



**Giving structure and standard
to learning in the oral tradition**

The IRISH HARP COLLEGE will be formally launched in 2008

INTRODUCTION

The Irish Harp College is an educational system for the Irish harp. It seeks to establish standards of excellence and qualification of harpers in the oral tradition, and to the integration of the harp in life at every level – in traditional music, the arts in general, cultural heritage, business and leisure, employment and healthcare, church and community. The Irish Harp College maintains the oral character of the tradition which prepares harpers to be creative interpreters, arrangers and accompanists, and to be versed in all the ‘Arts of Harping’ that have evolved over many hundreds of years in Ireland’s cultural heritage.

The Irish Harp College teaching, examination and qualification system has been developed to address trends in traditional music practise and music education today recognising the need for evaluation for personal, educational and employment purposes.

Other syllabi

Over recent years, a number of new syllabi have been established for the training and examination of Irish music including the Irish harp. In the more ‘classical’ systems, the creative aspects of melodic ornamentation and variation along with impromptu arrangement and accompaniment are not addressed. In some of the ‘traditional’ music systems, the harp is included with the other melody-only instruments whose primary focus is on the interpretation of dance music. Considering the age and diversity of the harp tradition, these systems limit students’ appreciation of and access to the entirety of the tradition and inadvertently support prejudices against certain aspects of the heritage. The Irish Harp College addresses the tradition as a whole offering access to all ‘The Arts’ allowing students to choose their special areas of interest after basic levels of skills and repertoire appreciation have been reached.

Addressing the totality of the tradition

In some traditional music circles, the argument is pressed that the harp should not be treated as ‘special’ or different to other instruments. The premise of the Irish Harp College is that the harp must be treated differently to other instruments. It has a broader range of skills essential to its proper performance, and a very old history that presents an exceptionally diverse repertoire. This ranges from epic harp pieces and planxties to slow airs and lamentations; traditional dance music and romantic instrumental music; session and stage performance; self-accompanied song; incidental music for story-telling and poetry recitation; music for the church and spiritual meditation; and music for health, relaxation and palliative care.

The Irish Harp College syllabus embraces the entire perspective of Irish harping; giving recognition and support to the particular skills essential to the mastery of the instrument and its multifaceted repertoire. It is a fully integrated system combining the ancient aural / oral tradition addressing the historical as well as contemporary repertoire, with a gradated approach to arrangement and accompaniment. It treats music as a language giving the student the sounds, structures and idiosyncrasies of style - so as to make it their own in a spontaneous way that speaks directly to and from the tradition.

A unique challenge and opportunity

The Irish Harp presents a unique challenge and opportunity. The mastery of the challenge is what earned Ireland’s harpers the international reputation for excellence maintained from the Middle Ages. Such is their value to the nation’s culture and identity, that the image of the harp has been our national emblem for many centuries.

The opportunity today is to realise the potential for harpers, their music, their tradition and their employability. Professional harpers can support themselves through performance on the concert platform and in stage shows, at wedding ceremonies and receptions, at corporate and community events, in the media and recording industry, in tourism and PR, in healthcare and in music education.

Irish Harp College aims to train and prepare Irish harpers to reach their potentials, to raise their standards of excellence and versatility, to raise their profile and accessibility nationwide and to show that our ancient tradition can be as vibrant and relevant to our cultural life and identity today as ever it was.

THE TEACHING SYSTEM

TUTORIALS, each with 2 CDS (1: oral tuition and 2: tunes in session)

Tutors: Levels 1 – 4
Preliminary Adult's Tutor
Preliminary Junior's Tutor
Teacher's Manuals (with DVD)

SUPPORTING RESOURCES (Books with CDs)

Harbison's 100 Easy Dance Tunes for all instruments (1 volume) and harp (5 volumes, all at Level 2)
The Music of O Carolan (3 volumes, Levels 1 – 3)
The Entertainer's Collection (5 volumes, Level 3/4)
The Book of Chimes (Technical training for harpers)
The Book of Chordscapes (Accompaniment training for harpers)

THE TRAINING IS ARRANGED IN 2 PHASES:

Phase 1: BASIC BUILDING SKILLS from Beginner to Competent, From Level 1 (or Preliminary) to Level 4
Phase 2: ADVANCED in 'THE ARTS OF HARPING' (chosen special interest areas) from Level 5 - 8
Designed to the average 12 year old taking Level 1 completing Phase 1 (Level 4) by age 16. Younger and significantly older beginners will take more time preparing Level 1 and are supported with 3 optional Preliminary Levels allowing the student to proceed comfortably until they are ready to proceed to Level 1.

The training system is presented in a total of 6 tutor manuals each with two CDs, one with teaching content, the other a 'session' CD to play along with as if in a social playing situation. The teacher's manual is supported with a DVD showing how to deliver the training with tuition in 'leading'.

3 Preliminary Levels

Preparatory levels to Level 1, these allow the beginner a For the very young or adult beginners, there are 3 'Preliminary Levels' with exams supported by a further 2 tutor volumes for the two age groups. These levels offer a 'buffer' to entry into the system at Level 1 whereupon they are expected to proceed normally through the system. The 'Junior Beginner's Tutor' has more child orientated content with pictures to colour and children's songs, rhymes, games etc; while the Adult Beginner's Tutor has more popular and romantic Irish song content with cross references to the classical music tradition.

PHASE I: 4 BASIC LEVELS

There are 4 basic levels bringing students to a level of general competency in the creative style of traditional music with specially chosen pieces representative of the total harp repertoire. Each level represents one year of a typical student's progress starting from age 12 years. Older or younger beginners may take longer to complete level 1 and are advised to start on the Adult Beginner's Course, or Junior Beginner's course to increase their level of comfort and confidence in proceeding with the further levels. These preliminary levels for the older or younger beginner are essentially a longer time scale to bring students up to the desired level before progressing through the further stages. Levels 1 to 4 prepare the student harper to develop:

- Comfort and confidence at their instrument;
- Strength, accuracy, speed and control in foundational technique;
- Creativity in the use of melodic ornamentation, variation and chordal arrangement;
- Sensitivity and discernment in accompanying;
- A broad appreciation of the total repertoire of harp music;
- A broad appreciation of the total repertoire of traditional music;
- Confidence and ability to participate in a 'seisiún
- Confidence and ability to play special solos (a slow air, a lament, a planxty, a formal piece)
- Freedom to evolve personal style.

PHASE 2: 4 ADVANCED LEVELS

On passing Level 4, the harper will have reached a good general standard of 'Competency' and will be embarking on the Advanced Levels of harping. At this point, the student harpers will be familiar with the total repertoire and possibilities of the harp and, with the maturity of years and experience, they are now ready to choose their special areas of interests to pursue. These areas of interest have been categorised into the '**Arts of Harping**' which aim to embrace all aspects of harping in the Irish tradition. Some obvious areas have been omitted as they would not be considered to be traditional and are already well catered to in other branches of music e.g. pop, jazz, new-age, classical or from other world traditions of harping.

The Arts of Harping

The Irish Harp has an enormously rich and diverse repertoire which has been evolving in Ireland for over 1200 years. Each era had its style and repertoire which has created many distinct areas of repertoire interest – all of which are recognised in the 'Arts of Harping'.

The Arts of Harping

- 1 Goltraí, Geantraí, Suantraí
(The art of improvisation for the accompaniment of poetry and storytelling)
- 2 Historical (or Classical Irish) Repertoire (17th and 18th Centuries)
- 3 Lamentations and Slow Airs
- 4 The Romantic & Folk Repertoire (19th and 20th Centuries)
- 5 The 'New Irish' (or Formal Modern Composition) Repertoire
- 6 Dance Music Repertoire
- 7 Song and Harp Accompaniment
- 8 Sacred and Ritual Music
- 9 Music for Health and Well-being
- 10 Composition
- 11 Arrangement
- 12 Accompaniment.

Each 'Art' has its relevance in particular situations/locations today: e.g. the 'romantic / popular' repertoire is relevant to the background entertainer's repertoire; the 'sacred' repertoire is relevant to church activity; traditional dance music to the seisiún; 'New Works' for solo stage performance; 'music for health' for homes, hospitals and hospices; and so on. Because of this specialisation for location, the styles and repertoires have become quite specialised and, by consequence, segregated. The Irish Harp College system brings all the repertoires along with the skills of arrangement, accompaniment and composition to all students to a basic level of competence at Level 4 after which students are then free to choose their special interest areas for their more advanced studies.

Each 'Art' is introduced and explained in greater depth between pages 11 and 18.

Students may choose one or two 'Arts of Harping' for each of their next 3 levels: Levels 5, 6 and 7, which represent three more years of study which can cover up to 6 areas (and a minimum of 3) of special interest. Each level examination will require a combination of project work with practical performance adjudicated by experts in those 'Arts'.

Finally, at Level 8, harpers may prepare entirely their own programme of music which may be a review of work already done (to a higher level of accomplishment) or further to what they have studied so far. This will be presented in a 1½ hour recital (public or private according to the student's wishes) at least one year after the last Advanced Level has been taken.

In comparative terms, Level 7 in this system would equate to Grade VIII in any of the well established Academies, Colleges or Schools of Music and may be recognised as such. Level 8 in the Irish Harp College System represents a first level performer's diploma, and is recognised in the Irish Harp College with the awarding of the title 'Master' of the College.

Teaching Diplomas

Comparable to Associate, Licentiate and Fellow Diplomas at other colleges of music but also requiring examination in class leading (for the oral style), session leading, accompaniment and ensemble arrangement. A further syllabus for these examinations is available on request.

Musical literacy

Musical literacy is introduced in Phase 2 of this system allowing the student to become well rooted in the oral tradition in the first phase – i.e. that they have learned to process music by ear and not by eye. Literacy is examined as it is relevant to the Arts of Harping chosen by the candidate for their examinations from Level 5. This is not to imply that harpers should not be able to read music notation during the earlier levels, but often, the challenge of reading and musically interpreting harp notation involving both treble and bass clef has been found to obstruct the aural experience of responding to music. The notated resources offered while learning with the Harp College introduce notation alongside the CDs so the ear remains the dominant receptor rather than the eye. The visual medium is a secondary support and the ‘reader’ learns to identify the shapes of the notes and their setting relative to the music as it is already known. During the early learning process, the student is always shown “how the music looks” at the conclusion of their lessons so it will be used as a supporting memory aid. The tutorial texts are also presented in a way that facilitates parents or other teachers to follow and support what is being learned since, in today’s hectic world, frequent playing in sessions is not as common as it used to be.

In Conclusion

The aim of the Irish Harp College system is to encourage players not only to know and be involved in the playing of the old repertoire but to be fully involved in the rich diversity of music-making at the core of traditional Irish music today. The aim of the system is also to maintain the ‘language’ of the tradition – preserving its unique style of interpretation which is so distinctive and was the basis for its high international regard of the Irish harp throughout the western world from the middle ages. The Irish Harp College aims to re-establish those high standards of excellence which historically gave us our national emblem and which today invites us to be re-invigorated and embracing of all the ‘Arts of Harping’, old and new, that represents a treasury of heritage second to no other.

THE LEVELS

PRELIMINARY LEVELS 1 – 3

(For the very young or leisurely adult beginner)

Development priorities:

- To become comfortable with the instrument
- To be able to complete simple tunes
- To recognise 'Home Chords' and 'Home Notes'
- To recognise the component notes of a simple chord
- To clap the pulse of a simple tune

These are supplementary introductory levels to Level 1 which are designed for the very young or more leisurely adult students that are not quite ready for the full Level 1 course. Essentially the course for these preparatory levels is the same but some of the sections are omitted at the earlier Levels.

Examination requirements at PRELIMINARY 1

- 1 Warm-up: Chimes A or an equivalent* (*Teachers entering students with technical exercises other than those in 'The Traditional Irish Harp Tutor' are advised to send scripts/recordings of their choices for approval by the Senior Examiner of the Irish Harp College.)
- 2 Play 2 pieces
This is the choice of the teacher and the student and may or may not include a harmony. Both hands should nevertheless be involved.
- 3 Knowledge and Know-how
The Examiner will ask some simple questions about your chosen tunes and aspects of them. Questions like: Why do you like this one? What about the title? Does it mean anything?
- 4 Aural tests
The examiner will play the chord of C and ask the student to spell it.
Then the examiner will sound the chord again and sound one of the chord notes. The student will be asked to identify this by "top, middle or bottom note" and/or give its letter name.
The examiner will sound a short tune at the end of a section will ask the student if the last chord was the "Home Chord" or not.
The examiner will play the tune again and ask the student to clap the beat (not the rhythm).
The examiner will play a note between middle C and G and ask the student to sing it.

Examination requirements at PRELIMINARY 2

- 1 Chimes A or B1 (or an equivalent*)
- 2 Play 3 pieces
At least one tune should include an accompanying 3 note Home Chord (in Simple/Root position). Both hands should be involved in every piece.
- 3 Knowledge and Know-how

The Examiner will ask the student “What is the Home Chord?” of any of the student’s chosen pieces that has accompanying chords.

The Examiner will ask some simple questions about the chosen tunes and aspects of them. Questions such as: Why do you like this one? What about the title? Does it mean anything?

4 Aural tests

The examiner will play the chord of C or G and ask the student to identify it. (Middle C may be sounded).

The examiner will then ask the student to spell whichever chord he/she sounded.

Then the examiner will sound the chord again and sound one of the chord notes. The student will be asked to identify this by “top, middle or bottom note” (or give it’s letter name).

The examiner will sound a short tune at the end of a section will ask the student if the last chord was the “Home Chord” or not.

The examiner will play the tune again and ask the student to clap the beat (not the rhythm).

The examiner will play 2 notes between middle C and G and ask the student to sing them.

Examination requirements at PRELIMINARY 3

1 Chimes A or B1

2 Play 4 pieces with contrasting characters

At least 3 of tunes should include harmonies using simple chords as well as one or two note accompanying patterns.

3 Knowledge and Know-how

The Examiner will ask the student “What is the Home Chord?” of any of the student’s chosen pieces that have accompanying chords.

The Examiner will ask some simple questions about your chosen tunes and aspects of them. Questions like: Why do you like this one? What about the title? Does it mean anything?

4 Aural tests

The examiner will play the chord of C or G and ask the student to identify it.

The examiner will then ask the student to spell whichever chord he/she sounded.

Then the examiner will sound the chord again and sound two of the chord notes (one after the other). The student will be asked to identify these by “top, middle or bottom note” or by their letter names.

The examiner will sound a short tune at the end of a section will ask the student if the last chord was the “Home Chord” or not.

The examiner will play the tune again and ask the student to clap the beat (not the rhythm).

The examiner will play 3 notes between middle C and G and ask the student to sing them.

Each of these Preliminary Levels follow the syllabus for Level I and allow the student to move more gently into the four basic levels.

LEVEL I

Aims:

To become comfortable the instrument and to understand the basics of how music works
To become able to sing and play a range of complete tunes with chord accompaniments
To gain a basic understanding how harmony and chording works and to understand the use of 'Chord Plans' and 'Play Patterns'
To understand a scale and to be able to recognise 'Home Chords' and 'Home Notes'
To understand how to build a chord
To apply chording to different modes of tune using either the chords of 1, 4 & 5 (in home / root position as well as in 'Close Position Chording') or 1 & 7 (A minor with G one step down)
To understand the use of the 'Compelling 7th' (dominant 7th)
To recognise the difference between pulse and rhythm and to clap and/or tap the pulse of a simple tune
To recognise tune types of Airs, Marches, Polkas, Slides and Mazurkas
To be introduced to Irish music, its history and its primary figures such as Carolan

Examination requirements at LEVEL I

Technical Study Chimes I

3 pieces including an air
a dance tune and
any other.

Additional repertoire

You will present another 3 pieces on your Repertoire List from which the examiner will choose one more piece to be performed.

Examiner's questions

Your repertoire: You will be asked what you know about the tunes, where they come from, what kind of tunes they are, if there is a significance to the title and about the composer(s) and arranger(s).

The music: You will be asked what is the Home note of a particular tune and the chords involved.

Harp history: You will be asked about Brian Boru and Turlough O Carolan, when they lived, what was their significance and something about their lives.

Aural tests

- 1 On the chord of D (major), the examiner will play a sequence of notes on the chord of D to be repeated in rhythm by the candidate.
- 2 Clap the pulse of a tune from the repeat played by the examiner.

Accompaniment test

Any of the Marches or Polkas in the Level I tutor may be chosen for accompaniment at this level. Listen to the first part of the tune and, on the repeat, join in with chord accompaniment to the end of the tune. You may choose to play at single or double time and in which play-pattern.

Marking

There are particular allocations of marks for each aspect of the examination, but you may earn 'bonus points' if you can include some of the variations in melody and accompaniment patterns given in the tutor.

LEVEL 2

Aims:

To become competent and confident with the harp and to be able to play a basic well-known repertoire
To be comfortable and enthusiastic about participating in social music-making
To be able to set any folk tune on the harp with basic accompaniment
To be able to accompany any basic folk or dance tune
To be able to construct a basic accompaniment or arrangement to a simple tune
To understand and be comfortable with the use of chords in all positions and play patterns
To play and become comfortable with octaves and basses in the left hand
To learn about and recognise major and minor chords: about timing and rhythm, 'lift' and 'flow'
To learn about Hornpipes, Slow Airs and 'Sean Nós'
To learn more about harping through history, about the early court harpers and about the Belfast Harpers' Assembly of 1792

Examination requirements at LEVEL 2

Technical Study Chimes 2 and one of the other Chimes 2b, 2c or 2d chosen by the examiner.

Player's Choice **4 pieces** including
a historical harp composition (by O'Cahan or Carolan)
a dance tune (showing some simple ornamentation including cuts and triplets)
an air or song and
any other.

Examiner's Choice You will present a further 6 pieces on your Repertoire List from which the examiner will choose one or two more pieces to be performed.

Examiner's questions

Your Repertoire: You will be questioned about the tunes as to the source, composer (if known), arranger, type of tune, its construction, harmony / chord plan, and any particular characteristics.

Aspects of History: On the Belfast Harper's Assembly; who attended; samples of what they played; why was it held; On Edward Bunting who transcribed the music and Thomas Moore who set it to new poetry.

Aural tests

- 1 On the chord of D (major), the examiner will play a sequence of notes within the first 5 of the scale (D – A) to be repeated in rhythm by the candidate.
- 2 Major or Minor? The examiner will play some chords in Simple (root) position, firstly with the notes played separately from low to high then played together (up to twice if necessary) for the student to discern.
- 3 The examiner will play a piece for you to say if the music was in 2 or 3 time – with duplet sub-beats or triplet sub-beats.

Accompaniment test

Any of the Marches, Polkas, Slides and Carolan tunes in the Level 2 tutor may be chosen for accompaniment at this Level. Listen to the first part of the tune and, on the repeat, join in with chord accompaniment to the end of the second part (with its repetition).

Marking

There are particular allocations of marks for each aspect of the examination, but you may earn 'bonus points' if you can include some variations in melody, arrangements and accompaniment patterns suggested in the tutor.

LEVEL 3

Aims:

To be able to use ORNAMENTATION in melody including cuts, triplets, runs, trebles and triplet rolls
To be able to use MELODIC VARIATION in all tune types
To play, arrange and accompany all dance types including reels
To recognise a range of historical pieces, praise pieces and slow airs
To play a number of historical pieces and slow airs
To be able to accompany a wide range of core session tunes
To be able to accompany an unknown simple dance tune
To recognise all 4 modes and both tunings
To understand the Cycle of Fives and the role of the 7th in chording
To improvise on a simple 4 chord sequence
To have an appreciation of 4 centuries of harp history in Ireland
To present an 'Entertainer's Programme' of music
To be able to participate competently and confidently in a session

Examination requirements at LEVEL 3

Technical study: Chimes 3

Player's Choice 5 pieces including
a historical harp composition (may include Carolan),
2 tune sets in different dance rhythms of Hornpipe, Jig or Reel
or 2 contrasting songs with varied accompaniments
a slow air, and
any other.

The dance tunes should show a competent use of cuts and triplet ornaments; variation in the melody, ornamentation, accompaniment and bass patterns on repetitions.

Examiner's choice You will present a further 16-20 pieces on your Repertoire List from which the examiner will choose up to 3. (A piece may be a tune or a song)

Examiner's questions

On your repertoire: You will be asked about the tunes on your list, about their source, composer, arranger, and about its construction, harmony, arrangement and character.

On harp and Irish music in general: You will be asked about dance rhythms, planxties, folk tunes and airs.

On aspects of history: On Rory Dall O Cahan, the Connallon brothers and the challenges of the 1690s, more on Carolan and the patrons of his tunes (in the tutors so far), about Thomas Moore and his Irish Melodies.

Aural tests

- 1 Starting from the 4 note chord of D, the examiner will play a sequence of notes covering the full octave D – D (high 7 major) in a rhythmical response. The examiner may repeat it up to 2 times.
- 2 Major or Minor? C sharp or C natural? The examiner will play melodic examples for identification of the mode (including and the tuning).
- 3 Ornamentation recognition: A segment of a tune will be sounded for identification of ornaments.
- 4 Tune type. The examiner will play up to 4 samples of any tune type for you to identify.
- 5 Tune Recognition: A number of well-known dance tunes and songs will be played for identification.

Accompaniment test

To accompany a simple unprepared tune (single part) in the keys of G or D, using the chords of 1,4, 5 & 7. The examiner will play the tune through twice and the candidate will say if the tune in 2 time or 3 time - with duple or triple sub-beats. Some LH octaves with RH chording will be expected.

Marking

There are particular allocations of marks for each aspect of the examination, but you may earn 'bonus points' with variations in melody, ornamentation, arrangement and accompaniments.

LEVEL 4

Development priorities:

- To become competent in all ornaments including the cut and tip roll
- To show the ability to varyate melody with ease
- To play a wide range of harp music with samples from all the 'Arts of Harping'
- To arrange impromptu previously unknown music
- To be able to accompany all core session tunes (including Reels)
- To recognise all modes and understand their chording
- To recognise the style, period, mode of unprepared music
- To improvise in cycle of 5ths to any of its 6 degrees

Examination requirements at LEVEL 4

- 1 Any warm-up piece not to exceed 2 minutes in duration
- 2 10 pieces to be chosen from the following 18 categories (one for each category):
 - 1 A historical harp composition
 - 2 A substantial piece by O'Carolan
 - 3 A combination of two short pieces by O'Carolan
 - 4 A lament / slow air
 - 5 A jig set
 - 6 A reel set
 - 7 A hornpipe set or Set Dance or Slip-jig
 - 8 A well-known piece from the 19th Century Popular/Romantic repert.
 - 9 Any piece from the 20th Century Popular / Romantic repertoire
 - 10 A prepared improvisation on a simple 4 chord/beat riff (a recording of which should be presented (on CD) to the examiner at the exam)
 - 11 A prepared improvisation on a pentatonic scale
 - 12 Any piece fully arranged by the Student
 - 13 A piece composed by the Student
 - 14 A modern harp composition
 - 15 A song with harp accompaniment in Irish
 - 16 A song with harp accompaniment in English or Irish
 - 17 A prepared accompaniment to a recorded set of dance tunes
 - 18 A prepared accompaniment to a recorded melody

The pieces chosen should show a competent use of ornamentation at least through options 1 – 6 with both cut & tip and triplet rolls included in at least one piece; a significant use of variation in ornamentation and bass patterns throughout; and some melodic variation.
- 4 Aural tests. The Candidate will be 'taught' a tune ½ hour before the exam (on a recorded 'lesson')
Which the candidate will:
 - play the tune showing a variety of ornamentation
 - apply basic accompaniment to the playing of the melody
 - indicate the chord plan and accompany the tune
- 5 Accompaniment. The candidate will be required to accompany some unprepared well known jigs, slides, barn dances or polkas
- 6 Type, Rhythm and Mode. The candidate to identify a tune of any of the type categories above
In which mode? (All modes included) Answers to be given as
Major High 7th / Major Low 7th / Minor High 6th / Minor Low 6th
Pentatonic / Hexatonic / Diatonic
- 7 The candidate will be questioned about the tunes, their sources, construction, and ornamentation
On harp history: On all main historic figures, on the Granard festivals, the Belfast Harper's Assembly 1792, on Bunting, Thomas Moore, Petrie, Charlotte Milliken Fox and modern organisations.

ADVANCED LEVELS

12 AREAS OF SPECIALISATION

Once Level 4 has been passed, students will choose 1 or 2 areas of specialisation for each of their next 3 levels. This offers the opportunity to harpers to study to a significant level of depth at least 3 and up to 6 of the 12 Arts of Harping.

The 12 Arts of Harping

Goltraí, Geantraí, Suantraí
(The 'Art of Improvisation' for the accompaniment of poetry and storytelling)

Historical (or Classical Irish) Repertoire (16th - 18th Centuries)

Lamentations and Slow Airs

The Romantic & Folk Repertoire (19th and 20th Centuries)

New Irish Repertoire (Fully arranged, formal harp compositions, 20th /21st Century)

Dance Music Repertoire

Song and Harp Accompaniment

Sacred & Ritual Music

Music for Health and Well-being

Composition

Arrangement

Accompaniment

The Arts of Harping and examinations specifications are as follows:

I Goltraí, Geantraí, Suantraí : The art of improvisation for the accompaniment of poetry and storytelling

This art paying homage to the 'mood' music of the ancient harpers is that of improvisation and the conscious manipulation of mood and energy in melody, rhythm and harmony. The style of improvisation is not free, however, as the Irish idiom will be expected to prevail (i.e. consideration of modality, arrangement style, melodic ornamentation and variation etc).

The Advanced Level examination in this specialization involves the following:

Part 1 (½ Hour duration)

To record the telling of one of the following Irish Fairy Tales (which may be paraphrased, and recited by someone other than the exam candidate in Irish or English)

- The Children of Lir
- The Cattle Raid of Cooley (Táin Bó Chulainne)
- Oisín in Tír na nÓg
- Finn and the Fianna
- Deirdre of the Sorrows
- The Death of Cu Chulann
- The Fate of the Sons of Usnach
- Finn Mac Cool, the Giants and the Wee Folk

and at the examination, to perform appropriate 'mood' music to the recording.

Part 2:

To similarly prepare appropriate 'mood' music to 2 Poems from any Irish poet in

- (1) Irish
- (2) English

(4 poems in total) which may be performed to a live or recorded recitation.

Part 3:

To present a portfolio of student's Own Choices of passages of prose or poetry (with duration indications) from which the examiner will choose items to complete the performance at the examination.

Part 4:

To improvise on two previously unseen texts of 4 - 7 minutes duration each (The candidate may choose to have texts in Irish or English)

Choices for Parts 1 and 2 of this exam must be submitted with the application along with a copy of the proposed recording to be used in Part 1 (in CD format).

2 Historical (or Classic Irish) Style & Repertoire (17th and 18th Centuries)

This specialism requires the thorough knowledge of the primary as well as secondary sources of harp music up to 1870, i.e. for example, the contents of the Bunting Manuscripts as well as the published sources. A critical knowledge is also required in the interpretation of the historical repertoire and, while its performance is not required to be authentically performed on period instruments, a significant appreciation of the style and a respect for tradition is expected. The harper should also be well acquainted with the social history surrounding the repertoire and be confident in introducing a programme on various historical topics.

The age of O’Cahan, the Connellan brothers, O’Carolan and their contemporaries are at the core of this specialism. As well as having a thorough knowledge of the known sources, harpers should be also familiar with the variations of published tunes and be able to discuss them critically. Harpers should also be able to discuss knowledgeably the Italian art music of the period and be able to discern the influences of style, structure and form imitated by the Irish composers of the time. The social history behind the patron tunes should also be known – essentially contributing to a thorough familiarity with the period and its music.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 40 pieces, no more than half of which may be by O’Carolan. The repertoire should also span the two centuries and while the arrangements need not be interpreted in an ‘authentic’ style, discernment for the tradition should be shown. At least one quarter of the harper’s repertoire should be arranged by the candidate themselves. The candidate will choose to perform 6 of the pieces and the examiner will choose a further 2 – 4 from the programme.

Written requirements

The candidate is required to write a 1500 word essay on the background of 3 or 4 of their chosen performance pieces giving a critical discussion on the source and their interpretation of it.

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to listen to a recording of 2 historical harp pieces: to identify them and comment on their background, interpretation style, and performance quality.

3 Lamentations and Slow Airs

This specialism requires a thorough knowledge of the Lamentation and Slow Air repertoire (*Sean nósach*) as well as a good background knowledge to the music and the sources from which they were acquired. Also, a clear and in depth study of the song texts of the slow airs where they exist is essential and the interpretation of the music should be dependant on how it would be sung in the *sean nósach* style.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 16 lamentations and slow airs, at least half of which are arranged by the candidate themselves.

Written Test

The candidate is required to write a 1500 word essay on 3 or 4 of their chosen pieces giving the historical background and a critical discussion of the source and their interpretation of it.

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to listen to a recording of 2 – 4 lamentations or slow airs: to identify them and comment on their background, interpretation style, and performance quality.

4 Romantic & Folk Repertoire (19th and 20th Centuries)

This specialism requires a particular knowledge of the 19th and early 20th century repertoires from Thomas Moore's melodies through the music of Percy French and all that is considered Irish 'folk' music. The focus is on purely instrumental arrangements of music. (The singing of folk songs would be presented under the category of 'Song and Accompaniment'.)

This is essentially the music of the harper 'Entertainer' which would be expected in the repertoire of 'background music players'. It involves a mix of most forms of Irish music, but more particularly new, popular, folk, romantic and historical music with dance tunes (mainly mazurkas, polkas, jigs and hornpipes).

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 100 tunes; each to be played between 3 and 6 times in a tasteful varied arrangement and to play a continuous programme (short stops between pieces is acceptable) for 50 minutes. Credit will be given for the number and choice of tunes, the variety of tunes, The candidate would be expected to present the music in 'sets' showing a capacity to improvise links between pieces, also in judiciously choosing tunes in a 'set' paying attention to mixing the moods, rhythms and key changes (not necessarily lever changes).

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to learn a melody and make an impromptu arrangement of it.

Written Test

The candidate is required to write a 1500 word essay on 3 or 4 of their chosen pieces giving a critical discussion of the source and their interpretation of it.

5 'New Irish' Repertoire (1960s to present)

This category caters to the repertoire of formal music composed by harpers in modern times – whether acquired within the oral or written traditions. The expectation is that they are 'fixed compositions/arrangements' formally constructed and learned by rote from the source. This music may be any kind of music formally 'finished' by the composer / arranger. The source must be acknowledged and the mode of acquisition acknowledged. This may be orally, first hand from the composer or second hand from another player. In the case of the latter, every effort to ensure a true reproduction should be made by the performer.

Should the music not be published (recorded on a CD or printed in a volume), written permission to reproduce and perform it must be ascertained from the composer (or their nearest relatives if the composer is deceased). The examiner will seek this at the examination.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 4 hour's duration stating on their examination programme the approximate duration of each piece. Sources must be acknowledged for the full performance programme.

Written Test

The candidate is required to write a 1000 word essay on 2 or 3 of their chosen pieces giving a critical discussion of the piece; its source; occasion of composition; composer and their creative influences.

Aural test

No aural test is required with this specialism.

6 Dance Music

Traditional Irish dance music comprises the greater part of today's traditional music repertoire and the core repertoire in the social 'Session'. In this specialism, candidates are examined on their expanse of repertoire embracing all dance types and rhythms with particular attention on their skills of ornamentation, variation, and the development of style; and their ability to participate on an equal par with other musicians in a traditional session.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 100 dance tunes with a minimum of 30 reels, 30 jigs, 20 hornpipes, 20 polkas, 10 slip jigs, and 5 set dances (this not already including polkas or slides). At least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tunes should be arranged by the candidate themselves.

Aural test

The examiner will give 2 parts of an uncomplicated dance tune to be learned by the candidate. Each part will be dealt with separately, which is first played twice by the examiner. Then the candidate is invited to accompany it, then arrange it with melodic ornamentation and a left hand bass.

Accompaniment test

The candidate will be asked to listen to recordings of a number of dance tune sets and to play along and / or accompany the music.

7 Song and Harp Accompaniment

This specialism examines the complimentary relationship between the song, the singer and his/her use of harp accompaniment. Since the singing of a song essentially comprises the telling of a story, and this is the prime function of the performance, the examiners will address themselves to the effectiveness of the performance as a whole giving equal attention to the quality of the interpretation and accompaniment. Candidates will need to display a wide range of song material and character in their accompaniments.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 16 songs, at least half of which are arranged by the candidate themselves.

Written Test

The candidate is required to write a 1000 word essay on 3 or 4 of their chosen pieces giving a critical discussion of the source and their interpretation of it.

Aural test

An impromptu performance and arrangement of a known folk tune.

8 Sacred and Ritual Music

This specialism is addressed to players in the church and sacred ritual context (within any branches of the Christian church). As well as having a wide knowledge of the general hymn and Christmas carol repertoire at least of their own denomination, the candidate should be able to lead choirs in song, to know the times in the liturgies or services when music would be played and there should be an appreciation of the differences in practices between the different denominations in all standard services.

Particular music would also be expected for special services such as wedding ceremonies, funerals, baptisms, meditations and prayer meetings.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 20 conservative hymns; 20 folk hymns and 20 Irish hymns; 20 meditations; and 10 processional marches (including wedding marches).

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to suggest a music programme for a particular religious service and to indicate where the music would be performed in the liturgy.

9 Music for Health and Well-being

This specialism is an extension of the first: Goltraí, Geantraí and Suantraí, but orientated to affect health and well-being, either on the individual or the communal environment. The role of the harp in comforting and medicine has long been acknowledged folklorically but today is significantly more seriously regarded in standard medical practise. Understanding how rhythm, melody and harmony impacts on all the body rhythms (pulse, respiration, digestion, brain function, hormonal and limbic systems), can lead to the harper relieving fear, stress and pain, and effecting general 'well-being' in both the 'healthy' as well as the sick, disabled and dying.

Performance requirements

The candidate will present four 15 minute improvisations shifting moods:

- 1 From calm to animated returning to calm in the higher frequency (ref children)
- 2 Pentatonic improvisation
- 3 Modal improvisation from Aeolian to Ionian (dark to light)
- 4 Meditation on one harmony

Practical: The candidate is required to:

- 1 Prepare a 20 minute session for a heart monitored volunteer to effect relaxation

or write a 1500 word essay on one of the following:

- 2 An aspect of music in hospital or hospice therapy.
- 3 An aspect of music in difficult children management,
- 4 Background music and children's education

10 Composition

This subject is primarily designed as a performance of the performer's own work. At least half of the candidate's repertoire should be written and submitted to the college at least a month before the examination.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present their repertoire to comprise 45 minutes of music after which they will be asked to illuminate their approach, structure and interpretation.

Written Test

At least half of the candidate's repertoire to be submitted to the college one month before the examination.

Aural test

The aural test will be in the capacity of a 'viva' on the candidate's work.

11 Arrangement

The candidate will need to show a broad spectrum of pieces, periods of original composition, styles of interpretation and tune types for this specialism.

Performance requirements

The candidate should present a repertoire of at least 20 significant arrangements (each tune played through twice only) and should present a further repertoire of about 40 tunes from which the examiner will choose 2 – 4.

Written Test

The candidate is required to present at least 20 arrangements in writing to be submitted to the college at least a month before the examination.

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to arrange a series of 4 tunes for impromptu arrangement with a 'viva' style discussion of the ideas and devices used.

12 Accompaniment

There are three aspects to this specialism – known and prepared accompaniments; known tunes but not prepared with accompaniments; and unknown tunes with impromptu accompaniments.

Performance requirements

The candidate will present a repertoire of at least 30 accompaniments to tunes or sets of tunes none of which are to be played more than twice. The complete repertoire will be presented to the examiner who will make their choices as they go.

Aural test

The candidate will be asked to accompany some sets of well known session tunes, some Carolan compositions, an air and a slow air. There will also be one set of dance tunes unlikely to be known, and one slow air unlikely to be known to accompany.

LEVEL 8 Final

Finally, at Level 8, harpers may prepare entirely their own programme of music which may be a presentation of work already presented at an earlier level but performed to a higher level of accomplishment. The Level 8 exam can be taken no earlier than six months after Advanced Level 7 has been passed. This Final Level involves the preparation of a 2 hour recital programme, selections of which will first be performed to a panel of examiners for adjudication. On the successful attainment of the desired standard, the harper will be invited to present a 1 hour public recital to the Harp College to which an audience of the student's peers along with important figures, agents, employers, facilitators or mentors from the chosen 'Arts' will be invited. The graduating student will also be awarded the title '**Master of the Harp College**' and will be invited to join 'the Masters of the College', an elite group of tradition bearers to provide impetus and direction to future harping activity.

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENT IN THE TUTOR VOLUMES

LEVEL I Beginner's

The course

How to use this book

Introduction to the Irish Harp and the House of Music!

Melody and Chords

Play and Sing!

Sing with 2 chords

Melody with Chords

Repetition and Structure

The Irish National Emblem

The Bards at Court in Ancient Ireland

The 3 Moods of the Story Music

Accompanying Brian Boru's March

The Chord of 5

Play Patterns, Overlaps, Lead-ins and Strong Beats

A Finished Version with Variations

Introducing Rhythm: Pulse, Beats and Bar Lines

Accompanying The Belles of Ballee

Building Chords on Any Note

The Chord of 4

THOMAS MOORE

TURLOUGH O CAROLAN

Playing around with chords

Simple air with lots of chords

Simple chords with challenging air

Adding the 7th to the Chord of 5

Changing Chord Positions

Air with varied chord positions

A Hymn for Church

About **DANCE MUSIC**

Polkas!

Accompanying the Polkas & Chord Plans

Slides!

Accompanying the Slides & Chord Plans

Slip Jigs!

THE ARTS OF HARPING

TECHNICAL TRAINING from the back of the book:

About Technical Training & How to Practise

Technical Training

Chord Training

Chord Plans and Play Patterns

Composing and Melodic Variation

The songs / tunes

Three Blind Mice

The Big Ship Sails

Óró Sé Do Bheatha Bhaile!

Brian Boru's March

The Belles of Ballee

Believe Me if ... Endearing Young Charms

Eleanor Plunkett

The Green Glens of Gweedore

I Wish I Was in Carrickfergus

The South Wind

Molly Malone

Down by the Sally Gardens

Christ be Beside Me (Morning Has Broken)

Peg Ryan's Polka

John Egan's Polka

Denis Murphy's Slide

Paraic O'Keefe's Slide

Sport of the Chase

The Streets of Dublin

The Chimes A & B

Chordscapes 1 – 3

Improvisation on the Chord of G

LEVEL 2 Elementary

The course

Minstrel Harpers in Ireland

RORY DALL O CAHAN

Structure in historical harp pieces

Another Historical Harp Piece

Playing Octaves in the LH

A Slip Jig in 5 parts

Marches with Octaves in the LH

Marches with 'Basses' in the LH

Major - Minor Keys

Tunes in Minor keys

Tunes in Major keys

More on CAROLAN

About chording & accompanying

Carolan's first composition

On Timing and Rhythm

2 time duplet beats

2 time triplet beats

3 time duplet beats

3 time triplet beats

Sacred music

Entertainer's music

3 STEPS TO ARRANGING TUNES

Hornpipes

THE BELFAST HARPERS' ASSEMBLY

Slow Airs

THE ARTS OF HARPING

Technical warm-ups

Chording & Accompaniment

Composing and Melodic Variation

TECHNICAL TRAINING from the back of the book:

Chimes B1 - 4

Chordscapes C - D

Improvisations 1 - 3

The songs / tunes

Give me your hand

The Rock of Cashel

Shoe the Donkey

The Bank of Primroses

The Foggy Dew

The Soldier's Joy

O Donnell's March

Roddy McCorley (or 'Sean South')

The Murroe Polka

Lannigan's Ball

The Road to Lisdoonvarna

The Britches Full of Stitches

St. Mary's Polka

Planxty Irwin

Fanny Power

Shebeg, Shemore

Ballydesmond Polka

Three Little Drummers

The Munster Cloak

The Butterfly

Be Thou My Vision

Cead Mile Failte Romhat

The Cliffs of Dooneen

The Rose of Tralee

The Mountains of Mourne

The Wind that Shakes the Barley

The Green Glens of Antrim

The Cuckoo's Nest

Jim Boulton's Fancy

The Rights of Man

Dermot O Dowd

An Driumeann Donn Dilis

Súil a Rún

LEVEL 3 Intermediate

LEVEL 4 Competent

PRELIMINARY for Adults

PRELIMINARY for Juniors

in preparation

in preparation

in preparation

in preparation