

Compánach

An intimate, audio-visual recital of music and song which brings alive the nature, scope and history of Irish Traditional music as described in the encyclopedia *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*.

It is a fast-moving concert of great variety with fiddler Gerry O'Connor, uilleann piper Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, flute-player Fintan Vallely, sean-nós step dancer Sibéal Davitt and singer Máire Ní Choilm. In a hundred tracks of music and song from all Irish regions they demonstrate Irish music's hallmark repertoire and style. The playing is infused with information, context and warmth by a flow of 400 full-screen images of people, places and events from the lens of Belgian-Irish photographer Jacques Piraprez Nutan.

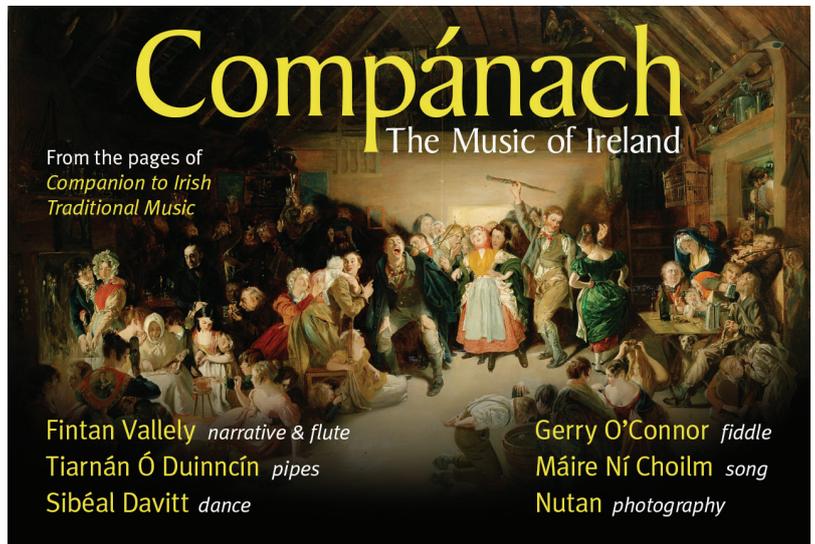
Background

The *Companion to Irish Traditional Music* is an encyclopedia first published in 1999 to alphabetically document the nature and performance of indigenous Irish music. It was re-issued in 2011, doubled in size with c. 900 pages, and also as an e-book.

The *Compánach* concert is based on its content, taking its A-Z format to illustrate tunes and song drawn from each Irish county, émigré region and ancient to modern eras. Over its two hours it uses the voices of solo, and unison duet and trio instruments, step dance, song in Irish and English, and large-scale photos to creatively document Irish Traditional music.

The visual motif for the concert is the *Companion's* cover image—a profound painting by the Irish artist Daniel Maclise of an 1832 Halloween party in Co. Cork. In vivid colour, this depicts all the elements of Irish music traditions—the piper, fiddler and flute player, the boy with the tambourine, the young learners and the dancers—all performing in an animated community celebration. Present in this image too are symbolically-important figures: one of the earliest folklorists—Thomas Crofton Croker—and an early antiquarian—Fr. Matthew Horgan—both of them contributors to the philosophy which energised the 20th-century revival of Irish Traditional music.

Compánach indeed takes all its aesthetic cues from this painting by using pipes, fiddle and flute, by opening with music which is likely to have been played on that night in 1832, and by using the power of a visual narrative rather than commentary to tell the music's story.



The Artistes

Gerry O'Connor is a Dundalk fiddler, a versatile figure in Irish music who is solidly 'of his place' in the music's traditions. He has toured Europe solo and with the band Skylark, and has many recordings, among them the seminal albums of Lá Lugh with the haunting singer Eithne Ní Uallacháin; he has also taught fiddle internationally over several decades.



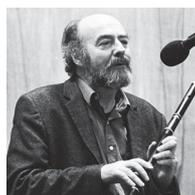
Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn is an uilleann piper from Monaghan who has achieved all major Irish awards for his playing, most recently the Seán Ó Riada gold medal.



Máire Ní Choilm is a Gaelic singer from Gaith Dobhair, the Irish-language region of Donegal; her repertoire and style are distinctively of her place too and have also gained her major Oireachtas awards.



Sibéal Davitt comes from a background of Irish language and music and is an accomplished student of dance as well as being a superb sean-nós (old-style, free-form) step dancer.



Fintan Vallely, editor of the *Companion* and director of the show, plays the wooden concert flute. He has been one of the major public voices in Irish music since the early 1990s, the editor of many books and articles on it; like the others, he has performed throughout the world and has recorded and broadcast.



Jacques Piraprez Nutan is an award-winning Belgian photographer who was a neighbour and protégé of surrealist painter Renée Magritte. He has made the west of Ireland his home, and Irish topography, people and music his life's work since the 1960s. A member of the Paris agency RAPHO, he has published in *Time*, *Stern*, *National Geographic*, and *Geo*, and has contributed music images to many music books and albums in Ireland.