

FIDDLER AOIFE GRIFFIN



From Roscommon to Boston

Aoife Griffin, newly-appointed Director of the Boston Comhaltas Irish Music School, is a highly-regarded fiddle player who is making an impact on the Boston Irish music scene since moving here in 2021. We caught up with Aoife to find out more.

Tell us about your background

I am a traditional Irish fiddle player from Co. Roscommon, a region renowned for its rich musical heritage and distinctive flute traditions, which have played a significant role in shaping my fiddle style over the years.

My journey in traditional music began with the tin whistle in primary school, and at age twelve I started fiddle lessons from Lorraine Beirne. Since then, Irish music has been a central part of my life. I quickly immersed myself in the tradition, playing in grúpaí ceoil, sessions, Siansa bands, and countless concerts and shows. I'm proud that I inspired my younger siblings, Áine, Seán and Carla, to follow in my footsteps. I had the privilege of learning from esteemed musicians such as Lorraine, Paddy Ryan and Oisín Mac Diarmada.

I later pursued a first-class honors degree in Irish Music Performance and Irish Language (Gaeilge) at the Irish World Academy of Music & Dance at the University of Limerick, where I studied under Siobhán Peoples and Clare Egan.

My playing is deeply rooted in the Connaught style, known for its strong rhythm and driving lift, characteristics that I strive to maintain while my own musical voice evolves. Everyone who has played with me knows I'm a fan of Sliabh Luachra Polkas & Slides from Kerry to liven up a session and get the crowd going!

Performance has always been a passion of mine, and I have performed in ensembles both in Ireland and internationally. I joined the National Folk Orchestra of Ireland in 2019 and we performed in Kilmainham Gaol at Dublin Tradfest. I also performed with the Silkroad Ensemble and U. Limerick at Harvard in 2022, one of my highlights of performing in Boston.

Tell us about your Boston experience

I moved to Boston in 2021 and was quickly drawn to its vibrant cultural scene and endless things to do. I settled in East Boston and eventually moved to Adams Village in Dorchester.

The Boston Irish traditional music scene is thriving, thanks in part to dedicated Irish pubs such as The Burren, run by Tommy

McCarthy & Louise Costello, The Druid, owned by Mikey Crawford, Oran McGonagle's various venues and Scobie's, owned by John and Anne Lydon.

One of the exciting aspects of Boston's music scene is the range of styles and influences. Many younger musicians blend Irish traditional, Scottish, and folk music, while others stay deeply rooted in the pure drop of Irish trad—the kind I grew up with at home. Musicians like Colm Gannon and Seán Clohessy are prime examples of carrying forward the deeply traditional sound. This fusion of styles creates a truly unique and dynamic session scene.

What's on your musical agenda this year?

Myself and my partner David Healy established a residency at Scobie's Café & Bar in Dorchester, and play there every weekend, Friday to Sunday. It's fantastic to have a regular trad session in Adams Village, a neighborhood long regarded as Boston's "Irish Village."

I also perform at various Irish American events throughout the year. I'm playing at C.F. McCarthy's in Canton over St. Patrick's weekend and

also at the Irish Cultural Centre.

Next July, I'm thrilled to be performing and teaching at the Catskills Irish Arts Week in upstate New York, which brings together some of the finest traditional musicians from around the world.

The late Ballinasloe fiddler Larry Reynolds and the Reynolds-Hanafin-Cooley branch of Comhaltas have had a profound impact on Irish music here, and I'm honored to be the new Director of the Boston Comhaltas Irish Music School that they established. My goal is to build on its strong foundation and to nurture the next generation of musicians while also working to future-proof the School so that Irish music and culture remain vibrant in Boston for years to come.

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L-R: ADAM HENDEY, NIAMH HEALY, DAVID HEALY, AOIFE GRIFFIN