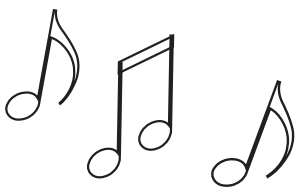
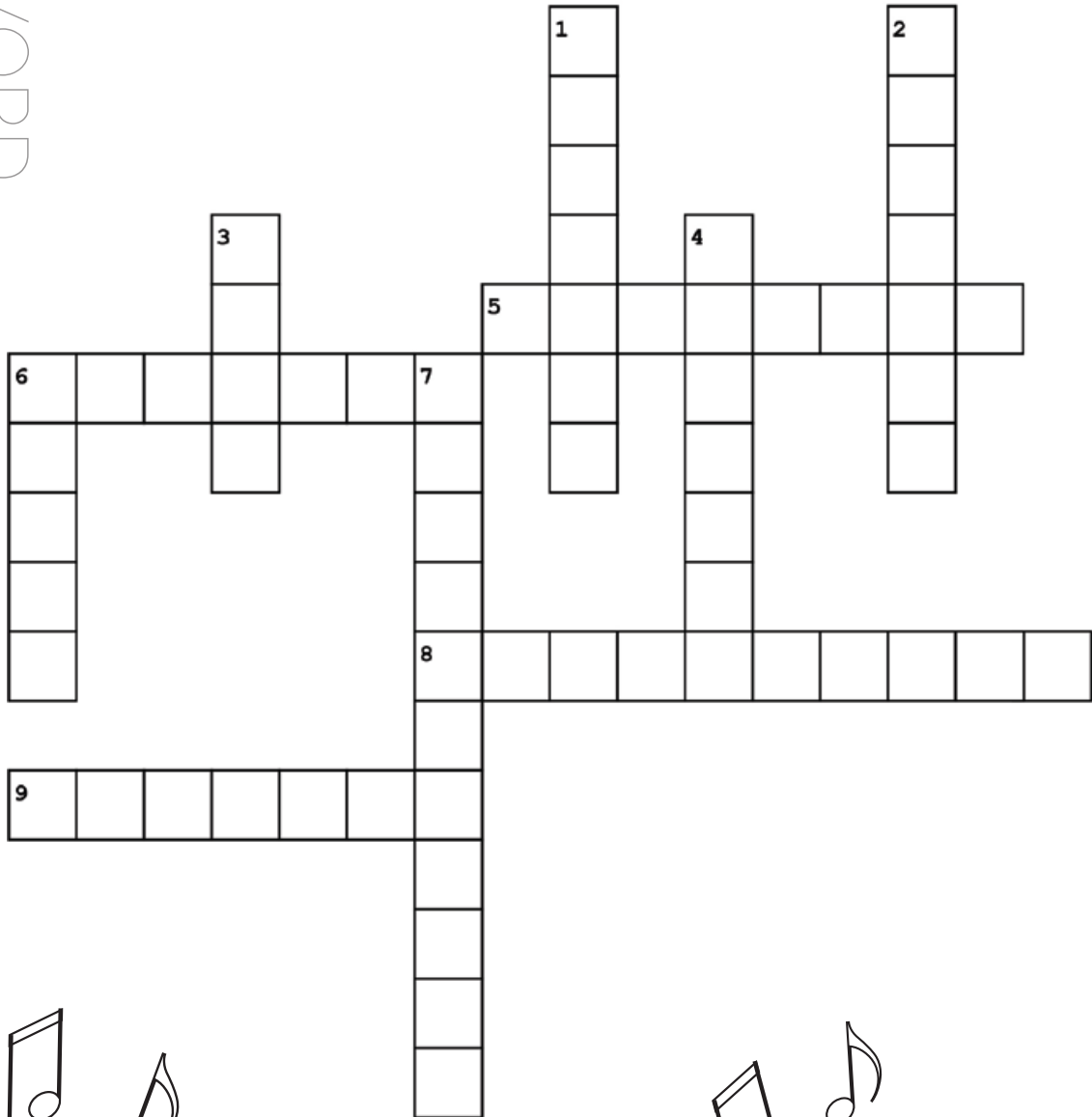


CRUIT AGUS CRUITIRE
HARP
AND HARPER



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- What age was Bunting when he wrote down the music he heard from the harpers at the Belfast Harp Festival? (8)
- The last of the Irish Harpers was a man called _____ (7)
- How many strings does an Irish harp usually have? (9)
- You play the harp with your _____ (7)

DOWN

- Who collected the ancient music from harpers at the Belfast Festival? (7)
- How many harp makers are there in Ireland? (7)
- The body of the harp is made of ____ (4)
- Where did Edward Bunting live before he moved to Dublin? (7)
- The Irish word for harp (5)
- What age was the oldest Irish harper at the Belfast Harp Festival? (11)

THE IRISH HARP

Ireland's national instrument

The harp has been played in Ireland for more than 1,000 years. You will see it on early stone crosses where it is shaped like a triangle with strings made of brass wire. It was generally made from a native Irish wood called willow. Every High King and chieftain in ancient Ireland had a harper to play for them and a poet to write poetry in their honour. The harper played to accompany *filíocht na mbard* - bardic poetry. The harper (an *cruitire*) played beautiful music while the reciter (*an reacaire*) performed a poem. As far as we know, harpers were mostly men in those days



From John Derrick's *Images of Ireland*, 1581

Harp music had magical powers in ancient Ireland. Legend has it that when a harper played a *suantraí* (lullaby: soft slow music), he soothed everybody to sleep. When he played a *caoineadh* (lament: sad, sorrowful



Late 17th Century harp which might have belonged to Turlough Carolan (National Museum of Ireland)

music), people were filled with sadness and when he played a *geantraí* (a fun tune; bright and joyful) people became very happy. The harp has always had a very special place in Irish society and is Ireland's national emblem. You will see it on our coinage, on letters from the government, on our Garda uniforms and the uniform worn by our army.



Carolán, the Irish Bard, James Christopher Timbrell, 1844. (© The O'Brien Collection)

Turlough Carolan, who was born in 1670, is known as the last of the Irish harpers; harpers and other traditional musicians often perform his music.

In 1792, the harp was in decline in Ireland and a group of people in Belfast organised a harp festival there to save the harpers' music from being lost for ever. 10 Irish harpers and one harper from Wales attended the festival and played their favourite harp music.

The oldest harper there was from Co Derry, **Denis Hempson** - he was 97 years old, and better again, lived until he was 112! He played the harp with his nails rather than the finger pads. The youngest harper at the festival was **William Carr** who was only 15 years old, and only one woman, **Rose Mooney**, performed. One Welsh harper attended the festival but is said to have drowned on his journey back to Wales.

Edward Bunting, a young organist from Co Armagh was only 19 years old when he was asked to go to the Belfast Harp Festival and write down the music played by the harpers there. He collected lots of information about



Portrait of Edward Bunting (© National Library of Ireland)

the harp from the harpers as well as many harp tunes and songs at the festival. After the festival, he travelled all over Ulster, and as far west as Mayo collecting from harpers and singers.



A page from Bunting's notebooks which are in Queen's University Belfast. They had no way of recording the music in 1792, so he wrote down the music notes as they were being played by the musicians.

LÁ NA CRUITE HARP DAY 2023

He published the tunes in three volumes of music called *The Ancient Music of Ireland* in 1796, 1809 and 1840. He moved to Dublin, where he lived with his wife and family in Baggot Street. He took an active role in Dublin musical life and played the organ in several churches including the well-known Pepper Canister Church. This year marks 180 years since Bunting died, and he is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery in Dublin.

Nowadays, Irish harps can be made of wood such as maple, cherrywood and walnut, and it usually has 34 gut, nylon or carbon fibre strings. There is a great interest in reviving the ancient style of playing with the nails on brass wire strung harps. There are 15 harp makers in Ireland and they make harps for harpers in Ireland and all over the world. There are hundreds of young people playing the harp in Ireland today. Irish harping has received special recognition from UNESCO; it is a unique part of our cultural heritage that continues to grow and develop in Ireland and all over the world.



Lisa Canny



Séamus Ó Flatharta, Harp Day 2021 at Ballintubber Abbey



TG4 Gradam Ceoil Musician of the Year 2020, Laoise Kelly

LÁ NA CRUITE HARP DAY 2023



Moya Brennan and Cormac de Barra



Máire Ní Chathasaigh



Catriona Cannon and Kathleen Loughnane



Gemma Doherty, Saint Sister



Maeve Gilchrist, Harp Day 2020



Gráinne Hambley