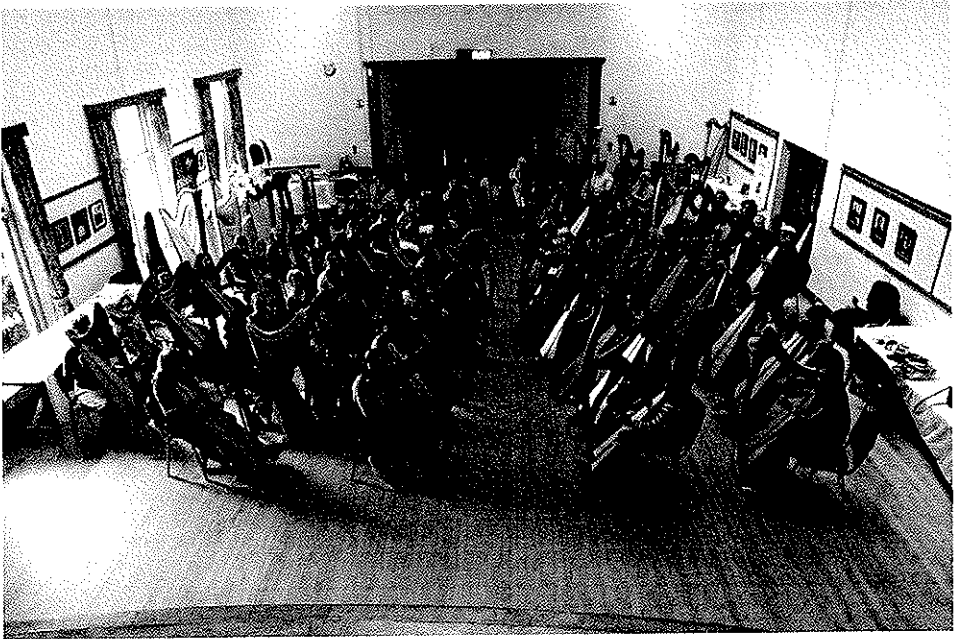


An Chúirt Chruitireachta 2009 –Harp Festival 2009



June 2009 was a hectic month for all those involved with the annual Cúirt Chruitireachta, which took place at An Grianán Termonfechin. However, the hard work was justified when we saw the enthusiasm with which all the participants engaged with its challenging programme. The festival's main principles promote total immersion in all aspects of Irish harp playing, singing in Irish and dancing, as well as giving harpers the opportunity to meet other Irish traditional musicians through collaborative workshops, sessions and public concerts. We also aim to promote the wire-strung harp and its music. We approached the 2009 festival with a certain amount of anxiety due to the international recession but fortunately managed to keep our rates and numbers attending the festival at 2008 levels.

2009 highlights

An Chúirt Chruitireachta 2009 saw our association with singer Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaoich as traditional singer in residence enter its second year. The purpose of this is to instil an understanding of the significance of the song tradition in Irish Music and how the harp can idiomatically reflect the integrity of that tradition. Participants really enjoyed the daily ‘sing-alongs’ with Seosaimhín and non-Irish harpers were equally proud to learn the cúpla focal.

Apart from the daily harp tuition and workshops, the integration of words and harp music as a theme continued throughout the week in varying guises. The ancient relationship between harper, poet and singer featured in our opening concert in Beaulieu House with poet Theo Dorgan, singer, Pádraigin Ní Uallacháin and harper Helen Davies.

Harpers Anne Marie O’Farrell and Cormac De Barra joined forces with Storyteller Nuala Hayes in an evening of riveting stories and music. This was preceded by a workshop of storytelling and harping where participants had an opportunity to experiment with interpretation of some of the better-known Irish legends.

The relationship between Irish and Scottish music was demonstrated by na Sileas – the renowned Scottish duo - in workshops and public concert emphasising the Scottish impact on the Irish harp tradition. This followed an exploration of the crossover between the Irish, Danish and Breton harping traditions at the 2008 Festival. We collaborated in a cross-border initiative with Harper Patricia Daly and a group of harpers from Armagh while the Meath harp school presided over a session of more than seventy harps in our Monday night Scoraíocht.

The final festival concert saw the dynamic duo Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Chris Newman take the stage with Nollaig Casey and Arty McGlynn emphasising the harp’s role in Irish music and how it can integrate with other traditional and not so traditional instruments.

Lunchtime concerts

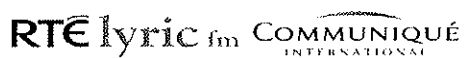
There was no respite for some people and each lunchtime saw An Chúirt Chruitireachta teachers generously give of their talent. Performers included: Cormac de Barra, Kathleen Loughnane, Helen Davies (Copenhagen), Caitriona Yeats (Copenhagen), Kim Fleming, Dearbhail Finnegan, Gráinne Hambley and Anne Marie O'Farrell. Irish harpers were given an opportunity to experience the classical harp repertoire and appreciate the capacity of the orchestral instrument, particularly in its exploration of Irish 'Art' music, in a lunchtime concert featuring the Jade Strings trio.

Working in partnership

We were pleased that our collaboration with Louth Co. Co. in staging the festival's opening concert in Beaulieu House was very successful and attracted a lot of local attention. Our media campaign which included media sponsorship from RTÉ Lyric FM, where we had decided to develop a more national focus also struck a chord in that we saw an increase in our audiences while local radio stations around the north-east encouraged more local participation. We worked with the Droichead Arts Centre and Louth Co. Co. Arts Officer in order to encourage local audiences to attend. This proved to be successful in that ticket sales showed an increase on previous festivals and we had full houses for all events. We hope to consolidate and develop this audience base in future festivals.

Another positive outcome of the festival was the continuation of our relationship with the Willie Clancy Summer School where 6 of our teaching staff took the harp classes in the following week. Our connection with the Willie Clancy Summer school is steadily developing. 38 harpers approx were in Miltown Malbay this year; many of whom went from An Chúirt Chruitireachta.

An exhibition of Irish and Pedal harps mounted by exhibitors from Ireland and abroad was also held and attracted considerable public attention. Our particular thanks to Salvi who are always very helpful with the provision of harps for overseas participants. Special acknowledgment to the teachers at An Chúirt Chruitireachta who unfailingly turn up year after year to share their experience and understanding of the music. Finally our thanks to all who help us on a voluntary basis in many different ways to make this festival one of the major events on the international Irish harp calendar.



Ceolchoirm na Nollag: Christmas Concert 2009

The 2009 Christmas Concert featured harpists and ensembles of harpists performing at the Foras na Gaeilge headquarters in Merrion Square on November 29th. The afternoon was a fitting beginning to the last Christmas of the first decade of the new millennium. The atmosphere was relaxed but festive and all enjoyed the very accomplished performances of the young harpists which included a first outing from 8 year old Andrew Jones to Diploma student Sinéad Ní Riada.

The emphasis was on sharing one's talents with the wider harp community and participants contributed with panache. The audience responded warmly to the contributions and the concert was followed by seasonal refreshments with customary mince pies, soft drinks and mulled wine. There was no doubt at the end of the afternoon's entertainment that harp playing is the booming tiger in this economic recession.

Thanks to the following performers:

Andrew Jones, Tracey McCluskey, Megan Duffy, Eunice Collins, Sinéad King, Sinéad Ní Riada, Siofra Ní Dhubhghaill, Clara Booth, Sorcha McCague, Deirdre Caulfield, Aedín Poole, Irina Kearns, Anne Marie Bourke O' Rourke, Ciara Gately and Emma Sargent.

Buíochas mór le Foras na Gaeilge.

Áine Ní Dhubhghaill

Rogha na gCruitirí - Harpers' choice

Our collection of harpers' tunes - Rogha na gCruitirí, Harpers' choice, funded by the Arts Council DEIS initiative - is progressing and its three editors Áine Ní Dhubhghaill, Anne Marie O'Farrell and Aibhlín McCrann are working hard to complete the final details. From our harpers' lists, we put out a call to as many Irish performers and arrangers for harp as we could, and invited them to contribute. We have had an enthusiastic response and while it has taken longer than initially calculated, the editors assure us that the much-expanded volume will be ready in early Spring in time for our 50th anniversary. We hope that this collection will be a 2010 "snapshot" of what is currently being arranged for the harp in Ireland. So we look forward to seeing the fruits of all that midnight oil!

Tribute to Teresa

It was with great sadness that friends and harpist colleagues of Teresa Lawlor learned of her untimely death in the past few days. Teresa, in a most unassuming way, made an enormous contribution to Irish harp playing. After beginning her career as a harpist in Knappogue and Bunnratty, she continued performing both in Ireland and overseas. She recorded most of the advanced repertoire in Sheila Larchet-Cuthbert's Tutor for Irish harp. Her tireless advocacy in search of new music for the Irish harp led her in 1989 to seek Arts Council funding to commission a work for Irish Harp, *An album of pieces for Irish Harp* from Brian Boydell, which she duly performed to critical acclaim in the National Concert Hall. Her skills as an administrator were many; she was a committee member of Cairde na Cruite for a number of years as well as serving as treasurer of the society. She was a frequent attendee at many of our events and we will miss her warm smile and infectious laugh greatly.

Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.



An Chúirt Chruitireachta International Harp Festival 2010 celebrating its 25th year

Preparations are under way for An Chúirt Chruitireachta 2010 and we anxiously await the outcome of our Arts Council funding application. The festival is non-profit making and is heavily dependent on this funding to fulfil our ambitious programme for An Chúirt Chruitireachta's 25th anniversary. We are very conscious of the constraints placed on us by the difficult economic circumstances and are trying to keep the cost to 2010 participants at 2009 levels. If you have of a potential sponsor or indeed have any fundraising ideas for An Chúirt Chruitireachta that you would like to share with us, contact the festival director Aibhlín McCrann at info@communique.ie or 087 2800390. Sponsorship offerings could range from funding a scholarship to a deserving student, supporting a day of events, or lunchtime or evening concerts. As Cairde na Cruite has charitable status, all donations are reclaimable against tax.

Exciting developments in Galway

A new school for Irish harp has just been established in Athenry, Co. Galway under the tutelage of Úna Ní Fhlannagáin. Catering for harpers of all ages and standards, it's great to see this additional activity in an area already rich in the Irish music tradition. Further information from Úna at 087 7529219. East Galway Harp Ensemble meets at 19:30 every Wednesday in Coláiste an Eachréidh, Athenry, Co. Galway.

Hot off the press....

This year saw the launch of an important collection of late seventeenth-century harp tunes and accompanying CD by Galway harper Kathleen Loughnane. The book, entitled *The Harpers Connellan: Irish Music of the Late 17th Century*, includes harp arrangements of nine tunes attributed to the Co. Sligo



brothers and three tunes of Scottish origin associated with them. There is also a comprehensive, scholarly introduction outlining the lives of the composers and the historical and cultural background to their music. Add to this, meticulously detailed notes on the individual tunes, illustrations, maps, images of manuscripts and early printed copies of the tunes and the result is a work which will prove invaluable not only to harpers and traditional musicians but to all those interested in the harp at a turbulent time in Ireland's history.

In the accompanying CD, Kathleen is joined by a group of musicians and singers, both family and friends, whose lively, inventive playing brings to life the tunes researched and contextualised in the book. Harp, guitar,



cello, pipes, fiddle and vocals all play a part in celebrating the musical legacy of the Connellan brothers. The Scottish influence is clear in tracks such as *Bonny Jean* and *The Two William Davis's*, illustrating the close links between Ireland and Scotland as exemplified by the lives of the brothers themselves.

Many of the tunes in this collection were noted down by Edward Bunting during the Belfast Harp Festival of 1796 and it is refreshing to hear them re-interpreted and set in context by a player who manages to infuse them with a new vigour and depth while at the same time remaining true to the musical tradition to which they belong.

Kathleen is to be warmly congratulated for making such an important contribution to our knowledge of harp-playing in seventeenth century Ireland.

Roisin McLaughlin

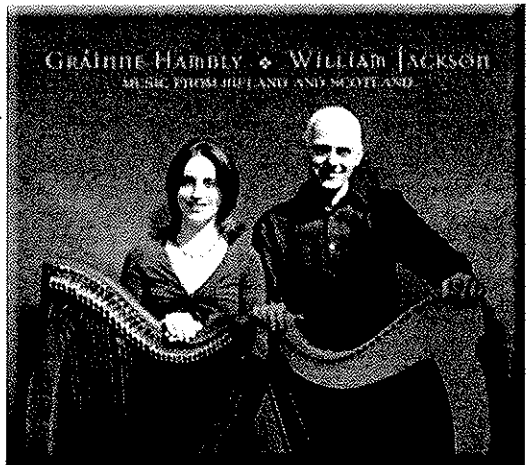
The Harpers Connellan: *Irish Music of the Late 17th Century*.

Buy now at www.reiskmoremusic.com or e mail Kathleen at kathloughnane@gmail.com

Another new release....

Gráinne Hambley and William Jackson – Music from Ireland and Scotland.

This recording features a variety of Irish and Scottish airs and dance tunes, some dating back to the 17th and 18th century harp repertoire as well as recent compositions, performed on harps, concertina, whistle and bouzouki. Gráinne and William first performed



together in October 2004. Since then they have toured extensively in the USA giving concerts and workshops, as well as performing at several international harp festivals. They have both released a number of solo CDs, but this is their first collaborative recording.