



Comhaltas Winnipeg Newsletter

Welcome to the October newsletter! In spite of the Covid pandemic, the members of Comhaltas have been forging on with their various activities. The valiant tune players recently braved the evening temperatures and played tunes by a roaring outdoor fireplace which staved off the cold night air. This event proved once again that Comhaltas members are many things including: resilient, determined, dedicated, slightly obsessed, magnificent, and awesome.

On another note, the Irish Association held its Annual General meeting on Sunday, Sept 27. Like many businesses and clubs, The Irish Association (Irish Club) has been experiencing financial difficulties during the pandemic. Folklorama and other fundraising events are on hold until further notice. It's important to note that Comhaltas members have benefitted greatly through their association with the Irish Club, over the years. We've made good friends with their members and enjoyed playing countless sessions at The Irish Club. We wish them all the best during this difficult time.

Submitted by Virginia Lockett



To all Comhaltas members, we are sending our best thoughts during these days of Covid-19. Keep well!

Braving the cold to play tunes!

Craig, Lynn, Wayne, Mary-Ann, Joanna, Karen



Meet our Members

Pamela Jeffrey



Pamela moved to Winnipeg in 2017.

My first introduction to live traditional Irish music was at the Wolf and Hound pub in Vancouver about 2002. I began going to concerts at the Rogue Folk Club where I heard a wonderful variety of exceptional trad. musicians. At Christmas 2007, friends gave me the gift of a \$10 tin whistle and some carved wooden "spoons." I decided to take a few lessons. After a few weeks of lessons, my teacher, Keona Mundy, forgot her whistle – but she had her Irish flute with her. Once I heard the sound, I was hooked. I then purchased a second hand Irish flute and I was on my way. My adventures into the trad. Irish music scene soon expanded my circle of friends and my opportunities to play with others.

I was invited to join a band – the Irish Wakers, who I enjoyed playing and singing with for several years. Throughout this time we had the good fortune to play with a series of spectacular fiddlers. A highlight of my time with The Irish Walkers was 12 gigs at the Irish House during the 2010 winter Olympics in Vancouver. Quite something to play for 800 joyous, slightly inebriated and for the most part well behaved people several decades younger than me!!! Around that time, a good friend, Helen Loftus (exceptional musician) told me that I should really buy a harp so we could play together! Needing little

Pamela Jeffrey Bio (continued)

encouragement, the two of us went off to Prussin Music Shop, where they had a harp...end result, a new harp and higher Visa balance! Helen and I often took our assorted instruments, including harps, and played outside near English Bay. The following years brought some interruptions in my playing, due to family health issues (now resolved), but I have resumed playing again in regular sessions, festivals and with different groups.

In 2017, I moved from Vancouver to Winnipeg. One day as I was out for a walk, I saw a sign about Irish music lessons – so I went to check it out and met Susan Hammer. Susan told me about the sessions at Shannon's, so I bravely put my flute and whistle in my knapsack and went to check it out. Happily, I knew enough of the tunes that I could play along with quite a few of them and over the weeks, I expanded my repertoire.

Winnipeg has been home for three years now. I feel very fortunate to have made many friends through my newfound musical community and you all have enriched my life greatly. I have enjoyed sessions, playing with different groups, becoming a member of Comhaltas, participating in Folklorama and last year's Irish Fest. In January, 2019, Ruth Schroeder and I started a harp circle which created a great way for players of all skill levels to come together and share their love of this beautiful instrument. We were meeting on a monthly basis until we had to suspend our gatherings – temporarily. Being “at home” more than usual has afforded me a greater amount of time to making art, and I have recently begun teaching a course online through Forum Art Centre. Examples of my art are on my Instagram account: (@pamelajeffreyart) and on Facebook. I plan to include work featuring people from my musical community. See you all at the next session!

Adventures in Ireland by Paul Hammer

During our visit to Ireland last year, Susan and I were walking around the town of Ennistymon, when we came upon a little shop that sold fiddles. Susan suggested that we venture inside, because she knew I was interested in upgrading my current fiddle at the time. So I followed Susan in, where we were met by the friendly owner behind the desk, Brendan Lynch. Brendan was a pleasant, kindly man, a fine fiddler with a CD and years of gigs behind him. He asked if I played fiddle, and I said yes, but I mentioned that I'd taken up fiddle late in life and I wasn't any great player. Still, he was anxious to play some tunes, and we ended up having a nice little session. I returned the following week and traded my fiddle for a beautiful, old, mellow one.

looking at the fiddle for the 1st time



I was so happy to have the old Irish fiddle, that I took it down to Cruizes Bar in Ennis, only a few minutes from our apartment in Miltown Malbay. As I entered the bar, I heard the sound of clinking glasses and laughter, mixed with wonderful free-flowing Irish tunes. And there in Cruizes Bar, running the session was Eoin O'Neill, a bouzouki player of

great renown. Eoin is one of Ireland's most respected musicians, and one of the things that makes him unique is his encouraging, welcoming approach to the sessions he runs. Eoin will help any player who wants to improve, or who just wants to join in. As I sat in on the session, I figured I could hide behind the advanced players, playing along unnoticed and unheard. But Eoin was calling on various players to start tunes, and he called on me. I madly launched into a set of tunes, but in my nervousness I started too fast. Frightened and intimidated, I listened to myself in horror as I careened ahead. The session became musically chaotic due to my rushed playing. I had been hoping to add some nice simple music to Eoin's wonderful, welcoming session but instead, things didn't work out the way I'd hoped. Later, when I got home I thought of the old Johnny Cash song “I don't like it but I guess things happen that way.”