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COMHALTAS



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Winnipeg Comhaltas Newsletter

Welcome to the July Newsletter! Summer is here, which means we can all head outside and enjoy the beautiful Manitoba weather. It's a time for gathering with friends and family in backyards and parks. Good times are here, but this is also a time for sombre reflection, due to the many events happening in our world today. During stressful times, Irish music can be a wonderful source of peace and reflection, because it's joyous and beautiful.

So as the Covid restrictions gradually lift, Comhaltas Winnipeg wishes you all a wonderful summer, with a much needed break from Winter "coop-up" **Have a great July!**

Meet our Members

Johanna Handford



Submissions

From **Linda Little**: Regarding what I've been doing during the lockdown: beside practicing my whistle 'till I drive my husband out of the house, I decided to dust off my water-color painting after a 30 year hiatus. Amazingly, the paints, brushes and paper were as good as new. It's been fun to resurrect a sleeping talent.

From **Lynn Mclean**: Just a tip about locating sheet music online. Type in the title and click on images - often the tune can be found as a picture of the sheet music. Screenshot to your photos or upload to documents or homepage on a computer.

Another tip from **Lynn**: There is a slow down app called **Voice Record Pro**. It's free and very user friendly. Wayne Drury told me about it. What I love about it is there is a slider bar to adjust the speed incrementally, so it's very helpful for picking out notes. You can upload an mp3 directly to the app as well.

While my family heritage does not include any Irish ancestors, I have always enjoyed the melodies and songs of the Irish tradition; starting with an introduction to them in grade school music classes. There is something about the rhythms, and melody lines that is charming and evocative. I am always happy to join in listening, singing and playing a piece of Irish traditional music.

My involvement with Comhaltas and the Irish Club has gone through several iterations, starting with attending sessions in the 80s as part of a group that incorporated well known Irish folk songs into its repertoire. At that time I sang and played guitar. While we liked the Irish tunes and played them a lot, our principal focus was on Scottish style instrumentals and melodies

Johanna's Bio

From this group, there grew Simpson's Folly, a five-person group of singers and instrumentalists that liked to sing and play songs and melodies from the British Isles generally and specifically those that dated from the era of the construction of Lower Fort Garry where we played for historic re-enactment dinners and outdoor Rendezvous style encampments. Irish songs and jigs were just one part of this.

I progressed to buying and learning to play the Irish harp. Here I was introduced to Larry Fisher and Liz Goossen and to early forms of a harp circle that had its origins at the Irish Club. Because most of what I believe to be the loveliest harp music is Irish, I purchased many books and CDs that featured it and worked to learn and play O'Carolan and other beautiful melodies for the harp. Carrying a harp up the stairs at the Irish Club was possible for me back in those days.

I picked up the button accordion about twenty-five years ago. The first tune I learned was Welsh, but I found the accordion lent itself more easily to jigs and reels. I still was not playing "Irish style", though.

About five years ago, I was finding winter evenings long and looked for something interesting to do. I heard that a 'slow session' out of the Irish Club was meeting at Tracy Robertson's on a weekly basis and decided to come and learn more about how to play distinctly Irish music and to begin to work on playing it. I found many other congenial folks who were doing the same thing. I decided to take some formal lessons from Susan Hammer to increase my understanding of the uniqueness of the Irish dance forms and how to play them. I joined Comhaltas and have maintained my association with other learning musicians as we take on the repertoire provided by Comhaltas. I have to say that session playing always worried me, as I do not play at speed, but I am prepared to practise and to try to improve as I am able.

The covid lockdown has been an unhappy time for those who live alone, but want to play with others, though I am happy to say that I have been able to join a small group of friends who are willing to play outside in parks when the weather permits, and we have tasked ourselves with learning new tunes and consolidating those we have learned. I am looking forward to the easing of restrictions and a return to more regular sessions. Music and friends; that is what it is all about.

Irish Music School

Well, summer has arrived, vaccines are rolling out and plans are starting to be made for summer and fall activities.

Think about what you would like to see the school offer in the upcoming year, as this is your Irish Music School!

An email will be going out soon with more information, but in the meantime here's a few fun things you can check out:

Musicians Use Whatever They Have: <https://youtu.be/pZTwQK65WI>

New Meaning to "One Man Band": <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57510337>

Pentatonic Scale: <https://youtu.be/ne6tB2KiZuk>

Traditional Music Series: <https://www.tg4.ie/en/player/categories/irish-music-series/?series=Geantra%C3%AD&genre=Ceol>

Happy Summer,

Susan & the Irish Music School Team.

Tune of the Month

Booley House Slip Jig

Taught by Martin Hayes

https://youtu.be/M95AoZmNy_c



This lovely tune, Booley House, is a slip jig. It's fairly easy to play and has a nice melody. A booley house is a little cabin in the mountains where sheep herders can live during the Summer months.