

*Notes from the*

# **Traditional Music Forum**

*held at Galeri, Caernarfon, Gwynedd*

*24 November 2006*

convened by the **Arts Council of Wales**

with **trac: Music Traditions Wales**



CEFNŌGI CREADIGRHYDD  
CYNGOR CELFYDDYDAU CYMRU  
THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES  
SUPPORTING CREATIVITY



folk development for wales  
datblygu traddodiadau gwern

Noddir gan  
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
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*Siân Thomas, David Francis, Beti George, and Paul Flynn  
at the forum, with Einion Dafydd in the foreground*

## Foreword

I had the honour to chair the folk music seminar in Galeri, Caernarfon on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The first thing that struck me was the enthusiasm of those who attended, but also the worries they expressed for the future of the folk music of Wales.

The contributions of representatives from Northern Ireland and Scotland were eye-openers, and I felt very jealous hearing them tell of the support they have from their public bodies which recognized the cultural and economic value of their indigenous music. O, that this were true of our public bodies in Wales.

To ensure the future of our folk music it must develop hand in hand with contemporary needs. But this does not mean turning our back on the past. Without a root, nothing grows. Despite this, the seminar was agreed on one thing – the young must be drawn into the music; and from hearing of the experience of the other Celtic representatives, this is not an impossible task.

Wouldn't it be fine to think that everyone who works in the folk music field in Wales could come together in order to make that dream come true?

I'd like to take advantage of the popularity of fantasies like Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. I imagine seeing a gala performance based, perhaps, on one of the Mabinogi legends, filling the Millenium Centre in Cardiff (as that is our capital) for a whole season! The grand stage of the Theatre would be a perfect location for the myriad talents which we have – rappers, members of Clera, pop singers, rock and jazz, cerdd dant-ers, dancers, schools like Glanaethwy and Ceredigion Music School – everyone celebrating our folk music and our traditional culture in one colourful, exciting "extravanza".

"Riverdance" saved the folk music and dance of Ireland, whatever the faults of that particular show. We have a product which is just as good, if not better, to offer to the world. With confidence, and with the support of our public bodies, our folk music can thrive, and be an important medium through which we can market Wales to our cultural and economic benefit.

*Beti George  
Broadcaster - Journalist*

# Notes from the discussion

Einion Dafydd, Senior Arts Development Officer (Music)  
Arts Council of Wales

## Background

The seminar was organised in order to air topics of importance to the folk music sector. This was an opportunity to discuss the past, present, and more than anything else, the future of this form of music. The gathering was a joint initiative of trac and Arts Council of Wales and it was widely publicised amongst practitioners, organisers, and local authority arts officers as well as representatives of venues, folk festivals, the media and tourism agencies. (A full list of attendees is on page 6). Beti George was invited to chair the seminar because of her interest in music as expressed through her radio and television work. This was also an opportunity to bring information about the folk music sector to the attention of an experienced broadcaster.

A loose agenda was set in order to encourage a flow of ideas from the attendees before setting about more structured discussion.

## The Oral Tradition

It is difficult to define any type of music and an agreement was reached that the unique characteristic of folk music is the way in which the material is transferred from generation to generation through the oral tradition. The academic can analyse the characteristics of musical material *from Wales*, but the view that folk music as a 'process' was nearer to the hearts of seminar attendees. Preserving and actively participating in the oral tradition means that the songs have a dual personality – belonging to the Tradition but also being richer for bearing the stamp of the Performer/ Presenter. This method of transference can be put in danger when the material is committed to print. The role of the performer/presenter is an important one, as s/he has the expected right to personal taste in presenting the *song*. The printed copy of a song or tune is only a record for ease of reference, with the emphasis on the style of performance, presentation and interpretation of the performer. It was suggested that all tradition is conservative by nature. The traditional exists because musicians either perform or present material which comes from that tradition or in a style which is associated with that tradition.

Criticism was expressed that folk music could be in danger of being kept in a museum or 'freezer'. Still, the high-art Classical tradition of Europe (Western Europe) can be criticised in the same manner even though this is rarely of any concern to audiences.

## Conclusions

- **The role of the performer/ presenter, who gives life to the material available in books, must be respected. If folk music is to thrive, emphasis must be placed on supporting and developing a network of tradition bearers and performers as well as opportunities for them to come together (e.g. workshops, weekend courses, local sessions, conferences). There is a need to increase the numbers available (“we don't have critical mass of performers in Wales”) and funding bodies can contribute to development by prioritising projects which encourage participation. In addition to this, it is only fair that folk musicians should perform on the same terms as those offered to musicians in other fields.**
- **The fact that the process of transferring songs/tunes from musician to musician is a fragile one should also be respected; also how this effects outputs such as the proposed numbers of participants on projects, the time allowed to ensure this transmission, and so on.**

## Education

The discussion of traditional methods of transferring songs moved on to include folk music and the national curriculum. There is a deficit in the curriculum syllabus in Wales compared to Scotland and Ireland. There, the folk music of the country is an integral part of the GCSE course. Music students in Scotland can follow tertiary education courses which include a graduate course in the National Conservatoire (Glasgow). This was considered to be one of the key fields and one which calls for prodigious development. A course on Ethnomusicology which includes music from Wales is offered through University of Wales Bangor. It is heartening that the London College of Music is developing a Welsh element as part of their external examination course on folk music. But if folk music of Wales is to be accepted on the same level as other types of music, it must be an element in music courses from Nursery School through to higher education.

- Open discussions with Welsh Joint Education Committee on the importance of folk music in GCSE, AS and A2 music courses
- Support peripatetic teachers to present traditional songs and tunes of Wales as part of Welsh nursery and junior schools experience and education
- Encourage bodies such as DELLS (previously ACCAC) (and music publishers) to produce material (books, collections) of Welsh indigenous music for the use of teachers and leaders of nursery groups in Wales
- Offer support to recording companies in Wales to produce collections of indigenous music in Welsh and in English. (N.B. remembering that there is a tradition of folk singing in English as well as in Welsh in Wales.)
- Urge Local Authorities to support traditional/folk music teaching posts in addition to those who specialise in the field of European music
- Encourage less 'Welsh' areas in Wales to hold folk music performance and participation activities and, through this, influence people's understanding of the field

The place of music as part of a nation's history is an interesting point and examples were given of the way in which folk music was a insurgency medium in Hungary during the challenge to the Soviet Union in the '50s. There are more recent examples such as in the Irish Republic during the '50s and more recently, and perhaps for more commercial reasons, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Politics

Many in the seminar felt that there is a place for folk music in today's Wales. This comes as part of the desire to define identity as reflected in recent governmental and institutional developments. Strong feelings were expressed on the role of curricular education in such developments.

"Every politician is a short-term thinker," said one contributor but it was agreed that it was crucial to include politicians in the task of developing the field. Developing the field of folk music can be seen as reflecting the increase of Welsh identity in the wake of establishing the Assembly. Reference was made to the very recent decision of the Scottish National Parliament to earmark £20m for Music Performance among the children and youth of Scotland – and the positive effect of such support on folk/traditional music in this part of the UK. Should not there be a similar fund in Wales?

## Youth Culture

The future of all kinds of culture depends on young people, and they desire the music of the masses. This, as would be expected, has changed over the years. Rock/pop/urban music is the most popular culture among the youth currently but the seminar felt that folk music offered something broader to them, or to a proportion of them – something both fun and *cool* which they can be part of. The folk world does not have the staffing resources to compete in the field of rock/pop/urban music – unless bodies such as NAW and ACW step into the breach and supply the necessary support.

In addition to introducing young people to folk music through school, they should be able to experience it in extracurricular and social activities. In this regard, the role of folk clubs and the youth clubs of Young Farmers and the Urdd, amongst others, is most important. The structures which already exist in the Urdd (camps, local and national branches, county and regional networks, eisteddfodau, etc) are ideal for developing the field of folk music in Wales. More co-operation should be encouraged with trac, Clera, folk festivals and the Urdd (specifically).

The National Eisteddfod and the Urdd have contributed much towards expanding the musical experience of people of all ages but the relationship between it and folk music has not been a close one or, because of this, a profitable one for the medium. The Llangollen International Eisteddfod has won its position as a major festival which celebrates international culture, with folk music (including Celtic folk competitions) as part of its activities. For some time now a lack of basic understanding of 'folk' in its true meaning has been apparent among National Eisteddfod organisers (Urdd and Genedlaethol). There is a need to educate and promote within the ranks of supporters and directors of the major festivals in Wales, and to encourage them to establish *real* folk competitions as well as (or in place of) the current fake-folk competitions.

**Conclusion: A better understanding is needed between the sector and youth networks with the intention of offering activities which encourage participation in the field and performance and participation opportunities for musicians, be than in competition or concert.**

## Profile

There was considerable discussion of the aspects of recording and broadcasting, recognising their importance to raising the profile of folk music in the Media if it is to flourish. Even though Paul Flynn of Northern Ireland Arts Council stated that CDs have killed regional styles in Ireland, he confirmed that recording sales have given a substantial stimulus to the success of folk music. Recordings are a way of creating income for musicians through radio broadcasts and particularly on the Web where there is a considerable growth in the sizes of audiences for this kind of music. The Web offers an inexpensive way to spread awareness of the music and folk musicians must take advantage of it.

Music and folk festivals specifically are a way of raising profile with the public. An exciting step is being taken in January 2007 when the Celtic Connections (Glasgow) festival will stage more Welsh artists than ever before in its history. The Interceltic Festival in Brittany is also a destination for artists from Wales and an example of international activity which is likely to attract the attention of broadcasters. Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau is a type of festival which should ensure more folk performances.

David Francis attested that folk music creates an income of many millions of pounds in Scotland, although there is still difficulty in getting it seriously considered in the economic development sector. He also expressed his opinion that Scotland's musicians are envious of the attention given the sector by RTE in Ireland and he explained also that the Scottish Press does not pay attention to the Interceltic Festival. In response to all this, the Scottish Arts Council took account of what was happening at grass-roots level when folk organisations set aside their differences and united to mount a robust campaign.

An opinion was expressed that there was a general lack of confidence amongst the Welsh with regards to anything indigenous. The fact that the demand for improvements for the folk sector came from the grass-roots in Scotland was stressed and so it will be here in Wales. The folk sector would be suspicious of any recommendation which comes from ACW unless it reflected the wishes of the sector. This justifies the reason for holding this seminar.

This was agreed but this should not excuse ACW from doing nothing to support folk music in Wales. ACW ought to:

- Set aside a specific sum of money (annually) for activity in the field of Wales' folk music
- Promote this financial fund and invite applications (from every area in Wales) for sponsorship
- Establish an annual competition (high profile) in the field of folk singing and instrumental music in a folk style
- Support recording initiatives (CDs) and the like in order to popularise folk music in Wales
- Support makers of traditional instruments

**Summary:** Ensuring attention in the Press and Media depends on the relationship between musicians and editors and producers. It is essential that musicians and folk bodies operate as agents for the field and to be points of contact between them and editors, broadcasters and new and established audiences.

## Marketing

Marketing is vital to the success of folk music as it is to all types of music. It is not enough to create a *critical mass* of performers as mentioned in the seminar. Marketing begins with lobbying national bodies such as happened with the distribution of the Gregynog Declaration (attached) to each member of the Assembly. At the same time, marketing must target the public as *critical mass* of audiences is of major importance.

It was agreed that ACW ought to appoint a Folk Officer or an officer with responsibilities for the field in order to raise awareness at every opportunity. David Francis suggested the following steps on the pattern of that which happened in Scotland:

- 1 Create a steering group
- 2 Create a strategy
- 3 Appoint an officer
- 4 Create projects at grass roots level

The seminar revealed that ACW has already revived the work of working towards a Music Strategy for Wales. Such a strategy would include all musical genres and amidst the specialist steering groups it would be a good thing to have one for the field of folk music as soon as possible, one responsible for drafting operational steps for their relevant sector.

### Chair:

Beti George (BBC)

### Attendees:

Gary Northeast (Dolanog Tune Club)	Tony Skeggs (Arts Connection)
Nikki Morgan (Wales Arts International)	Paul Flynn (Arts Council of Northern Ireland)
David Francis (Scottish Traditional Music Forum)	Siân Thomas (trac)
Blanche Rowen (trac)	Meg Browning (trac)
Antony Owen Hicks (ACW)	Nia Llywelyn (Ty Siamas)
Mabon ap Gwynfor (Ty Siamas)	Iestyn ap Robert (Telynnau Teifi)
Gwenan Gibbard (Sain)	Robin Huw Bowen (Welsh Triple Harp)
Rhiain Bebb (Clera/Tant)	Arfon Gwilym (Clera/Cwmni Gwynn)
Gwyn L Williams (Llangollen International Eisteddfod)	Stephen P Rees (University of Wales Bangor)
David Petersen (Festival International Lorient & I3C)	Gwyneth Edwards (UNESCO-Cymru)
Neil Browning (musician)	Kate Browning (musician)
Wyn Thomas (UW Bangor)	Elinor Bennett (William Mathias Centre)

### Present (ACW North Wales Office):

Einion Dafydd, Senior Arts Development Officer (Music) ACW  
Siân Tomos, Director (ACW)  
Rhian Haf, Arts Development Officer, ACW  
Ruth Gilford Administrator (ACW)

# Traditional Arts in Scotland

## David Francis, Scottish Traditional Music Forum

Eugene Delacroix, the 19<sup>th</sup> century French artist, wrote in his celebrated journals that for him, the painting was simply a 'pretext', a bridge between the mind of the artist and that of the spectator. With that he outlined the matrix that informs all art: artist, work and audience, not forgetting what physicist David Peat calls 'the space between'. It doesn't matter whether we are talking about Greek sculpture or Damien Hirst's shark, Dylan Thomas, or Beethoven – think of his famous inscription at the head of his *Missa Solemnis*, 'Von Herzen - möge es zu Herzen gehen'. That nexus of artist, work and audience is key.

Traditional music - and arts - are no exception. You can hear an echo of Beethoven's inscription in the singer and storyteller, Stanley Robertson of the Scots traveller people, when he says 'the story is told eye to eye, mind to mind and heart to heart.' I am going to use that matrix of artist, work and audience to outline briefly what I mean when I refer to traditional music in the context of today's gathering. I want to use the term to refer not just to sonic vibrations of a particular character. By traditional music I mean the whole constellation of artist development, education and training; the work and its availability in a range of stored forms - printed, recorded and digital, and of course its availability in the moment through performance; the way the work is marketed to an audience; and the way that audience's awareness, knowledge and taste are developed.

When we talk of advocating, promoting and supporting traditional music we generally refer to any one or all of those aspects of the trinity of artist, work and audience.

Anyone who has listened to a traditional ballad form will know that three is a number of great significance. Challenges come in threes, heroes and lovers get three chances and so on. I am reluctant to interfere with the trinity I've been referring to but I feel that although I've said that the matrix of three structures all art, including traditional music, that music, and the traditional arts in general, have a claim to add a further co-ordinate. Indeed it might be thought of as not so much a co-ordinate as an *enfolding context*. It is **community**. It's clear that the very nature of traditional music – an art-form characterised in the main by interpretation and re-realisation, constant re-animation and re-working of material that may have been first created many hundreds of years ago by people, singly or collectively, whose names are no longer known to us – is deeply informed by its origins in community. The community over time has shaped the very material that each new generation comes to. It's in and for the community that most beginning traditional musicians will have their first experiences of performance: in the ceilidh house, the dance hall, the accordion club, or the stramash at the end of the course. It's a category that includes 'audience', yet goes beyond it – if you like into the category the nineteenth century sociologists called *Das Volk* – the folk. A traditional artist not only addresses and connects with his audience as individuals, but helps them to connect to each other, and affirms, celebrates and renews a common bond to a shared past. The work is not only shared with the community in performance, but in its origin, in its conservation for the future, and in its transmission to the present.

Given that the community is, like the family, also an important factor in traditional music, one of the basic building blocks of society, the marginalisation of this music, particularly in the last century, may be a bit of a puzzle. Traditional music, however, suffered a twin misfortune. It was marginalised as an art-form by those who were in the business of promoting Art (with a capital 'A': think of the composer Delius, amusing his pals with the observation that playing a folk tune was all very well, but once you'd played it there was nothing left to be done but to play it again, only louder). The Art People had difficulty assimilating into their world, which gives such prime place to the idea of individual genius and the self-directed professional, an art form that is largely anonymous, and difficult to pin down as to origin and ownership.

It was also possibly marginalised as a popular form not by the evil machinations of disdainful broadcasters and record companies, but by a change in popular taste brought about by the introduction in the early twentieth century of the radio and the gramophone. Ironically that shift in popular taste was to music that, however new and exotic it may have seemed, was itself rooted in folk and traditional forms – swing music derived from the blues, American popular song with its harmonic and structural roots in Jewish and Eastern European forms, the derivatives of rock and roll, that potent mix of black rhythm and blues and white country

and old time music: all forms developed interestingly enough by people who were themselves marginalised because of their race or colour, their geographical location or their recent arrival in a new country . The music in Scotland was arguably marginalised because the communities which honoured it most were themselves marginalised: the Gaels, the travellers, the Scots speaking people of the lowland countryside, again by dint of geography, culture or language not fitting with the requirements of a globalising culture founded on capital rather than community. Yet we are talking of music pushed to the margins, not eliminated from the picture altogether. Popular taste is a complex thing, and that taste, and the forces which shape it, brought about a great upsurge in the popularity of Scottish dance music in the 50s, folk songs in the pop charts in the 60s, the re-imagining of British folk music with an American-inspired rock aesthetic in the late 60s and 70s, and full houses at home and abroad in the 80s for Scottish artists like the Corries, Silly Wizard and Runrig.

It was in the early 80s too that a significant event in terms of official support for traditional music was to take place. The Scottish Arts Council (SAC), maybe on the first tiny swell of a changing tide of institutional attitudes to the arts in Great Britain, convened a group to look at the position of traditional music in Scotland. That group, which included the celebrated folklorist Hamish Henderson and fiddler Aly Bain produced a report in 1984 which was the first major recognition by SAC of a significant and hitherto officially neglected ground note of Scotland's cultural life. It is probably safe to say that that piece of work helped to clear the way for what was to follow in the 90s, when SAC really began to move forward with its support for traditional music.

First traditional music and the traditional arts found their way into SAC's Charter for the Arts in 1993, again a first for an Arts Council strategy document. Around the same time the conference which was to lead to the setting up of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust took place, again under the aegis of SAC, and the long consultation process on the themes of education, information and advocacy for traditional music was begun. That consultation process led to a sizeable report published by SAC in 1999, which explicitly proposed a vision of a Scotland where traditional music has its value recognised, and its place supported, maintained and developed in the mainstream of the country's artistic and social life.

I wouldn't want you to run away with the idea, however, that all progress has been solely due to official largesse. SAC support is a thread running through a complex pattern which is mostly woven by committed individuals and communities throughout Scotland. Without those individuals and communities there would be nothing to advocate and nothing to fund. The last ten years in particular have seen some great breakthroughs in activity.

If we turn first to education, let's think back to the matrix I proposed earlier, and look first at the development of the individual musician. Traditional music education addresses a continuum of uses arising from that development. At one end of the continuum we have to identify talented individuals and help them to extend and stretch their talent, giving them the opportunity to work on their imagination, their musicianship, their ear, and to prepare them for engagement with the commercial context, and the hard road of the artist, if that is what they wish to do. There is also a recognition that those same musicians will want to join with others in acknowledging the traditional artist's relationship and responsibility to the community (our fourth co-ordinate, you'll recall). Part of traditional music education is also therefore about developing musical skills in individuals who will use those skills to make community: in social gatherings, playing for dancing, stitching music into the fabric of community life: affirming, celebrating and renewing.

Whatever the degree of talent, or the uses to which they'll put that talent, musicians' education and training needs a strong craft component: discipline and technique, backed up by knowledge of the repertoire, history of the music and its cultural context. In addition, whatever the degree of talent, traditional music education offers a unique perspective on the experience of creativity and co-operation as well as the well-attested neurological and psychological benefits of playing music. Crucially it also offers individuals a way of developing self-confidence, locating themselves in their culture, of cultivating a sense of place, all critical factors, when taken collectively, in developing successful communities.

The other key aspect of traditional music education, in addition to its contribution to artistic and community development is its role in developing an audience for the music. How do you develop an audience? I would suggest that the first stage is by cultivating their taste for certain experiences. Traditional music – the traditional arts - in schools has the primary job of helping to cultivate the taste for the music. In any case we have to give to children what is theirs by right. (One thinks here of the Irish musician, collector, publisher and writer on Irish music, Brendan Breathnach, who, when asked to justify his work, answered, 'there is one compelling reason why we should know our own music: it is our own.')

An audience with a developed taste,

an awareness and a knowledge of what is being offered is an available audience, in the marketing jargon, and consequently fertile ground for marketing activity.

So in the last ten years or so we have seen a whole host of developments, some of which address one or two of these threads, some of which attempt to address almost all of them simultaneously. In formal education we find that in Standard Grade Music (the Scottish equivalent of GCSE) there is a non-optional Scottish music module; we now have a dedicated Centre of Excellence for Traditional Music at Plockton High School; students at specialist music schools such as the unit at Broughton High School in Edinburgh can study traditional music as a first option, without compromise; students can go on to study traditional music at tertiary level, thanks to the dedicated work of Mark Sheridan at Strathclyde and Jo Millar at RSAMD; there are traditional music options at HND at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic college in Skye and at other tertiary colleges all over the country.

In informal education the growth of the *feis* movement, which typifies that connection between the individual traditional artist and the community I have already referred to, has been staggering. It makes an explicit link between the Gaelic language and the music, and now involves thousands of young people across the Highlands and in those cities with Gaelic enclaves. It has been adopted as a model outside the Gaidhealtachd, particularly in the Borders, in Edinburgh and Aberdeenshire. Edinburgh's pioneering Adult Learning Project created its Scots Music Group which soon outgrew its parent body, and in the last year had enrolled around 500 students at its evening classes. Again the model has been successfully followed by Glasgow Fiddle Workshop with a similar number of students, at Kennoway in Fife, and by Scottish Culture and Traditions in Aberdeen, all of which involve hundreds more in their programmes. Over the summer adults and young people can avail themselves of summer schools catering for every level of ability at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Ceolas, the Stirling University school, and elsewhere. And let's not forget Blazin in Beaully, the week-long teaching and social event which turns around the collective and individual talents of the band Blazin Fiddles.

Up until now the teaching skills for these events have largely been supplied by practising musicians with varying degrees of experience in teaching, but there are now discussions taking place through the Traditional Music Tutor Training Network, another initiative which came out of the 1999 report, to improve the quality of tutor training and assessment. A certificate has now been made available under the auspices of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, a move which was initially met with some wariness, but has now been accepted, and adopted by the *feis* movement in particular.

If we turn now to look at musicians' work and its availability, the picture is again one of good health. Going right back to source material, more and more is becoming available through projects such as the North East Folklore Archive, the School of Scottish Studies' PEARL project which is beginning to make the wealth of the School's archive material widely available and the Tobar nan Dualchais (Well of Heritage) project which will eventually digitise and make available Gaelic material collected over many years by John Lorne Campbell of Canna, and other Gaelic and Scots material held by the BBC, and the School of Scottish Studies.

There are a number of recording companies making available new material and back catalogue. The biggest of these, Greentrax, has a catalogue which is virtually a snapshot of traditional music activity in Scotland over the last fifteen years. Their outlets are world wide, and specialist retailers can be found in Scottish towns and cities and on the internet.

In print as well collections of music which for generations have only been available in libraries are now widely available. Fiddlers and pipers can now gain ready access to semi-legendary texts like the Patrick MacDonald Collection, or the Athole Collection, while collections of new material continue to fly off the presses. Some tunes composed in the last twenty years – I'm thinking of melodies like Ian Burns's 'Spootiskerry' and Phil Cunningham's 'Hut on Staffin Island' – are already established as standards, such is the acceleration of the folk process brought about by all this increased activity and availability.

On the live front, the undoubted success of the last ten years has been Celtic Connections, the giant winter festival, which has grown to become a prestige, international player. Combine the turn-over of Celtic Connections with all of the other commercial activity including live gigs, factor in course fees, tutors' fees and administrative spending and salaries, and you have a traditional music industry that has an economic impact in the multi-million pound category. I saw in the papers the other day that the Piping Centre alone is approaching a turnover of £1m. Marginal? It doesn't begin to look like it.

All of this activity is supported by a developing infrastructure: better funding; traditional arts development officers in local government; national organisations like the network, the Traditional Music Forum, the well

established Traditional Music and Song Association, the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, the Piping Centre, the Scottish Storytelling Centre; a level of radio broadcasting by the BBC we sometimes complain about, but which by and large is satisfactory, although TV is guarded by wolves and dragons and all kinds of mysterious enchantments to which we have not found the unlocking spell; a traditional music and tourism initiative; a Music Officer at SAC whose remit specifically includes traditional music. At the beginning of December each year we even have our own awards ceremony.

Thanks to the hard work and vision of many people over the years, we are making a good deal of progress in getting the bedrock right for the development of the traditional arts in Scotland. The one grey area still is the area of performance opportunities and audience development. We badly need a strategy involving audiences, performers, venues, promoters, agents, record companies, broadcasters, film makers. But that is a strategy for the development of live music that necessarily goes beyond traditional music alone.

All of these developments are pointers to a new approach to funding which SAC and the Scottish Executive may have to get to grips with in the future. It could be that, in order to give the right kind of support to this kind of indigenous, we may need to make a distinction between the Scottish Arts, new and native work produced by people living in Scotland – wherever they may have come from originally – and the Arts in Scotland, the production and marketing of the canon, the international and metropolitan work with its huge cost-base, epitomised by the likes of the Edinburgh International Festival and Scottish Opera. The Executive has moved some way to making this distinction by directly funding the national companies, but it remains to be seen whether this will lead to more money being released within Creative Scotland for traditional music.

I mentioned earlier the vision of the traditional arts having a place in the mainstream of the country's artistic and social life. Well, that begs the question 'what kind of artistic and social life do we want to be part of?' The future development of traditional music and the traditional arts is intimately bound up with our future responses to that question.



*David Francis, Beti George and Paul Flynn listen to the debate*



*The discussions continue in the break - left to right Iestyn ap Robert, Antony Owen-Hicks, Neil Browning, David Petersen, Gary Northeast, Mabon ap Gwyndaf, Gwenan Gibbard*

# Traditional Arts in Northern Ireland

**Paul Flynn, Traditional Arts Officer, Arts Council of Northern Ireland**

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has had a dedicated Traditional Arts Officer for more than 25 years and was the first Arts Council in the British Isles to do so. Whereas arts disciplines such as drama, dance and visual arts are to some extent generic throughout the world, one region's traditional arts are unique to that culture and celebrate a shared sense of identity and place. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is leading the field with regards the Traditional Arts.

## Arts Spend per year

	2004/05	2005/06
Arts Council England	£410,400,000	£410,455,000
Arts Council Scotland	£47,396,000	£54,270,000
Arts Council Wales	£23,203,000	£26,000,000
Arts Council NI	£11,050,000	£10,780,000
An Chomairle Ealaíonn (Rep of I)	£37,155,200	£42,004,500

## Arts Spend per Capita (Revenue)

	2004/05	2005/06
Arts Council England	£8.23	£8.19
Arts Council Scotland	£9.37	£10.69
Arts Council Wales	£7.95	£8.80
Arts Council NI	£6.49	£6.33
An Chomairle Ealaíonn (Rep of I)	£9.49	£10.72

## ASOP (Revenue) Traditional Arts 2001 - 2005

2001	£240,000
2002	£245,000
2003	£232,500
2004	£259,000
2005	£274,000

## Comparative Findings - ASOP Spend 2001-2005

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Literature	208,000	195,585	331,200	417,048	331,413
Visual	514,500	479,000	688,000	720,818	586,332
Community Arts	978,500	1,334,300	1,038,750	1,088,100	1,164,600
Dance	27,500	35,000	70,000	78,000	69,000
Drama	1,709,900	1,797,100	1,732,300	1,721,950	1,836,290
Development	296,500	308,200	279,000	297,000	-
Health/Voluntary/Disability	-	-	-	-	283,990
Music	1,575,000	1,680,500	2,025,000	2,112,700	2,287,921
Other	-	-	315,300	346,500	335,000
Traditional	240,000	245,000	232,500	259,000	274,000
Youth	82,000	82,000	457,700	413,000	484,269

### **Traditional Arts 2005 Funding - ASOP 2005**

8 awards, £274,000

- 5 Traditional Music Schools £171,000
- 2 Ulster Scots/ Scots Irish Organisations £38,000
- 1 Peripatetic Teaching £65,000

### **Traditional Arts Funding - MAP 2005**

3 awards, £170,000

- The Irish Traditional Music Archive £60,000
- The Open House Traditional Arts Festival £55,000
- All Set £55,000

### **Traditional Arts: Lottery 2005-2006**

- 3 Access Awards £112,744
- 1 LAP Award £7,200
- Awards for All £90,888

### **Traditional Arts: Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme**

- 1995 – 1997 106 Awarded £1.4 m
- 2002 – 2004 123 Awarded £1,756,833
- 2004 – 2005 13 Awarded £242,813
- 2005 – 2006 £150,000 to be awarded

### **Traditional Arts: Individual Artist Awards 2005/06**

16 Awards, £19,300

- 10 Travel Awards £5,300
- 6 General Arts Awards £14,000

- Traditional Arts: Arts Development Fund 2004/05
- Educational DVD £20,000

### **Traditional Arts: International Profile Fund 2005/06**

- Promotional CD-Rom £15,000
- International Delegate Visit £10,000

06/07 Archive Project £10,000 (allocated)

### **Traditional Arts & Visual Arts 2005**

- ASOP/MAP 2005 11 awards £429,000
- ASOP/MAP 2005 22 awards £747,906
- Lottery 2005 4 awards £119,744
- Lottery 2005 15 awards £366,000
- SIAP 2005 16 awards £19,300
- SIAP 2005 103 awards £218,387

Possible issues:

- Education
- Supporting the individual artist
- Infrastructure
- Promotions & Marketing
- International Profile

### **Traditional Arts Allocation 2003/04**

Financial Year April 2003 - April 2004 (in Sterling Pounds)

#### **Revenue Awards**

- The total ACNI allocation is £7,378,116
  - Traditional Arts programmes **£220,492**
    - Support for Individual Artist Programme (Trad Arts) **£27,700**
      - Total Revenue Trad Arts **£248,192**
  - Lottery Awards
    - Total **£8,923,488**
    - Traditional Arts (Lottery) **£220,429**
    - Lottery includes Awards for All Programme for claims up to £5k - **£178,141**
    - Total Traditional Arts (Lottery) **£398,570**
  - Arts Development Fund
- Total Allocation **£417,851**  
Traditional Arts **£25,000**

### **Traditional Arts Allocation 2003/04**

- The total monies allocated by the ACNI in the 03/04 financial year was £16,719,455
- The Traditional Arts allocation for the same period was £919,952
- The Traditional Arts accounted for 5.5% of the total monies allocated in the financial year April 03 - April 04

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland also runs a Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme which includes marching bands (including flute, pipe and accordion). In 2003 - 2004 the Arts Council allocated **£484,762** to this scheme

If the marching band sector is recognized as Traditional Arts then they bring the over all figure to **£1,404,714 (8.4%)**

## **Traditional Arts Policy 2006**

ACNI established a working group in 2006 with representatives both from Northern Ireland and the Republic to examine the needs of Traditional Arts policy.

Notes when formulating a policy

- The dual issues of formal and informal education and their inclusion in the policy
- The context of current funding difficulties and its possible impact on the policy over its five year period e.g. concern that music services in schools were liable to be cut against the backdrop of funding difficulties for local education and library boards
- Funding and support for full-time traditional musicians working in education - to enable individuals to go into schools to teach and deliver traditional music through a residency for example
- Accessibility and availability of traditional arts – traditional arts is seen as a popular and easily accessible art-form
- The benefits of Traditional Arts in assisting areas such as cultural tourism and economic regeneration
- Funding issues and the need to encourage increased numbers of funding applications to the Arts

Council of Northern Ireland from the sector – e.g. information seminars to raise awareness of funding opportunities, Arts Council support to develop skills training for organizations and individuals. It was noted that Arts Council funding to the sector was not capped at its current level but was defined by demand

- Building and strengthening partnerships with other organisations (Educations and Library Boards, Department of Education, Department of Health, An Chomhairle Ealaíon for example) to develop the sector and enable greater collective action
- Proactive promotion of the sector - the possibility of a touring road-show of musicians in promoting the sector, the encouragement of greater knowledge through promotional tools such as the Exploring Trad DVD, a specific funding budget for the traditional arts element of general arts festivals.
- The requirement to develop and encourage song at present – strengthen the connection with Scotland with an Irish/Gaelic emphasis for example
- The issue of audience box office and the availability of venues for the sector – it was noted that mailing lists were crucial in targeting an audience for traditional arts. A consortium application from the sector focusing on marketing and increased audience numbers for traditional arts was a possible development.

### **Draft Priority Areas**

#### 1 Infrastructure (Theme One ii)

Support the core and programming costs of organisations working to improve access to the traditional arts in Northern Ireland – including touring, cross-cultural initiatives, educational programmes, community festivals and events.

#### 2 Partnerships (Theme One ii, Theme Two)

Encourage new relationships between organisations currently promoting the traditional arts and continue to support existing collaborations.

#### 3 Supporting Artists (Theme One i)

Raise awareness of funding opportunities amongst organisations and individuals and explore with the sector the possibility of inventive touring proposals.

#### 4 Profile (Theme Three)

Raise the profile of traditional arts practitioners and organisations within the local environment and internationally, helping foster closer links between traditional arts festivals and events.

#### 5 Education (Theme Two)

Encourage initiatives to generate resource material for the formal education sector.

### **Draft Objectives**

- Develop innovative ways of bringing traditional music, song and dance to new audiences and venues and retain and diversify existing audiences. (Priority 1, **Theme One ii**)
- Raise the professionalism of traditional artists by promoting mentoring, networking and other professional development. (Priority 3, **Theme One i**)
- Increase collaboration, exchange and partnerships between traditional artists and groups and organisations. (Priority 2, **Theme One ii, Theme Two**)
- Resource interest in the traditional arts within the formal education sector. (Priority 5, **Theme Two**)
- Develop educational bursaries for traditional musicians, singers and dancers and design traditional musician residencies in schools. (Priority 5, **Theme Two**)
- Ensure Northern Ireland's traditional arts are showcased in Northern Ireland and internationally. (Priority 4, **Theme Three**)

# Traditional & Folk Music: its Nature and Nurture

## Notes from trac meeting, October 2006, compiled by Siân Thomas

In preparation for the ACW Traditional Music Seminar, trac convened a meeting in Rhayader on 21 October 2006 of its Advisory Panel to describe our experience of traditional and folk music.

Present at the meeting were

*trac Board members and staff:*

Siân Thomas (Director)

Danny KilBride (Chair)

Rhiain Bebb (Trustee)

Annette Davies (Trustee)

Gwenan Gibbard (Observer)

Blanche Rowen (Administrator)

*Advisory Panel and guests:*

Gary Northeast (Dolanog Tune Club)

Ruth Exell Stevenson (Pontardawe Festival)

David Hammond-Williams (Pontardawe Festival)

Iestyn ap Robert (Telynu Teifi)

Martin Davies (translator)

## 1 Core values

When discussing traditional and folk music, we refer to the music itself, not the structures which *may* be part of the Welsh tradition and which *may* engage with this music in some of their activities. Examples of these might be eisteddfodau and choirs. They play an important role in some aspects of *access* to the music but should not *define* the music.

Some of the underlying attributes of 'traditional' and 'folk' music might be:

1.i. **aural/oral** transmission whenever possible

1.ii. **exuberance** being, initially, more important than excellence

1.iii. **'folk process'**: the music isn't about 'historical re-enactment'; it could be argued that traditional music is the most contemporary as it constantly adapts itself to the performer and the circumstances. Also, the process adapts *other* musics and *adopts* them into the Welsh tradition.

1.iv. **a clear social context**, building social capital in its communities

1.v. **intergenerational**, being music which can be shared across the age groups

1.vi. **authenticity**: it is important that we understand and maintain the societal and historical roots of the music, in order to 'know' the craft so that we can build upon it and maintain its relevance to its time and place

1.vii. its **endurance**

## 2 'Art' or 'Culture'?

How the sector describes what it does is important in terms of the partnerships it can form. This music can stand its ground in the *Arts* world and should be more widely understood and used by Arts and Media professionals to create a Welsh Unique Selling Proposition. *Culture* is the medium through which social context is transmitted so traditional and folk music should be seen as a valuable resource in personal and community development programmes.

Investment in traditional and folk music would be most effective if focussed on *access*, both to performances of quality artists and to opportunities to participate.

2.i. **Funding**

2.i.a. **Arts**: Current funding streams are primarily via the Arts Council and Arts Lottery. Future priorities for Arts funding, both from public and private sources, may create an 'uneven playing field' for traditional and folk music.

2.i.b. **Heritage funding**: Heritage Lottery in Wales does not respond well to music or Intangible Heritage.

It appears that this is not the case in England, with projects such as The Northumbria Anthology receiving major investment from the fund.

*2.i.c.* **Societal funding:** There is considerable scope for use of traditional and folk music in project promoting social cohesion, community enterprise, etc but workers in these fields source their arts content from a very narrow range of providers. Better consultation between Social Change agencies and the Arts community in general would improve the content and effectiveness of these programmes.

*2.i.d.* Some might suggest that **no funding** is an option, as subsidy changes the nature of 'tradition', turning it into a commodity. The reality is that traditional and folk music must maintain a profile in competition with a well-funded global music industry. If there is a value in 'Sense of Place' – either for reasons of community cohesion or economic development – then the indigenous music must be funded as a dimension thereof.

### 3 Access

*3.i.* **Participation:** The opportunities in Wales to participate in traditional and folk music can be grouped as:

*3.i.a.* **formal:** through choirs, competition, bands, groups, etc.

*3.i.b.* **informal:** through sessions and other gatherings

Given the core values (above), we see the current system as lacking balance. Emphasis on the 'formal', and often 'academic', approaches disconnects those who would respond better to other processes.

It is also widely agreed that the new Licencing Regime discourages informal and casual participation in music. The possibility of the NAW establishing a framework to decriminalize informal participation should be explored, given its new law-making powers.

*3.ii.* **Education/training:** A major barrier to the development of traditional and folk music is the framework for teaching/learning; Wales has developed no robust structure for transmission of its indigenous music.

*3.ii.a.* Music education from the earliest years should include traditional and folk music. It gives children 'common ground' with their peers and their elders and is easily acquired. When learned in connection with its social context, it has uses in the teaching of a variety of subjects including music, history, languages, etc.

*3.ii.b.* Although accreditation is problematic, we acknowledge that a grading system – designed from within the traditional sector rather than adapted from the Art music sector – could have benefits. The discussions held with London College of Music put forward some workable ideas which could be developed further.

*3.ii.c.* There is scope for vocational training in traditional and folk music not only for performers interested in careers in entertainment, but also those interested in heritage interpretation, health care, tourism, education, etc.

*3.ii.d.* There is also a need for training of service providers operating in the above areas. Often, officials within the responsible agencies are not arts specialists or well-grounded in the indigenous culture.

*3.iii.* **Opportunities**

*3.iii.a.* Amateur - Professional

The classifications 'amateur' and 'professional' are counterproductive in a number of Arts fields but particularly so in traditional and folk music. At its most basic, traditional and folk music must remain very close to its community; 'distance' increases with commercialisation and commoditisation.

Traditional and folk musicians looking to add to their income through education, performance, interpretation, etc. should be assessed on the quality of the experience which they can provide, not on their tax status.

*3.iii.b.* Economic Development: By investing in education, training and opportunities to take part in traditional and folk music, potential will be created for developing the creative industries, for example: instrument making, the media, live touring, tourism.

### 4 Perceptions

Those who are active participants in traditional and folk music find current perceptions – by educators, broadcasters, legislators, etc. - to be a barrier.

*4.i.* The traditional and folk music sector must examine the underlying reasons for the accusation that the music is 'boring'

4.i.a. Does an over-emphasis on competition, excellence, and formal structure discourage individuals from participation on a leisure/casual level, which might lead to outcomes equally valuable on social and economic fronts?

4.i.b. Does competition and (staged) performance homogenise the music to a point where it is bland and lacks the vigour of other musics?

4.i.c. Is the 'boring' epithet assigned to traditional and folk music by promoters of more commercialised musics whose best interests are not served by music which, at its most basic, does not need a long value-added, profit-generating chain?

4.ii. The traditional and folk music community should encourage the perception that the music is, at its most basic, a community music indigenous to Wales. If this aspect can be promoted and made popular once again – in pubs, societies, 'the terraces', etc. – it can be a tool for developing 'common cause' across ages, classes, ethnic groups, etc.

