

IRISH JIGS, REELS & HORNPIPES



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RECORDED IN IRELAND

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 6819

Irish Jigs, Reels & Hornpipes

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FOLKWAYS FW 6819

Illustrated Notes are Inside Pocket

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IRISH JIGS, REELS & HORNPIPES

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IN IRELAND



Notes on Irish Dance Music

By

Henry Cowell

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The most popular Irish dances are jigs, usually in 6/8 or 12/8 meter, slipjigs, which employ in addition some measures of 9/8 (thereby slipping a dotted quarter out of the square-cornered time-flow of the ordinary jig), reels, usually in 4/4 or 2/2 with eight eighth notes to a measure but sometimes with three notes to a beat, and step dances, which have either three or four notes to a beat. The real question of the rhythm is not so much the number of notes in a beat as the tempo. If the tempo is right, it can be written down in 2/4, 3/8, 4/4, 6/8, or 12/8 and still be acceptable; the slip-jig is the only irregular

dance. Unfortunately, no one can set the exact speed which is correct for these dances, as individual musicians differ. In general, jigs have a fast beat, and reels a somewhat slower one. The music is square-cornered in form, coming out in eight-measure phrases, and these are usually doubled into sixteen measures and thirty-two measure sections. In playing for the actual dance, musicians perform different dances with the same rhythm one right after another without pause, according to the whim of the player, so that the music will last long enough without playing one piece over and over. In many cases the player improvises various

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forms with rondos. He may return to the same tune or tunes after contrasting tunes in between; very rarely, however, is the total set of pieces strung together according to some overall fixed plan. Only the tempo is unvaried; the order of tunes is subject to constant change.

The great traditional instrument for dances is the dance pipes called Uilleann pipes. This is a light bagpipe; a special invention of the Irish, with flexible tone and a wide range, capable of being played rapidly and virtuously. Instead of the constant-sounding drones of the larger and more raucous war pipes, the drones of these pipes can be turned on or off; and instead of their being always a fifth on the tonic and dominant, one can have either the tonic and dominant, the tonic and subdominant, or any one of the three alone. It is the only pipes known to me in which a sense of harmonic change can be indicated and sounded. The scale is like a major scale, but the tuning of the fourth note is higher, and that of the seventh tone is lower than in modern standard systems of tuning. This is in accord with old modes, in which these two tones of the scale often varied. On the Uilleann pipes it is also possible to adjust in advance so as to have the tuning of the tones still more slanted in the direction of some particular mode. Only diatonic modes can be used; there are no chromatic tones. The air for the bag is supplied by a sort of bellows, pumped by the elbow, instead of being blown in by the mouth, as in the war pipes; and the player is usually seated, and rests the pipes on a table, instead of standing and marching, as in war pipes. War pipes, however, are sometimes used for dance music, although it is louder and less varied, and shorter in range of pitch.

The fife, an instrument played like a flute but shorter and higher, is also one of the traditional dance instruments, and often plays the tune along with the pipes. It has similar tuning.

The Uilleann pipes are almost universally known as lilting pipes, and their style is often imitated by singers who "lilt" by singing nonsense syllables in dance rhythm. In Scotland and parts of Ireland this is known as mouth music. It enables dance music to be had, even if no instruments are available. The Uilleann pipe style is also the background for country fiddling style in the United States, and such fiddling as is also often found in Ireland, where it first arose. Fiddling, therefore, while much practiced and admired, is not of the oldest dance-playing tradition by an in-between one. Later the accordion became very much used, and now in many districts has taken the place of the more traditional Uilleann pipes. This means, of course, that the chords are complete with thirds instead of containing only open fifths, and the tunings have been changed to suit modern demands, instead of retaining the quaint old-style tuning of the lilting pipes. As the dance music reaches Boston, it is quite common to find a piano with the group, playing the fundamental chords and rhythms. It sometimes plays together with the pipes and fife - the latter with old style tuning, the piano with new; but they all go on blandly at the same time, and no one appears to enjoy himself the less. All the instruments, of all types and ages and with all sorts of tunings, play together with gusto and

zest, the dancers break in with an occasional bit of mouth-music lilting, and a whopping good time is had by all.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Michael Gorman is a 58 year old traditional fiddler from Co. Sligo, Southern Ireland. He has been playing fiddle since he was 8 years old. James Gannon of Achontry, Co. Sligo, a great fiddler, heard Michael whistling fiddle tunes and offered to teach him the fiddle if he could get hold of an instrument. Michael got his fiddle and was apprenticed to Gannon and later to Michael Corman, who taught every fiddler of note in West of Ireland. Gorman soon became a notable fiddler in the county Sligo style, a style which (unlike that of Donegall) eschews heavy down-bowing and achieves its effects by highly elaborate fingering. From being champion fiddler of the district, Michael became regional champion and later national champ. He has represented Ireland at International folk festivals. In his younger days he was also renowned as a dancer with a nice, clean style of footwork. Even today, after a lifetime of heavy work, he will, if moved or excited, dance a jig or a hornpipe while accompanying himself on the fiddle. He has made many recordings for B.B.C. folk music archives, has broadcast and been in television. During the day he works as a railway porter at Liverpool Street Station, London, and is one of the folk musicians who is helping to build the British Folk Song and Dance Ensemble.

Willy Clancy is a thirty-six year old native of Co. Clare. Like many good folk musicians he can turn his hand to most of the popular instruments of his country -- tin whistle, country flute, fiddle... But it is with the Uilleann (elbow) pipes that he really shines. He got his first piping instruction from John Doran a famous travelling piper and for the last fifteen years has devoted himself to mastering the instrument. As a performer of traditional dance music he ranks with the best in Ireland and Seumas Ennis, folklorist, and himself the greatest living authority on Uilleann pipes, puts Clancy among the top three pipers in Ireland. He came to England three months ago and is at present working on a building job as a carpenter.

Notes on the recordings by Esther Brown

MORE IRISH DANCES

(For a discussion of the ritual origin of Irish dance, its ethnological background, and a detailed description of basic steps and figures, see Dance Notes FP 818)

This collection of Irish dance tunes includes examples of the Slip Jig (or Hop Jig), more Hornpipes, a Set Dance, and Single Jigs and Double Jigs, along with more Jigs and Reels of ancient origin.

During and after the Tudor Wars, when all Irish culture was suppressed, the vigorous lively Slip Jig was singled out as particularly incendiary to the revolutionary spirit, and special efforts were made to stamp it out of Irish life. In a spirited 9/8 temp, the steps are different from ordinary jig steps in that they contain hops and the drumming used is the Rise-and-Grind

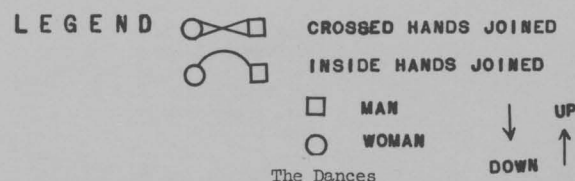
step (see FP 818). Although the origin of the Hornpipe is doubtful (some holding that it comes from England, others, from Wales) it seems likely that it takes its name from the Irish instrument, the "cornphiope", or hornpipe, and that Hornpipe dances, along with so many country dances of the British Isles and American, originated in Ireland. The Set Dance is an example of those dance tunes that do not conform to the regular construction of two themes with eight bars in each (A A, B B), but are irregular in form, with a number of different themes of varying length to which specific dance figures are set in advance, therefore called "Set Dances." Single Jigs are those in which each theme is repeated one, in Double Jigs the repetitions are doubled. The dance figures may or may not be doubled, but it is quite likely that originally they had been, as Irish dances follow the music most closely.

Although "step-dancing" (the competitive solo jigs, reels, and hornpipes developed by itinerant dancing masters in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in which rapidity and intricacy of step are emphasized for individual performance) predominates at Feisanna, Ceilidhes, Music Festivals, and other gatherings in Ireland, the older group dances are also performed. Ceilidhe, meaning "group", refers to Round (Rinnce More), Long (Rinnce Fada) and Square dances, and is the name used for festivals at which such dancing takes place, whether in cities or country communities.

The Feis itself, revived by the Gaelic League early this century, dates back to pre-Christian Ireland, when the first Feis was said to have been held at Tara (from which the Tara Brooch takes its name), where chieftains and druids gathered to feast and dance for three days before inspecting the national records of their monarch. Today Feisanna are held all over Ireland, and consist mainly of competitions in all areas of Irish culture. At the end of the Feis, the winners give a special performance, and often participate in the great Oireachtas held annually in Dublin. Feisanna, Ceilidhes, and Music Festivals are usually sponsored in Ireland by the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the YMCA, Youth Hostels, Girl Guides, etc., and occur most frequently between February and September.

There is much doubt among scholars of the authenticity of the costume now worn by Irish dancers, which resembles the Scottish kilt (except for the plaid). It is claimed that kilts came into use only after the ancient Irish costume had been lost sight of. But certain vestiges still to be found, such as the bright colored shawls of Galway and Connemara, with their beautiful black hooded cloaks of Munster, and the crimson skirts (sometimes worn over the shoulders as a cloak), all suggest a more ancient and quite different dance costume, and one in which bright colors predominate.

These dances hold much appeal for young and old alike, in schools and recreation groups. They form an exciting challenge to quick thinking and close co-ordination, with their subtle figures and evolutions in group dancing. Men and boys enjoy them just as much as women and girls. The dances given here are among the most widespread in Ireland, and while simple enough for beginners, will also be enjoyed by more advanced groups. Except for the Slip Jig Promenade Step and Slip Jig Side Step, described here, all other basic steps and figures used in these dances will be found in Pamphlet FP 818.



SIDE I, Band 1 and 2

Slip Jig: 9/8, counted rapidly as follows:

1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4-5

1. Slip Jig Promenade Step:

- 1 - hop on left foot, lifting right foot
- 2 - step on right, lift left
- 3 - step on left, lift right
- 4 - step on right, lift left

(repeat the above twice, beginning on alternate feet, moving slightly forward with each hop on count one)

- 1 - step on left, lift right
- 2 - step on right, lift left
- 3 - step on left, lift right
- 4 - step on right, lift left
- 5 - step on left, lift right

(accenting 1, 3, and 5, which causes the weight or accent to shift from forward in the first part, to backward)

2. Slip Jig Side Step:

- 1 - step to right on right foot
- 2 - place left behind right, lift right
- 3 - step in place on right, lift left
- 4 - step in place on left, lift right

(repeat the above twice, moving to the right with each step to the right on count one)

Then with left foot behind right throughout:

- 1 - step on right, lift left
- 2 - step in place on left, lift right
- 3 - step in place on right, lift left
- 4 - step in place on left, lift right
- 5 - step in place on right, lift left

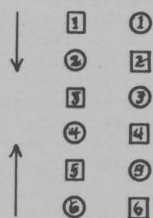
(whole step is then repeated to the left, returning to starting position with right foot off the floor)

These are the basic steps for the Slip Jig, and should be practiced at first by count, until sufficient speed is gained to be able to do them to the music.

Long Dance (Rinnce Fada) in Slip Jig time:

Formation: Longways for any number of couples, men and women alternately in line.

LONGWAYS
FORMATION FOR SLIP JIG, GATES OF DERRY



Steps: Slip Jig Promenade and Slip Jig Side Step as described above.

A. Advance and Cross Over. Partners advance toward each other, with Slip Jig promenade step, pass each other by the right and cross over, exchanging places.

A. Advance and Return. Partners advance, pass each other by the right, return to places.

B. Side Step to Right. Each line, hands joined does the Slip Jig side step to right (lines move in opposite directions)

B. Side Step to Left. Each line, hands joined, side step to left.

A. Advance and Cross Over. Same as A above, except that now partners pass each other by the left.

A. Advance and Return. Same as before, again passing by the left, returning to original places.

B. Side Step to Left. Same as before, except starting to left.

B. Side Step to Right. Same, starting to right.

A. Ring Round to Right. Odd couples join hands with adjacent even couples, and with Slip Jig Side Step, circle to right.

A. Ring Round to Left. Same, to left.

B.B. Swing Round. With crossed hands joined, elbows bent, couples turn clockwise with promenade step, describing a counter-clockwise semicircle as they exchange places with opposite couples (that is, adjacent couples)

The dance continues, with odd couples progressing down the set, even couples up the set, each couple standing idle at head and foot through one revolution of the dance, except

for Advance and Cross Over, Advance and Return, Side Step to Right and Left, when they join the line.

This is an extremely simple Slip Jig, excellent for beginners, as the repetitious figures make it possible to concentrate on learning the Slip Jig Promenade and Side Step.

SIDE I, Band 3

Two Single Jigs

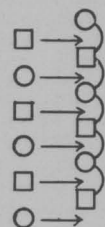
Dance: The Gates of Derry (Geatai Doire)

Formation: Longways, men and women alternately in each line, racing partners, for any even number of couples.

Steps: Promenade and Side Step (a "seven" and two "threes")

A. Advance and Retire. Each line, holding hands, advances with two promenade steps, toward opposite line, and retires to places.

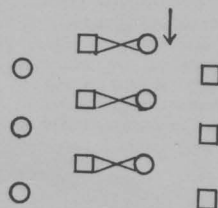
Advance again and form gates. Each line advances, then one line raises arms, forming gates through which opposite line passes, the two lines changing places, all release hands and turn to the right to face partners again.



A. Repeat all of the above. This time the opposite line forms the gates, and all return to original places.

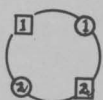
B. Down the center and form an arch. Beginning with first man, all odd couples advance and dance a "seven" down the center, with crossed hands joined. Couples then release left hands, and raise joined right hands to form an arch. The man dances two "threes" in place, while the woman turns to the right under the arch with two "threes"

Up the center and back to place. Same couples up the center a "seven" and fall back to place with two "threes"



(DIAGRAM)
 DOWN THE CENTER

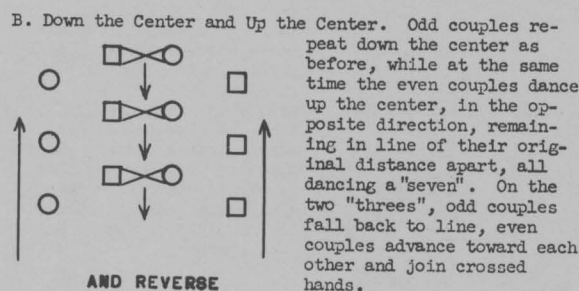
- B. Ring Round. Odd couples join hands with even couples next to them, and circle four to the right, with a Side Step, then to left.



- A. Down the center and form an arch. Even couples now repeat this figure, in the same way as the odd couples had done.

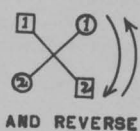
- A. Up the center and back to place. Even couples repeat, as odd couples before.

- B. Ring Round. Odd couples join hands with same even couples as before, and circle first to left and then to right, with Side Step.

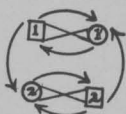


- Up the Center and Down the Center. Odd couples dance up the center, remaining in line of original distance apart, while at the same time even couples dance down the center. On final two "threes", even couples fall back to places while odd couples dance in place.

- A. Right Wheel and Left Wheel. Odd couples and even couples join right hands across, with four promenade steps circle once around. Then with left hands across, circle back to place with promenade steps.



- A. Swing Round. With both hands crossed and firmly clasped, elbows bent, partners turn with promenade steps in clockwise direction, describing a half circle and changing places with opposite couples. At the end of this figure, each dancer stops in the opposite line from which he or she began.



COUPLES TURNING CLOCKWISE IN COUNTERCLOCKWISE SEMI-CIRCLE.

The whole dance is then repeated, but the even couple at the head and odd couple at the foot of the set, now stand still while other couples dance Ring Round, Right Left Wheel, and Swing Round, but participate in Up the Center and Down the Center as before. After one revolution of the dance even couple at the head then becomes an odd couple, and odd couple at the foot becomes an even couple, as they progress up or down the line, as the case may be. The dance may be continued through both the single jigs given on this record, then repeated as many times as desired.

SIDE I, Bands 4 and 5

Two Double Jigs: The Mug of Brown Ale
The Fair-haired Boy

Dance: Donegal Long Dance (Rinnce Fada Dun Na Ngall)

Formation: Longways, men and women alternately in each line, facing partners, as in the Gates of Derry.

Steps: Promenade and Rise-and-Grind. (See FP 818 for description of Rise-and-Grind)

- A. Rise-and-Grind to partners. Facing partners, all do two Rise-and-Grind steps in place.

Turn by the Right.

Partners advance, join right hands and turn once around with four promenade steps, fall back to places.

- A. Rise-and-Grind to opposites. Men face the women at their right, all Rise-and-Grind again.

Turn opposite by the Right. Men join hands with

women at their right, turn once around with promenade steps, fall back to places.

- B. Link Arm with partners.

Partners advance, link right arms, turn once around with promenade steps, fall back to places.

Link Arms with opposites.

Men advance toward women at their right, link right arms, turn once around with promenade steps, fall back to places.

- B. Swing Round.

Partners join crossed hands, elbows bent, and with promenade steps turn counterclockwise, describing a half circle with opposite couple and exchanging places with them. As each couple reaches the head or foot of a set, partners change places, going to opposite line, and couple stands still through one evolution of the dance before joining the set again, this time as opposite of what

they had been before (odd or even). Dance may be repeated as often as desired, and both double jigs on this record may be used continuously.

SIDE II, Band 5.

Irish Set Dance

Dance: Four Hand Reel

Formation: A square of two couples, facing each other and woman on right of partner.

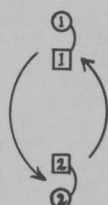
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Steps: Promenade and Side Step.

A. Lead Round.

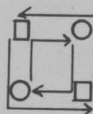
Both couples, with hands joined, lead round with promenade steps, counter-clockwise, and back to places. Partners release hands, turn toward each other, join inside hands and lead round clockwise, back to places.



FULL CIRCLE BACK TO PLACE EACH TIME & REVERSE.

B. Sides (See FP 818).

With the Side Step, the two men move to their right along the sides of the square, while the two women move to their left, passing in front of the men each time, and back to places. The turn at the corners comes on the last of the two "threes".

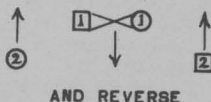


C. Four Sevens.

Partners dance Side Step toward each other, women passing in front of men going over, and behind them going back.

D. Right Wheel and Left Wheel. All join right hands at center and with Promenade Steps, circle counterclockwise, back to places. All join left hands at center and with promenade steps circle clockwise, back to places.

E. Down the Middle and Up the Sides. First couple, facing each other, join right hands and dance the Side Step toward the second couple, who at the same time are dancing the Side Step toward first couple, but on the outside. Then first couple



F. The Chain.

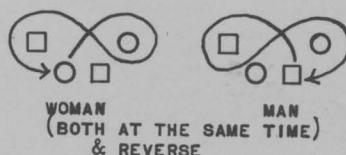
falls back and dances Side Step back to places, while second couple advances to join hands and dance Side Step between first couple, and back to places.

Partners face each others and begin "grand right and left" with promenade steps, right hand to partner, left to opposite, once around to places.

Repeat music from the beginning for the following figures:

A. Advance and Retire, then Figure Eight. First couple,

inside hands joined, promenade step toward second couple, who have separated slightly. First couple swing round, both hands joined, turning with promenade steps. First woman then passes between second couple and behind second woman, while first man follows, passing behind second man, then both circle around and pass between second couple again, this time first woman passes behind second man and first man passes behind second woman, describing the figure eight. First couple swing round, second couple does the same.

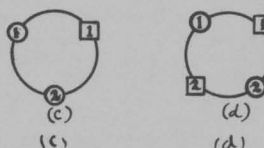
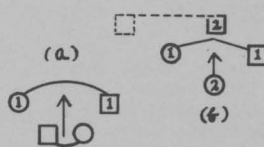


(repeat the body of the dance before going on to next figure)

Second Figure:

B. Arch and Ring.

First couple forms an arch, inside hands joined, second couple passes under, both couples moving toward each other with promenade steps. First woman passes in front of partner, without releasing hands, and both make a half turn to face second woman. Second man, at the same time, dances the Side Step to his right.



First couple and second woman Ring Round, dancing three in circle to left with Side Step, while second man returns to place with Side Step. Second man then joins circle, between the two women, to Ring Round to the right with Side Step.

B. Arch and Ring.

Repeat all of the above, with second couple now forming the arch.

Finish: With promenade steps and inside hands joined, both couples advance and retire. Advance again and Ring Round, with Side Step, first to left and then to right.