

Wisconsin Flute Festival 2020

Let's Play Irish Flute! - Andra Bohnet

September 8, 2020 – 7:00-8:30 pm (Central Time)

Thank you so much for being a part of this!! Because of the Zoom lag, we can't totally play together, but I wanted to put some useful things on this pdf along with the tunes so you can learn!

Irish flute style basics:

- I. Irish/Celtic Flute is a **STYLE** not an instrument!!!!
 - A. It can be played successfully on the silver Boehm flute, but with a different approach than classical technique
 - B. Playing a wooden flute with classical sensibilities will **NOT** make you sound Irish!!
- II. The Irish style is learned primarily through listening to and imitating other players
 - A. No universally accepted system exists for notation of the nuances of the style
 - B. No definitive source exists for standard versions of the repertoire
- III. Basic Tune Forms
 - A. Jig - 6/8, fast
 - B. Reel - duple, cut time, fast
 - C. Hornpipe - 4/4, swing feel, moderate
 - D. Most traditional dance tunes have two sections, each repeated
 - E. Other Dances: Slip Jig - 9/8, fast; Polka - 2/4, very fast; Waltz - 3/4
 - F. Slow Air - free rhythm, highly expressive, modeled after singers
- IV. Characteristics of Irish Flute Technique in Dance Music
 - A. Dark, reedy sound with **no vibrato**!!!!
 - B. Minimal tonguing, especially avoided on strong beats
 - C. Abrupt, rhythmic releases, no tapers
 - D. Rhythm is all important, don't lose time to breathe
 - E. Finger articulation (ornaments)
 - F. On the Boehm flute – use middle finger F#, it simplifies ornamentation, trill keys are extremely useful in ornamentation
 - G. Traditional Irish flute playing stays in the bottom two octaves!!
- V. Basic Ornaments
 - A. Cut - grace from above, accomplished by cracking a finger (or key) at least one hole above the one sounding the note to articulate the note, on the beat
 - B. Tap or Strike - grace from below, accomplished by tapping finger directly below the one sounding the note, on the beat
 - C. Roll - a rhythmic combination of a cut and a tap, often divides a note into thirds
 - D. Slide - gradually moving a finger (or fingers) off of the holes (or keys) to create a glissando between pitches
 - E. Finger vibrato - rapid opening/closing of the hole/key below the one opened to sound the note

So in summary:

- Slur everything you can, especially into the strong beats
- Rhythm is everything, don't break it
- When there are repeated notes separate them with a finger ornament instead of your tongue

VI. Other Useful Tidbits

- A. Most Irish music is in the keys of D and G and their relative minors, but A minor and A mixolydian are also common
- B. The key of Irish flutes and whistles is the note sounded when all six finger holes are closed, thus a D flute or whistle plays in concert pitch
- C. The vast majority of the repertoire can be performed on keyless flutes and whistles in D

VIII. Resources

- A. Internet Forums
 1. www.thesession.org - hundreds of tunes, listings of sessions, discussion groups
 2. www.chiffandfipple.com - emphasis on, but not exclusively devoted to, Irish whistle and flute playing
- B. Books
 1. June McCormick: *Fliúit & Fliúit 2* - www.draioichtmusic.com/fliuit - excellent tutor, includes great CDs, geared towards Irish type flute
 2. Grey Larsen: *The Essential Guide to Irish Flute and Tin Whistle*, pub. Mel Bay, comes with lots of audio examples, 470+ page tome
- C. Workshops/Classes
 1. Boxwood Flute Festival - www.boxwood.org, held last week in July in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia by Chris Norman, other faculty varies, but always includes Irish flute players
 2. Swannanoa Gathering - www.swangathering.com, Asheville, NC, held mid-July
 3. Catskills Irish Arts Week - www.catskillsirishartsweek.org, Catskills Region., NY
 4. Many others in U.S. and Ireland
 5. Find a teacher at a session near you or remotely!
- D. Great players to listen to!
 - a. Traditional: Matt Molloy, Kevin Crawford, John Skelton, Joanie Madden, Laurence Nugent, Grey Larsen, Catherine McEvoy, June McCormick, Frankie Kennedy
 - b. Progressive: Brian Finnegan, Skip Healy, Jean-Michael Veillon, Michael McGoldrick, Sylvain Barou,
 - c. Chris Norman: one of the finest flute players on the planet
 - d. Great bands: Lunasa, Flook, Solas, Danu, Altan, Chieftains, Cherish the Ladies

VII. Flute Makers

- A. If you're reading this, you already own at least one flute; use it to play Irish music!
- B. Wooden Irish style flutes - some of these makers have lengthy waiting lists
 1. Windward Flutes - www.windwardflutes.com, Forbes & Yola Christie, beautiful high end instruments, Forbes used to work for both Brannen & Powell, my favorites!
 2. Casey Burns - www.caseyburnsflutes.com, reasonably priced entry level instruments
 3. Walt Sweet "Shannon flute" - www.wdsweetflutes.com/shannon, a plastic flute for \$275
 4. Avoid internet specials made in Pakistan, non-Western tuning, ouch!!!!
- C. Tin Whistles - start with one in D!!!!
 1. Almost any cheap whistle is great to start on - decent makers are Clarke, Walton, Oak, Generation - these will not be tunable and usually have a plastic mouthpiece on a brass or nickel tube. Oak is my favorite of this group, around \$15
 2. Susato whistles - www.susato.com, my favorite entry level whistle. Made of plastic, Oriole model @ \$32.50 is nice, to go slightly upscale the Kildare model @ \$54 is a monster. The whistles have great intonation and can project through an orchestra!
 3. Michael Burke - www.burkewhistles.com, high end whistles, artist quality for \$250! This is my main whistle, I have them in several keys.

Let's have some fun!

Thank you to my Liminal Duo partner, Andy Kruspe (andykruspebodhran.com), for the amazing percussion tracks!! We just released our debut CD in February, right before COVID-19. Check it out at liminalduo.org

For the purpose of this workshop I have organized the tunes into tune types and sets. They are all common dance tunes you would hear at any session throughout the world.

Included are:

- Jigs - 6/8, fast, the most quintessential type of Irish tune
- Reels - duple, cut time, fast, where Irish players tend to show their chops
- Slip Jigs - 9/8, fun and IMHO, the sexiest type of Irish dance tune
- Hornpipes - 4/4, moderate speed, they swing!
- Polkas - 2/4. very fast and fun

Because I thought we should also play something pretty, I have also included two works by Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738), a blind harper who is credited with having written 214 tunes and in many ways is the father of Irish music. His incredible melodies are often a gateway for classical players to get into Irish traditional music.

Tune Contents:

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Jig Set #1

Jimmy Ward's/Swallowtail Jig/Tobin's Favorite Jig

Jimmy Ward's

Two staves of musical notation for Jimmy Ward's Jig. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns.

Swallowtail Jig

Two staves of musical notation for Swallowtail Jig. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (D# and F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns.

Tobin's Favorite Jig

Two staves of musical notation for Tobin's Favorite Jig. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (D# and F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is characterized by a series of sixteenth-note runs. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns.

Jig Set #2

Blarney Pilgrim/Banish Misfortune

Blarney Pilgrim



Musical notation for the piece "Blarney Pilgrim". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 6/8 time signature. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second and third staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns and repeat signs.

Banish Misfortune



Musical notation for the piece "Banish Misfortune". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 6/8 time signature. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second and third staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns and repeat signs.

Reel Set

The Maid Behind the Bar/The Merry Blacksmith

The Maid Behind the Bar

Musical notation for 'The Maid Behind the Bar' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Merry Blacksmith

Musical notation for 'The Merry Blacksmith' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Slip Jig Set

The Butterfly/The Boys of Ballisodare

The Butterfly

Musical notation for 'The Butterfly' in 3/8 time, G major. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff concludes the piece with a 'Final' marking above the final measure.

The Boys of Ballisodare

Musical notation for 'The Boys of Ballisodare' in 3/8 time, G major. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second, third, and fourth staves continue the melody, with the fourth staff ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Hornpipe Set

Off to California/Fisher's Hornpipe

Off to California

Musical score for "Off to California" in 4/4 time, featuring treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a first ending bracket. The piece includes several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above the notes) and a repeat sign at the end.

Fisher's Hornpipe

Musical score for "Fisher's Hornpipe" in 4/4 time, featuring treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a first ending bracket. The piece includes several fermata markings (indicated by a 'f' below the notes) and a repeat sign at the end.

Polka Set

Oh! The Britches Full of Stitches/Mairi's Wedding/ Denis Murphy's/John Ryan's Polka

Oh! The Britches Full of Stitches

Musical notation for the first piece, 'Oh! The Britches Full of Stitches'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff provides a complementary accompaniment.

Mairi's Wedding

Musical notation for the second piece, 'Mairi's Wedding'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff features a melody with dotted rhythms and eighth notes. The second staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

Denis Murphy's

Musical notation for the third piece, 'Denis Murphy's'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff has a melody with many sixteenth notes. The second staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

John Ryan's Polka

Musical notation for the fourth piece, 'John Ryan's Polka'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff features a melody with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The second staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

O'Carolan Tunes

Fanny Power/Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór

Planxty Fanny Power

Turlough O'Carolan



Musical notation for Planxty Fanny Power, arranged by Turlough O'Carolan. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with a prominent dotted quarter note in the second measure.

Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór

Turlough O'Carolan



Musical notation for Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór, arranged by Turlough O'Carolan. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The melody features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with a prominent dotted quarter note in the second measure.