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International song conference on Skye celebrates Scotland's musical heritage

Leading academics, musicians and singers from across Scotland gathered at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye this week to celebrate and debate the twin traditions of Scots and Scottish Gaelic song.

Over 70 people attended the three-day conference, **Òran 2010 Sang**, which was hosted by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama to hear from notable speakers including Dr Margaret Bennett, musician and broadcaster, Mary Ann Kennedy and Dr Fred Freedman, an expert on the songs of Robert Burns.

The opening address to the conference was given by eminent composer and musicologist, Dr John Purser, who spoke about the relationship between Gaelic and Scots song and the cross-over that has occurred between the two linguistically distinct strands of Scottish musical heritage. Delegates also heard from overseas representatives Dr Ruth Perry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Aindrias Hiort of the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Closer to home, Dr Thomas McKean from the University of Aberdeen delivered a paper on a macaronic version of a child ballad recorded by Murdo McRae, Kyle of Lochalsh for the American song collector James Madison Carpenter in 1931.

The conference reflected the strengthening relationship between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the RSAMD in supporting and developing the Gaelic arts and culture in Scotland. Professor Boyd Robertson, Principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig said: "Gaelic song and music has been at the core of the College's work since its inception and we are delighted to be hosting such a prestigious conference with our colleagues at the RSAMD.

"We are committed to providing further opportunities across the arts through the medium of Gaelic and to promoting the language and culture on an international stage. We very much look forward to the outcomes of the conference and to continuing to work in partnership with the RSAMD."

Professor John Wallace, Principal of the RSAMD said: "It is a pleasure to be here in Skye to listen to such distinguished speakers discuss the wealth of Scotland's musical heritage. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the RSAMD is more than a partnership, it's a marriage made in heaven, and through the twin mediums of Gaelic and Scots we will help propel Scotland to an ever higher position on the world's cultural stage."

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, who met with speakers and delegates at the conference said: "Creative Scotland will be a rallying call for the cultural strengths of the whole of Scotland. Traditional arts is a key sector and is central to Scotland's international reputation. The work at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is building a strong base for contemporary Gaelic culture."

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