

Press release (please do not publish before November 5th)

The 1st EU Songbook is published after nine years – the six Irish songs are revealed

After 70 years of exchanging coal, steel, and fish within the European Union, the time has come for a more soulful exchange: *song treasures*. A cultural milestone, the 1st EU Songbook, assembled by the civil society *independent* of the EU institutions, has finally been published in print format with an app. The six Irish songs, chosen by public vote, have now been unveiled.

Song celebrations are heard across the EU today where the motto of the European Union, ‘Unity in Diversity’, has been concretised in a pioneer songbook. The EU Songbook was created with the participation of more than 100 music organisations and conservatories, and through public votes covered by over 400 media outlets, engaging more than 87,000 citizens across the union. The result are 164 songs, six from each of the 27 EU populations, presented in both the original 25 languages and in singable “European English”, side by side.

Even though the EU Songbook originated from the civil society, the project was supported profoundly by 18 ministers of culture and education, as well as by the European Parliament, who granted it the *European Citizen’s Prize 2023*.

The Irish contribution

In 2018, with participation of Cork School of Music (CIT) and Sing Ireland, six cherished songs from Ireland were chosen by 1.674 people in a public vote covered by RTE, Irish Examiner and TheJournal.ie:

1. Freedom & Peace: ***The Fields of Athenry (1977)*** by Pete St. John
2. Love Songs: ***Grace (1985)*** by Frank and Sean O’Meara
3. Nature & Seasons: ***Song for Ireland (1970s)*** by June & Phil Colclough
4. Folk Songs & Traditionals: ***Whiskey in the Jar (traditional)***
5. Faith & Spirituality: ***Ag Críost an Síol*** – (Father Michael Sheehan / Seán O Ríada)
6. Children’s Songs: ***I’ll Tell Me Ma (traditional)***

One of three EU Songbook editors for Ireland, Mark Armstrong, ***Sing Ireland***, comments on the Irish entry:

„I am honoured to have been invited to be a part of the Irish submission and to have been able to delve more deeply into the background and history of the Irish songs which were voted as Ireland’s favourites. I hope that this publication will be embraced by all countries

and might form a catalyst, no matter how small, to provide some coherence within our ever-fragmenting world. And I would like to commend Jeppe and his team on this wonderful initiative, at the core of which is the bringing together of European peoples of diverse cultures through the universal language of music”.

From the Byzantine Empire to rock-classics

Each of the 164 classics are presented for solo voice, with chords, and with lyrics in both the 25 original languages (spanning three alphabets) and in singable *European English*, side by side. A mosaic of introductions, crafted by 61 national editors, provides unique insight into European music history spanning six centuries, from a Byzantine hymn to European rock-classics. For those who wish to listen to the songs, QR codes printed on all 164 scores lead to original recordings. Additionally, a free app is available for all who wish to participate in the European song exchange.

Jeppe Marsling (50), the Danish founder of the European non-profit NGO behind the project, comments on the intention of the EU Songbook:

“With the EU Songbook, we hope to enable the 27 populations to live less parallel lives through song exchange. We are pleased that one of the Irish songs included, Ag Críost an Síol, is in Gaelic, so that everyone has a chance to experience this most recent official EU language. We chose the term ‘European English’ on the cover because it reflects the way we Europeans speak our most common second-language—coloured by our native tongues. It is not meant for perfection, but for heart-to-heart dialogue. The EU Songbook is intended for all kinds of meetings between all kinds of people, whether in good times or times of crisis: for education, concerts, diplomatic engagements, or even for first-time conversations on a train or in a café. Moreover, we hope to inspire singing events on the largely silent annual Europe Day, May 9th—our European ‘Dependence Day’.

The EU Songbook is now available throughout the EU, UK and USA. The WebApp, which includes all 164 titles, introductions, and links to YouTube, is free for download via the App Store and Google Play or via the following QR code:



For comments: EU Songbook editor for Ireland:

Mark Armstrong, Sing Ireland / markarmstrong444@gmail.com

Dermot O Callaghan, chairman, Sing Ireland / dermot@singireland.ie

+353 (0)61 234 823

The EU Songbook Association:

Jeppe Marsling, chairman / editor@eu-songbook.org / +45 71 54 13 61