

Ruairidh Dòmhnallach

Dè chuir ri ceòl thu an toiseach?

Thug m' athair brosnachadh dhomh seinn gu h-òg, òrain leithid 'Eilidh' agus 'Teann A-nall'. Bho mu aois seachd bhiodh agam ri seasamh suas agus seinn nuair a thigeadh daoine dhan taigh air chèilidh. Cuideachd aig seann Taigh nam Bochd, nuair a chuireadh an luchd-obrach oidhcheannan sònraichte de chuirmean-ciùil air dòigh dha na h-euslaintich, ghabhainn pàirt agus sheinninn air an àrd-ùrlar bheag air a chur air chois ann an oisean an t-seòmair-bhidhe. B' e cuirm-chiùil bhliadhnail na Nollaige aig sgoil Loch nam Madadh tè eile. Nuair a bha mise ochd, chaidh bogsa-ciùil a thoirt dhomh agus nochd sin aig cuirmean-ciùil na Nollaige aig an sgoil cuideachd.

Bha a bhith ag èisteachd ri ceòl air an radio na bhrosnachadh cuideachd – Radio Luxembourg, prògraman nan dùrachdan ann an Alba is Èirinn, prògraman Gàidhlig BBC na h-Alba, agus Ceòl Dannsa na h-Alba Oidhche Shathairne, dh'èisteachd an teaghlach riutha daonnan. Dhèanadh Calum is mi fhìn prògraman mar gum biodh nan cuirmean-ciùil sinn fhìn aig an taigh.

Dè thug ort ceòl a dhèanamh agus cuin a dh'fhàs e follaiseach gum b' urrainn dhut bith-beò a dhèanamh às?

Tha e air a bhith ann an-còmhnaidh, feum ceòl a chruthachadh – gu h-àraidh oidhirp a' bhrìgh a bh' againn uile mu neart is moit ann an dualchas na Gàidhlig againn agus, ri tìde, am miann an ceòl sin a thoirt gu luchd-èisteachd na b' fharsainghe. Bha mise riamh den bheachd gum faodadh tu bith-beò a dhèanamh à cluich, ach cha robh e gus an d'rinn sinn cùmhnant le luchd-adhartachaidh ann an Lunnainn, Solo, aig deireadh nan Ochdadan, gun tàinig ar beachd gu bith. Thàinig an cùmhnant-clàraidh le Chrysalis gu goirid an dèidh sin.

Dè a' bhuaidh a th' air a bhith aig ceòl, sluagh, cultar, àrainneachd Uibhist a Tuath air a' cheòl a tha thu a' cruthachadh?

Chuir suidheachadh air leth a bhith gad thogail ann an Innse Gall cruth air na h-òrain againn bho thùs buileach, a bharrachd air faireachdainn làidir gun robh de shealbh againn a bhith beò aig àm nan èibhleagan mu dheireadh de sheann dòighean nan Gàidheal mus nochd an telebhisean san eilean a dh'atharraich gu bràth e. Chaidh an gaol air daoine is àite a fhigh ris an tobar de spreagadh aig deireadh nam 50an, sna 60an is 70an nuair a bha rock 'n' roll cuideachd ag atharrachadh an t-saoghail.

Dè an ceòl/an t-òran as fheàrr leat à Uibhist a Tuath ri ghabhail no èisteachd ris agus carson?

'An Eala Bhàn', seach gun robh m'athair cho dlùth ri Dòmhnall Ruadh agus mar a bhiodh e a' moladh an sgrìobhaidh aige gun sgur sna 50an. Bha gaol agam air a bhith ag èisteachd ri m' athair a' gabhail an òrain seach gun robh e a' drùdhadh air cho mòr – bhiodh e ga faireachdainn, a h-uile turas a sheinneadh e, agus thigeadh na deòir air a shùilean nuair a dh'fhàg cuid de na faclan a bhilean. B' e seo rud a thug buaidh orm fhìn gu domhain bho bha mi òg, a' toirt fa-near do chumhachd nam faireachdainnean ann an òran. Bha e gu math teann a thaobh an fhuinn agus a bhith a' cumail dìleas dha – chaidh seo a thoirt fa-near cuideachd.

Nuair a chruthaicheas tu ceòl ùr no a thaghas tu pìos ri chlàradh, dè an dòigh-obrach chruthachail a th' ann?

Feumaidh tu a bhith gad dheasachadh fhèin – a bhith dàna gu leòr gus beachdan a

shadail dhan t-sitig nach eil ag obair agus gluasad air adhart. Tha e car furasta ‘òran’ a dhèanamh, beagan fhacal is ceòl is suidheachadh a chruthachadh, ach fada nas doirbhe an t-òr, an draoidheachd, an *je ne sais quoi* a lorg, nach gabh cur ri chèile cho soirbh ach a dh’fhaodas nochdadh, gun fhiosta fhèin gu tric. Bidh e fàs eòlach air aithneachadh dè tha math – mar a tha le gach rud, bidh e a’ fàs nas fhasa tro eòlas ri tìde. Tha iomadach dòigh aig Calum ’s agam fhìn gus na h-òrain againn a dhèanamh ach tha iad uile gan sgrùdadh gu geur, a’ dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil na faclan agus na suidheachaidhean buileach ceart.

Dè an seòrsa ciùil ris an toil leat a bhith ag èisteachd?

Bidh mi feuchainn ri cumail ris na tha ùr tron radio, ged nach eil sin daonnan na thlachd buileach! Tha mi measail ann an seagh car farsaing air a h-uile seòrsa ciùil agus, anns an fharsaingeachd, ma bhios spionnadh aige na chridhe tha e a’ còrdadh rium. Tha e tric a’ còrdadh rium a bhith ag èisteachd ri Radio nan Gàidheal: Mairead ais Seonag san fheasgar, Pluto bho 5.30, Na Dùrachdan Dihaoine agus mar sin air adhart.

Dè a’ chomhairle as fheàrr a fhuair thu riamh?

Nuair a bha sinn a’ cluich anns an Astoria ann an Dùn Èideann, mhol pìobaire leis an ainm James Reid, nan robh mi a’ cumail m’ aire air cuimhneachadh air na faclan, sealltainn a-mach agus os cionn an luchd-èisteachd: gun a bhith a’ coimhead sna sùilean aca no a bhith gad tharraing a dh’ionnsaigh cuideigin seach gum faodadh sin d’aire a tharraing bhon rud. Comhairle mhath.

An tè air nach do ghabh mi feart thàinig i bhon cheannard-chòmhlain san Òban, Billy Ford, a mhol air ais ann an 1973 aig Tallachan a’ Chorrain gus faighinn air adhart ann an saoghal a’ chiùil bu chòir dhuinn ar sgioblachadh suas agus bow-ties a chaitheamh!

Nuair a chruthaicheas tu ceòl ùr no a thaghas tu pìos ri chlàradh, dè an dòigh-obrach chruthachail a th’ ann?

Na dèan e ach nuair a tha thu gu tur an sàs ann agus ullamh airson nan amannan doirbh nach gabh seachnadh agus nan cnapan-starra air an fheum thu dol thairis. Ma tha thu a’ creidsinn gu leòr annad fhèin gus cumail ris san ùine fhada, cumaidh an neart sin ceart thu. An dèidh sin, faodar na h-oidhirpean agad a bhith gan tomhas leis an ìre de dhaoine a bhios a’ faireachdainn gu leòr air an carachadh gus pàigheadh airson tighinn gad fhaicinn, agus an fhreagairt aca: an deuchainn mu dheireadh.

Dè an obair a bhiodh agad an-dràsta nad bheachd mura robh dreuchd ri ceòl air a bhith agad?

Ceangailte ri ealain is dealbhadh mar a bha ro Runrig, ’s e as coltaiche.

Rory MacDonald

What first got you into music?

My father encouraged me to sing at a young age, songs like Eilidh and Teann a-Nall. From around the age of seven I’d have to stand up and perform when folk came to the house for a ceilidh (ceilidh, in the traditional sense i.e. a social visit). Also, at the old Taigh nam Bochd, when the staff put on special concert nights for the patients, I’d take part and sing on the small stage that was set up in the corner of the dining

room. The annual, Lochmaddy school Christmas concert, held at the Court House, was another. When I was eight, I was given an accordion so it also made an appearance at the school Christmas concerts.

Hearing music on the radio, during the 50s, was continually inspiring – Radio Luxembourg's Scottish and Irish request shows, BBC Scotland's Gaelic programmes and regular, Saturday night Scottish Dance Music were always listened to by the family.

Calum and I would often make up imaginary concert programmes at home.

Who has inspired you to make music and at what point did it become apparent that you could make a living from it?

It's always been there, a need to create music – particularly, to attempt to express the mutual sense of strength and pride we felt about our Gaelic heritage and, in turn, the desire to bring that music to a wider audience. I always believed that a living could be made from playing, but it wasn't until we signed a contract with London promoters, Solo, late 80s, that our belief was finally vindicated. The recording contract with Chrysalis soon followed.

What part has the music, people, culture, environment of North Uist played in the music you create?

The unique experience of a Hebridean upbringing informed our songs from the very start, together with the deep sense of privilege of having lived through the dying embers of the old Gaelic ways before television arrived on the island and altered it forever. A love of people and place was subsequently married to the well of inspiration that arrived during the late 50s, 60s and 70s when rock 'n' roll was also changing the world.

What's your favourite piece of North Uist music/song to perform or listen to and why?

An Eala Bhan, because of my father's close involvement with Domhnall Ruadh and how he continually championed his writing during the 50s. I loved to hear my father singing the song as it so resonated with him – he felt it, each time he sang, and would well up as some of the words left his lips. This was something that deeply affected me from a young age, realising the emotional power of song. He was very particular about the melody and staying true to it – this was also noted.

When you create new music/chose a piece to record, what's the creative process?

Self-editing is a must – being bold enough to scrap ideas that don't 'have it' and move on. It's relatively easy to write 'a song', to come up with a set of words, music and arrangement, but more elusive to find the gold, the magic, the *je ne sais quoi* that cannot so easily be contrived but can arrive, often when one least expects. Recognising the good stuff becomes intuitive – like everything else it gets easier with experience over time. Calum and I have many ways of writing our songs but they all go through a rigorous honing process, making sure the words, notes and arrangements are just right.

What type of music do you enjoy listening to?

I try to keep in touch with what's new via the radio, although that doesn't always equate to enjoyment! I've a pretty wide appreciation of all types of music and, generally speaking, if it's got 'heart' at its core it goes down well. I often enjoy

listening to Radio Nan Gaidheal: Mairead and Seonag in the afternoons, Pluto from 5.30, Na Dùrachdan on Fridays etc.

What is the best advice you've been given?

When playing the Astoria in Edinburgh, mid 80s, a piper called James Reid, advised that if I were concentrating on remembering the words, to look out and over the audience: to avoid eye contact or get drawn to someone as this could distract.

Good advice.

The one that I ignored was courtesy of Oban bandleader, Billy Ford, who suggested back in 1973 at the Corran Halls that in order to get ahead in the music business we all ought to smarten up and wear bow ties!

When you create new music/chose a piece to record, what's the creative process?

Only do it if you are 100% committed and prepared for the inevitable difficult periods and hurdles to be overcome. If you have enough self-belief to stay with it for the 'long haul', that strength will stand you in good stead. After that, your efforts can continue to be gauged by the number of people who feel moved enough to pay to come and see you, together with their response: the ultimate test.

What type of work do you think you'd be doing right now, if you hadn't had a career in music?

Probably art and design related, as pre-Runrig.