

# **The promotion of music in Dublin: women's lectures and articles supporting the city's musical development**

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In nineteenth century Dublin there was a desire for music to play a greater role in the cultural aspect of the city. Women contributed to achieving this as teachers and performers but also as promoters of the cause. Their participation in the promotion of music in Ireland was mainly through articles, lectures and the organisation of events such as the Feis Ceoil. This chapter will examine their attempts to improve musical standards and to increase the involvement in, and appreciation of, music by a larger section of society. Through a discussion of the work of Margaret O'Hea, Edith Oldham and Annie Patterson it will present an evaluation of women's involvement in the promotion of music around the turn of the twentieth century.

## **Music promotion and development in the second half of the nineteenth century**

The second half of the nineteenth century saw many developments in musical life in Dublin. However, the musicians active in the city were well aware of the need to continue to increase public interest and involvement if they were to move these musical developments past their foundational stages. There was also a need for teachers and musicians to strive to be of a standard that was comparable to their British counterparts and, to a lesser degree, to their European counterparts. As a result, musicians were eager to continue to promote higher standards of teaching and performance and to encourage the participation of the general public in musical life in the city. In many ways women were at the forefront of these promotional efforts and their involvement was never hindered, but always greatly appreciated. This was unusual for women in Irish society in the nineteenth century. However, throughout the century their involvement and treatment in music was progressive. Because women in Dublin were accepted in music they were keen to continue to advance its development, improve music standards and to increase the interest of the general public in the capital's musical life. They set about doing this through involvement in several organisations

and movements. One of the main outlets for the promotion of higher standards of music as well as its growth and development, was through the meetings of the Leinster branch of the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

### **The establishment of the Incorporated Society of Musicians in Ireland**

The Incorporated Society of Musicians was an organisation founded in the north of England in 1882.<sup>1</sup> It was founded as a result of the absence of an organisation to represent British musicians in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Its objectives were:

the union of the musical profession in a representative society; the improvement of musical education; the organisation of musicians in a manner similar to that in which allied professions were organised; and the obtaining of legal recognition by means of a registration of qualified teachers of music as a distinctive body.<sup>3</sup>

In 1893 branches were set up in Scotland and Ireland. There were three Irish divisions of the society: in Leinster, Munster and Ulster. Fleischmann refers to it as the first time professional musicians were organised in this country.<sup>4</sup> In Ireland, particularly Leinster, the main aims of the society were to provide an organisation representative of the music profession, to raise standards of teaching, to hold examinations and to confer a professional diploma.<sup>5</sup> In its early years it was very well supported by Irish musicians, especially in the capital, where nearly all

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Bohan, *The ISM: The First Hundred Years* (London: The Incorporated Society of Musicians, 1982), p. 5. Hereafter referred to as Bohan, *The ISM*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Raynor & Neil Hoyle: 'The Incorporated Society of Musicians', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd edn, 29 vols (London: MacMillan Publishing Ltd., 2001), xii, 146.

<sup>4</sup> Aloys Fleischmann, 'Music and Society, 1850-1920', in *A New History of Ireland VI*, ed. by W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p. 514.

<sup>5</sup> Bohan, *The ISM*, p. 8.

of the staff of the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) were members as well as a large number of the city's performers.

In the society's early years in Dublin it held regular meetings for its members with many of the well known Dublin musicians such as James Culwick and T.R. G. Joze, giving regular lectures. It also supported Irish composers and their work. For example, between 1895 and 1898 the 'Toy Symphony', which was a collaboration between Culwick, Joze, Michele Esposito and Joseph Smith, received at least one Dublin and London performance a season because of the backing of the Incorporated Society of Musicians.<sup>6</sup> The Society welcomed and supported all aspects of music training, and although it has been criticised as a British organisation taking over, it was more a branch of a British organisation that was managed by Irish musicians. It was used as a means of communicating ideas with each other and supporting and developing music within Ireland.<sup>7</sup> For example, when the society met in January 1895, the occasion of Margaret O'Hea's lecture, the meeting was attended by all the prominent Dublin teachers, with two thirds of the crowd being made up of RIAM personnel.<sup>8</sup> That the organisation was Irish in its interests is further illustrated by an examination of the lectures of Margaret O'Hea and Edith Oldham.<sup>9</sup>

### **Margaret O'Hea: her early education and career**

Margaret O'Hea was the eldest daughter of James O'Hea, a circuit court judge. As a result of an unspecified accident in the 1850s, he was forced to retire and, while he maintained his position as a crown prosecutor until his death, his accident resulted in a big change in the financial

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Pine and Charles Acton, *To Talent Alone: The Royal Irish Academy of Music 1848-1998* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillian Ltd, 1998) p. 252. Hereafter referred to as Pine and Acton, *To Talent Alone*.

<sup>7</sup> Marie McCarthy, 'The Transmission of Music and the Formation of National Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland', in *Irish Musical Studies 5*, ed. by Patrick F. Devine & Harry White (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 1996), p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Pine and Acton, *To Talent Alone*, p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret O' Hea: 'The Responsibilities of a Music Teacher', Lecture given on the 4 January 1895 and reproduced in *The Irish Times*, 5 January 1895. Edith Oldham: 'Eisteddfod and the Feis Ceoil'. Lecture given in February 1898 and reproduced in *The New Ireland Review*, 8 (1898), pp. 349-361.

circumstances of the family.<sup>10</sup> This may have been an influencing factor in his children seeking their own financial independence. There were four girls and a boy in the O'Hea family. The son, John Fergus, was a political cartoonist who worked under the pen name 'Spex'. Of the four sisters, the eldest three all worked at the Royal Irish Academy of Music: Alice as a professor of singing, Mary as an elocution teacher and Margaret a professor of the pianoforte.<sup>11</sup> The youngest sister, Ellen O'Hea, was active as a composer and singer and her most popular work, a comic opera entitled *The Rose and the Ring*, was performed regularly in Dublin in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>12</sup>

The eldest of the O'Hea family, Margaret, began piano lessons with an unknown teacher at the age of ten and then two years later she took lessons with Miss Henrietta Flynn. O'Hea attended lessons with Miss Flynn at the same time as Charles Villiers Stanford.<sup>13</sup> Under Flynn's direction O'Hea made her first solo performance playing Weber's *Invitation à la Valse* in the Antient Concert Rooms.

In 1865 Margaret O'Hea entered the Royal Irish Academy of Music where she was a student of Mrs Fanny Arthur Robinson. She also began to teach privately to support herself. However, this presented her with problems other than financial ones. Because she was spending so much time teaching and travelling long distances from house to house, it became harder and harder to keep up her own solo practicing; her teaching became her priority because, as Annie Patterson put it, 'professional engagements of native solo instrumentalists are few and far between, and will not make the pot boil'.<sup>14</sup> After a year as a student in the Academy, Joseph Robinson suggested that O'Hea should go to London for a season to hear as much good music as possible. From that point on she returned to the city most years throughout her career. Through her trips she encountered such musical figures as George Grove, John Ella and Anton Rubenstein.

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<sup>10</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Margaret O'Hea', *The Weekly Irish Times*, 10 November 1900, p. 4. Hereafter referred to as *WIT*.

<sup>11</sup> Pine and Acton, *To Talent Alone*, p. 246.

<sup>12</sup> *The Irish Times*, 11 November 1876.

<sup>13</sup> Patterson, 'Margaret O'Hea', *WIT*, 10 November 1900, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

In 1871 a position became available in the Academy piano faculty and it would have seemed that O'Hea was an ideal candidate for the job. However, the board of management were eager to engage a French woman and on the 18 May 1871 the board announced the appointment of Madame Gayrard to the piano faculty of the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Two years later, in 1873, Gayrard resigned and was succeeded by O'Hea.

Margaret O'Hea remained on the teaching staff of the Academy for fifty five years, but a letter from George Grove to Edith Oldham suggests that she may not have always been content in her position. In 1883 she wrote to Grove asking if there was an opening for her at the Royal College of Music in London.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps she longed to live in London to experience its musical culture to a fuller extent or to be closer to her sister Mary who was living there at that time. That there was not an opening for Margaret O'Hea was a stroke of luck for the Royal Irish Academy of Music, her many students and music in Dublin.

During her time in the Academy there were two main streams of teaching, that of Edith Oldham and that of Margaret O'Hea. Although they worked together in the same faculty for many years there seems to have been some friction between them. As well as having different approaches to their teaching, O'Hea seemed to have had, at the very least, a professional problem with Oldham. O'Hea was involved in the early stages of the Feis Ceoil, attending meetings and offering her support until Edith Oldham became secretary at which point she withdrew her involvement. Also, in 1902, when Oldham was to be promoted in the Academy, O'Hea, along with Elizabeth Bennett made a strenuous but unsuccessful effort to prevent her promotion.<sup>16</sup> In her article on O'Hea, Annie Patterson's first quote from O'Hea was the following: 'Bickering and jealousies among musicians are often spoken of - my experiences on the contrary are very pleasant'<sup>17</sup> but perhaps this was not always the case. One cannot help but wonder if she was jealous of the opportunities that Oldham had received or of her friendship with George Grove. Evidence of the latter could be seen in a letter of Grove to Oldham in which he tells her that he had a visit from O'Hea and that she

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<sup>15</sup> Letter from George Grove to Edith Oldham, 22 July 1892.

<sup>16</sup> Pine & Acton: *To Talent Alone*, p. 219.

<sup>17</sup> Patterson: 'Margaret O'Hea', *WIT*, 10 November 1900, p. 4.

was in 'a wonderfully glossy Sunday gown with a suspicion of rouge on her cheeks or was it naturally pink? We fraternized directly and laughed and carried on in a splendid style'.<sup>18</sup>

### **O'Hea's Lecture on the 'Responsibilities of a Music Teacher'**

Margaret O'Hea was the first female member of the council of the Leinster branch of the Incorporated Society of Musicians. In 1895 she was asked to give her first address to the Society and on the 4 January, Margaret O'Hea gave a lecture to Dublin's music teachers discussing her thoughts on the responsibilities of the music teacher.

Although the article's title alluded to her talking about all music teachers, in the opening paragraph she stated that she was 'using it in its more ordinary and general acceptance, that of teaching pupils to play instruments'.<sup>19</sup> Within the paper she aimed to the characteristics of a good teacher. She stated that she would 'endeavour to sketch an abstract portrait of a good music teacher, without [...] laying any personal claim to the topics'.<sup>20</sup> She commented that she chose her topic because it was one that was 'likely to provoke an interesting discussion'.<sup>21</sup> She began the paper by discussing music as a language of expression with technique as the alphabet. In the first place, she saw the teacher as being directly responsible for accuracy, method and style. She believed that the taste of the pupil had to be carefully cultivated even 'while the solid foundation of technique is being laid'.<sup>22</sup> She suggested that as well as the development of a student's skill on their instrument, knowledge of theory, harmony and the history of music should 'be regarded as a pleasure as well as a necessity'.<sup>23</sup> O'Hea voiced her worry that many young students thought of the 'science of music as dry and the time spent on it more or less wasted'.<sup>24</sup> On the subject of the students' practice, O'Hea believed that full concentration was essential

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<sup>18</sup> Letter from George Grove to Edith Oldham, 22 July 1892.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret O'Hea, 'The Responsibilities of a Music Teacher', *The Irish Times*, 5 January 1895, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as O'Hea, 'Responsibilities'

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

in order for anyone to progress and that every year many thousands of hours got wasted while students who were 'bodily present and seemingly engaged at their instruments let their thoughts wander off to every trivial distraction'; that from the point of view of the teacher, the importance of practice could not be too often or too seriously insisted on. She also felt that that all students should be encouraged to memorize the music because 'without the printed copy so much more freedom and expression could be thrown into the performance'.<sup>25</sup>

Through the course of her address, it becomes evident that O'Hea expected a lot from her students. In the next paragraph she said that as well as direct instructions, the musical tastes of the student should be cultivated. Her suggestion on how to achieve this would have been extremely time consuming and possibly expensive. She suggested that 'artistic benefits should be derived from the study of the great poets, of the best prose literature, by seeing fine pictures and sculpture and being present at high class dramatic performances'.<sup>26</sup> But this was a comment that earned her a round of applause. While her expectations of the students were high, so too were her expectations of the ideal teacher. She started on the topic of teaching by warning those present to avoid the career unless they had enthusiasm for it that was sparked by something other than its monetary value, as she warned that the arts were not lucrative. She saw the role of the music teacher as being one of great importance in the life of any young student. As an extreme example of this, she stated that she had even known teachers who had discovered physical defects in their students which had gone unnoticed in the child's home and that their discoveries often led to the limitation being helped because it was detected in its early stages. This comment was so well received that it earned her a round of applause from her audience. The position of the music teacher, she believed, was one that held many moral responsibilities, a characteristic she felt was often lacking. She listed the following as desirable qualities: to bear a high character, to have self control, a command of temper, to be reliable, patient and to possess courtesy of manner but also to be simple and unaffected, with any inclination towards priggishness, personal glorification or airs of superiority being completely avoided. Overall she

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<sup>25</sup> O'Hea, 'Responsibilities'.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

believed that 'lessons carelessly given, time unnecessarily cut short, anything deceitful, underhand or untruthful, have an influence for evil on the young'.<sup>27</sup> The address was brought to a close with O'Hea stressing the importance of enthusiasm as the final necessary characteristic.

In many ways Margaret O'Hea's address is comparable to the work of Annie Curwen in that it seeks to guide the music teacher.<sup>28</sup> The big differences, however, lay in O'Hea's thoughts on the subject and her audience. She was not trying to help with teaching methods so much as to guide and encourage all those present at her address, to cultivate a breed of students who would be above average. The students would be diligent and well rounded, and constantly committed and enthusiastic. While many might find her approach harsh, she was talking to some of the best teachers of Dublin at a time when music teaching had truly begun to develop and expand. She wanted her audience to think about all that was involved in their jobs, that they were not there just to teach the notes, and their role was to help develop the next generation of teachers who would continue the development of music education in Ireland. From her time spent in London, O'Hea was eager to see Dublin continue to improve as an Irish centre for music training, and one that could compete with its British neighbour. She realised that to achieve this, the standard needed to continue to improve. Her paper also led to a debate between many of the musicians present, thus creating an opportunity for her points to be further developed. After her address, O'Hea was thanked by Dr Ebenezer Prout, chairman of the meeting. He rejoiced at having heard 'such an admirable and suggestive paper' being read by a lady and one of the society's Irish members. Others who

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<sup>27</sup> O'Hea, 'The Responsibilities'.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on the work of Annie Curwen see Jennifer O'Connor, 'The Growth of Female Piano Pedagogy in Nineteenth Century Dublin and Annie Curwen's Pianoforte Method', *Maynooth Musicology* (2008), pp. 59-77.



commented on the paper included Dr Annie Patterson<sup>29</sup> and Madame Jeanie Rosse<sup>30</sup>, a singing teacher at the RIAM.

### **Edith Oldham: early education and career**

Three years later, in February 1898 the Incorporated Society of Musicians heard another address from one of Dublin's female musicians, Edith Oldham. She was an accomplished pianist and teacher and was also instrumental in the founding of the Feis Ceoil competition. For many she is remembered as the young Irish girl befriended by George Grove. Edith Oldham was born in 1865, the youngest surviving child of twelve. Her father, Eldred Oldham, was in the drapery business.<sup>31</sup> Her older sister, Alice Oldham, was one of the first nine female graduates of the Royal University of Ireland and she was also the leader of the campaign for the admission of women universities throughout Ireland, particularly Trinity College.<sup>32</sup>

Edith Oldham began her tuition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music where she was taught by Margaret O'Hea and Sir Robert Stewart. In 1883 she was one of three RIAM students who received a scholarship to study at the newly opened Royal College of Music in London.<sup>33</sup> Her scholarship and subsequent move to London led to the development of a close friendship with the director of the RCM, Sir George Grove. Evidence of their friendship exists in the form of five hundred and fourteen letters from George Grove to Edith Oldham from 1883 to his

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<sup>29</sup> Annie Patterson seconded the Chairman's motion regarding the importance of O'Hea's paper and its topic. She later commented in agreement with the suggestions of a Mrs Webster that teachers needed to know more concerning the science of education. (O'Hea, 'The Responsibilities')

<sup>30</sup> Madame Jeanie Rosse was in agreement with O'Hea's suggestions for teachers but added that she felt that vocal training should be the first step to a student's musical education because 'if children first learned to sing pretty songs they would be prepared to learn attractive tunes on the piano.' (O'Hea, 'The Responsibilities')

<sup>31</sup> Details on Edith Oldham's family are from e-mail correspondence with Ms Catherine Ferguson. Edith was her father's great aunt.

<sup>32</sup> Susan M. Parkes, *Alice Oldham and the Admission of Women to Trinity College, 1892-1904*. (Trinity Monday Discourse, May 2004.)

<sup>33</sup> Pine and Acton, *To Talent Alone*, p. 113.

death in 1900.<sup>34</sup> Although there has been much speculation about their relationship, the letters suggest merely a close friendship and mutual understanding. Grove was an important advisor to Oldham in her early career. In 1888 Edith Oldham returned to Dublin and took up a position as a professor of the pianoforte in the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She was the first female teacher in the establishment to be listed as a holder of a diploma in music.

Edith Oldham was an important member of the early Feis Ceoil committees and was instrumental in the competitions success in its early years. She was the first honorary secretary of the Feis and throughout 1895 and 1896 she gave several lectures promoting the competition. It was also through the Feis Ceoil that Oldham met her future husband, Richard Best, who was the competition's first registrar. Edith Oldham continued to teach at the RIAM until her death in 1950.

### **Oldham's comparison of the Feis Ceoil and the Eisteddfod**

In her lecture to the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Oldham chose to speak on the Welsh festival on which the Feis Ceoil was based, the Eisteddfod. Although the topic was very different the aim of her lecture can be seen as the same as that of Margaret O'Hea: to spark enthusiasm in her listeners, to send them home thinking and maybe to aid in the development of musical activity. Her address provided a comparison of the Feis Ceoil and Eisteddfod.

Her opening statement refers to her initial misconception that the paper would be an easy one to write but that upon her return from Eisteddfod she realised its difficulty; it was a topic more fit for a statesman than a professional musician because to adequately address the subject was to touch on great questions.<sup>35</sup> Her experiences of Eisteddfod were very positive: she saw it as 'the expression of ideals of a nation'.<sup>36</sup> In short, she saw it as an event that brought the people

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<sup>34</sup> The letters were donated to the library of the Royal College of Music by the executor of Richard Best's estate, after his death. The library possesses all the letters from George Grove as well as letters from Mrs Oldham to Edith between 1883 and 1888.

<sup>35</sup> Edith Oldham, 'Eisteddfod and the Feis Ceoil'. *The New Ireland Review*, 8 (1898), pp. 349-361.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

together, it was an expression of their culture and their artistic ideals. In comparison, she described Ireland as a country that was severely in need of something similar but original because she felt that any attempts at organising a musical event up to that point had been merely an imitation of English standards and that Irish men and women could never be English. The Ireland that Oldham describes was dismal in many respects and her portrait would, most likely, have been a bold statement at that time, particularly for a woman. She believed that the nation had been deprived of legitimate outlets for its ideas and imagination:

Ireland, [was] once the home of a living art, [and although] still possessed of traditions of greatness in the higher things, still endowed with a spirituality and imagination which centuries of misgovernment and misunderstanding on the part of the ruling race has not eradicated [...] Ireland, the land of Song, sings no more. The happiness of her people is gone.<sup>37</sup>

She suggests that the nation needed an outlet for its artistic and musical endeavours to flourish, a means of expressing itself while meeting and supporting others so that the population grew together culturally and became happier and more contented as a result. Oldham believed that the Feis Ceoil festival was one such outlet. She commented on the influence Eisteddfod had on the founding and organization of the Feis. In giving a history of the Welsh festival, she pointed out that the Irish could not hope to adopt the programme straight off as it was one that had existed for hundreds of years in Wales and the Feis was only coming into its second year. To compare the two might 'almost be as reasonable as comparing our small cathedral of Christchurch to St. Peter's in Rome'.<sup>38</sup> The best they could hope for was that someday it would grow to the strengths that Eisteddfod had. In Oldham's words, 'we in the Feis have enough to do at present in getting the festival well established and a popular institution in the country'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Edith Oldham, 'Eisteddfod and the Feis Ceoil', *The New Ireland Review*, 8 (1898), p. 350.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Edith Oldham then describes how the Feis compared musically to Eisteddfod and on this subject she commented that though we compared poorly in numbers our standards were higher. For example, the Feis had thirteen choirs entered in 1897, Eisteddfod had sixty-six but in Wales only one choir sang without accompaniment; in Ireland it was compulsory. The largest area of difference was within the treatment of composers and their music. In Eisteddfod only half the concerts were given to Welsh composers, whereas in the Feis all of the concerts had music composed by Irish composers. In reference to the compositional competitions, Oldham claimed the Feis to be far superior because it had performed the winning work, Esposito's cantata, *Deirdre*. On the topic of this work Oldham goes as far as to credit the Feis with sparking Esposito's compositional output in this genre:

We all know the talent of the composer of *Deirdre* in a purely instrumental music but I think it was a revelation to most of us that we had a composer with us in the person of Signor Esposito who could favourably compare with any of the large orchestral and choral works of the day. I say 'revelation' advisedly because had it not been for the Feis it might have been many years before that talent had been revealed to us.<sup>40</sup>

In her discussion of the Feis Ceoil, Edith Oldham takes a very nationalistic stance. She believed that Ireland as a whole had suffered and needed something to bring happiness and self-respect back to the people and she saw the competition as a means of doing this. A joining together of ideas, interests and talents to create an annual event that would illustrate the creativity of its musicians while also bringing people together in support of this cultural development. She saw as one of its main aims that of teaching the people to stand firmly on their own merits 'not to imitate the fashions and ideas of another race, but to lift its head among nations as a self respecting and self reliant entity in the civilisations of the world'.<sup>41</sup> Oldham brings her address to a close by stating that 'I have within me a conviction that the Feis will ultimately

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<sup>40</sup> Edith Oldham, 'Eisteddfod and the Feis Ceoil'. *The New Ireland Review*, 8 (1898), p. 358.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

do more for the art of music in Ireland than anything that has yet been attempted'.<sup>42</sup> In this aspect Oldham was completely right. The Feis Ceoil is still going strong to this day. It continues to bring musicians from all over the country together, providing a forum through which our nation's talents can be expressed. Oldham envisaged this event long ago, and in many ways her lecture on the Feis may have been inspiration for many of the teachers and musicians present to get involved and attend the 1898 Feis, thus helping to promote the competition and allowing it to grow in its early years.

Her address seems to be a means of inspiring her listeners. She painted Ireland as a country that had neglected its music but that was finding its feet again and already at that point reaching higher standards than its Welsh neighbours. She encouraged others to attend or get involved with the Feis by presenting it in a positive manner, and equating it and the growth of music through it to happiness within the nation. It was appealing and one could not help but get caught up in her enthusiasm.

### **Annie Patterson: a woman of many musical talents**

The articles of Oldham's Feis co-founder, Dr Annie Patterson, for the *Weekly Irish Times* are along similar lines. They are filled with enthusiasm for Irish music, Irish musical events, Irish performers and Irish composers. They seemed to be constantly encouraging the reader to become more involved in the wonderful musical culture that was unfolding around them.

Annie Patterson began her musical education at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 1875 where she was taught piano by Miss Kelly and elementary harmony by Sir Robert Stewart. She later went on to study the organ with Stewart and in 1887 she was awarded one of the RIAM's first organ scholarships. She was also a member of the Academy choir. She also studied music at the Royal University of Dublin, graduating with a BA in 1887 and a MusDoc in 1889, making her the first woman to receive a doctorate of music in Ireland or England. Between 1887 and 1897 she worked as an organist and an examiner of music at the Royal University of Ireland. She also had several articles on music published in the popular English magazine *The Girls Own Paper*

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

on topics such as music in Ireland and music degrees for girls. In 1891 she founded the Dublin Choral Union and was conductor for that year.

Dr Annie Patterson's greatest achievement was the founding of Fees Coil. Patterson approached the Gaelic league in 1894 with the idea of reviving the ancient Irish Feiseanna. Between 1899 and 1901 Annie Patterson wrote articles on music for the *Weekly Irish Times*, through which she aimed to increase public awareness and appreciation of music. She continued to do this with many of her books, for example her volumes on *How to Listen to an Orchestra* and *Chats with music Lovers*. She also wrote a volume for the *Master Musicians* series on Schumann, and books on the oratorio and the native music of Ireland. Patterson was also an accomplished composer and her compositional output included songs, operas and choral works which were all based on Irish themes and myths<sup>43</sup>.

### **Patterson's articles for the *Weekly Irish Times*, 1899-1901**

Patterson's articles for *The Weekly Irish Times* appeared every Saturday from October 1899 until December 1901. Over the course of the articles she covered a wide range of topics but with one main theme evident throughout, that of evoking the interest of the public in the musical activities taking place around them. As Richard Pine points out, her writing in the articles is a 'noteworthy example of that extremely small group of writers on music who at that time embraced journalism as a way of creating an audience for the arguments of cultural nationalism.'<sup>44</sup> Her articles began with the general title of 'Music in the Home'.<sup>45</sup> The first article comments on the opportunities open to the public to enjoy music in their homes and gives points on when to practice. It also announces that the articles will contain an inquiry column 'on all matters musical'.

The second article is on how to practice. It points out in its opening paragraphs that there is a right and wrong way to do everything

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<sup>43</sup> William H. Grattan Flood and Patrick F. Devine, 'Patterson, Annie (Wilson)', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 29 vols (London: MacMillan Publishers Ltd, 2001), xix, 237.

<sup>44</sup> Pine & Acton, *To Talent Alone*, p. 289.

<sup>45</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Music in the Home', *WIT*, 14 October 1899, p. 4.

and that people should realise that there is no 'royal road' to proficiency in music.<sup>46</sup> In terms of the inquiry column, the answers addressed topics as diverse as giving the meaning of the Welsh festival Eisteddfod, to giving suggestions on how to acquire a classical repertoire. In the following weeks Patterson covered a wide range of topics ranging from the pianoforte, singing, opera and concert engagements to the choice of music as a profession. Her final article for the year is on the 'Musical Prospects of Dublin for 1900'.<sup>47</sup> It considers all the organisations that contribute to music in the city, such as the Royal Irish Academy of Music, the Dublin Musical Society, the Dublin Orchestral Union and many more, as well as naming several important figures involved in music. She concludes by suggesting that Dublin is prepared for the new century as long as the public continue to support its musical activities. To close the article she comments that:

As New Year comes in next week, and with its advent most of us are full of new resolutions and increased activity for the undertaking of great things in the dawning future, I will have few words to say about How to Study Music Methodically.

It seems that Patterson was determined to make sure that the new year's resolutions of her readers included their music practice.

Over the course of 1900 her articles continue to cover a wide range of topics from the music surrounding the Queen's visit to the eminent musicians and composers in Dublin at that time. As promised the first article of the New Year discusses the methodical study of music. As we might expect of someone who had achieved so much as a doctorate at twenty-one, she does not approach the subject lightly. The articles open by telling us that:

If we would do anything really well, it is wise to set about it 'decently and in order' that is, we ought to approach the work undertaken in the right spirit of self-devotion and we should allot our time and energies

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<sup>46</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Music in the Home: How to Practice' *WIT*, 21 October 1899, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Music in the Home: The Musical Prospects of Dublin for 1900' *WIT*, 30 December 1899, p. 4.

to it in such a way that we may completely cover the field of thought or action which we propose to explore.<sup>48</sup>

It is as if Patterson is trying to train the nation, thus hoping to create a country full of musical enthusiasts and she aimed to instruct her reader in all aspects of their musical training.

She manages to find the musical element in every event or occasion. For example, her 17 March article is entitled 'Music and The Saints'.<sup>49</sup> In it, she covers music and Christianity, music associated with several saints and lastly, the music associated with St Patrick himself. She notes that she can find no indication 'whether St Patrick himself was "musical" in our sense of the term as many of his kind were not'. But she does acknowledge the music that honours him. On the 14 April her article is entitled 'The Native Music of Ireland' and in it she states that there is 'surely no Irish topic that should so deservedly be discussed [...] and made fashionable [...] as the matchless native music of Ireland'.<sup>50</sup> She speaks of the exquisite beauty of the melodies and the joy to be achieved in performing them. In discussing instrumental improvisation based on Irish airs her thoughts are that the best approach to displaying the charms of Irish melody through improvising on themes is by doing so in the most delicate and dainty manner possible so as not to take away from what is important, the melody.

For the rest of the year her articles are almost completely centred on music and musicians in Dublin. She has an article on the Royal Irish Academy of Music, the Feis Ceoil and its prize-winners and composers and a series on eminent Dublin musicians, with a mixture of both male and female musicians. In her first article on a female musician, Mrs Alice Adelaide Needham, she comments that centuries ago Irish women were as much to the front as Irish men but that 'modern ideas of civilisation have for a time had a repressive effect upon the development and evolution of the feminine Gaelic element but the daughters and sisters of heroes cannot be bound within the limits on

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<sup>48</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Music in the Home: How to Study Music Methodically' *WIT*, 6 January 1900, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Music in the Home: Music and the Saints' *WIT*, 17 March 1900, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Annie Patterson, 'The native Music of Ireland', *WIT*, 14 April 1900, p. 3.



conventionality.<sup>51</sup> And so, over the course of her articles she draws attention to several prominent female musicians such as Margaret O'Hea, Elizabeth Scott-Ffenell and Fanny Moody, to name but a few.<sup>52</sup> The later article bears the title 'A Charming Prima Donna: Madame Fanny Moody' and one cannot help but wonder if this was Patterson's way of pointing out from the beginning that the singer's surname was no reflection on her character.<sup>53</sup>

In 1901 the theme of promoting and advertising local active musicians continues with the articles from 26 January to 4 May being devoted to doing just that. Later in the summer she offers advice on topics such as seaside music and summer pianoforte music and for the last few months the articles return to reviewing Dublin music and its musicians. The article 21 September is entitled 'The prospects of musical Dublin', and is reminiscent of her final article of 1899. This article summarises all that Annie Patterson was trying to achieve through her work with Feis Ceoil, her articles, her compositions and her many publications. She describes the Dublin audiences as being the ones who predict what will be popular. She states that London managers gauge the success of their ventures based on the reaction it gets in Dublin. However, Patterson believed that the same Dublin audience is not as generous yet with its attention to music and drama that is home-grown. She questions, at the end of the first paragraph, if they have yet got over the 'odious principle of honouring all prophets but those of our own country and city?'<sup>54</sup> She suggested that Dublin was a musical city because the public have a keen sense and appreciation of a good music but that the problem was that Dublin audiences did not persevere to keep alive what was worthy of support. As an example she uses the Dublin Musical Society, which had cancelled concerts shortly before her article, due to lack of interest. She points out that there was not enough widespread support for music and that it was up to all classes of the community to become involved in the wealth of musical

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<sup>51</sup> Annie Patterson, 'Alicia Adelaide Needham' *WIT*, 9 June 1900, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Annie Patterson dedicated two weeks to Margaret O'Hea, 10 November 1900 and 17 November 1900.

<sup>53</sup> Annie Patterson, *WIT*, 15 December 1900, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Annie Patterson, 'The Prospects of Musical Dublin' *WIT*, 21 September 1900, p. 3.

activities that were taking place. She praises the societies and organisations and the Academy, the music of the cathedral services, Protestant and Catholic, the theatre bands and the many active professional teachers. She refers to the Ireland of the past where music literature and art were the most treasured possessions of a rarely gifted people.

In this article Annie Patterson comments that she is doing her best to fan the spark of interest into a flame. This summarises what Patterson's work was all about. She wanted to make music an important part of Irish society as it had been in the past. She herself had an interest and appreciation for it from an early age and wanted to pass this on to others. Her articles were a means of bringing music back as an important element of people's daily lives, be it as amateur musicians or avid concertgoers. Through her writing she provided constant encouragement for every level of music enthusiast, making every reader feel like they could contribute to Dublin's musical activities.

The importance of the work of these women both through their articles mentioned above and their many other achievements is undeniable. As keen musicians themselves, they saw the benefits of music to everyday life and its ability to bring people together. At a time when nationalistic sentiments were strong they saw music as a means of uniting the people. They were eager to improve standards of music in Ireland, through music teaching, greater involvement and participation in musical events, such as Feis Ceoil and also through teaching the general public to develop a greater appreciation of music and of their own composers, performers and teachers. The topics for their lectures and articles were all nationalistic and in support of music in Ireland, and especially in Dublin. This chapter offers but a glimpse of the wonderful work of Margaret O'Hea, Edith Oldham and Annie Patterson in promoting music and assisting its development in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

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