

## Donal Lunny Biography

Dónal Lunny has been at the cutting edge of the evolution of Irish Music for thirty years and is generally regarded by musicians and those involved with music, to have been central to this movement.

Dónal formed **Emmet Spiceland** in the late sixties, the first group to break into the pop charts with Irish music. He went on to co-found **Planxty** (1971-1973) arguably the most innovative Irish band of its time. Planxty combined songs with dance tunes, unusual instruments and an original music approach, which revolutionised the public's attitude to traditional music. Its influence can be heard in many subsequent bands like The Chieftans and The Waterboys. During this time Dónal designed and commissioned the first custom built bouzouki, which is the prototype of what is now known as the Irish Bouzouki.

In 1973 he co-founded **Mulligan Records** and went on to produce 17 albums for the label over the years. His next involvement was with the **Bothy Band** (1975-1979) the most exciting and dynamic band of the traditional revival. Their hallmark was high-energy performance, a virtuoso front line of fiddle, flute and pipes and a powerful acoustic rhythm section. In 1979 Planxty reformed and Dónal produced their three resulting albums. Then, in 1982 along with **Christy Moore**, he formed one of the most successful trad-rock bands **Moving Hearts** and produced their three studio albums. Whilst playing with both Planxty and Moving Hearts, Dónal continued to work as a freelance producer.

Dónal has composed music for theatre (notably The Abbey Theatre and Field Day) as well as TV dramas and documentaries for **RTE**, **BBC** and **Channel 4**. He has also written scores for several films including '*This is My Father*', a major international production starring **Aidan Quinn** and **James Caan**. In 1988 he founded **Orcheilteach**, Ireland's first folk orchestra comprising 25 traditional musicians. Recently Dónal has become more involved with contemporary music and is a much sought after producer, producing albums for **Kate Bush**, **Paul Brady**, **Elvis Costello**, **Mark Knopfler**, **Rod Stewart**, **Marxman**, **Zoe**, **Indigo Girls**, **Clannad**, **Loreena Mckennit**, **Gary Kemp**, **Maire Brennan** and **Baaba Maal**. In 1992 Dónal was musical director and producer of the award winning series '*Bringing It All Back Home*'. In 1994 he and Sharon Shannon wrote and produced the music for the BBC Drama Series '*Runaway One*'. In 1995, along with **Micheal O Suilleabhain**, Dónal composed the title music for the BBC/RTE series '*River of Sound*'. He also produced the internationally acclaimed album for EMI, '*Common Ground*', featuring **Kate Bush**, **Sinead O Connor**, **Neill and Tim Finn**, **Paul Brady**, **Liam O'Maonlai**, **Andy Irvine**, **Davy Spillane**, **Sharon Shannon**, **Christy Moore**, **Brian Kennedy**, **Bono**, **Maire Brennan** and **Elvis Costello**.

Following the success of this album Donal brought together some of the musicians involved in '*Common Ground*' and toured Japan in August 1996 playing sell out shows in Osaka and Tokyo and headlining the week-long Earth celebration Festival on Sado Island. For these shows members of the world famous **Kodo Drummers** joined the band.

On his return from Japan Donal has produced an album for Sharon Shannon, has recorded a second series of '*Sult*', the much acclaimed music programme shown on Telifis Na Gaeilge, RTE and BBC. This second series featured Donal's band with special guests including **Van Morrison, The Hothouse Flowers, Sharon Shannon** and Kirsty McColl. Donal also continued touring returning to Australia and New Zealand and other collaborations with the **Kodo Drummers** in Sado and performances in Tokyo and Osaka in Japan.

1998 was another busy year in which Donal recorded the soundtrack for the film '*This is My Father*', a major international production starring **Aidan Quinn** and **James Caan** and continued touring with his band Coolfin. In July of that year there was a visit to this side of the world by the Kodo Drummers, who joined Donal and Coolfin for a sell out, knock show in Dublin's RDS.

**Dónal Lunny's Coolfin** completed a new album, featuring guests **Sharon Shannon Eddi Reader, Maighread Ni Dhomhnaill** and **Marta Sebastian**. This album was released in September 1998 on Hummingbird Records Ireland. On this album Dónal played Bouzouki, Bodhran, Keyboard, Mandolin and Guitar.

During 1999 Donal and Coolfin toured Europe and the US. Donal wrote Ireland's contribution to the Worlds Millennium celebration, which was broadcast, on New Years Eve 1999 by the BBC to a global audience of a billion people. This piece has been released as part of his album entitled '*Journey – The Best of Donal Lunny*' (5<sup>th</sup> May 2000). Donal also wrote '*Duiseacht*', a piece for orchestra and percussion which represented Ireland's contribution to **Expo** in Hanover in June 2000.

In 2002 Donal co-produced an album with Adrian Sherwood (**Massive Attack Primal Scream**) of traditional Irish songs for **Sinead O'Connor**, "**Sean –Nos Nua**" and again in 2003 worked with the singer on a more recent CD "**She sho dwells in the Secret Place of the Most High....**"

For a celebration of Irish Music in Cite De La Musicque in Paris in October, Donal brought together the talents of Mairtin O'Connor, Cathal Hayden, Noel Eccles, Graham Henderson and vocalist Roisin Elsafty with guest singer Andy Irvine, followed by a surprise sell out Planxty reunion in Lisdoonvarna in Co. Clare.

2004 Donal and his band travelled further afield to festivals in China where with vocalists Mary Black, Cara Dillon and Roisin Elsafty they played to enthusiastic audiences in Beijing and Shanghai. This was followed by a collaboration with some Icelandic musicians and singer Eivor Pallsdottir in Reykiavic and some months later they were invited to play in Eivor's homeland the Faroe Islands .

Currently based in Japan, Donal has been working with several Japanese musicians and returns regularly to Ireland to perform with Mairtin O'Connor and Roisin Elsafty. He has also toured extensively with Mozaik in Europe and Australia continuing his collaboration with fellow musician Andy Irvine.

More recently, Donal has produced and played on solo records by Eivor Pallsdottir and Roisin Elsafty, as well as contributing as a musician to the Transatlantic Sessions series of cds and dvds, recorded and filmed for the BBC. He was also

commissioned to write, produce, perform and direct the music for the opening ceremony of golf's Ryder Cup, held in the Kclub, Ireland, in September 2007. In that year he collaborated with a group of Maori artists/musicians to develop the Green Fire Island project which explores the common spiritual and musical roots of the Maori and Irish people. A widely acclaimed series of concerts was undertaken in New Zealand in 2008 and discussions are currently underway with a view to touring the show in Ireland, the UK and throughout Europe.

During the latter part of 2008, Donal, as part of Feile an Earagal in Co. Donegal, was commissioned to compose and perform, with a choir, a series of new pieces of music, based on the works of the Rann na Feirste author, Seosamh Mac Grianna. The performance was filmed by the leading Irish TV channel, TG4, and received widespread critical approval on broadcast.

He is currently writing new material for the reformed Moving Hearts who will be touring and recording during 2009, as well as contributing new work to the Dublin Electronic Arts Festival to be held later this year. He will, once again, be part of the large group of musicians and singers, including James Taylor, who assemble in Scotland this year to record and film Transatlantic Sessions 4 for BBC TV broadcast later in 2009, as well as release on CD and DVD.