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 the 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.draiochtmusic.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 of audioexamples, 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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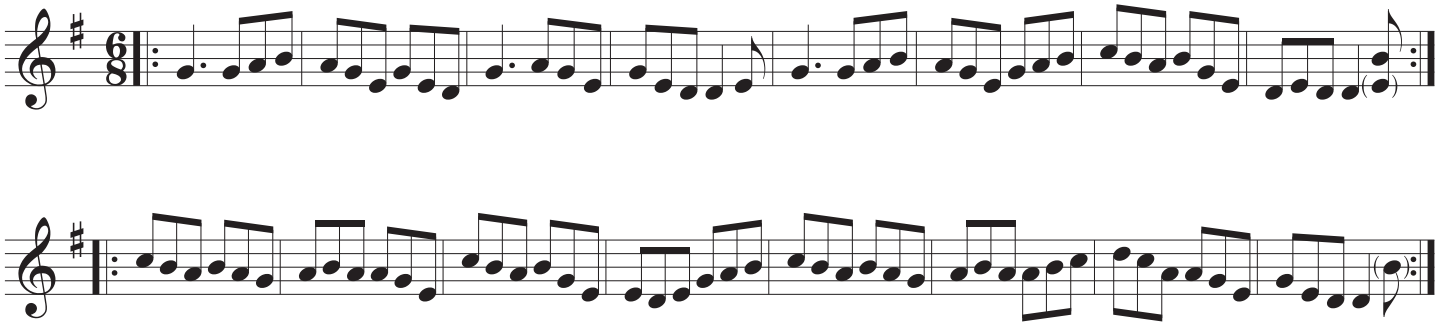
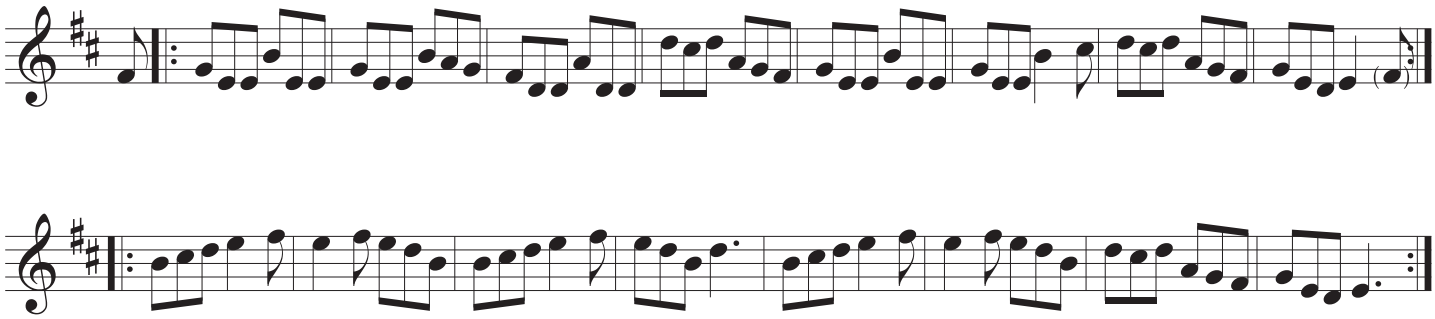
Jig Set #1
Jimmy Ward's/Swallowtail Jig/Tobin's Favorite Jig

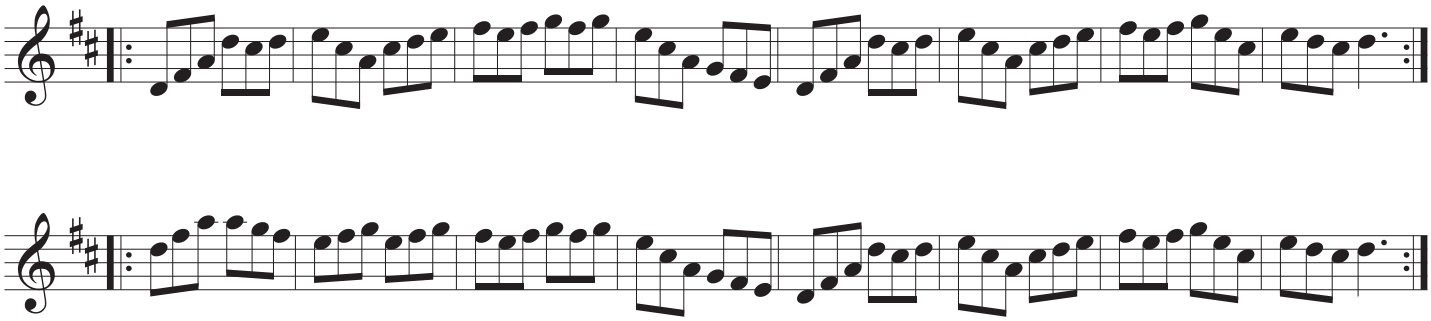
Jimmy Ward's



Swallowtail Jig

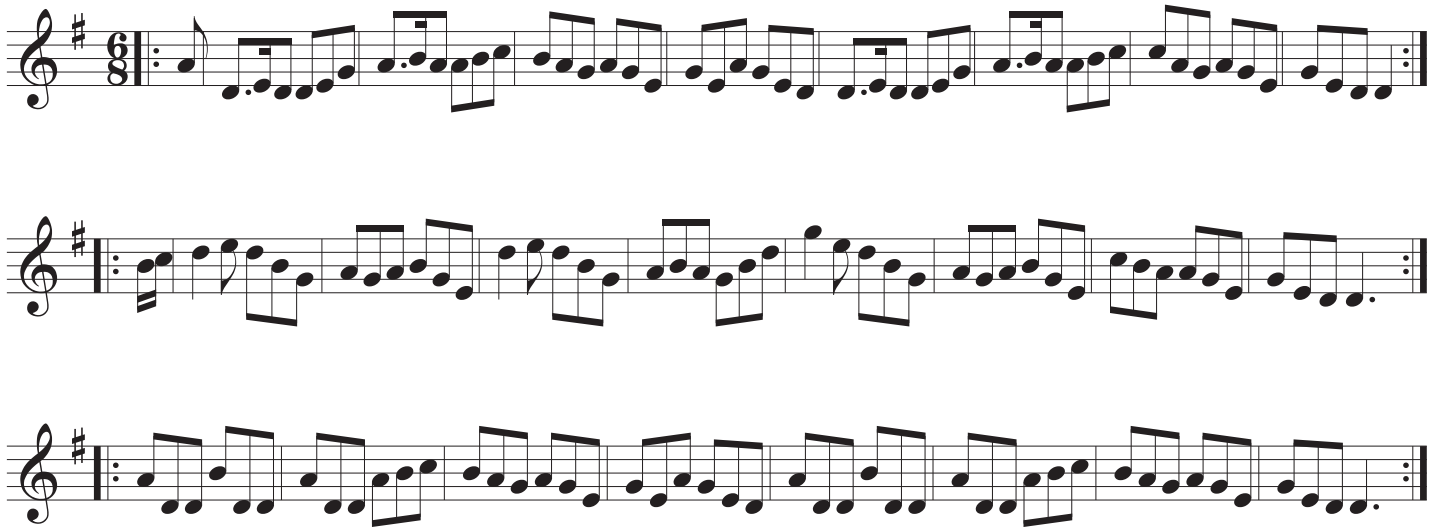


Tobin's Favorite Jig

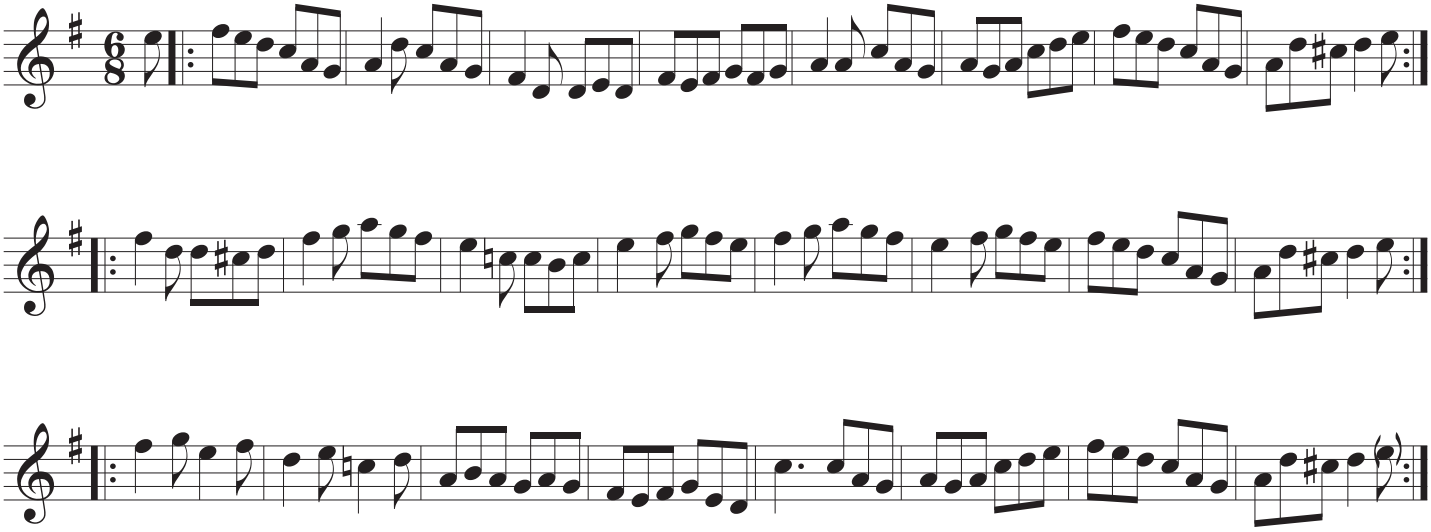


Jig Set #2
Blarney Pilgrim/Banish Misfortune

Blarney Pilgrim

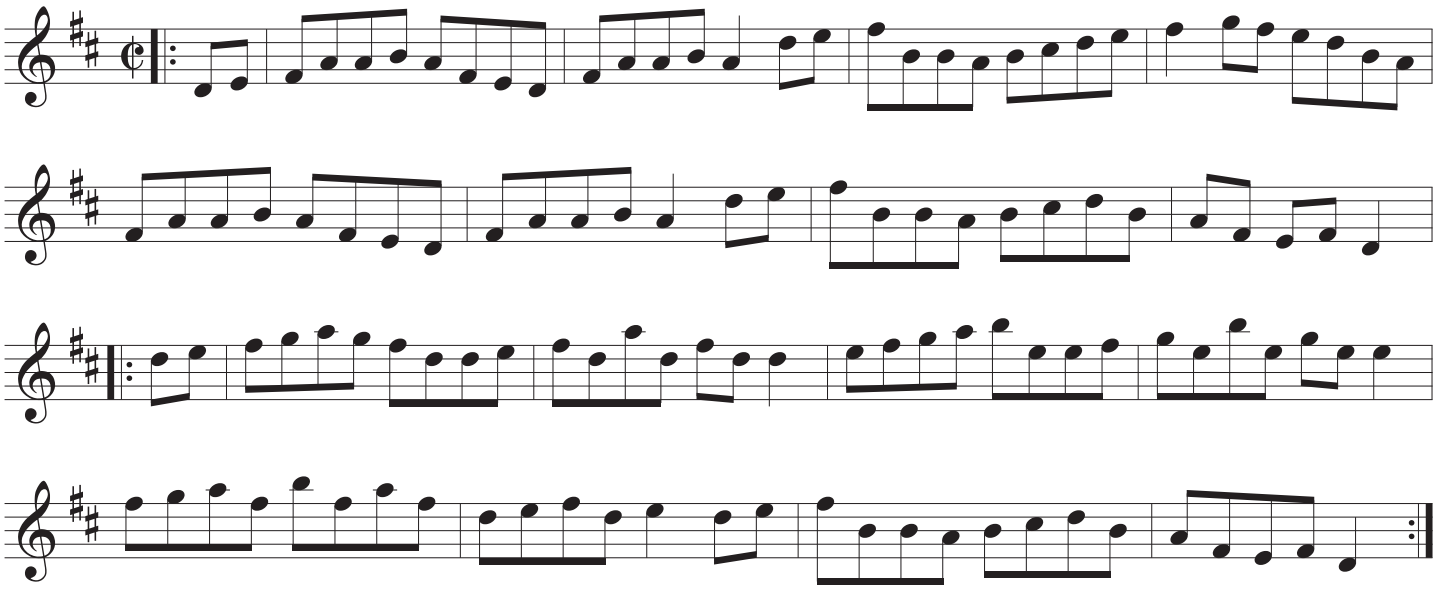


Banish Misfortune

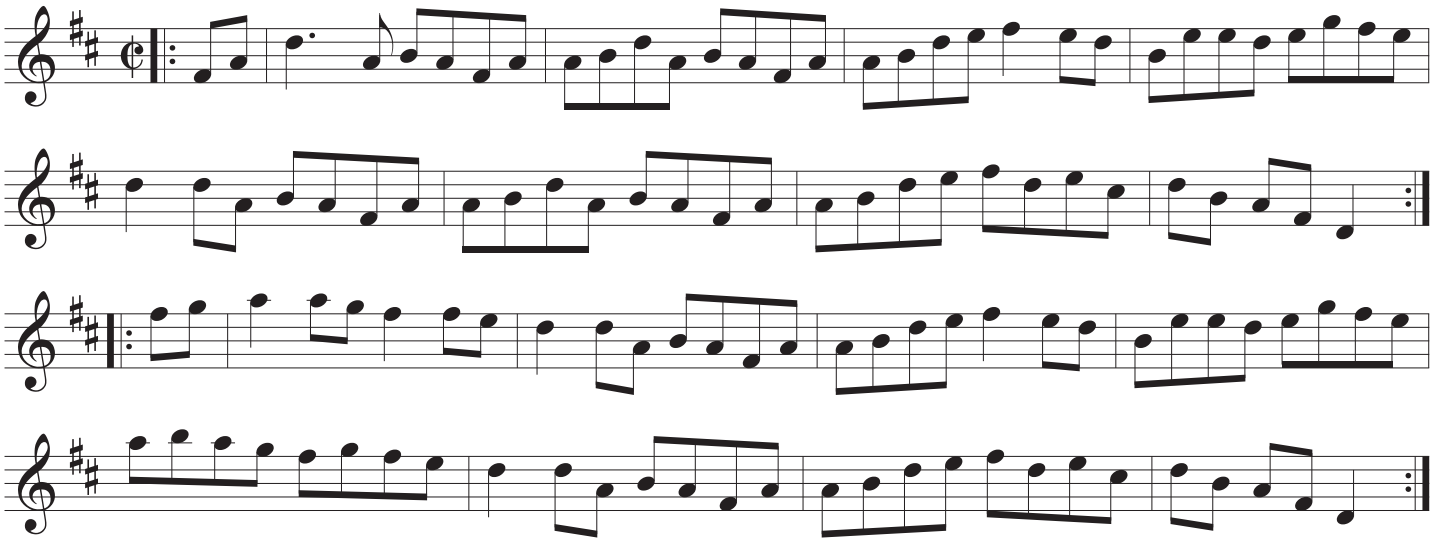


Reel Set
The Maid Behind the Bar/The Merry Blacksmith

The Maid Behind the Bar

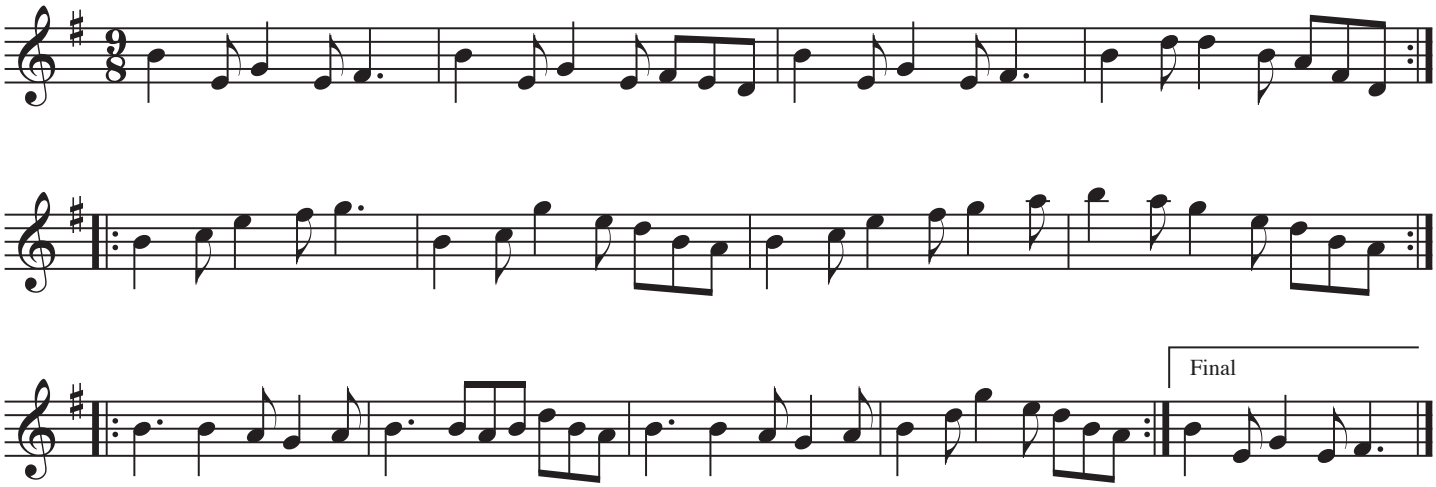


The Merry Blacksmith

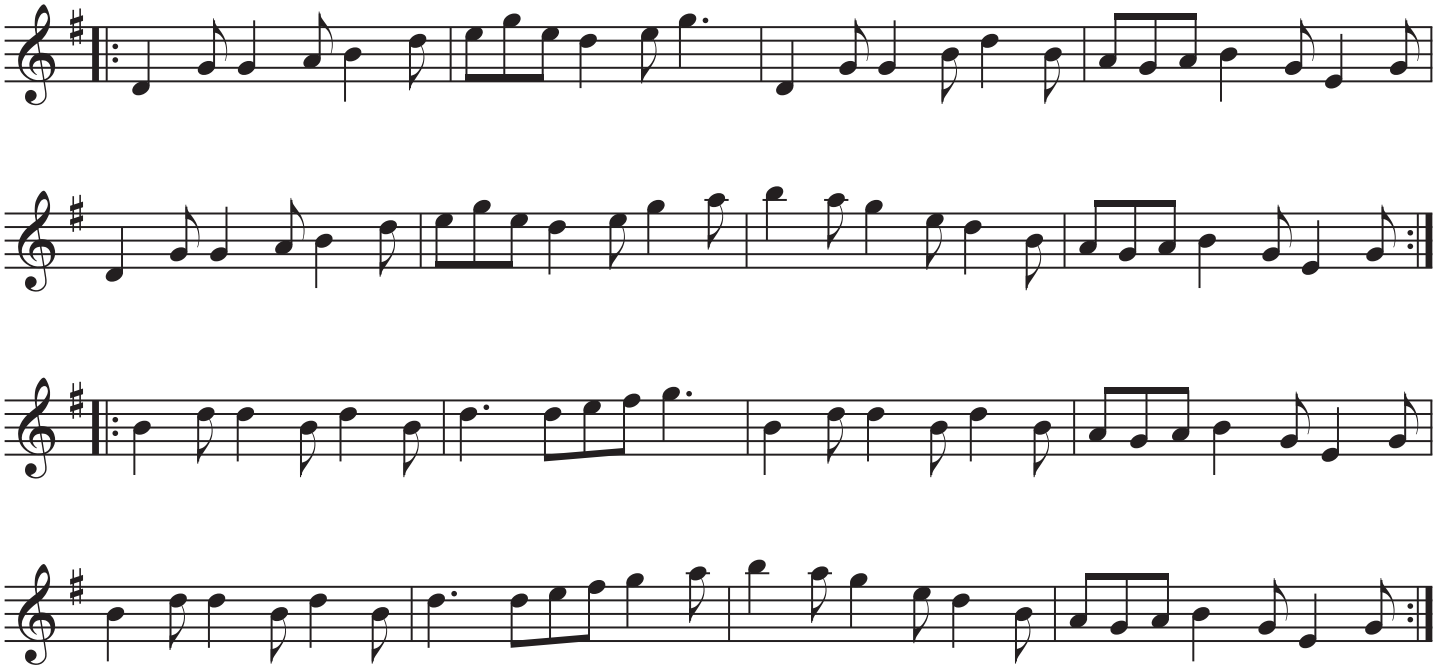


Slip Jig Set
The Butterfly/The Boys of Ballisodare

The Butterfly

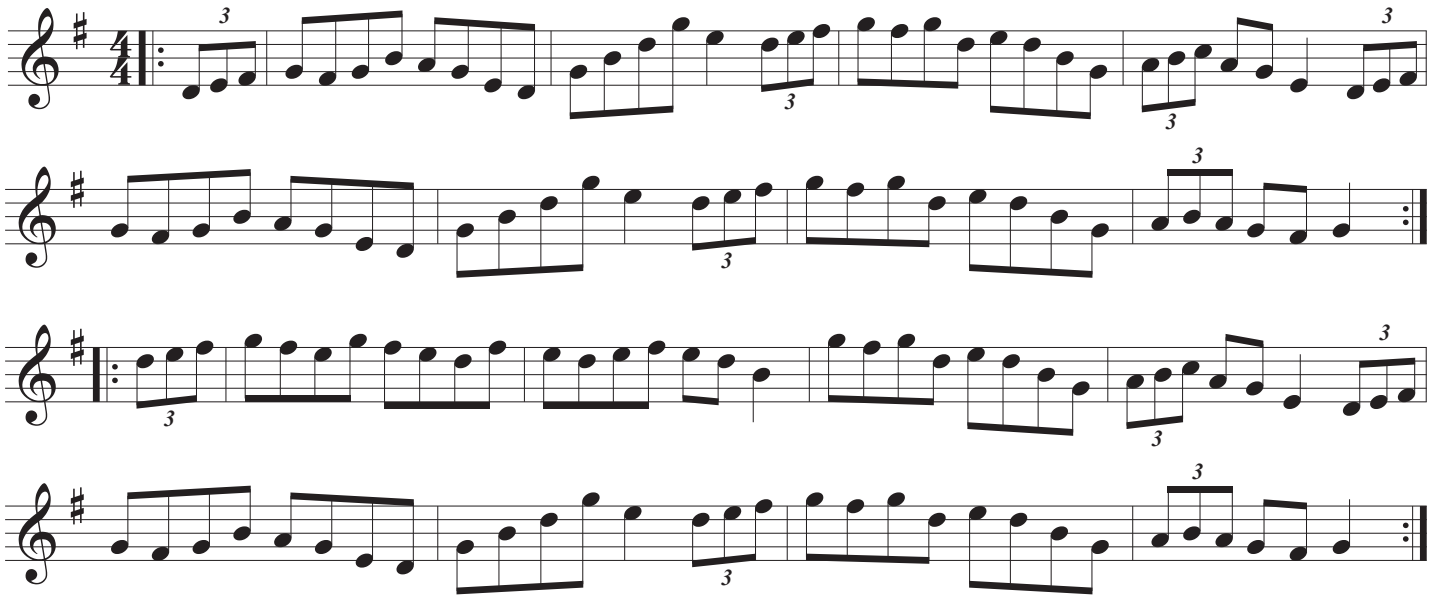


The Boys of Ballisodare

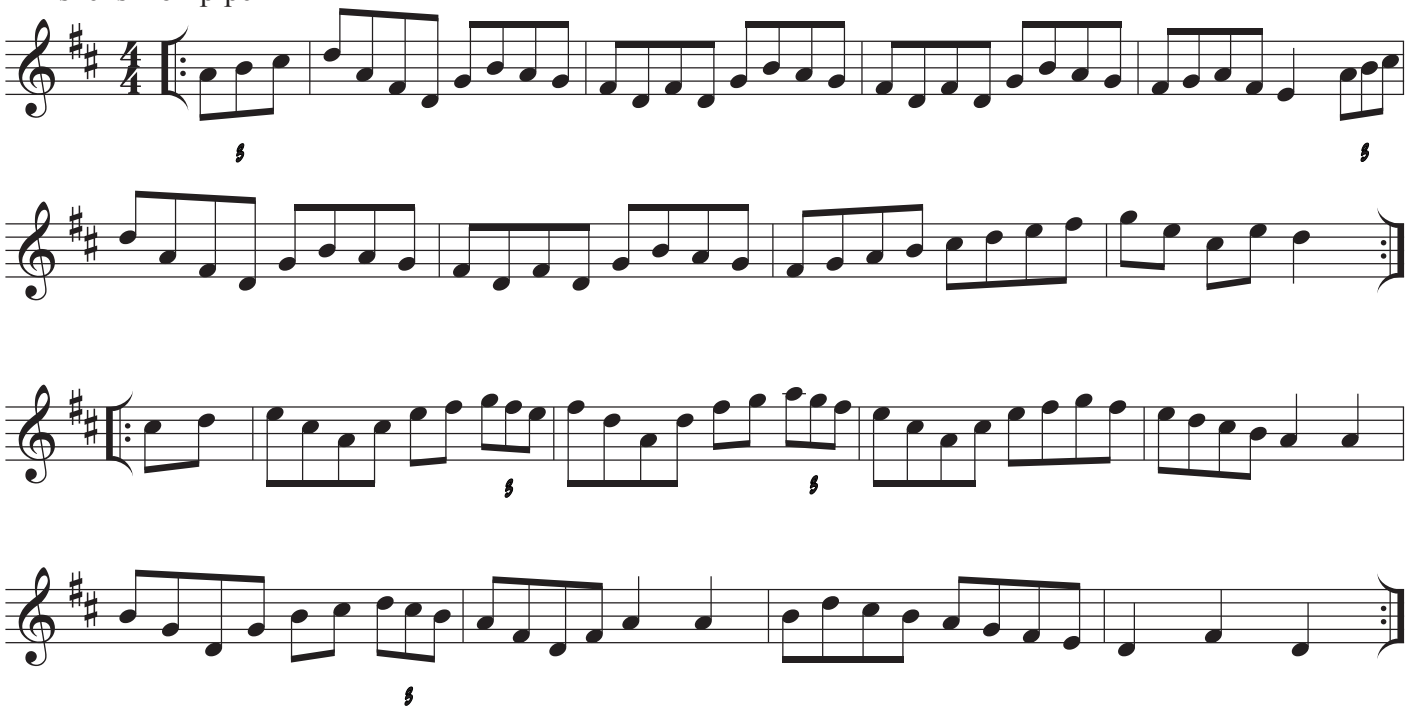


Hornpipe Set
Off to California/Fisher's Hornpipe

Off to California

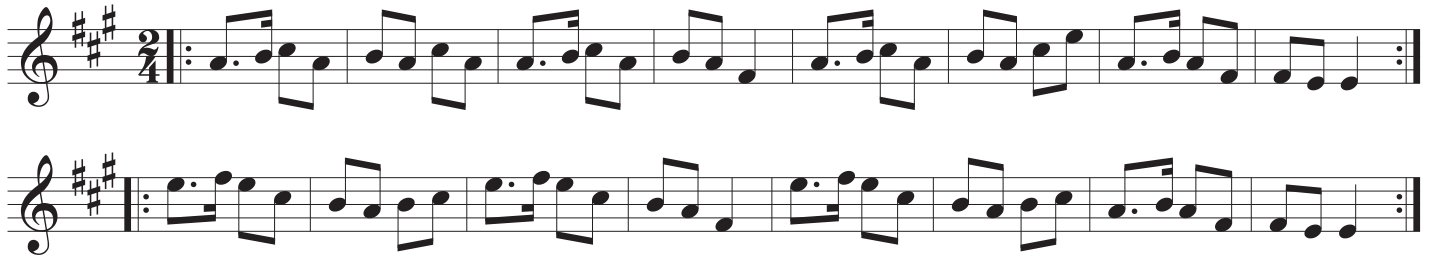


Fisher's Hornpipe

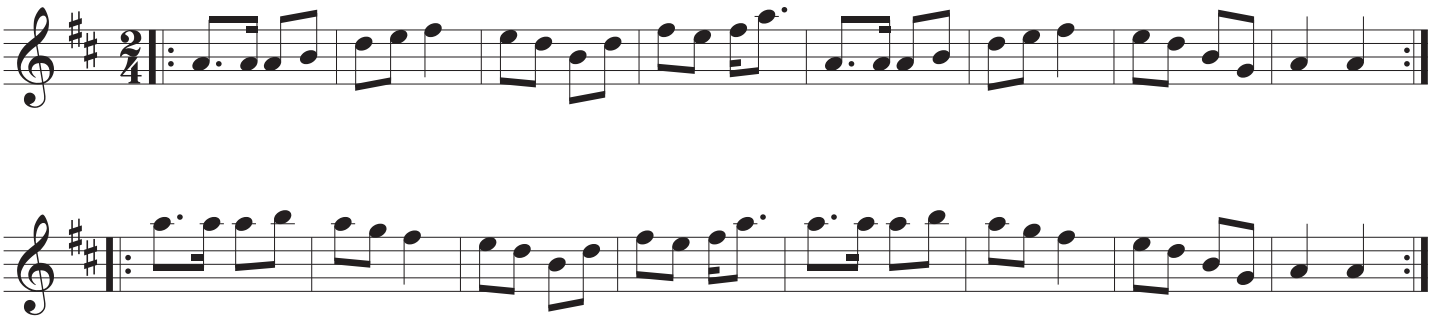


Polka Set
Oh! The Britches Full of Stitches/Mairi's Wedding/ Denis Murphy's/John Ryan's Polka

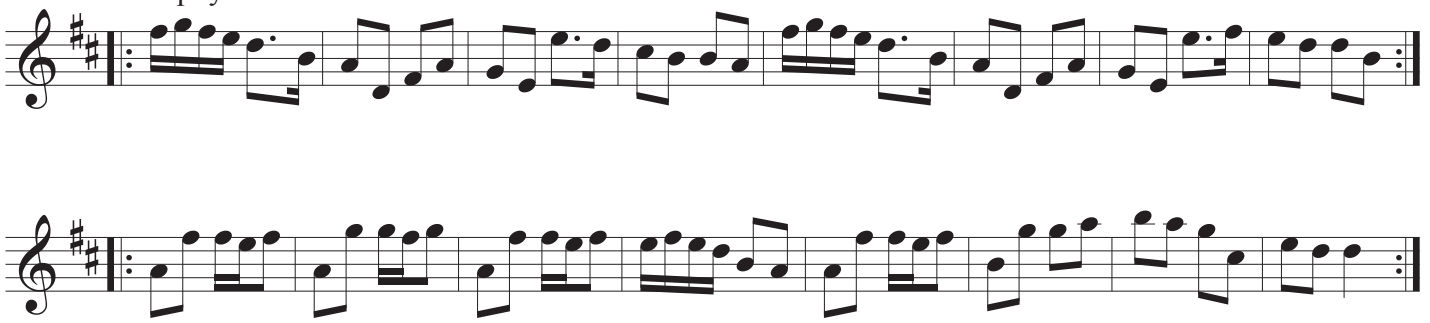
Oh! The Britches Full of Stitches



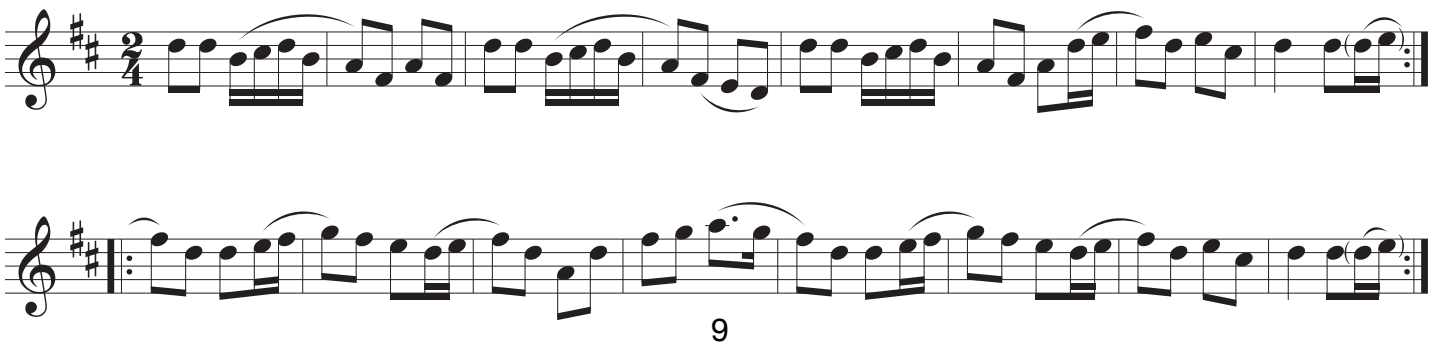
Mairi's Wedding



Denis Murphy's

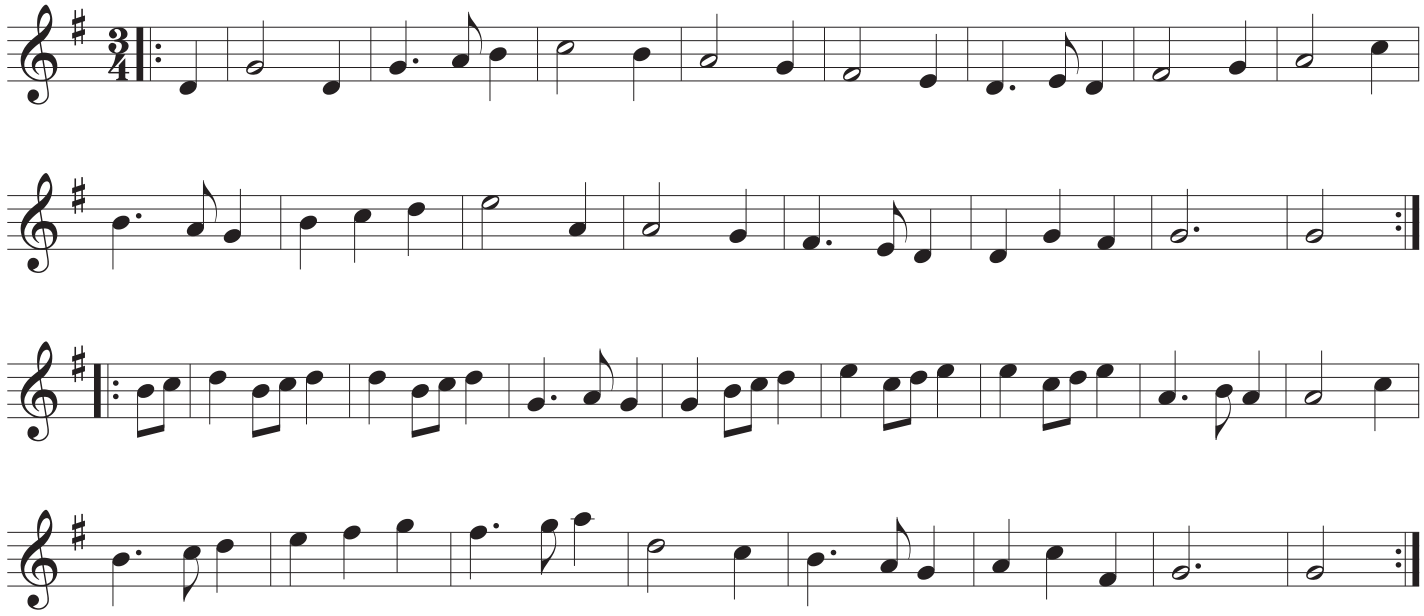
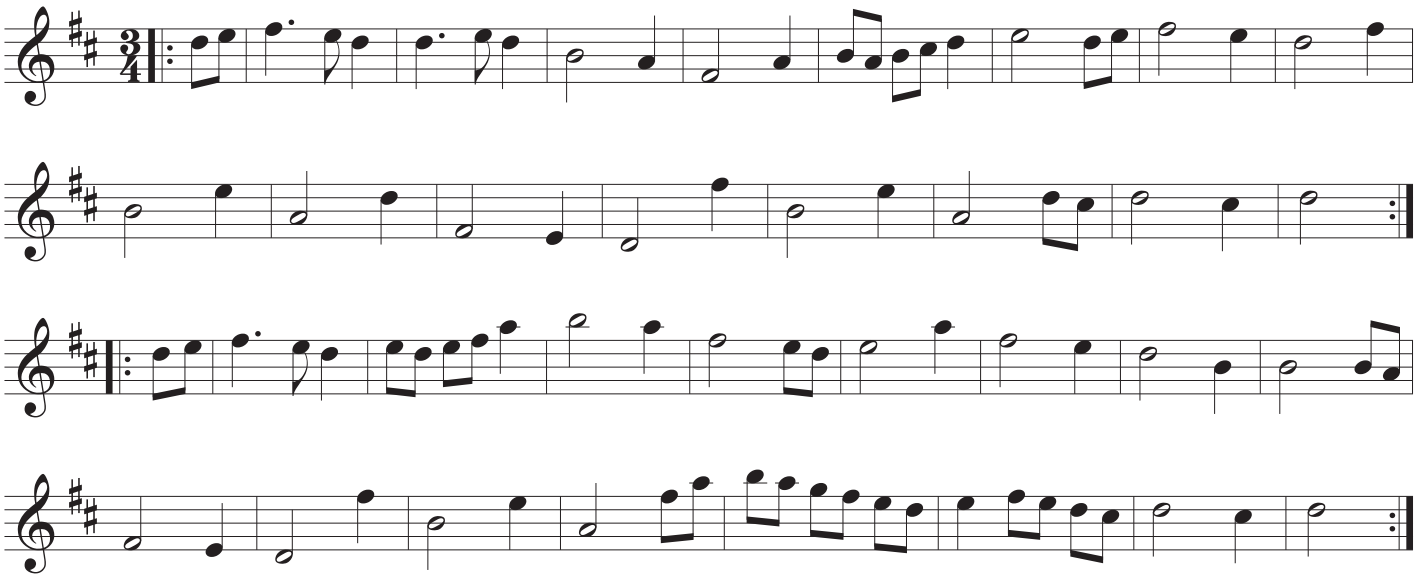


John Ryan's Polka



O’Carolan Tunes
Fanny Power/Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór

Planxty Fanny Power — Turlough O'Carolan



Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór — Turlough O'Carolan