



Loch Lao

COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN  
CRAOBH LOCH LAO, BÉAL FEIRSTE

**LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS RE: PLANS FOR THE 2011-2012 YEAR**

Since 2007, many of the musicians of Loch Lao have been actively involved in the grúpa ceoil sections of the fleadh cheoil competitions run by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. During that time, we have entered twelve groups for these competitions, five of which qualified for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and of those, three were crowned Ulster champions. This year alone, we saw our best ever achievement when our U12 grúpa ceoil came first in their Ulster Fleadh competition, and our 15-18 grúpa ceoil came second in their competition, being the first occasion when two of our groups qualified for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in the same year. In addition, we entered a céilí band for the fleadh competitions this year, for the first time, so this was a particularly memorable year for the Loch Lao fleadh effort, with 70 Loch Lao musicians participating in groups along with a huge number in solo, duet and trio competitions.

Although the benefits of participating in competitions are many and varied, this is only one aspect of involvement in traditional Irish music and indeed not necessarily the most rewarding or enjoyable. In the early days of Loch Lao, there was little emphasis on the competition side of things, in that although many members were entering solo competitions, Loch Lao did not enter grúpa ceoil or céilí band competitions. Instead, our musicians were very active in community events, sessions and charity functions, and made regular visits to other music groups. In recent years, many members have raised concerns about Loch Lao's apparent over-emphasis on competitions, which, in some cases, has been restrictive and not fully inclusive: the Loch Lao committee has considered this so during the coming year, we would like to revive these components of the Loch Lao calendar. The committee has agreed a plan for the year ahead which is intended to restore a healthy balance of musical activity to Loch Lao and whilst the competition effort will continue, plans are currently being made to facilitate a wider variety of non-competitive activities which will involve all members, of all ages and abilities.

**Loch Lao 2011-12**

Central to our plan for the coming year will be the division of the year into two main sections, as follows:

- 1. September – December 2011:** During this period, our musicians will be preparing for a major Loch Lao concert in Belfast's Waterfront Hall, which has been arranged for Saturday January 21<sup>st</sup> 2012. The concert will feature all our members performing in our long-established Junior, Intermediate and Senior groupings, and the focal point of the concert will be a performance of 'The Loch Lao Story', a suite of musical pieces composed by Patrick Davey. The Loch Lao Story uses original music, along with narration and visuals, to recount the history of Belfast Lough, as seen through the eyes of the Loch Lao Blackbird. Although The Loch Lao Story is the 'signature' piece of Loch Lao, it hasn't been performed for a number of years and indeed the majority of our current active members may not actually be aware of it, so we are looking forward to having it revived and performed again. The Loch Lao musicians will also be playing additional music arranged by Patrick Davey, which will build upon the experience the musicians have gained by being part of our grúpaí ceoil effort. The concert will also feature a guest performance by the Rathmore Grammar School traditional group, directed by Loch Lao's Catherine Muldoon. Rehearsals for the concert, which will be directed by Patrick & Bronagh Davey along with Senior Loch Lao musicians, will proceed on Monday evenings in the same way as the grúpaí ceoil rehearsals have done in recent years: full details of the rehearsal schedules and venues will be on the Loch Lao website & Facebook page shortly. **Please note that all Loch Lao musicians are invited to participate in this concert, but regular attendance at the Monday rehearsals will be required.**

- 2. January – June 2012:** Following the concert, attention will turn to the 2012 fleadh effort, and the Monday evening rehearsals will once again focus on preparing the Loch Lao grúpaí ceoil and céilí band. The groups will be taken by Senior Loch Lao musicians, with support from Patrick & Bronagh Davey, and will continue to use arrangements by Patrick Davey.

In addition, there will be an ongoing programme of additional events running throughout the year, in which all the Loch Lao musicians will participate. These will include community performances, visits to other music groups and also performances at Mass and other church services. These will continue after the fleadh preparation begins, so that those not involved in the competition groups are still fully involved in Loch Lao activities. A dedicated sub-committee has been set up within Loch Lao to focus on the development of non-competitive events, and it is important to emphasise that no musician will be excluded from these events. We would also like to invite any interested parents to join this sub-committee and help us develop this exciting programme of events for all the musicians and members of Loch Lao.

### **New Loch Lao Tune Book**

To underpin our new programme of activities, our musical directors Patrick & Bronagh Davey have compiled a brand new book of music for Loch Lao. The book contains over 200 dance tunes, popular ballads, liturgical pieces and Christmas tunes, all carefully selected to form the core of a new repertoire for our musicians, enabling an exciting programme of music to be prepared for each of the many events we are planning for the year ahead. The book will be available for members to purchase during October. This is an exciting development for Loch Lao and emphasises our intention to expand the range of activities to involve all Loch Lao members, of all ages and abilities.

### **Allocation! NOT Selection!**

The most controversial aspect of grúpa ceoil preparation is the unavoidable need to select musicians for inclusion, according to age, instrument and playing ability, among other criteria, within an overall restriction of a maximum of 20 members on stage. This meant that on some occasions, it was not possible to include everyone in a grúpa ceoil who wished to be involved, which caused much anxiety and discomfort to the Loch Lao committee and the musical directors, but most of all to the musicians affected. However, for all non-fleadh Loch Lao activities, 'selection' will be replaced by 'allocation' and no musician will be excluded on the basis of age, instrument or playing ability, and no group will be restricted to a maximum number of members. *The concept of 'selection' only applies to the competitive grúpaí ceoil and also the céilí band.* The three groupings, Junior, Intermediate and Senior, will roughly follow the grúpa ceoil age guidelines of U12, 12-15 and 15-18, reckoned according to age on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. So if a musician is aged 11 or younger on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, they will be allocated to the Junior Loch Lao group. Musicians aged 12, 13 or 14 on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 will be allocated to the Intermediate Loch Lao group and all older musicians will be allocated to the Senior Loch Lao group. If the musical directors judge a musician to be particularly capable, then they may invite that musician to play in a higher group, as long as they also play in their own group, ideally on a different instrument. Older musicians will never be asked to play in a lower group but may choose to do so themselves if, for example, they wish to play their second instrument in the lower group. Some accommodation may have to be made in particular circumstances, for example in the case of families who travel long distances to be a part of Loch Lao, but we hope members will agree that this represents a non-controversial and fully inclusive approach to arranging our groups. All queries relating to the allocation process should be directed to Patrick Davey.

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Our experience in preparing grúpaí ceoil for the fleadh competitions in recent years has been very beneficial, in that it has improved the standard of our performances, has created strong bonds of friendship among our members and has also established regular patterns of weekly rehearsal. It has also brought a great many new and very talented musicians to Loch Lao so it seems natural now for us to build upon this experience by rolling out these benefits to the wider Loch Lao membership. We would like to invite all our members to be a part of the activities we are planning for the year ahead and encourage any other musicians they know of to get involved: keep an eye on the Loch Lao website and Facebook page for all the latest information. We are starting the year with our important Annual General

Meeting (AGM) on Monday September 26<sup>th</sup> 2011, and we would like to extend a special invitation to all members and parents to attend the AGM as we will be discussing our plans for the year ahead. The AGM takes place in St. Gall's GAC beginning at 7:30pm and look forward to seeing you all then as we prepare for an exciting year ahead.

Many thanks for your continued support.

**CCÉ Loch Lao Committee**  
**[www.lochlao.com](http://www.lochlao.com)**

**IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR LOCH LAO DIARY**

**Monday September 26<sup>th</sup> 2011**

CCÉ Loch Lao Annual General Meeting (AGM), 7:30pm, St. Gall's GAC

**Monday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011**

Full rehearsal schedule for Waterfront concert commences, along with 2011/12 membership registration:

7:00pm to 7:45pm: Loch Lao Junior Group, St. Mary's College

7:45pm to 8:30pm: Loch Lao Intermediate Group, St. Mary's College

8:30pm to 9:15pm: Loch Lao Senior Group, St. Gall's GAC

9:15pm to 10:00pm: Loch Lao Céilí Band, St. Gall's GAC