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COMHALTAS



September

2021

Winnipeg Comhaltas Newsletter

Welcome to the September newsletter! Although Covid hasn't left us yet, there's still plenty of signs of life in our Comhaltas community. The Flatland Ceili Band rehearses on a regular basis. Some Comhaltas musicians have been gathering from time to time at Shannon's for a small session. A "Slow session Group" meets at the Irish association, 654 Erin street, every Thursday at 5:40. They work on one "learning tune" slowly, then play other easier tunes from previous sessions. The tune list is sent out to everyone a few days before the session, with the written score and audio file emailed for the learning tune. Proof of vaccination is required. Feel free to drop us an email if your interested in further information about any of the above activities.

Here's wishing everyone a great September!

Meet our Members

Linda Little



PLAYING MUSIC WITH AN IRISH ACCENT

We can often tell where a person comes from, by their accent when they speak English.

People in Ireland speak English with an Irish accent and play music with an Irish accent.

This is why learning to play a tune from a page of sheet music, is like learning to speak French from a book.

Playing the notes on the page is not enoughit's how you play them.

No matter what instrument you play, you can learn about the style/accnt in ITM from any instrument played by an Irish Traditional Musician. The technique might be different, but the end result is the same. Here's some interesting videos to help explain the mechanics of producing the Irish "accent" in your playing.

How to speak with an Irish Accent:

<https://youtu.be/V9NKyBiu6FM>

<https://youtu.be/qjFAzX3mnDg>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/HannahHarris/videos>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6mTCSt20dY>

Cheers!

Susan

I've always wanted to play a musical instrument. As a child, it simply wasn't feasible, but when I was around 16, I ordered a guitar from the Sears catalogue and proceeded to teach myself the chords with the instruction book that was included. However, I had trouble strumming and didn't have much of a singing voice, so my guitar was eventually abandoned.

When my son wanted to play piano, I followed along, learning what he learned. Eventually, both of us decided we weren't pianists, so that got ditched too.

Linda's Bio

Then I decided to go back to university and finish up a couple of degrees, which propelled me into a very satisfying and challenging career teaching English as Second Language, so my musical dreams were put aside. However, after years of pouring all my creativity and passion into helping international students succeed in their educational programs, I began to feel like I needed something as a diversion from all things English. That's when I heard a Celtic music group. One of the performers was playing a pipe of some kind, and I was hooked!

It took quite a long time to discover what the instrument was, and then to find someone to teach me about it. (This was before the age of google). One day I was in the Pembina Library, and what did I see on the bulletin board but a flyer that said, "Do you want to play the Irish tin whistle? No experience needed. Call Susan Hammer." And, so began my adventure with the tin whistle. Susan is the first and only music instructor I have ever had. I got the best right off the hop! But *wanting* to play the whistle and *being able to* play it are two different things. I had only a very tiny folder in my brain labelled "music." But I drew inspiration from teaching English because music is also a type of language with a written and audio form, individual notes, intonation and rhythm. And, just as some of my students couldn't hear certain sounds of English, I couldn't hear the difference between notes like F and E. To help my students learn, I gave them lots of listening practice so their brains could begin to hear, for example, the minor stressed vowel at the end of a word such as COFfee or the difference between r and l. In the same way, I had to listen and play the music over and over again before my brain could identify individual mid-scale and low stressed notes.

Sam's Place Session

Maurice, the coordinator of the Sam's Place Sessions, contacted the manager about future sessions. Here is the kindly response he received.

We don't anticipate being ready for an event such as this for some time.

Few reasons:

- We don't have enough room to physically space singers on stage from customers/concertgoers (other venues allow for this), and band members from each other.
- I anticipate a mask mandate for the duration of the fall/holiday season which will not allow for wind instruments or singing.

Events of this magnitude are hard to physical distance and will probably go over capacity limitations.

I would suggest not to wait for us, if you can find an **alternative venue** there will be no hard feelings on our end. Before we look at our evening operations we have to build up our volunteer team and re-train our volunteers, as we have not been open evenings for over a year. Additionally, we don't anticipate going back to our pre-Covid normal. Even previous to Covid we were experiencing some issues that need to be addressed. This may impact our booking policies and pricing, as well as the events we can offer. The hope is to get back to some sort of musical event structure in the future, but I just don't know when, or exactly what that will look like.

I think it's possible that we may be able to do solo acts (singer/songwriter) first, with specific admission restrictions before we can take on a larger event with integration of wind instruments as well as customer/concert goer involvement. I expect that we may be able to start doing musical events within 3 to 6 months from now. Maybe less, with vaccinated only patrons.

We are watching closely to see if there is a fourth wave. **I suggest connecting back with us in a few months.** Also, check out our website. It states what we are offering and what we are not doing during this time.

In the meantime I welcome you to stop by and check out our newly renovated space! Customer support with the purchase of food, drink, and retail is massively helpful for us during this time.

—Sam's Place management

Linda

So continued my musical journey. Again, my language students have been my inspiration. Just as adults with all their education and experience have to start at the very beginning with simple words and phrases, so I had to start with simple songs like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. When I graduated to Brian Boru, I was amazed at my ability!!! LOL A wise person once told me that nothing worth having comes easy, and that's been true of my musical adventure. For a long time, I played alone and my skills did grow, but only to a certain point. Again, I remembered my students. Those who tried to use what they knew even though they made mistakes, felt stupid, got frustrated but kept on trying, eventually succeeding.

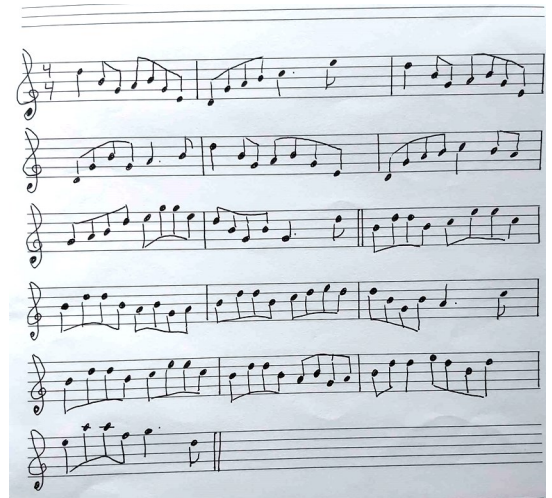
When I joined the slow session and later the small group that I'm in now at the encouragement of Randall Flower, it was very stressful. When you're playing a whistle with very high notes, public embarrassment is always hovering nearby. But, taking the chance was the best thing I did. I'm finally able to play faster with semi-relaxed fingers and can even tap my foot while I'm playing, which is actually very hard to do!!! But, best of all, I can do all this with a group of great friends. What can be better than that?

Tune of the Month

Maids of Feakle

Taught by Martin Hayes

<https://youtu.be/M2zGnBPLHVU>



This is the melody, but you'll notice that Martin Hayes varies the tune, each time he plays or teaches it. Also, some players repeat the sections and some don't.

Martin Hayes grew up near the small village of Feakle, which he describes as, "a place full of music, with lots of musicians living in the village, and nearby."

For more fun, watch Fergal Scahill play Maids of Feakle

<https://fb.watch/7HM0GIpOLx/>