AG09: Agallamh le Conall MacIlleChiar: A' Phiób
Interview with Conall MacIlleChiar: Bagpipes
Presenter: Sarah Cruickshank

SARAH: Cuide rium tha Conall MacIlleChiar, a tha a' dol a dh'innse dhomh beagan mun a bhith a' cluich a' phiób. Fàilte, a Chonaill. Nìse, inns dhomh dè bha cho taraingeach dhutsa mun a' phìob?

CONALL: Uill, feumaidh mi aideachadh nach robh mòran aig an toiseach. 'S e mo phàrantan a thug orm a' phìob a dh'ionnsachadh. Tha mi a' smaoinneachadh, air sàilleibh nach robh an cothrom aca ceòl a bhith aca nuair a bha iad òg, bha iad airson gum bìtheadh an cothrom agam sa. Mar sin, thug iad orm a' phìob ionnsachadh agus cha do chòrd e rium airson dha no tri bhliadhnaichean, ach às déidh greis, bha e a' còrdadh rium 's bha mi ag ionnsachadh fuinn a bha a' còrdadh rium agus bha e tòrr nas fheàrr. Bidh mi a' dèanamh mòran a'nise. Bidh mi a' cluich fad na h-ùine, so tha mi gu math fortanach, chanainn.

SARAH: Ciamar a thòisich thu ri ionnsachadh?

CONALL: Uill, thòisich mi air an fheadan an toiseach, agus thòisich mi anns na féisean ann an Inbhir Nis, Fèis na h-Òige, agus 's e Donnchadh Dòmhnallach a bha a' teagasg aig an fhèis, agus às déidh a bhith aig an fhèis, chaidh mi a Dhonnchadh airson leasanach a-mach às na féisean, às déidh na spoile, agus bha mi a' déanamh sin airson iomadh bliadhna, agus an uairsin, dh'ionnsaich mi a' phìob a chluich às déidh ... Ach 's e ... Bha e gu math duilich a’ dol bhon an fheadain air (dhan) a’ phìob.

SARAH: Dé a bha cho doirbh mun an gluasad a bha sin bhon an fheadain chun a’ phìob?

SARAH: With me is Conall MacIlleChiar, who is going to tell us a little about playing the bagpipes. Welcome, Conall. Now, tell us what attracted you so much to the bagpipes?

CONALL: Well, I must admit that there wasn’t much to begin with. My parents made me learn the pipes. I think that, because they didn’t have the chance to learn music when they were young, they wanted me to have that opportunity. So they made me learn the pipes and I didn't like it at all for two or three years, but after a while, I began to enjoy it and I was learning tunes that I liked and it was much better. I do it often now. I play all the time, so I’m very lucky, I’d say.

SARAH: How did you start to learn?

CONALL: Well, I started on the chanter at first, and I started through the féisean in Inverness, at Féis na h-Òige, and Duncan MacDonald was the tutor at the féis, and after attending the féis, I went to Duncan for lessons outwith the féisean, after school, and I did that for many years, and then I learnt to play the pipes after ... But it was ... It was very difficult to move from the chanter to the pipes.

SARAH: What was so difficult about moving from the chanter to the pipes?
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CONALL:
Chanainn gur e dìreach anail. Cha robh gu leòr spionnadh agam airson a’ mhàla a lionadh agus a’ cumail a’ dol. Ach tha cuid de dhaointe ag ionnsachadh air an rud ris a chaisteal a’ dhàna iad ... ’S e "goose" a th’ ann, agus ’s e piob a th’ ann gun na duis. Mar sin, tha e gu math furasta a’ sèideadh agus a’ cumail am màla a’ dol, ach gu mi-fhörtanach, cha robh sin agam, so bha mi dìreach bhon an fheadain air (dhan) a’ phìob, ’s bha sin gu math doirbh.

SARAH: Nis, bha thu a’ bruidhinn a siud air an (na) duis. Dè na rudan a dh’fheumas tu a bhith mothachail air fhad ’s a thu a’ cluich a’ phìob?

CONALL: Uill, feumaidh tu a bhith mothachail mu dheidhinn ... gu bheil na duis ann an gleus leis an fheadain air a’ phìob, agus tha sin gu math doirbh, agus tha e a’ toirt ùine mhòr a bhith a’ fás cleachdte ris. Agus, chun an latha a tha seo, tha mi fhathast ga fhaighinn gu math duilich uaireannan a’ phìob a gheàrnadh leis an t-sìonnsair.

SARAH: Agus mar sin, dè na fuinn is toigh leat fhèin a bhith a’ cluich agus carson?

CONALL: Uill, tha mòran diofar fuinn a tha a’ còrdadh rium, ach fear a tha a’ còrdadh rium gu mòr, ’s e Òran Mòr MhicLeòid. ’S e seann òran a th’ ann agus ’s ann às an Eilean Sgitheanach a tha e, agus tha mi a’ dol ga chluich dhut an dràsta.

SARAH: Taing, a Chonaill. Cò na piobairean eile is toigh leat?

CONALL: I’d say it was just breath. I didn’t have the strength to fill the bag and to keep it going. But some people learnt on something they call ... It’s a "goose", which is a set of pipes without drones. So it’s fairly easy to blow and to keep the breath going, but unfortunately, I didn’t have that, so I just went straight from the chanter to the pipes and that was very difficult.

SARAH: Now, you spoke there about the drones. What sorts of things do you have to keep in mind while you are playing the pipes?

CONALL: Well, you have to make sure that the drones are in tune with the chanter on the pipes, and that is quite difficult, and it takes a long time to get used to it. And, to this day, I still sometimes find it very difficult to tune the pipes to the chanter.

SARAH: And so, what tunes do you like to play and why?

CONALL: Well, there are a lot of different tunes that I like, but my favourite would be Òran Mòr MhicLeòid. And it’s an old song that comes from the Isle of Skye, and I’m going to play it for you now.

SARAH: Thank you, Conall. Which other pipers do you like?
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**CONALL:**

Well, I’d say I listened to a lot of pipers who do … who play competition music, such as Stuart Liddell and Gordon Walker, but I now listen to pipers like Angus Nicolson and Angus MacKenzie and there’s also a man called Ross Ainslie. Ross Ainslie comes from Pitlochry, and he plays in a band that is now quite famous: Treacherous Orchestra, and he does a lot of things with the pipes that I had never heard before I listened to Treacherous.

**SARAH:**

And that’s what you like?

**CONALL:**

That’s what I like, new tunes. But he still plays some very old tunes too, but he also composes a lot of tunes too. That’s what I really like.

**SARAH:**

A thousand thanks for speaking to us, Conall. Thank you.

**CONALL:**

You’re welcome. Thank you.