

'A genius and a gentleman' - friends remember the late Tommy Peoples

Andrew Hamilton
ahamilton@clarepeople.ie

TOMMY Peoples has a very special place in the folklore of Irish traditional music. There can be few parts of the world where his passing loss will be more keenly felt than in Kilfenora.

Since his arrival in North Clare in the 1970s, his presence has had a constant positive effect on the music and the soul of a whole community. A generous musician and an enthusiastic teacher of young talent, his effect on Clare music will be felt for generations to come.

His friend and one-time bandmate, John Lynch of the Kilfenora Ceilf Band, yesterday described Tommy Peoples as a genius and a gentleman.

"We were so lucky when he came to Kilfenora and married Marie [Linnane] back in the 1970s and played with Kitty [Linanne] all over Clare. He was an institution himself, he played in Cruises for so long, that Sunday session after lunch. He was a genius and we are all so sorry to see him go," John said yesterday.

"He was a lovely man. He shared his music with everybody. When Tommy came to Kilfenora first there were very few here playing traditional music. He touched all the musicians who came after him and was very respectful to all the musicians who went before him.

"If you ever spoke to Tommy Peoples, you got the impression that he had time for you. When you spoke to him, you knew it was genuine, a lovely smile would come across him and you'd be comfortable in his presence. But you'd also know you were in the presence of a genius.

"I was listening to one of his albums just now and there was nearly tears in my eyes listening to him. He played everything so well. He had his own unique style and I think that is something that everyone appreciated so much, he was so original.

"Tommy was never precious about his music. He shared it with everybody, he spent so much time in the Willie Clancy School imparting his knowledge and his technique. So many fiddle players are so indebted to Tommy Peoples. The musicians of Kilfenora and the people around Kilfenora are all indebted to Tommy Peoples.

"We hope that he rests in peace. I know that heaven is a lively place tonight with all the tunes that are going on up there. He was a lovely man to know and it was always a pleasure to be in his company."

John Lynch, band leader with the Kilfenora Ceilf Band, wishes to extend his sympathies to the entire Peoples family.

Left: Tommy Peoples playing in Cruises. Shelagh Honan



TRIBUTES TO TOMMY PEOPLES



"Very sad to hear of the passing of the great Tommy Peoples. Many years ago I heard the blues in Irish music when I heard him play a slow air on the fiddle. It moved me to tears. I'm glad I was able to tell him about it a few years ago. Rest In Peace, Tommy."
Maura O'Connell



"Travel on well, Tommy Peoples, you were great!"
Mike Scott of The Waterboys.



"Stockton's Wing played one of those gigs last night. There was something special in the air. We dedicated the entire show to the greatest of musicians, our great hero, friend and supporter Tommy Peoples. We just had to give it everything in the tank. That was easy. All the best Tommy Peoples and we hope the gig helped you on your journey. The wing salute you and your inspirational music which has always been embedded in our performance."
Stockton's Wing



"Today all the joy his playing gives me is quieted by sadness for his leaving us, so here's a sad and soulful tune to say goodbye to Tommy Peoples."
Cáit O'Riordan



"So sad to hear about the death of Tommy Peoples. The week I spent in his class in Miltown when I was 18 pretty much changed everything for me."
Toner Quinn

Compiled by Andrew Hamilton

President and Sharon Shannon lead tributes to music legend

Andrew Hamilton
ahamilton@clarepeople.ie

PRESIDENT of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, and Clare music legend, Sharon Shannon, have led tributes to Clare's adopted Donegal man, Tommy Peoples, who passed away on Friday, aged 70.

Tommy Peoples gained international fame as one of Ireland's greatest ever fiddle players during his long and distinguished career.

Having played with The Bothy Band, The Kilfenora Céilf Band, the Green Linnet Céilf Band amongst others - Tommy is also highly regarded as a solo performer, a composer and an inspired and dedicated teacher of music.

Tommy Peoples was awarded the first TG4 Traditional Musician of the Year Award back in 1998 and he also received the Composer of the Year Awards in 2013 - becoming the first person ever to receive a second Gramdam from TG4.

A long time teacher at the Willie Clancy Summer School, Tommy was also the subject of the annual Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy Tribute this year.

"I have learned with great sadness of the death of Tommy Peoples, the renowned Donegal fiddle player and composer," said President Higgins.

"Regarded as a master of his craft, Tommy enchanted audiences at home and abroad with his unique style of music, playing with the Kilfenora Céilf Band, the Bothy Band and many other legendary figures in the world of traditional Irish music.

"He also had a great love of the Irish language, which he considered to be a very important part of Irish life. I, with so many others have the warmest memories of Tommy as a friend over many decades and we shall all greatly miss him."

Clare musician Sharon Shannon paid tribute to Tommy Peoples during her performance at the Dublin Irish Festival on Saturday describing him



as a 'huge hero' of hers.

"Tommy's music has touched so many hearts of people all over the world. It is a very sad day for traditional music. He was a really huge hero of mine," she said.

"I saw a butterfly flying around on the roof for most of the gig and I was very happy to see it, it might be Tommy saying hello to us.

"I rarely play these tunes because Tommy himself made such a great job of them and all the tunes that he ever played, because I would be afraid that

I wouldn't do them justice. But it has to be done today."

Tommy Peoples will be laid to rest today at Drumcliffe Cemetery in Ennis following 12 noon mass. He is predeceased by his loving son Tommy Junior. Deeply regretted by his loving wife Maria, daughters Siobhan, Neasa and Grainne and sons Cronan and Lochlann.

Above: The remains of Tommy Peoples is taken from St Flannan's College chapel yesterday evening (Monday).

Natasha Barton