Music in Ireland

Dorothea E. Hast
Stanley Scott

Instructional Manual

Marie McCarthy
### Suggested Education Level for Instructional Activity

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<tbody>
<tr>
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Chapter 1
Invitation to a Session

Locating Ireland

The authors, Dora Hast and Stan Scott, are traveling in County Clare, in the Republic of Ireland. Ireland is an island and is surrounded to the east and north by St. George’s Channel, the Irish Sea, and the North Channel, to the south by the Celtic Sea, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. There are thirty-two counties in Ireland; twenty-six of them are located in the Republic of Ireland, and six of them are in Northern Ireland and under British rule.

1. On a map of the world, locate Ireland in northwestern Europe. Note that its latitude is approximately 52-57 degrees north of the equator. Find other places on the map that are at the same latitude as Ireland.

2. On a map of Europe, locate Ireland and find County Clare on the western seaboard.

3. Go to p. 40 in your textbook and examine the map of Ireland. The thick black line shows the division between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The bold lines show the dividing lines between the four provinces of Ireland: Ulster (north), Munster (south), Leinster (east), and Connacht (west). The other dividing lines show the counties. Look carefully at the size of the counties in the Republic and decide which of them covers the largest area and the smallest area [Cork and Louth]. Use this map to locate various counties that are referred to throughout the book.

3. Look at the map of Ireland that includes County Clare (Overhead 1.1). Find the following places on the map that you will read about in the book:

   - Ennis: the capital town of County Clare
   - Ennistymon: where the authors spent the weekend enjoying Irish traditional music
   - Coore: where the session was held in Gleeson’s pub
   - Miltown Malbay: the town to which the song, “Farewell to Miltown Malbay” was dedicated. It is also where the Willie Clancy Summer School is held.
   - Tulla: home of Mary MacNamara

The Session in Gleeson’s Pub

The Irish (Gaelic) word for a session is *seisiún*. Colin Hamilton writes that a session is “a loose association of musicians who meet, generally, but not always, in a pub to play an unpredetermined selection, mainly of dance music, but sometimes with solo pieces such as slow airs or songs.” There are usually one or more ‘core’ musicians, and others who...
are less regular. Although a session may appear to be a random event, there are factors that control the proceedings, e.g. ability, reputation, and age of musicians, as well as the instrument they play. Many publicans (those who run a pub) are keen to have their bars known as centers of good traditional music.


Answer the following questions about the session in Gleeson’s pub on that June evening in 1997.

1. Who was the publican and how did he develop his pub as a center of good traditional music?
2. Who were the core musicians at the session? Were there other musicians present who attended less regularly?
3. Who was the audience for this music?
4. Name all the musical instruments that the authors saw or heard at the session?
5. The authors say that a session brings together all the strands of Irish traditional culture (p. 15). Show how this is true for the session in Gleeson’s pub.
6. The authors paint vivid word pictures of Gleeson’s pub and the music session that goes on inside the pub that evening. Using your choice of visual medium, draw a picture showing either: a. the pub and the surrounding countryside, or b. life inside the pub as the session is going on.

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The Story of Junior Crehan (1908-1998)

Imagine that you are Junior Crehan telling the story of your life as a musician in west Clare. Using the text, create that story beginning with, “I was born near Coore in west Clare, Ireland, in 1908.” Include reference to family, music teachers, how he learned music, where he performed, and the community in which he grew up as a musician.

Fairies and Fairy Tales

Junior Crehan attributed the persuasive charm of his music to a gift from the fairies (p. 12). This is not unusual, given the prominence of music in Irish myths, legends and fairy tales. Music was perceived as a medium that had inherent powers to affect change and to bestow gifts or curses on people.

Read or listen to an Irish fairy tale and have students discuss any references to music in it. See collections such as:
Niamh Sharkey, *Tales from Old Ireland* (Dublin: Barefoot Press).

(5) C/U
Fairies and Fairy Tales

Junior Crehan attributed the persuasive charm of his music to a gift from the fairies (p. 12). This is not unusual, given the prominence of music in Irish myths, legends and fairy tales. Music was perceived as a medium that had inherent powers to affect change and to bestow gifts or curses on people.

Listen to or read the following poem by Seamus Heaney. The poet is referring to the Blasket Island which is located off the west coast of Ireland in County Kerry. Write an interpretation of the poem that centers on the relationship among music, magic and place. Connect your interpretation with the story shared by Junior Crehan on pp. 12-13.

“The Given Note”


Seamus Heaney

On the most westerly Blasket
In a dry-stone hut
He got this air out of the night.

Strange noises were heard
By others who followed, bits of a tune
Coming in on loud weather

Though nothing like melody.
He blamed their fingers and ear
As unpractised, their fiddling easy

For he had gone alone into the island
And brought back the whole thing,
The house throbbed like his full violin.
So whether he calls it spirit music
Or not, I don’t care. He took it
Out of wind off mid-Atlantic.

Still he maintains, from nowhere,
It comes off the bow gravely,
Rephrases itself into the air.

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(6) S, C/U
Page 5
CD Track 1
Two Reels by Junior Crehan: “The Maid Behind the Bar” and “Gregg’s Pipes”

1. Listen and identify what instruments you hear playing these reels? (fiddle, flute, concertina)

2. Listen again, and follow the chart that outlines the form (Overhead 1.2). The 8-bar tune (A) is played and repeated. The turn or B section is played and repeated. Together this is called one round of the piece (AABB).

Tune (A)

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Turn (B)

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3. As you listen again to the two jigs, tap the strong beat and count as follows: count the measure on the strong beat [1, 2, 3, etc.,] and say 2 on the weak beat of the measure:

   1-2, 2-2, 3-2, 4-2, 5-2, 6-2, 7-2, 8-2

4. As you listen again, focus on the melody and note differences between the A and the B sections of the reels. Now follow a version of “The Maid Behind the Bar” on Overhead 1.3.

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(7) C/U
Page 5
CD Track 1
Transcribing Tunes
Irish traditional music is an orally transmitted music. Over the years the tunes have been notated, sometimes to preserve them for future generations, other times simply as a learning device. While western notation is the most familiar system used to notate the tunes, alternative systems have been used also. The ABC format transcribes the tunes using the letter names and has been a popular way to pass on the tunes. Here you see an example of a version of “The Maid Behind the Bar” transcribed in the ABC format. This is the system used by Swedish musician Henrik Norbeck who has compiled and indexed over 1000 tunes, and they are available at [www.norbeck.nu/abc](http://www.norbeck.nu/abc).

1. Go to Overhead 1.4. Compare the ABC format to the version of “The Maid Behind the Bar” that is transcribed in western notation. Discuss the advantages and limitations of both systems for transcribing Irish traditional music dance tunes.
2. Go to Henrik Norbeck’s website and read about the indexing system he uses to present the tunes. Look at some other tunes in his collection. What information does he supply at the introduction to each tune?
3. Compare the versions of the tune on Overhead 1.4 with the version on the recording.

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**CD Track 3**

**Two Jigs played by Kitty Hayes: “The Mist Covered Mountain” and “Tommy Whelan’s Jig”**

1. Kitty Hayes plays the concertina. See photograph of instrument on p. 17, and for a description of the concertina go to pp. 77-79.

2. There are two jigs in this set. Listen and see if you can hear Kitty Hayes move from one jig into the next. Raise your hand when you hear that change.

3. As you listen again to the two jigs, do the same activity as you did for the reels on CD track 1. Tap the strong beat and count as follows (count the measure on the strong beat [1, 2, 3, etc.], and 2 on the weak beat of the measure):

   1-2, 2-2, 3-2, 4-2, 5-2, 6-2, 7-2, 8-2

4. Look at Overhead 1.2 and as you listen to these jigs, and decide if the form is the same as the reels on the overhead (AABB).

5. Go to p. 44 and read about another concertina player from County Clare, Mary MacNamara, and listen to her play two reels on CD Track 10. Identify differences between the style of the two concertina players.

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**CD Track 4**
Three hornpipes played by the Dublin Metropolitan Garda Céilí Band: “The Sunshine,” “Humors of Castle Bernard,” and “Dick Sands”

Céilí Band: This is a band of musicians that provides music for céilí social dancing, and for set dancing. The band first became popular in the early twentieth century. By the mid century, hundreds of céilí bands were in existence in Ireland and abroad. Instruments used were typically fiddle, flute, button accordion, piano, bass and snare drum with woodblock, banjo and sometimes double bass.


Dublin Metropolitan Garda Céilí Band: This band was an ensemble of serving policemen who were based in Dublin. The Garda Síochána (the civic guards or police) was established in the Irish Free State and took over from the Royal Irish Constabulary after the British withdrew in 1922. The Garda band was a military style band, formed to provide music at formal occasions, to broadcast on Irish Radio and to made recordings. The present recording was originally issued in 1937.


1. For a description of the hornpipe, see p. 68.
2. Apply your knowledge of the form of jigs and reels (AABB) as you listen to the hornpipes and follow the listening chart on Overhead 1.5.
3. List all the instruments that you hear in the céilí band.
4. What effect does the bass accompaniment have on the overall impact of the performance?

Dance “Caledonian Set”

Set dancing: Set dances are social dances in square formation for four couples that were originally brought to Ireland by dancing masters from France in the early nineteenth century. Historically the dances were frowned upon by religious leaders and labeled "foreign" by Irish nationalists, but they were still danced in some rural areas of Ireland through the 1960s. Each locality had its own distinctive set; some of these sets were actively danced, while others only lived in the memories of old people who used to dance them at house parties and outdoor crossroads gatherings.

By the 1970s, the genre began its transference from a rural form of entertainment to an urban one by the introduction of set dance competitions organized by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Gaelic Athletic Association. At the same time, a few inspired teachers, including Connie Ryan of Tipperary and Joe and Siobhán O’Donovan of Cork, began to teach in various locations around the country. But the initiation of classes in set
dancing at the 1982 Willie Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay, County Clare, more than anything else, sparked the revival. Within months, classes were being held all over the country in cities, towns, and villages. In Dublin, in the headquarters of Na Píobairí Uilleann, a group calling itself Brook's Academy, began to invite dancers from around the country to teach their local sets, whether revived from memory or still currently danced socially. Manuals of set dances were produced and trips were organized to talk to older dancers and piece together sets which had fallen into disuse. New dances were also created, such as the Piper's Set, composed by Terry Moylan of Dublin. Set-dancing workshops became a feature of the dancing scene nationwide, and the pressure was on to provide ever more and more obscure and "recently discovered" sets in order to satisfy the demands of the throngs of dancers who flocked into the classes. Set dancing today has become a major part of many week long summer schools and Irish music festivals, as well as a regular social activity for enthusiasts at pubs, halls, community centers, and clubs.


**Caledonian Set:**

**Figure 1 – Reel (128 bars)**

**FORMATION**

Square Set of four couples, gents on the left of their partners. First Top Couple have their backs to the band, with Second Top Couple opposite them. First Side Couple are on the left of First Top Couple (when facing into the set) and Second Side Couple are opposite them (to the right of First Top Couple). Traditionally the reel figure is danced with smooth flowing steps pushing flat along the floor.

**Basic Steps**

Viewing a videotape of set dancers is the best way of immersing oneself in the dance style and seeing the basic steps. The basic footwork can be described as a low, ‘sliding’ movement. There are many different regional styles. The polka, jig, and slide are danced on the ball of the foot (flatter for polkas) and the bodyweight drops onto the front foot on count 1 but weight change on counts 2 and 3 are less pronounced. (e.g. drop 2 3 and drop 2 3). The basic reel and hornpipe step uses the same shift of bodyweight as does a walking step. The weight stays on the back foot and the step can be counted as heel 1 2 3, heel 2 2 3 and so on. The leg bends slightly at the knee throughout the step.

**STEPS**

**A Beginning** (16)

1. All join hands in circle.
2. Advance and retire twice (8 bars)
3. All four couples dance round at home in waltz hold, turning twice (8 bars)

B Figure (40)
4. SLIDE AND CHANGE Top couples advance and retire and dance half way round the house to opposite position, turning clockwise twice while changing places (8 bars)

5. Top couples do the same as #4, returning to their home place (8 bars)
6. HOME Each couple dances round at home (8 bars)
7. SLIDE AND CHANGE Top couples repeat #4 and #5 (16 bars)

C. Middle (8)
8. SLIDE All four couples advance and retire once (4 bars)
9. HOME couples dance at home turning once (4 bars)

D. Figure (40)
10. SIDE COUPLES repeat B. (40 bars)

E. Finish (24)
11. SLIDE: All couples advance to centre and retire once (4 bars).
12. HOME: All couples dance round at home turning once (4 bars).
13. HOUSE: All couples dance round the house (16 bars)

(11) S, C/U
CD Track 2: “Farewell to Miltown Malbay” sung by Tim Dennehy

Irish song, in both the Irish and English language, frequently includes references to particular places and people. In fact, place is very important to Irish people as a mark of their identity. There is an entire body of literature called *dinnseanchas* which describes place names and their history and associations.

In this song the well-known, Irish poet Tomás Ó hAodha (1866-1935) “praises the beauty of the West Clare landscape, the kind hearts of the people who live there, and local cultural traditions.” (Hast & Scott, *Music in Ireland*, p.9)

As you listen to the song and follow the lyrics on Overhead 1.6,

1. Identify three place names that the poet used in the song.
2. Find two examples of the poet praising the beauty of the countryside and/or its people.
3. Use the questions on Worksheet 1.2 as points of discussion or as a written assignment

(12) 7-12, C/U
Pages 15-17
Terms used to describe and classify Irish traditional music
Fieldwork Class Project:

1. Go to a record store. Identify the categories in which the CDs of the following Irish artists and Irish groups are to be found:

   Artists: Martin Hayes, Sharon Shannon
   Groups: The Chieftains, Altan, Bothy Band, Lúnasa

Write down the names of 2 other Irish traditional music artists and 2 other groups that appear in the same location.

2. Go to the following websites that distribute and sell recordings of Irish traditional music. Examine the way in which Irish traditional music is classified. Evaluate your findings and write up the results:

   Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
   Gael-Linn Records
   Sceilig Records
   Tara Music
   Claddagh Records
   Green Linnett
   Shanachie Records

Irish Music in America

Due to the long history of emigration from Ireland, traditional music was brought to several countries. Since many emigrants went to the United States during the last four centuries, Irish music took root there and influenced American musical traditions. For example, the authors state that it influenced American popular music, beginning with minstrel shows and vaudeville.

Find a song from these traditions that shows influence from Irish traditional music. Listen to the piece or/and examine the notation. Identify the aspects of the music that show Irish influence, and describe how they were integrated into a new tradition. Use the following source to assist you in completing this task: *Far from the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-American Immigration through Song*, by Mick Maloney (Cork: the Collins Press, 2002; Bellevue, WA: Becker & Mayer).

Themes in Irish Traditional Music

The authors identify three themes that underlie Irish traditional music:

- the importance of people and place as embodied in performance style and context
- the flexibility of the tradition
the relationship between the contemporary performance of the traditional arts and Irish history (colonialism, emigration, nationalism)

In Chapter 1, the first theme was especially evident in the repertoire and cultural practices of Irish traditional music. Drawing on your own experience of music (e.g. at home, in church, in school, in the community and youth clubs), write an essay that describes either (a) a music performance in which the uniqueness of individual musicians and the performance venue played an important role in the performance style and context, or (b) a song in which people and place influence the song stylistically and lyrically.
Overhead 1.1
Overhead 1.2

Two Reels

“The Maid Behind the Bar”

“Gregg’s Pipes”

Tune (A)

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Turn (B)

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Overhead 1.3

The Maid Behind the Bar

See www.ceolas.org © Ceili House Band, 1996-2000
Overhead 1.4

Transcribing Tunes

X:96
T:Maid behind the Bar, The
T:Barmaid, The
T:Green Mountain, The
T:Little Judy
R:reel
D:Stockton's Wing.
Z:id:hn-reel-96
M:C|
K:D

FAAB AFED|FAAB ABde|fBBA Bcde|f2af edBA|
FAAB AFED|FAAB ABde|fBBA BcdB|1 AFEF D2DE;|2 AFEF D3e||
|:faag fede|fdad fd~d2|efga beef|gebe gfeg|
faaf bfaf|defd e2de|fBBA BcdB|1 AFEF D3e:|2 AFEF D2DE||
"Variations:"
~A3B AFED|FAAF ABde|fdBA Bcde|f2df efdB|
~A3B AFED|FAAF ABde|fdBA BcdB|1 AFEF D2DE:|2 AFEF D3e||
|:~a3g fdde|f2af fedf|~e3f ggef|gbeg bgeg|
fa~a2 b2af|defd e2de|fdBA BcdB|1 AFEF D3e:|2 AFEF D2DE||
Overhead 1.4 (continued)

Transcribing Tunes

The Maid Behind the Bar

Transcribed by John Walsh

Source:

Virtual Tunebook - http://celticmusic.com/cgi-bin/~celticmusic/tunes.pl
Designed & Programmed by Dan Beimborn
## Overhead 1.5

### Three Hornpipes

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<td>Round 1</td>
<td>AABB</td>
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<td>Round 2</td>
<td>AAB</td>
<td>piano plays melody; bass accompaniment serves as counterpoint</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Humors of Castle Bernard</strong></td>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>AABB</td>
<td>full ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dick Sands</strong></td>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>AA</td>
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Farewell to Miltown Malbay

Farewell to Miltown Malbay, a long and sad farewell,  
The sorrow in my heart today no words of mine can tell.  
I’m parting from my dear old friends, the scenes I fondly love,  
May happiness attend them all, and blessings from above.

A bright and pleasant youth was mine among the good folks there,  
No kinder hearts can e’er be found than those that throb in Clare,  
And oh, how crushed and sad I feel, my tears fall down like rain,  
As I look my last upon the place I’ll never see again.

From Barr a’Bhaile to the Square I often took a stroll  
And rambled out the Ennis Road, where Roberts’ was my goal  
To play a game of Oughts and Combs and pass the time away,  
While listening to traditions old and legends of Mal Bay.

And often too I sought Pat Burke’s where we had many a spree,  
Where Garrett Barry with his pipes filled our young hearts with glee,  
And put young and old up dancing sets upon the kitchen floor,  
The joy and fun that I had there I never will have more.

The sea is gemmed with twinkling stars, the sun shines bright today,  
The rocky shore is fringed with foam from Spanish Point to Freagh.  
The verdant fields go rolling down from Ballard to the sea,  
Oh, what a soul-entrancing sight is spread out there for me!

The Angelus it’s Merrily a-ringing in the air,  
Men bare their heads and silently to Mary breathe a prayer.  
If e’er I find this act devout beyond the ocean foam  
‘Twill bring to memory my last day I spent in my old home.

Farewell to Miltown Malbay, farewell to one and all,  
The sights I’ve seen, the joys I’ve had, I often will recall.  
For with my heart I love the spot where I was born and nursed  
And where, upon those sun-kissed flags, I crawled about at first.
Worksheet 1.1

Session at Gleeson’s Pub

Answer the following questions about the session in Gleeson’s pub on that June evening in 1997.

1. Who was the publican and how did he develop his pub as a center of good traditional music?

2. Who were the core musicians at the session? Were there other musicians present who attended less regularly?

3. Who was the audience for this music?

4. Name all the musical instruments that the authors saw or heard at the session?

5. The authors say that a session brings together all the strands of Irish traditional culture (p. 15). Show how this is true for the session in Gleeson’s pub.

6. The authors paint vivid word pictures of Gleeson’s pub and the music session that goes on inside the pub that evening. Using your choice of visual medium, draw a picture showing either: a. the pub and the surrounding countryside, or b. life inside the pub as the session is going on.
Worksheet 1.2

Farewell to Miltown Malbay

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is the poet leaving his native land?

2. How does the inclusion of place names and people’s names add to the song?

3. How did the poet take part in the musical life of his community when he was growing up?

4. a. If you are an immigrant in the country you now live in, what memories would you include in a song about your childhood? What kind of melody would you use in a song about immigration? You may use these pairs and expressive words to help you: fast/slow; higher/lower; large range of pitches/small range of pitches; major key/minor key; long note values/short note values; happy/fun/longing/sad/nostalgic.

   b. If you did not immigrate to the country you now live in, imagine that you are saying farewell to your home country and going to live in another country. What memories would you include in a song about your country, and what kind of melody would you use?