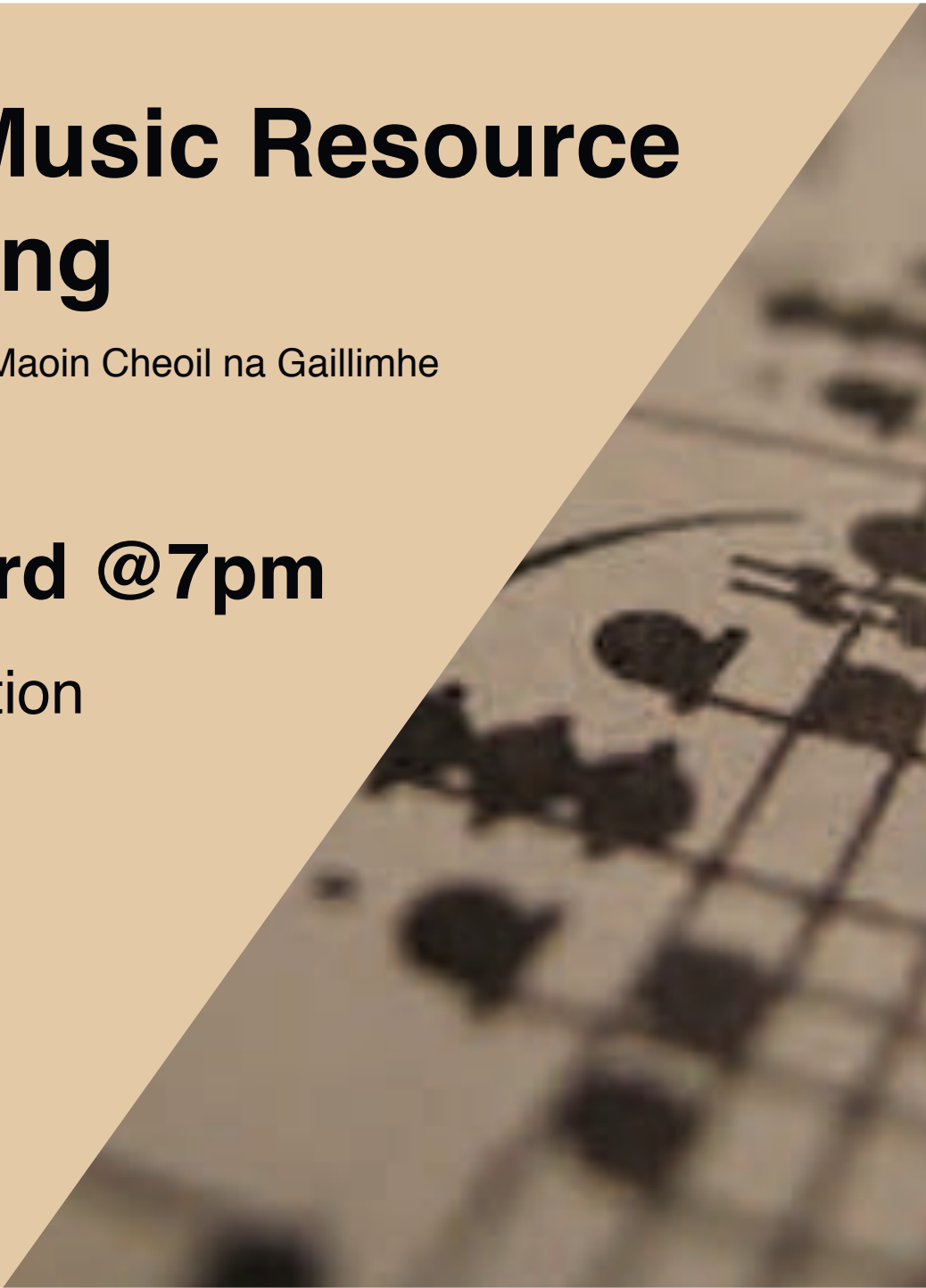


City Music Resource Evening

Presented by Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe

Feb 23rd @7pm

Presentation
National
School



“The purpose of music is to understand better: To evolve and expand our inner world. Legends of many people’s deem music to be of divine origin; thus, when we have reached the boundaries of human understanding, music points beyond, into a world that cannot be explored but merely guessed at.”

————— *Zoltan Kodaly, 1944*



John O'Connor

PhD, DMus, MusD, FRIAM, LRAM, ARCM, LRSM

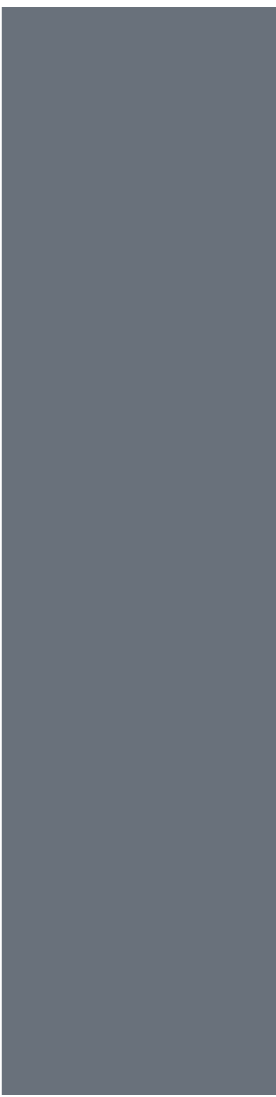
Artistic Director, Dublin International Piano Competition

Distinguished Artist in Residence, Professor of Music and Chair of the Piano Division,
Shenandoah Conservatory at Shenandoah

University, Winchester VA Professor of Piano, Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory
of Music, Toronto

International Visiting Artist, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin

Visiting Professor, Showa University of Music, Japan



I am very pleased to have been asked to act as Patron for Galway School of Music, Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe. Throughout my career I have been a strong advocate for the development of music nationally, but in particular in relation to Galway. I have had the great pleasure of performing to audiences in Galway over the years, and worked to help many of the teachers, so I am keenly aware that there is a great love of music here. This city has such a vibrant and diverse artistic culture, that the absence of a developed music infrastructure has, to date, been deeply felt. But I am happy to note how that is now undergoing a process of change.

I was delighted to be a part of the advisory team that, earlier this year, advocated for a degree in music in NUIG. With Galway set to become European Capital of Culture in 2020, and the resultant spotlight this will throw upon the city's artistic institutions, the need for space for a fully dedicated school of music in the city should be a priority.

It is with some satisfaction then that I note how Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe have laid out their agenda for the development of music across the city. Starting with early years learning and literacy programmes in primary schools, to later instrumental training, they have clear and particular ideas of how to build a strong demand for, and deliver quality music education. They have a network of international training and development programs to ensure that teaching standards are properly maintained and delivered to the students in their care. In short they have started something of quality and promise that deserves support and recognition at every level.

I, for one, am happy to offer my ongoing support and best wishes to all at Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe for the work they are doing.

*Sincerely
John O'Connor*

Sometime
before
Christmas
I wrote a
Facebook
post

detailing the annual spend on sports infrastructure in the country and then drew a comparison with the arts, more specifically music in Galway over the past 30 or so years. The figures are, as you might imagine, only on one side of the ledger, with music education infrastructure enjoying a total of zero funding.

That post went viral and 11,500 Galway people engaged with it. So on the strength of that I decided to set up meetings with politicians to see what their opinion was in relation to all of this. A number of conversations later and I realised that there was a total lack of awareness of the current situation. But there was also a willingness to engage with it providing that it was not a lone effort by a single politician to raise the issue once more a government level. Subsequent conversations with other people in the city has elicited a similar response and a willingness to meet and try to move the agenda forward on all of this.

The question of where we are is at the core of this. In another 2 years Galway will become the European Capital of Culture. As it does so we are all acutely aware of the lack of appropriate facilities. To their immense credit those who drove the project forward successfully argued that the currency of Galway was not in its institutions but in its people. I would agree with that but that does not make the situation any more bearable.

We are largely a voluntary community. By that I mean that much of what happens would never take place without a few driven individuals who work far beyond the levels we could ever reasonably expect and have such vision and energy that they drag a crew of people in their wake. Very few people working in the arts in Galway make a sustainable living. And it seems utterly reckless to rely on the effort of such individuals to sustain a level of public service.

So as the 2020 deadline approaches, we will not have a concert space in which to present beautiful acoustic concerts, should there be any. There are no dance facilities that offer safe flooring for performers to work or rehearse upon. There isn't a physical school of music to house and develop the creativity of the students of Galway. The purpose of this is not to concentrate on the failure of provision but to ask the simple question of 'if not now, then when?'

Concert Program



Oisín Kerans (Violin): Sarabande in D Minor by J.S.Bach

Oisín Kerans is a 1st year student in NUIG. He is also studying to take his Diploma examination in Violin this summer. He was the first recipient of the MCnG prize. He took distinction in all of his examinations with the RIAM and was a repeated High Achiever. Oisín is also an accomplished traditional fiddler.

Gordon O'Connor (Flute): Sonata for Solo Flute in A Minor by J.S. Bach

Gordon O'Connor is currently in final preparations for his Diploma in Flute playing. He is a recipient of the MCnG prize and of late has had the opportunity to work with Sir James Galway. He plays with a number of Orchestras including the CBOI.



Amar Debiasi (Piano): Etude in A Minor by A. Khachaturian

Amar Debiasi is a young pianist who has been studying in MCnG since the beginning of his learning. He is the recipient of the MCnG Junior Prize and has repeatedly won in external competitions. This year at age 10 he won the under 12 and under 14 competitions as well as being awarded his most promising young pianist in the Limerick Feis.

Laoise McMullin (Piano) Sonata in D major by J. Haydn 1st Mvt. Quartet

Laoise McMullin is after securing a place for the degree program in RIAM and will commence her studies with Prof Therese Fahy in Sept. Also a winner of the MCnG prize which she qualified for on two instruments, also being a student of Violin. She has competed successfully including a number of 1st prizes in competition on piano in Dublin, Sligo and Limerick Fesieanna. She has played with a number of Orchestras, including the CBOI and the MCnG ensemble of which she was Leader.



Dr Ramin Haghjoo (Piano): Concerto for three violins in F Major by A. Vivaldi, 2nd and 3rd mvts.

Dr Ramin Haghjoo teaches piano in MCnG. He is a graduate of the university of California where he received a M.M.in Piano, an M.A. in Music Theory, and a Ph.D. in Music Theory, all of which were funded by a full scholarship and full fellowships. Since arriving in Galway he has become one of the most sought after accompanists and regularly features in concerts in all of the cities locations. He also conducts the Augustinian Choir and is principal conductor of the MCnG ensemble.



David Clarke (Violin): Concerto for three violins in F Major by A. Vivaldi, 2nd and 3rd mvts.

Mr. David Clarke is originally from England and is a Violinist and teacher in MCnG. He has attended training in the Colourstrings method in Hungary with Geza Szilvay. He is currently the leader of the Corrib String Quartet with whom he has entertained a very considerable number of celebrities and political figures.

Gergely Kuklis (Violin): Concerto for three violins in F Major by A. Vivaldi, 2nd and 3rd mvts.

Mr Gergely Kuklis hails from Hungary and made the move to Galway in Jan of this year. In his time in Hungary, he has worked as a professional Violinist at the very highest level. He was leader of a number of prominent orchestras and has played with virtually every conductor and soloist of note in Europe over a distinguished career. His work is already making a serious impact on the cultural landscape of Galway.



Hugh Kelly (Violin): Concerto for three violins in F Major by A. Vivaldi, 2nd and 3rd mvts.

Mr Hugh Kelly is Director of school at MCnG. He teaches Violin, Viola and Double Bass. He holds full professional development in Colourstrings at both Kindergarten and String levels. He has won national competitions as a composer and has written for stage and Television. He was Conductor of NUIG orchestra for over 13 years was leader of the Oriel String Quartet for 12 years.

David Szabo (Piano): Prelude by J.S. Bach arr. Siloti

Mr David Szabo hails from Hungary where he graduated from the Ferenc Liszt Academy with distinction. He came to Ireland in 2011 to study in University of Limerick and the following year was asked to teach in the faculty. He is a fine prizewinning concert pianist and has played all over Europe to particular acclaim. In addition to his piano talent he also holds major prizes in Math and Chess.



Robert Solyom (Saxophone): Oye Como Va by Tito Puente

Mr Robert Solyom hails from Hungary where he also graduated from the Ferenc Liszt Academy with a Masters in Clarinet and teaching. A performer with years of experience playing right across Europe, he also has a large pedigree teaching in Hungary and Ireland. His primary instrument is Clarinet but he is proficient at Flute, Oboe and Saxophone as well.

State Provision for Music. A general overview.



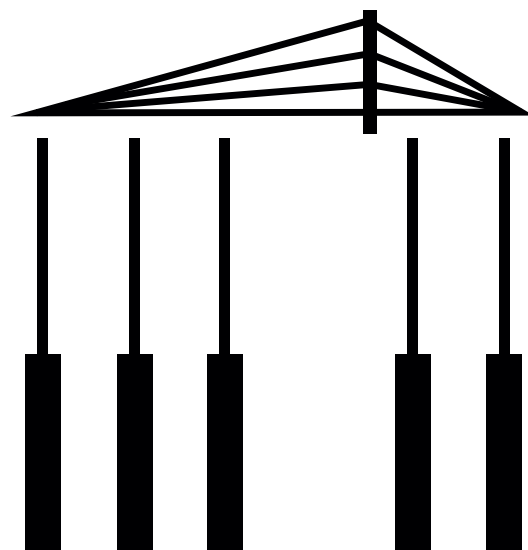
A school of music is an idea that musical excellence is an essential part of the cultural life of a people. That excellence comes from understanding and education. Unlike some of our European partners, who place music squarely within the school curriculum and provide tuition at primary and secondary level for students, in Ireland that provision does not exist and so schools of music are an essential requirement if we are to sustain a meaningful with this art form.

Music in Ireland has always been an intimate affair. Our traditional heritage is one that is part of the Irish global brand. But it also speaks to the heart of the communities from which it derives its strength. Like our language it has regional bias that developed from local practise that then shaped a unique response from musicians. So, we can speak of the great east Clare fiddle tradition and weight the merits of this against the might of the Sliabh Luchra tradition. The commonality comes from the fact that it is grounded in practical music making. It is a beautifully generous idea that looks to preserve centuries of music, handed from one generation to the next to preserve and most of all, to share.

The history of Classical music in Ireland is less linear and is more the subject of colonial interests in the country. This largely represents our link to the larger global community of classical music. It is the point at which we find ourselves looking outward to see where our place in the larger framework exists. However even in this tradition there is a recognised cross-fertilisation between the music of the Baroque masters such as Antonio Vivaldi, and the music of Irish harpers in the 18th century such as Ruairi Dall O Cathain and Turlough O Carolan. But it is not until the 19th century and the establishment of a social class that was capable of supporting an education in music that we see the formal establishment of colleges devoted to the study of music. Under colonial rule there was the establishment of the Academy of Music (later to have the 'Royal' added) in Dublin. This was followed by the Cork Municipal School of Music (now CIT) and later by the Dublin School of Music (now DIT). These remain the principal training schools in the country. The RIAM is perhaps considered the flagship school and has done huge work throughout the country to develop standards through its external exam system which caters to 40,000 students each year.

The only addition the Irish government has made to these state funded schools is the Limerick school of music which is run by the ETB board and was set up in the 1960's. The first three colleges cater to students through primary, secondary and third level. Limerick does not currently have a third level component.

Of recent times the state has entered into a relationship with the band U2 to create a fund to develop seed programs for music around the country. Galway city and county along with Roscommon were successful in securing funding through this program. It is hoped that in 2019 that process will begin to unfold in the city. The fund means that up to €200,000 of new money will be available to develop projects in the city. This is exciting and there are some interesting projects in the bid that harness the resources of disparate groups to bring a level of provision to areas suffering from a lack at the moment. Not to put a damper on what it is, but simply to add some perspective. The money on offer is finite. So, if the numbers grow and develop as should be anticipated, the money does not. Secondly the amount in question is to develop new projects and may not be used to add value to current teaching. And lastly the amount in question will not support the need of a major urban centre like Galway. The sheer levels of scale involved preclude this. That said, this money will make a difference to many young children for whom the possibility of music learning has not be available before and it is an excellent beginning.



Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe

Though there are a range of music services and individuals working in Galway for the betterment of students, we do not have sufficient knowledge of their practises to speak for them during this presentation, therefore the following is given as a singular example of what is available and is not intended to exclude any other people or bodies.

Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe operates school of music in the proper sense of the word. There is an integrated policy that is shaped by the need to provide a comparable learning experience for students in Galway to those offered by the larger state schools. There are two distinct if related sections to the school.

Our instrumental directed teaching that takes place in the Presentation National School and our outreach literacy program which operates in 12 schools in the city and county. The graphic below presents the network of people and institutions we have or are working with in a professional capacity, and represent our link to the world around us. Without these connections, there would be very limited access for students to the kind of excellence we want to imbue them with.

We consider these links a fundamental requirement for any teaching institution.



In School



Learning starts at kindergarten level to provide children with the core skills of music that will help them later when they take up an instrument. This is called Colourstrings and it is an integrated learning program from Finland that develops from kindergarten through to later instrumental playing. It is also the program that we have adapted for use in Primary schools to re-introduce music literacy there. Instrumental learning starts at about 6-7 years of age. Classes are currently offered in Strings, Piano, and Woodwind. We do not teach Brass instruments at the moment because the need for that is being absorbed by the Brass Bands in the city who have done a wonderful job in this respect for generations. In addition to instruments these children continue to learn their advanced colourstrings training, in conjunction with the Music is Fun program by Sr Karol O Connell of Kylemore abbey, in specially tailored lessons that we provide for free.

Standard lessons follow for students, including adults, right throughout the week with theory available to all ages and abilities. The language of music is the core of what we want to teach and the instruments are the way we share it.

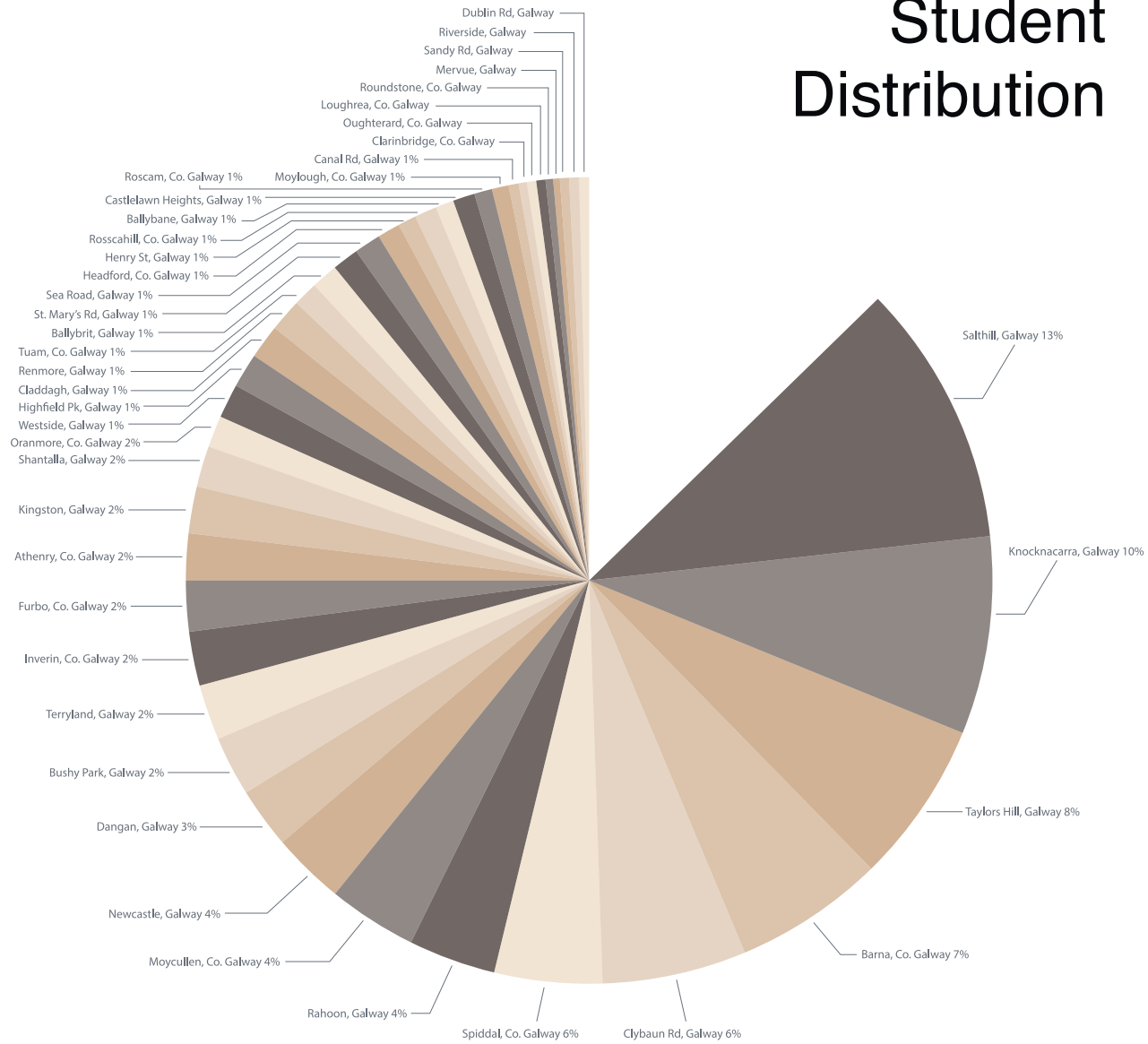
We have three performing ensembles and these are structured along age lines. There is the young string orchestra, the older orchestral ensemble and the adult string orchestra.

Workshops and concerts are integrated into every stage of learning. This year alone there have been workshops with Professor Therese Fahy in the RIAM and Sir James Galway flautist, who is one of the greatest musical ambassadors ever to come from Ireland. In school we have had three exceptional concerts by visiting musicians and there was also a collaboration with the GJF during which we ran jazz workshops for students. But students also perform on a very regular basis and on average we host about 15 concerts a year for them to play in. All of this culminates in the MCnG prize which is a performance assessment and competition run in May every year and which carries substantial bursaries for the winners to help them advance their learning.

Since opening the school there have been 5 advanced students that have successfully taken Professional Diplomas in their instruments and two more currently in that stream. In the Colourstrings outreach we are also engaged in the training of teachers and to date a further 7 primary school teachers are now fully qualified in Colourstrings kindergarten teaching while again another two in the current stream hoping to complete their work in the coming months. For the 18 members currently on staff we have enabled them through partial funding, to take over 50 CPD courses in the past 5 years.

Lastly, we are delighted to announce this evening, the establishment of more formal links with the Royal Academy of Music. Under the new 'Connect' program. This will see staff and students of MCMG engage in more two-way traffic with the Academy as we access some of their resources and expertise. It is a thrill to be able to offer new progression pathways through this program and we would like to acknowledge huge contribution made by RIAM in this regard.

Student Distribution

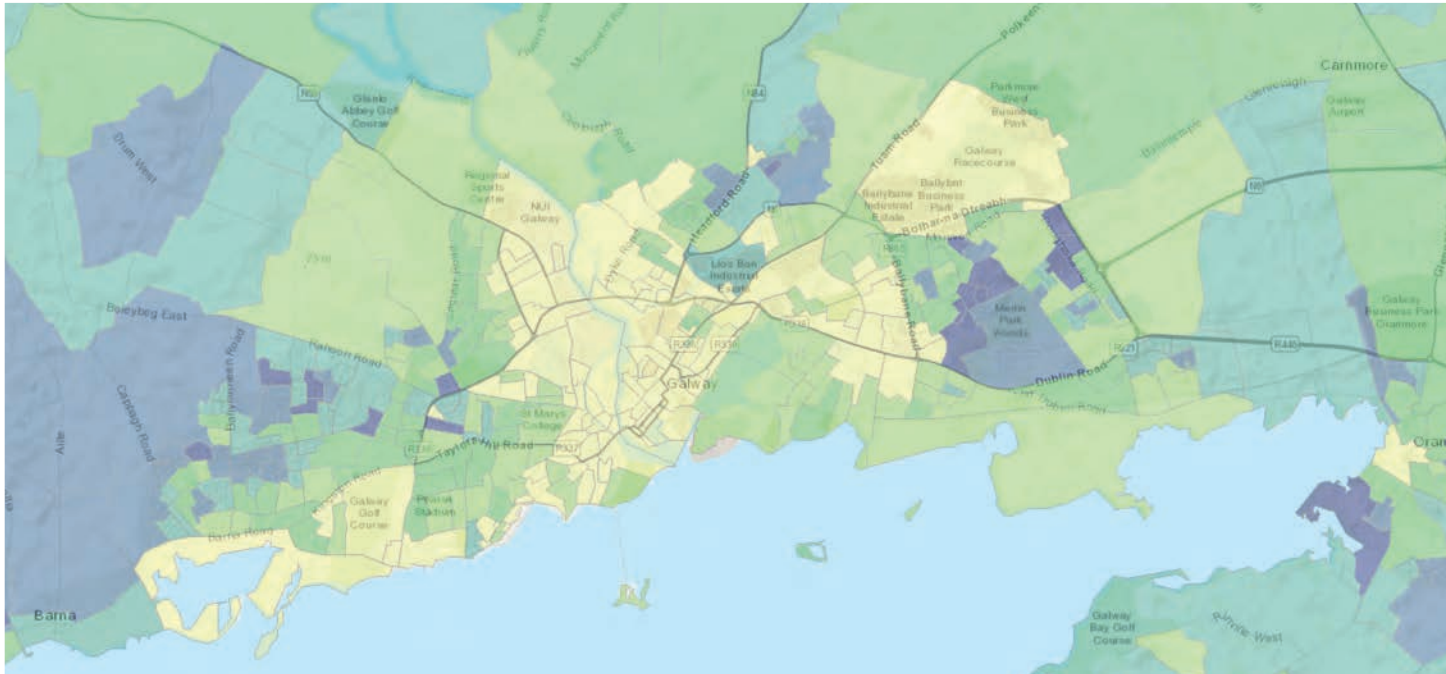


Outreach

This is the Colourstrings primary school project. In essence, it is largely the same as the class we teach in-school but it has been age adapted and has a clear focus on respecting and engaging with the music curriculum. In its final stages of development now it in fact covers every aspect of the primary curriculum in a very simple and approachable manner.

It starts as a mentoring program, by which we send a trained teacher to the school to deliver a program of lessons. But they also work with the teacher in the schools to help them to re-engage with music in their classrooms. Then if they wish it those same teachers can come to us for Dept. of Education approved CPD training in the summer months, to learn more about the system and ultimately if they wish to gain a qualification in it that is recognised internationally.

The idea came from studying model schools in England who were using the program, but in fact Irish schools are now leading the way in this because of the involvement of the teaching staff and Irish school children are trained at a much higher standard. In recognition of this level of advancement and the contribution we have made to the thinking around primary education Colourstrings International have agreed to having Hugh Kelly as the Irish teacher trainer in the method. The fundamental idea behind the whole program is to create a young musically literate population of children, all of whom have the potential to go on the advanced learning. The success of the learning is now one of the greatest challenges the school faces because the demand for additional services cannot be met in their entirety at the moment.



Unique Geography of Galway

The unique geography of Galway and the way in which the population is developing will require looking at in the context of provision. As the city empties out into the suburbs on the east and western sides of the city there is a difficulty of access arising. The main arteries through the city are in a state of total congestion. The idea that you could locate most of the industry in a city on one side of the river and, at the time, most of the workforce on the other side was a severe lack of urban planning for which we are now paying a heavy price. There is no flow across the bridge for tuition as you will see from the school graphic, because the effort in time far outweighs the possible benefits. We already know anecdotally of parents who have tried this and will have spent an hour and forty five minutes travelling to and from a thirty minute lesson. If the child is engaging with more than just the weekly lesson, which is what we recommend, they might need to return for theory classes or ensemble playing and then the simple truth is that it becomes unworkable.

With the explosion in numbers of young people in areas east of the city there is now a need to look at the two sides carefully in any development plan. So at the current time the only viable option is to bi-locate services on both sides of the city and try to create balance of resources and facilities.

With a population under 18 of somewhere in the region of 16,000 young people and growing, the need for long term planning is paramount. The GRETB collated figures last year of music provision in the city and arrived at a total of about 9%. The means that 91 children in every hundred currently do not have access to music learning. That leaves us with a figure of about 14,500 children with no access to formal music education. The thing is that even if the figures were twice as good and 18% of children had access, it falls so very short of what is considered acceptable for a modern urban city that wishes to be seen as a cultural capital.

To give an example of the issues surrounding planning for this. We currently teach in the Presentation National school and it is a very good working relationship. Our student numbers are approaching 400 per week and it is likely that we could accommodate about 450 in any given week and then the facilities will not allow us to take any more. To bring ourselves into line with European or Scandinavian standards of provision we would require a necklace of about 10 primary schools spread across the city. We would also require about 100 fully professional teachers living and working in the city to provide this tuition. That means that we need to find a way to attract high quality educators to come and work in Galway, which at its simplest means finding a way to provide them with a living wage, possibilities of career advancement and appropriate working facilities. Currently none of those provisions exist.

Living Wage

A teacher entering a comparable institution in any part of this country who on contract works full-time hours can expect a starting wage of about €35,000 per annum. Over time this wage can grow incrementally to something in the region of €65,000 after about 20 years of service. And this model takes into consideration the idea that learning is ongoing and a person with 20 years of experiences brings a wider range of abilities to work with them daily.

The standard part time wage in Galway lies somewhere between €33 and €40 per hour depending on the nature of the work contract. A full time working week in a college of music is somewhere between 16 and 22 hours depending on how admin is accounted for. At the outer end of this if a teacher in Galway works for the full 22 weeks and in our case is scheduled for a 32 week teaching year then the range of income they can earn lies between €17,000 and €26,500. This wage does not increase over time as it is directly funded by fees taken and is without subsidy of any kind. In essence this means that anyone who makes a commitment to work in the city and to bring comparable skills to those found anywhere on this island must accept in doing so that they will never achieve career advancement and never qualify for simple basics of living like a home mortgage.

At MCnG we recognise that there are compromises to be made for living and working in Galway. In return for service given we have invested heavily in the training of staff members. Workshops, CPD courses, higher qualifications. All geared towards creating a highly motivated and skilled staff. The harsh reality that we have also got to accept is that the higher the skill and qualification level we achieve for them the greater the chance that they will then leave Galway to take up properly paid jobs elsewhere.

What is it We Are Asking For

1. Simply we are looking for support for the idea of developing the current services further to reach more children. We are looking for capital. Both to add resources, and also to create more sustainable teaching positions. This need is immediate and should happen as part of the process to set up permanent structures.

2. We are saying that planning and development now will offset the problems we will face later in trying to access resources for a young population that has grown even further.

3. There should be meaningful dialogue now about the need to locate these services in a way that reflects the geographical layout of the city

4. There needs to be a discussion around governance because Galway's specific case requires a flexible approach with proven expertise in Early Learning, Primary and Second level music teaching and most likely a Third level component in time.

5. There needs to be unity of purpose. Local needs can be argued for at National Level but only once the local representatives in Council, Education and Business are seen to be driving it.



“Every time a child enters my room to begin learning the violin, I look at this child as if he/she was going to be the next great soloist.”

The greatest injustice perpetrated upon music is the notion that it is a talent. It does no service whatsoever to the young child who embarks on a course of music learning at the age of 5 or 6 and adheres to the disciplines and challenges presented to them over a 15 year period to then have their work and effort ascribed to this notion of talent.

By way of proof we can only offer the fact that in the 8 years we are working in Galway there has not been a single student that we could not teach because of a lack of talent. It is not talent that creates a musician it is inspiration and motivation to want to engage with it. It is the joy of giving voice to inner creativity and to experience the pleasure of mastery of a medium that is uniquely universal.

Geza Szilvay once said that every time a child enters his room to begin learning the violin he looks at this child as if he/ she was going to be the next great soloist. Every single child deserves this of him. It is his mantra and one that drove him to share his teaching methodology with all of us. In his first class there were 68 young violinists. 59 of them went on to become full professional violinists with many of the them then and now entering the upper echelons of the world's elite.

Every single child we take in to our school deserves no less than that from us. Not every child will want to become a full-time musician, but we must never be the reason they do not realise their full potential. Nothing but the best is good enough for a child's education. Under resourced or incomplete or inadequate teaching is almost worse than no teaching at all because it frustrates and limits children at the most precious part of their education. Amar Debiasi is at the forefront of the younger generation in the school at the moment. But he is one of about 20 other young musicians at his age whose abilities offer the most exciting possibilities and planning is already taking place around them.

Our dearest wish is that when you hear this music made so beautifully the message is not lost. Amar and his generation do not belong to Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe. They belong to you. They represent the future we are all creating. One in which beauty, creativity and excellence will still have a vital place. Damaging this has serious repercussions for us all, in that a people with impoverished imaginative abilities has a static future, because the possibility of change cannot be imagined.



Notes

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