



COMHALTAS



March
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Comhaltas Winnipeg Newsletter

Happy St. Patrick's Month!

Don't look now but Spring is just around the corner! Spring will bring new shipments of Covid vaccines which may mean we'll be able to emerge from this lockdown within a few weeks.

Emergence from the lockdown means we'll be able to get together to release an entire year of built up tension and frustration. For many of us, this would mean drinking Coke Zero and devouring Keto muffins all the while engaging in "tune hilarity" Tune Hilarity is a phenomenon where we gather with fellow Comhaltas members to talk, eat, drink, and play or listen to tunes.

There's already a rumor (started by this newsletter) that the above described event will take place in a park somewhere, when it's safe to gather. ***We look forward to meeting you all there!***

A Blast From The Past

Here's a photo of the group, Curraugh, performing at The Bhigg House, in 2000. Dave Clement and Al Thomson are long standing Comhaltas members. Tom Jeffers has since moved out of town. *Back in the old days, actual live concerts occurred. This photo is proof.*



MEET OUR MEMBERS

Karen Rice



Karen has been an integral part of our Irish music scene for many years. She often volunteers at Folklorama and other Irish community events, and participates in sessions at the Irish Club and other venues. She is a member of the Flatland Ceili Band. Karen has made many friends in the Irish music scene, and is a valued member of our community. Here in her own words is a brief description of her musical journey so far.

I have enjoyed Irish Traditional music for many years. It all began in 2003, while on a hiking trip in Northern Ireland I asked our tour guide if we could take in some music one evening. He obliged and the rest is history. That was the night I met Hugh Rice, my husband, in a small pub called Carrick, a Rede, in the village of Ballintoy on the north coast of County Antrim. We met again two nights later in McCarrolls pub in Ballycastle and from then on we embarked on a romantic and musical journey of 17 years.

All in all, I have lived in Northern Ireland more than four years all together as we visit there each winter and spend a few months visiting friends, family and the music.

Karen Rice Bio

Ballycastle is our base and it is a hotbed of Irish Traditional music with a very strong Comhaltas association and a teaching program for young ones that is second to none.

When we first met, Hugh gave me a bodhran and taught me the basics but it wasn't until I took lessons from Susan Hammer that I finally figured out the various rhythms and bought myself a new bodhran from Paul McCauley, bodhran maker in Ballycastle. Eventually, I got up the courage to take it along to the weekly sessions at O'Connors and Wee Tom's, The House of McDonnell, and I accompanied the session players who gathered there every week. Many of them has been playing at these sessions for 30 years. They all knew Hugh but it took awhile for them to accept and welcome this' blow in' from Canada.

Meanwhile, back here in Winnipeg, we joined the Irish Association and attended Tea and Tunes with Susan Hammer as well as Irish Festival, Folklorama, and the Trad group at the Irish Club. When the Flatland Ceilli band formed Hugh & I joined in with their rehearsals and started to attend gigs. It was a learning experience for me, but I persevered and gradually built up my skills and my confidence. And as Hugh always tells me, Irish traditional music is all about the rhythm.

I honestly believe that playing Irish music is good for my health. Not to mention, my social life. When I think of all the people I have met and enjoyed over the years, I am grateful and kind of proud. For someone who never played a musical instrument in her life (well I did take piano until the teacher gave up on me), it is quite fun to reflect on how much the 'craic'. and the Traditional music scene here in Winnipeg has given me. I miss the sessions and the return to normal life can't come soon enough!



CCE WPG IRISH MUSIC SCHOOL

Happy St. Patrick's Month!! It's disappointing to still have everything shut down, but look on the bright side. Spring is on the way, days are getting longer and we will soon be able to have sessions outdoors, and likely have in-person classes and sessions in the Fall. So brush off the dust (unless you have been diligently playing your instrument!) and start playing along with online sessions and recordings. Bodhran Players and Instrumentalists can play along with virtual guided sessions online. Remember that Youtube has a Slow-Down function if you want the music slower. Check out the Heaton's Slow and Moderate Virtual Sessions on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNBgNicF6tU0JlitHYcB03R9bE7MkGBI0>

ALSO a lot of older Trad recordings are out of print or difficult to find. But if you go to Youtube and type into the search bar the artist or band name followed by a dash and then the word "Topic" you can find full recordings of some of your favourite Trad musicians (Irish, Scots, English). And on Youtube you can slow the videos down if you need them slower to play along with - bonus! (example: type: [Micho Russell](#) - Topic or any other artist/band name and see what they have).

Happy Music-Making

Susan and the Irish Music School Team.

Adventures in Irish Music

During Irish Fest, a few years back, the organizers brought in some well known musicians to perform and teach. That year, Irish Fest was held on the campus of CMU College.

One afternoon during Irish Fest I met up with two of the performers in the hallway, and as we chatted, they asked me what instrument I played. I said guitar, and they politely suggested we could all play some tunes together sometime during the Irish Fest weekend.

Well it just so happened that the next day I was sitting in a CMU classroom, playing my guitar, when a friend of mine came into the room with his fiddle and asked if we could play some tunes together. He took out his fiddle and launched into a slow waltz, a waltz that he was just learning. I had never heard the tune before. He was otherwise a good player but on this day his fiddle was cold and out of tune. He barely knew the tune. Just at that exact moment those two previously mentioned guest performers were passing by the room and noticed me playing my guitar. They decided to stop in and take a listen to hear me play. Anyway the fiddler was out of tune and was playing with an unsteady rhythm, and I was attempting to accompany the waltz, but the effect was musically disastrous, a musical train wreck. I was poking at my strings, attempting to follow the beat and all the while we were horribly out of tune with each other. When the waltz mercifully ended, the two listening musicians slowly stood up and walked out of the room without saying a word.

Well that's my musical "adventure of the month."

If you have had an adventure, feel free to send it to us. We love hearing from you!

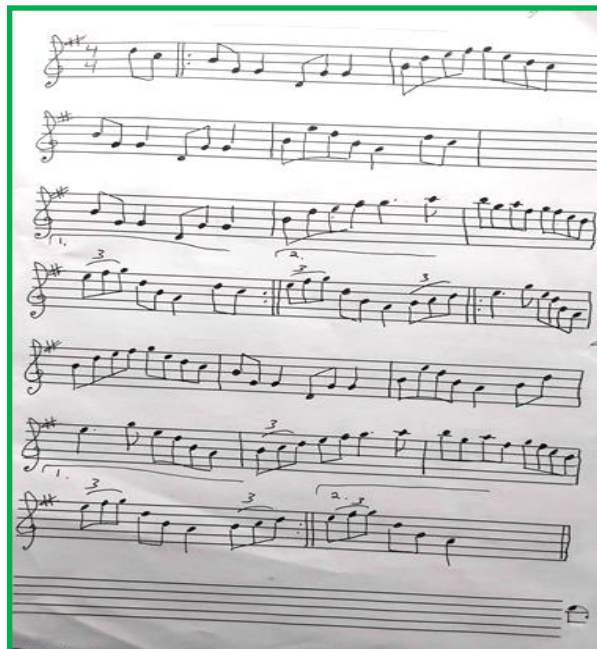
-Paul

Tune of the Month

The Honeymoon Reel

Taught by Martin Hayes

<https://youtu.be/frhFySAwN5c>



According to The Session online, The Honeymoon Reel has been recorded over 50 times.

Check out this link to find out more:

<https://thesession.org/tunes/2064#setting40592>

It's easy to understand why it's been widely recorded, since it's such a lovely reel, very enjoyable to play.

Interestingly, when Martin Hayes introduces the Honeymoon Reel, he says "I don't hear it that often, but maybe it will become popular with musicians, yet."

So it seems that although this tune has been fairly widely recorded, it isn't commonly played in sessions. Perhaps we here in Winnipeg can remedy the situation, and start playing it frequently in sessions, since it's such a nice tune!