

IN MEMORIAM

DONAL O'SULLIVAN (1893-1973)

There will be many who will have received the belated news of Donal O'Sullivan's death with profound sorrow. We, the members of the IFMC, have special cause to be grateful to him. He was one of our earliest members, and for twenty years he devoted himself unstintingly to the promotion and welfare of the Council. Besides being a member of the Executive Board from 1956 to 1962 and a Vice-President from 1963 to 1967, he served from 1959 to 1967 as a member of the small Advisory Committee that used to meet in London from time to time, and it was, perhaps, in this last capacity that he contributed most to the work and development of the Council.

Donal O'Sullivan was a man of many parts and his services to the Council were manifold. He was a first-rate scholar and he had a sensitive perception of the aesthetic qualities of folksong and of its value in the life of today. He was a man of affairs and he guided the Council through many difficult passages. He was, for instance, mainly responsible for the valuable Statement on Copyright in Folk Music, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1957. As Honorary Secretary I constantly turned to him for advice and assistance and invariably I received by return of post a reply which was full of wisdom and encouragement. He combined a spirit of boundless enthusiasm with far-sighted vision. Above all he was a warm-hearted, generous and lovable man who enlivened the spirit of all who came into contact with him.

Owing to ill-health he had little contact with the Council during recent years, but those who knew him will always remember him with gratitude and affection.

*Hon. President, IFMC,
London*

MAUD KARPELES

By the death on April 15th last of Dr. Donal O'Sullivan, Ireland has lost a scholar and humanist who left his mark in two very different fields — in current affairs and in the annals of Irish folksong.

Born of Irish parents in Liverpool in 1893, he started his career in the civil service as a First Division Clerk in London, transferred to Dublin at his own request, was called to the Irish Bar in 1922, and in the same year was appointed Clerk of the Senate of Saorstát Eireann, a post which he held until 1936 when he resigned owing to disagreement with the policies of Mr. de Valera's government. His views on this crucial period of Irish history are recorded in the controversial book *The Irish Free State and its Senate*, which he published in 1940. Throughout his political career he retained a love of Irish folksong which derived from holidays spent as

a boy with his grandparents in Kerry. Already in 1920 he had taken over the editorship of the *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society* from Mrs. Milligan Fox, and from 1927 to 1939 he published serially in the *Journal* his edition of the first two volumes of the Bunting Collection of Irish Folk Music and Songs, in which the published versions were compared with Bunting's original MSS, housed in the library of the Queen's University of Belfast, with the missing Irish texts restored, and with a wealth of annotations — references to further versions of the songs in other collections, and biographical notices of the traditional musicians, poets, people and place-names associated with the airs.

Having resigned from his position with the Senate, he now devoted most of his time to research, contributing articles on Irish music and poetry to various journals. He also contributed articles to the press on a variety of subjects, articles which revealed his learning, humour and a certain kind of dry irony which was typical of him. These were incorporated into a book, *The Spice of Life and Other Essays* which appeared in 1948. Having been a keen student of the international political scene throughout his life, he was appointed in 1949 to a newly-created post in Dublin University, a Lectureship in International Affairs, which he held until his resignation in 1965. Almost concurrently, he was appointed Director of Studies in Irish Folk Music at University College, Dublin, mainly a research post which he occupied from 1951 to 1962.

Dividing his time between these two appointments, he was still able to produce a steady stream of publications. In 1952 the Advisory Committee on Cultural Relations commissioned him to write a booklet in its series of Irish life and culture, *Irish Folk Music and Song*, the first general survey of the subject which was both scholarly, and attractively written for the average reader. A lengthy and authoritative article on Irish folk music followed in 1954 for the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, which included a full bibliography of the published and MS collections.

His chief work now followed, the monumental two-volume *Carolan - Life and Times of an Irish Harper*, published in 1958, the first volume containing all the information available relating to Carolan and his background, with an edition of 213 of his airs gleaned from a wide variety of sources, the second volume containing exhaustive notes on the airs, biographical accounts of the patrons for whom these were written, and an edition of the Memoirs of the harper Arthur O'Neill, a prime source for Carolan and his period.

In 1960 O'Sullivan published *Songs of the Irish*, a collection of some of the finest of our traditional airs, grouped into categories such as lullabies, children's songs, songs of occupation, love songs, laments, religious songs, drinking, historical and humorous songs, with translations of the Irish texts into English verse, most of them from his own pen, which fit the tunes as aptly as the originals, and with notes which illuminate the subjects of the songs, drawn from his unrivalled knowledge of the published sources, as well as of Irish literature and history. In 1961 the earlier booklet commissioned by the Advisory Committee on

Cultural Relations was revised and brought up to date, reappearing as *Irish Folk Music Song and Dance*. On his retirement from the Lectureship in International Affairs at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1965, he was appointed research lecturer in Irish Folk Music. From about this time he commenced work on Bunting's 1840 volume, to complete what he had already accomplished with the two earlier volumes. Just nearing the end of this task his memory began to fail, and he died leaving thirty-four of the one hundred and fifty one tunes in a still unfinished state. The manuscript, together with a collection of his books, were presented by his widow to the Irish Folklore Commission, and it is now hoped to complete his edition of the last Bunting volume on the lines he had planned, so that the project of presenting all Bunting's material — the most important single source of information about Irish traditional music — in relation to the original MSS and in the wider context of all the source-material, will become a further monument to his memory.

Despite his considerable learning and achievements as a scholar, Donal O'Sullivan was an essentially modest man, as well as being a genial companion and a brilliant conversationalist. He was a member of the International Folk Music Council since its inception in 1947, later becoming a Vice-President, and took an active part in its deliberations. In 1949 he led an Irish team to the International Congress and Festival of Folk Music and Dance in Venice, and his report to the then Minister for External Affairs in Dublin remains a model for all such reports, while showing the salient characteristics of the man himself — with its vivid delineation of detail, its incisiveness and its wry humour. A life member of the Royal Irish Academy since 1929, he was awarded the official degree of M.A. by Dublin University in 1951, and the honorary degree of Litt.D. in 1952.

In addition to his other accomplishments, Donal O'Sullivan possessed a photographic memory, which enabled him to trace duplicates and variants in collection after collection, and to provide instant information in regard to almost every tune about which a query was made. He gave advice and passed on his knowledge unselfishly to all who asked for it. In a subject in which imprecision and limited knowledge were all too common, he was the first Irishman whose scholarship commanded general respect. His students and friends will continue to mourn his passing.

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ALOYS FLEISCHMANN

LADISLAV LENG (1930-1973)

Slovak ethnomusicology, which has developed rapidly and admirably since the Second World War, has suffered a cruel loss in 1973 with the deaths of Ladislav Leng and Miroslav Filip. (Dr. Filip’s obituary will appear later.)

Leng studied at the Advanced Pedagogical College in Bratislava, and never ceased to contribute to teacher education thereafter. He published two small books on how to play the *fujara*, for example, in 1960 and 1970, and recent articles in the Slovak journal on music education about the geographical division of Slovak folk music. He also wrote two very useful textbooks for teachers on Slovak folk music, published in 1957 and 1961. (See selective bibliography, below.)

In 1960 he joined the research staff of the Institute of Musicology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and in the same year a joint study on Slovak folk flutes (*píšťaly*) appeared by Filip and Leng. The culminating work of his life, though no doubt only a preliminary version of what he intended to do later, was his book on Slovak folk musical instruments of 1967. A pioneer effort, it presents the state of research at the time it