



Cairde na Cruite

Bunaithe 1960

Nuachtlitir

Samhain 2011

2011 marks another very successful year for Cairde na Cruite. We have continued to develop and achieve our aims of promoting the harp both in Ireland and internationally. Both our latest book, *Rogha na gCruitirí, Harpers' Choice* and our new CD, *Masters of the Irish Harp*, have been met with widespread popularity and acclaim. The annual international harp festival, *An Chúirt Chruitreachta*, was again a great success.

We would like to congratulate Aibhlín McCrann on her new role as a member of the Arts Council and wish her the very best in this important position. The society has greatly benefited from her dynamic enthusiasm as Secretary and Festival Director over the past number of years and we thank her for her dedication to Cairde na Cruite. We are also grateful for the continuing support of Communiqué International. Áine Ní Dhubhghaill and Helen Lawlor will work as Festival Director and Secretary respectively. Thanks also to Dearbhail Finnegan and Anne-Marie O'Farrell for looking after membership and harp-hire, respectively, over the past few years.

The results of the Cairde na Cruite Harp Census will be available on the website shortly. Thank you to all who have participated. If you would like to know more, please see: <http://www.cairdenacruite.com/pdf/news/HarpCensus.pdf>

In 2012 we will launch the Cairde na Cruite Archive, housed at Dundalk Institute of Technology. The archive will act as a repository for manuscripts, scores, photographs, written materials, theses and papers, newspaper articles, videos and any other harp related material. We would be very grateful for any donations to the archive. For details please contact helen.lawlor@dkit (ph: 0429370200, extn 2989).



Supporting Cairde na Cruite

Cairde na Cruite's main objective is to promote the Irish harp through teaching, publishing and public performances. Over the past number of years we have been delighted to witness an increase in the number of teachers and players of our national instrument, with the result that it is becoming ever more visible at traditional *seisiúns* and other musical events. The enthusiasm and goodwill demonstrated by our members, friends and colleagues has had no small part to play in this renaissance and represents the continuation of an age-old tradition of the patronage of music and culture in Ireland.

We at Cairde na Cruite are committed to ensuring that the harp will remain an integral part of the cultural and musical heritage of Ireland in the twenty-first century. We appreciate the support given so generously by our members in many forms – organising and attending public concerts and the annual *Cúirt Chruitreachta*, contributing to our website and *Nuachtlitir*, buying our publications



and providing essential financial support in the form of annual membership subscriptions.

With this in mind, we would like to remind all our readers that the annual membership fee (now reduced to €20 for individuals) is due on January 1st annually. Your membership fee is essential in providing the resources to enable the society to continue with its promotional and teaching activities. You'll find a Membership Form (including an optional Standing Order) on the Cairde na Cruite website www.cairdenacruite.com and in this edition of our *Nuachtlitir*. Let's all make it our New Year's Resolution to fill in the membership form and return it so that we can continue to plan for the future and encourage new generations of Irish harp players!

We look forward to meeting our members and friends at the various harping events organised throughout the year and at the forthcoming Christmas concert. In the meantime, the Committee would like to thank all those who have contributed to Cairde na Cruite in the past and to welcome your continued support for the future.

Cairde na Cruite wish all our harper colleagues,

members and their families

a very happy Christmas and New Year!

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise

dhaoibh go léir!

An Chúirt Chruitireachta Annual International Festival for Irish Harp Report on 2011

Aibhlín McCrann, Festival Director 2011

Despite an active web presence, the world wide-recession affected our overseas numbers participating in the 2011 Festival. To our great relief, however, local attendance remained firm due to a major drive by teachers and Cairde na Cruite committee members to attract more participants. Our numbers increased dramatically toward the middle of May and we had a full quota by our start date.



Supported by its hard working team of tutors - Maire Ní Chathasaigh, Áine Ní Dhubhghaill, Kathleen Loughnane, Gráinne Hambley, Cormac de Barra, Kim Fleming, Dearbhail Finnegan, Anne-Marie O' Farrell and sean nós singer Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaoich - the Festival settled into its familiar routine of morning classes and singing workshops, afternoon seminars and open harp workshops, dancing classes, lots of informal playing and a series of great concerts featuring the best of traditional harpers and other musicians, which were also open to the public. Our vigorous marketing and media campaign assured us a very respectable audience each evening and we were delighted with our full houses. These concerts provided the public with an unrivalled opportunity to explore the cross cutting relationships between Irish harp, its positioning within Irish traditional music and its place within the wider tradition of harping in Ireland, Scotland and Wales.



Our opening evening saw poet and Aos Dána member Moya Cannon, Seán Ryan, whistle, and Rick Epping , concertina, join with Kathleen Loughnane, harp, for a night of poetry and music. Nicholas Carolan enthralled us by opening a window on The Neal Collection (1724) with Siobhán Armstrong, early Irish harp, singer Áine Uí Cheallaigh, Paul O'Shaughnessy and Paul McGrattan. The Mulcahy Family and Michelle Mulcahy, harp, held us spell bound by their virtuoso performances, while Scottish singer Alyth McCormack and Triona Marshall, harp, presented a riveting display of Scottish and Irish singing and harp music. Spanning the worlds of trad and jazz, Anne Marie O'Farrell, harp, and Scottish harper Maeve Gilchrist shared their unique approach in 'Súil Eile', while our Gala concert welcomed harper Cormac de Barra and Máire Bhreathnach, fiddle, who then joined special guests, T and the 3 Maggies (Triona Ní Dhomhnaill, Moya Brennan, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh and Maighréad Ní Dhomhnaill) for a great night of music and song.



My thanks to our tutors, our backroom staff who burn the midnight oil prior to the festival, the staff at an Grianán who take care of us so well and our enthusiastic students, who never fail to amaze us with what they learn in a week. None of this would be possible without the support we receive from The Arts Council, An Chomhairle Ealaíon, who fund the Festival and RTÉ Lyric FM, who very generously provide us with media sponsorship.

An Chúirt Chruitireachta Annual International Festival for Irish Harp

Sunday 1st July to Friday 6th July 2012



The annual Cúirt Chruitireachta in An Grianán, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, now ranks among the top international harp festivals. It focuses primarily on the music of the ancient harping tradition and Irish traditional music and attracts students from all over the world. This challenging week-long programme of workshops, concerts, sessions and tuition offers an opportunity to gain a better understanding of Irish music, song and dance as well as developing the skills and repertoire for players of all standards.

Teaching is conducted on a modular basis so that participants can benefit from a collaborative, multidisciplinary teaching approach. A full range of harping techniques are covered and include:

- Irish harping techniques
- Traditional ornamentation
- Session and group playing
- Wire strung harp styles
- Music of the 16th and 17th century Harpers
- Singing in Irish and English

If participants have specific requirements we'll endeavour to ensure that they are addressed during the week. You may now **apply online** to book your place for 2012 via our website www.cairdenacruite.com

An Grianán provides single rooms and double rooms ensuite. The fees include all tuition, concerts/workshops, accommodation and full board.

An Chúirt Chruitireachta

Sunday 1st July to Friday 6th July 2012

Join us for an exciting programme of

workshops and concerts!



Cairde na Cruite Student Concert St. Enda's, Rathfarnham



On 8th May 2011, Cairde na Cruite held a student concert in St. Enda's, Rathfarnham. The beautiful hall of Pádraig Mac Piarais' school rang to the sounds of a new generation of harpers watched by a full house of enthusiastic and devoted fans. We are very grateful to Director Brian Crowley and the staff at St. Enda's for welcoming and facilitating us and our talented young players, parents and friends.

We hope to foster our collaboration with this historic venue where Irish harp and pipes were taught almost 100 years ago and look forward to presenting many more student concerts here.

New Harp Syllabus at Royal Irish Academy of Music

The new syllabus for Irish and Concert Harps 2012-2014 is now available from R.I.A.M. It features a wide range of pieces from Traditional, Classical, South American to Jazz. The Chamber Music section includes Junior, Middle and Senior grades for two or more harps. This is becoming increasingly popular and a great way to enjoy sharing music with other students. Exams are held at centres throughout the country three times a year and are open to all students.

A Call for Harps

Over the last number of years there has been a resurgence of interest in the Irish harp. Cairde na Cruite supports young harpers by publishing music, providing concert venues and making available a high standard of teaching. Our harp-hire scheme enables young students to borrow a harp for a trial period for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months before purchasing. The income from this helps to sustain the viability of the society. This year in particular, in common with many organisations, our financial position is precarious. More harps would generate a very valuable income for the society:



- Would you like an opportunity to support Cairde na Cruite's work and assist young people in fulfilling their potential?
- Have you an unused harp that you would be willing to give or to lend us to hire to prospective harp students?
- Or, alternatively, you could make a donation to the society so that we may purchase more student harps.

For further information, please contact Ann Jones Walsh at 086 2856101.

RTÉ Lyric fm CD *Masters of the Irish Harp*

Official Launch June 2011



Masters of the Irish Harp (produced in association with Cairde na Cruite) is the latest release from RTÉ Lyric fm and it celebrates the virtuosity of sixteen of our leading harpers playing music ranging from solo harp tunes collected at the Belfast Harp Festival in 1792 right up to compositions created in the twenty-first century for harp, trumpet and guitar. The CD was launched at our Festival in Termonfeckin by Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht Affairs (pictured below trying one of our harps!).



Masters of the Irish Harp includes harpers who have played for American Presidents, as part of Riverdance, at international festivals and events, and who have won Grammy Awards. All of the musicians on the CD have toured throughout the world and are the leading players of their instrument. Masters of the Irish Harp is a musical snapshot of the vitality of Irish harp playing today and is a must for all music lovers. In the words of Giraldus Cambrensis, the twelfth century scholar, describing the musicianship of the harper “...the perfection of their art seems to lie in their concealing it, as if it were the better for being hidden.”





Masters of the Irish Harp Review

The following article was written by Niall Keegan, course director, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, and published in Journal of Irish Music on 8th July 2011.

Masters of the Irish Harp is a compilation of sixteen solo tracks mostly taken from the artists' own recordings released over the past twenty years. Three tracks are recorded specially for this album. Like all such enterprises there are a few surprising omissions, particularly the Monaghan born performer Michael Rooney, who has made an immense impact on the way the harp is perceived in the traditional music world. However the release does represent the extent and breadth of technical mastery, virtuosity and style that can be heard in Ireland today.

Simplistically we can see the Irish harp existing along axes defined by classical, traditional and early music. Certainly, if *Masters of the Irish Harp* was presented thirty years ago, the repertoire and style would have come from the worlds of Irish classical music and historical harp repertoire reimagined by classical collectors and editors. What we can hear now is a much more lively and diverse affair.



Musicians like Michelle Mulcahy, Laoise Kelly and Grainne Hambly have literally brought the harp into the middle of the pub session. Far from a radical and divisive development, this reinvention of the instrument for the performance of dance music has been adopted by other harpers who have enriched the harp world by engaging the traditional aesthetic – this is best illustrated in this recording by former RTÉ Concert Orchestra principal harper Triona Marshall.

Janet Harbison and Máire Ní Chasthasaigh present us with self-composed material that shows engagement with more contemporary popular and folk approaches, while Aibhlín McCrann and Dearbhail Finnegan refresh approaches to more historical harp repertoire. The wire strung harp can be found here in one of its first recreations in a track from Grainne Yeats and in Paul Dooley's invention of the instrument in a traditional context. From this world, creating art from the bones of a long-dead tradition, comes my favourite track of the lot, Siobhán Armstrong's vivid versions of 'Give me Your Hand' based on eighteenth-century published sources from Ireland and Scotland – the next time you hear this tune butchered at a wedding, make the musicians listen to this.

The spirit of this compilation is represented beautifully in Kathleen Loughnane's tongue-in-cheek segue from a hornpipe into the classic Carolan air 'Eleanor Plunkett' in a new-age style. If you are into this sort of thing you probably have these recordings already – otherwise it gives an excellent account of the harp tradition as it stands.

Harps for Healing

The following article may be of interest to our readers. It contains experiences that lead to the founding of Harps for Healing and the exciting developments taking place with the support of the Mater Hospital.

HARPS FOR HEALING is the provision of harp music for the wellbeing of patients and staff in hospitals and hospices. The music is provided by harpists or harpist/singers onsite in a venue chosen in partnership with the host hospital.

In addition, Harps for Healing provides an optional harp tuition programme suitable for the staff and the local community; a collaboration which would enable anyone wishing to learn the harp to heal themselves could do so at the host venue.

I was inspired to start this project because of experiences I had with people for whom I played the harp and sang.

1) A sister of mine lay in a coma in the Royal Free in Hampstead, after exploratory surgery had confirmed an inoperable cancer. We, her family, were told it was unlikely that she would return to consciousness, and it was suggested we make our farewells. My farewell was to sing to her, at which she opened her eyes immediately; looked around at all the people gathered, then closed her eyes and slept. She became fully conscious over the following few hours. She was later able to tell me that she was in a dreamlike place, undecided what to do, when she heard me singing.

2) A friend was dying of cancer in Blackrock Clinic; his sister was keeping vigil by his bedside. She told me he was in great pain. I asked to be allowed on the floor to play the harp for him. After some discussion, it was decided I would be allowed play for twenty minutes. When I played the harp for my friend, his sister came to me in tears and said that as soon as the sound of the harp could be heard he started to relax for the first time that day, then he slept. I continued to play, not taking account of the time, since the nurses station was beside me, and I assumed I would be told when my time was up. After an hour and a half I started to pack up thinking I had well worn out my welcome. A staff nurse noticed me packing the harp and asked: "you're not leaving are you? That was so relaxing, we could listen to it all night."

3) In Crumlin Children's Hospital at a special event which included me playing harp in various units, staff nurses told me that when I played, the babies stopped crying. As a result of this, they changed their minds about allowing me into the ICU, where I played for the babies and their parents. 4) A young autistic boy of about 4 years of age came and stood in front of me as I played the harp at a family event. His father, whom I'd noticed earlier trying to calm the boy, anxiously tried to move his son away, concerned about his erratic behaviour. His son screamed and resisted. I suggested he be allowed to stay where he was, right in front of me, with his father standing by. As I played he sat quietly and still. His father couldn't believe how peaceful his son was.

These are just some of the reasons I started Harps for Healing in 2009. The Mater Hospital was the first hospital to welcome the project. With their support, I applied for funding for the growth of the project.

A special “Harps for Healing Harp” has been designed and built by Colm O’Meachair of Marlay Craft Courtyard, Rathfarnham. This prototype was commissioned by the Mater Hospital and is known as the “Mater Harp” It will serve as the basis for the specialist healing harp to be used in all venues in the future. Its warm tone, size, and light weight make it especially suitable as a portable instrument for playing on the wards. The special strap allows the harpist to move freely, thus negating the elaborate arrangements previously required to make the music accessible to patients and carers.

The Mater Harp was unveiled on Friday 21st January, at the launch of the Mater Hospital’s 150th anniversary celebration which the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese officially opened. The Health Promotion Co-Ordinator made a speech on the occasion, as follows:

“Good morning everyone, we decided to take this opportunity to introduce you to the Harps for healing programme.

We have adopted this project as part of our strong commitment to the delivery of quality patient care based on the values and mission of the hospital. We continually strive to expand our expert services and take positive steps to maintain our status as a leading healthcare institution. We embrace every opportunity to support healing and promote health and wellbeing through cultivating a peaceful and calm environment within the hospital.

The Harps for Healing programme is expanding on the live music programme, which has been running here since 2008. This programme is based on ‘Bedside Harp’ TM an innovative hospital Harp music project in United States.

Our programme builds on our initial goal of providing music as an adjunct to the clinical care helping to decrease anxiety and promote emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

In support of the programme the Mission Effectiveness Office has commissioned a new portable harp. It has been designed through the good offices of our resident harpist Madeleine Doherty and Irish Harp maker Colm O’ Meachair. It is the first in the country and will be known as the ‘Mater Harp’

The design enables the harpist to move freely and with ease around the wards and go directly to the bedside of patients should the patient or family request it. The tone of the Harp is also designed to suit the hospital environment.

A second part to the programme is the opportunity of learning for wellbeing. This will enable out-patients, staff and the local community who would like to learn to play the harp for their own wellbeing and self-healing to do so.

Now you will have an opportunity to hear the sweet sounds of this harp played for the first time in this Mater by our resident harpist Madeleine...”

Madeleine Doherty

An Early Reference to the Harp in Ireland

The following Old Irish poem was translated recently for the first time. It is found in an eighth-century legal text entitled *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* which deals with the law relating to poets in early Ireland.

Source: Johan Corthals, 'The *Ailiu* Poems in *Bretha Nemed Dédenach*', *Éigse* xxxvii (2010), 59-91 at 75-78.

The poem will be of interest to harpers for several reasons. It contains the Old Irish words for the harp (*crott*) and a type of pipes (*cuislennach*, plural *cuislennaig*) and also the word *céis*, which the editor translates here as 'lute', although in other sources *céis* seems to refer to a part of a harp. It also contains the verb for playing a musical instrument, *seinnid*, which is still used in Modern Irish (*ag seinim* 'playing'). The passage quoted below forms the opening section of a much longer composition and the editor suggests that it may describe a drinking feast held in connection with a poetical examination or contest. It includes sections describing the procession towards the drinking hall (*tech midchúarta*) and eulogies of the beer, goblet and healing water. The Áed Sláine mentioned in the third line was the king of Tara who died in 604.

Áiliu seinm sernar n-imbus,
indel crott, cuislennaig córai.
Cumtangaí dánaib Áed Sláine.
Seinnes sephnae sifais,
díchuimrig a cholpthai, menmae étrocht.
Ardo-túaisét suid do-ruimdetar ainféith,
suíthe n-indomain, tuisel ndomain.
Admolta céis ad-bath a tulluinne.
Áiliu. Áiliu seinm

'I pray for music, by which great learning is displayed, arrangement of harps, harmoniousness of the flutist. Let Áed Sláine be exalted with poems. He who plays, he who played, he will play. Unleashed are his shanks, bright his mind. The sages, who listen to them (i.e. the music and the poems), are able to estimate disturbance, superficial learning, deep stumbling. By the eulogizing lute their great fierceness had died. I pray. I pray for music'.

'Have Among you Blind Harpers'

An English Diplomat and an Irish Harper, 1682–3.

Seán Donnelly

By the 1500s, 'blind as a harper' was a proverbial saying in English. Another, more curious one, 'have among you blind harpers', was used to encourage someone to get on with a project, to go with his instinct and not to bother with the possible consequences. Apparently it stemmed from the perception that blind musicians produced music almost unconsciously. The English diplomat, Sir Robert Southwell (1635–1702), quoted the phrase in a letter he wrote in the early 1680s from his country residence, Kings Weston, Gloucestershire. The recipient was the polymath, Sir William Petty (1623–87), physician-general to the Cromwellian army in Ireland, and compiler of Down Survey, 1654–6. Both men had been granted forfeited estates in Ireland. Born in Kinsale, Co. Cork, to which his father had migrated in the early 1600s, Southwell had been granted the estate of Phillip Barry Oge in the liberties of Kinsale in 1666. Petty had received 30,000 acres in Munster in the 1650s, and had subsequently purchased confiscated estates in other parts of Ireland. His descendants became earls of Shelburne, and later marquesses of Lansdowne.

Surprisingly Petty, who wrote prolifically on a wide range of subjects, seems to have expressed doubts about publishing something to Southwell, who made light of them when replying on 28 November 1682:

Wherefore, deare Cousin, make a virtue of Necessity, and what you cannot Resist or suppress lett us have it with a good Grace, and as it were have amongst you blind Harpers.¹

The phrase may have come into his mind because a blind harper had recently joined the household at King's Weston. Further on in the letter, writing of his children, he said: 'My small puggs are all well and very jovial for I have got them a blind Harper.'² A week earlier, on 21 November, Southwell had mentioned the harper to his brother-in-law, Sir John Percival of Burton House, Churchtown, Mallow, Co. Cork: '... My children are all in perfect health, and every night dancing with Dick Barry's harp.'³

But the harping and dancing had ceased within four months, as Sir Robert's son, Edward, informed his aunt, Lady Percival, on 20 February 1683:

... We are mightily troubled for the loss of poor Dick Barry, he leaving a sad heart in the nursery. But to repair his loss all we can do is that Miss Helena must play her old tune upon the harpsichord seven times a day till we go up to London, where, for a month, we are to learn all manner of things which Mr. Desirier with his one eye can teach us in that time. So you see in what manner we are to repair his loss.⁴

The sad tone of the letter suggests that Dick Barry had died and not just left. Though he is not said to have been an Irish harper, he was blind, as were many professional players in Ireland, and had a Co. Cork surname. Furthermore, Sir Robert and Edward both name him in their letters to the Percivals in Cork, as if they, too, knew him. Incidentally, the Percivals themselves also enjoyed the harp. An inventory of Burton House in 1680 lists 'a large Irish harp', on which, doubtless, the family was entertained by 'Anthony's son, the old harper', mentioned in a letter of 17 December 1680 to Sir John Percival.⁵

¹ [Henry William Edward Petty-Fitzmaurice 6th] Marquis of Lansdowne (ed.), *The Petty-Southwell correspondence, 1676–87* (London, 1928), p. 112.

² *ibid.*, p. 113.

³ HMC *Report on the manuscripts of the earl of Egmont* (2 vols., London and Dublin, 1905–9), II, p. 123.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641–1770* (New Haven and London, 2004), p. 359.

Cairde na Cruite Committee

2011 / 2012

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Cathaoirleach / Chairman: Roisin McLaughlin

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Rúnaí / Secretary: Dr. Helen Lawlor

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www.cairdenacruite.com

Cairde na Cruite's

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The Arts Council, An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Ba mhór ag Coiste Chairde na Cruite

tú a bheith i láthair ag

Cóisir na Nollag

Foras na Gaeilge, 7 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, BÁC 2

11 Nollaig 2011 3.00pm

Cairde na Cruite invites you to celebrate its

Christmas Student Concert

Foras na Gaeilge, 7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

11 December 2011 3.00pm

Our special guests this year are

Oisín Morrison and Niamh Nic Uileagóid

on

harp, flute and concertina.

So join us for a great afternoon's entertainment from our students,

who capture the magic of Christmas every year

in music and song.