



CLASSIC CELTIC MUSIC

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



Smithsonian Folkways

Classic Celtic Music from Smithsonian Folkways
SFW CD 40560 ©©2013 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Compiled and annotated by Richard Carlin



At home in Cork, Ireland 1904.

(Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

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WHAT IS CELTIC MUSIC?

RICHARD CARLIN

Celtic music is a convenient term used to describe a wide variety of traditional musics from the British Isles and Ireland. The Celts, so called by ancient Greeks and Romans, from about 500 BC lived in many parts of Europe and even central Anatolia, but by about AD 500 were found mainly in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and Brittany. What their music sounded like is open to speculation. Not until centuries later do English-language references to *Celts* and *Celtic* appear, and take on more of their current meaning in the 19th century when a growing sense of national pride and identity led to a revival of interest in traditional culture. The “Celtic Revival” was especially strong in Ireland. Today, *Celtic music* is rather loosely applied to a variety of musics, instrumental and vocal, performed in styles that range from unaccompanied singing to “world music” style, popular-influenced performances. In compiling this CD, I have focused more on the traditional end of the style, contrasting some of the better-known “original” performers with some of the best revivalists.



Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch (1905–1986) in 1948 with the audacious mission of documenting all of the sounds of the contemporary world. Asch did not set out to document Celtic music, per se, but it fell within the purview of his and his collaborators' interests—particularly the ethnomusicologist Harold Courlander (1908–1996), who edited the “Folkways Ethnic Library” series, and composer/folklorist Henry Cowell (1897–1965), who wrote liner notes for many of these releases. As early as 1945, Asch recorded the *sean-nós* singer Sorcha Ní Ghuairim (1911–1976) during her visit to New York. (*Sean-nós*, applied rather loosely like the term *Celtic music*, refers to traditional Irish vocal music, usually sung in Gaelic and in a highly ornamented and formal manner.)



*Elizabeth Cronin and singers from County Cork, Ireland.
(Photo by George Pickow)*

Asch relied on outside collaborators to help him build his catalog, and as his circle of friends grew, so did the catalog. Henry Cowell's wife, Sidney Robertson Cowell (1903–1995), was a talented folklorist who recorded extensively in the upper Midwest and California in the 1930s, as well as Cape Breton and Ireland in the 1950s. Her recordings made on the Aran Islands in 1955 formed the basis for an LP that was released two years later.

Another of Asch's collaborators was a young Kentucky folk singer named Jean Ritchie (b. 1922). Ritchie originally

came to Asch for funding for her visits to England and Ireland in 1950. Asch of course didn't pay advances (he barely could afford to pay the rent!), but he did eventually issue the fruits of Ritchie's labors on two LPs.

Asch associate Frederic Ramsey Jr. (1915–1995) brought a young jazz and blues enthusiast to Folkways. Ramsey met Sam Charters (b. 1929) while visiting New Orleans, and helped Charters place his first record with Folkways. Charters and his companion Ann Danberg (b. 1936; later his wife) became regular contributors to Folkways. A trip to Ireland and northern England in the summer of 1960 led to several releases for Folkways.

Another young folklorist and musician who came in and out of the Folkways orbit was Ralph Rinzler (1934–1994). Rinzler produced a number of landmark recordings of old time music in the early 1960s, introducing Doc Watson to the folk revival scene. Previously, in 1958, Rinzler had visited London where he was among the first to record a live “session” in an Irish pub. Sessions are informal gatherings where musicians and singers swap tunes while pub patrons continue to talk, drink, and carry on, often oblivious to the artistry around them. Rinzler caught this all in a wonderful recording that went unissued until 1965 called *Irish Music in London Pubs*. Later, Rinzler would be a key player in bringing the Folkways collection to the Smithsonian, preserving all of the recordings you hear on this CD.

Irwin Silber and his wife Barbara Dane were also close to Asch. Silber became Asch's partner in Oak Publications in the late 1950s, and also brought *Sing Out!* magazine into the Folkways orbit. Silber and Dane hosted the Irish traditional singer Margaret Barry and her performing partner fiddler Michael Gorman during their 1965 U.S. tour, and made informal recordings of them. These were released ten years later on a Folkways album.



*Jean Ritchie recording Mr. Rew during her field trip in Ireland.
(Photo by George Pickow)*

One of the most prolific artists of the folk revival was singer Ewan MacColl, who recorded dozens of albums for almost every folk label. Studio records show that MacColl would work on various albums simultaneously, knocking out 16 or more finished takes in a single afternoon! He supplied Asch with a series of records of Child and so-called Bothy ballads (the songs of the farm workers of Scotland), as well as his own topical songs.

In the early 1970s, a revival of interest in Irish music led Asch to seek out further recordings of Irish music. Like many other young folklorists, I came into contact with Asch by sending him an unsolicited tape of concertina music I made during fieldwork in England in 1975. Asch encouraged me to produce more records, and while I was studying at Oberlin College I discovered a vibrant community of Irish musicians in Cleveland. The result was three Folkways albums made in basements, home studios, and at informal concerts, in the label's tradition of documenting the music as it was actually performed.

The 1970s was also a period when many major Irish and British folk revival acts toured the United States. The Smithsonian's annual Folklife Festival held in Washington, D.C., naturally booked many key performers, particularly in the Bicentennial year of 1976 and again in 1983. Many of these groups and performers were brought to D.C. by folklorist/musician Mick Moloney (b. 1944), who has been an active performer and Irish music promoter since settling in the United States in the mid-1970s.

Like all the compilations in the *Classic* series, this one is meant to serve as a brief introduction to the Celtic music riches of the Folkways catalog. For reasons of space, I have mostly focused on Irish, British, and Scottish performers. We hope you will enjoy the music, and that it will bring your attention to some material you may not have realized was available.





TRACK NOTES

I. LOVE AT THE ENDINGS / JOHN McGRATH'S REEL

Kevin Burke, fiddle

Recorded in Winter 1972 by Isak Breslauer and Leslie Hanson. Originally released on Folkways FW 8876, 1977; CD reissue SFW 40485, 2001.

Just before joining the noted Celtic music revival group Bothy Band, Sligo-born fiddler Kevin Burke (b. 1950) came to the United States for a visit and to play music. He quickly was recognized as an up-and-coming master of the rhythmic swing and complex ornamentation that mark traditional Sligo fiddle music. Through a chance meeting with producer Isak Breslauer, he recorded an album in one day at Fordham University's radio station. Burke noted that the sessions were spontaneous and unrehearsed, and that most cuts were made in a single "take" with no overdubs or correcting of mistakes—just the kind of material that would delight Moses Asch! Five years after the recording was made, it appeared on Folkways.





Kevin Burke. (Courtesy of Kevin Burke)

The album opens with a solo rendition of two tunes, “Love at the Endings,” composed by master fiddler Ed Reavy of Philadelphia, and “John McGrath’s Reel,” written by that Bronx-based fiddler. Burke learned it from Andy McCann, one of New York City’s greatest Irish fiddlers in the Sligo style.

2. AS I ROVED OUT

Sarah Makem, vocals

Recorded by Jean Ritchie and George Pickow. Originally released on Folkways FW 08872, 1960.

Jean Ritchie and her husband George Pickow made a trip to England and Ireland in 1950 to trace the roots of Appalachian music. She recalled her first meeting with Moses Asch, who she hoped would provide them with funding for their trip, as somewhat off-putting:

We went over to this rather dingy little office and [Asch] took us into this incredible little room . . . piled from floor to ceiling with records and tapes with just enough space for Moe and a small desk. It looked like these piles could cave in on him at any time. . . . And he just sat there; he didn't say anything. We said hello and he said, "So what do you want?" . . . We tried to tell him what we had in mind but after 3 or 4 halting sentences he had the whole thing summed up and he said, "Go on, have a good year, and come see me when you get back. If you've got anything I want, I'll talk to you then. As for giving money in advance, I don't do that." (Carlin 2008, 187)

Ritchie did get in touch with Asch after retuning from her fieldwork, and in 1959 and 1960 the fruits of her field recordings were issued on Folkways on two LPs.

Irish folklorist Sean O'Boyle introduced Ritchie to the singer Sarah Makem, whom Jean and her husband visited in Makem's home in Keady, County Armagh, near the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Makem (1900–1983) is best known as the mother of Tommy Makem, who became a major star in the mid-1950s folk revival when performing with the popular Clancy Brothers. She was recorded many times in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the liner notes to *As I Roved Out (Field Trip-Ireland)* Ritchie described how Makem warmly greeted her:

The street door led right into the kitchen, the heart of any Irish cottage, and a cheerful warm room it was, with the lamps burning brightly and the kettle singing on the hearth. Mrs. Makem, a handsome, gentle woman, young to be a grandmother, welcomed us with "Come in, come in! Ye're as welcome as the flowers in May!" As though she had expected us, Mrs. Makem set three more places around the table . . . and as she bustled about, slicing bread and frying bacon, she sang and hummed on a dozen tantalizing snatches of songs, among them "As I Roved Out." We were so taken with the lilting melody that we begged her then and there to sing us all of it.

“As I Roved Out” is a traditional Irish song that is a fragment of the longer ballad, “The Soldier and the Maid” (known in the United States as “The Trooper and the Maid”). Makem’s version was used for many years as the theme song for a BBC radio folk music program of the same name.

3. BORDER SPIRIT

Billy Pigg, Northumbrian smallpipes

Recorded in c. 1958 by Roy Wilson. Originally released on Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40473, 1999.

Burt Feintuch, who edited the album from which this performance is taken, gives an excellent accounting of Billy Pigg’s life and music in the liner notes to *Northumberland Rant: Traditional Music from the Edge of England*:

Born Thomas William Pigg in Dilston Park in 1902, Billy Pigg was one of the most remarkable musical figures in [England’s] music. He pushed the smallpipes about as far as they go, playing with a wild, lyrical flair that captured the musical imaginations of many of his contemporaries and many of the musicians who followed him. . . . Billy used to bicycle to lessons and sessions with



Billy Pigg. (Photo courtesy of Burt Feintuch, Alfie and Mary Pigg)

*Margaret Dirrane. (Courtesy of The David
and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund)*



an earlier generation of musicians, notably Tom Clough. Clough was an exponent of a brilliant, highly technical style with exceptionally tight fingering. Billy developed an almost florid aesthetic, playing wild cascades of notes, his fingers flying faster than seems possible. . . .

By the time Billy had moved with his family to the country, urban musicians began seeking him out. Forster Charlton, in particular, a great advocate of the pipes, began visiting Billy after Forster's brother Bill had invited Billy to play at the annual Northumbrian Gathering concerts he began in Alnwick in 1949. . . . Forster's amateur recordings of Billy were issued on an LP in 1971, bringing his music to a younger generation.

Billy's performances and compositions were highly influential for folk revival musicians throughout Britain, and particularly in Northumbria. Without him the Northumbrian pipes undoubtedly would not be as widely played and appreciated today. "Border Spirit" is an air Pigg wrote to celebrate his beloved Northumbria and is a typical bravura performance by this master musician. Pigg died in 1968.

4. 'T WAS EARLY, EARLY IN THE SPRING

Margaret Dirrane, vocals

Recorded in June 1955 at Seven Churches on Inishmore island, Ireland, by Sidney Robertson Cowell. Originally released on Folkways FW 04002, 1957.

Margaret Dirrane (b. c. 1912—death date unknown) was a traditional singer who was well known thanks to her having been featured in Robert Flaherty's documentary film, *Man of Aran*, which was released in 1934 when Dirrane was 26 years old. During a subsequent tour of North America to promote the film, she met Henry Cowell and his wife Sidney. When Sidney visited the Aran Islands some 20 years later, she recorded Dirrane and her son singing in their home, using a portable battery-driven tape machine. The

slight drop in pitch heard on this recording is due to the unreliable speed of Sidney's recording equipment.

The song Dirrane sings, "Twas Early, Early in the Spring," is quite widely known in the British Isles and in the American Appalachians. It goes under various names, including "My Boy Willie" and "The Young Sailor Boy," as well as the title Dirrane gave it. She learned it around 1920 from her elder sister.

5. DE'IL AMONG THE TAILORS

Bob Hobkirk, fiddle

Recorded on August 20, 1960, at Hawick, Roxburghshire, Scotland, by Samuel B. Charters and A. R. Danberg (later Ann Charters). Originally released on Folkways FW 08781, 1963.

Sam Charters and his soon-to-be wife Ann visited northern England and Scotland in the summer of 1960, and recorded several musicians and singers who would go on to be key figures in the Northumbrian folk revival. One of them was fiddler Bob Hobkirk (1925–2002). He began playing fiddle as a teenager while working as a shepherd near the town of Teviothead, where he was living when the Charters recorded him. Later he relocated to Hawick, and there he helped found the Borders Strathspey and Reel Society, which he led for many years. By the early 1970s, younger fiddlers from the region became interested in his music, some of them introduced to him via the Charters album. Although he suffered a stroke in the late 1990s, he continued to play until his death in 2002. (Watson 2006)

"De'il Among the Tailors" is a popular reel that has been played for at least 300 years in English, Scottish, and Irish traditions. A well-known showpiece for fiddlers to play at conventions, it is more familiar in the United States today as "Devil's Dream." At the end of the track, Hobkirk explains how the tune would have been played at a dance.

6. THE ROCKS OF BAWN

Joe Heaney, vocals

Recorded in November 1958 at the Bedford Arms, Camden Town, London, by Ralph Rinzler and Barry Murphy. Originally released on Folkways FW03575, 1965.

Master singer Joe Heaney (1919–1984) came from outside the town of Carna in County Galway, on the West Coast of Ireland, and is considered among the greatest of the *sean-nós* singers. Heaney lived primarily in London through the 1950s and 1960s, although he returned regularly to Ireland. Settling in the United States in the 1970s, he worked in Manhattan as an apartment building concierge. He performed and taught Irish singing at Wesleyan University in the early 1980s and then at the University of Washington from 1982 until his death. He was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowship for excellence in the folk arts in 1982.

“The Rocks of Bawn” is a well-known Irish song that is also often performed as an instrumental air. It reflects on the plight of the rural farmers generally, although some also feel it is related to Cromwell’s invasion of Ireland in the mid-17th century and the suppression of the Irish Catholics at the time. Heaney commented to Mike Seeger that to sing the song properly, he had to envision the life of the protagonist as he sang the verse:

[In singing the song] you’re playing the act, you’re working exactly what Sweeney was doing, you’re going through the same thing that he was going through, before the song was ever made. You have this picture before you of the man going through this agony, and if he’d stop for one minute, somebody else would get the job. And that’s exactly the picture you must follow when you’re singing an old song. (Coleman 2002)

Heaney’s intense identification with the hero in the ballad is what accounts for the singer’s highly emotional and moving performance.

7. WHISKEY ISLAND POLKA

Pat O'Malley, two-row button accordion; Frank Keating, piano

Recorded on May 19, 1978, in Oberlin, Ohio, by Richard Carlin and Evan Stein. Originally released on Folkways FW 03521, 1979.

This recording was made at a live performance by a pair of Irish musicians associated with the West Side Irish Club in Cleveland, Ohio. Pat O'Malley was a popular accordion player, member of an informal *ceilidh* band (dance band), The Emeralds, and mostly played for local *feiseana* (a *feis* is a traditional Gaelic arts and culture festival). Born in Lenon, County Mayo, he learned traditional Irish music from his father (who played flute) and mother (who played accordion). His lively style reflects his background playing for dances. He is accompanied by Frank Keating, a native Clevelander who, in addition to being a fine dance band pianist, played traditional fiddle in a style he learned from his father, Mike, also from County Mayo. The button accordion came into Irish music in the mid-19th century, and became popular in dance halls because of its loud, piercing tone that could be heard over the sound of laughter and stamping feet. Polkas, too, came into popularity in the mid-19th century as a new dance style imported from Eastern Europe to Ireland. "Whiskey Island Polka" is one of many tunes played frequently at local dances throughout Ireland and in Irish communities like Cleveland in the United States. It is closely related to "Dennis Murphy's Polka," a favorite tune at Irish sessions.

8. D-TIGEAS Ó DEABHASA (Children's Game Song)

Sorcha Ní Ghuairim, vocals

Recorded in 1945 in New York City by Moses Asch. Originally released on Folkways FW 06861, 1957.

Sorcha Ní Ghuairim was a journalist and a noted *sean-nós* singer from a large musical family in Roisin na Mainach, Carna, County Galway (also the home region of Joe Heaney). She was one of 11 children, and her elder sister Máire was also known for her singing in the traditional Gaelic style. Sorcha described where she learned her songs:

I got most of these from my parents. There is the odd verse here and there in some of the songs that I learnt from hearing them being sung at singing occasions, but not many.... I didn't write any of them down until now, I just learned them from the singers on the hearth. When I was growing up we used to have big singing nights in our house, and my father and mother ... used often to be humming, particularly if they were anxious or upset. ("Sorcha Ní Ghuairim [1911–1976]")

In 1945, she came to New York City to visit her brother Máirtín, who was serving in the U.S. Navy. It is not known how she contacted Moses Asch, but she recorded several acetate 78s for him, which were subsequently released in 1957 on Folkways. In 1955, she moved to London and lived there until her death 21 years later. In 2002, the Irish label Gael Linn issued a CD of her music along with an extensive annotated booklet.

"D-tigeas Ó Deabhasa" is a well-known children's game song in the *sean-nós* repertoire.

9. TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN

Willie Clancy, uilleann pipes

Recorded on October 23, 1960, at Ballyheigue, County Kerry, by Samuel B. Charters and A. R. Danberg (later Ann Charters). Originally released on Folkways FW 8781, 1963.

Willie Clancy (1918–1973) is one of the best known of all traditional Irish musicians, and is considered among the greatest of all masters of the uilleann pipes. The uilleann pipes feature the usual drone and chanters that are found on most bagpipes, with the addition of regulators that enable the player to add chord harmonies. Clancy was born in Miltown Malbay, a small town on the West Coast of Ireland in County Clare. His father was a piper, having learned from the legendary blind bagpiper Garrett Barry, and passed along Barry's repertoire and unique playing style to his son. When Clancy was 17 years old, he met the second most influential musician on his style, the traveling piper Johnny Doran. In 1947, Clancy won the first of many first places at a local traditional music contest. Finding it hard to support himself farming, he moved to London in the early 1950s, where he often played with piper Seamus Ennis, and did not return home until 1957, to take over the family farm on his father's death. He recorded prolifically in his lifetime, particularly during the folk revival years of the 1960s and early 1970s. Since his death, the annual Willie Clancy Summer School held in his hometown has become the premier school for traditional Irish music and dance, attracting thousands of students annually.

“Trip O'er the Mountain” is a well-known Irish air that Clancy recorded on many occasions. In this performance, he shows his mastery of the expressive tremolo that was a hallmark of Irish piping, along with dramatic use of glissandi or slides from a low to a higher pitch.

10. THE STRAYAWAY CHILD / THE LARK IN THE MORNING

Michael Gorman, fiddle; Margaret Barry, banjo

Recorded on October 8, 9, 10, 1965, in New York City by Barbara Dane. Originally released on Folkways FW 8729, 1975.

Fiddler Michael Gorman and banjo player/singer Margaret Barry were popular figures in the early 1960s folk revival thanks to their living in London, where the British folk revival was centered. After they performed at the Newport Folk Festival in Summer 1965, the pair remained in the United States to play various colleges and folk clubs, including a stint in New York where they stayed with Irwin Silber and his wife, Barbara Dane, a folk-blues singer. Dane recorded the couple during their visit in order to document their unique style.

Gorman claimed to have been born on a boat that was traveling between Glasgow and Ireland on April 11, 1895 (others give the year as 1888 or 1902). He came from a musical farming family near Dooastle in County Sligo. From age 9 he was trained on the fiddle by James Gannon, who was said to have also taught Michael Coleman and a slew of other well-known Sligo-area fiddlers. Sometime shortly after World War II, Gorman immigrated to London, where he worked as a porter for the railroads. He began playing at a local pub, the Bedford Arms, which became the center of activity for Irish émigré musicians in London (this is where Ralph Rinzler recorded his album of Irish Music in London; see track 6). He also met the banjo player/singer Margaret Barry (1917–1989), a charismatic performer, and they quickly became mainstays at the pub. Gorman continued to perform with Barry until a week before his death in 1970. Barry lived another 19 years, although she performed only rarely in the last decade of her life.

“The Strayaway Child” is a slip jig that is particularly associated with Gorman. It is a tour-de-force 6-part work, and Gorman’s set of variations has become the standard

in folk revival circles, thanks particularly to a recording by the Bothy Band in the late 1970s. Barry claimed to have written the first phrase of the melody, and then Gorman developed his variations on it. “The Lark in the Morning” is a very well-known jig, and Gorman plays it in characteristic Sligo style.

II. THE QUEEN OF MAY

Shirley Collins, vocals

Recorded in 1959 by Alan Lomax. Originally released on Folkways FW 03564, 1960.

Shirley Collins (b. 1935) is one of the greatest singers of the British folk revival, and had a long and distinguished career. She initially performed in the folk revival style of the late 1950s and early 1960s, accompanying herself on 5-string banjo and guitar, and drawing her repertoire from traditional song collections and her family’s song heritage. When Alan Lomax (1915–2002) was working in England in the 1950s, he took on Collins as an assistant and eventually companion. Collins recalls that sometime in 1958 she “recorded in two days the 37 songs that would make up my first two solo LPs” (Collins 2004, 26). Even though these were her first recordings, Collins already shows the commanding voice and sensitive interpretation of traditional material that would mark her mature work. In the 1960s she primarily performed with her sister Dolly, who played a number of medieval and renaissance keyboard instruments, and then partnered with folk-rock producer/bass player Ashley Hutchings in the Albion Band and related groups.

“The Queen of May” comes from Cecil Sharp’s collection, *English Folk Songs*. Lomax comments in his liner notes to *False True Lovers* (FW 03564) on the fact that Sharp “bowdlerized” the lyrics due to the “prudery” of his day. Yet it remains pretty clear what happened on that May morning, despite the attempt to sanitize the song.

12. THE BONNY BUNCH OF ROSES

Patrick Clancy, vocals

Recorded in 1959 at the Newport Folk Festival. Originally released on Folkways FW 02431, 1960.

A member of the famous Clancy Brothers clan, Patrick Clancy was born in 1922 and along with brother Tom came to Canada and then the United States in search of employment following World War II. By the mid-1950s, they had teamed up with their youngest brother, Liam, and singer/actor Tommy Makem (son of Sarah Makem, heard on track 2) to form the Clancy Brothers. The Clancys, with their white knit sweaters and lively stage performances, helped launch the Irish folk music revival. Clancy was a fine ballad singer on his own, as this live performance from the first Newport Folk Festival shows. Clancy returned to Ireland in 1964 to run a dairy farm, but he continued to sing with the group through various lineups through the late 1980s. He died of cancer when he was 76 years old.

“The Bonny Bunch of Roses” is one of the greatest of Irish traditional ballads, telling the story of Napoleon’s attempt to conquer Europe and his fateful campaign in Russia, which led to his downfall. The Irish people in general sympathized with Napoleon, seeing him as their possible liberator from the tyranny of British rule.



Tom Byrne and Tom McAffrey (foreground) with the Byrne family in Lakewood, Ohio. (Photo by Pam Hardman)

13. THE GALWAY RAMBLER

Tom Byrne, flute

Recorded on April 29, 1977, at Oberlin College by Richard Carlin, assisted by Pam Hardman. Originally released on Folkways FW 03517, 1977.

While I was attending Oberlin College, I became aware of the Irish music community in nearby Cleveland, particularly in the neighborhood of Lakewood. There I met musicians including flutist Tom Byrne (1920–2001) and fiddler and storyteller Tom McAffrey (1916–2006), who were generally regarded as the best of the older players on the local scene. Tom Byrne was born in the small town of Geevagh in County Sligo, Ireland. At age seven he bought his first tin whistle at a local fair for three pennies, and immediately began playing it. He graduated to the wooden flute when he obtained a battered instrument from an older musician. Immigrating to Canada in 1948,

Tom moved on to Cleveland, where he worked at the rail and shipyards unloading freight. In about 1956, he teamed up with McAffrey, and the two became local favorites at the dance competitions and family gatherings. I recorded them in a small basement studio in Cleveland in April 1977 and then at a live concert, where they were considerably more relaxed. That performance formed the basis for the first Folkways album I produced of the community's music.

“The Galway Rambler” is a traditional Irish reel that is known under a variety of names, including “The Fairy Hurlers,” “Walsh’s Favorite,” and “Tiama Wellington.” Tom Byrne’s spirited performance shows his mastery of Sligo-style flute technique, including his use of slurs, staccato passages, and ornamentation.

14. THE MOUNTAIN ROAD

Denis Murphy, fiddle

Recorded on October 23, 1960, at Ballyheigue, County Kerry, by Samuel B. Charters and A. R. Danberg (later Ann Charters). Originally released on Folkways FW 8781, 1963.

Sam Charters recorded the great Irish fiddler Denis Murphy, along with piper Willie Clancy (see track 9), after they performed at a local concert. Murphy’s fiddling reveals his roots in County Kerry rather than County Sligo, birthplace of legendary fiddler Michael Coleman, whose highly ornamented style set the standard for Irish fiddling throughout the 20th century. Murphy’s playing is subtler but no less complex, and his rendition of the classic reel “The Mountain Road” is a tour de force of traditional fiddling. Along with his sister Julia Clifford (with whom he often recorded), Murphy learned to play from the legendary Padraig O’Keefe, and carried forward many of the older fiddler’s tunes and style.

Murphy was born in 1910 (some sources give the year as 1912) in Lisheen, County Kerry, in an area known as Sliabh Luachra (“mountain of rushes”). The region is famous for its distinctive dance music, including slides (played in either 9/8 or 12/8 rhythm) and polkas. Denis’s father played a number of instruments and was the conductor of the local fife-and-drum band; his mother was a well-known singer. Like many in his generation, Murphy immigrated to the United States in the 1949 looking for better economic opportunities. He settled in the New York area, where he played with other emigrants including fiddlers Paddy Killoran and Andy McGann and flutist James Morrison, but regularly visited family and played in competitions in Ireland. In 1959, Murphy and his wife returned to live permanently in Lisheen. He was widely recorded and appeared on BBC radio, becoming one of the best-known fiddlers of the Irish music revival from the early 1960s on. Murphy died in 1974.

“The Mountain Road” is a reel most closely associated with the Sligo-born fiddler Michael Gorman (see track 10).

15. BUSHES AND BRIARS

Isla Cameron, vocals

Recorded by Jean Ritchie and George Pickow. Originally released on Folkways FW08871, 1960.

Although born in Scotland about 1930, Isla Cameron lived in the Tyneside region of northern England, where Jean Ritchie and George Pickow recorded her singing the traditional song “Bushes and Briars.” She was associated in the 1950s with Ewan MacColl, whom she met when both were acting together. Cameron first came to prominence as a singer thanks to collector Peter Kennedy, who featured her on his BBC program *As I Roved Out* in the early 1950s. Kennedy probably also told Ritchie and her husband about Cameron.

Cameron continued to record and perform, often with MacColl, through the mid-1960s; after that, she primarily focused on acting until her death in 1980. Her singing of this song was featured in the film *Far from the Madding Crowd*, her voice being dubbed in for the film's star, Julie Christie. "Bushes and Briars" was a perfect song for the film, because of its frank expression of female desire—something which made the song somewhat controversial when it was first collected by Ralph Vaughn Williams at the turn of the 20th century. Cameron said she learned the song from "an old country woman from Ingatestone," according to Ritchie.

16. TIFTY'S ANNIE

Lucy Stewart, vocals

Recorded between October 1959 and August 1960 in Fetterangus, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, by Kenneth S. Goldstein. Originally issued on Folkways FW 03519, 1961.

Lucy Stewart was one of Scotland's greatest ballad singers. Folklorist Kenneth S. Goldstein spent several months with her and her family when she was at the height of her powers, documenting her wide repertory of songs and ballads. Stewart was born in Stuartfield in 1901 in Scotland's Buchan district. Her father was a tinsmith and farmer who had also served



Lucy Stewart. (Photo by Kenny Goldstein)

in the Gordon Highlanders as a piper. Her mother was a ballad singer, originally from northern England, whose family were local entertainers and traveling showpeople. In 1917, Lucy moved with her family to Fetterangus, a tiny town near Scotland's east coast. Although her other siblings were well known as musicians and singers, Lucy rarely sang outside of home, and Goldstein noted it took several months before she would sing for him even privately. Lucy continued to live and work in Fetterangus until her death in 1982. Her niece, Elizabeth Stewart, has continued to perform the family's traditional repertoire.

The ballad "Tifty's Annie" (also known as "Mill o' Tifty's Annie" and "Andrew Lammie") is based on a local story of an ill-fated love affair between Agnes (Annie) Smith and her father's servant, Andrew Lammie. Smith's tombstone in Fyvie records the date of her death as January 19, 1673, and the ballad itself was popular for the next several centuries. One version published by local folklorist Peter Buchan in the early 19th century was said to have sold over 30,000 copies, and ran some 50-plus verses. Stewart's version, at 14 verses, tells the full story, as Goldstein records in the liner notes to *Lucy Stewart: Traditional Singer from Aberdeenshire, Scotland, Vol. 1—Child Ballads* (FW 03519):

When I told her that I had collected a 52-verse version from another singer some few days after I first recorded her 14-stanza version, she replied that she knew many more stanzas, but that the way she sang it told the same story. To prove her point, she proceeded to sing over 40 stanzas before running out of breath.

Note that you can hear at one point several birds singing (presumably in Stewart's garden). Moses Asch loved this kind of aural evidence of what was actually occurring during a recording session, and was undoubtedly pleased that it was preserved on this record.

Stewart's version of "Tifty's Annie" has become the standard for folk revival singers.

17. THE PEARL WEDDING / NANCY TAYLOR'S REEL

Willie Taylor, fiddle

Recorded on July 30, 1986, in Taylor's home by Burt Feintuch. Originally issued on Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40473, 1999.

Willie Taylor was born in 1916 in the north of England, where his parents were shepherds—the same occupation he would pursue. His mother's family was rich in traditional fiddlers, and both his parents encouraged him to start playing when he was about 12 years old, but he didn't take to either his teacher or the instrument. However, when he was 19, he lodged with famed local fiddler and fellow shepherd George ("Geordie") Armstrong, who inspired him to take up the instrument again. This led him to pursue the life of the traveling fiddler, playing for dances and parties, while working as he did until his retirement as a shepherd. In the early 1960s, he was "discovered" by folk revivalists in the Northumberland region, including members of the popular group, the High Level Ranters. On his death in 2000 at the age of 84, Alistair Anderson, the concertina player from that group, wrote of Taylor:

During the last 20 years or so, along with fellow shepherds Joe Hutton and Will Atkinson, [Taylor] brought the authentic sound of traditional music from Northumberland and the Borders to festival audiences.... Aly Bain, the internationally renowned Shetland fiddler, described Willie as the finest player of jigs he had ever heard. He injected a dynamic drive into every tune he played, achieving much of his attack by the use of very strong up-bows at points where most fiddlers would use a down-bow, producing some of the most rhythmic music around. (Anderson 2000)

Taylor also composed traditional-styled tunes, and the two he plays here are among his best known, often covered by contemporary folk players of the region.

18. DERRY HORNPIPE

Joe Shannon, uilleann pipes; John McGreevy, fiddle

*Recorded on June 25, 1983, at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, Washington, D.C.
Previously unissued.*

Chicago-based master musicians Joe Shannon and John McGreevy were among the performers who appeared at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in 1983. During their set, they played this well-known Irish dance tune, “Derry Hornpipe,” which is a favorite at *feiseana* and Irish sessions around the globe.

Although Shannon and McGreevy had played together as teenagers, they did not regularly perform as a duo until the mid-1970s Irish music revival. After appearing on an anthology of Chicago Irish musicians in 1978, the duo made a full album for the Green Linnet label, leading to their appearance at the Smithsonian Festival in 1983. Joe Shannon was recognized as a master piper when he received a National Heritage Fellowship from the NEA in 1983. McGreevy died in 1990, and Shannon died in 2004.

Ethnomusicologist and master flute player L. E. McCullough, PhD, graciously provided the following biographical information on Shannon and McGreevy:

Piper Joe Shannon was born in 1919 near Kiltamagh, Mayo. All of Joe’s seven older brothers played music. The first piper he heard was his cousin, Eddie Mullaney, shortly after his family moved to Chicago in 1929. With encouragement from Mullaney, Joe took up the instrument while still in grammar school. In 1934, Joe was invited to play with the *ceilidh* band for the Irish Village in the Chicago World’s Fair. After the band broke up, he continued playing at Irish functions throughout the Chicago area for several years until the

responsibilities of his job with the city fire department and his growing family forced him to retire. In 1967, Eddie Mullaney gave Joe his set of pipes, made by Taylor of Philadelphia around 1880. It was the acquisition of this powerful, dazzling instrument that inspired Joe to take up the pipes again.

Joe represents an extension of what has been termed the American style of uilleann piping as exhibited in the recordings of Patsy Touhey, Tom Ennis, Mike Carney, and Eddie Mullaney. Frequent staccato triplets are interspersed with single rolls, double-cut rolls, trills, crans, and single and double grace notes in a melodic setting rendered with generally legato phrasing. The articulation of jigs is more staccato than is the case with reels and hornpipes. The regulators are used occasionally to heighten the contrast between sections of the melody, but the main emphasis is on bringing the full range of ornamentation to bear in the performance of the melody.

John McGreevy was born of Irish parents in Chicago in 1919. John grew up in a period when some of the most influential Irish fiddlers of the century were in their prime. He listened avidly to the recordings of Michael Coleman, James Morrison, Paddy Killoran, and Paddy Sweeney and successfully mastered the complexities of the demanding Sligo fiddle style. Personal tuition during his late teens from fiddlers James Neary, James Giblin, and Tom Fitzmaurice further honed his technical abilities and expanded his repertoire. Throughout most of John's life, however, opportunities for playing Irish music on a professional level were virtually non-existent. He recorded a few sides with Pat Roche's Harp and Shamrock Orchestra for Decca in 1938 but did not record again commercially until 1974, when he and flute player Seamus Cooley (brother of famed accordion player Joe Cooley) made an album. When Irish music came to be discovered by wider audiences in the 1970s, John McGreevy was in the forefront of the revival and was a well-received performer at several college concerts and folk festivals.

19. WITH MY PIT BOOTS ON

Louis Killen, vocals

First issued on Collector Records COLL 01932, 1980.

Lou Killen (b. 1934) has been a popular singer/performer on the British folk revival scene since the mid-1960s. Killen was born in Tyneside, Northumbria, an area rich in traditional folk song and dance music. One of the first to take up the English concertina during the folk revival, Killen developed a unique style of song accompaniment and performance. He relocated to the United States, where he performed as a member of the Clancy Brothers in the late 1960s–early ’70s and as a solo artist. He is best known for his interpretations of sea songs.

“With My Pit Boots On” originated among the coal-mining communities of northern England. It is closely associated with A. L. Lloyd, who first recorded it and whose version Killen and most other contemporary artists follow fairly closely.

20. THE YOUNG SAILOR CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME

Harry Cox, vocals

Recorded by Jean Ritchie and George Pickow. Originally released on Folkways FW 08871, 1960.

Singer Harry Cox (1885–1971) was one of the key “discoveries” of the British folk revival of the 1950s and ’60s, and his distinctive, reedy tenor and finely ornamented singing style were very influential on revivalist singers.

Cox was born in the small Norfolk town of Barton Turf; his father made his living by fishing and farming. Both his mother and father were singers, and his father was a regular at the local pub, the Windmill, which would become Harry's stomping ground. Harry worked as a farmer, but through his pub singing became well known locally for his vocal skills. British composer Ernest John Moeran heard him sing in 1921 when Moeran was collecting folk songs; 13 years later, Moeran arranged for Harry to record in London, and in 1945 he convinced a team of BBC folklorists to visit Harry to record his singing. Folklorist Peter Kennedy then picked up the torch, extensively recording the singer's repertory in 1953 and arranging for Harry to come to London, where he was recorded again by Alan Lomax. Jean Ritchie was probably led to Cox by Kennedy or Lomax (or perhaps both).

"The Young Sailor Cut Down in his Prime" is a popular song that is one of many versions and variants of the Elizabethan ballad, "The Unfortunate Rake." In the United States, it is best known as "The Streets of Laredo." It was a favorite of Harry's.

21. BONNIE KATE / JENNY'S CHICKENS

Jean Carignan, fiddle; unknown, guitar

Recorded in c. 1960 by Samuel Gesser. Originally released on Folkways FW03531, 1960.

Jean Carignan (1916–1988) was one of the best known of all French Canadian fiddlers. His playing of traditional French Canadian dance music was unparalleled, but he also mastered the intricacies of traditional Scottish and Irish fiddling. Pete Seeger, who is heard on some tracks of the original album on banjo, also made a film called *The Country Fiddle* (c. 1959) that featured a segment with Carignan performing. Carignan became even better known in the 1970s thanks to several excellent recordings on the Philo label, and was

awarded the Order of Canada in 1974. Carignan's version of "Bonnie Kate" closely follows Michael Coleman's, including the many difficult variations that Coleman created for the melody. The tune is paired with "Jenny's Chickens," again following Coleman's earlier recording. The guitarist on this track may have been Carignan's brother, who recorded with him often at this time, but no credit is given in the original notes.

Samuel Gesser recorded dozens of Canadian musicians for Folkways.



Jean Carignan. (Photo by David Gabr)

22. GLENLOGIE

Ewan MacColl, vocals

Recorded in c. 1960 in the City of London studios. Originally released on Folkways FW03511, 1964.

Ewan MacColl (1915–1989) was one of the most influential performers, collectors, songwriters, and leaders of the British folk song revival of the 20th century. He was born James Henry Miller to Scottish parents, both of whom were active socialists. From his teen years, he lived in Manchester, England, working as a street singer and actor/writer in political theater. In 1934, he met actress Joan Littlewood, and the two formed The Theater Workshop to present radical plays. After serving in World War II, he returned to acting and directing with Littlewood, taking the new name Ewan MacColl in honor of his Scottish heritage.

Around 1950, inspired by Alan Lomax's arrival in England, MacColl became interested in folk song as a means of spreading a political message, and began a career spanning several decades of prolifically recording traditional ballads, songs, and his own compositions. In 1956, he met Peggy Seeger while she was visiting England, and fell in love with her; the two became partners in life and performance.

This recording is taken from a series that was issued by Folkways in the early 1960s of the traditional Child ballads, the songs collected by American folklorist Francis James Child that form the backbone of traditional British balladry. "Glenlogie" (Child 238) is particularly appropriate for MacColl, as its hero is Scottish. It tells a classic story of a well-to-do maiden falling in love with a lower-class man. Despite the difference in their social standing, she loves him and agrees to marry him. The song carries a message of social justice that MacColl would have heartily supported.



Ewan MacColl. (Photo by Jim Maginn, courtesy of Peggy Seeger)

23. MARTIN WYNNE'S NOS. 1, 2, 3, AND 4

Brian Conway, Pat Mangan, fiddles; Felix Dolan, piano

Recorded between 1997 and 2001 by Edward Haber. Originally released on Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40481, 2002.

This compilation ends as any good selection of Celtic music should, with a rousing set of reels. Brian Conway (b. 1961) is a well-known fiddler born in the Bronx in New York City, where there is a long-established Irish community. He studied with several master fiddlers—including Martin Mulvihill (1923–1987) and Martin Wynne (1913–1998), who composed these tunes. He won his first All-Ireland championship in 1973 at the age of 12, and made his first appearance on record at age 16. He partnered with another well-known revivalist fiddler, Tony DeMarco, and the two produced the album *Apples in Winter* in 1981. He is joined on this recording by Patrick Mangan, who was his student at the time and was also an All-Ireland champion, and the well-known pianist Felix Dolan, who appeared on dozens of recordings made by New York-area Irish musicians.

It is believed that Martin Wynne composed these tunes in the 1930s, and the first two quickly became session favorites in both New York and Ireland. Less well known are the third and fourth reels. In fact, No. 4 was almost lost; Conway heard Wynne play it once in Philadelphia in 1976 at a festival, but it was only 10 years later that the master fiddler was encouraged to play it again so it could be notated.



Brian Conway. (Photo by Walter Sedovic)



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CLASSIC CELTIC MUSIC

Few genres carry such a rich and deep history as Celtic music, which reflects centuries of culture of Ireland and the British Isles, as well as their North American inheritors. Music historian, musician, and folklorist Richard Carlin delves into this diverse world of traditional music, compiling a wide spectrum of 23 tracks that contrast the better-known early recordings with some of the best contemporary interpreters. Styles ranging from Sligo fiddle tunes to Northumbrian piping to sean nós singing are represented in this enjoyable introduction to the Celtic music riches of the Smithsonian Folkways archives. 58 minutes, 40-page booklet with photos.

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|---|------|---|------|
| 1. LOVE AT THE ENDINGS /
JOHN MCGRATH'S REEL
Kevin Burke | 2:21 | 12. THE BONNY BUNCH OF ROSES
Patrick Clancy | 4:44 |
| 2. AS I ROVED OUT
Sarah Makem | 0:54 | 13. THE GALWAY RAMBLER
Tom Byrne | 1:16 |
| 3. BORDER SPIRIT
Billy Pigg | 1:20 | 14. THE MOUNTAIN ROAD
Denis Murphy | 1:03 |
| 4. 'T WAS EARLY, EARLY IN THE SPRING
Margaret DiFranco | 1:51 | 15. BUSHES AND BRIARS
Isla Cameron | 2:14 |
| 5. DE'IL AMONG THE TAILORS
Bob Hobkirk | 1:43 | 16. TIFTY'S ANNIE
Lucy Stewart | 4:34 |
| 6. THE ROCKS OF BAWN
Joe Heaney | 3:20 | 17. THE PEARL WEDDING /
NANCY TAYLOR'S REEL
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| 7. WHISKEY ISLAND POLKA
Pat O'Malley and Frank Keating | 1:32 | 18. DERRY HORNPIPE
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| 8. D-TIGEAS Ó DEABHASA
(CHILDREN'S GAME SONG)
Sorcha Ni Ghuairm | 1:03 | 19. WITH MY PIT BOOTS ON
Louis Killen | 1:46 |
| 9. TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN
Willie Clancy | 2:39 | 20. THE YOUNG SAILOR CUT DOWN
IN HIS PRIME
Harry Cox | 1:54 |
| 10. THE STRAYAWAY CHILD /
THE LARK IN THE MORNING
Michael Gorman and Margaret Barry | 2:54 | 21. BONNIE KATE / JENNY'S CHICKENS
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| 11. THE QUEEN OF MAY
Shirley Collins | 1:48 | 22. GLENLOGIE
Ewan MacColl | 5:12 |
| | | 23. MARTIN WYNNE'S NOS. 1, 2, 3, AND 4
Brian Conway, Pat Mangan, Felix Dolan | 4:43 |



