

MELODIC VARIATION IN THE INSTRUMENTAL
DANCE MUSIC TRADITION OF IRELAND

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Melodic Variation in the Instrumental Dance Music Tradition of Ireland

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This dissertation contextualizes melodic variation within a cultural, historical, and cognitive framework. This work discusses how traditional musicians learn how to vary melodies by observing norms of social and musical behavior exhibited by senior musicians.

The core of this dissertation is the transcription and analysis of fifty source recordings of fifty different Irish musicians playing one tune each dating from between 1904 and 2007. Though the transcriptions of the recordings exhibited a high instance of melodic variation (48.2% of the measures), only a small percentage of variation fell on set accented tones (an average of 7.3%). The considerable invariance of set accented tones suggests that part of what constitutes the concept of a tune in an Irish musician's mind relates to the pitch of these key tones.

I introduce the term *aesthetic conservatism* to designate a philosophical approach to performance practice that seeks to maintain both the dance genre and tune identity. I argue that aesthetic conservatism may be a by-product of archetypes and exemplars created through transcriptions and recording technology. This conservatism may also be a function of famine-induced fear of cultural dissolution or inferiority with respect to more

prominent music-making supercultures. I call on the philosophy of aesthetic conservatism to explain why few set accented tones are varied. Of the measures that were varied, 74% of those variations involved the addition, subtraction, or redistribution of ornamentation.

To catalogue the variety of variations within this sample, I propose a taxonomy that is designed to account for the number of notes in a measure and to assess intervallic differences over successive repetitions of a tune.

Finally, I propose a theory to explain the cognitive processes that allow a musician to vary a melody. I suggest that in the mind of a traditional musician there is both a tune schema and a variation schema. These are flexible models that are distinct and separate but that interact within a short span of time because of the exceptionally efficient anatomy of a musician's brain.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. AN INVESTIGATION OF MELODIC VARIATION IN THE INSTRUMENTAL DANCE MUSIC TRADITION OF IRELAND.....	1
1.1. Introduction and Statement of Purpose.....	1
1.2. Justification of the Study	2
1.3. Methods and Procedures	6
1.4. Definitions, Assumptions, Biases, and Limitations.....	8
1.4.1. Definitions.....	8
1.4.2. Assumptions.....	11
1.4.3. Biases	14
1.4.4. Limitations	15
1.5. Review of the Literature	15
II. LEARNING PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AND SOCIAL NORMS THROUGH CHILDHOOD ENCULTURATION.....	23
2.1. Introduction.....	23
2.2. Childhood Enculturation: Research and Observations	27
2.3. Subculture, Superculture, and Interculture: An Interpretive Framework	32
2.4. Learning Behaviors and Performance Practice in an Irish Music Community	39
2.4.1. Learning Formally and Informally.....	41
2.4.2. Community Music and Opportunity for Variation: The Session.....	44
2.4.3. Tempo and Performance Practice	48

Chapter	Page
2.4.4. Comportment and Attitude	50
2.5. Introducing Innovation in an Irish Music Community	52
2.6. Authority and Seniority in an Irish Music Community	58
2.7. Conclusion	62
III. AESTHETIC CONSERVATISM IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND THE LIMITATIONS OF MELODIC VARIATION	65
3.1. Introduction.....	65
3.2. The Importance of Humility	76
3.3. English Colonization and the Irish Cultural Inferiority Complex	78
3.3.1. Henry VIII’s Ascent to Power and the Colonization of Ireland	80
3.3.2. The Tudor Queens and the Plantation of Ireland.....	84
3.3.3. The Degradation of Irish Culture and Character.....	85
3.3.4. The Cromwellian Gauntlet and the Suppression of Indigenous Music.....	88
3.3.5. The Defeat of the House of Stuart and the Introduction of the Penal Laws	89
3.3.6. Comparative Remarks and the Cultural Inferiority Complex.....	91
3.4. Antiquarianism, Famine Survivalism, and Cultural Preservation	94
3.4.1. Collectors’ Philosophies of Tune Collecting, Transcription, and Publication.....	99
3.4.2. Preserving Cultural Essence: Collecting and the Potato Famine.....	109
3.5. Conserving Memory, Community Cohesion, and Remembering Love Ones	119

Chapter	Page
3.6. The Imaginary Museum, Recording Technology, and Reification.....	124
3.7. Innovation, Commercialism, and Compromising the Essence of Tradition...	131
3.8. Conclusion	141
IV. EXCLUSIVE CRITERIA: RECORDING SELECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION METHODOLOGY	144
4.1. Introduction.....	144
4.2. The Relevance of Transcriber Enculturation	147
4.3. The Fallibility of the Human Ear	149
4.4. Recording Selection Rationale: Exclusive and Inclusive Criteria	154
4.5. Available Technology, Source Recordings, and “Representative” Samples	161
4.6. Transcription Philosophy and the Limitations of a Score.....	168
4.7. Approach to Transcription	172
4.7.1. Rhythm.....	172
4.7.2. Articulation	173
4.7.3. Tuning and Microtones	173
4.7.4. Ornamentation.....	175
4.7.5. Regulators	175
4.7.6. Double-stops and Droning	176
4.7.7. Universals of Instrument Morphology	177
4.7.8. Chordal Accompaniment from Other Instruments	178
4.7.9. Acoustics and Reverberation	178

Chapter	Page
4.7.10. Organization of Successive Repetitions.....	178
4.7.11. Other Aspects of the Transcription Score.....	179
4.8. Conclusion	181
V. A METHOD FOR THE SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF MELODIC VARIATION IN THE INSTRUMENTAL DANCE MUSIC TRADITION OF IRELAND.....	183
5.1. Introduction.....	183
5.2. Limits to Melodic Variation: Dance Genres and their Rhythmic Attributes..	186
5.3. Successive Melodic Variations	192
5.4. The Source Recordings: Statistics, Inferences, and Correlations	199
5.5. Taxonomy of Melodic Variation Types Exhibited in Performance Practice	209
5.6. Ornamentation.....	211
5.7. Triadic Exchange	219
5.7.1. Harmonic Compression	228
5.7.2. Harmonic Extension.....	229
5.8. Modal Inflection.....	230
5.9. Harmonic Substitution	235
5.10. Passing Tones.....	242
5.11. Phrase Exchange	244
5.12. Putting It All Together: One Musician’s Thinking about Melodic Variation.....	245
5.13. Conclusion	251

Chapter	Page
VI. GRAY MATTER AND MUSICAL MATTERS: COGNITIVE PROCESSES THAT FACILITATE MELODIC VARIATION	254
6.1. Introduction.....	254
6.2. Defining Sameness: Criteria for Establishing Tune Identity	257
6.3. Caveats and Contingencies: Applying Cognitive Research to Irish Musicians.....	262
6.4. Neural Plasticity and Anatomical Nuances in Musicians	265
6.5. An Overview of Aural Memory: The Workings of Nuanced Equipment	271
6.6. Implicit Memory: Long-term Memory	279
6.7. Chunking: The Conceptual Building Blocks of Tunes	282
6.8. Categorization	284
6.9. Primitive Groupings and the Immediate Organization of Sound.....	286
6.10. Premeditated and “Spontaneous” Variations: Cuing	289
6.11. Mirror Neurons: The Importance of Listening	295
6.12. Set Accented Tones: Distinguishing Between Tunes	300
6.13. Great Expectations: Points of Reference	303
6.14. Episodic Memory: Hearing Variations of a Known Tune	317
6.15. Repetition, Codification, Hierarchy, and Recording Technology	318
6.16. Schema: Abstracting Variation Procedure.....	320
6.17. Tune Title: Cultural and Cognitive Significance	326
6.18. Conclusion	331

Chapter	Page
VII. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER APPLICATION	333
7.1. A Brief Summary	333
7.2. Immediate Application.....	338
7.3. The Cognitive Study of Complex Motor Tasks.....	338
7.4. New Insights into Historical Performance Practice.....	340
7.5. New Approaches to Music Theory and Ear Training Pedagogy	343
7.6. Conclusion	346
APPENDICES	347
A. INDEX OF PERFORMERS AND REPERTOIRE BY MELODIC INSTRUMENT	347
B. INDEX OF TRANSCRIBED REPERTOIRE BY GENRE	350
C. 50 TRANSCRIPTIONS OF IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC RECORDED C. 1904-2007	353
D. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF 50 TRANSCRIPTIONS OF IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC RECORDED C. 1904-2007.....	483
REFERENCES CITED.....	495

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.3: Diagram of the Relationship Among Superculture, Subculture, and Interculture	33
4.7.11: Context of Source Recordings in Appendix C.....	179
5.2a: General Structure of an Irish Dance Tune	187
5.2b: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Reel or Hornpipe.....	190
5.2c: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Jig.....	190
5.2d: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Slip Jig.....	191
5.2e: Hierarchy of Rhythmic Positions in an Entire Reel or Hornpipe	191
5.2f: Hierarchy of Rhythmic Positions in an Entire Jig.....	192
5.2g: Hierarchy of Rhythmic Positions in an Entire Slip Jig.....	192
5.3a: Graphic Representation of the Conceptual Independence and Application of a Variation Type to a Tune	196
5.3b: Graphic Depiction of Variance over Three Successive Repetitions of a Tune	198
5.5: Taxonomy of Melodic Variation Types in the Instrumental Dance Music Tradition of Ireland.....	211
5.6a: Examples of Ornamentation.....	212
5.6b: Eight Basic Rhythmic Positions in One Measure of a Reel	212
5.6c: Four grace notes add four auxiliary rhythmic positions to the eight basic rhythmic positions in one measure of a reel	212
5.6d: Rhythmic Positions Subsumed into One Note Shape in One Measure of a Reel.....	213

Figure	Page
5.7a: Two Primary Beats in One Measure of a Jig	220
5.7b: Two Primary Beats in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe	221
5.7c: Three Primary Beats in One Measure of a Slip Jig.....	221
6.7: Written out roll compared to a visually simplified representation	284
6.13: David Rubin’s Graphic Model for Chain and Net Learning	312
6.16: Graphic Depiction of Variation Schemas Applied to a Tune Schema.....	324

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
5.4a: Instrumentation of Melody-Playing Instruments of Source Recordings Sample	200
5.4b: Gender Distribution of Melodists on Source Recordings	201
5.4c: Percentage of Commercial Source Recordings and Non-Commercial Source Recordings	202
5.4d: Average Percentage of Measures Varied in Commercial Source Recordings and Non-Commercial Source Recordings	202
5.4e: Percentage of Musicians Who Adhere to or Deviate from Dance Genre Requirements	204
5.4f: Average Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance and Invariance	206
5.4g: Average Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Variance in which Set Accented Tones were Altered and Unaltered	207
5.4h: Percentage of Recordings with One Melodist, One Melodist Playing with a Harmonic Accompanist, and One Melodist Playing with a Percussion Accompanist	207
5.4i: Average Percentage of Measures Varied on Source Recordings with One Melodist, One Melodist with a Chordal Accompanist, and One Melodist with a Percussion Accompanist.....	208
5.4j: Average Percentage of Measures Varied by Instrumentation	208
B.1: Chronological Table Exhibiting Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician.....	482
B.2: Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Variance vs. Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Invariance per Musician	484
B.3: Percentage of Set Accented Tones Varied vs. Percentage of Set Accented Tones Unvaried per Musician within Measures Varied	485
B.4: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Solo Musician	487

Table	Page
B.5: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Harmonically Accompanied Melodist.....	487
B.6: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician per Commercial Recording.....	488
B.7: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician per Non-Commercial Recording.....	489
B.8: Percentage of Varied Measures Exhibiting Ornamentation as Variation per Musician	489
B.9: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Fiddle Recordings.....	491
B.10: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Flute Recordings.....	491
B.11: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Accordion Recordings	492
B.12: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Uilleann Pipes Recordings.....	492

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Musical Example	Page
2.5: Transcription of the reel “The Grey Fox”	56
4.3a: Unornamented transcribed excerpt of Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie”	150
4.3b: Transcribed excerpt from Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie” with ornamentation that I thought I heard Hannan play	151
4.3c: Transcribed excerpt from Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie” with the ornamentation that Hannan actually played.....	151
4.7.11a: Measures 1-4 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll’s 2000 recording of the hornpipe “The Drunken Sailor” with timings and part markers.....	179
4.7.11b: Measures 18-19 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll’s 2000 recording of the hornpipe “The Drunken Sailor”	180
4.7.11c: Measure 32 of the B part of fiddler Paddy Canny’s 1959 recording of the jig “Rogha Ghearóid De Barra”	181
5.3a: Measure 7 of the A part from fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy” in which Coleman varies this part of the tune over successive repetitions	199
5.3b: Measure 21 of the B part from fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy” in which Coleman does not vary this part of the tune over successive repetitions	199
5.4: B-themed material of fiddler Tommy Potts’s 1971 recording of the reel “My Love is in America”	205
5.6a: Measure 2-4 of the A part of uilleann piper Richard O’Mealy’s 1943 recording of the slip jig “Drops of Brandy”.....	214
5.6b: Measure 11 of the B part of flute player Matt Molloy’s 1984 recording of the reel “Patsy Touhey’s”	216

Musical Example	Page
5.6c: Measure 27 of the D part of fiddler Seán Keane’s 1975 recording of the slip jig “Gusty’s Frolics”	217
5.6d: Measures 6-8 of the A part of uilleann piper Patsy Touhey’s c. 1904 recording of the jig “The Connachtman’s Rambles”	218
5.7a: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance in One Measure of a Jig.....	222
5.7b: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance Concurring in One Measure of a Jig.....	222
5.7c: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance Concurring in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe	224
5.7d: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe.....	224
5.7e: Measure 24 of the B part of uilleann piper Willie Clancy’s 1958 recording of the jig “Down the Back Lane”	225
5.7f: Measures 1-6 of the A part (first and second times) of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill’s 1999 performance of the jig “The Lark in the Morning”	225
5.7g: Measures 1-6 of the A part (first and third times) of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill’s 1999 performance of the jig “The Lark in the Morning”	226
5.7h: Measures 5-6 of the A part of uilleann piper Kieran O’Hare’s 2001 recording of the jig “Páidín O’Rafertaigh”	227
5.7i: Measures 10-12 of the A part of fiddler Josephine Keegan’s 1980 recording of the reel “Music in the Glen”	228
5.7.1: Measure 5 of the A part of uilleann piper Tom Ennis’s 1920 recording of the reel “The Swallow’s Tail”	229
5.7.2: Measure 4 of the A part of uilleann piper Tom Ennis’s 1920 recording of the reel “The Swallow’s Tail”	229
5.8a: Measure 11 of the B part of fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy”	232
5.8b: Measure 31 of the B part of uilleann piper Paddy Keenan’s 1983 recording of the reel “The Maid Behind the Bar”	233

Musical Example	Page
5.8c: Measure 23 of the B part of uilleann piper Willie Clancy's 1958 recording of the jig "Down the Back Lane"	234
5.8d: Measure 3 of the A part of accordion player Billy McComiskey's 1981 recording of the reel "Dinny Delaney"	234
5.9a: Measures 43-44 of the C part of uilleann piper Robbie Hannan's 1998 performance of the jig "The Rambles of Kitty"	236
5.9b: Measure 13 of the B part of fiddler James Kelly's 1989 recording of the reel "Sporting Paddy"	237
5.9c: Measure 6 of the A part of flute player Kevin Crawford's 1995 recording of the reel "Sporting Paddy"	238
5.9d: Measures 4-5 of the A part of uilleann piper Mick O'Brien's 1996 recording of the hornpipe "Higgins's"	239
5.9e: Measures 9-10 of the A part of accordion player Joe Derrane's 1996 recording of the reel "The Humours of Lissadell"	240
5.9f: Measures 38-41 of the B part of fiddler player Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor"	241
5.10a: Measure 11 of the A part of banjo player Seamus Egan's 1990 recording of the reel "Bobby Casey's"	242
5.10b: Measures 9-10 of the A part of banjo player Seamus Egan's 1990 recording of the reel "Bobby Casey's"	243
5.10c: Measure 4 of the A part of flute player Niall Keegan's 1999 recording of the reel "The Dunmore Lasses"	243
5.10d: Measures 11-13 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor"	244
5.11a: Exchanged Phrase (1) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"	245
5.11b: Exchanged Phrase (2) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"	245

Musical Example	Page
5.11c: Exchanged Phrase (3) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"	245
5.12a: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (1)	248
5.12b: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (2)	248
5.12c: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (3)	248
5.12d: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (4)	248
5.12e: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (5)	249
5.12f: Measure 1 from uilleann piper Eliot Grasso's 2007 recording of the jig "The Butcher's March"	250
5.12g: Measures 25-26 from uilleann piper Eliot Grasso's 2007 recording of the jig "The Butcher's March"	251
6.9: Measures 49-53 of the D part of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill's 1999 performance of the jig "The Lark in the Morning"	289
6.10: Variation in the reel "Mother and Child" played by uilleann piper Eliot Grasso in a recording session for RTÉ on October 3, 2006	293
6.13: Comparison of Robbie Hannan's 1990 Claddagh Records studio recording and Hannan's 1999 performance of measures 7-8 of the A part of the reel "Miss Monaghan" that I heard him play live on Achill Island, County Mayo, Ireland	315
6.17a: "The Collier's Reel" with downbeat pitches circled	329
6.17b: "The Collier's Jig" with downbeat pitches circled	329

CHAPTER I

AN INVESTIGATION OF MELODIC VARIATION IN THE INSTRUMENTAL DANCE MUSIC TRADITION OF IRELAND

1.1. Introduction and Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I examine melodic variation as an aspect of performance practice in the instrumental dance music tradition of Ireland. I am interested in this topic because I have been playing Irish traditional music since childhood and have witnessed many musical performances that have profoundly affected me. I am studying melodic variation in particular because I am trying to understand what it is about the practice of melodic variation that contributes to the artistry of a performance in this music tradition.

What intrigues me about melodic variation is that this performance practice appears to have normative limitations. From many hours of listening to master musicians play this music, it has become clear to me that there are certain types of variations that seem to occur frequently, types that occur infrequently, and certain ways in which a melody is never varied. While each musician exhibits a unique approach to rhythm and articulation, musicians tend to use the same kinds of approaches when varying a melody despite the idiosyncrasies of personal style.

In order to formulate a coherent approach that categorizes, explains, and perhaps even predicts variation, I have approached the topic of melodic variation with the following questions in mind:

1. How do Irish traditional musicians learn to vary melody; how is this performance practice transmitted from one player to another?
2. What socio-historical and psychological factors might contribute to the regulation and limitations of melodic variation?

3. How much do Irish traditional musicians vary a tune over successive repetitions?
4. What is the nature of melodic variance over successive repetitions of a single tune and what stylistic systems might be extrapolated through listening, transcription, and intervallic analysis?
5. What cognitive processes enable an Irish musician to vary a melody?

In pursuing answers to these questions, I have compiled a body of research that 1) offers a socio-historical explanation for the parameters for melodic variation; 2) demonstrates empirically the nature and limitations of melodic variance and invariance in a given sample; 3) suggests a method for categorizing melodic variation using a repeatable experiment; 4) substantiates that melodic variation in Irish traditional music works on universal principles within the idiom; 5) links the behavior of music-making in a specific idiom to human physiology; 6) presents an anthology of Irish traditional instrumental dance music; and 7) proposes a method by which students of Irish music may learn how to vary melody within the idiom of Irish traditional dance music.

1.2. Justification of the Study

This study is necessary because melodic variation in the instrumental dance music tradition of Ireland has been understudied. While melodic variation is referenced in articles relating to Irish traditional instrumental dance music, melodic variation has never been discussed in the kind of systematic way that I introduce here. It is for this reason that my study is both timely and necessary. There is a conspicuous gap in the Irish traditional music literature on the issue of melodic variation in the performance practice of dance music. For example, there is no entry for “variation” in Vallely’s *Companion to*

Irish Traditional Music.¹ The gap that this dissertation aims to fill separates detailed case studies of specific players² and regional styles³ on the one hand and general descriptions of Irish traditional music within a broader cultural and historical context on the other hand.⁴ While specialized case studies may discuss variations played by a specific musician, these variations are not considered as a system of variables.

This dissertation fills that gap by offering a universal system that explains the options that are available to the traditional musician when he or she varies a melody regardless of instrumentation, geography, chronology, or gender. My desire to contribute to the community of musicians who have contributed significantly to my own musical growth parallels my interest in adding what will hopefully be a useful method to the musicological, ethnomusicological, and theoretical literature.

This present study is a description and categorization of what I have observed as a practitioner of Irish traditional music and what I have observed in transcriptions of fifty source recordings of Irish dance music. As my statistical analysis suggests, some instrumentalists vary more than others. Musicians will often have conversations about what is “traditional” (i.e., what is acceptable or legitimate), but often the label of

¹ *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Fintan Vallely (New York: New York University Press, 1999). While this text does not claim to be definitive or exhaustive, it is somewhat surprising that a topic so central and important to instrumental practice as melodic variation does not have its own entry.

² Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, "Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts" (Dissertation, Queens University Belfast, 1987).

³ Allen Feldman et al., *The Northern Fiddler* (London; New York: Oak Publications, 1985); Tony and Krassen DeMarco, Miles, *A Trip to Sligo: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Irish Fiddling, Sligo-Style* (Pittsburgh, PA: Silver Spear Publications, 1978).

⁴ Susan Lindsay Gedutis, *See You at the Hall: Boston's Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004); John O'Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Helen O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008); Gerry Smyth, *Music in Irish Cultural History* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2009).

“traditional” is not qualified with quantifiable or objective musical criteria. The ideas and lexicon that I introduce in this study could be used to bolster the evaluative language used in this musical tradition.

Because this dissertation discusses musical practice as a human behavior captured on recordings, I am measuring the results of those behaviors through transcription and analysis. I am comparing successive repetitions of one musician’s performance of a tune rather than comparing two like-titled tunes played by two different musicians. I am interested in something beyond pointing out differences and similarities: I am interested in describing idiomatic system and process. Analyzing two different recordings of the same tune will make differences and similarities apparent, but it may be more difficult to infer anything about process from such comparisons. What such a comparison immediately tells the reader is what criteria the analyst thinks constitutes “sameness” and “difference.” I take this one step further by suggesting that one musician’s successive variations may imply something about procedural options that a single musician has at his disposal.

A “good example” as the term is commonly employed in music, refers to a musical example that demonstrates a particular point. The problem, however, is that each musical performance is a unicum, thus it is singular and unique making each, paradoxically, both normative and exemplary. Measurement means nothing without appealing to a fixed standard. For example, we cannot say that one table is better than another table unless we have a fixed point of comparison and, even if we do, such judgments about the goodness of an example are largely subjective. While goodness can be quantified, it is necessary to numerically evaluate and articulate those criteria.

What is objective about musical analysis is the set of definitions that we agree are reasonable, but drawing inferences from the analysis of data is a subjective enterprise. Identifying *what* exists is scientific and objective, but there is nothing inherently objective or scientific about inferring importance or quality from such observations. Inferring cultural meaning or personal motivation from data requires experience on the part of the analyst and different analysts may bring slightly different interpretational approaches to that data. It is the experience of the analyst that can tell us something interesting and meaningful about data: the data alone do not necessarily tell us anything. In other words, there is no such thing as maintaining a scientific distance from one's object of study: there is only the honest disclosure of bias and assumption that enables a reader to trust an analyst and his interpretation of the data.

What this dissertation suggests is that the *way* of varying a particular tune is common to many different kinds of players and is evidenced in recordings. The variables are normative; it is how and when musicians apply them that will vary. In this dissertation, I will outline and describe what those variables are.

In the analysis of Irish tradition music, I offer one well-informed perspective. Because I am more interested in truth and reality than being right, I welcome amendment and invite critique in the hopes that my research will open the door for further dialogue about increasingly more appropriate ways to understand performance practice and melodic variation in Irish traditional music.

1.3. Methods and Procedures

To demonstrate melodic variation as a taxonomy of variables, I have transcribed fifty recordings documenting fifty different musicians over a period ranging from around 1904 to 2007. These transcriptions constitute Appendix C. My analysis of these transcriptions and contextualization of Irish music will offer a three-pronged approach, resulting in seven chapters total.

Chapter I is the introduction and offers a justification and explanation for need of this work including a review of the literature, discussion of my biases and assumptions, and working methodology.

Chapter II discusses the enculturation of Irish traditional musicians. This chapter uses an Irish music community in Baltimore, where I learned how to play Irish traditional music as a child, as one example of how interpersonal relationships make up the social hierarchy within which practices of innovation and variation are transmitted and legitimized.

Chapter III introduces what I am calling *aesthetic conservatism* in Irish traditional music. This is the idea that musicians feel that they should maintain a tune's identity and not change too many pitches over successive repetitions. The amount of change considered to be too much change varies from player to player. I situate this undercurrent of aesthetic conservatism relative to several historical events: the English colonization of Ireland, the Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century, the antiquarian movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the advent of recording technology and the commodification of Irish music, and, finally, the onset of *Riverdance* and other popular spectacles that plunged Irish music into the limelight of popular culture. While I do not

have statistical proof that establishes a causal relationship between musical practice geopolitical affairs, I will offer one interpretation of historical circumstance that may speak to the regulation of performance practice.

Chapter IV explains the process of selecting recordings for transcription as well as the software used to aid in transcription. In this chapter, I will also discuss my approach to transcription and explain what the reader may expect to find present and absent in the transcriptions of Appendix C.

Chapter V offers a taxonomy of melodic variables that are deployed by Irish musicians in performance that are derived in part from the transcribed sample and in part from my performance experience. To illustrate the tenets of this taxonomy, I have excerpted examples from full transcriptions to illustrate which variation types are played in a given performance.

In this chapter, I also offer a statistical analysis of the sample of the fifty source recordings. My statistical analysis discusses percentages of instrumentation, gender, commercial and non-commercial recordings, and the average percentage of measures varied among the fifty source recordings. This chapter also discusses the nature of melodic variation in the measures changed with respect to ornamentation and the alteration of set accented tones. Based on these data, I offer ideas about what these percentages might indicate about cultural norms and performance practice.

Chapter VI examines the cognitive processes involved in aural memory and how these processes relate to the ways in which variations of other players are assimilated and applied in recorded performances. This chapter explains in physiological terms how a performer could be assimilating variations from recordings and transcriptions into a live

performance while playing at a fast tempo. What I suggest is that it is reasonable to infer that the physical make up of a musician's nervous system enables economy of motion and ease of melodic variance. I also propose that there are tune schemas and variation schemas that interact with one another in the musician's mind directly before the performance of a variation in a tune. I will focus on the cognitive process of aural memory as a component of variation retention, formation, and application.

Chapter VII summarizes my findings and concludes the dissertation with suggestions about how such studies might have future application. I suggest that neurological testing on Irish musicians might be able to tell researchers about how the fine musculature works in the improvisation of goal-oriented tasks. Furthermore, I suggest Irish traditional music as an idiom to be considered in music theory pedagogy and the teaching of improvisation and keyboard skills to music students at the undergraduate level.

1.4. Definitions, Assumptions, Biases, and Limitations

In this section I will discuss my basic operating definitions, assumptions I hold about the content to be discussed, relevant biases, and limitations of the study.

1.4.1. Definitions

The musical terms that I will use to discuss what I hear on recordings and what I see in transcriptions are derived from the common language used by practitioners of Irish music, music theorists, and what I consider to be sufficiently precise and descriptive. I think that it is appropriate to use the same terminology for the Irish dance music tradition

that would currently be used to describe other continental musics of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries because the binary dance forms and harmonic implications of Irish music are similar enough to continental music to justify the overlap of terms.

By *variation*, I mean a perceivable and quantifiable distinction between two like sections of music. In such a definition, a comparison of two or more sections or performances is both implied and necessary. I underscore the fact that I am not defining variation as a departure from an expected norm. While this is how some musicians understand variation, that a variation is a pitch sequence that departs from one's expectations, deviations from an expected norm will not be a component of my analysis. Instead, I will compare variations over successive repetitions of the same tune played by the same musician.

To indicate a consistent departure from an expected norm, Irish traditional musicians would use the term *version* or *setting*. For example, if one musician consistently plays a part of a tune differently from the way I do, I might say that the other musician plays a different version or setting of the tune. Because I am not dealing in expected norms or exemplars, I will not be discussing differences between musicians' versions of a like-titled tune in my discussion and analysis. The difference between version and variation is a question of frequency. One version of a tune will be consistently different from another tune over successive repetitions. A different variation will occur with less frequency. Version is relative to other musicians' conceptions of a tune while variation may be understood as relative to one's own concept of the tune.⁵

⁵ Charles Seeger, "Versions and Variants of the Tunes of "Barbara Allen"," in *Studies in Musicology 1935-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

Furthermore, I am using the term *variation* instead of *improvisation* because for a traditional musician, these words are not synonymous. To an Irish musician, a variation is an addition of grace notes or an exchange of structural notes that largely leaves the original tune recognizable through successive repetitions of that tune. This differs from improvisation in that by definition, improvisation is an extemporization (although some jazz players will borrow licks—hence they are pre-composed and not extemporized by the performer—from other musicians). Irish musicians do not call variations “improvisations” in Irish traditional music because while variations might be improvised, they are just as often memorized—either made up by the player ahead of time (remembered from some other performance, perhaps), or borrowed from another musician’s recording.

In my Chapter V analysis, I will use the term *mode* to mean a collection of note relationships (intervals) whose pitch distribution (amount and proximity) within a metric cycle implies hierarchies of pitch importance. Mode is a useful and appropriate word to use in this study because it is a term commonly used by Irish traditional musicians to refer to the scale pitches that comprise a particular tune.⁶ Having said that, not all traditional players use or know the meaning of specific mode names. Sometimes musicians will refer to a tune simply as “modal” without specifying a mode. Practitioners who cite the mode of a tune are referring to the arrangement of whole and half steps of the scale whose pitches the tune uses. While there is scholarly controversy about the application of questionably derived medieval modes to contemporary traditional practice,

⁶ Grey Larsen, *The Essential Guide to the Irish Flute and Tin Whistle* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2003), 20-28; Christopher J. Smith, *Celtic Back-up for All Instrumentalists* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 1999), 24-29.

I will use the term mode in my analysis because it is a term that traditional musicians both use and understand.

I will refer to the modes not by their numbers as medieval theorists did, but by their Greek misnomers, as Irish traditional musicians commonly do. Essentially four modes are used in Irish traditional dance music: 1) Ionian, 2) Dorian, 3) Mixolydian, and 4) Aeolian. When a player says that a tune is in D Mixolydian, he is indicating that the seventh scale degree, C, is natural rather than sharp. When a player says that a tune is in D Dorian, he is expressing that both the seventh scale degree and the third scale degree, F, are natural rather than sharp. Rarely will traditional players use the terms Ionian or Aeolian, and will instead use the terms “major” and “minor” respectively.

I will use *mode* and *scale* interchangeably in my discussion and analysis. While some would argue that understanding an entire tune in terms of key or mode is inappropriate, I think that an overriding component of many Irish melodies is an implied drone or pedal point that frames the tune within a particular tonal/modal context. The implied drone indicates a hierarchy of pitches, a hierarchy that the idea of scale and key explains. Hence, mode does, in some sense, refer as much to the conceptual ordering of whole and half as much as it refers to the pedal point that a particular arrangement of intervals implies. Many tunes, while containing internal modulation, stray little from what can be established as a tonal/modal center.

1.4.2. Assumptions

1) I assume that music-making is first and foremost a volitional human behavior. As such, performers are responsible for the notes they play, however premeditated,

spontaneous, or “accidental” the results. While I am concerned with intentionality as a practitioner and teacher, my research methods are not designed to determine whether a melodic variation is intentional or accidental. It is my hope, however, that this work will lead to further work that will analyze intent and rationale. A variation need not be planned in order to be a product of an individual’s music-making system.

2) I assume four- or eight-bar parts of tunes as a theoretical point of departure. My analysis will consider tunes with two or more parts. The important limitation is that I am using tunes with an equal number of measures (or downbeat pitches) in each part. There are tune genres, notably set dances, whose parts may contain asymmetrical numbers of measures and phrases. I will not be discussing such tunes in this study because the variety of extra measures in these dance types provides too many variables to delimit, although they certainly may share many of the same types of variation and ornamentation. I will also not be discussing nuances of rhythmic variation because such variance would create too many variables in addition to melodic variation. I assume a standard pattern of rhythmic stress in which dynamic and durational emphases are given to the first and fifth eighth notes in each measure of a reel and hornpipe, the first and fourth eighth notes of each measure in a jig, and the first, fourth, and seventh eighth notes of each measure of a slip jig. These rhythmic schemes are discussed in Chapter V.

3) This study is subjective insofar as it is my personal understanding of a musical tradition given my own experiences with it. This dissertation offers one well-informed perspective among other potential equals.

4) One’s ability to perform, understand, or analyze this music is contingent on knowledge and experience rather than on age, nationality, or ethnicity. For example, the

ethnicity or origin of birth of those whose recordings I am transcribing is irrelevant in this study. In this sense, the provenance of a recording is inconsequential in this dissertation. I do not mean to imply that such markers of identity are completely irrelevant. My point is that any recording of Irish music is equally viable for analysis using the analytical method that I present. All analyses are in some way subjective and are informed by personal listening and performing experience. I contend that while one's background necessarily limits and contextualizes his understanding of music, specific personal history does not preclude one's work from consideration in my analytical method.

5) Style can be described quantitatively and qualitatively and is contingent on a complex of variables that are both simultaneously occurring and distinct from each other. While the categories of variation I am developing are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. Many different categories may be combined in the performance of a single tune.

6) Musical performances (both live and recorded) can be measured in terms of duration, amplitude, and frequency without requiring value judgments on accuracy or beauty. I will make inferences using my experience and subjectivity, but these inferences will not aim to reinforce my personal aesthetic preferences.

7) I assume that real intent cannot be confirmed, even when asking a musician. At best, inference and circumstantial intent can be suggested but not proved. Because of the tenuous epistemology in this area, I will focus on fixed sound documents whose content and form do not change.

8) My taxonomical system is objective in so far as it is analyzing relative frequency in the commonly acceptable analytical terms for discussing pitch in Western

music. While I am personally interested in the personal aesthetics of past and contemporary practitioners, I will not examine those here because I do not wish to create an implied hierarchy of good, better, and optimal performances of a tune. While as a teacher and practitioner, I am concerned with what constitutes an interesting variation, I will not use this study to prove, define, or establish objective criteria for what constitutes a good performance or a clever variation.

9) An immutable document such as a recording or transcription is necessary for research such as this because I am arguing and giving evidence on paper. However, the system I am proposing could potentially be used to instruct students in a live teaching scenario. This method could be used as one approach to aid in thinking about a tune in certain categories. The taxonomy I will describe is not a set of rules to be followed, but guidelines to be explored and considered.

1.4.3. Biases

1) In line with assumption 1, I do not believe that music is a thing external to those who practice it. I will not analyze or evaluate a Platonic idea of a tune—if a tune is not sounding either from a recording or on a real instrument, a tune, for my purposes, does not exist and need not exist. I am sidestepping Platonism in these terms because the idea of a tune varies from performer to performer and various performers differ on what they presume to be the “right way” to play a tune. Ethnomusicologist James R. Cowdery (discussed in the following literature review) has posited the notion of a “tune model,” a basis by which to justify calling same-titled tunes the same melody. Cowdery admits that such a tune model is an abstracted synthesis of what he considers to be like

characteristics of many performances of like-titled tunes. I do not think that an abstract model such as this is useful for my study.

2) Selecting recordings for such a project is daunting and, in considering this component of my research, I am forced to admit that the recordings I will examine do not constitute a representative sample of Irish traditional music in the sense that they are exemplary: the recordings I will use need not be considered as authoritative and/or canonic.

1.4.4. Limitations

While I have included one transcription of a recording that deviates from the normative attributes of dance music genres,⁷ this dissertation does not analyze performances of Irish traditional music that deviate from the normative rhythmic structures of dance tunes. This study also does not evaluate distinctions of pitch less than a half step. Furthermore, this study is limited to the analysis of recordings with performing forces of one melody player and one chordal or rhythmic accompanist maximum.

1.5. Review of Literature

I will here discuss scholarly literature relevant to the questions that I will pose throughout the remaining six chapters of this dissertation. What I will suggest through this review is that while several authors refer to variation as an element of style, as an indispensable component of instrumental performance practice, and as a cultural

⁷ See my transcription (no. 21 in Appendix C) of Tommy Potts's 1971 recording of the reel "My Love is in America."

hallmark, variation as a performance practice has not been analyzed as a system of variables universal to the idiom of Irish traditional instrumental music. Because Chapter VI will deal with the cognitive processes that facilitate melodic variation in Irish traditional music, I will examine that large body of relevant literature in depth at that juncture.

Ethnomusicologist and Irish music scholar Lawrence E. McCullough in his 1977 article “Style in Traditional Irish Music” writes that his essay cannot present “an exhaustive, definitive description and analysis of all of the instrumental styles that currently exist in the idiom of traditional Irish music...” because “[t]he data necessary for formulating precise stylistic distinctions...[are]...not available at present in a form that can be utilized by researchers.”⁸ I agree that exhaustive studies of anything are virtually impossible given the limitations of human resources. While, like McCullough, I will not endeavor to make an exhaustive study, I do think that the data available for analysis are now, more than ever, plentiful and accessible to music scholars.

McCullough transcribes and discusses variations in the reel “The Sligo Maid” and variation as a function of articulation and ornamentation in two performances of the jig “The Lark in the Morning.” McCullough discusses variation as a component of style suggesting that

The occurrence of variation in the melodic and rhythmic patterns of a tune is a distinguishing characteristic of a number of styles and is often used by performers who do not rely on elaborate ornamentation but instead concentrate on developing and extending the possibilities for variation offered by the basic pitch and rhythmic framework of a tune.⁹

⁸ Lawrence E. McCullough, "Style in Traditional Irish Music," *Ethnomusicology* 21, no. 1 (1977): 85.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

He then gives eight of his own examples of how to vary two measures of a reel called “The Sligo Maid.” While there are clearly differences among these eight proposed variations, the nature of the variations is not described or analyzed in the article. These examples are useful for showing how McCullough himself would vary two measures of a reel, but the examples do not speak to universal modes of variance.

Uilleann piper and scholar Pat Mitchell, in his collected transcriptions of Séamus Ennis recordings called *The Dance Music of Séamus Ennis*, alludes to the piper Ennis’s variations in two tunes, “The Blackbird” and “The [Little] Stack of Barley.”¹⁰ The variations are meticulously transcribed and “are clearly evident in the extracts”¹¹ as Mitchell states, but, as reviewer, fiddler, and former Assistant Director of the Arts Council Dermot McLaughlin notes: “the book is very detailed but, for all I know, partial description without analysis.”¹² My intention is to suggest a further use for this valuable collection, which can serve as a basis to compare Ennis to himself and other practitioners.

Scholar, composer, and pianist Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, in his 1983 dissertation on the music of Dublin fiddler Tommy Potts, presents the most thorough theoretical analysis to date on a single player’s style, variations, and influences.¹³ Potts’s recordings and Ó Súilleabháin’s analysis demonstrate that indeed, broad theories about variation are necessarily limited and that there are always exceptions. Potts varies ornaments, chord

¹⁰ Séamus Ennis and Pat Mitchell, *The Dance Music of Séamus Ennis* (Dublin: Na Píobairí Uilleann, 2007), xxix-xxx.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xxx.

¹² Dermot McLaughlin, "Review of the Dance Music of Séamus Ennis," *An Píobaire* 4, no. 42 (2007): 10.

¹³ Ó Súilleabháin, "Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts".

tones, structural harmonies, hypermeter, periodicity, and genre structure. These latter two realms of variation are atypical (perhaps even unique to Potts) and Ó Súilleabháin has already discussed them in his dissertation.

Ó Súilleabháin's discussion of creative process in traditional music highlights four improvisatory aspects of traditional music: phrasing, rhythm, pitch, and structure.¹⁴ In this same article, Ó Súilleabháin introduces the concept of *set accented tones* to the literature on Irish dance music, defining them as "...certain individual tones which occur at important accentuated points" and noting that "[i]t is the occurrence, or deliberate non-occurrence, of these tones which appears to provide the necessary point of reference for the performer."¹⁵

Ó Súilleabháin also suggests that the alteration of these set accented tones is a kind of variation that may begin to dissociate a tune from its given title.¹⁶ Ó Súilleabháin shows that these set accented tones occur on the downbeats of each measure. The downbeat pitches are in crucial locations because they are the tones that, if performed without accent, render a tune un-danceable. Ó Súilleabháin also notes in his article that while two tunes may have a similar melodic contour, they will be identified as different tunes if the mode is different.¹⁷ His fourth category, which deals with interchangeable

¹⁴ Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, "The Creative Process in Irish Traditional Dance Music," in *Irish Music Studies*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁶ Ó Súilleabháin does not suggest how many tones or which tones may be altered to successfully divorce the title from its tune.

¹⁷ The two reels that Ó Súilleabháin compares to make this point are "My Love is in America" in D Mixolydian and "The Dunmore Lasses" in E Dorian. This is a total modal shift. Ó Súilleabháin, "The Creative Process in Irish Traditional Dance Music," 124-26.

segments, is similar to what I will call phrase exchange in Chapter V: the segments (pitch sequences) are interchangeable because they share the harmony of the replaced segments.

Collector, uilleann piper, and scholar Breandán Breathnach states in his 1985 essay for the Irish Traditional Music Society titled “The Use of Notation in the Transmission of Irish Folk Music” that while variations are an integral part of Irish traditional dance music, such variations happen on a small scale and are not applied systematically.¹⁸ While Breathnach is perhaps implying that variations are small in the sense that they are not usually grandiose or flamboyant, I contend that melodic variations, while not always deployed *consciously* in a systematic way, do exhibit a system of variable application characteristic of Irish traditional instrumental dance music. Consciously systematized variation is not something that all (or arguably even most) practitioners employ. However, to say that one’s playing is not systematic implies that style is not consistent. Style is, if nothing else, the consistent application of musical devices and concepts in different music-making situations. *Systematic* and *deliberate* are not synonyms: just because a performer does not think in terms of systems and categories does not mean that the same are not reflected in his style.

Irish music scholar Fintan Vallely’s 2008 book *Tuned Out* indicates that three tunes “The Shanghai March,” “Boys of Tanderagee,” (a jig) and “The Swallow’s Tail” (a reel) are “essentially the same tune,” yet stops his analysis after giving the provenance of each tune.¹⁹ A similar instance occurs in McCullough’s article in which he states that the reel “The Girl Too Smart for the Fiddle” is the same tune as the reel “The Perthshire

¹⁸ Breandán Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach* (Dublin: Na Píobairí Uilleann, 1996), 99-100.

¹⁹ Fintan Vallely, *Tuned Out: Traditional Music and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), 98-99.

Hunt.”²⁰ Valley’s and McCullough’s criteria for justifying sameness are unarticulated. I admit that two different tunes or recordings might sound similar, but that does not mean a) that they are related or b) that they are the same tune. Criteria are needed to measure the similarity of two performances. Without these criteria, the idea of different versions of the “same tune” is unsustainable.

James R. Cowdery, in his book *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*, demonstrates that there is an unarticulated—but tacitly understood—musical foundation that musicians invoke when performing and varying a particular tune. Cowdery does this by comparing several performed versions of the set dance “The Blackbird.”²¹ He calls this melodic foundation the “tune model.” To illustrate this point, Cowdery transcribes and discusses fifteen transcriptions of the set dance “The Blackbird” in an attempt to isolate those musical attributes that comprise the tune model. He applies a similar analytical process to his transcriptions of the reel “Rakish Paddy.”

To illustrate that two performances of a like-titled tunes are indeed probably the same tune, Cowdery offers three modes of comparison: 1) contour (tunes are understood to be related by contour and varied by contour); 2) conjoining principle (similar conceptually to Ó Súilleabháin’s ideas about interchangeable segments); and 3) recombining (performances of the “same” tune with interchanged segments can still be identified and compared as the same tune irrespective of overall contour).

The importance of this work is that Cowdery offers a methodology for arguing that two performances of a tune with the same title are in fact versions of the tune

²⁰ McCullough, "Style in Traditional Irish Music," 91.

²¹ James R. Cowdery, *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*, World Musics (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990).

assigned to that title. The ontological conundrum of “how can we say that this performance of the Blackbird is a version of another since we can’t prove that they’re the same entity?” is dealt a hearty blow. I will not be setting out to justify that two different performances of a like-titled tune are indeed comparable, since Cowdery has already done much of that thinking. His conception of the so-called “model tune” has essentially “reduced the practices of real musicians to an abstraction which is never performed or consciously conceptualized by anyone.” He “has created an artificial reduction” to facilitate further study potential.²²

Charles Seeger, in his “Versions and Variants of the Tunes of Barbara Allen,”²³ agrees with Cowdery insofar as Seeger remarks

This notion is a third thing, namely a class of things to which both [versions of the tune “Barbara Allen”] belong, which is to say, *what* is sung as distinguishable from the singing of it. Suppose, then, one hears three, four, or more separate sings of *that* tune, sometimes with different titles or words or both by as many different singers. The name finally adopted for the lot will be found to cover an increasing number of differences.²⁴

Seeger and Cowdery part ways as Seeger observes that “what is sung and the singing of it” are not separate, but the same.²⁵ In other words, Seeger does not submit to an external point of comparison whereas Cowdery accepts the idea that the essential characteristics of a tune can be distilled. Cowdery demonstrates that two performances of

²² Ibid., 132.

²³ Seeger, "Versions and Variants of the Tunes of "Barbara Allen"."

²⁴ Ibid., 273. Emphasis original.

²⁵ Ibid., 278.

a similarly titled tune are similar in that there are some tune performances that have melodic sequences in common.

Variation, as discussed earlier, must be understood to be a measurable departure from some other quantifiable example. Seeger's point is that there is no such thing as what he calls "*the* 'Barbara Allen' tune." A model tune, while it can be fabricated according to Cowdery, cannot (and need not) be verified outside of real time.

My review of the literature suggests that while detailed case studies of particular performers or tunes have been pursued, the articles extant that deal with the topic of variation in Irish music still invite a systematic descriptive method. That is exactly what I have developed here.

CHAPTER II
LEARNING PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AND SOCIAL NORMS
THROUGH CHILDHOOD ENCULTURATION

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss how Irish musicians generally learn to play melodic variations in this idiom by drawing on my personal experience of learning how to play Irish traditional dance music in a community of Irish musicians in Baltimore, Maryland. This chapter will serve to introduce a few key ideas about the importance of interpersonal relationships and how authority figures in communities of musicians have the power to approve or reject musical innovations. What I will develop in this chapter is the idea that while variation is generally acknowledged to be an important component of performance practice, there are communal hierarchies that mitigate (to an extent) the degree of innovation that may be considered acceptable in this performance practice tradition. I will augment this interpersonal discourse in Chapter 3 where I offer a more theoretical discussion of socio-historical contexts that may contribute to the enforcement of musical boundaries.

The word “community” is a relative term that is generally refers to an exclusive group of people. By exclusive, I mean simply that individuals consider themselves (and others) as either a part of a particular community or not. Whatever communities we identify with, there will always be instances in which circumstances require us to interact with others who we may not consider to be part of our designated community.

Thus, understanding community dynamics will necessitate a discussion of how an individual converses with people who may be considered insiders or outsiders to a

particular community. The boundaries between those individuals who are inside the community and those who are outside the community are often vague, flexible, and subjective, thus making difficult a cultural assessment aimed at describing those who may have the right to legitimize change and innovation.²⁶

One idea related to established authority is articulated by Irish radio broadcaster Ciarán Mac Mathúna (1925-2009) who offers a cultural assessment of the important uilleann piper Willie Clancy in the liner notes of *The Piping of Willie Clancy*, volume 1. Mac Mathúna writes of Clancy that

Willie Clancy [1918-1973] was by general acclamation given his hieratic cloak – he did not assume it himself. He was recognised in a special way as the true inheritor of the rich repertoire of County Clare musicians, and as the mentor of a new generation there...Willie Clancy had a sense of humour...he took his music seriously, but not himself.²⁷

This quotation encapsulates three interrelated ideas that will enhance our understanding of how innovation is legitimized in Irish music culture. The first idea that will serve our discussion is that musical authority figures are invested with authority by a community of other musicians. Consensus establishes the importance and impact of one musician's opinion. By contrast, it is generally considered to be unacceptable for a musician to claim himself to be an authority figure.

The second idea that Mac Mathúna communicates is that older musicians mentor younger musicians in a trans-generational hierarchy. It is an older musician's role to

²⁶ Scott Reiss, "Tradition and Imaginary: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon," in *Celtic Modern*, ed. Martin Stokes and Philip V. Bohlman (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), 146-47.

²⁷ See the liner notes to Willie Clancy, *The Piping of Willie Clancy*, vol. 1, CD, Claddagh Records CC32CD, 1980.

exhibit appropriate norms of behavior and performance practice in the Irish music tradition and it is a younger musician's role to imitate the behavior of elders.

The third critical point that Mac Mathúna conveys is that part of an authority figure's role is to place himself below the performance practice, in the sense that the tradition is more important than the musician who is transmitting it. The transmitter or "culture bearer" is only one person, but what that single musician transmits is the cumulative performance practice tradition of many generations. I think that when Mac Mathúna says that Clancy "took his music seriously, but not himself," Mac Mathúna is suggesting that Clancy was more serious about communicating performance practice to younger musicians than he was about aggrandizing his own personal authority. The implications of these three ideas are that older musicians sustain the norms of performance practice and, therefore, legitimize the performance practices of younger musicians through verbal or non-verbal approval.

I bring the idea of trans-generational hierarchy to the fore in this introduction to set the stage for the discussion to follow and to draw attention to my own position as both researcher and traditional musician. When writing an academic work, it is considered acceptable to posture oneself as an authority figure relative to a particular topic. Having read, studied, and analyzed a body of literature and music on a particular topic, it is reasonable in an academic context to exhibit one's expertise in a given area: this is normative within an academic framework that functions largely as a meritocracy in which individuals who have read and written a considerable amount of high-quality literature may enjoy authority regardless of age or background.

I perceive the idea of academic meritocracy to be somewhat at odds with my sensibilities about my own place as a practitioner and student in the Irish music tradition because the roles of an academic and a traditional musician are fulfilled in different kinds of contexts. In my role as a traditional musician, it would be considered completely unacceptable to tout one's own ideas, music, or style as authoritative in any way. There are many more traditional musicians whom I would be obliged to cite as authorities before I would ever consider myself to be one. One's playing abilities aside, authority in Irish traditional music communities is a function of longevity of practice.

Meritocracy (despite the fact that there are Irish music competitions) is not a normative model for imputing authority: winning an All-Ireland competition still does not place the most facile of technicians above his elders. Even in Irish music competitions, senior musicians adjudicate younger musicians—not the other way around. These ideas will serve to frame my discussion of inter-communal dynamics.

Because some readers might not be enculturated in Irish traditional music from an early age and may therefore expect a modicum of authorship disclosure about my relationship to the topic at hand, I will briefly explain what life circumstances have enabled me to think and write about this music in the way that I will do so in this chapter. For those readers who may be enculturated in Irish traditional music, I will say up front that I do not mean to speak out of turn; that is, I do not, in the writing of this dissertation, mean to invest myself with any special authority above that which other musicians senior to me may rightly enjoy.

2.2. Childhood Enculturation: Research and Observations

This dissertation integrates several different subdivisions of musical research, not least of which is ethnomusicology. While I have not conducted formal interviews with musicians or other fieldwork for this dissertation, my knowledge of this culture has been collected informally through playing this music from childhood to the present. I have spent many years discussing and playing this music with close friends and family who have largely influenced the way I think about and practice Irish traditional music. It would be impossible for me to write about Irish music or even understand Irish music in the way that I understand it were it not for my upbringing and the many musicians and family members who contributed to my musical development.

Reflecting on her fieldwork experiences with cultures of the Arctic, ethnomusicologist Nicole Beaudry conveys that

...human relationships rather than methodology determined the quantity and quality of the information gathered. Social relationships with...the community at large—a below-the-surface human network of friendships...over which I had little control—influenced my results in important ways.²⁸

In order to give a point of reference about what contexts have generated the quality of analysis in this dissertation, it is both appropriate and necessary to situate myself in this study. The social relationships that have contributed to my understanding of this performance practice have had a great deal to do with the quantity and quality of the information that I have been able to process for this present study.

²⁸ Nicole Beaudry, "The Challenges of Human Relations in Ethnographic Enquiry," in *Shadows in the Field*, ed. Gregory F. and Timothy J. Cooley Barz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 68.

As a child playing this music, I was constantly guided by senior musicians and family members. My father began taking me to our local Irish music session on Thursday nights at J. Patrick's Pub in Locust Point in Baltimore City before I was ten years old. The session leader, Peter Fitzgerald, a banjo player from Navan in County Meath, Ireland, would allow me to sit in his session and would occasionally invite me to play tunes on my own.

My uilleann piping teachers Paul Levin, Kieran O'Hare, Robbie Hannan, Seán Óg Potts, and others gave me recordings to listen to, tune books to peruse, music lessons, and performance invitations, none of which I could have acquired on my own. It is the generosity of others that has enabled me to write about this topic and so I will spend some time in this chapter discussing what sorts of interactions I enjoyed and witnessed that will contextualize the performance practice of melodic variation in this dance music.

We all grow up with a first language: this is the language that we initially speak, think in, and dream in—secondary languages will be understood relative to this native tongue that we acquire in our youth. I have set about studying and assessing that musical language which is most familiar to me. This places me in a slightly different position compared to analysts who, later in life, encounter a fascinating music culture and set about to studying it from the outside-in. Having been immersed in this music from an early age, I am now analyzing my experiences retroactively in order to systematize the musical language that is most familiar to me.

The first memory of music that I have is hearing my father play the reel “Pigeon on the Gate” when I was five or younger. Wanting to imitate my father, I began learning to play Irish music beginning around age seven and spent hours playing tunes on the tin

whistle and flute. I had no formal lessons at first; I simply watched what other musicians did and tried to imitate them. Through my close association with the Irish traditional musicians of Baltimore, I became acquainted with the formal and technical aspects of playing Irish dance music along with the manners, behaviors, and discourses typical of this music tradition. Eventually, at age 11, I began taking formal lessons on the uilleann pipes from Paul Levin and, subsequently, from Kieran O’Hare whose recording of the jig “Páidín O’Rafertaigh” I have transcribed in Appendix C of this dissertation.

The relevance of this chapter to melodic variation is that it is within the context of playing for many years among the Baltimore Irish music community that I learned both the rudiments of playing Irish dance music and the finer points of how to play melodic variations. In the Baltimore Irish music community, I played in sessions (informal gatherings of musicians who play dance music in public venues) and at home. As I improved, I began to play for paying gigs, which included weddings, bar gigs, festivals, concerts, and studio recordings. It was in 1996 that I played my first paid céilí dance and in 1998 I made my first studio recording of uilleann piping for an album produced by Na Píobairí Uilleann called *A New Dawn*.²⁹

Part of learning how to play this music in the context of capital exchange involved negotiating with individuals who were not traditional players and who had varying levels of familiarity with Irish traditional music. There was definitely a sense growing up playing this music that there were people who “got it” and people who did not. There was a sense that in some contexts, those of us playing the music were insiders to the tradition while others (some of whom hired us to play at weddings, festivals, and other events) were outsiders to the tradition.

²⁹ Various, *A New Dawn*, CD, Na Píobairí Uilleann NPU CD008, 1999.

Ethnomusicology has, for many decades, been a field in which researchers study cultures foreign to them.³⁰ This has resulted in a crisis of representation in which non-native researchers become increasingly concerned with the ethical issue of representing the people from whom they collect musical and cultural data. I am in a slightly different position due to my childhood enculturation. Rather than trying to interpret what I observe based on what I have read, I am trying to deconstruct what I have experienced earlier in life. This crisis of ethnomusicology may be due in part to scholars' attempts at representing an impossible number of individual perspectives in a few analytical articles. This dissertation must be understood to be my singular perspective on how Irish traditional music coheres as an idiom. I am offering an explanation of how the practice of melodic variance is a process of culture and brain anatomy.

What comes with enculturation are certain modes of thinking about what insiders may expect from outsiders in terms of assumptions and critiques. I will discuss this in more depth later, but suffice to say that my learning how to play Irish music was complemented with learning how to interact with those outside a given community by watching other musicians do so. When learning this instrumental tradition as a child, I started to get impressions about how outsiders are thought to perceive what we do on the inside.

As I learned to play, I noticed that respected musicians usually exhibited two attributes. The first was that they were senior musicians, that is, they were older than the other musicians, as I pointed out by using Ciarán Mac Mathúna's quote about Willie Clancy. The second was that these older musicians were so good on their instruments that

³⁰ Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

they could play a tune however they liked. Being able to vary a melody was a mark of distinction: if you could play melodic variations, it meant that you had invested a considerable amount of time and energy on learning how to play this music. A musician who could vary a tune “took his music seriously” as Willie Clancy did and, like Clancy, that senior musician might also be invested with authority from the community as a result.

It is from these observations that I came to understand that melodic variation is one aspect of performance practice that is essential.³¹ I have then, since my early learning, inferred that the eldest and best musicians establish standards through practice. As a child, I did not observe musicians changing time signatures within a jig, playing extensively chromatic passages, or syncopating reels and, therefore, never cultivated an aesthetic that counted such practices as normative or acceptable.

I also began to see that while there was a variety of approaches to varying a particular tune among proficient musicians, these performance practices were contingent on the aesthetics and normative behaviors that characterize Irish traditional music culture. I will spend some time discussing collective community values and relational hierarchies because understanding how musicians interact with one another will give insight as to why seasoned practitioners appraise melodic variation and other forms of innovation as positive or negative.

There are implied norms of performance practice that inform and restrict how drastically a player might alter an instrumental dance tune’s chord progressions, rhythm, and melodic contour. My long-term observations of performance practice reveal that

³¹ Breandán Breathnach notes that “Irish folk music is a solo art form, of which embellishment comprising ornament, melodic and rhythmic variation is a prominent stylistic feature.” Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach*, 93.

certain types of melodic innovations recur regularly enough that they may be deemed acceptable within the aesthetic and behavioral restrictions of the music culture. These types of melodic variations will be discussed at length in Chapter V as I analyze excerpts from the fifty source recordings in Appendix C.

Therefore, a student of instrumental music in this tradition comes to an understanding of the implicit guidelines of performance practice through enculturation, and—after much practice—internalizes the limitations imposed on melodic variation through unspoken consensus.³² In other words, the student learns from observation both what to do and what *not* to do (or rather, what is not done). What an instrumentalist learns through many hours of observation over a period of years is how, where, and when to play certain variation types so that senior musicians may appraise his performance as aesthetically acceptable or, optimally, as interesting and creative. It is a gradual process for an instrumentalist to acquire a repertoire of variation types and instances in which to apply them because melodic variation, as a performance practice, has never been taught systematically in the way I will discuss it in Chapter V.

2.3. Subculture, Superculture, and Interculture: An Interpretive Framework

To pursue an understanding of what kinds of social norms regulate individual innovation and how such norms are imparted to musicians and—at times—imposed upon them, I will borrow a conceptual framework from Mark Slobin’s book *Subcultural*

³² John Sloboda’s research suggest that in terms of recognizing culturally established norms of practice, “most children can reject blatant violations, such as discords, by the age of seven, ad more subtle ones, such as unfinished cadences, by the age of ten...” and that by age ten, most people can make sense of music “...regardless of accomplishment in any particular sphere of musical performance, and regardless of having been in receipt of any formal musical education or training.” John A. Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 266.

*Sounds: Micromusics of the West.*³³ Slobin’s social schematic of superculture, subculture, and interculture will enable me to array large and small groups of musicians hierarchically and will thus provide a framework for my rationale about how norms of practice are articulated and enforced.

Slobin implies with the prefixes *super*, *sub*, and *inter*, that within the concept of culture—a collection of beliefs and practices shared among people—there concomitantly exists an overarching umbrella culture, as well as smaller subdivisions beneath the superculture (the subculture), and a dialogue between individuals, between subcultures, and between subculture and superculture. These various modes of dialogue constitute interculture. In our discussion, Irish traditional music culture is a superculture comprised of satellite subcultural communities of musicians in Ireland, America, and other locales. The dialogue that these subcultures share when individuals from subcultures converge at sessions, festivals, competitions, or Internet forums constitute interculture. Figure 2.3a is a graphic interpretation of how these various strata of culture interrelate and how they are conceptually situated relative to one another.

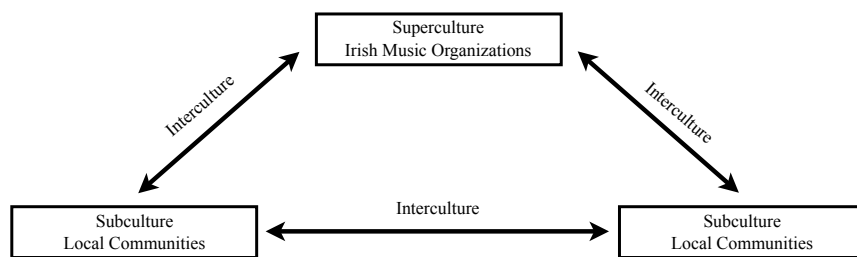


Figure 2.3: Diagram of the Relationship Among Superculture, Subculture, and Interculture

³³ Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, Music/Culture (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993).

On their own, the definitions of the terms superculture, subculture, and interculture are relative and require context for meaning: they require application to specific groups to see how these labels characterize their objects. Because superculture, subculture, and interculture are distinct, but inseparable terms, I will illustrate how such terminology might accurately be applied to real situations and scenarios.

Superculture refers to a dominant prevailing culture under which smaller community groups called subcultures interact as interculture. Superculture is what Slobin calls hegemonic. Hegemony, in terms of cultural categories, is the societal mainstream that is “internalized in the consciousness of governments, industries, subcultures, and individuals as ideology.”³⁴ While the hegemony of superculture is not regulated or voted upon, the hegemonic superculture becomes dominant and prevailing by consensus. The content of superculture can either be stated directly or implied subtly. In other words, it is difficult to pinpoint the source—if there even is such a thing—of hegemonic culture since the superculture is basically the bedrock of society. It is the vague and illusive object of the reference “mainstream.”

What is important about superculture’s consensus-derived dominance is that no one in particular describes or has the singular authority to enforce what constitutes a superculture’s ideological content since the agencies that give rise to it are, in theory, large and speak both unanimously and anonymously.

While any consensus is necessarily generated by individuals who think, act, and speak volitionally, the mainstream (or superculture) presents—at the same time—no one’s opinion specifically and everyone’s opinion collectively. The superculture is a particularly large collection of individuals who do reach agreement on issues and

³⁴ Ibid., 27.

imply—using ideological pressure—which individuals and subcultures not in agreement with collective ideology ought to be. In short, no one is “responsible” for the superculture—it just *is*.

Within these divisions of superculture, subculture, and interculture, there are three overlapping spheres of cultural activity that Slobin designates as *choice*, *affinity*, and *belonging*. These categories relate to how an individual participates in superculture, subculture, and interculture. The many mitigating factors that result in *choice* (be it conscious or subconscious) begin to accumulate the instant an individual is born into a subculture that emanates from the nuclear family—although one’s biological family is hardly a question of choice.³⁵ For example, my exposure to Irish traditional music at an early age was the result of familial circumstance rather than a result of conscious choice on my part. While ultimately choosing to play the music did involve personal decision-making, early exposure did not.

This familial enculturation is a person’s first point of reference for a culture and is experienced *de novo*. The family dynamic usually constitutes the first network of relationships that informs choice. Traditional musicians can be exposed to many different kinds of music depending on the technology available in the home and the preferences of family members, but ultimately—whether consciously or subconsciously—traditional musicians begin to choose what will or will not be imitated based on what is known and/or available. It is difficult to choose something that is unknown. Choice is a critical issue in our discourse on variation procedure because the execution of melodic variations may be explained either as a result of conscious or subconscious choice, a topic that I will discuss in Chapter VI on cognition and aural memory.

³⁵ Ibid., 55.

Pursuant to deliberate decision-making, Slobin's category of *affinity* cannot be explained exhaustively: we do not always know why we prefer one thing to another. This inability to understand why we might prefer one thing to another must be taken as an assumption when considering one's process for choosing.³⁶ In other words, an individual may be drawn to certain practices without being able to explain why: affinity is often—but not always—a matter of cultural conditioning. We may not know the reasons why we prefer one thing to another or why those preferences drive our choices. But, the fact remains that behavior can often be highly predictable and consistent, thus demonstrating an applied system of decision-making and cognitive processes that result in the execution of melodic variations. Consistent and predictable music-making behavior is what we like to call “style.”

Slobin defines *belonging* as the act of pursuing and putting into practice the affinities that comprise choice.³⁷ When a musician makes choices based on his affinities, he participates in belonging both to a subculture (this could be the family or another group of people) and the superculture under which subcultures operate.

These three overlapping spheres of cultural activity—*choice*, *affinity*, and *belonging*—meet the behavior of musical practice at the micro-level of the individual. The individual is a kind of one-man group whose musical aesthetic is formed by many different experiences. This one-man group participates in an affinity group, a “jointly imagined world” coalescing through common interests and goals.³⁸ The individual may

³⁶ Ibid., 56.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Reiss, "Tradition and Imaginery: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon," 158-66.

participate in more than one affinity group, creating a network of preferences and ideologies.³⁹

Slobin's purpose, as well as my own, is to give a schematic to help explain how musicians navigate the distance between insider and outsider and how such distances mitigate language used to discuss the relative value of Irish traditional music and ideas about individual innovation.⁴⁰ A musician understands that to an outsider, he is defined by supercultural categories. These supercultural categories are the apparatus by which the outsider comprehends and forms stereotypes about the subculture. If you play Irish music, the outsider assumes that you know and can play the "Londonderry Air" (or "Danny Boy" as it is more commonly known). This assumption is borne out by requests for that very song, regardless of context. This request relates to the larger superculture, not the Irish traditional one.

Allow me to now illustrate how Slobin's categories of superculture, subculture, and interculture might be applied to interfaces between the Baltimore Irish music community and outsiders looking to hire musicians of that community.

For example, to the outsider, uilleann pipes might signify the superculture of *Riverdance* or *Lord of the Dance*, popular dance shows that put Irish-themed dance and music on display for large audiences that I will discuss at greater length in Chapter III.⁴¹ The uilleann piper may have no affinity for these popular shows, thus experiencing no sense of belonging when among people who do have an affinity for *Riverdance* and *Lord*

³⁹ Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, 60.

⁴⁰ Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

⁴¹ James Porter, "Introduction: Locating Celtic Music (and Song)," *Western Folklore* 57, no. 4 (1998); Shannon L. Thornton, "Fanning the Celtic Flame: Music Patronage and Practice in Contemporary Ireland," *Western Folklore* 57, no. 4 (1998).

of the Dance. These outsiders are people who, because of their own experiences, have come to associate uilleann piping exclusively with those dance shows.

The outsider paints a subculture conceptually with a rather broad brush because those hegemonic structures are the only categories available to the outsider. In other words, the outsider does not have enough specific knowledge of the Irish traditional music subculture to interact with its members using anything but what is perceived by musicians to be supercultural language.

However, the avid *Riverdance* or *Lord of the Dance* fan is coming from his own subculture that figuratively sits beneath a larger superculture with its own standards, norms, values, and aesthetics. It is easy, but myopic, to view outsiders simply as bearers of superculture. I think Slobin would agree that all individuals do, at different times, participate both in subcultural and supercultural spheres. Just which supercultures and subcultures a person perceives himself to participate in depends on how a person views his own life and activities. We are all on the outside of things as much as we are on the inside of things.

To further illustrate the application of the concepts of superculture and subculture, consider the Irish-themed wedding. When people engage so-called Celtic music for their weddings, they are exhibiting what is basically the function of a subculture (family practices and preferences forged through real and imagined heritage) reaching out to a superculture (a perceived ancient and therefore venerable tradition of music-making in Ireland). Such generalizations may frustrate the Irish traditional musician because in his own subculture, such associations have pejorative associations, such as the pretense of the faux-ancient, the corruption of commercialism, and the superficiality of spectacle.

But, the couple to be married probably has no concept of how the musician's subculture responds to the superculture that the betrothed pair is invoking for their own subcultural (familial) reasons. The couple is oblivious to the fact that the traditional musician thinks that the nomenclature and implications of Celtic music are inaccurate and superficial.⁴² In fact, it is likely that the couple thinks that they are legitimizing and authenticating their wedding with the presence of Irish traditional music (or Celtic music, as the terms have come to be used interchangeably by outsiders).

In the discussion to come, I will address the following two questions: (1) What musical concerns occupy Irish traditional musicians in an urban subculture? And (2) What behavioral and aesthetic issues are addressed and how are these aspects of the subculture negotiated? With the understanding that the boundaries of culture are relative and flexible, defined as much by the observer as by the observed, let us consider the concerns and norms of the Irish music subculture in Baltimore, Maryland.

2.4. Learning Behaviors and Performance Practice in an Irish Music Community

This section is concerned with modes of interaction between musicians within an Irish music subculture. I will explain, based on my personal experience learning in a community of Irish musicians in Baltimore, how norms and behaviors are modeled, enacted, and enforced in a subculture. While I will make some generalizations about how performance practice is transmitted and social norms are communicated using the Baltimore community as a specific example, I have noticed, having traveled to teach,

⁴² Thornton notes that "Even if [the label] Celtic was, is, and will forever be an outsider's term, it has some, if limited currency within increasingly professionalized traditional music circles; particularly among players and promoters with Irish-Scottish connections, as well as those playing tours and festivals across the continent." See Thornton, "Fanning the Celtic Flame: Music Patronage and Practice in Contemporary Ireland," 264.

perform, and lecture in Irish music communities across North American and Europe, that what I observed in Baltimore is similar to what happens in other locations where this music is played. Much of what I will discuss pertains to the acquisition of repertoire and norms of performance practice among Irish traditional musicians and additionally concerns the community dynamic of the subculture.

Concerning the learning and practice of Irish traditional music, the twentieth-century scholar, uilleann piper, and tune collector Breandán Breathnach (1912-1985) writes that

There is only one way of becoming a traditional player or singer, and that is by listening to genuine material performed in a traditional manner.⁴³

The nature of Breathnach's comment is that to be considered a legitimate practitioner of Irish music, there is a certain way to go about learning how to play and a certain kind of music to play. But what exactly does Breathnach mean when he says "genuine material performed in a traditional manner"? This is the legitimizing apparatus, but Breathnach withholds the criteria that might establish what—in his opinion—constitutes the correct methodology and attitude.

Because Breathnach is not explicit about the meaning of his assertion, I will use my own experience learning to play Irish music as a means to investigate one of many possible scenarios that might qualify for the traditional manner of learning genuine material. From what I have observed during my years of playing Irish music, I suspect that the meaning behind Breathnach's "traditional manner" extends beyond what a performance sounds like: the "manner" referenced is a complex of situational and

⁴³ Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Cork, Ireland: Ossian, published in association with Mercier Press, 1996), 90.

behavioral norms. While I do think that Breathnach probably has in his mind a clear sense of what a traditional performance ought to look and sound like, a musical performance is conditioned by the behaviors, norms, and social etiquette involved in the acquisition of genuine material to be presented in performance. We will need to begin to form a concept of what could constitute authenticity, legitimacy, and traditionality relative to Breathnach's philosophy on enculturation.⁴⁴

2.4.1. Learning Formally and Informally

In terms of actually acquiring repertoire and nuances of execution—such as ornamentation and variation—most Irish traditional musicians learn by ear, that is, by listening to the patterns and quality of sounds played by another musician and subsequently attempting to reproduce similar sounds on one's own instrument. This transmission process might occur in formal or informal settings.⁴⁵ Formal settings would include music classes at annually occurring music festivals both inside and outside of Ireland throughout the year such as the Willie Clancy Summer School, Scoil Éigse, Scoil Acla, or the Catskills Irish Arts Week.⁴⁶ Other formal settings would include lessons

⁴⁴ See O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 78-104.

⁴⁵ See Barry Burgess, "Irish Music in Education - a Northern Irish Perspective," in *Crosbhealach an Cheoil the Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Fintan Vallely Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty (Dublin, Ireland: Whinstone Music, 1999), 45-51; Caoimhín MacAoidh, "The Critical Role of Education in the Development of Traditional Music in the Republic of Ireland," in *Crosbhealach an Cheoil the Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Fintan Vallely Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty (1999), 107-11; Marie McCarthy, *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ I have personally attended such events since 1996 and have taught at these kinds of festivals since 2001.

taught at the university level or private one-on-one instruction at the home of a student or practitioner in which money is exchanged for tunes and techniques.⁴⁷

Informal learning scenarios might involve an exchange of live and commercial recordings that have tunes that one musician wishes other musicians to learn, or that he himself may wish to learn. Live recordings of virtuoso players are considered to be of greater value than commercial recordings since they may have been personally recorded at great expense or are not widely available, mass-produced, or edited. Because such items are a precious part of one's music collection, giving live recordings to another musician often signifies that the giver acknowledges the receiver's insider status. In other words, these live recordings are not usually copied and given out to just anybody.

In my own situation, Jim Eagan, a fiddler and close friend, would purchase commercial recordings of Irish music. We might convene at each other's houses to listen to these recordings and learn tunes from them. When one of us would go to Ireland for a summer school, we would share the live recordings with each other that we had made on our cassette recorders and mini-disc players. Likewise, when other members of the Baltimore community would come into possession of a new live or commercial recording, the others might likewise acquire it to learn the tunes. There would always be dialogue about new recordings we liked or did not like, and which ones had good tunes.

The subcultural importance of sharing recordings is that when musicians in a local community gather to play, tunes may be selected from a commonly-known set of sources (recordings) so that a sequence of dance tunes may be anticipated and played by all the musicians present. Playing tunes and sets of tunes (three or more tunes of the same genre

⁴⁷ I have taught performance practice in my private studio since 1998 and conducted uilleann piping master classes at the University of Limerick where I earned my M.A. in ethnomusicology between 2006 and 2007.

played consecutively) from communally known recordings creates a kind of community identity through shared repertoire. For example, there is a repertoire of tunes that would be unique to Baltimore that would be based on the particular exchange and interest of the Baltimore musicians for certain live and commercial recordings.⁴⁸

These sets of tunes may become codified over time because of the expectations that are generated. Playing sets of communally learned tunes reinforces shared experience. For example, the Sligo-born fiddler Michael Coleman recorded the trio of reels “The Tarbolton,” “The Longford Collector,” and “The Sailor on the Rock” for an American record company in New York during the first half of the twentieth century. This set of reels has since become a staple of community repertoires and is now so well known that the set is often played for a finale at the end of an evening’s concert.⁴⁹ Because virtually all professional Irish musicians know Coleman’s set of reels, musicians exhibiting a wide variety of personal styles and repertoires can play together without rehearsal. We will revisit the import of Coleman’s recordings when we consider the formation of a canon of Irish traditional recordings in Chapter 3.

In addition to an informal exchange of recordings, Irish musicians within a subculture also teach tunes to each other face-to-face in an informal setting. This is often

⁴⁸ Reiss states that “Traditional music defines not a single community, but multiple communities with overlapping senses of identity. What these communities share are commonly held...dance tunes, and instrumental slow airs...In my initial fieldwork I asked many people in Ireland “Where does the tradition reside?” and the response was overwhelmingly “In the tunes.”” Reiss, “Tradition and Imaginery: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon,” 146.

⁴⁹ To underscore the paradigmatic status ascribed to Coleman, Seamus MacMathúna noted that “Even yet, more than (fifty) years after Coleman’s death...one seldom hears “Bonny Kate” without “Jenny’s Chickens”. “Tarbolton” is inevitably followed by “The Longford Collector” and “The Sailor’s Bonnet”. Compare any old recording of either of these two players with recent recordings of traditional music and this will be borne out.” Seamus MacMathúna, “Coleman, Morrison and Killoran”, *Treoir*, 1987, Uimh. 1 cited in Nuala O'Connor, *Bringing It All Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Merlin, 2001), 71. Listen to *My Love is in America: the Boston College Fiddle Festival* (Danbury, CT: Green Linnet, 1991), track 14. Michael Coleman recorded this trio of reels in November 1934 for Decca (12036/39113-A).

done so that repertoire can be shared, thus facilitating community music-making. If individuals within a subculture have a common repertoire of tunes to play, all who know the tunes can experience a sense of belonging and inclusion. Tunes may also be learned informally in public or semi-public sessions in which a musician may pick up tunes by ear. While sources such as tune books are also exchanged or shared to learn new repertoire, books are used less frequently than recordings and face-to-face teaching.

For example, accordion player Seán McComiskey would come to my home often to play tunes with me. We would play tunes together, teach each other tunes, and record tunes that we wanted to learn later. There are many reasons why learning by demonstration happens more often than learning from a score. A score lacks essential rhythmic information that only a recording or live musician can provide, musicians may have varying degrees of musical literacy, and book-reading just seems less sociable and community-oriented than learning from peers.

2.4.2. Community Music and Opportunity for Variation: The Session

An important community locus was the Irish session on Thursday night held at J. Patrick's Pub in Baltimore City. Recent scholarship has discussed the social implications of the session.⁵⁰ In an interview, uilleann piper Jimmy O'Brien-Moran was asked about his opinion of sessions, to which he replied

The more musicians you have in a session the less it is about music because you couldn't all possibly be listening to each other. It's wonderful to be part of the social session, and that's just a different sort of thing...[the session is]...not so musically directed. The music has taken a

⁵⁰ See O'Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, 65-82; O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 119-40; Reiss, "Tradition and Imaginery: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon," 146-50; Valley, *Tuned Out: Traditional Music and Identity in Northern Ireland*, 69-70.

subordinate role. It has become the catalyst for a social thing rather than the product of a musical union.⁵¹

O'Brien-Moran suggests that in larger sessions it is the social interaction that a session facilitates that takes precedence over the music. Playing music in a session is important because the gathering serves as a locus for conviviality first and music-making second. The session is less about playing concert-level music and more about camaraderie. According to O'Brien-Moran, it would be difficult to hear other musicians well enough to play concert-level music.

While first-rate performing is not the end goal of a session because high volume and heterophony make close listening difficult, I think that this format creates a space in which individual musicians can experiment with melodic variations. When a musician knows that the other musicians cannot really hear him, he might take that opportunity to be more adventuresome in his melodic varying since any really awkward maneuvers would go unnoticed in the din. The idea is that a musician plays under the cover of a heterophonic texture and tests variations that he might not otherwise try if playing solo before an audience.

In addition to being able to “hide” from scrutiny and experiment with variation, a session, by virtue of its duration might also invite melodic variation. A session might last upwards of four hours: a single tune might be played six times or more, depending on who started the tune and who is leading the session. The constant repetition of the same fingering patterns gets boring over time and as a result, a musician might try to vary a melody in a way that keeps the repetitions interesting for him. Also, it takes incredible

⁵¹ Daniel Smith, "Interview with Jimmy O'brien-Moran," *The Pipers' Review* 27, no. 2 (2008): 9.

focus to play the same tune in exactly the same way for several minutes. Even if a musician is trying to avoid variations, these melodic deviations might occur accidentally.

A large group of musicians might be assembled to play for a céilí dance. While musicians will play the same tune together several times, heterophony—that is, embellished unison—naturally ensues. Musicians may coincide melodically on the downbeat pitches, contour, meter, rhythm, and key, but will be changing a few notes here and there with each repetition to keep things interesting for themselves.

In addition to sharing repertoire, musicians may teach each other variations of known tunes so that the variations may be played in sessions. Having learned the same variations in a private setting, two musicians, when out in a public session, may be playing a particular tune, look at each other to signal that the section of the tune with the variation is approaching, and then execute the variations they both know in the tune they are playing at the same time. The exchange of repertoire and variation is a kind of insider's activity whereby bonds are strengthened between individuals who are both "in the know" about a particular way to play a tune. To teach such variations, one musician will first demonstrate to another musician a variation that he finds interesting on his own instrument. If the player learning the variation is having difficulty reproducing it, the player teaching the variation may say the note names, play it many times in succession, or transcribe it on staff paper.

I will interrupt myself here momentarily to point out that subcultural groups like that of our Baltimore community do not have a serious preoccupation with defining what constitutes "traditional" music, an "authentic" sound, or how one acquires "genuine material in a traditional manner," to quote Breathnach, when musicians are speaking

about music with other subcultural insiders.⁵² At the level of microcosm, such questions about what constitutes traditionality fade into the background as practitioners acquire new repertoire, master technique, and engage others in the kind of general fellowship and socializing that adds a fundamentally important personal dimension to playing Irish traditional music. Discussing traditionality with other community members is, in one sense, like talking about the weather.⁵³ It is a safe topic for musicians to discuss because it provides a common sense of aesthetics to consider. Just because two musicians are talking about what constitutes traditionality does not mean that they agree, but a common point of agreement comes with the realization on both sides that such definitions are largely subjective, not unlike the weather. “This player is traditional,” is basically like saying “The weather is nice”—it is an opinion that is generally unqualified by any kind of thorough analysis. Discussions of this sort are often no more than small talk.

The more familiar two musicians become, the more they are interested in considering issues of performance practice such as repertoire and ornamentation, and the less they may become interested in topics that center around subjectively imputing value to certain performances. Discussions of traditionality take place more often when one considering himself to be an insider (in this instance to a geographically localized subculture) is talking to a supercultural or subcultural outsider (perhaps from a distant

⁵² For discussions of authenticity relating to Irish traditional music, see O'Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, 173-95; O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 78-104; Sally Sommers-Smith, "Style and Authenticity," in *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Fintan Vallely (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

⁵³ Of course, such discussions can be extremely volatile if two musicians with dogmatic adherence to norms of practice engage in dialogue. For discourses about tradition and innovation, see Reiss, "Tradition and Imaginery: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon," 152-58; *Crosbhealach an Cheoil the Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Hammy Hamilton Fintan Vallely, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty (Dublin, Ireland: Whinstone Music, 1999).

Irish music subculture). It is in general terms that one may defend an argument about traditionality.

2.4.3. Tempo and Performance Practice

To return to subcultural preoccupations, norms are communicated by demonstration: one musician plays at an appropriate tempo and the others are expected to conform to that tempo. Musicians may be indirect about communicating musical aspects such as what tempos and rhythms are generally acceptable when playing a particular tune. A musician will typically not openly state, “Here’s the best tempo: please match my speed” or “You need to hold certain notes relatively longer than others.” This is a curious position for an instrumentalist to be in since step dancers, for the most part, will approach traditional musicians playing for them at festivals and announce a metronome marking at which she expects the instrumentalist to play.⁵⁴ The dancer might say something like “I like to dance this reel at 120,” meaning that when the metronome is set to 120 beats per minute, an ideal tempo is reached for dancing. These references to tempo generally baffle the majority of Irish musicians, who rarely use metronomes. Irish traditional musicians for the most part do not concern themselves with metronome markings, Italian tempo indications, and other such explicit interpretive information. The traditional musician

⁵⁴ Competitive step dancing in the twentieth century led to a standardization of tempo, repertoire, and appearance for dancers. The introduction of *Riverdance* in the 1990s generated considerable interest in Irish dancing, causing dance schools to explode with student enrollment. In many instances, students began to learn to perform with recorded music rather than with live musicians. The use of recordings, as we shall see in the coming pages, further standardized tempos and repertoire for dancing. Dancers use metronomes to determine the speed of a particular pre-recorded track, memorize that tempo marking, and then deliver it to live musicians who would play for dancers at festivals and competitions. The use of recordings has caused a divide between dancers who are listening to the music played for them and the dancers who are simply counting beats. See Helen Brennan, *The Story of Irish Dance* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001); Catherine Foley, "Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global, and Local," *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (2001).

infers a suitable tempo from a tune's harmonic rhythm and contour, even though he may not verbalize it or rationalize it in those terms. If a dancer asks for a faster tempo, the traditional musician will select a tune that sounds good at that speed.

One instance in which standards of tempo were subtly communicated to me occurred while I was playing in a session with a few senior musicians on Achill Island off the coast of County Mayo, Ireland in the summer of 1999. German uilleann piper and pipe-maker Andreas Rogge started a tune that I knew. I attempted to join in, but did not realize that I was gradually speeding up the tempo. Dublin uilleann piper Seán Óg Potts—who had pipes in hand, but was not playing—gently tapped me on the shoulder and shook his head as if kindly asking me to stop playing (or, at least to stop playing too fast). At no point did Rogge explicitly exert his will for the tempo in that particular session, but because of his seniority, I was expected to match it without having to be told. As I observed, Potts did not at any point explicitly state that I was playing too fast.⁵⁵

Again, the reason that traditional musicians in a subcultural context do not often speak explicitly about such things as tempo likely has to do with the fact that genre and

⁵⁵ Potts's communication to me was subtle because he was speaking with someone open to and familiar with acceptable norms of behavior. When Wayne Webster writes on the issue of tempo, he is writing to a large unknown audience: he is writing through a supercultural publication like Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann's *Treoir* and thus says "Usually when you try to play as fast as you can, as so many are wont to do, you don't know what that tempo is until you have exceeded it. People usually end up playing as fast as they can't, playing just beyond the speed their ability to play cleanly, with expression and sensitivity will allow, the Peter Principle. Maybe the notion that faster is better has to do with the fast pace of modern life. Maybe trad players feel they compete with rock and roll, that speed equals energy and excitement. Whatever, most of the top Irish traditional bands play reels and jigs on their CDs and in concerts at a blazing tempo. Even with the astounding skill and mastery at which they play, there is a cost to the integrity and inherent beauty of the tunes themselves. Impressive to the listener at first and for a while, lickity-split playing eventually becomes tiring to the audience. The listener's ear eventually becomes inured to the din... Playing for speed and not taking the time to find the individual personality that each of these tunes possesses by patiently exploring the landscape of a melody like a hiker traversing the hills, valleys and plateaux [*sic*] of the countryside is killing the soul of traditional music much like ATV's [*sic*], dirt bikes and snow mobiles are killing the environment. So please, slow down and smell the noises." Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, "Comhaltas: Speed Kills," http://comhaltas.ie/music/treoir/detail/speed_kills/ (accessed November 22, 2010).

harmonic rhythm imply a range for tempos. The simpler a tune's contour, range, and harmonic rhythm, the faster it can be played. Conversely, frequent chord changes and wide leaps in a melodic line necessitate a slower tempo. Of course, I remember one instance when a friend of mine asked a senior musician why he played so slowly. His sparse reply of "Because I can," said very little while communicating a great deal. Irish dance music is less about playing fast that it is about the proper accentuation of regularly recurring notes placed in rhythmically critical positions in a tune, a point of analysis that I will discuss in Chapter V. Playing at slower speeds allows for a more pronounced downbeat and upbeat because dynamic shifts go by more slowly and agogic accents can be perceived more readily. When a young musician plays fast, it is usually because he is still developing the ability to recognize and then emphasize important pitches that communicate the dance rhythm.⁵⁶ It is easier to rely on muscle memory as a function of reflex than to discipline one's self to deliberately imply all downbeats and upbeats in a dance tune.

2.4.4. Comportment and Attitude

Other aspects in the Irish traditional music subculture that are subtly communicated include comportment and attitude. In Baltimore, there is an accordion player named Billy McComiskey who is considered to be an authority figure in the music community. McComiskey holds this privileged status because of his extensive

⁵⁶ For example, hornpipes are usually played slower than reels, despite the fact that both genres are duple-meter dances. A reel by fiddler Paddy Fahy or accordion-player Finbar Dwyer, with unpredictable and asymmetrical harmonic rhythm, might be played slower than a hornpipe in order to allow the ear enough time to acclimate to, process, and enjoy the artistry inherent in the unconventional chordal structures of tunes by these two composers. These characteristics of different melodies, while not necessarily discussed by senior musicians in the terms that I am using here, contribute to the speed at which a musician chooses to play.

performing career, recorded output, technical virtuosity, and seniority within the community.

When a senior musician like McComiskey starts a tune that no one else knows in the middle of a session, it is appropriate to sit and listen to him play it at least once through without attempting to play it (i.e., learning it while he is playing it) on your own instrument. If McComiskey plays a tune that he expects other players will know, the other musicians will start playing with him immediately. In so choosing a tune that McComiskey knows to be community “property,” he is issuing a non-verbal invitation for everyone to participate in the music making. It may take a newcomer to an Irish music community a considerable amount of time before he begins to observe, adopt, and practice these social conventions. Some accompanists, without ever having heard a complicated tune, may bang away on a guitar, piano, or bodhrán causing glances of disdain to be exchanged among seasoned community musicians. Unenculturated instrumentalists may likewise try to learn a tune while a senior musician is playing, to the chagrin of all.

If someone in the community is asked to play a tune, that person may do as McComiskey might do: pick a tune that is commonly known. However, it is also typical for the other musicians to listen attentively to the invited player, joining in only after the tune is played once or twice through. Listening to another musician play—while resisting the desire to play your own instrument constantly—is an important component of music-making in a community such as the one in Baltimore. Restraining one’s nearly

irrepressible urge to participate in every tune is necessary in some instances because it demonstrates respect for another musician who has the floor.⁵⁷

Repertoires may be common to all members of a community, but may also be shared between only two musicians. On occasion at a session for instance, fiddler Jim Eagan and I might start a tune that we had both learned from the same recording. The other players would sit back with the understanding that this is one of those sets that he and I play together. Too much of this kind of activity, however, can be seen as hogging the session and may irritate other musicians. Even if the other musicians have heard the tunes enough times to be able to play along, they will not attempt to do so.

This exhibit of commonly shared repertoire between two individuals is slightly different from what is sometimes referred to as showboating. Showboating—the unannounced display of an interloper’s technical skills on tunes that are unsolicited or unknown by any other musician at a session—is generally frowned upon. The showboater will be instantly open to ridicule (usually unbeknownst to him) because in showing off, that person is demonstrating a lack of understanding about the social norms and proprieties of the subculture into which he has just inserted himself.

2.5. Introducing Innovation in an Irish Music Community

Introducing new repertoire into an Irish music community—especially if it is of one’s own original composition—is another delicate issue. Practitioners’ acceptance of or resistance to new compositions or variations of a known tune often depends on who it is that is doing the composing and the varying. While our discussion will touch on

⁵⁷ See Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1998).

variation, the purpose of this section is to introduce a few ideas about aesthetic conservatism that I will expand on in Chapter III.

There are some practitioners who are completely opposed to the creation of new tunes. When I asked the senior flute player Jack Coen in the late 1990s what he thought of newly composed tunes, he answered with the witticism that “When it comes to the creation of new tunes, I’m all for birth control!”⁵⁸ Not all traditional musicians share Coen’s antipathy for newer tunes, however. There are certain mitigating factors that can make one’s new compositions acceptable to an Irish music community.⁵⁹ For example, the more senior the player is in the community, the more acceptable it is to play one’s own compositions. Guests to the music community who are in the know (and here I am speaking of a group session format) generally do not do this. Younger children generally do not offer newly composed tunes unless they are invited to do so by a more senior member of the community.

A seasoned member of the community such as Billy McComiskey might play an original composition—concealing the fact that it is his own by omitting its title and provenance—until a desired response is gleaned from the other musicians. A desirable response is “Where did you get *that* tune?” implying that the inquirer would like to know the source so that he can learn it himself, thereby conveying his enjoyment of the tune. A

⁵⁸ Jack Coen was born in Woodford, County Galway, Ireland in 1925 and was honored as a NEA National Heritage Fellow in 1991.

⁵⁹ In her article on “style and authenticity” in *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, Sally Sommers-Smith writes that “There are limits to the amount of change acceptable as ‘traditional’. While such limits may call into question whether or not a newly composed tune will enter the traditional repertoire, they are more applicable to the playing style in which a tune is presented, its ‘setting’...By keeping necessary variation and change within prescribed limits, community standards maintain the continuity of the tradition...” Sommers-Smith, “Style and Authenticity,” 387.

lack of inquiry about the source of the tune usually indicates either that the listeners did not enjoy the tune or that the composition was unremarkable.

Irish-American fiddler Liz Carroll, recalling instances from her fledging years as an innovative session-goer in Chicago trying out new tunes in a group session format, relayed an anecdote in an archived interview about how other Chicago musicians responded to her newly composed tunes:

Carroll: There were a lot of [my tunes] that I'm sure that I would play in front of the musicians in Chicago and they'd go [after humoring my solo], "Well, let's play a *good* old tune now!" That would be their reaction to me playing something [I had composed]! That was not good.

Grasso: Would you tell them it was one of your own?

Carroll: No, of course not!

Grasso: Why not?

Carroll: You didn't need to know that they hated it. You'd be more inclined to get that when you didn't say it was yours... They liked the old tunes... It was always this embarrassing thing where you'd play it twice—you wouldn't *dare* play it three times—you'd play it twice and then you'd stop. And then if nobody says, "Hey, what was that?" or "That was good, play that again," or grab their tape recorder, that's *it!* And if you come back to the session next week and you tried that one again, you'd be really bold to do that. So it [the session] wasn't conducive to new music.⁶⁰

What is important for our discourse on responses to individual innovation in Irish music subcultures is that in this instance, Carroll did not even need to tell these musicians that the repertoire she played consisted of her original compositions to receive a tepid response. While we cannot know for certain the reasoning behind these kinds of

⁶⁰ Liz Carroll, interview by author, Portland, OR, November 15, 2007.

responses to Carroll's playing, two things seem to have made an impression on her. First, unfamiliar repertoire—known to be newly composed or not—is an undesirable element in the session she described. Second, the perceived admonishment for introducing new repertoire would only have been amplified had Carroll revealed the provenance (herself) of these unfamiliar tunes. What we have in Carroll's testimony is a singular instance that speaks to a greater socio-musical aesthetic in Irish music culture. Caution and even disdain for unfamiliar repertoire—especially for newly composed repertoire—is an aesthetic common to some Irish traditional musicians. Carroll could obviously sense that the other musicians disliked the unfamiliar repertoire (or at least the idea of it) that she was playing and did not need to know that these other musicians hated the tunes that she had spent time and energy composing.

The introduction of new tunes usually shifts verbal intercourse into explicit categories. Explicit communication is prompted when the composer of a particular tune is revealed and known. Generally speaking, players may become more communicative and interested in learning a tune note-for-note when a composer is known, especially when the interested party has a personal relationship with the composer. There is also explicit communication when two players are exchanging versions/settings of a certain tune, or when players are exchanging variations on a particular tune.

I remember one instance in which Billy McComiskey and I were returning to Baltimore from a performance in Washington, D.C. We had been listening to a tape when McComiskey suddenly stopped the cassette in his car stereo and started to whistle the most fabulous tune that I had heard in months. He whistled for several minutes until I asked, half exclaiming, "What is that tune?!" He told me that it was his own composition

and that he called it “The Grey Fox.”⁶¹ I have transcribed “The Grey Fox” in example 2.5.

Example 2.5: Transcription of the reel “The Grey Fox” composed by accordion player Billy McComiskey as played on track 12 of his 2008 recording *Outside the Box*⁶²

I asked to record “The Grey Fox” for me, but he insisted rather on teaching it to me by whistling it while he was driving the car. McComiskey would whistle a phrase and then I would try to whistle it back to him. If I misplaced a single note, he would correct me—to my delight. We spent the entire rest of the car ride this way until I had the entire

⁶¹ Listen to Billy McComiskey, *Outside the Box*, Compass Records, COM 4488, 2008.

⁶² In the source recording, McComiskey plays grace notes, chords, and variations over successive repetitions. I have not included those components of his playing here because I want simply to give the reader an idea about the tune that he taught to me.

tune memorized. Rather than being irritated at the correction, I was pleased to learn the tune as its composer wished me to understand it. McComiskey had introduced a tune that he knew was unfamiliar to me, waited for a reply (and I gave a positive one), told me that it was his, and then proceeded to share it with me upon my asking. At no point did I experience anxiety or resentment about the idea that McComiskey was giving attention to his own musical innovation in the form of a new tune. The protocol that I had learned through observation had ingrained in me the idea that McComiskey, due to his age, proficiency, and standing in the community, was completely rightful in his introduction of musical innovation.

What is probably becoming apparent is that the interpersonal discourse that creates modes of acceptable and unacceptable behavior in Irish music-making contexts hinges on the ways in which players' personal relationships develop over time. All of these aspects of interpersonal discourse comprise the dialogs and unspoken assumptions that characterize the subcultural interactions between individuals and the rest of the subculture. Some of these notions are stated outright while others are to be inferred from observation and enculturation.

I have thus far discussed both subtly and explicitly communicated standards in the Irish music subculture. Tempo, ornamentation, repertoire, variations, and newly composed tunes are all components of performance practice whose transmission is contingent on interpersonal relationships. Acceptable and unacceptable modes of behavior likewise constitute an important part of this community dynamic. While we have examined standards of behavior, how are these standards reinforced? Who is responsible for conveying aesthetic norms and how is this done? Having considered the

interchange among individuals in the subculture, I will now consider how authority are understood and reinforced within the subculture.

2.6. Authority and Seniority in an Irish Music Community

Newness is legitimized in the same way in which standards are reinforced. The unspoken hierarchy in the Irish music subculture is upheld by the mutual recognition of musicians' seniority and technical skill. Those musicians at the top of the hierarchy are older, have been around longer, and generally exhibit a high level of technical proficiency on their instrument. One's age and technical ability—and in that order—are the factors that determine to what extent new musical ideas or innovations may be introduced and accepted in performance practice.

Uilleann piper, scholar, and singer Tomás Ó Canainn describes the importance of trans-generational authority as he discusses a contemporary traditional musician's standing and authority relative to musicians of older generations. A traditional mindset, then, is one that takes stock of this trans-generational hierarchy and submits to it in the stylistic mirroring of past generations.

He [a traditional musician] sees his performance in relation to that of other musicians who have gone before him, as well as in the context of the living tradition, and he often refers to this aspect of his music.

His place is among the past generations of musicians as well as among his contemporaries. His performance only has its full meaning when measured against theirs...their contribution, though past, is to some extent affected by his [performance in the present]. With every performance he is...shifting the centre of gravity of the tradition towards himself, however minutely, and is re-establishing the hierarchy of performers past and present.

The very idea of a traditional style depends on such a view of the traditional performer's role, for in measuring himself against his predecessors he is, of course, being affected by them and in the process ensuring that his performance is in some general way comparable to theirs.⁶³

An interest in maintaining stylistic continuity across generations is perhaps one facet of this performing tradition that engenders a conservative approach to innovation and variation. As I will explain in Chapter V, while musicians, on average, vary about half of their measures, there are certain aspects of the first playing of a tune that are maintained over successive repetitions, thus suggesting that norms of performance practice encourage certain kinds of melodic alterations while discouraging others.

Let us consider a musical authority figure in the Baltimore music community. For example, Billy McComiskey, who heads the Baltimore community that I described in the previous section, is a senior member of the music-making community because he has lived in Baltimore since the 1970s and has likewise maintained extremely high technical standards on the button accordion, his instrument of choice. McComiskey's personality, coupled with his extraordinary technical and artistic aptitude for playing Irish music, makes him a figure of authority in the Baltimore Irish traditional music subculture. Other musicians take his approval or disapproval of certain modes of behavior seriously and his introduction and performance of new compositions are understood in kind.

For example, when I reached age eighteen, McComiskey said that I ought to make a commercial recording of my uilleann piping. Because this kind of approval came from a senior musician, I felt as if a greater authority within the community was officially validating my musical enterprise. Had the recommendation to record an album come

⁶³ Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), 41.

from a younger player, a newcomer to Baltimore, or someone who did not play instrumental music, I would likely have appreciated the compliment, but would not have acted on it because the new, the young, and the non-practicing are not inscribed with the validation power of senior players. Because McComiskey held high status, I was prompted to follow up on his suggestion and consequently produced a commercial recording of my playing.⁶⁴

McComiskey's authority in Baltimore is augmented by the fact that his sons also play Irish traditional music expertly, thus reinforcing the importance of trans-generational music-making, the idea that community music-making starts with familial music-making. Despite the fact that a musician's ethnic Irish heritage may be marginal and may exert little influence over one's ability to play Irish music proficiently, Irish traditional dance music is learned in a communal and trans-generational setting by some children in Ireland who end up playing it through their adult years.⁶⁵ Often, as in the instance of the Mulcahy family of Sliabh Luachra or the Doherty family of Donegal, music-making at a high technical level may extend back more than a single generation (in the Doherty family, music-making extends back at least four generations).⁶⁶

On the other hand, however, there are also Irish musicians who may not have grown up in households where parents or other relatives play traditional music. One

⁶⁴ Eliot Grasso, *Standing Room Only*, illen odyssey records, CD, EG001, 2004.

⁶⁵ All are not in agreement about the idea that one's biological heritage has little to do with a musician's ability to play a certain type of music proficiently. Flute player Seamus Tansey has stated that the kind of international musical "mongrelisation" that has happened in America through the influx of disparate cultures hampers American musicians' ability to reproduce what Tansey considers to be a pure and naturally derived Irish music. See Seamus Tansey, "Irish Traditional Music - the Melody of Ireland's Soul; Its Evolution from the Environment, Land and People," in *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference*, ed. Fintan Vallely Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty (Dublin, Ireland: Whinstone Music, 1996), 211.

⁶⁶ See Feldman et al., *The Northern Fiddler*, 36-37.

example of a first-generation musician in Ireland who has become proficient is uilleann piper Robbie Hannan. Hannan is a recording artist, renowned teacher, curator of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and radio presenter. Hannan learned from informal visits to uilleann piper and fiddler Seán MacAloon's home and from recordings of virtuoso uilleann pipers that he purchased in record stores.

A parallel to this learning method in the United States would be Baltimore fiddler Jim Eagan who learned from recordings and from other senior musicians living in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. during his formative years. There are also musician parents whose children do not play Irish traditional music.

The importance of trans-generational authority is illustrated in a brief article published in *An Píobaire* (pronounced Ahn Pee-breh, meaning "The Piper") by Na Píobairí Uilleann (pronounced Nah Pee-bree Ill-en, meaning "The Uilleann Pipers"), an Irish organization located in Dublin, Ireland that is dedicated to the promotion of the repertoire and techniques associated with the uilleann pipes.

In this anonymous article, the author cites renowned pipers Séamus Ennis (1919-1982) and his father, James Ennis (1885-1965), as arbiters of acceptable uilleann piping practice.⁶⁷ This article demonstrates the importance of trans-generational hierarchies with respect to maintaining normative practice within Irish traditional music culture. The author (Terry Moylan) states that

Séamus Ennis was often heard to remark "my father wouldn't have done that", upon hearing some new or flashy piece of execution on the chanter of which he disapproved. It was his way of indicating that he felt that the

⁶⁷ Since the article was published anonymously, I sent an email inquiry to Na Píobairí Uilleann on December 20, 2010 to see if this was anonymity was an oversight of the publisher or a deliberate omission. Na Píobairí Uilleann archivist, Terry Moylan, claimed authorship of the article and stated that the omission of his name was an oversight.

piece of piping in question was in poor taste, or outside the tradition. He was on record as passing this judgment on, for instance, the practice of thumbing the back D hole of the chanter[.] This could be a phrase suitable for all occasions, and a convenient slogan to label the category of ‘piping sins’. Readers are invited to nominate their own candidates for inclusion. Here are a few suggestions to get the ball rolling – things Ennis’s father certainly wouldn’t have done:

- having one’s head almost in one’s lap while playing
- concluding a song-air with multiple soundings of the final note, which bear no relationship to the text of the song⁶⁸
- the transformation of the A cut, when used to get a hard bottom D, into a full-value note, redundant in the actual tune.⁶⁹

This quote is similar to Ciarán Mac Mathúna’s quote about Willie Clancy at the start of this chapter in that both quotes make an appeal for a senior generation of musicians to establish standards of normative practice. Whereas Willie Clancy was ascribed mentorship for younger musicians, Séamus Ennis, citing his father James as a higher authority, is portrayed as a kind of tradition watchdog. Validation comes from older musicians. Séamus Ennis appeals to his father as an authority just as the author of this anecdote appeals to Séamus Ennis. Stating that Ennis approved of or disapproved of an aspect of performance practice implies that the standard is authoritative and therefore ought to be followed.

2.7. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I am situating the practice of melodic variation within several contexts. This chapter has focused on how variation might be appraised within a

⁶⁸ On the importance of the instrument imitating the voice and its songs, Richard Henebry conveys that “By fortune of accident I was reared amidst the last broken shreds of vocal and instrument Irish musical tradition, and found the opinion on all hands that the office of the instrument was to imitate vocal music, its success in that article being the only measure of its excellence.” Richard Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1928), 54.

⁶⁹ Terry Moylan, "My Father Wouldn't Have Done That," *An Piobaire* 4, no. 41 (2007): 25.

subcultural community and how hierarchies and interpersonal relationships come to bear on musical innovation.

In this chapter, I have used Slobin's categories of superculture, subculture, and interculture and have considered Irish traditional music culture in these categories. In order to consider possible meanings to Breandán Breathnach's statement that "There is only one way of becoming a traditional player or singer, and that is by listening to genuine material performed in a traditional manner," I have discussed how musicians learn repertoire and acceptable conventions of behavior in the Baltimore Irish music community. This analysis of the Baltimore subculture has afforded us a perspective of how authority works within such a community. The import of this perspective is that we may now begin to understand how social and musical norms are reinforced and how individual innovation, like the composition of new tunes or variations, may come to be deemed acceptable.

The Baltimore subculture is concerned primarily with issues of performance practice. Performance practices and behavioral norms of how, what, and when to play are reinforced both implicitly and explicitly. These standards are reinforced through community hierarchies whose structures reveal that a musician's seniority within a given community is placed at the top of that hierarchy. Seniority carries the weight of legitimization for new ideas and musical innovations.

I have considered this Baltimore community to show how power structures work to legitimize or invalidate certain musical practices. The terminology of legitimacy is couched in terms of the "authentic," the "traditional," and the "regional." Few criteria are given to qualify any of these terms in most cases, leaving individual innovation within a

community to be validated by senior musicians. In order to show this, I have considered how musicians generally learn to play Irish traditional dance music and what aspects of the music culture are discussed among individuals.

CHAPTER III

AESTHETIC CONSERVATISM IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND THE LIMITATIONS OF MELODIC VARIATION

3.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the historical contexts and the consequent psychological fallout that may contribute to a conservative aesthetic in Irish traditional music culture. In Chapter II, I discussed the idea that acceptable modes of playing Irish traditional music—including the playing of variations, the introduction of new compositions, and innovation in general—are generally established by senior musicians. Younger generations of musicians observe these standards and behave in kind. When younger musicians fail to observe certain standards of behavior, senior musicians may take it upon themselves to correct the younger musician. In order to broaden our perspective about what might mitigate variance and invariance at the interpersonal Irish community level, I will, in this chapter, consider what kinds of cultural contexts may have contributed to a general conservative mindset that senior musicians exhibit in the Irish traditional dance music tradition.

In the Irish instrumental dance music tradition, it is normal to both make up melodic variations and to perpetuate repertoire. Tomás Ó Canainn, whom we met in Chapter II, writes that

In many ways the Irish [music] tradition might be regarded as a conservative one, since the very idea of a tradition is unthinkable if one does not imply conservation of certain features of the past. Yet it [the idea of tradition] need not mean that there is the positive dislike of innovation implied by the word conservative, for one finds a tendency among traditional performers to alter the material they use. The change may take the form of variation of a melody in successive verses of a song, or it may

be a permanent long-term change through the process of oral transmission. Both [kinds of changes] are quite common in the Irish tradition and there is ample evidence to show that they [such changes] are an essential part of it.⁷⁰

Melodic variation is a normative part of performance practice in Irish traditional music, but, as Ó Canainn points out, the word “tradition” implies a kind of conservatism with respect to repertoire and style. In other words, “melodic variation” means changing the tune over successive repetitions. But, even the words “changing the tune” imply sufficient sameness across successive repetitions to qualify a variation as such rather than a complete change of tune. For a traditional musician, Ó Canainn says, varying a melody means that

The traditional performer may sometimes appear to resort to the use of clichés in variation or composition – he would not see them in this light of course, but would regard them as being almost the standard building-blocks, as it were, of his art.⁷¹

Ó Canainn is saying that when Irish traditional musicians vary, they do so using stock types of variations. The variations are melodic figurations and ways of thinking about melodies that have become ingrained in an individual musician’s long-term memory over long-term exposure to the idiom which, in live performance, can be quickly chosen and deployed to create a lively and interesting performing experience. The cognitive processes that facilitate this quick choosing, placement, and execution will be discussed in Chapter VI.

⁷⁰ Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

In order to understand melodic variation as a result of human behavior and cultural circumstance, we need to consider certain socio-historical contexts that may have contributed to a resistance to the kind of over-varying that might render a tune unrecognizable.⁷² I am calling this approach to performance practice *aesthetic conservatism*. Generally speaking, aesthetic conservatism is nothing more than choosing consistently over time: it is the opposite of stylistic eclecticism. When I refer to aesthetic conservatism, I am citing a prevalent philosophy about performance practice that is resistant to excessive innovation and change.⁷³ Obviously, if melodic variation is a hallmark of performance practice, then there are some kinds of changes and modes of variance that are generally acceptable: I am not saying that Irish traditional music culture is resistant to all kinds of changes and innovations. What I want to impress upon the reader is that perpetuating certain kinds of performance practices and repertoires across several generations of people is part of the core of what can be argued to define a traditional approach.

Aesthetic conservatism, with respect to Irish traditional dance music, is the idea that an instrumentalist should, through successive repetitions of a dance tune, play a tune in such a way that it remains recognizable. At the core of this aesthetic is the idea that a musician, regardless of age or technical dexterity, should not change too many notes of a tune throughout successive repetitions of it, and, should he choose to change a few notes

⁷² Extensive psychological testing would be required in order to establish the extent to which excessive pitch alteration over successive repetitions renders a particular tune “different” from the perspective of a listener. This research has not yet been carried out with Irish traditional instrumental dance music.

⁷³ I have used the word “excessive” deliberately rather than giving quantitative or qualitative specifications because an amount of change (if musical change can even be reasonably argued to occur in amounts) that is deemed inappropriate varies from musician to musician. The idea that change could be “too much” is largely subjective since it not a measurable standard agreed upon by all—or even most—musicians who play Irish traditional dance music.

over several repetitions of the same tune, he should change them occasionally rather than frequently. In aesthetic conservatism, less is more.⁷⁴

My purpose in this chapter is to address the following question: why might musicians exhibit aesthetic conservatism in a music culture that approves of melodic variation? One obvious answer to why a musician does not vary a tune could simply be that he likes the tune as it is, just the way he learned it. A musician may have no desire to vary a tune because the tune is, as he knows it and has always played it, kinesthetically, aurally, emotionally, and aesthetically satisfying—there is no need to change a good thing. I think that this is one reason why many musicians choose not to vary tunes.

Another reason why a musician might not vary a tune might also have to do with his technical skill, familiarity with a tune, or comfort with the idiom. In order to play melodic variations at dance tempo, it is usually necessary to develop one's technique and manual dexterity. Likewise, a musician may need to practice a tune for a considerable period of time before he feels comfortable enough with the fingering to vary a melody with ease. Unfamiliarity with Irish music in general might also inhibit melodic variation since, without familiarity, the range of normative variables—the style—is not yet known or assimilated. Ó Canainn states that

Style implies a selection by a performer of certain traditional patterns...of the tradition in his improvisation. His ability to select [variations] will obviously depend on what material he has at his command: a poor performer without much experience will have a small store of such material, while a top-class performer, having a wide choice, will be able to make his performance more interesting, varying his treatment of the tune in its successive repetitions.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

The morphologies of different instruments also invite different kinds of variations. Of the statistics I gathered from the source recordings, musicians playing certain instruments tended to vary more on average than others. Instrumentalists like fiddlers or accordion players, whose instruments have polyphonic capabilities, may feel freer to vary melodies because the physical options for varying may be more apparent. Conversely, tin whistle players and flute players, whose instruments are capable of only monophonic playing, may vary less because the instrument is capable of less than a fiddle or accordion. These are not hard and fast rules, however. This is not to imply that certain instruments are better for varying melody than others. I mean simply that morphology invites an instrumentalist to think about Irish music in certain ways and that these various ways of thinking may result in more or less melodic variations.

All these practical contexts are reasons why musicians might vary less rather than more and why it is that Ó Canainn may say that “tradition” implies conservatism. However, these immediately apparent reasons may not be the whole story of why musicians might choose to vary melody in a way that maintains a tune’s identity over successive repetitions. The reasoning behind a musician’s may preference for playing a dance tune as he has learned it may involve a complex of psychological rationale. As I suggested in Chapter II, we do not always know why we prefer what we prefer, but there is reason to suggest that our contexts, the beliefs and values that we are raised to hold dear, may play some role in establishing our preferences.

Outside the obvious reasons why an Irish musician might choose to maintain a tune’s identity, I would like to consider a few explanations that are philosophical and

contextual in nature and which are perhaps less obvious. I will offer a few possible answers to the question of aesthetic conservatism using a socio-historical approach.

In this chapter, I offer is a contextual interpretation of a behavioral practice. While I do not have quantitative evidence to establish a causal relationship between political and economical actions and performance practice, I will suggest that the ways in which modern practitioners operate in this music tradition is largely a function of imagined history and personal links thereto.

What is important about colonization and other historical contexts as they relate to aesthetic conservatism is *not* that there is an empirical correlation between politics and music-making. What I think is relevant about the effect of past events is the kind of mentality that circumstance has cultivated among Irish people—the way that some contemporary Irish musicians *think* they are supposed to think and behave as a result of historical conditioning. After all, colonization was hundreds of events involving thousands of individuals acting volitionally over several centuries. To state firmly that the effects of colonization (or famine, or antiquarianism for that matter) on contemporary musical practice today can be quantified implies that colonization can be considered as the kind of singular, homogenous historical event that it clearly was not.

While I will address many relevant contextual issues as they relate to Irish politics, society, and colonialism, I have written this chapter in a way that addresses the question at hand rather than in a way that could serve as a comprehensive political, technological, or economical history of Ireland. My objective is not to critique colonial historiography as it relates to England and Ireland, but to reconstruct common discourses

with which Irish musicians are familiar. I will now give an overview of my proposed route through this topic.

The inseparable standards of socializing behavior and performance practice are a function not only of individual decision-making—music is not practiced in a vacuum—but individual decision-making as it is practiced within a socio-historical dialogue. This socio-historical dialogue is a seamless continuum of past events that shape the way musicians formulate and evaluate present norms and standards of musical practice.

With the idea in mind that most Irish musicians find melodic variation crucial to performance practice, I will examine what socio-historical events could perhaps be contributing to the social norms and practices that fence off the practice of melodic variation so as to dissuade the practitioner from falling into the “abyss of freedom.”⁷⁶ I will discuss the theoretical constructs (a taxonomy) that I think constitute the “links” in this figurative fence in Chapter V.

I will begin with a brief discussion of England’s colonization of Ireland and English attitudes toward the Irish. In doing this, I will suggest that as the people of Ireland became socially disenfranchised, their social and artistic enterprises depreciated by the colonizer, that perhaps creativity was curtailed by a self-deprecating mentality.

The idea here is that regardless of the fruits of Irish innovation, the English would

⁷⁶ The phrase ‘the abyss of freedom’ is found in Igor Stravinsky’s *Poetics of Music*, as follows: “The creator’s function is to sift the elements he receives from her [imagination], for human activity must impose limits upon itself. The more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free. As for myself, I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves, I have the feeling that everything is permissible to me. If everything is permissible to me, the best and the worst; if nothing offers me any resistance, then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking becomes futile. Will I then have to lose myself in this abyss of freedom? To what shall I cling in order to escape the dizziness that seizes me before the virtuality of this infinitude?” See Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, Bilingual ed., The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 85. While those who vary melody would not call themselves creators, I will discuss in Chapter VI how aural memory necessitates re-creation in the process of music practice.

automatically depreciate such artistry. Because the English devalued Irish enterprises with criticism, perhaps the Irish felt it best to avoid criticism altogether and curtail musical creativity.⁷⁷

During English colonization, Ireland endured the Great Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. This catastrophe swallowed up millions of lives and threatened thousands more. This immediate biological and social threat triggered a survivalist mentality that would eventually be reformatted rhetorically as a musical-cultural threat. The idea here is that the musical practices that are at the essential core of Irish ethnicity survived the Famine⁷⁸ and thus must be preserved. The survival of musical practice implies the survival of a race: if the musical practice disappears, then ethnic identity disappears with it. If ethnic identity disappears, then personal identity also disintegrates. The Famine serves as an instigating context for aesthetic conservatism in music in that excessive melodic variation is considered to compromise the cultural aesthetic core of Irishness. If the essential core of the music is changed through melodic variation and innovation, then the core is unstable and could disintegrate. This cultural disintegration, caused by too much variety, is, I contend, perceived to herald the end of a practice and thus the end of a people.

I will examine preservationism first in the collecting philosophies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collectors such as the father-son Neal duo, Edward Bunting, and George Petrie. In the philosophies of Bunting and Petrie, we will encounter the belief that

⁷⁷ Prior to the twentieth century, it is unlikely that Irish traditional music was referred to as “art.” It is sensible to see music making prior to the twentieth century within its social context and not as a tradition of stage performance.

⁷⁸ I will henceforth use a capitalize “F” when referring specifically to the Potato Famine and a lowercase “f” when referring to famine in general.

there are more or less correct versions of a tune and that it is those correct versions that must be preserved for posterity. Aesthetic conservatism in this instance is a function of preservationism, a response to the perceived endangerment of cultural purity. Purity is preserved through a performance practice aesthetic that is disinclined to deliberately change the notes of the tune as they were handed down. Purity, again, is a word that will mean different things to different musicians. What will perhaps be common to all definitions of the word is the vagueness of the description. While some people hold cultural purity as a high ideal, definitions of purity remain illusive.

The idea that there exist more or less correct versions of tunes will bring our discussion to the advent of recording technology in the late-nineteenth century. Recording companies doing business during the first half the twentieth century, while arguably more interested in selling recordings than in perpetuating the waning practice of certain musical traditions, facilitated the conceptual reification (derived from the Latin *res* meaning “thing”) of musical practice by designing and perpetuating a technology that both renders a performance immutable and allows that performance to be divested of its human (and necessarily mutable) context through international dissemination. Many musicians living in Ireland sought to emulate the performances that came to Ireland in the form of recording technology because many of the musicians who were recorded early in the twentieth century were highly regarded. The idea that better musicians are emulated is not all that unusual in Irish traditional music culture: younger musicians would have imitated older and more proficient musicians. However, recording technology took the personality away from the transmission, thus allowing for musicians to idolize particular performers who had no personal connection with them.

These paragon recordings were to be emulated: you were to play like the recordings because they were the best. The idea was that being good meant imitating the recording—any deviation would fall short of the recorded genius.

The cultural implications for the impersonal acquisition of style and repertoire are significant, however. Recordings do not reinforce the generational hierarchies that were probably normative up through the nineteenth century. Recorded virtuosos invited (or exacerbated) a musical meritocracy to begin to replace the kind of trans-generational hierarchy that would have been the family default.⁷⁹

From having grown up in this music culture for nearly thirty years, a portion of which I detailed in Chapter II, I have observed several veins of rationale that may explain why instrumentalists exhibit aesthetic conservatism. I contend that one reason why musicians feel disinclined to change too much of a tune is because of the fact that tune might have been learned from a close friend or beloved community member. Playing the tune “as it was taught,” enables the musician a momentary sensory experience of that loved one who has died or moved away. Playing the tune differently from how the loved one taught and played it deprives the player and listeners of that sensory experience of that particular loved one. Hence, it may be in the interest of remembering an individual that the tune is reproduced as it was learned.

The importance of interpersonal learning might also contribute to the reverence some musicians hold toward the way a tune is played on a recording. While early

⁷⁹ While in Chapter II, I discussed that normative learning through childhood enculturation involves the emulation of senior musicians, not all people who learn to play this music begin learning during childhood. There are many communities of Irish musicians who began playing this music as adults and I think that it is in this format that meritocracy begins to replace trans-generational hierarchies. Adults who have earned high social positions in their vocations and homes assume that their authority automatically transfers to musical settings. This assumed or self-appointed authority can cause friction with other adult musicians who find themselves in the same sort of situation.

recordings arriving in Ireland might have documented performers unknown to the listener, lack of a personal connection with the recorded musician was certainly not exclusively the case through the rest of the twentieth century. Close friends and family would have made recordings from which other friends would have learned tunes.

My final point for considering contexts contributing to aesthetic conservatism will be to discuss perspectives on the commodification of Irish traditional music. Some musicians consider professional performers (those who make a living from performing and teaching others how to perform) to be sell-outs because, in an attempt to make a living by selling Irish music to larger crowds, these professionals are accused of compromising an essential core of Irish music that despite impossible odds has survived the Famine. Aesthetic conservatism is a reaction against the adulteration of the tradition and the spectacle considered necessary to sell Irish music to outsiders. The assumption of this philosophy is that the purity of the tradition is corrupted when the dance music is formatted for an audience that is largely ignorant of traditional aesthetics. In other words, creating a spectacle out of Irish music through dance shows and unorthodox arrangements of dance tunes adulterates the purity that would be otherwise maintained if the music were not performed and packaged for outsiders.

The lenses of English colonization, Famine survivalism, antiquarian preservationism, reification and recording technology, remembering love ones, and desires for disassociation from commercialism and spectacle will serve to focus my discussion on why it might be that musicians in Irish traditional music culture exhibit aesthetic conservatism.

3.2. The Importance of Humility

The theories in this chapter are intended to explain aesthetic conservatism, but a brief explanation of the importance of humility in Irish music culture is necessary before we venture forth. It is of the utmost importance to many musicians in this music culture to constantly rank oneself beneath others (at least in public) and to maintain a demeanor that is meek, retiring, self-effacing, and even, in extreme instances, self-deprecating. As I discussed in Chapter 2, using Ciarán Mac Mathúna's assessment of Willie Clancy's comportment as an example, it is inappropriate to posture oneself as an authority figure and it is inexcusable to deliberately draw attention to one's own musical gifts as if they have special importance. Aesthetic conservatism, I suggest, is inextricably linked first and foremost with this idea—the notion that ambition, showing off, or drawing attention to one's musical abilities in search of commendation is negatively appraised.

While this self-effacing attitude is not prevalent in writing, I have observed dozens of musicians exhibiting this kind of humility on stages, in sessions, and in private interactions. Accordion player Johnny Óg Connolly affords us a window into this genuine self-effacement in the liner notes of his album *Aisling Yoshua/Joshua's Dream* of 2011. Connolly's candid humility is apparent as he modestly—and almost apologetically—introduces the content of his recording of Irish traditional accordion playing. Connolly says that

It has taken me a very long time to get around to making a solo disc. You always feel you're not quite ready and of course you never are and you never will be! It was never my intention to include five of my own compositions on this CD but recordings take on a life of their own and the tracks seem to choose themselves...I am profoundly grateful to all the

musicians that have inspired me over the years and hope that my small offering will be acceptable...⁸⁰

If I may venture an interpretation of Connolly's words, there are a few important things that he wants the reader to understand. First, Connolly wants the reader to know that he has finally made a recording after putting it off for some time, but, in spite of his recording, he does not see himself as "ready" or finished with his musical development. He does not want to present himself as if he has arrived at some pinnacle of artistry and can improve no further.⁸¹

Second, Connolly's use of the word "never," with respect to his own compositions, intimates concern that readers might think him vain for recording his own compositions rather than recording the compositions of others. He wishes to distance himself from the idea that recording his own tunes is an attempt at shameless self-promotion. Connolly's apologetic tenor relative to recording his own compositions on the album is to be construed as an act of humility. This attitude is appropriate and desirable in Irish music culture.

Third, Connolly proposes a diminutive appraisal of his recording. It is a "small offering" in the greater scheme of the Irish music community—he wants the reader to understand that he considers others to be more important than himself. In other words, he does not want the reader to wrongly infer that he thinks his own project to be of some great importance or that his own recording is meant to eclipse other recordings. Given the

⁸⁰ Johnny Ó Connolly, *Aisling Yoshua/Joshua's Dream*, CD, Óg Music JOC001CD, 2011.

⁸¹ Uilleann piper Jimmy O'Brien-Moran, in the liner notes of his album *Seán Reid's Favorite* of 1996, echoes this sentiment by writing "And I'm still practising..." suggesting that piping for him is as much about the process of improvement as it is about results that are good enough to record in a studio. Jimmy O'Brien-Moran, *Seán Reid's Favorite*, CD, Piping Pig Music PPPCD001, 1996.

modesty of this excerpt, it seems that Connolly sees himself as a musician who, over due course, decided finally to put together a recording that, while including a few of his own compositions, must not be perceived as a stab at fame or creative self-indulgence.

The kind of retiring attitude that I sense in Connolly's remarks is not false modesty; it is a genuine meekness that Irish traditional musicians expect from one another. In fact, as is often the case that with outsiders, Irish musicians are encouraged to exhibit an uncomfortable level of self-acknowledgement because outsiders, for many reasons, expect proficient musicians to be overtly proud of their own music-making abilities. Exhibiting pride in oneself is hardly ever appropriate in this music culture.

With this psychological underpinning in place, let us proceed to consider how other historical contexts may have contributed to the cultivation of such an attitude.

3.3. English Colonization and the Irish Cultural Inferiority Complex

England's colonization of Ireland will serve as our historical point of departure as we examine potential causes for aesthetic conservatism in Irish traditional music culture. I suggest that the considerable period of time during which England exerted military dominance over Ireland ingrained in the Irish a kind of cultural inferiority complex. A cultural inferiority complex is a state of mind that immediately depreciates cultural achievements at large. Through colonization, the English ingrained in the Irish psyche the idea that Irish enterprises were feeble and inferior. What this attitude could mean for melodic variation and aesthetic conservatism today is the doubt about the value of one's musical creativity. Doubts about creativity may stunt creative impulses thus curtailing ambition for musical innovation.

Those occupying the lowest rungs of society—whether part of a colonial context or not—are often subject to a great deal of criticism. The Irish (the Catholic Irish in particular) occupied these low rungs during English colonization. The result of this low position and the criticism that assaulted its occupants from higher positions resulted in Irish musicians' hypersensitivity to outsider critique deemed to represent a dominant culture of some kind. Because of this expected criticism, Irish music rhetoric written for outsider consumption often furnishes a guarded and legitimizing appraisal of Irish culture. Irish cultural critic and barrister Ivana Bacik suggests that

The reason [that derogatory accounts of Ireland are difficult to find in popular modern writing] may lie in a reluctance to criticise ourselves publicly; a tendency, perhaps derived from past experience of colonisation, to band together collectively and defensively against any perceived external critique.⁸²

Under colonialism, the Irish found themselves in a situation in which their artistic, cultural, and social practices were repeatedly held up to an English standard that was prejudiced against Irish culture. At best, the Catholic Irishman could muse about attaining English status, but in reality, because of the many steps England took to subdue Ireland, an Irishman and an Englishman would never be social equals under English rule. My interpretation of historical circumstance is that the Irish, learning that their colonizer would inevitably depreciate Irish cultural enterprises, came to embrace a low profile with respect to their musical and cultural innovation rather than to risk inviting criticism. What colonialism means for forging aesthetic conservatism in performance practice is that in

⁸² Ivana Bacik, *Kicking and Screaming: Dragging Ireland into the 21st Century* (Dublin: O'Brien, 2004), 18.

this tradition, it is generally considered inappropriate to showcase one's own performance skills through unorthodox deviations from communally derived aesthetic standards.

Irish scholar Joseph Ryan compactly characterizes Ireland's historical association with England as one in which "Not only was Irish culture and life measured according to this standard [established by Britain], but the whole experience of western civilization arrived in the main through the medium of Britain."⁸³ The commercial and political dominance of English culture made it the yardstick against which other cultures existing inside the empire were measured. But how did English culture come to act as the supreme mediator of Ireland's experience of western civilization and how did the Irish come to be so disenfranchised that they cultivated a conservative musical aesthetic? To find out, we will have to delve into Ireland's socio-historical past and we will begin with Henry VIII, the first man to hold the title King of Ireland since the twelfth century.

3.3.1. Henry VIII's Ascent to Power and the Colonization of Ireland

With his marriage to Elizabeth of York in January of 1486, Henry VII united the houses of Lancaster and York thereby inaugurating what would become the Tudor dynasty, a succession of monarchs whose influence in Ireland would prove formidable. Henry VII's son, Arthur, died in 1502 leaving behind the Spanish (and Catholic) Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castille. To ensure the perpetuation of the Tudor bloodline, Henry VII secured a dispensation from Pope Julius II for his son, Henry VIII, to wed the widowed Catherine in 1509. Of the six

⁸³ Joseph J. Ryan, "Assertions of Distinction: The Modal Debate in Irish Music," in *Music and the Church*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 62.

children that Henry VIII and Catherine conceived, the only one to survive long enough to exercise sovereignty over Ireland was Mary I, who was born in 1516.

In the next decade after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII nursed a romantic interest in Anne Boleyn, one of Catherine's courtesans. By 1527, Henry VIII was aggressively pursuing an annulment for his marriage to Catherine by claiming that the papacy had wrongfully accorded the dispensation for Henry to marry Catherine in the first place. Pope Clement VII, a Medici⁸⁴ and cousin to Martin Luther's excommunicator, Pope Leo X, was disinclined to acquiesce to Henry VIII's request. After Clement VII denied the revocation of this papal dispensation, Henry turned to Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, and ordered him to annul his marital bonds to Catherine. Cranmer, using his Episcopal authority to defy the Pope's wishes, did as his king commanded, annulling the marriage and thus allowing Henry and Anne Boleyn to marry around 1533.⁸⁵ Rome's response to Cranmer's annulment was excommunication for both Henry and Thomas Cranmer in 1538. In the year of his excommunication, Henry founded the Anglican Church, the religious establishment in England of which subsequent English kings and queens would be the head. No longer would England or any of its holdings be subject to papal authority; the head of both church and state would henceforth be the English monarch.

Henry's break with Rome left the Catholic Irish under his royal jurisdiction at a legal disadvantage, should they choose to remain loyal to the Pope. This shift in religious authority would greatly alter the spiritual life (at least on paper) and civic life of the Irish

⁸⁴ Clement VII, being born into the powerful Medici dynasty was probably irritated with the English king's accusations that his office had acted wrongly.

⁸⁵ 1533 also saw a royal statute issued against the artistic class (the *aois*) in Ireland, which included the piper (*piobaire*), bard, and rhymer. Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*, 24.

when, in 1541, the Parliament of Ireland declared Henry VIII to be King of Ireland, effectively replacing the Lordship of Ireland with the Kingdom of Ireland. This proclamation was the culmination of what had been several years of dissolving Irish monastic centers to consolidate Henry's civic and religious power.

In 1538, the year prior to Henry's excommunication, the King sent royal commissioners to Dublin with the authority to dismantle monastic houses.⁸⁶ That same year, Archbishop George Browne, a supporter of the Reformation, ordered all references to the bishop of Rome to be stricken from liturgical books. It would seem that Henry's intent to loose himself from papal authority had been several years in the making.

With the Crown of Ireland Act approved 13 June 1541, Henry VIII, the newly proclaimed King of Ireland, appeared at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin the same week to proclaim this message in person before a large congregation.⁸⁷ When Henry was named King of Ireland in 1541, he began—and in many ways perpetuated—the dissolution of what was formerly an island-wide governing structure based on localized Irish tribal chieftaincies. Before Henry's nomination as King of Ireland, there was no unified form of government in Ireland.⁸⁸ Individual power-holders ruled local areas of Ireland leaving Ireland's political centers dispersed over the island. This decentralized means of governance contributed to Henry's ability to impose a kind of Anglicization on the Irish with a concentrated force previously unknown.

⁸⁶ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), 32.

⁸⁷ W. H. Grindle, *Irish Cathedral Music: A History of Music at the Cathedrals of the Church of Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), 11.

⁸⁸ The last king of Ireland was relieved of his position in 1169 when Norman invaders entered Ireland. In 1171, the Lordship of Ireland position was created and endured until the 1542 Crown of Ireland Act that reestablished the position of King of Ireland, as Henry VIII would henceforth occupied it.

While general comments about Henry's anti-Catholic activities are adumbrated in other histories of Irish traditional music, I am mentioning specific instances (and monetary instances) of England's depreciation of Irish religious practice to demonstrate the thoroughness and severity of England's ingresses.

Henry's political and religious machinations affected English attitudes toward the Irish and potentially altered Irish attitudes toward their own music making. Henry officially and invasively maneuvered the English monarchy into a more domineering political position on the island of Ireland. The perennial fear that Spain might use Ireland as an attack point compounded by the English desire to exploit the natural resources of the island led Henry and his three Tudor successors to focus assiduously on the task of dominating Ireland.⁸⁹

England's separation from the Catholic Church made the practice of Catholicism in Ireland increasingly hazardous and basically illegal, thus marginalizing the vast majority of the Irish who were practicing Catholics when Henry took the throne. The Tudor legacy for the next several decades would make serious efforts to assert political dominance by encouraging the breakdown of the chieftaincies that had served as the primary form of government in Ireland.

To gain control of Ireland, Henry instituted a practice called land re-granting. This was a legal practice that required those who were already living in Ireland to officially surrender their lands to the King of England. These lands would then be re-granted to the

⁸⁹ Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*, 23.

inhabitants of Ireland via Royal Charter provided they pledged military allegiance to England.⁹⁰ Those who would not pledge allegiance were stripped of their property.

While land re-granting might seem like a superfluous practice, petulant in its bureaucratic nature and formality, nothing could be further from the truth. The English return of land to the Irish under royal authority seared into the Irish psyche the bitter reality that the English were in charge. There would be no Irish soil: on paper and from the English monarch's perspective, Ireland was nothing more than an English colony. The practice of Catholicism would be perilous and marginalizing until the Catholic Emancipation of Ireland in 1829, a movement spear-headed by the Catholic Kerry-born Daniel O'Connell, which returned to the Irish many rights that English monarchs had stamped out one by one.

3.3.2. The Tudor Queens and the Plantation of Ireland

Henry's only legitimate son, Edward VI, died in 1553 at age fifteen whereupon Mary I, the only surviving royal heiress resulting from the union of Henry and Catherine, ascended to the throne. Mary reigned until her death in 1558, barely long enough to reverse some of the anti-Catholic ecclesiastical changes instituted by her father, and took considerable pains to restore Catholicism in England by eliminating exponents of Protestant reform. For our consideration of England's domination of Ireland, Mary started one trend in 1556 that would continue with her successor Elizabeth I: plantation. Plantation was the installation or "planting" of British subjects on the island of Ireland.

⁹⁰ Donal Joseph O'Sullivan, *Carolans: The Life Times and Music of an Irish Harper* (Cork: Ossian, 2001), 14.

At the death of Mary I, her half-sister Elizabeth became Queen of England: Elizabeth's interest and military presence in Ireland would be substantial. Elizabeth engaged in a series of shrewd tactical maneuvers that dealt further blows to the crumbling remnants of the Old Gaelic order of regional chieftaincies. Elizabeth continued her father's policy of land re-granting as would her successor James I. Elizabeth's version of plantation specifically installed Protestant British subjects in Ireland. Between 1558 and 1571, two domineering English governors, Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, and Sir Henry Sidney superintended Ireland at close range. It was through their agency and their common goal of exerting English authority over the whole of Ireland that resulted in the installation of English military presence in the provinces of Munster and Connacht, and the planting of English settlers in areas of Ulster and Leinster.⁹¹

3.3.3. The Degradation of Irish Culture and Character

The Tudor's largely successful policies regarding Irish colonization were paralleled by the publication of documents expressing racist attitudes about the Irish. These conquests caused no small amount of literary bile to be spilled over how lowly the English appraised the Irish.

One English writer who castigated Irish culture was the late-sixteenth-century author Edmund Spenser. Spenser served as Clerk to the Irish Court of Chancery starting in 1581 and by 1598 had become the sheriff of Cork, having acquired a great deal of land. His castle was burned when rebels overran Cork, thus exacerbating his contempt for

⁹¹ Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England, 1547-1603*, The New Oxford History of England (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1995), 270.

the Irish populous.⁹² Spenser's book, *A View of the State of Ireland*,⁹³ pronounces of the Irish that:

Marry those bee the most barbaric and loathy conditions of any people (I think) under heaven... They doe use all the beastly behaviour that may bee, they oppresse all men, they spoile as well the subject, as the enemy; they steale, they are cruell and bloodie, full of revenge, and delighting in deadly execution, licentious, swearers and blasphemers, common ravishers of women, and murderers of children.⁹⁴

While we may never know to what extent Spenser's material losses inflamed his hatred for the Irish, we can say that this kind of rhetoric about the Irish was typical of English writers. The English perception of the Irish people as a contemptuous lot of barbarians endured well into the nineteenth century.

Spenser not only slandered the character of the Irish people but also attacked the Brehon laws and the bardic tradition.⁹⁵ The bardic tradition in Ireland was a tradition of musician-composers, a highly specialized and greatly respected stratum of the Old Gaelic society. The bard's function, in essence, was to act as poet, genealogist, and reciter of the law (this was often done to regular accented stress, thus making the corpus of Brehon laws easier to remember).⁹⁶

⁹² Richard Ned Lebow, "British Historians and Irish History," *Éire-Ireland* 8, no. 4 (1973): 16.

⁹³ *A View of the State of Ireland* was published posthumously (Spenser died in 1599) in 1633 during the reign of King Charles I.

⁹⁴ Qtd. in Lebow, "British Historians and Irish History," 16.

⁹⁵ Laurence Ginnell, *The Brehon Laws: A Legal Handbook* (Littleton, Colo.: F.B. Rothman, 1993), 76-80.

⁹⁶ There were two separate roles within the notion of *bard*. The first is *fili* who, after six to seven years of training and demonstrating his prowess with language, composed poetry. The second role is filled by the *reacaire*, or reciter of poetry. This reciter would often be accompanied by a harper. See Keith and Kinnaird Sanger, Alison, *Tree of Strings Crann Nan Teud: A History of the Harp in Scotland* (Temple, Midlothian, Scotland: Kinmor Music, 1992), 36-38.

In 1601, the military forces of Elizabethan England emerged victorious over Old Gaelic Ireland at the Battle of Kinsale. With her victory at Kinsale, Queen Elizabeth was committed to expunging the entirety of Old Gaelic culture from Ireland, including the music. Near to the time of her death in 1603, Elizabeth ordered her constituents to “Hang all harpers where found and burn the instruments,”⁹⁷ a mandate issued to further weaken the social infrastructure of her collapsing colony. The likely purpose of Elizabeth’s order was to remove prestige and legitimacy from the remaining chieftain courts. The bards acted as good press for the man in charge: the bard would sing tales of the ruler’s heroism and how his ancestors had come to rule a particular area. Much of this historical and genealogical information was maintained only through oral recitation, so when the bards became dispossessed of their instruments and lives, the validating mechanism for the Old Gaelic political system dissolved.

I mention the dispersal of the bards in the litany of English monarchical activities because the context of bardic disintegration caused growing political animosity among the Irish toward the British. Eliminating the bards and their practices reflected a decline of Irish society in general that resulted from English policy and military interference. These societal changes, wrought both directly and indirectly by the English, compelled collectors of Irish traditional music, whose work we will discuss later in this chapter, to venture outside the Pale⁹⁸ to preserve what was thought to be a disappearing tradition that legitimized the essence of the Irish and their society.

⁹⁷ Seán O’Boyle, *The Irish Song Tradition* (Dublin: G. Dalton: distributed by O’Brien Press, 1976), 10.

⁹⁸ The English-occupied area around Dublin was generally referred to as the “Pale.”

3.3.4. The Cromwellian Gauntlet and the Suppression of Indigenous Music

Oliver Cromwell did little to ameliorate the havoc wrought by the Tudors and Stuarts in Ireland. During the Commonwealth, Cromwell brutalized the Irish, murdering many, and selling hundreds into slavery. Charles I was executed in 1649, and by 1653, Cromwell had maneuvered himself into the position of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, a title that he held until his death in 1658. The Puritan Cromwell was not well disposed toward indigenous music because of the licentious atmosphere he thought it created.⁹⁹ Neither was he well disposed toward Irish Catholics. Before he ascended to his position as Lord Protector, Cromwell, who took Edinburgh by military force and observed the recreational music making in that city, stated:

If any person or persons, commonly called fiddlers or minstrels, shall at any time after the 1st of July be taken playing, fiddling, and making music, in any inn, alehouse, or tavern...or intreating [*sic*] any person or persons to hear them play or make music in any of the places aforesaid, they shall be adjudged rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, and be proceeded against and punished accordingly.¹⁰⁰

Cromwell was not prepared to tolerate casual music-making in subservient lands under his control. It is not hard to imagine that this statement, made in reference to the Scottish, would have equally applied to the Irish who were the objects of Cromwell's disdain and aggression. This same military magnate echoed the same perceptions of the Irish as articulated by Edmund Spenser, except Cromwell exercised ferocious brutality on

⁹⁹ This idea of putting an end to unregulated dance and dance music reared its head in the twentieth century in the guise of the 1935 Irish Dance Hall Act, which stipulated that any group dancing was to be done under the supervision of religious authorities.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Anne Alburger, *Scottish Fiddlers and Their Music* (London: V. Gollancz, 1983), 19.

the Irish, killing women and children, annihilating entire villages, and selling thousands into slavery.¹⁰¹

3.3.5. The Defeat of the House of Stuart and the Introduction of the Penal Laws

Thirty years after the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, which succeeded Cromwell's reign of terror, William of Orange struck another decisive blow against Irish Catholic society in 1690. That year, Irish Catholic forces led by James II of England suffered defeat at the Battle of the Boyne. This major victory for Protestant England reinforced Protestant dominance over the entire island and thus the Penal Laws were instituted in 1695, a legislative act designed to subjugate the Irish Catholic contingency under the now Protestant English crown. The Penal Laws of 1695 leveled against Catholics prohibitions and limitations on voting, property ownership, inheritance, the intermarriage of Catholics and Protestants, holding public office, and other facets of life.¹⁰²

While more could be said about the relationship between England and Ireland, I will end my political history here. The point of the preceding sections has been to demonstrate how England treated Ireland harshly. The binary oppressor-oppressed is a historical narrative format that is admittedly simplistic. Real events rarely fall so neatly

¹⁰¹ Cromwell wrote on 16 September 1641 that "It hath pleased God to bless our endeavors in Drogheda [County Louth, Ireland]...The enemy were about 3,000 strong in the town...I do not think 30 of the whole number escaped with their lives. Those that did are in safe custody for the Barbados...I wish that all honest hearts may give the glory of this to God alone, to whom indeed the praise of this mercy belongs...this is a righteous judgment of God upon those barbarous wretches [the Irish] who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood." Cromwell marched forth then to Wexford where he destroyed no less than 2,000 Irish. See Richard Broad, Taylor Downing, Caroline Elliston, Isobel Hishelwood, Annie Kossoff, Sarah Manwaring-White, Ian Stuttard, and Adrian Wood, *The Troubles*, ed. Taylor Downing, 2nd ed. (London: Thames Macdonald, 1980), 13.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 23. While the Penal Laws proper were initiated in 1695, further laws of this kind were implemented through the eighteenth century. See Josef L. Altholz, *Selected Documents in Irish History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

into categories such that blame can be assigned easily and exclusively to one party over another.¹⁰³ While I have only recounted a rather general and common discourse that places Ireland in the victimized role and England in the oppressive role, this perspective is one commonly held and retold in histories of Irish music.¹⁰⁴ Even though I have recounted nothing that even approximates an unabridged history, this binary narrative is the sort with which many Irish musicians will understand and identify. What this common discourse amounts to is the idea that Irish culture—and the musical artifacts thereof—has endured tough times. This perceived longevity of practice adds value to it in the eyes of practitioners to the extent that changing the tradition shows disrespect to those musicians who endured the ill treatment for the sake of preserving an art form.¹⁰⁵

I have taken the time to retell common tales to underscore the oppressed side of Irish existence and the suppressive activities of the English government in Ireland. The religious fractures sustained by the impact of Henry VIII, the land re-granting and plantation of the Tudor queens, the enthusiastic malevolence of Cromwell, and the literary evidence from these periods suggests that Ireland was a country much maligned by its superintendent. The British were interested in purging the Irishness from the Irish and went to considerable lengths to make it legally and socially disadvantageous for the Irish to cling to traditional ways of living.

¹⁰³ *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, ed. David Boyce and Alan O'Day (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ See Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*; Sean Williams, *Focus: Irish Traditional Music*, Focus on World Music (New York: Routledge, 2010), 53-78.

¹⁰⁵ Consider Saeed De Ridder's statement that "The native culture of Ireland has experienced many challenges over the centuries – oppression, misrepresentation and apathy. These challenges to our national identity produced many heroic figures – men and women of vision who gave effective and dedicated service to the cultural movement. It is an acknowledged fact that in a pseudo-progressive and very often superficial world challenges to indigenous culture do not disappear, they merely change character but are nonetheless corrosive." Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, "Comhaltas: Treoir," http://comhaltas.ie/music/treoir/issue/spring_2003/ (accessed October 2, 2010).

The Tudor monarchs' aggressive colonizing strategies of the sixteenth century were paralleled in severity by England's general abasement of Irish culture. The kind of derogatory Spenserian appraisal of Irish culture continued well into the nineteenth century and met the Irish in America, where desperate Irish immigrants again occupied the lowest rungs of society.

3.3.6. Comparative Remarks and the Cultural Inferiority Complex

I suggest that part of the psychological fallout resulting from Ireland's period of colonization is a cultural inferiority complex. By cultural inferiority complex, I mean a cultural group's insecurity about the value of its artistic and social enterprises. This idea of a cultural inferiority complex, while applicable to the Irish, is not one that is unique to Ireland.

A. A. Phillips, writing about Australian culture in 1968, identified the cultural inferiority complex, isolating it in the superfluous comparisons he saw Australians making between Australian culture and external cultures.¹⁰⁶ Phillips thought that the tendency to make such unnecessary comparisons was exacerbated by the quiet self-assuredness that characterizes the English view of their own culture's superiority.¹⁰⁷ While Ireland and Australia are obviously different places, they have in common a lengthy period of English domination.

In line with Phillips's theory, I argue that statements that compare Ireland's vernacular music traditions with other respectable performance traditions exhibit this

¹⁰⁶ A. A. Phillips, *A.A. Phillips on the Cultural Cringe*, Mup Masterworks (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2006), 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

sense of inferiority. While some might recoil at the mere suggestion of a cultural inferiority complex, my objective here is not to demean Irish traditional music or to suggest that the authors of the statements that I will discuss have personal inferiority complexes. On the contrary, my objective is to rationalize conservative aesthetics and various reactions to personal innovation. In this section I suggest that comparative language attempting to dispel assumptions about inferiority really only serves to invite comparisons of dissimilar contexts and aesthetics, thus perpetuating the constructed bifurcation between “high” culture and “low” culture.

Asserting that one tradition is “just as good as” another can imply (and perhaps reinforce) a disparity in social prestige. When Irish musicians compare their music tradition to classical music (a more widespread global music culture), for example, Irish musicians perpetuate the constructed notion that classical music is somehow socially superior to the vernacular music of Ireland—a notion parallel to the idea that British culture, by comparison, is somehow intrinsically superior to Irish culture.

In his book *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* of 1971, Breandán Breathnach intimates the Irish cultural inferiority complex with a comparative statement that introduces a chapter titled “Traditional Techniques and Styles.” Breathnach states that

A violinist is not an educated fiddler, any more than a fiddler is an uneducated violinist. Traditional music, instrumental and vocal, is a system of music in its own right.¹⁰⁸

Breathnach uses two terms that refer to not only the instrument, but also to the individual playing that instrument. He also implies that one who is a violinist might be assumed to be more educated than a fiddler and, therefore, of better social stock.

¹⁰⁸ Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, 88.

Conversely, the fiddler in Breathnach's remark occupies the lower position in what he anticipates to be his reader's assumption. It is not simply the comparison of musical traditions, but the social status that these musical traditions invoke, that leads me to infer that this comparative statement suggests the cultural inferiority complex.

Further evidence of a cultural inferiority complex appears in a 2004 interview with the *Goucher Quarterly* in which Irish-American accordion player Billy McComiskey states matter-of-factly that "Irish traditional music is an art, like poetry or good writing or jazz..."¹⁰⁹ McComiskey wants to make it perfectly clear to the outsider who is interviewing him, an employee of an academic institution, that Irish music is on par with the respectable traditions of poetry and jazz.

On the surface, these comments seem straightforward: Breathnach is simply trying to anticipate his reader's knowledge base, while McComiskey is respectfully acknowledging poetry and jazz. I do not deny that these are reasonable ways to interpret these quotes, but I do not think that this is the end of their meaning. When we consider the comments of McComiskey and Breathnach in light of Ireland's oppressive colonial past, we begin to see how the musicians making these comparisons might be trying to anticipate and deflect criticism from outsiders. Whether or not the criticism comes is another issue—the point is that criticism is expected. The criticism is expected because receiving criticism for playing Irish music has come to be expected as normative based on decades and centuries of the same.

What I have tried to illustrate is, at its core, a kind of psychological standing in which the Irish feel inferior to other large political powers. However, the idea is not that, in the course of playing a tune, an Irish musician says to herself "I play the music that is

¹⁰⁹ Anne E. Kolakowski, "Pipe Dreams," *Goucher Quarterly* 2004, 33.

inferior to English music: if I want to avoid criticism, I better not vary the tune.” This is not what I mean at all. What I am referring to is the kind of retiring, humble, and even self-deprecating mentality that is current in this music culture, the kind of mentality expressed in the quote by Johnny Óg Connolly. The kind of humble self-effacement that characterizes appropriate comportment in Irish traditional music culture today may in part be linked to this colonial narrative. Playing the tunes the same way through successive repetitions is perhaps a byproduct of subconscious modes of thinking developed through colonization.

What these comparisons convey about the Irish traditional conservative aesthetic of performance practice is that the fear of criticism may curtail the type and amount of innovation most musicians exhibit in performances or on recordings. Perhaps musicians fear that should their innovations be perceived as either too ambitious or novel, they will be subject to a barrage of criticism both from outsiders and insiders. Having suggested that the English colonization of Ireland may have resulted both in feelings of inferiority (as evidenced in comparative remarks) and fear of criticism, I would now like to consider aesthetic conservatism as a reaction to perceived cultural decay.

3.4. Antiquarianism, Famine Survivalism, and Cultural Preservation

Playing a tune with few variations over successive repetitions may be caused by the idea that a musician is invoking an archetype, a singularly correct version of a tune that variations, if added, would deface. To understand what this idea has to do with music collecting and documentation, we will need to examine the idea of preservationism.

We preserve artifacts that we think are important and discard items that we consider unimportant. We try to imitate models of behavior that we consider to be exemplary and ignore models that we think are inconsequential. The Irish music collectors preserved what they considered to be important behavior as artifact in the transcriptions they made. Through transcription, the collectors established tune models and exemplars based on unique performances given by real musicians. These printed tunes were treated as authoritative exemplars by some musicians of subsequent generations. Notation specifically—and documentation generally—allows us to reassign cultural authority from an ephemeral person to an eternal/immutable document.

In this section, I will examine the collecting philosophies of Edward Bunting and George Petrie, two men who collected Irish music in the nineteenth century. Bunting and Petrie were outsiders¹¹⁰ who listened to live performances of Irish music and then created graphic representations (transcriptions) of those performances. Before a transcription was made, the music of performances could only be experienced live. I suggest that in making and selling these transcriptions, Bunting and Petrie infused each transcription with a qualitative authority.

As we will see from their own writings, Bunting and Petrie thought that performances of tunes did, to a greater or lesser degree, accurately represent some kind of fixed ideal of the tune that each collector might have had in his own mind.¹¹¹ Bunting was of the opinion that melodies remained unchanged by oral transmission. Therefore,

¹¹⁰ By “outsider” in this context, I mean collectors who did not grow up with or live among the musicians from whom they collected their music. My use of the term outsider with respect to collecting should also be understood to mean that collectors spoke a different language than their informants did, had different musical training, and identified with a Protestant denomination of Christianity.

¹¹¹ O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 19-22.

the versions he notated and sold in his collections were not only exceptional, but were also singularly correct—deviations in performance were mistakes, not creative variations. While Petrie thought that the same tune could be manifested differently from musician to musician or from region to region, his writings indicate that he believed there to be a singularly correct version of a tune that would be better suitable for publication than other lesser versions.

The reason why Petrie and Bunting advertised their transcriptions as if the performances they transcribed were paradigms was probably due to the fact that they, among other collectors, did in fact believe that what they had transcribed for publication was indeed the best version of the tune in existence. I suggest that music collecting and transcription has contributed to aesthetic conservatism in that print has introduced the idea that there are ideals that should be emulated consistently over time.¹¹²

Petrie and Bunting believed that there were better and worse ways to manifest a tune, and that they had transcribed the ideal manifestation of a tune on manuscript paper. One logical extension of this kind of approach is that no additions or alterations will improve the content of the transcription. If what is notated is inferred to be the finest representation of a performance, melodic variations are superfluous and do nothing to qualitatively improve the authoritative original transcription.¹¹³ If the publication contains no variations, adding variations will not improve the published version.

¹¹² For a series of essays dealing with textual authority in classical music, see Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹¹³ William Donaldson, in his study of highland piping in its social contexts, notes that the Highland Society decided to hold bagpiping competitions in which the performances of orally-trained bagpipers would be compared to simplified transcriptions of the same tune. The purpose, as Donaldson suggests, was to make adjudicating easier and to expedite the teaching of bagpipe techniques within the British army. In this instance, notation was regarded as authoritative by the “literate élite” who also wished to save bagpipe repertoire for the future. See William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society, 1750-1950*:

Before we examine the historical contexts of these two collectors, let us consider the nature of documentation and approaches to it. Why might a musician infer that a document necessarily discourages change? To preserve a thing automatically imbues that thing with both importance and superiority. Because it is impossible to preserve everything, those things selected for preservation are assumed to hold more importance than those things not selected for preservation. Preservationism, therefore, creates hierarchies of values with respect to cultural artifacts and thus establishes paradigms and exemplars that invite imitation. The transcription of a musical performance, as a type of preservationism, is a highly selective process. If an uncritical reader is unaware of that fact, he might assume that a musical transcription represents an exhaustive and therefore authoritative version of a tune or performance.¹¹⁴

In other words, some people think that a transcription is exhaustive and complete, requiring none of the kinds additions or changes that characterize melodic variation. Since the transcription of the purportedly best version of a tune shows no variations, one might infer that adding variations would only diminish the ideal representation of the tune printed on the page. Aesthetic conservatism's resistance to change could then be linked to an aversion for corrupting an archetype that is assumed to exist, a notion that the Irish collectors, as we will see in their own words, seem to have espoused. Performances that became transcriptions attained a qualitative advantage over those performances not transcribed because, as we will see, collectors submitted these

Transmission, Change and the Concept of Tradition (East Linton, East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 97.

¹¹⁴ Irish music scholar Leith Davis, writing of musicians who used printed music to learn tunes without enculturated musicians to emulate, states that "While many amateur musicians in Ireland would have had the example of native players to imitate, this would not have been so common in locations like London." Leith Davis, *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender: The Construction of Irish National Identity, 1724-1874* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 29.

transcriptions to the public as the “best” manifestations of a tune rather than as personal favorites.

It is from the pens of the Irish collectors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that we first see intimations of musical reification in Irish music culture. I propose that current notions of aesthetic conservatism are linked to antiquarianism and collecting by virtue of the introduction of exemplars. Let us now turn and consider the social contexts that compelled Bunting and Petrie to collect Irish music.

In the eighteenth century, there was an explosion of interest in all things Celtic due to the enormous popularity of the Ossianic poems. It is probably due in part to this popular literature and its purported foundation in ancient times that some antiquarians set out to preserve valuable articles of Irish culture in the face of the devastating Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. If we consider Edmund Spenser’s sixteenth-century assessment of the Irish earlier in this chapter, it is improbable that a similar catastrophe like mass starvation in sixteenth-century Ireland would have brought intellectuals to the back roads of the colony to collect traditional music. In fact, Elizabeth and subsequent rulers would probably have been thrilled at such an inexpensive way to eliminate the troublesome Irish and their practices. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collectors, however, thought that unless they stepped in to preserve the best and most important versions of tunes, those articles of culture would be lost forever.

Aesthetic conservatism in performance practice can also be understood as a reaction to the fear that too much change heralds the end of a practice and signals the demise of a culture and the end of a people. The idea is that playing excessive variations

dilutes the essential core of the music tradition. With this in mind, I would like to now turn to consider the historical contexts for Edward Bunting and George Petrie.

3.4.1. Collectors' Philosophies of Tune Collecting, Transcription, and Publication

In order to understand the impetus to transcribe Irish traditional music from live musicians in the first place, we must discuss the impact of the Ossianic poems, a literary phenomenon that cultivated an interest in Ireland's ancient past. I will contextualize collectors' philosophies (specifically those philosophies espoused by Edward Bunting and George Petrie) using the fervor generated by the Ossianic poems as a historical framework to suggest how, in response to a renewed interest in Irish culture, collectors presented tunes in a way that invited a conservative performing aesthetic.

Organist and musicologist Aloys Fleischmann (1910-1992) created a chronological index of the earliest collections of Irish airs, noting that the earliest records of Irish tunes appear in the *Dallis Lute Book* c. 1583.¹¹⁵ While the *Dallis Lute Book* may be the earliest written source of an Irish instrumental tune, it was not until 1724 that John Neal and his son, William Neal, published the first collection of exclusively Irish traditional instrumental dance music calling it *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes proper for the violin, German flute or hautboy* in Dublin. The Neals were manufacturers of musical instruments and inaugurated their publishing catalog in 1723. Nicolas Carolan, curator of the Irish Traditional Music Archive and Irish music scholar, states in his 1986 introduction to the 1724 Neal collection that it was probably the father-son duo's second or third public offering and, as a collection of exclusively Irish tunes,

¹¹⁵ See Aloys Fleischmann, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, and Paul McGettrick, *Sources of Irish Traditional Music, C. 1600-1855*, 2 vols., Garland Reference Library of the Humanities (New York: Garland, 1998).

represents a rather unique publication in their catalog.¹¹⁶ Both Edward Bunting and George Petrie owned copies of the 1724 Neal collection.¹¹⁷

In the interim between the Neals' 1724 publication of *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes* and Edward Bunting's *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* of 1796, which we will consider later, the Ossianic poems captured the imagination of Europe. The provenance of the Ossianic poems are debated into the twenty-first century, but the poems' initial publication between 1760 and 1763 quickly cultivated a fad for cultural and artistic practices associated with early Celtic civilizations. These Ossian poems are essentially verse stories about the Irish mythological figure Osín, son of Fionn mac Cumhaill, another mythological figure. Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736-1796) claimed that he had translated these poems from ancient Irish Gaelic sources, and he sold his purported translations to the European public as such.¹¹⁸

Because the debate over the poems' provenance and authenticity was not largely settled until the mid-twentieth century, the Enlightenment sensibility of the eighteenth century remained captivated by the "archaic modes of thought and uncorrupted ancient manners"¹¹⁹ that these poems presented. Thus the entrance of these translations of allegedly ancient texts of the 1760s was met with great enthusiasm and clamor. The

¹¹⁶ John Neal, Neal, William, and Carolan, Nicholas, *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes: Proper for the Violin, German Flute, or Hautboy: Dublin 1724*, Facsim. ed. (Dublin: Folk Music Society of Ireland, 1986), xii.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Scholar Derick Thomson suggested in 1952 that the Ossianic poems were compiled from a pastiche of sources and written largely by Macpherson himself. Derick S. Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian*, Aberdeen University Studies (Edinburgh: Published for the University of Aberdeen by Oliver and Boyd, 1952). Since then, multiple revisions of this judgment have been proposed.

¹¹⁹ Adam Potkay, "Virtue and Manners in Macpherson's Poems of Ossian," *Modern Language Association* 107, no. 1 (1992): 120.

enthusiasm for these purportedly ancient texts endured at least until 1840, when Edward Bunting published his third collection of Irish music. Bunting echoes the Enlightenment admiration of ancient Celtic civilizations stating that the purpose of exploring ancient heritage

...is to realize former times, so as to bring us acquainted with our ancestors...[so that we may be afforded]...an equal share of pleasure...to become acquainted with the men themselves, and with their general turn of mind and sentiment in the very notes and cadences by which they gave expression to their ruling passions.¹²⁰

Ancient heritage was important to people like Bunting because it represented an idealized reality.¹²¹ The Ossianic poems constituted popular literature of the day, and consequently found their way into the hands of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who would advocate the study and valorization of folk music in their respective Germanic locales. The Ossianic poems were to the 1760s and 1770s what Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* was to the 2000s in the sense that the unsubstantiated implications of the text were complete ancillary to the text's successful encapsulation of the zeitgeist—a quality that made huge commercial success stories out of both works.

Just as *The Da Vinci Code* caused a demand for related media from movies to book parodies, so too did the Ossianic poems create a demand for commercial stage plays and related articles. In the eighteenth century, *Oscar and Malvina*, an Ossian-based stage production named for characters in the poems, was staged in England. These

¹²⁰ Edward Bunting. *The Ancient Music of Ireland, Arranged for the Pianoforte* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840), 2.

¹²¹ Davis, *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender: The Construction of Irish National Identity, 1724-1874*, 95-119.

performances brought antiquarians and others from similar strata of society to the theaters. Antiquarian Sir John Graham Dalyell noted the insertion of the Irish bagpipes (a version of what is today called the uilleann pipes) in one such play to invoke the ancient in the stage productions.¹²² Intrigue about the origins of older layers of Irish music and culture had captured the imaginations of the researchers.

The popularity of the Ossianic poems demonstrates that eighteenth-century Europeans wanted authentic encounters with older layers of Irish culture and were willing to pay for those experiences. This fad perhaps also helps to explain why it was that Irish music started to be systematically collected and written down in the way that Bunting and Petrie did.¹²³ On one side of the Ossianic poems is the Neals' 1724 collection that is comprised of tunes apparently learned directly from a harper or harpers, but which, according to Nicolas Carolan, was a collection largely unknown by several important eighteenth and nineteenth-century Irish music collectors.¹²⁴ On the other side of the Ossianic poems are the collections of Edward Bunting who, in response to the popularity of ancient Irish culture, was sent both to the Belfast Harp Festival and into the field to unearth and preserve previously undocumented musical artifacts.

¹²² See Hugh Cheape and National Museums of Scotland., *Bagpipes: A National Collection of a National Treasure* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2008), 113. Sir John Graham Dalyell wrote in his memoirs that "The Irish bagpipe has been seen in the London theatres, as well as in our own, and in our concert rooms. It was introduced in the former at the performance of a favourite piece called Oscar and Malvina, founded on one of Ossian's poems." See John Graham Dalyell, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland, with Historical Annotations and Numerous Illustrative Plates* (Edinburgh: T. G. Stevenson, 1849), 39.

¹²³ Harry White suggests a political impetus behind the accumulation of Irish traditional music. See Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970*, Critical Conditions (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press in association with Field Day, 1998), 36-73.

¹²⁴ Neal, *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes: Proper for the Violin, German Flute, or Hautboy: Dublin 1724*, xxvii. Carolan notes that of all the tunes in this publication only two "Can duh Dilish" and "Sheen sheesh igus souse lum" had appeared previously in print.

The Ossianic poems excited the intelligentsia of Europe and convinced them that there was something of Irish music culture worth preserving in the first place. The institution of the Irish Royal Academy in 1785 accorded high status to the investigation of Ireland's cultural legacy.¹²⁵ There are many more music traditions both inside and outside of Europe that have never been committed to paper. The desire to preserve and market encounters with the authentic ancient explains first why Irish music continued to be collected from living musicians in the late-eighteenth century and why a conservative aesthetic may be a byproduct of collecting "genuine cultural articles" from those musicians. There was a market for ancient authenticity generated in part by the Ossianic poems.

Understanding the popularity of the Ossianic poems serves to explain collectors' philosophies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and aesthetic conservatism today. The reason that the Ossianic poems so captivated Europe was partly because modern Europeans thought that they could have a personal encounter with an authentic and unspoiled era. Music collectors sought to locate a musical equivalent to the literature of Ossian: the idea was that if cultural authenticity exists in a literary form, then surely there must be a musical counterpart. Collectors therefore operated under the assumption that certain musicians preserved pure vestiges of the past that were untainted by modernity and change.

This is the assumption that underlies the philosophies of Bunting and Petrie: music is a cultural byproduct that can be pure or adulterated, authentic or fabricated, and preserved or spoiled. Given the rhetoric that Bunting and Petrie deployed to introduce

¹²⁵ Cheape and National Museums of Scotland., *Bagpipes: A National Collection of a National Treasure*, 114.

and market these collections, it would seem as if the buying public was also under the impression that such musical vestiges of Old Irish culture did in fact exist and could be encountered in transcriptions. Assuring the survival of the artifact far outweighed the importance of its purveyor: in many instances, the musician who served as the source for tunes is not named.

With a renewed interest in all things ancient now besetting most of Europe, we can begin to get a better idea about what role the musically precocious organist and collector Edward Bunting played in the early collecting of Irish music. Bunting was born among musical siblings in Armagh during the winter of 1773. His precocity is implied by the invitation he received from William Ware to become piano teacher and organist at St. Anne's, Belfast in 1784.¹²⁶

Bunting's musical gifts brought him into contact with the social elite of Belfast, including Doctor James McDonnell, who would organize the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792 and invite the young Bunting to collect repertoire from harpers, who were considered to be the last few musicians in a declining lineage of bardic harpers.¹²⁷ The bardic harpers, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, served as court musicians to the chieftains of Ireland, learning their trade painstakingly over many years and preserving as oral tradition the genealogically legitimizing histories of their patrons. The machinations of the Tudor monarchs had caused the dissolution of the chieftains' courts and thus consigned these harpers to itinerancy.

¹²⁶ Brian Boydell. "Bunting, Edward." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/04324> (accessed May 9, 2010).

¹²⁷ Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians with Numerous Dissertations on Related Subjects* (Chicago: The Regan Printing House, 1913).

Bunting's first printed collection, *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music*, was published at W. Power and Co.'s Music and Musical Instrument Warehouse, No. 4 Westmoreland Street in Dublin in 1796. This is the collection that contains the yields of his fieldwork at the Belfast Harp Festival in July of 1792.

Bunting told the public in his prefaces that he was presenting to those who bought his collection a preserved tradition that had not been changed in the slightest, despite the fact that the repertoire he had transcribed had been perpetuated by multiple generations of practitioners. The implication is that if the music has survived a long period of time in its original and pure form, it ought not to be compromised with changes now. Bunting explains the preservationist onus put on him as he describes his approach to transcription at the Belfast Harp festival. He wants his reader to know that he has not changed a single note of what he heard at the harpers gathering, stating in his preface to the 1796 *General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* that

...[I, Edward Bunting] was appointed to...take down the various airs played by the different Harpers, and was particularly cautioned against adding a single note to the old melodies, which would seem from inferences, that will afterwards be drawn, to have been preserved pure and handed down unalloyed, through a long succession of ages.¹²⁸

For our purposes of investigating contributors to aesthetic conservatism, the following three points are significant: Bunting speaks of musical practice as if it is a thing by his reference to “purity” and the idea that it is “handed down”; Bunting considers music as a thing that can remain unchanged; and Bunting implies that changing this music is undesirable. If consistency is good, then change is bad. Bunting's philosophy

¹²⁸ Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin: Waltons' Piano and Musical Instrument Galleries, 2002 [orig. pub. 1969]), unpaginated preface.

with respect to this harping tradition reflects aesthetic conservatism in the sense that he sees musical change as corrosive to the cultural artifact. Since the opposite of change is consistency, it seems likely that Bunting would advocate a performance practice that is oriented toward reproducing what is in the score rather than introducing new variations. This philosophy hinges on the idea that music is reified, a concept I will discuss in more depth when I consider recording technology later in this chapter.

Bunting's premise that the music he collected had not been changed in transmission is evidenced in his observation from the same 1796 preface that

It would appear that the old Musicians in transmitting this Music to us through so many centuries, treated it with the utmost reverence, as they seem never to have ventured to make the slightest innovation in it during its descent.¹²⁹

It is, of course, impossible for us to know whether or not those musicians changed or added notes compared to the way they might have initially learned a particular tune.¹³⁰ Maybe the music never changed over time; perhaps that was a distinguishing characteristic of the bardic office, the practitioners' marvelous fidelity with respect to playing the same repertoire consistently over a lifetime and across generations. Whatever the case might have been, the important thing is that it is impossible for Bunting to know whether or not innovation was ever introduced deliberately or accidentally. Even though there would have been no way for Bunting to verify consistency of practice, he suggests uncritically that oral transmission in the case of the Belfast harpers admitted no change.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ If there is no external point of reference for a tune, then it is impossible to tell whether or not one is changing it accidentally. Contemporary theories of aural memory that I will discuss in Chapter VI will suggest that it is likely that a tune can be changed in recalling it for performance.

Perhaps Bunting's claim was a reflection of the times in which supposedly ancient poems were suddenly coming to light in translation or perhaps the harpers themselves told Bunting that they had never changed a note and he took them at their word. Again, what is important with respect to aesthetic conservatism is that Bunting, once again, suggests the idea that innovation is undesirable because it corrupts cultural artifacts.

Bunting compiled and sold two other collections of Irish music in his lifetime: *A General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* of 1809 and *The Ancient Music of Ireland* of 1840. Bunting's philosophy of transmission fidelity is amplified in his 1840 collection. Bunting states in the preface that

A strain of music, once impressed on the popular ear, never varies...For taste in music is so universal...that when a melody has once been divulged in any district, a criterion is immediately established in almost every ear; and this criterion being the more infallible in proportion as it requires less effort in judging, we have thus...at all times, a tribunal of the utmost accuracy and of unequalled impartiality...governing the musical traditions of the people, and preserving the native...melodies of every country...from the earliest periods.¹³¹

In 1796, Bunting was saying that the harpers had not introduced the slightest innovation to their repertoire. By 1840, he was alleging that a tune never changes once the populace has heard it. His argument is that consensus precludes a tune from changing in the slightest and that this consensus is "infallible." Either Bunting had a rather high opinion of the human memory or a rather loose definition of the word "same."

Bunting's remarks in the 1840 preface are significant because he suggests that it is possible to introduce and maintain a correct and authoritative melody that "never varies." Notice his use of language: he does not say that "once a tune is impressed on the

¹³¹ Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland*. See Edward Bunting. *The Ancient Music of Ireland, Arranged for the Pianoforte* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840), 1-2.

popular ear, *people* never vary it.” Bunting says that the tune “never varies,” which, while perhaps a turn of phrase, may reveal the assumption that a tune has an object’s corporeality. Aesthetic conservatism is a consistent philosophy only if the adherent espousing that philosophy thinks about music as if it is an object. If the adherent to this philosophy deals with music as a behavior, then there is literally nothing to be changed or which can change: it is only the musician whose behavior varies from instant to instant—the tune, then, is merely the sonic byproduct of particular anatomical changes.

George Petrie (1789 or 1790-1866) was two and a half years old when Edward Bunting was attending the Belfast Harp Festival in 1792 and transcribing tunes performed by harper Denis Hempson and others. Bunting and Petrie would come to collaborate on music collecting in due time. Petrie, like Bunting, was essentially a privileged Protestant Anglophone musician who enjoyed the fruits of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European music.¹³² Being of Scottish ancestry and living in Ireland, Petrie fell within the class of the Anglo-Irish Revivalists who, “because of their own ambiguous social position as members of a dominant ruling class *and* as proponents of nationalist self-determination, were perhaps better able to appreciate the contradictions inherent in a society mutually determined by the tension between...the archaic and the modern.”¹³³

Petrie grew up playing the compositions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven on the flute and violin, and other contemporary music that was popular during his lifetime. He began collecting music around age eighteen and pursued an avid interest in the medieval

¹³² When Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni* was produced in Dublin from 1816 to 1817, George Petrie attended every performance. See Grace J. Calder, *George Petrie & the Ancient Music of Ireland*, The New Dolmen Chapbooks, 10 (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1968), 13.

¹³³ Emphasis original. See Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

round towers of Ireland, a topic on which he soon was acknowledged as the greatest living expert.

In 1828, Petrie was elected to membership in the Royal Irish Academy, an institution that, as I mentioned earlier, validated the pursuit and recovery of ancient Irish heritage. Four years after Bunting died in 1843, Petrie was awarded an honorary doctorate by Trinity College Dublin. And, in 1851, on the heels of the Famine, Petrie founded the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland.

Petrie lived through the period in which Ireland was beset by severe famine. In order to understand how Petrie's brand of nineteenth-century preservationism contributes to aesthetic conservatism we must consider the Irish Potato Famine and then return to Petrie for an assessment.

3.4.2. Preserving Cultural Essence: Collecting and the Potato Famine

Aesthetic conservatism in performance practice can also be understood as a reaction to the fear that too much change heralds the end of a practice, thus signaling the demise of a culture and the disappearance of a people. When great change is perceived to occur over a short period of time, cultural conservatives respond by making efforts to preserve that which is perceived to be disappearing. The Potato Famine was one such event that wrought great change in a short period of time. The aesthetic conservatism of Irish music culture is also perhaps, in part, based on a fear of cultural dissolution. If music—a defining aspect of Irish identity—is changed, then there is the risk that Irish identity will be compromised completely. It is possible that instrumentalists feel that they should not innovate because of the contextual issues that I will describe here.

Conspicuous and unregulated variety occurring through musical innovation dilutes the idea of cultural purity that is meant to be preserved in the first place: that essential kernel of Irishness in the music that, despite all odds—at least according to how some rhetoricians have framed it—has survived centuries of colonization and a debilitating Famine.

An event like the Famine galvanized preservationist tendencies because Irish antiquarians heard about how their fellow countrymen were starving to death. The effects of the Famine prompted Petrie to write of Ireland that

‘The land of song’ was no longer tuneful; or, if a human sound met the traveller’s [*sic*] ear, it was only that of the feeble and despairing wail for the dead.¹³⁴

As the Irish died or emigrated, their traditional musical practices abated on the island. It was this circumstance that prompted George Petrie to conserve the melodies that he feared would be lost as musicians died.

The Irish Potato Famine lasted roughly between 1845 and 1851 and the contributing causes were numerous, first among them being severe potato blight. In a letter dated 6 September 1846 written to Canada from Ireland, Michael and Mary Rush petition Mary’s parents to fund their emigration out of Ireland so that their family might escape the certain death that they fear will attend the island’s Potato Famine. The Rush couple writes:

Dear father and mother...There is nothing expected here, only an immediate famine...do not leave us on the number of the starving poor...if you knew what danger we and our very countrymen are

¹³⁴ George Petrie, David Cooper, and Lillis Ó Laoire, *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 8.

suffering...you would take us out of this poverty Isle. We can only say, the scourge of God fell down in Ireland, in taking away the potatoes, they being the only support of the people...So, dear father and mother, if you don't endeavor to take us out of...[Ireland]...it will be the first news you will hear by some friend of me and my little family to be lost by the hunger, and there are thousands [that] dread [they] will share the same fate.¹³⁵

This letter illustrates a dire survivalist mentality that is captured in many such letters written by Famine victims to their relatives living in safety outside of Ireland. The pressing urge to secure a future through emigration, lest their entire family succumb to starvation, is palpable in the Rush's correspondence. The significance of this letter is that the Rush's survivalist mentality will haunt Irish music culture for over a century after the Famine ended, thus contributing to a conservative aesthetic oriented toward saving music that is in perpetual danger of disappearing.

Let us consider a few of the socio-historical circumstances that brought the Rushes to write the letter of 1846. The potato first arrived in Ireland in the hands of Spanish traders between 1586 and 1600 during Elizabeth's reign.¹³⁶ By about 1750, the potato had gone from being a supplementary crop to almost the sole food staple of the poorer classes during the winter months. In 1844, about 8 million people inhabited Ireland. 3.3 million of those people survived exclusively on the potato. Of the entire nation's food supply, the potato, a single food item, constituted 60% of the diet.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Kerby A. Miller and Bruce D. Boling, "The Pauper and the Politician: A Tale of Two Immigrants and the Construction of Irish-American Society," in *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America*, ed. Arthur Gribben (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 201.

¹³⁶ Matthew Lynch, *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture*, Vol. 2, edited by James S. Donnelly (New York: Thomson Gale, 2004), 574-575.

¹³⁷ Austin Bourke, Jacqueline R. Hill, and Cormac Ó Gráda, *The Visitation of God?: The Potato and the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin, Ireland: Lilliput Press, 1993), 52.

Disaster struck Ireland in August 1845 as the fungus *phytophthora infestans*, having appeared earlier in America (1843) and Belgium (June 1845), withered potato plants and left the tubers spongy and covered in black spots. Because this fungus reduced the 1845 potato crop by two thirds of its expected yield, crippling Ireland for several years, the death toll during Great Famine was ghastly: about one million Irish died of starvation and related diseases while more than two million left the island between 1845 and 1855. This population drop certainly meant that there were fewer people playing traditional dance music in Ireland than there had been before 1845.

During the nineteenth century, the Famine galvanized collectors such as George Petrie who wanted to study Irish language and music before dire circumstances made its study impossible. In this time of calamity, a tune was cultural currency and, in a sense, a commodity to someone like Petrie. The Famine caused a scarcity of the commodity by killing practitioners, and thus caused a spike in value. From Petrie's perspective, these valuable and vanishing cultural articles had to be saved.

Petrie was first and foremost a preservationist seeking to conserve for posterity the best versions of tunes he could find. In order to do this, he decided to interview those musicians whom he considered to be the authentic folk sources of the music. From Petrie's perspective, these sources were living among the impoverished Irish-speaking Catholics. To accomplish this end, Petrie took Eugene O'Curry with him, a native Irish speaker and expert on ancient Irish history.

It is in this sense that Petrie gives us another window into contemporary attitudes of aesthetic conservatism. Petrie sought to preserve for the common man the correct version of a tune stating that

I have availed myself of every opportunity in my power to obtain the purest settings of the airs, by noting them from the native singers, and more particularly, from such of them as resided, or had been reared, in the most purely Irish districts.¹³⁸

Of course, Petrie found it rather daunting to locate the correct version of a tune because

Of an air so extensively disseminated...it should naturally be expected that there would be a great diversity in the forms which it would assume, and such I have found to be the fact. So great indeed are those varieties, that, except in the essential notes and general structure, they have often so little else in common that the native of one province would probably find it difficult to recognize this popular melody in the form which it has assumed as sung by the native of another. In such instances, therefore, it will be often difficult to determine which version of a melody is the most correct one...¹³⁹

In terms of aesthetic conservatism, Petrie embraced the idea that there were better and worse versions (i.e., one version that more closely approximated the ideal version). As a result, Petrie generally did not trust instrumentalists' versions of songs because he acknowledged that an instrumental melody could vary widely depending on the area in which it was played.¹⁴⁰

Petrie's notion that there are better and worse versions of tunes suggests that Petrie's aesthetic relied on a qualitative hierarchy of performances and, by extension, the

¹³⁸ Petrie, Cooper, and Ó Laoire, *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland*, 11.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 16. To a similar effect, Petrie also remarked that "...as the result of my own experience as a collector of our melodies, that I rarely, if ever, obtained two settings of an *unpublished* air that were strictly the same; though, in some instances, I have gotten as many as fifty notations of the one melody. In many instances, indeed, I have found the differences between one version of an air and another to have been so great, that it was only by careful analysis of their structure, aided perhaps by a knowledge of their history and the progress of their mutations, that they could be recognized as being essentially the one air." *ibid.*, 34-35. Emphasis original.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

view that variation would be detrimental to the tune.¹⁴¹ If there is a correct version of a tune to be found, then varying that correct version is deleterious. Petrie's reaction to the Famine illustrates a musical-survivalist curator mentality that views the tradition as a thing that is both immutable (the ideal version of the tune) and in perpetual danger of dying out. It may in part be due to Petrie's kind of approach that performers today feel like they should not change the tune too much: change compromises that which has barely survived the devastating Famine and which is most valuable in its original, unaltered form.

Bunting and Petrie, however, were only two men writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It would be difficult to demonstrate the immediate impact of thinking on other musicians of the day. How much could the thinking and approach of these two outsider collectors have to do with the practice of traditional music during the time when they worked? Tomás Ó Canainn states that

The various collections of Irish music have never been regarded by traditional performers as a standard against which their performance is to be measured or its correctness checked...No special authority is given to one version of a tune by reason of its appearance in a collection...¹⁴²

And that

While it is true to say that the collections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had little influence on the tradition, the situation has changed considerably in the twentieth century.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴² Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 9.

Despite the fact that it may be impossible to measure the contemporary influence of Bunting's and Petrie's collections, I contend that Bunting's and Petrie's philosophies may reflect the thinking of their contemporaries in the sense that there may well have been other musicians who likewise considered there to be correct and incorrect versions of dance tunes. Furthermore, it is clear that some musicians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries consider there to be more or less correct versions of tunes, otherwise the statement made by tune collection editor Jackie Small that "The notations do not try to describe music in a 'correct' way: they employ conventions that traditional musicians have grown used to and are now at ease with" would be completely superfluous.¹⁴⁴

While it might be difficult to imagine that the events of the mid-nineteenth century have bearing on how Irish music culture functions in the twenty-first century, the truth is that the horror of Famine devastation remains with the Irish to this day. A fear of cultural obliteration influences the way Irish natives and descendants perceive their past, present, and future. Many Irish internalized the memories of the Potato Famine through their relatives' stories.¹⁴⁵ For example, Tom Brick, who was born in Kerry in 1881 and who emigrated to America in 1902, was described as having lived "in the Famine's shadow," despite the fact that he was born thirty years after it ended and lived until 1979.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Breandán Breathnach, *Ceol Rince Na Héireann*, ed. Jackie Small, vol. 5 (Dublin: An Gúm, 1999), xi.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Lee and Marion R. Casey, *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 19. One example of someone who experienced the Famine through relatives' stories was labor activist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* While Tom Brick did not personally live through the Famine years in Ireland, he likely had relatives who either survived or perished during that time. The ancestors who reared Brick probably imparted some ideas and events of the Famine to him just as survivors of war or other tragedies might impart to their own children.

Larger organizations of Irish musicians also exhibit this kind of post-Famine survivalist mentality. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (pronounced *Coal-tas keyole-Tor-rey Air-in*, meaning Society of the Musicians of Ireland henceforth referred to as CCE) founded in 1951, is the largest conglomerate institution promoting Irish traditional music in the twenty-first century and is comprised of some 30,000 members spread over approximately 400 branches worldwide. Perhaps it is because of the Famine that CCE states that

Irish traditional culture has become more popular in recent years, and the Uilleann Pipes and Harp no longer appear to be on the verge of extinction. We have a healthy network of Branches, and we maintain close links with other guardians of Irish culture.¹⁴⁷

The threat of removing the potential for a cultural future for the Irish is something that is communicated in the rhetoric of Irish music organizations like CCE. CCE has also published rhetoric that appropriates Famine survivalism to characterize Irish traditional music's fight for survival in contemporary society. CCE publications convey anxiety about Irish music's survival because of what the organization perceives to be the encroachment of societal change and industrializing progress.

Saeed De Ridder, writing on CCE's website, invokes Famine survivalism in order to rally support for the continued practice of Irish traditional music. De Ridder rails that

We live in a world where the very foundations of our earthly survival are under threat because of the rapacious nature of modern Industrial

¹⁴⁷ Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, "Comhaltas: Goals," <http://comhaltas.ie/about/goals/> (accessed October 2, 2010).

economies...Of all nations, Ireland should most remember how ‘the hunger of the many filled the bellies of the few’.¹⁴⁸

Survivalist rhetoric is symbolic of Irish music culture’s protectiveness of its music. Irish musicians are protective of the music they play because many feel that it defines who they are and that a change in music causes a loss of identity. The Famine caused a fear of loss that became appropriated to a performance practice that has “outlived” the Famine.

In the music philosophies of Bunting and Petrie, varying a tune would be like putting lacquer on a Ming vase. The valuable object sought was presented in its purest state in the transcription: no addition or alteration would enhance the value of that cultural artifact. The idea of authentic, true, correct, or best versions of tunes negated contemporary creativity. Preserving identity through the consistent reproduction of cultural articles (i.e., traditional tunes) creates this conservative aesthetic.

A moment ago, I referred to Bunting and Petrie as outsiders, qualifying that term with special criteria. If Bunting and Petrie were outsiders to the communities whose music-making they documented, how then could these preservationist attitudes apply to traditional “insider” practitioners today? If Bunting and Petrie are outsiders, surely it is reasonable to assume that insiders would have different or even opposite perspectives from these two men.

¹⁴⁸ Saeed De Ridder, “Comhaltas: Tradition is Transmission,” Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, http://comhaltas.ie/music/treoir/detail/tradition_is_transmission/ (accessed November 15, 2010). The anxiety over encroaching modernity is also apparent in this statement “The world looks to Ireland as a place where the traditions of past generations still flourish, but with the pressures of modern living these traditions are under threat as never before.” See http://comhaltas.ie/music/treoir/detail/the_comhaltas_vision_for_the_traditional_arts/ (accessed October 2, 2010).

The reality of the situation is that many different people from many different social and economic strata with various ethnic backgrounds have played this music over the past three hundred years.¹⁴⁹ There is no universal consensus on performance practice or philosophies relating thereto. While many musicians might consider it unusual to treat a musical transcription with the kind of fidelity that I am inferring from Bunting and Petrie, many people who study Irish music do come from backgrounds where that is a normative and acceptable attitude to have toward a transcription.

It would be an oversimplification to make a line of outsiders and a line of insiders and then say that insiders think only in a certain way and outsiders think in the opposite way. As I mentioned in Chapter II, insider and outsider criteria are flexible and are contingent often on who is doing the defining. While making demarcations would be convenient, such bifurcations would not reflect reality. While I think that it is typical for musicians who are enculturated in this tradition to regard a transcription as a partial record to aid memory, there are certainly musicians who, after learning a tune from a transcription, will not change a single note because they consider the score to be authoritative and, in a sense, complete.

¹⁴⁹ Francis O'Neill, in his 1913 book *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, names several musicians in a chapter called "Gentleman Pipers" who were practicing between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. See Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (Lincolnshire, England: The Moxon Press Limited [orig. pub. The Regan Printing House], 1987 [1913]), 180-93. Unless we invent criteria for excluding from the body of "traditional players" musicians of certain economic strata and social classes, then it is quite possible that the collections of Bunting and Petrie could have had some contemporary impact. Unless we qualify a "traditional musician" as an individual who is musically illiterate and of low social class, then we must entertain the possibility that there were musicians in Ireland from various social and economic strata who played dance music on uilleann pipes and fiddles and who could have shared Bunting's and Petrie's ideas about music, text fidelity, and authenticity.

3.5. Conserving Memory, Community Cohesion, and Remembering Loved Ones

Irish musicians play certain tunes to remember others who taught and played them. Playing personalized variations means that there is less about the performance to remind the musician of another individual. It is by playing tunes that we learn personally from other musicians that we afford ourselves the unique sensory experience that allows us to remember our relationship with that musician. To change the tune is to begin to erase the giver. Remembering a loved one by playing a tune he or she used to play does not mean that one never plays variations. If the loved one varied the tune, it would be consistent, in principle, to also vary that tune.

As Pacific Northwest American fiddler Randal Bays once said in a verbal introduction to a concert on San Juan Island in Washington state: “Irish music is really family music.”¹⁵⁰ What I think Bays meant by this comment was the idea that musical communities first and foremost are in many instances centered on trans-generational enculturation: children learn music as they observe parents and grandparents play it. Of course, there are many other ways of learning Irish music, but this kind of learning situation characterizes the close bonds that often form between musicians in Irish music subcultures like the kind I described in Baltimore in Chapter II.

As I relayed in the previous chapter, I was pleased to learn the reel “The Grey Fox” directly from its composer, Billy McComiskey, as he had conceived it. As he whistled a portion of the tune to me and I whistled it back to him (incorrectly), he corrected me and I was glad that he did. Because of my close personal relationship with McComiskey and because of his important status in the Baltimore Irish music community, I had a great interest not just in learning a new tune, but in him also. I had

¹⁵⁰ I was present at a concert on March 11, 2011 when Randal Bays made this comment.

(and still do have) a personal fondness for the musician and his tune. Playing the tune as he taught it to me afforded me the experience of remembering McComiskey even in his absence. Learning and playing a tune as it was taught to me is a kind of remembering that engenders the fondness associated with the tune's origin. McComiskey would, of course, play variations in his own compositions. But, the idea is that if I vary McComiskey's composition, the variations are mine and not his. The more of my variations that I play in McComiskey's tune means that there is more of me and less of him. If I want to remember him, and, in particular, the instance in which he taught me the tune, then I want to avoid inserting more of me in the performance.

This point became clear to me in a personal conversation I once had with Connemara flute player and maker Marcus Herson. Herson said that he does not personally like the idea of melodically varying the compositions of others and, in keeping with that philosophy, avoids playing melodic variations. Herson identified himself as musically conservative in the sense that his desire is to play the tune just as another musician taught it to him overrides whatever creative impulses that he might experience while playing someone else's tune. His website conveys about his musical approach that "...it is a very particular type of Irish music [that Marcus] plays, traditional, unadorned, played as he heard it from his elders."¹⁵¹

I was then intrigued to hear that Herson advocates writing new tunes, having recently published an entire book of his own tunes. At first glance, there seemed to be tension in his conservative aesthetic: one might reasonably assume that a musician who avoids the practice of melodic variation would necessarily renounce the composition of

¹⁵¹ Marcus Herson – Flute Player & Maker, About Marcus, http://www.marcusherson.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=64 (accessed April 5, 2011).

new tunes. This, however, is not the case. Herson, while philosophically opposed to varying melodies composed by other musicians, approves of composing new tunes and has composed many tunes himself. I think the reason that there is no contradiction in this philosophy can be explained with the following analogy.

For the sake of illustration, think of a tune as if it is a recipe for cookies. Let us say that every year, Grandma makes her special cookies for the holiday season. Grandma's cookies end up tasting the same every year, despite the fact that she does not measure her ingredients. After you express enough interest in her cookies, Grandma teaches you how to make her cookies by allowing you to observe her while she works. She does not give you measurements in terms of cups and teaspoons, but instead invites you to use "two handfuls of flour" or "a sprinkle of cinnamon." You learn how to make Grandma's cookies by observation and participation rather than by explicit instruction.

Grandma ages and eventually passes away. With her passing, you alone are the only family member who has any idea about how she made those beloved cookies. You watched her make the cookies year after year and even helped her yourself. Since you are the only one capable of reproducing the recipe, you become responsible for making Grandma's cookies for the family. You sit in the kitchen and pour over Grandma's movements and rough measurements in your head. You begin to move and measure as you saw Grandma do, but suddenly you decide that it might be nice to add a bit of orange zest that Grandma never added herself. After all, you think to yourself, the same cookies year after year can become a bit predictable and bland. You add a bit of orange zest to the cookie recipe that Grandma never added.

While you do not tell the family about your “creative addition” to the cookie recipe, you tell your relatives all the while that you are making Grandma’s cookies for the holidays. From your perspective, the orange zest you add contributes an extra bit of flare: you have still used Grandma’s ingredients, but have contributed something of your own. You make the cookies and set them before your family. Before tasting the cookies, the cookies you have made look just like Grandma’s. The cookies are round, brown, warm, and smell sweet. You are pleased with the result, but when someone takes a bite, he is left with a bitter taste in his mouth.

You said you were making Grandma’s cookies, but these cookies that you have made taste different. Sure, they are round, flat, sweet, and brown, just like Grandma’s. But they do not taste as one expects. They still taste like cookies, but they do not taste like *Grandma’s* cookies. You have offered up something that is similar to Grandma’s cookies, but is sufficiently different to disappoint. The family is disappointed with your culinary nuances and you receive disapproving looks from all. It is almost as if you are erasing the memory of Grandma by depriving the family of that sensory experience that reminds them of her at a special time of year.

In this illustration, Grandma is the composer, her cookie recipe is the tune, and the orange zest is the melodic variation of a well-known and well-loved tune. This is why some musicians do not care for melodic variations and prefer aesthetic conservatism to innovation. Playing melodic variations of a known tune deprives the expectant listener (and performer) of a sensory experience that allows him to remember a beloved musician. Certainly, the listener can identify the tune as he knows it, but it does not have the same

effect because you have changed a few of the notes that he had not expected. This change, however large or small, can rob a listener of certain memories that he holds dear.

To combine with my little illustration Marcus Hennon's philosophy advocating new compositions instead of melodic variations, it would almost be better to make up a completely new cookie recipe, call it you own, and let the family decide if they would like to try your cookies. But, if you say you are making Grandma's cookies, they had better taste the same as when she made them. It would be better to invent a totally new recipe than to corrupt a recipe of such longevity and with so many expectations attached to it.

My illustration involves a family dynamic because communities of Irish musicians, whether they are biologically related or not, often treat each other as if they are beloved relatives. Some Irish musicians oppose melodic variation for the reason that it is seen as a symbolic way of shirking the natural order of family relationships. Stating one's individuality by playing a tune however one likes can be perceived by some to be disrupting familial cohesion.

Those of an older generation may at times be upset when those of a younger generation vary familiar tunes. Melodic variation may upset the older generation because this alteration of well-loved tunes implies a kind of independence and ambition that contradicts the established generational hierarchies of Irish society in which the younger imitate the older. In other words, variation and innovation can be seen as a kind of rebellion against authority. When a young person varies a tune taught to him by an older family member, that young musician may be perceived by some to be rebelling against family conventions. That young musician is "out of line," in a manner of speaking.

Consistency of practice is important to many Irish musicians because the practice is seen as a legacy handed down through generations of players.

Some musicians espouse a conservative aesthetic with respect to performance because playing music in the way it was received facilitates a unique sensory experience of the musician who taught the tune in the first place. Melodic variation may be slight or completely avoided because the variation was not part of the original experience of learning the tune from a beloved friend or relative.

3.6. The Imaginary Museum, Recording Technology, and Reification

The title of this section is borrowed from philosopher Lydia Goehr's book of a similar title, which examines the Western classical tradition's idea of repertoire canon.¹⁵² I contend that Irish traditional music culture likewise maintains such an imagined canon that has been formed over time by the faculties of aural memory as that mental apparatus engages with sound recordings and live performances.

The performance practice philosophy of aesthetic conservatism is grounded for some musicians in the idea that "the music" is a thing that must be curated like a physical object. If an object is to be maintained and preserved, then change of any kind is usually perceived to be deleterious. Museums across the world attempt to regulate building temperatures and humidity because regulating these factors prevents (or, at least postpones) the decay that priceless works of art would otherwise suffer should such environmental factors be left uncontrolled.

¹⁵² Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, England; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1992).

In Irish traditional music culture, one thing to be maintained is a musical repertoire (and, necessarily, the authoritative performances that standardize that repertoire). This musical repertoire is not simply a body of tunes such as one might find in a book, but a collection of recordings that have been widely disseminated. The fixed nature of recording technology invites canonization and, consequently, reification of those once live performances. I argue that recording technology contributes to aesthetic conservatism because as the contents of recordings do not change, this fact encourages some living musicians to treat live performance practice as if it should not change.

On February 19, 1878, Thomas Edison received a patent from the United States Patent Office for what he called the “Phonograph or Speaking Machine,” a device that could effectively “record in permanent characters the human voice and other sounds, [and] from which characters such sounds may be reproduced and rendered audible again at a future time.”¹⁵³ The long-term impact of this new device for music and music research is inestimable. Among other results, this new sound recording technology caused a major shift in the way Irish traditional music is learned, played, and philosophized.

Recording technology instituted a rise in professionalism, altered traditional players’ artistic sensibilities, disseminated and popularized the music, fostered a retrospective approach to learning, and facilitated historic preservation of live performances. In the discussion to follow, I will consider what these changes might mean for aesthetic conservatism.

¹⁵³ See United States Patent no. 200,521 dated February 19, 1878.

In the end, the impact of recording technology will not be so much different from the impact of notation observed by unenculturated readers.¹⁵⁴ The recording will become a standard to be imitated and authoritative in its immutability.

Famine-stricken Ireland in the mid- to late-nineteenth century had little financial infrastructure that could support a market for the creation of new technology or the commercialization of a music industry, but America did. The economic situation in the United States allowed for the technological development of the phonograph.¹⁵⁵ This economic stability also allowed for the rise of a professional class of Irish musicians who could afford to purchase recording devices, but could also locate a target market with enough expendable income to buy recordings made with such devices.¹⁵⁶

By 1901 in his mid-30s, Galway-born uilleann piper émigré Patsy Touhey (1865-1923) was marketing himself the “Best Irish Piper in America” and had utilized Edison’s sound-recording invention, which he likely encountered at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, to establish a mail-order tune business for himself.¹⁵⁷ Touhey would sit in a telephone-sized booth with his pipes and a phonograph and record a tune onto a

¹⁵⁴ There are, of course, differences between recordings and transcriptions. One difference is that recordings can preserve variations within one performance while transcriptions published in tune collections seldom do.

¹⁵⁵ Susan Gedutis, scholar of Irish music in America, states that “...the boom economy of the 1920s in America meant disposable income to purchase records and increased interest in music. A new invention, the windup gramophone, became omnipresent in households in both America and Ireland. It seemed that every Irish household, no matter how poor, had a gramophone and a collection of 78 rpm records of Irish music, which was being recorded almost exclusively in America at the time.” See Gedutis, *See You at the Hall: Boston's Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance*, 20.

¹⁵⁶ “In the early days of sound recording before the turn of the millennium, record companies were eager to sell big-ticket phonograph cabinets to the general public...The market quickly took notice: In 1897, Edison Home Phonograph machines were selling for \$40, and the year 1899 saw 151,000 phonographs manufactured in the United States.” See Scott Spencer, “Wheels of the World: How Recordings of Irish Traditional Music Bridged the Gap between Homeland and Diaspora,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 4 (2010): 440.

¹⁵⁷ Pat Mitchell, Patrick J. Touhey, and Jackie Small, *The Piping of Patsy Touhey* (Dublin: Na Píobairí Uilleann, 1986), 9-10.

cylinder.¹⁵⁸ Touhey had a large catalog of tunes and for one dollar per cylinder (ten dollars for a dozen) you could buy yourself a performance to be “rendered audible again at a future time.” Touhey went on to record over one hundred cylinders for private sale.¹⁵⁹

Touhey was one of many musicians who made cylinder recordings to order for private use.¹⁶⁰ However, by the 1910s, a new market was opening up that allowed for the large-scale production and sale of commercially recorded Irish music. It was in 1913 that Columbia first began issuing mass-produced recordings of Irish traditional music played by native performers.¹⁶¹ Justus O’Byrne DeWitt recalls the growing demand for Irish music played by native Irish in the 1910s:

My mother owned a record store in Manhattan, and Irish people were always coming in and asking for old favorites, like “The Stack of Barley.” Well, she’d no records to give them because there weren’t any. So she sent me up to Gaelic Park in the Bronx to find some musicians. There was always music there on Sundays. Well, I found Eddie Herborn and John Wheeler playing banjo and accordion, and they sounded great. So my mother went to Columbia, and they said that if she would agree to buy five hundred copies from them they would record Herborn and Wheeler. She agreed, and they both recorded “The Stack of Barley,” and the five hundred records sold out in no time at all.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Touhey continued to make private cylinder recordings for sale until 1919 when he began recording flat disc sides commercially for the Victor company. Victor released the first of four recorded sides in 1920 stating in its printed advertisements that America could now hear “The Only Patsy Touhey” for eighty-five cents per 10-inch disc. See *ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Mick Moloney, "Irish Ethnic Recordings and the Irish-American Imagination," in *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress American Folklife Center, 1982), 90.

¹⁶⁰ Touhey was not mass-producing cylinder recordings of his piping, but rather had to record a new cylinder for each order.

¹⁶¹ Moloney, "Irish Ethnic Recordings and the Irish-American Imagination," 90.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

This new demand for recordings happened to coincide with the life course of a particular Irish fiddler who would become one of the most renowned Irish musicians of the twentieth century. In 1914, the Sligo fiddler, Michael Coleman arrived in America. Before leaving Ireland, having witnessed a surge of Irish nationalism instigated by the Gaelic League beginning in 1893, Coleman competed in the Sligo *Feis Cheoil* (pronounced *Fesh Key-ole*) in 1909 and 1910. Such competitions were a result of the Gaelic League's *Oireachtas* (pronounced *er-Ukh-tas*), a competition that was organized to bring bearers of "authentic Irish culture" together in one place to breath new life back into what had become a trampled culture.

Coleman arrived in America about two years before the Easter Rebellion of 1916. In the Easter Rebellion, Irish republicans attempted—and failed—to end British rule and establish the Republic of Ireland. This uprising causing a surge of Irish nationalism in Ireland and also among Irish immigrant families living in America. Ellen O'Byrne (1875-1926), who managed the *O'Byrne DeWitt Irish Grafonola and Victor Shop* and who had convinced Columbia in 1913 to record Irish musicians, sensed that this rebellion could be good for business. Intent on capitalizing in this surge of nationalism, O'Byrne wanted recordings made by Irishmen to sell in her establishment.

O'Byrne had sold recordings of musicians like baritone George Potter and accordion player Eddie Herborn and subsequently set her sights on Michael Coleman who, in 1921, recorded his first sides for the Shannon record label.¹⁶³ These recordings were subsequently sent back to Ireland where they were widely disseminated and became much beloved. Coleman's fiddling, by virtue of its transportability thanks to recording

¹⁶³ Harry Bradshaw, "Coleman, Michael," in *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, ed. Fintan Vallely (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 75.

technology, exerted a considerable influence on fiddling style and repertoire back in Ireland.¹⁶⁴ This legacy continues today whereby if a session musician starts a tune that Coleman recorded, it is inevitably followed by the other tunes on the album that Coleman recorded without a word being said.

The Irish revolt against the English, coupled with a massive Irish contingency living in America as a result of the Famine and compounded by advances in technology, launched the new masterwork concept in Irish traditional music: the recording.

It is a comparatively recent development in the big picture for senior players to encourage young people to listen to older recordings for inspiration and technique.¹⁶⁵ Listening to recordings has, in many ways, acted as a parallel to the classical *Werktreue* concept, a term that José Antonio Bowen defines as “fidelity to the musical work”¹⁶⁶ and which musicologist Richard Taruskin refers to as “museum ideology.”¹⁶⁷ Certain recordings embody a level of authority that often surpasses that of living practitioners.

This museum ideology is immediately relevant because it regulates both our musical attitudes and social practices.¹⁶⁸ The reality of this imaginary museum of reified performances is evidenced in the following anecdote in which a music official of CCE critiques musicians who are playing a version of the reel “Rakish Paddy” that he, the official, thought was illegitimate. The setting of this incident was at the Ulster Fleadh

¹⁶⁴ Harry Bradshaw concludes that “No other musician in the history of traditional music has been so imitated. His influence pervades the entire Irish tradition today.” Qtd. in Sally Sommers-Smith, “Style and Authenticity,” *ibid.*, 388.

¹⁶⁵ Robbie Hannan, “Listening: The Piper’s Eleventh Finger,” *An Píobaire* 28, no. 4 (2004): 20-23.

¹⁶⁶ Qtd. in Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Cheoil (pronounced *Flah Key-ole* and meaning “Festival of Music”) in Ballyshannon, County Donegal, Ireland in the early 1980s.

Sitting in the front room of the Millstone Hotel and surrounded by excellent Donegal fiddlers was an officer of the national executives of Comhaltas. As a small group completed the Teelin version of *Rakish Paddy* the flute-bearing [official] enquired concerning the name of the tune. When informed of it’s [sic] name and Donegal setting, the officer insisted that the only true version of the tune was that recorded by Michael Coleman. . . He dogmatically insisted that the Donegal version should never be played as it was not Irish music. In his opinion it was Scottish music, and even worse than that, as Donegal music it was not only Scottish music, but bad Scottish music!¹⁶⁹

A recording-generated aesthetic conservatism is apparent here in the official’s citation of Michael Coleman’s recording and the implication that Coleman’s recording is authoritative, correct, and, therefore, is to be imitated. The logic of this kind of aesthetic conservatism is that performances of tunes are either more or less correct relative to the standard established by important recordings. Aesthetic conservatism is at root a moral philosophy whose goal is to establish better or worse “manifestations” of the external reified tune by virtue of a fixed point of reference.

The abstract quality of a recording—its immutability, if you will—is reformatted to a context that does not really accommodate that quality: live performances where variations happen either deliberately or accidentally. We can understand why one would think that “...the very nature and substance of a living tradition is both *timeless* and *immutable*”¹⁷⁰ if we consider that idea from the perspective of reification and recordings.

¹⁶⁹ Caoimhín MacAoidh, *Between the Jigs and Reels: The Donegal Fiddle Tradition* (Nure, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim, Ireland: Drumlin Publications, 1994), 19.

¹⁷⁰ Saeed De Ridder, “Comhaltas: Tradition is Transmission,” Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, http://comhaltas.ie/music/treoir/detail/tradition_is_transmission/ (accessed November 15, 2010). Emphasis added.

The quoted portion comes from a longer essay by Saeed De Ridder's that was posted on the CCE website. De Ridder speaks of the tradition as if it has substance and exists independently of practitioners. I contend that the philosophy of Irish music's perpetuity owes something to the nature of recording technology.

Not all Irish musicians agree with the idea that Irish music is a thing existing outside of human agency. Flute maker and player Hammy Hamilton of County Cork counters De Ridder's implication, arguing that "the tendency to regard it [Irish traditional music] as an unchanging monolith is not only simplistic but demonstrably wrong."¹⁷¹

The advent of recording technology in the 1870s facilitated a means by which to fix a performance to an object just as the collectors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came to fix a performance to a transcription. This reification of music allows for the creation of paradigmatic performance exemplars. Recordings and reification bolster aesthetic conservatism by creating an authoritative hierarchy of performances divest of their performers to be respected and emulated. Melodic variation is curtailed in an effort to imitate inspiring and authoritative performances recorded in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

3.7. Innovation, Commercialism, and Compromising the Essence of Tradition

In this section I will discuss the idea that innovation is linked to commercialism. Some musicians find commercialism morally objectionable because music played and

¹⁷¹ Hammy Hamilton, "Innovation, Conservatism, and the Aesthetics of Irish Traditional Music," in *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference*, ed. Hammy Hamilton Fintan Vallely, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty (Colour Books, 1996), 83.

sold in a commercial market is perceived to be a corruption of cultural identity.¹⁷² As a result, musical practices deemed to be commercial are vilified. I will explain some of the rationale behind this idea by describing in part how Irish traditional music came to be a stage performance tradition in the twentieth century. While this section deals more with innovation generally and less with melodic variation in dance music specifically, we will encounter certain attitudes about public performance that will complement our previous discussion of humility.

The idea that variance and innovation are associated with corrupt commercialism reaches beyond individual melodic varying broadly to musical innovation in general. The point is that commerce is thought to corrupt and compromise tradition because in order to sell tradition to outsiders, the music must be formatted in a way that makes it accessible to outsiders.¹⁷³ This accessibility is attained through orchestration, elaborate arrangements, novel instrumentation, fusing other styles with traditional genres, and other musical nuances that those who self-identify as traditional might deem unorthodox. These kinds of compromises are counted within what Timothy Taylor calls “the discourse of selloutism.”¹⁷⁴ This discourse of selloutism expresses the idea that musicians “sell” their integrity in the public market in order to make a profit with their music.

Fiddler and satirist Barry Foy intimates the idea that the session (i.e., the community) is the legitimate bastion of traditional music and that those who innovate

¹⁷² O’Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, 177.

¹⁷³ John O’Flynn states that “The assumed authenticity of traditional music can come into question when modes of production appear to conflict with idealizations of value and style.” *ibid.*, 180.

¹⁷⁴ Timothy Dean Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 23.

upon a stage are merely offering a poor substitute for the kind of authentic Irish music that is generated in interpersonal community environments. Foy states that

The session is the wellspring of Irish music, its beating heart. Its importance to the tradition must never be forgotten. The sometimes tricky, overrehearsed material that finds its way onto recordings and the stage may maintain a high profile, but it owes its vitality to the decades of sessions that preceded it and gave shape to the music. What is all that fancy stuff, anyway, but the self-conscious stepchild of the classic session in a pub or friendly kitchen? And what is all its cleverness but an attempt to reproduce the verve and heart of a good session?¹⁷⁵

The commercial presentation of this music, according to Foy, is not the real stuff—it is a synthetic substitute for authentic dance music. The stage music is “overrehearsed,” it is dressed up for public consumption, and it is far too formal for the original cultural context that it cites as its source. The soul of the music is sold away in the name of innovation and accessibility. Musicians may maintain a conservative aesthetic in order to avoid association with such practices. This commercial success means that innovation happens on a grander scale and thus threatens the purity of tradition. While variation is an acceptable mode of variety, musicians have the feeling that they are responsible for protecting the repertoire in the face of advancing changes and superficial success.

The making accessible of Irish traditional music does, to a large extent, begin with composer and arranger John Reidy or, as I shall refer to him henceforth by the Irish form of his name, Seán Ó Riada (1931-1971).¹⁷⁶ Seán Ó Riada was a composer who

¹⁷⁵ Barry Foy, *Field Guide to the Irish Music Session: A Guide to Enjoying Irish Traditional Music in Its Natural Habitat!* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1999), 65-66.

¹⁷⁶ Tomás Ó Canainn states in his biography of Seán Ó Riada that the man’s name appeared as John Reidy for the first time on 25 July 1955 in a printed program for Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. The Irish form of the name, Seán, was first used in a Christmas pantomime in 1955. John Reidy used the Irish form of his

“embraced the prevailing difficulty of reconciling the burden of an ethnic tradition with the aspirations of an emancipated art music, and...entered a decisive claim for the composer as an artist of independent significance in the cultural fabric of Ireland in the 1960s.”¹⁷⁷

In the late 1950s, Ó Riada assembled a group of traditional musicians who would come to be called Ceoltóirí Chualann (pronounced keyole-*Tor-rey Cool-in*).¹⁷⁸ Ó Riada essentially created performance opportunities for traditional music by creating chamber-music-like arrangements of Irish dance tunes.¹⁷⁹ Uilleann pipes, flute, fiddle, and bodhrán (a type of frame drum) were coupled with harpsichord. Prior to Ó Riada’s creation of Ceoltóirí Chualann, there was little public performance of Irish traditional music to speak of outside of peoples’ homes at this point in Ireland’s musical history.¹⁸⁰ Prior to the late-1950s and early-1960s, it was virtually unheard of to purchase tickets for a concert of Irish traditional (or even Irish-traditional-inspired) music.

Irish traditional music began to attain respectability because it shared many of the same contextual features of already highly visible stage traditions.¹⁸¹ Some of these features—which Ó Riada was partially responsible for pioneering in Irish music—include ensemble tunes with instrumental solos taken, the requisite undivided attention of

name Seán Ó Riada for the remainder of his tenure at the Abbey Theatre which ended on November 26, 1962. See Tomás Ó Canainn, *Seán Ó Riada: His Life and Work* (Wilton, Cork: Collins, 2003), 42.

¹⁷⁷ White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970*, 125.

¹⁷⁸ In the Irish language, *Ceoltóirí* means “musicians” and *Cualann* refers to the area near Dublin where Ó Riada lived.

¹⁷⁹ John Glatt, *The Chieftains: The Authorized Biography*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 46; McCarthy, *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture*, 141.

¹⁸⁰ There were céilí bands playing for dances up through the 1960s, but these were not concert performances in the sense that people bought tickets to watch other musicians play.

¹⁸¹ White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970*, 125-50.

audiences while musicians are playing, the sale of concert tickets and recordings, special clothing to be worn in performance, mention of important composers, the development of individual personae, and the branding and marketing of ensembles.

‘Seán Ó Riada was experimenting,’ explains Ciarán Mac Mathúna. ‘He did different arrangements and produced a lot of these slow airs as well as the dance music. He brought in the harpsichord and it related back to an older classical or traditional harp music.’ Dublin society embraced Ceoltóirí Chualann but some group members mutinied when they were asked to perform in black tie at a gala concert organized by the Irish music company Gael Linn at the Gaiety Theatre. ‘I said I’ll never get into a monkey suit,’ said Paddy Moloney [uilleann piper for Ceoltóirí Chualann].¹⁸²

Peadar Ó Riada, Seán Ó Riada’s son, stated that “...he [Seán Ó Riada] decided the best thing to do would be to put it in the same sort of atmosphere as classical music...in other words, on stage, in a concert even though it didn’t suit the music itself...”¹⁸³ While Ó Riada’s instrumental novelties made Irish traditional music accessible to more diverse groups of people, some musicians felt that he was compromising the purity of tradition by making aspects of the music more accessible.

Ó Riada recognized the importance of melodic variation in traditional music and ensured that musicians would have an opportunity to play them after first “stating the basic skeleton of the tune [in an arrangement]; this then would be ornamented and varied by solo instruments, or by small groups of solo instruments.”¹⁸⁴ Ó Riada was of the

¹⁸² Glatt, *The Chieftains: The Authorized Biography*, 46.

¹⁸³ O’Connor, *Bringing It All Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music*, 75-76.

¹⁸⁴ Seán Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage*, ed. Thomas Kinsella (Mountrath, Portlaoise, Ireland: The Dolmen Press, 1982), 74-75.

opinion that “The more variation the better, so long as it has roots in the tradition, and serves to extend that tradition rather than destroy it by running counter to it.”¹⁸⁵

All of these features raised the status of Irish traditional music because it became a visible stage art that looked much like classical music in almost every respect except for instrumentation and repertoire. While the Dublin public responded with enthusiasm to Ceoltóirí Chualann’s 1961 appearance on two Raidió Éireann series *Fleadh Cheoil an Raidió* and *Reacaireact an Riadaigh*, purists did not care for the hybrid musical presentation.¹⁸⁶ Solos were given to the different instruments to highlight a player’s virtuosity and to exhibit the unique timbres of traditional melody instruments. Arrangements also incorporated the playing of melodies in thirds, sixths, fifths, and octaves.

Ceoltóirí Chualann performed until 1969, having released several recordings. This ensemble morphed into The Chieftains, the most publicly visible ensemble playing Irish traditional music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While The Chieftains have embarked on many projects fusing other music traditions with the Irish instrumental dance music that they began playing with Ó Riada in the late 1950s, they have, however, maintained Ó Riada’s format of chamber-music-like arrangements.

Contemporaneous with Ó Riada’s move to legitimize Irish traditional music by placing it in a performance tradition context was the folk revival movement in America. Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were popular in Ireland, so by the time Irish groups like the Clancy Brothers and the Dubliners appeared on the scene, society was ready to legitimize these folky, unpretentious, and serviceably untechnical performances. Irish music, as it

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Glatt, *The Chieftains: The Authorized Biography*, 46.

were, managed to simultaneously fill a high-society niche for orchestrated music and a proletariat demand for an accessible grass-roots music of the people.

This “fancy stuff,” as Barry Foy calls it, and modern manifestations of its kind, is interpreted as a compromise of traditional essence, all in the name of innovation and entertainment. Because many expert traditional musicians maintain non-performance or non-music-related careers, those who play concerts for a living may be perceived as selling out to entertain the masses with an inauthentic substitute. To avoid this association, traditional musicians may innovate less with melody.

Riverdance is seen by some traditionalists to be the ultimate compromise of traditional purity because musicians think that the show—and others like it—deploy unorthodox arrangements of Irish-like tunes, gimmicks, marketing, and sex appeal. On the evening of 30 April 1994, during a seven-minute interval of *The Eurovision Song Contest*, *Riverdance*, the brainchild of Irish television producers Moya Doherty and John McColgan, hit the stage before a television audience of several hundred million.¹⁸⁷ This single public spectacle has done more to generate social and commercial legitimacy for the practice of Irish traditional music than perhaps any other single phenomenon. The raving success of this televised glimpse caused a concert-length program to be devised that incorporated other types of percussive dancing. For ten weeks solid, the show sold to capacity in Dublin before playing to sold-out shows in London’s West End for five months.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Foley, "Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global, and Local," 38.

¹⁸⁸ Mick Moloney, Morrison, J'aime, and Quigley, Colin, *Close to the Floor: Irish Dance from the Boreen to Broadway* (Madison, WI: Madison Macater Press, 2008), 1.

Anthropologist Frank Hall in his book, *Competitive Irish Dance: Art, Sport, Duty*, states that “[The] watershed event was *Riverdance* in 1994 in which, through the power of the media, Irish dancing exceeded the control of institutionalized competitions and found a place in the world of commercial theater.”¹⁸⁹ By the tenth anniversary of *Riverdance*, over eight million people had borne witness to its popularity in thirty countries distributed among four continents.¹⁹⁰

This commercial success was orchestrated by choreographer, step dancer, and musician Michael Flatley, who became the first American to win the World Irish Dancing Championship in the 1970s. Flatley collaborated with Bill Whelan who fused Irish melodies with Balkan rhythms and phrasing.¹⁹¹

As a part of popular culture, *Riverdance* invited outsiders into traditional practice. The program states

We are one kind. We are one people now, our voices blended, our music, a great world in which we can feel everywhere at home. *Ni neart go chur le cheile*: together we are strong.¹⁹²

Lonesome uilleann pipers and other live musicians graced the stage. The sound and staging appealed to the kind of “ancient” stereotyping that Bunting deployed to sell his collections to sheet music markets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹⁸⁹ Frank Hall, *Competitive Irish Dance: Art, Sport, Duty* (Madison, WI: Macater Press, 2008), 113.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁹² Foley, "Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global, and Local," 39.

When asked in 2008 about the impact of shows like *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* on Irish dancing, New York-based Irish step dancer and choreographer Donny Golden replied:

The biggest effect is dancers from other nationalities coming into Irish dancing. Prior to that we had only Irish-born children or Irish-American children or first- or second-generation Irish. When *Riverdance* came out people from everywhere saw it and they said, “well, that is cool. I would like to do that.” Even people in Ireland never thought Irish dancing was that cool [before *Riverdance*]. They said, “oh, it’s...you know, *that* kind of stuff.” Now people in Ireland say, “Then when I saw that, then I said, oh I’m going to send my kid back into Irish dancing!”¹⁹³

Irish music and dance was suddenly popular: it was cool to be Irish. People began clamoring for sets of uilleann pipes, Irish-themed weddings, and Irish step dancing lessons. It was *Riverdance* that, in part, made Irish music commercially and socially viable at the end of the twentieth century.

As folklorist and Global Distinguished Professor of Music and the Irish Studies Mick Moloney summarizes, the significance of *Riverdance* is that it publicly validated the national culture of Ireland on an international stage.¹⁹⁴ The boom in the Irish economy several years prior to the public introduction of *Riverdance* set the stage for the performing arts of Ireland to be acknowledged by global audiences.

Riverdance not only legitimized Irish music socially and commercially; the dance show made Irish music more popular than it had ever been. In order to usher Irish music and dance into the popular sphere, producers of shows like *Riverdance* and *Lord of the*

¹⁹³ Moloney, *Close to the Floor: Irish Dance from the Boreen to Broadway*, 84.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

Dance made the presentation highly sexualized. This was seen by some to cheapen national practices of dance and music.

Furthermore, technical dancing was highly simplified in order to make dancer synchronization easier. Dancer Jean Butler, who launched *Riverdance* with Michael Flatley in 1994, said in a 2008 interview that

...the dancers...in the shows...are doing really simple stuff. I mean if you look at *Riverdance*, they're doing baby dance steps! The only dancers that get to do anything slightly interesting or challenging are the soloists who can created their own choreography.¹⁹⁵

Butler's statement is significant because it implies that the result of marketing a show to mass audiences is the simplification of Irish dancing. This manner of presenting Irish dance impresses large audiences because the dancing—despite its rudimentary nature—is synchronized, and because audiences are there for the spectacle, rather than for a cultural lesson. These simplifications reinforce conservative positions against innovation because conservatives are interested in appreciating the detail and nuance of individual masters rather than simplifying music and dance in order to make traditional practices accessible.

The popularity of Irish traditional music was perhaps a result of Ó Riada's blending of traditional practices with high styles of music that were already socially acceptable. Irish traditional music became a concert performing tradition because Ó Riada had dressed up in emperor's clothing what on its own would have been dismissed by most audiences as an inferior music cultural. With an achieved respectability, it became possible for "musicians like Micho Russell...[to]...sit alone on a stage in

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 98.

Germany and receive tumultuous applause for playing his tin whistle in his own pure style.”¹⁹⁶ It is impossible to know whether or not Irish traditional music would be a performance tradition today if not for Ó Riada. But, it seems reasonable to interpret Ó Riada’s forays into genre blending as a major step in bringing Irish traditional music (in whatever form) to a larger concert-going public.

It is not my prerogative to assess the relative costs and benefits of what emerged as a new performance tradition in the mid-twentieth century, but merely to assess that performing tradition’s impact on aesthetic conservatism and, by proxy, the practice of melodic variation. Accessibility means compromise and for some, compromise means the disintegration of cultural purity. Innovation and change happen to make this music accessible and is consequently avoided by some traditionalists thus cultivating a conservative aesthetic. Likewise, bands who accompany this simplified dancing might also be required to play synchronically, and may be encouraged to avoid melodic variation to present a unified artistic offering to a ticket-buying audience.

3.8. Conclusion

While it is normative for musicians to vary melody in Irish traditional instrumental performance practice, musicians do not simply vary in any manner they like. Musicians vary melodies in such a way that the tune’s identity is maintained for the listener through successive repetitions. While in Chapter II, I offered some interpersonal contexts within the Baltimore Irish music community to explain how trans-generational hierarchies mitigate behavior and validate innovation, I have in this chapter discussed in

¹⁹⁶ Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin quoted in P. J. Curtis, *Notes from the Heart: A Celebration of Traditional Irish Music* (Dublin: Torc, 1994), 25-26.

broader terms the kinds of socio-historical circumstances that may cultivate resistance to excessive change in performance practice.

In this chapter, I have considered several different possible answers to the following question: What socio-historical contexts could be contributing to the fact that over successive repetitions of a tune, a musician attempts to keep that tune's identity clear? As I have shown in this chapter, there is no simple answer to this question. Perhaps during a long period of British colonization, the Irish were so abused that they realized ambition was not a welcome attribute. Perhaps such a realization contributed to the development a self-effacing humility or even doubt about the importance or value of Irish music.

The preservationist attitudes of those like Edward Bunting include the idea that the tune, the cultural artifact, does not change in transmission or over long periods of time. Petrie offered the idea that there was a single tune archetype and that there were better and worse manifestations of that archetype. The tune is treated as a physical object whose inherent value cannot be enhanced through variation.

The Famine caused a cultural scare for these collectors. The deaths of thousands threatened Ireland with cultural dissolution. Acquiring and publishing tunes prevented the demise of Irish culture and the Irish people: people and culture live on in their tunes, despite who is playing them.

Certain tunes carry associations of the teacher and composer of that tune. Playing a tune is a way to remember the musician who served as the origin for that tune. Variations of the tune serve to erase the memory of the tune's origin. Since variations are newly added, they may replace or obfuscate the original version that was learned.

Variations may deprive the player or listener of the sensory experience required to remember another musician.

Recording technology contributes to aesthetic conservatism in much the same way the collectors' transcriptions did: paradigms are established with documentation that, by virtue of their inferred superiority, cannot be improved upon. Recordings are rather unselective documents in that they can reproduce more sensory information from a performance than a transcription can. The view that certain recordings are sacrosanct, in a manner of speaking, explains why musicians might attempt to emulate recordings as closely as possible and introduce few variations, if any. One goal of imitating a recording is to interact with an exemplar that one enjoys: adding one's own variations dilutes the value of the exemplar source.

Some musicians assume that in order to present Irish music to a larger outsider audience, its authenticity is compromised. The thinking is that because the masses will not necessarily appreciate Irish music in its coarse original form, it must be dressed up with non-traditional instrumentation and arrangements that make the dance tunes pleasing to outsiders. Innovation, admittedly more than melodic variation, is avoided because of this association. If innovation is associated with watering down tradition so that Irish music may become accessible for listeners who are looking for nothing more than a Riverdance spectacle, then innovation is undesirable.

Having considered what it is about context that might have generated the acceptable limitations that many traditional musicians respect, let us proceed to consider how musicians vary over successive repetitions of a tune and how transcriptions might serve to illuminate those variations.

CHAPTER IV

EXCLUSIVE CRITERIA:

RECORDING SELECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

In order to pursue the richness of melodic variation types in Irish traditional music, I have transcribed fifty source recordings made by fifty different performers from the early-twentieth century to the early-twenty-first century. These recordings are varied in terms of personnel, instrumentation, gender of musician, sound quality, repertoire, and chronology, and they exhibit performances in which melodies were altered over successive repetitions. To contextualize the contents of these source recordings and also to give the reader a clear idea about how I have handled the translation of audible music into musical graphics, I will explain in this chapter which recordings I have selected, something about why I selected them, and how I have gone about transcribing them.

Transcription is a complicated process because it challenges the transcriber's ear and philosophical consistency. In order to make an argument for the universality of variation types in Irish traditional music, I have had to devise a rationale for including and excluding certain aspects of a musical performance in a given transcription. I will describe these criteria in greater detail later on, but suffice it for now to say that making a picture out of a sound is the kind of process that can say as much about the transcriber as it can about the musician whose performance is being transcribed.

Transcription is a highly selective process that puts the reader in the service of (or at the mercy of) the transcriber's hearing, enculturation, and musical aesthetic. As long as a transcription is read with these mitigating factors in mind, a great deal can be learned

from a transcription, even if the medium of graphic representation lacks certain nuances that are outside its capacity to represent.¹⁹⁷

What a transcription can tell us about the transcriber is what he or she thinks is important or interesting, irrelevant, and, also, what cannot be adequately represented on paper. In 1985, Breandán Breathnach made the following statement about notation and its use in documenting Irish traditional music:

Conflicting opinions are expressed about the validity and value of...notation for interpreting Irish music. Those who are dubious about its use labour, I believe, under a misapprehension about its function...Staff notation mostly serves a two-fold purpose for a traditional player. It elucidates a twist or turn in the tune which his ear has failed to pick up; it recalls to memory a tune once played but now forgotten. Here the notation may be likened to a photograph – the features in both cases are instantly recalled on sight...¹⁹⁸

Breathnach suggests that notation is most useful to a student of Irish music if the inquirer understands that notation is written in such a way to serve as a memory aid and teaching tool.

All of these things—the interesting, the irrelevant, and the ineffable—come to bear in the transcription.¹⁹⁹ It is important to know something about a transcriber's

¹⁹⁷ Of notation, Michael Chanan makes the point that “[T]he development of notation has the effect of shaping musical materials to satisfy its own demands, thereby marginalizing and excluding from its syntax whatever it is unable to capture.” Michael Chanan, *Musica Practica: The Social Practice of Western Music from Gregorian Chant to Postmodernism* (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 29.

¹⁹⁸ Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach*, 98.

¹⁹⁹ Niall Keegan writes that “The score in the world of classical music is both an accurate model *for* performance and a model *of* performance and plays a major role in the economy of that music...In traditional Irish music the relationship between the signified (a model of the music) and the signifier (the notation systems used) is not as direct as their relationship in the art tradition. Many of the elements of Irish traditional music performance (for example variation, ornamentation, phrasing, articulation) are not accounted for at all and often the melody is represented in a very basic manner...Most of the information required for traditional performance, even elements of repertoire, is not transferred in notation but is done so orally...” Emphasis original. See Niall Keegan, “Literacy as a Transmission Tool in Irish Traditional

enculturation because knowing the transcriber's position will enable a reader to learn something from a transcription. I have not transcribed performances exactly as they are played on the source recordings. I have adjusted, I have omitted, and I have mediated for the eye the kinds of details that the ear hears but cannot immediately quantify.

What I have come to realize by making these transcriptions is that the process by which we analyze anything is, in reality, a rather close scrutiny of ourselves—so close in fact, that we scarcely realize that we are examining our own aesthetics as much as we are analyzing another musician's performance. When we are forced to make decisions about how to represent something, we are asking a question that defines and continues to redefine the subject-object relationship: asking questions about our object requires a regular renegotiation of our relationship to and perceptions of that object. Thus, we change as we hypothesize and study.

For the most part, I have transcribed recordings that are commercially available so that readers may procure recordings and listen to them in conjunction with the historical anthology in Appendix C of this dissertation. It is the sound itself that encapsulates the ineffable qualities of a performance. The transcriptions, as they appear in Appendix C, will look simple when compared to the complex aural experience that the source recordings provide.

One reason why the transcription will not approach the density of detail that a recording exhibits is because there are many kinds of variance that I have not taken upon myself to include in this study. Microtonal variance, slight rhythmic variations, articulation, and timbral nuances are all types of variation that ought to be accorded

Music," in *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995*, ed. Patrick F. Devine and Harry White, *Irish Musical Studies* (Maynooth: Four Courts Press, 1996), 338.

separate detailed studies. My research project is really just the first step toward more studies of other kinds.

While I have omitted these other types of variations from the transcriptions, I have done so in order to make certain theoretical aspects of the complex source recordings accessible in an attempt to bring into high relief aspects of performance practice that timbre, frequency, and amplitude allow for, but which can also mask underlying principles. It was my task then to listen to these recordings many times over in order to notate details that I thought necessary and to omit details that I thought might obscure what I want the reader to learn about these performances.

4.2. The Relevance of Transcriber Enculturation

I consider myself to be an Irish traditional musician. Having learned, taught, transcribed, composed, recorded, and performed this music since childhood, my immersion gives me unique insight about how Irish musicians engage in the performance practice of melodic variation.

Music theorists Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff posit that any method that treats musical practice as a coherent system is contingent on the theorist's listening experience and cultural situation.

A musical idiom of any complexity demands considerable sophistication for its full appreciation...because one's knowledge of a musical style is to a great extent unconscious, much of it cannot be transmitted by direct instruction. Thus one may rightfully be curious about the source of the experienced listener's knowledge. To what extent is it learned, and to what extent is it due to an innate musical capacity or general cognitive capacity? A formal theory of musical idioms will make possible substantive hypotheses about those aspects of musical understanding that are innate;

the innate aspects will reveal themselves as “universal” principles of musical grammar.²⁰⁰

Because I have spent many hours “handling” the repertoire that constitutes the Irish dance music tradition, I have a certain amount of ingrained—but unconscious—knowledge about what can and does occur during a performance. I would suspect that the situation is similar for other proficient performers inside and outside of Irish traditional music. These “innate aspects,” as Lerdahl and Jackendoff call them, govern how I perform this music and how I interpret the performances of other musicians—that is, how I make decisions about what I transcribe of recordings made by other musicians.

Over a period of time, some of these innate aspects about performance practice, while initially subconscious, have, in a manner of speaking, surfaced into consciousness. I think that there are two reasons for this. The first has to do with my experience teaching other people how to play Irish music. Teaching other people how to play this music has necessitated a distillation of rationale that might not have otherwise surfaced in my conscious thinking. I am now able to make explicit the “principles of musical grammar” as they are practiced in Irish traditional music because students have asked me questions about how I achieve certain musical results when I play. This taxonomy of melodic variation has come not only from my own thought experiments and listening analysis: it has been tested and refined through many years of teaching others how to create their own variations.

A second reason that I suspect these musical grammars to have appeared in my consciousness is a result of my training in music theory and analysis. My time spent

²⁰⁰ Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, The MIT Press Series on Cognitive Theory and Mental Representation (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 4.

analyzing classical music with a certain descriptive lexicon has prompted me to think about how I understand what I do as a traditional instrumentalist. While analyzing chorales or symphonies, I would have frequent epiphanies to the effect of “so *that* is what we could call a similar motivic or chordal shift in Irish music.” While my analysis classes dealt mostly with the music of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century continental Europe written for ecclesiastical, aristocratic, concert-going, and musically literate contexts, I found that the musical grammars were similar enough to transfer terminology. While there was not a one-to-one correlation in every instance, the theories used to explain continental music from these two centuries seemed easily adaptable for Irish traditional music for the most part.

One main difference between the music I analyzed in my theory classes and the music that I spent years playing on stages and in the bars of Baltimore was the form. The dance music genres of Irish music provide a sort of inviolable structure—the parameters, if you will—within which one may vary. Of course, one’s enculturation mediates what one hears and, consequently what one transcribes. It is now that I would like to consider how listening experience comes to bear on the process of transcription.

4.3. The Fallibility of the Human Ear

While one can spend many hours listening to other musicians play the same tunes many times over, the human ear is still fallible. In the interest of full disclosure, and to illustrate what I mean when I say that the reader is at the mercy of the transcriber’s hearing, allow me to recount a personal incident that brought this auditory fallibility to light.

The incident I will now recount was one in which I was surprised to hear something new on a recording with which I would have said I was very familiar. This was a recording that I thought I had totally deconstructed and understood thoroughly. However, as I will illustrate, there was still more for me to learn from this particular recording than I had originally thought.

I was teaching an uilleann piping student who asked me about a particular section of uilleann piper Robbie Hannan’s studio recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie.”²⁰¹ I had listened to the recording many times and knew Hannan’s performance of the tune well. Claddagh Records published the recording in 1990 and I had purchased a personal copy by 1996, the year after I had begun learning the uilleann pipes. I had listened to the recording regularly between 1996 and 2011, so when my student asked me about Hannan’s ornamentation in a particular section of this reel, I relayed to my student the finger movements that I thought Hannan was using to achieve a particular sound. An unornamented transcription of that part of “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie” is presented here in example 4.3a.



Example 4.3a: Unornamented transcribed excerpt from Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie”

As I said, I had listened actively to this track dozens of times since having acquired the recording in 1996. When I first heard Hannan’s recording of this tune in the mid-1990s, I, like my curious student, wanted to duplicate what he was doing—the effect

²⁰¹ Robbie Hannan, *Irish Traditional Music Played on the Uilleann Pipes*, CD, Claddagh Records CC53CD, 1990.

that Hannan was achieving on the chanter was astounding and I had never (and still have never) heard another uilleann piper play it in quite the same way. As a student of the pipes myself and of this recording in particular, I eventually concluded that Hannan’s ornamentation in this section of the recording probably looked something like what is shown in the transcription of example 4.3b: notice the G grace notes in the boxes.



Example 4.3b: Transcribed excerpt from Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie” with ornamentation that I thought I had heard Hannan play

My student’s question came at a time when I had not heard this recording for several months. Having had a time lapse from my last listening, my student’s question prompted me to revisit the source recording. Upon listening again to Hannan’s performance of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie,” I realized that Hannan was in fact not playing those G grace notes (in the boxes of example 4.3b) before the Eb’s as I had originally thought. What he was really doing involved bouncing the ring finger of the left (top) hand while leaving the little finger of the right (bottom) hand up to achieve the interesting effect that I have transcribed in example 4.3c.



Example 4.3c: Transcribed excerpt from Robbie Hannan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie” with the ornamentation that Hannan actually played.

I bring this example to light not to cast probable doubt on the reliability of the transcriptions that I have made. I cite this instance to illustrate that my preconceptions

informed how I heard Hannan's performance. The ornamentation that I then had at my disposal when I first heard Hannan's recording in 1996 largely informed what I thought he was playing. Because I had no idea that the technique he was using to achieve the effect involved bouncing the left ring finger, I had no way to infer that kind of maneuver from what I was hearing.

My menu of grace notes was slimmer in 1996 than it was in 2011 and, upon listening back during this lesson, I was finally able to hear what Hannan was actually playing rather than using some ersatz ornamentation as a placeholder. Returning to the recording with an open mind and with more listening experience allowed me to hear a musical maneuver that, for whatever reason, had eluded me for over a decade of listening. I have repeatedly checked the transcriptions in the anthology to ensure that the both the taxonomy and analytical method I am proposing are founded on empirical evidence, but there are bound to be some errors for which I take full responsibility.

As my anecdote about the mistaken ornamentation is meant to illustrate also that familiarity with a recording can be both a blessing and a curse. When we listen repeatedly to something, our memories and senses become habituated to certain kinds of musical stimuli. In some instances, the more we listen, the more musical nuance can get past our consciousness—while we may hear the same recording repeatedly, we may stop listening for certain musical nuances over successive playings. In other instances, we may discover increasingly more detailed layers of nuance over repeated listenings.

Of the source recordings that I have transcribed in Appendix C, I have only spent several years listening to about half of them. For the most part, I do not have a decade of familiarity with the source recordings that I have transcribed here. That is, I have not

listened to these source recordings daily, weekly, or even monthly for several years. To avoid biasing my taxonomy, I necessarily had to venture outside recordings familiar to me for this research project. I did this in order to avoid biasing my sample toward only a few select favorite players of mine. I became familiar with most of the source recordings that I have transcribed only within about six months of transcribing them to avoid aesthetic prejudice. Having researched aural memory and having reconsidered the implications of the scenario with my misinterpretation of Hannan's ornamentation, I am not sure if this short period of acquaintance with certain recordings will prove to be an advantage or a disadvantage. I suppose that time will tell.

In the explanation that follows, I will describe why I have selected certain kinds of recordings. I will also describe how I represented those performances graphically such that the reader will be able to see something about varying melody in the Irish dance music tradition that I think interesting and important. The transcriptions are not exhaustive and should not be interpreted as if they are; they are partial representations of what I (one musician) have perceived over repeated listenings. It is fair to say that when I use the word "partial," I mean that the transcriptions account for less than 50% of the aural nuance that the ear will detect.

I encourage any reader interested in coming to grips with the complexity of this musical tradition to listen to the source recordings while looking at the transcriptions and to listen many times over both with and without a score.

4.4. Recording Selection Rationale: Exclusive and Inclusive Criteria

From playing Irish traditional music for many years, I have developed aesthetic preferences with respect to performance practice. Having responded to my preferences, I have naturally acquainted myself more with some musicians' recordings and not others. This selective listening and highly cultivated set of preferences—something that all devotees of a particular musical genre pursue—must in some sense be put aside, since my desire is to investigate what types of variation procedures are “out there” in the recorded documents and not the kinds of variation practices that my favorite musicians choose to apply. It would be easy but delinquent to invoke a handful of preferred and beloved recordings to make general statements about variation practice at large.²⁰² Having said that, I have also transcribed a few of my favorite recordings since I think that there is something interesting in each of them that will draw attention to certain musicians' creative interpretations of traditional melodies.

In my selection of recordings to transcribe and analyze, I have tried to be “tasteless.” Tastelessness—in the sense of selecting a musical sample to analyze according to music scholar William Brooks—is to embrace the idea that “all music is equally valuable (or, if you prefer, that all music is rubbish)” and that “all music can be approached (and should be approached, sooner or later) with interest and without prejudice.”²⁰³ Because I am a practitioner and teacher who recommends some practices to

²⁰² Brooks notes that “...it is clear that music theory can have nothing to do with aesthetic values, judgements [*sic*] or preferences. If a theory is to account for a particular musical language, it must account for *all* utterances in that language.” Emphasis original. See William Brooks, “On Being Tasteless,” *Popular Music* 2, no. Theory and Method (1982): 17.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 13. Brooks states that “We can choose what we study by exercising our preferences, our likes and dislikes, so long as we agree that these have nothing to do with value. After all, ‘liking’ a piece is not a property of that piece, but rather of the relationship between it and a person; ‘liking’ has nothing to do with the music per se and need have nothing to do with value.” See *ibid.* “Historians...are inclined to assert that

students while challenging other practices, this philosophy is daunting to embrace. Naturally, my desire is to select performances for transcription and analysis that have excited me, that have profoundly affected me, and that have played for hours in my ears. In order to be tasteless, however, I have selected from source recordings that were initially unfamiliar to me in order to devise an analytical method and taxonomy that account for as much variety as possible.

Having said that, fifty performers is still a rather small sampling given the proliferation of recordings that are now published weekly due to the availability and affordability of home recording equipment. The wealth of recorded music that is now available for examination is simply too great a store for one analyst to grapple with in a single chapter let alone in an entire career. The limitations of this study notwithstanding, I hope that my research will spur other analysts to examine documents that I have not considered here.

To avoid developing a biased analytical method and taxonomy based exclusively on my favorite recordings, I have transcribed fifty performances given by fifty different performers, sampling ten decades from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In selecting recordings for analysis, I have stratified my sample by decade. Within the decade, however, instrumentation, personnel, gender, and chronology are intended to be random.

the material they select is ‘important’ or ‘historically significant’. Their argument usually rests on the assumption that history is a tangible thing, like a rug, and that one need only look dispassionately at it to see where the bumps and twists and patterns are. But there is no rug called history – only a vast accumulation of bits of wool. All that we have is residue, yesterday’s leavings; yesterday itself is altogether inaccessible...Historical importance is in no sense self-evident; it is defined by the selections we make to suit a rug half-woven. We compile the artifacts to build the history we want to build; there is nothing ‘objective’ about our choices.” *ibid.*, 14.

With the exception of the 1910s, a decade whose recordings I could not obtain, transcriptions come from each decade starting from the 1900s to the 2000s. The specific chronology of the sample ranges from around 1904 to 2007. I limited my sample to ten recordings maximum per decade. Having learned to play Irish music mostly in the 1990s, my music collection is weighted in that decade. While I have transcribed performances that I have enjoyed for years, this self-imposed chronological requirement encouraged me to become acquainted with musicians' playing that was otherwise unfamiliar to me and, consequently, beyond my aesthetic-reinforcing biases.

Below is a chronological list of the performers and repertoire that I have transcribed.

1900s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
1	Cronin, Edward	Banish Misfortune	Fiddle	c. 1904
2	Touhey, Patsy	Connachtman's Rambles	Uilleann Pipes	c. 1904

1920s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
3	Ennis, Tom	The Swallow's Tail	Uilleann Pipes	1920
4	Coleman, Michael	Rakish Paddy	Fiddle	1922
5	Gallagher, Michael	Plains of Boyle	Uilleann Pipes	1924
6	McKenna, John	The Flowers of the Red Mill	Flute	1928
7	Reavy, Edward	The Boys of the Lough	Fiddle	1928

1930s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
8	Grogan, Michael J.	Off to California	Accordion	1931
9	Killoran, Paddy	Down the Broom	Fiddle	1937

1940s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
10	Ennis, Seamus	Bonny Kate	Uilleann Pipes	1940
11	Howard, John	Toss the Feathers	Fiddle	1942
12	O'Mealy, Richard	Drops of Brandy	Uilleann Pipes	1943
13	Murphy, Denis	Humours of Galteemore	Fiddle	1949

1950s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
14	Clancy, Willie	Down the Back Lane	Uilleann Pipes	1958
15	Canny, Paddy	Rogha Ghearóid De Barra	Fiddle	1959
16	Casey, Bobby	Paddy Ryan's Dream	Fiddle	1959

1960s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
17	Doherty, John	The Spirits of Wine	Fiddle	1968-74
18	Carty, Paddy	Gilbert Clancy's	Flute	1969
19	McGuire, Sean	The Poppy Leaf	Fiddle	1969

1970s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
20	Taylor, Paddy	The Hag with the Money	Flute	1970
21	Potts, Tommy	My Love is in America	Fiddle	1971
22	Keane, Seán	Gusty's Frolics	Fiddle	1975
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	The Salamanca	Pedal organ	1976
24	Clifford, Billy	The Cordal	Flute	1977
25	Gavin, Frankie	The Peacock's Feather	Fiddle	1977
26	Sherlock, Roger	The Duke of Leinster	Flute	1978
27	Bergin, Mary	Tom Billy's	Tin whistle	1979
28	Coen, Charles	The Tynagh	Concertina	1979

1980s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
29	Keegan, Josephine	Music in the Glen	Fiddle	1980
30	Burke, Kevin	Paddy's Return	Fiddle	1982
31	McComiskey, Billy	Dinny Delaney's	Accordion	1981
32	Keenan, Paddy	The Maid Behind the Bar	Uilleann Pipes	1983
33	Molloy, Matt	Patsy Touhey's	Flute	1984
34	O'Brien, Paddy	Garrett Barry's	Accordion	1988
35	O'Leary, Christy	Out on the Ocean	Uilleann Pipes	1988
36	Connolly, Seamus	Sheila Coyle's	Fiddle	1989
37	Kelly, James	Sporting Paddy	Fiddle	1989
38	O'Flynn, Liam	Johnny McGreevy's	Uilleann Pipes	1989

1990s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
39	Egan, Seamus	Bobby Casey's	Banjo	1990
40	Byrne, Dermot	Hardiman the Fiddler	Accordion	1995
41	Crawford, Kevin	Sporting Paddy	Flute	1995
42	Derrane, Joe	Humours of Lissadell	Accordion	1996
43	O'Brien, Mick	Higgins's Hornpipe	Uilleann Pipes	1996
44	McKeon, Gay	The Maid in the Cherry Tree	Uilleann Pipes	1997
45	Hannan, Robbie	Rambles of Kitty	Uilleann Pipes	1998
46	Keegan, Niall	Dunmore Lassies	Flute	1999
47	Mulvihill, Brendan	The Lark in the Morning	Fiddle	1999

2000s

#	Musician	Tune Title	Instrument	Year
48	Carroll, Liz	The Drunken Sailor	Fiddle	2000
49	O'Hare, Kieran	Páidín O'Rafertaigh	Uilleann Pipes	2001
50	Grasso, Eliot	The Butcher's March	Uilleann Pipes	2007

I have selected recordings with a variety of instrumentation used in Irish traditional music. I have limited my sample to instrumentation to the following instruments: accordion, banjo, concertina, fiddle, flute, pedal organ, tin whistle, and uilleann pipes.²⁰⁴ There are more recordings of fiddlers than pedal organists or tin whistle players, so there will naturally be more fiddle recordings transcribed than recordings of other instruments.

I required that my sample include both men and women. My sample includes source recordings made by three women and forty-seven men. While both genders have played an equal role in the transmission of Irish music performance practice, recordings of female musicians, as I shall discuss below, have not been as plentiful historically as recordings of male musicians.

I have limited my sample to the following four dance music genres: hornpipe, jig, slip jig, and reel. I have chosen to transcribe these genres because the tunes are strictly symmetrical (each part having the same number of measures and therefore the same number of set accented tones) and also have many rhythmic positions that can be varied. Polkas and slides, while important dance music genres in which melodic variation can and does occur, generally have fewer rhythmic positions, thus leaving less room for melodic variation. I have not included set dances in this study because of their

²⁰⁴ Irish scholar Caoimhín MacAoidh points out that by ignoring certain instruments, the O'Neill collectors "were not representing the true width of the tradition." Caoimhín MacAoidh, *The Scribe: The Life and Works of James O'Neill* (Nure, Manorhamilton, Co. Limerick: Drumlin, 2006), 79.

characteristically irregular harmonic rhythm, irregular phrasing, and asymmetrical structure.

I also limited my sample to one tune per musician. In order to determine the universality of variation procedure, I had to disperse my sample selection to as many musicians as possible. Since some musicians vary frequently and others vary infrequently, I wanted to ensure that no single musician's amount of variance would skew the data. Some musicians have recorded prolifically throughout their careers while others have not. In cases of musicians like uilleann piper Liam O'Flynn (b. 1945) or fiddler Frankie Gavin (b. 1956), musicians who have recorded profusely over the tenure of their careers, I have limited myself to transcribing one tune per instrumentalist in an attempt to be fair in my analysis and theorizing.

The benefit to this criterion is that I may avoid formulating a general taxonomy based on the playing of a widely recorded minority. The drawback of this restriction is losing the potential to observe the influence that those prolifically recorded musicians' approaches to performance practice have had over time, if such a thing is measurable. Having said that, it must be taken into account that there are far more musicians whose performances are not available to contribute to the shaping of my melodic variation taxonomy. There are many recorded musicians' performances that are simply unavailable to me and lamentable as it may be, I hope that such omissions will give further cause to pursue a refinement of my taxonomy and analytical method.

Outside of my one-tune-per-musician, gender, genre, instrumentation, and chronology policies, I placed limiting criteria on available recordings in several other ways. I transcribed source recordings with only one melodist and one accompanist at

most. I avoided transcribing ensemble recordings with two or more melody players. These kinds of recordings, especially those made up through the 1950s, or those with two fiddlers or two flute players, make isolating and analyzing the results of individual music-making behavior extremely difficult. Likewise, two fiddlers can sound like one if well rehearsed. I am interested in assigning credit to musicians for their music-making, and it was with this desire in mind that I avoided recordings in which this basic tenet was problematic. Recordings with two or more melody players precluded me from ascribing variations to one player or another with certainty, and so I avoided the issue by transcribing recordings with only one melody player.²⁰⁵

I limited my sample to recordings with consistent mechanical fidelity, thus allowing me to select from among source recordings whose entirety could be transcribed. I deemed recordings that exhibited material damage to the original source ineligible for transcription. I avoided recordings that, because of some kind of material damage to the sound source, caused pitch to be either indiscernible or to vary unrealistically from the pitch production capabilities of the instrument on the recording. On some of the digitized cylinder recordings, for example, it was clear that damage to the cylinder obscured part of the performance. Likewise, I selected performances in which both recording quality and playing were clear to the point where I could discern individual grace notes and set accented tones. For instance, in order to say something meaningful variation types by observation and comparison, I needed at least two completely audible repetitions of a

²⁰⁵ Tomás Ó Canainn argues that “Playing in groups may, in certain circumstances, be detrimental to a player’s individual style, as the requirements of group playing are quite different from those of solo playing. The importance that Irish traditional musicians attach to ornamentation and variation means that the music can only be fully satisfying in the context of a solo performance. Spontaneity in group playing is, of necessity, subject to the requirement that the overall sound has a certain togetherness: this tends to inhibit the adventurous performer.” See Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 45.

particular tune by a single melodist. I deemed a performance involving one and a half times through a tune ineligible for transcription. Despite the interesting variations that might be cataloged on these damaged or partial tracks, I could not include them in my sample.

In Chapter 3, I spent a considerable amount of time discussing a few historical and contextual issues that might in part explain aesthetic conservatism with respect to musical innovation in Irish music culture. Not all musicians vary their tunes because, among other reasons, some musicians have developed a philosophy toward music that considers excessive change to be undesirable. Since I have opted to be tasteless in my recording selection, I have transcribed some performances that exhibit frequent and infrequent melodic variation.

4.5. Available Technology, Source Recordings, and “Representative” Samples

Since most of the source recordings that I have transcribed were originally published as commercial recordings, I will say a few words about document availability. I am raising a few contextual issues for consideration about what recordings are or are not likely to be available for sale and transcription, and who is or is not likely to be recorded.

First, the cost of recording and publishing in the early-twentieth century—not to mention the politics of the recording industry—hardly allowed for every Irish musician alive to be considered for a recording contract. Today, students of Irish music use various kinds of technology from laptop computers to mp3 recorders to document the playing of other musicians for later study. This ease of documentation is a relatively recent

phenomenon. For the most part, what is now available to transcribe from the twentieth century is “what has come down to us,” the results of many individual decisions made to record other musicians or musicians deciding to record their own playing. Since I have not used my own field recordings as part of my sample to give evidence for this performance practice, I am not responsible for the existence of the recordings. The benefit of using public recordings is that the academic community may either corroborate or refute my work by listening to a variety of sources that are widely available.

Because I have played no part in the making of the source recordings, the sounds that the technology can reproduce serve as my only point of aural reference for the music that I have transcribed. In other words, I am not transcribing a recording while at the same time remembering what a particular musician sounded like when he played live right in front of my recording device. I am not transcribing while trying to recall what an audibly indiscernible gesture looked like in an attempt to make sense of what is captured on the sound recording. Despite the fact that I have a professional working knowledge of the uilleann pipes, flute, tin whistle, and fiddle, the sound itself is my only sensory knowledge of the instance of the music-making behavior—I have no visual aid and no memory to help clarify and interpret the sound.

Second, there are also geographical considerations with respect to technology. Recordings of Irish traditional music began to be mass-produced and marketed in the early decades of the twentieth century in the northeast of the United States, and it is from this location that the earliest commercial recordings of Irish traditional music have necessarily come. Despite the many Irish musicians who immigrated to the United States to escape pressing famine, many Irish musicians also moved to England, continental

Europe, or points beyond, while some musicians never left Ireland in the first place. The reality of circumstance is that most musicians have either not been documented at all, or have not been documented in a format that I can access. I am not saying that I have selected the best performances or the worst performances. All I can say is that I have selected recordings that are available using certain criteria such as instrumentation, genre, gender, and chronology.

I have used many digital re-issuings of recordings previously made with earlier recording technology for my source recordings and can only hope that those collectors generous enough to allow their cylinders and 78 records to be republished will continue to do so. These are extremely valuable archival resources that could potentially tell scholars a great deal about performance practice in Irish music.

Political factors also matter with respect to who is recorded and who is not. Harry Bradshaw, an Irish music scholar responsible for documenting Michael Coleman's recordings and the history of recording within the Irish idiom, has suggested that one reason for the explosion of Irish recordings in the first two decades of the twentieth century in America was the result of the 1916 uprising in Ireland, an event in which the Irish rebelled against their British colonizers and thus galvanized those of Irish stock in the United States.²⁰⁶ This surge of homeland pride caused by the uprising effectively sparked an interest in buying recordings of Irish traditional music where there might have been less of a market before 1916.

Consequently, the selection process of musicians to record for major labels does not really say anything about the importance or beauty of someone's playing.

²⁰⁶ See Harry Bradshaw's liner notes for Michael Coleman, *Michael Coleman 1891-1945*, Viva Voce, 1991, 47-48.

Fortunately, I am interested in assigning neither of those qualities to the source recordings that I have transcribed. My intent is not to create (or to reinforce) the idea of a pantheon of recording musicians, but rather to “build a truer theory of human musical behavior by starting with the ordinary – without, however, rejecting for ever [*sic*] the exceptional.”²⁰⁷

There are gaps in the history regarding the selection of some musicians for recording—the screening process, if you will. The recorded documents from the early-twentieth century to the present exhibit a wide range of variety with respect to technical proficiency and melodic variations. While our tendency may be to assume that only the most exceptional players are invited to participate in commercial recordings, it is important to remember that preserving “art” (whatever that is) was not (and is arguably still not) the only objective of recording Irish music. It seems, therefore, that it may be presumptuous to infer cultural value and status from any recording.

A few musicians such as uilleann piper Patsy Touhey and collector Francis O’Neill acquired their own Edison cylinder recorders and recorded performances for private use.²⁰⁸ Many 78s from the so-called “Golden Age” have been digitized and re-released in a format that is easily accessible, thanks to the efforts of Mick Moloney, Harry Bradshaw, and the Ward Irish Music Archives, to name but a few. Other such recordings are awaiting re-release. Suffice it to say that those recordings that are available from the 1900s, 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, must be understood as selective, like the

²⁰⁷ Brooks, "On Being Tasteless," 18.

²⁰⁸ Listen to *The Francis O’Neill Cylinders: 32 Recordings of Traditional Irish Music*, Ward Irish Music Archives, WIMA 002, 2010 and Patsy Touhey, *The Piping of Patsy Touhey*, Na Piobairí Uilleann, NPUCD001, 2005.

documentation of any other phenomenon. The records that I may draw from are the result of other individuals' choices about documentation.

As the decades have passed, recording equipment has become more widely available and more record companies devoted to the Irish traditional idiom have sprung up (and also withered). This means that there are more recordings to select from in each subsequent decade. However, it must also be noted that not all traditional players have recorded the same volume of tunes: most players have recorded little music commercially, if any. There are beloved players who, as late as their seventies and eighties, are just stepping into recording studios for the very first time. Thus, we must keep in mind that performances captured on commercial recordings account for only a very small percentage of performances of Irish traditional music in the first place.

A great many variables came into play when it came to decide which recordings I would transcribe for this project and which recordings I would not transcribe. There are hundreds of thousands of tracks that Irish instrumentalists have recorded between 1900 and 2000. Which recordings should I use to illustrate my points and why? After all, it would seem obvious that to demonstrate a point about anything, one would want to use good examples of the topic to be discussed.

Often in music theory, we teach an abstract principle like sonata form, for example. After the terms of the form are described, we then introduce a piece of music that exhibits those particular characteristics. What is often the case is that those composers of whom we are fond, are our favorites because their compositions defy standardized formal procedure. Thus, we are left with a standard form and an example that defies the form. The form acts as a straw man for the genius of the rule-breaker.

As I considered this issue, a philosophical problem came to light. What exactly is a “good example”? I am not asking the question “what track of Irish music is a good one to transcribe?” but rather, “what is the nature of a good example?” It is one thing to call a transcription a good example, but it is quite another thing to call a performance a good example. A good example is, I conclude, an instance that demonstrates an abstract principle or corroborates an idea already proposed. The important thing is that the concept comes before the thing that exhibits the concept.

A performance cannot be both representative and exceptional because those categories are mutually exclusive. If something is normative, it is barely distinct from others of its type to merit mention. On the other hand, if something is exceptional, it is so different from others of its type that we may need to put it in a category of its own. In other words, that exceptional thing may not say anything about the unexceptional and vice versa.

Music, as I have and will continue to argue, is not a thing at all, but a highly refined kind behavior cultivated through hours of tedious repetition and listening. Hence, there is no way to defend a performance of music as normative unless we have a point of reference that consensus deems to be “standard.” Having said that, while I am not interested in normative results, I am interested in normative practice; that is, I am interested in typical ways of playing Irish traditional dance music. While results may vary greatly among musicians, I am proposing a mode of inquiry that is designed to probe process through results.

In this sense, we could liken this study to reverse engineering a cake. The basic ingredients of sugar, flour, eggs, and salt will be consistently used by those who bake

cakes, but depending on proportions and other nuanced flavors, the results may differ in sweetness, coloring, density, and aroma. That little analogy is as much as to say that I am looking at typical ways to vary a tune. This process requires abstraction from many performances deploying the same kinds of processes.

Upon further reflection, I am not convinced that the term “good example” is an appropriate one to use when discussing musical performances since each performance is unique, singular, and absolutely unrepeatable by either the original musician or another very good impersonator. Musical performances do not come off assembly lines. They are not like vases that can be compared to a visible factory standard and, in the event of a misshapen neck, chipped handle, or marred paint job, can be adjudicated to be “bad examples” of the standard vase. Because musical recordings are the audible results of specific human behavior, there are not good examples and bad examples: there are just examples. The adjudication of good and bad examples is, I suspect, largely a function of formalist approaches to music.²⁰⁹

As such, when I say that Michael Coleman’s recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy” is a “good example,” I mean simply that the recording demonstrates a point about variation procedure. The recording serves to illustrate the point that I am making, just as I have selected quotations to defend my arguments in this present work. The recordings I have transcribed are merely examples, not “good examples,” at least, as the term is used in common parlance.

²⁰⁹ As Albert Lord says in the *The Singer of Tales*, “The truth of the matter is that our concept of “the original,” of “the song,” makes no sense in oral tradition. To us it seems so basic, so logical, since we are brought up in a society in which writing has fixed the norm of a stable first creation in art, that we feel there must be an “original” for everything. The first singing in oral tradition does not coincide with this concept of the “original.”” See Albert Bates Lord, Stephen A. Mitchell, and Gregory Nagy, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 101.

I am resistant to the idea of canon when it comes to Irish traditional music because canons are largely a product of coincidence. We impute value to that which is popular. Because consensus determines cultural value, it is difficult to argue for objective criteria by which to establish a recording's importance or relevance. Those recordings that have received the best press become favorites and therefore become canonic. Michael Coleman's recordings of the 1920s and 1930s are a case in point. Coleman's recordings were numerous, widely distributed, and exhibit technically precise fiddling.²¹⁰ They are, as far as most Irish fiddlers are concerned, canonic. When demonstrating a coherent system of music-making practices, it is usually thought best to incorporate examples that demonstrate the general principles of those practices and then leave the rest to the "exceptions" pile. How then may I distinguish between normative and exceptional? In terms of performances, I cannot rationally argue for a single instance to be normative or exceptional. If that is the case, then how am I drawing any conclusions at all? If there are so many variables to consider, what is the constant?

The constants are the dance genres. I am not looking for good examples, but examples of musician playing reels, jigs, slip jigs, and hornpipes. As long as one of these dance genres is being played by a man or woman on the instruments I have already named, then the performance is an example that may tell us something about melodic variation.

4.6. Transcription Philosophy and the Limitations of a Score

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a recording is worth a thousand pictures. No transcription can exhaustively represent music because the nature of musical

²¹⁰ O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 25-29.

sound (the organized human disruption of matter in time) and matter itself are fundamentally different. If a recording can represent performance practice infinitely better than the blunt instrument of transcription, why bother to transcribe anything at all? The answer to this question lies in the nature of the graphic representation of music: a transcription provides a birds-eye view—a potential schematic—of what unfolds second-by-second in a real performance.²¹¹ The transcription is not meant to serve as an exhaustive representation of a musical performance and it is certainly not meant to act as a substitute for a recording. A transcription is useful because it facilitates the kind of simultaneous comparison that the medium of sound cannot offer. While we might *hear* differences if we listen to two performances of “Rakish Paddy” simultaneously, we will *understand* those differences much better if we look at two transcriptions. The transcription gives a panoramic picture of the variation types that I am describing.

In reality, reading a transcription of music is not all that different from reading printed poetry, in the sense that one’s listening experience tempers the visual experience. Having little aural experience of English at one’s command will make the mental sounding out of alphabetical symbols difficult in the same way that having little aural experience of Irish traditional music will make the rhythmic interpreting of notational symbols difficult.²¹²

One of the challenges of compiling an analytical method and taxonomy of melodic variations as they play out in performance practice is that my target, in a sense, is

²¹¹ Stephen Davies, *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47-59.

²¹² Irish fiddler Matt Cranitch discusses Sliabh Luachra fiddler Pádraig O’Keefe’s (1887-1963) unique fiddle notation in which “the four spaces of the standard five-line musical staff are used to represent the four strings of the fiddle.” Matt Cranitch, “The Sliabh Luachra ‘Code’,” in *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995 Selected Proceedings: Part One* (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1996), 345.

a moving one. I have had to recreate the recorded performances as graphic documents to analyze on paper; that is, I have transcribed a performance in a way that I think represents its content clearly and in a way that I understand it as a practitioner of Irish traditional music. Because I cannot pretend, as John Sloboda writes, to be above “systematic perceptual distortions,”²¹³ my ear may have perceived notes or rhythms in a way with which others might differ.

Analyzing a transcribed performance is fundamentally different from analyzing a score made by someone else. By the time we come to analyze someone else’s score, the score-maker has already made critical decisions for the interpreter about what is essential—and what is available—in the score. If we have little listening experience of a genre or idiom, we will have no idea what the score-maker assumes of the score reader: we will have no idea what is normative in a genre or idiom and will therefore have no idea about what kinds of instructions about performance practice have been omitted from the score. In other words, if we are not enculturated to expect certain things of a musical performance, we will have no idea what kinds of behavioral instructions a transcription might necessarily exclude. While behavioral practices can be thoroughly documented in treatises of performance practice, the score-maker decides how much of this to represent in the score. This is information that—to a large extent—is notated only insofar as it is not normative. The idea is this: that which is assumed of the reader is omitted. Just as the sides of food containers typically do not instruct the patron to chew and swallow one’s food, there is basic information about how to perform Irish traditional that is omitted from a score.

²¹³ Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function*, 73.

For instance, when Chicago-based fiddler James O’Neill (1862-1949) transcribed performances for Chicago-based tune collector Francis O’Neill’s (1848-1936)²¹⁴ various publications of Irish traditional music in the early-twentieth century, James O’Neill omitted—for the most part—the many ornaments, double-stops, dynamic changes, and rhythmic nuances that he probably would have heard from the musicians who recorded the tunes based on the digitized cylinders that we suspect that he used.²¹⁵ Such nuances are omitted from the O’Neills’ publications because the collections were targeted at buyers who were already practitioners of Irish traditional instrumental dance music—the target market was known to have a considerable amount of listening and playing experience. O’Neill’s assumptions about his target market meant that he had to include only a small amount performance information from a score. This minimalist approach to prescriptive score-making left the publication visually uncluttered with graphics and also cheaper to print. Because the target market consisted of practitioners with listening and playing experience, there was no need to include every minute detail of a performance in the published collections.

Unlike O’Neill, I have not set about to create a tune book, but an anthology of transcriptions to analyze. My challenge is that I am listener, transcriber, practitioner, and analyst all at once. Any reader must understand that my transcriptions—like many others—are biased toward what I think is essential, normative, and exceptional in a performance of Irish music. This does not mean of course that the transcriptions have

²¹⁴ Francis O’Neill and James O’Neill were not related.

²¹⁵ Ilana and Stephen Winick Harlow, "From 'Hide and Go See' to 'Paddy's Resource': The Dunn Family Collection of Captain Francis O'Neill Cylinder Recordings," *Folklife Center News* 29, no. 4 (2007).

unreliable content. What this means is that the score is my graphic interpretation of a recorded performance.

4.7. Approach to Transcription

I have used two software programs to facilitate the transcription of these performances. In order to slow source recordings to a speed at which I can detect the pitches of quick grace notes, I have used a copy of the Amazing Slow Downer OS X 3.3.1 ©2001-2010 Roni Music.²¹⁶ I have used Sibelius version 6.2.0 build 88 Audio Engine v1.0155 to notate the transcriptions that I will analyze in Chapter 5.

4.7.1. Rhythm

The rhythm notated in the Sibelius score is not intended to represent precisely what one can hear in the source recordings. The rhythm exhibited in my transcriptions is approximate. As Breathnach writes

...staff notation does not reflect the ordinary differences in duration which exist between these visually equal quavers, much less those subtle deviations that give life and colour to the performance of a good player. Only by constant listening can this rhythmic quality be attained.²¹⁷

While it would appear from the score that all eighth notes are of equal duration, they are not played this way on the source recordings. Subtle dynamic and agogic accents

²¹⁶ Roni Music. <http://www.ronimusic.com> (accessed January 2, 2011).

²¹⁷ Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach*, 99. Breathnach also feared that the increasing use of notation could affect variation. See *ibid.* While Breathnach does not articulate specific concerns, his argument suggests that learning variations from printed sources rather than learning *how* to play variations from hours of listening is his primary concern. From listening, a student can abstract methodology and apply types to many different instances. Perhaps this takes longer when appropriating types from scores.

in a performance affect the duration of these pitches. Because I am focusing on melodic variation, I have chosen to omit nuances of rhythmic variation that might otherwise visually obfuscate what I would like the reader to see with respect to melodic variation.

4.7.2. Articulation

I have omitted articulatory markings such as bowing, breathing, tonguing, staccato, and legato in order to clarify the reading of the score. There are already publications with a different scope and purpose that discuss these nuances.²¹⁸ Because these types of articulations are instrument-specific and might say little about universals of performance practice, I have omitted them from the score.

4.7.3. Tuning and Microtones

I am analyzing intervals of a semitone and larger with my taxonomy and analytical method. In reality, quartertones and other microtonal inflections are a regular part of performance practice in Irish traditional music.²¹⁹ The notation in the Sibelius score is not intended to imply an equal-temperament system of tuning in which the octave is divided into twelve equal parts of 100 cents each. For uilleann pipes, fiddle, flute, and tin whistle transcriptions, these notations should be understood first as fingerings rather than as sounded pitches. For example, music played on uilleann pipes pitched in B is

²¹⁸ See Ennis and Mitchell, *The Dance Music of Séamus Ennis*; Larsen, *The Essential Guide to the Irish Flute and Tin Whistle*.

²¹⁹ In 1928, Richard Henebry published the results of a study he conducted on frequency using an Edison phonograph. Henebry writes that “Some time ago I collected phonograph records of fourteen songs in...County Wexford...I forwarded them for tonometric examination to Dr. von Hornbostel of the Berlin University, and present them here, with the results obtained. The vibration rate is written above every note tested, and the number of cents in the intervening spaces is always marked with the proper distinguishing sign...” Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music*, 286.

notated as if the lowest note of the chanter as a D on the staff to ease readability.

Likewise, regardless of the frequencies to which a fiddle's four strings might be tuned, I have notated open-sounding strings as if they are G, D, A, or E.

Also, a notated *a'* will not necessarily sound at 440Hz on the source recording. Likewise, Cs and Fs, may not correspond to their respective frequencies in an equal temperament framework. What this means for transcription is that I am forced to insert a pitch into a graphic matrix (the staff) that is not really equipped to express the specific frequencies of notes and their precise relationships to one another: the staff allows for a relative approximation. For example, fiddler Bobby Casey, in his performance of the reel "Paddy Ryan's Dream" (see transcription 16) occasionally plays a note that sounds like it is between F \flat and F \sharp . In most instances, I assigned this in-between pitch a line or space on the staff based on the preceding and subsequent sequence of pitches. In other words, the in-between pitch did not sound exactly like F \sharp to my ears, but I thought that it sounded closer to F \sharp than it did to F \flat .

Slides and vibrato are not accounted for in the transcriptions for two reasons.²²⁰ First, I consider these techniques to be issues of tuning and second, such tonal nuances are not possible on all instruments used to play Irish traditional instrumental dance music. Only intervals of a semitone or greater are notated in the transcriptions. Intervals less

²²⁰ Upon trying to notate the pitch variance exactly on a staff, Henebry remarks that he "...was more inclined to give up all intention of an accurate representation of those tunes that he recorded tonality, as will be obvious to anyone who examines it, puts the writing of Irish music in terms of the modern scale entirely out of the question. And again, so much have certain notes been complicated by an involved system of sliding, with a range from full accent down to the most delicate and tenuous suggestion, that outside the impossibility of recording such variations by written signs there was often the difficulty of distinguishing what was of formative value from what was added ornament. For it cannot be said too often that the life and soul of melody, or even its very quality of superhuman artistry, is contributed by this faculty of sliding, because without that it would be stark and barren." *ibid.*, 299-300.

than a semitone are not notated. These kinds of microtonal changes would need to be measured with special frequency-measuring equipment for a separate study.

Musicians playing instruments with alterable pitch such as fiddle, flute, uilleann pipes, and tin whistle, often take advantage of these microtonal possibilities. Fiddlers will sometimes change the frequency of a certain pitch by rotating the finger forward or backward on the string, by sliding the finger between pitches, or by deploying finger and bow vibrato. Uilleann pipers, flute players, and tin whistle players may fluctuate the airflow with the bag or breath or may change the pitch of a note by covering part of the hole with a finger. The reader will hear these techniques used in the source recordings, but will not see them in the transcriptions.

4.7.4. Ornamentation

Like the notes occupying the basic rhythmic positions of the tune genre, I have not transcribed the grace notes in a way that reflects their precise duration. For my purposes, it is the position, recurrence, number, and relative pitch of the ornaments deployed that are crucial. In the recordings of the 1900s, 1920s, and 1930s, grace notes were, for the most part, easily discernible. However, I found that while listening, a pop or hiss in the source recording did, on first listening, sound like a grace note. I have checked to ensure that I have transcribed grace notes and not technical interference.

4.7.5. Regulators

On the source recordings of uilleann pipes the reader will hear a kind of chordal accompaniment played by the heel of the wrist of the bottom hand on the chanter. The

wrist is pressing on keyed pipes called regulators that are meant to add rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment to the tune played on the chanter. Also, the reader may hear left-hand bass accompaniment on the accordion source recordings. I have not transcribed any regulator or bass-button accompaniment because conceptually, those aspects of the instrument may be clearly understood as accompaniment and I am only interested in melody for this study. This study is focusing on the harmonic implications of the consecutive pitches melody rather than the harmonic conception of a single musician. While the practices of self-accompaniment interest me, they will not be addressed in this study.

4.7.6. Double-stops and Droning

A double stop occurs when two strings on a fiddle are fingered and bowed simultaneously. I have transcribed double stops for this study. The double stops seen in the fiddle transcriptions are those that seemed to me to be deliberate because of their amplitude and intonation. I have likewise transcribed plucked chords on the banjo. Because the fiddle is an instrument whose strings sometimes vibrate sympathetically when other strings played aggressively with the bow, ghost double stops may sound during a passage played with particular vigor. I have not transcribed these ghost double stops.

Since I have not transcribed regulators or accordion accompaniment, why transcribe double stops and fiddle droning? The reason I have transcribed double stops (plucked and bowed) is because this maneuver cannot rightly be called accompaniment. Because two simultaneous pitches occur within the same rhythmic position of a dance

tune, I cannot know which of the two notes the musician considers the “melody” pitch and which the “added” pitch. Because I cannot say that one note of a double stop is essential while the other is expendable, I have transcribed both. I have also transcribed intervals played within the compass of the melody-playing hand on the accordion, fiddle, and across both hands of the concertina.

4.7.7. Universals of Instrument Morphology

While glissandi or “slides” between pitches constitute melodic variation, along with vibrato, since the frequency of a pitch (the melody) is altered by these nuances, I have not notated them in these transcriptions. I have omitted notating these techniques because they are not common to all instruments used in this tradition. Fiddlers, flute players, and uilleann pipers can slide between notes in virtually infinite gradations of increasing or decreasing frequency. However, piano players, accordion players, and concertina players generally cannot. Because the microtonal variation of melody is instrument specific, I will not address it in a taxonomy that attempts to establish common ground for melodic variance among all instruments used in this tradition.

This might seem to contradict my rationale about double stops. Double stops and chords are not possible on all instruments, yet I have transcribed them for fiddle and banjo. Double stops are included while slides and vibrato are excluded because slides and vibrato are questions of tuning, that is, frequency. Double stops deal in quantity and conceptual additions and exhibit two notes that both—as far as I know—are equally viable in a single rhythmic position. I cannot therefore rule out either pitch. Microtones are issues of tuning and temperament, an aspect of performance that I will not here

discuss. Furthermore, since I cannot argue for the exclusion of one pitch in a double stop, I am not considering double stops as a variation type.

4.7.8. Chordal Accompaniment from Other Instruments

I have not transcribed any guitar, piano, or bouzouki accompaniment, although many source recordings included some kind of accompaniment instrument. I have forgone transcribing accompaniment because my focus is melodic variation.

4.7.9. Acoustics and Reverberation

The acoustical properties of a room did, in some instances, suggest a proliferation of grace notes when in reality there were fewer grace notes played in the source recording. Similarly, studio-added reverberation caused many single grace notes—upon slowing—to sound like doubled grace notes. I have listened several times to ensure that I have not transcribed echoes.

4.7.10. Organization of Successive Repetitions

I have laid out the transcriptions so that the reader will be able to quickly notice changes in the interval and amount of notes over successive repetitions of a single tune. Rather than have a score that depicts a performance linearly, I have stacked repetitions. For example, there is only one measure number assigned to the start of a tune's A part for each successive repetition.

4.7.11. Other Aspects of the Transcription Score

At the top of each score in Appendix C, you will see information relating to the performer's birth and death dates, the year of recording, the year of the source recording that I used for the transcription (many source recordings were rereleased in digital format after their initial release on other types of technology), the melodist's instrument, and the track on the source recording. See figure 4.7.11 below, which diagrams how to read this information.

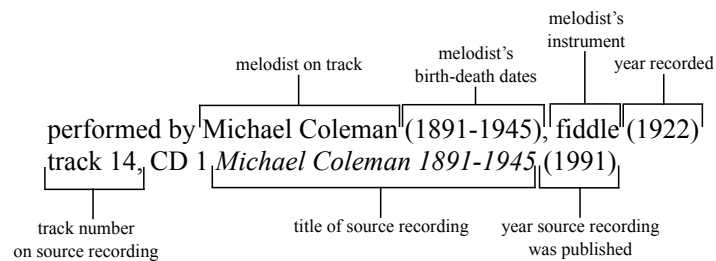


Figure 4.7.11: Context of Source Recordings in Appendix C

In example 4.7.11a for instance, I have also included boxed capital letters (A) in the transcriptions to indicate which part of the tune the reader is viewing. Each part of an Irish dance tune is repeated before moving on to the next part which, like the part preceding it, is also repeated (AA, BB, CC, etc.). This capitalized boxed symbol also indicates the first repetition of a particular part. Most of the source recordings captured two-part tunes. However, there are also tunes with three or more parts.

Example 4.7.11a: Measures 1-4 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor" with timings and part markers
See transcription 48 in Appendix C

I have also put in markers to indicate which repetition of that part of the tune you are viewing. The bolded (**A'**) indicates the second repetition of the A part of the tune. Note the dashed vertical line directly before the **A'** in example 4.7.11b. This dashed line is nothing more than a visual cue to reinforce that the musician is now played the A part of the tune for the second time.

A' (0:13)

(2:21)

Example 4.7.11b: Measures 18-19 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor"
See transcription 48 in Appendix C

The use of A and A' may invite a question about my statistical analysis. A' indicates that some parts of A are repeated and that some parts are different. Why not catalog and count variants of A in A' the first time through the tune? The reason why I have not considered A' as exhibiting variations of A has to do with the fact that I would need to establish performer intent to make the argument that A' can show variations of A. We cannot know, just by listening, whether a musician understands A' as a repeat of the A part with a different ending or as one continuous A part with similarities among measures. I have chosen to use A and A' to show the structure of the tune but not to imply musician intention.

The reality is that some musicians would understand A and A' to have first and second endings. If a musician is thinking this way, then any melodic variance in A' is

nothing more than a normative second ending of the A part. As you will see in the transcriptions of Appendix C, some reels, for example, have eight measures each in A and A' while other reels have four measures each in A and A'. While I could make the argument that A' exhibits melodic variance relative to A on the first playing, this argument is harder to substantiate than my current argument which treats the entirety of A-related melodic content as normative and standard in a first playing. The argument that A' exhibits variations of A is impossible to establish without knowing performer intent.

Example 4.7.11c shows fiddler Paddy Canny's three successive playings of measure 32 of the jig "Rogha Ghearóid De Barra." Note that while there is a final double bar in each repetition, Canny does indeed begin playing the tune starting again from measure 1. Note also that I have placed a timing to indicate where the tune stops. In this example, I have placed "END TUNE (1:39)" between the second and third staves.



Example 4.7.11c: Measure 32 of the B part of fiddler Paddy Canny's 1959 recording of the jig "Rogha Ghearóid De Barra"
See transcription 15 in Appendix C

4.8. Conclusion

I have transcribed source recordings of fifty different traditional musicians playing a single tune each in order to provide evidence for the taxonomy of variation that

I will introduce and explain in Chapter V. To encourage a varied sample, I transcribed source recordings exhibiting music played on accordion, banjo, concertina, fiddle, flute, pedal organ, tin whistle, and uilleann pipes and recorded during ten different decades of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This time span ranged from around 1904 to 2007.

My transcriptions are not meant to be exhaustive graphic representations of source recordings but are rather designed to highlight intervallic differences between a single performer's successive repetitions of a single tune. Nuances of rhythm, articulation, amplitude, and tuning will be heard on the source recordings, but will not be represented graphically in the transcriptions.

With a better idea about how I have reformatted the sound document to a visual document, let us consider a discussion of the source recordings, their contents, and commonalities.

CHAPTER V
A METHOD FOR THE SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF
MELODIC VARIATION IN THE
INSTRUMENTAL DANCE MUSIC TRADITION OF IRELAND

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is the core of my research and offers a detailed description and analysis of select excerpts that I have transcribed from fifty source recordings, the complete transcriptions of which are in Appendix C of this dissertation. These recordings were made using various types of recording technology between about 1904 and 2007 and they exhibit a variety of personnel, instrumentation, and genres. Having transcribed these source recordings, I have created a taxonomy that categorizes the nature of the variation types exhibited in the source recordings. This taxonomy is useful because future performances of Irish traditional music—provided the performances conform to the rhythmic and formal standards that I will describe—could be explained and cataloged using my taxonomy.

The taxonomy that I have created and refined in response to the variation types exhibited in the source recordings has predictive value: I suggest that were an Irish musician asked to vary a melody over several successive repetitions, the musical results could be understood and analyzed using my taxonomy.

My statistical analysis of this recording sample is designed to demonstrate the degree (by percentage) that Irish traditional musicians deploy any melodic variance in their measures, the degree to which this variance is a function of Ornamentation, the degree to which this variance involves the alteration of pitches in critical rhythmic

positions, and the degree to which variance is a function of instrumentation, gender, chronology, performing forces, and intentions for usage (some recordings were made to be sold to the public while others were made for private use). There are tables throughout this chapter that make these data accessible. Tables of my calculations for individual performers are available in Appendix D.

After a discussion of my statistical analysis, I will explain and analyze several examples of aspects relating to my taxonomy including Ornamentation, Triadic Exchange, Harmonic Compression, Modal Inflection, and Harmonic Substitution. In order to understand how these types of variations are placed within a performance, I will explain the rhythmic hierarchies of four dance genres: reel, hornpipe, jig, and slip jig.

What you will read here is a method to explain and make coherent many different instances of music-making behavior documented over the course of about a century. My objective is simple: to implement a system of analysis that enables the articulation of specific musical practices and that complements the meaningful and individualistic appraisals that are already offered to seasoned practitioners for their moving and artful performances. While we may never fully understand the biological, psychological, and social implications of music, this apparatus will contribute to the judicious appraisal of performances.

My method for analysis, though it focuses on the treatment of melody, will necessarily include aspects of harmony and rhythm as well. While Irish traditional music usually appears to be monophonic on paper (at least, if we look at tune collections), the morphologies of the instruments that play this repertoire must be taken into account if we are to discuss this music as it actually occurs. Fiddlers play double stops, concertina and

accordion players play chords, and uilleann pipers play regulators. The simultaneously sounding pitches that a single musician creates constitute the completeness of an individual's creative conception of a tune in performance and must be taken into account along with the grace notes and other ornaments that a performer adds or omits in a performance of a given tune. However, what I am offering in my analytical model and taxonomy is a set of variables that I think are common to all instruments across all geography and throughout all documentable history related to Irish traditional music.

While I will, in this chapter, introduce a taxonomical lexicon for analyzing variation, I am by no means going to offer answers about why a particular musician plays a variation in a source recording. Pursuing answers to such questions would require a separate study. I am not trying to justify or explain the location of variations; I am merely offering a linguistic apparatus so that at some point in the future, others may approach the "whys" of artistry in this tradition.

I have designed and conducted a repeatable experiment using exclusive criteria and constants and have analyzed a sample in the present in order to distill general musical practices within a particular idiom. Having observed Irish music for many years, I developed a hypothesis that there are a finite number of ways in which musicians vary melodies in common practice. To test that hypothesis, I transcribed fifty recordings to see how much variety I could expect. My result was a taxonomy that communicates the ways in which the musicians on the source recordings varied a tune over successive repetitions of that same tune. I have developed a theory of performance practice behavior that suggests that when a musician varies a tune, he will do it in one or several of a finite number of ways. This theory has predictive value in that one could ask a musician to vary

a tune over several repetitions and then categorize his variations in the system that I have devised. Given certain parameters: there is X probability that an Irish musician will do Y.

What I am proposing is an explanation and demonstration of the range of variables that Irish musicians deploy when they add and subtract rhythmic positions or alter notes through successive performances of the same tune. I am proposing a method of analysis for melodic variations that occur over successive repetitions of a single tune.

5.2. Limits to Melodic Variation: Dance Genres and their Rhythmic Attributes

In Chapter III, I discussed socio-cultural and psychological factors that may contribute to why Irish traditional musicians exhibit aesthetic conservatism, a proclivity to maintain a tune's identity over successive repetitions. In this section, I will discuss technical aspects of dance music genres and how the formal characteristics of these genres invite or discourage certain kinds of melodic variations. Performance practice in Irish traditional music has certain norms and standards that serve as boundaries that rein in deviation. As Irish music scholar and tin whistle player Lawrence E. McCullough put it in 1977, Irish musicians "concentrate on developing and extending the possibilities for variation offered by the basic pitch and rhythmic framework of a tune."²²¹ There are limitations within which traditional musicians play their melodic variations. Let us consider what kinds of limitations these different dance genres might impose.

The first technical restriction to melodic variation is the number of measures in a dance tune. Most Irish dance tunes are binary with eight measures per part and, if there

²²¹ McCullough, "Style in Traditional Irish Music," 87-88.

are more than two parts to a tune, all parts (be there three or seven) usually have the same number of measures. Figure 5.2a shows the structure of most Irish dance tunes.²²²

A part B part
||: 8 measures :||: 8 measures :||

Figure 5.2a: General Structure of an Irish Dance Tune²²³

When melodies are varied in this tradition, performers—except in rare circumstances—remain within the parameters shown in figure 5.2a.²²⁴ In dance music repertoire, each tune is set and remains in a single meter, and exhibits the same number of measures which each have the same number of beats. Melodic variation in Irish music does not usually entail the addition of measures to a part, the addition of beats within a part, a change of meter within a part, or the addition of entire eight-measure parts. These norms of performance practice may be considered the rules—the constants—within which the traditional player operates when she varies a melody.²²⁵

These restrictions invite the question: Why is it atypical and unusual to vary the meter, to add beats to a measure, and measures to a part? I think one of the main reasons why meter does not change and why beats and measures are not added to tunes at a whim when a musician varies has to do with a contextual issue: Irish traditional instrumental

²²² There are some dance tunes that have three or more parts. While the number of parts may exceed two, each part has the same number of measures as the others and remains in the same meter.

²²³ For other examples of tune structure layout, see Ó Súilleabháin, "The Creative Process in Irish Traditional Dance Music," 117-19.

²²⁴ As you will see in the transcriptions in Appendix C of this dissertation, sometimes the eight measures will be repeated: sometimes they will not be repeated. What is virtually unheard of, for instance, are dance tunes with eight measures in one part and seven measures in another part or some other asymmetrical distribution of measures among the two or more parts of the tune.

²²⁵ While there are extraordinary instances in which a player may add an extra beat, an extra measure, or change meters, this is so unusual that I am not including these deviations in my analysis.

music is (or at least was) often played for solo dancers or groups of dancers.²²⁶ Irish traditional instrumental music is utilitarian in the sense that its rhythmic regularity accommodates dancing. Performances of dance music, to facilitate dancing, must clearly express rhythmic patterns that dancers are able to perceive and anticipate. While musicians may play at home or on stage without dancers, this rhythmic regularity may in part be due to a close relationship between music and dance.

To imply rhythmic patterns, the musician must know (hear and perceive either consciously or subconsciously) where the downbeats are in the tune—where the foot taps. A musician may imply this downbeat using one or more of the following techniques on his instrument: 1) play one or more grace notes near to the note that is to be emphasized thus drawing special attention to it;²²⁷ 2) dynamically accent the pitch on the downbeat; or 3) agogically accent to the downbeat pitch with extended duration.²²⁸ These are the three main ways by which Irish musicians may inflect a regular pulse when playing dance music.

²²⁶ See Brennan, *The Story of Irish Dance*.

²²⁷ Because the pitches of an uilleann pipe chanter independently express their own dynamic level beyond the piper's control, the addition of grace notes is the ideal way to emphasize the downbeat. If a loud note falls on the downbeat, then this is ideal, but a quieter note falling on the downbeat will need to be compounded with a grace note if the rhythm is to remain in tact. For more on grace notes and ornamentation, see Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, 95-97; Matt Cranitch, *The Irish Fiddle Book: The Art of Traditional Fiddle-Playing* (Cork: Mercier: Ossian Publications, 1988); Ennis and Mitchell, *The Dance Music of Séamus Ennis*, xii-xiii; James Goodman and Hugh Shields, *Tunes of the Munster Pipers: Irish Traditional Music from the James Goodman Manuscripts*, Studies in Irish Traditional Music = Taighde Ar Cheol Dúchhais Éireann (Dublin: Irish Traditional Music Archive, 1998), 37 and 201; June McCormack, *Fliúit* (Sligo, Ireland: The Sligo Champion Office, 2006), 1-17; Pat Mitchell, *The Dance Music of Willie Clancy* (Cork, Ireland: Ossian Publications Ltd, 1993), 23-25; Mitchell, Touhey, and Small, *The Piping of Patsy Touhey*, 18-29; Leo and Helena Rowsome, *The Leo Rowsome Collection of Irish Music* (Dublin: Waltons, 2002), 193-94.

²²⁸ Ó Canainn says that “There are other ways of giving emphasis to particular notes in a tune. A note which is very high or very low will impress itself on the listener and thus attain greater emphasis than it would normally have, while a note preceded by a leap will similarly be given an extra emphasis. The first emphasised note in a tune will have more importance than later notes on strong beats, while a note which is much longer than the others must impress itself more firmly on the listener's mind.” See Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 28.

These three approaches to accent may occur simultaneously. For example, a fiddler might press harder on the bow while playing a grace note. In this instance, the fiddler combines dynamic accent with the addition of grace notes. A fiddler might also play a dotted quarter note duration where in a previous playing he played three separate eighth notes. This dotted quarter note acts as agogic accentuation and draws attention to the pitch by virtue of its duration.

For the most part, melodic variation is executed within the confines of the dance tune's rhythmic default. This means that if one measure of a reel has eight rhythmic positions, two downbeats and two upbeats, a musician will not add beats, change meters, or severely syncopate the tune. This means that melodic variation takes account of a tune's structure and does not obscure that rhythmic structure for the dancer or listener.²²⁹ The rhythmic structure of a tune is contingent on the regular pattern of accentuation that the genre of a tune implies.

I have included two duple meter dance genres and two compound meter dance genres in my study. The duple meter dances are reel and hornpipe (both written as 4/4).²³⁰ The compound meter dances are jig (6/8) and slip jig (9/8). Figures 5.2b-5.2d illustrate the rhythmic structure of each of these four dance genres. The size of each note in figures 5.2b-5.2d below indicates a rhythmic position's relative importance in communicating a regular pulse.

²²⁹ John Sloboda outlines seven tenets that relate to expressive performance and states in one that "The deviations [in a musical performance] are constrained by the structure of the music. This means that expression takes account of structure, and in some situations is intended to reinforce the structure by making it more manifest or salient to a listener." See Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function*, 284-85.

²³⁰ Transcription 48 is fiddler Liz Carroll's performance of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor." While the hornpipe is a duple meter dance, I have transcribed Carroll's source recording in 6/8 because I think in this particular instance, compound meter better reflects her metrical implications.

The largest notes represent the downbeat pitches. These downbeat pitches are the most important and often receive the most dynamic or agogic accent in conjunction with some kind of ornamentation. The medium-sized notes of figures 5.2b-5.2d represent the upbeat pitches. These upbeat pitches are slightly less important rhythmically and therefore may be played with less dynamic or agogic accent and ornamentation than downbeat pitches. The smallest notes of figures 5.2b-5.2d are rhythmically negligible in the sense that a musician could still identify whether a tune's meter if there was silence in those rhythmic positions.

Thus, in a reel or hornpipe, for instance, a melodic variation will typically not obscure the accents given to whatever eighth notes happen to occur positions 1 and 5—variation will not interrupt or obscure the rhythmic constraints of the dance genre in figure 5.2b.

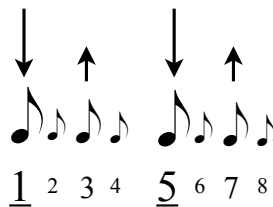


Figure 5.2b: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Reel or Hornpipe

In a jig, variation will not interrupt the downbeat pulse in positions 1 and 4 as shown in figure 5.2c.

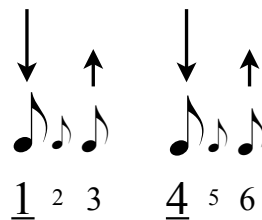


Figure 5.2c: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Jig

And in a slip jig, as figure 5.2d shows, rhythmic positions 1, 4, and 7 will remain in tact, despite melodic variation.

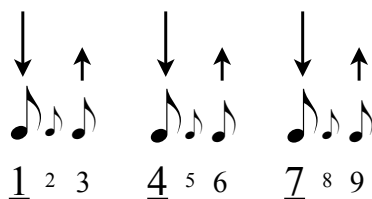


Figure 5.2d: Basic Rhythmic Scheme in a Single Measure of a Slip Jig

Now that we have a sense of how rhythmic hierarchy is distributed in the preceding figures 5.2b-5.2d, we can see in figures 5.2e-5.2g how those hierarchies might be practiced in an entire tune. Notice in these figures that I have placed the rhythmic positions between two repeat signs. I have also shown that these measures occur eight times by placing (x 8) next to the basic rhythmic of a particular genre's measure. In figure 5.2e, I have diagrammed how an entire binary reel or jig might exhibit these rhythmical hierarchies.

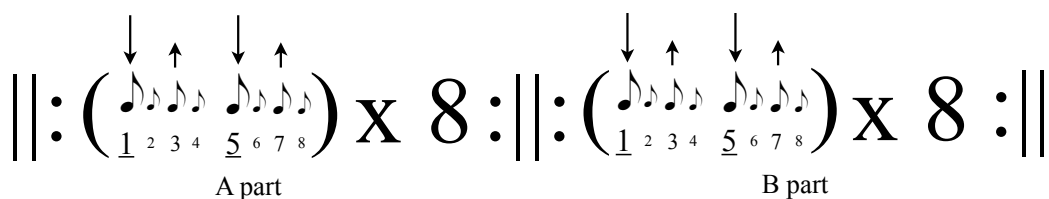


Figure 5.2e: Hierarchy of Rhythmic Positions in an Entire Reel or Hornpipe

Figure 5.2f shows how rhythmical hierarchies would be distributed in a sixteen-measure jig.

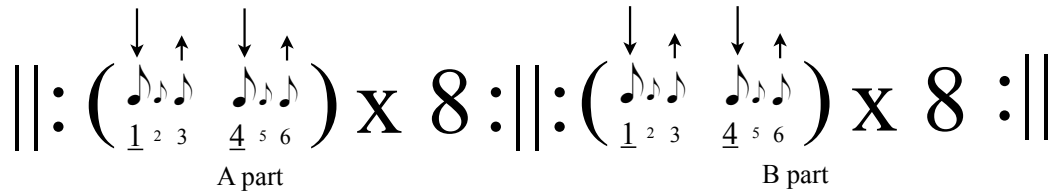


Figure 5.2f: Hierarchy of Rhythmic Positions in an Entire Jig

Figure 5.2g shows how rhythmical hierarchies would be distributed in an eight-measure slip jig.

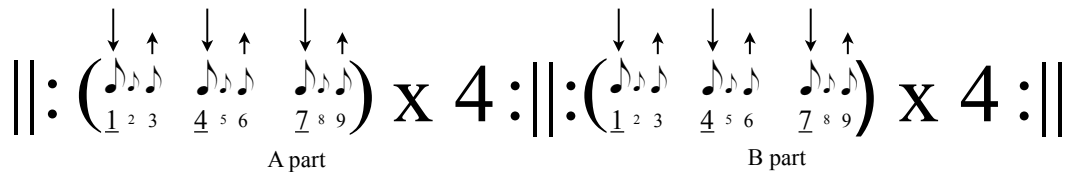


Figure 5.2g: Hierarchy of rhythmic positions in an Entire Slip Jig

Irish traditional music is excellent for analysis because the metrical variety is limited. The fact that a regular rhythmic pulse must recur for the music to be danceable necessitates certain boundaries for performance practice.

5.3. Successive Melodic Variations

Irish traditional musicians may vary a tune over several successive repetitions. The same tune, therefore, is played several times. Because readers will have varying levels of familiarity with Irish music specifically and other genres of music generally, I will give a brief comparison with jazz and classical instrumental music. These different approaches to change are largely a function of socio-historical context of the sort that I discussed in Chapter III.

Playing melodic variation in Irish music is something different from improvising a melody over chord changes in jazz. An Irish instrumentalist is not given a tune with a set of chords and is expected to play chord tones consistent with the changes when he varies a melody. As discussed earlier, because Irish musicians are playing dance music, their variations must adhere to the inflexible formal and metrical structure of the dance genre. In jazz, it is typical to hear musicians play hemiolas, syncopate rhythm, and even change meter in instrumental improvisation. For example, American saxophonist John Coltrane (1926-1967) exhibits these kinds of alterations when he improvises during “Blue Train” on his 1957 album of the same title. The transcriptions in Appendix C show that this kind of rhythmic variety is extremely rare in Irish traditional instrumental dance music.

While performance practice in Irish music does not involve the degree of melodic and rhythmic freedom that might be practiced in jazz, Irish music performance practice typically involves more freedom than in a text-adhering classical music tradition. In eighteenth-century classical variations, a composer chooses a theme and then incorporates aspects of that original theme throughout a series tonal, metric, and rhythmic alterations. One example of this would be the Chaconne of Johann Sebastian Bach’s (1685-1750) violin Partita in D minor BWV 1004 written in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Bach composed a bass line and then rewrote that bass line many times to contextualize successive predetermined and prescribed variations. This is not to say of course that classical musicians do not improvise when playing historical

compositions; sometimes they do.²³¹ However, in terms of approaches to altering the pitch content of a melody, classical musicians are less likely to make such alterations than Irish musicians.

In Irish music, the course of the variations is not laid out before the performer. The variations are not usually predetermined and prescribed in the same way one might see in Bach's Chaconne in D minor. The constants in Irish traditional music are first and foremost the dance forms and their implied durations.

Now that we have an idea that an Irish musician's approach to melodic variation is generally more conservative than a jazz musician's approach to improvisation and typically more liberal than a classical composer's approach to theme and variations, we must now consider why Irish musicians vary tunes at all.

Breandán Breathnach says of melodic variation in Irish traditional music that it is an important aspect of performance practice that makes listening to a tune played several times in succession an interesting rather than a boring experience, ostensibly for both player and listener.

In order to refine what I mean by melodic variation in Irish music, we must consider the idea that Irish musicians adhere not only to the metrical and formal requirements of dance genres I have suggested, but also to motivic figurations found that many different tunes exhibit. These motives can be understood as stock figures that the musician may transplant from one tune to another tune as a variation during a second repetition. This is what I am calling Phrase Exchange, a variation type that I will illustrate later in this chapter with specific examples. Breandán Breathnach, in his discussion of

²³¹ Listen to Andrew Manze and Richard Egarr's 2003 recording of Arcangelo Corelli's Opus 5 violin sonatas or Rachel Podger's 1999 recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin BWV 1001-1006.

melodic variation in Irish music, states that the rules of practice may be distilled through observation. However, Breathnach also notes that the alterations are on a “minor scale” and are not systematic. Breathnach informs us that

Melodic variation, undoubtedly the most important characteristic of Irish dance music...occurs throughout a performance. It is this that makes listening to a piece being played four, five or more times over an enjoyable rather than a boring experience. Rules of practice can be distinguished in the use of this embellishment. One thing is immediately obvious: the forms are on a minor scale and they are not used systematically. If the re-creative impulse of our definition implies that these variations are improvised in the act of performance we can say that that is a phenomenon that rarely occurs in the playing of Irish music. The specific form [of the melodic variation] is not predetermined by the player but it seldom happens that it is not one previously used by him. In performance, the traditional player is largely refashioning elements of embellishment he has already developed himself or acquired from other players.²³²

On the one hand, Breathnach is saying that practitioners do not deploy melodic variations systematically. On the other hand, he is also saying that improvisation rarely occurs. When Breathnach says that melodic variations are not systematic, I agree with him only insofar as he might mean that a musician might not be consciously aware of his system of playing melodic variations. If Breathnach means that the variation of melody cannot be understood as a system, then I do not agree. To say that something is not systematic almost implies that it is random, unplanned, or unorganized. Because I doubt that this is how Breathnach would characterize the melodic varying of Irish musicians, he likely means the former: that musicians do not use conscious systems of varying melody.

While Breathnach does not define what he means by “minor scale,” I suspect that he means that melodic variation generally involves the subtle alteration of melodies over

²³² Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach*, 99.

successive repetitions. In this sense, I would agree with him that relatively speaking, melodic variation is not so extreme that it interrupts the rhythmic momentum of a tune or a tune's identity. While most variations may involve subtle change, there are types of melodic variations that are attention grabbing, as I will explain later.

By "improvisation," I presume Breathnach means the compulsion to play music that is both spontaneously deployed and generated *de novo*. In other words, Breathnach is talking about stock types of variations known to the musician, which the musicians formats to fit a particular section of a tune.

If I may further interpret Breathnach's statement, I think that he is saying that certain types of motivic modules are known to a certain musician. This musician then, in performance, inserts certain *kinds* of motivic modules to vary the tune he is playing. This may happen deliberately or accidentally. Figure 5.3a is one graphic representation that illustrates how a musician applies certain stock variations to a particular melody that he knows well. While the puzzle pieces clearly do not fit perfectly together, this is intentional. The idea is that the variation type can fit in more than one place. If the two pieces were a perfect fit, then other opportunities to use the variation type would not work. Figure 5.3a shows that while a musician applies one or several variation types at a specific point while playing a memorized tune, the timing and manner of application is a result of that individual's choices, aesthetics, creativity, and enculturation.

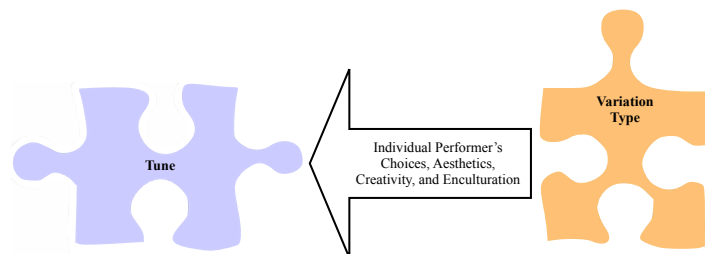


Figure 5.3a: Graphic Representation of the Conceptual Independence and Application of a Variation Type to a Tune

A dance tune will often be played two or more times in succession (e.g. AA BB, AA BB). Musicians will vary a tune over these successive repetitions. In my analysis, I consider the first time through a tune (e.g., 1A, 1A', 1B, 1B') to be a normative version without variation. While this initial playing might differ from a version of a tune printed in a book or from a different musician's version of a tune called by the same title, I am designating this first utterance of a tune as the "model" against which to assess variance in subsequent repetitions. All "model" means in this context is "first utterance." When I say "model," I am not referring to an inflexible, immutable, externally verifiable standard, but a point of reference. A musician could play a tune differently on Monday and Tuesday, but the first time through the tune on each respective day would be considered a normative point of reference for successive repetitions in my analytical method.

It is only successive repetitions of that same tune that may be measured for melodic variation in the way I am analyzing these transcriptions. In my analysis, if a tune was played three times total, only the second and third time through the tune can be said to have any variations. The first time through the tune must act as a standard point of reference. Without a normative point of reference, nothing can really be said about melodic variation since the word "variation," by definition, implies a fixed point from which a musician then deviates.

Figure 5.3b is a graphic depiction of what I am describing. The first time through the tune is represented with completely straight squared lines: 1A, 1A', 1B, or 1B' can exhibit no variation. In the second repetition, the length of lines 2A, 2A', 2B, and 2B' is

the same (indicating that the tune is the same number of measures in length), but there is slight variation (indicated by the altered appearance of the clean and straight line of the first repetition). The third repetition is meant to represent the same idea as to what the second repetition is indicating.

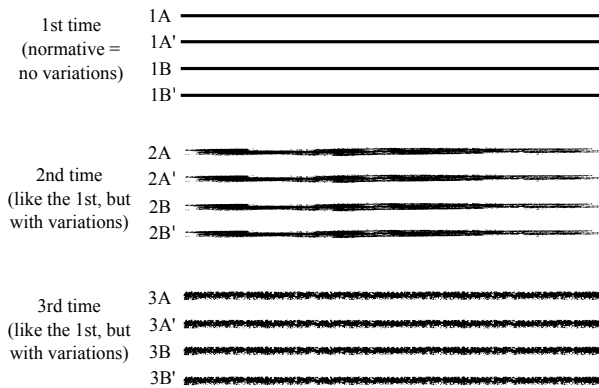


Figure 5.3b: Graphic Depiction of Variance over Three Successive Repetitions of a Tune

As we will see in the statistical analysis of the fifty source recording transcriptions, there are measures in successive repetitions of tunes that a musician might repeat consistently without variation: sometimes a musician will play the same part of a tune the same way over three successive repetitions. Sometimes a musician will play the same part of a tune differently over three successive repetitions. Examples 5.3c and 5.3d illustrate what I am describing.

Examples 5.3a and 5.3b show transcriptions of fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy” (see transcription 4 in Appendix C). Example 5.3a shows Coleman’s variations of measure 7 of the A part of “Rakish Paddy.” Notice that Coleman plays measure 7 of “Rakish Paddy” differently with each successive repetition while, as example 5.3b shows, he has left measure 21 of the B part unvaried over successive repetitions.

Example 5.3a: Measure 7 of the A part from fiddler Michael Coleman's 1922 recording of the reel "Rakish Paddy" in which Coleman varies this part of the tune over successive repetitions
See transcription 4 in Appendix C

Example 5.3b: Measure 21 of the B part from fiddler Michael Coleman's 1922 recording of the reel "Rakish Paddy" in which Coleman does not vary this part of the tune over successive repetitions
See transcription 4 in Appendix C

The idea that a tune is repeated several times in succession is the backbone of this analytical model. Intervallic analysis over several repetitions of a single tune is what will allow me to extrapolate the variation types that I will discuss as a taxonomical system in a later section. Before we address the taxonomy, I would like to first discuss the source recordings and some statistics that may give us some insight about when variation occurs contextually and perhaps why.

5.4. The Source Recordings: Statistics, Inferences, and Correlations

While having an idea about performance practice based on experience and observation is crucial to making inferences about systems and types of variations, it is also necessary to ground those ideas with data. In order to see how closely my conceptions about melodic variation practice conformed to reality, I transcribed 2,720 measures of dance music performed by fifty different musicians at different times over a time span of about one hundred years (c. 1904-2007).

The sample I transcribed included source recordings of performers playing Irish traditional dance music on accordion, banjo, concertina, fiddle, flute, pedal organ, tin whistle and uilleann pipes. As you can see in table 5.4a, the two most commonly transcribed instruments were the fiddle (38%) and the uilleann pipes (28%). Banjo (2%), concertina (2%), pedal organ (2%), and tin whistle (2%) were represented least in the sample.

Accordion	10%
Banjo	2%
Concertina	2%
Fiddle	38%
Flute	16%
Pedal Organ	2%
Tin Whistle	2%
Uilleann Pipes	28%

While I do not have statistics on the instrumentation of Irish traditional music recordings from 1904 to 2007, the fact that fiddle recordings predominate followed by uilleann pipes is consistent with what I know about the recordings now available for commercial purchase. I know of only one recording of Irish music using pedal organ. So, my sample is not representative of the recordings available at large in that pedal organ, tin whistle, and concertina occupy the same percentage of the sample. There are many more recordings now available on which musicians play banjo, concertina, and tin whistle than on which musicians play pedal organ.²³³

²³³ I chose to include an instrument like pedal organ in my study to see if these variation types could still be considered as universals deployed not only on commonly used instruments, but as aspects of the Irish traditional idiom. I wanted to find out if the variation types would defy instrumentation.

With respect to gender, table 5.4b shows a considerable difference between the percentage of female musicians of the source recordings sample (6%) and the percentage of male musicians of the source recordings sample (94%).

Female Melodists	6%
Male Melodists	94%

This 88% gap is not characteristic of the recordings produced after the 1970s. Female musicians were recorded less frequently than male musicians before the 1970s.²³⁴ There are source recordings of female musicians made prior to the 1970s, but these are a minority compared to the source recordings of male musicians.

Table 5.4c shows the percentage of the sample involving commercial and non-commercial recordings. I chose a majority of commercial source recordings (74%) for my sample so that others would be able to examine my findings further. I am defining “commercial source recording” here as a recording which, at the time of its making, was intended to be published for sale in a commercial marketplace in which capital is exchanged for goods and services. For example, Liz Carroll’s recording *Lost in the Loop* (2000) and Tom Ennis’s recording of the reel “The Swallow’s Tail” (1920) were both recorded and published so that they could be sold.

Unlike the recordings made by Liz Carroll and Tom Ennis, the recordings of fiddler Edward Cronin and uilleann piper Patsy Touhey (both c. 1904) were made with cylinder machines for private use. These non-commercial source recordings represent

²³⁴ For statistics concerning the number of female musicians playing Irish music recorded between 1893 and 1942, see Richard K. Spottswood, *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942*, 7 vols., Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 2737-869.

26% of the sample. While Cronin’s and Touhey’s recordings are now available for commercial purchase as of 2010 thanks to the Ward Irish Music Archives, these recordings were probably not originally recorded in order to be sold. As such, I have not counted them as commercial recordings.

Likewise, I have counted the source recording of uilleann piper Willie Clancy of 1958 as a non-commercial recording because it was originally recorded for radio use rather than for sale. In my analysis, I consider all recordings made for radio broadcast to be non-commercial since they were not originally intended for sale.

Table 5.4c: Percentage of Commercial Source Recordings and Non-Commercial Source Recordings	
% of Commercial Source Recordings	74%
% of Non-Commercial Source Recordings	26%

Of the 38 commercial source recordings that I transcribed, 65% of them involved one melodist and one chordal accompanist. Of the 12 non-commercial source recordings I transcribed none of them included a secondary chordal accompanist. I have organized my information in this way because I wanted to find out if any trends could be established with respect to the recording situation, intended audience, and amount of variation. As table 5.4d shows, the percentage of measures varied in commercial source recordings (50.2%) differed from the percentage of measures varied in the non-commercial source recordings (41.3%) by 8.9%.

Table 5.4d: Average Percentage of Measures Varied in Commercial Source Recordings and Non-Commercial Source Recordings	
% of Commercial Source Recordings	50.2%
% of Non-Commercial Source Recordings	41.3%

This sample suggests that there was not a significant difference between recording intent with respect to whether a recording would be sold. It does not appear, based on the data, that musicians varied significantly more for commercial recordings than they did for non-commercial recordings.

The two instances with the lowest percentage of varied measures were the source recordings of uilleann piper Liam O’Flynn (commercial recording published 1989) and uilleann piper Richard O’Mealy (non-commercial radio recording broadcasted 1943). The two source recordings with the greatest percentage of measures varied were the commercial recordings made by flute player Niall Keegan, who varied 93.7% of his measures on the source recording of 1999, and banjo player Seamus Egan, who varied 95.3% of his measures on the source recording of 1990. The non-commercial recording with the highest percentage of measures varied was Robbie Hannan’s live 1998 performance in Seattle, which exhibited measure variance at 66.6%.

I wanted to find out to what extent musicians adhered to the rhythmic requirements of the dance genres described in figures 5.2b-5.2g of this chapter. 98% of musicians, that is 49 out of 50, adhered to the rhythmic structure and form illustrated in figures 5.2b-5.2g and did not violate the rhythmic implications of the dance genre by changing meter, adding measures, or adding beats. Some musicians stopped playing in the middle of the A part of a tune, but this does not constitute rhythmic or genre deviation.²³⁵ Only one musician (2% of the source recordings), Tommy Potts, made a recording that exhibited what Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin calls structural deviation, “a radical

²³⁵ Patsy Touhey, Richard O’Mealy, Paddy O’Brien, and Willie Clancy finished playing at a point other than the final measure of the last part of a given tune.

alteration of the traditional relationships between motifs and phrases, thus fundamentally affecting the overall sense of balance in the piece.”²³⁶ Structural deviation also means that Potts did not adhere strictly to the rhythmic and formal requirements of the dance genres discussed thus far. Table 5.4e shows the percentage of musicians of the sample who either adhered to or deviated from the rhythmic and formal requirements of the dance genres

Table 5.4e: Percentage of Musicians Who Adhere to or Deviate from Dance Genre Requirements	
% of musicians who adhered to the dance forms	98%
% of musicians who deviated from the dance forms	2%

This 98% of source recordings that adhered to the rhythmic and formal requirements of the dance genres is significant because this statistic suggests that the rhythmic implications of dance genres are a default—a constraint—in which musicians must operate when varying music in the Irish traditional idiom. While Potts exhibits structural deviation in his recording of the reel “My Love is in America,” there is considerable invariance in his approach to B-themed material. If we look at example 5.4, we will see that there is little melodic and genre deviation with respect to the way Potts plays this B-themed material of “My Love is in America.” Only two measures of B2 (8 and 15) deviate melodically from what was played in B1.

²³⁶ Ó Súilleabháin, "Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts", 180-81.

Example 5.4: B-themed material of fiddler Tommy Potts's
 1971 recording of the reel "My Love is in America"
 See transcription 21 in Appendix C

I would like to now consider the variance statistics of those source recordings that adhered to the rhythmic and structural implications of the tune genres. As table 5.4f shows, an average of 48.2% (1,303 of the 2,720 total measures) of the fifty source recordings I transcribed exhibited some kind of melodic variation, while 51.8% of the total number of measures exhibited no melodic variation. It is significant that the variance-invariance factor is nearly 50-50. This result gives credence to Breathnach's

remark that variation is “undoubtedly the most important characteristic of Irish dance music”²³⁷ in the sense that musicians, on average, play variations in about half of their measures.

Table 5.4f: Average Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance and Invariance	
Average % of measures exhibiting melodic variation	48.2%
Average % of measures exhibiting no melodic variation	51.8%

While 48.2% seems like a considerable amount of variance at first glance, this figure is not specific. Without a closer analysis of the nature of the variance, we can conclude almost nothing about Irish musicians’ approaches to melodic variation except to say that *something* changes in 48.2% of the measures. In order to draw inferences about performance practice from these data, I asked a few more questions with respect to the nature of the changes that occurred in the measures.

I wanted to measure how often the set accented tones in important rhythmic positions were altered on recordings. A set accented tone, diagrammed in figures 5.2b-5.2d above, is a note that occurs in a rhythmically important position. For a reel and hornpipe, these set accented tones occur in positions 1, 3, 5, and 7. For a jig, the set accented tones occur in positions 1, 3, 4, and 6. In a slip jig, the set accented tones occur in positions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9.²³⁸

On average, as table 5.4g shows, 7.3% (891 out of 10,320 set accented tones) of set accented tones were altered either by changing the first utterance to another pitch or by adding a note to the rhythmic position such as a fiddler might do with a double stop or

²³⁷ Breathnach, *The Man & His Music: An Anthology of the Writings of Breandán Breathnach*, 99.

²³⁸ I borrow the term “set accented tones” from Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin who calls only downbeat pitches set accented tones. I have extended Ó Súilleabháin’s term to apply to both downbeat and upbeat pitches.

drone or an accordion player might do by hitting two notes simultaneously. There appears to be no correlation with respect to chronology. In the 1900s, Edward Cronin changed 0% of the set accented tones while Patsy Touhey changed 19%.

Table 5.4g: Average Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Variance in which Set Accented Tones were Altered and Unaltered	
Average % of varied measures in which set accented tones (downbeat and/or upbeat pitches) were altered	7.3%
Average % of varied measures in which set accented tones (downbeat and/or upbeat pitches) were unaltered	92.7%

I also wanted to find out if chordal accompaniment had any effect on the amount of melodic variation that would take place. Table 5.4h shows that of the fifty source recordings, 25 (50%) of them had only a single melodist. 23 (46%) involved a single melodist and another musician playing harmonic accompaniment. The other two recordings (4%) had percussion accompaniment on bodhrán.

Table 5.4h: Percentage of Source Recordings with One Melodist, One Melodist Playing with a Harmonic Accompanist, and One Melodist Playing with a Percussion Accompanist	
% of source recordings with one melodist	50%
% of source recordings with one melodist and one harmonic accompanist	46%
% of source recordings with one melodist and one percussion accompanist	4%

For table 5.4i, I calculated the average number of measures varied in source recordings with both a single melodist and a harmonic accompanist. On average, solo musicians varied 13.4% fewer measures than musicians playing with harmonic accompaniment. This was a surprise to me because I would have assumed that musicians playing solo would feel more freedom to vary as they wished. Perhaps this 13.4% suggests that musicians felt that the tune's harmonic underpinning was secured with an accompanist, thus allowing them to vary more freely than if a musician had to play the

tune (and maintain its identity) exclusively on his own. This trend seems to have no correlation with chronology.

Table 5.4i: Average Percentage of Measures Varied on Source Recordings with One Melodist, One Melodist with a Chordal Accompanist, and One Melodist with a Percussion Accompanist	
Average % of measures varied in source recordings with one melodist	36.3%
Average % of measures varied in source recordings with one melodist and one chordal accompanist	49.7%

I analyzed the average number of measures varied by instrumentation as table 5.4j shows. Flute players, on average, varied the greatest percentage of measures at 56.1%. Fiddlers varied second most at 50.5%. Uilleann pipers varied at 47% average and accordion players varied at 33.4%.

Table 5.4j: Average Percentage of Measures Varied by Instrumentation	
Accordion	33.4%
Fiddle	50.5%
Flute	56.1%
Uilleann Pipes	47%

I did not add calculated percentages for banjo, concertina, pedal organ, or tin whistle to table 5.4j because there was only a single example of each instrument in the sample. Seamus Egan, the lone banjo player, varied a greater percentage of measures than any other musician in the sample source recordings. To conclude, therefore, that banjo players vary on average 95.3% of their measures based on a single example is not reasonable. The percentage of variance for these individual musicians can be found in Appendix D of this dissertation.

Having asked and answered some important questions about the source recordings, it is time to ask another: how might we begin to organize the variance that

takes place in the kind of Irish dance music that is exhibited on the source recordings? It is here that a taxonomy will become useful and necessary, I have devised one to catalog what Irish instrumentalists do when they vary melody in this dance music tradition.

5.5. Taxonomy of Melodic Variation Types Exhibited in Performance Practice

We have now reached the core of this dissertation as it is here that I will introduce a taxonomy for categorizing the range of variables available to an Irish musician when he varies a dance tune. While scholars and theorists in this tradition have hinted at what constitutes variation, this is the first instance in which variations have been categorized as types or kinds. What I am describing here are the essential ingredients of what constitutes artfulness in this instrumental music tradition.

As evidenced in figure 5.5, I have divided melodic variation types into two broad categories, each with several subcategories. I will explain each subcategory in detail and give examples in the following discussion. I will give a brief overview of the chart now so that you may see how the following discussion fits within this theoretical construct.

My taxonomy is designed to catalog melodic variance with respect to several kinds of changes. The first kind of change is an addition, subtraction, or repositioning of auxiliary rhythmic pitches relative to the basic dance rhythm schemes of the genres discussed above. If auxiliary rhythmic positions are changed in number or proximity, this is classified as Ornamentation. If there is a noticeable change in the pitch of a note played in a basic rhythmic position, then we are concerned with intervallic analysis. Keep in mind that auxiliary rhythmic positions may be added, subtracted, and repositioned in the same measure in which there is a change of pitch in a basic rhythmic position.

The first two categories to consider when analyzing varied pitches in basic rhythmic positions are meant to assess the intervallic differences between the first and subsequent repetitions of a tune. The intervallic change can be categorized as either Triadic Exchange, in which chord tones are substituted for others over successive repetitions, or as Modal Inflection, in which scale degrees 3, 7, and 4 are altered by a semitone.

I have included a category of variation called Passing Tones. While Triadic Exchange and Modal Inflection are established by a vertical intervallic comparison, Passing Tones, as a category, are identified through horizontal intervallic analysis. They are approached and/or left by step and may either be diatonic (within the implied harmonic framework) or chromatic (outside the implied harmonic framework).

Harmonic Implication involves three subcategories: Harmonic Substitution, Harmonic Compression, and Harmonic Extension. Harmonic Substitution happens when a musician substitutes one series of pitches that implies a different fundamental than the pitch series it replaced. Harmonic Compression happens when a note value exceeding an eighth note compresses harmonic implications previously outlined in the first repetition. Harmonic Extension is when eighth note values in subsequent repetitions clarify and expand the harmonic implications of a similarly positioned note value in the first playing of a tune.

Phrase Exchange is another type of variation whose intervals may be consonant or dissonant relative to the first playing of the tune. Hence, I have given Phrase Exchange its own category. Phrase Exchange as a variation refers to a melodically discrete series of

itches that is exchanged with another melodically discrete series of pitches in an earlier repetition.

Taxonomy of Melodic Variation Types in the Instrumental Dance Music Tradition of Ireland

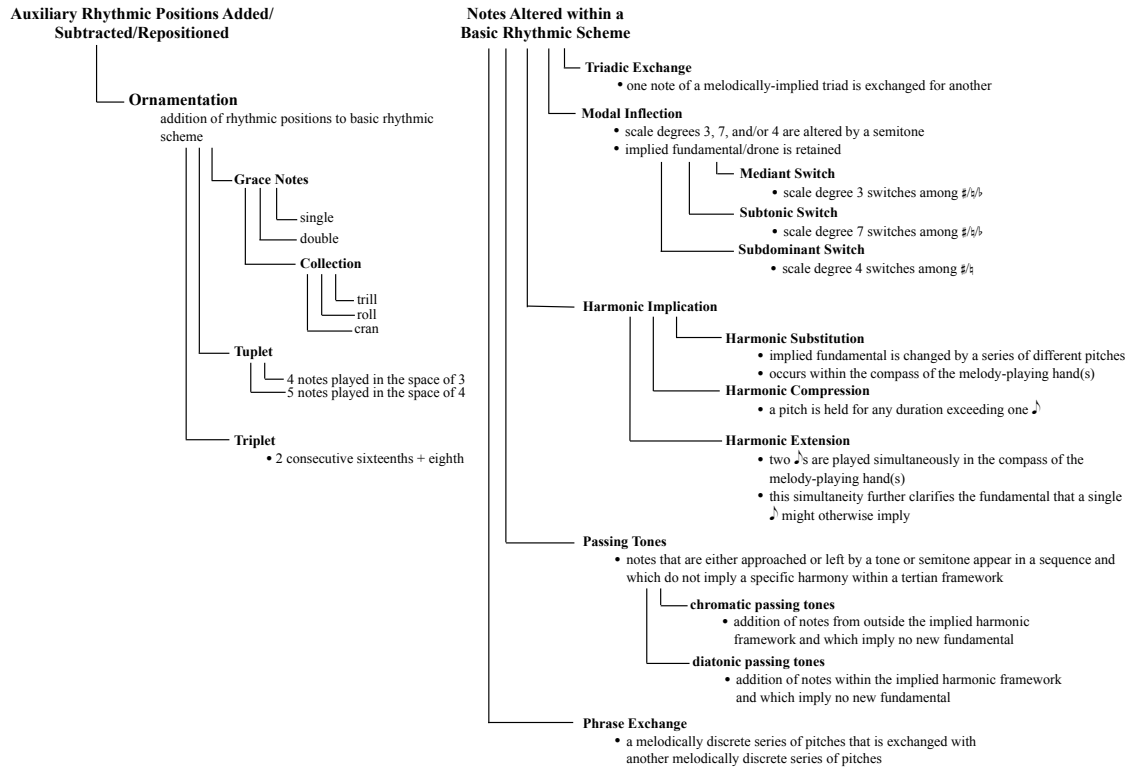


Figure 5.5: Taxonomy of Melodic Variation Types in the Instrumental Dance Music Tradition of Ireland²³⁹

5.6 Ornamentation

When categorizing melodic variation in Irish music, we first need to know if rhythmic positions are being added, subtracted, or repositioned over successive repetitions. I am defining Ornamentation as the addition, subtraction, or repositioning of auxiliary rhythmic positions over successive repetitions relative to the basic rhythmic

²³⁹ Note that my definition of triplet in this taxonomy differs from another definition of triplet in which three notes are played in the space of two notes. When Irish traditional musicians say “triplet,” they are typically referring to two sixteenths and an eighth as a triplet rather than three eighth notes of equal duration played in the space of two eighth notes.

schemes for the tune genres illustrated in figure 5.6a. Beneath the rubric of Ornamentation (I will henceforth capitalize this term so that it will be easily distinguished as a category), falls any grace note, collection of grace notes (rolls, crans, double cuts), triplet figuration, or tuplet.



Figure 5.6a: Examples of Ornamentation

In figure 5.6b on the left is the basic rhythmic scheme of one measure of a reel with only eight rhythmic positions. Figure 5.6c on the right shows a reel measure with the eight basic rhythmic positions plus four grace notes (four auxiliary positions) giving a total of twelve rhythmic positions. The grace notes in figure 5.6c do not have their own numbers because while these extra notes occupy time, they are rhythmically expendable because the reel rhythm can be communicated with or without the grace notes in these auxiliary positions. In general, the function of grace notes is to draw attention to whatever notes happen to be in positions 1, 3, 5, and 7.



Figure 5.6b: Eight Rhythmic Positions in One Measure of a Reel



Figure 5.6c: Four grace notes add four auxiliary rhythmic positions to the eight basic rhythmic positions in one measure of a reel

Suppose then that over successive repetitions, rhythmic positions are subsumed into a single pitch. By subsumed, I mean that a single pitch is held for two or more

eighth-note durational values. As figures 5.6b and 5.6d both illustrate, there are eight rhythmic positions that are common to a reel. In figure 5.6d however, positions 1, 2, and 3 are occupied by a single rhythmic value, or one dotted quarter note instead of three distinct eighth notes. I am calling this rhythmic compression. While figures 5.6b and 5.6d have different numbers of note shapes, neither of these figures has auxiliary rhythmic positions that qualify as Ornamentation.

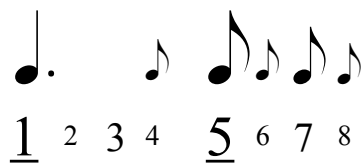


Figure 5.6d: Rhythmic Positions Subsumed into One Note Shape in One Measure of a Reel

I am defining Ornamentation strictly as any addition of auxiliary rhythmic positions to the basic abstract rhythmic schemes for the tune genres in figures 5.2b-5.2d or the varied placement of added positions.

The statistical analysis of the source recordings showed that of the 48.2% average number of measures varied, 74% of those varied measures (35.6% of the total 2,720 measures) exhibited some kind of Ornamentation. This means that in 74% of the measures one or several things occurred: auxiliary positions were subtracted or added over successive repetitions from the first play through of the tune or grace notes sounded at different pitches.

Ornamentation may be interpolated to 1) emphasize a down/strong beat; 2) emphasize an up/weak beat; 3) subdivide note values (e.g., a quarter note A will be

subdivided into two As by inserting a grace note after the first A); or 4) add aesthetic nuance.²⁴⁰

I am offering Ornamentation as a type of variation, but that does not mean that all ornamentation constitutes variation. For instance, if a musician uses the same ornamentation in the same place over successive repetitions of a tune, those additions do not constitute Ornamentation as a variation type. Ornamentation is only a variation type insofar as auxiliary rhythmic positions are added, removed, or changed among successive repetitions of the same tune played by the same performer.

For an example of ornamentation that is not a variation, consider example 5.6a excerpted from uilleann piper Richard O’Mealy’s 1943 performance of the slip jig “Drops of Brandy.” Notice that while O’Mealy has placed a C grace note between the two consecutive Bs of measures 2 and 4, he places that same grace in that same location in each successive repetition. While O’Mealy has indeed deployed ornamentation, the addition of rhythmic place values to the original rhythmic scheme, he has not used Ornamentation as a variation type.

The image shows four staves of musical notation, labeled '1st time', '2nd time', '3rd time', and '4th time'. Each staff contains three measures of music. Above the first three measures, the numbers '2', '3', and '4' are written. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/8 time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes. In each of the four staves, a blue circle highlights a grace note (C) placed between the two consecutive B notes in measures 2 and 4.

Example 5.6a: Measures 2-4 of the A part of uilleann piper Richard O’Mealy’s 1943 recording of the slip jig “Drops of Brandy”
See transcription 12 in Appendix C

²⁴⁰ An ornament or grace note may be placed in a position that does not help amplify the downbeat or upbeat pitches. In such instances where the ornament does not aid the rhythm, the ornament may be placed to aid aural or kinesthetic appeal for the performer.

For an example of Ornamentation as a variation type that serves to emphasize rhythmically important notes in the dance rhythm structure, let us consider flute player Matt Molloy's recorded performance of the reel "Patsy Touhey's" on Molloy's 1984 album entitled *Matt Molloy* as evidenced in example 5.6b.

In Molloy's first time playing through the B part of the reel "Patsy Touhey's." Molloy has interspersed a G and a D grace note among the repeated Es on beat 1 and has inserted a G grace note to accent the F# in position 3. Molloy's final G grace note accents the F# in position 7. I am describing ornamentation, but not yet Ornamentation as a variation type.

In the second repetition, Molloy demonstrates Ornamentation as variation by compressing the two E sixteenths from the first time he played the reel into two E eighth notes. Molloy now places the G grace note before the first E and executes the D grace note before the second E. He replaces the G grace note that accented the F# of position 7 the first time he played it with an A grace note.

In the third repetition, Molloy replaces the grace notes entirely with an ascending E-G-B triplet (by the definition on page 211) figure followed by an echo in eighth notes. The F# in position 7 retains the A grace note that was substituted for the G grace note from the first repetition.

I have circled the grace notes, boxed the sixteenth notes (to draw visual attention to them as auxiliary rhythmic positions), and have put the number of rhythmic positions in parentheses beneath the measure to which they refer. In his first playing, Molloy plays notes in (13) rhythmic positions, five of which are auxiliary. In the second playing,

Molloy decreases the number of rhythmic positions to (12), four of which are auxiliary. In the third playing, Molloy decreases the number of rhythmic positions still further to (10), two of which are auxiliary.

Example 5.6b: Measure 11 of the B part of flute player Matt Molloy's 1984 recording of the reel "Patsy Touhey's" See transcription 33 in Appendix C

For another approach to Ornamentation as variation, let us consider fiddler Seán Keane's recording of the slip jig "Gusty's Frolics," from his 1975 album entitled *Gusty's Frolics* as evidenced in example 5.6c.

In contrast to Molloy's varied Ornamentation, which enhanced critical rhythmic positions in the dance tune, my transcription of Keane's playing in example 5.6c is an instance in which grace notes have been placed for aesthetic/kinesthetic nuance and do not serve to extend or amplify notes in rhythmic positions that enhance the dance rhythm.

The top measure is excerpted from Keane's first time through the D part of the slip jig. Note the double grace notes E-G that Keane plays before the E in position 5. Keane uses Ornamentation as variation in the second time through the tune, in the middle of measure 27. Here, Keane replaces the double grace notes E-G with a D-E-F#-G quadruplet. The third and final time through this measure of the slip jig, Keane plays only a G grace note before the E in position 5.

During the second time through the tune, Keane decreases the number of rhythmic positions by decreasing the number of notes that comprise the ornamental quadruplet. Keane decreases the number of positions from (11) in the first playing to (10) in the second playing. The third playing of “Gusty’s Frolics” also has (10) positions, but now the G grace note is played instead of the quadruplet.

The image shows three staves of music in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 9/8 time signature. The first staff is labeled '1st time' and has a circled note with the number '27' above it. The second staff is labeled '2nd time' and has a circled note with the number '4' above it. The third staff is labeled '3rd time' and has a circled note with the number '27' above it. A red rectangular box highlights the circled notes in all three staves.

Example 5.6c: Measure 27 of the D part from fiddler Seán Keane’s 1975 recording of the slip jig “Gusty’s Frolics”
See transcription 22 in Appendix C

Example 5.6d is a transcription of measures 6-8 of repetitions 1-3 of uilleann piper Patsy Touhey’s cylinder recording (c. 1904) of the jig “The Connachtman’s Rambles.” Of these three repetitions, Touhey alters the number of rhythmic positions considerably.

In measure 6, Touhey plays only four notes of rhythmic positions, a rhythmic compression of the six rhythmic positions in a basic jig rhythm give a total of (4) positions. In the second time through measure 6, Touhey adds a D grace note before the A, giving a total of (5) positions, but not adding rhythmically critical positions. The ♪ still occupies the first three basic rhythmic positions. In the third repetition of measure 6, Touhey plays notes in (7) positions. He plays distinct pitches in positions 1-3 and subdivides position 5 with two sixteenth notes on G and F#.

In the second repetition of measure 7, Touhey repeats what he does the first time through totaling (9) rhythmic positions. In the third playing, Touhey omits the C# and A grace notes that comprise the roll and instead subdivides position 2 with G and F# giving a total of (8) rhythmic positions.

During the second time through measure 8, Touhey decreases the number of rhythmic positions from (10) to (9) by compressing the two F# sixteenths from the first playing into a single F# in the second playing. As Touhey plays through measure 8 the third time, he increases the number of rhythmic positions to (11) by added two A grace notes before positions 1 and 2.

The image shows three staves of music for measures 6, 7, and 8. The first staff is labeled '1st time' and has rhythmic position counts (4), (9), and (10) under measures 6, 7, and 8 respectively. The second staff is labeled '2nd time' and has counts (5), (9), and (9). The third staff is labeled '3rd time' and has counts (7), (8), and (11). Red boxes highlight changes in measure 8: the first box encloses two F# sixteenth notes, the second encloses a single F# note, and the third encloses two A grace notes. Blue circles highlight grace notes in measures 7 and 8 across all three staves.

Example 5.6d: Measures 6-8 of the A part of uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's
c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"
See transcription 2 in Appendix C

Touhey's recording illustrates the variety that can be achieved with Ornamentation. Of course, there are other variables that this example exhibits: Touhey plays different pitches through the successive repetitions as he adds to or subtracts from a number of rhythmic positions.

Now that we have considered some of the instances in which Irish musicians add rhythmic places in their performances, let us consider a few instances in which pitches within a particular rhythmic scheme are altered.

5.7. Triadic Exchange

Triadic Exchange is when another pitch of the originally implied triad replaces the original note. Whereas the nature of Ornamentation is to add notes to accent (draw attention to) other notes through the addition, subtraction, or repositioning of auxiliary notes, Triadic Exchange involves the exchange of one note for another.

Irish melodies imply triadic harmonies: melodies often lay out vertically over time what the echoic memory retains and compiles to be tertian harmony. The same sort of thing occurs when listening to a solo violin or cello suite by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), for example. The ear can assemble a succession of pitches to orient the listener about where the melody has been and where the melody might subsequently go whether or not a melody is harmonized with accompaniment. These expectations about where a melody might go are based largely on enculturation. Austrian music theorist Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) suggests that music need not present “three-phony” in order for triadic harmony to be implied.²⁴¹

Triadic Exchange involves substituting tones in the same measure and in the same rhythmic position over successive repetitions. For example, D might be exchanged for F# or A, just as G might be exchanged for B or D. Before we examine a few instances where

²⁴¹ Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 133.

Triadic Exchange occurs, we will need to discuss how to infer implied harmony in Irish traditional music.²⁴²

To determine the implied harmony of a beat in Irish traditional music, we need to determine the first pitch of the beat. A single beat has both a “down” and an “up.” In figures 5.7a-5.7c are representations of the two downbeats of a jig, slip jig, reel, and hornpipe. The downbeats of a jig are in rhythmic positions 1 and 4 of a measure. The upbeats of a jig are in rhythmic positions 3 and 6.

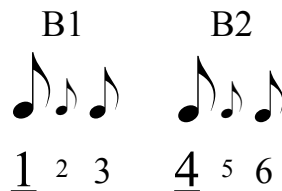


Figure 5.7a: Two Primary Beats in One Measure of a Jig

Figure 5.7b shows the downbeats of a reel and hornpipe are in rhythmic positions 1 and 5 of a measure. The upbeats of a reel and hornpipe are in rhythmic positions 3 and 7.

²⁴² Tomás Ó Canainn offers an analytical method to assess the importance of certain notes in a tune. These criteria are 1) note frequency, 2) note proximity (occurrence on a strong or weak beat), 3) range, 4) note preceded by a leap greater than a fifth, and 5) long notes. See Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 28. In order to assign hierarchy to pitches in a sequence, Ó Canainn assigns points (numerical values) where the tune exhibited these criteria. Based on his analysis of “Cailleach an Airgid/The Hag with the Money,” Ó Canainn concluded that there are Irish tunes whose melodic layout does not immediately accommodate terms like tonic, dominant, and subdominant meaning that attempting to infer a single harmonic implication from some tunes, may be untenable. Rather, an argument may be constructed for harmonic implications based on the criteria that Ó Canainn offers with the understanding that a single clear harmonic inference may not be possible with all tunes. As Ó Canainn suggests, this harmonic ambiguity points to a “melodic rather than harmonic philosophy behind their [traditional tunes’] composition.” *ibid.*, 30. In 1928, Richard Henebry published the results of a study in which he took 500 tunes transcribed in The Complete Petrie Collection of Irish Music and subjected them “to a minute process of counting, so as to yield a record of the number of times each note occurred in the accented condition, as well as the number and position, of its gaps...” Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music*, 72.

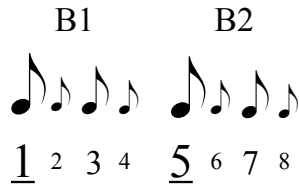


Figure 5.7b: Two Primary Beats in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe

The downbeats of a slip jig are in rhythmic positions 1, 4, and 7, as figure 5.7c illustrates. The upbeats of a slip jig are in rhythmic positions 3, 6, and 9.

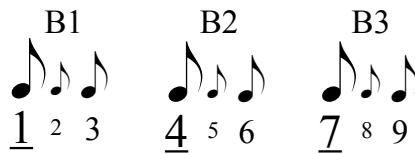


Figure 5.7c: Three Primary Beats in One Measure of a Slip Jig

The implied harmony of a beat will be contingent first and foremost on the pitch that occupies position 1. The note in position 1, within the context of preceding notes, will imply certain harmonies more than others. Next, consider intervals greater than a tone away from the note in position 1 within the beat. While two consecutive notes are usually not of equal rhythmic importance, they may constitute equal harmonic importance if more than a tone separates them.

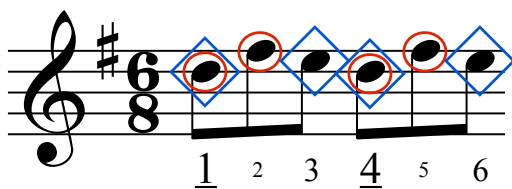
In example 5.7a notice on the left that of the two three-note groupings, only the outer two eighth notes have diamonds around them. Notes with diamonds around them are rhythmically crucial in a jig. A note without a diamond is rhythmically dispensable; therefore, the F# with the circle but no diamond around it is rhythmically negligible.

Notice again in example 5.7a on the left that the first two notes of the three-note grouping have circles around them. Those notes with circles around them communicate

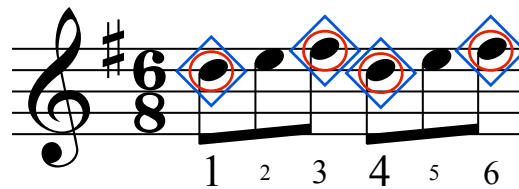
the harmony of that beat. Notes without circles are harmonically negligible. For example, in example 5.7a on the left, D and F# have circles around them. This third implies a D major triad despite the fact that there is no A present to completely clarify that implication. Given the measures preceding and following, the D and F# could also imply B minor or something else. The E with the diamond around it is harmonically negligible in the sense that it does nothing to clarify the harmonic implications of the D in position 4.

Now consider example 5.7b on the right. Notice that the outer eighth notes of each three-note grouping have both diamonds and circles around them. These notes that have diamonds and circles around them are both rhythmically crucial and harmonically relevant. The interior eighth notes in positions 2 (F#) and 5 (F#) that have no shape around them are expendable both rhythmically and harmonically.

○ = harmonically important
 ◊ = rhythmically important



Example 5.7a: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance in One Measure of a Jig



Example 5.7b: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance Concurring in One Measure of a Jig²⁴³

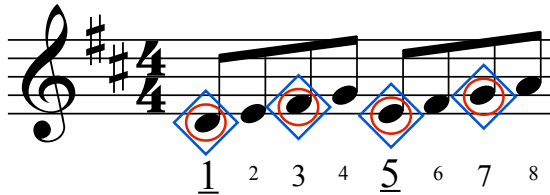
²⁴³ The same distribution of harmonically and rhythmically important positions would apply to a slip jig in a similar way.

In example 5.7c on the left, you will notice that of the two four-note groupings, only the four eighth notes in rhythmic positions 1, 3, 5, and 7 have diamonds around them. Notes with diamonds around them are those that are rhythmically crucial in a reel. A note without a diamond is rhythmically dispensable; the notes in positions 2 (E), 4 (G), 6 (F#), and 8 (A) are rhythmically negligible.

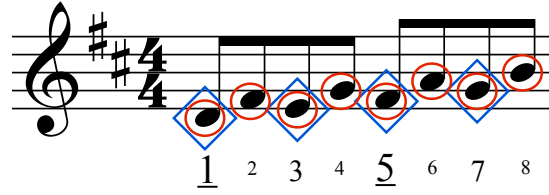
Notice again in example 5.7c on the left that the notes in rhythmic positions 1, 3, 5, and 7 of the four-note grouping also have circles around them. Those notes with circles around them communicate the harmony of that beat. Notes without circles are harmonically negligible. For example, in example 5.7c on the left, D and F# have circles around them. This third implies a D major triad despite the fact that there is no A in a rhythmically important position to completely clarify that implication. Given the measures preceding and following, the D and F# could also imply B minor or something else.

Now consider example 5.7d on the right. The rhythmic positions remain the same, except the pitches have changed to D (1), E (3), F# (5), and G (7). This type of harmonic and rhythmic distribution could be interpreted in either one of two ways. In the first instance, each successive pair of eighth notes could be inferred to imply its own harmony by virtue of the fact that they are arranged in triads. If we hold to this interpretation, then each beat expresses a distinct harmony. The other interpretation is to take harmonic implications from the downbeat pitches, that is, notes in positions 1 (D) and 5 (F#). The faster a tune is played, the more likely we might favor the second interpretation because the notes are going by faster and the brain has less time to group those intervals as

implicating units. If a tune is played slower, we might favor the first interpretation because the brain can process each third as a separate harmony.



Example 5.7c: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance Concurring in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe



Example 5.7d: Positions of Rhythmic and Harmonic Importance in One Measure of a Reel and Hornpipe

Triadic Exchange also accommodates octave displacement, a practice that is applicable in tunes where the range exceeds the lowest note on a single instrument, but not on every instrument (e.g., a fiddler plays the open G string and a flute player or uilleann piper plays the G an octave above). Octave displacement might also occur because a flute player might wish to vary a tune by playing a single line of melody between two octaves. Octave displacement might also occur in a performance of uilleann piping when too much or too little air pressure from the bag arm causes a note to play in a different octave from the rest of notes in that sequence.

Example 5.7e is an example of octave displacement that occurs within uilleann piper Willie Clancy’s 1958 recording of the jig “Down the Back Lane.” Notice in measure 24 how Clancy displaces notes A, G, and E of the first time around up an octave the second time around.

Example 5.7e: Measure 24 of the B part of uilleann piper Willie Clancy’s 1958 recording of the jig “Down the Back Lane”
See transcription 14 in Appendix C

For an example of Triadic Exchange, consider the excerpt in example 5.7f and example 5.7g from fiddler Brendan Mulvihill’s 1999 performance of the jig “The Lark in the Morning.” I have provided an intervallic analysis (numbers inside the boxes) to aid comprehension.

In example 5.7f, during the second time through the jig, Mulvihill replaces the A-
F# double stop with a D in position 3 of measure 1. He also executes a Triadic Exchange in positions 2 and 3 of measure 2 the second time around. For the second and third eighth notes of measure 2, Mulvihill replaces what was formerly G and D with two Bs. This Triadic Exchange is compounded by Mulvihill’s addition of Ornamentation.

Example 5.7f: Measures 1-6 of the A part (first and second times) of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill’s 1999 performance of the jig “The Lark in the Morning”
See transcription 46 in Appendix C

Mulvihill’s third repetition of the jig compared to the first time through the jig shown in example 5.7g gives a clear example of his conception of harmonic implications.

Measure 1 of the third repetition shows a completely unfolded D major triad between the two As, leaving us with a D major triad in second inversion. The sound recording testifies to the instability of this inverted chord as the ear retains the first pitch and contextualizes the following pitches by the low A. Measure 2 likewise unfolds a G major triad sounded in the first playing and only intimated in the second playing. This first inversion G major triad in the third playing, like the second inversion D major triad in measure 1, again leaves us with a sense of tension. The unfolded D major triad returns in measure 3 while measure 4 gives us a root-position G major triad that ascends over an octave. Measure 5 shows another unfolding of D major, while measure 6 exhibits the consecutive pitches of the G major triad in second inversion.

The image shows two staves of music in 6/8 time, labeled '1st time' and '3rd time'. Above the staves, measures 1 through 6 are numbered. Red vertical boxes are drawn around specific notes in each measure. Below the notes, numbers 1 through 6 indicate fingerings. In measure 1, the notes are A, F#, and A, with fingerings 5, 6, 3, 3. In measure 2, the notes are G, B, and G, with fingerings 3, 3. In measure 3, the notes are A, F#, and A, with fingerings 6, 6. In measure 4, the notes are G, B, and G, with fingerings 3, 3, 3. In measure 5, the notes are A, F#, and A, with fingerings 6, 5. In measure 6, the notes are G, B, and G, with fingerings 5, 6, 6.

Example 5.7g: Measures 1-6 of the A part (first and third times) of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill's 1999 performance of the jig "The Lark in the Morning"
See transcription 46 in Appendix C

Example 5.7h is excerpted from uilleann piper Kieran O'Hare's 2001 recording *Kieran O'Hare*. In the jig "Páidín O'Rafertaigh," O'Hare plays an example of Triadic Exchange in measures 5 and 6. In measure 5, O'Hare has exchange D for F# in rhythmic position 3, A for C# in position 4, and C# for E in position 5. In measure 6, we can see that O'Hare has substituted B for G in rhythmic position 6.

Example 5.7h: Measures 5-6 of the A part of uilleann piper
 Kieran O’Hare’s 2001 recording of the jig “Páidín O’Rafertaigh”
 See transcription 49 in Appendix C

Fiddler Josephine Keegan exhibits Triadic Exchange in example 5.7i, measures 10-12 excerpted from her 1980 recording of the reel “Music in the Glen.” In measure 10, the first downbeat and upbeat of measure 10 implies A major harmony both times Keegan plays through the reel. On the first downbeat of measure 10, Keegan substitutes E for A. On the second downbeat of measure 10, Keegan substitutes A for F#. While Keegan implies D major harmony on beats 3 and 4 of measure 10 during her first time through the tune, these pitches of the triad occur in rhythmically expendable positions (6 and 8). This is an instance in which the harmonically critical pitches do not coincide with the rhythmically critical positions, but which may be accounted as part of a harmonic analysis.

When Keegan plays through measure 11 a second time, she clarifies the A major harmony by playing chord tones on each of the downbeat positions (1, 3, 5, and 7). On the rhythmically expendable positions measure 11 (6 and 8), Keegan clarifies the A harmony further by putting in C#s

Example 5.7i: Measures 10-12 of the A part of fiddler Josephine Keegan's 1980 recording of the reel "Music in the Glen"
See transcription 29 in Appendix C

5.7.1. Harmonic Compression

Harmonic compression occurs when a musician extends the duration of a single pitch so that it lasts longer than a single eighth note: the implied harmony of the first time is compressed rhythmically into a single note value. This is a variation insofar as those separate eighth-note values made be added in over successive repetitions. This extended rhythmic value contains within it the harmonic implications of the previous playing of that section of music. For an example of this, let us consider uilleann piper Tom Ennis's 1920 performance of the reel "The Swallow's Tail."

I have marked the harmonic compression inside the boxes in example 5.7.1. When playing through this measure the first time, Tom Ennis plays E-A-C-A, articulating a complete A minor triad. However, when Ennis plays the A part a second time, he substitutes a dotted quarter on A in the place of what was formerly E-A-C, thus compressing the harmony into a single note value. He does this twice the second time he plays through measure 5.

Example 5.7.1: Measure 5 of the A part of uilleann piper Tom Ennis's 1920 recording of the reel "The Swallow's Tail"
See transcription 3 in Appendix C

5.7.2. Harmonic Extension

By contrast, Harmonic Extension involves the clarification of previously implied harmony when a musician subdivides a larger note values into eighth notes. Let us consider another excerpt from Tom Ennis's recording of the reel "The Swallow's Tail." Within the box of example 5.7.2, it is apparent that Ennis is extending and clarifying the harmonic implications in the second playing of this measure. Ennis plays a G quarter note during his first playing of measure 4. When repeating that same measure, Ennis harmonically extends that single G quarter note to D and G eighth notes, thus implying the G chord more clearly. If we continue looking past the box on the bottom staff, we will find a B that completes the triad in rhythmic position 7, an upbeat.

Example 5.7.2: Measure 4 from the A part of uilleann piper Tom Ennis's 1920 recording of the reel "The Swallow's Tail"
See transcription 3 in Appendix C

5.8. Modal Inflection

By “mode,” I mean a collection of note relationships (intervals) whose pitch distribution (amount and proximity) within a metric cycle implies hierarchies of pitch importance. The more frequently a certain note is played, the more important it can be inferred to be, just as the more times a note is played in a rhythmically important position, the more important it can be inferred to be.

The amount and proximity of pitch distribution will imply a certain hierarchy. This hierarchy of pitches will suggest a single note as a drone pitch. This drone pitch serves as a fundamental point of reference against which the passing of the other pitches may be regarded as relative for a fixed portion of a tune. The four most commonly employed modes in Irish traditional music are ionian, mixolydian, dorian, and aeolian. Despite the controversy surrounding the correct usage and understanding of the application of “mode” as a term, this designation is common currency among practitioners.²⁴⁴

Many Irish traditional dance tunes may be in a single mode, meaning simply that a single drone pitch will sound suitable throughout the entire tune. There are some tunes

²⁴⁴ Mode, as a term, has been a contentious historically with respect to folk music because the term “mode” has been perceived as a word applied (wrongly) to traditional musics by outsiders. It is the outsider classifying another tradition that has brought the criticism. However, as Matthew Gelbart points out, “In various ways the discourse on folk modality must have affected the objects of its study much earlier as well.” Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*, *New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 152. For a thorough discussion of on “mode” as it is (problematically) applied to folk music, see *ibid.*, 111-52; Anne Dhu Shapiro, “The Tune-Family Concept in British-American Folk-Song Scholarship” (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1975). Ó Canainn says of mode as an analytical category that “Some authorities regard tunes as being in one mode when the seventh is flattened and in a different mode when the seventh is sharpened. This leads to a method of analysis which leaves one completely unable to accept the fact of inflection and deal with it in a simple way. Irish tunes rarely change mode and to base a method of analysis on the assumption that they do seems foolish. It is somewhat better than the attitude adopted by those who assume that it is all something of a mystery!” Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 32.

whose A and B parts, because of a drastic intervallic difference between downbeat and upbeat pitches between the two parts, may imply two different drone pitches.

Having defined the term mode, I am defining “inflection” as a change of pitch. A Modal Inflection involves the alteration of certain scale degrees by a semitone only. The same fundamental drone pitch is implied despite this semitone alteration.

Tomás Ó Canainn states that

A note which appears in both sharpened and unsharpened forms in a tune is said to be inflected, and such inflection is common in Irish music.²⁴⁵

And that

The seventh is by far the most commonly inflected note, but the third and occasionally the fourth degree of the scale may be inflected.²⁴⁶

I have identified three subcategories of Modal Inflection that relate specifically to the scale degree that is altered. These subcategories are Subtonic Switch (involving the alteration of scale degree seven), Mediant Switch (involving the alteration of scale degree three), and Subdominant Switch (involving the alteration of scale degree four). My sample did not have any examples of Subdominant Switch.

The third and seventh scale degrees are important in Irish traditional music, as they are in other tonal musics.²⁴⁷ Modal Inflection involves the alteration of the third and seventh scale degrees in addition to the fourth scale degrees by a semitone. Let us

²⁴⁵ Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 30.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴⁷ Richard Henebry says that “These are the two greatest notes in the music, and their power and value are well understood by Irish musicians.” See Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music*, 60.

consider a few instances of Modal Inflection as a variation type exhibited in the source recordings.

Consider the alteration of scale degree 3 in fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy.” The Modal Inflection that Coleman deploys is evident in position 5 in measure 11 of example 5.8a. Coleman plays an F# on the downbeat (rhythmic position 5) during his first time through measure 12. The second time Coleman plays through measure 12, he plays an F \flat , lowering the third scale degree (F#) by a semitone. I am calling the semitone alteration to scale degree three a Mediant Switch, a subdivision of Modal Inflection. The third time Coleman plays through measure 12, he switches the third scale degree back to F#. In Coleman’s Modal Inflection, the implied fundamental (or drone) is D regardless of whether he plays F \flat or F#. This D drone is implied by the abundance of Ds and As in measure 12.

Example 5.8a: Measure 11 of the B part of fiddler Michael Coleman’s 1922 recording of the reel “Rakish Paddy”
See transcription 4 in Appendix C

Uilleann piper Paddy Keenan deploys a Modal Inflection in his 1983 recording of “The Maid Behind the Bar” on his album *Port an Phiobaire*. The Modal Inflection is evidenced on position 3 of measure 31 in example 5.8b. The first time Keenan plays

measure 31 of this reel, he plays F \flat . The second time he plays through measure 31, he plays F \sharp . This is another example of a Mediant Switch that falls under the rubric of Modal Inflection. Keenan also uses Ornamentation as a variation on beats 1 and 2 where in the first repetition he plays two sequentially descending figures. In the second repetition, he omits the triplet figures in favor of A grace notes. Furthermore, on beat 3, there is a Triadic Exchange. In the first repetition, Keenan plays F \sharp on beat 3 whereas during the second repetition, he plays A. Keenan's Modal Inflection, like Coleman's, does not alter the implied fundamental or drone. The implied drone remains D regardless of whether Keenan plays F \flat or F \sharp .

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time, both in the key of D major (one sharp). The first staff is labeled '1st time' and the second '2nd time'. Both staves show measure 31. A red box highlights the triplet of notes on beat 3 in both repetitions. In the first repetition, the notes are G4, F#4, and E4. In the second repetition, the notes are G4, A4, and E4. An arrow points from the A4 note in the second repetition to the F#4 note in the first repetition, indicating a triadic exchange.

Example 5.8b: Measure 31 of the B part of uilleann piper Paddy Keenan's 1983 recording of the reel "The Maid Behind the Bar"
See transcription 32 in Appendix C

The Subtonic Switch, another subset of Modal Inflection, is illustrated in example 5.8c, uilleann piper Willie Clancy's 1958 recording of the jig "Down the Back Lane." When Clancy first plays through the jig "Down the Back Lane," he plays a C \flat in rhythmic position 4. The Subtonic Switch takes place during Clancy's second playing of measure 23 where he inflects a C \sharp in position 4 instead of a C \flat .

23

1st time

2nd time

3rd time

Example 5.8c: Measure 23 of the B part of uilleann piper Willie Clancy's 1958 recording of the jig "Down the Back Lane"
See transcription 14 in Appendix C

Billy McComiskey's plays a Modal Inflection in his recording of the reel "Dinny Delaney." The implied drone in measure 3 of example 5.8d is A by virtue of the amount and proximity of chord tones from the A minor triad. When McComiskey first plays measure 3, he plays a G \flat in position 2; this is a Subtonic Switch. Over his second and third repetitions of measure 3, McComiskey plays a Modal Inflection by changing the G \flat to G \sharp . The drone is still A regardless of whether the G is \flat or \sharp .

3

1st time

2nd time

3rd time

Example 5.8d: Measure 3 of the A part of accordion player Billy McComiskey's 1981 recording of the reel "Dinny Delaney"
See transcription 30 in Appendix C

5.9. Harmonic Substitution

Harmonic Substitution involves the alteration of several consecutive pitches such that the harmony implied the first time through the tune is changed to another in successive repetitions. In this Harmonic Substitution, the melody player alters a succession of pitches after the first complete playing of the tune to imply fundamentals that differ from those implied by the pitches in a previous performance of the tune section.

Accompanists playing chordal instruments will often substitute chords through successive repetitions of a tune. Accompanists may substitute different chords in measures where harmonic implications are somewhat ambiguous. For example, if the melodist plays a roll on A, the accompanist may choose at some moments to re-contextualize that pitch by playing D or A harmony beneath an A roll. While it is typical for an accompanist to make chord substitutions, this performance practice is less common among melody players who may do this with or without an accompanist.

For another example of Harmonic Substitution, let us consider uilleann piper Robbie Hannan's 1998 performance of the jig "The Rambles of Kitty." Example 5.9a shows that Hannan performs a Harmonic Substitution in the C part of the jig "The Rambles of Kitty."

In Hannan's first iteration of the jig, he articulates an arpeggiated E minor triad descending from the note B in measure 43. The following measure exhibits what is clearly an A major chord if we count rhythmic positions 1, 2, and 3 in measure 44.

In Hannan's repetition of measure 43, he exchanges the notes of every rhythmic position of measure 43, resulting in a Harmonic Substitution lasting for the entire

measure. While he changes all the notes in rhythmic positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, he also alters the original contour. In the second playing of measure 43, Hannan substitutes a C major triad on beat 1 for the E minor triad that was played previously. On the second repetition of beat 2 of measure 43, Hannan places a partial (rootless) D dominant seventh chord where the remainder of the E-minor triad was played in the first time through in measure 43. In the second performance of measure 44, Hannan replaces the A-major chord on beat 1 with an inverted C-major triad.

The image shows a musical score for two performances of measures 43 and 44. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The first performance (1st time) shows a melody with implied chords Em, Em, AM, and Em. The second performance (2nd time) shows a different melody with implied chords CM, D dom7, CM, and Em.

Example 5.9a: Measures 43-44 of the C part of uilleann piper Robbie Hannan’s 1998 performance of the jig “The Rambles of Kitty”
See transcription 45 in Appendix C

Let us consider fiddler James Kelly’s Harmonic Substitution in his 1989 recording of the reel “Sporting Paddy.” As example 5.9b illustrates, when Kelly first plays through measure 13 in the B part of “Sporting Paddy,” he clearly implies A-minor harmony on beat 1 and beat 2. This is evidenced by the chord tones A and C in positions 1 and 3. On beat 3, Kelly holds two Gs for a single quarter note’s duration. While on its own, this long G might be difficult to interpret harmonically, Kelly clarifies the harmony

with a B in position 8. Over measure 13, Kelly moves from an A-major chord to a G-major chord.

Kelly deploys Harmonic Substitution the third time through measure 13. By lowering the notes in positions 1 and 3 a sixth, changing the harmony from the first time (A minor) to C major in the third time through measure 13.

The image displays two musical staves for measure 13 in 4/4 time. The top staff shows the melody with notes circled in red and blue diamonds. The bottom staff shows the implied chords. In the first instance, the chords are Am and GM. In the second instance, the chords are CM and GM. The melody in the second instance shows a change in notes in positions 1 and 3, indicated by blue diamonds, which corresponds to the change in harmony from Am to CM.

Example 5.9b: Measures 13 of the B part from fiddler James Kelly’s 1989 recording of the reel “Sporting Paddy”
See transcription 37 in Appendix C

Kevin Crawford gives an example of Harmonic Substitution in his 1995 recording of the reel “Sporting Paddy” as shown in example 5.9c. Crawford clearly implies A-minor harmony in the beats 1 and 2 of measure 6 in all iterations. However, the harmonic implications of beats 3 and 4 in measure 6 are not as clear. An A follows the G in position 5. While the G on that downbeat would suggest some kind of G harmony, the A does nothing to confirm or refute that supposition. The F# in position 7 seems to imply D harmony and the A that follows in the first and third gives credence to that inference. The

D that Crawford plays in position 8 of the third repetition also suggests that the F# implies D-major harmony.

In the fourth time through the tune, Crawford eliminates this harmonic vagueness by playing exclusively pitches of an A-minor triad on every downbeat and upbeat of measure 6. The notes that he plays in positions 2, 4, 6, 8 (the rhythmically negligible positions) are tones that do not fit within an A-minor chord.

The image shows four staves of music, each representing a repetition of measure 6. The music is in 4/4 time and has a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: 1st time: E, A, G, F#; 2nd time: E, A, G, F#; 3rd time: E, A, G, F#; 4th time: E, A, C, A. Red boxes highlight the notes in each repetition. A '6' is written above the second staff.

Example 5.9c: Measure 6 of the A part from flute player Kevin Crawford's 1995 recording of the reel "Sporting Paddy" See transcription 41 in Appendix C

In example 5.9d, we can see how uilleann piper Mick O'Brien uses Harmonic Substitution in his 1996 recording of "Higgins's Hornpipe." When O'Brien first plays through measure 4, he clearly articulates a G-major triad followed by a D-major triad starting on F#. When O'Brien repeats measure 4, he substitutes E-minor harmony where the G major harmony was previously. On beat 3 of measure 4, O'Brien substitutes G-E (implying E minor again) where previously he played F#-A (implying D major). Not only does O'Brien make a Harmonic Substitution, but he also changes the harmonic rhythm of that measure.

Measure 5 presents an instance in which one could argue for D major harmony on beats 3 and 4. I have opted to label these beats with an A-major harmony. While A and F# fall on downbeats (rhythmic positions 5 and 7), thus implying D major, the preceding pitches of E and C# in positions 1 and 3 contextualize the A as part of A major. Despite the fact that the E in position 8 is not in a rhythmically critical position, this note reinforces the overriding A-major harmony of the measure.

The image shows a musical score for two iterations of measures 4 and 5. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first iteration (labeled '1st time') shows a melodic line with notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G. The implied chords are GM, DM, AM, and AM. The second iteration (labeled '2nd time') shows a melodic line with notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G. The implied chords are Em, Em, DM, AM, and AM. The score includes melodic lines and chord diagrams.

Example 5.9d: Measures 4-5 of the A part of uilleann piper Mick O’Brien’s 1996 recording of the hornpipe “Higgins’s”
See transcription 43 in Appendix C

In example 5.9e, accordion player Joe Derrane plays a rather striking Harmonic Substitution in measure 10 of his 1996 recording of the reel “The Humours of Lissadell.” Harmonically, Derrane repeats himself twice in measure 9. The main difference between the first and second utterance of measure 9 is that in the second playing, Derrane inserts an A#—this, I think, might be placed to prepare the ear for the Harmonic Substitution that he plays in measure 10 since A# is the leading tone to B.

While Derrane does not give us B major the second time he plays through measure 10, he does play a sequence of notes that implies a B dominant seventh chord in place of the D major and E minor harmonies implied in his first playing of measure 10.

The image displays musical notation for two playings of measures 9 and 10. The first playing, labeled '1st time', shows a melody in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The implied chords for the first time are Em, Em, DM, and Em. The second playing, labeled '2nd time', shows the same melody but with a different harmonic structure. The implied chords for the second time are Em, Em, and B dom7. The B dom7 chord is shown as a triad with a flat on the third degree (B, D, F#).

Example 5.9e: Measures 9-10 of the A part from accordion player Joe Derrane's 1996 recording of the reel "The Humours of Lissadell"
See transcription 42 in Appendix C

For a final example of Harmonic Substitution, let us consider fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor" on her album *Lost in the Loop*. While a hornpipe is a duple-meter dance typically notated in common time, I have opted instead to transcribe Carroll's performance in 6/8, since I think that this meter better represents her approach to the dance rhythm in this performance.

Example 5.9f shows Carroll's performance of measures 38-41 from the B part of the tune. With the exception of the doubled G ornament in the first beat of measure 38 the second time through the tune, Carroll plays the same melodic content in measures 38 and 39.

Carroll implies F major harmony both times through measure 38. Beat 1 of both repetitions implies D minor harmony that returns to F major by beat 3. The first time Carroll plays through the tune, she echoes in measures 40-41 what she has played in measures 38-39 with the omission of the double stops. However, in measures 40-41 of the second repetition, Carroll deviates from the previous implied F major harmony by substituting different pitches that imply a completely different chord.

Carroll introduces an F# in position 3 during her second playing of measure 40. She immediately repeats this F# in position 4 of measure 40, thus changing the subsequent double stop to D major from what was D minor the first time. After pivoting back to the F#, Carroll plays a diminished seventh between F# and E \flat in position 1 of measure 41.

My ear retains the A from downbeat 1 of measure 40, thus effecting a striking harmonic substitution of an F# diminished chord for what was in the previous an implied D minor double stop.

The image displays a musical score for measures 38-41 of the B part of fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor". The score is presented in four staves:

- 1st time:** Melody line for measures 38-41.
- implied chords 1st time:** Chord diagrams for measures 38-41, labeled FM, Dm, FM, FM, Dm, FM.
- 2nd time:** Melody line for measures 38-41, showing a change in measure 40 (F#) and measure 41 (F# and E \flat).
- implied chords 2nd time:** Chord diagrams for measures 38-41, labeled FM, Dm, FM, DM, F# dim, DM. Red boxes highlight the changes in measures 40 and 41.

Example 5.9f: Measures 38-41 of the B part of fiddler Liz Carroll's 2000 recording of the hornpipe "The Drunken Sailor"
See transcription 48 in the Appendix C

5.10. Passing Tones

This category accounts for notes played in performance that may not be rationalized within a harmonic framework. Passing tones can either be diatonic, that is, within the established tonal center of the tune as performed, or they can be chromatic, that is, outside the established tonal center. Passing Tones replace disjunct portions of a melody in the first playing with conjunct stepwise motion in a subsequent repetition. They are approached and/or left by step and may either be diatonic (within the implied harmonic framework) or chromatic (outside the implied harmonic framework). As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Passing Tones, as a type of variation, are identified through horizontal intervallic analysis rather than through the vertical analysis that I have applied to extrapolate previously discussed variation types like Triadic Exchange, Modal Inflection, and Harmonic Substitution.

Example 5.10a shows the chromatic passing tone in measure 11 inside a triplet ornament in the second and third times Seamus Egan plays the reel “Bobby Casey’s.” In this excerpt, Egan inserts an F# passing tone during where there was none in the first playing.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, each representing a different repetition of a triplet ornament in measure 11. The first staff, labeled '1st time', shows a triplet of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4. The second staff, labeled '2nd time', shows a triplet of eighth notes: G4, F#4, A4. The third staff, labeled '3rd time', also shows a triplet of eighth notes: G4, F#4, A4. A red box highlights the triplet in each staff, and the number '11' is written above the first staff.

Example 5.10a: Measure 11 of the A part of banjo player Seamus Egan’s 1990 recording of the reel “Bobby Casey’s”
See transcription 39 in Appendix C

Example 5.10b, excerpted from this same recording by Egan, shows diatonic passing tones in measures 9 and 10 of the third time through those measures where Egan plays the same F-G-A-D figuration three times in a row. The G acts as the diatonic passing tone.

The image shows three staves of music in 4/4 time, labeled '1st time', '2nd time', and '3rd time'. Above the staves, measures 9 and 10 are indicated. The 3rd time through shows a consistent F-G-A-D figuration in measures 9 and 10, with red boxes highlighting the notes in each measure.

Example 5.10b: Measures 9-10 of the A part of banjo player Seamus Egan's 1990 recording of the reel "Bobby Casey's"
See transcription 39 of Appendix C

Example 5.10c illustrates an example of chromatic passing tones in an excerpt from flute player Niall Keegan's 1999 recording of the reel "The Dunmore Lassies." Keegan plays the same melodic content and ornamentation through his first two playings of measure 4. Keegan, in his third repetition of measure 4, exchanges G-A-A-G-F# for A-A#-B-Bb-A.

The image shows three staves of music in 4/4 time, labeled '1st time', '2nd time', and '3rd time'. Above the staves, measure 4 is indicated. The 3rd time through shows a chromatic passing tone sequence (A-A#-B-Bb-A) highlighted with a red box.

Example 5.10c: Measure 4 of the A part of flute player Niall Keegan's 1999 recording of the reel "The Dunmore Lassies"
See transcription 47 of Appendix C

Liz Carroll plays an example of chromatic passing tones in measures 11-13 of the A part from her recording of the hornpipe “The Drunken Sailor” excerpted in example 5.11d. Carroll substitutes D-E \flat -D-D \flat -C-C \flat -B \flat -A-A \flat -G-G \flat for what in her first playing was B \flat -C-D-C-A-G-F. In her second time through measure 13, Carroll plays a short chromatic figure of D \flat -D \sharp -E where previously she had played D-E.

The image shows two staves of music in 6/8 time, labeled '1st time' and '2nd time'. Measures 11, 12, and 13 are indicated above the staves. The 1st time performance shows a sequence of notes in measure 11: B \flat , C, D, C, A, G, F. The 2nd time performance shows a different sequence in measure 11: D, E \flat , D, D \flat , C, C \flat , B \flat , A, A \flat , G, G \flat . A red box highlights the notes in measure 13 of the 2nd time performance, which are D \flat , D \sharp , and E.

Example 5.10d: Measures 11-13 of the A part of fiddler Liz Carroll’s 2000 recording of the hornpipe “The Drunken Sailor”
See transcription 48 of Appendix C

5.11. Phrase Exchange

Phrase Exchange is a type of variation in which a musician exchanges a melodically discrete series of pitches for another melodically discrete series of pitches at different points in a tune over the course of several successive repetitions.

Example 5.11a is one such instance of a phrase that is exchanged in various measures in a single tune. Around 1904, uilleann piper Patsy Touhey recorded the jig “The Connachtman’s Rambles.” On that recording, Touhey plays the note sequence in example 5.11a first in the second time through measures 10 and 11. He repeats this sequence during his fifth time through measures 1 and 2.



Example 5.11a: Exchanged Phrase (1) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's
c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"
See transcription 2 in Appendix C

Example 5.11b shows a second measure that Touhey first plays in his fourth time through the A part at measure 6. He repositions this short phrase in measure 10 over his fifth and sixth repetitions of the A part.



Example 5.11b: Exchanged Phrase (2) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's
c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"
See transcription 2 in Appendix C

Example 5.11c shows a third measure that Touhey first plays in his third time through the A part at measure 10. He repositions this short phrase at measure 10 of his fourth repetition, at measure 6 of his fifth repetition, and again at measure sixth of his sixth repetition of the A part of "The Connachtman's Rambles."



Example 5.11c: Exchanged Phrase (3) from uilleann piper Patsy Touhey's
c. 1904 recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"
See transcription 2 in Appendix C

5.12. Putting It All Together: One Musician's Thinking about Melodic Variation

Having spent some time analyzing and describing the playing of other musicians using the taxonomy I have introduced in this chapter, I would like to briefly discuss how I think about melodic variation when I play Irish traditional dance music. While I mentioned that may be difficult to establish another musician's rationale for his stylistic system, such an endeavor can be a bit easier when analyzing oneself.

When I play melodic variations both in live performance and for studio recordings, I tend to play either variations that have occurred to me before in some other context or variations that fit comfortably under my hands. Sometimes while making a studio recording, I might attempt a variation that seems interesting conceptually, only to fail in executing it in the way that I wish. I might then re-record the track with the variation that had previously occurred to me. In planning repertoire for a studio recording, I tend to practice that repertoire before going into a studio in order to test out types of variations that might be interesting.

While playing at dance tempo, I rarely analyze myself in the systematic way that I have described in this chapter. I do not usually, while playing, think to myself “A Harmonic Inflection might be nice here,” and then alter the seventh scale degree of whatever tune I am playing the second time around. I may, after recording melodic variations in a tune, listen back and analyze how I liked a certain Triadic Exchange or disliked my manner of Ornamentation in a certain measure. I suspect that the reason I generally do not think in these terms while playing may have to do with the fact that the analytical method I have proposed to describe these variation types requires intervallic analysis. This conscious analysis takes more time to conduct than my implicit muscle memory needs in order to react to what my ear hears. Occasionally, I will record myself playing a tune and, upon listening back, have no conscious memory of playing certain variations. I would think consciously about my variations, but not immediately in the terminology I have offered in this chapter.

Because most of the variations that I would play would be Ornamentation, I tend to think of Ornamentation on a continuum, thereby gradating the amount of grace notes

in order to enable the listener to track my phrasing. Because of the morphology of the uilleann pipes, uilleann pipers do not have the same means of implying a downbeat or upbeat in a rhythmic scheme as readily as other instruments. Fiddlers can press harder on the bow, flute players can blow harder in the flute, accordion players can push or draw more vigorously on the bellows, and banjo players can pluck harder. Because uilleann pipers do not have direct physical contact with the vibration-producing body (the double reed inside the chanter), uilleann pipers have had to cultivate a system of fingerings that allows for the graded accentuation of pitches within a sequence. Uilleann pipers have had to develop systems of ornamentation because they cannot play certain notes significantly louder than others (at least to the extent that other types of instruments can).²⁴⁸

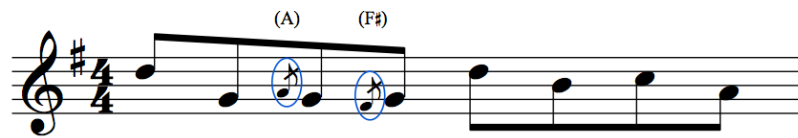
I tend to think of this graded ornamentation on a continuum from subtle to conspicuous. I have created five examples showing five different ways that I would think about playing a G roll. These five different ways of playing a single roll would constitute my list of options with respect to that particular ornament. I would have a similar list of options for each note that can be ornamented on an uilleann pipe chanter (24 notes total over two chromatic octaves).

I have transcribed these options for the G roll and listed them as I would think of them in order from subtlest to most conspicuous. Those types of rolls that I consider to be subtler are those in which the two auxiliary grace notes are close in pitch to the G that occupies a basic rhythmic position. The more conspicuous the roll, the further the grace notes will be from the ornamented note and the more grace notes will be added. I might

²⁴⁸ While each note on the chanter has a specific volume at which it plays (the bottom D being the loudest regardless of make), lifting the chanter at rhythmically important positions increases the volume of the chanter enough to draw attention to a particular note. See Eliot Grasso, "Dynamics in Piping," *An Piobaire* 4, no. 38 (2006).

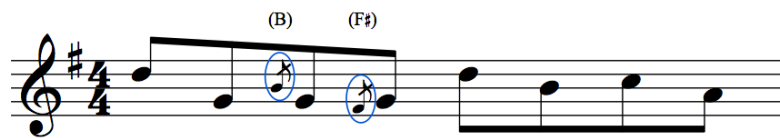
also lift the chanter from the knee to cause a dynamic swell in volume to amplify these different grace note options.

Example 5.12a is the subtlest option for the G roll because the A and F# grace notes are close to the G to be ornamented.



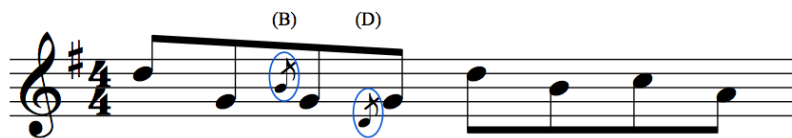
Example 5.12a: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (1)

Example 5.12b is more conspicuous than example 5.12a because the first grace note, B, is further from the G to be ornamented than the A grace note in example 5.12a.



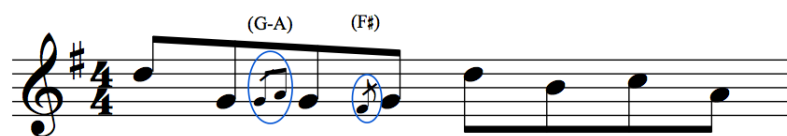
Example 5.12b: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (2)

Example 5.12c is still more conspicuous than example 5.12a because the second grace note (F# in example 5.12a and example 5.12b), has been changed to D. The D is further from the G to be ornamented than the F#.



Example 5.12c: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (3)

Example 5.12d is still more conspicuous because I have notated a double grace note before the G in position 3. This doubling draws the ear to that position by virtue of the proliferation of notes.



Example 5.12d: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (4)

Example 5.12e is the most conspicuous of the five examples of rolls because this example involves the most number of grace notes of any of the preceding examples. In example 5.12e, I placed the B grace note before the G to be ornamented and then play three more grace notes D-G-D by bouncing the bottom index and middle fingers of my right hand while keeping the ring and fifth finger firmly on the chanter. This doubling creates a bubbly effect that serves to draw the listener’s attention to that ornament more so than would happen in the first example of the roll with A and F# grace notes.



Example 5.12e: Uilleann Pipe G Roll Type (5)

Because I would appraise variation within an aesthetic framework that prizes the maintenance of meter and tune identity, I would tend to use Ornamentation to vary melody more than other variation types. I would also use Harmonic Substitution, Modal Inflection, and the other types of variations that I discussed earlier in this chapter, but to a lesser extent than Ornamentation.

In example 5.12f, I have varied measure 1 with Ornamentation and with Triadic Exchange in my 2007 recording of the jig “The Butcher’s March.” In the A part I have not repeated the G grace note before position 6 in measure in my second time through the tune. Furthermore, I have exchanged a B in my first playing of measure 1 for a G in my second playing.

Example 5.12f: Measure 1 from the A part of uilleann piper Eliot Grasso's 2007 recording of the jig "The Butcher's March"
See transcription 50 in Appendix C

Example 5.12g shows measures 25 and 26 of my 2007 recording of the B part of the jig "The Butcher's March." The variation that I played the second time through measures 25 and 26 is an odd instance because I actually remember where I was when it came to me. I was an undergraduate at Goucher College in Baltimore and was walking between the administration building and the chapel when the sequence E-A-G-A-G-F# E-G-D-E-B-D came to mind. This is an instance of another way to get between two melodic points.

In my first playing of measures 25 and 26, the melodic motion is all disjunct except for the A-B step between positions 3 and 4 of measure 26. The other melodic material I played in measures 25 and 26 clearly imply A harmony, D harmony, and then A harmony again.

The second time I played through measures 25 and 26, I retained the harmonic implications of measure 25, but substituted G for A, A for F#, G for A, and F#, for A. The leap of a seventh between positions 2 and 3 of measure 25 creates tension that invites resolution. That resolution is granted by the A-G-F# sequence. If we consider beat one of measure 25 as A dominant seventh harmony, then that resolves nicely to D harmony in the second beat. The Harmonic Substitution comes in beat 1 of measure 26. On the first

beat of measure 26, I am implying A harmony with the sequence A-E-E the first time through. In the second time through measure 26, I am implying E minor harmony over both beats.

The E minor triad is fleshed out with E, G, E, and B in rhythmic positions 1, 2, 4, and 5 respectively. While I would not consider the Ds in positions 3 and 6 to contribute to the overall implied harmony, these Ds function as dissonances against which the E acts. The interval of a major second between D and E creates tension again that invites resolution.

The image shows two staves of music in 6/8 time, marked with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is labeled '1st time' and the second '2nd time'. Above the first staff, measures 25 and 26 are indicated. Below the first staff, fingerings are written: 7, 3, 7, 6, 7, 4, 5. Red vertical rectangles are drawn around the notes in both staves, corresponding to these fingerings. In the second staff, blue circles and red diamonds are drawn around specific notes, highlighting dissonances and intervals.

Example 5.12g: Measures 25-26 from the B part of uilleann piper Eliot Grasso's 2007 recording of the jig "The Butcher's March"
See transcription 50 in Appendix C

5.13. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have proposed a taxonomy for classifying melodic variations in the instrumental dance music tradition of Ireland. I have described the basic rhythmic schemes for four dance tune genres: reel, hornpipe, jig, and slip jig. I explained that certain rhythmic positions take rhythmic priority while other rhythmic positions are expendable, meaning that if silence occurred in the expendable positions, an enculturated listener would still be able to distinguish the genre of the tune. I further explained that analyses of performances of Irish traditional music need to take into account the idea that positions of harmonic importance will sometimes coincide with positions of rhythmic

importance and sometimes will not. These details of genre aided in the analysis that gave rise to the taxonomy.

Before arriving at this taxonomy, I conducted a statistical analysis of fifty source recordings made between 1904 and 2007 to see how fifty different Irish traditional musicians varied their tunes. While I found that on average, 48.2% of measures were varied, I conducted further analysis on this sample to discover that 74% of the varied measures involved some kind of Ornamentation, the addition, subtraction, and repositioning of auxiliary rhythmic positions. Furthermore, I found that accompanied musicians varied on average 13.4% more measures than solo players.

In terms of understanding the limitations of variation, the data indicated that pitches occurring in rhythmically important positions (downbeats and upbeats) were only substituted 7.3% of the time. This conservatism with respect to the set accented tones suggests that it is between the notes in these important rhythmic positions that the musician must exact his melodic variations. If the set accented tone retention rate is 92.7%, then it makes sense that the most frequently deployed kind of variation is Ornamentation. While the addition of Passing Tones, Modal Inflection, and Harmonic Substitution all alter pitches in rhythmic positions, Ornamentation does not threaten the stability of tune identity by changing notes in rhythmically important positions. A musician can add as much ornamentation as she wants without change any of the set accented tones. However, in the case of Brendan Mulvihill, we saw that his extraordinary alteration of 44.9% of set accented tones might have rendered the jig “The Lark in the Morning” difficult to identify at times.

As a practitioner of Irish traditional music, I find a great deal of interest in the systems that other musicians use because it is these systems of variables and their nuanced application that makes performances of Irish traditional music intriguing and inspiring. It is the use of these variation types that makes a performer a master musician whose playing invites imitation and glowing appraisals.

While there are many more examples that we could example from Appendix C, I would like to now move our discussion toward a consideration of the cognitive processes that allows Irish musicians to apply these variation types in performance. We will see that it is the systems of the mind that facilitate the application of these variables in live performance.

CHAPTER VI

GRAY MATTER AND MUSICAL MATTERS:

COGNITIVE PROCESSES THAT FACILITATE MELODIC VARIATION

6.1. Introduction

Our discussion of melodic variation has been gradually narrowing from the broadly socio-historical to the specifically individualistic: allow me to retrace where we have been. In Chapter II, I discussed my personal experiences and observations learning how to play Irish music in the Baltimore Irish music subculture in order to illustrate how interpersonal relationships within a community hierarchy construct, reinforce, and validate normative ways of playing dance music and varying melody.

In Chapter III, I proposed the idea that past cultural contexts caused by historical events may play a part in informing how the boundaries of acceptable practice are articulated and enacted. These boundaries—derived through unspoken consensus—are regulative, and largely determine what is done and what is not done when an instrumentalist varies a melody.

In Chapter V, I examined the gamut of variation types that I have observed in fifty recorded performances from 1904 to 2007. I examined this sample and derived a taxonomy of variation types in order to illustrate how the results of music-making behavior could be understood categorically as a system of variables that in part make up the idiom of Irish traditional instrumental dance music. These variables, distilled from observation, act as guidelines that serve as an outlet for creativity within an idiom as well as a means by which to appraise that creativity as acceptable and interesting.

With the historical, social, and analytical avenues of our discourse secured, we shall, in this chapter, grapple with melodic variation as a human behavior as well as with the psycho-cognitive processes potentially associated with that behavior. Among these cognitive processes is aural memory, which will take a central role in this discussion. An explanation of aural memory will elucidate how we appraise innovation, creativity, and change in music because what we remember serves as our frame for reality.

Having funneled this discourse from the general to the specific, the question now at hand is this: what functions and physical structures of the human brain enable Irish musicians to vary melodies? Since performance in an oral tradition can involve the memorization and recall of a considerable amount of information in the absence of a notated memory aid, we will consider what human memory allows for—and how memory allows for it—in performance.

Our discussion will deal with two kinds of research: the anatomical and the theoretical. I will state up front that I am not an expert in the field of neurophysiology and other disciplines relating to brain function, cognition, anatomy, and organic chemistry. I am wholly reliant on original and secondary research of specialists in this field.

In the first instance, I will give an overview of the kind of brain anatomy that is unique to musicians who have been playing since childhood. The anatomy of proficient musicians who began learning early in life is considerably different from that of non-musicians in several important ways. Musicians are exposed to repeated stimuli (music). The musician's brain, in order to acclimate and more efficiently process these repeated stimuli, responds with neural plasticity. Neural plasticity, as I will explain later in greater detail, is the physical alteration of one's brain anatomy to accommodate repeated musical

stimuli. These anatomical nuances suggest that a musician's brain can process familiar genres of music with greater economy than a non-musician's brain. Hence, the musician can—while playing—respond more quickly to what he is hearing without interrupting the rhythmic flow of the music that he is playing. The musician's brain is such that he can hear something and respond with a variation within a narrow window of time.

The second kind of research that I will discuss deals with theories about memory. There are different kinds of memory and different kinds of processing. Modern neurology has not yet been able to firmly assign these processes to particular anatomical structures, if such physical analogs even exist. While scientists have developed theories about which parts of the brain relate to different kinds of memory, there is still much research to be conducted in the field of psychophysics.

In short, neurologists do not yet have enough information to thoroughly explain anatomically how someone sees a glass of water, wills his arm to move, grasps the glass, lifts the glass to his mouth, drinks, swallows, and then replaces the glass. Because these kinds actions are only partially understood, an exhaustive explanation of a behavior like playing a musical instrument is still daunting. While I can offer a partial explanation about how the brain processes music and how a musician physically plays an instrument, keep in mind that much research has yet to be conducted.

I will, however, work with current theories about memory to suggest how variation might work in the mind of a musician. I suggest that tunes exist as schemas in the experienced musician's mind.²⁴⁹ I also posit that variations are categorical, meaning that each variation is of a particular kind. My hypothesis is that there are separate

²⁴⁹ Because the faculties of processing and playing of music are diffused throughout the brain, it is unlikely that there is a single physical location or correspondence for a tune in a musician's brain anatomy.

variation schemas in the mind just as there are independent tune schemas. When the player, by an act of will, chooses to vary a tune upon successive repetitions, these tune schemas and variation schemas interact in the mind.

6.2. Defining Sameness: Criteria for Establishing Tune Identity

Traditional musicians often cue a tune with a title. A musician will say on stage, “I am now going to play a reel called Rakish Paddy,” in an attempt to prepare the audience for the series of pitches that the performer associates with that title. There are some tune titles whose associated pitch content is highly contested, while there are other tune titles whose content is not. For example, a reel in F, sometimes called “The Cruel Father,” has also been referred to as “Cul Fada,” “The Culfada,” “Culfadda,” “Culfodda,” “The Culfodda,” “The Descending,” “Far Back,” “The Kilfada,” “The Kilfadda,” “The Kilfodda,” “Killfadda,” “Larry Og,” “Walsh’s Fancy,” and “Larry Redican’s.”²⁵⁰

Likewise, the title “Larry Redican’s” refers to at least three different sequences of notes: one is a reel, one is a jig, and one is a hornpipe (all of them different dance genres).

Musicians may even have disagreements over the proper title that ought to be assigned to a series of pitches. Such disagreements are perhaps a result of the assumption that there is enough melodic content common to two tunes that they ought to have the same title.

Conversely, some tune titles refer only to one set of pitches. The slip jig “Flying to the Fleadh,” whose composer is said to be Belfast uilleann piper Patrick Davey,²⁵¹ is one such title that (so far) seems only to refer to a single series of pitches rather than multiple sets of different pitches.

²⁵⁰ The Session, <http://www.thesession.org/tunes/display/1523> (accessed April 1, 2011).

²⁵¹ The Session, <http://www.thesession.org/tunes/display/4370> (accessed April 1, 2011).

The idea is that musicians sometimes assume that all other musicians carry in mind the same melodic and rhythmic criteria linked to a tune title. This can be problematic when trying to compile liner notes for a recording or when attempting to organize a set list for a live performance. When two musicians associate different melodic sequences with the same title, confusion and social friction may occur.

While it is often the case that many musicians do indeed ascribe the same pitch content to the same title (otherwise, titling tunes would be virtually pointless), the same title may cue considerably different pitch sequences depending on which musician is asked. In order to understand the cognitive processes that facilitate melodic variation, we will need to first consider what melodic criteria a musician might invoke to both distinguish between two different tunes or to identify two musical performances as the same tune.

In Chapter III, I discussed the idea of an Imaginary Museum of Irish Traditional Music, a conceptual location figuratively built to metaphorically house reified tune paradigms. Because of these conceptual tune paradigms, some musicians express the idea that there is a “right” way and “wrong” way to play a tune, like the flute-bearing official in Chapter III. This musician seemed to think that a tune could manifest in more or less correct forms. When I say “correct form,” I mean that from the musician’s perspective, the tune sounded like what he expected—a familiar tune that he had heard and remembered from repeated listenings to the recordings of Michael Coleman playing that same tune.

Such perspectives are both a result of cultural conditioning and a function of differing views on the importance of traditionality and authenticity. Having already

considered the cultural import of such matters in Chapter III, we need to address what the word “tune” might mean in psycho-cognitive terms. Conflicting notions of tune identity are linked directly to conceptual fixtures in the memory, fixtures that vary—sometimes considerably—from musician to musician.

Irish music scholar and musician Richard Henebry (1863-1916) recalls an instance in which he heard a musician varying a particular melody. Having observed many such instances of instrumental variation, Henebry explains to the reader that a master musician is one who can manipulate a melody in a tasteful way and who is able to quickly assimilate new variations into a previously memorized version of the tune.

In fact, this...[melodic]...changing constitutes a main ornament and beauty of Irish [music]. The same rule was observed in playing dance music, for all the good players introduced similar changes every time the tune came round, and the musician who could not play in that style was not regarded as a master...it may be useful to explain that whenever a musician heard a note or an ascent passage in a tune that he considered an improvement, he straightaway incorporated it in his own version. I particularly remember, in my own case, as a boy, how...I used to listen...to...tramp pipers and fiddlers...especially if their style was good...in order to assimilate for myself such changes of version or interpretation as I considered suitable. And I never knew an Irish musician who did not do the same.²⁵²

In this quote, Henebry is describing how he would poach attractive variations from pipers and fiddlers in order to reproduce the variations himself when he played the tune. The significance of this quote is that Henebry was able to recognize a pitch sequence despite alterations. Why did Henebry conclude that he was hearing a tune that he already knew rather than assume that the performance he heard was a completely

²⁵² Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music*, 190.

different tune? How was Henebry able to recognize the tune despite the variations? Why did Henebry hear order instead of chaos?

While these intriguing questions will be addressed further in this chapter, Henebry's asked following questions as a result of his own observations: "Why does a tune, or any of its parts, assume one form more than another?...What predetermines the order, position, and quality of accent, and with it the external mould of phrases?"²⁵³

While the idea that a tune "assumes one form more than another" implies the kind of Platonist approach to tune reification discussed in Chapter III, Henebry's final question invites an examination of the kind of mental faculties that are activated when a listener hears music and when a musician plays. These are the mental faculties that enable listeners to perceive coherence in a musical performance. Our ability to distinguish coherence is largely based on our ability to distinguish between sameness and difference. When Henebry asks about different manifestations of the same tune, he is also implicitly asking: what collection of pitches qualifies as *the tune*? I will return to Richard Henebry's quote and questions to show how anatomy and mental processing might correlate to Henebry's thoughts.

To understand variation, a word which by implication requires some fixed point of reference, we need to understand what fixed points the mind could possibly be referencing if a musician is to vary anything at all, or if a listener is to infer variation from a sequence of notes. We need to understand how the brain assesses *sameness*.

Stephen McAdams and Daniel Matzkin, researchers of music perception, cognition, and psychology, propose three types of similarity that suggest how the mind

²⁵³ Ibid., 18.

interprets sameness.²⁵⁴ The first category is an abstraction that tracks the probability of the occurrence of certain musical events: we could call this expectation, a function of memory that is cultivated through enculturation, that is, repeated exposure to a particular kind of music.²⁵⁵

The second category that McAdams and Matzkin propose to explain how the mind interprets sameness is called *figural similarity*. Figural similarity catalogs recurring patterns of attributes that the ear perceives. These patterned events serve as landmarks in a tune. These landmarks enable a listener to perceive sameness and coherence in successive repetitions of a single tune despite melodic variations and other wrinkles in execution. These patterned events could range from the regular occurrence of a certain pitch and dynamic emphasis to the recurrence of certain kinds of ornamentation, silences, or extremes in melodic contour.

The third kind of similarity involves structural invariants, which are the underlying harmonic and metric structures that the performer implies through the act of playing. These harmonic and metric structures tell the listener that he is still hearing the same tune despite the fact that a performer may be deploying various types variations such as Ornamentation, Triadic Exchange, or Passing Tones, which I discussed in Chapter V. Were an instrumentalist to deploy a variation type such as Harmonic Substitution—the exchange of pitches that imply a different fundamental than the fundamental implied by previously played notes in the same part of the tune—the

²⁵⁴ Stephen McAdams and Daniel Matzkin, "The Roots of Musical Variation in Perceptual Similarity and Invariance," in *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Music*, ed. Isabelle Peretz and Robert Zatorre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 85-86.

²⁵⁵ Research has shown that expectations of musical sequences are largely conditioned by a listener's cultural background. See J. C. Carlsen, P. L. Divenyi, and J. A. Taylor, "A Preliminary Study of Perceptual Expectancy in Melodic Configurations," *Council for Research in Music Education Bulletin* 22(1970).

unpredicted alteration of set accented tones would disrupt the underlying harmonic structure established in the first play-through of a tune and might temporarily (or permanently) confuse the tune's identity for the listener.

The observations and questions that Henebry offered in 1928 expose a commonly held assumption that all Irish musicians carry in the mind the same (or similar) landmarks—the same melodic and rhythmic points of reference—associated with a particular tune title. What I will suggest in the following discussion is that the mental landmarks associated with a particular tune can and do vary from musician to musician. The import of this realization is that we may reorient Henebry's assumptions. Instead of debating the artfulness, authenticity, or correctness of tune-form manifestations, we can begin to postulate about certain aspects of human physiology that facilitate generating patterns in the mind.²⁵⁶ While virtually all Irish musicians are working with the same cognitive equipment and processes, the contents to which those processes are applied in the brain can vary widely between musicians.

6.3. Caveats and Contingencies: Applying Cognitive Research to Irish Musicians

In order to understand how traditional musicians are able to vary melody, I have researched theories and studies concerning aural memory. While it might seem self-evident that producing variations is “just what performers do,” I would like to draw attention to the fact that melodic manipulations are the byproduct of many more factors that extend beyond conscious choosing. What I have come to understand as a more refined question is this: what mental, psychoacoustic, and physiological processes

²⁵⁶ Cowdery, *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*, 44.

facilitate the conceptualized and implemented alteration of pitches in a sequence? In other words, why is it that there are variations instead of no variations?

To begin to answer these questions, I have read the published work of research scientists, neurophysiologists, and psychologists who have conducted experiments on living musicians in order to better understand the mechanisms of aural memory, muscle memory, and physiology as these functions relate to musical performance. Some of these studies—and the theories resulting from them—often involved the observation and testing of non-human and non-mammalian animal subjects. Having conducted experiments on non-human organisms, analysts then offered hypotheses about the implications that certain findings might possibly have for human beings.²⁵⁷ What this means is that the import of this research and its exact relationship to human anatomy is at times speculative in nature: the implications for human cognition have yet to be appraised using human subjects. While there is much speculation in this field of study, I think that until proven otherwise, a theory of sorts may be cautiously extended to Irish traditional musicians so that we may begin to start understanding how mental processes enable variation to occur.

Another caveat to consider is that the experiments whose data have yielded the theories that I will discuss did not involve Irish traditional musicians specifically. I have not found any such studies that have been designed for and carried out on Irish musicians. Perhaps in the future, such studies will be conducted so that more conclusive and

²⁵⁷ For example, researchers assumed that simpler organisms have simpler brains, thereby allowing for an easier exclusion and testing of variables. The sea hare, *Aplysia californica*, with roughly 20,000 nerve cells—compared to a mammal’s one hundred billion—which are clustered in 2,000-cell ganglion and which can be viewed without a microscope, made it a better candidate for early memory testing than a mammal with a more complex brain. Larry R. and Kandel Squire, Eric R., *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, Scientific American Library Series, (New York: Scientific American Library: Distributed by W. H. Freeman and Co., 1999), 17.

nuanced evidence may be gathered to understand what exactly the Irish musician's brain does when a tune is varied. My hope is that as neurologists uncover more details about the function of human anatomy, I might at some point be able to conduct research jointly with neurologists to see if there is a functioning anatomical correlation between playing a tune's pitch content the same way over successive repetitions and varying a tune's pitch content over successive repetitions. If there is such a correlation, then a music-oriented study such as this could offer insight about how the mind deals with variables and how it responds to complex self-produced stimuli.

While the research relating specifically to Irish musicians remains to be conducted, the human subjects that have been tested and studied have been enculturated and trained in jazz and classical idioms for the most part. While it seems reasonable that there would be some overlap into Irish music—since Irish musicians are probably born with the same mental equipment as classical and jazz musicians—I am by no means convinced that this mental equipment is used in exactly the same way across all musical traditions. Playing a Mozart violin concerto from a score or improvising on a series of chord progressions are music-making activities that are conceptually different from playing and varying Irish traditional dance music from memory.

Although we must entertain the possibility that the mental equipment of musicians might not be utilized invariably between idioms, my speculation is contingent on the possibility that there is enough similarity in cognitive usage to use research conducted on non-Irish musicians to understand in part what might be happening in the mind of an Irish musician. With these contingencies in mind, let us consider the nuances of anatomical function in musicians' brains and memory theories relating thereto.

6.4. Neural Plasticity and Anatomical Nuances in Musicians

Many respected virtuoso Irish musicians have two important kinds experiences in common: they were exposed to Irish music at an early age and began playing Irish music at an early age. Childhood enculturation (observation and participation), especially during the years when the brain is still developing, prompts the brain to grow in a specific way to accommodate certain kinds of stimuli so that these stimuli can be processed more efficiently and in a short period of time. Processing new stimuli requires more energy because the body does not yet have a mechanism in place that is equipped to deal with those new stimuli.

It helps to think of the learning process through the metaphor of a filing system, in which the brain is constantly filing information. It takes less energy and thought to file paperwork when there is already an “Irish music” filing system in place, with labeled manila file folders. It takes more energy to process music if a new system has to be simultaneously created to handle that new information, the equivalent of going to the store, buying the cabinets and folders, transporting them to the office, unpacking them, labeling them, and *then* filing the new information.

Scientists who research music cognition have found anatomical differences between musicians’ and non-musicians’ brains. Several research studies suggest that parts of the frontal cortex are involved in the simultaneous integration of disparate sensory modalities and brain regions.²⁵⁸ These observations allow for the likelihood that

²⁵⁸ See F. Bremmer, A. Schlack, N. Jon Shah et al, "Polymodal Motion Processing in Posterior Parietal and Premotor Cortex: A Human Fmri Study Strongly Implies Equivalencies between Humans and Monkeys," *Neuron* 29(2001); E Kohler, Keysers, C, Umiltà MA, Fogassi, L, Gallese, V, and Rizzolatti, G, "Hearing Sounds, Understanding Actions: Action Representation in Mirror Neurons," *Science* 297(2002); C Keysers,

the frontal cortex plays a critical role in developing associations across modalities, including action-sound mappings.²⁵⁹ The reason that these differences exist between musicians' and non-musicians' brains is that musicians' have been using the same filing system to process, hold, and retrieve the same kinds of papers that have been coming to the office for years. The non-musician will not have this same kind of extensive filing system (anatomically speaking) for music, but may have other types of filing systems depending on skills and specialization specific to that individual. Mathematicians will have unique kinds of filing systems just as seamstresses will.

These types of anatomical anomalies are the result of what is generally termed *neural plasticity*. Neural plasticity is a quality of the brain's tissue that allows its neurons to organize and re-organize in response to repeated sensory stimuli.²⁶⁰ Neural plasticity allows for increased efficiency of cognitive processes in musicians' brains and means that connections between neurons are strengthened or weakened as a consequence of new experiences.

There are certain tunes that an Irish musician may hear and learn as early as age six that he may continue to hear and play until age sixty. Decades of processing and reproducing similar kinds of stimuli change the brain's anatomy so that the figurative

Kohler, E, Umitilà, MA, Nanetti, L, Fogassi, L, and Gallese, V, "Audiovisual Mirror Neurons and Action Recognition," *Experimental Brain Research* 153(2003).

²⁵⁹ Gottfried Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," in *Music, Motor Control and the Brain*, ed. Mario Wiesendanger Eckart Altenmüller, and Jürg Kesselring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 148. See Marc Bangert and Eckart Altenmüller, "Mapping Perception to Action in Piano Practice: A Longitudinal Dc-Eeg Study," *BMC Neuroscience* 4, no. 26 (2003).

²⁶⁰ It is estimated that the mammalian brain is comprised of around 10^{11} —one hundred billion—nerve cells. This makes the study of memory and the isolation of variables a daunting task. Each of these one hundred billion nerve cells makes around 1,000 connections—called synapses—to other neurons, resulting in roughly 10^4 synaptic connections in the human brain. Research has demonstrated that the connection between established between two neurons “is an elementary unit of memory storage.” Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 16-25.

storage and retrieval (or reconstruction) of that tune gets faster over time. There is an increase in a musician's efficiency, precision, and capacity when playing music.

What is potentially happening at the anatomical micro-structural level that facilitates this increased efficiency is an increase in the number of glial cells and synapses, density of capillaries in the cerebellum and primary motor cortex, and the appearance of new brain cells in the hippocampus.²⁶¹ Capillaries are the thinnest of the body's blood vessels and transport various organic molecules to and from every region of the human body. Because capillaries are only one cell thick, they can grow quickly and are ideally suited for osmotically transferring oxygen to and removing carbon dioxide and other wastes from cells in need. Parts of the brain that are stimulated require more oxygen and waste deportation. The volume of oxygen increases for brief periods of time while that part of the body is stimulated. What the body infers from chronic stimulus over a long period of time is that the stimulated part of the body will need a permanent increase in oxygen supply and efficient means of waste expulsion. Capillaries grow in response to repeated stimuli to furnish a nutrient-transport system that enable increased and sustained levels of activity in a particular region of the body. In the instance of musicians, parts of

²⁶¹ Gottfried Schlaug, "Music, Musicians, and Brain Plasticity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, ed. Ian Cross Susan Hallam, and Michael Thaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 197. Several studies show that brain anatomy changes in adult rats that have been exposed to long-term learning of involved motor skills over a period of months. See J.E. Black, K.R. Isaacs, B.J. Anderson, A.A. Alcantra, and W.T. Greenough, "Learning Causes Synaptogenesis Whereas Motor Activity Causes Angiogenesis in Cerebellar Cortex of Adult Rats," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 87(1990); K.R. Isaacs, B.J. Anderson, A.A. Alcantra, J.E. Black, and W.T. Greenough, "Exercise and the Brain: Angiogenesis in the Adult Rat Cerebellum after Vigorous Physical Activity and Motor Skill Learning," *Journal of Cerebral Blood Flow & Metabolism* 12(1992); B.J. Anderson, S. Li, A. Alcantra, K.R. Isaacs, J.E. Black, and W.T. Greenough, "Glial Hypertrophy Is Associated with Synaptogenesis Following Motor-Skill Learning, but Not with Angiogenesis Exercise," *Glia* 11(1994); J.A. Kleim, E. Lussnig, E.R. Schwarz, T.A. Comery, and W.T. Greenough, "Synaptogenesis and Fos Expression in the Motor Cortex of the Adult Rat after Complex Motor Skill Acquisition," *Journal of Neuroscience* 16(1996); G. Kempermann, H.G. Kuhn, F.H. Gage, "More Hippocampal Neurons in Adult Mice Living in an Enriched Environment," *Nature* 386(1997); H. B.R. Christie Van Praag, T.J. Sejnowski, and F.H. Gage, "Running Enhances Neurogenesis, Learning, and Long-Term Potentiation in Mice," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA* 96(1999).

the brain in need of more capillaries is the cerebellum, which regulates motor control, the primary motor cortex, which is involved in the planning and execution of movements, and the hippocampus, which is involved in spatial navigation.

Increased capillary density occurs as a result of repeated stimuli over a long period of time—it does not happen in a day. The body is slow to grow more capillaries because doing so requires a great deal of energy, energy that could be allocated elsewhere. When an athlete grows muscle mass in areas of the body that are exercised frequently, blood vessels extend to bring oxygen to that new muscle mass. Conversely, blood flow will abate in areas of the body that are stimulated rarely or irregularly.

This increase of tissue interrelatedness and capillary density in the brains of musicians is thought to be a result of practicing a musical instrument over an extended period of time. Such practice has also been linked to an increased density of gray and white matter in the brains of musicians.²⁶² The brains in the heads of musicians who practice for many hours exhibit anatomical changes in the gray matter of the motor areas.²⁶³

There is also evidence that musicians can distinguish between spatial and aural relationships more quickly than non-musicians. In musicians, neural plasticity is manifested in structural differences that are measurable in the primary sensorimotor

²⁶² Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," 143.

²⁶³ Lutz Jäncke, "The Motor Representation in Pianists and String Players," *ibid.*, 160-61. Jäncke notes also that it may be premature to associate these changes with practice regimen, since it is also possible that the potential for gray matter development is some kind of genetic predisposition that "compels" certain individuals to practice more. Jäncke means that we do not yet know for sure the nature of the relationship between playing music and increased white and gray matter density if, in fact, there is a causal correlation. While such correlations have yet to be confirmed with respect to human beings, the literature on animal brain anatomy strongly suggests that rigorous environmental demands are linked to regional growth and structural adaptation in cerebral gray matter. See Brenda J. Anderson, Eckburg, Paul B., and Relucio, Karen I., "Alterations in the Thickness of Motor Cortical Subregions after Motor-Skill Learning and Exercise," *Learning Memory* 9(2002).

cortex. The primary sensorimotor cortex facilitates fine motor skill in the hands (preparation, execution, and control of finger movements) and the primary auditory cortex that serves auditory discrimination skills.²⁶⁴ These auditory skills include fine spectral and temporal discrimination and pitch categorization.²⁶⁵

Neurologist Gottfried Schlaug has conducted studies that demonstrate that musicians who began studying music before the age of seven have an enlarged anterior corpus callosum. The corpus callosum the strip of the brain tissue that is situated between the hemispheres and is the section of brain that enables the right and left hemispheres communicate with each other.

The size of the corpus callosum is proportional to the amount and density of axons that cross the mid-line.²⁶⁶ It follows then that if a child has an enlarged corpus callosum, that section of brain is enlarged (i.e., it is denser) because more axons cross the mid-line, thus allowing for more efficient communication between hemispheres.²⁶⁷ These results suggest that instrumentalists who started playing earlier in life have superior interhemispheric communication between anteriorly located motor areas including the pre-motor and primary motor areas.²⁶⁸ Other structural adaptations are measurable in the inferior frontal gyrus, a section of the frontal parietal lobe responsible for making sudden decisions. Anatomical changes to the inferior frontal gyrus suggest that neural plasticity

²⁶⁴ Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," 142.

²⁶⁵ Schlaug, "Music, Musicians, and Brain Plasticity," 197.

²⁶⁶ Depending on an axon's function, it can range from 0.1 millimeters in length to as long as one meter. Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 29.

²⁶⁷ Nineteenth-century biologists arrived at the conclusion that mature brain cells cease to divide for the most part. Therefore, learning new information throughout one's life does not tend to generate new brain cells. The Spanish neuroanatomist Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) suggested that learning, rather than causing cells to divide in the brain, strengthens connections between existing cells. *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁶⁸ Jäncke, "The Motor Representation in Pianists and String Players," 158.

is possible in areas of the brain that are involved in “primary musical functions or serve as multimodal integration regions for musical skills.”²⁶⁹

These anatomical nuances are specific to musicians and may have something to do with one’s ability play an instrument and also play melodic variations within an idiom like Irish traditional music. Increased interhemispheric communication and the ability to make fine aural and spatial distinctions allow musicians to vary music while playing at a relatively fast tempo and without having to plan many minutes or hours in advance. Physical maneuvers (like playing an instrument or varying a melody) that might take a regular individual weeks, months, or years to prepare, take the seasoned musician only a few seconds to consider and execute precisely in live performance. With respect to mental equipment and enculturation, there is still much research to be done on the topic of how enculturation—behaviors learned, remembered, and applied over time—correlates to the structure and chemistry of a musician’s brain.

These anatomical nuances could explain how musicians can make decisions and execute those decisions with greater speed and efficiency in conscious and subconscious mental processing than non-musicians. The implications of neural plasticity is that a musician’s brain is nuanced in such a way that allows a musician to vary melodies that are played at a very fast tempo, something that non-musicians are unable to do.

Having briefly addressed a few anatomical aspects of musical research, let us now consider theories of aural memory that will further elucidate how it is that variations can occur at all.

²⁶⁹ Gottfried Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," *ibid.*, 142.

6.5. An Overview of Aural Memory: The Workings of Nuanced Equipment

Since melodic variation is a function of human behavior, a discussion of aural memory will give us insight into how music-making behavior occurs in response to known and recalled information. If we reconsider Richard Henebry's experience with variation in light of the workings of his memory, we will see that it is aural memory that allowed Henebry to 1) identify the tune that he heard; 2) identify variations in the performance(s) that he heard; 3) appraise the variations as worthy of repetition; and 4) recall the event for publication in his book. Without aural memory, there would be no way to distinguish the coherent from the chaotic, the orderly from the random, or the novel from the clichéd. To demonstrate the import of what aural memory means for how listeners and performers experience music, I will discuss theories that have been proposed to explain this cognitive indexing system.

Memories, rather than being localized in a single physical region in the brain, are dispersed throughout.²⁷⁰ This means that memories are retained and reconstituted by many different areas of the brain, each of which performs a unique function. The great majority of the brain's activities—including the organ's capacity to reconstruct memories—are not part of what brain scientists call *awareness*.²⁷¹ What this means for our current discussion is that both conscious effort and unconscious automation are involved when a musician plays a tune. The musician's behavior that produces "the tune"

²⁷⁰ While working at Harvard University in the 1920s, Karl Lashley (1890-1958) conducted experiments on rats which involved training the animals to run a simple maze, removing different sections of the cortex, and then allowing the animals to try the maze several days later. Lashley's experiments led him to believe that memories required for learning are not localized to any single region of the brain, but are rather dispersed throughout different areas of tissue. See Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 8-9.

²⁷¹ Bob Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 50.

is, in reality, a complex assembly of different kinds of mental functions that are distributed throughout the nervous system.

While Irish musicians make conscious choices about the amplitude, frequency, and duration of the pitches that they produce on an instrument, the means of executing these choices are largely the province of musculature that requires little—if any—conscious instruction. For example, if a flute player wants to play one note louder than another, she does not think to herself, “In order to make that G louder than the preceding F#, my lungs need to increase the airflow pressure by 7 psi.” She probably does not—in most cases—even think consciously to herself “I need to blow harder when I finger G than when I fingered F#.” The results are imagined and the body, having been trained to produce certain results, responds by behaving in a way that causes an increase of amplitude between respective pitches. These results are achieved by unconscious processes, especially if the musician has been playing for a long time. Let us now consider a few general types of memory.

Physiologically, memory is the ability of neurons in the brain to adjust the number and strength of connections to each other over time. In theories of memory, the kinds of neurons whose connections are strengthened over time are those whose activities are thought to be associated with the long-term memory. Aural memory is a specific kind of memory that can be understood generally as three interrelated processes: echoic, short-term memory, and long-term memory. While I will explain each kind of memory in turn, keep in mind that theories of memory work on the assumption that all three processes occur simultaneously, as if in they are engaged in cognitive dialogue with one another. In

other words, one type of memory does not shut off when the other types activate: they do not take turns but act synchronously.

The initial stages of aural memory involve the echoic memory and early processing, a series of events in which the inner ear converts sounds into nerve impulses. A nerve impulse is an electrical current that moves along axons—facilitated by fluctuating levels of potassium and sodium—that link the neurons of the brain.²⁷²

This influx of sonic data lasts for less than a second in the echoic memory, during which time the composite attributes of a sound, such as overtone structure, pitch, and frequency, are separated and collated in a process called feature extraction.²⁷³ Within the ear's processing of melody, sounds are grouped according to contour, timing, and intensity.²⁷⁴

During feature extraction, features (that is, discrete components) of a sound are bound together in groups. The grouping criteria of feature extraction are contingent on the similarity and proximity of pitches as they are compared to similar experiences stored in the long-term memory. This means that if too much time elapses between two sound events, the brain will not interpret those events as related to one another.

For example, if you sang the melody of “Happy Birthday” to someone, did not tell them the melody you were singing, and allowed five or more seconds to elapse between pitches, the listener would probably not be able to identify the pitches as the melody to “Happy Birthday” because of the time lapse.

²⁷² The rate at which electrical signals travel along axons ranges from 1 to 100 meters per second. The amplitude of such a signal ranges from 100 to 120 millivolts with a duration at any single part of the axon from 1 to 10 milliseconds. Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 31.

²⁷³ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 4.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

The reason that the listener would not be able to determine that you were singing the melody to “Happy Birthday” would likely be due to the fact that echoic memory can only hold three to five seconds of information. It is less likely that the brain will consider two sounds to be related to one another if an interval of five or more seconds separates them. If two consecutive sounds occur outside of a particular timeframe, then the echoic memory cannot establish a relationship between them. If the echoic memory cannot establish a meaningful link between two sounds, then the sounds will not be compared to similar patterns in the long-term memory. For example, if an instrumentalist played a dance tune as a slow air, a listener would probably not be able to identify the slow air as a dance tune played slowly because of the unusually long time lapse between pitches.

The long-term memory comparison that establishes the criteria for feature extraction is a process called perceptual categorization. Long-term memories—against which the new data are compared—can be understood as conceptual categories. That is, a long-term memory is not laden with the details of every sensory experience, but with the representative impression left by sensory experiences. Sound comes in, is dissected, and similar sound elements are compiled and compared to what is already familiar to the unconscious long-term memory. This process renders as coherent for the listener a series of sounds that the ears perceive.

Establishing a large storehouse²⁷⁵ of sensory experiences is not a quick process, however. It can take several months for the brain to fashion the categories of long-term memory into points of comparison for incoming sensory information. The formation of

²⁷⁵ Keep in mind that the “storehouse” is not filled with “exact records of a myriad of original events (Mandler 1984).” Our memories of specific events are reconstructions that draw on a knowledge base cultivated from experience types. Roger Chaffin, Logan, Topher R., and Begosh, Kristen T., “Performing from Memory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, ed. Ian Cross Susan Hallam, and Michael Thaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

long-term memories is probably the result of chronic stimulation, related to the strengthening of connections between neurons that are active at the same time.²⁷⁶

Repeatedly experiencing the same phenomenon over a period of time causes synaptic growth to occur between neurons that were formerly unconnected: this is a critical part of the memory process.²⁷⁷ What I have just described are the cognitive processes when we learn.

This is as much to say that learning melodic variations for one tune as a kind of case study is different from learning the nature of a melodic variation as an abstract category. It is one thing to advise a student to play D instead of A in one part of a particular tune; it is another thing to suggest playing other chord tones on downbeat pitches as a means of varying *any* tune.

Long-term memories, which operate exclusively at the subconscious level, serve to contextualize new sounds coming in and, consequently, affect the listener's expectations. When listening to music, we will expect what is already part of our storehouse of the familiar that has been built up over time through life experience: we cannot expect what we have never experienced. As long-term memories are brought into consciousness, they cross a divide into short-term memory where, if not displaced by new information, can be sustained for three to five seconds.²⁷⁸ Perpetuating sound in the short-term memory requires conscious rehearsal: the same sounds must either hit the ear repeatedly or be rehearsed by the mind's ear.

²⁷⁶ Joaquin M. Fuster, *Memory in the Cerebral Cortex: An Empirical Approach to Neural Networks in the Human and Nonhuman Primate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 25.

²⁷⁷ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 79.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

For example, if a musician is learning a new tune, he must consciously remind himself of the pitch sequence until it is related to long-term memory. Without this active rehearsal in the short-term memory, he will forget that particular section of the tune until some outside source reminds him of what it is.

When the listener rehearses a sound in this way, or when an incoming sound is “striking or novel,” the composite elements of that sound are ferried back to the long-term memory to modify similar memories that are already logged.²⁷⁹ As a result, what a musician is already familiar with largely informs what he hears: “we see and hear what we look *for* more than what we look *at*.”²⁸⁰ The brain, when processing music, attempts to relate a new aural experience to what is already familiar. The brain probably undergoes this comparative association because it is more efficient to use pre-established categories than to create and develop new categories.

Short-term memory differs from echoic memory in that, while the content of echoic memory receives incoming raw data to be analyzed, short-term memory deals in activated memories already extant and categorized in the long-term memory.²⁸¹ Because short-term memory acts as the integrating space for pre-existing experiences and new experiences, brain scientists would say that short-term memory serves as the musician’s interface with reality. Short-term memory, in essence, is temporary by nature. As a result, it does not cause the kind of irrevocable chemical and anatomical inter-neuron

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 11. Emphasis original.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 47.

connections that long-term memory is thought to cause: short-term memory merely shuttles information between sensory organs and long-term memory.²⁸²

I am taking the time to explain (and oversimplify) a complex series of processes that comprise aural memory in order to hypothesize about the implications of how listening to live and recorded music might affect the playing of melodic variations. Furthermore, the categories of echoic memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory are arbitrary. This tripartite explanation is only one of many schemes that can be used to explain how memory processes are divided.

Past generations of musicians, because of the contexts in which they played, have perpetuated a performance practice of Irish dance music that involves considerable repetition; tunes are short sixteen-measure sequences of notes that are often repeated multiple times to accommodate the duration of a particular dance. Because these tunes are short and undergo many repetitions, traditional musicians will often vary the melody in each successive repetition. The workings of the mental/aural processes just described serve as one point of departure for understanding how variations can occur.

A tune begins to enter the ear and echoic memory. Aspects of the sound undergo perceptual categorization. As this happens, memories of similar events are accessed in long-term memory and shuttled to the short-term memory whereby a new tune category may be created in the long-term memory or an old tune category may be adjusted in the long-term memory.

Because the creation of long-term memories likely requires the brain to physically change to accommodate repeated events, it takes years for long-term categories to form. After long-term exposure to Irish traditional music through listening and practice, the

²⁸² Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 131.

various motives, note groupings, ornamentation, and stock phrases common to the idiom become cemented in the long-term memory by virtue of first—and repeatedly—entering the echoic process. Over time, blocks of memory coalesce from individual notes to entire tunes and even sets of tunes.

As an Irish musician plays, his brain engages in this dialogic process through echoic, short-term, and long-term memory that I have just described. Since a musician has established a large storehouse of tunes and practices through years of playing and listening, the sounds entering an experienced musician's ear can be dissected, bound, and cross-checked with that vast storehouse through processes that are speedier and more efficient than those of a novice. These inferences are partially drawn from the fact that musicians execute music-related finger motions with greater motor control economy than amateur musicians.²⁸³ These processes not only facilitate the varying of melody, but also enable seasoned practitioners to learn tunes more quickly and remember them more easily.

After decades of playing, the limited number of melodic fragments that comprise Irish traditional music are already stuck in the long-term memory. Learning a new tune only requires the reorganization of these melodic fragments. If I am applying theories of aural memory correctly to Irish traditional music, then “experience” is another way to say “anatomical adaptation.” Experienced musicians, then, are organisms who, having endured repeated stimuli, are able to make music with greater speed and efficiency than those organisms with less experience.

With this process expedited, a musician may rely less on arduously recalling and memorizing each successive note of a tune and more on a tune's rhythmic and melodic

²⁸³ Jäncke, "The Motor Representation in Pianists and String Players," 164.

attributes—at least to the extent that a tune’s attributes have been established in the long-term memory. As a result, musicians may exchange or substitute sections, ornaments, and melodic formulae consciously or subconsciously. The degree to which such substitutions can occur is contingent on a musician’s experience, individual creativity, and philosophical aesthetics. With an overview of aural memory, let us consider more closely how the memory might facilitate the exchange of tune sections in a performance.

6.6. Implicit Memory: Long-term Memory

This vast storehouse that I have been calling “long-term memory” is where theories of memory would place Henebry’s (and George Petrie’s and Edward Bunting’s, for that matter) Platonist tune form, if such a thing exists. I am not saying that such a fixed idea of a tune does not exist or is not legitimate: some musicians have a very clear idea of what constitutes an acceptable performance of a tune based on their expectations that are conditioned by long-term memory. I am only saying that it would be difficult to prove that a fixed tune idea is universal to all Irish musicians because the contents of each musician’s long-term memory may differ—and differ considerably.

A musician’s ability to associate a sound with an action is essential for the production and comprehension of music.²⁸⁴ It is easier for an instrumentalist to reproduce a sound on his own instrument if he knows physically what to do. In that same vein, it is easier to comprehend a sound when we know how it was produced.

A tune’s relative fixity in the musician’s memory is in part a function of what is called *implicit memory*, a type of long-term memory that is automatic and operates

²⁸⁴ Gottfried Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," *ibid.*, 147-48.

subconsciously. When an Irish musician picks up an instrument to play a tune, she needs to exert very little conscious effort to organize how her musculature is going to make sounds come out of the instrument: these are memories of muscular acts, or what are called *motor memories*.²⁸⁵ Because the musician's implicit memory has no linguistic components, she may be able to hold the instrument and play a tune, but she might not be able to teach another person how to do those activities just as she does them.²⁸⁶ Motor memories are an example of what music psychologists call *associative chaining* in which one physical movement prompts the next.²⁸⁷

To highlight a downbeat pitch while playing a flute, a flute teacher might simply illustrate the desired results through repeated demonstrations. She might even tell the student to blow harder into the flute when playing the G after the F#. She will not instruct a student (except in unusual circumstances) to blow with 7 psi more on G than on F#. While the wind pressure can be numerically calculated for downbeat pitches, this is a measurement that neither the teacher nor the student will really understand insofar as the numerical value is understood to correlate precisely to physical behavior. The word "more" seems to be the most common descriptor used when a teacher explains to a student how to emphasize a particular note while playing Irish dance music.

The disconnect between doing a task and explaining the kind of task-oriented knowledge that is held in implicit memory has to do with the likelihood that the memories used to execute such tasks and the memories attached to language that could

²⁸⁵ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 73.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Chaffin, "Performing from Memory," 355.

explain such tasks are located in different areas of his brain, distinct from implicit memory areas.²⁸⁸ Not only may such types of memories be located in disparate areas of the brain, but the implicit memories used to operate a musical instrument may very well be physically located in close proximity to the muscles themselves that express those memories as movements lower in the nervous system.²⁸⁹ Because a musician's ability to play an instrument has been acquired laboriously over time, these implicit memories may be recalled expediently and without conscious effort. However, it is rather difficult to change or erase the memory of such behaviors: practice makes permanent.

I have been speaking about long-term memory metaphorically, and have been using terms like "contents" and "storehouse," as if the mind is a pencil box and the tunes are like crayons that may be put in or taken out and reshaped at the will of the musician. This is not really the way things are in reality: a tune is not a cluster of cells stuck somewhere in the brain, but rather a special kind of generating pattern. I have spoken metaphorically to elucidate the complex nature of the memory. While metaphors are useful, they are not univocal. In keeping with the metaphor that acts as our theory of memory, let us now consider how long-term memory deals with large and complex pieces of information and how those pieces of information could possibly be assembled in such a way that an Irish dance and variations of that tune result.

²⁸⁸ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 73. See Larry R. Squire, "Declarative and Nondeclarative Memory: Multiple Brain Systems Supporting Learning and Memory," in *Memory Systems*, ed. Koen Lamberts and David Shanks (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 204.

²⁸⁹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 73. See also Fuster, *Memory in the Cerebral Cortex: An Empirical Approach to Neural Networks in the Human and Nonhuman Primate*, 169-73.

6.7. Chunking: The Conceptual Building Blocks of Tunes

As early as 1928, Richard Henebry postulated that the repertoire of Irish traditional music is made up of conceptual building blocks, stating that "...our present gamut has resulted from an agglomeration of the phrases most often in use, and that the breaks...are but the joints by which they are assembled."²⁹⁰ The neurological process that corresponds with Henebry's language of "agglomeration," "breaks," and "joints" is a process that neuroscientists call *chunking*.

Chunking is a process in which the short-term memory rapidly categorizes mental and physical patterns. The size of a chunk is about five to nine elements, an element being defined as "any of the basic elements in a sequence...[consisting]...of more than one of the same item without necessarily increasing the memory load."²⁹¹ If the definition of an element sounds vague in this context, it is because the size of an element is relative to those elements preceding and following another element. In other words, a chunk could be comprised of five to nine numbers, five to nine fruits, five to nine addresses, or five to nine sixteen-measure tunes. The important thing is that a chunk is comprised of five to nine distinct concepts of similar size.

For example, a chunk would *not* be comprised of three fruits and a Shakespeare play or three book titles and a bike route. Fruit names and Shakespeare plays are comprised of critically different amounts of information just as book titles and bike routes are. Furthermore, it is unlikely that fruit names and the contents of a Shakespeare would be naturally associated with each other.

²⁹⁰ Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music*, 19.

²⁹¹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 36.

Because the elements comprising a chunk are often associated with each other, the elements come to form higher-level units. These higher-level units give rise to larger structures in the long-term memory.²⁹² The five to nine elements that constitute a chunk could also be five to nine downbeat pitches in a tune, or five to nine parts of an extremely long Irish dance tune. What is important conceptually about chunking is that it is a way for the short-term memory to compress a considerable amount of information because the elements comprising the chunk are associated in kind, occupy similar amounts of space, and are associated with comparable amounts of detail. The chunk (whatever the elements that make it up) exists in a hierarchical structure in which the details of the elements are relative to less detailed elements of a similar type.

For example, when a student first learns a roll—an ornament in Irish music involving a primary note interrupted by two auxiliary grace notes—the teacher may just demonstrate how to play the roll or she might also explain that the roll is a series of five notes: three principle notes that are interrupted by two other grace notes. Chunking allows for these five consecutive notes to be understood as a single conceptual chunk: an ornament called a roll. When an Irish musician wishes to play a roll, he can simply interpret these five distinct notes as a chunk called “roll,” rather than to have to think through all five notes that comprise that particular ornament in every situation requiring a roll. This chunking process is illustrated in figure 6.7.

²⁹² Ibid., 54. See also Bernard J. Baars, *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 37.

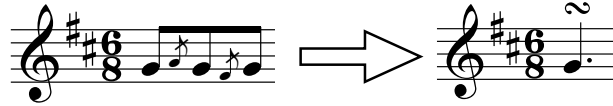


Figure 6.7: Written out roll compared to a visually simplified representation²⁹³

What a discussion of chunking suggests about melodic variation is that a musician is not consciously thinking through all the details of a tune while playing it. He is relying on a system of compressed elements that, for him, defines the essentials of the tune. While the variation may involve the alteration of conceptually essential elements, many of the other elements of a tune that a musician considers essential will remain in tact, despite the variations.

For example, the kinds elements that a musician might keep in tact could include 1) the meter; 2) starts on D; 3) tune descends at its lowest point to G; 4) tune has three parts. These elements that comprise the tune are not scrutinized because they are chunked. With these basic chunks under control, the musician can dedicate more free thought to potential melodic variations. Because the time between when these variations are imagined and then implemented might be a second or less, the musician's mind will need space unencumbered by the conscious processing of the basic elements of the tune.

6.8. Categorization

Categorization is another grouping mechanism in the memory. This process enables the mind to group features of different musical experiences, thus allowing a musician to distinguish one musical event from another and to differentiate qualities of

²⁹³ The short-term memory's chunking process enables the five-element roll on the left to be conceptually condensed as the one-figure symbol on the right. After a while, a musician does not need all the grace notes of a roll written out, but can make due simply with one symbol with a turn symbol above it.

sound. Such grouping processes allow a musician to perceive musical events as equivalencies and allow him to remember and associate similar events.²⁹⁴

Physiologically, categorization potentially enables different neural maps throughout the brain to become linked and interactive.²⁹⁵

Two types of categorization are *perceptual categorization* and *conceptual categorization*. Perceptual categorization is the process by which the nervous system automatically divides the world into discrete things.²⁹⁶ Conceptual categorization facilitates the comparison and linkage of memories of musical events that a musician has experienced at different times.²⁹⁷

What is relevant about categorization for variation is that the mind is better at distinguishing differences *between* discrete categories than distinguishing differences *within* discrete categories. It is easier to remember the names of three fruits than to remember descriptions of three fruits. Of course, if you were to recite the names of three fruits, you could then give physical descriptions of each fruit. But, it is easier to compress (or chunk) the details and then recall them later.

The Irish musician's memory is better able to distinguish between different tunes as distinct conceptual categories than it is able to distinguish between the details of two different performances of the same tune. Hence, the concept of the "tune" in the long-term memory may be fixed in one sense while remaining flexible in another sense.

²⁹⁴ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 81.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 82.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 84.

In variation, melodic phrases and fragments may be exchanged between parts (see transcription 2 of Patsy Touhey's recording of the jig "The Connachtman's Rambles"). In this instance, Touhey relocates certain phrases to different measures in the tune: these relocations serve as melodic variations. Touhey probably understands the difference between the A part and the B part, but, while playing, the details of these two parts may momentarily become obscured or confused. If confusion occurs, categorization as a mental function would help explain phrase exchange: the details of the B part might end up in the A part and vice versa. It is in this sense that if a variation is accidental, it may be the result of this process of categorization in which details *within* a category are hazier than the differences between categories.

What constitutes a category is relative, however, which is why we must continually evaluate the context of the musical incident. One musician might rarely exchange phrases between parts in a tune or even between tunes because he has such clearly defined mental categories that such an incident would be unlikely.

6.9. Primitive Groupings and the Immediate Organization of Sound

When listening to new variations in a tune that a musician knows, her brain creates *primitive groupings*. This is similar to the concept of chunking with the difference that primitive grouping effects are a function of early processing, feature extraction, and binding. Chunking is a compressing mechanism that occurs throughout the various processes of aural memory.

Primitive groupings are collections of two or more events that, because they occur close enough to each other in time or pitch, become grouped together. This level of

information processing is automatic: little memory or learned information is engaged to form primitive groupings.²⁹⁸ This means that a musician's concept of musical process is broadening simply while listening—and it is happening subconsciously.

What is relevant about primitive groupings for the brain's ability to allow variation in Irish traditional music is that when musical events are organized into primitive groupings, the groupings' patterns exhibit "(1) the melodic quality of pitch patterns, derived from changes in frequency or rate of vibration of different events; and (2) the rhythmic pattern that the events make in time."²⁹⁹ Thus, primitive groups that are formed automatically retain pitch, frequency, contour, and rhythm over a period of time.

The nervous system is predisposed to group incoming sensory information into units. The nervous system then organizes the contents of the units that it perceives to be related into wholes.³⁰⁰ Such a grouping is to the ear what an object is to the eye. Our ability to distinguish between like and unlike is a function of our conditioning with respect to what criteria of a sensory experience can be interrelated to form a whole. This primitive grouping process is called "bottom-up" processing or "data-driven processing," because it is based primarily on sensory experience rather than on memory. This grouping response is automatic—not learned—and is a reconstructive activity.³⁰¹ While feature extraction and perceptual binding do the work of disassembling sensory experiences that come to relate those experiences to the information that is already in the

²⁹⁸ Albert S. Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis: The Perceptual Organization of Sound* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 18-21, 38-44.

²⁹⁹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 21.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

memory, primitive grouping processes reassemble that raw data so that the musician can detect coherence.

For groupings to be meaningful and for continuous sound to be cataloged as discrete occurrences, there must be *closure*. Closure is the establishing of grouping boundaries, and is the quality that makes a grouping seem relatively self-contained and separate from other groupings. A closure is created when an aspect of the acoustical environment changes sufficiently. In Irish traditional music, a closure could be created by a change in the amount of ornamentation used or the location that ornamentation had previously been deployed. For example, if a musician inserted a triplet figure—four notes played in the space of three notes—where there was none previously, a closure might be created. An unusually low or high note could create a closure, as could the alteration of the third or seventh scale degree.

Closures are created by exceptional occurrences in a performance, and some of the most exceptional occurrences are ones that we do not expect. Closures could also potentially be created when there is an unexpected change of duration or amplitude in the course of a tune thus allowing for groupings of several notes and groupings of several phrases that participate in a hierarchy. A change of implied meter might do this also.

Example 6.9 is excerpted from Brendan Mulvihill's 1999 performance of the jig "The Lark in the Morning." In measures 51 and 52 of Mulvihill's second time through the jig, he places dynamic accents on the first, third, and fifth eighth notes in both measures. These accents create the momentary impression of duple meter. In measures 50 and 53 of Mulvihill's second time through the jig, on either side of the hemiola, he places

dynamic accents on the first and fourth eighth notes. This momentary implication of meter change would be sufficient to create a closure.

Example 6.9: Measures 49-53 of the D part of fiddler Brendan Mulvihill's 1999 performance of "The Lark in the Morning"
See transcription 46 in Appendix C

Closure is not absolute, however. The mind can make partial groupings thus allowing for groupings of groupings.³⁰² If we had to relate the process of chunking to the process of primitive grouping, we could say that a chunk can be created because of the primitive grouping that occurs in the early steps of aural memory. Chunking is a later, more permanent, and more conscious process than primitive grouping. It is primitive grouping that enables Irish musicians to have movable or "floating" chunks of music in their memories. The way in which primitive groupings and chunks are summoned is through a process called *cuing*.

6.10. Premeditated and "Spontaneous" Variations: *Cuing*

Irish traditional musicians do not typically use the term *improvisation* to discuss melodic variation in performance practice. While there could be many reasons for this,

³⁰² Ibid., 33.

perhaps one is to reinforce the importance of the idea that the musician maintains the tune's identity since it is expected that a musician will repeatedly exhibit the same aural attributes of a tune through successive repetitions of that tune. From an Irish musician's perspective, improvisation, such as the variety found in jazz that is linked most often to chord changes, is too liberal a treatment of a tune for the Irish tradition. For reasons of cultural conservatism that I have suggested in Chapter III, a performer's ability to act on a tune is attenuated in favor of preserving the tune's identity for the listener. Of course, most Irish musicians would consider it acceptable to change a few notes here or add an ornament there to add a bit of flare to one's playing. But musicians also typically stop short of musical changes that excessively alter the tune's identity.

Because the cognitive processes that facilitate the execution of melodic variations in Irish traditional music are a mix of conscious and unconscious processes—thereby making variations seem spontaneous or premeditated to a listener—we will consider the mechanisms of aural memory that may be responsible for *how* melodic variations and how *much* melodic variations might be positioned in a performance.

The extent to which a melodic variation might be premeditated and executed where desired in the course of playing is largely determined by a phenomenon called *cuing*. Cuing is the process by which chunks stored in the long-term memory are shuttled to the short-term memory (consciousness) where they can then be partly-unconsciously and partly-consciously applied by implicit/motor memory in the due course of a performance. Physiologically, this function of memory is facilitated by neural connections in which two or more memories are activated by association.³⁰³ The cue is ignited by something in the environment that then prompts a memory to travel from long-

³⁰³ Ibid., 69-70.

term memory to short-term memory, thus causing the previously unconscious to come into active awareness.

The three types of cuing recognized by researchers are *recollection*, *reminding*, and *recognition*. Recollection is when a musician consciously attempts to cue a memory, such as when he is playing a tune and, while playing, tries to remember the first few notes of another tune that he wants to play directly after it.

Reminding is when a particular environmental stimulus automatically cues a memory that is linked to that stimulus. This kind of environmental stimulus could be visual, aural, or olfactory. An example of reminding could be when musicians look intently at each other to effect a reminder to switch into the next tune. Glances that musicians exchange while playing are contextual in the sense that both musicians know, but do not speak, what tunes or variations occur during or after the tune they are then playing. Or, perhaps the odor of a certain pub elicits memories of tunes played on site during previous evenings.

Recognition is a situation in which a stimulus in the environment automatically acts as its own cue.³⁰⁴ A musical example would be if another musician started to play a tune that the others were able to identify and then play in tandem with the other musician.

Irish musicians sometimes premeditate variations. This means that a musician composes a variation in advance and then memorizes it to be played from memory at a later point in time. A musician could sit down with his instrument with the intention to compose a variation, or, he might simply play until a variation is cued. In either instance, because sheet music is rarely used in performances, the musician will have to remember the variation, relying on cues to activate that memorized variation. Irish musicians also

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 70.

play variations that are spontaneous in the sense that their occurrence has not been premeditated.

Suppose a musician is performing for a concert and is playing a reel into which he wishes to insert a variation that he has composed in advance and then memorized. That musician is relying on the cuing mechanism of recollection to insert that variation exactly where he wants it. His cue could be the auditory phrase, notes, articulations, and muscle movements that directly precede the place where the variation is to be played—the cue could also be linked to a non-aural stimulus. If the cue is indeed preceding sections of the tune to be varied, and those sections are executed successfully, the recollection has worked as intended and the variation will be played correctly. If the musician errs in the section of the tune designated to cue the variation, he may miss the opportunity to insert the variation because the cue originally relied upon has encountered interference. Furthermore, since the cue for the variation has been stalled, the place where the variation was previously intended to go may or may not cue another sequence of notes to take its place. This is what we call a mistake.

A *mistake*, as I will define it here, is simply a musical maneuver that brings a musician's intentions into question. A sequence of notes could be assigned mistake status if that melodic maneuver fails to conform to the player's intentions or if it fails to reflect the listener's expectations. Often, the only person aware that intentions have not been properly executed is the musician playing. And, a mistake is not inherently a bad thing. Unintentional (and by this, I mean unplanned) musical sounds can present an opportunity for variations to fill a gap spontaneously.

Example 6.10 illustrates a variation that so thwarted a listener’s expectations that he thought the melodic alteration to be a mistake. Radio presenter and uilleann piper Peter Browne invited me to give an interview for RTÉ in Dublin on October 3, 2006. The interview was to be recorded and then aired at a later time. While recording a set of reels, I played the reel “Mother and Child,” the last four measures of the B part of which are transcribed in example 6.10a. The first time I played measures 5-8 of the B part, I played notes that implied the chords A—D—A—D. The second time I played this section of the tune, I inserted a variation that extended the dominant harmony until the downbeat of the A part.

The image displays two musical staves for the reel "Mother and Child" in 4/4 time, showing measures 5 through 8. The first staff, labeled "1st time", shows a melodic line with notes beamed in pairs. Below it, the "implied chords" are shown as block chords: A in measure 5, D in measure 6, A in measure 7, and D in measure 8. The second staff, labeled "2nd time", shows a melodic variation where the notes in measure 8 are extended. Below it, the "implied chords" are: A in measure 5, D in measure 6, A in measure 7, and A dom7 in measure 8.

Example 6.10: Variation in the reel “Mother and Child” played by uilleann piper Eliot Grasso a in recording session for RTÉ on October 3, 2006

As I played the last notes and sat silently for a moment so that the recording technician would not have any excess noise to edit out at the end of the track, I heard Browne’s voice coming from the recording box. I do not recall his exact words, but he said something to the effect of “We’re set up here when you want to play the reels again.” I was confused: from my perspective I had played not only played the reels well, but had added an interesting variation. As Browne and I continued to talk, it became apparent to me that he thought my extension of the dominant harmony in measure 8 was a mistake

rather than a variation. In reality, it had not been a mistake, but a deliberate variation. Perhaps Browne interpreted the variation as a mistake because it had not been what he expected given my first playing of the reel.

Variations may occur spontaneously *and* intentionally, by which I mean that a musician, while having not premeditated note additions or alterations, plays a variation that he has played in the past. These spontaneous variations, which may be cued by other familiar note sequences, can be deliberately inserted as well as suppressed. There are many instances in music-making where a series of notes will automatically cue another series of notes that a musician might not want to play.

For example, since many Irish tunes have note sequences in common, musicians sometimes enter a sequence of notes only to accidentally leave that sequence in some part of another tune. Because this can be disastrous, especially when playing with an ensemble, the prevention of such inadvertent cuing is necessary and, as a result, may require conscious effort.

Physiologists Gerloff and Hummel have found that suppressing such undesirable cues requires the active inhibition of motor control. While two contexts (series of pitches) might be identical in the musician's mind, he will at some times have to suppress note sequences that are cued by preceding sequences, depending on the context. Inhibiting undesirable sequences prompted by these cues involves "a decrease in the blood oxygenation level-dependent (BOLD) signal to below the resting state..."³⁰⁵ When certain cues *are* deployed, the converse is true: blood oxygenation levels increase in

³⁰⁵ Christian and Friedhelm Hummel Gerloff, "The Role of Inhibition in the Motor Control of Finger Function," in *Music, Motor Control and the Brain*, ed. Mario Wiesendanger Eckart Altenmüller, and Jürg Kesselring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 239.

anatomical structures required to execute the physical action.³⁰⁶ Blood flow must decrease to areas of the brain holding the cue that the musician does not wish to deploy.³⁰⁷

To put this discussion of motor inhibition in the larger context of this dissertation, the types of variations that I discussed in Chapter V could result from either premeditation or spontaneous action. In the instance of spontaneous variation, reminding is the cue type that is activated. Chunks of sound, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, exist in a hierarchy and so their placement is flexible because of the primitive grouping mechanism; their execution/placement is to some degree automatic because of implicit memory and muscular motor memory. Chunks of various sizes can be shifted without much premeditation or conscious effort.

6.11. Mirror Neurons: The Importance of Listening

Giacomo Rizzolatti and his colleagues conducted in 1996 that led to the discovery of a mirror neuron system in primates.³⁰⁸ The significance of this discovery is that Rizzolatti and his research team demonstrated that a primate, upon watching another primate carry out a goal oriented task, experienced the same neuron firings in his own brain as if he were doing the action himself. In 2004, Giovanni Buccino and his research team carried out further testing and found that it is likely that such mirror neuron systems

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ “Inhibition of pre-learned behavioural programs (e.g. sequences of finger movements) is represented in the brain by a reduction of net synaptic activity in the cerebrocerebellar pathway and by specific modulation of oscillatory activity of the cortical neurons, leading to a suppression of excitability in the motor cortex.” *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Giacomo Rizzolatti, Fadiga, Luciano, Gallese, Vittorio, and Fogassi, Leonardo, "Premotor Cortex and the Recognition of Motor Actions," *Cognitive Brain Research* 3(1996).

also exist in human beings.³⁰⁹ The mirror neurons of the human brain facilitate a kind of music practicing that can occur in lieu of actually playing an instrument. When an instrumentalist listens to music that he can already play, imagining playing that same music reinforces neural connections in his brain. These reinforced connections result in an expedited and streamlined music-making behavior.

Proficient Irish musicians advocate that students listening to live and studio recordings in addition to live performances of Irish music because the act of listening to cultural forebears is considered to be an important way in which living musicians can interact with the tradition of players that have preceded them.³¹⁰ Listening to recordings is one way a musician can participate in a musical genealogy of sorts. However, cultural knowledge is not the only potential benefit of listening to other musicians play one's own instrument. Research has shown that cortical responses are more intense when a musician is listening to an instrument that he plays. These intensified cortical responses suggest that there are functional brain differences specific to players of certain instruments.³¹¹

For example, when fiddlers play, the right primary auditory cortex, contralateral primary sensorimotor cortex, bilateral superior parietal lobes, and the ipsilateral cerebellar hemisphere are extremely active.³¹² In 2003, Lotze and his colleagues have observed fiddlers who moved their fingers in a pattern that matched how they might

³⁰⁹ Giovanni Buccino, Binkofskik, Ferdinand, and Riggio, Lucia, "The Mirror Neuron System and Action Recognition," *Brain and Language* 89(2004).

³¹⁰ Hannan, "Listening: The Piper's Eleventh Finger."

³¹¹ Schlaug, "Brain Structures of Musicians: Executive Functions and Morphological Implications," 142-43.

³¹² Lutz Jäncke, "The Motor Representation in Pianists and String Players," *ibid.*, 163.

move on the strings and fingerboard.³¹³ What Lotze and his research team noticed was that there were similar cortical reactions—except activity in the auditory cortex—in fiddlers who were only imagining playing as there were in fiddlers who were physically holding and playing a fiddle.

Meister and his research team published a study in 2004 that suggested that both during real and imagined execution, “a similar bilateral frontoparietal network was active comprising the pre-motor areas, the pre-cuneus, and the medial part of the superior parietal lobe.”³¹⁴ The significance of this finding is that similar cortical networks are activated whether a musician is physically playing the fiddle or simply *imagining* playing the fiddle. This pre-motor cortex, which is also comprised of the frontal operculum, is involved in the preparation, execution, and imagination of playing a tune on the fiddle. The importance of this is that the ventral pre-motor cortex, which some have hypothesized to house mirror neurons, is highly active while playing a fiddle.³¹⁵ The mirror neurons system is activated when a musician listens to, sees notation for, and watches performances of music that he knows how to play.³¹⁶

Functional imaging has been used to demonstrate that playing music establishes an auditory and visual-sensorimotor network.³¹⁷ “Listening to sounds of (and/or seeing)

³¹³ Ibid., 163-64. In this study, violinists were monitored as they listened to, played, and imagined playing classical music.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 164.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 163-64.

³¹⁶ Schlaug, "Music, Musicians, and Brain Plasticity," 204. See also J. and Knösche Haueisen, TR, "Involuntary Motor Activity in Pianists Evoked by Music Perception," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 13(2001).

³¹⁷ Schlaug, "Music, Musicians, and Brain Plasticity," 204.

well-learned actions elicits activity in a network of brain regions.”³¹⁸ The inferior frontal gyrus is an important part of this cognitive network and becomes active when a musician sees “meaningful, goal-directed actions or hears action-related sounds” including imitating hand gestures³¹⁹ and hearing instrumental sounds linked to motor actions.³²⁰

As I have already stated, Irish instrumental dance tunes are short. They are also played at a relatively fast tempo for dancing. What this means for mirror neurons and short-term memory is that an entire tune could be played in under one minute. An entire part of a tune could certainly be played in ten to twelve seconds, the outer limits of what the short-term memory can keep track of. When a musician hears the first part of a tune that he already plays, the auditory sensations are activating neurological pathways that are already established in his brain.

The discovery of mirror neurons endows the acts of listening and imagining with practical significance that augments the cultural importance of listening to previous generations of respected players. When an instrumentalist listens to a live or recorded performance, this listening reinforces specific anatomical systems. Reinforcing these

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ See Buccino, "The Mirror Neuron System and Action Recognition."

³²⁰ Schlaug, "Music, Musicians, and Brain Plasticity," 204; Amir Lahav, Saltzman, Elliot, and Schlaug, Gottfried, "Action Representation of Sound: Audiomotor Recognition Network While Listening to Newly-Acquired Actions," *Journal of Neuroscience* 27(2007); Kohler, "Hearing Sounds, Understanding Actions: Action Representation in Mirror Neurons."; Keysers, "Audiovisual Mirror Neurons and Action Recognition."; T Hasegawa, Matsuki, K, Ueno, T, Maeda, Y, Matsue, Y, Konishi, Y, and Sadato, N, "Learned Audio-Visual Cross-Modal Associations in Observed Piano Playing Activate the Left Planum Temporale. An Fmri Study.," *Cognitive Brain Research* 20(2004); B Haslinger, Erhard, P, Altenmüller, E, Hennenlotter, A, Schwaiger, M, Einsiedel, H, Rummeny, E, Conrad, B, and Ceballos-Baumann, AO, "Reduced Recruitment of Motor Association Areas During Bimanual Coordination in Concert Pianists," *Human Brain Mapping* 22(2004); Marc Bangert, Peschel, Thomas, Rotte, Michael, Drescher, Dieter, Hinrichs, Hermann, Schlaug, Gottfried, Heinze, H-Jochen, and Altenmüller, Eckart, "Shared Networks for Auditory and Motor Processing in Professional Pianists: Evidence from Fmri Conjunction," *NeuroImage* 30(2006); A D'Ausilio, Altenmüller, E, Olivetti Belardinella, M, and Lotze, M, "Cross-Modal Plasticity of the Motor Cortex While Listening to a Rehearsed Musical Piece," *European Journal of Neuroscience*, no. 24 (2006).

systems invokes the neural plasticity that thickens connections between neurons and increases the number of neural connections within the brain. It is these kinds of physical changes have the potential to enable a musician to play with greater efficiency.

As an instrumentalist listens and watches another musician play, these pathways are reinforced while concurrently refining categories in the long-term memory through a process called *pattern recognition*. Pattern recognition is a mental function in which the contents of long-term memory are compared and matched to sensory experience in the present.³²¹ When a musician hears a variation that is “striking or novel,” the new sound refines the long-term memory category for a particular tune. These long-term memories simultaneously become refined and expanded, allowing for more kinds of variations to be legitimately ascribed to the tune for which the musician has the long-term memory.

The mirror neurons system could potentially be linked with implicit memory, or, muscle memory, in the instrumentalist’s hands in such a way that the aural experience reinforces the physicality of playing. With increased listening—and actual playing, of course—the “elements” that make up the tune in the musician’s long-term memory, including whole parts of the tune, become categorized by the long-term memory not only as a single concept—the tune—but as discrete concepts that may be reinserted roulette-style.

There is a tendency to presume that there is an infinite number of possibilities for melodic variation in Irish traditional dance music, and in some senses I agree that there are. But, what is so remarkable about something like a *style* is that many options that comprise this supposedly infinite continuum rarely—if ever—occur. What is remarkable is that there is order and consistency rather than chaos and incoherence. I have yet to hear

³²¹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 23.

a fiddler vary the B part of a jig by playing it in 7/8 and I have yet to witness a piper modulate from D Mixolydian to G-sharp Lydian in the middle of “My Love is in America.” Of course, such variations certainly are possible and could be—if they have not been already—executed by an Irish musician. What is so intriguing, though, is that there appear to be a finite number of ways in which melodies are altered within an idiom like Irish traditional music. Indeed, this is what allowed for the categorization of variation types accounted for in Chapter V. My aim is to try to understand why Irish musicians—in the face of theoretically limitless possibilities—vary melodies in circumscribed ways.

So far, I have avoided the Platonist interpretation of variation. While I do not believe that the tune exists “out there” and that players simply channel it, I do agree that musicians have specific concepts of the tune in mind. The question I will address in the next section is this: what musical elements could contribute to the idea of a fixed, unchanging, normative tune model for a single musician?

6.12. Set Accented Tones: Distinguishing Between Tunes

I contend that the memory of a tune—a single musician’s point of reference for the tune which is conceptually housed in the long-term memory and which is revised every time he hears someone play it a little differently than he does—is comprised not only of contour, but also of range, harmonic progression, and set accented tones. Music psychologists call these collective traits of a single conceptually discrete tune *multiple constraints*. These multiple constraints are the attributes that constitute a tune’s “identity” for a single musician after he has played the tune over many years and in many different contexts. Each musician has in his own mind multiple constraints whereby if the

constraints were changed, one tune would share so many criteria with another tune that the two tunes might become confused or indistinguishable in the musician's mind.

A set accented tone, a term introduced by composer and scholar Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, is a note in a recurring and, therefore, predictable place in a melody. The criteria of a set accented tone is relative to rhythmic position as much as pitch content; for instance, the set accented tones in a jig would be the first and fourth eighth notes in each measure. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin has proposed that in the practice of Irish traditional music, it is the “occurrence, or deliberate non-occurrence, of these tones which appears to provide the point of reference for the performer.”³²² Ó Súilleabháin demonstrates his point by changing the set accented tones in a jig called “The Old Grey Goose.”³²³ In his projected variants, Ó Súilleabháin alters these downbeat pitches such that each successive variation has fewer set accented tones in common with the tune version that precedes it. Determining an average of how many set accented tones could be changed before a tune can legitimately be designated as a different tune would require human testing. I would suspect—without actually having conducted live experiments—that listening and playing experience would need to be a constant in such an experiment. As I suggested early in this chapter, a musician's concept of sameness can be flexible is a function of experience and context. Different musicians have narrower and looser definitions of the word “same.”

In Chapter V, I introduced the basic rhythmic schemes of reels, hornpipes, jigs, and slip jigs, noting that there are certain rhythmic positions within those schemes that are rhythmically critical whereas other positions are rhythmically expendable. What do

³²² Ó Súilleabháin, “The Creative Process in Irish Traditional Dance Music,” 123.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 124.

performers do to ensure that these set accented tones are both *set* and *accented*? To *set* the tone, the same pitch occurs in the same place through repeated repetitions. To *accent* that set tone, a musician might use one or more techniques. First, the set accented tones are played slightly louder than the other notes in a rhythmic cycle. Second, these set accented tones tend to be slightly longer in duration. Third, grace notes and other ornaments frequently occur adjacent to—mostly before—these set accented tones. When a set accented tone is louder, longer, and ornamented, it sticks in the listener’s ear, because, compared to the other notes, the set accented tone is striking and novel by virtue of its being louder, longer, and more highly ornamented than notes occupying other rhythmic positions. In a measure of a reel, there are two downbeat positions. Out of eight positions, only twenty-five percent of the notes are noticeably louder, longer, or more ornamented than the other six. By comparison, the set accented tones are striking and novel in terms of duration, amplitude, and ornamentation.

What also happens is that set accented tones, because musicians seem to change their pitch less frequently than notes in the other rhythmic positions, become normative and predictable. The point at which the set accented tones become normative and predictable is the point at which we may talk about the tune’s “model” being stuck in the listener’s long-term memory.

I suspect that after many decades of playing, a proficient performer has created long-term memory categories for the rhythmic schemes of various dance genres. If this is true, then these basic rhythmic schemes exist in a dialogue with particular arrangements of set accented tones.

6.13. Great Expectations: Points of Reference

Irish flute player and flute maker, Hammy Hamilton, posits that for a variation to be understood as such—and further to be appreciated as interesting or nuanced—the listener must have a point of reference against which to compare the new sensory information that constitutes the variation.

The principles of variation and decoration as used by Irish traditional musicians...depend very much for their success...on the assumption that the listeners have a great degree of familiarity with the basics of the music. Variations depend for their effect on the contrast that they make with the basic tune, and it therefore follows that this basis must be well known to the listeners. Given the large repertoire that Irish music...aesthetic involvement...[requires]...amongst other things that the listener is familiar with a large body of melody, and [is] also sufficiently familiar with rhythms since rhythmic variation plays its part as well.³²⁴

The only way in which our current discussion of cognitive function would clarify Hamilton's otherwise apropos remarks would be to replace his reference to "basic tune" with "initial performance of the tune." Our context for appraising melodic variation is a combination of what we expect—given a title and genre—and what a musician actually plays in each successive repetition of a tune.

Researcher David Huron has conducted and compiled research explaining the psychology of musical expectation. The conclusion that Huron reaches is that we like what we expect, hence the title of his book *Sweet Anticipation*.³²⁵ The idea that we prefer and thrive on what we expect is somewhat related to Charles Seeger's culinary analogy

³²⁴ Hamilton, "Innovation, Conservatism, and the Aesthetics of Irish Traditional Music," 84.

³²⁵ David Brian Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

“...although variance may be the spice of life, invariance may be the meat.”³²⁶ We might imagine that we prefer a great deal of variety in our tastes and preferences, but in reality the great variety that we might pretend to enjoy is really only a small part of change that accompanies the quotidian, the mundane, and the expected. While a dash of saffron or a pinch of nutmeg might dress up a dish, thus making that dish a unique and enjoyable sensory experience, the spice on its own is hardly sufficient to sustain us.

Huron states that the biological purpose of expectation is to ready an organism for potential future events.³²⁷ This hypothesis implies that physical survival is contingent on one’s ability to anticipate future, and that this predictive ability is based on previous experience. When one is able to accurately predict future events, accurate predictions are understood as a positive thing: the anticipator has correctly guessed future events based on established expectations, thus reinforcing those expectations for similar future scenarios. The anticipating mechanism guessed right and is therefore useful to ensuring survival.

There are both psychological rewards and punishments that a person inflicts upon himself depending on how well or how poorly he is able to predict a particular scenario.³²⁸ When a stimulus occurs that has not been anticipated, “the emotional response is negatively valenced.”³²⁹ If the hypothesis that all unexpected events are appraised negatively is not qualified, then it would follow that a human being ultimately experiences *all* unpredicted stimuli as unpleasant. The idea that we experience all

³²⁶ Seeger, "Versions and Variants of the Tunes of "Barbara Allen"," 286.

³²⁷ Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, 4.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

unpredicted events negatively is not consistent with reality—at least on the surface—since many people enjoy surprises in music and in other facets of life.

The reason that we occasionally experience an unpredicted musical event as pleasurable is because that while the unexpectedness of the musical event engenders an immediate negative psychological response, this negative valencing may be followed—in time—by a contrasting positive appraisal.³³⁰ While we may at first subconsciously dislike melodic variations that we have not anticipated, our aesthetics quickly take over to reassess the situation.

What this means for melodic variation in Irish music is that while a melodic variation's unexpectedness is initially cataloged as bad (because the listener did not accurately anticipate that the variation would occur), immediate subsequent values and musical aesthetics are dispatched that can assign “good” status to that unexpected variation.

In 1994, researchers Bornstein and D'Agostino suggested that appraising an expected stimulus as “good” has to do with the fact that it is easier for the human brain to process familiar stimuli and more difficult for the brain to process unfamiliar or unexpected stimuli.³³¹ The thesis that we prefer what we like relates in part to the idea that the familiar is easier to deal with because we have already cultivated a mental system for dealing with familiar types of stimuli. Conversely, we dislike the unfamiliar because it takes more effort to process unfamiliar stimuli—there is no figurative mental filing system set up that can efficiently catalog new incoming sensory information.

³³⁰ Ibid., 23.

³³¹ R. Bornstein, and P. D'Agostino, "The Attribution and Discounting of Perceptual Fluency: Preliminary Tests of a Perceptual Fluency/Attributional Model of the Mere Exposure Effect," *Social Cognition* 12, no. 2 (1994).

If it is true that we like what we expect because it takes less energy to process familiar stimuli, we can begin to understand on a cognitive level why traditional musicians hold certain beloved recordings as paradigmatic. Having become familiar with a particular recording over years of listening, those repeated listenings yield compounded experiences of “goodness” by virtue of the fact that repeated sensory experiences create conceptual categories that allow the brain to process the information more efficiently.³³² It appears that a listener will still prefer a familiar melody to an unfamiliar melody, even if other environmental stimuli distract a listener while a particular melody is playing within earshot.³³³ One need not give their undivided attention to a melody to come to prefer it in the long run.

Metabolically, anticipation causes fluctuations in heart rate, an increase of respiration and perspiration, and acute engagement with the environment that is caused by the release of the hormone norepinephrine.³³⁴ It seems as though the practical advantage of these physiologically responses is that in this heightened state of awareness, a person may more readily anticipate and avoid potentially dangerous situations. However, even when a physical threat is not imminent, as in (most) musical performances, this heightened awareness and sensitivity to change can allow for slight melodic variations to affect the listener profoundly.

³³² Bornstein found that even after thirty repetitions of a sound stimulus, the listener continued to increase the severity of appraisal as “good.” R. F. Bornstein, "Exposure and Affect: Overview and Meta-Analysis of Research, 1968-1987," *Psychological Bulletin* 106, no. 2 (1989): 270-71.

³³³ See W. R. Wilson, "Unobstrusive Induction of Positive Attitudes" (University of Michigan, 1975); W. R. Wilson, "Feeling More Than We Can Know: Exposure Effects without Learning," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37(1979).

³³⁴ Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, 5.

Just as in the various types of memory that I have discussed so far, specific areas of the brain become active when anticipation is generated by a situation. Listening to a performance or recording for the first time activates the ventral tegmental area (this area of the midbrain rewards accurate—and punishes inaccurate—sensory prediction by releasing the hormone dopamine), substantia nigra (also part of the midbrain that deals in rewards), lateral prefrontal cortical areas (performs executive functions such as differentiating between same and different as well better or best), and anterior cingulate cortex (activated for decision-making and emotional rewards) areas of the brain. When our expectations are violated,³³⁵ we may also experience gooseflesh, which is also called *frisson* and *piloerection*.³³⁶ This is when the skin tightens and the hairs stand upright.

Studies have shown that listeners can direct their attention at particular frequencies and ranges better if they know what to expect.³³⁷ Further, research has

³³⁵ I do not mean “violate” in the pejorative sense as in instances where one is frustrated because a bus arrives at a station later than expected. I mean simply that a particular expectation is not met. Positive or negative appraisals of a thwarted expectation are value judgments that come over a longer period of time.

³³⁶ For studies linking these physical responses to music, see Richard M. Gray, "The Pilo-motor Reflex in Response to Music" (University of Kansas, 1955); A. Goldstein, "Thrills in Response to Music and Other Stimuli," *Physiological Psychology* 3(1980); John A. Sloboda, "Music Structure and Emotional Response: Some Empirical Findings," *Psychology of Music* 19, no. 2 (1991); John A. Sloboda, "Empirical Studies of Emotional Response to Music," in *Cognitive Bases of Musical Communication*, ed. M. R. Jones and S. Holleran (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1992); J. Panksepp, "The Emotional Sources of "Chills" Induced by Music," *Music Perception* 13, no. 2 (1995); Anne J. Blood, Robert J. Zatorre, and Alan C. Evans, "Intensely Pleasant Emotional Responses to Music Correlate with Cbf Modulation in Paralimbic and Other Subcortical Brain Regions," *Society of Neuroscience Abstracts* 25(1999); Anne J. Blood, Robert J. Zatorre, Patrick Bermudez, and Alan C. Evans, "Emotional Responses to Pleasant and Unpleasant Music Correlate with Activity in the Paralimbic Brain Regions," *Nature Neuroscience* 2, no. 4 (1999).

³³⁷ G. Z. and W. D. Larkin Greenberg, "Frequency-Response Characteristics of Auditory Observers Detecting Signals of a Single Frequency in Noise: The Probe-Signal Method," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 44, no. 6 (1968). In this study, noise was generated at the same time a familiar melody was played for the subject. The subject could anticipate the shape of the melody despite the noise because of the subject's familiarity with that particular melody.

suggested that melodic context largely influences where listeners direct their attention.³³⁸ So, what do listeners expect when they are told that they are about to hear Irish traditional music? The studies of music and anticipation that I have cited thus far have not, like the others I have cited regarding brain function, been conducted with Irish traditional music or on Irish traditional musicians. However, since Irish traditional music bears some similarities to other traditions, I think it reasonable to extend the findings to Irish music until further evidence suggests that such suppositions are ill-founded.

To give us an idea about what an Irish musician might expect, researchers have proposed categories to use in assessing prediction. Psychologist Diana Deutsch found that musicians tend to process tones preceded by small intervals more efficiently than tones preceded by large intervals.³³⁹ Also, researchers Vos and Troost suggest that listeners expect that large intervals will sound from low frequency to high frequency, while small intervals will sound from high frequency to low frequency.³⁴⁰ Listeners also expect small intervals to be followed by pitches sounding in the same direction, a hypothesis proposed by Leonard Meyer and supported by Paul von Hippel and Eugene Narmour.

Musicians also expect a post-skip reversal in a series of pitches. A post-skip reversal is when after a leap in one direction, stepwise motion follows in the opposite direction. Eugene Narmour has developed an implication-realization theory that proposes

³³⁸ J. H. Howard, A. J. O'Toole, R. Parasuraman, and K. B. Bennett, "Pattern-Directed Attention in Uncertain-Frequency Detection," *Perception & Psychophysics* 35, no. 3 (1984).

³³⁹ Diana Deutsch, "Grouping Mechanisms in Music," in *The Psychology of Music (Revised Edition)*, ed. Diana Deutsch (San Diego: Academic Press, 1978).

³⁴⁰ P. G. and Troost Vos, J. M., "Ascending and Descending Melodic Intervals: Statistical Findings and Their Perceptual Relevance," *Music Perception* 6, no. 4 (1989).

that some melodies strongly imply what might happen next, while others do not.³⁴¹

Narmour found that listeners expect stepwise motion to lead to more stepwise motion in the same direction: he calls this *registral direction*. Based on his findings, Narmour also postulated that listeners anticipate small intervals to imply more subsequent intervals of the same size while large intervals forecast intervals of a smaller size. It would seem that based on current research, large intervals are generally not expected by listeners.

As I have summarized already in this chapter, much of what a listener expects from a musical performance is contingent upon what that listener has already learned from his exposure to a particular idiom. In other words, if a listener has never heard Balinese gamelan in his life and has never been told about it, he will have no idea what to expect of a concert involving Balinese gamelan.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the primitive grouping effect, the function of which is to make sense of the world immediately around us. The primitive grouping effect has a long-term corollary called the *learned grouping effect*. The learned grouping effect is an established cataloging system in the mind that is cultivated through prolonged and repeated exposure to systems of music making. Learned grouping differs from primitive grouping in that learned grouping is a process that involves musical enculturation and higher-level long-term memory integration.

This learned grouping effect can be parsed into an *objective set* and a *subjective set*.³⁴² The objective set grouping effects are established by and are specific to a single

³⁴¹ Eugene Narmour, *The Analysis and Cognition of Melodic Complexity: The Implication-Realization Model* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁴² This is similar to Jamshed Bharucha's distinction between schematic expectations (similar to subjective set grouping effects in which expectations are based on many performances in a specific idiom) and veridical expectations (similar to objective set grouping effects in which expectations are based on repeated listenings to a unique piece of music). Bob Snyder, "Memory for Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of*

tune. During the course of learning the tune, normative expectations are established with respect to set accented tones, contour, harmonic progressions, range, and meter. For example, when a musician learns the reel “Rakish Paddy,” and, in the process of learning that tune comes to hear many different performances of that specific reel, that musician experiences objective set grouping effects.

Subjective set grouping effects develop out of learning and listening to many similar pieces within an idiom such as Irish traditional music.³⁴³ Subjective set grouping effects are more abstract. Rather than cultivating expectations for a specific reel like “Rakish Paddy,” a musician, over time, learns many different reels. Having learned many different reels, a musician abstracts the general rhythm of a reel: this is the subjective set grouping effect.

Conferring acceptability on some variations and not on others is a function of subjective set grouping effects where, after having heard many performances of Irish traditional music, the seasoned listener has an ever refining sense of what is likely to happen in a given tune with respect to its set accented tones, range, harmonic progressions, tempo, contour, and meter. Both varieties of expectations are facilitated by semi-activated long-term memories. While such long-term memories have a considerable impact on our present listening experiences, they are, like other long-term memories, mostly outside the listener’s conscious awareness.³⁴⁴

Music Psychology, ed. Ian Cross Susan Hallam, and Michael Thaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 110. See also Jamshed Bharucha, "Tonality and Expectation," in *Musical Perceptions*, ed. Rita Aiello and John A. Sloboda (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁴³ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 45.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

David Rubin, psychologist and neuroscientist who specializes in transmission in oral traditions, delineates two main types of learning and conveyance: *chain* and *net*. In a chain-like transmission scenario, the individual hears only one version of a tune and then transmits it to only one other person, whereas in a net-like learning scenario, the individual may hear and integrate aspects of many versions of the same tune before passing on his own version any number of times to any number of people.³⁴⁵ Nets can be more advantageous for remembering a tune because by utilizing nets, performers can fill in gaps or adjust for parts that have been introduced from outside the tradition.³⁴⁶ In this sense, nets are more stable than chains.³⁴⁷ Below as figure 6.13 is a diagram that I have borrowed from David Rubin's book *Memory in Oral Traditions* to help illustrate Rubin's hypothesis about the two different types of transmission in music.

³⁴⁵ David C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 134.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 135.

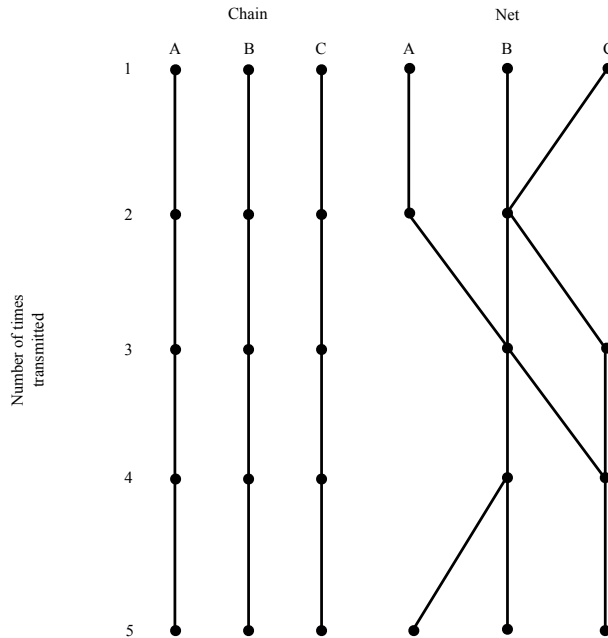


Figure 6.13: David Rubin's Graphic Model for Chain and Net Learning³⁴⁸

If we consider transmission contexts for Irish music, we can begin to see why some older players might have been stricter about how a tune is to be played. Having perhaps had only one source for a tune (chain learning), the details of that one point of reference for the tune are seen as more important because that musician is dealing only in objective set grouping effects.

While the objective set grouping effect means that a musician has a very clear singular point of reference for the tune, he might not—without other versions—abstract the rhythmic or harmonic essentials of that particular tune. Without points of comparison, the importance of what might otherwise considered to be expendable details is amplified in importance in the mind of the learner.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 133.

I remember a senior uilleann piper, Mattie Connelly, once telling me about how he and his brother used to listen to the famous uilleann piper and pipemaker Leo Rowsome (1903-1970) on Irish radio. Connelly told me that he and his brother struck an agreement to the effect that when Rowsome's broadcast aired, one brother would memorize the A part of the tune while the other brother would memorize the B part of the tune. If one brother forgot his part of the tune, Connelly explained, he would get a wallop from the other. The brother who forgot his part of the tune would be punished by his sibling because that single radio broadcast might be the brothers' only source for that tune. If one brother forgot his part, there was no way to put on a record or open a tune book to find another version to play. Once the broadcast ended, the tune they had heard was completely inaccessible except through their own memories.³⁴⁹

I have already described an instance of chain learning in Chapter II. When Billy McComiskey and I drove from Washington, D.C. back to Baltimore, he taught me a reel called "The Grey Fox" that he had composed himself—a tune that I had never heard before from any other source. This tune had a unique series of set accented tones, chord progressions, and contours. In order to learn this tune from McComiskey, I had to begin to create a long-term schema for this tune. In all honesty, I did not remember the tune several hours later because my only exposure to the reel was a one-time teaching situation in which the tune was whistled to me. I could retain it as it was taught to me while McComiskey drove and whistled, but the reel left my memory after some time had elapsed.

³⁴⁹ Perhaps this anecdote can inform us about the rationale behind Bunting's assumption that certain tunes had remained unchanged for centuries, even though there was no empirical way for him to verify that claim. This story also gives some more insight into why older generations of musicians may exhibit aesthetic conservatism: with fewer points of reference for the tune, the details of a tune were assigned greater importance with respect to a tune's identity.

Another example of chain transmission is when a musician tries to remember a composition that she has composed. This point has become clarified after a conversation that I had with fiddler Liz Carroll. Having asked her about how she creates original compositions, she mentioned in passing that one of the difficult things about writing new tunes was making variations on them.³⁵⁰ This observation on Carroll's part seems to acknowledge (and reinforce) Rubin's chain theory of transmission.

When generating new compositions in an idiom like Irish traditional music, the composer's memory is the composer's only point of reference for a tune's defining characteristics. The composer has no external point of reference to help develop a category for the new tune unless she writes down her ideas or records the tune in fragmentary form on a recording device.

In Carroll's case, she said that when making up a new tune, she has to rehearse it in her mind's ear unless she writes it down on manuscript paper or records it using recording technology. If she does not create an external reference for her new tune, she has to retain the essential attributes of the tune in her memory and must actively try to keep herself from varying it too much. The more variations she plays on her new tune, the greater the likelihood that her tune could quickly and easily become another tune. With no fixed documentation, she could lose her new composition by altering it irrevocably. This is consistent with the theories of memory and transmission that I have just discussed: altering the original idea of the tune in one's mind dislocates the frame of reference such that it becomes difficult to comprehend whether one is writing a new tune while playing or attempting to vary a preconceived tune.

³⁵⁰ Eliot Grasso, Personal Correspondence with Liz Carroll, November 15, 2007.

One instance in which I experienced net learning occurred when I first went to Achill Island in Ireland in 1999 to study the uilleann pipes with Robbie Hannan. Hannan performed in a concert one evening and played the reel “Miss Monaghan,” a tune that I knew not only from his 1990 commercial recording of it, but from other musicians’ recordings that I had studied. During his performance of “Miss Monaghan,” Hannan changed only a few notes—at least, from what I can *now* remember and what I *could* remember *then* based on his recording that I had listened to for hours. The few notes that he changed have remained in my memory. I have transcribed his studio recording below in example 6.13 and have compared it to what I remember from his 1999 performance of that reel.

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time, key of D major. The top staff is labeled '1990' and the bottom staff is labeled '1999'. Both staves show measures 7 and 8. In measure 7, the 1990 recording has a D chord (D4-F#4-A4) on the first beat and a G chord (B3-D4-F#4) on the second beat. In measure 8, it has a D chord on the first beat and a G chord on the second beat. The 1999 recording has a G chord (B2-D3-F#3) on the first beat, an A chord (C#3-E3-G#3) on the second beat, and a G chord on the third beat. Red boxes highlight the chord changes in both recordings.

Example 6.13: Comparison of Robbie Hannan’s 1990 Claddagh Records studio recording and Hannan’s 1999 performance of measures 7-8 of the A part of the reel “Miss Monaghan” that I heard him play live on Achill Island, County Mayo, Ireland.

What struck me so profoundly about the variation that I heard Hannan play at the end of this A part in 1999 was the fully arpeggiated G chord starting on the second downbeat of measure 7. Having listened to an unchanging recording of him playing for several years, I was expecting the implied D chord that appears in measure 7 from 1990. What I heard in 1999 caught me by surprise. What changed was both the clarity of the implied harmonies and the chords themselves.

Measure 7 of example 6.13a shows the 1990 studio recording in which Hannan implied the following harmonies: D, G, D, G (or, I—IV—I—IV). What he did in 1999 caused a wrinkle in my expectations. He instead implied the chords G, A, G, G. Hannan altered the harmonic rhythm by implying the same G harmony for both the second downbeat and second upbeat in measure from 1999. This made me cry and I am still trying to figure out what caused that biological response.³⁵¹ To me, it was beautiful; it was sublime; it was art; what I heard was incredible.

I think one reason why such a small change might have had such a huge impact on me was that I had a ready schema into which those variations could be integrated. Because learning how to play music requires tedious behavior refinement and close listening, what might seem like a small or insignificant change to a non-musician is a tremendous alteration to a performer who spends thousands of hours listening to recordings in order to discern how professional performers achieve certain musical effects.

This personal anecdote exhibits a kind of net learning that I experienced. My brain had been primed for “Miss Monaghan” for several years. So, when I heard a variation after hearing Hannan announce that he was about to play that particular reel, even though only a few notes changed, the memory of the changed notes has remained with me for years.

³⁵¹ This was an emotional experience. While I have no independent documentation to prove that I heard what I claim to have heard, the emotional response that this experience evoked is significant in that human beings form and retain emotional memories more easily than non-emotional memories. Chaffin, "Performing from Memory," 356. See also Gordon H. Bower, "Mood and Memory," *American Psychologist* 36(1981); D Talmi, Schimmack, U, Paterson, T, and Moscovitch, M, "The Role of Attention and Relatedness in Emotionally Enhanced Memory," *Emotion* 7(2007).

6.14. Episodic Memory: Hearing Variations of a Known Tune

Episodic memory is a type of long-term memory that is available to consciousness in the sense that we are aware of what we perceive. This kind of memory is explicit: it is available to consciousness.³⁵² Episodic memory is sometimes designated as “autobiographical” since it is a memory of something that happens “in the presence of the rememberer.”³⁵³ The three necessary ingredients of episodic memory are “what, where, and when.” For example, if a musician attends a performance and hears another traditional musician play melodic variations in the reel “My Love is in America,” the memories of that specific event would qualify as episodic memories. The listener’s memory of that concert would constitute what he might later be able to describe to another person.

Episodic memories are particularly linked to time and place, the organizational principles of this kind of memory.³⁵⁴ Episodic memories are created quickly and can become distorted with repeated recollection: our recollecting of episodic memories actually modifies them without our knowing it. While the details of episodic memory can fade over time, it seems reasonable that if the listening musician has well-defined long-term memories about the reel “My Love is in America,” that the details of a melodic variation from a performance could be retained through practice in the short-term memory, and implemented later in his own performance of that tune. This is a similar

³⁵² The distinction between implicit and explicit memory was proposed as early as 1949 by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle and was tested as early as 1980. Cohen and Squire postulated based on their research of amnesia patients that the nervous system distinguishes between “knowing how” (explicit memory) and “knowing that” (implicit memory). See Neal J. Cohen, and Larry R. Squire, “Preserved Learning and Retention of Pattern-Analyzing Skill in Amnesia: Dissociation of Knowing How and Knowing That,” *Science* 210, no. 4466 (1980).

³⁵³ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 75.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

instance to what I remembered when I heard Robbie Hannan play “Miss Monaghan” live on Achill Island.

A musician’s episodic memories are filtered through his musical aesthetic and participate in how that musician represents musical events to himself.³⁵⁵ A musician’s episodic memories are the result of hearing a new performance of a tune that he knows. The memories then interact with whatever mental construct of the tune is already lodged in his long-term memory. This mental construct of the tune that is housed in his long-term memory is a kind of *semantic memory*, an abstraction generated by repeated hearings of the same tune.³⁵⁶

6.15. Repetition, Codification, Hierarchy, and Recording Technology

With playback recording technology, Irish musicians can learn and memorize other musicians’ settings and variations of new and familiar tunes. Spacing the practice over a longer interval is more effective than trying to “overlearn” in a single session.³⁵⁷ Playing a recording at casual intervals or spaced intervals aids recall.³⁵⁸ The recording acts a self-check device for the student: the recording helps a student know whether or not he is learning the tune “correctly.” Such variations as they may be captured in a

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, and Michael Thaut, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 108.

³⁵⁷ What Nellie L. Perkins described in a 1914 article is that “Two weeks after the last learning trial, people recalled 79% of the syllables seen once on each of the 16 successive days as opposed to 9% of the syllables seen eight times on each of two successive days. Thus spacing is effective enough to overcome the loss of strength caused by the time it involves.” See Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes*, 124-25; Nellie L. Perkins, “The Value of Distributed Repetitions in Rote Learning,” *British Journal of Psychology* 7(1914).

³⁵⁸ Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes*, 126.

recording, however, may become codified versions of the tune. I think that this codification happens because first, the learning takes place over a period of time and second, because a recording has an identifiable start and end. If the student does not communicate with the musician who recorded the tune, then the student cannot inquire of the performer about which aspects of the recording may be conceptually fixed or variable.

However, with more recordings there is greater dissemination, thus allowing for more variations to be generated for a single tune. Irish musicians may now learn even more so in a net paradigm, in which there are multiple sources of input for the same tune rather than in chain learning in which there is but a single source for a tune to be learned. By virtue of the presence of the learning net, many individuals may internalize and manipulate a performed tune, thus creating an even more fertile environment for variation.

I would think that we cannot—at this point in time—imagine what it would be like to live in a world where all the information that we wished to retain must reside exclusively in our memories. Were access to information limited strictly to what we could retain in our memories, it seems reasonable that there would be a stricter approach to the way someone learned a melody if a teacher were at all concerned that a student copy his music-making behaviors. Having fewer points of input for a particular tune could mean that an individual musician varies a melody less often or less drastically.

Given what I have explained thus far about memory and expectation, the instance I recounted in Chapter III regarding the flute-bearing official who scowled at some musicians whom he caught playing what he considered to be a lesser version of “Rakish

Paddy” should make a little more sense. The musicians playing the tune the official identified as the reel “Rakish Paddy” departed from the official’s expectations that had been solidified over years of listening to the unchanging recordings of Michael Coleman. The official’s outrage at the differences between the Coleman recording and live performance he was admonishing broke his expectations, angered him, and caused him to lash out in a way that suggests that he held a sacrosanct regard for the fixed recording.

6.16. Schema: Abstracting Variation Procedure

At this point, I will refine what I have referred to in previous chapters by the term *enculturation*. Enculturation happens when a musician, through regular exposure to certain kinds of behaviors, learns “rule systems of relations between elements without ever consciously trying to memorize them.”³⁵⁹ These rule systems of relationships between elements are known as *schemas*.³⁶⁰ While the details of many discrete experiences may be lost to episodic memory, semantic memory distills common qualities of many different musical experiences to create a schema. Schemas are different from knowledge categories, which concern specific types of objects and single events.³⁶¹ “[S]chemas are like metacategories: they are categories of entire types of situations”³⁶²

³⁵⁹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 74. See Arthur S. Reber, *Implicit Learning and Tacit Knowledge: An Essay on the Cognitive Unconscious*, Oxford Psychology Series (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press; Clarendon Press, 1993). Robert Bornstein also argued that listeners do not need not to be aware of previously encountered sounds to show a preference for those sounds that are familiar.

³⁶⁰ The Latin root “schema” comes from the Greek σχήμα and refers to something’s “shape,” “form,” or “plan.” In Latin, “schema” would be appropriately pluralized either as “schema” or “schemata.” In this chapter, however, I will use the more common and colloquial form “schemas” as a plural form of “schema,” a declension commonly used in the psychological literature. See Chaffin, “Performing from Memory,” 353.

³⁶¹ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 78.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

and serve as “a set of ideas about how things *usually* are.”³⁶³ A schema—a series of networks that are cued and primed into semi-activity by continuous experience—is what informs the expectations that we as listeners might have about music.³⁶⁴

What happens with experience over time is that the episodic memories that contextualize new musical experiences in real time become abstract semantic memories. For instance, a performance of the reel “My Love is in America” goes from being a unique experience (for example, when a listener heard the tune performed on the Friday night of a music festival) to a type of situation (in which “My Love is in America” is played).³⁶⁵

The theory of schemas helps explain how options for melodic variations in Irish traditional instrumental music might exist conceptually as a menu of types as I have argued in Chapter V, rather than as alterations that occur exclusively on a case-by-case basis. Because tunes often share common melodic sequences, these sequences act like cues for sections of other tunes that may be swapped with varying degrees of premeditation. Hearing a tune whose title is consistently used to refer to a certain pitch sequence reinforces the schema that is associated with the title “My Love is in America” in the long-term memory. This reinforcement both solidifies the category—which is partially defined by set accented tones, harmonic progressions, contour, range, and meter—while at the same time making the details more flexible.

³⁶³ Ibid., 95. Emphasis original.

³⁶⁴ Snyder, “Memory for Music,” 109.

³⁶⁵ Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, 78-79.

Allow me to illustrate this abstract concept with a concrete example. Suppose you are a baker and a customer orders a cake. As a baker, the word “cake” means that you mix eggs, flour, salt, sugar, and baking soda together in a bowl. For the sake of illustration, let us pretend that these ingredients never change. With these fundamental ingredients fixed in your memory, you have some flexibility about how much cinnamon you might add or even how many eggs you might add. The cake needs eggs, but you can decide how many on a case-by-case basis. Some cakes will have cinnamon while others will not: the point is that your schema for “cake” implies certain essential characteristics thus allowing you to improvise the details within certain limits. While you may feel free to put more or less cinnamon in, you will probably not feel free to put more or less soap in the batter. Soap is suitable to have in a bakery, but it obviously does not belong in a cake.

I am suggesting that both a conceptually distinct tune and the processes by which any tune is altered are independent and discrete schemas that interact figuratively in live performance. This makes sense if the variation schema and the tune schema are in some respects both conceptually fixed and conceptually malleable. Snyder posits that

...flexibility makes a schema somewhat like an equation, with abstract variations that can be filled in with different values. These variables, in turn, are like “slots” into which various particular features can be fitted, provided they do not violate the basic nature of the schema. This flexibility is one of the things that make schemas so useful, because they can be adapted to many different situations.³⁶⁶

In geometry, math students use the Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) to determine the length of a triangle’s hypotenuse. The Pythagorean theorem is the schema;

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 97.

the specific sides of the triangle to be measured supply the variables. If an Irish tune functions like a kind of equation with a fixed number of downbeat and upbeat pitches that are complemented by other constraints such as range and contour, then the variations act as variables on that basic formula. For example, one could play a roll almost anywhere in any tune. The roll constitutes one of a great number of musical variables that could be deployed to vary a tune. So far, the tune is the equation (the schema); the variation types are the variables. If we stopped with this example, the variation would be no more than one of several possible adaptations to the tune as case study. But, I do not think that this is the end of variation application.

The tune has certain essential attributes (multiple constraints) that keep it a distinct conceptual entity in the mind of the musician. Melodic variations are changes, but each change is of a certain kind. A roll involves the addition of grace notes where there might have been none in a previous playing. Different kinds of substitutions change the content of a certain rhythmic position rather than add notes to the fundamental rhythmic positions that define a dance genre.

The question that makes me think of melodic variations not just as variables but also independent schemas is this: what is the nature of the change? The fundamental difference between variation types is that either 1) rhythmic positions are added or 2) notes in essential rhythmic positions are altered. This basic observation suggests that variations are in some sense conceptually independent from the tune attributes that may be altered.

The many different situations to which the variation schemas are adapted are the different tune schemas that the long-term memory holds. However, the schemas of the

tune and the variation must remain flexible so that they can interact with each other. The tune schema is defined in part by characteristics like set accented tones. The variation schema is then perhaps applied reactively to the tune schema. Figure 6.16 is one graphic depiction designed to show how a conceptually solid and flexible schema like a discrete tune might have multiple opportunities at which various kinds of variation schemas might be applied to it.

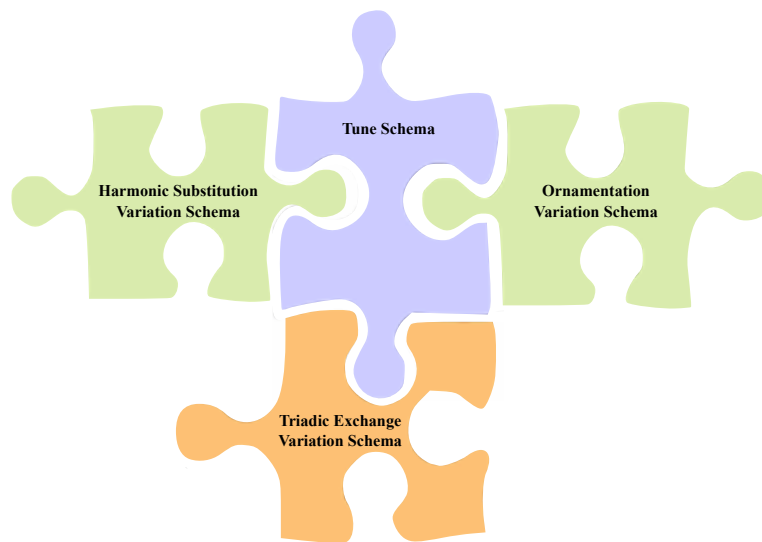


Figure 6.16: Graphic Depiction of Variation Schemas Applied to a Tune Schema

How do Irish musicians then come to deploy variation as an approach to many different kinds of situations rather than as a tedious series of case studies? To be able to conceive and then apply a variation in only a few seconds of premeditation would require a kind of implicit memory, conditioning, and category formation that differs considerably from the kind of creativity employed to compose variations before a performance is given. Earlier in this chapter, I described certain anatomical differences between musicians and non-musicians that can help elucidate why it is that professional performers are able to vary melodies seemingly *ad libitum* and on the spur of the

moment. While subconsciously conceptualizing types of melodic manipulation can be taught and learned theoretically, there seems to be a considerable amount of brain adaptation that needs to occur before such changes can occur suddenly and at dance tempo.

The variation types that I discussed in Chapter V are discrete schemas that I think were initially episodic memories—linked to specific hearings of tunes on a particular occasion in time and space—that have become converted to semantic memories (abstract categories whose initial context has at the same time become less memorable and whose potential for reinsertion and reapplication has become stronger). The process by which a single variation in a single tune becomes abstracted as a way of varying (a schema) takes place through repeated hearings that occur over a very long period of time that I have yet to measure.

Perhaps one reason why the ability to vary melody takes a considerable amount of time to develop in Irish musicians may be because, as I have stated in Chapter III on aesthetic conservatism, copious variation is not the norm in this musical culture. Hearing enough variations of the same tune—let alone variations in other tunes—enables a musician to develop abstract categories to the point at which variation types can be divested of their original experience and thus freed to be integrated in performance with various levels of premeditation.

I am not simply talking about phrase exchange in which phrases between and within tunes are replaced with others, a kind of variation that can, on occasion, be a cuing issue. I am talking about turning isolated experiences into types of experiences. I think

that variations involving Triadic Exchange, Modal Inflection, and Ornamentation³⁶⁷ also act as independent and discrete schemas because these types have a specific result discrete from other types of variations, as I have argued in Chapter V.

Because a schema is a long-term memory and therefore unavailable to conscious activity, variation types, rather than being understood as schemas (kinds of situations), are treated as case studies by musicians trying to teach someone else how to play a variation. The methods by which Irish traditional musicians vary tunes are a composite of long-term semantic memory and long-term implicit memory: the conceptual schema interacts with the muscle memory to insert variations with varying degrees of premeditation. Because long-term memory (especially implicit memory) is not related to language centers in the brain, explaining variations as manipulation types that exist independently of a specific tune has not been documented until this present work.

A musician's ability to vary a melody requires the deployment of various parts of his memory systems. Melodic variations are a function of both conscious and unconscious activity. A musician is keeping track of what tune he is playing on some levels and is not keeping track of it on other levels.

6.17. Tune Title: Cultural and Cognitive Significance

All of this research comes to bear on something like a tune title, or, the omission of a tune title. Stating a tune's title before playing a tune creates considerable expectations about the pitch sequence that is to follow. An experienced listener, when he

³⁶⁷ Snyder suggests that ornaments may be deployed to introduce uncertainty into a pitch category within a musical tuning system. Inserting ornamentation at the beginning or end of a stable pitch event "creates uncertainty about what the stable pitch will actually be or about where it will lead." *ibid.*, 143. Since I found that of the measures varied 74% of them involved Ornamentation as a variation, it seems that this kind of uncertainty is a type with which a great number of musicians in this idiom are comfortable.

hears a performance of a tune whose title he knows, will engage not only the process of primitive grouping, but also the process of schema-driven grouping effects. This schema-driven grouping is a function of experience and learning within a particular musical idiom. Giving a tune's title in album liner notes or before playing a concert is a cue to help the listener reconstruct the patterns that the performer wants his audience to hear.³⁶⁸

In Chapter III, I explained conservative aesthetics and what socio-historical events may have contributed to their formation. Now that we have concluded the biological portion of the discussion, let us revisit these ideas with an eye to how memory and the expectations generated by memory might contribute to aesthetic conservatism.

Priming is a type of implicit memory in which previous experience informs recall outside of conscious awareness.³⁶⁹ This kind of memory also takes place during recognition.³⁷⁰ When we get the sense of familiarity when listening to a tune, as if we have heard it before, this is priming. Tune titles are extremely important to aesthetic and cultural appraisal because titles cue the long-term memory, thus bringing tune schemas into short-term memory so that a performance may be assessed.³⁷¹ Gay McKeon, uilleann piper and former chairman of Na Píobairí Uilleann, mentioned in an interview that he noticed that "...people don't know the names to tunes and stuff like that. I think it's

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 33.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 73.

³⁷⁰ What is called "priming" today was first studied in 1968 by Elizabeth Warrington and Lawrence Weiskrantz. Priming is an instance where, for example, a subject might be shown a picture. The first time that picture is shown, the subject might take 900 milliseconds—just under one second—to speak the name of the object in the picture. The second time that same image is shown, it only takes 800 milliseconds. See Squire, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 15.

³⁷¹ I would like to thank Professor Lori Kruckenberg in particular for encouraging me to pursue and examine the importance of tune title.

almost disrespectful to the music.”³⁷² Given the importance placed on lineage, listening, and community, it is obvious why failing to track repertoire through other musicians and generations would be construed as disrespectful of the tradition.

I would add to this theory that when musicians do not know the names of the tunes that they play—or at least fail to note them in performance or in recordings—they do not set up the kinds of expectations that listeners want when they hear a performance. One reason why people go to live performances instead of simply listening to recorded music is that a live performance offers an opportunity for both surprise and affirmation. When going to a concert, we have certain expectations whether the genre we are about to hear is familiar or unfamiliar. Our hope is that the musical performance will exceed our expectations. The more knowledge we have about a performance going into it will condition our detailed awareness of that event. Giving tune title can heighten a listener’s engagement with the environment since the performer has just given him one more criterion upon which to hang his expectations.

No matter how much importance musicians place on tune titles, the titles themselves can be assigned to more than one tune, and a musician, whose memory is failing him, may make up a new name for a tune that has already been titled by someone else.³⁷³ Titles not only migrate between tunes, but also between genres as examples 6.17a and 6.17b illustrate: there exist both a “Collier’s” reel and a “Collier’s” jig which are both

³⁷² Gay McKeon, interview by author, Dublin, Ireland, May 26, 2007.

³⁷³ Nicolas Carolan writes of Francis O’Neill’s tune-collecting enterprise that “Rather than reproducing exactly what musicians or paper sources provided, as earlier collectors had purposed to do and as modern scholarship would demand, O’Neill and his friends took the more robust and pragmatic approach of practising traditional musicians. They invented titles for anonymous tunes, and reset dance music if necessary in keys suitable for fiddle, flute, and uilleann pipes.” See Nicolas Carolan, *A Harvest Saved: Francis O’neill and Irish Music in Chicago* (Ireland: Ossian Publications, 1997), 42.

to a large degree based on similar set accented tones. Perhaps the similar title is based on the fact that both tunes largely have downbeat and upbeat pitches in common.

Example 6.17a: “The Collier’s Reel” with downbeat pitches circled

Example 6.17b: “The Collier’s Jig” with downbeat pitches circled

Let us compare the downbeat pitches in the A parts of “The Collier’s Reel” and “The Collier’s Jig.”

“The Collier’s Reel”: F, A, C, C, A, D, F, D, F, A, C, C, A, A, E, F

“The Collier’s Jig”: F, A, C, C, A, D, F, C, F, A, C, C, A, A, F, D

What these similar set accented tones show is that the “Collierness” of these two tunes is probably contingent on the downbeat pitches. It would seem that the tune’s identity is determined, at least in part, by the downbeat pitches. The reason why some musicians might identify the two tunes as *similar*, but not the *same* would be due to the change of meter. The reel is in a duple meter while the jig is in triple meter.

Having said that, I think that we should be cautious about assuming that these commonalities imply a relationship. Just because two things are similar does not mean that they are related or that one is derived from the other. It is of course possible that perhaps one musician wrote “The Collier’s Reel” and then she, or another musician at a later point in time, decided to leave out a few notes thus giving us “The Collier’s Jig.” We will probably never know the provenance or relationship (if there is one) between these two different tunes.

What we must consider, however, is that a tune title serves as much more than a commemorative designation for a pitch sequence. The tune title gives us essential and specific information about what notes are to be played and in what order. In one sense, this is obvious: a title goes with a tune. However, what is not so obvious is the fact that a tune’s title acts as an appraisal apparatus for a given pitch sequence and that the relationship between a title and a pitch sequence can engender grossly different physiological responses from listeners based on the expectations that a tune title establishes. The degree to which a tune title corresponds to a sound can drastically alter our emotional state of mind, physiology, behavior, and attitude.

Severe deviations from the listener's tune schema may either delight the listener or frustrate certain expectations that the tune title has engendered. For example, if a musician says he is going to play the reel "My Love is in America," and then proceeds to play anything in 6/8, the audience will be surprised because to the best of my knowledge and the tune collections I have looked through, I have yet to encounter a 6/8 tune called "My Love is in America."

Because both the genre and title are given in a live performance or on a recording, the listener is primed for a musical experience that she expects will—to a considerable degree—correspond with the set accented tones, harmonic progressions, tempo, range, contour, and meter that exists in the long-term memory. Each person will have an immediate negative response if expectations are violated. Whether a positive appraisal follows would have to be tested in a live situation.

6.18. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed what cognitive processes facilitate the varying of melody in Irish traditional music. I have also considered what implications that theories of expectation might have in the appraisal of melodic variations. What seems clear is that while theories and research abound with respect to the functional anatomical nuances of music listening and playing, research has yet to be carried out specifically with Irish traditional music and musicians so that such theories may be refined and situated within the narrower boundaries of enculturation.

Through many hours of listening and playing, schemas are created in the long-term memory. I have argued that there could be schemas for specific tunes. These

schemas would be based on musical attributes such as set accented tones, harmonic rhythm, contour, and range. A proficient musician then, I posit, applies variation schemas to the tune schemas. In this theory, the tune schema and the variation schema are independent, but frequently melded. Variation types, independently of a specific tune, are the “spice” added to the “meat” of invariance.

The aesthetic conservatism that some musicians embrace means that variation types are slowly learned and/or deliberately suppressed in most performances. The rules of the variation schema are learned and absorbed, but because this is done using the unconscious faculties of episodic memory, semantic memory, implicit memory, and other types of long-term memory, variation schemas are not typically recognized as the systems that I contend that they are.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER APPLICATION

7.1. A Brief Summary

In Chapter II, I discussed how Irish traditional musicians come to learn how to vary melodies through childhood enculturation. In a community setting, a child not only learns the acceptable norms of music making, but also can infer proper rules of conduct and comportment. It is senior musicians who establish the rules of behavior, and these rules are established more by example and demonstration than by explicit communication. These senior musicians are the members of the community who may legitimize melodic variations, new compositions, and types of innovation, thus it is from observing older musicians that a child will learn what constitutes acceptable performance practice norms.

In Chapter III, I considered the mindset of a traditional musician as it may be a function of a psycho-socio-historical set of contexts in order to suggest why traditional musicians might exhibit such rules. I introduced the term *aesthetic conservatism*, an idea that implies that there are limitations to melodic variation. Traditional musicians, by virtue of the designation “traditional,” uphold the idea that continuity of practice is preferable to deliberate departures from established norms. An aesthetic conservative is a musician who, despite melodic varying, chooses either consciously or subconsciously to adhere to the metrical requirements of the dance genre that he is playing. This sort of musician also conserves the tune’s identity for the listener by playing certain pitches in rhythmically important positions while changing other notes in rhythmically expendable positions.

To link current attitudes and behaviors with the past, I considered six socio-historical circumstances that may have contributed to the cultivation of this performance philosophy. Those six circumstances were colonialism, Famine survivalism, tune collecting, antiquarian preservationism, remembering loved ones, the advent of recording technology, and anti-commercialism. I proposed that these six distinct circumstances have cultivated a sense of self-effacement and humility among some traditional musicians. The humble musician is disinterested in drawing special attention to one's own musical abilities by showing off or by disrupting the chain of transmission that is perceived to have been unbroken for many generations. The document-making involved in tune collecting and recording technology has given rise to a culture of paradigms and exemplars to be imitated, thus cultivating an attitude among some musicians that is bent on copying authorities rather than exploring types of variance.

The period of colonization and the Great Potato Famine in conjunction with the introduction of exemplars via recordings and tune transcriptions, the desire to remember beloved musicians, and the avoidance of prideful self-exhibitionism all, I think, contribute to the formation of these boundaries. From my perspective, it is the negotiation within these musical conventions and not the violation of them that distinguishes an expert from an amateur in this performance tradition. We may say that the rules are meant to be broken, but the way in which one breaks the rules and the musical argument that results in justifying that breach defines the difference between elegance and crudeness, between cleverness and clumsiness, and between humility and pride. While we may, in the end, win over our audience despite our transgressions, we must realize

this can only be done if we successfully predict their assumptions and address them musically.

In Chapter IV, I discussed my inclusive and exclusive criteria for selecting a sample of fifty source recordings made between 1904 and 2007. I limited my sample to recordings of one melodist and one accompanist at most. There could be no more than ten recordings per decade and there could only be one tune per musician. I further discussed my philosophical approach to transcription and what the reader might expect to find with respect to the format of the transcriptions that I created. I said that I had not made any attempt to precisely transcribe the rhythm of performances because this kind of detail would obscure the melodic variations and the systems of variations that I wanted the transcriptions to exhibit. I also explained that I did not transcribe accompanimental playing of any kind.

From the transcriptions in Appendix C and from my years of experience in this music culture, I developed and introduced a taxonomy of variation types in Chapter V that could be considered as universals of performance practice for Irish traditional instrumental dance music irrespective of a musician's chosen instrument, repertoire, geographical location, ethnicity, gender, or time period. The taxonomy is subdivided first by the number of rhythmic positions in a measure and then by the intervallic changes (or redistribution) of the notes in those positions. The major categories I derived to catalog variation types are: Ornamentation, Triadic Exchange, Modal Inflection, Phrase Exchange, and Passing Tones.

This taxonomy could also have predictive and pedagogical value. The categories that I have devised represent the kinds of variations that recording technology has

allowed to be documented and can also potentially serve as a predictor and categorizer of the kinds of variations one could expect from a performance of an Irish tune in the future. If one were to sit before an Irish instrumentalist and ask her to play variations on a particular tune for several minutes, I suspect that each melodic variation (provided she adhered to the rhythmic and formal requirements of the tune genre) could be cataloged within the taxonomy that I have developed.

With respect to pedagogy, this taxonomy facilitates the categorical breakdown of a complex practice such that a student interested in learning the methods of varying a tune in Irish traditional music might be able to learn how to do so with the categories I have described.

In Chapter VI, I endeavored to estimate the internal contexts that the brain and physiology facilitate. The human brain, it would seem, allows and disallows certain processes that are common to the human memories. We reconstruct memories in order to interface with reality in the present and we enjoy the familiar, perhaps in part because it is easier for the brain to process familiar situations. We are not really able to recall a past event in minute detail. While much of how the memory works is yet to be discovered, I have discussed aspects of human memory that have been studied in order to describe how it is that melodic variation can be both surprising and predictable.

Neural plasticity might explain in part how something such as a musical style might exist at all. We listen to repeated kinds of stimuli and the brain's anatomy is altered to make that processing more efficient. These repeated stimuli causes capillary growth in areas of the brain needed to process the stimuli. One or two hearings of a new kind of music will not substantially change the brain (if it does at all), but decades of playing and

listening creates figurative grooves in the mind that, for the Irish musician, allow—as Seán Ó Riada put it—the river of tradition to flow easily.³⁷⁴

The function of mirror-neurons, systems of neurons that become electrically active when a human being observes, imagines, or practices a certain kind of music familiar to him, suggest that enculturation is more than practicing a system of external customs, mores, and etiquettes. Enculturation does, of course, involve those things. But, musical enculturation also changes our brain's anatomy such that we do, in some sense, become the music. The music-making behaviors of others encourages us to behave in a similar way and, after many years of behaving as we see others behave, our anatomy also changes to facilitate the efficient reproduction of those behaviors and manipulations of the types of behaviors that we abstract from observation.

This is a long way of saying that melodic variation is not simply a byproduct of human anatomy, psychology, and culture, but that melodic variation is a performance practice that invites an investigation of preference formation, societal convention, musculature, and, I think most important of all, motivation and intent. Human behavior is orderly and predictable on a basic level. While certain behaviors might appear random and haphazard to those unfamiliar with certain cultural trends in behavior, human activity can be predictable because the functional anatomy that facilitates certain types of behavior is predictable.

With this said, I would like to discuss further potential application for the kind of research that I have conducted in this dissertation.

³⁷⁴ Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage*, 19-20.

7.2. Immediate Application

I have introduced a systematic method for categorizing melodic variation in Irish traditional instrumental dance music. I have considered the music of many different kinds of instruments, historical contexts, and geographies in order to propose that the system of variables that I observe in Irish traditional performance practice is universal. With a universal system of variables in place, scholars of Irish music may use this tool to further conduct focused studies dedicated specific instruments, time periods, and individual practitioners.

Furthermore, with this performance practice systematized, students of Irish traditional instrumental music may now learn the abstract principles of melodic variation and make up their own variations based on the parameters that I have articulated.

7.3. The Cognitive Study of Complex Motor Tasks

I have cited many studies conducted by neurophysiologists and psychologists that describe the correlation between certain kinds of music-making behavior and the electrical activity in the brain by using an fMRI machine. This body of research explains which areas of the brain are called to action for the physical and mental activities associated with music production. I would like to see these kinds of experiments expanded and extended to other musical idioms. I would be extremely interested in the kinds of data that experiments involving the variation of Irish melody using an fMRI machine might furnish.

In Chapter VI, I discussed theories of memory and proposed the idea that perhaps there are schemas for both tunes and variation types. My supposition was that musicians

have a rather concrete idea of a particular tune in mind, but, because a particular tune is varied in a fixed number of kinds of ways, the way in which the tune is altered is an independent concept.³⁷⁵ While a musician might learn a variation for a specific tune, the nature of that variation may become an independent abstraction that can then be applied to any other tune. The variation type may be applied to the tune in real time and with little premeditation. Upon repeating a similar section of music, a different variation type may be applied.

If my application of memory theory to what I know of performance practice in Irish music is reasonable and consistent, then I would hypothesize that there could be separate kinds of neural networks involved in melodic variation. Certain experiments could be devised to test for the existence of variable neuron functions that coincide with certain kinds of melodic changes. If an fMRI machine did measure differences in brain activity between varying and not varying a particular tune, such results could have extended implications for the study of human physiology. These kinds of measurements could give physicians a better idea about how fine motor control corresponds to goal-oriented tasks. Such results could also yield benefits in the field of music therapy. We know that repetitive behavior can relax patients under duress. Measuring the brain activity of musicians playing melodic variations within an fMRI machine could perhaps expand that understanding.

While it seems unlikely that a musician would be able play inside of an fMRI (since image resolution deteriorates when the subject moves during testing and because

³⁷⁵ By “concrete idea of a particular tune,” I mean that a specific musician has a clear idea when one tune is not another tune. I am not suggesting that there is a common, external model tune or a singular way of identifying a tune. A tune, practically speaking, can be different among musicians, but for each musician the tune is a specific complex of set accented tones, meter, contour, key, and range, which, however, may change over time.

the magnetic field of the machinery would prohibit the presence of metal objects during a screening), areas of the brain housing mirror neurons systems could be monitored in a patient inside an fMRI while another musician plays variations outside of it. This is one possible extension.

These kinds of data could also potentially yield insights about human language and phonology. While music is not a universal language, researchers have suggested that music is similar to a language insofar as the human practice of music making exhibits a kind of grammar and syntax that spoken languages also exhibit. A non-verbal testing situation might be able to give researchers information about how our minds deal with speech and pitch variability.

7.4. New Insights into Historical Performance Practice

Historically informed performance practice is a branch of musicology that relates to the study of treatises, iconography, and other kinds of documents in order to infer the physical means of tone production that would have been current in eras where musicians made music before the advent of sound recording. Furthermore, historically inclined performers underscore the importance of using instruments that were available during the time period in which a certain piece of music was composed.

Traditionally, there has been little serious consideration of European music-making traditions that have operated outside of aristocratic and ecclesiastical contexts in historically informed performance practice. Many music history textbooks deal primarily with musical practices of a rather narrow stratum of European society, but are beginning to mention the import of traditional musics insofar as they have influenced composers

who worked in aristocratic and ecclesiastical contexts.³⁷⁶ I suppose that this is the current state of musicological scholarship and textbooks because the kinds of people who venture into the anthropologically- and socially-oriented field of ethnomusicology tend to study the non-aristocratic and non-ecclesiastical traditions of non-European geographies while those who are theoretically-minded deal with what has constituted (until very recently) historical musicology.

I think that a serious theoretical study of Irish traditional music could bring to light many important ways of thinking about performance practice that historically informed practitioners might assume can be found only in treatises or in jazz departments. Irish traditional dance music we now know, thanks to the work of Aloys Fleischmann, has been consistently documented since the early eighteenth century. The tunes common in the practices of the early eighteenth century are strikingly similar in form, melodic content, and harmonic rhythm to the tunes Irish traditional musicians play in the twenty-first century. These similarities suggest that there has been a continuity of practice (perhaps including variation procedures) over several centuries.³⁷⁷

While documenting non-aristocratic and non-ecclesiastical traditions on paper has not been the norm in Western Europe for hundreds of years, collectors around Europe did document a few different traditions of dance music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I think that Irish instrumental dance music repertoire as it sounds today bears a

³⁷⁶ For example, see Donald Jay Grout, J. Peter Burkholder, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 500, 606-07, 15.

³⁷⁷ While I suggested earlier that older musicians might vary less because they have had fewer sources of input for a single tune (their learning may be more akin to net learning and chain learning), this does not mean that older musicians do not vary at all. While one reading of the dissemination of recordings might be that more recordings result in more variations, I would also contend that ideas about variation would need to have existed prior to the advent of recording technology since this technology has indeed captured these procedures in fixed form.

striking resemblance not only to the Irish repertoire documented in the eighteenth century but also to continental dances of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: binary forms in either duple, triple, and compound meter with predictable harmonic rhythm and motivic content.

While I would not infer from these similarities that Irish traditional instrumental dance music and continental dance musics share a common origin, I would be curious to examine Irish music as perhaps a kind perpetuated mode of thinking that might date from the eighteenth century or earlier. Of course, I can offer no proof about a consistent way of thinking about melodic variation over several centuries—providing evidence for such a claim, as far as I can tell, would be extremely difficult if not impossible. However, I wonder to what extent the kinds of ingrained procedures and systems deployed to vary Irish melodies today are holdovers from earlier centuries and could be appropriately applied to continental musics from earlier centuries.

Were it possible to ascertain with reasonable certainty that this were the case, that the ways in which Irish musicians vary binary dance tunes today were common to the early-eighteenth century, then the discipline of historical performance practice might glean valuable insights from studying the performance practices of contemporary Irish traditional musicians. I am not suggesting this because I think that the musicians of eighteenth-century orchestras played then like Irish musicians play now. But, I am suggesting that there is perhaps more to be derived from contemporary performance practice in Irish music than a cursory assessment might furnish. Having extensive training in both traditional and classical genres, I see similarities in musical structure across these genres that are too obvious to ignore.

7.5. New Approaches to Music Theory and Ear Training Pedagogy

I think one of the greatest benefits and greatest downfalls of the study of so-called classical music is the great variety that we enjoy as listeners and researchers. The harmonic and melodic language of European composers is exceedingly rich: this is both a blessing and a curse if we want to teach students how to analyze music. When we talk of “theory” with respect to music, we often are referring to a set of compositional practices and techniques that are deployed fairly consistently across geographies and individuals. The problem with teaching introductory theory seems apparent to me: what set of practices do we classify as normative?

On one hand, we (some of us, at least) claim certain German composers to be the most creative, exceptional, atypical, and interesting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, these same musicians are then used as normative models for how to write counterpoint and melodies. I think that the cognitive dissonance arising from the idea that a technique is both exceptional and normative should be apparent, and that if we are using singular musicians’ compositions as both normative and exceptional examples, then we ought to reassess our methodology for the sake of our own consistency.

The variety that we treasure about classical music can make it challenging for students to learn the norms of musical behavior. Also, it seems that fewer and fewer students have grown up listening to and playing music from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century orchestral, aristocratic, and ecclesiastical traditions. As a result, students increasingly seem to have diminishing points of reference for what “typical” music sounded like (or should sound like) in nineteenth-century aristocratic and ecclesiastical

contexts. The financial and cultural diversity policies of universities will, over time, likely result in our inability to assume a musical practice or context as normative and may disrupt our ability to communicate univocally to students about how “music” ought to sound and why. Parallel fifths do not sound all that odd to people enculturated in most music traditions and I would argue that without a considerable amount of training, parallel fifths will not sound inappropriate to anyone.

I think it astounding that we assume that the human ear can be trained in a few years at college to predict chord progressions that the ear has not been trained to predict from an early age. I think it unusual because of the research I found and relayed in Chapter VI. The brain can indeed change to process repeated kinds of stimuli, but it seems unlikely that this substantial change would occur in the three or four years that it takes some to complete an undergraduate degree in music.

Having said that, I think that Irish traditional instrumental dance music could serve as a point of departure for teaching both analysis and ear training. The reason that I predict this music’s usefulness is that Irish traditional instrumental dance music is extremely consistent in meter, harmonic rhythm, and chord progressions as the transcriptions in Appendix C show. There are no “surprises” that raise a certain tune to the level of exceptional art—this is what makes Irish repertoire a good point of departure for beginners. Irish repertoire bears enough similarities both harmonically and rhythmically to eighteenth-century dance music that it could easily be used as a springboard into polyphony of that period. The monotony (and I mean that in the most positive sense) of Irish traditional instrumental dance music repertoire is its greatest

offering to beginners in theory who do not need to be impressed with variety and genius as much as they need a sturdy and predictable musical footing.

With respect to cultivating keyboard skills in students having little or no familiarity with the instrument before attending a university, I suspect that showing students how to accompany Irish dance music on the piano could be an excellent way to give a student a simple basis for developing technique while also teaching a student how to improvise accompaniment.

I have been teaching Irish traditional music by demonstration for over a decade and have found that students are better able to retain, manipulate, and reproduce music that they have memorized. I have noticed that students are also able to learn faster once they have memorized many tunes of a particular type because they listen first for rhythmic and harmonic essentials and then fill in the rest. Of course, students do memorize music at university, but the kind of music they memorize is so diverse in harmonic, motivic, and rhythmic vocabulary that extrapolating basic compositional procedures that makes memorization easier might take much longer than it would if they started with Irish music. Memorizing, reproducing, and analyzing Irish tunes could be a profitable way get help students see not only products, but also principles. Memorization, if done the right way and if done with the right repertoire, can lay an unassailable system for integrating and retaining new music.

Irish music exists in this curious liminal space between jazz, which invites melodic improvisation based—usually—on only chord tones, and classical music, which

invites less melodic or harmonic improvisation.³⁷⁸ In Irish music, melodic variation is somewhere in between. The variations themselves are not prescribed as in a theme and variations, but the variation procedure is also more restricted than the playing of any chord tone at any time. The tune has characteristics—rules—that are maintained in Irish music common practice and I think that in this way, students could learn the principles of variation in order to make them well-rounded musicians and music teachers.

7.6. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have introduced a few new concepts to the study of melodic variation in Irish traditional music. This systematic approach may have far reaching implications with respect to human physiology. The criteria I have offered for analysis will perhaps bring more critical attention to the performance practice of Irish traditional music as it is played within the changing contexts of society, history, and the mind.

³⁷⁸ Exceptions do, of course, exist. Notated fauxbourdon, Arcangelo Corelli's improvisatory suggestions, thoroughbass treatises, and descriptions of Franz Liszt's piano playing all testify to the improvisatory nature of music-making in Western Europe.

APPENDIX A
INDEX OF PERFORMERS AND REPERTOIRE BY
MELODIC INSTRUMENT

Accordion

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Byrne, Dermot	Hardiman the Fiddler	Slip Jig	1995	40
Derrane, Joe	Humours of Lissadell	Reel	1996	42
Grogan, Michael	Off to California	Hornpipe	1931	8
McComiskey, Billy	Dinny Delaney	Reel	1981	30
O'Brien, Paddy	Garrett Barry's	Jig	1988	34

Banjo

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Egan, Seamus	Bobby Casey's	Reel	1990	39

Concertina

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Coen, Charles	The Tynagh	Jig	1979	28

Fiddle

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Burke, Kevin	Paddy's Return	Jig	1982	31
Canny, Paddy	Rogha Ghearóid De Barra	Jig	1959	15
Carroll, Liz	The Drunken Sailor	Hornpipe	2000	48
Casey, Bobby	Paddy Ryan's Dream	Reel	1959	16
Coleman, Michael	Rakish Paddy	Reel	1922	4
Connolly, Seamus	Sheila Coyle's	Reel	1989	36
Cronin, Edward	Banish Misfortune	Jig	c. 1904	1
Doherty, John	The Spirits of Wine	Reel	1968-74	17
Gavin, Frankie	The Peacock's Feather	Hornpipe	1977	25
Howard, John	Toss the Feathers	Reel	1942	11
Keane, Seán	Gusty's Frolics	Slip Jig	1975	22
Keegan, Josephine	Music in the Glen	Reel	1980	29
Kelly, James	Sporting Paddy	Reel	1989	37
Killoran, Paddy	Down the Broom	Reel	1937	9
McGuire, Sean	The Poppy Leaf	Hornpipe	1969	19
Mulvihill, Brendan	The Lark in the Morning	Jig	1999	47
Murphy, Denis	Humours of Galteemore	Reel	1949	13
Potts, Tommy	My Love is in America	Reel	1971	21
Reavy, Edward	The Boys of the Lough	Reel	1928	7

Flute

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Carty, Paddy	The Dogs Among the Bushes	Reel	1969	18
Clifford, Billy	The Chordal	Jig	1977	24
Crawford, Kevin	Sporting Paddy	Reel	1995	41
Keegan, Niall	The Dunmore Lasses	Reel	1999	46
McKenna, John	The Flowers of the Red Mill	Reel	1928	6
Molloy, Matt	Patsy Touhey's	Reel	1984	33
Sherlock, Roger	The Duke of Leinster	Reel	1978	26
Taylor, Paddy	The Hag with the Money	Jig	1970	20

Pedal Organ

<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Ó Súilleabháin, Mícheál	The Salamanca	Reel	1976	23

Tin Whistle

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Bergin, Mary	Tom Billy's	Jig	1979	27

Uilleann Pipes

<u>Musician</u>	<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Genre</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Clancy, Willie	Down the Back Lane	Jig	1958	14
Ennis, Séamus	Bonny Kate	Reel	1940	10
Ennis, Tom	The Swallow's Tail	Reel	1920	3
Gallagher, Michael	The Plains of Boyle	Hornpipe	1924	5
Grasso, Eliot	The Butcher's March	Jig	2007	50
Hannan, Robbie	Kitty's Rambles	Jig	1998	45
Keenan, Paddy	The Maid Behind the Bar	Reel	1983	32
McKeon, Gay	The Maid in the Cherry	Reel	1997	44
O'Brien, Mick	Higgins's	Hornpipe	1996	43
O'Flynn, Liam	McGreevy's	Jig	1989	38
O'Hare, Kieran	Páidín O'Rafertaigh	Jig	2001	49
O'Leary, Christy	Out on the Ocean	Jig	1988	35
O'Mealy, Richard	Drops of Brandy	Slip Jig	1943	12
Touhey, Patsy	The Connachtman's Rambles	Jig	c. 1904	2

APPENDIX B

INDEX OF TRANSCRIBED REPERTOIRE BY GENRE

Hornpipes

<u>Title</u>	<u>Musician</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Drunken Sailor, The	Liz Carroll	Fiddle	2000	48
Higgins's	Mick O'Brien	Uilleann Pipes	1996	43
Off to California	Michael Grogan	Accordion	1931	8
Peacock's Feather, The	Frankie Gavin	Fiddle	1977	25
Plains of Boyle, The	Michael Gallagher	Uilleann Pipes	1924	5
Poppy Leaf, The	Sean McGuire	Fiddle	1969	19

Jigs

<u>Title</u>	<u>Musician</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Banish Misfortune	Edward Cronin	Fiddle	c. 1904	1
Butcher's March, The	Eliot Grasso	Uilleann Pipes	2007	50
Cordal, The	Billy Clifford	Flute	1977	24
Connachtman's Rambles, The	Patsy Touhey	Uilleann Pipes	c. 1904	2
Down the Back Lane	Willie Clancy	Uilleann Pipes	1958	14
Garrett Barry's	Paddy O'Brien	Accordion	1988	34
Hag with the Money, The	Paddy Taylor	Flute	1970	20
Johnny McGreevy's	Liam O'Flynn	Uilleann Pipes	1989	38
Lark in the Morning, The	Brendan Mulvihill	Fiddle	1999	46
Out on the Ocean	Christy O'Leary	Uilleann Pipes	1988	35
Paddy's Return	Kevin Burke	Fiddle	1982	31
Páidín O'Rafertaigh	Kieran O'Hare	Uilleann Pipes	2001	49
Rambles of Kitty, The	Robbie Hannan	Uilleann Pipes	1998	45
Rogha Ghearóid De Barra	Paddy Canny	Fiddle	1959	15
Tom Billy's	Mary Bergin	Tin Whistle	1979	27
Tynagh, The	Charles Coen	Concertina	1979	28

Reels

<u>Title</u>	<u>Musician</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Bobby Casey's	Seamus Egan	Banjo	1990	39
Bonny Kate	Séamus Ennis	Uilleann Pipes	1940	10
Boys of the Lough, The	Edward Reavy	Fiddle	1928	7
Dinny Delaney's	Billy McComiskey	Accordion	1981	30
Dogs Among the Bushes	Paddy Carty	Flute	1969	18
Down the Broom	Paddy Killoran	Fiddle	1937	9
Duke of Leinster, The	Roger Sherlock	Flute	1978	26
Dunmore Lassies, The	Niall Keegan	Flute	1999	47
Flowers of the Red Mill, The	John McKenna	Flute	1928	6
Humours of Galteemore, The	Denis Murphy	Fiddle	1949	13
Humours of Lissadell, The	Joe Derrane	Accordion	1996	42
Maid Behind the Bar, The	Paddy Keenan	Uilleann Pipes	1983	32
Maid in the Cherry Tree, The	Gay McKeon	Uilleann Pipes	1997	44
Music in the Glen	Josephine Keegan	Fiddle	1980	29
My Love is in America	Tommy Potts	Fiddle	1971	21
Paddy Ryan's Dream	Bobby Casey	Fiddle	1959	16
Patsy Touhey's	Matt Molloy	Flute	1984	33
Rakish Paddy	Michael Coleman	Fiddle	1922	4
Salamanca, The	Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin	Pedal Organ	1976	23
Sheila Coyle's Reel	Seamus Connolly	Fiddle	1989	36
Spirits of Wine, The	John Doherty	Fiddle	c. 1968-74	17

Sporting Paddy	Kevin Crawford	Flute	1995	41
	James Kelly	Fiddle	1989	37
Swallow's Tail, The	Tom Ennis	Uilleann Pipes	1920	3
Toss the Feathers	John Howard	Fiddle	1942	11

Slip Jigs

<u>Title</u>	<u>Musician</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Transcription #</u>
Drops of Brandy	Richard O'Mealy	Uilleann Pipes	1943	12
Gusty's Frolics	Seán Keane	Fiddle	1975	22
Hardiman the Fiddler	Dermot Byrne	Accordion	1995	40

APPENDIX C
50 TRANSCRIPTIONS OF IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC
RECORDED C. 1904-2007

- 1900s -

(1)

Banish Misfortune
(Jig)

performed by Edward Cronin (c. 1847-c. 1913), fiddle (c. 1904)
track 10, CD 2 on *The Francis O'Neill Cylinders* (2010)

A (0:09)

1st time

(0:58)

2nd time

(1:46)

3rd time

6 **A'** (0:17)

(1:06)

(1:54)

11

16 **B** (0:25)

(1:13)

(2:03)

21

26 **B'** (0:33)

(1:22)

(2:12)

31 C (0:42)

(1:30)

(2:18)

36

5

5

5

41 C' (0:49)

4

4

4

(1:38)

4

4

4

(2:27)

4

4

4

45

5 4

5 4

5

END TUNE (2:35)

The jig “Banish Misfortune” is the only tune that Edward Cronin plays on this track of the source recording. Edward Cronin is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(2)

The Connachtman’s Rambles
(Jig)

performed by Patsy Touhey (1865-1923), uilleann pipes (c. 1904)
track 11, CD 1 on *The Francis O’Neill Cylinders* (2010)

A (0:06)

1st time

2nd time (0:34)

3rd time (0:59)

4th time (1:24)

5th time (1:50)

6th time (2:16)

5

Musical score for measures 5-8, consisting of six staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs. The melody is consistent across all staves.

9

A'(0:14)

Musical score for measures 9-14, consisting of six staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs. The melody is consistent across all staves. Time markers are placed above the staves: (0:40) above the second staff, (1:05) above the third staff, (1:31) above the fourth staff, (1:56) above the fifth staff, and (2:22) above the sixth staff.

14

Musical score for measures 14-17. The score consists of six staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The sixth staff includes the text "END TUNE (2:29)" at the end of the line.

18

B (0:21)

Musical score for measures 18-22, labeled as section B. The score consists of five staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. Time markers are placed at the beginning of each staff: (0:46), (1:12), (1:37), and (2:03).

22

Musical score for measures 22-25, consisting of five staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*.

B' (0:27)

26

Musical score for measures 26-30, consisting of five staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. Time signatures are indicated above the staves: (0:53), (1:18), (1:44), and (2:09).

30

The image shows a musical score for a jig titled "The Connachtman's Rambles". The score is written in D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first four staves are identical, and the fifth staff is a variation. The music is a jig, characterized by its 3/4 time signature and D major key signature. The melody is simple and repetitive, with a strong rhythmic pattern. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of two sharps (D major), and a 3/4 time signature. The music is written in a single system with five staves. The first four staves are identical, and the fifth staff is a variation.

The jig “The Connachtman’s Rambles” is the only tune that Patsy Touhey plays on the source recording. Patsy Touhey is the only musician playing on the source recording.

- 1920s -

(3)

The Swallow's Tail
(Reel)

performed by Tom Ennis (1889-1931), uilleann pipes (1920)
track 20 on *Oldtime Records Vol. 1 U.S. Recordings* (2006)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves: the top staff is labeled '1st time' and the bottom staff is labeled '2nd time'. The first measure of the 1st time is marked with a box containing the letter 'A' and a duration of '(0:01)'. The second measure of the 2nd time is marked with a duration of '(0:32)'. The second system also has two staves. The first measure of the top staff is marked with a '4' and the first measure of the bottom staff is marked with a '7'. The first measure of the top staff in the second system is marked with 'A' (0:08) and the first measure of the bottom staff is marked with '(0:40)'. The third system has two staves, with the first measure of the top staff marked with an '11'. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests.

15 **B** (0:16)

(0:47)

19

23 **B'** (0:24)

(0:55)

27

30

END TUNE (1:02)

Tom Ennis plays the reel “The Maid Behind the Bar” after the reel “The Swallow’s Tail” on the source recording. The accompanying pianist on this recording is unknown.

(4)

Rakish Paddy
(Reel)

performed by Michael Coleman (1891-1945), fiddle (1922)
track 14, CD 1 on *Michael Coleman 1891-1945* (1991)

A (0:02)

1st time

(0:34)

2nd time

(1:07)

3rd time

4

7 **A'** (0:10)

(0:42)

(1:15)

11

Musical score for measures 11-14, featuring three staves in G major. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

15

B (0:18)

(0:51)

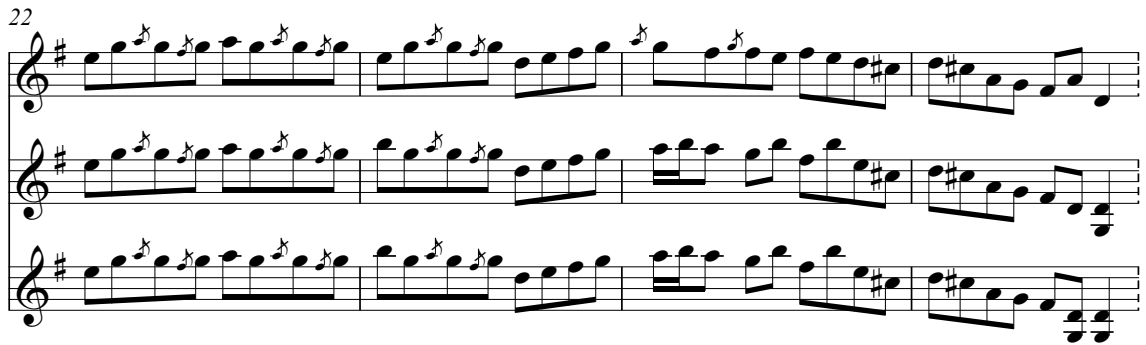
(1:23)

Musical score for measures 15-18, featuring three staves in G major. A boxed section labeled 'B' begins at measure 15. Time markers (0:18), (0:51), and (1:23) are placed above the staves. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

19

Musical score for measures 19-22, featuring three staves in G major. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

22



26 **B'** (0:28)

(0:59)

(1:32)



29



31



END TUNE (1:40)

Michael Coleman plays the reel “The Boys of Ballisodare” after the reel “Rakish Paddy” on the source recording. John Muller plays piano accompaniment on this recording.

(5)

The Plains of Boyle
(Hornpipe)

performed by Michael Gallagher (c. 1890-1972), uilleann pipes (1924)
track 21 on *Oldtime Records Vol. 2 U.S. Recordings* (2007)

A (0:01)

1st time

2nd time (0:39)

4

7 **A'** (0:10)

(0:49)

11

14

Musical notation for measures 14-16, consisting of two staves in G major. The melody features eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and accents.

17

B (0:20)

(0:58)

Musical notation for measures 17-19, consisting of two staves in G major. Measure 17 is marked with a box labeled 'B' and a time signature '(0:20)'. Measure 18 is marked with '(0:58)'. The notation includes slurs and accents.

20

Musical notation for measures 20-22, consisting of two staves in G major. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, featuring slurs and accents.

23

B' (0:29)

(1:07)

Musical notation for measures 23-26, consisting of two staves in G major. Measure 23 is marked with a box labeled 'B'' and a time signature '(0:29)'. Measure 25 is marked with '(1:07)'. The notation includes slurs and accents.

27

Musical notation for measures 27-30, consisting of two staves in G major. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, featuring slurs and accents.

30

END TUNE (1:03)

Michael Gallagher plays the hornpipe “The Leitrim Fancy” after the hornpipe “The Plains of Boyle” on the source recording. Arthur McKenna plays piano accompaniment on this recording.

(6)

The Flowers of the Red Mill
(Reel)

performed by John McKenna (1880-1947), flute (1928)
track 16, CD 1 of *Leaving Tipperary of Farewell to Ireland* (2005)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:14)

2nd time

(0:28)

3rd time

(0:42)

4th time

(0:55)

5th time

4 **A'** (0:04)

(0:17)

(0:31)

(0:45)

(0:59)

Detailed description: This block contains five staves of musical notation for section A'. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The section is marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. Time markers are placed below the staves: (0:04) at the start, (0:17) below the second staff, (0:31) below the third staff, (0:45) below the fourth staff, and (0:59) below the fifth staff.

8 **B** (0:07)

(0:21)

(0:35)

(0:49)

(1:03)

Detailed description: This block contains five staves of musical notation for section B. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The section is marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. Time markers are placed below the staves: (0:07) at the start, (0:21) below the second staff, (0:35) below the third staff, (0:49) below the fourth staff, and (1:03) below the fifth staff.

12 **B' (0:10)**

(0:24)

(0:38)

(0:53)

(1:06)

15

END TUNE (1:18)

John McKenna plays the reel “Back in the Garden” before the reel “The Flowers of the Red Mill” on the source recording. The accompanying pianist on this recording is unknown.

(7)

The Boys of the Lough
(Reel)

performed by Edward Reavy (1898-1988), fiddle (1928)
track 10, CD 3 on *Memories of Sligo of Farewell to Ireland* (2005)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:35)

2nd time

(1:08)

3rd time

(1:42)

4th time

4

8 **A'** (0:10)

(0:43)

(1:15)

(1:50)

12

16 **B** (0:18)

(0:51)

(1:25)

(1:58)

20

Musical score for measures 20-23, consisting of four staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first two staves are identical. The third staff contains a measure with a fermata over a half note, followed by a measure with a fermata over a quarter note. The fourth staff is identical to the first two.

24

Musical score for measures 24-27, consisting of four staves. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first two staves are identical. The third staff contains a measure with a fermata over a half note, followed by a measure with a fermata over a quarter note. The fourth staff is identical to the first two. Time markers are present: **B'** (0:27) above the first staff, (1:00) above the second staff, (1:33) above the third staff, and (2:06) above the fourth staff.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-30, consisting of four staves of music in G major. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and slurs. The first two staves are identical, and the last two are also identical.

31

Musical notation for measures 31-34, consisting of four staves of music in G major. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and slurs. The first two staves are identical, and the last two are also identical. The text "END TUNE (2:12)" is written above the fourth staff.

Edward Reavy plays the reel “Tom Clark’s Fancy” after the reel “The Boys of the Lough” on the source recording. Michael Crowley plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

- 1930s -

(8)

Off to California
(Hornpipe)

performed by Michael J. Grogan (fl. 1931), accordion (1931)
track 8 on *Irish Dance Music* (1995)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:41)

4

8 **A'** (0:10)

(0:51)

12

16 **B** (0:21)

(1:02)

20

24 **B'** (0:33)

(1:12)

28

31

END TUNE (1:22)

The image shows a musical score for a hornpipe. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system is labeled '16' and 'B' (0:21), with a time signature of (1:02). The second system is labeled '20'. The third system is labeled '24' and 'B' (0:33), with a time signature of (1:12). The fourth system is labeled '28'. The fifth system is labeled '31' and 'END TUNE (1:22)'. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Michael Grogan plays the hornpipe “Dunphy’s” after the hornpipe “Off to California” on the source recording. Michael Grogan is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(9)

Down the Broom
(Reel)

performed by Paddy Killoran (1904-1965), fiddle (1937)
track 22 on *Oldtime Records, Vol. 1 U.S. Recordings* (2006)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:34)

2nd time

(1:07)

3rd time

4

A' (0:09)

(0:42)

(1:16)

12

Musical notation for measures 12-15, three staves in G major. The notation consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves have a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties.

16

B (0:17)

(0:50)

(1:25)

Musical notation for measures 16-19, three staves in G major. The notation consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves have a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties. A section marker **B** is placed above the first staff at measure 17, with a time marker (0:17) below it. Subsequent time markers (0:50) and (1:25) are placed above the second and third staves respectively.

20

Musical notation for measures 20-23, three staves in G major. The notation consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves have a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties.

24

B' (0:25)

(0:59)

(1:32)

Musical notation for measures 24-27, three staves in G major. The notation consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves have a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties. A section marker **B'** is placed above the first staff at measure 25, with a time marker (0:25) below it. Subsequent time markers (0:59) and (1:32) are placed above the second and third staves respectively.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-30 of the reel "The Gatehouse Maid". The notation is presented in three staves, all in treble clef and G major. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and accents. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The music continues across three staves.

31

Musical notation for measures 31-33 of the reel "The Gatehouse Maid". The notation is presented in three staves, all in treble clef and G major. The melody continues from the previous section. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The music concludes with a double bar line. The text "END TUNE (1:41)" is written to the right of the third staff.

END TUNE (1:41)

Paddy Killoran plays the reel “The Gatehouse Maid” after the reel “Down the Broom” on the source recording. The accompanying pianist on this recording is unknown.

- 1940s -

(10)

Bonny Kate
(Reel)

performed by Séamus Ennis (1919-1982), uilleann pipes (1940)
track 1 on *Return from Fingal* (1997)

A (0:02)

1st time

2nd time (0:38)

5

9 **A'** (0:12)

(0:47)

13

17 **B** (0:21)

(0:56)

21

24 **B'** (0:30)

(1:05)

27

31

END TUNE (1:14)

Séamus Ennis plays the reel “The Milliner’s Daughter” after the reel “Bonny Kate” on the source recording. Séamus Ennis is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(11)

Toss the Feathers (Reel)

performed by John Howard (fl. 1942), fiddle (1942)
track 2 on *Milestone at the Garden* (2010)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:18)

2nd time

(0:34)

3rd time

(0:50)

4th time

(1:06)

5th time

5 **A'** (0:05)

(0:22)

(0:38)

(0:54)

(1:10)

9 **B** (0:10)

(0:26)

(0:43)

(0:58)

(1:14)

Detailed description: This block contains five staves of musical notation for measures 9 through 12. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. Measure 9 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 9. Time markers are placed below the staves: (0:10) is above the first staff, (0:26) below the second, (0:43) below the third, (0:58) below the fourth, and (1:14) below the fifth.

13

Detailed description: This block contains five staves of musical notation for measures 13 through 16. The music continues in G major and 4/4 time. The notation consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The key signature remains one sharp.

16

END TUNE (1:24)

This block contains a musical score for the reel "Callan Lassies". It consists of five staves of music, all in treble clef and G major. The music is a single melodic line repeated across the staves. The score begins at measure 16 and ends with a double bar line. The text "END TUNE (1:24)" is positioned at the end of the fifth staff.

John Howard plays the reel “Callan Lassies” after the reel “Toss the Feathers” on the source recording. John Howard is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(12)

Drops of Brandy
(Slip Jig)

performed by Richard O’Mealy (1873-1947), uilleann pipes (1943)
BBC Broadcast tape (1943)

A (0:04)

1st time (0:21)

2nd time (0:37)

3rd time (0:54)

4th time

This block contains a musical score for the slip jig "Drops of Brandy". It features four staves of music, all in treble clef and G major. The music is a single melodic line repeated across the staves. The score begins with a boxed letter 'A' and a time signature of 9/8. The first staff is labeled "1st time" and has a time marker "(0:04)" above it. The second staff is labeled "2nd time" and has a time marker "(0:21)" above it. The third staff is labeled "3rd time" and has a time marker "(0:37)" above it. The fourth staff is labeled "4th time" and has a time marker "(0:54)" above it. Each staff ends with a double bar line.

4

A' (0:08)

Musical score for section A' (0:08), consisting of four staves of music in G major. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

(0:25)

(0:41)

(0:58)

8

B (0:12)

Musical score for section B (0:12), consisting of four staves of music in G major. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

(0:29)

(0:46)

END TUNE (1:07)

11

Musical score for section 11, consisting of three staves of music in G major. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

14 **B'** (0:17)

(0:33)

(0:50)

16

Detailed description: This block contains two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled '14 B' (0:17)', consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff has a measure rest for the first measure, followed by eighth-note patterns. The second and third staves have a measure rest for the first measure, followed by eighth-note patterns. Time markers (0:33) and (0:50) are placed above the second and third staves respectively. The second system, labeled '16', also consists of three staves in the same key and time signature, with eighth-note patterns throughout. The first measure of the first staff in this system has a measure rest.

This is the only tune that Richard O’Mealy plays on the source recording. Richard O’Mealy is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(13)

The Humours of Galteemore
(Reel)

performed by Denis Murphy (1910-1974), fiddle (1949)
track 3 on *Music from Sliabh Luachra* (200?)

A

1st time

(0:19)

2nd time

(0:36)

3rd time

(0:54)

4th time

Detailed description: This block contains a musical score for section 'A' in G major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It features four staves, each representing a 'time' (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th). The first staff begins with a measure rest, followed by eighth-note patterns. The second, third, and fourth staves begin with eighth-note patterns. Time markers (0:19), (0:36), and (0:54) are placed above the second, third, and fourth staves respectively. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and eighth rests.

5 **A'** (0:06)

(0:23)

(0:41)

(0:58)

9 **B** (0:10)

(0:27)

(0:45)

(1:02)

13 **B'** (0:14)

(0:32)

(0:49)

(1:06)

16

END TUNE (1:11)

Denis Murphy plays the reel “O’Keefe’s Dream” after the reel “The Humours of Galteemore” on the source recording. Denis Murphy is the only musician on the source recording.

- 1950s -

(14)

Down the Back Lane
(Jig)

performed by Willie Clancy (1918-1973), uilleann pipes (1958)
track 15 on *The Piping of Willie Clancy, Vol. 1* (1980)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:32)

2nd time

(1:02)

3rd time

(1:31) END TUNE (1:33)

4th time

5

10 **A'** (0:09)

(0:39)

(1:09)

15 **B** (0:17)

(0:47)

(1:16)

20

25 **B'** (0:25)



(0:55)

(1:24)

29



The jig “Down the Back Lane” is the only tune that Willie Clancy plays on the source recording. Willie Clancy is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(15)

Rogha Ghearáid De Barra
 (Garret Barry’s)
 (Jig)

performed by Paddy Canny (1919-2008), fiddle (1959)
 track 23 on *Milestone at the Garden* (1996)

A (0:00)

1st time



(0:33)

2nd time



(1:06)

3rd time



6 **A'** (0:09)

(0:41)

(1:14)

11

16 **B** (0:16)

(0:50)

(1:23)

21 **B'** (0:25)

(0:58)

(1:31)

26

29

END TUNE (1:39)

Paddy Canny plays the jig “Bruacha Loch Gabhna” after the jig “Rogha Ghearóid De Barra” on the source recording. Paddy Canny is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(16)

Paddy Ryan’s Dream
(Reel)

performed by Bobby Casey (1926-2000), fiddle (1959)
track 6 on *Casey in the Cowhouse* (1992)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:41)

2nd time

4

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Both staves contain rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes.

7

A' (0:12)

(0:50)

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. Time markers (0:12) and (0:50) are placed above the staves.

11

(0:17)

(0:55)

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. Time markers (0:17) and (0:55) are placed above the staves.

15

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket.

18

B (0:22)

(1:00)

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). A box labeled 'B' is placed at the start of the first staff. Time markers (0:22) and (1:00) are placed above the staves.

21

Musical notation for measures 21-24, consisting of two staves of music in treble clef. The melody is a continuous sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals.

25

B' (0:31)

(1:09)

Musical notation for measures 25-27, consisting of two staves of music in treble clef. Measure 25 is marked with a repeat sign. The notation includes a section labeled 'B' (0:31) and a section labeled '(1:09)'.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-30, consisting of two staves of music in treble clef. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes.

31

END TUNE (1:21)

Musical notation for measures 31-34, consisting of two staves of music in treble clef. The notation ends with a double bar line. The section is labeled 'END TUNE (1:21)'.

The reel “Paddy Ryan’s Dream” is the only tune that Bobby Casey plays on the source recording. Bobby Casey is the only musician playing on the source recording.

- 1960s -

(17)

The Spirits of Wine
(Reel)

performed by John Doherty (d. 1980), fiddle (sometime between 1968 and 1974)³⁷⁹
track 1 on *The Floating Bow* (1996)

A

(0:01)

1st time

(0:34)

2nd time

(1:07)

3rd time

5

³⁷⁹ Alun Evans writes in the liner notes of *The Floating Bow* that "...these recordings of John Doherty were made over a six year period from 1968-74, on an Akai X-1800SD, reel-to-reel stereo recorder." Specific years are not given for each track, hence the time expanse of 1968-1974. I have chosen to include this track among the recordings of the 1960s because I have ample sources for the 1970s.

9 **A'** (0:10)

(0:42)

(1:15)

13

17 **B** (0:17)

(0:50)

(1:23)

21

25 **B'** (0:26)

(0:58)

(1:31)

29

31

END TUNE (1:39)

John Doherty plays “Madame Bonaparte” after the reel “The Spirits of Wine” on the source recording. John Doherty is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(18)

The Dogs Among the Bushes
(Reel)

performed by Paddy Carty (1929-1985), flute
track 22 on *Traditional Irish Music from Galway* (1969)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:20)

3rd time (0:39)

A' (0:05)

4

(0:24)

(0:44)

B (0:10)

7

(0:30)

(0:49)

10 **B'** (0:15)

(0:34)

(0:53)

14

END TUNE (0:57)

Paddy Carty plays the reel “The Flogging Reel” after the reel “The Dogs Among the Bushes” on the source recording. Paddy Carty is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(19)

The Poppy Leaf
(Hornpipe)

performed by Sean McGuire (1924-2005), fiddle
track 3 on *The Wild Irishman* (1969)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:43)

3rd time (1:24)

4

8 **A'** (0:11)

(0:54)

(1:35)

12

Musical score for measures 12-15, three staves in G major. The first staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves contain a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

16

B (0:22)

(1:04)

(1:45)

Musical score for measures 16-18, three staves in G major. A section labeled 'B' begins at measure 16. Time markers (0:22), (1:04), and (1:45) are placed above the staves. The notation includes a double bar line at the end of measure 17.

19

Musical score for measures 19-21, three staves in G major. The first staff features a more active melodic line with sixteenth notes. The second and third staves continue the harmonic accompaniment.

22

Three staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains measures 22-24. The second and third staves contain measures 23-25. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

25 **B'** (0:32)

Three staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains measures 25-28. The second and third staves contain measures 26-29. Measure 25 is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled (1:14). Measure 26 is marked with a first ending bracket labeled (1:55). The music features eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

29

Three staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains measures 29-31. The second and third staves contain measures 30-32. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

32

The image shows a musical score for three staves, all in G major (one sharp). The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The middle and bottom staves begin with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music consists of a series of notes and rests, ending with a double bar line. The text "END TUNE (2:05)" is written in the right margin of the bottom staff.

Sean McGuire plays the hornpipe “McCormack’s” after the hornpipe “The Poppy Leaf” on the source recording. Josephine Keegan plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

- 1970s -

(20)

The Hag with the Money
(Jig)

performed by Paddy Taylor (1914-1976), flute
track 5 on *The Boy in the Gap* (1970)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:30)

5 **A'** (0:07)

(0:37)

10

14 **B** (0:15)

(0:45)

19

24 **B'** (0:22)

(0:52)

29

END TUNE (0:59)

Paddy Taylor plays the jig “Faster the Legging” after the jig “The Hag with the Money” on the source recording. Paddy Taylor is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(21)

My Love is in America
(Reel)

performed by Tommy Potts (1912-1988), fiddle
track 12 on *The Liffey Banks* (1971)

(0:00)

5

(0:12)

13



Musical staff 13: Treble clef, starting with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some ties and slurs.

17 (0:21)



Musical staff 17: Treble clef, key signature changes to one flat (Bb). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

21



Musical staff 21: Treble clef, key signature changes to two sharps (F#, C#). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

25 (0:30)



Musical staff 25: Treble clef, key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

29



Musical staff 29: Treble clef, key signature changes to one sharp (F#). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

33 (0:39)



Musical staff 33: Treble clef, key signature changes to one flat (Bb). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

37 (0:46)



Musical staff 37: Treble clef, key signature changes to two sharps (F#, C#). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

41 (0:48)



Musical staff 41: Treble clef, key signature changes to one flat (Bb). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

45



Musical staff 45: Treble clef, key signature changes to two sharps (F#, C#). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

49 (0:57)



Musical staff 49: Treble clef, key signature changes to one flat (Bb). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes, ending with a double bar line.

53 (1:02)

57 (1:06)

61

65 (1:15)

69

73 (1:23)

77 (1:30)

81

85 (1:39)

89 (1:41)



Tommy Potts does not play any other tune before or after the reel “My Love is in America” on the source recording. Tommy Potts is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(22)

Gusty's Frolics
(Slip Jig)

performed by Seán Keane (b. 1946), fiddle
track 4 on *Gusty's Frolics* (1975)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:43)

3rd time (1:25)

4

A' (0:06)

(0:48)

(1:30)

7

10 **B** (0:12)

(0:54)

(1:35)

13 **B'** (0:16)

(0:59)

(1:40)

16 **C** (0:22)

(1:04)

(1:46)

19

Musical score for measures 19-21, three staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals.

22 **C'** (0:27)

Musical score for measures 22-24, three staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. Measure 22 is labeled **C'** (0:27). Measure 23 is labeled (1:09). Measure 24 is labeled (1:51).

25 **D** (0:32)

Musical score for measures 25-27, three staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. Measure 25 is labeled **D** (0:32). Measure 26 is labeled (1:14). Measure 27 is labeled (1:57). A 4-measure rest is present in measure 26.

28 D' (0:38)

31

END TUNE (2:09)

Seán Keane does not play any tune before or after the slip jig “Gusty’s Frolics” on the source recording. Seán Keane is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(23)

The Salamanca
(Reel)

performed by Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (b. 1950), pedal organ
track 2 on *Jockey to the Fair* (1976)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:37)

2nd time

(1:14)

3rd time

(1:49)

4th time

4

8 A' (0:10)

(0:46)

(1:22)

(1:58)

11

15 **B** (0:19)

(0:55)

(1:31)

(2:06)

19

23

B' (0:28)

Musical score for measures 23-26, consisting of four staves. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled with a measure number of 23. The second staff has a measure number of 24 and a time signature of (1:05). The third staff has a measure number of 25 and a time signature of (1:40). The fourth staff has a measure number of 26 and a time signature of (2:15). The music features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the first three staves, with a change to sixteenth notes in the fourth staff.

27

Musical score for measures 27-30, consisting of four staves. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled with a measure number of 27. The music continues with a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the first three staves, with a change to sixteenth notes in the fourth staff.

30

END TUNE (2:29)

This block contains a musical score for a reel. It consists of four staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is written in a rhythmic pattern characteristic of a reel. The fourth staff ends with the text 'END TUNE (2:29)'.

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin does not play any tune before or after the reel “The Salamanca” on the source recording. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(24)

The Cordal
(Jig)

performed by Billy Clifford (fl. 1977), flute
track 5 on *Irish Traditional Flute Solos and Band Music
from Kerry and Tipperary* (1977)

A

1st time (0:01)

2nd time (0:30)

6

A' (0:08)

(0:37)

This block contains a musical score for a jig. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system is labeled 'A' and has a time signature of 6/8. The first staff is labeled '1st time (0:01)' and the second staff is labeled '2nd time (0:30)'. The second system is labeled '6' and has a time signature of 6/8. The first staff is labeled 'A' (0:08)' and the second staff is labeled '(0:37)'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#).

11

16 **B** (0:15)

(0:44)

21

26 **B'** (0:22)

(0:52)

30

END TUNE (0:58)

Billy Clifford plays the jig “The Munster Jig” before the jig “The Cordal” on the source recording. Billy Clifford is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(25)

The Peacock's Feather
(Hornpipe)

performed by Frankie Gavin (b. 1956), fiddle (1977)
track 3 on *Masters of Irish Music: Frankie Gavin and Alec Finn* (1995)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:42)

4

A' (0:11)

(0:52)

12

16 **B** (0:21)

(1:02)

20

24 **B'** (0:32)

(1:13)

28

31

END TUNE (1:23)

Frankie Gavin plays another hornpipe after the hornpipe “The Peacock’s Feather”³⁸⁰ on the source recording. Alec Finn plays bouzouki accompaniment on the source recording.

³⁸⁰ Because the track is titled simply “The Peacock’s Feather,” I am unsure of whether both tunes imply the same title, if there was an omission, or whether “The Peacock’s Feather” is the title of the medley of two tunes.

(26)

The Duke of Leinster
(Reel)

performed by Roger Sherlock (b. 1932), flute
track 3 on *Memories of Sligo* (1978)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:34)

4

8 **A'** (0:09)

(0:43)

12

16 **B** (0:17)

(0:51)

20

24 **B'** (0:26)

(1:00)

28

31

END TUNE (1:08)

Roger Sherlock plays the reel “The Duke of Leinster’s Wife” after the reel “The Duke of Leinster” on the source recording. Roger Sherlock is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(27)

Tom Billy's
(Jig)

performed by Mary Bergin (b. 1949), tin whistle
track 3 on *Feadóga Stáin* (1979)

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of two systems of first and second endings, and two systems of main melody lines.

System 1: The first ending (A) starts at 0:00 and ends at 0:42. The second ending (0:42) follows. The first ending is marked with a box 'A' and the second ending with '(0:42)'. The first ending leads to the second ending, which then leads to the start of the second system.

System 2: The first ending (A') starts at 0:07 and ends at 0:49. The second ending (0:49) follows. The first ending is marked with a box 'A'' and the second ending with '(0:49)'. The first ending leads to the second ending, which then leads to the start of the third system.

System 3: The first ending (B) starts at 0:14 and ends at 0:56. The second ending (0:56) follows. The first ending is marked with a box 'B' and the second ending with '(0:56)'. The first ending leads to the second ending, which then leads to the end of the piece.

Measure numbers 5, 9, and 14 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

18

Two staves of music in G major, measures 18-22. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a consistent rhythmic pattern.

23

B' (0:21)

(1:03)

Two staves of music in G major, measures 23-26. Measure 23 is the start of section B'. The notation includes rests and eighth notes.

27

Two staves of music in G major, measures 27-31. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes.

32

C (0:28)

(1:10)

Two staves of music in G major, measures 32-36. Measure 32 is the start of section C. The notation includes a double bar line and eighth notes.

37

C' (0:35)

(1:16)

Two staves of music in G major, measures 37-41. Measure 37 is the start of section C'. The notation includes eighth notes and rests.

42

46

END TUNE (1:23)

Mary Bergin plays the jig “The Langstern Pony” after the jig “Tom Billy’s” on the source recording. Johnny ‘Ringo’ McDonagh plays bodhrán accompaniment on the source recording.

(28)
CD track 28

The Tynagh
(Jig)

performed by Charles Coen (b. 1933), concertina
track 5 on *Father Charlie* (1979)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:32)

2nd time

(1:04)

3rd time

6 **A'** (0:08)

(0:40)

(1:13)

11

17 **B** (0:16)

(0:49)

(1:20)

22 **B'** (0:24)

(0:56)

(1:28)

28

The image shows a musical score for three staves of a jig in G major. The first two staves are identical and contain the main melody of the piece. The third staff is a simplified version of the first two, with some notes omitted, and is labeled "END TUNE (1:37)". The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Charles Coen plays the jig “Paddy Fahy’s” before the jig “The Tynagh” on the source recording. Charles Coen is the only musician playing on the source recording.

- 1980s -

(29)

Music in the Glen
(Reel)

performed by Josephine Keegan (b. 1935), fiddle
track 6 on *Reels, Jigs, Hornpipes, Airs* (1980)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:37)

2nd time

5

A' (0:11)

(0:46)

9

13

17 **B** (0:20)

(0:54)

21

25 **B'** (0:29)

(1:03)

29

32

END TUNE (1:11)

Josephine Keegan plays the reel “The Lass of Ballintra” after the reel “Music in the Glen” on the source recording. Josephine Keegan double-tracked her own piano accompaniment on the source recording.

(30)

Dinny Delaney's
(Reel)

performed by Billy McComiskey (b. 1951), accordion
track 12 on *Makin' the Rounds* (1981)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:21)

3rd time (0:41)

5 **A'** (0:07)

(0:26)

(0:45)

9 **B** (0:12)

(0:31)

(0:49)

13

Musical notation for measures 13-15, three staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes.

16

Musical notation for measures 16-18, three staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

END TUNE (0:59)

Billy McComiskey plays the reel “Set the Clock” after the reel “Dinny Delaney’s” on the source recording. Billy McComiskey is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(31)

Paddy’s Return
(Jig)

performed by Kevin Burke (b. 1950), fiddle
track 6 on *Portland* (1982)

A (0:01)

1st time

Musical notation for the first time of "Paddy's Return" (Jig), measures 1-4, treble clef, 6/8 time signature, key signature of two sharps (D major). The melody starts with a quarter rest followed by eighth and quarter notes.

(0:34)

2nd time

Musical notation for the second time of "Paddy's Return" (Jig), measures 1-4, treble clef, 6/8 time signature, key signature of two sharps (D major). The melody starts with a quarter rest followed by eighth and quarter notes.

6 **A'** (0:09)

(0:42)

11

16 **B** (0:17)

(0:50)

21 **B'** (0:26)

(0:58)

27

31

END TUNE (1:07)

Kevin Burke plays the jig “Willie Coleman’s” after the jig “Paddy’s Return” on the source recording. Mícheál Ó Domhnaill plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(32)

The Maid Behind the Bar
(Reel)

performed by Paddy Keenan (b. 1950), uilleann pipes
track 4 on *Port an Phiobaire* (1983)

A (0:01)

1st time

(0:38)

2nd time

4

A' (0:11)

(0:47)

8

11

Musical notation for measures 11-14, consisting of two staves in G major. The melody is primarily eighth-note based, with some sixteenth-note runs. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment.

15

Musical notation for measures 15-17, continuing the two-staff system. The melody concludes with a quarter rest in measure 17.

18 **B** (0:20)

Musical notation for measures 18-20, starting with a boxed 'B' and a time signature of 0:20. The melody features a sequence of eighth notes with slurs.

(0:56)

Musical notation for measures 21-23, continuing the two-staff system. The melody continues with eighth-note patterns.

21

Musical notation for measures 21-23, continuing the two-staff system. The melody continues with eighth-note patterns.

24 **B'** (0:29)

Musical notation for measures 24-26, starting with a boxed 'B'' and a time signature of 0:29. The melody features a sequence of eighth notes with slurs.

(1:05)

Musical notation for measures 27-29, continuing the two-staff system. The melody continues with eighth-note patterns.

27

30

32

END TUNE (1:14)

Paddy Keenan plays the reel “O’Rourke’s” after the reel “The Maid Behind the Bar” on the source recording. Paddy Keenan is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(33)

Patsy Touhey’s
(Reel)

performed by Matt Molloy (b. 1947), flute
track 5 on *Matt Molloy* (1984)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:18)

2nd time

(0:36)

3rd time

4 **A'** (0:06)

(0:23)

(0:40)

8 **B** (0:10)

(0:27)

(0:44)

11 **B'** (0:14)

(0:31)

(0:46) (0:48)

14

END TUNE (0:52)

Matt Molloy's plays the reel "The Maid Behind the Bar" before the reel "Patsy Touhey's" on the source recording. Dónal Lunny plays bouzouki accompaniment on the source recording.

(34)

Garrett Barry's
(Jig)

performed by Paddy O'Brien (b. 1945), accordion
track 11 on *Stranger at the Gate* (1988)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:29)

2nd time

(0:58)

3rd time

6 **A'** (0:07)

(0:36)

END (1:07)

11

B (0:14)

(0:44)

16

21 **B'** (0:22)
(0:51)

26

30

Paddy O’Brien plays the jig “John Brady’s” before the jig “Garrett Barry’s” on the source recording. Dáithí Sproule plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

(35)

Out on the Ocean
(Jig)

performed by Christy O’Leary (fl. 1988), uilleann pipes
track 1 on *Sweet Rural Shade* (1988)

A (0:02)
1st time

(0:34)
2nd time

(1:06)
3rd time

6 **A'** (0:10)

(0:42)

(1:14)

11

16 **B** (0:19)

(0:51)

(1:22)

21

26 **B'** (0:26)

30

END TUNE (1:37)

Christy O’Leary plays the jig “Mooney’s Jig” after the jig “Out on the Ocean” on the source recording. John Coakley plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(36)

Sheila Coyle's
(Reel)

performed by Seamus Connolly (b. 1944), fiddle
track 6 on *Here and There* (1989)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:36)

4

A' (0:09)

(0:44)

12

16 **B** (0:18)

(0:54)

20

24 **B'** (0:27)

(1:02)

28

30

END TUNE (1:11)

The image displays a musical score for two hornpipe tunes. The first system, starting at measure 16, is labeled 'B' and has a duration of 0:18. The second system, starting at measure 20, has a duration of 0:54. The third system, starting at measure 24, is labeled 'B'' and has a duration of 0:27. The fourth system, starting at measure 28, has a duration of 1:02. The fifth system, starting at measure 30, is labeled 'END TUNE' and has a duration of 1:11. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of two staves per system, with the upper staff representing the hornpipe melody and the lower staff representing the piano accompaniment. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The piece concludes with a final chord in the lower staff.

Seamus Connolly plays the hornpipe “Miss Mountan’s” before the reel “Sheila Coyle’s” on the source recording. Both Barbara Magone and Gilles Losier play piano accompaniment on the source album, but the liner notes do not specify which pianist plays on the reel “Sheila Coyle’s.”

(37)

Sporting Paddy
(Reel)

performed by James Kelly (b. 1957), fiddle
track 3 on *Capel Street* (1989)

A (0:03)

1st time

(0:21)

2nd time

(0:38)

3rd time

5 **A'** (0:08)

(0:25)

(0:42) (0:44)

8 **B** (0:12)

(0:29)

(0:46)

11

(0:49)

14 **B'** (0:17)

(0:34)

(0:50)

16

END TUNE (0:54)

James Kelly plays the reel “Doctor Gilbert’s” after the reel “Sporting Paddy” on the source recording. Josephine Keegan plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

(38)

Johnny McGreevy's
(Jig)

performed by Liam O'Flynn (b. 1945), uilleann pipes
track 2 on *The Fine Art of Piping* (1989)

A (0:03)

1st time

(0:37)

2nd time

(1:12)

3rd time

5 **A'** (0:12)

(0:46)

(1:20)

10

15 **B** (0:21)

(0:55)

(1:29)

20 **B'** (0:29)

(1:03)

(1:37)

26

29

END TUNE (1:45)

Liam O’Flynn plays the jig “Sweeping the Cobwebs Out of the Sky” after the jig “Johnny McGreevy’s” on the source recording. Liam O’Flynn is the only musician playing on the source recording.

- 1990s -

(39)

Bobby Casey's
(Reel)

performed by Seamus Egan (b. 1969), banjo
track 3 on *A Week in January* (1990)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:39)

2nd time

(1:13)

3rd time

4

8 **A'** (0:11)

(0:48)

(1:22)

12

Musical notation for measures 12-15, consisting of three staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves are also treble clefs with a key signature of one flat. The music features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

16

Musical notation for measures 16-19, consisting of three staves. A section labeled **B** begins at measure 16. Time markers are present: (0:21) above the first staff, (0:57) above the second staff, and (1:30) above the third staff. The notation includes a key signature change to two flats at the start of section B.

20

Musical notation for measures 20-23, consisting of three staves. The notation continues with the same rhythmic and melodic patterns as the previous sections.

24 **B'**(0:30)

(1:05)

(1:38)

28

31

END TUNE (1:46)

Seamus Egan plays the reel “The Congress Reel” after the reel “Bobby Casey’s” on the source recording. Dave McIsaac plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(40)

Hardiman the Fiddler
(Slip Jig)

performed by Dermot Byrne (fl. 1995), accordion
track 10 on *Dermot Byrne* (1995)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:21)

2nd time

(0:42)

3rd time

4 **A'** (0:05)

(0:26)

(0:48)

7 **B** (0:10)

(0:32)

(0:53)

10

13 **B'** (0:16)

15

Dermot Byrne plays the slip jig “The Humours of Whiskey” after the slip jig “Hardiman the Fiddler” on the source recording. There is bodhrán accompaniment on the source recording.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ The liner notes of this album state that the track is traditionally arranged by Dermot Byrne, Stephen Cooney, and Trevor Hutchinson yet the liner notes also list Dónal Lunny as the only bodhrán player on the album, a name not associated with this track in the liner notes. I assume that it is Lunny playing bodhrán accompaniment, but I am not certain.

(41)

Sporting Paddy
(Reel)

performed by Kevin Crawford (b. 1967), flute
track 11 on 'd' Flute Album (1995)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:17)

3rd time (0:34)

4th time (0:51)

4

A' (0:04)

(0:21)

(0:39)

(0:56)

7 **B** (0:09)

(0:26)

(0:43)

(1:00)

10

13 **B'** (0:13)

(0:30)

(0:47)

(1:04)

15

END TUNE (1:08)

This musical score consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a measure number '15'. The music is a reel, characterized by its rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth staff concludes with the text 'END TUNE (1:08)'.

Kevin Crawford plays the reel “The Abbey Reel” after the reel “Sporting Paddy” on the source recording. Dónal Clancy plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(42)

The Humours of Lissadell
(Reel)

performed by Joe Derrane (b. 1930), accordion
track 1 on *Return to Inis Mór* (1996)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:32)

2nd time

(1:03)

3rd time

This musical score is for the reel 'The Humours of Lissadell' in G major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It features three repeated sections, each on a separate staff. The first section is marked '1st time' and begins with a boxed letter 'A' and the time '(0:00)'. The second section is marked '2nd time' and begins with the time '(0:32)'. The third section is marked '3rd time' and begins with the time '(1:03)'. The music consists of rhythmic eighth and sixteenth notes.

5

Musical score for measures 5-8, consisting of three staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

9

(0:08)

Musical score for measure 9, first staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

(0:40)

Musical score for measure 9, second staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

(1:11)

Musical score for measure 9, third staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

13

Musical score for measures 13-16, first staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

Musical score for measures 13-16, second staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

Musical score for measures 13-16, third staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

17

B

(0:16)

Musical score for measure 17, first staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

(0:48)

Musical score for measure 17, second staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

(1:19)

Musical score for measure 17, third staff, treble clef, key signature of one sharp.

21



25 (0:24)



(0:55)

(1:27)

29



Joe Derrane plays the reel “The Music in the Glen” after the reel “The Humours of Lissadell” on the source recording. Carl Hession plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

(43)

Higgins's Hornpipe
(Hornpipe)

performed by Mick O'Brien (b. 1961), uilleann pipes
track 2 on *The May Morning Dew* (1996)

A (0:02)

1st time

2nd time (0:42)

4

7

10 **A'** (0:12)

(0:52)

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves: the top staff is labeled '1st time' and the bottom staff is labeled '2nd time (0:42)'. A box labeled 'A' with '(0:02)' is positioned above the first staff. The second system also has two staves. The top staff begins with a measure number '4' and the bottom staff with '7'. A box labeled 'A'' with '(0:12)' is positioned above the top staff of the second system. The bottom staff of the second system has '(0:52)' written above it. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and accents.

13

Musical notation for measures 13-15, consisting of two staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

16

B (0:22)

Musical notation for measures 16-19, consisting of two staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. A double bar line is present after measure 17. The notation includes a time signature of (1:02) above the second staff.

20

Musical notation for measures 20-22, consisting of two staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes.

23

Musical notation for measures 23-25, consisting of two staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes.

26

B' (0:32)

Musical notation for measures 26-29, consisting of two staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. A double bar line is present after measure 27. The notation includes a time signature of (1:12) above the second staff.

29

31

END TUNE (1:21)

Mick O'Brien plays the hornpipe "The Cuckoo's Nest" after the hornpipe "Higgins's" on the source recording. Mick O'Brien is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(44)

The Maid in the Cherry Tree
(Reel)

performed by Gay McKeon (b. 1957), uilleann pipes
track 15 on *Irish Piping Tradition* (1997)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:34)

4

8 **A'** (0:08)

(0:41)

12

16 **B** (0:17)

(0:50)

20

23 **B'** (0:25)

(0:58)

27

30

END TUNE (1:06)

Gay McKeon plays the reel “Colonel Frazer”³⁸² after the reel “The Maid in the Cherry Tree” on the source recording. Gay McKeon is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(45)

The Rambles of Kitty
(Jig)

performed by Robbie Hannan (b. 1961), uilleann pipes
taken from a live recording on cassette tape, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. (1998)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:41)

5

A' (0:06)

(0:48)

³⁸² “Frazer” can also be spelled as “Fraser.”

10

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some slurs and accents. The bass line follows a similar rhythmic pattern.

14

B (0:13)

(0:55)

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. Measure 14 is marked with a box containing the letter 'B'. The notation continues with eighth and quarter notes, including slurs and accents.

19

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The melody features eighth and quarter notes with slurs and accents. The bass line is consistent with the previous section.

23

B' (0:20)

(1:02)

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. Measure 23 is marked with a box containing the letter 'B' with a prime symbol. The notation includes eighth and quarter notes with slurs and accents.

28

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes, featuring slurs and accents. The bass line remains consistent.

33 **C** (0:27)

(1:09)

37 **C'** (0:34)

(1:15)

42

46

END TUNE (1:23)

Robbie Hannan plays the jig “The Tattered Jack Walsh” before the jig “The Rambles of Kitty” on the source recording. Robbie Hannan is the only musician playing on the source recording.

(46)

The Lark in the Morning
(Jig)

performed by Brendan Mulvihill (fl. 1999), fiddle
taken from a live video tape, Vienna, Virginia, U.S.A. (1999)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:58)

3rd time (1:56)

6 **A'** (0:07)

(1:06)

(2:04)

11

16 **B** (0:14)

(1:13) (2:10) (2:13)

21 **B'** (0:22)

(1:20) (2:18)

26

32 **C** (0:29)

(1:27) (2:25)

37 (0:36) C' (0:37)

(1:35)

(2:32)

42

47 **D** (0:43)

(1:42) (1:44)

(2:39)

52

57 **D'** (0:51)

(1:49) (1:51)

(2:47)

61

END TUNE (2:53)

Brendan Mulvihill plays “The Lark in the Morning” after a jig in G and before a jig in A on the source recording.³⁸³ Brendan Mulvihill is the only musician playing on the source recording.

³⁸³ I was not able to find titles for either the jig on G or the jig in A.

(47)

The Dunmore Lassies
(Reel)

performed by Niall Keegan (b. 1968), flute
track 2 on *Don't Touch the Elk* (1999)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time (0:33)

3rd time (1:06)

4

7 **A'** (0:08)

(0:41)

(1:14)

10

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations such as accents and slurs.

13

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some rests and dynamic markings.

16

B (0:17)

(0:50)

(1:22)

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a box containing the letter 'B' followed by '(0:17)'. The second and third staves also begin with double bar lines and are followed by time markers '(0:50)' and '(1:22)' respectively. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes with articulations.

19

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various rests and accents.

22

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some triplet markings.

25

B' (0:25)

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The music features eighth and sixteenth notes. Time markers are present: (0:58) above the second staff and (1:30) above the third staff.

28

31

END TUNE (1:38)

Niall Keegan plays the reel “My Love is in America” after the reel “The Dunmore Lassies” on the source recording. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin plays piano accompaniment on the source recording.

- 2000s -

(48)

The Drunken Sailor
(Hornpipe)

performed by Liz Carroll (b. 1956), fiddle
track 6 on *Lost in the Loop* (2000)

A (0:00)

1st time

2nd time

5

10

15

A' (0:13)

20

25

30

B (0:26)

(2:33)

35

(2:38)

41

47

B' (0:39)

(2:46)

53

59

Musical notation for measures 59-64, consisting of two staves in a 12/8 time signature. The melody is in the upper staff, and the accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

65

C (0:51)

(2:59)

Musical notation for measures 65-71, consisting of two staves. Measure 65 is marked with a box containing the letter 'C'. The notation includes a double bar line and a repeat sign. The key signature has one flat.

72

Musical notation for measures 72-78, consisting of two staves. The key signature has one flat.

79

C' (1:05)

(3:12)

Musical notation for measures 79-85, consisting of two staves. Measure 79 is marked with a box containing the letter 'C' with a prime symbol. The notation includes a double bar line and a repeat sign. The key signature has one flat.

86

Musical notation for measures 86-91, consisting of two staves. The key signature has one flat.

92

D (1:17)

(3:25)

Musical notation for measures 92-98, consisting of two staves. Measure 92 is marked with a box containing the letter 'D'. The notation includes a double bar line and a repeat sign. The key signature has one flat.

99

Musical notation for measures 99-104, consisting of two staves in a 2/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat. The melody in the upper staff features eighth and quarter notes, while the bass line in the lower staff provides harmonic support with similar rhythmic patterns.

105

Musical notation for measures 105-110, continuing the piece with two staves. The upper staff melody includes a sharp sign on the second measure, and the lower staff continues with a consistent rhythmic accompaniment.

111

D' (1:30)

Musical notation for measures 111-115, marking the beginning of section D'. The upper staff features a melodic line with a repeat sign at the end, and the lower staff has a more active accompaniment. A rehearsal mark (3:38) is placed above the lower staff.

116

Musical notation for measures 116-120, continuing section D'. The upper staff melody is similar to the previous section, and the lower staff accompaniment remains consistent. A rehearsal mark (3:39) is placed above the lower staff.

121

Musical notation for measures 121-125, continuing section D'. The upper staff melody and lower staff accompaniment follow the established patterns of the previous measures.

126

E (1:43)

Musical notation for measures 126-130, marking the beginning of section E. The upper staff features a melodic line with a repeat sign at the end, and the lower staff has a more active accompaniment. A rehearsal mark (3:50) is placed above the lower staff.

131

137

143

E' (1:57)

149

155

159

END TUNE (4:16)

Liz Carroll plays the reel “The Bag of Spuds” after the hornpipe “The Drunken Sailor” on the source recording. John Doyle plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(49)

Páidín O'Rafertaigh
(Jig)

performed by Kieran O'Hare (fl. 2001), uilleann pipes
track 4 on *Kieran O'Hare* (2001)

The musical score is written for uilleann pipes in the key of D major (two sharps) and 6/8 time. It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system is labeled '1st time' and '2nd time' with a boxed 'A' and a duration of (0:00). The second system is labeled '5' and 'A'' with a duration of (0:07). The third system is labeled '10' and has a duration of (0:53). The fourth system is labeled '15' and 'B' with a duration of (0:15). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and repeat signs.

19

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

24

B' (0:22)

(1:08)

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. This section is marked with a box 'B'' and a time signature of 0:22. The notation continues with eighth and quarter notes.

29

C (0:30)

(1:15)

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. This section is marked with a box 'C' and a time signature of 0:30. The notation continues with eighth and quarter notes.

34

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The notation continues with eighth and quarter notes.

39

C' (0:38)

(1:23)

Two staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. This section is marked with a box 'C'' and a time signature of 0:38. The notation continues with eighth and quarter notes.

44

END TUNE (1:30)

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a measure number of 44. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various ornaments. The second staff ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Kieran O’Hare plays the jig “The Young Tom Ennis” after the jig “Páidín O’Rafertaigh” on the source recording. John Doyle plays guitar accompaniment on the source recording.

(50)

The Butcher’s March
(Jig)

performed by Eliot Grasso (b. 1983), uilleann pipes
track 1 on *Up Against the Flatirons* (2001)

A (0:00)

1st time

(0:29)

2nd time

5

A' (0:07)

(0:36)

The image displays musical notation for 'The Butcher's March' in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It is divided into sections: Section A (0:00) with a first and second time through; Section A' (0:07) with a first and second time through. Measure numbers 5 and 9 are indicated at the start of the second and fourth staves respectively. The notation includes various ornaments and rhythmic patterns.

14 B (0:14)

(0:44)

19

24 B' (0:21)

(0:51)

28

31

END TUNE (0:58)

Eliot Grasso plays the jig “The Butcher’s March” after the jig “Old Hag You Have Killed Me” and before the jig “The Gander in the Pratie Hole” on the source recording. Eliot Grasso is the only musician playing on the source recording.

APPENDIX D

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF 50 TRANSCRIPTIONS OF
IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC RECORDED C. 1904-2007

Table B.1: Chronological Table Exhibiting Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	# of Measures for Melodic Variation Potential	# of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variation	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	96	15	15.6%	84.4%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	176	77	43.7%	56.3%
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	32	20	62.5%	37.5%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	64	32	50%	50%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	32	24	75%	25%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	64	26	40%	60%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	96	38	39.5%	60.5%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	32	7	21.8%	78.2%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	64	32	53.1%	46.9%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	32	19	59.3%	40.7%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	64	16	25%	75%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	56	6	10.7%	89.3%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	48	25	52%	48%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	64	33	51.5%	48.5%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	64	15	23.4%	76.6%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	32	21	65.5%	34.5%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	64	23	39.5%	60.5%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	32	17	53.1%	46.9%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	64	57	89%	11%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	32	21	65.6%	34.4%
21	Potts, Tommy	1971	Fiddle	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	64	49	76.5%	23.5%
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	1976	Pedal organ	96	65	67.7%	32.3%

24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	32	15	46.8%	53.2%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	32	18	56.2%	43.8%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	32	10	31.2%	68.8%
27	Bergin, Mary	1979	Tin Whistle	48	11	22.9%	77.1%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	64	9	14%	86%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	32	9	28.1%	71.9%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	32	12	37.5%	62.5%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	32	10	31.2%	68.8%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	32	18	56.2%	42.8%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	32	16	50%	50%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	40	17	42.5%	57.5%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	64	31	48.4%	51.6%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	32	21	65.5%	34.5%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	32	20	62.5%	37.5%
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	64	4	6.2%	93.8%
39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	64	61	95.3%	4.7%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	32	17	53.1%	46.9%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	48	33	68.7%	31.3%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	64	8	12.5%	87.5%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	32	22	68.7%	31.3%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	32	9	28.1%	71.9%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	48	32	66.6%	33.4%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	128	72	56.2%	43.8%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	64	60	93.7%	6.3%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	160	98	61.2%	38.8%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	48	19	39.5%	60.5%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	32	13	40.6%	59.4%
				Total =	Total =	Average =	Average =
				2,720	1,303	48.2%	51.8%

Table B.2: Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance vs. Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance per Musician

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	6.2%	93.8%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	10.7%	89.3%
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	15.6%	84.4%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	12.5%	87.5%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	14%	86%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	21.8%	78.2%
27	Bergin, Mary	1979	Tin Whistle	22.9%	77.1%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	23.4%	76.6%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	25%	75%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	28.1%	71.9%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	28.1%	71.9%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	31.2%	68.8%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	31.2%	68.8%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	37.5%	62.5%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	39.5%	60.5%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	40%	60%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	40.6%	59.4%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	42.5%	57.5%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	43.7%	56.3%
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	46.8%	53.2%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	48.4%	51.6%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	50%	50%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	50%	50%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	51.5%	48.5%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	52%	48%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	53.1%	46.9%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	53.1%	46.9%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	62.5%	37.5%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	53.1%	46.9%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	56.2%	43.8%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	59.3%	40.7%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	61.2%	38.8%
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	62.5%	37.5%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	65.6%	34.4%

45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	66.6%	33.4%
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	1976	Pedal organ	67.7%	32.3%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	68.7%	31.3%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	68.7%	31.3%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	75%	25%
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	76.5%	23.5%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	89%	11%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	93.7%	6.3%
39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	95.3%	4.7%

Table B.3: Percentage of Set Accented Tones Varied vs. Percentage of Set Accented Tones Unvaried per Musician within Measures Varied

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	# of Set Accented Tones to be Varied	# of Set Accented Tones Varied	% of Set Accented Tones Varied	% of Set Accented Tones Unvaried
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	384	0	0%	100%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	288	55	19%	81%
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	128	15	1.1%	98.9%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	256	51	19.9%	80.1%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	128	3	0.2%	99.8%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	256	0	0%	100%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	384	40	10.4%	89.6%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	32	1	0.3%	99.7%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	256	19	7.4%	92.6%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	128	11	8.5%	91.5%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	256	1	0.03%	99.9%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	240	0	0%	100%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	192	30	15.6%	84.4%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	256	5	1.9%	98.1%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	256	4	1.5%	98.5%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	128	5	3.9%	96.1%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	256	4	1.5%	98.5%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	128	5	3.9%	96.1%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	256	55	21.4%	78.6%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	128	4	3.1%	96.9%
21	Potts, Tommy	1971	Fiddle	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	384	12	3.1%	96.9%
23	Ó Súilleabháin,	1976	Pedal organ	384	32	8.3%	91.7%

	Micheál						
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	128	0	0%	100%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	128	11	8.5%	91.5%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	128	2	1.5%	98.5%
27	Bergin, Mary	1979	Tin Whistle	192	0	0%	100%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	256	0	0%	100%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	128	10	7.8%	92.2%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	128	3	2.3%	97.7%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	128	5	3.9%	96.1%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	128	12	9.3%	90.7%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	128	10	7.8%	92.2%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	160	14	8.7%	91.3%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	256	7	2.7%	97.3%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	128	17	13.2%	86.8%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	128	11	8.5%	91.5%
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	256	1	0.3%	99.7%
39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	256	44	17.1%	82.9%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	192	3	1.5%	98.5%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	192	4	2%	98%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	256	24	9.3%	90.7%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	128	14	10.9%	89.1%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	128	3	2.3%	97.7%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	192	15	7.8%	92.2%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	256	115	44.9%	55.1%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	256	81	31.6%	68.4%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	640	116	18.1%	81.9%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	192	4	0.2%	99.8%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	128	13	10.1%	89.9%
						Average variance of set accented tones = 7.3%	Average invariance of set accented tones = 92.7%

Table B.4: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Solo Musician

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	15.6%	84.4%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	43.7%	56.3%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	21.8%	78.2%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	59.3%	40.7%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	25%	75%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	10.7%	89.3%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	52%	48%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	51.5%	48.5%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	23.4%	76.6%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	53.1%	46.9%
21	Potts, Tommy	1971	Fiddle	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	76.5%	23.5%
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	1976	Pedal organ	67.7%	32.3%
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	46.8%	53.2%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	14%	86%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	37.5%	62.5%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	56.2%	42.8%
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	6.2%	93.8%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	10.9%	89.1%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	2.3%	97.7%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	7.8%	92.2%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	44.9%	55.1%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	40.6%	59.4%
				Average = 36.3%	Average = 63.7%

Table B.5: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Harmonically Accompanied Melodist

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	62.5%	37.5%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	50%	50%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	75%	25%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	40%	60%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	53.1%	46.9%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	21.4%	78.6%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	31.2%	68.8%

29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	28.1%	71.9%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	31.2%	68.8%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	50%	50%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	42.5%	57.5%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	48.4%	51.6%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	53.1%	46.9%
39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	95.3%	4.7%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	53.1%	46.9%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	68.7%	31.3%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	12.5%	87.5%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	93.7%	6.3%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	34.3%	65.7%
				Average = 49.7%	Average = 50.3%

Table B.6: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician per Commercial Recording

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	62.5%	37.5%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	50%	50%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	75%	25%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	40%	60%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	21.8%	78.2%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	53.1%	46.9%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	89%	11%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	65.6%	34.4%
21	Potts, Tommy	1971	Fiddle	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	76.5%	23.5%
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	1976	Pedal organ	67.7%	32.3%
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	46.8%	53.2%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	31.2%	68.8%
27	Bergin, Mary	1979	Tin Whistle	22.9%	77.1%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	14%	86%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	28.1%	71.9%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	37.5%	62.5%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	31.2%	68.8%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	56.2%	43.8%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	50%	50%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	42.5%	57.5%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	48.4%	51.6%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	62.5%	37.5%
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	6.2%	93.8%

39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	95.3%	4.7%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	53.1%	46.9%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	68.7%	31.3%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	12.5%	87.5%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	68.7%	31.3%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	28.1%	71.9%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	93.7%	6.3%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	61.2%	38.8%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	39.5%	60.5%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	34.3%	65.7%
				Average = 50.2%	Average = 49.7%

Table B.7: Percentage of Measures Varied vs. Percentage of Measures Unvaried per Musician per Non-Commercial Recording

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	% of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	15.6%	84.4%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	43.7%	56.3%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	59.3%	40.7%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	25%	75%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	10.7%	89.3%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	52%	48%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	51.5%	48.5%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	23.4%	76.6%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	53.1%	46.9%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	66.6%	33.4%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
				Average = 41.3%	Average = 58.6%

Table B.8: Percentage of Varied Measures Exhibiting Ornamentation as Variation per Musician

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	# of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variation	# of Measures Exhibiting Ornamentation as Variation Specifically	% of Measures Exhibiting Ornamentation as Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	15	15	100%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	77	65	86.6%
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	20	6	30%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	32	22	68.7%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	24	19	79.1%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	26	20	76.9%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	38	25	65.7%

8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	7	7	100%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	32	21	65.6%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	19	17	89.4%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	16	16	100%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	6	4	66.6%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	25	15	60%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	33	32	96.9%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	15	7	46.6%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	21	16	76.1%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	23	19	82.6%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	17	11	64.7%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	57	35	61.4%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	21	15	71.4%
21	Potts, Tommy	1971	Fiddle	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance	Structural Deviance
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	49	37	75.5%
23	Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál	1976	Pedal organ	65	48	73.8%
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	15	10	66.6%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	18	15	83.3%
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	10	5	50%
27	Bergin, Mary	1979	Tin Whistle	11	8	72.7%
28	Coen, Charles	1979	Concertina	9	6	66.6%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	9	4	44.4%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	12	9	75%
31	Burke, Kevin	1982	Fiddle	10	8	80%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	18	17	94.4%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	16	14	87.5%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	17	11	64.7%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	31	21	67.7%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	21	12	57.1%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	20	18	90%
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	4	4	100%
39	Egan, Seamus	1990	Banjo	61	28	45.9%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	17	16	94.1%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	33	25	75.7%
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	8	4	50%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	22	18	81.8%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	9	6	66.6%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	32	26	81.2%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	72	33	45.8%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	60	55	91.6%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	98	50	51%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	19	18	94.7%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	13	13	100%

Table B.9: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Fiddle Recordings

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
1	Cronin, Edward	c. 1904	Fiddle	15.6%	84.4%
15	Canny, Paddy	1959	Fiddle	23.4%	76.6%
11	Howard, John	1942	Fiddle	25%	75%
29	Keegan, Josephine	1980	Fiddle	28.1%	71.9%
7	Reavy, Edward	1928	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
17	Doherty, John	1968-74	Fiddle	39.5%	60.5%
4	Coleman, Michael	1922	Fiddle	50%	50%
13	Murphy, Denis	1949	Fiddle	52%	48%
37	Kelly, James	1989	Fiddle	62.5%	37.5%
9	Killoran, Paddy	1937	Fiddle	53.1%	46.9%
25	Gavin, Frankie	1977	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
46	Mulvihill, Brendan	1999	Fiddle	56.2%	43.8%
48	Carroll, Liz	2000	Fiddle	61.2%	38.8%
16	Casey, Bobby	1959	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
36	Connolly, Seamus	1989	Fiddle	65.5%	34.5%
22	Keane, Seán	1975	Fiddle	76.5%	23.5%
19	McGuire, Sean	1969	Fiddle	89%	11%
				Average = 50.5%	Average = 49.4%

Table B.10: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Flute Recordings

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
26	Sherlock, Roger	1978	Flute	31.2%	68.8%
6	McKenna, John	1928	Flute	40%	60%
24	Clifford, Billy	1977	Flute	46.8%	53.2%
33	Molloy, Matt	1984	Flute	50%	50%
18	Carty, Paddy	1969	Flute	53.1%	46.9%
20	Taylor, Paddy	1970	Flute	65.6%	34.4%
41	Crawford, Kevin	1995	Flute	68.7%	31.3%
47	Keegan, Niall	1999	Flute	93.7%	6.3%
				Average = 56.1%	Average = 43.8%

Table B.11: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Accordion Recordings

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
42	Derrane, Joe	1996	Accordion	12.5%	87.5%
8	Grogan, Michael	1931	Accordion	21.8%	78.2%
30	McComiskey, Billy	1981	Accordion	37.5%	62.5%
34	O'Brien, Paddy	1988	Accordion	42.5%	57.5%
40	Byrne, Dermot	1995	Accordion	53.1%	46.9%
				Average = 33.4%	Average = 66.5%

Table B.12: Percentage of Measures Varied and Unvaried in Uilleann Pipes Recordings

#	Musician	Year	Instrument	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Variance Compared to First Playing of the Tune	Percentage of Measures Exhibiting Melodic Invariance Compared to First Playing of the Tune
38	O'Flynn, Liam	1989	Uilleann Pipes	6.2%	93.8%
12	O'Mealy, Richard	1943	Uilleann Pipes	10.7%	89.3%
44	McKeon, Gay	1997	Uilleann Pipes	28.1%	71.9%
49	O'Hare, Kieran	2001	Uilleann Pipes	39.5%	60.5%
50	Grasso, Eliot	2007	Uilleann Pipes	40.6%	59.4%
2	Touhey, Patsy	c. 1904	Uilleann Pipes	43.7%	56.3%
35	O'Leary, Christy	1988	Uilleann Pipes	48.4%	51.6%
14	Clancy, Willie	1958	Uilleann Pipes	51.5%	48.5%
32	Keenan, Paddy	1983	Uilleann Pipes	56.2%	43.8%
10	Ennis, Séamus	1940	Uilleann Pipes	59.3%	40.7%
3	Ennis, Tom	1920	Uilleann Pipes	62.5%	37.5%
45	Hannan, Robbie	1998	Uilleann Pipes	66.6%	33.4%
43	O'Brien, Mick	1996	Uilleann Pipes	68.7%	31.3%
5	Gallagher, Michael	1924	Uilleann Pipes	75%	25%
				Average = 47%	Average = 53%

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