

Abair Trad Report

Clár Éire Ildánach Creative Ireland Symposium

Red Store, Youghal, Co. Cork

Saturday 24 June 2017

“The Traditional Arts symbolise and embody the creativeness of Irish people for generations and *Abair Trad* seeks to explore the potential for the traditional arts within the Creative Ireland Programme.”

Compiled and edited by

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With contributions from Mícheál de Builéir, Michael O'Reilly, Conor Nelligan, Dr Matt Cranitch, Dr Michelle Finnerty, Dr Jessica Cawley, Willie Larkin, Maurice Mullen.



Cork
County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



COMHALTAS



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



Abair Trad: Clár Éire Ildánach

Creative Ireland Symposium Report

Réamhrá / Introduction

Abair Trad was a community based response to the Irish Government's Creative Ireland programme that was held in The Red Store, Youghal, Co. Cork on Saturday 24th June 2017. Organised by Craobh Eochaille CCÉ with the support of Cork County Council, the symposium sought to debate, discuss and share ideas about the value and importance of culture and creativity in the context of the new programme. The event was attended by a number of invited speakers and valued contributions from the audience which comprised of a range of stakeholders including members of various branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, creative arts practitioners, and parents.

The symposium recognised that the traditional arts symbolise and embody the creativeness of Irish people for generations and sought to explore the potential for the traditional arts within the Creative Ireland Programme.

The event was hosted by local Comhaltas Chairman Mícheál de Buitléir and facilitated by Dr Daithí Kearney from the Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music at Dundalk Institute of Technology. The morning featured presentations from Michael O'Reilly (Creative Ireland), Conor Nelligan (Cork County Council), Dr Matt Cranitch (musician), Dr Michelle Finnerty (UCC), Dr Jessica Cawley (Creative Traditions), Willie Larkin (Tradtime™), Maurice Mullen (Ceoltóirí Cluain Tarbh), and Dr Adèle Commins (DkIT).

Through short presentations, group discussions and roundtable talks, the day brought together practitioners, policy-makers, academics and other stakeholders covering the five pillars of the exciting five-year Programme. This report seeks to share their ideas and outline a vision for the traditional arts in a creative Ireland.

What is unique about Creative Ireland is that it is not a top-down approach, it is up to community groups to embrace this plan to draw together all of the artistic, creative and cultural offerings in a unified County Plan. We hope that this is the start of further conversations that will inform and include the voice of the community in Cork and further afield.

Dr Daithí Kearney

Ethnomusicologist, geographer and performer Dr Daithí Kearney is a lecturer in Music at Dundalk Institute of Technology. His research is primarily focused on Irish traditional music but extends to include performance studies, community music and music education. Daithí has toured regularly as a musician, singer and dancer with a number of groups including Siamsa Tíre, The National Folk Theatre of Ireland. In 2012 he released an album with Cork accordion player John Cronin entitled *Midleton Rare*, which is related to a wider research project on the music and musicians of the Sliabh Luachra region. Most recently he released an album of new compositions with collaborator Dr Adèle Commins entitled *A Louth Lilt* (2017) and together they are undertaking research on the musical traditions of County Louth. A graduate of University College Cork, Daithí was formerly resident in east Cork and has worked with a number of branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in the county, serving on the County Board and performing with Ceolta Sí.

Clár ábhair / Contents

Abair Trad: Clár Éire Ildánach.....	2
Creative Ireland Symposium Report	2
Réamhrá / Introduction	2
Fáilte / Welcome.....	4
Mícheál de Buitléir	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Session A: A Creative Ireland Perspective.....	8
Speaker 1: Michael O'Reilly, Creative Ireland.....	8
Creative Ireland - What is it?	8
Speaker 2: Conor Nelligan, Cork County Council	11
Creative Ireland: A Cork County Council perspective	11
Questions from floor.....	12
Conclusion.....	16
Session B: Current Practice and Shared Experience	17
Speaker 1: Dr Matt Cranitch	17
An Irish traditional musician's perspective	17
Speaker 2: Dr Michelle Finnerty.....	19
Engaging children from a young age in Irish traditional music.....	20
Speaker 3: Jessica Cawley	25
Creative Traditions in Cork.....	25
Speaker 4: Willie Larkin.....	26
Introducing TradTime™	26
Questions	27
Discussion:	28
Notes.....	32
Conclusion.....	32
Session C: Learning from Success	34
Speaker 1: Dr Adèle Commins	34
Linking with Academic Institutions	34
Speaker 2: Maurice Mullen.....	37
Pre-existing models for success	37
Questions from the Floor.....	40
Concluding Remarks and Acknowledgements.....	43

Conclusion.....	45
Appendix 1	47
Additional comments from participants.....	47
Appendix 2	50
Traditional Music and Creative Ireland – a survey of initial plans and documentation	50

Fáilte / Welcome

Mícheál de Buitléir

Chairman, Craobh Eochaille CCÉ

Tá fáilte romhaibh go léir anseo don ócáid speisialta.

This is about Creative Ireland but it is about Creative Ireland from the bottom up. We have a number of contributors to stimulate discussions in different directions following the pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme.

We welcome a number of Comhaltas groups, the drama society, the historical society, Youghal Community Forum, other groups and lots of individuals. There is quite a bit of diversity in the room and we hope that the diversity of ideas will filter up.

While we are looking at Creative Ireland from a traditional music perspective, you could very easily take that template and shift it over to any other arts discipline. Therefore the information gathered from the audience will be very important in influencing people such as Conor Nelligan who is tasked with writing the Cork County Culture Plan. When a plan gets written, you are all expected to engage with it and implement it so now is a chance to bring forward your ideas and Conor will be glad to record those.

For the occasion, we have Daithí Kearney with us who brings his experience of organising events and academic conferences. Both he and Adèle Commins have been facilitating workshops in Youghal this week so Creative Ireland is already up and going here in Youghal. We had upwards of twenty-five young people learning new tunes and they performed at the Quality Hotel during the week. They are performing again tonight at Brú na Sí. They are learning tunes from the area such as ‘Youghal Harbour’ and ‘The Cork Lasses’ and in the context of creativity Adèle has composed a new piece for the group entitled *Lighting Capel Island*. So you can see how we are using local community involvement and the environment as an influence on the music as well. Hopefully that will also inspire us today.

Executive Summary

The traditional arts, including Irish traditional music, song and dance are an integral part of our cultural heritage and should be central to future developments in terms of creativity and cultural innovation. The following points are drawn from the presentations by invited speakers and contributors from the audience. More complete discussions can be read in the subsequent sections.

- While not significantly highlighted in documents to date, the traditional arts including Irish traditional music, song and dance, can and should be part of the Creative Ireland programme, with many current projects and activities mirroring the aspirations of the programme.
- Irish traditional music, song and dance can create and enhance a sense of place and sense of community particularly when projects focus on local themes and engage the artists that are located within those communities.
- The traditional arts are an accessible art form that should be available to children from the earliest opportunity and this can be also enhanced through online resources and online delivery of educational projects.
- We should not assume a lack of interest amongst a community in an art form because of a current absence in their community. A wide range of traditional artistic activity and endeavour, from music to lace-making, can attract an interest amongst a broad range of people and bring with them many other benefits for the individual and the community. Thus, we must address geographical gaps in provision and access.
- Community based organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann are central to the successful promotion of the traditional arts in Ireland but this can be linked to school based activities.
- Better communication and the development of networks are necessary to facilitate a sharing of knowledge and skills and greater collaboration between individuals, institutions and organisations.
- There is a need to identify, support and acknowledge leaders and nurture new leaders in communities in the context of the arts.
- Projects should identify several phases that can be funded successively for purposes of sustainability and greatest value.
- The importance of experiencing live music, such as performances by musicians in the classroom, cannot be underestimated.
- Creative Ireland needs to recognise the individuality and independence of some creative practitioners such as solo Irish traditional musicians but also utilise their experience and abilities as a resource for collaborative projects.
- Schools need to work together to ensure fair and equal access for all pupils to the arts but also need to create links with their communities.
- There is a need to ensure that time is dedicated to the learning of Irish traditional music in schools and that the wider community, beginning with parents, are involved in this process.
- As creative drivers in their regions, third level institutions are valuable resources and partners who can enhance programmes and projects supported by Creative Ireland and address some of the needs and resource deficits that exist in communities.
- Creative Ireland could develop a charter to be signed by every academic institution to support and develop creativity in their communities, with potential for hosting artist-in-

residence schemes, performance groups and rehearsal spaces, access to technology and skills, etc.

- Tourism and other industries provide opportunities for jobs but employment should not be the sole focus or motivation for funding and financing projects.

Through the presentations and discussions, it is recognised that Irish traditional music contributes significantly to a sense of well-being in Ireland, has been of significant benefit to people in Youghal and surrounding areas and, with further support, could benefit many more people in social, cultural and economic terms.

Amongst the challenges were the need to provide schools and teachers with the resources, skills and knowledge to include Irish traditional music in their programme of learning, acknowledging the challenges presented by time. The accessibility and pervasiveness of popular culture in society through technology can and must be addressed by schools, institutions and organisations including broadcasters. There is a need to develop an ethos and philosophy where engagement, participation and consumption of local artistic activities is valued, not for the potential financial reward but rather for the social and cultural value that enhances the wellbeing of individuals and their communities.

It is necessary to think holistically about developing projects drawing upon the vision of Creative Ireland so as to share knowledge and thinking, reach all people in our society, be inclusive and learn from each other, support each other and avoid duplication.

It is clear that there is already much good being achieved in terms of creativity and the traditional arts with great enthusiasm for further activity and action. There is a need for greater awareness of this activity, the development of a network through which information and knowledge can be shared, and support for projects in terms of resources including finance, space and promotion.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017



Session A: A Creative Ireland Perspective

The Creative Ireland Programme was developed following the success of the Ireland 2016 celebrations. As a cross-government initiative chaired by An Taoiseach, the programme seeks to encourage creativity in the life of the nation to promote individual, community and national wellbeing and realise our full creative potential. The speakers in this session provided an overview of the programme from both a national and county perspective.



Speaker 1: Michael O'Reilly, Creative Ireland

Michael O'Reilly is one of the architects of the Creative Ireland programme and is currently working on the implementation team. He is a Solicitor and Barrister with an extensive background in arts and culture, private practice, business, political consultancy, and strategic planning in the private and public sectors.

Creative Ireland - What is it?

Clár Éire Ildánach is a legacy programme for Ireland 2016 – a five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which **places creativity at the centre of public policy**. It is a high-level, high-ambition, all-of-government initiative to **mainstream creativity in the life of the nation** so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our full creative potential.

2016 highlighted how culture and the arts come from the communities and the important of embracing diverse views. There was significant financial investment and a strong team put together to co-ordinate cultural events all around the country that were open, inclusive and engaging. 2016 became an exemplar of what cultural creativity could be. It developed a common space to explore multiple identities and different strands of our history in an inclusive and engaging way.

Creative Ireland is a **five-year initiative**, not a grant giving agency. In terms of governance, it is a **cross-government initiative** involving education, arts, children and youth, foreign affairs, enterprise and employment, (and should include health and justice) and is chaired by the Taoiseach. It seeks to **place creativity at the centre of public policy**.

Creative Ireland is a **culture-based programme** designed to promote individual, community and national **wellbeing**. The core proposition is that **participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity**, with significant implications for **individual and societal wellbeing and achievement**. It's a facilitated invitation – to everyone – to get involved in our Cultural Life and to

learn from artists and other creators. The programme aims to bring artists more centrally into the life of society and to build collaborative networks.

Creativity is the key concept of the programme - the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules; to make meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations. Culture-based Creativity opens up a common ground for society — recognising individual expression while fostering cohesion and wellbeing. Creative collaboration is a human strength and access to arts, culture and creativity are a basic human right, not a luxury for those with access to finance.

We are living in a rapidly changing world where the structures are constantly changing. People need to live a little more like artists and be able to adapt and think creatively. The idea of a lifetime career is changing and living without existing structures in the context of employment needs to be explored and realised. We need to nurture the creativity that is inherent in all of us from early years onwards.

Key Operating Principles

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Community
- Empowerment
- Internationalisation

Collaboration is key. Many people around the country are engaged in trying to make life better. Irish people are very aware of their social responsibilities but we are lacking in terms of **networking and collaboration**. There is an opportunity to develop collaborative networks to enhance what is already going on in many communities.

Key Informing Principles

- Culture and Democracy depend upon each other
- We are all co-owners of our Cultural and Creative Infrastructure
- Culture is a Human Right
- Participation in Arts and Culture is essential to Wellbeing
- Cultural opportunity must embrace equality and diversity

The Strategy – 5 Pillars

1. Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child
2. Enabling Creativity in Every Community
3. Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure
4. Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production
5. Unifying our Global Reputation

Pillar 1 - Children

... the beginning, centre and end...

By the end of 2017, a national plan will be in place which will include enabling every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art, and coding. There is recognition for both the formal and informal education sectors and the Department of Education and Skills has been tasked with making changes including access to tuition and including arts organisations. The Charter for Arts in Education will be embraced, fast-tracked, and fully resourced as a core element of the CREATIVE IRELAND agenda.

There is recognition that Professional Development Strategies and measures to ensure that good arts-in-education practice is sustained. The expertise and enthusiasm of teachers is one of the main determinants of high quality and mentoring schemes, secondments, professional exchanges, peer reviews and evaluations, showcases and joint projects are some of the ideas being developed.

Beyond the mainstream initiatives, there is a need to acknowledge and harness the role of non-formal and non-mainstream educators and encourage, highlight, and recognise the work of existing and accessible initiatives in arts, music, drama, coding, literature, and play.

Research

There is a need to develop research to identify needs and approaches. There is potential to build upon local youth creativity partnerships and to engage in consultation with children and young people.

Collaboration

The programme recognises collaboration as a key operating principle. Collaboration is a joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a task or project. Collaboration describes a process of value creation that our traditional structures of communication and teamwork can't achieve.

Collaboration has two primary, essential objectives:

- **Social negotiation**
- **Creative output**

There are barriers to collaboration?

1. **Dominance**
2. **Distance**
3. **Dissonance**
4. **Discomfort**

Conclusion

Creative Ireland is a facilitated invitation. Now is the moment to engage seriously with the local authorities and get your interests into their long-term strategic thinking.

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Speaker 2: Conor Nelligan, Cork County Council

Conor Nelligan is the Cork County Council Heritage Officer, was the coordinator for 2016 events in the county and is now the Creative Ireland Co-Ordinator for Cork County.

Creative Ireland: A Cork County Council perspective

It is always a welcome opportunity to come to Youghal and to experience the history and heritage that exists here, supplemented with the sense of pride that is part of Youghal's history dating back to efforts to establish a county in this area around 400 years ago. Michael has given an overview of the Creative Ireland programme and, as he noted, local authorities are taking the lead role in the

community participation aspect of it. This is essential and very important to Cork County Council and we acknowledge the wonderful work being done throughout the county. Last year over 200 groups took part in over 500 commemorative events throughout the county, by far the largest number in Ireland, and it is testament to all of the groups involved. Youghal contributed significantly to this. From a community perspective Youghal is already quite active and there is a huge amount of heritage and history in the town with fantastic venues such as St Mary's Collegiate Church and The Mall Arts Centre.

Heritage is not just about stones and buildings but about the people and the stories, in other words our culture, and people want to see the vibrancy of a community wherever they go. Traditional music is a fantastic reflection of this vibrancy and it is very good that we are here today in promotion of that as well.

Cork County Council commenced its Creative Ireland undertakings in February of this year and one of the first undertakings was Cruinniú na Cásca. Cruinniú na Cásca in Cork County was a very successful day with over twenty events and there is a DVD being produced to showcase the events including activities in Youghal. Concurrently, we are developing a culture plan for the county. To date we have facilitated three workshops throughout the county – invited submissions and received significant interest. The Culture and Creativity Plan benefited from a lot of engagement which was very positive. The Creative Ireland team ('Culture Team') in Cork County Council has cross-directorate approach with a number of sections involved. The team includes Mary Ryan (Director of Municipal Operations and Rural Development), Ian McDonagh (County Arts Officer), Eileen O'Brien (County Library), Rose Carroll (Tourism Officer), and Aileen Loughrey (Irish Officer). We are currently devising Cork County's Culture 2017 plan. The Irish language and tradition is a very important part of our proposals for Cork County, particularly with the two Gaeltachts but also in recognition of the pockets of spoken Irish throughout the county to this day.

Culture is multifaceted, encompassing both historical and contemporary culture. There is a need to make things accessible to people of all backgrounds, abilities and disabilities. The Council recognises

the value of culture for personal wellbeing and mental health with many studies supporting this, as well as fostering a sense of place and a sense of belonging. With the world moving so fast as noted by the previous speaker, that sense of belonging is very important.

In terms of implementing the plan, there is a community advisory and support aspect as well as a promotional aspect. There is a range of different mechanisms that will be put in place through social media, email updates, workshops and cultural videos on YouTube that we hope will foster a greater sense of culture within the county. Pop up shops have potential to bring life back into historic quarters of the towns through exhibitions in the shop windows that can reflect the work of various local groups for a period of time.

From a Cork perspective, there is a desire to get great minds together to discuss the importance of the creative output. There is already a lot happening in Cork but there is a desire to facilitate artists to work together. There is a desire to use culture to inspire further development. A desire exists within the county to marry historical and contemporary culture amongst practitioners, artists and community groups across the county, motivated in part to make cultural activities accessible to all.

A County Cork Grant Scheme for projects that relate to the Creative Ireland programme will be announced shortly. In the autumn there will be a conference on culture and creativity or 'The Art of Heritage' to bring together people to discuss creative output with a basis on the historical. This was a successful aspect of projects in 2016 where inspiration for cultural performances was drawn from the people and stories of 1916.

We look forward to facilitating further gatherings and hearing ideas from the communities over the coming months. We want community groups to be at the heart of Creative Ireland in County Cork.

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Questions from floor

The following is a number of questions drawn from people in attendance with responses from Michael O'Reilly and Conor Nelligan.

Mícheál de Buitléir:

From working on the ground, we know that many community groups have already developed and work in an ecosystem based on what they do. What is intended by creating a cross directorate approach and how will you engage community with that? We have not been successful at getting community engagement and this is essential for success. What do Creative Ireland mean when they speak of facilitating an ecosystem and how will they nurture such an ecosystem?

Response:

When we look at governance of culture around the world, we see a divided approach with different offices for sport, art, tourism, and whatever else and this can lead to silos. Culture touches everything that we do. In Germany, there already is an all-of-government approach already in place.

At a local level, each local authority is forming a culture team and they recognise the importance of them all working together. This is making a tangible difference. In 2016, people came together (Arts Officer, Heritage Officer, Language Officer, etc.). Our tour so far has been successful because of this,

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

bringing in a wider audience to public spaces to develop a network. Thus, the role of the local authorities as the link into communities is evolving, being developed in a more coordinated and collaborative way.

Cork County Council administers a number of different grants systems under different headings but they are not promoted together. Under Creative Ireland, the various events and festivals are being brought together and people will be informed of everything that is happening in the county. Culture is now enshrined in every department and part of everything that we do.

The Cork Plan includes a focus on venues and spaces. Spaces will be identified to facilitate groups to practise and meet. 2016 highlighted the potential of working together and a county culture team allows direct access to many different directorates in the county and brings together the necessary expertise.

Michelle Finnerty:

In relation to enabling the creative potential for every child, there is enormous potential to learn from artists and creators but what groundwork has been done and where is the thinking coming from in terms of connecting our children with artists, musicians and creators who are out there in the community? What structurally could happen to allow our musicians who may be isolated and not part of organisations to work with this?

Response:

The Creative Ireland project all started in a huge hurry. We could have spent longer gathering evidence. It would have been time wasted as we all know what is there so we went straight into implementation. There is a three-strand approach being developed between Creative Ireland and the Department of Education.

We began with the charter on arts and education based on the Benson report. Now there is a government commitment that the charter will be resourced and fast tracked. There is a particular initiative now entitled 'arts rich schools' – may change this title as it is more than arts. There are also proposals for teacher arts partnerships and other elements of CPD which recognise the importance of giving teachers training to work with artists. For programmes to be successful and sustainable teachers need training and principals need to be informed. There is also a need to give autonomy to each school to develop their own arts programme.

There is also the non-formal sector. A meeting has already taken place in Dublin involving the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Arts with representatives from non-formal education providers including youth choirs, Music Generation, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. This highlighted how the informal system can feed into the formal education system. We recognise a need to look at resourcing for this and steps are being put in place to support this.

In 2016, there was very successful programme of events with schools including the provision of a copy of the proclamation to all schools. It is important to get schools enthused and involved to develop culture and creativity. It is important that all schools have access to tuition. If children are involved, that brings in parents and grandparents.

If every person does something small to involve children in their own community, the cumulative result can be very big.

It is also about developing a network of people who are very enthusiastic about what they do. Comhaltas are a great example, bringing together young and old with a grassroots energy. Being part of a county programme that is linked to a national programme provides a greater sense of being part of something.

Séamus Lantry:

The future of jobs should be considered as the nature of jobs is changing but there must be some way for people to earn a living. Anything to do with culture should be ultimately providing jobs for people. Workshops are very good and important but what we need is a solid foundation. Why does the government not consider a revival of the An Tóstal, which has a long history, which could underpin activities throughout the country? There are examples from around the world where countries display their national culture and heritage which attracts tourists. When it was first realised, it generated photos on postcards, which was good for tourists. An Tóstal was a national celebration that is documented and there is potential for a permanent celebration.

Response:

The idea of a new festival or revival of An Tóstal is similar to the idea underpinning Cruinniú na Cásca, which will continue each year. We will continue to celebrate 1916 each year but in a manner similar to 2016 with a celebration of the arts. There is potential for events celebrating other cultural dates/feasts throughout the year that focus on culture based creativity. The idea is already there.

In terms of economics, we have focused on the idea of creativity and culture based creativity because there is irrefutable evidence that children exposed to culture based creativity from a young age will not all will be artists but they are better kids. An ERSI longitudinal study shows that they are happier kids, more productive kids, better at maths and sciences and become better surgeons, engineers and plumbers. People who grow up in an environment that is rich in arts and culture have a better life and do better in their future careers and become better citizens.

People like the idea that a country should value their culture. People will wish to visit a county like that and live here with their families. Companies wishing to locate here want there to be a good cultural environment for their employees and for their children to grow up in. But that is not the reason for doing this. This is about peoples' wellbeing and what we value most.

We need to value creative potential of every child and invest in this and then there will be fantastic spin off from this.

Cruinniú na Cásca was a great success. Given the size of the county, rather than having one big event, it was decided to have a lot of smaller events at community level that could allow for people to engage, get together. It facilitated local cohesiveness. We can look at having bigger events as well but that can support that.

In terms of economic benefits, Youghal is a large medieval town with a wonderful heritage that attracts a large number of tourists. Many jobs depend on creativity and culture, not just artists and

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

musicians. Most organisations have an appreciation of culture, recognising that inspiration can often come in 'down time' similar to the Greek story of Archimedes' gold.

There is a need to examine and recognise what already exists within communities and promote that. Youghal is a good example of heritage led tourism and regeneration and when tourists come they want to see people and locals enjoying themselves.

Mícheál de Buitléir:

There is much already happening here in Youghal including Tóstal an Sean-Thóir, a modern festival. Earlier in my life as a painter and decorator, there was a colour known as Tóstal green. I didn't know what that was but the older guys told me that it was a Fáilte Ireland thing. Ideas can be lost but can also be revived. This festival embodies a lot of collaboration.

I also want to go back to the idea of reaching into schools. Can you learn from those of us who have tried? Comhaltas had an outreach into schools. I want to raise idea of silo mentality when you try to get people to collaborate. We brought instruments into schools, worked with SECAD so they could all get their bank of instruments but schools began competing against each other and wanted to have a better set of tunes for their Holy Communion day than the next school, rather than promoting the traditional arts as was envisaged. Silo mentality has to be addressed.

Can I also challenge Cruinniú na Cásca? Cork County Council drove that and we were glad to be involved but the two venues which were used were Cork County council venues and we need to break down that silo thinking as well. This provided these venues with funding rather than other venues in the community used by community groups. Sometimes by the time the funding gets to communities there is no funding left for us.

The idea of collaboration is great but we need to learn from our mistakes. We need to make sure we have a proper accord system to drive partnership. Invariably, those with the resources control the power within their own silos and we need to break down silo mentality.

Response:

Conversations like this are important. We have had 39 public consultations in relation to Creative Ireland in addition to hundreds of meetings with individual groups. If you want to get schools to collaborate you need to bring them all together. It is difficult to get people to work together. The encouraging experience over the last year has given everybody motivation. We are all serious about the future. We hope that the future is much more than consumerism as it is better to create something. The ethos and desire is there in the country but it is difficult to get people out of their silos to collaborate and there is no substitute for gathering people together and getting them to share.

Some groups involved in Cruinniú na Cásca had their own centres. It is important to show that the council also wishes to offer, free of charge, their venues and facilities for an event. It is vital that we work together.

John Kelly:

The commemorations to date have been very successful but we are only mid-way through the decade of commemorations. The President noted that 1916 is easy to commemorate but more sensitivity is needed for 1922 commemorations and creativity will be very much needed.

Response:

There is a separate group semi-formed to continue decade of centenaries. The stories are indeed more challenging and more scholarship and research may throw up things we might not like. Having come through the 1916 commemoration, people are more comfortable with their different backgrounds. 100 years is a sufficient distance to be reasonable and objective about enquiries and looking back into our past. 50 years is more difficult as some people still alive. While our civil war was difficult, we did come together quite quickly to form a successful state.

In Cork, we have a strong history of the War of Independence and Civil War. Events like last year demonstrate that history is rarely black and white but if you are doing things for the right reasons people are appreciative of that.

James Connolly was a character who was central to some of the events in Youghal last year and it was the collaborative efforts of different groups who made that a success.

Conclusion

- Creative Ireland is a facilitated invitation through which more people can strive to work together creatively for the betterment of the society we live in.
- As well as the creative industries, thinking creatively about how we work and the types of jobs we undertake will be increasingly important.
- Cork County Council aim to develop a network and facilitate an ecosystem across the county that will raise awareness and support projects.
- There is a need for groups and organisations to support each other and work collaboratively rather than view others as competition.
- The decade of centenaries and tourism are two factors that can provide impetus for projects.
- We need to consider creativity and cultural learning from the earliest stage in a person's life and ensure that opportunities for learning and engagement continue throughout life for the betterment of individuals and their communities.



Session B: Current Practice and Shared Experience

Session B brings together four practitioners who are currently engaged in projects in the traditional arts in County Cork and beyond. They bring perspectives as both performers and educators with perspectives from Early Years through to Higher Education and from community engagement through to international performances.



Speaker 1: Dr Matt Cranitch

Matt Cranitch is renowned at home in Ireland and abroad as an Irish traditional fiddle-player, teacher, lecturer and author. He has performed extensively with various groups at concerts and festivals, as well as on radio and television, and has made a number of highly-acclaimed recordings. He has also presented many lectures, master-classes and workshops on various aspects of Irish traditional music.

An Irish traditional musician's perspective

I welcome the opportunity to be here today and to make a contribution to the deliberations, in the context of which, I feel that I come from the creative end of the spectrum. I wish to thank the organizers, and especially Daithí for inviting me.

REVIEW

I will start with making a number of points in response to the comprehensive documentation presented on the Creative Ireland website, as well as orally here today.

1. Irish traditional music or the Traditional Arts¹ are not mentioned in the document 'About Creative Ireland', nor in the documentation for any of the Five Pillars. In the 'About' document, the word 'Music' is mentioned four times, and twice in the 'Children and Youth Pillar'. The word 'traditional' does not appear at all, although terms such as 'folklore' and 'cultural heritage' are used.

2. One would not get the impression from these documents that Ireland is the home of the Irish traditional arts. I strongly suggest that these facets of our artistic and cultural heritage should occupy a special place in this initiative. Not only is it the case that they don't, but in the 'Creative Industries Pillar' for example, we read that Ireland is to become a "Centre of Excellence in Media Production", with "The overarching, long-term objective of this pillar being to elevate the creative industries

¹ The traditional arts are defined by the Arts Council "as comprising traditional music, song, dance and oral arts such as storytelling, agallamh beirte and lúibíní."

including media, architecture, design, digital technology, fashion, food and crafts.” There is no mention of any of the indigenous traditional arts.

3. I would like to ask what representation if any from the traditional arts community was included in the deliberations which led to this strategy and to the publication of the documentation. Who wrote these documents – an individual person or a committee? Who were they?

4. I wonder if the organisational model for Creative Ireland somehow follows that of Culture Ireland. In the case of the latter, their Expert Advisory Committee does not include anyone from the traditional arts community. Yet, other art forms are represented.²

5. I’m reminded of what was said by Jackie Daly when he received the TG4 Gradam Ceoil Award in 2005. Inter alia during his thank-you speech, he stated: “It’s great to be first at last, I was always behind before.” If Irish traditional music could express a view here today, I don’t think it would be saying that!

6. I note from earlier comments today that Creative Ireland is not a grant-giving agency, and that the local authorities are expected to provide the necessary funding. In other words, central Government produces the concept of Creative Ireland, and expects that the people will not only implement it on the ground, but will also fund it.

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite such inequities and inequalities, I hope the situation can be turned around, through local empowerment, by leadership from the bottom, in effect through subversion (if we accept an older and more comprehensive meaning for that word, namely ‘to turn from below or beneath’).

7. I hope that Cork Co. Council would assume the lead in this, taking an inclusive approach through involving the various different interests and groupings, and by bringing on board the required expertise.

8. I suggest that they would arrange a symposium or indeed more than one, such as this gathering, but aimed at the whole county, to seek the views of stakeholders on the ground, and also to disseminate information.

9. There are many strands of activity within the traditional arts involving different categories of performers, with varying levels of ability and achievement, from amateur to professional, young to old, solo to ensemble, and indeed many combination and permutations of these. In addition, we must consider participation in group activities, such as social dance and music sessions, for example.

10. And then there is the whole area of education, ranging from the early years in the home through the different institutional levels, and on to the realm of adult education.

11. I suggest we also take cognisance of the non-performer, such as the informed listener. Personally, I’ve learned a great deal from people who did not play but knew a lot about the music. In

² The professional affiliations of the people listed as the Expert Advisory Group are as follows: National Sculpture Factory; Gaiety Theatre; Tourism Ireland; Brandon Point Industries; Irish Film Board; Rubicon Gallery; Poetry Ireland; The Arts Council; Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade; IDA.

addition, the role of the keen listener in the performance milieu can be both stimulating and rewarding, often contributing to the creative dynamic, and this in real time.

12. We have heard here today that cultural creativity is very much linked to community, and that collaboration is the key. In this regard, I wish to point out that many traditional musicians operate outside of any organizational structure, although of course they are members of the global community of Irish traditional musicians. But I'm not sure that this understanding of community is what was intended. I'd also like to point out that many of the significant and seminal performers of Irish traditional music were individuals, who worked in a lone capacity to a great extent. That position continues today.

QUESTIONS

In conclusion, I would like to ask two further questions, in addition to those I posed earlier under point 3:

- Are there parallels with the sport domain from which we can learn?
- Is Cruinniú na Cásca intended to supersede Culture Night in Sept?

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Speaker 2: Dr Michelle Finnerty

Michelle is a Lecturer in Music and coordinator of the Early Start Program in Music. Her research interests include; Irish traditional music, music in education, early years arts education, music in community contexts and teaching and learning in higher education. Michelle has recently completed her PhD on the musical cultures of children in Ireland. Michelle was awarded a prestigious doctoral scholarship from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. As part of this work, Michelle explored children's perspectives on their musical worlds and culture lives in Ireland. She has carried out research with children in a range of in-school and out-of-school contexts in Cork. Her original research findings will

be presented in the context of the National Children's Strategy and the role of music and culture for children in this context. In addition to performing music in many contexts, Michelle is also involved in the research and development of community projects in education and health care contexts. Michelle has overseen a diverse range of music education research projects funded by The Arts

Engaging children from a young age in Irish traditional music

Overview

I will outline ways to engage young children with Irish traditional music and share some examples of practice, bringing some quotations from musicians who are facilitating Early Years' research projects I am involved in and the voices of some of the children who are involved and benefitting from these projects.

We know that children experience Irish traditional music through various spaces including the home, school, after school and local community organisation. Irish traditional music features to an extent as part of the primary and secondary level music curricula but the content and nature of how it is transmitted at local, classroom and whole school level varies depending on each local context and indeed school. Some schools have an extensive range of opportunities for students to learn to play Irish traditional music instruments, sing Irish traditional songs in the tradition idiom and to learn Irish dance while other schools have limited focus on this aspect of music.

In these short few minutes, I would like to highlight a number of areas of practice and approaches to the thinking about providing young people opportunities to engage and experience ITM throughout their lives that I feel would be useful in the context of our discussions today relating to creative Ireland

I am focusing on two areas which I have recently carried out research in – the first is with Early Years Project that took place with Music Generation Cork City focusing on children primarily between 0-5 years – the second is middle childhood children ages 5-12 that took places with primary years both in school and out of school in a variety of locations in both Cork City and Cork County. I've chosen to highlight some of the things that children, musicians and teachers that were shared with me in relation to their views and experiences of ITM. Some of these highlight the significance of ITM for children of these ages but also raise issues regarding provision and access for children throughout Cork.

Early Years Education in Ireland (Children ages 0-6 years)

Music Generation Cork City Pilot Project

In recent years, there have been many developments in public policy and legislation that highlight the importance of children in these formative years. The MGCC pilot project involved artists, one of whose focus was on ITM to visit early year's settings and work with childcare practitioners and children over a number of weeks. The focus on was sound exploration, creativity and fun. While ITM was not entirely the focus of the pilot project, it emerged as a significant way to allow children to engage in musical and sound exploration from a young age.

'Live performance was used as a starting point for engaging with young children, the programme incorporated elements of activity and discovery learning led by the musician with direct support of early childhood practitioners. The overarching aim was to provide the children and early childhood practitioners in the various settings with a 'rich and engaging experience through listening and

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

looking, artist led play and exploration and child-led play and exploration' (Kelleher, Early Years Proposal, November 2014).

Writing about the philosophy of the programme and in particular the significance of the performance of live music, Fiona notes:

"Early year's music education can be a very powerful and positive tool in benefitting very young children in countless ways other than music learning. It is a privilege to have the possible honour of providing some children with their first live musical experience. That is why it is so important to give them the highest quality experience that we can, mindful of the possible positive outcomes for the children and always acknowledging and appreciating their presence" (January, 2015)

Fiona emphasises the potent creative potential in young children and the important role that music educators have to support and encourage this through fun and imaginative play that is open and flexible to the needs of children. Fiona states:

'They are inventors, detectives, performers, kings, and queens of imaginative play. Music education for very young children needs to acknowledge and reflect this potent and precious curiosity and openness in its thinking and approach. Music education can be a powerful tool in supporting and encouraging the learning strengths of young children. It should encourage and support their sense of fun and imaginative play. It should be adaptable and open to the unexpected' (Fiona Kelleher, November, 2014).

The performance of live music plays a central focus in the AIR pilot programme. At each session, Fiona introduces various songs and the children engage and respond well. Children are particularly interested in joining in and the children could be heard singing more and more over the weeks of the sessions.

Children responded well to the aural experience of the live singing and music. It was clear that it had a great impact on the early childhood practitioners also. In many settings, the early childhood practitioners mentioned how they could hear children singing throughout the week during their other school activities.

Many Early Childhood Practitioners spoke about the significance of having a 'real singer' come visit, emphasising the importance for staff members in this area of education to have the opportunity to collaborate with someone who had real confidence in singing and a love of sharing of songs with the children. The following two quotations by Early Childhood Practitioners reflect the value of how Irish traditional music can exist in an Early Year's Setting:

"They are singing so much more, without being asked even, they sing while they are free playing and sometimes when they are getting ready to go home, they sing some of the songs that they have heard Fiona sing in the sessions" (Early Childhood Practitioner, March 2015).

"I love the idea that Fiona is a singer and she does it so naturally and it just flows out of her....you'd know she doesn't get nervous and even this has made me feel like I could try it during the week with the children. It's given us all the confidence to try it out. It's amazing something so natural, can be so intimidating to do" (Early Childhood Practitioner, Setting A, February, 2015).

Recent research on Early Years in Cork County alone noted that there are over 120 parent-toddler groups and over 40,000 children attending over 400 Early Years settings. Although there have been some developments in recent years, it is a relatively new area in Ireland in terms of music education provision. The above pilot projects highlight how significant even a small pilot project can be for allowing Irish traditional music, an Irish traditional musician or an Irish traditional singer work with children and educators in a partnership approach.

Middle Childhood Education (Children 5-12 years)

Moving on to share some information on a large scale project that took place over four years with children in various in-school and out-of-school locations in Cork City and County that focused on children's perspectives on their experiences of Irish Traditional Music (ages 5-12 years).

Although there was a wealth of provision of music education in some schools I visited, there were often little opportunities to learn to play Irish traditional music instruments. There were a few examples of Irish traditional music activities being integrated as part of classroom activities and in particular as part of the visiting Irish traditional music specialist curricular work in the form of listening activities. In other schools, there was a strong emphasis on Irish traditional music.

In one school the school traditional music band was an important part of music activity. The teacher responsible for setting up the band was once a parent in the school and many of the band members also learned music privately after-school with a private teacher or small group lessons in the CCE after-school club that took place in the school building. Irish traditional singing featured as part of the many of the classroom generalist music provision also. In another school children engaged in Irish traditional music activities as part of the school curriculum and they also had the opportunity to partake in after-school lessons in a variety of instruments.

Children appeared interested in Irish traditional music for diverse reasons but most especially as it gave them the opportunity to learn to play different instruments and play together in an ensemble. Two of the children said the following:

"I play whistle and bodhrán as part of the school band. I don't get to learn like others outside of school because of sport and all that but I get to do the band as the group starts in the morning and I can do that as my parents work early and can drop me. I like it now as I can play and I get to meet others from different classes. I like getting to play at the different events that take place. I might take up another instrument but I'll have to see how I can manage that with sport"

"I play guitar myself and even though I don't read music, I could join the trad group in school. I love it as it is a way of allowing me to not just play at home on my own and I can get to feel the energy from other instruments and people. I love the practicing as I don't have to worry about making mistakes and I can try new things out"

Instrumental ensembles are a central part of how some children engage with music at primary level. The types of instruments that form the groups vary and are generally influenced by the instruments that children are already learning outside of school settings. There was a strong focus on Irish traditional music groups in two of the schools and three of the after-school settings. School bands enhance the musical reputation of schools and are considered important to the development of community (Davis, 2012; Creech and Gaunt, 2012; Berrill, 2014). My observations for this study revealed a strong focus on Irish traditional music instrumental ensembles in two of the schools and

all of the after-school clubs. I continue sharing children's perspective on the role and value of participating in groups both within and outside of school settings.

In one of the after-school Clubs I visited, Cormac (age 11) and John (age 12) are members of the Grúpaí Cheoil in a local CCE branch. They both talk about the social benefits of participating and also how one of the main reasons they enjoy partaking is linked to the desire to perform as part of the group.

Reflecting on his experiences of Irish traditional music and in particular the significance of joining a grúpaí cheoil, Cormac (aged 11) states:

"You get to enter competitions and you get to perform in front of lots of people. And you can get through to All-Irelands and you can win medals and all sorts. That's what everyone loves about it really... And you get to meet new people and you make new friends a lot of the time. And lots of new people join so you're never really short of friends when you're there.... Like I have friends now from different places as well, like. they don't all go to the school. It's just like a group so they let in anyone who just plays" (Cormac, age 11).

Similarly, John (age 12) reflects on his experiences:

"I'm in the Under 15s céilí band. I only started this year. I was doing kind of private lessons then I joined Comhaltas.... That really helped...I just went into a class in September there. I was starting doing the céilí bands. So it really helped because I was kind of at the same level as the other people in my class....it definitely helps improve your music...We have Feis Maitiú coming up, we have the Fleadh Ceoil in Derry, and we have to do all the Munster... the County and all that..." (PhD research, Finnerty (2017).

In one of the schools I visited, a significant number of students from the school participate in the after-school lessons. Students can learn a wide range of instruments in the traditional idiom, including: fiddle, banjo, tin whistle, concertina, accordion and bodhrán.

Alan (age 10) and John (age 11), are both members of the after-school club and attend weekly. Talking about these experiences Alan reveals how he engages with the activities.

"I play fiddle, flute and some bodhrán and over the last three years, I've tried other instruments. I did not own them all initially but I still was able to try them. The after-school club does not just do music instruments. You get to do dancing and some singing also" (Alan, Interview 4, School B, November 2012).

Alan's comment above is representative of many of the children in the study who appeared enthusiastic about the possibility of learning to play a wide range of instruments. Over one-third of the children I interviewed appeared to have difficulties with owning their own instrument and many indirectly suggested that they would like to play a particular instrument if that opportunity arose at some point.

Similarly, John talks about how he enjoys engaging in the group work in the after-school club. He considers how the group work encourages him to practice independently at home each week, so that he knows the material.

“The best part for me is the bands, like I don’t particularly like the lessons as they mean I have to learn and perfect new stuff myself but in band I prefer this as we get to work together with different tutors and different friends and this makes it more of a goal. The performances are good fun, even though it is hard work getting ready for them” (John, Interview 4, School B, November 2012).

John’s comment is also representative of many of the students I interviewed in this study. Many of their conversations highlighted a preference for group learning within performance groups. Students who participated in the after-school club had the most opportunity to perform at local and national Fleadh Cheoil competitions. **Unlike the other school and after-school clubs in this study, there were many opportunities for children who participated in these performance groups to engage in musical activities during the summer.**

How can Creative Ireland endeavour to engage children in Irish traditional music?

It is evident from these examples that music is important to children. Listening to their perspectives and including their views is important as we continue to strive towards providing increased opportunities for young people to choose and engage in music

Irish traditional music forms an important part of our musical landscape in Ireland. It also provides children with the opportunities to engage in music making, performing and to increase their social and communication skills. I believe there are plenty examples of practice where creativity can become a central part of children’s musical lives and where Irish traditional music can connect young people with their local communities.



Speaker 3: Jessica Cawley

Dr Jessica Cawley is an educator and scholar in the fields of music education and Irish traditional music. She is currently applying her PhD research into school and community settings in partnership with Music Generation Cork City. Since 2013, she has established and coordinated Creative Tradition, an organization that leads various education programmes, including two Club Ceoil in Knocknaheeny and Blarney. Educated in both the United States and Ireland, Dr Cawley has a diverse background in performance, ethnomusicology, and music education, and embodies a passion for traditional, classical, jazz and popular music. Musical performance plays a significant role in her music life, including her research and teaching practice.

Creative Traditions in Cork

Creativity is a central component of playing Irish traditional music. Today, I would like to also highlight that teaching and promoting Irish traditional music is an inherently creative process on the part of the teacher and the children involved.

I am currently the coordinator of Creative Tradition (supported by Music Generation Cork City) with 300 participants in Knocknaneehy and 40 participants in Blarney. We aim to engage children and young people with creative music-making experiences, and target children who have previously lacked access to the tradition. The projects involve in-school and after-school activities and we reach children age 4-18 years. Creative tradition focused on other skills – not just learning the tunes – composing, arranging, and forming groups. We believe in the philosophy that you cannot teach children creativity – you can guide them and spark their creativity.

Our programme includes:

- Creative elements of the instrumental and singing tradition (ornamentation, variations).
- Guiding arranging and composing.
- Integrating our Irish traditional music programme alongside other forms of expressions.

Children are encouraged to verbalize their reactions to the music in class discussions, but also through storytelling, visual art, dance, games, and through play. Creative Traditions engages the children on a personal level, which is important within the context of learning in an area with little to no exposure to Irish traditional music.

We believe it is important to include composing and arranging of Irish traditional music in our programme. We start composing at a young age. Even a six year old can compose – it is not an advanced activity and it fosters a sense of ownership. They feel they can engage in the instrument and not just copy their teacher.

I would like to conclude today but sharing a short example of arts integration from our project in Knocknaheeny. This involves tin whistle and singing ensembles from our 3rd Class, with visual art and media. We made our own music video featuring the drawings of the students' interpretation and feelings of the song.

A video demonstrating a performance of Óró Sé do Bheatha Bhaile by participants in Creative Tradition was shown.

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Speaker 4: Willie Larkin

Willie Larkin is the founder and director of Tradtime™. From Templeglantine, Co. Limerick, he is an accomplished button accordion player and was a member of the All-Ireland winning Templeglantine Céilí Band.

Introducing TradTime™

Creative Ireland is a wonderful opportunity for the country. My only fear is that the opportunity might be missed as it might not be structured in the right way. What Creative Ireland is obviously trying to do is to make Ireland a better place and give people a greater appreciation of their culture.

I've been teaching music in Primary Schools for over thirty years and have taught from the bottom to the top. I have also been part of an All-Ireland winning céilí band. Any plan must be based in reality. You have to get every child involved in music through the Primary Schools but not every Primary School teacher grew up in a musical environment. Many are already inundated with the amount of work that they have to do. It is difficult to enthuse them to do more or extra when they already feel overburdened with work.

While it is important to engage with school principals, each teacher in their own classroom is in charge of their own space and must be encouraged and facilitated to develop within this space. Resources should be designed as a palette freshener that works between the other courses that the teachers do in class. It must be interesting for the teachers to use and help develop musicality amongst the pupils.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

The aim is for all pupils in a school community to be able to play music together. A whole school initiative takes huge preparation as each teacher is doing their own thing so something is needed to link these groups. The desire is to have a shared repertoire that all of the pupils could join in together for a performance, welcoming in other members of the community including parents and grandparents.

Tradtime™ is an Irish company that promotes the teaching and understanding of traditional music, song and dance in schools and colleges around Ireland. We endeavour to pass on our rich cultural heritage to people of all ages. We are backed by the traditional music organisation Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. We provide high quality, interactive, affordable classes nationwide. Tradtime™ provides a combination of classroom tutors and innovative whiteboard technology to teach music.

Tradtime™ is an online resource for supporting the learning of tin whistle, flute and banjo and is available in both Irish and English. It has been developed over a number of years and are now entering a period of more intensive promotion. The programme begins with the basics and some tunes have harmonies so that different groups can work together. For the youngest pupils, the characters are designed to be attractive.

Tradtime™ recognises the presence of pupils with Special Needs and are creating resources to facilitate these including colour coding and special instruments. Tradtime™ does not seek to eliminate other service providers but deliver a resource that everyone can use and genuinely create an environment where children can learn the same tunes the same way so that they can learn independently but then become part of a community. Tradtime™ can be supplemented by visits from a musician or tutor.

The online resource ensures that even when tutors are absent, children have access to music education. All tutors work to the same programme which allows for sustainability and consistency. However, there is not a desire for everybody to end up playing the same but rather having a strong foundation from which they can then develop their own styles.

Addressing the issue of employment and job creation, we recognise that teachers can be experts in music after studying music in college but they need to do post graduate qualifications to gain employment as primary school teachers. Tradtime™ has employed about forty music teachers to date and is teaching about 60,000 children in over 300 schools. We have met with and were encouraged by the Minister Education to seek funding from Creative Ireland.

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Questions

The following are a number of questions from audience members related to TradTime™.

Question:

As a parent, I recognise that not everybody values tin whistle lessons in school and so there is a need to engage parents also.

Willie Larkin

Teachers can give parents login details so that the child can also access the resource at home. There are statistics that the teacher can access that show how many times a child has accessed the programme to practice. The parents can watch their children practising and the teachers can share reports with teachers on progress and lessons covered.

Question

How much time is dedicated to TradTime given that time is already challenged by the need to cover other aspects of the curriculum?

Willie Larkin

It is based on reality. It is something constructive that can be used for five minutes as a break from other work. Music is sometimes viewed as a big chore but rather than setting aside a half hour, this can be used to do some constructive for a short period of time. They are learning unknown to themselves rather than switching to music for half an hour in the middle of a busy day.

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Discussion:

The following comments are drawn from the subsequent discussion that involved both the invited speakers and members of the audience.

Michelle Finnerty

Reflecting on prior experiences, while the technology is great, there is no substitute for bringing in the live musician to the classroom and there is a lot of evidence to demonstrate the positive effect that this has on even thinking about music. I also think it impacts on children wanting to learn instruments. In a project I was involved in with Daithí and other musicians in Cork involved us bringing in a range of instruments to the classroom and the responses from teachers and children demonstrated that they were interested in trying and learning the instruments. TradTime can support learning during the week but I would be in favour of maintaining a tutor. There is a concern that only seeing a musician or tutor only once a month – while some teachers are very good at encouraging music in their classrooms, others require further support.

I am also reminded of another project I was involved in whereby a teacher brought me to the door and pointed to the residence of a very famous Irish traditional musician and wondered how a system could be developed whereby a musician such as that could be engaged to be part of what was happening in the school, being mindful of the fact that the musician also had a touring schedule and may not be always available.

The other thing that strikes me is that, while tin whistles are very accessible, many children cannot afford to buy flutes or banjos.

Matt Cranitch

I wouldn't like to diminish the tin whistle having had the experience of listening to Mary Bergin recently. I teach one-on-one to a limited extent and it has come to my attention that the student

may come to me for an hour or so but for the rest of the week they do not hear Irish traditional music and they never hear it in their home environment. The same applies to other genres – people learn to play the piano but never hear Chopin, for example. I sometimes ask people what have they on their ipods or iphones and it is all pop music. I think this is a real issue. In former times, in maybe rural societies, that was not the situation. There was the local musician, like a Julia Clifford, and children growing up in the locality heard her. At other times people listened to the wireless or the radio and people like Ciarán MacMathúna and there was no television. You couldn't download stuff. This is a challenge for the parents and the teachers. The teaching approach has to take account of that.

A number of years ago, Music Network embarked on an initiative whereby if we were going somewhere to play a concert we would go into a school that day or perhaps a week beforehand we would give a talk to an adult education group about the music and gave a concert to the schools. Music network no longer do this but it was a very worthwhile initiative.

West Cork Music based in Bantry send musicians into schools with support from Cork County Council. Around three times a year they go to about ten schools with a variety of instruments. Children love the interaction and if the teacher is enthusiastic, and they are because in many instances they have asked for this, the pupils are well-informed. The sad thing is that when they go home, they turn on the television and there is pop music, the parents have pop music blaring, and there is no more traditional music.

Even tin whistles can be a financial aspect or burden on families but even in instances where children can afford to go to concerts they don't and very often their parents don't believe it is worth the time. Parents and older teenagers think little of spending €200 or €300 to go up to Dublin to Croke Park or similar venues to see a pop singer from some part of the world but at the same time are unwilling to pay €15 to hear Mary Bergin play.

There are few people going to concerts despite promotion. Adults need to be educated to go and bring along children in order to build a community who appreciate the music, as distinct from a music class that takes place for half an hour each week. It is like learning French without having heard it.

Jessica Cawley

For the children in Knocknaheeny, their favourite music is pop music and while you might ask why we would start a traditional music project in an urban part of the city that had never heard of traditional music before, the reality is that there are many healthy pockets of traditional music around the city and country. Comhaltas have done great work and you can go up to the Fleadh and witness thousands of young children playing Irish traditional music. So the health of the tradition is fantastic but in parts of Cork City there is no activity at all.

So it takes creative people to go to these areas and make people aware of the tradition. When these children are connected with traditional music they seem to enjoy it. There are paths through popular music and there are opportunities to move beyond genre or use popular music to motivate them. Once they are interested in music, we can use their obsession of pop music to an advantage

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

This year the children from Knocknaheeney are going to the Munster and All-Ireland Fleadh. When we started, they could not even recognise Irish traditional music or know what a jig is. That's where they are coming from; don't intimidate them with the tradition but rather link it with popular music that might have a folk music groove to it.

Michael Hickey

There are a lot of wasted opportunities in schools and wasted time that could be availed of. Something as simple as having music playing when children are waiting around could help them develop their awareness and appreciation for music. Teachers sometimes put on a cartoon like *Shrek* when kids are eating lunch, which promotes a homogenised popular culture. We should explore a way of putting on Irish traditional music to educate them or help them appreciate the environment which is tied up with culture. This can include National Geographic who have wonderful programmes about nature. There are many opportunities to expose children to Irish traditional music and this would not cost anything.

Parent of three children

Two of my children are in the Gaelscoil and one has started in secondary school. You win hearts and minds in primary schools. They are inspired by their teachers. That is how I was inspired. But it is not on the curriculum. Why aren't they learning about Séamus Ennis – my kids know nothing about Séamus Ennis. He's not on the curriculum. They know nothing about Irish traditional music. It's not on the curriculum. They know nothing about the history of the locality. It's not on the curriculum.

My kids are in CCE and they are asked to play in schools. The people who go to Comhaltas are the ones that are brought out to perform for others. While it is great to speak of Cruinniú na Cásca, we should focus on the Primary Schools. The people who inspire kids are teachers. I know they have a hell of a job to do but these things should be on their curriculum. The teachers that stand out for me are the ones that taught me music or singing.

Michelle Finnerty

We must be mindful that the curriculum is written as a guideline and it is up to teachers to adapt to whole school and local level. While I am not a Primary Teacher, I have done a little bit of work on the curriculum so in that context the curriculum allows us a little bit of flexibility for the subjects which we are looking for in order to develop subjects such as music but ultimately it is a support. If we look at the most recent curriculum from 1999, I attended the Curriculum support sessions which was two half days for music and as part of that Irish traditional music or indeed reference to any genre was completely absent. They were just looking at responding, listening, composing. So unless a teacher chooses to then go and take their week-long course during the summer on music, and we are still missing a lot of these courses that might deal with or include Irish traditional music, since 1999 that is the only support that we have given teachers. Flexibility is part of how the curriculum is written and we need to value that because freedom is important but again it is probably why we have different manifestations of music and different examples of practice across different schools.

In one of the schools that I spent time studying, which had the richest musical environment with many music teachers coming in and out, actually had no Irish traditional music as part of it. The children said they would love to do Irish traditional music or jazz but it did not occur.

Primary School Teacher

I have been teaching in primary schools for nearly thirty years. The most important thing is to get the principal on board. You also need to have the support of the parents committee. I have taught from infants to sixth class and I can't emphasise how important music is, especially for the weaker ones. In the school I'm in every child is playing music but the support of the principal is essential. I find the primary school curriculum useless in this regard. I also think that you need musicians coming in. Another issue is that the parents committee might change focus from year to year and the progress that may have been made can be lost very quickly.

Jessica Cawley

I was brought up in a system in the States where there was no religion in schools at all, we could do classes on Sundays; even the Catholics had Sunday school. We would do music instead. So we had a full time music teacher and everybody go lessons. That was why I am here today. I got music lessons in school; everybody did. To contrast that with Ireland, Ireland is so different. While it is too late to reinvent the wheel and create a whole new Irish system, we have a system in place here which is equally valid and what is most interesting in my mind, because there is no music in schools that is why we need Comhaltas. In contrast with where I grew up, there is a lot of activity outside of school, it is real here but where I come from it was only something in school. It would be amazing if we had both in Ireland – in and after school. Then you can reach children from non-musical families as well. The variety and vibrancy in Ireland is quite amazing to an outsider.

Micheál de Buitléir

Comhaltas is needed in society because the educational provision isn't there. If we look at the history of traditional music in Youghal, there isn't any tradition only what has been created by Comhaltas. It is a vehicle that is needed in society as our educational system doesn't provide. It is only where we engage and where we get a sympathetic principal who has empathy and realises it is much more than something for mass on Sunday.

We have Tom here from local radio and we encourage them to play traditional music as much as possible. We even have a group of teenagers from our branch who go in and broadcast their own traditional music radio show.

There is a need for cultural organisations engage with and get involved in the schools, and sporting organisations does it very well, but the same emphasis is not put into music. The VEC in Cork County does a lot of music in the County but does not reach all areas and does not enter east Cork. If the VEC is rolling out a music service, why not roll it out everywhere and what needs to be done to facilitate this?

Jessica Cawley

The same can be said for Comhaltas. There are areas where it sprouts because there is an interest there – I was talking to some musicians earlier here who said they wouldn't be playing music at all if it weren't for Micheál – but there are some areas that lack that interest because there is nobody there to say will we try traditional music. Comhaltas branches grow organically when there is an interest there. It is not just urban areas but also there is a lack in rural areas and it cannot be just

down to Comhaltas. Music Generation is doing a little bit in certain areas that don't have traditional music but it could be bigger.

Matt Cranitch

I said earlier that I think our artistic and cultural heritage should occupy a special place in this initiative Creative Ireland. I think that could be extended and it should occupy a special place in the DES curriculum and state funded organisations like RTE.

The amount of Irish traditional music that you hear on RTÉ has diminished drastically. But for Raidió na Gaeltachta, we hear little traditional music on the official airwaves. I mentioned Ciarán MacMathúna earlier. While he was there his programmes provided for Irish traditional music. His successor, Peter Browne, has had his output cut, and I suspect that when Peter Browne retires there may be no traditional Irish music person in RTÉ. These are real facts and it is a concern. At the same time radio stations promoting other activities – wall to wall pop music in the case of 2FM and regrettably some of the broadcasting time on Raidió na Gaeltachta is going that way as well. It is a society issue and maybe Creative Ireland could address this by using the terminology of the traditional arts as part of the initiative, not shying away from making a committed stand.

Notes

Reference to 'Irish traditional music' or the 'Traditional Arts' in documentation from Creative Ireland was discussed during the session. Reference to the Traditional Arts in the Creative Ireland programme includes:

Creative Ireland is underpinned by the key values identified in Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach. They are:

.... The importance of the Irish language, our cultural heritage, folklore, games, music and the uniqueness of our Gaeltacht areas (p. 9)

Creative Ireland is the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in that framework policy which seek to:

.... Celebrate our cultural heritage and traditions (p. 16)

Nevertheless, it was accepted by those present that the Traditional Arts and Irish traditional music should occupy a special place in the Creative Ireland initiative.

Conclusion

To conclude this session, a number of points were made and questions raised:

- To engage children, we must also engage adults.
- We should make connections with local musicians, whether in schools or otherwise and recognise value of the individual musician in all aspects of creativity.
- A question arises as to who is guiding the process – individual/organisation?
- How will the education system adapt/react to Creative Ireland?
- How can we address the gaps that exist in some places and create a greater balance of opportunities between different places?

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

- Can cultural organisations and national institutions do more to promote Irish cultural heritage?

In addition to our speakers, we have had excellent interaction from the floor which is informative and will be valuable moving forward.



Session C: Learning from Success

The Creative Ireland Programme was developed following the success of the Ireland 2016 celebrations. As a cross-government initiative chaired by An Taoiseach, the programme seeks to encourage creativity in the life of the nation to promote individual, community and national wellbeing and realise our full creative potential. The speakers in this session provided an overview of the programme from both a national and county perspective.



Speaker 1: Dr Adèle Commins

Musicologist Adèle Commins is Head of Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music at DkIT. A graduate of NUI Maynooth with a PhD in musicology and first class honours degrees in Music and Irish and Higher Diploma in Education, she also holds an ALCM and LGSMD in piano performance. In addition to playing piano, she is an accomplished piano accordion player and soprano and is Musical Director of two local church choirs. She is an elected member to the Council of the Society for Musicology in Ireland, a member of the Society for Music Education in Ireland National Committee, a member of Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM) Ireland committee, the Honorary Secretary of the Council of Heads of Music in Higher Education in Ireland and is also an active member of the Society for Musicology in Ireland and the International Stanford Society. She has also acted as consultant for a number of bodies including QQI.

Linking with Academic Institutions

The Creative Ireland programme seeks to develop culture and creativity across the country. In many ways academic institutions are already contributing to this mission. The HEA identify academic institutions as cultural drivers in their regions. There are many ways in which higher education

institutions can engage in and support the creative Ireland programme and I will both highlight generic possibilities and specific examples from my experience at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Thinking about the five pillars in the context of Irish traditional music and Irish academic institutions there are many examples from my own experience where there are exciting synergies.

The first pillar seeks to **enable the creative potential of every child and young person**. Many of our students undertake projects involving children or research that will inform their future careers of working creatively with children. For example staff and students in the Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music at DkIT teach in local Comhaltas branches. We have been delighted to welcome young Irish traditional musicians as participants in a number of our concerts and events and are delighted to see that they continue to attend as audience members. Through these experiences, the children see the potential to explore and present their creativity, influenced by role models in their community. Currently at DkIT, four undergraduate students drawn from music and science are working on a funded Summer Research Project to develop resources for STEAM education – recognising the role of arts and creativity for teaching STEM subjects.

Our concert series contributes to the second pillar which seeks to **enable creativity in every community**. Our concerts at DkIT regularly feature the work of local performers, composers and songwriters. This regular celebration of local creativity by the local community in the community creates a sustainable community for future creativity. We welcome students from a diverse range of backgrounds who develop their creativity across the creative arts and technologies. Films and documentaries made in the Department utilise the talents of local actors and deal with local issues. An example in relation to traditional music was the recent documentary, *The Road to Speyfest* which followed a group of traditional musicians from Dundalk on a tour of Scotland, which also relates to the fourth pillar that I will address shortly. Games and computing students also act creatively and respond to their communities, developing games and apps that enhance the lives of their users and we recognise the reference to coderdojo in the programme. Perhaps students can develop apps that can enhance or facilitate Irish traditional music education and appreciation. Our building has also housed art and photography exhibitions and film screenings including *Coppers and Brass*, a documentary about the musical traditions of the travelling community.

The development of **infrastructure** is part of the third pillar. Academic institutions are important infrastructure in the regions and community engagement is a key strategy of many academic institutions. Many have theatres and performance spaces, recording and media facilities and human resources in the staff and students. Communities and institutions need to work together in order to maximise the potential of the Creative Ireland programme. At DkIT we are delighted to host rehearsals by Music Generation on a regular basis and other creative groups regularly benefit from the facilities, including groups from Comhaltas. Summer camps hosted on the campus include Music Generation and coderdojo while our facilities provide state-of-the-art spaces for media production.

The fourth pillar of the Creative Ireland programme seeks to **promote Ireland as a centre of excellence in media production**. This can only be achieved through the development of education and research and access to technology and resources. We are fortunate to teach with skilled colleagues in state-of-the-art facilities and work on projects in music and audio production, film and television production, and multimedia. The Irish music documentary, *The Road to Speyfest*, was

initially a collaborative effort supported by Irish TV and gave all involved, including ourselves, an insight into television production that we can continue to build upon.

The fifth pillar of the Creative Ireland programme seeks to develop our **international profile and unify our global reputation**. Academic institutions are increasingly driven by internationalisation frameworks as they seek to ensure that their programmes are internationally relevant and that they attract international students. Groups from DkIT have travelled to America, Brazil, Norway, Belgium and France in recent years. Their performances provide a platform for up and coming musicians and artists while contributing to Ireland's global reputation. As I mentioned, the narrative of the recent DkIT documentary *The Road to Speyfest* focuses on a trip to Scotland by a group of Irish traditional musicians including and under the direction of Daithí and I to perform in Glasgow at the International Conference for Music Education and the Speyfest festival in Fochabers. One of the aims of the project, which was developed prior to the Creative Ireland programme, echoes some of the rhetoric of this fifth pillar – to bring a message overseas that communicates that Ireland is 'a great place to visit, invest in and to study'. We have been delighted to travel widely in recent years, supported in part by Culture Ireland, IMRO and Erasmus Plus, and this has not only made our audiences more aware of creativity and opportunities in Louth but has also inspired us in our artistic development – which links back again to the first two pillars.

While there is much that is positive, what needs to be made more clear to us is how we can engage more in Creative Ireland. In our own county our institution appears to be side lined in comparison to other groups who get regular funding. Ideas include the potential to develop artist-in-residence programme based in academic institutions that can engage with the whole community. Every academic institution in Ireland has signed up to a charter on community engagement in 2015. Perhaps Creative Ireland could develop a charter to be signed by every academic institution to support and develop creativity in their communities.

It appears from discussions that guidance, training and continuous professional development is needed. With support from Creative Ireland, Academic institutions can provide continuous professional development programmes, while academic institutions require guidance, support and input from practitioners and teachers.

Academic institutions have an important role to play in society. We need to come together with all other parts of society. To some people, academic institutions may seem far moved from some of these initiatives, too focused on academic researcher. However, we are excited by the potential of the Creative Ireland programme in our institution and encourage all community groups to consider how they can link, collaborate and engage with their academic institutions to develop creativity amongst their young people and in their community, as well as benefitting from education and research, available infrastructure and international networks. We look forward to ongoing discussion and development of the Creative Ireland programme.

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Speaker 2: Maurice Mullen

Maurice Mullen is a former Assistant Secretary General Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport having previously worked in the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Marine and Natural Resources. He has also been actively involved in Ceoltóirí Chluain Tarbh (CCT) for over 30 years, a community organisation established over sixty years ago to teach and promote Irish traditional music in Dublin. He was chairman of the organisation for a number of years and at present is chairman of the music committee, for engaging the teachers (35+), setting the teaching programmes and managing the teaching classes. He has worked with Dublin City Council's Arts Office and the The Ark, Ireland's National Childrens' Theatre, on promoting learning and performing music in the community. He is also a flute player who recently completed an MA in Traditional Music Studies at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Pre-existing models for success

This presentation drew significantly on research undertaken by Maurice in completing an MA in Traditional Music Studies in Dundalk Institute of Technology. Titled *The DEIS Dividend: A Critical Analysis of the Arts Council of Ireland's Funding of Irish Traditional Music*, Maurice examined if the DEIS scheme met the development needs of four selected projects in receipt of DEIS funding, and also considered if there were wider "legacy" benefits discernible beyond the targets set for each of the individual projects.

Maurice is a flute player, and his presentation was also informed by personal experience acquired over 30 years working with Ceoltóirí Chluain Tarbh, a major community organisation teaching and promoting traditional music in Dublin, and as an activist for the promotion of the Irish traditional arts generally.

The four DEIS projects Maurice reviewed included: *A Musical Vision – The Blind Tradition*, *Music of the Sliabh Beagh Region*, *Tunes form the Goodman Manuscripts* and a *Week-long Dance Residency* in Leitrim. In each case DEIS grants were small and some projects also benefited from additional follow-on grants be awarded: the *Musical Vision* project involved separate grants for recording a CD and holding a master class, while the *Sliabh Beagh* project involved three grants for, respectively, recording a CD, undertaking workshops and producing a book.

Maurice reported that the four projects were successful and produced wider project and community dividends. The projects also demonstrated shared characteristics, including

- Strong project leadership and clarity on project aims was evident
- Collaborative processes and “bottom-up” ownership was fostered
- A professional approach ensured quality was at the heart of all projects.
- Innovation and creativity were actively promoted in project delivery
- Flexibility and taking risks were hallmarks
- Projects were built on learning from experience of other successful projects
- The value of informal learning and exchange was emphasised by all promoters

During his presentation Maurice outlined wider legacy dividends evident in all projects, such as benefits gained in addition to the specific objectives set by each project promoter. These generally came in the form of additional benefits to the project promoter, the local community and even the wider traditional arts community. He emphasised the importance of identifying and articulating such wider benefits, particularly in small projects, to appreciate the true value of the projects. The wider benefits identified in the four projects reviewed included

- Broader project ownership resulted in “Community Champions” emerging
- There was clear evidence of local community cohesion being strengthened
- Pursuing projects creates “More strings to promoters’ bows”, i.e. creates new economic opportunities for them.
- Arts Council support / recognition increased public perceptions of the value of projects, which in turn can help to attract further local funding support for a project.
- Confidence gained from delivering the first project led to follow on projects
- Local drive, know-how and knowledge is at least as important as money!

In concluding his presentation, Maurice made suggestions for consideration by Creative Ireland to promote creativity and innovation through the delivery of small local projects. Among the measures he suggested were

- Local Authority actions plans under the Creative Ireland programme should support many wide ranging small-scale projects
- Two linked projects can deliver more than the sum of both
- Funding should allow for flexibility and risk taking
- Targeting how “personal learning” can take place is important. Furthermore, informal learning and exchange benefits from formally planning opportunities and creating the necessary space to facilitate it
- Providing seminars, website, DVD and information packs on projects successfully delivered is very important in disseminating best practice and in guiding potential project promoters
- Encouraging multiple stakeholders (including business) to work together in projects targeting several objectives simultaneously is valuable for fostering creativity and longer-term commitment (sustainability) to the project goals
- Celebrate / recognise in public fora the achievement of each project



Questions from the Floor

Micheal de Buitléir

The need for champions is very important. Role models, as they are also called, are very important. We don't recognise our role models enough. Matt facilitated a workshop at Brú na Sí for Americans who saw the benefit in engaging with somebody like him.

We have a festival coming up and part of the festival is today's event. I see Creative Ireland and this document becoming the bible of Youghal Comhaltas. It ticks a lot of boxes. Maurice is my champion and we share a lot of knowledge and this idea of sharing knowledge and collaborating with groups is very important.

We have a new group of champions here in Youghal; young people who engaged in workshops with Daithí and Adèle during the week. The youth are the future champions – other young people will look up to them and aspire to be them.

Michael O'Reilly

I have spent the last number of months travelling around the country talking about what we think Creative Ireland is and what it can become and this is the first time that we have sat in a group like this and people are telling us what they think it should be and what it could become and challenging us. It is absolutely fantastic. It has been the most helpful meeting that I have been at in the last number of months in that sense. There is a coherence to what is being said across all things.

Maurice's study is excellent and needs to be captured and I will communicate it to all local authorities.

Briefly, I will focus on children – a child's life is school, out of school, home and all of everything else. The programme is trying to tackle everything in a sense but, for scale, to get to every child we must get to the curriculum. So we have tagged on to what is there, the 'Arts Rich Schools' initiative and similar things that are already there that we can further resource, put more money into and get results immediately. But that doesn't mean that that is the be all and end all by any means. There are far bigger questions around what is a school and if the current model is the best. But we need to take what we have got.

We are seeking to get funding for an instrument bank, informed by the Music Network model.

The whole basis of Creative Ireland and its success is as a collaborative partnership between practitioners, policy makers and researchers. You've got to have all three. We are working on that. We are developing a research project. We have spent time bringing the policy makers on board. And then the practitioners – meaning artists, teachers, everybody who is involved with creativity. Getting that partnership at local and national level is something we see as critical to the whole programme.

We started in middle of 2016 because we recognised that local authorities doing great work on centenary. There were no new extra personnel, just a small team, but we saw how people demonstrated a commitment to and interest in local place and heritage. There were not the divisions between heritage and contemporary arts but rather we saw a desire for collaboration. We got political backing to do it rather than undertaking extensive research. There are many models

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

elsewhere. Britain have had two attempts at it and going to go again and they have put a lot of money into the 'Great Britain' campaign. Despite huge promotion, few people know about it because there was no community engagement in it.

Ireland jumped straight into it. The document is a flawed document and there are omissions in it. It is a launch document to initiate the discussion. There are ten things that are outlined that will be done this year. It is daunting and challenging but I can take a lot of the ideas heard here today and develop them. The implementation of ideas is critical.

Barry Cogan

An Tóstal was an inspiration to Ireland when I was young. I remember when it was launched and it was a marvellous event that is being mirrored again here in Youghal. Collaboration is the key to make the strides that can be made. All the organisations, like the GAA who organise Scór, are struggling to get people to engage in traditional arts and they are a huge resource for the country. Broadcasters would give a description of dancers, costumes, and dances and there is a need for pride in our traditions.

We travel internationally with our traditional performances and we always get a great welcome. We also had a Folk Dance Festival. Unfortunately there is no International Folk Dance Festival in Ireland today.

Jessie noted that there are pockets where there is no Irish traditional music. In my opinion there should be six branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Cork City. We have a great programme lined up for the Munster Fleadh and everybody is welcome.

Conor Nelligan

The dialogue today is very interesting and I am taking a lot of notes. We gleaned a lot of information from the panels and it is great to see all of the work that is being done.

What struck me is that you hear about a lot of things that are happening but what does it take for someone to really get involved? . This comes easiest when someone develops a love of something – this happens primarily in the home and in community. For example, I have children at home and instruments in the house and the children want to play music at home; they love it; and hopefully this interest will inspire them to continue and get involved well into the future.

With Irish music, my own perspective is that when tourists come, often they hear the same type of polished traditional Irish music, whether it be in Youghal or in Buncrana, often missing local flavour/ornamentation. For obvious reasons it is important to learn the basics first, I would hope that local traditional music performances remain organic and do not fall into a textbook/uniform style. It is like the Irish language – somebody recently said to me that until recently they could tell where somebody was from based on the way that they spoke – not anymore. Every effort should be made to ensure that Irish traditional music does not lose its local accent.

You can only be creative when you have confidence and communities can help to instil that confidence in their individuals and groupings.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

There was talk of sports also. Children regularly hear about the GAA at home and go out and have a kick around. When was the last time someone saw a few young people sitting out on the green and playing a few trad songs together? Comhaltas groups could encourage breakout sessions; when people see music being played as an enjoyable and natural pastime in day to day locations, such as down the park, along the street (not busking!), etc. this will bring the culture home.

The County Council can help and support initiatives but we need ambassadors locally as well, as the saying goes, *Ní neart gur chur le chéile*.

Dick Beamish

I'm from a rural background but living in Ballincollig for forty years. Speaking about breakout sessions, I'm involved in the Comhaltas branch in Ballincollig. There are over 80 nationalities represented in the population of Ballincollig and there is a very vibrant CCE branch. I have noticed that there is a fashion or surge of interest in traditional music as a child activity to add to all the other boxes that are ticked on the CV. That's good that there is that much interest but it then wanes after a while. It is difficult to develop an atmosphere in some areas. Youghal and Clonakilty are very different but equally very different from people from more rural areas. Many young people from Ballincollig are not interested in living in Ballincollig; less and less people living in rural cottages, seeking to live in larger urban areas. It is very difficult to get parent buy-in because of fatigue; they are involved in too much.

These discussions were followed by informal discussions and networking to share ideas and knowledge.



Concluding Remarks and Acknowledgements

A sincere word of gratitude for Mícheál de Buitléir, whose idea it was to host this event and who sought out ideas on presenters and topics for discussion and who sent out invitations to attend. The event would not have been possible without the support of all of the speakers and the contributions from the audience.

Micheál de Buitléir

Thank you to Daithí for facilitating the event and engaging many of the speakers.

A special word of thanks to Michael and Conor, who were, for a time, subjected to a barrage of questions but I think it was beneficial to both of you. It is important that new forms of engaging with the community are looked at and considered. There was a time you couldn't talk to God unless through a priest or a church but that has changed in society and now we can all talk to God. We can now email the County Manager directly and he's saying thank you for your email and we'll take that on board. The subtle changes with Creative Ireland are welcomed and I am sure it will be a two way street, which is to the benefit of everybody.

I am delighted to hear that Comhaltas were involved nationally in conversations related to Creative Ireland. It is important that these conversations filter down to the grassroots. Comhaltas is an institution that needs to examine how they are communicating with the rest of the network and consider how it is being informed from the bottom up. Institutions can become closed and isolated in ivory towers if they do not engage with their grassroots. There is a challenge to break down silo thinking and boss-led organisations, even in our community groups.

The traditional arts symbolise and embody the creativeness of Irish people for generations and today *Abair Trad* sought to explore the potential for the traditional arts within the Creative Ireland Programme. I think Matt's few words raised the flag for traditional arts and I thank you for that.

Michelle and Jessica, collaboration between Youghal and UCC will be high on our list and we see opportunities in that, especially with what you are trying to do with young people and education. That is very important. We do have experiences, we do have negative experiences and positives and we do need to look at the balance of what went right and what went wrong. I believe that Music Generation is finding some of the challenges that were faced by Comhaltas branches and perhaps this is something we can follow up on.

Willie Larkin, thank you for travelling from Limerick. A number of years ago we engaged with a document written at the time by Maurice Mullen, which related to a five-year development plan for Comhaltas. I am delighted to see that you have progressed on some of these ideas in terms of education. The use and the need for technology, not as a solo means but as a way of communicating what we need to do with traditional arts, to make it easier for families, communities and schools to engage with it is very important.

Maurice is continuing to be involved in a community context and today's presentation was very inspiring and we hope to continue a link going forward.

Thank you Adèle for highlighting some of the ways we can engage with third level education. We have to develop a way of thinking of how we bring a child through from Early Years to Third Level

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

Education and beyond into employment. There is a lot of activity going on but it is not currently joined up and that is the problem. If Creative Ireland helped do that, perhaps we could achieve a lot more.

A word of thanks to the Comhaltas branches, the drama groups, Youghal Community Forum, and Youghal Celebrates History for attending here today. It is very positive from a community context and the support you give us is always very much appreciated.

Thank you to Tom from Community Radio Youghal who has recorded today's event and some elements will be utilised for news items on the radio.

Thanks to the Red Store for the venue. We considered hosting it in Brú na Sí but Creative Ireland is telling us to about collaboration, it is telling us about identifying business leaders and engaging with them. We spoke about principals in schools and how important it is to have their support to get music into schools. It is the same if there's a pub, it's easy get a session in if they are on your side. We have to embrace businesses as well. We don't have the business any more but perhaps Creative Ireland can help us engage with what is there. Pop-up shops might be one starting point and we are engaging with that.

Conclusion

The *Abair Trad* symposium highlighted the importance of discussion and engagement with grassroots when endeavouring to develop plans that can both take into consideration the ideas of individuals and communities and be subsequently implemented by these same individuals and communities.

People experience culture and creativity in a wide range of spaces. These spaces can be unconnected but inform the cultural understanding formed by the child and continued through to adulthood that shape our wellbeing, how we view ourselves, and how others view us. There is also a culture that is sharing our knowledge, experiences, successes and failures. This creates a culture of endeavouring to do better, to support others, and to challenge policy-makers to listen to and act upon what is being realised at the grassroots.

Education emerged as a central theme in the presentations, discussions and comments during *Abair Trad*. In terms of education, opportunities and access to Irish traditional music differ from school to school; similarly there is inconsistency in out of school provision in different places. We need to address these imbalances and ensure fairness. We need to create opportunities for continuing professional development for teachers and practitioners and form collaborative networks through which information and experiences can be shared. Positive experiences should be shared and replicated, while we can learn from common challenges and negative experiences.

Sustainability should be a key measure of the success of Creative Ireland. Projects should respond to lived experience, can include practitioners visiting classrooms and community settings, and should be accessible to all in our communities. All activity needs to acknowledge and appreciate the presence of children and be open and flexible to the needs of children. However, in order for activities to be successful, they must also involve adults as part of a community understanding of sharing culture and creativity and involving all members of our community. The traditional arts should be central to a holistic approach to developing a culture of creativity in Ireland.

Cultural activity requires leadership and we must acknowledge and value our cultural leaders who inspire participation. We must encourage young people to be leaders within their own communities and inspire their peers to be creative. We need to ensure that existing leaders, including teachers, parents, practitioners and volunteers, are supported and resourced and discussions highlight the need for both training opportunities and greater networks to facilitate communication and collaboration.

Projects cannot be considered as isolated events but rather their potential for development and extension over time and long-term value must be considered, not in terms of employment but in terms of how they will benefit the lives of people in our society.

We need to utilise all resources available to us and like Creative Ireland, we need to think outside of narrow boxes such as arts, sports, tourism, health and justice. Resources include artists in our communities, spaces including schools, colleges and community centres, and the internet. While the internet provides new opportunities for learning and engagement with culture and creativity, it also creates challenges. We must maintain local identities and a sense of ownership in the face of homogenised popular culture. Neither can we allow the internet to replace the live and lived experience of the concert or tutor.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

The *Abair Trad* event raised many questions and brought forward ideas and suggestions for development. It is clear that there is much enthusiasm for continuing the conversation, finding answers to questions and sharing knowledge. If Creative Ireland is a facilitated invitation, then those in control must continue to invite and meet the challenges presented by those invited. It is through ongoing discussion that collaborations will develop, networks will form, and success will be achieved.



Appendix 1

Additional comments from participants

Notes written by attendees on table mats were gathered for consideration. Some are in the form of questions, others ideas and suggestions, others comments. These notes have been summarised here to inspire further and future discussions.

Comments

Many comments expressed gratitude for the day, highlighting the inclusive and informative nature of the event.

Live music is essential in inspiring children. If they are not exposed to it, they will not develop an interest. It's like learning a language – you need to be exposed to it in order to learn properly.

Primary School. 1999 most recently revised curriculum. 18 years!

Interaction – social aspects of being part of a music group and making friends.

Informal learning needs planning.

Link projects can deliver more than the sum of both. Take bite size chunks.

Community champions – also needed for schools.

Unfortunately music is not a priority in schools Literacy and numeracy are the key focus. Music is considered a bonus. Time is a huge challenge in the school day. Also many teachers lack confidence and knowledge when it comes to music education. Professional musicians going into schools may work better for one term of the year, after that the class teacher could continue to programme as children have many other activities such as swimming, hurling, football, gymnastics, choir, speech and drama, etc. Those interested in music will join local Comhaltas branches or bands.

Time has to be set aside for Creative Ireland in crèches, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools.

Bring arts concepts and culture back into schools – employ people who are experts in this field to teach students as teachers are burned out and have no interest.

Teacher training colleges need to teach the trainee teachers about getting children to sing from infants classes upwards.

Early childhood intervention in traditional arts is hugely important.

In terms of tourism, the Irish pub is very big in the minds of a lot of tourists as an experience. Music (Traditional) is very much needed in every town. There needs to be buy-in from publicans in Youghal who could learn from other places.

Sessions for families in non-drinking venues are needed. Very well catered for in Youghal by Brú na Sí and in some other Comhaltas venues but not accessible everywhere.

There is a need for spaces in the centre of towns and villages such as a community hall to bring music out of schools into the community and eliminate competition between schools.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

There is a need for groups to promote all activities in an area.

It's great to combine music and arts and give freedom to express their emotions and associations.

A story from a 70 year old. When he was a child his younger sister was interested in the box at age four or so. Her father was heard to say "if we could only get her away from the bloody music she might be some good". A common attitude or bias that I experienced in a rural farming environment.

Re singing in schools (Michelle's presentation) – my 4th class teacher was a singer/musician in 1950s. I still remember his songs. I guess teachers nowadays are less likely to have time.

As somebody who is happy to work (a little) in schools I came to a blockage at one point – the school needed to have me registered with the Teaching Council. Result – I backed off and went away.

Because of my anger and shock that our young people no longer learned basic crochet skills in primary schools, I completed a City and Guilds in design and crafts. I needed something under my belt as teachers' attitude was, I felt, I was a bored housewife killing my time. I was never bored. The interest shown by young people when using a sewing machine is a joy. Their interest in hand sewing and completing a project is heart-warming. A young lad was sent to me as he was getting into trouble in school He now goes everywhere with his sewing and the young students who turn up at the Limerick College of Art and Design lack all of the basic skills of sewing. I've had two cancer patients learn crochet as it helped them to sit, rest and focus. There are many other benefits. The cost involved in teaching sewing, crochet lace, kanka, garment repairs, is very little. To teach a child to redesign their old pair of jeans, repair their favourite jumper is not only a joy but practical.

Ideas and suggestions

Pop-up shop idea for Youghal – bring Comhaltas group practice downtown once a month and open it to the public in order to create publicity and spread the culture.

Youghal Comhaltas should make a CD of tunes associated with the area. There are many of them but they are scattered across various collections and we are the prime candidates to gather and document them.

Play music at break time in schools for children to listen to and experience.

In Youghal we have a huge part of our history that needs to be told under Creative Ireland. 'Youghal Needle Point Lace' is not mentioned on any lace trail of anywhere. We need the stories to be told and heard of this lacemaking school which dates back to the 1800s. I have done several culture nights previously. People have enquired of the tourist office for lace to buy but it is unavailable in our town at present. Our lace is in Fitzgerald Park and we cannot access it as it is in drawers and loaned out. This lace belongs in Youghal and should be exhibited in Youghal and the story told.

Youghal people still lament the demise of the Busking Festival over the August weekend. Could it be a traditional music busking festival or trad dominated and open to all genres?

There is a need for a collaborative network that might be east to west, from the Ancient East to the Wild Atlantic Way, connect people who are interested in working together. Creative Ireland should support local voluntary and community organisations to network and duplicate less. Perhaps identify a venue where we can meet and communicate with each other.

Questions

How can Creative Ireland work with the Department of Education to include culture in the 300 hours of wellbeing in the new Junior Cycle?

Have Creative Ireland incorporated the notion of Arts for the pre-school group? Is there a co-ordinated approach for this?

How does Irish traditional music connected children to their local communities? Can we quantify this?

Has Music Generation Ireland a template that can be shared with other music/arts teaching groups?

How could Comhaltas promote linked projects as Maurice Mullen's research shows that two linked projects can deliver more?

Who made the decision and why was the decision made and when was the decision taken that it would no longer be a requirement for our young teacher training to have a portfolio of sewing and knitting skills? I've been trying to get an answer to this for years. Some answers I have got include: 1. When computers came into the classroom we no longer had time to teach sewing. 2. When male teachers were being trained it was felt unfair for them to have sewing skills. I have been asked by some art teachers to show them how to do crochet lace, sewing and repair skills. I was shocked when told embroidery was being taught in class. What's the point in that when they can't sew in a button. Crochet lace was a huge part of Ireland's history and it has died a slow death. I gave a class on crochets some years ago to transition year students but found the teachers' attitude towards me awkward and uninterested. I have, over the years, given my time volunteering to my community and neighbours teaching basic sewing and crochet lace.

Appendix 2

Traditional Music and Creative Ireland – a survey of initial plans and documentation

It is clear from a reading of the recent publicity material relating to the Creative Ireland 2017 Programme that, in the short term at least, Creative Ireland is building upon pre-existing activities, institutions and events. This is a very practical approach, although it raises two important questions – what is new? And how are projects being selected?

Amongst the institutions listed – which include the IMMA, the Abbey Theatre, the National Museum and the National Concert Hall - there is little to suggest that Irish traditional music is a priority, with the exception of the artist-in-residence position of Martin Hayes at the National Concert Hall. It is also worth noting that these institutions are Dublin based – what of regional institutions such as Siamsa Tíre, or national organisations that are rooted in local communities such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

The importance of Irish traditional music and heritage more generally in the context of Creative Ireland, is highlighted by the Tipperary Heritage Officer Róisín O’Grady who notes that artists and communities can ‘use heritage as their inspiration, like a lot of artists would do.’ The County Cork Culture and Creativity Plan 2017 also states ‘just as the poetry of the Bards often echoed the stories of Ireland past, let the stories of Cork County’s past inspire our creative output amongst people young and old – let us be historian and artist at the same time’. As the preamble to this seminar notes, ‘the traditional arts symbolise and embody the creativeness of Irish people for generations’.

Plans for the capital announced to date do not appear to include Irish traditional music although Fingal County Council recognises its strong Irish traditional music heritage and the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre as an important piece of infrastructure while the Fingal Fleadh will take place in Swords in September. Elsewhere in the county, Clondalkin is being promoted as a key heritage centre under the Creative Ireland umbrella, recognising the strength of the Irish language and the impressive Áras Chrónáin.

In Louth, Irish traditional music is a core component of the music degree at Dundalk Institute of Technology and staff and students there teach with a local Comhaltas branches and have performed internationally in recent years in addition to regular performances in Dundalk. With Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann coming to Drogheda in 2018, there is an opportunity to celebrate the strong Irish traditional music heritage in the county that includes céilí bands – the Siamsa Céilí Band and Táin Céilí Bands have both won coveted three-in-a-row All-Ireland titles – fiddling, singing and harping – An Chúirt Chruitreachta takes place in Termonfeckin this week. A regional centre for Comhaltas is located at the Oriel Centre Dundalk Gaol, an important part of the infrastructure and, like Brú na Sí, it hosts an annual seisiún performance. The policy being put forward by County Arts Officer Brian Harten seeks to be inclusive and rebrand and repackage the county as a cultural destination, something that has been at the heart of some recent initiatives at DkIT.

Cork County is one that is more explicit in its inclusion of Irish traditional music, from the Jim Dowling Uilleann Pipe and Trad Music Festival in Glengarriff in the west to Tóstal an tSean Thoir here in Youghal in the east, it is clear that, if Creative Ireland is to build upon existing local energies and

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

synergies, Irish traditional music is a fundamental fuel. While Cork is certainly a large County, Conor Nelligan noted the sense of local pride in every village, town and parish. Kerry are supporting the Sliabh Luachra Music Trail and events at the Scartaglin Heritage Centre – an important centre for Irish traditional music that is not connected to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. There are also plans to fund a film documentary on Sliabh Luachra and there is ongoing support for the Sliabh Luachra Music Trail across the Arts Offices of Cork, Kerry and Limerick County Councils. This is an example of positive collaboration between three different Local Authorities, and Creative Ireland is a further opportunity to see cross-county collaboration, which should be encouraged through the Programme, particularly for groups that straddle County boundaries, such as Sliabh Luachra as mentioned and Ceolta Sí, which reaches also into West Waterford.

The integration of Irish traditional music to the experience of place is also developed in Waterford, where the new Greenway includes links to site-specific video content of local Waterford singers performing songs that have a historical association to noteworthy points along the trail.

The one county that places Irish traditional music front and centre, not surprisingly, is County Clare. Festivals of traditional music in Doolin, Feakle, Ennis and Miltown Malbay appear to be supported and with good merit - they tick the boxes of the five pillars. Involving communities, encouraging young people, building on infrastructure and attracting a global audience, the advent of Fleadh TV and other initiatives has meant that Irish traditional music is at the cutting edge of media production. Initiatives such as Ceol na nÓg in the Michael Cusack Centre in Carron engage with a particularly local sound. In contrast, the Mayo Manchester Tradfest focuses on connecting with the diaspora.

What we learn from the initial press coverage and communications related to Creative Ireland is that spaces – physical spaces such as Brú na Sí and The Mall Arts Centre in Youghal, or festival spaces such as Tóstal an tSean Thoir – are integral to the implementation of Creative Ireland. A number of counties are considering cultural archives and traditional musicians will be important contributors to these.

It is clear that Comhaltas and Comhaltas centres have a role to play. Dún na Sí in Westmeath are developing its Scéal exhibition, which tells the story of traditional Irish music, song and dance as part of the Creative Ireland programme. However, the widespread absence suggests that the organisation has not yet engaged with the programme. Although, as Matt might outline, the opportunity for traditional artists generally to engage has been limited to date.

Other organisations also get a mention, such as Music Generation and Laois are promoting both its Music Generation Laois Trad Summer School with a new suite of music for Trad Orchestra by composer Ryan Molloy and concert with Beoga in July, as well as a Harps and Pipes Tionól in November. Music Generation in Sligo (and to some extent Louth) recognises the strength of Comhaltas in the county and does not seek to replace the organisation. Music Generation is also signalled in the plans for the County of Cork and would benefit with a strong Comhaltas element.

There are numerous Irish traditional music events around the country that operate without recourse to Comhaltas. Limerick includes Fleadh by the Feale and the West Limerick Singing Club, which are Irish traditional music events that do not make explicit reference to Comhaltas but place Irish traditional music within the Creative Ireland programme. In Leitrim, Edwina Guckian's Leitrim Dance Project, encourages young people to participate in sean nós dancing and organises a festival that

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017

attracts dancers from all over the world to the county; musicians also travel to Leitrim for the well-established Joe Mooney Summer School in Drumshanbo, which is listed in the events – both existing outside the organisation that is Comhaltas.

Urban centres appear to be hubs and Creative Ireland has a role in regenerating or making some of these urban centres more attractive after the recession.

It is also clear that, to date, traditional music is not featured prominently in the plans of many counties. It is important that it is recognised how traditional music can contribute to all five pillars of the programme and enrich the lives of communities throughout the island of Ireland, the diaspora abroad and an inquisitive global audience. It is also important to encourage the involvement of young people. One example is the Tradoodle Traditional Arts Festival for Young Audiences in County Monaghan that is co-ordinated by early years' specialist Thomas Johnston.

In terms of spaces for creative and cultural initiatives, a number of obvious institutions are mentioned but little attention has been paid to the potential of the educational institutions. Universities and Institutes of Technology are centres of creativity that contribute greatly to the cultural life of the communities in which they are located. An exception appears to exist in Tipperary where students from LIT and WIT are engaged in projects. DLR – IADT students taking photographs at an event. Dr Adèle Commins has explored this further as part of her *Abair Trad* presentation.

It is clear from the initial information that there is much happening and much that can be achieved. However, it is vital that Creative Ireland continue to engage with local communities, to share knowledge of opportunities, and address the needs that are a reality on the ground. With so many stakeholders, it is essential that a mechanism for voices and opinions to be heard is developed and resources are shared fairly and transparently.

Abair Trad: Symposium on Traditional Music in Creative Ireland
24 June 2017



