

# THREE of MR. O'FARRELL'S for GUITAR

## III. The Waterford Waltz

"O'Farrell's Pocket Companion " IV

*mm ~ 72*

*mf*

5

1

9

2

13

17

1

2

21

25

1 2

29

1 2

32

1 2

36

2

*mm ~ 50*

*harm.*

*p*

40

*f*

*p*

*harm.*

44

*f*

*ff*

"Mr." O'Farrell (his first name is uncertain, although it may have been Patrick or Peter) was a piper, composer, and teacher who flourished in the latter half of the 18th and early 19th Centuries.

We don't know the exact place of O'Farrell's birth, although evidence from the place names applied to his compositions suggests the Tipperary or Waterford areas of Munster (southern Ireland). We also don't know the exact dates of his birth or death. There is mention of his performing in Edinburgh as late as 1832, but no other details of his later life have been discovered.

What we do know is the fact that he made his living as a stage musician in London, composing and performing for pantomimes (the "musicals" of their day). O'Farrell also maintained a shop in London for the construction and repair of pipes.

However the element that has contributed most to O'Farrell's lasting fame among traditional musicians is the series of tutors that he assembled in the years just before and after 1800. The full name of this series is *The Pocket Companion for the Irish or Union Pipes* ("union" being an alternative spelling for "uilleann" - pronounced ILL-en - a word meaning "elbow" in Gaelic and referring to the means of inflating the bellows). The *Pocket Companion* (PC henceforth) series was augmented by another work, *Collection of National Irish Music for the Union Pipes*, published in 1804. (Both are available from Patrick Sky - [www.patricksky.com](http://www.patricksky.com)).

There are four volumes of the PC, containing a total of some 430 tunes, many of which are unique to the series. It seems that O'Farrell collected these pieces from various sources, although there are a few that evidently are his own compositions. The pieces consist of dance tunes, airs, waltzes, and include duets and other tunes composed in what piper Jerry O'Sullivan refers to as the "folk baroque" style, clearly demonstrating the influence of musicians like Handel and the Italian school on those Irish musicians engaged in "formal" composition (see note on Carolan, page 11). Although unsigned, it's a good guess that these "folk baroque" pieces are the work of O'Farrell himself, created primarily for the purposes of stage performance as mentioned above.

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The dance tunes derive in about equal number from the Scots and the Irish traditions. How many of the dance tunes were O'Farrell's own works is open to question - maybe three works out of the 420+ total are "signed", but there could be many more that are his. A curious feature of the *PC* is the fact that there are very few entries that are clearly identifiable as Irish reels, and many more 9/8 "slip" or "hop" jigs than would be expected. The numbers of each type of tune compared to the O'Neill collection from later in the 19th century are almost exactly reversed (i.e., in O'Neill reels predominate and 9/8 jigs are a minor feature). Why this reversal should have taken place is an interesting question but not one that needs to concern us here.

A difficulty that a contemporary musician encounters in the *PC* is the almost total lack of any indication as to tempo, aside from the occasional "slow" or "very slow" supplied by O'Farrell. A performer encountering one of O'Farrell's 4/4 tunes (such as "Cecilia" in this collection) is left to decide whether or not to play it as a reel, or a hornpipe, or a march, or an air ... The names of the tunes don't help either - there are very few equivalents of "Fisher's Hornpipe" or "Miss McLeod's Reel" to point in any direction.

The three pieces I have selected - "Cecilia" (a kind of cheerful hornpipey piece), "Doubaling" (a mixolydian jig that sounds like it's from the Scots tradition), and "Waterford Waltz" (one of O'Farrell's own), are not intended to be representative of all the music in the *PC*. For that purpose I would recommend piper Jerry O'Sullivan's two recordings of O'Farrell's music (google Jerry's name for more details). The extensive liner notes to the CDs also contain a great deal more information on Mr. O'Farrell and his music than I have provided here.