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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On May 6, 2015, the National Endowment for the Arts announced the award of 1,023 grants totaling \$74,326,900 to nonprofit arts organizations in all 50 states plus five U.S. jurisdictions. Included among the events receiving NEA funding, and indeed one of only two such awards that advances Irish culture, is the Musical Arts and Dance (MAD) Week sponsored by the O'Neill-Malcom Branch of the international Irish cultural organization Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (CCE). MAD Week 2015 will be held from July 5th through July 11th on the grounds of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, Maryland. The 2015 production of MAD Week will represent the tenth annual occurrence of the event, each of which has been marked by significant growth in scope and attendance from the preceding year.

This recognition and support of MAD Week by the U.S. government in the form of NEA funding echoes by several years the support of the Irish government, which continues to offer the patronage of the Ambassador of Ireland to the event. Unlike many similar events which are limited to staffing themselves with musicians and teachers from Irish America only, CCE MAD Week has always striven to include among its performing and teaching staff a significant portion of musicians and dancers who travel directly from Ireland to participate in the week. The NEA funding for 2015 will provide enormous help toward realizing that objective.

Traveling from Ireland to be part of the MAD Week 2015 teaching staff will be fiddler and banjo player John Carty of Boyle, Co. Roscommon, fiddler MacDara Ó Raghallaigh of Co. Meath, and Connemara, Co. Galway *sean nos* (old style) step dancers Gerard and Patrick Devane. They will be joined by Irish emigrant and Irish American artists such as flute player Kevin Crawford, concertina player and ethnomusicologist Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, fiddlers Rose Conway Flanagan and Sean Cleland, and piper Jerry O'Sullivan. Rounding out the staff will be mainstays of the Washington-Baltimore Irish music scene including fiddler Brendan Mulvihill, accordionist Billy McComiskey, flute player Laura Byrne and harpist Lily Neill.

CCE MAD Week was founded by and is directed by fiddler and music teacher Mitch Fanning of Silver Spring, Maryland. Its daytime classes and evening activities are designed for and open to registrants from across the age spectrum from child to senior citizen. Instruction is offered in all the instruments of Irish music (fiddle, flute, whistle, uilleann pipes, concertina, accordion, banjo, harp, guitar, bouzouki, piano and bodhran) and in various dance forms such as *sean nos* dance, set dancing and Appalachian clogging/flatfooting. For more information about CCE MAD Week 2015, or to register to attend, see the website <http://www.ccepotomac.org/MADWeek/cce-madweekhome.html>.