The BEST of the IRISH TRADITION

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Airs, Songs, and Harp Tunes Arranged for Piano

by Bill Black

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DEDICATION

... with love, to my wife Pat for her support, artwork, help with the layout, and excellent suggestions

... with thanks, to Dr. Dick Winchell, Kathleen Kanaley, Susan Pennington, Norma Perron, Alice van Buren, and Megan Anthony, excellent pianists all, for their assistance to a pianistically-challenged arranger

... with respect, to Bunting, O'Neill, Joyce, Petrie, Roche, Breathnach, and the other tune collectors whose loving labors in years past have established the precedents for preserving the riches of the Irish musical tradition

FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is a simple one - the introduction of the rich repertoire of Irish traditional music to musicians, particularly pianists, who may not already be familiar with it.

The pieces selected in this volume come from the harp tradition and the song tradition of Ireland. Some are composed tunes; most belong to the category of "composer unknown". The melodies and harmonies are "simple" (a dangerous word in this context!) but expressive of great beauty. Some of the pieces can be dated to a particular year or range of years, while of others we can only agree that they are probably of great antiquity. Some of the pieces are well-known in different contexts ("Derry Air", for example, is of course the melody for "Danny Boy", and "My Lodging's in the Cold Ground" is the tune of "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms"), while others of equal musical merit have - to the best of my knowledge - not been heard in years, and have almost certainly never been recorded.

The harp tunes represented in this collection are representative of a very ancient tradition of Irish harp music that culminated in the famous "Meeting of the Harpers" that took place in Belfast in the year 1792. We are fortunate that the Meeting was organized by a young musician named Edward Bunting, whose interest in preserving the ancient melodies of Ireland led him to the concept of translating into notation the music performed by the ten harpers present at the Meeting. Had Bunting not undertaken this task, it is doubtful how much of the harp repertoire would have survived the passing of the last representative of this ancient tradition with its bardic implications.

Bunting's efforts are not immune to criticism; there are many who view his efforts at confining the richly-ornamented modally-structured harp repertoire within the strict boundaries of classical notation as misguided. This may be an shining example of twenty-twenty hindsight: in the absence of modern recording devices, the classically-trained Bunting was prepared to confront his task with the best of the tools at his command, and it cannot have been an easy task (among other obstacles, traditional musicians rarely perform a piece of music exactly the same way each time they play it).

The criticism may be deserved, but the fact remains that the efforts of Bunting and other contemporary collectors have preserved treasures of the ancient musical heritage of Ireland that might have disappeared forever.

Some of these songs live on in the repertoire of "sean nós" ("old style") singers of today; on the other hand, some of the pieces in this book may be seeing the first light of day after centuries of undeserved neglect.

FOREWORD

Another collector whose efforts are represented in this volume is Chief Francis O'Neill (1849-1936), a native of County Cork who after a series of storybook adventures wound up as Chief of Police of the city of Chicago. in the late 19th and early 20th Century and one of the most influential men in the history of Irish traditional music by reason of the depth of his interest in the history of the music and of the people who were playing it. Chief O'Neill's tune collections remain to this day a wonderful resource for musicians, who are far more familiar with the parts of his work devoted to dance tunes, the jigs, reels, and hornpipes that even today remain the backbone of today's Irish traditional repertoire.

Far fewer contemporary musicians are aware that O'Neill's first collection - referred to as "the 1800" for the number of pieces contained therein - contains in its first section many slow pieces - referred to by traditional musicians as "airs" or "slow airs" - the vast majority of which are no longer familiar to us. We know from other sources the provenance of some of these pieces; of most we know nothing beyond the fact of their existence as beautiful examples of Celtic music.

It is my sincerest wish as a traditional musician that the arrangements presented in this book do nothing but enhance the beauty of the melodies themselves. In the case of some of the lesser-known pieces, the harmonic ideas are my own, based on years of experience as a player and listener. Any given musical pitch can be harmonized in a number of different ways, not all of which will produce a result that is both pleasant to the ear and true to the spirit of the melody. I take full responsibility for trying to accomplish both goals with these arrangements.

Finally, I state again my hope that the material presented in this book will open the wonderful world of the Irish tradition to those musicians interested in the challenge of making its hidden beauties their own.

Adh mór libh go leir! (Good luck to you all!)

Bill Black Falmouth MA August 2010



SOUND FILES

Each of the pieces in this book is linked to its corresponding MP3 sound file.

This MP3 can be accessed by simply clicking on the tune title.

The individual sound files appear (with abbreviated names) on the server in this folder:

http://www.capeirish.com/books/piano/piano_mp3/

They can also be accessed using the <u>Table</u>.



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ADIEU ADIEU THOU FAITHLESS WORLD

O'Farrell collection











ADIEU ADIEU THOU FAITHLESS WORLD











ADIEU ADIEU THOU FAITHLESS WORLD

This tune is found in Volume I of the *Pocket Companion for the Irish or Union Pipes*, a collection of tunes published c.1805 by a piper named O'Farrell.

Not much is known about Mr. O'Farrell, not even his first name (Patrick and Peter are possibilities). He was apparently from the Province of Munster (southern Ireland), possibly Clonmel in Tipperary. It is known that he spent a great deal of time in London, where he was a stage musician, pipe teacher, and instrument dealer; his presence in Edinburgh is also recorded. He might have died somewhere around 1830

Mr. O'Farrell might have remained little more than an obscure footnote in the history of Irish traditional music had not New York piper Jerry O'Sullivan decided in 2005 to record some of O'Farrell's music (or, more accurately, music from O'Farrell's collections, some of which - the percentage seems to be anybody's guess - may have been composed by him). The CD is called "O'Sullivan Meets O'Farrell", and it's a tour de force of research as well as performance. The CD comes with an excellent booklet containing as much information about Mr. O'Farrell as is evidently known at present (as they say, the research continues), plus information on the tunes and on Mr. O'Sullivan.

"Adieu Adieu" is one of the tunes in Volume I whose ancestry is unknown. It's labelled "slow" and "Irish", presumably by O'Farrell himself, but beyond this scant information and the time signature of 4/4, there's not a lot of guidance for a musician as to whether the tune is a march, slow reel, slow air, etc etc. Jerry plays it as a slow air. and that's good enough for me!

As with the other tunes in this collection (mine, not O'Farrell's), the harmony concepts that have been applied are my own (Jerry performs unaccompanied on the CD). They are based on years of experience playing this music, both as a lead instrumentalist and as a backup player. I have tried to do justice to the melody line by adhering closely to the "less is more" theory. In this particular piece I have added a few variations, but nothing like the seven and eight and more that O'Farrell occasionally employs to be "fashionable" in a late 18th century kind of way.

There's a great deal of excellent music in the *Pocket Companion*, including dance tunes that could be accommodated at a session very comfortably, Scots strathspeys, lovely airs like "Adieu Adieu", and more classically-flavored material (which Jerry refers to as "folk baroque"). The second "O'Sullivan Meets O'Farrell" CD, which features Jerry on pipes accompanied by cello and harpsichord, has been released as of August 2010.



BEAUTY IN TEARS

T. O Carolan (1660-1738)











BEAUTY IN TEARS





A composition attributed to the best-known of Irish harpers, Turloch O Carolan (1660-1738), many of whose works - still played and loved today - share characteristics with those of the continental Baroque musicians of the day.

O'Carolan is often referred to as the "last of the Irish bards", those poet/musicians whose importance to their society is attested in the earliest histories of Ireland. Like so many other harpers of his age, he was blind, although not born so; his living as an itinerant musician - which he began after attempts to live the settled life of a farmer ended ingloriously - was made less burdensome through the kindness of various patrons of the nobility and landed gentry who, in the true bardic tradition, welcomed the harper into their houses for as long as he wished to remain. This laudable practice, certainly appreciated by O'Carolan, was lovingly commemorated by him in his compositions. The titles of many of these works include the names of patrons, often preceded by the word "Planxty", a term whose origin is obscure but whose general meaning Implies "pleasant celebration," "revels," or in a more 21st Century jargon, a "fun time".Such cheerful pieces are certainly among the most popular of O'Carolan's works, but his versatility as composer is clearly manifest in pieces such as "Beauty in Tears" or "O'Carolan's Lament", or certainly his valedictory "Farewell to Music", compositions whose musical feel is altogether different from that of the lighter-hearted Planxties.

"Beauty in Tears" shares many characteristics with the popular Welsh tune "The Ash Grove", which dates from the early 18th century and was widely known in Carolan's day, but which tune is the "original" - or if both are based on an even more remote common ancestor - is probably impossible to say at this point.

The BEND of the RIVER

O'Neill collection











BEND of the RIVER



From *Music of Ireland* (1903), the first tune collection assembled by Capt. Francis O'Neill (1849 - 1936). Since "the Chief" provides no further information on its source, we can only guess that it might have originally been a harp piece.

However, in his introduction to the 1987 reprint of O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, the eminent tune collector and expert on traditional music Breandán Breathnach proposes a theory that at least some of the more obscure pieces contained in *Music of Ireland* were new compositions and not "traditional" at all. While he finds no problem (from a musical standpoint) with their inclusion, Breathnach does fault O'Neill for not advising his readers of the fact. One is left to wonder if this is the situation concerning "Bend of the River", which remains a lovely tune regardless of its pedigree (or lack thereof).

CAROLAN'S LAMENT

T. O Carolan (1660-1738)











CAROLAN'S LAMENT



Another of the many compositions of the blind harper Turloch O'Carolan, "the last of the Irish bards".

Note that tune titles bearing the composer's name are inconsistent regarding the use of the "O" (Gaelic = "son of"). The argument has been made that it was customary for individuals having an "O" to drop that syllable in conversation, so that the harper refers to himself as "Carolan" on numerous occasions.

While that seems to me sufficient reason for dropping the O, it has not convinced everyone to do so, hence the bard's various tunes may still appear as "O'Carolan's ..."

The DARK SLENDER BOY An Buachaill Caol Dubh

Seán O Seanacháin (mid-18th c.)









The DARK SLENDER BOY



This piece is from Donal O'Sullivan's *Songs of the Irish* collection, where he comments "In this song we have the attractive concept of the Spirit of Drink as a Dark Slender Boy who accompanies his protegé everywhere. The author of the conceit was a Munster poet of the mid-Eighteenth Century named Seán ó Seanacháin (John Shanahan), whose eccentric character and general irresponsibility earned for him the sobriquet of 'Seán Aerach' or 'Flighty Jack'."

DERRY AIR

Ulster traditional











DERRY AIR









This is perhaps the most familiar piece in this collection because of its use as the melody for "Danny Boy" - love it or hate it, the quintessential Irish ballad (whose words were composed by an English actor named Fred Weatherly, who never actually set foot in Ireland!)

The original melody was collected by a Miss Jane Ross from an itinerant musician in County Derry (known in some circles as "Londonderry") sometime in the middle of the 19th century. Regardless of the abuse it has had to endure over the years (nothing quite matches the experience of listening to a pub singer approaching the hight note with the sure and certain knowledge that he/she will attack it and fall off backwards), the melody remains unparalleled for its beauty and serenity.

The ENCHANTED VALLEY

O'Neill collection











ENCHANTED VALLEY







This is another lovely tune from O'Neill's *Music of Ireland* collection. The Chief mentions nothing about it in any of his reference works, and an Internet search turned up nothing (Google's 8404 hits are - not surprisingly - mostly for golf courses and other resorts!) As with "Bend of the River", this may be an original composition by one of the Chief's circle of musicians, or even by O'Neill himself.

FAIR HILLS of EIRE O!











FAIR HILLS of EIRE O!





From the Songs of the Irish collection. The song is a lovely reminiscence of Ireland as seen through the eyes of a poet far away from his native land. As Donal O Sullivan points out, the attribution of the song to the 18th Century Munster poet Donncha Rua Mac Con Mara ("Red-Haired Dennis MacNamara") is problematic; the actual composer may have been one Fitzgerald, a soldier who fought for the French army, with MacNamara revising and adding to the earlier song.

The Gaelic words of this song were translated into English by the Dublin poet James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849).

FOR IRELAND I'D NOT TELL HER NAME Ar Éirinn Ní Neosfainn Cé hÍ

traditional harp tune











FOR IRELAND I'D NOT TELL HER NAME









Speaking about this song a few years back, an Irish native speaker told a radio interviewer "[This song] is a story about a priest who fell in love with his brother's wife. [The priest] said, 'For the whole of Ireland I wouldn't tell her name.' "

Well, maybe, but the version of the song that appears in the *Ceolta Gael* collection is clearly of the type referred to as an "aisling" or "vision", in which Ireland is personified as a beautiful young damsel in distress - often referred to as a "spéir-bhean" or "heavenly woman" - who calls on the poet/singer for assistance: "Roisin Dubh" - "The Little Black Rose" - is a better-known song of the same type. The allegorical nature of "aisling" songs and their relationship to the Irish political situation in the days when open discussion of

FOR IRELAND I'D NOT TELL HER NAME

English - was unwise at best has been well documented, although as Donal O Sullivan points out, the poets writing in Irish "placed no restraint whatever on the expression of their views about the English."

This piece is a beautiful example of what Irish traditional musicians refer to as a "slow air". The simple definition of that term is probably most easily understood in negative terms, i.e. a "slow air" is not a tune you could dance to (in its original form; some slow airs in 3/4 time can be played as waltzes, as this piece and "Give Me Your Hand" [see below] often are). The first printed references to this tune appear in the mid-19th Century works of the tune collectors Petrie and Joyce.

Since it was not an uncommon practice for the composer of an "aisling" to take existing love song material and re-work it into a political allegory, the idea of one melody serving two or more purposes - in this case, recounting the tale of the unhappy priest as well as that of the young patriot - is by no means out of the ordinary. I'll conclude this lengthy note with an interesting quote from harpist Mary O'Hara: "The melody of this song has travelled far. Clondillon relates hearing a Roumanian folk singer sing the tune believing it to be a Roumanian folksong. Perhaps some soldier of fortune belonging to the Wild Geese [17th century Irish exiles] had the gift of song! "



GARTAN MOTHER'S LULLABY

Co. Donegal traditional











GARTAN MOTHER'S LULLABY









This hauntingly beautiful modal song was discovered in Co. Donegal by the collector and musicologist Herbert Hughes, who included it in his collection *Irish Country Songs* (1909). The version I have used is that recorded by harpist Mary O'Hara. The well-known folklorist Joseph Campbell composed lyrics in English (beginning "Sleep o babe for the red bee hums / The silent twilight's fall") to the melody. I have not seen any reference to the existence of original Irish lyrics to this song.

GIVE ME YOUR HAND

Tabhair Dhom do Lamh

Ruairi Dall O Cathain (1646 - ?)























GIVE ME YOUR HAND



A composition of the harper Ruairi Dall O Cathain (Blind Rory O Kane, c.1570 - c.1650), a scion of the O Cahan clan of Ulster and as such a nobleman in his own right. Though born in Ireland, Rory spent much of his career in Scotland as the court harper of the Laird of Macleod.

The story is told that a certain Lady Eglinton insulted Rory by addressing him in a manner more appropriate to a servant than to a member of the nobility. Upon discovering her error, the lady apologized, and to demonstrate that there were no hard feelings, Rory composed this lovely tune in the lady's honor. The fact that couples are still waltzing to the tune 350 years or so after its creation should be a source of great delight to the shades of Rory Dall and Lady Eglinton!



HYMN to the HEART of JESUS Duan Chroi Iosa

Tadhg Gaedhlach O Suillebháin (c.1715 - 1795)










HYMN to the HEART of JESUS

Light of my heart / Thy heart, O Lord divine! Pulse of my heart / Thy heart to have for mine! And since for love of me / Thy Sacred Heart did fill Within my heart fast-bound / Thy Heart be still! - Donal O'Sullivan translation

It is a fact of history that the Irish, despite the undoubted strength and resilience of their religious faith and their unquestioned skills as poets and musicians, did not compose as many pieces of religious music as might be expected. While this might appear to be a paradox, one must always remember that the historical milieu in Ireland was for centuries not favorable to such expression, as both the Irish language and the Catholic religion were viewed as seditious by those exercising political power in Ireland.

The infamous Penal Laws are the clearest evidence of this antagonism. In spite of official restrictions, however, songs of a clearly religious nature did appear and often achieved great popularity among the Catholic peasantry, although they were often at first circulated orally or in manuscript. "Duan Chroi Iosa", a composition of Tadhg Gaedhlach O Súilleabháin (= Timothy O Sullivan "the Irishman") is one such. O Sullivan was a poet from the Munster (southern) area of Ireland whose religious works were rooted in a personal conversion experienced in his mid-life.

While the words of these religious songs can usually be clearly attributed, less certain is the source of the music. In the absence of any information to the contrary, we have to presume that the the poetry and the melody to which it was set were the work of a single person; the historical evidence indicates that these pieces were so considered by those closest to them.

LAMENT for OWEN ROE O'NEILL

T. O'Carolan 1670-1738











LAMENT for OWEN ROE O'NEILL



The "Fiddler's Companion" website furnishes the following:

Owen Roe O'Neill (1582-1649), or, in Irish, Eoghan Rua Ó Neill, was a member of the noble O'Neill family of County Tyrone who as a youth left Ireland for military service on the Continent.

He fought in the Netherlands and distinguished himself as an officer in service with the Spanish, but in 1642 at the age of 60 he returned to Ireland and helped to mastermind the rebellion against the Stuart regime called the Confederation of Kilkenny. O'Neill won an important victory at Benburb in 1646, but died three years later of an illness at Cloughouter, County Cavan, just before he was to campaign against Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads.

It has long been maintained in tradition that O'Neill was in fact poisoned at the hands of a woman who placed the toxin in his shoes before a banquet. O'Neill danced vigorously at the affair for several hours, causing the substance to be absorbed into his skin, leading to his death several days later.

LAMENT for ROGERS O'NEILL

F. O'Neill 1849-1936









LAMENT for ROGERS O'NEILL



This lovely lament can be found in Francis "The Chief" O'Neill's *Irish Music and Musicians*, originally published in 1913 and reprinted in 1987. It is all the more touching because it honors Rogers O'Neill, whom the Chief refers to only as "a young collegian of brilliant promise", when in actuality Rogers was the O'Neill family's oldest son, who died in Chicago of meningitis at the age of eighteen. He was the last of the O'Neill sons to die; all were dead before age 21, including three younger siblings who all died on the same day of diphtheria. (The young man's unusual first name was his mother's maiden name.)

In the book there is no attribution to a composer, although it seems a foregone conclusion that it was the Chief himself who composed it. It bears a strong resemblance to the well-known "Lament for Owen Roe O'Neill" that appears on the same page in the book.

The LARK in the CLEAR AIR

traditional harp tune











The LARK in the CLEAR AIR







A traditional melody known originally as "Caitlín Ní Uallacháin", later as "Kitty Nowlan" or "The Tailor's Son". The poet Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810-1876) wrote the words that are now sung to this air, which begin:

Dear thoughts are in my mind And my soul soars enchanted, As I hear the sweet lark sing In the clear air of the day. For a tender beaming smile To my hope has been granted, And tomorrow she shall hear All my fond heart would say. **LIMERICK'S LAMENTATION**

? Myles O'Reilly (c.1636 - ?)











LIMERICK'S LAMENTATION









Unfortunately the beauty of this piece is in direct proportion to the amount of confusion surrounding its exact origins. That there is a close relationship of some sort to the Scots tune "Lochaber No More" seems not to be in dispute, but the origin of the work that is the common source for "Lochaber" and "Lamentation" is not clear.

Bunting states that "Lochaber" derives from a piece composed by the Irish harper Myles O'Reilly (born c.1635/6), while O'Neill says that the harper Thomas Connellan of Cloonmahon, County Sligo, added introductory and concluding phrases and re-named it "The Breach of Aughrim", and that it was introduced to Scotland after his death in 1698 by his brother Laurence Connellan, who was also a harper.

The references to Limerick and to Aughrim connect this moving piece with the unsuccessful 1691 attempt by Sarsfield's Irish troops to remove the English occupation forces from Connacht (western Ireland), providing a context if not an exact date for this piece.

LORD MAYO

David Murphy (17th C.)











LORD MAYO



The composer of this stately piece is said to be one "David Murphy" ("David" - not a common Irish first name even today - is probably meant as a close English approximation to the Gaelic "Dáithi").

The story goes that the tune was composed by Mr. Murphy to get himself back into the good graces of his patron, the eponymous Lord Mayo, although the circumstances that led to the ill-feeling have not been recorded. We know little else about Mr. Murphy. However, Chief O'Neill in *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* claims that another harper named Thady Keenan in fact composed the tune, leaving us to surmise that Murphy might have been responsible for the lyrics. These consist of fulsome praise of Lord Mayo, perhaps a little hard to take for us today but not untypical of the time. An example: "Mayo! Whose valour sweeps the field / And swells the trump of fame / May Heav'n's high power the champion shield / And deathless be his name! / Of glory's sons, thou glorious heir / Thou branch of honor's root", etc etc etc ad nauseam.

Fortunately for Mr. Murphy and whatever remained of his self-respect, the Lord apparently relented, with the result that the friendship of nobleman and harper was restored.

MOLLY McALPIN

William Connellan (17th c.)













MOLLY McALPIN

This composition is attributed to harper William (O) Connellan, who was born in Cloonmahon, Co. Sligo; dates are uncertain (c.1645 - c.1700) We don't seem to have as much biographical information on William as we do on his brother Thomas, who was also a composer (e.g. Thomas travelled extensively in Scotland, was elected to public office in Edinburgh, etc etc).

There's also a "Laurence Connellan" but whether he's the same person as William or another brother is anybody's guess.

We also don't know for sure who Miss McAlpin was, but we can hazard a guess that she was a daughter of some family belonging to the nobility or landed gentry (perhaps one of Connellan's patrons).

MY LAGAN LOVE

Ulster traditional











MY LAGAN LOVE



Another gem in distinctive mixolydian modality discovered in Northern Ireland by folklorist Herbert Hughes and included in his *Irish Country Songs* collection. The English lyrics were composed by another well-known folklorist, Joseph Campbell. I presume there were Gaelic words to this song but I have never run across them. (Geographical note: the River Lagan rises in the mountains of County Down and flows through the city of Belfast into the Irish Sea.)

MY LODGING'S in the COLD GROUND

traditional harp tune









MY LODGING'S in the COLD GROUND



This is the melody used by the poet Thomas Moore for his well-known song "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms"."The air of that popular favorite ... has come to be regarded by not a few musical authorities as being originally English instead of Irish," says Chief O'Neill - barely suppressing a shudder - in his *Irish Folk Music*. He continues: "Very naturally, any such claim contrary to the time-honored belief will by Irishmen at least be considered ridiculous."

Unhappily for the Chief, the fact of the matter is that the melody does not appear in any of the harp collections or other collections of Irish music prior to 1787. In contrast, a song with a similar name appears in an English publication as early as 1665. All this is pretty scary stuff for the Chief, but he rallies bravely to the cause: "Like many other Irish airs, it may have found its way into England in the early part of the eighteenth century ..."

And he finishes with a flourish (and who are we to argue?) :

"If originally an English composition, it must be admitted that more than a century's residence in the Emerald Isle has by no means proved a drawback to it; on the contrary, the Irish form appears to be infinitely finer than the original English version, and for that reason, if for no other, it may be considered an Irish melody."

O SOUTH WIND!

D. MacNamara (17th century?)











O SOUTH WIND!



From O'Sullivan's *Songs of the Irish*. The tune is well-known and well-loved today in many parts of the world outside Ireland, but nothing much is known about the composer beyond his name (Donal MacNamara) and the fact that he was a native of Co. Mayo.

OLD TRUAGH

Bunting collection











OLD TRUAGH

A harp tune (also known as "Old Triugha") collected by Bunting at the 1792 Belfast harpers' meeting from the County Leitrim harper Charles Byrne (1712 - c.1810). The actual composer seems to be unknown although O'Carolan is naturally a candidate.

According to the entry for the tune in the "Fiddler's Companion", it had previously been published as "Ye Trugh" (?) by Neal in 1724, and harpist Ann Haymann (1992) says it was quite popular, with many instrumental and vocal variants.

Byrne was Bunting's source for several Carolan tunes, and had a wealth of stories. Arthur O'Neill (1734-1818), a blind harper who also played at the Belfast Harp Festival and who was one of the last of the old itinerant harpers, mentions the tune in his memoirs.

"Truaigh" (or a variant spelling), meaning a division of land, is the name of several places in Ireland. Lyrics beginning with the words "Arise from thy slumbers, oh, fairest of maids!" were composed to the tune by a Miss Balfour, but I have never heard the song performed.

PRETTY GIRL MILKING HER COW

An Cailín Deas Cruidhe na mBo

Bunting collection











PRETTY GIRL MILKING HER COW











PRETTY GIRL MILKING HER COW

This tune is one of the better-known items collected by Edward Bunting at the 1792 Belfast harpers' meeting. No composer is mentioned.

The tune appears in various guises in Ireland, Scotland, America, and Wales and according to "Fiddler's Companion" was even used as a retreat call (at the end of the camp working day) by the Union Army during the Civil War.

It exemplifies a genre known as "milkmaid songs," in the course of a discussion of which the following interesting point is made by Chief O'Neill (who grew up on a farm in West Cork and should know whereof he speaks):

"Without assuming that all cattle are influenced by music, we are certain that some are keenly alive to its attractions, and will even follow it, with evident delight, until restrained by the limits of their enclosure."

There are several sets of unexceptional lyrics that have been set to this melody. Thomas Moore used the melody for his song "The Valley Lay Smiling Before Me", but I would venture to say that it is not one of his better-known pieces.

The Irish title for this piece is "Cailín Deas Cruidhe [or "Cruidte"] na mBo" but I have not come across a full set of Irish lyrics for it.





T. O Carolan (1660-1738)











SI BEAG, SI MOR



One of the best-known of O'Carolan's harp pieces. The title means "Little Fairy, Big Fairy" and evidently refers to a pair of hills near the County Leitrim estate of the Bard's good friend and patron George Reynolds. Local folklore tells of a battle between two fairy bands - presumably the Littles and the Bigs - for whom the hills were named. (It should be noted for the sake of accuracy that this is not the only explanation of the title.)

Roughly 350 years after its composition, this pleasant lilting tune remains a staple in the repertoire of today's session musicians and makes a handy waltz when one is required.

SONG of REPENTANCE

(The Repentance of John Hoare)

Seán de Hóra (? - 1780)











SONG of REPENTANCE



Sweet Jesus who art in Heaven apart Soften this heart like a stone And cause from mine eyes contrite tears to arise So the heavenly prize may be won!

This piece is adapted from a song of which the full title in English is "The Repentance of John Hoare" Seán de Hóra [? - 1780] was a native of County Cork who relocated to County Clare to practice his trade as a blacksmith. As the lyrics of this song (in Donal O'Sullivan's translation) clearly indicate, de Hóra was also a poet imbued with a strong religious conviction.

THIS PERVERSE WORLD

An Saol Meallta

Patrick Denn (? 1756 -1828)











THIS PERVERSE WORLD









As sleepless yestreen I lay and pondered On all who from Christ's strait path have wandered Ochone! How grievous my tale!

Pádraig Denn (? 1756 - 1828) was a deeply religious man who combined the occupations of schoolteacher, parish clerk, and poet in his native town of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford. His religious songs achieved great popularity in the Irish-speaking homes of the day, and his collection of hymns called *Pious Miscellany* was reprinted many times.

The TWISTING of the ROPE Casadh an tSugáin

traditional harp tune











TWISTING of the ROPE











TWISTING of the ROPE



"Oh King of Miracles, how did I ever get into this fix?"

The suitor of a beautiful young girl sings these plaintive words as her mother - under the guise of letting him hang around to help make rope - moves him further and further out the door away from his beloved. Definitely not a situation to be envied! (As might be expected, there are many other versions of this story.)

This is one of the "amhráin móra" or "big songs" found in the repertoire of most of today's traditional singers. I have always liked the melody, which even more than in most traditional songs seems ideally suited to the subject matter. It is of the same origin as that of "An Súisín Bán" ("The White Blanket") as noted by Edward Bunting, who collected the tune under that name in 1792 from Mayo harper Rose Mooney. In fact, "Twisting of the Rope" appears in Bunting's *Ancient Irish Music* (1796) in a form not



The WIND THAT SHAKES the BARLEY

traditional harp tune











WIND THAT SHAKES the BARLEY







This arrangement is an adaptation of the song of the same name to which Robert Dwyer Joyce (1830-1883) set his stirring lyrics concerning the 1798 Wexford uprising. It is also known as "I Sat Within the Valley Green", but I am not sure of the source of the melody, and although it may well have originally been a harp tune, I can find no confirmation of this. (To add to the confusion, there is also reel called "Wind That Shakes the Barley" that bears no relationship to the present tune.)



APPENDIX

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MODALITY in IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

For those not acquainted with Irish traditional music, a word or two about its use of "modal" structures might be helpful.

The Irish musical system makes frequent use of two of the so-called "church modes" derived originally from ancient Greece, namely the "mixolydian" mode and the "aeolian" mode.

Mixolydian:

For our purposes here, it should be sufficient to point out that the mixolydian mode is distinguished by a flatted seventh scale degree, hence a C natural instead of C sharp in the key of D, an F natural instead of F sharp in the key of G, and so on. The melodic effects of this alteration are striking and contribute much to the "ancient" sound of much Irish music.

In notating pieces that feature the mixolydian mode, I have followed the practice of using the tonic key signature (e.g. two sharps for the key of D) and adding the natural sign to every C, rather than using a key signature (for the subdominant, in this example G) that omits the C sharp. Irish musicians usually refer to tunes in D tonality with the flatted C as being "D modal" tunes; the use of a key signature that might possibly indicate another tonality never seemed like a good idea to me, although it is obviously defensible from the standpoint of good musical practice.

I should point out here that not all musicians employ the flatted notes, even when performing tunes that are generally agreed to possess them. Much will depend upon the player's particular instrument, e.g. F naturals may be less likely to sound good on an uilleann pipe chanter or a keyless flute and so will be played as F sharps by flutists or pipers (the question of the "sliding F" - which exists somewhere between F natural and F sharp on some instruments - is too long to discuss here).

Aeolian:

The other mode frequently encountered in Irish traditional music is the "aeolian", which in the real world of Irish tunes means simply a minor key in which the sixth scale degree is always sharped, e.g. A minor "aeolian" will always include an F sharp, E minor "aeolian" always has C sharp, and so forth. Again the common practice is to notate such tunes using the tonic key signature and employing accidentals as necessary.



MODALITY in IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Minor key tunes in the traditional repertoire that do not employ the sharped sixth on accented notes are quite rare, and can be considered as most likely deriving from a non-Irish source.

One final aspect of Irish traditional music that might strike a newcomer as unusual is the use of the VII rather than the expected V chord as the cadence chord in a minor key. Many well-known minor-key dance tunes can be accompanied using just the tonic and leading tone chords (fortunately the melodic material is almost always strong enough to prevent this harmonic situation from becoming boring!).

For complete discussions of this occasionally daunting topic, interested parties are invited to consult reference works like the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*.





PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Irish Gaelic, like English, is (alas) not a language that lends itself to the delights of pronouncing the words directly from the spelling (as any parent of a school-age daughter named Siobhán will readily attest).

Following is a guide to pronunciation of phrases, names, and song titles that appear in this book (the accented syllable is underlined). Apologies for any I have omitted.

aisling = \underline{ash} - ling amhráin móra = ow-rawn moo-ra Ar Eirinn Ni Neosfainn Cé hI = er <u>air</u>-in nee <u>nyohs</u>-hing kay hee Binn Lisin Aerach a Bhrogha = bin li-<u>sheen air</u>-ock a <u>vroh</u>-wa Buachaill Caol Dubh = boo-khal kayl doo (kh = aspirated k sound, as in "loch") Caitlín Ní Uallacháin = catch-LEEN nee oo-la-HAWN Casadh an t-Súgáin = kas-san too-gawn Duan Chroí Iosa = doon kree ee-sa Róisín Dubh = <u>roh</u>-sheen doo Ruairi Dall o Cathain = roo-ry dawl o conn Saol Meallta = sail myalta ('myalta' two syllables, not three; "y" as in "you", not "my") Sí Beag, Sí Mór = shee byug, shee moor Súisín Bán = soo-sheen bawn Tabhair Dhom do Lámh = toor dum d' lahy Tadhg Gaedhlach O Suilleabháin = tige (as in "tiger") gay-lakh oh soo-lya-wahn Truagh = troo-ah **Turloch = toor-lock**



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