

MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS, part 1

It's amazing what effects are rendered on the human brain by an open jar of peanut butter and a spoon. Not enough research has been done on this topic, although the Nutrition and Alternative Sexuality Division of the far-famed Zouki Cultural Labs is claiming to be achieving some progress. In the meantime . . .

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[1]

There is not a great deal of truth to the rumor that the Northeastern power outage of October 1966 was a direct result of two Balducci Flashing Astonisher piano accordions being plugged into outlets closer than the 347 mile minimum recommended by the American Society of Electrical Engineers. "The grid did suffer some damage, but we managed to correct it this time," said a utility spokesperson. "But we need these guys to coordinate better."

[2]

Joe Derrane - who lived not 50 miles away from me up the wee boreen, across from the lime-white house where the witch, her talking broom, and her three-legged cat live - was NOT a German dwarf, his real name was NOT Moscovitz, and - amazingly - he really WAS dead for twenty years like we all thought! (*Update: a great guy and one of a kind. RIP.*)

[3]

Re the IRTRAD discussion about the composer of "Durang's Hornpipe", I quote Wikipedia: "During his first season with the [Hallam dance] company, Durang took violin lessons from a musician named Hoffmaster, who composed a tune for him that became known as 'Durang's Hornpipe'. Hoffmaster's given name is absent from records of the time. As he was quite short, under four

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feet tall, he is described as a 'German dwarf.'" Okay, let all of that sink in for a minute. How many Irish musicians who play the tune today realize that it was composed by a semi-anonymous Teutonic dwarf named Hoffmaster? And what do we really know about any of the other tunes we play that have no named composer? There's a tune called "The Sleepy Reel" - is a dwarf involved in that? It's time we found out, I suggest. Living in ignorance is no fun (but of course you don't realize that, since you're . . . uh . . . ignorant . . . okay, let's drop it and move on.)

[4]

Q: what do "The Chicken Reel", "Turkeys in the Straw", "Pigeon on the Gate", "Nell Flaherty's Drake", "The Pretty Blue Seagull", "The Eagle's Whistle", and "Gander at the Pratie Hole" all have in common?

A: They are all in the Avian or Ornithian mode, which ethnomusicologists (and you know who you are!) have traced to the Canary Islands. By the way, all these tunes are played in Boston, where Larry BIRD (a *Celtic* - note!) is still much loved, the theater at Coolidge Corner shows vintage movies starring Walter PIDGEON, and CARDINAL O'Malley always said Mass on St. Patrick's Day. Coincidence . . . ?

[5]

Multiple choice: which of the following is probably NOT an American traditional tune?

- [a] Smack my Yak Breakdown
- [b] The Floppy-Eared Wildebeest
- [c] Slobodan in the Low Ground
- [d] Astrakhan Traveller
- [e] Wallabytown Fling
- [f] Cincinnati Hornpipe

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[6]

When Shel Silverstein - may the Heavens be his bed - went to his reward in 1999 (and all of us jealous non-geniuses secretly rejoiced), the Zouki Cultural Labs Music Creation Unit believed that to have been an opportune time to replace "The Unicorn" with a similar loveable ditty. At their behest (whatever that is), I began working on one - perhaps a few years too late to take advantage of the "Jurassic Park" craze, alas - called "Terry O'Dactyl, the Irish Dinosaur". (I do NOT want flames from paleontologists - if they don't like it, they can write their own goddam song.) I didn't make much progress but maybe someone with more time (and, yes, talent) can do something with it.

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Thanks for your patience and now back to your treasured "Bachelor/Bachelorette" reruns (which you stare at because you "swear you heard" De Danann on the soundtrack somewhere)

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