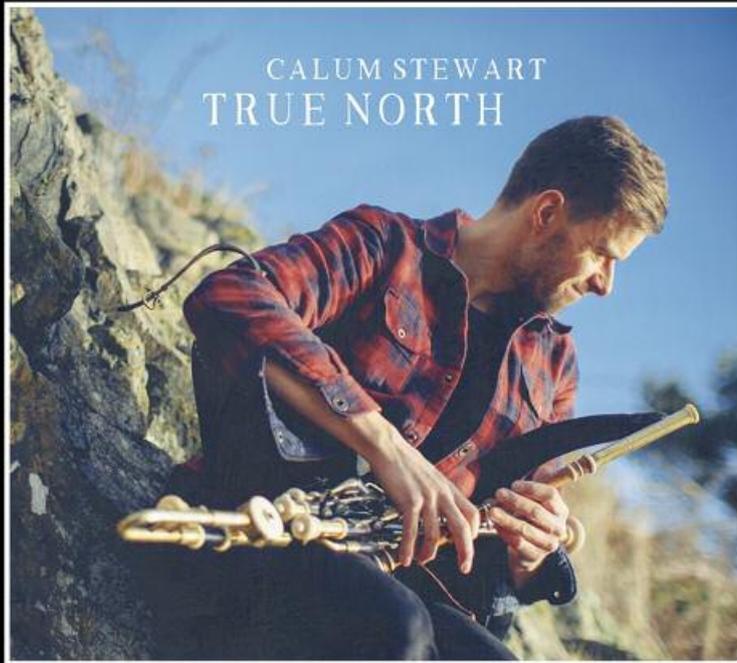
The album’s first two singles are available to stream and download on all major digital platforms and you can pre-order your copy of *Thing of the Earth* direct from the band at www.realtamusic.com



Photo : Dónal Glackin

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MEET ALLY THE PIPER

Anita Lock interviews Ally Crowley-Duncan, the mastermind behind the inimitable Ally the Piper.



Multi-talented multi-instrumentalist Ally Crowley-Duncan has been changing the course of tradition for the Middle Ages' Great Highland Bagpipe since winning the 2012 World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow back in her youth, followed by consecutive years of ranking top in her divisions in the Eastern United States. In 2016, she broke away from competition to build her career, breaking the Scottish bagpipes' stereotypes by presenting a modern twist to the beloved yet ancient instrument to her ever-growing audiences.

Anita: Give us a brief history of your musical beginnings in the Great Highlands Bagpipe, including your other musical talents.

Ally: Music has always been my first language. My mother has always said that I was singing before I could talk. I grew up listening to Celtic music and immediately fell in love with it! I started playing any instrument I could get my hands on, such as the piano and most of the wind section from my school band. When my dad legally adopted me when I was 12, I sought ways to connect to my adopted Scottish heritage through music. Thus, I found the pipes!

Anita: What was the turning point in your life that led you to begin your career as Ally the Piper?

Ally: Music was a part-time job for me from when I was 14 until COVID-19 furloughed me from my retail job. I took that as an opportunity to pursue music full-time. During the lockdown in the States, I logged onto Facebook Live and put on a series of concerts, playing pipes, whistles, singing, and so forth for friends and family. People seemed to appreciate it a lot, which pushed me to keep going. Moving to short-form apps, such as TikTok, enabled me to be more experimental and put my music in front of many more eyes.

Anita: Give us examples of how you have transformed the Great Highland Bagpipe into your music.

Ally: I have always loved layering my instruments and vocals, but doing that requires playing in concert pitch keys. Since I struggled with only being able to play in concert B^b on the highland pipes, I made myself

a new bagpipe chanter in the key of B natural during the pandemic. That opened many doors for me creatively, allowing me access to more music than before.

Anita: What has your experience been like developing a fan base only through social media during lockdown compared to utilizing social media and playing live?

Ally: I was terrified about playing live after two years on my phone screen. Calculating numbers on social media into real humans was difficult, so I greatly underestimated what the shows would look like. I can never return to performing virtually because I enjoy sharing my live shows on my platforms.

Anita: Tell us about *The Pipes are Calling*, your first full-length album.

Ally: It was always my dream to put out an album that sounded like how I feel who I am at the core. Since I have both Irish and Scottish heritage from my parents, I have a deep love for a wide variety of music. This album is a culmination of those influences, the eight instruments I play, vocals, and cross genres I'm passionate about and love performing, such as Irish folk, jazz, classical, and traditional Scottish.

Anita: Tell us about your exciting new collaboration with electronic violinist Mia Asano.

Ally: Mia and I met on TikTok in April 2021 and performed for the first time together the following April. We quickly realized how similarly we perceive and feel about the music world. We're both passionate about respecting our musical origins. We felt enough trust to join each other on our debut tours but quickly realized that what we had together musically was too special to leave unexplored. Thus, we created the Mia x Ally duo project!

"It was always my dream to put out an album that sounded like how I feel who I am at the core"

Anita: What future projects are in the works?

Ally: For my solo work, I plan to release a Celtic rock album in Spring 2024. I am touring at various U.S. Celtic festivals and playing pieces from *The Pipes Are Calling* and my first album—an extended play I released in 2021 called *Billow and Breeze*. Mia and I are also releasing a Duo album this October and will be going on our second tour, which will be through the Eastern and Southern U.S. We have hopes to go international soon!

For more details: Ally the Piper website: <https://piperally.com/>
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COLIN FARRELL : THE MUSIC IS STILL IN SAFE HANDS

Colin Farrell is the recipient of the 2023 Irish Artist in America Achievement Award granted annually by the Traditional Irish Music Education Society at its O'Flaherty Irish Music Retreat which is celebrating its 20th year, writes Peggy Fleming for Irish Music Magazine.



Growing up in an Irish community in Manchester, Colin Farrell was exposed to traditional music from an early age. His mother, who was from Co. Galway, and his father, from Co. Cavan, made sure that all the Farrell children received instruction in a variety of instruments, but more importantly, that they participated in musical activities with other children. The result was that Colin experienced traditional Irish music as a recreational activity, a time to get together with friends where sessioning and even competing provided a backdrop for fun, an experience that has informed his lifelong approach to the music.

Enjoyment is evident in everything that Colin does, whether it's teaching, performing, or posting any of the over 700 original tunes he composed and performed on his *Tune a Day* feature on Facebook and YouTube over a two-year period. Sure, there is deep respect for the integrity of the music, but not so much that a tune can't be tweaked to reflect a personal touch. A respect for the traditions and an emphasis on mastery provide a fine tension with the freedom to play with a tune and give free reign to one's own creativity, and that has inspired Colin's music from an early age. Young Colin was taught by legends - Paddy McMahon on fiddle and Michael McGoldrick on whistle - and his mother made him practice a half hour every night on each instrument, before he could go out and play football, even before homework. But, Colin observes, "there is a difference between practicing and playing". Practice ensured a mastery of the fundamentals, and his grounding in basic skills and technique he can attribute in part to a mother's insistence on discipline. But lessons with McMahon and McGoldrick were also fun, as were the gatherings at the local Comhaltas clubs.

"When you'd go for these lessons, they were more of a social thing," says Colin. "Sometimes we would sit and chat about life and have a laugh and you go through a few tunes and it was never about you're doing this wrong or this right. And it kept our interest. That's why I think it's important for every young kid to enjoy what they're doing."

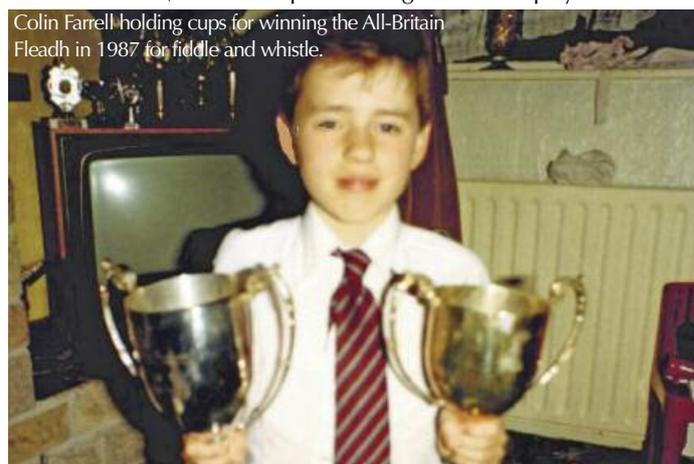
"Competitions and fleadhs were also more of a social outlet than competition - you would see all your friends there. It helps to have something to focus on and encourages people to play, and winning is great, but it's not the end of the day."

With mastery came paying gigs: playing for ceili bands, set dances and in local pubs at 13, in bands, the first of which was Ceile, touring around England and Scotland at the age of 16. At the same time he began performing with a group called Banshee, who sprinkled traditional tunes among Dubliner-style songs. Colin found that he gained valuable experience doing impromptu tunes and song accompaniment for Banshee as well as a variety of singer/songwriters in pubs. It was grist for the mill for a future prolific composer. "All of that adapting to songs fairly quickly and thinking up tunes in my head led up to why I write music," he says. (Colin's astounding oeuvre of original tunes, many composed in under 20 minutes, comprise his *Tune a Day* project, which is detailed in the June issue of *Irish Music Magazine*).

The music expanded his horizons in other ways. Soon he was touring with dance shows in Germany and France, and it dawned on Colin that this wouldn't be a bad way to make a living, see the world, and, always, above all, have fun. And providential. It was at just such a show that Colin met his future wife, Danielle, who was a dancer from Dublin.

It was at this point, Colin says, that life took a turn. Leaving behind a planned career in engineering after graduating from Leeds University, Colin moved to Ireland, finding a new community of musicians there and getting a master's degree in Traditional Irish Music from the University of Limerick. Shortly afterward, he moved to the U.S. to perform at Raglan Road Pub in Disney Springs in Florida, followed by touring with trad bands, notably Lúnasa, and recording, both solo albums and with several collaborators like Kevin Crawford and Patrick Doocey, and he will have an album release this year with Crawford and Dave Curley. He also teaches at music camps and festivals around the country, and this will be his third year to appear at the O'Flaherty Retreat. In the absence of local community like the one that nurtured him in Manchester, Colin appreciates the value of such gatherings.

"Events like the O'Flaherty bring people together for the social aspect that's so important," he says. "You can sit at home and play along with YouTube videos, but it's important to get out and play with other



Colin Farrell shown holding a framed Fleadh Cheoil award for “Most Promising Musician” and, left to right, are his musical siblings Shane, Michelle and Paul.



musicians.” It is events like festivals, he notes, that can draw young people to enjoy playing music together in community. To create these opportunities at a local level, he points to the work of fellow Mancunian Angela Usher, who was recently awarded an MBE for providing services to disadvantaged youth through music. “You need people like that getting people together. To shows kids that they can get out and see the world through music . . . you learn so much by playing with other people.

“When I was growing up in Manchester there was an organization called Club Cheoil and some of the kids were brought in to record an album called *In Safe Hands*. It was a celebration of Manchester’s traditional Irish music with young musicians. The title was so significant, because when you look around at all the places where young people are playing music - cities like Boston and New York and festivals like Willie Clancy Week, the music really is in good hands.”

And what advice would he give to young people or anyone who wants to play traditional music? It starts with listening. “It’s important to listen to music, listen to sessions and bands. Listen to different kinds of music, not just Irish, but other traditional forms like Breton and Galician music. And listen over and over to the tunes you want to learn. Listen enough times that you can sing it in your head.”

He also encourages people to be open to creativity. He recalls that Brendan Mulkeré, as visiting lecturer at UL, would get students to express themselves rather than play a tune the same way every time. “He’d say, hold this note or do a roll here. Vary the tune, not so much that you lose the tune. Be yourself, but know the tune well before you attempt variations. It’s the best advice I ever heard.”

“Events like the O’Flaherty bring people together for the social aspect that’s so important”

But there is no way around the basics. “You start with scales, basic rhythms of jigs and reels, playing in tune, keeping tempo,” he says. The basics that laid his own foundation under his mother’s watchful eye back in Manchester. If his own son, Darragh, now approaching his second birthday this year, wants to learn the music, Colin will no doubt remember the payoff of the discipline of his own childhood.

If Colin’s celebrated *Tune a Day* project is any indication, Darragh already shows an early affinity for the music. Along with Dave Curley, Colin’s brother Shane, and a Who’s Who of Irish trad musicians, Darragh has a recurring role in the videos that appeared daily in 2020 and again in 2022: nestled in the crook of his dad’s arm while Colin plays a jig on low whistle, jumping out of his playpen to play with the headstock of Uncle Shane’s banjo during a duet, celebrating his first birthday with whistle in hand while his dad plays the tune of the day in his honour.

“Darragh loves the music, and his face lights up whenever he’s around it. He blows into the whistle, plucks on the fiddle. We’ve set up a piano for him. Danielle has taken him to our shows since birth. He’s surrounded by music, and if he wants to play, it’s up to him,” says Colin.

And will Darragh find his community in a new generation of trad players? “Well,” says Colin, “his cousin Jack lives nearby. But, yes, with all the people who are committed to preserving and promoting traditional music, I’m confident that the music and the joys of sharing that music will be there for him.

“You can definitely say that the music is in safe hands. The future of Irish music will always be there.”

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THE 44th CORK FOLK FESTIVAL

Seán Laffey puts a call into William Hammond to find out what's on offer at the 44th Cork Folk Festival.

Martin Carthy

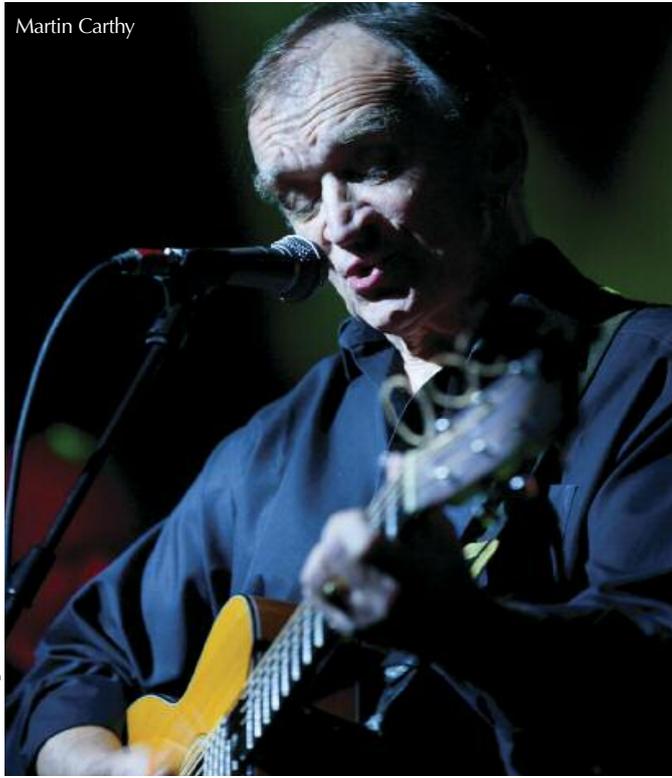


Photo : Dragon Thomas

I began with a bit of maths, from my reckoning (when we went to press), this year's Cork Folk Festival, which runs from Wednesday 27th September to Sunday the 1st October, will feature 36 events held in 15 venues across the city. Prices range from free to €35 for the closing concert on Sunday at the Cork Opera House with Frances Black, Sharon Shannon and Mary Coughlan. My first question was how do they manage the logistics of this citywide festival?

William tells me there is a dedicated team of organisers who have been with the festival since its inception, they know the ropes and work in close collaboration with a number of volunteers, who all help to make the festival run smoothly. "For the bigger gigs, at the Cork Opera House, Triskel Christchurch and the Everyman Palace, the venues themselves take over stage management and the box office, which takes a lot of weight off our team."

Then there is the book launch of *Cork Folk Festival 1979- 2022 Reeling Down the Years* on Friday at 6pm in the Cork City Library. William says: "It is a 360-page look-back at every event since 1979. You can find out who played at each festival, which venues hosted the gigs, there's a section on the famous festival posters, who has been involved in the back room teams, and even a discography and list of the songs and tunes that have entertained people at the festival down the years."

I noticed that there are many concerts, with price tags of between €10 - €15. William explains this has been a feature of the festival for many years. "We are an urban festival with intimate venues such as the famous An Spailpín Fánach, that are perfect for acoustic music. Daoirí Farrell plus John and Kevin Byrne play at the Spailpín Fánach on Thursday night and we have Martin Carthy, Matt Cranitch & Jackie Daly at Triskel Christchurch on Saturday."

I was intrigued to find out more about Karan Casey's *The Women, We Will Rise*, William fills me in on the details: "Karan has been working in collaboration with the theatre director Sophie Motley on this project, which progresses the female narrative in the folk tradition, placing women centre stage and sharing through song the experiences of gallant women from Ireland's past. It has a distinct drama-documentary quality to it, as it is based around the lives of real women, including Karan's grandmother Agnes Ryan who played a pivotal role in Cork during the War of Independence. The show runs at the Everyman Palace on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday."

The festival will also host contemporary women songwriters under the banner of *Gals at Play*. This concert features original songs, newly composed for the festival with Mary Greene, Brigid O'Neill, Molly O'Mahony, Siobhan O'Brien, Neo Gilson; it's on Saturday at 5pm at An Spailpín Fánach.

A new venue is the historic Elizabeth Fort, which will host *Folk Fest in the Fort*, at 2pm on Saturday. This is a Community Trad Event with Club Ceoil Ballyphehane, Douglas Comhaltas Adult and Youth Groups, Cork Singers Club, Knocknaheeny Music Generation.

"We are an urban festival with intimate venues that are perfect for acoustic music"

If sean-nós song is your thing then make a diary note: Sunday October 1st at 8pm at Triskel Christchurch, for the *The Diarmuidín Songbook*. It will be a special night celebrating the legacy of Diarmuid Ó Súilleabháin. He was a sean-nós singer and broadcast journalist from Cúil Aodha. He died in a car accident in 1991, and a posthumous album of sean-nós songs, *Bruach na Carraige Báine*, was released in 1995. This concert will highlight the rich tradition of Múscraí songs. Artists on the night are: Danny Maidhcí & Eoiní Ó Súilleabháin, Seán Lehane, Máire Ní Cheileachair, Nell Ní Chróinín, Four Star Trio with Con O'Drisceoil, Johnny McCarthy, Pat Ahern, the MC is Peter Browne.

There's much more, and there always has been, ever since 1979 when a group of friends decided that Cork needed a folk festival. How lucky are we that those friends are still making it happen every September? And they have a new book to show how it was all achieved.

For the full festival details please visit www.corkfolkfestival.com

Karan Casey



Steph Geremia



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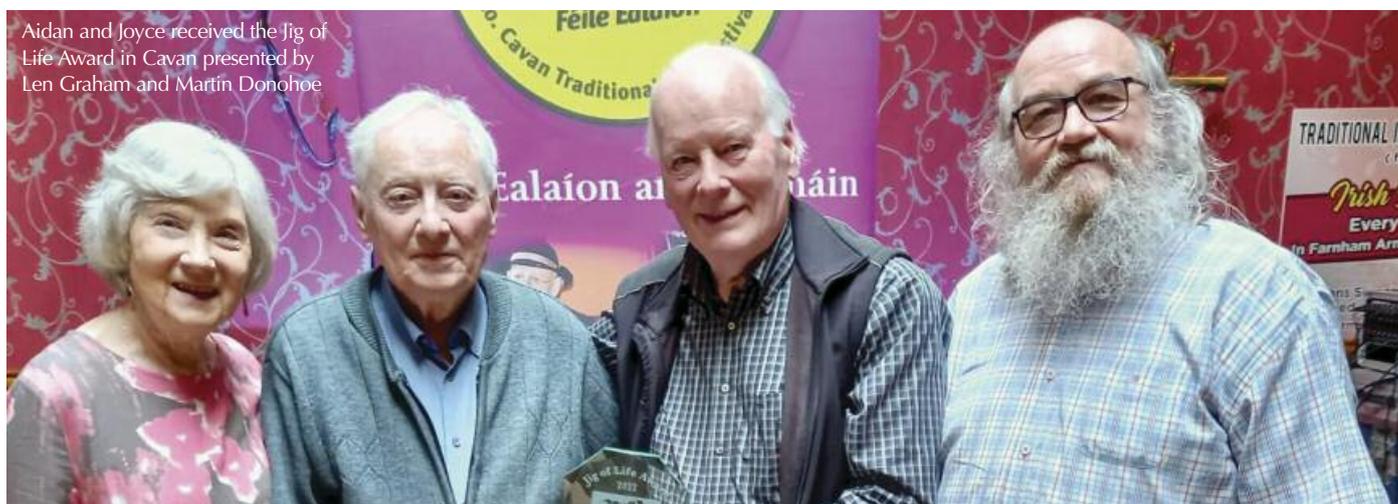
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REMEMBERING AIDAN O'HARA

Seán Laffey looks back on the remarkable career and contribution to Celtic culture made by Aidan O'Hara, who passed away in June 2023.



Aidan and Joyce received the Jig of Life Award in Cavan presented by Len Graham and Martin Donohoe

Aidan was born in Derry in 1939; it was the nearest maternity hospital to the home place in Muff, Donegal. Anyone who heard Aidan speak would never have guessed his age, he sounded the same at 84 in 2023 as he did over twenty-five years ago when we first began working together at Irish Music Magazine.

The dispersed nature of modern media meant we rarely met, but we talked often. There were days when I'd be riding the lawnmower and my wife would be standing at the door waving the phone. "It's Aidan," she'd call. I'd switch off the engine and settle on the tractor seat for a conversation that might last anything from three minutes to the bare bones of an hour. Those calls were always great fun, he had a wicked sense of humour, a store of dad jokes, impromptu hilarious puns, and he always had something interesting to say. He had a nose for a good series too, and right up to the week of his passing he was suggesting ideas for future IMM features. His work was a joy to edit, he wrote on time and to the brief, his pieces rarely needed subbing, and where there might be ambiguities in the text, there was always a phone call to hone and polish the piece. Having trained as teacher, the discipline of correcting pupils' copy stood him in great stead as an author.

His son, musician/singer - Brian Ó hEadhra, gave me an insight into their early family life in Newfoundland. "I remember as a small boy, falling asleep under a kitchen table whilst step dancing took place on the kitchen floor. Canada played a huge role in Dad's professional and family life. He met my mother, Joyce, a Canadian of German heritage, when they were working as voluntary teachers in Terrace, a remote settlement in British Columbia. They had a lovely courtship that would lead to their lifelong partnership." Aidan and Joyce appeared together on CBC Television and there are archive clips on YouTube if you'd like to see how comfortably they were as a singing duo. Whilst living in Ottawa he also formed a quartet called The Celts, two Irishmen and two Scots, they sang ballads around Canada in the late 1960s.

Aidan's work in Newfoundland in the early 1970s was truly groundbreaking; incidentally he always pronounced the island's name correctly, as New-Found-Land. His work was crucial both in uncovering a rich and forgotten store of Irish culture and in advancing Newfoundland folk music to the wider world.

Jean Hewson from the Newfoundland Folk Festival sent us this recollection of Aidan. "In the 90s I was on the board of the folk festival, and in the 2000s I became president and Artistic Director for a while, I had the pleasure of meeting Aidan when he came home for the 30th festival. I had lots of contact over the years with the artists that Aidan was responsible for bringing to our festival, and in many ways those early festivals gave me a lifelong love of traditional music and the people who engaged in it. I guess one could say that indirectly, Aidan exerted a huge influence on me!

"His wife Joyce is also a marvellous person, she cooked for all the performers and volunteers at those early festivals. It really was about celebrating and creating community, and they were both committed community builders, without a doubt!

"Aidan O'Hara was a pivotal figure in the early years of the NL folk festival. He was invited by Lewis Brookes to join the board of the St. John's Folk Arts Council (now the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society) in 1975. Aidan had moved to St. John's in 1973 to pursue studies in folklore at Memorial University, and through his research, both as an academic and as a broadcaster, he ended up establishing friendships with a host of local singers, musicians and storytellers from the area of the Southern Avalon Peninsula known as the Cape Shore.





"Most of these folks were descendants of immigrants from the areas of Waterford and Wexford, and Aidan was astonished by the fact that they sounded Irish and had clear recollections of past events and traditions of their ancestral home. When the first NL folk festival happened in Bannerman Park, St. John's in 1977, the stage was populated with Aidan's friends from Branch, St. Bride's, Ship Cove, and other communities along the Cape Shore. Thanks largely to him, the first couple of folk festivals enjoyed a wealth of performances from source singers and musicians to whom singing, dancing and storytelling were a part of everyday life.

"In my mind, Aidan was really the first Artistic Director of the folk festival (even though people who programmed festivals often didn't have fancy titles back then other than volunteer). By putting those people on stage, he showed the public that what they were doing was important; that those songs and stories and traditions still mattered. After Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, there was a

"Aidan lived Celtic culture; we all sang, it was part and parcel of being an O'Hara"

move towards modernisation, and that included the local arts scene; many people eschewed traditional music and dancing as archaic and old-fashioned. But the early days of the NL folk festival reminded us of the beauty of those ancient songs and stories, and encouraged us to take pride in them once again – and Aidan was a big part of that."

Brian echoed that grounded aspect of his father's song collecting work. "He was interested in people, in their lives, in their everyday; as a historian he had a deep affinity with those people history often overlooked. He took great delight in listening to what people had to say and how they said it. He was a great mimic and he used this gift professionally and respectfully. For example when he interviewed Irish speakers he talked to them in their own dialects, he put them at their ease. He never had any time for political or religious tribalism, and he saw the Gaelic speaking peoples and their descendants of the North Atlantic as sharing a history and culture. He lived the culture himself, our house was filled with laughter and song, Aidan and Joyce sang all the time, we all sang. It was and is part and parcel of being an O'Hara."

Aidan made a lasting impression on the Irish national broadcaster RTÉ too. He presented *Fáilte Isteach* on the radio, and on St Patrick's Day 1981 RTÉ broadcast his documentary *The Forgotten Irish of Newfoundland*. On his passing the Jonathon Bowman radio show

recalled his work as the biographer of Delia Murphy, whom he defended from her critics; and he would later go on to lecture about her life and her music. He said, "in the 1930s and 40s she was the most established and most famous woman's voice in broadcasting in Ireland."

It was while he was living in Ottawa that he met Delia Murphy. In 1968 a friend who sang with Aidan in an Ottawa folk group mentioned that Delia was living some fifty miles away. He phoned her and was surprised to hear her distinctive voice; she was delighted to be contacted and invited him over to Jasper Creek near Smith Falls in rolling Ontario Farmland. It was a hot August day; Aidan, Joyce and their one-year-old daughter Kathleen arrived to find Delia sitting in a chair under a tree on the farm where she raised cattle. She sang and reminisced about her dear late husband Dr. Thomas J. Kiernan who had been Irish Ambassador to Canada, the USA, Germany and Australia, he had died the Christmas before. Aidan accompanied her on guitar as she sang *The Spinning Wheel*, and the most moving song of the afternoon was *Cold Blows the Wind*. Aidan said he was bowled over by the emotion she invested in the song.

After years of living in Knocklyon, south of Dublin, Aidan and Joyce moved to a charming modern house on the outskirts of Longford Town. His father was a Longford man from Drumlish and he had deep roots in the county. Community minded, as ever, Aidan became a key figure in the local history society. If you ever go to Longford there's a massive fiddle placed in the grass bank at the side of the bypass, it is a monument to Blind Tom Kiernan, one of Aidan's ancestors, of whom he was rightly proud and whose teaching influenced generations of musicians in the county. Brian said, "Tom Kiernan was an important figure in the traditional music of Longford. Thanks to the work of Aidan and others we have a greater appreciation of traditional Longford music and our heritage today."

That celebration of who we are and where we came from, that collective connection between us over generations was central to Aidan's view of the Celts as a people. The world is so much richer for Aidan's life and work, his never aging voice can still be heard in online archives from RTÉ and ITMA, and his books are essential reading. Moreover he has left a living legacy in Newfoundland and another one through his children who still sing at every opportunity.

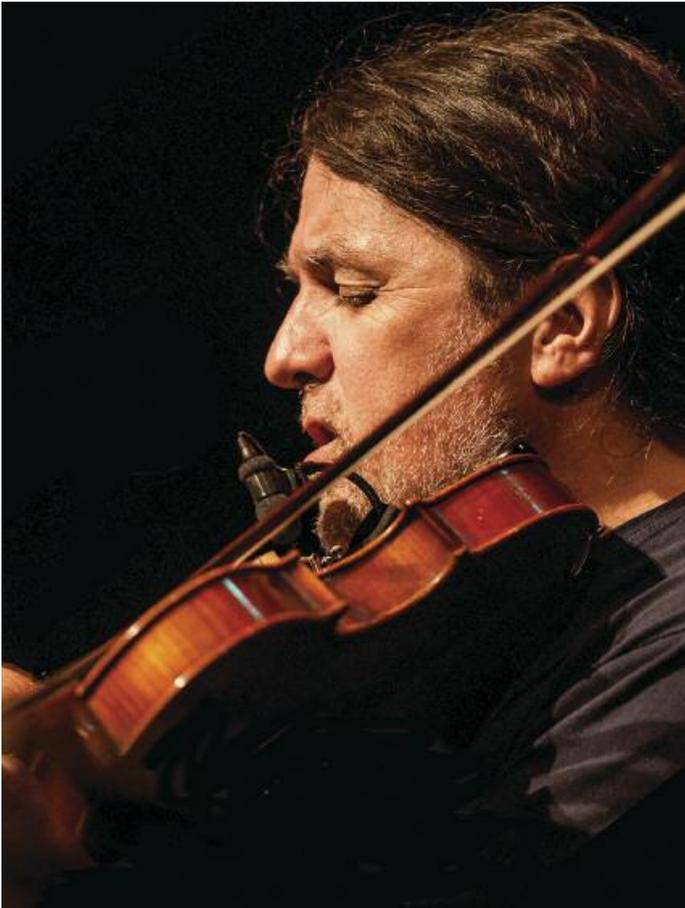
It was an honour to call Aidan a colleague, it was a privilege to call him a friend.

To find out more about Aidan's projects visit www.aidanohara.com



FURTHER DOWN THE LINE WITH SEAMIE O'DOWD

Further Down the Line is the highly anticipated fiddle album from the musical wizard, Seamie O'Dowd. He spoke to Anne Marie Kennedy about his fortuitous beginnings, his very rewarding career to date and making the album.



Seamie: "I've been lucky really. My parents gave me a lot of encouragement. Music was a big thing in both their families. Mam's father Frank Regan, her aunt Lizzie Regan/ Kieilty, my uncles Mick Regan, Jack and Mike O'Dowd and Dad's uncle John O'Dowd all played fiddle. Becoming aware of the breadth of the south Sligo tradition as well as getting to know local musicians from that tradition were invaluable early lessons. Sligo town, where I'm from, has also very significantly influenced me in terms of the eclectic nature of its music scene. Traditional Irish musicians from Sligo and neighbouring traditions of Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Donegal, Cavan and Fermanagh. Players like Fred Finn, Peter Horan, Josie Mc Dermott, Pdraig Kerins, Kevin McTernan and Mick Shannon could be found in sessions with musicians like Thom Moore, Rick Epping, Francie Lenehan or Gerry Grennan who'd absorbed loads of American folk music. I probably owe the multi-instrumental side of the 'bug' to the Sligo town scene. Also, the multi-instrumentalist trend in recordings during the 70s influenced me a lot."

AMK: "You've had some very impressive musical highlights."

Seamie: "The biggest thing that I've done in terms of a career is having played at the quite massive Rock In Rio festival with Dervish but the most profound has been getting to play music with my children, the biggest honour of all really. Highlights in a folk or traditional music career can occur anywhere, from a massive

festival to a gathering at a house, and all kinds of places and circumstances in between. It was also quite an honour to get nominated as an instrumentalist in the first Radio 1 Folk Awards, given the amount of fantastic folk and traditional musicians that have yet to be nominated, and I'm sure will be over time. Sligo Corporation awarded Dervish the Freedom Of The Borough in my time with them and also officially acknowledged my local activity at a civic reception, and I'm thankful for all that. I was also hosted at the Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo, a really memorable event where I was invited to play with any musician I could think of from any genre, local or visiting, that was around on the night. I felt quite honoured and we had a mountain of fun."

AMK: "*Further Down the Line*, it's a fiddle album and much more."

Seamie: "I'd say it is traditional Irish fiddle recording from Sligo rated around 85 to 90 percent proof!! The title was chosen to acknowledge a long line of Irish, and particularly Sligo musical tradition, both in and out of family from which I'm thankful. The traditional tunes are mostly Irish, apart from three Shetland tunes and one American tune. There are also tunes by my son Stephen, Mairtín O'Connor, Cathal Hayden, Kevin Burke, John Doyle, Brian Mc Neill, Dick Gaughan, John Sheehan, Brendan Emmett, and the late Frankie Simon, who was a fantastic guitarist from Roscommon. The original tunes, which spurred me to record the album, are all written in traditional Irish style except for two. The three tracks that most represent the overall feel of the recording are probably *Across The Black River*, a set of my own reels I've called *The Fork Down The*

"It's a traditional Irish fiddle recording from Sligo rated around 85 to 90 percent proof!"

Hill and the *Bonny Kate* set. The tracks which probably push the musical definition or category would be *To Await Whatever Comes*, which sounds a bit middle-eastern and *The White Mountain*, which has a strong American folk influence at one section. And I went a little bit orchestral on *The Rolling Hills Of Angels*, which I wrote on a whistle!"

AMK: "You'll be launching and touring it in the next few months, best of luck."

Seamie: "Many thanks, Anne Marie. The album will be available through most of the usual shops as well as online via the Coleman Centre in Sligo (www.colemanirishmusic.com). The official release is on October 20th in Sligo's Hawk's Well Theatre, with another scheduled for November 16th at the Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar. Patrick Doocey is doing me the honour of playing guitar on those gigs and one or two surprise guests are also planned."

Info on further launches and gigs can be sourced by checking out facebook.com/seamieodowd and seamieodowd.net. Or emailing Seamie at seamieodowd@gmail.com if you fancy such things happening in your locality!

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CALUM MacPHAIL : AT LAST

Seán Laffey puts a Friday morning call into Celtic-country pop artist Calum MacPhail, who is based in Inverness.



Calum MacPhail is a twenty-something, rising star in Celtic-Country Pop. He was born in Fort William on the shores of Loch Linnhe. Now the big question is, for one so young, why did he call his debut album *At Last*?

He tells me it's the album he's been meaning to make for years; there was an EP in 2017 before covid, but this is *the one*. The recording features Calum on accordion and vocals, Sean Cousins (Hò-rò) on guitar and piano, and award-winning, virtuoso uilleann piper Calum Stewart on uilleann pipes, whistle and wooden flute. With Mark Scobbie on drums, 2020 BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year winner Ali Levack on whistle, and Ivan Steele on saxophone and whistle.

Calum started early. "When I was six I asked my dad for a piano accordion, my wish came true that Christmas. The instrument must have been as big as I was! I took a few lessons over the next three years and I followed Gary Innes who played locally; he had a huge number of traditional tunes and I picked up a solid repertoire early on."

As a twelve year old Calum was getting paid gigs. "We moved from Fort William to Inverness when I was around nine. Inverness is the capital of the Highlands and there's always been good music here. There must be four or five bars that have music on seven nights a week. There was plenty of opportunity for a young lad to find work playing in the evenings as well as doing a fair share of busking too."

When Calum reached the ripe old age of 15 he formed, Hò-rò. They were awarded 'Up and Coming Artist of the Year' at the MG ALBA Scots

Trad Music Awards in 2017. "We are still together, it's a six piece band and we played the Danish Skagen Festival this past summer. We toured Europe and made a self-titled album in 2016, since then we released *Hex* in 2018 and *New Moon* in 2022."

How does a traditional accordion player become a sought-after singer? "It was a trip to Dublin's Temple Bar that got me into singing. I came across Stephen Walsh, I loved the stuff he did and I'd play his album constantly on car trips. I love Irish songs. There's something special about them, especially the way they flow, and I'd always include Irish songs in my live sets."

Country music of course is massive in Ireland and Calum's voice suits the genre to a T. You can hear him sing the Bellamy Brothers classic *Let Your Love Flow* as the featured song on his latest promotional video. "I'd been talking to Nathan Carter about it, and he said because it had been covered by so many artists before I should make sure it was my own take on the song. That was good advice, and so far I think people will be very happy with my version."

One song that made it to the album is *7 Years Old*. "The song was written from a personal perspective, and I was unsure if it would fit with the upbeat Celtic-Country vibe of the rest of the album. On reflection, I think it does have a place within all the happiness on the recording."

"It was a trip to Dublin's Temple Bar that got me into singing"

The song relates to Calum's childhood relationship with his father John MacPhail. "He was a well-known folk singer on the Scottish circuit in the 1970s, and made an album of some classic folk songs. Unfortunately, the scene at the time wasn't good for him and he became an alcoholic. There were some dark days in my childhood. He now has dementia, and sadly, he isn't sharing in my success. When the single came out I donated all the profits to *Mikeysline*, an Inverness-based suicide prevention hotline, which helps young people with mental health problems."

That is a telling mark of Calum's humanity. Hailed as Scotland's Nathan Carter by some, he is eager to tour in Ireland and build a fan base here. Not yet thirty he knows first-hand the pleasures, pressures and perils of life as a professional musician, and he's determined to make the best of the considerable talent he has been given.

Find out more about Calum and his music at www.calummacphail.com



BELTAINE

With a sixth album recently released, Gráinne McCool caught up with band member John Keys to find out a bit more about them and their music.



Hailing from Portland, Oregon, Beltaine are a Celtic Fusion band featuring hammered dulcimer, guitar, accordion, flute and penny whistle. They offer a unique blend of instrumentation and musical styles.

Beltaine was formed after John started to play the hammered dulcimer. As soon as he heard it, he was drawn to Irish and Scottish jigs and reels that he grew up listening to from his family. He connected with other musicians from the Portland music scene and through his local church. The members clicked and found a fun and unique sound that people enjoyed.

Gráinne: "Beltaine has been described as a 'Celtic fusion band'. What is that exactly?"

John: "Celtic Fusion is often described as modern music with Celtic influences, our definition is quite the opposite. We all come from different backgrounds; for example I am rooted in Celtic, jazz and blues, Brian Baker on guitar and percussion has a rock and folk background, Jamie Vandenberg who plays accordion in the group is classically trained, and our bass player Tyler McDowell comes from a blues and country background. We have taken our diverse backgrounds to offer a unique perspective on traditional, contemporary, and original Celtic songs. Since Celtic Fusion (like Jazz Fusion) has different meanings for people, and sometimes a negative connotation, we have switched our tag line to "Celtic Craic" because we really want listeners to have a fun and festive experience at our performances and with our recorded works."

Gráinne: "How did the band come to be formed?"

John: "Beltaine started as a more traditional, instrumental band which you will hear in the first three albums: *Brilliant Fire*, *String Fling*, and our Christmas album, *Winter Wind*. There is a funny story about running into a fine Irish gentleman while playing for a St. Patrick's Day gig, where he wanted to hear some Irish pub songs fitting for St. Patrick's Day. We avoided a skirmish by playing *A Nation Once Again*, which the man joined in loudly, with a tear or two in his eye! We then found that people really enjoyed the traditional songs and they were eager to join in."

Gráinne: "Why Beltaine?"

John: "I was looking for a name that matched the sounds of the

hammered dulcimer; one meaning that I found early on was brilliant fire. Beltaine is also the Celtic May Day festival that celebrates spring, and the hope and brightness it brings after a long, dark and cold winter."

Gráinne: "The new album *Mercy* is just out. How different is this to your previous releases?"

John: "Our albums show how the band has evolved over the past twenty plus years, starting with traditional and original, instrumental tunes, then progressing to vocals. *Mercy* includes six originals, four are vocal tunes written by Brian and John. This was a new opportunity for the band to tell stories and respond to some of the craziness in the world today. We have a unique way in developing original songs, one of us comes with a story idea or a musical riff, others then add their interpretation with their instruments. There is an organic evolution of songs created by the entire group."

"There is an organic evolution of songs
created by the entire group"

"As mentioned before, we all come from different backgrounds but we have known each other for years. Brian, Tyler, and John have played in different bands before (currently, me and Brian play in a pop, rock, country, and funk band called Saturated Phats.) Brian and I met Jamie at a local church where they participated in church music and many dinner theatre musicals! Brian and myself lead most of the songs, often telling stories and jokes. Jamie plays along and comes up with some real zingers. We like to say that we take our music seriously, but we don't take ourselves too seriously."

Gráinne: "What are the band's plans for the autumn? Any touring?"

John: "We have had a busy summer with the release of *Mercy*. Fall will continue to be busy with regular gigs, festivals and events, including the Kelso Highlander Festival, the Enchanted Forest, and some trips to neighbouring states. We would love to have a tour in Ireland and Scotland! We have talked about it but no plans quite yet."

Find out about Beltaine and check out the lyrics to their traditional songs at www.beltainemusic.com

GETTING TWISTED WITH THAWCROOK

Seán Laffey talks to Glasgow-based traditional music duo Rebecca Hill and Charlie Stewart about their new album *Thawcrock*.



First things first, what is a thawcrock?. Rebecca tells me it's a traditional tool for twisting material into a rope. "Historically it would have been used to make a cord of rope from twisted marram grass, or heather."

Charlie explains the significance of the album's artwork. "The illustration is by Orla Stevens, it shows a cord twisting across Scotland from Perthshire to the coast of Argyllshire. It represents the musical connection between our two local areas, where many of the tunes on the album are from. Our own compositions also

feature alongside tunes from further afield; we thought that rope made from a wide variety of materials reflected the way in which we have drawn on a diverse range of sources for the album."

Rebecca talks of their upbringing. "I was involved in Gaelic language events such as the Mod from a very young age. Charlie is from Glenfarg in Perthshire and we both met at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire in Glasgow about ten years ago. We experimented with improvisations on traditional themes for a few years, really just having some fun with them. There's always inspiration in the air here in Glasgow. It is a great city for sessions; these days the hot spots are the Ben Nevis and the Lismore, and you can find a session every night of the week in the city. And, because there is so much music of all sorts of genres, it's a great place to get new ideas and to hear fresh takes on old favourites."

Charlie tells us that there was a considerable gestation period before *Thawcrock* was fully-fledged. "Although we'd been playing together for years, it wasn't until the latter end of the lockdown. We wanted to build on the spontaneous and conversational side of playing that we both enjoy. Luckily we had a lot of time during Lockdown to work on melodies and arrangements."

Rebecca talks about their instruments. "I play a Starfish lever harp, which offers me wide range of keys; it has a lovely rich deep tone, and it is an ideal sound for soulful slow airs. Charlie plays both a regular fiddle and an octave fiddle, that latter instrument opens up some moody textures for us."

Charlie offers a few details of how the album came to fruition. "We recorded the album at Gorbals Sound, which is south of the Clyde, the engineers were Kevin Burleigh and Matthew Boyle. We were joined on some of the tracks by the singer Mischa MacPherson; she did a brilliant job and we are delighted with the result. Creative Scotland came on board with some funding and that really helped us get the project over the line. We also opened pre-sales to help with our printing costs."

I asked the duo to mention a few tracks to give our readers a flavour of what to expect on *Thawcrock*.

Rebecca starts with, "*Iorram Iomraimh* is a rowing song from the outer Hebrides, where traditionally fishing was done from small rowing boats. The sea theme occurs again in *Aonghais Oig*, a Gaelic song about a man whose boat capsizes and whose dogs accidentally drown him trying to save themselves. It's a brutally sad story, and Mischa sings the song really beautifully."

Charlie adds, "I play the octave fiddle on *Out on The Roof*, which gives me a range similar to that of a cello. I like the shape of this track and it was the first single we released from the album back in March 2023."

I wondered if the music has evolved since they went into the recording studio? Rebecca gives the question careful consideration. "The music has changed subtly as we've come to know it more deeply. There is space in our live performances for extemporisation and improvisation within the tune sets; you might think of them as

"During the lockdown we sat down and started to work seriously on new material"

templates on which we build our live musical conversations."

You can hear the duo's music live when they play at the Scots Fiddle Festival in November. For an up-to-date list of gigs and venues please visit www.rebeccahillharp.com

You can hear the full *Thawcrock* album and buy it from their Bandcamp page www.rebeccahillandcharliestewart.bandcamp.com



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Sat 2nd Dec.	Kilmaine Community Hall, Kilmaine, Co. Mayo

2024

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THE LEGENDS SERIES

Chapter 29 : Jackie Daly. An appreciation by Mark Lysaght for Irish Music Magazine.

Sliabh Luachra is an area in southwest Ireland around the borders of northwest Cork and east Kerry, which has been the source of a style of music much revered among aficionados of the Irish tradition. Jackie Daly is one of the finest exponents of the music associated with this area, and is much revered as a solo accordion player, composer and also as a member of a number of influential bands dating back from the 1970s to the present day.

Jackie was born in Kanturk, Co. Cork in 1945; his father played the melodeon and encouraged him to play music from an early age. He was precocious and progressed rapidly, so that before his teens he was playing at nearby crossroads dances under the guidance of fiddle player Jim O’Keeffe, who had developed a style of musical notation specifically for that instrument. By reading these charts, Jackie was able to establish a great affinity with fiddle music.

He spent some years in the Dutch Merchant Navy before returning home, intent on pursuing a career as a full-time musician. He

approach to his instrument brought out the beauty of the tunes and was to become pivotal in re-establishing the button accordion as a force to be reckoned with in Irish music. He had been performing regularly with fiddle player Séamus Creagh, and their eponymous album, also from 1977, is widely regarded as one of the all-time classic recordings in the Irish tradition.

By now Jackie was in great demand, and he continued to perform and record, guesting on Kevin Burke’s album *If The Cap Fits* before they recorded a duet album *Eavesdropper* in 1981. He had accepted an offer to join Dé Dannan in 1980, and he appeared on four of their best-known albums. His prowess on the accordion was now being internationally recognised, and his fluid style made it easy to integrate his playing into a band setting. However, the hectic schedule of the band took its toll, and Jackie left the group in 1985.

Always looking for new opportunities for collaborations with fiddle players, he formed Buttons & Bows with Séamus and Manus McGuire along with accompanist Garry O’Brian, ultimately

“His fluid style made it easy to integrate his playing into a band setting”

established his pedigree in 1974 by winning the All-Ireland accordion competition on the (mandatory) B/C accordion, then immediately switching to a C#/D box which had been his preferred option. His debut solo album *Music from Sliabh Luachra* was released in 1977 to great acclaim. His gentler, more refined

recording four superb albums while performing on an occasional basis. They combined Irish tunes with music from other traditions, including French-Canadian, Scottish and European airs. He also accepted an invitation to join Patrick Street in 1986, teaming up with Kevin Burke, Andy Irvine and Arty McGlynn to form a genuine Irish supergroup. Their more relaxed touring and recording schedules suited Jackie much better and he remained a member for over 20 years, recording several acclaimed albums with the band.

Another notable collaboration has been with fiddler Matt Cranitch, who also hails from Sliabh Luachra, and with whom Jackie has performed regularly in recent years. They are old friends, and both have an instinctive appreciation of the essence of Sliabh Luachra music. Together, they have recorded *The Living Stream* (2015) as well as *Rolling On* (2014), both fine examples of the classic fiddle and accordion combination that Jackie Daly contributes so much to.

Jackie’s second solo album *Many’s A Wild Night*, released in 1995, showcased a few of his own compositions, an aspect of his talents that he was to develop to a point where a book, *The Jackie Daly Collection* was issued in 2022, featuring over two hundred original tunes, including jigs, reels, slides, polkas and hornpipes, some of which have been recorded on various albums over the years. He has been the recipient of several prestigious awards, the most notable being *Ceoltóir na Bliana* (Musician of the Year) at the annual TG4 Gradam Ceoil event in 2005.

A modest and unassuming character, Jackie Daly has been based in Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare for many years, where he participates actively in the local music scene and passes on his instinctively brilliant interpretations of the music he loves to succeeding generations of musicians. His influence has been wide-ranging, popularising his relaxed approach to tune playing, which can be seen clearly in those who have followed in his footsteps. His legacy has been captured on the many seminal recordings he has made throughout his career, as well as his original tunes.



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OAIM have three fabulous courses for those tempted by the possibility of this wonderful instrument. The *Bodhrán Basics* course is taught by the enigmatic Brian Fleming and has everything to get you started on the instrument. *Nicoll's Bodhrán Basics* is a feast of well thought out exercises to help you progress faster. Then there is this course, *Bodhrán Technique*, a next-level course, delivered by master percussionist, Jim Higgins.

Jim hails from Renmore in Galway. Born into a musical family, he went on to study music in University College Cork under Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin amongst others. While in Cork, Jim caught 'the bodhran bug', playing alongside players such as Mel Mercier, Colm Murphy and Frank Torpey. During this period Jim was an active member of 'The Stunning' rock band playing trumpet and keyboards as well as percussion. He went on to play drums with fellow Galwegians 'The Saw Doctors' following a four-year stint with 'The Riverdance Show' which took him around the world.

He is an honorary member of the Donegal based traditional group 'Altan' having recorded and toured extensively with them for the last fifteen years from the Hollywood Bowl to the Sydney Opera House. He has recorded and performed with such luminaries as Paul Brady, Christy Moore, Liam O'Flynn, Donal Lunny, Bill Whelan, Martin O'Connor and Lunasa. Jim also specializes in ethnic percussion encompassing the djembe, the darabukkas, the dumbleq and the mbira.

“Calling us to move and feel, dance and sway—for such is the power of the bodhrán—played well it can possess us as we willingly lose ourselves in its wild seductive beats”

The Course

While this is officially a bodhrán course, it really is a masterclass in percussion and is applicable to any aspiring percussionist. As a drummer, Jim frequently discusses how to translate a drum beat to the Bodhrán. If you're a drummer then you'll really enjoy this challenge of transferring your skills to the hand drum.

During the course, as you'd expect, a broad range of rhythmical accompaniments are taught. Reels, Jigs, Slipjigs, Slides, Polkas and Hornpipes are all covered in-depth. The bonus aspect of the course is that there are accompanying mp3's for each rhythm type included to download and keep, plus an innovative notation guide that further aids in distinguishing the different beats.

Jim discusses and demonstrates rolls, backhand motion, the use of syncopation, the 'Bo Diddley Beat', and rim techniques to name but a few. The video tutorials are in a split screen format, so the learner can view the back hand (on the hide) as well as the forehand (holding the beater/stick) at all times.

Jim is a very patient, deliberate teacher. His soft voice provides a gentle and thorough guide through what it takes to master each rhythm, step by step, beat by beat. For example, he uses phrases like "rashers and sausages", "bacon and eggs" to humorously, yet effectively, describe the 6/8 timing for the jig. And while there are 13 Lessons in this course, make no mistake about it, every tutorial (*there are approximately 3 per lesson*) will call for your undivided attention and challenge you to the next level of your ability. Many may think the bodhrán a simple instrument, but it is far from an easy one to truly master. Herein lies the beauty of video instruction, you get to playback each tutorial as often as you need until you master it.

So, while you're tapping out your beats, see if you can lose yourself in its embrace. Let it work its magic and transport you beyond its rhythm to that shared space of mystery the ancients held dear.

In this YouTube video Jim demonstrates a very funky rhythm to accompany a reel called *The Sun Street Shuffle*:

<https://youtu.be/SC79SyQZyR0>

Check out this Video on the Irish Music Magazine Facebook Page @ www.facebook.com/TRADIMM

BEAT TO ACCOMPANY A REEL

Notation Key
Tablature Notation
 O= Open Tone, M= Mid Heel Tone, H= High Heel Tone, n= Neutral/Mute, P= Pop/Snare
 Bold= Accented, Regular= Unaccented, Underlined Tones= Roll
 ↓= Down Stroke, ↑= Up Stroke, L= Double-Ended Roll (Down-Back-Up)
 Placement of the letters assist in indicating relative pitch relations.

Standard Notation
 Sounds: Open Tone, Mid Heel Tone, High Heel Tone, Neutral/Mute, Snare/Pop, Accented, Unaccented
 Articulations: d= Down Stroke, u= Up Stroke, D= Accented Down Stroke, U= Accented Up Stroke, dU= Double-Ended Roll (Down-Back-Up)

Scan for YouTube Video to Play Along!

1st Part of the Beat
 O-O- P-
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 D D D

2nd Part of the Beat
 O-O- PnHH
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑
 D D D u d U

3rd Part of the Beat
 O-O- PnHH -OO- P
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓
 D D D u d U u D D

4th Part of the Beat
 O-O- PnHH -OO- P- MMM O
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 D D D u d U u D D d b u

taken from:
Bodhrán Technique
 with Jim Higgins

www.oaim.ie OAIM

IRONWOOD'S VISIONS ALBUM

Seán Laffey talks to Anna Dorsey for Irish Music Magazine.



Troy, Michigan-based Ironwood, are the husband and wife duo of Anna Dorsey and Mark Pierce. They met in 2011 at Grand Valley State University, where their shared love of music blossomed into romance, and from the sounds off camera, a wee little man is now present in their lives.

Anna tells us about Ironwood. "I sing and play violin, mandolin, and harmonica. Mark plays electric bass, acoustic guitar and kick drum. The name Ironwood describes our routes taken into Celtic Music and encompasses the different acoustic and electric instruments we play. I play by ear and write lyrics, while Mark does most of the arranging. Hearing Milish play at the Michigan Irish Music Festival initially inspired us. It was a moment that really brought us together in our relationship."

The duo performs regularly at summertime festivals, such as Saline Celtic Festival, Holland Celtic Festival, Irish on Ionia, Motor City Irish Festival and more. Organisers have welcomed them across the region and appreciate the good-time happy music that Ironwood makes. "I think they recognise we put a lot of work into our music, both in our writing, and high-energy performance. We don't overcomplicate things, the key is to keep music accessible to the audience, and to fill that stage with as much balanced sound as possible. We get a huge thrill when the audience sing our original lyrics with us, and sometimes know them better than we do. Lyrics are on our website, ironwoodband.com, so that fans can get a better handle on them. Overall, there's a great spirit of sharing in the Celtic Music community. If one band can't do a gig, alternate names are passed on to event organisers. The Celtic music community here is self-sustaining and welcoming. We support one another and want to see everyone succeed."

That community came to Anna's aid when she was looking to upgrade her instruments, for their latest album. "Some of the local musicians went on a shopping trip with me and we got to sample mandolins and violins before I made the decision to buy. So helpful!"

Ironwood has released two albums, *Gretna Green* in 2022, and their most recent album *Visions* in 2023. Both albums feature primarily

original songs. Anna tells me how it came to be made. "It was an elaborate project. We came up with a plan to let loose on the mandolin and fiddle and see where the music took us, layering harmonies. Mark is great at working out the chord and dynamics, whereas I'm a vocal and harmony gal. There's an overall theme of changing your perspective or vision in life within our new songs, and they are presented with joy and boldness."

The album was recorded at Solid Sound Recording Co. in Ann Arbor, Michigan by Eric Wohjan. "A total wizard. He is always laughing, telling stories, and encouraging us. One great piece of advice he gave me for our recording of *You Are My Sunshine*, was to smile while I sing. I put a big fat smile on my face, and it really changed the tone of the piece. You can actually hear the smile."

There was something on the horizon that concentrated their efforts when it came to recording *Visions*. "I was pregnant at the time, and I figured I had a small window before my domestic life would take a new direction. The studio work was finished within a week, all thanks to Eric, who kept us rolling; the whole experience felt more like a fun vacation than a job."

Both have day jobs, Anna is an Art Director and Mark is a HVAC Technician, helping to keep hospital buildings cool and sterile. Anna says those day jobs "give us the freedom to do what we want musically. We are not dependant on music bringing home all the bacon. It's

"We get a huge thrill when the audience sing our original lyrics with us"

something we do together outside of work, and it has been key in our bonding together as a couple."

On cue there were more noises of a toddler looking for a cookie, it seemed the right time to sign off. Things are going well for Ironwood, both as a family and a band. They are looking forward to playing Thumbfest in Lexington, Michigan in September.

To find out more please visit www.ironwoodband.com



ARMAGH
16-19
NOVEMBER

29th
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kennedy
piping festival

Adar *Gascony / Basque Country*

Andy May *Northumberland*

Barry & Laura Kerr with Donogh Hennessy

Ceri Rhys Matthews and Rick Lines *Wales*

Cillian Vallely

Gay McKeon, Paddy Glackin & Mary Corcoran

José Manuel Tejedor *Asturias*

Maeve O'Donnell

Méabh, Annie & Aoife Smyth with Marty Barry

Mick O'Brien

Mná na bPíob

featuring Máire Ní Ghráda, Mary Mitchell-Ingoldsby & Rosaleen O'Leary

Olle Gällmo & Matthias Branschke *Sweden / Germany*

Réalta

Robert Watt

Seudan *Scotland*

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The Mark Donnelly Uilleann Piping Academy



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council



ALL SET FOR THE CORK FOLK FESTIVAL**September 27th – October 1st, 2023 www.corkfolkfestival.com**

The Cork Folk Festival is all set for its 44th edition this autumn. Here is a rundown of what to expect. The festival will pack in nearly 40 events from Wednesday 27th September to Sunday 1st October.

Headlining this year's festival will be a trio of Ireland's finest musicians: accordion maestro Sharon Shannon, blues and jazz singer Mary Coughlan and senator and singer Frances Black. The festival will feature five concerts at Triskel Christchurch; Thursday 28th September with Dingle songstress Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh, Gerry O'Beirne, Donál O'Connor; Friday 29th with Banjo legends Damien O' Kane and Ron Block (Alison Krauss Band) from California; Saturday features a lunchtime concert with John Spillane & Conal Creedon, and in the evening we feature the legendary UK folk singer Martin Carthy; on Sunday we are commemorating the late singer, Diarmuidín Ó Súilleabháin, in a concert entitled *The Diarmuidín Songbook*, featuring members of his family, Nell Ní Chróinín and singers from Cuil Aodha.

Waterford singer Karan Casey will be presenting *The Women We Will Rise* at the Everyman Palace from Wednesday 27th to 30th of September. Once again, the festival will feature Gals at Play with Mary Greene, Brigid O' Neill, Molly O'Mahony, Neo Glison and Siobhan O'Brien. The packed programme will include Dublin singer Daoirí Farrell, Boruma Trio with Eileen O'Brien, Andrew MacNamara and Geraldine Cotter. The line up from Cork features Lee Valley String Band, Four Star Trio, the Céilí Allstars, Matt Cranitch, Jackie Daly and Greenshine. Steph Geremia will be launching a new CD with John McCusker, Dermot Byrne, Aaron Jones and Ian Carr. The list of musicians booked for this year's festival is growing and it includes songwriters, Cormac O' Keeffe, John Neville and Martin Leahy, accordionists Ruby Falvey, Diarmuid Ó Meachair and Cork sean nós singers Máire Ní Chéileachair and Danny Maidhic Ó Suilleabhain.

To help audiences reduce the cost of concerts and booking fees we are offering a Season Ticket for €60 Euro, it includes all nine An Spailpín Fanach Concerts.

All details will be published on our website, www.corkfolkfestival.com and we can be contacted by email cfolk@gmail.com and phone 087 2759311.



**When you walk the grounds of
Tulsa IrishFest
at River West Festival Park on**

March 8-10, 2024,

you will think you have arrived in Ireland!

Head to Tulsa, Oklahoma Next March!

- **3 Day Festival**
- **Immersive Cultural Experience**
- **Authentic Live Music**
- **Bands from Ireland, Scotland, Nova Scotia, the USA, France**
- **Irish and Irish-Fusion Food**
- **Family Friendly**
- **Speakers on Culture and Heritage & Much More...**

<https://tulsairishfest.org/>

CELTIC COLOURS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**October 6th – 14th, 2023 celtic-colours.com**

October 2023 will mark the 27th Celtic Colours International Festival, an award-winning festival that spans nine days, and the entirety of Cape Breton Island. The distinctive combination of music and culture found in Cape Breton is inspired by Mi'kmaq and Acadians, as well as nineteenth-century settlers from Scotland and Ireland, and the waves of immigrants who populated the Island during industrialization. Celtic Colours celebrates the unique traditional culture of the Island, presenting dozens of concerts and an extensive line-up of community events, all set against the spectacular backdrop of the Island's changing fall colours.

This year's Festival features artists from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Isle of Man, the U.S., and across Canada, along with some of Cape Breton Island's finest traditional singers, players, dancers, and culture-bearers. The list of performers includes Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy, Blazin' Fiddles, Le Vent du Nord, John Doyle, Béla Fleck, Allan MacDonald, Maggie MacInnes, Cathy Ann MacPhee, Tim Edey, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Heather Rankin, J.P. Cormier, Mary Jane Lamond, Howie MacDonald, Dwayne Côté, Brenda Stubbart, Béolach, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, Ruth Keggins and Rachel Hair, and VRi.

The 27th Celtic Colours International Festival, presented by TD Bank, runs from October 6 to 14. In addition to 49 concerts, there are more than 200 community cultural experiences happening in every corner of the Island, providing loads of opportunities to take a deep dive into the culture.

For the full schedule and lineup of artists, to buy tickets, or to tune in to the livestreams, visit celtic-colours.com.

O'FLAHERTY IRISH MUSIC RETREAT PLANS SPECIAL CELEBRATION**October 19th – 22nd, 2023 oflahertyretreat.org**

The O'Flaherty Irish Music Retreat is planning a special celebration in observance of its 20th annual event. This year's camp will be held October 19-22, 2023 at the Hoblitzelle Camp & Conference Center in Midlothian, Texas where it has taken place for most of its history. While keeping tight-lipped about the plans, retreat director Ken Fleming said the festivities will highlight the past. "We have had an amazing journey to get us to this milestone," he said. "And we will, in many creative ways, thank our volunteers, teachers, students and supporters who have made O'Flaherty's what it is today." The O'Flaherty Retreat began in 2004 at a small retreat centre in Richardson, Texas and attracted 140 students, mostly from the surrounding area. The next year, the event moved to the larger Hoblitzelle Camp in Midlothian. Today O'Flaherty's has grown to more than 350 participants from all over the U.S. and several countries. "We have developed a reputation for packing a lot of learning in a three-day camp," said Fleming, "balanced by a lot of enjoyable activities that make the experience a real retreat. There's the work, but there's the social side of it, the concerts, sessions, ceili, and more."

Online registration is still ongoing with many classes still open. Students can choose from a wide range of courses, including fiddle, tenor banjo, mandolin, harp, flute, whistle, uilleann pipes, button accordion, concertina, guitar, bouzouki, bodhrán, Sean-nós dancing, and singing. Additionally, enrichment classes and workshops will explore topics ranging from Irish music history to music theory for trad musicians. Tuition for the O'Flaherty Retreat is \$325 for participants 18 and older and \$225 for youth 12-17 years old (admitted by invitation only). Meals and lodging are separate.

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

IMDL EVENTS & RETURN TO LONDON TOWN**www.irishmusicinlondon.org & www.returntolondontown.org**

The next event in IMDL's year round series is Music Network Ireland's 2023 Traditional Music tour in concert, featuring: Oisín MacDiarmada (Téada), Mirella Murray (Cherish the Ladies), Noriana Kennedy (The Whileaways) and Donogh Hennessy (Ex Lúnasa) on Thursday 28th September at the Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith. Doors open at 7.30pm, **Tickets available: £15/ £6 U18s at www.irishculturalcentre.co.uk**

Line up for London's 25th Festival of traditional Irish music, song and dance 'Return to London Town' – due to take place in The Crown Hotel, Cricklewood and other local venues includes: Noel Hill and Brian McGrath, The London Lasses, Michael McGoldrick and John Carty, Saileóg Ní Cheannabháin and Pádraic Keane, Harry Bradley, James Carty and

Libby McCrohan, Mairéad and Deirdre Hurley, Tara Vascardi and Robert Harvey, Sorcha Costello and John Blake (album launch), Páraic McDonnchadha, Pádraic Keane and MacDara Ó Faoláin (album launch). The Festival takes place from Friday 27th to Monday 30th October and includes concerts, céilís, workshops, album launches and sessions. Weekend tickets now available for just £40. Special B&B room rates are available at The Crown Hotel for Return to London Town Festival goers: Single: £100, Double/Twin: £110, Triple: £120, Quad: £130. **Please email: groupbookings@turnitcapital.com and quote IMDL in the subject line. More details at www.returntolondontown.org and www.irishmusicinlondon.org**

Other concerts coming up soon at the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith: Sunday 24th September: Diarmuid Ó Meachair, James Carty and Caoimhín Ó Fearghaill. Friday 22nd December: The London Lasses celebrating their 25th Anniversary Album.

WILLIAM KENNEDY PIPING FESTIVAL November 16th – 19th, 2023 wkpf.org

A distinctive feature of Armagh's William Kennedy Piping Festival since its inception in 1994 has been the delivery of an expert presentation on some aspect of piping or traditional music. Many of these were published in a lavishly illustrated 2019 collection by Armagh Pipers Club. This year's William Kennedy Lecture deals with the neglected history, and contemporary revival, of Welsh piping, and it will be given by Ceri Rhys Matthews, who has laboured for three decades to recover an instrument and repertoire lost two centuries ago.

The primary focus of the Armagh festival is, of course, on pipe-based music, and the November 2023 edition – the 29th WKPF – will have over 40 artists from around Europe. The Swedish/German säckpipa duo Olle Gällmo and Matthias Branschke feature along with the Basque group Adar, the return of Asturian piper José Manuel Tejedor, Northumbria's Andy May and, as ever, a wealth of talent from Ireland and Scotland. Armagh's own Cillian Vallely, taking a break from trotting the globe with Lúnasa, is not the only local star: the Smyth sisters from Ballymacnab will appear, as will Lurgan's Barry and Laura Kerr. Dubliners Gay McKeon, Paddy Glackin and Mary Corcoran perform together, while the alternative capital, Cork, is ably represented by three Mná na bPíob, including Mary Mitchell-Ingoldsby, a former William Kennedy Lecturer. Early online bookings for the Festival and its Mark Donnelly Piping Academy have included a surprising number from Belgium and the Netherlands, and the Pipers Club is confident that this will be another successful year.

For further information visit wkpf.org, email : info@wkpf.org or info@armaghpipers.com, or tel. +44 (0)7712 809933.

TULSA IRISHFEST

March 8th – 10th, 2024 <https://tulsairishfest.org/>
Is Tulsa a city in Ireland?

(TULSA, Okla.) Authentic live music. Irish and Irish-fusion food. Speakers on culture and heritage. Herding dogs and highland cattle. When you walk on the grounds of Tulsa IrishFest at River West Festival Park on March 8-10, 2024, you will think you have arrived in Ireland!

Executive Director Millan Hupp said plans are well underway to making next year's event one of the best Irish Festivals in the world. "We are looking forward to bringing this very special event to Oklahoma and are excited to present our guests with everything that Irish culture has to offer," Hupp said. The three-day festival invites all ages for a wonderfully immersive cultural experience. Over 8,000 attended the first Tulsa IrishFest on March 17, 2018. By 2019 the festival had grown to over 12,000 attendees, including a special "Celtic Music for the Schools" pre-festival concert series. Tulsa IrishFest 2020 featured a global array of Celtic music and was one of the last live festivals in the world for all our bands. But they fell in love with Tulsa!

And they are returning for Tulsa IrishFest 2024, which organizers say will be bigger and better than ever. Bands from Ireland, Scotland, Nova Scotia, the USA and even France will perform. "We are committed to our family-friendly, authentic experience as we add the best music, culture, food and entertainment," said President Don Burdick.

Tulsa IrishFest will be at the River West Festival Park (2100 S. Jackson Avenue).

Learn more at <https://tulsairishfest.org/>

RETURN TO LONDON TOWN 2023

FRIDAY 27TH – MONDAY 30TH OCTOBER 2023

LONDON'S 25TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF
TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE



**The Crown Hotel, Cricklewood
Broadway and other local venues**

Featuring: Noel Hill and Brian McGrath

- The London Lasses • John Carty and Michael McGoldrick • Pádraic Keane and Saileóg Ní Cheannabháin • Harry Bradley, James Carty and Libby McCrohan
- Sorcha Costello and John Blake (album launch) • Páraic MacDonnchadha, Páraic Keane and Macdara Ó Faoláin (album launch) • Tara Viscardi and Robert Harvey
- The Trad Gathering

More line up to be announced and tickets available soon at:

www.returntolondontown.org

For more Festival information and how to purchase tickets, see:

www.returntolondontown.org

www.irishmusicinlondon.org

 **IMDLEvents**

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 **Irish Music and Dance in London**

JOHNNY DOHERTY FESTIVAL IT BEGAN WITH A CRACKED PICTURE

Seán Laffey talks to Pat McGill about the Johnny Doherty Festival in Ardara, Donegal, which will run on the 22nd and 23rd of September.

Sharon Shannon



The late Johnny Doherty, a native of Ardara is one of the most recognisable characters in the history of traditional music. Key his name into Google and you'll find dozens of images of him playing the fiddle, and for sure he will be wearing his trademark flat cap. Indeed this is how he is depicted in a Redmond Herry sculpture commissioned by the Ardara Comhaltas branch that stands in the diamond at the heart of the town.

scenes of a session from a UTV documentary of 1972 called *Fiddler on the Road** with Johnny and John "the Tae" Gallagher playing tunes in the Beehive Pub.

"Myself and my brother put in a successful bid for the Beehive, which we reopened in 2003. When we bought it the place needed complete renovating. When we began clearing the debris from the bar I found an old photograph of Johnny Doherty, the picture was fine but the glass was broken. It just seemed right that we not only get it fixed and hang it back on the wall, but also do something about creating a legacy for him. The first Johnny Doherty Festival was in 2009. I set up a Comhaltas branch and from there we've had hundreds of young players through the ranks in the last dozen years or more. Also there are some excellent musicians within a few miles radius, who are the bedrock of the local tradition."

Pat says they run the Johnny Doherty Festival on the same weekend as the Glasgow Holiday and they often have had a good contingent of Irish musicians coming over from Scotland each year. "We've had visitors from Australia, America, and Europe, the Germans are particularly taken with Donegal music."

Pat is a committee member of the Cup of Tae festival and he says he's amazed that small festivals can attract upwards of 2000 visitors annually. "Things are a little different these days as we've lost the use of the local hotel. We moved to the GAA Club House last year and the numbers held up. There are B&Bs and Air BnBs in the area to book and camper vans are welcome, and there is free parking for them in the town; we welcome everyone."

The festival is run on a shoestring, it has received no funding from the Arts Council, despite having put in bids through the proper channels. Pat says it can be frustrating at times, but he is determined that Johnny's legacy continues and that "the area's music benefits and we take pride in the hosting of such a special music festival in the town. As we don't run over a bank holiday and it would not be fair to run workshops that would eat into work and school time on the Monday."

"Pat is determined that Johnny's legacy continues and that the area's music benefits"

Pat takes up Johnny Doherty's story. "He is one of the most influential Donegal fiddlers of all time. The late Francie Mooney used to bring his daughter Mairéad to see Johnny when she was starting out, and she has gone on to be the lead fiddler with Altan for over 35 years. If you listen to many Donegal fiddlers you'll catch an echo of Johnny's music. He was born in 1900 and died in 1980. He was sought after by collectors and field recorders; there are at least a dozen albums that feature his playing. His most famous and probably most influential album would be the *Floating Bow*.

"In 2012 Ciarán Ó Maonaigh presented an award-winning music documentary *John Doherty Ar Leir Na Gaoithe*, where he went in search of stories associated with Johnny. That show incorporated

Pat flagged up the two major concerts of the weekend: "Our Friday night concert will feature Bríd Harper, Dermot Byrne and Steve Cooney playing at the iconic Beehive pub. On Saturday our headliner is Sharon Shannon, she's celebrating thirty years in the business this autumn; it looks like there will be one big party in the Ardara GAA club that night. There will be lots of great music too at venues throughout the town over the weekend, so you are all very welcome."

**Fiddler on the Road* can be watched online at www.digitalfilmarchive.net

To find out more about the Johnny Doherty Festival please see www.johnnydohertyfestival.com



O'Flaherty

IRISH MUSIC RETREAT

20th ANNUAL

October 19th - October 22nd
Hoblitzelle Camp and Conference Center
Midlothian, TX (30 Miles South of Dallas)

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

The Retreat opens with a Texas BBQ Dinner followed by a Kick-Off Concert on Thursday evening October 19th. Online enrollment begins June 10th. Classes begin October 20th.

Classes Offered for

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

ALSO: Enrichment Classes • Informances • Workshops



Tara Breen
intermediate fiddle



Colm Broderick
uilleann pipes



Matt Cranitch
advanced fiddle



Dave Curley
mandolin



Cormac De Barra
harp



Colin Farrell
whistle



Nicole Fig
bodhrán fundamentals



Brid Harper
intermediate fiddle



Tess Hartis
fiddle fundamentals



Margaret Keefe
concertina fundamentals



Jack Maher
mandolin/tenor banjo
fundamentals



Oisín McAuley
intermediate fiddle



Jacob McCauley
bodhrán



Rebecca McGowan
Sean-nós dancing



David McKindley-Ward
singing



Louise Mulcahy
flute



Alan Murray
bouzouki



Jim Murray
guitar



Pádraig Rynne
concertina



Enda Seahill
tenor banjo



Sharon Shannon
button accordion

\$325 for Adults Ages 18 & Older • \$225 for Youth Ages 12-17 by Invitation Only
On-site and Off-site Motel Rooms, Dorms, Cottages • RV Parking and Tent Camping Available
Official Retreat Hotel: Courtyard by Marriott Midlothian

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

TRADFEST 2024 LINE UP ANNOUNCED

Ireland's largest gathering of trad and folk music takes centre stage as one of the most exciting cultural events to take place in Dublin this Winter.



Carlos Nunez



Julie Fowlis



Tara Howley



Alannah Thornburg

On the back of a hugely successful festival in 2023 TradFest is going bigger and better than ever, with a rich and ambitious showcase of the very best of trad and folk music. Running from January 24th-28th, audiences can enjoy cosy pub sessions across Temple Bar, and concerts throughout Dublin City Centre and County.

TradFest continues to enthrall audiences with its day and nighttime concerts in spectacular venues, with the 2024 programme seeing the festival explore new spaces such as Malahide Castle, Swords Castle, Skerries Mills, Draíocht Theatre, The Millbank Theatre and The Lark. Concerts will also return to staple venues such as the majestic St Patrick's Cathedral, historical landmarks Collins Barracks, GPO, The National Stadium and Dublin Castle, as well as vibrant live music venues such as the Button Factory and the Grand Social.

TradFest has programmed an incredible line up of trad and folk for 2024. Audiences will get to see old festival friends returning next year as well as performers making their TradFest debut.

Below are just a few highlights to help whet your appetite!

Carlos Nunez, Julie Fowlis, Transatlantic Women with Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Women of Note with Aoife Scott, Altan, Stockton's Wing, Kíla & Yankari, Máirtín Ó Connor Trio, Maurice Lennon Trio, Freddie White, Liam Ó'Maonlaí, Cathy Jordan & Feargal Murray, Laoise Kelly, Pádraig Rynne, Tara Breen & Jim Murray, Lumiere, Nuala Kennedy with Tara Breen & Tony Byrne, The Raines, Steo Wall, Síle Denver, Zoe Conway & John McIntyre, Michelle

FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 2024

Tara Howley 1pm Collins Barracks
Anna Tavnir & Maninder Singh 1pm Swords Castle
Niwel Tsumbu 1pm Malahide Castle
Liam Ó'Maonlaí 5pm Swords Castle
Michelle Mulcahy 5pm Malahide Castle
Alannah Thornburg 7.00pm Castle Hall
Altan 7.30pm Pepper Canister Church
Stockton's Wing 8.00pm The Lark
Cinderwell 8.30pm The Grand Social
Strangeboy 8:30pm The Button Factory
Féile Kíla / Yankari 7.30pm The National Stadium

SATURDAY 27 JANUARY 2024

Oisín Morrison 1pm Collins Barracks
Niamh Farrell / Varo 1pm Pepper Canister Church
Nuala Kennedy, Tara Breen, Tony Byrne 1pm, Swords Castle
Sive 1pm Malahide Castle
Zoe Conway & John McIntyre 5pm Swords Castle
The Remedy Club 5pm The Millbank Theatre
Laoise Kelly 5pm Malahide Castle
Cuas / Pádraig Jack 4pm Pepper Canister Church
David Howley 7:00pm Castle Hall
Máirtín O'Connor Trio 7.30pm Pepper Canister Church
The Deadlians 8:30pm The Grand Social

“TradFest continues to enthrall audiences with its day and nighttime concerts in spectacular venues”

Mulcahy, Sive, Farah Elle, Niamh Bury, Niamh Farrell & Varo, Cinderwell, The Remedy Club, Strange Boy, The Deadlians, Cuas & Pádraig Jack, Bridget Mae Power, David Howley, Niamh Bury, Angelina Carberry, Tara Howley, Emma Corbett, Oisín Morrison, Alannah Thornburg, Niwel Tsumbu, Anna Tavnir & Maninder Singh, Dagogo Hart, Dublin Pride Trad Géilí.

WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2024

Emma Corbett 1pm Collins Barracks
Steo Wall Celebrating Travellers Musical Heritage 7.00pm Castle Hall
Tara Breen, Pádraig Rynne, Jim Murray 7.30pm Pepper Canister Church
Women of Note with Aoife Scott and Friends 7.30pm St. Patrick's Cathedral
WeAreGriot presents 'Sthory with Dagogo Hart 8.30pm The Button Factory

THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2024

Angelina Carberry 1pm Collins Barracks
Steo Wall Celebrating Travellers Musical Heritage 7.00pm Castle Hall
Tara Breen, Pádraig Rynne, Jim Murray 7.30pm Pepper Canister Church
Maurice Lennon Trio 7.30pm Pepper Canister Church
Dublin Pride Trad Géilí 8:30pm The Button Factory
The Raines 8.30pm The Grand Social
Julie Fowlis 7.30pm St. Patrick's Cathedral

Transatlantic Women with Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh and Friends 7:30pm The National Stadium
Carlos Nunez 7.30pm St. Patrick's Cathedral

SUNDAY 28 JANUARY 2024

Bridget Mae Power 1pm Pepper Canister Church
Síle Denver 1pm Swords Castle
Farah Elle 1pm Malahide Castle
Cathy Jordan & Feargal Murray 5pm Swords Castle
Niamh Bury 5pm Malahide Castle
Freddie White 5pm The Millbank Theatre
Lumiere 6pm Pepper Canister Church

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WARD IRISH MUSIC ARCHIVES

Mary Beth McCormack continues our series for Irish Music Magazine.



It was the serendipitous sighting of one of his grandfather's works that inspired Milwaukee Irish Fest founder, the late Ed Ward to assemble all things Irish in Milwaukee.

In 1991 Ward was visiting the Irish Traditional Music Archives in Dublin, the world's largest Irish music archive, when he spotted one of his grandfather's books.

"I was going through music books on the shelves and came across copies of my grandfather's collections," Ward said in an early interview. "Recognizing that these books, which were part of our family's heritage, had historical significance and value, made me wonder where a record of Irish America's musical heritage was being preserved." It wasn't.

Apparently it made sense to Ward that Milwaukee Irish Fest just might be a place to preserve and also protect Irish music and memorabilia. So in 1992 the John J. Ward, Jr., Irish Music Archives was established and is now housed in the CelticMKE Center.

Today WIMA's resources consist of thousands of Irish recordings, antique and vintage rarities, song books, outfits, instruments, photos, concert memorabilia, wax cylinder players and recordings and rare 45s, 78s and LPs. Currently WIMA is the second largest Irish music archive in the world with more than 60,000 Irish music recordings and related memorabilia.

disseminated. Lately we've done rather well in the collecting department. We just picked up Noel Rice's collection from Chicago. It includes more than one thousand pieces. We're always looking to collect and add to the archives."

Enhancing the WIMA physical plant is new carpeting, drywall repair and paint. "We remodelled and opened up the space a little more to give us additional room for programs and meetings." Stapleton said conferences are already scheduled for the new space.

"We've also done quite well on the preservation side, as well," Stapleton said. "It takes time and serious money to preserve a large collection. The digitization efforts directed and overseen by Jeff not only help with preservation but with dissemination."

Stapleton said that WIMA has always put a "premium" on dissemination. "WIMA is just full of lifetimes of stories to be shared. One of WIMA's main goals is to continue to bring as much content as we can to everyone around the world via our digital collections and databases, always keeping in mind copyright law. Our digital collections get a great amount of traffic.

"Our focus is mainly and will continue to be Irish America," Stapleton said. "WIMA collects, promotes, preserves and disseminates Irish and Irish American music in all their forms. WIMA makes these cultural resources available to researchers, artists, and the general public now and into the future for the purposes of teaching, scholarship and practice. And with Jeff as our lead archivist the Archives has a great future."

One of the greatest challenges WIMA faces in the future is securing funding for continued growth, and collection, preservation and dissemination.

"Like all arts institutions, we face issues," Stapleton said. "CelticMKE has been our main source of funding throughout our thirty-some years. Obviously they have always been our main financial support. Still, it is hard for us to move forward with projects without finding the funds to allow us to do that.

"Looking ahead, donations, grants, and sponsorships will need to be a bigger part of our revenue side. ESP grants from the Irish Government, for example, have helped sustain positions here at WIMA for years."

Stapleton said WIMA now has corporate status and its own Board. "They're already looking toward the future and planning a 2024 archiving conference."

For Donations to the Ward Irish Music Archives <https://wardirishmusicarchives.com/Get-Involved/Donate.htm>

"One of WIMA's main goals is to continue to bring as much content as we can to everyone around the world via our digital collections and databases"

Barry Stapleton, Director of WIMA, has overseen the collections for close to 25 years and works with Jeff Ksiazek, senior archivist.

"Just so much has changed in the past 30 years since WIMA was established," Stapleton said. "When we started there was no internet. Music was still passed around as objects in the forms of CDs, LPs and cassettes. Now the internet is where we pioneer. Now music is mostly digital, a file, or a stream. I honestly miss seeing, feeling and listening to older recordings. There's a sense of connection that I personally get listening to a cylinder playing and someone singing a song from 125 years ago."

Stapleton said that while looking toward WIMA's future, his and Ksiazek's work and focus never change. "The main job of WIMA remains the same," Stapleton said. "It's up to us to make sure archival materials are collected and then that they are preserved and



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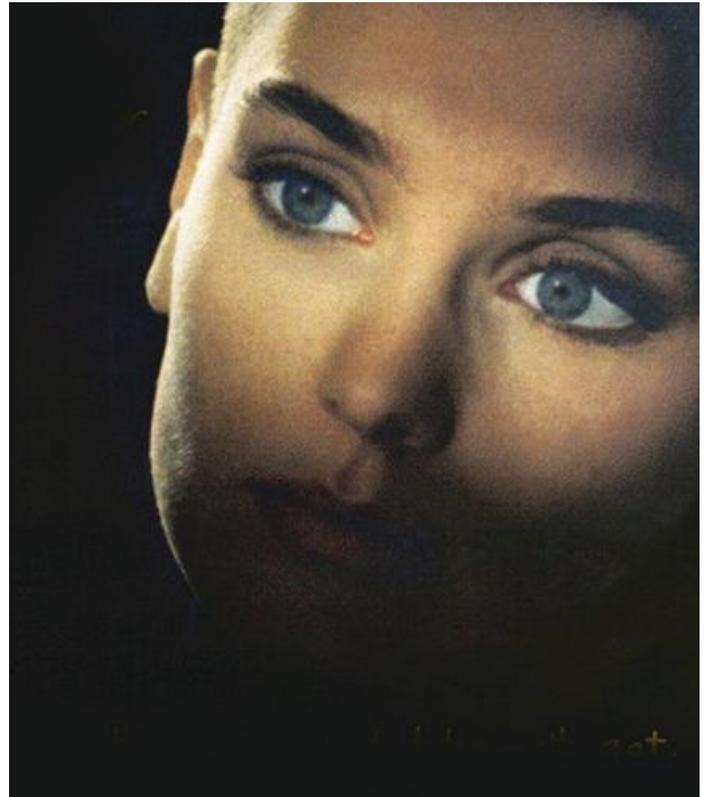
Seán Laffey remembers Sinéad O'Connor, who has sadly passed away, for Irish Music Magazine.

On August 8th 2023, the seafront of Bray was lined with thousands of people who had come to say a last goodbye to Sinéad O'Connor, one of the town's most famous residents. She was a woman who etched herself permanently into the history of Ireland and whose work and life have made profound and lasting changes to Irish society.

Sinéad was found unresponsive in her London home on July 26th; when we went to press there was no official cause of death, that verdict is for another day. The paradox of her life was that she was loved by distant millions, but lived with her demons, and it was they who it seems had the strongest hold on her.

Tributes flowed in from the national and international press; tellingly some described her as an activist and singer. Folk music has had a pantheon of activists, notably Pete Seeger in America and Christy Moore in Ireland, both vocal on issues of social justice and a fairer society. But here's the difference, their angst was assembled on abstract concepts, Sinéad's was visceral, rooted in a lived experience, more bruised, more personal, more authentic. Famously in October 1992 on America's *Saturday Night Live*, she red-flagged child abuse in the Catholic Church. At a time when the institution was above public suspicion; conservative America reacted negatively to her tearing up a photograph of Pope John Paul II on the show. Her subsequent appearance 13 days later at Madison Square Garden was met with a barrage of cheering support and derisive boos. It was a deeply disturbing moment in pop culture.

The pop music industry has a habit of turning its artists, and especially women into commodities. When Sinéad broke onto the MTV screen in 1990 with her cover of *Nothing Compares to You*, she appeared with a shaven head, the video was shot full facial.



Hummingbird Records in Ireland and Vanguard internationally. I had the privilege of interviewing Sinéad for a feature about that album. She was anything but the diva; I got the feeling that she really did hold those traditional ballads dear to her heart and the fact that she produced the album herself ensured that she had full control of her artistic process. The album wasn't really sean-nós, only two songs were in Irish: *Óró Sé do Bheatha 'Bhaile* and *Báidín Fheilimí*, both songs from the National school curriculum. Two others had Canadian connections: *Lord Franklin* about the ill-fated attempt to find the North West passage and the Nova Scotia ballad *Peggy Gordon*, which she recast as a lesbian love song.

Would Sinéad's life have taken a different trajectory if she had followed the promise of *Sean-nós Nua* with a genuine folk career?

“She really did hold traditional ballads dear to her heart”

Effectively saying “I'm a singer, not an object for your voyeurism”. As we looked into her beautiful eyes what shone back was a deep humanity. Billboard Magazine said of her: “what's interesting is just how much the themes in her music and her life predicted the way we live and think now. O'Connor's desire to be marketed as the capital-A artist she was, instead of just an attractive singer, once seemed like a fringe issue but is now a mainstream topic in the music business”.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar paid tribute to Sinéad at the opening of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar on August 6th, saying: “She was a wonderful traditional Irish music artist and her sixth album, *Sean-Nós Nua*, remains one of her best.” That album will be of most interest to readers of this magazine.

She made *Sean-Nós Nua* in 2002 with Donal Lunny, Sharon Shannon and Christy Moore and many others. It came out on

The album sold well enough, 200,000 copies by all accounts, although a mere fraction of the 7 million sales of her debut album. I'm sure the folk community would have been kinder and gentler to her and even proffered a sympathetic platform for her views.

We know that Ireland has changed in the thirty-five years since Sinéad began singing and since she became open about her own troubled truth. President Higgins commented on her untimely passing: “My first reaction on hearing the news of Sinéad's loss was to remember her extraordinarily beautiful, unique voice.”

Two or three generations from now people will still be able to hear Sinéad's voice and history will have a fuller understanding of her bigger contribution to feminism and the indelible consequences of her brave advocacy on Irish society. Her life was troubled and tragic, her music sublime. May she rest in peace.

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MEITHEAL GRAND FINALE CONCERT 2023

Anne Marie Kennedy reports for Irish Music Magazine.

Meitheal Orchestra 2023



Photo : Key

Traditional Irish music week for teenagers, Meitheal, was once again held in Ennis in July with one hundred and forty one young musicians taking part. A week of intense workshops, limited to ten participants, this summer camp is apparently no cakewalk. Not for beginners but for advanced young players, they get to engage intimately with some of the elite of traditional Irish music as their tutors.

Under chief co-ordinator Garry Shannon, Executive Director Ernestine Healy and Directors Eimear Ní Mhaolmhuaidh and Orla Healy, it continues to grow year on year with applications coming in from all over the world.

With workshops in composition, arrangement and performance, divided into groups of nine or ten, the participants prepare, arrange and rehearse sets of tunes for the showcase concert on the final night. Held in Glór to a packed house, the fifteen bands played a short set each, terrific playing, with great variation in the material, embellishment, ornamentation, all technically skilled, masters of their instruments. Many of the students were awarded scholarship for excellence, composition, singing and performing including one from this publication.

Clever band names like Dunne and Dusted for Niamh Dunne's group, who were first up with *Our Next Trip To Belfast*, a perfect introductory tune, impeccable musicianship, followed by Tara Breen's charges, Fire Brigade, great craic had with pipes assimilating the fire engine; Eimear Coughlan on

harp led her group Schandel in a delightful slow reel, followed by Jody Moran's Egyptian Heavy Meitheal, they tampered beautifully with our national anthem to great applause. Clara Mannion's group Suas had mature players, multi-instrumentalists, very admirable and Anthony Quigney's protégés, Kilbeggan Ultras, went from a march, *Lord Mayo* into the *Green Groves of Erin*, looking and sounding like they'd been together for years, flawless timing, melodic, an outstanding example of what the week at Meitheal produces.

Francis Cunningham, award-winning concertina player brought his band, Barney's Dinosaurs from slow to polka pace, inserting 'yankee doodle went to town' in the tune break! Alice, all the way from America was in *Frosting Burn*, with *Aisling Drost Byrne*, a march into a jig, lively, innovative, happy faces and a theatrical finish. Cathal King's band was

Dark and Dirty, led in his own experimental style in a French waltz-mazurka, very compelling with fiddles on fire.

Ivan Goff's Tip it Off played two hop jigs, *Coleman's* and *Top It Off*, a stellar performance, great showcase of their working week. Ronan O'Flaherty fiddler of note, a member of De Dannan brought his Fleckin' Fiddles from a march to a sean-nós song, a barndance and two reels, a céilí band ready for the road. Doireann Ní Ghlacáin's Kilbeggan Catastrophe were a tight group, highly accomplished playing and clever arrangements.

Claire Fennell, member of the reigning Senior All Ireland Céilí band Taobh na Mara, had her Claire and the Clan play a slip jig and a lightning-fast reel with great camaraderie. James Harvey, founding member of the highly renowned band Goitse, joined his Assembly Point B in a mazurka and a reel, top notch playing, four fiddles, two flutes, two banjos, two concertinas and an accordion, wonderfully achieved. The last ensemble was Alan's Army led by Alan Finn, leader of the Shandrum Céilí Band and they went all out innovative; Flintstones theme tune, into rip roaring reels, segues into classical and back to trad, great energy in the playing, superbly versatile musicians, a rousing finish to the showcase.

Ceolfhoireann an orchestral piece, newly composed by Executive Director and Composer Ernestine Healy, was breathtakingly beautiful, an aural and visual delight with all the students in sunshine yellow tee shirts, instruments grouped, Ms. Healy the conductor. Great sweeps of strings,

"Ceolfhoireann an orchestral piece, was breathtakingly beautiful..."

buttons, bows and percussion, she led this highly talented group in an outstanding finale to an already enchanting evening of music.

Meitheal as a concept has all the ingredients for success, whether in business, culture or community; the entrance criteria held to a rigorously high standard, assessing abilities and experience for compatibility in groups, employing inspiring mentors, maintaining solid timetables, delivering exactly what it says on the Meitheal tin.

A perfect auditorium in Glór, great sound and lighting with Matt Purcell and his team, the participants all getting a taste of professional performance to a wildly enthusiastic and supportive audience, ensuring all present how alive and constantly developing the tradition is and in the safe hands of a growing number of young players. Youngsters who are all stone mad for the trad!

Doireann Ní Ghlacáin



Photo : Key

Ernestine Healy conducts



Photo : Key

DUNGARVAN TUNEFEST

Seán Laffey reports for Irish Music Magazine.



Mid summer and Europe was baking, Dungarvan was experiencing a Goldilocks day, the temperature ideal for the best of street entertainment. The mercury would rise at the day's close in one hot gig; I'll get to that later.

Emerging from Dunnes Stores underground parking into the daylight I saw two young lads busking away on box and fiddle, the accordion case bereft of coins. Busking is a hard station these days, plastic tap and go has replaced the jangle of change in punters' pockets. As I walked to Grattan Square I negotiated a set dance disco, folks having a blast to a selection of rocked up sea shanties. The people of Dungarvan were obviously intent on having a good time.

My destination was the Town Hall Theatre for the launch of *Honey Talk Between Strangers*, a book written by Joe Power and put together by Benny McCarthy (of Danú), it had already sold out before the theatre doors opened. Priced at €50, and at over 300 pages with an attached CD, with a print run of only 100 copies,

“It was goose bumps time as Joe Power out Branaghd Branagh”

the price-tag was a steal for such a limited edition. Joe Power is a force of nature in Dungarvan music circles: singer, harmonica player, writer, poet, actor, folk club organiser, consistently old school in his approach to music, local lore and life.

Well-wishers packed the theatre, I recognised friends and aficionados from three counties. The concert began with Jimmy Crowley singing a song he had composed in praise of Joe and his habit of resorting to a park bench at midnight to read by the street lamp. Then Jimmy, joined by Eve Telford, the duo sang a version of *Willie of Winsbury* collected from the traveller Mary McGrath of Wexford.

Joe was up next, with *The Lays of Amergin*, the oldest poem in Ireland. After which he introduced us to an afternoon of music from his local heroes, beginning with a performance by Bobby Gardner and Donal Clancy, a box and harmonica duet with Benny McCarthy and Des Dillon and more. The killer moment was a Shakespeare soliloquy from Joe Power, the famous opening from *Richard the Third*. He breathed life into the bitter envy of the

deformed prince for his golden-haired brother; it was goose bumps time as Joe Power out Branaghd Branagh. Emotionally worn out, he slumped down in a chair while we were treated to a heartfelt rendition of Stephen Foster's *Hard Times* from the ensemble, before a final set of reels sent us all out into the afternoon sunshine in search of more music.

I headed to The Local, passing Downey's Pub on my way. Peering into the dark I caught a lovely session with Dervish and Nuala Kennedy, relaxed, informal and music of the highest quality. Pressing on to the Grattan Square where a series of booths fronted the pubs and cafes, the scene reminiscent of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, sunny times, happy people enjoying life to the background of great music from Tullua, Booley House and Taobh na Mara on the gig rig. What a glorious way to spend a late afternoon.

The evening show was at Lawlor's Hotel just off Grattan Square. The room was set for dancing, chairs and tables concentrated by the bar, which must have made the excellent set from the local duo the Dunford Bothers somewhat strange for them. Their audience were a good many metres away from the stage. Their performance was one of polished originals and very good acoustic covers, especially The Cranberries' *Zombie*, which went down well with the few folk who ventured onto the dance floor.

The main band of the evening and the reason for the bare dance floor was Ímar. Fronted by concertina wizard Mohsen Amini, their full-on show had the young audience dancing from the first few bars to the last encore. The crowd were almost on the stage and a good deal of moshing occurred. One seasoned Dee-Jay standing next to me remarked, “Who needs Glastonbury when you have an audience reaction like this?” Ímar's was a red-hot gig on anybody's thermometer.

As I drove home, I reflected that the Dungarvan TuneFest had got it right, again. All ages are catered for, the music is top drawer. The town unquestionably values their own. I can't wait for the next TuneFest; I'm off now to mark the 2024 calendar - 21st to 23rd June 2024..



Photo : Seán Laffey

ALLY THE PIPER**The Pipes Are Calling****Own label, 8 Tracks, 22 Minutes** <https://piperally.com/>

Highland bagpiper, multi-instrumentalist, and singer-songwriter Ally Crowley-Duncan (Ally the Piper) joins forces with her husband Denver Wayne (acoustic guitar), Sam Dame (vocals on *Danny Boy* and *Northern Downpour*), and Mia Asano (electric violin on *Game of Thrones*) to create an unforgettable, eight-track album.

To all *The Witcher* (Netflix) fans, rejoice as Ally begins with her version (chilling acapella vocal duet opening, leading into a light backup of guitar and pipes) of *Toss the Coin to Your Witcher*. Who would have thought that a saxophone would blend well with highland bagpipes? Ally nails that combo in *Magdalena*, her arrangement to an old Scottish tune, *Sleepy Maggie*, followed by a moving rendition of *Danny Boy*. *Landcaster's Hornpipe* is a hoppy original with a light head-bobbing drum backdrop.

Ally also includes another original (as well as a winning competition tune)—a delightful mix of pipes and bodhran: *Faye's Jigs*. *Auld Lang Syne* maximizes on Ally's lilting near-Dolores O'Riordan voice to create a stirring reflection on this familiar song before heading into her arrangement (drums, pipes, and keyboards) of the majestic *Game of Thrones* theme tune before closing with vocals, guitar, and pipes to Ally's rendition of *Panic!* At the Disco's thought-provoking *Northern Downpour*.

Ally the Piper's presentation of traditional tunes, modern covers, and original compositions in *The Pipes Are Calling* provides a small window into a powerfully new musical spark, which is bound to spread far and wide quickly.

Anita Lock**CONOR ARKINS & PAUL CLESHAM****The Morning Thrush****Own Label, 12 Tracks, 48 Minutes**www.arkinsandclesham.bandcamp.com

There is something about Clare music that sets it apart from other regional styles. On the face of it, this album from Conor Arkins (fiddle) and Paul Clesham (concertina) contains some well-known session tunes: *Joe Bane's Barn Dance*, *The Port Hole of the Kelp*, *The Shaskeen*, you get the drift. Well-known but never ordinary. Here's the thing, music from the Banner county has a tempo all of its own, laconic, un-hurried, the duo tipping a wink to the minimalism of Martin Hayes. Their feet are off the gas pedal but the tunes still purr along. Open the window and breathe in that Wild Atlantic air, no worries your coif won't be ruffled. This is music at ease with itself, driven slow enough to avoid the potholes and fast enough to get us there before bedtime.

The pair met whilst studying at UCC and are joined here by Ryan Molloy on piano and Jim Murray on guitar. Let's delve into a few tracks. The concertina opens the album with *The Shaskeen*, a walking pace, never ponderous, never breathless, it moves up a key to *Paddy Faheys*, still that steady rhythm holding it all together. It closes with *Ashmolean House*, the tone down a notch. There are Clare style Kerry polkas: *The Newborn Lamb/Dick Tobin's /The Cool Duff*, concertina and fiddle together taking us on a jaunt south, the accompaniment softly harmonic, avoiding unnecessary percussive pushing. Then a lovely switch into a modal mid-section, oh that's tasty!

More polkas on track 8, a swinging opening to *Callaghan's* with long notes on the concertina, then a short held pause between phrases to propel the tune forward; it's artistry of the highest calibre. A set of barn dances: *Lord Leitrim/Joe Banes* shift effortlessly into a reel (and the album's title) *The Morning Thrush*. The last track is a tune that is enjoying something of a renaissance of late: *The Fisherman's Island*, ensemble playing of the highest order and a final chord from the piano.

This is one of the best albums to come my way in a long time. If you like to play along to traditional albums, this should be on your wish list. Teachers out there, order this for every one of your pupils. You cannot see the beauty of a butterfly's wing if it flies too fast. Like this album, the magic happens when we let things settle naturally.

Seán Laffey**BUÍOCH****Buíoch****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 51 Minutes** www.buiochtrad.com

Their website says it in Ronseal style "Irish Traditional Music Band Composing All Original Melodies". Buíoch are based in Portlaoise according to their Facebook page; this debut album was released on August 9, just four days before they were scheduled to gig at the All Ireland Fleadh in Mullingar. Guitar, box, pipes and double bass are in the hands of the four lads on the album's cover, however, now we are in the era of the download, you'd have to do a bit of web hunting to actually find out who these lads are. I've done the leg-work for you; Ruaidhrí Tierney (accordion), Dale McKay (guitar & percussion), Kurt Dinneen Carroll (whistle & pipes), and Dave Harte (double bass).

Buíoch's sound is assured, they are tight, their trademark coming from Dave Harte's double bass, a rare enough instrument in Irish trad, with Clannad and Lúnasa being its most famous exponents. Harte is adept at playing back up and joining in on the faster dance tunes too - if this starts a trend then all the better.

The *Cones* is counted in with "1,2,3,4", the accordion takes up the melody, guitar and bass running alongside. *Bergin's* has menace and intent on the opening salvo from the guitar and bass. Again they leave it a while before the whistle joins the party; the ending is a series of quiet chords from the guitar and bass. *PB18* is over 6 minutes long, a low whistle and guitar combine on a simply delicious melody. They hit the accelerator 2 minutes in and it's into the fast lane to the track's end as the bodhrán adds the bass underblanket to keep the music nicely warm. The last note rings out with an echo.

Trip To Lucca has a bossa-nova intro, the accordion goes in continental mode, with the track bubbling like a cork being popped from a bottle of champagne. Our first chance to fully hear the pipes is on track 8, *Late Night in Stiges*, heady, bouncy, charged with pizzazz and a one note ending on the bass, pure class.

A punning title on *Harte of the Band*, the box is to the fore here; the first half is a gentle melody with whistle and accordion, the second sees the same two instruments bring home the tune in fine rollicking style. They leave the best to last, with *College Drop Out*. The piping here is first rate and the backing adds to the drama, and being Buíoch, as I've discovered, you can't keep a good accordion down, and the close out is a flourish from Tierney.

The English translation of their name is grateful, and thanks to the lads in Buíoch both they and Irish trad in general have a great future ahead of them.

Seán Laffey**GWENAN GIBBARD****Hen Ganeuon Newydd****Sain SCD2850, 12 Tracks, 46 Minutes** www.sainwales.com

The English translation of the album title is *Old Songs New*. This will be seen as an important recording of Welsh language songs in the 21st Century. Important because these songs come from a small region of North Wales, the Llŷn Peninsula. In the 19th century the area was culturally rich in song and poetry making, and singing was a key social pleasure within its community.

Gwenan is not only a fine singer and harp player but also an academic, and her research of archive manuscripts of Dr Meredydd Evans and Phylis Kinney is opening up native Welsh song to the world.

The Welsh Diaspora isn't as extensive as the Irish, and is often hidden within other cultures; one such outpost is in Patagonia, and it is from there that Gwenan has *Y Gwch Fach Lwydai* (The Little Grey Cuckoo) collected by R. H. Evans. Many of Gwenan's songs were collected over 100 years ago; there are more background details at www.siocpwlwm.co.uk

Musically there is much here to enjoy, even if you haven't an inkling of the meaning of the words. Gwenan has a clear, musical and melodic voice and her harp accompaniment is designed to let her voice shine above the strings. It's not just harp and vocals as she is joined by Patrick Rimes (fiddle and viola), Aled Wyn Hughes (bass) and Gwilym Bowen Rhys (guitar, bouzouki and mandolin).

Farfwel i Bencaenewydd, a story about a sailor leaving home has the minimal of extra accompaniment, whereas *Y Drydedd Waith Yw'r Goel's* catchy chorus and lively tempo, benefits from a full ensemble sound. Things become musically more introspective on *Dacw Long*, the mandolin tremolo is a sensitive interlude. *Trafnidiaeth yn Llŷn* seems to be a humorous song about how folks travelled around the Peninsula. On the final track

Gwenan sings to the accompaniment of a piano, the song is *Anne Bach Ray's Mynd I Fwrdd*, an achingly sad sound, topping off an emotionally rich album.

In a country where the Dragon has two tongues, all that *Hen Ganeuon Newydd* needs now is a dedicated lyrics and translation web page. These songs are too good to gather dust for another 100 years.

Seán Laffey

MAURA SHAWN SCANLIN

Own Label MSS01CD, 9 Tracks, 37 Minutes

www.maurashawscanlin.com

Celtic-Country crossover - there's a lot of it about, and this is a particularly fine example. Fiddler Maura Shawn Scanlin plays in the Irish style, adds banjo in a new-oldtimey style, and sings like steak sizzling on the grill. Her raw, smoky, tender vocals suit the two songs here, both Scanlin originals, supported by Kat Wallace as well as two guitars and a string quartet which blends surprisingly well with the 5-string banjo for contemporary Americana. Contemporary is where it's at on the opening instrumental track too, straight out of the New England fiddle playbook. A trio of pipe jigs takes us clearly into Scots territory, reinforced by Elias Alexander on border pipes: *The Seagull*, *Jerry's Pipe Jig* and *The Boys of Ballymote* range from Scotland to Cape Breton to Ulster. Maura's tune *Leaving Harvey Street* lingers in Scottish mood, hovering between a lyrical strathspey and a slow jig, until her reel *The Anglerfish* stamps an unmistakable Irish shamrock on proceedings. Jigs by Paddy O'Brien and John Dwyer continue the Hibernian thread at a more relaxed pace with lovely smooth fiddle.

This Boston Celtic run ends with the first of Maura's two songs, dreamy and devil-may-care. Her quirky *Nuala's Tune* has an even more backwoods feel, echoes of *Farewell to Trion* perhaps, subtly arranged for several string lines. There's nothing subtle about *The Squall* and *Wildflower*, two thumping Celtic reels combining fiddle with accordion and those brash border pipes. After another front-porch vocal number, the album closes on a couple of great Irish reels: a saunter through *Black Pat's* by Donegal icon Tommy Peoples, and a neatly swung version of the Morrison classic *Maud Millar*.

This debut solo outing is an unassuming treasure. Maura's Rakish bandmate Conor Hearn spells Eamon Sefton and Steven Manwaring on guitars, with occasional input from Owen Marshall on bouzouki, Neil Pearlman on keyboards and Sarah Collins on additional fiddle. In the words of one of the songs here, "We've got our friends, We've got our music, And the promise of the sunrise" - life doesn't get much better.

Alex Monaghan

LILY HONIGBERG

The Sun's Valley

Own Label, 9 Tracks, 23 Minutes www.lilyhonigberg.com

Lily Honigberg is an award-winning fiddler and violinist based in Los Angeles. *The Sun's Valley* is an album of her original fiddle music. Lily has gathered together quite the crew to bring it to life: James Yoshizawa on bones and bodhrán, James Heazlewood-Dale on upright bass, Calvin Anderson on guitar, Hannah Crowley on vocals, and this being California, she enlisted Eric Rigler as the go-to uilleann piper (he also doubles up on whistles). Eric has played on the soundtracks to *Titanic*, *Braveheart*, *Outlander*, and *Rings of Power* to name a few.

The album's tone is set with *Shelley's Jig*, a tune with depth and movement, rocking bass line and a long note to finish *Sunrise Summit II*, a slow start, the bass playing single notes at the end of each bar. Lily favours the lower end of the instrument, then a section where things get deliciously deconstructed, a counter melody is plucked on the bass and Lily takes up a jerky continuo, like the sun bursting through the fog of a west coast morning.

More sky pyrotechnics on *The Lightning*, again a modal tune, the first half establishing the melodic shape, then Lily picks up the tempo, chords from the piano, interjected little trills of keyboard notes. We are living in a territory between the Butterfly and Hardiman the Fiddler.

Eric Rigler's whistle is the main ingredient on the atmospheric slow air *Raft*, before the fiery fiddling brings the piece to a rolling boil, with a last minute enlivened by the bones. Eric Rigler's pipes are to the fore on *Tuesday Adams*, this is one for the traditional purists among you.

Hannah Crowley sings *Lost on Land* on track 8, fiddle and whistles weaving between verses, a cinematic story of escape and pursuit, the singing a dramatic narrative, the track ending with an extended instrumental. The last number *Sometimes You Need* is a smouldering slow

air with pizzicato fiddle, some electronic wizardry and a solo banjo, the nearest we get here to a tone poem, from the other dimension of Lily's considerable talent.

Seán Laffey

JOSHUA BURNELL

Glass Knight

Own Label, 10 Tracks, 46 Minutes www.joshuaburnell.co.uk

Winner of the Rising Star accolade in the 2020 Folk Awards, Burnell belongs to a generation who have grown up in a world of videos games; for them the past and the future are vividly accessible, an inner imaginative world where it is possible to experience dark-age combat one moment and the building of a mega city in a far off galaxy the next. His music takes on those chameleon dimensions with alt-folk, glam rock, classical influences; to his generation all of those genres are musics of the past, all of which he skilfully brings to his present.

In *Where Planets Collide*, his voice is light and youthful, the backing driven by a full drum kit, he ends the song with "I can't help but feel nothing is real anymore".

He is reflective, quiet and confessional on *Out of These Worlds*, he moves into a pop call to action on the dystopian *Last Rain* with reverb notched up on the electric guitar, handclaps and a doo-wop refrain. The title track is a mini-Rock opera, all achieved in less than five minutes.

For me the most infectious melody occurs in *Looking Glass*; the song is a retelling of the Snow White myth, this time from the mirror's perspective. If you are a fan of exuberant electric guitar riffs, I suspect you'll have track 9 *Why The Raven Cries* and Nathan Greaves playing on loop. The last track *Moonlighter's Child* fulfils the trajectory of the album; like all fantasy tales, there's a circular journey, all beginnings are endings, all endings are beginnings. It's a formula as old as the *Odyssey*, our hero asks "If there's a god in the sky looking down on high/can he tell me please am I living it wrong or right tonight?" Questioning drumbeats leave an empty space in which to wonder what answer we'll offer up.

A work of intense imagination, this is 21st Century Folk Rock. Irish listeners will no doubt murmur the name of Chris De Burgh when trying to dock onto a cosmic connection. The album was launched at Cropredy in Oxfordshire in August, no doubt the thousands of faithful received it warmly.

Seán Laffey

BELLA GAFFNEY

Reflections

Own Label, 10 Tracks, 37 Minutes www.bellagaffneymusic.com

Bella was a winner of the 2016 Celtic Connections Danny Kyle Award and she performs with the acclaimed folk band The Magpies. The York based singer songwriter is bringing a new kind of folk song to the clubs and festivals on the UK scene, whilst retaining a repertoire of old ballads such as the *American Fair and Tender Ladies*, a single pulled from this album which is released September 2023.

The first track is *Black Water*, five-string banjo, steel strung guitar and constant bass, a fiddle comes in with a short passage as Bella takes on a rural riparian ramble, a stream connecting people and places, past and present. *Black Water* is a way back from a place from where we have come.

Holy Island is a portrait of the wild coast of Northumberland where St Aidan founded his Celtic Church and influenced generations of Northern monarchs. Listen here for the low whistle. She contrasts the natural innocence of the seascape with our ingenuous spirit in the recurring line, "Oh what a tangled web we weave first we practice to deceive".

On the track *Blue*, Bella plays guitar punctuated by harmonic taps, adding to hand slaps on the instrument's body, her voice here vulnerable, words tumble out as if talking to a lover whose time with you is running out. A theme of finding solace in music and the inner life of a travelling folk musician is distilled in *Going Through The Motions*. There's a burst of optimism mid way through as the band picks up the slack and she realises that she's just fine with her folk singer's life.

The final track is a live recording of *Gallows Pole*, dark Americana, emotionally charged and angry as it reaches its final quarter. Chilling proof, if proof were needed, that Bella can bring this music alive on stage. As she sings on *Black Water*, "the Music that we share is a bond that we keep". *Reflections* is a way of connecting with her muse.

Seán Laffey



GEORGE SANSOME & MATT QUINN**Sheffield Park****Own Label, 11 Tracks, 47 Minutes****www.sansomequinn.bandcamp.com/album/sheffield-park**

This is the debut album from George Sansome and Matt Quinn, a delightful package of folk songs and ballads, superb vocals, fittingly sparse accompaniment on guitar and mandolin, savvy harmonies, a perfect blend of two unique voices.

My Son in America, a well-rendered story of the boy who left County Mayo but "sent nothing home", a lot of drama in *The Death of Andrew*, compelling twist in the tale of a bold deceiver, innocent maiden and the wrath of her brothers. The cruel father, already robbed of his gold, when the destitute daughter shows up, he instructs "no one to rise and let her in". Her brothers vow vengeance, pursuing the traitor into Wales, leaving him maimed and naked to the mercy of the wolves, one can only imagine a live audience being enthralled by the song's unfolding, delivered theatrically by Sansome and Quinn.

Their version of *The Night Visiting Song* and *Sheffield Park* of the title are both melodic: guitar, mandolin, voices and arrangements all enhance the material chosen.

Produced and mixed by Tom Wright, mastered by Nick Cooke with artwork by Maria Alzamora, *Sheffield Park* as a debut album is a fine expression of their individual talent, warmth and intimacy in their collaborations, tasty accompaniment throughout.

Brilliance in the unaccompanied songs; *I Live Not Where I Love* is a standout, spine-chilling harmonies, tight, intimate, great range and depth in the vocals, nuance, quirkiness in the timing, a vibrant expression of both their talents, it has melodic warmth, a listener's delight.

Indeed the entire body of their work as a debut could be marketed by isolating the line, "singing sweetly and completely, songs of pleasure and of love", what Sansome and Quinn do effortlessly. Their debut CD is a sparkling showcase of their individual and combined talents.

Anne Marie Kennedy**TAMSIN ELLIOTT & TAREK ELAZHARY****So Far We have Come****Penny Fiddle Records, 13 Tracks, 46 Minutes www.tamsinelliott.co.uk**

So Far We have Come is a debut album from seasoned players and composers, Tamsin Elliott and Tarek Elazhary, blending strong Arabic musical traditions with western genres. Tarek, a member of the band Dokkan are the leading edge in Cairo's contemporary music scene. With Bristol based Elliott and guests they have created an outstanding showcase, a robust fusion of world music.

Their collaborative composition *El Hara* is a compelling piece, on oud (historically recorded as the first stringed instrument), accordion, viola and percussion, musically imaginative with dramatic variation in tempo. With guests Rowan Elliott, Sam Sweeney, Archie Churchill-Moss, Daniel Gouly, Ricardo do Noronha and Leila El Balouty, recorded on the Penny Fiddle label.

In The Grey Of The Morning is a cinematic piece, notes and chords capturing morning mood, a blend of dawn chorus with exotic instruments tuned to avian vocal chords, nature sounds are brought indoors, harmonising and opposing, then a gentle shift in mood as the instruments are brought out of doors where birds and music makers merge as one, so beautifully achieved. Also related is their homage to Emily Dickinson's bird poem *Hope Is A Thing With Feathers*, given new musical life in a haunting tune, where like the great poet's observation of the little bird who "sings the tune without the words and never stops at all", the tune here could well be a similarly enrapturing song.

Elliott, Elazhary and their guest musicians are not so much pushing boundaries, they are making and breaking new ones, widening musical horizons with a fusion of sound and cultures embroidered together, music for the discerning ear, making iconic sounds, fiddling, fretting and plucking tunes and airs. *So Far We Have Come* is truly pioneering. Launching in September with an extensive UK tour, see all venues and dates on Tamsin's website.

Anne Marie Kennedy**MICHELLE MULCAHY****Lady on the Island****Own Label, 13 Tracks, 47 Minutes**

Whenever I come across acclaimed musician Dr Michelle Mulcahy, it's the astonishing beauty of her music that first comes to mind. I don't often dwell on the PhD level of scholarship intrinsic to her name. But with this solo harp-album, I'm reminded of the multi-layered elements at play in Michelle's artistic depth, complexity, giftedness, scholarship & vision. But better yet - she carries all that with grace, joy & a lightness of touch - evident from the very first notes - Michelle's harp-music *Scatters the Mud* in great style with poise, power, and a deliciously creative pause, before taking us on a dance-inducing delve across a gorgeous set of tunes including her composition *The Sweet Note* in tribute to her father. A beginning that magically holds *both* the subtle powerfulness of her musical assurance & a fragility of sound as real, featherlight & beautiful as birdsong.

Her notes fill the heart like liquid gold. In *Tabhair Dom Do Lámh*, Michelle's ingenious & intuitive arrangement casts fresh light - harp-playing that imbues *so much* new beauty into this much-loved air from 1603. In great liner-notes, Michelle links Eochail with gratitude for her connection to, and love of, the singing of *An Rinn's Níoclás Toibín*. Her stunning interpretation of *The Drunken Sailor* is intoxicating in the best sense of that, a tribute to the hauntingly evocative fiddle-music of the late Tommy Potts. No surprise from a young woman whose MA explored *Emotional Meaning in Irish Music* & a pioneering PhD exploring Burmese & Irish Harp traditions. Connections, complexity and courage - Michelle's commitment to tradition & mastery of many instruments paradoxically liberates this great artist to truly inhabit & re-imagine the tunes, a lingering explorative musical mindfulness that's also lit with bright radical energy, elevating this album & gifting us with gorgeous music, longstanding engagement, true integrity.

Nowhere more evident than in Michelle's utterly compelling composition *Caoineadh Mick Moloney* in the wake of the profound loss of her great friend and mentor. I came across these lines to Michelle from brilliant musician Maurice Lennon: "*I can feel your love for Mick in every single note Michelle, he would be so proud. Truly beautiful.*" And the same Mick would so approve of how Michelle carries us then to a joyful blast of reels. An important & impeccably lyrical CD.

Deirdre Cronin**DAVE FLYNN****A Curious Compendium of Crooked Irish Tunes****Frisbee Records, 12 Tracks, 56 Minutes www.daveflynn.com**

I first crossed paths with Dave Flynn twenty-odd years ago at a strings workshop during the Frankie Kennedy Winter School. A PhD, many accolades and the Memory Orchestra later, Dave has brought out a fascinating album of guitar music, and it is guitar music like no other. Forget comparisons to Tony McManus, Jens Kommnick or Shane Hennessy, this album takes its own serpentine finger-picked backroad into traditional music. A visit to Dave's website will give you a clue how he pulled this project off, including what he bashed a kettle with to get a particular sound.

For the more traditional minded listener, I'll point you in the direction of *Begley's Belt* and *Magical Slides*, they are Sliabh Luachra but not as you know it. The latter takes on an Andalusian flavour in places, chorizo with the white pudding. There's an atmospheric opening to *The R. Tucker Thompson*, a southern wind gently blowing in the background. More noises off, this time a cold blast ushers in *McCarthy's Antarctic Slip-Slide Slip*, a sort of nua- Carolan composition, it comes in with a roar and ends on the distant wings of bird song. More avian noises in *The Frosty Vales of Milton*, the lower end of the nylon strung guitar a rich foil for the high parts of this happy lithe tune, with its ending like the nervous chattering of giggly children. If you are looking for a deeper contrast then *The Lemon Jig* will take you away from the jig steps you are familiar with, crooked indeed.

Track 11, the *Errigal Suite* would take all of the CD review pages to analyse; at 16 minutes long it's the same length as many a modern EP, suffice to say, it combines the guitar with radio-phonetic sound effects, creating an altogether different sonic dimension. I wonder if its seed was sown during one of those new year string sessions in Gweedore?

Seán Laffey



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MY LAGAN LOVE

Seán Laffey brings us the history of a song that Belfast calls its own.

My *Lagan Love* was track 11 on Sinéad O'Connor's *Sean-Nós Nua*, which was released on 8 October 2002, by Vanguard Records. The song was given a more modern Celtic sound thanks to the production work of Dónal Lunny. *My Lagan Love* was first recorded by John McCormack in 1910, it soon became a perennial favourite. It has been recorded in 2021 by Hozier, Van Morrison (1988), Mary Coughlan (2018), Niamh Parsons (2002) and many more.

The air of the song is very old, it was known in the first half of the 19th century. The English words were written for it by Joseph Campbell (Seosamh MacCathmhaoil) from Belfast whose grandparents came from the Irish speaking Flurrybridge, South

“*My Lagan Love* was track 11 on Sinéad O'Connor's *Sean-Nós Nua*”

Armagh. Campbell worked with the composer and collector Herbert Hughes, who collected the melody in Donegal in August 1903 from Proinseas mac Suibhne. It had been known in Proinseas' grandfather's time as *The Belfast Maid*.

The Lagan River flows through the centre of the city, and the song first appeared in Hughes' *Songs of Uladh* (1904 MH Gill, Dublin). The symbolism in the song evokes the Celtic twilight literary

movement of the early 20th century. The Lena Shee is a fairy lover, who captures the hearts of men and drains them of their energy until they wither and die. The cricket in contrast was a sign of good luck in ancient Ireland. The insect was kept near to the hearth, if the house was warm and the fire always lighting the cricket would chirp all day.

MY LAGAN LOVE

Roud 1418

Words by Joseph Campbell (Seosamh MacCathmhaoil)
The Key of F was the preferred choice of Van Morrison.

(Gm) Where Lagan (C) stream sings a lulla (Bb) bye,
There (C) blows a (F) lily (C) fair,
(Gm) The twilight (C) gleam is in her (Bb) eye,
The (C) night is (F) on her (C) hair,
(C) And like a (F) love (Em) sick (Eb) lena (F) shee,
(Gm) he (F) hath (Dm) my (Am) heart (G7) in (C) thrall;
(Eb) Nor life I (C) owe, nor liber (Bb) ty,
For (C) love is (F) lord (Fm) of (C) all

Where Lagan stream sings lullaby
There blows a lily fair
The twilight gleam is in her eye
The night is on her hair
And like a love-sick lennan-shee
She has my heart in thrall
Nor life I owe nor liberty
For love is lord of all.

Her father sails a running-berge
'Twiixt Leamh-beag and The Druim;
And on the lonely river-marge
She clears his hearth for him.
When she was only fairy-high
Her gentle mother died;
But dew-Love keeps her memory
Green on the Lagan side.

And often when the beetle's horn
Hath lulled the eve to sleep
I steal unto her shieling lorn
And thru the dooring peep.
There on the cricket's singing stone,
She spares the bogwood fire,
And hums in sad sweet undertone
The songs of heart's desire

Her welcome, like her love for me,
Is from her heart within:
Her warm kiss is felicity
That knows no taint of sin.
And, when I stir my foot to go,
'Tis leaving Love and light
To feel the wind of longing blow
From out the dark of night.

Where Lagan stream sings lullaby
There blows a lily fair
The twilight gleam is in her eye
The night is on her hair
And like a love-sick lennan-shee
She has my heart in thrall
Nor life I owe nor liberty
For love is lord of all.



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