

The TRADITIONAL MUSICIAN'S SENSITIVITY TEST

(1) You're at a session where some clown previously unknown appears from the bar and announces in no uncertain terms that you all face severe physical harm if you don't play "Who Threw the Overalls in Mrs Murphy's Chowder?" You should:

- (a) drop everything and play it immediately
- (b) point to your least favorite bodhrán player and tell the clown that he/she is the only musician there that knows it
- (c) apologize profusely for your failure to play it, and offer him counseling for the trauma that you may have caused him
- (d) suggest that the clown engage in a biological paradox and continue playing whatever you want

(2) A new player stops by your session some night who is obviously brilliant and who unfortunately plays the same instrument you do. After he/she blazes through three complicated reels in D flat minor, you:

- (a) say to the player "Fantastic - wish I could play like that!!"
- (b) remark to your neighbor "Great stuff but you could never dance to it!"
- (c) shout at the guy furthest away from you at the table "Remember Jimmy used to play those tunes just before his lung collapsed?"
- (d) you apologize profusely for your failure to play the same tunes, and offer to undergo counseling for the trauma that your inadequacies have obviously caused everybody

(3) A great session is in progress when a singer unknown to the group decides to follow the Michael Coleman reel set with a twenty-verse dirge in Manx. Your reaction:

- (a) around verse 5, begin figuring your tax deductions for next year
- (b) around verse 13, begin noticing that your left cheek is twitching uncontrollably and worry about whether you're having a stroke
- (c) around verse 17, begin trying to remember the 'Angelus' in Latin [*this should not be attempted by anyone under the age of 45*]
- (d) around verse 20, begin wondering why anyone of sound mind and steady employment would want to learn a 20-verse song in Manx
- (e) around verse 23, realize with a start that the song was over 3 verses ago

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(4) You and your gang are hacking away at "The Butterfly" one Sunday evening when a set of quintuplets approaches the table, all carrying bodhráns. You should:

- (a) welcome them insincerely but heartily to the session, then disappear to the bar for three hours
- (b) ignore them
- (c) eventually share your deepest musical feelings with them
- (d) tell them you once retrieved Ringo McDonagh's clapper at a concert and hope they're impressed
- (e) sneak around the corner and phone a bomb threat to the pub

(5) After a neat set of jigs, a large sincere person with thick glasses and a "Kiss Me - I'm an Ethnomusicologist" button approaches, takes out a note pad, and asks you for the names of all the tunes you just played. Your reaction:

- (a) you tell her the names
- (b) you tell her that real traditional musicians never know names, and act insulted that she asked you
- (c) you make up silly names and hope someone hears you telling them to her
- (d) you launch into a lecture on the bourgeois uncertainty of names in traditional music and hope she goes to ask someone else
- (e) you apologize profusely for not knowing the names, and offer to undergo counseling etc. etc.

Congratulations - you have reached the end of the test! of course there is no passing or failing - that would be judgemental - but now you know the areas you have to work on. Good luck!

