Welcome to Spéis, the online bulletin of the International Council for Traditional Music Ireland. Our members have certainly been productive since our summer issue, and this, our sixth volume of the bulletin, provides updates and details on our activities and the many upcoming events on the ICTM calendar.

Dr. Catherine Foley brings us news from the 27th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology, which took place last July in the University of Limerick. We are delighted to announce the publication of Dr. Foley’s book, *Irish Traditional Step Dancing in North Kerry: a Contextual and Structural Analysis*, published by North Kerry Literary Trust Limited.

In light of the abundance of new recordings made by our members, this issue has a special section dedicated to CD releases. Also included is what can only be called conference reviews with a little extra: Dr. Ioannis Tsioulakis writes about the Mediterranean Music Studies Symposium and Jérémy Tétrault-Farber reviews the Second Canadian Oireachtas.

We have a lot in store over the coming months, including the second edition of ICTM Ireland’s online journal, *Ethnomusicology Ireland*, edited by Dr. Colin Quigley. *Notes on Notes*, a performance day in DkIT will take place in November and promises to be an educational and enjoyable day for all.

The committee is busy preparing for the Joint Annual Conference with the BFE and we hope to see as many of you there as possible. The conference theme is *Ethnomusicology in the Digital Age* and will take place in Queen’s University, Belfast, April 4th – 7th. Everyone and consequentially, every musical tradition is affected by digital technology nowadays, so even if you don’t consider your research pertinent to the theme, it probably is! Details on these events and more can be found inside.

Sheryl Lynch
The 27th Symposium of the International Council for Traditional Music's (ICTM) Study Group on Ethnochoreology

Catherine Foley

This event was hosted by the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, from Sunday 22nd – Sunday 29th July, 2012. Over 100 delegates came from Malaysia, the USA, Canada, Taipei, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Turkey, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Romania, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Ireland.

The year significantly marked the 50th anniversary since the foundation of the study group on ethnochoreology and was celebrated with the pioneers of the study group and a special dance concert funded by the Arts Council and the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. The concert featured alumni of the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance programme at the University of Limerick and Ériu Dance Company. The Local Arrangements Committee included Dr Catherine Foley (Chair), Dr Mats Melin, Dr Orfhlaith Ni Bhriain, and Dr Colin Quigley.
Many of our members have been busy recording! So, we’ve decided to dedicate a section to all of the new CDs that ICTM members have spent time creating.

**Midleton Rare by John Cronin and Daithí Kearney**

For the past few years, accordion player John Cronin and banjo player Daithí Kearney have enjoyed playing a regular session in Wallis’ Bar in Midleton. This recording is a snap shot of the session in Midleton but draws heavily on the music of Sliabh Luachra, and in particular, accordion players Johnny O’Leary, Denis Doody, Jackie Daly and John Brosnan. It also features music sourced to John’s father DD, a fiddle player from Glenamuckla in the parish of Newmarket, Co. Cork.

Described by Siobhán Long of *The Irish Times* as “A clear-headed addition to the Sliabh Luachra canon”, the recording and sleeve notes reflect the research into and continuing relevance of regional identities and musical traditions in Ireland.

Eamonn Cotter’s new CD *The Knotted Chord*, was recently launched by Áine Hensey, at Scoil Samraidh Willie Clancy. The material for this is varied: traditional tunes, some new compositions e.g. by Paddy O’Brien, Liz Carroll and James Kelly. He also composed two new pieces: *The Steinway Queen*, a hornpipe, and *The Balleen Jig*. Fiddle player Eileen O’Brien did a string arrangement of the traditional descriptive piece *Nóra Críonna*. Eileen and his daughters Gráinne and Sadhbh play with him on that track. Geraldine Cotter also plays on this album.

Accompaniment is provided on guitar by Garry O’Briain. He plays on flutes in the keys of C, D, and Eb, which he manufactured in his workshop in Kilmaley and also on an antique flute in the key of F. Other guest musicians include fiddle player Maeve Donnelly and accordion player Charlie Harris. Martin Hayes describes his music as “grounded in a deep knowledge and respect for the music of his native Co. Clare. His vast experience in playing for dancers, and his love of the subtle elements of the music, have combined to make him one of the most respected flute players in Irish music today”.

Eamonn Cotter's photograph on the lower left.
Michelle Mulcahy’s new album, *Suaimhneas*, released under the Cló Iar-Chonnacht record label, is her début solo recording, and though she is known as a player of many instruments this album is dedicated solely to her harp playing. The album which was just released in July 2012, is already receiving worldwide acclaim and rave reviews: “Her revolutionary style on the harp is scintillating - played with power and panache, no concession to the complexity of the instrument, confirming her as one of the most significant musicians redefining harp at present”- *The Living Tradition*.

Siobhán Long praises the CD in her *Irish Times* Review: “Seed, breed and generation are writ large across every tune and set of this finely calibrated album. Multi-instrumentalist Michelle Mulcahy has chosen to focus on the harp for this, her solo debut, having already stilled listeners by her playing of fiddle, concertina, piano and accordion in the company of her sister, Louise, and father, Mick, on previous albums. As its name suggests (it means “serenity”), this thoughtful collection reflects the subtlety of much of our traditional music”.

Caitlín Nic Gabhann’s debut album *Caitlín*

Three times winner of the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil on concertina, Caitlín is a regular performer at festivals and in concert halls from North America to Asia. She is also an accomplished dancer and in 2009, joined Riverdance as a troupe dancer. She is an award winner in the University College Cork Music Department, where she graduated in 2009 with first class honors, and she returned to UCC in 2011 to complete a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology. Writing tunes since the age of ten, her compositions have been performed in the Cork Opera House and The National Concert Hall, Dublin.

She teaches concertina annually at summer and winter schools in Ireland, Europe and USA and has performed with the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet, Paddy Keenan, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Cherish The Ladies, The Kilfenora Ceili Band and for Presidents and Royalty around the world. This is her début solo CD.

Connections - A participatory performance project in Irish traditional music, song and dance

Michelle Finnerty

Michelle Finnerty, research student at Department of Music, UCC recently completed an arts and health project in collaboration with Cork based Irish traditional musicians, Aideen Curtin, Karl Nesbitt and Tommie Cunniffe. The project was supported by The Arts Council of Ireland and Cork Arts and Health Programme (CAHP).

The Connections Project is a collaborative creative arts project which aimed to facilitate the engagement of Irish traditional artists with members of the local community health care settings in Cork city. Through the use of music, song, movement, oral narrative and sound technology, the project aimed to elevate the expressions of members of the community contexts through creative practice. The project culminated in semi-formal performances that reflected the various musical collaborations between the artists and community members developed throughout the sessions.

Member Activities

Dr. Deirdre Ní Chonghaile has been awarded a two-year Postdoctoral Research Fellowship by the Irish Research Council. She will be based at the Moore Institute at NUI Galway where she will be working with Dr. Lillis Ó Laoire on an edition of songs composed in the Aran Islands, which will be supported by accompanying CDs/mp3s and by a partner website.

Contact: aransongs@gmail.com

Library of Congress webcast


Publications


Conference paper

DkIT Trad Week 20th-24th November 2012

Dr. Daithí Kearney

The Section of Music at Dundalk Institute of Technology will host a series of Irish traditional music events this November. Featuring prominently will be the ‘Cosgrove fiddle’, on which Michael Coleman recorded the famous Tarbolton set, which is on loan to the Institute for this semester. The Institute will also team up with ICTM Ireland to host students from other third level institutions for a series of workshops on performance in Irish traditional music entitled ‘Notes on Notes’.

The Section of Music is home to the Ceol Oirghialla Traditional Ensemble, a group of over forty musicians drawn from the DkIT community who perform at a variety of events during the year. Their concert on Thursday 22nd November will focus on the music of Sligo born fiddle players Michael Coleman and John Joe Gardiner. Coleman (1891-1945) is one of the most revered fiddle players in Irish music and spent most of his life in New York where he recorded some of the most influential records of Irish traditional music. Gardiner (1893-1979) was a contemporary of Coleman’s from Sligo who migrated to Dundalk and greatly influenced the local music scene.

Events will start with a session in The Spirit Store on Tuesday at 9.30pm. On Wednesday, students from the Institute will interact with students from local schools to improve awareness of local Irish traditional music. The Thursday Masterclass at the Institute will be facilitated by renowned fiddle player John Carty followed by a concert in the MacAnna Theatre featuring Ceol Oirghialla. On Saturday, students from around the country will converge on Dundalk for a series of workshops with experienced facilitators and producers in association with ICTM Ireland. Performers will also share their experiences in a round table discussion.

In 2010 the Section of Music moved into the newly refurbished Carroll Building on the DkIT Campus. This €38 million state-of-the-art music and creative media centre includes dedicated facilities for students in the Section. Students in Music and Creative Media now avail of new, purpose-built performance spaces and practice rooms and fully equipped labs and recording studios. The building also houses a recital room, dance movement room, Radio Studio, a TV Studio, a Screening Room, an Avid teaching lab and numerous Editing and Animation Suites. Students have access to new Mac Pro and iMac labs with a wide range of professional multimedia, audio and editing software.

Irish traditional music is a core element of activities in the Section of Music. All music students study and learn to play Irish traditional music in first and second year of the BA (Hons) Applied Music. Many continue to study through third and fourth year and currently we have a number of postgraduate students in the area.

For further information contact Dr Daithí Kearney, daithi.kearney@dkit.ie or Ann Coffey, ann.coffey@dkit.ie, or telephone 042-9370280. For future events check out music.dkit.ie.
2013 Joint Annual Meeting

British Forum for Ethnomusicology and ICTM-Ireland

4 – 7 April 2013 Queen’s University Belfast

CALL FOR PAPERS

Theme: Ethnomusicology in the Digital Age

Increasingly, digital technologies are mediating people’s engagement with music, posing new challenges to traditional ethnomusicological orientations. The theme for the 2013 conference, ‘Ethnomusicology in the Digital Age’, aims to confront these challenges by addressing the ways in which the digital revolution is affecting how music is conceptualised, constructed and used both by individuals and groups. Possible questions for exploring how ethnomusicological concerns might be directed toward the analysis of digital mediations include:

• How are digital technologies being used in the emergence, development and dissemination of new musical genres?

• How are traditional genres being affected by these same media?

• What impact are digital technologies having on the ways people listen to music?

• How does music mediate the formation of internet communities, and to what extent does it sustain them? How are these social spheres creating new musical identities?

• How are internet technologies affecting the trans-national flows of music?

• How is music mediating social networking?

• What legal and/or ethical implications do ethnomusicologists need to consider in research in the realm of digital technologies?

• How have ethnomusicologists explored digital media in their research, and what untapped potential might there still be for the discipline?

Keynote Speaker: The conference organisers are very pleased to announce that Professor Leslie C. Gay, Jr., has agreed to deliver the Keynote Speech at the conference.

Proposals are invited for:

• Papers (20 mins + 5-10 mins for questions)

• Organised sessions (3 or 4 linked papers around a theme, 1½ or 2 hours)
• Round table discussion sessions (discussion topic, 3-4 shorter presentations not exceeding 15 mins each, chaired discussion, total 1½ or hours)

• Poster/digital display material
Proposals should follow the following format to enable them to be reviewed anonymously:

Paper proposals: Name of proposer, Email address, Paper title, Abstract (not exceeding 300 words). The name of the presenter should not appear in the abstract.

Organised session proposals: Name of proposer, Names of other contributors, Email address of proposer and other participants, Abstract for session, Abstract for each contributor. Abstracts should not include the names of any of the contributors.

Roundtable proposals: Name of proposer (assumed to be the chair unless stated otherwise), Names of other contributors, Email address of proposer and other participants, Abstract for the roundtable, Abstract for each contributor. Abstracts should not include the names of any of the contributors.

Poster/Digital display: We hope to be able to support a number of digital displays of work in the same area as the book displays/refreshments, enabling work in progress to be shared using video/image as well as other media. A brief description of the material and technical requirements should be submitted for this.

The deadline for the submission of proposals is 15 December 2012. Successful applicants will be notified by mid January. Anyone requiring an earlier confirmation date, please contact the conference organisers so that special arrangements can be made. Please note that all presenters must be members of EITHER the BFE or the ICTM-Ireland at the time of the conference. Contact the conference organizers via s.reily@qub.ac.uk

For more information on location, travel etc., visit the BFE Conference Website

Conference Committee: Suzel Reily (chair), Ioannis Tsoulakis (ICTM-IE rep), Noel Lobley (BFE rep); Local Organisers: Gordon Ramsey and Ray Casserly
**Mediterranean Music Studies Symposium: some inspirations for Irish ethnomusicology?**

Ioannis Tsioulakis

‘The Irish are a bit like us’, every Greek compatriot rushes to tell me whenever I mention that I live and teach in Ireland. ‘Must be because they are also surrounded by sea’, some would explain, or ‘because their land was also occupied/colonised/enslaved for centuries’ others might add. ‘They, too, have a strong musical tradition that refuses to die out’, a musician recently told me. Despite their romantic disposition and lack of experiential basis, these observations tend to reveal some intriguing correlations. In early 2012, I had the pleasure of teaching an MA course entitled ‘Music and Identity in the Mediterranean’ at University College Dublin. The students were always quick to point out similarities with Ireland which went beyond the usual common themes within ethnomusicological thought; similarities that would suggest the existence of fundamental sociocultural parallels between the island and the (somewhat imagined) area of the Mediterranean. With this presupposition in mind, in July 2012 I attended the **Symposium of Mediterranean Music Studies**, held in Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal.

Organised by Marcello Sorce-Keller, Caroline Bithell and Kevin Dawe, and hosted by Salwa El-Shawan Castello-Branco, the three-day symposium explored the theme of ‘Musical insularity: how it favours conservation, how it triggers innovation’. Through a series of very current, thought-provoking presentations, three sub-themes seemed to emerge very clearly: the place of tradition in a cosmopolitan/globalised world, the challenges and merits of multi-cultural co-existence, and the meaning of ‘islandness’ in musicality.

*Tradition*, this amalgamation of surviving and invented traits, intertwined with historical transformations, conflicting memories and contemporary claims, serves as a starting point for diverse music practices around the Mediterranean. In Crete, it becomes synonymous with claims of local patriotism and mythical bravery (Maria Hnaraki), while in Andalucía it serves as an eclectic and hybrid art form and simultaneously a terrain for contesting ethnic identities (Loren Chuse). Folk music revivals around the area also exemplify a striking variety of intentions. The almost complete regeneration of the Calabrian lira brings it out of its previous isolation and makes it a symbol of new popular music-making fruitful for all kinds of commercial and touristic utilisation (Goffredo Plastino), the Majorcan bagpipes fuel world-fusion experimentations alongside political claims of independence and anti-capitalism (Cassandre Balosso-Bardin), and the Maltese ghana performance is transferred to Australia to serve as a facilitator of nostalgic migrant sociability (Andrew Pace). Musical practices, however, can also become marginalised when they are deemed politically undesirable as was the case of *Serenata Korçare* during Albanian insular socialism (Mikaela Minga), or when the cosmopolitan imaginaries out of which they sprang are now regarded with scepticism in the dawn of economic/political depression, as my paper on Athenian *ethnic-jazz* attempted to argue.
Multicultural coexistence, sometimes acknowledged and celebrated while others ignored or even hidden, also emerges as a shared generative force of many Mediterranean musics. Ruth Davis and Judith R. Cohen explored the striking changes in the visibility of Jewish musicians in different periods of Tunisian and Iberian history.

Similarly, Vanessa Paloma’s discussion of a salvaged early 20th-century songbook from Alcazarquivir, revived the cohabitation of Berber-Jewish, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish communities in Northern Morocco. Jerusalem’s West Wall Plaza is discussed as a sonic illustration of coexistence between the Jewish, Muslim and Christian inhabitants of the city in Abigail Wood’s contribution. Expanding on the criticism against cultural purism, Ed Emery’s paper challenged widespread ethnocentric views within (ethno)musicology that, coupled with the exercise of socio-political power, have often excluded populations and scholarship that does not conform to neat insular categorisations.

Finally, the concept of islandness and its implications on cultural insularity and exchange emerged as a persistent theme. Gail Holst-Warhaft’s paper illustrated how Aegean islands played the role of conduits for the transmission of musical genres from Asia Minor to mainland Greece, thus showing their ‘porous’ and ‘liminal’ nature. Conversely, Mojca Piskor discussed the development of Otočki Rock as an effort to construct a unique perception of Croatian islandness through musical form, and Jorge Castro Ribeiro elaborated on the popularity of mandolin orchestras in Madeira as an expression of insularity and political autonomy. Franco Fabbri’s insightful presentation on Greek island music (and sea transportation!) proposed ‘distributed insularity’ as a concept that might capture the dual nature of seclusion and interconnectedness between island cultures. Finally, Caroline Bithell’s survey of ‘Narratives, Negotiations and Representations in Mediterranean Musics’ touched on the numerous imaginings that (real and metaphorical) islands can attract, in both the Academic and popular discourse.

Marcello Sorce-Keller’s reflections on musical insularity, islands and borders bring us full-circle back to Ireland. Most of the themes explored in Mediterranean Music Studies (and crudely outlined in this short review) can provide fruitful points of comparison for Irish ethnomusicology. Even if Irish people are not necessarily ‘just like us Mediterraneans’, the commonalities generated by Ireland’s geopolitical attributes as an island on the fringes of ‘Europe’ cannot be ignored in either theoretical or cultural levels. If it is true that it is in ‘conditions of insularity [...] where the dynamics of culture change can better be studied and understood’ (Sorce-Keller), then perhaps Irish and Mediterranean ethnomusicology have a lot to learn from each other. After hearing interviews of Majorcan bagpipers who quoted The Chieftains in their musical credo, I think musicians have realised that already.
Second Annual Canadian Oireachtas

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber

In 2006, Cumann na Gaeltachta bought 62 acres of land north of the 401, one of Ontario’s main highways, much like one might buy land for a farm or cottage. Instead the organization set upon creating the first North American Gaeltacht, devoting the land to the Irish language and its indigenous culture. The second annual Canadian Oireachtas (Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada) took place in these picturesque fields along the Salmon River one weekend in July 2012, with the competitions and most of the events on Saturday July 7th.

The Oireachtas featured Irish language drama, singing, storytelling, literature and speaking competitions, as well as music and dancing contests. Dr. Ray Bassett, Ireland’s ambassador to Canada, was in attendance. Respected figures in the Irish traditional arts agreed to serve as judges: Máirín Nic Dhonnchadha, Máirín Uí Chéide, Labhrás Sonáí Choilm Learráí, Mattie Jó Shéamuis Ó Fátharta and Liam Ó Maolaodha. Belfast-born, Toronto-based uilleann piper Steafan Hannigan, and Kingston fiddler Meghan Balogh provided music for the dancing competitions.

Of particular note was a stunningly artful blend of music, storytelling and live painting in the recounting of An Rón Dall (the Blind Seal) by Galway-based theatre troupe Fíbín. A banquet took place at the Days Inn in Kingston that evening, where prizes were distributed and dance, music and craic filled the night. The second Canadian Oireachtas gathered participants and spectators from across North America and Ireland. The sustained success of this event for the second consecutive year is an encouraging sign for the future of Irish culture in North America.
ICTM would like to congratulate those who have recently completed PhD research:

**María Escribano** has completed her PhD thesis with the University of Limerick.

**Title:** Rhythms of Struggle. Recovery, Revival, and Re-Creation of Txalaparta in the Basque Country.

**Supervisors:** Prof. Micheál Ó Súilleabháin and Dr. Colin Quigley.

**Abstract:**

This dissertation, the first extensive academic work on Txalaparta as a social phenomenon, explores the ongoing revival and construction of this tradition and percussion instrument amid the Basque struggle for self-determination. Based on ethnographic work mainly undertaken from 1998 to 2006 in the capital of the Spanish State, the Basque Country, and Ireland, this thesis examines current constructions of meaning and “reality”, from a broad spectrum approach to the study of performance as well as praxis perspectives within the field of ritual studies. Anarchistic reflections of freedom and general Marxist aspirations, memories of past sovereignty and current dreams of independence, emerge in the commitment of many of those who have engaged, and engage today, with Txalaparta, shaping narratives and practices, and giving way, in particular, to an ongoing project: the making of “music” on a par with the making of nation.

In-depth interviews with different Basque artists, including relatives of the old Txalaparta players, Basque ex-prisoners, political rally organizers, and other left wing and independentist Txalaparta players within and outside the so called Basque Movement for National Liberation, as well as fieldwork with Txalaparta groups of different ideological leanings within the left, provide the multiple voices that inform the insight this dissertation intends to provide into processes of national construction and resistance amid conflict by means of expressive culture.

**Mats H. Melin** has completed his PhD thesis with the University of Limerick.

**Title:** Exploring the Percussive Routes and Shared Commonalities in Cape Breton Step Dancing

**Supervisor:** Dr Catherine Foley
Abstract:

Cape Breton step dancing is the regional label given to the vernacular form of percussive step dance found in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada. Whether improvised or choreographed into a routine, this dance genre has, alongside the local fiddle tradition become emblematic for the Cape Breton community identity. *Exploring the Percussive Routes and Shared Commonalities in Cape Breton Step Dancing* is the first academic study where the investigation is focused on visual, aural and kinaesthetic transmission processes at work in the Cape Breton dance community.

Observing, participating and sensing by utilizing phenomenological hermeneutics as a research method are the three transmission processes which are analysed individually and symbiotically. The study observes how Cape Breton step dance movements are embodied and also how they migrate from body to body by means of the three sensoria. Observations on visual transmission, for example, draw on recent research in the cognitive sciences, and what aspects of the dance tradition that are acquired by direct observation in different community contexts are explored. Aural, or ear, learning probes the interconnected transmission environment of the home as one example, and furthermore looks at the particular local soundscape that informs dancers of sound and rhythm preferences in the Cape Breton music and song tradition and its relationship to dance movement.

A concluding picture which emerges, based on the particular sources of this study, is one of a holistic transmission environment, where the processes of sights, sounds, and kinaesthetic awareness, all often subconsciously, work harmoniously together to inform each actor in this cultural context. Transmission occurs over long periods of time and develops into an on-going process that forms an integral part of daily life for those involved. Even though the home context is no longer the primary environment for transmission of dance, the informality of transmission at concerts and at square dances deepens the understanding, provided in the class teaching context. The dance genre is changing, with a growing motif repertoire being one result. This study, however, shows that most of the essential elements with regard to movement repertoire, aesthetic and stylistic criteria are maintained. These essential elements make up the shared commonalities that define Cape Breton step dance and which are passed on through the transmission processes described.

**Aoife Granville has completed her PhD thesis with University College Cork**

**Title:** “We never died a winter yet” – The Sráid Eoin Wrenboys of Dingle: Music, Community and Identity

**Supervisor:** Dr Mel Mercier

**Abstract:**

The celebration of calendar custom in the twenty-first century has a profound influence on performing communities. The shared experiences of music-making, muscular bonding, pilgrimage, masquerade and liminality bring communities together and heighten their sense of communitas. In Dingle, the wren tradition brings the community together to celebrate its identity.
The four main performing groups in the tradition – Sráid Eoin, Green and Gold, Goat Street and the Quay- each bring their own distinct identity to the fore on the Wren’s Day, 26th December. The groups parade in masquerade through traditional routes of the town accompanied by bands of fifes or whistles and drums.

A musicking community, the townspeople celebrate the wren and other calendar customs with enthusiasm and vigour. The soundscape that accompanies the practice of calendar custom in Dingle is distinct and symbolizes a sense of ‘dingleness’ to the community. The Dingle Wren brings its community together in masquerade, play, music, ritual and tradition. Its maintenance through to the twenty-first century portrays its significance to the performing community as well as its status on the international festival calendar. This thesis examines the history of the wren custom in Dingle town as well as exploring contemporary perspectives of the tradition. It explores the various calendar customs which are celebrated within the town boundaries and the musics of the various performing bands.

While all performing groups within the tradition are examined, an ethnographic chapter focuses on the Sráid Eoin wren group in the town and the various roles and rituals of the group. The tradition is then contextualized alongside the carnival customs such as Fasnacht, Lewes Bonfire Night, Up Helly Aa and Entroido as well as Irish mumming and rhyming traditions.

ICTM would like to congratulate Nic Gareiss on the completion of his MA thesis with the University of Limerick.

**Title:** Queering the *Feis*: An Examination of the Expression of Alternative Sexual Identity in Competitive Irish Step Dance in Ireland  
**Supervisor:** Dr Catherine Foley

**Abstract:**

Helen O’Shea, in her 2008 article on the ‘fraternal order of Irish traditional music’ asserts that “‘Irish’ and ‘queer’ are mutually exclusive identifications” in the discourse of both Irish nationalism and the Irish music scene. (p. 66) If such is the case, it might follow that related Irish cultural forms with similar nationalist histories are also devoid of such ‘queerness.’ One such form, competitive Irish step dance, seen as literally “embodying the values associated ideally with Irish national cultural identity,” ought to enforce this proscription, bearing congruence with Irish traditional music under the extension of O’Shea’s contention. (Hall 2009, p. 7) However, such is not the case. As is true in many forms of dance, where in some cases up to fifty percent of the male participants may profess to be homosexual or bisexual, the world of Irish step dance contains a large LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender) population. (Hamilton 1999) In fact, many of the most successful dancers, adjudicators and teachers openly express a gay sexual identity. (Ibid.)

How then, do we make sense of O’Shea’s proposed lack of ‘queerness’ in the discourse of Irish nationalistic arts, while people of alternative sexual identity feature so prominently in the world of Irish step dance competitions? This study seeks to elucidate the ways in which sexuality, as a “culturally specific complex of ideas, feelings and practices is deeply embedded” in competitive Irish dance culture. (Cowan 1990, p. 4)
Catherine E. Foley’s book examines a unique form of step dance in North Kerry in the south-west of Ireland. The book is based on the author’s fieldwork in the region and her collection of Irish traditional step dance from a population of elderly step dancers. This research was undertaken in the 1980s and was the first ever intensive regional study of Irish step dance. It contributes to the cultural and historical knowledge of dance in Ireland. A video recording accompanies the book.

At the launch of the book, Jimmy Deenihan, TD Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaelteacht described the book as ‘a wonderful resource for anyone interested in Irish dance and in Irish culture. Also included is a section with biographies of the dancers, along with video recordings from Muckross House. Indeed, this is a comprehensive publication and one which will provide a great deal of information for generations to come who may want to see the origins of this distinctively Irish form of dance which combines artistry, grace and physical ability’.

The book is published by North Kerry Literary Trust and can be bought from The Seanchaí Centre, Listowel.

**Irish Traditional Step Dancing in North Kerry: a Contextual and Structural Analysis**

**NORTH KERRY LITERARY TRUST LIMITED**

**IRISH TRADITIONAL STEP DANCING IN NORTH KERRY**

*A Contextual and Structural Analysis*

**CATHERINE E. FOLEY**

**Dr. Catherine Foley** is a lecturer at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. She is course director of both the MA Ethnochoreology and the MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance programmes and supervises doctoral research. She is an advisor with Deis, the Arts Council’s funding scheme for traditional artists; is Founding Chair Emerita of the international society Dance Research Forum Ireland; and is the Director of the National Dance Archive of Ireland. She is a musician and a dancer.
Become a member of ICTM Ireland...

ICTM Ireland’s membership comprises a diverse body of musicians and scholars who study a variety of musical genres and contexts throughout the world. Currently, we are working to expand our membership so that the organisation can reflect the breadth and depth of scholarship on music in Ireland. We have increased ICTM Ireland’s activities over the past years, in particular through the institution of an annual postgraduate workshop designed to strengthen research skills and the recent launch of our online, peer-reviewed journal. It is our hope that we might continue to strengthen ICTM’s presence. If you are interested in becoming a member, renewing your membership, or recommending ICTM Ireland to a student or colleague, full details on joining can be found at www.ictm.ie or contacting us at membership@ictm.ie

Contribute to the Spring 2013 edition of Spéis

Keep an eye on the ICTM Ireland website for the call for submissions. Some of the headings that you can submit under are:

- Research in Ireland (max 400 word)
- ICTM Ireland Member Events Listings (max 250 word)
- ICTM Ireland Member Activities (max 600 word)
- ICTM Ireland Member Reviews (max 600 word)
- Recent & Forthcoming Publications by ICTM Ireland members (max 250 word)
- Recently Completed Theses (max 500 word)
- Upcoming Conferences / Funding Opportunities (max 250 word)
Culture Ireland is the Irish State Agency that promotes the best of Ireland’s arts and culture internationally and assists in the development of Ireland’s international cultural relations. Visit [www.cultureireland.gov.ie](http://www.cultureireland.gov.ie)

The Fulbright Programme was established in Ireland in 1957 to provide scholarships to Irish citizens to lecture, research or study in the United States and for the US citizens to lecture, research or study in Ireland. Visit [www.fulbright.ie](http://www.fulbright.ie)

Arts organisations, artists, and groups (i.e. a non-profit organisation or community group or those working in the health and education sector) may apply for financial support from the Arts Council. Visit [www.artsccouncil.ie](http://www.artsccouncil.ie)

The Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences operates a suite of interlinked Research Schemes. The IRCHSS Government of Ireland Post-Graduate Scholarships and Government of Ireland Post-Doctoral Fellowships fund research at pre- and post-doctoral levels. Visit [www.irchss.ie](http://www.irchss.ie)

These awards are designed principally for scholars and academics who are currently engaged at graduate level research in a discipline which is, or has potential to be, related to both Ireland and Canada, or who are commencing such research. Visit [http://www.icuf.ie/index.html](http://www.icuf.ie/index.html)

Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships are individual fellowships that aim at providing advanced training tailored to the researchers' individual needs with a view to adding different/complementary scientific competencies. Visit: [http://cordis.europa.eu/mariecurie-actions/elf/home.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/mariecurie-actions/elf/home.html)

ICTM Ireland is currently producing a database of researchers in Ireland who are involved in research in the areas of Irish traditional music, song, dance, ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology. If you are one of these researchers, and would like to share your research profile through this database, please fill in the form on the ICTM Ireland website and return to francis.ward@ul.ie. This information will be published on our website ([www.ictm.ie](http://www.ictm.ie)) and will make others aware of your work, enable you to find fellow researchers working in similar areas to your own and, hopefully, help develop the third level research community on the island of Ireland. If you know someone who might be interested in being included please feel free to forward this document.