



MusicConnects

ACTIVITY REPORT

2025





MusicConnects

WELCOME

2025 was the year we became MusicConnects!

And while we have a new name, we are continuing to deliver a comprehensive music programme inspired by connection to, and through, music. *Music that moves Galway*, emotionally, socially and culturally.

We thank you for your invaluable, ongoing support, making all of this possible. Here's a look back at some of the highlights of 2025.

Maeve, Jacqueline and all at MusicConnects

Performance

Lunchtimes with ConTempo



Lunchtime with ConTempo - March - Music of Woodland Wonder

Our flagship series, Lunchtime with ConTempo, continued on the first Tuesday of each month (February-May and September to December) at St Nicholas' Collegiate Church. Our 2025 theme of Nature & Ecology gifted us with wonderful repertoire that captivated audiences, sometimes bringing them to new music worlds. Performed by ConTempo Quartet, this music celebrated the natural world, exploring flora and fauna, delicately balanced ecosystems, the migratory patterns of animals, the impact of light and weather, and more. We were delighted to be able to bring awareness to the biodiversity crisis through music, taking pause to consider how we can all support the environment around us.

ConTempo Countywide



ConTempo Countywide - Claregalway

MusicConnects continued to serve communities the length and breadth of Galway through our ConTempo Countywide series. We brought our Nature & Ecology programmes to local centres across County Galway, presenting ConTempo Quartet to audiences in Connemara National Park, Oughterard, Claregalway, Loughrea, Portumna, Headford, Kinvara, and An Spidéal.



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ConTempo Countywide cont...

We were delighted to work with Rosina Joyce, Biodiversity Officer for Galway County Council, throughout the year. She supported our programme with her expertise and passionate care for our natural world. We partnered with Birdwatch Ireland and NPWS on a special event which screened a beautiful film - Wildlife on Roundstone Bog. We also collaborated with the Shorelines Arts Festival, the Something in the Water Festival, Kinvara Community Orchestra and with Comhlacht Forbartha, An Spidéal.

Story of a Day / Scéal Lae

Over the past number of years, we've had the absolute pleasure of working with Branar, Ireland's leading theatre company creating work for children. Together we present Story of a Day – Scéal Lae, a beautiful show about a day in the life of a child. A story with illustrated animations by author Mary Murphy, performed by Eoin O Dubhghaill, with music composed by Tom Lane and performed by ConTempo Quartet. The show for children aged 4+ and their families had runs at Baboró International Arts Festival for Children in 2024 and Galway International Arts Festival in 2025 in English and as Gaeilge. The show is currently in development for a local and national tour in the spring of 2026, ensuring a future life of this heart-warming show.



Story of a Day - Scéal Lae

A Romanian Collaboration

We were delighted to collaborate with the Romanian Embassy in Ireland and the Romanian Association of Music Performers to present two concerts in November 2025.

ForestARIA was a celebration of the creativity of women in contemporary music. The programme featured works by Rucsandra Popescu, Oana Vardianu, Sarah Marze, and Crea Sullivan performed by ConTempo Quartet, with special guest Ladislau Csendes, who was one of the quartet's teachers and mentors early in their career.

It Takes Three to Tango explored a dialogue between tradition and innovation. ConTempo Quartet's cellist Adrian Mantu, Dermot Dunne (accordion), and Sebastian Tegzesiu (violin) performed selected works by George Enescu, Niccolò Paganini, Astor Piazzolla, Turlough O'Carolan, Ina Boyle. Saint-Saëns, and Ennio Morricone.

Stay up to date on our wide range of activities by signing up to our mailing list on the homepage of www.musicconnects.ie. You can also find us on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, where you'll discover music treats and educational resources.



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3 Kinds of Music

In November and December, we brought our hugely popular multi-genre series to Galway city in the iconic Mick Lally Theatre. This year, our 3 Kinds of Music series was co-curated with The Black Gate.

November saw brother and sister duo Séamus and Caoimhe Uí Fhlatharta take to the stage with their unique style of arrangements in the sean-nós tradition. They also facilitated an inspiring sean-nós workshop for audience members after the event. Galway producer and songwriter, Eoin Dolan, treated audiences to his vintage pop sound. Quentin Cooper and Floriane Blancke enthralled the audience with music created by harp, guitars, and singing that experiments with their French and Peruvian roots.

We closed our annual programme in December with a final instalment of 3 Kinds of Music. Audiences were given the chance to take respite from the busyness of the season with a musical moment of pause. ConTempo Quartet explored the theme of wintering through a classical music lens with works by Vivaldi, Corelli and Haydn. Java Blue, a vocal quartet born in Galway's evolving jazz landscape, crafted a soothing nostalgic sound where jazz, gospel, and folk converge through intricate harmony and rhythm. While Rodney Owl treated audiences to his quirky and whimsical electric folk.



3 Kinds of Music - ConTempo Quartet



3 Kinds of Music - November



3 Kinds of Music - Java Blue



3 Kinds of Music - Séamus & Caoimhe Uí Fhlatharta



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Outreach

Music in the Afternoon

Supported by Creative Ireland's Creativity in Older Age initiative, and in collaboration with Creative Ireland Galway City and Galway County, we were delighted to present our Music in the Afternoon initiative again in 2025. We worked with eight nursing homes, pairing them with an ensemble or artist who then had a three week residency in that home. Across three visits the residents of each home enjoyed intimate performances and conversation with our musicians, building meaningful connections.

We visited four homes in the city as well as homes in Carna, Clifden, Clonberne and as far as Inis Mór. We were delighted to work with trad ensemble Galvian Way, ConTempo Quartet and Aengus Hackett's Jazz Quartet again this year. We also added a solo artist to the team, Padraig Jack, a native islander who worked with the residents at Áras Ronáin on Inis Mór as well as on the mainland.

Music in the Afternoon continues to be one of the most moving and impactful programmes that we deliver, both for the residents, their families and care home staff, and also for our musicians and staff, who see first hand the power of music and connection.



Galvian Way at Teach Altranais Charna, Carna



Padraig Jack at Áras Ronáin CNU, Inis Mór



Bertrand Huvé, Aengus Hackett, & Paul O'Driscoll at Central Park Nursing Home, Clonberne



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Listening Initiatives

Listening initiatives have become a very important strand in our community and education work. Through guided listening and creative response sessions, we provide opportunities for our audience members to connect with our music before it is performed in concert.

Music Unveiled

Each month, ahead of our Lunchtime and Countywide concerts, we hosted our Music Unveiled series to prepare audiences' ears and empower people to have a more meaningful listening experience at the live performances. These events could also be enjoyed independently and were open to all with no experience necessary.

Music Unveiled is our Guided Listening initiative at Galway's city libraries, presented in partnership with Galway City Council Arts Office as part of its Cultural Partnership Programme. We also partnered with University of Galway's Department of Music to present our lead speaker each month.

These informal and accessible sessions deconstructed some of the music performed each month. Each Music Unveiled was recorded and made available online for those who were unable to attend the event live.



Music Unveiled at Ballybane Library

Lines of Listening

A new listening initiative we introduced into our 2025 programme, was Lines of Listening, presented as part of Lochrán, our outreach initiative in partnership with Arts in Action, University of Galway. During our Autumn season, these monthly events featured ahead of our Lunchtime and Countywide concerts, allowing participants to engage with the music on a deeper and more personal level.

Participants were guided by our wonderful facilitators, artist Maeve Curtis and author Mike McCormack, as they engaged in process-oriented mark making - either in paint or in words - responding to the 2025 Autumn season music programme. Beautiful moments were created during these intimate events, as participants connected deeply with the music.

Our Music Makers Circle supports us to continue giving the gift of music. With a donation of €50, €100 or €250 you can make music possible for more adults and children in Galway. Find out more:

info@musicconnects.ie/support-us



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Education

As well as helping students succeed in school, music assists in building self-confidence, emotional development, improved memory, creativity and so much more. Because of this, MusicConnects is dedicated to, and passionate about, providing music education to children and young people of Galway.

Ensemble Skills Weekend Course

Our Ensemble Skills programme supports the young string players of Galway city and county to develop their skills in working and performing with others.

During the May bank holiday, 18 young string players took part in our exciting three-day Ensemble Skills Summer Course with conductor and music educator Sinead Hayes and ConTempo Quartet at University of Galway. As well as partaking in a varied programme of chamber music learning, this year participants also had the chance to work with In Flow Gamelan Ensemble in partnership with That's Life, Brothers of Charity's Arts Programme for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. This wonderful opportunity allowed the participants to develop their ensemble skills through a new lens, exploring Indonesian music making and a new way of performing with us.



Our Ensemble Skills Participants working with In Flow Gamelan Ensemble

Ensemble Skills Master Class

In November 2025, in partnership with our friends at Music for Galway, we presented a masterclass for young musicians. Naomi Berrill led young cellists and violinists in a unique workshop that gave the participants the tools to deconstruct and learn their favourite songs by ear. The emphasis on listening to yourself play and others was strong, and each participant had the opportunity to perform solos while the group played the supporting music.



Ensemble Skills Workshop with Naomi Berrill



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Ciara Ó Connor facilitating a *Learning to Listen* workshop

Learning to Listen

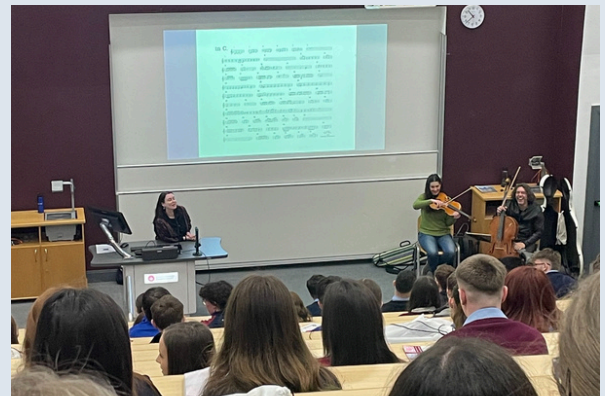
In 2025, we launched our *Learning to Listen* primary school programme, supported by the AIB Community Fund. This programme, developed with Anna Mullarkey for MusicConnects, supports children to become critical, confident and joyful listeners. A team of experienced educators who trained in our Listening Thinking Strategies method, facilitate deep listening for children in 3rd to 6th class. This child-led method empowers young pupils to articulate their authentic response to music and supports co-composing projects.

University of Galway Education Partnership

BA in Music

MusicConnects continues a fruitful partnership with the Music Department at University of Galway. Our work is embedded into the BA in Music programme through workshops across music history, music practice, composition and more. ConTempo Quartet works together with the lecturers to assist student learning by providing quality music and insights.

In 2025, we delivered 9 workshops as part of the BA programme, as well as a taster workshop for prospective students. We were delighted to work with the University of Galway Chamber Orchestra again this year, supporting them as they prepared for their seasonal concerts.



Members of ConTempo Quartet and Dr Amanda Feery at University of Galway's spring Taster Day

BA and MA in Writing Workshops

We also worked closely with the BA and MA in Writing. ConTempo Quartet and visiting speakers worked with students to discover the interplay between music and writing, and the broader creative process. Some students created work in direct response to the music performed by ConTempo Quartet, while others examined their personal writing process.



BA Creative Writing workshop



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Rebrand Launch - ConTempo Quartet



Rebrand Launch - Board Members Eithne Egan, Ruth Gordon (chair), and John Caulfield with MusicConnects staff Maeve Bryan and Jackie Teegarden



Rebrand Launch - Pádraig Jack



Rebrand Launch - Sinéad Hayes with ConTempo Quartet

Rebrand Launch

In 2025, we rebranded to MusicConnects. For over two decades, Galway Music Residency was the cornerstone of the cultural fabric of our city. With gratitude for all that has been, we stepped into the future as MusicConnects, a name that reflects our belief in the power of music to move Galway emotionally, socially, and culturally.

On August 31st at the Mick Lally Theatre, we shared our new Strategic Priorities, new look, and new name with Music Makers, funders, friends, and partners. We brought the audience along on a journey, sharing how MusicConnects us across our lifespan, art forms, and with the pressing issues of our time.

The audience was treated to a talk from the Biodiversity Officer from Galway County Council, Rosina Joyce, as well as an insights into our collaboration with Branar via a chat between our Executive Director, Maeve Bryan, Branar's Artistic Director, Marc Mac Lochlainn, and Branar's Executive Producer, Joanne Beirne. And, of course, music was performed by ConTempo Quartet as well as Pádraig Jack and special guests Dr. Ramin Haghjoo and Sinéad Hayes.

We are so excited about our future as MusicConnects and look forward to connecting with you at an event soon.



MusicConnects

Help us make music...

Everyone should have the right to **listen to, learn about and love music**. This simple belief is the driving force of **MusicConnects**. We proudly provide opportunities for the people of Galway city and county to experience music in new and unexpected ways, to learn from inspiring musicians and spark joy in their lives.

We can't do this alone.

Our **Music Maker's Circle** members play a key role in making our work possible. By joining MusicConnects' **Music Maker's Circle**, you empower us to give the gift of music to more children, adults and communities in and around Galway.

To learn about our **Music Maker's Circle** programme visit our website:

www.musicconnects.ie/support-us/

Or contact us at:

info@musicconnects.ie

MusicConnects

Music that moves Galway

Board Members

Ruth Gordon (Chair) | John Caulfield | Elaine Donovan | Eithne Egan | Anne-Marie Hanlon | James Harrold | Claire O' Doherty | Aoife Tuohy

Staff

Maeve Bryan, Executive Director
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Maeve Curtis, Acting Operations Manager

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