



fleadh nua

ennis, co. clare mis, co. an chláir
MAY 22 – 30 bealtaine 2011

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MISFORTUNE WELL AND TRULY BANISHED AT FLEADH NUA

May 2011 will live long in our memories as a special time. For our step was a little lighter and our spirits a little brighter thanks to the visits of Queen Elizabeth II and President Barak Obama and the exploits of our Rugby heroes from Leinster and Munster. A further source of satisfaction for the people of Ennis was the outstanding success of Fleadh Nua 2011 which drew to a close on Monday night after 9 hectic days of top class traditional entertainment.

Such is the international reputation of the long-running festival that performers from the Arctic Circle to Argentina, from Texas to Tokyo and all points in between descended on the town for a celebration of music, song and dance that truly is second to none. The mantle of Traditional Music's Heartland rests easily on County Clare's shoulders. This pre-eminence brings with a responsibility to welcome with open arms – and ears - everyone who wants to participate in or just to enjoy the Traditional Arts which constitute the common currency of our social and cultural landscape. Undoubtedly, the appropriately decorated shop window displays, the road signs, the abundant street entertainment, the plethora of café and pub sessions all contributed greatly to the feel good factor so prevalent at this year's Fleadh. But feedback from the many visitors indicates that the friendliness of the people and the quality *sans pareil* of the artistes were of greater significance to them.

The sheer depth of talent displayed by the Tulla Branch at the Official Opening was a truly fitting tribute to the 60 years of achievement by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in the preservation and promotion of our Traditional Music, Song and Dance. The "Riches of Clare" series of free lunch time concerts proved a runaway success with standing room only being the order of the day for many of the listeners in attendance. The evening we spent in the company of the Brock Maguire Band will be savoured for many months to come because it is a rare privilege indeed to encounter such virtuosity combined with a repertoire of such breadth and discernment. The Aos Óg Concert showcased the prodigious



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talents of our underage performers and in no uncertain terms gave the lie to Shaw's old adage that "youth is wasted on young people".

Old rivalries were laid aside at the Celebrity Concert as the Tulla and the Kilfenora Céilí Bands took to the stage for the launch of *Foinn Seisiún 4* - the final volume in the popular Music Book Series devised by the late Brian Prior. Noel Hill and his daughter, Aisling held the audience spellbound with their performance. The audience delighted in the singing of Séamus Mac Mathúna and Denise Whelan and revelled in the sean nós steps of Sibéal Davitt, Eoin Marrinan and Suzanne Leahy. Anna and Aisling Prior's accomplished performance in the company of Eimear Arkins provided an emotional but highly fitting tribute to the memory of their late father and our great friend.

At the Singers' Sessions which were conducted by Joe O'Connor, *Gradaim Ceoil Fleadh Nua* were bestowed on the peerless Robbie McMahon, Declan Coyne and the late Gary McMahon for their respective contributions to the art of Traditional Singing. Songs, recitations, recordings and anecdotes from far and near flowed like the proverbial snuff at a wake in the convivial surroundings of the Old Ground Hotel. Fleadh Nua is always an extremely busy time for the Dancing Fraternity as there are so many Céilithe and Set Dancing Workshops to attend. The addition of a Sean Nós Dancing Competition to this year's programme of events alongside the well established Comórtas Rince Náisiúnta proved an inspired decision and attracted a highly favourable response.

Bhí Gaeilge bhinn bhlasta le cloisint go forleathan in Inis le linn na Fleidhe – dea-thionchar an Bhanríona Eibhlís II agus an Uachtaráin Obama ba chúis leis, gan amhras. D'éirigh go geal leis na Ciorcail Cainte 'sna Caifí éagsúla. Bhain an lucht éisteachta sár-thaithneamh as an gceol, an amhránaíocht, an aithriseoireacht agus an rince ag an Oíche Ghaelach in a raibh oirfidigh óga ó Shionna, Chluain an Fhathaigh, Inis agus ón Tulach páirteach.

Frank Custy's Foinn Seisiún Workshops proved extremely popular with musicians and audiences alike during the week. Fleadh Nua is fortunate to be able to call upon the services of Ireland's foremost Seanchaí, Eddie Lenihan who proved once again that you cannot beat a good story well told for entertainment. Screenings of "Last Night as I lay Dreaming" – a documentary about Robbie McMahon, the Guided Walking Tour of Ennis and the Banjo Strikes Back 2 demonstrate the wide range of activities which were on offer at the Fleadh.

Mindful of the difficult Economic Climate in which many people find themselves at present, it is pleasing to note that most of our events were free of charge with the remainder being extremely reasonably priced.

A recent visitor to our shores reminded us: "Is féidir linn. Yes we can." The success of Fleadh Nua 2011 demonstrates just how right he is.

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