

FACTFILE: GCSE MUSIC



Musical Traditions in Ireland

The Musical Traditions in Ireland module covers a range of instrumental and vocal folk music that can be heard both locally and globally. It is hard to separate Irish traditional from Ulster Scots music as they have the same origins and share a wide range of repertoire. Some instruments, such as the fife and bagpipes, are more commonly played in Ulster Scots music rather than in Irish Traditional music.

TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

STRING INSTRUMENTS

Fiddle

Are the fiddle and the violin the same instrument? Yes, but it is the style of music that tells us which label to use. If the musician is playing folk, they will call the instrument a fiddle, e.g. American Bluegrass fiddling. If they are playing Classical music, the musician will call it a violin.

Banjo

The banjo is a four string instrument. It has a fretted neck similar to a guitar and is played using a pick. The banjo is naturally a loud instrument. It has a distinctive sound and melodies are ornamented with snappy triplets.

Harp

The harp can play both melody and chords. It often plays a syncopated accompaniment pattern.

Fiddle players: Zoe Conway, Frankie Gavin, Tommy Peoples, Brid Harper, Aly Bain, Tara Breen, Donal O'Connor, Emma Smith, Diane McCullough, Keith Lyttle

Banjo players: Cathal Hayden, Enda Scahill, Gerry O'Connor, Barney McKenna, Sammy Lynch

Harp players: Derek Bell, Laoise Kelly, Kavan Donohoe, Sandra Kirk, Ailie Robertson

WOODWIND INSTRUMENTS

Flute

The traditional wooden keyless flute commonly made from African boxwood or rosewood. These woods give the instrument its distinctive black colour. The flute is a melody instrument.

Fife

Predominantly used in Ulster Scots music the fife and is often used in military or marching bands. It is similar in sound to a piccolo but does not have keys. The combination of the fife and drum is more common to the Ulster Scots marching tradition, than Irish Traditional.

Tin Whistle

Sounds shrill and is high pitched. It has the same finger pattern as the flute and is used for playing melody.

Flute players: Harry Bradley, Matt Molloy, Michael McGoldrick, June McCormack, Rev Gary Hastings, Ballygowan Flute Band

Fife players: Scad the Beggars, Ulster Scots Folk Orchestra, Session Beat

Whistle players: Mary Bergin, Geraldine Cotter, Paddy Moloney

REED INSTRUMENTS**Background Information About Pipes**

All pipes consist of a bag, a chanter and drones. Air can be pumped into the bag using the blow pipe via the mouth (bagpipes) or by pumping air into the bag via the bellows (bagpipes and uilleann pipes). Pumping air into the bag gives all pipes their continuous sound. The chanter plays the melody and is similar to an oboe. Drones are pipes that are designed to provide continuous single note accompaniment.

Highland Scottish Pipes

The Scottish Highland pipes are played in a standing position. Bagpipes are a very loud instrument and are commonly played outdoors or in larger venues. A set of bagpipes will consist of a bag, a chanter and at least one drone, which will lie over the shoulder or arm.

Uilleann Pipe (elbow pipes)

The uilleann pipes are played in a sitting position. They are considered to be the most difficult of all traditional instruments to play and are noted for their mellowness and sweetness of tone. They play both melody and chords. Listen for when the uilleann piper sets the chanter down on his knee to close off the sound. This is part of the distinctive timbre of the instrument.

Accordion

The accordion can be played using buttons or piano keys. It is a loud instrument and can play both melody and chords.

Concertina

The Concertina is a hexagonal, button operated, instrument played with both hands. The sound of the concertina is thinner and less rich than the accordion.

Uilleann Pipers: Willie Clancy, Cillian Vallely, Becky Taylor, Deb Quigley, John McSherry

Bagpipers: Bradley Parker, Margaret Dunn, Ravara Pipe Band, Ross Ainslie and Jarlath Henderson (combine uilleann pipes and Scottish border pipes)

Accordion players: Sharon Shannon, Joe Burke, Phil Cunningham, The Grousebeaters

Concertina Players: Mohsen Amini, Noel Hill, Cormac Begley, Caitlín Nic Gabhann

PERCUSSION

Bodhran

The bodhran is played using a wooden stick called a tipper. The player uses both hands; the in-side hand is pressed against the skin of the drum to alter the tension, and the outside hand creates the rhythm using the tipper. Both these actions change both the timbre and the pitch of the sound.

Lambeg Drum

The Lambeg drum is one of the loudest drums in the world. It is louder than a small aircraft taking off. The drum is so heavy, it is carried using a neck harness and it is played using whip-like canes with one on each side of the drum. The rhythmic patterns played on both of these drums are very complex.

Bodhran Players: Kevin Conneff, Mel Mercier, Eamon Murray, John Joe Kelly

Lambeg drummers: Norman Beattie, Mark Wilson (Field Marshall Montgomery Pipe Band)

NON-TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

STRINGS

Guitar

Guitar chords can be played using a strumming pattern or using a finger picking style. The guitar can play the melody of the tune or 'back up' the melody with a chordal accompaniment.

Mandolin

It has double strings, two strings for each pitch, and is played with a plectrum. It cannot match the volume of other instruments and has a smoother sound than the banjo or bouzouki.

Bouzouki

The bouzouki is a Greek instrument that has been adopted into traditional music. It plays both melody and accompaniment. It is played with a plectrum and has a sharp metallic sound.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/ontherecord/files/paul-brady-and-andy-irvine-600x300.jpg>

Double Bass

The double bass is a recent addition to traditional music and is used as an accompaniment to outline the bass.

Guitar Players: Steve Cooney, Dick Gaughan, Paul Brady, David Mulgrew

Mandolin players: Marla Fibish

Bouzouki players: Andy Irvine

Double Bass players: Trevor Hutchinson (Lunasa)

KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

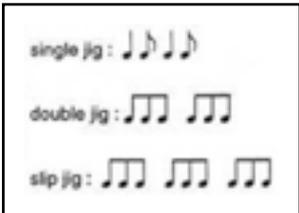
Keyboard instruments can be used to both play the melody, or simply accompany the melody with chords. They have a wide range of notes and but you cannot slide between notes as you can do in other traditional instruments.

Piano: Geraldine Cotter, Josephine Keegan, Caoimhín (Keeveen) Vallely, Ryan Molloy

OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Other, less common instruments that you might discover included: Drums, Djembe (African Drum), Snare Drum, Orchestral Instruments such as the Cello, and Ethnic Instruments

TRADITIONAL DANCE TYPES

Type	Time Signature	Rhythm	Tempo	Background Info	Example
Jig – Double Single Slip jig	Compound Time 6 8 6 8 9 8	Rashers- and sausages	Fast and lively	Most jigs are from 18th and 19th centuries. Tunes are mostly from Ireland and Scotland with some from England also	‘Smash the windows’ ‘The Butterfly’ ‘The Fox-hunter’s’ ‘Soggy’s’
		 <p>single jig: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ double jig: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ slip jig: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪</p>			
Reel	4 or 2 4 2	Black and Decker	Fast and flowing. Can be played straight, or have a swing feel to them.	Originally Scottish in origin.	Bonnie Kate’ ‘Cooley’s Reel’ ‘Frank’s Reel’
Hornpipe	4 4	Characterised by dotted rhythms. Strong emphasis on 1st and 3rd beats	Slower than a reel. Leaves room for more complicated dance steps	Originate from the English maritime profession.	‘The harvest home’ ‘The rights of man’ ‘King of the Fairies’
Polka	2 4	Bouncy rhythm	Fast, lively dance tune	Originated from Bohemia (now Czech Republic) and is still very popular in Poland. Played a lot in Munster.	‘Britches full of stitches’ ‘Kerry polka’
Strathspey	4 4	Scotch Snap A short note before a dotted note.	A slower dance tune	Scottish in Origin and introduced to Donegal by returning migrant workers in the 1800’s	‘The Fermanagh Fling’ ‘Orange and Blue’

Type	Time Signature	Rhythm	Tempo	Background Info	Example
March	Can be written in a variety of time signatures	Regular rhythm	Tempo can vary	Military origins	'Centenary March' 'Lord Mayo's March' 'The Battle of Aughrim' 'The Suffering Ducks'
Waltz	3 4	Strong - weak - weak	Tempo can vary	Originated as a folk dance from Austria	'Maguire and Patterson's' 'The Marino Waltz'
Slow Air	Free time	No associated rhythm	Slow	The instrumental version often comes from a song	The Coolin/An Chúilfhiann Ardai Cuain

VOCAL MUSIC

Sean Nos: Highly ornamented style of Irish traditional unaccompanied singing. Sung in Irish.

Folk Songs: Ballads: usually sung in English and accompanied on guitar, themes of love, loss, emigration and local areas. Other instruments may be included also. Ulster Scots folk songs may also include the poetry of Robbie Burns or the words from the Ulster Scots colloquial speech.

Singers and Groups: The Little Family, Malinky, Peatbog Fairies, Runrig, Dougie McLean, Delores Keane, Pauline Scanlon, Maura O'Connell, Mary Black, Sinéad O'Connor, Cara Dillon, Willie Drennan, Len Graham

Sean Nos: Brid Ní Mhaoilchiaráin, Liam Ó'Maonlaí (Hot House Flowers), Lasairfhiona Ni Chonaola

TRADITIONAL FEATURES OF THE MUSIC

Aural tradition: Tunes and songs were preserved in the memory of the musicians and passed down 'by ear'. Tunes are also taught 'by ear' rather than by reading the music. Tunes are learnt off by heart.

Session: A social gathering of musicians and singers who perform music in an informal setting.

Repetition: Melodic phrases are often repeated. Melodic repetition is a feature used in all musical styles and helps the listener remember the melody.

Binary Form: – AABB. Most tunes consist of 2 x 8-bar phrases, which are usually repeated. The second section or 'part', the B part, is usually higher in pitch than the A part. The whole tune is repeated for a second or a third time.

Ornamentation

Ornamentation is the general term for the techniques associated with dressing up tunes. These techniques include the roll, tip, cut, cran and triplet. A player/singer won't play a tune in the same way from verse to verse or from performance to performance.

- Cut: like a grace note, i.e. a quick extra note played above the main note.
- Tip: the opposite of a cut. i.e. the extra grace note is lower.
- Roll: A note is split into 5 parts (EGEDE) with more emphasis placed on the first note.
- Triplet: involves playing 3 notes in the time of 1 beat.
- Slide: where the player slides between notes, (Fiddle, Whistle, Flute) especially on slow airs.
- Double stopping: 2 notes played at the same time, on the fiddle the bottom note is usually an open string. This technique is often borrowed by accordion and concertina players.
- Variation: a principle where performers vary tunes every time they play them. Rhythmic variation involves changing the rhythm. Melodic or intervallic variation involves changing the pitch of a tune.
- Cran: an ornament associated with piping. On a low d, its not possible to play a roll as there is no lower note. Therefore the piper uses several notes above the main note to simulate a roll. a, g, and f# are alternated with the main note d.
- Doublings: bagpipe ornamentation where a note is repeated for emphasis.
- Birl: a bagpipe ornamentation where you tap your finger on the low G, and then pull across in a slide action, to give two different timbres.

Free Rhythm in Songs and Slow Airs: Due to the freedom of expression in songs and slow airs, it is very difficult to notate them. They are often performed as solos. When they are accompanied, the accompaniment follows the soloist.

Last Note Repeated: Often the last note at the end of a dance tune is repeated.

Monophonic: Solo performances, especially of solo airs and songs.

Dynamics: There is very little dynamic contrast when dance type tunes are played. The volume is linked to the amount of instruments playing.

Modal Keys: A lot of tunes are written in modes which help give the music its folk-like sound. Modes are an alternative grouping of notes which also form a type of scale.

NON-TRADITIONAL FEATURES OF THE MUSIC

Harmony: Tunes are traditionally played in unison although harmonies and countermelodies have been added on many modern recordings.

Accompaniment: Accompaniment tends to be chordal or based on arpeggios.

Notated Music: Notated music is commonly used in flute bands and when combining with orchestral forces.

Syncopated rhythms: Piano and harp often add in syncopation to their accompaniments.

FUSION of STYLES

In the last 50 years, there has been an explosion in the popularity of mixing styles. Advances in recording, transport and technology have made it possible to hear music from anywhere in the world. Here are some examples of excellent fusion groups for you to listen to.

Traditional and Orchestra Fusion

Micheal Ó Súilleabháin (O'Sullivan) uses an orchestra, harp, fiddle, harpsichord, bodhrán in his album "Idir Eatarthru" (Between Worlds). **Bill Whelan's Riverdance** combines trad and orchestral forces throughout.

Moxie – 'Planted' combines orchestra and traditional instruments.

Traditional and Folk Fusion

Planxty and the **Chieftains** fused contemporary folk, with the music of other countries. **The Low Country Boys** combine Ulster Scots and Bluegrass. **India Alba**, who combine Indian and Scottish music styles to create a new sound. **The Outside Track** fuse Canadian/Irish/Scottish in a modern folk style.

Traditional and Rock/Punk Fusion

Thin Lizzy ("Whiskey in the Jar") mix trad with Rock. **Ross Ainslie and Jarlath Henderson** combine Scottish Border Pipes and Uilleann Pipes to take on AC/DC's Thunderstruck. **The Red Hot Chilli Pipers** fuse pipe tunes and modern rock styles. **Lau** mix traditional music with electronica, electro, folk, indie rock and rock genres, especially in their most recent album "The Bell That Never Rang".

Traditional and African Fusion

The Afro Celtic Sound System brought ethnic African music and instruments, electronic music, and traditional music together. **Salsa Celtica's** combine Afro Latin Salsa with Scottish and Irish traditional music.



Beoga

Prelude Polka, Paddy's Polka No. 2, Millstream Reel

Background:

Although there is a large amount of vocal music within the sphere of Irish traditional music, it is dance music which is most closely associated with this genre. Whatever their origin, jigs, reels, polkas and hornpipes account for the majority of the repertoire at any traditional session, feis or céilí. As the tunes are passed on from one generation to the next "by ear" the performers have considerable freedom in terms of interpretation and the application of ornamentation in particular.

Beoga:

The band Beoga (the name means lively) was formed in 2002. Its members, apart from fiddle player Niamh Dunne, are all from Northern Ireland: Damian McKee – accordion, Liam Bradley – piano and keyboards, Seán Óg Graham – accordion and guitar and Eamon Murray – bodhrán. All are accomplished traditional musicians in their own right but the band has forged a distinctive style stemming from the fusion of typically Irish tunes with diverse influences such as jazz, blues, tango, bluegrass, rock and pop. This is the first track from their 2004 album, *A Lovely Madness* and, despite being a studio recording, it attempts to replicate the spontaneity of a live session where several tunes are played without a break.

Instrumentation:

The "traditional" instruments which feature on this track are the bodhrán, fiddle, and accordion but other instruments less obviously connected with this style (some played by guest musicians) are also used such as the piano, bass guitar, double bass, soprano saxophone and cymbals together with synthesised string and percussion sounds.

Features:

- Melody:**
- The Prelude Polka* is in the Aeolian mode transposed to B n.b. the absence of the sharpened seventh – A# – distinguishes the mode from the ordinary minor scale.
 - Paddy's Polka No. 2* is in the key of A major but is based entirely on the pentatonic scale (the 5 pitches E, F#,A, B, C#).
 - The Millstream Reel* is in the key of G major with the second section using a higher set of pitches than the first – a common trait in traditional music.
- Rhythm:**
- Beoga add considerable variety to the regular rhythms and phrasing normally associated with traditional dance tunes. Frequent syncopation – where weak or off-beats are stressed – in the melody and accompaniment suggests an affinity with the American "Bluegrass" style. The "Blues" version of the *Millstream Reel* (3.44) is in "swung" rhythm where the first note of each pair is lengthened giving the feeling of quaver/semiquaver within a triplet.
- Time signature:**
- The polkas are in 2/4 time and the reel has also been notated in this time signature although 2/2 is perhaps more common.
- Structure:**
- All three tunes are in the customary binary form i.e. consisting of two sections each of which is repeated: AABB.

Harmony:

Harmony is not usually a significant feature of Irish traditional music as the tunes are generally played by all the melody instruments in unison. One of the most interesting aspects of Beoga's approach is the variety of chords in the accompaniment: major and minor triads plus added sixth and seventh chords more likely to be found in jazz or other popular styles.

Analysis:

Time	Content
	Introduction
0.00	Bodhrán solo in which a pattern of 3+3+2 quavers derived from the <i>Tango</i> or <i>Habanera</i> is emphasised.
0.03	The accordion has a riff based on a rising and falling B minor arpeggio which moves up to D minor, F# and G#.
	<i>Prelude Polka</i>
0.14	A First section of the polka tune on accordion accompanied by bodhrán rhythm and syncopated piano chords.
0.20	A Repeat of the tune interrupted by rests in the piano and an unusual violin trill and discord.
0.26	B Second half of polka beginning in D major and returning to B minor
0.32	B
0.38	A Rising countermelody (B, D, E) on keyboard and fiddle with its 3+3+2 rhythm accented by suspended cymbal.
0.43	A First four bars only followed by <i>ritardando</i> .
0.49	D major interlude in a slower tempo consisting of a duet for soprano saxophone and fiddle.
0.58	Added piano arpeggios and glockenspiel effect on keyboards.
1.08	A Return of the polka in its original tempo.
1.14	A The tune is broken up with rests and a rising scale in the piano.
1.20	B
1.26	B Variety of pitches/tone on the bodhrán in the final bars.
	<i>Paddy's Polka No. 2</i>
1.31	A First section of new polka played by accordion and fiddle in unison with rhythmic ostinato on maracas. Bass guitar joins with tonic pedal and then underlines the cadences at the end of each section. Tubular bells can also be heard.
1.37	A
1.43	B Second section begins in F# minor but returns to the tonic. Polyphonic texture created by interplay between 2 accordions.
1.49	B

Time	Content
1.54	A Prominent syncopated bass guitar part moving in dotted crotchets against the regular crotchet pulse.
2.00	A
2.06	B As 1.43
2.11	B
2.17	A As 1.54
2.23	A Descending scale in bass guitar and a rest for full band before last 2 bars.
2.29	B As 1.43
2.35	B
	<i>Millstream Reel</i>
2.40	AA Start of new tune (unison accordion and fiddle) is marked by cymbal crash.
2.48	Dominant pedal point with syncopated chromatic bass on repeat.
2.56	AA
3.04	Dominant pedal point followed by descending scale in the bass.
3.12	AA
3.20	BB Dominant pedal point including falling octave. Syncopated F# chord leads into return of A section.
3.28	AA Syncopated chords for full band in 2nd and 4th bars.
3.36	BB Sudden change of tempo two bars before the end. Double bass replaces bass guitar playing walking bass using "slap" technique". Ostinato rhythm on hi-hat cymbal.
3.44	A Reel melody treated in swung rhythm.
3.50	A Blues-like style evident in fiddle, saxophone and piano.
3.56	A Free improvisation based on the A section of reel tune.
4.08	BB Second section of melody in original fast tempo.
4.16	AA
4.24	BB
4.32	AA Additional harmonies in parallel 3rds and 6ths added by accordion and fiddle in the second A section.
4.40	BB Breaks off 2 bars before the end and continues the second last bar in a descending sequence.
4.50	Pause on final blues chord – G7. Tremolando effect on accordion and piano, downward glissando on keyboard.

Further listening:

Moxie: *Planted*

Beoga: *The Homestead Hero*



Stonewall Folk Group: Fife Medley – *The Boys of Belfast/The Girl I Left Behind*

Background:

The history of the musical traditions of Ireland – and of Northern Ireland in particular – is both confused and confusing. The reel, which is a staple of Irish dancing and traditional sessions, apparently came from Scotland while the hornpipe and polka seem to have originated in Europe. Tunes usually associated with the Ulster Scots fife tradition also turn up in the Irish traditional repertoire, e.g. the melody known to loyalist fife bands as *The Boyne Water* is practically identical to the definitely nationalist *Rosc Catha na Mumhan* (*The Battle-cry of Munster*). There is also evidence to suggest that Lambeg drums – a sound closely identified with the fife band tradition – were also used by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Stonewall:

The Stonewall Folk Group is a versatile ensemble from County Armagh whose main members are: Colin Slaine – lead vocals, keyboards, flute and accordion; Kenny Qua – flute, fife, whistles and guitar and Andrew Cornett – drums, percussion, vocals. Their lineup is often supplemented by Warren Attwell, Caitriona Crimmins and various guest musicians. Their 2010 album, *Built in Belfast*, includes a mixture of Irish and Scottish tunes together with some original songs of their own.

Instrumentation:

Traditionally the two instruments which give this body of music its distinctive sound are the fife and the Lambeg drum. The fife is a small, keyless, high-pitched wooden flute with a piercing tone – though not quite as shrill as the piccolo.

The Lambeg drum consists of a large wooden shell with goatskin heads at either end. The drum is slung around the player's neck and is beaten with slightly curved cane sticks. Various predetermined patterns provide a rhythmic accompaniment to the fifers' melodies. On this recording the fife melody is played on tin whistle and the rhythmic accompaniment uses the drum kit: snare, hi-hat and toms. Snare drum and hi-hat cymbal are also used in *The Girl I Left Behind*.

Features:

- Melody:** Like most Irish or Scottish tunes the two melodies are constructed around a limited number of central pitches.
- The Boys of Belfast* is in the Myxolydian mode beginning on A, which is basically an A major scale with a G natural instead of G sharp. This is common in Scottish music as it is the natural scale of the bagpipes. The group of four quavers is sometimes inverted and the second half of the melody contains a hint of descending sequence.
- The Girl I Left Behind* is in the key of G major and the descending figure of the opening is inverted in the second section. This melody appears in the second movement of *An Irish Symphony* by Hamilton Harty (1879–1941). There is a tendency to lengthen or even dot the first note of the groups of four quavers in this performance. The basic melodies are ornamented by the addition of runs, mordents and other spontaneous decorations. This is a natural part of both the Irish and Ulster Scots traditions.
- Time signature:** Both tunes have been notated in 4/4 time but in performance this probably feels more like 2/2.
- Structure:** The two melodies share the standard A-A-B-B form and are played through twice. This is an example of binary form or indeed rounded binary form as in both pieces the B section contains a reference to the melody from section A.

Analysis:

Time	Content
	<i>The Boys of Belfast</i>
0.00	A Melody on tin whistle accompanied by ostinato on Lambeg drum featuring dotted rhythm and accented offbeats.
0.08	A Dotted rhythm at the start of melody is filled out with quavers.
0.16	B Grace notes in the first and last bars of this section.
0.24	B
0.32	A
0.40	A
0.48	B
0.56	B

Time	Content
	<i>The Girl I Left Behind</i>
1.05	A Grace note added to first bar of tune. Snare drum on the third beat of every other bar from the fourth bar of tune.
1.13	A
1.21	B
1.29	B Dotted rhythm in first bar.
1.37	A Hi-hat cymbal added.
1.45	A
1.53	B
2.01	B <i>Ritardando</i> and tin whistle slide on to final note. Drum roll in last bar.

Further listening:

Hamilton Harty – *An Irish Symphony* (second movement)

Gary Hastings – *With Fife and Drum* (accompanying CD)

