

Advertorial



**Music Generation
Kilkenny**
Chill Chainnigh

“We just want to make sure that everyone, whatever their background, gets access to music tuition.”

Bono, U2 – Music Generation philanthropic funder



Music for all our ears

The vision that inspires Music Generation Kilkenny is the same today as when Music Generation was established almost ten years ago – to break down the barriers that may otherwise prevent children and young people from experiencing the pure joy of making music.

This year alone, Music Generation Kilkenny gave that opportunity to 6,000 children and young people across the city and county.

Over the following pages, the Kilkenny Observer shines a spotlight on the aims and accomplishments of this performance-based music programme headed up by Kilkenny’s own international Soprano, Sinéad Blanchfield... >>

Contact: e: musicgenerationkilkenny@kcetb.ie | m: 087 1765493 | PM on Facebook: [musicgenerationkilkenny](https://www.facebook.com/musicgenerationkilkenny)



**Music
Generation**

Music Generation is Ireland’s National Music Education Programme. A Music Network Initiative, co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, The Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships



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Kilkenny and Carlow
Education and Training Board





**Music Generation
Kilkenny**
Chill Chainnigh

Affordable music tuition – where you live

Music Generation Kilkenny is part of Ireland's national music education programme, initiated by Music Network and co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Skills and Local Music Education Partnerships.

The programme aims to transform the lives of children and young people ages 0-18 by creating access to high quality, affordable music tuition in their localities.

Nationally, the programme creates more than 42,500 opportunities each year for children and young people to take part in high-quality, subsidised performance music education in all musical genres and styles – from trad to jazz, rock, pop and hip-hop, samba drumming, brass band, choral and orchestral initiatives, composers' clubs and much more.

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) leads the programme locally in partnership with Kilkenny County Council.

For more information visit:
musicgeneration.ie

A role model for our musical youth

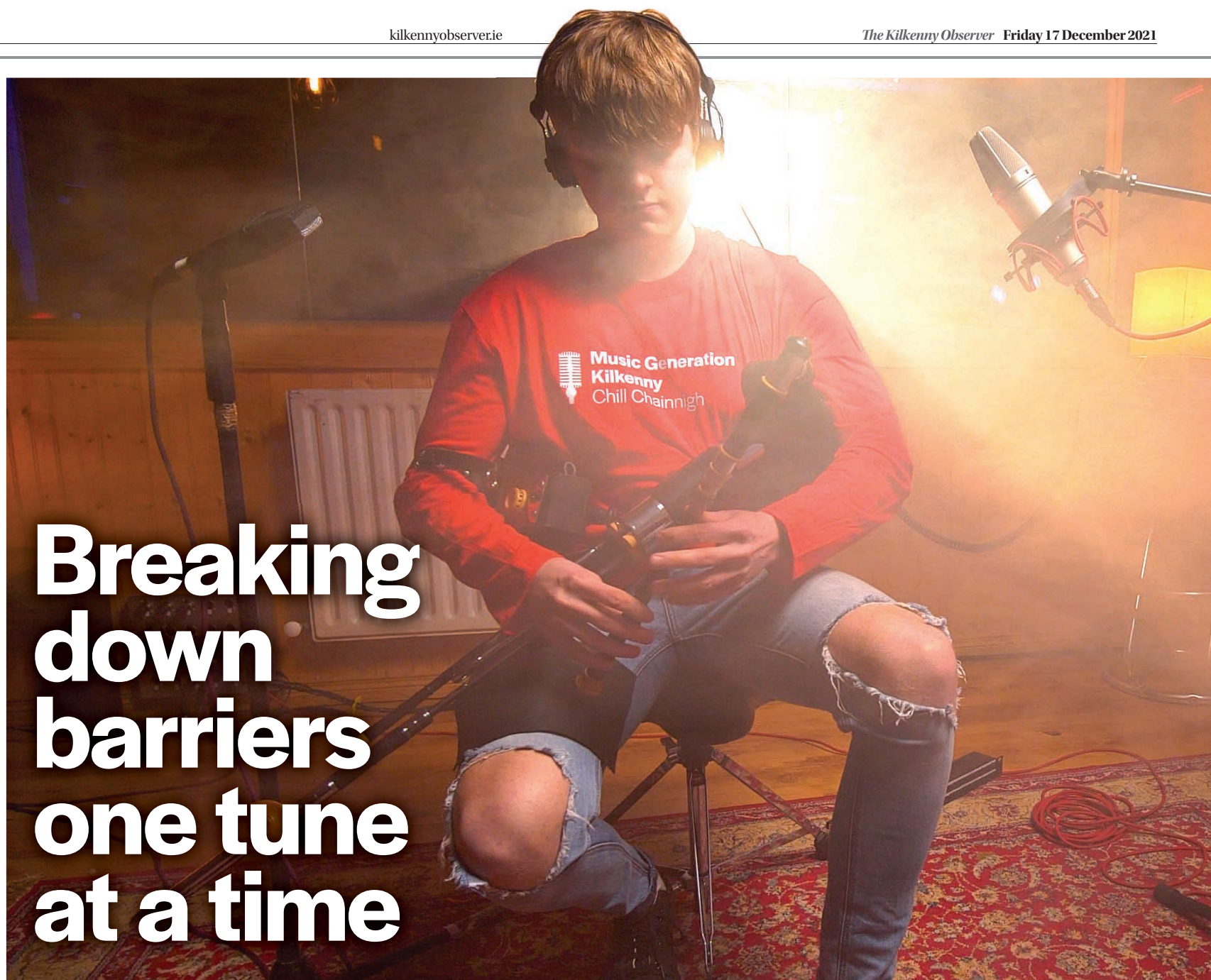
Sinéad Blanchfield is the Music Generation Development Officer and manages the overall development and implementation of the Music Generation Kilkenny programme across the county. An international Soprano, Sinéad is Kilkenny-born and feels privileged to be in a position to give back to her city and county. "When I was growing up in Kilkenny, music helped shape and form me as a person," said Sinéad.

"It grew my confidence as a young person, not just as a musician. I want to give that same opportunity to as many of our young people as possible."



**Sinéad
Blanchfield**

**Music Development Officer,
Music Generation Kilkenny**
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Breaking down barriers one tune at a time

Music Generation Kilkenny aims to sweep away the obstacles that often block our young people's access to music tuition.

"Music is a universal language; it overrides divides, barriers and social norms," said Sinéad Blanchfield, Music Development Officer, Music Generation Kilkenny.

"Performing music together gives our children and young people a vitally important opportunity to experience inclusion, creativity, diversity and empowerment through music. It helps them build their confidence and develop who they are as individuals."

Sinéad spearheads Music Generation Kilkenny, a partnership programme whose mission since 2019 has been to create inspiring musical experiences for children and young people across our city and county.

The aim is to help transform their lives by giving them opportunities to create, play and perform music in their communities and on their terms.

So far, this year alone, 6,000 school children have tuned in to that mission by taking part in Music Generation Kilkenny programmes across 23 primary schools, after-school music hubs, workshops, secondary schools, SEN settings, camps, taster days and festivals.

"We want to give access to singing or playing a musical instrument to every child in County Kilkenny. That is the goal," said Sinéad. "And we are doing this by offering high quality, performance-based music education across a wide range of genres and styles."

Instrument bank

"We try to capture every child, and

we underpin that by resourcing the programme through our instrument bank. The children can now rent an instrument from us at a very low rate. It's another encouragement for children to get involved because they don't have the prohibitive cost of buying an instrument.

"The music scene in Kilkenny is incredible. It's so vibrant in terms of its cultural and musical offerings. There are two music schools in the city, and much private tuition is going on in the city and county. We're trying to offer an alternative to this traditional method of music education, a more performance-based approach."

"We're all about getting children involved in group tuition, having a collaborative experience, and working with their peers. To make this accessible to them we form ensembles, bands and offer performance opportunities for children across a spectrum of genres and styles such as trad, rock and pop, fusion and classical. We give them access to a vast range of instruments from strings, vocal, ukulele, trad instruments and also provide song writing and sound production coaching."

Professional musicians

Coming from a performance background herself, Sinéad is ideally qualified to lead this multifaceted programme. She leads the design, development, implementation and management of all the Music Generation Kilkenny programmes delivered by her team of 22 musician educators. "My team is just amazing," said Sinéad. "They

are wonderful, professional musicians who all live in Kilkenny."

Currently, Music Generation Kilkenny runs programmes in 23 primary schools across five strands: vocal, ukulele, string and percussion, along with a Music Makers programme aimed at Junior Infants to Second Class pupils.

"We also have three after-school music hubs," added Sinéad. "Rock and Pop in partnership with Foróige, every Thursday at The Drum, MacDonagh Junction; Monday Trad Hub in Castlecomer - again in partnership with Foróige - and a blended, online Uilleann Pipe Hub on Tuesdays."

These are their core programmes, but there have been many more initiatives such as community programmes, special education sessions, a pilot TY programme, camps and workshops.

Workshops this year have included: a drumming workshop with Youth Reach, a rhythm workshop - Crash Bang and Wallop; songwriting and sound production workshops in partnership with Foróige; a vocal online workshop called Virtual Voices and toddler music workshops. A summer Trad Camp in partnership with Music Generation Tipperary culminated with a final performance in Ballykeefe Amphitheatre.

Christmas song

The summer songwriting and sound production camp in 2020 resulted in the release of a lockdown-themed Christmas song called 'Feel the Victory'. Written, performed and recorded by Music Generation Kilkenny participants,

the song got lots of radio play nationally and in the US when featured in The Ireland Funds' Winter Galas. It's a very professional production with heartfelt lyrics. Watch and listen to it on the Music Generation Kilkenny YouTube channel.

Music Generation Kilkenny has also been involved in city events such as the St Patrick's Day virtual parade. "We were invited to perform 'virtually', so we created a video of our 12 young Uilleann Pipers playing 'Uilleann Pipe Dreams'." On Kilkenny Day in October, they held a taster session where young children could come and try out an instrument that they might never have tried before.

Sinéad also created an online Wellbeing programme. "I designed that specifically in response to the pandemic," she explained. "There were so many young children at home being homeschooled and missing out on the creative aspect of their education that comes from music and dance. So I created a pilot programme for primary schools during the lockdown. When children returned to school, we streamed it to the classroom whiteboards. We had 2,400 children take part in that, which was terrific."

"The Wellbeing programme also helped build up the morale of our Musician Educators. Live music performances had come to a standstill, so this programme pulled in the talent and skillsets of these amazing musicians, harnessing it to deliver a wonderful programme for children."

What's very important for Music Generation Kilkenny is the building of partnerships. "Over the past few years, I have built partnerships with school principals, managers in youth settings, the county library service with Kilkenny Childcare Committee, Kilkenny Education Centre, Foróige and Na Piobairí Uilleann. Partnerships are key in terms of how we deliver our programmes."



In the Hub of it

Opportunity for creativity is vital for our youth's wellbeing, and it shouldn't stop when the bell rings at the end of the school day. Music Generation Kilkenny runs after-school music hubs for young people who want to learn an instrument or explore their singing skills in a group setting. There are three currently (see below), with plans to expand into more locations next year:

Creative Music Space

An after-school rock and pop music hub run in partnership with Foróige at the DRUM, MacDonagh Shopping Centre on Thursdays. Music Generation Kilkenny small group lessons in ukulele, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, drums and singing.

Trad Hub

Meets every Monday after school in Castlecomer. It provides an opportunity for young traditional players of primary school age to get involved in fun weekly lessons and performance opportunities. Instruments include fiddle, bodhrán, concertina, whistle, flute and banjo.

Uilleann Pipe Hub

A blended mix of online and in-person tuition every Tuesday. The Hub's 12 dedicated young Uilleann Pipers performed 'Uilleann Pipe Dreams' as part of this year's St. Patrick's Day virtual parade. Check out the Music Generation Kilkenny YouTube channel to hear their captivating performance.

What next?

"We're ongoing all the time. The core programmes will continue and expand to reach children and young people in more locations. We'll be holding another Trad Camp next summer, and workshops will continue throughout the year. And we are linking with festivals to deliver some programmes.

"We will also develop the TY programme to more schools, delivering songwriting, music recording and sound production coaching by our musician educators to more children."

The overarching goal for Music Generation Kilkenny is to meet children where they are. "We take the programme to their locality instead of children having to come into Kilkenny for lessons, which is often a barrier for some parents. We're great about breaking down those barriers to get to where the children are.

"I grew up in Kilkenny; that's where my development as a young singer started. I had great opportunities, and my parents were very supportive. But if Music Generation had existed back then, I would have loved to use the opportunity to sign up and try every single instrument!

"I know the immense joy and happiness that music gave me as a young person. It helped shape and form me and grew my confidence as a young person - not just as a musician but as an individual."

In conclusion, Sinead said, "I'm very passionate about nurturing young talent, and I'm very proud to be from County Kilkenny, so my role as Music Development Officer for Music Generation Kilkenny gives me the perfect opportunity; to give back."

If you want to find out more about Music Generation Kilkenny, its programmes, workshops etc., get in touch by email: musicgenerationkilkenny@kcetb.ie, by Facebook message, or by phone: 087 1765493

Enjoy a Yulefest of talent

Young people from Music Generation Kilkenny's Creative Music Space Hub will perform at Yulefest on Sunday, December 19th, from 12 to 1 pm in Kilkenny's Parade Bandstand.

"I'm setting up the house band with my professional musicians, so this will be a very special experience for the children - and the audience! It will be the first time ever performing in public for some, so it would be lovely to have as big a crowd as possible pop by and lend them support," said Sinead.



RTE Nationwide

• Watch RTE Nationwide tonight (Friday), at 7pm, to catch a performance of 'Jingle Bell Rock' by some of the younger Music Generation Kilkenny musicians.

Take a look back...



Musician Educator Carl Rochford and young violinist Martyna, Kilkenny Day, October 2021. Photo: Freddie Greenall



Musician Educator Brendan Hickey taking young guitarist Djorge through his paces. Photo: Freddie Greenall



Young singers taking part in the June Jammers' summer event, 2021. Photo: Freddie Greenall



Meave and Mia are in their second year of receiving violin tuition with Carl Rochford in Scoil Naomh Fiachra Clontubrid.

What people are saying

Primary School Principal

"Muckalee School is very proud of our association with Music Generation Kilkenny. When Sinead first called and offered professional performance music to the children in 2nd, 3rd and 4th classes, we jumped at the chance and haven't looked back since. Through pandemics and lockdowns, storms and snow, we have loved having Barbara Kelly, our Music Generation Educator, visit us every week (mostly in-person, sometimes virtually) and share in her enthusiasm for all things music.

"The children have benefitted from their lessons so much over the years, both in terms of learning and enjoyment. Our pupils are much better off thanks to our involvement with Sinead and Music Generation Kilkenny; as the late, great Levon Helm said, 'If you pour some music on whatever's wrong, it'll sure help out'. "A massive thanks from all of us in Muckalee to Music Generation Kilkenny for all their help!"

Kevin Cummins, Principal St. Brendan's National School, Muckalee, Co. Kilkenny

Young musicians

"It's nice learning a new instrument really quickly and it's good to get into something different. It's really enjoyable and we'd now like to learn more violin and other music, outside of school.

"Carl is a great teacher; he really helps us to get it right. You feel like you're playing in a proper orchestra each week and you have the confidence to perform in front of others."

Maeeve and Mia, 5th Class, Scoil Naomh Fiachra, Clontubrid, Co. Kilkenny.

Musician Educator

"Working with Music Generation Kilkenny has really helped me broaden my skillset, both as a musician and as an educator. From Music Production and Drums in Kilkenny City to Percussion and Song Writing in rural Kilkenny schools and in SEN settings, there are so many diverse and inclusive programmes on offer all over the county.

"I have also become a Lead Musician Educator, which has allowed me to lead the Musician Educator team in the delivery of some programmes. With so many gigging musicians having lost much of their regular income, this is a real lifeline for many in the current climate."

Mark Colbert, Lead Musician Educator, Music Generation Kilkenny.

Partner

"We are delighted with the progress Music Generation Kilkenny has made in the past three years under Sinead's leadership. We couldn't be prouder of the achievements of our children and young people in the county and everything Music Generation Kilkenny has achieved to date.

"Music Generation has opened the door to untold musical possibilities for children and young people in Ireland and we are thrilled that those opportunities will be available in Kilkenny for generations to come."

Cllr Peter Cleere, Chairman of the Board, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB.

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Musician Educator Mark Robinson and young musician, Arian. Photo: Freddie Greenall.



Music Generation Kilkenny Chill Chainnigh

Thank you for the music!

Creating access to performance music education for children and young people across Kilkenny city and county since 2019.



'Crash, Bang & Wallop' Rhythm workshops age 6-8, Easter 2021.



Children trying the Bodhrán with Karena Dowling at the Kilkenny Day Taster Session, October 2021. Photo: Freddie Greenall



Clodagh took part in the 'June Jammers' summer event 2021. Photo by Freddie Greenall



Conor enjoying the virtual 'Crash, Bang & Wallop' rhythm workshop during lockdown.



Mark Colbert Lead Musician with Music Generation Kilkenny. Photo: Freddie Greenall



Musician Educators (L-R) Clare Kilkenny, Barbara Kelly, Féibhar Baldwin Wall. Photo: Vicky Comerford.



Young Drum Musician, Rachel taking part in the Kilkenny Music Generation programme. Photo: Freddie Greenall.



Music Generation Kilkenny musicians (L-R) Cathal, Katie, Clodagh, Laura, Charlotte and Enya during filming for the 'Feel the Victory' music video. Photo: Shane Hatton, Old Mill Pictures.

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