

LIVERPOOL IRISH FESTIVAL SONG, VIGIL AND MEMORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Liverpool Irish Festival, the UK's largest Irish arts and culture led multidisciplinary festival, today announces the release of a song commissioned to mark the Liverpool Irish Famine: *The Ullaloo* (© I Cantwell, M Snape, 2024). Its first public airing will be held at the [***Liverpool Irish Famine Memorial***](#), Sun 27 Oct 2024, one of the closing events of the annual Festival.

Featuring c.40 events, for adults and children (Thurs 17-Sun 27 Oct 2024), the Festival began with an official launch at the ***Liverpool Irish Centre***. [***See the full programme***](#). The Festival, a highlight of the UK cultural calendar, celebrates 'departures' as its core theme this year. Considering migrancy, displacement, changes in thinking and the rejection of shame, the range of events span children's activities to rich historical Irish heritage. The line-up includes an array of Irish artists and contributors from across the worlds of theatre, film, spoken word, visual arts and academia. Each connects with 'departure'— whether focussed on the displacement of people or the advent of a new philosophy. The Liverpool Irish Famine story is intrinsically linked with these themes.

Liverpool Irish Famine Trail work

Having received funding from the ***National Lottery Heritage Fund*** last year, the Festival has conducted a range of projects to expand the [***Liverpool Irish Famine Trail***](#). This includes [***The Walk of the Bronze Shoes***](#) (May 2024, giving rise to this year's vigil) and the commissioning of a new song, *The Ullaloo* (© I Cantwell, M Snape, 2024) at the official Liverpool Irish Famine memorial. The memorial will be attended by Ireland's Ambassador to the UK, Martin Fraser and Consul General Sarah Mangan, alongside Liverpool's Lord Mayor Richard Kemp. There will also be key attendees from the ***Strokestown National Famine Park Museum*** and ***National Famine Way, Roscommon Solstice Choir, Irish Heritage Trust*** and ***Quinnipiac University*** (CT, USA)

The Ullaloo ([***listen here***](#)) will be sung here for the first time by the ***Liverpool Irish Centre Choir***, led by Amy Housley, using a score and arrangements completed by Chris Matanlé-Mockridge ([***available on this page***](#)). The song was selected from a strong set of public submissions, based on its connection with the brief and its ability to engage audiences that would be stood at the Irish Famine Memorial at ***St Luke's Bombed Out Church*** on an October day. Songwriter Ian Cantwell says:

"I first heard the word 'ullaloo' on a radio programme about terms that have long since fallen out of use. It is a haunting expression that rolls off the tongue. An ancient ritual lament to the dead. I had been researching my family tree and learned that my great-great grandparents William and Rose had fled the ravages of the Great Hunger - or An Gorta Mór - setting sail for Liverpool in 1850. Words in the history books became flesh and blood, and the story of my great-great grandparents struggle became the inspiration for the song *The Ullaloo*. It is an honour and a proud moment for Marty and myself to have our song chosen and we cannot wait to hear it performed by the choir".

These events precede an ***Irish Heritage Trust*** talk on [***The Poor Helping the Poor***](#), led by Professor Christine Kinealy from ***Quinnipiac University*** (28 Oct). Expanding on this work — and linked directly to 'departures' — the *Revealing Trails* and *Postcards from a Pilgrimage* exhibitions offers a poignant look at contemporary views on An Gorta Mór, whilst a new self-guided Trail app, reflects on Irish migration, settlement and legacy. [***Access the app, here***](#). The brand new, state-of-the-art in-browser GPS triggers interactive content either at trail sites or on your device, wherever you are in the world. Launched on 17 Oct, it's been developed in partnership with ***Gazooky Studios*** and sister company ***Second Stride***.

All events are public and subject to suitable weather conditions. We invite everyone to remember the 1.3m Irish Famine poor that came through Liverpool and the 300,000+ that stayed to build Liverpool into the city we know today. We thank ***St Luke's Bombed Out Church, National Lottery Heritage Fund***, the

Irish Government's *Emigrant Support Programme* and **Liverpool City Council's Culture and Arts Investment Programme** for their support with this event.

Quotes

Liverpool Irish Festival CEO & Artistic Director, Emma Smith says:

"As in previous years, the **Liverpool Irish Festival** brings Liverpool and Ireland closer together using arts and culture. 'Departures' allows us to consider ideas and philosophies that are core to the Irish experience. As the third largest migrant community in England, the Irish are aware of how challenging (and damaging) assumptions can be.

"Having undertaken [**The Walk of the Bronze Shoes**](#) earlier this year, 2024's vigil and memorial have taken on additional meaning to us — as an organisation — and to me as an individual. I cannot help but draw comparisons to today's issues of small boats arriving on our shores, full of those in need, and politically driven economic hardship. We must remember famine is not inevitable. Remembering the Irish Famine should drive our commitment to resolving issues by showing us the horror of that hardship".

Dr Ann Hoskins, new Chair of the **Liverpool Irish Festival**, states:

"I've been around the **Liverpool Irish Festival** since its inception. I've watched it become a significant cog in Liverpool's annual cultural machine. I'm proud to support the work as Chair. Though I'm originally from Belfast, I've built my family life in Liverpool. I can see how the Festival connects the culture of the city with the island of Ireland. I'm excited by this year's programme and look forward to being challenged, stimulated and enjoying the events".

Sarah Mangan, Consul General of Ireland, follows with:

"the Northwest contains many thriving Irish communities. Here at the Consulate, we've been invigorated by the work of the Festival, particularly events that treat the diaspora as a progressive and changing community and, especially, the commemoration work around Irish Famine and the city".

EVENT LINKS

[**Vigil**](#) | [**Memorial**](#) | [**The Poor Helping the Poor**](#) / [**Events**](#)

PRESS INFORMATION FOR MORE DETAILS

Founded in 2003, the Festival brings Liverpool and Ireland closer together, using arts and culture. As the most diverse celebration of Irish culture in the UK, we've become a 10-day festival of music and song; visual arts; performance arts; culture, history and identity sharing, talks and tours and film. **Liverpool Irish Festival** receives regular funding from **Liverpool City Council's Cultural Arts Investment Programme** and the Irish Government's *Department for Foreign Affairs Emigrant Support Programme*. It received **Arts Council England's HM Government Cultural Recovery Funding** (2020-21). The Festival's *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail* work is funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. The Festival is a Director of **Culture Network LCR CIC**, a radical friend of **The Baobab Foundation**, signatory and action group member of the LCR's arts and culture sector *Race Equality Manifesto* and holds a committee seat on Ireland's *Department of Foreign Affairs' Emigrant Services Advisory Committee*. We lead the [**Cultural Connectedness Exchange Network**](#), which it founded and chairs, having over 80 members. The Festival took on custodianship of the [**Liverpool Irish Famine Trail**](#) in 2021.

CONTACT DETAILS

For images, information and interviews please contact Artistic Director and CEO Emma Smith on [**emma@liverpoolirishfestival.com**](mailto:emma@liverpoolirishfestival.com) or +44(0)7804 286 145. Visit [**liverpoolirishfestival.com**](http://liverpoolirishfestival.com) Follow [**@LivIrishFest**](#) and [**#LIF2024**](#) on social channels. A *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail* photo archive and [**logo suite folder can be found here**](#).