

Lotus Blossoms 2016

# Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran



Teacher's Resource Guide

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Photo by Irish Music School of Chicago

## Music Background; From Ireland to the United States

1848- Francis O'Neill born in Tralibane, Co. Cork, Ireland.

1850-1900 - First major attempts at tune collection.

1890s - Second Celtic revival. Gaelic League. Precursors to Comhaltas. Attempt to revive rather than promote.

1930 -Decline in Irish traditional music despite efforts to preserve, promote, and nationalize it

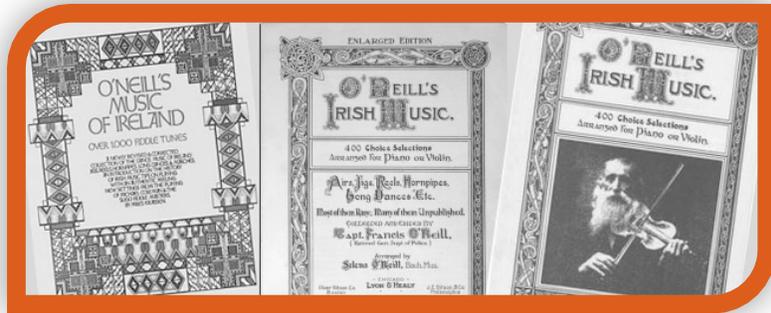


Photo by WTTW Chicago

Francis O'Neill's Manuscripts

1930s-1940s -Irish traditional music thrives and develops in Irish diaspora communities (U.S. and elsewhere)

1956: First Fleadh Cheoil. Attempt to give legitimacy to traditional music and provide a gathering point for musicians.

1960s -First decade of Irish music revival; shift toward neo-traditional musical styles, including ensemble rather than solo performance. Folk revival

1980s -Altan and other new groups established, preserving traditional styles while continuing to push Irish traditional music in new directions as well

1990s -Riverdance becomes an international sensation

Irish fiddle playing today has never been more vigorous, whether at a professional or amateur level, with an extremely high standard of playing and a strong demand for the music both in Ireland and elsewhere. As early as the middle ages Ireland had an international reputation for the quality of its musicians.

Francis O'Neill was an Irish-born Chicago police chief who collected the single largest collection of Irish traditional music ever published. He was a flautist, fiddler and piper who was part of a vibrant Irish community in Chicago at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one that included some forty thousand people, including musicians from all thirty-two counties of Ireland, according to Nicholas Carolan, who referred to O'Neill as "the greatest individual influence on the evolution of Irish traditional dance music in the twentieth century."

*For more information regarding the history and types of Irish Music, please reference Appendix A*

## Fun Facts about the Irish Fiddle and Bodhrán

### Irish Fiddle

- A violin in Irish music that is played in a unique style and sound that makes it different from classical violin playing
- The playing style is predominantly in first position
- It is played with a bow and is thought to have been played in Ireland since the 17th century



### Bodhrán

- This is a large framed drum ranging from 25cm to 65cm in diameter and covered with stretched animal skin, typically goat skin.



- It is struck with a stick which is traditionally made from double-ended knucklebone to provide traditional music with a pulsating beat
- The other side is open ended for one hand to be placed against the inside of the drum head to control the pitch and timbre

## Learning to Speak Gaelic

Here is a collection of phrases to help introduce a class to the Gaelic language. Considered a complex language to learn, these short phrases include a phonetic pronunciation to assist.

Phrase: Hello Irish: Dia dhuit Pronunciation: Djee-ah gwitch	Phrase: What is your name? Irish: Cad is ainm duit? Pronunciation: Codh is anam gwitch
Phrase: Thank you Irish: Go raibh maith agat Pronunciation: Guh row mah aguth (row as in cow)	Phrase: You're welcome Irish: Tá fáilte romhat Pronunciation: Thaw foil-cheh roath

## Irish Music Sessions

Sessions are mostly informal gatherings at which people play Irish traditional music. They are the cornerstones of the social nature of playing traditional Irish music. The Irish language word for session is *seisún*.

Sessions are a key aspect of traditional music; some say it is the main sphere in which the music is formulated and innovated. Further, the sessions enable less advanced musicians to practice in a group. In many rural communities in Ireland, sessions are an integral part of community life. Sessions are most often held in pubs but also are held in homes or at various public places.

The general session scheme is that someone starts a tune, and those who know it join in. Good session etiquette requires not playing if one does not know the tune, and waiting until a tune one knows comes along. In an "open" session, anyone who is able to play Irish music is welcome. A "closed" session is by invitation only.

*For more information regarding Irish Music Sessions, please reference Appendix B*

## Céili Dance

A céili (kay-lee) dance is a popular form of folk dancing in Ireland. Traditional céili dances were enjoyed at house parties and corner road gatherings in the rural countryside. Decades later, they are still danced in Ireland and the diaspora.

Céili music may be provided by an assortment of fiddle, flute, tin whistle, accordion, bodhrán and in more recent times also drums, guitar, mandolin, and bouzouki. The music is cheerful and lively, consisting in Ireland mainly of jigs, reels, hornpipes, polkas, slip-jigs and waltzes. Dancing at a céili is usually in the form of Cèilidh dances, set dances or couple dances. A "Set" consists of four to eight couples, with each pair of couples facing another in a square or rectangular formation. Each couple exchanges position with the facing couple, and also facing couples exchange partners, while all the time keeping in step with the beat of the music.



Photo courtesy of the Irish Music School of Chicago

Céili Dance at the Crossroads in Ireland

## Irish Music School of Chicago; Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran



Photo by Irish Music School of Chicago

The school's goal is to provide quality education and fun experiences in the traditional Irish arts to everyone. That includes learning from great hometown teachers year-round as well as the opportunity for Chicagoans to learn from and listen to the best traditional Irish music direct from Ireland.

The School was founded in 2003 by Chicago-bred and internationally acclaimed Irish fiddler Sean Cleland. As a young Irish-American determined to play traditional Irish music, Sean made repeated trips to Ireland. Back at home, he immersed himself in the vibrant Chicago Irish Music community, literally sitting at the feet of the mostly immigrant Irish musicians.

### *Seán Cleland - Irish Fiddle*

Seán is an Irish fiddle player, Irish music teacher, adjudicator, collaborator, producer and executive director of the Irish Music School of Chicago. Seán grew up on the North side of Chicago in an Irish-American household. He started classical violin lessons at age 7, and at age 9 his parents took him to one of the first North American concert tours of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Ireland's national music organization. There he became enthralled with Irish Fiddle and began playing. He has since gone on to form a multitude of groups and perform with some of the finest musicians worldwide.

### *Jackie Moran - Bodhrán*

Born in Tipperary, ten-year-old Jackie and his family immigrated to Chicago where he quickly began drumming with the best players in the Irish music scene. He swiftly grew into one of the preeminent figures in the Chicago Irish music scene. Jackie's talents have also led him to appear on stage with "Riverdance," and to help form and perform with the Trinity Irish Dance Company



Photo by Irish Music School of Chicago

## In-Class Activities and Lesson Plans

- 1) Explore the world of Irish culture through playing, singing and dancing. Students will learn to differentiate styles of Irish music and start discussing the cultural context of song and dance. Follow the link to the Smithsonian lesson plan that introduces traditional dancing and musical activities: <http://www.folkways.si.edu/irish-experiences-dance-singing-instrument-playing/jigs-polka/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>
- 2) Play the bodhrán accurately and with a steady beat. Learn listening, singing and dancing skill through the traditional song “Cunla.” Any drum would serve as a suitable substitute to a traditional bodhrán. Lesson plan available in link: <http://www.folkways.si.edu/irish-bodhran-celtic-classics-singing-dancing-playing/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>
- 3) Traditional Irish Music Learning Resource Center. Includes a multitude of links to materials, songs and learning tools.  
[http://www.tradirishmusic.org/index\\_files/ExtHome3.html](http://www.tradirishmusic.org/index_files/ExtHome3.html)

## Helpful Links

- 1) A informative background on Francis O’Neill, who served as an instrumental figure in spreading Irish arts and culture heritage through Chicago in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
<http://www.wttw.com/main.taf?p=1,7,1,1,34>
- 2) Listen and learn some classic songs in Gaelic! Sheet music and audio recordings available at this link: <http://www.gaelic4parents.com/maoilios/listen-and-sing>
- 3) Color these signs that denote the various rooms of the house from the kitchen to the bedroom. <http://www.gaelic4parents.com/maoilios/make-and-print/door-signs>

## Appendix A: Additional History

In common with many other kinds of traditional music, Irish music took a big downturn in the 40's and 50's as swing, rock and roll, and general postwar optimism saw a new generation turning their backs on what was seen as a tired and outdated genre. Concerned by the decline and potential demise of traditional playing, a group of musicians got together in Dublin in 1951 and formed Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann ("gathering of musicians of Ireland"), commonly referred to as just Comhaltas (key-ol-tas). Their aim was to promote Irish traditional music, dancing, language and culture, and to establish an annual national festival and competition or *Fleadh*. Classes teaching instruments and dance to young children became widespread, and the competitions have consistently driven up the overall standard of playing.

Irish immigrants created a large number of emigrant ballads once in the United States. These were usually sad laments, steeped in nostalgia, and self-pity, and singing the praises of their native soil while bitterly condemning the land of the stranger. These songs include famous songs like "Thousands Are Sailing to America" and "By the Hush", though "Shamrock Shore" may be the most well known in the field.

## Appendix B: Additional History & Types of Irish Music by Style

Most often there are more-or-less recognized session leaders; sometimes there are no leaders. At times a song will be sung or a slow air played by a single musician between sets.

Typically, the first tune is followed by another two or three tunes in a set. The art of putting together a set is hard to put into words, but the tunes must flow from one to another in terms of key and melodic structure, without being so similar as to all sound the same. The tunes of a set will usually all be of the same sort, i.e. all jigs or all reels, although on rare occasions and amongst a more skilled group of players a complementary tune of a different sort will be included, such as a slip jig amongst the jigs.

Some sets are specific to a locale, or even to a single session, whilst others, like the "Coleman set" of reels ("The Tarbolton"/"The Longford Collector"/The Sailor's Bonnet"), represent longstanding combinations that have been played together for decades.

## Appendix C: Types of Irish Music by Style

**Reels** are fast tunes in 4/4 time (or more accurately, in cut time). Reels are the staple of Irish traditional sessions the world over, usually outnumbering all other tune types by a large margin. They were imported from Scotland in the late 18th C, but have now developed their own style in Ireland, and make up a large part of the repertoire. They are made up mostly of eighth notes (quavers), which may be played straight, or given a swing a bit like hornpipes. The pulse of a reel can either be on the first of each four quavers (the on beat), or on the third (the off beat or

backbeat). Kevin Burke frequently uses the latter approach, similar to the American Georgia shuffle. Patterns in which the bow rocks across two strings are common in reels. Most reels have repeated eight-bar sections; making 32 bars (eg. the *Star of Munster*, the *Merry Blacksmith*,) Less common are 3-part (48 bar) reels such as the *Flogging Reel* or the *Moving Cloud*. Single reels are those in which the 8-bar sections are not repeated. Examples of two-part single reels include *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, the *Monaghan Twig*, and *Drowsy Maggie*. Single reels can also be three-part (*The Flogging Reel*, the *Longford Spinster*, *Boys of Malin*); four part; (*Lord MacDonald's*), or five-part (*Bucks of Oranmore*).

Reels are usually fast and flashy, showing the fiddler's technique to good effect, though Martin Hayes is known for playing reels in a very slow and expressive fashion.

**Hornpipes** were introduced from England. They are similar to reels, but with a bouncy, "humpty dumpty" rhythm created by lengthening the first of each pair of quavers, and shortening the second. They tend to be played slower than reels, particularly when played for dancing. A hornpipe can be reliably identified if the 8 bar line ends with three even crotchets, as for example in the sailor's hornpipe. Hornpipes tend to be more melodic than reels, and with more harmonic interest, and frequent triplets are a common feature. Arpeggiated phrases, chromatic notes and implied non-diatonic chords are all common in hornpipes. Examples include *Harvest Home*, *Boys of Bluehill*, *Stack of Barley* and *Off to California*. Listen to Frankie Gavin's take on *The Wonder Hornpipe*, which more than lives up to its name.

**Polkas** are played faster than reels, but feel steadier as they have far fewer runs of quavers. They are in 2/4 time- ie two crotchets to the bar. They originated in Poland in the 1830's. The polka was soon a popular throughout the ballrooms of Europe, before filtering down to the dances of ordinary people. Polkas are often very simple melodies, and a particularly prevalent in the Sliabh Luachra region of Cork, Kerry and Limerick. Among the leading exponents were Julia Clifford and Denis Murphy, a brother and sister from county Kerry, and more recently the fiddler Matt Cranitch from the band Sliabh Notes.

Examples of well-known polkas include *Maggie in the Wood*, *The £42 cheque*, *Farewell to Whiskey*, and *Denis Murphy's Polka*. *Britches full of Stitches* is a particularly easy tune to learn, as it is based on a pentatonic (five note) scale.

**Jigs**, among the oldest form of Irish dance tune, have a bouncy 6/8 rhythm, with a stress at the beginning of each three notes (*rashers and sausages*) Examples would be *Haste to the Wedding* or *Lannigan's Ball*. You may sometimes hear the term double jig; this is in fact the normal form. The term "double" in reference to jigs refers to the "double battering" step used by dancers.

Jigs are occasionally three-part (such as *Dingle Regatta*) or four-part (*The Lark*), but like most Irish tunes are usually 2-part. A **single jig** has a simpler rhythm (*boil the eggs and cook the bacon*), and is sometimes notated in 12/8 time. The best known examples include *Smash the Windows*, *Hag at the Churn* and *Off She Goes*.

**Slip jigs**. Far less common than ordinary jigs, these have a similar feel but are in 9/8 (*cooking my rashers and sausages*). The slip jig is used for a graceful soft shoe step dance, usually danced by

women only, and also for the ceili dance Strip the Willow. Among the best known are *The Butterfly* (a composition by Dublin fiddler **Tommy Potts**), *Rocky Road to Dublin*, *Drops of Brandy*, *the Kid on the Mountain* and the *Foxhunter's Jig*.

**Slides**; similar to jigs again, but in a brisk 12/8 time; found only in the south west of Ireland. They can be distinguished from jigs by the long melodic phrases which would not fit into a bar of 6/8 (*cooking my taters and rashers and sausages*) Examples include *Star above the Garter*, *Hare in the Corn*, and *Kilfenora Jig*.

**Mazurkas**. Like Polkas, Mazurkas originated as couple-dances in Poland (a *Mazur* being an inhabitant of the province of Mazovia). They are in 3/4 time, but unlike the waltz, the accent is usually on the second beat of the bar. Examples include *Johnny Doherty's*, *Charlie Lennon's*, and *Sonny's Mazurka*. They are played somewhat faster than a waltz. They have become particularly associated with Donegal music.

**Slow airs**, derived in part from the sean-nos (old style) gaelic singing, are only occasionally played at sessions, and make more demands on tone and intonation than do the dance tunes. They are played rubato, and with a great deal of expression. Examples of well-known slow airs include *An Chúilfhionn (The Coolin)*, *Bean Dubh a' Gleanna (Dark women of the Glen)*, *Sliabh Geal Gcua (Fare you well)*, and *The Wounded Hussar*. Slow airs are an important feature of fiddle contests at the *fleadh*; in the adult category the playing of one is compulsory. It is said that to perform one properly, you need to be familiar with the gaelic lyrics, otherwise the phrasing will make no sense.



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Photo Credit – Irish Music School of Chicago

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