



THE INTERFACE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND ART MUSIC IN IRELAND

A Multimodal Arts Practice Research Study

by

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DECLARATION

We, the undersigned declare that this thesis entitled _____
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ABSTRACT

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND ART MUSIC IN IRELAND

A Multimodal Arts Practice Research Study

by

Odhrán Ó Casaide

This PhD project was undertaken at the Dundalk Institute of Technology, commencing in 2019 until submission in 2023. Work on *Famine Odyssey* began in the summer/autumn of 2020 and the current version was completed in the spring of 2023.

It is a study based on the interface, or boundary area, between traditional music and art music in Ireland. The interface is where two musical *genres* meet and influence each other and, as such, is continuous throughout history. Musical influences can cross the interface in one, or in both directions.

This thesis describes activity on the interface. It also seeks to explore this boundary, first with a recital which contrasts music from two selected sub-periods of the interface and, secondly, by means of a new composition which is located on the interface.

The recital contrasts music from the great Collections of Irish traditional music in the 18. and 19. centuries, music which is mostly if not entirely pre-Famine, with that of the Nationalist school of art-music composers, which commenced in the final quarter of the 19. century. The great Collections represent a fusion of folk music and art music (harper music) in Ireland since the Middle Ages, or earlier. The recital contrasts this with art music, compositions and arrangements, with folk music and folk-cultural influences, up to the early 1960s. After that, one can observe a qualitative change in art-music composition on the interface - the post-Nationalist period.

The second artistic endeavour is a large-scale musical composition, *Famine Odyssey*. It is an original work which seeks to arrive at a partial synthesis of art music and traditional music and, as such, is post-Nationalist. It is an art-music composition, imbued with features of Irish traditional music, *sean-nós* singing, traditional instruments and Irish idiom. The work is based on a true story of flight from Ireland to Canada in 1847 to escape the Great Famine.

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a documentary report on a study in the discipline Arts Practice Research, undertaken at the Dundalk Institute of Technology from 2019 to submission in 2023.

In society, many *genres* of music come into contact with each other so that an exchange of influences can be observed. This process of interaction or fusion, between any two, can occur in either direction, or in both. The environment in which it takes place is what is meant by the *interface* between musical *genres*. The focus of this study is on the interface, or environment, where two distinct *genres*, Irish traditional music and art-music in Ireland, interact and some degree of fusion occurs. This interface is continuous throughout history, but for the present study it is necessary to restrict attention to two well-defined, chosen samples, or time periods. By implication, this study does not deal with art music which is not influenced by traditional music. Similarly, it is not concerned with traditional music where the art-music influences are insignificant, such as an orchestral accompaniment but nothing else.

The output of this study consists of two artworks, or artifacts, in addition to this report. The first is a music recital, henceforth the Recital, and the second is a large-scale music composition. Both of these are firmly located on the interface.

The Recital is a musical recital in which music from two sub-periods of the interface are contrasted. The first segment explores aspects of the great collections of Irish music amassed in the 18th and 19th centuries. These collections reflect an earlier fusion (pre-Famine) of the art music of Medieval Ireland and after, with the folk music of the people. In this case the fusion had already occurred, and lack of public record prevents us from isolating the progress of the transfer of influences. The second segment covers a period of approximately 80 years, from the mid-1880s to the early 1960s, as will be explained below, when many Irish art-music composers increasingly engaged with Irish traditional culture. This mirrored an international trend in Europe and beyond. Here we can map the transfer across the interface. The first artwork provided as part of this study is a Recital which presents, and contrasts, music from these two periods.

A recording of this Recital is submitted in evidence. The Recital and its musical significance are the subject of chapter 6 of this thesis.

The second artwork is a large-scale music composition, in seven movements, titled *Famine Odyssey*. This work is a descriptive musical account of true events during the Irish Famine in 1847, specifically the story of a precarious escape from almost certain death in Ireland. It is scored for narrator, traditional and classical soloists, a large orchestra and choir. It seeks to integrate the two overlapping, musical traditions widespread in Ireland, art music and traditional music, the former reflecting the gentry, the latter the peasantry. Moreover, the goal was to integrate both *genres* seamlessly rather than present them alternately, or side by side.

What determines the location of *Famine Odyssey* on the interface is not just the scoring for orchestra or the use of traditional musicians; no less important is the intertwining and integration of many musical features of both *genres* in a single work. It is not a matter of a few influences; the work is firmly in *both genres*. It is positioned in what I call the post-Nationalist School, the subject of chapter 4. With the exception of some of the texts in Latin and Irish, the composition, in four languages, is entirely original. It is also tonal throughout because, echoing Bartok, folk music is tonal, not atonal.

In evidence, a complete score of this work is presented in Book 2, along with a recording of the premier performance of this work in Toronto, Canada. In addition, the work is described in chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis.

Arts Practice Research is relatively new as an academic discipline leading to the award of the degree of PhD, as will be discussed in chapter 2. Consequently, it is still subject to a certain amount of misunderstanding. For this reason, I would like to stress that, although there is a considerable amount of original historical research involved in this work, history is not the primary focus of this study. Likewise, although music looms large in this study, and is the artistic mode in which it is based, it is not a thesis in musicology. This thesis does not set out to meet all the requirements of those disciplines. Arts Practice Research, as implemented in this study, is also concerned with the creative process leading to an artwork, and documents this process. As such, this thesis includes material which is important to the process, but which might not be considered so important were the focus on the artwork alone.

Following from this it is, perhaps, helpful to emphasise that chapters 3 and 4, and especially chapter 5, are not construed as surveys of the literature in a conventional sense, or locations on a lineage to use the terminology of APR. Instead, they are intended as descriptions of some of the activity on the interface between Irish traditional music (chapter 5) and art music with traditional influences (chapters 3 and 4). As such, they help identify and define the interface. This identification is regarded as a sampling process, and our samples are restricted to specified time periods. In considering the interface, our main interest is in art-music

composers who incorporate influences from folk music and folk culture in their music. We also have some, if fewer, instances of art music influencing traditional-music arrangements. New compositions which are essentially traditional, but which may have an accompaniment involving strings or a small orchestra, constitute a different region of the interface and are not a focus of this thesis. In describing traditional music (chapter 5), we focus on the music, its cultural environment and on technical aspects of performance – composition is less a concern.

To summarise: the focus of this study is on the interface between art music and traditional music and culture in Ireland. The purpose of the two artifacts, a recital and a composition, is to provide artistic illustrations of this interface. The operational goal of the Recital is to contrast and consider two defined segments of the interface. The goal of the composition, *Famine Odyssey*, is twofold. First, I seek a synthesis between art music and traditional music where both are equal partners and neither is subservient to the other – a seamless blend as it were where one can transition, seemingly imperceptibly, between the two. Second, I try to apply this to *sean-nós* singing, something which has not been attempted (to my knowledge) with an orchestra.¹ The *modus operandi* I use is described in chapter 4.3.

1.2 Conceptual Framework – The Three-Legged Stool

This study rests on three essential components which are mutually interdependent and individually indispensable. Like the analogy implicit in a three-legged stool, the absence or malfunction of any one of the “legs” would undermine the entire structure and render it unstable as an Arts Practice Research project. The three “legs” of this study are **experience**, **research** and **methodology**. *Experience* refers to my musical background, education, and interests and, as such, reflects on my ability to undertake this project. *Research* consists of the extensive study in a wide variety of fields I have undertaken as part of this project, but also includes the environment in which I have been immersed since infancy. *Methodology* refers to core procedures, or the investigative approach, applied throughout this study. It includes modes of Action Research which are a core method fundamental to APR studies and frameworks, but in reality, an underpinning for all scientific as well as creative investigation.

I will now discuss each of the three “legs” in more detail.

¹ Several composers have combined *sean-nós* singing with orchestra, but invariably one party is always dominant – the orchestra where the meter is fixed, or the singer where the singer enjoys complete artistic freedom and the orchestra provides a “sonic cushion”. To date I am not aware of any *equal-partner* synthesis of *sean nós* with orchestra, as undertaken in *Famine Odyssey*. The methodology is attributable to Hardebeck (chapter 3) for voice and piano.

1.2.1 *Experience*²

I do not remember a time when I didn't play the violin. My first and formative teacher was my father, Seán Ó Casaide who, himself, played the fiddle, although his main, earlier interest in music had been with choirs.³ I must have shown considerable aptitude as a child, garnered from some anecdotes,⁴ but of this I was completely unaware at the time. My father's abiding principle, and one I have taken to heart, was that it didn't matter what music one played on the fiddle – classical or traditional music, or any other – as long as one adhered, uncompromisingly, to classical technique. This may be more widely accepted today, but in Ireland of the 1960s it was rather progressive. First school, then music, were always the primary goals in our family - with a certain humility I have to admit that I was better at the latter. Music was regarded mainly as a social skill and, although daily practice was important, mostly supervised by my mother Nóirín in my father's frequent absence, there was never any pressure or drilling involved. I have possessed perfect pitch for as long as I have been aware of the concept, and still do.

The family moved from Donegal to Dublin when I was still of pre-school age and, soon after, I became a pupil of Mrs. Vanaček at the College of Music in Chatham Row. Later, I was a pupil of Brian McNamara, which completed a family musical circle of sorts, as a first-cousin of mine, Geraldine O'Grady, had been a pupil of his father, Michael McNamara. At 17 years of age, I won the Senior Concerto Competition for violin at the *Feis Ceol*⁵, after which the adjudicator of the competition, Mr Yossi Zivoni, agreed to accept me as one of his students at the Royal Northern College of Music, a constituent college of the University of Manchester.

There began six years of intensive, full-time musical study at the RNCM, in the course of which I graduated with a degree in music from the college as well as a graduate degree in violin performance. For all six years, my mentor and violin professor was Yossi Zivoni, a noted soloist and winner of several important international prizes. During this time I also attended some masterclasses, most notably at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, which were taught by Jean

² In this section, I concentrate on my classical-music background. My activities in traditional music are covered more extensively in chapter 5.

³ My father founded and conducted the choir of the Keating Branch of Conradh Na Gaeilge (Craobh an Chéitinnigh) in the 1930s. It was an SATB choir and an old photograph shows that it had 27 members, eleven of them male. They performed songs in Irish, in 4-part harmony, which was unusual at the time. Some of them were arranged by my father but many of them by Karl Hardebeck, whom we shall discuss in chapter 3. The choir performed regularly on 2RN, the precursor of *Radio Éireann* (RTE radio). A later conductor and director of this choir was Seoirse Bodley, see chapter 4.

⁴ My father once laughingly related to my mother how, as a young boy, I did not seem to see, or experience any technical difficulties on the violin, but could imitate, or play, anything with a complete lack of inhibition.

⁵ For this competition, I performed the Wieniawski Violin Concerto, No. 2 in D-minor.

Fournier of the Paris Conservatoire, as well as by Sylvia Rosenberg of the Juilliard School of Music. Towards the end of my studies I was soloist with a number of junior orchestras, with which I performed the Sibelius violin concerto.

During this period, two career-affecting developments occurred. First, I severely injured a tendon in my left hand which, ever since, tends to flare up with any extended period of intensive practice. This severely hinders my ability to prepare for technically demanding public performances. Secondly, along with a group of my siblings, I had been performing Irish music, informally at sessions, for a number of years. Following a season at the Gaeity Theatre, Dublin, as part of the popular, long-running show *Gaels of Laughter* with comedienne Maureen Potter, the group, *Na Casaidigh*, suddenly and unexpectedly found itself hugely in demand. Although never full-time or professional, the group has since toured on three Continents, played in many leading venues including Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall and the Royal Albert Hall, taken part in countless TV shows, toured in the USA at least fifteen times, probably more, performed with symphony orchestras and at international festivals, and has issued 7 long-playing records and CDs. The distinctive character of the group, initially at least, was decidedly “classical” or “chamber” as it featured a harpsichord, harp, string trio and 4-part harmony vocals along with uilleann pipes, whistles, guitar, bouzouki and bodhrán.

After returning from Manchester, I was appointed lecturer in violin studies at the College of Music, later a department of Dublin Institute of Technology, and now a department of TU Dublin. I continued my studies on a private basis in Vienna with Prof. Franz Samohyl, a former leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. In DIT, I was one of the creators of the degree programmes in Irish music, which I led and organised for some years. In 2000, I took a master’s degree in traditional Irish Music at the IWAMD⁶ of the University of Limerick. One of the great privileges I enjoyed there was a close association with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.

Finally, an earlier composition of mine, *Marbhna 1916 (Requiem for 1916)* received its inaugural performance in Dublin Castle on the centenary of the 1916 Uprising, in the presence of His Excellency, Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland. It has been performed many times since in Ireland and abroad, including London, Rome and New York. The Dublin Castle performance was broadcast on RTE Radio 1 on Easter Monday 2016. *Marbhna* has also been recorded and broadcast on TG4.

⁶ The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

1.2.2 *Research*

The research for this study spans far beyond the period of registration for this degree and, to be honest, envelopes my entire life.

Music in general, and Irish traditional music in particular, were abiding passions of my father's life, which he fully shared with us. We had a collection of classical records at home which were played regularly. My father also spoke frequently about the character of Irish songs, the music and musical features of the Irish harpers and the activity of the prominent collectors. Indeed, he was also a collector in an informal way and had a large collection of songs from districts he had visited. He was a Gaelic-language enthusiast, which is why we were raised in the *Gaeltacht* of Gaoth Dobhair as native-Irish speakers. He often bemoaned the unfortunate circumstance that some of the collectors did not possess a knowledge of the language and, thus, were unable to record the words of songs they collected, or sometimes simply lost the words to songs they had collected. He was convinced that some of the poetry in the Irish literature was actually the missing texts to songs, from which they had become detached; a personal interest was looking for plausible matching of poems to great Irish melodies. He would write 4-part arrangements for songs, in counterpoint, as he felt each line should have its own internal melody.⁷ He composed a great many songs for children as well as a Mass in Irish. Many of the early arrangements for *Na Casaidigh* reflected his musical suggestions, his harmonisation as well as collective discussion on arrangements.

This lifelong exposure and absorption are fundamentally important to my interest in, and understanding of, Irish music. It is not something one can acquire hurriedly in preparation for a study of this kind.

The same is true of art music. I have had the privilege of having had many wonderful teachers and each in his, or her, own way provided me with valuable and incisive insight and skills. Some of them were my violin teachers, but a great many of them were musicians whose paths I crossed and who were happy to let me have the benefit of their own research, experience and understanding. At first, I was musical blotting paper, but later began to find my own legs.

Having said all that, a great deal of original research was specifically undertaken for this study. First and foremost, I researched the Irish Famine in great detail. I have read all the classic publications and a great deal more; virtually everything I could find. Early on, my supervisor suggested I write a chapter on the Famine, but this I declined, not least because it is a work best left to historians. Writing about the Famine, *per se*, was not what I had in mind. But, where this

⁷ Seán Ó Casaide studied music at University College, Cork, with Aloys Fleischmann, of whom he always spoke warmly and admiringly.

research is ever-present, is in the music – the atmosphere, the moods, sentiments, uncertainty and inner feelings which permeate the composition *Famine Odyssey*. The pathos and the sentiment reflect how I feel about the Famine, based on the extensive reading I undertook. For the purpose of this thesis, this research is used in writing the brief Background Notes to the movements and the Narration (both Appendix B). But, for *Famine Odyssey*, it is part of the acoustic sound and environment of the work.

On a visit to Toronto, Canada, for a performance of *Marbhna 1916*, I came in touch with the Canada Ireland Foundation, and this proved to be an inspirational encounter. At the time, the Foundation was working on a memorial park for Dr George Robert Grasett, a doctor who died of typhus while attending to Irish Famine migrants to Toronto in 1847. When he died, he was 36 years old. My first involvement began when they invited me to compose music for the ceremonial opening of the park, which took place online during Covid, and it also became the first piece composed for this work. The Foundation brought the story of Brigit Ann Tracey⁸ to my attention; instinctively I felt I had found the Famine narrative I had been searching for. I regard the narrative for this work as being no less important than the *libretto* of an opera.

Then began an intensive period of historical research on this topic. Coffin ships, *Grosse Île*, social conditions in Ireland, the conditions on the voyage, transportation problems on the Saint Lawrence River, administrative problems in Canada and the USA, even mundane topics such as historical shipping records for the port of Quebec and information about the main ports of departure in Ireland and the UK – the list is endless. Some of this material took considerable effort to uncover, some of it is interview based, and some of it has only recently become available. But at least I knew what I wanted, so the task was more manageable. The narrative is historically accurate and factually based.

The Recital also required an extended research effort. The music of the Irish harpers and folk tunes of the people, preserved by the great collectors, were well known to me. Nevertheless, these collections are very extensive and one discovers much that is “new” and gains new insight on each visit. Not so well known to me were the compositions of the Nationalist school of art-music composers in Ireland. Many of the names were familiar, some practically household names, others more obscure. A more detailed study of their work was still necessary.

⁸ Brigit Ann Tracey was seven years old when she arrived, half starved, in Toronto in early June 1847. Her descendants have reconstructed what we know of her story (see King, Jason, 2016, p.11), as well as Leslie Scrivener, (*Toronto Star*, 11 March 2007) and many more. In this work she symbolises the youth of Ireland fleeing their country, too young to really understand why. We view the unfolding events and associated emotions through her eyes.

I adopted the early 1960s as an arbitrary cut-off point for the Recital. On the one hand, the 1960s marked a major revival of interest in traditional music, elevating it on a plane with popular music. From then on, incorporating Irish culture in art music was no longer so new or innovative. On the other hand, eighty odd years seemed an adequate time period to take. However, it soon became clear that there was a younger generation of classical musicians engrossed with Irish national musical culture, with a refreshingly original approach. To ignore them might seem ironic, especially as my own work would pertain to this period. I studied a number of these composers – it is no more than a sample - so, what started out as an appendix to the Nationalist school became a separate chapter, chapter 4. I call this the post-Nationalist school. Its importance to this study is that of another segment on the long interface between traditional and art music.

Finally, there is a survey of the literature on Arts Practice Research, chapter 2. This is not a conventional survey, which is typically meant to summarise the entire literature, or significant subsections of the literature. Instead, I set out to see how this literature could help and guide me in the task I had set myself. This turned out to be challenging in its own way.

1.2.3 *Methodology*

Every study needs to identify a core methodology which sets the standard, or guidelines for work on the study.

A methodology I found very helpful goes under the general designation of Action Research (hereafter AR). There are different modes of AR. I found Operational AR most useful as it utilises the ‘cycle of enquiry’, a set of steps which helps to organise structuring and sequencing the entire work, but is also applicable to small specific problems. The sequential steps involved are: planning – acting/implementing – observing – reflecting, and these are widely used as an investigative process in many different contexts and disciplines. It is often illustrated as a closed circle but, in fact, is more like a spiral, as one may have to go around several times before one converges on the desired result. I used it extensively in the Recital and *Famine Odyssey*.

One could argue that many composers go through these steps instinctively without being aware they were following any specific model. This is true in the sense that “practice precedes theory”, and that theory is often no more than a codification of common best practice. Still, it is helpful to have a framework, or template, in mind.

While these steps are ideal for solving a problem on hand, I have found it very useful to combine them with another element of AR, i.e. ‘Critical Reflection AR’. This is an ongoing

process of questioning, retrospectively, whether all previous actions taken are consistent and coherent as parts of the entire work. It may happen that what might have been judged as perfect in an isolated context, may not gel well in the context of a movement or even the entire work. ‘Critical Reflection AR’ may lead to changes in the composition which restores balance between different elements, affects the tempo of the narrative and helps the composer decide if the artistic end-product meets the artistic goals which were set at the beginning. In my case, it has even led to completed sections being discarded.

1.3 Outline and Explanation of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis can be summarised as follows. In chapter 2, I set out to summarise important topics and issues in Arts Practice Research. As a relatively new discipline with a truly enormous scope, I attempt to find out how the literature can guide a study of this kind, and some of the main issues involved. Chapter 3 reviews some of the most important contributors to the Irish Nationalist School of composition since the late-19th century. I close this period (and the description) with the folk-music revival of the 1960s. For the purpose of this study, the Nationalist School of art-music composition is one of the segments on the interface which is represented, for comparative purposes, in the Recital, (chapter 6).

However, this tradition did not terminate there. The period which began in the 1960s – I name it the post-Nationalist School – brought about significant qualitative changes. Since that time, art-music composition with traditional-music character has been more developmental, more experimental, more exploratory, more concerned with finding new synergies, new points of contact between the two, rather than using one as a vehicle for the other.⁹ This distinction should not be exaggerated or over-stated as, perhaps, I have, and some compositions from the pre-1960s period could fit comfortably in the later period as well. Some activity in the post-Nationalist school is covered in chapter 4 where I focus on a number of the main contributors. This is the environment into which *Famine Odyssey* sits, primarily in that it attempts to synthesise aspects of the two *genres*.

Attention shifts to the Irish cultural context of traditional music in chapter 5, and seeks to enhance this by also including technical aspects of traditional-music performance. To an

⁹ Examples of what I mean by “vehicle”, are (a) quoting folk tunes directly in art-music compositions, and (b) taking traditional music and embellishing it, more or less raw, in an orchestral arrangement. These are perfectly legitimate activities, but lack integrative development, and are more reflective of the ethos of the Nationalist School rather than the post-Nationalist School.

extent, this describes the other side of the interface. It is based on my own involvement in this music, which is why I focus on *sean-nós*, uilleann pipes and fiddle. Chapter 5 closes with a brief discussion of bi-musicality in Ireland, my personal “home environment”, as it were.

In chapter 6, I present the first of two artworks arising from this study. The Recital contrasts two segments of the art music – traditional music interface in Ireland. The first part of the Recital is drawn from the great collections of Irish traditional music, and is a fusion of the music, art and traditional, of the pre-Famine era. The second part includes important compositions from the Nationalist School, composed in the period 1887 – 1960, also a traditional-art-music fusion.

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the second artwork produced as part of this study. The musical composition, *Famine Odyssey*, is based on emigration to Canada in 1847 as a consequence of the Great Irish Famine, 1845 - 50. Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the work; chapter 8 deals with important influences from the fields of art music and traditional music. Many traditional-music features are described in discussing the music presented for the Recital, and some of these have also made their way into *Famine Odyssey*. I avoid over-repetition of these features in chapter 8.

In chapter 9, I provide a reflective overview of the entire project, in the spirit of Arts Practice Research, and include some thoughts on how I see the project going forward from here.

There are two Appendices. Appendix A provides background details about *Famine Odyssey* which cannot be included in the thesis. Appendix B presents some of the publicity materials pertaining to the performance of the work in Toronto, Canada.

There are also digital recordings of the two artworks.

This thesis is accompanied by Book 2, a complete musical score of *Famine Odyssey*.

2.1 Introduction

Arts Practice Research, or Arts Practice as Research, (hereafter APR) is relatively new and its adoption as a recognised research discipline leading to a PhD is of relatively recent origin. Nelson (2013, p. 11), dates its origins from the 1980s, in Finland. Sullivan (2006, p. 21) contends that the discussion about practice-based research in a university context first emerged in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. Candy (2006, p. 4) held that practice-based PhDs (in creative writing) originated in Australia in 1984, when introduced by the University of Wollongong and the University of Technology, Sydney. All of these differ slightly with regard to detail, but all are in broad agreement as to the approximate starting date.

In contrast, music theory dates back to some 800 years BC and, as a scientific discipline, to Jean Phillippe Rameau in the 17th century; physics and economics as distinct disciplines date from the period between the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, whereas the origins of mathematics, medicine and philosophy are much, much older still. With a history of a little over 40 years, it is not surprising that APR, as an academic discipline, should still be seeking to establish a clear sense of identity.

As a result, many writers tend to interpret the key elements of APR research in terms of their own research activity, as will become clearer in the following sections. In this chapter, several viewpoints are considered with a view to evaluating them, both positively and critically. This is no different from other disciplines where differences of opinion also exist on certain questions. Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed are personal rather than a consensus in the literature. In no sense is this intended to cast doubt on APR as an academic discipline.

In this chapter, I make no claim to resolving any outstanding issues, ideological or practical, in the field of APR – this is best left in the hands of experts. My more limited goal is to describe what I regard as important topics in APR. First, I consider the definition of some APR terminology, specifically the meaning of “practice” as in “arts practice research”. This is undertaken in section 2.2.

Next, I consider some of the research frameworks in APR – these are not models, at least not in a scientific sense. They are more like templates for APR research. At other points they are more in the nature of individual authors’ reflections on the nature of APR. This is the subject of section 2.3.

After that I attempt to appraise some outstanding issues in the APR literature. First, the reason why APR has met resistance in its struggle to be recognised as a valid Ph.D. discipline in the university sector. Secondly, the need for written reporting in an APR Ph.D. thesis, and, if so, what? Finally, the arguments are considered for rejecting the relevance of professional practice research, in contrast to academic practice research, as an academic activity. These issues are discussed in section 2.4.

Concluding thoughts are presented in section 2.5.

2.2 'Practice' in APR Terminology

The Meaning of 'Practice': The most widely used term in APR is the word 'practice'. In the English language 'practice' can appear as a noun or a verb, is usually spelt differently in the UK and the USA (which can be confusing) and has several standard and widely-used meanings. In spite of there being many different contexts in which the term can be used, for example, to practise the piano (regular exercise to hone a skill), or own a medical practice (a business) etc, none of these fits the usage of the word in the APR literature. Thus, we are dealing with specialist APR terminology. This is not unusual as all specialist subjects are rich in such terminology. What is different is that it is difficult to find a definition in the APR literature.

Nelson (2013) tries to give a definition. In his PaR (Practice as Research) model, he presents a core concept, 'Praxis', which he defines as "theory imbricated with practice", Nelson (2013, p. 37). This is a circular definition. Or, perhaps he means applied research? In another passage, he gives numerous distinct meanings for the word 'practice', rendering a precise definition even more elusive:

PaR involves a research project in which *practice is a key method of inquiry* and where, in respect of the arts, *a practice* (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as *substantial evidence of a research inquiry*. (Nelson 2013, pp. 8 - 9, italics added).

And again,

The practice, whatever it may be, is at the heart of the methodology of the project and is presented as *substantial evidence of new insights*." (Nelson, p.27, italics added)

From the first quotation, we find that 'practice' can mean a "method of inquiry, i.e. a methodology, or alternatively, something (an artwork? a report?) that is "evidence of a research inquiry". From the second quotation above, it provides "substantial evidence of new insights"

(research outcomes recognised in the profession?). This could be an artwork or some form of recorded evidence, but a methodology alone cannot provide this.

Phelan and Nunan (2018) refer to “artistic practice”, in which their definition, a “form of inquiry” echoes Nelson. In “artistic practice” they say, supplementary materials *may be required* (italics added).

The clearest indication of the meaning of “practice” is provided by Smith and Dean (2009) who, on the whole, are less jargon-prone in their treatment of the subject. They make it clear that ‘practice’ is simply a synonym for ‘creative work’ or ‘creative activity’.

.... we have engaged with both practice-led research and research-led practice. The reciprocal relationship between the research and the creative work has taken numerous different forms, (Smith and Dean, p. 11).

It is with this definition that I proceed.

2.3. Methods of Arts Practice Research

In this section we deal with research frameworks put forward in APR. We begin with a framework put forward by Linda Candy, Candy (2006)¹⁰. Following that, we consider the Iterative Cyclic Web by Smith and Dean (2009). This is followed by the Nelson ‘Praxis’ model, Nelson (2013). And finally, we consider some of the content of a lecture by composer and academic, Stephen Goss, delivered at the TU Dublin on April 26, 2022. Due to considerations of length, we can give no more than a brief and selective overview of these frameworks.

The models presented here are not the only research frameworks that exist in APR although they are prominent and well-known in academia. They are a selection I have found useful in my own endeavours, and they have helped my understanding of the methodology and key points of an APR study.

¹⁰ I regard Candy’s paper as an important contribution to the subject because she made a preliminary attempt to provide a classification of APR studies. Her contribution has been largely ignored. In my view, this absence of a classification is one source of the considerable confusion that reigns regarding the requirements of an APR Ph.D. (see section 2.4).

Candy (2006) provides a guide to students reading for a PhD in research-based practice, and in the process discusses a wide range of issues. But first, she provides a classification of studies in practice-related research, i.e. *practice-based* and *practice-led*;

1. If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-**based**.
2. If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**.

(Candy, p.1)

Practice-based research is an original research study which will produce new knowledge, partly through practice and partly through the result of practice, i.e. (1) creative activity and (2) an artwork.

Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions (p.2).

Clearly, this category includes not only practice which produces a lasting physical outcome, such as a music score, a choreography, a sculpture, but also a transient physical outcome such as a performance or an exhibition, of which only a recording remains. A practice-based PhD differs from a conventional PhD in that “creative outcomes from the research” are submitted as part of the evaluation, and also that “original creative work” satisfies the requirement to make an original contribution to the field.

According to Candy, the materials in the doctoral submission “must include a substantial contextualisation of the creative work.” The merit of the doctoral submission is determined by an evaluation of both the written documentation and the artwork.

Practice-led research is substantially different in that it is mainly concerned with “the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice.” The contribution to knowledge concerns the nature of practice or activity within practice. The doctoral thesis will consist entirely of written text and will generally not include an artwork which is the outcome of creative activity.

Towards the end of the article, Candy provides a blueprint for writing a PhD thesis in research-based practice. She also provides a Q&A section, one question of which is of particular interest to us here, i.e. the role of the artifact in the submitted research results. According to Candy, the artifact does not, of itself, “explain” anything and requires a “linguistic description” to illuminate the *nature* and the *development* of the artifact, as well as “*understandings* about

the creative process”, (Candy p.8, italics added). She references Scrivener, that “(t)he art object does not embody a form of knowledge. Art is not a form of knowledge communication.” In Candy’s view, without the text it would not be possible to appreciate the “innovation” in the artwork. On the other hand, text alone cannot replace the artifact which, in order to be fully appreciated, must be “observed” in some form.

Candy is clearly referring to the evaluation of an artwork submitted in partial fulfilment of a PhD submission requirement. Adequate documentation is essential here as what is being examined is the student/artist’s work or performance with respect to specified criteria; in APR this is the creativity and the process involved, not just the artwork alone. For this purpose, the two are interdependent. Alternatively, a public performance for an audience, unrelated to an academic enquiry, is different. With the exception of programme music, including opera, documentation is not essential, as an important object of art is to stimulate the imagination or fantasy. It is rarely meant as a lecture.

This classification of APR studies by Candy has been acknowledged by Smith and Dean, but largely ignored by everyone else. One reason could be that almost all studies of interest to most researchers fall under the rubric of researched-based practice. As a result, most researchers treat ‘research-based practice’ as a synonym for all the other descriptors of APR and ignore her other interesting insights.

2.3.2 Iterative Cyclic Web – Smith and Dean (2009).

Art can change society by extending our vision and understanding, as well as opening our horizons to all sorts of new possibilities. But art also drives investment and research in technology, including that required to record, project and disseminate art. Advances in technology, in turn, open new possibilities for the arts. The relationship between art and the sciences is symbiotic and interdependent. The synergies of their combined interaction have helped to amplify their effect manifold. This is the essential insight of Smith and Dean.

Smith and Dean (2009) proposed an interactive model which implies that, at least in a university environment, creative artistic activity could, and should, work hand-in-glove with basic research activity in other disciplines. They elaborate on an interaction between creativity in the arts on the one hand, and research in technology and science on the other – a creativity-research dichotomy. This is captured by the two terms, **research-led practice**, and **practice-led research**. The latter term reflects an increasing acceptance of artistic endeavour for the

insights it yields concerning the creative process, in addition to its being a driver of research in technology. Research-led practice reflects how technology contributes to artistic creativity. This mutually advantageous interaction should encourage the acceptance of creative activity as a form of research in the university sector. However, their definitions of ‘practice-led research’ and ‘research-led practice’ are now completely different from Candy (2006).

Roger T. Dean is a British-Australian biochemist and musician. Musically, he has performed extensively on double bass, piano and also engaged with experimental, computer-based and algorithm-based music. Hazel Smith, his wife, is likewise a British-Australian musician and academic who has been active in a wide range of creative activities including creative writing and new media. Thanks to their cooperative work in developing what is known as the *Iterative Cyclic Web* model, they have become leading figures in the world of Arts Practice Research, whose development they have strongly promoted.

The important publication Smith and Dean (2009) was much more than a presentation of their model, and included a collection of articles by other prominent authors. Several important topics are aired in this book, including an examination of the meaning of knowledge, and how it is possible for research to add to the global stock of knowledge. An important question here concerns how ideas, or theories, can be tested to be given validity. Nevertheless, one should not confuse knowledge with truth, a fundamental precept in probabilistic testing; the former does not imply the latter. Some of these issues will be revisited in section 2.4.

Stripped of its complexity (and abstract theorising) the basic idea of Smith and Dean is rather simple; it highlights the fact that creative activity and many other disciplines are interdependent. Impetus flows in both directions and inter-disciplinary research is not linear but can swing back and forth. We are dealing with a research model of inter-disciplinary cooperation. Creative activity (i.e. practice) generates demands for research in technology (practice-led research) which, in turn creates new opportunities in producing, communicating or disseminating art (research-led practice). To Roger Dean, in particular, coming from the world of experimental and electronic music, the advent of affordable computers and the development of digital signal processing opened new avenues to musical exploration and artistic expression, (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.7). On the other hand, the artistic exploitation of these new media has driven research in digital electronics and sound reproduction to a new high.

The interlinkage between research in technology and artistic creativity (research-led practice) is evident. As an example, one need only consider advances in film, television, or sound recording and reproduction. A case in point is the advances in cinematography over the

past century, and how this has elevated the potential for artistic expression to a new high. This is immediately obvious when we consider advances in sound, colour, distribution etc., since *The Jazz Singer*, the first “talkie” film with synchronized sound, was released in October 1927. Colour came a little over a decade later, and was popularised by *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone With the Wind*, both in 1939. Streaming has revolutionised distribution possibilities in the music industry and when artificial intelligence AI has developed beyond its current state, music may be changed once more beyond recognition. But this interaction of technology and art is not a new phenomenon. Since the invention of the Metronome by Johann Maelzel in 1815, musicians have been able to specify the *tempo* (or *tempi*) at which a musical composition should be played. This was used by Beethoven as early as 1817 in his earlier compositions, enabling *tempo* to be defined objectively over time and space and no longer left to the subjective interpretation of the practitioner.

This, however, is only half of the equation. Creative activity can also lead to important insights which are research-like in character (practice-led research). This is the case where creative activity (art, dance, musical composition and other performing and non-performing arts) can produce insight into how such art can be produced. This highlights the critical importance of documentation or theorisation, both of which help us understand the creative process itself. (Smith and Dean, 2009, Ch. 1). Practice-led research includes both an artwork, which is a form of research, and “the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theorised and generalised ...” (*ibid*, p. 7).

These two processes, research-led practice and practice-led research are not two separate and distinct entities, but interactive and inter-disciplinary ones. But that does not cover everything because most research is undertaken for its own sake and not just to promote creative activity. This, they call academic research. While academic research may be undertaken independently of creative activity, and most of it is, that does not mean it will never have artistic relevance, i.e. spin-off effects, or applications, in creative activity. Examples abound – a hearing aid may assist a composer with severe loss of hearing in his/her artistic endeavours; air travel facilitates performers in travelling the world and interacting with audiences in a way which might, otherwise, be very challenging. The role of creative work and its relationship with traditional research activity in science, engineering, technology etc. are integrated within an iterative model – the *Iterative Cyclic Web*. This model is the innovative kernel of Smith and Dean.

The Iterative Cyclic Web model is represented by a circle which is divided into three segments, each representing one of research-led practice, practice-led research and academic

research. Research activity occurs along the circumference of the circle, but there are important considerations involved. As one moves along the circumference of the circle, one forms ideas, selects a main idea, formulates a theory (or hypothesis) along with some methodology for testing the theory (hypothesis). An important point is that the researcher is not restricted to moving consecutively along the circumference of the circle, but is free to skip to any other point on the circle at any time. Thus, an artist may switch to research in technology to overcome a problem; a dancer may need new materials for special shoes; a microchip producer may need new rare-earth minerals to enable some aspect of her nanotechnology experimentation; the manufacturer of a new mobile phone might want new sounds for a ringing tone. This is the inter-disciplinary aspect of the model and it is represented by switching between segments of the circle as required.

Another interesting aspect of the model is how problem-solving is incorporated into the model as a micro component of research activity. Examples could include how a painter solves a problem with perspective in a work of art, how a composer structures a melody, or how an art-gallery curator sequences artwork for an exhibition. This is not an inter-disciplinary problem but requires an internal solution. Such problems are represented as small circles on the circumference of the web. The solution may involve a number of stages but invariable requires an application of Action Research (see chapter 1). Once the research problem has been identified, the Iterative Cyclic Web model helps to structure the solution as a combination of macro interactions (inter-disciplinary) and micro tasks (Action Research).

Without going into excessive detail, the purpose of this web is to combine all three components (practice-led research, research-led practice, and academic research) in the creation of new knowledge, however defined, which is the goal of research activity in a university environment. Its practical purpose in APR is to integrate creative activity as an important component in total research activity, in spite of considerable resistance on the grounds that it didn't fit.

This iterative, web-based process results in the development of ideas which must then be documented and made publicly available.

This process is followed by the selection of ideas ... which are then ... developed and released through publication or other public outlets. (Smith and Dean, p. 21)

2.3.3 Praxis Model - Robin Nelson

Nelson claims to promote a unified framework which encompasses, and can be applied to, all of the arts, performing and non-performing.¹¹ This is a very broad constituency. He also seeks to dispense with categorisation, mainly by promoting his own, which would simplify the exploding nomenclature for practice-centred research:

‘Practice-based’ and ‘practice-led’ are familiar terms but ... (t)he approach is variously called ‘Practice as Research’, ‘Studio Research’, ‘Artistic Research’, ... (while) other method descriptors can include artography, arts-informed research, action research, action learning, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, participant observation, ethnography or reflective practice. (Julie Robson, Ch. 7 in Nelson 2013)

Greater generality comes at a price, usually a greater degree of vagueness in specifying his model.¹² It is not clear whether Nelson feels that “practice” implies the production of a tangible artwork; at least here, we will see that it doesn’t.

Much PaR work does not involve the creation of new artworks but applications of art or arts processes in social circumstances beyond a marked performance space. (Nelson 2013, p.67)

Nelson does not explain what he means by this quotation. He also provides a considerable amount of terminology, including ‘research’, ‘practice’, ‘meaningful research outcome’, ‘insight’ or ‘academic relevant document’, but rarely if ever explains what he means. As a result, purported definitions invariably take the form of examples. Nelson also has a fondness for inventing new terms for old, established concepts. Thus, it is not clear what is new about his construct ‘Praxis’, and his “location in a lineage” (document) is not clearly differentiated from the well-established ‘survey of the literature’. His ‘know-how’, ‘know-what’ and ‘know-that’ are also not his own invention but his loose adaptation of a well-known tool in knowledge-hierarchy models.

Nelson gives the impression that he is striving to provide a general, or universal model of APR, i.e. one that subsumes everyone else’s model and contribution. On close inspection

¹¹ “I do not claim my model to be the only one with all the answers.” (Nelson 2013, p.7)

¹² One of the greatest difficulties in coming to grips with what Nelson stands for arises from his tendency to get immersed in the philosophy of knowledge and cognitive psychology. Whenever we feel the need for a precise, pithy description or definition, he diverges into the realm of the abstract. This makes much of his writing inaccessible to anyone who doesn’t share this interest, and one can legitimately question its relevance.

(and reflection?) one can ask if his Praxis Model (2013), “theory imbricated with practice”, is more than “applied research”, or if it is more than a stylised version of the Smith and Dean (2009) ‘Iterative Cyclic Web’. When he attempts to describe what constitutes evidence of a research inquiry, including archival material, he comes up with an extensive list:

Over the course of three decades of discussion of PaR in the UK (and elsewhere) practitioner-researchers have increasingly accepted that the work itself is just one mode – albeit the most significant aspect – of evidence of a research inquiry in a multi-mode submission. Other traces of the knowledge-producing capacity of a project also remain and can be mobilized as part of the thesis. Documentation does not take only the form of the video or the written word. Sketches, scrapbooks, objects of material culture, photographs, video and audio recordings and exhibitions have all been mobilized not only to support but also to make the case by way of *evidencing the research inquiry*. Reason suggests that archives can consist of almost anything, including but not limited to theatre programmes, brochures, leaflets, photographs, video and sound recordings, press releases and press cuttings, details of marketing strategies, figures of ticket sales, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, descriptions of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage properties, and so on. (Nelson 2013, p. 86).

In some arts disciplines, the object of investigation (“the heart of the methodology of the project”) is “ephemeral (e.g. theatre, performance, dance, live art)”, so the examiners of the process “should experience the practice at first hand” (Nelson, p. 27). Where this is not possible, a DVD recording of the performance may be substituted for a live performance. In Nelson’s view, a DVD recording is “better than nothing, though, of course, it has serious limitations” (p.27). There is no elaboration of what these “serious limitation” might be.

These reservations notwithstanding, the Nelson framework does present interesting material for discussion. The complete model is given the name ‘practice as research’ or PaR. It is defined by Nelson as “an arts practice submitted as research” (Nelson, p. 24). It is a research inquiry which “must promote critical reflection”. It differs from traditional “scientific investigation” in that it leads to “substantial insights” rather than “definite conclusions which can be presented as answers to specific questions.” As such, it is less of an investigation, more of a process, and it is quite possible that the process will change as the inquiry progresses.

The nucleus of the model is the concept of “praxis”, which Nelson (2013, p. 37) defines as “theory imbricated with practice”.¹³ Interacting with praxis, and perhaps guiding it, is a body of knowledge which Nelson divides into three distinct categories, ‘know-how’, ‘know-what’

¹³ What Nelson means is that theory and practice are not separate entities interacting with each other at certain points, but are continuously interwoven, like a zipper, or pleated hair.

and 'know-that', hereafter the '3-knows'. Praxis is a multi-modal process in which the researcher seeks "to reveal and capture moments of discovery", (p.28)¹⁴.

My use of 'praxis' is intended to denote the possibility of thought within both 'theory' and 'practice' in an iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-authenticating-doing', (Nelson, p.32).

Certain modes are very important to the process, and two of those are reading and writing (documentation). The importance of reading as a research activity, or mode, is partly that reading is an indispensable part of any research inquiry. More especially it is the means whereby the arts researcher can evaluate his work in terms of a "location in a lineage", i.e. in the context of other research in the area. Finally, it enables the researcher evaluate that the "praxis manifests new knowledge or substantial new insights", (p. 31). Documentation (which "might include notebooks, sketch books, scores, video footage, audio recordings) is also an essential mode of PaR, because "writing assists in articulation and evidencing of the research inquiry", (p. 36). Writing, or suitable documentation, is necessary to meet the academic "criterion of disseminating ... the nuances of research findings ... to share knowledge for the general good." (pp. 36 - 7). Nelson prefers the term "complementary writing" because it may not be possible, let alone desirable, to represent the essence of an arts-practice in words. From his suggestion concerning submission requirements, the most important textual document would appear to be the "location in a lineage".

The Nelson model is strongly reminiscent of Smith and Dean's iterative model. Both of these models incorporate an iterative process involving theory and practice, and supposedly stand in contrast to the social and physical sciences. In the sciences, practice (behaviour or reality) precedes theory, and the goal of science is to generate theories which "explain" observable phenomena. It becomes iterative when an accepted theory breaks down, or proves inadequate, and one must return to the drawing board.¹⁵ In the sciences, a theory always seeks to explain reality, even if it is not yet verifiable.¹⁶ Art has the advantage of not having to be sequential or restricted to solving specified problems, so 'praxis' is a refreshing new perspective.

The submission requirements for an PaR research are likely to include

¹⁴ What makes this process distinctive is that continuous reflection is an integral part of the creative process. By this means, moments of insight and creative decision are recorded, thus capturing and illustrating the creative process.

¹⁵ The Copernicus revolution (1543) concerning the trajectory of the Heavenly Spheres is a good case in point.

¹⁶ Einstein's Theory of Relativity is a theory which was only subsequently verified.

- a product (exhibition, film, blog, score, performance) with a *durable record* (DVD, CD, video);
- documentation of process (sketchbook, photographs, DVD, objects of material culture, and
- 'complementary writing' which includes locating practice in a lineage of influences and a conceptual framework for the research. (Nelson, p. 26).

The role of the '3-knows' – 'know-how', 'know-what' and 'know -that' - is that knowledge is at the root of all human investigation. "Practice is at the heart and it incorporates different modes of knowledge", (Nelson, p.38).

Know-how, or procedural knowledge, is knowing how to do something. An oft-quoted example is to know how to ride a bike, but any skill which one learns incrementally presents an equally good example. It amounts to a set of actions which "facilitate complex tasks", what is widely referred to as 'muscle memory'. Learning how to dance, balance, play a musical instrument, drive a car, swimming, skiing, or even how to walk (as a child) –requires persistence and practice, but once you can do it, you know how.

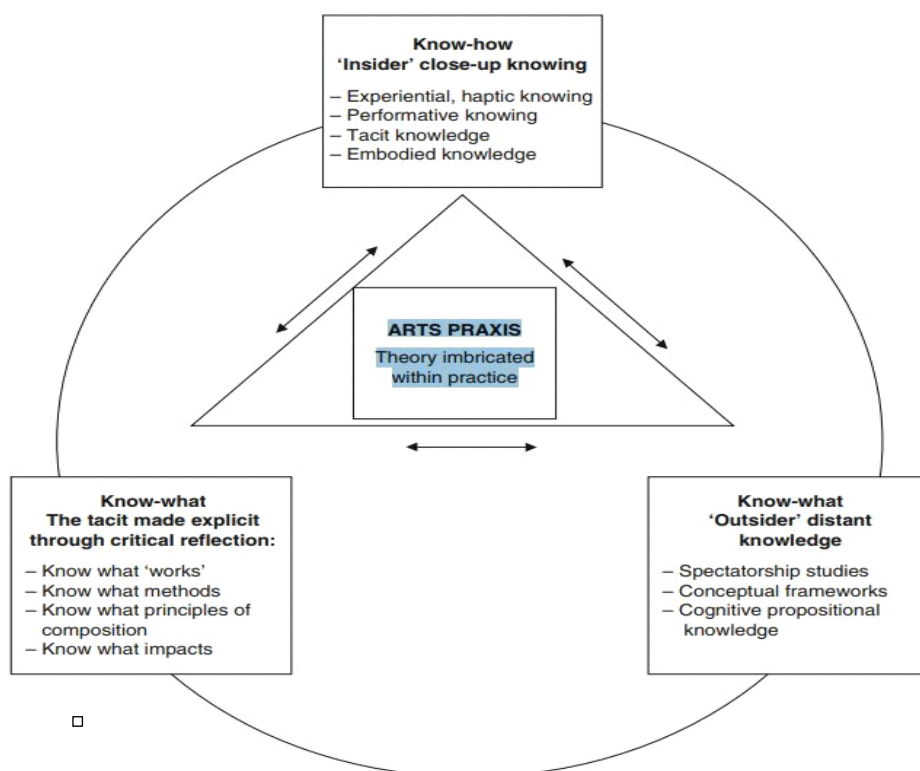


Figure 2.2 Modes of knowing: multi-mode epistemological model for PaR



Figure 2.1: Modes of Knowing: Multi-Mode Epistemological Model for PaR

Invariably it enables us to develop an innate ability.¹⁷ While easy to do once you have learned how, it may be very difficult to explain or to transmit to someone else. At one point, Nelson seems to equate it with “tacit knowledge” (p. 41) which is actually something quite different; tacit knowledge includes knowledge that we accept, based on values, so if Nelson is correct, ‘know how’ also includes our social and cultural conditioning and not just incrementally acquired, latent skills one is born with.¹⁸

Nelson explains that ‘know how’ has two important implications for PaR. First, arts practitioners tend to take this knowledge for granted and pay it insufficient conscious attention. Second, apart from performing the skill, it may be very difficult to explain to others. For this reason, an important aspect of a PaR inquiry is “to make the ‘tacit’ more ‘explicit’” (p. 43).

Know-what is developed from ‘know-how’ by means of critical reflection. It involves being able to stand back from the research process to evaluate where you are at present, and to decide on further desirable steps to take. It helps to identify the way forward. This is not always easy to do because when one is engrossed in the process of creativity it can be almost impossible to gain an objective view.

The know-what of PaR resides in knowing ‘what works’, in teasing out the methods by which ‘what works’ is achieved and the compositional principles involved, (p. 44).

But sometimes the arts-research practitioner can experience a feeling akin to writer’s block where it seems to be impossible to move forward. Nothing is appropriate. Nothing works. It is then that it becomes particularly important to engage in “critical reflection – pausing, standing back and thinking about what you are doing”, (Nelson, p. 44). Such instances can be usefully recorded in the documentation.

Know-that receives very little treatment or explanation. It is “the equivalent of traditional academic knowledge ... drawn from readings of all kinds” (Nelson, p. 45). It can be in language or numerical form, is often brought to the PhD programme from the previous degree programmes of the participants or from previous professional experience.¹⁹

¹⁷ That the ability is innate is important. A student of mine once told me that, as a child, she believed that she could fly. To develop this skill, she used to throw herself off the couch. After each failed experiment, she convinced herself it was just a matter of practice, and so, picked herself up and tried again.

¹⁸ There is a difference between an innate skill such as learning to ride a bike and a tacit, or social, norm e.g. to be faithful to your partner.

¹⁹ In a typical knowledge-hierarchy model, especially in the business sector where such models are of practical importance, the third and most knowledge-intensive phase is known as ‘know why’ rather than ‘know that’.

2.3.4 Operational Research Framework - Stephen Goss

Stephen Goss is a Welsh classical guitarist as well as professor of composition and director of postgraduate research at the University of Surrey. He is a prolific composer and this makes his engagement with APR particularly pertinent to the present study. A lecture he held at the TU Dublin forms the basis of this section, Goss (2022).

Goss posed three questions: One, how active musicians fit into a university environment? Two, why people do doctorates in creative arts research? and, finally, of special interest for present purposes, how artistic research differs for performers and composers? Our discussion is largely confined to the process of artistic research for composers. In addition, we consider Goss's view on the make-up of artistic research. The lecture concluded with a case study.

Composition as Research consists of five elements, (Goss, 2022)

The composition or artwork

Context

Creative Process

Research

Reception

For the composer engaged in APR, the artwork is the centrepiece of the research activity and it is set in a research context, i.e. an environment in which it is understood and interpreted. Clearly the context is of great importance as it determines the character of the composition and becomes an inseparable and integral part of the whole. This is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

The three remaining elements in this figure are external – they may influence the artwork but are not a part of it, First is 'reflection' (extended and extensive consideration of the artwork so that it can be honed and refined to perfection), then 'commentary' ("contextualises the research, identifying and communicating its contribution to knowledge") and, finally, 'reception' (responsiveness to the reaction of supervisors, the public and others, leading to

Research

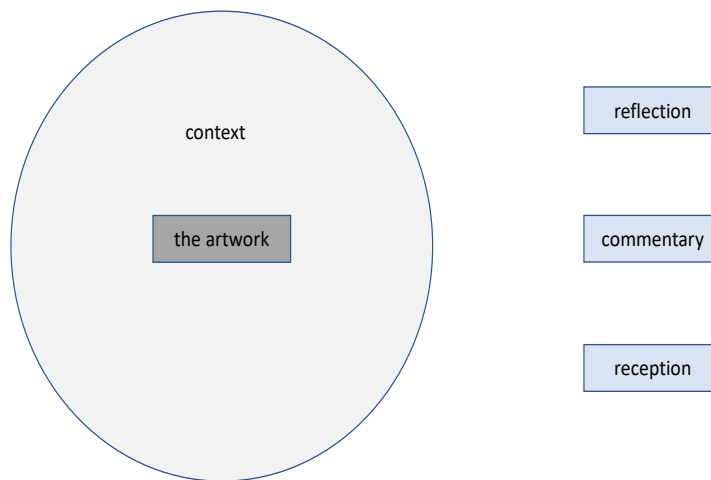


Figure 2.2: Five Elements in Composition as Research (Diagram 10, in Goss (2022))

further amendments if artistically meaningful). This response to the reception of the artwork can vary along the spectrum ignoring third-party opinion to extreme responsiveness. to the requirements of his performing artists.

Figure 2.4 below (Diagram 15 in Goss) describes the reflective process in a research project. A composer never stops thinking about the artwork, so that adjustments and refinements, major and minor, are almost continuous. It is frequently the deadline of the performance which puts an end, temporarily, to this.

Research as a reflective process

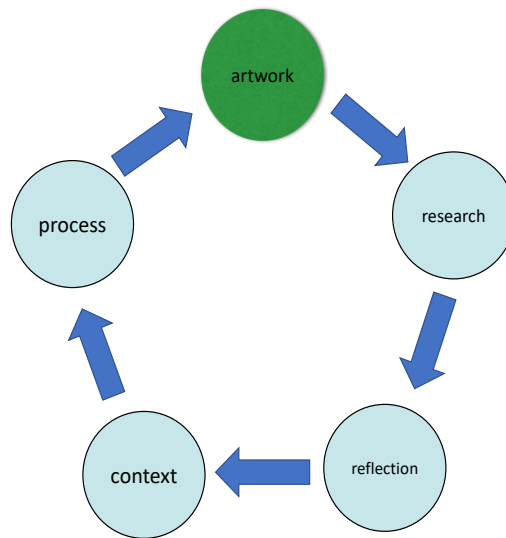


Figure 2.3: Reflective Processes in Research (Diagram 15, Goss (2022))

Figure 2.4 has the appearance of an operational version of the Smith and Dean Iterative Cyclic Web. It is also a variant of the Action Research methodology presented in chapter 1. Here we are dealing with one of the smaller circles along the perimeter of the large circle. These small circles deal with some aspect of the artwork – hence they begin and end with the artwork itself - and are the basis of changes or revisions that are implemented. The steps can be in any sequence required, so the figure is illustrative rather than prescriptive. ‘Research’ may concern any one of a host of factors, e.g. the context of the artwork, for example, thus influencing it in a very meaningful way, or music theory (keys, modulation, orchestration, effectiveness etc.), communication of the artwork to the public (title, narrative, lyrics of vocal parts etc), or a host of other factors. In this sense, the ‘research’ unit (Figure 2.4) is embedded in the creative ‘process’ unit (Figure 2.3); here, they are shown separately for expositional purposes.

Finally, we consider the nature of the research work in this type of study. Goss emphasises that “the Practice IS the Research”; in other words, the creative process is the research activity. What makes it so is the contextualisation of the research which enables the identification of original content, or insight, and facilitates its communication as a contribution to knowledge. This depends on extensive and appropriate documentation of the creative process, which follows from, and is based upon, suitable reflection of every aspect of the study. Goss states that a critical role is attributed to both documentation and textual analysis, as these

serve to validate the creative process and meet the requirement that a doctorate can verify its contribution to knowledge.

2.4 Issues in APR

APR has met with considerable resistance in academia in the course of its adoption as a research discipline. In this section we take a look at some of the issues involved. First, we consider the traditional view of academic research and how it generates new knowledge, and how APR fits into this. Second, we summarise the discussion whether written documentation should be necessary in an APR study, beyond the need to fulfil bureaucratic regulation. However, these two questions seem to be closely intertwined. And, finally, we consider some arguments which seek to confer research legitimacy on APR studies while denying this legitimacy to professional practitioners.

2.4.1 APR and Academic Research²⁰

Part of the difficulty experienced by APR in gaining acceptance in an academic environment stems from the requirement of universities that, to be recognised as such, knowledge must be verbal or numeric. This is because universities insist that knowledge must meet two essential requirements; first, it must be *generalisable*, i.e. applicable to other processes outside of the context in which it was produced, and second, knowledge must be *transferable*, or understandable and usable by others in a similar situation.

To be generalisable, the research findings need to be broadly applicable, and not confined exclusively or uniquely to the subject or context in which they were discovered. The subjective insights into the discovery of one's own creativity, which we discuss later in the autoethnographic studies referred to by Phelan and Nunan, lack this characteristic. They are subjective, and there is really no transfer of learning possible to a broader context.

The transferability requirement is similar in meaning and implies that the research findings can be understood, and used, by other parties in a different, but similar, context. Both of these characteristics require that research findings can be articulated in some form which can then be broadly accessed and communicated. Subjective sensations or insights which cannot be

²⁰ Much of this discussion centres on Knowledge Theory and the contributions of famous philosophers and mathematicians, notably the British philosopher and pacifist Bertram Russel as well as the Austrians, philosopher Karl Popper and mathematician Kurt Gödel. It is not central to the present study.

communicated, or communicable only for an instant (as in experiencing a live performance, live) simply do not count.

Opponents of this view of knowledge argue that sonic or visual artwork can also, and under certain circumstances, transmit knowledge in a manner that is neither verbal nor numeric. Consequently, any definition of knowledge must be expanded to account for these methods of transmission. Some critics have gone even further and argued that creative insight is a subjective experience which cannot be expressed in verbal form. Consequently, written materials or verbal representation play either a limited role, or have no place at all, in a PhD with creativity as its central element.

These abstract arguments seem to be destined for a philosophical stalemate, leading nowhere. Attempts to change the globally accepted definition of knowledge, no matter how justified, is destined to be a long-term and weary process. The ‘new kid on the block’, in this case APR, cannot be expected to have much leverage to apply in bringing this about.

At a more practical level, APR experts tend to focus on what is required so that creative activity can fulfil the requirements of research. A pragmatic view, which various writers have emphasised, is that a successful research outcome adds to the global stock of knowledge. The question then becomes how can one crystalize, and capture, the knowledge which is uncovered by creative activity?

Smith and Dean make it clear that, at least in academia, there is no mileage to be gained from a work of art in splendid isolation, at least not as a form of research.

In using the term practice-led research, we ... are referring to *both* the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theorised and generalised ... we would normally see the documentation, writing and theorisation surrounding the artwork as crucial to its fulfilling all the functions of research. (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.7).

What is particularly interesting here is that the claim to being research rests not just in the creation of an artwork, but equally the process whereby the artwork was created. Documentation is important in explaining the process.

Goss (2022) dealt specifically with musical composition and is, therefore, of particular relevance for this study. He maintains that the *contextualisation* of the research activity is what distinguishes *creativity* (alone) from *academic research* – this requires extensive documentation which enables one to identify original content and makes it easier to communicate the results to an audience. He seems to imply that inspiration, or insight, may be very creative, but that this alone is not research. Instead, research is the process of study,

reflection and documentation which accompanies, and contributes to, the creative impulse. Candy (2006) would agree:

Increasingly it seems that practice as research can best be interpreted in terms of a broader view of creative practice which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorisation and documentation.” (Candy, 2006, p. 5).

2.4.2 APR and Documentation – How Much and What Kind?

How much documentation should be required for a PhD in APR? This is very much a question of regulations and can vary from institution to institution. Most universities set an upper limit of about 100,000 words, sometimes less, for a PhD by thesis only. Consequently, it is felt that about half of this would be appropriate for a PhD which includes an artwork as part of the submission. Nelson (2013) would agree but seems to set the bar a little lower;

A typical balance between practice and complementary writings in UK PhDs is 50:50 – the thesis constitutes a substantial practice together with 30,000 to 40,000 words. (p.11)

Phelan and Nunan (2018) discuss the situation at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. Although the issue has not been finally resolved, the current regulations there require doctoral students “to write a 40,000-word contextual document (alongside presenting two major performance events).”

In the Dundalk Institute of Technology, where this study was undertaken, the upper limit for a “stand along” thesis, without any accompanying artwork, is 90,000 words. Where an artwork (or artworks) are produced as part of the PhD process, about half of this is envisaged, with a minimum thesis length of 30,000 words required.

Thus, there is no important difference of opinion on this point and the actual differences are minor. Nonetheless, a 40,000 word thesis severely curtails the range of topics which can be discussed.

Even where writing, or some other formal documentation, is considered important, there is little agreement as to what this should be. This is partly because research studies dealing with creative activity in the arts can be very varied. But, it is also a reflection of the fact that there is little consensus on what creative activity actually is. The principal justifications for insisting on some documentation would appear to be (1) that it is an administrative requirement for a Ph.D., (2) as part of the evidence, along with the artwork, of a research inquiry, and (3) it helps to identify

instances of creative inspiration, and (4) to make the knowledge in the research outcomes publicly available. Yet, there are some who argue that any documentation requirement at all is counter-productive and merely deflects from true creativity (see discussion in Phelan and Nunan). This view may help to explain the resistance to APR as an academic discipline in some quarters.

The essential role of writing, or documentation, in a PhD would seem to focus on the need for “evidence of a research inquiry” (Nelson, e.g. p.11), importance of “contextualisation” (Goss), to identify and record “moments of Discovery” (Nelson, p.28), or “insight”, or “moments of autoethnographic insight” into the development of their own art, mainly by means of “reflexive journals” (Phelan and Nunan, 2018).

Nelson (2013, p. 4) takes a rather ambivalent stand on the requirement that artistic outcomes in APR should be susceptible to verbalisation, or some other communicable form. He feels that ‘practice as research’ in the performing arts can be ephemeral, or transient, and that this ... “pose(s) particular challenges to ideas of fixed, measurable and recordable ‘knowledge’.” In the early days of ‘practice as research’, it was a matter of debate

... why any writing was required in a PaR thesis ...
on rare occasions I do believe that *the practice alone may evidence a research inquiry*” (Nelson, 2013, p.37, italics added).

Phelan and Nunan (2018) consider approaches to writing in the context of APR at the Irish World Academy, in pursuit of the goal of “breaking down historical barriers between performance practice and academic scholarship”. Ethnographic writing (based on the description of cultural customs in a society) also includes accounts of autoethnographic experience (or personal formative experience in a cultural context). A list of suitable writing techniques is also presented. The most important would appear to be “reflexive journals” which record the arts-researcher’s journey of discovery and key moments on this journey.

Of particular interest in Phelan and Nunan are several examples they present from students’ PhDs describing moments of autoethnographic insight into the development of their own art. These are obtained from “reflexive journals” which the performance-researchers maintained to capture their reflections on their own art. In one example, choreographer and step-dancer, Breandán de Gallaí, discusses the critical self-discovery of how long he felt he could remain suspended in the air following a leap, when inspired by the music. Another example involved a professionally-trained singer, Sharon Lyons, discovering a formative and deep empathy for ritual after singing at the funeral Mass of her close friend. These examples

are mere “flavours” and are too short to represent the impact of insight into one’s art, but they show how writing can reveal flashes of recognition and experience, however imperfectly.

We can leave the last word on this topic to Judith Mottram,

The disinclination to engage with writing cannot be the basis for developing a new approach to advanced academic work. Writing lucidly and accurately about practice is essential for advanced contributions to a field within the university arena. ... University regulations generally frame the doctoral thesis as an argument made evident through a written text, possibly some objects and a discussion. The viva is articulated through language. (Mottram, J., in Dean and Smith, 2009. p.246.)

2.4.3 Arts Practice and Professional Practice

The last issue to be discussed here is the argument that the research practitioner in APR can merit a PhD while the leading exponents of this art in the world, the professional practitioners, do not. This is often described as the difference between ‘practice research’ and ‘professional practice’. In the previous section, Phelan and Nunan (2018) explained that efforts at the Irish World Academy at UL sought to break down barriers between professional and research practice.²¹ The conflicting views of Nelson (2013) and Candy (2006) are discussed here.

Nelson describes the academic goal of the process of PaR (p.35), and describes several reservations he holds regarding the role of performing artists in academia. First, artists may be reluctant to relate “the specifics of their process ... because they do not think they will be of interest”. Second, artists fear that to “reveal their process” could very well “extinguish the spark”, or that they “are precious about what they do” with the result they are unwilling to “share knowledge for the general good” (Nelson, 2013 p.36). Finally, he holds that while performing artists maintain that what they do “as established professionals” is research, they are unwilling to countenance the minor “adjustments” which would be required to meet the protocols of academic research. (p.25).

What Nelson describes does not correspond with my experience. Almost all artists, from international soloists to orchestral players, teach in various educational establishments as professors, and also have some private students who exhibit unusual talent. They are more than keen to impart their skills, and such artists attract special note and prestige in the profession when they produce top students. Conversely, every top soloist will dedicate part of their CV in concert programme notes to mentioning the important and illustrious teachers they studied

²¹ The motivation behind this innovative approach is elaborated upon in chapter 4.2.3 in the discussion on Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin.

under. It would be unusual for any skillful musician not to teach. Far from being “precious” about their skill, they take pride in imparting their art to the next generation. Furthermore, teaching helps to crystallise one’s understanding of one’s own art.

At risk of over-simplification, we can take the ‘riding a bike’ example of latent ability as an analogy. Almost anyone can be taught to ride a bike, but only the truly exceptional will win the *Tour de France*. Most former top cyclists will engage with cycling clubs to help train young talented cyclists, advising on specialist topics such as health, fitness, training, diet, etc., and the top cyclists of the future will certainly come from such clubs.

Candy (2006) makes a different point, but also feels it is important to distinguish between practice-based research carried out within a doctoral programme and the personal research carried out by a wide range of artists in pursuit of their professions. She accepts that practitioners undoubtedly carry out research and produce original knowledge, but ...

... this kind of research is, for the most part, directed towards the individual’s particular goals of the time rather than seeking to add to our shared store of knowledge in a more general sense. (Candy, 2006, p.1).

Candy argues further that research carried out by practitioners lacks academic validity because it does not fulfil a list of administrative requirements, such as appropriate documentation. Apart from that, the critical distinction for Candy would appear to be that a practice-based doctoral outcome is “shared with a wider community” because it “arises from a structured process that is defined in university examination regulations.” (Candy, 2006, p. 1). Thus, her two main arguments would appear to be, one, that practitioner research does not produce the documentation required in the official regulations, and two, that it is just for private consumption and personal goals, rather than being disseminated publicly. Her first point is correct, if minor. Her second argument is false.

Candy’s argument about the public availability (“shared with a wider community”) of “private” practitioner research can be easily laid to rest with a few examples. In 1829 at the age of 20 years, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy organised and conducted, in Berlin, the first ever performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* outside of Leipzig. This was more than one hundred years after Bach had composed the work, and by then, Bach was all but forgotten.²² It sparked a huge wave of interest in Bach in Germany and throughout Europe. Four years later, in 1833, Mendelssohn staged the G.F. Handel oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*, in Dusseldorf, which led to a similar revival of interest in Handel. And in 1839 as director of the *Gewandhaus*

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Mendelssohn

Orchestra in Leipzig, he organised the first ever performance of Franz Schubert's Ninth Symphony after the manuscript had been discovered, and sent to him, by Robert Schumann.²³ All of this would count as professional practice, not as research practice. But, is this not public dissemination? In 1843, Mendelssohn founded the Music Conservatory in Leipzig, today the *Hochschule für Musik und Theatre "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy"*.

Alternatively, take two titanic works in the music literature, Beethoven's violin concerto in D-major, and Elgar's cello concerto in E-minor, as examples. Both of those were largely ignored when they first appeared and hardly featured in the repertoire. In the public perception a violin concerto was expected to produce fireworks in the manner of Vivaldi, and Beethoven did not do that. It was not until it was championed by the Austrian violinist, Joseph Joachim, the leading violinist of the 19. century, that the Beethoven violin concerto became appreciated for its magnificence, so that it broke through into the mainstream repertoire²⁴. The same was true of the Elgar cello concerto, which only won recognition as an astonishing work of genius, having languished in relative obscurity for several decades, when played and promoted by Jacqueline du Pré. The sad character of the concerto and the tragic fate of du Pré, have only served to cement the association of the two in the public perception.

The point is that the research of practitioners is rarely private and in pursuit of purely private goals. Normally, such intensive research and study is undertaken with a view to public performance, possibly even a recording for radio or television and, occasionally, released on recorded medium. This leads to reviews by music critics and such recordings are then extensively studied by other artists, in turn, as part of their research into the appropriate interpretation of the work.²⁵ This dissemination of artistic insight is hardly more restricted than that of a PhD thesis lodged in a university library.

2.5 Reflections on Methodology

The central goal of this chapter was to review a relatively small but relevant section of the APR literature in order to extract guidance on how to proceed with the current study. Along the way consideration was given to a few other issues, which loom large in the world of APR specialists but may not be of central relevance here – I will ignore them in this reflection.

²³ Schubert's "unfinished symphony" was his seventh, not the ninth. However, it was only "unfinished" in that the final movement was lost and has never been recovered, not that he died before he could finish it.

²⁴ Joachim also wrote the cadenza at the end of the first movement that is normally played as part of the work.

²⁵ The same would apply to Rudolf Nurejew's (Nureyev) celebrated choreography for the Tchaikovsky ballet *Swan Lake*, first performed by the Vienna State Ballet on 15. October 1964. A significant feature of this choreography was an upgrading of the leading male role.

The first hurdle I came across was the meaning of the word ‘practice’ in ‘arts practice research’. To the expert this may seem obvious and elementary, which may explain why almost no one actually bothers to define it, or define it precisely. Yet, every science provides concise definitions of its core terminology. As it happens, the word simply means ‘creative work’ or ‘creative activity’.

Upon extensive reflection, including evaluation of my understanding of research frameworks, it dawned on me that there is no fundamental difference between the frameworks of Smith and Dean (2009), Nelson (2013) and Goss (2022).²⁶ The core methodological element or nucleus in all those models would appear to be some variant of the Action Research “cycle of enquiry” which I described in chapter 1. Any perceived difference is in the detail, the focus (perhaps) and the presentation. But there is nothing fundamentally different. When so many art forms can claim to come under the umbrella of APR, the focus on the essence of creativity shifts a little to allow for where each writer is coming from and the peculiarity of the art form in question. But, all writers take *the artwork* as the centrepiece of the study, and all emphasise the importance of *reflection on the creative process*. Most important, all regard insight gained from creation of the work as an important research outcome, i.e. the addition to the global stock of knowledge.

Smith and Dean came from the realms of experimental music (the latter) and signal data processing technology (the former). This may explain why they stress the distinction between music creation supported by advances in computer technology (research-led practice) and the research in technology driven by the requirements of music (practice-led research). This is a clear inter-disciplinary dichotomy whereby music is the creative activity and computer technology the research. The amalgamation of such diverse fields is rather extreme, resulting in a hard distinction. However, it is not a general model but a very specific one.

Phelan and Nunan are concerned with ethnographic and autoethnographic research, a distinctive area in APR. In the latter especially, the focus switches to exploring the development of one’s own art, mainly through a process of reflection and journal writing. Moments of self-discovery and insight into one’s art are key components (perhaps the key element) in the process of creating artistic performances. The underlying philosophy of this programme at the University of Limerick was to break down traditional barriers between performance research and academic research and create academic protocols which would enable this. The method of introspective reflection and detailed record-keeping is central to this art form, but may not be

²⁶ In this summary I ignore the article by Candy. She is mainly concerned with providing a blow-by-blow account of how to write a PhD. Although helpful, I find it strangely counter-productive to provide a template for what is, after all, a creative exercise.

so to others. In these studies, some form of public presentation, or recital, provides the context in which the introspective analysis and self-realisation occurs.

The most relevant for this study is the work of Goss because he is a composer and deals with APR in the context of a musical composition. The composition is unambiguously the centrepiece of the research activity, with the context of the composition an integral part of the whole. He collapses the Smith and Dean dichotomy by stating that *the practice is the research*, i.e. the activity of artistic creation is the research work. While the Smith and Dean dichotomy is not sacrosanct, it is still a useful insight.

In all cases, extensive documentation is required to provide adequate contextualisation, which enables the identification, and dissemination, of the original contribution in the work.

Chapter 3 Nationalist Movement in Irish Art Music

3.1 Birth of the Nationalist Movement in Western Art Music

Arguably the first important instance of folk music exerting an emphatic influence on Western art music was the opera *A Life for the Czar* by the Russian composer Mikhail Glinka in 1836 (Schonberg, 1980, pp 306-7).²⁷ In the second half of the century, a Russian Nationalist school emerged which rejected the strict Austrian-Germanic rules of composition. They embarked on a more spontaneous and free form, which was immersed in Russian culture; its principal exponents were Modest Mussorgsky (1839 – 1881), Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844 – 1908) and Alexander Borodin (1833 – 1887). Influenced by Glinka, Bedrich Smetana (1824 – 1884) and Antonin Dvorak (1841 – 1904) followed a similar route in Bohemia, then part of the Habsburg empire and now in the Czech Republic, (Schonberg pp. 334-346).

Around the same time, and later, many more were to follow and embrace the indigenous music of their own countries, such as Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 – 1924), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958) and Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934) in Ireland and England, Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945) in Hungary, Manuel De Falla (1876 – 1946) in Spain and Hector Villa- Lobos (1887 – 1959) in Brazil, to name but a few.

In this chapter, we deal with some of the most prominent composers who incorporated elements of Irish folk music and traditions in their art-music composition and arrangement, what I term the Irish Nationalist school. We are concerned with some works which establish them on the interface, or boundary between Irish traditional music and art music, not with their entire output. It deals with this *genre* up to the mid-1960s, the pivotal point, or *caesura*, represented by Ó Riada. Beyond this point, composition on the interface underwent a qualitative change, and we consider this later period in chapter 4.

Our concern is mainly, but not exclusively, with orchestral composers. Not all of them were Irish. For some, engagement with Irish culture was not even the main focus of their musical output. Finally, this chapter excludes prominent Irish composers, such as Gerard Victory, Brian Boydell, or others who did not include Irish folk influences in their music, or too little to warrant inclusion here.

²⁷ Schonberg, Harold C., (1980) *The Lives of the Great Composers*, Futura Publications.

3.2 Early Irish National Composers of Orchestral Music

3.2.1 Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 – 1924)

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford was born and reared in Dublin into an Anglo-Irish family. He studied Classics at Cambridge University and also studied music in Leipzig and Berlin. He spent most of his adult life in London. Stanford was a co-founder of the Royal College of Music in London in 1883, where he held the post of professor of composition throughout his life; his most prominent students include Ralph Vaughan-Williams, Gustav Holst and John Ireland. In 1887 he was also appointed professor of music at Cambridge University. He was a prominent conductor, musical director and a prolific composer.

Yet he never lost his interest in Irish music or his links to Ireland, and was president of the Feis Ceoil, for a brief spell, after its establishment in 1895. He was a close friend of George Petrie, whose extensive collections of Irish traditional music he published after Petrie's death. Stanford brought the world of Bunting and Petrie into the mainstream of European art music. The sounds of Gaelic Ireland were represented by Stanford within the classical structures of late nineteenth century European art music (Mac Cól, 2010, p. 61).²⁸

Stanford's output consists of almost 200 works, and included ten operas, seven symphonies, more than thirty oratorios, eleven concertos including three piano concertos, twenty-eight chamber works including eight string quartets. In addition, there were songs, organ works and preludes. None of these has survived in the general orchestral and operatic repertoire. His main musical interest was church choral music and this is what he is chiefly remembered for. But in some of his work and through his students, he is regarded as the originator and promoter of interest in folk music and the folk tradition, in a classical context, in Ireland and Great Britain.

He made considerable use of Irish themes and features in his compositions. This influence was sometimes subtle as in the use of modal harmonies, while at other times he uses material from the Irish traditional music repertory directly. In his *Irish Symphony* No.3 (1887) he includes well known airs such as *Molly Mc Alpine*, *The Little Red Fox* and *Father O'Flynn* (Vallely, 2011, p. 664).²⁹

²⁸ Mac Cól Liam, (2010) *An Chláirseach agus an Chróin, Seacht Siansa Stanford*. Clódóirí Lurgan.

²⁹ Vallely, Fintan (ed.) *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 2nd Ed, Cork University Press.

It was an Irish composer, Charles V Stanford (1852 - 1924) who triggered a symphonic folk movement on the British Isles with his 'Irish' Symphony (1887), one of the earliest and most influential examples.³⁰

Stanford's '*Irish Symphony*' is full of romanticism, expression, heroism and colour. Though reminiscent of Brahms, one can also hear echoes of Elgar, Holst and the English school which he mentored, and which was to follow. Some of the Irish music themes are instantly recognisable, such as *Molly Mac Alpine* on lower strings and later on clarinets, and *Let Erin Remember* played on trumpets and trombones in the finale, *Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco*. These themes are treated skilfully and creatively in a large orchestral tapestry.

Apart from his *Irish Symphony*, Stanford's 'Irish' musical output included six *Irish Rhapsodies*, an opera titled *Shamus O'Brien* and the *Songs of Old Ireland*. His repeated attempts at opera met with mixed success and the prominent music critic, George Bernard Shaw, expressed his disappointment that "Stanford the professor was in such firm control of Stanford the Celt". In other words, Stanford the Celt was musically superior to his other compositions.

Other critics disapproved of what they perceived as the influence of Schumann and Brahms, even Wagner, in his compositions. These influences, infused with traditional melodies and modes, make him an exceptional composer in my opinion. This fusion is particularly evident in his *Irish Rhapsody* (No. 6, Op 191 (1922)) for solo violin and orchestra, his final composition completed shortly before he died. It is also one of his finest, and in my opinion the equal of his peers such as Bruch, Brahms and Elgar.

In this piece, reminiscent of Max Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*, Op 46, (1880), Stanford achieves an effective fusion of the late romantic style and Irish traditional music. Stanford blends romantic harmonic language, including chromaticism and daring modulations, with a classic Irish *Caoine* (lament) in the Aeolian mode, giving the opening section of the Rhapsody, an elegiac feel. "Stanford was of the opinion that the falling figure was a defining characteristic of an Irish *Caoine*"³¹ The traditional character of the opening measures of the work is enhanced with the arpeggiated harp accompaniment and the ornamental falling figure on the violin reminiscent of harper embellishment of airs, figure 3,1.³²

³⁰ Klein Alex, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, cmc.ie/composers/ p. 174

³¹ In conversation with Liam Mac Cóil, 16/02/25. (author and critic).

³² Stanford Charles Villiers Score (piano and violin reduction), IMSLP561534-PMLP904587-VP_STANFORDG_IRISH_RHP_6_PSC_PT. pd

Figure 3.1: Arpeggiated harp accompaniment with ornamental feature in violin, Piano reduction, Stanford, *Irish Rhapsody no. 6* (bars 16-17)



The *Rhapsody* references the well-known reel, *The Blackberry Blossom*, which Stanford uses to conclude the work. It is written in a style that is fluent, high powered, and technically challenging, placing the work among the finest in the repertoire of late romantic violin pieces. The emphasis, therefore, is on thrilling virtuoso passage work, with exciting orchestration and modulation. While Stanford does not reference aspects of traditional performance, such as ornamentation, he quotes the reel in full, with variation, in what is a violinistic *tour de force*.

Figure 3.2: *The Blackberry Blossom*, from the Goodman Collection, (1861-1866) ³³



Figure 3.3: Virtuoso playing of *The Blackberry Blossom* Reel, (piano reduction), Stanford (bars 113- 117)³⁴



It is ironic, therefore, that his lightest opera, the comic opera *Shamus O'Brien*, was the only one of his operas to enjoy popular success (Ryan 2003, p. 50)³⁵. It featured much material

³³ Hugh & Lisa Shields, (eds. 2013), *Tunes of the Munster Pipers 2 / Irish Traditional Music from the James Goodman Manuscripts*, Volume 2, Dublin, p. 189

³⁴ Stanford Charles Villiers Score (piano and violin reduction), IMSLP561534-PMLP904587-VP_STANFORD_IRISH_RHP_6_PSC_PT. pdf

³⁵ Joseph J Ryan. *Opera in Ireland before 1925*, in Cox and Klein (eds) 2003, *Irish Music in the Twentieth Century*.

from the repertoire of Irish traditional music and may well represent a distinctive national operatic style. “*Shamus O’Brien* is arguably the first recognisable example of an Irish ‘national’ opera ...”³⁶ It was subsequently performed in the United States and toured Ireland in 1892.

3.2.2 Michele Esposito (1855 – 1929)

An Italian-born composer and pianist, Michele Esposito is a “figure of seminal importance in the history of Irish music.” (Dibble, Jeremy, 2010, p. xiii)³⁷. He left his native Naples for Paris in 1878, and four years later accepted a teaching post for piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin.

The Royal Academy and Dublin Musical life in general greatly benefited from his boundless energy for performance, composition and teaching. Within a short while he was seen as the *de facto* director of the Academy... (He) established Ireland’s first professional symphony orchestra, ‘The Dublin Orchestral Society’ in 1899. For nearly half a century he dominated Irish musical life as a conductor, composer, pianist and teacher.³⁸

He composed primarily in the late Romantic style, Dibble detects its ‘kinship’ to the Italian style of Sgambati and Martucci. He was also very interested in using Irish music themes in his orchestral works and prefaced many of his orchestral works with overtures that sounded thematically Irish.³⁹

His *Irish Symphonie* (1902) and *Irish Suite* (1907) are based on Irish folk music, while his opera *The Tinker and the Fairy* (1910) and cantata *Deirdre* (1897) drew textually and thematically on Gaelic mythology and folklore (Dibble, 2010, p. xiv). We are fortunate that the orchestral score for Esposito’s *Irish Suite*, has survived, as a great deal of his music has been lost, and only the vocal scores for his two operas and cantata are extant.

Some of his most important compositions — including two piano concertos, several major orchestral works, a string quartet, a piano quintet and two piano quartets — were not published in his lifetime and the manuscripts seem to have disappeared along with his personal papers, together with the full orchestral scores of his two operas and the cantata *Deirdre*.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ring, Gavin, *Performance Considerations for Robert O Dwyer’s “Eithne” (1909): A Contextual Study and Edited Vocal Score*, Doctoral thesis RIA. p. 17

³⁷ Dibble, Jeremy, (2010), *Michele Esposito*: Dublin: Field Day Publications,

³⁸ Fleischmann Aloys (Ed), 1952, *Music in Ireland a Symposium*, Cork University Press (Digitalised, University of Minnesota, March (2010), p. 8

³⁹ Klein, Alex, <https://www.cmc.ie/composers/michele-esposito>

⁴⁰ Dibble Jeremy, (2010) p. xvii.

His writing is stylistically different from Stanford, in a sense, more European. Stanford tends to quote complete melodies such as the *Caoine* and the reel, (see *Rhapsody* No 6, above) whereas Esposito tends to use shorter themes, derived from the melodies. He blends the rich textures, chromatic movement, and thematic development of the late-Romantic era with the idiom of Irish traditional music. The traditional character evident in his score of the *Irish Suite*, is achieved through quoting well-known melodies and the use of modal scales, such as the Dorian mode, in the first movement, *Allegro Maestoso ed Energico*, and gapped scales in the second movement, *Allegretto Vivace*. The “...*Irish Symphony* and the *Irish Suite* are notable early attempts to use Irish folk tunes as a basis for serious symphonic works” (Dibble, 2010, p. xiv).

Figure 3.4: Esposito, Gapped scale, *Allegretto Vivace*, oboe (bars 1-4)



The highlight of his *Irish Suite* is the third movement. Here Esposito uses a *Lento-Vivace-Lento* form, in which he blends two well-known melodies, the 17th century song, *Éamonn an Chnoic* (*Ned Ryan of the Hill*) and the Clan march, *Fead an Iolair* (*The Eagle's Cry*), in a quasi-ternary, slow-fast-slow structure.

The opening theme of the movement, played by cellos, contains the first eight bars of the song, figure 3.5. This is given a melodramatic accompaniment, with syncopated semiquaver movement in strings and woodwind reminiscent of the silent movies. This is quite effective and reflects the drama of the lyrics of the song, which is in the form of a dialogue between the Rapparee, Éamonn, and the Lady of the house from whom he seeks shelter. The song has an A-A1-B-A1 structure of which Esposito uses only the first A. He scores his theme in the Aeolian mode instead of the Ionian mode or F major, by treating the final note of his theme as a tonic note on D, rather than the 6th degree of F Major. In the repeated A1 section of the original song, the melody rests on the tonic note of F. This subtle difference changes the original melody, altering its tonality and giving it a more tragic character.

Figure 3.5: Esposito, *Éamonn an Chnoic*, theme on Cello, *Lento Vivace Lento*, (bars 1 – 8)



The opening of the fourth movement also shows how Esposito had immersed himself in Irish music in spite of his background in European art music. In figure 3.6, he quotes a harper tune from Bunting right at the very start of the movement. It is all the more regrettable that so much of his music has been lost, as one must wonder what other gems his manuscripts contained.

Figure 3.6: Esposito, Movement IV, opening measures of harper air. *Irish Suite*⁴¹

He also arranged many Irish folk songs, including the well know song-air *An Chúlfhionn* for violin and piano (see chapter 6, Recital programme). According to Dibble, these compositions and arrangements by Esposito “are amongst the most interesting attempts by composers at the period to forge a distinctively ‘Irish’ mode of musical utterance.”⁴² The libretto for Eposito’s opera, *The Tinker and the Fairy*, was written by Douglas Hyde and originated from incidental music Esposito had written for Hyde’s one act play in Irish, *An Tincéir agus an tSídheóg* (1902).⁴³

⁴¹ Esposito Michele, (score), *Irish Suite*, Op. 55, C.E. Music Publishers Co, 22 South Frederick Street, Dublin.

⁴² Dibble (2010)

⁴³ Klein Alex, *Celtic Legends in Irish Opera, 1900-1930*, Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium, Vol 24/25, Harvard University 2004/05 p. 48

3.3 Early Attempts to Develop Irish Opera

Although some opera has been composed in Ireland, such as *The Sleeping Queen* by Michael William Balfe⁴⁴, our main interest in this section is on the development of an Irish operatic style. This was brought a step further during the cultural revival, with three works in the Irish language: Thomas O'Brien Butler's *Muirgheis* (1903), Robert O'Dwyer's *Eithne* (1909) and Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer's *Sruth na Maoile* (1923).⁴⁵ Because of their contribution to Irish music in the Irish language, their almost total neglect is surprising.⁴⁶ Both Palmer and O'Dwyer were English composers who were inspired by the ideals of the Gaelic League to use the Irish language in opera. They are mainly of interest because of the Irish language librettos and that they are thematically based on Celtic mythology.

Thomas O'Brien Butler (1861-1915) is a pseudonym for a largely forgotten composer named Whitwell from Caherciveen, Co. Kerry. He wrote songs, chamber music and a sonata for violin and piano, but his only large-scale work was the opera *Muirgheis* (1903) which was performed for a week in the Theatre Royal to mixed reviews.

Set in Waterville Co. Kerry at the dawn of Christianity, this three-act opera with its numerous dance tunes, uneven score and lack of any great arias is probably closer to a ballad opera in style.⁴⁷ What makes it important for the interface is the *Banshee's Caoine* at the conclusion of the work, an air he attributed to his native district. "Butler is so explicit in his use of Irish folk song in *Muirgheis* as to add an unaccompanied *Caoine*."⁴⁸

It is noteworthy in that it was the first opera written with a libretto entirely in Irish. Despite this, its premiere was performed in English with Irish text printed, which deprived the opera of the honour of being the first performed in Irish.⁴⁹

Robert O Dwyer (1862 - 1949) who was born in Bristol to Irish parents, enjoys the distinction of being the composer of the first opera ever performed with a libretto in the Irish language.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Lee, Michael (2017): Gavin Ring – Interview, GoldenPlec, <https://www.goldenplec.com/featured/gavan-ring-interview/>

⁴⁵ Ring, Gavin, (2014): *Performance Considerations for Robert O Dwyer's Eithne (1909): A Contextual Study and Edited Vocal Score*, Doctoral thesis RIA, p. 19

⁴⁶ Forbes, Anne Marie H., *Celticism in British Opera*, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301223452> .

⁴⁷ Ibid 335

⁴⁸ Ring, Gavin, (2014): p. 21

⁴⁹ Klein Alex, Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium, Vol 24/25, Harvard University 2004/05 Pg. 44

⁵⁰ Klein Alex, Celtic Legends in Irish Opera, 1900 1930, Klein Alex, Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium,

The opera, *Eithne*, was commissioned by Oireachtas na Gaeilge, and was premiered in 1909 in the Round Room of the Rotunda, Dublin, with a libretto by the Rev Thomás Ó Ceallaigh. It was written in the *sean-chló Gaelach* (old Irish script) in the Munster dialect, and the plot is a complex mythological love story based on the pre-Christian legend, *Éan an Cheoil Bhinn* (The Bird of Sweet Music).⁵¹ Stylistically, the opera belongs to the late-Romantic period and seems to have drawn from the Irish music idiom.

Although Ó Ceallaigh's libretto won great praise in reviews of *Eithne*, the fact remains that neither Butler nor O'Dwyer spoke Irish, an impediment to their operatic word setting. For Gaelic speakers, the words did not sit comfortably with the melody.⁵²

Eithne was revived to critical acclaim when revived in The National Concert, Dublin Hall in 2018 after an absence of over 100 years.

Geoffrey Molineux Palmer (1882 - 1957), from Middlesex England, studied with Stanford at the Royal College of Music before settling in Ireland permanently in 1909.⁵³ His opera *Sruth na Maoile* (The Sea of Moyle), was first performed in July 1923 to another libretto in Irish by the aforementioned Tomás O Ceallaigh.⁵⁴ The opera, for which he is mainly remembered, is based on the tragic legend of *The Children of Lir*, who spent 100 years as swans on the Sea of Moyle. Palmer made extensive use of existing traditional airs, most obviously Moore's *Silent O Moyle*, in his opera.⁵⁵

3.4 In Communion with the Irish Folk Idiom

3.4.1 Hamilton Harty (1879 – 1941)

Sir Herbert Hamilton Harty was a distinguished conductor and composer who drew on the wealth of Irish folk music of his native Ulster in several of his most important compositions. He was chief conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester and, for two years before his death, of the London Symphony Orchestra. His musical training seems to have been obtained mainly from a personal study of musical manuscripts, although some early training was

Vol 24/25, Harvard University 2004/05 Pg. 46

⁵¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eithne_\(opera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eithne_(opera)) (accessed 25 October 2024)

⁵² Ring, Gavin, (2014), p. 54

⁵³ Ryan Joseph J, (1991): *Nationalism and Music in Ireland*, Dissertation, p. 363.

⁵⁴ Klein Alex, (2004): *Celtic Legends in Irish Opera, 1900 - 1930*, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Ryan Joseph J, (1991), p. 363.

obtained from his father, an organist and choirmaster in Co. Down. Under the tutelage of his father, Harty learned the piano and became an outstanding accompanist. Later he took some lessons with Esposito. He was greatly admired for his impressive orchestral technique.⁵⁶

His treatment of Irish folk tunes in an orchestral setting is reminiscent of Stanford, with its rich harmonic language and strong Irish traditional themes. Like his mentor Esposito, however, he tends to quote traditional themes rather than complete melodies. His harmonic language is conservative and typical of the late romantic period. Harty's *Irish Symphony* contains such well-known melodies as Moore's *Avenging the Bright*, the *Croppy Boy*, a playful arrangement of well-known Irish reels, and the 18th century Gaelic song *An Spailpín Fánach*. Its third movement provides a beautiful rendition of the air *Jimmy Mo Mhile Stór* as its main theme, and highlights the more miniaturist qualities of his style. Dibble detects the influence of wind bands and even the uilleann pipes in his "heavy octave doublings evocative of folk instruments".⁵⁷ It was, however, his 'orchestral virtuosity' that Fleischmann considered to be of enduring value, however, rather than 'it's intrinsic worth'.⁵⁸

Although a great deal of his orchestral work has an Irish flavour, it was in such overtly Irish pieces as the *Irish Symphony* and the two tone-poems, *With the Wild Geese* and *The Children of Lir*, that he came nearest to expressing his deep love of his native country.⁵⁹ (Italics added)

His tone poems *The Wild Geese*, written for the Cardiff festival 1910, and *The Children of Lir* (1938), do not quote Irish music directly, though they are influenced by the idiom with the use of gapped scales, decorative flourishes, modality and repeated tonic notes. *The Children of Lir*, written at the end of his life while terminally ill, is probably his finest; dark and tragic from the start, it was inspired by the mythological tragedy of *Clann Lir*.⁶⁰

The Wild Geese was well received and Harty was invited by Richter to conduct it with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1911.⁶¹ In it he quotes the well-known ballad, *The Wearing of the Green*. At the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745, the Irish regiments distinguished themselves on behalf of France, though a third of their number perished. Legend has it that, after the battle, the dead arose from the field and sailed home through the night to their beloved country. This composition is based on the poem by Emily Lawless, *With the Wild Geese*.

⁵⁶ Dibble Jerome, (2013): *Hamilton Harty*, Musical Polymath, p. 57.

⁵⁷ Dibble Jerome, (2013): *Hamilton Harty* Musical Polymath, p. 44.

⁵⁸ Fleischmann Aloys (Ed), *Music in Ireland a Symposium*, p. 9

⁵⁹ <https://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3841>

⁶⁰ Ryan Joseph J, (1991): p. 320

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 317

This stirring work makes extensive use of brass and woodwind to convey a martial character. This is evident from the opening measures of the work with a dramatic opening statement on horns of the slow introduction *Lento*, figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Hamilton Harty, Opening measures on horns, *The Wild Geese* ⁶²



There are also some tender moments in this tone poem, which is beautifully orchestrated, such as the lyrical opening measures, of the *Meno mosso, tranquillo*, featuring an oboe solo with an ornamental sextuplet, which may be Irish in character, figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8: Harty, Oboe solo, Opening measures, *Meno mosso, tranquillo*. Bar 1 of 13 ⁶³



In his introduction to the tone poem, Harty emphasises the programmatic character of this piece which is evident throughout the work. One wonders if the following feature on solo flute, may be an allusion to the souls of the slain Irish soldiers sailing back to Ireland after the battle of Fontenoy, figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9: Harty, Souls sailing back to Ireland after the battle in bar 8 of 32, *Wild Geese*, *Piu tranquillo* ⁶⁴



⁶² Harty Hamilton (score) *The Wild Geese*, IMSLP39460-SIBLEY1802.7762.7f45-39087009456460.pdf, 1910

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ *ibid*

3.4.2 John F. Larchet (1884 – 1967)

John F. Larchet was born in Dublin and was a student of Esposito's at the Royal Irish Academy. He went on to become professor of music in UCD, succeeded Esposito as professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Royal Academy and became musical director at the Abbey Theatre. He composed music in an Irish idiom in a smaller-scaled form, but did not write any works for large-scale orchestra. His enduring and important legacy lies in promoting an Irish school of composition through his encouragement and training of his students, including Michael Bowles, Fredrick May, Brian Boydell and T. C. Kelly.

In his compositional style, Larchet seemed more comfortable with the smaller canvas. He is best remembered for his arrangements of Irish songs and airs as well as his numerous art songs, which were written in the style of Irish airs. Highly regarded are *The Ardglass Boat Song* (1920), *Wee Hughie* (1947), as well as the beautiful *Padraig the Fiddler* (1919) which was recorded by John McCormack, Fritz Kreisler and Edwin Schneider in 1924. He also wrote a number of beautiful orchestral works for a medium-sized orchestra such as the *Lament for Youth* (1939), *Dirge of Oisín for Strings* (1940), and *By the Waters of Moyle* (1957). The last of these Larchet describes as a Nocturne, although it could also be described as a fantasy on the theme of *Silent O Moyle*.⁶⁵ Larchet titles his work in Irish, *Ar Thaobh Sruth na Maoile*, with the English translation, *The Waters of Moyle*, underneath.

Elegant and restrained, it is an effective exploration of traditional themes. It takes a similar approach to that in his *Suite of Irish Airs*, in that he uses well known Irish airs and dance tunes to create more elaborate musical forms, in this case, an extended work in ternary form. The main theme for this work is best known as *Silent O Moyle*, from the second book of *Moore's Irish Melodies*⁶⁶ published in 1808, and one presumes that it was from this source that Larchet took his melody and title. In contrast to Moore, Larchet notated the melody in the Aeolian mode, restoring its original harper tonality. He introduces the melody initially on viola, as a *quasi recit*, reminiscent of Bach's partitas for solo violin, figure 3.10. One gets the impression in this initial section of the work that Larchet is writing in a descriptive style, with attractive episodes on flute and oboe between melancholic restatements of his main theme.

⁶⁵ *Sruth na Maoile* (the Moyle) is one of the locations where the Children of Lir sheltered for 100 years of the 300-year spell, having been converted into swans by their wicked step-mother.

⁶⁶ Moore notated the melody, an old harper tune, in the key of A-minor, which in my opinion made the melody line illogical with the raised 7th degree of the minor scale.

Figure 3.10: Larchet, *Silent O Moyle*, theme viola, bars 9 - 10



For the central section of the work Larchet references the reel, *Kitty in the Lane*, giving contrast and pace. This attractive reel, in the Dorian and Mixolydian modes, is reminiscent of the reel from the Goodman collection, *The Lady's Cup of Tea*, with its descending melodic contour, rhythmic drive and bi-modality. This creates contrast with the sombre *Silent O Moyle* theme, introducing a sense of gaiety into the work with an attractive call and response dialogue between flute and oboe, figure 3.11. This is anticipation of what Ó Riada would do with *Ceoltóirí Chualainn* a few years later.

Figure 3.11: Larchet, *Kitty in the Lane*, flute and oboe



Many versions of *Kitty in the Lane* exist in different collections, such as, *Ryan's Mammoth Collection*, Boston, (1883, p. 98), *Levey's first collection of the Dance Music of Ireland*, with piano accompaniment (1905), and O'Neill's (1907). The last mentioned is the version closest to Larchet's tune. A version of *Kitty* was also found in Joyce's final manuscript which was found by his bedside when he died.⁶⁷

Figure 3.12: *Kitty in the Lane*, bars, 1-8, O'Neill's 1001 Gems, No 796⁶⁸



⁶⁷ PW Joyce manuscripts, National Library of Ireland, MS 2983, p. 175, tune 468

⁶⁸ O'Neill, Francis, (1907): *The Dance Music of Ireland, 1001 Gems*, Lyon and Healy, Chicago

The reprise of Silent O Moyle is effective with a full orchestration of the melody, in a late romantic style, with chromaticism and suspensions. His restraint, however, in setting these traditional tunes, along with his observation of their modal qualities, makes this an intriguing blend of traditional and art music composition. Larchet is reminiscent of Esposito in his deference to the traditional themes, but closer stylistically to Stanford in his quotation of traditional tunes in full.

Larchet was musical director at the Abbey Theatre from 1908 to 1934, a position in which he was succeeded by Sean Ó Riada and Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair. His approach could be described as purist, in that the harmonic language in these pieces is conservative and the primacy of the melodic line was seldom interrupted by the accompaniment.

3.5 Three English-Born Composers Who Embraced the Irish Idiom

In this section I include three English composers who were very important in the widespread development of the Irish idiom in art music. These are Carl Hardebeck, Arnold Bax and Ernest John Moeran.

3.5.1 Carl Hardebeck (1869 – 1945)

Carl Hardebeck was born in London to German and Welsh parents and was blind from birth. His musical potential was evident from an early age, setting Shelley's poetry to music at the age of seven⁶⁹. He received a thorough musical education in his youth at the Royal National School for the Blind (from 1880), where he was taught by Fredrick Corder who also taught at the Royal College of Music. His contact with Irish music began when he moved to Belfast in 1893 to open a music shop and he was appointed organist in St. Peter's Cathedral, Belfast.

Hardebeck was appointed principal and professor of Irish music at the Cork Municipal School of Music in 1919, where he saw to it that the syllabus required the "performance of a piece of Irish music in every grade".⁷⁰ In 1922, he was appointed professor of Irish music at Cork University, but resigned after one year, most probably due to hostility towards him by

⁶⁹ Vallely Fintan, (Ed). (2011): *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, Cork University Press, p. 324

⁷⁰ Fleichmann Aloys (Ed), (1952), p. 56.

members of the staff.⁷¹ One suspects that his strongly held nationalist views, “I believe in God, Beethoven and Patrick Pearse”, would not have endeared him to the anglophile classical-music fraternity in Cork city at that time.⁷²

In 1897, Hardebeck won first prize for composition in the Feis Ceoil with his anthem *O God My Salvation*, and this brought him to national awareness. He learnt Irish in order to understand Irish music better, and to facilitate communication with musicians and singers.⁷³ Hardebeck became an ardent collector of folk songs, particularly in Donegal, using a braille board, frame and stylus.⁷⁴ His skill and training in plain chant was to be an invaluable help in his work.⁷⁵

If Hardebeck could be summed up in one word, that word would be *authenticity*; the preservation of authenticity in traditional-music performance. Hardebeck espoused a number of important principles. First, he believed that the beauty of the melody should not be encroached upon by overly elaborate arrangement or accompaniment. Then, he held that the beauty and complexity of *sean nós* could not be represented within the confines of a fixed metre. Third, he was adamant about the modal nature of Irish music and, finally, that traditional styles should be adhered to. This applied especially to piano performance, which he felt was best represented by harpsichord music of the 16th century, and in adherence to traditional *tempi*.

In each of these principles, Hardebeck was a visionary, and ahead of his time in that his appreciation of Irish music was analytical and not just inborn and instinctive. Because of their fundamental importance, I want to discuss them in a little more detail.

As regards Irish songs and airs, Hardebeck was aware that commercialisation, or any transposition into other styles, or *genres*, ran the risk of distorting the intrinsic character of the music. This was because of the ametrical (absence of metre), or irregular metre, of Irish songs and airs, as interpreted by traditional singers and musicians. The metric ambiguity of *sean-nós* songs arises from the fundamental and primary importance of the poetry to which the music is set, and this poetry is quite different from the Western concept of song texts.

⁷¹ Breathnach Diarmuid and Ní Mhuirchú Máire, <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=258&xml=true>

⁷² Vallely Fintan, (Ed). (2011): p.152

⁷³ Vallely Fintan (Ed). (2011): p. 152

⁷⁴ Vallely Fintan, (Ed). (2011): p. 324

⁷⁵ My father, Seán Ó Casaide, was a great admirer of Hardebeck and spoke of him often. Ó Casaide founded the choir of Craobh An Chéitinigh (Keating Branch) of Conradh Na Gaeilge, and directed the choir from 1933 to 1937. Hardebeck was of great assistance, providing four-part arrangements of Irish songs which they regularly performed on 2RN, the precursor of Radio Éireann. As he was blind, he could arrange and orchestrate in his head, and would dictate every note and musical expression to anyone who was available, and able, to write them down. See also <https://cassidyclan.org/author/scassidy/page/2>

As Gaelic poetry depends upon assonance, not rhyme, for its existence, it is quite independent of English metre and rhyme. The Irish bards and minstrels had their heart in what they wrote, and never sacrificed the text to make commonplace music. The commonplace belongs to a commercial age alone not only in the Church but in the field and cottage, the Irish understand the art of rhythm; and also, that some of the peculiarities of rhythm met with in Brahms were in a manner anticipated by the Irish Musicians.⁷⁶

Traditional singers pay close attention to vowel assonance, the repetition of vowel phonemes, or sounds, which occur in close, but not fixed, proximity to each other, as well as syllabic rhyme. In addition, the musical style calls for vocal embellishment which is not standard, but intuitive, and represents the artistic interpretation of the performer. And finally, we have the dramatic pauses, or pausing for effect, which is also part of the artistic interpretation. Overall, *sean-nós* singers are telling a story in highly stylised form and this does not conform to a fixed metre. Making it conform amounts to a distortion.

Hardebeck pioneered an approach whereby his notation would reflect the reality of traditional performance, rather than shoe-horning the music into a fixed metre. In some of his more complex arrangements, the metre changes by the bar, reflecting how *sean-nós* singers intuitively interpret their songs.⁷⁷ This was just a first step and we can see an example from his accompaniment to the song *Éire*, Hardebeck (1914, p.11)⁷⁸, figure 3.13.

Figure 3.13: Hardebeck ,arrangement of the air, *Éire*, with numerous changers of metre, bars 40 – 44.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Éire'. It consists of two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The tempo is marked 'Allegro Maestoso' with a quarter note equal to 100 beats per minute. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The vocal line has lyrics in Gaelic: 'aon eoch - air leo. Achtbeidh siad ann-súd ar thaobh-chnoic sua drom-af 'cá d'á'. The piano accompaniment features complex rhythmic patterns and changes in time signature, including 3/4, 4/4, 3/8, and 6/8. A dynamic marking of 'ff Tri Corda.' is present in the piano part.

But Hardebeck was fully aware of the complexity of notating the melodies in accordance with the requirements of the poetry, and changing the metre was just a first, if important, step. He augmented this by subdividing notes, reflecting, as he states, the “rhythm of the words”, also in figure 3.13. This is quite a modern approach, which was not practiced by other arrangers

⁷⁶ Hardebeck, Carl G. (1905): Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society, iii. 1905–6 Farncombe & Son, London

⁷⁷ This is the method I utilise in setting *sean-nós* melodies in an orchestral setting, see chapter 4.3.

⁷⁸ Hardebeck Carl G, (1914), *Seoda Ceoil, II, A Collection of Old Irish Melodies, with accompaniments for piano or harp*, Pigott and Co Ltd, Dublin.

or collectors of Gaelic songs at that time, with the exception of Liam de Noraídh, (1888-1972).⁷⁹ Hardebeck explains his approach in a footnote to the song, *Éire*, which he sourced from the song book *Londubh an Chairn* (1925).⁸⁰ He approaches this song more as an art song than a folk song, with each verse being approached differently, both rhythmically and harmonically, depending on the textual demands of the verse.

(*Éire*) is, I consider, one of the finest examples, in its rhythm of the attention and care the Gaelic speakers bestow on their poetry and syllabic accent as being the essential part of the music. (Hardebeck, 1914 preface)

One can hear echoes of this in the “maximalist approach” which is now growing in fashion, as espoused by composers such as Dave Flynn and others (chapter 4). The maximalist approach is a method of notation that documents the exact rhythmic and melodic characteristics of the music, as it is performed, and can be extremely complex.

Hardebeck also understood the modal character of traditional music, a characteristic he acknowledged in an accompanying note to *Éire* (above).

The melodic and harmonic minor scales are modern innovations, and this air is in neither, but in a scale with the flat sixth and seventh ascending as well as, descending, (Lah mode). The accompaniment has been written in the spirit of this scale, and with the closest attention to the details of the rhythm of the words. (Hardebeck, 1914, preface).

Hardebeck believed that the accompaniment to traditional music should be light and transparent, similar to the harpsichord, thereby anticipating developments that were reintroduced by Ó Riada forty years later. Ó Riada’s justification for using the harpsichord was different, i.e. that it approximated the sound of the brass strings of the Medieval harp (chapter 4). In his collection of tunes for piano, and songs with piano accompaniments, published in 1921, Hardebeck commented on the appropriate form of piano performance in Irish music.

As piano solos, they appear to me to have an affinity to the old harpsichord music of the sixteenth century. I therefore recommend that they be played delicately, and almost

⁷⁹ Liam de Noraídh, best known for his publication, ‘Ceol ón Mumhain’ (1872), was a collector and publisher of songs in Irish. He was especially noted for the complexity of his notation which, in many respects, mirrors Hardebeck’s approach. Collector and author, Breandán Breathnach said of him, “Níor cuireadh síos an ceol ceart *sean-nós* riamh chomh cruinn is atá sé anseo” (the true *sean-nós* singing has never been notated as accurately as it is here).

⁸⁰ The song book, *Londubh an Chairn*, published by Séamus Clandillon and his wife Mairéad Ní Annagáin, was the subject of the longest litigation in Irish judicial history. <https://www.dib.ie/biography/clandillon-seamus-clan-a1682>, (accessed 25/02/25). The 1925 book was probably a reprint.

throughout with the Una Chorda pedal, so as to come as near as possible to the harpsichord tone. (Hardebeck Carl G, preface, 1921) ⁸¹

He was keenly aware of the importance of an authentic style in the traditional context. He argued the piano should imitate the character of traditional fiddle players with his fingering and phrasing. “As these melodies were originally intended for the fiddle, the piano version has been fingered and phrased to imitate as far as possible the style as played on that instrument”, (Hardebeck Carl G, 1921, preface). This is an approach to the performance of traditional music on piano that is gaining acceptance in modern times. It has been restored and developed by composers such as Ó Riada, Ó Súilleabháin, and Ryan Molloy, in what amounts to a reinvention of the piano as a traditional instrument.

Figure 3.14: Hardebeck, Imitation of fiddle style on piano, with accentuation, Scotch snap and double stops, *Tap Room Reel*, bars 1 – 6 ⁸²



Authenticity and remaining true to tradition were always central for Hardebeck. He took issue with what is a perennial problem in Irish dancing, the *tempi* at which dance tunes are typically played. Writing in 1921, Hardebeck expresses views that are as relevant today as they were 100 years ago.

(Dance music) rhythm shows that it was impossible to dance at the ‘break-neck’ speed in vogue today, because the beauty and life of the rhythm and accent would be destroyed. Every good dancer admits that Irish dancing is being destroyed at the present day by the speed at which it is taken. (Hardebeck Carl G, 1921, preface)

The fact is that dance tunes are no longer played solely as accompaniment for dancing but have become an entertainment form for concert audiences in their own right. Hardebeck would have been horrified had he lived to experience the *tempi* at which bands like the *Bothy Band*, *De Danann*, and others, were to perform Irish dance music. While exhilarating as concert pieces and on recordings, the music completely lost the lilting bounce (“rhythm and accent”) which

⁸¹ Hardebeck Carl G, (1921) *Cnuasacht Port agus Cor don bPiano, II*, Mills Music Inc, New York

⁸² Hardebeck Carl G, (1921, p.2).

supported the steps of dancers. As we shall see later, the music was now better suited to step dancing, but no longer suited to traditional *céilí*, or folk dancing.

Probably due to his handicap, Hardebeck was not a prolific composer, and seemed more at home arranging numerous airs and songs for choir, and instrumental melodies for piano. In 1902, Conradh na Gaeilge published *Ceatha Ceoil*, followed by *Seoda Ceoil* (1908), and *Fuinn Fiadha Fuinnidh*. Many of his song arrangements were also published by An Gúm. His rather small compositional output includes two *Irish Rhapsodies* and a lyric cantata, *The Red Hand of Ulster*, for solo voices, chorus and orchestra for which he won first prize at the Feis Ceoil in 1901. One of his most popular pieces *Seothín Seothó: Theme and Variations for Small Orchestra*, written for a medium-sized orchestra was performed at Oireachtas na Gaeilge, Dublin in 1936.⁸³ He was a miniaturist stylistically, who believed in clarity, sparseness in arrangement and simplicity in the melodic line. In this way he demonstrated how a composition style in the Irish idiom could be developed.

3.5.2 Arnold Bax (1883 – 1953)

Two composers of English extraction who spent a significant part of their creative years in Ireland were Arnold Bax (1883-1953) and Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950).

Bax first came to Ireland in 1902 having been attracted initially by the literary works of the Celtic twilight and in particular W. B. Yeats. Initially drawn to Ireland by Yeats's poem, *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), Bax's love of Ireland became a lifetime passion, which was to exert a profound influence on his musical composition.

I think I may say in all honesty, that I was the first to translate the hidden Ireland into musical terms, and all this I owed in the first place to Yeats, for his was the key that opened the gates to the Celtic wonderland, (Oliver, 1983).⁸⁴

The Garden of Fand (1912), a tone poem which Bax wrote when he was twenty-nine, and which remained his favourite of all his compositions, was inspired by Yeats. The garden of the title represents the ocean and *Hy Brasil*, a mythical Island, cloaked in mist, off the coast of Ireland. The work is inspired by the legend of *Cuchulain* but does not depict it explicitly. It was

⁸³ Fleischmann Aloys (Ed), (1952): p. 172

⁸⁴ Oliver Michael, 1983, *A Radio documentary on Arnold Bax*, written and produced for BBC Radio 3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWTu8rx2YYM> (Accessed 27/02/25).

to be one of his final work based on Celtic culture. It has the contour and chromaticism of an Irish melody and features the Aeolian mode.

This tone poem conjures up the mist of *Hy Brasil* with dreamy impressionist passages and parallel movement for flutes and strings. Some of the references to traditional music are subtle such as the repeated tonic notes in first violin, figure 3.15.⁸⁵ Airs and dance tunes are alluded to but not quoted directly.

Figure 3.15: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, repeated tonic notes, typical of an Irish tune (p.21)

But long before that, his tone poems *Cathleen Ni Hoolihan* (1905) was followed by a trilogy called *Éire*. Part I, *Into the Twilight* (1908) was followed by *In the Faery Hills* (1909), and finally, *Roscattha* (1910). These show his flair for melody and his preference for an expansive orchestral canvas.⁸⁶ Another work inspired by Irish mythology, but composed after he had left Ireland, was *The Poisoned Fountain* (1928), a piano duo which referenced the mystical wells of *Segais*, source of the River Boyne, and *Conia*, source of the River Shannon.

Bax was a prolific composer who composed, *inter alia*, seven symphonies, a cello concerto and a violin concerto. His first three symphonies are considered to include Celtic influences, but not explicitly folk tunes or melodies. In fact, he did not particularly approve of this practice employed by other composers whom he felt did not otherwise capture the essence of a Celtic spirit;

The Irish for their part can point to C. V. Stanford, Charles Wood and Hamilton Harty. Unhappily, these three proficient musicians were assiduous and dutiful disciples of the

⁸⁵ Bax Arnold (score), *The Garden of Fand*, p. 21

⁸⁶ Ryan, Joseph 1992, p. 47

nineteenth century German tradition, even while clothing their native melodies in all too conventional dress. They never penetrated to within a thousand miles of the Hidden Ireland, (Bax, 1952).⁸⁷

His edgy fourth symphony, thought to be influenced by the horror of the first World War, may in fact be an expression of his despair at the Irish civil war (1922-1923).⁸⁸ In the decade before the First World War, Bax became acquainted with a number of key political and literary figures in Ireland, such as Thomas McDonough, James Stevens and Padraic Colum, whose poems *Cradle Song* he set to music. A chance meeting with Patrick Pearse at a dinner party left a lasting impression on him, leading to his tone poem *In Memoriam* (1916) as well as in the *Elegiac Trio* (1916) after Pearse's death.

In Memoriam, which is subtitled *I gcuimhne ar bPádraig Mac Piarais* (In memory of Patrick Pearse), was written shortly after the Easter rising of 1916. Bax, who had met Patrick Pearse in 1911, later described that encounter which made a lasting impression on him.

As he was leaving that night he (Pearse), said to Molly, "I think your friend Arnold Bax may be one of us. I should like to see more of him." I was anxious to meet him again too, but somehow it chanced that I never did. I could not forget the impression that strange death-aspiring dreamer made upon me, and when on Easter Tuesday 1916, I read of that wild, scatter-brained, but burning idealist adventure in Dublin the day before, I murmured to myself, "I know that Pearse is in this!"⁸⁹ (Arnold Bax).

In Memoriam (1916) is intensely romantic with numerous subtle key changes, chromatic movement, and a hint of impressionism with the use of parallel harmonies. The Irishness of the piece is established with the opening bars on solo harp, followed by this beautiful melody on the Cor Anglais, which is the main theme of the work. This air is in the Dorian mode with idiomatic use of the flattened 7th recurring through the entire work. It is intensely Irish in character with its phrasing and melodic contour, reminiscent of airs, such as *Buachaill an Chúl Dualaigh*. It is, however, an original melody, representing his unique and personal expression of the interface between the idioms. Note how the second A, bars 8 - 12 is a variation of the opening section A, a stylistic characteristic of traditional airs, which Bax adopts, figure 3.16.

⁸⁷ Bax, Arnold, 1952, *Music & Letters* Vol. 32, No. 2, Oxford University Press p. iii

⁸⁸ Oliver Michael, 1983, A Radio documentary on Arnold Bax, written and produced for BBC Radio 3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWTu8rx2YYM> (Accessed 27/02/25).

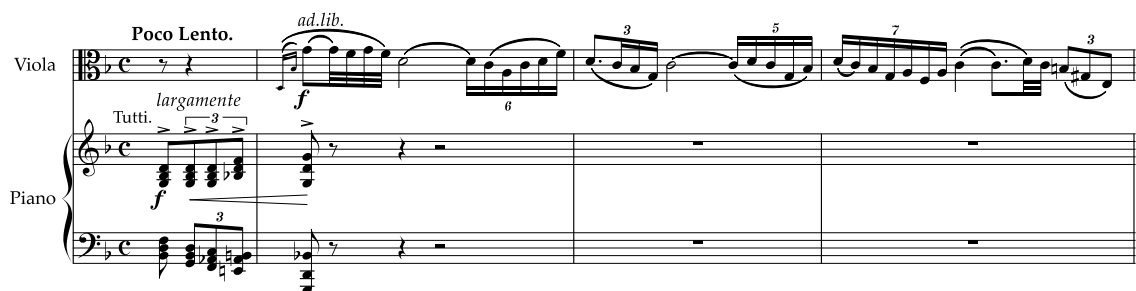
⁸⁹ Bax, Arnold, <https://qpol.qub.ac.uk/remembering-pearse-music-arnold-baxs-memoriam/> (Accessed 15.1.2025)

Figure 3.16: Bax, *In Memoriam*, opening theme on Cor Anglais, bars 4 – 12 ⁹⁰



Bax's most overt interaction with the tradition occurs in his *Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra*, GP 235 (1929).⁹¹ Typical of his style, there are no direct quotations. The influence of the traditional idiom is noticeable here from the opening theme of the work, which has the contour of an Irish air, figure 3.17, along with complex notated ornamentation, figure 3.18. There are references also to clan marches and dance tunes such as slip jigs in 9/8. Some of the lyrical writing is modal in character enhancing its traditional feel.

Figure 3.17: Bax, *Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra*, opening measure, air-like melodic contour, with complex ornamentation (viola and piano reduction).



Bax loved Ireland, her language, with which he became conversant, music and folklore. “I have known Ireland for over forty years and love her better than any land.”⁹² He adored Irish folk music which he states; “derives from the heart and the core of Ireland” though he was critical of contemporary arrangements in the idiom and much preferred it in its natural unadorned state,

Here is a folk music in splendid barbaric nudity (much of it coming from Connemara) and despite more decent arrangements by Stanford, Harty, Hughes and others, there's more enterprise in walking naked.⁹³

⁹⁰ Bax Arnold, (score), Sextet for Cor Anglais, Harp and String Quartet
[https://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/b/b0/IMSLP64302-PMLP131005-Bax_-_In_memoriam_\(score\).pdf](https://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/b/b0/IMSLP64302-PMLP131005-Bax_-_In_memoriam_(score).pdf)
 (accessed 26/02/25)

⁹¹ Bax Arnold (score), 1929, *Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra*, GP 235. Mordoch, Murdoch & Co, London

⁹² Bax, Arnold 1952, p iii

⁹³ Bax, Arnold 1952, p. iii

Bax returned to England at the start of World War I and settled there permanently afterwards. Still, he remained a regular visitor to the West of Ireland, especially Glencolmcille. He died unexpectedly on a visit to Cork in 1953, and is buried there.

3.5.3 Ernest John Moeran (1894 – 1950)

An English composer of Irish extraction, Morean studied with C.V. Stanford at the Royal College and later with John Ireland. His many compositions include two concertos, three rhapsodies, tone poems, chamber music, songs settings, his highly acclaimed *Symphony in G minor*, and much more. Some consider this symphony his greatest composition, but his *Violin Concerto* (1942) and *Cello Concerto* (1945) could also lay claim to this accolade.

He came to Ireland initially in 1917 to recover from a serious head injury sustained during the Great War; "... at the time of our earliest acquaintance he was about to be demobilised from the army after suffering a head wound..."⁹⁴ Like Bax, he fell in love with Ireland and the pastoral lifestyle and, from the early 1930s, spent much of the year in Kenmare Co Kerry. Like Bax, he drew on the rich heritage of Irish music but did not quote from it directly. Morean referenced the interface of the classical and traditional idioms in a very different way to his friend, and fellow countryman, Arnold Bax. Not for him the dreamy impressionism of the *Celtic Twilight*, but an intense romanticism, with a rugged pastoral and folk-like character. Many of his beautiful themes are wrought with a melodic arc and structure, suggestive of Irish folk songs, such as the theme from his *Theme and 6 Variations* R 5, (1920), which has a structure A-A1-B-A1, and a tonality suggestive of the Dorian mode.⁹⁵

There is much one can write about E.J. Moeran but, in this section, I am going to focus on some of his work which has clear influences from Irish folklore and music.

Distinctive Irish elements are particularly evident in works written after his arrival in Ireland, on a semi-permanent basis, from the early 1930s onwards. This applies to his *Symphony in G minor* (1937), part of which may even have been written on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry.⁹⁶ The beautiful air opening the 2nd subject of the 1st movement is particularly suggestive of traditional music. We can see how Morean changes the metre of the bars to capture the ametrical

⁹⁴ Bax, Arnold 1952, p. 125

⁹⁵ Morean E.J. (Score, 1923), *Theme, 6 Variations*, Schott and Co Ltd, London.

⁹⁶ According to Ian Maxwell (2014, p. 291), the full score manuscript in the British Museum is dated "22 January 1937, Valentia Island".

character of traditional airs. This line by Morean also recalls the rising third line of the well-known air *Boolavogue*, figure 3.18.⁹⁷

Figure 3.18: Morean, *Symphony in G minor*, 1st movement, 2nd statement, 1st violins



...certainly, folk song is a very strong element in his music, but he doesn't just use folk song as so many other composers do in their rhapsodies. He uses the inflection and the shape of folk song as part of his own musical language, (Vernon Handley 1994).⁹⁸

His compositional works divide between his early years in England and his subsequent move to Ireland. His early compositional style could broadly be described as being influenced by the folk music of Norfolk and by Elizabethan music. This separation, however, is far from absolute, as one can detect clear Irish influences in some of his earlier writing, in particular his setting of *Seven Poems by James Joyce* (1929) principally taken from Joyce's *Chamber Music* (1907), and his orchestral work, *In the Mountain Country* (1921).⁹⁹ In the latter, we see references to the Dorian mode and rhythmic patterns associated with Gaelic song airs such as, *Móra ar Maidin Duit*, a *Spéirbhean Chiúin*, and *Caitlín Triail*, figures 3.19 and 3.19A.

Figure 3.19: Moeran, *In the Mountain Country*, rhythmic patterns of Gaelic Folk Song on flute, bars 17-21



Figure 3.19A: *Caitlín Triail*. Goodman collection



⁹⁷ Morean E.J. (Score, 1937) *Symphony in G Minor*, Novello and Company Ltd, London, 1937

⁹⁸ Jonston Lyndon, (1994), "Lonely Waters" - a radio documentary on E.J. Moeran December.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_whHkIQ0A8

⁹⁹ Morean, E.J. (orchestral score), *In the Mountain Country*,

¹⁰⁰ Shields, Hugh, ed., *Tunes of the Munster Pipers / Irish Traditional Music from the James Goodman*

Similarities between English and Irish folk songs, and borrowing in both directions, complicate this hypothesis. That said, however, his interest in Irish folk music dates back to as early as 1917 when he was busy collecting folk songs while he was stationed with the RIC in Boyle, Co. Roscommon during the First World War. In example 3.19B, we can see a reference to the 9/8 metre of the slip jig, and in particular, the sung variety which tends to be more interrupted in the final triplet.

Figure 3.19B: Moeran, *In the Mountain Country*, Slip jig reference on strings¹⁰¹

The image shows a musical score for five string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The time signature is 9/8. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is written in a style that references a slip jig. The Violin I and II parts feature triplets and a final triplet. The Viola part also features triplets and a final triplet. The Violoncello and Double Bass parts feature a final triplet. The dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *sfz* (sforzando).

In my opinion, Morean represents the high point of the Stanford tradition of composers who were inspired by Irish folk music, and quoted it, either directly or indirectly. He merges both idioms, with his use of complex romantic harmony, along with pentatonic and modal scales, intervals, and a melodic arc which call to mind well known airs.

This became quite evident to me when studying the Morean sonata for violin and piano (1923) which, incidentally, is very difficult to play, with a *tessitura*, particularly in the 1st movement, that is at the extreme range of the instrument. This seems to be characteristic of his writing for violin in general. The second movement, *Largo*, has a traditional feel evocative of traditional love songs. While the writing here is very intense, with the sustained use of chromatic harmony, the melodic line in the violin is suggestive of the song air, *Árd Tí Chuain*, in particular the falling phrase so typical of that song, figures 3.20 and 3.20A. Here, we get a fusion of late romantic textures and classical form, with melodic lines and intervals suggestive of the traditional idiom.

Manuscripts, Volume 1, Dublin, 1998, p. 110

¹⁰¹ Morean, E.J. (orchestral score), *In the Mountain Country*,

Figure 3.20: Morean, Sonata for Violin and Piano, *Largo*, bars 26-28¹⁰²



Figure 3.20A: *Árd Tí Chuain*, falling phrase



There is reason to believe that his *Violin Concerto* (1942) was also composed on Valentia Island.¹⁰³ This violin concerto is probably the work which has the most overt references to the traditional idiom, “reflecting strong Irish influences”¹⁰⁴ and may, therefore, be the closest stylistically to his lost *2nd Symphony in E flat*. Although technically suited to the violin, it is extremely challenging to play. It is in my opinion, not only the finest written in the crossover idiom, but on a par with the best of 20th century violin concertos. One wonders why it is not more popular?

The pastoral opening theme, with its short 6-bar introduction, states it’s folk-like qualities from the very start. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is very well written with dreamy almost impressionist passages for solo violin, with the sonorous use of lower woodwind and brass reminiscent of the Sibelius concerto. It is imbued with folk-like references to the idiom and with traditional motifs. It is these thematic inflections that give the work, which is essentially a late romantic concerto, its traditional character, such as the melodic arc of the example below, figure 3.21.¹⁰⁵

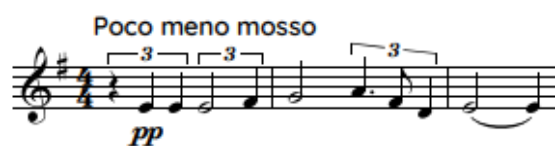
¹⁰² Morean, EJ, (score) Sonata for violin and piano, J and W Chester Ltd, London (1923).

¹⁰³ <https://www.allmusic.com/composition/concerto-for-violin-orchestra-mc0002357552> (accessed 5/3/2025)

¹⁰⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_John_Moeran (accessed 5/3/2025)

¹⁰⁵ Morean E.J. Score, (1942), *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, Novello, Wardour Str. London.

Figure 3.21: Morean *Violin Concerto*, traditional phrase on solo violin, 1st movement, bars 28-30



Another obvious reference here is to what is known as the Scottish or Irish snap. This rhythmic characteristic is common to both the Scottish and Irish folk traditions. This snap is evident, not only in the dance music but in the music of the harpers and the song airs, and as such permeates the entire tradition. Morean uses it here to great effect in a descending musical line of great intensity with three statements of the snap, figure 3.22.

Figure 3.22: Morean *Violin Concerto*, three statements of the Scotch snap, on solo violin, bars 159-164



Morean imbues his own melodies with many of the characteristics of traditional music, and those of Kerry in particular. His use of these inflections and motifs are never obvious or pastiche, and show a high degree of familiarity with, and immersion in, the idiom. In figure 3.23 below, there may be numerous references to Kerry dance music such as the slide, or march, in the melody Morean uses for the second subject. The tonality implies a pentatonic scale and the Dorian mode. There could also be a reference here to the musical sigh, a characteristic of the music in the Goodman collection (1861-1866), as indicated by the phrase mark Morean placed on the third beat of bar 166 (see section 8.2 and figure 8.2). The intervals in the second bar, such as the rising third followed by a descending 6th, are traditional characteristics, as is the ornamental feature of the triple semiquavers in bar 167 and the repeated tonic notes at the conclusion, figure 3.23.

Figure 3.23: Morean, *Violin Concerto*, 1st movement, 2nd subject, possible reference to Kerry slide, Flute, bars 166-167 ¹⁰⁶



¹⁰⁶ Morean E.J. Score, (1942), *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, Novello, Wardour Str. London.

It is precisely with the use of these traditional inflections, rather than direct quotation, that Morean manages to capture the traditional characteristics which are so evident in his music. The concerto is full of references to folk song and dance-like rhythms. In this concerto, Morean inverts the normal sequence of the second and third movements, with the joyous dance-like *Rondo Vivace* placed second and the more reflective *Largo* as a *finale*. “The very spirit of Ireland and especially of Kerry is evident in the central *Rondo* which evokes the gaiety of a fair day in Killorglin.”¹⁰⁷ The second movement so overtly references the traditional idiom, that it calls to mind the comments, by Lionel Hill: “He played it for the locals in the pub in Kerry. They applauded and said it sounded like all the Kerry tunes put together.”

His final work, poignantly titled *Songs of County Kerry* (1950) was completed the year he died.

3.6 Romantics of the Irish Folk Idiom

3.6.1 Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair (1906 - 1982)¹⁰⁸

Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair (1906 - 1982) was a romantic optimist who lived for music, was always impeccably dressed, but behind it all, was impractical and impecunious. He was a prolific composer, conductor and pianist who studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and started out playing piano with the Capitol Cinema Orchestra during the silent movie era.¹⁰⁹ An autodidact to a certain degree, the scale of his compositional output is remarkable, constituting 1,166 works, much of it unpublished and relatively little of it ever performed. These include arrangements of Irish music, original compositions and a large corpus of unaccompanied choral works such as his Irish arrangement of *An Sean Duine* (1930),

.. this strophic arrangement of a traditional air for an a cappella four-part chorus is both simple and attractive.¹¹⁰

He composed thirty scores for opera and ballet, five mass settings, and 132 orchestral works.¹¹¹ Ó Gallchobhair wrote the music for eleven ballets on folklore themes, so-called

¹⁰⁷ Ryan, Joseph 1992, p. 55

¹⁰⁸ Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair is one of the composers included in the Recital, chapter 6, where his music is discussed in greater detail.

¹⁰⁹ Ryan, Joseph 1991, *Nationalism and Music in Ireland*, (dissertation), p. 55

¹¹⁰ Ryan Joseph J, (1991), p. 423.

¹¹¹ Ibid

“dance dramas”, as well as for Hollywood films, the most famous of which was John Ford’s *The Rising of the Moon*.¹¹² He seemed more comfortable, however, composing works on a smaller scale. He was a musically conservative nationalist and belonged to the more traditional wing of composers in the Irish music idiom at that time.¹¹³ As well as being musical director of the Abbey Theatre, and conductor of the RTE light orchestra (now the Concert Orchestra), he was also the predecessor of Seán Ó Riada as assistant head of music at RTE. This last post he relinquished after one year, just as Ó Riada also relinquished it after a short time. Like many composers of his era he was entirely immersed in his art and therefore lacked the practical day to day skills to make ends meet. He died in relative poverty in Alicante, Spain.

He was essentially a man of his time, a romantic composer whose harmonic language was always tonal and accessible, especially to a new Irish-speaking middle class. His fluid, improvisational style was informed by the idiom and was coloured by its characteristics. He wrote and arranged a great deal of choral pieces, some of them very striking, such as his setting of the Christmas carol, *Ag Teitheadh go hÉigipt*, (The Flight into Egypt), arranged for unaccompanied choir. (1975). This work in the Aeolian mode has an attractive simplicity and clarity that are characteristic of his writing, figure 2.24.¹¹⁴

Figure 3.24: Ó Gallchobhair, *Ag Teitheadh go hÉigipt*, bars 9-12¹¹⁵

Allegro

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

on - óir in uais - leacht, i gcumh - acht 'si méad - acht, Do

on - óir in uais - leacht, i gcumh - acht 'si méad - acht, Do

on - óir in uais - leacht, i gcumh - acht 'si méad - acht, Do

His orchestrations, such as his arrangement of a set of reels, on the Gael Linn LP, *Ceolta Éireann*, (1958), call to mind Larchet’s approach, by combining dance tunes in a quasi-ternary form. His approach is light and uncluttered, with a playful quality that was characteristic of his personality. He composed music that was traditional in style, but which did not quote the

¹¹² Wikipedia,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Éamonn_Ó_Gallchobhair#:~:text=Later%20he%20gained%20some%20fame,The%20Rising%20of%20the%20Moon. (accessed 20.2.25).

¹¹³ Ryan Joseph J, (1991), p. 420

¹¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1--Au6CYJA4>

¹¹⁵ Ó Gallchobhair Éamonn, Score,

idiom directly, though was informed by it. He had very strong views on the integrity of a native compositional school, which should be unfettered by the contemporary European music aesthetic. A good example of this approach is his *Ceol I gComhair Óbó nó Veidhlín*, (*Music for Oboe or Violin*). The final movement in particular, *Allegro con motto*, with its rousing march-like theme in the Aeolian mode, demonstrates Ó Gallchobhair's gifts as a melodist. In this piece, he is reminiscent of Morean's approach, he imbues an original composition with the essence of traditional music, through the use of ornamentation, modal tonalities and intervals.

Figure 3.25: Ó Gallchobhair, *Ceol I gComhair Óbó nó Veidhlín*¹¹⁶



He was deeply committed to the aesthetic development of orchestral music in the Irish idiom and was critical of ‘academics of the day’ for their lack of interest in, and ignorance of, Irish traditional music.¹¹⁷ He never pulled his punches, either in his work as a music critic or as an adjudicator at music festivals, where his pronouncements were sometimes controversial.¹¹⁸

Ó Gallchobhair was very critical of what he considered the lack of a genuine Irish folk-music aesthetic in much contemporary composition and, in particular, its absence in university music departments. In this, he echoed sentiments expressed by Hardebeck. This is evidenced by a transcript of a broadcast, cited by Ryan, which Ó Gallachóir, made on RTE in 1958.¹¹⁹

...where musical education has not a vestige of connection with the national tradition ... any intimate contact with Irish music and its aesthetic principles must force the student to question and examine the very basis of his acquired academic knowledge. (O Gallachóir).

¹¹⁶ Ó Gallchobhair Éamonn, Score, *Ceol I gComhair Óbó nó Veidhlín*, CMC

¹¹⁷ Vallely Fintan, (Ed). Companion to Irish Traditional Music, Cork University Press, 2011 Pg. 514.

¹¹⁸ He is reputed to have told an unfortunate competitor in a fiddle competition that he would be better off playing a clothes line than a fiddle. (Anecdote recounted by Eily O’Grady).

¹¹⁹ Ryan Joseph J, Nationalism and Music in Ireland, (dissertation 1991. p. 422

3.6.2 Archibald Potter (1918 – 1980)

The son of a blind piano tuner from Belfast and a well-known folk singer Claire McMaster, Archibald Potter was a close friend of Carl Hardebeck's.¹²⁰ After what seems to have been a rather unhappy childhood, he moved to England to stay with relatives in Kent where he showed great promise in music. Having won music scholarships to All Saints Church, London, and Clifton College, Bristol, he later studied composition at the Royal College, London under Vaughan Williams. His musical career was interrupted when he fought in the British army during World War 2. Settling in Dublin after the war, he lived in Co. Wicklow until his death in 1980.¹²¹

Potter was awarded a doctorate in music from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1953. Two years later, he was appointed professor of composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, a post he held until 1973; in this post, he distinguished himself as a teacher and administrator. In the early 1950s, he won many prizes for compositions, from the Feis Ceol (twice), the Oireachtas (all chamber music), the Festival of Britain and Northern Ireland (choral music, for his *Missa Brevis*), and the Carolan prize from RTE (twice) for *Rhapsody Under a High Sky* (1952) and *Concerto de Chieso* (1953).¹²²

While most of his compositions are of a lighter nature, his output of major orchestral works includes four ballet suites *Variations on a Popular Tune* (1955), a concert overture, *Overture to an Irish Occasion* (1956), the *Concerto for Orchestra* (1967), the *Sinfonia de Profundis* (1968), a three-movement suite, *Souvenir de la Cote d'Azur* (1974) and *Symphony No. 2* (1976).¹²³ There was also his *Irish Rhapsody* (Rapsáid Gaelach) for violin and orchestra.

His most important work, from the viewpoint of referencing the traditional idiom, is an unpublished work titled, *Seilg an Mhadradin Ruadh* (1969)¹²⁴, which is scored for orchestra, choir, harp, and uilleann pipes. This descriptive work is an orchestral setting of the early 19th

¹²⁰ Vallely Fintan, (Ed). Companion to Irish Traditional Music, Cork University Press, 2011, p. 550.

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Hourican, Bridget (2009), Potter, Archibald James ('Archie'), Dictionary of Irish Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/potter-archibald-james-archie-a7441>

¹²³ Zuk, Patrick (2007). A.J. Potter (1918-1980): The career and creative achievement of an Irish composer in social and cultural context, Thesis, Durham University

¹²⁴ I am indebted to Mark Redmond for making this copy of the original manuscript available to me. It is dated 5/x/1969 and it was performed at the annual Irish festival, *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* in late October or early November of that year. The source of this manuscript is the RTE Archive.

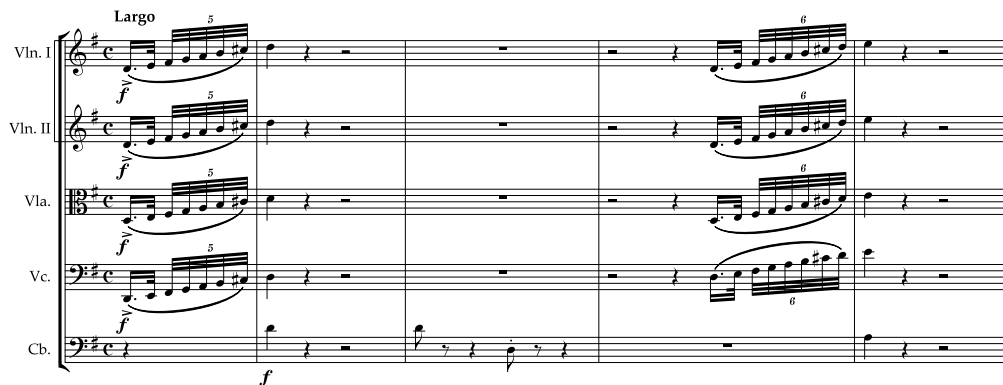
century virtuoso piece for uilleann pipes, *The Foxchase*. It is regarded as the *tour de force* of uilleann piping, which depicts the hunt, with descriptive passages on the pipes. These passages include the yelping of the hounds, and the demise of the fox, both achieve their effect with a piping technique known as popping (described in chapter 5.3.1). The call of the bugles and hunting horns are alluded to on the regulators of the pipes.

The entire composition, from the horsemen trotting out, to the triumphant homecoming, fox in tow, was described by Potter as “a complete self-contained sonata for uilleann pipes, with an opening *Allegro*, link passage and fast finale.” (Potter, notes to the original manuscript, 1969). Potter’s approach to this piece is to treat the solo pipes as part of an 18th century concerto for pipes and orchestra. This is the very first instance we know of in which the uilleann pipes is embedded as a solo instrument in an orchestral work.

The idea behind the present adaptation was to imagine it as the solo part of an 18th century concerto, such as might (had things gone differently) been written by Carolan or Colgan – or even Giordani. (Potter, manuscript, 1969).

The work opens with an impressive *Largo* section, with dramatic rising scale-like figures on *unisono* strings, reminiscent of baroque overture style, figure 3.26. Potter leaves the piping episodes unaccompanied, with the passages on pipes coming between the orchestral sections. Other than a few bars at the beginning and end of the uilleann-pipes sections, Potter does not write out the solo parts on pipes in the score, which are completely left to the interpretation of the piper. Hence, I presume they are there more as a guide for the conductor. But he does stipulate which tunes are to be played on the pipes, these are well-known tunes, and he specifies the piping effects to be played, such as “Horn calls” and “Hound cries”. This is an interesting approach which leaves the piper free to interpret and extemporise at will, unrestricted by the metre and *tempo* of the orchestra. “...the solo passages, have been preceded, and followed by orchestral *tutties*”. (Potter, manuscript of score, 1969).

Figure 3.26: Potter, *Seilg an Mhadradin Ruadh*, opening measures, strings¹²⁵



In figure 3.27, we see a few bars of music for pipes with instructions in the last bar on how to proceed. The last few bars of the solo pipes passage are similarly notated to facilitate the conductor and orchestra.

Figure 3.27: Potter, *Seilg an Mhadradin Ruadh*, indicated introduction to pipes solo passage with written instruction¹²⁶



The inclusion of a choir adds an unusual dimension to Potters baroque concerto for pipes and orchestra and chorus. Potter makes light of his reasons for including them;

As the scene was set in Ireland we had to include a harp, and, to keep everyone happy, we threw in a part for the choir as well. (Potter, manuscript notes 1969).

The chorus, SATB, makes its first entry singing what appears to be a lament with variation for the dead fox. A few measures of the same melody are later indicated for solo pipes as a lament, along with *the Hunters Jig* and *Homeward Gallop*.¹²⁷ The choir appears again in the concluding section, *Allegro non Troppo*, of the homeward gallop. They sing a well-known song, *An*

¹²⁵ Potter A.J. ,1969 (unpublished score)

¹²⁶ Potter, A.J. (unpublished score). 1969

¹²⁷ AH- vowel sounds, at rehearsal mark E for 32 measures, at what appears to be a lament for the dead fox.

Maidrín Rua, which is traditionally used as a conclusion to the *Foxchase*. Initially, this song is sung by altos and basses, figure 3.28.

Figure 3.28: Potter, Altos and Basses sing the opening bars of the folk song, *An Maidrín Rua*. Rehearsal mark 'G'



Stylistically this work is Carolanesque, with the use of sequences and other baroque devices prevalent in O'Carolan's music, along with well-known traditional melodies. Authenticity from the traditional perspective was assured by the use of unaccompanied pipes in the solo episodes.

From our perspective, with our focus on the fusion of two *genres*, the composition is important. It was the first time that the uilleann pipes was incorporated as a solo instrument in an art-music composition. The pipes solo, *the Foxchase*, was not a new composition; it is an outstanding highlight of the piping tradition and showcases the possibilities and virtuosity of that instrument. But incorporating it in an orchestral context, contrasting the two traditions, was new and original. This accolade of being the first is often conferred on Shaun Davey for his composition *The Brendan Voyage*; Potter's also needs to be considered as his manuscript is dated 5/x/69 and was publicly performed some weeks later. In spite of some differences, Potter predates Davy in the use of an uilleann pipes in an art-music composition by over a decade.

An interesting feature of Potter's composition is that the pipes and the orchestra perform separately, or alternatingly, and no attempt is made to combine the two. That was characteristic of the times. Seoirse Bodley also alternated between idioms, for the most part, as did Seán Ó Riada in his use of classically-trained and *sean-nós* singers.

An important innovation of the *Brendan Voyage* was that it advanced the fusion of the two *genres* by incorporating the uilleann pipes fully into the orchestra, and as part of the orchestra (chapter 4.2.8), an approach which I also took in *Famine Odyssey* (chapter 7). However, as we shall see below, Fleischmann was ahead of both Potter and Davey.

3.7 Composers of *avant-garde* music writing in the traditional idiom

In the 20th century, the serial 12-tone music of Schönberg, Webern and Berg swept academia and classical-music composition in most Western countries. Ireland was no different. Quite a few Irish composers took this route in their musical composition. In this section, we consider those who also had a significant impact on Irish traditional music in an orchestral setting, in spite of it being a small part of their output. Here we turn to two of the most prominent, influential and most admired composers who composed mainly in the *avant-garde* genre.

3.7.1 Frederick May (1911 - 1985)

Frederick May is considered by many to be one of the finest Irish composers of the 20th century. He studied with both Esposito and Larchet at the Royal Irish Academy before furthering his compositional studies with both Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob. Williams would undoubtedly have encouraged him to explore the idiom of Irish folk music and to avoid oversophistication, as he did Ina Boyle. A brief period spent studying in Vienna with Dr Egon Wellesz, most likely in 1933, drew May closer to the European aesthetic in his writing, in particular Mahler and Berg, both of whom he admired. The fact that May was consciously engaging with the Irish idiom is clear, even though he did not do so overtly. The traditional elements in Mays music are subtle, and as with Morean, capture more the inflection of traditional music, rather than any direct quotation.

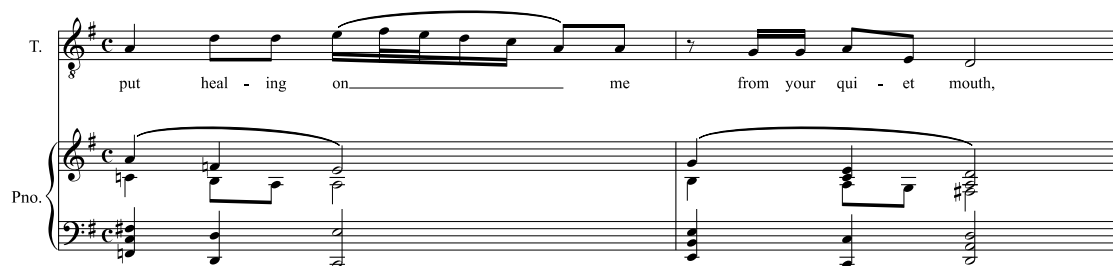
Though his compositional output was rather small mainly due to ill health, his work was creative and original. This includes his impressive *Scherzo for Orchestra* (1933), *Spring Nocturne* (1938) and his most *avant-guard* composition, his *String Quartet in C Minor* (1935). His most famous work *Songs from Prison* (1941), is a song cycle originally set in German and scored for double orchestra and baritone, is pastoral in character.

His art songs are reminiscent of Larchet with his use of ornamentation and modal effect. An example of this would be in his art song *Irish Love Song* (1929), which is all of twenty-seven bars long. In this song, in which May set to music the final lines of Maude Gonne's translation, *The Narrow Road*, we see a folk-like ornamental feature in the vocal line of the *Meno Mosso* section. Here, the piano plays what seems like a traditional ornament called a

‘roll’; which is then imitated by the voice, reminiscent of *sean-nós* singing,¹²⁸ figure 3.29. This particular ornament is typically used by *sean-nós* singers in a descending, slow-moving vocal line. Other features which call to mind the traditional idiom, would include the melodic ark, choice of intervals, and the referencing of the mixolydian mode. The latter is not only prevalent in the *Meno Mosso* section, but also in the opening *Andante con Motto*.¹²⁹

It was only when I read Irish history and really reflected upon what one’s duty as an Irishman was, I became really interested in Irish folk music and traditional music. I wrote a short song called an Irish Love Song, the poem was translated from the Irish of Douglas Hyde, by Lady Gregory, and Dr Larchet, my teacher then was good enough to say it was worthy of publication. (May Frederick, Radio Eireann, 1958)

Figure 3.29: May, *Irish Love Song*, *sean nós* or rollán-like ornament in vocal line, bars 13-14



While there is no intention of over-stating the folk influences in May’s writing, I would make the case that some of these may be subliminal or intuitive, such as his use of the flattened 7th degree in the vocal line of his song *Spring* (1929), set to a poem by Thomas Nash, which thereby references the Dorian mode. There is also in my opinion a melodic borrowing from the well-known ballad, *The Foggy Dew* in bars 7 to 9 of his song, *April*, set to a poem by Robert Bridges, figures 3.30 and 3.30A. The melodic arc is identical. One should keep in mind that *The Foggy Dew* was an extremely popular ballad during the early decades of the new State. It is interesting that the right hand of the piano accompaniment (3.30) is mainly in parallel fourths; it is suggestive of a slip jig and implies the mixolydian mode.

¹²⁸ Scott (2018, p.139) Examining the Irish Art Song: Original Song Settings of Irish Texts by Irish Composers, 1900-1930, Master’s Thesis, DIT: semanticscholar.org

¹²⁹ Fitzgerald, M. (Score, 2016). Frederick May Songs. Technological University Dublin. DOI: 10.21427/MZ17-BZ50

Figure 3.30: May, *April*, Melodic borrowing from *The Foggy Dew*, bars 7 - 9

The image shows a musical score for the song 'April' by May. It consists of a vocal line (T.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The vocal line has lyrics: 'black - thorn star - reth now his bough on the eve of May:'. The piano accompaniment features triplets and a dynamic shift from *p* to *mf*. A slur in the piano part indicates a phrase borrowed from 'The Foggy Dew'.

Figure 3.30A: *The Foggy Dew*, opening bars, relevant phrase indicated by slur.

The image shows a musical score for 'The Foggy Dew', opening bars. It features a single melodic line with a slur indicating a relevant phrase.

Even if much of his earlier work is pastoral in character, his only work to be written directly in the Irish music idiom is his *Suite of Irish Airs* (1953), which he dedicated to Alloys Fleischmann and the Cork University Orchestra.¹³⁰ In my opinion, it is a work of outstanding beauty. Nevertheless, this arrangement of Irish airs was considered “polished but soulless” by Boydell and White, on the grounds that he was writing for commission in an idiom that did not suit him. The *Irish Times* music critic, Michael Dervin, also referred to the work as “a rather maudlin Suite of Irish Airs”.¹³¹

In the *Suite of Irish Airs*, May took selected airs from the great collections of Irish music, in particular Petrie-Stanford (1902), Joyce (1873) and Joyce (1909). He did not pick well-known tunes from these collections but selected very attractive, relatively unknown airs. I demonstrate one below and I have identified others. He probably used other sources as well.

His first movement, *Moderato, Gá Gréine*, (Sunbeam), opens with lush string harmonies reminiscent of Vaughan Williams. Much like Larchet, he uses ternary form with a jig and slip jig in the central section, *Un poco piu mosso*. The use of both double and slip jigs is original. He also uses a drone-like effect on bassoons in the latter, to accompany the melody on oboe, evoking the sound of the pipes, figure 3.31. This effect is reinforced by his use of horns in the B section of the slip jig, evoking the regulators of the pipes. This effect was used

¹³⁰ May Frederick, Score, (1953), *Suite of Irish Airs*, The Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin.

¹³¹ Dervin Michael, *Irish Times*, Fri Nov 11 2011 (accessed 13/03/25).

many years later by Micheál O Súilleabháin in his concert piece for pipes and orchestra, *Bean Dubh a' Ghleanna*.

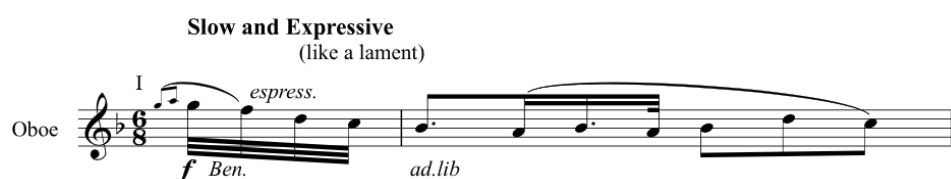
Figure 3.31: May, *Suite of Irish Airs*, *Gá Gréine*, slip jig on oboe with bassoon drones, and transition from simple to compound time, bars 51 - 53 ¹³²



Second Movement: *An Sparánín Airigid* / *The Green Bushes*

An Sparánín Airigid, (the Little Purse of Money), *Andante*, is also in ternary form featuring oboe and flutes. The writing is cinematic and impressionist in character with its use of parallel harmonic language, and commencing with a sustained minor-7th chord on strings. This is reminiscent of Ó Riada's writing in *The Banks of Sulan* and *Seoladh na nGamhan*. May references traditional ornamentation right from the first bar with an ornamental *anacrusis*, typical of the piping tradition (figure 3.32). This approach is sometimes used by pipers to herald the air with an opening ornamental feature.

Figure 3.32: May, *Suite of Irish Airs*, *An Sparánín Airigid*, *Andante*, ornamental feature in opening *anacrusis* on oboe



The song-air *The Green Bushes* is arranged by May in an impressionist style with repetitive *quaver ostinato* movement in the accompaniment, giving the air an ethereal quality. His variant of the air, which is in the Dorian mode, is vocal in character with an A A1 B A1 structure.

¹³² May Frederick, Score, (1953), *Suite of Irish Airs*, The Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin.

A variant of the air was published by Joyce (1873, p.25) which is in the Ionian mode, (figure 3.33). It has the same melodic arc as the air arranged by May, but differs in its tonality (figure 3.33A). A version was also published by Francis O'Neill, in his *Music of Ireland*, (O'Neill, 1903, p.149), which is also in the Ionian mode.

Figure 3.33: Joyce Collection (1873), opening measures of *The Green Bushes*



Figure 3.33A: May, *Suite of Irish Airs*, opening measures of *The Green Bushes* on flute ¹³³



The Petrie-Stanford collection has three variants, and one of them No. 369 (figure 3.33B) is identical to May in both the melodic line and rhythm, apart from a raised 4th degree in the second phrase. This could well be the source of May's air. It demonstrates however, that this song was part of the song tradition in Ireland in the mid-19th century and possibly much earlier. This suggests its Irish provenance, thus justifying its inclusion in May's *Suite of Irish Airs*.

Figure 3.33B: Petrie-Stanford No.369, *The Green Bushes*, opening bars



¹³³ May Frederick, (score), *Suite of Irish Airs*, (1953), The Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin 8.

3.7.2 Aloys Fleischmann (1910 – 1992)

Aloys Fleischmann (1910 – 1992) was born in Munich and grew up in Cork where his parents had settled in 1906. His father, also Aloys G., was German, from Bavaria. While studying at the music conservatoire in Munich, Aloys (senior) had met, and married, a concert pianist from Cork, Tilly Swertz who was of German descent. The couple moved to Cork where Aloys (senior) worked into old age as *Kapellemeister* (principal conductor) and organist of the Cathedral of Saint Mary and Saint Anne.

...I remember being astonished beyond words many years ago when I first heard the beautiful singing of the Catholic Cathedral Choir there, directed by Aloys G Fleischmann, and the renderings of sixteenth century church music in which this choir specialises.¹³⁴

Following music studies in Cork and Munich, Aloys Fleischmann (jn.) became professor for music at University College, Cork in 1934. He founded the university orchestra (which in 1939 became the Cork Symphony Orchestra), as well as the Cork International Choral Festival which has taken place annually since 1954. In spite of his parentage he did not speak German, but was a fluent, enthusiastic and dedicated Gaelic speaker; many of the instructions in his music are in Irish. He even spent his honeymoon on the Blasket Islands.¹³⁵ He may not have been a very prolific composer, but his output is significant. It includes song cycles, a symphony, five ballets, piano music and a variety of chamber works. His extraordinary versatility enabled him to work simultaneously as conductor, educator, and as musicologist. His epic work, *Sources of Irish Traditional Music c. 1600 - 1855*, an annotated collection of manuscripts and printed sources, comprising 7,000 melodies along with all known variants, was published posthumously by Micheál Ó Súilleabháin and Paul McGettrick (Eds.) in 1998. Fleischmann had worked on this for over 40 years.

...it was the late professor Fleischmann's scholarly ambition to realise a thematic index of Irish traditional music which led him into a field hitherto known to him largely as a composer.¹³⁶

Aloys Fleischmann is a significant and important figure on the boundary between art, and traditional, music. He felt strongly that an Irish compositional school should not only be 'rooted' in the native culture but should also be rigorous, contemporary and avoid pastiche

¹³⁴ Bax, Arnold, 1952, p. iv

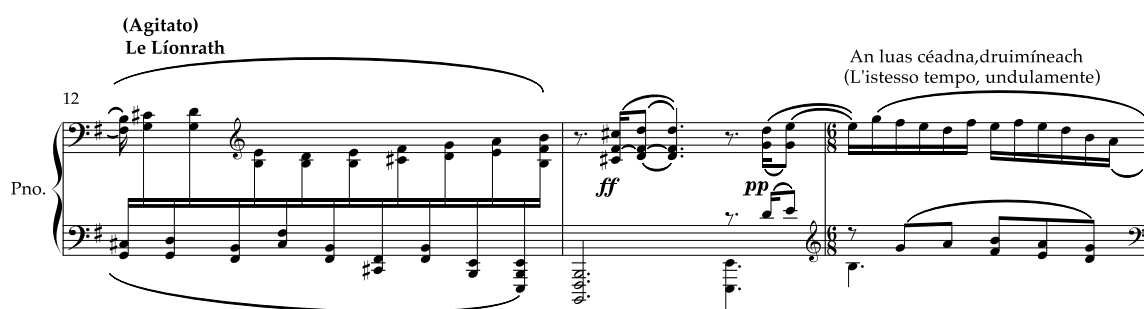
¹³⁵ Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál, 2007, JIM

¹³⁶ White Harry, International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Dec., 1996), pp. 123-138

arrangements and compositions in the idiom. Early settings of the poems *Prelude* by John Millington Synge and *Cradle Song* by Edward Sheehy show the influence of Irish folk song.

One of Fleischmann's early compositions shows his individual stamp of integrating his Irish *persona* into his creative output. His piano composition *Sreath do Phiano* (Series for Piano) was published in 1933 under a pseudonym, Muiris Ó Rónáin, which he assumed in order to bolster his Gaelic credentials.¹³⁷ It is a mix of late romantic piano style, reminiscent of Rachmaninov, and the traditional idiom. The 9/8 metre of the first movement is suggestive of a slip jig, although the traditional character of this piece is not overt and lies more in the turn of phrase. We can see this in the example below, figure 3.34. We see romantic piano writing, with staggered, or rolled chords, reminiscent of Rachmaninov's C-minor prelude or his 2nd piano concerto, bar 12, followed by two statements of an Irish or Scotch snap, in bar 13, and a typically Irish turn of phrase in the Dorian mode, with descending parallel accompaniment in 4^{ths}, bar 14.

Figure 3.34: Fleischmann, *Sreath don Phiano*, bars 12 - 14¹³⁸



A second work I draw attention to is *The Humours of Carolan* (1941), a four-movement suite of O'Carolan's melodies arranged for string orchestra. The slow movement, *Elizabeth McDermott Roe*, is dissonant though modal in character, figure 3.35. Fleischmann was an O'Carolan enthusiast and most likely he influenced his student, Seán Ó Riada, as to the merits of the 18th century composer. This may have been instrumental in Ó Riada's popularising O'Carolan's music in the 1960's with *Ceoltóirí Cualann*. The work has a quasi-baroque feel, reflecting the crossover character of O'Carolan's own style. It differs in approach to other suites

¹³⁷ Graydon, Phillip, 1999, p. 134.

¹³⁸ Fleischmann Aloys, Piano score, *Sreath do Phiano*, The Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland. (1933). Breandán Breathnach was of the opinion that the word 'Humours' denotes character, mood and exuberance of spirit, and dates the practice as far back as the middle of the 18th century. Breathnach Breandan Folk Music and Dances of Ireland · Ossian Publications Ltd, Dublin 1996.

of Irish airs in that the harmonic language is edgy and more contemporary. Note how the title and instrumentation are written in Irish, demonstrating his love of the Irish language.

Figure 3.35: Fleischmann, opening measures *Eilís Nic Dhiarmada Ruaidh*, (Elizabeth Mac Dermot Roe).¹³⁹

One of Fleischmann's best-known compositions, *Clare's Dragoons* (1945), is based on the Thomas Davis ballad which celebrates the exploits of the legendary historical figure, Patrick Sarsfield. The piece is heroic in character opening ominously *A La Marcia Allegro* with snare drum and cymbals, with movement in parallel 5ths in the bases, clarinets and bassoons, later imitated by strings. The use of parallel harmony is a feature that is prevalent throughout the work, and may be another aspect of Fleischmann's reference to the traditional idiom, figure 3.36.

Figure 3.36: Fleischmann, *Clare's Dragoons*, Parallel movement in clarinets, with an ostinato pattern in 5th on bassoons, bars 12-16 ¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Fleischmann Aloys (Score) 1941, *The Humours of Carolan*, The Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland, Dublin

¹⁴⁰ Fleischmann Aloys (Score), 1945, *Clare's Dragoons*, The Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland, Dublin

The song is first sung by the male voices with sopranos and altos joining, with imitation on the words *Viva la* for the refrain. The solo bagpipe appears with snare drum creating a highly original sonic reference to its use as a 17th century instrument of war in Ireland. This may be the very first time the pipes, either bagpipe or uilleann pipe, was integrated into an orchestral score.¹⁴¹ Fleischman weaves the bagpipe theme, which is notated stylistically with appropriate ornamentation, in counterpoint with the Clare's Dragoons melody, the principle theme of the work. This unites the two distinctly traditional aspects of the piece, the bagpipe, and the ballad sung by the chorus. The piece concludes dramatically with the massed forces of orchestra, choir and bagpipe. It received great critical acclaim at the time.

Figure 3.37: Fleischmann, *Clare's Dragoons*, Chorus and Bagpipe, with ornamentation and drones, bars 116-118¹⁴²

42 Trionfale ♩ = 100

Soprano
Vi - - va - la!, The new brig - ade, Vi - - va la!, The

Alto
Vi - - va - la!, The new brig - ade, Vi - - va la!, The

Tenor
Vi - - va - la!, The new brig - ade, Vi - - va la!, The

Bass
Vi - - va - la!, The new brig - ade, Vi - - va la!, The

Baritone

Warpipes
Trionfale ♩ = 100

3.8 Final Observations

In this chapter, I have summarised, the work of art-music composers who engaged with the traditional music and folklore of Ireland in the period up to the 1960s. The chapter is a summary

¹⁴¹ This predates Potter's work by 25 years, and Davey by 35 years. Unlike Potter, Fleischmann's work had had a wide audience. This the first time I know of that a traditional pipe instrument ever appeared in an orchestral work.

¹⁴² Fleischmann Aloys (Score) *Clare's Dragoons*, The Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland, Dublin 1945

of what I regard as the Irish Nationalist school, covering a period of about 80 years, and it is one of the music periods adopted for contrastive purposes in this study (see chapter 6).

It is not easy to compare these musicians as they joined the process at different stages and faced very different starting conditions. Each displayed his respective strengths; curiously, they are all male. Allowing for that, I will say that the composers whose music I find the most interesting in the entire process are E.J. Moeran and Aloys Fleischmann. Not only do I find their music fascinating – the traditional-music influences they use are subtle and ingenious and could easily be missed, or at least not fully appreciated, by anyone who does not devote time and effort to their music. Fleischmann was trying to create a new Irish art-music aesthetic, with the Irishness concealed in the texture of his music. Moeran is a delight, not to mention a challenge to the performer. Each is like a book that yields new insights every time you read it.

All the composers covered here have contributed to my understanding of the interface in one way or another. Two who have served as a gentle warning for my own work are Carl Hardebeck and Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair. They emphasised the importance of observing the authenticity of traditional music when set in an environment other than its native setting. Moeran shared this concern as well, but in a completely different way as he struggled to avoid, at all costs, being cliché Irish or *pastiche* in his compositions.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ When considering the most cliché Irish (artistic) works of all time, the Walt Disney Productions film *Darby Ó Gill and the Little People* (1959) must be a strong contender for the top spot.

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, I drew an arbitrary line under the Nationalist school with the advent of Seán Ó Riada and the traditional-music revival of the 1960s. This euphoric revival meant that the mental wall separating art music from traditional music in Ireland began to crumble and conservative forces, on both sides, began to be left behind. However, the time-line is entirely arbitrary and the transition was not as abrupt as this presentation suggests. Moreover, an arbitrary date may place some musicians in one camp who could rightly claim to be in the other, or in both. This is always a difficulty in attempting to date a transition into another period.

So, what was different? The greatest change can be summed up by two words, *synthesis* and *authenticity*. The combination of extraneous influences always involves a degree of synthesis and this trend accelerated markedly in the Post-Nationalist period. First, at the level of performance, there was the introduction and establishment of art-music features into traditional music, features which had not been there before but, without which, Irish traditional music was no longer imaginable. Seán Ó Riada's innovation of disciplined ensemble playing with worked-out arrangements, a 'folk orchestra' or 'trad band', is an example of this. The reverse – incorporating traditional music into art music – is also true, for which Seoirse Bodley is a prime example. One could also argue that Ó Riada's presentation of Irish music, in concert, as a mini-illustrated lecture rather than a set-list of tune titles (shopping-list format), was also innovative, although it probably owed more to his academic background than to art music. Whichever, it was new, and it enabled a broader audience to access and appreciate traditional music in a way that had not been widespread before.

Secondly, there was greater emphasis on integrating different musical *genres*. This is in contrast to the Nationalist school where, frequently, it sufficed that a number of Irish melodies, or themes, were incorporated into a composition, or traditional features reworked in an orchestral, art-music format. This synthesis provides many challenges, not least of which involves combining *sean-nós* singing and slow ametric airs on uilleann pipes and other instruments, with art music. As we shall see in the next chapter, *sean nós* provides a special

¹⁴⁴ As earlier explained, this chapter is not intended as a survey of a musical *genre* but as a selective description of activity on this segment (1960s onwards) of the Irish traditional – art music interface.

challenge because of the interpretative freedom of the performer, which is the essence of this art form (sections 5.2.1 and 4.3). The “high art” of the pipes also comes from the skilful use of chromaticism combined with microtonality (section 5.3.1), which make it difficult to take it out of its solo environment. This makes the synthesis more challenging.

The challenge of this synthesis was compounded by a greater emphasis on authenticity, in this case an authentic representation of the Irish traditional-music idiom. In chapter 3, this was seen to be a central concern for Karl Hardebeck. This requirement demands that the composer be immersed in the traditional idiom and possess a deep, intuitive understanding of its intricacy and character, both instrumentally and vocally. Alternatively, the composer must work closely with traditional musicians and craft the composition through their artistic filter. Frequently, authenticity requires both. The drive for authenticity also led to traditional instruments and *sean-nós* singers being presented in their own right as soloists with orchestra, instead of this role being filled by classical singers and orchestral instruments in art-music performances. This greatly increases the complexity of the synthesis. Authenticity also applied to ornamentation which, in turn, called for a more detailed and modified musical notation.

Finally, the Post-Nationalist period led to a more intensive use of modal scales and pentatonic scales, along with their implied harmonic structures. These had been used to some extent by all composers in the Nationalist period, but a more conscious realisation now emerged concerning their central importance to the traditional-music idiom.

4.2 Composers of the Post-Nationalist School

4.2.1 Seán Ó Riada (1931 – 1971) The Revolutionary

Seán Ó Riada was born in Cork but grew up in Adare, Co. Limerick. In his youth he would have been extensively exposed to traditional music which was vibrant in the area, but his early compositional output showed little sign of this. Bodley (1981) was convinced that as Ó Riada’s most significant early compositions, *Nomos 1* (1957) and *Nomos 4* (1958), both use tone rows right from the start, they were unquestioningly entrenched in the European 12-tone, art-music

tradition. Even further, he argued that “at the time this work was written, Ó Riada had little interest or involvement in Irish music” (Bodley 1981, p. 36).¹⁴⁵

Others do not share this view, and imply that Bodley overstates his case. Although Gerard Victory could not detect specific Irish influences in *Nomos I*, there must have been some reason for him to assert that “it was unmistakably the work of a great Irishman, and could have been written by no one else”, (Victory 1981, p. 53).¹⁴⁶ Flynn (2010) detected many “references to the mode of D-dorian, particularly in its main theme”.¹⁴⁷ In my view, Ó Riada’s implementation of quasi-serialism is folk-like in character, possibly because these works retain the sense of a tonal centre. In a curious way, he manages to make a tone row sound Irish and melodic.

Most telling of all, perhaps, was that Riobard Mac Góráin, the legendary and long-serving head of Gael Linn, insisted that Ó Riada receive the commission for the musical soundtrack to the documentary film, *Mise Éire* (Nic Fhinn, 2018)¹⁴⁸. This was not a precipitous choice as Mac Góráin was nothing if not methodical, and this commission would have been very important for Gael Linn. He would have known Ó Riada well from the latter’s time as musical director of Radio Éireann, followed by his years as musical director of the Abbey Theatre where he was composer/arranger for the small pit orchestra. At this stage Gael Linn was launching its own record label recording Irish folklore, and one of its earliest L.P.s (long playing record) heavily featured Seán Ó Riada.

The remaining ten years, or so, of Ó Riada’s life were to witness a seismic shift in the traditional-music landscape – a revolution in traditional performance practice and attitudes. With the creation of Ceoltóirí Cualann in 1961, Ó Riada started working directly with traditional musicians and brought his skills and his style, as a classically-trained composer, into play. Until then, the typical Irish-music band had been the Céilí Band, a dance-band in which the members played as individuals, kept together by means of a jazz drum kit which marked the time. Ó Riada introduced new concepts into Irish traditional music, that have endured, such as the chamber group, or folk orchestra of traditional musicians. He introduced new musical ideas to the *genre* – precision playing, complex if sparse arrangements, an extended range and variety of music, exciting key changes and frequent changes of colour, to maintain interest. So successful were these ideas that a new breed of traditional group emerged, many of them

¹⁴⁵ Bodley in Harris and Freyer (Eds.), 1981, Dufour, USA.

¹⁴⁶ Victory in Harris and Freyer (Eds.), 1981, Dufour, USA

¹⁴⁷ Flynn (2010, p. 325)

¹⁴⁸ Máire Nic Fhinn worked in Gael Linn for many years and was closely involved with Mac Góráin during those formative years.

destined to become household names, such as The Chieftains, Planxty, and The Bothy Band, which developed his ideas even further. Traditional music moved from the dance hall to the concert stage. Innovation became acceptable. While this may seem inevitable from today's perspective, it was entirely new and novel in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Some of the innovations he introduced mirrored classical notions and forms. He played the harpsichord, which he rationalised as a near substitute for the medieval harp with strings made of brass, and this gave Ceoltóirí Chualann a baroque sound.¹⁴⁹ He also played piano and bodhrán, the latter which at that time had become all but extinct.

There is a stylistic overlap between some of his classical compositions and his arrangements in the Irish traditional-music idiom. His use of parallel harmony, especially consecutive 4ths and 5ths, evident in *The Banks of Sulan* and *Nomos 1* (see figure 4.1), is also featured in a number of traditional arrangements, including *Caoineadh an Spailpín*. Ó Riada used this air as the basis for his film score in Brian Desmond Hurst's film *The Playboy of the Western World* (1962).¹⁵⁰ It is based harmonically on the repetition of two parallel chords, A-major and G-major on accordion, later repeated in parallel 5ths on whistles.¹⁵¹

Figure 4.1: Ó Riada's use of parallel 5ths in *Nomos 1*, (bars 27-29)

Allegro ma non troppo
27

The musical score for Figure 4.1 shows the orchestral arrangement for bars 27-29 of 'Nomos 1'. The tempo is 'Allegro ma non troppo'. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music features parallel 5th intervals between the Violoncello and Double Bass staves, and between the Violin I and Violin II staves in some measures. The Viola part has rests in bars 27 and 28, and a single note in bar 29.

One can observe how Ó Riada began to notate more closely to traditional performance practice in his writing, rather than adhere to conventional notation. In his orchestral work,

¹⁴⁹ This rationale was clever. It neutralised conservative ideas as to what instruments were acceptable as "traditional Irish" instruments. The resultant acceptance of the harpsichord could also be attributed to the almost Deity-like stature in which Ó Riada's was held. Much later – mid/late-1970s – I recall being involved in a heated discussion about whether a viola was a valid (Irish traditional) instrument, long after the harpsichord was accepted without a murmur.

¹⁵⁰ Gael-Linn – CEF 012,

¹⁵¹ Many of his innovations subsequently became an accepted part of the harmonic language in Irish traditional music, see The Chieftains arrangement of the reel *The Morning Dew* on their fourth album.

Seoladh na nGamhna (1959), which is based on a well-known *sean-nós* song, Ó Riada writes for oboe (see figure 4.2) but notated complex ornamentation as if for a traditional fiddle. He also indicated more complex phrasing, and a change of meter which is in keeping with the textual demands of the song.¹⁵²

Figure 4.2: Ó Riada, *Seoladh na nGamhna*, oboe, (bars 13-16)



There are many examples of this borrowing of classical aesthetics in his traditional arrangements, which would include his use of counterpoint on tin whistles in *Long Faoí Lán tSeól*.¹⁵³ His creation of a rhythmic motif with a bodhrán, a biscuit tin, a squawk on the pipes and a ding from a glass bottle in *Ding Dong Dedaró*, was effective and original.¹⁵⁴ The rhythmic pattern is informed by the text of this occupational song, which depicts the sounds of the blacksmith in his forge hitting the anvil and blowing his bellows; it is, therefore, programmatic or descriptive music. Occupational songs were popular in 18th and 19th century Ireland and were sung as people worked at their given task.

Ó Riada also introduced classical structures to a tradition which, till then, had used mainly binary form. He uses *Rondo* form, for example, in *Ríl Mór Bailed an Chalaídh*, with the recurring *ríl* comprising the A section of the arrangement.¹⁵⁵ One of his most remarkable arrangements involves his use of impressionist harmonic language and whole-tone improvisations on the traditional air, *Port na bPúcaí*, which he recorded live in March 1971 at UCD, shortly before he died. This recording which has only recently come to light demonstrates his remarkable improvisational skill, and may indicate how his involvement in traditional music might have developed had he lived.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Flynn (2010, p. 53)

¹⁵³ *Reachaireacht an Riadaigh* Dublin: Gael Linn, 1962

¹⁵⁴ Gael-Linn – CEF 016, 1967

¹⁵⁵ Gael Linn - SKU: ORIADACD01

¹⁵⁶ At a concert in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, in 2022, at which Ryan Molloy and I both performed, I remember Ryan marvelling at Ó Riada's improvisations on *Port na bPúcaí* and, in particular, at how he landed perfectly, despite some very daring improvisations.

Seóirse Bodley is widely acknowledged as the most important, and prolific, Irish composer to come to the fore in the second half of the 20th century who drew extensively from the Irish traditional-music idiom for inspiration. He composed both tonal music and *avant-garde* as well as a mixture of both. His lasting fame will be based on his expansive and path-breaking compositional output, but also on his teaching as well as his influence on successive generations of prominent Irish composers.

The one composer who stands out for initially embracing not just the pre-war serial techniques of Schoenberg but also the integral serialism of the post-war *avant-garde* is Seóirse Bodley (Fitzgerald Mark p. 354) ¹⁵⁷

Bodley was imbued with Irish culture and the Irish way of life. Like Ó Riada, he changed his name to Irish, but not his surname. In contrast to Ó Riada who introduced, and fused, art-music features into traditional music, Bodley remained an art-music composer who incorporated traditional music elements and features into many of his art-music compositions. Unlike both Ó Riada and Ó Súilleabháin he did not mingle extensively with traditional musicians and participate in “sessions”, but his understanding of traditional music was second to none. In particular, he stressed the importance and distinctive character of *sean-nós* song, its style, ornamentation and tone quality, and even devised a special notation for the unique ornamentation of *sean-nós* singing (see figure 4.8B below). He was conductor and accompanist of the SATB choir of the Keating Branch of Conradh na Gaeilge.¹⁵⁸ He was a fluent Irish speaker. In 1971, the year Ó Riada died, Seóirse Bodley was a founding member of The Folk Music Society of Ireland and served as its first chairperson.

Seóirse Bodley commenced his musical studies in UCD in 1952 with Anthony Hughes and John F. Larchet, the same year his first important composition, *Music for Strings (Ceól do Théadaí)* was premiered. By the time he was awarded his D.Mus. in 1959, he had spent two years studying composition and conducting at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Stuttgart* (Stuttgart Conservatoire, Germany). In the early 1960s, he repeatedly attended the summer courses in Darmstadt, Germany, the *Darmstädter Ferienkurse*,

¹⁵⁷ <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=aaconmusart> (accessed July 24th 2024).

¹⁵⁸ This is the choir my father, Seán Ó Casaide, founded and conducted in the 1930s (see chapter 1).

which is widely regarded as a “leading international forum of contemporary and experimental music with a focus on composition”.¹⁵⁹ Here he expanded his knowledge of *avant-garde* compositional techniques and, by his own admission, became a fluent German speaker. His over-riding concern as a composer was to find his own authentic Irish voice in his contemporary art-music compositions.

I should like to compose music that would be well constructed, reflect my own experience and background, and be written in the contemporary idiom, without regard for passing fashions. (Radio Éireann 1958).¹⁶⁰

Klein (1996) identifies four distinct stages in the compositional output of Seóirse Bodley, the third of which roughly covers the decade of the 1970s. This is the phase in which he engaged most actively with traditional Irish music and, thus, is the period on which we focus here. However, he had composed music in an Irish ethos before then, including his best-known composition.¹⁶¹ From this period, his most prominent works would include a piece he had written for two pianos, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1973),¹⁶² *The Tightrope Walker Presents a Rose* (1976)¹⁶³, as well as two symphonies, his Symphony No. 2: *I Have Loved the Lands of Ireland*, (1980) commemorating the centenary of the birth of Patrick Pearce, and Symphony No. 3: *Ceol*, (1980), which was commissioned for the opening of the National Concert Hall, Dublin. In his symphony no. 3, he included a highly innovative feature of audience participation in the form of singing a refrain.

He developed these ideas further in his tone poem, *A Small White Cloud Drifts Over Ireland* (1976), incorporating aspects of Irish traditional music directly into a larger *avant-garde* tapestry. This is one of his most overtly Irish compositions. “Ireland is viewed as if from the perspective of a small white cloud” (Bodley).¹⁶⁴

This playful piece quotes traditional music in the form of a jig, a slow air and a reel, with simple, though suitable ornamentation notated in the score, figure 4.3.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darmstädter_Ferienkurse, (accessed 14. October 2024)

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.cmc.ie/features/archives-seoirse-bodley> (accessed August 3rd 2024). Also in Cox (2010, p.26).

¹⁶¹ His arrangement of *Iníon an Phailtínigh* (*The Palatine's Daughter*), was used as the signature tune for the long-running TV series, *The Riordans*, for most of its 14-year run. This delightful arrangement elaborated on the existing folk melody with an attractive variation of the well-known melody.

¹⁶² <https://www.cmc.ie/features/archives-seoirse-bodley> (Accessed Aug 8th 2024).

¹⁶³ Bodley Seóirse, Notated score, *The Tightrope Walker Presents a Rose* (1976), CMC Ireland

¹⁶⁴ https://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2009/mar09/Bodley_CD121.htm (accessed July 16th 2024).

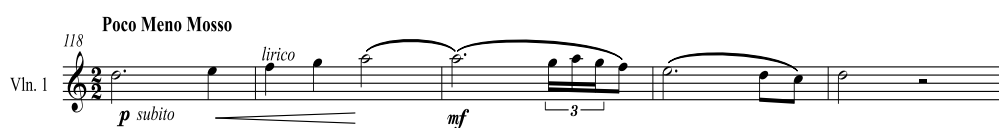
¹⁶⁵ Bodley Seóirse, Notated score for Symphony Orchestra, *A Small White Cloud Drifts Over Ireland*, 1975 Dur. (Contemporary Music Centre).

Figure 4.3: Violin solo in Bodley, *A Small White Cloud Drifts Over Ireland*, (bars 22-24)



While these traditional tunes are newly composed, it seems as if he is referencing traditional music by composing new melodies that sonically remind us of well-known pieces. In a conversation I had with Martin Hayes, Martin also alluded to this concept of tunes being at once, “different and familiar”, and that this is not confined to Irish music. Many tunes of a certain type sound similar to one another and may have a common source. This may well have been Bodley’s intention here. But, it is by no means all derivative as we can see from the newly-composed air, figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Newly composed air in an authentic style, Bodley: *A Small White Cloud*, (bars 118 – 122).¹⁶⁶



The work is full of references to Irish traditional music, some overt, such as when he quotes traditional tunes directly. Others are subtler, such as this reference to the *rollán* or roll ornament, so prevalent in Irish music - as a rhythmic pattern on the timpani (bar 159) and on violins (bars 480 – 482).

As the concert pianist, Pádraig Ó Cuinneagáin, commented on his style of piano composition, which applied to his music in general;

Bodley’s compositions for piano are exact opposites. You will get a phrase that sounds Irish and familiar but is probably newly composed, with sympathetic harmonic accompaniment, and then suddenly the next section is entirely atonal. (Ó Cuinneagáin)¹⁶⁷

Bodley tended to juxtapose short passages of typical traditional music with a stark dissonant response, creating tension, perhaps referencing the contrast between the romantic

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*

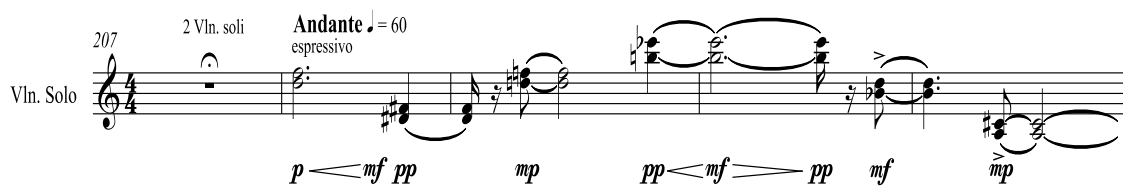
¹⁶⁷ In conversation with Pádraig O Cuinneagáin, TU Dublin, (7. November 2024).

vision of Ireland and the edgy and harsh reality of 1970's Ireland. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 provide examples:

Figure 4.5: Two-bar phrase jig, Bodley: *A Small White Cloud* (bars 202-204).¹⁶⁸



Figure 4.6: Dissonance on Violin, Bodley: *A Small White Cloud* (bars 208- 211).¹⁶⁹

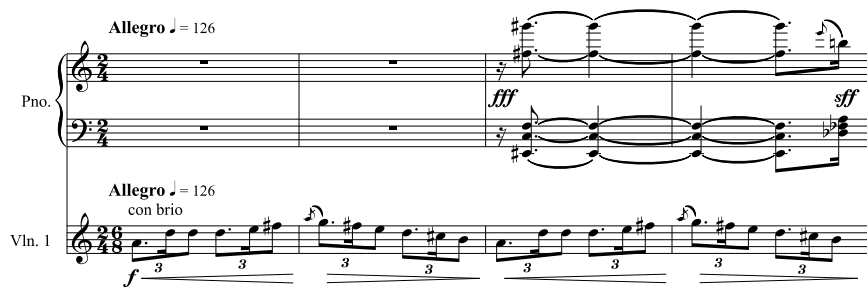


Bodley was not alone in taking this approach, and others (e.g. Potter) have also included traditional and classical passages in a single work but have kept them separate. Bodley, however, was also prepared to “combine” the two. There are subtle references to the folk idiom discernible texturally in the score, and therefore the idioms may not as entirely separate as it seems. In figure 4.7, we have an example of dissonant accompaniment to his traditional tunes (it is not the only one), indicating that he intended, occasionally, to blends the idioms texturally as opposed to keeping them entirely separate and distinct.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*

Figure 4.7: Dissonance and traditional fusion, Bodley: *A Small White Cloud* (bars 141- 144)



Bodley also uses complex rhythmic notation to define traditional ornamentation, figure 4.8. This clearly defines his musical intentions and allows these ornamental features to be used in the orchestral texture.

Figure 4.8: Complex notation of traditional ornamentation on flute, (bars 221-225).¹⁷⁰



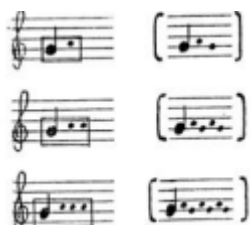
Two other features used by Bodley have become common practice with classically-trained composers in the traditional idiom. First is the use of lower strings to create a drone-like effect in accompanying a reel, (see, for example, *A Small White Cloud* bars 255 – 256). This is a reference to the piping tradition, and has been used by Ó Riada, Ó Súilleabháin, Ryan Molloy and others, including in the present composition *Famine Odyssey*. Second, he notated the reel in triplets. As this is closer to performance practice, but not how it is normally notated, it demonstrates that he had an intuitive feeling for performance practice in the idiom. This is also a practice I very much favour.

And, finally, Bodley invented his own system of notation for ornamentation in *sean-nós* singing, Figure 4.8A. In this system Bodley defines the ornamental notes as small dots, without definite duration and without stems. He also demonstrates the various ways in which they occur. This system identifies the main pillar note, giving only the melodic contour of the ornamental notes.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*

Figure 4.8A: Bodley catalogue of typical notation of *sean-nós ornamentation* ¹⁷¹

1. (a) ornamentation with the note above, once, twice or three times:



- (b) ornamentation with the note below:

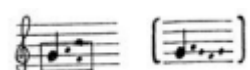


- (c) without returning to the basic note at the end of a double or triple ornament:

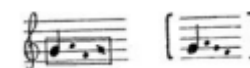


2. The turn:

- (a) ornamentation with the note above and the note below the melody note:



- (b) without returning to the basic note at the end of the turn:



3. Grace notes upwards or downwards



¹⁷¹ Bodley, Seirse (1973): *Technique and Structure in Sean Nos Singing*, Irish Folk Music Studies No 1

The ornaments on the other hand are not as complex as might be imagined. They mostly take the form of steps adjacent to the main melodic line. The reason for this is probably that large intervals are not easily sung with rapidity... (Bodley, 1973, p. 47) ¹⁷²

4.2.3 Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (1950 – 2018) – Ethnomusicologist Who Emphasised Performance

One of the remarkable aspects of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin's career was his unlikely background – he grew up in Clonmel, in a family where "there was no music of any sort. ..." ¹⁷³ And yet, in 1972 he graduated from University College, Cork with a B.Mus., where two of his mentors were giants of the Irish musical landscape, Alois Fleischmann and Seán Ó Riada.

I discovered myself between the twin poles of Fleischman, on the one hand, and Ó Riada on the other, and in many ways even though I didn't realise it fully at the time, they were like chalk and cheese, and I found myself between two cultural electricity nodes ... (Ó Súilleabháin, Lyric FM, 2022).

He was an accomplished pianist with a very distinctive traditional style, and a background in jazz performance which goes some way towards explaining his outstanding talent for improvisation. He became a lecturer in the Music Department of UCC in 1975. Ó Súilleabháin was awarded a PhD in ethnomusicology from Queens University, Belfast in 1987; the subject of his doctoral thesis dealt with "innovation and tradition in the music of Tommy Potts", which, as much as anything else, indicated the direction and scope of his interest.

In 1994, he was appointed to the inaugural chair in music at the newly established University of Limerick, and in 1996 helped set up the precursor of what was to become the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, and became its first director. He encouraged the Irish Chamber Orchestra to leave Dublin and relocate to Limerick, to the IWA. With professor Helen Phelan, a classical pianist and his second wife, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin organised the funding and construction of a new centre for the IWAMD at the UL in 2008. And in 2014, he also established the dance company *Fidget Feet* as Artists in Residence.

¹⁷² Bodley Seóirse (1973). *Technique and Structure in Sean Nos Singing*, (Edited by Hugh Shields, Seóirse Bodley and Breandán Breathnach), Irish Folk music studies No 1, (FMSI).

¹⁷³ Corless, Damian (1995): Interview with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, *In Dublin*, Vol. 20, no.20. Quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mícheál_Ó_Súilleabháin (accessed 20. October 2024)

With such frenetic organisational and administrative energy, it is not surprising that his compositional output was not extensive. Although he never produced a major classical composition unlike Ó Riada, his influence on the development of traditional music with art-music setting was of great significance and importance. Some of his innovations, such as using Bulgarian rhythmic patterns or Indian motivic musical constructions, had clear origins in ethnomusicology. As with most innovators, he was not without his critics. A seven-part series for RTE and the BBC, *A River of Sound: The Changing Course of Irish Traditional Music*, which he recorded in 1995, was energetically attacked by Tony McMahon as “Hiberno-jazz, scrubbed clean of roots and balls” and as “rattling of bones”.¹⁷⁴ McMahon and Ó Súilleabháin had at least one thing in common – each of them felt *stuck* on the wrong instrument for the music they loved. In McMahon’s case it was the accordion,¹⁷⁵ in Ó Súilleabháin’s the piano. But, Ó Súilleabháin’s commitment to Irish traditional music was all-consuming, and he described it as:

... a sonic encoding of the dynamic of Irish identity itself . . . a swirling gyroscope of Irish cultural life in its general sweep”.¹⁷⁶

His piano playing was innovative in the sense that he created a new and distinctive traditional piano style, which became the template on which many traditional piano players base their styles today. I first became aware of Micheál Ó Súilleabháin in my teens with his ground-breaking album of traditional music performed on clavichord, harpsichord, piano, pedal organ and mini-moog synthesiser. (*Micheál Ó Súilleabháin*, Gael Linn, 1976). This recording not only became a standard for modern performance practice, but also heralded what was to come in terms of his individual style and his use of harmonic language. That is not to say that the piano was not already part of Irish traditional music at that time; it was, but tended to be either cloaked in the harmonic language of the late romantic era, or the vamping style of the céilí band.

¹⁷⁴ Irish Times, <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/micheal-o-suilleabhain-obituary-exceptional-musician-who-straddled-classical-and-irish-traditional-music-1.3692385> (accessed 20. October 2024.).

¹⁷⁵ “An exceptional performer on accordion-particularly his interpretation of slow airs - he nevertheless considered that instrument inappropriate to the ethos of traditional music.” (Vallely, Fintan, 2011 p. 420).

¹⁷⁶ Irish Times, <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/micheal-o-suilleabhain-obituary-exceptional-musician-who-straddled-classical-and-irish-traditional-music-1.3692385> (accessed 20. October 2024.).

Traditional music and performance were also to the fore in his thinking as an educator. His innovative brainwave came when he realised that many, highly talented, traditional performers were effectively barred from studying music in university by the admission requirements. He set about rectifying this by opening up university education to traditional musicians by devising new entry requirements and courses. The IWA introduced a wide range of undergraduate and taught post-graduate as well as research degree programmes, many of them quite new. As alluded to in chapter 2.5, referencing the article by Phelan and Nunan, his inspiration was to break down the barriers between professional research practice and academic research practice. Not only is this the ideological bedrock of IWA, but it has inspired others to follow, not least the Irish music department and degree programmes at TU Dublin. His influence has been profound.

... the majority of Ó Súilleabháin's efforts were devoted to shifting studies of music away from literary techniques and toward the art of performance. ... [It was] a radical move of removing a sight-reading test to get into a music department ... he described it himself as setting off a bomb in the music department ...(Phelan)¹⁷⁷

Ó Súilleabháin approached composition from the performer's perspective and his compositions depended on his dashing performance, his style and his undoubted improvisational ability. Ó Súilleabháin tended not to write out the piano parts for his compositions but, instead, performed them intuitively in an improvisatory manner. He held that a tune, air or a motif can be performed in an improvised manner, to a relatively constant harmonic accompaniment, as long as the performer has an intuitive knowledge, or feeling, of where to land musically. This can be seen in compositions such as *Woodbook* (1992), a fantasia on a well-known hornpipe, *The Plains of Boyle*, and *Becoming* (1997) where the piano extemporises on well-known airs. Ó Súilleabháin maintained that a good improviser can extemporise on a piece of music in all manner of ways.

In spite of the many influences which permeated his music, including jazz, Gregorian chant and Indian folk music, as well as classical music and Irish traditional music, he regarded himself mainly as a classical composer. He maintained that the really exotic music in the world was classical, mainly because of its adherence to scores and the written note.¹⁷⁸

His orchestral works include, *Oileán* (1989), *Lumen* (1995), which was initially an interval act in the 1995 Eurovision Song Contest, *Becoming* (1998), *Templum* (2001), and *Irish*

¹⁷⁷ Quoting Professor Helen Phelan, UL, in *The Heights*, <https://www.bcheights.com/2023/12/09/stories-of-a-life-in-music-remembering-irish-music-composer-micheal-o-suilleabhain/> (accessed 22. October 2024)

¹⁷⁸ In conversation with Micheál O Súilleabháin 2000.

Destiny (2004). The central section of *Becoming* is in fact music which Ó Súilleabháin wrote for a silent film titled *Irish Destiny* (1993) directed by George Dewhurst, which marked the 10th anniversary of the Easter rising (1926), and is a love story set during the War of Independence.

Oileán, is a quasi-concerto for traditional flute and string orchestra with three clearly defined movements. It is reminiscent of Bodley's *A Small White Cloud* in its use of a jig, air and reel structure to loosely define its three sections. It differs, however, in that it uses well known dance tunes, along with a traditional soloist, in this case flautist Matt Molloy. It is stylistically homogenous in that it does not mix the traditional and the *avant-garde*. It starts with a dramatic *unisono* introduction in 8/8, in a 3+2+3 pattern, figure 4.9, reminiscent of Bulgarian folk music with its irregular rhythms. This bold introduction which heralds the entry of the traditional flute was ahead of its time, anticipating developments that were to come later in *Riverdance* and other works.

Figure 4.9: Ó Súilleabháin, *Oileán*, Rhythmic pattern (3+2+3), Bar 1.

The image shows the first bar of the musical score for *Oileán*. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 170 beats per minute. The score is for a string orchestra, including Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The time signature is 8/8. The rhythm is a 3+2+3 pattern. The Violin I and II parts are marked 'f' (forte) and 'marcato'. The Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass parts are also marked 'f' and 'marcato'. The Double Bass part includes a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) marking. The score shows the first bar of the piece, which is a 3+2+3 pattern in 8/8 time.

In bars (165 -169), Ó Súilleabháin elaborates on these ideas by changing the metre by the bar, 12/8 – 10/8 – 12/8 – 9/8 – 6/8. One could surmise that it may have been his study of ethnomusicology that attracted him to these irregular rhythmic combinations, as these would have been considered exotic in an Irish music context at that time.

The flute entry gives the first exposition of a three-bar phrase (motif), on traditional flute which recurs throughout the work in various forms, figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10: *Oileán*: recurring traditional-flute theme, (bars 11-13)



The accompaniment for solo sections consists mainly of sustained chords. This is effective as it allows the solo instrument the space to demonstrate its remarkable ornamental palette and timbre in an uncluttered texture. Ó Súilleabháin notates these ornaments with complex rhythmic patterns, figure 4.11. These are probably intended more as a guide because the accomplished traditional musician, and certainly Matt Molloy, would probably use their own, intuitively. Ó Súilleabháin quotes *The Killavil Jig* for the main theme of the first movement.

Figure 4.11: *Oileán*: Complex ornamental notation for traditional flute, (Bars 17 – 19)



The second movement, the highlight of the work, opens with an effective theme which is both contemporary and melodic, and is essentially a dialogue between traditional flute and orchestra. It draws melodically from the opening flute *motif* emphasising the first four notes B – E – F# – B. Ó Súilleabháin makes extensive use of an E-minor pedal, in drone-like style, using the lower strings to create a dark ominous mood. This pedal is sustained for much of the movement.

There is a traditional-flute *cadenza*, based on the opening flute *motif* in bar 11, figure 4.12, which is a typical aspect of the classical concerto style. He also stipulates a *Flutterzunge* tonguing effect, which is a feature of concert-flute technique and not in the traditional ornamental repertoire. This reinforces the concerto feel of this movement. The E-minor pedal at this stage loses the 3rd degree which is now sounding perfect 5ths. This brings us sonically closer to the Ó Riada aesthetic.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ This Cadenza was only touched upon in the original recording of this work with Matt Molloy. (Virgin records 1989).

Figure 4.12: *Oileán*, Cadenza for traditional flute, (bars 76 – 83)



The final movement has the well-known reel *The Morning Dew* as its main theme. In figure 4.13 we can see the syncopated rhythmic pattern which introduces the *Finale* and is also featured in the accompaniment to the reel.

Figure 4.13: *Oileán*, *The Morning Dew*, syncopated rhythmic accompaniment, opening bars of the final movement

Ó Súilleabháin's passion for traditional music was one of the driving forces in his life. It was probably for this reason that he tried learning the pipes as a means of achieving authenticity in his performance, but reverted to piano when this proved too daunting.¹⁸⁰ He regarded the uilleann pipes as the ultimate traditional instrument even if, as we shall see in chapter 5, a challenging instrument to play proficiently. Nevertheless, the pipes remained inspirational for him and informed his orchestral writing with his use of piping features such as sustained drone-like accompaniment, imitation of regulators and very fine idiomatic writing for the instrument. His sensitivity for the instrument is evident in his arrangement of the love song,

¹⁸⁰ In conversation with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (2000). One must bear in mind that proficiency on the uilleann pipes is enormously time consuming and that an over-worked Ó Súilleabháin would simply not have had the time for this. The same would have applied to the violin or almost any other musical instrument.

Bean Dubh an Ghleanna for pipes and orchestra.¹⁸¹ This piece starts with a lush introduction, reminiscent of Grieg's *Holberg Suite* (Op. 40). The solo pipes entry is unaccompanied apart from drones, and states the main theme of the air before being responded to by horns descending in thirds, much like the regulators of the pipes.¹⁸²

His last works include *Elver Gleams* (2017) and *Between Worlds* (2018), the two parts he completed of a trilogy he had planned with the National Symphony Orchestra. There was also *Fill Arís* (2018), an orchestral setting of the poetry of Seán Ó Riordáin, including *sean-nós* song, which was premiered during Ó Súilleabháin's last performance with the orchestra only months before he died.

He was really interested in the *sean-nós* voice, that wide orchestral palette, and his idea was that the orchestra would be almost like a sonic landscape into which the voice would sit, so a lot of the new compositions were in and around that ... (Phelan, 2022).¹⁸³

4.2.4 Ryan Molloy (1983 -) The New Generation

Ryan Molloy represents a younger generation of Irish composers who are more a product of the revival of Irish traditional music than instigators of it. Given his background, it is no surprise that his art-music compositions are intuitively imbued with the essence of traditional music.

I am influenced a lot by traditional Irish music as well. I grew up as a fiddle player, and the kinds of sound worlds that were there in my early years, have a big influence on the musical decisions I make in my composition. (Molloy)¹⁸⁴

He defines his compositional approach as threefold;

My music consists of three main preoccupations, drones and colour, or a sense of playing with colour, and temporal transcendence, so our ability to ignore real time and get beyond real time, to float away...(Molloy).¹⁸⁵

These compositional approaches of droning, colour and transcendence are features he has in common with his illustrious predecessors, Ó Riada and Ó Súilleabháin. They are also

¹⁸¹ Especially recommended is the recording of *Bean Dubh An Ghleanna* by Liam Ó Floinn and the Irish Chamber Orchestra on *The Piper's Call* (1998) Tara Music, Universal Music, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R81As8e9YsQ>

¹⁸² I had the privilege of performing this piece on pipes in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, in 2002, under the baton of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.

¹⁸³ Irish Examiner, (2022), <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/artsandculture/arid-40940615.html>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDsb-3HfKvo> (accessed Dec 30th 2024).

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDsb-3HfKvo> (accessed Dec 30th 2024).

particularly evident in compositions such as *Innisfáil* (2015), his *violin concerto* (2016), and *Geallán* (2019) for Irish Harp and orchestra. The last of these is his most overtly traditional composition with soaring melodic lines which, though original, are reminiscent of existing melodies. This recalls Bodley's approach in some of his earlier compositions, such as *The Narrow Road to the North* and *The Tightrope Walker Presents a Rose*.

To understand Molloy's compositional approach, one must appreciate his fluid authentic style of playing Irish traditional music on piano which, in my opinion, is a continuation of an approach pioneered by Seán Ó Riada, and further developed by Micheál Ó Súilleabháin. This lineage is evident in Ryan Molloy's early recordings, such as *Pianopoly*.¹⁸⁶ His lively hop jigs are reminiscent of Ó Súilleabháin, and his restrained interpretation of *The Wounded Hussar* calls to mind Ó Riada's playing.¹⁸⁷ Molloy has, however, developed his own voice in this idiom, with his use of counterpoint interwoven with melody, a jazz-influenced harmonic language, along with good old-fashioned vamping reminiscent of Charlie Lennon and the céilí bands.¹⁸⁸

He could, therefore, be seen to have taken up the torch where they left off, bringing his own individual style to the repertoire as a composer, arranger and performer. His accompaniment style is also very individualistic, with rhythmic patterns reminiscent of Cape Breton style. His innate ability to adapt sympathetically to the style of the musicians that he is accompanying, bringing to it his own unique style, demonstrates a deep understanding of traditional music. These qualities are especially evident in his *Tune a Day* series, which he recorded with Fergal Scahill, on YouTube, during Covid.¹⁸⁹

Ryan Molloy participated regularly at Fleadh Ceol na hÉireann – an annual, nation-wide festival of Irish music – organised by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. He won an all-Ireland title on solo fiddle (15 – 18 years age group), and also competed at national level on piano and as a piano accompanist. A traditional musician's musician, who intuitively understands the essence of the music, and is informed on modern developments in the *genre*.¹⁹⁰

One of his early works, and arguably one of his most unusual, was a double-bass improvisation which he “created” in conjunction with *virtuoso* bass player, Malachy Robinson, *Bodhrán v1.0* (2014). It is best to let them describe it themselves.

¹⁸⁶ <https://music.apple.com/us/album/pianophony/1510444692>

¹⁸⁷ Gael Linn ORIADACD07

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/XaT9nTQFt8A6Sr1q/> Fergal Scahill was the winner of Fleadh Ceol na hÉireann (fiddle) in 2002.

¹⁹⁰ Ryan Molloy was nominated in the category 'Best Folk Instrumentalist' for the RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards in 2020 and 2021.

I came (up with) about seven snippets of ideas, the first of which involved detuning the bass considerably and bowing heavily with a jig swing on the lower strings to emulate the sound of the bodhrán ... The result is essentially a series of stimuli that the performer has to respond to, through repetition and extemporisation ... the result is a 'conditioned improvisation'. Some of these conditions involve exploring certain physical aspects of the bodhrán. For example, playing towards the rim produces a thinner sound which is generally higher in pitch, or playing on the side of the bodhrán produces a wooden sound (= *con legno*)¹⁹¹. The navigation amongst these elements is left entirely to the performer. (Molloy, 2014)¹⁹²

The score for the piece was a circular drum with certain musical impulses on which Malachy Robinson was to improvise.¹⁹³ The bowing is supposed to reflect the swing of an Irish jig. Molloy stipulates a triplet crotchet quaver figure, more typical of traditional performance practice, as opposed to the straight quaver rhythms in 6/8 time.

Figure 4.14: An excerpt from Ryan Molloy's composition, *Bodhrán*, written on a bodhrán skin. (This is illustrated because of the novelty and humour of the idea, not as copy of part of the score.)



Molloy also gives detailed instructions on ornamentation.

Cuts - “grace notes to be played as quickly as possible in a way that is comfortable to the performer.”

Rolls - “are similar to the classical turn although done much more quickly.”

The performer is free to ornament at will using stipulated ornamentation.

¹⁹¹ *con legno* – playing with the wood of the bow.

¹⁹² <https://ryanmolloy.ie/bodhran-v1.0>

¹⁹³ *ibid*

Malachy Robinson, who performed the work on double bass, also gave his impressions.

I enjoyed being a bodhrán for the day. Ryan told me that apart from the beginning and the end, I could pretty much do what I liked. The score consisted of a circular drum with suggestions as to what I might do. If I were to play them as written, the piece would take less than a minute, so I improvised on these ideas in a single unedited take. (Malachy Robinson, 30/10/24).¹⁹⁴

A work of a very different kind is his violin concerto (1916), in which Molloy gives expression to these influences in a very different way. The programme notes in the score, provided by the composer, give considerable insight into how Irish traditional music influences are discernible in both the character and the structure of the work. Molloy references Bunting's *Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840) to define the overall structure of the work.¹⁹⁵

This work draws on the ancient categories of traditional Irish music – goltraí, suantraí and geantraí – as a mirror for the traditional three-movement form of many concertos. (Molloy)

The first movement, Goltraí, (lament), is described by the composer as having the feel of an 'ameterical slow air'. This reference to actual performance practice of slow airs, rather than how they are typically notated, is evident from the violin entry, an effective *cadenza*, which establishes the unaccompanied solo violin's traditional character. The traditional character of repeated statements of a *rollán* ornament, in various forms, in the opening measures of the solo violin, is reinforced by the composer's instruction of '*legatissimo* – writhing, unsettled'. In contrast to *Bodhrán*, the ornamentation and colouration for solo violin in the concerto is notated rather than suggested with symbols.¹⁹⁶

Figure 4.15: Molloy, *Violin Concerto*, solo violin with *rollán* figures (bars 18 – 21)



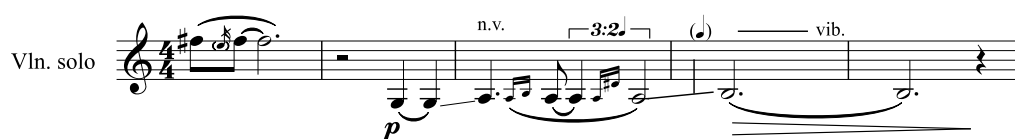
Molloy also makes extensive use of different kinds of sliding techniques which are prevalent in traditional music. This is indicated in his score, comprising different kinds of *glissandi*, typical of traditional performance.

¹⁹⁴ As performed, the piece lasted just over seven minutes.

¹⁹⁵ Bunting Edward, *Ancient Music of Ireland*, 1840, p.

¹⁹⁶ Ryan Molloy score for *Violin Concerto* (1916), bars 15 - 17

Figure 4.15A: Molloy, *Violin Concerto*, ascending traditional *glissandi* (bars 46 – 50)



4.2.5 Patrick Cassidy (1956 -) Irish – Baroque

Patrick Cassidy is a prominent Irish composer who specialises in classical music in a Baroque-Irish style and has written a number of highly acclaimed works in this *genre*. He is largely an autodidact, having graduated in applied mathematics and statistics, and has developed his composition skills from a detailed study of the scores of Baroque composers, mainly Handel, but also Haydn.

Patrick Cassidy's first orchestral work, *The Children of Lir* (1991) was first performed in Christ Church Cathedral and subsequently recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra and the Tallis Choir.¹⁹⁷ This was followed soon after by *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1998). His composition, *Famine Remembrance* (1997) was especially composed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Irish Famine. These are but a selection of his many compositions/recordings.

The music is not distinctively Irish, but there are some attractive, newly-composed traditional elements in his works. Apart from the fact that many of his compositions are based on Irish folklore, and Irish history, further traditional elements arise in the use of dance rhythms, such as the jig-like melody on the flat pipes, evident in the fifth movement of the *Children of Lir*, *Mochean do Mharcshluaigh na Neach* (*Welcome to the Cavalcade of Steed*). In this movement Cassidy uses a recurring melody in 6/8 on the flat pipes, reminiscent of O'Carolan, to accompany the chorale theme, figure 4.16. This goes to the heart of Cassidy's compositional style, in that he writes what is essentially new baroque music that is informed not only by the great masters, Purcell, Handel and Haydn, but also by the Irish traditional music idiom, in particular, the music of the harpers.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ I had the great pleasure of playing the pipes with the National Symphony Orchestra in a production of the *Children of Lir* in the NCH, Dublin in 2014. I also played uilleann pipes in a production of *Famine Remembrance* in Claremorris in 2014, as well as violin in *Proclamation*, a piece for violin and orchestra from *1916 and Rebellion*, in Knock, Co. Mayo, both with the RTE Concert Orchestra.

¹⁹⁸ Note that while the movement is in the key of F-major, the pipes score is in G-major as the pipes are a transposing instrument

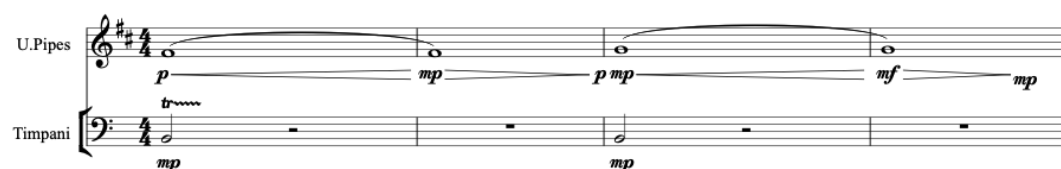
Figure 4.16: Ritornello-type Theme on Flat Pipes in the Style of O'Carolan, *Cavalcade of Steed*, bars 8 - 15



Patrick Cassidy is stylistically closer to the minimalist school with his uncluttered harmonic language and frequent repetition of melodic and motivic themes. His writing is mostly tonal and his preferred use of traditional instruments is as a textural colour rather than a bold soloistic statement.¹⁹⁹ This, as evident in many of his compositions, imbues his writing with a distinctive traditional character, even if the themes may be closer in character to baroque than traditional Irish music. This textural use of traditional elements is what distinguishes Cassidy from other composers, and represents his unique contribution to the interface between art music and traditional music. His preferred pipes are the flat chanter,²⁰⁰ especially the C-chanter, with their mellower tone, hence their superior blending qualities.

This use of the pipes in a more contemporary context is evident in his score for the documentary, *1916 The Irish Rebellion*, commissioned by the University of Notre Dame. The pipes here have slow moving textural lines, referencing the traditional idiom in a subtler and more individual way, figure 4.17. He took a similar approach with *sean-nós* voice in the same documentary where he used Sibéal Ní Chasaide as the *sean-nós* singer. In the film score, *Calvary*, (2014), directed by John Michael McDonagh, Iarla O Lionáird's voice, though audible, is blended into the texture rather than featuring prominently as a solo voice. Note his addition of dynamics for pipes in the example below, displaying an understanding of the dynamic possibilities of the pipes in the hands of a skilled performer.

Figure 4.17: Textural use of pipes, *1916 The Irish Rebellion*, section 4, bars 51 - 53



¹⁹⁹ In conversation with Patrick Cassidy 2014

²⁰⁰ The 'flat pipes' is a term used to describe a set of pipes for which the chanter is tuned from D downwards (see chapter 5).

Cassidy is a fine traditional flautist. His knowledge of traditional music has informed his writing, particularly for the pipes. This is evident in pieces such as the *Funeral March* from the *Famine Remembrance Suite* (1997), where the upper register of the chanter is exploited effectively. Note his repeated use of the ‘back D’, with its distinctive tonal quality, the soaring qualities of the upper register notes of A and B and the C-natural in bar 5, (the lonesome note), which exploits the qualities of the chanter in an idiomatic way, giving authenticity to his writing in the idiom.

Figure 4.18: Funeral March, Famine Remembrance Suite, *opening measures*



His composition for pipes and orchestra, *Skibbereen*, from the *Famine Remembrance Suite* (1997) for pipes and orchestra, is reminiscent of Elgar with its soaring melodic lines. His intuitive writing for the uilleann pipes, attractive dialogue between pipes and orchestra, and his flair as a melodist places this particular movement among the finest in the genre.²⁰¹

His most famous work is the operatic aria, *Vide Cor Meum* (2001), which was composed for the Scott Ridley film, *Hannibal*. It is his most contemporary work and certainly the one for which he is most widely known. It is meant to be Italian in spirit. However, it also has a subtle traditional-Irish music feeling, with the use of large intervals such as fifths, sevenths and octaves in the vocal lines, reminiscent of the music of the harpers. The slow harmonic progressions, clear vocal lines moving mostly stepwise, and the parallel motion, particularly in the vocal counterpoint, gives the piece a transcendent quality which makes it timeless.

²⁰¹ Patrick considers Elgar to be one of the finest orchestrators, and a model on which to study orchestration. 2016.

Figure 4.19: *Vide Cor Meum*, opening measures

The musical score for the opening measures of *Vide Cor Meum* is presented. It features a vocal duo (Amore child and Amore female) and a string ensemble (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass). The tempo is marked *Adagio espressivo*. The vocal parts are in Florentine dialect, with the lyrics "E pen - sa-ndo di lei". The string parts are in 3/4 time and feature a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with a triplet. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time.

4.2.6 Dave Flynn (1977 -) Notating Traditional Music

Dave Flynn was born in Dublin but divides his time between Ireland and New Zealand. His work rate is impressive in terms of compositional output, his organisational activity as well as his collaborative work with leading traditional, and other, musicians. He is the founder and artistic director of the Irish Memory Orchestra (founded 2016)²⁰² – “a cross-*genre* orchestra mixing musicians trained in classical music, traditional Irish music, jazz and other styles ... the orchestra performs Flynn's compositions and arrangements entirely by memory.”²⁰³ He is a prolific composer and his Wikipedia page lists sixty three works²⁰⁴ up to 2019 (certainly many more by now), including three symphonies, several concertos and string quartets, *Five Études for Uilleann Pipes* (2009), and the intriguingly titled *Toccata for Obama* (2009).

With the Irish Memory Orchestra, traditional, classical and jazz musicians play side by side, assisted by the removal of sheet music, and focussing instead on memorising the music. This has led to works such as the *Clare Concerto* (2013), *Trad Bolero* (2016), a re-orchestration

²⁰² It was founded as the Clare Memory Orchestra in 2012, and renamed in 2016. It consisted of 70 musicians.

²⁰³ Dave Flynn: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Flynn_\(composer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Flynn_(composer)) (accessed 25. November 2024).

²⁰⁴ *ibid*

of Maurice Ravel's score, *Inside the Box: Outside the Box* (2016), an orchestration of a suite of tunes composed by Máirtín Ó Connor, and the *Rebel Suite* (2017), based on traditional melodies from Co Cork.

The dominance of aural learning in the dissemination of traditional music and conversely the visual aid of sheet music in classical music has meant that many of the essential characteristics of traditional Irish music have rarely, if ever, been analysed or notated in the detail that is expected for classical music. (Flynn, 2010, p. iii)²⁰⁵

This would appear to define one of his major concerns, i.e. to capture the genuine essence of traditional music in a notational system that accurately defines its characteristics.

He defines three different approaches to notating traditional music.

1) The skeletal approach where one reads an outline of the tune, leaving out all the hidden detail of traditional music. This approach is the usual way in which melodies are notated in collections and tune books.²⁰⁶

2) The ornamental approach, where ornamentation is indicated through a series of symbols. This approach has been used by composers such as Bodley and Molloy, and also by music collectors such as Breandán Breathnach, who devised an entire system to indicate traditional ornamentation.

^ v a small curve above or below the staff, devised by Breandán Breathnach, to indicate a 'roll' is now in common usage.²⁰⁷

3) The maximalist approach, which is also used by composers such as Ryan Molloy, Bodley and Ó Riada, where almost every aspect of traditional performance is notated in great detail. At its most extreme this system becomes very complex, with exact rhythmic notation of ornaments and micro dynamics. In the example below, Flynn has dispensed with time signatures and normal bar lines, figure 4.20.

Figure 4.20: Opening measures of *Gol na mBan san Ár*, transcribed from the playing of Paddy Glackin²⁰⁸



²⁰⁵ Flynn Dave, 2010, p. 107

²⁰⁶ For example, *O'Neill's 1001 gems, The Dance Music of Ireland*, was the go-to repertoire book for traditional musicians during the 20th century.

²⁰⁷ Mitchel Pat. (1999)

²⁰⁸ Flynn Dave, (2010) PhD Thesis, p. 107.

His adaptation of the maximalist approach is extremely detailed, giving precise notation for ornamental features, microtonality and bowing. While this may work well in a classical context, traditional musicians often relate that how they play is a combination of feeling, intuition and style – it is personal and subjective and is unlikely to be captured by any notation. In addition, many traditional musicians do not read music or their capacity to do so is limited, so this approach would simply be ignored.

Figure 4.21: “Maximalist approach”, *Taréis an Caoineadh*, indicating microtonal deviations from concert pitch (bars 26 - 30).²⁰⁹



Note to Figure 4.21: The symbols  above some of the notes in this excerpt indicate microtonal deviations from concert pitch, with the arrow indicating the direction of deviation. The small circles above some notes indicate an open E-string while the microtonal note E is played with a flattened 4th finger on the A-string.

Bodley for example, took a different approach, encouraging the solo violinist to listen to recordings of Seán Keane, so as to help them to understand the nuances of the ornamentation and the natural swing of the idiom. He would have wanted the ornamentation performed in a traditional manner, without the cleanliness of baroque or classical ornamentation.²¹⁰

Flynn’s compositional approach differs from Ó Riada, Bodley, Ó Súilleabháin and Molloy, not only in his adaptation of key aspects of the tradition in his scores, but the tendency for his compositions to be tune led. He is also influenced by rhythmic patterns in folk music, such as the irregular rhythms of Balkan music,²¹¹ as well as the motor rhythms in Irish traditional music.²¹²

Some of his compositions sidestep conventional classical harmonic language and explore the implied harmony of Irish traditional music. Flynn is particularly taken with the

²⁰⁹ Flynn Dave, *ibid.* p. 343.

²¹⁰ In conversation with Padraic O Cuinneagáin, TU Dublin, 7/11/24.

²¹¹ Bulgarian folk music includes song and dance based on the rhythms 5/8 (Pajduško), 7/8 (Račnica), 9/8 (Dajčovo), 11/8 (Kopanica) and 13/8 (Postupano). In addition, the emphasis can move within the bar depending on the lyrics (songs) or the steps (dances).

²¹² An example of motor rhythms in traditional music would be the manner in which the Bothy Band play their dance music, with a relentless rhythmic drive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5f-ILLD4vL4>

uilleann pipes as is evidenced by his *Five Études for Uilleann Pipes* (2009), which explore different aspects of the instrument.

Flynn's acclaimed concerto for traditional musician and orchestra, *Aontacht* (2010), performed by Martin Hayes on fiddle, is also influenced by the implied harmonies of traditional music. This is evident from the opening measures of his concerto, which is reminiscent harmonically of a full set of pipes. Much of the writing is tune led and minimalist in style with effective angular melodic writing. The highlight however, is the slow movement which opens with an extended passage for solo violin, described by the composer as a *cadenza*. The subsequent orchestral accompaniment is drone like in character, capturing some of the colours and textures of pipe drones' and regulators. This movement is also programmatic with effective descriptive writing imitating the howl of the slow wind.

While the blending of the idioms is effective, with much emphasis on droning and piping textures, the concerto is soloist led, with the orchestra having primarily an accompanying role. This overlooks an important aspect of the concerto form, which is the epic nature of the dialogue between soloist and orchestra, evident, not only in concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms, but also by Bax, Morean and Molloy.

4.2.7 Neil Martin (1962 -) In Search of Synthesis

On an summer's evening in July 2022, while footing the turf near my home in Rath Cairn, Co, Meath, I heard the broadcast of the premiere of *Sweeney Astray* a song cycle composed by Neil Martin, which was performed by the Concert Orchestra with soloist Iarla Ó Lionaird, and narrator, Stephen Ray. It is a work, based on Seamus Heaney's 1983 translations of the text for *Buile Shuibhne*, a 7th century Irish saga, with a text in both English and Irish.²¹³

I was particularly taken with the blending of *sean-nós* voice along with contemporary compositional style and techniques, as a vehicle for the expression of Heaney's translation of the epic text. Martin also edited Heaney's translation, in order to come up with a coherent story that he could set to music.

It struck me at the time that there were interesting parallels between this work and *Famine Odyssey*. The inclusion of a *sean-nós* soloist, for example, in this instance, Iarla Ó Lionaird, and embedding him in a large-scale orchestral work. Martin comments on this process in an interview he gave with Lyric radio prior to a performance of the work at the Kilkenny

²¹³ <https://www.rte.ie/radio/lyricfm/clips/11555754/>

Arts Festival on August 16, 2023. This is interesting as he lays out his process and methodology for incorporating *sean-nós* voice with orchestra.

When I was writing it, I knew I was writing it allowing Iarla the freedom to bring his own ornamentation into it...it's absolutely impossible to write exactly in notation, how a *sean-nós* singer should sing something, because it's such an individual and personal inflection, that will never be the same twice, so Iarla and I worked together at fairly deep levels. I would be checking keys of songs and all of that, during the course of the thing and feeding stuff through to him as the composition was progressing, but it was always written with the knowledge that it would be his freedom to ornament'. (Lyric radio interview, 16/06/23).

There is also the fact that the work is based on an epic journey with a central character, Sweeney, half man half bird who continuously travels between Ireland, England and Scotland. On looking at the text, Martin decided there was a need for a narrator in order to give the project coherence to convey key aspects of the story and to keep the listener informed of what the music was trying to say.

Very early on I knew that we would need a narrator, because to tell enough of the story within an hour, you need a narrator....²¹⁴

He also comments on his objectives in blending the traditional and classical idioms seamlessly in an integrated orchestral work.

I deliberately didn't want any break to fracture the magic that I was hoping to create, he explains. My objective was to ensure that Sweeney's internal and external journey should be one thought process. (Martin, 2018).²¹⁵

Neil Martin, is a composer with a background in both the classical and traditional idioms. He is also a cellist and uilleann piper. Growing up in Belfast during the latter decades of the 20th century gives him a unique perspective for composing orchestral music in the Irish idiom. “

He brings his own unique style to his work with the West Ocean String Quartet which blends the two idioms seamlessly. ‘With my colleagues in The West Ocean String Quartet, we seek out a space in between the two genres, a place where fascinating things can happen.’ This seamless blend of idioms is also reflected in the membership of the quartet with traditional and classical musicians, such as traditional fiddle player Séamus McGuire and violist, Kenneth Rice as members. Martin with his skills as a contemporary composer and a traditional musician, arranges and composes for the quartet, evident in arrangements such as *The Lark in the Clear*

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ Irish Times, March 15, 2018

Air dedicated *In Memoriam* to Ciarán Mac Mathúna. This is an effective blend of idioms with the traditional fiddle giving authenticity to the quartets contemporary sound and harmonic language.

He has worked closely with some of the leading traditional musicians as well, such as Liam O’Floinn, for whom he composed his concerto for pipes and orchestra, *No Tongue Can Tell* (2004). An admirer of O’Floinn since childhood this work was therefore, written not only for pipes but for the particular sound and style unique to O’Floinn. “I have a memory of hearing the clean, clear lines of O’Floinn’s piping on the programme, naturally, I could not have described back then the majesty of his uncluttered flow and the purity of his tone (Martin ITMA 2022).²¹⁶ This is interesting, as Martin, an accomplished piper, had learnt to play the pipes with O’Floinn. This is evident in the final piece of the work, the four-part jig, *Sheltering Sound*. “What really appeals to me is Neil’s ability to compose a new tune based on the older tunes...Neill very much had Liam O’Floinn in mind when he composed this piece”. (Redmond, 2020).²¹⁷ The ability to make the new, sounding like the old is also evident in the second movement of his work *And They Loved*. The soaring uncluttered style of his writing for pipes and whistle, dwelling on notes such as the F-sharp, the 7th degree, with its idiomatic precursor trill, or the soaring G of the second octave, as is used in the Scottish or Irish snap.

I love playing his music because, unlike a lot of contemporary composers, he totally understands the pipes and writes beautifully for them. He is a really good piper himself. I also like the fact that his pieces have a life beyond the scores. (Mark Redmond 2024).²¹⁸

4.2.8 Two Trend-Setting Composers

There are two further composers I wish to include briefly, because of the prominence they have obtained in the public perception, so that their omission might seem curious. These are Shaun Davey and Bill Whelan.

Shaun Davy (1948 –) wrote several concert works for soloists and orchestra, including *The Pilgrim* (1983) and *Granuaile* (1985) as well as film music scores and many other

²¹⁶ <https://www.itma.ie/blog/liam-oflynn-1945-2018-a-tribute-by-neil-martin/> The programme in question was *Mo Cheol Thú* presented by Ciarán MacMathúna on RTE Radio 1 on Sunday mornings. Ciarán Mac Mathúna was a legendary broadcaster and traditional music collector whose Sunday morning programme on RTE Radio 1 *Mo Cheol Thú* was part of our Sunday mornings listening.

²¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv4ZgRkSTMc>

²¹⁸ In conversation with Mark Redmond, 25/11/24

compositions. His fame rests mainly on his first orchestral work, *The Brendan Voyage* (Tara Records, 1980). This work depicts the voyage of Saint Brendan from Ireland to the Americas in the 6th century; the solo instrument, the uilleann pipes, represents Saint Brendan's leather *curragh* while the orchestra is the ocean. In this way the composition attains thematic unity, and one can almost feel the heroic accomplishment of the tiny boat in the soaring tones of O'Floinn's exquisite lyrical piping battling with the darker sounds of the ocean. Unusually, this work also featured a drum kit and electric bass, which sometimes mark a pronounced beat.

This composition was hailed as the first work of its kind to feature a traditional instrument, in this case uilleann pipes, as the solo instrument with orchestra. While this is correct, it was not the first use of uilleann pipes in an orchestral suite.²¹⁹

The Brendan Voyage is written as a Baroque suite with finely composed melodies, effectively written for the pipes. It was highly innovative for its time as, until then, traditional airs had been expressed through the orchestra, but not by using traditional instruments in a solo capacity with orchestra. The sound of uilleann pipes and strings was highly evocative, and had a profound effect. Several of the melodies have become firm favourites, such as *The Brendan Theme*, essentially a pipes-solo although a light and controlled strings section augments the regulators towards the end; *Water under the Keel*, a jig which has become very well-known, and uses the orchestra to good effect, descriptively, to represent the swishing of the water and, of course, *Newfoundland*, which has become the most popular melody of the composition. The last-mentioned piece has the heroic spirit of an anthem swept along by the soaring pipes.²²⁰

Bill Whelan (1950 -) was born in Limerick and has enjoyed a long, successful and illustrious career as arranger and composer, but also as record producer and musician. Like many composers such as Ó Riada and Ó Súilleabháin, he had background experience in jazz music, the piano being his main instrument. For a time, he was a member of Planxty and also played with Stockton's Wing. The jazz influence can be seen in the prominent role of the evocative and effective saxophone parts in two of his most successful arrangements and compositions,

²¹⁹ Some time ago I kindly received a photocopy of a manuscript by A.J. Potter, *Seilg an Mhadradin Ruadh (The Foxchase)*, from Mark Redmond, see chapter 3.7.2. This orchestral suite from 1969 also included uilleann pipes and choir, and predated Shaun Davey by more than a decade.

²²⁰ There are many recordings of this piece available, but perhaps the most attractive, and one that effectively showcases the pipes was recorded in Bucharest in 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4THo5cx3MGc>

respectively, the Eurovision-winning song of 1980, *What's Another Year*, and the Eurovision interval music and dance spectacle, *Riverdance*, first performed in 1994.²²¹

In 1981 he was involved with Planxty in *Timedance*, a medley of Irish dance tunes and new compositions, combined with contemporary dance. However, in 1994 came *Riverdance*, which unleashed a worldwide boom of interest in Irish cultural activity generally, not least Irish dance. The music was written by Bill Whelan.²²² The music for *Riverdance* was predominantly jig (6/8) and reel (4/4) time. The opening choral work, written by Whelan and sung by Anuna, was in 7/8, (figure 4.22). The following dance segment kept varying the rhythm and time signatures, (figure 4.23). This frequent change of rhythm and accent was very dramatic.²²³

Moreover, with an underlying sonic cushion suggesting a 4/4-time signature, there are hints of polyrhythms here as well. *Riverdance* was an inspirational success and has led to many spin-offs over the years.

Figure 4.22: Vocal theme from *Riverdance*, sung by Anuna (Whelan)



Figure 4.23: Main theme of *Riverdance* showing frequent changes of metre, (Whelan)



Whelan and *Riverdance* have had a huge effect on writing of traditional dance music and, today, many young composers write Irish dance music with variable rhythmic patterns and

²²¹ Bill Whelan has an extraordinary talent for spotting the potential of popular musical trends and implementing them successfully. The emotive saxophone solo in *What's Another Year* is strikingly reminiscent of another saxophone solo in the song *Baker Street* by Gerry Rafferty. In an interview with Toner Quinn of Lyric FM, Bill Whelan described how the idea for the 6/8 - 4/4 rhythmic pattern, so effective in *Riverdance*, had come to him from the 6/8 - 3/4 rhythmic change in the song *America* from the musical *West Side Story*.

²²² There were many significant contributors, including Noel Eccles who devised and recorded all of the percussion, including the Lambeg drums which featured dramatically in the performance.

²²³ Arguably, the star of the performance was the dance routine, more specifically the flamboyant Michael Flatley (1958 -), ably assisted by his female counterpart, Jean Butler (1971 -) and the precision dancing of the line of dancers behind them. But the music was strikingly appropriate and became a huge success in its own right, winning a Grammy award for the composer.

meters. This is an interesting and durable influence. However, it is music for step dancing and the concert hall but, in the sense of Hardebeck, unsuited as an accompaniment to traditional dancing, or dances. For this reason, it is mostly used by Irish dancing schools with newly choreographed dances, as well as by bands in concert.

But even before *Riverdance*, Whelan had composed several orchestral works, including *The Seville Suite* (1992), performed as part of the *Universal Exhibition of Seville - Expo 92*, commemorating the journey of Red Hugh O'Donnell to La Coruña in Spain after the battle of Kinsale (1601). We have also had *The O' Riada Suite* (1987), and more recently *The Connemara Suite* (2008) which includes the *sean-nós* song, *An Chistín*. More recently, Whelan composed *Linen and Lace* (2014), an orchestral suite for solo flute, which featured James Galway; the third movement is a flute *cadenza*.

The Connemara Suite was written with traditional fiddle player (Zoë Conway) and classical violinist (Fionnuala Hunt) in mind. In a 2008 interview in the *Irish Journal of Music*,²²⁴ Whelan was asked by the interviewer about the problem of integrating two contrasting styles in a single piece. In Whelan's view, the traditional has to get priority:

At a moment like that in particular you have to lean towards the Irish tradition and expect everybody else to get in line. I would be inclined to let the tradition, or my sense of the tradition, lead, and then try and tuck the rest in behind it, rather than write something very smart that pulls bits out of the tradition but doesn't seem when you listen to it to be anything more than a nod towards it. (Whelan, 2008)

Allowing for the fact that combining *sean nós* with orchestra is of a different degree of complexity, I agree with the sentiments expressed by Whelan. However, my goal is to give both, traditional and art music, equal standing, while remaining true to the needs of both. It is to this that I turn in the concluding section.

4.3 *Sean Nós* in an Orchestral Setting

To conclude this chapter, I wish to present how I have sought to integrate *sean-nós* singing into an orchestral setting. Although this is anticipating some ideas in chapter 5, where *sean-nós* singing is discussed more fully, the technical difficulty of integrating voice and orchestra

²²⁴ Quinn, Toner, *Ireland's Dance with Music – Interview with Riverdance Composer Bill Whelan*, *Irish Journal of Music*, July 2008.

belongs here. What I set out to do was not just to provide a sonic cushion for the *sean-nós* voice but to produce a meaningful integration of voice and orchestra as equal partners.²²⁵

The *sean-nós* voice with its unique style and vocal quality (to be discussed in chapter 5) should be notated idiomatically, but also in a way that is compatible with large-scale orchestral forces. There are different ways in which this can be done.

The first, is to notate without bar lines to allow full expression and freedom to the voice, an approach hinted at by Flynn, section 4.2.6. This does not allow a complex dialogue between voice and orchestra; it gives primacy to the voice and diminishes the role of the orchestra.

Second, Ó Riada and Shaun Davey opted for a fixed meter in the strictly classical sense. They seldom varied the time values. This elevates the orchestra but compromises the singer/traditional player.

A third option is to combine both in a single work but keep them separate. As discussed in section 4.2.2, this is the approach adopted by Bodley when combining traditional and *avant-garde* in a single work, and was also the approach of A.J. Potter in his work with uilleann pipes.

A final option which I have tried to implement is to cointegrate the two, which is based on an approach applied by Hardebeck (chapter 3.6.1), and I seek to describe it here.

In *sean-nós* singing, the music is not without a pulse, but varies in meter and emphasis. It doesn't ramble aimlessly, but keeps a sense of movement and propulsion, no matter how slow, or how freely interpreted. The method used by Carl Hardebec is based on a defined meter but it is constantly changing. An example of this would be Hardebec's arrangement of the classic love song, *An Bínsín Luachra*, where the meter changes almost by the bar (Hardebec, Carl, 1936, p. 1). Although Hardebeck worked in the context of a piano accompaniment and did not have an opportunity to test his method with orchestra, I regard this as a most promising approach and resolved to experiment with this technique.

The method I developed was to begin work with the *sean-nós* singer.²²⁶ I worked at length, alone with the singer, until she was satisfied that she had arrived at an artistic interpretation of the song with which she was completely happy, one that suited her style, dramatic and rhythmic interpretation, voice and personality. This took time.

Only then did I notate the meter and tempo, along with every turn and embellishment, ornamentation and/or irregular timing, in her rendition of the song. Once this was set, I could then (and only then) give full rein to the orchestral score, not just as an accompaniment, but

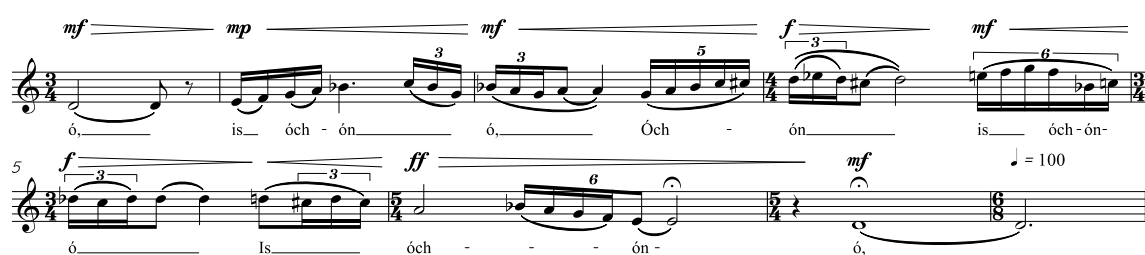
²²⁵ In discussions with traditional singers, frequent mention is made of the restrictiveness of singing with orchestra, sometimes compared to singing in a vocal "straight-jacket". Orchestral players have alternatively remarked how they dislike playing with traditional soloists as the orchestral scores consist mainly of "long notes".

²²⁶ Here I was fortunate to be able to work with my daughter, Sibéal Ní Chasaide, a well-known *sean-nós* singer.

within the parameters dictated by the vocalist. The harmonisation and the orchestration now reflect how I feel an orchestra can enhance the intrinsic pathos and beauty of the song and, in particular, cointegrate with the voice. There is still an element of compromise. The main drawbacks are that it is extremely labour intensive and requires adaptation with a change of singer.

Example of notation for *sean-nós* voice with changing metre.

Figure 4.24: Modulation and chromatic movement in *sean-nós* voice, *Famine Odyssey*, First Movement, (bars 71 - 78)



The end result is a song which has the free and airy feeling of *sean nós*, combined with an orchestral accompaniment that is meaningful, complementary and sensitive.²²⁷ The voice and the orchestra are not competitors, but partners in bringing the song to a pinnacle of performance.

The average listener will not notice anything unusual, not so the trained musician. That the end product sounds natural is the yardstick by which I measure success.

The end result is that the *sean-nós* singer exerts a significant influence on the melody which has been composed. First, it sounds different because the timbre of the *sean-nós* voice is unusual and this character is imparted to the song. Second, *sean-nós* singers are not trained in music conservatoires but by established experts in the art form. As a result, singing style becomes very individualistic, not only in terms of regional variants but also between one singer and another, driven by vocal quality as well as understanding and interpretation.

Working with Sibéal was an eye-opener and led to pronounced changes. Not only in *Twilight* but in all the *sean-nós* songs, she slowed down the *tempi* considerably. She also broadened out the phrasing. She changed the contour of the melody lines to facilitate her choice of ornamentation and to suit the *timbre* and register of her voice and the lyrics. She personalised not only the contour of melody lines and intervals, but also timing, vocal emphasis and *timbre*.

²²⁷ A similar sense of freedom is achieved by Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin in his celebrated and wonderful arrangement of *Bean Dubh a' Ghleanna* for orchestra and uilleann pipes.

In *Twilight*, she “*sean-nós-ed*” what is an eastern-European melodic contour. All of these songs/passages were vocalist-led, *sean-nós* led. It was both extraordinary, and gratifying, to watch a process of what one has written being brought to another artistic level.

Chapter 5 Irish Traditional Music – Cultural Setting and Performance Features

5.1 Motivation for the Consideration of Irish Traditional Music

As part of the endeavour to explore linkages between Irish traditional music and art music, we need to evaluate characteristics of both *genres* of music. In chapters 3 and 4, we considered art-music composers who have been, or are, active on the traditional-music interface. Rather than mirror that from the other side of the interface, my goal here is to consider the socio-cultural *milieu* of Irish traditional music and some technical aspects of performance.

In this chapter, three important musical idioms of the Gaelic culture are explained. These are the *sean-nós* song, the uilleann pipes (elbow pipes), and finally, the ubiquitous fiddle, or violin. These idioms are not chosen at random, and there are others one could have chosen. But, these are the areas, or idioms, with which I have the greatest experience and in which I have participated most actively. This chapter is concerned with the cultural context of each as this helps to understand its role in society. In passing, it also explains my growth and development within this *milieu*.²²⁸

Apart from the cultural setting, this chapter also seeks to provide some insight into the technique, and challenge, of the voice or instrument (pipes or violin) in question. This is important for any composer who wishes to write for that voice/instrument. To be effective, one must understand the strength and weaknesses of each voice or instrument, including technical aspects, and not just the feasible range of notes in each case.

Finally, the topic of bi-musicality is considered, i.e. the mixing of different musical *genres* in composition and performance. This has not always been well-received, and has long been regarded in Irish traditional musical circles with suspicion. One presumes that this is mainly because the preservation of traditional culture, in its purest form, is a cultural value in its own right. To be fair, the scepticism has been apparent on both sides.

²²⁸ In this, I had the great fortune in primary school of having been taught by a wonderful teacher, Seósamh Ó Conceanainn from Cárna, West Galway, a noted *sean-nós* singer, who sought to impart the art form to his students. Under his tutelage, I was coached in *sean-nós* singing and entered the *sean-nós* segment of Slógadh (an inter-schools' national competition, organised by Gael Linn). Having qualified for the national finals in my age-cohort, I was runner-up to Iarla Ó Lionáird, who today is the most widely-known male *sean-nós* singer in the country. In my teens, I was immersed in the playing and maintenance of uilleann pipes and I still perform on this instrument. For over 40 years now, I have been the uilleann piper as well as a violinist in the traditional music group, *Na Casaidigh*.

5.2 The *Sean-Nós* Singing Style

Sean nós means ‘old style’ or ‘old custom’ and is the traditional style of singing to be found in Ireland²²⁹. In this work it is the *sean-nós* style of Connemara, and its satellite community in Rath Cairn, County Meath, that is featured throughout. *Sean nós* is, in essence, an unaccompanied form of singing where the voice is used, not only to sing the song, but simultaneously to embellish and adorn it with technical features as a form of accompaniment²³⁰. The *sean-nós* song is a vocal accompaniment to a poem and its function is to optimise the impact of the poem. It is not just the melody that requires careful attention, clear diction of the words is also extremely important. The accompaniment is not merely harmonic in the sense of a Bach *Partita*, but has the function of accentuating and adorning the lyrics, very much as a *seanchaí*, or storyteller, would accentuate words or phrases for added impact. *Sean nós* is a form of singing that can only be acquired over many years of constant practice, preferably from childhood, with expert supervision and advice.

Expertise in art music, both instrumental and vocal, is acquired over many years of dedicated and formal practice in conservatoires of music. Expertise in *sean-nós* singing, on the other hand, is acquired by working with a recognised master, learning song after song with all its intricacies, until the novice reaches a level of maturity where they can express their own individual skill, ability and interpretation. It is a parallel form of art music and mastery depends on the student’s initial endowment of talent combined with an acquisition of technique over many years. Yet, *sean-nós* singing is a social culture and part of the everyday lives of traditional communities, rather than an elite culture which caters for the cultural entertainment of an educated elite.

In the book, *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs*, Patrick Weston Joyce (1909, p.64)²³¹ recounts a description of a pre-Famine rendition of a *sean-nós* song in a completely natural environment. It relates to a song in the Petrie-Staunton collection; the melody has a number of settings and thus comes with different titles. The setting described in this excerpt is a portrayal

²²⁹ It is not a standardised form of singing but consists of three main variants, or dialects: Ulster (Donegal), Connaught (Conamara) and Munster (Kerry). In addition, there are further sub-styles (An Rinn, Cúl Aodh and Mayo). The style found in Rath Cairn, Co. Meath, is the same as the Conamara style.

²³⁰ This description was provided by Seán Ó Casaide, a *sean-nós* enthusiast, who for many years adjudicated *sean-nós* competitions at Oireachtas Na Gaeilge, an annual festival of traditional Irish cultural events organised by Conradh Na Gaeilge.

²³¹ This publication was his main collection and appeared in 1909. However, his first publication of Irish music, *Ancient Irish Music*, consisting of 100 songs, was published in 1873. Joyce was born in 1827, and was a young man in pre-Famine Ireland; his recollections in the notes are first-hand accounts of social life at that time. He is recognised as one of the great collectors of Irish music.

of normal life in rural villages throughout Ireland in pre-Famine Ireland. As such, it gives a snapshot of social intercourse in a happy setting, before the Famine was to envelop most of the country in an unimaginable terror. This excerpt is important for other reasons as well. It shows how *sean-nós* singing was an integral part of everyday social life in pre-Famine Ireland. Unlike today, *sean nós* was an accepted form of musical expression, and was widespread, appreciated and accepted by young and old alike. It was enjoyed by the performer as much as the audience. The excerpt is a demonstration of the cultural milieu in which this study is set. Because of its charm, we transcribe it here in full, in spite of its length.

I once heard “Cashel of Munster” sung under peculiarly pleasant and characteristic circumstances, when I was a mere child. The people of the village had turned out on a sunny day in June to “foot” the half-dry turf in the bog at the back of Seefin mountain which rises straight over Glenosheen: always a joyous occasion for us children. Dinner time came – about 1 o’clock: each family spread the white cloth on a chosen spot on the dry clean bog-surface. There might have been half a dozen groups in that part of the bog, all near each other, and all sat down to dinner at the same time: glorious smoking-hot floury savoury potatoes,* salt herrings (hot like the potatoes), and good wholesome *bláthach*, i.e. skimmed thick milk slightly and pleasantly sour – a dinner fit for a hungry king.

After dinner there was always a short interval for rest and diversion – generally rough joyous romping. On this occasion the people, with one accord, asked Peggy Moynahan to sing them a song. Peggy was a splendid girl, noted for her singing: and down she sat willingly on a turf bank. In a moment the people clustered round; all play and noise and conversation ceased; and she gave us the *Clár bog déil* in Irish with intense passion, while the people – old and young, including myself and my little brother Robert – sat and listened, mute and spellbound.

I have good reason to fear that the taste for intellectual and refined amusement – singing, music, dancing, story-telling, small informal literary clubs and meetings, etc. – once so prevalent among the people of my native district, which often expressed itself in scenes such as I describe here, is all gone; and we shall never witness the like again. *Is muar and truagh é*: more’s the pity!

* This was before the great potato blight of 1846. Irish potatoes have never been the same since that year.

One of the outstanding exponents of *sean nós* in the past century has been Seamus Ó hÉanaí (1919 – 1984) from Cárna, Co Galway, or Joe Heaney as he was known in the USA where he spent most of his adult life²³². The artistry of Ó hÉanaí’s singing, as well as the recognition he gained during his lifetime, is evidenced by a review in the Washington Evening Star following a concert he gave in Washington in 1968.

²³² Seosamh Ó Concannon from Cárna was a great admirer of the lyrical style of Ó hÉanaí and emphasised how an enormous amount of detail and understanding, of the melody and text of a song, is essential for performance.

The Folklore society of Greater Washington opened its fifth season last night. With one of the finest folksong programmes in its career. The excellence of the presentation was entirely due to one man, singer Joe Heaney from County Galway, Ireland...Heaney represented all that was classical in Irish Folk music, with its extremely ancient songs and elaborate and expressive vocal style. (Quote from Mac an Iomaire, 2007, p. 252).

It is this variant of *sean nós* with its unique vocal quality, its complex melodic and melismatic ornamentation, its glottal stops, microtonal intervals and rhythmic variation, which is the vocal quality I seek for this work. It is the one I am most familiar with.

Female singers in this style predominantly use their chest voice with its raw clarity and nasalisation. The use of head voice, in particular the transition from chest to head voice in mid-phrase especially in moments of heightened tension, would be considered stylistically and interpretively suspect. There are of course notable exceptions to this, one such exception being Máire Áine Ní Dhonnacha (1919 - 1991), the legendary *sean-nós* singer from An Croc, Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe, who sang exclusively with head voice. I listened to her CD recording, *Deora Áille*²³³, intently as a child and was captivated by her singing, especially her interpretation of *Úna Bhán* and the classic woman's love lyric, *Domhnall Óg*. Her interpretation of the former with its high vocal timbre and its crying plaintive character is exceptional. It may contain aspects of the old tradition of keening, (*bean caointe*) which was widespread in Gaelic Ireland until the early twentieth century.

Listening to *Úna Bhán* on this record, I want to pay her artistry a worthy tribute, and find my words inadequate. When one hears such high excellence of singing, one searches in vain for praise that won't seem incompetent or patronising. (Williams and Ó Laoire, 2011)

Rhythmically, *sean-nós* singing is free flowing and should not be boxed in. This is not to say that the songs do not have a metre or a rhythmic pulse. They invariably do, but the metre is constantly changing so that one must notate many different meters to capture the essence of the song. This is partly due to interpretive preference of an individual performer, but it is also dictated by textual considerations – the phrasing, emphases and accentuation are dictated by the text.

The phrasing of the song follows the flow, or phrasing, of the sentence. This can be demonstrated in more complex songs such as *An Clár Beag Déil*. In the Goodman manuscripts, Canon James Goodman (1826 - 1898) gives an elaborate air of this title, but without text: thus, it is regarded as an instrumental air. The melodic contour seems to suggest a particular phrasing.

²³³ Cerníní Chladaigh (1970). She can also be heard on Spotify.

However, a well-known song of the same title, but with a different melody, was collected in Munster in the 19th century. The lyric of the Munster song matches the Goodman melody, which suggests we may be dealing with two variants of the same song. When we combine the lyric of the Munster variant with the air of the Goodman variant, textual considerations suggest a rather different structure to the phrasing. The text required phrasing, accentuation, emphasis, high points and low points that were significantly different from the way it would be interpreted as an instrumental melody, (Ó Casaide, 2000). We can speculate that a considerable drift in the phrasing occurred when the Goodman air was divorced from its original song lyric. This serves to underpin the interdependence between the melody and lyrics.

The transmission of *sean-nós* songs in Gaeltacht areas was, and still is, a natural aspect of daily life. People were not usually taught these songs in a formal manner, but acquired them aurally as a normal part of everyday family and community life. In a detailed interview from the 2. March, 1978, Seosamh O hÉanaí describes the process by which he perfected his interpretation of the Christmas song, *Dán Oíche Nollag*.

I picked it up from her (my grandmother), but she wouldn't let me sing it until I could do it justice ... I sang it for my grandmother before she died and she liked what I did and she said 'keep at it. You'll be able to do it yet.' (Williams and Ó Laoire, 2011).

Máire Áine Ní Dhonnacha also spoke of the transmission of these songs in her native Indreabhán Co. Galway;

Dúirt sí faoina ceantar dúchais go raibh 'na hamhráin chomh fairsing leis na clocha duirlinge ar na cladaigh, nó leis na ceannbháin bhána ins na portaigh. Bhíodh na hamhráin le cloisteáil amuigh is istigh.

She said of her own native district that the songs were as numerous as the pebbles on the shores, or as the white cotton flowers on the bogs. The songs were to be heard both outdoors and indoors. (Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú) Ainm.ie <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=1667&xml=true> (accessed 14. July 2021)

Her account demonstrates how *sean-nós* songs were interwoven into the fabric of everyday family life in the Gaeltacht. This is also evident in Rath Chairn where every occasion has song as a central element. Due to the socio-historical circumstances that applied to the setting up of this satellite of the Connemara Gaeltacht, there is a particularly strong extant *sean-nós* tradition in this area, which is an amalgam of the local styles of Máimín, Leitir Mór, Leitir Mulláin, Cárús, and Ros Muc. These different styles are preserved and transmitted within families that migrated from their respective areas during the three main migrations to Rath Cairn 1935, Laimbé 1937 and Doire Loingáin 1953.

Sean-nós singers often refer to the fact that true style can only be acquired, but not taught. A stylistically suspect singer would be quickly dismissed by the term, “níl sé a’d”, (you haven’t got it!) Whether or not this is the case, the intuitive nature of *sean-nós* transmission is greatly enhanced by immersion from early childhood. This applies in particular to ornamentation, both melodic and rhythmic. These ornamental forms are part of the overall performance where the singer sees themselves as a conduit for the story and in a very real sense place themselves in the narrative of the song. Ó hÉanaí taught *sean-nós* singing to university students in the United States, but had great difficulty teaching *sean-nós* ornamentation to his students. “There’s nobody living who can tell anyone else where to put grace notes into a song, you just do it.” (Williams, and O Laoire, 2011, p 48).

While there is a great deal of improvisation and variation involved in *sean-nós* ornamentation, it is circumscribed by clear stylistic boundaries that define the idiom. It is sometimes the over use of ornamentation and accentuation that sets one apart from the idiom; Ó Concannon and Ó hÉanaí were remarkable in how they crafted their ornamentation so as not to disrupt the melodic line. Their occasional use of an emphasised non-ornamented note was, of itself, a form of ornamentation. Melismatic ornamentation is usually, though not always, on the unstressed syllable and is also used by the singer to highlight or reinforce the text. In this way the singer utilises ornamentation as a means of transmitting the words of the song.

Other forms of ornamentation include grace notes, rolls and glissandi, both ascending and descending. Glissandi are also used effectively as a vehicle for microtonal effect. These microtonal effects usually, though not exclusively, occur on the fourth and seventh degrees of the scale. Sometimes the singer will dwell on the micro interval in mid glissando before proceeding to the adjacent note. Darach Ó Catháin (1922 - 1987), the *sean-nós* singer from Leitir Mór/Rath Cairn, was a fine exponent of this technique. His rendition of *Amhrán an Tae* (The Tea Song) on the Ó Riada’s recording, *Reacairacht an Riadaigh* (Ceirníní Gael-Linn 1962), demonstrates this technique. The recognised expert Breandán Breathnach, considered colouration (vibrato) and dynamics as traits that are outside of the idiom.²³⁴

²³⁴ Breandán Breathnach argued in one of his books that *sean nós* does not have vibrato or dynamics. This is not correct, but the *sean-nós* usage is not the same as in operatic singing. Most voices have a small amount of natural vibrato, as can be clearly seen from audio files - voices fluctuate minutely around a certain pitch rather than sitting fixed in the centre of a note. One can hear this clearly from the recordings of Ó hÉanaí and Iarla Ó Lionáird, even if this vibrato might not have been intentional. Ó Lionáird’s recordings also clearly demonstrate a wide range of dynamics, including micro-dynamics which takes the form of *crescendo* – *diminuendo* on a single note rather than spanning the length of an entire phrase.

5.2.1 Challenges of incorporating *sean-nós* singing with orchestra

Any attempt to incorporate *sean-nós* singing into an orchestral environment confronts the composer with enormous challenges. The *sean-nós* voice, which is normally unaccompanied, is taken from its normal performance environment. Singing with orchestra places the *sean-nós* singer in an entirely different performance context. It therefore demands new skills from the soloist. The singer is now restrained by the score. They can no longer set their own tempo, pitch or metre.

Because of the importance of allowing for spontaneous variation - and hence, self-expression, - instrumental accompaniment is generally avoided in *sean nós*, (Vallely (2011) p. 625).

This is contrary to performance practice in the art form. The good *sean-nós* singer seldom sings a song exactly the same way twice, not to mention variations between verses.

A *sean-nós* singer may vary the ornamentation - both melodic and rhythmic - of a song from performance to performance, or even from verse to verse within a single performance of a song, (ibid. p.626)

Iarla Ó Lionard, a celebrated *sean-nós* singer, expressed his views on this topic in conversation with Micheál Ó Suilleabháin, on the occasion of the latter's orchestration of *An Buachaill Caol Dubh* as a tone poem:

The sean-nós singer is king of his province, He doesn't require anybody to time, or to tell him, how long or how short the piece is, so when there is a piano or an orchestra there is a tremendous interplay, an exchange that changes the character of the performance.²³⁵

It is in a way that I find delightful. The song in question lends itself rather well to this expanded understanding of our sean-nós song. It is capable of being experienced in that way, in a new way.²³⁶

This 'new way' which Ó Lionard mentions poses considerable challenges. How far can the vocal score deviate from what would be considered acceptable in the idiom of *sean-nós* singing? How far can one push the boundaries while remaining true to the art form itself?

Ó Riada seems to have dealt with this conundrum by utilising two very different types of singer. He greatly admired the Rath Cairn *sean-nós* singer Darach Ó Catháin, whom he used

²³⁵ Iarla Ó Lionard, RTE Interview, 29th June 2017

²³⁶ Ibid.

in his radio series *Reacairacht an Riadaigh*. It was to Seán Ó Sé (a classically-trained tenor) he turned however when he wanted to arrange music for harpsichord and Ceoltóirí Chualainn.

Ó Riada may not have regarded *sean-nós* singing and formal musical arrangement to be aesthetically compatible. While it is delightful, according to O Lionard, to sing in this ‘new way’ the question arises as to whose musical language the *sean-nós* voice actually speaks? Is it an orchestral work with *sean-nós* voice or is it an orchestral accompaniment of a *sean-nós* song?

Ó Suilleabháin refers to the musical conversation between soloist and orchestra in the aforementioned RTE broadcast (2017), and this may be the key to a successful interplay of soloist and orchestra. It is the musical conversation that allows the seamless exploration of melodic and motivic ideas. It is crucial in my opinion that the soloist stays anchored in their idiom while exploring a new musical context. Both *sean-nós* voice and orchestra have to be adapted to each other’s *genres* to provide a unified work.

5.3 The World of the Uilleann Pipes and Pipers

A piper in the streets today set up, and tuned, and started to play,
And away, away, away on the tide of his music we started.
(Sheumas O Sullivan 1879 - 1958).²³⁷

In addition to *sean-nós* voice, an important solo instrument in this work is the uilleann pipes which provides a unique voice with its heroic sound and expressive qualities. It was very popular in Ireland before the Famine and almost every village and townland in the country had its own professional piper. Its popularity quickly declined after the Famine. This is evidenced by Cannon James Goodman in his introduction to the first volume of his collection (1861).

... the labour of writing has been rendered easy by my desire to preserve the music of my native province which is fast becoming extinct, (Shields, 2000, p.4)

Suffice as to say that at its lowest ebb there were very few pipers in the country and even fewer pipe makers. Both skills could very easily have died out. In spite of this, the instrument and its performance represent an unbroken piping tradition in Ireland dating back to the Middle Ages.

²³⁷ Irish Independent, June 26th 2015. James Starkey, poet, essayist and writer wrote under the pseudonym Sheumas O Sullivan.

The uilleann pipes, once referred to as the “Irish Oboe” evolved from the Irish bagpipe *an phíob mhór* in the early eighteenth century. During this evolutionary process a series of innovations occurred with the addition of a bellows and a third drone. The ‘chanter’, (the part that plays the melody) almost doubled in range to two octaves²³⁸ and became capable of chromatic movement through the addition of keys. It also became more refined in tone with the development of more refined reeds, which were now dry due to the fact that the instrument was no longer mouth-blown. The chanter was also capable of more staccato-type playing due to the chanter being stopped on the knee, hence the development of what is now termed the ‘closed style’ of playing with its intricate finger work and highly ornamented percussive style.

With the gradual addition of ‘regulators’, effectively keyed chanters played by the wrist, from the late-eighteenth century onwards, it became possible to accompany oneself with the drones and regulators providing full triadic, harmonic accompaniment. Mastery of the regulators is a skill in itself. The best I have ever heard was (a recording of) the legendary piper Patsy Touhy, who made his living as a virtuoso piper in Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century. His regulator playing is remarkable and complex with varying syncopated chords, percussive in character, with contrapuntal lines and long sustained chordal pedals. On the other hand, Liam O’Flynn used them sparsely, to highlight more than to accompany. Seamus Ennis and Leo Rowsome, yet again, used them in a constant vamping style

This gained the instrument the title of the ‘Irish organ’ and was popular for a period at church services as a result. Intriguingly, the instrument retained its distinctiveness during this evolutionary process and seems to have developed on its own terms, retaining many of the heroic qualities of the bagpipe while remaining embedded in the piping idiom. Thus, it avoided the danger of becoming overly refined in order to make it more acceptable to the refined taste of the gentry. Though bellows-blown pipes were widespread in Europe during the eighteenth century, the uilleann pipes retained its distinctive quality as many of the performance practices pertaining to the old bagpipe were transferred to this newly developed form of the instrument. It is in this sense that we speak of the unbroken tradition of piping.

I entered the arcane world of pipes and piping shortly after I started secondary school. To play the uilleann pipes in those days one had to learn the associated skill of reed-making and maintenance, as the reeds were fragile and sensitive and had to be custom-made for each set of pipes. A full set of pipes has seven reeds, one for the chanter which plays melody, three for the regulators, and three for the drones.

²³⁸ The Scottish bagpipe to this day has a melodic range of a single octave.

A set of uilleann pipes has two kinds of reed. The chanter and the regulators, i.e. four reeds, use double reeds, each made from two fashioned blades of cane and tightly bound together at one end. When air is blown through this double reed they vibrate and produce the familiar sound. They have to be tuned and fitted to the chanter. Making a reed is slow, precision, quality work of a master craftsman and even a small error will render the reed unusable.

Three of the reeds are drone reeds and these are quite different from the double reeds used in the chanter and the regulators. There are three drones on the uilleann pipes, tenor, baritone and bass, and these are pitched octaves apart. Drones are tuned with a tuning slide, much like a trombone slide. Drone reeds, which are single reeds, are made from slender, intact pieces of cane, of varying sizes, which determines the pitch. They are roughly the diameter of a pencil. and are designed to produce a single tonic note. The reed is made by making an incision in an intact length of cane, and slicing a flap downwards along, roughly, two thirds the length of the cane. This flap vibrates against the main body of the reed producing a constant pitch. They tend to be most stable pitch-wise when receiving the full air pressure required. They become unstable, and raise in pitch, if the air pressure is not adequate thereby producing fluctuations in pitch and timbre. If subjected to too much pressure they tend to cut out completely.

To keep all of this in tune is challenging, to put it mildly.²³⁹ Pipers have to become adept at tuning their pipes quickly, especially in concert. It is also physically very demanding for the player, whose arms are very active, as it takes a lot of air to keep seven reeds operating effectively and simultaneously for any length of time.

The air source is obtained by a bellows strapped to the right elbow which is continuously pumped to fill a bag as an air reservoir. The appropriate air pressure is obtained, and regulated to control pitch, by pressing on this bag hemmed in between the forearms and the pelvis. Meanwhile, the right wrist operates the regulators (harmony) while the fingers of both hands play the melody (chanter). In addition, the hands are used to bounce the chanter off a leather patch resting on the right thigh, thus stopping the air-flow and creating percussive stops. The three drones, tuned to different pitches, can be operated by manipulating a single off/on catch.

There are essentially two styles of uilleann-pipe playing, referred to as ‘open style’ and ‘closed style’. All pipers occupy a position along this spectrum. Both styles are equally valid and are a matter of personal preference. In the open style, the air flow from the end of the chanter is continuous, and it is not blocked off for any length of time by bringing the chanter in

²³⁹ A full set of pipes is rarely used except by a solo piper in concert.

contact with a leather patch, known as the “piper’s apron”, strapped to the player’s right thigh. The chanter functions much like a tin whistle and the playing is characterised by its fluidity.

Johnny Doran (see footnote 17) was the ultimate, and revered, exponent of this (open) style. He busked with the pipes and played standing up. Davey Spillane and Liam Óg O’Floinn also tend towards this end of the spectrum. Other well-known exponents of this style are Finbar Furey of the *Furey Brothers* (an excellent piper and, in my opinion, a far better piper than singer, even as his fame rests mainly on his singing) as well as the outstanding Paddy Keenan of the *Bothy Band*: both of these had tinker backgrounds like Johnny Doran.²⁴⁰ One would also include Leo Rowsome, along with his protégé Gabriel McKeown president of the Piper’s Club, as well as Mark Redmond.

The closed style, in its extreme form, involves keeping the chanter resting on one’s thigh for much of the time, thus blocking the air flow from the end of the chanter. When the fingering holes are also closed, no sound can emanate from the chanter. Although this will last no more than an instant, this style of playing is more percussive, or staccato. All players produce percussive sounds, but to different degrees. Tommy Reck²⁴¹ is arguably the most extreme example of the closed style of playing, with Patsy Tuohy of Philadelphia and Paddy Maloney of the *Chieftains* also favouring this style.

Learning to play the pipes required endless hours of practice, comparing notes with other enthusiasts, endless imitation of old masters along with tips from pipe-makers on how to achieve special effects. In this way I learned to play the pipes in a manner that was stylistically authentic and idiomatic, while developing my own voice in a way that was compatible with the idiom. At that time uilleann pipers were few and far between, and it was extremely difficult to procure a set of pipes. People played and made pipes in a hidden world of piping, largely in little garden sheds at the rear of little council houses in neighbourhoods such as Donnycarney in the North Inner City. It was here I used to visit a legendary old piper, pipe-maker, and retired fireman, Dan Dowd. Incidentally the well-known piper Paddy Maloney who lived around the corner, was also a frequent visitor whom Dan sometimes preferred to avoid.²⁴²

Dan’s protégé at the time was the young piper, Mick O’Brien, who subsequently became one of the finest pipers of his generation. The same sub-culture also thrived in rural towns such

²⁴⁰ I use the term “tinker” in its socio-demographic context and is in no sense meant to be pejorative or disparaging.

²⁴¹ For an example of the Tommy Reck, closed style of playing, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUGH6Dy3_uY, or more clearly, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp77lOynAgk>

²⁴² A pipe-maker’s workshop became a social destination for aficionados, much like a blacksmith’s forge in a former age, which must have cost the poor pipe-maker an endless amount of time. Dan told me how he once went for a long Sunday drive so as to avoid being plagued by Paddy Maloney (leader of *The Chieftains*).

as Miltown Malbay where the legendary piper Willie Clancy and his close friend Seán Reid, whom I visited, practiced their crafts. These garden sheds, whether in rural Ireland or inner Dublin city, usually contained a wood turning lathe, and other paraphernalia necessary for making pipes, and reeked of tobacco smoke and the odour of freshly cut leather from which they made their bags and bellows. This was a quiet secretive world, which practiced its craft largely unbeknownst to most people in their neighbourhood.

Being a piper then usually embraced a holistic world of piper, reed-maker and possibly pipe-maker, as was the case with the legendary Leo Rowsome. The old sets were magnificently made with exotic materials such as ebony, silver and ivory, with reeds made of Spanish cane. The pipe makers showed great ingenuity in procuring their materials as the supply chain was precarious at best; the ivory for example, was usually procured from old scuffed billiard balls, and the cane from discarded cane baskets. Old furniture such as tables and chairs made of dense African timber was usually evaluated for its suitability to make a chanter. A full set of pipes seldom changes hands but is invariably passed-on from generation to generation as family heirlooms.

Writing for the pipes has been greatly helped by my knowledge of the instrument and being a participant in that tradition. Due to the technical demands of the instrument, certain intervals work well and others do not.

In piping, pitch is not fixed and a skilful piper will constantly vary the pitch with air pressure from the bag, much as a skilful jazz player can ‘bend’ a note on a saxophone or a clarinet. In my view, this playing with pitch is an aspect that separates the great pipers from the good; it is an intuitive skill that is related to the musical context and is, therefore, not easily taught. Additional pathos can be achieved with fingered glissandi both ascending and descending. A particularly effective use of this colouration is the use of upwards and downward glissandi on a single note. Vibrato is also widely used by pipers, combined with altering the velocity of the note so as to capture the expressive mood of the music. Many pipers make extensive use of trills as an ornamental feature. This is particularly evident in the faster dance music where the trill is added to the ornamental palette making a complex music even more complex. Some fiddle players who emulate the pipes, such as Seán Keane and Liam O Connor, also use this trilling technique in their playing, which has its origin in piping.

That is why it is so important to write for the uilleann pipes in a way that is stylistically faithful and which exploits the beautiful palette of tonal colour which the instrument is capable of. For example, there are certain notes on the chanter where the qualities of a particular instrument may be exploited. This is the opposite to classical instruments, where evenness in

tone is such a treasured quality; in piping, this would be considered dull. Every note on the chanter has its own unique qualities; some work well together and some don't.

5.3.1 The Art of Piping²⁴³

This section deals with microtonality and the manner of its usage in uilleann-pipe performance. Microtonality refers to situations where practitioners use in-between notes, i.e. notes that divide the scale into more than 12 semitones – the number of divisions may be infinite - and exploit this greater tonal variety for artistic purposes as well as for special effects. I have already mentioned the phenomenon of “bending notes”, and this is one prominent example of its usage. But it is not the only one.

In this section, I will explain how microtonality is an important aspect of piping that is interwoven through every aspect of its performance. The ability to exploit microtonal qualities of the instrument is a skill which is achieved by only the most accomplished players on the instrument. One must have a highly developed sense of pitch to be able to weave in and out of this microtonal tapestry with authenticity and musical purpose. Great exponents of this exotic art include pipers such as Seamus Ennis, Willie Clancy and Leo Rowsome, who retained links to an old sonic world of pre-Famine piping, long gone. These characteristics are less evident in modern playing and are not widely understood or discussed today – this is an important motive for devoting space to a consideration of the topic here.

The part of the pipes which enables microtonality, is the chanter. Exploiting the use of microtones involves both the construction of the chanter in addition to the skill of the player. This may be the best place to commence our consideration of the subject.

Microtonal and textural issues in uilleann piping

The chanter – the flute-like part of the instrument - is hand-made, and every aspect of its manufacture is down to the judgement and intuition of the instrument-maker. The conical bore

²⁴³ When I was 13, I got the flu. I was sent to the back bedroom which became the isolation ward in our home for two weeks or more. I listened to the album, *The Chanter and the Drones*, around the clock, all day long; I had nothing else. I recall it was one of those vinyl records which had to be manually restarted each time, and I must have worn it out. It was a compilation album of many masters of the art of piping: Dan Dowd played a B^b set; Séamus Ennis a C[#] (or D^b) set and Leo Rowsome a concert set of pipes, etc. By the time I was well again I had assimilated all I could about their various styles of playing, their use of microtones for colour and effect, the different characteristics of the different sets of pipes and their individual techniques in playing. It was a fortnight-long master class by the greatest pipers of their age.

of the interior of the instrument as well as the positions of the tone holes, is a matter of the exquisite judgement of the pipes-maker, and will determine whether an individual chanter is best suited for the concert stage or hung on a wall as an ornament. As with all hand-made instruments, each one is different and comes with its own quirks and characteristics. But, more so than with other instruments, the piper adjusts to his instrument and learns to exploit its potential as well as its idiosyncrasies, so it is no easy matter to pick up an unfamiliar instrument, and start playing.

The uilleann pipes is a difficult instrument to control at the best of times and, to a certain extent, one has to ‘humour’ every note in order to make it sound good. This is partly due to the fact that pitch is relatively unstable²⁴⁴, as well as to vagaries of the hand-made reed. Consequently, one has to ‘coax’ the pipes, with varying degrees of air pressure, to maintain tonal quality and stay in tune. It is very unforgiving in unskilled hands. This instability however, is a feature which great pipers readily exploit. The chanter of the pipes is neither fixed-pitch nor tuned to the diatonic scale. It has its own tuning system or sonic code, which is essentially microtonal, though these subtleties may not be obvious to non-practitioners of the art of uilleann piping.

If you think about it I don’t think any of the notes are bang on in tune. If a chanter sounded bang on in tune, just like a piano, it would sound off. Every chanter has its own character.²⁴⁵

The chanter can be tuned, which is important when the pipes is combined with other instruments, but the extent to which this works effectively is limited. Inserting the reed deeper into the chanter raises the pitch, and *vice versa*. But there is a constraining tradeoff; raising the pitch of the bottom D beyond a certain point will knock the upper notes completely out-of-tune.

The most widely used chanter today is the D-chanter, but this was not always so. In the early 19th century, chanters were typically tuned to B or B^b. It was not until the introduction of the Tuohy sets of concert pipes at the end of the century in Philadelphia that the D-chanter became a sort of standard, if anything about the uilleann pipes is truly standard. One can still get a lower-pitched chanter today, say in C-natural or B^b, which is larger and has quite a different reed. It also has a mellower tone. The uilleann pipes is a transposing instrument, like the clarinet, horn or saxophone, so that it is described in D no matter what it is tuned to.

²⁴⁴ This means that pitch varies if air pressure across the reed changes. It can also be varied in certain circumstances by the choice of fingering used, and again by lifting the chanter off the knee and opening up the air outflow.

²⁴⁵ In conversation with piper, Maitiú Ó Casaide 31/10/2024

The choice of wood from which the chanter is made is also important, as this has an effect on the quality of the tone and, therefore, on the chanter's response to microtonal devices. Boxwood, for example, produces a soft nasal tone, and tends to be used more in flat sets.²⁴⁶ Ebony is more strident, and African blackwood is even more so. The latter two are the preferred woods for concert sets.²⁴⁷ It is difficult to generalise due to the fact that each chanter is hand made by a master craftsman. However, there are characteristics which are common to most well-made chanters

The notes on a typical chanter with only one key²⁴⁸, are D, Eb, E, F#, G, A, B, C, C#, and (upper) D, also known as 'Back D'. These notes are replicated in the second octave, which is triggered by overblowing the reed. Some of these notes are referred to in piping terminology as Hard D, Soft D, and High D, and similarly for some of the other notes to which this possibility applies. These are devices whereby a skilled piper can exploit the microtonal possibilities of the pipes. A device known as the 'Hard D', for example, is implemented by overblowing the reed, and simultaneously lifting the chanter off the knee, on the tonic note.²⁴⁹ This has the effect not only of giving a harsh strident sound rich in harmonics, but also of raising the pitch of the note creating a microtonal effect. The Soft D, a soft-blown note and a mirror image of the Hard D, is actually a shade flat of concert pitch. This implies that neither the tonic note, nor the Soft or Hard D, is actually tuned to the diatonic scale.²⁵⁰ The soft D is usually used in slow airs etc, where evenness of tone is desired.

A close relative of the Hard D, is the Hard E which is achieved by the same technique, the only difference being that the ring finger of the right hand is raised. This gives a harsh growly E note, with more bite or attitude, and sounds slightly sharper than its equivalent note.²⁵¹ If one continues up the scale in this manner to the 4th or 5th degree of the scale, this microtonal rise in actual pitch is maintained, in effect creating a parallel scale which is harsher and sharper. This gives a heroic quality to the sound and has been used to great effect by pipers of the open

²⁴⁶ The term, flat set applies to chanters pitched below concert D.

²⁴⁷ The term, concert set, applies to chanters pitched on or above concert D

²⁴⁸ A key refers to a tone hole which is covered by a felt pad and operated by a brass lever, rather than by lifting the fingers covering the tone hole. This keyed note is C natural and is located on the rear of the chanter, like the upper D, known as the 'Back D', which is covered by the thumb. This C natural is rarely used when playing in the lower octave, as C can be produced with a special finger formation on the other tone holes giving far greater microtonal scope, not to mention vibrato. It is almost always used when playing in the upper octave.

²⁴⁹ The triggering of the Hard D is not merely a product of overblowing, but is aided by the inclusion of a grace note combined with added pressure. (Maitiú Ó Casaide).

²⁵⁰ The lowest note on the pipes, obtained by closing all the tone holes and lifting the chanter off the knee, is referred to as D regardless of pitch.

²⁵¹ The Hard E is a favourite effect in the playing of Seán Óg Potts.

style, such as Johnny Doran, Leo Rowsome, Finbarr Fury, Paddy Keenan and, more recently, Davey Spillane.

Another common effect is created by lifting the chanter off the knee in the second octave, thereby creating a significantly louder note that has a broader tonal quality. This effect is enhanced when combined with intense vibrato and is especially appreciated for its intensity in slow airs. A similar, though different technique is used in ‘popping’, where one combines the closing of a particular note, or tone hole, with hopping the chanter off the knee. This technique can be used in many ways to emphasise a particular note. At its most extreme it can be used to imitate animal sounds, often compared to a barking dog, as exemplified in the descriptive piece, the *Foxchase*. A fine example of this style of descriptive playing can be experienced in a recording of the *Foxchase* by Felix Doran, brother of the aforementioned Johnny Doran, (Doran Felix, Topic records, 2009).²⁵²

Lifting the chanter off the knee in the lower octave, without overblowing, produces a sound with an attractive throaty texture, reminiscent of a high bassoon, which is a shade sharper than its equivalent note played on the knee. The degree of microtonality depends on the set of pipes, as well as differences in the number of fingers left open on the chanter at any given time. Thus, we can have unlimited tonal and pitch variations, depending on whether the chanter is played in the usual manner on the knee, lifted off the knee, or whether it is lifted off the knee and overblown with additional air pressure. Any of these constellations may be further altered with additional passive finger patterns, utilised for microtonal and textural effect.

An octave above the bottom D is the iconic ‘Back D’. This note is so called because the tone hole is positioned at the back of the chanter and covered by the thumb. It can be played with different finger patterns on the other tone holes, thereby achieving variations in pitch and tonal quality. If one uncovers all the other tone holes on the chanter it will sound quite sharp. If the ‘Back D’ hole is uncovered while leaving most other fingers down, a better sound which is richer in harmonics and closer to concert pitch is evident. Various types of vibrato add additional variations in pitch and timbre, depending on which finger is used for this coloration. This allows the piper to choose from an array of different pitches and textures for one given note. There is also the high D, which is pitched an octave higher again, and is invariably sharp and difficult to play. The skill of great piping is to use these possibilities judiciously and with authenticity, reflecting the musical context.

One of the most exotic notes on the pipes is the E^b note, positioned second from the bottom of the chanter. This note has a pitch that sounds neither E flat nor E natural, but

²⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD32gle1Kw4>

somewhere in-between. This note facilitates the use of diminished intervals that would be considered exotic in traditional music. It is used both as an ornamental and a melodic feature, and is synonymous with piping. The ‘Ghost D’, for example, involves playing the E^b, as a grace note ornamenting the ‘Back D’. We are in a microtonal territory here as neither the ‘Back D’ nor the adjacent E^b are tuned in the conventional sense. This device was a particular feature of the playing of Seamus Ennis, Willie Clancy and Liam Óg O’Floinn.²⁵³ They also made considerable use of the evocative, fingered-C-natural of the lower octave. This note is neither a C natural nor a C[#], and when used along with a rising glissando, or slide, provides a sound reminiscent of a human cry. The use of this note is iconic in piping, and was referred to by Sean Keane as the “lonesome note”.

It’s very near the sean-nós voice, in the particular piping that I liked, in the image of Willie Clancy or Seamus Ennis, like absolute masters. it’s just the way they used to bend the notes, the lonesome note, which was common to Clare because Joe Ryan played it as well, that bend in the note upwards.²⁵⁴

The fluctuating, or alternating, 3rd and 7th degrees of the scale, evident in some traditional melodies, adds another element to the mix. This tendency to use both the natural and raised 3rd and 7th within the same tune, creates tonal uncertainty, which enhances the microtonal effects. These qualities are all evident in Seamus Ennis’s interpretation of the reel, *Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie*. (Claddagh records 1971).²⁵⁵

When all these characteristics are used in conjunction, we get a delightful mixture of chromaticism, microtonality and a shifting tonal centre. Pipers typically achieved chromatic and microtonal movement with finger patterns, or by partially covering a section of the tone hole on which they wished to play. If one intended to play an F natural, for example, one could only partially cover the F[#] tone hole. The extent to which this note is covered defines the pitch of the note. This gave infinite possibilities for microtonal effects to skilled pipers, whose sensibility to these effects was finely tuned. One need only listen to Willie Clancy’s interpretation of the *Bold Trainor O*²⁵⁶ to appreciate his artistry with regard to micro tonality and the partially covered note. (Willie Clancy, the Gold Ring, RTE, 2010). While the use of these effects has diminished in modern piping, some of the younger generation of pipers such

²⁵³ Liam Óg O’Floinn would have been considered a master of the use of the Ghost D technique.

²⁵⁴ Sean Keane, A portrait of an Artist, ITMA, 2023

²⁵⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxk11HK2SHo>

²⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ljxNVa2Mpk>

as Maitiú Ó Casaide, Seán Óg Potts and Seán McKeown have retained many of these magical qualities of piping.²⁵⁷

When the drones²⁵⁸ are added to this sonic mix the real magic of piping emerges. Pipers tune their drones to the tonic note, but in my experience, the precise tuning reflects the individual peculiarities of the piper, or of the chanter. When playing in a D-tonality, the drone will sound a constant tonic note. However, pipers play in many other keys, but the pitch of the drones is not altered to match. Thus, while playing in a G-tonality, for example, the drones sound a constant sub-dominant note giving an entirely different harmonic sense. A more extreme version of this occurs if a piper plays in an E-tonality such as E-Dorian. The drone now sounds a constant major 2nd below the tonic note. When one adds in microtonal peculiarities of the pipes, such as the tendency for the E note to sound sharp, we now have a dissonant harmonic effect. This effect is dissipated to a certain extent by the tendency of such tunes to be bimodal, modulating to a more sympathetic tonality, such as G or D Dorian in subsequent phrases, or in the B section of the tune, thereby resolving the tension.

If a piper plays a tune rooted in E, the drones will create even more tension. Most tunes based in E Dorian revolve around a melodic sequence rooted in E, moving to a melodic sequence rooted in D. (Flynn David, 2010, p.142).²⁵⁹

5.4 The Classical Violin and the Traditional Fiddle

Characteristics of piping are evident in traditional fiddle playing. The tendency for certain fiddle players to incorporate aspects of piping in their playing is evidenced by their use of piping ornaments and microtonal effects. They also tend to use of more double stopping when playing with pipers, as a way of emulating the regulators of the pipes. ‘The pull for fiddle players is always towards the pipes, never the other way around.’ This is particularly evident in the Dublin style of fiddle playing, whose greatest exponents were Tommy Potts and Seán Keane.

While the instruments used in both idioms are identical, there are significant differences in the technical and musical approaches to performance in both idioms. The classical violinist is faithful to the notated score and seeks variety and colour through an array of technical skills, such as varying the velocity and pressure of the bow on the string. Coloration of the sound is

²⁵⁷ This is no coincidence as these pipers were all trained in the Pipers Club by Gabriel McKeown, a master piper who, himself, was a student of Leo Rowsome.

²⁵⁸ As previously explained, the drones are constant tonic notes, spanning three octaves.

²⁵⁹ Flynn Dave, Ph.D. Thesis, *Traditional Irish Music, a Path to New Music*, TU Dublin 2010.

also achieved through vibrato which constantly varies in velocity, in response to the musical context and style. In the Paris conservatoire this varying in intensity was taught as a colour spectrum, from white to dark red, by the French violinist, Jean Fournier.²⁶⁰ Tonal colour can also be varied with judicious positioning of the bow between bridge and fingerboard. The finer points of interpretation are nuanced with bowing and left-hand articulation which influences aspects of playing, such as phrasing, dynamics, emphasis and style.

Tonal colour is achieved in the traditional idiom using a variety of effects such as *glissandi*, accentuation, *crescendo-diminuendo* on a given note and microtonal fluctuations in pitch, an attractive feature which is becoming less common, but which probably has its origin in the piping and *sean-nós* traditions. Vibrato, though prevalent in the piping tradition, is used sparingly if at all, and most traditional fiddle players tend to perform *senza vibrato*.

Sonically, the traditional sound differs from the classical with its plaintive nasal sound, its microtonality and its stridency, which is particularly evident in plaintive laments or in the war-like music of the clan marches. This can be produced by the use of open strings, or strings that are sounded without pressing a finger. Whereas classical players tend to avoid the harshness of open strings so as to maintain an even sound, the traditional player utilises open strings, not only for their stridency, but also as a percussive device like a bodhrán or snare drum. This is reminiscent of what pipers do on their tonic note, ‘bottom D’, which is sounded by lifting the chanter off the knee giving a harsh warlike sound. This is particularly evident in ornamental features such as bowed triplets and in craning;

... craning is applied by pipers to a rhythmic ornament, performed on the lowest and second lowest notes on the chanter...This produces a drumming effect on the note” (Donnelly 1988, p.133).

One of the greatest visual differences between the classical and traditional performer is in how they hold the fiddle. Some traditional fiddlers rest the fiddle on their shoulders rather than fixing it between the chin and shoulder/collar-bone. They also let the neck of the fiddle sink into the gap between thumb and index finger rather than supporting it with the ball of the thumb. This is only possible because the traditional fiddler plays almost exclusively in the first position and rarely makes use of the second position, probably with the result that most dance music is written in the keys of D-major and G-major.

²⁶⁰ During masterclasses at the Mozarteum, Salzburg with Jean Fournier, 1980.

5.4.1 Bowing technique

Classical and traditional music also exhibit pronounced differences in their approaches to bowing. While the classical player utilises every inch of the bow, in particular the lower half towards the heel where the additional weight of the bow can be used for sonority and accentuation, the traditional player tends to avoid the heel, and uses a lot less bow, generally. The fact that some traditional players tend to hold the bow further up from the heel, in effect shortening the bow, they thus eliminate what for the classical player is an essential aspect of bowing.

While this increases the traditional performer's agility and facilitates intricate bowing patterns, it also reduces the volume of sound. The traditional fiddler compensates for this by increasing pressure on the bow, creating a harsher edgier sound.²⁶¹ This may be advantageous for playing dance music, but is much less so for airs which require more bow in order to create a more sustained sound. This has the effect that some traditional players avoid playing slow, plaintive airs, or play more rhapsodic airs where there is more ornamentation and movement. This is a characteristic of playing technique, not of the instrument itself, but it is not shared with other instruments such as the pipes, or wooden flutes, which have no difficulty in sustaining long phrases.

Classical articulation places considerable emphasis on bowing. This is especially the case in the use a down-bow on the strong beats, or on notes requiring greater emphasis, which is logical as the downwards movement of the arm is capable of greater force than the upwards movement. The traditional player does not make this distinction, but can freely choose how to bow, following the logic of the music. This may be due to the improvised ornamentation and more spontaneous nature of the music where no two performances of a given tune need be identical. This negates the need for defined bowing patterns and frees up the traditional performer to interpret at will as it would be difficult to define bowing patterns for music that is constantly changing. It is therefore the musical impulse, informed by practice and tradition, that defines the bowing and other aspects of performance.

²⁶¹ Many of these features of traditional fiddle playing can be observed in the dramatic playing of the celebrated traditional artiste, Eileen Ivers from Chicago – see her solo reel playing in the recording: “Eileen Ivers with The Chieftains – Ballina 2023”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkPTrTyW61E>. Note how she plays exclusively in the first position, how she holds the neck of the fiddle in her left hand, how she grips the bow and the rasping of open strings to get an extra “kick” at strategic points in the reel.

While the classical score represents merely a map to which the skilled performer can bring considerable interpretive skills,²⁶² there are clear stylistic limits to this process. The parameters of interpretation can be quite limited, as in the classical performance style of, say, Haydn or Mozart. A greater amount of improvised ornamentation and variation may be permitted, especially in music of the Baroque period, as these tend to be reconstructions of performance practices which may have been widespread during the 17th and early 18th centuries. Thus, the score is regarded more as an outline where the skilled performer could add their own improvisations, not unlike Irish traditional music today.

For the traditional performer, adherence to a printed score would be perceived as a weakness. In this world, musical literacy is not essential and oral/aural transmission is the norm. The score merely indicates a melodic contour, of which the skilled performer can make his own. Emphasis is placed on aural skills, musical memory, and a considerable array of ornamentation which, though not codified, nevertheless follows strict stylistic parameters. Injudicious use of these elements would leave the performer consigned to the shallows of the traditional-music world.

The wider context of how the instrument is perceived and its role within the idiom has performance implications. While there are some distinctly fiddle tunes, especially in regions such as Donegal and Sligo, the traditional idiom is less instrument specific than the classical repertoire. In the traditional world, the instrument is regarded as a medium with which to express repertoire, much of which is common to all instruments; the choice of instrument was often determined by availability. With the possible exception of the pipes, it is the style and interpretation that are paramount, less so the instrumentation.

5.5 Bi-musicality and Social Attitudes in Ireland – Combining Traditional and Art Music

Ever since Mantle Hood (1918 – 2005), the renowned American ethnomusicologist, invented the term bi-musicality in a celebrated paper *The Challenge of Bi-Musicality* (1960), the academic discipline has sought to develop a universal understanding of the term. Hood referred to the problem of Western musicians acquiring expertise in Eastern music, specifically Indonesian gamelan music, and *vice versa*. He felt that alongside music, one required a knowledge of the language, religion, customs and history of that nation to become truly bi-

²⁶² In conversation with Yossi Zivoni, 1987.

musical. Hood concluded that the acquisition of bi-musicality was near impossible. Others have disagreed, effectively adapting his definition. Adkins (1999) whose main interest is in singing, adopts a narrower approach and compares bi-musicality with bi-lingualism. Titon (1995) proposes a similar definition involving the acquisition of performance fluency in different forms of music, in this case folk music and art music in the United States.

The concerns of ethnomusicology, which focuses on issues such as “understanding the humanity of the human species through humanly organised sounds”, goes far beyond our concerns in this thesis. Following Hood, much of the concern in the literature would appear to lie with the difficulty of *acquiring* bi-musicality in adulthood. In this study, we are concerned with a situation where two *genres* of music co-exist in a single, if stratified, cultural environment and, like bi-lingualism in a dual-language environment, may be acquired naturally from birth. In the world of ethnomusicology, this is very much a special case.

In the context of the present study, my interest in bi-musicality in Ireland concerns individuals who straddle two, or more, musical idioms and who exhibit some elements of crossover in their performance. Of particular interest is how this is perceived by society, and this can vary greatly. In Ireland it has not always been accepted with forbearance. Furthermore, stemming from ethnomusicology, the question arises as to what degree of proficiency in both idioms, or *genres*, is required before one can truly speak of bi-musicality? Listening to different musical styles or idioms on the radio in the course of a day, is clearly not what is meant.

In the conservative atmosphere of Ireland of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and later, bi-musicality was frowned upon, to put it mildly. Anyone performing classical and traditional Irish music was regarded with suspicion, in both idioms.

Tommy Potts, the legendary, if maverick, fiddle player from the Liberties district of Dublin would certainly have suffered from this attitude. Because of the frequent repetition of melodic motifs in traditional Irish music, along with the natural rotation of melodies, it is quite normal to maintain interest by varying ornamentation, or through improvisation. But, there are clear consensual, if unwritten, limits to this. Potts’s musical interests were broad and he was as likely as not to draw inspiration from Chopin, Liszt or Kreisler.²⁶³ His improvisational genius and his tendency to alter the long-established structural norms of the music left him a controversial and isolated figure, as he discussed in an interview with Prof. Micheál Ó Suilleabháin.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ In conversation with Micheál Ó Suilleabháin (2000).

²⁶⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZg5ajXgeGs> This interview was part of the submission for his Ph.D. (1982)

In the conservative world of Irish traditional music, too much indulgence in innovation could invoke even more disapproval than too little. If Potts had not been from one of the most highly regarded families in Irish traditional music circles, he would have been dismissed out of hand.²⁶⁵ Neff considered him “the most credible example of the avant-garde within an Irish traditional music context,”²⁶⁶ Arguably the most liberal or tolerant towards bi-musical crossover are those who, themselves, come from a bi-musical, or multi-cultural, background.

If a classical composer might wish to make use of Irish traditional material in order to install an Irish identity into the compositional process, what might motivate a traditional musician to cross that action in the opposite direction? (Ó Suilleabháin, 2010, p.1).²⁶⁷

Composer Neill Martin, himself a product of a bi-musical upbringing, argues that a genuine duality of styles depends on the artist being able to perform proficiently in both the classical and traditional music idioms.²⁶⁸ Nugent²⁶⁹ agrees that the degree of fluency in each discipline is important for bi-musical performance and learning. “I consider that I was a different person musically in each of these traditions”. Moreover, “At times I experienced the need to be careful not to betray traditional/classical behaviour in the other world.”²⁷⁰

In this sense, the composition *Famine Odyssey* (see chapters 7 and 8) is only possible because of my bi-musical background (detailed in chapter 1 and the present chapter). I have studied extensively, and taught, in both idioms and performed at a professional level in both idioms. I have also felt the reservations of my peers, in both idioms, although this was by no means universal. Without this background, experience and training, *Famine Odyssey* would be, qualitatively, a completely different work.

²⁶⁵ In conversation with Micheál Ó Suilleabháin (2000).

²⁶⁶ See Neff (2012), p. 260

²⁶⁷ In interview with Neill Martin, broadcast on Lyric FM radio, 22/04/2022

²⁶⁸ In interview with Neill Martin, broadcast on Lyric FM radio, 22/04/2022

²⁶⁹ Nugent, Mary, (2018), p.1

²⁷⁰ Nugent (2018), pp. 4 – 5.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the first of two artifacts created under the umbrella of this Ph.D. project. This artifact is a recital of music, which represents activity on the boundary, or interface, between Irish traditional music and art music. In the Recital, two distinct segments of the interface are contrasted, both showing a degree of fusion between the two musical *genres*: First, we have a selection of compositions from the major collections of traditional music of the 19th century and early 20th century, but which represent a fusion of traditional and art music from earlier generations. The second part of the Recital presents music which was composed between the late-19th century and the middle of the 20th century. This is art music which incorporates folk-music influences.

The term “Irish traditional music” itself presents problems of definition. Until recent history, Irish culture and folklore were part of an aural/oral tradition rather than a written tradition. Then, once any music or composition falls out of favour and ceases to be played – and musical tastes do change – there is no possibility of a later revival. Nevertheless, we know that a distinctive art music existed in Ireland until the early part of the 19th century – the music of the harpers – and that references to this music go back to the twelfth century, at least. It was then well established so its origin is much older. Beginning in a small way in the middle of the 18th century, but accelerating from the end of the century with the work of Edward Bunting, a concerted effort was made to record this music directly from the harpers themselves. Later, a significant corpus of music was collected from the general population, and even from Irish emigrants to the United States. This included harper melodies but also dance tunes and folk songs.

Part II of the Recital covers the late-19th century up to the middle of the 20th century. Our principal interest consists of art-music composers who incorporated folk melodies, or folklore, in their art-music compositions. Some of them also arranged traditional melodies, or variants, in an art-music setting. We describe this as the Nationalist school of composition in Ireland and described it in chapter 3. It commenced with the *Irish Symphony* of Charles Villiers Stanford in 1887, and continued until the early 1960s and the folk revival, a period of 70 to 80 years.

6.2 Background Notes to the Recital

In this section, we provide a brief description of the Irish harpers as well as the most important collectors of traditional music. This is followed by a stylised account of the Nationalist school which was discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

6.2.1 The Harpers

The most famous, and one of the first accounts of the ancient harpers in Ireland is to be found in *Topographia Hibernica*, written in Latin by a Welsh monk, Geraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), around the year 1188 AD, shortly after the Norman invasion of Ireland. His description of the Irish in general was highly unflattering, but he eulogised about the Irish harpers;

“The attention of the people to musical instruments I find worthy of commendation. Their skill is beyond comparison, superior to any other nation I have seen It is wonderful how in such precipitate rapidity of the fingers the musical proportions are preserved and, by their art, faultless throughout ... the twinkling of the small strings sport with so much freedom under the deep notes of the bass, delight with so much delicacy, and sooth so softly, that the delicacy of their art seems to lie in concealing it.”

Topographia Hibernica: Translation reported in *Annals of the Harpers*, p. 83

The harpers were professional musicians and ranked in the Gaelic system alongside other esteemed professions such as law, medicine, poetry, history etc. They seemed to enjoy a higher status in the social order than was typical in many other European countries, and they benefitted from the patronage of the ruling chieftains. They were bestowed with lands. As with poets, for example, a very long period of training was required to become a harper. Their reputation spread, even to other countries, on account of their ability and their musical skill.

The beginning of the 17th century witnessed the ultimate destruction of the old Gaelic order. The profession of harper continued, although in very much reduced circumstances.

The final overthrowing of the Gaelic system cut the roots of the patronage on which the harpers had depended, but they had survived as itinerant harpers, still proud of their aristocratic profession, visiting those of the landed proprietors in the big houses who welcomed them as, indeed, many of them did. A harper stayed in the house of his host usually for a fortnight or three weeks during which time he entertained the family, taught music to members of the family, played for people from the neighbourhood who came to hear him and sometimes composed a song in praise of his host or some member of his family.

(Seán Ó Casaide, unpublished manuscript).

A large proportion of the itinerant harpers were blind as a result of smallpox, which was quite prevalent at the time. Musically very talented children who were blind, were encouraged to take up music as a profession.²⁷¹ Although they lived in the community, they travelled to their patrons on horseback, escorted by an attendant who was also mounted and carried the harp.

Towards the end of the 18th century, it was clear that the number of harpers was dwindling very quickly and that many of those remaining were getting very old. In an attempt to preserve what was left of their music, a three-day festival was organised in Belfast in July 1792 and a young musician, Edward Bunting (1773 – 1843), was commissioned to record their tunes faithfully, “without changing a note”. Ten harpers turned up for the Belfast festival. These were;

1. Denis Hempson; blind, from Co. Derry, aged 97 years. An exponent of the old style of playing.
2. Arthur O’Neill: blind, from Co. Tyrone, aged 58 years. He later dictated his famous memoirs from which we get our knowledge of the life and habits of the harpers.
3. Charles Fanning: from Co. Cavan, aged 56.
4. Daniel Black: blind, from Co. Derry, aged 76.
5. Charles Byrne: from Co. Leitrim, aged 80. As a boy he had acted as guide to his blind uncle, a harper contemporary to the great harper-composer O’Carolan (1670 – 1738).
6. Hugh Higgins: blind, from Co. Mayo, aged 56.
7. Patrick Quinn: blind, from Co. Armagh, aged 56 years.
8. William Carr: from Co. Armagh, aged 15 years.
9. Rose Mooney: blind, from Co. Meath, aged 52.
10. James Duncan, from Co. Down, aged 45.

(Bunting, Vol. 1, *various pages*)

Edward Bunting was particularly enamored by the playing of Denis Hampson, the oldest participant at the festival. Unfortunately, their accompaniments were not recorded, but from Bunting’s notes it is clear that they were very sophisticated;

In fact Hempson’s staccato and legato passages, double slurs, shakes, turns, graces, etc. comprised as great a range of execution as has ever been devised by the most modern composers. (Bunting, Volume I)

Bunting, in the preface to his first collection of their music, gives a description of the harpers at the festival.

... they were in general clad in a considerable homely manner in dark-coloured or grey cloth of coarse manufacture. A few of them made an attempt at splendor by wearing silver buttons on

²⁷¹ That many musicians were blind was a documented phenomenon in many countries, e.g. China (as long ago as the 6th century BC), Japan (12. – 14. centuries AD), and Ukraine (19. – 20. centuries AD) as well as in Ireland, where itinerant pipers as well as harpers were sometimes blind. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_musicians.

their coats. they seemed perfectly happy and contented with their lot, and all appeared convinced of the excellence of the genuine Irish music.

After the festival, Bunting travelled to Connaught and Munster, as well as in Ulster, recording more music from harpers and singers. Between 1798 and 1840, he published three collections of music comprising 293 melodies. In his third collection, he also provided piano accompaniments for 150 tunes. His three volumes of published music amounts to about half of the music in his manuscripts, which are preserved in Queens University, Belfast. This is the largest and most important collection of music recorded directly from the harpers.

6.2.2 Collectors and Preservers of the Irish Musical Tradition

Apart from Bunting's collections, a great many harper tunes crossed over into the folk tradition and enriched it, as the harpers lived amongst, and interacted socially with, the wider populace. They were not court musicians, or employed by noble or civic/religious patrons as in the European model. Many airs we regard as folk tunes are likely to be harper tunes. We can infer this from their sophistication, but their authorship is unknown. We may further assume that many of the instrumental techniques also transferred, as these techniques of embellishing tunes are characteristic of modern-day traditional musicians.

Much of the music of the harpers was likely to have been instrumental, but it also included many songs. We may infer that some melodies could have been songs from characteristics of the melodic line; however, we are not able to draw firm conclusions as there has always been a tradition of poets putting words to popular melodies. A well-known example, in the English language, is Moore's *Irish Melodies*: Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852) set words to ten collections of Irish melodies, many of which were sourced from Edward Bunting's *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* (1796) and some were also obtained from the private collection of George Petrie. That Moore took liberties and modified some of the melodies to suit his poetry was a matter of great annoyance to Petrie.

George Petrie (1789 – 1866) was a highly artistic scholar, artist and musician, who worked for a time with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. During his travels around Ireland he became an avid collector of Irish folklore, legends and, especially, music. Petrie was also active in archeology, and was instrumental in preserving the Cross of Cong, which is now in the National Museum, Dublin. Among the band of collectors, the relationship was collaborative rather than rival and many of the collectors sent each other tunes. It was Petrie who strongly encouraged Bunting to publish his third volume of harper melodies, and this appeared in 1840.

The personal Petrie collection contains more than 2,000 melodies, some provided by other collectors, and he finally, if reluctantly, acquiesced to publishing 146 of them in 1855 as the *Ancient Music of Ireland*. The *Complete Petrie Collection* was published by Sir Charles Stanford in three volumes between 1902 and 1905.

There were several other important collectors, such as John Edward Pigot and William Forde, who are not widely known today although they left behind them large collections of folk music. Their copious manuscripts are in the Royal Irish Academy. Two who have gained special prominence, however, are James Goodman (1828 – 1896) and Patrick Weston Joyce (1827 – 1914). Goodman was a Church of Ireland clergyman who hailed from Dingle and his collection focuses primarily on this district. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin, was a pastor in some parishes in West Cork as well as professor of Irish at TCD, between which duties he divided his year. Goodman played the pipes, which helped him understand the tunes. Although Goodman appreciated the importance of recording the words to the songs he collected, some of his notebooks containing the words are believed to have been lost. Both Goodman and Joyce lived through the Great Famine (1845 – 50) and felt a special urgency in collecting the folk music of their country, and districts, before it was forever lost.

Joyce was a school teacher who came from Glenoisheen in County Limerick, and many of the tunes he collected were peculiar to this district and not known elsewhere. On arrival in Dublin in 1852, he established contact with Petrie and supplied the latter with many tunes. Joyce published a volume of music in 1872 containing 100 songs and dance tunes with piano accompaniment. His second volume was published in 1909 and contains 842 airs from his own manuscripts as well as hundreds of tunes from the Forde and Pigot manuscripts.

The significance of those collectors, and others, is that some 12,000 airs and dance tunes have been saved for posterity, many if not most of which would undoubtedly have been lost.

6.2.3 The Nationalist Movement in Art Music

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 – 1924) was born and reared in Dublin. His family was involved in musical Dublin and it is likely that he knew Petrie and some of the other collectors; he published the Petrie collection posthumously. Without a doubt he gained exposure to Irish music, which he features in many of his compositions, but this was probably second hand through his work with the Petrie collections. In the second half of the 19th century, a national style of music was emerging, especially in Russia, with Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov in the forefront. Their promotion of a national style and ethos was in opposition to the more establishment-oriented Rubenstein brothers and Tchaikovsky. Whether influenced by this, or

just ahead of his time, Stanford's *Irish Symphony* (1887) was the first symphony to use recognised national folk tunes in an otherwise classical orchestral score.

By now the wheel had turned full circle. Whereas art music – the music of the Irish harpers – had earlier been absorbed into folk music, we now had folk music being readopted within art music. In Ireland, classically-trained musicians devoted greater attention to composing in an Irish idiom as well as providing arrangements for Irish folk songs. Esposito was an Italian musician who ended up in Dublin, and his fiery individualistic interpretation of *An Cúlghionn* is still heard today. The list of composers who followed in this furrow is long.

At the risk of over-simplification, we can identify several, very general approaches to the treatment of Irish folk music in an art-music context. First, we have the arrangement of Irish folk tunes, either for piano or orchestra, (Larchet, T.C. Kelly). Or, what can be quite similar, is to adapt and change the structure of a traditional air and combine it with the harmonic language of the Romantic period (Esposito).

Second one can quote Irish folk music directly as elements of art-music compositions, or incorporate melodies which, although original, adhere to the folk-music tradition, (Stanford, Fredrick May, Seoirse Bodley). In contrast, we have the “purists” who felt that no accompaniment whatever dare impinge in any way on the free expression and character of traditional music; for them, any arrangement should be so accommodating as to accept that the integrity of traditional music was paramount (Hardebeck, Éamonn Ó Gallchobhóir).

Another approach has been to compose without direct reference to the traditional idiom, but utilising folk settings, either by using folk legends as themes, or emphasising the character and technique of folk music, (E.J. Moeran, Arnold Bax). One aspect of this approach is to incorporate a traditional “flavour” by means of introducing performance techniques and ornamentation. Features such as rolls, slides and cuts, can be added to the violin line, or a more discrete vibrato and timbre can be used to bring a composition closer to the traditional performance practice. These features, however, are best left in large part to the impromptu interpretation of the performer, as is common practice in the traditional idiom, rather than trying to craft an overly-precise notation.

What makes classification challenging is that few composers confined themselves to a single one of the methods mentioned above.

6.3 The Recital Programme

Traditional Music Meets Art Music in Ireland: A Recital

Odhrán Ó Casaide (violin) with Seána Davey (harp)

DkIT, Dundalk. 28th November 2023

Part 1

George Petrie (1789 - 1866)

Air Without Title, (Petrie-Stanford Collection No. 6)

Carolán's Draught

Rev James Goodman (1826 - 1896)

An Binsín Luachra

Siobhánín Seó / The Lady's Cup of Tea

Patrick Weston Joyce (1827 - 1914)

The Races of Ballyhooley

Captain John's Hornpipe

Part 2

Michele Esposito (1855 - 1929)

The Coulin (Arr. Esposito)

John Larchet (1884 - 1967)

Irish Airs for violin and piano (1917)

1) *Cáit Ní Dhuibhir*

2) *Ríl na Gaillimhe*, (*A Galway Reel*)

3) *Suantraí*, (*Cradle Song*)

Éamonn O Gallchobhóir (1906 - 1982)

Ceol i gcomhair Veidhlín agus Piano

Allegro con spirito

Moderato con motto

Frederick May (1911 - 1985)

Idyll for violin and piano (1930 approx.)

I am deeply indebted to Seána Davey, an accomplished performer on both the classical and the traditional harp.

6.3.1 Part 1 of the Recital

For the first half of this recital, I chose a programme of airs and dance tunes from three of the most important music collectors of the nineteenth century, George Petrie, James Goodman and Patrick Weston Joyce. All three of these collectors were active during or immediately after the famine, which is important, as many regional variants and versions of airs were lost during that time, only to be replaced eventually by the widely known versions. This was particularly true with regard to Goodman, who managed to preserve the unique Kerry and West Cork variants which would otherwise have been lost. The music was chosen for numerous reasons, such as its melodic beauty and unusual characteristics. They were also for the most part modal, and linear in the melodic line.

6.3.1.1 Petrie Collection: George Petrie (1789 - 1866)

Air without Title, (Petrie-Stanford Collection No. 6)

There are three variants of this air in the Petrie collection, No. 6, No. 171 and No. 175, all without titles. Both No. 6 and No. 171 are identical. No. 175 is slightly more elaborate but is clearly a variant of the same tune. As No. 171 was collected from F. Keane September 10th 1854,²⁷² it is probable that No. 6 came from the same source.

I choose No 6, as it was the simplest of these versions, in particular its uninterrupted melodic arc in the second phrase, figure 6.1 This is significant as the opening phrase, which is in effect a descending hexatonic scale, is responded to by its mirror image, or inversion, in the second phrase. This creates an effective opening line, establishing the style and contour of the melody.

Figure 6.1: Opening phrases of Petrie, Air No. 6 ²⁷³



The alternative version, No. 175, elaborates on the second phrase, as it does in other phrases, giving the impression, in my opinion, that it may be a variant of No. 6. Any attempt to determine

²⁷² Petrie George, Stanford Charles (Ed). The Complete Collection of Irish Music (1902)

²⁷³ Slurs have been added to identify phrases

which of several existing versions of any tune is the original version, is seldom more than educated guesswork. I remember having this conversation with Micheál Ó Súilleabháin with regard to melodies in the Goodman collection. He pointed out that both elaboration and simplification can occur in the evolution of traditional tunes.²⁷⁴

Figure 6.2: *Air without title*, Petrie No 175, 2nd phrase (variation)



This air is deceptive, however, in that its simplicity conceals what is a very well-constructed musical composition. The economy of material is notable with the opening melodic ideas being repeated frequently, giving structure and form to the piece. The first and second phrases are the building blocks of the melody, creating a *quasi* call-and-response effect throughout the piece. In the B section of the tune this opening material is inverted with the second phrase starting the development of the new section.

It also contains a rhythmic and melodic motif, figure 6.3. The rhythmic pattern of two quavers followed by two crotchet beats is quite prevalent in traditional airs, and is maintained throughout giving the piece an attractive pulse.

Figure 6.3: Petrie, Air No. 6, melodic and rhythmic motif



This is one of the most attractive pieces of traditional music that I have come across, with its use of motivic devices and economy of material along with the use of melodic inversion. It is these qualities that lead me to believe that this is a deliberate musical composition, possibly the work of a skilled harper composer, rather than that of a gifted musical amateur. In my opinion this represents a native classical harper composition, that has survived largely thanks to its crossing the interface into the Irish traditional sphere.

²⁷⁴ In conversation with Micheál O Suilleabháin, IWMA, University of Limerick, 1999

Figure 6.4: Air without title, Petrie-Stanford Collection, No. 6



O Carolan's Draught

During his lifetime, Turlough O Carolan was very much at the interface between the Irish art music of the medieval harpers, and the music of the baroque masters which was in vogue at the time among the aristocracy, particularly in Dublin. It is this crossover of styles or *genres*, evident in many of his compositions that makes his music unique. The fact that seven of O'Carolan's airs were published during his lifetime, in a collection of Irish airs published by John and William Neal of Christchurch Yard,²⁷⁵ is testimony to his popularity, even during his lifetime. This may be due in part to his ability to embrace a duality of styles, endearing him to both the old Gaelic stock as well as the new aristocracy.

The fact that the airs attributed to O'Carolan exhibit such a wide variety of styles, has led some musicologists to suspect that not all of those pieces were truly composed by him. In my opinion, however, this crossover, or bi-musical feature, came to be identified as a hallmark of his personal compositional style. Far from casting doubt on his authorship, I feel they indicate more convincingly that O'Carolan was, indeed, the composer. With regard to *O'Carolan's Draught*, Petrie states:

... the peculiarities of its style, and of its flow of melody, can leave no doubt as to its being a genuine composition of the eminent composer whose name it bears... (Petrie George)

²⁷⁵ Although it was known that this book had been published, it was widely believed that no copy had survived. It was not until very recently that a copy was found among Bunting's papers in Queen's University, Belfast. As a result, this is the oldest, known recording of harper tunes.

Petrie was held in high esteem by other collectors who regularly sent him music from their native districts, and it was in this way that he obtained *O'Carolan's Draught*. "The following spirited harp melody was obtained from an old MS music-book sent to me by Father Walsh, P.P. of Sneem, in the county of Kerry". The Munster origin of the tune is interesting and Petrie surmises that it may have been composed during one of O'Carolan's sojourns into that province.

I chose *O'Carolan's Draught* for this recital, not only for its melodic beauty and charm, but also because it is one of the compositions which most clearly demonstrates the influence of the Baroque in his compositions. This spirited tune contains numerous examples of the Italianesque style, and is also one of the few compositions by O'Carolan which modulate. While O'Carolan's harmonic language was not notated by any of the collectors, this modulation can be demonstrated by the addition of an accidental C sharp in the 6th and 7th bars of the melodic line, figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: *O'Carolan's Draught*, bars 6 to 8, modulation



These peculiarities of style and flow of melody to which Petrie refers, are evident in O'Carolan's use of Baroque devices such as the descending pedal-type figure evident in works by both Corelli and Vivaldi, contrast figures 6.6 and 6.7.

Figure 6.6: *O'Carolan's Draught*, Baroque feature, bars 13 & 14



Figure 6.7: Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Concerto in G minor RV. 315, *Allegro non molto*, Violino principale, bars 95 -98



He also makes use of sequences and sweeping scale-like passages which are also a feature of the Baroque. The improvisational characteristics of the Baroque would have been suited to O'Carolan's style, where he was clearly at ease blending the characteristics of both idioms in a convincing musical statement.

Figure 6.8: Sequence in *O'Carolan's Draught*, bars 21 & 22



This piece is aptly named, for O'Carolan was known to have had a jovial personality and to have enjoyed his drink. His drink of choice is thought to have been the claret cup, which was the term then used for Bordeaux wine. He composed at least three bacchanalian pieces, which allude to drink, the *Ode to Whiskey*, *O'Carolan's Cup* and *O'Carolan's Draught*.

Figure 6.9: *O'Carolan's Draught*, Petrie Collection



6.3.1.2 Goodman Collection: Rev. James Goodman (1826 - 1896)

An Binsín Luachra (The Little Bench of Rushes)

An Binsín Luachra, (*The little Bench of Rushes*) is one of the most beautiful song/airs in the traditional repertoire. The particular variant I chose for this recital is the one notated by Cannon James Goodman in the first volume of his collection, (1861-1866). It is included in a selection

of song/airs notated by Goodman at the beginning of the manuscript. Goodman marked the front of the score with the letter K, which probably alludes to the blind piper, Thomas Kennedy, from whom he notated many of his melodies. His notation is very detailed with phrasing, accentuation and possible micro dynamics at the beginning of the second bar.

Figure 6.10: Opening bars of *An Binsín Luachra*



The title of the air refers to the custom of collecting rushes, to lay on stone benches, where young people would congregate for singing, dancing and general amusement. The air is of such a high quality that one would assume that this melody is a harper air. The third line, in particular, is remarkable in its construction and the manner in which the composer manages to build the tension in the melodic line with release evident only in the last bar, figure 6.11. This is reminiscent of Elgar, Holst and other composers of the English school. In my opinion this is one of the most well-crafted melodic lines in the entire repertoire of traditional music.

Figure 6.11: Third line of *An Binsín Luachra*



Unusually for a traditional air, the highpoint is reached in the penultimate phrase of the concluding line of the air, figure 6.12. This has the effect of building on the intensity of the previous line of the air, leading to an effective resolution of the musical conversation with the rise and fall of the final phrases. This is clearly the work of a highly skilled melodist and represents an important interface between the two idioms. As previously mentioned, this style of melodic composition is reminiscent of the English school of composers and may well have been a source of inspiration to them, possibly through the influence of Stanford.

Figure 6.12: Climax of the air



Figure 6.13: *An Binsín Luachra*, Goodman Collection



Siobhánín Seó / The Lady's Cup of Tea

These dance tunes are also included in Volume 1 of the Goodman Collection and both are also marked with the aforementioned letter K, which probably indicates that they were taken down from the playing of the piper Thomas Kennedy. Goodman refers to him as an ex-piper due to the fact that he no longer earned his living from playing the pipes. He was also blind, a fact that was confirmed by his great, great, grandniece, Neasa Ní Chinéide, who referred to her distant relative as Tomás Dall Ó Cinnéide.²⁷⁶

Although there is no indication in the Goodman manuscript that *Siobhánín Seó* is a song melody, this attractive slip jig is probably vocal in origin. This is indicated by the narrow range of an octave in the tune, the vocal character of the melodic line, and by the title. The use of the diminutive form of the name Siobhán (Susan) followed by the word ‘Seó’ indicates that this may have been a lullaby. The word ‘Seó’ appears in both the text and titles of some lullabies in Irish, such as, *Seothín Seó Thó*, and *Seó Thó Thoil*. This opinion is also held by Hugh Shields (Shields, 1998, p.168), who added “Lullaby Vocables” below the title in his edition of the

²⁷⁶ In conversation with Neasa Ní Chinnéide, Limerick 1999

manuscript. This is not unusual as there are numerous examples of slip jigs having words, such as the Foxhunters jig, sung to the words of *Nead na Lachain*, (*The Ducks' Nest*), the well-known children's song, *Cuirfidh Muid Deandaí, Deandaí*, (*We'll Put a Dandy Dandy*).

This is an unusual melody in 9/8 metre, and almost certainly dates from pre-famine times. While it is in the Ionian mode it has the character of a pentatonic melody. *Siobhánín Seó* has a melodic *motif* which gives an attractive call and response character to the melody. This motif, which occurs in every bar of the tune, is maintained in the B section of the tune, a 5th lower, maintaining the melodic and motivic unity of the tune.

Figure 6.14: *Siobhánín Seó*, motif



The B section of the tune has the exact same rhythmic pattern as the A section, and is also melodically derived from it.

Figure 6.15: *Siobhánín Seó*, Goodman Collection



The Lady's Cup of Tea

As previously mentioned, this tune was also written down from the playing of the piper Thomas Kennedy. The importance of Kennedy to the Goodman's Collection is borne out by a comment Goodman made to Douglas Hyde,²⁷⁷ that he had received more than 700 tunes from one blind piper (Ó Casaide 2000). This establishes the tune as belonging to the pre-famine repertoire of Corca Dhuibhne. Local lore in that area suggests that the Lady in question was Lady Ventry. Many post-famine tunes, especially reels, came from Scotland and tend to be in a different style.

²⁷⁷ Collector of Gaelic poetry and first president of the Republic of Ireland.

They tend to be less modal in character and are mainly in the diatonic major scale, hence the importance of preserving the pre-famine repertoire from that area, (Shields, 1998, p.45).

Figure 6.16: *The Lady's Cup of Tea*, Goodman, bars 1 & 2



A variant of the tune was also published by Joyce, with the title, *Flurry*. Joyce states under the title that it was written down from memory, (Joyce, 1909, p. 35). This would imply, as he stated with other tunes, that this pertains to childhood memories.

Figure 6.17: *Flurry*, Joyce Collection



While both versions are similar, there are small rhythmical and other differences. Both are in the Mixolydian mode, though pentatonic in character, and Goodman's version is more consistently so. In considering which version to use in the Recital, I was attracted by the rhythmic energy of the unbroken quaver movement in Goodman's version. The call and response character of the repletion of the opening phrase also lent itself to being performed as a set with the previous melody. The D tonality of both pieces was also convenient.

Figure 6.18: *The Lady's Cup of Tea*, Goodman Collection



The Races of Ballyhooley

Patrick Weston Joyce includes this stirring melody in his *Old Irish Music and Song* (1909). In an accompanying note he states that it was written down “From memory, as learned from my young days” (Joyce, 1909, p.2). This places the melody firmly in the pre-famine repertoire of his native district of Ballyorgan, Co. Limerick. Joyce also informs us that it is the air to a song which “commemorated the fate of a number of peasants who were shot down in the neighbourhood of Ballyhooley, near Fermoy in Co Cork, while resisting the collection of tithes, early in the last century, about (1824).” (Joyce, 1909).

This melody is both melodically and rhythmically appealing with the Irish, or Scottish, snap giving the melody a martial character. Joyce presents this melody as a song, giving us the first line of the text in Irish “*Tá scéal agam á insint, s’ná smaoiním gur bréag é*”²⁷⁸ (I have a story to tell, and I wouldn’t think it’s a lie). (Joyce, 1909, p.3).

In spite of Joyce stating that the melody is an air to a local song, I feel that that this melody may be older, and instrumental in origin. The combination of large intervals, such the descending interval of a 9th in bar 8, the sextuplet *anacrusis* in bar 10, and the wide melodic range of an octave and a sixth, is more indicative of the character of a melody of harper or piping origin, figures 6.19 and 6.20.

Figure 6.19: Joyce, *The Races of Ballyhooley*, bar 8 with descending 9th

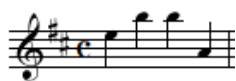


Figure 6.19A: Joyce, *The Races of Ballyhooley*, bar 10, sextuplet anacrusis,



The practise of adding lyrics to an existing melody has been a constant feature of traditional music since the 17th century. One can follow the melodic migration of specific tunes from

²⁷⁸ I have altered the spelling to the modern form.

harper airs in the 17th century, to songs in the 18th, and reappearing as dance tunes in the 19th century. This process is still ongoing in Gaeltacht areas, where new songs are composed and set to existing melodies. The adaptation of a well-known melody with new lyrics, makes the song immediately accessible to the local people.

Figure 6.20: Joyce, *The Races of Ballyhooley*



Captain John's Hornpipe

In the introduction to his collection, *Old Irish Music and Song*, Joyce (1909, p. vii) gives an account of how music was a part of everyday life in his native district:

My home in Glenosheen, in the heart of the Ballyhoura mountains, was a home of music and song: they were in the air of the valley; you heard them everywhere, sung, played whistled, and they were mixed up with the people's pastime, occupations, and daily life.

This attractive hornpipe in the Ionian mode is one of the finest dance tunes in Joyce's collection, displaying many of the rhythmic and melodic characteristics common to such tunes. It's jaunty quaver movement, scale-like passages, arpeggiated movement and larger intervals such as the 5th, gives the tune the hornpipe character which would have made it suitable for the intricate steps of the dance. Joyce recalls this dance tune from his childhood, "learned from childhood from fiddlers", which places it in the pre-famine repertoire of his native district. (Joyce, p. 28)

Hornpipes were a great favourite of the ordinary people and also of dancing masters who travelled the county with their pocket fiddles, teaching the steps of the dance. The Irish hornpipe differs from the English in that it is usually performed with a cut, or dotted rhythm

although it is seldom notated as such. This issue also arose in the *Canadian Wake*, (first movement of the *Famine Odyssey*). I wanted to notate the tunes in the manner that they are usually played. I therefore decided to notate these barn-dance hornpipes with a triplet figure.

Figure 6.21: Triplet notation in *Canadian Wake, Famine Odyssey*, bars 218-220



The tune, *Captain John's Hornpipe*, with the same name, was also collected in San Francisco from an Irish emigrant, Francis E Walsh, and published in O'Neill's²⁷⁹ *Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody* (1922, p. 116). I write out part of the O'Neill's version (figure 6.22) which can be contrasted with the last line of the Joyce version (figure 6.23). It shows that there is also a musical version of "Chinese Whispers".

Figure 6.22: *Captain John's Hornpipe*, from O'Neill's *Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody*, (p. 116 bars 13-16)



Figure 6.23: *Captain John's Hornpipe*, Joyce, *Old Irish Music and Song*, (p. 28)



²⁷⁹ O'Neill was a captain in the New York Police Department, who collected dance tunes from Irish emigrants to the United States. "O'Neill's" was the go-to source for Irish dance tunes for most of the 20th century.

6.3.2 Part 2 of the Recital

For the second section of the Recital, I selected art-music works which engage with the Irish traditional idiom and are written for violin and piano. There is no shortage of repertoire to choose from. I narrowed the choice down to four Irish composers, who represent a variety of styles and compositional approaches. Apart from instrumentation and variety, I was also conscious that these compositions should fit comfortably with Part 1 of the programme, so as to present a contrasting recital of music that was integrated and coherent.

Michelle Esposito and his gifted pupil at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, John Larchet, left the melodies more or less intact and arranged them according to the music. Next, I include Frederick May, who studied with Vaughan Williams who, in turn, had been a student of Charles Villiers Stanford. May took inspiration from traditional music in his early compositions but avoided referencing the idiom directly. Finally, we have the self-taught, or autodidactic, composer represented here by Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair. In this category we also find the likes of Hamilton Hearty²⁸⁰ and, more recently, composers such as John Kinsella, Patrick Cassidy and Conor Walsh.²⁸¹ One could say that all innovative, inspirational composition is autodidactic in some degree.

6.3.2.1 Michele Esposito (1855 - 1929)

The Coulin/ Arr. Esposito, Op. 56, No 2

I have fond memories of this piece as it was a favourite of violinist Geraldine O'Grady, who performed it regularly in her concerts, both in Ireland and abroad. It is probably the piece for which Esposito is best remembered. This arrangement of the well-known love-song air, *The Coulin, An Chuilfhionn*, (The Fair-Haired Girl) is an exquisite example of how to arrange an Irish air for violin and piano.

Esposito exploits the full range of the violin spanning over three octaves. This is enabled by his choice of tonality, G Major, which touches on the lowest and highest notes on the

²⁸⁰ "He was a born musician - self-taught and an unbeliever in academic teaching"; C. "Hamilton Harty." *The Musical Times*, vol. 61, no. 926, April 1920, pp. 227–30. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/909607> . Accessed 10 January 2025.

²⁸¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/conor-walsh-a-self-taught-minimalist-piano-composer-1.2579010> . Accessed on 19.January 2025.

instrument exploiting the sonority of the instrument in different registers, and the sympathetic vibrations of the open strings which enrich the timbre. It is technically demanding as is evidenced by the scale-like anacrusis in bar 43.

Following a sonorous opening on the G string, Esposito alters the structure of the air repeating the first line, or ‘A section’ of the melody, an octave higher in the first rendition of the melody. He goes an octave higher again on the second rendition of the tune, in a challenging passage, leaving the solo violinist very exposed, as the accompaniment is light and transparent. The arpeggiated figures in the piano introduction are by and large maintained throughout the piece keeping the texture light and allowing the violin to soar.

Figure 6.24: Arpeggiated triplet accompaniment, *The Coulin*, bars 1 and 2



In the first four bars of the B sections, bars 20-24, and 39-42, respectively, the violin plays an arpeggiated variation of the melodic line, in an accompanying style, figure 6.25. This is effective and places the arrangement stylistically in the art-music repertoire. As the piano accompaniment style changes to sustained chord progressions in these passages, neither instrument in fact plays the melodic line. This is unusual, as the melodic line of this developmental section of the air is not heard, but implied harmonically. This is a pity because, in my opinion, the piano could also perform the melody for these four bars while maintaining the harmonic progressions. Both rotations of the melody conclude with the last four bars of the B section which is a repetition of the concluding bars of the A section.

Figure 6.25: Variation in Violin for B Section of Melody, *The Coulin*, (bar 40)



The harmonic language is clearly romantic in character, but it is sympathetic and supportive of the air and never interrupts the melodic flow. The piece concludes with a short *coda* which tends not to be performed as the piece also ends effectively at the conclusion of the air. This *coda* however is a feature of the romantic style of the arrangement and typical of its time. For this reason, I include it in my performance.

6.3.2.2 John Larchet (1884 - 1967)

Irish Airs for violin and piano, volume II (1917)

1) *Cáit Ní Dhuibhir*

2) *Ríl na Gaillimhe, A Galway Reel*

3) *Suantraí, Cradle Song*

John Larchet wrote two suites (volumes), of arrangements of *Irish Airs*, for violin and piano. Suite No I was published in 1917²⁸² and suite No II²⁸³ was published almost ten years later in 1926. He also indicates parts for string orchestra which he refers to as *ad lib*. This may be significant with regards to Larchet's post as director of music at the Abbey Theatre, which he held from 1908 to 1935, where he composed and arranged music on a regular basis for a small orchestra. It suggests the orchestra provided the impetus for the arrangements and would also have known what was intended without any need for fully written-out scores.

Cáit Ní Dhuibhir

Due to time constraints in the recital, I chose the first three pieces from volume II which made a balanced set that was representative of the suites in general. It also references the ancient Gaelic meters of *Goltraí, Geantraí and Suantraí*, (Lament, Joyous music, Sleep music)

In his arrangements of traditional airs and tunes for violin and piano, Larchet's harmonic language is romantic, though discreet. He maintains the structure and integrity of the music adopting a conservative, almost traditionalist approach. The melodies are seldom interrupted by the arrangement although there is some attractive elaboration on the melodic line in the four-

²⁸² Larchet John, *Irish Airs*, Vol I, Dublin: Pigott & Co., 1917.

²⁸³ Larchet John, *Irish Airs*, Vol II, Dublin: Pigott & Co., 1926.

bar piano introduction to *Cáit Ní Dhuibhir*, (bars 1 - 4) and in the playful coda, (bars 41 – 43), see figure 6.26, with imitation on the concluding phrase. The aforementioned harmonic language is romantic, discreet and supportive of the melodic line, played by the solo violin.

Figure 6.26: Larchet, *Cáit Ní Dhuibhir*, bars 40-43

Ríl na Gaillimhe

The arrangement of the Galway reel is effective and the accompaniment avoids the stereotypical vamping style which was in vogue at that time. The syncopated dialogue between violin and piano and more sustained harmonic accompaniment, is closer to the contemporary approach of Ó Súilleabháin, Molloy, and others, in their accompaniment of traditional dance tunes. Although this tune is an arranged reel, Larchet has not altered the binary structure of the melody. Instead, he achieves variety in the repetition of the melody by putting the melodic line an octave higher and inverting the violin and piano, with four bars of the reel on piano (bars 39 – 42) with an accompanying line on violin. The piece has a humorous conclusion (in bar 49) with a *sforzando pizzicato* on violin.

Suantraí (Cradle Song)

The concluding movement of this selection, *Suantraí*, or *cradle song*, is both tender and delicate. The rocking of the cradle is implied from the two-bar piano introduction with syncopated accompanying figure in the piano, figure 6.27.

Figure 6.27: Syncopated piano introduction, *Suantraí*, (bars 1-3)²⁸⁴



This descriptive writing is attractive, and suitable for the simple sleep-inducing melody it is accompanying. This is clearly a vocal piece, and contains a refrain in bars 11- to 15, which is introduced by the imperfect cadence at the end of the first verse. I also chose not to perform this *Sur la Touche* as this would position it sonically, further away from the traditional idiom. I choose instead to capture the character of the composer's intentions by reducing the dynamic and positioning the bow closer to the fingerboard of the violin. This produces a sound which is just as tender though richer in overtones.

Figure 6.28: *Suantraí*, Refrain, bars²⁸⁵



²⁸⁴ https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/4/4b/IMSLP711764-SIBLEY1802.16832.6ec2-39087004966174vol.1_score.pdf

²⁸⁵ *ibid*

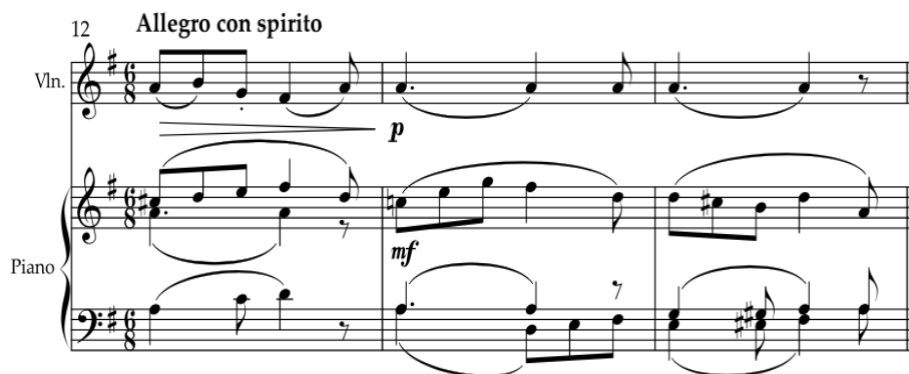
6.3.2.3 Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair (1906 – 1982)

Ceol I gComhair Óbó (nó Vheidhlín) agus Piano, (Music for Oboe (or Violin) with Piano)
Allegro con spirito
Moderato con motto

I chose the first two movements, from his three-movement work for violin and piano titled *Ceol i gComhair Óbó (Music for Oboe)*, written in 1958. This piece is an important contribution to classical works in the traditional idiom.²⁸⁶

The playful character of the music reflects Ó Gallchobhair's impish sense of humour and love of traditional music. In particular, he was enraptured by the music of the harpers, which he loved to discuss and perform. While this is an entirely original art-music composition, it is written with a keen sense of the traditional idiom, and informed by it. It also has a fluid extemporised character, of which he was a masterful exponent, a skill I witnessed first-hand on his frequent visits to our home. For this reason, harmonic language apart, it is probably closer in its aesthetic to the approach of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, rather than that to his own contemporaries.

Figure 6.29: *Allegro con spirito*, contrapuntal writing in violin and piano, bars 12 – 14.²⁸⁷



The spritely first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, is written in the style of a harper jig or planxty. This is an interesting composition, however, as he also uses a *quasi Rondo*-form structure for the movement. The jig-like character of this piece is enhanced by some attractive

²⁸⁶ I was given a copy of the score by a colleague, flautist Ciarán O Connell, who retrieved it from eminent flute teacher, Doris Keogh, who was retiring.

²⁸⁷ O Gallchobhair Éamonn, *Ceol I gcomhair Obo (nó Veidhlín)*, Oifig an tSoláithair, Baile Átha Cliath.

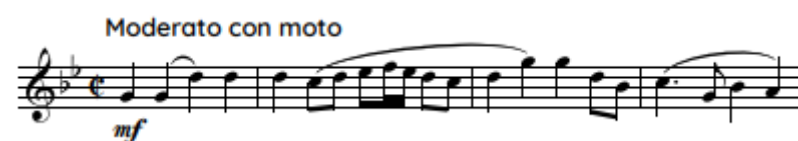
contrapuntal writing for piano. It therefore references both the circular nature of traditional music and classical musical form. This places this work on the interface between the idioms, and is reminiscent of how Ó Riada later approached his arrangements of traditional music for Ceoltóirí Chualainn.

Figure 6-30: Ó Gallchobhair, opening theme, *Allegro con spirito*, bars 1-5 (Oboe or Violin)



For his second movement, *Moderato con moto*, Ó Gallchabhóir chooses the more solemn parallel tonality of G-minor. The main theme of the movement, however, is in the G-Aeolian mode giving the movement a very Irish feel.

Figure 6.31: Ó Gallchobhair, *Moderato con moto*, Aeolian theme



Although the score is indicated *Con moto*, (with movement) it has a tender character. It also has some of the characteristics of the solemn music of the harpers, such as *Molly McAlpine*, or *Ó Carolan's Lament for Thomas Mac Donagh*. It reminds me of an extemporised arrangement he once performed of Bunting's, *An Caoine Mór*, (*The Great Lament*), which he introduced with an almost theatrical description of a great chieftain's funeral procession. Ó Gallchobhair engages in a very real way with the interface between the idioms in this attractive piece of newly composed art music in a traditional style.

6.3.2.4 Frederick May (1911 – 1985)

***Idyll*, (for violin and piano)**

Frederick May's *Idyll* for violin and piano is stylistically the most contemporary of the pieces presented in this recital. While the date of composition is uncertain, it is thought to have been composed in the early 1930's, around the time he received a scholarship to study with Vaughan

Williams and Gordon Jacob at the Royal College of Music, London. Mark Fitzgerald dates the piece from the “1930s rev 1950s.”²⁸⁸ In my opinion It probably predate his studies with Egon Wellez in 1934, as it is pastoral in character.

The version I play for my recital is from an edition that has been edited and prepared by Mark Fitzgerald.²⁸⁹ It is reminiscent of Vaughan William’s style, in particular his one-movement work, *The Lark Ascending*, with its soaring fluid pentatonic lines and folk-music allusions. May indicates *quasi recit, senza misure* which roughly translates, in a recitative style without measure. This would indicate a very free non-metronomic interpretation of the piece. This also draws comparison with the opening *cadenza* in *The Lark Ascending* where Williams indicates a very free interpretation with *senza misura*, i.e. without bar-lines.

Figure 6.32: Williams, *The Lark Ascending*, Cadenza, opening phrase²⁹⁰

The musical score for the opening phrase of the Cadenza in *The Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The score is for Violin solo, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The tempo is 'Andante sostenuto' and the performance instruction is 'con sord'. The Violin solo part is marked 'Cadenza senza misura' and 'pp sur la touche'. The other instruments are marked 'ppp con sord'.

The opening violin *cadenza* of *Idyll* is pentatonic, which gives the composition a folk, or traditional feel right from the start. Whereas the piece is not strictly pentatonic in its entirety, the overall character of the piece is pentatonic. This has a parallel with traditional music which not only has a repertoire of pentatonic melodies, such as *Fáinne Geal an Lae*, but also contains

²⁸⁸Fitzgerald Mark, *Retrieving the Real Frederick May*, Technological University, Dublin, 2019

²⁸⁹ May Frederick, *Idyll* for violin and piano, (copyright estate of Frederick May; edition prepared by Mark Fitzgerald).

²⁹⁰ Williams Ralph Vaughan, Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, 1925

airs and dance tunes which, though not strictly pentatonic, retain an overall pentatonic character, such as the above-mentioned *The Lady's Cup of Tea*.²⁹¹

Figure 6.33: May, opening measures of solo violin²⁹²



This piece is so attractive that it could hardly be omitted from the programme. It is also quite challenging to play, however, with its wide melodic range, soaring melodic lines and transparent accompaniment. This piece has effective *cadenza*-like passages for unaccompanied violin, attractive dialogue between violin and piano, with imitation and counterpoint. The concluding harmonics in bars 47 - 49 were added by Mark Fitzgerald as part of the editing process,²⁹³ figure 6.34.

Figure 6.34: May, Concluding measures of the piece with violin harmonics, bars, 45 - 49 ²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ In conversation with guitarist John Feely 2016.

²⁹² May Frederick, Idyll for violin and piano, (copyright estate of Frederick May; edition prepared by Mark Fitzgerald). (score).

²⁹³ In conversation with Mark Fitzgerald. Feb 9th 2022

²⁹⁴ May Frederick, Idyll for violin and piano, (copyright estate of Frederick May; edition prepared by Mark Fitzgerald).

6.4 Concluding Remarks

A recital of this nature provides many challenges. Arguably, the greatest of all is to make a short selection from the wealth of music available. Some of the music, at least for me, chose itself, but many pieces were the outcome of a long-drawn-out, internal wrestling match.

Almost any selection would have served the central purpose of the Recital. That was, to show clearly the nature of the interface and to examine the kinds of influences which have crossed this boundary from one *genre* to another over time. This is a fascinating topic and one that affects all *genres* of music, not just Irish traditional and art music.

7.1 Introduction

The musical composition, *Famine Odyssey*, is the second artistic endeavour, or artifact, in this APR study on the interface between Irish traditional music and art music. It seeks to integrate *sean-nós* singing, uilleann pipes and traditional fiddle into an orchestral art-music setting, attaching equal importance to both traditions while maintaining a tonal, idiomatically-Irish feeling throughout. The current chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the composition; the following discusses a number of art music and traditional music influences which permeate the work, as well as identifying where this work is positioned in the musical literature.

Most of the present chapter is a presentation of this work and discusses selected elements of the work movement by movement, seven in all. But first, in section 7.2, we turn our attention, briefly, to what I view as the main structural elements, or cornerstones, of this composition. First is a short elaboration of how *Famine Odyssey*, as a creative concept, has evolved slowly as a musical goal in my subconscious since childhood – in no sense was it a spontaneous decision. Second, the historical story of the flight of Brigit Ann Tracey from Newry to Canada in 1847, and the *idée fixe* which represents her, provide the structural narrative and framework on which the composition is built. And finally, we have the *Famine Theme*, a core musical theme which runs throughout the work, provides the principal *motif*, and is introduced incrementally to keep the focus facing forward rather than back.

7.2 Cornerstones of *Famine Odyssey*

7.2.1 Motivation for and Evolvment of a Creative Idea

I have been interested in the Irish Famine, *An Gorta Mór* or the Great Famine, for as long as I can remember. My early years were spent in the townland of *An Luinneach* on the western seaboard of County Donegal, a district ravaged by the Famine and post-Famine emigration. This was the Ireland which predated the legacy of Seán Lemass, before there was any talk of economic growth or job creation. Many local men would migrate seasonally to Scotland to earn

money to support their families as potato-pickers on large estates in Scotland²⁹⁵ As a child, oblivious to this hardship, I would play happily among the relics of emigration, stone ruins of deserted old cottages whose roofs made of sods or thatch had long ago caved in.

I heard many stories about the Famine, no doubt sanitised for youthful consumption, and they left a lasting impression. Some of this was in the guarded tones of my grandparents, a topic unsuitable for children, as they would have known about the desperate, even horrific circumstances of many people who had survived the Famine. The memory was recent, painful and raw, and not yet a mere chapter in a history book.

As I grew older and involved in Irish music, I became aware that there was a dearth of music dealing with the Famine, and none at all that I know of written during the Famine. I can imagine two reasons for this: First, poets lived largely from the benevolence and *largesse* of society and from teaching, and so were most likely among the earliest casualties of the Famine. Second, the topic is remorselessly distressful and must be very difficult to capture in words, if at all. Whatever the reason, the Great Famine is unique in Irish history as a cultural vacuum. Although famine has been a recurring tragedy in all agrarian societies throughout history, there is no significant literature on, or cultural treatment of the subject. Fortunately, there are many historical works on the topic.

My more recent interest was sparked by a conversation I had in 2016 with his Excellency, Kevin Vickers, the Canadian ambassador to Ireland. He brought to my attention that in the year 1847, the highpoint of the Famine, almost as many Irish refugees went to Canada as to the United States in spite of it being a much longer voyage. That this is almost entirely overlooked may not be surprising as Canada was not established as an independent country until 1867, exactly twenty years later. In 1847, Canada was a cluster of crown colonies, just like Ireland, so that restrictions on the arrival of distressed refugees did not apply. Most refugees crossing the Atlantic for “America” did not distinguish between Canada and the United States. It is not widely known that more Irish had already settled in Canada before the Famine than arrived during the Famine. For the most part they left from Ulster, fleeing religious discrimination. During the Famine and post-Famine, emigration was mostly to the United States which probably explains why Ellis Island looms large in the Irish consciousness, but not its counterpart, *Grosse Île*. For Irish Canadians, *Grosse Île* is no less a part of their diaspora DNA.

On subsequent visits to Toronto, I came in contact with the Canada-Ireland Foundation and its dynamic chairman, Robert G. Kearns. At this time, the Foundation was immersed in a

²⁹⁵ They were known as “Tatie Hokers”, see <https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/ballycroy/ballycroy-history-tatie-hoking.html>, (accessed 10. November 2024).

major project to establish a memorial park in Toronto in honour of Dr. George Robert Grasett, and others, who had sacrificed their lives to aid sick Irish immigrants in 1847. I was asked to write a tribute to Dr. Grasett, which is now, in expanded form, part of this work. They put me in touch with many interested parties, and it is largely through these contacts that the contours of this project took shape. The final push came in the form of an opportunity to realise my widely-strewn ideas in fulfilment of the requirements of a PhD in Arts-Practice Research at Dundalk Institute of Technology. This provided expert supervision and encouragement as well as the necessary discipline to work to a timetable, and a deadline.

As the project progressed, so too did the interest of the Canada-Ireland Foundation. Robert Kearns expressed an interest in staging the completed work in Toronto under the auspices of the Foundation. With the support of this organisation, and the expert liaison of Dr. Sheila Flanagan, what had begun as a relatively modest Arts-Practice project, grew organically, both in scope and in potential. In particular, the possibility of obtaining an orchestra and choir expanded the horizons of what was now possible beyond all previous expectations. The performance was originally scheduled for late 2022, the 175th anniversary of the events portrayed, but Covid restrictions disrupted preparations. The inaugural performance, therefore, took place in the Winter Garden Theatre, Toronto, to a capacity audience, on March 9, 2023.

The live performance of this work may be viewed on YouTube, courtesy of the Canada-Ireland Foundation, under the title *Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope*, at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjX2DB379X4&t=4s>

7.2.2 The Brigit Ann Tracey Narrative and *Idée Fixe*

The programme or narrative of *Famine Odyssey* is a linear description of the flight of a seven-year old girl, Brigit Ann Tracey, her five-year old brother, Tom, and their aunt, Peggy Clancy, to Canada in the spring of 1847. Thanks to family folklore published in Canadian sources, we have a skeletal outline of this dramatic flight, but not very much more. Their experience was shared with tens of thousands of other emigrants, fleeing from famine in Ireland.

Brigit Ann Tracey is the heroine of the narrative and gives it a face,²⁹⁶ and a focus which is more powerful than could be achieved with an impersonal account of events. We know she

²⁹⁶ A photograph of Brigit can be seen at <https://www.canadairrelandfoundation.com/explore/irish-famine-migrant-stories/>. It is part of her wedding photograph, taken when she was 25 years old.

left Newry, County Down, in the early spring of 1847 along with her brother and that the children were accompanied by their aunt, Peggy Clancy. The fate of other family members, or what caused their flight just then is unknown. Their journey to Limerick is not recorded but may well have been on foot in the winter/spring of 1847. We know they sailed on a ship, the *Jane Black* from Limerick and, hence, the precise date of departure. Brigit's great granddaughter, Terry Smith, recounts how Brigit's five-year-old brother was lost in the *melée* during boarding, never to be seen or heard of again. We know the dates on which this ship arrived, first at *Grosse Île*, and then Quebec. We also know that Brigit and her aunt took the steamer to Toronto – there was simply no other way of getting to their destination – and that they were among the first wave of emigrants to arrive in Toronto in the early days of June 1847. After that, family folklore and public record are more detailed and specific.

Peggy Clancy, Brigit's aunt, obtained a position in domestic service in the town of Whitby, near Toronto. She dedicated her life to rearing her niece. At the age of eighteen, Brigit entered for, and won, a local beauty contest for the title "Belle of Whitby". This was of social importance as it signified that the ragged and diseased refugees of the Famine were now fully accepted into Canadian society.

That is the skeletal storyline of *Famine Odyssey*.

Brigit is the thread that holds the story together. She is ever present throughout the narrative by means of an artistic device, the *idée fixe*, or *Leitmotiv* – (see figure 7.6 and section 8.3.1). *Famine Odyssey* is her story, a tragic experience she shared with thousands of other Famine refugees. On her journey she would have witnessed the full horror of events as they unfolded, but mercifully, she and her aunt were spared the very worst.

Brigit Ann Treacy died in 1924 at the age of 84. Her aunt Peggy Clancy lived to be 103.

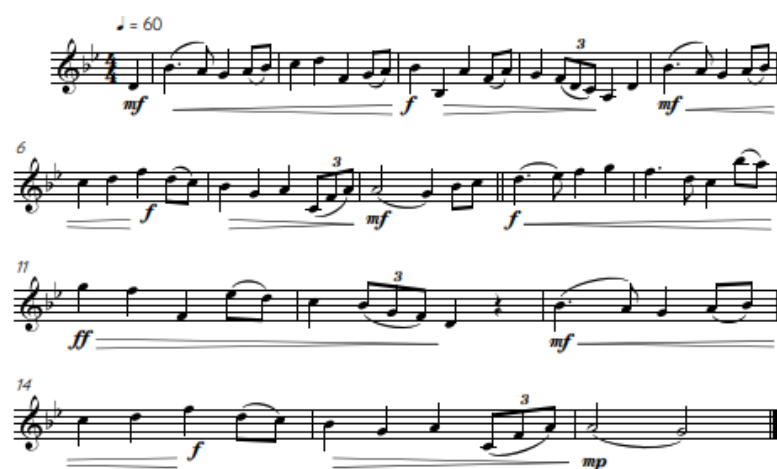
7.2.3 The *Famine Theme*

The *Famine Theme* is the main theme of *Famine Odyssey*. Unusually, perhaps, it is first heard in its complete form in the *Reprise*, at the end of the sixth movement. In spite of this late appearance, various segments of the *Theme* crop up frequently throughout the work, on a variety of different instruments and, sometimes, under different guises. The first two bars of the *Theme* are heard at the very opening of the work and are repeated frequently thereafter as a

motif. So, in spite of its late appearance in complete form, it is quite well established by that stage and should have a familiar ring. What is new in the *Reprise* is the B-part which is now heard for the first time.

The complete 16-bar *Famine Theme* is presented in Figure 7.1. It has the arc of a traditional slow air with the second phrase resting on the 2nd degree of the scale. One of my earliest ideas had been to position the *Famine Theme* at the arrival on *Grosse Île*, almost as a triumphant celebration at having successfully crossed the Atlantic, or as deliverance from the

Figure 7.1: *Famine Theme*, Main theme of *Famine Odyssey*



Famine. But, as so often in this story, arrival on *Grosse Île* constituted a severe reversal of hopes and offered no grounds for any form of triumph. *Grosse Île* ends, and in the transition to the following phase, a plaintive horn solo emerges performing the first part of the *Theme*, as a brief lonesome farewell to the dead, reminiscent of the *Last Post*.²⁹⁷

Use of the *Theme* in the first movement, *A Cry from Ireland*, and the fourth movement, *Arrival in a New World*, is intended to create a bridge between departure and arrival. But there are differences. In the former, a substantive portion of the *Theme* is played on uilleann pipes, oboe and divisi, first violins, figure 7.2. It features a more agitated rhythmic pattern, not dissimilar to an Irish or Scottish snap. This is an echo of the double-dotted figure in the string accompaniment, which is imitating the contour of the *Rollán Figure* (see chapter 8.11), but also referencing overture style in baroque music, blending traditional and classical features. This iteration of the *Theme* is incomplete as it ends on the third phrase.

²⁹⁷ The *Last Post*, signifying inspection of the last sentry post in an inspection tour of a military camp at night, is a bugle call used in the British army and the armies of the British Commonwealth. Today, it is played as the final item at military funerals, or services commemorating the fallen in various wars. It signifies that the deceased have reached their “last post” – of eternal repose. It was composed in London at the end of the 18. century, and is widely (but not universally) attributed to Josef Haydn. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Post (accessed on 25 August 2024).

Figure 7.2: *Famine Theme* on Uilleann Pipes etc. *Cry from Ireland*, (bars 11 - 19).



In the fourth movement, the first two phrases of the *Theme* are played separately on cellos and oboes. This is in response to repeated statements of the *motif*. The dotted figure, so prevalent previously, is now omitted, to give the *Theme* more pathos, reflecting the tragic nature of circumstances on *Gross Île*.

The *Famine Theme* reappears in different forms to suit the mood and character of a piece, thus giving a certain unity to the work. In *Ghostly Escorts* (third movement) it is sung by solo soprano and tenor to the text of the *Kyrie Eleison, Christi Eleison* from the Latin Mass, as the passengers are confronted with the presence of sharks reminding them of death. The double-dotted figure, or snap, is maintained in this section. (*Ghostly Escorts*, bars 13 – 16).

In the *Steamer* (fifth movement), it reemerges as a playful dance tune (polka), and finally, in *Reprise*, an entire B section is heard for the first time which borrows melodically and rhythmically from the first part of the *Theme*. The effect of this concluding iteration, is to give the *Famine Theme* the structure and style of a slow air. The slow air concludes with a repetition of the second line of the *Theme*, giving it the structure A – A1 – B – A1.

7.3 Analytical Description of *Famine Odyssey*²⁹⁸

Famine Odyssey – Structure

Movement	Section
1. A Cry from Ireland	Famine 1847 Twilight Canadian Wake
2. Departure	Boarding Mo Bhrón Ar An Fharraige Long Fé Lán tSeól Hey Ho Canada Way
3. Coffin Ship	Ghostly Escort Off the Coast of Cape Breton Gulf of Saint Lawrence PAUSE
4. Arrival In A New World	<i>Grosse Île</i> <i>Ne Jamais Oublier</i>
5. Endurance	The Steamer Seven Candles / <i>Ave Verum</i> Fever Sheds
6. Awakening	Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett The Belle of Whitby Reprise
7. Epilogue	Canada, We Thank You!
Total Running Time	80 minutes

Work on *Famine Odyssey* commenced, autumn 2019

First version completed, autumn 2022

Current (revised) version completed, spring 2023.

²⁹⁸ In the present chapter, relatively little attention is devoted to the musical influences which have found their way into this work as that is dealt with separately in chapter 8.

By the spring of 1847, all hope that things might somehow improve, was gone. The third consecutive failure of the potato crop left many of the peasantry with neither the resources nor the strength to recover. They were staring into the abyss of death by starvation and I have attempted to convey a feeling for this looming void. The Gaelic speaking districts of the West of Ireland were among some of the worst affected areas of the country. The vast majority of those who emigrated were monolingual Gaelic speakers, and this is highlighted by the fact that, with the creation of the Confederation of Canada in 1867, serious consideration was given to making Irish the third official language of the State.

The losses by famine, fever, and emigration were greatest among the cottier class and in the most Gaelic parts of the country. In Mayo and Kerry for example, the population fell by over half. (Curtis Edmond, p. 371).

7.3.1 First Movement

<i>A Cry from Ireland</i>	- <i>Famine 1847</i>	C-minor (home key of <i>Famine Odyssey</i>)
	<i>Twilight</i>	A-minor/ D-minor
	<i>Canadian Wake</i>	D-dorian/ A-major

The short opening, *A Cry from Ireland*, captures the hopelessness and affliction of the population in the grip of a cruel Fate. The second part, *Twilight*, expresses the bewilderment of a young girl unable to comprehend what is about to happen. The final part, *Canadian Wake*, is an attempt at a cheerful farewell when all parties know they will never meet again, or even hear from each other again.

Famine 1847

When writing the first part, *Famine 1847*, I chose sounds that are intentionally dark and restless, signifying famine, disease and despair. I chose the C-minor tonality for the theme, and as a home key for the entire work, because of its darkness and strength, sitting as it does at the bottom of the harmonic series.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ This key has been chosen by composers for some of the most profound works in the art-music repertoire, such as Mozart's Adagio and Fugue, Beethoven's 5th Symphony and Bach's Fantasia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 537, for organ, later transcribed by Edward Elgar for orchestra.

This section, which is loosely ternary in form, opens with a statement of the principle motif of the movement on solo horn. This is the opening bars of the *Famine Theme*. It is a rising interval of a minor 6th falling stepwise to the tonic.³⁰⁰

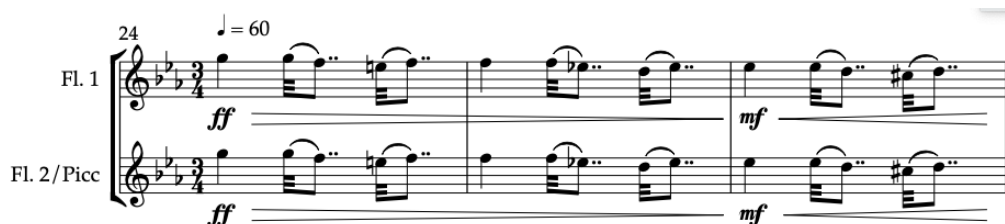
Figure 7.3: Principle Motif on Horns, *Famine 1847* (bars 1 - 2)



This opening motif is then restated canonically by the trumpets an octave higher and by the trombones an octave lower. The horn elaborates on this motif, leading to the conclusion of this fanfare with a unison tonic pedal. This fanfare, which is 8 bars long, sets a maritime mood reminiscent of ships horns, foretelling the sea journey ahead as well as announcing the opening of the work.

The focus moves from the brass to the woodwind (bar 8), letter A, with a double-dotted ornamental figure over a stepwise descending bass. This is what I call the *Rollán Figure*³⁰¹ and is widely used in both *sean-nós* singing and in the instrumental tradition. Its precise rhythmic properties are difficult to define as they may vary from performer to performer, with different regional styles, and within the musical context. Here I use a double dotted rhythmic pattern which gives an exact duration to the grace notes and also gives the assembled players a constant pulse with which they can associate, reminiscent of overture style (figure 7.4). This ornamental feature is taken up by the strings 4 bars later, where they accompany the first statement of the *Famine Theme*, played by uilleann pipes, oboe and divisi, first violins.

Figure 7.4: Flutes and piccolo playing descending sequence of the rollán-like ornaments, *Famine 1847*, (bars 24 - 26)



³⁰⁰ The arc of this motif is very classical in structure. In musical terms it reflects *tension and relief*, the rising figure creating tension, which then falls away relieving this tension. This is symbolised by the Acanthus leaf and most Gregorian Chant, on which the classical music tradition is founded, is based on this pattern.

³⁰¹ See section 8.11.

As the movement progresses, the rollán figures become quite agitated and angular with large leaping intervals of sixths and octaves as opposed to the stepwise motion of the original ornamental feature. The opening motif is continually heard in this section, initially (bars 10 - 12) by the horns, (bars 14 - 16) by trombones, and tuba (bars 16 - 18). This music becomes increasingly tense and agitated as it progresses, reaching a high point (bar 22), with a timpany roll and a cymbal hit.

I have added a descending, stepwise bass line which was written in this style in order to give gravitas to the score and to convey the feeling of impending danger, tragedy and misfortune, with smooth gradual change in the harmony. This anticipates the wave-like motion of the ocean.

Figure 7.5: Reprise of descending bass, cellos and bass, (bars 29 - 36)



We now hear the most emphatic statement of the motif played on unison strings and trombones (26 - 28), which is the real *Cry from Ireland*, after which the music comes to rest, pausing on the chord of the dominant 7th (bar 29). At this stage the outpouring of grief and despair has subsided.

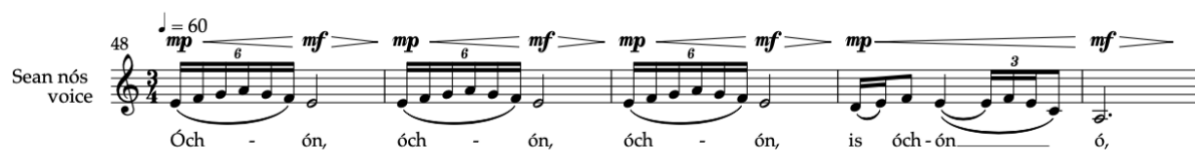
Twilight

I have chosen the title *Twilight* for the second part of the trilogy in the opening movement. The title reflects a phase of transition. It is binary in form, with two contrasting sections, A and B. It also contrasts with *Famine 1847* in that the *sean-nós* voice is introduced for the first time, representing the young Brigit Ann Tracey on the eve of her departure from her home to a destination she cannot comprehend.

Now there is also a change of tonality with the music descending into the key of A-minor, which establishes an entirely different mood, reflecting the loneliness, the apprehension, the uncertainty she must have felt. It is introduced by a synchopated dissonant feature in trumpets and trombones creating a feeling of unease; this is followed by a rhythmic sextuplet

figure on timpani which is taken up by *sean-nós* voice as she begins to sing the *idée fixe*. (bars 48 to 52, and figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6: Bridget Ann Treacy, *Idée Fixe*, (bars 48 - 52)



The motif which she sings is notated in $\frac{3}{4}$ time with the first crotchet ornamented as a sextuplet figure. This motif is her signature and will recur throughout the work as a sonic reminder of her presence - an *idée fixe*. It will recur periodically until the *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett* in the fifth movement, linking her departure from Newry and arrival in Toronto.

The theme which she sings is in various meters, and is based on the aforementioned ornamental sextuplet figure in the opening phrase. Having already worked with *sean-nós* singer, Sibéal Ní Chasaide, on this theme, it became clear that her interpretation would be much freer in meter and ornamentation. I rewrote her vocal line to take this into account. At this point, the conductor and *sean-nós* singer will have to cooperate very closely.

This *idée fixe* is later recalled in the theme of *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett* with the former resembling the melodic contour of the opening four bars of the latter. Both themes are intentionally outside the Irish-music idiom to highlight the fact that Grasett was Canadian, of Portuguese birth, and a brother of the Anglican Archbishop of Toronto. He had no cultural or religious ties with Ireland, being motivated solely by his compassion for those in need.

Figure 7.7: Opening of *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett*, movement 5, (bars 1 - 4)



These opening bars of the *idée fixe* (figure 7.6) are repeated by the strings, with sustained notes on the horn maintaining our maritime effect. The vocal theme then modulates to E-

minor, and A-major, before restating the *idée fixe* in the key of D-minor. Here the trumpet provides a new timbre, before resting on C-sharp, to establish a chord of A-major; this acts as a dominant chord leading us into D-minor, which is highlighted by the imitation of the clarinets in bars (61 - 63).

Figure 7.8: Clarinets in imitation, Twilight bars (61– 63)



The opening phrase is now repeated in D-minor with an accompanying halo on the upper strings. Tension increases as the singer resumes the theme, with horn and timpani beats building a sense of urgency and propulsion, and with imitation on flutes and upper strings.

Having allowed the vocal free reign from there, I was surprised where it took me. It may be that my studies of Wieniawski and Sarasate came to the fore here, but I am inclined to think there was another influence. As a young violin student in Vienna I was very taken with the music of the *Zigeuner* fiddle players, at the gaeity and agility of their technique and their beautiful harmonic progressions.

As the music continues we are brought through the harmonic progressions of B-minor and A-major reaching the highpoint on the chord of G-minor before it falls away with a diminished-G-minor chord, highlighting the chromatic movement in the vocal line which rests on the dominant chord of A-major at bar 76. The movement concludes with a descending scale-like passage in the vocal, following the contour of the harmonic-minor scale, creating a hint of *sean-nós* song and Gypsy styles. At the end we have a silence followed by the final note; this is a typical Connemara *sean-nós* ending. In the Connemara style, the last note is sometimes spoken, not sung. This note overlaps with the choral entry at bar 78 with a change of meter.

Figure 7.9: Modulation and chromatic movement in *sean-nós* voice, (bars 71 - 78)



Part B of *Twilight* provides contrast, with an unaccompanied choral introduction while staying in the tonal centre of D-minor. This is the first time we hear the choir, which sings the first line of the *De Profundis* in Latin, a Sicilienne-style theme in 6/8.

At bar 78, we have a transition from *sean-nós* singer, singing in 5/4, to the choir singing *De Profundis* unaccompanied in 6/8. This transition from 5/4 to 6/8, unaccompanied, proved to be rather challenging (figure 7.9). Then, in bar 86, the choir drops out and the soprano and tenor sing the *De Profundis* accompanied by the woodwind. This is intended to provide contrast between the *sean-nós* voice and the classical soloists using the choir as a bridge. Unity is maintained by the use of the same, or similar, harmonic language for both sections.

The more freely interpreted A-section, with its *sean-nós* phrasing and timing, is now followed by the B-section which is more classical in character, contrasting the two styles. The music in B maintains the harmonic language and gipsy-like character so evident in section A, providing unity. This provides a seamless transition from the opening vocal solo in section A to the duet entry in section B.

Canadian Wake

The third and final part of the opening movement is based on the concept of the Canadian wake. In Famine times, most ships travelling to the USA or Canada advertised their destination simply as America. The Canadian wake alludes both to a farewell gathering for those emigrating, which is analogous to the practice of waking the dead on the night before burial.

I decided on a set of hornpipes/barn-dances to convey the atmosphere in the family home the night before departure. These newly-composed tunes are arranged in the traditional manner, with each tune played twice before proceeding to the next tune. I also included a change of key between the first and second tunes which is the modern practice in the idiom. The bitter-sweet character of the occasion is especially evident in the first of these dance tunes, which is in the melancholy tonality of D-dorian. It is written in a style reminiscent of Martin Hayes and Paddy Fahey, from the East Clare and East Galway music traditions, with their melancholy turn of phrase, mellow tonalities, and relaxed soulful tempo.

Figure 7.10: Fiddle solo, barn-dance melody in D Dorian, (bars 120 - 122)



The feeling of sadness is reinforced by a lonely descant-style accompanying line on the oboe which moves stepwise so as not to disturb the melancholy atmosphere. The harp joins in the B section of the tune, in a vamping style reminiscent of old-style piano players, also known as piano drivers, creating an almost traditional trio waiting by the fire for the dancers to assemble. The pattern of the accompaniment to the first barn-dance echoes the syncopation from the opening bars of Mozart's *Requiem*, figure 7.11, a subliminal reinforcement of gloom.

Figure 7.11: String figure, (bars 155 - 156)

This building up of the texture is intended to reflect the increased participation in the dance as more dancers join in. The sustained notes on the horn recall the maritime character of the previous sections, while an idiomatic scale-like passage in the upper strings is typical of the variation a traditional fiddler would use to herald a transition to a new tune. This dovetails into a bridging passage introducing the happy tonality of A-major.

The dance is now in full swing and for a brief moment we forget our sadness and the impending journey to escape hunger and disease. Other traditional instruments will join the fiddle, including the pipes. This increasing sense of gaiety is also reflected in the orchestral

texture which now grows fuller, with the harp, flutes and 1st. violins maintainig the imitative figure of the bridging passage throughout.

For the final round of the tune, the dance reaches its apex and the clarinets and lower brass join the fray. Even the trombones join in the sense of fun imitating our melodic contour and the descending scale previously heard on the traditional fiddle. The piece finally ends with a *molto rallentando* before coming to rest on a paused *semibreve*. This is a rather nostalgic ending which is intended to convey how sadness flows back after the gaiety of forgetfulness. It introduces a tinge of sadness and nostalgia to the conclusion of the movement. We leave the wake reminded of the sadness of the occasion rather than ending with a sense of merriment and fun. Very soon they will have left Ireland forever.

7.3.2 Second Movement

<i>Departure</i>	- <i>Boarding</i>	E-minor
	<i>Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige</i>	G-dorian
	<i>Long Faoi Lán tSeól</i>	G-mixolydian
	<i>Hey Ho Canada Way</i>	E-pentatonic/ G-pentatonic

In the second movement, we portray the atmosphere of parting. First, we have the absolutely chaotic conditions at boarding. Second, *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige*, is a lament for the tragic loss of five-year-old Tom Tracey, who went missing during boarding. *Long Faoi Lán tSeól* is a slow air which captures a flickering of hope as the ship finally sails. And finally, *Hey Ho Canada Way*, is a sea shanty the sailors sing as they go about their work.

Boarding³⁰²

This is written to conjure up the chaos and panic of boarding. It is quite angular in its contour and written in a contemporary style. After a stately introduction and a restatement of the

³⁰² Boarding was more a scramble than an orderly process; the ships were cargo ships and normally carried few if any passengers. Moreover, there were no set sailing times and many passengers waited, sometimes for days sometimes for weeks, until the ship was ready to sail. During this time, they had to fend for themselves as best they could, wherever they could. There are even accounts of passengers who ran out of resources and had to go home before the ship set sail.

sextuplet figure on timpani, we get agitated movement, with rapid, scale-like figures on upper strings, figure 7.12. This scale-like passage is restated canonically by lower strings and horns.

Figure 7.12: Agitated movement on harp, followed by a scale-like *anacrusis* figure in 1st violins. (Bars 21 – 25)

The musical score for Figure 7.12 shows four staves: Harp, Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The Harp part begins at bar 21 with a scale-like figure in the right hand, marked *mf*. The Violin I and II parts enter at bar 22 with a scale-like figure in the right hand, marked *f*. The Viola part enters at bar 23 with a scale-like figure in the right hand, marked *ff*. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *f*, *ff*) and a tempo marking of 100.

The sense of drama and danger is also emphasised by varying the accent, especially on the triplet figure and with the use of chromaticism. Departure continues in this restless fashion in order to reflect the sheer agitation and danger of boarding, especially for children.

Figure 7.13: varied accents and chromatic passage work on oboe, (bars 36 – 39)

The musical score for Figure 7.13 shows the Oboe part starting at bar 36. The Oboe part features a chromatic passage with varied accents, marked *f* and *mf*. The score includes dynamic markings (*f*, *mf*) and a tempo marking of 100.

Historical accounts suggest that this was more of a melee than an orderly process.³⁰³ This was made even more complicated by the requirement of passengers to provide their own food for the passage, as little or none was provided on board throughout the voyage; whatever was brought on board could be cooked on the few grates provided. The staple food of Irish emigrants on the ships was oatmeal and water.³⁰⁴ Brigit's younger brother, Tom, was lost while boarding and was never heard of again. Six children of similar age were deposited in the

³⁰³ When experiencing existential fear, chivalry and civilised behaviour tend to disappear. Historical accounts, such as those reported in the weekly newspaper, *Quebec Mercury* and elsewhere, contain many accounts of gross violence which peaked during the Famine. This is not uncommon.

³⁰⁴ [https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Folklife-Collections/Folklife-Collections-List-\(1\)/Other/Emigration/Irish-Emigration-to-America-The-Journey](https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Folklife-Collections/Folklife-Collections-List-(1)/Other/Emigration/Irish-Emigration-to-America-The-Journey) (accessed Aug 30th 2022).

Limerick workhouse on the day the coffin ship, the *Jane Black*, sailed. Their names were not recorded.

This piece is reminiscent of the *Tarantella*, from Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne III* (1933). In particular, this applies to the restless string movement, accentuation, scale-like movement and the spritely dance-like character of the music.

Figure 7.14: Boarding, flutes and piccolo (bars 11 – 14)



Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige

Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige is a newly composed song in the *sean-nós* style. It is through composed in that no section of the melody is repeated. This is characteristic of some harper airs such as *Molly St. George* by harper Thomas Connellan (c.1640 - c.1700). *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige* is set to the text of a poem of the same title, collected by Douglas Hyde in his poetry collection, *Love Songs of Connacht* (Hyde, p. 28, 1893).³⁰⁵ I have set the first three verses of the poem to music. The context and narrative of the song is apt for the narrative of the story, in particular Brigid Ann Tracey's younger brother Tom, who was separated from his family at boarding and was never heard of again. This song is a lament for her lost brother.

This must have been agonising for his sister and aunt. This is reflected in the opening phrase of the song with its rising interval of a 10th, and is meant as a cry of despair. This interval is also sounded on the horns, thereby recalling the opening of the work.

Figure 7.15: Opening phrases of song *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige*, *sean-nós* voice (bar 121 - 124)



³⁰⁵ Douglas Hyde gives an interesting account with this song stating that "this is how a woman keens after her love, exceedingly simply and melodiously. I got this song from an old woman named Biddy Cuasraroee, (or Crumnee in English), who was living in a hut in the midst of a bog in County Roscommon". Douglas De hídé was professor of modern languages at the University of New Brunswick, Canada, and subsequently professor of Irish at University College, Dublin. He was the first elected president of the Republic of Ireland (1938 – 1945).

The use of parallel harmony in the string accompaniment, reminiscent of the impressionist school is intended create a magic mist, *ceó dríochta*, depicting the extreme sorrow of having lost her younger brother at boarding. *Ostinato* flute and piccolo in the 2nd and 3rd verses (bars 130 – 132) create tension and movement.

Long Faoí lán tSeól

This piece brings us from despair and loss, to optimism and hope. It is written for solo pipes and orchestra, reflecting the sense of relief the passengers must have felt at finally setting out to sea. The heroic nature of the pipes represents the coffin ship as it sets out on its voyage across the vast Atlantic Ocean,

The boat pushed off and, in a few minutes, I was on board the brig that was to waft me across the wide Atlantic.³⁰⁶ (Whyte 30th May 1847).

This hope and optimism are evident right from the start with a strong rhythmic pattern on timpani.

Figure 7.16: Rhythmic pattern on timpani, (bar 142)



The heroic nature of the pipes dissipates the melancholy character of the previous section bringing variety and pace. This piece, which is ternary in form, is written in the style of a rhapsodic Irish air, such as *Caoine Uí Dhomhnaill*. Sonically, this piece is informed by the harmonic language of the uilleann pipes with the lower strings imitating the drones, and the horns moving harmonically in a manner suggestive of the regulators of the pipes.

The opening phrase I have called the “Dan Down scale”, which is a rising mixolydian scale on G (see section 8.4, Figure 7.17). This section is dedicated to his memory.

³⁰⁶ White Robert and James J. Mangan (Ed), (1847); *Famine Ship Diary, The Journey of an Irish Coffin Ship*. Mercier Press.

Figure 7.17: *Dan Dowd* scale on oboes and clarinets (bar 155)



This phrase, with its call like character, is a central element of this composition, and reappears throughout. We see it below in the introduction where it is stated in an imitative way by flutes, piccolo, oboe and horns. It is also evident in the central section, where it is stated in a call and response form between pipes and orchestra.

Hey Ho Canada Way:

This lively song in 6/8 time is modelled on old Gaelic occupational songs and contains both a refrain and a chorus. It has a typical vocal structure of A - A1 - B - A1. It is pentatonic in character like many Gaelic songs, such as *Fáinne Geal an Lae*. While the A sections of the song are tonally in the pentatonic scale of E, the B section modulates to the pentatonic scale of G. This, along with the melodic contour, places the song sonically in the idiom of Irish traditional music.

The sea shanty features mostly the male voices. This is for the obvious reason of sea shanties being sung by sailors while going about their tasks. These were typically sung in a call and response style, with solo voice, and chorus in unison. The phrasing of the melody is suggestive of that structure with a rising figure in the first phrase, the call, followed by a falling figure, the response. These songs typically have a strong rhythmic pulse reflecting the rhythm and pulse of the task in hand. For that reason, I choose a lively 6/8 double-jig tempo reminiscent of occupational songs such as *Túirne Mháire* (Mary's Spinning Wheel).

The text of this song, which is newly written, contains the response *Hey Ho Canada Way* in order to give the song the character of a sea shanty. In the chorus, the sailors are joined by the *female Chorus* (see section 8.6) representing the sailors' wives and sweethearts, in spiritual union, from on the other side of the ocean.

...the seamen promptly proceeded to their work with apparent pleasure although (being the Sabbath) they did not accompany the action with the usual chant.³⁰⁷

7.3.3 Third Movement

<i>Coffin Ship</i>	- <i>Ghostly Escorts</i>	A-minor
	<i>Off the Coast of Cape Breton</i>	E-pentatonic/G-major/A-major/
	<i>Gulf of Saint Lawrence</i>	G-minor

The third movement describes the hardship of the transatlantic voyage. The first piece reflects the endless tedium of the voyage and apprehension about sharks following the ship as corpses were consigned to the depths. The *Coast of Cape Breton* reflects a lightening of the mood as the Atlantic has been traversed. But the *Gulf of Saint Lawrence* shows there is still a long way to go with many hazards, typically storms and icebergs, to be overcome.

Ghostly Escorts

This initial section of the movement *Coffin Ship*, which is ternary in form, is intentionally dissonant so as to reflect the never-ending monotony of the voyage. The passengers also feel a sense of fear, particularly in the knowledge of sharks following the ship due to numerous burials at sea.

A shark followed us all the day and the mate said it was a certain forerunner of death.³⁰⁸

For passengers in such cramped conditions below deck, pretty much for weeks on end, some of them seriously ill, it must have seemed like Hell on Earth. The text of the *Kyrie Eleison*, sung by soloists and choir reflects the plight of the suffering, pleading for mercy and daring to hope for salvation. It features the frequent repetition of variations of the opening motif, some comprised of the descending figure only. We also hear the *idée fixe* with *sean-nós* voice, and phrases of the opening theme of the work. The mood is dark throughout.

³⁰⁷ White Robert, James J. Mangan (Ed), 1847 Famine Ship Diary, The Journey of an Irish Coffin Ship. Mercier Press.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

Figure 7.18: Ostinato bass, *Ghostly Escorts*, opening measures

The musical score for Figure 7.18 shows the opening measures for Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 60$. The time signature is 3/4. The Viola part is in G major (one sharp) and the Violoncello and Contrabass parts are in C major (no sharps or flats). The pattern consists of a half note followed by a quarter note, alternating between *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamics across four measures.

This sense of unease is amplified by the oscillation of the ostinato bass (figure 7.18) and the dissonance in *female Chorus* voices (figure 7.19). These eerie choral lines with their dissonant clashes, such as minor 2nd, are contemporary in style and are descriptive of the wailing of the *Bean Sí*, a harbinger of death in Gaelic folklore. In the contemporaneous diary, written by Stephen De Vere, who travelled on a coffin ship and recorded his experiences, he describes passengers lamenting their decision to travel when they could at least have had a Christian burial in Ireland.

Figure 7.19: Dissonant choral lines, (bars 29 – 30)

The musical score for Figure 7.19 shows the dissonant choral lines for Tenor Solo, Soprano, and Alto. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 60$. The time signature is 3/4. The Tenor Solo part is in G major (one sharp) and the Soprano and Alto parts are in C major (no sharps or flats). The lyrics are: "Chr - is - te e - lei - son,". The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the Tenor Solo, *mp* (mezzo-piano) for the Soprano, and *p* (piano) for the Alto. The score includes a triplet of eighth notes in the Tenor Solo part.

The *idée fixe* is heard here in a very different context. It is intended to blend with differing orchestral textures, much as how changing a colour filter on a spotlight can change the atmosphere in a theatrical scene. In this context, the *idée fixe* blends into the dissonant

character and sombre mood, reinforcing the desolate atmosphere of the music. The sextuplet figure of the *idée fixe* is also imitated by other instruments such as flute, piccolo, and harp where it is played in unison with the *sean-nós* voice. The harp sounds both the *idée fixe* and the ostinato bass, (bars 21 – 22).

The central section of Ghostly Escorts, features the *idée fixe*, with dissonant brass accompaniment and repeated statements of the motif on flute, piccolo and oboe.

Off the Coast of Cape Breton

This three-part double-jig brings a change of mood which is both joyous and wistful, dissipating the fear and tension of the previous section. It is scored for traditional instruments and orchestra. It is accompanied by the use of parallel harmony, and recalls the previous *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige*. In this instance, it is to convey a sense optimism at seeing land in the distance.

The passengers expressed great delight at seeing land and were under the impression that they were near their destination, little knowing the extent of the gulf they had to pass and the great river to ascend. (Whyte's diary entry, July 10th 1847).³⁰⁹

Unusually for an Irish jig, it modulates to a different key in each of its three sections. The first section, (A) is in E-pentatonic. The second section (B), modulates to G-major, which implies more optimism, though it retains the character of the previous tonality. The third section (C) is in the happy key of A-major reflecting a brief cheerful hopefulness, in spite of oneself. This is short lived as the descending passage at the end of the section spirals back down to our opening tonality, the more-melancholy E-pentatonic, dissipating our optimism (figure 7.20). This reflects the circular structure of many traditional dance tunes where the final section dovetails back into the opening section of the tune maintaining the circular structure. This ending is also descriptive in that we are being brought back down to earth, returning to the more melancholic E-pentatonic, for having dared to hope.

Figure 7.20: Descending figure on pipes, *Off Cape Breton*, (bars 201 – 205)



³⁰⁹ White Robert, James J. Mangan (Ed), 1847 Famine Ship Diary, The Journey of an Irish Coffin Ship. Mercier Press.

The Gulf of St Laurence

The concluding section of this movement, *The Gulf of St Lawrence*, is also a descriptive piece. It is intentionally agitated in order to reflect the terror of a storm at sea, especially when confined to the bowels of a small ship. We know from historical records that some coffin ships perished in these storms, most notably *Carricks* which perished within sight of land, off the coast of Quebec in 1847.³¹⁰

The start of this section recalls the tension from the start of *Twilight* (first movement) with a reprise of the dissonance on trombones and trumpets, and the rhythmic pattern of the sextuplet figure of the *idée fixe* on timpani, figure 7.21.

Figure 7.21: Restatement of sextuple figure of the *idée fixe* on timpani, (bar 219)



This is followed by angular arpeggiated movement in strings introducing the choir, which sings a declamatory chant with the words *Gorta* meaning famine, which repeats every four bars.

This is answered by the horns which are by now hinting at a new theme (figure 7.22), which is beginning to emerge from the chaos of the impending storm. This idea governing this segment is an old proverb from Rosmuc, Co. Galway; *Tá braon i mbéal na gaoithe* (there is a drop in the wind's mouth), and is a common way of predicting an impending rainstorm.

Figure 7.22: Horns anticipating new theme of hope (bars 237 – 238)



³¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/12/31/bones-found-on-canadian-beach-likely-from-coffin-ship-from-irelands-great-famine/> (accessed August 27th 2023).

This new theme, the *Storm Theme*, is anthemic in character, and derived from the ground bass of the entire work, also in *Coffin Ship*. It is sung by the *sean-nós* singer and is a set to the first stanza of the poem by Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852), *Before the Battle* (By the Hope Within us Springing). The heroic qualities of the *sean-nós* voice suit the setting of Moore’s poem, which is a battle cry. In this case the impending battle is with an Atlantic storm.

Figure 7.23: *Storm Theme* based on the ground bass, *sean-nós* singer (bars 238 – 241)



The sequential structure of this theme (figure 7.23) is reminiscent of the *Frère Jacques* theme of Mahler’s first symphony in D-major (1887 - 8). The G-major chord which commences the B section of the theme, in an otherwise minor tonality, creates tension between both parallel tonalities.³¹¹

The strings simultaneously play a variation on this theme in the form of a reel, in effect framing the theme.³¹² The reel, which is initially played in half time in the introduction to the storm, is played in octaves by the 1st and 2nd violins, alluding to the tradition of octaving in the Donegal fiddle tradition. Along with this, the trumpet response heralds the storm (bar 231).

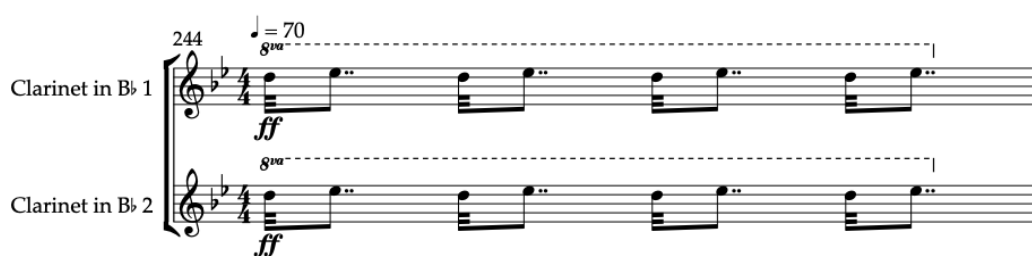
This theme, which is heroic in character, symbolises the steadfast nature of the boat, while the reel and surrounding effects depict the chaos of an Atlantic storm. This is descriptive writing with the purpose of sonically portraying the tempest. This is done in a variety of ways such as the descending chromatic figure in the trombones and the ascending and descending figure in flutes and piccolos as they imitate the howling of the wind and rain (bar 289).

We also hear the cry of sea gulls, figure 7.24, a bad omen, as they seek shelter in the ship’s wake.

³¹¹ This was common in the Renaissance, with devices such as the Picardy 3rd giving an otherwise sad piece a happy ending. We also see it in more recent classical repertoire such as Ravel’s *Menuet* from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, (1914 – 1917). This device is also used in popular music, such as in the Beatles song, *Michelle*, and *Dumb* by Nirvana. In the former, we get word painting with the deliberate use of the word “Michelle” on an F-major chord.

³¹² This reel is also derived from the ground bass.

Figure 7.24: The cry of the sea gulls, clarinets, (bar 244)



As the storm progresses, the music becomes more and more agitated and our anthemic theme is passed from *sean-nós* singer to horns.

The choir and soloists now start singing a new *counter theme*, to the text of an old Irish proverb from Corca Dhuibhne, West Kerry, *Fógraimís an Ghorta* (let us renounce the famine), also derived from the ground bass. Now we have the new *storm theme*, the *reel*, a new *counter theme* (SATB) etc. and the ground bass all playing together, all derived from the ground bass. My intention here is to combine the agitated sound of the storm, with the choir as the passengers in the ship, renouncing the famine and pleading for their lives. The ground bass is now played in repeated quaver notes by lower strings giving propulsion and increasing the sense of movement and agitation. This is presented in chapter 8.9.3.

The heroism of the initial theme has now ceded to the raw fear of drowning in the storm. This counter theme, which has already been heard on pipes, is proclaimed here by the chorus. This counter theme emerges later as the main theme of *Fever Sheds*, the concluding section of the fifth movement (*Endurance*).

The entire movement of *Coffin Ship* concludes with a restatement of the brass fanfare from the opening material of the first movement, *A Cry from Ireland*, with repeated canonic statements of the motif and the opening phrase of the main theme.

7.3.4 Fourth Movement

<i>Arrival in a New World</i>	-	<i>Grosse Île</i>	G-minor
		<i>Ne Jamais Oublier</i>	C-major/ A-minor

The movement begins with the opening motive in varied forms, such as descending thirds on horns. The opening theme is then stated on cellos, oboe and finally on solo horn. The second

piece has the character of a *chorale* (see section 8.7) and is a tribute to the people of Quebec, including the Mohawk Indians, who adopted, or cared for, many unattended orphans. The refrain of the first and third verses are in French, as a tribute to all Quebecers (or Québécois) for their generous humanity.

Grosse Île

Gross Île, belying its name, is a small island on the approaches to the Port of Quebec³¹³. It was not a point of immigration, as was its New York counterpart, Ellis Island, but a point where arriving immigrants were checked for possible health risks. As parts of the Empire, restrictions on entry from Ireland did not apply, in contrast to emigration to the USA. Disease was rampant, not only on the coffin ships, but also spread quickly to the onshore facilities on *Grosse Île*. A testimony to the high mortality is evidenced by a plaque, erected by Dr Douglas the medical officer on *Gross Île* at that time, on the site of a mass grave of Famine victims on the Island.

In this secluded spot lie the mortal remains of five thousand, four hundred and twenty-five persons who, flying from pestilence and famine in the year 1847, found in North America but a grave (Coogan, 2012, p.207).³¹⁴

When planning the music for the movement titled *Gross Île*, I chose to return to the main theme of the work with its darkness and anxiety. This piece opens in an agitated manner with celli stating the opening motif of the work. The timbre of the celli in G-minor was ideal for conveying the dark and desperate nature of their arrival. This is answered with an angry *fortissimo*, (*fff*), with timpani roll and agitated angular semiquaver chatter in the upper strings using leaps of octaves and fifths, much as a flock of crows would scatter from a gunshot. The immigrants were sometimes left for days in disease-ridden holds of ships before being allowed to disembark. The opening statement is treated motivically and most of this section is built on these three elements demonstrated in figure 7.25.

When they finally disembarked, things did not improve much. This agitation is therefore maintained with imitation of the cello motif in 10ths on flutes and piccolo, and with imitation of the strings figure on the clarinets. The aim is to create tension reflecting the

³¹³ This is described in greater detail in Appendix B.

³¹⁴ The number of dead was likely much higher, in the region of 25,000, though at the time a significantly lower number was reported to avoid embarrassing the British Government in Canada. (Smith, Angele 2004, P. 222).

hopelessness, anxiety and fear described above. De Veere effectively captures the essence of this;

... several died between ship and shore, ghastly appearance of boats full of sick going ashore never to return.³¹⁵

Figure 7.25: The three elements of the motivic opening statement of *Grosse Île*, (bars 1-4).

The return of the familiar opening motif in a dark and restless manner, is intended to create a heightened sense of unease. Sometimes, the most effective depiction of horror occurs in familiar surroundings. The music continues to build in intensity with the descending figure of our motif sounding on horns and trumpets in descending intervals (figure 7.26). These are interspersed with repetitions of the rising semiquaver figure, previously heard on clarinets and violins, now on tuba.

This is a noisy affair, with visual music, restless and dramatic, portraying the sick, the dying and the well, all mixed together in a cauldron of infection and disease. There was probably much crying, praying, and remorse by those who had chosen this path to salvation. There would also be the sounds of the clatter of care workers, the doctors, orderlies, nurses and all kinds of other employees and helpers who themselves must have been terrified of becoming infected with, and dying from, typhus. Death may be silent but dying is not, particularly for those who are hallucinating, or are at an advanced stage of disease.

³¹⁵ Quoted in King, Jason (1916), p. 4.

Figure 7.26: Brass stating opening motif in a descending figure, (bars 9-12)

The image shows a musical score for a brass section, specifically bars 9 through 12. The instruments listed on the left are Horn 1,2; Horn 3,4; Trumpet 1,2; Trombone 1,2; Baritone Trombone; and Tuba. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The score features a descending motif across the brass instruments. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte). There are also markings for *a2* (second octave) and *a1* (first octave). The Tuba part is written in the bass clef, while the other instruments are in the treble clef. The score is written for a full brass section, with each instrument having its own staff.

The horn emerges from the confusion, unaccompanied, giving the first entire statement of the first part of the *Famine Theme*, concluding the section with pathos. They died in their thousands and the unaccompanied horn solo is a lament for those who died in the fever sheds of *Gross Île*.

Ne Jamais Oublier

The second part in this movement is a choral piece titled *Ne Jamais Oublier* which acknowledges the countless Irish children orphaned in Canada during the spring and summer of 1847. It also pays tribute to the French-Canadian families who adopted them. The children were encouraged to keep their own family names and were told to “never forget where they came from”, hence the title of this *chorale*, (see section 8.7). The adoption of so many Irish orphans during this time in Canada is a little-known historical fact. Some of the children were orphaned on the Atlantic crossing, while others were orphaned soon after arrival at *Gross Île*.

Most of the children had lost parents, either at sea, during the journey, or in the fever sheds of Grosse Île. (Mc Gowan, RTE, 2021).

John Francis Maguire³¹⁶ recorded the tragic story of the family of Robert Walsh, where both parents died of fever, to the great distress of their children - just one of numerous cases. It

³¹⁶ This is the same John Francis Maguire who founded the *Cork Examiner* in 1866.

is easy to imagine the plight of monolingual children, who have just lost their parents, so that they have no one to care for them and no one can even understand them.

The Mohawk Indians also adopted Irish Famine orphans at this time. A chance conversation I had with their Chief at a reception in Toronto, yielded some fascinating insight. He told me, without elaboration, that “there is a memory of these children among my people.” He also told me that they “took some of them in”. I asked him how they went about this and he replied, “We take them in, we feed them and we make them strong.” I also asked him how they found these children and he answered, “they were just roaming about”.³¹⁷ This conversation was interesting as it touches upon oral memory among the Mohawk Indians of this event. It is evident that the Mohawk tribe, and possibly others tribes as well, sheltered and cared for Irish orphans.

In seeking music that would reflect the profound sense of loss, both personal and collective, I chose a biblical source, Psalm 137 *By the Rivers of Babylon*, as a textual source for a choral piece commemorating the orphaned children of the Famine in Canada. In this Psalm, the Jewish people, exiled from their homeland, sit down by the rivers of Babylon and weep for their homeland. I have set the first stanza only, as this seems best suited to capturing the sentiment of the piece. I have also set this text mainly in Irish as this would have been the language spoken by the children. The words seem more poetic and sorrowful in Irish.

Ar shrutheanna na Bablóine a shuíamar síos ag sileadh deor,
Ar shrutheanna na Bablóine ag cuimhneamh dúinn ar Shíon.

This section starts with solo *sean-nós* voice³¹⁸ in the strong C-major tonality, giving a smooth transition from the horn solo in the G-minor tonality of *Grosse Île*. This is one of the big themes of the work and is a musical and emotional highpoint. This piece with its serene melodic line, as well as the unaccompanied voice, provides considerable contrast to the previous section. The *sean-nós* voice is joined in bar 38 (figure 7.27) by the flutes playing a very classical falling figure, and this will be taken up later by strings. In bar 41, the *sean-nós* voice is joined by harp and the *alto* section of the choir. One should note the harmonic language as well as the Bach-like triplet movement in the harp entry, which is a variation of the melody sung by the *sean-nós* voice. The *altos* are singing in classical style, and in counterpoint to the *sean-nós* voice. This transitional phase between two quite different *genres* is deliberately meant

³¹⁷ In conversation with Chief of the Mohawk Indian tribe, 2018. The casual manner in which they adopted Irish children further supports the contention that the official statistics very much understate the true figures.

³¹⁸ In chapter 4, I explained the mechanics of notating this chorale for *sean-nós* voice, in this case the *sean-nós* interpretation of Sibéal Ní Chasaide. *Seán-nós* interpretation can be individual, so that some modification will be necessary where it is sung by a different singer.

to be smooth and frictionless; it is a good example of what I have sought to achieve with this work. It is but one example of many. This synthesis between the different *genres* is a defining feature of *Famine Odyssey's* location on the art-music traditional-music interface.

Figure 7.27: *Ne Jamais Oublier* chorale with harp accompaniment, (bars 35 - 44)

41 $\text{♩} = 55$ *mf* *f* *f* *mp*

S. nós voice

46 *mp* *mf* *mp*

Fl.

Picc.

Ob.

Hp.

S. 1

A.

Cois sruth - an-na na. Boinn - e a shuí - om - ar ag - si leadh - deor, Cois -

sruth - an - na na Boinn - e Ne - ja - mais ou - bli - er, Ar shail - eog - a na

Ar shail - eog - a na

Figure 7.27A: Chorale *Ne Jamais Oublier* sung in French by *sean-nós* singer

mf *f*

94 Com - ment chan - te - ri - ons nous, sur une terre ét -

mf *f*

97 ran - gér - e, Sur la bords des fleuves. Ba - by lone, Ne - ja - mais ou - bli -

p *rall.* *p* *mp*

101 - e, Ne - ja - mais ou - lier - er,

The music also recalls *Twilight*, with a restatement of the *idée fixe*, which is intended here to provide an auditory link between the opening of the work to their arrival on *Gross Île*. Note the contrast in styles between the *sean-nós* voice singing the *idée fixe* unaccompanied, and when accompanied by female voices. The latter is intended to dovetail with the choral character of the verse, so as to flow naturally from one genre to the other. Moreover, the falling figure on the upper strings at the chorale entry is classical in character.

In the final verse, the *sean-nós* voice returns bringing all these elements of the piece together in a final climax, such as the triplet figure in the harp, the falling figure in upper strings and the rich choral harmonies. A larger orchestral texture is now evident. The movement concludes with a statement of *Ne Jamais Oublie*, ending on an imperfect cadence (bar 99), and this is followed by a restatement of the final phrase.

7.3.5 Fifth Movement

<i>Endurance</i>	- <i>The Steamer</i>	B-minor to D-major/ E-minor to G-major
	<i>Seven Candles/ Ave Verum</i>	E-major (E-Ionian mode)
	<i>Fever Sheds</i>	G-minor

Passengers travelling beyond Quebec were obliged to board the *Steamer*, because sailing ships were unable to navigate the rapids on the Saint Lawrence river. The journey to Toronto took several days and involved several ports of call. We depict one of them, at Montreal, where fever sheds were erected along the river bank for refugees who had left Quebec in apparent good health but had become very ill along the way. *Seven Candles/Ave Verum* is a tribute to the Grey Nuns of Montreal, and all others, who assisted the sick and dying. The final destination was Toronto, where *Fever Sheds* were also erected near the river to accommodate the seriously ill.

The Steamer

The emigrants who had been processed on *Grosse Île* and were deemed well, were packed onto steamers and dispersed down river to Quebec City, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto. Passengers were so tightly packed on deck, that there was standing room only. This mixing of the well with the sick in very close quarters meant that typhus spread quickly among the passengers.

This piece is written in the style of a set of Irish polkas, which are binary in form, to which I add typical noise of a paddle wheeler. The polka, though not a traditional Irish dance, was transformed when it became integrated with Irish traditional music in the late 19th century.³¹⁹ Micheál O Suilleabháin compared this process to an asteroid hitting a planet, the planet of Irish traditional music. These polkas were absorbed and transformed in a process that

³¹⁹ This is apparent from the fact that the Goodman Collection of Irish traditional music, which was collected in West Cork and Kerry (1860 – 1866), doesn't contain a single polka.

left little in common with their central European antecedents. They are meant to accompany set dancing with key and tune changes chosen to inspire the dancers.³²⁰ The Kerry variant, which is the basis of this piece, has an unusual feature with the accent on the second of each pair of quavers, creating a syncopated rhythmic pulse. This feature is reversed on the last beat of every line where the accent is placed on the final crotchet. This follows the rhythm of the dance.³²¹ This can be seen, (bars 18 – 21). They quickly gained in popularity so that, today, polkas represent a sizeable part of the current traditional music repertoire, particularly in Kerry

The rhythmic pattern of this Kerry variant of the polka is particularly evident in the syncopated rhythm of the timpani, cellos and basses. This syncopated rhythm, which is imitated later by brass and woodwind, is descriptive of the thud of the engine and the continuous chugging of the paddle steamer's paddle wheels. They are notated in 2/4 time and are played at a fast pace.

The sound of the steamer's horn is simulated with sustained chords on brass at the start of this section (figure 7.28). This horn was used upon arrival and departure from a riverside town and as a warning to other vessels on the river. I experimented extensively to find a suitable sound and finally settled on the most dissonant one I came up with. You wouldn't miss the departure of this paddle wheeler, which is preceded by a cracking rhythmic introduction on timpani.

The imitative string figure which follows the brass chord (ship's horn), bridges the discordant opening material to the first polka giving us the feeling of movement - in this case departing from the jetty and going out onto the river. The *accelerando* in the syncopated bass line gives the impression of movement and acceleration

³²⁰ In conversation with Micheál O Suilleabháin (2000).

³²¹ In conversation with Steve Cooney and Séamus Begley.

Figure 7.28: Dissonant brass chords imitating paddle steamer's horn (Endurance bars 1 - 5)

The musical score for Figure 7.28 shows five measures of music. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The brass instruments (Horns 1,2; Horns 3,4; Trumpets 1; Trumpets 2,3; Trombones 1,2; Bass Trombone; and Tuba) play sustained, dissonant chords with a crescendo and decrescendo. The Timpani plays a rhythmic pattern in the first measure, then rests. The score is for five measures (bars 1-5).

Seven Candles / Ave Verum

The *Steamer* transitions seamlessly from the key of E-minor to the parallel key of E-major for *Seven Candles/Ave Verum*. As the steamer docks in the city of Montreal, we hear the *female Chorus* (see section 8.6) represent the Grey Nuns of Montreal, in singing the chant-styled *Seven Candles/Ave Verum*. This section is sung by female voices only, consisting of sopranos, altos and soprano solo.³²² This has been done in order to evoke the spirit of the Grey Nuns of Montreal, and others, who put themselves in mortal danger to attend the sick and dying immigrants in the fever sheds.

Plainchants are monophonic, modal in character and usually have a narrow range, typically one octave. They tend not to be accompanied though this is not a hard-and-fast rule. *Seven Candles* is written in the Ionian mode on E. It has a range of one octave, and movement is mainly stepwise. Intervals are small, typically 3rds and 4ths. The *Ave Verum* is a *Eucharistic* hymn and we, therefore, imagine the nuns singing it at Mass. It starts serenely, with sopranos and altos, singing unaccompanied, in counterpoint (see bars 83 – 85).

³²² As a last-minute adjustment to the performance, the soprano solo was added to give greater stability and confidence to the choir. This worked so well that I decided to include it as a permanent feature.

The first two sections of the *Ave Verum* maintain a chant-like style, and are sung unaccompanied. The addition of a sustained pedal on lower strings on the dominant chord of Bmajor7th in the third section, creates tension. This tension is released in the final section, which is a reprise with variation of the opening section. It includes full harmonic string accompaniment, which frames the vocal, giving it a classical character, reminiscent of Haydn or Mozart.³²³

As the steamer takes off again, the serenity of the vocal singing is followed abruptly by a dissonant bridging passage heralding the reprise of the first polka with canonic imitation of material from B section of the first polka. The Steamer takes off again down river with its chugging paddle wheel, accelerating on its way to Toronto.

Fever Sheds

Fever Sheds in G-minor follows abruptly as many of the passengers, on landing, were brought directly from Reece's Wharf in Toronto, to the *Fever Sheds* nearby. Many of them died. This cry from the depths, is derived from the third section of the movement *Coffin Ship*, the *Gulf of St Lawrence*, and restates its choral section ominously with a call and response between soprano and choir. All the fury of the Atlantic storm is stripped away and it is now accompanied by horns and timpani (figure 7.29), and later by strings, reinforcing our perception of doom. It is intended as a quasi-requiem for the dead and dying in the fever sheds.

Figure 7.29: Horns and Timpani, (bars 187 - 188)

The musical score for Figure 7.29 shows the Horns and Timpani parts for bars 187 and 188. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 50. The Horns 1,2 and 3,4 parts are in treble clef, and the Timpani part is in bass clef. The dynamics are marked as mezzo-piano (mp) at the beginning and mezzo-forte (mf) at the end. The music consists of a simple, rhythmic pattern of quarter and half notes.

The restatement of the choral section creates a link between the Atlantic storm and the fever sheds, the two greatest danger points of the entire odyssey: One from the fury of the

³²³ The classical character towards the end of the *Ave Verum* was commented on by the American horn player, Kenneth Silverstein, who attended the concert in Toronto.

tempest and the other from the ravages of disease on immigrants who had little or no resistance. The harmonic language is derived from our ground bass, though here, it is in a varied form, (bars 211 – 212).

7.3.6 Sixth Movement

<i>Awakening</i>	- <i>Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett</i>	D-minor/ G-minor/ C-minor/ D-minor
	<i>The Belle of Whitby</i>	B ^b -major
	<i>Reprise</i>	G-minor

The first piece in this movement is a lament for Dr Grasett, a young doctor who was appointed, at his own request, Supervisor and Chief Attending Surgeon of the Emigrant Hospital (fever hospital) in Toronto on the 18th June 1847. He fell ill with typhus, then an incurable disease, within two weeks of his appointment and died of typhus on the 16th July. Embedded in this lament is a *Valse Triste*, or sad waltz.³²⁴ Following that is the aria, *The Belle of Whitby*. Finally comes the *Reprise*, the finale, which presents the complete *Famine Theme*, of which only segments have been heard so far.

Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett

This lament, which is ternary in form, is a flowering of the *idée fixe*. The melodic contour of the *idée fixe* and the first phrase of the *Elegy for Grasett* are similar (Figure 7.30), creating a link between Bridget Ann Tracey and Dr Grasett. In figures 7.30 and 7.30A both have a similar melodic arc and they both descend through an interval of a fifth. After that, the *Elegy for Grasett* emerges as a melodic theme in its own right. Moreover, the *Elegy for Grasett* is sung by the *sean-nós* voice, representing Brigit Ann Tracey, thus reinforcing the link even further.

Figure 7.30: Melodic contour of last 3 bars of the *idée fixe*, *Twilight* (bars 50 – 52)



³²⁴ This is also reflected in the keys used, in the contrast between the A section in G-minor and the B section in B-flat, its relative major.

Figure 7.30A: 1st phrase of *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett, Awakening* (bars 1 – 4)



My intention was to create a musical link between Brigit Ann Tracey and Dr Grasett, one representing the immigrants who were in dire need of medical assistance, the other the head of the medical response to the health crisis in Toronto. This is essentially a musical device as there is no indication that that the two ever met. Coincidentally, the two were in Toronto at the same time.

The initial statement of the theme is responded to by the violin solo which elaborates on it in a varied or improvised form, and is accompanied by tremolo strings. This violin improvisation is important in the dialogue between *sean-nós* singer and solo violin, and is meant to have a Gypsy-like quality, with the violinist picking up and elaborating on the theme as sung by the *sean-nós* singer, figure 7.31.

Figure 7.31: Violin elaboration on Grasett theme (bars 28 – 37)



The ensuing bridging passage with its rising imitative passages, reminiscent of Stanford and the English school, modulates through various keys, with repeated statements of the melodic and rhythmic motif of the opening phrase in varied form, figure 7.32. It finally rests on the parallel tonic chord of D-major, leading us into the central section of the *Valse Triste* in G-minor.

Figure 7.32: Bridging passage on harp, bars 36 – 40



The Valse Triste, or sad waltz, has a wistful quality, as it implies a certain sadness in an otherwise happy context, such as the tears at a wedding, or the unhappy clown. It is dedicated to all those, religious and secular, who risked their lives in tending to the Irish Famine immigrants in Canada during the spring and early summer of 1847.

Stylistically it is closer to the eastern European, or Gypsy-music aesthetic, with its fluctuating augmented 4th, suggestive of the Hungarian double-minor scale or the Gypsy Aeolian mode, rather than to Irish music. This is intentional, as the care givers who attended to the sick and dying were, for the most part, neither Irish nor Catholic. It also alludes to the Gypsy-like, character of the *idée fixe* in *Twilight*, hence creating an auditory link between our heroine at the start and at the conclusion of the story.

The Belle of Whitby

This reflective aria, the *Belle of Whitby*, written in a *quasi Da Capo* style, gives an opportunity to our classical singers to shine in a challenging vocal duet. The *sean-nós* voice, passes the baton at the end of the *Elegy* which transitions smoothly into the aria. The melody is a stylistic blend of the melodic arc of a traditional air and the sequential character of classical melodies.

Figure 7.33: Introduction to the aria, *The Belle of Whitby* in B flat major, (bars 195 – 198)

The *Elegy* is scored in D-minor and the following *Belle of Whitby* in B^b-major. In this way the key relations are preserved, so that the *Elegy* ends, and the introduction to the aria begins on the note of D. This works as a pivotal note, modulating between the two keys.

According to the lyrics of the *Belle of Whitby*, and the intention behind this aria, it is here that Brigit Ann Tracey finally overcomes the severe trauma she suffered as a result of her experiences. The years of patient and therapeutic assistance of her aunt have helped her overcome her fears and this triumph is the final tipping point. It is here that her personal *Odyssey* ends.

Reprise

The final section, or finale, concludes the work with a *reprise* of thematic and motivic material from both the 1st and 4th ‘movements. It differs from them however, in that the statement of the main theme, on solo horns is repeated with tremolo strings to heighten tension, leading to the emergence of the *Famine Theme*, this time as a slow air.

Up to now we have only heard excerpts from the *Theme*, sometimes disguised in various forms (see section 7.2.3). We now hear the complete *Famine Theme*, including the entire B-section for the very first time, see section 7.1. This B-section is melodically and rhythmically derived from the first part of *Famine Theme*. It is played with full symphonic forces, featuring oboes and trumpets on the melodic line, with variation on upper strings in the repeat, giving a rousing conclusion to the movement and to the work. This use of variation in the repeated material is an important aspect of performance practice in traditional music.

7.3.7 Seventh Movement ³²⁵

Epilogue - *Canada, We Thank You!* C-minor/ C-major

Canada, We Thank You!

The final movement is a typical “Encore” in the time-worn tradition of the theatre. An encore serves the dual purpose of signalling the very end of the performance and of bringing all

³²⁵ An organ part is included as an important element of the score for this movement, to give depth and a heroic quality to the concluding stanzas of the *Epilogue*. I had also considered introducing it earlier, in particular in *Seven Candles*, but decided against as it made the piece liturgical rather than contemplative. In any case, an organ was not available in Toronto, and had to be omitted. However, it remains an important part of final movement.

performers back on stage to share the appreciation of the audience. However, it is part of *Famine Odyssey* and is in keeping with the character of the work. It projects a generation forward in time, and depicts the descendants of those Irish refugees who fled Ireland in 1847 thanking Canada for the humanitarian assistance extended by so many people in Canada to their forefathers. Musically some compromises were necessary.

Canada, We Thank You is an anthem of gratitude, sung by the Irish diaspora, expressing their appreciation for the humanity and bravery with which Canadians received their people in 1847. This anthem of gratitude begins with a recapitulation of the opening fanfare from the first movement, which is in C-minor. However, it quickly modulates to the “happy” parallel key of C-major for the anthem proper. It starts with the character of a slow ballad, telling a tale;

*On the wind-swept coast of Newfoundland
Were only just alive*

....

*We were met with such love and compassion
Kind strangers who ne’er asked why?*

In the chorus, it breaks out into a moving, even emotional, and powerful anthem;³²⁶

*Canada, we thank you
Your outstretched hand in our hour of grief
Canada our refuge!
Responding to our need.*

³²⁶ Although planned as an inspiring rather than emotional piece of music, the latter sentiment was the dominant feeling experienced by many Canadians in the audience. One example emerged in a conversation with James Moloney, a member of parliament for Newfoundland, after the concert in Toronto. He told me how emotional that moment was for him and how it reminded him of their anthem *O Canada*.

Appendix to Chapter 7

The original intention was to provide here a discussion of some of the feedback received following the initial performance of *Famine Odyssey*, along with some of my responses and thoughts on this feedback. In many Arts Practice Research studies this is considered an important aspect of reflection on the creative activity and an integral part of its further development. Due to pressure of space, some adjustments have been necessary. For this reason, this discussion is postponed, and provided instead as Appendix A at the end of the thesis.

8.1 Introduction

This chapter considers some of the most important influences which have supported the composition, *Famine Odyssey*. I say some, because many influences are, and will probably remain, subconscious. Others are very minor in terms of their presence in the work. In this chapter I focus on aspects of art music, and traditional music, which were consciously adopted, and which I felt contributed to the work and added to, or facilitated, what I was trying to express. Some of the traditional influences have already been discussed in the Recital, chapter 6, and will not be repeated here.

8.2 Gregorian Chant

My personal approach to composition has always been to decide on a musical style for a particular piece which matches the nature and character of the piece in question. One episode in the fifth movement of *Famine Odyssey* deals with the heroism of men and women, of different nationalities and religious persuasions, who rushed to the fever sheds near Montreal to attend to the sick and dying.

One of the very first to volunteer were the Sisters of Charity, known locally as the Grey Nuns of Montreal. Although all of the nuns became infected, seven of their number are recorded to have died, which is why the piece is titled *Seven Candles*.³²⁷ They were soon joined by other orders, including the Sisters of St. Joseph, a contemplative order, whose members had to receive special permission of their bishop to set aside their vows of silence. They all undertook this action at great risk to their own lives and the piece, to the text of the *Ave Verum*, acknowledges their sacrifice.

In paying homage, I felt that the soaring and uplifting quality of Gregorian chant could best capture the spirit of heroism and serenity that reflected their calling as well as their sacrifice.

³²⁷ This local name for the order came from the grey habits they wore as a sign of humility. To this day, seven candles are lit every year in the convent in Montreal in honour of those who died.

This liturgical chant, with its origins in antiquity, is based on the singing style of the early Latin Church. Codified by Pope Gregory I (590 - 615), it quickly became the official music of the universal church.

Gregorian chant is monophonic and moves mainly stepwise with small intervals, mainly thirds. This gives the chant a serene flowing line with even, metrical time values. It is this which gives the music a timeless quality in order to reflect eternity.³²⁸ “It is a music sung on one plane, and no part of it is to be quicker than the other, which simply means that each note is equal”, (Hekenlively 1978 p. iii)³²⁹ The melismatic character of the chant, along with its gapped scales, modal tonalities and free rhythm, bears a striking resemblance to some aspects of the Irish-language song tradition, and *sean-nós* singing in particular. Irish music, which predominantly uses the Ionian, Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian modes, may have been influenced by the plainchant singing of the early Irish church.³³⁰

In my own work I added a contrapuntal line, as well as a string accompaniment towards the end of the piece, figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1: *Famine Odyssey*. Counterpoint in *Seven Candles/Ave Verum*, 5th movement, (bars 83 – 88)

The image shows a musical score for two voices, Soprano and Alto, in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats (♩ = 60). The score begins at bar 83. The Soprano part starts with a piano (p) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-piano (mp) section, and ends with a piano (p) dynamic. The Alto part follows a similar dynamic pattern. The lyrics are: 'A - ve ve - rum cor - pus, na - tum de Ma - ria vir - gi - ne,'. The music is written in a style that combines traditional Gregorian chant with modern contrapuntal techniques.

The *Ave Verum* is a 13th century chant, which is sung during the Eucharistic Consecration of the Mass, and has been set to music by many composers in various styles. Mozart’s setting in D-major (1791) for choir and orchestra K. 618, is perhaps the best known though there are notable settings also by Joaquin des Prez, William Byrd, Franz Liszt, and Edward Elgar.

While *Seven Candles* contains some characteristics that are not typical of the plainchant tradition, the addition of counterpoint was a personal choice which added harmonic interest and also allowed me to include all the female voices of the choir. Nevertheless, I have observed the

³²⁸ In conversation with the concert violinist Yossi Zivoni, professor of violin studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, University of Manchester.

³²⁹ Hekenlively cites 13th century author, Elias Salomon.

³³⁰ In conversation with Michel O Suilleabháin about a programme for Gregorian chant at the IWMC.

stepwise motion, restricted the chant to a single octave, and as far as possible kept the intervals small using only 3rds and 4ths.

The melodic line of *Seven Candles* is also influenced by features from the Goodman collection (1861-1866).³³¹ I refer in particular to an ornamental feature, or turn of phrase, that is common to some of the airs and slow airs in that collection. It consists of a four quaver or semiquaver figure, moving stepwise in a melodic arc, constituting what could be called a “musical sigh”. In the case of *Duan an Oirimh*, (*the ploughman’s song*), figure 8.2, it occurs in semiquaver form.³³² In *Sliabh na mBan*, this feature occurs in every section of the tune, bars 4, 10 16 and 22.

Figure 8.2: *Duan an Oirimh*, Goodman collection, No 324, (bars 6 – 7)³³³



This turn of phrase also occurs in every section of *Seven Candles* acting as a unifying factor between the various sections of the piece, figure 8.2A. In the third section this feature occurs a fifth higher.

Figure 8.2A: Melodic Arc, *Seven Candles*, *Famine Odyssey*, (bars 105 – 106),



8.3 Thematic Unity

Thematic unity has long been an issue in art music, one need only think of the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi (1678 – 1741), and many devices had been developed over centuries to help create an integrated work.

³³¹ The influence of collections of old Irish music is discussed at greater length in section 8.8 as well as chapter 6.

³³² Shields, Hugh, ed., *Tunes of the Munster Pipers / Irish Traditional Music from the James Goodman Manuscripts*, Volume 1, Dublin, 1998, p. 144

³³³ Ibid. p.133

The composition *Famine Odyssey* is clearly based on an integrated theme. As a descriptive work in an historical setting, thematic integration is not in question. Beyond this, it was decided to enhance musical integration by the ample use of art-music devices which had evolved over time to this end. Three well-recognised devices are used extensively.

8.3.1 *Idée Fixe (Leitmotiv)*

The *idée fixe* is an artistic device which has frequently been used in a variety of artistic fields, “to evoke associations, or recurrences, involving people, places or ideas.”³³⁴ They have been used, *inter alia*, in music, art, literature and architecture. Its key role has been to provide a thread, or link, that served to integrate the entire work.

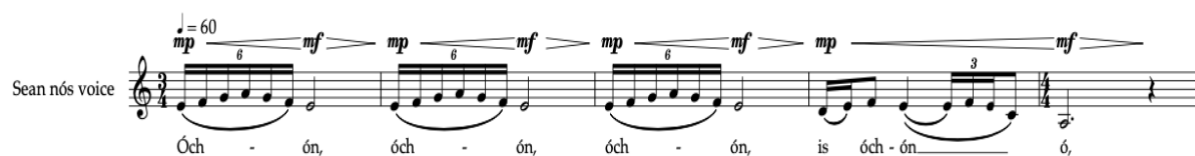
The *idée fixe* was used extensively by Wagner in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* opera cycle. But an earlier example and one of the most famous uses of this device is to be found in *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830) by Hector Berlioz (1803 – 1869). This *idée fixe* represents the young musician’s romantic obsession with an idealised, perfect woman, but his love remains unrequited. This symphony was the first important example of programme music, as each movement involves an encounter of the composer with his obsession.

In reading about Irish emigration to Canada in 1847, including discussions with the historian Stephen King, and others, it became clear that from the Canadian perspective, the seven-year old girl who started out on her voyage with her brother and her aunt by walking, possibly barefoot, from Newry to Limerick in the spring of 1847 represented an important historical figure. I felt that she should represent a constant thread in the work bringing us with her on her voyage. As we have few details about their journey, we try to reflect her presence by means of *idée fixe* which runs through the piece. This reminds us of our heroine in moments of danger, sadness and loss; we are reminded that she is omni-present. Sometimes it recurs in disguised form.

The passage I chose for the *idée fixe* is the quasi-*sean-nós* vocal figure which first appears right at the start of *Twilight* in the first movement. It is a recurring sextuplet sung to the text “*ochón, ochón, ochón is ochón ó*”, figure 8.3. It captures the bewilderment of a seven-year old who is mature enough to realise something cataclysmic and life-changing is about to happen, but too young to grasp what it is. From now on, she is swept along on the tide of Fate.

³³⁴ Kennedy, Michael (1987), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*.

Figure 8.3 (figure 7.6 repeated): *Idée Fixe* figure, representing Brigit Ann Tracey. *Famine Odyssey*, fourth movement, (bars 50 -54)



This *idée fixe* recurs periodically, for example in *Ghostly Escorts* (third movement), where the passengers are horrified when they realise that to die on board ship is tantamount to being fed to sharks following the ship. It also features prominently in *Ne Jamais Oublier* (4th movement). The *idée fixe* recurs in various places until the opening of *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett* and, in this way, creates an aural link between Brigit Ann Tracey and Dr. Grasett. Indeed, the Grasett theme is musically related to the *idée fixe* and its opening phrase is a variant of the *idée fixe*. This is one, and arguably the most important, method I use to create unity within the work.

8.3.2 Motivic Cell

As the word suggests, the cell is a very small unit which is part of a larger organism. They possess a stand-alone identity. Even within the organism, they can be repeated any number of times and can reappear throughout the organism in many different guises or forms. In music, the motivic cell can be a snatch of melody, sometimes no more than a single interval, a sequence of chords (harmonic cell), a rhythmic component (rhythmic cell) or even a combination of all three.³³⁵ What is important is that they constitute an important element in the work thus giving it a unified and integrated feeling.

Although he did not invent the device, the motivic cell was brought to its most complete development by Beethoven (1770 – 1827), who built many of his works on this foundation. To this day, the most famous such cell is the opening bars of Beethoven’s fifth symphony, which he described as “destiny knocking at the door” (Tovey 1945 p.38), and this short pattern is repeated frequently and in varied form throughout the first movement of the work. No less impressive is the rhythmic bass cell, or pattern, running throughout the second movement of Beethoven’s seventh symphony, with some variation in different sections of the movement.

³³⁵ See Composer’s Guide: Motivic Cells, <https://composersguide.com/motivic-cells/#:~:text=Beethoven%20was%20a%20champion%20at,C%20minor%20displays%20this%20concept.> Accessed on 20 July 2022. Also, Motif (music), Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motif_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motif_(music)) Accessed on 22 July 2022.

The motivic cell is closely related to the *idée fixe*, the defining difference being that the latter is associated with a person, place or idea; the association of the motivic cell may be more abstract or need not represent any association at all apart from its musical role. The *idée fixe* will also tend to be somewhat longer.

This use of motivic cells is also evident throughout my own work. *Famine Odyssey* has many overarching motivic and thematic elements. The most important of these is to be heard at the very opening of the work, played on solo horn, figure 8.4. Immediately afterwards it is restated canonically on other instruments, expanding to envelope the entire work. This motif, or motivic cell, consists of a rising interval of a sixth, followed by a falling stepwise movement to the tonic. These are the opening notes of the entire work and it recurs right up to the seventh, and concluding, movement of the work.

Figure 8.4: Example of motivic cell, *Famine Odyssey, A Cry from Ireland*, opening bars



This motive is the opening bars of the *Famine Theme*, see section 7.2.3, so that this motivic cell is an integral part of the main theme of the work. This motif is heard both instrumentally and vocally: It occurs on various instruments, in different contexts and in a variety of different forms. It provides the foundation of some of the parts. Some recurrences of the motif may not be immediately apparent but, nevertheless, constitute an aural binding that integrates the entire work into an integrated unit.

The motivic cell is particularly prominent in the choral piece *Ghostly Escorts*. A more humorous use of this same motif can be heard in *The Steamer* which opens the fifth movement *Endurance*. Hundreds of refugees are crammed on board open steamers with standing room only. To depict this chaos, I have reworked the opening motif as a dance-like figure. The contour of our motif is embedded in the melody of a polka, played on trombone.³³⁶

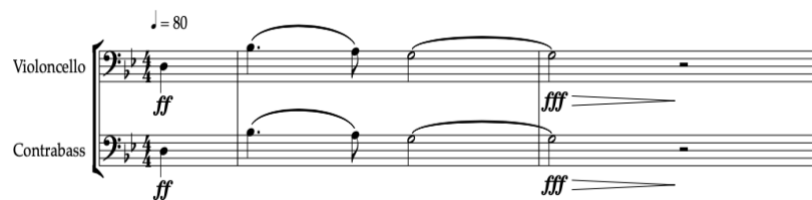
³³⁶ This is the form of the polka used in Irish traditional music, which differs quite markedly from the Central European variety.

Figure 8.5: Motif in polka form on trombone in *The Steamer*, (bars 47 – 49)



This motif is worked out thematically in an almost Beethovenian style in the fourth movement, *Arrival in a New World*. Here it forms a musical dialogue in the opening section, *Gross Île*. The music depicts the sick and dying refugees in the fever sheds where they are being quarantined. From the very first note our motif is sounded on the cellos.

Figure 8.6: Motif on cellos and basses, *Arrival in a New World*. opening bars.



In bars (19 - 24) we see a motivic dialogue between the horns and the trombones. This is meant to create tension and unease for the listener as the true horror of *Gross Île* unfolds. Bars 19 and 20 contain a statement of the descending contour of the motif on trumpets and lower brass. This is imitated by horns in bars 20 and 21. The trombones then sound a variation of the motif a fifth higher with the ascending interval altered to a perfect fifth, which is responded to by the horns repeating the figure of bars 20-21.

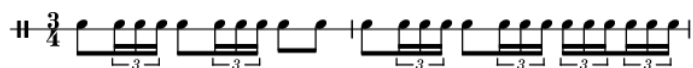
8.3.3 The Ground Bass

As the name suggests, a ground bass is a repetitive, usually short, bass pattern which provides a foundation upon which a musical composition can be constructed; the ground bass will typically be played throughout the piece, as in a loop. Some minor variation may be included which does not disrupt the underlying bass pattern. The repetitive bass part can be as short as two notes, or a short melody, but there is no prescribed length. The compositional challenge for the composer is to vary the melodic, harmonic, even the tonal interplay of the parts above the repetitive bass so

as to avoid any hint of tedium. A ground bass implies that the piece is constructed from the bass line upwards. *Ostinato* is simply a ground bass on any instrument other than bass.

Two *sub-genres* of the ground bass, or *ostinato*, prominent in the Baroque were the *chaconne* and the *passacaglia*. Arguably, the best-known and instantly recognisable *ostinato* in the popular repertoire today is *Bolero* (1928) in C-major by Maurice Ravel (1878 – 1937). It is built on an *ostinato* rhythm on snare drums (or side drums) played 169 times, above which are two alternating melodies, each played eight times on different instruments, and with accumulating orchestration.³³⁷

Figure 8.7: *Ostinato* pattern on snare drums from Ravel's *Bolero*.



The use of a ground bass in *Famine Odyssey* is a feature of the entire work and is probably influenced by the music of Purcell and Bach. The predominantly descending, stepwise bass line from the overture is also used in other movements, such as *Ghostly Escorts*, *Coffin Ship*, *Gross Île*, *The Steamer* and *Fever Sheds*. Therefore, not only are these movements composed with this recurring bass, but this descending bass line also permeates the entire work, providing another source of thematic unity.

Figure 8.8: Ground bass, *Famine Odyssey, A Cry from Ireland*, Bars, 20- 28



8.4 The Dan-Dowd Scale.

Dan Dowd was a consummate expert on all aspects of piping, a renowned piper and an expert craftsman in making full sets of uilleann pipes. We have discussed him already in chapter 5. Whenever Dan made a new reed for a chanter it had to be tested immediately. This was no trivial

³³⁷ Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boléro>, accessed on 15th September 2024.

matter as every chanter was hand made, and therefore unique, so that reeds were usually hand-made to fit a particular chanter. The new reed had to be tested to see if it was fit for task, or needed to be modified. Dan would take the chanter, fit the new reed, and blow the reed by mouth as if it were a Breton Bombard, a double-reed instrument of the woodwind family which is sometimes called the Celtic oboe. I can see him before me now, eyes popping and cheeks bulging with exertion as he sought to blow the new, stiff reed. In the years that followed, I sometimes copied this activity, on stage, for effect.

As a youthful observer, it struck me as curious that Dan always played precisely the same seven-note sequence in testing a new reed. In all the years that I knew him, he never deviated from this rising sequence of notes, which is why I call them the Dan-Dowd scale; it is a major scale with a flattened 7th, in this case the G-Mixolydian tonal scale, see figure 7.17.

As a tribute to Dan, I use this rising sequence of notes as a theme in *Long fé lán tSeól*, the third part of the second movement, which captures the emotional release of the passengers as the sailing ship puts out to sea. Not only had they escaped the Famine, but boarding was often haphazard in the extreme. With no set sailing times, pre-boarding often involved passengers sitting on the quay for days if not weeks on end.

In this piece the uilleann pipes is the solo, or lead, instrument. As the piece is in ternary form, the Dan Dowd scale is the basis of the melodic development at the beginning, and end, of what is a piping tune. The piping influence does not end there because the string arrangement imitates the drones of the uilleann pipes, whereas the horns imitate the regulators in a stepwise process. Thus, the piece is a pipes solo in which the orchestra, to an extent, performs as a set of uilleann pipes.

8.5 Brass Fanfares, Canonic Effects and Antiphonic Opening

A fanfare is a short, musical flourish, usually on brass instruments and often accompanied by percussion. It is typically used to draw attention to the commencement of some important event. It is a stirring sound, a call to attention, and by its nature, intended to raise the excitement barometer. It is a technique I use at the very start of the *Famine Odyssey* where I draw chiefly on the influence of the Italian composer, Claudio Monteverdi (1657 – 1643).

Monteverdi stands out as one of a select group of the most influential composers in musical history. He represents a bridge between the modal polyphony of the late Renaissance and the new Baroque style which was about to become the new musical aesthetic. His scores are laced with the folk idioms and rhythms of his native Cremona. Into these he incorporates forms such

as masquerades, ballets and folk songs which, together with folk instruments, (now obsolete), give an earthiness and rustic charm to his music. In this I see a parallel with my own work where the edgy and rustic sounds of Irish traditional instruments are blended in an orchestral texture.

It was from this sixteenth-century context that the language of classical tonality emerged, with Monteverdi favouring more daring harmonies and greater use of dissonance. He was one of the first to make this transition from modality to tonality with his opera *Orfeo* in 1607. The work I have found most influential, however, is *Vespers* (1610), consisting of fourteen pieces of music in loose variation form, which is on a remarkable scale with its six-part choirs, triple-meter *ritornelli* and imitative duets. Kurtzman (1978, p.70) described *Vespers* as “a compositional challenge of staggering proportions”.

The canonic introduction to *Vespers* has always struck me as a dramatic and effective way to commence a large-scale work. I have referenced these effects in the canonic opening and conclusion of the opening piece, *Famine 1847*, using an antiphonal-canonic effect with horns, trumpets, trombones and tuba, as this would make a dramatic start to the work.

Figure 8.9: *Famine 1847*, opening with canonic and antiphonal influences, (bars 1 – 7).

1 $\text{♩} = 40$

Horn in F 1,2

Horn in F 3,4

Trumpet in B $\flat$ 2,3

Trombone 1,2

Bass Trombone

mp *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

mp *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

mp *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

mp *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

mp *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

8.6 Presentation Method of *Famine Odyssey*: The *Female Chorus* and a Narrator

It became clear from the start that something was needed to keep the audience in contact with the unfolding storyline of *Famine Odyssey*, if only because of the enormous amount of historical

detail involved, the rather complex twists and turns the story takes and the events portrayed. Without some device it would be quite impossible for the audience to keep in touch with what they were experiencing onstage.³³⁸

In the worlds of literature and music, different techniques have been used to communicate directly with the audience, and inform, them beyond the development of the plot on stage.

The most famous of these is the *Greek Chorus*, which dates from the great Greek tragedies in the 5th century BC. It soon became clear that this device was impractical as it involved a number of singers/dancers who sometimes spoke to the audience in unison, sometimes through a leader or spokesman, the *Coryphaeus*.

In *Famine Odyssey*, I make occasional use of a *female Chorus* which is quite different from the *Greek Chorus*. The *female Chorus* consists of the sopranos and altos in the choir but, apart from being part of the choir, they also have a functional role, or roles, to play. In the first movement piece, *Twilight*, the choir foretells that momentous events that are about to happen, as a sort of soothsayer, or oracle. This is the beginning of the unfolding saga. Thereafter, the *female Chorus* takes over this role. In the second movement we have a sea shanty, *Hey Ho Canada Way* in which the sailors are singing as a musical and rhythmical accompaniment to their work. But, in the chorus they are in spiritual and emotional communion with their loved ones in Quebec on the other side of the ocean. This is captured by the contrapuntal chorus where the sailors are joined by the *female Chorus*, as well as by the softer, more romantic lyrics of the chorus.

In *Ne Jamais Oublier*, the *female Chorus* sings along with the Brigit Ann Tracey *idée fixe*, in the interludes between the verses; here I feel they seek to hold a protective hand over the many orphans who are uncared for. Later, the *female Chorus* becomes a choir of nuns who perform *Seven Candles/Ave Verum* in remembrance of the nuns who have died.

In the third movement in *Ghostly Escorts*, fear of death and warning of imminent death are the predominant sentiments in the part sung by the *female Chorus*. Here I view the *female Chorus* as a *Bean Sí* (fairy woman), or *Banshee*, who can be heard wailing whenever death of a family member is imminent.³³⁹ In this situation, the female voices are used to create an unearthly

³³⁸ One could argue that a concert programme would fulfil this role. However, it is unlikely that any audience is going to study a programme step by step throughout a performance.

³³⁹ The dissonant lines for sopranos and altos are meant to represent the eerie sound of the *Bean Sí* which was an accepted part of life in Connemara until relatively recently. In the mid-1990s, I had a fascinating conversation with Nan Mháirtín Thomais, an old woman from Ros Muc, Co. Galway, who was then in her nineties. She related how she clearly remembered hearing the sound of the *Bean Sí*, coming from the shore one Sunday morning. She described it as being similar to the *Bean Chaointe*, or keening, of old. While at Mass, she was informed that her next-door neighbour had died during the night.

feeling, using chromatic movement in the lines with intervals such as perfect and diminished 5ths, diminished 7ths and major and minor 2nds., figure 8.10.

Figure 8.10: The eerie sounds of the *Bean Sí, Ghostly Escorts*; sopranos and altos, (bars 69-71)

61 $\text{♩} = 60$

S. *p* *mp* *p*

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, Ky - ri -

A. *p* *mp*

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son,

The music here is quite different, and for this I was conscious that the musical style of the Renaissance would be very suitable, especially that of Carlo Gesualdo (1566 – 1613).

Gesualdo's music, while bearing traces of sixteenth-century modality, represents an important step towards modern tonality precisely because it finds a sure path through chromatic mazes to its firm tonal cadences. (Deane, 2010 JMI).

Gesualdo's music reveals the possibilities of chromatic and dissonant harmonic movement in modal harmony. "Textures of the late madrigal could be extremely chromatic, and as in Gesualdo's or Monteverdi's case, downright dissonant" (Schonberg 1997, p.5).

The Narrator. The possibility of the *female Chorus* in providing information for the audience is limited; it is more of musical and dramatic value than of informational importance. For this reason, I also use a narrator to keep the audience in touch with the progress of the work.

This idea I have adapted from the musical fairy tale, *Peter and the Wolf*, (a symphonic tale for children) by Sergei Prokofjew (1891 – 1953), written in 1936. The music is charming and accessible, as one would expect of music written for children, but it is the narration that brings the piece to life. Each character is represented by an instrument, or instruments, which announce the presence or arrival of the character by playing a personal theme, or *Leitmotiv*. Thus, the wolf is represented by three horns, the bird by a flute, Peter by a string quartet, the duck by an oboe, etc.³⁴⁰ With the help of a brief, spoken narration, short and simple as it is, every note in the music

³⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_and_the_Wolf, accessed January 2022

is full of danger, excitement and meaning, and fires the imagination of the youthful listener. The narrator describes each action whereas the orchestra illustrates the action.

This cannot be translated one-for-one to the current composition – a 27-minute tale for children, consisting of simple actions, cannot realistically be compared with the complexity of the present work. But, the idea is good and I adopted (and adapted) it.

I use three related elements to this end: The *Narration* is a short passage, spoken by a narrator onstage, before the beginning of each movement except the last. Because the last movement is short, it is preannounced during the narration of the penultimate (sixth) movement. This *Narration* is an intrinsic part of the score and should be kept as short as possible.

Two further items should be presented in the concert programme. A *Timeline* (a single-page sketch of the work showing the movements and sub-parts), and *Background Notes* (which provide considerable historical background information on each movement). Thus, we have three aids for the audience (presented in Appendix B).

8.7 The Chorale and Contrapuntal Writing

The chorale emerged from rather humble origins. Seven years after the commencement of the Protestant Reformation in Augsburg in 1517, Martin Luther published a collection of church, and other, hymns whose lyrics were in the German vernacular rather than the Latin of the Roman Church. The objective was to provide a hymnal for congregational singing, and consisted of established hymns as well as some which were newly composed. Sometimes they were sung with instrumental accompaniment. These hymns were the original chorales. Over the following centuries they became an element of Western art music and evolved dramatically into elaborate 4-part choral arrangements and were even incorporated as orchestral or vocal features in a range of symphonies.³⁴¹

The final part of the fourth movement of *Famine Odyssey* is a 4-part chorale with an orchestral accompaniment, i.e. the bilingual *Ne Jamais Oublier* which is sung in Irish but with two choruses in French. The first verse is in *sean-nós* style with minimalistic accompaniment.

The *Leitmotiv* of each character is played each time they are about to appear, analogous to a *Punch and Judy* show in which each character is pre-announced.

³⁴¹ The chorales of J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750) established a pinnacle of 4-part harmonic arrangement of chorales, often used as the *finale* of his *cantatas*. Many composers included, or referenced, chorale melodies, i.e. Lutheran hymns, in symphonic compositions (Felix Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns, Brahms, Bruckner). Others included self-composed, chorale-like features, which need not be vocal, in their symphonies (Spohr, Beethoven, Mahler, Stravinsky) and this persisted right up to the middle of the 20th century. Arguably, the final movement of Beethoven's 9th symphony includes the most widely known example of this. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chorale>, accessed on 25. June 2023.

The third, and final, verse is full SATB choir and expansive orchestration. Between the verses we hear the *idée fixe*, which jolts us back from the serenity of the chorale to the reality of the present. I felt that the spiritual essence of the chorale matches my purpose here, and I wanted it to be infused with the melodic idiom of an Irish hymn of thanksgiving. I will not discuss the chorale further here as it was treated more fully in chapter 7.

My approach to chorale writing was honed since my early teens by extensive practice at writing four-part chorales based on the methods of J. S. Bach. I, and many others, studied initially with Dorothy Stokes, a former student of John Larchet at the Royal Irish Academy. Her door was always open and her room was a workshop where many of her students sat around working on their harmonisation skills, consulting with her from time to time as the need arose. Her tutelage has always stayed with me and finds expression in many of the choral movements such as *Ne Jamais Oublier*.

Figure 8.11: Chorale, *Ne Jamais Oublier*, bars (73-75)

The musical genius of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) is infused in our musical psyche to such an extent that one can detect his influence in almost everything we write, in particular his contrapuntal and fugal writing, of which he was the indisputable master.

...the greatest legacy left by J. S. Bach to his own and future generations was his unparalleled skill in the art of counterpoint, (Payne 1986 p. 18).

Contrapuntal writing is a feature of the writing in *Famine 1847* as is evident in *Canadian Wake*, the third section on the first movement *A Cry from Ireland*. In this instance the counterpoint on clarinets has a tonal center of the Dorian mode on D. In this example the lower clarinet anticipates the restatement of the melody, creating a canonic effect.

Figure 8.12: Counterpoint in clarinets, *Famine Odyssey, Canadian Wake*; bars 153 – 155



8.8 The Collectors of Irish Music – Bunting, Joyce, Goodman

From the middle of the 18th century, several pioneers went out into the field collecting music and songs which were performed in different districts of Ireland. Edward Bunting (1773 – 1843), George Petrie (1790 – 1866), Patrick Weston Joyce (1827 – 1914), and the Rev. James Goodman (1828 – 1896) may be the best known, but there were many more. In addition, others may have composed many airs and dance tunes that lie in private collections waiting for their successors to publish them privately. I have studied these collections in considerable detail over many years and, inevitably, I incorporate some of their influences in my own work.

In section 8.2 of this chapter I referred to a four-note melodic arch linking two notes, which can be found in the Goodman collection, and which I used in *Seven Candles*. I referred to this as a “musical sigh”.

Figure 8.13: Example of “musical sigh”, in *Sliabh na mBan*, Goodman collection No 361, (bars 3-4)³⁴²



This is not the only example. The sextuplet figure of the *idée fixe*, (see figure 7.6) is also a feature of Irish traditional music. In particular, we find it in the Joyce collection which features airs and dance tunes written down in pre-famine times in Glen Oisín, Co Limerick. It is usually found as an ornamental feature, figure 8.18.

³⁴² Shields, Hugh, ed., p. 147

Figure 8.14: Rising Sextuplet figure, *Cois Taobh an Chuain*, Joyce Collection (bars 16 – 18)³⁴³



The sextuplet figure also appears in a descending figure in the aforementioned *An Clár Bog Déil*, as sung by Peggy Moynihan at dinner break on the bog (see chapter 5.2; figure 8.15). Note in this, and in the preceding example, the fluctuating 7th degree which is a characteristic of the older pre-famine music.

Figure 8.15 Descending sextuplet figure, *An Clár Bog Déil*, Joyce Collection, p. 65, bar 8



The sextuplet figure used next as a quasi-glissando giving a rousing *anacrusis* to the final phrase of this unusual march, *The Races of Ballyhooley*, figure 8.16. This march was featured in the Recital, chapter 6.

Figure 8.16: Sextuplet Figure *Anacrusis*, *The Races of Ballyhooley*, Joyce Collection, p. 4 Bar 10



Another example of the sextuplet figure can also be found in Edward Buntings, *Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840), in a pentatonic musical study called *Feagh an Geleash*, (*Try if it be in tune*).³⁴⁴ Not unlike the Dan Dowd scale for tuning reeds, this piece which Bunting described

³⁴³ Joyce P.W. p.38 – 9.

³⁴⁴ Bunting's translation.

as an “an ancient Irish prelude” may have been some sort of tuning ritual for the medieval harpers.

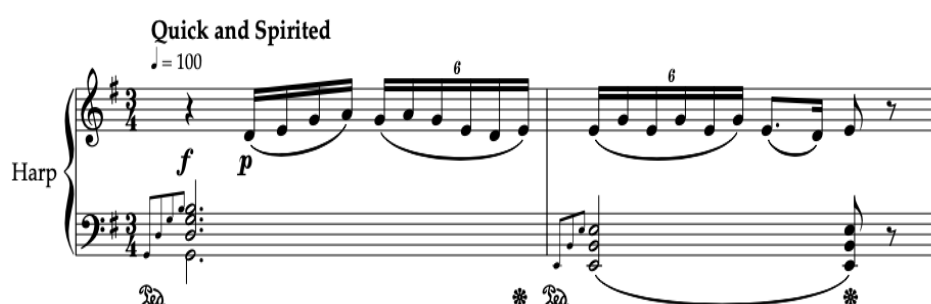
It was with great reluctance that the old harper was prevailed on to play even the fragment of it here preserved.³⁴⁵

It was collected from Denis Hempson, who was by far the oldest, and the only one of the harpers present at the Belfast Harper Festival (1792) to play in the old style with brass strings and long finger nails. It may, therefore, represent the dying embers of the harping tradition. According to Bunting, Hempson disliked modern refinements, which he “studiously avoided”, such as the music of O’Carolan.

...he had been in O’Carolan’s company as a youth, he never took pleasure in playing his compositions³⁴⁶

The sextuplet figure highlights the pentatonic character of the piece, and is clearly an integral part of the composition. It is not merely an ornamental feature. It is notable, that these complex rhythmic patterns are more discernible in the older music of the collectors, suggesting that much of it probably of harper origin. Note here how these pentatonic sextuplet figures are adjacent to one another, coming on the third and first beats of the bar respectively, figure 8.17. This would indicate a deliberate use of this rhythmic pattern, rather than an ornamental flourish.

Figure 8.17: Ornamental Sextuplet Figure in Bunting (1840), *Feagh an Geleash*



³⁴⁵ Bunting, Edward, *Ancient Music of Ireland*, (1840), p. 82

³⁴⁶ Bunting, Edward, *Ancient Music of Ireland*, (1840), p. 73

8.9 Sounds of Nature and Descriptive Writing

Apart from the themes of love, and pious worship, feelings of awe for nature and love of the countryside must be one of the most abiding themes in musical composition. Many works dealing with this subject spring immediately to mind, first and foremost symphony no. 6 in F-major, the *Pastoral* symphony, by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827), composed in 1808. This is closely followed by a long list which would include works by Antonio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741) *The Four Seasons*; Louis Spohr (1784 – 1859) symphony no.9, *The Seasons*; Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949) *An Alpine Symphony*; Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) *Waldszenen* for piano etc., the list is endless.

In this section, I discuss three episode of nature which appear in *Famine Odyssey*. First, I deal with birdsong. After that I deal with three instances where sensations of the ocean, or maritime effects, are portrayed. Finally, I deal with a feature which is frequently described in the musical literature, i.e. a storm. What distinguishes this storm from many others is that it is a storm at sea and that it threatens the survival of a ship packed with terrified passengers.

8.9.1 Birdsong

Beethoven's music was part of the soundscape of my childhood and has therefore been an inspiration to me for its expressive and descriptive character.

One can appreciate this in the title, *Pastoral*, but more especially in the musical themes of the movements,³⁴⁷ e.g. in the 2nd movement, *Andante Molto Moto*, titled *Szene am Bach* (*By the Brookside*), and the 3rd movement, *Allegro*, titled *Lustiges Zusammensein der Landsleute* (*Merry Gathering of Country Folk*). In this 3rd movement, I can imagine the oboe imitating the village piper calling the people to dance, and the hunting horns evoking the descriptive piping piece, the *Foxchase*, giving an idyllic sensation of country life. One can easily imagine the sounds of nature, including the imitation of summer birdsong. In figure 8.22, we can hear a veritable bird chorus such as the Nightingale the Quail, and the Cuckoo's call.

³⁴⁷ Beethoven's 6th symphony is the only one of his nine symphonies for which he provided a title for each of the movements.

Figure 8.18: Beethoven, *Pastoral symphony*, *Andante Molto Moto*, Bars (132-135).

Figure 8.18 shows a musical score for Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, *Andante Molto Moto*, bars 132-135. The score is for Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Clarinet 1 & 2 (B-flat), and Bassoon 1 & 2. The tempo is marked 'Andante Molto Moto' with a quarter note equal to 50. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 12/8. The score shows bird imitations: 'Cuckoo' for the Clarinet, 'Nightingale' for the Flute, and '1. Quail' for the Oboe. Dynamics include 'cresc.', 'mf', 'p', and 'p cresc.'

Antonio Vivaldi also imitates birdsong in his *Spring Concerto* from his descriptive work the *Four Seasons*. In this we hear birdsong in the freshness of a dawn chorus in spring, referencing a fashion in 17th and 18th centuries to incorporate imitative birdcalls in scores, (Ossi 2016 p. 118).

Figure 8.19: Vivaldi, *Birdsong in a Spring Chorus* (*The Four Seasons*)

Figure 8.19 shows a musical score for Vivaldi's *Spring Concerto*, *Birdsong in a Spring Chorus*, starting at bar 19. The score is for Violin principale, Violin I, and Violin II. The tempo is marked 'Giun't é la Primavera' with a quarter note equal to 110. The key signature is three sharps (F# major). The time signature is common time (C). The score shows bird imitations with various musical notations like trills and grace notes.

In *Famine Odyssey*, birdsong of an entirely different nature is evident. In the storm sequence of the 3rd movement, *Coffin Ship*, we hear the clarinets repeatedly imitate the cry of seagulls warning us of the danger of the impending Atlantic storm. Far out on the ocean, seagulls are more likely to be encountered than almost any other bird, especially in the proximity of ships.

Figure 8.20: Cry of Seagulls, *Famine Odyssey*, *Coffin Ship*, (Bar 244)

Figure 8.20 shows a musical score for *Famine Odyssey*, *Coffin Ship*, bar 244. The score is for Clarinet 1 and Clarinets 2 & 3. The tempo is marked 'Cry of Seagulls' with a quarter note equal to 100. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 4/4. The score shows the cry of seagulls with a 'ff' dynamic marking.

8.9.2 Nautical Impressions

Early in the 1st movement, *A Cry for Ireland*, the perilous nature of the sea crossing is foretold with descriptive writing imitating the sound of the waves crashing against the prow of a ship. This is achieved using the bass drum and timpani to create the thud of the wave, with the cymbals giving a sonic impression of the spray generated from the impact of the wave. Just before the wave strikes we hear an ominous sound of a ship bell. This impact also represents the highpoint of the *Famine Theme*, and occurs at the moment of heightened tension.

Figure 8.21: Sounds of Waves Crashing Against the Ship, *A Cry from Ireland*, (bars 20 – 24)

[Note the third beat of bar 24. This has been left to the timpani and bass drum, representing a rogue wave hitting the ship much like an aftershock after the big hit on the first beat. In my experience the unexpected additional waves, usually hitting the ship from a different angle, are the most frightening in a storm.]

The musical score for Figure 8.21 is arranged in a system with seven staves. The top staff is for Trumpets 1, 2 in Bb, followed by Trombone, Bass Trombone, and Tuba. The bottom three staves are for Timpani, Bass Drum, and Cymbals. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The key signature is Bb major (two flats). The time signature is 3/4. The score shows a crescendo from bar 20 to bar 24, with dynamic markings ranging from mp to ff. The timpani and bass drum play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes, while the brass instruments play sustained chords. The cymbals enter in bar 24, playing a single quarter note.

This effect is heard at the climax of the *Famine Theme*, which is interrupted by the crashing sound of a wave. This nautical reference is intended as a reference to the odyssey which is about to commence. It is repeated a number of times before the *Leitmotiv* or *idée fixe* which represents Brigit Ann Tracey is sung.

A second nautical effect is to be found in the section, *Ghostly Escorts*, in the third movement, *Coffin Ship*. The title refers to sharks which followed the ship across the ocean. The passengers were aware of the fact that they were there and, more pertinently, why?

This allusion to sharks is created by an ostinato bass line on basses and cellos, with a semitone fluctuation, much as in the Spielberg film, *Jaws*. The lower strings are spaced an octave apart, imitating the drones of the pipes. This fluctuating drone is also an aspect of some pipe's drones and I have sought to emulate this with the ostinato bass, see figure 7.18.

A further nautical effect can be heard as the coffin ships arrive at *Grosse Île*.

Grosse Île was a small island, comprising a quarantine station, built downstream from the entrance to the port of Quebec. All ships arriving for Quebec had to receive medical clearance from the authorities of the quarantine station before they could proceed to the port. Until a medical officer boarded the ship and issued a clearance certificate, all passengers and crew had to remain on board ship.

With so many ships arriving on a daily basis this could be a long wait, and it has been reported that as many as 40 ships could be queued-up awaiting clearance at any one time. Waiting could then take many days. I attempt to capture the tedium of this delay with the sound of waves lapping against the sides of the ships. It is represented by syncopated movement in the lower strings, figure 8.22, and can be heard at the end of the *Famine Theme* and before the beginning of the chorale *Ne Jamais Oublier*.

Figure 8.22: Waves Lapping against the Side of the Ship, *Grosse Île* (bars 21 – 23)

The musical score for Figure 8.22 shows three staves: Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 70. The score spans three measures (bars 21, 22, and 23). The Viola part consists of half notes on the lines G4, A4, Bb4, and C5, with a dynamic of *mp* in bar 21 and *mf* in bar 23. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts play an ostinato pattern of half notes: G2 (Violoncello) and F2 (Contrabass) in bar 21, and A2 (Violoncello) and G2 (Contrabass) in bar 23, with a dynamic of *mp* in bar 21 and *mf* in bar 23. The pattern is syncopated, with the notes occurring on the off-beats.

8.9.3 The Storm

A storm is an entirely different matter because it portrays the furious, even destructive side of Nature.

The transition from the 3rd movement of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* to the *Allegro* (4th movement), titled *Gewitter, Sturm* (*Thunderstorm, Storm*), is continuous and gradual; in fact, the two movements are played without a break so that the build-up to the fury of the storm is

continuous. In Beethoven's world, the storm is not unwelcome; it cools down the Earth after a period of prolonged heat, has a refreshing effect on Nature, and is soon over.

In Richard Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony*, the thunderstorm occurs during the descent from the mountain, so that one is completely exposed to the elements; the danger is palpable. Once more there is no break between the preceding movement and the storm itself. At the end of the preceding movement, *Stille vor dem Sturm* (*Quiet Before the Storm*), one can already hear the raindrops beginning to fall and becoming heavier. This storm is truly dramatic, helped by the very large orchestra as well as the innovative, percussive techniques used. Yet, this storm also recedes into a gentle and beautiful sunset.

Both of these works, and others, would have influenced the storm sequence which occurs in the 3rd movement of *Famine Odyssey*, titled *Coffin Ship*. However, there are significant differences.

By contrast, the storm in *Coffin Ship* is a storm at sea. It is well-documented that many Famine migrants died due to severe Atlantic storms, which took a heavy toll on unseaworthy ships, some perishing within sight of land.³⁴⁸ The ship itself battling against the elements is portrayed by the *storm theme*, figure 8.23; the fury of the storm is portrayed by the reel; the choral part represents the terrified passengers in the bowels of the ship, pleading to God for mercy.

Figure 8.23: *Famine Odyssey*, storm at sea.

Storm (1. and 2. violins); *Ship* (*Famine theme*, violas); Ground bass (chelli and basses) (bars 246 – 247)

³⁴⁸ The Gulf of Saint Lawrence in spring was notable for the dangers from storms and icebergs, and the loss of a ship was periodically announced in Quebec. The weekly newspaper, *Quebec Mercury*, reported regularly on whether arriving ships had any word or knowledge of ships that were overdue. In the days of sailing ships, one depended on sightings from other passing ships for any information on vessels that might have run into trouble.

The storm sequence makes full use of timpani to imitate thunder, cymbals to imitate the waves crashing against the ship causing explosions of sea-spray, and woodwind representing the fury of the wind with stepwise chromatic movement.

Figure 8.24: Sound of wind, on flutes, piccolo, oboes, and clarinets, *Coffin Ship* (bars 261)

This musical score snippet, starting at bar 257, is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 100. It features five staves for woodwind instruments: Fl. 1, Fl. 2/Picc., Ob., Cl. 1, and Cl. 2/3. The Fl. 1 and Fl. 2/Picc. parts play a rapid, stepwise chromatic ascending and descending scale. The Ob. part plays a slower, stepwise chromatic line. The Cl. 1 and Cl. 2/3 parts play a similar rapid, stepwise chromatic pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

Thunder and lightning are alluded to here with the use of bass drum, snare and cymbals.

Figure 8.25: *Coffin Ship*: Thunder and Lightning, 3rd movement, (bars 289 – 290)

This musical score snippet, starting at bar 289, is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 60. It features six staves for percussion: Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Bass Drum, and Snare Drum. The Trombone, Bass Trombone, and Tuba parts play a slow, stepwise chromatic line. The Timpani part plays a series of rolls. The Bass Drum, Cymbals, and Snare Drum parts play a series of rolls. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, and *ff*.

A storm at sea is a very different soundscape, with the turmoil of the ocean and the waves battering the ship. It also lasts longer, as the sea takes much longer to build up to a climax and also takes longer to calm down again. The anticipation, fear and ultimately relief, are much more drawn out. Unlike in Beethoven and Strauss, the storm is an existential threat, a matter of life or death.

In the middle of the storm, a spontaneous, collective cry of fear can occasionally be heard from the passengers, who are living in dread in their miserable, cramped quarters below deck. Adding to this fear is the fact that the hatches have been battened, so they are in complete darkness. They are trapped as the ship is buffeted by an unseen wave, or plunges sickeningly into the trough between two giant waves. This cry is sung by the choir, representing all the terrified passengers, to the text of an old Munster proverb, *Fógraimis an Ghorta* (Let us renounce the Famine).

No storm lasts forever. As the storm dies down and calm is restored, the last gasp of the storm is evoked with a descending chromatic scale, played initially on flutes and piccolo, followed by clarinets. The climax of the storm has passed but the sea comes to rest more gradually.

Figure 8.26: *Famine Odyssey*: The wind dying down heralding the ending of the storm, *Coffin Ship* (bars, 292 – 294)

The musical score for Figure 8.26 is for five instruments: Fl. 1, Fl. 2/Picc., Ob., Cl. 1, and Cl. 2,3. The tempo is marked '♩ = 100'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score shows a descending chromatic scale starting at bar 292, marked 'ff' (fortissimo) and 'gmo' (grandioso), and ending at bar 294, marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The Fl. 1 and Fl. 2/Picc. parts play the scale, while the Ob., Cl. 1, and Cl. 2,3 parts play a sustained note.

After Beethoven's storm, we have feelings of happiness and gratitude (*Frohe und Dankbarkeit Gefühle*), or Strauss's, being replaced by a beautiful sunset. There is no such relief for the passengers on the Coffin Ship. Instead, the misery continues,

8.10 Some Post-Nationalist Features of *Famine Odyssey*

In this chapter, attention has been devoted to musical influences, both art music and Irish traditional, which have found their way into *Famine Odyssey* – this formulation is deliberate because there was never any conscious attempt to copy any music, and rarely style. But I have always listened to a great deal of music, and still do. Most of it is art music, not traditional, and this is largely motivated by my profession.

As a result, I am familiar with the evolution, and a great deal of repertoire, of art music through the ages. My formal musical training, and profession, have been predominantly in this *genre*. In my youth and beyond, I also lived through and participated in the folk-music revival, was deeply involved with the traditional-music group, *Na Casaidigh*, studied traditional music with Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin in Limerick and was actively involved with the development and implementation of the traditional-music curriculum of TU Dublin (including its earlier incarnations). Much of this has been detailed in chapters 1.2 and 5. This eclectic mix has formed my musical DNA, which finds its expression in *Famine Odyssey*.

On reflection, *Famine Odyssey* sits squarely in the category of Post-Nationalist composition (chapter 4) which, in turn, evolved from the Nationalist school (chapter 3). The Nationalist school reflected art music primarily, and although it is defined by the incorporation of elements of traditional music and culture, it remained unequivocally rooted in art music. In contrast, the Post-Nationalist school focussed on capturing the authentic essence of traditional culture and expressing it in an art-music form and context, which is much more than merely providing an orchestral accompaniment. One school is a development of the other and reflects a shift in emphasis. But there is no inherent conflict or contradiction. The Post-Nationalist school built on earlier work, emphasising authenticity and synthesis, along with many implications of these two concepts. They share a lot of common ground.

Any attempt to integrate two distinct musical *genres* involves some degree of synthesis, and the Post-Nationalist school has brought this to a more advanced level. More recently, this synthesis has occasionally been approached in an experimental manner. One can think of the theme music of *Riverdance* (figure 4.23) which combined ethnic rhythmic patterns, with shifting emphases, while alternating between the time signatures of a jig and a reel. The result created dramatic tension. Molloy (*Bodhrán*, section 4.2) created a largely improvised piece of music with a detuned double bass imitating the percussive characteristics of a bodhrán. The focal point of this composition was improvisation. In *Twilight* (*Famine Odyssey*, section 4.3),

the process of transforming a melodic arc in an Eastern-European gypsy-style, into a musical passage which sounds decidedly *sean nós*, is described in detail. None of the key components, the arc of this melody, the melodic intervals or the harmonisation, is remotely *sean nós*. The *sean-nós* effect was achieved by the addition of the timbre of the *sean-nós* voice along with the filter of *sean-nós* technique. The end result is significantly formed by the art of the singer in question, in this case Sibéal Ní Chasaide. Both Ó Suilleabháin (*An Buachaill Caol Dubh*) and Neil Martin (in his song cycle *Sweeney Astray*) did something similar with *sean-nós* singer Iarla Ó Lionaird, in that their orchestral accompaniments were fashioned to accommodate the singer's artistic interpretation

However, this combination of synthesis with experimentation is the exception rather than the rule. Stanford, Esposito, Larchet, Ó Riada, Ó Suilleabháin and others, tended to quote Irish traditional music directly in their works, although they differed in approach. Stanford, for example, quoted entire melodies, such as the reel *Blackberry Blossom*, (Rhapsody No.6), whereas Esposito tended to quote phrases, not complete melodies, which he then developed into memorable themes. Ó Riada quoted well-known melodies which he then explored thematically and motivically, as in *The Banks of Sulan*.

Other composers wrote melodies that sounded Irish and familiar, although in fact were newly composed. They include Harty, Bax, Morean, and Molloy, to name but a few. Bodley's violin solo in *A Small White Cloud Drifts Over Ireland* is a fine example. The dance music in *Famine Odyssey* consists of newly composed melodies written in a traditional style, and they are used functionally to provide changes in *tempi*, rhythm and mood throughout the work and avoid monotony. The barn dances in *Canadian Wake* possess a melancholy tonality and style, typical of East Clare and Galway, to portray happiness and sadness simultaneously.

Frequently, the traditional character of the music is expressed in more subtle ways, such as the choice of intervals, modality, structure or an intuitive turn of phrase. The harmonic language is informed by these characteristics. This approach is typical of Bax and Morean, where the Irishness of the music is not overt and is sometimes difficult to discern. It may be an inflection or a turn of phrase, as in the second movement of Morean's violin sonata with its intervallic reference to the love song *Áird Tí Chuain*, or Bax's *Fountain of Fand*, where the Irishness of the work is derived thematically from Irish mythology. In *Famine Odyssey (Ghostly Escorts)*, there is a reference to Irish folklore where the dissonance in the choral voices alludes to the wail of the *Bean Sí*, the harbinger of death.

Synthesis apart, another characteristic which distinguishes the Post Nationalists from their predecessors, is a quest for authenticity. The Nationalist School did little to accommodate the traditional elements they incorporated. Presenting Irish culture authentically in an art-music context can be observed, in the first instance, by the incorporation of traditional instruments and voices, as soloists or lead musicians, in orchestral works. A second important aspect of authenticity can be seen in the observance of important nuances of tradition, such as complex ornamentation, traditional syncopation and variation and, occasionally, micro tonality, as in Flynn (4.2.6). And, finally, one can observe a greater use of modal tonalities and pentatonic scales, with implications for harmonic structures in orchestration; this is considered a more appropriate representation of the traditional idiom.

The incorporation of traditional instruments and vocalists, either as soloists or as texture in orchestral works, was an important innovation in the Post-Nationalist school. Many composers, such as May, Bodley and Ó Riada, alluded to the tradition in their scores, but they did not orchestrate explicitly for traditional soloists. May used the oboe to represent the pipes. Even Ó Riada, innovative in so many ways, used the classically-trained tenor, Seán Ó Sé, in his orchestral work which typically had a fixed-meter. However, Ó Sé was a native-Irish speaker, immersed in Irish culture, and thus a half-way house; one could hardly imagine Jonas Kaufmann or Juan Diego Flórez in this role.

Ó Súilleabháin rang the change with his arrangement of *An Buachaill Caol Dubh*, for which he combined the *sean-nós* voice of Iarla Ó Lionaird with orchestra. The art of *sean nós* is very individual and can vary significantly from artist to artist, with the result that the choice of artist can make a work feel quite different. In *Famine Odyssey*, all the *sean-nós* parts, and there are several, bear the stamp of Sibéal Ní Chasaide, and the work was composed with her vocal characteristics in mind. Furthermore, and unusually, in *Famine Odyssey* *sean-nós* vocals are often combined with classically-trained vocalists or a choir, sometimes even within the same piece, but crafted in such a way as to make the transition relatively seamless. This is in contrast to Bodley who, in combining traditional and *avant garde*, produced transitions which were abrupt and dramatic.

Some musicians of the Nationalist school anticipated the Post-Nationalist school which was to come. Hardebeck (section 3.5.1) composed piano accompaniments in the early 20th century, and was the first to insist on authenticity in representing traditional culture. His piano music has a contemporary feeling even today, most unlike the vamping style of his contemporaries, and would remind the modern listener of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin or Ryan Molloy. Potter (section 3.6.2) was the first to score for uilleann pipes in an art-music

composition (a Post-Nationalist feature) with his arrangement of the well-known virtuoso piece, *Seilg an Mhadradin Ruadh* (1969), for uilleann pipes, chorus and orchestra. However, Potter kept the pipes separate and distinct from the orchestra.

Thus, Seán Davey's orchestral suite for uilleann pipes and orchestra, *The Brendan Voyage* (1980), was the first Post-Nationalist work to feature the uilleann pipes as the solo instrument in an orchestral setting. His suite, depicting St. Brendan's 6th century Atlantic crossing in a leather boat, broke new ground. The writing for pipes was idiomatic and the harmonic language tonal and contemporary, with the contemporary feel enhanced by the inclusion of electric bass guitar, drums and bodhrán in the orchestra. This was followed by other works for pipes and orchestra, such as Bill Whelan's *Seville Suite* (1992), Ó Súilleabháin's arrangement of the air *Bean Dubh a' Ghleanna* (1998) for uilleann pipes and chamber orchestra, Michael Holohan's *Road to Lough Swilly* (2001) and by Neil Martin's *No Tongue Can Tell* (2004). The pipes are also used texturally in an accompanying role by Patrick Cassidy in a number of his works, which is characteristic of his approach.

There are parallels between *The Brendan Voyage* and *Famine Odyssey*, such as the epic nature of the journey and its musical telling involving pipes and orchestra. Davey's *suite* is programme led, based as it was on Tim Severin's voyage and book of the same title, and entirely instrumental. It includes descriptive writing such as *Labrador*, depicting the frozen wastes of Canada. Much of the writing is idiomatic, and tune led, with airs and dance tunes such as *Water under the Keel*, and *The Gale*, as well as the anthemic theme, *Newfoundland*, which concludes the work. In *Famine Odyssey* on the other hand, the writing for pipes is designed to exploit the unique characteristics of the pipes (see chapter 5.3.1). The tension of the intervals on the chanter is exploited as are the unique timbres of different parts of the chanter. There are also references to aspects of the chanter, such as micro tonality and range.

References to piping have been incorporated into Western musical composition and have a long history in art music as well as traditional Irish music. Drones, representing pipes, were not so unusual in art music, and was used *inter alia* by Mozart, albeit on the violin. A drone-like pedal, imitating the *Musette* (a bellows-blown pipes which was very popular in France in the 17th and 18th centuries), appears in the *finale* of Mozart's violin concerto in G-major (K 216). Better known are the drone-like passages by Beethoven, e.g., the opening, and scherzo, sections of the *Pastoral Symphony* (No 6).

In the Post-Nationalist school, the use of drones has become much more prominent. Seoirse Bodley (*A Small White Cloud*, bars 255 - 260) used a cello and bass playing an octave apart, which most likely alludes to the bass and baritone drones on the uilleann pipes which are

also pitched an octave apart. In the second movement of his *Oileán Suite*, Ó Súilleabháin made extensive use of an E-minor pedal using the lower strings, bass, cello and viola, to imitate all three drones, thus creating a dark ominous mood. In *Famine Odyssey* (*Long fé Lán tSeól*), scored for uilleann pipes and orchestra, I also imitated the three drones, bass, baritone and tenor with the lower strings, bass, cello and viola, respectively. In addition, I referenced May's approach by doubling them with bassoon and contra-bassoon. In my opinion the doubling with bassoons adds an attractive reedy quality to the smoother string sound.

My personal preference in the use of drones is to use what I call an *ostinato* drone. This oscillation in the drone pitch reinforces the tension. It also alludes to the natural pitch-fluctuation in piping performance which could be due to varying pressure from the natural operation of the bellows. The *ostinato* drone in *Ghostly Escorts* (*Famine Odyssey*) provides an eerie atmosphere which describes the apprehension of the immigrants at seeing sharks follow their ship.

There are harmonic implications arising from the manner in which drones are used. Drones typically sound the tonic note of the particular set of pipes, which need not be the tonality, or mode, in which they are playing. It is not unusual for example, to have a tune in E-dorian played with a drone on D, as in the well-known reel *Drowsy Maggie*. Dave Flynn explores these possibilities in his five *études* for uilleann pipes. The tension of a major 2nd, for example, between the drone and the tonic note creates idiomatic dissonance. The regulators may add to this dissonance, not only with triadic chords but also with chromatic harmony and tritones. If one adds to this the inherent microtonal nature of the pipes it is possible to create a unique sonic effect.

Finally, in this discussion on authentic piping influences, we occasionally find use of the entire orchestra being used to simulate a full set of pipes. The harmonic language is then dictated by the regulators, and even more so by the drones, which can be used to create dissonance while remaining stylistically within the idiom. Frederick May (*Gá Gréine*, in *Suite of Irish Airs*) achieves this effect with a slip jig scored for oboe, bassoons and horns, imitating the chanter, drones, and regulators, respectively. The use of bassoons for droning was original and effective and his referencing of the regulators with horns is discreet, and stylistically convincing. In the opening measures of his concerto (*Aontacht*, 2010), Dave Flynn also explored the implied harmonies of the uilleann pipes and the harmonic implications of the use of drones in various modes.

Ó Súilleabháin references the uilleann pipes in his orchestration of the air *Bean Dubh a' Ghleanna*, for pipes and chamber orchestra. This piece is original in that, in addition to using the orchestra to simulate a full set of pipes, it also features the uilleann pipes as the solo

instrument. Ó Súilleabháin uses the strings to imitate the chanter and drones, and the horns to allude to the regulators, especially the descending line in thirds which is idiomatic to piping. The solo pipes provides the melodic line, which is also taken up by higher strings and cellos, reinforcing the dialogue between pipes and orchestra.

Long fé Lán tSeól in *Famine Odyssey* was orchestrated with the idea of the orchestra imitating the pipes as well as idiomatic features of piping. This composition also features solo pipes. As mentioned above, the drones are scored using the lower strings, pitched an octave apart, and reinforced with bassoon and contra bassoon to achieve a deeper reedier growl. The horns are scored to imitate the idiomatic use of regulators. On occasion, the horns also imitate the chanter, as in the Mixolydian Dan-Dowd scale, very much as pipers sometimes use the regulators to imitate the chanter. The horn provides a favorite timbre for alluding to the regulators. This also works in reverse, as pipers use the regulators to imitate hunting horns, as in the aforementioned virtuoso piece, *The Foxhunt*.

The influence of Post-Nationalist composition extends to other instruments as well, and by changing the setting, provided a welcome opportunity to capture effects I sought. Orchestration can be used to great effect in descriptive writing. The *ostinato* flute/piccolo in Ó Riada's arrangements of *Slán le Máigh*, for example, or in *The Banks of Sulan* (1957), may also be heard in my orchestration of the *sean-nós* song, *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige*, reflecting the innocence of the lost boy. It also creates propulsion and tension in what is otherwise a very melancholy piece. In his film score, *Mise Éire*, Ó Riada makes use of brass, mainly high trumpets and solo horn, along with a snare drum, to create a military feel. In *Famine Odyssey*, the snare drum is reserved for engendering a sense of anxiety (e.g., *Gulf of Saint Lawrence*, 3rd movement), and the use of brass was mainly chosen to convey a maritime feel.

In *Famine Odyssey*, the opening phrase on brass, with dissonant parallel intervals, is also used as the basis for other movements, such as *Coffin Ship*, *Gross Île* and *The Steamer*. As mentioned in chapter 7, the entire work is constructed on a platform of the very-classical figure of the Acanthus leaf *motif*, which captures *tension and relief*, the rising figure creating tension, which then falls away relieving this tension. The use of solo horn for airs or themes, with its wide range and varied timbre, creates a nostalgic or melancholic effect: it has been used by many composers, for example the opening measures of Tchaikovsky's 2nd Symphony in C-minor, Op 17. The use of brass throughout *Odyssey*, from the opening fanfare to the howl of the paddle steamer's horn in movement 5, was significantly influenced by my collaboration with the Band of the *Gárda Síochána* and the virtuosity of their playing. There is something particularly evocative about the use of the horn at the upper extreme of its range. I discussed

this aspect of writing for horn with members of the Garda band, as I was concerned about the *high tessitura* of the writing. While they considered it extremely challenging, it was possible to play. They suggested re-scoring it for trumpet, but it was the lonesome timbre of the horn, in this high register, that I wanted to capture.

The harmonic language in *Famine Odyssey* is tonal with frequent use of sharp dissonance, mainly 2^{nds} and 7^{ths} and extended diatonic harmony. It occupies the same sonic space, harmonically and stylistically, as works by Ó Súilleabháin, Davey, Martin, Patrick Cassidy and Flynn. It does not, however, reference the *avant garde*, of Ó Riada, Bodley, and May.

The use of traditional and modal harmonic language is a feature of the work, a characteristic it shares with the works of other Post-Nationalist Irish composers. The *Famine Theme*, the main theme of *Odyssey*, is written in the Aeolian mode, influencing the harmonic language of the entire work. Other modal tonalities in the work include the Dorian and Mixolydian modes as well as pentatonic scales and droning effects, the last of these influenced by the piping tradition. Anchoring the work in a modal tonality is an effective way of placing the work in the Irish traditional idiom. This is also a feature of works by composers such as Ó Súilleabháin's in his *Oileán Suite*, where all three movements reference the Dorian mode. In Bodley's *Music for Strings*, the modal character is evident, as well as in the tonal sections of *A Small White Cloud*, which reference the Dorian mode. Ó Riada's *Nomos I* and his *Pastorale, Seoladh na nGamhna*, also sound the Dorian mode.

Parallel harmony

Some composers from both the Irish Nationalist and Post-Nationalist schools, use parallel harmony and other devices of the Impressionist school, in a style reminiscent of Debussy, Ravel, and Delius. This harmonic and textural device is effective in descriptive or mood engendering passages, to create other-worldly effect. It is also flexible and can be imbued with other meanings, depending on the context of the work. It was used by Stravinsky, for example, to evoke primitivism in ancient Russia, in *The Rite of Spring*.

Ó Riada uses parallel harmony, in both *The Banks of Sulan* and *Seoladh na nGamhan*. Other examples include May (2nd movement of his *Irish Suite*), Potter (*Fantasia Gaelach No.1*), Morean (*In the Mountain Country*) and in Molloy (*Ogham*). A dream-like quality, or tensionless harmonic movement, is an effective way of expressing magic in music. This magic is a recurrent narrative or theme in Gaelic folklore. The supernatural origin of certain airs is almost a sub-genre in traditional Irish music. The air, *Port na bPúcaí*, is reputed to have come to the

inhabitants of Inis Mhiciláin of the Blasket Islands on the sea mist. Ó Riada recorded this air with whole-tone variations and parallel harmonic movement evoking the magical qualities of the air (see chapter 4). In *Famine Odyssey*, (*Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige*), 2nd parallel movement in the orchestral accompaniment is used to express the extreme grief experienced by Brigid Treacy at losing her younger brother during boarding. Stepwise parallel movement in the strings is also used to create a haze-like effect in movement 3, (*Off the Coast of Cape Breton*), reflecting the bitter sweet emotions of the famine migrants on seeing of the mirage-like image of Cape Breton Island on the horizon.

8.11 Other Extraneous Influences

One summer some years ago as I participated in the *Ceol Na Mara* Summer School in Kylemore Abbey, Co. Galway, I was asked if I could take a session with the assembled strings sections on some aspect of Irish music. This group consisted of violins (1 + 2), viola, cello and double bass, about 30 musicians in all. I decided to use the students to explore the *rollán*, a figure that is widely used in both *sean-nós* singing and in the instrumental tradition. It is a basic technical figure in traditional fiddle playing. Nevertheless, its precise rhythmic properties are difficult to define as they may vary from performer to performer, with different regional styles, and within the musical context.

Having taught the essential rhythmic and melodic qualities of the *rollán*, I asked the large assembled group of string players, which included twelve cellos, to perform this ornamental figure, with each instrumental group playing one octave apart. This unison playing of the *rollán* was highly effective, particularly when slowed down. However, it was unstable due to the undefined duration of the shorter, grace notes of the ornamental figure. To remedy this and to give definition, I asked the students to play a double dotted rhythmic pattern which gave an exact duration to the grace notes and also gave the assembled players a constant pulse with which they could associate, reminiscent of overture style.³⁴⁹

This time it worked and I was surprised at how powerful it sounded. I call this a *Rollán Figure* for want of a better term. Later, this *Rollán Figure* became the epic sound I sought, and which I use at the very beginning of *Famine Odyssey*. It has this dramatic Doomsday feeling that makes the opening so, well, epic. This ornamental feature is therefore particularly evident in the

³⁴⁹ This is a form of Irish snap, similar to the Scottish snap, which I call a *rollán figure*. I am indebted to Rhona Clarke for an interesting exchange of ideas on this feature.

Famine 1847 (see movement 1, bars 29 – 32) and in the *Coffin Ship* parts, where the figure provides an accompanying feature and gives propulsive, rhythmic drive to the music.

Perhaps, one could call it luck.

9.1 Overview

It is customary to finish a PhD thesis with a summary of the thesis. However, this was done comprehensively in chapter 1 and, rather than repeat this, I will use the opportunity to reflect on the entire project.

This thesis is the documentary representation of a study undertaken in Arts Practice Research. For me, APR was an ideal platform, not only because of the emphasis on creativity, a feature which applies to all platforms, but mainly because of the flexibility it afforded. In Ireland, the ideological impetus of APR has been to break down barriers between *practice research* and *academic research* as genuine academic disciplines, largely thanks to pioneering work at Limerick University.

One of the personal advantages of a project such as this is that it forces one to focus on, and study, something that is important from a personal perspective, even if one has never had the opportunity to devote much time to it before. All of my life has been involved with traditional Irish music as well as art music, both of which are the subject of this study. As a result, I now have a heightened awareness and appreciation of influences that infiltrate and permeate music. Change in music, as in language, is mostly organic.

In this context I have obtained great benefit from studying art-music composers who engaged with traditional Irish music, regardless of how they approached it or which period they belong to. In the process, I could see in what ways they were receptive to the music, the incremental steps they took in developing their compositions, and the creativity involved.

When I started researching the Nationalist School of art music in Ireland, I discovered that there were so many fascinating links to follow, so many interesting composers and compositions I had been unaware of, and so many antecedents of my personal art I had never fully appreciated. Some of this music is really very good, much of it is very interesting, but virtually all of it is ignored, or largely so, by Irish orchestras. This is a pity. No composer wants to write for the archive only.

As far as my current understanding goes, the Irish Nationalist School is like a river that has three tributaries. They are composers who have sparked a surge of original creativity, partly through their compositions, but arguably even more so through their teaching. They are Charles Villiers Stanford, Michele Esposito and Alois Fleischmann. They were not really

contemporaries although their lives did overlap. They came from very different cultural backgrounds, even national backgrounds, but each of them in his own way appreciated, and explored, the cultural treasure trove on which they were sitting. For me, the great pity is Esposito. It is known that he composed a great deal of music including orchestral works, sonatas, concertos, operas, compositions for piano etc. but most of it has been lost.

Similarly, the need to concentrate on the detail of traditional Irish music has encouraged me to examine a great deal I previously took for granted, both artistically and technically. I was conscious at all times that I was a part of both worlds and not just one. Combining them in a way that was attempted in the Recital was demanding, but rewarding.

Exploring the great Irish collections of the 18th and 19th centuries for material for the Recital was a greater challenge than might appear at first sight. Some of this music is familiar to me from having studied the great collections previously, but acquiring command of this corpus of work is a lifelong task not a short-term endeavour. Nevertheless, picking a small, representative sample, and most especially one that dove-tails with the compositions of the Irish Nationalist school, is a different challenge. It is more difficult to make a small selection than a large one. One can never be sure that the choice or the balance for a recital is right. The selection is very much a personal and subjective choice. Therefore, the question remains, what would other knowledgeable musicians have chosen that would be different?

In 2017 or 2018 on a visit to Toronto, I came across an old article in a local newspaper which dealt with Irish immigrants who had arrived in Toronto in June 1847 (Scrivener, *Toronto Star*, 2007). Amongst others, it described an emaciated, half-starved, seven-year-old child who sat on Reese's Wharf, surrounded by a wretched humanity discarded from the river steamboat recently arrived. She sat on the wharf trying to eat her shoelaces. In her pocket was a small cream jug which she had picked up as she left her home, near Newry, several months earlier, and had clung to for comfort as an insecure small girl will cling to a ragdoll. It was a last vain, instinctive attempt to maintain some link with her home and family, a life she would never see again.

Who was she and how did she come to be there?

Her name was Brigit Ann Tracey, and her saviour was her aunt, Peggy Ryan Clancy, who had accompanied her on the journey. We know nothing about her family, or their fate, other than that she had a five-year-old brother who was lost along the way. This made me angry in a way that unnecessary and avoidable natural catastrophies, with great human suffering,

always do. With a shock I realised that had I been born about 120 years earlier, it could have been me, or someone of my generation.

I resolved that my Famine composition would relate the story of this waif, as seen through her eyes and her experiences. However, her life, environment, and circumstances were so different from mine that a lot of work would be needed to put myself in her world. *Famine Odyssey* is her story, seen sometimes through her eyes and, at other times, in a detached way as if observing her remotely.

The story gave concrete form to what had been no more than a vague idea.

Famine Odyssey was not composed in a linear manner, starting at the beginning and finishing at the end. There was a vague outline, but there was no script. A flexible plot, or sequence, somewhere at the back of my mind evolved gradually over time. Research and composition took place simultaneously, seldom sequentially, and inevitably the story went through many revisions. When something preoccupies your mind all of the time, ideas tend to come in an unpredictable fashion. As I have mentioned previously, the *Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett* was the first piece actually composed. It was a version for violin and classical guitar. The final version in *Famine Odyssey*, is fully orchestrated and a *Valse Triste* has been added. Gradually it took shape. Ideas which had seemed important when the project began receded into the background, only to be replaced by new ideas as my ongoing research uncovered important new dimensions to the story. The pieces may have been put together erratically, like a giant jigsaw puzzle, but the overall concept always made it clear what could, and what would not, fit.

A conflict I had always been conscious of is the clash of cultures. Before the Famine, Ireland was a country of subsistence tenant farmers who worked the land on large estates. Some of the aristocracy were present in Ireland and could witness the tragedy of the Famine unfold before their eyes. Many were absentee, living in London society. A great many of those were heavily in debt, and were certainly oblivious to and, perhaps, uncaring for the circumstances of the tenants on their estates. The agent who ran the estate was confronted with ever-increasing demands for more money, in spite of diminishing returns to any effort to extract this. At a certain level, integrating the art music of the aristocracy and traditional music of the local population mirrors the clash in society. Integrating both music *genres* in this work augments the bigger picture of the storyline, even if this is not explicit.

9.2 Suggestions for Further Research

It is difficult to provide recommendations for an activity that specifies creativity as a central element – inspiration comes from within, even if triggered by an external stimulus. No doubt, the interface between musical *genres* provides a fertile ground with infinite possibilities for further research. The known collections of Irish traditional music are far from being fully explored and new composers are adding to them all the time; many of these extensions of the repertoire are bound to include new influences.

This study has been confined to the linkages between Irish traditional music and art music in Ireland. However, there are many other *genres* of music common and popular in Ireland which would also be interesting to examine in terms of their influence on each other. Here one could focus on sub-themes – dance music, the love songs, historical accounts - and explore how music reflects important sociological developments in society and how social change may be reflected in art in general, including music.

But, I also feel the Nationalist school in Ireland has been relatively ignored and is overdue a re-evaluation. This could be a rewarding task as much of this repertoire is sadly overlooked, if not forgotten.

The feature of this study I am most satisfied with is integrating distinctively Irish traditional music with art music, in such a way that the transition is imperceptible, or as close to this ideal as possible. It is analogous to changing gears in a motor car, without using a clutch, and doing it so skilfully that the passengers never notice. It was advantageous that I had my own willing, if “captive”, *sean-nós* singer in the person of my daughter, Sibéal. Of course, this is not all. Extensions of this interest also include further work with the uilleann pipes and slow airs in general.

In this endeavour I am keenly aware that there is a credible school of thought that holds that *sean nós*, in particular, is a solo artform and should be left, “uncontaminated”, in this form. I fully subscribe to the notion that it must be preserved as a solo artform, but I do not agree that any experimentation is in some sense heretical. No living artform should be fossilised by public convention or *diktat*. As with all living art, the good will prosper and the bad will soon be forgotten. In any case, my methodology is focussed on preserving the solo-qualities of *sean nós*, and not significantly compromising them, in what is a relatively new setting.

9.3 Concluding Remarks

Where do I go from here? Even before this thesis was finished, I was already engaged in another project – a 25-minute *suite* commemorating the centenary of the *Gárda Síochána*. This was unexpected at the time, and was a result of *Famine Odyssey* as well as the earlier composition, *Marbhna 1916*. It was performed in a courtyard of Dublin Castle as part of the centenary celebrations in August 2022.

Soon after, I was asked to write the musical score for a film, *An Fhidil Ghorm*, (*The Blue Fiddle*). This was a completely new experience which involved not only composing the completely-original music score, some of it to a time clock, but also recording the music and working closely with the producers and, especially, the film editor. The last of these was particularly helpful as, on occasion, the film could be edited to fit the music. This full-length feature film has already been shown at some festivals and is currently awaiting release.

The main point is that all of these projects provided a platform to exploit the insights gained in the course of this study, and even add to the technical refinements I have acquired. In the spirit of Arts Practice Research, I am convinced that creativity grows organically and is ultimately a process whereby one can approach future tasks with greater confidence.

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APPENDICES

Note: The work *Famine Odyssey* was performed in Toronto, Canada under the title *Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope*.

Appendix A: Feedback and Reflection on the performance/broadcast	A2
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APPENDIX A FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION ON *Famine Odyssey*

Arts Practise Research is a creative academic discipline rather than a purely scientific one. As such it includes processes which promote, or yield, artistic insight, rather than being strictly confined to standards of scientific rigour. This is sometimes lost sight of. In APR, special importance is attached to personal insight, a highly subjective phenomenon which some may reject as “unscientific”, and thus inappropriate. APR also attaches importance to “feedback”, and reflection on this feedback, although this is common to all studies which use an Action Research (AR) methodology. In many APR studies, an important part of the validation documentation consists of “reflexive journals” (see chapter 2). These consist of feedback along with personal reflections. Although the present study does not provide a reflexive journal - its scope is simply too great for that - a brief consideration of some feedback received on the composition *Famine Odyssey* is the subject matter of this Appendix.

During the composition process, few had access to the work-in-progress, and most of the feedback was obtained from my supervisors, assessors, and a small number of interested parties. This has been incorporated into the main body of chapter 7, and the following chapter 8. Subsequent to the initial performance of *Famine Odyssey*, members of the audience came up to me and offered their congratulations and impressions. Others who followed the online broadcast of the concert commented on the work in different languages. These, while very much appreciated, were for the most part not substantive.

There were two exceptions. The first was an email from Mr. Frank Heneghan, formerly principal of the College of Music in Dublin (now a constituent part of TUDublin) and my very first employer when I returned to Ireland as a young violin graduate. Frank Heneghan is a renowned piano teacher, in demand all over the world, with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of music I have rarely if ever encountered elsewhere. Dr. Ken Silberstein is a senior medical officer in the USA, originally from New York City, who attended the concert with his wife. In his younger years he played horn with various orchestras for several years and has wide experience as an active orchestral player. He enthusiastically offered to send me some written comments, an offer I gladly accepted.

What follows is a transcript of these communications with very minor editing. Where appropriate, I add my own reflections (in italics). I conclude Appendix A with a communication from the Irish Ambassador to Canada following the concert.

From: Frank Heneghan³⁵⁰

Sent: Saturday, March 18, 2023 11:27 PM

Dear Odhran,

First thank you for letting me know that your Magnum Opus was to be relayed. I listened from start to finish. totally mesmerized by the scope of what you undertook and delivered on.

I believe that what you had in mind (and there is nobody better qualified, from your training) was to show that there should be no boundaries in allowing all kinds of music to blend with one another, and not only that, but the inclusivity of language and culture in general was well insinuated. We are all treading the same ground. It was one of my insinuations when the MEND report was issued more than 20 years ago. The mixture of classical with Gregorian chant, Irish traditional (including Sean Nos) and motivic techniques recalling Bach and Beethoven, in particular, was engagingly natural and held the interest throughout. There was simply no way of knowing what was going to come next. The resources you called into service were beyond impressive - orchestra of classic and traditional musicians (including the Garda Band!), choir, and soloists in variety left nothing unsaid. Please congratulate Sibeal for me. The 'come hither' in her voice, its lyrical and coaxing quality and the disarming simplicity ([ochon etc!]) nothing overdone) which seems so appropriate to the message of the narrative . . . all was delivered with aplomb . . . lovely. The story-telling was fascinating, too, and the visual effect was almost amusing in the way the memory of 1847 and the horror of it all was contrasted with the 'wokeness' of contemporariness - shaved heads, psychedelic jackets, leather waistcoats, Covid masking, even nose and ear piercings, were all there to let us know that we can still respectfully remember, but in a characteristic way, 175 years later. The mixture of classical and traditional instrumentation was deftly managed, too, with no feeling of incongruity. I think you have achieved much in getting the message across as I outlined above. Your intrepid decision to observe no boundaries is a statement in itself.

I hope that many more performances will take place and that the work will receive its full due in having made a substantial and telling statement about the coexistence of misery, heroism, courage, generosity of spirit, tolerance, and fidelity to prevailing cultures that all need freedom of expression. Your achievement is great. I wish you every success in the further artistic development that must surely be before you.

Thank you again for the reminder. I am sure that heaven's approval from the dear departed smiled proudly down on the whole endeavour in all its spectacularity. Congratulations!

Ever yours,

Mr H

³⁵⁰ Mr. Frank Heneghan kindly gave his permission for me to use his email in this thesis.

I found this evaluation very heartening, especially in the approval for the process of musical integration, or synthesis, as a valid form of expression. In chapter 5 I discussed how this has not always been so. Even in popular music, crossover is not widely approved of and generally avoided – compartmentalisation is the order of the day. Thus, we not only have pop music and country music as generic categories, but Hip Hop, R&B, pop music, rock music, rock ‘n roll, Britpop etc. etc., but also Hillbilly, Rockabilly, Cajun ... the list is endless, each with its own dedicated and committed audience. I once came across an online, digital radio station that restricts the music it broadcasts to the Beatles, 24/7, and it is not the only one! Frank Heneghan recognised that the synthesis is not just musical but also cultural, linguistic and historical. What I have discussed in this thesis as an Interface, and analysed as a two-dimensional divide is, in reality, an n-dimensional hyperplane. I feel that this is what Frank was referring to where he states that “there should be no boundaries in allowing all kinds of music to blend with one another ...” I was very gratified that he found the synthesis successful “with no feeling of incongruity”.

A second point, which resonated with my lengthy and extensive deliberation on this work, was how he felt that the art-music underpinning of the work was very clear. Indeed, it was Mr. Heneghan who drew my attention to the fact that the musical form of the key, and recurring, motif in the work corresponded to the Anacrusis-leaf figure discussed in section 7.3. This figure is a veritable hallmark of classical music through the ages with its origin back in Gregorian chant, perhaps earlier. Art-music aficionados are likely to find the work “too traditional”, while traditional musicians may find it “too classical” or “baroque”, none of these terms meant exactly as compliments. It is none of these: it is an original composition reflecting a synthesis of two musical genres.

Ken Silberstein Notes – *Famine Odyssey*

Most of Ken Silberstein’s very extensive comments referred to the composition, and actual performance, rather than to the cultural context of the study. Many of his comments dealt with the orchestration. In some cases, he identified problems which will certainly lead to revision in future versions, even performances. Several of his very detailed comments are nevertheless very valuable, and it is with a short selection of those I engage here.

(Movement 1, section 1, Bars 1-8) Opening is very exposed and needs a really tight brass/winds section, expert in ensemble playing, ability to blend (and play in tune). I suppose it would have been easier to open with strings laying down a backdrop of lush chords and bring the winds/horns in over the top. You only have one chance to make a first impression. Edgy harmonies right out of the gate which makes a statement about the boundaries you will push against throughout the piece. The word of caution is that if you want to juxtapose tones so close together, they all really need to be in tune.

(Mov.3, section 1, bars 61 – 64) Again, close-toned harmonies and dissonance need crisp execution. The audience may think someone made a mistake, either the composer or the performer.

Point taken. This was a calculated risk. Throughout the composition, I did not simplify the score on the grounds that an orchestra or choir might struggle with aspects of the arrangements. Some adjustments were made on the spot, nonetheless.

(Mov. 1, section 2, bars 86 – 101). The first duet with the tenor and soprano has great harmonies and the singers in this performance did a really good job. There is tension building in this section which is effective.

(Mov. 2, section 4, bars 196 – 199). Soprano line here is awesome.

(Mov. 4, section 2, bars 68 – 75) The orchestration accompanying the soprano solo is great.

(Mov. 4, section 2, bar 94) Three voices, just perfect.

(Mov. 6, section 2, bar 227). Yes!! Best moment of the night!
Climax of the Aria

One cannot overestimate the wonderful performances of the soprano and tenor under exceptionally trying circumstances – very long flights, freezing cold, change in time zone, limited rehearsals etc. Were exceptionally professional.

(Mov. 1, section 2, bars 42 – 47) The dissonance introducing the idée fixe is very effective. Sibeal – can “sing the phone book.” Just keep writing for her. Her work with the melody for this next section is wonderful.

(Mov. 4, section 2, bars 33 – 35). Great transition to a beautiful melody. This seems to be the sweet spot for Sibeal’s range and is perfectly written for her as well as perfectly executed. The winds and orchestration behind her is wonderful.

The guitar with the idée fixe is very effective.

There were many wonderful performances on the night, and Sibéal was definitely one of them. In many respects the work revolves around Sibéal: as Bridget Ann Treacy she is the centre of the narration and as a work integrating sean-nós and art music, her performance was always going to be key.

(Mov. 1, section 3, bar 252). Love the trombone run.

(Mov. 2, section 3, bars 146 – 147). Ileum pipes with strings is just beautiful.

(Mov. 2, section 3, bars 163 – 167). Love the motif going up here, horn, clarinet, flute, ileum pipe, etc.

(Mov. 3, section 3, bar 211). The whole stormy seas section is really great.

(Mov.3, section 3, bar 269). You will have brass players lining up to perform this piece with this kind of marching bass line for the trombones.

(Mov. 6, section 1, bars 9 – 16). Perfection, the guitar and oboe.

(same, bar 20). More perfection with the orchestration.

(same, bars 41 – 45), And more perfection.

A selection of very kind comments. With such huge forces there were always going to be some flaws as well, which I appreciate, but omit. All comments are gratefully received.

And finally,

(Mov. 1, section 1, bars 35 – 39). Sounds like Samuel Barber. Nice!

(Mov. 2, section 1, bars 6 – 9). Are these intentional Asian influenced pentatonic harmonies? Effective.

(Mov. 1, section 2, bars 57 – 60). So Avant Garde. Stravinsky?

(Mov. 5, section 2, bar 83). Feel the Mozart influence here. I love the harmonies from the choir behind the soprano voice.

(Mov. 6, section 1, bars 93 – 101). With the shift to a different style altogether, a touch of Strauss maybe?

(Mov. 6, section 2, bars 271 – 280). Sounds like Copland.

I later try to identify art-music influences in the composition Famine Odyssey. Here are some I would never have guessed. Thanks.

In conclusion,

From the many congratulatory messages received I would like to present one. It is from His Excellency Eamonn McKee, Irish ambassador to Canada, to the organisers and liaison personnel involved with staging of Bound for Canada (or its title in this thesis, Famine Odyssey). It shows that the work and its performance are seen as an important diplomatic even in the bilateral relations of Ireland – Canada. It is curiously symmetric, and appropriate, that the final appreciation should come in Toronto, from the Irish ambassador to Canada, given that the starting impetus came in Dublin, from the Canadian ambassador to Ireland.

On Mar 10, 2023, at 11:31 AM, Eamonn.McKee@dfa.ie wrote:

Dear Robert, Sheila,

Congratulations on a fabulous event last night at the Winter Gardens Theatre. It was an event in so many ways. The premiere of a fantastic and sweeping musical epic, [Bound for Canada](#). A creative, skilled, and moving rendering of a major chapter in the conjoined histories of Ireland and Canada. A generous tribute to Canada for its compassionate response to the Irish in a year of desperate, apocalyptic need. A gathering of the Irish in Canada and those of us privileged to play a part in our bilateral relations. That the Government was represented by such a senior Minister as Michael McGrath was more than appropriate for what was a signal event in our transatlantic relationship.

Bound for Canada, a major contribution to the cultural vitality of both Ireland and Canada, linking the events of 1847 to the dynamic and creative Ireland of today, befits the ethos and ambitions of the Canada Ireland Foundation. Everyone involved from your inspirational discussion all those years ago, to Odhrán's creative genius and the skills of the musicians and singers Irish and Canadian alike, and of course all those involved in the Foundation, should be very proud indeed. This is a major achievement.

The team and I look forward to working with you in promoting *Bound for Canada* on both sides of the Atlantic.

Best wishes and renewed congratulations.

Eamonn

Dr. Eamonn McKee
Ambassador of Ireland to Canada, Jamaica and The Bahamas

Embassy of Ireland/Ambasáid na hÉireann/Ambassade d'Irlande/Ottawa
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APPENDIX B Documentation *Famine Odyssey*

- B-1 Structure of the Composition
- B-2 Narration for the Movements
- B-3 Historical Notes for Each Movement
- B-4 Texts/Lyrics Used in the Different Movements

B-1 *Famine Odyssey* – STRUCTURE OF THE COMPOSITION

Movement	Section
1. A Cry From Ireland	Famine 1847 Twilight Canadian Wake
2. Departure	Boarding Mo Bhrón Ar An Fharraige Long Fé Lán tSeól Hey! Ho! Canada Way
3. Coffin Ship	Ghostly Escort Off the Coast of Cape Breton Gulf of Saint Lawrence PAUSE
4. Arrival In A New World	<i>Grosse Île</i> Ne Jamais Oublier
5. Endurance	The Steamer Seven Candles / Ave Verum Fever Sheds
6. Awakening	Elegy for Dr George Robert Grasett The Belle of Whitby Reprise
7. Epilogue	Canada, We Thank You!
Total Running Time	80 minutes (approx.)

Work on *Famine Odyssey* commenced, autumn 2020

First version completed, autumn 2022

Current (revised) version completed, spring 2023.

The work is described and analysed in chapters 7 and 8

B-2 NARRATION FOR THE MOVEMENTS

[There is a short narration at the start of each movement. Its purpose is to assist the members of the audience understand what they are about to hear. It is delivered by a narrator on stage. If desirable, brief elements of the Background Notes (3 – A) can be incorporated into the Narration. However, brevity is essential and it is not meant to be a detailed explanation.]

1. Movement

Because of the dramatic gravity of this topic, we would kindly ask you not to applaud throughout this work. At the end, however, we will appreciate your generous applause all the more.

The first part of this work, *A Cry from Ireland* begins with a Famine *motif* which will recur throughout the work. The first section, *Famine 1847*, conveys a feeling for the epic scale of the disaster and the suffering. It is the third year of famine and all hope has vanished. Everyone is in the grip of existential fear, as well as a catastrophic and crushing Fate, which they feel powerless to resist. This trauma accompanies them long after they have left.

Then we meet seven-year-old Bridget on the eve of departure. She knows that something momentous is about to happen, something she is unable to comprehend. In the second section, *Twilight*, she is riven by internal conflict and confusion. Her motif, an *idée fixe*, is also repeated periodically throughout the work.

This part concludes with a barn dance (hornpipe), representing what was to become known as an American, or Canadian wake. It was so called because the departing loved ones would never be seen again. It is a musical send-off. It is meant to be joyful, but becomes increasingly melancholic as the moment of departure approaches.

2. Movement

The Part 2 begins with the chaos and crush of boarding.

This is followed by a lament, *Mo Bhrón ar an Fharraige* (My Sadness on the Ocean), which Bridget sings for her young brother who is missing, feared lost. The song is in the Irish language, the only language she knows, and is sung in the traditional style of “*sean nós*” (old style).

Afterwards, we have an uplifting piece, *Long fé lán tSeól* (Ship Under Full Sail), which captures the exhilaration of the ship under full sail departing the Irish coast. Many of the passenger feel a sense of relief that they have successfully escaped the lingering fate of famine.

This part ends with a sea shanty as the sailors go about their allotted tasks; in the chorus, they are in communion with their loved ones far across the ocean.

3. Movement

This part begins with *Ghostly Escorts*. Because of the practice of burying the dead at sea, the ships were tracked across the ocean by sharks. For the passengers, confined to the hold of the ship for 23 hours a day, the journey across the Atlantic is distressful, claustrophobic and, at times, very frightening.

This is followed by a slip-jig. The mood among the passengers lightens when they hear they are off Cape Breton. They have made it across the ocean.

But, the Gulf of Saint Lawrence is stormy and wild. Many vessels have been shipwrecked here with heavy loss of life, when adverse weather can sweep ships onto the rocks. A sense of doom permeates the cramped hold of the ship and, at times, a collective cry of fear can be heard.

4. Movement

This part commences with the theme of *Grosse Île*. The final part of the theme is not played at this stage, and the theme in its entirety will be restated as part of the Finale.

This is followed by a chorale, *Ne Jamais Oublier*. It is a form of thanksgiving to all those who took-in orphans into their own families. The title, and text of the final chorus, are in French to acknowledge the particular generosity of French-Canadian families – how they encouraged orphans never to forget their identity, or where they came from, and to retain their own names, hence the title. The folklore of the Mohawk tribe also recalls how they “took in and restored to health” orphans who were “just roaming about”.

5. Movement

This part, “Endurance” begins with passengers loaded onto steamers leaving Quebec. The well-off can afford a cabin but the emigrants are crammed on deck, or possibly onto barges which are in tow. Many of them are ill, but so tightly packed that the sick cannot lie down.

At Montreal, the steamer puts in to drop off the seriously ill at the fever sheds at *Pointe de Charles*. This tribute, *Seven Candles*, dedicated to the Grey Nuns, is in honour of all religious, nuns and clergy, who administered to the sick. In recognition of their calling, it is an *Ave Verum* in Latin and in the Gregorian style.

The steamer continues on its journey, and finally arrives at Reese’s Wharf in Toronto where the sick are transferred to the *Fever Sheds* nearby.

6. Movement

This final section, *Awakening*, begins with an *Elegy for Robert Grasett*, representative for all in Toronto who lost their lives attending to their mission of charity. Embedded in this elegy is a Valse Triste, which pays tribute to all in Canada who risked their lives to help the emigrants.

This is followed by *The Belle of Whitby*, a song which marks the complete acceptance of Bridget Ann Treacy in Canadian society. It follows her progress from traumatised child to beauty queen.

After a reprise of the hornpipe symbolising the emigrants leaving their home forever, we have the finale, a full statement of the *Grosse Île* theme.

7. Movement (pre-announced as follows 6. Movement without a break)

The Final short movement recalls the tragic departure from Ireland many years ago. Then it starts into the anthem-type song, *Canada, We Thank You*, where Ireland, and her people along with the descendants of those who fled during the Famine, gratefully thank Canada for helping with such generosity in the hour of greatest need in our history.

1. Movement – **A CRY FROM IRELAND**

In the years between 1845 and 1850, Ireland experienced one of the most catastrophic famines ever, when the potato crop failed repeatedly in successive years. This crop failure was experienced internationally, but nowhere else were the consequences on this scale.

In Ireland, the bulk of the population was totally dependent on the potato as a food source.

The result was widespread starvation, disease and flight, a combination of which diminished the population of Ireland by 25% in six years. A consequence of the despair was a disintegration of social organisation, cohesion and norms. It would trigger a process of emigration, resulting in a continuous decline in the population, which would continue for well over a century.

In 1847, or 'Black 47' - the highpoint of the Famine - many of the Irish refugees went to Canada. The United States, an independent country, introduced restrictions on immigration in view of the diseased and destitute condition of the arrivals. As far as the passengers themselves were concerned they were going to America and their precise destination was of little, if any, importance. Canada, like Ireland, was a Crown Colony, part of the British Empire, so that admission was unrestricted.

The musical work describes the experience of Famine refugees who sought to escape starvation by means of a precarious journey across the ocean to North America. It incorporates the true story of two orphans, the seven-year-old Brigit Ann Tracey and her younger brother, Thomas, who along with their aunt Peggy Ryan Clancy, set off from their home in Newry in County Down, in the spring of 1847.

In the early spring of 1847, they set off on foot for the city port of Limerick, some two hundred miles away, with the intention of boarding a ship for America. At the time, agents sold passages to America on prospective sailings, to those able and willing to pay. Some landlords assisted the passages of their tenants. For this, or some other reason, they chose a relatively distant point of departure and were also on one of the very first ships to sail for Canada that year. We have no details of this part of their journey, but we know the name of the ship on which they sailed, and that Bridget and her aunt arrived in Toronto in the early summer. We also have a considerable family lore concerning their future lives in Canada.

Much of the detail of this voyage is based on the diary of Stephen De Vere, a member of the Irish gentry, who undertook such a voyage only a few weeks later. He chose to travel steerage class on a coffin ship to Canada, to witness, first hand, what conditions were like. He left us with a contemporaneous eyewitness account of events, an invaluable historical document. Also important are many reports of the experiences of Irish emigrants in Canada in the spring and summer of 1847.

2. Movement – **DEPARTURE**

After what must have been a harrowing journey, Peggy Clancy and the Treacys arrive in Limerick. On the 2. April 1847, they set sail for the Port of Quebec on board the *Jane Black*, one of the infamous “coffin ships” with 429 passengers on board. Their voyage will last 7 weeks and 3 days, arriving in the Port of Quebec on 23. May 1847.

All passenger numbers refer to passengers on departure. They remain unchanged thereafter and do not reflect the true numbers that actually arrived in Quebec.

Peggy Clancy and her charge are in the vanguard of the wave of emigrants arriving in Quebec that summer, arriving just three days after the Bark *Syria*, the first ship to arrive with hundreds of Irish emigrants on board. Less than one week later, alarm bells start ringing in Quebec; health conditions at the Quarantine Station on Grosse Île are deteriorating rapidly.

Boarding is chaotic and tumultuous. Soon after departure they realise to their consternation that five-year-old Thomas is not on board. In spite of frantic efforts to find him, and extensive efforts to discover his fate, no trace of the boy has ever been found.

When the ship sets sail, many feel a sense of relief that the worst is now behind them. But, for many, the worst is yet to come.

3. Movement – **COFFIN SHIP**

It has been estimated that 5 per cent. of all emigrants from Ireland, who set sail for Canada in 1847, died on board ship. Most died of a highly contagious disease, then known as ship fever, which we now know as epidemic typhus. Many more died from infection contacted during, or after, the voyage. Many Canadians were also to die, especially those who assisted the emigrants.

To put this in perspective, we can compare the average emigrant from Ireland to the average emigrant from Germany at the same time, both travelling to Canada. The Irish emigrant was more than 300 times more likely to die at sea. If we include mortality from infectious disease subsequent to the voyage, the emigrant from Ireland was more than 1000 times more likely to die.

But, the mortality rates during the voyage from Ireland were not uniform. On some ships, most if not all passengers survived; on the very worst, setting sail from Liverpool and Cork, in some cases fewer than half of the passengers survived.

This is why the ships transporting emigrants from Ireland are commonly known as “coffin ships”.

The conditions on these ships were truly appalling. The authorities on Grosse Île attributed the high mortality rates to

... the overcrowded ships, the poor hygienic conditions and the lack of food on board, ... [in addition to] ... the condition of the emigrants before they embarked on the journey as well as the latent presence of the germ of the disease amongst them.

A report in the London Times of July 31st 1847 refers to the ... “condition of filth, raggedness, and starvation in which a large proportion of these people were taken on shipboard, [with] in some cases more than 500 having been received within the steerage of one vessel.”

The coffin ships, for the most part, were cargo ships used to transport Canadian timber to England and Ireland, mainly to rebuild the British navy after the Napoleonic Wars. They were quickly adapted to transport “steerage class” passengers in their holds back to Canada. These passengers were disparagingly regarded as “paying ballast”:

Loose boards were laid over the bilges as temporary flooring and rows of rough berths about the size of dog kennels were fitted in place and covered with straw for bedding.

The most graphic account of the experience of passengers on board coffin ships is obtained from the diary kept by Stephen De Vere. He set sail from London on the Bark *Birman* on the 29. April 1847, four weeks after Bridget Treacy and her aunt had sailed from Limerick.

His eyewitness account is unique;

Before the emigrant has been a week at sea he is an altered man. How could it be otherwise? Hundreds of poor people men, women, and children of all ages from the drivelling idiot of ninety to the babe just born, huddled together without light, without air, wallowing in filth and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body, dispirited in heart, the fevered patients lying between the sound in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them the power of indulging, by a change of position, the natural restlessness of the disease, by their agonized ravings disturbing those around them and predisposing them, through the effects of the imagination, to imbibe the contagion; living without food or medicine except as administered by the hand of casual charity, dying without the voice of spiritual consolation and buried in the deep without the rites of the Church.

4. Movement – ARRIVAL IN A NEW WORLD

Grosse Île is a small island – 3 km long and 1 km wide – about 45 km downstream from the Port of Quebec. Its small size belies its historic importance, because a quarantine station was established here in 1832 to provide health clearance for newly arriving emigrants to Canada. This followed a cholera epidemic which had cost many thousands of lives. The station was built to cater for 200 patients.

The crisis of 1847 erupted suddenly. Although the daily newspaper, The Quebec Mercury, carried regular reports on conditions in Ireland, none of the ships arriving at Grosse Île up to May 20th had carried more than a handful of passengers, and most none at all. There was no palpable concern. But this was the calm before the storm. Two days earlier, the Chief Agent for Emigration had published a list showing that 31 ships were on their way from the UK and Ireland with close to 11,000 passengers on board.

May 20: Of the 14 ships that arrive in Quebec on this day, only the bark *Syria* from Liverpool with 213 passengers on board, had any passengers at all. (Recorded passenger numbers refer to numbers at departure, not arrivals.) Already at Grosse Île on the same day were at least 5 passenger ships, including the *Jane Black* from Limerick (425 passengers) and the *Wandsworth* from Dublin (527 passengers). Three days later, the *Jane Black* arrived in Quebec.

May 25: We get the first mention of “considerable excitement” in town because of “many unauthenticated rumours that are in circulation respecting the sickness at the Quarantine Station”.

In the following days the situation deteriorated explosively.

On almost every vessel arriving from Ireland there has been sickness. The hospital at the Quarantine Station was full, or nearly so.

Recent restrictions on emigration to the United States meant even more vessels were heading for Quebec.

The number of orphans at the station had more than doubled in one day, to over 100.

Dr. Douglas, Medical Superintendent of the Quarantine Station, reported that, although serious, “rumours of conditions on Grosse Île are greatly exaggerated.” The captain of the ship *Argo*, stuck at Grosse Île, wrote that conditions are “daily getting worse”.

The report dated June 5, which appeared days later in the Quebec Mercury, indicated “alarming sickness”. In a little over two weeks, a summary of the situation reads as follows;

25,400 arrivals at Grosse Île

1,097 died at sea

900 deaths at the Quarantine Station

1,200 sick on board the vessels at the station

1,100 sick at different receptacles on the island

43 ships detained in quarantine

120 internments took place that day

Of passengers who had been cleared and gone up to Quebec, 300 had fallen ill and been admitted to the Marine hospital. Health of the city not affected.

To get a personal feeling for the human tragedy, we get an eyewitness impression from the diary of Stephen De Vere, whose ship was in Grosse Île. His diary entry for June 16th reads;

“Arrived at Grosse isle aquarantine about 7 am. Detained waiting for dr till evening, when he inspected & gave us clean bill of health – abt. 40 ships detained there – villages of white tents on shore for the sick. Daily mortality about 150. One ship, Sisters of Liverpool, in wth all passengers & crew in fever of this ship, all but the Cap’n and one girl died.

Laid alongside of “Jessy” in which many ill. Water covered with beds, cooking utensils refuse of the dead. Ghastly appearance of boats full of sick going ashore never to return. Several died between ship and shore. Wives separated from husbands, children from parents. Ascertained by subsequent enquiry that funds in agents hands altogether insufficient for care. Medical attendance bad. Exemplary conduct of Catholic /Clergy.”

5. Movement – **ENDURANCE**

Sailing ships could come as far as Grosse Île and Quebec, but then the steamboat reigned. Since they first made their appearance in 1809, the steamboat had become the economic workhorse of the river, frequently with barges and sometimes even ships in tow. Poor passengers travelled on open decks, or in barges, despite sailings usually involving night-time travel. The steamboat was also the main communicative link between the Port of Quebec and Grosse Île.

The Sisters of Charity of Montreal were founded in 1737. They are known as the Grey Nuns because of their beige-grey habits, which they adopted as a symbol of humility. Their main charitable focus was on women, whose needs were completely neglected at the time, and orphans. In 1847, the Montreal house numbered some forty sisters; two years previously in 1845, three of their members had set up a sister house in Bytown, now Ottawa. Both houses were highly active in helping the sick and dying emigrants as well as caring for the orphans.

In early June, sick passengers began arriving in Montreal in great numbers, many an overflow from Grosse Île. The mayor of Montreal, John Mills, opened fever sheds at *Pointe Saint Charles* on the bank of the river, against considerable local opposition. As the situation became critical the Grey Nuns rushed to help in the sheds on June 9th. They were soon followed by the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of St Joseph, the last a contemplative, or cloistered, order which required special permission from their bishop to set aside their vow of silence. The clergy, Anglican and Catholic, worked day and night offering spiritual solace and the Last Rights to dying patients.

Nearly all of the Grey Nuns in the sheds contracted typhus, and seven died – some reports put this number considerably higher. They are commemorated annually by the lighting of seven candles.

On June 7, 1847, the first boatload of emigrants arrived in Toronto, many of them ill. It is estimated that over 38,000 emigrants arrived that year in a city of 20,000 inhabitants. The city responded quickly, allocating funds to open a makeshift hospital, as well as fever sheds close to Rees's Wharf where the emigrants landed.

Brigit Tracey and her aunt Peggy Clancy would certainly have been on one of the earliest boats to arrive in Toronto. According to family lore, the seven-year old Brigit was seen sitting on the wharf trying to eat her shoelaces.

6. Movement – AWAKENING

News heralding the approach of typhus to Toronto in 1847 required a quick response, as had the cholera epidemic some fifteen years earlier. An Emigrant Hospital was established in the building of the old cholera hospital and fever sheds were erected nearby. A young doctor, George Robert Grasett, who only ten years before had been licenced to practice medicine, sought to be put in charge. On June 22, he was appointed Medical Superintendent of the newly created Emigrant Hospital. Two weeks later he became ill. On July 16, less than one month following his appointment, he died of typhus.

Altogether some 1,200 people died of typhus in Toronto. This included medical staff, religious confessors, including Michael Power the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Toronto, and many others who braved the risk. The disease was not understood and some believed transmission occurred through miasma.

But, some were lucky and they included Brigit Tracey and her aunt Peggy Clancy. In spite of extended exposure to the disease, there is no record that either of them was infected.

Peggy Clancy got a position as a cook in Whitby, where she brought up her niece. At the age of 18, Brigit was chosen the *Belle of Whitby*, a local beauty contest. This showed that the Irish emigrants, who had arrived under such unfavourable circumstances, were now fully accepted into Canadian society. Brigit became a nurse. When she was 25, she married another Irish emigrant and they had four children; today, her family counts over 200 Canadians who are directly descended from her.

Brigit Ann Treacy died in 1924 at the age of 84. Her aunt lived to be 103.

B-4 TEXTS FOR VOCAL SECTIONS OF EACH MOVEMENT

Movement 1 - Famine 1847

Twilight - Ochón

Ochón, ochón, ochón is ochón ó
Ochón, ochón, ochón is ochón ó
Is ochón ó,

Twilight – De Profundis

De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine;
Domine exaudi, Domine vocem meam.

Movement II - Departure

Mo bhrón ar an bhfarraige (3 verses)

1

Mo bhrón ar an bhfarraige
Is é tá mór,
Is é gabháil idir mé
'S mo mhíle stór.
Fagadh san mbaile mé
Déanamh bróin,
Gan aon tsúil thar sáile liom
Choíche ná go deo.

2

Mo léan nach bhfuil mise
'Gus mo mhúirnín bán
I gCúige Laighean
Ná i gContae an Chláir.

Mo bhrón nach bhfuil mise
'Gus mo mhíle grá
Ar bord loinge
Triall go Meiriceá.

3

Leaba luachra
Bhí fúm aréir,
Agus chaith mé amach é
Le teas an lae.
Tháinig mo ghrá-sa
Le mo thaobh
Gualainn ar ghualainn
Agus béal ar bhéal.

Hey Ho Canada Way (Sea Shanty)

I

Eight bells and all hands on deck
Hey Ho Canada Way
Sail'n for the Port of Quebec
Hey Ho Canada Way
Smartly catch the weather tide
Hey Ho Canada
Topsail can billow with pride
Hey Ho Canada Way.

Chorus

(But) When I hold you in my arms,
On the wharf at Saint Charles.
Locked in embrace as crowds move away
Hey Ho Canada Way
Soon it's time to say goodbye
Ocean seagulls cry
Parting is our way of life
Hey Ho Canada Way.

II

Reef sails and batten the hatch
Hey Ho
Wild seas with tempest to match
Hey Ho
Scudding in the face of the storm
Hey Ho
We'll live to see the morn'
Hey Ho

Chorus

III

Captain's asleep in his bunk
Hey Ho
First mate is taking the brunt
Hey Ho
Sharp me hearties now is our watch
Hey Ho
Work - sleep around the clock
Hey Ho Canada Way

Chorus

Repeat Chorus (2nd half different)

(But) When I hold you in my arms,
On the wharf at Saint Charles.
Locked in embrace as crowds move away
Hey Ho Canada Way
When I'm old and tired to the core
I'll go to sea no more
In my heart there's always a place for
Hey Ho Canada Way

Movement III - Coffin Ship

Ghostly escorts

Kyrie eleison – Christe eleison – Kyrie eleison

Gulf of Saint Lawrence

Before the Battle - Thomas Moore (By the hope within us springing)

By the hope within us springing,
Herald of to-morrow's strife;
By that sun, whose light is bringing
Chains or freedom, death or life
Oh! remember life can be
No charm for him, who lives not free!
Like the day-star in the wave,
Sinks a hero in his grave,
'Midst the dew-fall of a nation's tears.

Movement IV - Arrival in a New World

Ne Jamais Oublier (translation Anna Soudry and Ailbhe Ní Chasaide)

Cois Srutheanna na Bablóine

1

Cois srutheanna na Bablóine
A shuíomar ag sileadh deor,
Cois srutheanna na Bablóine
Ne jamais oublier,
Ar shaileoga na tíre sin
Do chrochomar ár gcruiteanna,
Cois srutheanna na Bablóine
Ne jamais oublier,

2

Au bord des fleuves de Babylon
Nous étions assis et nous pleurions
Au bord des fleuves de Babylon
Ne jamais oublier.
Les vainqueurs nous demandaient de
chanter,
Et nos oppresseurs cherchaient de la
gaieté
Chantez nous quelques chants du Sion

Ne Jamais oublier.

3

Au bord des fleuves de Babylon
Nous étions assis et nous pleurions
Au bord des fleuves de Babylon
Ne jamais oublier.
Comment peut on chanter
Sur un sol étranger
Au bord des fleuves de Babylon
Ne jamais oublier.

Movement V - ENDURANCE

Seven Candles/Ave, Verum Corpus

Ave, verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine:
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine:
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine.
O Jesu dulcis, O Jesu pie,
O Jesu Fili Mariae.
Ave, verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine:
Miserere Miserere mei.
Amen, Amen.

Movement VI - AWAKENING

The Belle of Whitby (duet)

Soprano (representing Bridget's aunt)
Tenor (Representing Bridget's lost brother, Tom)

1

Her radiance and beauty
Have made her the 'Belle of Whitby'.
Her smile and charm have won her
Acceptance and so much praise.
But no matter how she tries, to hide
The sorrow deep inside,
Can never go away.

Tenor (representing the lost brother)

2

You went across the ocean
And left our country in haste.
Pursued by wicked demons
From whom there was no escape.
I have watched you from afar, with pride
You flourished as you tried
To build another life.

Soprano / Tenor

I did everything to love her
And to make her a credit to her race,
To her parents and her brother
To all who died, without a single trace.
Many years I dried her tears
I held her hand and tried to calm her fears ...

Soprano / Tenor

3

Her radiance and beauty
Have made her the 'Belle of Whitby'.
The happiness that shines in
Her eyes, hides her secret well.
Something's changed which only I can tell
Her old world now has gone
The new one's just begun.

Movement VII – EPILOGUE

Canada, We Thank You

1

On the wind-swept coast of Newfoundland
Were on-ly just alive
Having crossed the great wide ocean
In hope that we might survive.
We had fled despair and hunger
No hope le-ft of respite
At the mercy of our brothers
Whose promise never dies.

2

In the holds o-f ships were transported
Where many a soul would die
(Of) disease and blighted misfortune
Fell short of the other side.
We were met with such love and compassion
Kind strangers who ne'er asked why?
Showing kindness too great to mention
And mercy for all mankind.

Chorus:

Canada, we thank you
Your outstretched hand in our hour of grief
Canada our refuge!
Responding to our need.

3

With sorrow and shock we witnessed all
This suffering unfold,
With no sec-ond thought we heard the call
Help was o-ur only goal.
Did our best to support the afflicted
And many would pay the price
But the flame that was then ignited
Will burn forever bright

Chorus:

Canada, we thank you
Your outstretched hand in our hour of grief
Canada our refuge!
Responding to our need.

Canada, we thank you
Your outstretched hand in our hour of grief
Canada our refuge!
Responding to our need.

APPENDIX C Promotion Materials - *Famine Odyssey*:

PUBLICITY MATERIAL AND PROMOTION FOR TORONTO PERFORMANCE - March 9, 2023

TWO PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

BOUND FOR CANADA: PREVIEW VIDEO for Premier on Thursday, March 9 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjvBzGJ-5Uk>

Online Broadcast (teaser video) for worldwide streaming on March 18. 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKVHpgWAt4c>

- 1-B CONCERT PROGRAMME (edited)
- 2-B ADVANCE PUBLICITY POSTER FOR WORLDWIDE STREAMING OF CONCERT
- 3-B ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTERVIEW WITH ODHRÁN Ó CASAIDE ON CLASSICAL FM, CANADA
- 4-B INTERVIEW FEATURE WITH ODHRÁN Ó CASAIDE IN *LUDWIG VAN*, TORONTO



Canada Ireland Foundation presents

BOUND FOR CANADA:

A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope

by composer Odhrán Ó Casaide

Tá fáilte romhat a chara,

We are delighted to welcome you to the world premiere of *Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope*. The original orchestral suite we will enjoy this evening was composed by Odhrán Ó Casaide. It honours the resilience of the Irish Famine migrants who, in 1847, embarked upon their perilous journeys. The concert is also an expression of gratitude for the many brave and selfless people in Canada who provided compassionate assistance to the thousands of desperate men, women and children who arrived on these shores during that fateful summer.

We are honoured to have with us this evening such a wonderful assembly of musicians, who have prepared tirelessly for this unique event. We are especially grateful to our friends who have travelled from Ireland and elsewhere to be here. This collaboration between Irish and Canadian artists is a perfect expression of Canada Ireland Foundation's mission and purpose.

This concert would not be possible without the generous endorsement of our event sponsors. Thanks to your support, and to the valued partners and donors who have contributed to our building campaign, we look forward to being able to offer more original artistic, cultural and heritage programming when our new venue, The Corleck, opens on Toronto's waterfront next year.

Wishing everyone a joyous Irish Heritage Month, With profound appreciation,

Robert G. Kearns & Cheryl Shindruk

Event Co-Chairs and Members of
Canada Ireland Foundation's Board of Directors





Odhrán Ó Casaide composer, violin

Odhrán Ó Casaide was born in Ireland into a musical family. He started the violin at age three, and soon became immersed in both the classical and traditional musical idioms. He studied music and violin performance, first at the College of Music, Dublin, then the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester (UK), and then continued his studies in Vienna (Austria) with the renowned Franz Samohyl, a former leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. During this time, he won the Feis Ceol for violin, the highest award in Ireland.

Odhrán has performed as soloist with a number of orchestras in Ireland, the UK and the USA, and performed the main violin theme in the award-winning film *Calvary*, but his main performance activities have been with the traditional music band Na Casaidigh, a family group which also included five of his brothers. He is a professor of Violin and Irish Music Studies at the Technological University, Dublin.

His composing began in the early 1990s when commissioned by RTÉ to write the music for a documentary on the *seanchaí* (storyteller) Eamon Kelly. He later composed songs for a series of children's programmes, a suite for the visit of Pope Francis to the Basilica in Knock (2018) and an *Ave Maria* for the rededication of the Basilica (2017). His *Marbhna 1916*, a Requiem for the centenary of the uprising of 1916, brought him to international prominence. There followed commissions to compose music for the centenary of the Garda (2022).

His latest work, *Bound for Canada* (2023), commissioned by Canada Ireland Foundation, is a moving work which reflects the support of, and in some instances ultimate sacrifice made by, Canadian medics and clergy of all denominations in assisting those fleeing famine in Ireland in 1847. This composition is in fulfillment of Odhrán's doctoral work at Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland.

Tonight's programme

Welcome

Cheryl Shindruk and Robert G. Kearns

Canada Ireland Foundation Board of Directors and Event Co-chairs

Opening remarks

Michael McGrath TD

Minister of Finance, Government of Ireland

Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope

Composed by Odhrán Ó Casaide

Conducted by Inspector Pat Kenny, Musical Director • The Irish Garda Band

Narrated by Rory O'Shea

Featuring

Sibéal Ní Chasaide sean-nós vocalist - Niamh O Hanlon soprano -
Lee Harding tenor

Odhrán Ó Casaide violin - Mathilde de Jenlis violin - Dr. Michael Nielsen guitar – Maitiú Ó
Casaide uilleann pipes

The Irish Garda Band - North York Concert Orchestra - Toronto Choral Society

There will be one 20-minute intermission



Sibéal Ní Chasaide featured vocalist

Hailed as “a young woman of the new Ireland” by the *Irish Independent*, Sibéal’s unique vocal qualities and singing style have commanded rapturous attention wherever she has performed.

Sibéal regularly appears on Irish national television and radio as well as in showcases of Ireland’s culture for visiting international dignitaries. Internationally, she has performed in London, New York and Sydney and is delighted to be returning to Toronto, where she last performed in 2019.

Her debut EP, *Sibéal – Live at Abbey Road*, was recorded at the iconic London studio and brings together contemporary and traditional songs utilizing Ireland’s traditional *sean-nós* vocal style. Her first full-length album, *Sibéal*, released in 2019, features timeless songs performed in both Irish and English with lush new orchestrations.

Sibéal’s latest EP, *Twilight Lavender* (or *Clapsholas* in Irish) was released in 2022 and is available on Spotify, iTunes and Apple Music.

STREAMING WORLDWIDE! Tell your friends. BOUND FOR CANADA:

The Irish Garda Band

The Garda Band is the official musical branch of Ireland’s national police service, An Garda Síochána, which recently celebrated its centenary.

The band is led by Inspector Pat Kenny, Musical Director. In addition to providing music for official Garda ceremonies, the Band undertakes an extensive community-oriented programme, performing at schools, sporting events and festivals throughout Ireland. The Garda Band has also represented Ireland at numerous international events and festivals. The band gave its first public performance on Dún Laoghaire Pier on Easter Monday, 1923.





Niamh O Hanlon soprano

A native of Dundalk, County Louth, Niamh qualified as a social worker from Trinity College Dublin before returning to full-time to music, receiving first class honours in vocal performance together with the gold medal in performance from DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama.

Niamh appears regularly as a concert soloist in Ireland and in the UK. Her operatic and stage experience includes the roles of Dorabella (*Così fan Tutte*) and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) with DIT/Opera Ireland; Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*), Magdalena (*Rigoletto*), and Carmen (*Carmen*) with DIT productions/National Concert Hall Dublin; and Mrs Lovett (*Sweeney Todd*) with OperaPlus Belgium.

Niamh's achievements include multiple awards at the annual Feis Ceoil classical music competition in Dublin, the Stevenson Award (Ballymena Festival), as well as the Lieder and Oratorio prizes (DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama).



Lee Harding tenor

Lee is a classically trained singer with interests in conducting, performance, composition, education and musicology. As a soloist, Lee has performed with Odhrán Ó Casaide, Tredagh Singers and Dundalk IT Choir.

In 2020, Lee completed his degree in Applied Music from Dundalk Institute of Technology with first class honours. He received the 2019 Van Dessel Choral Conducting Scholar Award, and was the second prize winner of the 2020 CHMHE Undergraduate Musicology Competition. His current research documents the social history, fandom and musical lives of transgender people in Ireland.



Mathilde de Jenlis violin

Born in France, Mathilde began studying the violin at the age of five. In 2007, she was admitted to the Royal Conservatory of Liège as a Young Talent.

In 2015, she completed a Master's degree in Pedagogy from the Royal Conservatory in Brussels as well as a Master's degree from the Institute of Advanced Social Communication (IHECS). In 2017, Mathilde graduated with a Master's degree in Performance, specializing in Irish traditional music, from the Conservatory of Music and Drama at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

Mathilde frequently performs with chamber music groups such as with the Trio Jenlis and with orchestras in Belgium, Ireland and France. With her sister, harpist Héloïse de Jenlis, Mathilde created the band JenliSisters, which performs a variety of music styles in concert and has recorded

a CD of Celtic music, *Land of Legend*.



Dr. Michael Nielsen guitar

Jazz guitarist Dr. Michael Nielsen has lectured and performed worldwide, most notably with American jazz great Dave Liebman. As a solo guitarist, he opened for Elvin Jones and John McLaughlin on their first visit to Dublin. Michael features on 25 CDs and created a rhythm book, *Precision Timing*, published by Schott Music. His pioneering work on microtonality features in *The Contemporary Guitar* by Grammy Award winning guitarist John Schneider.

Michael has lectured in jazz at TU Dublin's Conservatory of Music and Drama since 1995 and coordinates the jazz Master's programme.

"...Nielsen was already one of Ireland's most respected jazz musicians with an international reputation as an innovator, but the guitarist's artistic courage now places him among the most intrepid pioneers in jazz."
— *The Irish Times*



Maitiú Ó Casaide uilleann pipes

Born into a musical family, Na Casaidigh, at age ten Maitiú decided he wanted to play the pipes and began taking lessons at Na Píobairí Uilleann. His school band won the Siansa Gael Linn Irish music competition in 2007. He has gone on to become a founding member of Dublin-based folk band The Bonny Men, who have toured extensively and released two highly acclaimed albums:

The Bonny Men (2011) and *Moyne Road* (2015). Maitiú has twice been selected winner of the Oireachtas na Gaeilge pipes competition and in March 2015 was awarded TG4 Young Musician of the Year.



Rory O'Shea narration

Rory is a first-generation Canadian, with his parents and siblings hailing from Dublin. Rory's mother, Peggy Delaney, was a prominent member of Toronto's Irish community for decades. Following in her footsteps of acting, media and production, Rory's auspicious start was starring in a Heinz ketchup commercial, at age

15, alongside Canadian comedy legend John Candy. Following eight TV commercials as a teen he commenced a twenty-year stretch of on-air pursuits in radio and TV, including at Q107 and The Weather Network. He's also acted in multiple movie and television roles (*SUITS*, *Designated Survivor*, *Murdoch Mysteries*).

In 2000, Rory created his own studio focusing primarily on voice-over services for clients worldwide. From crafting a Brit accent for MINI USA as their national branding voice, to show announcer for *Family Feud Canada*, Rory has recorded everything from documentaries to cartoon characters. He is beyond proud to be involved in this evening's production.

Production Team

Scott Beckett T. Daniel Burns Diana Conconi Eileen Costello

Alan Duffy Kevin Flynn Claire Lehan Constance O'Brien

Honorary Directors

His Excellency Eamonn McKee

Ambassador of Ireland to Canada

General (Ret'd) John de Chastelain

Former Head of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, Northern Ireland

Mark Purdy Cheryl Shindruk Mike Williams

Norma Smurfit

Chair and Founder,
The Famine Commemoration Fund, Dublin

Jonathan M. Kearns

Partner, Kearns Mancini Architects

Producer and Talent Liaison

Sheila Flanagan Vice-President Dundalk Institute of Technology

Graphic Design

Colin Elliott, The Brownstone Collective

Bespoke Audio-Visual

Alex Naylor, Production Manager

North York Concert Orchestra

Led by Musical Director and Conductor Rafael Luz, the North York Concert Orchestra (NYCO) is a diverse ensemble of dedicated musicians brought together by a shared love of classical music. NYCO presents an exciting series of public concerts each year, while offering programmes for community outreach and the development of young talent.

For a list of their upcoming concerts, visit nyco.ca.

The Toronto Choral Society

Founded in 1845, the Toronto Choral Society is the oldest choir in the city and plays an integral part in the community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Geoffrey Butler, the Toronto Choral Society presents important works from the traditional choral repertoire while exploring the music of the cultural mosaic that is our city.

TorontoChoralSociety.org



A Tribute to Our Irish Ancestors and the Enduring Compassion Shown by Canadians

Canada is celebrated as a country that welcomes newcomers and prides itself on the compassion it has shown to refugees both in recent years and generations ago.

Today, among our diverse and multicultural population, including our Indigenous brothers and sisters, more than 4.4 million Canadians trace at least part of their family's roots to Ireland. Many fifth- or sixth-generation Irish-Canadians have ancestors who came to this land seeking refuge from

An Gorta Mor, the Great Famine.

In the years between 1845 and 1850, Ireland experienced one of the most catastrophic famines in human history, when the potato crop failed in successive years. The bulk of the population was totally dependent on the potato as a food source. The result was widespread hunger, disease and emigration.

In 1847, or "Black 47" – the peak of the Famine – as the United States imposed new restrictions, many Irish refugees fled to Canada, which at the time, like Ireland, remained a colony of the British Empire.

This evening's musical work is the premiere of an original orchestral suite composed by Odhrán Ó Casaide. The score weaves together classical and traditional Irish music. The musical narrative traces the experiences of Irish Famine migrants who sought to escape looming starvation by embarking on precarious journeys across the ocean to North America.



A cry from Ireland

Drawing from personal diaries, letters and newspaper accounts of the time, the music incorporates stories of young and old, families and orphans, as they set off from their homes and bid farewell to loved ones.



Grasett Park



(C-2) Advance Publicity Worldwide Streaming of Concert

Bound for Canada

Online Broadcast March 18, 2023



The poster features a dark blue background. On the left, there is a vertical strip of colorful icons: a sailboat, a violin, a key, a maple leaf, and waves. To the right of this strip, the text 'Canada Ireland Foundation presents' is in white. Below it, the title 'BOUND FOR CANADA:' is in large, bold, light blue letters, followed by the subtitle 'A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope' in white. Below the title, there are four small portraits of the performers: a woman with curly hair playing a violin, a man with glasses and a bow tie, a man playing a violin, and a woman with long dark hair. To the right of these portraits, the text 'ONLINE BROADCAST' is in yellow, followed by 'Saturday, March 18, 2023' and '1pm PT | 4pm ET | 8pm GMT' in white. At the bottom, there are logos for the Presenting Sponsor (GOLF NORTH), Lead Sponsors (Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme, Cultúr Éireann Culture Ireland, Canada, and Ontario), and Media Sponsors (THE GLOBE AND MAIL and Classical 96.3).

Canada Ireland Foundation presents

BOUND FOR CANADA:

A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope

ONLINE BROADCAST
Saturday, March 18, 2023
1pm PT | 4pm ET | 8pm GMT

Presenting Sponsor: GOLF NORTH

Lead Sponsors: Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme, Cultúr Éireann Culture Ireland, Canada, Ontario

Media Sponsors: THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Classical 96.3

Canada Ireland Foundation is pleased to present the free online broadcast of

Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope

Saturday, March 18, 2023, at 4pm Eastern / 8 pm GMT

Recorded live at the world premiere held March 9, 2023 at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre.

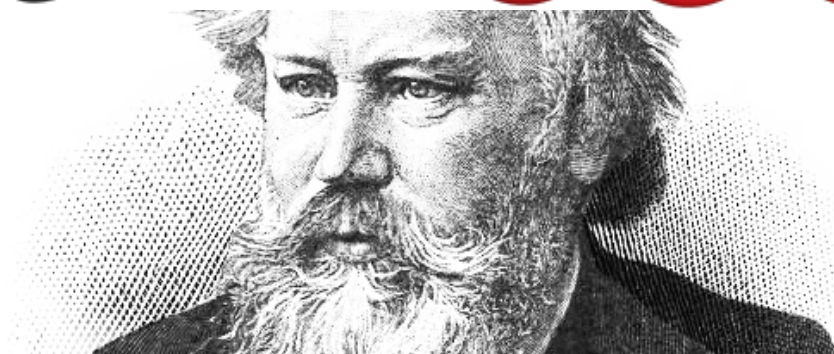
For optimal viewing, we recommend watching the online broadcast from [the Foundation's YouTube channel](#), where you will be able to join the live chat with members of the creative team during the broadcast. However, the broadcast can also be watched below starting at 4pm.

(C-3) Announcement of Interview on Classical FM

LISTEN LIVE

ON AIR: The New Classical FM

To A Wild Rose - Edward MacDowell (1860-1908) USA



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Odhrán Ó Casaide joins Classical Jukebox to discuss
“Bound For Canada” from Canada Ireland
Foundation

Station Blog 2023-2-28 By: Classical Staff

(C-4) ADVANCE FEATURE ON LUDWIG VAN, TORONTO
INTERVIEW WITH ODHRÁN Ó CASAIDE



<https://www.ludwig-van.com/toronto/2023/03/01/preview-bound-canada-gala-concert-celebrates-longstanding-ties-ireland/>

PREVIEW | The Bound For Canada Gala Concert Celebrates Longstanding Ties With Ireland

By [Anya Wassenberg](#) on March 1, 2023



Composer and violinist Odhrán Ó Casaide (Photo courtesy of the Canada Ireland Foundation)

The ties between Canada and Ireland go back centuries. It's a link that the Canada Ireland Foundation is dedicated to celebrating via the arts and culture, and a special gala concert on March 9.

Composer Odhrán Ó Casaide and a cast of musicians and performers will visit Toronto for the concert titled Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope. We asked Ó Casaide a few questions about the piece he's created for the occasion, titled Bound for Canada, the nature of traditional music, and the performers he's bringing with him.

The Great Famine and Canadian immigration

Founded in 1977, the Canada Ireland Foundation (CIF) is responsible among other projects for Ireland Park, a sculpture park on Toronto's waterfront. Robert G. Kearns, founder of CIF, saw Rowan Gillespie's 'Departure' series of sculptures in Dublin in 1995. They depict migrants on the waterfront, leaving due to the Irish Famine, and looking for a better life across the ocean in a new country.

He was moved to create a monument to those desperate travelers and the reception they received with sculptures that showed the Irish Famine immigrants landing in their new home in Canada. Ireland Park was opened in 2007 on Bathurst Quay. Kearns, an architect, designed the park himself with five sculptures.

The Irish Famine

In the late 1840s, a potato blight caused a devastating famine in Ireland. Local crop production would have been sufficient the Irish population, but much of the land was owned by absentee British landlords. The British government allowed exportation of food rather than using it to ease the suffering of Catholic Irish farmers, who relied on potatoes for subsistence.

Driven to desperation, between 1.5 million and 2 million Irish left the country, many to what was then British North America. The largest influx of famine migrants in Canada occurred between 1847 and 1852. In 1847, about 2,500 Irish refugees arrived in Kingston every week. By 1871, the Irish represented the largest ethnic group in most cities across Canada (with the exception of Québec).

While early Canada was no stranger to sectarian strife between Protestants and Catholics, there is also ample evidence of Canadians coming together to help the new arrivals, many of them ill.

It's that welcoming reception that the concert commemorates.



Odhrán Ó Casaide and Sibéal Ní Chasaide (Photo courtesy of the Canada Ireland Foundation)

Q&A With Odhrán Ó Casaide

Odhrán Ó Casaide is a lecturer and violin teacher at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama (the Technological University Dublin), where he also heads the Irish Traditional Music program. With his brothers, he is also part of Na Casaidigh (also known as The Cassidys), a traditional Irish group that have been performing since the 1980s.

As a violinist, he studied with the concert master of the Vienna Phil, and has played as a soloist with many orchestras in the classical vein, along with his Irish traditional performances. He was asked to compose his work *Marbhna 1916*, which commemorates the 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland, for the occasion of the Pope's visit to the country in 2018.

Your work, both as a composer and performer, brings Irish musical traditions into the broader world of orchestral music. How important is it to constantly refresh and reinvent musical traditions to keep them current in a world that changes so quickly?

Traditional music is not a homogeneous body of music, even within a single country, and it is not static. In Ireland, I would include all folk music under this heading, but also a great deal of what might be described as the “art music” of its day, which has been absorbed into the popular culture. What all of this corpus has in common is popular acceptance. Public taste in music changes continuously and the best from every era will be absorbed into the tradition. For me personally, simply following popular trends has never been a goal, otherwise I would not write for an orchestra. On the other hand,

no composer writes music purely for the filing cabinet. The music I write comes from deep within but, of course, that is influenced by my environment.

At the risk of simplification, many countries have developed a form of nationalist music whereby traditional elements, be they melodies, modal scales, rhythmic patterns and figures, ornamentation etc. have been incorporated into orchestral music. In Ireland, this tradition began with Charles Villiers Stanford, who composed his Irish symphony in the late 1880s. Many have followed in his path. I consider this work to fall within this tradition, with two exceptions; first, it is not purely orchestral, but also includes a choir along with traditional and classical soloists. Second, it is entirely original and does not incorporate any existent traditional melodies. It is a story, and at each stage I use the musical tools best suited to the task on hand. It also includes a narration, whereby the audience is kept in direct contact with the music and can follow the evolving story.

This work is a musical odyssey in that it is a musical representation of an epic journey, or voyage. But, it is in the Irish idiom through and through. It is a stage in a personal goal which I have pursued for many years, an attempt to reach a synthesis between traditional Irish music and “classical” music, something that has never been achieved with an orchestra. The scale of the challenge can be seen insofar as the *sean-nós* style of singing, or instrumental slow airs, affords the performer complete freedom of interpretation, including freedom from restrictions of meter. An orchestra cannot cope with this. In a sense one could say I am trying to square the circle.

The theme of Bound For Canada is described as a tribute to the resilience of early Irish immigrants, as well as the compassionate reception they got from Canadians. How do those themes translate into the music?

In this work I try to capture two main elements. First, we have the tragedy of the Irish famine, a period of five years during which the population of the country declined by 25%. It overshadows any other tragedy in our entire history. One needs the versatility of an orchestra with its depth and range of colour in order to express this. The orchestra creates the monumental background of the Famine, which accompanies the refugees and the trauma they experience throughout the journey.

Second, the story line is based on a true story of a young girl who manages to flee from Ireland to Toronto in the summer of 1847. In other words, it is not a work of fiction.

However, the details we have of her journey are very sketchy, and are supplemented with contemporaneous diaries and other materials, which describe what it was like. In this case, I wanted to capture the spirit of the common people who fled to Canada. They were Irish speakers; they had their own musical culture. Thus, the heroine of the piece sings in the traditional style, the *sean-nós*, uses the Irish language, we have some pieces of Irish dance music and we have leading exponents of traditional Irish instruments, the uilleann pipes, or elbow pipes, and a fiddle played in the traditional style.

The charitable reception they received in Canada was an outstanding example of the very best of humanity. The work acknowledges examples of this. The many families who took in orphans, at great risk to themselves, are saluted with a chorale in French, as many of them were French speakers. The Sisters of Charity of Montreal, and other orders, are acknowledged with an Ave Verum in Latin. There is an Elegy for Dr. Robert

Grasett, who sacrificed his life to attend to the emigrants, and a Valse Triste, in honour of all who risked their lives to provide succor to the afflicted.

Most important, the musical idiom of the work, from start to finish, is unmistakably Irish. This is not an accident, as I have been steeped in this musical tradition from infancy.

Does the theme of the music have a personal resonance for you?

I have been engrossed with the Irish Famine all of my life and I have always wanted to write a work dealing with this theme. This is partly due to the fact that I spent my early childhood in a poor rural district on the north-western seaboard of Ireland, a district that clearly bore the scars of the Famine and post-Famine emigration. The Famine was very much part of our folklore. Our grandparents would have known many people who survived the Famine, so that memories and personal experiences would have been very fresh.

Apart from that, the Famine has left a musical vacuum in its trail. Of all periods in Irish history, I do not know of any music or poetry composed in Ireland around that period. In all probability, people had more urgent matters to attend to. In addition, poets and musicians, who lived to a large extent from social support, would have been among the earliest victims.



Inspector Pat Kenny, Musical Director of the Garda Band; Toronto Choral Society; North York Concert Orchestra (All photos courtesy of the Canada Ireland Foundation)

Can you talk a little about the soloists who will be performing the piece?

Conductor: Superintendent Patrick J. Kenny

The concert will be conducted by Patrick J. Kenny, a superintendent in the Garda Síochána (Irish Police Force). He is conductor and musical director of the Garda Band, the band of the Irish Police Force.

Patrick J. Kenny has conducted several of my works to date with great sensitivity and nuanced understanding of the music. He conducted a performance of my *Marbhna 1916*, a requiem commemorating the Irish uprising of 1916. He also conducted *An Forsa Nua* (the new force) to mark the centenary of the foundation of the Garda Síochána.

Konzertmeister: Mathilde de Jenlis

Mathilde de Jenlis will lead the North York Concert Orchestra. A French national, Ms. de Jenlis is a great grand-niece of General de Gaulle, former President of France.

Mathilde de Jenlis is a graduate of the Brussels Conservatoire and has also obtained a master's degree in Irish traditional music performance from the Technological University, Dublin. I have worked with her for several years and she has led the orchestra at the performance of many of my works. She combines absolute mastery of her instrument with great leadership skills along with a detailed knowledge and understanding of Irish music.

Sibéal Ní Chasaide (Vocals)

Sibéal is a rising star in the world of Irish music. Her focus is *sean-nós* singing, first and foremost and combines this with contemporary music. She has made several acclaimed recordings for Universal Records. Sibéal demonstrates great vocal skill with the technical demands of *sean-nós* (traditional style) singing. She appears regularly on Irish television and has performed in several of my compositions to date.

Niamh O Hanlon (Mezzo soprano)

One of Ireland's leading sopranos, Niamh O Hanlon is hugely in demand throughout Ireland and the UK. She has also starred in many operatic roles. The timbre of her voice is particularly well suited to my compositions and she has already performed in some of my other works, notably, *Marbhna 1916*.

Lee Harding (Tenor)

Lee Harding is an up and coming tenor who shows a great sensitivity for Irish music. As a lyrical tenor, he is ideally suited to the role in this work.

Maitiú O' Casaide (uilleann pipes)

The uilleann (elbow) pipes is the archetypal traditional Irish instrument. Maitiú is well known throughout Ireland and Europe as the piper in the Irish traditional band, The Bonny Men. In 2015, he won the Young Musician of the Year award in Ireland.

Michael Nielson (guitar)

Michael Nielson studied guitar at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin and Berkeley College of Music, Boston USA. He has also been soloist with the Irish National Concert Orchestra. Michael is a leading exponent of jazz guitar and has a special interest in improvised music.

I am also deeply indebted to the **North York Concert Orchestra** as well as the **Toronto Choral Society** for their participation in this concert.

Tickets for the *Bound for Canada: A Musical Journey from Hardship to Hope* on March 9, 2023 at the Winter Garden Theatre are on sale [here](#).

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Anya Wassenberg is a Senior Writer and Digital Content Editor at Ludwig Van. She is an experienced freelance writer, blogger and writing instructor with OntarioLearn.

