

The Manx Heritage Foundation: Music Policy

Introduction

Music is a corner stone of the cultural life of the Isle of Man. It is one of the most important and far-reaching of all cultural activities in past and present times. Recent research, mostly through the Centre for Manx Studies (CMS), has shown that music is able to give a vivid and unique insight into the social, religious and political lives of Manx men and women, as well as demonstrating how they feel about non-Manx influences on these same issues. This research has received international recognition through conferences, entries in prestigious volumes, and the publication of papers and articles in Britain, Ireland and North America. Manx music is being studied and taught at university level in California, Oregon, Wisconsin, Ontario and British Columbia, and Manx music is being performed by North American bands and choirs.

This impetus must now be maintained and strengthened in order to allow Manx music to take its place internationally.

SECTION 1: Aim, objectives, benefits and management

1.1 Context

In the light of growing interest in the music of the Isle of Man over more than three decades, allied with a surge of academic interest in the 1990s, it has become essential to plan and implement a formal development policy.

1.2 Aim

To continue to encourage and develop the study and performance of music of the Isle of Man and to support through academic work the performances of traditional and other musicians.

1.3 Objectives

- To further our understanding of the history of the music of the Isle of Man by means of a major research project.
- To disseminate the findings through performance and publication on and off the Island.
- To continue to develop a Manx 'voice' in traditional music by offering workshops.
- To identify and initiate a planned programme of collection and archiving of documentary, recorded and other relevant material.

1.4 The benefits of a development policy include:

- 1 An immediate focus for research at all levels
- 2 A means of establishing and developing links with appropriate international institutions.
- 3 A higher profile for Manx music in the British Isles and further afield.
- 4 A channel for offering workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.
- 5 A means of encouraging publication.

1.5 Management

As most of the work is channelled through the CMS and much of Manx-sourced funding is through the Manx Heritage Foundation (MHF), it is proposed that this policy should be formulated and implemented by these two bodies in association with Manx National Heritage Library.

SECTION 2: Development Plan

2.1 Research

Aspects of Manx music that are important nationally/internationally

While recognising that many aspects of Manx music are of limited significance outside the Island, there are some areas that have already been proved to be of wider importance. They include:

- 1 The 'revival' of 'traditional music' within the Celtic/British Isles context, 'West Gallery' and other sacred music. Popular music and entertainment of the late 19th/early 20th centuries.
- 2 The Isle of Man was a prime holiday resort from the Victorian period until after the Second World War. It was therefore one of the most important entertainment centres in the British Isles.
- 3 Work complete or in progress by 10 postgraduate and at least five undergraduate students has only served to show the potential for further research, particularly in the following areas:

Priority

Music in the Isle of Man today

Music as a weapon for social, political and religious reform

Music of the Manx diaspora

Medium/long term

Popular church music

Making sense of the 'traditional' music in the archive collections

Smaller, self-contained research projects

2.2 Organisational

- 1 A good electronic bibliography with easy referencing to Manx National Heritage Library's collection
- 2 Cataloguing important collections on and off the Island
- 3 Active collection of archive sound and documentary material
- 4 On-going identification and copying of existing manuscripts, printed and recorded material

2.3 Teaching

- 1 Prepare modules for teaching on and off the Island
- 2 Encourage institutions to include such modules in their degree programmes
- 3 Establish a scholarship scheme for the training of teachers in traditional music
- 4 Develop an on-Island teaching programme for traditional music. This will probably entail funding a pilot scheme for a peripatetic teacher to work within the framework of the Department of Education.

2.4 Publication and promotion

- 1 Design and launch a Manx music website
- 2 Further publication of on-going research in national and international journals, in conference proceedings and on the Web
- 3 Prepare a road-show for touring to festival and educational institutions, including university departments
- 4 Develop a programme of publication of music editions and re-issues, and publish new and archive recordings

2.5 Conferences, workshops and seminars

- 1 The coordination and development of seminars, conferences and workshops in collaboration with CMS, MNH, the Department of Education, the Arts Council and other bodies.