

Drumshanbo Music Course

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Two years immersed in traditional Irish music in North Leitrim! Drumshanbo Music Class 2010-2012.

Having a chance to take a career break from my job as a wildlife ranger, I wondered if I could get a place on this famous 'trad' music course that I had heard of in Drumshanbo. I had talked to a number of musicians who extolled the virtues of the course and I never thought that I would get such an opportunity. I was thrilled to get a place and couldn't believe my luck when I realised on a Monday morning in September that, instead of being at work, I was sitting learning an instrument beside like-minded people.

The Post Leaving Cert course is run at the Drumshanbo College of Further Education by the Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB. It runs for two years, full time, and confers a level 5 qualification in Traditional Irish Music.

The course includes music theory, business, sound production, folklore and history of traditional Irish music. However, the bulk of the course is about learning traditional music as well as learning how to play an instrument. It is such a privilege to be able to give the time to this process.

The course has been running since 1997 and

was tutored for many years by veteran fiddler and radio presenter Paddy Ryan, before being taken over by Mossie Martin, an excellent fiddler, and wise mentor. The tutors juggle complete beginners and more experienced musicians and encourage the best from all the participants.

I travelled up and down every day from Sligo, car-sharing with classmates and discussing what we were learning, and sometimes even playing tunes on the way. Some of my classmates moved to Leitrim for two years to participate in the course. They came from as far away as Cork and Kerry, and even Spain! I always wanted to play the wooden flute, but I also realised that this was a once in a lifetime chance to learn the fiddle, so I did both! I still scratch away at the fiddle in private, but it is the flute I bring to music sessions. I went on later to study with another renowned Leitrim fiddler, Charlie Lennon, in An Spideal, but that's a story for another day.

In March every year, the annual concert is the chance to show off newly learned talents. For students on the course, it is a fantastic goal to work towards as an incentive to perfect the tunes, songs, and arrangements. So, if you get a chance to attend, the March concert in the Mayflower in Drumshanbo gives an excellent showcase of what the course is achieving every year. The 20 years of the existence of the course has supplied many a music session throughout Leitrim and beyond with musicians that may otherwise never have reached their potential. Let us hope the course continues to go from strength to strength.

The best way to find out more, to browse the activities of the course and to get in touch, is through the Facebook page:

[Drumshanbo Irish Music course facebook.com/drumshanbotradcourse](https://facebook.com/drumshanbotradcourse)
Hup!