

Comhaltas Winnipeg Newsletter

Welcome to the October CCE newsletter!
We just finished up the Winnipeg Irish Festival, and a very fun, educational time was had by all. The daytime activities were free to the public and ran continuously from 10am till 4:30pm. Kids were able to get their faces painted by Eva from Eva's Face Art, and there were great educational workshops throughout the day. The well attended workshops included bodhran, voice, accompaniment, and strings. The evening concert was a big success with an enthusiastic audience. The rainy weather no-doubt deterred some of the walk in crowd, but the musicians put on a professional and exciting show, that had the audience clapping along. To close off the busy day, the musicians gathered for a rip roaring session. Congratulations to everyone who made this year's Irish Fest a success!

Coming up this month, there's a terrific concert at the Irish Club on Oct. 5th, and the session season is getting under way. Looking forward to see you there!

Paul Hammer: Editor phpauleo@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Concert at The Irish Club, Saturday Oct. 5th.
Songs from Britain and Ireland accompanied by Northumbrian smallpipes and guitar. Performed by Celtic/British Duo: Dick Hansold (pipes) and Patsy O'Brien (guitar).
Time: 7:30pm. doors open: 6:30pm.
Presented by The Irish Association of Manitoba.
\$15.00 members
\$20.00 non-members

Slow sessions at The Irish Club, Tuesdays, Bi-weekly, starting Oct 1st. 7pm.
Sessions at The Irish Club, Thursdays, Weekly. 7:30pm.
Session at Sam's Place 159 Henderson Hwy. Last Friday of every month. 7:00pm.
Sessions at Shannon's Pub on Carlton. Saturdays, 5pm.

Music classes and lessons starting in October at The Irish Club.
Offered by The CCE School of Traditional Irish Music & Arts
Contact: hammersmusic@gmail.com 204-894-4499

Featured Member Larry Fisher



Luthier: Larry Fisher

Our October Featured Member is Larry Fisher, a well known member of Comhaltas. Larry often participates in sessions throughout the city, and can be found at Shannons, Sam's Place or the Irish Club playing concertina and harp. He has played with various groups over the years including the Blarney Band, Alchemy, and most recently Pluck. As a luthier, Larry has gained international acclaim with the creation of his Irish style harps.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the majority of Comhaltas All-Ireland winners in recent years, have won on Larry's harps, and his harps are now widely played across Ireland. See p.2 for an interview with Larry.





Interview: Paul: Larry, you've been an instrument builder for many years, when did you first develop your current successful harp model? Larry: "Developing my Irish harp was a long process. Way back in 2002 I started exhibiting my harps in harp festivals down in the U.S. It was at these festivals that I met other makers and performers, Grainne Hambly for instance. (Grainne is an internationally recognized harp teacher and performer.) The harps these people were playing and making differed radically from what I was making at that time. So by two years later, in 2004, I had created a harp model based on my research and development, and I had my first Irish harp model ready to show. That year (2004), Micheal Rooney and June McCormick (Flute and Harp duo) were here in Winnipeg for the Irish Festival, where Micheal had a chance to play my newly created Irish harp model. He liked the harp very much and was impressed with the high quality of the craftsmanship. He gave me encouragement to continue developing the Irish "sound ideal." He gave me a detailed list of requirements that Irish players are looking for. He encouraged me to go in that direction, based on the good quality of my current model, saying "Larry you know we have 2 really good harp makers in Ireland, Larry Egar and Paddy Cafferkey. They can't possibly keep up with the demand, as they're back ordered 3 years each. You have the quality of anything being made in Ireland, why don't you further develop a specific Irish model."

His encouragement and advice was a tremendous impetus to me, and so I created a 2nd test model. After attending more harp festivals, and getting feedback from Janet Harbison (renowned author, teacher and performer) I ended up at a harp festival in Nashville where Grainne Hambly ordered an Irish harp from me. At that Nashville festival, other orders started coming in fast. I returned to my shop in Winnipeg, feeling tremendous pressure to fill the orders I'd received in Nashville. It took me slightly less than a year to fill all those orders, but I did it. Since then I've been getting orders from across Ireland as well as other parts of the world and these days my harps are the number one sought after harp in Ireland."

Paul: "What other sources of inspiration did you find for your harp building?" Larry: "I should point out that luthiers including myself, closely study the work of master luthiers. So as part of my ongoing research and development that began in 2002, I reversed engineered a Larry Eager harp. What I mean by "reversed engineered" is that I took meticulous measurements and carefully studied every detail. I did not copy the Eager harp but I was influenced and inspired by it. I'll always be grateful to my friend Patricia McDermott for showing me her Larry Eager harp, and allowing me to study it closely."

Paul: You are an active session player and often perform with various musicians in the city. Your harps are sold internationally. What does the future hold for Larry Fisher?" Larry: "Well, I love what I do, and I'm always so happy when a harp student from Ireland has success and joy with my harp. But at this point in my life I'm starting to wind down my harp business. I have a huge list of back orders, and therefore, I'm not taking any new orders. In the years ahead, I see myself building the occasional special-order instrument. As a musician I hope to continue playing in sessions and with groups, and learning that next tune!"