NCFA unimpressed with Government’s Covid-19 Scheme

As part of a Government plan to support Ireland’s artistic and cultural life during the Covid-19 crisis, the Minister for Culture, Josepha Madigan, announced in April an allocation of €1 million to support Irish-based professional artists creating new writing, music, painting, photography and sculpture. Comprising 334 grants of €3,000 each, the initiative is being jointly funded by the Department of Arts and the Arts Council. It was stated that these payments would be administered rapidly.

Declaring that the Arts Council was fully aware of the huge impact the crisis is having on the livelihoods of everyone working in the arts, its chairperson, Kevin Rafter, said that the new work would be presented on a digital platform created by the Council.

However, the National Campaign for the Arts (NCFA) expressed extreme disappointment at the Department’s response to the effects of Covid-19 on the arts community.

Continued on page 2
Unions secure improvements in Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and SIPTU have secured changes to the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) to correct anomalies.

On 15th April, the Government announced measures to improve the operation of the Scheme, which include:

1. Workers with net pay of up to €412 per week will now see the subsidy increase from 70% to 85% of their net weekly pay. This will benefit workers on pay of up to €24,400 per year.

2. For employees with previous average net pay of between €412 and €500 per week (equivalent to €24,400-€31,000 per year), the subsidy will now rise to €350 per week.

This means no one will fall below the level of the emergency Pandemic Unemployment Payment. In addition, workers above €38,000 per annum will now have pay reductions taken into account when calculating the amount of the Temporary Wage Subsidy provided to the employer.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack, said: “I would ask all staff to enter discussions with any member/company where the workers remain on payroll but are being paid less than €350 through the TWSS, to ensure that this amount is now increased to the minimum payment of €350.”

Covid-19 Unemployment Payment helpdesk

There is now a helpdesk available from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to the COVID-19 Emergency Payment. The Department has agreed to handle individual queries from artists and arts workers about the payment, so if you’ve been refused the payment or have a question about your eligibility, you can contact the Department directly as follows and an official will contact you to discuss your query.

Please email artsunit@chg.gov.ie with the following information:
• your telephone number
• a short description of your question

It is important that all of you who did not qualify for the COVID-19 payment or are still having difficulties accessing it would use this facility so that the Department can see first hand the extent of the problem we are pressing them on.

NCFA unimpressed with Covid-19 Scheme

Continued from page 1

In a statement, NCFA Chairwoman, Angela Dorgan, said:

“In a time when the Irish Government has acted swiftly and decisively to allay fears and secure the welfare of Irish citizens in this unprecedented crisis, we are dismayed by the lack of vision shown in relation to the arts”.

Citing other countries that had made provision for significant Covid-19 arts supports, including England (€160 million), Wales (€7 million) and Germany (€50 million), the NCFA said providing just €1 million to create online work was a small investment in individual artists.

An Arts Council survey revealed the massive scale of the Covid-19 crisis in the arts sector, with a loss of audiences between March and May of some 2.4 million, more than 12,000 cancellations and 112,000 tickets sold for events not proceeding.

IMPORTANT

Have you been refused the COVID-19 Unemployment Payment?
Or have a question about your eligibility...

Click here for the latest information
SIPTU launches working women’s charter 2020

A working women’s charter outlining key demands that will improve rights for women in the workplace was launched by SIPTU Vice-President, Michelle Monahan, on 8th March – International Women’s Day – in Liberty Hall, Dublin. The 10-point Working Women’s Charter deals with issues such as the gender pay gap, flexible working arrangements and properly valuing care work. Monahan described it as “a road map for our union for the coming decade in our organising and campaigning agenda for women workers”. She said the Charter underlined the union’s “key priorities and initiatives” on the issue. “Other mechanisms for changing the game for women workers in Ireland are set out in our Charter,” Monahan added, “such as the legal right to flexible working arrangements so women can better balance work and caring responsibilities. “This includes maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits on a pay-related basis so that parents don’t experience a major drop in income when caring for young children, and that women workers caring for elderly relatives have their work valued and appreciated.”

SIPTU member and Big Start activist, Aisling Silke, told the launch: “Today we have a situation where we are providing care in a society that refuses to value care. As we move into a new decade we need and must begin to value care. As a union, SIPTU can do this by committing to embed the Working Women’s Charter 2020 into all of our policies and objectives.”

The event, attended by more than 100 activists, was also addressed by SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley and SIPTU Services Division Organiser, Teresa Hannick. It also included the launch of a photographic exhibition featuring images of women in the trade union movement. Following the launch, the film, Naila and the Uprising, about Palestinian resistance leader, Naila Ayesh, was screened followed by a discussion with the film’s producer, Rula Salameh.

The charter is available here.
Windmill Lane Recording Studios opens ‘Visitor Experience’

Dublin’s world-famous Windmill Lane Recording Studios has opened a new “visitor experience”, which Fáilte Éireann has said will be a “huge draw” for both domestic and international tourists. The original studio buildings were famously covered in graffiti by U2 fans who visited from all over the world.

Since then, some of the artists who have recorded there include Kate Bush, The Rolling Stones, The Cranberries, The Spice Girls and, more recently, Lady Gaga, Ed Sheeran, Westlife, The Script and Hozier. The soundtrack for The Commitments film and the Riverdance album were also recorded there.

Growing demand for its services led to its relocation in 1990 to a larger facility in an art-deco protected structure on the site of the former electrical power station for the tramline depot on Ringsend Road.

President Michael D Higgins was the guest of honour at the studios for the launch of the new visitor experience on 20th February, at which singer Paul Brady performed alongside Donal Lunny.

The one-hour tour provides visitors with an insight into the creation and production of some of the albums and songs of the past forty years through a mix of technology, audio-visual media and storytelling. Visitors can also observe the music recording and production process.

ICTU Women’s conference backs Stop67 campaign

THE Stop67 campaign is growing, with support from leading civic society organisations, political parties and – most importantly – the public. The recent unanimous support from delegates at the ICTU Women’s Conference for the campaign is another important milestone for the campaign.

Speaking to Sound Post, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, said the raising of the State pension age affects all workers but it has a more detrimental effect on women. She said:

“Women are more likely to have interrupted contribution records and caring duties and forced to rely on means-tested unemployment payments between retirement age and the age we can access the State pension. That is why stopping the raising of the age of pension entitlements is one of the key demands of SIPTU’s Working Women’s Charter. Pensions are a workers’ issue and a women’s issue. We are committed to winning the battle for pensions fairness in order to ensure that older workers will not be forced into poverty, working more years than they want to or pushed on to the dole.”
FIM a participant in Make Music Safe initiative

The International Federation of Musicians (FIM), of which the Musicians’ Union of Ireland is an affiliate, took part in a new consultative meeting jointly organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) within the ‘Make Listening Safe’ initiative. Underway for some years now, this initiative is pursuing the following three aims:

- Drawing up and implementing a world WHO-ITU standard aimed at reducing risks linked to the use of music listening devices (audio players and smartphones);
- Undertaking a campaign aimed at the general public to modify patterns of listening behaviour;
- Developing a regulatory framework for controlling recreational sound exposure.

Held from 17th to 19th February 2020, at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, the meeting brought together acousticians, sound engineers, doctors, researchers, theatre operators and show organisers, musicians and hearing-impaired persons, as well as teenagers, since young people are one of WHO’s priorities.

WHO has declared 3rd March World Hearing Day. In addition, it would like to invite the largest number of players in the live entertainment sector to subscribe to a commitment to the precautionary principle (currently being drafted), for which FIM will be consulted. Representatives of the entertainment sector pointed out, however, that this was a particularly sensitive exercise and that each word should be carefully weighed.

Developing a regulatory framework to control noise is a particularly complex and risky business. Although there can be no doubt that precautionary measures must be implemented at all performance venues and that the general public and professionals have to learn how to protect themselves better, including using earplugs if necessary, it is also crucial not to foster a climate of mistrust or implement legal provisions that would be so strict as to make them unenforceable. The consequences for the live entertainment sector, in particular the smallest venues whose means are very limited, could actually prove to be catastrophic. A subtle balance needs to be found, something that is made all the more difficult by the fact that WHO intends to make this a universal framework. FIM will be following this issue closely.

Finally, we should note that, thanks to the action of FIM, WHO has undertaken a cycle of interviews with musicians on the issue of sound exposure.
The National Youth Orchestra of Ireland was the brainchild of my mother, Dr Olive Smith. She established it in 1970, having cherished this ambition since 1958, when the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain held their Easter course in Cork and gave concerts in Cork and Dublin. For many years my mother was deeply involved in the work of the Music Association of Ireland (MAI), a body which was responsible for many significant developments in the classical music scene during the years 1948 to 1988.

In 1967, on behalf of the MAI, she made a successful application to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal for a grant to establish a Schools’ Recital Scheme in Ireland. Her plan also included a ‘Youth and Music’ organisation to encourage concert-going among young people. This group was called Ógra Ceoil, and it was under its umbrella that, in 1969, she began to develop her ideas for an Irish youth orchestra. Ógra Ceoil had its own committee and shared a small budget with the Schools’ Recital Scheme. She was able to interest the Irish violinist, Hugh Maguire, in taking on the role of conductor, a significant move which she later described as her most brilliant idea ever!

The first course at Our Lady’s School, Rathnew, County Wicklow, in July 1970, attracted about sixty-five young instrumentalists, most of whom had experienced only the music of their school orchestra and certainly had never taken part in a week-long residential course, tackling works by Mozart, Schubert and Britten. Expert coaches drawn from Hugh Maguire’s Allegri Quartet and the RTÉSO helped to iron out difficulties and inspire the players. The administration was in the hands of Mary Timoney and my mother while most of the Ógra Ceoil committee formed the staff. From the accounts of many of the players, membership of the Youth Orchestra was a life-changing experience, confirming for them the importance of music in their lives, and encouraging their determination to become professional musicians. Such was the success that there was immediate clamour for another course at Christmas and this was followed by two courses in 1971. On 3rd January 1972, the Irish Youth Orchestra (IYO) was launched before the public at a concert in the Examination Hall, Trinity College, Dublin, to a standing ovation and generous critical acclaim.

The following years consolidated the pattern of two courses per year with concerts outside Dublin, as well as in the capital. In 1974 there was a successful visit to Mönchengladbach in Germany, but during those early years funding was a constant concern. The initial Gulbenkian grant was replaced by funding from the Department of Education in 1971, and there was assistance with the fares to Germany from the Cultural Relations Committee of the Department of Foreign Affairs. A number of businesses became sponsors and there were also private donors. The aim was to keep the course fees as moderate as possible; a scholarship scheme was established to encourage players of less popular instruments such as oboe, bassoon, horn and double bass.

The really significant financial breakthrough came in 1979 with the commitment of major and ongoing sponsorship by Toyota Ireland. This continued until 2008 and enabled many significant developments including the establishment of the Junior Irish Youth Orchestra (JIYO) in 1980, with Gearóid Grant as conductor and Loretta Keating as director. That same year the senior orchestra took part in the International Festival of Youth Orchestras in Aberdeen.

Towards the end of 1981 my mother announced her retirement – her last concert was in Belfast on 3rd January 1982.
Enid Chaloner assumed my mother’s role for a short time, organising the IYO’s visit to Rome in the summer of 1982. Then, in early 1983, Loretta Keating took over as Director of both orchestras and important decisions were taken regarding governance. A registered company ‘Irish Youth Orchestra Ltd’ was incorporated on 22nd September, 1983, and held its first directors’ meeting on 21st October. This was an important step in assuring the future of the orchestras. The name was changed to ‘National Youth Orchestra of Ireland’ (NYOI) in the mid-1980s.

Loretta Keating remained as Director until the end of 1995. During her tenure there were several overseas tours, notably three prestigious concerts in Boston, New York and Washington in 1983. Visits to France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Hungary followed in subsequent years and the JIYO gave three concerts in Cyprus in 1986. Hugh Maguire conducted his last concert in summer 1991, and was replaced by guest conductors including Albert Rosen and Bryden Thompson.

In January 1996, Joanna Crooks took over as Director and, thanks to the ever-enthusiastic support of Toyota and its chairman, Tim Mahony, was able to expand the touring possibilities for both orchestras. The JIYO played at the International Festival of Youth Orchestras in Aberdeen in 1996, and visited Denmark in 1999. The NYOI played in the Netherlands, the USA, Germany and Finland, and were privileged to work with conductors of international repute such as En Shao, Eri Klas and Atso Almila. The Russian conductor, Alexander Anissimov, formed a fruitful relationship culminating in 2002 with the most challenging and rewarding of projects, namely concert performances of Wagner’s complete Ring cycle in Limerick and Birmingham. Over the years, there have been many TV appearances and a number of fine CD recordings have been issued.

President Mary McAleese became Patron in 2001, this patronage continuing with President Michael D Higgins. Joanna Crooks retired in 2006, succeeded by Zoë Kears from 2007 until 2012. Carol-Ann McKenna has been General Manager since May 2012. Since 2011 there has been just one under-18 orchestra – its chief sources of funding are the Department of Education and the Arts Council, the Toyota sponsorship having ceased in 2008. The governance of the NYOI is in the hands of the board of directors, headed by chairman, John Dennehy, and the orchestra continues to tour abroad having played in Abu Dhabi in 2014, in Lisbon in 2015 and Amsterdam in 2018.

Prior to the onset of Coronavirus, plans were well-advanced for the celebration in 2020 of the Golden Jubilee of this wonderful organisation. Unfortunately, the summer course and concerts are cancelled, likewise the performance of a special orchestra of Alumni at the National Concert Hall in August. The management and players are looking forward to the day when they can come together again to make music....sooner rather than later. It is one’s dearest hope.
A Composer’s Strategies

By Roger Doyle

I compose all the time – every day, in my home recording studio (a fast computer, lots of software, midi keyboard, piano, microphone). Pieces come into being, and are revised until they reach what I call ‘saturation revision’. Then I think of them as having reached a certain standard.

I work mainly with electronic music – in what’s called ‘fixed media’, like a film-maker, painter, sculptor, or novelist does. I shape and mould pieces until they are ‘finished’. Then they’re fixed forever – on tape, CD, digital file, whatever. When I perform piano live or compose for acoustic instruments, this is different and isn’t fixed media (as a play isn’t, but a novel is).

Then there is the task of getting these ‘studio only’ works out into the world.

In 1975, I self-released my first LP record, called OIZZO NO (pronounced ‘I Don’t Know’ in a Dublin accent). I’ve had records (vinyl and CD) released on several labels in several countries in the intervening years. I took up self-releasing again in 1999 after I had completed a 5-CD set called BABEL which I knew nobody would release and which took me ten years to compose.

I invented a label called Silverdoor, financed the manufacture of 1,000 CDs, paid a designer and set about getting sales. I found a US distributor called Forced Exposure, took out ads in music magazines and just about made my financial outlay back. I still have boxes of them under the spare bed along with many other CDs of my own music that I released. Enquiries welcome.

As time went by and the CD market began to shrink, we all began to rely more and more on the internet for exposure. In 2012 I opened up a Bandcamp account https://rogerdoyle1.bandcamp.com

It’s the best platform I know for getting your music heard, and payment is made via PayPal. It took a while for me to get used to the fact that you uploaded full tracks for people to listen to, and not just a minute as in other platforms. The argument being that if you want to buy a painting you shouldn’t only offer a peak of the left-hand corner to the prospective buyer.

Upload the artwork, images, programme notes, pdf booklets, lyrics and the buyer can download/stream all of that and the music in hi-res mp3 format or WAV files and buy the CD (in editions of 100 now)/vinyl if you have it. And, depending on how much revenue you generate Bandcamp gives you a generous amount of free download codes to give to fans.

It’s exciting at first to set up a page for a release and wait for the first order to come in. A friend of mine got his first order after 2 minutes. I recommend €8 for a digital album, €10 for a CD, €18 for vinyl. Paypal and Bandcamp are taking their small cut, but the rest all goes to the artist.

So, for me this means, with 21 titles (29 individual albums) I can be kept in cappuccino money. About €4 a day. Sad but true. I go down to the post office and post CDs off to Japan, LA, Paris, Australia, you name it, a few times a week. Feels good. But at the same time friends have told me to keep quiet about the tiny income from this, now that the industry has more or less collapsed.

It’s exciting at first to set up a page for a release and wait for the first order to come in. A friend of mine got his first order after 2 minutes. I recommend €8 for a digital album, €10 for a CD, €18 for vinyl. Paypal and Bandcamp are taking their small cut, but the rest all goes to the artist.

My most recent album is called The Electrification Of Night.

To try and boost sales I commissioned and paid filmmaker Trish McAdam to make a video for a track called ‘The New Triangle’, from that album, which is in 3 parts.

I think Trish responded beautifully and am grateful to her for the work she did. This is version 6. I responded with remarks/suggestions to 5 of them, which were becoming more and more amazing with each revision https://youtu.be/HWtNPfVotWg

So, this is the state of play for me and other established musicians…. challenging, embarrassing, glorious.

You can see me talking about this in the trailer for a documentary film which was made by Brian Lally in 2018, called The Curious Works Of Roger Doyle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFS7qVdBerGs

Still more recently I joined Dis-trokid, a digital distribution service which, upon receipt of a once-off €14.50, and when you upload your albums with artwork (no liner notes) will get your music onto such platforms as Spotify, Apple music, iTunes, Deezer, Pandora, YouTube, Google Play etc. It took a while to recoup the €14.50 at first as income from digital sites is famously small, but I’m now up to €167, which will get me a few scences as well.

Roger Doyle is known as a keyboardist and composer of electronic music - most notably for his 5-CD set Babel, and the onstage piano score for the Gate Theatre production of Salome, directed by Steven Berkoff. His electronic opera Heresy, premiered in The Project Arts Centre in 2016. He is a member of Aosdána, Ireland’s state-sponsored academy of creative artists and was recently elected to the higher honour of Saol, conferred on him by President Higgins.

www.rogerdoyle.com
A Waltz King among Waltz Kings

By Fintan Moran

This year we are commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of Josef Strauss. In other words, an anniversary connected to a member of probably the most famous family in European musical history. It was a dysfunctional family, marred by jealousy and financial worries, but a family united in its genius, whose music was a source of joy to the Vienna of their day, and has been a source of joy to the musical world ever since.

Josef Strauss was born in Vienna on 20th August 1827, the second of the three surviving sons born to Johann Strauss the elder and his wife Maria Anna [Anna], née Streim. At the time of his birth Josef’s father was a violinist, with his own successful orchestra in Vienna.

After completing a formal education Josef studied mechanical engineering and architecture before embarking on a successful career as an architectural draughtsman. His father was opposed to any of his sons becoming professional musicians, and had envisaged an army career for Josef. Fortunately, after Johann senior abandoned the family, Josef’s mother saw to it that all three sons became proficient musicians. Unknown to Johann senior that was to be fortunate for posterity.

However, fate was to take a hand where the family’s true talents were concerned. Josef’s elder brother, Johann junior, had studied the violin and, to the jealous anger of his father, had formed an orchestra of his own in Vienna, which quickly became a very serious rival to the band of Johann senior, causing family acrimony. Johann junior conducted, played the violin, and composed music for his new orchestra.

In 1853, when Johann junior, for health reasons, had to take a lengthy rest from conducting, his brother Josef was coerced into deputising for him. Upon Johann junior’s return to his post, Josef abandoned his own career, studied the violin, and joined the family music business full time. Johann junior, like his father, had been composing dances and marches, and now Josef showed himself to be equally capable of supplying new music when required. The Viennese public immediately showed themselves as appreciative of Josef’s compositions as they had been of his brother’s. That decided him to abandon all thoughts of any career other than music. With his brother Johann junior fully recovered, Josef stayed on with the orchestra as the deputy conductor of the Strauss orchestra, and helped supply ever new music for its repertory. He became co-conductor in 1856, and principal conductor in 1863, taking it on tours of Europe. From then on, the waltzes, polkas and other dances which poured from his pen were quite distinctively his own. The difference between his compositions and those of his brother Johann is notable, but they collaborated on several compositions, including the famous Pizzicato Polka.
Josef’s finest waltzes have a haunting beauty and a subtle melancholy which gives them an individuality. Nothing he composed has quite the sweep and grandeur of Johann’s *The Blue Danube* or *Tales of the Vienna Woods*, but many musicians have found a greater musical depth in the best of Josef’s waltzes. It is interesting that throughout his career Johann composed mainly in major keys whereas Josef preferred, and was inspired by, minor ones.

Among Josef’s finest waltzes are: *Dynamiden*, *Sphärenklänge*, *Delirien*, *Aquarellen* and *Mein Lebenslauf is Lieb’ und Lust* - each a masterpiece of its kind.

Josef Strauss’s importance as a composer is undoubted, but as he’s in the Strauss family firm he, like the others, sometimes becomes anonymous when a Strauss waltz is mentioned without reference to which of the family composed it. But what a gifted family, and what wonderful music they gave the Vienna of their time, and us!

In childhood, Josef had been plagued with poor health, and was sickly for most of his life, suffering fainting spells and intense headaches. During a tour with the orchestra in 1870 he suffered a suspected stroke, and fell from the conductor’s podium during a concert in Warsaw, receiving a serious head injury. His wife brought him back to Vienna, where he died on July 22nd, 1870. He was forty-two. The actual cause of his death is unknown as his wife forbade an autopsy. He was buried in Vienna’s St Marx Cemetery, but was later exhumed and reburied in the Vienna Central Cemetery.

Posthumously, Josef has lived somewhat in the shadow of his brother Johann, but, had he been granted a longer life, his music might have surpassed that of Johann in universal popularity. At the time of his death he was beginning to concentrate on writing operettas and other stage music. But that was not to be.

Many years earlier, when Josef was being persuaded to conduct the Strauss Orchestra, Johann junior said: “Pepi (Josef) is the more gifted of us two; I am merely the more popular…”
The Dublin Orchestral Players celebrates 80th anniversary

By Conor Pyle

The Dublin Orchestral Players (DOP) celebrates its 80th anniversary in 2020. Its celebration concert at the National Concert Hall has had to be postponed, but this is a good opportunity for a retrospective view. A wealth of historical information is contained in the programme of the 75th anniversary concert at the NCH, written by Geraldine McCarter and Brenda Alexander, and I am indebted to them for much of the research quoted here.

The DOP has its roots in the winter of 1939/40 when Constance Harding, Havelock Nelson, Brian Townsend and David D’Oyly Cooper established the Dublin Junior Orchestra. Harding was the leader of Signor Grossi’s Musical Arts Society orchestra at the time, and originally she planned the group as a training ground for this. The new orchestra’s first rehearsal was in St. Andrew’s Church Hall on Suffolk Street, with members paying 3d at the door. Its first concert was on Wednesday 5th June 1940, in the Abbey Lecture Hall on Lower Abbey Street and featured works by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Grieg, Peter Warlock and John Ansell. The conductors were Constance Harding and Havelock Nelson, with Maurice Sinclair leading. Nelson doubled as soloist in Mendelssohn’s Serenade and Allegro giocoso for piano and orchestra, and Brian Boydell soloed in songs by Bach and Warlock. W. Baxter played the oboe obbligato for the Warlock songs.

It rapidly became apparent that the orchestra was no longer a training ground, and so it was renamed the Dublin Orchestral Players. In spite of the difficulties engendered by the war years, the DOP flourished. On 10th June 1941, just over a week after the Luftwaffe bombing of the North Strand, Betty Sullivan gave the Irish premiere of Haydn’s Cello concerto in C, which started a tradition of introducing works from the international repertoire to audiences here. At the same time, all DOP concerts in the early decades began with the National Anthem, in John Larchet’s arrangement.

It was a blow to the DOP when conductor Havelock Nelson left Dublin in 1943. His successor was 25-year-old Brian Boydell, who took to the role with verve and brio. His memoir and diaries were published in 2018 and give
a tremendous insight into the early years. Boydell wrote of “driving through the streets of the city with a horse and cart carrying timpani, music stands, double basses and a pile of trestle tables with which to extend the platform [in the Abbey Lecture Hall]”. His introductory talks were always a popular feature of DOP concerts.

Unusually for those days, parts of the May and November 1944 DOP concerts were live-broadcast by Radio Éireann. It would be nice to think that these broadcasts encouraged Fachtna Ó hAnnracháin when the Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra was established in 1948.

The DOP blossomed in the years after the war, as until 1948 it was the only symphony orchestra in Dublin. As well as giving three public concerts a year in the city, including regular performances at St Columba’s College, it played elsewhere such as in Mullingar, Drogheda, Belfast and Derry. The orchestra was innovative: for many years, an Irish work was included in every concert. Young conductors and soloists were encouraged: Hugh Maguire gave his first concerto performance with the DOP in 1949. John Ronayne, a future leader of the RTESO, André Prieur, Geraldine O’Grady, Jaroslav Vaneček, Veronica McSwiney and the celebrated English piano duo of Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick were among the many well-known soloists to perform with the DOP in the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

In his diary, Brian Boydell describes the preparations for the DOP concert in the Metropolitan Hall on Abbey Street on 2 March 1950 which featured Haydn’s Farewell Symphony and Beethoven’s Wellington’s Victory. In the Farewell Symphony, the players left the stage one by one, each snuffing out a candle as they left. Boydell records that he “went to buy clothes pegs and screws for making candle stands for the Haydn Farewell Symphony. Spent much of the morning on this”. Real cannon were needed for Wellington’s Victory but despite widespread publicity no cannon could be obtained. Boydell notes “Went off to Dockrells [builders’ providers] in the morning to bang things and find how to make a noise like a cannon for the ‘Battle’ Symphony….. finally chose a large sheet of 24 gauge steel, which, when beaten with an iron hammer, seemed to make the best noise”.

Brian Boydell stepped down in 1966. For the next fifteen years, the orchestra’s conductor was Captain Fred O’Callaghan of the Defence Forces School of Music. The critic and longtime DOP member Charles Acton wrote in Hibernia in 1969 that under him the orchestra had undergone a “remarkable process of rejuvenation”. On occasion Captain O’Callaghan’s military skills were needed. Fanny Feehan, reviewing the DOP’s 1968 performance of Beethoven’s Symphony No 6 Pastorale for the Evening Press, noted “In the Andante, subtitled ‘the Brook’, there was a distinct danger of the brook running in flood and bursting its banks, carrying all with it. Captain O’Callaghan worked like a beaver, damming operations were put in motion, and soon the turbulent tide was contained.”

Continued on page 14
The Dublin Orchestral Players celebrates 80th anniversary

Continued from page 13

The DOP has also worked under the baton of Robert Houlihan, James Cavanagh, Fergus Sheil, David Brophy, Barra Boydell, John Finucane, Brendan Healy, Adele O’Dwyer, Cathal Garvey, Gavin Maloney, Ciarán Crilly, Marion Doherty Hayden, Karen Ní Bhroin and currently Andrew Synnott. Havelock Nelson and Brian Boydell maintained a great interest in the DOP, and both returned in March 1990 to conduct in the Golden Jubilee Concert at the National Concert Hall.

The rehearsal location has changed over the years. Early on, the DOP rehearsed in Four Provinces House, Harcourt Street, which, from 1946, was the headquarters of the Bakers’ Union, of which John Swift Senior was General Secretary. Brendan Healy, who joined in 1957, has fond memories of his early days with the DOP when rehearsals took place in 17 St Stephen’s Green in two large rooms on the first floor. “Lighting and heating were very poor, with visibility not improved by some dedicated smokers among the orchestra members. One clarinet player could play, holding a cigarette in one hand, while the conductor used a baton in one hand and a cigarette in the other...” Currently rehearsals take place in De La Salle College, Churchtown.

Several members have had long playing careers with the DOP. Eunice Jolley retired in 2010 after seventy years, having been present at the outset. The orchestra has played over 300 concerts and still performs at least three concerts a year. In 1993, the DOP performed a completed version of Schubert’s Symphony No 8 (Unfinished) by English musicologist, Professor Brian Newbould. This was the first time that this symphony was heard as a four-movement work in Ireland. The tradition of presenting new works continues: in 2012 the orchestra performed Hibernian Reverie, a short work for string orchestra composed by Bill Ellison from the orchestra’s violins section. It collaborates frequently with choirs and in 2017 performed Mendelssohn’s Hymn of Praise at the National Concert Hall and Ulster Hall. It is hoped to reschedule its planned performance of Mozart’s Requiem with the Bray and Wicklow choral societies when circumstances allow.

Conor Pyle is an English teacher and plays double bass in the Dublin Orchestral Players.
This is singer Francy Devine’s long awaited second offering, coming a full six years after his acclaimed 2014 debut, My Father Told Me, which was top rated by the Irish Times and others.

Devine’s new double CD, is grounded not just in the wealth of his talent but in the breadth of his collaborators, principal among whom is accomplished Scottish Singer of the Year, musician and producer, Steve Byrne.

The opening track, ‘The Old Poachers Song’, was written by Meath man, Jim Connell, a man who knew a thing or two about that noble art, being the author not just of the world famous Socialist anthem, The Red Flag, but of a classic volume on his other metier, Confessions of a Poacher. More on point as far as the overall project is concerned, the opening sets not just the title, an ownerless corner of earth as well as the free born tone of the album, but also inspires the image of a mountain hare on the cover.

The late, great Liam Weldon’s arrangement of “One Starry Night” (track 3) provides what is, for this reviewer, the standout moment of the first CD in this 26-track compilation. It’s always a challenge to inject originality and inspiration into such a beautiful song, so well covered already by other fine singers. However, Devine, in a perfect fit for his voice, and accompanied by guitarist Graham Dunne, singer Niamh Parsons and others, passes with flying colours.

His poem, “Gazing at Lochangar” (track 6) provides an opportunity to appreciate another of Devine’s other talents. Even more so it is the chance to hear what has to be one of the most moving pieces in the canon of Scottish fiddling, “Neil Gow’s Lament for the Death of his Second Wife”, played by award winning Scots fiddler and composer, Paul Anderson. Irish fiddling is well represented too by the outstanding Liam O’Connor on both fiddle and viola in the musical backdrop to another intensely rich poem of Devine’s, “When Abdul Moneim Khalifa Met Darach O Cathain” (track 9).

The final track on Side 1 is Steve Byrne’s delivery of the well known “Tramps and Hawkers” (track 13). Like many of my generation, I’m hotwired to the version sung by the late Luke Kelly. Nevertheless, I still remember the first time I heard Byrne sing this a few years ago in Liberty Hall and his rendition here is as fresh as on that evening.

If the first CD is owned by the hares, then the second belongs to the other part of that dubious ‘sporting’ equation- the lurcher, or, to be more precise, Jim Connell’s favourite of the breed, “My Nellie” (track 1).

And if “One Starry Night” is the standout moment of the first part of this work, then Devine’s composition, “Dark and Slender Boy” (track 2), has to be that of the second CD. Inspired by the well-known traditional air, “An Buachaill Caol Dubh”, his English version is true to the sensibility of the original and, like “One Starry Night”, a perfect fit for his voice.

Likewise, the singer’s own “Magaidh Ruaidh” (track 7), suggested by the wonderful Kathleen MacInnes’ interpretation of the Scots Gaelic song, “Ceud Failt”.

Devine is joined on the penultimate track (12) by Northumbrian shepherd and singer, Dave McCracken, in the late Terry Conway’s “Fare Thee Weel Regality”. Like many, I was blown away when I first heard this sung, in my case by the Unthanks. It’s still one of my all-time favourite songs and can never be sung too often.

‘an ownerless corner of earth’ is both entertainment and, with erudite sleeve notes, an education and while Devine’s first album might have been his ‘Prentice Piece’ (to borrow from the work of singer Dick Gaughan), this, his second, is the work of a master craftsman at the height of his powers.

Michael Halpenny is a former Head of SIPTU’s Legal Rights Unit and a former National Industrial Secretary of SIPTU. He is a frequent contributor to Liberty and Sound Post.
Recent letters to The Irish Times

20th May, 2020

Dear Sir,

In 1948, my grandparents were forcibly exiled from their home in the city of Lydda, Palestine as 950,000 Palestinians suffered the forced displacement and slaughter known as the Nakba. On their difficult exile to Gaza – a journey taken on foot – their eldest son went missing. I knew my uncle only through my dad’s stories. My dad, who is in his late 70s, always tells my children stories of his days in Palestine when we meet in Jordan every summer. This is the only place I can see my parents because I only hold identification as a citizen of Gaza, which prohibits my travel to the West Bank or East Jerusalem without Israeli permission. My father recalls the fig trees and cactus fruits that grew in their garden. My mother, who was born in Jaffa, also fled with her family to Gaza. She was young, but my grandfather kept her memories of the sea and Jaffa’s beauty alive. My grandmother’s heart was broken at the loss of her home, and she never got over it.

It was against this backdrop that, after the 1967 war, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel extended the city’s municipal boundaries, putting both East and West Jerusalem under its sovereignty and to this day, it continues to pursue its policy of stealing Palestinian land. It relies on expropriation and acquisition of land to build and expand settlements over years of occupation. More than 600,000 settlers live in over 200 colonial settlements in the West Bank.

The recent agreement between Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz to form a coalition government in Israel included a commitment to the annexation all of its illegal settlements which occupy large parts of the Palestinian lands. At his swearing in ceremony on Sunday last (17th May), Mr Netanyahu repeated his threat to extend Israeli sovereignty over the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, calling it “another glorious chapter in the history of Zionism”.

Ireland has always advocated for human rights, and as Palestinians, we believe that it will strongly challenge this latest Israeli plan of annexation.

The enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill would ban the selling of goods produced in illegal settlements on the Irish market. This diplomatic sanction is one of those referenced by UN Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk, in his recent letter to your newspaper, as a potentially important instrument in restraining illegal expansion by Israel.

With this Bill, Ireland has a unique opportunity to lead the way in challenging the long injustice of the Israeli occupation. As Palestinians, we place our hopes in other nations with a lived experience of colonialism to guide the international community on the right path and to end the decades-long displacement, exile and slaughter of our people.

Dr. Jilan Abdalmajid
Ambassador of Palestine to Ireland

15th May, 2020

Bewley’s Café Theatre

Dear Editor,

The announcement of the closure of Bewley’s on Grafton Street is a devastating blow to its 110 employees. It is also a loss that will be mourned by generations of Bewley’s visitors who have particularly enjoyed the buzz and the history of their favourite city centre meeting place.

The loss of the hugely successful and ever popular Café Theatre is also devastating for the countless actors, writers, directors, designers, musicians and singers who have found a platform to present their work in its intimate surroundings. Theatre spaces on this scale are already in very short supply, and the loss of Bewley’s Café Theatre leaves the whole cultural community deeply saddened. Part of the remit of the Café Theatre has always been to present new Irish writing and this strand of its work has been a lifeline to many writers. It has also encouraged practitioners from other disciplines to spread their wings and develop a new set of skills, in the process creating greater employment opportunities for themselves and other creatives.

Apart from its role in showcasing exciting new work, Bewley’s Café Theatre has also served as a vital springboard for theatre artists. Many shows that began life there went on to tour other venues, nationally and internationally.

Bewley’s Café Theatre is the only venue in Dublin producing lunch time theatre. The loss to the thousands of patrons who enjoy theatre at this time of day will be immense. For many who are reluctant or unable to travel into the city centre at night, it may spell the end of their enjoyment of a regular live theatre experience.

The building’s associations with theatre stretch back long before the Café Theatre was opened. It played host to both Oscar Wilde and Richard Brinsley Sheridan as pupils in Samuel Whyte’s Academy, which was originally located in the present building. Whyte’s Academy was the model for Sheridan’s ‘The School for Scandal’.

Irish Equity sincerely hopes that the theatre can once again rise from the ashes, as it did during the more recent temporary closure, and continue its vital work in the city.

Gerard Lee on behalf of the Executive Committee of Irish Equity.
OBITUARY

Des Smyth (d. 24.02.2020)

Des Smyth, who had a long career as a singer and entertainer, died on February 23rd.

In 2002 a film by Peter Foott paid tribute to him. Taking as its title one of the songs from the album, *Reflections*, the short comedy film, ‘Just a Little Bit of Love’, tells the story of a young woman, unsuccessful in love, who decides to use mannequin parts to create the man of her dreams. The end result is a suave and debonair Des Smyth lookalike!

As a young boy in the Liberties, Des sang with the Catholic Boys’ Brigade Choir. Later on, with his brothers Frank and Jimmy, he formed The Smyth Brothers. A broadcast in 1955, from the Phoenix Hall, Dublin, with the Radio Éireann Light Orchestra, led to concerts in major venues and a UK tour and more radio broadcasts.

During the showband era, Des fronted The Collegemen, recording a number of songs on the Pye Records label. He went on to record a number of solo singles with EMI, Columbia and Rex Records, as well as the album, *Reflections*, mentioned above.

Throughout his long career, Des performed in the Theatre Royal, Dublin, worked with Maureen Potter in *Gaels of Laughter* and appeared in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. He was very popular on the cabaret and supper club scene and he was often a guest on RTÉ’s *Late, Late Show*. Other TV roles included an appearance as a Garda who gave Mike Murphy a speeding ticket for going too fast on his scooter, in an episode of *The Likes of Mike*!

Des was an honoured guest at a special performance of *Dublin’s Theatre Royal Remembered*, which took place in the Mansion House last September even though he was quite ill at the time. It was a pleasure to meet and perform for him.

Des’s wife, Carmel, predeceased him in 2017. Deepest sympathy to his family.

Gerry Noonan

OBITUARY

Angela McQuillan, née Nolan (d. 16.02.2020)

As the last Secretary of the Ireland-USSR Society (1985-1991), Angela McQuillan made a remarkable contribution to Ireland’s relations with the Soviet Union and its peoples on the basis of mutual goodwill and friendship. From Roscommon town, she was the eldest daughter of Martin and Helen Nolan who owned the town’s prominent Railway Bar and Grocery. She was among the first students at TCD’s new Russian Department, from 1964 to 1968. That was noteworthy because as a newly-married woman from a Catholic background, she was among the first students to break taboos relating to gender, marital status and hierarchical rules to obtain dispensation to enrol at ‘Protestant’ TCD. Angela had married John ‘Jack’ McQuillan (1920-1998) the dynamic full forward on the County Roscommon GAA football team that won back-to-back All Ireland Senior titles in 1943-4. He was elected a Clann na Poblachta TD for the Roscommon constituency in 1948, and he and Angela formed a life-long political and friendship bond with Dr Noël Browne and his wife, Phyllis.

Angela was attracted to the Ireland-USSR Society in 1969, initially because of the Russian language. She put her linguistic skills to work as the Society hosted Russian language classes in the premises of the Language Centre, at Wilton Place, Dublin. When Angela took on the role of Secretary, the Chair was her great friend, Nora Harkin, and together they took advantage of the improved political climate following the instalment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. The initial period of his policies of perestroika and glasnost, with their promise of re-energising the Soviet economy and opening up its society, had the effect of attracting more interest in Ireland. New branches at Limerick and Cork were established. Angela’s duties included organising annual holiday tours to the Soviet Union; a stream of two-way visits of societal and cultural groups – including musical events; support for Soviet ambassadors with societal contacts and helping them to ‘polish’ their speeches; and communications with Friendship House in Moscow.

Angela has left behind her not just the affection and respect of hundreds of Irish and former Soviet people, but also a precious collection of papers relating to organised Irish-Soviet friendship that is presently being prepared for deposit in TCD’s archives by Neville ‘Nev’ Swift – a grandson of John Swift Senior, the Society’s founding chairman in 1966.

Our sincere condolences to her daughter Helene, family and friends.

Michael Quinn
Possible NCH programming changes raise alarm bells

In a disturbing development, the Board of the National Concert Hall has “recommended that in the light of a financial loss of €41,000 in 2019, consideration must in future be given by NCH programming to the changing nature of music tastes and solid deliberation be accorded to the effects of competition for audiences in certain music genres promoted by NCH with competing commercial promoters.”

According to the NCH’s Head of Finance, John Nolan, the principal reasons for the losses were reduced ticket sales, higher expenditure, and a decrease in donations and fundraising.

Since its opening in September 1981, the NCH has been the principal venue of classical music in Ireland and home of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (RTÉ NSO). With the RTÉ NSO already greatly diminished following years of underfunding and neglect, many classical musicians and music lovers are fearful that further broadening of the NCH’s programming will inevitably result in a reduction in classical music content at that venue.

SOUND REASONS TO JOIN THE MUSICIANS’ UNION OF IRELAND (MUI) TODAY!

- Professional advice and representation on employment-related matters.
- Representation at MUI and SIPTU conferences.
- Access to MUI website and twitter page.
- Optional inclusion in MUI Directory of Members.
- Free copy of MUI quarterly newsletter, Sound Post, with opportunity to submit relevant material for publication in same.
- Free rehearsal facility in Liberty Hall, Dublin.
- Discount of 25% on hiring the 400-seat Liberty Hall Theatre, the Connolly Hall and the Cois Life Bar, in Liberty Hall, Dublin, for concerts, gigs and book and CD launches.
- Music shop discounts on the purchase and repair of musical instruments.
- Car, home and travel insurance and other MUI membership services (see page 20).

For further details of MUI services and benefits, check the MUI website: www.mui.ie or contact the MUI office, tel: (01) 8586402, email: mui@siptu.ie, MUI twitter account: @mu_Ireland

I wish to join the Musicians’ Union of Ireland (Mui)

Name: 

Email Address: 

Tel.: 

Send completed form to Musicians’ Union of Ireland, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1. Email: mui@siptu.ie; Tel: (01) 8586402
**Sound Post**  
**AND FREE EXPRESSION**

A forum of free expression, Sound Post welcomes material from MUI members. Unless explicitly stated, the views expressed in this newsletter, including goods and services promoted in advertisements, are not necessarily endorsed by the union.

*Sound Post* is compiled and edited by John Swift, former MUI Secretary, and produced by the Communications Department of SIPTU.

Material may be emailed to John Swift: johnpswift45@gmail.com or forwarded to the MUI office.

---

**Musicians’ Union of Ireland Executive Committee 2019-2020**

President: Seamus Doyle  
Vice-President: Eamon Murray  
Committee Members: David Agnew, Francis Devine, Andy Irvine, Niamh Parsons, Cormac Ó hAodáin, Niall O’Loughlin, Robert [Tob] Swift and Senator Fintan Warfield  
Organiser: Graham Macken  
Servicing Official, RTÉ Orchestras: Denis Hynes

---

**FREE REHEARSAL SPACE**

MUI members may avail of a free rehearsal space in Liberty Hall, Dublin.

Those wishing to avail of this facility should contact the MUI office:  
email: mui@siptu.ie  
Tel: 01-8586402  
to make a booking and to check that all musicians concerned are benefit members of the union.

---

**MUI RTÉ Freelance Orchestral Daily Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutti</td>
<td>€153.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Principal</td>
<td>€165.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>€179.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**INTERVAL QUIZ**

1. Which well-known Irish group released a new single, *We Had It All*, in March 2020?
2. Where was Joseph Haydn born?
3. *Bruised, Never Broken* is the title of the 2019 autobiography of which well-known Irish musician and songwriter?
4. O’Lehane House, Cavendish Row, Dublin, is the headquarters of which trade union?
5. With which Mozart aria is John McCormack most associated?
6. Name the 2019 biographical musical film based on the life of Elton John?
7. Who composed *Invitation to the Dance*?
8. The Deputy Leader of which Irish political party is a trained classical singer?
9. Which Irish orchestra celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016?
10. ‘If music be the food of love, play on’ are the opening words of which Shakespeare play?

---

Answers

1. Stockton's Wing.  
2. Rohrau, Austria.  
3. Phil Coulter.  
4. Mandate.  
5. 'Il mio Tesoro' from *Don Giovanni*.  
7. Carl Maria von Weber.  
8. Catherine Martin.  
9. The Ulster Orchestra.  

---

Marin.  
9. The Ulster Orchestra.  
8. Catherine Martin.  
7. ‘Il mio Tesoro’ from *Don Giovanni*.  
5. *Twelfth Night*.  
4. Mandate.  
3. Phil Coulter.  
2. Rohrau, Austria.  
1. Stockton’s Wing.
PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS
Full-time and Part-time Rock, pop, jazz, traditional and classical
MUI SUPPORTING THE ARTIST
Liberty Hall, Dublin 1 • Tel: 01-8586402
E-mail: mui@siptu.ie • Website: www.mui.ie