

# Membership Renewal Form

Ainm: .....

Seoladh .....

.....

Teileafón: ..... Dáta: .....

Please tick as appropriate:

Cash: \_\_\_\_\_ Student (7 euro): \_\_\_\_\_  
PO/Cheque: \_\_\_\_\_ Individual (13 euro): \_\_\_\_\_  
Standing Order: \_\_\_\_\_ Family (20 euro): \_\_\_\_\_

Payment is due on 1st January each year.  
Receipts are not posted unless requested.

Please return to: Dearbhail Finnegan, Clongill-  
Donaghpatrick, Navan, Co Meath.

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### Standing Order

To: (Insert name and address of bank) Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name (Capitals):

\_\_\_\_\_

On the first day of January each year, commencing  
20\_\_ until further notice, please pay the sum of  
\_\_\_\_\_ euro to the Bank of Ireland, Main Street, Dun-  
drum, Dublin 14 for credit to Cairde na Cruite Account  
No. 105 82665 branch code 90-10-95.  
Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Bank Account Number:

## Cairde na Cruite Committee 2007/2008

- ◇ Uachtarán Gráinne Yeats
- ◇ Cathaoirleach: Roisin McLaughlin
- ◇ Cisteoir: Kieron Cummins
- ◇ Rúnaí: Aibhlín McCrann
- ◇ Coiste: Áine ní Dhubhghaill  
Cormac de Barra  
Tracey Fleming  
Kathleen Loughnane  
Anne-Marie O'Farrell  
Dearbhail Finnegan  
Gráinne Ryan  
Aisling Ennis  
Helen Price  
Mary Nolan  
Aoife Hegarty

- ◇ Newsletter articles to: Aisling Ennis  
(aislingennis@gmail.com) or Roisin McLaughlin  
(rmcl@celt.dias.ie).
- ◇ Harp Hire enquiries to: Anne Marie O'Farrell, 138  
Meadow Grove, Dundrum, Dublin 16. Tel. 2966222
- ◇ Cairde na Cruite enquiries to: Aibhlín McCrann,  
50 Wyvern, Killiney, Co Dublin. Tel. 2856345;  
(mccranna@eircom.net; fax: 6768007)
- ◇ Membership Secretary: Dearbhail Finnegan, Clongill-  
Donaghpatrick, Navan. Co Meath Tel:0469055778,  
(e mail:irishharper@mac.com)
- ◇ Cairde na Cruite Website: www.cairdenacruite.com

Cairde na Cruite is granted-aided by The Arts Council, An  
Chomhairle Ealaíon

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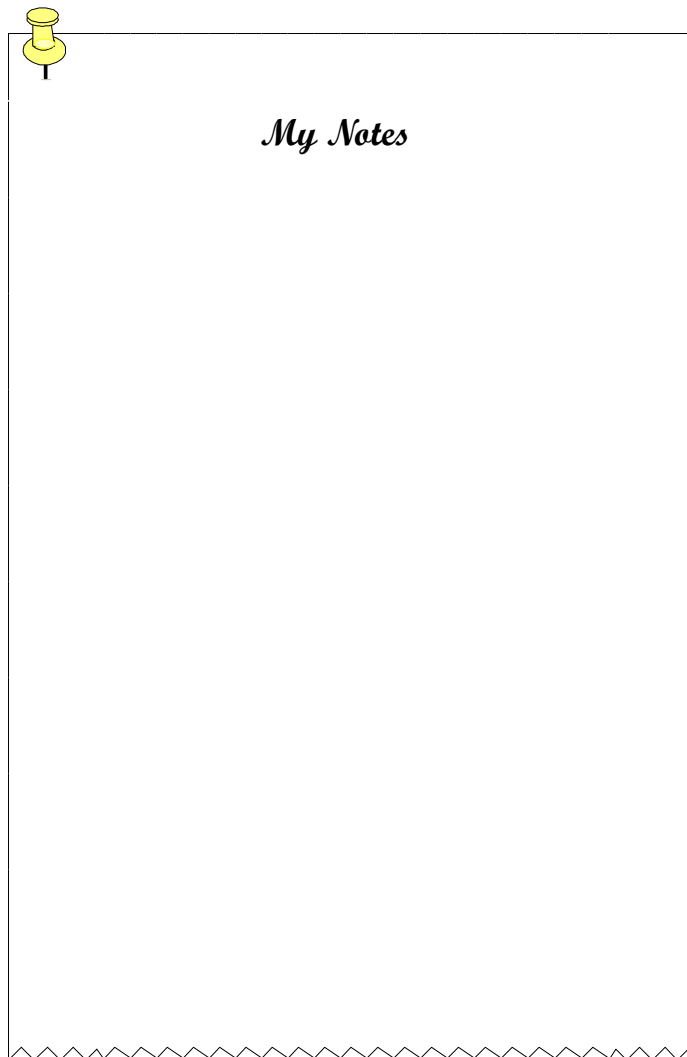
**Cairde na Cruite Secretary's report  
2005/2006**


In spite of the fact that the Cairde na Cruite committee only convened sporadically in 2005/2006, the society's work progressed very satisfactorily. Activities like publishing, harp hire, our newsletter and our annual Cúirt Chruitreachta harp festival are all going from strength to strength and we continue to receive very positive feedback from our members and participants.

However, I find myself harking back to comments I made in my 2004 report which noted that with volunteerism on the wane in many areas of interest, Cairde na Cruite, like every other organisation depending on enthusiasts and committed people for its survival, still needs more people to get involved in the administration and organisation of the society's core activities. This is particularly urgent in the light of the fact that we are in receipt of additional state funding for which we are accountable. I stress that it is not necessary to play the harp to be on the committee of Cairde na Cruite. The founding committee of Cairde numbered as many non-players as harpers, people like our late president Cearbhaill Ó Dálaigh, and Eibhlín Nic Chathailriabhaigh, former secretary of Cairde na Cruite, both of whom espoused the need to revive and preserve the Irish harp tradition and all it represented. What we need are people like them with vision; people who are prepared to give some time to promote the harp and particularly to assist in the provision of platforms for younger harp players to perform and interact at a social level with one another. Therefore part of our work over the next 12 months needs to focus on recruiting people prepared to help. There are tremendous possibilities in relation to the current development of the harp. Apart from ongoing activity in Mullingar and Nobber, other Harp schools have sprung up in many areas around the country, particularly Clare and Limerick. This is very welcome and we need to harness our common sense of purpose at this level, encourage open communication and share resources where possible.

There has been a corresponding development in interest in the Early Irish harp and we have continual contact with Siobhan Armstrong who is based in Carrick on Suir and who is building up a strong wire strung harp following.

Another very positive move has been the inclusion of the Irish harp





*Things to do.....*

- ◇ *Renew Cairde na Cruite membership.*
- ◇ *Check out Cairde na Cruite website.*
- ◇ *Send Newsletter contributions (by e-mail or post) to Aisling or Roisin.*



at the Willie Clancy Summer School; a major acknowledgment of where the Irish harp is positioned in traditional music at the moment.

We held a number of student concerts to coincide with the Salvi visit to Ireland as well as our usual Christmas concert. Book sales provide a steady source of income for the society for which we are very grateful. Cairde na Cruite is deeply indebted to Editors Gráinne Yeats and Mercedes Garvey. Indeed Mercedes still administers the selling of the Sounding Harps series. We continue to hire our harps to prospective players and there continues to be a demand from beginners for that short term opportunity

The last two years have been sad ones for Cairde na Cruite in that we lost a number of our members. Our sympathy to Áine Ní Dhubhghaill on the loss of her parents, who were longstanding supporters of Cairde na Cruite. Her father spent many long hours in the early days, designing and sourcing our society logo apart from the interest that he and his wife Máire had in the activities of the society. I also want to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to Micheál Yeats who passed away in January 2007. The contribution he made to Cairde na Cruite is immeasurable. He gave unstintingly of his time. Whether it was for legal opinion in the drafting of the constitution or editorial input he made in our Sounding Harps series or whether it was just for good solid advice on numerous different issues, he was always there with a knowledgeable, realistic outlook on what was possible and what wasn't viable. And he gave always with un-failing good humour and anecdotes of times past. We miss him greatly. The Yeats family suffered a second bereavement this year and all our sympathies are with them on the loss of a daughter and sister. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dilse.*

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the various officers on the Committee of Cairde an Cruite who have undertaken the necessary chores: Tracey Fleming, who will be stepping down as treasurer this year; Kathleen Loughnane who has looked after membership; Aisling Ennis and Roisin McLaughlin who edit our newsletter and Anne Marie O'Farrell who is our harp hire officer.

Aibhlín McCrann



### **An Chúirt Chruitireachta Report**

An Chúirt Chruitireachta has now established itself as one of the foremost harp festivals of its kind in the world. This is due to the kind of programme it offers, the quality of teaching and the varied workshop and concert programmes, which have embraced a wide range of harping and singing styles. Despite minimum marketing, our numbers increased last year and An Grianán played host- between visiting artistes and residents - to more than 90 people during the course of the festival. An undoubted advantage in promoting An Chúirt Chruitireachta has been the re-design of the website and the fact that applicants could enrol on line. Hopefully, this trend will continue with the ongoing up-dating of the website and our numbers will continue to increase for the 2008 festival.

In relation to the programme, classes generally take place in the morning with workshops and evening concerts slotting in throughout the rest of the day. A feature of recent festivals has been the presence of the harp makers on the initial Sunday, the sponsorship of harps by Salvi and a concert with David Watkins by Morley in lieu of venue hire. We are hoping to develop this practice over the next few years.

Due to an increase in our Arts Council allocation, it has been possible to initiate a more ambitious series of evening concerts both in 2006 and 2007. For the first time we held our opening concert, featuring Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Chris Newman, in Drogheda with the help of Louth Co. Council. It was a major move for us and the Droichead Arts Centre proved to be a very sympathetic venue. Again, funding permitting we hope to develop this initiative further in 2008. Our concert programme tried to incorporate our theme for the festival, which focused on the relationship between Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We devoted a complete day to the music, song and dance of Wales, which was enormously successful. A superb masterclass given to Pedal harp students by Elinor Bennet was followed by an even more inspiring concert that evening. Other concerts and workshops included the singing of Muireann nic Amhlaóibh and Scottish singer Julie Fowles, Scottish harper Caitriona McKay and fiddler Chris Stout, Kathleen Loughnane and piper Cormac Cannon who demonstrated the strong links between harp and pipes, Early Irish harper Siobhán Armstrong and Clann Eile, featuring the De Barra and Ó Braonáin dynasties. Teaching staff shared lunch-time concerts throughout the week.



## Viii. cal. Ianuarii

In notlaic mór mírbuil  
Crist ó Mairi bánlain  
génair la díth ndorcha,  
rí sorchad síl Ádaim.

*'At great, marvellous Christmas, Christ  
from white-pure Mary was born with the  
ruin of darkness, (Christ) the luminous  
King of Adam's race'.*

In notlaic mor mirbuil .i. is a notlaic moir  
facta est natiuitas Christi.

*'On Christmas day, a great marvel, i.e. on  
the great Natalicia Christ's Nativity took  
place'.*

Sliocht as *Féilire Óengusso Céli Dé* (8ú haois),  
curtha in eagar ag Whitley Stokes (London 1905)



2007 also saw a modular approach to teaching in that each group got the opportunity to experience the individual styles of the teaching team in the second session each morning. This proved to be very successful with the more advanced harpers. The two junior classes remained with their core tutor for the whole morning in order to give them some additional continuity of approach. Our teachers this year were Cormac de Barra, Maire Ní Chathasaigh, Helen Davies, Áine ní Dhubhghaill, Kim Fleming, Dearbhail Finnegan, Gráinne Hambley, Kathleen Loughnane, Anne Marie O'Farrell and Caitríona Yeats. Teaching always entails a lot more than it sounds and a very special thanks to all the teachers who also gave workshops and concerts as well as doing the nocturnal watch, where our younger students were concerned. My thanks also to Ann Jones and Aisling Ennis who both stepped into the breach at short notice to teach at various times during the week.

As usual, the staff at An Grianán gave us exceptional service during the week and our own team of stalwarts, Helen Price and Aisling Ennis, who came to help with the induction process on the opening day, also deserve a special mention. Our 2008 programme will shortly be posted on the website and enrolling will then begin for next year's festival.

Aibhlín McCrann

***For photos of last year's harp course and general  
information about our activities, check out  
[www.cairdenacruite.com](http://www.cairdenacruite.com)***



### Angel Padilla Crespo Masterclass at Royal Irish Academy of Music

Harpists at the academy were delighted to welcome Mexican Concert Harpist Angel Paddilla Crespo to coach some senior students on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October. Eva O Gorman, Robert Mortell, Daniel Mortell and Niall Murphy participated playing music by John Thomas, Guridi, Pierne and Tournier. It's always interesting to hear other interpretations and different approaches to technical challenges and the students responded with enthusiasm.

Thanks to the staff of the Mexican embassy for their support. Angel finished his tour of UK/Ireland with a wonderful solo recital in the National Concert Hall the following Wednesday.

Aine ní Dhubhghaill



### Angel Padilla Crespo, Harp Concert, National Concert Hall

Irish audiences were treated to an exceptional recital by the Mexican harpist Angel Padilla Crespo, who played to a capacity audience in the John Field room of the National Concert hall on October 21<sup>st</sup>.

Born in México City, Angel Padilla Crespo attended the Royal College of Music in London and worked with Marisa Robles. He continued with his studies under the instruction of Nicanor Zabaleta and in 1999 obtained a Performer's Diploma from Indiana University. He has been presented with awards such as the Malcolm Sargent, Jack Morrison and Ian Fleming in England, the Andrés Segovia and José Miguel Ruíz Morales in Spain and the Barbera Foundation and Eleanor Fell awards in the USA. In May 2006, the Tchaikovsky Conservatory invited him to give several recitals and masterclasses at the Bolshoi Salle and he also performed as soloist with the Kremlin orchestra.



### *Cóisir na Nollag*

*Cairde na Cruite's Christmas Concert  
will take place on **Sunday 9  
December 2007 at 3 pm in Foras na  
Gaeilge, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.***

*Music ... mince pies ... mulled wine ...*

*Fáilte roimh Chách*



**..News....New Releases....News....New Releases....News...**

During November the South Dublin County Council presented a classical concert series in Whitechurch, Rathfarnham, devised by their artist in residence, Finghin Collins. While it featured mostly chamber music and solo piano repertoire, the Irish harp was given a prominent place for its opening recital of the series. Anne-Marie O'Farrell performed works by Bach (cello, lute and keyboard works), Handel and some original compositions on solo Irish harp. Much of this programme will be included in her forthcoming CD next spring.

Other recordings: Jazz singer Dorothy Murphy launched her new CD entitled 'Calling' this September in Crawdaddy. It features Anne-Marie O'Farrell on harp, Claire Fitch and Kate Ellis, cellos, Seán Og, bass clarinet and saxophone, and Phil McMullen on drums. The recording has been kindly supported by Music Network and the Arts Council.

New Publications: Chorale Variations on Blessed Are the Pure in Heart (2007) for solo Irish harp. Duration 5'. Advanced level. The O'Farrell Collection Vol. 1 (2007); traditional Irish dance tunes arranged for Irish harp. Intermediate and above. Chorale Variations on Take My Life and Let it Be (2006) for solo Irish harp. Duration 5'. Advanced level.

Premieres of works by Anne-Marie O'Farrell: 'In the Beginning' for 4 trumpets and percussion received its world premiere at the National Concert Hall in May this year. It was performed by Kylemore College Brass and percussion ensemble. In the same concert Kylemore's harp ensemble of ten harpists performed Anne-Marie O'Farrell's arrangement of Wacht Auf from Bach's cantata no. 140 along with other works by Bach and Carolan. A new work for solo Irish harp, 'Chorale Variations on Blessed Are the Pure in Heart' received its first performance on 24 June in Rathfarnham Church of Ireland. A setting of Amazing Grace for pedal harp, voice and two French horns received its first performance on RTE television in a special broadcast celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Mission to Seafarers.

Further information on all of the above is available at: [www.annemarieofarrell.com](http://www.annemarieofarrell.com); [www.myspace.com/annemarieo30farrell](http://www.myspace.com/annemarieo30farrell) or by emailing [amofharp@iol.ie](mailto:amofharp@iol.ie).



The recital at the National Concert Hall consisted of Spanish and Mexican works dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century right up to the present day and it was a programme that displayed Angel's considerable technical and musical talents to perfection. It was a rare chance to hear well-known and lesser-known works side by side, culminating in an evening of glorious Latin reflections.

Some of the works were transcriptions of piano works such as the Albeniz and Granados and Chavarri, and these were accomplished with great sensitivity and panache. One of Angel's teachers, Nicanor Zabaleta, was instrumental in transcribing so many of these works for the harp in order to broaden the repertoire and thus introduce new audiences to the music of Spain.

The harp has long been associated with the music of Spain and earliest sources date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, encompassing both the diatonically tuned harp and the later so-called 'double harp' with its two rows of strings. Undoubtedly, Antonio de Cabezón had this instrument in mind when he composed the 'Pavane and Variations', which is now easily brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century on the modern concert harp.

It was a lovely evening of virtuoso harp playing, rounded off with a generous reception given by the Mexican Ambassador and her dynamic diplomatic team. There was lots of warm conversation and a chance for Angel to relax and chat with members of the audience and for the audience to toast his good health with wonderful margueritas made especially for the evening by the Ambassador herself (the recipe of which seems to be a closely guarded diplomatic secret!!).

Andreja Malir



**O'Carlolan Harp, Cultural and Heritage Festival, Nobber, Co. Meath****Harp Competition Results**

**Under 10:** 1<sup>st</sup> Megan Uí Chearuil, Dublin; 2<sup>nd</sup> Jennifer Leahy, Meath; 3<sup>rd</sup> Katie Patience, Down.

**10-12:** 1<sup>st</sup> Aisling Lyons, Clare; 2<sup>nd</sup> Caoimhe Harte, Meath; 3<sup>rd</sup> Jack Patience, Down.

**12-15:** 1<sup>st</sup> Aine Allen, Meath; 2<sup>nd</sup> Fiona Gryson, Meath; 3<sup>rd</sup> Aedin Poole, Meath.

**15-18:** 1<sup>st</sup> Alice Martin, Meath; 2<sup>nd</sup> Ciara Taaffe, Meath; 3<sup>rd</sup> Oisín Morrison, Dublin.

**Senior:** 1<sup>st</sup> Cathy Potter, Antrim; 2<sup>nd</sup> Aedin Martin, Dublin.

**Harp's a Wonder:** Overall winners Ceoltóirí Crosskeys, Antrim.

***Sounding Harps Books 5 and 6***

*The Publishing Committee has been making steady progress in their work on books 5 and 6 of our successful Sounding Harps series, which will be available during 2008.*

*The books will be of a standard similar to that of Book 4 in the current series and will reflect a wide range of Irish traditional styles. The selection of pieces includes harpers' tunes, dance music, slow airs and song airs, as well as songs with harp accompaniment in Irish and/or English.*

*Books 5 and 6 will be welcomed by harpers and teachers alike and will prove invaluable as a source of repertoire for an ever-growing number of players.*

*The Publishing Committee thanks all those who generously contributed arrangements of tunes and songs.*





## ***Cúirt Chruitireachta 2008***

***Tionólfar Cúirt Chruitireachta  
Chairde na Cruite i dTearmann Féichín ó  
29 Meitheamh—4 Iúil 2008.  
Tuilleadh eolais le fail ar an suíomh idir-  
lín atá againn!***

***Cairde na Cruite's annual  
Cúirt Chruitireachta  
will take place in Termonfeckin from June  
29-July 4 2008. Check out our website for  
more details!***



## ***Dates for your Diary .....***

***28 November, Kylemore College, 8pm***  
*Students of Anne-Marie O'Farrell will perform to  
welcome this year's new harp students in Kylemore. This  
is an annual event and all are welcome.*

***December 5th, Trinity College Chapel, 8pm***  
*A performance of Britten's A Ceremony of Carols with  
The Boydell Singers and harpist Niall Murphy.*

***4th December, Dean Crowe Theatre, Athlone, 8pm &  
7th December, Listowel, 8pm.*** *Anne-Marie O'Farrell and  
Karin Leitner (Flute) perform concerts entitled  
O'Carolan's Dream.*

*Andreja Malir will perform as soloist with Anúna in St.  
Anne's Church, Dawson Street, on the 21st & 22nd of  
December, and with Cor na nÓg in St. Annes, Dawson  
Street at 6.30, 13th of December.*

***17th of February 2008, Bantry House, 3.30 pm.*** *Trio  
Recital with William Dowdall (flute), Andreja  
Malir (harp) and John Lynch (viola). The programme  
will include Ravel Sonatine -Trio and Richard Rodney  
Bennett Trio after Syrinx.*

***2nd April 2008, Edinburgh International Harp Festival***  
*The Kylemore Harp Ensemble & director Anne-Marie  
O'Farrell will perform at the closing concert of the Edin-  
burgh International Harp Festival.*

***April 8th, 2008 'Singing Harps',*** *at the John Field Room,  
National Concert Hall, Dublin.*



### E-mail Interview with Grainne Hambly October 17th 2007

*Aisling: How often do you travel with your work? What kind of trips have you been on?*

Grainne: "For the past few years I've been spending about 6 months of the year on tour abroad, mainly in the USA but also in different parts of Europe and Japan. The trips can vary in length, from just a weekend or a week up to about 3 months. But, I've found that 3 months is really too long to be away, so I'm trying to organise things in shorter trips now so I can spend more time at home in Galway."

*Aisling: Your most memorable trip and why?*

Grainne: "I suppose probably my trips to Japan. Everything is so different over there, the culture, the food ... I was amazed at the reception I got and how much people seemed to enjoy the music, plus they were so polite and appreciative. I was lucky that Salvi harps let me borrow a harp from their Tokyo showroom, so I didn't have to bring my own over. And the people who arranged the tour organised someone to carry the harp for me, which was really nice for a change! Another very memorable trip was when I went to play at an Irish festival in Israel a few years ago. The performances and everything went very well and people were very welcoming. But it was also quite an adventure for my harp - first it got mislaid in London during a snow storm on the way there and finally arrived after 4 days, just in time for my first concert. Then on the way to the airport to fly home, I had to take a taxi with my harp strapped to the roof-rack, which was quite nerve-wracking!"

*Aisling: Any tips for other harpists on their travels?*

Grainne: "I think anyone who has a harp should have it properly insured, and definitely if you're flying with it, because the airlines don't cover damage to items over a certain value. I travel with my harp in a flight case, which is fairly good protection for it, but still you never know what might happen. The only trouble with the case is that it means the harp is overweight and oversize in terms of luggage restrictions so sometimes you can be charged a lot. It is a good idea to check the excess baggage policy and charges of the various airlines before flying - I recently made the mistake of not checking beforehand, and when I got to the airport, the airline was insisting I had to buy a seat for



### 2007 Edinburgh International Harp Festival

Four hundred and twenty harpers and their harps, inhabiting the environs of Merchiston Castle school for a week before Easter, were thoroughly spoiled by a worldwide harping experience. I had an eventful, hard working and interesting time at the 25<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh Harp festival. It was a special occasion for the festival, which featured concerts by artists from five continents and four Celtic countries, playing a spectacular variety of styles: from traditional Scottish, Irish and Welsh to Chinese, jazz, Persian, Colombian and Paraguayan. Eighteen workshops were on offer with a tantalizing choice including Breton dance, Scottish dance and Gaelic or Scots song. Teaching, as always, was central to the heart of the festival and 38 courses were on offer, catering for all levels from beginner to advanced.

I gave an advanced and intermediate class and was delighted with the level of musicality and competence in both, but in particular in the advanced class, where a core group were studying harp at university level. Here I had the joy of mostly teaching repertoire and working towards a feel for Irish dance music and the old harping airs. I was able to attend some of the concerts, including Edward Witsenberg and his brother who, needless to say, brought us into their own charmed world. A particular highlight of the concerts for me was the young Chinese harper Yi Dong, who shared her bill with the up-and-coming young jazz harpist and singer Maeve Gilchrist. Yi Dong is not only a national treasure, but a remarkable player in terms of mastered technique and musicality, while Maeve's mastery of speedy lever changing, jazz chords and improvisation was most impressive.

The Sunday night concert, in which I was joined by Alec Finn on bouzouki, Cormac Cannon on uilleann pipes and Martin Hughes on concert flute to play the music of the Irish harpers, was very warmly received. The finale was a host of harps: two hundred and two harpers with their harps gathered in the hall for a performance of Scottish music, arranged and directed by Isobel Mieras and delivered with a lightness of touch and humour. A good time was had by all and we achieved our goal of breaking a world record for the greatest number of harps playing at the same time!

Kathleen Loughnane



**Dear Cairde na Cruite readers!**

*Just a quick letter to let you know what's happening in our neck of the woods in Kylemore! We are having our annual 'Welcome Party' for new students next Wednesday, November 28. Anne-Marie organises this party every year to welcome her new students to the college. Some of the more mature (harp-wise!!) students play for the new arrivals and the Ensemble would normally have something ready to entertain the new students with also. We have a little party after the concert with tea, coffee and goodies. It is always a lovely evening and a great way for new people to get to know established students and hear harp repertoire.*

*Our other 'Big News' is that The Ensemble has been invited to play at The Edinburgh Harp Festival on April 2 '08. Our current Ensemble has 10 members of varying abilities, from almost complete beginners to quite advanced players. It is a measure of Anne-Marie's skill, enthusiasm and patience that she can cope with such a motley group! We plan to go to Edinburgh for the full duration of the Festival and take advantage of all that is on offer, from work-shops and master classes to concerts.*

*After the Christmas holidays the Ensemble hope to perform at hospitals and homes for the elderly. We had originally thought of doing it before Christmas but felt it might be appreciated more during the dark days of January.*

*We will keep you posted as things unfold!*

*All the best,*

*Mary Nolan*

the harp, even though it was going to be checked in as luggage! Of course a last minute seat would have been very expensive. Luckily they let me off with 'only' paying 100 euro in the end, but next time I'll definitely be prepared. I actually avoid flying with some airlines because I know I'm likely to get charged more for the harp."

*Aisling: Who do you tour with?*

Grainne: "I've toured a lot on my own as well as working with different groups over the last few years, but most recently I've been touring with Scottish harper William Jackson, doing some joint concerts in the USA. I've also toured with the band Teada on their Christmas tour for the last 2 years, and I'll be doing that again in December. Then in May, I'm going to be touring in Ireland with uilleann piper Brian McNamara and sean nós singer Éamon Ó Donnchadha, on a Music Network tour. Most of the tours I've done so far have been abroad, so I'm really looking forward to that one, and having the chance to play for audiences here."

*Aisling: Your most recent trips?*

Grainne: "I was in Edinburgh recently for a weekend, doing workshops for the Clarsach Society there which was very enjoyable. And before that, I was in the USA for 6 weeks, touring on the East Coast, from Georgia up as far as Boston. That was with William Jackson. We were doing concerts and workshops, and it went very well."

*Aisling: Anywhere you wouldn't take your harp and why?*

Grainne: "Probably anywhere with extremes of hot or cold, especially if it was very dry too. I also wouldn't play outside if it was too sunny, but then again, there's not much call for that in Ireland anyway!"

[www.grainnehambly.com](http://www.grainnehambly.com)



### Welsh Harper and English Bagpiper

The following is a fifteenth century account of an English wedding feast by a Welsh harper called Lewis Glyn Cothi. Lewis was furious to find that his harp music and poetry were not appreciated by the guests, who preferred the music of a local piper named William.

“Last Sunday I came—a man whom the Lord God made—to the double-dealing, skinny, tottering town of Flint. May I see it all aflame! A wedding was there, with but little mead—English clearly, an English feast! And I promised myself I should earn a shining, solid reward for my harper’s art. So I began, with ready speed, to sing an ode to the kinsman; but all I got was mockery, spurning of my song and grief. It was easy for hucksters of barley and corn to buffet all my skill, and they laughed at my artistry, my well-prepared panegyric so precious to me; John of the Long Smock began to jabber of peas, and another about dung for his land. They all called for William the Piper to come to the table, a low fellow he must be. He came forward as though claiming his usual rights, though he did not look like a privileged man, with a groaning bag, a load of bare guts, at the end of a stick between chest and arm. He grimaced and bulged his eyes, making startling roars, a horrid noise, from the swollen paunch. He twisted his body here and there, and puffed his two cheeks out, playing with his fingers on a bell of hide—unsavoury conduct, fit for the unsavoury banqueters. He hunched his shoulders, amid the rout, and dragged at his cloak like a miserable minstrel; he snorted away, and bowed his head until it was on his breast, the very image of a kite with nimble zeal preening its feathers. The crab puffed, making an outlandish cry, blowing out the bag with a loud howl; it sang like the buzzing of a hornet, that devilish bag with the stick in its head, like a nightmare howl, fit to kill a mangy goose, like a sad bitch’s hoarse howl in its hollow kennel; a harsh paunch with monotonous cry, throat muscles squeezing out a song, like the voice of a crane, long shrieking, like a stabbed goose screeching aloud. There are voices in that hollow bag like the ravings of a thousand cats; it has a cry like a wounded, ailing, pregnant goat—fair pay for its hire.



The sheer scale of the production and of the organisations involved was enormous. There must have been more than twenty people checking the takes in the control room that day, and one of them had the sole duty of being in charge of the click track. In a roomy upstairs office above studio one there was a full-time copyist, whose services we were invited to use at any time if needed.

As harpists the four of us are used to lugging and hauling weights not a million miles from the bags of cement Janet Baker mentioned. We’re used to leaving extra time for parking problems, for diplomatic debates with airline staff, and even for the odd stretching exercise so we don’t damage ourselves with the lifting. But this was different. Drivers were arranged for us at every turn, harps were kindly provided by Salvi harps and freed of the usual hassles, we were free to concentrate on the task in hand. Relaxing later over dinner there were many fascinating conversations to be had: orchestrator Geoffrey Alexander talked about the skill of writing for large symphony orchestra while Ray Cooper (drummer with Elton John, Eric Clapton and Rod Stewart) shared his love of the performances of our own mezzo soprano Ann Murray in baroque operatic roles. Irish composer Anna Rice spoke of her appreciation of Irish support in her studies as a writer of film music.

There were many moments when I felt lucky last weekend. One of them was earlier that day, walking back out of the building onto Abbey Road, seeing the photos of the great musicians who’ve recorded there, and I lingered at one picture, taken in studio one where we had just played. It was of Janet Baker.

Anne Marie O’Farrell



### Abbey Road

When I was a teenager I adored the singing of mezzo soprano Janet Baker. I was captivated by the way her interpretation could range from Bach to Duparc, and back to Schubert without her personality ever getting in the way of the composer's music. In her autobiography, *Full Circle*, she mentioned seeing a man covered in dust, carrying bags of cement as she made her way into Covent Garden, and thought how lucky she was to be making her living doing something she loved so much, namely singing.

Last weekend I found myself gigging in London, and felt every bit as lucky. Together with Irish harpists Triona Marshall, Gráinne Hambly and Jean Kelly, I took part in a recording with The Chieftains for the soundtrack of a film, *The Waterhorse*, due to come out in Europe next year. The composer of the soundtrack, James Newton Howard (who also scored the music for *Blood Diamond*, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, and *Peter Pan* among countless others) and Paddy Moloney wanted the sound of an orchestra of Irish harps to accompany the distinctive Chieftains sound which, no matter who they perform with, would never be mistaken for any other group. Their singlemindedness regarding their timbre, choice of instruments and style of arranging must be one of the main reasons for their consistent success since their beginnings in 1962. No wonder then that for a film of a fantasy tale set in Scotland, this distinctive timbre of the Chieftains would be so appropriate.

I wondered how the various elements would fit together. The MP3 files sent by email from Canada, the attachments to messages containing scores for pedal harp and Irish harp, the mixture of manuscript and dictaphones at rehearsal, and the coordination of getting harps around, not to mention the 8-hour time difference with artist management offices. But it was listening back to a take in the control room that I didn't need to wonder any more. As a single musician in a production of this kind of scale, I got a clear sense of why I was there, why it had to be four Irish harps with The Chieftains and with a 100-piece orchestra. And as a member—albeit briefly—of such a large team it was impressive to see the way the musicians Howard and Paddy Moloney allowed each other to shine and made for the individuality of one another's contributions.



After it ended its wheezing note, that cold songstress whom love would shun, Will got his fee, namely bean-soup and pennies (if they paid) and sometimes small halfpennies, not the largesse of a princely hand, while *I* was sent away in high vexation from the silly feast all empty-handed.

I solemnly vow, I do forswear wretched Flint and all its children! May it and its English people and its piper fall into a wide, hellish furnace! That they should be slaughtered is all my prayer, my curse in their midst and on their children! If I go there again, may I never return alive!”

From *A Celtic Miscellany, Translations from the Celtic Literatures* by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson.



### **An Exciting Era for Young Harpists**

When I started to play the harp a mere 12 years ago, the instrument was quite an unusual one to start learning, especially for boys. In fact, I'm still ignorant as to how I ever had the idea of taking it up! I remember spending several years as the only boy in the Nobber Harp School!

But over the past 12 years things have changed considerably and, although the harp is still certainly not a mainstream instrument, it is quickly becoming a very popular one. Male harpists are no longer the rarity they once were. Harp makers are being flooded with orders and their waiting lists are growing. All these trends are very encouraging for the harping community as a whole, but especially for us younger harpists. They are signals that a new era is dawning for the harp in Ireland and we are at the centre of it.

The student concert during Summer in the Radisson Hotel, hosted by Salvi Harps, was proof of the ever-growing popularity of the harp in Ireland, in both the traditional and classical sectors. Students, young and old, presented a diverse programme ranging from Irish dance music to Carolan to a variety of contemporary styles. Naoise O'Briain and I finished off the afternoon with two duets for harp and flute, an enchanting instrumental combination. The concert displayed not only the wealth of talented young harpists we have but also the stylistic flexibility of the instrument, which I believe is enticing more and more people into studying it.

An Chúirt Chruitreachta, the annual harp course in An Grianán, Termonfeckin, is further evidence of this. The number of students enrolling on the course has sky-rocketed since its founding and it now attracts visitors from all over the world. The course offers a wonderful opportunity for student harpists of all ages to interact on a musical and social level. This unique experience is forming an intimate community of harpists which exists for virtually no other instruments.

The image of the harp is changing drastically and the number of young harpists is on the up. All in all, it's an exciting time for young harpists!

Niall Murphy



### **My Experience with the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland**

I have many happy memories of the NYOI. Everybody comes to the orchestra with the same goal of performing in the concert as well as they possibly can, and of course there's lots of fun to be had along the way!

The first stage in getting into the orchestra is sending in your application for an audition. Then, closer to the audition date, you are sent an orchestral excerpt to perform along with another piece of your own choice. As for the audition itself, I found it quite a relaxed experience in which you're just there to reassure them that you're capable of performing a piece well.

My first time playing with the NYOI was the 05/06 season. Myself and my brother were the two harpists with the under 18's orchestra that year. The day we arrived was quite daunting but we soon realised that everybody is extremely friendly and great fun! The course was about a week long and rehearsals began in separate groups. For us that meant that harps rehearsed with each other for the first day or two with our harp tutor, who made sure we were comfortable with what we had to play. Soon afterwards, we moved into sectional rehearsals which meant that we either practiced with Violins, or Viola/Cello/Double basses, or with the Wind/Brass group. Since we were playing harp, we could choose which group to practice with and could also move around if we changed our minds.

Soon after these sectional rehearsals, the entire orchestra came together. This was a very big moment for me, as it would be the first time I was going to see everyone playing together. We gave each piece a run-through and then got down to work on the details.

The conductor, Gearóid Grant, was incredible! Everybody loved having him there because he was great fun but also ensured he got the very best performance out of everybody. Every night there would be different activities/games for everyone to take part in and on New Year's Eve there was also a disco.

After being with the NYOI I made lots of friends from all over the country and lots of us are still in contact! It was an incredible experience and I would strongly recommend it to anybody who is considering trying it out.

Robert Mortell.

