

Press Release

Hear My Tune

by Neil Halligan

School-goers in Co Longford, both primary and secondary, will get an up-close introduction to traditional Irish music through a unique initiative set up by the county's arts office.

Fun Trad is the name given to the music residency that will see local musicians travel to as many schools as possible in Longford, sharing their experience and craft.

“It’s an initiative to raise awareness in the schools among children in the county who listen to music of the fact that there are local musicians playing traditional music,” Fergus Kennedy, Longford County Arts Officer explained.

“Our objective would be to encourage a greater interest in Irish traditional music among the younger generation and hopefully encourage some people to maybe take up an instrument.

“We’ve put together a residency called Fun Trad; we hope to tour the primary and secondary schools in the county over the next few months on a pilot basis.”

The musicians involved are well known to lovers of trad music in the county. Pat Finnerty (pipes), Noel Sweeney (flute) and Olive Kilbane (fiddle) will undertake the county-wide tour.

“We’ll start by playing some music for the children, explain our backgrounds and how we got involved in traditional music and talk about our instrument,” explained Pat.

“We’d hope to introduce children to a way of recognising different tunes and talk about reels, jigs and the like. There’ll also be an emphasis on getting the children to participate to come and join in with us at the end of an hour.”

As it's a pilot scheme, the organisers will gauge what kind of a reception they get from the schools to see where it goes from here.

“If there are expressions of interest, we will then look at how we can best provide music education on a structured basis, given the resources available to us,” said Fergus.

Ultimately it's hoped to tie in the residency with the county's application for funding under Music Generation, a music network initiative funded by the rock band U2 and the Ireland Funds.

The arts officer said he hopes to develop more strands to the initial project and encompass other genres.

“This (Fun Trad) is what is evolving as part of the Longford application to Music Generation for funding,” said Fergus.

“It’s a rolling, funding scheme which means that we will be applying for funding continuously until we’re successful.

“The process of applying for funding has released an incredible amount energy and interest in all forms of music in the county at all different levels.

“We’re putting together pilot projects of various types to assess the actual levels of interest with the ultimate aim of developing an audience for all kinds of music - in this case traditional Irish music - and developing the skills of musicians in the county. They’re our two ultimate objectives of the larger project which is the Longford Music Education Partnership, which was set up as part of the Music Generation application.”

The long term goal would be to have permanent classes in musicianship, in various genres, and in various locations around the county. “To make music available to anybody that wants it,” as Pat explained. “One of my great beliefs is that there’s nobody who hasn’t got music; everybody has got music somewhere. If you’re only clicking your fingers, you’re playing music. I’d like to see as many kids participating as possible.”

The scheme will be rolled out in the coming weeks and schools across the county will be invited to take part on a first-come basis.

Ends

22/12/12