

THE FULL IRISH

A FEAST OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

**AT THE LINENHALL ARTS CENTRE
CASTLEBAR, CO MAYO**

JULY-AUGUST 2011

VISITOR MARKETING STRATEGY

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As part of the Arts Audiences : Build your audience 2011 scheme

CONTEXT

The Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, is a multi-disciplinary arts centre in the heart of the busy Mayo County town. The centre features an intimate theatre space (capacity 144), a visual arts gallery, a busy education/access programme and a bright and airy foyer space used for displaying artistic work by local/community groups. It is housed in a historic stone building with an attractive street façade, and also contains a small, attractive and busy café.

Castlebar is one of three urban centres less than 20 kilometres from each other in the county of Mayo, which has a population of 120,000. Castlebar's town population is 11,891, nearby Ballina (35 mins drive) is home to 14,000, and Westport, just 15 mins drive away, has a population of 5,475, which increases significantly in the summer.

The area is well served with arts facilities: in addition to the Linenhall, Castlebar boasts the 2,500 seater Theatre Royal, which programmes large-scale, commercial, touring shows. There is a Town Hall Theatre in Westport (capacity 280), and a new arts centre in Ballina (theatre capacity 240). In addition the National Museum of Country Life is just 3 miles from Castlebar, attracting approx 100,000 visitors per annum.

The Linenhall was successful in their application to participate in the **Arts Audiences: Build your Audience scheme 2011**, which looks to assist arts organisations in engaging with cultural tourism. In the case of the Linenhall, they are looking to attract an increased number of non-locals to a summer traditional music series, which they are programming specifically with the visitor market in mind.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

THE FULL IRISH: a feast of traditional music at the Linenhall features six high-quality traditional music gigs, one per week, from mid July to the end of August. The concerts generally take place on a weeknight, offering the opportunity to see the best of Irish musicians in an attractive and intimate environment.

Concert ticket prices are €15/12 conc., and family tickets will be available.

The concert programme is as follows:

July 20	John Carty (fiddle, banjo, guitar) and guests
July 27	Joe Carey (accordion, vocals, guitar), Liam McGonigle (accordion, melodeon), Seamus O Mongáin (concertina)
Aug 4	Harry Bradley (flute), Tommy Keane (pipes), Seosamh O Neachtain (sean nós dance, accordion)
Aug 11	Verena Commins (accordion), Julie Langan (fiddle), Pádraig O Broin (guitar)
Aug 18	Laoise Kelly (harp), Michelle O'Brien (fiddle)
Aug 25	Emer Mayock (flute), Aoife Ní Bhriain (fiddle), Mick O'Brien (pipes)

The concert series is accompanied by an exhibition of photographs in the Linenhall gallery, by Danny Diamond, himself a musician as well as a photographer. The exhibition, entitled **Chasing Shadows, Irish music photographs**, runs from July 18 to August 27 and features images of Irish traditional music in its continual evolution from generation to generation, from rural to urban, from session to stage and back again.

Entry to the exhibition is free.

AUDIENCES

CURRENT AUDIENCE

The Linenhall has a very loyal core audience who regularly attend performances at the venue. About half the audience attends more than once a year, with 25% attending 3+ times and 8% attending 6+times. The other half attends about once a year with lapsed attenders regularly returning.

The Linenhall has a loyal, regular music audience

VISITOR AUDIENCE

With this new summer series, the Linenhall wishes to reach out to new audiences, and is particularly invested in engaging with visitors.

Holidaymakers to the West of Ireland are made up predominately of domestic tourists: 49% of holidaymakers to the West in 2009 were Irish*. The next most prevalent tourist group is visitors from mainland Europe (23%), who make up almost a quarter of all holidays in the West, and many of which are independent fly-drive travelers who comes in July and August. 12% of holidaymakers are North American, followed by visitors from Britain, who, at 11% of visitors are much less prevalent in the West than in other regions. Of the approx 1.1million overseas visitors to the West, 314,000 visit Mayo (the majority visit Galway).

Demographically, visitors to the West tend to be overwhelmingly ABC1 (managerial / professional / white collar), which matches with a tendency for arts appreciation and attendance. The most common party composition is couples (47%).

Over half of all holidaymakers to the West arrive in the months June, July and August (although domestic visitors are spread much more evenly throughout the year) and 70% of them stay in hotels, guesthouses or B&Bs. They tend to hire cars (51%), but also do a lot of walking, particularly the European visitors. Americans are the most likely to be part of an organised coach tour (30%).

* Source: *Failte Ireland West*

TARGET AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

New locals

The Linenhall plans to use this new summer programme to attract some first-time attenders from among the local/regional population, with a view to converting them to regular audiences for the venue going forward. These include the large numbers of people who attend commercial shows at the Theatre Royal, as well as the 'alternative west' population: former urban dwellers who have moved to Mayo for the rural life, but still crave quality artistic events.

Domestic holidaymakers

As half of all visitors to the West, the domestic visitor market is key for this programme. The population of the area soars every summer as Irish people head west to holiday homes / self-catering locations and hotel breaks. In addition to the primary party composition of **couples**, we believe the summer programme would be attractive to **families**, who cannot bring their children into pubs/bars in the evening but would like to listen to some live music.

In addition we plan to target those Irish visitors who travel west to participate in **competitive activities** (such as Gaelforce West and the Connemara Adventure Challenge), which at 20% of visitors to the West is a growing segment. Many participants travel with their families and are looking for post-competition entertainment, which is something this series can provide.

Trad enthusiasts

Domestic visitors, many of whom are musicians themselves, and who travel regularly around Ireland to the dedicated music events such as Willie Clancy Summer School, South Sligo Summer School Tubbercurry and Scoil Acla. While being a 'predisposed' market to target for this year's programme, we would also hope that should the summer series develop a following among musicians, it might become a step on the summer 'trail' of musical events for **musicians and music enthusiasts** throughout the west each year.

Overseas visitors

Unlike other parts of Ireland, the West attracts significantly fewer Britons, proportionately, and so visitors from **mainland Europe** are the key international target segment for this summer series, followed by visitors from **North America**. As 50% of such visitors have not decided on their activities in advance of arrival, and given the small marketing budget available for this programme, we hope to capture the interest of this segment while they are in the locality, developing relationships with the local hospitality sector and tourism infrastructure to reach these visitors.

Sub-sections to target within this segment include **fly-drive independent travelers, visitors researching their ancestors** and **organised tour groups**. A visitor segment we think might also be of interest is **anglers**, who are clearly visible around the area during the fishing season. We will research this group in more detail to find out more about their arts interests and whether they would be a viable segment to invest some resources in targeting for this programme.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives are to optimise the centre's attractiveness to non-local audiences, to increase first-time attendance and to improve the centre's engagement with the busy tourism infrastructure surrounding it.

Specific objectives include:

- To ensure all shows in this series attract at least **70% capacity** audiences in the Linenhall theatre space (capacity 98)
- To attract **40% of the audience** from the Linenhall's **current audience** base
- To attract **20% of the audience** from the resident population in the Westport-Ballina-Castlebar area **as first-time attenders** to the Linenhall
- To attract **40% of the audience** from the **non-local/visitor summer population**
- To encourage a steady flow of day-time visitors to the Linenhall through the photographic exhibition that accompanies the music series, and to look to convert these to evening show attenders
- To provide a **variety of price points** and value-for-money offers to be welcoming and inclusive to all
- To **raise awareness of the Linenhall among the local/regional hospitality sector** and to cultivate long-term relationships with relevant 'visitor-facing' organisations and people
- **To maximise media coverage** of the series in local, regional, national and online media
- To deliver an effective and efficient marketing campaign on time and on budget
- To learn more about current/potential audiences through robust audience research
- To track all activity undertaken, note its impact and compile into a case study report for Arts Audiences

MARKETING ACTIVITY

For this summer series, the Linenhall plans to focus their marketing activity on visitors already in the West of Ireland, with a view to converting them to attenders. The geographic focus of activity will be in the Castlebar – Ballina – Westport – Achill and the Southwest Mayo area.

Print promotion

Venue brochure

This summer series will be included in the Linenhall summer brochure, of which 5,000 are printed. 3500 are mailed to the Linenhall's regular audience in May and the remainder are distributed throughout Castlebar and surrounding areas.

Event brochure/flyer

10,000 flyers specifically detailing the summer series will be produced and distributed throughout the region in visitor-facing locations. Suggested locations include:

- Hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs hostels, etc
- Tourist information offices in the region
- Access points in the region: Knock Airport, local train stations/bus stations
- Through car hire companies (ideally placed in the cars)
- Through local taxi drivers
- At local visitor attractions: particularly National Museum, Theatre Royal, etc
- At Castlebar Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- In welcome packs for activity adventure/challenge events such as Connemara Adventure Challenge (May 7), 10HD Mayo Walk (June 26) and Gaelforce West (August 20).

Event poster

200/500 posters will be created for destinations where brochures are not suitable, or to supplement the brochure distribution. These include:

- At traditional music event locations: Willie Clancy Summer School (July 2-10), South Sligo Summer School (July 10-16), Scoil Acla (July 25-31).
- In pubs/bars in the region where trad music is played
- On hostel / self-catering notice boards
- At visitor attractions: National Museum, etc
- At access points: rail/bus stations
- At Tourist information offices

Online activity

Website

The very attractive website for the Linenhall, which attracts 13,000 visitors annually, is currently not working as hard as it could be for the organisation. The Linenhall plans to update the site this year, adding in the following facilities:

- Online ticket booking for events
- Addition of an 'About the Area' page on the site, including links to local hotels, restaurants, visitor attractions, etc.
- Inclusion of Google maps to locate the Linenhall for those not familiar with the area
- Development of an e-newsletter, with online sign-up

The website address will be placed on all promotional material for the summer series to encourage traffic to the site. However, the major update of the website is unlikely to be carried out before the summer season, and so this will not be the main channel through which to promote the "Full Irish" series of events.

Social media

The Linenhall plans to develop a Facebook page to develop interactive relationships online with its community of artists and attenders. The Facebook page will be established in May and regularly updated with news from the Linenhall. and the line 'Find us on Facebook' will be used in printed promotional material produced from May onwards.

Visitor-facing websites

The Linenhall will work with Failte Ireland West to ensure that information on the summer series is included on the discoverireland.ie website, which also feeds into Tourism Ireland's international website for Ireland.

We will also ask other visitor-facing organisations, such as accommodation providers and visitor attractions, to either include information on this series on their websites or provide an inbound link to the Linenhall site, which the Linenhall will reciprocate on its 'About the Area' section of its own website.

Niche media

The Linenhall will endeavour to secure as much coverage as possible on relevant niche outlets online for the summer series. Target sites include:

- Participating musicians' websites
- Traditional music blogs
- Traditional music websites
- Traditional music event sites (such as for Tubbercurry, Willie Clancy Week, etc)
- More general arts blogs

Online advertising

While Google and Facebook advertising have significant merits in promoting the arts, it is felt that the Linenhall's own online presence is not yet strong enough to warrant spending money on advertising that drives traffic to its currently underdeveloped website. This avenue will be reviewed and explored for future summer projects.

Networking

Developing working relationships with key members of the local hospitality sector is vital for a small organisation like the Linenhall to reach the visitor market. Suggested relationships to cultivate include:

Failte Ireland West: meet with them, discuss the programme, ask them for assistance in maximising presence in the region's Tourist Information Offices, work with them for inclusion in the Discover Ireland campaign, utilise the new in-office Ticketsolve system, ask for information on anglers, ask for assistance on developing a presence at points of entry.

Local hotels: organise meetings with the GMs and Concierges of 10 key hotels within a 30 minute drive, tell them about the programme, offer discounted tickets to shows for their staff, try to get brochures into hotel bedrooms or foyer, agree with them a way that you can send updates to their reception/front of house staff.

Local venues: organise meetings with Managers of the Theatre Royal venue and the arts centres in Westport and Ballina. See if an agreement can be reached to promote each other's events through each venue.

Knock Airport: organise meeting with Airport Marketing Manager, discuss how to create a presence for the event in the airport.

Local visitor initiatives

Ambassadors: The Linenhall plans to develop an 'ambassador scheme' from among its core audiences. Initially there will be just 10 ambassadors created, who will assist the Linenhall in promoting the summer series (putting up posters around the region, talking up the organisation, etc), in return for complimentary tickets to Linenhall events.

Castlebar Tourist Office: the Linenhall is involved and supportive of a Chamber of Commerce initiative entitled 'Castlebar You're All Invited', and will work closely with the Chamber on developments in the coming months. These include improving the local Tourism Office service, which the Chamber has taken over from Failte Ireland and which will be based in the same building as the Linenhall.

Local shuttle bus: The Linenhall is involved with a group of local organisations who want to set up a shuttle bus service that would travel a regular circular route including the train station – National Museum – Theatre Royal – Braefy House and back to the train station. The Linenhall hopes to add its own venue to this route, or at the very least, ensure that flyers/information about the Linenhall is available to users of this service, and that the drivers are fully briefed on Linenhall events.

Public Relations

A specific public relations campaign, targeting local, regional and national media will be rolled out for the summer series. The quality of performers secured for the programme should garner media interest, particularly among traditional music media but also among the main arts media.

In addition, local press coverage will be very actively sought out, with a view to ensuring the local population are well aware of the series and in a position to pass on details to other locals and visitors.

Advertising

Due to limited budgets, press and radio advertising will not be purchased to promote this summer series. This is mainly because research has shown that non-local visitors do not read local/regional newspapers when on holidays and thus such advertising would not contribute to reaching the target visitor audience.

Resources

The Linenhall has committed a modest budget towards this new summer series, both to programme and promote the programme, however, it will primarily rely on a lot of 'legwork' by the Linenhall to develop relationships that will work for and with the Linenhall in reaching a broader market than it can afford.

The organisation also plan to have an intern in place to assist with practical activity, and hope that the 'ambassador' scheme will add to the people resources available to this project.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND TRACKING

The Linenhall will utilise a number of systems to track the impact of activity undertaken in promoting this new summer series, including:

Box Office: the venue box office system will track exact event sales for the series, including noting sales 'spikes' (such as post brochure mailout). The Box Office staff will particularly ask 2 questions of all summer series bookers, namely:

Where did you hear about this event?

Where do you live (if first-time attenders)

Exhibition count: An intern will track visitor traffic to and through the foyer space where the photographic exhibition will be placed. Traffic will be counted on a number of days during the exhibition run and this figure will be extrapolated to give an estimate of total number of visitors.

Website analytics: Google analytics on the Linenhall website will track the online impact of promotional activity, particularly referring sites, and Facebook statistics will show how people are engaging with that aspect of the Linenhall's online presence.

Detailed distribution plan: detailed lists of venues where flyers and posters are placed will be kept to ensure the full breadth of activity and reach is noted.

Meeting notes: brief notes will be kept of all hospitality sector meetings to track the nature of each: whether positive/neutral/uninterested in the summer series and the work of the Linenhall, and whether a positive ongoing relationship can be developed.

Post-event review: the Linenhall will hold post-event meetings with key people to get their opinions on how the series went, and what might be done in the future to make it even easier to reach the non-local audiences with such a summer programme.

Ends