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The Monthly Newsletter of The Loch Lao Traditional Music Society

Issue No. 21, September 2007

LLTMS EVENTS

SEPTEMBER
2007

Monday 3rd
St. Gall's GAC
9:15 - 11:00pm
Senior Session

Saturday 8th
Europa Hotel
Meet 7:00pm
Special private
performance by
Fleadh Group

Monday 10th
St. Gall's GAC
9:15 - 11:00pm
Senior Session

Monday 17th
9:15 - 11:00pm
St. Gall's GAC
Senior Session

Sunday 23rd
Meet 10:30am
St. Michael's
Church
Playing at Mass

Monday 24th
St. Gall's GAC
9:15 - 11:00pm
Senior Session

Friday 28th
7:15 - 9:00pm
An Chultúrlann
Family Session

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LOCH LAO FLEADH GROUP & SOLOISTS DO US PROUD!

A new and exciting venture for the LLTMS this year was the preparation of a group to enter for the annual Fleadh competitions of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, playing in the 12-15 age group. The group, which was organised very efficiently by Mr. Michael McCullagh, had been working hard since February, preparing a new style of performance for competition. The group gave a strong performance at The Antrim Fleadh in Portglenone in May, which secured their progress to The Ulster Fleadh which was held in Coalisland in July. Shortly before the Ulster Fleadh, the musicians travelled to An Creagán visitor centre in Co. Tyrone, for a special 'away day' Fleadh rehearsal. This provided an opportunity for the group to fine-tune their performance, under the direction of Patrick Davey and Gemma Gorman, and the results were excellent. The musicians worked tremendously hard all afternoon on every aspect of their performance and by the end of the day had produced something very impressive in terms of its musical impact and especially the teamwork in the performance. As a reward for their efforts, everyone was treated to a delicious meal so the day rounded off in style! Many thanks to those members who made a huge effort to attend this rehearsal, especially those who drove from Belfast or Donegal or even both! We sincerely appreciate everyone's efforts. The group gave another commendable performance at The Ulster Fleadh and although not featuring among the winners on that occasion, the players earned many new friends and admirers. But possibly the most rewarding aspect of the competition preparation was how the musicians enjoyed themselves and made new friends, whilst at the same time improving their standard of playing and developing new skills in group performance. These are the main positive outcomes of preparing for competitions, so it's fair to say that the Fleadh had done its job even before the competition had started. Many congratulations to the players involved, many thanks to their parents, families & friends who supported them, and a special word of thanks to chief organiser Michael McCullagh, also Gemma Gorman and the other Senior Loch Lao musicians who helped prepare the group since February. The All-Ireland Fleadh took place in Tullamore in Co. Offaly at the end of August (see report below), and many congratulations are due to LLTMS members Liam McCullagh, and Sorcha & Aoife Ní Chairáin, who won through from The Ulster Fleadh in their respective solo competitions. All three did us proud and received many favourable comments from the adjudicators and audiences. Be sure to check out the LLTMS website, which has been recently updated with a large number of photos charting the progress of the Fleadh group from Portglenone to Coalisland. Thanks to Michael McCullagh and Gary Johnston for these.

And There's More.....

We have been invited by our member Philip O'Hara to provide some musical entertainment on the occasion of his parents' 50th wedding anniversary celebration, which takes place on Saturday September 8th in The Europa Hotel. Philip's son Matthew took part in the Fleadh group this year so we have invited the Fleadh group to give this performance. We would like to offer our congratulations to Philip's parents, Marie & Pat, on reaching this tremendous milestone.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Tullamore, August 2007 *By LLTMS Musical Director Patrick Davey*

The All-Ireland Fleadh is without doubt the largest celebration of traditional Irish music in the world. I enjoyed a great weekend at this year's All-Ireland in Tullamore at the end of August and I would like to share my experiences with the rest of the LLTMS membership. The first All-Ireland I ever attended was in Listowel in Co. Kerry way back in 1982, when I was pleased to come second in Under-12 flute! I remember large crowds then and so it was this year, with a particularly large representation of both visitors and competitors from overseas. The All-Ireland is always preceded by the Scoil Eigse, which is an intense week of teaching by some of the top traditional Irish musicians from all over the world. Competition qualifiers from regional Fleadhs are awarded free scholarships to attend this but anyone else is also able to enrol. On the Friday of Fleadh week, there is a colourful opening parade featuring representatives from all 32 Irish counties and our own County of Antrim proudly heads the procession, for alphabetical reasons as much as any others! This year there were many new and original events taking place, showing great creativity on the part of the organisers. One such event was a world record attempt at the largest ever traditional Irish music session, which took place immediately after the opening parade. According to the CCE website, this involved 2,700 musicians! The main competitions took place on the Saturday and Sunday and I was able to attend a good many of these. I would dearly love every LLTMS musician to experience these competitions, as the standard is in almost every case extremely high, including the U-12 competitions. But for me personally, the highlights were the group competitions. It is quite incredible to see the standards that are being achieved here and full credit is due to the musicians, their teachers and parents. Although I have always been fortunate to have achieved success in the Fleadh competitions myself, I have never presented competition entry as essential. However, with the correct approach, competition entry can have many benefits including raising the standard and also increasing the enjoyment of the music. Both these were very apparent during the preparation of the LLTMS 12-15 group this year and I feel quite enthusiastic about doing the same next year and indeed even expanding this to involve U-12 and 15-18 groups. But the Fleadh isn't just about competitions - there are very many informal sessions taking place throughout the week and these present a great opportunity for meeting other musicians and learning new tunes. Overall, I found the All-Ireland to be a very worthwhile experience, one which has served to refresh and rejuvenate my own appreciation of the music. Hopefully Loch Lao members will reap the benefits of this in the year ahead!

London College of Music Grade Exams 2007

This year we had the largest ever number of entries for the traditional Irish Music grade examinations of The London College of Music, with 64 entrants for the Summer session alone, across three centres. Yet again we scored a magnificent 100% success rate so congratulations once again to the candidates, their teachers and their parents. In the Summer session, 41 of the 64 candidates scored a distinction, and particular mention should be made of Caoimhe Flanagan who scored a massive 95% in Grade Six tin whistle, Liam McCullagh who also scored 95% in Grade Four uilleann pipes, and Olivia Donnelly who became our youngest person to be awarded the LCM Diploma for tin whistle playing. So the LCM Grade Exams continue to prove popular among students and we look forward to continued success during the year ahead. The next exam session for which we shall be making entries will be the Spring 2008 session, the closing date for which will be Friday February 1st. LLTMS Musical Director Patrick Davey, who is also an LCM examiner, will again be organising the exam session and he has advised that anyone interested should email him before the end of this year on p.davey@mac.com

The Loch Lao Traditional Music Society is a Registered Charity No. XR62137

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