



## **Submission by Trad Ireland / Traid Éireann Future of Media Commission**

**8 January 2021**

### **About Trad Ireland / Traid Éireann**

Trad Ireland's mission is to promote the traditional arts throughout the island of Ireland and support practitioners through advocacy and expanding career opportunities. Established in 2018 by traditional artists Tristan Rosenstock and Oisín Mac Diarmada, we have successfully curated several projects and initiatives which have developed audiences, created opportunities for artists, and enhanced our understanding of the traditional arts community through a major piece of research. The report *Navigating the Traditional Arts Sector in Ireland: A Report on Resources, Challenges, and Opportunities*, written by Jack Talty and funded by The Arts Council, was launched by renowned fiddler Martin Hayes in December 2020 and a section 2.2 of that report focuses on the media (see below).

Trad Ireland also offers support and facilitates peer-support through our annual gathering TradTalk, which gives voice to the community, harnessing the energy & ideas of the sector into a strategy for future renewal.

Other recent initiatives include 20/20 Visionaries, which saw twenty leading traditional artists create online audio-visual content celebrating a figure or a source of inspiration. The series was funded by Culture Ireland and featured the likes of Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (Altan), Peter O'Toole (Hothouse Flowers), and Fergal Scahill (We Banjo 3).

*Note: The term "traditional arts" covers traditional music, song, and dance.*

### **Causes of concern**

The aforementioned report *Navigating the Traditional Arts Sector in Ireland: A Report on Resources, Challenges, and Opportunities* brings together the voices of leading figures within the traditional arts community. Indeed, 74 people ranging from traditional artists to media professionals of festival promoters took part in an interview with author Jack Talty, while hundreds more fed into the rich content by taking part in an online survey. It is a comprehensive account in which we hear a community speaking very clearly. Section 2.2 of the report begins with the statement: "Many of the traditional artists and commentators who participated in this research discussed insufficient media coverage as a major challenge encountered by the traditional arts sector in Ireland today." Talty continues: "Many are surprised that the media are not responding to the popularity of the traditional arts among its expanding community of participants, given that the traditional arts are widely perceived to be more popular now than at any other time in the history" (P.68).

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Web:** [trad-ireland.com](http://trad-ireland.com)



This popularity can be seen in the Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann Annual Report 2020 which states that approximately 750,000 people attended the 2019 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Yet RTÉ Television's annual output of traditional music rarely exceeds 6 half-hour programmes featuring highlights from Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

## Public Consultation

This public consultation is an exciting moment in shaping the future of public-service media, and the opportunity to contribute to the discussions is one we welcome, and appreciate. The Commission's terms of reference note that public service aims should contribute to supporting Ireland's cultural and creative sectors and continues with the aim that "creative Irish talent gets the opportunity to have their work reach audiences in Ireland and, where possible, further afield." Trad Ireland believes that it is essential to increase the output of traditional arts content on broadcast in print media to meet those goals. While TG4 have a very strong offering of traditional arts programmes, ranging from performance-based shows to major live events, as well as a documentary strand celebrating the lives of noteworthy artists, the same can certainly not be said for RTÉ Television, sadly.

The reference to reaching audiences in Ireland and "further afield" in the terms of reference also strengthens the case for more traditional arts content on public services. Our diaspora often take a deeper interest in our own music once they are far removed from Ireland, while international viewers with no ancestral connection to Ireland can easily connect with our culture through music, song and dance.

## Community

The traditional arts have a unique ability to reach people in a variety of settings that can be accessed by all citizens regardless of means. A strong community ethos runs deep within this community, and equal regard is given to the musician who has performed in Sydney Opera House and to the farmer who plays on a part-time basis.

A healthy respect for elders is at the core of this community, with an inter-generational transmission of art form crucial in passing a tradition down from generation to generation.

Communities who often feel marginalised find respect and esteem within the traditional arts community, for example the Traveller community, who for long were carriers of the tradition when it wasn't on as strong a footing as it currently is.

The traditional arts and the Irish language go hand in hand, and *sean-nós* singing along with other vernacular oral art forms found in the Gaeltacht form a hugely important strand within our native art forms. Blending the Irish language and traditional arts programmes works very well on TG4 and those who rely on subtitles get just as much enjoyment out of the content as those who have the fluency to ignore the subtitles. But TG4's output should not shirk RTÉ

Email: [REDACTED]

Web: [trad-ireland.com](http://trad-ireland.com)



of its responsibilities, and collaborations in both official languages between the broadcasters have proven very successful, most notably with the archive-based series *Come West Along the Road* which was broadcast for many years on RTÉ Television, while the Irish-language version *Siar an Bóthar* went out on TG4. It was a series that brought viewers of all ages together and its demise led to great disappointment within the traditional arts community.

And like the GAA, behind every well-known figure is an army of volunteers who selflessly give time and support to ensure that generations continue to enjoy the gift of music, song, and dance. Every county has numerous festivals and summer schools which give a boost to the locality and forge that sense of community. That is to say, participation can come in many forms and the traditional arts are extremely accessible. You don't need to perform to enjoy a session, a concert, a recital, a céilí, a singing circle, or a festival.

## Recommendations

Commenting on the title of his book to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RTÉ Television *Window and Mirror – RTÉ Television: 1961 – 2011*, John Bowman explains that: “It states that the television service was both a window on Ireland and the world; but also a mirror reflecting Irish society to itself...”. Currently, the traditional arts community is not reflected on RTÉ Television.

Trad Ireland would like to take this opportunity to recommend the following:

- The return of a long-running performance-based television programme on RTÉ Television, similar to *The Pure Drop* or *Aisling Gheal*. This series should feature traditional artists at all stages of their career, in solo and ensemble settings.
- The return of an archive-based series (in English or Irish) ensuring that the treasure trove within RTÉ can be enjoyed by viewers at home and abroad.
- Specialised programming – including factual documentaries – celebrating the lives of those who have contributed so much to the traditional arts including living artists, past masters, collectors, patrons, and those who played a role in preserving our rich musical tradition.
- Special features on the arts pages of print media on traditional artists.
- Establish reviews of traditional music albums across print media. Currently a review of a traditional-music album is a rarity, with the exception of the Irish Examiner.
- Traditional music to appear in “stings” and “sig tunes” across radio and television.
- Consideration be given by the BAI with its Sound and Vision scheme to fund traditional arts content for online only broadcast. The pandemic has shown some traditional practitioners to be very adaptable, and with funding and support we believe online content could be created by traditional artists working with film-makers. Trad Ireland would be happy to host and play a curatorial role in the content.

Email: [REDACTED]

Web: [trad-ireland.com](http://trad-ireland.com)



## **Trad Ireland**

Oisín Mac Diarmada – CEO  
Tristan Rosenstock – Executive Director

Martin Hayes – Patron

### **Board**

Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh – Chairperson (traditional singer & musician, broadcaster)  
Willie Ryan – Music lawyer  
Mikie Smyth – Accountant, uilleann piper  
Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin – singer & author  
Catherine McEvoy – Musician and special needs education  
Jack Talty – Musician, producer, academic  
Edwina Guckian – Dancer  
Thomas McCarthy – singer & storyteller  
Marie O'Byrne – Director of Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo  
Brendan Bell – Musician & Finance

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Web:** [trad-ireland.com](http://trad-ireland.com)



# NAVIGATING THE TRADITIONAL ARTS SECTOR IN IRELAND

A REPORT ON RESOURCES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Jack Talty  
July 2020

## 2.2 MEDIA COVERAGE

---

Many of the traditional artists and commentators who participated in this research discussed insufficient media coverage as a major challenge encountered by the traditional arts sector in Ireland today. While radio and TV were listed as the main sources of frustration for artists, the print media's decreasing coverage of the traditional arts was also noted.

### Supporting the traditional arts?

Some contributors expressed an opinion that the state broadcaster, RTÉ, fails to live up to its stated commitment to the arts, and especially the traditional arts:

*"I feel that RTÉ could do so much more. It feels like artists don't get played on the radio anymore. I would love to think that would help with audiences. I feel it's very tough on artists to get heard. It's like as if there is no space for them unless it's a trad music programme. There's no space within general daytime radio. RTÉ supporting the arts? That's just a sales package. And RTÉ advertising is so expensive. It's not really supporting the arts at all"*

*"The national media needs to open their eyes and allow some new performers in. There are established performers who cannot get opportunities on RTÉ, and I think that is one of the biggest challenges at the moment for a professional musician in Ireland"*

*"On mainstream daytime radio, it's very rare that you would hear traditional music, and that really needs to change. Regularly, when I'm promoting a musician or an album, I would pitch to the mainstream radio slots where they would interview the band. For some musicians with a high profile, it might be easier. But if there's any slight doubt in the radio producer's mind as to the profile of the traditional musician, they are very resistant to having live trad music on"*

*"I don't think traditional music has enough of a reach on mainstream media. I feel to get broader media coverage, presenters will have to start taking risks in a world that they don't really know an awful lot about. And that's the fear. There are so many great musicians doing so many great things but it's always safer to stick with someone who brings a readymade audience. Hopefully that will change in the future but I think it will take the next generation of journalists, reviewers and radio presenters to bring Irish traditional music to the forefront again and maybe talk about it in a different way and make it more mainstream and inclusive. I think people think 'I wasn't brought up*

*with that so I don't get it'. If anything, it's one of the most inclusive artforms we have and yet people seem to feel shut out from it. But I think that is something that will be fixed by future generations"*

*"It would be nice to see some of the kids here who have never heard Irish traditional music, hear it, without getting their parents' view of it being something that happens in a corner in a pub. Suddenly they go away and they see that there's an interest in it in far-flung places all over the world. They see Japanese people playing Irish traditional music to a really high level and these kids can't recognise a jig. Awareness is a big thing and I think it could be achieved by the main media being a little bit more sympathetic to our music, not just having a programme on a Sunday night"*

For many, the inadequate coverage of the traditional arts is particularly unusual given the aforementioned global reputation of the artform, and the belief that many international visitors come to Ireland to enjoy traditional music, song, and dance. However, commentators feel that the traditional arts are not sufficiently represented in mainstream media at home, irrespective of how frequently the artform is drawn on by the State as a symbol of Irish identity, and performed for international dignitaries:

*"I feel that traditional music is lost in mainstream media, in every media almost, in Ireland. And I feel the value that it has in terms of world value as a traditional music is underappreciated. If you take maybe the greatest Indian music, and the greatest Spanish music, it's up there with all of them, and I feel that most people in Ireland don't know that, and they don't understand the value of what they have, and it's a responsibility of the media to bring this awareness to people but the media don't even know its value"*

*"If I didn't have the background that I do in traditional music, I might think that this stuff is just middle of the road. In a country like Ireland, you have a flute player like Matt Molloy who is internationally regarded as one of the finest exponents of a very popular instrument that is played in most countries in the world, and yet where are the hour-long recitals of him on mainstream television such as RTÉ? Is he on the same parity of esteem as James Galway is through the BBC for example?"*

*"I still don't think that there is enough support for traditional music on the airwaves, and if we do have any great champions of that, they are hidden away in the early morning or the late-night slot. I think on a Government level, we are really good at trotting out the traddies for when the expensive or important people come to visit, but in terms of real support, I don't think there is much in place there in terms of radio play. I think we are getting reviewed less too"*

*"People come to Ireland and they expect an Irish experience, and they come here and they put on the radio but they will never hear a jig or a reel. It's just not there in mainstream media"*

*"Ireland is sold on our music and our culture and yet when people come to visit us they can't find traditional music. They find Country and Irish. RTÉ have a lot to do with it but there are others too"*

One respected singer recalls her surprise at Irish language songs being deemed inappropriate for broadcast here in Ireland, despite the respect shown in other parts of the world:

*"I can especially correlate how negatively the Irish language and Irish traditional music is perceived by Irish TV, radio and journalists in general. I mostly sing in my native tongue and only in Ireland have I been asked to change my song to an English song on TV and Radio programmes, for ratings. As if Irish audiences do not like their own native language. In Japan, UK and the USA the programme producers ask for Gaelic songs specifically and are fascinated by it"*

### Responding to the increasing levels of participation in the traditional arts

Many are also surprised that the media are not responding to the popularity of the traditional arts among its expanding community of participants, given that the traditional arts are widely perceived to be more popular now than at any other time in their history.

*"I know from working on TV shows over the years at the Fleadh that locals are shocked and in awe at how young and vibrant, and exciting Irish traditional music is. This sense of shock should not be there. There is something for everybody out there but they are not getting any opportunity to actually showcase it to the wider listener"*

*"People don't know what they want until you give it to them. I think we need more airplay. Irish traditional music has never been more popular with young people but instead of having more traditional music on radio, there's less. So it's kind of a contradiction in terms"*

*"The national airways need to change their attitude to traditional music. I would present a television show for free, just to do it. Just to make sure that people were hearing and seeing the level of quality that is out there. And it is extraordinary, the talent of young people playing Irish traditional music. And Irish traditional music is by far the most popular folk music on the face of the planet"*



*“Only for TG4, traditional music would get no exposure worth talking about. Yet you have Late Late Show specials on Country Music. There aren’t many children in this country playing Country Music. Everyone from the age of 3 to 93 is playing traditional music”*

*“You need the media to take a risk because the fact of the matter is that there is enough talent, and diversity of personality, character, and musical style to create excellent programming, be it on radio or television”*

*“You need to make it normal to hear Irish traditional music. It needs to be a lot more available and we need a lot more radio and TV programming to let people see how much fun Irish traditional music is, and how alive it is”*

As one experienced radio producer notes, there is a demand among the wider population for hearing more Irish traditional music and song on mainstream radio:

*“I worked on Sunday Miscellany, for example, for two years, and definitely the biggest reaction I ever got to any music played on that programme was when traditional music was played. I was playing jazz, classical music, I was playing anything. It depended on the script. Traditional music is hugely popular and there is huge goodwill towards it. It taps into something within people that moves them in some way and gives them confidence, and that makes them feel good about themselves. It’s a very positive force. And when I worked on the Pat Kenny show, when there were traditional musicians in, it was always a very positive and vocal reaction. We always got messages and emails looking for more information. So, I’ve no doubt that the audience is there”*

## Cronyism

According to some observers, on occasions when media such as radio and TV feature traditional artists, their selection is often confined to the same cohort of practitioners:

*“If you take the number of seriously outstanding traditional artists that are out there, and you take the overall scant coverage of the traditional arts, and an over-reliance on a couple of the big names, that’s where you really see how unrepresented the traditional arts are in the media in Ireland”*

*“I think we have a huge problem in terms of our mainstream media in Ireland. Our primary broadcasters have no interest in showcasing anyone on the next tier down. The same names appear*

*everywhere. I feel like the broadcaster is missing a trick because there is a vibrant scene, and a diversity within the tradition that really should be showcased. I think it would elevate traditional music onto another stage, in terms of the amount people listening to and enjoying it"*

*"I find it hard to even know where to look, to hear about good traditional music concerts anymore. There is so little media attention given to traditional music. Unless you have good PR, you're invisible. But the usual names still appear everywhere still"*

### The media 'angle'

Some feel that producers and other gatekeepers in the media are reluctant to deal with the traditional arts on their own terms, and instead, mediate or dilute the artform in a certain way in an attempt to make it accessible for mainstream consumption. In addition, some feel that advocates almost need to justify why traditional arts coverage shouldn't conform to notional listener expectations that many not even reflect audience demand.

*"The media copout is that they feel they need to sugar-coat it. They need to get artists from other musical genres to mess about with Irish traditional musicians and reach compromises that aren't artistically creative. And I think there is a huge amount of lazy programming. There are so many really fantastic musicians, singers, and dancers around the country but because they are not household names, they don't get asked to perform. These are really good artists and they are very entertaining. And those gatekeepers hold the budgets, whether it be the media, radio, TV, or concerts and festivals that are often funded by public funds"*

*"The relationship between the traditional arts and the media as I experience it, is one of real struggle, to find the space, to secure the space, to give the traditional arts the space it deserves. And that's always a struggle. I still feel like it's going back to first principles when you're talking to somebody in an editorial position, about a particular story or a piece. You constantly have to go back and justify it. It never seems to evolve in the way that you see conversations evolving in the media about other artforms"*

*"It seems like a struggle for the traditional arts to be presented on mainstream radio, TV and newspapers and magazines. Unless you have something different to say or do they don't entertain it, or if you are flavour of the month. I notice that if there is a good financed promotional campaign with a project, it will get into the mainstream on TV and radio and the press"*

### TG4 and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta

While a significant amount of goodwill was expressed towards Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4 by contributors to this research, many feel that RTÉ have delegated traditional arts coverage to them, rather than investing in traditional arts programming that has the potential to bring the traditional arts to a mainstream national audience.

*"I think it's wonderful that Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4 do really great work but I think generally, RTÉ's treatment of traditional music, in terms of its collection, and its projection on the premier station, which is Radio 1, leaves a lot to be desired. I've no problem with the programmes that they actually do. They are very important. But I think it's really difficult for young traditional musicians. And if they say Raidió na Gaeltachta is part of the RTÉ family, that's actually not a good enough answer"*

*"Since TG4 came into existence it seems like RTÉ decided to hand over traditional music to them and let them deal with it. When we had The Pure Drop and other programmes on RTÉ, it was broadcast to a big audience. Sometimes the mainstream audience who wouldn't have been into traditional music were coming across this and it was creating awareness and access. Now, TG4 are the only broadcaster who service the needs of traditional music, and there is more of it than has ever been on TG4, and I think a lot of it is really well done. Unfortunately, it is generally broadcast to very small audiences"*

*"The problem with RTÉ is that they see Raidió na Gaeltachta as taking care of their obligation to the Irish language and Irish traditional music. So, it takes the pressure off them to put the same content on Radio 1. They think they are fulfilling their public broadcasting commitments through Raidió na Gaeltachta, so they don't have to do much about it"*

*"The main media in this county have washed their hands of showing our music on radio and TV. They've left that to Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4 so therefore you have generations of people who never get to see our music. And I think a lot of people would love to hear a concert but they think that stuff happens in a corner in a pub and they think, 'it's not for me', but they're not given the option. Are you telling me that if a good piece of quality Irish traditional comes on during a daytime radio programme that people are going to turn it off? Of course, they're not. So, I think that RTÉ is a major thorn in the side of traditional music when you think of the tokenistic coverage they give it"*

In response, one contributor with a professional familiarity with the inner workings of the TV industry, although very supportive to the concerns of traditional artists, feels that the relatively

small scale of our broadcasting sector impacts upon our ability to showcase specialist and niche interests such as the traditional arts, in a similar way to arts channels in other jurisdictions:

*“Artists would want to be represented on maximum platforms of course but in a broadcast landscape, it doesn’t always work like that. We are a tiny territory in Ireland. So, it’s not as if RTÉ sit back and say they will leave all that diddley-eye to that crowd down in Connemara. When they see that they will garner big audiences, they are right on it. Documentaries are done on the likes of Riverdance or Mary Black. They won’t do a documentary on Junior Crehan because they see it as niche. That is the world of broadcasting. If you compare it to the UK, BBC 1 is the RTÉ 1, BBC 2 is the TG4. You get a lot of the arts and location stuff on BBC2. And then you have BBC Arts, or BBC 4 as it was, which is a dedicated arts channel that we don’t have here because we’re not big enough”*

### The print media

Traditional arts coverage in the print media such as newspapers and music magazines was also discussed in commentary offered to this research. Some feel that the traditional arts feature even less in the print media than on TV and radio. For example, the following contribution suggests that it is easier to get radio play to promote a new album than it is to have an album reviewed:

*“Should one manage to create an album or get a project through to completion, the next hurdle is promotion. The niche radio shows continue to do an enormous service to the traditional arts. The presenters clearly love the music they play and are extremely knowledgeable about it. With the exception of a number of good music magazines, music journalism feels more underdeveloped. A wider pool of writers who, like the radio presenters, clearly love the genre and can communicate the artistry and essence of each project, is very much needed. It would be a great plus if an artist could contact a music journalist who would simply be more into, and knowledgeable about, a particular style and who could write authoritatively about the content”*

It is also a challenge for reviewers and journalists to keep informed about new traditional arts releases and projects due to the high level of activity in the sector, and because many artists do not have the resources to delegate PR and publicity work to professionals who specialise in those areas:

*“The fact that somebody has a new album just won’t cut the mustard. It’s interesting now with streaming, and people not releasing hardcopy albums more, that access to information about artists, and their work, and what motivates them is actually harder now for journalists than it would*

*have been in the past, because people are not resourced. They don't have the time and the money to do it. But then, that makes it that much harder for whoever it is in the media to make sense of what is coming into them. And there's so much noise. To be able to stand out apart from that is a real challenge, both for the journalist and the artist"*

However, when an artist or act has support that attracts coverage by journalists, the results can be very different, and can have lasting impacts on developing audiences for the traditional arts:

*"When you have something like The Gloaming, all of a sudden who have journalists outside of the traditional music world writing about them. Obviously, their music has some part to play in it, but I think that when somebody gets the media support, and record company support, and people hear Irish traditional music, they like it. So, I think there is an audience and a constituency that would enjoy hearing more traditional music in performance settings, but they have to actually hear it"*

### Pejorative attitudes to the traditional arts in the Media

A number of participants stated their opinions on how various elements of the media still look negatively at the traditional arts in Ireland.

*"Unfortunately, there are still people around the media, sometimes in very influential positions, who still talk about 'diddle-eye', which is really hard to believe. That's really 'flat-earth' language. Things like Fleadh TV is aimed at a kind of frantic youth market, and that's fair enough if that's where they're getting their audience share and their advertising, but I'm not sure that it always serves the music very well. And RTÉ has ruthlessly de-prioritised traditional music, and I do think that is a problem, but it's only one of a number of problems they have as a public service broadcaster in a highly commercialised digital world where people's consumption patterns are totally different now"*

However, such misconceptions about the traditional arts are not limited to the Irish media.

*"It is hard to shirk the 'diddle-de-dee' persona that Irish music is inclined to have. And I think we are so much more than that and I get so frustrated. We have been asked to do something for the biggest radio station in the UK next week, and their point of reference was the basement of the Titanic scene. We do have a problem, even in Ireland, with how Irish traditional music is perceived by the general public and by those with power in the media"*

### A forum for critical discourse

Contributors also made reference to a perceived lack of media platforms for critical discourse on the traditional arts and suggested that this was not always the case. As a result, some feel that the high artistic qualities of the traditional arts are under-appreciated when the media emphasise participation over showcasing artistry.

*"There's no space in the media for discourse on Irish traditional music, as in what is good, what isn't good, what people like, and what people don't like. And that's all relative but the discussion of that creates opinions and that creates an audience in itself. That isn't happening in Irish traditional music now and it's all the weaker for it. I think it was happening in the 1970s. You had traditional music front and centre"*

However, programmes such as 'Sé mo Laoch on TG4 are seen as a positive step in addressing this:

*"I love the Sé mo Laoch programmes that are on TG4 at the moment, and I would have been strongly advocating for those style of programmes to have been extended to the 55-minute format that they are in at the moment. They portray Steve Cooney as an artist, they portray Sean Keane as an artist. They get into the personality of these musicians, so that your next-door-neighbour can understand what we can hear in that music"*

### Clare FM

Some of the commentary on media coverage for the traditional arts made reference to the efforts of local radio stations in promoting the traditional arts in Ireland. Clare FM, a regional radio station based in Ennis, was by far the most commonly-referenced station in conversations with contributors who viewed the station as a model of good practice for traditional arts coverage. *The West Wind*, the station's flagship traditional music programme, is broadcast for 2 hours between 7pm and 9pm, from Monday to Friday, with a different presenter featured each night of the week. One contributor describes the value of Clare FM to their work from the perspective of a management and PR professional:

*"Clare FM has been invaluable. And while it's a local radio station, it has a big listenership. And they have consistently, for 20 years, had a nightly trad music programme, which I think is kind of unprecedented. Clare FM is still a business and they still need to make their bobs, but they have not in any way rolled back and it's an invaluable source of airplay, and particularly now with the online presence of Clare FM, the word is getting out even more, and a lot of the presenters are very active on social media so they are talking online about new albums and that's bouncing all over the place. I think a lot of local radio stations could model their output on what Clare FM does"*

A presenter on Clare FM offers the following insight into why she feels that Clare FM works as a model for traditional arts programming:

*"Although we have a huge global listenership, it's like a family. It has kept its local identity also. But everybody wants the local. They want to belong. People want to identify with our culture. And we also find that people who listen to Clare FM come and meet us. They want to put a face to the voice. And they have become very much part of the fabric of Ennis in county Clare. It intrigues me a lot, actually. They might come to Ennis three or four times a year, and the rest of the time they are online with us. It's all down to management. In every county in Ireland and abroad, people would do what I'm doing, and would really enjoy it. The interest is definitely there. I suppose it goes back to who was in Clare FM from the start. It's all about self-belief. Obviously, those at Clare FM felt that they had something unique, and that was our culture. And thankfully, the management for the last 30 years, have recognised that and maintained it, and sustained it"*

### Engagement with the media

Broadcasters who contributed to this research offered some valuable insights into how traditional artists could improve their chances of getting airplay on national and local radio, as well as increasing the likelihood that performances and various events are publicised:

*"A bit of thought as to how the media works would be good. But then there is the basic stuff. People are often sending us stuff in a week before the event. But that's too late. We can't do anything. People aren't good, weirdly, about sending us music. Very oddly, it doesn't come in. I've bought a lot of new CDs this year from shops. If the stuff isn't here, we can't use it"*

*"Bear in mind that somebody might get 50 press releases a month and 20 CDs, so you have to be the kind of person who writes, and follows up because it is hard to keep on top of the volume of stuff that comes in. I definitely think the more that people know how programmes work, the more effectively they can pitch their music"*

*"It's interesting to me how people are not proactive. I want to play the music if it comes in. And things that do come in, often come in with no contact details on them, or no press releases or notes. Trying to be a little bit more cognisant of the person receiving your music would work well. If the word could go out about that, it would be great"*

### Future developments


A number of discussions with contributors on the level of media coverage allocated to the traditional arts suggested that the changing nature of media more generally will have an impact on its significance and influence on the popularity of the traditional arts. A retired senior radio producer at RTÉ observes how online content and podcasts are almost dominating the radio landscape, signifying a notable change in how programming is now determined:

*"The way people are consuming music is changing. I don't think my own children will ever buy a newspaper in their lives. There's not much radio listening at all. It's all podcasts. That market is moving so fast. How can traditional music get attention or seek publicity? It's just such a changing world. It's hard to keep up with it. The graph has gone from where it was bureaucratic people, almost civil servants, deciding in response to their own brief or mission statements what they should be doing, and that was very Irish as such, to something that is now market driven, and it's in a world context, and it doesn't pay heed to what I would regard for the most part, as genuine traditional music"*

Some are optimistic that online content, social media, and other avenues will provide a promotional infrastructure for the traditional arts in a way that, in their view, conventional media has not:

*"I think the traditional arts are very poorly supported by the media in general. In general, that's the old media. I think social media has a lot to offer and I would be optimistic that's going to get better over time. There's a lot more harnessing of social media by traditional artists perhaps than there would have been before"*





*"I do think that it is remarkable that the tradition is thriving the way it is despite, not because of, the media, or because of anything that is happening in that zone, so I don't think its future is in any way dependent on that. I think its future is around how it organises itself or chooses to take different routes"*