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seo linn
NEW ALBUM : ANUAS



SÉAMUS BEGLEY
(1949-2023)



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MUSIC

www.irishmusicmagazine.com

Issue No. 325 March 2023

FOREWORD

THE CONFIDENCE OF AGENCY

There is a wonderful confidence that comes from being supported by peers. This positive backing underpins a number of our interviews this month: Daoirí Farrell tells us about the infectious passion for traditional songs Niamh Parsons brought to classes at the Ceoltóir course at the Ballyfermot College of Further Education. John McCusker recalls Robin Morton recognising the teenage fiddler's talent. Karan Casey is buoyed by the support she has received from like-minded women in the Fair Plé movement.

Rising fusion band Seo Linn features on our front cover this month. The close-knit group of friends has a unique quality of presenting material both in English and Irish.

Karen Ryan of the London Lasses is providing a platform for female traditional musicians and is championing women composers who have given so much to the tradition. It hasn't always been so positive for women, Joseph Chester's latest suite of music sheds a clear light on Lucia Joyce, the famous author's troubled daughter, a young woman who wasn't allowed her personal agency, and whose artistic life was tragically cut short when she was permanently confined to a mental asylum.

One would hope the situation for those with fragile mental states is much better now, and we can thank creatives such as Karan Casey and Joseph Chester for highlighting issues, which are to be deplored and eradicated. Music can't cure our society by itself, but it can keep us on our toes and keep issues of social concern at the top of the agenda.

Here at IMM, as we have done for the past 28 years, we are on the side of the angels.

Slán
Seán L



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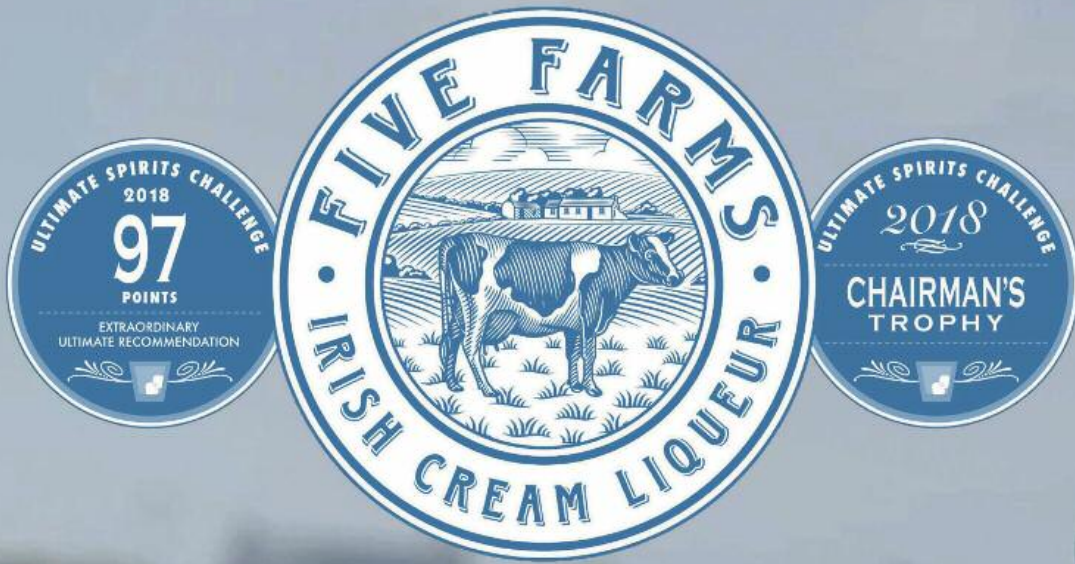
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Seamus Begley courtesy of Seán Laffey

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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

VINCEY KEEHAN : GREAT HIGHWAY

<http://www.vkmusic.net/>

Vincey Keehan was sidelined by the Covid lockdown but it gave him time to write some new songs and pull some old ones from the bottom drawer. Before he knew it, he had a fine album on his hands, *Great Highway*. Galwayman Keehan is a vital, long-time node in the San Francisco Bay Area music community. He gathered the village luminaries to produce this lively, lyrical collection of songs, a piece of high-level, homemade art honed over years of playing with like-minded working musicians. The album serves as a portrait of Keehan's whole life starting with his dancehall days in the West.

The Classic is a honky-tonk opener inspired by nights at the Classic Ballroom in Gort, Co Galway, Keehan's home territory. It's a sketch of his journey from the showbands to traditional music and later emigration to the U.S. The following songs travel through themes of love, loss, family, and the humbling realities of life. The album is a celebration of the beauty of life and serves as a reminder that no matter how hard you fall you can always get back up.

Keehan has been singing trad and folk songs for many years. There are songwriting lessons to be learned from all the old songs and Keehan has absorbed them well. He continues his journey down the Great Highway, making all the stops along the way.

***Great Highway* is streaming everywhere now.**

For more information on Keehan's music and performances visit <http://www.vkmusic.net/>

LOCAL DETROIT-AREA INTERNET RADIO STATION DRAWS INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE

***Irish Music Café* mixes stories and songs to bring its audience closer to their heritage.**

www.irishmusiccafe.com

The tagline of the Irish Music Café (IMC), "Your Heritage, Your Music" seems self-explanatory on its surface, but scratch that surface and you'll find a radio program that does much more than just spin Irish tunes. Now in its seventh year, host Patrick Johnson, and co-hosts Dave and Erin Keem dive deep into Irish culture weekly during their broadcast, which happens on Mondays from 9 – 11 pm in Ireland and 4 – 6 pm ET in the United States. The IMC has built an international audience, with listeners tuning in from all over the U.S., Ireland, and other European countries.

"We want to engage the entire Irish community by mixing traditional music with that of young, up-and-coming artists," said Johnson. "Then we provide the backstory, along with a look at Irish events and culture."

Musically, the IMC features a mix of both legends and the newest stars from Ireland and beyond. When not spinning the tunes, the show presents in-depth interviews with the music makers themselves.

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Johnson weaves current events into the program, talking about happenings in Ireland and the United States that relate to Irish heritage. He also highlights significant historical events during the program.

Originating from Cave Radio Broadcasting, an internet-based provider, the IMC can be streamed on www.crbradio.com (Studio 1), or from its own website, www.irishmusiccafe.com. Listeners can also link to the website through its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/irishmusiccafe. Make sure to hit "like" when you visit the FB page to get updates on guests and programming.

GAEL LINN MUSIC ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS www.gael-linn.ie

In 2023 Gael Linn celebrates 70 years since its foundation. The spark was struck on 29th of March 1953 in the Imperial Hotel, Cork City. Soon after Gael Linn began producing Irish traditional music and song. Since then, Gael Linn has created one of the oldest and largest traditional music labels.

For better or worse streaming and downloading platforms are the future for the music industry it seems. Although this shift from physical to digital has been rightly criticised for failing to share the rewards fairly with artists and producers, one irrefutable benefit has been the increased accessibility of music.

Helping Gael Linn manage our music label for over 30 years now has been Crashed Music Group. This partnership has been one that has benefited artists, traditional music lovers and Gael Linn's music label. Crashed Music Group helps Gael Linn remain ahead of the curve. Our priority in the coming months and years is to ensure we maximise access to such a unique corpus of Irish music, song and spoken word.

Gael Linn recordings being available throughout the globe on digital platforms allows us to see where our artists are being appreciated.

The most popular Gael Linn item in the digital world is *Rí Liatroma / The Green Cockade / The Mourne Mountains* by Téada.

Outside Europe Gael Linn artists have generated some hot-spots in the U.S., Canada, Australia and Japan. Gael Linn recordings are being streamed as far afield as Sudan, Samoa, Christmas Island and Bhutan.

Speaking about the long and supportive role Crashed Music Group has been playing with Gael Linn, Alan Hennessy said, "Being responsible custodians of Gael Linn's extraordinary catalogue in the digital era is of immense importance to us. These recordings are a lasting snapshot of our world-renowned musical heritage and preserving them with integrity is the priority that guides the work we do together."

Find out more at www.gael-linn.ie

JIMMY CROWLEY & EVE TELFORD 2023 TOUR www.jimmycrowley.com

Jimmy Crowley and Eve Telford are an exciting folk duo based in Co. Cork, Ireland. Their first album is of new arrangements of Child ballads learned from the singing of Irish Travellers. They also perform a variety of folk music, ranging from narrative ballads, parlour songs, and sean nós, as well as their own wide-ranging compositions.

Jimmy Crowley has been a central figure in the Irish folk scene since the enthusiastic reception of his debut album *The Boys of Fairhill* in 1977. Eve Telford is a powerful singer of traditional folk songs as well as her original compositions. In her singing of traditional songs, one can sense her deep-seated connection to the old folk singers who have passed on.

**Find out more at www.jimmycrowley.com &
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=10006403329304>**

Spring Tour Dates

February

- 8** Album Launch, ITMA, Dublin
- 9** Áras OaC, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare
- 10** The Crane, Galway
- 11** Eileen's Tea Rooms, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
- 12** Murray's Tavern, Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon
- 14** Irish World Academy, UL, Limerick
- 15** Music Department, UCC, Cork
- 16** McGrath's, Boher, Co. Limerick
- 17** Ionad Cultúrtha, Baile Mhuirne, Co. Cork
- 19** Crocanoir Centre, Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary



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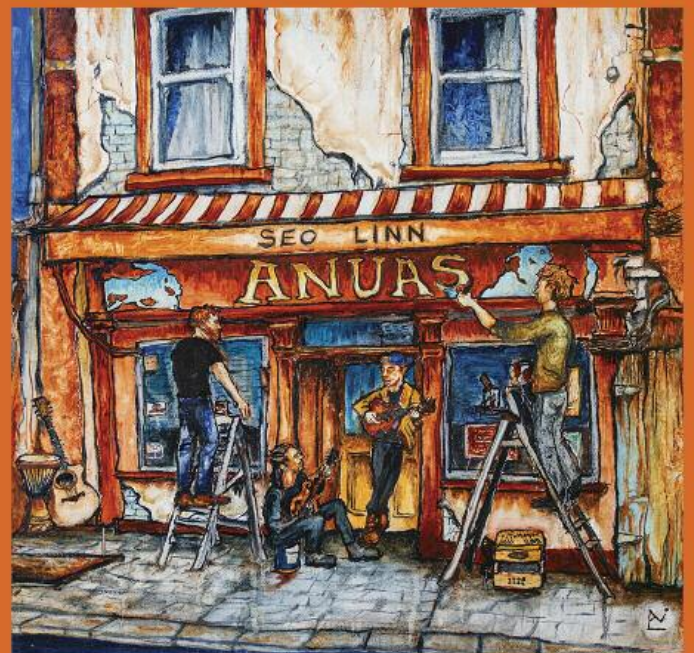


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- 21 Singers' Club, Merry's, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
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 24 Pipers' Club, Armagh
 25 Margaret Barry Folk Club, Laurencetown, Co. Down
 26 Sandino's, Derry
 27 Rostrevor Folk Club, Rostrevor, Co. Down
- March**
- 2 Sunflower Folk Club, Belfast
 3 Club d'Art, Carlow
 4 Community Centre, Dunhill, Co. Waterford

RACHEL WALKER & AARON JONES : *DESPITE THE WIND AND RAIN*

www.rachelwalkerandaaronjones.com

Despite the Wind and Rain, the debut duo album from Gaelic singer Rachel Walker and celebrated musician Aaron Jones, is a beautiful folk record with an important message at its core. Released on Friday 25th November 2022, the body of work pays tribute to influential but under-recognised women throughout Scottish history whose work has made a significant impact on the lives we live today.

The 10-track album recounts stories, not of the heartbreak or love-struck revenge on which so many female-led songs are based, but of scientific achievement, entrepreneurship and strength. With tales spanning across centuries, each track is dedicated to women from Scotland's past. Through Rachel and Aaron's beautiful lyrics and intricate musicianship, these inspirational stories come to life in Gaelic and English song.

The album aims to ensure the triumphs of these women are not forgotten, championing what they achieved in the face of inequality and the obstacles put in their way. The project takes note of how, in spite of the patriarchy, sexism, misogyny and a system rigged against them, they all succeeded in their own right. They made a difference to so many, *Despite the Wind and Rain*.

"*Despite The Wind And Rain*, then, is a splendid album – but more than that a tremendous historical and artistic document." *Mike Wistow – Folking.com*.

"...one of my albums of the year - great singing/musicianship but more important - great soul." *Mike Harding*.

Find out more about the album, the songs and the inspiration behind them on our website www.rachelwalkerandaaronjones.com

REGULAR PROGRAMMING RETURNS TO CelticMKE
<https://celticmke.com/>

CelticMKE, the nonprofit organization behind Milwaukee Irish Fest, is entering 2023 by hitting the ground running. The organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Irish, Irish American and Celtic cultures is bringing back some of the programming that had been on pause since the pandemic while also producing new events and starting new initiatives.

On February 2, CelticMKE will host a lecture with speakers Dr. Tim McMahon and Dr. Abigail Bernhardt, where they will dive into the history of the partition of Northern Ireland and the 1958 World Cup. February 10 will see the return of the Guinness, Chocolate and Bluegrass event, which features the Milwaukee-based bluegrass group The MilBillies.

On Sunday, March 12 CelticMKE's family-friendly St. Patrick's celebration, Irish Family Day - Passport to Ireland, will return to their center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for an afternoon of music, crafts, workshops and more.. And on Friday, March 31, the Ward Irish Music Archives (part of CelticMKE), along with host Rory Makem, will re-release footage from a show in the 1970s that starred Tommy Makem and Liam Clancy, along with a few other prominent folk performers at the time. The event is called From the Archives: Makem & Clancy 1977, hosted by Rory Makem.

And on Friday, April 28, Fishamble: The New Play Company is bringing their tour of Margaret Mc Auliffe's one-woman show, *The Humours of Bandon*, to CelticMKE.

View the nine events coming up throughout this winter/spring at CelticMKE by visiting their website at celticmke.com and following their social media channels.

SHASKEEN IN 2023
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 of 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.

The year 2022 has been very exciting for Shaskeen with lots of concert gigs around Ireland with highlights at *The All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil* in Mullingar, *The Electric Picnic* in Stradbally & rounding off an amazing year in December '22, as support to *The Stunning* in Leisureland, Galway.

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.

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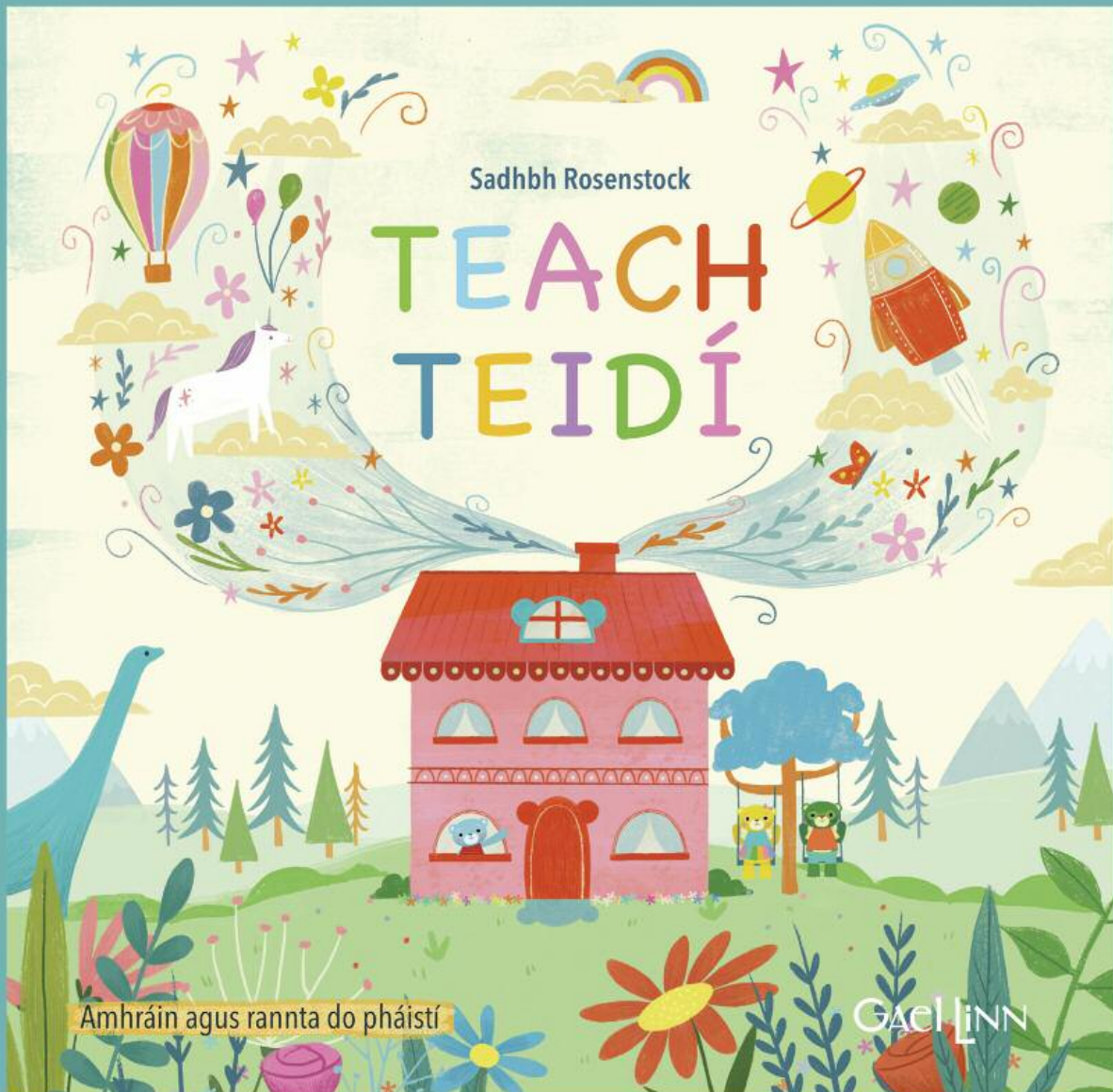
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IRELAND WITH MICHAEL SEASON 3 BROADCASTING NOW**www.michaellondra.com**

Emmy-nominated Irish singer, Michael Londra resumes his journey across Ireland this spring as he returned for the third season of "Ireland with Michael," which began broadcasting on public television and PBS on January 6.

Ireland with Michael, combining glorious footage from the vistas of the Emerald Isle, fascinating travel destinations, exciting cultural experiences, and performances from popular Irish artists and rising stars, explores Ireland's hidden treasures and majestic natural beauty. From the city lights of Dublin to the mountains of Kerry, *Ireland with Michael* showcases every beautiful aspect of Ireland and is an excellent starting point for those who are unfamiliar with or planning a visit to the country.

Each of the eight, half-hour episodes of *Ireland with Michael* highlights an intriguing Irish destination, steeped in culture and history. Viewers meet local artisans, experience small-town pubs and traditional cuisine, and enjoy VIP access to unique musical and cultural experiences.

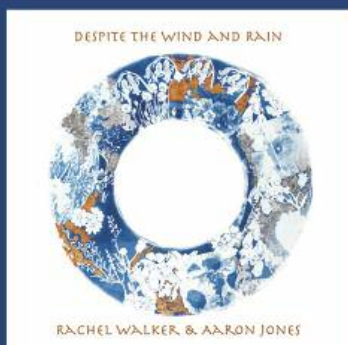
He unveils the stories behind some of Ireland's most famous sites, including the Rock of Cashel, the Irish National Famine Museum, the Derry Walls, and the Iveragh Peninsula.

Londra interacts with a range of fascinating guests throughout the new series, including Clannad's Moya Brennan, opera singer Gavin Ring, Niamh Ní Charra, The Henry Girls, Damien and Shauna McGeehan, Cormac O Hanlon and Shelly O Grady, Una Walshe, and singer-songwriter Aoife Scott. He also introduces viewers to Ireland's Poet Laureate Sasha Terfous, celebrity chef Darina Allen, and the Riverdance troop as they embark on their 25th-anniversary tour. "I was lead singer of the show on Broadway but this time I got to go back to the Gaiety as one of the dancers.....at 57 years old."

The series first aired on public television in May 2021 and has since clocked 8,400 individual episode airings on PBS stations across the US, broadcasting into 83% of all US households.

Learn more at www.michaellondra.com

'Despite The Wind And Rain', the brilliant debut album from Rachel Walker and Aaron Jones.



"...one of my albums of the year - great singing/musicianship but more important - great soul."

Mike Harding

"A showstopping extravaganza of history and songs, singing and strings that nails this duo as a pairing to watch."

At The Barrier



Available from www.rachelwalkerandaaronjones.com

MUSIC FOR UKRAINE

<https://official-scythian-merch-store.myshopify.com/>

Irish festival headliner SCYTHIAN was founded by Ukrainian brothers Alex and Danylo Fedoryka. Both their parents escaped the Communists before the Iron Curtain dropped and it is sad to see history repeating itself. Fuel lines are being cut and power grids have been heavily hit in Ukraine, so it promises to be a frigid winter. The brothers have teamed up with the Knights of Columbus to give 100% of ALL Scythian Shopify digital download sales to Ukrainian relief efforts.

The Knights of Columbus "Ukraine Solidarity Fund" has already raised \$20 million dollars in relief funds and Scythian hopes to add to that. Of note, Scythian has featured one or two Ukrainian songs on each of their 16 albums, so be sure to check those out.

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SEO LINN: ANUAS

www.seolinn.com

Seo Linn are back with their powerful new album *Anuas* set for release on the 24th February. It is an innovative album made up of 10 stunning songs from the Irish tradition reimagined in an exciting and explorative way.

Multi-award winning group, Seo Linn, formed in 2013 while living and working together in the heart of Conamara. Their unique fusion of traditional and contemporary music, and their electric live show, have earned them thousands of followers and brought them all over the world, performing and headlining festivals like the Milwaukee Irish Fest in the US, Groundswell Music Festival in Australia and Celtic Wave Festival in Italy to name a few.

The group is made up of Stiofán Ó Fearail on lead vocals/guitars, Kevin Shortall on accordion/percussion, Keith Ó Briain on bass/mandolin and Daithí Ó Ruaidh on keys/sax. The group are regularly joined by drummer Ben Wanders and keys/sax/fiddle player, Louis Young.

Seo Linn's repertoire of songs has amassed millions of views and listens on their various social media channels since the release of their debut album *Solas* (2017) and their EP *Marcas sa gCoill/Marcus in the Wood* (2019). Their spine-tingling rendition of Óró 'Sé do Bheatha Abhaile is the most watched version of the song on YouTube with a staggering 8 million views. Their title-track from *Solas* is currently being studied as part of the Leaving Certificate course in Ireland. Songs like *Buy Me Time* and *Darkness Shines A Light* have established themselves as firm fan favourites and are cornerstones of their live show.

The bi-lingual group has had a whirlwind few years. They've performed in Croke Park, The Aviva Stadium, The 3Arena and headlined their own show in Vicar Street. They wrote and recorded the official FAI song for the Euros (*The Irish Roar*) and also wrote and performed *Musical Makers* which featured as the finale of the much acclaimed RTÉ Centenary concert commemorating 100 years since the 1916 Rising, in the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre. The event was broadcast to over a million viewers live.

The next chapter, *Anuas*, is set for release on the 24th February and will be followed by a tour of shows in Ireland, mainland Europe and the US.

Find out more at www.seolinn.com and follow us on: [facebook.com/seolinn](https://www.facebook.com/seolinn), [instagram.com/seolinnstagram](https://www.instagram.com/seolinnstagram) and twitter.com/seolinn

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<https://www.seanscelticcreations.com/>

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Sean's quality handcrafted sterling & fine jewellery has been featured personally at Irish festivals & art venues across the USA since 1984.

A trip to Ireland was a major inspiration for Sean. "The people, music, community, history, sacred sites, and culture of Ireland touched me deeply, and became a vital part of who I am today. Following a

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recommended trip to see the "Book of Kells", (an Irish illuminated manuscript circa 600-900 AD) at the Trinity College in Dublin, my fate was sealed as an artist who had discovered a new path to explore converging art, history, and personal expression", says Sean.

"I could not be more pleased that the Universe (through all of you) has allowed me the joy of creating art and ideas based on the mystical paths and inspiration of the Celtic tribal people and beyond. The images and symbols still seem endless to me in their power of connection to life's intricacies, beauty and universal truths. If people are inspired to wear the designs I create as talismans of expression of their own path, then I have done the job I set out to do."

Please join Sean's email list online for monthly updates!
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/ohLc3Kt> and to learn more of Sean's story and the inspiration behind his work visit <https://www.seanscelticcreations.com/>

MUSIC CITY IRISH FEST

March 17th & 18th, 2023

[opry.com](https://www.opry.com) & [musiccityirishfest.com](https://www.musiccityirishfest.com)

Music City Irish Fest is gearing up for a huge celebration over St. Patrick's Day weekend on the legendary stage of the Grand Ole Opry. Irish artists will be performing alongside Nashville stars giving them the opportunity to share their music with a wider audience that may have never heard Irish music before. The highest quality music is centre to the culture everywhere in Nashville.

This March, MCIF has the privilege of bringing extraordinary Irish talent to the lineup. Eileen Ivers and Rory Makem will be performing on the Opry on St. Patrick's Day. Eileen is an Irish fiddle virtuoso that has been called the "Jimi Hendrix of the violin," by the New York Times. As the son of the legendary Tommy Makem, Rory Makem is truly carrying on the tradition with charisma, passion for the songs, humour and skilled musicianship. On March 16, Shane Hennessy takes the stage on Opry Country Classics hosted by The Gatlin Brothers. Shane has established himself as one of the leading guitarists on the world stage. On March 18, Jiglam and Clare Cunningham will continue the Irish celebration! The Jiglam lads will rock your world with their foot-stomping, high energy brand of Irish bluegrass and Clare's heart-felt lyrics and soul ripping voice will touch you right down to your soul.



Catch more artists on the FREE Irish Party on the Plaza March 17 and 18. The Nashville Irish Music School and Fiddle Frenzy students will join Belfast students for collaborative performances to commemorate Nashville's Sister City relationship and Belfast's recent UNESCO City of Music designation.

For more details visit [opry.com](https://www.opry.com), [musiccityirishfest.com](https://www.musiccityirishfest.com) & [wsmonline.com](https://www.wsmonline.com)

RUNA : COLLABORATION WITH THE CHOCTAW NATION

www.runamusic.com

RUNA is delighted and honoured to announce an ongoing musical and cultural collaboration with the Choctaw Nation.

The collaboration celebrates the Gift Exchange between the Choctaw and Irish people in 1847 and the continued friendship between both cultures. After having been forced to relocate from their homes east of the Mississippi to Oklahoma along the Trail of Tears only fifteen years earlier, the Choctaw people sympathized with the plight of those suffering from the Gorta Mór in Ireland. From the little they had, they collected and donated \$710 to the Irish Famine Relief Fund. This selfless act of humanity and generosity remains the most well-known donation sent to Ireland during the Famine.

In October of 2019, the history surrounding the Gift Exchange was introduced to our band, inspiring the idea of a creative musical project. We contacted the tribe, hoping to, potentially, meet some of their historians and musicians as the basis for our research. When we arrived at the Choctaw Headquarters in Durant, OK in January 2020, we were greeted by almost one hundred tribal elders. We were welcomed with open arms and hearts, and spent the next two days sharing music and food, dancing and laughing together, and travelling to poignant historic Choctaw sites across the state.

Since that moment, we have embarked on a musical journey and a friendship that will last a lifetime. Through the pandemic, we have continued to write, share, and develop music remotely in the hopes of one day being able to perform and share that music together, in person.

We are proud to announce that RUNA and the Choctaw Nation are producing a celebration event where we will be able to share some of the results of this collaboration together with a live audience.

The celebration will take place at the newly-opened Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, OK on Saturday, March 11th, 2023. Doors open at 10.00am. The event will include Choctaw and Irish cultural workshops, Choctaw artists, social dancing, and a collaborative concert. Check out RUNA's website for more details about the event and the project: www.runamusic.com

We are humbled and honoured to share this journey with our friends in the Choctaw Nation. We cannot wait to share it with all of our RUNAtics! Stay tuned for updates!

Lots of love, The RUNA Gang.

For more information and tour dates, visit RUNA's website www.runamusic.com

COSCÁN 25 YEARS AND COUNTING

www.coscan.ie

COSCÁN, the traditional band based in the Royal County are almost 25 years playing, composing and arranging new tunes. With 3 highly acclaimed albums under their belt, they are by no means finished yet. All of the band members, Harry Long - whistles, David Nevin - Bodhrán and Keyboards, Gerry Doggett - Fiddle and John Shankey - Guitar, have been busy composing and arranging more new tunes for their next album.

Coming from the historic village of Slane, the home of that famous rock venue with its castle and also the home to another famous band of the 60's The Johnstons, COSCÁN continue to blaze a trail in the music world.

Their music blends elements of traditional music with more contemporary, experimental styles and the work on new music continues on an ongoing basis. They are exploring different options in recording and video and continue to perform their unique blend of traditional and original music and songs for tour groups visiting Ireland. You can find out more at their website, [coscan.ie](https://www.coscan.ie) or keep an eye on their Facebook page. The band also have a number of different videos up on YouTube.

For more information go to www.coscan.ie



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SEO LINN'S RISING STAR

Anita Lock interviews Stiofán Ó Fearail, Seo Linn's founding member, about the rising fusion band and their second album, *Anuas*.



Seo Linn is Stiofán Ó Fearail (guitars, lead vocals), Daithí Ó Ruidh (keyboard, synth, saxophone, harmonicas, whistle, vocals), Kevin Shortall (accordion, percussion, vocals), and Keith Ó Briain (bass, mandolin, guitars, percussion, vocals), with regular session musicians Louis Younge and Ben Wanders. The band is no stranger to the music industry, especially with their rising fame in late 2013. Now recognized worldwide as top-rate performers with one album under their belt (*Solas* 2017) and an EP (*Marcas sa gCoill/Marcus in the Wood* 2019), the band gears up to release their next album, *Anuas*.

Anita: Tell us briefly about each of your musical backgrounds.

Stiofán: We have varied musical backgrounds. We all loved music growing up. I was the latest to the game, from a playing-perspective. I first took an interest in my teens when I bought a guitar in Galway City. Before that, the main focus was trawling through CDs - the likes of Bob Marley, the Dubliners and whatever else my friend could download. In comparison, the other lads played from very young ages. Kev's childhood was steeped in traditional music. He's been playing the box since he was big enough to hold one. He used to traverse Ireland learning and performing with his grandad. Keith grew up in rock bands, performing publicly since age 14. He slowly moved from rock to folk while retaining those earlier influences. Daithí played sax in orchestras for years and is probably the most musically trained of the bunch. He's a dab hand at scoring harmonies so he's quite useful!

Anita: Tell us about what brought you together to form Seo Linn.

Stiofán: We all met in the Gaeltacht in Indreabhán, Galway, on the west coast of Ireland. It's a beautiful part of the world, which we consider our second home. We all worked there for many summers on various musical projects and promoting the Irish language. We immersed ourselves in music because we loved it, and we played music together every day. In 2013, some of our YouTube projects with TG Lurgan went viral and amassed millions of views. People started inquiring when "the Lurgan band" would perform at shows and festivals. As the musicians running the studio for these projects, we agreed it was time to form a band.

Living in Conamara was also conducive to our musical development since we worked with many young musicians and learned something different from all of them. Playing and listening to music in the local

pubs (Tigh Mharcais and Tigh Mholly) became integral in our early formation. We love going home to Indreabhán.

Anita: How did you come up with the band's name, Seo Linn?

Stiofán: It came from a lyric we wrote as part of a project we worked on with TG Lurgan. The first line was "Seo linn le chéile, canaimis os ard é, seo linne d'aon ghuth amháin." The line means, "Off with us together, let's sing it out loud. Off with us, all of one voice." There was an intrinsic feeling that we were achieving something important and that many people were working hard towards the same goal of giving the Irish language a new stage. That feeling inspired the name of the band.

Anita: The band has a unique quality of presenting material both in English and Gaelic. What has audience reception been like for the band over the years?

Stiofán: The Irish language is integral to what we do, and every show we play highlights that. I think there is a particular fascination with the Irish language when presented with music. Here in Ireland, it can be a source of great pride for people or even ambition for those who wish they could speak more. Abroad it can represent heritage or a connection to one's past or parents. It's also fascinating the reaction we get to the Irish language in places where there wouldn't be a predominant link to Ireland. Irish is a very artistic and musical language that sounds like poetry in daily conversation. It feels great hearing people from the US to Italy sing back to us in the Irish language. It makes us feel very proud.

We write our songs in Irish and English and record them both so our audiences can enjoy our music in either language. It means we have two versions of most of our songs which can be fun on stage!

Anuas is a little different in that we recorded songs from the tradition that have been passed down from generation to generation. Each song on this album is special - hence the fact that they've stayed with us for so long. We like putting these songs into another context - it lets the listener experience them in a different way. The reception has been great for the few times we've played them live and we can't wait to play them again.

Anita: What would you say makes Seo Linn stand out against other folk bands?

Stiofán: The folk scene is in a great place at the minute musically with so many innovative bands recording and gigging. I suppose for us, the

fact that we perform bilingually is a real draw. We also pride ourselves on our live shows since we love performing and getting creative on stage. It's an electric experience because we never fully know how the shows will unfold, which is part of the fun. We're really enjoying what we're doing right now.

Anita: Do you see keeping to your style of music—originals, trad, and covers—or shifting into new territory in the future?

Stiofán: It's hard to know what's around the corner. We love the writing process, and we've learned an enormous amount from this album that will shape our writing and arranging in future projects. Every project we undertake has a central theme. *Anuas* was focused on songs and music from the tradition that have made an impression on us both lyrically and musically. Reflecting on that feels like a natural progression as we write more original material. I'm excited for the next step, too, I have to say. What form it takes isn't clear now, but it will be fun. Right now though, diving into the songs from *Anuas* will be our emphasis for a while. We enjoy talking about all of them and we love performing them.

Anita: Where have your musical experiences taken you?

Stiofán: We've been fortunate throughout our ten-year career, having learned, done, and seen a considerable amount along with touring many places across the US, Australia, and Europe. At home, we've performed on huge stages like the 3Arena, the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, the Aviva Stadium, and Croke Park.

However, some of our favourite experiences have been from learning about other cultures. We visited Uganda in Africa at the start of our

“The Irish language is integral to what we do, and every show we play highlights that”

journey to shoot a music video promoting the charity Self Help Africa. That trip—where we wrote our first-ever song—had a significant impact on us. A few years later, we had another wonderful experience, meeting with Aboriginal elders in Lake Tyres, Australia, where we learned much about their culture and music. We also had an exchange with members of the Meskwaki Nation in Iowa, USA, where we discussed language and music. These are some examples of what has been an amazing journey so far as a band. It's incredible the power of music and the effect it can have on people. It can be a real educator and a unifier.

Anita: What would you say have been Seo Linn's most memorable musical experiences and why?

Stiofán: It's a tough question to answer, but it's hard to look beyond our trip to Uganda with Self Help Africa. They are amazing people that do so much for communities facing difficulties across Africa and other parts of the world. The people we met in Kayunga were extremely kind, welcoming, and happy. We had a lot of fun with them and learned so much. That trip helped shape who we are as people and as a group. We value culture hugely and highly respect people who create and bring happiness and positive energy into the world. We strive to do the same.

Anita: Do you have any exciting events coming in 2023?

Stiofán: We're touring in Ireland, around Europe, and the US and are excited to play our songs (old and new) for everyone. *Anuas* has added so much to the show that we enjoy playing more now than ever. You can see a complete list of our dates on our website below.

Anita: What does the future hold for Seo Linn?

Stiofán: New music as we continue to write and record, new friendships as we continue to tour and new learning as we continue to grow! A lot done and a lot more to do!

Check out more about Seo Linn at <https://www.seolinn.com/>.



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THE WEDDING ABOVE IN GLENCREE

Daoirí Farrell talks to Seán Laffey about his career to date and his new album, which will be released at the end of February 2023.



Daoirí Farrell is one of a growing band of performers who are relishing authentic Irish folk song. Count him in the same stable as Ye Vagabonds, Lankum and Lisa O’Neill. A cohort who are unafraid to sing traditional songs in a traditional style, and who are at home with all the comic, tragic and political spectrums of the Irish song tradition.

As a bouzouki player I’ve been a fan of Daoirí’s ever since hearing his debut album. I thought his music was a secret pleasure I shared with a few of us in the zook community, until I saw his debut gig at the Milwaukee Irish Festival. It was in a marquee, with sound bleeding from We Banjo 3 and Socks in The Frying Pan. Daoirí carried on as if there was nothing beyond the canvas back wall. Looking around the audience, every woman and man knew his songs, they were singing along to number after number. Just think about that, his first gig in America, 4000 miles from home, singing songs from the tradition, from Liam Weldon and from Frank Harte, and the crowd were primed in advance. I knew right then I wasn’t the only fan of Daoirí Farrell.

Daoirí is busy, he has an agent, he’s feted in festivals and folk venues around the world, yet he’s no overnight sensation. As he recalled, “I was twenty and an electrician, it was hard graft, pulling cables all day wears you out. By the time I was 20 the jobs were drying up. So I said ‘I’ll give education a go’ and enrolled on the Ceoltóir Course at the Ballyfermott College of Further Education. I gave myself two weeks to settle in. I figured if it wasn’t for me I could go back to being a sparky. I loved those two weeks and wanted more. The course was brilliant and so were the tutors. Paul McGrattan was a real inspiration. He’d toured professionally and he had a way of explaining how to master stagecraft; chiefly how to get over your performance fears. It went beyond singing and playing in the classroom. He encouraged us to perform as if we were on a stage with an audience of hundreds. We got great

feedback and mentoring, and as the course progressed we grew in confidence.

“One day Niamh Parsons was invited in to give us an insight into traditional song. She was marvellous, so supportive and so committed to authentic songs. She said there was a great place to visit in Dublin every Friday night, The Teacher’s Club where An Góilín singers held their meetings. Brian Bourke and myself decided to go along and see if it was any good. He sang *Sergeant William Bailey* and I think I sang *The Shamrock Shore*. The reception I got was so encouraging and the singing circle was so friendly, I was thrilled to be asked back the next week. From then on I was more or less a regular, learning new songs and picking up old ballads from the lads.

“All of that fed back into my college work and when I’d completed my two year HND I went off to the Dundalk Institute of Technology on their BA programme. Our tutors were Gerry (fiddle) O’Connor and Fintan Vallely. Len Graham would come down from Armagh to give us singing master classes. I was aware of Liam Weldon before I met Fintan Vallely but he did encourage me to write my final year thesis on him, which I called *The Life Times And Singing Of Liam Weldon*. I’ve recorded a number of his songs on my albums, including one on my recent CD.”

From Dundalk IT Daoirí moved to the University of Limerick’s Irish World Music Academy to study for an MA. He speaks highly of the course, which was run by Niall Keegan and Sandra Joyce, and it was at the university and through his course that his debut solo album *The First Turn* (2009) was released followed by *True Born Irishman* (2016), *A Lifetime Of Happiness* (2019), and the most recent *The Wedding Above in Glencree* (2023).

Daoirí is in no doubt that his first fortnight in Ballyfermott College changed his life forever. “The course taught me to be both self-critical and to be confident. If there is any advice I can give to an up-and-coming performer it is record yourself. Do it on your smart phone or your laptop. Firstly you’ll get to know how you sound and how you can improve your performance and secondly when it comes the time for a serious recording project you won’t be fazed by the experience. Think of it like insurance or a regular trip to the dentist. You are making the future so much better for yourself. I record myself on a little system I have set up in my lounge here at home. It’s a great way of working through new material and it helps you understand the sound the audience hears and not just the sound that is in your head.”

Daoirí is recognised as one of the pre-eminent Irish bouzouki players of the moment. It’s an instrument he fell in love with twenty years ago. “I’ve just taken possession of a gorgeous Joe Foley bouzouki. It’s based on his own instrument. I just can’t stop playing it. I met Joe the other night at a session in O’Donoghues and he was in great form. The chat was mighty as you might expect. Another luthier to look out for is Justin Rogers who is based in Wexford. I was playing one of his octave mandolas before Christmas and I was blown away by its well-balanced sound. There’s a YouTube video of me playing some of his instruments if your readers would like to hear what they sound like.”

The title song of *The Wedding Above In Glencree* was learned from Mick Keeley of An Góilín; it’s one of those long comic songs peopled by characters that frequent recognisable locations in Dublin’s hinterland. There is an extended version of *Father Murphy*, which is a tour de force in folk arranging. The album contains acappella songs and ensemble work. “I tried to keep the band sound to a minimum. I was conscious that there is always a temptation to over produce,” Daoirí tells me.

Daoirí is joined on the album by a stellar cast of musicians that includes Manus Lunny (guitar, bouzouki and bass bouzouki), Paddy Kiernan (5-string banjo), Mark Redmond (uilleann pipes and whistles), Pat Daly (fiddle and harmonium), Trevor Hutchinson (upright bass), Robbie Walsh (hand pan and bodhrán), Alan Doherty (whistles), Geoff Kinsella (tenor banjo) and a special guest appearance on Ron Hynes' *Sonny's Dream* by renowned bluegrass dobro player, Jerry Douglas. Daoirí had toured the UK with Jerry with Transatlantic Sessions in 2018 so Jerry knew of Daoirí's work. "I emailed Jerry Douglas, just to see if he would be interested. It was a bit of a long shot. I didn't think he'd respond, however he came back immediately and said he'd love to contribute to the album."

Notwithstanding the large cast of supporting musicians the album is not cluttered. The *Father Murphy* track is perhaps the densest musically. Daoirí had the words from Frank Harte and his father-in-law is from Boolavogue so it was a good fit. He says "Father Murphy is arranged and accompanied by me on guitar and Manus Lunny plays bouzouki on the track." *Sullivan's John* he had from Robbie McMahon of Ennis and *Murphy's Running Dog* is a comic song that Daoirí sang at a Fleadh competition in his early 20s; it was given to him by Paddy Berry from Wexford. He sings *Slieve Gallion Brae* unaccompanied. "I'd tried it with a shruti box and fiddle, but in the end I thought it worked best with a solo voice. This is a very rare

"If there is any advice I can give to an up-and-coming performer it is record yourself"

version given to me by Jerry O'Reilly of An Goilin." Being a Daoirí Farrell album there has to be a Liam Weldon song in the mix, and it's a standout. *One Starry Night* is a song that was collected by Liam Weldon in his earlier years.

Daoirí considers *The Wedding Above In Glenree* to be his best work so far and certainly the best sounding album he's made to date. "It was mastered in Holland by the brilliant Zander van der Heide. With a good set of earphones or some high-end speakers you can hear every instrument in the mix. The man is a genius."

Daoirí will release *The Wedding Above In Glenree* on 24th of February and there will be tours in Ireland and the UK to showcase the new album. You can pre-order on Bandcamp. There was a special offer of signed copies for the first 100 orders. His legion of fans snapped them up early. No surprise there at all, is there?

To find out more about Daoirí and his music please visit www.daoiri.com



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SÉAMUS BEGLEY (1949-2023)

An appreciation by Aidan O'Hara for Irish Music Magazine.



Photo : Seán Laffey

“Is mór an chaill é (he is a big loss),” is one of the phrases used in Irish when speakers hear of the death of one for whom they had a great regard. Without doubt, those were the words used by family members and neighbours of the renowned West Kerry musician and singer Séamus Begley who died unexpectedly at the age of 73 on the 9th January last. Indeed, the huge sense of loss being experienced by the Begley family is shared far and wide, in Ireland and abroad.

His great friend and guitarist, Steve Cooney described him as being “larger than life, the real Ireland”. Séamus was certainly a big man in every way and with those large hands of his he could knock sparks out of the box he was playing, and then when he sang the contrast was almost startling. This big ebullient man, he sometimes said of himself he was boisterous, who could have the room dancing and laughing at his witticisms and antics one minute became something entirely different the next when he stopped and sang.

When his death was announced his friend, Donal Lunny, said that his singing was “almost angelic” when he sang in soft tender tones one of the Gaelic songs from Kerry. “The room that was full of noise and clatter fell into silence as he sang.” There was a tear in Donal’s voice as he spoke, and no doubt tears welled up in many eyes on hearing the sad news on the radio that morning.

Séamus who was from the close-knit village of Baile na bPoc, Corca Dhuibhne, County Kerry, was born into an Irish-speaking musical family of singers and musicians, rightly regarded as among the leading performers of Irish traditional music and song. Throughout his life he regaled his listeners with the slides, polkas, songs and slow airs he had heard growing up at home and in the community.

It seemed like an unlikely friendship that emerged from the time Séamus met up with longhaired guitar-playing Australian named Steve Cooney. The two of them would often joke about it, with Steve calling himself the hippy that played with the redneck, and Séamus using the term Hairy and Squarey about each other. They teamed up, and their 1992 recording *Meitheal* that achieved international acclaim is described as ground-breaking.

Séamus later played with other noted musicians, including Jim Murray and Tim Edey, producing further award-winning albums. When he was 62, he joined the group *Téada*, and joked: “Out of the blue, the group’s founder, Oisín Mac Diarmada asked me to join the band. The last thing I expected at my age was to be asked to join a boy band. It’s my retirement plan.” Oisín observed that there was such energy and drive in his music that he “lit up the room with his playing”.

Each of us can recall memorable occasions when we heard Séamus performing and how it affected us. For me such a moment was his rendition of *Sé Mo Laoch* in a 2020 profile on TG4, and another was his TV performance with Mary Black of *Bruach na Carraige Báine*. She said that she wanted to cry the first time she heard him perform that song. She said how it affected her. “It just moves you so much, and he had that quality that just brought you right into the music...beautiful, the voice of an angel.”

“He had that quality that just brought you right into the music...beautiful, the voice of an angel”

Another of Kerry’s great singers, Muireann Nic Amhlaioibh, speaking in Irish of her admiration for Séamus the man and singer, and translated here, said: “Séamus Begley, rogue, a giant of a man, character, friend, neighbour, teacher, and to all of us our hero, king of music in these parts and Ireland, indeed.” Yet, this man she saw as the king of trad can be seen and heard on YouTube singing Canadian Gordon Lightfoot’s great song, *Early Morning Train*, Tim Edey on guitar. Séamus was game for it all.

President Michael D. Higgins paid this tribute to Séamus who had performed at State functions at his residence. “All those who knew Séamus will remember him for his talent, warmth, and sense of fun. He will be deeply missed, and my condolences to his wife Mary, children Breandán, Eoin, Niall, and Méabh, his extended family, and to his wide circle of friends and musical colleagues.”

Séamus sums himself up very well: “I just love entertaining people, telling lies and winding people up.” He leaves behind a musical legacy that will be appreciated by generations to come.

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NINE APPLES OF GOLD

Seán Laffey talks to Karan Casey about her new album *Nine Apples of Gold*, her upcoming tours and the emotional toll of being an advocate in the FairPlé movement.



Photo: Liadh Connolly

It's a difficult job to keep up with all the projects that Karan Casey is involved in. There is her new album *Nine Apples of Gold*, a 14 night tour of the USA in March followed by 11 dates in Ireland in April, her first major Irish tour in 8 years. She has also written a one-woman show and then there is her involvement with the FairPlé organisation, which as we will see below took her into a dark world of gender politics.

Karan says the pandemic was a time to re-evaluate many things in her life. "For me it was a time for healing, for getting back to nature, simple things like walking in the Glen Park in Cork. It was also a time of grief and sadness as my brother passed away. Connecting with nature was cathartic. It helped me deal with things and I found solace in writing songs and a lot of them ended up being about the twilight."

Recording her new album *Nine Apples of Gold* was part of her healing process. "I recorded the album at Seán Óg Graham's studio in Portglenone. It's in an old farmhouse by the river Bann, a really beautiful place, where we were surrounded by nature, which allowed us the space and time to chill at the end of each recording session. Prior to meeting up we'd share musical ideas via Dropbox. Seán would send me riffs and I would send him lyrics. I realised that I'd come to a point in my song writing where I could discard a song, some songs just don't work and you have to let them go. Working with people who support you and have faith in your art is vital and there was so much trust between us when we recorded the album."

Karan collaborated on the album with Niamh Dunne on a duet *Sister I am Here for You*. Pauline Scanlon joined Karan on *I Live in a Country*, that is a critical feminist perspective on life of women in modern Ireland. Karan explores an old ballad form, the conversation between generations in *Daughter Dear* on which she is joined by Ríoghnach Connolly. Conor McCreanor, John McCullough, Hannah Hiemstra and Kate Ellis join Karan on what is her 12th album. Her PR says of the album that it: "displays her fine poetic voice where she has taken traditional symbolism and shaken

it by the neck to create an ode to mother nature and a poignant cry for change."

Karan writes on her Bandcamp page that she teamed up with "Seán Óg Graham, her long-time collaborator and friend, to create an album of songs that speaks to healing, camaraderie in times of strife, finding enrichment and new life in campaigning for women, and of course death. This is an ode to the natural world featuring the songbirds of Portglenone, the moon, conversations from the grave, returning to the wild, listening for the cuckoo as she sleeps." These themes are also explored in Karan's theatre show, where she sings her original songs, plays piano and talks about the inner experience of being a woman. She says traditional musicians can learn a lot from the culture of theatre in Ireland, where time is given to think about and discuss performances and work is collaborative and there are structural systems in place that support people making art.

Karan just doesn't sing about feminist issues, she campaigns for them too. She is one of the leaders of the FairPlé organisation, along with Pauline Scanlon, Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin, Niamh Dunne among many others. FairPlé was founded back in 2018 to question and explore why there were so few women in professional traditional music. Initially it called for gender balance in traditional music. As their mission statement reads: "FairPlé aims to achieve gender balance in the production, performance, promotion, and development of Irish traditional and folk music. We advocate for equal opportunity and balanced representation for all."

One of their reports considered women performers headlining festival line-ups and concert billings. Published in 2022, Fairly collated data from 16 festivals; their findings are stark, only one quarter of the festival performers were women, and when headliners were taken into consideration the representation of women dropped even further, as low as 10% for one Fest and none at all for another Folk Festival.

Things became a lot darker and more serious in 2020 when allegations of sexual abuse and harassment in Traditional Music came to light from the #misefosta movement on social media. FairPlé responded by offering help and guidance, one section of their website reads:

"If you experienced sexual assault, harassment or coercion, FairPlé would firstly like to advise you that none of it was your fault. You did nothing to deserve it. Please, mind yourself and do what you need to do to care for yourself."



Supportive words were a start but action was needed, and what followed was a series of intense lobbying of politicians and government to bring about real change in the arts. Karan is candid about how the issues impacted the activists. "This was an emotionally difficult time for many of us, meeting politicians and appearing on Oireachtas committees is stressful enough, but taking on board and becoming invested in the stories of women who had suffered was harrowing. There were times when we as advocates needed counselling ourselves."

Fairly produced a set of recommendations for a "Safe and Respectful Working Environment for the Arts" which was brought before the Oireachtas Joint Committee in November 2021. Following on from that and the work of other pressure groups. Arts and Culture Minister Catherine Martin launched the 'Safe to Create' programme in October 2022. It is a raft of measures aimed at providing safe working conditions for those 55,000 people working in the Arts industry. Among the new measures will be a system to let people anonymously report incidents of abuse or harassment.

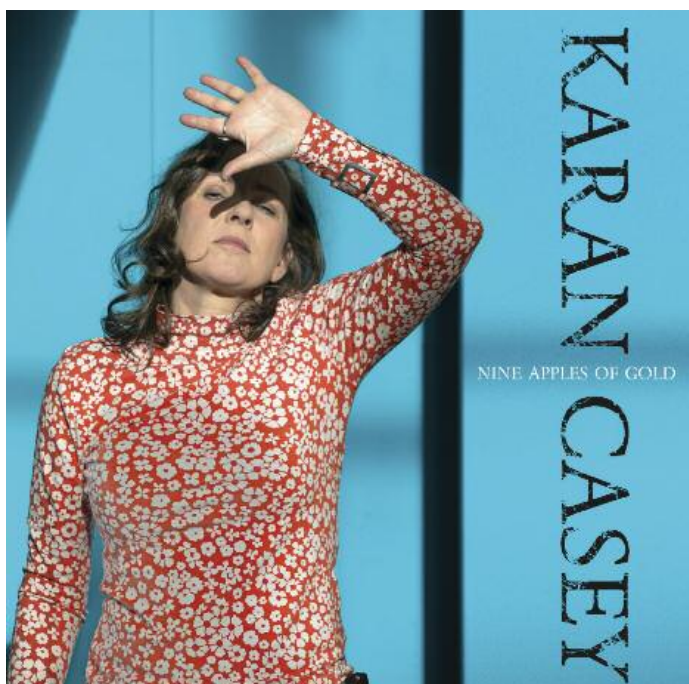
Karan is also heartened by the stories of strong-minded independent women who have gone before her. For instance Saint Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th century religieuse who was the most prolific composer of the middle ages and whose work is still performed today. Karan was part of a major concert in the Saint's honour at Dublin's Kaleidoscope Night at The Pepper Canister Church as part of the celebration of International Women's Day 2020.

"Working with people who support you, and who have faith in your art is vital"

Strong women from the turn of the 20th century have also played a role in Karan's music; her own grandmother was in Cumann Na mBan who were pivotal during the founding of the state 100 years ago. Karan will present a show at Cork's Everyman Theatre in October 23 where women of the rebellion will be remembered in song and story, women such as the Countess Markievicz, Agnes Ryan, Kathleen Clarke. "And of course that was just the start of women becoming immersed in Irish politics. When you think that the Countess was the first female minister 1918 and then it was NOT until 1979 for Máire Geoghegan Quinn to be appointed a minister, things move slowly here for women."

You can visit the FairPlé Music CLG online at www.fairple.com

Karan's new album *Nine Apples of Gold* will be released on Feb 22nd 2023. You can pre-order CDs, Vinyl and Digital downloads on Bandcamp. Karan's website is online at www.karancasey.com



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NIAMH DUNNE : TIDES

Highly regarded singer, composer, fiddle player and song-writer Niamh Dunne (of Beoga) in conversation with Deirdre Cronin about *Tides*, her solo album of self-penned songs.

Photo : Ruth Medjber



As a prelude to our interview, Niamh Dunne's new album was, (and is!) the loveliest of listening experiences. Great narrative songs that evoke the past, contemplate our contemporary world, and explore Niamh's own family roots in tradition in a way that feels universal and relatable.

In a nutshell, Niamh Dunne essentially sings us into the deep heart of epically good stories! All achieved with the kind of musicianship that draws past and present together into a great album.

Tides is full of strong, bright, introspective songs exploring life, love, feminism, history, injustice, joy, and connection - but all notably linked by lyrical cohesiveness where Niamh and her musical peers create their own narrative arc of outstanding musicianship across this song

Limerick with her husband, Niamh's dad, the great uilleann piper Mickey Dunne (who himself is related to the renowned traveller musicians, the Dunne brothers.) Karan Casey sings alongside Niamh here, their voices full of joy, light, love, and childhood.

I can imagine these songs sung for years to come, and ask Niamh which comes first, the words or the melody? "Well, I grew up hearing the stories of my family, but I've been a fiddle-player since I was a little kid, so for me it's the melody that comes first, and I then weave the story I want to tell in the song-lyrics around that, and if it's set to a traditional style, I guess the story I'm telling is adding to the canon in its way."

Niamh speaks with eloquence and clarity about her creative way of linking old Irish mythology to highlight some of the contemporary issues she illuminates so powerfully.

"Celtic mythology is full of women with super-powers no matter how dark the story - murder, rape, injustice, blood battles, fertility, fierce high drama altogether. As a feminist, I'm interested in imagining modern women with real agency - and *The Raven* song epitomises that - based on a goddess of war with shape-shifting powers - it felt like an apt shift in perspective for me compared to how folk music is often full of comely maidens fair & slender!"

Apt indeed, considering that *Tides* includes another really strong feminist song *Hold Your Head Up High* written as a passionate response to her work as co-founder of Fairplé with Karan Casey and others advocating for change and artistic integrity around gender-balance, pay, inequality, harassment & violence - a very *real* feel to this, potent, relevant, and brave.

Along with the grace, fusion and lilt of fiddle, vocals and more, Niamh fearlessly explores dark nooks of history, walking us in dream-like song

"As a feminist, I'm interested in imagining modern women with real agency"

collection. Artists include Karan Casey, Kate Ellis, Joshua Burnside, Seán Óg Graham, Michael Keeney, Liam Bradley & Conor McCreanor.

Niamh's accomplishments with Beoga include a Grammy nomination; the band profile elevated through co-writing and performances with Ed Sheeran, including Glastonbury. She also tours in a band with brilliant musical artist and writer Karan Casey.

There's a spell-binding element at play across the songs, Niamh's voice is strong, deep, but also full of light, the natural flow of her lyrics easy on the ear. I ask Niamh about her writing process, about how her songs hold depth, nuance and complexity, yet are as light as the air itself in terms of a gorgeous accessible set of songs and instrumentals that'd have your album worn out in no time.

"Well, I had time on my side during the Covid lockdown, so I suppose that helped lend a reflective quality to the song-writing process. I wanted to write about my family connections, it's a great time for that - Irish families are replete with rich stories and there's a new energy around expressing that - it's a fascinating time for artists. In writing *Roads of Old Tralee*, the folk-music style felt natural. I've been singing traditional songs all my life, whereas some songs on the album are more contemporary in style. Here, the central character is my great-grandfather, the Irish revolutionary known as The O'Rahilly as he sets out to win the heart of his beloved Nancy Brown."

Niamh's great-grandfather is honoured again on Side-2 for his heroic freedom fight. The O'Rahilly was tragically killed in Dublin's Moore Street during Ireland's Easter Rising of 1916. The proud marching rhythm of the music here reflects Niamh's astonishing great-grandfather to the end - mustering the courage as he lay dying to write a letter so full of love and gratitude to his beloved wife Nancy.

In a sweet and serendipitous continuance of that, Niamh's title song *Tides*, is a tribute to her own mother Aideen O'Rahilly who lives in

through *Lady Thomond's* Limerick and beyond, giving voice to *Colleen Bawn*, the ghosts of the slain, and the battle weary, Niamh lingering on Limerick place-names like Mulgrave Street or Misery Hill. Strong echoes on the album rail against more recent injustices to women like the outrageous Magdalene Laundries.

Chatting with Niamh reminds me of how the great writer Anne Enright once said that most good stories were often gentle in tone and timbre, yet not one bit afraid to lob a hand grenade across the page. Add to that how the beauty of music surely means that an artist like Niamh Dunne gets to *sing* her own poetic lines, unfolding *all* our past in a sense, along a song-road littered with love stories. Do buy, support, and enjoy this great album!

For more details see www.niamhdunne.com

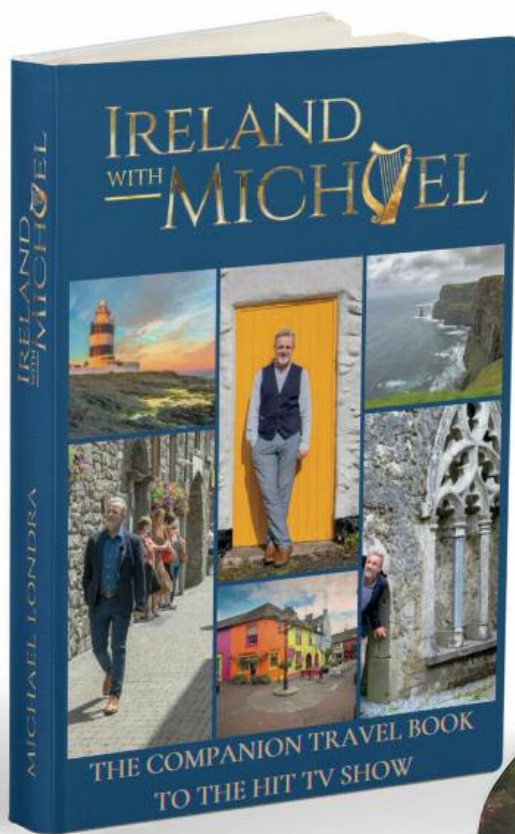


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MUSIC CITY IRISH FEST 2023

Brenda Willis, Founder & CEO of Music City Irish Fest in conversation with Robert Heuston for Irish Music Magazine.



Robert: Can you tell our readers a little about Brenda Willis and your background in Irish and Celtic Music?

Brenda: Oddly enough, I did not grow up listening to Irish music nor did I even know that I was Irish. After I was married and had four children, I was living in Chicago and saw Riverdance. I had no idea how that day would forever change my life. Shortly thereafter, I started my two oldest children in Irish dancing classes with Julie Showalter who was the Director of World Academy of Irish Dance in Chicago. Two weeks after their first class, Julie invited all the new students to wear their World Academy t-shirts and come see the older students dance at the Chicago Celtic Festival being held in Grant Park, downtown on the Chicago lakefront. I had never been to a music festival before. It was culture shock! We saw our school dance and then wandered over to the main stage where the first band we saw was Leahy, and the second was Lúnasa. Again, life-changing. We found the artist merch tent and purchased artist albums and a Generation D whistle. The rest, as they say, is history.

My children went on to compete at the world level in Irish dancing and music and won the senior grupa cheoil at the Fleadh in Cavan in 2012. That year they released their first album. The beautiful reality in all this is that it was the people in the Irish music world that encouraged us to come along and learn. People like Kevin Crawford, John Doyle, Liz Carroll, Jimmy Keane, John Whelan, John Williams, Niall O'Leary, Maurice Lennon, Joanie Madden, Kell Chole, Colin

Dunne, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Moya Brennan and many others breathed into our family and welcomed us into the world of Irish culture. Oh....and the funny thing is....my dear mother (God rest her soul) leaned over to me at my kids' first feis and whispered in my ear, "You know you're Irish, right?"

Robert: Music City Irish Fest 2023 will be presented by The Tennessee Center for Arts and International Culture, a non-profit organisation with yourself as president. What is your mission statement?

Brenda: The Tennessee Center for Arts and International Culture (TN CRAIC) is a nonprofit organization that provides support for international artists to perform, learn and explore opportunities for growth in the state of Tennessee. This nonprofit also offers funding for events, festivals, venues and organizations that promote international culture in Tennessee and that send artists abroad for performance and educational purposes. Having only received our nonprofit status the end of 2019, we are just now getting up to speed with our mission.

Music City Irish Fest will be our main annual fundraiser with other events throughout the year. The roots of Nashville are distinctly Irish and Scots-Irish, however there has never been an organization to showcase or promote this heritage. TN CRAIC is committed to growing the awareness and opportunity to experience Irish culture in Tennessee and connect folks back to their roots in Ireland and Northern Ireland through music, sports, literature, history and travel. Nashville's music industry is second to none therefore giving Irish artists who participate in the events of TN CRAIC the exposure to the best in all aspects of the business and affords them the needed credentials to launch on a world-wide stage. The unique collaborative aspect that Nashville alone offers artists thrusts them into a cross-cultural and musical arena with superstars they could not connect with otherwise. For example, in 2023, Irish artists will be playing on stage with international country music superstars on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry over St. Patrick's Day weekend. Many of the Opry members have performed and even collaborated in Ireland and Scotland as part of the Transatlantic Sessions, and this year we are bringing that level of collaboration to the oldest running radio and most prestigious country music program in America - WSM Radio - The Grand Ole Opry.

Robert: Tell us a little about what's involved in preparing the Festival over St Patrick's weekend and the challenges that you face post Covid-19?

Brenda: I suppose all festivals and events have faced similar challenges in preparing to bring people together after covid lockdowns and restrictions. I felt very strongly that I wanted to wait until Ireland re-opened its borders for musicians to travel abroad and tourists to visit again. I did not want to risk another shut down nor host a half-way festival. I believe that waiting until 2023 was the right move for us here in Nashville. We do things very big in Music City. Our events draw hundreds of thousands of visitors and I want our St. Patrick's Day celebration to be the same.

The main obstacle was finding a venue. We have dealt with many weather issues in the past from freezing cold, rain, snow, tornadoes, flooding, then again, in some years we had sunny warm weather that teased us to come back the next year hoping for the best. I

determined I needed an indoor venue or at least partially indoor to remove weather from the equation. I am a firm believer that things happen as they are supposed to and will unfold in the right time. After several years of growing pains, set backs, difficulties and relationship building, the right opportunity presented itself. I am delighted to have found a partner in the Grand Ole Opry that is excited about celebrating the roots of country music, presenting collaborations between country/bluegrass/folk and Irish artists and will give us the flexibility to be indoors for some aspects of the festival and yet, utilize the gorgeous outdoor facilities to keep the festival vibe alive.

Robert: You have partnered with The Grand Ole Opry for the 2023 Festival. How excited are you about this development and what can visitors to Nashville expect?

Brenda: Yes, I am over the moon excited about partnering with the Grand Ole Opry for Music City Irish Fest 2023! I could not have wished for a more beautiful venue and perfect stage to showcase the history of our city and our musical culture. I think our audience will be surprised to learn how much of our identity here in Nashville comes from the Irish culture. I am truly looking forward to the magic that will undoubtedly happen on stage as Nashville's stars and amazing Irish musicians come together in the historic Opry circle to create and commemorate their shared love of this living art form. This collaborative aspect is what sets Music City Irish Fest apart from other St. Patrick's Day celebrations. We will indeed be "taking country music back to its roots".

Visitors to MCIF should buy a ticket to one of the Grand Ole Opry shows throughout the St. Patrick's Day weekend - www.opry.com. Seating 4,400 people, the Opry House is a venue that is second to none and is home to the radio show that has been presenting country music for nearly

"Music City Irish Fest has the unique privilege of bringing two of the most iconic musical cultures not just together, but back together"

100 years on WSM Radio. Eat and drink and hear some incredible music on country music's most famous stage. But come early and stay late as there will be lots to do at the FREE "Irish Party on the Plaza". The entrance to the Opry House is a spacious park-like atmosphere where Music City Irish Fest will host an Irish party bigger than Nashville has ever seen.

Robert: Music City Irish Festival have also partnered with Emerald Isle Media and Irish Music Magazine who will produce a Transatlantic Virtual Experience on March 17 and 18 over 14 hours. What is the objective of this exciting addition?

Brenda: The history of country music reaches back not only in time, but across the ocean to Ireland. Music City Irish Fest has the unique privilege of bringing two of the most iconic musical cultures not just together, but back together. It is a reunion from ancient to modern times. Nashville's music industry is a family - a very tight-knit, very talented family. To me, the hub of that family is the Grand Ole Opry. This year, we welcome Irish artists into our family, into the Circle. The ability of live music to bring people together is something I strongly believe in. This has been happening on the Opry stage for almost 100 years continuing to inspire music lovers of all ages. Collaborative music is a rich and beautiful way to bring people together. It is my goal to make Nashville's St. Patrick's Day festival the largest, most authentic Irish celebration



in America bringing the old and new together. This year is a mighty leap forward toward that goal. The partnership with Emerald Isle Media and Irish Music Magazine and our other media partners allows us to be able to extend the amazing music family of Nashville to artists who aren't able to be with us in person this year and we do hope that, in future years, we will be able to welcome our virtual artists physically to the historic circle on the Grand Ole Opry. It is a moment one never forgets.

Robert: What other cultural activities are planned for the 2023 Festival?

Brenda: Music City Irish fest will be hosting plenty of cultural activities at the "Irish Party on the Plaza" for all to enjoy at no cost. There will be Irish music and dancing with Éamonn de Cógáin where you can dance a traditional Irish jig and join with others in a céilí - showcasing the roots of country square dancing. The Nashville Gaelic Athletic Club (NashvilleGAC.com) will be out with their hurleys to showcase the Irish sport of hurling and Gaelic football. Meet an Irish wolfhound. Explore Nashville's Sister City, Belfast in our St. George's Market shopping area where you can find authentic Irish merchandise. Book a trip to travel to Ireland with Enrichment Travel Services (EnrichmentTravel.com). Did you know the Titanic was built in Belfast? Learn about the horrific accident of the "unsinkable" ship and make plans to visit the Titanic Museum in Belfast. Families will want to bring their children to play in the kids' zone sponsored by the Tennessee Renaissance Festival. Come hungry as there will be plenty of options for great food and drink. Buy festival, artist and Opry merchandise at the booths in the shopping area. Win a car!! Yes, sign up onsite for a chance to win a new Ford car! There will even be an Irish golf tournament on March 16 where you can play golf with Nashville celebrities! Proceeds from the golf tournament will benefit our charity partner, Blood Assurance which supplies blood to Nashville area hospitals. There truly will be something for everyone.

For more details, check out www.MusicCityIrishFest.com, www.Opry.com, www.VisitMusicCity.com. Also find us on Facebook and Instagram.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE LONDON LASSES

Seán Laffey talks to Karen Ryan about the London Lasses' milestone recording *LL25*.



Photo : Grant Burchill Photography

For a group from London, it might come as a bit of a surprise to discover their roots lie in a trio project that first performed professionally in the USA. Karen takes up the story.

"In 1997 myself and fiddler Elaine Conwell and the banjo player Pauline Conneely were chatting in the kitchen after coming home from a night of tunes. Pauline suggested that we should tour America, she'd already been out there and had a few contacts. We were young, mad for tunes and it seemed it was going to be a big adventure. We called ourselves the *London Lasses* after an old reel and went off on a 6-week tour. We had a great time and one pivotal moment came when the young piano player Brendan Dolan joined us in New York; we knew straight away that we wanted a pianist in the band. When we came back we played with a number of pianists: John Coakley, John Blake and Pete Quinn (who I married)."

How was this fledgling group received in the USA? "Irish America loved our music but some of their media were confused over our name and origins. There wasn't the same understanding of the global Irish Diaspora as there is now. We pointed out that Irish sessions have their roots in London. Dr Reg Hall has written extensively on those early London sessions as places where immigrants could meet up, where work was found and relationships blossomed. In the 1950s thousands of Irish women went to work as nurses in the NHS and thousands of Irish men were rebuilding the country after the blitz."

Those immigrants had places to play and music to hear and Karen tells me the London session scene they created is as vibrant as ever. "There are at least 28 sessions each week across the city. There's a session in Wimbledon that's been going for thirty years. Only last week two lads turned up at our Wednesday night session in the London Irish Centre (Camden), they'd only been in London for two days. They found the session through the Irish Music and Dance in London website.

Musicians and listeners alike are flocking to the new music pub, Brendan the Navigator on Highgate Hill. Sessions are still a magnet for immigrants."

The London Lasses are happy to be part of an unbroken tradition of Irish Music in the city; this is reflected in *LL25*, which is as much a look to the future as recognition of past triumphs. There are 10 musicians from the various iterations of the London Lasses with a further 6 guests. Karen is totally committed to Irish Musical culture, teaching, organising and playing, whether it be formally in the London Lasses or in those sessions. "One of my London-wide projects is with some 30 teenage players, we focus on the repertoire of a particular musician and we learn, arrange and perform 9 of their tunes. Currently we are looking at the music of Julia Clifford. Some of the youngsters are racing ahead of me and digging out tunes from the Sliabh Luachra tradition that Julia and her brother Dennis Murphy used to play." Another of Karen's projects is *In Good Company*, a loose collective of around 80 women who play music that has been composed by women such as Josephine Keegan and Edel Fox. But back to the *LL25* album, the liner notes give a full history of its personnel who have moved in and out of the ensemble. There is also a deep respect and

"The London Lasses are happy to be part of an unbroken tradition of Irish Music in the city"

scholarship for the tunes. Karen has an extensive collection of CDs and printed manuscripts and is never short of inspiration. *LL25* may be a milestone, but there's no doubt the London Lasses has many more miles left on the clock. So much has been achieved since that 1997 craic in the kitchen.

Karen concludes by telling me about the *LL25* launch weekend. "We had a formal launch concert on Friday 2nd of December and a meal on the Saturday, which was like a happy family Christmas. There was laughter and tunes; once you are a London Lass you are always a London Lass!"

You can find out about Irish music in London by visiting www.irishmusicinlondon.org. And keep up-to-speed with the London Lasses at www.londonlasses.net



Photo : Grant Burchill Photography

MUSIC NETWORK'S SPRING SEASON 2023 KICKS OFF WITH A TASTY TREAT FOR TRAD AND FOLK FANS

Seán Laffey talks to Noriana Kennedy about the upcoming February Music Network tour of Ireland.



In the first half of 2023 Music Network will be working with 25 different partners and venues in 18 counties across the country to bring audiences world-class music and unforgettable concerts. Their initial tour in February features four of Ireland's finest on the folk and traditional music scene, and it will set the bar high for the array of superb artists from the worlds of classical, contemporary, opera, roots, jazz and traditional music that follows.

The season kicks off on 8th February at St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre, Listowel with four performers who have been involved in some of the country's most lauded ensembles: Noriana Kennedy of The Whileaways and Solas on vocals and banjo, Cherish the Ladies' Mirella Murray on accordion, Donogh Hennessy who is one of Lúnasa's founding members on guitar, and Téada's Oisín Mac Diarmada on fiddle. This quartet will bring sublime songs, energetic tunes and

in Ennis in early January and I am genuinely excited about the music we are making. Donogh has written some new pieces and the interplay between Mirella and Oisín is electric."

Noriana is full of praise for the logistical organisation of the Music Network tour. "It's so professional, so smooth, so well organised, with full attention to the detailed preparations for the tour. Our sound crews and hotels are all sorted way in advance and venues are ready to welcome us and our audiences. It's a dream way of working, and crucially it allows us to focus 100% on our music."

Music Network's Chief Executive Sharon Rollston commented, "As a whole new year of musical possibilities beckons, we're excited to bring audiences our brand-new season of tours, running from February to June 2023. We're grateful to our principal funder The Arts Council, our Friends and our network of partner promoters, whose continued support helps us to bring affordable, exceptional quality live music to venues throughout Ireland and to provide professional opportunities for musicians."

The first Music Network Tour of 2023 featuring Noriana Kennedy, Mirella Murray, Donogh Hennessy and Oisín Mac Diarmada will play at the following venues:

February 2023

8 St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre, Listowel, County Kerry
9 glór, Ennis

10 Ionad Cultúrtha, Baile Mhúirne, Chontae Chorcaí

11 Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely, County Wicklow

12 National Opera House, Wexford

15 The Sugar Club, Dublin 2

16 Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire

17 Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, County Offaly

18 The Dock, Carrick-On-Shannon, County Leitrim

19 Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo

20 Station House Theatre, Clifden, County Galway

To see the full programme and buy tickets for all tours please visit: www.musicnetwork.ie/news/music-network-announces-its-spring-2023-national-touring-programme

"The essence of the folk and traditional music tours is to create something new"

captivating arrangements to audiences around the country on their tour, which runs through to 20th February with the final gig at the Station House Theatre, Clifden, County Galway.

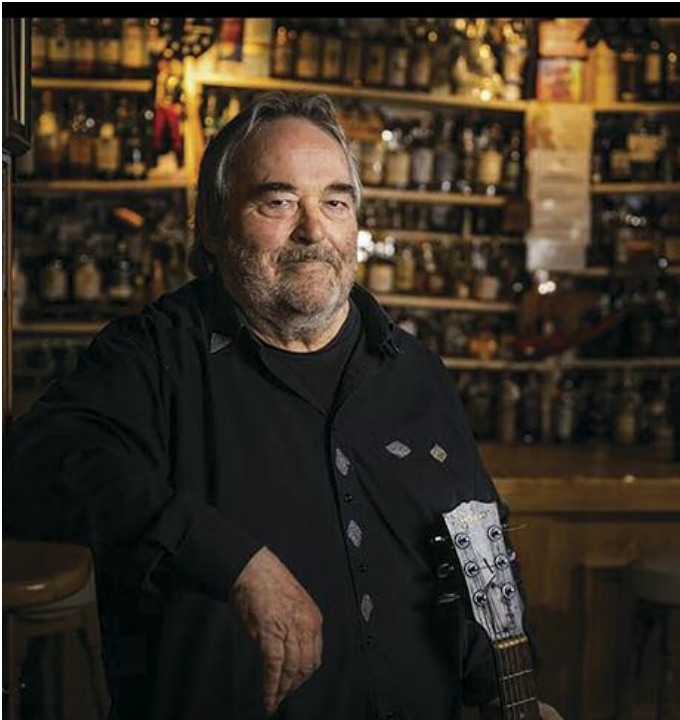
Noriana tells me she was delighted to get the call to be part of a Music Network Tour. "It's a real honour and a privilege to be selected, and it's more than a little daunting, as the essence of the folk and traditional music tours is to create something new." For Noriana this freedom to make new music was a challenge to be cherished. "I asked if it would be possible to have Donogh Hennessy on the tour, he's a guitarist that I've looked up to for years and I thought he'd be an ideal accompanist for my songs. Luckily, Music Network also had Donogh in mind so this worked out very well. When it comes to Mirella and Oisín, I've also known their work for years. I have even been on festival bills with them, but I've never played with them, so this Music Network tour is really exciting. I'll be bringing some of my favourite songs for this set ... there's a shanty, a waltz, and some big ballads for example ... I've indulged myself by having them join me on one of my own songs too.

"It has been a genuine thrill to rearrange them with the other musicians. I can tell you we met for 3 days of full-on rehearsals at glór



STORM IN MY HEART FROM JOHN FAULKNER

John Faulkner in conversation with Anne Marie Kennedy for Irish Music Magazine.



Kinvara based John Faulkner has released his third solo album *Storm In My Heart*. With original material and co-writes, it bears the hallmarks of a lengthy and very successful creative career. He spoke to me about his life's musical milestones.

John: "Growing up in London I was playing guitar from about fifteen years old, playing a Framus guitar that an uncle gave me. I taught myself a few chords, met up with like-minded mates and we formed a skiffle group, a popular genre of the time. Rehearsing in one of my mate's gardens we were eavesdropped by none other than Lonnie Donegan, who had just had a number one hit with *Rock Island Line*. 'Sounding good lads,' he said! We were blown away when he offered to show us a few chords. He talked about Huddie Leadbetter who wrote the hit and Woody Guthrie who wrote *Grand Coulee Dam*. I had never heard of Guthrie so this serendipitous meeting was my introduction to Old Time American, Blues, Dustbowl ballads, everything. My skiffle thing didn't last too long, then Elvis happened, a baptism of rock and roll, which I loved too, Hank Williams, the old timey music, country blues, Mississippi John Hurt, Appalachian music and Ewan McColl, a smorgasbord! I played through the folk revival that was countrywide, small villages with folk clubs where I got to perform and earn a few bob, a most enjoyable time in my musical journey. Meeting Peggy Seeger and Ewan McColl later, he very much encouraged me to find my own voice, to discover my own style, sage advice."

AM: "You were a guitar player, singer and art teacher before moving to Ireland."

John: "I'd been teaching and working as a musical director for the BBC with the producer Phillip Donnellan and Nigel Williams who commissioned me to make a short movie about Irish music in London, which led to something similar based in Galway with the Keane sisters of Caherlistrane among others. I met Alec Finn and was blown away by his playing, seeing first-hand the accompaniment values he brought to the songs, especially with great singers like Dolores Keane, finding counter melodies to enhance the melody, pure brilliance. That's how I got into the bouzouki because of Alec who also became a dear friend."

AM: "Your latest solo project *Storm In My Heart* took a while, didn't it?"

John: "It's been ten years in gestation. Some of the songs were written years ago, but being as self-critical as I am there have been many drafts; songs road tested with audiences, songs recorded by others, songs that almost made it to the album but didn't earn their keep, resulting in my being really happy with what got on there. It is the culmination of many years' work and I'm thrilled with the reaction so far."

AM: "Universal themes in the work but you've kept the production local, to Kinvara, where you live."

John: "Yes, that was important to me, especially with having access to great local talent. For a short time John Prine used to live near me and we'd play in the pub sessions. In my opinion John Prine was one of the most important songsmiths of our time. When I told him I was making an album and had a song he might like to join me on, 'of course,' he said without hesitation. Declan O'Rourke and I co-wrote another, Peter O'Hanlon also, Gavin Powey and Eddie Sheehan were also collaborators, eighteen musicians in total, in the capable hands of excellent sound engineers Brendan O'Regan and Paul Mulligan."

AM: "*Storm in My Heart*, the title track, is an intriguing concept of love, relationships, loss and something else, something liminal, the in-between exposed?"

"I met Alec Finn and was blown away ...seeing first-hand the accompaniment values he brought to the songs"

John: "In terms of love songs or love poems, it is generally accepted that there are two types; a song to mourn unrequited love and another to acclaim and celebrate an enduring love, but I thought there had to be something else. So in the song *Save Me A Place In Your Heart* I wrote about a love that didn't necessarily work out but was kept in fond memory, hopefully I've captured that."

AM: Do you have any plans to tour and promote *Storm in My Heart*?"

John: "I'm releasing some of the tracks separately on Spotify, YouTube, Bandcamp and at www.johnfaulknermusic.com. I am also planning on touring in 2023, I am currently looking at venues and festivals here and in the U.K."



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A NEW LIGHT ON LUCIA

Composer, songwriter, guitarist and producer Joseph Chester was back home in Dublin for the Christmas break. Seán Laffey put in a phone call to talk about Joseph's latest album.



Photo : Julie Bienvenu

Bohemia Records released Joseph's album, *LUCIA*, on January 27th, 2023. He played a solo version of the album called *Fragments of Lucia* at the Smock Alley Theatre Dublin on the release night. This is the multi-award nominated musician's first major composition for classical guitar & strings; it was commissioned by Axis Ballymun, Dublin, as part of the celebrations marking the centenary of James Joyce's *Ulysses* which took place in Dublin and globally on the 16th of June 2022. The suite, which was "inspired by fragments of the life of Lucia Joyce", had its world première performance in Dublin on Bloomsday, 2022.

Joseph's new album is an instrumental homage to Lucia Joyce (26 July 1907, Trieste – 12 December 1982, Northampton), the troubled daughter of James Joyce. Her talent burned brightly but briefly and her fate was one of confinement and erasure.

"When it came to recording having the parts written out was a real liberation"

Joseph says: "I'd not known about Lucia Joyce's story and it's not one that ended happily. A talented dancer and illustrator she was a rising star of modern dance in Paris during the late 1920's. However, she had some very serious mental health issues; she was diagnosed as schizophrenic in 1934, was prone to violent outbursts and was sexually liberated in an epoch where polite society deplored promiscuity. Another possible impact on her mental health was an unsuccessful relationship with the young writer Samuel Beckett. She was committed in 1936 at the age of 29 and became an inmate of a series of asylums until her death in 1982. James Joyce did all he could to bring about a resolution, the cost of treatment was high and he consulted with some of the leading psychiatrists of the day for help. Then the war made things even more complicated, Lucia was caught in bureaucratic limbo, her parents moved to Zurich in neutral Switzerland and she was left in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, with the

Nazis blocking her exit visa. Then in 1941 James Joyce died from complications following ulcer surgery. Her champion gone, things became worse for Lucia. In 1951 after the death of Nora Joyce, she was sent to the notoriously cruel St Andrews Hospital for Mental Diseases in Northampton in the UK, where she remained until her death in 1982.

Joseph says his guiding principle in writing a suite of music was to tell Lucia's story "Without judgement. There is a lot of scurrilous rumour and unfounded conjecture about her, with people looking through James Joyce's work for oblique references. Unfortunately Stephen Joyce destroyed her manuscripts and notes after her death. The pieces of music I composed are based on 10 facts of Lucia's life, such as her stay in *Northampton*, *The Little Match Girl*, which was her first professional engagement in Jean Renoir's film and *Candlemass 1932*, the incident which led to her brother having her sectioned for the first time.

"I had been working on the project for about a year when I mentioned the concept to Niamh Ní Chonchubhair, the Director and CEO of Axis Ballymun. She is a long-time champion of community arts engagement and knows first hand the power of arts to address mental health issues. She was immediately supportive of my ideas and commissioned me to finish the suite."

This is Joseph's first instrumental album and it lies on the classical music side of the spectrum. "I'd wanted to read and write music for years and the lockdown gave me time to master the discipline. When it came to the première, having the parts written out was a real liberation. Working with classical musicians the pieces came together so quickly, there was no rewriting, just finessing the dynamics of the individual parts."

Joseph's solo iteration of the suite called *Fragments of Lucia* is ready to be performed over the next few months. Joe lives in Rennes, the ancient capital of Brittany and he'll return to France in February where he plans to tour the suite later in the year. Having the musical score means he can collaborate with classical ensembles across Europe, which opens up many possibilities for his music to shed light on Lucia Joyce's story.

Find out more about Joe Chester's impressive opus at www.joechester.com



Photo : Julie Bienvenu



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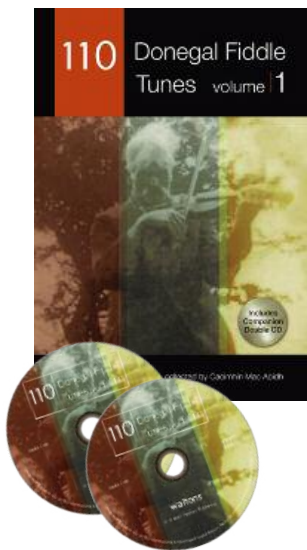
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110 Donegal Fiddle Tunes



This month we feature four great double jigs from *110 Donegal Fiddle Tunes*, compiled by Caoimhín Mac Aoidh. This is the companion tune collection to his *Between the Jigs and the Reels Revisited*, a comprehensive work on the Donegal fiddle tradition, its history and its players.

Ballyshannon Boys: This tune is transcribed from the playing of John J. Sweeney (fiddle) and his brother, Frank (piano), who recorded it on a 78rpm disc in New York City in 1927.

Connie the Soldier: The source for this tune is Mickey Doherty (1894 – ca. 1967). It is an old tune that has been in print since at least the 1840s and which has found life under a variety of titles, including 'An Ghaoth Aniar Aneas', 'John McKenna's No. 1' and 'Bolen's Fancy'.

The Frost Is All Over: The source for this tune is Donegal fiddler Con Cassidy (1909 – 1994). This is the Teelin, Donegal version of an otherwise common tune. The transcription is taken from Con's playing on *The Brass Fiddle* (Claddagh Records, 1996).

The Fair Hills of Donegal: This transcription is taken from Manus P. McLaughlin's 78rpm disc on the Columbia label in 1928, which was re-released on *The Fiddler's Delight – Recordings of Irish Traditional Irish Fiddle Playing 1921 – 1945* (Oldtime Records, 2016). The first part of the tune is 'Jackson's Rum Punch'.

Ballyshannon Boys (Double Jig)

Connie the Soldier (Double Jig)

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Connie the Soldier cont/d

Musical score for 'Connie the Soldier cont/d' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence and a double bar line. A '4' is written above the fourth measure of the third staff, indicating a four-measure rest or a specific rhythmic value.

The Frost Is All Over (Double Jig)

Musical score for 'The Frost Is All Over (Double Jig)' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff includes first and second endings, marked '1.' and '2.'. The third and fourth staves continue the melody with various ornaments and repeat signs. A '2' is written above the second measure of the third staff, and another '2' is written above the second measure of the fourth staff, indicating a two-measure rest or a specific rhythmic value.

The Fair Hills of Donegal (Double Jig)

Musical score for 'The Fair Hills of Donegal (Double Jig)' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff includes a four-measure rest, marked '4'. The third and fourth staves continue the melody with various ornaments and repeat signs.

THE LEGENDS SERIES

Chapter 22 : Damien Dempsey. An appreciation by Mark Lysaght for Irish Music Magazine.



Damien “Damo” Dempsey’s journey to his current status as an iconic figure in Irish music has been long and hard-won, but there is no doubt that his unique artistic vision, emotional vocal delivery and songwriting are based on his own life experience, which includes his personal triumph over adversity.

Born the youngest of three boys in 1975 in the Dublin suburb of Donaghmede (where he still lives), he attended Mount Temple Comprehensive School (where U2 were formed). He then enrolled in the Rock School at Ballyfermot College, where he completed a two-year diploma. He had a keen interest in music from a young age, inspired by regular family singsongs. He developed an eclectic taste, keeping his roots firmly in music, which reflected his own heritage, while embracing other genres as well. He became fascinated by Irish history and folklore and developed his knowledge via books from his local library.

He tried to develop his career in Dublin via solo gigs and some support slots, but found this to be a hard slog, and he spent some years on the dole with no clear direction. In his local area he became something of an outcast, as his chosen occupation was at variance with most of his peers. His material reflected some of his emotions around his personal situation, while observing the impact of social deprivation and addiction in inner city Dublin. To escape his mounting depression at his lack of progress, he moved to New York for a while, where he worked in a bar.

On his return to Ireland, producer John Reynolds approached him to record some of his songs in London. Reynolds augmented

the basic recordings, including contributions by Sinéad O’Connor and Brian Eno, and Damien was impressed with the results. The debut album *They Don’t Teach This Shit In School* was released in 2000. As a result of her involvement, Sinéad also became enthusiastic about Damien’s material and began to champion his work, even recording one of his songs herself and inviting him to tour with her as a support act. Other established Irish artists, including Christy Moore, began to sit up and take notice.

His breakthrough album in 2003 called *Seize The Day* entered the Irish charts on its release, won two Irish Meteor Awards and was eventually certified double platinum. His songwriting had evolved to a stage where he could explore deeply personal themes in a way that displayed a remarkable level of empathy and maturity. He used a highly inventive musical palette, which he had developed by adapting various styles including folk, traditional and sean-nós, and incorporating other elements such as rock, rap, and reggae.

He began to tour extensively and built up a very loyal fan base, many of whom were deeply moved by the content of his songs, which frequently championed the cause of the abused, downtrodden and deprived. His next album *Shots* entered the Irish charts at Number 1, and he picked up numerous awards and

“He has evolved a philosophy and view of the world which is a powerful force for good”

accolades. *Live At the Olympia* captured his stage show superbly; by now he had developed his performances to a point where the audience became deeply engaged and involved in the music.

It’s All Good, a greatest hits collection released in 2014, emphasized the quality of his work to date, and he has continued to attract legions of new admirers while diversifying his act, touring with a settled band which mixes Irish, world and rock music in a way that is unique, powered by his long-time producer John Reynolds on drums. His Christmas gigs at Dublin’s Vicar Street are now legendary, playing several nights to packed houses whose enthusiastic participation makes each event an intensely spiritual and cathartic occasion for all. They bring audience participation to a new level as the lyrics of his songs are chanted out by the massed choir.

These concerts were used as the basis for a documentary called *Love Yourself Today*, directed by Ross Killeen and featuring three people whose lives had been impacted by adverse events but had come through their respective ordeals – Damien’s personal journey also forms part of the narrative.

Damien Dempsey has become a champion for the downtrodden in society, oozing authenticity because he has personally experienced many of the troubles he writes about so expressively. He acts as a genuine voice for the disadvantaged, and has evolved a philosophy and view of the world, which is a powerful force for good. His is an artistic triumph over adversity for us all to witness and admire.

HISTORY OF IRISH MUSIC

In Part 7, Aidan O'Hara discusses Fiddle styles and players.



Much has been written about Irish music styles over the past fifty years. This publication has explored a number of regional styles “based on the assumption that musicians within a loosely defined region share a common musical style,” as Dr Caoimhín Mac Aoidh described it in his studies.

He adds: “Irish traditional music has moved from local contexts to a global community leading to questions regarding the links between music and place. While local contexts remain important for the transmission, performance and consumption of Irish traditional music, local distinctiveness is challenged by changing social and economic conditions, technology and the distances that many musicians travel to take part in musical events.”

fiddler, and others are agreed that in referring to regional musical styles based on those four geographical areas, the styles so named stem from the popularity of a musician or group of musicians from a particular region.

Dr Daithí Kearney and other scholars make it clear that the influence of the great Sligo fiddle player, Michael Coleman, and his contemporaries in America had a profound effect on traditional musicians outside of north Connacht. Their recordings were seen as the death knell for many of the regional styles that existed in Irish traditional music prior to the early twentieth century.

CONTRASTING STYLES

Caoimhín Mac Aoidh recalled that the late Patrick Kelly, a fiddler from Cree, Co. Clare best summed up “the evil side” of recordings when he stated that “the worst thing that ever happened to the West Clare style of fiddling was the appearance of Micheal Coleman’s records”. Years later, Caoimhín wrote that while he stood over what he said about 40 years earlier he would write it today with “a more tempered view” such as substituting a different word for ‘evil’.

People have noted that there’s a sense of urgency and power involved in the Donegal style and individual fiddle players from the county who have distinctive personal styles play what has been called “a very attacking type of music”. One thinks of the Doherty brothers John, Mickey and Simon, and also Neil Boyle and the Campbell brothers. John Doherty developed a highly personal style of playing, which although very much Donegal in essence was very much his own. John’s brother Mickey was said to have a style of playing that was much more like that of their father’s.

In total contrast there’s the Sliabh Luachra style, whose most noted fiddler was the late Pádraig O’Keeffe, from Scartaglen, Co. Kerry. Among the many musicians from the area that were taught by Pádraig and became noted for their prowess as musicians were Paddy Cronin, Johnny O’Leary, Terence Teahan, brother and sister Denis Murphy and Julia Clifford.

Writing over fifty years ago, Breandán Breathnach observed that in spite of what he termed “a levelling influence on traditional music” it was still possible, particularly among older players to distinguish

“Michael Coleman, and his contemporaries in America had a profound effect on traditional musicians outside of north Connacht”

The noted Sligo flute player Séamus Tansey felt strongly about what he referred to as ‘regional styles’ and said on many occasions that if Irish traditional music were to survive, regional styles must be kept alive. I can’t recall hearing if he ever defined style or how it was to be preserved, but it would have been interesting to hear his views on the subject.

It would present Seamus and others of like mind with quite a challenge for at least one good reason, clearly stated by the renowned Clare musician of this generation, fiddle player Martin Hayes: “There’s a good degree of subjectivity when you’re determining a regional style.”

One of the earliest students of the subject, Seán Ó Riada identified four principal areas in Ireland based on variances between the styles that he observed in these regions: Sligo, Donegal, Sliabh Luachra and Clare. Dr Conor Ward from Co. Leitrim, himself a

local styles. He noted that Northern performers played with an economy of ornamentation but that from Sligo southwards the music is much more decorated and all forms of ornamentation are used.

And how does Martin Hayes who can be said to have inherited the East Clare style, see it all today? “I find myself in that in-between world where in one sense I think it’s absolutely traditional, and then with just a flick like that, suddenly it’s something completely new and different.”

REFERENCE

Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, (Ossian, 1996).

Martin Hayes

Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Short History of Irish Traditional Music* (O’Brien Press, 2017).

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"In this incredible course Kevin puts down the flute, picks up the whistle, and takes you through 13 of his favourite session tunes in a very personal and most endearing way"

flute, which he is most famous for, picks up the whistle, and takes you through 13 of his favourite session tunes in a very personal and most endearing way. So, instead of these lessons feeling like Kevin is your teacher, they're more like having a chat with him, where, in his relaxed style, he imparts the wisdom of a lifetime on the Irish music scene.

Born in Birmingham, England to parents from Miltown Malbay, Co Clare, Kevin Crawford's early life was soundtracked by the resonance of the lively traditional music scene in the midlands city.

Moving to Co. Clare in 1989, he soon became a pivotal member of the effervescent session trail in the Banner county (Co Clare) before enhancing his burgeoning reputation in the group Grianán and the trio Raise the Rafters. He then propelled himself to international recognition with Moving Cloud, with whom he recorded *Moving Cloud* in 1995 and *Foxglove* in 1998. Kevin joined Lúnasa in January 1997 for a tour of Australia and has been ever-present in the group since. To date, the instrumental quintet have eight albums to their credit while Kevin has released two solo records, *'D' Flute Album* (1994) and *In Good Company* (2001). He joined fellow band member, piper Cillian Vallely for a critically acclaimed duet album, *On Common Ground*, in 2009. The innovative flute player has appeared as a guest on several albums, including singer Seán Tyrrell's *Cry of a Dreamer* (1994) accordionist Joe Derrane's *The Tie That Binds* (1998) and American singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant's 2010 release, *Leave Your Sleep*.

A year earlier along with his four fellow members of Lúnasa, he performed on The Leitrim Equation. One of Kevin's latest side-projects is the formation of a new super-trio, The Teetotallers alongside John Doyle and fiddler Martin Hayes.

The Course

In this course, Kevin teaches 13 lovely session tunes in a gentle pace, while packing each lesson full of interesting tips and techniques. The version of each tune is chosen to sit beautifully on the tin whistle and the lessons, chat and tunes are all marvellously infused with Kevin's energy, humour and experience.

Detail is given on the pulse and rhythm of various tune types, variations of rolls and ornaments, finding breath spots in a tune (*by using humming!*) and of course the 'lilt' of each melody and how to create subtle variations. Be sure to watch out for the "ACDC Ornament" later in the course, and no, it's not a nod to the famous heavy metal band but it may just get you rocking!

This course is a masterpiece of both teaching and playing, with Kevin imparting his personality and wealth of knowledge and insight into every tune.

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Kid on the Mountain
Hardiman the Fiddler

Polkas:

Knocknagoshel Polka
Ballydehob Polka

Hornpipe:

Rover Through the Bog

By the end of the course, apart from wondering when Lúnasa are next playing in your area, you'll be armed with 13 really wonderful Irish session tunes to get the best out of your tin whistle while keeping the fire burning for this amazingly versatile instrument.

Watch the first lesson in the course with Kevin where he teaches *Come West Along the Road*: <https://youtu.be/zsaRBY0le1Y>

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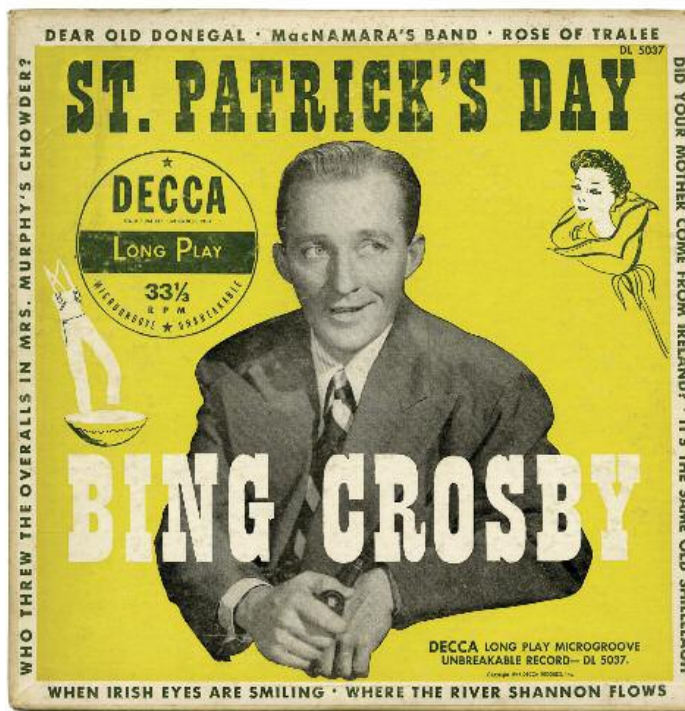


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WARD IRISH MUSIC ARCHIVES (WIMA)

Part of the Ward Irish Music Archives is The Stapleton Bing Crosby Collection, writes Mary Beth McCormack for Irish Music Magazine in part 3 of the current series.



Who knows what Barry Stapleton's name would be if his father hadn't been such a fan of Bing Crosby. "My father watched and enjoyed Bing Crosby's films," said Stapleton, Director of Ward Irish Music Archives. Apparently neither of his parents was minus craic because they named their son after Dublin-born Barry Fitzgerald, Crosby's sidekick in five movies and a member of Abbey Theatre's Irish Players.

Ed Stapleton, Barry's father, served as an MP during World War II. "He couldn't go overseas and fight because a soldier in his company got the mumps," Stapleton said, "so he was stationed in California and sometimes had to work security for celebrities.

As a result of his advertising efforts Stapleton quickly heard from "at least" six people from around the country who donated their complete Bing Crosby collections to him. He said collections came from "New York, California and everywhere in between. Even Iowa. A Crosby fan that lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sent us his miscellanea after his house was 'decimated' by a cattle stampede. Within six months I had thousands of records. I even got some rarer stuff like personal records for generals on the front line," he said.

Today, The Stapleton Bing Crosby Collection is the second-largest public collection of Bing Crosby recordings outside of Gonzaga University. Part of the Ward Irish Music Archives, The Stapleton Bing Crosby Collection occupies three complete cabinets and numerous preservation boxes. Stapleton said the assemblage contains "nearly all" of Bing Crosby's commercial recordings, numbering more than 2,000 in total. That music comes in a variety of formats including 78, 45 and 33 1/3 rpm records. He said there are numerous books included in the memorabilia including a book about Bing Crosby that was signed by Katherine Crosby, Bing Crosby's second wife.

But, Stapleton said, there is a downside to amassing and then curating such a collection. "After establishing our credibility over a number of years, we had people who would bring in just huge boxes of records and stuff," he said. "Then we had to decide what to do with the duplicates. We would never, ever dispose of those duplicates, say, in a dumpster. We just move the doubles and more on to other institutions. These personal collections are really important to the collectors. They listened to Bing Crosby all the time. He may have been their favourite entertainer and every piece in every collection we received had been carefully gathered and edited over the years and then entrusted to us."

Stapleton said he has kept in touch with some of those donors. "So many were just so happy that someone gave their memorabilia a home, keeping the collection intact. We held a

"The assemblage contains 'nearly all' of Bing Crosby's commercial recordings, numbering more than 2,000 in total"

If you were ranked sergeant or above, you could golf at Pebble Beach. My father took advantage of that and got to know Bing Crosby on the golf course and by sometimes serving as security for him.

Stapleton's fond memories of his father and the Crosby films fostered an interest in all things Crosby. He began collecting Crosby memorabilia in the late 1980s. "I looked it up and I learned that one of the biggest Bing Crosby fan clubs was being run by a gentleman in West Bend, Wisconsin, by the name of Greg Van Beek, a local broadcaster. So I located him and we connected," he said.

At the same time, Stapleton bought some ad space in some fan magazines and asked for donations of Bing Crosby memorabilia. "I made it clear that I couldn't pay for any of the items but that I could guarantee every item or collection a good home," Stapleton said.

centennial event to commemorate Bing's one-hundredth birthday and Katherine Crosby, attended. She told me she was very, very grateful that people were 'keeping Bing alive'."

Stapleton explained that Bing Crosby "became like a Michael Jackson" around 1926. He went on to host his own weekly broadcast in 1931. Crosby would perform on the show and then interview guests. He was signed by Decca Records in 1934. "By the early 1940s Crosby wanted to make Irish recordings, his mother was Irish, but the label vetoed that idea, saying that ethnic music hadn't been popular for years. All that changed after he filmed *The Bells of St. Mary's* and *Going My Way*. *Tura Lura Lura* rose to number four on the Billboard charts, the first time since the 1910s that an Irish song had done that," Stapleton said. "Bing Crosby was a great creator; music, radio, film, golf. He did it all."

<https://wardirishmusicarchives.com/> for more details.

A NEW ALBUM ...AGAIN

French band Poppy Seeds offer us *Arís*, their fourth album. Philippe Cousin met them for this IMM feature.



Photo : Bernard Larricq

“The band was formed in 2010 in Rennes,” begins Benoît Volant, “and is made up of Camille Philippe on mandolin, guitar and vocals, Tom Lemonnier on guitar and bouzouki, Pierre Cadoret on flutes and myself on fiddle.”

Benoît and Camille have known each other since secondary school, Benoît having learned Irish fiddle from Camille's father. In 2008, during an Irish music festival in Brittany, they met Tom Lemonnier. As for Pierre Cadoret, they met him the following year during the Rennes sessions. Benoît says of their beginning, “The feeling quickly spread and we wanted to build a repertoire to perform on stage.”

As Irish music is often a family affair, each of them had at least one musician relative who was interested in this music in some way. Tom admits, “As soon as we were old enough to participate in the sessions, we loved how each evening developed and how spontaneous the music was at each meeting.”

“The main idea,” says Camille, “is to be able to share the energy of Irish music as it is played in a session, whilst adding arrangements that are more suitable for the stage.”

“We're getting to be an old band,” jokes Pierre. “The team has been the same since we started 12 years ago and we have kept our way of working. We all choose the songs together, and the same process for the tunes and the accompaniment. Once the album is released, we get together on stage and enjoy playing and presenting our music to the public.”

The music that the band plays is traditional Irish music. However, they do include some recent compositions and they don't hesitate to borrow some pieces from other repertoires, notably Breton, Scottish, American or Swedish music.

“The instrumental suites are mainly built around the flute/fiddle duet,” explains Benoît. “The mandolin can then play the themes with us. For some suites, Tom and Camille are both on guitar, using different tunings.”

We wanted to know how they felt about the tradition. For Camille, “There is always an ambivalent relationship with the music. We

have a deep knowledge of the specificities of Irish traditional music with its different regional styles, and at the same time we have the desire to transgress the rules sometimes by bringing other colours to better frame this music.”

All the members of the band compose, but they also cover some recent compositions by well-known musicians such as Liz Carroll for example. “Of course, we keep some traditional tunes that we always have a lot of fun playing together,” Pierre concedes, adding, “for the songs, we write new arrangements, which really gives them a different colour.”

Benoît clarifies this when he says, “Camille chooses his songs from the American repertoire, from old-time or bluegrass albums. For our new album, we wanted to make an exception by choosing an Irish song that came from Pauline Scanlon.”

The band's musical influences are quite broad. Pierre outlines their philosophy, “We've always wanted to keep our sound: playing in the style of traditional Irish music but with bluegrass accents and arrangements that are sometimes a little pop. Over the years, we

“The main idea, is to be able to share the energy of Irish music as it is played in a session...”

have integrated more and more of our own compositions into the repertoire. This makes *Arís* a very personal album that represents our approach to Irish music after twelve years of playing together.”

“Everyone brings ideas for tunes, compositions or songs, and then we try to put together the instrumental suites and fix the arrangements. Negotiations can sometimes take a long time before we all agree,” Benoît explains with a laugh.

“On this album,” Camille adds, “we had the pleasure of being accompanied on several tracks by Félix Le Pennec on the bodhrán. Katell Kloareg also did us the honour of coming to sing her version of *Twa Sisters*. For the last track of the album, we wanted a long suite that evokes the atmosphere of the sessions, with Félix and the band Zonk.”

Pierre tells us, “We play mainly in Brittany and France. Going to play in Ireland would really be the Grail but the opportunity hasn't presented itself yet.” Benoît has the last word: “Now that the album is out, we want to share our repertoire on stage.”

See <https://poppyseeds.fr/> for details.



Photo : Eric Legret

MEET THE RADIO PRESENTER

Irish Music Magazine are pleased to feature John O'Regan, presenter of *Eclectic Celt*. Robert Heuston asks the questions.



Robert: Can you tell our readers a little about John O'Regan and your background in Irish Music and broadcasting?

John: I was born in Limerick and have been interested in music and radio since childhood. I listened religiously to *The Long Note* and *An Droichead Beo* on RTE Radio 1 in the 70's. My first radio shows were on Pirate Radio stations in Limerick, LBC in 1979 and from 1980 to 1988 I presented *Regan's Rambles* on Raidió Luimni run by the legendary John 'the Man' Frawley.

From 1989 to 1992, *Regan's Rambles* broadcasted on Radio Limerick One (RLO) and revived on Radio Galtee from 2000 to 2003. In the 90's, I was a freelance journalist in Ireland, the UK, US and Australia contributing to magazines like Irish Music Magazine, fRoots, and The Living Tradition. I contributed to music shows on RTE Radio One, 2FM, BBC Radio Ulster, Downtown Radio, Radio Kerry, 98FM, BBC Radio 4, and Travelling Folk (BBC Radio Scotland) and also Belgian and American radio. I produced and compiled albums including *The Ultimate Guide to Irish Folk*, *Gaelic Ireland*, *A Magical Gathering – The Clannad Anthology*. I wrote CD notes for BGO Records and lectured at colleges and festivals including Milwaukee Irish Festival, Copenhagen Irish Festival and Return to London Town.

Robert: When did *Eclectic Celt* commence and how has the show evolved over the years?

John: *Eclectic Celt* (EC) commenced on March 1st 2014 when Limerick Community Radio (LCCR) went on FM. (It was a completely online station before that). LCCR now has weekend live FM transmissions through Wired FM and is on all week at www.lccr.ie. I co-presented *Eclectic Celt* for two years but it has since evolved into a solo show.

The name *Eclectic Celt* suggested a broad scope of musical genres-traditional, folk and Indie singer-songwriters. I have continued to expand it with an ideal of mixing traditional songs and varied folk music with more contemporary styles and idioms, creating a worldwide audience and appeal. I have found that this open-door policy, so to speak, brings forth an inclusivity of guests from traditional Irish music even via other countries to cutting edge contemporary and eclectics. Some of our guests have included the traditional bands Altan, Teada and BackWest, ballad groups like The Dublin City Ramblers, singer songwriters Moya Brennan, Fiachna Ó Braonáin, Luka Bloom and Emma Langford, folk-rock legends Fairport Convention, The Oyster Band, Dr. Strangely Strange, Jacqui McShee (Pentangle), Charles O'Connor (Horslips), The O'Malley's, Greenshine, Laura Mulcahy, JEOin, international names Redgum and Ruth Hazleton (Australia), Ivonne Hernandez and Yves Lambert (Canada), Black Velvet (Israel), Tony Christie (UK), John Oates from Hall & Oates) and Ashley Davis (USA).

Robert: Tell us a little about what's involved in preparing your show each week and what challenges did you face during Covid 19?

John: Each week I aim for a mix of music from new releases, classic albums and rare recordings. The 60-minute show usually features 10-12 items including a guest interview whether live or recorded, along with historical and/or personal anecdotes. I have had the pleasure of actually sitting down with many of the artists one-on-one and discussed the back stories. Connections and collaborations I have assisted with or coordinated over the decades have brought lasting friendships for which I am truly grateful for. Podcasts and playlists are uploaded after the show on the *Eclectic Celt* Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/eclecticcelt>) and sent to all artists featured, or if they have passed on, I try to share with one of their relatives. I prefer using CDs to downloads and do have quite a collection. While downloads are cost effective, they sometimes don't translate to air, thus depriving an artist of exposure.

Covid 19 brought huge challenges, however LCCR remained on air, provided entertainment and acted as social outreach to audiences at home and abroad. Musicians faced new challenges, but from what I have been told, this time of not touring resulted in an increase in intuitive creativity. More social media presence ensued via Facebook channels, Zoom video performances and TikTok. Certain schedules opened up creating an increase in interview availability of artists for the show. Many artists became even more active in supporting their fanbase and reaching out to various communities, teaching song writing, music appreciation, etc.

Robert: Which Irish Traditional and Folk musicians have made a significant impact on your life?

John: My initial influences would have included Sean O'Riada, The Dubliners, Horslips, Sweeneys Men, The Johnstons and Fairport Convention. My particular favourites included The Woods Band, De Dannan, The Bothy Band and other Irish and international acts. I later developed an interest in Gaelic songs and sean-nos singing which resulted in compiling an album *Gaelic Ireland* for ARC Music in 2002. I listened to a wide mix of styles from traditional ballads, to orchestral tunes and original songs from

*“The name *Eclectic Celt* suggested a broad scope of musical genres-traditional, folk and Indie singer-songwriters”*

people like Sandy Denny, John Martyn, Alison O'Donnell and Clodagh Simmonds of Mellow Candle, Gay and Terry Woods, Iain Matthews, Folk-Rock, European folk bands, American Celtic outfits and others. This diversity helps to ensure that *Eclectic Celt* appeals to a wide audience.

Robert: What does the future hold for John O'Regan and *Eclectic Celt*?

John: I have been involved on the Adjudication Panel for the RTE Folk Awards in 2021 and 2022. I enjoyed it immensely and hope this association will continue. I have also written forewords for the latest book publications of Mary Murphy and Nicky Woulfe. I hope to continue writing and contributing to magazines online and in print and keep up my music liner note and album projects. I hope *Eclectic Celt* will continue to provide a platform for local, national and international artists. I hope to continue featuring a consistent mix of music and songs and interviews and live sessions that make for an entertaining programme and one whose profile will increase locally and nationally. Also that *Eclectic Celt* will retain its artistic integrity and continue to provide space for artists to promote their music. Having access to a local and international audience offers unlimited scope for exposure and I want to continue shining the spotlight on creative talents both old and new.

***Eclectic Celtic* radio show presented and produced by John O'Regan runs on Sundays from 2pm-3pm GMT on 99.9fm. Keep up-to-date at <https://www.facebook.com/eclecticcelt> and www.lccr.ie**

Shaskeen

in Concert



Shaskeen Concert Dates 2023

- Fri 10th Mar.** Lake View School Hall, Renmore, Galway
Sat 11th Mar. Ballinderreen Community Centre, Galway
Sat 18th Mar. Town Hall Westport, Co. Mayo
Sat 1st Apr. Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, Birr, Co. Offaly
Sat 6th May. The Cobblestone Pub, Smithfield, Dublin
Sat 20th May. Coleman Centre, Gurteen, Sligo
Sat 10th June. Town Hall Theatre Galway
Sat 29th July. Phil Murphy Trad Weekend, Wexford
Fri 11th Aug. All Ireland Fleadh, Mullingar Arts Centre
Sat 12th Aug. *All Ireland Fleadh Gig Rig, TBC*
Sun 3rd Sept. The Electric Picnic, Stradbally, Co. Laois
Sat 23rd Sept. The Roscommon Arts Theatre, Roscommon
Sat 30th Sept. The Glen Theatre, Banteer, Co. Cork
Fri 20th Oct. St Johns Theatre, Listowel, Co. Kerry
Sat 4th Nov. *Cois na hAbhna, Ennis, Co. Clare, TBC*
Sat 2nd Dec. Kilmaine Community Hall, Kilmaine, Co. Mayo



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THE BEST OF JOHN McCUSKER IS ALL ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

John McCusker tells Seán Laffey appreciating comedy is one way he enjoys excellence in performance.



Photo : Elly Lucas

John's new *Best Of* album features 30 tracks from the last 30 years, and includes four new tracks. It is a celebration not only of his solo work but also of the collaborations he has been part of throughout his career. Not yet 50 he started his professional life as a teenager, he takes up the story.

"Robin Morton asked me to join the Battlefield Band when I was 16. It was my first professional gig and I was doubly lucky as the lads in the group were older than me, they had families and they took their music seriously. I got a wage and it opened up opportunities to tour and play on international stages; because I'd joined the Batties I got my first passport. I spent 11 years with the band, starting so young I'm really relaxed on stage; it's become my natural habitat. It was a wonderful time and it allowed me to meet up with many more musicians and begin to make life-long musical friendships."

Those friendships created possibilities to work with other groups and he was recruited to play in the Kate Rusby Band and later with Mark Knopfler (he's been with the famous guitarist for the past 15 years). "I've been supported by people who have had great faith in me. For example when I was asked by Kate Rusby and Kathryn Roberts to produce their first CD together, it was all new to me. When it came to recording I threw myself into the process. When the album came out, it went on to win lots of awards, it felt like the start of something exciting."

Working with like-minded musicians it seems has been a positive feedback loop for John. This is where his appreciation of comedy comes to the fore. "At the moment I'm loving Tommy Tiernan's RTÉ chat show. I love the fact there's no one feeding him anecdotes in his ear, it's seat-of-the-pants stuff and it's compelling. I went to one of his live shows in Edinburgh and I was blown away by his professionalism. The way he structured the gig, from a whisper in the beginning to crescendos of laughter and applause at the end, it was a master class in performance. As musicians we can learn so much from watching other performers."

Another comedian whom John admires is Billy Connolly. "I was approached by Billy to write the incidental music for his New Zealand travelogue series. I'd never done anything like that before. Billy had faith in me and he would send me cassettes of him playing reels and jigs on his five-string banjo and I'd work up ideas from there. Initially I was writing too much, the skill in creating music for TV is to not get in the way of the voice. For TV music, often less is best. I'm delighted that Billy is on my *Best Of* album, he's singing the Maori love song *Pokarekare Ana* backed by his autoharp.

John says the camaraderie of music has kept him going for thirty years. He's currently working with John Doyle and Mike McGoldrick and is looking forward to a 30-date spring tour, having begun his year with gigs at Glasgow's Celtic Connections in January.

"I'm blessed that I've worked with some of the finest players and nicest people over the past 30 years. Like the lads from Transatlantic Sessions such as Jerry Douglas and Aly Bain, musicians without an ounce of ego in their bodies." And from those meetings other things arose. "I was chatting with Eddi Reader who said she was looking for an accordion player.

"As musicians we can learn so much from watching other performers"

I mentioned that Alan Kelly was a great lad to work with, she called him up and they toured for years together. I'm currently producing Alan's partner Steph Geremia's next solo album."

I ask John to sum up his *Best Of* album. "It's the first time in thirty years that I've looked back to see where I've been and who I have played with. It's a marker of course, but I'm sure I'll always revert to my old ways of making music with mates, my friends, which is the best kind of music to be making in any age. It's one of my favourite things to do."

John McCusker's *Best Of* was released on January 20th. For more details please visit www.johnmccusker.co.uk



Photo : Elly Lucas

THE MUSIC OF GREEN ROAD

Anita Lock interviews Green Road's Tony McCabe on the band and their local, national, and upcoming global musical experiences.



Green Road is an aspiring Irish folk band hailing from County Wexford. Their unique sound features traditional music and ballads interlaced with Americana and bluegrass elements and set within a fine array of string and wind instruments. Green Road is PJ Sinnott (lead vocals and five-string banjo), Jon Reville (mandolin and tenor banjo), Tony McCabe (base guitar and vocals), Ned Wall (uilleann pipes, low whistles), and Fergal O' Hanlon (guitar and vocals). While they have performed locally and nationally, Green Road and Irish soprano Clodagh Kinsella are about to make a big splash as headline acts for various 2023 St. Patrick's Day celebrations in the USA.

Anita: Tell us briefly about each of your musical backgrounds.

Tony: Certainly! Although I come from a long lineage of musicians, I owe everything I have musically to my Da, Gerry McCabe (RIP). He taught me the ropes—serving time playing the bass as a youngster alongside him—and sent me on my way to stand on some of the finest stages in the country. PJ—a great admirer of Liam Clancy, Luke Kelly, Finbar Furey, and Doc Watson—has had folk music running through his veins to the point that he headlined many a session from a young age with his 5-string banjo and uniquely powerful vocals. Fergal, who started on the Wexford folk scene, brings to the band his unique and skillful guitar-playing style, which he developed from all his

and unique sound will translate into keeping the grand tradition of folk, ballads, and trad alive and kicking—bringing it back to its roots and origins—for present audiences and future generations.

Anita: What makes Green Road stand out against other folk bands?

Tony: A lot of practicing produces tremendous energy and passion on stage. Since we don't rely on effects or technical tricks, we give audiences pure feeling and rawness. Some call it "The real deal!"

Anita: Do you foresee creating originals?

Tony: While much of what we do are trad cover ballads and tunes, we've often discussed doing our own music, so creating originals is definitely in the works for the near future.

Anita: Do you have any exciting events coming in 2023?

Tony: So far, we already have a sold-out, upcoming gig on February 4th at the National Opera House, Wexford, with an 855-seat capacity. In March, we will embark on our first tour of the USA. In October 2022, we performed with Irish soprano Clodagh Kinsella in a sold-out concert at St. Michael's Theatre in New Ross during the Eugene O'Neill Festival. Many US guests were a part of the audience, including Newell Arnerich, the Mayor of Danville, California, sister city of New Ross. Mayor Arnerich was so impressed with our performance that he invited

“In March, we will embark on our first tour of the USA”

influencers—Tony Rice, Bryan Sutton, and Christy Moore. Ned, destined and privileged to serve his time mastering the same set of uilleann pipes made by master craftsman Tom White, Ned's great uncle, brings his immense skills to every tune we perform. He also plays low whistle at an extremely high standard. Jon comes from a family of Wexford's finest musicians. Jon is a gifted banjo and mandolin player with his distinctively quirky and individual style. From a very young age, Jon played with the famous Danescastle music group. As a result, he is a master of the jigs and reels.

Anita: What goals brought you together to become Green Road?

Tony: We carry mutual respect and admiration for each other's skills, each leaving room and space for the other to shine. We also blend very well together. Green Road's goal is that our companionable passion

the band and Clodagh to perform the same concert during Danville's St Patrick's Day celebration in 2023.

What followed became a whistle-stop, coast-to-coast tour of other USA towns as headliners to St. Patrick's Day celebrations in California (San Francisco), Georgia (Savannah), and Massachusetts (Boston). If that isn't enough of a plateful, we also plan to release our first album.

Anita: What does the future hold for Green Road?

Tony: Hopefully, we'll be able to play at more lovely venues, visit more beautiful places, and make more new friends along the way. It's been and continues to be a great passion and privilege to share our music with thankful and appreciative listeners.

Check out more about Green Road at
<https://greenroadmusic.net/index.html>

MEITHEAL CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!

The 20th Edition of the Meitheal Residential Summer School takes place from July 17th – 21st, 2023.

The Meitheal Orchestra



Photo : Key

Meitheal Summer School was launched in 2004 as an experiment based on the Folkworks Residential Summer School based in Durham in the north of England and is now firmly established as one of Ireland's most prestigious summer schools, attracting students from all around the world.

As the concept of a residential (total-immersion) traditional music summer school was relatively new within the Irish Traditional Music scene and the organisers didn't have a track record in the area of running such an event, a huge effort was put into promoting it during that first year. Brochures were printed and sent to music teachers, journalists, trad radio presenters, CCE branches, music shops, venues – any individual or organisation with the slightest involvement in trad music. Applications were on paper and all the auditions were recorded on cassette and sent by post. In advance of their arrival, the written material for the students was photocopied, bound and posted to them and most communications were by letter.

That first year, a few weeks beforehand, it emerged that the venue, St. Flannan's College had been double booked and so alternative accommodation had to be found for the entire student body at short notice and they had to be bussed in every morning. Even though this took away slightly from the original concept of total-immersion residential, students who attended had a great week working with tutors Kevin Crawford, Kieran Hanrahan, Siobhan Peoples, Derek Hickey, Niall Keegan, Fergal Scahill, Zoe Conway and Mícheál Ó Raghallaigh.

The following year, the team moved to a more compact campus in Villiers School in Limerick, where they remained for the next 14 years and saw Meitheal build and establish itself as a regular fixture on the Irish Traditional Music calendar. Over-expansion was always avoided due to the logistical difficulties it would cause in relation to accommodation and the staging of a show. With demand being hard to ignore, in 2018, Meitheal returned to the original larger campus of St. Flannan's in Ennis. And now in 2023, we see it celebrate 20 years.

Garry Shannon has been coordinator and Ernestine Healy the Executive Director since its inception in 2004, along with co-Directors Eimear Ní Mhaolmhuaidh and Orla Healy. Fionnuala Rooney also spent a short stint as Director in the early days.

Schedule for the week

As it has been since the beginning, the usual intense programme will pertain. On the website www.tradweek.com, applicants are warned *not to come unless you have a trad obsession!* Certainly, a prior level of high competence is required to keep up with the level of activity involved and grasp the various innovations. In addition, one needs quite a level of stamina due to the long hours as one moves between several tutors to participate in the various modules. As always, students will partake in classes in arrangement and composition, in addition to the normal masterclasses. They will also participate in lectures and workshops on a variety of music subjects including some aspects of recording and performance, sessions, concerts, a trad table quiz, trad disco, along with lots more fun activities.

Cooperation with other bodies & organisations

The Meitheal project grew out of an eponymous Comhaltas initiative in 2003 which encouraged branches to reach out to other community bodies, businesses and organisations and foster collaboration for mutual benefit – in the spirit of the proverb *Ní neart go cur le chéile*. That spirit of collaboration still fuels Meitheal and a glance at the array of partner logos on their site www.tradweek.com gives a sense of the emphasis they have on partnership. They retain reciprocal ties with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and festivals such as Corofin Tradfest, Kilfenora Tradfest, Consairtín, Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and Fleadh

“Meitheal Summer School is now firmly established as one of Ireland's most prestigious summer schools, attracting students from all around the world”

Nua etc. Meitheal has also had arrangements with Fleádh TV, Clare & Limerick Arts Offices, Raidió na Gaeltachta, Gael-Linn, Irish Music Magazine, NYAH, Cork ETB and Limerick ETB and more. They value very much their links with the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick, which has generated performance opportunities in the Irish World Academy for Meitheal students, participation on the BA in Irish Music Undergraduate Programme along with their BLAS International Residential Summer School of Traditional Irish Music and Dance.

SOME OF THE TUTORS ALREADY CONFIRMED FOR 2023:

Doireann Ní Ghlacáin is a fiddle player, sean-nós singer, academic and broadcaster from Clontarf Dublin. She learnt the fiddle from her father and inherited a love of the Irish language from her mother who hails from the west Cork Gaeltacht of Cúil Aodha. Ní Ghlacáin has been at the forefront of Irish language broadcasting with her work with TG4 and has toured the world with her fiddle playing in China, The Middle East and all over Europe and America.



Jody Moran is accomplished on a variety of instruments (including liting!) but most well-known for his tenor banjo playing. He has tutored in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and France has also twice won the gold medal in the newly composed tune category at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Since emigrating to Australia he has been nurturing the scene there with an annual traditional music festival. He is also a mainstay in the vastly popular Facebook group for fellow tenor banjo nerds; 'Banjoheads'.



Killian Shannon plays banjo, bouzouki and guitar. He has played, recorded and toured with various groups, including the Fureys, and dance shows over the years and has held residencies on cruise ships and American folk clubs. He is also a composer and arranger and works with Music Generation in Clare.



Anthony Quigney comes from a well-known, Co Clare traditional music family. He plays flute, whistles and piano and has been a member of the iconic Kilfenora Céilí Band for 3 decades. He has toured far and wide & has appeared on 9 studio albums including band, solo & duet projects. His solo flute and whistle album, *Breath-Taking* was released in 2021. He is also an accomplished music teacher, arranger and producer and has been a board member of Glór Arts Centre.



Ronan O'Flaherty is in much demand as a performer and fiddle tutor and has over 20 years' experience. He has guested on many studio albums over the years and recorded a critically acclaimed duet album with the renowned concertina player Edel Fox back in 2006. He's a member of the legendary De Danann with whom he has toured Europe, America and Canada.



An all-round extraordinary musician, **Tara Breen** was the fiddler with the legendary band The Chieftains. She has 11 solo All-Ireland titles and was invited to perform at Dublin Castle for the Queen of England during her State visit to Ireland. Tara has numerous recording credits to her name and regularly guests with artists such as Carlos Nuñez, Stockton's Wing, and the Trí Tones. Tara also tours with Pádraig Rynne and Jim Murray.



Piper and fluteplayer, **Ivan Goff** is from Dublin and is a member of Irish traditional band *Danú*. He has performed/toured worldwide in duets and ensembles with many household names of Irish music including Martin Hayes, Eileen Ivers, Dervish, and Lúnasa. With credits that range from film and theatre to appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Ivan has also performed in Broadway productions such as *Riverdance* etc.



Ivan has a PhD in music from NYU and MAs from Queens, Belfast and UCD.

Eimear Coughlan from Tulla in Co. Clare continues the musical heritage of her grandfather Paddy Canny. As a harpist, she has performed on several music tours throughout Europe. Also a fiddle player, Eimear learned her music from her grandfather and in more recent times, she has become a member of the highly acclaimed Tulla Céilí Band. Eimear's harp playing can be heard on the new album *Úrnuá* with Carl Hession and Francis Cunningham.



Francis Cunningham hails from Crusheen, Co. Clare. He is described by Kevin Crawford as one of the finest young exponents of the concertina with a strong emphasis on the Clare tradition. A winner of numerous All-Ireland concertina titles, he has taught and performed at various festivals such as Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, Consairtín, The Feakle Festival, Scoil Éigse, The O Carolan Harp Festival and Concertina Cruinniú.



Niamh Dunne is an accomplished fiddle player and singer known for her folk-infused fiddle compositions and smoky warm vocal style. She has performed on the world stage as founding member of the renowned band Beoga. Their album *How to tune a fish* was shortlisted for a Grammy nomination in the 'Best contemporary world music album' and they have won widespread acclaim for their collaboration with Ed Sheeran.



Cork native, **Alan Finn** is leader of the Shandrum Céilí Band. A winner of multiple awards, he performed for Barack Obama in the White House on St. Patrick's Day in his first year in office. Renowned as a box-player, he also plays fiddle and viola and is possibly the most successful ever céilí band and grúpa ceoil coach. He teaches music all over North Cork.



The Meitheal Orchestra

The experiment of the Irish traditional group Ceoltóirí Chualann by Seán O'Riada in 1960, laid down a template which has guided Irish music bands, in all its genres since.

In the late 1980s, the concept of a Traditional Folk Orchestra was pioneered by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann under the musical direction of Micheál Ó hAlmhain, and they continued to make music together up until 1995. The idea of playing music that was traditional with orchestral arrangements along with newly composed tunes, was something fresh and exciting in the tradition. The National Folk Orchestra was reformed in 2013 to perform *The Boróimhe Suite* which was composed by Michael Rooney and they are most recently under the direction of Tom Doorley. The last decade has seen the concept of the traditional folk orchestra grow even further across the country.

Since its inception in 2004, Meitheal has integrated the concept of the traditional orchestra as part of its programme, providing an opportunity for all students to engage in dynamic, innovative and creative aspects of music. One of the challenges is getting it together in such a short time but each year the enthusiasm, talent and love for music that the students bring, makes the job of producing it so much easier.

The first iteration saw the orchestra work an arrangement under the baton of Garry Shannon. This continued for the first few years where tunes were chosen, and traditional arrangements placed with them. In 2008, Ernestine Healy (executive director) considered the option of

writing a full suite for the orchestra. With its success that year, it was decided that a prolific musician and composer within the Irish Music scene would be commissioned to compose a suite for the orchestra and come and work with them the week of the summer school. Over the following 15 years, composers have included Simon Thourmire, Anne-Marie O'Farrell, Tom Doorley, Padraic O'Reilly, Michael Rooney, Mairearad Green, Zoe Conway, Ryan Molloy, Luke Daniels, Karen Tweed along with their very own executive director Ernestine Healy who is taking the helm again for 2023.

At the time of going to press, Ernestine said that as of yet she had no definite plans for the suite of music. *"I normally sit at the piano and play for a few hours to let the creative juices flow. I love to work harmonically and let pieces grow from there. So I will probably start by using that approach and then see where it takes me. I do want to create something that will encourage the Meitheal students to expand their own musicality and technique. I like to push students outside their comfort zone and expand the limits of their musical potential, so that will strongly influence my approach. I am really looking forward to the experience, as composition is an aspect of music that I really enjoy. I am really looking forward to writing the suite and the prospect of working with the Meitheal students again this year, especially as it marks our 20th year!"*

Recognition for Meitheal Students

As in previous years, at Meitheal 2022, a number of students were singled out for expertise in various musical disciplines. The awards presented at Meitheal are designed to give the recipients a leg up and a kick-start in their performance careers. Most of the awards consist of opportunities to appear at venues and festivals normally beyond their reach. The following are some of the award winners:

Jack Dilleen fiddler and lilter from Doora, Co. Clare won a full-scholarship to Meitheal 2023 (value €770) for excellence in composition. He believes in seeking beauty in other people's compositions and then finding his own journey, weaving tunes out of memories. His winning tune is called *The Glebe House*, a three-part jig named after an old building near his mother's home where he played as a child.



Timpeall na Tire appeared on Fleadh 2022 TG4 & a concert in IWA, UL

Photos : Key

Aisling Moroney and **John Munday** were each awarded half-scholarship to Meitheal 2023 (value €385) for excellence in composition.

Éabha Ní Mhurchú was awarded an opportunity to exhibit her talent on concertina to a discerning audience at Consairtín 2023 in Ennis. Consairtín is run by Aine Hensey and Tim Collins and has grown to become Ireland's premier concertina event.

Aoife Ní Chonghaile (harp), **Rachel Mahony** (concertina) along with the group **Snasta** played to a full house at a prestigious concert in St. Paul's Church at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar in 2022.

Bhuaigh **Sorcha Hennessy & John Elwood** deis freastal ar Choláiste Gaeltachta de chuid Gael-Linn i dTír Chonaill. Leath-scoláireacht a bheas ann agus tapóidh siad an deis an samhradh seo chugainn.

Aisling Moroney and **John Munday** are to spend a week on the *BA Irish Music programme* at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick due to their excellent musicianship and maturity beyond their years. This will take place during Spring 2023.

Darragh Egan is to attend the BLAS International Summer School of Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy in Limerick this Summer 2023 – a great opportunity to broaden horizons and engage with students of various nationalities.

Mairéad O'Brien (fiddle) was awarded a performance as support act at *Corofin Trad fest* this Spring. She is a performer mature beyond her years. The festival has not been held during the Covid era and makes a welcome return to the calendar this year under the stewardship of Padraic O'Reilly.

Tá **John Munday & Rian McCarthy** fós ag feitheamh ar pháirt a ghlacadh i gclár ar *RnaG*. Cabhróidh siad le Neansaí Ní Choisdealbha clár ceoil a chur le chéile agus déanfaidh siad agallamh & dreas ceoil freisin beo ar *RnaG* uair éigin le linn an Earraigh. John & Rian are looking forward to a discussion and performance on Raidió na Gaeltachta in the company of presenter Neansaí Ní Choisdealbha.

Harpist and concertina player, **Emily Greaney** will play support to a major act at Kilfenora Trad Fest in April 2023.

The Ed Reavy International Fiddle Competition was held in Autumn 2022 and **Cara Finn** was given an opportunity to compete there and also to perform a slot at a concert event.



Snasta performed a Concert slot at the Fleadh Cheoil

Photo : Key



Photo : Key

Cara Finn performed at the Ed Reavy International Fiddle Competition

Áine Teape and **Anna Moynihan** are scheduled to perform a gig as a duo at Fleadh Nua in Ennis in May 2023.

Matthew Hurrell O Connor was awarded a performance slot on TG4 at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2022 which garnered great social media reaction from all over the country.

The group **Timpeall na Tíre** who draw members from various counties had an acclaimed performance on TG4 last August. They are also due to perform a lunchtime concert at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick in Spring 2023. Recipients of this award also receive an expert workshop on the day.

Most of the above awards and more will be offered again to the students next July and represent impressive goals again for this year's Meitheal applicants. **Further awards are in the pipeline, so keep an eye on www.tradweek.com and the Meitheal Facebook page for details.** Meitheal welcomes suggestions and opportunities for synergy with other bodies, especially in this, their 20th year.

For many years, a representative student from Meitheal was included in the Comhaltas Tour of Ireland but sadly, the tour was suspended during Covid and as of yet, the custom of the tour has not been revived.



Photo : Key

John Munday & Rian McCarthy - awarded an appearance on R na G

Details re. application

All applications are online at www.tradweek.com/applicationform.

Part of the application involves uploading an audio clip to verify competence and to help stream applicants into classes.

Even those who attended previously must furnish a recording as part of the application. In view of the fact that Meitheal is confined to one venue in 2023, *the application date is significant* this year. The date of application is the date both elements have been received:

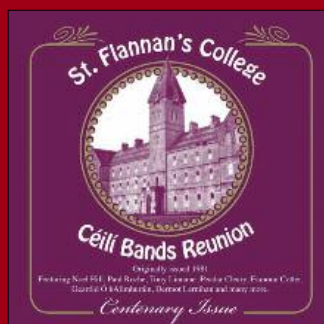
“Applications close Friday March 24th”

1. Application form completed and submitted online at www.tradweek.com/applicationform
2. Deposit (€200) paid by EFT or posted to Meitheal, c/o Garry Shannon, Ruan, Co. Clare.

Contacts: Ph. 0876704465. **Email** meitheal1@gmail.com

Meitheal runs from July 17th to 21st in St. Flannan's College, Ennis. Applications close Fri. March 24th.

St. Flannan's College re-issue classic trad music album



The Meitheal venue, St. Flannan's College, Ennis has a proud history of involvement in trad music. The re-launch of the classic trad music album *St. Flannan's Céilí Bands Reunion* took place in Glór on Jan 22nd. It was a nostalgic night, bringing old musical comrades back onstage together, who hadn't met for 40 years – and they shared the limelight with the College's

current crop of trad music talent.

By the early 1970s, the traditional music revival in Clare had brought many young musicians to St. Flannan's. Determined to foster this talent, Fr. John Hogan, himself a fine fiddler, organised the first College Céilí Band in 1970. The baton was soon taken up by Fr. Joe McMahon and later Fr. James Grace. This album gives a sample of the musicians and bands who contributed to that early successful era, during which u18 All-Ireland CB titles were won in 1971, '76, '78 and '79. The cassette was first issued in 1981 to mark the centenary of the College. Now, 40 years later, it has been re-mastered onto CD for posterity and was formally launched on January 22nd.

The album features artists who represented St. Flannan's in solo and band competitions at the Fleadh and Slógadh from 1973 to 1981 and appeared at concerts all over the county. Many of them kicked on from their stage and studio experience with the College and built subsequent musical careers which brought them round the world in the following decades.

Included are early-career solo items from Noel Hill (*concertina*), Paul Roche of Stockton's Wing (*flute*), Tony Linnane (*fiddle*), Peadar Cleary (*vocals*), Eamonn Cotter of Shaskeen (*flute*), Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin (*uilleann pipes*) and Dermot Lernihan (*accordion*), who in 1981 had already become artists of note. The Céilí Band tracks also include many younger musicians whose careers flourished in subsequent years.

A bumper crowd was in attendance to welcome back and to celebrate the veterans as they performed some of the tracks and to support and applaud performances of the current crop of musicians and singers who are nurtured by their teachers Fionnuala Rooney, Edel Vaughan and Garry Shannon.

The album St. Flannan's College Céilí Bands Reunion is available from www.custysmusic.com



FÉILE PATRICK BYRNE**Irish Traditional Arts Festival****February 25th and March 30th – April 2nd, 2023****www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie**

The Máirtín O'Connor Band, Gráinne Holland, Tara Breen, Pádraig Rynne, Jim Murray and the Salamanca Céilí Band are among the confirmed artists for this year's Féile Patrick Byrne in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. Organised since 2007 by the local branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the féile honours the local 19th century harper Patrick Byrne who was the first Irish traditional musician ever photographed.

The Máirtín O'Connor Band – Máirtín with Cathal Hayden and Seamie O'Dowd – will perform a stand-alone festival launch gig on Saturday 25th February in the Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen.

The festival proper will run over the Palm Sunday weekend, Thursday 30th March to Sunday 2nd April. On Friday, Gráinne Holland will give an intimate performance in the wonderfully atmospheric St. Finbarr's Church. On April Fool's night it will be the turn of master musicians Pádraig Rynne, Tara Breen and Jim Murray to showcase *Nasc*, their critically acclaimed album from last year.

Sunday 2nd April will feature The Salamanca Céilí Band in a sets céilí (dances will be called). Add in workshops, sessions and heritage events and this is a weekend not to be missed. Full details will be posted on www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie.

Carrickmacross Comhaltas / Féile Patrick Byrne would like to thank our funders, the Arts Council, Monaghan County Council, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann for their support.

Visit www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie

CO CAVAN NYAH ST PATRICK'S WEEKEND**NYAH Feast of Tradition****March 16th -19th, 2023 <https://www.facebook.com/cavanmusic>**

The NYAH celebrates the traditional music, song, dance and culture of County Cavan, the Ulster tradition and the county's very own musical style. Workshops, Open Air events, Recitals, Sessions & master-classes.

Thursday 16th NYAH CCE Musicians and friends will visit selected Nursing Homes. Ramblin' house Cootehill Session from 9pm. St Patrick's Day 17th Farnham Arms Cavan hosts a four hour Session from 2pm with Martin & Karen McMahon and friends. 18th March Townhall Cavan NYAH Jig of Life Award to Oliver Diviney Button Accordion Legend Galway with Guests Annette Owens, Brenda Mc Cann, Fermanagh, Kanako Machida Japan, Brian McGrath Fermanagh, Darren Breslin Fermanagh, Stanley & Evija Nwaneri & Multicultural Dancing Group, Eamon Mc Givney Longford, Philip Clarke, Neansaí Ní Choisdealbha Galway, Martin Murphy Longford, Aoife Murray McGovern, Hannah O Reilly, Fintan McManus, Martin Donohoe & Karen McMahon. **Tickets (049) 4380494 or Book Online Via www.townhallcavan.com 8pm start.**

10pm Session Cavan Crystal Hotel, Sunday 19th 11am -3pm Workshops, 3pm Farnham Arms Hotel hosts Multicultural Music Song and Dance with 4C Group admission free. 9pm Session in Percy French Bar Cavan.

Supported by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon FIS Scheme, Arts Office, Cavan County Council, Farnham Arms Hotel, Ramblin' house Cootehill, Cavan Crystal Hotel, Backyard Arts Centre, Lizzie Buggies Ballyconnell, Shannonside Northern Sound Radio & Raidió na Gaeltachta.

March festival info is available on the County Cavan Nyah Facebook page and www.cavanarts.ie

NYAH Radio Show every Saturday 8pm on both Radio Shannonside and NorthernSound. Contact Martin Donohoe mob : 086 2342270, email: cavanmusiclive@gmail.com and www.cavanarts.ie

"CUP OF TAE" FESTIVAL**April 28th – May 1st, 2023 www.cupoftaefestival.com**

The Annual "Cup of Tae" Festival in Ardara, Co. Donegal, takes place again this year on May Bank Holiday Friday 28th April to Mon 1st May, 2023. This year is a special year for the committee as we honour one of the truly unsung heroes of the festival and the teaching of traditional music in general.

This year we honour Donna Harkin with a special Concert in her honour on the Friday night in her favourite spot: The Beehive

Bar. Donna has been teaching young people at the festival since it started focusing on the young and beginners as she has that wonderful temperament and passion to see more and more people learn how to play an instrument. In the world of traditional music Donna is loved by all who know her, and all are so happy with the committee's decision to honour her. Of course Donna will be one of the teachers at the famous schools of music as part of the "Cup of Tae" festival.

In the past wonderful teachers like Jim McKillop, Brid Harper, The Campbells, Michael O'Rourke, Martin McGinley, Seamus Gibson to name but a few have been teachers at the festival.

The "Cup of Tae" festival often affectionately known as the biggest little festival in Ireland is a must for lovers of traditional music with a spontaneous session at all times throughout the festival.

Accommodation can be secured by contacting the accommodation page on Ardara.ie

Find out more at www.cupoftaefestival.com

MINNESOTA IRISH MUSIC WEEKEND**June 8th – 11th, 2023****<http://www.centerforirishmusic.org/mim/>****The Center for Irish Music, St. Paul MN, Presents the 15th Minnesota Irish Music Weekend.**

Presented by the Center for Irish Music, Minnesota Irish Music Weekend is a unique festival that pairs world-class traditional Irish musicians and teachers with learners of all ages for a weekend of workshops, lectures, sessions, and concerts.

Each of our visiting artists is recognized for their musical mastery and will offer insights and techniques to help learners tap into the deep roots of traditional Irish music. This year's featured artists include musicians and educators Liz and Yvonne Kane – The Kane Sisters – from North Connemara.

The 2023 weekend starts with a rousing **Kick-Off Celebration** at a local brewery. **The Great Session Experience** is open to all and includes a special grand opening celebration of the new Center for Irish Music home at Celtic Junction Arts Center. Featuring all visiting artists, the much-anticipated **Master Artists Concert** will also be broadcast live.

Programs include:

- Irish Trad Immersion Camp for 9-12 year-olds
- Intermediate-Advanced Teen Program
- Adult Workshops, Lectures & Classes for intermediate to advanced-level students

Workshops are offered in accordion, banjo, bouzouki, concertina, fiddle, flute, tin whistle, uilleann pipes, and song, along with fascinating in-depth talks and lectures with visiting artists on the Irish musical tradition.

Lecture, workshop, and concert prices range from \$10 to \$250 for a weekend package. More information can be found at <http://www.centerforirishmusic.org/mim/>.

The Center for Irish Music, 836 Prior Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104. Telephone: +1 (651) 815-0083. www.centerforirishmusic.org

21st ANNUAL PENN-MAR IRISH FESTIVAL**Set for June 17th, 2023 <https://pennmaririshfestival.com/>**

The Penn-Mar Irish Festival returns to the grassy grounds of The Markets at Shrewsbury on Saturday, June 17, 2023.

This volunteer-run community celebration of Irish heritage will feature traditional and contemporary live Irish music, Irish dance groups, cultural workshops and living history exhibits, Irish food, a children's area, and a variety of vendors offering Irish goods including gifts, clothing, jewellery, music, books, pottery, photography, stained glass, and more.

The festival committee is proud to present the following performers for 2023: Eileen Ivers, Arise & Go, Cas Ceol, Enda Reilly, Screaming Orphans, Steel City Rovers, Susquehanna Pipes & Drums, McGinley School of Irish Dance, NiRiain School of Irish Dance, and Oh! Gills Irish Dancers.

The children's area will again offer free crafts, games, face painting, bounce houses, and more.

Some festival seating is provided, but lawn chairs and blankets are welcome. Please, no pets or outside food and beverages.

The Markets at Shrewsbury is located at 12025 Susquehanna Trail, Glen Rock, PA 17327 (in southern York County off I-83 between exits 4 and 8). Parking and shuttle bus service will be provided at nearby locations (look for signs).

For discounted advance festival tickets and complete details, please visit PennMarIrishFestival.com. You can also follow updates

NYAH

St Patricks Weekend NYAH Feast of Tradition March 16th -19th 2023

The NYAH celebrates the traditional music, song, dance and culture of County Cavan, the Ulster tradition and the county's very own musical style.

AMONG the Highlights

Saturday 18th March in Townhall Cavan NYAH Jig of Life Award to Oliver Diviney Button Accordion Legend Galway with Guests Annette Owens, Accordion and Brenda Mc Cann, Fiddle Fermanagh Kanako Machida (Accordion) Japan, Brian McGrath (Banjo and Piano) Fermanagh Darren Breslin Accordion Fermanagh, Stanley & Evija Nwaneri & Multicultural Dancing Group, Eamon Mc Givney Fiddle Longford, Philip Clarke Pianist Neansai Ni Choisdealbha Flute /Whistle Galway, Martin Murphy Drums Longford, Aoife Murray McGovern, Hannah O'Reilly Singers & Fintan McManus Guitar, Martin Donohoe Accordion & Karen McMahon Guitar

TICKETS (049) 4380494 or Book Online Via www.townhallcavan.com 8pm Start

The NYAH gathers together young and old for a festival of diversity, community, new horizons, shared spaces, safer communities, cultural expression and new friendships. Workshops, Open Air events, Recitals, Sessions, master-classes and ONLINE.

Supported by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon FIS Scheme, Arts Office, Cavan County Council, Farnham Arms Hotel, Ramblin' house Cootehill, Cavan Crystal Hotel, Backyard Arts Centre, Lizzie Buggies Ballyconnell, Shannonside Northern Sound Radio & Raidió na Gaeltachta.

March festival info is available

on the County Cavan Nyah

 page and www.cavanarts.ie

NYAH Radio Show every Saturday 8pm

on both Radio Shannonside and NorthernSound.



Email cavanmusiclive@gmail.com Martin Donohoe 0862342270



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June 17, 2023

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ENDA REILLY

ARISE & GO

CAS CEOL



PennMarIrishFestival.com

SCOIL SAMHRAIDH WILLIE CLANCY

Miltown Malbay, Co Clare

51st Annual Willie Clancy
Summer School
1st - 9th July, 2023



Photo: Eamon McGivney

Tuition on uilleann pipes, whistle, flute, fiddle, concertina, button accordion, melodeon, banjo, harmonica, harp, step dancing, set dancing, Conamara sean-nós dance.

Workshops on the Irish and English language song traditions.

Dúchas an Cheoil, the Scope of Irish Music, is a week-long course on the history and evolution of Irish traditional music, song and dance.

Lectures, recitals, concerts, film documentaries, céilithe.



Information on Registration and Programme:

086-8773747/087-9500006/087-9264256 / Scoilwclancy73@gmail.com

Accommodation: 089-2320498 / kilduffmg@gmail.com

www.scoil samhraidh willie clancy.com

on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (#PennMarlIrish). Marketing and volunteer opportunities are available in support of the festival.

For all inquiries, please email PennMarlIrish@gmail.com

SCOIL SAMHRAIDH WILLIE CLANCY

July 1st – 9th, 2023 www.scoilsamhraidhwilleclancy.com

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Willie Clancy's death in January 1973, aged 54. His reputation as a piper had been well established by the 1960s and his residence on the Flag Road, Miltown Malbay, had become a port of call for his peers and young aspiring pipers who were keen to meet the man, hear his music, and learn from him. Miltown was a place of pilgrimage for traditional musicians before the summer school was established, and the media was taking an interest in the piper. An illustration of this was the short film documentary shot in Clancy's workshop in 1965 by Swedish film maker Lennart Malmer and shown at last year's school.

A founder member of Na Píobairí Uilleann in 1968, Willie Clancy was always interested in passing on knowledge of traditional music to younger generations, particularly the art and craft of uilleann piping. Immediately after his death a local committee of his friends, headed by Martin Talty and Muiris Ó Rócháin, set out to organise a commemorative event in his memory. Scoil Éigse Willie Clancy, as it was then called, ran from the 28th July to 4th August 1973.

The school has attracted thousands of students to Irish traditional music from all over the world. And it has fulfilled the wishes of the founders of the school: that traditional music be taught for its own sake, in a non-competitive environment, where an appreciation of its artforms could be cultivated and personal styles developed.

To find out more about the 2023 School visit www.scoilsamhraidhwilleclancy.com

37th SOUTH SLIGO SUMMER SCHOOL

July 9th – 15th, 2023 www.southsligosummerschool.com

We are back again in person this July! Having made a successful return to a full face-to-face summer school in 2022, we are more than delighted that the 37th South Sligo Summer School will take place in person in Tubbercurry, Co Sligo, from 9th to 15th July 2023. Join us once

more, or indeed for the first time, for an eclectic week of fun, learning, camaraderie, playing, singing, dancing, listening and total engagement in the pure enjoyment of our traditional music, song and dance here in the heart of South Sligo. We can't wait to welcome you all.

Our programme of classes and workshops in a whole range of musical instruments as well as different singing and dancing styles, concerts, céilithe, talks, sessions and more will cater for all levels of experience. A great week's music, song and dance is in store with everything happening right in the heart of Tubbercurry.

As always, we are looking forward to a full and varied programme of afternoon events and one of the guaranteed highlights for 2023 will be an informal musical gathering on Friday 14th July with the legendary Connemara box player PJ Hennon. Living in South Sligo for many years now, PJ is a prolific musician whose latest album of melodeon music is eagerly awaited and will be launched at the summer school.

Please refer to our new website

www.southsligosummerschool.com where all programming details will be made available in the coming weeks. Booking and pre-payment for all classes and workshops can be done directly through our website ahead of the summer school and this will be set up through Eventbrite as in 2022. Contact us by phone 00-353-89-6111375 or email : anseo@southsligosummerschool.com with any enquiries.

MEITHEAL 2023 IN ENNIS

July 17th – 21st, 2023 www.tradweek.com

This year, Meitheal will be held once again in St. Flannan's College, Ennis. Meitheal 2023 will run from July 17th to 21st. A stellar cohort of tutors is being lined up.

Reaction to Meitheal every year has been extremely positive and many students highlight the Finale Concert as an unforgettable experience. The Meitheal team are really delighted with the tutor line-up for next July. Confirmed so far: Fiddle: Tara Breen, Ronan O Flaherty, Doireann Ní Ghlacáin, Niamh Dunne. Flute & Pipes: Anthony Quigney, Ivan Goff. Harp: Eimear Coughlan. Concertina: Francis Cunningham. Concertina: Alan Finn. Banjo: Killian Shannon, Jody Moran.

Awards of solo & group concert slots at various festivals are a very exciting aspect of Meitheal for students – as are the other opportunities

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- Family Fun & Learning Area
- Irish Cultural Area
- ShamRock N Run 5K
- High Nelly Bike Rally

- Workshops in Irish Dance, Music, Language & Culture
- Whiskey Tasting
- Rugby Tournament
- Highland Games

- Celtic Cruise Motorcycle Rally
- Outdoor Catholic Mass on Sunday
- Celtic Vendors
- Food & Drink
















FÉILE PATRICK BYRNE

30 March to 2 April

Gráinne Holland, Pádraig Rynne, Tara Breen & Jim Murray, the Salamanca Céilí Band

Concerts, workshops, sessions, heritage events
www.feilepatrickbyrne.ie






The "Cup of TAE" "Traditional" Music Festival 2023

Concerts, workshops & Sessions



Fri 28th April to Mon 1st May, 2023
 ARDARA, CO. DONEGAL FAMOUS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

This is the 20th "Cup of TAE" Festival
 We welcome all our international musicians back to the 20th "Cup of TAE" Festival
 This year's Guest of Honour is **Donna Harkin**, one of the country's top accordion players.

Ireland's top teachers will be on hand to tutor at the famous Schools of Music
 Come to the famous schools of music in fiddle, flute, whistle, accordion, with Ireland's top teachers open air recitals free entertainment, spontaneous sessions a weekend not to miss CUP OF TAE
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For info email - glenardfish@gmail.com
 Website - www.cupoftaefestival.com
 Tel Stephen (087) 2424590 or John 074 (95) 41769



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20


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 W.B. Yeats 'Mythologies'

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celticfestival.ca


College and Kids' Camp
 August 7th to 11th, 2023

Celtic Roots Festival
 August 11th to 13th, 2023

Our College is led by instructors from all over the world while the Festival features an Artisan Village alongside international and award-winning musicians.

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such as RnG involvement, a scholarship to Blas, a week on the B.A. in Irish Music and Dance – agus na scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta Irish College scholarships from Gael-Linn.

Information and application forms from Garry Shannon, Ruan, Co. Clare, Tel : 087 6704465 www.tradweek.com or also via email : meitheal1@gmail.com Closing Date: March 24th.

IOWA IRISH FEST

Waterloo, Iowa, USA

August 4th – 6th, 2023 www.iowairishfest.com

Be sure to save the date and plan to be at the Iowa Irish Fest this summer for our 17th year, August 4th-6th, in downtown Waterloo. What began as an informal family picnic organized in the back-parking lot of a local Irish pub, has grown into one of the Midwest's premier Irish events. Located in and around Lincoln Park, our fest highlights Irish Culture, music, and dance from the US, Ireland, and Scotland. We are happy to announce we can also add France and Italy to that list this year. True world-class entertainment.

All three BIG days of entertainment will bring you major headliners, the bands Gaelic Storm and Scythian. We will also be welcoming back your favourite mainstage performers from the past, along with some BRAND-NEW bands, to our 7 festival stages.

Along with the amazing music, there's always something for everyone of any age to enjoy; from watching Chicago's phenomenal Trinity Irish Dancers to cheering on participants in the Highland Games and Rugby competitions. Other highlights of the fest include a variety of free events and workshops featuring Irish Language, instrumental, vocal, and dancing workshops along with Irish history, mythology and whiskey tasting. There will be a Hero's Area honouring our military, police and first responders, a Cultural Village, High Nelly Bicycle Ride, Shamrock & Run 5K, Celtic Cruise motorcycle ride, and Sunday's outdoor Mass. Of course, no festival is complete without a large selection of great food, cold beverages, and Irish merchandise vendors. You're all invited.

See www.iowairishfest.com for more.

DUBLIN IRISH FESTIVAL

August 4th – 6th, 2023 <https://dublinirishfestival.org/>

Head to Dublin, Ohio Aug. 4-6 for the largest three-day Irish Festival on the planet. The Dublin Irish Festival has come a long way from one

stage on a tennis court with Irish dancers and a few hundred people. Now, more than 100,000 guests will head to Dublin, Ohio to enjoy 7 music stages, 65 acts, and more than 535 performers. There is truly something for everyone at the Festival.

Known for Irish music and dance, the Festival is much more than that. More than 90 vendors sell traditional items like T-shirts, hats, and jewellery, along with specialty items. Of course, kilts, photos and paintings of Ireland and a wide variety of glass and crystal items are always popular. Festival guests indulge in a wide variety of Irish to American cuisine from over 30 food vendors.

Guests discover the richness of Irish history and culture by tracing their roots in the Genealogy tent, meeting authors, and hearing literary and historical presentations. Guests always enjoy hands-on fun at the Music and Workshop stages and visiting musical instrument crafters learning to play the tin whistle, fiddle, flute, and harp. Animal lovers have the opportunity to meet Irish breeds and their owners at the Celtic Canine area.

Children have their own area at the Festival featuring crafts and games. In addition, they can visit the Wee Folk Stage, which features entertainment including storytellers, music and dance for the younger crowd.

Festival tickets go on sale St. Patrick's Day weekend. Sláinte!

See <https://dublinirishfestival.org/> for more.

FEAKLE INTERNATIONAL TRADITIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

August 9th – 14th, 2023 www.feaklefestival.ie

The 36th Annual Feakle International Traditional Music Festival is set to take place this year from Wednesday 9th to Monday 14th August.

The quality of entertainment, for which Feakle is well known will once again be of the highest calibre. With five days of music, song, dance, poetry, walks and talks, most people's tastes will be catered for.

The line-up for this year will soon be revealed and only the best can be expected to perform. Previous years' line-ups included Martin Hayes Trio, Edwina Guckian, Garadice, the late Séamus Begley, Caitlin Nic Gabhann & Ciaran O Maonaigh, Cormac Begley & Steve Cooney, Cor Cuil Aodha, The Conifers, Out The Gap, Ceili with The Tulla and many more. 2023 looks to be more exciting than ever.

Check www.feaklefestival.ie for more information and email : feaklefestival@gmail.com

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www.feaklefestival.ie E: feaklefestival@gmail.com









GODERICH CELTIC ROOTS FESTIVAL**August 11th – 13th, 2023 www.celticfestival.ca**

The Goderich Celtic Roots Festival announces World-Class International Celtic Artists from Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and USA to perform at the 31st Annual Goderich Celtic Roots Festival taking place August 11-13, 2023 at Lions Harbour Park on the shores of Lake Huron in Goderich, Ontario, Canada. Preceding the festival, the *Celtic College* takes place August 7-11, 2023, with instrument, singing, craft art and dance classes being facilitated by our incredible lineup of international artists.

The *Celtic Kids Day Camp* is a chance for children aged 4 to 12 to take part in all things Celtic! At the same campus as the adult Celtic College, the Kids Camp follows the same daily schedule. The Kids Camp is divided into three streams by age: 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Students have the opportunity to experience song, tin whistle, harp, guitar, fiddle, percussion, dance, drama, storytelling, and craft art with local professionals and masters from the Celtic College.

Applications are now open for the 2nd annual *Robinson Emerging Artist Showcase*. An opportunity for artists in the Celtic genre and in the early stages of their career, to apply for the chance to appear at the 2023 festival. This will also include sessions of Artist Development given in the months leading up to the festival.

For more information please visit us at
<https://www.celticfestival.ca/> or email us at festival@celticfestival.ca
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/goderichceltic>
Instagram: @goderichcelticroots

MASTERS OF TRADITION FESTIVAL**August 23rd – 27th, 2023 www.westcorkmusic.ie**

Masters of Tradition celebrates its 21st anniversary this year and takes place from 23 – 27 August in Bantry, Co. Cork. Its mission remains the same as every other year – to journey to the heart of Irish music and provide a platform where subtle elements of the music can be heard.

As ever, the Festival is headlined by its Artistic Director *Martin Hayes*, the fiddler from East Clare, whose distinctive touch and extravagant virtuosity has brought the tradition to new levels.

The Masters of Tradition opened its doors in 2003 and since then it has welcomed such renowned names as Christy Moore, Scullion, Lisa O'Neill, Donal Lunny, Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, Altan, Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Moya Brennan, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Iarla Ó Lionáird,

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, Séamus Begley, John Spillane and many more. In recent years, the festival has evolved to include a number of collaborations with musicians from other traditions including Ricky Skaggs, chamber music quartet Brooklyn Rider, Swedish folk band Väsen, jazz musician Doug Wieselman and Indian pianist Utsav Lal.

Its programme has expanded beyond the main concerts in the intimate library of Bantry House and the historic St Brendan's Church in the centre of Bantry to include concerts on Whiddy Island, Garnish Island and in Bantry's oldest pub Ma Murphy's.

Programme and booking details will be announced on www.westcorkmusic.ie and on the festival's social media channels in the coming months.

Masters of Tradition is generously supported by the Arts Council and Cork County Council.

IÚR CINN FLEADH**August 24th - 28th, 2023 www.iurcinnfleadh.com**

Classical music and poetry in pubs, trad players in coffee shops, international acts in the town hall and a mural in the city centre – those have been just some of the features of Newry's Iúr Cinn Fleadh.

And now plans are underway to bring the city's own music festival back for another year from 24th-28th August 2023.

The 2022 *Fleadh* was the first since two years of lockdowns, and saw Irish trad phenomenon The Sands Family, award-winning multi-instrumentalist Tim Edey and local folk hero Matt McGinn all deliver headline spots at the town hall. And it wasn't just music that filled the city. Manchester poet Tony Walsh performed in the street and local venues. Some of Northern Ireland's best women writers and San Francisco's Noctambule gave presentations at Newry City Library.

Famous artist Seán Hillen spoke about his work. Dancing On The Green brought Irish culture to people's doorsteps. Irish street artists Jonny McKerr and Dermot McConaghy created a massive mural of a young boy with a specially adapted 'I heart NY' t-shirt. Trad cruises took punters and players down Newry's historic ship canal. There were events for families and children, with everything from storytellers to Irish rapper Cú Chulainn. In August once again around 100 events will draw countless locals and visitors to the city over the five days.

For all the latest news, visit www.iurcinnfleadh.com or contact us at info@newry2020.com

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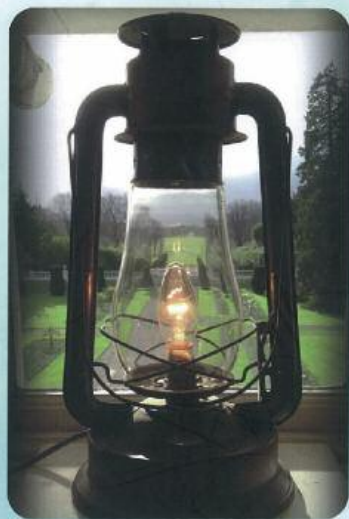

IÚR
CINN
FLEADH

NEWRY CITY MUSIC FESTIVAL
24-28 AUGUST 2023

SHINING A LIGHT FOR SAFE HOME IRELAND

Frank Grealley reports from Tullamore for Irish Music Magazine.

'Friday Friendship' 2023 Diary



Inspirational thoughts, poetry and imagery from
Safe Home Ireland



There was a full house and a lively festive atmosphere at the Tullamore Court Hotel on December 1st last for the launch of the *Friday Friendship Diary 2023* - a unique and beautifully designed publication, speckled with inspirational thoughts, poetry and imagery compiled and delivered by Safe Home Ireland Communications & Information Officer Johnny B Broderick, who has been writing and sharing his inspirational poetry for over 45 years.

Johnny B has also been the manager for Seán Keane for the past decade, and the Galway singer and his fellow accomplished musicians Fergus Feely and Shane McGowan delighted the crowd at the Tullamore Court with a lively pre-Christmas concert. Seán Keane is an ambassador for Safe Home Ireland.

Speaking at the Friday Friendship 2023 Diary Launch, Safe Home Ireland CEO Karen McHugh said: "We began our 'Friday Friendships' solidarity and inspirational messages in February 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, to connect with our friends and followers in Ireland and abroad.

"The diary author and Safe Home Ireland Communications Officer Johnny B Broderick brought a whole new dimension to this since September 2021 with his original poetry, so we decided to include these inspirational poems in a Diary - a first for Safe Home Ireland."

Safe Home Ireland is a county Mayo-based not-for-profit national organisation with a global remit. Founded in 2000, Safe Home was set up to facilitate the desire for older Irish emigrants abroad to return home to live in their native area. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is the core funder of Safe Home Ireland and the organisation is also supported by a wide range of funders and donors who appreciate the wide-reaching services that the organisation delivers.

The Tilley Lamp adorning the front cover of the Friday Friendship 2023 Diary shines a light of hope and welcome and invitation to explore and savour the delightful and inspirational content within.

"Symbolism forms a very important print in the fabric of Irish culture and heritage," Karen McHugh said. "Saint Patrick, Saint Bridget's Cross, the Celtic Cross, Round Towers, the Shamrock, the Wolfhound and Hurler, are all symbolic of our uniqueness on the world stage.

"The Irish diaspora travelled, settled and contributed to possibly every country in the world, and brought with it courage and tenacity for survival and that constant yearning for home.

"When President Mary Robinson lit the Candle in the Window, she understood that yearning. She placed the light in the window of Aras an Uachtaráin, saying- 'We will never forget you and here is the light to lead you home'. President Mary McAleese changed the candle to the storm lamp that features on the front cover of the diary. Our patron, President Michael D Higgins, continues the tradition today and the light still shines brightly in the window of Aras an Uachtaráin."

For the last 22 years, Safe Home Ireland has been part of that symbolic light, to date helping 2241 Irish people return to settle at home. Thousands of others have benefitted from outreach advice given freely to help them make an informed choice.

Safe Home Ireland was originally set up as a pilot project by GP and current Life President, Dr Jerry Cowley. Since then, Safe Home has been assisting qualifying Irish emigrants abroad to explore housing options in their native areas. "With support from Local Authorities and Housing Associations, we work to secure long-term affordable housing in Ireland for them to return to," Karen McHugh said.

"Safe Home was set up to facilitate the desire for older Irish emigrants abroad to return home to live in their native area"

Johnny B Broderick's poems make for delightful and inspirational reading, covering a multitude of themes including- love, family, friendship, reflection, fear, courage, integrity, grief, loss and gratitude. Johnny B has also composed many rare gems of songs that have been recorded by Seán Keane- including *Nature's Little Symphony*, *Poughkeepsie* and *One More Hour*.

"Poetry can raise you up and give you hope," Johnny B said. "Being kind has no cost attached - it's free and if we can be kind to all we meet and avoid gossip, it's a good way to live."

Seán Keane, Fergus Feely and Shane McGowan signed off a wonderful night of uplifting music and song in the Tullamore Court Hotel with a song called *Home* that could be a suitable anthem for Safe Home Ireland. The last lines of that lovely song still linger in my mind.

'My footsteps carry me away - but in my mind I'm always going home'



Seán Keane

WILLIAM KENNEDY PIPING FESTIVAL 2022

Fergal Woods reports from Armagh for Irish Music Magazine.



If 2021 witnessed the first tentative step to return after lockdown, then November '22 saw the Piping Festival take a giant leap back on the path to former glories. This most recent version (the 28th) featured 38 musicians from different countries and cultures. In addition to six public and two school concerts there were workshops, lectures and sessions, and Armagh resounded to the sound of various pipes, entertaining visitors from home and abroad and informing and inspiring the next generation of young pipers.

Events ran from November 17 – 20 and due to previous commitments I missed the beginning and ending of the festival. Some of the events I missed included the opening and closing concerts which featured the Orquestra de Foles from Portugal, and Irish pipers Mickey Dunne and Aaron O'Hagan among others.

I also unfortunately missed an interesting lecture by Neil Martin and a conversation between Declan Masterson and Brian Vallely as part of the festival, but Friday night saw my first gig and it took place in the impressive space of Armagh's First Presbyterian Church. Local hero Jarlath Henderson performed a fine solo set with some lovely jigs and reels, and he was followed by the Italian 3-piece Lampetròn from the Piedmont region north of Turin who played delightful music from their area with strong vocals in addition to lively dance tunes.

players and some younger musicians to keep spectators entertained between the concerts.

Saturday afternoon in the Market Place Theatre saw a very auspicious performance of new material specially commissioned to celebrate the painting of JB (Brian) Vallely. The music was performed by Brian's son Cillian of Lúnasa fame in combination with the Fidelio Trio, one of Ireland's leading Piano Trios. The composers included Niall Vallely, Shaun Davey, Irene Buckley, Neil Martin, and in addition to these original compositions there was an electrifying adaptation of Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin's (*Must Be More*) *Crispy*.

Niall Vallely's *Swaggering* and Shaun Davey's set of jigs, the traditional tune *Port na bPúcaí* and Neil Martin's *Fite Fuaithe* were the most memorable of the new tunes and hopefully this music will be recorded as Vallely's pipes worked wonderfully in the chamber music setting and the Trio (Darragh Morgan – violin, Tim Gill – cello and Mary Dullea – piano) were outstanding advocates for this merging of classical and traditional forms.

The very impressive surrounds of the reading room in the Armagh Robinson Library was the venue for the last concert I was able to attend and was most entertaining with a multi-national line up. Alana MacInnes, fresh from a successful short tour of Ireland with Liam Ó Maonlaí and Kathleen Macinnes, kicked off proceedings

“Armagh resounded to the sound of various pipes, entertaining visitors from home and abroad”

Headlining on the Friday was the “In B” group which featured the uilleann pipes of Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn and Louise Mulcahy in concert with the small pipes of the Scots Brìghde Chaimbeul and Fin Moore. All pipes were unusually tuned to the key of “B” which has its own unique sound characteristics. Different combinations of the performers played Irish and Scots tunes with marches, strathspeys intermixing with jigs, reels and airs.

Some of the more memorable sets included *Maids of Kintail/O'Sullivan's/ The Rock* and *Dornach Links/Tàladh Bhrìde. The Kitchen Maid/ Fog in the Bog* were also extremely fine and belied the short time the foursome had to rehearse for their performance. At the end of the night Tiarnán was the very deserving recipient of the Dick MacRae Award for services to the Piping Festival!

I witnessed some outstanding piping in sessions in Red Neds where players like Anxo Lorenzo, Alana MacInnes, Aaron O'Hagan and Brìghde Chaimbeul rubbed shoulders with local

with numbers from South Uist like *Do Làmh a Chrìosda* and *A Mhoire Mhìn-Gheal* and a couple of strathspeys. She was joined by fellow Scot Rory Campbell of Deaf Shepherd on small pipes for the tune *Farewell to the Creeks*.

Campbell returned for his own set where he concentrated on the Highland pipes. He played a number of his own original compositions, some of which had not yet been titled! Following the two Scots was the American piper Joey Abarta. Born in LA but now living in Boston it was easy to see why he has accumulated a number of awards with extremely dexterous use of ornamentation.

Declan Masterson of Riverdance and Moving Hearts fame was making his debut in Armagh and he performed some classic pipe tunes including *Spike Island Lassies*, *Jenny's Wedding*, *The Humours of Ballingarry/The Munster Jig* and some lovely slow airs with a couple of great hornpipes thrown in.

Roll on November 2023!

THE LONDON LASSES LL25

Lo La Records, 14 Tracks, 60 Minutes

www.londonlasses.net

Marking 25 years since their formation in 1997, The London Lasses have recorded all new material for this album, their sixth, while managing to include members from all incarnations of the band. Leader Karen Ryan is joined by at least nine other lasses, as well as pianist laddies Chris O'Malley and Pete Quinn, not to mention Karen and Pete's talented daughters Katie and Annie looking to the future of Irish music in London. In ten instrumental sets and four songs, *LL25* spans four centuries of Irish music, from Carolan's *Planxty Thomas Burke* to very recent compositions by the likes of Tommy Fitzharris and Edel Fox. In between are pieces from Coleman, Morrison, Redican and others who recorded in the early 1900s, and the poignant song *Bánchnoic Éireann Ó* written in the 1700s and beautifully sung by Bróna McVittie whose distinctive Down voice also delivers the other three songs in English.

Almost all the tunes here are well documented, most with known composers: *Martyn Wynne's Number 4*, *Caves of Kiltannon* by Paddy Canny, pieces by John Dwyer, Vincent Broderick, Joe Liddy, two by Armagh pianist Josephine Keegan, the delightful slip jig *Gort na Móna* by harpist Michael Rooney, and the appropriately-named reel *Farewell to London* by Brendan McGlinchey which almost closes out this fine collection. I say almost, because the last notes are left to Father PJ Kelly's popular session tune *The Rossmore Jetty*, cheekily pushed up to A in one of the many twists The London Lasses introduce here.

A solid traditional sound from fiddles, flutes, banjo, button box, pipes and concertina is spiced by saxophone, harp, and inventive piano accompaniment on several tracks, making this both an exciting new album and a valued addition to London's long history of Irish music.

Alex Monaghan

JOHN FAULKNER Storm In My Heart

Own Label, 11 Tracks, 47 Minutes www.johnfaulknermusic.com

Storm In My Heart is an important recording by one of Ireland's greatest singers, musicians and composers, John Faulkner. With contributions from seventeen high-calibre contemporaries, the album is dedicated to his daughter Nell, an eleven-track record of the genius he has shared with many over forty years.

Save Me a Place in your Heart, written with Dara Connolly, lays out the high standard and calibre that John Faulkner consistently delivers. John Prine collaborates on *Tonight as We Dance*, a delightful country song and story, perhaps the very core of this record, written with Peter O'Hanlon, great texture, effortless harmonies and poignantly memorising the Prine/Faulkner musical brotherhood.

Faulkner goes from pared-back to intricate in layering fiddles, uilleann pipes, clarinet, accordion, percussion, piano and every breed of string imaginable in his orchestra; great depth, innovation and nuance in the arrangements, a true professional basking in creative freedom.

Declan O'Rourke came on board for *The Laird of the Land* and together they retell an historic tale, compellingly done. The title track *Storm in My Heart* has a gospel touch, richly melodic, familiar for having been recorded by others, this version unique. *Aileen* is a heart wrenching lament, pipes and voice, nostalgic, philosophical, addressed to the beloved who knows "her race is run", being implored to not "let your spirit lie", evocative, a song apart.

John Faulkner acknowledges with gratitude all who contributed musically and to Paul Mulligan and Brendan O'Regan for their excellent sound engineering. One of the finest albums in the Irish folk music cannon, great style to the work, versatility and variety, firmly rooted in folk and Irish but genre-defiant.

Storm in My Heart, from a truly gifted, intelligent and seasoned performer is a compelling and vibrant showcase of John Faulkner's imagination, poetry and unique song craft.

Anne Marie Kennedy



JOHN McCUSKER

Best Of

Under One Sky Records, 30 Tracks, 132 Minutes

www.johnmccusker.co.uk

This compilation of 2 CDs of personally curated work marks thirty years of music making by John McCusker. A young lad who played fiddle in Glasgow Comhaltas, inspired by his Irish mother's album collection, he has gone on to become the leading fiddler of his generation in Scotland.

There is no doubting not only his skill and musicality, but also his influence on countless other musicians. His joint albums include, *Before the Ruin*, with Roddy Woomble and Kris Drever (2008), *Under One Sky* (2009), and the enduring trio with John Doyle and Mike McGoldrick, producing two studio albums *The Wishing Tree* (2018) and *The Reed That Bends in the Storm* (2020), as well as three live albums. John is also a longstanding member of the annual Transatlantic Sessions house band.

On *Best Of* his original fiddle tracks include *A Trip To Roma*, *Wee Michael's March*, *Wiseman's*, *Leaving Friday Harbour* and *Kev's Trip To Brittany*. John has selected instrumental sets with Mike McGoldrick and John Doyle: *The Wishing Tree* and the *Madison Square Set*, and a piece with Scottish National treasure Phil Cunningham *Chickadee's Christmas*. Collaborations with the finest female singers of the past three decades include Eddi Reader, Kate Rusby, Karine Polwart, Julie Fowlis, Helen McCabe and Heidi Talbot. As for the gentlemen, he recorded *Hope To See* with Chris Drever, and Roddy Woomble, he also selects *Lavender Hill* with Roddy Woomble and veteran Home Service singer John Tams is recruited for *Hush a Bye*.

The mainstream media may mention his writing for TV and the work he did with Billy Connolly, and sure enough the second CD ends with a gentle *Pokarekare Ana* from Billy Connolly's World Tour of New Zealand. My favourite from the thirty tracks is *FooFoo The Retirement*, a syncopated mash up of bass, drums and Easy Club style fiddle, sheer bliss.

Best Of is the perfect window into the past thirty years of creative groundbreaking Celtic music, and given John's relatively young age, and the fact there are four new tracks here, I'd reckon he's only halfway there yet. What a ride it's going to be in the future.

Seán Laffey

ELLE MARIE O'DWYER Reimagined

Own Label, 13 Tracks, 51 Minutes

www.ellemarieodwyer.ie

Hailing from County Cork, Elle Marie O'Dwyer has released a fresh and uplifting collection of music. Each track exploring her unique voice and showcasing a unique traditional style. O'Dwyer is captivating with each track and succeeds in making each her own.

Reimagined is a collection of 13 tracks. The music is bringing new life to old songs with a new composition amid all, integrating the old with the new. The title is very apt for the collection.

Opening with *Sonny* in a whole new vibrant melody and bringing new life into this infamous 1970's song. It's straight into *Caledonia*, which she encapsulates beautifully with her again vibrant, unique voice. There's something so fresh with each song. Journeying through the collection we encounter such songs as *Joe McDonnell*, *Hard Times*, *My Island Home*, and then we hear O'Dwyer's own composition, *The Best is Yet to Come*. Mirroring life in general, it is fast, fun and funky in a traditional way. It highlights for most of us to maybe believe that the best in life really is ahead and we should look forward and not back. Accompanied on this song by Liam O'Connor it really is her take on coming out the other end of Covid.

The second half of the collection brings us songs such as *I Will Love You*, *Feet of a Dancer*, *Roll Back the Clouds*, *Faraway in Australia* and *Wrap the Green Flag*. The bonus track is the much loved, *Arms of the Angel*, which like all before it is fresh and new in its own right.

O'Dwyer successfully explores her unique voice and captivating style to make this collection of music one which not only confirms the future of traditional songs, but re-imagines them in a purely fresh and unique manner.

Gráinne McCool

RACHEL WALKER & AARON JONES**Despite the Wind and Rain****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 41 Minutes****www.rachelwalkerandaaronjones.com**

Rachel Walker is best known as a Gaelic singer from Lochaber who is establishing a name for herself as a songwriter, collaborating with some of Scotland's finest poets. With four solo recordings to her name, she has teamed up with guitarist & bouzouki player Aaron Jones and splits the singing and writing with him on *Despite the Wind and Rain*. Rachel's contribution includes one song in English and four Gaelic songs co-written with lyricist Marcas Mac an Tuairneir.

Aaron has accompanied some of the finest folk singers, and also written and sung his own songs with fiddler Claire Mann and with Old Blind Dogs: here he provides five original songs in English, as well as backing vocals in Gaelic, and plays guitar and cittern. All ten songs on this concept album are inspired by women from Scottish history, from the 1300s almost to the present day: seers, scientists, suffragettes, a Celtic warrior queen and a Glasgow-born Ghanaian artist among others.

Female song collectors and anti-slavery campaigners, explorers and entrepreneurs have inspired moving words and powerful melodies. From the mystical *Sgàthach* to the grim *Rule of Thumb*, and not forgetting the wry humour of *Bessie Miller* with her trade wind charms, *Despite the Wind and Rain* is a varied and entertaining album. Both Walker and Jones have powerful voices, expressing a wide range of emotions. Their own talents on fretted strings and keyboards are supplemented here by a band of Scotland's finest folk and classical musicians: Patsy Reid and Katrina Lee on fiddles, Rhoslyn Lawton on viola, the powerful cello of Alice Allen and the flexible Duncan Lyall on double bass and additional keys.

The album artwork is surprisingly gentle and attractive, and there are excellent notes on each track as well as lyrics available online for all the songs.

Alex Monaghan**BROWNIE GUINAN****Peat Sounds****Own Label, 11 Tracks, 49 Minutes** **www.brownieguinan.com**

The title of this album is deliberately self-deprecating but did not prepare me for its undoubted quality. Ciaran "Brownie" Guinan is a member of a well-known musical family from Ferbane, County Offaly, and this is his second solo outing, consisting of a mixture of original material and songs from the local archives. It's a very strong collection of songs, inspired by his deep connection with his local area. He has an attractive vocal style, always relaxed and never forced, and opens the album with *Shannon Harbour Home*, an ode to his mother's home place. The music on this is contemporary and beautifully played, with saxophone and pedal steel to the fore. He also adapts traditional songs, either sticking faithfully to the original as on *The Fields Around Ferbane* or giving them a fresh treatment on *The Turfman from Turraun* with some bluesy banjo to the fore, or *The Ballad of Barry Lowe*, from a poem written by the late Tony Holleran with an up-tempo country-rock treatment.

He has assembled a fine collection of musicians with producer Des Sheerin at the helm. Some of the playing is really top-class, notably pedal steel and electric guitars (Jonathon Milligan), and saxophone (John Byrne), which adds a lot to the listening experience. *The Boora Railway Line* has some lovely lead guitar by Willie Kieman, with more than a passing nod to Mark Knopfler. There's plenty of humour in songs like *Cloghan Traffic Lights* and *That's Your Mouldboard Baby*. *The Town I left Behind* breathes new life into the old Johnny McEvoy classic.

The Rose of Ballinahorn is a lovely treatment of a poem by the late John M. Doyle, whose lyrics provided Ciaran with great inspiration; here, keyboards (Rose McLaughlin) and low whistle (John Byrne) intertwine beautifully. The closing track is an expansive homage to his hometown – *The Town of Ferbane* is a lyrical master class incorporating an international cast of characters. A really delightful album full of unexpected gems.

Mark Lysaght**THE CARRIVICK SISTERS****Illustrated Short Stories****12 Tracks, 38 Minutes** **www.thecarrivicksisters.co.uk**

Twin sisters from the South West of England, Charlotte and Laura Carrivick love bluegrass, old time and Americana music. On this album

they display a fine talent for song writing in those genres and a mastery of a number of instruments, which they play in an authentic folk-style, such as the Dobro, lap steel guitar, tenor guitar and five-string banjo. They never try to mimic a southern Appalachian drawl and yet their songs have the potential to cross the broad Atlantic and become naturalised over there.

Charlotte takes the lion's share of the lead vocals, Laura adding harmony alongside her fiddle to round out the melodies. The album opens with *In The Odstock Churchyard*, a story about a Gypsy funeral, a family feud, destructive horticulture and a curse on the vicar. *Crying To The Moon* is the most English sounding song on the album; its themes are infidelity and death, themes that also permeate American folk music.

Charlotte hits the highest notes on *The Gorge* with Laura adding bluegrass colour on her lap steel. Her banjo is played in a minor key for the song *War Games*, a reflection on childhood conditioning of masculinity, with the lines "sticks and stones for swords and guns the harmless toys of childhood..."

They bring in an electric guitar on *Ever Really*, which revolves around the sentiment that some things are "too big to keep inside the confines of your mind, better out than in."

They touch on environment and extinction in *Last of My Kind*. Laura is the lead voice on *Amsterdam*, with Charlotte adding a strummed mandolin. They head for old timey country on *Sally In The Woods*, playing banjo and fiddle; is it about a lost child, a malevolent phantom, we are left uneasy in the car, momentarily safe from the dark woods beyond.

The album closes with the instrumental duet *Digging Up The Rosebush*, an old time breakdown on fiddle and mandolin. Great songs, polished playing and voices that mesh in sibling harmony. It's a keeper all right.

Seán Laffey**TERENCE BLACKER****Meanwhile...****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 48 Minutes****www.terenceblacker.com**

Best known as an author of books for both adults and children, Terence Blacker has also developed his career as a songwriter of note in the last decade. This is his fifth album and a follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Playing For Time* released in 2020. Thematically, the material mainly reflects issues in relation to the pandemic and other world events of the past two years.

The title track highlights our tendency to ignore the natural world through being too absorbed with trivia, and is delivered in a relaxed jazz ragtime style with some virtuoso piano playing from Dom Pipkin; his talents are featured extensively throughout. Producer Lukas Drinkwater colours in other musical spaces on bass, keyboards and percussion, with Terence himself taking centre stage on acoustic guitar and vocals. Each song is lyrically rich, with some very clever observations on the human condition.

The songs are mainly inspired by external events, but *Other People's Lives* is a personal reflection on Terence's father, along with other family and friends. There's an underlying thread of optimism in most of the material, with a "must keep going and it will all work out" theme, an essential survival device in recent years! Lyrics are at times quite sardonic and humorous, with *Everyday Hero* making a wry political statement and *Moanin' Joe* poking fun at a fictional misery-guts. *The Couple Next Door* is a reflection on aging that is quite endearing; with the music hall frivolity of *The Way of the World* providing a light-hearted romp through middle-aged angst, with lovely piano from Pipkin.

His song writing has been compared to Jake Thackray and Loudon Wainwright III, and I also hear echoes of Ray Davies in some of the songs – overall, this is a fine collection of original material of particular interest to budding songwriters.

Mark Lysaght

JOHN BLEK**Until The Rivers Run Dry****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 36 Minutes****www.johnblek.com**

This is Cork based John Blek's eighth studio album and will surely be welcomed by his legion of fans, and with his intense touring schedule there are many of them. Recorded in early 2022 and will be released officially on February 10th 2023, and I'm sure it will be a hit at his many gigs this year.

As befits a studio album, his work is multi-layered and carefully crafted, a remarkable achievement given the album was recorded in just 10 days. His collaborators are Colm Mac Con Iomaire (of the Frames) on fiddle, Kit Downes on piano, Chris McCarthy plays double bass and Davey Ryan is on drums. This is alt-folk that resonates with mid-century pop-rock influences. John's songs are given headroom to breathe and his arrangements are memorable and melodic. On *Half Life* there's a syncopated entry, the piano and percussion play in parenthesis around the lyrics.

His song writing is brimming with well-chosen phrases, in *St John's Eve*, he sings "the day is dragging its heels", referring to the longest day of the year when traditionally bonfires were lit across Ireland to mark the height of summer. He turns to the electric guitar on *'Til The Rivers Run Dry*, the fiddle moving into the expansive sound-scape as they conjure around the eternal theme of everlasting love. He channels his inner Springsteen on *Love Lorne*. Then on *Restless Sea* he imagines what it is like to be travelling away from the shore to a point where the colours of the coast fade into the monotonous hue of the ocean. Back to the theme of love on *Lyrics and Air*, he sees his love like the music and instruments of a band in perfect harmony. Joined by Cathy Davey, their voices are perfect foils for each other, making this the most commercial of the selections on this album.

Finally to the last track *Floating Aimlessly*, a sensuous clarinet, steel string guitar and synth, happily surrendering the album to love and fate.

Seán Laffey**WEST OF EDEN****Next Stop Christmas****Own Label, 15 Tracks 41 Minutes www.westofeden.com**

Yes this is a Christmas album from West of Eden, following on from their *Celtic Christmas* (2010) and *Another Celtic Christmas* (2016). They formed in Gothenburg Sweden in 1995; they play a blend of sophisticated, accomplished Celtic folk rock, which is often inspired by Irish music. Husband and wife Martin and Jenny Schaub are the band's principal songwriters, and they are clearly accomplished wordsmiths.

The initial *We Shall Sing Together* is a call and response song with Jenny on lead vocals and a big chorus of voices amplifying the answers. On their new party song *Must Be Santa*, responses grow in cumulative length. Another brisk number is *Perfect Winter's Morning*, its seasonal staccato coming from the sticks hitting the rim of the drum.

Jenny has a sweet yet powerful voice, she hits some very high notes on Christina Rossetti's *In the Bleak Mid Winter*; it's a modern cover of the famous song. Listen out for the electric guitar solo some three quarters of the way through on this updated version of Holst's 1906 tune.

Three *Winter Solstice* tunes hang like jewelled baubles and another similar sparkle comes from *The Jacobite*. All are less than 1 minute long, with *Winter Solstice III* having the most Celtic sound thanks to a flute leading its melody. A longer piece *Christmas in Carrack* is sung over a snare drum, it's a tale of punch and whiskey, and the company of friends. The title track looks to a rail journey and a much-anticipated trip home for the annual re-connection with family. That theme is revisited on the final track, *Next Stop Christmas (Mind The Gap)* where the homecoming is ultimately achieved.

My take away number has to be *The Bells of St Stephens*, beginning with a clarion peel; it offers hope for many more Christmases to come.

When Christmas jumper time comes round again, this album will be on my kitchen playlist. Mark it on your calendars now.

Seán Laffey**LADY MAISERY****Tender****Lady Maisery Records LMCD05, 11 Tracks, 50 Minutes****www.ladymaisery.com**

Hazel Askew, Hannah James and Rowan Rheingans are Lady Maisery, three singers who also bring harp, banjo, accordion, electric guitar, viola, percussion, harmonium and organ to this album. Feted in the English folk scene for 10 years, *Tender* was recorded in Sheffield and is their first studio album since 2016.

Rain on a roof ushers in the title track, set in the security of the dry indoors. The harp lays a riff, an under-melody over which three voices consider the modern condition. When the storm lifts there will be a morning departure and housebound neighbours might just catch you dancing.

Bird I Don't Know pictures a bird flitting through an urban landscape; we hear it, but can't determine what it is. The viola sets the mood with a big sound, akin to a pipe drone, almost Scandinavian in its insistent purpose. *Echoes* has an undercurrent of breathing, its subject is the ageing process, dementia and the fogging of memory, where an echo is "throwing words against the wall" like King Lear raging against the storm and only hearing ourselves bouncing back rhetoric from an unkind world.

Issues of female safety are raised in Tracy Chapman's *300 Miles*, asking, is it safe to walk the streets alone? The answer is pragmatic, "I'll take safe and terror free". The banjo gets louder as the song moves to a massive ending overpowering us with decibels.

Personal safety again in *Hyperballad*, with handclaps and acappella harmony, whereas *Scientist* looks to the bigger issue of climate change, and the fear of reading the data first hand, seeing warnings of warming and trying to find hope in the evidence. Lal Waterson's *Child Among The Weeds* lays a duty on us to offer a spiritual lullaby to those in need. Mountains feature in at least 3 of the songs, as a metaphor in *Rest Now*, a song for a Kurdish feminist who was killed fighting against ISIS. "Rest Now" is repeated as a mantra that asks activists to take their ease and look to "the edge lands where dawn is breaking".

For many of the songs on *Tender*, you have to dig deep for meaning, the narrative is often opaque, even ambivalent. Discovering those messages brings the listener into the tribe. Listen carefully and you will understand.

Seán Laffey**SEO LINN****Anuas****Own Label, 10 Tracks, 46 Minutes****www.seolinn.com**

Irish band Seo Linn makes musical waves with beloved songs in their upcoming release, *Anuas*. The band includes Stiofán Ó Fearail (guitars, lead vocals), Daithí Ó Ruaidh (keyboard, synth, saxophone, harmonicas, whistle, vocals), Kevin Shortall (accordion, percussion, vocals), and Keith Ó Briain (bass, mandolin, guitars, percussion, vocals).

Anuas opens with an all-out percussive rendition of *Cailleach An Aigid* (The Hag with the Money) before toning down the usual Puir A Beul style to capture the song's meaning in *Fionnghuala*. Solo voice and harmonies against a slow-moving drone are chilling at best in the love song, *Casadh an tSúgáin* (The Twisting of the Straw Rope). *Molly na gCuach* follows an all-instrumental and vocal version of this lover's lament. Kevin's unhurried mix of two old airs in *Eanáir Bhán* (White January) against a ghostly setting will take listeners back to haunting sea melodies.

The famous *Siúil a Rún*, sung in Gaelic and English, gradually builds in intensity to recreate the Jacobite-Williamite conflict. *An Poc Ar Buile* is bound to be a new favourite with their minor interpretation. Ethereal droning backdrop against evocative solo voice and harmonies raises another Jacobite favourite, *Mo Chile Mear*, to a new listening level. *Óró Sé do Bheatha 'Bhaile* builds slowly to morph into hard rock before closing with a stirring sean nós rendition of *Amhrán Mhuínse*.

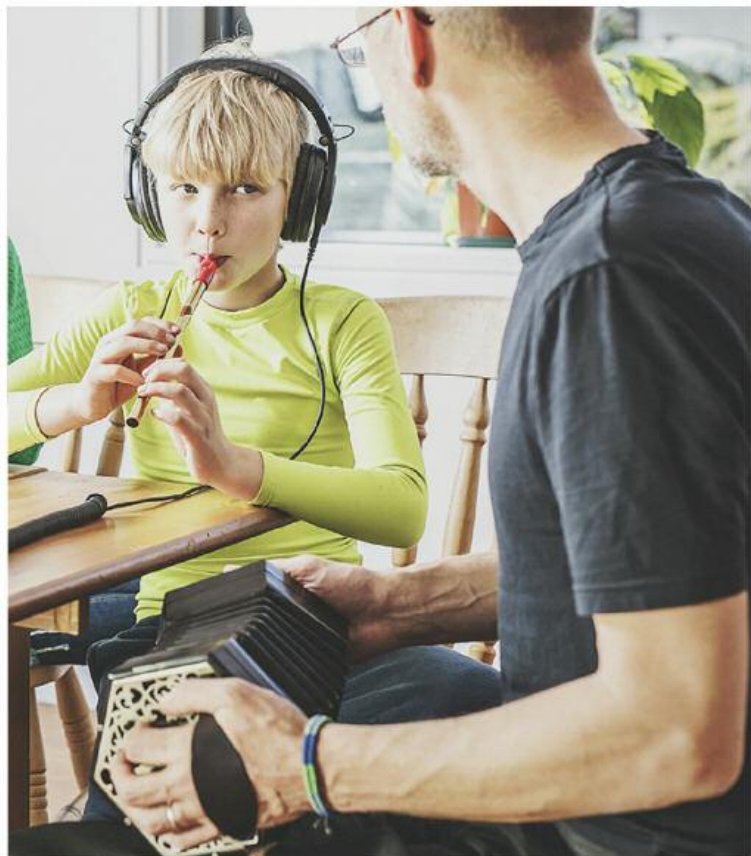
Undoubtedly, Seo Linn will make great strides as they share their love for the Irish language and extensive musical styles worldwide!

Anita Lock



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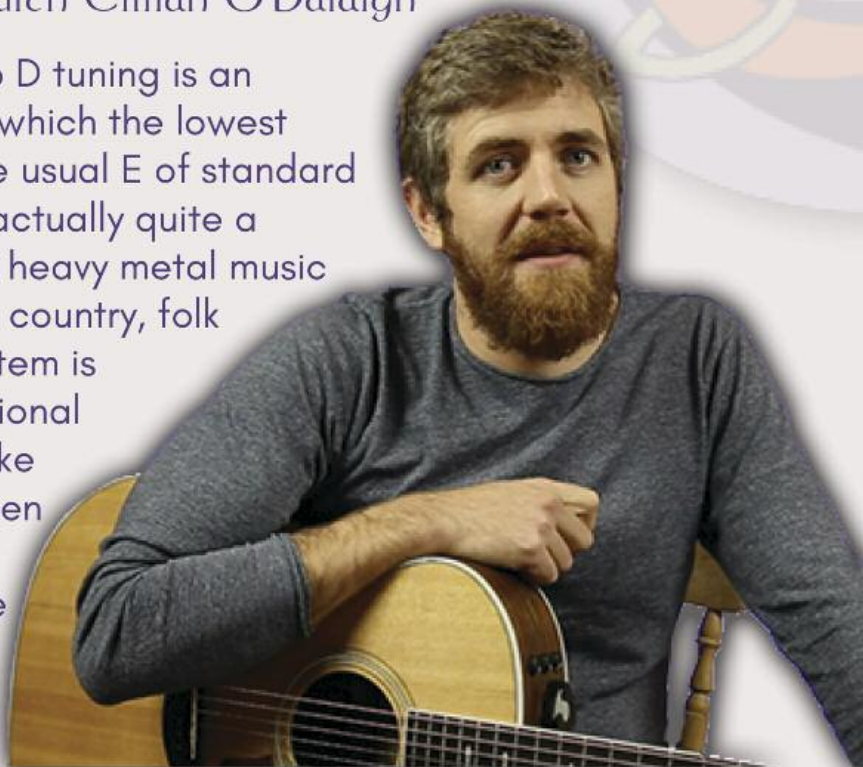
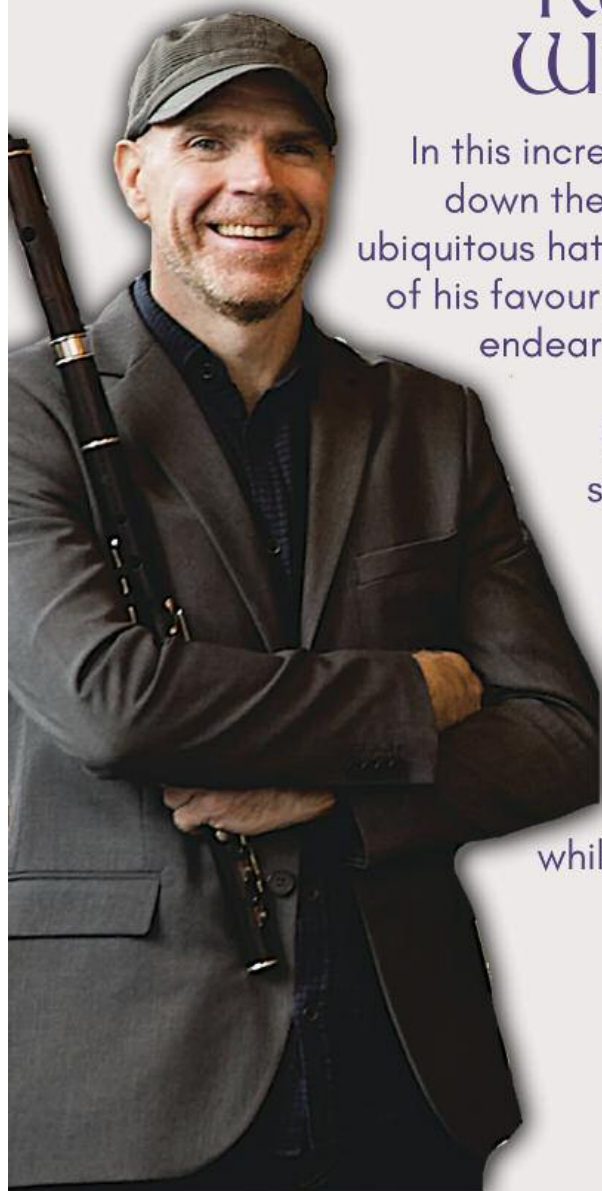
In this incredible course, Kevin Crawford of Lúnasa puts down the flute, which he is most famous for, dons the ubiquitous hat (also famous for!), and takes you through 13 of his favourite session tunes in a very personal and most endearing way. So, instead of these lessons feeling like Kevin is your teacher, they're more like having a chat with him, where, in his relaxed style, he imparts the wisdom of a life-time on the Irish music scene.

By the end of this intermediate level course, apart from wondering when Lúnasa are next playing in your area, you'll be armed with 13 really wonderful Irish session tunes to get the best out of your tin whistle while keeping the fire burning for this amazingly versatile instrument.

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with Cillian Ó'Dálaigh

For those not already familiar, Drop D tuning is an alternative form of guitar tuning in which the lowest (sixth) string is tuned down from the usual E of standard tuning by one whole step to D. It's actually quite a popular tuning for electric guitar in heavy metal music and is also found regularly in blues, country, folk and classical guitar. This tuning system is particularly suited to the Irish traditional music genre as a beautiful drone-like effect can be created using the open D string. Previous knowledge of standard tuning, at an intermediate level, is necessary to begin this course.





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IRELAND**CHRISTY MOORE**www.christymoore.com**March**

2 Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar, County Westmeath
 8 Killashee Hotel, Naas, County Kildare
18, 25 National Concert Hall, Dublin
April

1 National Concert Hall, Dublin
 7 National Opera House, Wexford
 15 National Opera House, Wexford
19, 21 Millennium Forum, Derry

DAOIRÍ FARRELLwww.daoiri.com**February**

20 Album Launch, Whelan's, Dublin
 23 The Spirit Store, Dundalk, County Louth
24 The Hot Spot Music Club, The Beach House, Greystones, County Wicklow

March

3 The Seanti Bar, Smartscastle, Waterford
 4 Dolan's, Limerick
 5 Winthrop Avenue, Cork
25 Dún Uladh Cultural Heritage Centre, Omagh, County Tyrone

KARAN CASEYwww.karancasey.com**March**

24 Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, County Wicklow

April

13 Duncairn Arts Centre, Belfast
 14 Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny, County Donegal
 15 Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge, County Kildare
 20 Glór, Ennis, County Clare
 21 National Opera House, Wexford, County Wexford
 22 Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford, County Waterford
 23 Hawkswell Theatre Sligo, County Sligo
 27 Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny, County Kilkenny
 28 Solstice Arts Centre, Navan, County Meath
 29 Triskel Christchurch, Cork
 30 Town Hall Theatre, Galway, County Galway

SEÁN KEANEwww.seankeane.com**February**

25 The Gathering Festival, Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney, County Kerry

KEVIN BURKEwww.kevinburke.com**April**

22 The Seamus Ennis Centre, The Naul, County Dublin
 26 Glór, Ennis, County Clare

THE DRUIDSwww.thedruids.ie**February**

10 The Bridge House, Tullamore
 11 McHughes, Carrick on Shannon
 23 The Central, Roscrea
 25 Feerick's Hotel, Rathowen
 26 The Grand Hotel, Killarney

NORTH AMERICA**KARAN CASEY**www.karancasey.com**March**

2 Next Stage, Putney, VT
 3 Highland Center for the Arts, Greensboro, VT

4 Gracie Theatre, Bangor, ME
 5 Club Passim, Cambridge, MA
 7 The Grand Opera House - The Baby Grand, Wilmington, DE
 8 Susquehanna Folk Music Society at The Abbey Bar, Harrisburg, PA
 9 Community School of Music and Arts, Ithaca, NY
 10 G.A.R. Hall, Peninsula, OH
 11 Roy's Hall, Blairstown, NJ
 12 Music in the Valley, Reisterstown, MD
 15 Buskirk-Chumley Theater, Bloomington, IN
 16 Ten Pound Fiddle, East Lansing, MI
 17 Dogwood Center for Performing Arts, Fremont, MI
 18 The Ark, Ann Arbor, MI

DERVISHwww.dervish.ie**February**

24 Theater, Philadelphia, MS
 25 Bartlett Performing Arts Center, Bartlett, TN
 26 Focal Point, St Louis, MO
 28 The Holland Theatre, Bellefontaine, OH
March
 3 GE Theatre at Proctors, Passport Series, Schenectady, NY
 4 Camden Opera House, Camden, ME
 11 Appalachian Theatre, Boone, NC
 14 Brevard Music Center, Brevard, NC
 17 The Stockbridge Theatre at Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH
 19 George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

CHERISH THE LADIESwww.cherishtheladies.com**February**

25 North Penn High School Auditorium, Lansdale, PA
 26 The Towne Crier, Beacon, New York, NY
March
 1 The Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center, Old Saybrook, CT
 3 Enlow Recital Hall at Kean University Hillsdale, NJ
 4 The Pollak Theater at Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ
 5 The Barns at Wolf Trap, Vienna VA
 7 The Tin Pan, Richmond, VA
 11 The Barre Opera House, Barre, VT
 18 Caterpillar Center with the Heartland Festival Orchestra Washington, Illinois, IL

THE GOTHARD SISTERSwww.gothardsisters.com**March**

17 St. Patrick's Day @ The Old Church Concert Hall, Portland, OR
 18 Patrick's Day @ Edmonds Center for the Arts, Edmonds, WA
April
 14 Omak Performing Arts Center, Omak, WA

THE DRUIDSwww.thedruids.ie**March**

1 The Shillelagh Club, NJ
 2 Keane's Kathona Ave, Bronx, NY
 3 The Banshee, Buffalo, NY
 4 Mount Tabor Country Club, NJ
 5 Irish American Club, Rutherford, NJ
 5 Baily's, Nantucka, NY
 8 AOH Hall Redford, Detroit, MI
 9 Irish American Club, Toledo, OH
 10 John Boyle O Reilly Club, Boston, MA
 11 Fiddlers Green, Worcester, MA
 12 The Strand Theater, Hudson Falls, NY
 13 Irish American Heritage Museum, Albany, NY
 14 The Fainting Goat, PA
 15 Connolly's Time Square, NYC
 16 Connolly's 47th St, NYC
 17 & 18 Connolly's Time Square, NYC

RUNAwww.runamusic.com**February**

4 BRIGID Celebration with Pittsburgh Irish Fest, Pittsburgh, PA

March

11 Cultural Event with the Choctaw Nation, Durant, OK
 12 McPherson Opera House, McPherson, KS
 16 Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, AZ
 17 Smith Center, Las Vegas, NV
 18 Auburn State Theatre, Auburn, CA
 23 La Veta Mercantile, La Veta, CO
 24 -25 Durango Celtic Festival, Durango, CO
 29 Backroom at the Burren, Sommerville, MA
 30 St. Kieran's Arts Center, Berlin, NH
 31 Highland Center for the Arts, Greensboro, VT
April
 1 Blackstone River Theatre, Cumberland, RI
 2 Next Stage Arts, Putney, VT
 21 Philadelphia Ceili Group, Philadelphia, PA
 22 Dills Celtic Festival, Dillsburg, PA

EUROPE**ANDY IRVINE & QUILTY****Quilty's 30 Years Anniversary Tour**www.andyirvine.com**March**

14 Eskilstuna Teater, Eskilstuna, Sweden
 16 Dieselverkstaden, Stockholm, Sweden
 17 Gävle Konserthus, Gävle, Sweden
 18 Kulturhuset i Ytterjärna, Järna, Sweden
 19 Kulturoasen, Uppsala - 2pm concert, Sweden
 19 Altunagården, Fjärdhundra, Sweden
 21 Herr Nilsen, Oslo, Norway
 22 Laholms Teater, Laholms, Sweden
 22 Victoriateatern, Malmö, Sweden

24 Linköping, Linköping, Sweden
 25 Kulturhuset, Bollnäs, Sweden
 26 Folkmusikens Hus, Rättvik, Sweden

WILLOS'www.willos.it**March**

17 Irish Soul Pub, Grosseto, Italy

UNITED KINGDOM**McCUSKER, McGOLDRICK & DOYLE**www.johnmccusker.co.uk**March**

4 Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, Cumbria

CARA DILLONwww.caradillon.co.uk**March**

2 Ropetackle Arts Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex
 10 Pound Arts, Corsham, Wiltshire
 11 Pound Arts, Corsham, Wiltshire
 13 Colchester Arts Centre, Colchester, Essex
 18 Blackheath Halls, London
 23 St Andrew's Church, Hertford, Hertfordshire
 25 The Exchange, Sturminster Newton, Dorset
 31 Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh, East Lothian

DAOIRÍ FARRELLwww.daoiri.com**April**

19 Cramlington Folk Club, Cramlington, Northumberland
 20 Square Chapel Arts Centre, Halifax, Yorkshire
 21 Folk at the Meadows, Belper, Derbyshire
 22 The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch Leisure Centre, Shropshire
 23 Temperance, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire
 27 Calstock Arts, Calstock, Cornwall
 28 Pound Arts, Corsham, Wiltshire
 29 Devoran Village Hall, Devoran, Cornwall
 30 Topsham Folk Club, Topsham, Devon



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SLIABH GALLION BRAE

This song from Northern Ireland is track 5 on Daoirí Farrell's new album *The Wedding Above in Glenree*. He sings this a-cappella, writes Sean Laffey.

It is one of the most recorded emigration ballads of the past 60 years. It first came to light on disc sung by Francis McPeake in 1963 on Topic records. One key a-cappella version is by Dolores Keane in *Farewell to Eirinn, Music and Songs of Emigration from Ireland to America* (Green Linnet 1981). It was also sung by Dick Gaughan when he recorded with the group Five Hand Reel.

Sam Henry has another song called *Slieve Gallen Brae* which he said was composed by James O'Kane of Gortnagure of Maghera. His song is about a returned emigrant enjoying the clean air of the uplands after spending a life in the smoky industrial cities of England.

A gander at Google will turn up a variety of spellings: Gallon, Galleon, Gallen and the more correct Gallion. They are all Anglicisations of the Gaelic Sliabh gCallann 'mountain of the heights'; this is a flat top mountain, part of the Sperrin range, which rises to 528 metres (1,732 ft) west of Lough Neagh. Geologically it is a volcanic plug, the chief rock types are igneous and granite. Nearby settlements are Moneymusk, Cookstown, and Magherafelt, all of which have appeared in folk songs from Ulster.

The word brae is common in Ulster Scots, however it has Old Norse origins referring to the brow, as in an eyebrow of the brow of a hill, the incline of land on the way to the summit.

The melody is attributed to Carl Gilbert Hardebeck (1869–1945); he was born in Clerkenwell, London to a German father and a mother with

Welsh antecedents. He lost his sight as a baby and was educated at the Royal Normal School of Music for the Blind in Norwood, where he showed a talent for the keyboard. He would eventually be taught by Professor Frederick Corder at the Royal Academy of Music.

Hardebeck's father ran a jewellery company and provided his son with sufficient funds to set up a music business in Belfast in 1893. That venture was unsuccessful, but the move to Belfast proved pivotal in

“It is one of the most recorded emigration ballads of the past 60 years”

young Hardebeck's life. He was the organist at St Peter's Catholic cathedral in the Falls Road from 1904 to 1919. A visit to the Feis Cheoil in Dublin in 1897 exposed him to Irish folk songs and he began collecting and later arranging folk songs for the piano. He had a long and distinguished career as a teacher, composer and collector; he was the first Professor of Irish Music at University College Cork (1922) and later worked for An Gúm, the National book publisher. He was fluent in Irish and became an ardent Nationalist. He was afforded a State Funeral on his death in 1945.

SLIABH GALLION BRAE

[D] As I went a- [C] walking one [Em] morn [G] ing in [D]
May,
To [Am] view yonder val [G] leys and mountains so [D] gay,
I was [C] thinking of [G] yon flowers soon a-[C] going to de
[Am] cay,
That grow a [G] round you, [D] bonny, [Em] bonny Sliabh [A]
Gallion's [D] Brae.

My name is James McGarvey and I'd have you understand,
I come from Derrygennard and I own a farm of land;
But my rents are getting higher, and I can no longer pay,
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Sliabh Gallion's Brae.



Oft o'er these mountains with my dog and my gun,
I wandered these mountains for pastime and for fun,
But those days they are all over, and I must go away;
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Sliabh Gallion's Brae.

It's not for the want of employment at home,
That causes the sons of Old Ireland to roam,
But our rents are getting higher, and the rates we cannot pay;
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny

Farewell to Old Ireland, that island so green,
To the parish of Lissan and the cross of Ballinascreen,
May good fortune shine upon you while I am far away,
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Sliabh Gallion's Brae

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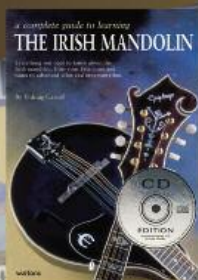
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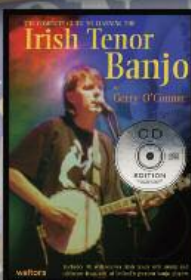
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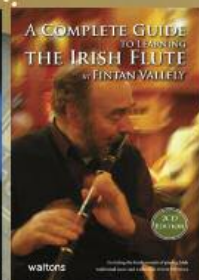
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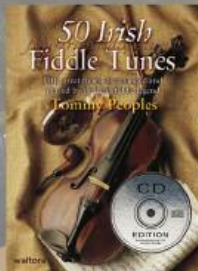
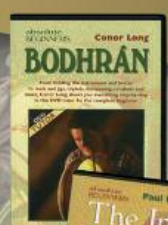
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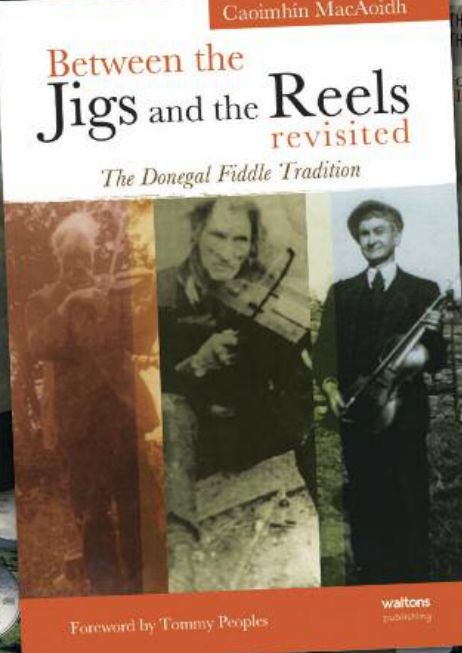
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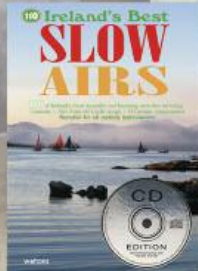
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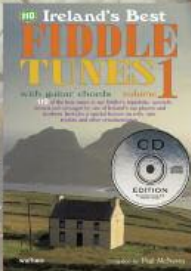
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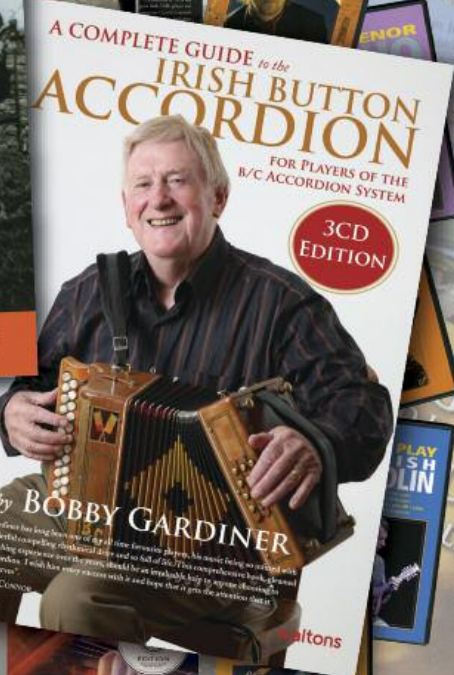
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