



Comhaltas Winnipeg Newsletter

Welcome to the September edition of our newsletter! As we head into September, everyone is excited and optimistic about the days ahead, but the fact remains that we're living in extraordinary times. The Corona virus has had a profound effect on the health and economy of the world, a hurricane of historic proportions (Laura) has hit Louisiana, and protests and riots are occurring South of the Canadian border. Some people are anxious about the prospect of heading back to school or to work, but they're less concerned about themselves personally, than they are about their immediate family members, such as elderly parents, grandparents, and the very young. Therefore, with the Corona virus in mind, the Irish Music School made the decision to not resume classes until the winter term, or beyond. Re-opening will depend on several factors such as the prevalence of a "2nd wave" or the development of a vaccine. On an upbeat note, many of our members continue to meet in the park or in their homes to play some lovely Irish tunes! Here's wishing everyone a safe and healthy Fall!

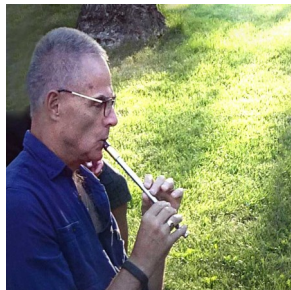
Member of the Month

Mary- Ann Fast



Mary-Ann became involved in the Comhaltas music program quite by accident two summers ago. She was camping at Winnipeg Beach and heard some beautiful Irish music while she was out one evening walking her dogs. Mary-Ann has always loved Irish music so she followed the music and discovered a group of musicians playing Irish music on the bandstand by the beach. Mary-Ann sat on the grass with her dogs to listen and when the session was over, she approached the first person she saw (Randall Flower) and asked what the group was all about. He sent her over to talk with Susan Hammer who connected her up with Daniel, the leader of the Slow Sessions at the Irish Club. Since then, Mary-Ann has played the violin in the slow sessions for two years. She also started taking mandolin lessons with Paul Hammer and group lessons with Susan this past year.

Randall strikes a tune



Lynn fires up a tune



Joke

I'm sick of all these Irish stereotypes.
When I finish this drink
I'm punching someone.



A blast from pre-pandemia: While Susan and Paul were in Gweedore, Ireland, last Spring, Susan took classes with Caitlin Nic Gabhann. One day Caitlin's band: High Seas, gave us all an informal concert.



Mary-Ann Fast Bio (continued)

Discovering this group of musicians on the beach playing together became a very good reason to dust off her violin that hadn't been played for many years! Mary-Ann started playing violin at age 7 and participated in the Winnipeg Junior, Senior, and Youth Orchestras until age 20 where her love of playing music with a group became firmly established. She studied violin with Mr. Alfred Zimmerman, a very dedicated violin teacher, who guided her to achieve her Gr. 8 Violin standings with the Royal Conservatory of Music program. Life eventually became busy with full time teaching and music was mostly forgotten. When two daughters came along, she changed to teaching halftime and Mary-Ann decided that this was the time to study cello, an instrument she always loved. She was very fortunate to be able to take lessons for 5 years with Alex Adaman of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. She played cello for 3 years with the U of M School of Music Orchestra as a community member to once again satisfy her love of playing with a group. However, many years ago, carpal tunnel syndrome, and returning to full time teaching left little time for music. So, temporarily, the dust settled on her instruments. But now, Mary-Ann feels so very lucky to have discovered the welcoming group of people playing at Winnipeg Beach two years ago. Being able to participate in the Comhaltas programs at the Irish Club has been perfect for satisfying her love of Irish music and her love of playing with a group! It forced Mary-Ann to finally deal with the cubital and carpal tunnel issues in her left arm and she had successful surgery on her left elbow and wrist this past January.

Mary-Ann is very thankful for the Comhaltas session leaders and to **Lisa, Linda, Katy, Randall, Wayne, and Virginia** who are her dedicated partners in learning, playing, and loving Irish music! Her goals for this coming year are to try to remember the correct names for a few of the tunes, and to play the correct "B" part of a tune that goes with the matching "A" part most of the time!

Submitted by Susan Hammer

This was sent to me by a friend. It is quite relevant in these uncertain times!

The Mountain Poem

By Laura Ding-Edwards

*If the mountain seems too big today then climb a hill instead
if the morning brings you sadness it's okay to stay in bed
if the day ahead weighs heavy and your plans feel like a curse
there's no shame in re-arranging don't make yourself feel worse
if a shower stings like needles and a bath feels like you'll drown
if you haven't washed your hair for days don't throw away your crown
a day is not a lifetime a rest is not defeat
don't think of it as failure just a quiet kind retreat
it's okay to take a moment from an anxious fractured mind
the world will not stop turning while you get realigned
the mountain will still be there when you want to try again
so climb it in your own time and love yourself til then*

Submitted by Susan Hammer

CCE Winnipeg Irish Music School News

From Susan Hammer

Hello Folks! We are sad to say that there will be no classes or lessons this Fall due to safety concerns around the pandemic. We are all very disappointed as we had such a strong start to the school last Fall. However, we will review the situation after Christmas and hopefully we can be up and running in the new year. In the meantime, keep playing the music, keep in touch, and let us know if you want us to send you any learning materials, slow-session recordings, etc. Stay safe and well, and explore the internet for any online Irish concerts, sessions, etc.

<http://www.comhaltaswinnipeg.ca/>

Here's a video that helps explain why Irish music sounds Irish.

It demonstrates and explains modes, how they change the sound of Irish tunes, and how they influence the chords or "drone" notes used to accompany Irish tunes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLCDhK6Y5wI>

Here's something fun and educational for musicians and non-musicians:

Improve your coordination, your sense of rhythm, your creativity, build brain cells, and get a bit of a workout while having fun! (also a good way to warm up before playing).

https://youtu.be/O4HUeD2H_5E

The Irish Club, 654 Erin St, is now open on Thursday and Friday evenings, doors open 5pm! Come down for a pint, pub grub, and a session on Thursday's, or a music jam on Friday's (bring your own instrument).

