

"And people will begin to wonder
What has happened to Pecker Dunne?"

*Qualitative Research Exploring
Traveller Music in County Carlow*

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The title of this report is taken from the last lines of a popular Traveller song, written and performed by Pecker Dunne. His lyrics reflect much of what was said in the focus group interviews. I feel these lines represent what is happening to Traveller music.

St. Catherine's Community Service Centre, 2008

WEXFORD

*My family lived in Wexford town, stopped travelling and settled down,
Though my father kept a horse and car, we lived within the town,
The people there misunderstood, or they did not know our ways,
So with horse and car, back on the road, I began my travelling days.*

*My father was called the Fiddler Dunne, and I'm a fiddler too,
But although I often felt his fist, he taught me all he knew,
I know I'll never be as good, and yet I feel no shame,
For the other things my father taught, I am proud to bear his name.*

*He taught me pride and how to live, though the road is hard and long,
And how a man will never starve, with a banjo, fiddle or song,
And how to fight for what I own and what I know is right,
And how to camp beside a ditch on a stormy winter's night.*

*O times were good and times were bad, and people cruel and kind,
But what I learned of people then, has stayed within my mind,
I'll honour friends with all my heart, do for them all I can,
But I've learned to go the road again, when they spurn the tinker man.*

*O Wexford is a town I like, but the travelling man they scorn,
And a man must feel affection for the town where he was born,
I know one day, that I'll go back, when my travelling days are done,
And people will begin to wonder, what has happened to Pecker Dunne.*

Written by Pecker Dunne

Foreword

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements and warm thanks to those who co-operated in the research for this publication. I am very grateful to individual Travellers who shared their experiences, thoughts, beliefs and hopes with me. Without their openness and responsiveness, the identification of the current needs relating to Traveller music would not have been as clear and thus the research would not have been as successful.

Thanks are extended to St. Catherine's Community Centre, especially to the Senior Community Worker with the Travelling Community in Carlow (Margaret Wouters). I believe her thesis ("Can music be used effectively to support the development of more egalitarian politics", Margaret Wouters, 2005) created the basis for initiating a process of looking at Traveller culture and music and consequently looking at their needs in relation to the part music plays in their tradition. This research is also accompanied by a CD, recording some wonderful Traveller music produced thanks to the motivation and commitment of the Traveller singers featured on it. I also want to thank the staff of St Catherine's Community Services Centre, in particular Margaret Wouters and Mary Lee Stapleton for their great support and advice throughout the research.

Special thanks to all the people listed in my contact sheet. I am very grateful to everybody for their time and their interest in this research and for their positive attitude and openness.

I also want to thank Carlow Traveller Interagency Strategy Committee for funding this project. Without their support this research would not have been possible.

This research is a vital step in raising positive self awareness and encouraging of self-development within the Travelling Community. Through this primary research Travellers themselves have highlighted skills and issues relating to their musical traditions. These are some of the foundations that maintain their sense of identity.

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Introduction

Music is a fascinating power arising from human creation which influences people in many different ways. It can touch our unconscious self and raise deep emotions; it projects these emotions to the outside and makes them tangible. It's a symbolic language that everybody understands without translation and a world in which we can identify and share those unspoken feelings. "Where the power of words end, begins the music" (Luban-Plozza, 1988)

But not only has music the ability to emotionally move us and be part of developing our personal identity and self, it can also embody identification for groups, for ethnic groups and for nations. Through music, ethnic groups and nations can represent themselves, their values, their socio-economical thoughts and ideologies. Music is also "an important form of political communication" (Wouters, 2005, 28). It can create a feeling of belonging within a large group of people with a common history and a common culture. Within this culture traditions have been built.

The objective of this study was to identify Travellers' needs in relation to their musical tradition. "The needs are determined by the environment but the way in which people adapt to these needs is determined by their culture and by the historic experiences of the group" (O'Sullivan, 2000, 15). This report presents the findings of a small-scale study carried out among a focus group of ten women from the Travelling Community. Their age range spanned two generations. Key factors relating to Travellers' experiences of music were established and issues were identified. The findings provide a clearer picture of where these issues originate and how the steps required to provide solutions for them, could be explored. The outcome of the research will hopefully initiate a revival of nearly lost traditions, a preservation of skills and an opening of possibilities in educational areas, job opportunities and personal development. With these achievements we hope to maintain a foundation for cultural identity in these times of transformation.

"Travellers and Traveller culture have been marginalised and rejected over the centuries. This continues to be the prevailing climate affecting Travellers in Ireland today. Accepting, resourcing and celebrating Traveller identity, culture and heritage is a central element in any strategy to counter this situation and improve the circumstances of Travellers" (Pavee Point Fact sheets – Culture and Heritage).

1. RESEARCH PLAN

Statement of the Research Problem

In order to ensure that St. Catherine's and other agencies in Co. Carlow are working according to the real needs of Travellers in Co. Carlow, St. Catherine's are undertaking primary research to explore Traveller music in Carlow.

1.2. Choice of Research and Collection Method

Qualitative Research

The reason for choosing the qualitative research methodology was to get the reasons and inspirations for the answers given and not just answers. As in every conversation, answers given can trigger more questions that might not have been considered by the researcher. These questions might lead the discussion in unexpected directions and therefore unexpected answers and further identification of needs. Using the qualitative approach the respondents are the experts, the researchers are the ones who need to listen, learn and turn the gained knowledge into something tangible to create change.

Two separate interviews were held with 2 groups of seven women from the Travelling Community during a two week period in October 2008. Some of the women took part in both interviews so altogether ten women took part in total. Their age range spanned two generations. I am conscious that this is a small sample of respondents and that the group only represented females. But attempts to describe peoples' needs outside the focus group were also made and taken into consideration.

The first interview was taped using a video camera. The reasons for choosing technical equipment were as follows: One, writing down notes could distract from hearing essential discussion points and two, in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere between researcher and focus group as everybody was able to join in the discussion. To avoid people getting irritated and uncomfortable with the idea of having a video camera "in their face" the discussion was taped "sound only" from the background after seeking permission from the group.

The information from the second interview was taken down as notes. The aim of the second interview was more so to summarise the needs that had been expressed in the first interview and was therefore a more in depth conversation about certain issues that had been touched upon two week previously. Even though a good few new questions arose during the flow of discussion, the pen and paper method was sufficient in the second meeting.

1.3. Questions for the Research

The following questions were used as a guide in the interviews.

Questions for Interview 1

- Who in the focus group is personally involved in Traveller Music?
Singing/dancing/playing instrument/making and repairing instruments?
- Who did they learn it from?
- If they have children, do they teach their children singing/dancing/etc?
- If they don't teach them, what are the reasons?
- If they do teach them, do they feel they need help with it? What kind of help?
- How important is it for them to see traditional music being passed on?
- If there was a traditional music workshop offered where their children and/or parents could learn a few steps, songs, join in with instruments, would they like to be part of it?
- What kind of workshop would they be most interested in? Dance, repairing instruments, playing music, sing?
- When family members meet to play music/dance? where do they gather?
- Can "space" be a problem when they are gathering?
- Do they feel their music is appreciated by the rest of the community?
- Do they think an open day would be a good idea to change public awareness?
- What are their wishes for their music? If they had a magic wand, what would they like to change?
- Are people able to make money from traditional music? If yes, in what areas, i.e., making and repairing instruments?
- Would they like to see their music in various public festivals, i.e. Carlow Arts Festival? If no, what are the reasons?

Questions for the Interview 2

- What is Traveller Music?
- What kind of Traditional music workshop would be most beneficial to them?
- Do they think they could bring in family members with instruments to join the workshop?
- How do they like the idea of having a singing workshop with the tutor of the Carlow Youth Choir?
- If they like the idea what is important to them being part of a singing workshop?
- After having a few hours of workshops, would participants like the idea of meeting with their children and sing/dance/play instruments in a public venue i.e. GAA hall, Parish Centres, Secondary School, on a regular basis?
- If yes, do they think some men might be interested in doing that, too?
- Suggestions for the Open Day?
- Would some members of the group want to give a performance on the Open Day?
- Do they want to include other parts of their culture? Ideas?
- Who would they like to invite in particular?
- Where do young people meet to enjoy music?

1.4 Analysing and Interpreting Information

As with every research there are benefits and drawbacks with the chosen method of data collection. Some of the answers overlap or are repeated, some even contradict each other depending on the participant's interest, individual experience or age. I will include every answer as a valuable one since everybody has different needs, wishes and strengths especially when it revolves around the subject of the arts. None of the answers are considered as more or less important. The method of analysing and interpreting information I gathered from the participants, is one that respects the individual needs as much as the needs of the group. The individual is essential to put the jigsaw of an overall picture together. "Pictureøgs" (A Public Library Cultural Inclusion Project) authors believe if one identifies the strengths of the individual then "... these strengths are recognized, fused and directed back into the community, development is cultivated and empowerment happens" (2007, 4).

1.5. Outcome of the Research

With the needs and issues identified and expressed by the focus group I went on a journey of researching existing facilities in relation to those needs. As with every journey some paths were covered but some showed rocky ways and gaps. One of the most successful discoveries of this research was the huge interest people expressed in this research and their willingness to help overcome obstacles. Together with existing services, the gaps identified and the engagement of different bodies the outcome of the research will hopefully initiate musical and cultural movements and developments and move a step closer to equality and humanity.

2. TRAVELLER CULTURE AND MUSIC

The Pavee Point Centre promotes Travellers' human rights and it also provides information about Traveller culture on their website (www.pavee.ie). On their fact sheet they state that "Historically, Travellers played a role as bearers of culture – music and storytelling. They brought song and stories from parish to parish and developed unique styles of singing, playing music and storytelling. This has influenced many musicians of today who openly acknowledge their debt to these Traveller musicians of the past".

But Traveller music hasn't just influenced musicians of today. Working in partnership with settled people many years ago Traveller musicians and singers also influenced Irish traditional music in the past. "Travellers music has been orally passed on through generations and played an important part in keeping traditional songs alive during colonial times and beyond into modern Ireland" (Wouters, 2005, 21). Liam Gaul highlighted the importance of "master" performers from the Travelling Community in the survival of the Uilleann pipes. "Johnny and Felix Doran gave the dance and music a vitality often lacking from players of the settled community, a mode of ornamentation only gained from careful practice and understanding of the underlying rhythmic nuance of our "wild" native music." (Gaul, 2000, 69).

Yet the role Traveller musicians played in the history of Irish folk music has not been acknowledged. Even nowadays research fails to acknowledge the strong musical skills within the Travelling Community. (Wouters, 2005). "Traveller tradition is marked by a distinct style of singing" and "many Travellers are excellent storytellers and have done so in their music and songs in the past" (Ni Laodhóg and Collins, 1995, in Wouters, 76). Also the tradition of playing the fiddle is one that has survived to the present day.

In the first interview, participants of the focus group expressed strong feelings about traditional music being part of their culture. As Travellers grow up with music each member of the focus group is involved in traditional music in one way or another. Some of them sing – during the discussion we were privileged to hear the beautiful vocals of one of the participants performing "Tinker's Lullaby" -, some dance but all of them would have grown up being surrounded by music played by family members. It used to be mainly the men who play instruments, women sing and dance.

One of the women said: "When we were travelling, a lot of people travelled together. In the evenings we gathered around the fire outside the caravans playing music and singing. There was always somebody who could play an instrument, which would have been passed on to a child to try it out. The next day the instrument was still lying around somewhere and this child could keep practising. This way the skill of playing an instrument was passed on".

There is a small number of professional musicians from the Travelling community and some of them play at weddings or other special occasions. Within the Travelling Community professional musicians don't have to promote themselves since it's a close circle. People also dance and sing at weddings but apart from weddings or other special occasions they don't meet to sing or dance.

The needs and issues revolving around Traveller music and dance tradition in these times of changes and transformation were discussed and are following:

3. IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Playing an instrument

Issues

a) Passing on skills

The women who took part in the focus group felt that they could more or less pass on singing and dancing to their children, but they couldn't teach them how to play an instrument. Since learning an instrument has always been a case of picking it up from listening to another Traveller playing it, the focus group believes breaking the tradition of travelling has broken the tradition of passing on the skills of playing an instrument.

b) Availability, location and feasibility of music lessons

Availability and location of music teachers seem to be a problem in Carlow town. One mother sent her son to accordion lessons, but has difficulties finding a new teacher since the old one is not available anymore. Most mothers feel that their children don't have enough access to tuition. Apart from the difficulty of finding a suitable music teacher, the issue of the expense of purchasing instruments and tuition is another problem for some.

c) Motivation

One example came up in the discussion where a young man owns a guitar but there seems to be a lack of motivation to learn it.

Discussion

There are some schools, i.e. Presentation College, Askea in Carlow town that offer tuition for musical instruments like the tin whistle or the accordion as a school activity. The charge for these lessons is small. The music tutor in this school offers a service of giving instruments as a loan during her lessons. This of course is a great help introducing the instrument to the child before an instrument is purchased.

As the focus group felt that the availability, location and feasibility of tuition for learning an instrument is problematic, there would be a demand for traditional music workshops that catered for children and adults. During these workshops skills could be acquired or improved, interests discovered and motivation gained.

Diarmuid O'Giollain deals with the issue of "The End of Tradition" (2000), where he explores the survival of folklore and tradition in modernity. He believes that in the transformation from tradition to modernity, traditions have to compromise in order to survive. This survival is essential for an ethnic identity because "...tradition helped to legitimise identity. Hence the loss of tradition had negative implications for the maintenance of identity" (O'Giollain, 2000, p.8).

The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance has been running the NOMAD project since 2003. It's a music project that facilitates Music Workshops, Performance Training, Tuition, Development of Curricular Material, Archive and Interactivity between the Travelling Community and the University of Limerick. This project is a great example of interaction between the Travelling Community and an accessible facility in the City of Limerick with the purpose of not only supporting and developing Traveller music and dance practices but also enables the exchange of musical and economical experiences. A similar project could be established in Carlow town with the help of various experts and facilities i.e Carlow College of Music, Comhaltas, Carlowtrad.

To ease the initial costs of learning an instrument "The Music Stand" in Athy offers the service of hiring instruments. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be any similar service in Carlow.

In my inquiries about existing facilities in relation to traditional music there are two major issues that I came across. One was a lack of music teachers, which has been confirmed by Comhaltas member Dave Sheridan. His ambition is to pass on traditional music and he is hoping to get some young musicians involved in teaching music to increase availability of teachers. The second issue revolves around venues in town. There is a lack of dedicated space where traditional music teachers can hold their classes and where musicians can meet.

If somebody was interested in passing on musical skills as a profession, every first week in July, Comhaltas offers a one week course in Dublin to complete a TTCT (Teacher Training Course). They also offer student exams in January, February, April and May in locations around Ireland. These exams are for experienced musicians and are the first step towards the TTCT. A lot of traditional music teachers would pass on their skills in a less formal way than classical music would, a member of Comhaltas informed me.

Recommendations

Introductory music workshops should be held for Parents and Children to learn about different instruments thus increasing the motivation to learn an instrument and creating the connection to performing music.

Advanced music workshops to learn the skill of playing an instrument.

Teacher Training for skilled musicians as a job opportunity to teach music or run music workshops.

For more schools to offer lessons as given in the example above. This way musical instruments can be introduced and areas of interests identified.

Creation of a self organised music group in a public venue for Travellers to meet regularly and therefore creating a space where the old way of passing on and preserving Traveller music can happen.

Attempt to involve both male and female in these recommendations.

3.2. Singing

Issues

For the more experienced singers in particular, the need to learn the right technique to prevent straining vocal cords had been expressed. The wish for vocal tuition and singing workshops, where a piece of music can be learned and performed was expressed.

Discussion

Since the majority of the focus group didn't consider themselves good singers it was a minority who identified with this issue. Taking into account that many very talented singers amongst the Travelling Community have been mentioned (some of them have been recorded at the St. Catherine's Community Services Centre and this CD is included at the back of this report), I believe this issue did not have enough representatives in the focus group or that a lack of self confidence prevented participants from identifying themselves as good singers. I am certain that a singing workshop would be of interest to many.

The tutor of the Carlow Youth Choir has expressed interest in taking part in a possible singing workshop and a potential co-operative project between the Youth Choir and a group of Traveller singers has been discussed.

The idea of a self organised weekly get together in one of the local public halls was very welcome. Travellers could meet and sing, dance and play instruments simply to promote Traveller Music. The need for at least four people to be dedicated to this project was discussed in the second interview.

Recommendations

Singing Workshops for Parents and Children to preserve and improve skills

Co-operative project with the Carlow Youth Choir

Self organised music group in a public venue for Travellers to meet regularly and create a space where the old way of passing on and preserving Traveller music can happen.

Teacher Training to become a vocal tutor

Performing in schools and public festivals to introduce and promote Traveller music

3.3. Dancing

Issues

A lot of the women would like their children to learn Irish dancing. Some of the women would love to learn a few line dancing steps themselves and for the younger generation Hip-Hop is more appealing.

Discussion

Some of the National Schools offer Irish dancing for children. Similar to the issue of music instruments availability and location can be a problem if Irish dancing is not offered as part of a school programme.

Access to Hip-Hop and Line-Dancing is an issue for some of the women. In my search for current dance lessons I found very few services. I have listed these findings in the “Contacts” sheet.

Recommendations

Irish Dancing classes for children to learn, preserve and improve skills

Line-Dancing and Hip-Hop workshops for different age groups.

Self organised music group in a public venue for Travellers to meet regularly and create a space where the old way of practising dance can happen.

3.4 Making and Repairing Instruments

Issues

According to the focus group the old tradition of making and repairing instruments has died out.

Discussion

As an example of reviving an old tradition, one participant talked about the tradition of making wooden carts, which had died out. But a person from Dublin picked it up again and now passes the tradition on to younger people through workshops.

In the interview I inquired about ways and ideas to involve men in a music project, but the attending women believed they would not be interested, since their main interest deals with horses or woodcarving. Therefore making and repairing instruments is an area where the women could see men being interested in. I would also imagine that a handcrafted instrument creates a connection between the maker and the instrument. This way a connection to Traveller music could be revived for men and for those who currently don't engage in community projects.

“The Men’s Development Network” (Clarke, N, O’Neill, Franklin, S. 2009) has researched the area of Traveller Men’s Attitudes to Engagement and has found following issues which I would like to summarise. These findings are discussed more detailed in their research:

- ❖ Disconnection: Traveller men are disconnected and unlikely to engage for different reasons, e.g. in conflict with state agencies.
- ❖ Fear of Scrutiny: Their involvement in activities that they feel they would not like to have scrutinised means that they will not engage at any point.
- ❖ Hierarchy and the Challenge of Engagement: Engagement would reduce their stature and perhaps dominance.
- ❖ Open to Convincing: There are men who need convincing that engagement is benign and will not have an impact on their ability to live their lives the way they wish to live.
- ❖ Prepared for Engagement: There are men who are prepared to engage.
- ❖ Traveller Women’s Participation: Women’s involvement may impact positively on Traveller men’s interest in becoming involved in programmes.
- ❖ Horse Projects: Horse Projects are an avenue in which Traveller men can begin to engage with providers on their terms and with their interest in mind.
- ❖ Machismo: Machismo played a large part in how Traveller men are in the world and how they engage with services.
- ❖ Location, Issues and Agencies: The greater the problems facing a particular group in a particular location the less likely it is for men to engage in addressing the issues that are fundamental to them.

In the process of trying to engage male members of the Travelling community in a music project these findings should be taken into consideration.

Recommendations

Making and repairing instruments workshop

Training to get involved in running a workshop

Reviving skills of making and repairing instruments as a job opportunity

Information about engaging Traveller men by studying “Traveller Men’s Development Programme” (Clarke, N., O’Neill, Franklin, S.)

3.5. Music as a Profession and Self esteem Issues

Issues

As a response to my question if members of their family who are very good at playing an instrument or singing would turn their skills into something more professional like running workshops or professional singing or playing themselves, the answer was that most of the Travellers –mainly the men - would lack the confidence to perform in public.

Another opinion was that talented women would end their singing career by getting married and having children which according to one member “is the thing to do” if you are a woman from a Travelling community.

Discussion

Examples were mentioned where members of the family had been very good at singing but would not perform in public. Sometimes they would get embarrassed performing as they lacked self- confidence.

Lack in self-esteem and confidence can be a result of oppression and marginalisation. Travelling women have to deal with both “external” and “internal” oppression as Anastasia Crickley calls it in “Women and Racism” (in: Responding to Racism in Ireland, 2001, 88 – 98). The “triple burden” (p 90) implicates the “crosscutting oppression experienced as a woman, as a member of a minority and as a woman member of a minority...”(p90). But the “external oppression, the reality of racism and discrimination takes priority in the life of a woman from a minority group. There are “intersections between gender and ethnic oppression” (91) and “thus, an end to racism can not be achieved without also challenging abuses of women’s human rights.”(96).

To build up both women’s and men’s self esteem, Music Therapy could be considered. Music has been used throughout the ages as a complement to healing. Music therapy can act as a psychotherapeutic means to enhance low self- esteem. “...Successful musical experience can promote self worth and promote body awareness and identity” (Thaut & Smeltekop, 1990). It “offers a secure creative space for exploration, expression and development when verbal communication is inadequate or unavailable.” Music Therapy is not music teaching but involves interactive improvisation. The process of music making is important not the musical product. The person’s own creative potential is being developed and enhances a sense of independence and self-esteem.

Recommendation

Performance training for experienced singers and musicians.

Music Therapy Workshops to enhance self- esteem.

Engagement in recording songs.

Engagement in public events, i.e. Eigse Festival

Performances in public venues i.e. schools to educate public about Traveller culture.

3.6. Appreciation of Travellers Music

Issues

When the question of how the rest of society appreciates Traveller Music came up, there were frustrated responses in relation to what people know about Traveller Culture.

The overall opinion was that the settled community has a fear of Travellers even though it is not justified. One opinion of a woman in the focus group was that Travellers don't really mix and therefore there is a lack of knowledge about Travellers by the settled community.

Research about Travellers commenced a long time ago and yet the settled community's negative attitude towards Travellers doesn't seem to have changed were the concerns of an older woman.

Discussion

"Travellers don't get the chance to express themselves" was one of the responses. Some of the opinions of the focus group are following: "People hear a lot negative about Travellers but nothing positive." "If you asked people on the street about Traveller Culture they "would not have a clue". "People have a fear of Travellers because they don't know enough about them." "Traveller Culture is one of the richest cultures but it is not recognized by the settled community". One of the older participants complained that she had been questioned by different kinds of researchers when she was only a child and from there on she has participated in many questionnaires and interviews, but nothing has changed the negative picture settled people have about travellers.

The idea of an open day to widen people's views on Traveller culture was very much appreciated. One suggestion from the participants was to also invite various agencies in town.

A great idea on how to present Traveller culture came from a participant who had seen a play by Travellers in Dublin. The issues of discrimination could be brought across through drama and music and different parts of their culture and musical skills could be linked into that play. All participants showed a great interest for such a project.

Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" is interactive theatre designed for people who want to learn ways of fighting against oppression in their daily lives. The facilitator explores the situation lived by the participants, analyses the root causes of the situation, explores group solutions and acts to change the situation following the precepts of social justice. The facilitator creates a safe space for people to explore ideas in an uninhibited way. With the "Theatre of the Oppressed" the participants would be introduced to drama as a media for raising awareness of issues and performance skills could also be developed.

To make the public aware of Travellers' musical skills I inquired about feelings regarding Traveller Music being part of public festivals, i.e. the Eigse Festival in Carlow. The steering group was confident that singing would be a great input into the festival.

Recommendations

A public play using the techniques of "Theatre of the Oppressed" including music and dance to inform the settled community about Traveller culture and Traveller issues around marginalisation and oppression.

Engagement in the project by different age groups and different genders.

Music and drama workshops to rehearse for this performance.

Invitation of local agencies

Play being held in schools or libraries

Possible video taping of play and introducing it to schools by a member of the Travelling Community. Education and promotion can happen by circulating this DVD to libraries and schools. An example of a similar project is the DVD "Pictureògs", initiated by the Kildare County Library. It celebrates Irish Traveller Culture and history through song, story and participatory arts.

Group singing tuition to practice a piece of music and performance training to take part in a public event.

Self- confidence and self esteem training with the help of Music Therapy

3.7. The Younger Generation and Music

Issues

One of the younger women in the group was concerned about access to local nightclubs where they could dance. Access is frequently denied for being a Traveller.

As evident in many cultures, the younger generation of the Travelling Community doesn't identify itself as much with traditional music anymore. While the older generation identifies traditional music with "Traveller Music" the younger women in the group feel that Dean Martin, Elvis Presley and Celine Dion is now part of Traveller Music as well as the traditional music. Playing the spoons was introduced to me in the first interview and seems to be a skill both generations know well.

Discussion

There is a nightclub in New Ross that runs a special night weekly where Travellers can meet, but nothing similar exists in Carlow.

Hip-Hop is the type of dance most young people are interested in and the music they identify themselves with the most can vary from traditional music. Charlie Ward, a rapper from the Travelling community was mentioned by one of the younger participants and some young people listen to Gypsy rap.

Yet even the younger women in the focus group were in favour of a traditional music workshop rather than a more contemporary workshop. The dynamics of the Travelling community between the older and the younger generation in the focus group could have influenced this decision though, since the opinion and decisions of the older generation is respected strongly by the younger people.

Recommendations

To make this report accessible to the public to change awareness

Music Workshops relating to young peoples interest i.e. including African drums and other ethnic music and instruments.

4. CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS

Music has always played an important role in Travellers' lives, it is part of their culture and hence part of their identity. Without a sense of belonging, tradition and common culture we get lost in finding our way to establish a healthy sense of personal and cultural identity.

Traveller traditions – one of them being musical tradition – have been able to survive as part of nomadism. By taking away one of their most significant traditions, a cultural avalanche has been triggered and affected traditions linked with travelling. Travellers are not just facing difficulties of adapting to unfamiliar ways of living but they are also struggling with maintaining a way of keeping old traditions without alternative facilities in place.

“Travellers were constructed as a problem for Irish society. Their cultural distinctiveness became constructed, within a highly racialised discourse of Traveller deviance and inferiority, as justification for spatial exclusion and discrimination. Within the dominant discourses of the time Travellers were not to have equal rights to welfare unless they first ceased to be Travellers. The price of social citizenship, within the assimilationist logic of the social policies which emerged to address the “problem of intinerancy” included the surrendering of identity and difference” (Brian Fenning, 2002, 153)

As we can clearly see some of their musical traditions have died out already and some are slowly fading away. Hand in hand with the loss of tradition, goes the loss of identity and therefore a loss of self esteem and pride. Self esteem issues are not just down to loosing a sense of identity but it is also due to the effect of being marginalized and socially excluded. The issue of access is one Travellers encounter in every day life. Denial of access to public venues, prejudiced opinions from the public and discrimination in living and health circumstances are just a few to mention. Looking at the lack of opportunities for Travellers to maintain their musical skills by inequality of access or by failing to provide alternatives is another problem to highlight amongst many. “As well as limiting people’s access to the main system of resource distribution, racism often results in a rejection and denial of the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities.[...] This can interact with economic deprivation and further isolate and alienate and increase exclusion and marginalisation from society.” (Hugh Frazer, 2001, 144).

I strongly believe that in times of transformation, maintaining and reviving Traveller traditions is vital. With new living circumstances Travellers need to identify themselves in new ways - not in different ways. Travellers are still Travellers in their beliefs, values and culture. Music has the ability to be moved to different places without changing shape or style and it creates a sense of home, a sense of familiarity and belonging. But without suitable facilities in place it cannot be kept alive.

It is our moral obligation to start recognising Travellers strong and positive traditions, to provide solutions to keep these traditions alive and to help strengthen their sense of pride and self esteem. An even greater effort has to be put into delivering the positive aspects of Traveller culture to the public. These findings will hopefully challenge

injustice and discrimination, promote equality and most important create respect for differences and diversity. We should hope to start with music and end with words.

With the words of Martin Luther King I would like to end this research.

“I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

5. CONTACTS

5.1 Music Workshops

Carlow College of Music, Larkfield, Carlow, 059 9140676

Ms Mary Amond O'Brien, tutor of the Carlow Youth Choir, arranges singing workshops, possible project with the Youth Choir, 087 6536143

Mr Micheal Bolton, Violin teacher, arranges traditional music workshop, 087 9644395

Carlowtrad, Traditional music workshop

Mr Eric Butler, Accordion teacher, arranged traditional music workshop for experienced accordion players, 086 8531233

Mr Eoin O'Meachair, Banjo, Tin whistle teacher, musician, arranged traditional music workshops, 086 8542436

Waltons New School of Music, www.newschool.ie
2 ½ hrs "Sounds Irish" workshops, 70 participants,
Contact person Ms Sarah Cunningham, 01 4781884

Comhaltas

Comhaltas is the largest group involved in the preservation and promotion of Irish traditional music. They are a non-profit cultural movement working for the cause of Irish music.

Carlow branch: Dave Sheridan, Violin teacher, arranged traditional music workshops (059) 9140979

Kilkenny branch: Ms Patricia Foley, arranged traditional music workshops, patriciafoley@hotmail.com

Arts Office, Carlow County Council, Athy Road, Carlow, 059 9170300

Contact Person: Aileen Nolan, Project Co-Ordinator, Sinead Dowling, Arts Officer
Currently the Arts Office is more involved with visual Arts and can not offer a list of upcoming music events. There is an Arts Centre being built in Carlow town which will be of great benefit for the town and its communities.

Crooked House Theatre Company Ltd, Riverbank Arts Centre, Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, 045 448309

Artistic Director and Practitioner of "Theatre of the Oppressed":
Mr Peter Hussey, 087 2759420

5.2 Dance Lessons

Leighlingbridge Parish Centre, 059 9722607

Irish Set Dancing Classes for Adults, every Wednesday 8.15pm – 10pm.

Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre, 059 9723196

Currently running guitar and drum workshops for Teenagers age 14 – 20. Hoping to organise dance workshops for teenagers in the next year.

Contact Person: Ms Karen Mullens, Youth Worker

5.3 Instrument Making Workshops

Wexford School of Musical Instrument Making

www.Fretbord.net Contact Person: Mr Mike Regan fretbord@iolfree.ie

5.4 Available venues for workshops

Carlow Library, Headquarters, Tullow Street, Carlow

Contact Person: Mr John Shortall, 059 9170094, jshortall@carlowcoco.ie

Athy Library, Contact Person: Ms Carmel Hutchinson, 059 8631144

5.5 Contact list of Music Teachers

AD-LIB Music, 4A Hanover ct, Kennedy Ave, Carlow, (059) 9142771

Carlowtrad, www.carlowtrad.ie

Comhaltas

Contact addresses available from Dave Sheridan 059 9140979

5.6 Hire of Music Instruments

The Music Stand, 23 Offaly Street, Athy, Co. Kildare, 059 8632265

Most equipment to hire bar brass

5.7 Example Music Project

Nomad Project, Irish World Academy of Music

Irishworldacademy@ul.ie, 061 202590

5.8 Eigsè Festival

Eigsè Carlow Festival Group, College Street, Carlow, 059 9120291.

5.9 Possible Funding Sources for above recommendations

Arts Council - DEIS is a new scheme established under the Arts Council Traditional Arts Initiative 2005 – 2008. DEIS is a proposal-based scheme which is aimed at encouraging and facilitating the traditional arts community to seek funding from the Arts Council for a range of projects.

Carlow County Council: - Community Arts Project, funding applicable from January 2009.

Arts Act Grant

Government Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs: Applications eligible for Community Developments.

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