

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

HONORARY CONFERRING

Friday, 18 March 2022

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **DR CIARÁN CRILLY** on 18 March 2022, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa* on **PADDY GLACKIN**

Deputy-President, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Paddy Glackin is one of Ireland's most eminent fiddle players, a shining light in the popular wave of the Irish folk revival from the 1970s, as well as being an illustrious broadcaster and producer, and a respected authority on the history of traditional music in Ireland. It is entirely fitting that he featured in an iconic album from the 1980s showcasing the cream of Irish performers entitled *The High Kings of Tara* as he is indeed musical royalty, and something of a legend.

Born in Clontarf, Dublin in 1954, his musical talent was recognised at an early age. In a 2021 interview, he recalled how Clontarf was no 'hotbed of traditional music', and that he received 'a fiddle rather than a football' at the age of six. He

inherited a love of music particularly from his father, who he would often hear at night-time playing softly with the aid of a clothes peg for a mute.

Glackin technically honed his natural ability by taking classical violin classes at the College of Music on Chatham Row in Dublin, while music was a frequent and vibrant presence in the home. He was exposed to leading players of the time, being taken to the Church St Club on Wednesday evenings during school holidays, and to the Thomas St Piper's Club on Saturdays. He began to participate in live sessions at the age of twelve and was playing with esteemed figures on the scene by fifteen, one example being the great piper Tommy Reck. Initially adopting the fiddling style of his father's native Donegal, he would master a variety of approaches, influenced by musicians like John Doherty, Tommy, Potts, and Padraig O'Keefe. He became fiddle champion at the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil in 1973.

It was during his time at UCD that Glackin became exposed to Dublin's vibrant traditional music scene, and his involvement in Gael Linn would lead to creating a group that was to become, in 1975, the Bothy Band. With an inimitable membership that also included Donal Lunny, Paddy Keenan, Matt Molloy and

Tony McMahon, this ensemble garnered widespread critical acclaim and became a significant force in 1970s traditional music.

His sometime collaborator Andy Irvine famously wrote a song entitled *Never Tire of the Road*, but tire of the road he did, as he related in a 2013 interview: ‘My gravitation was in a slightly different direction. I went into radio. I joined RTÉ as a producer and ended up in sports. I then moved around current affairs, and became arts and features editor. I was radio sport editor until last year.’

However, Glackin continued to make celebrated recordings of traditional Irish music. Notable albums include *Glackin* (1977), *Doublin* (1978), *In Full Spate* (1991), and *Reprise* (2001). He has performance, composition, arrangement and production credits on over 60 album releases – this even includes a recording with the composer of *Roaratorio*, John Cage’s avantgarde ‘Irish circus on Finnegans Wake’, linking him to the great literary heritage of this country, and indeed this university. More recently, he played with LAPD, a supergroup also featuring Lunny, Andy Irvine, Liam O’Flynn that the Irish Independent memorably dubbed “Trad Zeppelin” in a 2013 review.

Glackin is widely regarded as one of the leading experts on Irish traditional music in the country. He has had a venerable career as a broadcaster with RTÉ, most notably as presenter of the long-running radio series *The Long Note* and the TV series *The Pure Drop*. He has worked as a curator and archivist of traditional Irish music, and was Traditional Music Officer for the Arts Council of Ireland from 2016–2021. He has maintained a connection with his alma mater, working with the National Folklore Collection in UCD to complete the 220-page illustrated book *The Otherworld: Music and Song from Irish Tradition*, published in 2012.

In preparing for today, I approached some of my own colleagues in music who would have encountered and worked with Glackin over the years, and here is a selection from some of the glowing personal testimonials I received:

- ‘A thoughtful and studious approach to music-making and its history.’
- ‘There is great drive and vibrancy in his playing.’
- ‘He’s a great man to tell a story, which explains why he was such a successful presenter and producer on TV and radio.’
- One considered Dublin, a recording made with piper Paddy Keenan, ‘one of the finest traditional duo albums ever released’.

- 'I think very highly of him, and not just from a performance side, but all across the board in relation to traditional music... He's a brilliant man'.

A 2013 review in the Journal of Music about LAPD described how he 'has etched a reputation as one of our premier fiddlers, steely yet divinely delicate'.

Praehonorabilis Pro-Praeses, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad Gradum Doctoratus in Litteris; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.