



alchemy

Alchemy Music presents

Wicklow Music & Health Gathering

Mermaid Arts Centre
1st June 2017



“Really brightened my day”

Three ‘Music and Health’ projects ran in County Wicklow during the Spring of 2017 at:

Kilmullen Centre, Newcastle
Portview Centre, Arklow
Lincara Centre, Bray

These projects were organised under the aegis of the *Alchemy Music* organisation and were made possible by the generous support of The Wicklow County Arts Office and the Community Education Service of the Kildare-Wicklow Education and Training Board.

The projects incorporated weekly music sessions at the Centres led by experienced facilitators, Linda Ferguson, Jessica Harris and Eamon Sweeney – working through song, poetry, creative composition and relaxation.

The projects received advice and support from the Waterford Healing Arts Trust and Kevin O’Shanahan, Clinical Nurse Specialist in Mental Health and the Arts for West Cork Mental Health Services, and were run along similar lines to long-established Music & Health programmes in Waterford, Cork and Sligo.

Music can play a vital role in the recovery-oriented model of healthcare by providing a vehicle for, amongst other things: focussing on the person and not the disease, providing for personal growth and discovery, being strengths-based, allowing for a sense of personal meaning and choice. To paraphrase the trail-blazing French ‘Music and Health’ organisation, *Musique et Santé*:

Through the presence of artists, healthcare settings become cultural venues and can be an opportunity for encounters with artistic creation. Those shared moments are open windows onto the outside world, creating new opportunities for expression and communication.

“I was nervous getting up to sing the first time but Linda had made me feel at ease and that I think the others enjoyed it even though I’m not a good singer”.

Kilmullen Centre

I’d like to say that the service users have loved having Linda play every Friday in the Centre. It’s easy to see how they enjoy the music and there is a wonderful atmosphere around the centre when she is playing and the service users are joining in. One of them had said to me two weeks ago that “I was nervous getting up to sing the first time but Linda had made me feel at ease and that I think the others enjoyed it even though I’m not a good singer”. I hope we can continue to have the music sessions as I feel it has been a great benefit to them all here in Kilmullen Centre.

Ronan Murray, Clinical Nurse Manager
Kilmullen Centre

I started working with the Kilmullen centre three years ago. In that time I have had the pleasure of getting to know this wonderful group of people through our shared interest in music, songs and stories. Our Friday’s together are always vibrant and fun-filled. Every participant contributes to the music session in their own unique way. Some love to sing, some love to listen. I have enjoyed making music with this group immensely and I have particularly enjoyed watching how their voices and confidence has grown while developing a rich repertoire of rock, pop and traditional songs together.

Linda Ferguson
Musician

“Music has such a profound effect on peoples mindset and overall well-being”.

Lincara Centre

We have found the music Jessica has provided to us to have a positive and energetic yet relaxing aspect to our lives. Music has such a profound affect on peoples mindset and overall well-being. It has also provided people with the ability to express themselves in a socially acceptable way. People actively listened and participated in the group and this provided a sense of ownership and belonging to the group.

Thank you so much and to Jessica for the Music

Clare Barnes
Clinical Nurse Manager, Lincara

I have greatly enjoyed my eight weeks with this wonderful group in Lincara! We quickly established a supportive and safe group dynamic, through which our group members expressed preferences, held group discussions and freely listened, created and responded both to music and to each other! Our group held an eclectic mix of musical preferences and part of our session structure included members being offered a song choice. While this introduced us to a fabulous range of songs, this also sometimes opened wider discussion, which we could then use to initiate our own improvisation using a range of percussion instruments. We engaged in some rhythm work with instruments, establishing rhythms together and creating connections and interactions. We also learned some new songs, including one song in a South African dialect! I feel that the group dynamic and interactions between members has blossomed over the eight weeks, evident through the smiles and feedback given. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with this wonderful group again!

Jessica Harris
Musician

“...the joy it brings is its own motivation to persevere and develop”.

Portview

Our service users here in Arklow enjoyed thoroughly the music programme. The music, different rhythms and the variety of singing helped improve our music interpretation and appreciation over the course of the project, and we are looking forward to hosting same again in the future.

We would highly recommend this music project for other services in the area of Mental Health Service Provision.

Pearse Egan
Clinical Nurse Manager
HSE Portview Centre.

I have had the good fortune to work through music with the staff and service users in Portview a number of times over the last 5 years. The kindness, trust and support that both the staff and service users have extended towards me has been remarkable. We have learnt songs, created new musical compositions, written music inspired by the original poetry of one of the group's members, improvised music, played drums and generally had a lot of fun. There's a wide range of musical tastes in the group and we've enjoyed exploring a wide palette of music – folk tunes dating from hundreds of years ago to the more recent rock and pop songs.

Music is a human practice, an action - an exercise in interaction, concentration, teamwork, trust, muscle memory and creativity. The longer we stay at it the better and deeper the results. And the joy it brings is its own motivation to persevere and develop. I look forward to any opportunity to work with everyone at Portview again in the future.

Eamon Sweeney
Musician

“Our Friday's together are always vibrant and fun-filled.”

Linda Ferguson

Linda Ferguson began learning traditional music in her local Ceoltas Centre in Roundwood as a child. She focused primarily on playing the flute, tin-whistle and low-whistle. In secondary school Linda took up the guitar and singing. She encountered other genres of music and became very drawn to blues, rock and roll, folk and African music. This new found sound led Linda towards becoming a backing singer in blues band and she also began experimenting with percussion and improvisation at this time. With no doubt in her mind that a music-based career was the only option for her, she went on to attain qualifications in Irish Music Production, a BA Degree in Folk Theatre Studies and an MA in Community Music.



Linda is an advocate of the Community Music model and approach. Over the past 10 years she has developed many community music programmes throughout County Wicklow in partnership with the KWETB, Music Generation and local community centres and services. Her programmes are designed to develop the confidence, identity and music skills of children and adults from all backgrounds and abilities.

“I am passionate and committed to providing opportunities for change, hope and joy”

Jessica Harris

My career began as a musician and I have performed throughout Ireland and the U.K. with orchestras and ensembles such as the National Symphony and National Concert Orchestras of Ireland. My love for connecting with and supporting people of all ages and abilities then led me to music therapy and in 2010 I completed my Masters in Music Therapy at UL. Following graduation I began work with Music Therapy Ireland and have since continued to work privately.

I have provided music therapy to clients across a wide range of populations and ages including within Autism Initiatives Ireland, Bloomfield Health Services, the Central Remedial Clinic, Lois Bridges and the Royal Irish Academy of Music. As such I am adept at blending and working within a multi-disciplinary team and have introduced and developed music therapy services as being of integral value towards wellbeing. My approach is person-centred and psychodynamic, supporting and meeting HIQUA standards. I am passionate and committed to providing opportunities for change, hope and joy.



Eamon Sweeney

Eamon Sweeney began his musical studies on the violin, transferred to guitar while in his teens, subsequently studying classical guitar at the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama where he ultimately completed his Doctorate.

After that Eamon became very interested in Music in Healthcare Settings and pursued training at home and abroad through bodies such as Musique et Santé, Music Network and the HSE with Arts Council and Wicklow Arts Office support.

“Music is a human practice, an action - an exercise in interaction, concentration, teamwork, trust, muscle memory and creativity.”

Eamon teaches and performs extensively in a variety of genres and styles and is also committed to the provision of Community Music and Early Years Music.

He lectures in Community Music for the Royal Irish Academy of Music and delivers music programmes for Kildare-Wicklow ETB, City of Dublin ETB and Music Generation Wicklow.

Stakeholders

Alchemy Music is a Wicklow-based, not-for-profit, 'music in the community' initiative – dedicated to making music that connects people through the production of powerful cross-genre musical events and community projects that unite, engage and uplift. Projects they have spearheaded (including Féile Londubh, formerly Féile Heaney) have been funded by Wicklow Arts Office, The Arts Council, Kildare-Wicklow Education and Training Board and Music Generation Wicklow. Eamon Sweeney and Rachel Factor, Ashford-based professional musicians, are co-directors of Alchemy Music.

“I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with this wonderful group again!”

Kevin O'Shanahan has been working as a professional musician for three decades. To further his work in the area of music in mental health contexts he trained as a psychiatric nurse in 2001. In 2011 Kevin O'Shanahan was appointed as Arts & Health Co-ordinator with West Cork Mental Health Services (WCMHS). The post also incorporates a research and education role to raise awareness of the therapeutic potential of arts & health activities within a context of mental health care that embraces recovery and inclusion.

The Claddagh Rogues started life during an artist-in-resident project at the Cork Simon Community in 2007, led by musician and clinical nurse Kevin O'Shanahan who specialises in mental health and the arts for Cork's mental health services. Throughout 2017 and 2018, The Claddagh Rogues will be touring their new album For the Record across Ireland. For the Record is available as a download and a limited-edition vinyl album from thecladdaghrogues.bandcamp.com. The Claddagh Rogues are supported by HSE South's Cork Arts and Health Programme, Cork City Arts Office, Cork Mental Health Services and MusicAlive.

Kildare-Wicklow Education and Training Board Community Education Service:

The Department of Education & Skills guidelines for Community Education Services define community education as being 'outside the formal education sector, with the aims of enhancing learning, fostering empowerment and contributing to civic society. It is located in communities which can be area-based or issue based, or around some other value. The mission of the KWETB Community Education Service is to enhance learning, foster empowerment and contribute to civic society through working collectively and addressing social exclusion in order to improve the quality of personal, family and community life and contribute to equality and social justice.

Wicklow County Arts Office was established as a core service of Wicklow Local Authorities in 1997, to stimulate arts practice in the county and to support artist development.

Lincara Centre, Portview Daycare Centre and Kilmullen Centre provide support and services as part of the Mental Health Services in County Wicklow.

Mermaid Arts Centre is a leading space where ideas, creativity, imagination and artistic expression find a natural home with a key role of being a place for people to gather – engaging communities and building networks.

“...can't wait to do it again ”



Special Thanks to:

Brenda Delaney, Niamh O'Donnell, Jenny Sherwin, Clare Barnes, Pearce Egan, Ronan Murray, Claire Meaney, Kevin O'Shanahan, Lynda Shepherd, Mermaid Arts Centre, Wicklow County Arts Office, KWETB, Waterford Healing Arts Trust, Staff and Service Users of Kilmullen, Lincara and Portview Centres.

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Lincara Centre

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Arts and Health

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