

# Press Release

## Classical Harp Pilot Programme in Longford Schools

Following Fun Trad, the hugely successful traditional music schools pilot project organised by Longford County Arts Office in Longford's primary schools in the first half of the year the Arts Office has established another music pilot project based around the harp.

Nationally recognised, and Lanesborough based classical harp duo, Edel and Alida Loftus have for the past number of months visited national schools; St Joseph's Longford, St. Mel's Ardagh and Newtowncashel NS as well as Templemichael and Mercy Convent Ballymahon secondary schools on a weekly basis.

According to Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha, Principal of Templemichael Community College: "The pilot programme has provided an excellent opportunity to expose students to new and different musical experiences. The Harp is so deeply entrenched both symbolically and musically in our perception of Irish culture that it is vital that our young people be made aware of the beauty of its music and the pervasive mythological and historical resonances of its image.

Education is all about opening young people's minds and imaginations to new knowledge and experiences however the cost of this can quite often be prohibitive it is for that reason that pilot projects such as this is of immense value to longford schools and of course Longford students."

The primary reasons for these schools visits is to expose students to the beauty of the classical and Irish harp, to encourage them to begin to play the instruments and to attempt to evaluate the level of interest and activity in music education in Longford.

These are two very different but equally important considerations according to County Arts Office Fergus Kennedy. "Our primary responsibility is always to the artist or the prospective artist, the student and to assisting them in the development of their creative talents. However we cannot provide efficient and worthwhile supports until we first evaluate the level of interest the level of participation and the level of material need in the musical sector."

There is quite a lot of good work going on in music education in the schools of Longford but all too often it falls to the personal and professional commitment and initiative of individual principals and teachers. There is a complete lack of co ordination, material resources and follow on supports for students. The County Arts Office hopes that by evaluating the experiences of Fun Trad traditional music pilot programme in the early half of the year and the classical harp pilot programme in the latter half of the year, it will provide a more coherent and detailed picture of the landscape of music education in Longford.

**Ends**

**20/12/12**