



The role of commercial recordings in the development and survival of Irish traditional music 1899-1993

Samuel Colin Hamilton

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**The Role of Commercial Recordings
in the Development and Survival
of Irish Traditional Music
1899 - 1993**

SAMUEL COLIN HAMILTON

Ph.D.

1996

**The Role of Commercial Recordings in the
Development and Survival of Irish Traditional
Music 1899-1993**

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Submitted to the University of Limerick, May 1996.

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This work is dedicated to my children
 Aoife and Sarah May

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Introduction

As a someone who has been involved in the oral traditional music of my own society for many years, as a performer and on other levels, I have always felt that one of the major areas of tension, of a sort of underlying unease, lay in the realisation that this sort of music, although part of my day to day reality, was somehow not based in the present. I don't believe that I was alone in this feeling. I was one of a small group of young urban musicians who were in the process of discovering the existence of Irish traditional music behind the brash commercial front of the Ballad Boom. In the late 1960s and early 1970s traditional music was like a ghost that only a few people could see. We convinced ourselves that we did see it, reassuring ourselves by describing the details of a shadowy figure that for most of our contemporaries, didn't exist.

In retrospect, I can see that this was largely because our vision, the vision of the traditional music revivalist, was focused on the past. Our heroes were aged, or eagerly sought through the medium of old, hard to find books and recordings. There was a perception that our holy grail, the 'tradition', was to be found remote from modernity, from cities, from commercialism.

I am sure that anyone who was involved in what is now seen as the 'folk revival' in Ireland from the late 1950s onwards will find the above familiar. We lived in a country which was

modernising and industrialising apace, and yet still had the reputation of being the repository of an age-old tradition. In the face of the rapid pace of change there was something strongly preservationist in the approach to this tradition. Change would kill it, foreign influence poison and dilute what had existed from time immemorial.

Some of those who were then involved would now see this attitude as xenophobic and simplistic, and in fact having no historical foundation. Its very existence though, forms the germ of the question that this work attempts to answer. Its existence was our attempt to place oral traditional music in the modern world that surrounded it, if only by making a space for it into which the modern world could not enter.

If our attitude was defensive in the extreme, this was felt to be justified in the face of the powerful forces, perhaps best represented by the commercial media, which seemed ranged against us, intent on promoting shallow commercial music to the exclusion of what we saw as real, meaningful, and ultimately of greater value.

Thirty years later, although attitudes have changed, I still feel that the basic dilemma facing those currently involved in oral traditions in general can be expressed in terms of the following:

How can oral traditional music maintain its identity in the modern world where transmission of music is increasingly

mediated by means other than oral?

Although we, as musicians of the Irish revival, were perhaps unaware of it at the time, implicit in this question, and central to this thesis, is the notion that identity is somehow affected by the process of transmission.

Within this context, it must be said that Irish traditional music is seen as having maintained its identity rather well in comparison to the oral traditional music of most other western European countries, and this is one of the reasons why I saw it as a suitable vehicle for the question posed above.

There are other reasons, not the least of which is my long and deep familiarity with this music. I realise that this brings its own problems of objectivity, but I would hope that my training in both science and ethnomusicology helps me overcome these.

Finally, since I am stressing the type of transmission process as one of the most important ways of distinguishing oral tradition, it seemed to me that it was the electronic media, in particular the medium of sound recording that was one of the main factors for change in this area. Again Irish traditional music came to mind with its long history in terms of sound recording, and importantly, with commercial sound recording. Given the above, the problem being addressed might be fully stated as follows:

In what way has the involvement of the commercial recording industry with Irish traditional music influenced

mediated by means other than oral?

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In what way has the involvement of the commercial recording industry with Irish traditional music influenced

its development and survival?

Aspects of the music such as repertoire, instrumentation, style, performance practise, transmission, and levels of activity, form focuses which allow examination of the problem at a closer level.

Among Irish traditional musicians there is a strong consciousness of the role of recording. Even today, musicians constantly quote the early Irish-American 78 r.p.m. recordings as an authority for playing a certain version of a tune, or a particular combination of tunes. In terms of the more recent recordings, all musicians have interacted with them on one or more of several levels; as a performer, a listener, a critic, as a source of tunes and songs. On the most basic level, this work sets out to document the body of recordings, and to establish fundamentals such as who recorded what, when, where and how often. That done, it attempts to relate these facts to musical behaviour within the tradition, and how it has responded to them.

As an example of media/tradition interaction, sound recording has other aspects which also recommended it. The associated material which is almost always published with the recordings forms a huge database which helps the observer to place the actual sound recording in context. In the case of some of the early recordings at least, some collections of this type of material have been published, mainly in the form of discographies which make the researchers job considerably easier. Information was sought from the following sources:

1/Printed sources

a/ Material published with phonograms, company records, promotional material, and advertisements.

b/ Databases prepared from such material.

c/ Material published mostly in the popular press relating to the phonograms.

3/ The work of the collectors.

2/ Fieldwork which took the form of tape recorded interviews with individuals from two groups:

a/ Those involved in the recording industry and other sound media.

b/ Irish traditional musicians, who may or may not have recorded professionally.

In practical terms, the information about the recordings themselves was entered into a database using the FileMaker, and later FileMaker Pro, programmes for Macintosh. The search and retrieval facilities of this programme were exceptionally useful in generating the data about numbers types and dates of recordings which form the core of the work. Interviews were recorded on an Iawa D.A.T. machine, and later transferred to standard cassette for transcription.

Literature Review

Literature dealing with Irish traditional music is diverse. For the

purposes of this dissertation it can be divided into two main sections, on the one hand consisting of material published in the popular press, and on the other of academic publications.

Chapter 2 suggests a division of this first section into six areas:

- 1/ Collections of tunes in staff notation.
- 2/ Commentary.
- 3/ The work of the collectors.
- 4/ Broadside.
- 5/ Ballad Poetry
- 6/ Non-dedicated sources.

Moloney(1992), gives a comprehensive review of this literature.

Academic interest in Irish traditional music overlaps to an extent with some of the categories above, especially with commentary or the work of the collectors, but we must wait until the twentieth century for the appearance of literature in the modern sense of social, historical, or ethnomusicological studies.

As outlined in Chapter 1, periods of activity and development in traditional music in Ireland have been associated with periods of cultural nationalism, and the second phase of this, concomitant with the rise of the Gaelic League, stimulated some degree of academic inquiry, in the broadest sense of the word, into Irish traditional music. Journals such as *The Irish Book Lover*, *The Catholic Bulletin*, *The Journal of the Ivernian Society*, *The Irish Monthly*, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Review*, *The New Ireland Review*, *The Irish Review*,

and the important *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society*, published articles which addressed a wide range of aspects of Irish traditional music. These were mostly by amateur enthusiasts (Clandillon 1911, "J." 1897, Maguire 1903, 1905, Martyn 1911, McCraith 1896, 1937, O'Keefe 1913, Oldham 1896, Young 1880), but some came from professional (mostly art music), academics (Bewerunge 1900, Hardebeck 1931, Joyce 1911, Patterson 1909, 1920). Books were somewhat scarcer, but notable are Charlotte Milligan Fox's *Annals of the Irish Harpers* (1911), Henry Grattan Flood's *A History of Irish Music* (1913), and Richard Henebry's *A Handbook of Irish Music* (1928).

Purely academic work on Irish traditional music in Ireland, has been largely carried out under the aegis of the various University music departments, especially that at University College Cork, where a series of academics including Hardebeck, Patterson, Fleischmann, O Riada and O Súilleabháin have worked. This has led to a series of postgraduate dissertations (Kelly 1978, McAuley 1989, Jardine 1981, Kearney 1981, Ring 1991, Keegan 1992) on various aspects of traditional music over a long period of time, not only from University College, Cork, but from other Irish university music departments as well.

In 1974, the Department of Social Anthropology at The Queen's University, Belfast, established the first postgraduate course in Ethnomusicology in either the U. K. or Ireland. Academic

involvement in Irish traditional music entered a new phase, separated to a great extent from art music based scholarship, with many practising traditional musicians among those who completed studies (Hamilton 1978, McCann 1983, 1985 O Súilleabháin 1987, Vallely 1993). The rise of ethnomusicology as an academic discipline in America, and in continental Europe, has also given rise to a series of Irish Traditional music studies. Jos Koning's study of music in east Clare (Koning 1976) was one of the first in the field. The number of such studies from America has been surprisingly low given the relative size of the Irish-American population, but might be explained by the comparatively low level of traditional music activity within that community. Foremost among them must be Moloney's comprehensive survey of Irish music in America (1992). Lawrence McCullough produced a series of publications in the 1970s (McCullough 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980). Moloney (1992) gives a list of further Irish music studies done in the States. Several larger works of relevance to Irish Traditional music have also been published in recent times (Porter 1989, Cowdery 1990).

Literature relating to recording technology and to ethnic, and more specifically, Irish traditional music on record forms a separate group. Since the actual technology of the process was not central to this dissertation, I consulted several standard publications. Gelatt's *The Fabulous Phonograph* (1977) and Read and Welch's *From*

Tinfoil to Stereo: The Evolution of the Phonograph (1976), proved very useful. A less technical but more general account of the whole area of recording and its effects on music in general can be found in Robert Chanan's "Repeated Takes" (1995). In a more particular fashion Goldstein discusses recording technology in the British folk revival (1982).

Richard Spottswood has worked extensively in the discographical area and his publications are among the most important (Spottswood 1982, 1990)

Pekka Gronow has made an important contribution in his own right, both with regard to Irish music on record (1979), and as editor of and contributor to *Ethnic Music in America: A Neglected Heritage* (Gronow 1982). Irish recordings from the 78 era are dealt with by Healy (Healy 1979).

In Ireland, recordings of Irish music have not attracted a great deal of attention, with the notable exception of the work of Nicholas Carolan (Carolan 1987).

Irish music and the broadcast media are dealt with by Gorham in *Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting* (1967), and by Cathcart in *The Most Contrary Region: The BBC in Northern Ireland 1924-1984* (1984).

Newspaper articles too numerous to list here (see Bibliography) also deal with this area, as do a long series of articles in the *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* magazine *Treoir*.

Apart from works which refer specifically to Irish traditional music

and the area of sound recording, which have been listed above under the broad areas of academic and popular publications, further general literature referred to in the text are listed in the bibliography.

MUSIC IN IRELAND

Music Types in Ireland

Traditional music does not exist in a vacuum in Ireland, but rather is one of a group of musics which co-exist here. In the course of its development there have always been other parallel music systems which may have been thriving or in decline at various times in the past. Even when Ireland was still wholly Gaelic in language and culture there was a likely distinction between the music of the aristocracy and the other classes.

Ó Súilleabháin has suggested four basic music types as being relevant to the Irish situation (Ó Súilleabháin 1981, 1982). These are the music of the Gaelic aristocracy (now extinct), European art music, traditional music, and popular music. The relationship between these musics is perhaps more easily seen when they are viewed as belonging to different groups within Irish society at different periods.

The Music of the Gaelic Aristocracy

The music of the Gaelic aristocracy is hardly unknown to us, except for some literary records, both before and after. These descriptions (drawn up by MacDonagh 1973), mainly refer to the ballads for the aristocracy, the chanted praise songs at the

**THE SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF TRADITIONAL
MUSIC IN IRELAND**

Music Types in Ireland

Traditional music does not exist in a vacuum in Ireland, but rather is one of a group of musics which co-exist here. In the course of its development there have always been other parallel music systems which may have been thriving or in decline at various times in the past. Even when Ireland was still wholly Gaelic in language and culture there was a likely distinction between the music of the aristocracy and the other classes.

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The Music of the Gaelic Aristocracy

The music of the Gaelic aristocracy is largely unknown to us, except via some literary sources, both native and otherwise. These descriptions, summed up by Breathnach (1971), mainly refer to the harp and its use in accompanying chanted praise songs at the

chieftain's courts. Whether this was the totality of this class's music or only one aspect of it, is unknown, and we are mostly ignorant of the sound of this music, although certain aspects can be reconstructed from literary accounts and some much later transcriptions. This system was dependant on the patronage of the aristocracy, and when they suffered political, military, and cultural eclipse at the beginning of the seventeenth century their music largely disappeared with them. The harp, in the sense of its primary use (see below p 26), lingered on in Irish music for approximately another two hundred years, long enough for some of the music then played on it to be recorded at the end of the eighteenth century. The relationship of the music which was written down at the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival to that of the Gaelic aristocratic system is hard to establish. Only one of the harpers present claimed to have been trained in the old bardic system. Harp music had survived since the seventeenth century under the patronage of the new Anglo-Irish ascendancy, and saw the flowering of such harper/composers as Turlough O'Carolan, whose music shows strong influences from the Western art music of the day.

Western Art Music

The interest of the Anglo-Irish landlord class in this particular type of Irish music was very much on the wane in the latter years of the eighteenth century, and as a class their musical preference was

much more typically the music of Corelli and Vivaldi, popular with their peers throughout Europe. Western art music maintained its association with this class into the twentieth century, and to the present day with the middle class that had emerged during the nineteenth century.

Traditional Music

Traditional music, following this association of class and music, was almost exclusively the music of the peasantry and landless labourers, initially Irish speaking, but as the nineteenth century progressed increasingly English speaking. The relationship between this body of dance music and song and the music of the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish aristocracies is complex. It is commonly thought to be in some way a direct descendant of the music of the Gaelic period, if not from the music of the aristocracy, then from the lower classes of that period. There is no evidence to support this. The body of Irish language song which was typical before English became widespread, used a different metrical system from that of the older poets, and there is again little evidence which dates its characteristic performance style. Relationships between this peasant music tradition and western art music are perhaps closer than would at first be thought possible. Almost all the instruments used are borrowed from art music, and most of the musical structures would not be thought strange if found in many art music compositions. This music, which is the main focus of this dissertation, is perhaps

the most stable of the four, and maintained its strong class association until the middle of this century.

Popular Music

Popular music is a broad term loaded with many meanings. Its use to mean one type of modern electronically mediated music is probably the commonest interpretation, but it also often used to mean music that is commonly found in particular time and place (e.g. *Popular Music in Eighteenth Century Dublin*, a publication of the Folk Music Society of Ireland [FMSI 1985]). However I believe that Ó Súilleabháin (1982) intends the more common meaning of the term. In the Irish context this could be taken as including, in an historical sense, music from the early days of the music hall, through to the prevalent Afro-American based “pop music” of today, and encompassing jazz, rock and roll, and musical theatre along the way. In terms of association, popular music in Ireland would originally have been limited to those who, by virtue of their urban background, had access to the media that disseminated it. During the course of the twentieth century the spread of such media as sound recording and broadcasting in Ireland has ensured that popular music is now characterised by not being restricted to any particular class or geographical distribution. Maloney (1992) has commented on the relationship between traditional music and the early forms of popular music in America, but unfortunately little work has been done in this area in Ireland to date.

The Concept of Primary and Secondary Users

I would suggest that some aspects of the interaction of traditional music with other music and with other social groupings in Ireland can be expressed by the terms **Primary** and **Secondary**. This terminology is useful in describing the period after the late eighteenth century when traditional music began to attract the attention of musicians and academics, and later on when it expanded beyond its rural base. **Primary users** are essentially those from a rural peasant background who are the musicians, singers, dancers, and listeners who access the music in an oral tradition. **Secondary users** are those whose interest in the music may take two basic forms.

1/Collectors and commentators whose interest is essentially academic, for example Bunting or Joyce.

2/Musicians whose initial musical experience is in another tradition. The young urban musicians of the revival would be typical of this group.

Rural Social Genres

By the mid nineteenth century traditional music had stabilised as a closely related group of what Konig (1976) has called 'social genres'. A social genre is essentially a performance situation, and in nineteenth century Ireland this would have included outdoor dancing, weddings, wakes, ceilidhing or rambling, and other social gatherings such as fairs and patterns. This group of what Merriam

would call 'uses' of music can be thought of as 'rural social genres'. These types of musical activity form the base from which traditional music expanded, initially in response to the rise of cultural nationalism in Ireland, and in the period on which this dissertation concentrates in response to interaction with the sound recording and broadcast media. Fig 1 illustrates this genre expansion.

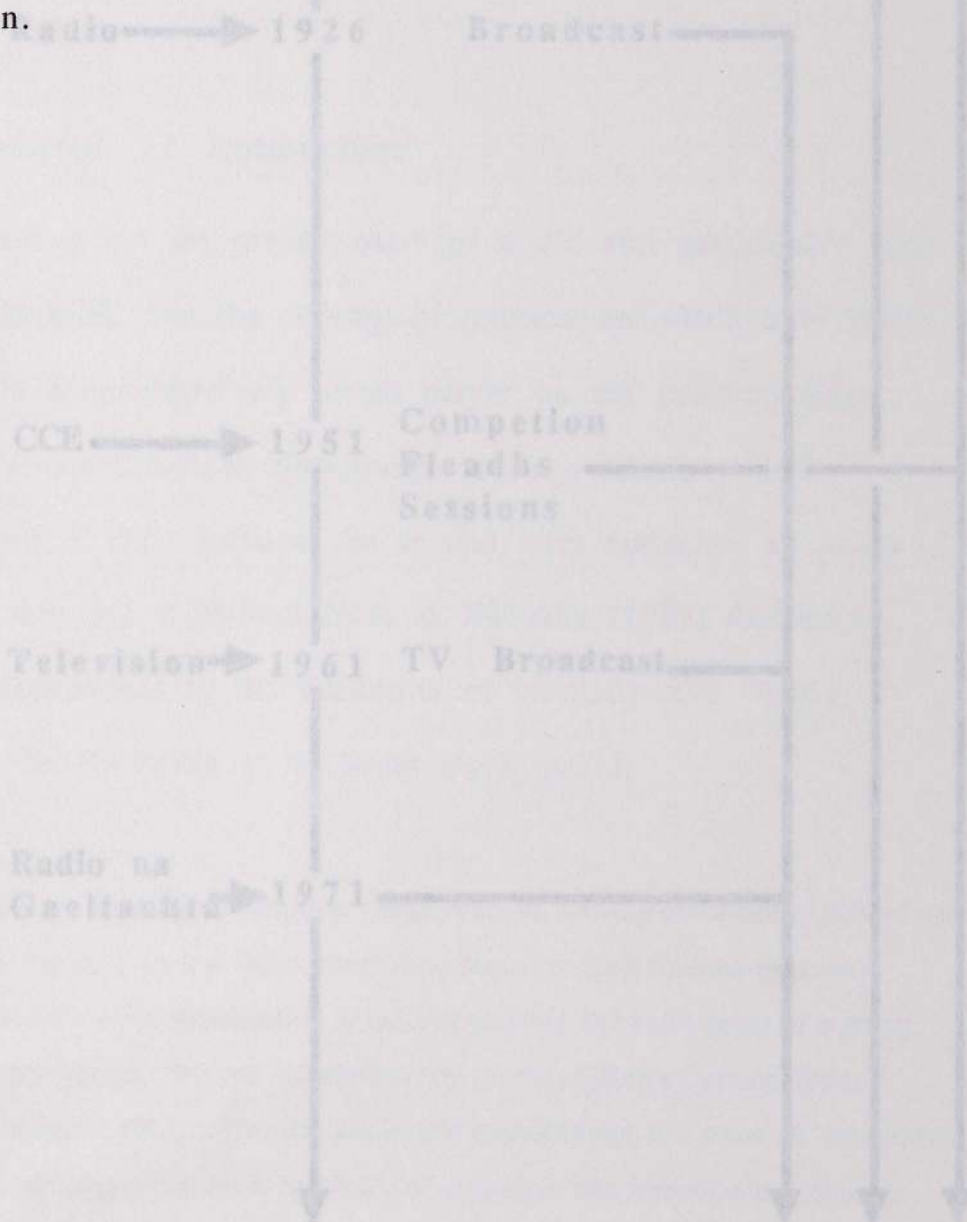


Fig. 1 Genre Expansion in Irish Traditional Music

RURAL SOCIAL GENRES

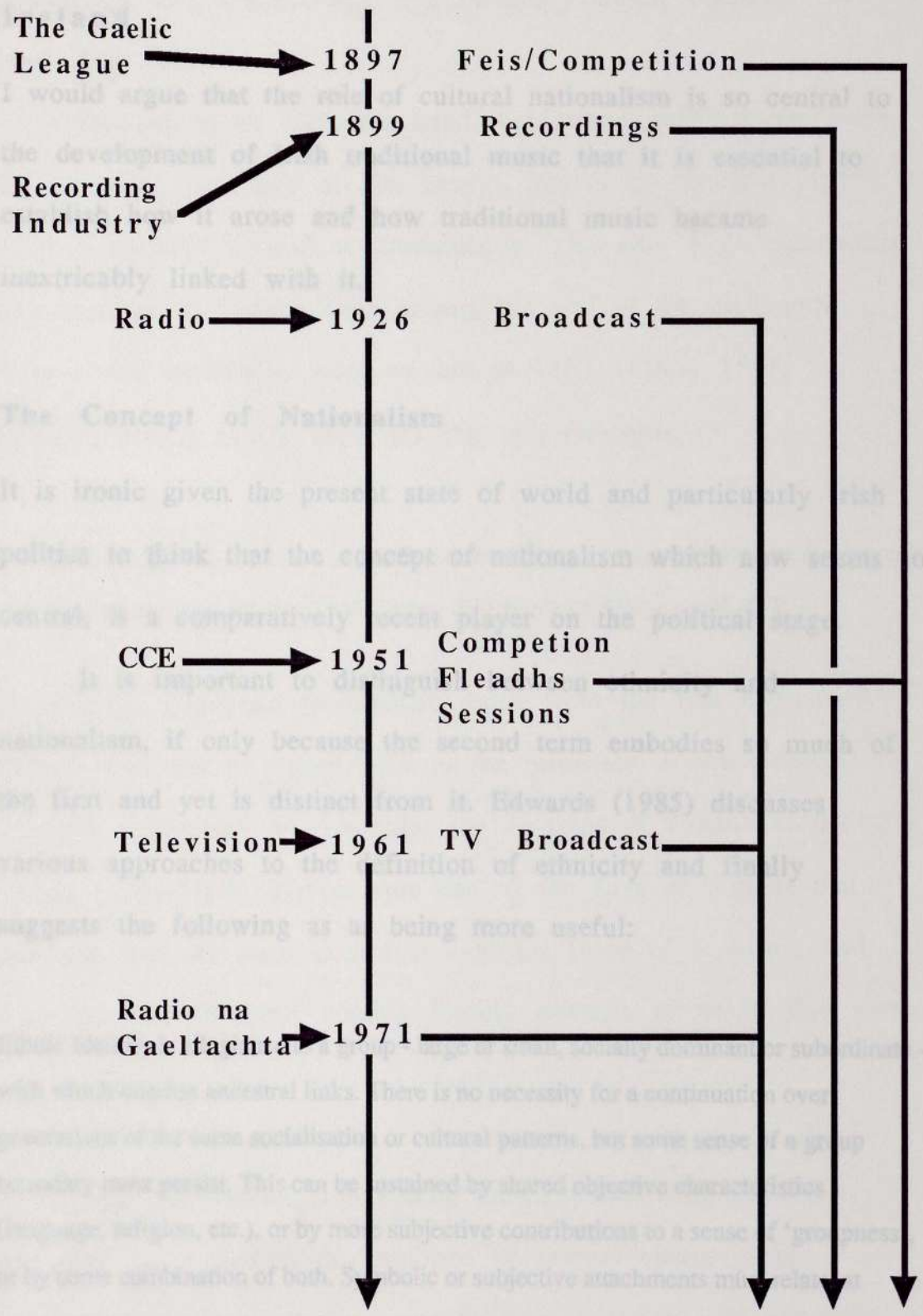


Fig. 1 Genre Expansion in Irish Traditional Music

The Historical Background to Cultural Nationalism in Ireland

I would argue that the role of cultural nationalism is so central to the development of Irish traditional music that it is essential to establish how it arose and how traditional music became inextricably linked with it.

The Concept of Nationalism

It is ironic given the present state of world and particularly Irish politics to think that the concept of nationalism which now seems so central, is a comparatively recent player on the political stage.

It is important to distinguish between ethnicity and nationalism, if only because the second term embodies so much of the first and yet is distinct from it. Edwards (1985) discusses various approaches to the definition of ethnicity and finally suggests the following as being more useful:

Ethnic Identity is allegiance to a group - large or small, socially dominant or subordinate - with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation over generations of the same socialisation or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of 'groupness', or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past.

The essentials of this definition are an element of blood relationship, and the concept of a boundary which separates the group from others.

Nationalism on the other hand, has strong political overtones, and according to almost all the sources quoted by Edwards (1985) is to be considered a modern phenomenon. The very word nationalism only features in English from around the end of the eighteenth century, and nationality from as late as 1862. (Conor 1978)

Edwards (1985) neatly separates the two concepts:

both ethnic group and nation are self defined; the difference between them resides in the nation's possession of the additional 'idea', the conscious wish for self control.

Historically, European nationalism dates from the late eighteenth century, and can be traced back to the influence of the German romantic movement, in particular the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). Herder was one of the first to suggest that language was the most important cohesive force of a nation, and other German thinkers, notably Fichte, strongly endorsed this view.

Nationalism in Ireland

In Ireland, nationalism, and indeed ethnicity has long been a complex matter due to the presence of several ethnic groups inhabiting and claiming the same national territory, and yet there is a connection from the romantic linguistic nationalism of the German romantics to the development of cultural nationalism in Ireland.

Thomas Davis was the leader of a group of young ardent nationalists that came to prominence in the 1840's. The Young Irishmen as they were known, adopted a deliberate policy of the use of culture (in their case mainly literature) in the promotion of nationalism. Davis was from the Protestant ascendancy and was a convert to nationalism. It is known that he was strongly influenced by the German romantics. MacDonough (1977) says:

here the single most critical event seems to have been Thomas Davis's visit to Germany in 1839-40. Davis underwent an evangelical-like conversion when confronted by the works of Lessing, Fichte, and the Schlegels.

Although of English descent himself, Davis adopted Irishness with that zeal peculiar to the convert. Like other nationalists, one of the ways in which Davis chose to advance the cause of his group was to compare them unfavourably with another, an idea again spawned by the German romanticists (Edwards 1985):

Like many subsequent nationalist movements, the German romantic variety found it easier to maintain a coherent position when there existed a reviled 'out-group'.

In Davis's case, this 'out-group' were of course the English, or 'Saxons' as Davis found it easier to term them as part of the intellectual contortions needed to justify his strange position as a member of one ethnic group claiming membership of another by association as it were.

ballads, for example Gavin Duffy's *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland*.

The various nationalist/independence movements that arose in Ireland from the late eighteenth century onwards tended to become more and more aware of the power of a common cultural heritage, real or imagined, as a means of uniting the population politically. The revolutionaries of 1798 were more inspired by the success of similar revolutionary movements on the continent and by general considerations of republicanism and the rights of man, than by any considerations of a culturally distinct nation. The mass political motivation achieved by O'Connell was more largely based on religious grounds, but the nationalism of the Young Irelanders from the early 1840's onwards was illuminated by the idea of a culturally distinct nation.

The Young Irelanders

The Nation was a newspaper founded by Davis, Gavin Duffy, and John Blake Dillon in 1842 which met with an unprecedented success, having a circulation of 10,000, and an estimated readership of a quarter of a million by 1843. Convinced of the importance of the printed medium to their cause, the Young Irelanders (named thus, interestingly, by an English journalist), also oversaw the establishment of 'The Library of Ireland' where subscribers were given a new book every two months over two years. The books on offer were of the same literary school as the contents of the nation, and included, as did the nation a fair proportion of poetry and

ballads, for example Gavin Duffy's *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland*. *The Nation* also contained considerable amounts of such 'ballad poetry', mostly penned by the publishers themselves, and its popularity is attested by the fact that almost every adult in today's Ireland is still familiar with such ballads as 'A Nation Once Again', 'The West's Awake' etc.

Boyce (1982), speaking of the Young Irelanders use of the medium says:

the young Irelanders embarked on a concerted campaign which profoundly influenced not only Irish nationalism, but also the relationship between literature and nationalism in Ireland. They sought to make Irish literature subordinate to Irish nationalism, and to use it to promote and foster a sense of nationality among the people.

This blend of literature and nationalism/patriotism had in fact already a place in the hearts and minds of literate Irish people due to the efforts of Thomas Moore. The tenor of his poetry was gently nationalist, in a way acceptable to the ascendancy, and similar to the work of the Scot, Macgregor. The notion of setting them to music may have been influenced by such publications as *The Scots Musical Museum*, which appeared in parts from 1760 onwards. His work though, shows none of the nationalist fire of the later work of the Young Irelanders.

The cultural nationalism, almost entirely literary based, of the Young Irelanders bore a strange relationship to the actual culture of the Ireland of their day. Davis, although no Irish speaker himself,

enthused on the idea of a national language as being essential to the idea of nationhood.... another idea borrowed from the Germans.

Boyce (1982), on this point states:

A nation was defined by its culture, by which Davis meant its literature, its history, and above all embodying these, its language... Language was the vehicle of a nation's historical memory, not merely an accidental set of speech patterns. A nation should therefore 'guard its language more than its territories', for a people without a language of its own was 'only half a nation.

It is somewhat ironic that the effect of the activities of the Young Irelanders was actually to introduce the English language more effectively into Irish speaking areas as the medium for discussion of nationalism and politics in general, an effect which had been given a powerful start by O'Connell and his Catholic and Repeal Associations.

The activities of the Young Irelanders were brought to a halt by the famine, and also by an abortive rebellion in 1848, and it is from the 1880's that we again see a wave of cultural nationalism building up in Ireland.

In summary I think it can be said that the young Irelanders' concept of Irish culture was exceptionally naive and uninformed. Apparently promoting it, they in fact seemed to be totally ignorant of the rich musical and linguistic culture of the rural community, and in their publications replaced it with their own version, without any consideration of the original. This was because their interest

lay, not in the culture itself, but in using it as a tool for political ends. As Boyce (1982) points out there were 'literary patriots' who sought to use Irish literature as a source of pride and of intellectual equality among nations, and 'literary nationalists' who wished to subvert literature to serve the cause of nationalism.

The legacy of this particular chapter of cultural nationalism is mostly a legacy of doggerel verse, which only gained a precarious hold in the minds of traditional musicians and singers, although it became for many others typical of what they saw as the national music of Ireland. It is the next phase of cultural nationalism which laid the foundations for many of the patterns that we see in Irish traditional music today.

The Foundation of the Gaelic League

In the course of the nineteenth century Irish culture suffered heavily at the hands of the famine and the massive exodus which followed it. The Irish language began to decline at an alarming rate, and the perception of an increasing anglicization prompted several responses towards the end of the century, among which the foundation of several groups which in essence strove to foster a distinct sense of 'Irishness' in their members, came to be of great importance.

The Gaelic Athletic Association, founded by Michael Cusack in 1884, was set up to encourage the playing of native football and hurling, and rapidly became widespread throughout the country. Its

policy of encouraging native culture in general along side native sports in particular played a very important role along side that of the Gaelic League, which was essentially a cultural organisation. Educated, and indeed more general interest in the Irish language had manifested itself in the form of several short lived societies, for example the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language founded in Dublin in 1877 (Greene 1972) , but it is generally conceded that the foundation of the Gaelic League was inspired by a speech given to the National Literary Society by Douglas Hyde in November 1892 entitled 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland'. The league was founded in the next year by a group among whom the most prominent were Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, and Father Eugene O'Growney, who was Professor of Irish at Maynooth. The Gaelic league, like its sister organisation, the GAA grew rapidly and to quote Lyons (1971):

Of all the factors influencing the rise of a new and urgent sense of nationality at the end of the nineteenth century, this has come to be regarded as perhaps the most significant.

Initially, growth was slow. Four years after the foundation there were only 43 branches, and it was only really after the turn of the century that there was any significant growth. In 1902 there were 227 branches, and by 1904 almost 600 with a membership of around 50,000 (1972).

The Gaelic League, unlike many of its more academic forebears was imbued with an almost evangelical spirit. They

adopted what were for the time, innovative teaching methods, and to counteract the lack of qualified teachers in many areas developed the idea of the travelling teacher. By 1903 the league had established its first college for training teachers in the west Cork gaeltacht village of Ballingeary, and went on to establish many more. According to Mac Aodha (1972):

The *modus operandi* of the League was by now firmly established. Full time Timirí or Organisers travelled round the countryside establishing new branches. These were served by the travelling teachers, who in addition to holding language classes **taught Irish dances, history, folklore, music, and organised feiseanna, céilithe and aeríochtaí** (my emphasis)

The league were thus among the first to look at Irish culture in a reasonably holistic way, and it is their role in this sense that makes them so important in the development of Irish music as well as language. Again Mac Aodha states (1972)

It remained unchallenged....as a provider of entertainment, especially of Irish music and dancing, in those days when cinema, radio, and television were as yet unknown.

Musical Activity in the Gaelic League

As we have seen, the League, although primarily a language movement consolidated their linguistic activities by being almost as much a social club as an adult education movement. They were astute enough to realise that very few of the people they attracted to their classes would ever become fluent speakers of Irish, but that

in order to keep up the momentum of a populist movement it was essential not to let the League degenerate into a small group of fanatics. Their involvement in the broad spectrum of what they saw as Irish cultural activities is what set the Gaelic League apart from its forerunners, although the GAA adopted the same policy to some extent. It would be interesting to know how many people were members of both organisations simultaneously.

The Feis Ceoil

On a national level the Gaelic league was involved in the introduction of an event called the Feis Ceoil, (Music Festival) which was intended to encourage native music on several fronts by means of competition. One of the founding members of the League, Thomas O'Neill Russell wrote to the Dublin Evening Telegraph in September 1894 complaining of the neglect of Irish music and the eventual result was a committee formed by members of the literary society and the Gaelic League to investigate the possibility of founding a festival of Irish music (Breathnach 1986). Observers were sent to look at other similar events such as the Welsh Eisteddfod (Oldham 1896). The basic basic aims of the festival were twofold; to promote the study and cultivation of Irish music, and to preserve it by collection and publication. The first Feis Ceoil was held in Ballsbridge, Dublin, three years later, and the traditional music was encompassed as follows (Breathnach 1986):

Section 21 Competitions of Archeological Interest

A Irish Wire Strung Harp

1st Prize £5 (+gold medal presented by W. J. Simpson, Belfast) 2nd prize £3,
3rd prize £1

B Irish Pipes

1st prize £5, 2nd prize £3, 3rd prize £1 entrance fee 2/6. Performers to choose
their own pieces, which must be Irish in character.

C £3 for the discovery and vocal or instrumental performance of ancient Irish
melodies hitherto unpublished (presented by P.J.. McCall)

The inclusion of a competition for wire-strung harp is indicative of the musical naivete of the organisers, since it had been almost 100 years since that instrument had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist.

The First Recordings of Irish Traditional Music

The organisers used a wax cylinder phonograph to record some of the performances, the first recordings ever made of Irish traditional music, and they eventually published a collection of the tunes which they considered as hitherto unpublished (Some of these cylinders in playable condition are in the possession of the Department of Folklore, University College, Dublin). The Feis Ceoil is still in existence, but at some period the level of interest in Irish music seems to have declined, and the current Feis is basically a classical music event.

The Céilí

A second major innovation of the Gaelic league in this area was the introduction of the céilí as a formal traditional music event. The use of the already existing word Céilí to describe this type of event is somewhat misleading, but the secondary meaning has now become the major one. Originally a céilí was an evening visit paid to a neighbour's house for the purpose of whiling away an hour or two in conversation, song, or occasionally music and dance. The custom was widespread throughout rural Ireland well into the present century, and was also known as rambling in other parts of the country. Each local area would have one or two houses which were known as céilí or rambling houses, and into which people would feel free to call.

The Gaelic league borrowed this term and applied it to a more formal organised event where dancing was the main function. The first ceili (the accents are often omitted in the Anglicised spelling) was in fact held in London, and again seems to have been based on the activities of other Celtic revival groups (*An Comunn Gaidhealach*, an organisation for the promotion of Scots Gaelic culture was formed in 1891, and organised a national festival, the National Mod, in 1892). The event, which was held in the Bloomsbury Hall on the thirtieth October 1897, was organised by the London branch of the League, and seems to have been a combination of dance and concert (Breathnach 1971):

...the programme included, besides step dancing, music and song, sets and waltzes performed to Irish airs. A form of group dancing was devised by having boys and girls face each other in two lines to perform the double jig. Between each step the facing couples changed places by a linking movement, so that only every second step was danced in the dancers' original position. In this way a movement was achieved which superficially at any rate looked like the group dances performed by the Scots at their functions in London.

The league spread the concept of the ceili as an acceptable form of Irish entertainment at the same time and in the same way as they attempted to spread the Irish language. McCann (1983) comments:

Two Gaelic League teachers of language and dance catered for Belfast and the surrounding rural areas. Seamus (Duckey) Mallon travelled out from Belfast by bicycle to teach in the country areas and Jimmy Johnston covered Belfast itself. **Not only the dance steps and dance sets had to be learned but also the ideology of the céilithe, its supposed origins and meaning** (my emphasis).

From this beginning, ceilis (this is the commonly used Anglicized plural. The Irish plural is *céilidhe*) became a very popular and widespread part of the traditional music scene. In general the concert aspect was abandoned and the event became purely an Irish dance. The popularity established by the Gaelic league for such dances was quickly taken up by others, and the Ceili became a standard aspect of Irish life, both urban and rural, and for many an easy and enjoyable means of publicly asserting their Irishness.

The Piper's Clubs

A third, if indirect, contribution of the leaguers was the formation in the last years of the nineteenth century of piper's clubs, initially

in Cork in 1898, and in Dublin two years later. These were independent bodies but their origin was amongst members of various Gaelic league branches. The pipers clubs lost momentum after the early years of the century and the Dublin club was wound up in 1926, the Cork club following it into extinction in 1930 (Mitchell 1980). As we will see later the pipers were later to reorganise in another form, but the significance of the pipers clubs as they first appeared is as one of the first hints of institutionalisation in Irish music, an event of great importance in its later development.

The Political Influence and Decline of the League

The Gaelic league as a popular movement had a great influence on life in the Ireland of the early twentieth century in much more than a purely social or cultural sense. The original Gaelic League was a constitutionally non-political organisation, which hoped to cross class and creed barriers in the Gaelic cause. Nowlan (1972) reports:

It was noted for example, that in Monaghan County Council a resolution in support of the language was 'accepted by unionists and Nationalists alike', and there was a similar report from the Larne board of guardians. At a meeting of the South Dublin Guardians, a like resolution was described as being warmly supported by a unionist. Again, the Gaelic League in Belfast felt, in April 1899, sufficiently confident to hold a public meeting in support of the demand for the teaching of Irish in the schools. *An Claidheamh Soluis* proudly claimed that: 'all classes and creeds were represented at the gathering'.

Numerous other sources attest to the early non-sectarian nature of

the league, and several of its founders including the president, Douglas Hyde were Protestant. But this is perhaps not entirely the reason why the league initially chose to be non-political. Nationalist politics at the time was also in a divisive phase and the founders may have realised that a political stance would have denied the movement the popular base that it need to accomplish its aims. Ernest Blythe (De Blaghd 1972) has suggested:

Those who at the foundation of the Gaelic League insisted that it be non-political were, perhaps, strengthened in their attitude by the fact that just then the times were, politically speaking, out of joint. The bitterness of the Parnell split poisoned the air and, besides warning Hyde and his colleagues of the danger of allowing the new movement to be involved in politics, may well have been a factor in getting such a large number of people interested in cultural nationality and in creating, at last, a really vigorous popular movement.

The non-political position of the league did not last for long. The nationalist political aspirations of the cultural nationalists soon became apparent, and in fact the bulk of the league's membership notwithstanding several prominent Protestants, was essentially Catholic and increasingly republican in politics. Sinn Fein, then a comparatively small party, which was to play a great role in things to come, had a strong connection with the Gaelic League (De Blaghd 1972):

Sinn Fein, the first fully nationalist movement to arise in Ireland for a long time, owed its origin primarily to the work of the Gaelic League.

and again:

Though Sinn Fein was weak in the country as a whole, it was relatively strong in the Gaelic League from which it had drawn most of its recruits.

Later in the century the connection between the League and the revolution also attracted comment. Speaking of the League Corkery(1943) said:

Nor could they have foreseen the triumph of 1916, which indeed was a triumph of the Gaelic League's Own.

This increasing politicisation of the league was to lead directly to the resignation of Douglas Hyde as president in 1915, although he himself pleaded ill health as the cause.

The Gaelic League After 1922

The next year saw the beginning of a great upheaval in Irish life which to some extent eclipsed the language movement until the foundation of the state in 1922. This in itself might be seen as one of the latter aims of the league but in fact, as Devlin reveals, it was to prove disastrous:

It is probably true to say that the greatest blow to the Gaelic League, as an organisation, was the setting up of an independent State, avowedly dedicated to the ideals of the League, as it was the end product of the revolution which the league itself had set in train.

The degree of the blow can be measured in terms of the number of branches in the relevant years as pointed out by Brown (1981). In 1922 there were 819 branches and in 1924 only 139. It has been suggested that this was largely due to the fact that because of the intimate involvement of the League with the new political developments, many assumed that the new Government would fulfil the same role, and thus render the League redundant. In fact although the new government instituted all sorts of measures to promote the Irish language, mainly through the education system, it failed to maintain the momentum which had been established by the Gaelic league, and the decline of the Irish language continued despite the ongoing, but restricted, activities of the League. The post-revolutionary Gaelic League has been only a pale shadow of what it was in the first decades of the century and this is reflected in its current levels of activity on the musical as well as the linguistic front.

The Gaelic League: An Analysis of their Role

Although it was always primarily a linguistic movement the Gaelic league's role in the development of traditional music is of great importance. It is easy in retrospect to see the League as an organisation of somewhat naïve idealists but this belies their role on several fronts. In the way in which they organised and taught, the Gaelic League were at the forefront of adult education, not only in Ireland but internationally. Their methods were very advanced

for the time, and the level of involvement that they managed to engender meant that they had a much bigger effect on Irish cultural life than we might nowadays imagine. In terms of their involvement with aspects of Irish culture other than language the League left several important legacies to Irish traditional music. Their encouragement of Irish music helped to move it out of the old social genres of kitchen and crossroads, and into larger more public venues such as halls. Concomitant with this move, was the participation of larger groups of people and this was in some ways responsible for the development of the group figure dances which allowed more dancers to perform at once. This in turn encouraged the development of ensembles of musicians to play for the dancers rather than the old concept of the solo performer playing for a small group of dancers. We must be careful to realise that this was a process that did not happen overnight. The céilí band did not suddenly arrive on the scene with the céilí, but rather developed over the first few decades of the century.

Prior to the 1890s almost the only people apart from the rural small farmers who had any interest in traditional music in Ireland were a very small group of academics, but with the arrival of the League, the rural and urban middle classes were for the first time drawn into traditional music activities. In parallel to the way that the League and its members actually encouraged interest in Irish as a spoken language as opposed to the academic interest in texts

which had dominated its study for most of the nineteenth century, it also for the first time induced people to think of Irish traditional music as a means of enjoyment, as music to dance to, as songs to sing, as a music which could be held up alongside any other in terms of sophistication and beauty.

They introduced competition as a means of promoting traditional music and song, and although the traditional content of the Feis Ceoil was not maintained, that of the Oireachtas was, and even today, Oireachtas competitions, especially in singing are the focus of great interest and rivalry.

The ceili, as introduced by the league, and as modified by various social factors is still with us and has played an important role in the history and development of Irish traditional music. Perhaps because of its legitimisation by association with the Gaelic League the ceili in various forms became the standard Irish cultural event in many situations, including importantly, the activities of the Irish abroad. It soon took on a life of its own, and even as the league faltered in the years after independence, the popularity of the ceili continued to grow.

The ceili band, that much reviled and yet most typical Irish traditional music activity in the period from the 1930's to the 1960's and beyond, grew from the need to provide dance music that could be heard in large venues. It is notable that although set dancing was by far the most common expression of dance in rural

Ireland at the time of the "invention" of the ceilidh it was rejected by the Leaguers as being non-Irish and therefore not suitable in association with their activities. This was on the basis that sets are derived from quadrilles introduced from the continent in the nineteenth century. The figure dances which the League instigated were in part based on old Irish figure dances as taught by the dancing masters. Whether as a matter of popular demand or perhaps indicating the decline of the League's influence, dancing at ceilis soon came to include waltzing (usually to Irish song airs played in waltz time), and even other forms of 'ballroom' dancing. The term 'Ceili and Old Time' indicating a mixture of ceili dancing and two steps, foxtrots, and waltzes, was common in the notices for dances which appeared in newspapers around the 1950's.

The ceili (and its music) has suffered much criticism over the years as being a degraded form of Irish music and dance, and yet, although it is undoubtedly true that it may have lacked the sophistication that its critics seemed to imply was necessary in traditional music, it was absolutely central in its role in the following respects.

Firstly, although not as widespread in the urban environment as in the rural, it was probably the first type of traditional music activity to have any significant role in the towns and cities. McCann (1983) has attested to the popularity of the ceili in urban Belfast, and a similar situation existed in other large conurbations.

Secondly, it gave many the opportunity to hear traditional

music who would not otherwise have done so, and perhaps more importantly it provided a musical outlet for many musicians at the time when the house dance, which had been a major, if not the major, performance genre, had disappeared. As Taylor (1984) has pointed out almost every traditional musician of note has at some time or another played in a ceili band.

The Attitude of the League to Traditional Music

In objective terms the Gaelic league's concern with Irish culture introduced an element of self consciousness. It has been said that before the thirtyfirst July 1987 (The foundation date of the Gaelic League), people in Ireland sang songs, danced and played music.....after that date they sang Irish songs, danced Irish dances and played Irish music. The de-Anglicisation policy of the Gaelic League demanded that everything be examined for evidence of contamination by English language or culture. However, those in the league who took an interest in Irish music seemed to be largely unaware of the huge amount of music making that was going on around them, or if they were conscious of it, saw it as being debased or not worthy in some way. Many were convinced that Irish music was under threat of extinction, and many articles by League members appeared which discussed the league's role in the reversal of this threat (Martyn 1911). The terminology used shows that basic ignorance which existed on the part of the middle class league activists with regard to the music making of the rural small

farmers. In an article typical of its kind, a certain Florence Maguire (1903) claimed:

So it was hardly to be expected that these airs, coming down to us, as they did, through generations of untutored peasants, could be in any but the most elemental form.

Other writers confirm this approach and talk of rough country singers and fiddlers, while at the same time wondering why Ireland has produced no Chopin or Wagner. The period under consideration shows many of the characteristics which typify an external revival (more fully discussed in Chapter 6).

The Gaelic League and Sound Recording

The radical way in which the League approached its main objective of the restoration of the Irish language was paralleled to some extent, at least initially in the field of music. The decision to use a wax cylinder recorder at the first Feis Ceoil would be typical of this, and the fact that some of the recordings have survived, gives us a remarkable insight into the sound of traditional music in nineteenth century Ireland. The intention to collect and publish new material was also to be praised but was hardly innovative. Despite this beginning, the league failed to follow up on it, although it has to be remembered that the Feis Ceoil was a separate body not directly under the League's control. The importance of the new medium of the 78 rpm record seems to have passed them by, not only as a means of collecting preserving and disseminating Irish music but

the also much more obviously as a linguistic teaching aid.

America. There may be logistical reasons why the League's interest and encouragement of music soon petered out. Firstly it may be that they believed that this cause was being well served by the Feis Ceoil. Secondly the hey-day of the recording industry coincides with the League's dramatic decline in the early 20's, and it would not be surprising that they would have concentrated on their core interests in this period.

Some attempts were made to concentrate the musical interest among the membership. An Irish Review article (Martyn 1911) states:

A society in the Gaelic League has lately been formed, called Cumann Ceoil, whose object is immediately to do the best that is possible for the preservation of our folk music. Mr. Carl Hardebeck is the president; and we have succeeded in arresting the attention of other musicians who were hitherto hostile to what they considered barbarous and "low down" to use an expression of the imitation English for everything indigenous in Ireland.

Nothing is known however of the fate of this society, and it is left to us to wonder what would have been the fate of Irish traditional music if the same energy had been applied to it as was to the language.

It is also possible that the league's efforts in this area failed because they were trying to preserve a music that existed largely in their own imaginations. In the countryside music and dance continued for the moment at any rate unabated, and unforeseen by

the Gaelic league was about to enter a new and exciting phase in America.

Summary

This chapter serves to establish the position of traditional music in Ireland vis-à-vis other indigenous and imported forms. Two concepts, which inform the rest of the work are introduced.

1/ Primary and Secondary Users. Primary Users operate within the culture or sub-culture which gave rise to the music. Secondary Users transfer their involvement from outside.

2/ König's concept of the 'social genre' is proposed as a useful tool in examining the social diversification in Irish traditional music.

Finally, cultural nationalism in Ireland, from the nineteenth century Young Irelanders to the twentieth century Gaelic League, is looked at from the point of view of its significance for traditional music.

These were intended purely as a source of material for performers,
and **EARLY MEDIA INVOLVEMENT IN IRISH TRADITIONAL**

class. Not **MUSIC: PRINT IN THE PRE-RECORDING ERA** of

the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes produced by William Neal, and

Categories of Printed Material O'Carolan 1986) Most were

Printed material on Irish music falls into six categories: 'Fifty

1/ Collections of Tunes in Staff Notation. Scotland, and many general

2/ Commentary. tions published in the two islands have some Irish

3/ The Work of the Collectors. re correctly considered as non-

4/ Broadside. es.

5/ Ballad Poetry

6/ Non-dedicated sources. of the Collections

Given the fact that the vast majority of traditional musicians in

There is of course some degree of overlap between different types,

notably for example, when the collectors work contained at. The

commentary and also notated music, but the distinctions become

clearer when the intentions of the publisher and the probable

readership is considered. well. The involvement of this class of

people. The medium of print of course continued to have an the oral

important influence after the introduction of sound recording, and n

the fact that this survey stops at the latter point is not intended to

imply the opposite. On the contrary, after this point we must begin

to consider the relationship between traditional music and the were

media, and not the single medium of print. ofaris is further

Collections of Tunes in Staff Notation

These were intended purely as a source of material for performers, and eighteenth century publications are almost entirely in this class. Notable here is the 1724 Dublin publication, *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes* produced by William Neal, and known from a single surviving copy (O'Carolan 1986). Most were produced in Ireland, but several, notably Brysson's 1790 'Fifty Favourite Irish Airs' were produced in Scotland, and many general dance tune collections published in the two islands have some Irish material, and therefore are more correctly considered as non-dedicated sources.

The Intended Market of the Collections

Given the fact that the vast majority of traditional musicians in eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland were musically non-literate, it must be asked who these collections were aimed at. The answer seems to lie in the large numbers of 'gentlemen amateur' musicians who were active in all the urban centres, and to some extent in the provinces as well. The involvement of this class of people with dance music and song airs whose origin was in the oral tradition of the countryside is well documented in Ireland (Carolan 1986), and particularly in Scotland (Emmerson 1971).

The publication of such tune collections continued throughout the nineteenth century, and the fact that very many of them were arranged for violin, German flute, and pianoforte is further

indication that the market at which they were aimed was distinct from the body of rural oral-tradition players.

The final work to be considered here was actually published after the advent of sound recording which I am considering as the upper limit of this survey, but I think it warrants inclusion because of its importance as outlined below, and because the collection of the material was largely accomplished before the first sound recordings appeared.

This is O'Neill's *Music of Ireland* published in Chicago in 1903 (O'Neill 1903), a collection of dance music and song airs running to 1850 pieces. This differs from previous collections in several important ways. It was, if we exclude *Jackson's Celebrated Tunes* (which were his own compositions), the first collection to be amassed by a practising traditional musician who had grown up in the oral tradition. It was the first collection to be representative of the repertoire of a recognisable group of musicians, in this case the expatriate Irish of late nineteenth century Chicago. Finally it was far and away the pre-eminent collection used by practising traditional musicians as a source of tunes. There might be some justification for including O'Neill's tune collections in the third section here under the 'Work of the Collectors', but although O'Neill is considered to be one of the great collectors of Irish music, the style of publication shows that his intent was prescriptive. O'Neill did make extensive commentary as well, but in separate publications which fall distinctively into the next category.

distinctively into the next category. *Minstrelsy* takes a very similar

Commentary on the Music

Eighteenth Century Commentaries

By this classification I imply what would nowadays broadly be called ethnographic studies, giving us information on such matters as who played the music, where and on what occasions it was and played, on what instruments. It is contextual information. Works of this type are much more unusual than tune collections. The eighteenth century only gives us only one¹Joseph Cooper Walker's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* published in 1786. This is in essence an historical account of the old bardic system, and although this constitutes the majority of the work, there are some 15 tunes notated in an appendix, including (as Carolan notes [Carolan 1990]), types of tune not previously published, such as bagpipe laments and *caoine*. Typical of the antiquarian approach of the period, there is no mention of contemporary musical practise. the section on commentary above contains scarcely any of the type

Nineteenth Century Commentaries in a modern

The nineteenth century is similarly almost void of such the origins publications. One such is Michael Conran's 1846 work, *The National Music of Ireland*. This apparently originated as a series of lectures given at the request of the Directors of the Manchester Mechanics Institution. It is, in its way, almost a reworking of Walker's book. publication to have the Irish words and music syllabically

¹ There is some amount of commentary in Ledwich's *Irish Antiquities* under the title 'Of the Musical Instruments of the Ancient Irish'. This garbled account appears to have been the contribution of a William Beaufort, and not Ledwich's own work.

Hardiman's 1831 publication, *Irish Minstrelsy* takes a very similar approach.

Twentieth Century Commentaries

Works of commentary became rather more common in the twentieth century. Most prominent here would be O'Neill's two works, *Irish Folk Music: A Fascinating Hobby*, (O'Neill 1910), and *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, (O'Neill 1913). Published somewhat later, and not by any means as well known is *A Handbook of Irish Music* by Richard Henebry (1928), which was the first work to examine the structure of Irish music in detail.

The Work of the Collectors

In intent this falls somewhat in between the two previous categories. Works of this type contain by definition amounts of music presented in staff notation, but this is almost always accompanied by commentary, which in a similar manner to that in the section on commentary above contains scarcely any of the type of information that one would expect to find in a modern ethnographic study. The text is mostly concerned with the origins and perceived 'purity' of the versions of the tunes presented, and little information on social context is given. These books also deal to some extent with song, but curiously, airs and text are rarely coordinated. Joyce's *Irish Music and Song* (1877) was the first publication to have the Irish words and music syllabically coordinated. Maloney (1992) describes the work of the collectors

from the point of view of their approach to the task.

There is a common thread running through the work of the three great collectors, Bunting, Petrie, and Joyce. All sought to preserve for various reasons the ancient music of Ireland...They all hoped that the music they collected would survive and continue to be performed with the help of their collections. All three in varying degrees felt free to edit, amend, and in some cases to rewrite the material they collected in order to "improve" it according to the aesthetic canon they favoured. All either implicitly or explicitly operated from an ideological perspective imbued by the spirit of the romantic movement and of cultural nationalism.

The Contribution of Edward Bunting

Edward Bunting, whose association with the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792, and subsequent lifelong devotion to the collection and study of Irish music is well documented (Fox 1910, 1911) was the first of these collectors. In some respects his work is distinct from that of his two successors, and Moloney is, I believe, in some part mistaken to refer to the subject of all three as 'the ancient music of Ireland' (Moloney 1992). This was certainly the interest of Bunting who believed that the music he was presenting to the public was of great antiquity. He had little interest in the dance music tradition which was in a vibrant stage of development at the time. O'Neill in his *Irish Folk Music: A Fascinating Hobby* (1910) noted that only three 'so called' jigs were recorded by Bunting, and not a single reel or hornpipe. With characteristic drollery he remarks:

Lamentations there are in plenty, and an occasional lullaby adds a little variety to the gloom.

² Fleischman (1972) forms the basis for this section

The Work of George Petrie

ed in his lifetime, published under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation and Petrie (1855), and more particularly, Joyce (1873, 1877, 1906, 1909) collected and published contemporary traditional dance music and song. Charles Stanford between 1902 and 1905.

Although the work of the music collectors of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contained large amounts of music in staff notation, it is obvious that their intention was descriptive and preservative as well as prescriptive. The tune collections mentioned above, as distinct from the publications of the collectors, in general make no mention of the sources of the material, underlining their primary function as prescriptive notation. Although Bunting's earliest publication in 1796 consisted entirely of notated tunes, his second in 1804 included song words and some small amount of commentary. His largest and final work published in 1840 contains almost equal amounts of both. The other major published collectors of the nineteenth century, Petrie, and Joyce combine commentary and notated music in a way which shows that they intended their work to be more than simply a source of tunes and songs.

Petrie in many ways inherited the role of collector from Bunting.² He had been active in collecting tunes, and offered what he had to Bunting for publication. In fact only a small proportion of

² Fleischman (1972) forms the basis for this section

the tunes he had collected appeared in his lifetime, published under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland, which had been founded in 1851. The major part of his work was published after his death in an edition by Sir Charles Stanford between 1902 and 1905.

Joyce and his Collections

Patrick Weston Joyce, the third collector, had a relationship with Petrie somewhat similar to that between Petrie and Bunting, giving him over a period of years a series of notebooks (Joyce 1911) containing tunes he had jotted down from memory of his youth in Glensheen, Co Limerick.

Although the bulk of Joyce's work was not published until the twentieth century, after the advent of sound recording, I feel he warrants inclusion here on the basis that the collections were made in the pre-recording period.

Joyce's work, more so than that of the other published collectors of the period seems to better reflect the musical reality of the day. He pays attention for the first time to the type of music and song which might have been commonly found in the rural Ireland of the late nineteenth century, and which is still found. Like the other collectors, but perhaps not to the same extent, he was inclined to 'edit' his material making it much less useful for present day scholars.

Manuscript Collections

Since this work in general concerns the media through which traditional music is or has been presented to the public, the large unpublished manuscript collections of dance music and song airs which were made by Forde, Pigot, Hudson, Goodman, and others, must be excluded. Breathnach's assertion (1971), however, must at the same time be borne in mind:

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that local poets were proficient enough to produce Irish ballads in the English language and that there was a knowledgeable audience for these songs large enough to justify their mass production by the popular press. Rich as is the material which has been published, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the best collections made of our native music still remain unpublished

Although it might be presumed that most of the material in the print medium is contained in the categories above, there are others which must not be ignored, and which perhaps had more influence in real terms than the academic efforts of the collectors at any rate. In terms of sheer bulk, the next category is without doubt predominant.

Broadsides

The roughly printed song sheets known as broadsides, ballads, or chapbooks if more than one song was on the sheet, which was then folded into a crude booklet, appeared in Ireland at a very early stage and played a considerable role in the development and dissemination of traditional song in English.

The Language of the Broad-sides

Although broadsides are almost exclusively in English, the first one recorded is in Irish, and was published in Dublin in 1571, later productions were almost entirely in English, and given the status of the Irish language in Ireland, this obviously had an effect. Neiland (1986) comments:

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that local poets were proficient enough to produce Irish ballads in the English language and that there was a knowledgeable audience for these songs large enough to justify their mass production by the popular press.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, English was widespread and broadsides formed the most widespread and popular interaction of the rural population with the print medium.

Broadsides normally took the form of a sheet which carried a crude, standardised, woodcut, and the words of the ballad. The air of the song was normally indicated by reference to the air of another well known song. e.g. 'A New Song on the Coleen Bawn to the air of The Peeler and the Goat'. Neiland (1986) claims that staff notation was never printed on broadsides proper, but did appear on some later 'literary' examples such as those produced by Yeats' Cuala press.

The idea that each song did not have its own individually composed tune was in line with what we know of the old Gaelic tradition, where one tune could serve many sets of words which had the same metric structure. Broad-sides were very much a popular

phenomenon. The production of broadsides was a very commercial operation, and any topic which it was thought might sell was covered. In some ways broadsides were the equivalent of today's tabloid press, and favourite topics included lurid accounts of murders, hangings, and abandoned lovers. Broadside publishers were not particular as to the sources of their material. Previously printed collections and the work of other broadside publishers were freely pirated, and there is some evidence that material collected from the oral tradition found its way into print in this form. Publishers also employed writers to turn out songs on contemporary events, and there is a persistent rumour quoted by many authors on the subject, that Oliver Goldsmith at one time earned money in this way.

Economics and the Distribution of Broadsides

Broadsides were sold at fairs, markets and other public gatherings by sellers who advertised their songs by singing them, and this was a widely appreciated form of public entertainment, as well as an efficient way of selling. Sellers would buy selections of broadsides from the publishers and then sell them at a profit. This profit could be quite substantial. Neiland quotes the *Irishman* newspaper of twentieth November 1858 as stating that a ballad seller could average 10-15 shillings on a fair day, and a few years earlier in 1841 Dublin Castle had been informed that a ballad seller had an average weekly income of £1, and a maximum daily income of

£1. 5. 0., and this at a time when a farm labourer earned £1 a quarter! These facts serve to illustrate the similarity on the popular and commercial fronts between broadsides and the recording industry.

The story is well known. Moore, romantic poet, sets his work to tunes which Bunting collected, and which Moore had rearranged by other Irish classical musicians such as Stevenson. The text which Moore provided was vaguely (and safely) nationalist and patriotic in Ireland at any rate is a relatively late development. In the Gaelic tradition there was no concept of difference between the poet and the song maker. It would be easy for the future literary historian to assume that broadsides were a purely literary form if their social context as song was unknown. Whether it can be seen as a continuation of this tradition or not, the nineteenth century saw the publication of numerous works which like broadsides offered song words to the public, only rarely publishing tunes in any form of notation in conjunction with them. It might be tempting to see works like Charles Wilson's *Select Irish Poems Translated into English* (1782) or Charlotte Brookes' *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), as the forerunners of the sort of publication now under consideration, but it is clear that there was no intent that this material should ever be performed, and they and their ilk are quite distinct from the likes of Moore's *Melodies* or the *Ballad Poetry of Ireland* discussed below.

Thomas Moore

One publication in this class is pre-eminent in its pervasive influence and actual physical presence in terms of the vast numbers of copies produced.

The story is well known. Moore, romantic poet, sets his work to tunes which Bunting collected, and which Moore had rearranged by other Irish classical musicians such as Stevenson. The text which Moore provided was vaguely (and safely) nationalist and patriotic in character, evoking images of a largely imaginary Celtic past. As touched on in Chapter 1, Bunting was less than enamoured with the way in which 'his' traditional airs were being used by Moore, with eleven of the sixteen airs used in Moore's first set of the *Melodies* being originally published by Bunting himself. This may have influenced him to include similar poetic texts to accompany the airs in his 1809 publication, perhaps in an attempt to reclaim some of the kudos from Moore given the close proximity of the appearance of the two works. In this he failed however, whereas Moore's work was hailed throughout the kingdom, and received high praise from the poetic giants of the day. The *Melodies* appeared in a series between the years 1807 and 1834, and were reprinted in a bewildering maze of editions and reprints throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. The degree of popularity of the *Melodies* is hard to comprehend, and it has been remarked that it was the one of the few books that would almost certainly be found in any Irish household. Its reputation was just as in

high among the emigrant Irish communities, and perhaps as a final remark, relevant to the overall theme of this thesis, we should note that a John McCormack recording of his song 'The Last Rose of Summer' sold over one and a half million copies in the USA alone. (Moloney 1982)

Although Moore's work mostly predates the rise of cultural nationalism, (see Chapter 2) that movement was the inspiration for the publication of numerous works which might be considered the middle class equivalent of the broadside. The organ of the Young Irelanders, *The Nation*, published a series of poems/songs which were strongly nationalist in character, and which based their style on the narrative ballad form. A selection of these were republished in book form as *The Spirit of the Nation* in 1843, and two years later another largely similar collection, *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* appeared (Duffy 1843, 1845). In the course of the nineteenth century, many Irish *literati* turned their hand to this form, and Moloney (1992) gives a comprehensive list. The most popular of these ballads had an existence outside of the printed page, and were often performed in the drawing rooms of the middle classes. Joyce's celebrated short story, 'The Dead' revolves around such an event.

Non-Dedicated Sources

By this classification I mean the appearance of traditional music or song in publications which are not overtly dedicated in whole or in

part to this end. In fact the earliest print appearance of Irish music seems to be in this category. The first edition of Playford's *English Dancing Master* published in London in 1651, has several pieces, for example 'The Irish Trot', which in all probability are Irish in origin. Fleischman (1991), lists several earlier pieces, but their Irish provenance is not entirely certain. The song 'Sín Síos agus Suas Liom' was published in London in 1701 as part of collection called *Collection of Songs in Several Languages* by a professional singer, John Abell, and is the first appearance of an Irish song in print (Breathnach 1981).

The Ballad Opera

Another type of publication, which might well have been an effective medium for introducing Irish tunes to the public, was the ballad opera, which used popular and traditional tunes to carry the libretto. Carolan (1990) lists some of these sources. It should be noted that in reality it is not via the medium of print that such Irish tunes as appeared in these works were transmitted, but rather via the medium of live performance which the printed version reinforced.

Mention must be made as well of Irish tunes which appear in collections of music essentially devoted to another, if related type of music. Irish tunes in collections of Scottish music would be of importance here, as would the inclusion of Irish material in the numerous books of 'Country Dances' which appeared from the late

eighteenth century on (Hogan 1966).

Publication is not the equivalent of distribution. Many of the works introduced above may be significant only through their existence, and any effect they may have had on the living tradition may be minimal. The fact that Neal's *The Most Celebrated Irish Tunes* exists only in one copy, and that other tune collections from the eighteenth century are also rare does not necessarily indicate that they were not published in any great numbers, but may point in this direction. Others, particularly Moore and O'Neill, achieved widespread distribution and effect.

The Relationship between Print and Sound Recording

At this point it may be useful to compare at a basic level the two media, print and sound recording. Both require something other than their mere existence to be functional. Music in print, as notation of one form or another, is meaningless without the literacy skills required to read it, and music literacy generally implies word literacy as well. Printed collections of tunes or songs expect that their readers can read not only music. Secondly a voice or musical instrument is required to turn musical symbol into sound. Someone without either the skills or ability to perform can not realise the music sound of such a system. For the various systems of sound recording there are again two levels in the interaction. The physical object which holds the recorded sound, wax cylinder, shellac or vinyl disc, magnetic tape, compact disc, is useless without the

machine which releases its sound. However once the two are combined it only takes an almost non-existent level of manual skill to realise this release. Furthermore, each time these two factors are brought together the result is identical. We hear a reproduction of the original sound. The same instruments play the same arrangement, the same variations in the same places each time. This is not so when print is the medium of storage and retrieval. Depending on the skill or interpretation of the musician, even depending on what instrument they are playing the resulting sound can be radically different.

Style and the Two Media

The level at which stylistic elements can be indicated in printed music is very basic, and normally takes the form of verbal instructions, which of course implies a second type of literacy as suggested above. These instructions can do no more than indicate the most basic stylistic elements such as tempo, and even these are almost always omitted in printings of Irish traditional music. This of course implies that an element of oral transmission is present, since the music cannot be reconstructed in the way the person who committed it to paper intended without the musician having either heard the piece or a similar one before, or having extensive training which allows them to play in a particular style.

³ This is a sound recording, in complete contrast, carries all the information of several actual performances, and may not even be capable of being performed live.

stylistic elements, and for those seeking to imitate them repeats them exactly time and time again. The exact repetition of recorded sound might be highlighted as a major difference between the two media. Printed music is only prescriptive up to a point, and in certain fields such as that of Baroque music, Jazz, or the current practise among Irish traditional musicians, the printed notes are only used as the basis of the performance, the musician having considerable leeway with certain aspects of melody and rhythm. It is only when either medium is used as a means of transmission, that this difference becomes less apparent. Those musics that traditionally rely on the printed note as a repository of their canon tend not to use recordings as a means of transmission. The classically trained musician would never dream of learning a piece by listening to it on a recording without referring to the notation. Traditional musicians would often learn from a recording, but would most often treat it in the same way as they would a live performance, an aural source which is used as the basis of further performance, not as an authoritative version which must be exactly imitated (although see Chapter 9 below).

Copy Attention can be drawn to other contrasts. A sound recording is of a performance, notation is the basis of many performances.³ Sound recordings tend therefore to emphasise the performer, notation the composer, either of the melody, words, or both. In the that the mechanical reproduction of sound was not simply a

³ This is ignoring for the moment the fact that a modern recorded 'performance' may in fact be a combination of several actual performances, and may not even be capable of being performed live.

Irish tradition the words are by far the most important from this point of view, hence the importance of broadsides and song collections without notation which at the same time engender musical performance because the melody is taken as already in the experience of the performer.

Print, Sound Recording, and Technology

Finally there are several technological consequences of the arrival of the new medium. Although printing obviously requires a level of technology, it is low compared to that required to back up sound recording and the subsequent equipment required for reproduction. This had several important consequences for the nascent recording industry which will be expanded on in Chapter 9. A major effect was the restriction of the length of a piece of music that could be recorded to approximately 3 minutes in contrast to notation, where theoretically at any rate there was no restriction as to length. Again this technically imposed restriction had consequences unforeseen at the time of its emergence.

Copyright

Interaction, as opposed to contrast between the two media, is a complex area, most of which is beyond the scope of this discussion, but a few points can be usefully made. When it became established that the mechanical reproduction of sound was not simply a novelty which would have its heyday and then disappear, there

was some unease among the publishers of printed music that sound recordings would somehow take over from printed music, and that their business would suffer. They shortly realised however that in fact recordings had the result of popularising certain pieces and in fact this increased the sheet music sales. The fact that sound recording was initially not taken seriously as a medium is emphasised by the fact that the first Berne Convention on international copyright in 1886 placed sound recordings in the same classification as mechanical devices such as music boxes and barrel organs, and decided that the mechanical reproduction of music did not infringe copyright. This state of affairs did not last long. A court in France in 1905 ruled that mechanical reproduction was an infringement of copyright, and the 1908 Berne Convention agreed, establishing the principal of mechanical copyright in Europe. The United States of America, although not a signatory of the Berne Convention, introduced its own mechanical copyright law in 1909 (Chanan 1995). Thus a law originated to protect printed material was quickly adopted to cover the new medium when its commercial success and resilience became established.

Summary

This chapter looks at the early media involvement in Irish traditional music in the form of print, up to the point where sound recording becomes a potent force in the early years of the twentieth century. Six categories of printed material, which have

some degree of overlap are suggested:

a/ Tune collections in staff notation

b/ Commentary

c/ The Work of the Collectors

d/ Broadside

e/ Ballad Poetry

f/ Non-Dedicated Sources

The more important works in each category are briefly discussed, and some works published after the arrival of sound recording are included as being essentially part of the same body of material.

The two media are compared and contrasted in terms of their reproduction capabilities, ability to reproduce stylistic elements, their use in transmission, and their relationship to technology and copyright law.

Pre-famine Emigration

The demographics of the Irish population have never been as simple as various political interests would have us believe. Various waves of invaders, invitees, and long and short term visitors have been, sometimes gone, but have certainly left their mark. In the case of the pre-famine emigrants from Ireland it was almost a case of 'last in, first out'.

The 'Plantation of Ulster' is a name given for the migration of large numbers of mainly Scots, but also some English settlers to the province of Ulster in the early years of the seventeenth century. The scheme was initiated by the English government who had just

THE IRISH IN AMERICA AND THEIR MUSIC

Emigration

This thesis is not the place to discuss in detail the Irish diaspora or its origins, but since Irish music arrived in America on its tide, certain aspects must be explained if the subsequent fortunes of the music in the New World are to be understood.

Emigration from Ireland to America is unfortunately still an aspect of modern Irish society, but for our historical purposes here we are considering only emigration which occurred before the second World War. This occurred in several distinct phases.

Pre-famine Emigration

The demographics of the Irish population have never been as simple as various political interests would have us believe. Various waves of invaders, invitees, and long and short term visitors have been, sometimes gone, but have certainly left their mark. In the case of the pre-famine emigrants from Ireland it was almost a case of 'last in, first out'.

The 'Plantation of Ulster' is a loose term for the migration of large numbers of mainly Scots, but also some English settlers to the province of Ulster in the early years of the seventeenth century. The scheme was initiated by the English government who had just

had just seen the end of a strong resistance from the native Irish, and whose intention was to 'Anglicise' the province to prevent the re-establishment of Gaelic, Catholic power. The overwhelming numbers of settlers that arrived soon resulted in radical change over large areas of the Northern counties. Beckett (1981) states:

.....Their example was soon followed by other Scots, in Antrim as well as in Down; and within a generation a great part of both counties had been transformed, in population and way of life, into a sort of extension of the Scottish lowlands.

Throughout the seventeenth century the Protestant Scots planters consolidated their position in the Northern counties. Their noted work ethic, and the development of the linen industry brought a prosperity to those areas which was absent elsewhere. But this was in comparison to the rest of Ireland, and in comparison with England the standard of living was still low. A rise in rents caused by the expiry of the original land leases, and religious discrimination, engendered by 1718, the beginnings of what was to be a great exodus of the group now known as the Scots-Irish to America during the eighteenth century.

Fitzpatrick (1989) reports that one of the first groups to go left that year, led by their Minister James McGregor, from Aughadowey in Co. Derry, inspired by his words:

Brethren, let us depart for God has appointed a new country for us to dwell in. It is called New England. Let us be free of these Pharaohs, these rackers of rents and screwers of tithes and let us go unto the land of Canaan. We are the Lord's ain people and he shall

divide the ocean before us.

Although leaving for reasons of betterment, many emigrants of this period were far from destitute, and they travelled equipped to re-establish a farming lifestyle in America. Those who couldn't often went as indentured servants.

By the 1770's the rate of emigration was in the region of 12,000 a year (Beckett 1981), partly encouraged by a downturn in the linen trade. Throughout the period the numbers emigrating served as an accurate barometer of economic conditions in the province.

The Scots-Irish often found in America the same or even a greater degree of religious intolerance among the puritan Americans, than they had with the Established Church in Ireland. Initially, partly to avoid this, and partly due to the encouragement of the earlier settlers, they moved further west and south, occupying that great area of mountains and valleys generally known as Appalachia. Other ethnic groups seeking freedom of belief such as the English Quakers and several German Protestant sects made up the growing population in this frontier region, but the Scots-Irish were the dominant group culturally, and eventually politically as well.

Early Catholic Emigration

Catholic, Gaelic Irish emigration, did of course take place in this period, but it is generally held that it was not a large enough or concentrated enough movement for its cultural effects to be

Scots-Irish Music

The music that this group brought with them to America has been hailed as the first great injection of Irish music into the cultural melting pot that was eventually to give birth to many of the popular music forms of the twentieth century (O'Connor 1991). However the evidence points to the strong likelihood that the music that the Scots planters carried from the North of Ireland after only a few short generations there, was essentially the music and song of the Scottish lowlands. The Scots-Irish were a fiddle playing, Scots or Lallans speaking (and singing) people, and if the music they brought to America has to be labelled then that label must be Scots and not Irish, even accepting the very close relationship between them. The two peoples, the two cultures, related as they are, are distinct, and the point is further reinforced by the rich vein of songs uncovered in Appalachia by Cecil Sharp in the early years of this century, which are distinctly un-Irish in character. Any similarity between the repertoires of Ireland and Appalachia, evidenced by later collections in Ireland and America is more due to the continuing Scots/English influence in Ireland than to the export of Irish music to America in the eighteenth Century.

Early Catholic Emigration

Catholic, Gaelic Irish emigration, did of course take place in this period, but it is generally held that it was not a large enough or concentrated enough movement for its cultural effects to be

concentrated enough movement for its cultural effects to be detected alongside that of the Scots-Irish.

This mainly Protestant Scots-Irish emigration continued unabated into the first years of the nineteenth century. The pattern was changing however. An 1834 Ordinance Survey census (Fitzpatrick 1989) of 2,000 emigrants from County Londonderry, showed that 60% were Presbyterian, 30% Catholic, and 10% Church of Ireland, revealing some shift in the composition of emigration. It is thought that the increasing levels of Catholic emigration at this time had a cultural effect far less than the numbers would suggest because single males formed the majority, and they tended not to form ethnically centred communities.

Post-Famine Emigration

The massive changes brought about by the famine, still some years in the future, were to alter not only life in Ireland, but also to bring the level of emigration from Ireland to America to a previously undreamed of level.

This time, however, the vast majority of the emigrants were Catholic Irish, of Gaelic origin, if not Gaelic speakers, and it was with this group that Irish traditional music *per se*, first reached America in a significant way.

The decimation of the Irish rural, mainly southern and western population by starvation disease and emigration has been well told by various authorities and need not be repeated here. A

few statistics though, dealing with the emigration that resulted will help establish a basis for what is to follow. Lyons (1971) tells us all we need to know for the purposes of this work (the famine began in 1845).

Thus the formidable figure for 1846, some 116,000, was easily surpassed the following year when 230,000 left for North America and Australia, apart altogether from the uncounted thousands who crossed the Irish Sea to Britain. The false dawn of the better season of 1847 reduced the flow considerably, but the renewed crop failure of 1847 at once swelled it again to a torrent, and in a few short months in the latter part of the year 200,000 left the country - a haemorrhage which was to become an annual *average* for the years 1849 to 1852 and to produce a total emigration of some two million for the decade 1845 to 1855.

There are many great differences between the emigrants that now began to arrive in America from Ireland, and those that had made their way in the last century. Although the vast majority of the post famine wave were rural Irish from the poorer south and west of the country, it seems that they left behind them more than simply a physical place in which to live. It is of course very difficult to establish with any precision the social background of those who left, but it is generally accepted that those hardest hit by the famine and its aftermath of disease and eviction, the rural poor, were very much to the forefront.

Urbanization in America

In contrast to the earlier emigrants, who moved on inland from the coast, hungry for land, and epitomising in many ways the pioneer spirit in their attitude, the post-famine immigrants in general stayed in the east coast cities where they landed. One reason for this is that many simply had no resources to continue the journey, and were too ill, weak, and exhausted after the Atlantic crossing.

Another may be the fact that although these were rural people, they had no real knowledge of agriculture beyond the ability to grow a potato garden, and perhaps keep a pig and a few fowl.

Certainly not enough to equip them for the harsh demanding life in the frontier areas where land was available. It should also be remembered that in essence the east coast cities did not exist as centres of industrial employment in the eighteenth century.

The conditions which the Irish endured in the American cities were in many cases worse than what they had fled in Ireland. Huge slums grew up in cities like Boston and New York, where the newly arrived emigrants existed in unbelievably horrific conditions.

Boston, in particular was notorious for this, in part due to certain

physical restrictions of the city. In human terms, the price was paid. Woodham-Smith (1962) quotes a report which although predating the arrival of the famine refugees, indicates that conditions may well have been worse after their arrival exacerbated an already intolerable situation.

.....Lemuel Shattuck states that among Irish Catholics, between 1841 and 1845, 61.55 per cent died under the age of five; children in the Irish districts, he wrote, seem "literally born to die," and taking the Irish Catholic population as a whole the average age of persons buried, during the same period, was 13.43 years only.

The Irish Language in America

From the point of view of this thesis, the cultural consequences of such a traumatic change in lifestyle are of central importance. How much of the rich oral traditional culture of rural nineteenth century Ireland was brought to America, and how much survived the Boston and New York slums, or dilution in the melting pot of cultures met by the much smaller numbers who ventured beyond the cities? As in other areas of social history, little hard evidence exists and a picture must be patched together from disparate sources. One area which perhaps indicates the level of the trauma is

is the apparent abandonment of the Irish language.

The It is hard to be certain of the proportion of Irish speakers among those who sought relief on the emigrant ships, but although English was beginning to make inroads into the largely Irish and speaking west and south, it is safe to assume that the level of Irish speakers fleeing from the worst hit famine areas was high.

Woodham-Smith (1962) relates that the 'runners' whose livelihood derived from defrauding newly arrived emigrants addressed their victims in Irish, the better to reassure (and cheat) them.

Yet no long term Irish language communities were established in America, and Irish-America seemingly became English speaking overnight, without passing through the several generations of bilingualism that characterised other ethnic groups.

Americ The loss of a language also means the loss of songs in that language, for it has been suggested as a principle (Breathnach 1973) that songs are rarely translated in a period of linguistic shift.

Americ. His tune collections, already referred to in the last chapter, were mostly written down from the playing of musicians in Chicago, in the later years of the nineteenth century, although some were also taken from printed collections and other sources. More directly useful to the matter in hand are O'Neill's two later

The Fate of Irish Traditional Music in America

We have some idea of the music and song that was in some cases the only possession that the emigrant brought from Ireland, and this has been outlined in Chapter 1, but what was its fate in the New World? From the point of view of the researcher, Irish traditional music essentially disappears from view, whether in the crowded streets of New York or the mountains and prairies of the interior. Even Maloney's comprehensive study of Irish music in America (Moloney 1992) has very little to say on the matter, and in terms of publications nineteenth century America is silent save for the 'Songsters', collections of song words, sometimes with music, containing a mixture of some old ballads, but mostly Irish American comic/vaudeville material.

Francis O'Neill's writings, dating from the early years of this century, give us the first insight into the fate of Irish music in America. His tune collections, already referred to in the last chapter, were mostly written down from the playing of musicians in Chicago, in the later years of the nineteenth century, although some were also taken from printed collections and other sources. More directly useful to the matter in hand are O'Neill's two later

works of commentary (O'Neill 1910, 1913) which are the first insight we have into traditional music in Irish-America. He paints a picture of widespread activity in the field, pipers and fiddlers playing in saloons, on ferryboats, and of his delight at the discovery of a musician or tune unknown to him.

One remarkable fact emerges from a study of these books. All (with a very few minor exceptions) of the musicians that O'Neill gives notice to in both books are Irish born, and this is approximately four generations after the arrival of the first numbers of Irish emigrants! Does this imply that there were very few or no native born Irish-American musicians, or that if there were, O'Neill was unaware of them?

The second implication seems very unlikely. One gathers from the books that O'Neill, in his capacity as Chief of Police in Chicago was very well informed about the goings on, musical and otherwise, in the city. It is simply unbelievable that if a musical scene involving second and third generation Irish musicians existed that O'Neill would not have commented on it. On the other hand the idea that at least some of the instrumental music which arrived with the post famine emigrants was not passed on to their children also begs disbelief. The fact is, however, that we have little evidence that this happened to anything other than a very minor extent, and further evidence, presented below, supports the idea that in the Irish-American communities from after the famine to c.1940, traditional music was played mainly by Irish-born new immigrants. Barry

Barry O'Neill (1973), in his introduction to the 1973 Norwood Editions reprint of *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* hints at some of the reasons why this should be so.

While the American Irish continued to define themselves as a community, they abandoned many of the national traits of their homeland. Only a few valued the traditional culture of language or musicianship. Facing poverty, and bigotry by the established, the communities aim was social and financial respectability. The Irish-American press reflected these concerns. It emphasised the gaining of nationhood for Ireland and the contributions of noted Irishmen to the United States. Irish-Americans were to be regarded as full and equal citizens, was its message as it stressed those aspects in which the two countries were alike. This, however, did not include the tradition of itinerant musicianship and crossroads dancing. Search the output of Irish-American journalists authors and political leaders of O'Neill's time for descriptions of rural life back home, and O'Neill's work stands out almost alone, marking the strong mindedness and sense of self of its author.

These thoughts also have parallels in the behaviour of the children of the great Irish musicians who illuminate what has been called the 'Golden Age' of Irish music in America in the 1920s.

Irish America and its Music in the Twentieth Century

The 1920s is important not only from the level of musical activity, and the fact that so many recordings exist, but also because some of the participants survived long enough to be interviewed by musicologists. The picture that emerges is one of a very healthy traditional music/dance scene in the major Irish urban communities. Harry Bradshaw, an R.T.E. radio producer of

¹ Much of the information in the following section is derived from a taped interview with Harry Bradshaw.

traditional music programmes, has made a special study of this period, and tracked down and talked to as many of the musicians and others involved as he could find.¹ He estimates that in the heyday of the 1920s that some 28 Irish ballrooms were in operation in New York. These in many cases were quite large venues, and some had up to four separate rooms where dancing took place. Many had two such rooms. Music for dancing was provided by groups of musicians, which by necessity of audibility had on average six musicians. Some, on the evidence of contemporary newspaper advertisements, had up to fourteen. A simple calculation shows that such a scene provided a lot of work for musicians, and combined with radio shows, and recording for the better known artists, it can be seen that there was a sound economic basis for the existence of a good number of professional musicians.

It is interesting to note that these dance halls advertised both American and Irish music, but this was most likely provided by different bands, at least in the 1920s.

Irish Traditional Song in America

As examination of the existing recordings from the period shows, dance music was only a part of the overall Irish music scene.

Traditional song, in the generally understood sense of unaccompanied singing in either Irish or English does not feature

¹ Much of the information in the following section is derived from a taped interview with Harry Bradshaw.

as re on the recordings, and evidence of its existence in other milieu is
preror difficult to find. The songs that are recorded, on the one hand give
us a tie in to the nineteenth century American songsters, and on the
O'Ne other go some way to explaining the present day perception that
music many Irish-Americans have of Irish music. The relationship
perfor between instrumental music and song as revealed by the 1920s
that recordings is profoundly different to that experienced in Ireland,
music and yet there is ample evidence to show that in many cases the
to tak same musicians were involved in playing dance music and in
much providing 'orchestral' accompaniment for what were essentially
music vaudeville or 'Irish Tenor' singers. from rural backgrounds.

This is patently not the case.

Vaudeville and Irish Traditional Music

very Patsy Touhey and Tom Ennis, both well known pipers, even played
comm dance music as part of a vaudeville act, and even the legendary
witho Coleman danced and played on the popular stage. Irish traditional
point music seems to have had an early presence on the popular stage
some albeit in a limited way, perhaps even being viewed as a novelty act.
envir Laurie (1953) claims:

remarked that he never heard him play anything on record that he

hadn' The first straight musical acts played musical glasses, bells, bnajo, cornet, violin, piano,
Irish bagpipe, sweet potato (*sic*) harmonica, xylophone, and harp.

One explanation for this may be the fact that unlike the wave

New Immigrants and Irish traditional Music

then Again the remarkable feature of all this musical activity, certainly

as represented by the recordings, is that it is almost entirely the prerogative of new immigrants.

The conclusion that begs to be drawn from this fact, and from O'Neill's accounts, is that there was no body of Irish American musicians involved in performance, certainly professional performance, in any ordered way. One would imagine for example, that if there had been second or third generation Irish traditional musicians in New York when the recording industry was beginning to take an interest in such music that they would have made a much greater impression, due to local knowledge, contacts etc. than musicians fresh off the boat, and mostly from rural backgrounds. This is patently not the case.

One further snippet of evidence which supports the theory of very little traditional music activity in the Irish-American community is the repertoire that appears on the recordings. Almost without exception this material can be found in Ireland as well, pointing towards little or no generation of new tunes in America, something which would be expected in a healthy traditional music environment. Jim Coleman, brother of the famous Michael, remarked that he never heard him play anything on record that he hadn't heard him play before he left for the States (Bradshaw, personal communication).

One explanation for this may be the fact that unlike the wave of Scots-Irish emigration which established a population which was then isolated from the homeland by the cessation of further

emigration, the population of post-famine urban Irish-America was continually being 'refreshed' by new arrivals. It could be suggested that perhaps in such a situation Irish-born musicians were held in higher esteem, and besides, there was a constant supply of new talent with the arrival of every boat.

The Recording Industry

The attitude of the recording companies may have had some influence in this regard as well. Selling as they were to an ethnic market, it seems likely that they would have preferred Irish born musicians to attract Irish record buyers. This would seem even more likely in the case of singers, where accent may have been a feature. More work needs to be done in this field, especially with singers from the more popular end of the spectrum, who have not attracted the same attention from researchers.

In some cases, as can be seen from the names in company records, the backing musicians were not Irish. This has led to a common perception among contemporary traditional musicians that many of the piano players, for example, were imposed on the recordings by the studio. This may be a latterday attempt to excuse what was often a musically execrable accompaniment. This idea does not bear examination. Some of the Irish piano players were among the worst 'offenders' in this area, and some non-Irish among the best. The whole area is an inexplicable one, and no satisfactory reason has been put forward to date as to why so many recordings

are 'marred', from the modern point of view at least, in this way. Some musicians seem to have exercised a much greater deal of control over their immediate musical environment than others. James Morrison, who we know was musically literate, often insisted on his own backing musicians, and chose people such as a Polish piano player, Banks, and an Italian, Martin Christy, on banjo and guitar. These were musicians from the popular dance band scene.

Although there were some small Irish controlled companies in operation at the time, such as New Republic or Celtic, the large companies such as Columbia, and Victor had the lion's share of this field as they had of all the others. Although around 40 companies released recordings of Irish music between 1899 and 1942 around 40% of total releases were for Columbia, 18% for Decca, and 16% for Victor as the three major producers.

Loyalty to a particular company or work on a contractual basis seems to be nonexistent. Most musicians who made a number of recordings did so mainly for the bigger companies, but also appear on several of the smaller labels. Part of this may be due to leasing and selling of masters between companies.

The Economics of Recording

Musicians were paid on a one record basis, and were offered a choice between a large lump sum, or a small one plus royalties. Almost all took the larger sum. Payment for recordings was very high even by today's standards. The better known musicians are

American Companies and Numbers of Irish Sides Recorded

Arto	5
Banner	21
Bluebird	45
Brunswick	10
Cameo	3
Cardinal	4
Columbia	1094
Crown	34
Decca	509
Domino	2
Edison	16
Empire	1
Federal	4
Gaelic	5
Gennet	194
Grey Gull	3
Harmony	4
HMV	1
Ind	18
Keltic	2
Lyric	4
Meteor	2
Montgomery Ward	4
Nation's Forum	2
New Republic	12
O'Dowd	8
O'Byrne De Witt	17
Odeon	10
Okeh	93
Pathé	21
Paramount	6
Paroquette	4
Rex	1
Regal Zonophone	16
Shannon	9
Shannon Shore	2
U.S. Everlasting	6
Varsity	1
Victor	460
Vocalion	63

Table 1

² James Morrice, son of Tom Morrison, a fiddle player who recorded at the time, in an interview with Harry Bradshaw.

reported² as earning \$75 a side, at a time when a good weekly wage was \$25! Thus a recording session which resulted in 4 sides, a very feasible afternoon's work, would have given the performer the equivalent of 12 weeks ordinary wages! Against this it must be said that the output of even the most prolific recording artists was small in comparison to those of today. James Morrison, for example, recorded the equivalent of about 6 modern LPs, and Coleman only slightly more.

External Influences

Although the Irish musicians were working and recording in the huge ethnic melting pot of the American east coast cities, there seems to have been little cultural interchange with other groups in the musical sphere at any rate. The only other similar music to the dance music of 1920s Irish-America, was the geographically isolated music of the Appalachian mountains, heir of the music brought by the Scots-Irish. In fact it was the popularity of 'foreign ethnic' recordings which led to the recording of this music and the music of the black population in the 1920s as well. Non-Irish musicians who played Irish music at this time, either seem to have been almost completely acculturated, for example the German accordionist J. J. Kimmel, or to have been sight players who were drafted in by individual musicians or studios. It must also be remembered that the heyday of the ethnic recording boom occupies

² James Morrison, son of Tom Morrison, a flute player who recorded at the time, in an interview with Harry Bradshaw.

only a few short years before it was cut short by the depression, and if it had persisted over a longer period, who knows what intermingling would have resulted. There is some tantalising evidence of this possibility in three recordings that the Flanagan Brothers made for Columbia in November, 1927 under different names. As Tromba Dei Zingari they played a piece called Il Passatempo, listed as Danza Caratteristico, and two Polish sides, Gaidzio Polka as Liaudies Orkestra, and Polka "Kogucik" as Wesola Dwójka. Given that there were plenty of Italian and Polish musicians recording at the time, we can only wonder now what was the motivation behind these recordings.

If we are to look, however, for any major area of influence on the Irish music of the time in America, song as well as dance music, it must be sought in the 'non ethnic' mainline popular music of the day

Summary

The arrival of Irish traditional music in America is examined in light of both pre and post-famine immigration and the changing patterns of immigration in these two periods, and their distinct consequences for Irish culture in America are examined.

A brief look at the fate of the Irish language in America is contrasted with the fate of Irish music there. Lack of evidence is noted as a problem of working in this area, and the work of Francis O'Neill is referred to as one of the only sources.

It is proposed, based on the evidence of O'Neill, accounts from the early twentieth century, and the strong evidence of the early recordings, that Irish traditional music activity was largely restricted to Irish-born immigrants.

The relationship between Irish traditional music and other musics in the USA is noted, and it is suggested that the greatest influence was from the area of popular and vaudeville. The distant relationship, in practical terms, between Irish traditional music and the music of the Appalachians, heavily influenced by the Scots-Irish, is noted in terms of patterns of recording activity.

came about as the result of research in the field of acoustics. Charles Cros, a French scientist, in his attempts to make a visual record of sound invented a machine called the Phonautograph which by means of a vibrating diaphragm, a stylus, and a rotating disc, achieved that end. Edison, who was familiar with Cros's work, strove to develop a practical application of the principle, and using the same basic elements in a different form, invented the phonograph on July eighteenth, 1877.

Edison's commercial success led to him trying to market the machine as a Dictaphone, but due to lack of interest in the business community, he let the idea lapse, even to the extent of letting go control of the patents (Chanas 1995).

In 1885, the invention of the wax cylinder was the doorway to a renewed interest in the phonograph, and by 1890 the first

COMMERCIAL IRISH RECORDINGS IN AMERICA 1899-1942**The Background to the Ethnic Recording Boom**

The advent of sound recording, which is nowadays seen as a revolutionary advance in media technology, was seen in its own time as more of a curiosity, with perhaps some limited practical applications.

The development of sound recording towards the end of the nineteenth century (Gelatt 1977, Read & Welch 1976, Sherman 1992) came about as the result of research in the field of acoustics. Charles Cros, a French scientist, in his attempts to make a visual record of sound invented a machine called the Phonautograph which by means of a vibrating diaphragm, a stylus, and a rotating disc, achieved that end. Edison, who was familiar with Cros's work, strove to develop a practical application of the principle, and using the same basic elements in a different form, invented the phonograph on July eighteenth, 1877.

Edison's commercial acumen led to him trying to market the machine as a Dictaphone, but due to lack of interest in the business community, he let the idea lapse, even to the extent of letting go control of the patents (Chanan 1995).

In 1885, the invention of the wax cylinder was the doorway to a renewed interest in the phonograph, and by 1890 the first

commercial cylinder recordings were available. However the fact that cylinders could not be readily mass produced was a severe commercial limitation, and it was largely due to the fact that the flat disc type record was in essence mass-reproducible that accounted for its increasing share of the market, although the sound quality obtainable was inferior to that of the cylinder.

The development of the disc, and the equipment that played it, the Gramophone, was largely the work of a German emigrant, Emile Berliner who first produced a machine operating on this principle in 1887. Again, the musical connotations of the invention were largely overlooked at first, and initial commercial applications included a talking doll and a 'toy' gramophone. Problems with durability, and surface noise led to the development of the shellac based disc by 1897. Early plastics such as Ebonite had been used for discs, and although a durable material one major drawback was that few copies could be pressed from the master before it wore out. The shellac based disc solved this problem and it remained the basic standard until the Second World War resulted in shortages of shellac, which came from the Far East. Vinyl, as a material for discs was developed in response to this.

Certain other technological problems slowed the advance of the Gramophone as a popular medium. The more expensive Phonographs had electric motors which gave them a very regular playback speed, but the expense of this meant they were restricted to the luxury market. In 1896, Berliner, using a spring driven

developed by a mechanic called Elridge Johnson produced a Gramophone which was cheap and reliable.

Competition between the two systems probably led to faster technological development than would have been the case with one unopposed system, but the disc eventually won out, and the cylinder was essentially obsolete before the first World War.

music from the very inception of the recording industry. By 1900

Sound Recording and the World of Music

The realisation that sound recording had a serious role to play in music of all sorts happened quickly after reliable records and playback equipment had been developed. Despite the fact that some commentators saw it as the beginning of the end of all music, or leading to mass unemployment among musicians, many well known performers in all fields were quickly drawn to the idea, a fact in itself which speedily legitimised the medium.

The physical fact that two elements, the record and the player were necessary in the process is an important element in the economics of the development of the record industry, and particularly its growth in ethnic cultures worldwide, and among ethnic groups in America. It is too often forgotten that what we think of as primarily record companies such as Victor, and Columbia, were also manufacturers of gramophones, and that large parts of their energies, and turnovers, were devoted to this end. Selling records needed a large population with the equipment to play them, and people would not buy machines unless there was a

big enough variety of the type of records that interested them available.

The realisation of this fact, against the reality of ethnic diversity in the New York home of the embryonic recording industry in the early years of this century, goes a long way towards explaining the presence of large numbers of recordings of ethnic music from the very inception of the recording industry. By 1900 the Gramophone Company had 5,000 titles in many different languages. Record companies deliberately exploited the ethnic market realising that people would enter the record/gramophone market much more easily if they were attracted by records in their own language. Gronow (1982) quotes the following from the Columbia company's in-house magazine from 1909:

remember that in all large cities and in most towns there are sections where people of one nationality or another congregate in "colonies." Most of these people keep up the habits and prefer to speak the language of the old country. Speak to them in their own tongue if you can, see their faces light up with a smile that linger and hear the streak of language they will give you in reply. To these people RECORDS IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE have an irresistible attraction and they will buy them readily. (Original Emphasis)

The record companies, in order to satisfy the demand which they had initiated for such records, recorded material from a very diverse group of countries and cultures. Obviously the ethnic societies which were well represented in the United States, such as the Germans, the Italians, the Poles, and the Irish, were the main marketing targets, but the tentacles of commerce touched almost

every European, Asian and American society, no matter how seemingly insignificant the financial return.

The emergence of several large companies in the same area led to very vigorous marketing, and this goes some way to explaining the lengths to which they went in their attempts to dominate the market. It must be remembered that at this early stage there was still intense competition not only between the different companies, but also between the formats of disc and cylinder. Although the terms Phonograph and Gramophone are often used interchangeably, it is important to remember that they are quite distinct. The Phonograph is the recording/playing machine of the Edison Company which used only cylinders. The Gramophone is the disc playing-only machine used by the other major companies, who found themselves in competition not only with Edison, but also with each other, in that all Gramophones could play discs produced by all the competitors.

The numbers of recordings available of a particular ethnic group need not necessarily indicate recording activity among emigrants in America, and especially at the outset, many recordings made in Europe were re-released in America. The Gramophone Company, whose licence to record covered the globe with the important exceptions of America, China, and Japan, made c. 200,000 records in the 1898-1921 period, many of which would have been re-released by themselves or on licence to other companies in the U.S. This factor does not apply to Irish recordings which were

recorded almost exclusively in America in this period.

Recordings of emigrant musicians were of course made right from the very start of the era, but they become a more established and indeed dominant feature with most ethnic groups slightly later on, as the momentum of the increasing number of gramophone owners/record buyers increased. In many cases where dance music made up a goodly proportion of the recordings, there was an important relationship between live appearances and record sales which of course was not overlooked by the companies. As a measure of the importance of the ethnic section within the industry in general Gronow (1982) gives the statistic that for one of the major companies, Columbia, between 1908 and 1923 ethnic releases were numerically the most important, with 6,000 issues as opposed to 5,000 domestic/popular issues.

Although the big companies continued to dominate, smaller companies, often with a particular ethnic interest began to proliferate, and Irish recordings can serve as a good example of this with around 40 companies involved in the total 1899-1942 period. The early twenties saw the heaviest competition with 11 companies issuing Irish records in 1922.

An interesting effect of the success of what might be called 'foreign ethnic' recordings was the development of the 'home ethnic' market for race and hill billy records aimed at the black and southern rural white populations respectively, which began to develop in the early 1920s.

¹ The 'Polka' music boom of the late 1940's is an exception to this general rule.

The overall timescale of the initiation, development, and subsequent collapse of the ethnic record industry in America seems to follow a similar pattern for all ethnic groups, which may have important economic reasons behind it. Recordings are present but intermittent until the end of the first World War. Activity increases, and the twenties see what can only be described as a boom, which peaked just after the middle of the decade. Numbers recover slightly in the mid to late thirties and the final collapse comes in the early forties¹, when a combination of decreasing ethnicity of second generation immigrants, the War requisition of shellac, and the 'Petrillo Ban' union strike effectively sounded the death knell of ethnic recordings as a major force in the American recording industry for some time.

It is important to note here that in overall terms, the record industry boomed as never before after the second World War, but that ethnic records ceased to play a significant part in this.

A Survey of Commercial Recordings in America 1899-1942

Sources

Several sources of information about the recordings in this period were used, including sleeve notes from revival re-issues of 78s, and some very small amount of contemporary popular press accounts. The vast majority of the information however was gleaned from Spottswood's *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic*

¹ The 'Polka' music boom of the late 1940's is an exception to this general rule.

recordings Produced in the United States, 1893-1942 (Spottswood 1990). This is organised along ethnic lines and the Irish section lists almost 3,000 issues of a broad range of types of music which fall under the label 'Irish'. Entries are alphabetical by performer and each entry lists chronologically the recordings of each artist, giving the title and classification, (reel, jig, etc.) if the performer is listed as an instrumentalist rather than a singer. Other information includes the location of the recording, the record company and catalogue number of the recording on the first and subsequent issues, and the matrix no. of the recording.

Spottswood's listings allow us an insight into the world of Irish music in America in the first half of this century. The discography is not completely comprehensive, mainly because Spottswood omitted some performers as not being Irish or as not performing Irish material. John McCormack for example is omitted, and details of his phonograms had to be sourced elsewhere (McDermott Roe 1972). This seems a strange omission, especially given that many similar artists are included. Otherwise it is complete enough to allow the building up of a comparative picture of the type of music recorded.

In this survey of the recordings I extracted information from the sources under the following headings:

Name of Performer

Date of recording

Location of recording

Main instrument/vocal

solo/ensemble

No. of sides

Type (my own classification)

Excluded Types

The music which Spottswood chose to include under the Irish ethnic label covers a wide range of types of music, which can be classified in various ways, but in fact if we look back to the last chapter and its treatment of Irish music in the nineteenth century we find that most of the types of music that were under discussion there are present, albeit with some important exceptions.

The major exceptions which will be discussed later, as this chapter deals with the music actually recorded, are;

1/ Traditional song sung in a traditional style.

Although song is an important part of these recordings, the type of songs, or more particularly the style associated with the rural social genres, i.e. unaccompanied lyrical songs in Irish, or the common narrative ballads in English, either are completely absent, or in a modified form represent only a tiny percentage of the overall body of recordings.

2/ Art music arrangements of traditional material.

All the other types are represented to a significant extent.

The First Commercial Recordings of Irish Music

The first commercial recordings of Irish material in the States are cylinder recordings produced by the Edison company of uilleann piper James C. McAuliffe in 1899. He recorded four 2 minute cylinders in that year, two of dance music, Miss McCloud's Reel and the hornpipe The Stack of Barley, and two song airs, The Minstrel Boy, and Donnybrook Fair. Several other artists recorded Irish dance music in this early period, most notably the accordion player John Kimmel, but in reality very few recordings were made until after the first World War.

Healy (1979) sees Irish recordings in the 78 rpm era as going through five periods which he describes as:

- 1/ 1900-1914. Characterised by mainly non-Irish studio performers.
- 2/1914/15-1922. Increasing numbers of Irish musicians appearing.
- 3/1922-32. The main period. Almost exclusively Irish musicians.
- 4/1932-42. Increasing re-issuing and re-release. Little new recording.
- 5/Post 1942. Decrease in interest by major companies.

I would broadly agree with these divisions, even though Healy's analysis was made for different reasons to those which motivated the following survey.

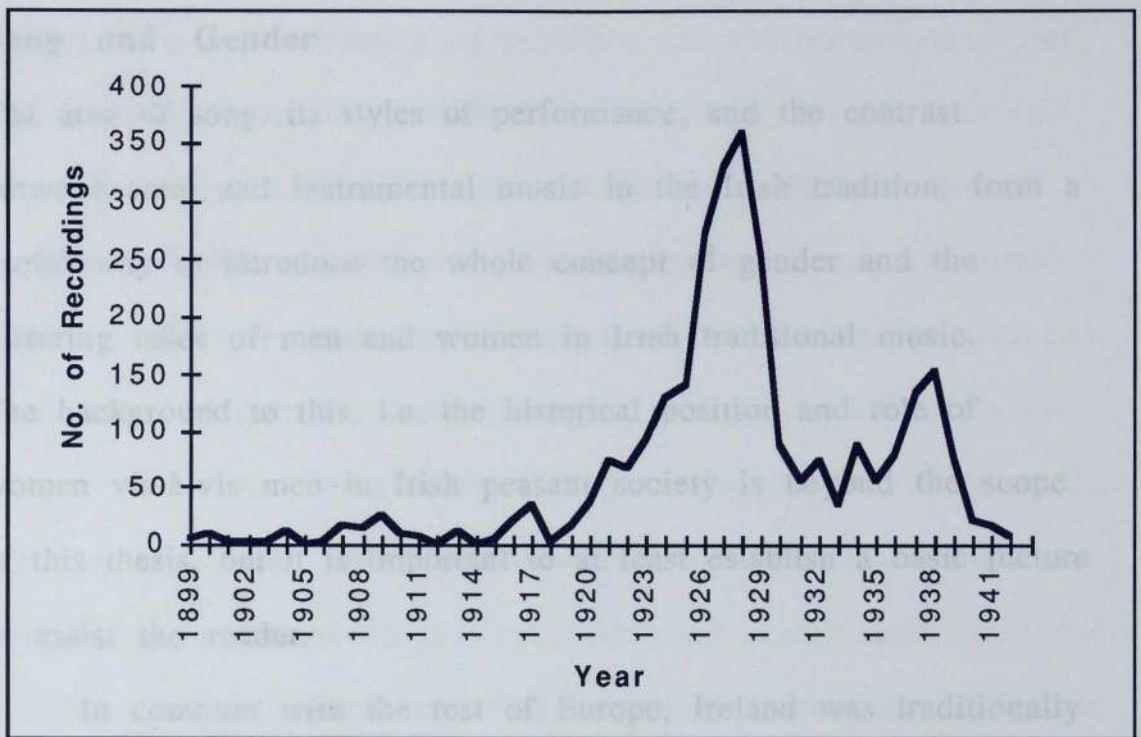


Fig. 2 Total releases per year 1899-1942

The small number of pre-war releases may be a reflection of technology or economics rather than an indication of the level of musical activity or a demand for recordings. Cylinder machines were expensive, and as such would not have been readily available to the Irish community in general. The cylinders themselves were also expensive, given that duplication processes were still in their infancy at this time. Disc recordings had also been around since 1887, and in America since 1894. The first releases of Irish music in this format were John Kimmel's 1904-5 recordings. Up until the First World War there was a great deal of competition between the disc and cylinder formats (Chanan 1995), and although the cylinder hung on until 1929, from the point of view of commercial recordings of Irish music it plays only a very minor role.

Song and Gender

The area of song, its styles of performance, and the contrast between song and instrumental music in the Irish tradition, form a useful way to introduce the whole concept of gender and the differing roles of men and women in Irish traditional music. The background to this, i.e. the historical position and role of women vis-à-vis men in Irish peasant society is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to at least establish a basic picture to assist the reader.

In common with the rest of Europe, Ireland was traditionally a strongly patrilineal society, a situation which was reinforced by both the legal and religious systems. At all levels of society, women's role was almost entirely domestic, concerned with the production and care of children, and all aspects of domestic economy. In peasant society women were expected to do all the physical tasks that such work entailed, and some of the food production work such as that concerning butter and eggs, typical of the Irish rural economy, traditionally fell to them as well.

In any society, a degree of 'leisure' time is necessary to the development of any amount of musical activity, not only as time for musical performance, but also just as importantly, for the development of the skills involved. The seasonal nature of the rural economy provided this within Irish peasant society but in a rather uneven way. The landless labourer, and small farmers whose activities, in the nineteenth century at any rate, revolved around

the planting and harvesting of potatoes, and the production of turf for fuel, found themselves with some amount of leisure at certain times of the year, but this applied unevenly to different groups even within this seemingly homogenous group. Young unmarried adults would have had more leisure time than married people, and since the patterns of marriage changed radically in Ireland in the course of the nineteenth century, in particular after the Famine, the proportions of these groups changed quite radically as well. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Irish rural society had developed a large group of unmarried males, prevented from marrying by the lack of land and property to bring to a marriage, and which would only come to them on the death of their fathers. This also meant that only one son from the often very large families would be able to marry eventually, and this had, in my opinion, consequences on two fronts. Firstly it produced a large group of bachelors who in general lived with their parents or other relatives, sometimes to an advanced age. This group, I feel, were until recently very important in the social history of traditional music in Ireland. Their lack of domestic responsibility often meant that more than any other group, they had the time to devote to musical activity. Secondly, musical events, such as ceiliing and crossroads or platform dancing, were the social events where it was possible to meet the opposite sex, and as such these events were eagerly patronised by this group.

The other major consequence of this enforced propertyless

bachelorhood was a huge increase in emigration among this group, who saw no prospects for their future in Ireland, and although difficult to estimate quantitatively, I would suggest that this had a considerable impact on Irish music in America.

As one moves up the economic scale in rural society to the stronger farmers the amount of leisure time available becomes more limited. In conjunction with this, the work ethic associated with the more successful farmers implied that for them, music was not something that time should be given to, as not economically important.

Against this background it might be imagined that women would have played a much more restricted role in musical life than men, and in fact this was largely the case, certainly up to the revival period, where a change in the male dominated pattern begins to appear. In particular, women's domestic roles meant that even when leisure time from economic activities was available that women were less able to share in it.

Written accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and verbal evidence from the present century establish that instrumental music was completely male dominated. This is not to say that women instrumentalists were unknown (see Little 1943), but they were certainly unusual. O'Neill's works (1903, 1910) mention some few women performers, a tiny proportion of the total, but he gives no special notice to them as women, reinforcing the 'unusual but not unknown', categorisation.

Although it is evident that women did on occasion perform instrumental music, their major involvement with traditional music performance was in the area of song and dance. As stressed above, the overall role that women played in Irish society meant that they had little leisure time to devote to musical activity, particularly after they were married, but this did not apply in the area of traditional song, which could be learned and performed without leaving the domestic context.¹ (see Rice 1995 for an interesting parallel in Bulgarian peasant society)

The other major area of involvement for women was in dancing. Many sources attest the popularity of dancing over a long period, and although certain dances were seen as specifically male or female, the majority were danced by both sexes, and in fact dancing was one of the major areas of interaction between unmarried people of both sexes, and the major way in which women became involved in instrumental music.

The above description of gender differences within Irish traditional music holds true for much of the nineteenth century and indeed in many places for the twentieth, certainly up until the decline which occurred after the second World War.

However, from the mid to late nineteenth century, changes

¹ Women played a dominant role in *caoine*, vocal lament for the dead, and professional *caointeoreacht* was exclusively the prerogative of women.

were beginning to occur, albeit at a very slow pace. The introduction of new instruments, for example the mass produced free reed accordion and concertina, had some effect. These instruments because of their nature required less time to acquire a level of competency, and this suited women who as explained above had less time to devote to musical activity. The concertina, above other instruments, became known as a women's instrument, although in fact the majority of players were men. It is true that a higher proportion of women seem to have played it in contrast to other instruments.

The revival, coming as it did at a period where women were beginning to move outside their traditional roles on many fronts in society, saw the beginning of a radical change in the role of women in the instrumental tradition, so that at the present time practical involvement in instrumental music seems to be the equal prerogative of both sexes. Certainly in the observation of areas such as sessions and traditional music classes women are to be seen in equal, or in even greater numbers than men. If access to commercial recording is seen as a measure of achievement or success in traditional music it must be said that the proportional gender division as seen in amateur performance is not reflected in commercial recordings to date.

In terms of the early American recordings covered in this chapter, out of a total of 2815 sides under consideration only 69 can

be assigned to women performers.² Further examination shows that of this 68, 50 are recordings of English language song. In terms of performance style, I would propose that the majority of these women fell into the 'trained singer' category (see p. 113 below). Their repertoire tended to have a somewhat different bias to that of male singers, with a much higher proportion of 'serious' song, and much less comic or vaudeville material.

In instrumental terms the accordion is perhaps surprisingly the most common choice of recorded female performers, with 10 sides recorded by Mrs. Margret McNiff-Locke, and 2 each by Mrs. Redie Johnston and Mary Eileen Conlon. There are 4 sides of banjo played by the daughter of Margret McNiff-Locke (as a duet with her mother), and an unusual single side of dance music played on the piano by Eleanor Kane.

Whether this admittedly tiny proportion of recorded female performers is a fair reflection of the numbers of 'recordable' female performers at the time is a moot point. I would personally feel, that while a lot more research needs to be done in this area, there were probably more women playing traditional music at the time than the numbers of recordings would suggest. Details of women performers in the revival period are covered in Chapter 7.

² This figure excludes the 96 sides which the family group The McNultys recorded in the 1930s. 'Ma' McNulty features strongly both as a singer and instrumentalist with this group, which makes her by far the most recorded female performer of this period. She is excluded because her recordings were as part of an ensemble.

Irish Songs

The treatment of song in these recordings is an exceptionally difficult area on which to impose any classification. Even if broad generalisations are utilised, the way in which many performers had a habit of including songs of radically different provenance in the same group of recordings or even sometimes on the same recording tends to make a nonsense of these. If for the moment we ignore this cross-over tendency of the performers, a useful way to impose some order in the chaos is to look at the body of recorded song as having three basic categories, and two basic performance styles.

Categories of Irish Song

The categories use the origin of the material as the basis of differentiation, thus:

1/ Songs of Irish origin, i.e. those which would have already been in the repertoire of singers prior to emigration and would have been from the traditional repertoire in Ireland, but also including material influenced by traditional song, but still originating in Ireland e.g. the songs of Thomas Moore. Although representing only a small section of the overall recorded material they can be subdivided as follows:

a/ Traditional songs, those which would have been in the repertoire for a considerable period in Ireland.

b/ Nationalist songs, ranging from the songs of the Young Irishmen to more recent compositions of a political nature.

c/ 'Ballad Poetry' such as that of Moore and Lover set to Irish airs. elements of the popular stage, or street singing style. It is direct

2/ Songs originating in the Irish-American community. These are typified by their textual content, and many in fact use the same melodies as category 1/. They tend to be either nostalgic or comic in content, and are heavily influenced by the vaudeville/music hall tradition. Many would have been published in the 'Songsters' listed by Moloney (Moloney 1992) had a strong Irish connection, provided much of this material (Moloney 1993). In this regard,

3/ Songs originating outside the Irish or Irish-American communities. This type of material was written by composers of popular song (tin-pan alley) who were simply using ethnic association as a commercial ploy. Song lyrics are usually careful to use words which establish the song as an 'Irish' one, although the subject matter may only tenuously deal with Ireland. Melodies owe much more to the popular music of the day than to Irish traditional tunes, but some rhythms and melodic devices perceived as being typically Irish may be used.

Performance Style on Recordings

These categories of song are presented by performers in two basically different styles.

1/ The Trained Singer. These performers are listed as tenors (by far the most common) baritones, basses, or sopranos.

2/ 'Vocalists' (my own term). Listed most often simply as 'vocal'.

Their style of singing is closer to the traditional style but has strong elements of the popular stage, or street singing style. It is direct and undecorated.

Both types of singer can be heard singing all the categories of song, but there are some tendencies which can be noted.

The trained singers are more often heard singing 'serious' songs. Comic song was immensely popular and the vaudeville tradition in the States, which had a strong Irish connection, provided much of this material (Moloney 1993). In this regard, 'serious' song includes some of the tin-pan alley compositions. The trained singers have several other characteristics which identify them. They were soloists in the sense that although they almost exclusively sang with instrumental accompaniment, they were only singers, and not instrumentalists. Secondly, although the term 'orchestra' indicates a much smaller group of as little as three musicians in many cases in these listings, they tended to either to perform with larger ensembles playing reasonably complex arrangements, or with a piano accompaniment leaning heavily towards an art music style.

'Vocalists' on the other hand relied heavily on comic/vaudeville song as the basis of their repertoire. Again almost never performing without accompaniment, this tended to be in the form of a group of musicians playing 'traditional' instruments, who also played selections of dance tunes. The accompaniment often simply consisted of the musicians playing the air of the song in

unison along with the singer. In very many cases the singer was also a musician himself, who joined the others in playing selections of dance tunes.

Song in all these categories forms an exceptionally important part of the total mass of recordings. Fig. 3 shows the numbers of song recordings per year in the period under consideration, and the proportion of the total releases that they formed.

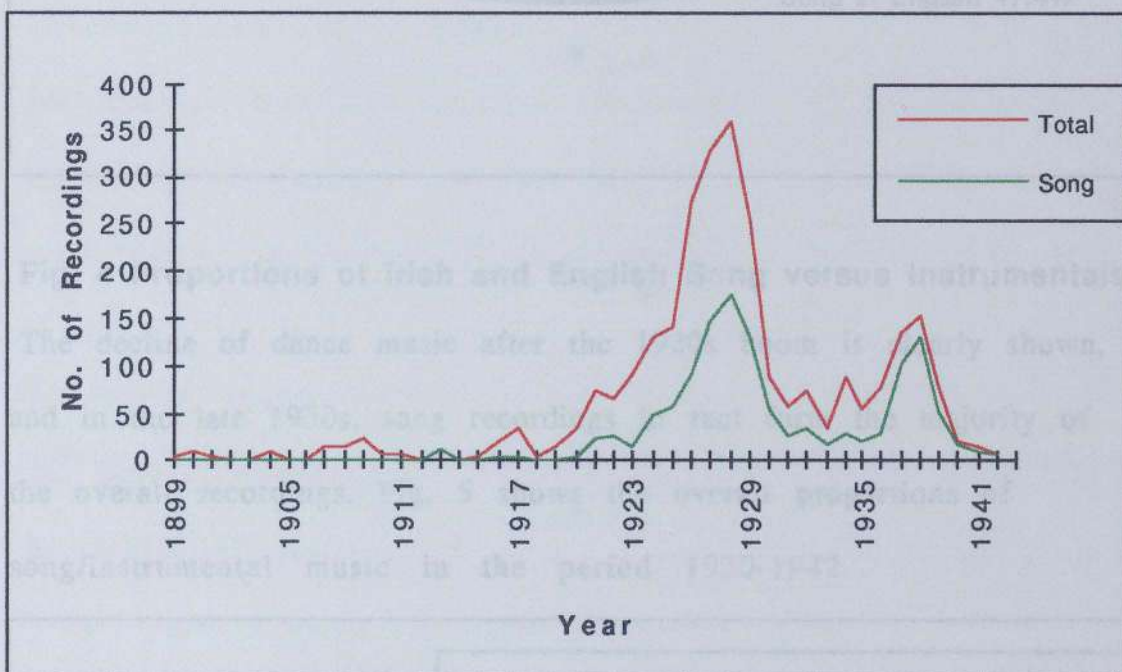


Fig. 3 Song Recordings per Year, and as a proportion of total Recordings.

Looked at in total between 1899 and 1942, song forms a considerable part of the total releases.

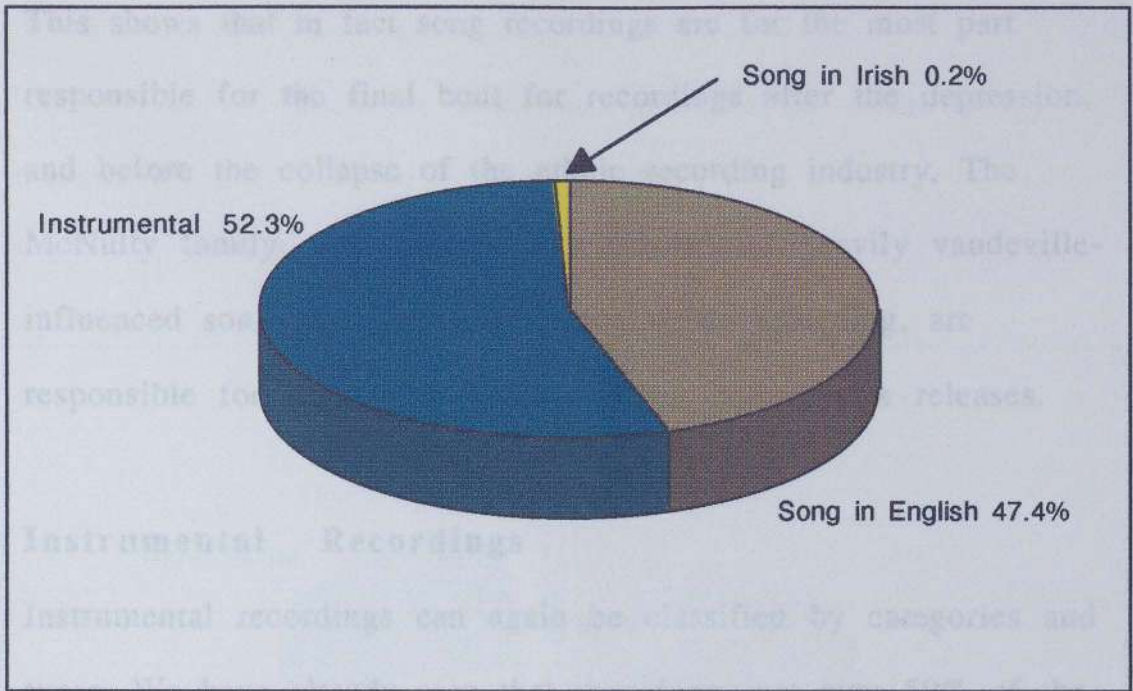


Fig. 4 Proportions of Irish and English Song versus Instrumentals

The decline of dance music after the 1920s boom is clearly shown, and in the late 1930s, song recordings in fact form the majority of the overall recordings. Fig. 5 shows the overall proportions of song/instrumental music in the period 1930-1942.

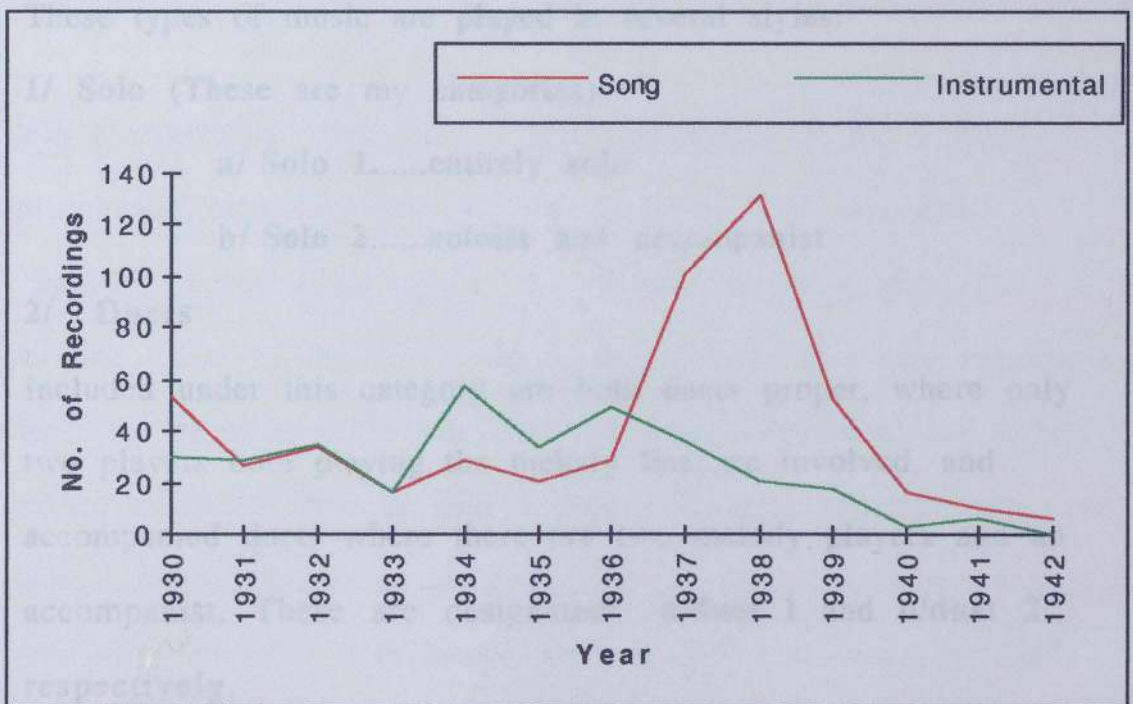


Fig. 5 Proportions of Song/Instrumentals in the 1930s

This shows that in fact song recordings are for the most part responsible for the final bout for recordings after the depression, and before the collapse of the ethnic recording industry. The McNulty family, who performed a mixture of heavily vaudeville-influenced song and occasional dance music recording, are responsible for a large proportion of the late thirties releases.

Instrumental Recordings

Instrumental recordings can again be classified by categories and types. We have already seen that they form just over 50% of the total body of recordings and this consists of the following categories of music.

- 1/ Dance music.**
- 2/ Song Airs/Pieces**
- 3/ National music.**

These types of music are played in several styles:

- 1/ Solo** (These are my categories)

a/ Solo 1.....entirely solo

b/ Solo 2.....soloist and accompanist

- 2/ Duets**

Included under this category are both duets proper, where only two players both playing the melody line are involved, and accompanied duets where there are two melody players and an accompanist. These are designated **a/duet 1** and **b/duet 2** respectively.

3/ Ensemble

This is taken to mean any ensemble with three or more melody instruments, and has two sub categories:

a/ Band.

b/ Military and/or Pipebands.

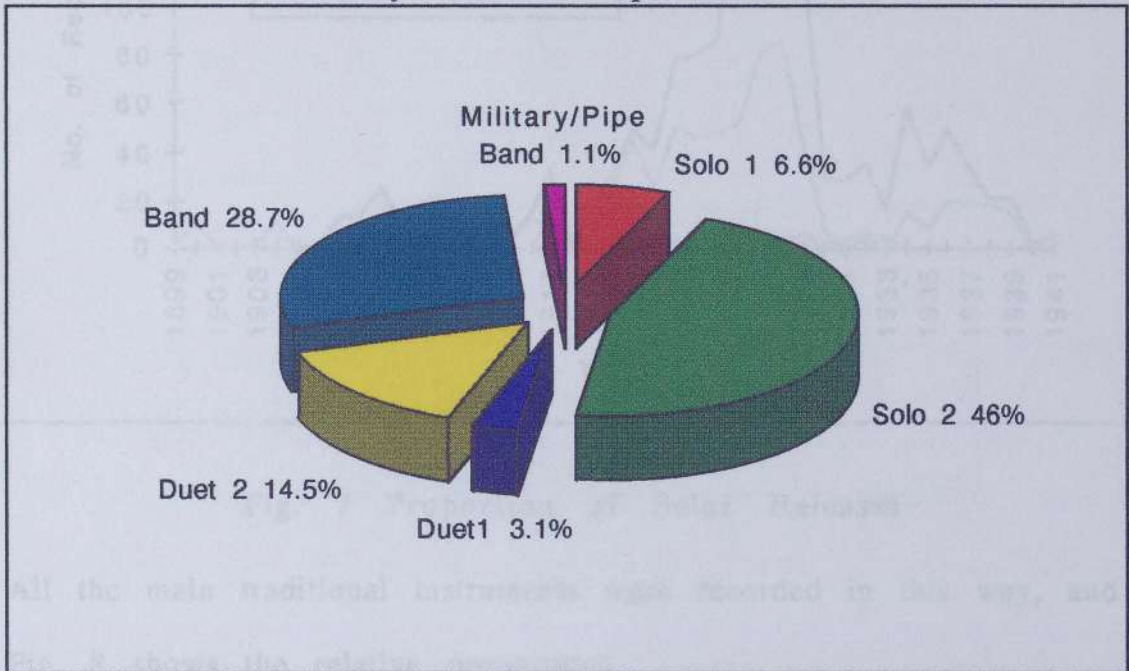


Fig. 6 American 78's. Categories of Instrumental Recordings

Solo 1 recordings form only a small percentage of the overall instrumental recordings, but as Fig. 7 shows, this remained reasonably constant throughout the period, surviving even the crushing effect of the depression in the thirties. This may indicate a small but constant market for such recordings. Some of the better known musicians recorded solo 1 sides, including Coleman who was unusual in that he never recorded with an ensemble. Many who were well known as solo artists, such as James Morrison or Paddy

Killoran, always played with an accompanist.

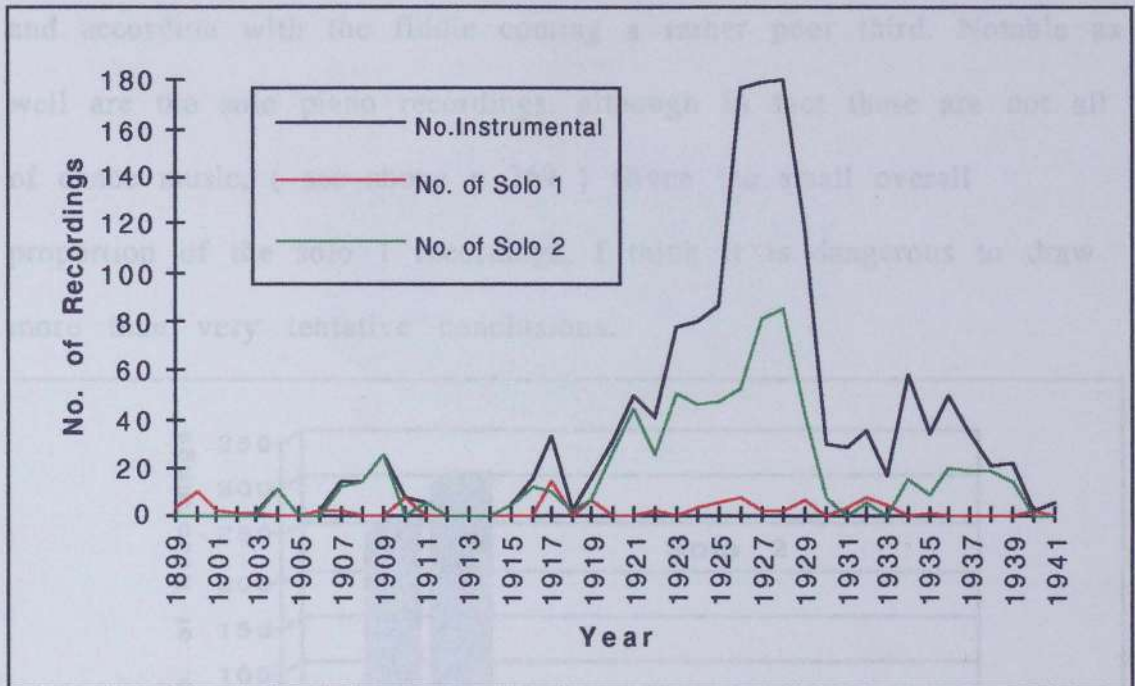


Fig. 7 Proportion of Solo1 Releases

All the main traditional instruments were recorded in this way, and Fig. 8 shows the relative proportions.

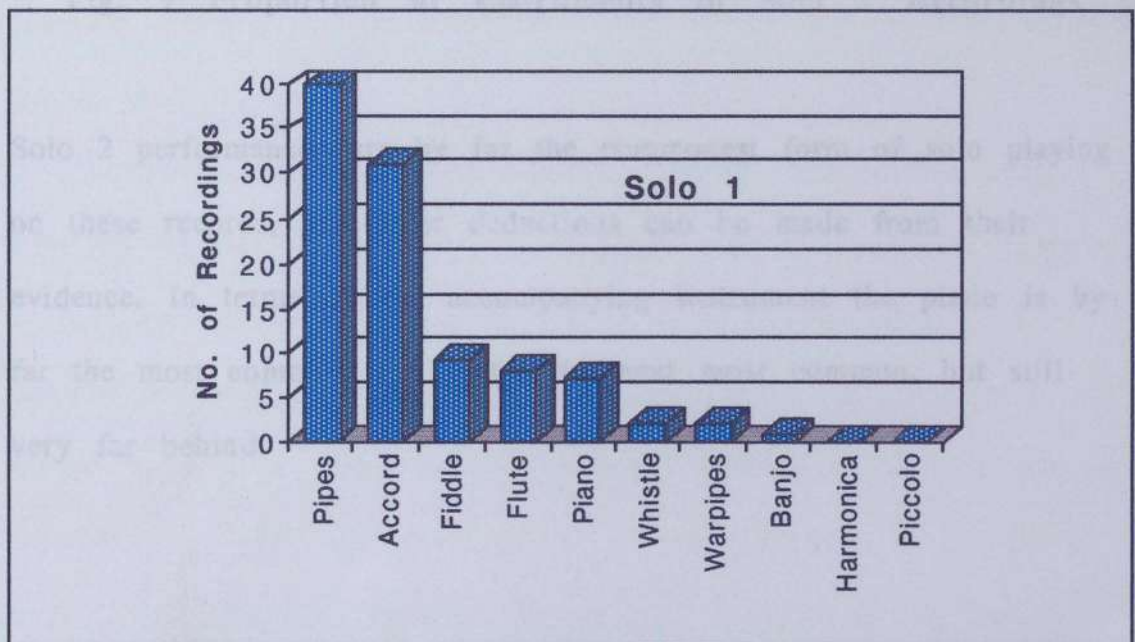


Fig. 8 Proportions of Instruments in Solo 1 Recordings.

It is interesting that the lion's share of these recordings are of pipes and accordion with the fiddle coming a rather poor third. Notable as well are the solo piano recordings, although in fact these are not all of dance music. (see above p 269) Given the small overall proportion of the solo 1 recordings, I think it is dangerous to draw more than very tentative conclusions.

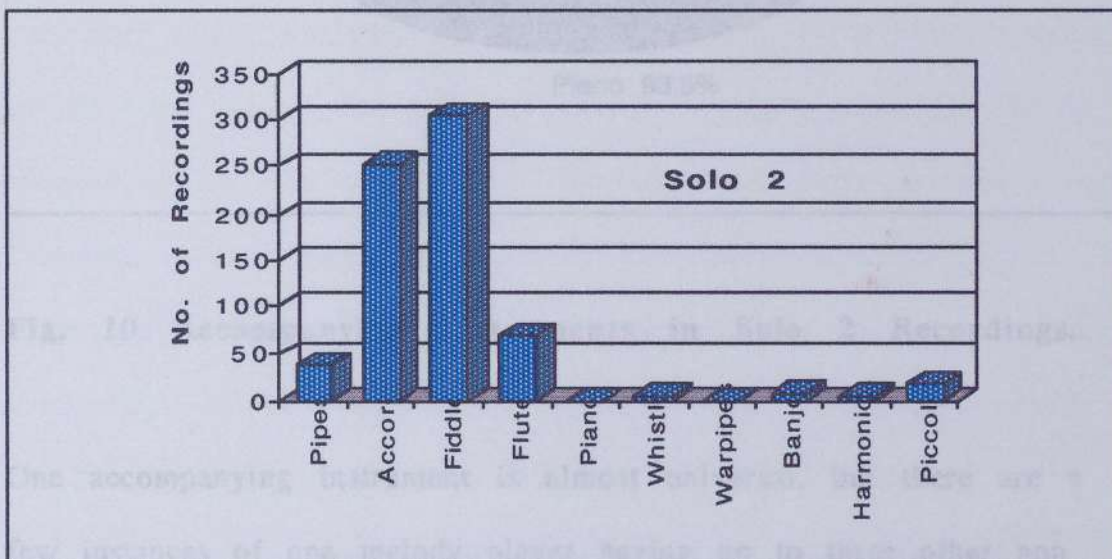


Fig. 9 Proportion of Instruments in Solo 2 Recordings

Solo 2 performances are by far the commonest form of solo playing on these records, and safer deductions can be made from their evidence. In terms of the accompanying instrument the piano is by far the most common, the guitar the next most common, but still very far behind.

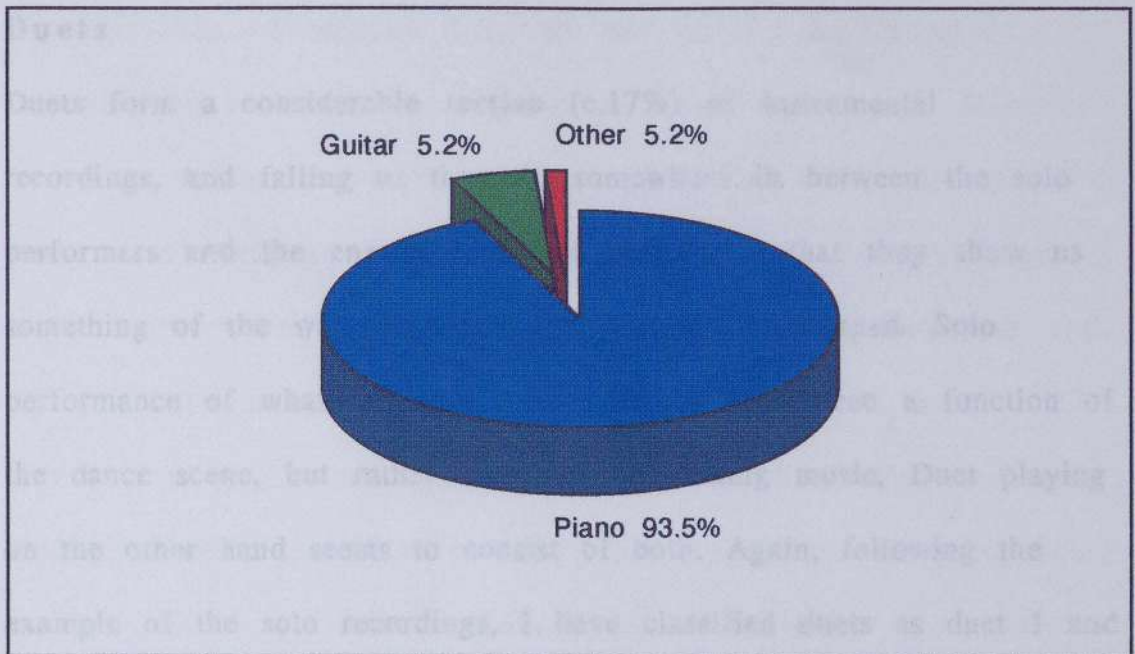


Fig. 10 Accompanying Instruments in Solo 2 Recordings.

One accompanying instrument is almost universal, but there are a few instances of one melody player having up to three other non melody players in an accompanying role, an example being The Emerald Quartet, who recorded four sides for Victor in 1927, using fiddle, piano, guitar, and traps.

Ensembles such as The Emerald Quartet, and several others who went under the name of trios, might also justifiably be placed in the same group as ensembles on the basis of the number of players involved, but until further evidence comes to light with regard to whether these ensembles were simply recording artists or whether they were also involved in the very active live dance scene I feel that their inclusion in the solo 2 group on the basis of the number of melody instruments is justified.

Duets

Duets form a considerable section (c.17%) of instrumental recordings, and falling as they do somewhere in between the solo performers and the ensembles are important in that they show us something of the way in which the ensemble developed. Solo performance of whatever type seems not to have been a function of the dance scene, but rather consists of listening music. Duet playing on the other hand seems to consist of both. Again, following the example of the solo recordings, I have classified duets as duet 1 and 2, where duet 1 implies two melody instruments with no accompaniment, and duet 2 indicates two melody instruments and an accompanist. Of a total of 261 sides of duet playing, 214 or 82% are duet 2, and the remainder (47 sides, 18%) are duet 1.

The combinations of instruments used in these duets is revealing.

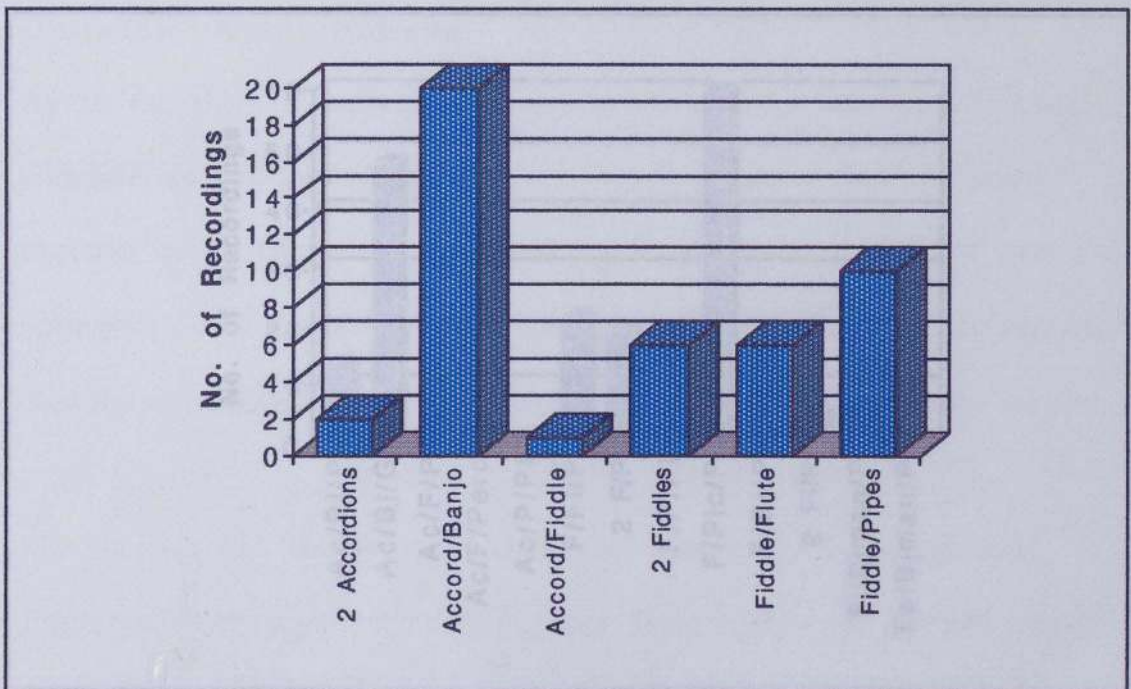


Fig. 11 Instrumental Combinations in Duet 1 Recordings

Again it must be stressed that with the small overall number of recordings it is dangerous to draw too many conclusions. However the preponderance of the accordion and banjo combination seems to have some significance. The recording made by accordion player Eddie Herborn and banjo player James Wheeler on September 15th 1916, is often quoted as the beginning of the boom in Irish recording in the States (Maloney 1982), and there may have been some attempt to capitalise on the popularity of this recording which reputedly sold well. The banjo/accordion combination was in all probability also popular as a live combination for dance venues, given the loudness of both instruments. This also made it a suitable combination for pre- electric recording. Notably scarce or absent are combinations which became popular in the revival period. The popularity of this and other combinations in accompanied duets can be seen in Fig. 12 below.

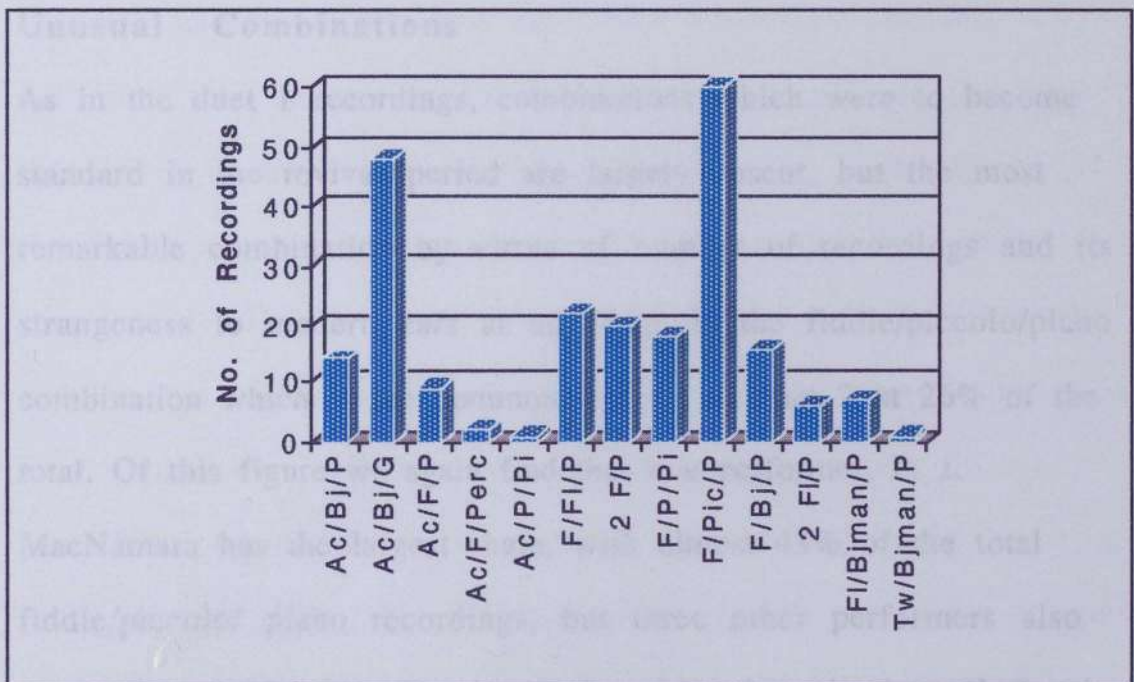


Fig. 12 Instrumental combinations in Duet 2 Recordings

The success of the banjo/accordion combination is evident in the accompanied duets as well. The first two bars of Fig. 12 (totalling 30% of all the recordings) represent the banjo/accordion recordings. Surprisingly, although the piano is present as an accompanying instrument on 63% of the duet 2 recordings it is only on 22.5% of the banjo/accordion sides, and as Fig. 12 shows the guitar is the prevalent instrument in this case. This apparent departure from standard practise can be explained by the fact that the *and only* banjo/accordion/guitar recordings were all made by The Flanagan Brothers, and I think that what we are looking at here is the popularity of the performers, rather than of a particular combination of instruments. This also illustrates the danger of *from* looking purely at the statistics without taking the context into *oves I* consideration.

Unusual Combinations

As in the duet 1 recordings, combinations which were to become standard in the revival period are largely absent, but the most remarkable combination by virtue of number of recordings and its strangeness to modern ears at any rate, is the fiddle/piccolo/piano combination which is the commonest form of duet 2 at 26% of the total. Of this figure we again find that one performer, P. J. MacNamara has the largest share, with almost 43% of the total fiddle/piccolo/ piano recordings, but three other performers also used this combination. The interesting thing here is that all the duet

2 performers who used the fiddle/piccolo/piano combination performed under names that indicated an ensemble. Thus P. J. MacNamara was The P.J. MacNamara Trio, and the others were: Geoghegan's Emerald Trio - 1 side

The Four Provinces - 10 sides

McConnell's Four Leaf Shamrock Orchestra - 2 sides

Other duet 2 performers who used "ensemble" names but line ups other than the fiddle/piccolo/piano are two in number and only contributed four sides of the total 207.

Ensembles

The development of ensemble playing as such, and as distinct from accompanied duets takes place in the mid 1920s. For my purposes I am defining the ensemble as a group of musicians with more than two melody players, and this definition is justified by the fact that the vast majority of recorded ensembles which fall into this definition were known by names which clearly indicate that they thought of themselves as ensembles as well. The predominance of the fiddle/piccolo/piano combination in the accompanied duet seems to establish a direct connection between that classification and the full ensemble, in that all of the four performers in the duet 2 who used the fiddle/piccolo/ piano combination not only used ensemble type names when recording accompanied duets but went on to become fully developed ensembles. Fig. 13 below shows how while duet 2 recordings in general continue, fiddle/piccolo/piano

while duet 2 recordings in general continue, fiddle/piccolo/piano recordings appear to decrease and eventually disappear with the rise of ensembles.

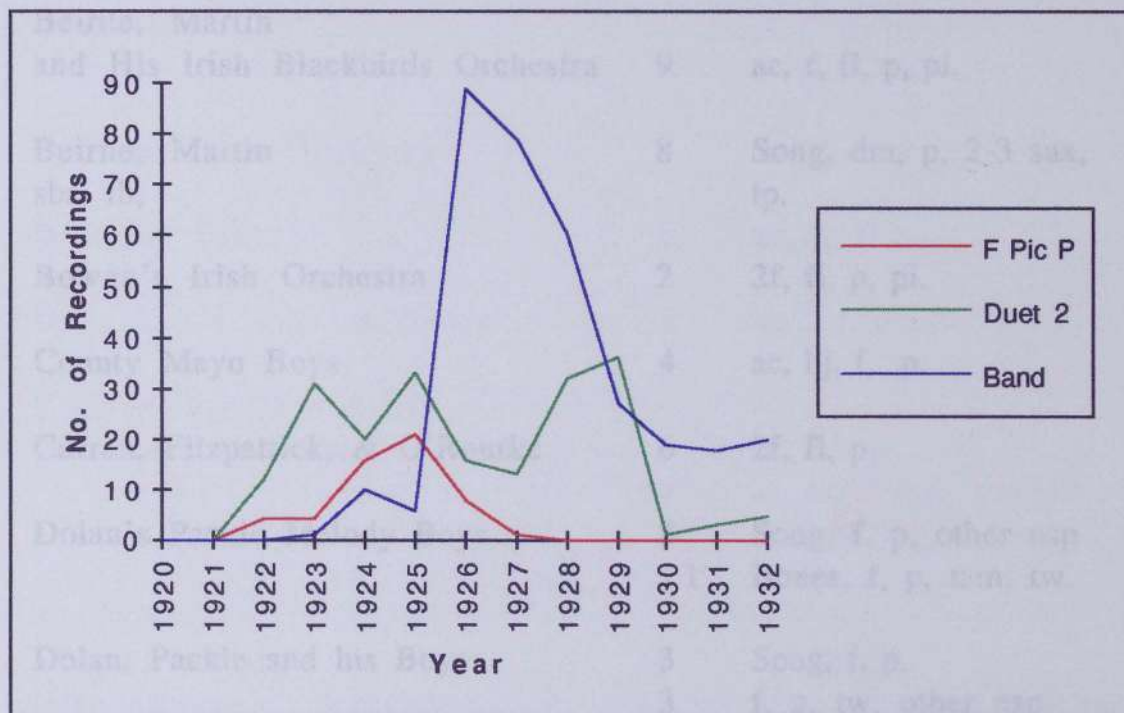


Fig. 13 Fiddle/piccolo/piano, Duet 2, and Band recordings in the 1920-1932 period.

In the period 1924 to 1942, forty nine ensembles recorded 676 sides, 255 with singers and the remaining 421 were purely instrumental tracks. Forty nine ensembles indicates the involvement of fewer musicians than might be imagined, for in the case of some of the better known bands, variations in the line up were known by different names. Below are listed the various ensembles and the instrumental/vocal line ups they used.⁴

⁴ The abbreviations used are:

ac=accordion, alt=alto, bj=banjo, c=cornet, cl=clarinet, dm=drums, f=fiddle, fl=flute, g=guitar, hca=harmonica, orch=orchestra, p=piano, pi=uilleann pipes, pic=piccolo, sax=saxophone, sbs=string bass, tam=tambourine/bodhrán, tb=trombone, ten=tenor, tp=trumpet, unk=unknown, vc=cello

Table 2

Line up of Recorded Ensembles 1924-1942

Performer	No. of Sides	Line-up
Beirne, Martin and His Irish Blackbirds Orchestra	9	ac, f, fl, p, pi.
Beirne, Martin Orchestra	8	Song, dm, p, 2-3 sax, tp.
Bowen's Irish Orchestra	2	2f, fl, p, pi.
County Mayo Boys	4	ac, bj, f, p.
Curran, Fitzpatrick, & O'Rourke	6	2f, fl, p.
Dolan's Packie Melody Boys	2	Song, f, p, other nsp
	1 1	Bones, f, p, tam, tw
Dolan, Packie and his Boys	3	Song, f, p.
Irish-American Serenaders	3	f, p, tw, other nsp 3 sax, sbs
Doran, Patrick, Owens, Joe, Flynn, Dennis, & Hart, Mike Serenaders	2	f, fl, p, pi.
Dublin Concert Orchestra	2	nsp
Dublin Orchestra	2	nsp
Erin Boys Orchestra	2	nsp p, pi, pic, traps
Erin's Isle Ballroom Orchestra	4	nsp nsp
Flanagan Brothers	2 1	Song, ac, bj, g
	7	Song, ac, bj, cl, g, p
	2 0	Song, ac, bj, p
	7	ac, bj, g, p sax, f, p, tp.
	5	ac, bj, hca, Jew's Harp, Kazoo
McGettigan, John and His All-Irish Orchestra	4	ac, bj, longpipe, p
	6	ac, bj, cl, g, p

Four Provinces Orchestra	3	bj, dulcimer, f, fl, p
Three Leaf Shamrock Orchestra	3	bj, 2f, p, pic
	4	nsp
	6	Song, bj, f, p, pic
	9	bj, f, p, pic
McGettigan's, John Irish Minstrels	21	ac, f, g, p
Geoghegan, Ed and His Orchestra	5	ac, 2 f, g, p
	4	cl, f, p, traps
	8	ac, f, p, pic
	5	Song, ac, f, g, p
Innisfail Irish Orchestra	4	ac, bj, f, p
Irish Big Four	6	ac, bj, fl p
Irish Piper's Band of Boston	6	ac, 2 f, p
	1	cl, f, p
Killoran, Patrick and His Pride of Erin Orchestra	4	ac, 2 f, p
MacNamara's Emerald Orchestra	4	ac, bj, 2 f, p, ten sax
	8	bj, 2 f, fl, g, p, sax
MacNamara, P. J. Quartet	2	c, f, p, pic
Killoran's Paddy	4	c, f, fl, p
Irish-American Serenaders	8	Song, ac, dm, f, p, 3 sax, sbs
McNulty, Peter and Eileen and Their Orchestra	2	Song, nsp
Killoran's Irish-American Serenaders	8	Song, nsp
Killoran's Irish Entertainers Orchestra	7	Song, f, p
	4	fl, p, others unk
McConnell's Four Leaf Shamrock Orchestra	2	2 f, p, pi, pic, traps
James and His Orchestra	4	Song, ac, bj, f, p
McCune, Bill and his Orchestra	4	Song, nsp
McGettigan, John Instrumental Quartet	3	Song, bj, f, p
	3	Song, f, fl, p
	10	2 f, p, vc
	8	Song, alt sax, f, p, tp.
McGettigan, John and His All-Irish Orchestra	4	Song, bj, f, g, p

McGettigan's, John Minstrels	4 1	nsp
Three Leaf Shamrock Orchestra	6	Song, bj, 2 f, p
O'Malley, Myles	7	Song, f, p, vc, p, tw
	3	ac, 2 f, p, vc
Quinn, Frank	1	Song, ac, 2 f,
McGettigan's, John Irish Minstrels	2 1	ac, f, g, p
	5	ac, 2 f, g, p
Quinn, Frank & Clark, Jim	6	Song, f, p
Smiles and Tears of Erin Orchestra	6	Song, ac, f, g
	5	Song, ac, f, g, p
	5	Song, ac, g, p
Quinn, Louis and His		
McGovern, Pat Minstrels	1	dm, 2 f, fl, p
McGrath's, Jim Orchestra	1	Song, cl, f, p
Dublin Orchestra	1	cl, f, p
Roche's Pat Harp and Shamrock Band	1 0	ac, dm, 2 f, fl, p
MacNamara's Emerald Orchestra	4	dm, f, p, pic
Sheridan, John	3	2 bj, fl, p
MacNamara, P. J. Quartet	2	c, f, p, pic
	4	c, f, fl, p
McNulty, Peter and Eileen and Their Orchestra Band	2 0	Song, nsp
	2 2	2 f, fl, p, pi, tw
McNulty Family	8 8	Song, ac, bj, p
Sullivan's Dan Shamrock Band	6	bj, sca, fl, p
Meehan's Edward Rosaleen Orchestra	1 4	ac, bj, 2 f, p, pic, tam
	4	fl, p, others unk
	7	Song, ac, bj, p, pic
Morrison, James and His Orchestra	7	Song, ac, bj, p, pic
	4	Song, ac, bj, f, p
	4	Song, nsp
Morrison's James Instrumental Quartet	3	ac, bj, f, p
	1 2	ac, bj, f, g, p
Nolan's Sean Dublin Orchestra	1 6	ac, f, p, pic

O'Leary's Irish Minstrels	41	nsp
O'Malley, Myles	8	alt sax, bj, dm, p, tw
Quinn, Frank	1	Song, ac, 2 f, woodblocks
Quinn, Frank & Clark, Jim		
Smiles and Tears of Erin Orchestra	3	ac, f, fl, p, perc
	3	2 f, fl, p, perc
Quinn, Louis and His Shamrock Minstrels	5	ac, 2 f, g, p
Quinn, William and His Dublin Orchestra	8	ac, bj, f, p
Roche's Pat Harp and Shamrock Band	10	ac, dm, 2 f, fl, p
Sheridan, John	3	2 bj, fl, p
Sheridan, John and His Boys	4	ac, bj, pic, p
	4	ac, bj, fl, p
Sullivan's Shamrock Band	20	2 f, p, pi, tw
	22	2 f, fl, p, pi, tw
Sullivan's Dan Shamrock Band	6	bj, hca, fl, p
	14	ac, bj, 2 f, p, pic, tam
	25	ac, bj, p, pic
	7	Song, ac, bj, p, pic
	7	Song, ac, bj, p, pic, traps

Instrumentation

The first thing that emerges from examination of this list is the apparent lack of a standard line-up for ensembles playing in this period. Even ensembles playing under the same name very often use several, sometimes quite distinct, line-ups. As an adjunct to this it is also common for essentially the same group of musicians to call themselves several slightly different names, e.g. John McGettigan's various bands. Eliminating what are essentially the same bands, the number of ensembles is reduced to 36. These 36 are comprised of some popular groups who made a considerable number of recordings, and others who released only a small amount. Of these ensembles, 13 contributed under 5 sides, 9 between 5 and 10 sides, while the 7 most often recorded ensembles - The Flanagan Brothers, The Four Provinces Orchestra, Paddy Killoran's various ensembles, John McGettigan's ensembles, The MacNulty Family, O'Leary's Irish Minstrels and Dan Sullivan's Shamrock Band - make up slightly over 65% of the total.

In terms of instrumental/song recordings 29 of the original 49 ensembles listed above were purely instrumental, but further examination shows that the most successful ensembles used a mixture of songs and dance music, the 7 ensembles mentioned above recording 215 sides of songs, and 225 instrumental sides. The ensembles who recorded 10 sides or less (18 ensembles) are almost exclusively instrumental. The ensembles who played both vocal and instrumental music often released records that had a

song on one side and a set of dance tunes on the other, as can be seen from the catalogue numbers that Spottswood lists.

The instrumentation used by the ensembles, as indicated by the list above, does seem to vary tremendously, but there are some patterns. As an overall view the table below lists all the instruments that appear in ensembles and the frequency of their occurrence.

Table 3

Instruments in Ensemble Recordings

Piano	553	Trumpet	16
Fiddle	445	Tambourine	14
Accordion	385	Traps	13
Banjo	314	Bones	12
Pipes	172	Cornet	12
Piccolo	115	Harmonica	11
Guitar	112	Trombone	8
Flute	106	Percussion	6
Tin Whistle	68	Jew's Harp	5
Saxophone	44	Kazoo	5
Drums	43	Longpipe	4
Cello	20	Dulcimer	3
Clarinet	19	Woodblocks	1
		String bass	16

The fiddle is the most commonly used instrument, which reflects its popularity within the tradition in general. The figure shown above would be higher but for the fact that The Flanagan Brothers,

atypically one of the most widely recorded ensembles, never used it.

Notable here is the predominance of three instruments newly introduced to the music, the piano, accordion, and banjo, which along with the older, more traditional fiddle, top the list. In terms of melody instruments, the traditional wind instruments with the new addition of the piccolo form a second group. The rest is made up of a diverse group of instruments mostly borrowed from the mainstream popular danceband tradition. Brasswind form the largest cohesive grouping in this third area, and in the woodwind section, the saxophone, while mostly used as an accompanying instrument, sometimes played melody.

The two main backing instruments are the piano and guitar, both apparently American additions, as indeed the whole concept of harmonic accompaniment in Irish traditional music seems to be - with the exception of uilleann pipe regulators. Few recordings were made without the piano - only 123 out of the 676 total, and of these 73 are listed as nsp [instrumentation not specified] and may well have used piano. Notably, the other main backing instrument, the guitar, is seldom used as a replacement for the piano, but more often occurs in conjunction with it.

exclusively with the fiddle, re Table 4 is central position. Of 152

sides which have Piano and Guitar in Ensembles two fiddles. 8

	Total	Instrumental	Song
Piano	553	344	209
Piano no Guitar	468	280	188
Guitar	112	64	48
Piano & Guitar	85	64	21
Guitar no Piano	27	0	27

Although some of the best known piano players in this era were Irish (ethnically, if not in origin), where names are listed, and this is not always the case for backing musicians, it is obvious that some at least were from outside the Irish community, and this lends some weight to the theory that these were studio musicians. 129

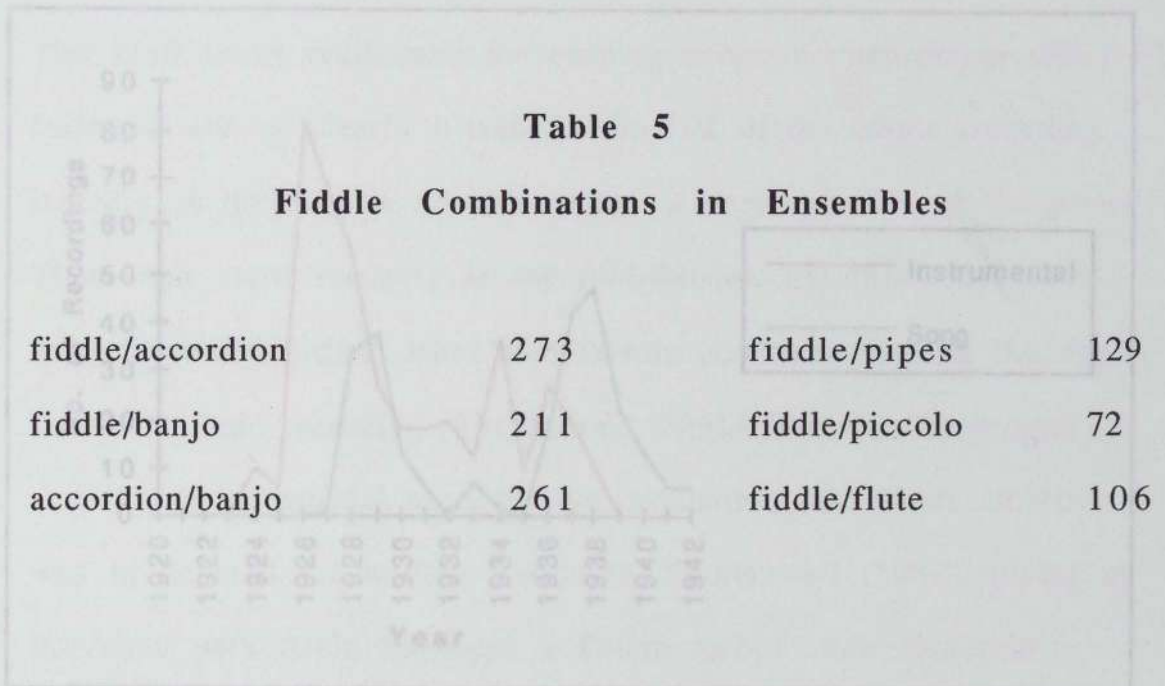
Players of other 'imported' instruments were also not generally named and the same my apply to them. fiddle/flute 106

Ensemble Size

The size of the ensembles is also open to much variation, and is in general much smaller than the names indicate. Four to six musicians is the norm, with quartets probably the commonest. Two ensembles recorded some of their material with 9 musicians, and one with 7, but large groups were uncommon. Enlargement was generally achieved by adding different instruments rather than by doubling of existing ones, although this does occur, almost

exclusively with the fiddle, reinforcing its central position. Of 152 sides which have a doubled instrument, 141 are with two fiddles, 8 with two saxophones, and 3 with two banjos.

In terms of overall instrumental combinations, the huge variation, even within named groups, makes it difficult to be definitive. The fiddle is the commonest melody instrument, and when looked at in combination with one other instrument within the ensemble context, the following associations stand out:



Looking at three instruments in association, one combination is overwhelmingly the most popular, that of fiddle, accordion, and banjo which occurs on 166 sides (24.5%), and if the piano is included this accounts for 146 sides (21.5%).

Songs in Ensemble Performance

The relationship of song to instrumental music in the ensemble recordings shows an interesting relationship when looked at as a function of time. Although, as asserted, the most popular groups recorded both instrumentals and songs it can be seen in Fig. 14 below that on both occasions, in the 1930s depression and the second World War, when instrumental recordings were on the decline, there was a concomitant increase in vocal recording.

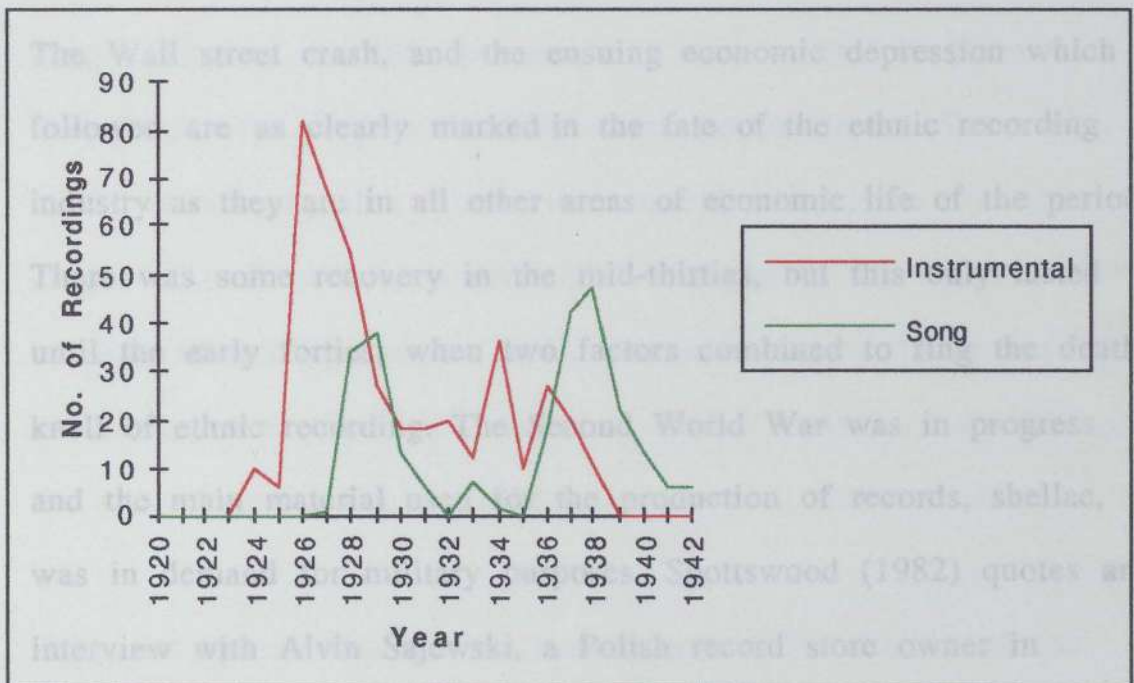


Fig. 14 Instrumental and song recordings made by ensembles 1920-1942.

This further illustrates the distinct difference between the dance music and song repertoires of the Irish performers. The line between Irish song recordings and popular music in the U.S.A. has always been a narrow and sometimes not easily visible one, and the trends shown in Fig 12 may indicate that performers and or record

companies saw that song recordings would prove ultimately more popular in the market.

The End of the Boom

Although Irish recordings on cylinder and disc cover a period of over 40 years, the period 1924-1929 saw the appearance of the majority of the recordings, and in fact 52% of recordings were made in those five years, and in the decade of the 1920s, 65% of all the Irish recordings appeared.

The Wall street crash, and the ensuing economic depression which followed are as clearly marked in the fate of the ethnic recording industry as they are in all other areas of economic life of the period. There was some recovery in the mid-thirties, but this only lasted until the early forties, when two factors combined to ring the death knell of ethnic recording. The Second World War was in progress and the main material used for the production of records, shellac, was in demand for military purposes. Spottswood (1982) quotes an interview with Alvin Sajewski, a Polish record store owner in Chicago:

In World War II we had to turn in old records for every new record, and that's where we lost a lot of the good records that we had. When the time came that I had to go and pick up records, they would call me and say they had 150 or 200 records for me, but in order to get them I had to take a bushel basket with old records in it. We would advertise in the paper that we were paying 5 cents apiece for old records.

Further, 1942 saw the start of a Musician's Union strike, the 'Petrillo Ban', that was to practically halt all recordings for two years. Several other factors, some universal, some particular to the Irish scene, conspired with the above to ensure that the damburst of Irish recordings of the mid to late twenties was reduced to a trickle by the early 1940s and was all but extinguished by the end of the War. Two important and related social factors are involved here as well. The performance of, and interest in, Irish music in America was at this time primarily the concern of Irish born and immigrants. The drop in the level of emigration to the States after 1925, when emigration quotas were introduced, meant that this supply of both performers and audience began to dry up. The second and third generation Irish were more content to be seen as American rather than Irish, and this applied nowhere more than in the area of music. Grunow (1982), quotes an L. Dunn (1975):

But second generation Europeans are *Americans*, particularly in their musical tastes.

Thus what has been called the 'Golden Age' of Irish music in America passed away. Or seemed to. None at that stage could have foreseen the second great revival which was to take place, this time originating in Ireland, but leavened by the yeast of the great American folk revival, which was beginning to stir just as the 78 era faded.

Summary

The basic technology of sound recording is introduced, as is the general boom in ethnic recording of which the Irish recordings are a part.

The sources for the survey of recordings between 1899-1942 are discussed, and the recordings themselves are classified in terms of song and instrumental, and also as solos, duet, and ensembles.

The concept of solo and duet 1 and 2 is used to distinguish between completely solo performance and that with harmonic accompaniment. The instrumentation of the various performers and ensembles is examined. This information is displayed graphically where possible.

The reasons for the collapse of the boom by the early 1940s are briefly considered.

The momentum generated by the American-Irish music scene in the 1920s was, certainly in terms of recordings, quickly dissipated by the economic collapse of 1929. The public face of Irish traditional music in America was commercial, relying on dance halls and professional or semi-professional groups, and this scene and the recording industry appear to have been interdependent. It seems likely that both aspects were devastated by the huge downturn in disposable income at this time. Prohibition might be thought of as another likely reason for the decline of traditional music via the removal of performance venues.

Decline at Home and abroad

Following the periods of musical activity at home in Ireland as discussed in Chapter 2, and the 'Golden Age' in the U.S. covered in Chapters. 4, there was a general decline. This was most obvious in the numbers of recordings of traditional music, and I believe was almost everywhere mirrored by a decline in the amount of traditional music being played and the social activities associated with it. This chapter looks at the reasons behind this phenomenon, firstly in America and then in Ireland.

Traditional Irish Music in America after 1929

The momentum generated by the American-Irish music scene in the 1920s was, certainly in terms of recordings, quickly dissipated by the economic collapse of 1929. The public face of Irish traditional music in America was commercial, relying on dance halls and professional or semi-professional groups, and this scene and the recording industry appear to have been interdependent. It seems likely that both aspects were devastated by the huge downturn in disposable income at this time. Prohibition might be thought of as another likely reason for the decline of traditional music via the removal of performance venues.

However, since it was introduced in 1920 and was therefore in force throughout the period of highest recording activity this theory must be discounted. When midway through the 1930s there were some signs of a recovery, the recording industry responded in a different way than it had in its heyday.

Only eleven companies were involved in recording Irish music after the crash, and of the previous major players in the field, only Columbia maintained an interest at anything like the same level, although it was completely eclipsed by the newcomer Decca who began operations in 1934. Victor, previously the second most important company, recorded less than 10 sides between 1930 and 1942.

Changes in Recorded Music

Patterns of type of music recorded show distinct differences as well. Whereas the 1899-1929 division between instrumental/song recordings shows approx. 48% song as against 52% instrumental (See Fig.4), recordings in the 1930-1942 period show a reversal of that majority with 62% of the releases featuring vocalists.

The instrumental/song division is a useful way of looking at what might be called the 'traditionality' of the recordings. Since the appearance of Irish recordings, the vocal material has always been much closer to the concept of 'popular' rather than 'traditional', with

its close ties with vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley. Instrumental recordings, although often presented in a 'non traditional' way, at the same time were firmly based in the traditional repertoire which would have been familiar to nineteenth century Irish rural musicians.

bands to draft in 'mainstream' dance band players to either support

Changing Audience Preferences

The increasing level of the popular material reflects to a reasonably accurate extent the preferences of the Irish-American community at this time, and the falling popularity of Irish dancing and the music and performers associated with it. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that, as in Ireland, dance culture began to absorb popular modern dance, not in the sense of a change in style, but rather in the sense of the existence, side by side, of two different forms of dancing, two different forms of music, but within the same community and very often in the same venue, sometimes at least making use of the same musicians. Moloney (1992) quotes interviews with several musicians who played in this period, and it is obvious that not only was the music conceived of as being in two categories, Irish and American, but that two separate sections of the band played it, one often quitting the stage to make room for the other. The increasing popularity of 'American' music can be seen in the gradual change in the types of tunes that bands recorded, with two steps and foxtrots beginning to creep into the repertoire. Some Irish musicians seem to have been bi-

musical in this sense. Paddy Killoran was noted not only for his great solo performances, but was one of the most active musicians in dance bands and in backing ensembles for singers throughout the period. This was untypical and it seems to have been more common for Irish bands to draft in 'mainstream' dance band players to either support them, or fulfil this role entirely.

The recording and dance hall scenes are documented to some extent, but of course they only represent one aspect of musical activity. The other, more private existence of Irish traditional music in America at this time is more obscure.

Demographic Changes

One major factor in the different patterns now appearing was the change in emigration law after 1925 which resulted in a considerable falling off in the numbers of new immigrants arriving in America. This in itself changed the demographics of the Irish-American community in that the proportion of Irish born began to decrease, with the concomitant increase in second and subsequent generation American-Irish, who were increasingly more American than Irish. The dance hall scene suffered disproportionately from this, since new emigrants tended to be young people, who, I would suggest, made up the largest group attending dances. Musically this was reflected in an increase in the popular music content of what was on offer at venues that were

¹ Note that even at this late stage that of these three, Derrane was American born

seen as ethnically Irish. In some cases the Irish musical content would be reduced to an almost stylistic level, when a small part of the evening, consisting of as little as several sets of tunes, would be given over to Irish music and dance.

Irish Traditional Music in America after the War

In the years after the war, and especially as the 1950s dawned, traditional dance music ceased to play any really significant role in Irish American society. Individual musicians continued to perform, but there was a move away from public or commercial manifestations, back to the realm of the private and amateur. After the war, the recording industry effectively ignored Irish music. One company, Copley, operating in Boston, did produce a number of records in the late 1940s and 1950s mainly of Irish-American songs in the vein of the 'Irish tenor', but also several important recordings of instrumental dance music, notably by the Kerry fiddler, Paddy Cronin and the accordionists Joe Derrane and Jerry O'Brien¹

The Copley company was founded by the son of the man who had initiated the famous 1916 recording of Eddie Herborn and James Wheeler which has been hailed as a starting point of the Irish recording boom, reinforcing the important role that motivated individuals have played in the development of Irish traditional music (Ní Fhuatharáin 1993)

¹ Note that even at this late stage that of these three only Derrane was American born

The End of the Decline in America

This period of decline in Irish music in America only came to an end with what was essentially an importation of the Irish folk revival in the 1970s. Recordings of Irish traditional music began to be made again in the U.S. and although some of these featured Irish performers, this time a considerable proportion of them were resident in Ireland, in contrast to the Irish-born/American based performers who recorded in the earlier period. What is more notable is the occurrence for the first time of second generation Irish-American performers as major figures, and the emergence of an 'independent' Irish music scene in the States which does not rely for its continuation on the recruitment of new musicians via emigration (Moloney 1992).

The role of the Irish revival in this process has been largely augmented in America by the activities of certain individuals who took it upon themselves to pass on their music to the next generation in a structured way, via classes, and involvement in musical organisations. This highlights the importance of the role of the individual as opposed to that of commercial organisations or institutions.

Developments in Irish Traditional Music after 1900

If, as argued in Chapter 3, recruitment of musicians to the Irish-American music scene was basically from Ireland, an extension of that

that argument could claim that traditional music there was still in a healthy state. Although we have little of the same type of evidence via recordings that documents the American experience, contemporary accounts, augmented with the personal experiences of musicians in one conversation, give us a reasonably accurate picture of traditional music in Ireland in this century.

Extrapolating from such evidence, I believe that it is safe to conclude that in very many areas of rural Ireland, traditional music activities continued in the early years of the twentieth century much as they had in the nineteenth. Traditional music fulfilled the same niche as it had done, and the introduction of new instruments, and consequent rise in amateur performance did little to upset that pattern. In fact it might be claimed that the only factor detrimental to the music was the level of emigration. While this drained musicians from the Irish countryside, it was at the same time providing the base for the great boom which America was later to witness.

The Rise of Popular Music in Ireland

As in a society which confronts two languages, the arrival of other music systems can quickly upset an equilibrium which may have long existed. The different music systems which existed in Ireland, discussed in Chapter 1, remained more or less in equilibrium for a long period of time. Interaction between them, (for the sake of this

period of time. Interaction between them, (for the sake of this discussion we can assume that the two main systems in consideration are Western art music, and Irish traditional music) was mostly voluntary and consisted basically of some movement of melody in one direction, traditional to art, and some movement of instruments in the other, art to traditional. Basically the two systems coexisted in the same time and space, separated by considerations of urban/rural location, class, and ethnicity. There was no apparent desire by either group to emulate the other. The gradual arrival of a third system in the form of the popular music of the theatre and music hall began to change this.

The appearance of sound recording accelerated this process immensely. Whereas previously urban contact of some sort was necessary for the spread of such music, the arrival of the Gramophone made a nonsense of geographical location. The popular music so dispersed was much more readily assimilated than Art music ever was or could have been. It was easy to imitate the performance style, and the tunes and song topics seemed not so far removed from those long familiar, having in fact a close connection with them. The process of learning such material was also simplified. Before the advent of the Gramophone the aural process of transmission depended on exposure to the source. Given the nature of traditional performance in rural Ireland, this would often mean that a particular song or tune might

take a considerable length of time to acquire, even assuming the highly developed memory often associated with oral tradition. The Gramophone allowed this process to be telescoped into a matter of days or even hours. Traditional practise was eroded in other ways other than simply the expansion of repertoire, and this applied just as much to the effects of the recordings of traditional as opposed to popular material. Many people learning from the same source increased the standardisation, not only of repertoire, but of tune or song versions and style. Local musical dialects suffered, not in that they disappeared as some have suggested, but in that they were overlaid by a layer of material which was the same countrywide. Even at the present time, songs and tunes which were introduced via the medium of the early recordings can be heard in the same versions from Kerry to Donegal.

Dilution of Traditional Music Activity

This process of popularisation had the effect of diluting the regenerative base of traditional music. Performers who 20 or 30 years previously would have of necessity learned material from the traditional repertoire now had the possibility of performing the newer popular music as well. It has been my experience, and that of many collectors who have worked in Irish traditional song, that the older traditional singers in rural Ireland very often include 'popular' or

music hall material in their repertoire of traditional song, without seeming to make any distinction between the two. The effect of this was a contraction of the traditional repertoire, and indeed a diminution in the numbers of performers primarily engaged in traditional music. I would suggest that the introduction of a new musical system in most cases means that the level of musical activity must now be shared between the old and the new systems, rather than stimulating an increase in overall activity. Thus one suffers at the hands of the other.

Contrasts between Song and Instrumental Music

In the case of Irish traditional music it must be said that the popular music which was introduced in this way consisted almost entirely of song. No new categories of dance music or airs in terms of rhythms or melodic patterns appear in the repertoire of otherwise traditional musicians, in the same sense that songs of music hall origin entered the repertoire of traditional singers, unless the playing of the airs of some of the new popular songs in waltz time for dancers merits inclusion. The songs, which were assimilated by rural and urban listeners alike could largely be classified under the terms comic and nostalgic, essentially different to the older, longer, songs, many with local associations which typified traditional singing.

One of the most important aspects of this introduction of popular

music is not to do with any musical differences between it and traditional music, but rather the fact that although popular within the community, it was generated outside it. Thus for the first time the focus of creativity begins to move away from the local community.

Expansion of Performance Genres

Performance genres were also expanding in this period, and one of the crucial aspects of this was the move from private to public space best represented by the increasing amount of music and dance that went on in halls. Dance halls begin to appear in Ireland around the turn of the century (Lynch 1989) although they were not common until much later. Initially they would have been a less common genre than the house dance, which was by far the most popular form up to the mid 1930s, but in the 1920s at least they operated side by side. The house dance can be seen as a more formal development of the custom of 'rambling' or 'ceiling', where neighbours would gather in one or two particular houses in an area for tea, a chat, and perhaps some music, song, or dancing. The house dance was more formal in the sense that a particular date and venue were preset, musicians would be organised, and very often the music and dancing were ostensibly at any rate the secondary activity to a night of card playing or other social activity. Sometimes money did change hands in return for drink or food, and musicians were occasionally paid in cash rather than in kind, but this

was by no means standard. The early dance hall events seem to have been simply an extension of this activity into the larger space provided by the hall, and a confirmation of such features as an entry fee and payment for the musicians. The popularity of dance halls increased to such an extent that in 1935 the government brought in legislation to control them, and this has been claimed to have had such wide reaching consequences for traditional music and dancing that it deserves examination in some detail.

The Dance Hall Act

There is a popularly expressed opinion among some involved in the traditional music scene, including those involved at the time of these events, that in fact the real reasoning behind the Act was pressure from the clergy for the introduction of legislation which would help them bring about an end to private house dances, which they saw as great occasions of sin. Although some research has been done into this subject (Austin 1993) it is still not clear that this was the overall motive, even if it was used as a weapon against house dancing by some. One of the major problems in discussing the whole area of Irish social history in the twentieth century is that it is impossible to treat the country as a whole. Conditions and the conclusions to be drawn from them vary wildly. Some areas had dance halls in 1900, others had to wait 30 more years for the same development. Many clergy

2 interview with John Kikoughy, Liscaheen, Co. Wick. in: *The Joy of Pats* - Documentary on sex dancing broadcast by RTE 21/12/93

were active in their disapproval of dancing, and there are many references to priests effectively putting a stop to dancing in their parish, sometimes by physical intervention. Captain Francis O'Neill, certainly later in his life, felt that the attitude of the Catholic Church was one of the major reasons behind the decline in Irish traditional music that he observed (Breathnach 1977). It should be noted that it was not traditional dancing per se that they saw as objectionable but the 'company keeping' and 'occasions of sin' that they claimed it gave rise to. Some of Lynch's (1989) informants claimed that the clergy supported the Dance Hall Act because it brought dancing, and the associated profits from it under their control, but there were some clergy, admittedly more rarely, who perhaps as musicians themselves, were supportive of traditional music and dancing in a general sense.

Even the Dance Hall Act itself seems to have been applied very unevenly. In some instances, Co. Clare being a good example, prosecutions were made of private individuals for continuing to hold house dances. Fines imposed were heavy, £10, a large sum in today's money, being mentioned. The effect of one prosecution of such severity in a local area was in this case to stop all further house dancing for fear of retribution.² In other areas house dancing seems to have continued unmolested up to the 1950s (Lynch 1989) leading to the conclusion that the Dance Hall Act can not be offered as a universal

² Interview with John Killoughry, Liscannor, Co. Clare, in: The Joy of Sets. Documentary on set dancing broadcast by RTE 21/12/93

factor in the demise of house dancing. Dance halls, now licensed, continued unabated in popularity, many run as Parish halls by the same clergy that had vehemently opposed house dancing, but with the passage of time it becomes obvious that traditional set and figure dancing features less and less and modern dance more and more. Dance halls in the towns probably never featured traditional music and dance to any great extent, certainly at the outset, although céilí dancing later became popular in a restricted sense, and it seems likely that the increasing influence of 'jazz dancing' as it was then known spread from the towns. Writing in 1941, in an admittedly facetious article, Brian O'Nolan, under the pen name Flann O'Brien (1941), gives the impression that at this stage only the most remote rural halls were home to Irish dancing. Whatever the timescale, and experience leads me to believe that this would vary quite widely from one part of the country to another, it is probable that the same progression from traditional dance to modern popular dance was taking place in the Irish dance halls as it was in the American. The two processes were to some extent contemporaneous, but there is no suggestion here that Ireland was following America's lead.

Changes in Emigration Patterns

At this stage the target of emigration from rural Ireland had changed

from America to England. This type of emigration was no longer a life sentence in exile, and many emigrants based in England were in the habit of spending holidays at home. This was one of the most important ways in which popular culture was introduced to rural Ireland, and since emigration tended to be heaviest from the poorer western areas, this effect was in some ways more heavily felt in such places, which in normal circumstances would seem to be remote from the influence of popular culture.

Further Changes in Musical Behaviour

By c.1940 Irish rural society consisted of a patchwork of differing patterns of musical behaviour. In some areas, especially but not necessarily, adjacent to large towns or main communication routes, more particularly in the east, there was very little evidence of traditional music activity. Brown (1985), quotes Neil (1944):

The country town with a wireless set in the houses of the rich and poor, with a talkie-cinema, with inhabitants who wear the evening clothes of London or New York and dance the same dances to the same music - this town has not yet appeared in Irish literature, but it is the most typical Irish country town

In other areas, usually but not exclusively geographically isolated, traditional set dancing continued, mostly in halls and sometimes in partnership with modern popular dances, but in some areas house

dances continued apparently unaffected by the Dance Hall Act. Lynch (1989), quotes a dancer from Caragh Lake, Co Kerry:

House dancing ended in the middle fifties. I firmly believe television had a lot to do with it. After that there was dancing at the stations once every nine, ten or eleven years.

The Effect of the Cessation of Dancing

The overall impression is one of slow decline, with a gradual transfer to modern popular dance among young people. The cessation of traditional dancing over large areas of the country meant that music ceased as well, for in the days before the development of the session as we now know it, music had no other use or function than that associated with dance, and the small repertoire of non-dance music in the instrumental tradition had no separate existence of its own. Thus except in a few isolated cases, a breakdown in the transmission of the music began to occur, and there was little or no recruitment of young people as musicians. In the days before music classes, printed tutors, and pub sessions, the only source of knowledge for the aspiring musician was the local older generation. If they died without passing on their music, then a whole area could become silent.

The Extent of the Decline

Luckily, though this certainly did happen, it must be made clear that we are looking at a decline and not a collapse. It is clearly wrong to

simplify this period in terms of a complete break in the music/dance scene brought about by the Dance Hall Act, which is then reversed by the folk revival. Several pointers indicate that this purported gap was not quite as severe as some have thought. When Radio Éireann set up its Mobile Broadcast Unit in the late forties and began to record rural musicians on their home ground for the first time, they had no difficulty in finding musicians and singers in most areas that they visited. Some of these people may not have played for some time, but they were in general delighted with the opportunity to play again. (The role of the media apart from the record industry is examined in more detail in Chapter 8)

Further to this and directly relevant to this thesis, there was some level of recording activity in Ireland at this time, with some records actually being manufactured here. This was the work of large international companies such as Columbia and HMV and indicates that they must have seen a market here for such recordings, in which dance music, particularly that of the céilí band, featured quite strongly.

Summary

Although Irish traditional music enters the twentieth century, much as it left the nineteenth with the rural social genres still intact it begins to experience a decline which is influenced by such factors as

emigration, and the spread of other music forms, particularly popular music. This spread is assisted by the sound media in the form of the gramophone and the radio.

Traditional music and dance begins to move from private houses and public space into commercial dance halls, and there is widespread clerical opposition to dancing.

The 1935 Dance Hall Act is effectively stops house dances in some areas of the country and by the mid 1940s the old rural social genres are beginning to disappear over large areas of the country, but survive in some areas, of the west in particular. Popular music, as experienced in larger English speaking world of England and America, is replacing traditional music as the common music experience of rural Ireland, aided strongly by the new patterns of semi-permanent emigration to England. Although traditional music is in a period of decline and unpopularity, and traditional music activity is absent from many areas, this phase does not last long enough to cause any real damage to the basic repertoire or skill base of traditional instrumental music.

Revival

The Concept of Revival

When in the Belfast of the early 1970's I began to play Irish traditional music I never thought of myself as taking part in a revival. There were various different sorts of music in my environment and I was familiar with most of them. I gradually came to realise that traditional music was the one for me, and set about learning to play it. There were plenty of traditional musicians around me so that in itself was not a difficult task, and although I had had some classical training both in school and privately, I never saw myself as transferring from one sort of music to another. As far as I was concerned Irish traditional music was the first music that I learned to play. As time went on, and I learned to play well enough to become one of the group of musicians who made up 'traditional music in Belfast' I gradually became aware that we, as young urban musicians, although playing the same tunes, and often in the same circumstances as our older rural counterparts, were in fact a group apart. As my emphasis began to change from learning music to learning about music I began to realise that what I was doing was in many ways not part of a continuum, but was part of a revival. The term revival itself was not one we commonly used to describe our interest in Irish traditional dance music and song, but

it was used when we talked about English folk music. As far as we were concerned, although they had revived their music, we had no need, as Irish music had 'always been there'. In retrospect, I think that along with all my musician friends of those days we now realise that we were revival musicians and had taken, and are still, taking part in a revival. It is perhaps a measure of how successful a revival it was, that we were not conscious of taking part in it.

The 'Folk Revival'

In broad terms, 'The Folk Revival' (upper case initials) is a series of events, beginning in America in the 1930's which saw the music and song of mainly rural ethnic and class groups becoming widely popular among young middle class urbanites. Encompassed in this term are smaller revivals of particular sorts of music, which I will term 'folk revivals', using lower case initials. Thus the revival of traditional set dancing in Ireland in the 1970's is a folk revival, which is part of the Irish folk revival which itself is an important part of The Folk Revival.

Types of Revival

Many workers in this field have identified two types of revival. The first is what might be called an 'internal revival' in that it is engendered by the participants in a tradition themselves. Secondly there are revivals which are instigated by those from outside the tradition. Blaustein (1993) states:

One source of folk revivalism is the alienation of an unsatisfactory cultural identity, leading to folk romanticism; a second source is a subjective sense of deteriorating tradition, resulting in a grass roots preservationism. Historically, these two types of folk revival movements are rarely separable; instead they tend to reinforce one another in symbiotic fashion.

Although The Folk Revival, and the folk revival under discussion here are twentieth century events, one of the types of revival mentioned above has been a factor for a lot longer (Blaustein 1993):

The folk romantic movement or folklorismus, has been a continuously vital aspect of modern life since the eighteenth century. The rejection of the hegemony of urban-industrial-commercial-bureaucratic values and the return (symbolic, periodic, or actual) to an idealized rural-pastoral-spiritual-organic community have appeared in various forms including the development of academic folklore itself.

In Irish terms we can immediately see parallel with these two strands. The late eighteenth century harping revival fits rather neatly into the folk romantic slot, whereas some aspects of the current revival would be of the grass roots variety.

The Revival Process

The word revival is in some ways an unfortunate choice to describe these phenomena because of its implication of restoration to an original state. All observers and commentators have noted the inevitability of change as part of the revival process. Slobin, quoted by Blaustein (1993), agrees:

The ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin, in his essay "Rethinking 'Revival' of American Ethnic Music" suggests that folklorists misapply the term 'revival' in most cases. In Slobin's opinion, traditions do not usually totally die out; what is happening is the reinterpretation or reinvention of traditions rather than their literal rebirth.

The terms reinvention and reinterpretation are the key words here. It is characteristic of all revivals that they change what they revive, in many cases despite (or sometimes because of) the efforts of purist 'watchdogs' who set themselves the task of preventing change.

A further characteristic of revivals is the introduction of a new group of performers. Typical of a tradition under threat is a decline in the number of **Primary** participants, and revivals try to counteract this by actively encouraging new participants from inside or outside the tradition. (**Secondary** performers if from outside the tradition see p 26)

Stekert (1993) uses a different approach to classifying revivals. She talks of 'new aesthetic' revivals, and 'named system' revivals. The former implies the construction of a new tradition from elements borrowed from several other traditions along with genuine innovation on the part of the performers and Stekert gives Joan Baez as a good example of the genre. Named system revivals on the other hand are revivals of identified and accepted types of music; the country blues revival, the old time fiddling revival, and the Irish traditional music revival being three examples. Stekert also suggests a useful term for those involved in named system

revivals as performers. The original performers from within the tradition she simply calls traditional singers, but those from outside the tradition that had learned to perform in that style she calls emulators (in the original essay she uses the term imitator, but suggests modifying this to emulator in a foreword to the 1993 publication) This classification matches my own of primary and secondary involvement, but is restricted to performers and not other users of the music.

Revivals and Primary and Secondary Involvement

The idea of the involvement of a new group in a revival is an exceptionally important one, and reinforces the concept that a music which has a certain set of values may be used for a very different reason by a distinct group within the meaning of the term 'revival'. In ways this is a cross-cultural phenomenon, but it has certain trends or patterns that seem to be repeated. Almost without exception the new group of secondary users are from a higher social class, and very often a more dominant ethnic group. To quote Titon (1993):

Even on a superficial examination it becomes obvious that in fact the blues revival was a white middle class love affair with the music and lifestyle of marginal blacks

All the concepts and ideas discussed above are easily recognised in the Irish revival, but they interrelate in a complex way which requires their examination in an historical context in order to fully

understand them.

When one talks about the revival in terms of Irish traditional or folk music it is generally taken to mean the period from the 1950s to the present day. This is in reality only the latest in a series of revivals. The attempted revival of the harp, beginning in the late eighteenth century and dying out in the early nineteenth has all the hallmarks that set it apart as a revival of the 'folk romantic' type. The activities of the Gaelic League at the end of the century also constitute a revival, a more successful one in this case if only in terms of the longevity of some of the genres that they introduced, such as the ceili, and the activities of Comisúin le Rincí Gaelacha.

However, the scale and effect of the revival which began in the 1950s set it apart as certainly the most important revival movement yet to have occurred in Irish traditional music. Whether in fact this is still an ongoing process, or whether we are at the moment in a post revival phase is moot.

The Irish Revival

Even on a superficial examination it becomes obvious that in fact we are dealing with several different overlapping revivals each with different timescales and aims. Chapter 5 has chronicled the decline of traditional music in Ireland after the period of great activity at the beginning of the century due to both the Gaelic League and the influence of emigrant musicians and the recording

industry. founding a series of branches throughout the country.

I consider that there are five strands which must be taken into account if this period is to be understood, both in its own terms and in relation to other folk revivals. These are:

the national life of Ireland.

1/ The role of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

2/ The 'Ballad Boom' among all the lovers of Irish traditional

3/ The role of Sean Ó Riada

4/ The economic prosperity of the 1960s or the restoration of Irish

5/ The role of specialist record companies

6/ To establish branches throughout the country and abroad for the achievements of these aims and objectives.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

In 1950, musicians from the pipers club present at a Feis Ceoil in Mullingar held a meeting where it was felt that something should be done to halt what they saw as the decline in Irish traditional music. The next year they founded an organisation called Cumann Ceoltóirí Éireann (The Irish Musicians Society) and held a festival called a Fleadh Ceoil (literally 'music feast') in Mullingar. The name of the organisation was changed to the now familiar Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (The brotherhood or coming together of, Irish musicians) the next year. From this small beginning the organisation grew to what is today the largest involved in Irish traditional music.

the CCE strove to maintain and stimulate interest in traditional

music by founding a series of branches throughout the country.

Their aims as set out by themselves are as follows:

- 1/ To promote Irish traditional music in all its forms.
- 2/ To restore the playing of the harp and of the uilleann pipes in the national life of Ireland.
- 3/ To promote Irish traditional dance.
- 4/ To create closer bonds among all the lovers of Irish traditional music.
- 5/ To cooperate with all bodies working for the restoration of Irish culture.
- 6/ To establish branches throughout the country and abroad for the achievement of these aims and objectives.
- 7/ To foster and promote the Irish language

The Fleadh Ceoil

The Fleadh Ceoil as a national festival of traditional music was an important part of this, and from the organisation's point of view the competitions which they held in traditional singing and instrumental music were the core of this. Response among those interested in Irish music was good and in a short time the competitions were organised on the basis of county Fleadh Ceoils, (the proper Irish plural is Fleadhanna Ceoil, but the Anglicized version of just adding an 's' is often used) whose winners then competed at regional level, and if successful there, went forward to the All-Ireland Fleadh Ceoil, as it became known. Winners in each

instrumental or song category were known as All-Ireland Champions. Within ten or twelve years, the Fleadh Ceoil had become an integral part of musical life in Ireland, and the festivals, especially at the regional and national level, attracted large crowds. The other major role that CCE became involved in was that of teaching, and very many classes in all the traditional instruments were organised.

The great strength of CCE as an organisation in the early days of this revival lay in its branch structure and the way in which these small local branches drew on local resources in the form of older musicians and singers. In many areas, because of the very fact that the older musicians had ceased to play, there was a break in the transmission of traditional music. The activities of CCE began to reverse this trend. They encouraged the older local musicians and singers to get involved and to pass on their music to the younger people, often by way of formal classes.

The Competition

From a very early stage in the development of CCE the concept of competition is central, and the fact that the organisation grew out of the Feis Ceoil, itself a competitive body, may be important here. Although the Fleadh Ceoil quickly became much more than just competitive festivals for the majority of those attending, most of the organisational effort went into the competitions. These are divided into instrumental, with competitions for pipes, harp, flute,

fiddle, whistle, piano, and bodhrán. There is also a miscellaneous instruments competition for instruments which have no category of their own. This would include banjo, mandolin, and harmonica. There are also competitions for non-solo playing, ranging from duets to Ceilí bands. There are separate song competitions for both song in English and Irish. For instrumental players, there are separate competitions for dance music and for slow airs. The type of dance tune to be played is specified in the rules. Each competitor plays before a panel of judges in public, and results are publicly announced afterwards with often some comment on the performances in general and of individual players. Competitions are age grouped into categories such as under 12, under 16, with a senior competition is for those aged over 18. There is a gender division only in the singing competitions. The competitions, especially at the larger fleadh, attract large crowds, some competitions, such as the fiddle, and ceilí band, attracting considerably more than others. Alongside the competitions, the social aspect of the fleadh was of immense importance. Only a small minority of the musicians who would attend would be directly involved in competition, the others would simply see the event as an opportunity for music making and meeting friends. By the mid 1960s, huge crowds were attending fleadh and as discussed later, this led to severe problems of crowd control and behaviour. These problems were overcome however, and at present the fleadh ceoil is still a major event.

The Current Position of CCE

There have been some changes in the role that CCE plays today from that at its inception. I think it is fair to say that from the early 1950s to the late 1970s, CCE commanded the admiration and respect, if not the actual support, of just about everyone involved with traditional music in Ireland. The broad appeal of the idea can be seen in the rapidity with which a national network of branches was established, with the first English branch established as early as 1955. Up to the late 1970s at least, the fleadh ceoil was an irreplaceable part of musical culture for the vast majority of traditional musicians of all ages. The strength of CCE at a local level was reflected in the attendances at county fleadhs, not just in terms of overall participation, but in that of musicians. Speaking from personal experience, attendance at a county fleadh of that period would almost certainly bring one into contact with most of the notable musicians from that particular county, as well as numbers who had travelled from neighbouring counties and further afield. A good proportion of the musicians would be involved in the competitions, but there would be a large attendance of musicians and others who would not be CCE members. Theoretically, at least, musicians had to be paid-up members of CCE to be able to participate in competitions. The senior competitions would attract a large proportion of mature musicians, many of them well known locally or even nationally. In the early 1980s, this picture began to change. Attendance at

some county fleadhhs began to decline, both in terms of competitors and audience. A typical feature of this would be the radical decline in the numbers of mature musicians taking part in the senior competitions. In recent years the typical 'senior' competitor is aged under 25. Regional fleadhhs were affected as well, but the All-Ireland Fleadh Ceoil increased in significance if anything, mainly due to great efforts on the part of CCE to 'market' it, and make it a commercial transaction between CCE and the various host towns, who bid considerable amounts of money in return for the right to hold the event. Part of this trend is undoubtedly due to the proliferation of other events which also featured traditional music in a major way, such as the Willie Clancy Summer School, and the large 'Folk Festivals' which became a feature of the scene for a while in the 1970s.

There has also been, however, a strong element of reaction against CCE by musicians and others involved in traditional music. People who had participated in CCE events began to distance themselves from this association. It is exceptionally difficult to give specific or even general reasons for this trend, and also somewhat outside the scope of this thesis, but it is true that at the present time there is a considerable amount of music making carried on outside the remit of CCE by people who were once involved with the organisation in some way. There is little active opposition to CCE activities, although there is a lot of verbal criticism. This would be directed mainly at what is seen as the 'hierarchy' of CCE, and not in

general at the rank and file members. If I may be allowed to paraphrase the opinions of this group, the criticisms would be that CCE are too rigid in their approach, that their emphasis on competition is damaging the music, that they want to control all areas of Irish traditional music activity, and that in spite of their claims to be the saviours of Irish music, that in fact they are fast becoming commercialised, and given to producing stage shows to the detriment of what would be seen as 'real' music making. Thus the current status of CCE is of an organisation, originally absolutely central to the revival, which has become marginalised to some extent by more recent developments.

The 'Ballad Boom'

The 'Ballad Boom,' as it became known, was a feature of the revival in Ireland which might even be considered a distinct revival in its own right. In the terms we have already discussed it falls more readily into the 'folk romantic' category, and it has close ties with The Folk Revival via both America and England. As its name suggests, song as opposed to instrumental music was at the heart of this movement, and the use of the term ballad in this context requires some explanation in light of its multiple implications in the area of traditional music.

The original meaning of the word, now archaic, was a song which accompanied dancing. Later meanings retained the song aspect but dropped the dance so that by the end of the middle ages

the term in English simply meant a popular song (Shields1993). A later and more academic interpretation of the word is as a narrative song and Shields (1993) proposes two subdivisions of 'old' and 'new' ballads which need not concern us here except to say that the old ballads are what many other scholars would call 'Child' ballads, and new ballads would be of later composition. There is also the meaning, especially when applied to the popular music tradition, of a slow sentimental song - thus Elvis Presley sang ballads. Finally, and of greatest relevance here, is the meaning associated with the Ballad Boom which originally was something of a mixture of the last three meanings but which has now come to imply a certain repertoire of songs hand in hand with a certain style of performance strongly associated with a number of commercial groups.

The Origins of the 'Boom'

The ballad boom, in contrast to the Comhaltas movement, was essentially an urban phenomenon, and made its appearance in Ireland, mainly in Dublin, in the early 1960s. Roots in the American folk revival can be easily established. The origins of the American revival are complex and are intimately tied up with left wing politics in the United States. Munro (1984) has traced its origins to an organisation called the Industrial Workers of the World (the I.W.W. or 'wobblies' as they were known) who used political lyrics set to common hymn tunes and popular airs to put across their

message. By the 1930s singers such as Pete Seeger and groups like the Almanacs were continuing this process with 'protest songs' which again used elements of traditional style but with contemporary, usually political verse. This movement gained considerable popular appeal, particularly among young urban middle class, college educated whites, and by the 1950s there were many recordings and publications in connection with it. By the 1960's it had begun to affect the mainstream popular music culture of America.

From the Irish point of view this influence seems to have been introduced in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The Clancy Brothers, originally from Tipperary but who made their initial reputation in New York, have been widely credited as being the most important figures in this. As emigrants from Carrick-on-Suir, they were working in New York and trying their hand at some part-time acting in the Village area, at that time the heart of the folk scene in the city. Apparently their singing began as performance purely for their own amusement, but it was received so well by other customers in the pub where they performed, that they were soon in great demand as a singing group. The songs they sang were songs that they had known from Tipperary, and by the time they started to make records, some of them taken from the repertoire of English folk revival composers, such as Ewan McCall. The style of singing was a direct and up front unison delivery, with some very basic guitar accompaniment, which in its novelty proved

a great attraction in Ireland as well as in America. A review in the Evening Press (1963) comments:

The shattering vitality of their voices, I would say...the lusty, rowdy, exuberant, to hell with production attitude which is their attraction...

After making several very successful recordings for Columbia, starting in 1956/7 they returned to Ireland in 1963 to find a country already in the grip of a 'ballad fever' which was not only the preserve of a group of enthusiasts, but which attracted considerable media attention. The Dublin newspapers were at pains to explain this new craze to their readers and numerous articles appeared which correctly saw the phenomenon as being American influenced but in essence strongly Irish. The Evening Press in March 1963 said:

As in the States the Irish folk song revival grew on or within the fringe of Art circles. Now adherents include the world and his mother. Although beards and black stockings are still very much to the fore, the full -throated chorus to *The Wife of the Bould Tenant Farmer* or the calls of " Good on yeh " and "lovely weather" in Dublin's Kitchen Folk Club will assure the greatest "square" that these are no ordinary extraordinary arty-crafty meetings.

and the Evening Herald of December 1962 commented:

Ballad singing, the present craze in America, is enjoying a revival in Ireland just now. Young people are getting together in the evenings to sing ballads old and new just for the

fun of it, and with the help of the new recordings now on the market, the ballad is gradually pushing its way into the Top Twenty.

The Spread of the 'Boom'

Ballad clubs sprang up all over Dublin and were packed to the doors with young people who in general had had no previous exposure to this type of music. The emphasis on song as opposed to instrumental music did not go unnoticed either at the time. The same article quoted above continues:

The emphasis in Ireland has been on folk music, people getting together to play their pipes whistles and fiddles, and in Dublin this is still a popular pastime at the St. Mary's Club in Church St.

Now, however, the new trend is in favour of the singers, and the Kitchen Club, meeting at the Coffee Kitchen in Molesworth St. specialises in the ballads.

The ballad boom was initially an amateur movement, with the whole idea of audience participation an important aspect. It became commercialised fairly quickly, in terms of involvement by the recording industry, and certainly by 1963, the style and repertoire of the amateur performers was determined by the commercial groups such as the Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers, or the Johnstons.

The popularity of ballads was seen at the time, both by the participants and the media, as simply another aspect of the general revival of folk music in Ireland. Newspaper articles (Doyle 1963) of the time attest to this by including the activities of the Pipers Club in Church St. as part of the overall increase in popularity, despite

the fact that it had been in existence for 27 years at the time (Evening Press 11/11/58).

Initially the young urban ballad fans certainly made no differentiation between the music which was to be found in the countryside, and their own particular version of it, and they flocked to fleadhhs in huge numbers, looking for music, drink, and fun. They found all three according to the shock/horror reports of the press at the time. A few headlines will suffice to give the picture:

Scenes in Mullingar (EP 5/6/63)

45 Publicans on 125 Charges (Irish Press 9/9/61)

Orgies at Fleadhanna (EP 6/5/63)

or quotes from letters to the papers from the same period.

The scenes of hooliganism, vulgarity and drunkenness seen on our streets have saddened the townspeople of Mullingar (EP 5/6/63).

I am a stranger to your country....(we) were shocked and horrified at the disgraceful scenes we witnessed on the Holy Sabbath day! by your Irish colleens and the mob with which they associated (EP ?/5/63)

Despite several Fleadh Ceoils in these years that threatened to be the last of their kind because of this type of unruly behaviour, the association between the urban balladeers and the Fleadh Ceoil continued. When the initial hysteria of the craze had died away

there remained a group of young urban people who, drawn originally to the ballad clubs, now found that their interest was moving towards the more traditional forms which had inspired the ballad movement. Although interest in traditional singing was part of this, it was much more strongly based around the dance music which was the basis of the Irish instrumental tradition, and beginning in the 1960s there was inspiration aplenty in the form of the new groups which were presenting it in a new and exciting way. The development of this new style of instrumental playing forms the third of the four elements of the overall revival.

The Role of Ó Riada

Since its evolution in the early twentieth century, ensemble playing in Irish traditional music had taken basically two forms. The first was the American bands which began to come into prominence in the 1920s through the medium of the recording industry, mainly in the large east coast cities. This type had largely died out by the early forties.

The second, and for our purposes the more relevant type was the

ceili band. Essentially dance bands, ceili bands, whose origin was closely associated with the expatriate London Irish community, quickly became the standard form of dance music performance for the larger venues which were becoming common in Ireland from the mid twenties. They had their heyday though, when the 1935 Dance Hall Act severely restricted the house dance over large areas of the country, and dancing in increasingly larger halls became the norm. Ceili bands are still with us, if in lesser numbers than before, but they played an exceptionally important role which has too often been ignored, in a period when traditional music was under threat of disappearance. I think that it is not going too far to say that when the nascent revival had stirred middle class and educated interest in traditional music certain commentators saw the ceili band as typical of all that was worst. Prominent among these was Charles Acton, the music critic of the Irish times. A classical music reviewer, Acton found himself in the position of having to comment on the new phenomenon of the folk revival, and speaking from what was basically a position of ignorance he adopted a purist stance based on second-hand information. The ceili band was one of

¹ Taylor (1984) criticises Ó Riada's position on this point.

his favourite targets¹ and he was under the mistaken impression that it had been 'invented' by Seamus Clandillon as a means of presenting Irish music on the newly formed Irish radio station in 1926. It is likely that he garnered this opinion from Seán Ó Riada. In his 1962 radio series *Our Musical Heritage*, Ó Riada (1982) stated:

In 1926, Seamus Clandillon, the first Director of Irish Broadcasting, conceived the idea of the Céilí band: eight or nine musicians playing together...

He went on to severely criticise the ceili band as the antithesis of all that was good in Irish traditional music, particularly with regard to the loss of individual expression that was found in solo playing.

Ceoltóirí Chualann

Realising that an ensemble performance style had become an integral part of the tradition, Ó Riada experimented with traditional music played by an ensemble of his own choosing which he eventually named Ceoltóirí Chualann (The musicians of an area near Bray).

This group first performed in 1961, at the Dublin Theatre Festival in a play by Bryan MacMahon, *The Golden Folk*, which was a re-working of his earlier *The Song of the Anvil*. As part of the same festival, they played a concert of traditional tunes arranged by Ó Riada, in the ballroom of the Shelbourne Hotel, which was

¹ Taylor (1984) criticises Ó Riada's position on this point.

warmly received by the audience and critics alike. This event was a landmark in the development of traditional music in Ireland from several points of view. Musically, it saw a completely original approach to the performance of dance music based on Ó Riada's ideas of incorporating the solo tradition with ensemble playing. The tonal balance of the group, which consisted of flute, whistle, two fiddles, two accordions, pipes, bones, and bodhrán was an important feature, as was the way in which solos from the different instruments alternated with ensemble passages. Ó Riada also introduced the idea of using other types of instrumental music apart from dance music, and part of the programme consisted of song airs, and O'Carolan pieces arranged for the band. Socially the event was also of great importance. The venue, the Shelbourne Hotel, was the resort of the elite of Dublin society, and the concert itself was attended by many of them, including several high-ranking members of the government. Dress was formal.

The significance of all of this, which seems so normal in the 1990s, is in the realisation that prior to these events, traditional music was thought to be entirely the preserve of rural unsophisticates, which had absolutely no role in modern Irish urban society. Any nationalist sympathy with 'Irish music' was satisfied by gentele renditions of *The Harp that once through Tara's Halls*, or sprightly arrangements of *A Nation Once Again* played by the Artane Boy's Band. Ó Riada, by presenting Irish traditional

music in a form that seemed to its listeners far removed from all associations of the bog, allowed a new appreciation of it by a whole range of people without whose involvement the revival might not have been as far reaching or long lasting.

◇ Riada's Film Music

Ó Riada's contribution to the widening public awareness of traditional music was also made through the medium of film music. The year 1961 had seen the premier of a film made by Gael-Linn, *Mise Éire* (I am Ireland) for which Ó Riada had been commissioned to provide the music. This consisted of orchestral arrangements of traditional tunes, something which had been attempted many times before, but there was something in Ó Riada's music which, combined with the images of the film, struck a deep chord in those who saw it. The film was immensely popular and Ó Riada's music played a large part in this. The film consisted of edited documentary footage from the time of the War of Independence. Roibárd Mac Góráin, one of the founders of the Gael-Linn organisation, who actually commissioned Ó Riada to write the music explains the approach (Mac Goráin interview 21/10/94)

It was my idea that the musical side of a film like this was more important than in a normal film..... where it was seen, certainly at the time, as having a subsidiary function. But we thought that the music should play a much more important role, especially as we couldn't control the images on the screen, so the whole emotional and dramatic side relied on the music.

Mac Góráin also firmly relates the success of the film and its music (Gael-Linn released an LP of the film music coincidentally with the cinema release of the film), to the increasing public awareness of traditional music that began around this time.

...the film was a great success, but for us it was a breakthrough in record distribution as well. It increased our standing as a company and record sales in general went up. It drew attention to traditional music, not just traditional fans, but for ordinary man in the street, here in Dublin it was the breakthrough element...

...but I honestly think that without Ó Riada's *Mise Éire* it [the increasing public awareness of traditional music] would have been a slower process. It was a big impact coming at the right time. [my comment in brackets]

He followed this up with the music to another Gael-Linn film, *Saoirse?* (Freedom?) the next year. A proposed third film never materialised.

If the music of Ceoltóirí Chualann was instrumental in revealing traditional music to the middle classes, the music for *Mise Éire*, although further removed from the tradition was perhaps an even more powerful catalyst in increasing public awareness of Irish traditional music.

Ó Riada continued to work with Ceoltóirí Chualann for several years, but eventually he decided that he could do no more with the idea, and disbanded them in 1969

The Spread of the Group

If Ó Riada thought that he had taken the idea as far as he could, others quickly took it over and began to develop it along their own lines. Several members of Ceoltóirí Chualann along with others, did formed The Chieftains, who recorded their first album in 1964. The Chieftains and Ceoltóirí Chualann co-existed for some years. Eamon de Butléir, another ex-Ceoltóirí Chualann member formed a group called Ceoltóirí Laighean. Both of these groups were fairly straight imitations of Ceoltóirí Chualann, but in the late 1960's and early 1970s, increasing numbers of musicians, more especially those whose interest in the music had been initiated by the ballad boom, began to form themselves into performance groups which had more eclectic influences than those of Ó Riada. These groups, who played a mixture of dance music, airs, and accompanied songs were professional or semi-professional, and played mainly to a young urban audience, whose interest was encouraged by an increasing number of recordings made by the better known groups. These groups reinforced the development of traditional music as listening music, and freed from the hegemony of dancers they were free to experiment with melody, harmony and especially with tempo and rhythm. By the early 1970s the revival was well and truly consolidated and while the strands outlined above had all lent their weight to the overall picture, there was one further factor, that of contemporary economic and social development which must not be overlooked.

The Economics of the Sixties

Since the foundation of the State in 1922, the Irish economy had remained basically stagnant due to an inward looking economic policy which had adopted two ideals, which although disparate, did little to advance the Irish economy. The early government looked to a policy of self-sufficiency inherited from Sinn Fein and its mentor, Arthur Griffith. They avoided tariffs wherever possible. This policy did almost nothing to advance the economy, and statistics show only minor advances, and in some cases figures even fell below late nineteenth century levels.

In 1932 Fianna Fail eventually won power from their rivals and immediately began to implement a policy of high tariffs, which led to the 'economic war' with England, and further stagnation in the home economy. To some extent, pressure on the State finances were relieved by the massive emigration rates in this period. Tobin (1984) sums up the effect of all this succinctly:

An emigrant returning to the Republic of Ireland in the late fifties after thirty years abroad would have had few recognition problems. The country had no television station, although the few homes on the east coast which could afford TV sets picked up programmes from the British stations.....The ferocious literary and film censorship was as vigilant as it had been when he had left. Those most conservative of Irish institutions, the churches, were very much as they had been in 1930.....Late marriages, large families and high rates of emigration were as common as ever.....Industry was still protected by tariff barriers erected in the 1930s, and agriculture had seen few changes since the turn of the century.....The physical appearance of the nation's cities and towns was unchanged.

In other fields, that of education for example, we find that not only third level education but even schooling to the end of second level was a privilege of those who could afford it.

The huge turn around of these somewhat depressing circumstances in the sixties happened with a speed that now seems to us bewildering. A new set of policies, the brain child of the economist T. J. Whitaker, were put in train by the government of Sean Lemass, and were intended to boost the economy by attracting foreign investment with the idea of building up industry. Internal government spending was directed away from social schemes such as house building, towards the same ends.

This new policy was wildly successful, and though the economic drive did lose some steam as the decade progressed, Ireland was a transformed country at the end of it. Tobin (1984) states:

In the most crucial area of all, the performance of the Irish economy in the 1960s did not fully satisfy the optimists. Total employment did not rise. But industrial employment increased sufficiently to absorb the flight from the land and thus stop emigration. To all who remembered the fifties, this fact more than any other marked out the sixties as the best of decades. Employment, security and the prospect of reasonable material comfort in Ireland for all her population: that was a revolutionary set of expectations for a country that had known little other than abject failure in the material world since the great famine.

The increased prosperity of the sixties was enjoyed disproportionately by the young. They had the lion's share of the new industrial jobs. Migration from rural areas to towns as opposed

to emigration out of the country became the pattern. Emigrants returned to this new buoyant Ireland and invested in businesses at home.

Musical Developments in the Sixties

Culturally, many things were on the move. On the music front in particular, as well as the phenomena described above, the showbands were attracting unprecedented crowds to the huge rural dance halls that had sprung up all over Ireland (Power 1990). It should be added that this was not a purely rural, but a truly nationwide affair, which in terms of numbers of people involved was probably bigger than the ballad boom.

The notable thing about all this outburst of music of whatever style is that it is almost without exception commercial in some way or other. The private house had no longer a significant role to play in music making, but rather the public house, the dance hall, and the club were now the venues. To participate in this way required money, for entrance fees, for drinks, and perhaps more importantly for records, and record players and radios. Cheap and readily available transport was another factor which must not be overlooked. As an indicator of this, sales of new cars in 1960 were up 40% on 1959 (Tobin 1984), a dramatic illustration of the sudden nature of the economic upturn. Music was no longer restricted to the radius of a bicycle ride. For the first time, Irish society had a large young population with a disposable income, and a

considerable amount of it was disposed of via music in various forms. Thus the revival of folk and traditional music in Ireland which might have degenerated into the enthusiasm of a small minority, was given an important economic push towards the mainstream. (see Chapter 4)

The Role of the Recording Companies

The role of recording in this process was a major one, and the actions of the companies involved were central to it. Chapters 3 and 4 have examined a similar process at work in the U.S.A. earlier in the century, and important parallels can be drawn.

Firstly, these are commercial recordings and in both periods there is an important relationship between the level of live performance by the recording musicians and the level of record sales. Secondly in both periods a wide range of different styles of music were recorded under the umbrella term 'Irish'.

In other ways the recording industry of the 1950s and later had evolved immeasurably from the pioneering industry of the 1920s, particularly on the technological front.

As has been pointed out, although the 'recording contract' did not exist in the same sense as today, most of the recordings in the pre-microgroove era were made by the large companies for whom 'ethnic' recording was only part of their business, albeit an important one at the time. In contrast the revival recordings, those made after 1955, tended to be the productions of smaller

companies which specialised in recording Irish traditional music. This is in contrast to the 1920s where although there were similar specialist companies, for example O'Byrne de Witt, the majority of 'Irish' recordings were made by the large companies such as Columbia or Victor. (see Chapter 4)

The activities of the modern small companies is central to the way in which the revival developed and warrants a more detailed examination.

The Specialist Companies

Several companies can be considered under this heading, but the following information is based on interviews carried out with representatives of Topic Records, Ceirníní Cladaigh, and Gael-Linn.

Fundamental to the foundation and approach of these companies was the commitment of the founders, not to profit, although they realised at the same time that some level of commercial viability was essential, but to a cultural ideal. They believed firmly that the music they recorded had an inherent value which was paramount to other considerations. Céirníní Cladaigh (Claddagh Records) was founded by Garech de Brún and Ivor Browne who wanted to make a record of their teacher Leo Rowsome (they were both taking piping lessons at the time). That was in 1959, and although they didn't make further recordings until some years later, these were again of primary performers, although the company's subsequent relationship with

the Chieftains was beginning to develop at this stage. They used the profits made from recordings which sold well to support the production of recordings which on their own would have had no commercial viability. Tom Sherlock of Claddagh Records told me (Interview 27/7/91).

...and it's fully accepted, and fully understood, that when we issued a sean-nós album last year (of) Val O Flaherta, we do that in the full knowledge that it's unlikely to recoup its costs, certainly within the first five years, but accepting that and issuing it anyway. However we'll also take some care to try and issue an album that will more than recoup its costs. It's a delicate balance act.

The time factor which the sale of more commercially successful recordings allows the company is important. The recordings of primary performers, probably will eventually recover their costs, as their sales pattern tends to be one of a small but steady level of sales over a long period of time. This type of financial return alone would not support the company, but combined with some commercial recordings, ensures survival. It seems that every company of this sort must balance a few commercial releases with their 'core interest' recordings. A company which collapses produces no recordings at all.

Topic Records, an English company, grew out of an organisation called The Workers Music Association, an overtly political group whose aim was to record and publish the music of the rural and urban working class. The combination of their

political and musical philosophy resulted in numerous commercial recordings of what were essentially non-commercial primary performers, many of whom were Irish, dating from the late 1950s.

Gael-Linn, both as a recording company, and in the other aspects of their business, have played a major role in Irish cultural development since their foundation in 1953. Again, cultural commitment rather than profit was the motive, and the company was originally founded to promote the use of the Irish language and Irish culture on a much broader basis than simply by recordings. Using profits generated by a 'pools' lottery game, which the government had made legal in 1953, they began to experiment in several areas, notably in film, producing short documentary films of Irish life which were distributed by Rank to all the cinemas in Ireland, and following this up with a weekly newsreel in Irish which dealt with current affairs. These films were reaching an estimated audience of one million cinema-goers a week in the late 1950s (Mac Goráin Interview 26/10/95).

Their attempts at recording traditional music were initially less successful in terms of sales at any rate. Beginning in the mid 1950s they recorded some twenty 78 r.p.m. discs of traditional musicians and singers, usually with a song in Irish on one side, and a set of dance music on the other. These were widely distributed in shops, but Gael-Linn were disappointed with the response of the record buying public. It was not until the success of the film *Mise Éire*, and the accompanying LP record of the sound track, that the

public began to show an interest in the other Gael-Linn recordings, part of the amazing effect that the film and its music had, as outlined above. Gael-Linn have always been more eclectic in their approach to traditional music than, for example Claddagh. They experimented with pop songs in Irish, in an attempt to broaden the use of the language among the young, and they also recorded groups such as Skara Brae, and the young Clannad, whereas Claddagh focussed on recording more traditional performers and performance styles. Gael-Linn are currently major publishers of traditional music in all its present manifestations.

The importance of the role that these companies (in essence the individuals who ran them) played in the revival period cannot be overemphasised. Their insistence in recording for commercial release music that would never have otherwise been recorded by the larger companies was a seminal influence on the revival, and must be seen as distinct from the role of such bodies as the Folklore Commission, who recorded for archival or academic purposes.

American Companies in the Revival Period

The activities of the specialist recording companies in Ireland was mirrored, and in some cases pre-empted by a small group of companies based in the Eastern United States.

There was very little continuity in terms of record companies between the 78 era and the revival period. In terms of Irish traditional music one company did straddle the two periods. This

was Columbia, who were the major company responsible for Irish recordings between 1899 and 1942 (39%). Their role in the revival period was much more restricted in terms of numbers of recordings produced (2.4%), but they did produce seminal recordings in several different areas. Thus the first ever commercially released recording of *sean-nós* singing was on the Columbia label c. 1955, and in the ballad field they issued the first recordings of the Clancy Brothers in the early 1960s.

Among companies of the revival period, Folkways were among the earliest to take an interest in Irish traditional music. Their 1957 recording 'Songs of Aran' was the second recording ever to feature *sean-nós* singing, and they went on to record a range of Irish material of both Irish and Irish-American origin, mostly from the more traditional end of the spectrum, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

A noticeable difference between the American companies and their Irish contemporaries, in the early revival at least, was the more eclectic nature of most of the American companies in terms of the categories of music recorded (see Chapter 7). All of the companies included traditional dance music and song recordings as part of their catalogue, but all of them also included ballads, and some of them, at a later stage, material which would fall under the Type Transfer, and Poptrad and Newtrad classifications. This is in contrast to companies such as Claddagh and Topic, who were much more focussed in their presentation of material.

¹ Copsey was run by descendants of the O Byrnes do Wail fan by who played an important role in the very early days of TG recordings. See Chapter 9.

Typical of this is the material recorded by the Boston based Copley company,¹ which while issuing several important recordings of dance music, like those of Paddy Cronin for example, basically relied on material which could only be very broadly classified as Irish traditional music, if at all. Other smaller companies operating in the United States such as Avoca had similar catalogues to Copley, but others such as Rounder, Philo, tended towards more traditional material.

Folkways, and later on Shanachie and Green Linnet, are probably the American companies which can be most closely compared to the 'culturally motivated' concerns on this side of the Atlantic, and for example this is reflected in the fact that of 19 releases of Irish traditional music under the aegis of Folkways, some 16 are in the Solo 1 category. This is far in excess of the percentage of Solo 1 for any of the other companies considered here.

In quantitative terms though, Green Linnet and Shanachie far outdo their rivals on the American scene.

The American companies made major contributions to the broad field of Irish traditional music on several fronts.

1/ They recorded both native Irish performers based in America,

¹ Copley was run by descendants of the O'Byrne de Witt family who played an important role in the very early days of 78 recordings. See Chapter 9.

Irish-based Irish performers, and American performers of both Irish and non-Irish origin. In doing this they helped to maintain the broad bi-continental base that Irish traditional music had been building up since the nineteenth century. In particular I believe that they made Irish musicians living in Ireland aware of the second and third generation Irish players that were coming to the fore in the United States at the time, as well as bringing these musicians to an American public who may have been largely unaware of their existence.

2/ They made American audiences aware of the developing group scene in Ireland by re-issuing recordings of most of the major ensembles playing in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s. The Bothy Band, De Danann, Planxty, The Chieftains, Altan, and Patrick Street, among others, all appeared as re-issues on these American labels, at a time when poor distribution ensured that Irish-produced recordings of the same bands were difficult to acquire over most of the United States.

3/ They made both American and Irish audiences aware of the 'Golden Age' of Irish music in America via the re-issue of the recordings of some of the great performers of the 1920s and 1930s. Shanachie in particular, were pioneers in this area, re-releasing the recordings of Michael Coleman, Paddy Killoran, James Morrison and Packie Dolan.

Of the companies under consideration here, several, including the once major player, Shanachie are essentially defunct, leaving Green Linnet as the major force in Irish recording in the United States at the time of writing (1996).

Obviously the factors that control which companies survive in an increasingly competitive commercial world are complex in the extreme, but it seem to me to be significant that Green Linnet have expanded beyond their original remit of recording Irish traditional music, and have apparently sucessfully made the transition into the burgeoning area of 'World Music'.

S u m m a r y

My own experience of the Irish revival leads to a general discussion of the concept of music revivals and how other workers in the field have analysed them.

The revival in Irish traditional music since the 1950s is seen as one of a series of revivals which have taken place, and it is suggested that it can usefully be analysed as a group of interacting revivals. In this light, five elements which made major contributions to the post-1950s revival are identified.

- 1/ The Role of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
- 2/ The 'Ballad Boom'.
- 3/ The Role of Sean Ó Riada

4/The Economic prosperity of the 1960s

5/ The Role of Specialist Record Companies

COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS 1956-1993

This chapter covers commercial recordings of the revival period which consist of 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm LPs, EPs, cassettes, and compact discs released from 1956 to 1993, mainly in Ireland, but also covering recordings made outside Ireland, mainly in America and England.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, women as performers in the revival were much more obvious in the many social gears of traditional music in Ireland than it appears they had been up to the end of the first period under consideration. This social visibility has not been translated into visibility in commercial recordings. Of the 2281 recordings surveyed only 231 could be identified as being specifically by female performers¹. This figure admittedly hides the role of females as singers in ensembles, which was a common role, and in fact 135 of the 231 feature women as vocalists. Of the remaining 96, 29 feature the harp, which is, in the early to mid revival, the instrument most strongly associated with female traditional performers in the public mind. These figures demonstrate clearly that the level of female performance on the ground is not being adequately reflected in numbers of commercial

¹ These figures are necessarily rough because of the degree of overlap caused by the presence of various tracks on any one album, and particularly in the case of compilation recordings. I believe however that they are a valuable indication as to the level of women as performers in the period.

CHAPTER 7

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¹ These figures are necessarily rough because of the degree of overlap caused by the presence of various tracks on any one album, and the common occurrence of compilation recordings. I believe however that they are accurate enough to serve to illustrate the level of women as performers in this period.

recordings up to 1993. I believe, however, that there is evidence of an increase in the level of female participation in commercial recordings since 1993 which does not appear in the statistics as given here.

Independent Recordings

The majority of these recordings, certainly up to the mid 1980s, were issued by recording companies whose major, if not only, commercial activity, was the publication on sound recordings. By around 1985 decreasing prices for processes such as tape duplication and printing of inserts, made the possibility of independent publication of recordings a reality. Many Irish traditional musicians increasingly took advantage of this and independent cassette recordings became more and more common. A very small number of independent LPs were released as well. The overwhelming majority of musicians were discouraged from this format by the vastly increased costs of producing vinyl LPs as opposed to cassettes from the master tape. The greater prestige of LP as opposed to cassette was usually not enough to offset this.

The availability of studios and the financial investment necessary to produce an independent cassette recording brought access to the medium within the range of almost every musician. Obviously varying amounts could be spent on the process and it is difficult to arrive at anything like an average, but the following figures, based on my own experience of releasing an independent

tape in 1990, and being involved in a music retail outlet around the same time, were typical, and can be adjusted according to the amount of time spent in the studio.

of paramount importance in the case of the independently produced recordings, and there were/are several possibilities on this front, including sales at gigs,

Studio Time @ c.£20 per hour	£200
Cassette Duplication 500 copies	£350
Printing	<u>£50</u>
Total	£600

Many of the musicians who were motivated to make independent recordings were also professional or semi-professional. They would

Since in the vast majority of cases, tracks were listed as 'Traditional, arranged

not only there would be no expenses in the area of mechanical royalties. Very few cassettes were of completely solo performers, but the general pattern would be for the main musicians to call on friends to play with them, and these extra musicians might be paid when money began to come in from sales.

The costings are those of about 1990, and at that time such independently recorded cassettes were selling for £5 on average.

The main problem for the musician was to sell enough tapes to cover the basic outlay as quickly as possible, for in many cases credit would have been raised from various sources to make the recording. If all the tapes were sold within a reasonable period it can be seen however that this would give the musician a profit of £1,900. and even after the deduction of fees that might be paid to supporting musicians, this would have been considerably more than

would have been earned if the musician had had the recording published by one of the accepted 'traditional' record companies. Distribution and sales were therefore of paramount importance in the case of the independently produced recordings, and there were/are several possibilities on this front, including sales at gigs, local retailers, and professional distribution.

Sales

Many of the musicians who were motivated to make independent recordings were also professional or semi-professional. They would offer their tapes for sale in the venues where they played, not only on the actual occasion, but tapes would also be available 'behind the bar' in venues where they would play regularly.

If, as would be the case for most of the musicians, they were playing mostly in a local area, they might also ask local retailers, in pubs, shops, or petrol stations to display their tapes for sale, usually on a sale or return basis. The 'middleman' would normally receive £1 profit on each tape.

Distribution

Finally, a professional distributor could be approached, and the deal here would normally be that the distributor would buy a greater quantity of tapes from the musician than they could expect to sell to any one outlet, but normally only for half, or sometimes even less, of the retail price. Thus the costs involved in physically

distributing the tapes were offset against a smaller profit for the musicians. In many cases, a combination of the above was practised. The retail price of independent recordings would normally be £1-2 under the cost of a 'commercial' cassette. A musician playing regularly in a local area would also benefit from the publicity which such a recording would generate, and would hope to get more gigs, and therefore sell more tapes, and so on. Depending on the quality of both the music and the recording, such recordings could expect some airplay on local radio stations, and even on the national station RTE, although the latter would not play cassette recordings because they were not considered to be broadcast quality for technical reasons. But other factors could override this and sometimes RTE would play the master tape, which would normally be broadcast quality. On rarer occasions a cassette thought to be sufficiently unusual might be broadcast. In some cases these independent tapes sold runs well in excess of releases by commercial companies of better known performers. However, despite the popularity of the independent tape there was a certain amount of prestige associated with a release by one of the recognised companies which the 'do-it-yourself' tape lacked.

As well as the prestige of being recorded by a recognised company there were other associated benefits, such as a ready-made distribution network, and much greater access to the publicity generated by radio plays.

The Survey Methods

Almost 2,300 recordings were surveyed, and data entered in a data base similar to that used in the survey of the American 78 rpm recordings, but with the information entered in different fields, for reasons which will become apparent. Information about the recordings was in this case accumulated from the following sources.

1/ By examination of the actual recordings

Revival period issues as opposed to the earlier 78s often have all or some of the required information on the sleeve. Records from many collections, private, public, and institutional were examined, the major source however, being the collection in the Traditional Music Archive, Dublin.

2/ Catalogues

Most recording companies issue catalogues which often contain useful information.

3/ Discographies

I consulted both published discographies, some appended to other research dissertations, and in one useful case, that compiled by a private enthusiast, Axel Schulde (1994).

In the context of the present study, direct comparison between the 78 rpm recordings and those now under consideration was not possible. This is primarily due to the change in format from the 78, which only allowed approximately 6 minutes of music to be

recorded, counting both sides, to the LP and later cassette and CD, which at a minimum allowed 6 times this amount to be recorded. Advantage of this was taken in several different ways.

- 1/ More than one performer or group of performers can appear on one phonogram.
- 2/ More than one 'type' of performance can appear on one recording. Type in this instance is one of my fields of entry in the database and includes such categories as Solo, Group, Duet, etc.
- 3/ More than one kind of music can appear on one recording. Recordings might consist of several tracks of traditional music and several tracks of perhaps classical or popular.

Because of this, the same classifications of type could not be directly transferred from the 78s database. A typical revival recording might consist of singing, possibly in both Irish and English, solos on several different instruments, and some tracks of group performance. To make a direct comparison with the earlier recordings it would have been necessary to do a track by track listing, which was not attempted for two reasons.

Firstly, this would have taken an amount of time which I considered to be excessive in respect of the possible return.

Secondly, the recordings were conceived, recorded and marketed as

a unit, and the mixture of items on individual LPs is a matter of careful consideration by the performer and producer. To treat them as if they were 78s in this sense would have been imposing artificial categories never intended by their makers. I therefore used categories which describe the whole recording. Some are self defining. Most are self evident. Categories for which I have coined new terms are explained as they arise.

Other aspects of the information available make some types of analysis of these recordings difficult, one of the more important being change over time. Publication date was unfortunately not available for a proportion of the recordings. A surprisingly high number of companies did not include this information in sleeve notes, catalogues, or on the actual phonogram itself. It was possible in some cases to determine the date in other ways, from record reviews for example, but of the total some 20% remain undated, although it was possible to date them to within a few years by other methods. Since undated recordings do not seem to be concentrated in any particular time or category, it is argued that they do not change to any great extent the proportionality on which deductions are based.

It is not suggested that the recordings covered in this section represent the totality of the recordings issued in this period. I believe however that they represent a very large percentage of them, certainly enough to allow the analytical comparisons that follow to be proportionately correct.

Classifications

As with the earlier recordings the question of what qualifies as 'traditional' arises, and the same basic approach, that of making the initial definition as wide as possible has been adopted. The following broad classifications were adopted.

1/ Instrumental Music.

This would have major sub-divisions of;

a/ Solo

b/ Duet

c/ Ceili Band

d/ Group

2/ Vocal music

Major sub-divisions

a/ Ballad Performers

b/ Solo Traditional

c/ Group (in the sense of songs performed by division 1.d/)

Although many phonograms from this period do not fall easily into one class or category, there are also a considerable number that do, and a high proportion of these seem to be recordings which are indicative of more traditional performance, in the sense that they are of traditional instruments played in solo 1 or 2 style, (see Chap.

5 for introduction of these terms), duets, or unaccompanied traditional singing in Irish or English.

I am using the term 'dedicated' to describe any recording which can easily be placed into one 'Type' field. Typically this indicates that one performer or ensemble of performers playing one type of music occupy all the tracks on the album.

The following categories of dedicated recordings were identified from the database.

Solo

Fig. 15 shows the total numbers of albums released, and the total number of solo 1 and Solo 2 instrumental albums, per year.

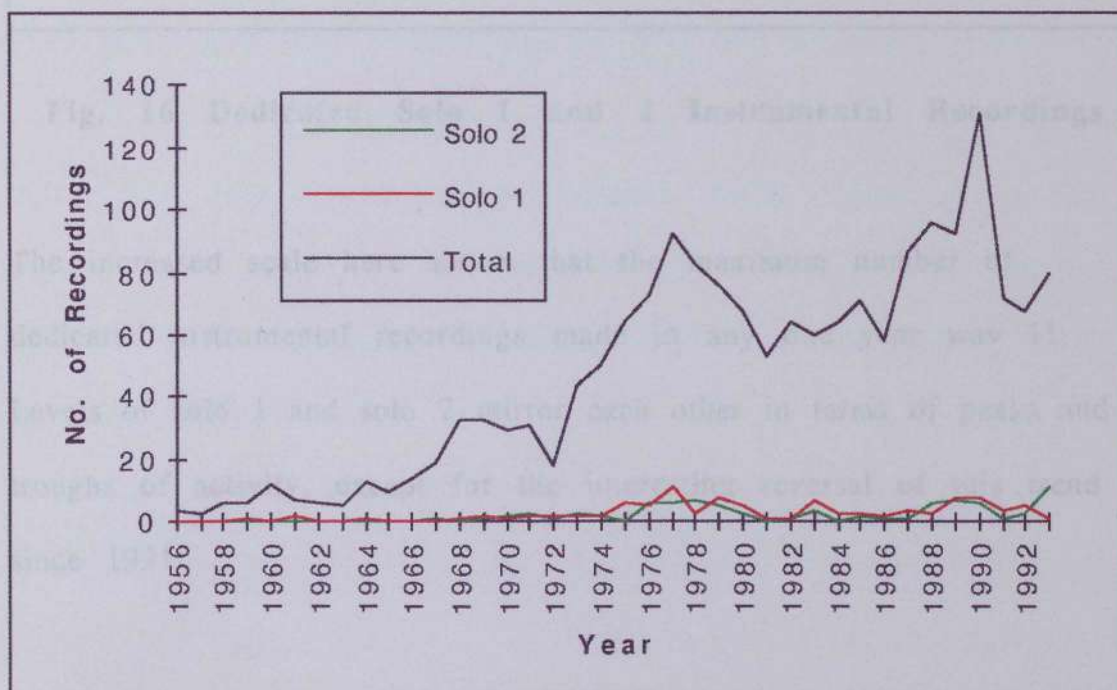


Fig.15 Dedicated Solo 1 and Solo 2 Instrumental Albums, and Total Releases.

As the graph shows, such recordings form a small percentage of the

total. (some 7.4% are Solo 1 recordings, 4.5% Solo 2) A better idea of the actual numbers involved is obtained by displaying the information separately, as below:

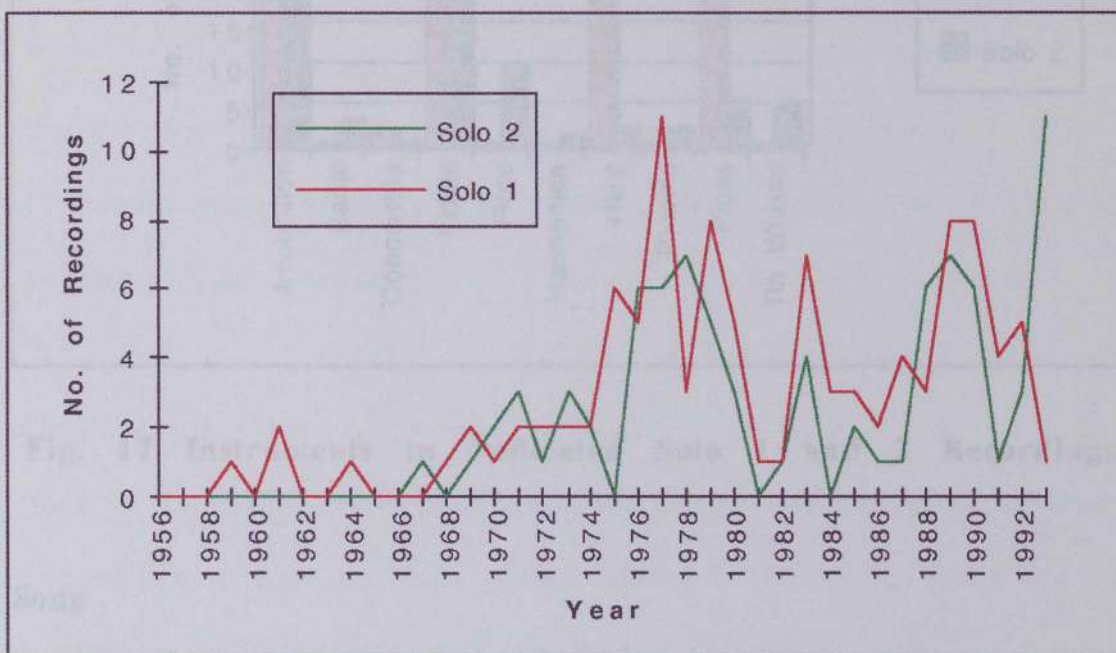


Fig. 16 Dedicated Solo 1 and 2 Instrumental Recordings

The increased scale here shows that the maximum number of dedicated instrumental recordings made in any one year was 11. Levels of solo 1 and solo 2 mirror each other in terms of peaks and troughs of activity, except for the interesting reversal of this trend since 1991.

Solo Instruments

In terms of instruments used in these recordings Fig. 17 gives a breakdown and compares solos and accompanied solos.

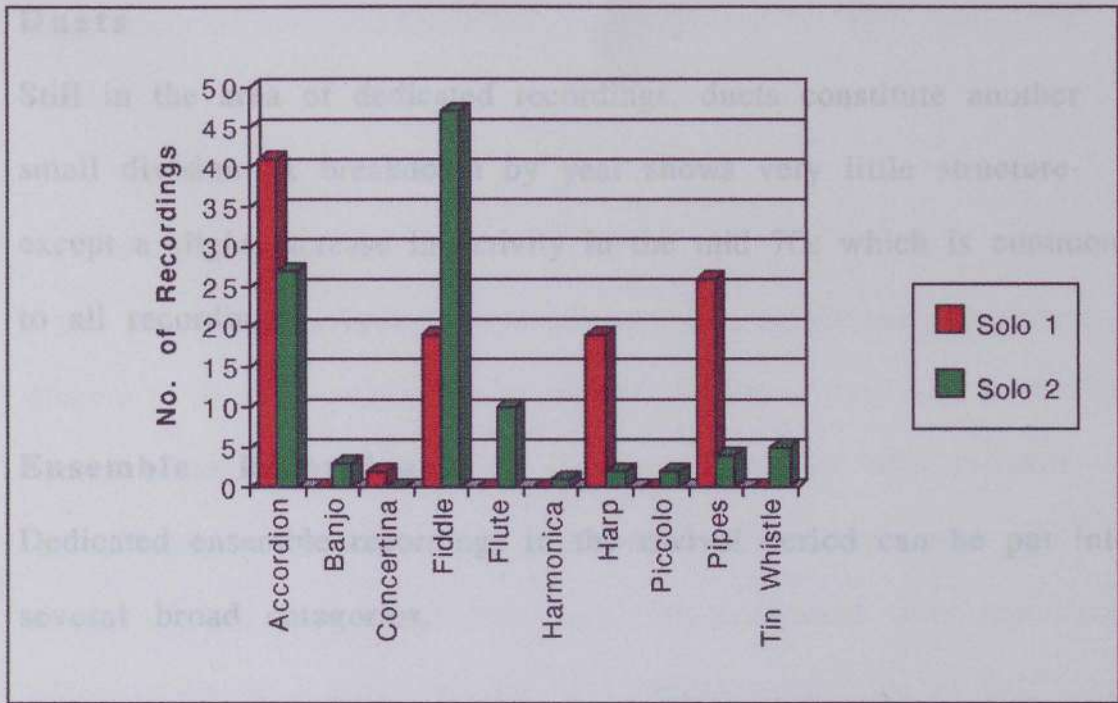


Fig. 17 Instruments in Dedicated Solo 1 and 2 Recordings.

Song

Dedicated vocal Solo 1 recordings in Irish and English represent the core of traditional song recordings and again form a small group, on a par with solo instrumental performance. Songs recordings in this style in both languages make up 7.4% of the total and the language split is 2.8% in Irish, 3.4% in English, and the balance having songs in both languages.

Non-dated recordings caused some problems with this section. The overall figure for Irish language recordings is probably slightly higher than stated above. This is in the main due to the activities of companies such as Camus, GTD, and Cló Iar Chonnachta which specialise in this field.

Duets especially the instrumental, is very largely from traditional. Still in the area of dedicated recordings, duets constitute another small division. A breakdown by year shows very little structure except a slight increase in activity in the mid 70s which is common to all recordings.

Ensemble Recordings Dedicated ensemble recordings in the revival period can be put into several broad categories.

Ceili Band. This is an easily identifiable category simply because most of the performers include the term in the name of the band. There are several subdivisions that will be looked at later.

Group. This designation is intended to indicate groups of performers who are part of a very loose 'movement' which most observers would agree, grew out of the folk revival, Riada's work with Ceoltóirí Chualann, and some input from the 'Ballad Boom' as well.

Traditional instruments are the core of the line up, but almost all use some form of accompanying instrument, mostly fretted, as well. A majority use songs as well as instrumentals in their performance and recordings. On the whole, performers in this category see themselves as traditional players and singers, and their repertoire,

more especially the instrumental, is very largely from traditional sources.

Ballad Performers

I use the term performers here because this is probably the most diverse as well as being the largest of the categories. The term 'Ballad Group' is widely in use to cover ensembles who perform almost entirely accompanied vocal music from a repertoire which is related to, but seen as distinct from, the traditional song repertoire. Where there is a direct overlap, the performance style is definitive. Traditional instruments are used, but the more recently introduced fretted stringed instruments are dominant. Although performance is usually by an ensemble, several individuals have attained a high profile.

The pie chart on the next page shows how dedicated recordings are divided between the categories above.

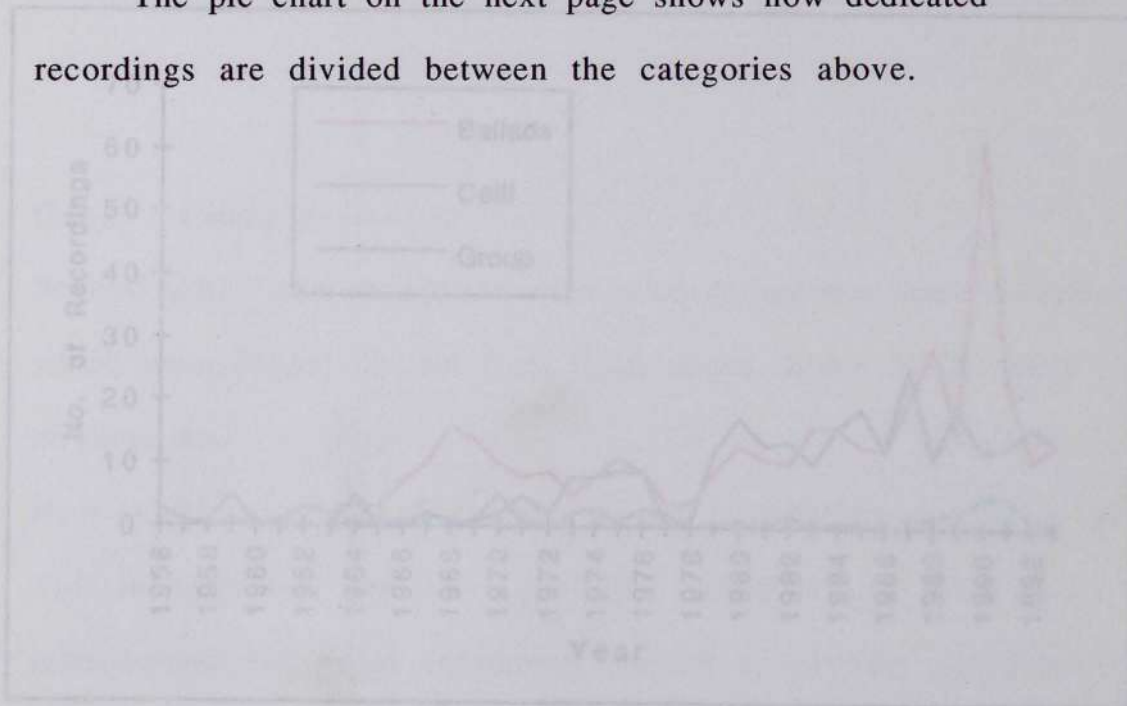


Fig. 19 Dedicated Ensemble Recordings by Year 1956-1993.

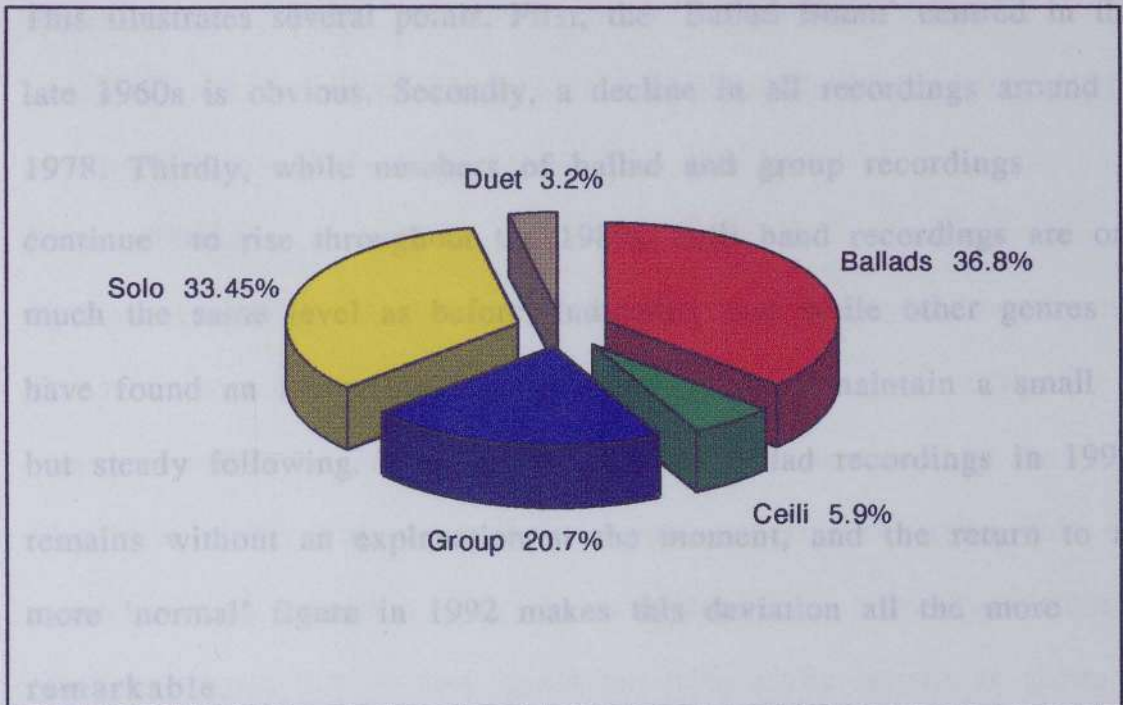


Fig. 18 Dedicated Recordings 1956-1993

A look at the dated ensemble recordings in the same categories indicates the relative popularity throughout the period.

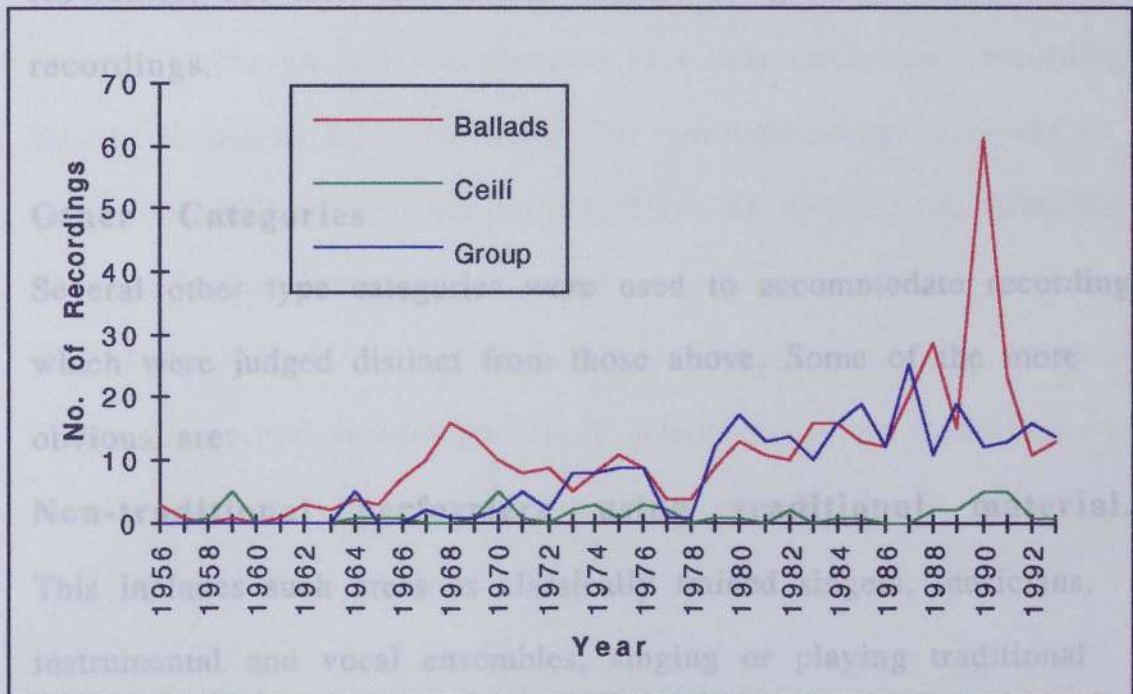


Fig. 19 Dedicated Ensemble Recordings by Year 1956-1993.

This illustrates several points. First, the 'Ballad Boom' centred in the late 1960s is obvious. Secondly, a decline in all recordings around 1978. Thirdly, while numbers of ballad and group recordings continue to rise throughout the 1980s, ceili band recordings are on much the same level as before, indicating that while other genres have found an increasing popularity, ceili bands maintain a small but steady following. The high number of ballad recordings in 1992 remains without an explanation at the moment, and the return to a more 'normal' figure in 1992 makes this deviation all the more remarkable.

The above figures are, as explained, derived from what I am calling dedicated recordings, where all the tracks can be placed in one type category. This normally but not exclusively implies only one main performer. The categories above make up about 67% of all recordings, but there are further smaller categories of dedicated recordings.

Other Categories

Several other type categories were used to accommodate recordings which were judged distinct from those above. Some of the more obvious are:

Non-traditional performers using traditional material.

This includes such areas as classically trained singers, musicians, instrumental and vocal ensembles, singing or playing traditional dance music and song. The 'Irish Tenor' would be a typical

recording here. There are several other very minor categories which do not exceed one or two recordings, such as cabaret groups and pipe bands (100 recordings, 4.3%)

Film Music

Instrumental music has been used in this way on several occasions. The most notable are Ó Riada's film scores, which feature highly arranged traditional melody. Other scores, such as those by the Chieftains, differ little from their normal performance style. This is a self-defining category, with the associated film normally indicated on sleeve notes etc. A very small but historically important group (6 recordings 0.26%)

Dance/Tutor

These recordings could also be placed in other major categories, such as Solo 1 instrumental or ballad for example. Again self-defining by information supplied with the phonogram, (in this category there are often explanatory booklets etc.) these recordings overtly intend to teach technique, or repertoire, or provide the appropriate music for dance tuition. Some 42 of the total (almost 2%) are in this category.

Religious Music.

There are several recordings (3) of masses based on traditional themes. Several other recordings contain some tracks of religious song, notably those by Nóirín Ní Ríain.

Session ed the terms 'Type Transfer' 'poptrad' and 'newtrad', (my
Only four recordings of those surveyed fall into this category, which
might seem surprising as the genre is by far the most common
overall in terms of live music. There are probably more recordings
of this type in existence, but being independently produced, are
often hard to find.

Folk traditional material, but now are individuals whose
These performers are typical of the early Folk Revival. Song based,
they would include songs of the English and American folk revivals
more typically than Irish material. Contemporary songs in a folk
style would also be a feature.

Recent Categories

Some performances almost defy classification or definition. There
may be characteristics of several different types present.
Sometimes individual style or content is the dominant feature, but
because there is still a strong association with one of the major
categories above they come within the boundaries of a broad
classification which were suggested at the beginning of the chapter.
In some cases the relationship with 'Irish' music, even in the widest
sense, may be very slight if present at all, but the public mind
firmly places such performers in the 'Irish' and 'traditional'
category (Hamilton 1995a) Such performers may be very popular
and successful.

I have used the terms 'Type Transfer' 'poptrad' and 'newtrad', (my own terminology) to help explain these categories.

This consists of mostly of musicians and singers that in terms of

Type Transfer

A major characteristic of many performers in this category is the fact that they have changed category. It consists almost entirely of singers. Some may originally have been Solo 1 or group performers, using traditional material, but now are individuals whose performance is much closer to 'Middle of the Road'. They may retain some elements of traditional style. Traditional material now forms little of their repertoire. They are mostly professional. Mary Black is perhaps the best known performer who might be used to typify this group.

Poptrad

Again consists of the superficial use of traditional themes. Best characterised by Phil Coulter. Often self-defining as 'Irish' in recording titles. Although a small group, some of the performers are very popular. One of the commonest types of recording is a spin off from the original recording by Phil Coulter where he played simple arrangements of Irish (in the broadest sense) song airs on the piano. This led to a rash of other recordings doing the same thing, with almost identical repertoire on various standard western art music instruments.

Newtrad

Another category difficult to define is what I have called 'newtrad'. This consists of mostly of musicians and singers that in terms of basic repertoire and technique are firmly based within the tradition. From that base they experiment with material from other traditions, new instruments, deliberate fusion with other types of music etc., or composition using novel arrangement of traditional elements. Many examples of this would probably now be found in record shops under the commercial 'World Music'

Fig. 18 Non-Dedicated Ensemble Recordings 1956-1993

Non-Specific

This can be conveniently considered in two sections.

a/ Firstly there are recordings which contrary to dedicated recordings contain performances in more than one of the above categories. Some of these may be compilation albums, for example samplers from a particular recording company, or perhaps music representative of a particular area. In such recordings there is a surprisingly similar distribution of the major types to that of the dedicated ones. (see Fig.18 above)

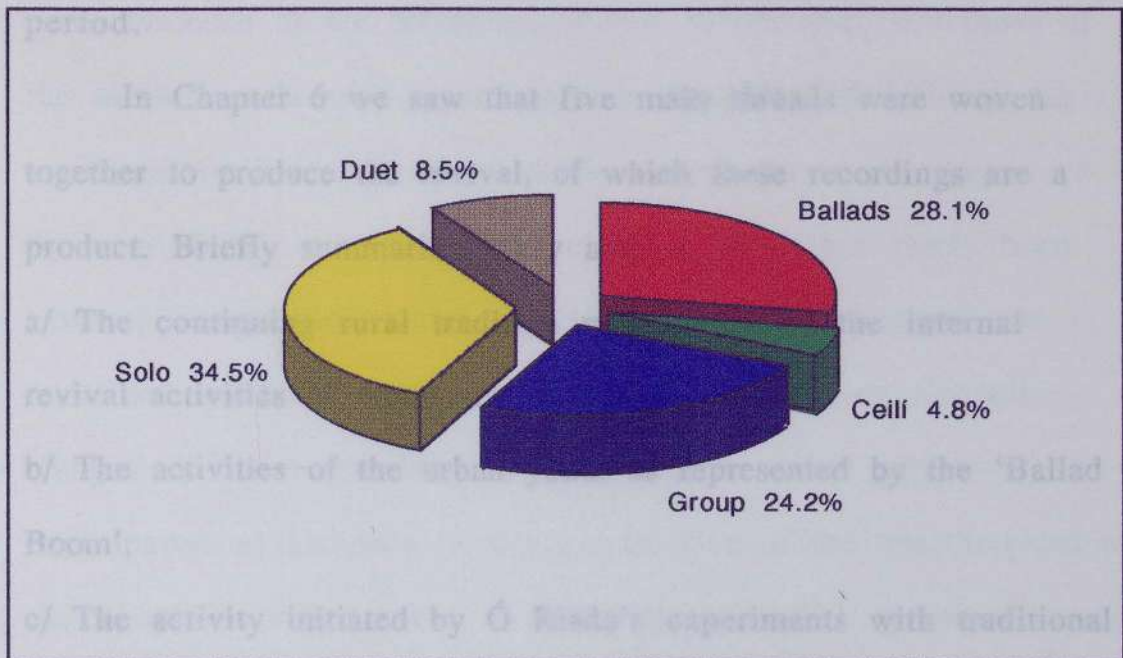


Fig. 20 Non-Dedicated Ensemble Recordings 1956-1993

The above figure refers to non-dedicated recordings where there are normally two or possibly three categories on each album

b/ The final category consists of those recordings that contain such a mixture of types and even kinds of music that any classification is fruitless. In general there are many different performers on such recordings, and typically only a few of the tracks would be in any of the above categories.

The inclusive nature of the definition used to select the recordings above means that a lot of material which many observers would not include in the term 'traditional' has been included. Given that this is the case, what can be retained as genuinely illustrative of traditional music, and what rejected as having only a spurious connection with it, in an attempt to assess the real impact of recordings on traditional music in the revival

period.

In Chapter 6 we saw that five main threads were woven together to produce the revival, of which these recordings are a product. Briefly summarised they are:

a/ The continuing rural tradition represented by the internal revival activities of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

b/ The activities of the urban youth as represented by the 'Ballad Boom'.

c/ The activity initiated by Ó Riada's experiments with traditional music.

d/ The economic prosperity of the 1960s.

e/ The role of the specialist recording companies.

The first three are evident in the recordings, and form major categories. Ceili band recordings are revealed as having an existence which in some ways seems to be separate from the effects of the revival, and it might be claimed that this sort of music is a link between the older period of recording and the present day, given that it is the only form that was recorded to any extent in the period discussed in Chapter 5.

Public Perceptions of Traditional Music in Ireland

If it is accepted that the core of traditional music in Ireland is solo instrumental dance music and song, then how do the other types of musical activity as revealed in the recordings relate to this? To answer this question satisfactorily we must look deeper than the

aural evidence of the recordings. Public perceptions, and those of the musicians themselves, are an important way of defining the music, although in this case I believe that the two are very different. Public perception of traditional music has rarely been assessed in any measurable way. One of the few attempts was contained indirectly in a report prepared for the Arts Council (Sinnott & Kavanagh 1983) in an attempt to assess public participation as audience in arts events. One of the questions put to the sample surveyed asked if they had attended a traditional music performance in the last year. Twenty-one percent claimed they had, a figure which was backed by the response to another question that indicated that 23% of those who bought a recording in the previous year, bought a recording of traditional music. Apart from film-going in the case of attendance, these figures were higher than for any other class of arts event. The report was hailed by some (see CCE journal, Treoir, 15 no. 2/3) as a vindication of their position in insisting the overall importance of traditional music in Irish culture, and treated with extreme suspicion by others, among whom I would include almost every traditional musician of my acquaintance. Partly in response to this survey I attempted a local survey in Waterford city, as part of my lecturing duties in Waterford Regional Technical College, and with the assistance of the Music Department students. The aim was to determine how the public defined traditional music, for it immediately struck me that the major flaw in the Arts Council survey was that it allowed the

respondents to define traditional music for themselves, or in fact any of the other categories of music covered. The Waterford survey attempted to discover how the public defined traditional music by asking them to name a performer that they thought typified the genre (Hamilton 1995a). They were first asked if they recognised the name of a well known traditional performer by simply being asked who is X? Respondents at this stage did not know that the survey was on the subject of music. This was followed by questions which asked them to name a traditional performer, if they had bought a traditional recording in the last year, and if so, of whom? The results indicate that only a very small percentage, between 5% and 6%, are aware of what might be called the 'core' of traditional music in the sense of the pre-revival dance music and song tradition. Those who did respond when asked to name a traditional musician, overwhelmingly named someone from the ballad, folk, poptrad or newtrad categories as outlined above. This result fits with what I myself as a performer of this music feel is the current level of public awareness, and I believe the majority of other performers think the same.

The Folk View

Definition by the performers themselves, the 'folk view', is also important in attempting to discover which among the recordings are considered 'traditional'. Based on over twenty years participant observation I believe I am correct in claiming that performers in

the Solo, Duet, Ceili, and Group categories think of themselves as traditional musicians. One of the ways in which they assess what they do musically is in terms of its 'traditionality'. They are concerned that their music will be thought of by others as traditional. Some performers in other categories, notably dance/tutor and film music, but also some newtrad performers, would also consider themselves traditional musicians.

The major area thus excluded by the above is ballad, and in fact ballad performers do not in general consider themselves to be traditional musicians, which confirms my own inclination to exclude the ballad category from the 'traditional' definition for the purposes of this study at any rate. Further evidence for the separation of the categories along these lines is provided by the behaviour of the two groups.

From its inception the ballad movement was seen as distinct from the older rural styles of performance, and many newspaper reports of the day make it clear that this separation is not something more easily seen in retrospect (Doyle 1963, Anon. 1962). Even well known performers quickly realised that if the movement had traditional roots, it was quickly outgrowing them. Luke Kelly, a performer with one of the best known ballad groups, The Dubliners, stated in a press interview at the time (anon. 1963):

Done amateurishly, or done over and over again - and I include myself in that, by the way - the songs become devalued. The ballads have become a part of the popular music spectrum, though it was the original idealistic intention to replace pop music with them.

Ballad 'Movement' Characteristics

In spite of the involvement of amateur ballad performers at the early fleadh, the subsequent behaviour of the balladeers compared to that of the traditionalists further serves to separate the two groups. The ballad boom was solidly song based, and this reflects its partial origins in the wider Folk Revival which could also be so described. Instrumental music, although present, played a relatively minor role. It was urban centred, and the major venues for performance were urban. The repertoire very quickly became controlled via the medium of recordings in the sense that amateurs learnt almost all of their repertoire from recordings of a few well known commercial ballad groups. This is still the core repertoire of the genre. Performance was/is largely professional. This is not to say that there are not many amateur performers, but rather that little respect is given to those who do not achieve the recognition of at least semi-professional performance and published recordings. There are no regional stylistic subdivisions. Very little material is in the Irish language. The genre has not yet attracted published works of commentary or academic interest.

Dance Music 'Movement' Characteristics

Traditionalists, on the other hand, concentrate on instrumental music, although traditional song makes a larger and more important contribution than instrumental music among ballad performers. Although many performers, especially since the revival, may be

urban based, the focus is predominantly rural. Most of the major events such as festivals, fleadh, etc. are in rural areas. The repertoire of both dance music and songs is large, and although the recorded repertoire, both from the earlier 78 rpm period and the later revival has a strong influence, the current repertoire has many other sources as well, including many oral ones. Although most of the performers with the highest profiles are professional or at least semi-professional, the scene is still very strongly amateur in nature, and there are many musicians and singers within the group who are highly regarded by their peers but who have never recorded and are still fully amateur. The session is probably the most important performance situation. One of its most important aspects is the body of Irish language song associated with the term *sean nós*, and this is recognised by musicians and singers alike. Regional stylistic difference is an important concept, and the genre has attracted academic attention for at least 200 years, and academic interest in the area is growing.

In terms of connection between the two groups there is of course a degree of overlap, bigger in some areas than in others. It is notable, however, that whereas performers may 'change camp' as it were from ballad to traditional, and in fact there was a considerable degree of recruitment of this nature in the early years of the revival, movement is very rarely, if ever, in the other direction.

Although acknowledged as growing from the tradition, the ballad scene can now be arguably considered a separate entity.

Could the same logic not be used to exclude categories such as *Local Group*, because it too, growing from the tradition has now, many distinctive features? I think not, based on the evidence that the categories which can be called traditional tend to draw from the same pool of musicians. The term **Comhaltas/Session Base** might be used to explain the process whereby musicians who are introduced to traditional music by the activities of CCE and their competitive festivals and/or playing in pub sessions make up the group of musicians who associate to form Ceili bands and groups or who make solo or duet recordings. This does not by any means exclude those who grow up in musical households, because almost inevitably they will interact with this 'base' at some stage. Newtrad musicians have so far been recruited from this base as well, and it is purely their use of external influences which mark them out as separate.

Non-Traditional Categories

Five other categories of recordings must also be eliminated in any attempted discussion of traditional music and the recorded sound medium. Firstly, non-traditional performers using traditional material. This, in Ireland at any rate has been a popular category for radio broadcast, and was encouraged during the first phase of radio broadcasting here. It is easily rejected on the basis of performance style and musical origins and behaviour of the performers.

Secondly the 'Type Transfer' category above. Although the musical origins of many such performers in the Comhaltas/session base might beg their inclusion as traditional, their radical repertoire change has in most cases excludes them. Almost all of Mary Black's or Dolores Keane's material is now the product of contemporary song writers, or MOR standards. This is not to say that either as an individual does not on occasion perform traditional songs in a traditional manner, or that some of their early recordings are not included in traditional categories. Their names are simply used here as examples of the 'Type transfer' category on the basis of their recent and current recordings, which on the grounds outlined above cannot be included as traditional .and also on the basis of the

music. Thirdly, there is 'poptrad'. I had originally thought of this term as constituting music which was popularly thought of by the public as being traditional music, but this proved too unwieldy a concept, and the term as it stands now is really meant to indicate recordings whose use of traditional themes is not only superficial, and probably commercially motivated, but which do not have origins in any of the revival genres. In spite of the ubiquitous nature of some of the category, it would probably be the first to be rejected out of hand as non-traditional, especially by musicians.

The The fourth category is 'folk'. Although using some traditional technique, the area is still too far away in terms of repertoire, and performer origins to be considered traditional. There may well be recruitment from this group of performers to traditional genres.

Finally, section b/ of the non-specific category as outlined on page 204 above must I think also be excluded. Even though there may be some amount of real traditional performance on such records, their overall intention (remembering that we are trying to categorise whole albums) is not to present traditional music as such, and are therefore excluded on those grounds.

The one remaining category, newtrad, is doubtless the most controversial. Among musicians more central to the tradition arguments and discussion constantly revolve around whether such music is traditional or not. The very fact that it inspires such a response indicates that quite a lot of traditional musicians think it should be included. On this basis, and also on the basis of the musical origins of many of the musicians, newtrad recordings are here included as traditional.

In conclusion, of a total of 2284 recordings made in the period 1956-1993, 797 have been rejected as being non-traditional and therefore irrelevant to the purpose of this thesis. Their inclusion in a wider, public definition of 'traditional' has been noted.

Attempting to classify such a seemingly amorphous mass of recordings in a logical way has been an exceptionally difficult task. The solution which I have arrived at is far from being a precise one, and most of the categories although they may have a 'hard centre' of easily classifiable recordings also have a blurred edge, where the decision to include or exclude has necessarily been a personal one.

Summary

CHAPTER 3

This chapter uses different sources in a survey of recordings issued on 78 rpm, LP, EP, audiocassette and CD between 1956-1993.

Problems with the dating of certain recordings is taken into account. Although there are differences in format between these recordings and those covered in Chapter 4, a similar classification is attempted using categories such as:

1/Instrumental:- Solo 1 & 2, Duet, Ceili Band, and Group.

2/ Vocal:- Ballad, Solo Traditional, Group.

A series of minor, and recent categories are also considered, and their relationship to the major categories examined. As in Chapter 4, this statistical information is presented graphically.

Public perceptions of traditional music as revealed by their interaction with recordings is briefly considered.

Irish Pipes: "The Blackbird" (air), "The Blackbird" (dance tune), "The Walls of Liscanel" (Double jig), "The Green Mountain" (reel), "Dunphy's Hornpipe" (Meyers.

OTHER SOUND MEDIA AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Radio in Ireland

The 1st January 1926 saw or rather heard a new voice in Irish society in the form of the inaugural broadcast of the national radio station 2RN. From the beginning, traditional music, and music which could be broadly characterised as Irish music, had a strong presence, and the occasion of the opening was no exception. On this occasion programming began at 7.45 pm, and the last item began at 10.20 pm. The station was officially opened by the President, Douglas Hyde and the evening continued with various musical presentations. These items, 14 in all consisted of classical soloists on piano violin and harp, several contributions from the No.1 Army Band, and one from a choir. There were five sets of songs, two of which were in Irish, and the remainder although in English were 'Irish' songs best characterised as being 'Ballad Poetry' (see above p 64). The Irish language songs were sung in classical style, as we can tell from the names of the performers. The item of real interest to traditional music enthusiasts was broadcast at 9.15 pm, and was reported in the newspapers the following day (Irish Times 2/1/26)

Traditional singing in the sean-nós sense, did feature in some small Irish Pipers: "The Blackbird" (air), "The Blackbird" (dance time), "The Walls of Liscarrol" (Double jig), "The Green Mountain" (reel), "Dunphy's Hornpipe" (Messrs.

Liscarrol" (Double jig), "The Green Mountain" (reel), "Dunphy's Hornpipe" (Messrs. Ennis and Andrews).

Other traditional tunes were played on harp and violin, but with classical interpretation.

Traditional Music and the Radio

The first director of broadcasting Seamus Clandillon, who was himself a performer of traditional songs rather than a traditional singer, and his wife Maighr ad N  Annag in from the Irish speaking area of Co. Waterford, also a singer, both performed on the opening broadcast. They often featured as radio performers in the early years of broadcasting (Gorham 1967), his wife so much so that she was nicknamed "Maighr ad N  On-Again" by some who obviously thought that she was getting too much air time.

The attitude to traditional music shown by the fledgling station was in general benign, and typified perhaps the attitude of those educated Irish people at the time who would have considered themselves interested in, or at least well disposed towards traditional Irish culture in general. This translated in musical terms into the presentation of traditional material often mediated by non-traditional performers. Thus traditional songs both in Irish and English were performed by trained singers generally in arrangements with piano or orchestra, sometimes in choirs.

Traditional singing in the sean-n s sense, did feature to some small extent, certainly by the mid-thirties, but English language

traditional song seems to have been condemned to classical interpretation. Instrumental music fared a little better, and there was some amount of traditional performance. This took the form of a musician being asked to audition, and if selected, to propose a series of pieces to be played. All broadcasts were of course live, in the sense that no one was recorded and then broadcast later. Pre-recorded commercial discs were played from the very beginning, and the Irish Times of the 2nd January 1926 told its readers that 'new gramophone records' would be played from 8.15 to 8.45 the next evening. A list of performers and records to be played was published in the national press some days beforehand. Since at the outset, the only studio was in Dublin, musicians tended to be from adjacent areas. Instrumental music was also presented in the form of tunes in orchestral and military band arrangements, and the céili band is in the minds of some so strongly associated with the radio, that Seamus Clandillon was credited with its invention.

Radio lectures on traditional music also featured and covered a broad range of topics. Some newspaper notices of upcoming performance, and comment on broadcasts for July 1936 will give the flavour of the Irish listener's experience at the time.

The Dublin Metropolitan Ceilidh Band will broadcast this evening. This is the first broadcast of a Garda Ceilidh Orchestra and it is the aim of its director, Supt. C. O'Donnell Sweeny to present Irish dance music properly arranged (Cork Examiner, 11/7/36).

In a broadcast last night on "Folk Music and the Professors" Mr. H. Hughes said that Irish music today was suffering from a confusion of ideas. They had the traditionalists, largely propagandists out to preserve the old music at any cost and the cultivated musicians concerned with art music - at the moment their most urgent need was co-ordination between the two (Irish Press 17/7/36).

An illustrated lecture recital entitled "The Gaeltacht - Its Singers and Their Songs" will be given by the Rev. J. C. O'Flynn. (Irish Press 24/7/36)

Leo Rowsome will give an illustrated talk on Uilleann pipes - their antiquity and development (Irish Independent 25/7/36).

The Mobile Broadcast Unit

This pattern continued up to the late 1940s when changes in technology meant that recording was no longer tied to the studio and Radio Éireann, as it had then become, took advantage of this with the setting up of the Mobile Broadcast Unit in 1947. Originally using acetate discs they quickly changed to tape, and although the recording of traditional music was not the only task of the unit, it is best known in this regard. The unit travelled to many areas of the country and recorded for broadcast for the first time many musicians and singers previously unknown outside their own areas. Apart from the archival importance of such material the effect that 'being on the Radio' had on the confidence of local musicians was paramount, especially coming at a time when such music was experiencing a severe decline in popularity. (see chapter 6)

Seamus Ennis, Seán Mac Reamoinn, Proinnsias O Conlúain, and Aindreas O Gallachóir were collectors with the unit in the early

days, but it is with the name Ciarán Mac Mathúna that the mobile unit is most strongly associated.¹ Mac Mathúna began to work with the unit in 1955 and he spent the next twenty years travelling throughout the country recording, preparing material for broadcast, and presenting traditional music programmes on radio and eventually on television. His programmes strongly represented the rural base of traditional music while at the same time keeping a finger on the pulse of urban developments.

The system of management in RE was unusual in that the mobile unit was in a section of the organisation called 'scriptwriters', and was not as might be expected under the control of the music department. This meant that Mac Mathúna himself was in control of the complete process from the decision of who and where to record, to presenting the programmes. This separation of traditional music from the same type of control as other music within the station was also to be found when television broadcasts began in 1961.

Radio During the Revival

The radio work of people such as Ciarán Mac Mathúna was in no small way responsible for the boom of the folk revival period, which in itself provided an important feedback for radio in the form of the LP and cassette recordings which began to appear in numbers from 1964 on. This influenced the style of programming

¹ The following section is based on an interview with Ciarán Mac Mathúna 23/7/91

that now a large amount of air time was filled by broadcasting these recordings and there was a reduction in the amount of field collection and subsequent broadcast of this type of material.

Several other long running programmes typify traditional music radio coverage. 'Ceili House' concentrated on the eponymous music, and is still in existence although the format now is slightly changed and in fact has some interesting parallels with the early mobile unit presentations. Ceili bands as such make up only a small amount of the music broadcast, reflecting their decline as a genre in modern Ireland. Recordings of pub sessions now form the bulk of the material recorded and broadcast by "Ceili House".

The 'Long Note' (1973-1991) now defunct, was a magazine programme which covered a very wide range of topics within traditional music. It was presented by a series of people who were themselves well known as performers or commentators within the traditional scene. It maintained a very high standard, and was viewed by the community of traditional music very much as 'their programme'.

In the late 1970s traditional music had a considerable presence on radio, and the policy of reinterpretation of traditional music, for example as arrangements for orchestra or military band was almost completely a thing of the past, featuring only in 'light music' programming, and rarely side by side with other more traditional formats. Traditional music as heard on radio was now almost without exception performed by traditional musicians.

Radio na Gaeltachta

Several hours a week were devoted to traditional music on RTE, and Radio Na Gaeltachta, founded in 1971, added considerably to this. Designed as a station for Irish speakers, and concentrating on Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht areas, its policy forbade the use of English, and the encouragement of all types of native Irish culture. This resulted in a considerable amount of traditional music being broadcast, both in the form of commercial recordings and recordings which the station themselves made of local traditional musicians. Radio na Gaeltachta has been criticised for the poor quality of some of the musical material broadcast, and I believe that this was to some extent exacerbated by the need to fill broadcast time in the absence of sufficient high quality commercial recordings. The increasing availability of such recordings has to some extent improved matters on this front.

Changes in Broadcast Policy

In 1993 RTE radio adopted a radically different policy, not only to traditional music, but to all types of music which they saw as 'special interest', which in effect meant everything apart from MOR pop music and western art music. To a howl of outrage from musicians and listeners alike, they announced that in future such areas would be covered in slots in other general magazine type programming. The public resistance to this move, shown in a petition presented to the station, did result in some backtracking.

'Ceili House' was retained, for example, but it is fair to say that radio coverage of traditional music, as reflected in dedicated air time became only a fraction of what it had been.

In 1995 RTE reversed this decision, and programming dedicated to traditional music reappeared on the schedule.

Airtime Devoted to Traditional Music

Currently, (Jan 1996) there are three hours of programming dedicated to Irish traditional music on RTE Radio One, and around three and a half hours on Radio na Gaeltachta. This figure gives a false impression of the amount of traditional music on Radio na Gaeltachta since as well as these dedicated programmes, almost all the music played as theme music for programmes, and as interludes in other programming is traditional. At present I have been unable to determine the reason for this change in policy, but it may be related to audience survey findings.

Television

In 1961 Radio Éireann became Radio Telefís Éireann with the opening of a television station. The attitude of RTE to traditional music eight years later was stated by the Director-General, T. P. Hardiman in an address to a C.C.E. seminar entitled 'The Place of Traditional Entertainment in the Broader Field of Light Entertainment' (Hardiman 1969). In this he clearly stated that from the stations point of view traditional music was to be treated as

light entertainment.

First, I would like to say a word of congratulations to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann for the realism of the title to which I speak. It recognises that traditional entertainment is part of the broader spectrum of light entertainment and it is with this broad spectrum that we in broadcasting must especially deal... There is no question as to the fitness of ceili music to be classed as light entertainment.

He went on to classify traditional music into four categories which bear no relation to either academic thinking or popular conception.

1/ Traditional 'art music' - This is a 'classical' tradition of folk music embodying in Ireland the great Gaelic art-songs and in India, for instance, the great classical instrumental music. This genre has origins in a sophisticated music tradition and at its best demands not only great skill in execution but also a knowledge of a wide range of technical devices.

2/ Light music of the dance - This relates in general style to traditional 'art music' but it is greatly simplified usually with simple rhythms and designed specifically for broader entertainment.

3/ An adaption of light music of the dance to influences from other countries which result in a form geared to an even wider audience having a close relationship to cabaret entertainment.

4/ An adaption of both traditional 'art music' and light music of the dance to the international styles of better light and concert music; in other words, arrangements of folk material for the concert and symphony orchestra

His approach and C.C.E.'s acceptance of it were severely criticised (O Corcoráin 1970). At least some of this was from within the CCE organisation or its supporters (Ní Eigearthaigh 1969).

His attitude towards traditional performance is strange to say the least, and remembering that the mobile unit had been in operation since 1947 reveals a curious ignorance of what the organisation of which he was the head, was actually doing. In the same address

Hardiman states:

With traditional music and song there is the vital question of performance as far as broadcasting is concerned. Very often tunes and songs, though of great interest and value for folklore experts and archives are not suitable for general or light entertainment because of weak performance.

This could well be fair comment, but later in the address he reveals that he thinks that traditional musicians are benefiting from exposure to traditional tunes played by light orchestras.

Furthermore they (the orchestras) set professional standards which are emulated by the more serious and authentic traditional musicians.

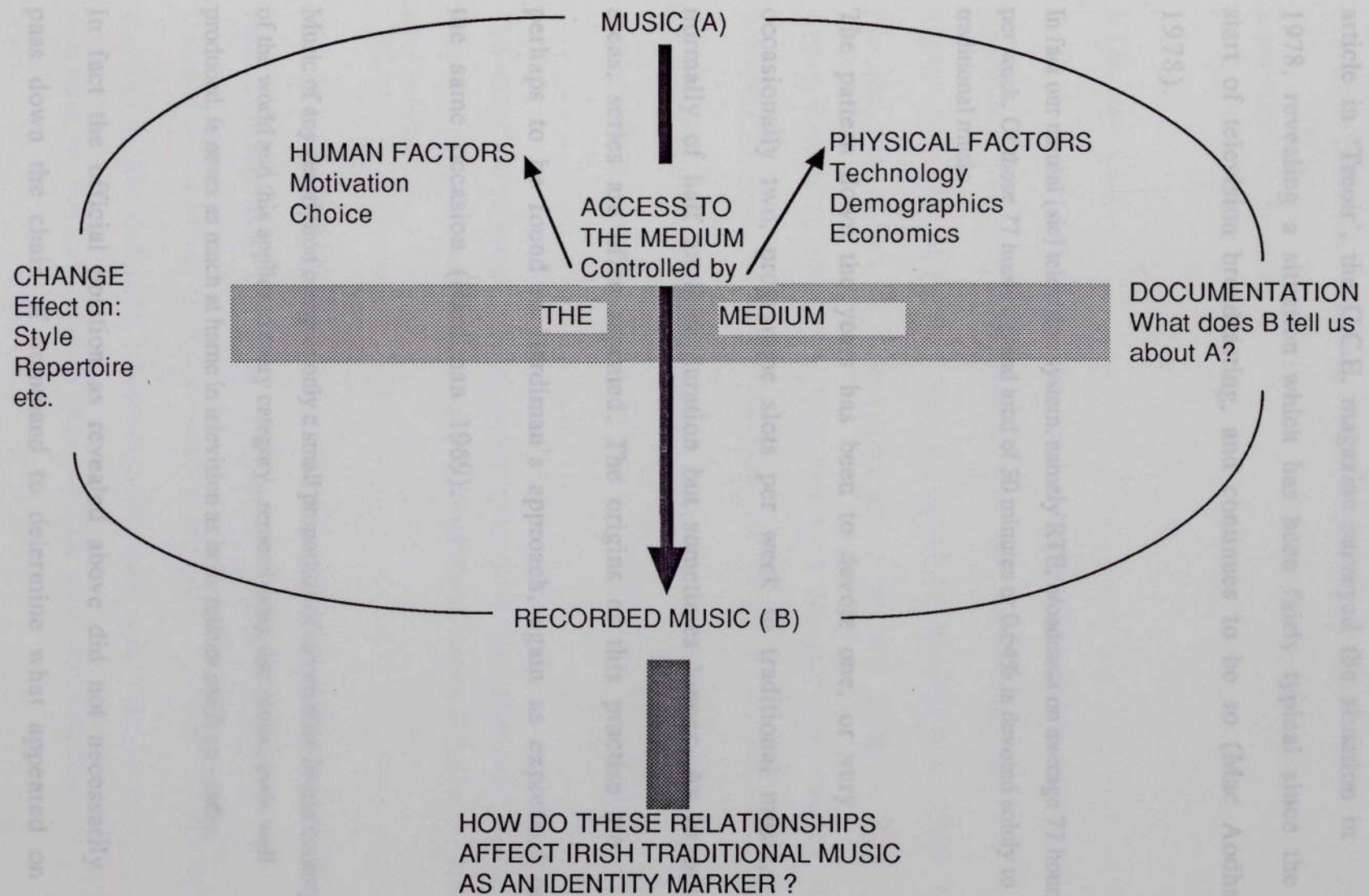


Fig. 21 Music and the Medium

Television Airtime

Little time was/is given to traditional music on television. An article in 'Treoir', the C.C.E. magazine surveyed the situation in 1978, revealing a situation which has been fairly typical since the start of television broadcasting, and continues to be so (Mac Aodha 1978).

In fact our natural [sic] television system, namely RTE, broadcasts on average 77 hours per week. Of those 77 hours a grand total of 30 minutes or 0.64% is devoted solely to traditional music.

The pattern down the years has been to devote one, or very occasionally two, programme slots per week to traditional music, normally of half an hour duration but sometimes longer. As in other areas, series are often repeated. The origins of this practise are perhaps to be found in Hardiman's approach, again as expressed on the same occasion (Hardiman 1969).

Music of any description occupies only a small proportion of screen time in any country of the world and this applies to every category...remembering that music, even well produced, is never as much at home in television as in its mother medium - radio.

In fact the official position as revealed above did not necessarily pass down the chain of command to determine what appeared on

nation's screens. Traditional music is in the 'variety' section of RTE, and the programming is in reality controlled by the Producer/Directors who work in this area (Tony MacMahon, Interview 21/10/94).

RTE and CCE

Over the years RTE have been involved with CCE in the making of traditional television programmes, and the relationship has not always been as intimate as that suggested by Hardiman in 1969. In fact the year before in a newspaper article entitled 'Faceless RTE Types Rapped' (anon.1968), RTE had been severely criticised by the president of CCE, Labhras O Murchú, for daring to suggest that a ballad programme should satisfy their request for more traditional music on television:

This was akin to suggesting that a pig market report should satisfy those requiring a cattle market report. Ballads bore no relationship to the traditional singing Comhaltas wished to have fostered.

The fact that ballads were accepted as one of the categories of light entertainment that Hardiman suggested should represent traditional music on television goes a long way to illustrate the up and down, hot and cold relationship that has, and still does, characterise the relationship between the two organisations.

In general terms RTE coverage of traditional music on television has changed little in the last thirty years. Programming consists for the most part of televised concert type performance, with commentary playing a relatively minor role. The point that a lot of the television programming is in essence 'televised radio' could be made with justification, and perhaps in the absence of a more innovative approach is one reason why the station has limited itself to the small amount of coverage that it does give. This coverage, although still at the same level in terms of actual time, has decreased radically in percentage of total broadcast time. RTE now has two television channels which broadcast around 210 hours per week, so that in real terms traditional music programming has fallen to 0.24% since the 1978 figure quoted by Mac Aodha (0.64%). Add to this the fact that many homes in the state now have multi-channel and satellite television facilities, and this already small figure becomes infinitesimal.

In recent years, independent producers have contributed programmes that in their mix of music, commentary and cultural perspective, have revealed to television viewers an aspect of their own traditional culture seldom produced by the national station.

Occasional programmes made by neighbouring British and Northern Irish stations have been shown on RTE at various times. They fall very much into the same categories as the home produced programmes.

Video dancing, can claim more teaching videos than any other area

With the arrival of the video, and its almost universal appearance in Irish homes, the visual medium has expanded in several directions which those involved in both producing and consuming television programmes have not been slow in exploiting. Since around the mid-1980s videos of interest to traditional music fans have been available and these take several forms. Video tape copies of individual RTE programmes or edited highlights of particular series are offered for sale by RTE, but increasingly common are independent productions of widely varying quality which fall into two basic categories. Firstly there are those which though independently produced offer much the same fare with which RTE viewers are familiar. They can be classed as performance video.

accordion player John Williams have all featured in tuition videos.

Tuition Videos Marie Lenehan on fiddle, Vinnie Kilduff on whistle.

Since the late 1980s, there has been a huge expansion in the use of video as a teaching medium. As a run-up to this, a large number of tuition packages based on a combination of a book and a tape recording were published in the 1980s, and it would appear that the widespread availability of domestic video facilities in Ireland by the end of the decade made it feasible for publishers to change this format to video. This move seems to have happened in America rather sooner than this, but for the same reasons.

Almost all the traditional instruments have at least one, if not several video tutors available, and set dancing, in notable contrast

to step dancing, can claim more teaching videos than any other area of traditional music activity.

Although it is difficult to assess what impact these videos have had in terms of turning out competent musicians, it seems that they are a more popular means of transmission in the United States. This is not surprising given the thinly spread nature of the Irish music community in America, which means that the same level of access to teachers as is possible in Ireland, is unattainable.

Another important feature of these videos, which I feel is a major element in their commercial success, is the fact that many of them feature very well known performers, by whom the purchasers of the videos would unlikely to be taught in real life. Thus in the United States fiddler Kevin Burke, banjo player Seamus Egan, and accordion player John Williams have all featured in tuition videos, and in Ireland, Charlie Lennon on fiddle, Vinnie Kilduff on whistle, and Tommy Hayes on Bodhrán have followed suite.

Since this thesis concentrates on sound recording, it must be stressed that it is the visual media aspects of the tuition videos that make them successful commercial ventures. One unusual consequence of the visual nature of this tuition is that it has produced some musicians who not only sound like their virtual teachers, but who also copy their demeanour, posture, and way of holding their instruments to the extent that it is immediately obvious from which video they have learnt. The wide availability of video taping facilities on home video machines has also led to the

The wide availability of video taping facilities on home video machines has also led to the use of mainstream television programmes in an unauthorised tuition role.

Cassette Technology

The effects of the electronic media on the transmission of traditional music has been immense. Until the 1960s this effect was almost entirely controlled by the companies large and small who controlled the technology of the recording and playback process. The invention of the tape recorder, and especially the cassette tape recorder changed that situation radically.

Tape recording as a technology was brought to a practical level in Germany during the second World War, and afterwards it very quickly spread throughout the industry as the basic means of recording. Originally the equipment was bulky and confined to studios, but the increasing miniaturisation of all sorts of electronic equipment which the invention of the semi-conductor transistor allowed, meant that home taping became a reality in Ireland in the 1960s. The original tape recording equipment had been the technology behind the move out from the formal constraints of the studio that the mobile broadcast unit represented, and as outlined above this played a major role in the development of the traditional music revival. The first commercially available amateur tape recorders were reel to reel, and although portable were not readily so. Musicians were quick to realise the potential that these

machines represented, and numerous recordings exist of traditional musicians made by interested amateur collectors. It was the introduction of the tape cassette by Philips in 1963, and the appearance of the small easily portable, battery powered recorder, that really revolutionised the whole process of learning and transmission for the traditional musician. The common use of the cassette recorder was concurrent with the development of the Fleadh Ceoil as a major force in traditional music. In the mid 1970s, to see musicians at a session outnumbered by those taping it was not an uncommon sight. This phenomenon had advantages and disadvantages. A lot of musicians were very wary of being recorded, particularly those who thought that others were after their 'best tunes'. Later on as the quality of cassette recorders improved, professional and semi-professional musicians had a fear of being 'bootlegged', and although this was rare there were cases where it did happen. In general though, musicians took control of this technology themselves and used it to swop tunes and learn other repertoires and styles in a way which had been previously much more difficult.

Expansion of Repertoire and Style

One effect of this was the appearance of young musicians with incredibly large repertoires, which reflected a broad spectrum of styles and regions. In some cases this led to a competitive approach, where players were judged on the number of tunes they could play,

but it also had the effect that many previously obscure tunes were again brought to light. The universal use of cassette recorders has meant that an incredible amount of traditional music, the majority of it in session form, has been recorded over the last 35 years. It is not stretching the truth to say that for this period almost every session at every Fleadh and festival was recorded by someone. Although the vast majority of this material is probably of very little value and of low quality, there is no doubt that an amount of interesting and rare recordings exists in this form in amateur hands.

The commercial cassette became popular slightly later, and was never, at least initially, produced as the only format for a recording. When home cassette players became common, the major record companies began to offer the consumer the choice of LP or cassette. The car cassette player was one factor that made cassettes even more popular as time went on, and the ultra portable Walkman-type tape player reinforced this.

The fact that blank cassettes were widely available led to the situation where copyright infringement in the form of illegal cassette copies of commercial LPs was very common. Although illegal, it was and is a widespread practice which I mention here only to point out that commercial recordings may have an impact far beyond their actual sales figure due to this practice.

Independent Production and the Control of Technology

The question of control of technology is central to the question of the interaction between traditional music and the media. The role of the record company in the early years of the revival period, and the way in which they played it in many ways was the key which opened the door to the revival. Chapter 6 shows how important the role of culturally committed recording companies was in this period. This is reinforced by the realisation that in the 1960s and early 1970s recording companies controlled completely the process of recording and subsequent release and marketing. A musician who wanted to make a record could of course approach a recording company with a proposal, but if this was rejected then the path to commercial release was effectively blocked. Perhaps the major result of the technological advances in recording has been the way in which control of this whole process has come more and more into the musicians hands. Several factors combined to bring about this change.

1/ The cassette. Economically cheaper to produce, and to reproduce in quantity than the vinyl microgroove disc.

2/ The growth of the small independent recording studio. This was made possible by cheaper technology without a similar drop in sound quality.

3/ The development of the 'folk club circuit'. Within this broad term I mean to include the type of venues where many of the

professional and semi-professional traditional musicians began to play from the 1960s onwards. The classification would cover genres from pub sessions to more formal concert type settings. It consists of everything a musician would call a 'gig'. Making recordings outside the fold of the larger companies meant that access to distribution and therefore enough sales to make the project viable was difficult. Many musicians got around this by selling cassettes at gigs. Cutting out the 'middle man' meant more money for the performer, cheaper recordings for the public.

Independent production has now reached a level where almost every musician who plays regularly on a semi-professional basis has published a recording. Professional musicians strive to have as many recordings as possible before the public.

Digital Technology

The arrival of digital recording has made less impact than the step from LP to cassette. The public demand for the CD format means that more and more musicians are obliged to produce a CD as opposed to a cassette, and the increased cost of this means that more must be sold to cover the overhead costs, but that this happens more quickly due to the increased profit margins.

Current developments are all in the direction of making technology that was previously only available to the studios, available to the public, and the adventurous musician can now buy for several thousand pounds, equipment superior to that which a

traditional music and the media has been, and may be, access has essentially ceased to be a problem.

Multitrack Technology

The first technology which allowed the manipulation of recorded sound to any significant extent was tape recording. Initially this took the form of editing the recording by physically cutting the tape and splicing it together. Using this process several recordings of one piece of music could be assembled into a final version that combined the best aspects of each performance.

Multitrack technology went further than this by allowing the music to be recorded as several separate tracks which themselves could be edited and then assembled to make the final 'recording'.

Four track tape recorders became available in 1958, and eight and sixteen track recording arrived by the late 1960s (Chanan 1995).

In general, the recording companies which have mediated Irish traditional music to the public have been slow to take advantage of this technology, certainly in the way in which it has been used in other fields of music, particularly popular music.

Chanan (1995) makes the point that in popular music, the arrival of multitrack technology saw the development of the role of the recording technicians and producers to a level almost equal to that of the performer, since they could use this technology to change the recorded sound.

In the early days of the revival, the role of the record

producer was seen as simply to reproduce the 'real' sound of the music as accurately as possible, and many of the classic recordings of the sixties and early seventies were made as one track recordings, often because they were recorded outside the studio. Even when studios were used, as became increasingly common, true multitracking, where each musician of an ensemble would record their performance separately, only hearing the other musicians through headphones, was relatively rare.

With the advent of the professional traditional musician who relied on sales of recordings as important element in their income it became more common for traditional musicians to make full use of the technical facilities of the studio. I believe that an important reason for this was to give their recordings the same aural 'feel' as recordings from other areas of music. This was particularly important given the technical limitations of many of the earlier recordings. It should also be noted that the importance of the solo, and later accompanied solo within the Irish tradition, meant that multitracking was largely irrelevant to many of the classic recordings of the early and middle revival.

Thus initially it was in the field of ensemble playing that multitracking began to make an appearance, but in recent years even recordings which are ostensibly 'solo', often being titled by the name of a single musician, are in fact ensemble recordings, where the 'solo' musician is in essence the leading musician of an ensemble, and because of this some element of multitracking is to

be found on the vast majority of recordings made since at least the early 1980s.

The elevation of the producer/technician to the level of someone with an artistic input to commercial recording has only happened to a very minor extent in the Irish music world, although I feel that there is some evidence that it is beginning to appear in recent years. One figure, though, has made a major contribution in this field since the early days of the revival in Ireland. This is Donal Lunny, whose work with many ensembles and 'solo' players, both as a musician and producer has left a lasting mark on the 'aural style' of both live performance and commercial recordings.

S u m m a r y

This chapter looks at the other media operating alongside sound recording in Ireland. The role of the national broadcasting station and its attitude to traditional music is considered in some detail from its inception in 1926. The change in this attitude in the 1940s, and the work of the Mobile Broadcast Unit is examined. The introduction of television and video, and the relationship between RTE and the institutional face of traditional music in the shape of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is discussed.

On a separate level, the role of non-commercial tape recording made possible by cassette technology is seen to have an important

influence, in terms of changing access to the medium.

The role of multitrack technology vis-à-vis commercial recordings in the revival is discussed.

NOTES AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Recorded sound has come a very long way from its first commercial outings as a business machine or a talking doll. In the world of music, and in music throughout the world, recorded sound has become all pervasive. Changes in technology mean that the rural and urban have to a great extent ceased to be different places in terms of access to, and availability of, its necessary hardware.

Recorded sound now forms by far the larger part of the listening experience of those in the industrialized countries, and this is radically increasing even in the Third World (Wainwright & Melin: 1984, 1992). Apart from direct access to music on phonograms, recorded music plays a larger and larger part of other listening experiences, radio being an obvious example. In other areas such as television and video, music - even when not the direct subject - is constantly involved as theme tunes, jingles, or background music. When music performance is televised, there has been a notable tendency to move towards the 'MTV' format. Here instead of watching a live, or 'recorded live' performance, the audience listens to a studio recording and watch video images which support the 'atmosphere' of the music.

Live performance, once the other end of the spectrum from

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

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Live performance, once the other end of the spectrum from

recorded sound, is itself being encroached upon. The use of pre-recorded backing tapes is now widespread in combination with many types of live music, and the creative use of pre-recorded 'samples' increasing. An extreme example of this is quoted by Wallis and Malm (1992, p. 242) where they describe how some Swedish dance bands have set up their instruments, not to play in the normal way, but to instigate standard melodic and rhythmical patterns which are stored on a computer. They appear to play the instruments, but in fact the only live part of the performance is the singing.

In spite of its early involvement with recording, Irish traditional music stands somewhat apart from such full blooded involvement with the media. Firstly there is, in my experience, a general perception that traditional and folk musics are not really involved in the world of the professional and commercial. It has connotations of 'country', 'homely' and 'do-it-yourself'. Secondly, and leading from this, is the fact that the vast majority of the recordings are made by non-professional or semi-professional musicians.

In Chapters 4 and 7, I have documented the numerous recordings that have been made and have attempted to classify them in a way which will allow further analysis. I now want to pursue that analysis in relation to the following areas and their relationship (see Fig. 21)

1/ Access to the Medium. Who and what controls this. I have considered this in two sections:

a/ **Physical Factors:-** such as technology, demographics and physical economics.

b/ **Human Factors:-** such as motivation and choice

2/ Documentation. Recordings as history, how does recorded music reflect the reality of music in its social context.

3/ Change. Has recorded music stimulated change? Has it acted as a vehicle for change or as a standard of stability?

4/ Identity. Music as part of culture serves as an identity marker (Edwards 1985), on many different levels. How has the involvement of Irish traditional music with the medium of recorded sound changed how we see ourselves through music?

1/Access to the Medium

The Selection Process

It is of the utmost importance to remember that music can exist, even on a broad scale and not be recorded. In the phonograms that have been surveyed here there is always a process of selection which determines which music comes to be recorded. Firstly, this may be a human factor, where, for example, a record company decides to record one musician, group of musicians, or type of music, over another. The importance of culturally motivated

recording companies in the early revival, and their importance in making certain types of music commercially available is perhaps the best example of this type of selection. Secondly it may also be a physical one, determined by elements of technology, demographics and economics.

a/ Physical Factors

Demographics and Urban Irish-Americans

The reasons why the rural Irish, who formed the bulk of the post famine immigrants, chose to stay in the cities where they landed are complex, and it is sufficient for our purposes to know that they did so. It could be claimed that the first great urbanisation in Irish history took place not in Ireland, but in America. That there was a very large population of ethnic Irish in the city where the new technology of sound recording came to fruition may be coincidental, but it is of overriding importance in the development of Irish traditional music. Two examples which illustrate this point are the music of the southern whites of the Appalachian mountains, and that of the Cajun French of Louisiana, both remote from the studios, neither of which was commercially recorded until some years after the ethnic musics of New York and Boston (Grunow 1982). Physical proximity to the technology was the priority.

Urban Demographics

The demographic patterns even within the cities themselves, were a great advantage to the record companies in that there were large densely populated areas of a particular ethnic background. Records produced by and for these groups needed minimal efforts of distribution or sales, in comparison to the thinly spread populations of the rural southern states.

Moving into a new ethnic market held some risks for the companies. Being largely ignorant of the music they were recording, they often had no idea of the quality of the performers, and relied on initial record sales as an indication. Hardware in the form of machines to play the records was another problem, and in many cases companies keen to break into a particular market would sell gramophones at a very cheap price to 'seed' that market, and help build up a demand for records and future sales of gramophones.

Technology

Technology can sometimes impose purely physical limitations which can affect music sound in a completely unconscious manner. A good example of this was the restriction imposed by the pre-electric recording process on the types of instruments that could be recorded. Since in this process the actual energy of the sound generated by the instrument (or voice) directly cut the groove in the master disc, loud instruments and singing styles were preferred. It is difficult to be accurate about the degree of influence

that this state of affairs had in a practical sense on the Irish traditional music recorded at the time, but it can be heard in the role that the accordion, banjo and piccolo play in these early recordings. It may have had an influence on the rise of ensemble playing as this was technically easier to record. Even in terms of what is considered to be some of the finest music recorded in this era, and which had the greatest and longest lasting impact-the fiddle recordings of Coleman, Morrison, and their ilk-the demands of the recording process meant that many of these recordings were made, not on their own instruments, but on a 'Strohviol' provided by the studio, because it was a much louder instrument.

However, the majority of technological influences are concious, and in Ireland it seems that the impact of recording technology on the traditional music scene was initially via America. In many western rural areas the first records came not from Dublin or England, but appeared in the hands of 'yanks', as Irish people who had spent some time in America were known, and in the early days at least, almost all the records came from this source.

Eventually the industry realised that there was a large market in Europe for their ethnic recordings and these were re-issued via European subsidiaries or under licence to other companies.

In terms of access to technology this evidence points to the conclusion that commercial viability was the final arbiter. This is not to say however that only those artists who sold a certain amount of records were called upon to record again. The economics

of the early record industry seems to have been based around the fact that even small issues like the 500 mentioned above could be profitable. This is important in terms of the numbers of 'minor' musicians who were recorded, and their styles and repertoire which otherwise would be unknown to us, for example Patrick Fitzpatrick (born Leitrim 1860), a piper referred to by O'Neill (1913), who recorded eight sides for various companies in New York between 1917 and 1919.

The New Technology

The technological changes which happened in the interim period between the collapse of the American ethnic record market and the revival were eventually to have radical effects on the relationship between musicians and the industry, but in the early years of the revival this effect was muted.

Two new elements of microgroove and tape recording were introduced to the recording industry between the collapse of the ethnic recording boom and the years of the folk revival.

Microgroove Recording

The first of these was the microgroove recording, or long playing record (LP). In terms of technical innovation this was not a big step and simply consisted of having more grooves per inch on a record now generally made of vinyl, which revolved at 33 rpm. This resulted in a record which not only had a much longer playing time,

but also a much higher quality of reproduction. The second element was tape recording, which eventually was to have a profound effect on the whole phonogram industry.

The ability, inherent in LPs, to now record uninterrupted sections of music lasting up to 30 minutes or so was surprisingly not made use of to any great extent, except by art music. The '3 minute format' imposed by the the old style 78 rpm recording had been so firmly established as the standard length for a song or piece of music, that particularly in the fields of popular music and folk music, LPs were in general simply used to present a larger selection of three or four minute segments.

Stereo recordings were introduced in 1954 (Chanan 1995), but the significance of this for Irish traditional music at the time was limited, and I believe that the separation of sound inherent in this would have gone largely unnoticed by the average consumer of traditional Irish records. The circumstances in which many of the recordings from the early revival period were made also precluded 'high fidelity' reproduction. Many were made outside the studio in what were essentially field recording conditions. Recording quality, at this stage in the revival, was not at all the important feature that it was later to become. As long as the perceived 'essentials' of style could be heard, this was enough. In some ways over-concern with recording quality as such was seen as effete and out of character with the music. Poor or mediocre recording quality gave the listener a sense of 'rurality', of something remote from cities and recording

studios (which might not necessarily have been the case), rather in the way that a crackling, hissing, 78 rpm recording gives the listener the sense of actually hearing the past.

Tape Recording

Tape recording has had a much more seminal effect on the whole area of sound recording. Developed in Germany and launched there commercially in 1934, it quickly became a standard feature of the recording industry because of its editing capabilities, but its significance for this study lies in the portability of the technology which became a practical reality in Ireland in the early 1950s.

The RTE Mobile Broadcast Unit

In the beginning it was in the field of radio that the greatest impact was seen, as many rural traditional musicians and singers were broadcast for the first time. The first recordings of the unit were made on a portable disc cutting machine, but tape recording was introduced fairly quickly after its foundation. The conception of these programmes of the Mobile Broadcast Unit of RTE was entirely different to what had gone before, where the concern of music broadcasters in the national radio station had been dominated by the idea of quality of performance, and a failure to understand the intrinsically different approach of traditional musicians and singers. A system existed whereby traditional musicians would be asked to audition before a panel, who then decided if their music was

suitable for broadcast. The fact that in many cases traditional musicians were asked to 'come and bring your (sheet) music' (John O'Connell, personnel communication) reveals just how out of touch the official policy of the radio station was with traditional music on the ground. There was admittedly a different approach to singing in Irish, which seems to have been almost entirely due to the fact that it was in Irish. Singers very much in the same style in English were given little or no air play. The establishment of the Mobile Broadcast Unit in 1947 brought about a radical change in this policy. The music that they recorded was typical of the community that produced it. Some of the performances were virtuosic, some weak, but they reflected much more accurately than before the real nature of traditional music and its role in the community. I have not been able to determine who among the hierarchy of Radio Éireann was responsible for this policy decision, but in combination with the technology which permitted mobile broadcasting, I believe it was one of the strongest factors in the reversal of the pattern of decline which had been building up since the mid-1930s.

Tape Recording and Transmission

Tape recording was later to be of exceptional importance outside the area of broadcasting and commercial recording. Traditional musicians in Ireland were quick to take advantage of the small portable reel-to-reel recorders which became available in the 1950s, and realised at an early stage their potential as a means of

storing, learning, and transmitting tunes. Some musicians even used them to improve their musicianship by critically listening to recordings of their own playing (O Súilleabháin 1987). This whole phenomenon expanded rapidly with the advent of the compact cassette, introduced by Phillips in 1963, and certainly by the late 1970s, my personal experience was that transmission of tunes via cassette recordings was at least as important, and probably much more so, than direct oral transmission. Tape recording also had a large influence on the transmission of tunes which had been commercially recorded. It was/is very common for musicians to make illegal cassette copies of commercial recordings. In this way the material on them reached and influenced a much greater number of people than if access was restricted to the original owners.

Economics

The separation of the factors under discussion here is practical, but to some extent artificial. This is particularly true of economics which is all-pervasive and could in some ways be just as easily considered a human factor, although I believe its connections with technology and demographics justify some consideration here.

With regard to the ethnic recording boom which took place in America after the first World War, economic factors are inseparable from the demographic. The American recording industry 'discovered' the ethnic market on their doorstep, and the record

companies involved in the very early recording of Irish music in America were by and large the major companies that were active in every field of music, such as Victor and Columbia. There were some small Irish-controlled companies, but these were relatively unimportant in terms of the numbers of recordings released. The major companies had no cultural commitment to any particular group, and their motivation was purely commercial. The 1916 recording of the banjo and accordion duet of Edward Herborn and James Wheeler is a case in point. The recording was made at the Columbia studios under the auspices of the O'Byrne de Witt family, who ran an 'Irish' shop in New York. Columbia agreed to issue the recording, but only on the basis that the O'Byrne de Witt outlet bought 500 copies (Moloney 1982). This recording was the first commercial 78 rpm recording of traditional instrumental music played by Irish musicians, and Columbia were evidently not taking any risks in case the recording was not a success. In the event it went on to sell a lot more than the initial run, and Columbia became one of the major companies involved in the production of Irish records.

Economic motivation in the revival period is quite different. Here, initially at any rate, the large companies played a much smaller role and small local companies are much more important. Characteristic is the survival of such companies over a long period of time using various ploys to stay afloat in a commercial environment. These ploys included income from back catalogue

sales. Each of the recordings they issued might only have limited sales in the immediate period after issue, but because of the nature of the market there would be a small but steady level of sales for a considerable period of time. In the market for traditional music the concept of the hit record does not generally apply. Otherwise, the small companies supported their recording activities with income from other sections of their business. Both Gael-Linn and Claddagh are now in the business of phonogram distribution, which is probably their main source of income. Occasionally, a particular traditional performer or group would gain a wider reputation, and this would earn income for the publisher of their recordings. Examples of this would be the recordings that The Chieftains made on the Claddagh label, or those of Clannad on Gael-Linn. The motivation for such economic manoeuvring is looked at below.

Other economic aspects of access to the recording medium are so intimately involved with what I am terming human factors in access to the medium that they will be appear under that heading.

b/ Human Factors

Cultural Motivation

One of the most important aspects of the revival period is the emergence of culturally motivated recording companies. These companies, although aware that a certain level of involvement in the commercial world was necessary if they were to survive, saw as their function the release of recordings which were in their eyes,

truly reflective of Irish traditional culture. In this way, several types of Irish traditional music found their way onto disc for the first time. Sean-nós singing in Irish was completely absent from the catalogue of any recording company until the c.1955 Columbia recording of Sean 'Ac Donncha (Irish Folk Songs AKL4941), and other genres such as sean-nós singing in English, and recordings of non-commercial solo dance music instrumentalists also began to appear. At first such recordings had no commercial appeal and sold very poorly (Mac Goráin, interview, 21/10/91), but one company, Gael-Linn, continued to record and issue them, because they felt strongly that this type of material should be available to the public. The economic base of the Gael-Linn organisation allowed the production of loss-making records by supporting them with income gained from other activities, in this case a lottery based on the results of Gaelic sports. They were/are also a registered charity. These recordings, which were in effect publications of the type of material which normally would be recorded only for archival purposes, are the outstanding feature of the early revival in Ireland. Other, more 'commercial' recordings were of course also produced. Gael-Linn had a policy of operating through the medium of the Irish language, and in fact the organisation is more properly seen as an agent for the promotion of the Irish language which saw music, and not just traditional music, as an effective way in which to do this. Thus they also released recordings of art music by Irish composers, and 'pop' records, which had lyrics in Irish, in an

attempt to reach the younger, probably more urban sections of society. Other companies, notably Ceirníní Cladaigh (Claddagh), were more traditional in their outlook, and imposed certain restrictions, of instrumentation for example, on their recording artists (Sherlock, interview, 27/7/91).

Motivation can be seen as a two sided concept. On the one hand there is the motivation of the companies, commercial or cultural, to record musicians and singers and publish them. On the other is the motivation of the musician or singer to be recorded. The balance between these is in some measure indicative of the changing role of the amateur and the professional. In Irish traditional music, at least since the middle of the nineteenth century, professional, semi-professional, and amateur musicians have existed side by side. This economic status appears to have been unrelated to musical ability - some top class musicians may well be amateur, and some mediocre ones professional. In terms of motivation I would propose that it is the professional and semi-professional performers who are motivated to record, seeing it as an important adjunct to their earning ability. Cultural motivation, as best expressed by the Irish companies in the revival, tended to result in the recording of amateur musicians.

Changes in technology, mainly in the 1980s, saw the appearance of studios and other facilities such as cheap printing, which made it economically feasible for the semi-professional and amateur performer to publish their own recordings.

The Role of Independent Recordings

The proliferation of recording studios plays an important role in the next chapter in the story of access to the medium. The association of the city with the recording studio lasted well into the revival period, but as the larger studios began to upgrade their equipment to keep pace with international standards, small studios sprang up using the older technology. As the bigger studios moved through 8-track, 16-track to 24-track recording as standard, the smaller studios survived by offering old equipment and standards to those who could not afford, or did not see the need for, the new levels of sophistication.

A considerable amount of the recordings made in these new studios were the type of independent recording discussed in Chapter 7. The economics of this type of recording (see above p. 187) brought about quite a sudden change in the level of access to the medium. In the space of about five years in the middle 1980s the situation among semi-professional musicians changed radically. In the early eighties a musician who was on record was a rarity. By the late eighties the situation was approaching the converse of this.

Commercial companies are often loath to record musicians who are not already well known because they fear poor sales and low, or perhaps no profit, or even a loss, from such a release. There is a catch inherent here in that if the musician is not famous, then they are not asked to make a record, and if they haven't recorded,

then they're not famous. I believe that the proliferation of independent recordings in the mid-1980s was in some measure a response to this dilemma.

Musicians who are technically and stylistically competent enough to make a recording but who seldom play gigs present another problem for recording companies, who realise that such performances are closely connected to sales. They would encourage the musician to perform in such a way, and in many cases even organise national and international tours to promote 'their' musicians. This may be one of the benefits of being recorded by a company from the point of view of the younger professional or semi-professional traditional musician, but there are others, normally older rural based musicians who would be content to remain playing in sessions, or at the occasional local gig.

The financial arrangement between recording companies and the performers varies, but the basic deal is that the performer signs a contract which gives the rights of the recording to the company in return for an advance on the royalties which the recording will earn. This royalty will probably be in the region of 10% of the retail cost of the recording. The amount advanced against future sales is calculated to be close to what the company thinks the performer will actually earn, so that in many cases this first payment is all that the musician will receive. It is a common complaint among traditional musicians that it is very difficult to get certain companies to reveal sales figures so that they can determine

whether in fact the recording has already earned the amount of royalties advanced, and the company owes them more money.

Commercial Re-Release of Independent Recordings

It is becoming more common for successful independent releases to be taken over and reissued by a company. For this reason many musicians are now conscious of the fact that this will not be done if the original recording is not of sufficient quality, and with advent of digital technology the common practice is for the recording to be mastered onto DAT from which an independent cassette release can be duplicated, and the same master can then be used by a commercial company if a 'takeover' deal is done, to release the recording as a CD. Falling prices for CD duplication are leading to increasing numbers of independent CD releases in the last few years, and currently (1996), almost all releases are primarily in this form. Another scenario is for a company to invite a performer who has made an impressive independent recording to record new material with them for an album they will issue.

In general, musicians are now more conscious of the alternatives that are available to them if they want to release a recording. Among young professional and semi-professional traditional musicians it is now common to make the finished digital master tape, and then lease the publication rights to a company for a limited amount of time. The money earned in this way is probably not any greater than with the advance royalties system outlined

above, but the musicians have ultimately greater control of their own work.

One of the greatest problems facing all researchers in the area of commercial phonograms, is the lack of statistics relating to sales of particular recordings, and as mentioned above, even the musicians themselves sometimes don't seem to be aware of the sales of their own recordings. Asked for such figures, company representatives simply refuse to give them. Off the record, however, I was told that sales in the region of 5,000 would be considered good for a traditional recording. This would be over a period of a few years. Recordings of better known groups might sell considerably more than this, and vice versa. Some independent releases might only be a run of 500 or 1000 copies, and the musician will be quite happy to sell just that amount. It is interesting that the more successful professional groups have moved away from the Irish based companies which specialised in traditional music, and now release their recordings on labels that are in the area of popular or middle-of-the-road music. The Chieftains, who originally recorded on the Irish Claddagh label and who are now with RCA Victor are a prime example. Individual performers rarely achieve the same level of exposure, in particular those who have not played in a well known group.

Distribution

The relationship between the effect that a recording may have, and

its physical distribution in terms of sales and where they take place, is a very complex area, further confused by radio plays, and a high level of piracy. A recording of a musician who is stylistically innovative may have a noticeable effect on the playing of many others, but this might not be reflected in high sales. It is very common for illegally taped copies of recordings of this type to circulate among musicians, and there is also the possibility of taping from the radio. Conversely a recording could achieve a high level of sales and yet have little effect on the community of musicians. Who buys is from this point of view probably more important than the level of sales.

Documentation - Recordings as History

It is important to remember that recordings are much more than simply the physical existence of shellac 78s, vinyl LPs, cassettes, or CDs. Recordings are in essence sound, and it is essential in a study of this kind not to let this basic fact be swamped by numbers, dates, and other statistics. Recordings allow us to document the sound of music and how it changes, both on the recordings themselves, and in comparison with the sound of live performances which are their normal adjunct.

The invention of sound recording changed music as an art form in the most radical way possible. Before sound recording, music sound existed only during the instant of its creation. The ability to record music placed it on a similar level to the plastic and literary arts,

where the work can be returned to and re-examined. Through the recordings the temporality of music is crystallized, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of music *as sound* began as Edison tested his newly invented phonograph with the words 'Mary had a little Lamb'.

It is also dangerous to assume that a phonogram is a complete record of a musical event. Acceptance of the basic proposition of ethnomusicological theory that music is only understandable as socially significant sound will act as a prophylactic here.

From the historical viewpoint, recordings, commercial or made in the field, can be deceiving if viewed as a mirror of general musical activity of the period. They *in themselves* only tell us, for example, what happened in a particular location during a specific time period.

Live Music and Recorded Music

My basic concern in this area is: how accurately do the two main groups of recordings under consideration reflect the overall nature of Irish traditional music making at the time? I believe the answer as illustrated by the examples below demonstrates the fallacy of relying on recorded music sound alone as an historical statement. One of the major features of the period of decline experienced by traditional music in the middle of this century, was the severe reduction in the amount of dancing that had previously taken place as a normal part of traditional music activity (See Chapter 5). The

revival saw what had come into being as dance music re-cast in the mould of listening music to a much greater extent than it had during the 78 era. In this period, most essentially in the 1920s, the relationship between the live performance which was essentially for dancing, and the dance music as recorded was very close, making allowances for such things as the time restrictions inherent in the 78 rpm format. There appears to have been a basic feedback between dancers hearing live music and then buying recordings of the same musicians, and listeners hearing these recordings and then going to dance to the musicians playing live. There is a small amount of evidence, in Ireland at least, of people dancing to 78 rpm records (Aarensberg 1937), but I believe that this was insignificant in comparison.

If it is accepted that the rise of ensemble playing seems to have been tied in to some extent with dancing in large venues, the continued development of the ensemble - easily visible in the recordings of both the 78 era and the revival - belies the massive decline in social dancing in the same period.

In a similar way, the documentary evidence of recordings distorts the picture we have of three other areas; solo performance, the role of song in ensemble performance, and the importance of some new performance genres.

Song and Solo Performance

There is no evidence to suggest that solo performance was featured

in the dance hall venues of New York or Boston, although it did feature to a small extent on the vaudeville stage (Laurie 1953), and yet some 29% of the early recordings are of solo instrumental performers, the vast majority playing traditional dance music. This may indicate that in fact the level of live solo performance was higher than there is corroborating evidence to suggest, and that perhaps it was not public in the same way as dance hall performance. There is evidence (Bradshaw 1991) that essentially solo musicians such as Coleman played for private parties and weddings. Solo song, and in fact a large percentage of the type of 'Irish' song recorded, was in fact more a feature of the vaudeville stage, and perhaps should be considered in the same light as the 'ballad' recordings of the revival period. Bradshaw also suggests (see above p 86) that in fact song did not feature in the live performances of ensembles before the invention of practical electrical amplification, although it was an essential feature of their recorded performance style.

New Social Genres - The Session

The decline in, or absence of, dancing which is characteristic of the revival, was concomitant with the development of several important social genres, which if we were to rely on commercial recordings as evidence of their existence, might easily be overlooked or at the very least severely underestimated. The prime example of this is the session, probably the most important

social genre for live performance in the whole revival period, yet which merits less than a half dozen recordings out of nearly 2300, although it is interesting that the private non-commercial recordings made possible by compact cassette technology are almost entirely of this social genre. In this case the lack of commercial recordings can be directly related to the essentially different relationship between musicians and audience that exists in the session (Hamilton 1978).

The development of the session and other new social genres (see Fig 1) can be seen as being related to the following:

a/ The development of listening music from the dance music base, and an increasing awareness of this both by musicians and those involved in the record industry.

b/ The essentially different role of traditional song in the revival, and its legitimisation by the publication of recordings of the genre.

In summary, although recordings do reveal certain developments, perhaps best illustrated by the rise and diversification of ensemble playing, my knowledge of the social context of Irish traditional music in the twentieth century leads me to believe that major developments such as the decline of dance and the evolution of the session remain almost invisible in the documentary evidence of contemporary recordings.

The Effect of Recordings

Accepting that the effect of recordings is modified by the factors discussed above, nevertheless I am satisfied that the areas of repertoire, style, and instrumentation, have undergone extensive modification due to the effect of recordings.

Repertoire

The effect of the recorded repertoire of Irish dance music on the subsequent repertoire of live performance has been noted by several observers. (Bradshaw 1991, Moloney 1993) Before the widespread appearance of 78 rpm discs of traditional dance music in Ireland, there was a pattern of local repertoires which perhaps overlaid a national repertoire. Limited travel for most players meant that opportunities to hear new tunes were few, although they may have been eagerly sought. Hearing a new tune and being able to play it are not the same thing, even admitting the highly developed aural skills of many musicians in pre-phonogram days, which implies that more than simply superficial contact, such as hearing a tune played at a fair, would in most cases be necessary. Travelling musicians, although often referred to as a means of transmission of repertoire in general, seem to have travelled an established circuit within discrete areas, but in all probability were the most active means of repertoire expansion before the advent of recordings.

Access to recordings affected repertoire in two distinct ways. Firstly in terms of acquisition, the record could be listened to again

and again until even the slowest musician became familiar with the piece. Secondly tunes from an area remote from the listener were just as easily acquired as those from the neighbouring parish. The same could be claimed of the print medium, but the effect of this was severely limited by the lack of musical literacy among traditional musicians.

The fact that in the Ireland of the early twentieth century the gramophone was at the cutting edge of technology must not be overlooked. Nowadays our wonder has been dulled by the constant progress in this area, and such significant advances as digital technology are taken for granted. In the rural Ireland of the early twentieth century the gramophone must have had an almost magical appeal, and the music that issued from it imbued with an almost supernatural significance. It is no surprise to discover that the tunes and styles (discussed below) were avidly acquired by musicians all over Ireland, even to the extent of playing the tunes in the same 'sets' just as they were recorded. In fact there is some justification in saying that in many cases musicians in Ireland did more than simply acquire repertoire or style from this source. In effect they 'learned the record' and reproduced it in live performance.

Repertoire Learned from Records

The fact that the repertoire which was expanded through this process was itself a local or regional one is often overlooked. The majority of the most important solo dance music performers who

recorded in the early years in America were from the Sligo/Leitrim/Roscommon region, and it was this local repertoire that became the standard national repertoire through the medium of the 78 rpm recordings.

Repertoire in the Revival Period

The revival period recordings reveal just how long lasting the above effect was, in that the same sets can be found commonly recorded on revival records from the mid-1950s. However, a distinct approach to repertoire begins to be seen in the revival recordings from the mid 1960s which I think can be tied to the increasing importance of the 'group' as a performance genre of traditional music closely related to young urban revival performers. In this type of recording the incidence of 'standard' sets of tunes decreases, and originality of repertoire becomes important in its own right. This is related to the professional or semi-professional status of many of these groups and can in many cases be seen as a conscious attempt to be different to their 'competitors'. A common pattern which develops from this is that sets of tunes recorded by such performers become very common among session players, reach a peak of popularity, and then tend to slip from the repertoire. They might then become acknowledged as an addition to the 'standard' repertoire after a gap of up to several years. Thus previously rare tunes which may have been sourced by the original recording artists from old printed collections, obscure recordings or other,

generally older, rural musicians can become standard repertoire in a short time. This leads to a constant change in what is considered to be the 'standard' repertoire, and it is sometimes possible to locate when younger traditional musicians entered the music scene by the tunes they play. Some musicians who began to play in the mid 1970s were heavily influenced by recordings of the Bothy Band, whose last recording was made in 1980. Young musicians who came into the music later in the 1980s don't tend to have this material in their repertoire.

Expansion of the recorded repertoire, and by transmission from records, of that of live performance, is a feature of this conscious search for new material. In recent years it has in some cases meant the inclusion of obviously non-traditional pieces, which however are often given a traditional 'feel'. The use of the Lennon and McCartney song "Hey Jude" by the group De Danann is an excellent example of this (45 rpm Single. Hey Jude/The Teetotaler, St Anne's Reel. Gael-Linn CESN 002 1980).

Style

The above comments about repertoire could also be applied to style. The various elements of style in Irish traditional music have been discussed by McCullough (1977), and McAuley (1989), and to the factors of ornamentation, variation in melodic and rhythmic patterns, phrasing and articulation that they suggest, I would add

tempo, and tone¹ as being elements which are definitive of style. In this present discussion we must also take into account harmonic accompaniment, ensemble playing and arrangement as being pertinent to the whole concept of style, if not in fact further stylistic factors in themselves.

The Move away from Solo Performance

Harmonic Accompaniment

The vast majority of accounts that we have of Irish traditional music activity prior to the twentieth century relate to solo playing. Many authors (Ó Riada 1982, Breathnach 1971, Ó Canainn 1978) are insistent on the essentially solo nature of the Irish tradition, and they use this as a paradigm in resisting any move towards the acceptance of accompanied or group playing as a standard. This argument is underlined by the central position that melodic, rhythmic, and decorative variation hold, and the claim would be that these processes are interfered with in any form of non-solo playing. There are however some few references to non-solo performance which lead to the conclusion that if not widespread, then at least it was not completely unknown prior to the first recorded ensembles, or accompanied solos (O'Neill 1913, Little 1943). There is, or rather was, also the example of the *gol* section of the *caoine*, which was sung by several women together, as well as the practise of 'playing in octaves' widespread among Donegal

¹ Although in fact McCullough admits tone as a subsidiary factor

and Sliabh Luachra fiddlers. The regulators of the uilleann pipes introduced around the turn of the eighteenth century can also be seen in this light. These references are almost without exception to duets, although larger groups are implied, especially by O'Neill.

In light of this strong solo tradition, it might be seen as surprising that with the advent of recording, very few (6.64% of recordings documented by Spottswood between 1899 and 1942) are of completely solo (solo1) musicians. The concept of harmonic accompaniment appears almost immediately and, there is no evidence to suggest that there was any level of resistance to it. All the great musicians who recorded 'solo', did so with harmonic accompaniment from a piano, or occasionally a guitar.

The 'inappropriate' nature of this accompaniment often draws comment from those not familiar with it, and in fact in many cases there is little harmonic relationship between the two instruments. Even where the piano backing² is played by someone who is familiar with the melodic outline of the tune and its tonality, the relationship between the two musicians is still loose. In the vast majority of cases, therefore, I would propose that the level of melodic, rhythmic, and decorative variation is not reduced by the presence of a backer, and that the style of performance of the melodic line is not affected. This is still essentially solo music.

² Backing is the term most often used by musicians to describe harmonic (or rhythmic, in the case of the bodhrán) accompaniment, the accompanist being known as a backer. It could be proposed that the use of this term consciously or unconsciously states the practical relationship between the two musicians, i.e. one is the 'musician' and the other the 'backer', implying that they operate at different musical levels.

Ensemble Playing

Ensemble playing in Irish traditional dance music could be considered more a mode of playing than a style in itself. The early ensembles, typified in America by performers such as Dan Sullivan's Shamrock Band and the others listed on p121 above, and in Ireland by the Ceili band, reveal little attempt at arrangement or any move towards a standard instrumentation. Such performances can be understood as heterophony. I believe, though, that the term '**group solo**' although covered by heterophony, conveys rather more accurately what is going on. Each musician is playing, in terms of variation and decoration, *as if they were playing a solo*. There is no attempt, beyond a certain unification of tempo and tuning, to change from a solo style. Thus similarly to the solo 2 category introduced in Chapter 4, this is also essentially solo music, displaying the same stylistic factors.

Chapter 4 details the occurrence and development of ensemble playing in the early recordings, but although the evidence for the influence of the solo recordings in Ireland is strong, there does not seem to have been a parallel imitation of the type of ensemble typical of the 1920s in America. Instead this is the era of the early development of another type of group solo genre, the ceili band, in Ireland, and the relationship between the two types of ensemble is an area which requires more research.

Groups and Arrangement

The new type of ensemble typical of the revival period, commonly

§ The text of the lectures was not published until this date.

known as 'groups', again seems to bear little or no relationship to those of the American 'Golden Age', and to be more a consequence of the Folk Revival, the Ballad Boom, and Ó Riada's reaction to the ceili band.

It is not until the revival period that we begin to see a deliberate move away from the 'group solo' which initially takes the form of varying measures of arrangement. Ó Riada misinterpreted the ceili band group solo sound as a dismal attempt at unison, which he believed was undermining the essentially solo nature of the tradition, and he proposed, in the course of a series of radio lectures on the topic of Irish traditional music which he gave in 1962, the formation of 'an ideal type of ceili band or orchestra' (Ó Riada 1982)³. This group, which actually came into being in 1963, presented traditional tunes, played on traditional instruments by traditional musicians, with the important difference that each tune was played in a pre-determined arrangement, which alternated sections of ensemble playing using various combinations of instruments, with solo passages.

From around the mid 1950s, some other musicians were also experimenting with arrangements of traditional material. The McPeakes, a family of musicians from Belfast who were a major influence in the folk revival both in Ireland and Britain recorded in this style in the early sixties. Their activities seem to have been independent of Ó Riada's, and it little is known at this point about

³ The text of the lectures was not published until this date.

what influences they had, if any, in their arrangements. Francis McPeake (born 1885), the eldest of the family, had played at the early Feis Ceoils, where he had contact with the classical musician and composer Carl Hardebeck, and he may have been influenced by Welsh musicians at the Eisteddfod.

The expansion of this genre of 'group' music that followed these efforts resulted in the formation of many commercial groups that continued to experiment in various ways, but which followed the same basic lines in terms of arrangement. Many, in fact the vast majority of them also opted for some form of harmonic accompaniment, which

Ó Riada claimed to revile, yet used in the form of the harpsichord.

Instrumentation

The current widespread use of several instruments can be related to their use in recordings. One consequence of the move away from solo performance was the introduction of instruments previously unknown or at least very marginal to the tradition. Most of these instruments were accordingly used in an accompanying capacity, and even when capable of playing the melody of traditional Irish dance music were rarely so used in solo performance.

The Piano

As an instrument that seems to have no background in the Irish tradition, the piano appears almost from the beginning of the era of

Irish recordings, initially on a John J. Kimmel recording in 1904, played by one Otto Kost. Various theories have been put forward to explain this sudden and enthusiastic embrace of the piano by Irish traditional musicians, but it is likely that the majority of traditional musicians in Ireland first heard the piano used in this way, via the early American recordings. It should be pointed out that although the piano was used almost exclusively as a backing instrument, some seven sides were recorded where it featured as a melody instrument (see Fig. 7). Only one of these sides, recorded by Eleanor Kane in Chicago in 1935, actually features dance music. The others consist of song airs played as 'pieces'.

The rate of adoption of the piano in Ireland is difficult to ascertain mainly because its use was largely limited by portability. It is likely that it may have been restricted to dance halls and venues where pianos were to be found, a supposition that is supported by the standard use of the piano by ceili bands, who would mainly have played in such places. The new generation of secondary users spawned by the revival, at first were inclined to dismiss the piano as non-traditional and unsympathetic to the spirit of the music, no doubt encouraged by the attitudes of commentators such as Ó Riada (Ó Riada 1982). This is supported by the notable absence of the piano in the recordings of revival musicians or groups, while many recordings made in the same period by primary users (e. g. Martin Byrnes 1969) made use of it in a style almost identical to that on the 78s. This picture was to change later as the

purist approach of the revivalists softened, and it is now fairly commonly heard on recordings made by secondary users.

The Banjo

Although O'Neill (1913) documents the use of the 5-string banjo in Irish traditional music in America, it is rather the tenor banjo which is the instrument associated with Irish traditional music, and it is mainly through the medium of the early 78 recordings that it comes to notice. The loudness and crisp sound of the banjo made it an easy instrument to record in pre-electric recording days (pre-1925), and although there are few solo recordings, it can be heard on over half of the ensemble recordings of the period.

The banjo has never gained full acceptance as a solo melody instrument in Irish traditional music, and this is confirmed in the revival period, where out of around 2,300 phonograms only in the region of a dozen significantly feature the banjo as a solo instrument, and none of those are entirely solo recordings. (also see MacAuley 1989)

The Piccolo

In a similar way to the banjo, the piccolo, although a melody instrument in its own right, was rarely used as a solo instrument. It features on around 7% of the 78 rpm recordings, but on only 0.6% as a solo instrument. Its use in Irish traditional music seems to be unknown before the 1922 Vocalion recording by the P.J MacNamara

Trio, and without having any hard evidence I am inclined to believe that its use stems from the demands of pre-electric recording technology for loud, easily recorded instruments. Whatever the truth of the matter, the sound of the piccolo, particularly in combination with the banjo, is completely typical of the ensembles such as Dan Sullivan's Shamrock Band, or the Four Provinces Orchestra, who recorded from the mid 1920s.

In the revival, the piccolo almost completely disappeared, featuring on only 5 out of almost 2,300 phonograms, and only two of these are solo recordings. The piccolo can be seen as an instrument which is almost completely tied to the recording studio, and which has never really featured in a meaningful way in other social genres of Irish traditional music.

The Bodhrán

Although the bodhrán has been used by primary performers in an apparently minor role for at least 150 years (Hamilton 1990, 1996), its widespread use is a phenomenon of the revival, which can probably be traced to Ó Riada's use of it in his experimental ensemble, Ceoltóirí Chualann. The expansion of its use was very rapid, and from being a marginal instrument with probably mainly ritual uses (Such1985), it developed a central role in the revival, and inspired bitter debate as to its traditionality (Hamilton 1996). There is no doubt that recordings were very influential in this process as almost all of the groups, and many of the solo 2

performers who have recorded in the post-Ó Riada period, have used it to some extent. Stylistic innovation on the bodhrán has drawn the attention of some scholars (Ó Súilleabháin 1981).

The Bouzouki

Under this general term I include other similar instruments, such as the cittern, mandola, blarge etc. which fulfil the same role, since to treat them separately in a discussion of this kind would be pedantic. A rather similar series of events has brought the bouzouki to the position it now holds. Introduced by Johnny Moynihan (Ní Fhíonghaile 1990) who first used it in the context of the group Sweeney's Men. This group first recorded in 1968, and the bouzouki's use as an accompanying instrument spread very rapidly since then. The recordings of groups such as Planxty (first recording 1973), The Bothy Band (first recording 1975), and De Danann (first recording 1975) had an important role in this process, and the style in which it was played in the first two groups by Donal Lunny, and in the latter by Alec Finn, has been strongly influential on the present generation of revival musicians, via the medium of recordings. The age and background of its players place it firmly as the choice of Secondary Users.

The Guitar

Although in use from at least 1923 when the Flanagan Brothers used it on a recording, the guitar, up until the revival period was

only used in a limited way, appearing on some 5.2 % of the early American recordings. This figure is in itself somewhat exaggerated since over half of this figure is accounted for by the Flanagan Brothers. Never used as a melody instrument in the 78 era, it was rarely used as a backing instrument for solo 2 players of traditional dance music, and occurs mostly as an ensemble instrument. However, Hugh Gillespie's twenty sides of solo 2 fiddle and guitar recorded for Decca in the late 1930s are notable here.

The Flanagan Brothers use of the guitar on over two thirds of their recordings foreshadows in some ways the overwhelming use that was made of the instrument in the revival period given that a large part of their material was comic or sentimental ballads. I believe that the use of the guitar in the mainly instrumental groups of the revival stems from its almost universal use as the accompanying instrument in the ballad boom. When these musicians began to play instrumental dance music, the guitar began to feature strongly in these groups. Reinforcing this was the high level of popularity of the guitar in popular music at the time. Availability of the instrument was not a problem. There has been a very limited use of the guitar as a melody instrument played in the same style as the plectrum banjo, in recordings since 1956, notably by Arty McGlynn.

perfunctory mention of it, or the concertina. Despite this, these free

'Traditional' Instruments versus 'New' Instruments

Irish traditional music has been slow to accept new instruments as central to the tradition. Even though almost all of the instruments in

use in the tradition are borrowed from other musics, and must therefore have been themselves 'new instruments' at some time. Even that most traditionally Irish of musical instruments, the uilleann pipes, was developed in a reasonably short period of time in the eighteenth century, and must surely have been considered a new instrument at that time. The appearance of several tutors for the pipes in the early nineteenth century also reinforces the notion of their novelty. Notwithstanding this, there is a considerable degree of status associated with the older instruments (Hamilton 1978), and none of the instruments discussed above, despite their widespread distribution via the medium of recording has succeeded in achieving this status.

The Accordion and Concertina

I have deliberately excluded these instruments from the discussion above for several reasons. It is difficult to establish the position of the accordion/melodeon/concertina in Irish traditional music prior to the first appearance on record of the accordion in the hands of John Kimmel. Although it was widely available as a mass produced instrument from the 1850s and presumably arrived in Ireland shortly afterwards, even O'Neill, writing in 1913 makes only perfunctory mention of it, or the concertina. Despite this, these free reed instruments are perhaps the only 'new' instruments which have gained a degree of acceptance to the centre of the tradition, the concertina for some reason more so than the accordion. This is

not to claim that they have been accepted with open arms. There was and still is some resistance to giving the accordion the same status as the old instruments, but even Ó Riada's forthright condemnation of it failed to stop its enthusiastic reception by the vast majority of traditional musicians in Ireland. The concertina is, and has been for some time, fully accepted as a traditional instrument. Given the large numbers of recordings that featured the accordion it might be proposed that it was through this medium that its popularity and eventual measure of acceptance was attained. However the full acceptance of the concertina notwithstanding the tiny number of recordings (11 sides in the 78 era, 6 solo albums in the revival period) shows that exposure via recordings is not essential for this process.

These musicians would have learnt their repertoire and style in this era, and there is no reason to believe that they would have made sudden changes simply because they were being recorded. Indeed, some of them may not have been aware of the fact that recording was taking place, or if so, fully conscious of what it entailed. There is also the body of lore and written accounts (Chapter 1) which give us a fairly accurate picture of the type of music making that was going on pre-1897, since they are all in agreement about the major areas in which I want to suggest, change did, or did not, take place.

A very useful basis for any discussion of musical change is the

Change

A Comparative Standard for Change

The ability to detect and discuss audible differences implies that we have a basic reference point. That is, a difference can only be perceived when we know what it is different from, and here we come across a major difficulty in this discussion of stability, change and survival, in that it is not actually known what Irish traditional music sounded like, before the first recordings dating from the last decade of the nineteenth century. The sound of the music prior to this must be reconstructed, although I think that most scholars would agree that it is possible to do this with a fair degree of accuracy. Firstly we must presume that the early music that was recorded (remembering that the very earliest recordings, made at the first Feis Ceoil, were non-commercial) is representative of the music of the pre-recording era. These musicians would have learnt their repertoire and style in this era, and there is no reason to believe that they would have made sudden changes simply because they were being recorded. Indeed, some of them may not have been aware of the fact that recording was taking place, or if so, fully conscious of what it entailed. There is also the body of lore and written accounts (Chapter 1) which give us a fairly accurate picture of the type of music making that was going on pre-1897, since they are all in agreement about the major areas in which I want to suggest, change did, or did not, take place.

A very useful basis for any discussion of musical change is the

work of John Blacking (1977) who was careful to point out the danger of confusing change with the normal variation that may occur within a tradition. He proposes that change should be looked at as:

An audible change in the norms of performance *that is recognised as such by performers and audience*, and is not merely a variation or a new item in an established style, or a new style in a tradition that incorporates stylistic variation. (original emphasis)

Hence quoting an example of change which fits the above definition is rather more difficult. Elsewhere in the same paper, Blacking stresses that such change:

To qualify as musical change, the phenomena described must constitute a change in the structure of the musical system, and not simply a change within the system.

and also

If the concept of musical change is to have any heuristic value, it must denote significant changes that are peculiar to *musical* systems, and not simply the musical consequences of social, political, economic, or other changes.

I propose to look at Irish traditional music since 1900, essentially the period of interaction with phonograms, in this light.

Audible Change

Blacking suggests that musical change should be audible, and the major audible changes associated with the two periods of recording

have been examined above in terms of the move away from solo playing and the adoption of harmonic accompaniment and ensemble performance. But are all of these audible differences 'change' in the sense that Blacking suggests, and as such distinct from variation? I would argue that the proposed concept of the 'group solo', covering the use of harmonic accompaniment and some ensemble playing, insists that such changes though audible, do not represent any change in the underlying process, and are therefore 'merely a variation or a new item in an established style, or a new style in a tradition that incorporates stylistic variation' (Blacking 1977).

Where arrangement is a feature of ensemble performance, as it increasingly became after 1960, I believe that here we begin to see change on a deeper level, and not merely 'a variation or a new item in an established style, or a new style in a tradition that incorporates stylistic variation'.

Structural Change

Within the milieu of arranged group performances however, structural elements in the music have rarely been disturbed. In arrangements, the structure of the music being passed between the various soloists or groups of players remains intact. Elements such as rhythm, tonality, and basic melodic outline are not interfered with.

At various times in the past, and now more commonly, certain musicals have introduced elements which go beyond simple

variation on existing musical structures, and again seem to suggest the sort of changes at a musical level that Blacking talks about.

Patrick Kelly, from Cree, Co. Clare, was a very traditional fiddle player whose occasional introduction of radical rhythmical elements into his playing, may have been indicated the beginnings of structural change. (Ó Súilleabháin 1977a). Tommie Potts, a better known figure mainly because of a commercial recording (Potts 1972), also experimented with structural changes in a more radical way than Kelly and his music has been extensively documented by O Súilleabhain (1987).

Both Kelly and Potts are the more remarkable in that both were of an age and background which would normally be associated with a strong musically conservative stance, but more recently, several younger musicians have been noted as moving in the same direction, although in different ways. McAuley (1989), describes in detail this aspect of two younger, professional musicians, and although some of what she describes can be allocated to Blacking's variation within an established style, some important elements, especially those implying a change in motor rhythm, cannot. Although in both cases that McAuley investigates, it is the solo playing of the musicians that is under consideration, both also play in professional groups where these elements are being introduced as a further layer of change over the already existing concept of arrangement.

The mediation of all the above performers through recordings

illustrates rather well how the whole area of recordings relates to musical change. Kelly was recorded, but never made a commercial recording. His music would only be known to a small group of enthusiasts. Few, if any, have been influenced or attempted to imitate his music.

Potts' music would be equally unknown, but his commercial recording for Céirníní Cladaigh in 1972, made it available in a limited way. Potts was a very shy retiring man, and virtually never played in public. Had the opposite been the case, the effect of the recording on other musicians and the public might have been quite different. As it stands, Potts' music is more widely known than Kelly's, but still only by a minority group among musicians and the 'traditional music public' as a whole. Again, although his music is highly admired by those that know it, only a few professional musicians who are performing largely on stage or in the recording studio have been influenced by it. The musicians studied by McAuley are both young professionals who both record and perform widely. The structurally radical aspects of their playing, including as she suggests, changes in the underlying motor rhythms, are obvious features of their recordings, and based on personal observations I believe that these are beginning to influence other young musicians on a widespread basis. The meaning of influence here must be carefully considered in the light of what it is that recordings can actually transmit from one musician to another. I have suggested that the changes outlined above are approaching

the type of deep changes that Blacking discusses. At this point it is essential to distinguish between imitation of changed musical sound, and re-creation of the process that gave rise to the changes. Perhaps one of the reasons why few of those who heard and liked the music of Tommie Potts tried to emulate him was that they had no access to the process that produced his music and were forever condemned to simply re-produce it in the same way as a recording. Recordings only give access to product, not to the underlying process. If this is true, is the widespread influence via recordings of radically innovative musicians solely on the level of imitation of product, or is this imitation a first step in understanding and being able to use the process? Whatever the answer to this it is certain that without the universal role that recordings play in today's Irish traditional music, the innovations and radical changes that arise with individual musicians would be disseminated much more slowly. Regarding individuals and their role in change Blacking (1977) has this to say:

Musical change, for example, is not 'caused' by 'contact among people and cultures' (Nettl 1964:232): it is brought about by the decisions made by individuals about music making and music on the basis of their experiences of music and attitudes to it in different social contexts. (original emphasis)

I would propose that the major role of the phonogram is not in causing change, but rather in its spread, and consequent acceptance or rejection.

Identity

The basic questions to be addressed here are:

1/In what way does Irish traditional music as found on recordings reinforce or undermine concepts of Irish identity in its audience.

2/Has the medium of recording distorted the role of traditional music as a cultural marker

In attempting to find answers, I believe that it is important to see the place of music in Irish cultural identity, especially vis-à-vis language.

The role of nationalism in the historical development of Irish traditional music is of seminal importance. Both periods of genre expansion - the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century activity which resulted in collections of traditional material and the development of forms of Irish music outside the original social genres (Secondary Involvement see p 26), and the late nineteenth/early twentieth century cultural nationalist activity - can be seen as the cultural offshoots of movements which had strong undercurrents of nationalism, even if they were not overtly nationalist in nature.

Traditional Music and the New (post-1922) State

Historically, the last and ultimately successful attempt towards some measure of national self-determination is synchronous with the development of commercial Irish recordings in America, and to me the most interesting feature of this period is the surprising

dearth of commercial recording activity in the new state. This after all had come into being on the crest of what had begun as a cultural movement.

The attitude of the new Irish Government (post 1922) to culture in general begs some comment at this point. Brown (1981) details the rapid falling off in membership of the Gaelic League in the early years of the new state, and attributes it to the expectation that the League's role would now be taken over by the Government. This expectation was largely unfulfilled. For the new Government, Irish culture and the Irish language were to become almost synonymous, and promotion of the language took almost all of the resources devoted to 'culture'. This could occasionally produce ironic results. A Government sponsored publication office (An Gúm - the Plan) translated world literary classics into Irish, but these remained very largely unread on library shelves while talented Irish writers in both Irish and English struggled for recognition or had their works banned by the draconian censorship of the period. Official recognition or involvement with Irish traditional music, except in the medium of radio after 1926, was almost nonexistent. There was little attempt to institutionalise traditional music through the setting up of structures, either governmental or educational, in complete contrast to the Irish language (Kelly 1978, Ó Súilleabháin 1985, McCarthy 1993).

There are several factors that go some way towards explaining this. I believe that one of the main reasons was simply

that for the Government of the time, as for other sections of Irish society, it was exceptionally difficult to define Irish traditional music in a meaningful way, even if there had been a desire to promote it. Perhaps the main reason behind this difficulty was that in the Irish situation, the expansion of genres of music since the early nineteenth century led to many different types of music being thought of as characteristic by different groups within Irish society. Looking at Irish music broadly with regard to national identity, it could be said that no one composer, performer, work, or style, is nationally representative, and this is reflected in the very broad range of material which was seen as 'Irish' by both recording companies and consumers. The language on the other hand, even though beset with problems of regional dialect from an educational point of view, was still a readily identifiable area where no confusion existed between what was, and what was not, Irish. On another level, apart from the work of Moore and composers such as Hughes and Grainger in integrating elements of traditional music into western art music, Irish traditional music was associated with the Irish peasant and landless labourer and this was not an association which the Government would have wished to use as a symbol of national or international identity, despite De Valera's often quoted exhortations of cosy homesteads and comely maidens (Lee 1985 p. 334).

Within this broad variety of Irish music, however, two strands can be identified as being overtly nationalist, and serving as identity markers. Both are vocal, and it appears, that in the Irish situation at least, melody is normally only construed as nationalist because of associated text.

1/ National Music

In spite of the variety of music which can be found under the umbrella term 'Irish', the concept of a 'national music' is one which appears early in the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 relates how Moore was hailed as the national bard (also see Ó Súilleabháin 1994), and discusses the popularity of the ballads and poetry of the Young Irelanders (Duffy 1845). The very large circulation achieved by their newspaper *The Nation* [10,000 by 1843, a year after its inception, with an estimated readership of 250,000 (Boyce 1982)] went a long way towards establishing a popular concept of national culture which completely eclipsed the peasant dance music and song as a symbol of national identity, if in fact it ever had been.

Although this notion of Irish identity began as a middle class affair it soon began to spread beyond its origins. Callahan (1994) speaking of the identity of the Irish in America has this to say, which because of its American context is doubly relevant here:

In addition to populations from still traditional areas in the South and West, later nineteenth century emigration involved those from transitional and already modernised counties elsewhere in Ireland. Yet the hegemony of the middle class and its version of Irish identity was so complete that all these other people - monolingual Irish speakers

from the 'rundale' system in Mayo, displaced 'cottiers' from what had been the small farm region of Tipperary, and younger sons of Carlow market farmers - deferred to the cultural forms of this new middle class group in any public or institutional expression of Irish identity. It was this identity that was transferred to America.

The entrenchment of this version of Irish identity reveals itself in the numerous American editions of Moore's Melodies, and from the point of view of this thesis, in the recordings of this type of song which make up a considerable part of the vocal music recorded in the 78 era. John McCormack's recordings of Moore's "The Last Rose of Summer" first recorded in 1910, (Worth and Cartwright 1986) is reputed to have sold one and a half million copies in America alone (Moloney 1982).

In the course of the nineteenth century, this music, which originated as a middle and upper class activity, gradually spread throughout Irish society, with the airs of these songs soon just as likely to be found in the repertoire of small local temperance or fife and drum bands as in the drawing room (Kearney 1981). *The Nation* and its enthusiastic use of ballad poetry was an important factor in this, but the adoption by the educational system of what was now broadly known as 'national music' entrenched it even more firmly in the Irish psyche.

National Music in Schools

If traditional music *per se* found little place in the school curriculum in the early years of the State, then it may be largely

because national music in the form outlined above took its place. The fact that music, derived partly from seventeenth and eighteenth century melodic sources married to nineteenth century texts, remained popular for over one hundred years, surely reinforces the opinion that certainly in this period, (approx. 1840 - 1950) it served as a focus of Irish national identity, even if its relationship to Irish traditional music, in the sense of the dance music and song traditions, is tenuous. Since national music was already established as an identity marker before the advent of sound recording, the role of recording was rather in the maintenance of this relationship. I would claim, however, that the use of national music in schools was of at least equal importance to recordings of it in maintaining its role as an important identity marker. It was the revival and its revelation of other forms of Irish music largely via the medium of the phonogram that gradually began to reduce this role to its present, almost irrelevant level.

2/ Nationalist Music in the Revival-Ballads and Rebel Songs

There is a whole section of the repertoire of the ballad groups which is overtly nationalist in character, and in fact some performers make this their forte. The origins of this are in the national music previously discussed, and there is some overlap of repertoire, but this new genre, more properly called 'rebel songs' quickly developed its own characteristics. The political situation in

Ireland since 1922, whereby only 26 of the 32 counties were part of the new Irish state is partly the motivation of such material. Performers or indeed consumers of rebel songs are not necessarily politically involved. Most of the groups which emerged as commercially successful from the ballad boom era used material of this sort to some extent. Some, for example The Wolfe Tones, made a speciality of it. At some stages, the overtly political nature of the lyrics led to broadcast bans on certain songs (Orpheus 1966), but of course their availability on phonograms meant that they did achieve some degree of distribution. Certain companies, notably a northern concern called Derry, specialised in political ballads, most of which could never hope to get airplay beyond local pirate stations such as Radio Free Derry. This type of music, although representing a much more charged and aggressive nationalism was really in the same situation as its national music forerunner with regard to its relationship, on a musical level at least, with traditional music. Several studies have in fact dealt with aspects of music and politics (Zimmerman 1967, McCann 1985, Valley 1993) but it must really be looked at in the political context which is outside the scope of this thesis.

The level to which the 'rebel song' currently acts as an identity marker is difficult to establish. The whole area of 'ballads' in the sense of the activity of the ballad groups, has attracted little or no academic interest, and so any opinion offered here is based purely on personal experience. I believe that currently the 'rebel

song' is slipping as a widely recognised identity marker. This is related to a growing discomfort that many Irish people feel with the type of nationalism that they represent, especially in relation to the ongoing political situation in Northern Ireland. In the broader field of ballads in general, their high overall profile in the body of recordings produced since 1956 (see Fig. 16) would lead to the belief that they still have an important role to play in the identity of many in today's Ireland.

The Dance Music and Song Tradition as an Identity Marker

Although national music did, and ballads still have their role in the construction of an Irish Identity it has been suggested that as forms of music that they are distinct from the tradition of dance music and song. Since these are the oldest indigenous music forms, what is their role here? Studies have shown that the level of public awareness of this music is low (Hamilton 1995a), though it is probably true that the majority of Irish people would certainly identify it as a form of Irish music. I would propose that in fact the role of this music as an identity marker has been in decline since the early nineteenth century, a process which began to accelerate rapidly after the second World War.

It is perhaps somewhat ironic that as the youth of rural Ireland were abandoning traditional music and other aspects of rural culture and emigrating or migrating to the cities to further identify

with the world of high technology and Anglo-American urban culture, a certain section of urban youth were actively seeking to identify themselves with rural, low technology, peasant music and song. If the dance music and song tradition is to serve as an identity marker in today's Ireland, it has already been demonstrated that it is unlikely to be accepted by the population in general in this sense.

In its older forms (rural social genres) it served to mark the identity of the rural small farmer. Within the 25 years from 1945 to 1970 it had increasingly become the cultural flag of a small section of urban youth. This remarkable occurrence would have been impossible without the medium of recorded music.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this section I would propose that in fact recordings have reinforced the role of several types of Irish music in the creation of an Irish identity, given the very broad selection of music that was and is recorded. However, admitting the diminishing position of traditional dance music and song in this process I believe that it might well have further retreated into the background of the national identity without the aid of recordings, in the 78 era, and more especially from the mid 1950s to the present day.

Appendix A

Tape Recorded Interviews

Harry Bradshaw, R.T.E Radio Producer, Viva Voce Records,

Recorded in Dublin on 20th October 1991. (D.A.T.)

Nicholas Carollian, Director of the Irish Traditional Music

Archive. Recorded in Dublin on 27th July 1991. (D.A.T.)

Pat Kilroy, traditional musician. Recorded in Cúil-Aodha, Co. Cork,
11th September 1991. (D.A.T.)

Tony MacMahon, R.T.E. television producer, presenter, and
traditional musician. Recorded in Dublin 21st October 1994.
(Cassette)

Ciarán Mac Mathúna, R.T.E. radio producer, presenter and
traditional music collector with the Mobile Broadcast Unit. Recorded
in Dublin 23rd July 1991. (D.A.T.)

Robáird Mac Góráin, Chief Executive, Gael-Linn. Recorded in
Dublin, 21st October 1991. (D.A.T.)

Johnny O'Leary, traditional musician. Recorded in Knocknagree Co. Cork, 14th June 1992. (Cassette)

Tom Sherlock, Record company executive, Claddagh Records. Recorded in Dublin, 27th July 1991. (D.A.T.)

Jean-Michel Veillon, traditional Breton musician. Recorded in Cúil-Aodha, Co. Cork, 30th September 1991. (D.A.T.)

A copy of the database of recordings which was compiled from the sources described in Chapter 7 has been lodged in the Archive of The Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick. This is on a floppy disc, and consists of a file in the FileMaker Pro programme for Macintosh, which contains entries for 2282 recordings made in this period. There is also an explanatory text file in TeachText. It was not bound with the thesis for reasons of copyright.

Appendix C
APPENDIX B

Selected Discography of Pre-1942 Recordings

DATABASE OF RECORDINGS 1956-1993

This is simply intended to give some examples of the types of recording referred to in the text. It is not intended as a

A copy of the database of recordings which was collated from the sources described in Chapter 7 has been lodged in the Archive of The Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick.

This is on a floppy disc, and consists of a file in the FileMaker Pro programme for Macintosh, which contains entries for 2282 recordings made in this period. There is also an explanatory text file in TeachText . It was not bound with the thesis for reasons of copyright.

Vocalist

1/ Comic: 1926. John Griffin Fingegan the Tailor.
Victor, Vi 20761.

2/ Sentimental: 1927. Charles Massinier Inland L.
Love You Macushla Macrae, Victor, Vi
79184

Instrumental

Solo 1

1/ Accordion: 1924. Patrick Lynch High Level, Royal
Belfast Hornpipes (Gypsy Melody, Edison, Ed
51460.

Appendix C

Selected Discography of Pre-1942 Recordings

This is simply intended to give some examples of the types of recording referred to in the text. It is not intended as a comprehensive discography of any kind. Categories correspond with those in Chapter 4.

Trained Singer

- 1/ **Irish:** 1916. George Potter Inghin An Phalaitinigh Shule Agrah. Columbia, Co A2093.
- 2/ **English:** 1926. Seamus O'Doherty Emmet's Farewell to his Love. Columbia, Co 33079-F.

Vocalist

- 1/ **Comic:** 1926. John Griffin Finnegan the Tailor. Victor, Vi 20761.
- 2/ **Sentimental:** 1927. Charles Massinger Ireland I Love You Macushla Machree. Victor, Vi 79184

Instrumental

Solo 1

- 1/ **Accordion:** 1924. Patrick Lynch High Level, Royal Belfast.-Hornpipes (Gypsy Medley). Edison, Ed 51460.

- 2/ **Banjo:** 1929. Michael Flanagan Tickling the Strings.
Columbia, Co 33373-F
- 3/ **Fiddle:** 1929. Frank Quinn The Tenpenny Bit-Jig.
Columbia, Co 33341-F.
- 4/ **Flute:** 1929. Michael A. Glynn Kitty's Wedding.
Columbia, Co 33441-F.
- 5/ **Piano:** 1935. Eleanor Kane Morning Dew;
Traveller's; Shark's Favourite-Reels. Decca,
De 12068.
- 6/ **Tin Whistle:** 1927. Daniel P. Moroney Trip to the Cottage.
Columbia, Co 33172.
- 9/ **Uilleann Pipes:** 1917. Patrick Fitzpatrick The Kilfenora; The
Flower of the Flock; The Floggan-Reels.
Edison, Ed 51692.
- Solo 2**
- 1/ **Accordeon:** 1923. John J. Kimmel Haste to the Wedding;
Larry O'Gaff. Pathé, Pat 10663.
- 2/ **Banjo:** 1934. Micheal Gaffney The Night Cap;
Mysteries of Knock-Jigs. Decca, De 12041
- 3/ **Concertina:** 1927. W. J. Mullaly Salamanca; Peter Street-
Reels. Victor, Vi 20763.
- 4/ **Fiddle:** 1920. Michael Coleman Reidy Johnson's
Reels. Shannon, Sh 2503.

- 5/ **Flute:** and **Pipe:** 1924. Patrick Doran Hard Road to Travel-Reel. Gennett, Ge 5617
- 6/ **Piccolo:** 1925. P. J. McNamara Walls of Limerick.
Columbia, Co 33074-F.
- 7/ **Tin Whistle:** 1936. Myles O'Malley The Swallow's Tail;
Piano: The Heather Breeze-Reels. Decca, De 12066.
- 8/ **Uilleann Pipes:** 1917. Tom Ennis The Maid that Left the
2/Accordion, Banjo Country; Drowsy Maggie; Around the World
Guitar: for Sport-Reel Medley No. 6. Victor, Vi
18366.
- Duet 1**
- 1/ **Two accordions:** 1928. The Hyde Brothers Back O' the
Haggart-Jig. Columbia, Co 33251-F.
- 2/ **Accordion and Banjo:** 1916. Edward Herborn and James
Percussion: Wheeler The Maid Behind the Bar-
Reel. Columbia, Co A2147.
- 3/ **Accordion and Fiddle:** 1926. Frank Quinn The Rocks of Bawn.
Piano: Columbia, Co 33128-F.
- 4/ **Two Fiddles:** 1927. Frank Quinn Cadden's Fancy-Jig
Set. Columbia, Co 33223-F.
- 5/ **Flute and Fiddle:** 1928. Bernard McGovern and Thomas
6/ **Fiddle, Flute, Piano:** O'Brien Kick out the Scrub; Jackson's
Choque-Jigs. Victor, Vi 21319.

- 6/ **Fiddle and Pipes:** 1929. Micheal Carney The Peeler's Jacket; The Duke of Leinster-Reels.
- 8/ **Fiddle, Pipes, Piano:** Columbia, Co 33350-F.
- Duet 2** Hornpipe, Columbia, Co 33192-F.
- 1/**Accordion, Banjo,** 1923. Stack of Barley Medley.
- Piano:** 1930. Tully and Kelly Popular Reel.
- 10/ **Fiddle, Banjo, Piano** Columbia ,Co 33451-F. Columbia, Co 33404-F.
- 1 **Guitar: Flutes, Piano:** 1923. The Flanagan Brothers The Morning Star; The Collier's Reel.
- 12/ **Flute, Banjo-mandolin** Columbia, Co 95-D.
- 3/**Accordion, Fiddle,** 1925. Early Breakfast Scotch.
- Piano:** 1929. The Tap Room; The Moving Bog-Reels. Columbia, Co 33318-F.
- 4/ **Accordion, Fiddle,**
- Banjo Percussion: Piano:** 1927. Frank Quinn The Varsouviana. Columbia, Co 33234-F.
- 5/**Accordion, Pipes,**
- Piano:** 1923. Ennis, Morrison, and Muller Mama's Pet; My Love is on the Ocean. Gennett, Ge 5054.
- 6/ **Fiddle, Flute, Piano:** 1926. Doran, Cawley and Malone Sweeney's Favourite-Reel. Columbia, Co33110-F.

- 7/ Two Fiddles, Piano: 1929. The Silver Tip; The Frog in the Well. Columbia, Co 33400-F.
- 8/ Fiddle, Pipes, Piano: 1927. Touhy's Favourite-Hornpipe. Columbia, Co 33192-F.
- 9/ Fiddle, Piccolo, Piano: 1922. Stack of Barley Medley. Vocalion, Vo 14420.
- 10/ Fiddle, Banjo, Piano: 1929. Johnny Cope. Columbia, Co 33404-F.
- 11/ Two Flutes, Piano: 1928. The Teetotaler's Fancy-Reel. Columbia, Co 33298-F.
- 12/ Flute, Banjo-mandolin, Piano: 1925. Early Breakfast; Scotch Breakfast-Reels. Gennett, Ge 5749.
- 13/ Tin whistle, Banjo-mandolin, Piano: 1925. Roland's Return-Jigs. Columbia, Co 33075-F.
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