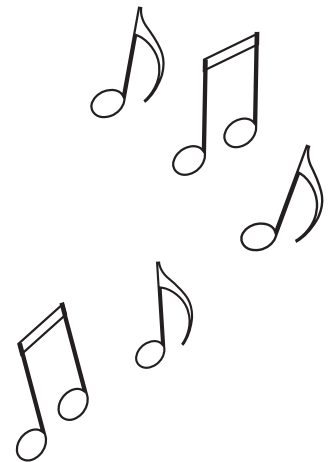
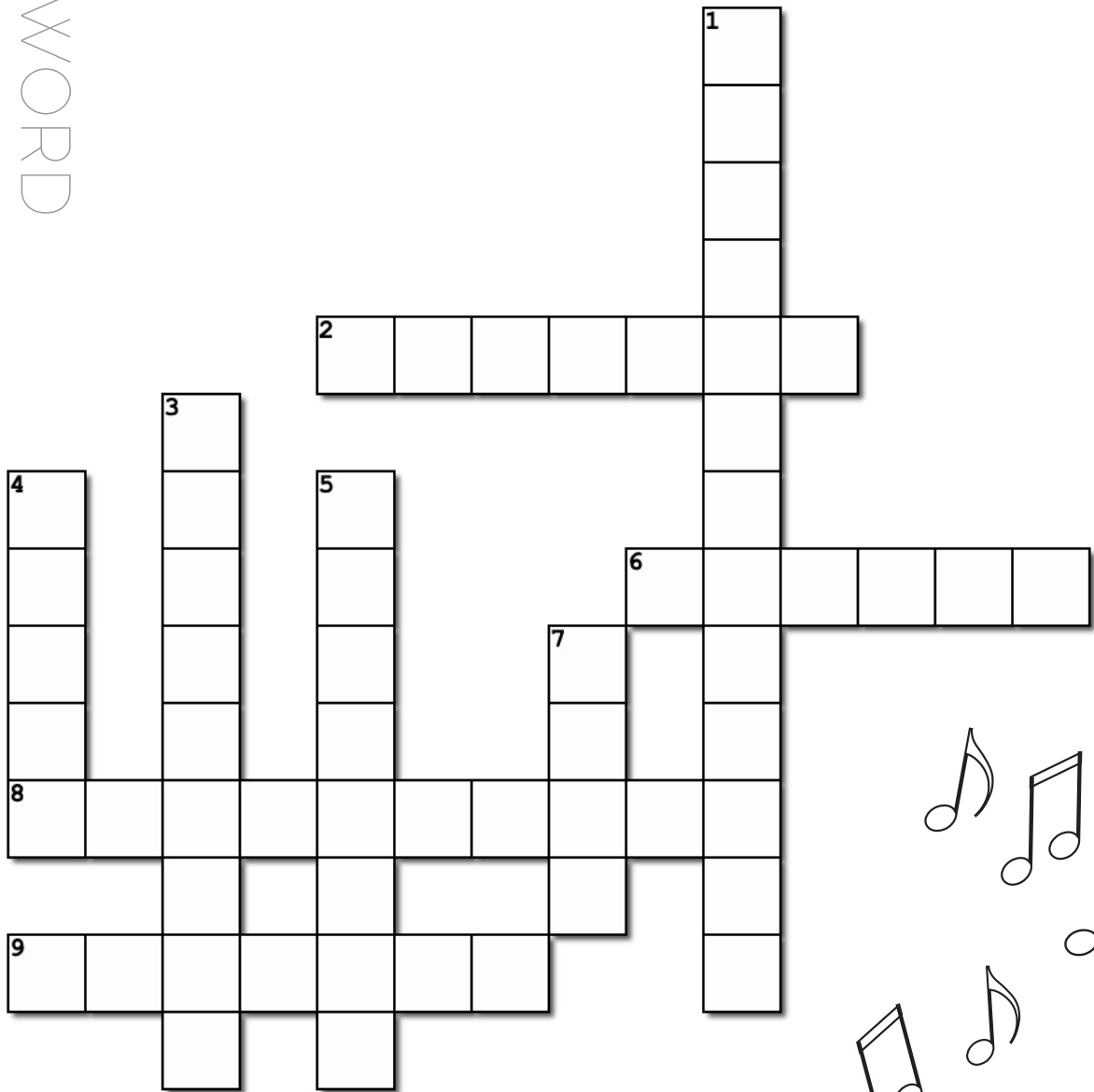


CRUIT AGUS CRUITIRE
HARP
AND HARPER



CROSSWORD

LÁ NA CRUIĆE HARP DAY



ACROSS

2. How many harp makers are there in Ireland? (7)
6. Where was Turlough Carolan born? (6)
8. How many strings does an Irish harp usually have? (9)
9. You play the harp with your _____ (7)

DOWN

1. What was the surname name of the woman who helped Carolan? (13)
3. What was the name of the Italian musician who inspired Carolan? Francesco _____ (9)
4. The Irish word for harp is _____ (5)
5. What age was Edward Bunting when he wrote down the music he heard at the Belfast Harp Festival? (8)
7. The body of the harp is made of _____ (4)

THE IRISH HARP

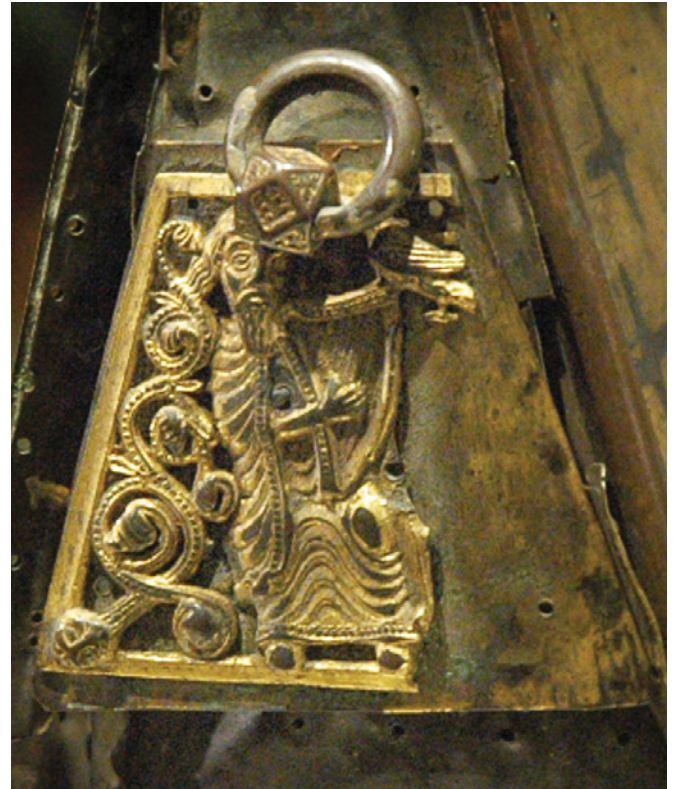
Ireland's national instrument

The harp has been played in Ireland for more than 1,000 years. You will see it on early stone crosses where it is shaped like a triangle with strings made of brass wire. It was generally made from a native Irish wood called willow. Every High King and chieftain in ancient Ireland had a harper to play for them and a poet to write poetry in their honour. The harper played to accompany *filíocht na mbard* - bardic poetry. The harper (an *cruitire*) played beautiful music while the reciter (*an reacaire*) performed a poem. As far as we know, harpers were mostly men in those days



From John Derrick's *Images of Ireland*, 1581

Harp music had magical powers in ancient Ireland. Legend has it that when a harper played a *suantraí* (lullaby: soft slow music), he soothed everybody to sleep. When he



The St Mogue bronze relic box has what might be the oldest image of a harp! It is thought to date from the 10th or 11th century.

played a *caoineadh* (lament: sad, sorrowful music), people were filled with sadness and when he played a *geantraí* (a fun tune; bright and joyful) people became very happy. The harp has always had a very special place in Irish society and is Ireland's national emblem. You will see it on our coinage, on letters from the government, on our Garda uniforms and the uniform worn by our army.

LÁ NA CRUIĆE HARP DAY

In 1792, the harp was in decline in Ireland and a group of people in Belfast organised a harp festival there to save the harpers' music from being lost for ever. 10 Irish harpers and one harper from Wales attended the festival and played their favourite harp music. The oldest harper there was from Co Derry, **Denis Hempson**. He was 97 years old, and better again, lived until he was 112! He played the harp with his nails rather than the finger pads. The youngest harper at the festival was **William Carr** who was only 15 years old, and only one woman, **Rose Mooney**, performed.

Edward Bunting, a young organist from Co Armagh was only 19 years old when he was asked to go to the Belfast Harp Festival and write down the music played by the harpers



Portrait of Edward Bunting (© National Library of Ireland)



A page from Bunting's notebooks which are in Queen's University Belfast. They had no way of recording the music in 1792, so he wrote down the music notes as they were being played by the musicians.

there. He collected lots of information about the harp from the harpers as well as many harp tunes and songs at the festival. After the festival, he travelled all over Ulster, and as far west as Mayo collecting from harpers and singers. He published the tunes in three volumes of music called *The Ancient Music of Ireland* in 1796, 1809 and 1840. He moved to Dublin, where he lived with his wife and family in Baggot Street. He took an active role in Dublin musical life and played the organ in several churches including the well-known Pepper Canister Church. Bunting is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery in Dublin.

The Story of TURLOUGH CAROLAN: The Blind Harper of Ireland

Turlough Carolan was born in 1670 in a small village called Nobber in County Meath in the east of Ireland. His family was poor, but they loved to sing, dance, and celebrate together. When Carolan was still a boy, his family moved to County Roscommon, where he spent his childhood, surrounded by the beauty of the Irish countryside. When Carolan was 18 years old, something very sad happened — he became sick with smallpox, a common illness at the time. Although he survived, the sickness took away his eyesight, and Carolan became blind. He felt upset and unsure of what his future would hold.



Statue of Carolan in Co. Leitrim

But Carolan was not alone. A kind woman named Mrs. MacDermott Roe, from a wealthy family, saw his talent and wanted to help. She sent him to learn how to play the harp. Although he couldn't see,



Late 17th Century harp which might have belonged to Turlough Carolan (National Museum of Ireland)

Carolan could still hear beautiful melodies in his heart. After three years of learning, Carolan didn't just play the harp — he started writing his own music! His very first composition was a tune called *Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór*. This song was inspired by an old Irish legend about two hills where magical fairies lived. According to the story, the fairies from each hill had a big battle, and the music of *Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór* tells the tale

LÁ NA CRUICE HARP DAY



Carolán, the Irish Bard, James Christopher Timbrell, 1844.
(© The O'Brien Collection)

of this magical fight. The tune is soft and enchanting, just like the fairies themselves.

Carolán became a travelling harper, riding across the Irish countryside on horseback, together with his guide, and carrying his harp on his back. He visited castles, mansions, and cottages, bringing joy to everyone who heard his music. One of Carolán's most famous compositions is *Carolán's Concerto*. The story goes that, in Dublin, Carolán met a talented Italian violinist called Francesco Geminiani, who played a beautiful piece of music. Carolán, feeling inspired, said, "I think I can write something just as good!" And he did! *Carolán's Concerto* is a lively, cheerful tune that shows off his musical skills.



Portrait of Turlough Carolán, by Francis Bindon c.1720 (© National Library of Ireland)

Later in his life, Carolán wrote a very special piece called *Farewell to Music*. By this time, Carolán knew that his life was coming to an end. This song was his way of saying goodbye to the music he loved so much. It is a gentle, peaceful tune,



A page from Edward Bunting's notebooks showing a reference to Carolán's name. These were handwritten around 1792. They had no way of recording the music in 1792, so Bunting wrote down the music notes as they were being played by the musicians. Thanks to him, we have a record of Carolán's music today. They are stored in Queen's University Belfast.

filled with both sadness and joy, and it remains one of his most moving compositions.

Carolan wrote over 200 pieces of music during his life. His melodies were so beautiful that people still play them today. He wrote songs not just for the rich, but for everyone, and his music was filled with happiness, sorrow, love, and laughter. He wrote tunes for weddings, birthdays, and even for friends he admired. Many of his songs were about the people of Ireland and their stories. He lived a long and happy life, traveling, playing, and composing until he passed away in 1738.

Today, Turlough Carolan is remembered as one of Ireland's most famous musicians. His music is still played at festivals, in concert halls, and by people all around the world who love Irish music. So, the next time you hear the sweet sound of a harp, think of Turlough Carolan, the blind harper of Ireland, whose heart was filled with music that will live on forever.



Séamus Ó Flatharta

THE IRISH HARP

Nowadays, Irish harps can be made of wood such as maple, cherrywood and walnut, and it usually has 34 gut, nylon or carbon fibre strings. There is a great interest in reviving the ancient style of playing with the nails on brass wire strung harps. There are 15 harp makers in Ireland and they make harps for harpers in Ireland and all over the world. There are hundreds of young people playing the harp in Ireland today. Irish harping has received special recognition from UNESCO; it is a unique part of our cultural heritage that continues to grow and develop in Ireland and all over the world.



Lisa Canny

LÁ NA CRUITE HARP DAY



Moya Brennan and Cormac de Barra



Máire Ní Chathasaigh



Catriona Cannon and Kathleen Loughnane



Gemma Doherty, Saint Sister



Maeve Gilchrist, Harp Day 2020

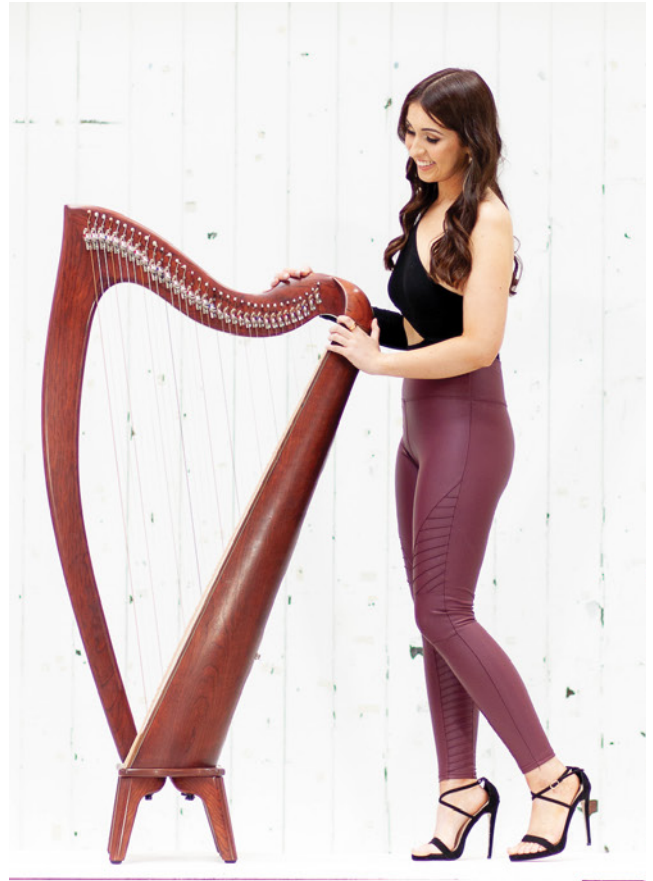


Gráinne Hambley

LÁ NA CRUITE HARP DAY



Bridín



Éadaoin Ní Mhaicín



Alannah Thornburgh



TG4 Gradam Ceoil Musician of the Year 2020, Laoise Kelly

QUIZ QUESTIONS

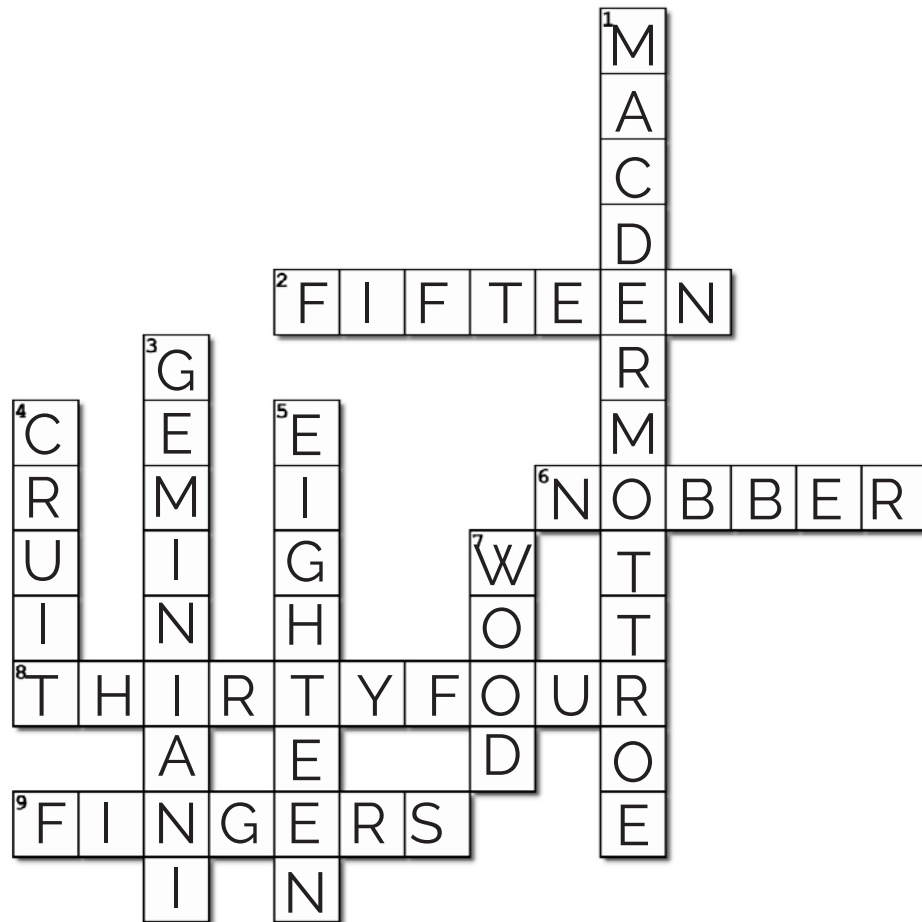
1. Who collected the ancient music from harpers at the Belfast Festival?
2. What was the name of Turlough O'Carolan's first song?
3. Name the only woman who played at the Belfast Harp Festival.
4. Where did Edward Bunting live before he moved to Dublin?
5. What is the Irish word for a lullaby?
6. What illness caused Turlough O'Carolan to lose his sight?
7. Where is Edward Bunting buried?
8. Which organisation has recognised Ireland's special harping culture?
9. How many pieces of music did Turlough O'Carolan write during his life?
10. Name a well-known Irish harper.

1. Edward Bunting 2. Si Bheag, Si Mhór 3. Rose Mooney
4. Armagh 5. suantraí 6. Smaltpox 7. Mount Jerome Cemetery
8. UNESCO 9. over 200 10. any included in the worksheet

ANSWERS

ANSWERS

LÁ NA CRUIE HARP DAY



SEND US YOUR STORY

We hope that you've enjoyed learning all about the harp and its history in Ireland.

Now we want YOU to tell us about the harp! Write a **short story** or **poem** about or including the harp. You can include as much or as little detail as you want.

Your story/poem can take whatever form you'd like. You can type it out or write it by hand, you can even include some drawing or illustrations if you'd like!

Have your teacher, parent or favourite grown up scan and send it to us at info@harpireland.ie so we can share your stories with the world!

All stories sent to us will be displayed on the Cruit Éireann | Harp Ireland website Harp Day 2024 page.