# A HISTORY OF IRISH MUSIC

By

William H. Grattan Flood



1905

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**PREFACE**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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ALTHOUGH Erin is symbolical of Minstrelsy there has never yet appeared anything like a trustworthy History of Music in Ireland—that is to say, of genuine Celtic-Irish and Anglo-Irish Music. We have absolutely no compact record of the "divine art," wherein the Celts of Ireland pre-eminently excelled, or of its professors and exponents during sixteen hundred years of authentic history.

Innumerable magazine articles, and references to the "land of song" have been published during the past century, but to the serious student of Irish music no standard work was at all available. True it is, no doubt, that the sources of information may almost be regarded as an *embarras des richesses*, yet these are so scattered, and in some cases so difficult of access, that the task of wading through such voluminous material would be no light one.

Hitherto the principal authorities on the subject have been Walker, Bunting, Hardiman, Petrie, Beauford, Drummond, Renehan, Pilkington, O'Curry, and Conran; whilst some little information is to be met with *passim* in Rimbault, Chappell, Burney, Hawkins, Crotch, Busby, Rockstro, Davey, Moore, Hudson, O'Daly, Joyce, Moffat, Sparling, Graves, and O'Donoghue. *The Dictionary of National Biography* and Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* are somewhat deficient in their treatment of Irish musicians; and it is no exaggeration to add that the information vouchsafed of the thirty natives of Ireland who are included in the former colossal work of reference is unreliable, whilst the number of omissions is simply appalling.

O'Curry says: "Much has been confidently written on the ancient Irish music and musical instruments, particularly by Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker and Mr. Edward Bunting; the former chiefly from imagination, and the latter from induction, aided by a high musical education. Walker seems to have been the sport of every pretender to antiquarian knowledge, but more especially the dupe of an unscrupulous person of the name of Beauford—not the learned author of the *Memoir of a Map of Ireland*, but another clergyman of the name—who unblushingly pawned his pretended knowledge of facts on the well-intentioned but credulous Walker."

All Irish students must be for ever grateful to O'Curry for having gathered together what has well been described as "a mine of information" in his *Lectures on the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, edited by Dr. W. K. Sullivan. The section dealing with "Music and Musical Instruments in Ancient Erin" cannot be ignored, especially in connection with Dr. Sullivan's learned Introduction and Notes; yet, I must rather unwillingly acknowledge that many of his theories and conclusions are at variance with the result of recent scholarship. During the past thirty years our knowledge of matters relating to Ireland has been wonderfully added to; and the investigations of erudite writers have cleared away the almost impenetrable haze which had so long obscured the state of civilization as regards literature, art, and music in pre-Norman and mediaeval days.

No further apology is therefore needed for offering the present work to the reading public. Twenty-six years of unwearied research have resulted in a colossal amount of material, but I have endeavoured to condense my matter so as to produce a concise history. Moreover, I have avoided as far as possible all technicalities, and thus hope to make these pages more popular, and within the scope of the average reader.

It would be ungrateful not to mention the valuable assistance received from numerous kind friends, and from the Librarians of the home and continental libraries. As far as possible, all references have been verified at first hand; whilst, from the sixteenth century onwards, the State Papers and contemporary documents have been laid under tribute. Files of newspapers, commencing with the year 1728, have proved of much service, and rare magazines and chap-books have been consulted. Dr. Henry Watson and Dr. Culwick lent me some unique music books, and Mr. T. L. Southgate allowed me to use his exceedingly scarce edition of Playford's *Dancing Master* (1652). The Lord Abbot of Mount Melleray, Mr. F. J. Bigger, Mr. Andrew Gibson, Mr. Barclay Squire, Mr. David Comyn, Dr. Douglas Hyde, Mr. H. F. Berry, Dr. W. H. Cummings, Dr. Cox, The O'Neill, The Lady Abbess of Stanbrook, Mr. Dix, Father G. O'Neill, S.J., and others helped me in many ways.

I must especially thank Father Maurus, Prior of Mount Melleray, for his kindness in reading through the proofs, and supplying many valuable suggestions. His unrivalled knowledge of Irish was ever at my service in the case of archaic Irish names of songs, dance-tunes, etc., some of which proved a stumbling-block to O'Curry and Hardiman.

Above all, I must thank my subscribers—whose names will be found at the end of this volume—for their material support in the expense of publication.

In conclusion, it is my earnest wish that the result of my labours will prove, in the words of O'Heerin, "an addition of knowledge on holy Ireland."

WM. H. GRATTAN FLOOD.

ENNISCORTHY,  
*November 1st*, 1904.

DEDICATED  
TO  
EDWARD MARTYN, ESQ.,  
THE FOUNDER OF THE PALESTRINA CHOIR  
AND  
THE MUNIFICENT PATRON OF  
TRUE CHURCH MUSIC IN IRELAND

**Ancient Irish Music**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter I**.

MUSIC is a universal language, appealing to the very soul of man, and is the outpouring of the heart, whether to express joy or sorrow, to rouse to battle or soothe to sleep, to give expression or jubilation for the living or of wailing for the dead, to manifest sympathy with society or devotion to the Deity. It is, as Thomas Davis writes, "the first faculty of the Irish." He goes on as follows:—

"No enemy speaks slightingly of Irish Music, and no friend need fear to boast of it. It is without a rival Its antique war-tunes, such as those of O'Byrne, O'Donnell, MacAlistrum and Brian Boru, stream and crash upon the ear like the warriors of a hundred glens meeting; and you are borne with them to battle, and they and you charge and struggle amid cries and battle-axes and stinging arrows. Did ever a wail make man's marrow quiver and fill his nostrils with the breath of the grave, like the *ululu* of the North or the *wirrasthrue* [A Muire ir Truag] of Munster?"

In ancient Ireland the systems of law, medicine, poetry, and music, according to Keating, "were set to music, being poetical compositions." Vallancey tells us that the bards, specially selected from amongst noble youths of conspicuous stature and beauty, "had a distinctive dress of five colours, and wore a white mantle and a blue cap ornamented with a gold crescent." The curriculum for an *ollamh* (bard) extended to twelve years and more, at the expiration of which he was given the doctor's cap, that is, the *barréd*, and the title of *ollamh*.

Keating assures us that Cormac Mac Art, *Ard Righ* [Head King] of Ireland (A.D. 254-277), had in his court ten persons in constant attendance:—1, A Prince for companion; 2, a Brehon; 3, a Druid; 4, a Chief Physician; 5, an *Ollamh*;, 6, an *Ard File* [head poet]; 7, an *Ollamh re ceoil* "with a band of music [*oirfideadh*] to soften his pillow and solace him in times of relaxation:" 8, three stewards of the household. The *ollamh*, or *ollav*, be it understood, was the Chief Bard, whilst the *oirfideacha* were the instrumental musicians. Cormac himself was styled "Ceolach," or the Musical.

Dr. Douglas Hyde, in his monumental *Literary History of Ireland*, gives by far the clearest and most succinct account of the bardic classifications. The real poet was the *file* (of which profession there were seven grades), to whom the bard was the merest second fiddle. The Bards were divided into the *Saor* or patrician class, and *Daor* or plebeians—with eight grades in each class. They were poets, not musicians—a fact which has not unfrequently been overlooked by writers on this subject.

It is now absolutely certain that the Irish were a literary people long before the coming of St. Patrick; and we have Ogham stones yet preserved which date from the third century, The codices of St. Gall and Bobbio—valuable as they are—must yield supremacy to the oghams, which undoubtedly furnish us with specimens of Gaelic grammar earlier than any known writings. The Irish alphabetic inscriptions in ogham which have survived the hurly-burly of seventeen centuries are mostly on stone, though they were also written on rings, wooden tablets, ivory, bone, gold, silver, lead, crystals, twigs, etc. So far, that is up to the present year (1904), about 340 oghams have been discovered; and whilst some of them are decidedly Christian, the greater number are pagan. Moreover, the deciphering of these quasi-cryptic oghams has been a veritable triumph for the authenticity of ancient Irish history and tradition.

Sixty years ago the savants sneeringly asserted that our ogham inscriptions were "mere tricks of the middle ages, and founded on the Roman alphabet." Now, however, owing to the researches of Brash, Ferguson, Graves, Rhys, Barry, Power, Macalister and others, the reading of the mystic strokes is almost an exact science. The very word *ogham* suggests at once a musical signification, and, therefore, it is of the very highest importance to claim for Ireland the earliest form of musical tablature.

In MacFirbis's MS. Book of Genealogies, there is mention of the three great Tuatha de Danann musicians, viz., *Music*, *Sweet*, and *Sweet-String*, i.e., CEOL, BIND, and TETBIND, whilst the chief harper was named Uathne, or Harmony. Our most ancient writers agree that the Milesians, in their first expedition to Ireland, were accompanied by a harper. The *Dinn Seanchus*, compiled by Amergin MacAmalgaid (MacAwley), *circ*. A.D. 544, relates that "in the time of Geide, monarch of Ireland, A. M. 3143, the people deemed each other's voices sweeter than the warblings of a melodious harp; such peace and concord reigned among them that no music could delight them more than the sound of each other's voice." In the same ancient tract there is mention made of music, in the *Vision of Cahir Mor*, King of Ireland. However, passing over the ages that may be regarded as quasi-fabulous, we come to the close of the third century, when we are on fairly solid historical ground. At this early period the number of Irish minstrels was very great; and there is a record of nine different musical instruments in use.

Heccataeus, the great geographer quoted by Diodorus, is the first who mentions the name *Celt*, and he describes the Celts of Ireland, five hundred years before Christ, as singing songs in praise of Apollo, and playing melodiously on the harp. The Galatians, who spoke Celtic in the time of St. Jerome, sang sweetly.

There is scarcely any room for doubt that the pre-Christian inhabitants of Ireland had the use of letters, the ogham scale, and the ogham music tablature. The Bressay inscription furnishes an early example of music scoring; and it is quite apparent that the inscriber regarded the ogham and the quaint tablature employed as one and the same—in fact, three of the mystic strokes are identical with three musical signs.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/I.php#501)

Inasmuch, therefore, as there are genuine ogham inscriptions dating from the third century, we are forced to believe that the music tablature also co-existed at the same early period. Not a little remarkable is it that the very name of ogham writing, namely, *Bethluisnin*, or Birch Alder tree, is derivable from a tree or branch; and the Irish letters—sixteen in number—are perfectly unique of their kind. Moreover, the trees were called after the letters, and not, as some have alleged, the letters after the trees.

The music pupils in pre-Christian Irish schools had their *music staves*; and O'Curry describes for us the Headless Staves of the Poets, *i.e.*, *squared* staves, used for walking (or purposes of defence), when closed, and for writing on, when open, in the shape of fans. And, regarding the advanced state of our ancient bardic poetry, Constantine Nigra writes:—"The first certain examples of rhyme are found on Celtic soil and amongst Celtic nations, in songs made by poets, who are either of Celtic origin themselves or had long resided among the Celtic races. . . . Final assonance, or rhyme, can have been derived solely from the laws of Celtic philology."

Archbishop Healy tells us that St. Patrick "taught the sons of the bards how to chant the Psalms of David, and sing together the sweet music of the Church's hymns." He adds: "They might keep their harps and sing the songs of Erin's heroic youth, as in the days of old. But the great saint taught them how to tune their harps to loftier strains than those of the banquet hall or the battle-march."[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/I.php#502)

*Apropos* of the Psalms of David, Biblical commentators agree that the music of the Apostolic age was derived from the Jewish psalmody. The Apostles themselves "adapted" the psalm tunes of the Temple, but, as the Hebrews had no musical notation, the Synagogal chants and melodies, which must have been simple, were handed down traditionally. Very little is actually known of even the shape of the Jewish instruments, as not a single *bas relief* exists by which we can accurately judge. However, in regard to the vocal department, we can assume that a *monotonous recitative* gradually developed into occasional modulations, and, in process of time, worked up to an ambitious form of *roulade*. An irregular form of chant, designated *cantillation*, was the primitive system of psalm-singing; and it is worthy of note that the modern Arabs recite the Koran in this manner.

Many elaborate essays have been written on Hebrew accents, but, unfortunately, it seems that these accents expressed both the *interval*, or movement of the voice, and also the *melodic succession* of notes, with an array of embellishment. Moreover, as Sir John Stainer says, "some of the vowel accents of Hebrew became tonal accents if placed in a particular place with regard to the letters forming the words," which, of course, increases our difficulty in attempting any translation. As is well known, the Hebrews utilized poetry and music as a sort of medium for religious worship, whereas the Greeks cultivated music and the kindred arts solely for arts sake—and thereby evolved an ideal mythological world.

Most musicians are now agreed that the early Christian musical system was not altogether founded on the Greek *modes*, as, apart from other arguments, the ecclesiastical modes could in no wise be accommodated to Pythagorean tonality. Moreover, for over three hundred years, the early Christians, that is, the Christians of the Catacombs, could not possibly have any ornate form of service; and the music of that period must needs have been of a primitive nature.

Dr. W. H. Cummings, one of the most eminent living English musicians, thus writes: "I believe the Irish had the diatonic scale as we have it to-day. It was the advent of the Church scales which supplanted that beautiful scale." More recently, Father Bewerunge, Professor of Ecclesiastical Chant in Maynooth College, expresses his conviction as follows:—

"It is thought that the old Irish melodies contain within them the germ that may be developed into a fresh luxuriant growth of Irish music. Now, *the Irish melodies belong to a stage of musical development very much anterior to that of Gregorian chant. Being based fundamentally on a pentatonic scale, they reach back to a period altogether previous to the dawn of musical history*."[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/I.php#503)

On Easter Sunday, 433, Duththach (Duffy) MacLugair, chief bard of Ireland, gave his adhesion to the tenets of Christianity, as propounded by St. Patrick; and soon after, the Irish minstrels, almost to a man, imitated his noble example. However, so far from the ecclesiastical chant introduced by St. Patrick in aught affecting the music of ancient Erin, it was exactly vice versa. O'Curry, Dr. Sullivan, Archbishop Healy, and others are in error when they assert that Gregorian chant coloured much of the music in Ireland from the fifth to the eighth century. As a matter of fact, "Gregorian" music only dates from the year 593; and it was the *Gallic* (some say *Ambrosian*) chant which St. Patrick taught.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/I.php#504) Even assuming that the *plain song* of St. Gregory reached Ireland about the year 620, which is improbable, Irish psalmody and hymnody were distinctly *Celtic* in the first half of the seventh century, and were mainly "adaptations" of the old Irish pre-Christian melodies.

**END OF CHAPTER I**.

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**NOTES**

[1] See "Ogham Readings," *Journal* R.S.A , 1857, p. 328.

[2] As regards the absurd theory that St. Patrick introduced letters into Ireland, it is only necessary to quote Colgan, the venerable hagiologist, who tells us that Dubhthach MacLugair, Arch-Poet of Ireland, had taught St. Fiacc of Sletty, and "had sent him a little before into Connaught *to present some of his poems to the princes of that country*." St Patrick may possibly have introduced the Roman letters but it must be borne in mind that the pre-Patrician Irish had their *Irish* alphabet centuries previously.

[3] *New Ireland Review*, March, 1900.

[4] The learned Usher informs us that "St. Jerome affirmed that Mark the Evangelist *chanted as the Scots do*," etc

**Irish Music from the 6th to the 9th Century**

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**Chapter II**.

THE *Carmen Paschale* of our Irish Sedulius (Shiel), written in the fifth century, was, according to Dr. Sigerson, "the first great Christian epic worthy of the name," the Latin metre of which is decidedly Irish in its characteristics. But, from a musical point of view, the beautiful *Introit* of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin—"Salve Sancta Parens enixa puerpera Regem," which is still sung throughout the Western Church, is the most glowing tribute to the estimation in which this worthy Irishman's compositions were held by the compilers of the Roman Missal and Gradual. Again, in the Roman Liturgy we find our Irish composer's abecedarian hymn commencing "A Solis ortus cardine"; and, as Dr. Healy writes, "several other expressions in the Divine Office are borrowed from the *Carmen Paschale* of Sedulius."

Some critics have, as might be supposed, questioned the *nationality* of Sedulius (for there is no contrary opinion as to the *authenticity* of his writings), but this point is set at rest by another Irish scholar of European fame, Dicuil the Geographer. This Dicuil, who flourished about the year 795, wrote a celebrated treatise *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum*, and, in the second section of his fifth chapter, he quotes twelve poetical lines from Theodosius, regarding which he observes that the faulty prosody had the authority of Virgil, "*whom in similar cases our own Sedulius imitated*." Needless to add that the mention of "*noster Sedulius*" by Dicuil, fellow-countryman of the Christian Virgil, should be held as conclusive.

In 544, Amergin MacAmalgaid mentions the Irish Harp; and, at one Feis there were over a thousand bards present—each *ollamh* having thirty bards in his train. It is interesting to notice that the last *Feis* at Tara was held by Dermot MacFergus, in 560. As a result of the Synod of Drumceat, near Limavady, in 590, the chief minstrels were prohibited from pursuing the nomadic life they had previously been leading, and were assigned apartments in the mansion houses of the princes and chiefs.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/II.php#501) The *Annals of Ulster* chronicle the death ot Ailill the Harper, son of Aedh Slaine, who was killed in the year 634.

Another early reference to the Irish Harp is in a distich on the death of St. Columba (*d*. 596), wherein we read of a "song of the *Cruit* without a *ceis*," that is, "a harp-melody without a harp-fastener [*ceis*]," or an air played on an untuned harp. Regarding our Irish *cruit* Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, Bart., Mus. Doc., says:—"*From its very construction we must assume that Harmony was known to the ancient Irish*." Moreover, the Irish Harmony was distinctly in advance of Hucbald's (840-930), which only allowed fourths, and fifths, and octaves, with occasional elevenths and twelfths, whereas the Celts admitted major and minor thirds as consonant intervals.

Not only were our ancestors acquainted with Harmony in the sixth century, but they had an acquaintance with discant or primitive counterpoint. From a passage in Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba* we gather that the Irish monks sang canticles in counterpoint. St. Adamnan uses the phrase "*modulabiliter decantare*," which clearly indicates discant; and, in the ancient Irish glosses of the eighth century "modulantibus" is glossed by *donaibhi bindigeddar*, that is, "to those who make melody." Hucbald, in the ninth century, describes organising as "modulatio." Furthermore, John Scotus Erigena, the world-famed Irish philosopher, who died *circ*. 875, is the first authority to allude to discant or organum, which subsequently developed into counterpoint. This he does in his tract *De Divisione Naturae* (864), as will be seen in Chapter VII.

In connection with the subject of ecclesiastical chant it is as well to emphasise the fact that whilst the Irish at the close of the sixth century had a form of music tablature, a knowledge of the diatonic scale, harmony, counterpoint, and musical form, the plain-song of Rome was in a very elementary stage, and was only known traditionally until collected and arranged in an *Antiphonarium* by Pope St. Gregory the Great, in 593. Dr. Haberl adds:—"Whether Pope Gregory made use of the letters of the alphabet or of symbols (points, accents, etc.) to designate the sounds is uncertain; but it is certain that whatever signs he adopted they were not adequate to determine the intervals with exactness." In fact, not a single authentic liturgical chant-book in existence goes back farther than the eighth century, or early in the ninth, as some assert.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/II.php#502)

All musical persons have read of the world-renowned monastery of St. Gall, in Switzerland, but the fact is too often ignored that its foundation, in the year 612, was the work of the Irish saint Cellach, whose name has been latinized *Gallus* or Gall. This great Irishman, a student of Bangor, Co. Down, the friend and disciple of St. Columbanus, died October 16th, 646, and, at his demise, the fame of his music-school became known far and near.

About the year 653, St. Gertrude, of Brabant (daughter of Pepin, Mayor of the Palace), abbess of Nivelle, in Brabant, sent for St. Foillan and St. Ultan, brothers of our celebrated St. Fursey (Patron of Perrone), *to teach psalmody to her nuns*. These two Irish monks complied with her request, and built an adjoining monastery at Fosse, in the diocese of Liege.

St. Mailduff, the Irish founder of Mailduffsburgh, or Malmesbury, in England, flourished in 670, and composed many beautiful hymns. He is best known as the tutor of St. Aldhelm, who tells us that the English students of his time flocked daily in great numbers to the schools of Ireland "of unspeakable excellence," and that Erin, "synonymous with learning, literally blazed like the stars of the firmament with the glory of her scholars."

Davey, in his *History of English Music*, mentions, with pardonable pride, the fact that St. Aldhelm (d. 709) is the first English writer who alludes to *neums*, or musical notation signs, but he conveniently ignores the equally well-known fact that the illustrious Saxon saint owed his knowledge of neumatic music tablature and liturgical chant to our countryman, St. Mailduff.

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**NOTES**

[1] At this Synod, according to Dallan Forgail, were: "Twenty Bishops, two score priests, fifty deacons, and thirty students;" and he adds that the Bishops and priests were "of excellence and worth," and were famed for "singing psalms—a commendable practice."

[2] Gevaert adds:—"The compilation and composition of the liturgical chants traditionally ascribed to St. Gregory is, in truth, a work of the Hellenic Popes, at the end of the seventh an

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In regard to the so-called Gregorian *Sacramentarium* which Pope Adrian sent to the Emperor Charlemagne by John, Abbot of Ravenna, between the years 788 and 790, Dr. Haberl, one of the greatest living authorities on Church Music, says that "it was altered in the copying, and Gallican elements were introduced." Moreover, it contained only the Roman Station-festivals, *with additions made by Popes that came after Gregory*," so that Duchesne justly observes that "it should rather be called the *Sacramentarium Hadrianum*." The Pope also sent two famous Roman singers, Peter and Romanus (author of the Romanian notation) to the Irish monastery at St. Gall's, who brought with them a faithful copy of the Gregorian *Antiphonarium*, but Duchesne considers that this great musical work was also altered by the monks of St. Gall. In any case, owing to the very imperfect method of notation by *neums* (which really were only aids to memory, or a form of mnemonics to indicate the rendition of the liturgical chant as taught orally), it is only within the past ten years that a scientific attempt to solve the puzzles of neum-accents has been made by the learned Benedictine monks of Solesmes. Certain it is, however, that the Celtic monks, from the time of Sedulius, unquestionably introduced and composed many original melodies for the early plain-chant books, and these musical arrangements were afterwards retained in the service of the Church. As a matter of fact, the name *Cantus Gregorianus*, or Gregorian Chant, is first mentioned in the first half of the eleventh century, by William of Hirschau, who died July 5th, 1091.

Dungal, an Irish monk, who founded a great school at Pavia, was a particular friend of the Emperor Charlemagne, and at his death, at Bobbio, in 834, he bequeathed to that Irish monastery his library, including *three fine Antiphonaries*, which are now in the Ambrosian Library of Milan.

In reference to St. Gall's, Ekkhard, the historian of the monastery of St. Gall's, who wrote in the earlier part of the eleventh century (1036), says:—"Moengal came from Rome to the Abbey of St. Gall in company with his uncle Mark, *to visit their countryman Grimoald*, who was elected Abbot of that monastery about the year 840." This testimony of a distinguished German historian is convincing as to the nationality of Grimoald, Abbot of St. Gall's, and also of Mark and Moengal. Were it not for such an authority, some persons would be very sceptical as to the fact of any Irishman rejoicing in the seemingly German name of Grimoald. It is as well to explain—even to the Irish reader—that many of our countrymen who went abroad were "re-christened," inasmuch as the Irish Christian names—to say nothing of surnames—were not sufficiently intelligible or euphonious for Continental taste. Therefore, do we find *Moengal* figuring as Marcellus, just as *Maelmuire* appears as Marianus and Mylerus; *Maelmaedhog* as Malachy; *Gillaisu* and *Cellach* as Gelasius; *Gilla in Coimded* as Germanus; *Tuathal* as Tutilo; *Donal* as Donatus; *Aedh* as Aidan and Hugh, etc.

In the year 870, the above-mentioned Moengal (Marcellus) was appointed head master of the Music School of St. Gall's, under whose rule it became "the wonder and delight of Europe." "The copying of music became such a feature of the work done at St. Gall's that the scribes of this monastery," as Matthew writes in his *History of Music*, "provided all Germany with MS. books of Gregorian Chant, all beautifully illuminated." Moengal died September 30th, 890, and had as his successor his favourite Irish disciple Tuathal, whose name is Latinized Tutilo.

Tuathal, or Tutilo, was even more famous than his master Moengal, and was not only a wonderful musician, but was also famed as a poet, orator, painter, goldsmith, builder, and sculptor. We are told that he was a skilled performer on the *Cruit* and the *Psaltery*. Père Schubiger published many of the *Tropes* composed by Tutilo, two of which, "Hodie cantandus," and "Omnipotens Genitor," betray all the well-known characteristics of Irish music. This marvellous Irish monk died at an advanced age, on the 27th of April, 915.

Although music was the great feature of St. Gall's, literature was by no means neglected—in fact, to the Irish scribes of St. Gall's we owe the preservation of priceless manuscripts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. It was mainly from the glosses of the Irish MSS. at St. Gall's, dating from 650-900, that Zeuss deduced the rules which formed the basis of his *Grammatica Celtica*, in 1853. *Inter alia*, these glosses incontestably proved that part-singing was known to the Irish of the seventh century. Dr. Sigerson in his *Bards of the Gael and Gall*, gives us a charming translation of "The Blackbird's Song," written in Irish by an Irish monk of St. Gall's about the year 855, and published by Nigra in 1872.

O'Curry says that we have Irish lyrics of the ninth century which will sing to some of our old tunes; and, he quotes a boat-song by Cormac MacCullenan, Prince-Bishop of Cashel, who died in 908, which would seem to have been written for the melody of "For Ireland I would not tell her name"—"Ar Éirinn 'ní neórainn cé hí." Let me add that the first Ode of Horace sings admirably to the Irish melody "Táimre am codla 'r na duirig me," as pointed out by a writer in the London *Sun*, of October 18th, 1844.

The *Liber Ymnorum Notkeri*, one of the most ancient MSS. belonging to St. Gall's, is fully "noted," and was illuminated by an Irish scribe. Dr, W. K. Sullivan says that "the initial letter of the Easter Sequence, commencing 'Laudes Salvatori voce modulemur supplici,' is an excellent example of the interlaced Irish style of ornament, with the interesting peculiarity that the trefoil or shamrock is used as a prominent feature of it."

St. Notker Balbulus, the author of this valuable book of hymns, about the year 870, shed undying lustre on the music school of St. Gall's, but he is best known to students of liturgy as the inventor of *Sequences*. I may add that Sequences were also called *Tropes*, just as Tropes, properly so-called, were denominated Proses. Although the original meaning of Sequence was a prolongation of the last syllable of *Alleluia* by a series of neumes, jubili, or wordless chant, yet the name was more generally given to a melody *following the Epistle*, before the Gospel. We need only refer to an ancient Irish authority quoted in the *Book of Lismore* for an explanation of the term *Sequence*; and it is added that "Notker, Abbot of St. Gall's, made [invented] sequences, and Alleluia after them in the form in which they are." In process of time a special Sequence was introduced for every Sunday and feast-day, but Pope Pius V. eliminated all but five.

# Irish Music from the 6th to the 9th Century

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter II**....*concluded*

Among the numerous Sequences composed by St. Notker is the famous one on the Bridge, the "*Antiphona de morte*," commencing *Media vita in morte sumus*—" In the midst of life we are in death"—which was almost immediately adopted throughout Europe as a funeral anthem. Not unfrequently are the words "In the midst of life we are in death," quoted as Scriptural, but the text is only one of the many contributions to the Sacred Liturgy due to Irish writers and composers.

NOTE.—This exquisite *Responsorium*, also called *Antiphona de Morte*, from the fact of having been the favourite "anthem" sung at all "offices for the dead" during the Middle Ages, was suggested to Blessed Notker *balbulus* (the stammerer) by his Irish master, Moengal, or Marcellus, about the year 870. Not only was it superstitiously supposed to be a preservative against death, but the singing of it was believed by many to cause death; and hence, the Council of Cologne, in the twelfth century, forbade the chanting of "Media Vita" without the express permission of the Ordinary of the diocese. The neum-accents merely served as a mnemonic guide for the precentor or choirmaster, showing the number of notes to be sung and the manner of grouping them, but leaving the interpretation as to exact intervals and phrasing to the Cantor, who was required to know all the liturgical chants "in theca cordis." St. Notker also elucidated the "Romanian" signs as taught by Romanus, in 795, as we learn from a letter of his, in a manuscript of the thirteenth century, preserved at St. Thomas's, Leipzig. The earliest known theoretical treatise on church music was by a priest, Aurelian of Réomé, in his *Musica Disciplina* (850), who described the system as devised for the Western Church by Pope St. Agatho (678-682). St Notker died a centenarian on April 6th, 912.

But why dwell longer on St. Gall's. All Europe must acknowledge its indebtedness to Ireland more or less. The learned Kessel, writing of our Irish monks, says:—

"Every province in Germany proclaims this race as its benefactor. Austria celebrates St. Colman, St. Virgilius, St. Modestus, and others. To whom but to the ancient Scots [Irish] was due the famous 'Schottenkloster' of Vienna? Salsburg, Ratisbon, and all Bavaria honour St. Virgilius as their apostle. . . . Burgundy, Alsace, Helvetia, Suevia, with one voice proclaim the glory of Columbanus, Gall, Fridolin, Arbogast, Florentius, Trudpert, who first preached the true religion amongst them. Who were the founders of the monasteries of St. Thomas at Strasburg, and of St. Nicholas at Memmingen, but these same Scots? . . . The Saxons and the tribes of Northern Germany are indebted to them to an extent which may be judged by the fact that the first ten Bishops who occupied the See of Verden belonged to that race."

I have now reached the limit of the present section, namely, the close of the ninth century. The reader has seen that the ancient Irish were acquainted with the ogham music tablature in pre-Christian ages; they had their battle-marches, dance tunes, folk songs, chants. and hymns in the fifth century; they were the earliest to adopt the *neums* or neumatic notation, for the plain chant of the Western Church; they modified, and introduced Irish melodies into, the Gregorian Chant; they had an intimate acquaintance with the diatonic scale long before it was perfected by Guido of Arezzo; they were the first to employ harmony and counterpoint; they had quite an army of bards and poets; they employed blank verse, elegaic rhymes, consonant, assonant, inverse, burthen, dissyllabic, trisyllabic, and quadrisyllabic rhymes, not to say anything of *caoines*, laments, elegies, metrical romances, etc.; they invented the musical arrangement which developed into the sonata form; they had a world-famed school of harpers; and, finally, they generously diffused musical knowledge all over Europe

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**Ancient Irish Musical Instruments**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter III**

THE subject of ancient Irish musical instruments is involved in much obscurity, which has been intensified by the absurd theories of archaeologists about a century ago. Walker, whose book on the Irish bards was published in 1786, was, unfortunately, misled by Beauford and others; and no writer tackled the question properly till O'Curry's *Lectures* made Irishmen feel that a knowledge of the Gaelic language was absolutely essential for the elucidation of this and kindred knotty points.

Zeuss's *Grammatica Celtica* (1853) was the first book to give a real clue to the nature of many old Irish instruments; and the musical references were taken from the glosses written by the Irish monks of St. Gall's, which commentaries make the basis of this epoch-making work. These glosses, as mentioned in the first chapter, date from 650 to 900, and are without any doubt the earliest MSS. we possess which throw light on various musical allusions. However, it remained for O'Curry to present the clearest and most succinct account of references to music, scattered as they had previously been in a very fragmentary way throughout the hundreds of ancient Irish manuscripts critically examined by that much-lamented Gaelic scholar.

To the reader who wishes for an exhaustive account of ancient Irish musical instruments, I can unhesitatingly recommend O'Curry's admirable *Lectures*, though I do not acquiesce in some of his opinions. Were that eminent Celticist now alive, he himself would have altered not a few of the conclusions arrived at; but, all the same, his list of the instruments played on in pre-Norman days, as recorded in the oldest Irish MSS., is very interesting. Recent Celtic scholarship, especially by German, French, and Irish writers, has been freely availed of in collating the various passages quoted by O'Curry, and I have summarised his list, with some necessary modifications, as follows:—

1. *Cruit* and *Clairseach* [harp]; 2. *Psalterium, Nabla, Timpan, Kinnor, Trigonon*, and *Ocht-tedach* [stringed instruments]; 3. *Buinne* [oboe or flute]; 4. *Bennbuabhal* and *Corn* [horns]; 5. *Cuislenna* [bag-pipes]; 6. *Feadan* [flute or fife]; 7. *Guthbuinne* [horn]; 8. *Stoc* and *Sturgan* [trumpets]; 9. *Pipai* [pipes]; 10. *Craebh ciuil* and *Crann ciuil* [musical branch or cymbalum]; 11. *Cnamha* [castanets]; 12. *Fidil*.

Omitting the 10th and 11th, which, after all, were not musical instruments in the restricted sense, we thus find nine instruments in general use among the ancient Irish. The professional names of the various performers were:—

1. *Cruitire* [harper]; 2. *Timpanach* [timpanist]; 3. *Buinnire* [flute player]; 4. *Cornaire* [horn player]; 5. *Cuisleannach* [player on the bag-pipes]; 6. *Fedanach* [fife player]; 7. *Graice* [horn player]; 8. *Stocaire* and *Sturganaidhe* [trumpeter]; 9. *Pipaire* [piper].

The CRUIT is called *crwth* by the Welsh, and *crowde* by the English. Originally a small harp or lyre, plucked with the fingers (as in the case of the Roman fidicula), it was subsequently played with a bow, and is mentioned by an Irish poet who flourished about four hundred years before Christ. It is justly regarded as the progenitor of the *Crotta*, the German *Rotte*, and the Italian *Rota*. St. Venantius Fortunatus (the great Christian poet, A.D. 530-609) calls the Cruit a CROTTA; and we learn from Gerbert that it was an oblong-shaped instrument, with a neck and finger-board, having six strings, of which four were placed on the fingerboard and two outside it—the two *open* strings representing treble *G*, with its lower octave. In fact, it was a small harp, and was generally played resting on the knee, or sometimes placed on a table before the performer, after the manner of the zither.

The CLAIRSEACH was the large harp, "the festive or heroic harp of the chiefs and ladies, as also of the bards," having from 29 to 58 strings, and even 60, but as a rule 30 strings. Its normal compass was from *CC* (the lowest string on the violoncello) to *D*, in all 30 notes, that is, about four octaves. It was generally tuned in the scale of *G*, but, by alteration of one string a semitone (effected by means of the *ceis* or harp fastener), the key might be changed to *C* or *D*. "In those keys the diatonic scale was perfect and complete, similar to ours now in use." It may also be added that the ancient Irish played the treble with the left hand, and the bass with the right.

Among early representations of the Irish harp we find one in a MS. of St. Blaise, quoted by Gerbert, dating from the close of the ninth century Another one is on the panel of a sculptured cross at Ullard, Co. Kilkenny, dating from the tenth century, and which, as Dr. Petrie points out, is "the first specimen of the harp without a fore-pillar that has hitherto been found outside of Egypt."[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III.php#501) Sir Samuel Ferguson refers to the appearance of a harp on the cover of an Irish manuscript of the eleventh century, preserved in the Stowe Library, which harp has a fore-pillar and sounding board. There is also a drawing of a harp of 29 strings on a relic-case containing the *Fiacail Phadraig* (tooth of St. Patrick), formerly belonging to Sir Valentine Blake, of Galway, dated 1350. This shrine-case was ornamented by Thomas, 8th Baron of Athenry, who died in 1376, and it was acquired fifty years ago by Sir William Stokes, father of the late eminent surgeon of that name.

The so-called "Brian Boru's Harp," though not dating from the time when the hero of Clontarf flourished, has a venerable antiquity, and was almost certainly a harp of the O'Briens. It really dates from about the year 1220, having been made for the famous Donnchadh Cairbre O'Brien, King of Thomond, whose death is recorded on the 8th March, 1242-43. A detailed account of its workmanship is given by Petrie and other writers; and it is here sufficient to mention that it is furnished with 30 metallic strings, having a compass from *C* below the bass stave to *D* above the treble stave.

One of the most veracious of Irish chroniclers, Tighernach, who died in 1088, has preserved for us a poem, dating from 620, wherein the Irish harp is extolled. Walker says that "the *cionnar cruit*, or *Kinnor*, had ten strings, and was played on with a bow or plectrum." He describes it as "similar to the *canora cythara* of the Latins of the Middle Ages, and the origin of the modern guitar." Another form of *cruit* was the *creamthine cruit*, which the same author tells us was "the *crwth* of the Welsh," and is said to be the parent of the violin, "but having only six strings." We also have a record of the *Fiddle* being used in Ireland as early as the eighth century, as is quoted by O'Curry from the poem on the Fair of Carman. In regard to the very favourite and oft-quoted instrument known as a *timpan*, it has been variously explained as a drum, or a sort of tambourine, whilst an Anglo-Saxon MS. makes it equivalent to a bagpipe! Dr. W. K, Sullivan cautiously tells us (relying on the authority of Dr. Charles O'Connor) that it "was a bowed instrument," whilst the credulous Walker gravely assures us that "a Timpanist [player on the timpan] was simply a musical conductor."

The *timpan* was, in reality, a small stringed instrument, having from three to eight strings, and was played with a bow or plectrum, being also called a *benn crot*, or peaked harp, by an ancient Irish writer. Recent research has almost conclusively proved that the *Kinnor* and the *Trigonon*, or three-stringed *timpan*, are identical, whilst the *Nabla*, or *Psalterium*—a favourite Celtic instrument from the seventh to the eleventh century—was generally of eight strings, and hence called the *Ocht-tedach*, or the eight-stringed.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III.php#502) We meet with constant allusions in the old annalists to *timpans* and *timpanists*; and a skilful performer on the timpan was held in the highest esteem.

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**NOTES**

[1] There are still preserved Egyptian harps dating from B.C. 2000, but it was during the rule of Rameses II , *cir*. B.C. 1284, that the harp, from being triangular shaped, assumed its present form. The Egyptians had various other instruments, such as the lyre, single and double flutes, trumpets, timbrels, sistra, etc. Harps are sculptured on the High Crosses of Monasterboice and Castledermot—not later than the 10th century.

[2] Euclid, a name dear to the heart of most schoolboys, tells us that Terpander (who founded the celebrated Lesbian School where Sappho was taught), about the year B. C. 670, invented a new system of musical notation, and extended the tetrachordal lyre to one of seven strings, known as the heptachordal lyre. The Nabla is described in an old Irish tract as "a ten-stringed cruit"; and St. Isidore says that "there are ten chords used in the Hebrew Psalterium, from the number of the Decalogue."

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**Chapter III**...*concluded*

Let me here mention a comparatively unknown item of musical history in regard to Irish surnames. The CURTIN (MacCurtin) family is so named from a hereditary skill on the *cruit*; whilst the family names TUMPANE and TUMPANY are derived from a musical ancestry—famous *timpanists*, or performers on the *timpan*. The music of this latter instrument was generally known as a *dump*; and various dumps are to be met with in MS. music books of the sixteenth century. A similar musical origin is traced for the surnames Harper, Piper, Fiddler, etc., whilst the family of MACCROSSAN (now Englished CROSBIE) are so-called from the Irish word *Crossan*—a travelling musical comedian. The CRONINS or CRONANS are in like manner designated from a family of street singers.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III-2.php#501)

The *Buinne* was a primitive oboe, or a flute, and it is glossed by Zeuss as equivalent to *tibia*. O'Curry equates it with "trumpet in the shape of a horn," whilst Dr. O'Sullivan says that it is the Romance *Buisine*, or Bassoon, but I am more inclined to the view of the eighth-century Irish monks, which makes it a sort of pipe, or flute, or *cambucus* (crooked flute, as it is styled by Archbishop Kilwarby, in 1275). Moreover, we read that the Irish were wont to sing to the accompaniment of the *cruit* or the *buinne*, which renders it most probable that this latter was a delicate instrument of the flute genus. In a poem by William de Machault, a writer of the fourteenth century, there is a reference to our Irish *buinne* as "La flaute bretaigne," which, in English, was given the name of "Recorder," or "Flute a Bec."

In the twelfth-century manuscripts we meet with allusions to the *bennbuabhal*, a horn of a very resonant character, and *corn* (Chaucer's "corn pipe," and the Welsh "pibcorn,"[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III-2.php#502)) which were horn-pipes. From the Irish *corn-pipe* came the instrument (as also the dance) called hornpipe, which instrument survived till the seventeenth century. As we have the hornpipe dances called from the *horn-pipe*, so we have the jig dance from the *geige* or *fidil*. The term "lilt" is from *lilt-pipe*, a form of shepherd's pipe—in fact a simple reed—replaced in after days by the human voice singing the syllables *la la la* to the tune—and hence called "lilting" a tune. Chaucer writes thus in his *House of Fame*:—

"Many a flower and *liltyng horne*,  
And pipes made of greene corne."

The *Guthbuinne* was also a horn, but more of the bassoon character. (Compare the "gait-horn" and the "wayt" or oboe.) Of course there is no difficulty in identifying the *feadan* with the fife; and O'Curry has given many references to it from ancient manuscripts. The *Stoc* and the *Sturgan* were forms of clarions or trumpets, though some authors assert that they were horns—whence the name "stock-horn." We learn from the Brehon Laws that cooks and *trumpeters* were to have a special supply of "cheering mead."

Although there is mention of the bagpipe in the Brehon Laws of the fifth century,[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III-2.php" \l "503) this instrument did not come into prominence until the eleventh century. Dr. W. K. Sullivan tells us that the old Irish bagpipe was inflated by the mouth, "and was in every respect the same as the Highland bagpipe of to-day." In the State Papers of the fourteenth century, the bagpipe is expressly termed "the music of the Irish Kernes."

One of the earliest drawings of this warlike instrument is in a MS. in the British Museum, dated 1300, describing the Irish who accompanied King Edward to Calais, in which manuscript there is an illuminated initial letter with the quaint device of "a pig, as gravely as possible, playing on the bagpipes." Lovers of mediaeval art will be interested in knowing that there is a splendid painting still preserved at Vienna of an Irish piper, by the celebrated Albrecht Dürer, dated 1514; and in Ferguson's *Dissertation* (in Bunting) there is an illustration of "a piper heading an irruption of the native Irish into the English Pale in the sixteenth century."

We are given by Stanihurst, in 1584, a most graphic description of the Irish bagpipes of his time, as follows: "The Irish, likewise, instead of the trumpet, make use of a wooden pipe of the most ingenious structure, to which is joined a leather bag, very closely bound with bands. A pipe is inserted in the side of this skin, through which the piper, *with his swollen neck and puffed-up cheeks, blows in the same manner as we do through a tube*. The skin, being thus filled with air, begins to swell, and *the player presses against it with his arm* [fore-arm]; thus a loud and shrill sound is produced through two wooden pipes of different lengths. In addition to these, *there is yet a fourth pipe, perforated in different places*, [having five or six holes], which the player so regulates by the dexterity of his fingers, in the shutting and opening of the holes, that he can cause the upper pipes to send forth either a loud or a low sound at pleasure."

Ullan Pipes and Cuisle Pipes are synonymous, according to Vallancey, inasmuch as Ullan is derived from *Uilleann* = elbow, whilst even in the last century pipers called their bellows *bolg cuisleann* = fore-arm bellows. Walker adds: "In Ullan Pipes we have, perhaps, the *woollen* Bagpipe of Shakespeare, to which he attributes an extraordinary effect" (*Merchant of Venice*, Act iv., scene 1). The late Professor Morley, in his *English Literature*, says: "The familiar presence of the bagpipe indicates a former Celtic occupation of the fens;" and he adds that "the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe is one of Falstaff's similes for melancholy." Other Shakesperian commentators assert that the "drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe" is not the music of that instrument, but is intended to typify "the croaking of frogs in the fen country." From the seventeenth century the Irish "Union" pipes were played as at present, that is, the wind being supplied by a bellows (worked by the forearm), just as were the *regal*, or *portative* organs, organs of that date.

Regarding the introduction of the organ into Ireland, Walker says that "there is no mention of an Organ in our Ecclesiastical History till the year 1641, at the Friary of Multifarnham," etc. This truly absurd statement will give the reader an idea of the value to be attached to many of the facts (?) detailed by Walker, and goes far to justify the strong language in which O'Curry denounces such charlatans on the subject of ancient musical history. Other writers have asserted that the earliest notices of the organ in Ireland date from about the middle of the fifteenth century; but recent research has shown that we can go back to the first decade of the ninth century for the use of "the king of instruments" in our lovely Hiberno-Romanesque churches.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III-2.php#504)

About the year 140, according to Optatian, the organs then in use had fifteen pipes, namely, fourteen notes for the seven modes, and one additional for the *Proslam-banomenos*, but, in A.D. 350, they were increased in size to twenty-six pipes. In the year 660, Pope Vitalian (657-672), as we learn from John the Deacon, introduced organs into the service of the Church; and they were soon adopted in the Irish Church, as also by the Anglo-Saxons. Under date of the year 814, in the *Annals of Ulster*, we read that the organ in the Church of Cluaincrema (Cloncraff, Co. Roscommon) suffered destruction by an accidental fire. It is almost unnecessary to add that the Irish word *orgán* (oircin) is a loan-word from the Latin *organum*; and *organum* in the Vulgate always means a pipe. Before the death of Charlemagne (814) the organs had fifty-two pipes, with two stops; and subsequently, many improvements and additions were made. During the Middle Ages it was the custom to designate the king of instruments as "a payre of organs,"[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III-2.php#505) a designation which obtained as late as the year 1680.

The next chapter will be appropriately devoted to a brief explanation of ancient Irish scales, and a summing-up of the characteristics of our old melodies.

**END OF CHAPTER III**.

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**NOTES**

[1] Similarly, the family name *Mac an Bhaird*, or Ward, which really means "son of the bard," is derivable from a bardic origin, just as the *Brehons* (who in some cases changed their names to *Judge*) are the descendants of Irish Judges.

[2] The "Pibcorn" was played in Wales till near the close of the eighteenth century.

[3] In one of the ancient Irish historic tales describing the palace of Da Derga at Bohernabreena (Bothar-na-Bruighne), it is stated that "nine pipers, who came from the fairy hills of Bregia," did honour to King Conaire, by their performances. Their names were Bind, Robind, Riarbind, Sihe, Dihe, Deichrind, Umal, Cumal, and Ciallglind, and they are styled "the best pipe-players in the whole world." In this tale the set of pipes is called *tinne*, whilst the band of pipers is named *cetharchoire*, indicating the four parts of the pipe.

[4] Walker also informs us that "the Irish harp received considerable improvements from the ingenuity of Robert Nugent, a Jesuit, in the 15th century [*sic*], who resided for some time in this Kingdom "Even assuming that *15th* is a slip for *16th*, Father Robert Nugent did not flourish till the 17th century. As is well known, the Jesuit Order was not founded till the year 1549 by St. Ignatius; and it was only in 1561 that Father David Wolfe, S.J., founded the Jesuit mission in Ireland.

[5] In the 14th century organ pipes were generally called "flutes," and hence the subsequent corruption of *flue* pipes for *flute* pipes. In 1667, Pepys, in his diary, under date of April 4th, alludes to "a fair pair of organs."

**Ancient Irish Scales**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter IV**

THE construction of the old Irish scales has afforded a wide field for the most conflicting theories. Even Dr. Sullivan, in his critical introduction to O'Curry, says that the Irish scales were "manifold, and often apparently quite arbitrary, so that the principles upon which they proceed are sometimes incomprehensible to us." Dr. James C. Culwick would have us believe that the Irish scales numbered 15, and he compares our old "gapped" scales to those of the Chinese, Russians, and Zuni Indians. Father Bewerunge, the most recent authority on this subject, only admits four modes namely, Doh, Ray, Soh and Lah.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IV.php#501)

From a long and careful study of some thousands of our ancient melodies, I have arrived at the conclusion that the old Irish scale was pentatonic, proceeding as follows: *C D EG AC*. By making each note in this first mode a tonic, or keynote, we naturally form four other modes—and thus we get five modes. These five are:—

1st. C  D  EG  AC  
2nd. D  EG  AC  D  
3rd. EG  AC  D  E  
4th. G  AC  D  EG  
5th. AC  D  EG  A

The notes *F* and *B* are studiously omitted, and the arrangement is made throughout these five modes so as not to include the fourth and seventh. This omission of F and B is largely the cause of the quaintness which characterises many of our oldest airs. Between the eighth and twelfth century, the missing, or absent notes of the above five scales were gradually supplied, and thus our ancient gapped scale became almost the self-same as five of the so-called Gregorian modes, namely:—

1. Intense Iastian.  
2. Æolian.  
3. Intense Hypolydian.  
4. Iastian.  
5. Relaxed Iastian.  
6. Hypolydian.  
7. Relaxed Hypolydian.  
8. Dorian.

The third Irish mode (omitting *F* and *B*) is the same as the Phrygian mode in the *E* to *E* scale, with naturals only.[2] However, I would especially call attention to the beauty of airs constructed in the fourth Irish mode, at least, the variant of it which obtained in the early Anglo-Irish period, when the really characteristic note of this lovely mode had become definitely fixed by the inclusion of the missing seventh, that is *F natural*. This mode being subsequently played and sung in the modern key of *G major* (which, of course, has *F* as an *essential sharp*), had to flatten the seventh in order to meet the tonality of the Irish modes, and thus the airs written in this fourth mode were said to have been the *flat seventh*. One of the very best examples of the airs written in this quaint mode is "An Maidrin Ruad" which Moore sadly mutilated in his "adaptation" of "Let Erin Remember"—a mutilation which extended not only to the character of the mode, or scale, but to the very rhythm, or time-period, of the tune. In the light of this explanation it is amusing to read of the *flat seventh* as "one of the most certain indications of an ancient Irish air"! Indeed, for well nigh two centuries, we have invariably one writer copying another as to the "ravishing effect of the flat seventh," ignoring the real truth that it is the modern scale which must needs flatten the seventh in order to equate itself with the old Irish scale of the fourth mode.

Another very popular delusion, which has been quoted *ad nauseam* by English and Irish writers, is the apparent use of the *minor* mode by the ancient Irish. One constantly meets with allusions to the "grand old air in a plaintive minor scale," or to "a captivating ballad in a minor key, so characteristic of old Irish melodies," etc. As a matter of fact, some of our liveliest and most inspiriting dance tunes are in what one would call the modern minor key, whilst many *caoines* and dirges are in the major scale. Strange as it may seem, there is a vein of melancholy or tenderness throughout all our old tunes, which character is derivable from the peculiarity of scale construction. This is equally true of our hymns, folk-songs, battle-marches, jigs, cradle-songs, elegies, drinking-songs, etc.; and Moore has hit it off very aptly in his exquisite lyric, "Dear Harp of my Country," when he sings:—

"But so oft hast thou echoed the deep sigh of sadness,  
That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still."

According to Walker, the ancient Irish cultivated three species of musical composition, answering to the *three* modes (the Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian) which the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians, namely, the *Goltraighe*, the *Geantraighe*, and the *Suantraighe*. Hardiman also writes:—"Among the ancient Irish the principal species of musical composition was termed *Avantrireach*. It consisted of three parts—*Geantraighe*, which excited to love; *Goltraighe*, which stimulated to valour and feats of arms; and *Suantraighe*, which disposed to rest and sleep." I may add that the Irish affix, *draiocht*, or *traighe*, means a mode or measure. The ancient *Gol*, which dates from the remotest period, was a distinctive lamentation air; and each province had its own *Gol*. Walker prints the four ancient Lamentation Cries for Connaught, Munster, Leinster, and Ulster. Petrie informs us that "the *Gol* answers exactly to the rhythm and cadence of those words, which are recorded, in the *Book of Ballymote*, to have been sung over the grave of a king of Ossory, in the tenth century." Numerous *Suantraighes* are still preserved, better known as "Irish Lullabys," but the *Geantraighe* has more or less disappeared.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IV.php#503)

Mr. Alfred Perceval Graves says:—"Ireland was the school of music for the Celts of Great Britain during the Middle Ages, and *her minstrelsy remained unrivalled* until the Irish Bard, famous for 'the three feats' of solemn [*goltraighe*], gay, [*geantraighe*], and sleep-compelling music [*suantraighe*], degenerated under the stress of the internecine conflict between Saxon and Gael in Ireland, into the strolling minstrel, and finally into the street ballad-singer."

Numerous dissertations have been written on the characteristics of Irish music, but as a nutshell summing up of the whole question, it may briefly be stated that nearly all our ancient tunes are of symmetrically short construction, having the emphatic major sixth, and the thrice-repeated final cadence (the thrice-struck tonic at the close)—and with an undercurrent of tenderness, even in the sprightliest tunes. Apart from an artistic construction peculiarly Celtic, there is an undefinable charm about our ancient melodies that cannot be mathematically expounded. Sir William Stokes, in his *Life of Petrie*, thus writes:—

"It was Petrie's opinion that the music of Ireland stands pre-eminent among that of the other Celtic nations in beauty and power of expression, especially in her *caoines*, her lamentations, and her love-songs; the latter, by their strange fitfulness, and sudden transitions from gladness to pathos and longing, are marked with a character peculiarly her own. It may well be supposed that some of these delightful tunes are accompanied by songs of corresponding simplicity and pathos."

Petrie himself thus writes regarding our ancient folksongs, and his description of their construction is applicable to numerous old melodies:—

"These melodies are all in triple or three-four time, and consist of two parts, or strains, of eight bars each, and the same number of phrases, divided into two sections. Of these sections, the second of the first part is, generally, a repetition—sometimes, however, slightly modified—of the section preceding; and the second section of the second part is usually a repetition of the second section of the first part—sometimes also modified in the first, or even the first and second phrases—but as usual in all Irish melodies, always agreeing with it in its closing cadence."

Taken in general, from a technical point of view, the ancient Irish can claim the credit of inventing musical "form"—in fact the germ which developed into the Sonata form. Dr. Pearce, no doubt, wishes us to believe that the latter development is due to the thirteenth century Wolfenbuttel melody of the Christmas hymn: *Corde natus ex Parentis*. However, there is not a shadow of doubt that we have Irish tunes long before this period—certainly before the Anglo-Norman invasion —which are characterised emphatically by an artistically constructed ternary or three-phrase arrangement, that is, a phrase of four bars, not unfrequentiy repeated, followed by an apparent modulation. Sometimes we meet with phrases of seven bars, namely, of four bars and three bars alternately; whilst a rather unusual rhythm is also to be met with, consisting of four sections of five bars each, each section being barred according to modern ideas into equal or unequal phrases of two bars and three bars. A not unfrequent form of rhythm is nine-eight; and we meet with numerous tunes constructed on the principle of four sections of two bars each in nine-eight time The jigs in nine-eight time are known as Hop Jigs, Slip Jigs, or Slip Time, and, at Hudson remarks, are "the most ancient, as well as in general the most effective."

But here it may be objected that probably our ancient Irish music was not of a high order, according to the canons of modern criticism. To this I shall briefly answer by quoting five unquestionable authorities.

(1.) Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, Mus. Doc., acknowledges that "long before Norman influence was brought to bear on native art, there existed in Ireland traditional melodies, the origin of which is lost in antiquity." (2.) Sir Hubert Parry, after an exhaustive examination of about three thousand tunes in various collections, gives it as his opinion that "Irish folk music is probably *the most human, most varied, most poetical in the world*, and is particularly rich in tunes which imply considerable sympathetic sensitiveness." (3.) Sir Alexander MacKenzie writes in an equally eulogistic strain. (4.) Chappell, who was particularly biassed in favour of English music, avows the "exquisite beauty" of our old tunes; and (5.) the late Brinley Richards was enraptured with "their individuality and tenderness." It is unnecessary to quote the eulogies of Handel, Beethoven, Berlioz, Pleyel, Haydn, and other great masters.

Our own Moore rather ignorantly alludes to the comparatively modern date of many of our "ancient" melodies, the origin of which he is pleased to reckon as "dating no farther back than the last [eighteenth] disgraceful century." In his later years the "bard of Ireland" grudgingly admitted to Dr. Petrie that he was mistaken in his previous views, and he acknowledged that "*the date of those airs is much more ancient*" than he had stated. This admission, however, is not to be found in the various editions of the *Melodies*. However, as Renehan points out, Moore, in his *History of Ireland* (1840) admits "the superior excellence of the music of Ireland *before the English invasion*." Recent research has more than vindicated the undoubted claim of ancient Erin to the possession of the loveliest airs in the world.

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**NOTES**

[1] See *New Ireland Review*, for June, 1903.

[2] Mr Fuller Maitland, in January, 1904, in an admirable lecture on Folk Music, quoted examples of the Dorian (D) mode, and also of the Ionian (C), Lydian (F) and Mixolydian modes, from the Petrie Collection.

[3] The commentator of the meeting at Dromceat by Dallan Forgall, preserved in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, says that "it was a cruit without any one of three tunings (*Glesa*) which served to Craiftine the harper, namely, Suantraighe, Goltraighe, and Geantraighe, for the sleeping, the crying, and the laughing modes."

**Irish Music before the Anglo-Norman Invasion**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter V**

ALTHOUGH in ancient Erin, from the ninth to the middle of the eleventh century, the Danish incursions, as well as internecine conflicts, were serious obstacles to the cultivation of music, yet this very period was one of the greatest lustre for Irish music on the Continent. Of course, there are not wanting a few zealots who would fain have us believe that the Norsemen actually contributed to the preservation of churches and monasteries and schools in Ireland. It is strange to find Dr. Sigerson, in his otherwise excellent book, *The Bards of the Gael and Gall*, enunciating and upholding these peculiar views in reference to the Norsemen as regards Irish literature and music.

All our ancient chronicles are at one in describing the terrible vandalism committed by the Danes in the island of saints and scholars. Keating distinctly assures us that the Norsemen sought to destroy all learning and art in Ireland. His words are most emphatic:—"No scholars, no clerics, no books, no holy relics, were left in church or monastery through dread of them. *Neither bard, nor philosopher, nor musician, pursued his wonted Profession in the land*."

To come to concrete examples, we are told that "Brian Boru's March" and "The Cruiskeen Lawn" are good specimens of "Scandinavian music." This statement is quite erroneous. Both of these airs are genuinely Irish in construction, though I gravely doubt whether either of them dates from the Norse period, or even from mediaeval days.

Despite the troubled condition of Ireland during these two or three centuries, as Dr. Douglas Hyde writes, "she produced a large number of poets and scholars, the impulse given by the enthusiam of the sixth and seventh centuries being still strong upon her." Among the distinguished bards of the tenth century was Flann Mac Lonain. In one of his eight poems that have come down to our days he describes a harper called Ilbrechtach, of Slieve Aughty, near Kinalehin.

King Brian, ere his sad death at the glorious victory of Clontarf, in 1014. did a great deal towards repairing the ravages wrought during three centuries. According to the "Wars of the Gael with the Gall," a valuable manuscript that was written during the first quarter of the eleventh century, Brian "sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge," but he was compelled "*to buy books beyond the sea and the great ocean, because the writings and books of the churches and sanctuaries had been burned and drowned by the plunderers*."

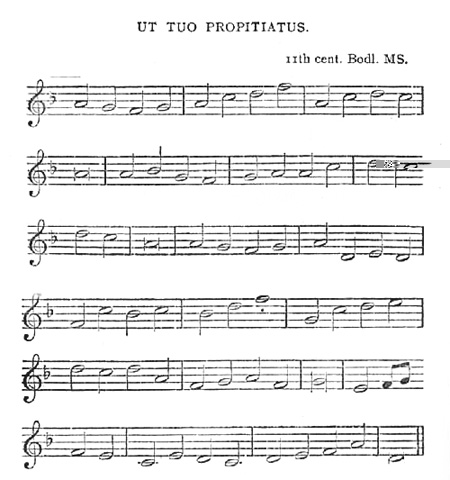
Whilst we must for ever lament the destruction of our ancient literary and musical manuscripts by the Norsemen, it is gratifying to know that some few musical treasures, written by Irish monks, still remain on the continent. Only to quote one instance, at Zurich, in the library of the Antiquarian Society, may yet be seen a fragment of an Irish *Sacramentarium* and *Antiphonarium*.

Our Irish St. Helias, a native of Monaghan, was elected Abbot of Cologne, in Germany, in 1015. He was the bosom friend of St. Heribert, and ruled the two monasteries of St. Martin's and St. Pantaleon's, from 1015 to 1040. Mabillon tells us that not only was St. Helias a most distinguished musician, but that he was "*the first to introduce the Roman chant to Cologne*,"[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/V.php#501) and he is, most probably, "the stranger and pilgrim" to whom Berno of Riechenau dedicated his well-known musical work, "The Laws of Symphony and Tone."[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/V.php#502) No greater tribute to the esteem in which the Irish monks were held at Reichenau can be cited than the fact that this monastery (founded in 724 by our Irish St. Pirminius) was placed under the patronage of St. Fintan, a Leinster saint, who flourished *circa* 830. Walafridus Strabo, Dean of St. Gall's, was Abbot of Reichenau from 824 to 849.

The famous Guido of Arezzo (born in 995, and died May 17th, 1050), Benedictine Prior of the monastery of Avellina, perfected the gamut of twenty sounds, and improved diaphony. He devised the hexachordal scale, *Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La,* from the first syllables of the hymn to St. John the Baptist, commencing "Ut queant laxis." It is not a little remarkable that the melody to which this hymn was sung before Guido's time was not an original one, but had been, years before, composed for an Ode of Horace, commencing "Est mihi nonus," and which is to be met with in a Montpellier MS. of the tenth century. This interesting fact strengthens the view put forward in a previous chapter, that many Irish melodies were similarly utilized, or "adapted," by Irish scribes in various copies of the service-books between the eighth and twelfth centuries. Let it not be forgotten that the musical work of St. Ambrose was in great part an adaptation; and, later still, we find the great hymnist, St. Venantius Fortunatus, setting some vintage songs to religious words. Father Michael Moloney, of Bermondsey, some years ago,[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/V.php" \l "503) stated as his "firm belief," that "some day, not far distant, the fact that Gregorian music was largely influenced by ancient Irish music would be satisfactorily established."[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/V.php#504) From all the proofs here quoted—cumulative evidence of the very strongest kind—the reader must be convinced of the deep debt which "plain chant" owes to the monks and scribes of ancient Erin.

As amply and conclusively supporting my view I can confidently quote the "organised" arrangement of *Ut tuo propitiatus*, written by an Irish scribe about the year 1095, and interpolated in a tenth century Cornish manuscript now in the Bodleian Library (Bodley, 572). Professor Wooldridge says that it is one of the earliest known examples of "irregular Organum" in contrary movement, employing an independent use of dissonance, and it is written in alphabetical notation. The hymn itself is portion of the hymn to St. Stephen, and apparently was most popular in England, as well as on the continent, as we meet with a variant of it in the Sarum Antiphonal. In 1897, Professor Wooldridge was of opinion that the hymn was of the same age as the whole of the Bodleian manuscript in which it is included, but, in 1901, as a result of closer examination, he agrees with the experts who assign its date as eleventh century, or certainly not later than the year 1100.

The score of the "organal" part, as stated in a learned article by Dr. Oscar Fleischer, in the *Vierteljahrsschrift fur Musikwissenshaft*, 1890, is really an adaptation, or setting, of "a Gaelic folk song, afterwards worked upon by a learned composer of that period," the melody being "in a scale of the pentatonic character." I subjoin a translated modern version of this ancient Irish melody from the reconstruction as given by Dr. Fleischer:—



In a rare vellum MS. in Trinity College, Dublin (H. 3, 18), compiled about the year 1490, there is an extract given from an Irish tract written at the commencement of the thirteenth century, which exhibits a full knowledge of the Guidonian system, and discusses at great length the etymology of the syllables *Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La*. A translation of this extract is quoted in lull by Dr. W. K. Sullivan, in his introduction to O'Curry's *Lectures*. A still more convincing proof that the Guidonian gamut was known in Ireland at the close of the eleventh century is the actual preservation of some Irish airs in Morris's Welsh collection, quoted by Dr. Burney, which are said to have been transcribed in the twelfth century.

The great monastery of St. Peter's, Ratisbon, was established by Muiredach (Marianns) Mac Robertaigh, in 1076; and St. James's, at Ratisbon, was founded in 1090, with Diuma, or Domnus, a monk from the South of Ireland, as Abbot—being built, according to the *Chronicon Ratisbonense*, "by funds supplied from Ireland to Denis, the Irish Abbot of St. Peter's, at Ratisbon." By a curious irony of fate, the music school of Ratisbon, originally founded by Irish monks, has been for some years past importing German organists to various Catholic churches in Ireland, whilst Ratisbon itself is the home of the great music publishing establishment of F. Pustet, the printer of various liturgical works used in the Western Church.

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**NOTES**

[1] The *Annals of Ulster* tell us that Donnchad, Abbot of Dunshaughlin, died on a pilgrimage at Cologne in 1027, as also did Eochagan, Archdeacon of Slane, in 1042; and, similarly, Brian, King of Leinster, died there in 1052. Of course, the great musical theorist, Franco of Cologne, must have imbibed some of the Irish traditions as to discant or organum.

[2] Mabillon, *Annales Benedictinorum*, tom. iv., p. 297.

[3] At the Irish Literary Society, London, on January 25th, 1900, the present writer lectured on "A Hundred Years of Irish Music," when a vote of thanks was proposed by the Countess of Aberdeen, and seconded by Father Moloney, the chair being occupied by Mr. C. L. Graves, in the unavoidable absence of Professor Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.

[4] Professor Dickinson, in his monumental book, *The Music of the Western Church* (1902), unhesitatingly adopts the view of Gevaert, that "actual adaptations of older tunes and a spontaneous enunciating of more obvious melodic formulas"

**Irish Music before the Anglo-Norman Invasion  
(*continued*)**

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**Chapter VI**.

DR. LEDWICH gave it as his opinion that "the incomparable skill of the Irish harpers, as attested by Giraldus Cambrensis, could never be predicated of unlearned, extemporaneous, bardic airs, but implies a knowledge of the diagram [*sic*], and an exact division of the harmonic intervals." On the other hand, Brompton, in the reign of Henry II., says that "the Irish harpers taught in secret, and committed their lessons to memory."

The truth is that though the pre-Christian Irish had their ogham music-tablature, and the Irish of the seventh-eleventh century had the neumal accents, after which the Guidonian system was adopted, *very little use was made of written music*, inasmuch as the "divine art" was mostly taught orally, according to traditional rendering, just as the Gregorian Chant was taught on the continent. At the same time there were *written* copies of the musical services; and Gerbert gives a "memoria technica," from the *Breviarium de Musica*, a manuscript of the eleventh century, in which the neumatic names and the signs corresponding thereto are given in hexameter verses.

However, in a country so tenacious of its language, music, and customs as Ireland, it is not such a very great loss that no notated copies of our religious tunes or folk-songs exist prior to the eleventh century, as, even if such notated manuscripts survived, they would be absolutely unintelligible to latter-day musicians, and would only possess an antiquarian value. The self-same must be predicated of all written music until the year 1100. Dr. Haberl thus writes: "During the course of the twelfth century the various manuscript *codices* written in *neums* were transferred into the clearer and larger staff-notation. But, the character of these translations was very much determined by locality, as the possibility of multitudinous interpretations and renderings of the neumatic signs gave rise, in the eleventh century, to different ways of chanting one and the same text, *according to the teaching which the singer received in the several cathedrals and cloisters*." And, in proof of the comparatively small number of written copies, he adds: "The old teachers relied for the method of singing the neums principally on oral traditions. They committed very little to writing, and that little was by no means clear or determined."[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#501)

To this opinion may be added the view of the late Mr. H. B. Briggs, in his *Structure of Plainsong*, who says that "Plainsong is recitative," and "no notation can exactly express the rendering that will be given to it by a good singer." It is as well to state that the one-line stave, suggested by the Irish ogham scale, was drawn horizontally across the parchment over the words which demanded a musical setting, and the letter F was placed at the beginning of it, meaning an F line, that is to say, indicating the nomenclature of all the neums on the line as F, thus affording a basis for musical pitch, from which was naturally evolved the present musical staff or stave.

In the new organum of the eleventh century we find in use dissonances of the major and minor third, with the major sixth, and even the second and the seventh, as well as concords. At the close of this century and during the first half of the twelfth, many examples are preserved of hymns and songs containing "imitation" passages, which gave rise to Rondel. But, more particularly, the basis of the mensural system was laid when the *Virga* became the *Longa*, or long note, and the *Punctum* the *Brevis*, or short note.

I have mentioned above that there are old Irish airs preserved in Morris's Welsh collection, dating from the twelfth century, and which are quoted by Dr. Burney. This fact demands a brief reference to Wales, and to the debt which she owes to Ireland for her music.

In consequence of the constant intercourse between Ireland and Wales from the third to the eleventh century, Irish immigrants introduced Celtic minstrelsy, and taught the Welsh people the music of ancient Erin. This musical cult was most warmly taken up during the reign of Howell the Good (915-948). Numerous entries in the Irish Annals, from 950 to 1095, testify to the exodus of Irish harpers to Wales, culminating in the celebrated Eisteddfod of Caerwys, in 1100, which became the model on which the subsequent Welsh festivals were based.

About the year 1059, the King of North Wales was forced to seek an asylum in Ireland, and, whilst abiding with his Queen as an honoured guest in the "Sacred Isle," his son and heir, Griffith ap Conan, was born, who was carefully fostered and instructed in all the polite learning of that period. We are told that the young prince was particularly enamoured of Irish music, especially the martial tones of the bagpipe. Dermot Mac Maelnambo, King of Leinster, was at this time supreme monarch of Ireland, which position he maintained till his death, on February 6th, 1072. His rule is highly praised by Caradoc of Llancarvan (1156), who frankly asserts that "the Irish devised all the instruments, tunes, and measures in use among the Welsh."[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#502)

When Prince Griffith came to man's estate, he returned to Wales in order to assert his undoubted right to his father's patrimony, then in the hands of a usurper called Traherne; and the decisive battle of Carno, in 1080, eventuated in his being placed on the throne of North Wales. No sooner was he securely established as king than, between the years 1085 and 1095, he invited over some Irish bards and minstrels, so as to put the music of Wales on the same lines as the Irish musical code.

At the Eisteddfod of Caerwys in 1100, King Griffith, in order to introduce the Irish bagpipes, gave particular prominence to pipe performances, and we read in the Welsh Annals that "*the prize was carried off by an Irishman, who received from the monarch a silver pipe as a reward for his skill*." However, the crowning glory of this epoch-making Eisteddfod was the evening *Feis*, held under the presidency of the monarch himself, in which laws were enacted for the proper regulation of Welsh minstrelsy.

In order that the future Eisteddfodau should have a genuine Irish character, King Griffith sent to Murtogh O'Brien, styled by St. Anselm "Muriardach, the glorious King of Ireland," for an eminent professor of music, to confer with three Welshmen in drawing up a musical code. King Murtogh (1089-1120) selected a distinguished minstrel called by the Welsh chroniclers "Matholwch the Gwyddilian," or *Malachy the Irishman*, who, in conjunction with the three Welsh bards, drew up rules, according to the Irish system, for orchestration, musical theory, and metre. We read that these doctors "laid down rules for the performance on stringed instruments, the harp and the cruit; and they also drew up twenty-four musical canons, and established twenty-four metres."[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#503)

The Welsh annalists tell us that these enactments of the four learned bards were confirmed at a Feis held at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, by the said Murtogh O'Brien, King of Ireland, "who ratified them by his prerogative and influence, commanding all to maintain them;" and thus was settled for ever the question of Welsh minstrelsy. It is interesting to add that a daughter of our Irish monarch was married to Arnuph de Montgomery, Earl of Pembroke; and King Murtogh himself died as a monk in the famous monastery of Lismore, Co. Waterford, on the fourth of the Ides of March, 1120.

Under date of A.D. 1110, the veracious *Annals of Ulster* chronicle the death of Ferdomnach the Blind, Lector of Kildare, who is described as a *Cruitirecta*, or "Master of Harping." Some years later, namely, in 1119, there is a record of the death of Diarmuid O'Boylan, "chief Music-master in Ireland," who was killed by some ruffians in his own house, as were also his wife and his two sons, "with 35 others, his guests and retainers."

In Dowling's *Annals of Ireland* in connection with the year 1137, there is chronicled the demise of Griffith ap Conan, King of North Wales, "born in Ireland of an Irish mother, who had led back with him from Ireland, harps, timpans, cruits, cytharae, and harpers." The intercourse between Wales and Ireland was very frequent at this epoch, and in 1142, Dowling has the following entry:—"Cadwallader, the son of Griffith ap Conan, was forced to fly into Ireland, and brought back with him, for 2,000 marks, the son of O'Carroll, captain of 1,000 fighting men, together with spoils and booty."

The Irish character of the verses written by Prince Howell, son of Owen, King of North Wales, about the year 1165, is most remarkable. This Howell (whose mother was the daugher of an Irish chieftain) assumed the government of his petty kingdom on the death of his father, in 1169, and ruled till 1171, when he came over to Ireland to claim the property of his grandfather, in right of his mother, the heiress. It is only pertinent to add that Welsh poetry and minstrelsy flourished exceedingly from 1140 to 1240, in which latter year Llewellyn the Great died.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#504) With the decline of the Irish element, and the decay of the bards towards the close of the thirteenth century, came the conquest of Wales, and its annexation to the "predominant partner," in 1283.

Scotland, even in a greater degree than Wales, owes her music to Ireland, as a result of two colonizations from *Scotia Major*, or ancient Erin—the first under Cairbre Riada (*a quo Dal Riada*) in A.D. 130, and the second under Fergus, Lome, and Angus, the sons of Erc, in A.D. 504.

Giraldus Cambrensis, in the twelfth century, writes as follows:—"Scotland and Wales, *the former by reason of her derivation*, the latter from intercourse and affinity, seek with emulous endeavours to imitate Ireland in music." He adds:—"The Irish use and delight in but two instruments, the harp and the viol [cruit]; the Scotch in the harp, viol, and bagpipe; the Welsh in the harp, pipes, and bagpipe. The Irish also use *brass wires* for their harps in preference to those of gut."[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#505)

O'Donovan says that "the present language of the Highlands passed from Ireland into the Highlands about A.D. 504; and a regular intercourse has ever since been kept up between both countries, *the literature and music of the one having been ever since those of the other*."

Ruined churches and monasteries, shrines, wells, inscribed stones, and solidly founded tradition—all point to the very close kinship between the parent Scots of Ireland and their progeny in Caledonia, Alba, or Scotia Minor. Somerled MacGillabride, Chief of Uriel (Louth, Armagh, and Monaghan), was recognised as King of Argyle, that is, Lord of the Isles, about the middle of the twelfth century. In a naval battle which took place in 1156, this same Irish king (who died in 1164) captured Iona and the rest of the Southern Hebrides from Godred, Norse King of the Isles, and he induced Flaherty O'Brolcain (Brollaghan or Bradley), Abbot-Bishop of Derry, to take over the Abbacy of Iona *in commendam*, who accordingly did so, and retained his Presidency of the Columban monasteries till his death in 1175.

King Somerled's sons, Reginald, Dubhgall, and Angus, and their successors, held sway over the west of Scotland till the end of the fifteenth century, namely, 1493, when the Lordship of the Isles was surrendered to the Scottish Crown. "This will account for the old bonds between Scotia Major and Scotia Minor being drawn still closer, and for the number of Irish bards—O'Dalys and others—entertained at Dunstaffnage, Inverary, and other western strongholds, during this long period, and the vitality of the old stories and poems that originated in the native country of these minstrels."[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VI.php#506)

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**NOTES**

[1] Haberl's *Magister Choralis* translated by the Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly, Bishop of Canea, and Dean of Dublin.

[2] Powell's *History of Cambria* (1584), p. 191. See also the Notes to Michael Drayton's *Polyolbion* by Selden.

[3] See the "Celtic Origin of the Welsh Eisteddfod" by the present writer in the *New Ireland Review* for March, 1898.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Top. Dist*. iii. c. xi.

[6] *Dublin University Magazine* for January, 1864.

**Irish Music before the Anglo-Norman Invasion  
(*continued*)**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter VII**.

IT would be merely slaying the slain to bring forward any of the silly arguments that formerly were availed of by Dempster and others to claim as natives of Scotland the ancient Irish Scots. It is now universally conceded that even at the close of the eleventh century the Irish were called Scots; and John Major says that "it is certain the present (fifteenth century) Scots of Caledonia owe their origin to Ireland."

Even England must acknowledge its indebtedness for music to Ireland, "the lamp of learning in the West," from the fifth to the twelfth century. It was our Irish missionaries who introduced Irish music and inaugurated plain-chant at Lindisfarne, Durham, Ripon, Lichfield, Malmesbury, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cornwall, Glastonbury, etc. St. Bede and St. Aldhelm vie with each other in their eulogies on Irish scholars.

Old neumatic notation is to be found in a copy of the *Codex Amiatinus*, one of the three books which Ceolfrid, Abbot of Jarrow, took with him, in the year 716, to Rome, as a present to Pope St. Gregory II. These neums, which were written about the year 704, are set for the Lamentations of Jeremias; and the saintly Abbot died on his way to the Eternal City, in 716. Ceolfrid was the tutor and predecessor of St. Bede; and, as is well known, the monks of Jarrow and Wearmouth were taught by the Irish monks of Northumbria, of which district our Irish St. Aidan was first Bishop.

The learned Alcuin studied at Clonmacnoise, in 755-760, under St. Colgu the Wise, whom he styles his "blessed Master and dear Father." In 803, as an old man, this great English scholar, when he had resigned his scholastic labours, querulously informs Charlemagne of "the daily increasing influence of the Irish at the school of the Palace."

Suidhne Mac Maelumai (O'Molloy), the thirty-fourth Abbot of Clonmacnoise, is justly styled by the old chroniclers as *doctor Scotorum peritissimus*, whose best known pupil was Dicuil the Geographer. In the year 890, he was one of the three Irish sages who were summoned to England by Alfred the Great, to devise a scheme of studies after the manner of the Irish Universities.

During the winter of the year 941, Muircheartach of the Leathern Cloaks (heir apparent to the throne of Tara) made a circuit of Ireland, and brought away with him the provincial princes or their sons to his palace at Royal Aileach, on the eastern shore of the Swilly, near Derry, where he detained them for five months, after which he sent them to the Ard Righ of Ireland, Donogh II. His secretary, Cormac an Eigeas, has left us an account of this circuit of Ireland, in which we read that the evenings were generally devoted to music:—

"Music we had on the plain and in our tents—  
Listening to its strains we danced."

Towards the close of the eleventh century, Gilbert, Bishop of Limerick, made an effort to displace the existing Irish liturgical "uses" in favour of the Roman Rite, but was not successful. In his *De Usu Ecclesiastico* he tells us that there was a great diversity and variety in the Church offices in Ireland, so much so that even a learned cleric, accustomed to one particular form of liturgy, would be quite bewildered in a neighbouring diocese, where a different Use obtained. It is more than probable that the Ambrosian chant—introduced by St. Patrick—and the Irish modification of the Gregorian chant continued to be sung in most of the Irish churches till the year 1125.

St. Malachy, Legate of the Holy See, got the Roman chant adopted throughout the archdiocese of Armagh in 1148; and, a few years later, Donogh O'Carroll, Prince of Uriel, got a complete set of liturgical books—Antiphonaries as well as Missals—copied by an Irish scribe. This Donogh O'Carroll, the founder of the Abbey of SS. Peter and Paul, Knock, County Louth, and a munificent benefactor to Mellifont Abbey, died, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, on Thursday, the tenth of the moon, Kalends of January, 1170; and "he it was for whom were written the Book of Knock Abbey, and the chief office-books (books used for the singing of the Divine Office) for the ecclesiastical year, and the chief books of the Mass." [[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#501)

John of Salisbury, about the year 1165, highly extols the music of Ireland; and his testimony is all the more valuable as he was not very favourable towards this country. He declares that in the Crusade of Godfrey of Bouillon, in 1099, *there would have been no music at all had it not been for the Irish Harp*, or, as Fuller says, "the consort of Christendom could have made no musick if the Irish Harp had been wanting."

The great St. Laurence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin, in 1165, dissatisfied with the Dano-Celtic system of liturgical chant in Christ Church Cathedral, introduced the Arroasian Canons of the Order of St. Victor—a reform of the Augustinians—who sang the Divine Office daily, presided over by the Archbishop himself.

Music was an especial feature in the school of the Culdees at Armagh, as has been amply demonstrated by the late Bishop Reeves. The *Annals of Ulster* give a lengthened obituary notice of Flann O'Gorman, "chief lector of Armagh and of all Ireland," in 1174, "on Wednesday before Easter, the 13th of the Kalends of April [March 20], in the 70th year of his age." He had been President-General of the Universities throughout Ireland, and was held in the highest esteem.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#502)

Even after the formation of a Chapter in the Cathedral of Armagh, the Prior of the Culdees was invariably Precentor, or Chief Chanter, whilst the brethren of the *Colidei* acted as Vicars Choral.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#503) These Culdees were the representatives of the old Columban order of monks; and their school at Armagh lasted from the close of the ninth century to the time of Elizabeth. The diocese of Meath is still a silent witness of the ancient Celtic monastic form of church government, and has never had a cathedral body or Chapter, nor yet a Cathedral. Under date of the year 1171 the *Annals of Ulster* give the following entry:—"A.D. 1171 The timpanist Ua Coinnecen, Ard-Ollamh of the North of Ireland, was killed by the Cinel-Conaill, with his wife and with his people."

Irish bishops, priests, and clerics were accustomed, in the twelfth century, to carry round with them small harps, both for the purpose of accompanying the sacred chant, as also for their own delectation. This fact is expressly stated by Archdeacon Gerald Barry, from personal observation at the close of the same century:—"Hinc accidit, ut Episcopi et Abbates, et Sancti in Hibernia viri cytharas circumferre et in eis modulando pie delectari consueverint."[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#504)

The neums or accents of the Irish corresponding to the Latin *Acutus, Modicus, Gravis*, and *Circumflexus*, are: *Ardceol, Ceol, Basceoil*, and *Circeoil*, indicating pitch; whilst the mediaeval Irish had their own characters to represent mensural music, corresponding to the *Longa* and the *Brevis*, that is to say, practically our modern Semibreve and Minim. Unison was called *caomhluighe*, or lying together; the fifth was termed *Tead na feithe olach*, or string of the leading sinews; the octave below was *cronan*, etc. In tact, each string of the harp had its own particular name; and the ancient minstrels had an infinite variety of terms for musical rhythm and expression.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#505)

In regard to the old Irish form of "organising," O'Curry writes: *Rind* was music consisting of full harmony, while *Leithrind*, or half Rind, was one or other of the two corresponding parts which produced the harmonious whole; and these parts were the bass and treble notes, or the bass and treble strings—the *Trom Threda*, and the *Goloca*, or the heavy and the thin strings." *Coir* is another Irish term for harmony, and is mentioned in the Brehon laws.[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#506) From a passage in the Life of St. Brigid, by Anmchad, Bishop of Kildare, who died in the year 980, it is evident that the harp was at that period employed as a favourite accompaniment for part-singing.

The commentary on the Elegy on St. Columba, which was certainly written before the year 1100, contains musical allusions, including the *ceis* and the "*bass* chord in the harp of Crabtene." From the well-known passage of our Irish John Scotus Erigena, in his tract *De Divisione Naturae*, written about the year 864, it is perfectly clear that the free Organum of the Fourth, or of the *Diatesseron*, was well known to the Irish of the ninth century—that is to say, a hundred and fifty years before the appearance of the *Scholia Enchiriadis* and the *Musica Enchiriadis*. Professor Wooldridge, in the *Oxford History of Music*, says that "Erigena's description of the alternate separation and coming together of the voices quite admits of application to this method." For the benefit of the musical student, I give the Latin passage of Scotus:—

"Organicum melos ex diversis qualitatibus et quantitatibus conficitur dum viritim separatimque sentiuntur voces longe a se discrepantibus intensionis et remissionis proportionibus segregatae dum vero sibi invicem coaptantur *secundum certas rationabilesque artis musicae regulas per singulos tropos naturalem quandam dulcedinem reddentibus*."

From Coussemaker it appears that a monk who wrote soon after the death of Charlemagne alludes to the art of "organising," and he concludes that the practice of harmony was certainly known in the early part of the ninth century.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#507)

Brompton, writing in the reign of Henry II., waxes enthusiastic over the very advanced skill of Irish musicians in the twelfth century on the cruit, timpan, and bagpipe; and he extols "*the animated execution, the sweet and pleasing harmony*, the quivering notes and intricate modulations of the Irish"—"*crispatis modulis et intricatis notulis, efficiunt harmoniam*" (Hist. Anglic. Script, p. 1075).

In justice to Tom Moore it must be acknowledged that he pointed out the ridiculous error into which Walker and Bunting had been led, quoting from Beaufort, owing to a mistranslation of Brompton. Walker makes the foregoing extract as signifying that the Irish had "*two sorts of harps, the one bold and quick, the other soft and pleasing*"!!!

This brings us to the epoch of the Anglo-Norman invasion; and, as contemporary evidence is always of the first importance, I cannot conclude this chapter better than by quoting the following eulogy on the Irish school of harpers from the pen of Gerald Barry, better known as Giraldus Cambrensis, Archdeacon of St. David's, who came to Ireland in 1183:—

"They are incomparably more skilful than any other nation I have ever seen. For their manner of playing on these instruments [cruits, clairseachs, and timpans], unlike that of the Britons to which I am accustomed, is not slow and harsh, but lively and rapid, while the melody is both sweet and pleasing. It is astonishing that in such a complex and rapid movement of the fingers the musical proportions [as to rhythm] can be preserved, and that throughout the difficult modulations on their various instruments the harmony, notwithstanding shakes and slurs, and variously intertwined organising, is completely observed."

The Latinity of Giraldus is not easy to give in an English dress, but he wishes to display his knowledge of musical technicalities as then in vogue. He describes "the striking together of the chords of the *diatesseron* [the fourth degree of the scale], and *diapente* [the fifth] introducing B flat, and of the "tinkling of the small strings coalescing charmingly with the deep notes of the bass"—clearly pointing to the Irish free organum of the fourth, and that of *diapente*, including the discord of the Imperfect Fifth interval. He concludes as follows:—"They delight with so much delicacy, and soothe so softly, that the excellence of their art seems to lie in concealing it."[[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VII.php#508)

Not even a professed panegyrist of our twelfth-century Irish musicians could use more flattering language than the foregoing, and, therefore, such testimony from the prejudiced bishop-elect of St. David's should be highly valued. Rev. James F. Dimock, who has edited Giraldus, under the direction of the English Master of the Rolls, says:—"Giraldus had not an idea that anything he thought or said could by any chance be wrong"; and "he was replete with the exact qualities, the very reverse of what are needed to form an impartial historian," For all that, the observant Archdeacon was completely captivated by the charm of Irish music, and he has left us the above imperishable record. Well does Moore sing:—

"The stranger shall hear thy lament on his plains;  
The sigh of thy harp shall be sent o'er the deep.  
Till thy masters themselves, as they rivet thy chains,  
Shall pause at the song of their captive, and weep."

**END OF CHAPTER VII**.

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**NOTES**

[1] *Annals of Ulster*, vol. ii., pp. 160, 161.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] Among the treasures exhibited in the Gregorian Congress, in Rome, during Easter week, 1904, was a copy of St. Gregory's *Moralia*, in the last page of which was inserted the hymn, "O Christi Martyr"—of the Irish St. Kilian, *in musical notation of the twelfth century*.

[4] Cambrensis, *Topog. Hib*., Dist. c. xii.

[5] The following is a brief description of the dress worn by ancient Irish harpers, as is chronicled in the "Bruidhean da Derga," one of the oldest Irish sagas now known, and contained in *Leabhar na hUidhre*: "I saw another row of nine harpers. Nine branching, curling heads of hair on them: nine grey winding cloaks about them: nine brooches of gold in their cloaks: nine circlets of pearls round their hands: nine rings of gold around their thumbs: nine torques of gold around their ears: nine torques of silver round their throats: nine bags with golden faces in the side-wall: nine wands of white silver in their hands." Dr. Hyde dates this saga as of the seventh century if not earlier.

[6] The seven Irish words for concerted music are:—*cómseinm, cóicetul, aldbse, cepóc, claiss, clais-cetul*, and *foacanad*. In Cormac's Glossary (p. 43) *cómseinm* refers to instrumental harmony, whilst *cóicetul* is given as "singing together"—*clais-cetul* signifying "choral singing."

[7] There is a manuscript translation into English of Erigena's valuable tract, made by the late William Larminie (whose death, in 1900, was a great loss to Irish studies), which is now in the National Library of Ireland, Kildare-street, Dublin. It is said to be the only English version of Erigena's work. The translation is in two quarto volumes, and was presented to the library by the author's brother.

[8] *Topographia Hiber*., Disp. iii., cap. xi. In the original Latin, the terms *proportio, crispatos, modulos, organa, dispari paritate discordi, concordia, consona*, etc., can only mean, as Renehan writes, "the rhythmical measure of time, the slur and graces, the organizing or counterpoint, the harmony of discords, and all the then latest inventions of modern music." (Renehan's *History of Music*, p. 163.)

**Irish Music in the Middle Ages**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter VIII**.

THE year 1216 is remarkable for an incident from which we get a clue to the origin of the so-called "Brian Boru's Harp." So much legend has attached to the historic instrument of that name (now housed in Trinity College, Dublin), said erroneously to have belonged to King Brian, that a sketch of the real facts will not be unwelcome to critical readers.

Muiredach O'Daly, of Lissadil, Co. Sligo, was a famous Irish minstrel at the opening of the thirteenth century. In 1216, Donal *mor* O'Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnell, sent his steward (Finn O'Bradley) into Connaught, to collect tribute, who was slain, in a fit of anger, by O'Daly, for a supposed insult to the bardic profession. The bard fled to Athenry (where, for a while, he was protected by Richard de Burgo), and thence to Thomond and Dublin, pursued by O'Donnell himself, and finally escaped to Scotland, where he remained for some years [1217-1222].

Whilst in Scotland, O'Daly wrote three celebrated poems to O'Donnell, "who permitted him to return unmolested to his native country, and even restored him to his friendship." These Irish poems were fortunately preserved in Scotland, in the Dean of Lismore's Book;[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php" \l "501) and O'Daly was known as *Albanach* that is, the Scotchman, from his residence in Albania, or Alba.

Meantime, Donnchadh Cairbre O'Briain, King of Thomond, *sent his own harp*—"the jewel of the O'Briens"—as a pledge, to Scotland (for the ransom or return of the bard O'Daly), where it remained for over 80 years. Thus, we can accurately trace the history of a rare harp of the O'Brien sept, sent to Scotland, about the year 1221, as a forfeit, by the valiant King of Thomond, whose death took place on March 8th, 1243.

About the year 1229, Gillabride Mac Conmidhe [Mac Conmee, Mac Namee, or Conmee], a famous Ulster bard, was commissioned by King O'Brien to endeavour to ransom the much-prized harp. In response to this request Mac Conmidhe—also known by the soubriquet of *Albanach* on account of his many visits to Scotland—composed the well-known "Ransom song," in commemoration of his playing on its chords for the last time. At that time, the power of a bard was very great, and even a song fetched a high price; but, alas! the lovely harp of the O'Briens—the so-called harp of Brian Boru—would not be restored for "whole flocks of sheep," and so, as O'Curry considers, it remained in Scotland until Edward I. took it with him to Westminster. Finally, on July 1st, 1543, when Henry VIII. created Ulick Mac William de Burgo Earl of Clanrickarde, he presented the Earl with this Irish harp, which had belonged to Donnchadh Cairbre O'Briain.

Vallancey says that this harp, having reverted to the Earl of Thomond, was purchased by Lady Huxley, for "twenty rams and as many swine of English breed," and "bestowed by her to her son-in-law, Henry Mac Mahon, of Clenagh, County Clare,[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php" \l "502) who about the year 1756, bestowed it on Mat MacNamara of Limerick, Esq., Counsellor-at-Law, and some years Recorder of that city." In the year 1760, Arthur O'Neill, the great harpist, played on this venerable instrument, newly strung for the occasion, through the streets of Limerick. It was bequeathed by Mr. MacNamara in 1778 to Ralph Ouseley, Esq., of Limerick, who, in 1781, presented it to the Right Hon. Colonel Conyngham, and, at length, in 1787, Conyngham donated it to Trinity College, Dublin.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#503)

The following is Petrie's description of the O'Brien harp:—

"From recent examination, it appears that this harp had but one row of strings; that these were 30 in number, not 28, as was formerly supposed, 30 being the number of brass tuning pins and of corresponding string holes. It is 32 inches high, and of exquisite workmanship; the upright pillar is of oak, and the sound board of red sallow; the extremity of the fore-arm, or harmonic curved bar, is capped in part with silver, extremely well wrought and chiselled. It also contains a large crystal set in silver, under which was another stone, now lost. The buttons or ornamental knobs at the side of the curved bar are of silver. The string holes of the sound board are neatly ornamented with escutcheons of brass carved and gilt. The four sounding holes have also had ornaments, probably of silver, as they have been the object of theft.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#504) The bottom which it rests upon is a little broken and the wood very much decayed. The whole bears evidence of having been the work of a very expert artist."

There is a remarkable entry in connection with the year 1225 in the *Annals of Lough Cé*, amply demonstrating the progress of instrumental music at that period, especially the cultivation of the harp:—"A.D. 1225. Aedh, the son of Donlevy O'Sochlann, Vicar of Cong, a master of vocal music and harp tuning, the inventor of a new method of tuning, a proficient in all arts, poetry, engraving, and writing, and other arts, died this year."

Apropos of harp-tuning, I may here repeat what has been incidentally mentioned in Chapter II., that this was effected by means of the *ceir* or harp fastener. Furthermore, *gler* is the Irish term for tuning; and we find in the Brehon Laws an allusion to the *Crann Gléra*, that is, tuning-tree or key. But, as has so frequently been insisted on, the theory of music and the rules of the minstrel's art were the outcome of many years of weary study. Blessed Edmund Campion, S.J., in his *Account of Ireland* written in 1571, tells us that he himself had seen the Irish students "chanting out their lessons piecemeal," which they were wont to "conn by rote."

"Sumer is icumen in"—the earliest known version of a double canon with a ground bass, in England—is merely a harmonised arrangement of a phrase taken from the old Irish tune: "Tá An Samrad ag Teacht," which may be Englished: "The Summer is Coming," sung time out of mind in ancient Erin to usher in the summer season. This Irish air, wedded by Moore to his lyric "Rich and Rare," was copied by John Fornsete, a Benedictine monk, of Reading, about the year 1230, and, "though animated in its measure," as Lady Morgan writes, "yet, still, like all the Irish melodies, breathes the very soul of melancholy." Its Irish origin was clearly proved by Dr. Young, Protestant Bishop of Clonfert, at the close of the eighteenth century, who ably refuted the English claim to it, as advocated by Dr. Burney, in his *History of Music*.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#505)

In this connection, Ireland can justly claim the invention of what is now called "ground bass" or "pedal point," as its origin must be sought in the old Irish *cronan*, an allusion to which is to be found as far back as A.D. 592, when it is described as "the most excellent of music." St. Colman Mac Lenan, founder of the See of Cloyne, gives us to understand that the Aidbre (*Corur Cronain*) was the most favourite form of part singing with the educated musicians of the sixth century.[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#506) O'Curry calls it "a low murmuring accompaniment or chorus, which, from its name Cronan must have been produced in the throat, like the purring of a cat"; and he adds that the word "croning" [crooning] is an abbreviated anglicised form of "cronaning"—not humming, but purring—a corruption of which has resulted in the calling an old woman a "crone."

Not so long since, it was generally believed that the inclusion of the *harp* in the arms of Ireland only dated from the reign of Henry VIII., but the fact is that our national instrument appears on coins issued by King John and King Edward I.; and, in 1251, we read that "the new coinage was stamped in Dublin with the impression of the King's head in a triangular harp." A harp was originally the peculiar device of the arms of the Leinster province, and it was subsequently applied to the whole kingdom of Ireland, namely, in heraldic language, "on a field *vert*, a harp *or*, stringed *argent*." Under date of 1269, in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, is recorded the death of Aedh O'Flynn, "a good musician. A similar entry occurs in the *Annals of Ulster*, but the surname is given as "O'Finn," and he is described as a "master of minstrelsy." [*rai oirfídig*]

The European fame of the Irish harp was at this epoch well sustained, as is best attested by the following quotation from Dante (1265-1321): —

"This most ancient instrument was brought to us from Ireland, where they are excellently made, and in great numbers, the inhabitants of that island having practised on it for many ages. Nay. they even place it in the arms of the kingdom, and paint it on their public buildings, and stamp it on their coins, giving as a reason their being descended from the Royal Prophet David."[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#507)

Ralph Higden, a distinguished historiographer, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, describes the music of the Irish harp as "musica peritissima." John de Fordun, a Scottish priest, who wrote in the same century, expressly says that "Ireland was the fountain of music in his time, whence it then began to flow into Scotland and Wales."[[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII.php#508)

In 1329, the annalist, Clyn, has the following entry concerning the massacre of Sir John Bermingham, Earl of Louth, at Bragganstown, near Ardee, on June 10th of that year: —

"Maelrooney Mac Cerbhaill [O'Carroll], chief musician of the kingdom, and his brother Gillakeigh—a famous timpanist and harper, so pre-eminent that he was a Phoenix in his art—were killed in that company and with him fell twenty timpanists who were his scholars."

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**NOTES**

[1] The editor (Rev Mr. MacLachlan) of this valuable Gaelic MS. says that O'Daly "was the ancestor of the MacVurricks, bards to the MacDonalds of Clanranald."

[2] The husband of Lady Elizabeth de Burgh.

[3] Egerton MSS , No. 74.

[4] In 1876 one of these ornaments was found in the Phoenix Park (See *Journal* R.S.A., for October, 1878.)—W.H.G.F.

[5] Bishop Young died on November 28th, 1800.

[6] There are seven Irish words to designate various forms of Harmony—in particular *foacanim*, which is glossed by Zeuss as succino or "singing under."

[7] *Dialogo di Vincenzo Galilei*, A.D. 1589 (not 1581 as stated by Bunting).

[8] Walker's *History of the Irish Bards* (1786).

# Irish Music in the Middle Ages

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter VIII**...*concluded*

The *Annals of Ulster* particularly praise the musical powers of Mac Cerbhaill, whom they describe as "the blind Cerbhail, namely, Maelruanaigh, the most eminent timpanist in Ireland and of Scotland, and of the whole world." The cognomen *caoch* was given to him "because his eyes were not straight, but squinted"; and, Clyn adds, "if he was not the inventor of chord music, yet, of all his predecessors and contemporaries, he was the corrector, teacher, and director." The author of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* further informs us that "no man in any age ever heard or shall hereafter hear a better timpanist."

According to Hardiman, this harper, O'Carroll, composed the lovely song: "Eleanor Kirwan," but "every effort," he adds, "to recover the music has proved fruitless, although it was well known in Galway in the last [eighteenth] century." The air "is supposed to have died out with an old musical amateur of the name of French, who resided in Galway a few years ago; and thus perished, perhaps, the last known relic of the genius of O'Carroll."[[9]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#509)

It must, however, be borne in mind that the battle of Bragganstown was in reality an Anglo-Irish feud; and an ancient chronicler relates that an old nurse distinctly gave warning to the Earl of Louth and his attendants of their approaching doom, in a song commencing: "All the joy of my heart is the hearing." I may add that on the Patent Rolls of Edward III., a pardon, dated May 31st, 1330, was granted to those Anglo-Irish who took part in the conflict, and, amongst others, to John the harper, of Ardee, Co. Louth.[[10]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#510)

A charming legend is told in connection with the founding of the Franciscan Friary at Irrelagh—better known as Muckross Abbey, Killarney—in the year 1340.

MacCarthy Mor, *i.e*., Donnell, son of Tadhg, had vowed to build a monastery for Franciscans in thanksgiving for his delivery from a great danger. He found it difficult to select a suitable locality. While he hesitated a vision appeared to him, warning him to erect the convent nowhere but at *Carraig-an-chiuil* (the Rock of Music). He knew of no such place, and dispatched a number of his followers in various directions to make inquiries. The search was unsuccessful; no one had even heard of the name. They were returning in despair when they heard the most enchanting music issuing from a rock in Oirbealac [Irrelagh]. They hurried home in all haste, and related their experience to MacCarthy. He concluded that this was *Carraig-an-chiuil*—the Rock of Music spoken of in the vision—and commenced to build the monastery without delay."[[11]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#511)

Under date of 1345, an Irish musician appears in the dual capacity of bard and minstrel. In the celebrated *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, or Book of the Dun Cow (compiled and transcribed, in the year 1100, by Maelmuire Mac Kelleher), there is an entry, at page 37, from which we learn that Sigraidh O'Cuirnin, who had carefully perused said volume, in the year 1345, begged a prayer for the writer of the book. This Sigraidh O'Cuirnin, hereditary poet and ollav of the O'Rourkes, therein described as "poet and musician," died on a pilgrimage to Clonmacnoise in 1347.[[12]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#512)

In reference to the hospitality extended by the Irish people of all classes to minstrels and bards, we read in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, under date of the year 1351:—

"William MacDonogh *maenach* O'Kelly invited all the Irish poets, brehons, bards, harpers, etc., in Ireland to his house, upon Christmas of this year, where every one of them was well used during the Christmas holidays, and gave contentment to each of them at the time of their departure, so as every one was well pleased, and extolled William for his bounty."

Thierry thus writes —"Every house preserved two harps, always ready for travellers, and he who could best celebrate the liberties of former times, the glory of patriots, and the grandeur of their cause, was rewarded with a more lavish hospitality."

For the year 1357, there is a record of the demise of Donlevy O'Carroll, "an excellent musician," and "a noble master of melody, the person that was best in his own art in Ireland." Three years later, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, died Gilla-na-naem O'Conway, "ollam of Thomond as Timpanist," whom other annalists describe as "chief professor of music in Thomond."

In 1361, the obit is chronicled of Magrath O'Finn, "chief professor of Siol Murray (Sligo) in music and minstrelsy," followed, three years later by that of Bryan O'Brien—also called Bran Ua Briain—an eminent timpanist—or performer on the *tiompan*.

A terrible blow was given to music in Ireland by the passing of the iniquitous Statute of Kilkenny, in 1367, which made it penal to receive or entertain Irish bards, pipers, harpers, minstrels, rhymers, etc., the ostensible reason being that "these and such like often came as spies on the English." However, as Dr. Joyce writes, "it was intended to apply only to the English, and xvas framed entirely in their interests—its chief aim being to withdraw them from all contact with the 'Irish enemies,' and to separate the two races for evermore."[[13]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#513)

From the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, we learn that John Mac Egan and Gilbert O'Barden, two most famous harpers of Conmaicne (Ardagh), died in 1369; and Andrew Mac Senaigh, "master of melody," died of the plague, at Tuam, in 1371—whose name is given as "Amhlaim Mac Senaigh, accomplished emperor of melody," by the Ulster Annalists.

On the Patent Rolls of the year 1375 (49 Edw. III.), we find a license granted to Donal O'Moghan, an Irish minstrel [Ministrallus Hibernicus], "for that he not alone was faithful to the King, but was also the cause of inflicting many evils on the Irish enemies," permitting him, contrary to the *Statute of Kilkenny*, to dwell within the English Pale.[[14]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#514) Hardiman adds: "This recreant bard was one of the very few traitors of his Order, of which Patriotism was the motto and ruling principle. Like Alfred, the Irish bards went amongst the enemy to learn their situation, strength and intentions, which they never failed to report to their countrymen."

Under date of 1379, the Four Masters chronicle the obit of Gillacuddy O'Carroll, "the most delightful minstrel of the Irish," who is called by the Ulster Annalists, "William, son of Gillacuddy O'Carroll." Evidently the musical abilities of the O'Carroll family had not diminished since the days of Maelroony O'Carroll—so lauded by the Irish chroniclers, as also by the Anglo-Irish annalist, Clyn, who died in 1349, as Guardian of the Franciscan Friary, Kilkenny.

One of the many legends that for long obtained currency was the ascription of the song, "Eiblín A Rúin."—*vulgo* "Aileen Aroon"—to Donogh *mór* O'Daly, of Finvarra, Cistercian Abbot of Boyle, who was called "the Ovid of Ireland," and who died in the year 1244. Most writers concur in dating the music and words as from "the first half of the thirteenth century," whilst the more sceptical tell us that it was composed in "the latter portion of the sixteenth, or the first half of the seventeenth century." The sober truth is that this exquisite melody, so admired by Handel (as we learn on the unimpeachable testimony of the Venerable Charles O'Conor, of Belanagare), was written in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. It was composed by Carrol *mór* O'Daly, about the year 1390, in honour of Eibhlin Kavanagh, of Polmonty Castle, near Bunclody, Co. Wexford; and all readers are familiar with the romantic story of how our Irish harper and composer successfully won the hand of Kavanagh's fair daughter.[[15]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#515)

The minstrel O'Daly, who is described by the old annalists as "chief composer of Ireland, and Ollav of the country of Corcomroe," died early in 1405.

As a proof of the estimation in which Irish minstrels were held at this epoch, we learn from Froissart that, during the Christmas and Spring of 1394-5, at the sumptuous banquets given by King Richard II. to the Irish chieftains who visited him, these princes, contrary to English ideas, "had their minstrels and principal servants sitting at the same table, and eating from the same dish as they themselves."

In connection with the year 1399, the death is chronicled of Conla MacNeal O'Neill, "a great benefactor of the professors of Irish poetry and music."[[16]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/VIII-2.php#516) During the same year died Boetius Mac Egan of Breffni, "a learned man in laws and music," who is described in the *Annals of Ulster* as "ollav in jurisprudence."

It scarcely comes within the scope of this work to touch on literary Irish personages, yet I cannot well resist the temptation of citing a little-known item of information, namely, the appointment of an Irishman as Lecturer in Oxford University. This eminent divine—Matthew O'Howen (Owens), son of the Aircinneic of Inishkeen on Lough Erne—lectured continuously at Oxford for fourteen years, and died on September 4th, 1382. His son, Matthew, was chaplain of Inishkeen, whose death occurred on October 11th, 1393, as is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*.

On February 8th, 1396, died Matthew O'Luinin, "Herenach of the Ards [near Enniskillen], namely, an expert, learned man, both in poetry and history and *melody* and literature and other arts"—(*Annals of Ulster*).

The advent of Sir John Stanley as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in December, 1399, is memorable for renewed hostility to Irish Bards and Minstrels, and as a consequence, his Viceroyalty was most unpopular. He left the country in May, 1401, and in the August following he was succeeded by Stephen Scrope, Deputy for the Duke of Clarence. This brings us to the fifteenth century, which demands a chapter all to itself.

**END OF CHAPTER VIII**.

**Irish Music in the Fifteenth Century**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter IX**

ALTHOUGH the first quarter of the fifteenth century was a most troubled period in Ireland, yet there were not wanting many learned men and musicians. In 1405, the *Annals of Ulster* chronicle the death of Gilladubh Mac Curtin, who is described as "Ollav (Doctor) of Thomond in Music," and who was also distinguished as an historian and writer. The same year is memorable for the demise of Carrol O'Daly (Cerbhall Ua Dalaigh), composer of "Eiblín A Rúin," whose obit is thus quaintly given by the annalist of Clonmacnoise:—"Keruell O'Daly, chief composer of Ireland, dane of the country of Corcomroe, died."

A great benefactor of the Irish minstrels—Tadhg O'Carroll, Prince of Ely O'Carroll—was gathered to his fathers in 1407. Conal Mac Geoghegan thus writes of him:—"This Teige was deservedly a man of great account and fame with the professors of poetry and music of Ireland and Scotland, for his liberality extended towards them, and every of them in general." According to the *Annals of Ulster*, Tadg Ua Cerbaill was defeated and slain by the Lord Deputy Scrope, who himself died of a pestilence in May, 1408.

The lovely song '"*Deirdre deag-gnuireac*"—Englished "The Blooming Deirdre"—was composed, in 1409, for the marriage of Thomas Fitz John, 6th Earl of Desmond, to Catherine, daughter of William Mac Cormac Mac Carthy, a romantic wedding which cost the bridegroom his inheritance. Certain it is that the unfortunate Earl, in whose honour the song was written, was compelled by his own family to surrender his title and possessions, and he died an exile at Rouen, on August 10th, 1420. Deirdre is used by the Earl's bard as representing the ancient Irish heroine of that name, who is the central figure of the "Fate of the Children of Usnach." Founded on the same story is Moore's lyric: "By the Feale's wave benighted."

As illustrating the satirical powers of the bardic family at this period, it is recorded by the Four Masters, in January of the year 1414, that the bard Nial O'Higgins satirised Sir John Stanley, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, for having plundered his property, and so fierce and stinging was the satire that the English Deputy died from the effects of it. In a word, O'Higgins literally rhymed him to death: and we know from the chronicles of Henry of Marlborough that Sir John Stanley, who had landed at Clontarf, in October, 1413, died at Ardee, Co. Louth, in January, 1414. The same annalists chronicle a second "poetical miracle" performed by the same family of rhymers against a hostile tribe. By way of retaliation, Sir John Talbot, Lord Furnivall, despoiled many of the Irish rhymers, as is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*.

Under date of 1429, the Four Masters give us the obit of a distinguished Ulster musician, as follows:—Matthew, the son of Thomas O'Kiernan, Ollav of Breffni, and universally learned in history and music, died in his own house."

In 1433, as appears from the *Annals of Ulster*, occurred the death of Aedh O'Corcrain, a remarkable harper; and, early in 1435, Seanchan Mac Curtin, "historian, poet, and musician," was gathered to his fathers. From the MS. Annals of Ireland, by Duald MacFirbis, we learn that the year 1433 was memorable in Irish musical history by reason of the "two general invitations" given by Dame Margaret O'Carroll, wife of Calbach Ua Concobair, Prince of Offaly, to bards, minstrels, and learned men. The first general invitation (reception) took place on March 25th, at Killeigh, King's County, when 2700 persons assembled—"besides gamesters and poor men"—and each person was given a generous gratuity before dinner. The second reception was given on August 15th, at Rathangan, which was equally well attended.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#501)

At this epoch, the enactments of the Statute of Kilkenny were utterly ignored, and this is confirmed by the Patent Rolls of the 15th of Henry VI. (1435) From this State Paper, it is quite apparent that the provisions of the statute were practically inoperative. It is distinctly stated "that Mimi, [Comedians], Irish Clarsaghours [Harpers], Tympanours [Timpanists], Crowthores [performers on the cruit], Kerraghers [Chess-players], Rymours [Rhymers], Skelaghis [Storytellers], Bardes, and others, contrary to the Statute of Kilkenny, went amongst the English, and exercised their arts and minstrelsies, and afterwards proceeded to the Irish enemies, and led them upon the King's liege subjects."[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#502)

Henry VI., as Renehan writes, "finding such laws ineffectual, and his lieges habitually paying *grandia bona et dona*, in exchange for Irish music, commissioned his Marshal in Ireland to imprison the harpers; and, in order to stimulate his activity, authorised him to appropriate, to his own private use, their gold and silver, their horses, harnesses, and instruments of minstrelsy."[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#503)

From the *Annals of Ulster*, under date of 1448, we learn of the death, at Kilconly, Co. Galway, of a munificent patron of minstrels, namely Tadhg O'Higgins, who is described as "preceptor in poetry and erudition of schools in Ireland and Scotland, and general entertainer of the litterati and pilgrims of Ireland."[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#504)

In striking contrast to the world-renowned fame of Irish musicians, England had no music-school of the least importance, even in the first decade of the fifteenth century. We have it on the authority of the late Rev. Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, Bart., Mus. Doc., Professor of Music in Oxford University, that, of the English compositions which have survived, ranging from 1300 to 1510, "none seem to be of any great merit," and all betray "much crudeness and a sad lack of regular melody." Even Davey, the avowed eulogist of English music is forced to admit that "its condition in the fourteenth century was more barren than the thirteenth," and he adds: "Not a piece of music endurable by modern ears existed in England before 1400." In fact, the so-called "English School of Music" only dates from 1425, with John Dunstable as its founder, who died December 24th, 1453.

The wars of the Roses, which commenced in 1455, added materially to the existing strife in Ireland. We find the Geraldines of Kildare and Desmond, taking sides with the Yorkists, whilst the Ormondists threw in their lot with the Lancastrians, and of course, the Anglo-Irish and Celts participated in the general *mêlée*. Three-fourths of Ireland still belonged to the natives, and the English were obliged to pay heavy tribute to the Irish chiefs as a guarantee for peace. Thus, the barony of Lecale disbursed £20 a-year to O'Neill of Clanaboy; the county of Uriel £40 to the O'Neill; the county Wexford, £20 to Mac Murrough; the county Limerick £40 to O'Brien; the county Cork £40 to Mac Carthy of Muskerry; the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary £40 to O'Carroll; the county Kildare £20 to O'Conor, etc., etc.

About the year 1455 flourished an Irish Cistercian monk, Brother Aengus, of Holy Cross Abbey, Co. Tipperary, who was a harper, organist, organ-builder, and composer. He joined the community of Duiske (Graignamanagh, Co. Kilkenny), in 1460, and was welcomed, notwithstanding the Statute of Kilkenny. The *Annals of Duiske* describe him in the most eulogistic terms. He especially won the favour of the then English Abbot of Duiske, by repairing the abbey-organ which had been, for many years, discarded owing to its bellows having proved a prey to damp and rats. The Anglo-Irish annalist adds:—"In truth, Brother Aengus excels in music any citharist (harper) ever heard in these parts; for not alone is he a master of psalmody and *faux bourdon*, as is evidenced by his setting of 'Benedicam Dominum,' but he is even a cunning performer on the *cruit*." In 1461, died Felimy O'Neill, described as "a man of hospitality and prowess, and head of the bardic bands and pilgrims of Ireland, and one that was a most extensive purchaser of poetic and erudite compositions, and was the greatest *rhymer* that was in Ireland in his time."—(*Annals of Ulster*.)

The Statute of Kilkenny, forbidding the English or Anglo-Irish of the Pale to receive or entertain Irish minstrels, was put in force by a new act, passed in 1481. Six different classes of bards are enumerated, and the strictest orders were given not on any account to permit harpers as guests.

In 1482 we meet with an interesting side-light of history in connection with the city of Waterford, showing clearly how the Urbs Intacta had resolved to maintain its "loyal" reputation, and uphold the penal enactments of the Statute of Kilkenny even against a Bishop who was a "mere Irishman." Nicholas O'Hennessy, Cistercian Abbot of Fermoy, had been "provided" by Pope Sixtus IV., on May 20th, 1480, to the united Sees of Lismore and Waterford, and was consecrated Bishop in 1481. This appointment was freely acquiesced in by the Chapter, clergy, and people of Lismore, yet the Waterford clergy and laity objected to the new Bishop on the plea that "he was Irish spoken, and did not understand the English language." On December 30th, 1482, the Pope bade the Archbishop of Cashel "to excommunicate the Waterford Chapter and clergy in case they should still be contumacious, and, if necessary, to invoke the aid of the secular arm." But, all in vain; the worthy Bishop deemed it prudent to retire to his abbey, and John, Rector of Baudrip, diocese of Bath and Wells, was appointed his successor—being duly consecrated on May 4th, 1483.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#505)

Perhaps it is as well to state that (so general was the use of the Irish language in all parts of Ireland at the close of the fifteenth century, even in County Dublin) Archbishop Fitzsimon, by an Act of Parliament passed in 1484—and renewed in 1493—was permitted "to collate *Irish* clerics to benefices in his diocese, inasmuch as the English clerks were not expert in the Irish language, and such of them as were, disdained to inhabit amongst the Irish people."

The Four Masters, under date of 1488, chronicle the death of Henry Shelly, whom they eulogise as "the best singer of the Irish of *Leath Cuinn* [the North of Ireland]." The *Annals of Ulster* give his obit as occurring in that year, but describe him as "Henry Ua Selbaigh [O'Selby], the best chanter of the Irishry of the Half of Conn."

In 1489 is recorded the obituary of Arthur O'Hussey, described by the Four Masters as "a poet and a good scholar, and a youth honoured amongst the English and the Irish, who was distinguished for musical powers, both vocal and instrumental." This entry is thus given by the Ulster annalist:—"Athairne O'Hosey, son of John, poet, preceptor, instrumentalist, and vocalist, died."[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#506)

During the second half of the fifteenth century Irish minstrels were frequent visitors to Scotland; and, in Dauney's *Scottish Melodies* there are given several items regarding the visits of our Hibernian musicians to the Scottish Court, e.g.:—

"April 19th, 1490. To Martin, the clairseach player, and the other Irish harper, at ye King's command, 18 shillings.

"May, 1490. To an Irish harper, at ye King's command, 18 shillings."

For the year 1490 there is an entry in the *Annals of Ulster* recording the sad fact that Dermot O'Carbry, *harper*, slew Aengus, "the son of MacDonnell of Scotland." Apparently O'Carbry must have been on a visit to Scotland, because the annalists are careful to inform us that his victim was called "the Lord of Aag," i.e., Angus Macdonald, son of Donald, son of Ranald of Clanranald, Dr. MacCarthy identifies "Aag" as "Hay," but the annalist says "Aacc," which most probably is Eigg, an island of the Inner Hebrides, of which the MacDonalds were then Lords. MacDonald, as we read, "was slain in treachery at Inverness, by an Irish harper, Diarmait Ua Cairpri." The family of Ua Cairpri, or Cairbre, supplied many musicians, but none of their compositions have come down to our time.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/IX.php#507)

At the close of November, 1494, Sir Edward Poynings, Lord Deputy of Ireland, assembled a Parliament at Drogheda, in which was passed the infamous enactment known as "Poynings' Law." Irish war-cries (such as *Lam Dearg Abu*) were forbidden, as also the exaction known as "coyne and livery;" and the Statute of Kilkenny was confirmed, with the exception of the unworkable ukase against the Irish language. But, as often happened before, these enactments were so much stage-thunder, and the great Hiberno-English Lords of the Pale openly set them at naught, retaining Irish brehons, bards, harpers, pipers, etc., whom they patronised in the most lavish style.

According to the *Annals of Ulster*, in the year 1496 is placed the obit of "Florence O'Corcoran, player on the harp and other stringed instruments, and a distinguished vocalist " and, in 1497, there is mention of the death of William MacGilroy, "a master of stringed instruments " [*rai fir ted*].

The peaceful condition of Leinster and Munster from 1498 to 1501 contributed not a little to the cultivation of Irish Music, but it was merely the calm before the storm, and already the days of medievalism were nearly over, with the "new learning" making its way, and the traditional folk songs gradually giving place to Anglo-Irish music.

**END OF CHAPTER IX**.

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**NOTES**

[1] *Miscell. Ir. Arch. Soc*., i., pp. 227-8.

[2] The *Mimi* mentioned in above Patent Roll were Irish Mummers, a survival of the *Druith Righeadh*, or Royal Comedians, in the Irish Court train since the days of the *feir* of Tara.

[3] Renehan's *History of Music*, p. 164.

[4] Another bard named O'Higgins, i.e Bryan macFergal Ruaid Ua Uiccinn, named by the Four Masters as "Superintendent of the Schools of Ireland, and preceptor in poetry," died on Holy Thursday of the year 1477.

[5] Theiner's *Vetera Monumenta*.

[6] His son Cithruadh, described as "an eminent bard and a good teacher," died in 1518.

[7] In 1495, "a month before Lammas," our Irish annalists chronicle the visit of Hugh Roe O'Donnell to James IV., King of Scotland, who received the Irish prince with much distinction. O'Donnell returned to Donegal on Friday, August 7th, of same year.

**Anglo-Irish Music from 1200 to 1400**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter X**

UP to the present we have been treating of Irish musical history in its true acceptation, that is Celtic-Irish music, but from the year 1200 Anglo-Irish music has to be reckoned with, as a distinct factor in the social life of Erin. Between the years 1180 and 1280 there was a fusion between the invaders and the native Irish, and some years subsequently, as Dr. Joyce writes, "the English all over the country were fast becoming absorbed with the native population." In the first decade of the thirteenth century many of the colonists had adopted the language, dress, and habits of their adopted country, and, in 1206 (among the deeds of Christ Church, Dublin), there is mention of "Geoffrey the Piper."

One of the greatest musical theorists of the thirteenth century was John Garland, of County Louth, known variously as De Garlande and Gerlandus. Born about the year 1190, he was sent to Oxford to be educated, as was generally the case with the Anglo-Irish nobles,[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php" \l "501) and, in 1212 or 1213, he went to finish his studies at Paris. In 1218 we find him taking part in the crusade against the Albigenses at Toulouse, where he wrote his famous treatise on music, *De Musica Mensurabili* Positio, and then returned to Paris. So great was his fame as a grammarian and poet, that he was selected to assist at the foundation of the University of Toulouse in 1229, but he had to leave, in 1232, owing to friction with the Dominicans. We again find him in Paris, in 1234, where he was still living, in 1264, according to Roger Bacon. The street in which he lived and taught was called the "Clos de Garlande," afterwards known as "Rue Gallande."

John Garland gives ample evidence of the musical principles he had imbibed in Ireland by his strong insistence on the rhythmical test in Organum. He divides Organum into two kinds, namely, *Rectum* and *non rectum*, and he tells us that the Long and the Breve are to be strictly taken in the first regular mode—the plain chant being notated in symbols of equal length. To him is due the invention of the *copula* and the figures *sine proprietate*. But he also shone as an original composer, and gives some admirable lessons in double counterpoint.

Not alone did Garland excel all his fellows as a musician, but he was a distinguished literary man, as appears from his *De Triumphis Ecclesiae* which he finished at Paris, in 1252, and of which the British Museum possesses a MS. copy, which has been printed by Mr. Thomas Wright.

Among the deeds of Christ Church, Dublin, there is mention, under date of 1260, of "William the piper;" [[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#502) and, in 1287, there is a record of a grant of land to "Roger the harper." In addition to players on the pipe and harp, there is ample evidence to prove that the Anglo-Irish of this period were also conversant with the flute and the recorder.

Lovers of Shakespeare do not need to be told of the skilful manner in which the bard of Avon introduces the "recorder" in Hamlet, but it is not generally known that the earliest mention of the instrument of that name is in the *Manipulus Florum*, begun by John Walsh, in 1280, and finished by Thomas Walsh, of Palmerstown, Co. Kildare, in July, 1306, Both these learned men were Anglo-Irish Franciscan Friars, and their conjoint book was printed at Venice in 1492. Dr. John Walsh was regent of Oxford in 1258, and subsequently taught in Paris, where he died in 1284. His fellow-countryman, Dr. Thomas Walsh, mostly lived at Naples, where he ended his days, and is better known as Thomas *Hibernicus*.

In the Anglo-Norman ballad entitled "Rithmus facture ville de Rosse," or "The Entrenchment of New Ross"—describing the building of the walls of Ross, Co. Wexford, in 1265,—written by Brother Michael FitzBernard, a Friar of Kildare, allusion is made to tabors and flutes, also to carols.

It is probable that the lovely air "An Cuilfionn," anglicised as "The Coolin," dates from the year 1296 or 1297, inasmuch as it must have been composed not long after the passing of the Statute, 24th of Edward I., in 1295, which forbade "the degenerate English in Ireland" to imitate the native Irish "by allowing their hair grow in coolins"—"nec amplius praesumant avertere in *Colanum*." In the Irish song the bard makes the Irish maiden despise the Anglo-Irish who conformed to the statute by cutting off their coolins, and prefer the chieftain-lover who was proud of his Irish ancestral custom. This inedited Statute, which was apparently unknown to Moore, Moffat, and Stanford, is quoted by Ledwich in his *Antiquities* (p. 347), and is also to be found in the Harris manuscripts.

Some Irish and Anglo-Irish minstrels accompanied King Edward I. in his expedition to Scotland in 1301. From the *Annals of Ulster* we learn that John FitzThomas MacFeoris (Bermingham), and the principal barons of Ireland were in Scotland "from a fortnight before Lammas [August 1st] to November day of that year," and again, in 1303. Allusion has previously been made to the bagpipers who went to Calais in the train of King Edward I.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#503)

As an instance of the general use of the Irish language in speech and song by the Anglo-Normans in Ireland at the opening of the fourteenth century, there is an interesting item chronicled by Friar Clyn, under date of 1326: "A.D. 1326. The O'Carrolls killed Sir Matthew Mylborne, a trusty and prudent Knight, *English by nation, but Gaelic by use of speech, speaking only Gaelic*."

Mensural music was now beginning to supersede the old metrical measure peculiar to plain chant. The Longa or Long Note (*see* [\*](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#601)) was divided into three equal or two unequal parts, or breves, *e.g.* (*see* [\*](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#601)), which in turn was subdivided into three notes called semi-breves, (*see* [\*](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#601)); and, from this system was evolved the structure known to mediaeval musicians as "Cantus Mensurabilis." In the theoretical treatises of this period, we get specimens of *Organum* *purum, Conductus, and organum communiter sumptum*; and there are yet preserved many illustrations of Cantilena, Rondel, Ochetus, or Hoquet, and Motet, all of which go to prove that the line of cleavage with old traditions had definitely begun—soon to develop into what is now known as Modern Music.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#504)

The adaptation of secular songs to sacred words was freely practised in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. William of Malmesbury tells us of Thomas, Archbishop of York (1070), that "whenever he heard any new secular song or ballad sung by the minstrels, he immediately composed sacred adaptations of the words to be sung to the same tune." Very remarkable it is that the existence of the very earliest known English folk-songs is due to a record among the archives of the Kilkenny Corporation. In the *Red Book of Ossory*, there are fifteen pages written in double columns containing sixty Latin verses, written by Richard Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory, who ruled from 1317 to 1360—best known for his connection with the heresy and witchcraft trials between the years 1324 and 1331. We may date the Bishop's verses as of about the year 1324.

These Latin verses, or *Cantilenae*, were written by Bishop Ledrede "for the Vicars Choral of Kilkenny Cathedral, his priests, and clerics, to be sung on great festivals and other occasions," as is stated in a memorandum in said book, "that their throats and mouths, sanctified to God, might not be polluted with theatrical, indecent, and secular songs." The sixty pieces are in honour of Our Lord, the Holy Ghost, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the first of them is entitled: *Cantilena de Nativitate Domini*, a sort of Christmas Carol, followed by three others "de eodem festo."

To the antiquarian musician the really interesting feature of the Bishop of Ossory's verses is that six of them are set or adapted to English tunes, the names being given as follows:—

1. Alas! how should I sing, yloren is my playing  
    How should I with that old man,  
    To leven and let my leman }Sweetest of all thing.  
2. Have mercy on me, frere, barefoot that I go.  
3. So, do, nightingale, sing full merry  
    Shall I never for thine love longer Kary.  
4. Have good dey, my lemen dear  
5. Gaveth me no garland of green  
    But it ben of wythones [withies] yrought.  
6. Hey how the chevaldoures woke all night.

Two of the *Cantilenae* are set to French tunes, and may be of somewhat earlier date than the English songs. It may be added that Chappell's account of the contents of the *Red Book of Ossory*, so far as it relates to the adaptations of Bishop Ledrede, is both inaccurate and misleading. The interested reader will find an accurate description given by Gilbert in the Tenth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission where some of the Latin lyrics are given in their entirety.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#505)

Another most valuable contribution to Anglo-Irish literature is the morality-play, called "The Pride of Life"—written in 1345. This play is regarded by the late Professor Morley as one of the earliest known specimens of its class in the English language. It was found among the deeds of Christ Church, Dublin, and was written on the back of an account-roll. In this old morality-play we have the familiar mumming characters of King, Queen, Nuncio, Bishop, First Soldier and Second Soldier. There are 120 quatrains, mostly in dialogue form, one of which will suffice as an example:—

"Thu art lord of lim and life  
and King wt outen ende,  
stif and strong and sterne in strife  
in loude qwher thu wende."

In 1360, King Edward III. issued an ordinance to the Sheriff of Kilkenny forbidding any Englishman dwelling in said liberty to speak *Irish*, and also ordering that "*every Englishman must learn English and must not have his children at nurse amongst the Irish*." Almost needless to add that this enactment was openly violated by the denizens of the Pale; and the violaters, who were termed "degenerate English" by the loyal colonists, were regarded on a par with the "wilde Irish." In fact many of the great nobles were said to have become *Hiberniores Hibernicis ipsis*, and, in 1388, a royal license was granted to Gerald, Earl of Desmond, "to allow his son to be brought up as an Irishman," under the tutelage of Conor O'Brien, of Thomond, "for the better preserving the peace for the future."

Sir James Ware has preserved for us the "first staffe only" of a ballad which was composed about the year 1370, by some Anglo-Irish citizen of Waterford, to warn the townsmen of the old city by the Suir against the machinations of the Powers, of County Waterford, who had become more aggressive than the natives by reason of their many raids on the city, The original ballad which, like its counterpart in our own time, must have had a dozen or more verses, has long since perished (having been torn out of the antique parchment volume some time after Sir James Ware made an extract from it), but we are assured that it was a regular household-song in Munster at the close of the fourteenth century. At page 94, of Sir James Ware's manuscript,[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php" \l "506) we read:—

"There is in this book (*the Book of Ross or Waterford*) a longe Discourse in meter, putting the youth of Waterford in mind of harm taken by the Powers, and wishing them to beware for ye time to come. I have written out ye first staffe only:—

'Young men of Waterford lernith now to plai  
For yur mereis plowis ilad beth a way [[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#507)  
Scure yur hafelis yt lang habith i lei [[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#508)  
And fend you of the Powers that walketh by the way.

    'For rede.

'For if hi taketh you on and on  
From him scapeth ther never one  
I swer bi Christ and St. John  
That off goth yur hede  
    'Now hi walkith etc.,' "

Sir James Ware's transcript was made in February, 1608, and was acquired by Bishop More, of Norwich, who lent it to Bishop Tanner, and it subsequently passed into the library of the Earl of Oxford. As an instance of the manner in which the editing of the Lansdowne Catalogue was done by Douce, it is rather amusing to find him giving the following explanation regarding the line "in mind of harme taken by the Povers"—"The Povers," says this eminent antiquary, "seem to mean the paupers or rabble"!

Of course, it is the Powers, or le Poers, of County Waterford, who are here alluded to, and who were by far the most powerful clan in that county from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. Crofton Croker adds:—"Mr. Lemon, of the State Paper Office, has queried, whether the common expression of ' By the powers' does not refer to the warlike strength of the Poer family, or faction, becoming proverbial?"

Anyhow, although Ware attached no importance to this ballad in his day, yet we, of the twentieth century, would gladly have wished that he had not stopped at transcribing "one staffe onely." Had he taken down the traditional folk-tune it would have been more interesting still. We possess no single example of thirteenth, or fourteenth, century Anglo-Irish secular music; and all that has escaped the vandalism of the so-called Reformation is of a sacred character, of which I shall treat in a subsequent chapter.

The history of English Music during the first half of the fourteenth century is almost a blank, and the only two names that adorn the latter half of that century are Anglo-Irish—namely John D'Exeter and Lione Power. Of the former very little is known save that he was of the D'Exeter family, Lords of Athleathan or Ballylahan, now known as Strade, barony of Gallen, Co. Mayo, and he wrote some sacred music now preserved in the Old Hall MS. a most valuable repertory of fourteenth and fifteenth-century English composers.[[9]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#509) Concerning the latter, we are, fortunately, in a better position. To Lionel Power, a worthy Anglo-Irishman, of Co. Waterford, is due the first English treatise on Music, about the year 1390, and his nationality is placed beyond question by another Anglo-Irish contemporary who styles him *noster Lionel*.

Davey, the historian of English Music, tells us that Power appears in Coussemaker's great work as *Iconal*. His treatise on Music is included in a volume which Tallis found in Waltham Abbey, in 1537, and which is now in the British Museum, among the Lansdowne MSS. No. 763. Not only is it written in English, but it is illustrated by musical examples.

It is regrettable that we have no details regarding the early life of Lionel Power, but it is almost certain that, like many of the younger sons of the wealthy Anglo-Irish in Ireland, he went over to Oxford to study, and became a cleric,[[10]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php" \l "510) His relative, Milo Power, was Bishop of Leighlin from 1321 to 1347, and another, Sir Maurice Power, was Knight of St. John of Jerusalem in 1415. We can unhesitatingly assign the period of his musical works as about 1380 to 1395, although Davey supposes him to have outlived Dunstable, which could only hold good unless we assume Power to have lived to the age of 120, which is improbable.

The works of Power which have come down to our own time prove conclusively that he had assimilated all that had been written by Guido of Arrezzo, Odington, Tunstede, Franco, Garland, Jerome of Moravia, and other theorists, and had materially advanced the development of harmony and counterpoint. "He certainly," as Davey admits, "establishes the use of sixths and thirds, and the distinct prohibition of consecutive unisons, fifths and octaves." Moreover, he was the first to indicate chords by figures, in other words, he was the inventor of figured bass.[[11]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/X.php#511)

Of Power's compositions which have survived, Morley, in 1597, knew several which cannot now be traced. However, in the choir books formerly belonging to Trent Cathedral, but now at Vienna, out of forty works, mostly by English composers, eleven are by Power, eight of which were transcribed about the year 1430.

Other compositions by our distinguished countryman are in the Liceo Communale, Bologna, whilst, at Modena, eight motets of his are still to be seen, one of which is for four voices.

Between the years 1375 and 1400 improved organs were gradually being introduced into the larger churches in Ireland. In the absence of any local records, it is of interest to quote the earliest bill in existence for the erection of an organ in Ely Cathedral, in 1396:—

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Twenty stones of lead, | 16s. 9d. |
| Four white horse-hides for four pairs of bellows, | 7s. 8d. |
| Ashen hoops for the bellows, | 4d. |
| 16 pairs of hinges, | 1s. 10d. |
| 13 springs, | 3d. |
| 1 lb of glue, | 1d. |
| 1 lb. of tin, | 3d. |
| 6 calf-skins, | 2s. 6d. |
| 12 sheep-skins, | 2s. 4d. |
| 2 lbs. of quicksilver, | 2s. 0d. |
| Wire, nails, cloth, hooks, staples, etc., | 12d. |
| The Carpenter, 8 days making the bellows, | 2s. 8d. |
| Organ builder and his board, | 40s. 0d. |
|  | [*sic*].£4 8s. 3d. |

This was a "pair of organs" which had twelve notes corresponding to the twelve sounds of the plain chant and was furnished with chromatic notes—sharps and flats—in a separate row from the natural keys. The actual amount of the bill as furnished tots up to £3 17s. 8d., but we must presume that there are some items omitted. At a rough calculation, £4 8s. 5d. may be estimated as equal to £100 of to-day. At this period the organ keys were so large that the performer was termed a "pulsator," or smiter, and the keys were struck with the clenched fist. As a matter of fact, the keys of the organ built at Halberstadt, in 1361, were from two to four inches in width, with a space of two inches between some of them.

**END OF CHAPTER X**.

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**NOTES**

[1] In 1255, owing to "the noisy Hibernian element" in Oxford, there was much disturbance, and among the students were John Barry, William Power, and 28 other Anglo-Irish. The Irish students were very numerous in 1267, and occasioned much trouble.

[2] Geoffrey Chaucer (1328-1400) says of his Miller:—

"A bagge-pipe coude he blowe and soune."

[3] See Chapter iii.

[4] See *Oxford History of Music*, Vol. I. (1901).

[5] Appendix Part V.

[6] Lansdowne MS. No. 418.

[7] For your mares and plows are both led away.

[8] Secure your oats that lieth overlong in the fields.

[9] The Old Hall MS. (so called because it belongs to the famous English Roman Catholic College of St. Edmund's, Old Hall, Ware) is a transcript made in the latter part of the fifteenth century, apparently intended for a church choir. A very full description of the contents of this manuscript was given by Mr. W. Barclay Squire, of the British Museum in *Sammelbande Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, an excellent digest of which was published by Mr. Robin Grey, in the *Edmundian* for July, 1901.

[10] In the fourteenth century students from Ireland were very numerous at Oxford University. However, we read that, in 1423, Irish students were expelled from England.

[11] Davey's *History of English Music*, p. 58.

\*

# Anglo-Irish Music during the Fifteenth Century

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XI.**

DAVEY is forced to admit that "not a piece of music endurable by modern ears existed in England before 1400." But all this is by the way of glorifying the work of John Dunstable, whom the historian of English music claims as the inventor of polyphony and counterpoint. Professor Niecks, of Edinburgh University, very properly denies this statement; and he instances dozens of examples of two and three-part counterpoint all anterior to the birth of Dunstable, a few of which go back to the year 1300.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#501) Mr. Barclay Squire, of the British Museum, shows clearly that the absurd claim for Dunstable's invention of counterpoint is owing to a misreading of Tinctoris (1455-1511).

Certain it is that the so-called "improvements" attributed to Dunstable, *e.g.*, "the independence of his voice parts, and the use of suspensions, passing-notes, and short imitations"—were known to our Anglo-Irish composer, Lionel Power. Davey rather naively adds that "it is not easy to point out exactly in what the improvements of Dunstable consisted;" and that "the lack of older music makes it unclear whether these were known previously."

After this damning admission on the part of Mr. Davey, it is scarcely worth while to examine too closely the assertion that "we may take it as certain that Dunstable walked in Rouen Cathedral before Henry V., in January, 1419. But when we are seriously told that the great Guillaume Dufay (1370-1474) graduated at Paris, "where he learned the *English* art of composition," it is time to protest. "Paris," writes Davey, "was under English rule from 1420 to 1436, . . . and, thus, Dufay, without visiting England, could learn *how immeasurably superior English music then was to all other; indeed, to any music which had ever existed*."

No better refutation of this amazing statement need be quoted than the words of Professor Ransome, who tells us in his *Short History of England* that "*from* 1424 *to* 1429 *England had practically lost France*; and, in 1440, Paris was completely abandoned—the English with difficulty maintaining themselves in Normandy." Moreover, it is doubtful if ever Dunstable was in France; and we know that Dufay went to Rome in 1427, where he remained till 1437. Strangely enough, Davey ignores the ancestry of Dufay, who was a Walloon, and the Walloons were Celts.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#502) It is only pertinent to add that Dunstable died on December 24th, 1453, whilst Dufay's death, at Cambrai, is chronicled on November 18th, 1474.

The Irish harp and the timpan were popular at this period with the inhabitants of the Pale, and, in 1450, there is an allusion to the Clavichord or Clavicembalo, a primitive keyboard stringed-instrument. Nor was the bagpipe, or Cornemuse, neglected. In the "Buke of the Howlate," a Scotch MS., written *cir*. 1455, there is mention of "the trump, the tabour, the recordour, the tympane, and the lilt-pype."

In regard to the organ, it is of interest to mention that one of the earliest organ builders in England of whom there is authentic information, was Brother John Rouse, a Dominican Friar, who had learned the art in Kilkenny, in 1455. As yet, organs were not very elaborate in construction, and we read that the "noble instrument" which was presented to St. Alban's Abbey, in 1448, by Abbot Wheathamstead, only cost £18. The same year is memorable as the date of the earliest example of an organ score, namely, a manuscript autograph on a staff of eight lines, with the three clefs of F, C, and G, by Adam Fleborg, Rector of the University of Stendall.

Under the date of 1460, in the MS. Annals of Duiske (Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny), we read that Brother Aengus, a Cistercian monk, of Holy Cross Abbey, Co. Tipperary, came to Duiske and repaired the "old organ" there, "which, not having been used of late years, was sadly affected by damp, and the leather of the bellows was gnawed by rats."

In the will of Michael Tregury, Archbishop of Dublin, dated December 10th, 1471, that estimable prelate bequeathed "a payre of organs" to St. Patrick's Cathedral, to be used in St. Mary's Chapel.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#503) About this time the keys of the organ were reduced in size from two inches to 1 ¾ inches, and new contrivances were devised to facilitate alike the labours of the "pulsator organorum" and the blowers. Each key had its name-letter inscribed on it, namely, F, G, A, etc.

John Lawless was a most celebrated Irish organ builder during the latter half of the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, none of his specifications have survived, but there is evidence that he erected twenty organs in various parts of Ireland for cathedral and monastic churches. He was held in such high esteem that the Kilkenny Corporation, at the suggestion of the Earl of Ormonde, granted him many privileges on condition of making a permanent residence in the cathedral city of St. Canice. Fortunately, among the deeds of the Corporation, there is still preserved a document, dated December, 1476, "on the Monday after the Feast of the Nativity," agreeing to the terms of the ground rent, etc., from John Lawless, "organ maker," with the proviso that he was "to practise his art within the said town of Kilkenny."

In an interesting MS. account of the Dominican Abbey, Athenry, Co. Galway, there is an entry, under date of 1479, which proves that the Friars Preachers, or Black Friars, availed of the king of instruments in their musical services. We read that Thomas Bermingham, Baron of Athenry, and his wife, Annabella, bestowed "three silver marks towards the building of the abbey-church organ."[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#504) The "loyal" tendencies of this munificent benefactor to Athenry Abbey may be gauged from the fact that he repaired, at his own expense, "the rooms of the English bachelors of theology."

Milo Roche, Bishop of Leighlin (1470-1490), was an accomplished musician, and "a skilled performer on all manner of instruments." The annalist Dowling says:—"Inter bardos numeratur pro omnibus instrumentis"; whilst Ware adds that "he was more addicted to the study of music and poetry than was fit."

In reference to Davey's statement that "probably Dunstable taught Okeghem," it is only necessary to say that the Latin original of Tinctoris from which he professes to quote can bear no such interpretation. The text of Tinctoris merely gives the reader to understand that the then modern school of music *followed the example of Dunstable, Dufay, Obrechts*, etc. However, it is satisfactory to read the following candid admission by the historian of English music:—"Okeghem's science brought forth the genius of Josquin des Pres, who, as early as 1480, had produced that *Stabat Mater* which to this day commands admiration, *while the English were still doing what had been done before*." Of course this is equally true of Anglo-Irish music.

In the "Squyr of Lowe Degre," written cir. 1480, there is mention of the various instruments then popular in England, including "harp, getron, sautry, rote, ribible, clokarde, pypes, organs, bumbarde, sytolphe, fydle, recorder, doucemere, trompette, and claryon."[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#505)

With the invention of music printing, in 1473, the knowledge of the "divine art" made considerable headway all over the continent. It is not a little remarkable that the very first book containing plain chant in Roman notation, printed from movable types, was issued from the press of Octavianus Scotus, of Venice, in 1481, under the supervision of an Irishman, Maurice O'Fihily, a Franciscan Friar, who was subsequently Archbishop of Tuam. It was not till 1495 that Wynkyn de Worde printed the first book in England containing musical notes.

After the Lambert Simnel comedy in 1487, Sir Richard Edgecombe was sent to Ireland as Royal Commissioner to administer new oaths of allegiance, and we read that, on Monday, July 21st, 1488, he was present at St. Thomas's Abbey, in Dublin. The old record of his "progress" runs as follows:—"At the termination of High Mass in one of the oratories, the Earl of Kildare and the other magnates went into the great church; and, in the choir thereof, the Archbishop of Dublin began the *Te Deum*, and the choir *with the organs* sung it up solemnly."[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#506)

I have dwelt at rather unusual length on the use of organs in Ireland in the fifteenth century, inasmuch as most writers, copying Walker, have asserted that organs were only introduced into this country after the period of the Reformation. A similar fiction has long obtained to the effect that Mumming and Christmas Carols only go back to the days of Elizabeth, and hence a brief refutation of such a statement is within the scope of the present chapter.

As to Mumming, we have ample documentary evidence that Mystery or Morality plays were performed in Dublin and Kilkenny in the fourteenth century, from which sprang the Mummers. Dodsley says that "the Mummers, as bad as they were, seem to be the true original comedians of England." It is quite apparent that the Buffoon who invariably accompanied the Mummers was an evolution of the Vice of the old Morality plays, subsequently represented by Punch, in the now fast disappearing Punch and Judy shows.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XI.php#507)

Christmas Carols were popular among the Anglo-Irish in the fourteenth century, and continued in unabated favour till the reign of Elizabeth. They were mostly adaptations of secular songs, as we have seen in the case of Bishop Ledrede's Cantilenae. The word "Carol" is of the same family as "Choir"—meaning Song or Dance, or both—and is derived from the mediaeval form *Coraula*, which, in turn, is derived from the Celtic. In the Coventry Mysteries there is introduced a Christmas Carol. A very natural outcome of the various hymns sung in the churches during the Christmas season was the transference of such airs to the home circle.

Naturally, the Wars of the Roses did much to retard the development of music during the second half of the fifteenth century. The Earl of Ormonde was hanged after the battle of Towton, on March 29th, 1461, but the Butlers were again taken into favour in 1468. In 1485, Henry VII. propitiated the Yorkists by appointing Gerald, Earl of Kildare, as Viceroy, and Thomas Fitzgerald as Chancellor. Seven years later, the Perkin Warbeck plot complicated matters; but it fizzled out ingloriously in 1494, and Warbeck was hanged at Tyburn, with his friend, John Waters, Mayor of Cork, on November 16th, 1499.

England, from 1450 to 1500, can only boast a few compositions of any merit, for which Davey apologetically explains as follows:—"So much of Flemish work remains, and so little of the English work, that the English appear to be more inferior than they really were." If this apology seems satisfactory as regards music in England at this period, it is of still greater force in the case of Anglo-Irish music, both on account of the Wars of the Roses, the Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck plots, and the internecine conflicts of the colonists themselves, as also the destruction of manuscripts. In any case, practically the only secular music in Ireland at the close of the fifteenth century was the old Irish music, whilst, as regards sacred music, matters were pretty much as they had been a century previously. But of this latter phase I shall treat in a separate chapter.

**END OF CHAPTER XI**.

**Irish Music in the Sixteenth Century**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XII.**

MANY of our old annalists tell of the fame of harp making in Ireland during the first decade of the sixteenth century. This statement is accentuated by Dr. Petrie, who describes for us a very beautiful harp, which bore the date 1509, but which has, unfortunately, disappeared since 1810. "It was small," he writes, "and but simply ornamented, and on the front of the pillar, or forearm, there was a brass plate on which was inscribed the name of the maker and the date—1509. The poor harper [a wandering minstrel in 1809], had often expreseed his intention of bequeathing this harp to his kind entertainers [Mr. Christoper Dillon Bellew and his lady, of Mount Bellew]; but a summer came without bringing him to his accustomed haunts, and the harp was never forwarded, nor its fate ascertained." For contemporary criticism of this period, one may adduce the learned John Major, (*d*. 1525) who gives unstinted praise to Irish music and musicians, especially to harpers: "Hibernenses . . . qui in illa arte praecipui sunt."

To those who are interested in the bag-pipes, it is worth mentioning that though we have no pipes of the sixteenth century now existing, there is, in Vienna, an excellent representation of an Irish piper, with the date 1514, from the world-famed master-brush of Albrecht Dürer; and, in Ferguson's *Dissertation*, there are two illustrations given of a piper and pipes of this period. Galilei, whose *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music* was published at Florence, in 1589, thus writes:—"The bagpipe is much used by the Irish, To its sound, this unconquered, fierce and warlike people march their armies, and encourage each other to deeds of valour. With it also they accompany their dead to the grave, making such mournful sounds [*caoines*] as to invite, nay almost force, the bystanders to weep."

In the early part of this century, Gerald, Earl of Kildare, was a great patron of Irish harpers, pipers, rhymers, bards, etc. He befriended various members of the clan MacWard, famous Ulster rhymers, who paid him as a gratuity, or *honorarium*, six beeves yearly. In 1518, we find Dermot O'Coffey, *rhymer*, as tenant of this Earl, holding a carucate of land in Ballysallagh, in Machairecuircne, barony of Kilkenny West, Co. Westmeath. All readers of Irish history are familiar with the dramatic incident which happened on June 11h, 1534, when O'Nealon (some authors call him Nelan), harper to Silken Thomas, struck up an Irish song in praise of his lord, at St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, with the result that the impetuous Geraldine threw down his sword of state, and went into rebellion.

The first enactment against Irish bards and minstrels, in this century, was, on the recommendation of an Anglo-Irish noble, Patrick Finglass, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, about the year 1520, who in his *Breviate* proposed as follows:—"That noe Irish minstralls, rymers, ne bardes, be messengers to desire any goods of any man dwelling within the English Pale," upon pain of forfeiture of all their goods, and their bodies to be imprisoned at the King's will. This recommendation was ostensibly acted on, but the magnates of the Pale, following the example of the Earls of Kildare, Desmond, and Ormonde, defied all such legislation, and retained each an Irish harper. Under date of 1533, the *Annals of Ulster* chronicle the death of O'Sullivan Beare, who is described as exceedingly bountiful to bards, ollamhs, pilgrims, and learned men. Five years later, the same Annals have a similar entry in connection with the death of Hugh O'Donnell.

In 1533, there was issued a proclamation in England to suppress "foolish books, ballads, rhymes, and other lewd treatises in the *English* tongue." Evidently, Robert Cowley, Collector of Customs in Ireland, was of opinion that seditious ballads in the *Irish* language should be also suppressed, and, accordingly, in 1537, he wrote to Secretary Cromwell that "harpers, rhymers, Irish chroniclers, bards, and *isshallyn* commonly go with praises [elegies] to gentlemen in the English Pale, praising in rhymes, otherwise called danes [*danta*], their extortions, robberies, and abuses, as valiantness, which rejoiceth them in that their evil doing," etc.

Polydore Vergil (Virgilius) in his *History of England* (published in 1534) writes thus of our Irish minstrels:—Cujus Musicae peritissimi sunt: canunt enim *tum voce tum fidibus eleganter*, sed vehementi quodam impetu, sic ut mirabile sit, in tanta vocis linguaeque atque *digitorum velocitate*, posse artis numeros servari, id quod illi ad unguem faciunt." [[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XII.php#501)

Inasmuch as the people of the Pale adhered to Irish customs as well as music and language, a statute was passed, in 1537, by the obsequious Irish Parliament, enacting: "That *no person* or persons, after the 1st of May, 1539, shall be shorn or shaven above the ears, or use the wearing of hair upon their heads, like unto long locks called *glibbes*," etc. This statute expressly forbade the wearing of *Crommeals* or *glibbes*, or flowing locks of hair, by any resident whatever in Ireland, whether Palesman or native born; and is the celebrated enactment which Moore erroneously supposed to have called forth the exquisite melody and words of *An Cuilfhionn* or *The Coulin*—printed by Walker in 1786.

Chappell tells us that in 1537, John Hogan was arrested in London, for "singing with a *crowd* or a *fyddyl*" apolitical song to the tune of "The Hunt is up"—an old dance tune mentioned by Shakespeare. In the same year the *Annals of Ulster* place the death of O'Keenan, a famous instrumentalist—namely, Bryan son of Cormac O'Keenan—who is said to have composed the charming melody, *Cailin og a stuir me*.

A few years later, Stowe chronicles for us an item: "On July, 1st, 1541, John Davey, a Welsh minstrel, was hanged, and quartered, for singing of songs [in the Welsh language], which were interpreted to be prophesying against the King."

Lord Leonard Grey, Viceroy of Ireland, who had been censured by the English Privy Council for "plundering the *rhymers* on the mountain side," was recalled on April 1st, 1540, and was replaced after a short interval by Sir Anthony St. Leger. This St. Leger, or Sellenger, was sworn into office on July 25th, 1540, and was, on the whole a tolerant ruler. He pursued a policy of conciliation towards the chief minstrels and rhymers.

At a Parliament held at Limerick on July I2th, 1541, the Royal Commissioners enacted:—"That no poet or other person whatever shall make verses called *auran* [*abráin*] to anyone after God on earth except the King, under penalty of forfeiting all his goods." This decree, as is evident, was aimed at rhymers and wandering minstrels who "made songs" on those whom they visited, being paid liberally for such poetic expressions. The practice was not altogether extinct in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; and the late Michael Hogan, better known as the *Bard of Thomond*, excelled in rhymes of this class.

In 1541, we meet with an interesting entry in the State Papers, from which it appears that the doughty warrior Cahir Mac Art Kavanagh, Tanist of Leinster, gave a guarantee to Sir Anthony St. Leger, for the loyalty of his *rhymers*, "so as parcels of their land shall rest with the King for their offence." This agreement affords evidence that even in the sixteenth century it had been the custom to give fee-farm lands to harpers, rhymers, brehons, etc.

We learn of the existence of Tuathal Maelmuire Mac Keogh of Rathtorkill, Co. Kildare, *rhymer*, from a brief reference to him in the State Papers, where it is mentioned that he was indicted, in 1542, for stealing "one pork, of the price of five shillings," belonging to a brother rhymer named Patrick Mac Hugh of the same village. It is satisfactory, however, to learn that Mac Keogh was pardoned for this offence on May 11th, 1549, as is recorded in the same official sources.

Among the *fiants* of Edward VI. we meet with a pardon to Fergal Mac Thomas Mac Keogh, of Donard, Co. Wicklow, *rhymer*, on April 16th, 1549; and to Owen oge Mac Crossan, of Ballymacrossan, rhymer, on June 10th, 1550, Hugh *boy* (*buide*, the yellow complexioned) of Ballyedmond, Co. Wexford, *piper*—one of the retainers of Mac Edmund *duff* of Hy Kinsellagh—received a pardon on February 10th, 1552; and another performer on the bagpipes, known as "Cormac the piper," was accorded a similar mark of clemency in the autumn of the same year.

One of the most distinguished harpers of this epoch was Edmond O'Flynn, of Meylerstown, Co, Kildare; and his compositions are said to have been numerous, but, none of them have come down to our time. He was chief harper to an Anglo-Irish nobleman, Walter Bermingham, and received a royal pardon on February 8th, 1553. (Fiants of Edward VI.)

In *Smyth's Information for Ireland*, dated May 5th, 1561, there is mention of four classes of rhymers, namely, brehons, shanachies, *aois-dana* (men of songs), and *fileas* or poetic story-tellers; also, female ballad singers called *mná riubail*. Sir William FitzWilliam, Lord Justice of Ireland, thus writes to Cecil, on April 14th, 1562: "These rhymers set forth the most 'bestlyest' and odious parts of men's ancestor's doings and their own likewise, for whom the rhymes are made. Such be caressed and defended, even with their priests, and rewarded with garments till they leave themselves naked [metaphorically], besides the best piece of plate in the house, and chiefest horse away with them; *not altogether departing empty-handed when they come among the Earls and others the nobility of the English race*."

As might be expected, severe measures were now ordered to be taken against all classes of musicians. From 1523 to 1563, notwithstanding the ordinances above-mentioned, wandering bards and harpers had freely exercised their avocations, and were even welcomed by the Lords of the Pale. "These laws," as Dr. Joyce writes, "were almost wholly inoperative; for the people went on speaking Irish, shaving, riding, and dressing just the same as before." In fact Irish music was almost at the zenith of its glory at this epoch, and was inseparably associated with the Irish language.

The first Elizabethan enactment against "Rymours, Bardes, dice players," etc., was on December 20th, 1563; and the reason alleged for such legislation was because "under pretence of visiting, they carry about privy intelligence between the malefactors in the disturbed districts." From this enactment, which is to be found in the Patent Roll, 6th Eliz., it appears that the nobles of the Pale often gave as much as 100 marks "as a reward for *lewd* rhymes," i.e. rhymes of a *deluding* nature, viewed politically. It was decreed that "if anyone in future gave a reward for such rhymes, a fine would be exacted of double that amount to the Queen, and the poet was to be fined at discretion." Some readers of the twentieth century will doubtless marvel at the interesting fact here disclosed, namely, that over £500 of our present money had been then frequently given in return for a song. A song writer was surely a person to be envied in those days—"'twas something then to be a bard,"—but, alas ! the professional rhymer could scarcely have foreseen that in days to come "the price of a song" would be synonymous with the merest trifle.

In connexion with the above statute, let me explain that as the person of a bard, harper or rhymer, was deemed sacred, these worthies were, in consequence, enabled to act, as a sort of intelligence department for the Irish chiefs, whilst often accepting largesse from the English enemy. The English themselves made use of bards or rhymers as spies, and in 1561, Fardoragh MacNamee is mentioned in a State Paper as conveying "secret information" to Captain Piers, Governor of Carrickfergus.

Father William Good, an English Jesuit, who taught a school, at Limerick, in his "Description of the Manners and Customs of the Wild Irish"—written in 1566, at the request of Camden, says: "They love music mightily and, of all instruments, are particularly taken with *the harp, which, being strung up with brass wire and beaten with crooked nails*, is very melodious." The Scotch harp of this period was exactly the same as the Irish, as may be proved by an examination of Mary Queen of Scots' Harp, still preserved. This harp is 31 inches high, and 18 inches from back to front, and was furnished with twenty-nine brass strings. It was richly ornamented, and was embellished with her portrait and the royal arms, which however were stolen in 1745.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XII.php#502)

The first pardon to a musician under Elizabeth was in 1565, when Richard O'Malone, of Donore, Co. Westmeath, *harper*, was received with favour. In the following year, on May 31st, William the piper was pardoned. On March 4th, 1569, pardon was granted to Donogh Mac Crydan, of St. John's, Nenagh, Tipperary, *harper*, and to Thady Credan, of Drangan, Co. Tipperary, *harper*.

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**NOTES**

[1] *Angliae Hist*. lib. xiii.

[2] On March 12th, 1904, this harp was sold by auction in Edinburgh, for 850 guineas. It was purchased by the Antiquar

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**Chapter XII.**...*concluded*

Under date of August, 1570, there is a record of a pardon to John O'Doran, of Brittas, Co. Wicklow, *piper*, at the reqest of the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin.

The Elizabethan enactments against bards, minstrels, pipers and rhymers, were enforced after the promulgation of the Bull of St. Pius V. in 1569, though Elizabeth herself retained in her service, an Irish harper called Donogh. In 1570, there was a beautiful poem written by an unknown Irish bard in praise of the O'Brien harp which had, during the enforced absence of its owner, Conor, Earl of Thomond, been in temporary possession of a certain O'Gilligan, a famous sixteenth-century harper. The poet describes it as "a musical, fine-pointed, speckled harp," and though "sweet in the hands of O'Gilligan, it was sweeter by far in the halls of O'Brien." We have ample evidence that it is none other than the present "Brian Boru's Harp," which had been given to the Earl of Thomond by Lord Clanrickarde.

In the Indenture between Sir Henry Sydney and the Mac Damore Clan in County Wexford, dated June 26th, 1570, one of the principal freeholders was "*Morighane piberre*," that is Morgan the piper, of the Park, near Gorey. The appearance of this wealthy Irish piper as one of the parties to a treaty with the then Lord Deputy of Ireland is a sufficient proof of the estimation in which he was regarded; and he agreed to surrender his lands on the express stipulation of receiving them back by letters patent, "such lands to be held for ever at such rents and services as shall be expressed in the patents."

There is a letter in the State Papers written on December 7th, 1572, in which mention is made of Feagh Mac Hugh O'Byrne, Rory O'More, and others of the Leinster clans, "who were wont to come by daylight *with bagpipes*, and by night with torch-light" on their predatory incursions. About this time another proclamation was issued against "bardes, carroghs, and rimors"; and Conor, Earl of Thomond, displayed his loyalty by vigorously carrying out the decree, and actually hanging three bards, "for which abominable and treacherous act," as the Annalists say, "he was satirized and denounced." A few years later this recreant Earl sent his son Donogh to England as a hostage to be educated as a Protestant.

Between the years 1570 and 1577, Henry Colley, of Carbury, Co. Kildare, and John Bourke, of Derryvicklan, Co. Clare, were appointed Seneschals of their respective counties, "with power to banish all malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, rhymers, Irish harpers," etc.; and Myler Delamere, of Ross, Co. Westmeath, was given the chief sergeantship of "Delamere's country," on condition of apprehending and committing to Mullingar jail any Irish minstrels. On March 6th, 1571, pardon was granted to Brian Mac Mahon Fitz Philip, of Newcastle, Co. Meath, *harper*; and, on January nth, 1572, to James O'Harrigan, *harper*.

On November 5th, 1571, Gerald, Earl of Kildare, and Piers Fitz James, of Ballysonan, Co. Kildare, were commissioned to execute martial law in said county, and to punish by death, or otherwise as directed, all harpers, rhymers, bards, etc. A similar commission was given to Patrick Savage, Seneschal of the Ards, Co. Down, on March 22nd, 1572.

Among the pardons for the year 1572 are those of Conly Mac Fannin fionn, late of Dunamaggan, Co. Kilkenny, *piper*, and Manus the piper, on January 12th; and Thomas *reagh* MacShane, *piper*, and Brian FitzPatrick Mac Donegan, *piper*, of Queen's County on September 19th.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XII-2.php#503)

On May 6th, 1573, Sir John of Desmond was pardoned on condition of not keeping any bard, carrogh, or rhymer in his train; and, early in 1576, orders were issued by the Privy Council of Ireland against "rimors, harpers, and other Irishmen," prohibiting same from allowing their horses to graze without payment ["a foyning"] in the barony of Rathdown, in the marches of Dublin

From a Grand Jury presentment of County Cork in 1576, it appears that the *Ollamh dann* and the various rhymers belonging to the lords of the soil "were wont to take the best apparel of the newly married wife of any freeholder in the county, or its value thereof"; and, as a case in point, O'Daly *fionn*, of Slieve Luachra, in Desmond, is quoted, "he being the chief rhymer, otherwise called *ollave dane*."[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XII-2.php#504)

The following pardons were issued, *inter alia*, in the year 1577: to Donal Mac Namara, of Galbally, Co. Tipperary, *harper*, on September 5th; to Donal MacRory O'Heffernan, of Shronehill, Co. Tipperary, *harper*, on September 12th; to Fergall Mac Maelmurry O'Heffernan, Magrath O'Heffernan, and Aherny O'Heffernan, of Shronehill, *rhymers*, on the same day; to Conor Mac Loughlin, of Moher, *piper*, on November 14th; and to Owen *the piper*, of Carrickmines, Co. Dublin, about the same time.

We are fortunately able to give an illustration of the Irish harpers and war pipers of 1578, as drawn by John Derrick, in his *Image of Ireland*. This extraordinary book, dedicated to Sir Philip Sydney, is extremely rare, and was published by John Day in 1581, though, as stated in the title, "made and devised anno 1578," The reader can judge of Derrick's artistic powers by the subjoined sketches "of the habite and apparell" of an Irish harper and an Irish piper:—



As is well-known, the minstrels of Erin stood bravely by the proscribed religion, under Elizabeth; and, indeed, it may be said that music and verse contributed not a little to the preservation of the Catholic religion in Ireland during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. From the *Religious Songs of Connaught*, edited by Dr. Douglas Hyde, we can imagine what must have been the effect of these sacred effusions when rendered with due expression.

On March 13th, 1578, Sir Lucas Dillon, Chief Baron, was ordered "to punish all malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, *rhymers, Irish harpers*," etc.; and, not long afterwards, Sir William Drury hanged Father O'Rourke, O.S.F., and Rory oge, a brehon. In the following year, on November 23rd, a proclamation was issued ordering that "no idle person, vagabond, or masterless man, *bard, rhymer*, or other notorious malefactor remain within the district of North Wicklow on pain of whipping after 8 days, and of death, after 20 days." The great victory at Glenmalure, on August 25th, 1580, when Fiacha Mac Aodha O'Byrne and Viscount Baltinglass utterly defeated Lord Grey de Wilton (Viceroy), and Sir William Stanley (the English loss being estimated as 800 soldiers, including Sir Peter Carew, Colonel Moore, and Captains Audley and Cosby), was celebrated by many a martial lyric. In particular, the fine song "*dia lib, A laocrad gaoideal*," written by Aengus MacDoighre O'Daly, bard of O'Byrne, dates from this period, but the air has long since disappeared.

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**NOTES**

[3] Fiants of Elizabeth, 12th Report of the D.K.I.

[4] O'Daly, of Muinter Bhaire, Co. Cork, was an important personage at this epoch, and, in a grant of certain lands to Thomas, Earl of Ormonde, for which a fiant was issued on December 10th, 1578, was included "a freehold, with the tithes of the same, which O'Daly the Rhymer lately held." Dinely, in 1681, writes:—"The suit and service expected from O'Daly and his successors for all that land unto Carew and his heirs was *to be their Rimers, Poets, and Chroniclers of their actions*."

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(*continued*)**

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**Chapter XIII.**

PARDON was granted to MacLoughlin roe O'Brennan, *harper*, on October 4th, 1581; and, in 1582, there are grants of pardon to Thomas *reagh* (the brown), of King's County, *piper*, on May 8th; Maelmurry MacTuathal MacKeogh, of County Carlow, rhymer, on August 27th; Walter Brenagh (Walsh), harper, on August 30th; Owen MacLoughlin MacEgan, *brehon*, on September 19th; and Donogh O'Creedan, of Synon, *harper*, on November 13th.

In the articles between the Privy Council of Ireland and Sir John O'Reilly, of Breffni, Co. Cavan, on August 28th, 1583, there was a special covenant: "That he shall not keep any Irish *brehons* . . . nor keep within his house any Irish *bard, carroghe*, or *rhymer*," etc.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII.php#501) Subsequently, there were similar articles of agreement entered into at the Camp, near Dunluce, on September 18th, 1584, between Sir John Perrott and Donal *gorme* MacConnell of the Glens, the ancestor of the MacDonnells of Antrim.

Between the years 1581 and 1584, Edmund Spenser, author of the *Faerie Queene*, had a very good opportunity of studying Irish music, which he praises very highly, shrewdly remarking the then prevalent mode of elaborately embellishing the simplest airs. This meretricious adornment of old melodies, as noticed by Spenser (whose residence for three years at Kilcullen, New Abbey, Co. Kildare, has, strangely enough, been overlooked by almost all his biographers), continued till the close of the eighteenth century, with the natural result that it is most difficult to get accurate versions of sixteenth and seventeenth-century tunes. Petrie collected fifty "settings" of one particular melody, many of them widely different; and I myself, some twenty-nine years ago, sent Dr. Joyce—one of our best living authorities on ancient Irish music—five or six variants of certain seventeenth-century melodies which I had noted down in different parts of Ireland.

Spenser assures us that the bardic verses "are taken up with a general applause, and *usually sung at all the feasts and meetings by the racraidhe, whose proper function that is, who also receive for the same great reward and reputation amongst them*" He adds:—"I have caused divers of these [Irish] poems to be translated to me that I might understand them; and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention .... sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their natural device, which gave good grace and comeliness unto them." For the benefit of the English reader it is as well to explain that the *Racraidhe* above mentioned included those who sang to the music of the *cruit* or harp, and who also recited the poems of their master. Spenser instances a case he had known where *forty cows* were paid by an Irish noble for an effusive ode or *dan*.

The author of the *Faerie Queene* alludes to "the wandering women called *Mona Shull*." These female ballad singers—*mna siubhail*—are also described by Derrick in his *Image of Ireland* (1581), and were under the rule of a leader called Lucas, having only one eye. Severe enactments were passed against these mendicant women-rhymers, as also against *aesulla*, or *ishallyn*, as the name is written in the State Papers of Elizabeth. Camden thus writes in 1586:—"They [the Irish] have their *Brehons* [judges], *Historians* (who record their exploits), *Physicians, Poets* called *Bards*, and *Harpers*, each of whom have lands assigned them; and each of these [five] professions, in every territory, form distinct families, as Brehons of one lineage and name, Historians of another, and so of the rest."[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII.php#502)

A Presentment of the Grand Jury of County Cork for November, 1584, gives the names of 72 persons who were then living as "poets, chroniclers, and rhymers," including O'Cuill (Quill) and O'Cahill, *rhymers*; Art *na caoine, bard*; Maelconry MacShane, of Castletownroche, *harper*, Shane O'Dwyer, of Aherlow, *chronicler*, Cormac O'Daly, the Lord Barrymore's *rhymer*, etc.; also Mary ny Donoghue, a *she barde*, and Mary ny Clancy, *rhymer*. An Inquisition of same year returns John MacDonnell as "Rhymer" or "*Ollamh re Dan* of Desmond."

Although Hardiman was of opinion that the famous Munster song, *Seaghan O'Duibhir an Gleanna*—"John O'Dwyer of the Glen"—only dated from after the year 1651, in reference to Colonel John O'Dwyer, of Glynn, Co. Waterford, I am strongly inclined to the view of O'Daly, in his *Poets and Poetry of Munster* (2nd series), that it really dates from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and was composed for the *Shane O'Duibhir*, of the Glen of Aherlow, Co. Tipperary, living in 1584, who figures in the above Presentment, as quoted in the Carew MS., No. 627. The clearing of the forests alluded to in this grand old song began as early as the fifteenth century, and was well nigh completed by the "Undertakers" under Elizabeth, who were anxious to make all the ready money they could fearing that the Irish would soon dispossess them. Moreover, the very construction of the air seems to point to the second half of the sixteenth century, rather than the middle of the seventeenth century.

In the list of pardons issued in 1584 are the names of Morgan the piper (who made the Indenture with Sir Henry Sydney in 1570) and Alexander the piper, both of "The Park," near Gorey, Co. Wexford, on April 10th; Donal MacKeogh, of Co. Carlow, *rhymer*, on April 28th; Russell MacRussell, of Ballinacarrig, Co. Cork, *harper*, on June 4th; and John Piers, "chief musician and piper to Sir Gerald Fitzgerald," of Dromana, Co. Waterford, on July 13th.

The viceroyalty of Sir John Perrott (a natural son of Henry VIII.), who was sworn in on June 21st, 1584, proved fairly beneficial to Ireland; and he held a Parliament at Dublin, on April 26th, 1585, in which a statute was passed regarding costume, and another. against sorcery and witchcraft. This Deputy ordered stocks to be made for punishing "idle persons, spies, *bards, gamesters*," etc.

Among the *fiants* of Elizabeth, the pardons for the year 1585 include:—William MacCruddan or Creedan, "*harper and yeoman*," on February 26th; Mahon O'Heffernan, *rhymer*, Eneas *roe* O'Heffernan, *rhymer*, and Donogh O'Casey, *piper*, on May 14th; Ulick O'Maelconry, of Clonea, Co. Roscommon, "*gentleman and rhymer*," Gillananeave caoch (the blind), of Clonpluckane, *rhymer*, and Paudheen *oge* O'Mulconry, *rhymer*, on June 1st; Melaghlin *roe* O'Brennan, of Co. Galway, *harper*, on June 27th; Murtogh MacRory O'Heffernan, of Derrycloney, *rhymer*, Donogh MacCormac, of Co. Limerick, *piper*, and Conor O'Heffernan, of same, *rhymer*, on July 8th.

The pardons granted during the year 1586 include Gillaglass O'Shallow, *harper*, on May 29th; Dermot MacGrath, of Hospital, Co. Limerick, *harper*, on May 31st; and Flann MacEneas *oge* MacGrath, of Garristown, Co. Tipperary, rhymer, on September 2Oth. This is the renowned bard, Flann Magrath, who wrote a fine elegy on Thomas, Earl of Ormonde, published by O'Donovan in 1850, from the MS. of John Murphy, of Carrignavar, Co. Cork, dated 1726. O'Donovan only knew of Magrath's existence by the fact of his name being signed to some poems, about the year 1586; but the State Paper entry is an interesting addition to our scant knowledge of this Irish bard.

Notwithstanding all that Perrott had done for the "English interest" in Ireland from 1584 to 1587, he was a "marked" man, owing to the machinations of Loftus, Wallop, Bingham, Fenton, and Bagnall. One of the accusations against him was a leniency towards bards, minstrels, and others who had sounded the praises of the dispossessed Irish princes and nobles. Accordingly, an order was issued on March 20th, 1588, to John Kiernan, Seneschal of MacKiernan's Country (County Cavan), "to prosecute, banish, and punish by all means, malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, *rhymers, Irish harpers, bards*, etc. From a letter written by the ill-fated Sir Brian O'Rourke, Lord of Breffney, on October 6th, 1588, to MacMahon, Lord of Oriel (Co. Monaghan), it would appear that this order was stringently carried out. The scarcity of the Irish harp is lamented by O'Rourke, who thus writes:—"And what you request us to send you, as *a harp and a great spear*, we do assure you we cannot; there is never a good harp in our country, but we will provide one for you, and will send two great spears, and two *skeins* of the best made in our country."[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII.php#503)

On May 4th, 1588, pardon was granted to "Grany ny Malley, Sadh Bourke ny Davy Bourke, widow. Theobald Bourke MacRichard *enieran*, gent., Margaret O'Flaherty, daughter of Grany," and others. This Grany ny Malley, or Grace O'Malley was none other than *Grania Maol* (daughter of Owen O'Malley, of the Owles, Co. Mayo, chieftain of Burrishoole), the widow of "Iron Dick." About this time was composed a fine old song in honour of this Queen of the West; and the name *Graine Maol* (pronounced *Grania Uaile*) was used by the bards, in after days, to symbolize Erin—the affix *maol*, meaning "bald," personifying the desolate condition of Ireland from wars and famine. Though the original words of the song, as well as the tune of "Graine Uaile," are almost forgotten, an excellent Irish version was furnished by John *Claragh* MacDonnell, about the year 1730, which is printed in Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* where the original lyric may also be found.

Sir John Perrott, fairly disgusted with the viceroyalty of Ireland, besought the Queen to recall him to England; and, on June 30th, 1588, he delivered the sword of state to his successor, Sir William Fitzwilliam. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in the late summer and early autumn of the year 1588 accentuated the strained relations existing between England and Ireland; and, on October 28th, 1589, another proclamation was issued against "rhymers, Irish harpers, idle men and women," etc. Lady Morgan writes:—"Elizabeth, jealous of that influence which the bardic order of Ireland held over the most puissant of her chiefs, not only enacted laws against them, but against such as received or entertained them; for Spenser informs us that, even *then*, 'their verses were taken up with a general applause, and usually sung at all feasts and meetings.'" The Earl of Cumberland paid a visit to Dingle, Co. Kerry, in 1589, as is recorded in *Hakluyt's Voyages* (published at London in 1599), and he gives an interesting account of the social state of the country at the period. *Inter alia* he writes:—"Here we wel refreshed ourselves whilest the *Irish harpe* sounded sweetly in our eares."

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**NOTES**

[1] See Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy*, vol. ii., p. 159. However Hardiman erroneously gives the date as A.D. 1584, whereas it should be 1583.

[2] Gough's *Camden* vol. iv., p. 467.

[3] Sir Brian O'Rourke was betrayed by James VI. of Scotland in 1590, and handed over to Queen Elizabeth—being sent as a convict in chains. Elizabeth "ordered him to be hanged without even the form of a trial," and, to add insult to injury, assigned him in his last moments, by way of a ghostly father, Miler Magrath, the Protestant Archbishop of Cashel, "who exhorted him," as MacGeoghegan writes, "to conform to the religion of the Queen and of the state," However, Lombard tells us that the ancient Prince of Breffni refused Miler's ministrations, and added: "As for *me*, I shall die in the religion which *you* have deserted." O'Rourke's death (on November 3rd, 1591) was amply avenged by his son, at the Battle of the Curlew Mountains, on August 15th, 1599, when Clifford and his 1,500 men were utterly routed by O'Rourke's force of only 200. Amongst the slain were Sir Conyers Clifford, Sir Alexander Ratcliffe, and others.

# Irish Music in the Sixteenth Century (*continued*)

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XIII.**...*concluded*

On January 28th, 1590, Patrick Fox, of Dublin, a Government spy, wrote to Walsingham that Hubert O'Ferrall, son of Fergus O'Ferrall, "had sent a harp as a token to Feagh MacHugh, by one Richard O'Quinn, a priest, well knowing MacHugh to be a bad member," and that he had stayed a week with the said Feagh "to establish friendship betwixt Feagh and O'Rourke and his own father."

Queen Elizabeth was particularly incensed against Hugh O'Neill, Prince of Tyrone, but yet, when that nobleman presented himself at court, attended by a numerous retinue, including his chief bard (O'Gnive) and piper, he was restored to favour, notwithstanding the malignant efforts of Cecil.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII-2.php#504)

The inauguration of Hugh O'Donnell as "The O'Donnell of Tyrconnell," on May 3rd, 1592, followed by the English defeat at the Ford of the Biscuits, in 1594, and the recall of Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam (who was replaced by Sir William Russell on August nth, 1594), induced Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, to sever his connection with the Hiberno-English faction. We read that the bards and minstrels were rejoiced at the alliance between O'Neill and O'Donnell; and numerous harpers and pipers from Munster and Connaught flocked to the standards of the Northern Chiefs. Lady Morgan writes:—"Although Ulster was never deemed poetic ground, yet, when destruction threatened the bardic order in the southern provinces, .... hither they fled for protection, and, at different periods, found it from the Northern Princes." Various successes following on the victory of Clontibret, in 1595, induced Queen Elizabeth to come to terms with O'Neill, in April, 1596, but the Prince of Tyrone refused the conditions; and, on July 6th of that year, the Ulster chiefs wrote to their brethren in Munster to league with them in a war for religion and country.

Many fine old songs and ballads date from this epoch. The bards of County Wicklow strung their harps in praise of the noble Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne,[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII-2.php" \l "505) whilst those of Munster had for their theme the gallant deeds of the Earl of Desmond. The lovely tune known as "The Foggy Dew" is certainly as old as the year 1595, and it was used by Denny Lane for his ballad "The Irish Maiden's Lament." Who has not heard the grand air "Roisin *dubh*," which was written and composed in praise of Hugh Roe O'Donnell? "*Seaghan Ruadh*" (*Shaun Rua*) was composed for John of Desmond, whilst the Geraldines of Kildare were not forgotten by the harpers.

The English, too, availed of the services of Irish harpers as "intelligencers," and there is a report in the State Papers, under date of July, 1595, wherein a certain spy called Peter MacMahon, of Drogheda, detailed much secret information acquired in the household of Lord Louth. The better to ingratiate himself with the followers of O'Neill, he assiduously practised the harp, and was able to play well on the instrument.[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII-2.php#506)

Turlogh *Luineach* O'Neill, who died early in September, 1595, was a great patron of bards and rhymers. His mansion house was at Strabane, Co. Tyrone, and it was ever open to minstrels. One of his bards, Ferdoragh MacConmidh (MacNamee), is described in a State Paper as "the richest rhymer in Ireland," and Turlogh himself —who had assumed the title of "O'Neill"—was wont to invite, during the Christmas holidays of every year, all literary and musical persons as honoured guests, "not one of them departing dissatisfied, or without being supplied abundantly."

From the State Papers we learn that on August 2nd, 1597, Sir Conyers Clifford availed of the services of an Irish harper to bring a message to O'Rourke.

Edmund Spenser published his *View of the South of Ireland*, in 1596, in which he expresses the conviction that the Irish people, if managed on his lines, "would quickly consume themselves and devour one another." It seemed like a retribution when, on a certain October evening of the year 1598, Kilcolman Castle was attacked and burned by the Irish, and Spenser with his wife barely escaped. As is well known, the poet actually died of starvation at a tavern in King-street, Westminster, on January 16th, 1599.

Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne was at length betrayed by a relative to the Lord Deputy, and was killed on the 18th of May, 1597; and on May 22nd, Sir William Russell was superseded by Thomas, Lord Borough. A pardon was granted to Dermot MacGrath, *piper*, at the suit of the Lord of Upper Ossory, on June 6th, which was the first and last act of clemency exercised by the new Deputy. Lord Borough died on October 14th, and was succeeded by Sir Thomas Norris, who resigned in a month, being replaced by Loftus and Gardiner as Lords Justices.

Early in September, 1597, was fought the Battle of Tyrrell's Pass, in which Captain Richard Tyrrell, with 400 men, utterly defeated the Anglo-Irish of Meath, under Lord Trimlestown, near Fertullagh, Co. Westmeath. MacGeoghegan writes:—"While the English were passing the place where O'Connor (Tyrrell's lieutenant) lay in ambuscade, this officer sallied forth with his troops, *caused the drums and fifes to play 'Captain Tyrrell's March,' this being the signal agreed on for an attack*. The English army, having got between two fires, were cut to pieces; and so general was the slaughter that only one soldier escaped."

On July 6th, 1596, Lyon, Protestant Bishop of Cork thus writes to Lord Hunsdon, Lord Chamberlain of England:—"Some strict order must be taken for idle persons, as *carroghes, hazards, rhymers, bards*, and *harpers*, which run about the country, eating the labours of the poor, carrying news and intelligence to the rebels, and bruiting false tales. Also, the *rithmers* make songs in commendation and praise of the treasons, spoilings, preyings, and thievings made. They flock to the *cuddies*, or night-suppers," etc.

The Battle of the Yellow Ford was a glorious victory for O'Neill, on August 14th, 1598, when Marshal Sir Henry Bagenal, with the flower of his army (about 2,000 troops), bit the dust; and it was followed by the surrender of *Portmore*, concerning which so many songs were written. Had the Irish forces, under O'Neill and O'Donnell, marched on to Dublin at this crisis, the English power in Ireland would have been annihilated.

At the terrible "disaster" of Ranelagh, Co. Wicklow, on Tuesday, May 29th, 1599, in which Sir Henry Harrington, with 600 men, was utterly defeated by Phelim MacFeagh O'Byrne, we read in the State Papers that, on the evening preceding, "the rebel Phelim MacFeagh sent *a messenger of his own, being a Rymer*, to pray Sir Henry to forbear doing of any hurt to him, and that he would submit himself to the Lord Lieutenant." The Privy Council, in their letter of June 2nd, describe briefly how O'Byrne destroyed Harrington's "whole regiment, and brake them with a lamentable slaughter of the most part of the companies of foot."

On August 15th, 1599, a fiant was issued granting a pardon to Fineen Fitzjohn, *piper*, at the suit of Edmund, Viscount Mountgarret. Two famous musicians of this epoch were Dermot O'Dugan, bard to the Earl of Desmond, and Rory *dall* O'Cahan, the harper and composer. Many a well-fought field resounded with the martial strains of *Lamh dearg abu* and O'Donnell *abu*; and the close of the year 1599 found Hugh O'Neill practically King of Ireland. Perhaps nothing more signally demonstrates the absolute freedom enjoyed by the harpers, pipers, tympanists, and minstrels at this epoch than the non-appearance of any State pardons in the various official documents from 1586 to 1600—save the solitary one to Fineen Fitzjohn, above mentioned.

One of the saddest pages in Irish history is the account given, both by native annalists and English writers, of the last twelve months of the career of James, Earl of Desmond—better know as the *Sugan* Earl. This great Anglo-Irish noble, who is described in the State Papers as "the most powerful of the Earls of Desmond," fought against terrible odds, and, at length, was defeated, on September 17th, 1600, on his way to the Glen of Aherlow, by Captain Greame. Fortunately, he managed to get away, with about 400 men, and retreated for a time to the well-known fastness of Aherlow, immortalised by the lovely song *Seagan o Duibir an Gleanna* (John O'Dwyer of the Glen), which I have previously alluded to. In the following month he was joined by Dermot MacCraith, Bishop of Cork and Cloyne; and the two "outlaws" lay concealed till the close of November in a cabin at Lisbarry, near the woods of Drumfineen.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIII-2.php#507)

In all his hair-breadth escapes the Earl was assisted by his faithful harper, Dermot O'Dugan, who acted as a devoted sentinel, and gave due notice to his master of the approach of the soldiery. We read that during the Christmastide of 1600-1, the only companions of Desmond were Father John Shanahan, two of the Baldwin family, and the harper, O'Dugan. The noble Geraldine was at last captured, on May 29th, 1601, by his own kinsman, the White Knight (in a cave near Clogheen, Co. Tipperary), by whom he was given up to Sir George Thornton, receiving for his treachery the then large sum of £1,000.

Native Irish minstrelsy was now in a sore plight, and was destined to experience further persecution under James I., as we shall see in a succeeding chapter.

**END OF CHAPTER XIII**.

**Pre-Reformation Church Music in Ireland**

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**Chapter XIV.**

THERE are still in existence two canons of a Synod held by St. Patrick about the year 450, relative to church music. Various Missals, Antiphonaries, and Hymn Books from the eighth to the twelfth century, attest the Irish form of the Roman Liturgy.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV.php#501) Tirechan, a writer of the seventh century, tells that a proper Preface was always sung for the National Apostle, in the Mass for the feast of St. Patrick; and all liturgical scholars are familiar with the old Irish *Liber Hymnorum*. I have already treated of the great Continental schools of music founded by Irish monks, especially that of St. Gall's; and reference has also been made to the Culdees of Armagh, who had a world-renowned music school, from the eighth to the sixteenth century.

Under date of 1224 we read of the death of "Maurice the Canonist, son of King Roderick O'Conor, one of the most eminent of the Irish for learning, *psalm-singing* and poetry."

From the close of the thirteenth century the Sarum Use obtained in the majority of the Irish churches, and continued till 1560. Inasmuch as Christ Church, Dublin, may be regarded as a typical cathedral, the following notices, from its archives, relating to music, together with other kindred matter, will supply a lacuna in our ecclesiastical annals.

In 1217, Henry de Londres, Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Justice of Ireland, convened a Synod, in which it was decreed that the singing of the canonical hours should be rendered "distinctly and clearly, with due reverence and devotion," and that "there should be no skipping or slurring of the notes of the liturgical chant." Two years later, this prelate erected St. Patrick's Collegiate Church as a cathedral, and founded the dignities of Precentor, Chancellor, and Treasurer, ordering that the Use of Sarum should be observed; and he died in July 1228. After eighty years dissension, a settlement was come to on March 2nd, 1300, whereby Christ Church, as the Mother Church (receiving three ounces of gold, annually, from St. Patrick's), was confirmed in its precedence over St. Patrick's, yet both Cathedrals were to be metropolitan, and both Chapters were to have a voice in the election of Archbishop.

Although Pope Clement V. on July nth, 1311, issued a Bull for the erection of a University in Dublin, yet it was not till 1320 that Archbishop de Bicknor was able to formally open it, and he also framed a code of statutes for the infant University, the *studium generale* being in St. Patrick's Cathedral.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV.php#502)

In 1328, according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, died Maurice O'Gibellan, Master of Arts, learned in civil and canon law, a philosopher, Irish poet, and exact speaker of the speech which in Irish is called Ogham; a Canon and singer in Tuam, Elphin, Achonry, Killala, Annadown and Clonfert, as also Vicar-General. In 1343, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, "Donnchada O'Mael-Brenainn [O'Mulrenin] the cleric, Canon-chorister of Elphin, was killed by one shot of an arrow by the people of David Mac William de Burgh the Brown."

From the Statutes of the Provincial Council held in Dublin, in 1348, under the presidency of Alexander de Bicknor, Archbishop of Dublin, it is evident that the study and cultivation of sacred chant was insisted on as an essential part of the duties of clerics. (Can. 23). These statutes, according to Ware, are preserved in the White Book of the Church of Ossory.

John of St. Paul, Archbishop of Dublin, built the choir of Christ Church Cathedral in 1358, and subscribed to the fund for a new organ, which was presided at by one of the Canons, generally designated as "clerk of the organs." His successor Thomas Minot (a relative of Laurence Minot, the famous war-song writer), who was consecrated on Palm Sunday, 1363, almost rebuilt St. Patrick's Cathedral, and added a steeple to it.

About the year 1370 was transcribed the exquisite Psalter of Christ Church, now preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Mr. Mills, of the Dublin Public Record Office says that "this work must be acknowledged to be the most elaborate extant work of Anglo-Norman art in Ireland."

In 1390, John de Sandale, Precentor of Christ Church, effected some improvements in the musical services. The ordinary choir dress for the Canons was the same as at Salisbury, that is, "black copes down to the feet, and surplices beneath them," whilst the choir boys wore *cottae* and *rochettae*, or shortened albs—the acolytes generally being vested in "scarlet cassocks with a scarlet hood over the surplice."

Reading between the lines of musty parchment deeds and account rolls of the fourteenth century, we get a tolerable insight into the constitution of the choir and its general economy. Music was sedulously cultivated; and several Latin treatises on musical theory were written by eminent prelates and clerics, including a valuable work by Simon Tunstede, D.D., O.S.F., who died in 1369. I have previously mentioned that the earliest *English* treatise on music was written by an Irish cleric, Lionel Power, about the year 1390. It may also be added that there is a fine Antiphonarium of this period among the manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV.php#503)

In the *Red Book of the Exchequer* there is a very fine transcript of the Gregorian Modes, and also the hymn for the feast of the Ascension and the Latin hymn to St. Nicholas. Folios 49-64 contain an early illuminated Missal comprising the chief festivals, following, to a great extent, the Use of Sarum, whilst folio 135 has the well-known hymn to St. John the Baptist, "Ut Queant laxis," from which Guido of Arezzo evolved the names Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, etc. It also contains an early Church Calendar, with various notices of events from 1264 to 1524.

King Edward III., in 1335, as a mark of favour to the Carmelite Friars of Dublin, granted the said White Friars the sole right of performing Divine Service in the Chapel of the Exchequer in George Street (near the present South Great George's Street), who were, for their labours, entitled to receive from the Court of Exchequer an annual payment of one hundred shillings. In 1347 or 1348 the Exchequer removed from George Street, and its site was granted to the Austin Friars on July 28th, 1362. Here it is as well to explain that there was always a Chaplain of the Exchequer Chapel, and it was a custom, from the close of the fourteenth century to the year 1869 (when the "Church of Ireland" was disestablished), for the choiristers of Christ Church, on the third day previous to the close of each Law Term, four times a year, "to proceed to the Court of Exchequer to do homage to the King before the Barons, in open Court, in order to secure their estates and privileges." On these visits the Chaplain recited the Latin prayers contained in the Red Book, and the choir sang appropriate antiphons and Latin hymns, "standing on the green cloth," at the conclusion of which they received a certificate that entitled them to all their revenues. An entry was then made in the rule-books of the Court to the effect that "the Chauntor of Christ Church brought into Court the Vicar's Choral, and performed their accustomed service and homage due to his Majestie," receiving their wonted fee of ten shillings sterling.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV.php#504)

In 1396, there is a record of the death of Matthew O'Lonan, Archdeacon of Ardagh, who is described by the old chroniclers as "a man versed in various arts and sciences, in history, poetry, *music*, and general literature."

Under Nicholas Staunton, Prior of Christ Church from 1420 to 1438, the musical services were very numerous, owing to the number of anniversary Requiem Masses. In an interesting inventory of the goods of Thomas Weston, Prior of the Hospital of St. John of Newgate, Dublin, enrolled among the deeds of Christ Church, there is mention of "three capes and two hoods, worth 6s. 8d.;" "a breviary, worth 20s.; " "a mass book," etc.; and he bequeathed his breviary "to the Prior of Holy Trinity, *to be chained in the choir*."

In 1431, Richard Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin (brother to the Earl of Shrewsbury), instituted six minor Canons and six Choristers in St. Patrick's Cathedral, who were not, however, to have a stall in the choir, nor yet a voice in the Chapter. Each of the six Choristers was to receive four marks, English money, and twenty marks to the Precentor.

On February 18th, 1438, Pope Eugenius IV. granted an indulgence of four years and 160 days to "those who, being penitent, and having confessed devoutly, visited Holy Trinity Church yearly, on the Sunday on which is chanted *Laetare Jerusalem*, and bestow alms towards its repair and preservation." Among the items of expenditure recorded in the Treasurer's book at this period we find "quires of paper for copying music," "mats for the choirs," "surplices and rochets for the choristers," "sconces for the quires," "a key to the quire door," "a quire of paper for songs," etc.

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**NOTES**

[1] Renehan's *History of Music*, p. 68.

[2] William de Rudyard, Dean of St Patrick's, was appointed first Chancellor. On August 14th, 1359, Edward III. endowed a Lectureship in Divinity in the University of Dublin; and, in 1364, Lionel Duke of Clarence founded a theological chair to be held by an Austin Friar—said lectures to be given in the vestry or robing-room of the Cathedral.

[3] No. 100 in Abbott's Catalogue of the MSS. in T C.D.

[4] Mr. Bumpus tells us that in the early years of the nineteenth century "four of the chorister boys and the two clerical vicars used to attend, escorted by the verger of Christ Church." Mr. John Horan, the veteran Organist of Christ Church, who had been a chorister from 1841 to 1846, is the last surviving member of the choir that took part in this quaint ceremonial—abolished since 1869.

**Pre-Reformation Church Music in Ireland**

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On the death of Archbishop Talbot, on August 15th, 1449, John Streguthen, barber, acting as agent for the Prior and monks of Christ Church Cathedral, pledged the archiepiscopal cross and crozier to Richard White, tailor, for five marks. These *insignia* were not released for seventy-eight years till Archbishop Allen redeemed them on payment of "almost 100 ounces of silver" out of his own substance, as he himself states in a note which is contained in the *Liber Niger*.

Nor was Dublin peculiar in upholding a good standard of sacred music. We learn that the Cashel province was equally zealous in the cause of plain chant. This is apparent from the 86th Canon of the Provincial Council of Cashel, in 1453, under Archbishop Cantwell: "Statuit Concilium, quod in civitatibus et locis in quibus cantus habetur et chorus regitur, nulli ad aliquas praelaturas nisi cantores admittantur, salvo privilegio speciali Sedis Apostolicae."

Archbishop Tregury—a skilled musician, as well as a most erudite prelate—by his will, dated December 10th, 1471, bequeathed his "pair of organs" to St. Patrick's Cathedral, "to be used at the celebration of service in St. Mary's Chapel."[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#505) He died on December 21st of same year, and was succeeded by John Walton, in 1472, during whose rule an Act was passed by the Irish Parliament, in 1474, for the regulation of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Under Thomas Harold, Prior of Christ Church from 1474 to 1489, the Cathedral of Holy Trinity received many valuable bequests, and the excellence of the musical services was fully maintained. Richard White of Swords, by his will dated March 26th, 1476, left 12d. to 12 choir boys to assist at the singing of a Requiem for his soul. Similarly, by his will dated June 10th, 1476, Nicholas Delabre bequeathed the sum of four nobles to a choir boy named Robert Plunket.

On April 15th, 1480, Thomas Bennett, ex-Mayor of Dublin, granted the lands of Ballymore-Eustace, Co. Kildare, to the Prior and Convent of Christ Church, "in order to sustain four choristers, to be instructed," and to assist at certain specified Divine offices. However, as Johanna Sowerby, mother of said Thomas, had a lien on the property, it was not until May 4th, 1484, that seisin of the lands so assigned was given to Prior Harold.[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#506)

From the *Calendar of Christ Church Deeds* we learn that on October 8th, 1485, John Estrete, or Street, Sergeant-at-Law, granted certain lands and other property in trust "to convey to the Prior and Convent of Christ Church for a Canon to celebrate the Mass of the Holy Ghost daily in the Chapel of St. Laurence O'Toole, in the south aisle next the choir"; and, on every Thursday, there was to be a solemn High Mass, with full choir, for the repose of the soul of said John and his benefactors, the Earl of Kildare, Sir Rowland FitzEustace, and others; also directing that the annual obit should be sung in Whitsun week.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#507)

In July, 1488, there was a grand celebration in Christ Church Cathedral, when general absolution was given to all those who had aided in Lambert Simnel's rebellion; and there was "joyful music on the viols and the organs," after which an oath of allegiance was signed by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishops of Meath and Kildare, and many others.[[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#508)

David Winchester, who had been elected Prior of Christ Church on March 5th, 1489, was evidently determined to have the music a special feature of the services, and so, on August 28th, 1493, he founded a Professorship of Music in connection with the Cathedral. By the terms of the foundation, "the oblations offered to the relic of the Holy Staff of Jesus within the said church," with various rents of lands in Dublin and Ardee, were allocated to establish a music school. The "music master" was bound to teach four choristers and four probationers; and these boys were to assist at "daily Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Mass and Antiphons of Jesus every Friday in Lent, and at all other times when required." In addition to being instructed in music, the four choristers were provided with "meat and drink," and were clothed at the expense of the convent.

As an interesting specimen of the duties required of a church organist and choirmaster at this period, I cannot do better than quote the following Indenture, dated December 11th, 1502, which is among the Harleian manuscripts. This Indenture was made at Rushen Abbey, Isle of Man, on said date, between an Anglo-Irish musician, John Darcy, and William Parke, whereby John Darcy agreed, for certain considerations, to live in Rushen Abbey for six years, and to teach said William Parke "to sing prick song discant of all manner measures, and to sing upon a prick song faubourdon to tunes of every measure, and to set a song of three parts, four or five substantially, and also to play upon the organs, and any manner plain song or pricked song in two or three parts, and *to make plain and shew him the secrets and method of teaching and instruction of every of the premises in the best manner*." Apparently, John Darcy was engaged for the term of six years in order to teach William Parke, a Cistercian monk, the profession of "clerk of the organs."

Among the manuscripts now housed in Trinity College, Dublin, there are Psalters, Antiphonaries, and Breviaries of the fifteenth century—catalogued respectively as Nos. 69, 77, 82, 86, 95, 101, 102, and 109 in Dr. Abbott's Catalogue—but, of all these, the most interesting from a musical standpoint is No. 82, being the *Kilcormick Missal*, with a four-lined stave notation—written by a worthy Irish scribe, Brother Dermot O'Flanagan, a Carmelite Friar of Loughrea, and finished on March 3rd, 1458. It was written for the Carmelite Friary of Kilcormick, or Frankford, King's County, at the request of the Prior, Father Edward O'Higgins. As is usual in pre-Reformation Missals, there are thirteen sequences (of course the number varied), and there is also a valuable Kalendar, containing obits of benefactors, etc. A charming sequence, "Mellis stilla," is given for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Mass of St. Patrick, too, has a very fine Sequence, and there is a fragment of the Sequence of St. Brigid.

Richard III. and Henry VII. were generous patrons of music and musicians, and, naturally, their Deputies in Ireland took the cue accordingly. In the privy purse expenses of Henry VII. we find that, in 1490, Arnold Jeffrey, "orgon pleyer," received his quarterly salary of *ten shillings*.[[9]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#509) Henry Abingdon, Mus. Bac., "Master of the Song," had a yearly salary of forty marks, as had also his successor, Gilbert Bannister, in 1480. However, the earliest record in Ireland of a salaried organist is that of William Herbit, who, in 1506, was appointed "pulsator organorum"—or organist—of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, with the munificent (?) stipend of £3 6s. 8d. a year.[[10]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php" \l "510) It was, in truth, no misnomer for the organist of the fifteenth century to be called a "pulsator" or smiter of the organs, because the keys were both large and stiff, and could only be played on with the clenched fist.

Maurice Fitzgerald, Archbishop of Cashel, was not unmindful of the interests of church music in his diocese, and the fourth canon of a Synod which he held, in 1512, has reference to the cultivation of psalmody by the clergy. The Statutes of the Synod were inserted in the *Black Book of Lismore*, compiled by John Russell, Economist of Lismore Cathedral, under the direction of Thomas Purcell, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

Archbishop Fitzsimon died May 14th, 1511, and was succeeded by William Rokeby, who held a provincial Synod in Christ Church Cathedral, on September 2lst, 1512. In September, 1513, the body of Gerald, eighth Earl of Kildare, was interred with all religious and musical solemnity in the Kildare chapel of Christ Church; and, on January 16th, 1518, died Thomas Fitch, Sub-Prior, who wrote many important works, notably the *White Book of Christ Church*.

In 1518, Archbishop Rokeby held a Synod (the canons of which are extant in the *Red Book of Ossory*, published by Spelman), and many useful regulations were made, including some in reference to ritual and liturgical chant.[[11]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#511) In the same year he confirmed the Statutes of the Collegiate Church of Maynooth, and he subsequently united the Prebend of Maynooth to the Wardenship of the College, and the Vicarage to the Sub-Wardenship.

A sidelight on the "music-makings" that were wont to be held in the greater monasteries on the double-feasts is to be found entered on the Patent Rolls. From a deposition made by Sir John Plunket (Chief Justice of the King's Bench) it appears that in 1528, on a certain festival there was a musical at-home at St. Thomas's Abbey, Dublin, in the chamber of John Brant, Abbot of St. Thomas's, "on which occasion Chancellor Fitzsimon, of St. Patrick's, with his strollers, sang ballads."[[12]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XIV-2.php#512)

William Hassard, Prior of Christ Church, resigned in January, 1537, and on July 4th, 1537, William Power, Archdeacon of Dublin, in pursuance of a mandate from George Browne, schismatic Archbishop of Dublin, installed Robert Penswick, *alias* Castell, "late canon of the monastery of Lanthony," as Prior of Christ Church —Richard Ball continuing as Sub-Prior. Geoffrey Fishe, Dean of St. Patrick's, died in January, 1538, and his successor was "the scoundrel Basnet," of whom Dean Swift wrote so savagely. This brings us to the period known as the "Reformation."

**END OF CHAPTER XIV**.

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**NOTES**

[5] MSS., T.C.D., B. 52—see also *Register of Dublin Wills*, 1457-1483, by Berry.

[6] The musical antiquarian may be interested to know that one of the earliest inventories of choir music in England is that of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1445, in which for the first time we fin d a separate organ score.

[7] On July 28th, 1488, the conditions of the various benefactions given to Christ Church by Sergeant Estrete are recited at length wherein the Prior undertakes to have the Mass of the Holy Ghost celebrated daily, "between the quire Mass and High Mass; that the entire convent and choir shall sing every Thursday a Mass of the Holy Ghost; that Vespers, Complin, and *De Profundis* be said every Sunday and Holyday for said persons; that, when dead, the souls of the various persons shall be prayed for, the obit of John, the founder, being kept on the Thursday and Friday of Whitsun week, the *dirge* being said and the parties treated as founders."

[8] At this date the compass of the organ was from B natural to f*"*, two octaves and four notes, whilst the pedal keyboard was from A to a*"*, (*Story of the Organ*, p. 53).

[9] In the 31st of Henry VI (1452) an "orgon pleyer," or organist, who, however was only employed for the *greater* feasts, was given a fee of 3s. 4d. for each service.

[10] Herbit was succeeded as Organist of St. Patrick's by William Browne.

[11] *Tin* chalices were strictly ordered to be discontinued; and, "the playing of football by clergymen was forbidden under a penalty of 3s. 4d. to the Ordinary, and 3s. 4d. to the repair of the parish church."

[12] *Cal. Rot. Pat. Depos*., Feb. 7th, 1578.

**Irish Church Music - 1538 to 1598**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XV.**

BY a Royal Commission dated April 7th, 1538, a clean sweep was ordered to be made of the Irish monasteries, and pensions were promised to those religious who surrendered. Lord Leonard Grey, Lord Deputy of Ireland, wrote a very urgent letter, on May 21st, 1539, to Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General to Henry VIII., pointing out that six of the larger monasteries ought to be allowed "to stand and continue, changing their habit and rule into such sort as the King's grace shall will them," giving as a reason that not only were these houses ever accustomed to be utilised as lodgings for the Council and officers of State, but were excellent schools for "young men and children, both gentlemen's children and others, both of mankind and womankind, to be brought up in virtue and in the English tongue and behaviour, to the great charge of the said houses." [[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV.php#501)

As an evidence of the use of organs, even in the smaller religious houses, it is merely necessary to quote a State Paper dated July 26th, 1538, in which Lord Leonard Grey mentions that he had carried off a "pair of organs" from the Augustinian Priory of Killeigh, King's County, and had presented the instrument to the Collegiate Church of Maynooth. Moore, in his *History of Ireland*, gives the date as 1537, whilst Renehan, quoting from Moore, places the event as occurring in 1539.

Among the pensions given to the monks of the Abbey of St. Thomas, Dublin, for which a warrant was issued on September 10th, 1539, there was an annuity of £5 to Patrick Clinch, "clerk of the organs," or organist of said abbey.

Evidently, the suggestion of Lord Deputy Grey resulted in the preservation of Christ Church Cathedral, but as a religious community it was dissolved, and, by warrant of December 12th, 1539, the Prior and Canons of Holy Trinity were transformed into secular clergy, henceforth to be known as the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church—Robert Penswick, *alias* Castell, Prior, and Richard Ball, Sub-Prior, becoming *Dean* and *Precentor* respectively, whilst Walter White, Seneschal and Precentor, developed into *Chancellor* and Vicar-Choral, and John Moss, Sub-Precentor [Succentor] and Sacristan, into *Treasurer* and Vicar-Choral of the new foundation.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV.php#502)

Let not the reader, however suppose that the change of name and dress in the least affected the ancient Roman Rite according to the Use of Sarum. Neither the Ritual nor the musical services were in aught altered, and the dignitaries, like those of St. Patrick's, were bound to reside in the church. In the royal warrant, it was expressly stipulated "that, saving the Dean, one of the dignitaries shall celebrate second Mass daily, and the Mass of the Blessed Virgin, and High Mass on festivals proper to the same"; and, further, "that eight regular Canons and four choristers shall be known as the Vicars-Choral, £53 13s. 4d. being yearly assigned for the Vicars, and £6 13s. 4d. for the choristers," that is, about £600 a year of our money. John Curragh, the first of the Vicars-Choral was named Sub-Dean, with a place and voice in the Chapter; John Kerdiffe, the second Vicar-Choral, was named Succentor, with the like privileges of Sub-Dean, "*whose office it shall be to instruct the choristers*"; Christopher Rathe, Chancellor, was to be Minor Canon, and, as a Vicar-Choral, was bound "*to correct the Latin of the choir books*"; and Oliver Grant, Treasurer, was made Minor Canon and Vicar-Choral. Finally, it was ordered that "*a clerk learned in music and organ playing shall teach the boys, perform at Mass, and have the office of beadle, with a stipend of* £6 13s. 4d."; also, "a sacristan and a third clerk be appointed to ring the bells, etc.; and that a syndic steward or proctor be elected to manage the affairs of church and chapter." [[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV.php#503)

The musical reader, will, doubtless, note that the first recognised cathedral organist of Christ Church (no longer to be known as the Priory of the Holy Trinity) was bound to act as beadle, which office was likely performed by deputy, and his salary was equivalent to about £70 a year, not including perquisites. In June, 1540, the letters patent of Henry VIII. confirming the "new foundation" were made out, in which appear the additional names of William Owen and Nicholas Owgan, completing the number of eight secular Canons. It was also enacted that William Power, Archdeacon of Dublin, and his successors, "should have a stall in the choir and participate in the acts of the Chapter." However, it was only on July 11th, 1542, that all the formalities were complied with, in favour of the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV.php#504)

A very circumstantial account roll of the economy rents of the "Cathedral Church of the Blessed Trinity," in 1542, was furnished by the Rev. John Moss, Treasurer and Proctor, and is printed in Sir John Gilbert's *History of the City of Dublin*, copied from the *Novum Registrum*. Among the receipts entered from the Church, we find "the Knells," "the Month's Mind of Bea," the anniversary offices for the dead, "the Funerals, the Obligations, and the *Compos*." To the antiquarian, the payments are of exceptional interest, e.g., the sum of 4d. is set forth for "a quire of paper,"; "rushes to Our Lady Chapel, 2d."; "thirteen dozen tallow candles, 13s."; "two chalice cloths and making, 10d."; "*washing the choristers' surplices*, 2 *towels* and 2 *rochets*, 6d."; "5 girdles for albs, 4d."; "a dozen of Christs, 2s."; "7 pair of gloves for the ringers, 1s. 9d."; "*a quire of paper for songs*, 6d." etc., not forgetting the item: "To Sir John Moss for his pains, 40s."

In the autumn of 1543, Thomas Lockwood, erstwhile Archdeacon of Meath (a see which, strange to say, never had a Dean, Cathedral, or Chapter), was appointed Dean of Christ Church, the other dignitaries mentioned above remaining unchanged, with John Kelly as Sexton.

Another important, albeit minor, personage connected with the Cathedral is mentioned in deeds of this period, namely, Thomas Grace of Dublin, barber, who was given certain lands on condition of "shaving, and trimming the Dean, Chapter, and Vicars-Choral when required, to come once a week for the purpose of shaving and, should some of the brethren be absent on the shaving day, to come when sent for, and also *to poll and round the choristers*."

On March 16th, 1546, the Dean and Chapter granted to Robert Hayward, of Dublin, "singing man," an annual stipend, for life, of £6 13s. 4d., twelve pecks of wheat, and eight pecks of malt, "payable at the feasts of the Nativity, Easter, Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and Michaelmas; a livery coat, and a cartload of wood at Christmas, and the chamber [the monastic scriptorium] by the east of the churchyard; and the Vicars-Choral grant him four pecks of malt, in equal portions, at said feasts, his daily *finding*, table and board, sitting and taking same with them."

From the above *précis* of the emoluments and perquisites of Mr. Robert Hayward, it will be seen that his was a very good position, and he was "empowered to distrain the lands of the Dean and Chapter in Dublin county and city, for his salary." His status as a "professional gentleman" was fully recognised, as appears from the proviso that he had daily table and board in the common hall of the reverend Vicars-Choral; whilst, at the "festive season," there was no danger of his running short of wood for the Yule log, not forgetting the "peck of malt," which was not improbably "brewed." In addition, the "livery coat," which, we may presume, was a splendid specimen of sartorial art, must have added to the dignity of his presence on all occasions. Surely, a musician to be envied!

But the reader may possibly be desirous of learning what were the duties of this first "professional" organist of Christ Church Cathedral. They are explicitly set forth in the original document, of which the following is a *résumé*:—

The said Robert Hayward was bound "to play the organ, to keep Our Lady's Mass and Anthem daily, Jesus' Mass every Friday, according to the custom of St. Patrick's, and Matins when the organs play on the eight principal feasts, as well as on a greater feast day, or Major Double, *grantors finding an organ blower*." Moreover, he was to supply, at the expense of the Cathedral, "suitable church music," and "to behave humbly and well" to the Dean and Chapter. As soon as he was put in possession of his residence, he was "to instruct the choristers in *prick song and discant to four minims*, and to play at Our Lady's Mass." In regard to the choristers, it was the office of the Organist "to present them to the Precentor to be admitted, and they were found in all requisites *during the time of their child's voices*."

This deed was signed by Thomas Lockwood, Dean; Richard Ball, Precentor; Walter White, Chancellor; John Moss, Treasurer; John Curragh, John Kerdiff, and Christopher Rathe, Prebendaries; and William Lynch, William Owen, Robert Lloyd, and John Dillon, Vicars-Choral, and John Dorning.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV.php#505)

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**NOTES**

[1] *State Papers*, vol. viii., 1539.

[2] *Calendar of Christ Church Deeds*, No. 431.

[3] *Calendar of Christ Church Deeds* (20th Report D.K.I), 1888.

[4] The Priory of the Holy Trinity was not the only establishment that was converted from its original foundation at this epoch, and on June 28th, 1543, the Cistercian Abbey of Newry was incorporated by royal charter as a secular collegiate church, as "the Warden and Vicars-Choral of the College of the Blessed Virgin and St. Patrick of Newry," John Prout, Abbot, to be first Warden. This Wardenship collapsed in 1549, when ex-Abbot Prout was given a pension of £15. Again, after the dissolution of the Collegiate Church of Maynooth, we find a lease of the College House granted to John Kelly, *Cook*, on April 20th, 1551.

[5] *Calendar of Christ Church Deeds*—No. 1201.

# Irish Church Music - 1538 to 1598

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**Chapter XV.**...*concluded*

Between the years 1539 and 1545 the Irish monasteries and nunneries were dissolved, and the church furniture, including many valuable organs, were sold "for a song." Some of the prices given for precious relics were only a few shillings. On November 8th, 1546. Henry VIII. issued a commission to sequestrate the property of St. Patrick's Cathedral, with a view of dissolving the metropolitan dignity of said church, and having Christ Church as the State Cathedral of Dublin, which surrender was formally made in the following January.

We learn from one of the Christ Church deeds that the English monarch "died on Thursdaie the xxviiith of January," 1547.

Under the boy king, Edward VI., St. Patrick's Cathedral was formally suppressed, and, on April 25th, 1547, a pension of 200 marks sterling was assigned to "Sir" Edward Basnet, the Dean, followed, some months later, by pensions of £60 each to Chancellor Alien and Precentor Humphrey, and £40 to Archdeacon Power. The silver, jewels, and ornaments, were conveyed to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church.

By King's letter, dated Westminster, March 24th 1547, the residence of the Vicars-Choral of St. Patrick's was assigned for a Grammar School, with Matthew Talbot as schoolmaster, at a salary of £20, and William Talbot as Usher, at a salary of £10 a year; but it is certain that no such school was established for years afterwards. In fact, it was only on October 28th, 1552, that the residence of the Vicars-Choral in St. Patrick's Close was given over for the purpose of a School.

By King's letter of March 24th, 1547, pensions of ten marks each annually were assigned to Christopher Rath, John Herman, Nicholas Dardis, William Walshe, Richard Betagh, and John Claregenete, priests, "for performing Divine Service in Christ Church Cathedral"; and pensions of four marks a year were given to John Golding and Leonard Fitzsimon, choir boys, as two additional choristers.

During the years 1548 and 1549 strenuous efforts were made to propagate the reformed doctrines in Ireland, but all to no purpose. Even the year 1550 passed by without any development of the schism, and the Roman Ritual continued to be used throughout the country.

Easter Sunday of the year 1551 is memorable in the annals of Christ Church, as, on that day, the "reformed" liturgy of Edward VI. was used for the first time, under the auspices of Archbishop Browne, who had been accused of "gluttony and drunkenness," and called a "brockish swine," from whom "all virtue and honesty were almost vanished." The learned Archbishop of Armagh, George Dowdall, openly repudiated the innovation of an English liturgy, and boldly proclaimed that "henceforth any illiterate layman would have the power to say Mass."[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV-2.php#506)

To stimulate their loyalty Patrick Clinch and Robert Hayward, organists, were given valuable leases early in 1552. However, the English services do not seem to have been received favourably, and, as yet, only the Litany and the Book of Common Prayer were set to music. The Sarum Rite was in full swing, and the figured Masses of Taverner, Aston, and Fairfax were in use. Neither the first nor second edition of Sternhold and Hopkins—issued in 1549—nor the Supplement, of 1550, contains music.

With the death of Edward VI., on July 6th, 1553, ended the brief reign of the English liturgy, and almost immediately, on the accession of Queen Mary, Dean Lockwood, of Christ Church, was quite assiduous in destroying any evidences of the "reformed" tenets. On March 25th, 1555, St. Patrick's Cathedral was restored as a metropolitan church, with Bishop Leverous, of Kildare, as Dean, and William Browne, as Organist. At the Provincial Synod held by Archbishop Curwen, of Dublin, regulations were made for the restoration of the ancient creed, in which year a Jubilee was proclaimed.

On May 20th, 1555, Philip and Mary confirmed the grant of Edward VI. in regard to the increased number of priests and choristers of Christ Church—the six additional priests receiving ten marks each, and the two "chorister boys" four marks each—whose nomination was vested in the Dean and Chapter. Thomas Radcliffe, Viscount FitzWalter, took the oath of office as Lord Deputy during Whitsun week of the year 1556, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, according to the old Catholic ceremonial; and Parliament assembled on June 1st, by the acts of which the Roman Catholic religion and ritual were formally restored, heresy was ordered to be suppressed, and the "first fruits" were again given to the Church. The principal officials of Christ Church at this date were:—Thomas Lockwood, Dean; Christopher Rathe, Precentor; John Herman, Chancellor; John Kerdiff, Treasurer; Christopher More, Robert Lloyd, and Thomas More, Prebendaries; and Robert Hayward, Organist.

Almost the last official document of Queen Mary's short reign is a deed, dated April 27th, 1558, in which there is a release by Thomas Leverous, Dean, and the Chapter of St. Patrick's, of the "goods, chattels, *musical instruments*, etc.," belonging to said Cathedral, and which had been in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XV-2.php#507) The lands of the various abbeys and monastic establishments were permitted to remain in the hands of lay impropriators, except the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem, which was confirmed to the Hospitallers, and of which Sir Oswald Massingberd was appointed Prior.

Primate Dowdall died in August, 1558, and with him expired the project of completely restoring the Catholic religion in Ireland, and of re-integrating the 380 dissolved religious houses, the revenues of which amounted to £35,000 yearly. The intended restoration of Dublin University also came to nothing. Three months later Queen Mary departed this life, and Queen Elizabeth was crowned, according to the accustomed Catholic ritual, on the 25th of January, 1559, after which the mask of fidelity to Rome was thrown off.

In Reeves' great work on the *Culdees* the following entry occurs:—"A.D. 1574, September 26th, died Nicholas MacGillamurry, late Master of the Works, and Culdee of the metropolitan church of Armagh; *he was a blameless priest, and a great proficient in the art of music*."

It is certain that the Roman Catholic ritual was observed in Armagh till 1598, as Ussher admits.

**END OF CHAPTER XV**.

**Anglo-Irish Music in the Sixteenth Century**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVI.**

IN the first half of the sixteenth century there is very little to chronicle, save what has already been quoted in the preceding chapter in connection with sacred music. What we would now call "scientific music" had made very little headway in Ireland until the reign of Queen Mary, when di Lassus visited England.

Between the years 1505 and 1535 there are evidences of clavichords, harpischords, and spinets or virginals, having been introduced into Ireland. The name "Virginals" was given to the Spinet as being the favourite instruments for ladies or "virgins," and Henry VIII. is said to have been a good performer on the Virginals.

Music was regarded as an important accessory to the Mystery or Morality plays, and, in 1509, there is a record quoted by Sir John Gilbert in reference to Dublin. The historian of the city of Dublin tells us that, in the year 1509, "a sum of 3s. 1d. is charged for Thomas Mayo acting with seven lights at Christmas and Candlemas, and 4s. 7d. for the Players with the great and the small Angel and the Dragon, at Whitsuntide."

From the opening years of the sixteenth century it was customary for the several Corporate guilds of the city of Dublin to invite the Chief Governor to a play at St. George's Chapel, on the anniversaries of their patron saints. Stanihurst, writing in 1584, thus laments the fate of St. George's Church in South Great George's Street:—"This chappell hath beene of late razed, and the stones thereof, by consent of the assemblie, turned to a common oven, converting the ancient monument of a doutie, adventurous, and holie knight to the cole-rake sweeping of a pufloafe baker." [[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#501)

In 1528, during the Christmas holidays, plays were acted every day on College Green, before Piers Butler, Earl of Ossory, Lord Justice of Ireland, wherein the tailors acted the part of *Adam and Eve*;, the shoemakers represented the story of *Crispin and Crispianus*; the vintners acted *Bacchus* and his story; the carpenters that of *Joseph and Mary*; the story of *Vulcan* was represented by the smiths; and the comedy of *Ceres*, the goddess of corn by the bakers.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#502) An entry in the chain-book of Dublin Corporation supplies the information that the music consisted of four trumpets.

Sir James Ware, writing of the rejoicings got up by the Palesmen in Dublin after the proclamation of King Henry VIII. as King of Ireland, in June, 1541, enumerates comedies as having been performed on that occasion. However, it is more than probable that the so-called *comedies* were merely the morality plays given, as customary, during the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi, as said Parliament formally opened on the day following the great festival of the Blessed Sacrament—the proclamation formally taking place "on the Sunday within the octave," in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

On Sunday, August 20th, 1552, a performance was given by the schismatic Bishop Bale of Ossory, at the Market Cross of Kilkenny, of a tragedy, "God's Promises in the olde lawe," and a comedy, "St. John Baptiste's Preaching"—both written by Bale himself—"which were *accompanied with organe plainge and songes very aptly*." After each act there was a choral arrangement of the Advent Antiphon *O Sapientia*, to the accompaniment of a positive organ.

In a manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin, it is stated that in August, 1557, after the return of Lord Deputy Sussex from a successful expedition against James MacDonnell, "the *Six Worthies* was played by the city, and the Mayor gave the public a goodly entertainment upon the occasion, found four trumpeters's horses for the solemnity, and gave them twenty shillings in money."

Four years later, namely, in June, 1561, when Lord Sussex was sworn in Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he was invited to dinner by the then Mayor (Thomas Fitzsimon), at the conclusion of which the play of the *Nine Worthies* was acted. At the evening entertainment the Corporation band discoursed music, "after which the Mayor and his brethren, with the city music, attended the Lord Lieutenant and Council to Thomas' Court, by torchlight." [[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#503)

Under date of 1566, there is a manuscript "Love Song" (without music however), written by Donal, first Earl of Clancarty. A few years previously, an Anglo-Irish Song was written to the tune of "Greensleeves." In a Morality play by William Bulleyn, in 1564, a minstrel is decribed as "dancing Trenchmore and Heie de Gie," that is, the Hey of the arms, or, as the Italians call it, *da braccio*, as in the case of the *Viola da Braccio*. Thus, as early as the year 1564, two Irish dances—popular in the pale—anglicised as "Trenchmore" and "Hey," had found their way to England, just as the Irish *corr* had become known as the Reel. *Trenchmore* is introduced by Fletcher into his *Pilgrim*, and it is referred to by Stanihurst, in 1584, as follows: "And truly they suit a Divine as well as for an ape to frisk *Trenchmore* in a pair of buskins and a doublet." I shall merely add that the music of this dance tune was printed in *Deuteromelia*, in 1609.

In the notes appended to Spenser's *Shepherds Calendar*, by a certain Mr. E. K., in 1579, the Hey is explained as "a country dance or round." The Irish Hey, or Hay, is, therefore, the origin of the English Round or Country Dance. We are the more certain of this, as one of the earliest Rounds known is stated by Sir John Hawkins to be "Sellenger's Round," which Sir Anthony St. Leger saw danced in Ireland, in 1540, and which, on retiring from the Viceroyalty in 1548, he brought back with him to England, where its popularity was so great that it was arranged by the famous master, Dr. William Byrd.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#504)

"Trenchmore" is an Anglicised corruption of *Rinnce Mor* or the *Rinnce Fada*, that is, the Long Dance, whilst the Hey was danced in a circle. Allusion is made to both these Irish dances in *The Complaint of Scotland*, in 1549.

Nor must we pass over the antiquity of the Irish *port* or Jig. Strangely enough, many writers, including the late Sir Robert Stewart, only regard the Jig dance as borrowed from the Italians, in the latter half of the seventeenth century. However, there is ample evidence of its existence in Ireland in the middle of the sixteenth century, at least in 1550. Sir Henry Sydney, in a letter to Queen Elizabeth, in 1569, waxes enthusiastic over the dancing of Irish jigs by the Anglo-Irish ladies of Galway, whom he describes as "very beautiful, magnificently dressed, and first-class dancers." Indeed, the Irish Jig is distinctly *sui generis*, but is so named from the *Geige* (or Fiddle) just as in the case of the Hornpipe.

From 1560 to 1580 appeared a class of Anglo-Irish ballads, of which Stanihurst, in 1583, published a good imitation, which he styled: "An Epitaph, entitled Commune Defunctorum, such as our unlettered Rithmours accustomably make upon the death of everie Tom Tyler, as if it were a last for every one his foote, in which the quantities of sillables are not to be heeded." In 1576, a ballad on the death of the unfortunate Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, in Dublin, was sung to the Irish tune of "Fortune my Foe," under the title of "Welladay, or Essex's Last Good-Night."

I am the more particular in mentioning this "lamentation song" on Essex (who died on September 22nd, 1576), as he was a generous patron of music. From a State Paper we get a fair indication of his musical proclivities, in the account of his expenses as "Lord General of Ulster," in 1574 and 1575. To the "singing men" of Mellifont, then tenanted by Sir Edward Moore, he gave ten shillings; to the Earl of Ormonde's musicians, twenty shillings; whilst a harper at Sir John Bellew's received three shillings. However, a princely largesse was bestowed on "Crues, my Lord of Ormonde's harper"—namely, forty shillings, equivalent to £35 of our present money. This Anglo-Irish harper is thus praised by Stanihurst, in 1584:—

"In these days lived Cruise, the most remarkable harper within the memory of man. He carefully avoids that jarring sound which arises from unstretched and untuned strings; and, moreover, by a certain method of tuning and modulating he preserves an exquisite concord, which has a surprising effect upon the ears of his auditors, such that one would regard him rather as the only, than the greatest harper." [[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#505)

But a more famous lamentation song was written in June, 1584, on the martyrdom of Archbishop O'Hurley of Cashel, dealing in a special manner with the perfidy of Thomas Fleming, Baron of Slane, who had arrested the saintly prelate. It was entitled: *Slane's Treason; or, the Fall of the Baron of Slane*, set to music by Richard Cruise, the distinguished harper above-mentioned, " [[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php" \l "506)

We now come to an epoch-making event in the musical world, namely, the publication of the first printed book on musical theory in English, by an Anglo-Irishman, William Bathe, in 1584. Ireland has every reason to be proud of the fact that the first published theory book on music in the English language was due to a young Dublin man, who was then studying at Oxford University. Its title was as follows:—

"A brief Introduction to the art of Music, wherein are set down exact and easy rules for such as seek but to know the truth, with arguments and their solutions for such also as wish to know the reason of the truth. Which rules be means whereby any of his own industry may shortly, easily, and regularly attain to all such things as to this art do belong. To which otherwise any can hardly attain without tedious, difficult practice, by means of the irregular order now in teaching, lately set forth by William Bathe, student at Oxenford. Imprinted at London by Abel Jeffes, dwelling in Sermon Lane near Paule's Chain, anno 1584."

This extremely rare work, in small oblong quarto, black letter, was dedicated by Bathe to his grand-uncle, Gerald FitzGerald, Earl of Kildare. However, the author was not satisfied with this treatise, and so he thoroughly revised it, such that it may be regarded as almost a new book, which, however, was not published till the year 1600, entitled:—

"A brief Introduction to the Skill of Song, concerning the practice, set forth by William Bathe, gentleman. In which work is set downe ten sundry wayes of two parts in one upon the plain song. Also, a table, newly added, of the comparisons of cleffs, how one followeth another for the naming of notes, with other necessarie examples to further the learner. London: Printed by Thomas Este, 1600." [[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#507)

The following extract from the latter work, written in 1587, will be of interest:—

"Wherefore, seeing sufficiently others to labour and travail in other sciences, I thought good to bestow my labour on music, seeing that pains might so much prevail, as by the fruit of my labour may plainly appear.

"I took the matter in hand upon this occasion, though it were far distant from my profession, being desired by a gentleman to instruct him in song. I gave him such rules as my master gave me; yet could I give him no song so plain, wherein there chanced not some one thing or other to which none of those rules could directly lead him. ....

"In a month, or less, I instructed a child about the age of eight years to sing a good number of songs, difficult, crabbed songs to sing at the first sight, to be so indifferent for all parts, alterations, cleves, flats, and sharps, that he would sing a part of that kind of which he had never learnt any song; which child for strangeness was brought before the Lord Deputy of Ireland to be heard sing, for there was none of his age, though he were longer at it, nor any of his time, though he were elder, known before these rules to sing exactly. There was another, who had before often handled instruments, but never practised to sing (for he could not name one note), who, hearing of these rules, obtained in a short time such profit hy them that he could sing a difficult song of himself without any instruction.

"There was another, who, by dodging at it, harkening to it, and harping upon it, could never be brought to tune sharps aright, who, as soon as he heard these rules set down for the same, could tune them sufficiently well. I have taught divers others by these rules in less than a month what myself, by the old method, obtained not in more than two years. Divers other proofs I might recite which here, as needless, I do omit." [[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI.php#508)

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**NOTES**

[1] Stanihurst's *Description of Ireland* (*Holinshed's Chronicle*), p. 23.

[2] Robert Ware's MSS., quoted by Walker in his *Essay on the Irish Stage*.

[3] Harris's *History of the City of Dublin, sub. an*. 1561. The Earl of Sussex, writing to the Secretary of State, in October, 1561, quotes a "ditty," then popular, condemning his government, called "The Land of Perdition."

[4] A copy of Byrd's arrangement is in Lady Neville's MS. music book, dated 1590, and it also appears as No 64 in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. See also Chappell, page 69, where the melody is printed.

[5] Stanihurst's *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*. 4 Books. Antwerp 1584. 4to.

[6] O'Sullivan's *Catholic History* (Chap. xix.), published, in 1621 at Lisbon.

[7] There are copies of this book in the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, and Sion College. The British Museum copy was presented to that library by Sir John Hawkins, May 30th, 1778.

[8] British Museum copy: a small unpaged octavo of 25 pages, of which six pages have musical notation.

**Anglo-Irish Music in the Sixteenth Century**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVI.**...*concluded*

Briefly, William Bathe, the young Irish student at Oxford, was not only the first to print an English treatise on music, but he actually formulated methods of transposition and sight-reading that may still be studied with profit. Davey, in his *History of English Music* thus writes of Bathe's *Brief Introduction*: "It is remarkable in its *perception of the octave, instead of the hexachord, as the foundation of the scale, and for its rides* *regarding accidentals. These merits would require fuller notice in a work on general musical history*." However, like most other biographers, Davey is in error when he says that "Bathe subsequently became head of the Jesuit College at Salamanca, where he died in 1614."

William Bathe was born in Drumcondra Castle, Dublin, on Easter Sunday, 1564, his parents being John Bathe (appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1579) and Eleanor Preston, daughter of the 3rd Viscount Gormanston, and niece of the Earl of Kildare. He studied "humanity" in Ireland, and evinced a great taste for music, but was always of a religious turn of mind. In 1582, he was sent to Oxford, where he studied for four years, during which, in October, 1584, he was introduced to Queen Elizabeth by Sir John Perrott, Viceroy of Ireland. His earliest biographer, Fr. Paul Sherlock, S.J., tells us that Bathe became a great favourite of the Queen, "whom he delighted by his wonderful skill in playing *all kinds of musical instruments*, and amused by teaching her mnemonics, whilst his many other brilliant parts won for him universal estimation."

We have the clearest evidence that William Bathe was a prime favourite with Queen Elizabeth, from several entries in the State Papers between the years 1587 and 1591; and the Lord Deputy of Ireland wrote to Burghley that this young gentleman of the Pale was especially known at Court "for his skill in music, and or *his late device of the new harp which he presented to Her Majesty*."

His father died at the close of July of the year 1586, whose successor, Sir Edward Waterhouse, was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer on October 19th, 1586.

Bathe then returned from Oxford and stayed for some time in Dublin, but again came back to England in the train of his friend, Sir John Perrott, who was recalled in June, 1588. He got livery of his property on September 24th, 1590; but, having made over his inheritance to his brother John, he set sail for Spain, in October, 1591, when he went to Flanders, with a view to entering a religious order.

William Bathe became a Jesuit, at Tournai, on September 21st, 1596, and continued his theological studies at St. Omer's and Padua where he was ordained in 1601. We next find him at Valladolid, and, in 1604, he was made spiritual director of the Irish College at Salamanca. In 1611, he published his *Janua Linguarum* in Latin and Spanish, which went through an endless number of editions, being issued in eleven languages, of which the English version appeared in 1615. At Salamanca he taught church music and liturgy with conspicuous success for ten years, and, in 1614, he was invited to conduct spiritual exercises at the Court of Madrid. Father Bathe died at Madrid, on June 17th, 1614—one of the most learned men of his day.

In the same year (1584) which is memorable for the printing of Bathe's *Brief Introduction* was issued *A Handful of Pleasant Delites*, by Clement Robinson and others, "containing sundrie new sonnets newly devised to the newest tunes." This rare little book has a few Irish tunes, including the familiar "*Cailin óg a'-rtiuiré me*" under the corrupt anglicised form of "Calen o custure me," quoted by Shakespeare in "Henry V." In Playford's *Musical Companion*, printed in 1673, this air is set in four parts, and is expressly headed: "An Irish Tune."

On the feast of Corpus Christi, 1598 (as appears from a letter written by Father P. Hamill, on July 12th of that year), Father Henry Fitzsimon, S.J., of Dublin, had a Solemn High Mass celebrated in the house of a nobleman, "with full orchestra, composed of harps, lutes, and all kinds of instruments except the organ"—all the more remarkable as being "the first solemn Mass celebrated, in Dublin, for the last forty years." [[9]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI-2.php#509)

The reader can form a good idea of the "full orchestra" of the year 1598, in Ireland, from the constitution of Queen Elizabeth's Band of Musick, in 1588:—16 trumpets, 9 minstrels, 8 viols, 6 sackbuts, lutes, harps, 3 players on the virginals, 2 rebecks, and a bagpipe. It is specially worthy of notice that nearly all the great composers and musicians of this period adhered to the the old faith, e.g., Tallis, Bird, Bevan, Bolt, Phillips, Dering, Johnson, Mundy, Heywood, Morris, Norcome, White, and others.

From 1559 to 1595 the musical services of Christ Church Cathedral, and St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, were utterly neglected, and it was not till 1595 that a salaried lay organist [[10]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVI-2.php#510)—John Fermor—was appointed to the former church, who was succeeded, in 1609, by Thomas Bateson, Mus.Bac.

Trinity College was opened in 1593, but no degrees in music were conferred till 1610. As is well known, the doors of Dublin University (founded on the site of All Hallows Monastery) were practically closed against Roman Catholics; and the College has ever been a stronghold of the ascendancy faction in Ireland. In the library are preserved two valuable musical manuscripts dating from the last decade of the sixteenth century, namely, Thomas Dallis's *Lute Book* (*cir*. 1590), and William Ballet's *Lute Book* (1594). The latter MS. contains many Irish airs, such as:—"Fortune my foe," "Peg a Ramsey," "Callino Custurame," "Weladay," "Sellenger's Round," "All flowers in broome," "Queen Mary's Dumpe," Dowland's "Lachrymae," "Rogero," etc.

Between 1590 and 1600 modern musical art began to make itself felt in Ireland, and already madrigals, ballets, catches, as also music for the virginals, were beginning to be heard. A new musical era was at hand.

**END OF CHAPTER XVI**.

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**NOTES**

[9] *Life and Letters of Father H. Fitzsimon, S.J*., p. 207.

[10] Rev. Walter Kennedy acted as organist from 1592 to 1595, as appears from the *Calendar of Christ Church Deeds*.

# Shakespeare and Irish Music

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVII.**

THE subject of Shakespeare's acquaintance with Irish music will possess for many, at least, the merit of novelty. Even to the ripe Shakespearian scholar the many Irish airs alluded to by the Bard of Avon are comparatively unknown, and, therefore, a separate chapter on such a theme may not be unacceptable.

With this object in view, I purpose to adduce some convincing arguments in favour of Shakespeare's knowledge of Irish minstrelsy. Let it be premised that Irish music was much in vogue in England during the sixteenth century, and had favour at Court during the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, as is evident from the oft-quoted extract from the Talbot Papers, under date of September 19th, 1602, written by the Earl of Worcester to the Earl of Shrewsbury:—"We are frolic here in Court; much dancing in the Privy Chamber of Country Dances before the Queen's Majesty, who is exceedingly pleased therewith. *Irish tunes are at this time most pleasing*." Let me also add that Viscount St. Albans, or Francis Bacon (whom many writers believe to have written Shakespeare's plays), says that "no harp hath the sound so melting as the Irish harp."

There are many Irish words used by the great English bard, such as *feere* (far = a man), *geck* (a fool), *cam* (crooked), *cailleach* (an old woman), *sprag, kerne*, gallowglasses, etc; whilst the parallelisms of Puck and Puca, Mab and Meave, Lear and Lir, Malvolio and Melville, are equally well known. And does not Mr. Alfred Nutt admit that Shakespeare's fairy mythology is taken from Celtic fairy tales? He says that Ireland possesses "a romantic literature which, so far as interest and antiquity of record are concerned, surpasses that of Wales, and which is obviously and undoubtedly more archaic in character"; and he adds that Oberon and Puck "are members of a clan of supernatural beings having the same origin as the Tuatha de Danaan wizard hero or princess of Irish romance." But with these matters I am not concerned, and, therefore, must fain content myself with the definite topic of Irish tunes, Irish musical allusions, and such kindred matter to be found in the works of Shakespeare.

There are eleven Irish tunes mentioned under various aliases by the bard of Avon, of which two have been previously identified by Malone, Dr. Petrie, Dr. Sigerson, and others. For the identity of the remaining nine I alone am responsible. Taking the list in order, on each of which I shall say a few words, the eleven airs are:—

  1. Callino custurame.  
  2. Ducdame.  
  3. Fortune my foe.  
  4. Peg a Ramsay.  
  5. Bonny Sweet Robin.  
  6. Whoop! do me no harm, good man.  
  7. Weladay, or Essex's Last Good-night.  
  8. The Fading.  
  9. Light o' Love.  
10. Yellow Stockings.  
11. Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.

As regards "Callino custurame," we learn from Halliwell that a ballad of this name was entered on the books of the Stationers Company in 1581-2, and it was printed in *A Handful of Pleasant Delites* in 1584. It is also found in William Ballet's Lute Book, the manuscript of which is in Trinity College, Dublin, dating from cir. 1590. In the FitzWilliam Virginal Book (incorrectly called Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book), which dates from between the years 1602-1622, our Irish air appears as "Callino custurame," arranged by Dr. William Byrd (called the English Palestrina), who died, as he lived, a good Catholic, on July 4th, 1623. It was subsequently printed by Playford, in 1673, arranged in four parts, and headed "An Irish Tune." The only difficulty is in equating the correct Irish for Shakespeare's phonetic rendering. Boswell's *Malone* gives the name as equivalent to "little girl of my heart for ever and ever." Dr. Petrie, Dr. William Stokes, and Sir Robert Stewart regard "Callino custurame" as an attempt to spell as pronounced "Colleen oge asthore," which is also the view of Dr. Sigerson, with a slight modification. However, the "me" at the end persists in all the readings, and so I should venture to give the correct Irish as *Cailin og a' rtuire mé*, an old synthetic ending now obsolete, which is concurred in by my friend, Mr. David Comyn, the editor of Keating.

2. In the fifth scene of "As You Like It" there is reference to "Ducdame," an invitation calling fools into a circle, and "a verse to this note." Now "Ducdame'' is an anglicised form of the Irish invocation—An d-tiocfaid = "Will you come," which is sung twice in the third verse of "Eileen a roon." "Verse passages" in the sixteenth century meant passages for solo voices; and here Jacques sings the song in answer to the preceding song. An almost equally well-known seventeenth-century Irish song was *An tiocfadh tu a bhaile liom*. As very properly pointed out by Dr. Sigerson, the real ballad containing this apparently enigmatical name is *Eiblín a rúin*, which was then exceedingly popular in England. Another phrase which occurs in the same lovely song is the well-known *cead mile fáilte*, or "a hundred thousand welcomes"—and it is remarkable that Shakespeare makes Agrippa greet Coriolanus with "a hundred thousand welcomes," a purely Irish form of salutation. More remarkable still is the employment of the invocation, "diuca tu"—"Will you come," in the form of "Ducket" and "Tucket," by Shakespeare in "Henry V." (Act IV., Scene 2). The ordinary explanation equating *tucket* with the Italian *toccata* is absurd for many reasons. Shakespeare gives the word as meaning a signal or call for the trumpets or drums to sound—"Then let the trumpets sound the tucket sonance." This explanation is borne out by a stage direction in the "Devil's Law Case," in 1623, when we read: "Two tuckets by several trumpets," *i.e*., two trumpet calls; and in an eighteenth-century ballad we find a soldier complaining bitterly to his mistress of the cruelty of the tucket sound with its reiterated burthen of "Will you come, will you come."

The tune of "*Eiblín a rúin*" is too well known to need illustration, but I shall just mention that it was sung to phonetically written Irish words in 1731 at the old Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, by Mrs. Sterling, in an opera epilogue to "Richard III.," and again by Mrs. Storer, as an interlude, in Shakespeare's tragedy of "Julius Caesar," at the same theatre, on December 15, 1743. Within twenty-five years of Shakespeare's death we find Joe Harris, an Irish actor, in London, singing Irish songs. In 1666, when "Henry V." was presented, one of the principal attractions was Harris's singing of a song in the Irish language. From Pepys we learn that the beauty of the Irish air, wedded to its original Irish words, completely captivated the audience. He thus writes: "Among other things, Harris, *a man of fine conversation, sang his Irish song, the strangest in itself, and the prettiest sung by him that ever I heard*."

3. "Fortune my Foe" is an exquisite sixteenth-century Irish melody, alluded to by Shakespeare, the music of which is to be found in William Ballet's *Lute Book*, in 1593; also, in the Fitzwilliam *Virginal Book*, and in William Forster's *Virginal Book*, dated January 31st, 1624, now the property of King Edward VII. As far back as 1565-6 it was licensed as a ballad, and is mentioned in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (Act II., Scene 3). Chappell says that "Fortune my Foe" was known as the *Hanging Tune*, "from the metrical lamentations of extraordinary criminals being always chanted to it." In February, 1649-50, we read in a contemporary chronicle that the Irish pipers attached to Lord Inchiquin's army drew off from Naas to the march of "Fortune my Foe"; and in 1676 this Irish tune was used by Thomas Duffet, himself an Irishman, for the well known lyric, "Since Coelia's my Foe." The earliest tune to which Duffet's words were set is in Playford's, dated 1676, whereas another air, claimed as *the* "Irish tune," is "King James's March to Ireland," to be found in the Leyden MS., about the year 1692-3, also known as "Lochaber no more." "Fortune my Foe" is an early sixteenth-century air, whilst the Irish tune to which "Since Coelia's my Foe" was adapted in 1730, is "Limerick's Lamentation," dating from 1691, and translated by Dermot O'Conor in 1720.

4. "Peg a Ramsay" is another old sixteenth-century Irish tune, included in William Ballet's *Lute Book*. It is called a "dump tune" by Thomas Nash, in 1596, in "Have with you to Saffron Walden"; whilst in his "Shepherds' Holiday," in 1598, he alludes to "Roundelays, Irish Hayes, Cogs and Rongs, and Peg a Ramsay." Shakespeare makes Sir Toby call Malvolio a "Peg a Ramsay" in "Twelfth Night" (Act II., Scene 3), proving the popularity of our Irish "dump tune." Some persons may naturally wonder what was a "dump tune" or a "dump." Shakespeare makes mention of merry dumps and doleful dumps. Chappell says that a dumpe was a "slow dance," which is incorrect, whilst Mr. Comyn equates it with "the Irish *duan* or *dan*, a song or poetical composition of any sort." Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. The dump was the music of the old Irish instrument known as the tiompan, a small stringed instrument, akin to the harp, and which was very popular in England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; so much so that the English language was enriched with the names "dump" and "thump"—the music produced by plucking or striking the tiompan. Shakespeare, in the fourth act of "Romeo and Juliet," begs the minstrels to cheer him with a "merry dump" (which would, of course, be absurd were a dump synonymous with a slow dance), and later on he alludes to "doleful dumps," whilst in the third act of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" he again mentions a "deploring dump." He refers to dull and heavy dumps in "Much Ado," whilst in "Titus Andronicus" he uses the phrase "dreary dumps."

Here, perhaps, it is well to explain Thomas Nash's "Roundelays, Irish Hayes, Cogs and Rongs, and Peggie Ramsay." Rounds and Roundelays are Irish terms, the word *lay* being admittedly Celtic. Irish Hayes were Irish round dances as distinguished from other forms of dances, the round being the old Irish *corr* or *reel*. In a printed book of 1588 the Irish Hey de gie is illustrated as danced by four men, with bare arms, in imitation of a combat, and the music for it is printed in Playford's *Musick's Handmaid*, in 1678. Shakespeare, in the fifth act of "Love's Labour Lost," written in 1591, says: "Let them dance the hay," whilst in *England's Helicon*, written in 1600, we read: "Shall we go dance the hay." In Martin's *Month's Mind*, written in 1589, there is reference to "Irish Hayes, Jiggs, and Roundelays," and Shakespeare, in the second act of the "Midsummer-Night's Dream," says: "Come now, a roundel and a fairy song." It is almost unnecessary to explain that a "fairy song" is the exact English equivalent of our Irish *Ceól—ride*; and the roundel was a reel or dance in a circle. Sir Henry Sydney, in 1569, in a letter to Queen Elizabeth, waxes enthusiastic over the dancing of Irish jigs by the ladies of Galway, whom he describes as "very beautiful, magnificently dressed, and first-class dancers."

5. "Bonny Sweet Robin" is another Irish tune quoted by Shakespeare, and has been known in Ireland since the sixteenth century.

**Shakespeare and Irish Music**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVII.**...*concluded*

6. "Whoop! do me no harm, good man," twice referred to in "A Winter's Tale" (Act IV., Scene 3), is better known in Ireland as "Paddy Whack," and adapted by Tom Moore to "While History's Muse."

7. "Welladay; or Essex's last Good-night," is of Irish origin, dating from the early part of the sixteenth century. New words were set to it in 1576, on the death of the unfortunate Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, in Dublin; and it was also used as a tune for the Anglo-Irish lamentation-song written for Robert, Earl of Essex, Viceroy of Ireland, who was beheaded on Ash Wednesday. 1601. It has all the well-known characteristics of the Irish *caoine*, and was printed by Margaret Allde in 1603.

8. "The Fading," or "With a fading"—mentioned in the fourth act of "A Winter's Tale," is, even on the testimony of the late Mr. William Chappell (an uncompromising advocate of English music), undoubtedly an Irish dance tune. It is none other than the once-familiar *Rinnce Fada*, which was danced before King James II., when he landed at Kinsale in 1681; a dance which is to this day called "The Faddy," in Cornwall. Of course, all are agreed that the *Rinnce Fada* means the Long Dance, but it has been more generally called the *Contre Dance*—or dance in which the performers are opposite each other—a name which is corrupted as "Country" dance. The English Country Dance is merely the Irish *Rinnce Fada*, as is quite evident from the second name given it in the early editions of Playford's *Dancing Master*, between the years 1651 and 1701—wherein we read, "The Long Dance for as many as will"—the best known survival of which is "Sir Roger de Coverley." Thomas Dineley, who made a tour of Ireland in 1680, says that "the Irish of this day are much addicted to dance after their country fashion, that is, the Long Dance, one after another, of all conditions, master mistress, servants, etc." Another favourite Irish dance mentioned by Shakespeare in the fourth act of "A Winter's Tale" (1611) is the hornpipe, *Urran*, that is, the corn-pipe of the mediaeval Irish. He says: "There is but one Puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to *hornpipes*."

9. "Light o' Love" is another English annexation from the Emerald Isle.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVII-2.php#501) Shakespeare, in his "Much Ado About Nothing" (Act III., Scene 4), says, "Clap us into 'Light o' love,' that goes without a *burden*; do you sing it and I'll dance it." *Burden* is the same as a drone or drone-bass, generally being a vocal accompanyment of Fa le la, or Hey troly, loly, lo, as quoted by Piers Plowman in 1362, or else the more usual Shakespearian "Hey, nonny, nonny." Strangely enough, the Irish of the sixth and seventh centuries were acquainted with the musical art-form known as the drone-bass; whilst it is a commonplace of musical history that our own John Scotus Erigena is the first writer to allude to the free organum of the fourth, about the middle of the ninth century.

10. "Yellow Stockings" is an undeniably Irish tune. The very name has a reference to the saffron *truis* of the mediaeval Irish. Shakespeare introduces it in "Twelfth Night," and the air dates from the sixteenth century, being known by the natives as *Cuma liom*, "It is indifferent to me," or "I don't care." Playford printed it as early as 1680, and in 1705, Dean Swift adapted a nursery song, "Hey my kitten, my kitten," to it. Other verses for our Irish tune are "Mad Moll" (1698) and "The Virgin Queen" (1703); and, finally, Tom Moore set it to his lyric, "Fairest put on awhile."

11. Shakespeare, in "King Lear" (Act III., Scene 6), makes Edgar say, "Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam? Come o'er the bourn, Bessie, to me." This quaint Irish melody dates from the second half of the sixteenth century, and was very popular in England. As regards the play itself, Mr. Sidney Lee says that it was mainly founded on Holinshed's *Chronicles*, from our Irish Stanihurst. The air is intensely characteristic.

That Shakespeare was a tolerable musician is almost self-evident, and, in addition, he had good taste—in fact he may well be described as a cultured amateur. We know from his writings that he was acquainted with the works of Orlando di Lasso. His plays are invariably heralded by three flourishes on a trumpet by way of overture, and the orchestra was represented by a band of fiddlers in an upper balcony, over what is row termed the stage-box, and who played music between the acts. We can have a tolerable idea of the orchestra of his day from the constitution of Queen Elizabeth's Band of Music in 1587, viz., 16 trumpets, lutes, harps, a bagpipe, 9 minstrels, 2 rebecks, 6 sackbuts, 8 viols, and 3 players on the virginals. But of all who enjoyed the intimate acquaintance of Shakespeare, his "very intimate friend" (a man admittedly the greatest lutenist in Europe and a really charming composer) was an Irishman, John Dowland. In 1599, Richard Barnfield's sonnet, reprinted in Shakespeare's "Passionate Pilgrim," has the following couplet:—

"Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch  
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense."

Even Davey, the most recent and most eugolistic historian of English music, is forced to admit that "the grace, tenderness, and frankness of the best Irish character are all present in Dowland's works." Whether as the composer of "Awake, sweet love," "Now, ah now, I need must part," the translator of the *Micrologus* of Ornithoparcus (probably an Irishman also), the author of excellent lessons for the lute and bass viol, Dowland's Lachrimae, the Frog Galliard (which was danced by Queen Elizabeth in her sixty-ninth year), or as an incomparable performer on the lute, Dowland was a marvellous musician. In 1598, he became lutenist to Christian, King of Denmark, at the then unprecedented salary of 500 thalers a year (getting an extra 600 as a douceur in 1600), but returned to England in 1605. Luca Marenzio, the great madrigal composer, wrote to Dowland from Rome on July 13th, 1595. It is not at all unlikely that Shakespeare was indebted for many details of his "Hamlet" to his friend Dowland, whose residence as Court lutenist in that country gave him peculiar advantages, more than could be derived from books. Mr. Sidney Lee says that Shakespeare owed all his information with regard to the Continent and Ireland to the verbal reports of travelled friends or to books, the contents of which he had a rare power of assimilating. It is only to my present purpose to add that Dowland died in March, 1626, surviving his "intrinsic friend," Shakespeare, by ten years.

There are some other Irish musical allusions in Shakespeare, like "Jig off a tune," in "Love's Labour's Lost," and "All my merry jigs are quite forgot," in the "Passionate Pilgrim,"—jig, however, in this instance, meaning any metrical composition, generally applied to second-rate drama, whence Shakespeare adverts to "garlic jigs,"—which Mr. Sidney Lee explains as "indifferent entertainments interspersed with dances in the smaller play-houses." To jig off a tune is a common phrase to this day—meaning to lilt or "la la" it, as is still done in some country places From this fact we are able to draw the conclusion that jig and lilt were originally forms of the geige and the lilt-pipe—whence we read in Chaucer of a lilt-pipe and a corn-pipe, the name of the instrument being transferred to the dance tune, even as the name *choir*, meaning persons who sang in the choir portion of a church, was evolved from the *place* where the singers were. This question naturally brings into notice another Shakespearian allusion to the music of the people or the old folk tunes. The great Bard of Avon has one famous passage describing the effect of old songs of occupation, those sung by spinners, weavers, knitters, etc.

I have stated that Shakespeare was indebted for most of his information regarding Ireland to Stanihurst and Blessed Edmund Campion, S.J., in Holinshed's *Chronicles*; also, to Captain Barnaby Rich, who spent forty years in Ireland, and to Sir John Harrington, John Dowland, and Edmund Spenser. Indeed, as regards Irish music, Dowland and Spenser would appear to be Shakespeare's chief sources of information. It is a singular circumstance that in the fiant of Elizabeth apportioning Kilcolman Castle and lands to Spenser, on October 26th, 1590, he was to hold it for ever in fee farm by the name of "Hap-Hazard." More singular still, notwithstanding the harsh things which the author of the *Faerie Queen* has left on record regarding Ireland, he himself succumbed to the charms of a fair daughter of Erin named Elizabeth Boyle, of Youghal, whom he wedded, in June, 1594.

Shakespeare, in "Richard III.," alludes to Irish bards, one of whom, he says, had told him "that he would not live long after seeing Richmond." Again, Rosalind in "As You Like It" (Act III., Scene 2), says: "I was never so be-rhimed that I can remember since Pythagoras's time, when I was an Irish rat"—alluding to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Many writers of Shakespeare's day allude to the power of Irish bards of being able to rhyme men as well as rats to death. Senchan Torpest, chief poet of Ireland in the seventh century, is said to have uttered a *aer* (satire) on rats which killed ten of them on the spot.

Thus, Shakespeare's acquaintance with Irish music is much greater than has been previously pointed out by any of his commentators.

**END OF CHAPTER XVII**.

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**NOTE**

[1] In the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" (Act I, Sc. 2) allusion is made to "the tune of `Light o' Love.' "

**Irish Music in the Seventeenth Century  
1601-1650**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVIII.**

POLITICALLY, no more gloomy outlook could be imagined of any country than the state of Ireland during the last years of Queen Elizabeth's rule. The capitulation of Kinsale was signed on January 13th, 1602, and Dunboy Castle was taken on June 18th. A deliberately planned famine ensued. Red Hugh O'Donnell died on September 10th; Rory O'Donnell submitted on November 14th; and the great O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, agreed to accept the terms offered by Mountjoy on March 24th, 1603.

Numerous pardons to Irish minstrels appear in State documents for the years 1601 and 1602, and their names —though little more is known of most of them—are a distinctly valuable addition to our musical history, the majority being unknown to Walker, Hardiman, Bunting, or Petrie.

On March 18th, 1601, pardon was given to John O'Lynch, *harper*, and to Murtagh MacCoyne, of Kilmallock, *piper*; on March 28th, to Art MacGillegrome MacDonnell and Geoffrey M'Glade, *harpers*; also, to Tadhg O'Dermody, *harp-maker*, County Kilkenny, whose son Donal made the famous Fitzgerald (Dalway) harp in 1621—remarkable as being the oldest dated Irish harp now in existence. Two days later a piper called Owen MacHugh *na bralie* was pardoned.

On April 11th, 1601, there is chronicled a pardon to Nicholas *dall*, of Ratoo, County Kerry, *harper*. This is none other than the famous Nicholas *dall* Pierce, the blind harper of Ratoo, in whose praise there were three different odes written, as O'Curry mentions. O'Curry, however, merely conjectured that he lived about the year 1625, but the State pardon of April, 1601, is a convincing proof that Nicholas dall must have exercised his art at the very commencement of the seventeenth century.

John *intlea*, a wandering piper from County Cork, was pardoned on April 25th. On May 5th, Cosney MacClancy, of Cloonanna, County Limerick, *piper*, was received into favour. Two days later a similar clemency was extended to Dermot O'Sgingin, of Donore, County Westmeath, *harper*, and to Donogh O'Phelan, of same, *rhymer*.

Pardon was granted to David MacDonal O'Rahilly, of Schull, Co. Cork, *rhymer*, on May 14th—the ancestor of the famous Egan O'Rahilly, who flourished a century later. On May 15th, four pipers from County Wexford were received into favour, namely, Bryan MacGillachrist, Fergus O'Farrell, Donal MacFergus O'Farrell, and Patrick *oge* O'Farrell—the last mentioned surviving till the period of the Confederation.

On May 28th, 1601, Donal MacConmee, of County Westmeath, *harper*, was taken into favour on giving due security, and on the following day pardons were granted to Daniel O'Cullinane, and Conor O'Cullinane, of Burren, County Cork, *pipers*. On May 30th, Richard Forstall, of Cloughnageragh (Wilton), County Wexford, *harper*, was pardoned, as was also Richard buidhe MacJames, of County Wexford, *piper*. Two days later, Turlogh Piper, of Tubberdower, *piper*, was pardoned, and, on June 10th, two other pipers, Owen and Dermot O'Delaney, of the Park, Queen's County, were received into favour, as was also James O'Nolan, of Donore, County Westmeath, *harper*.

A distinguished harper called Tadhg MacDonal MacRory, of Townagh, County Clare, received pardon, on July 21st, whose name is imperishably associated with the lively air known as "Teague's Rambles," printed by Playford in 1651.[[1]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#501) He is also credited with the composition of "Fort Mountjoy," called in honour of the new fort built by his patron, Lord Mountjoy.

On August 3rd, 1601, five of the family of Halpin (MacAlpin, or Halfpenny) were outlawed, and, as was customary by the Irish bards, a lament was composed for one of the ladies of this family, ever since known as "Molly MacAlpin." The air is known in Scotland as "Gilderoy," in consequence of the Irish air being adapted to new verses, written on the execution of Gilderoy (Gilla-ruadh), who suffered death in July 1636. It was printed as far back as the year 1719 by Tom D'Urfey, who got the air from the Irish actor, Thomas Dogget, about the year 1700. Matthew Concannon, an Irishman, selected it as the ninth air in his version of "The Jovial Crew," in 1731.[[2]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#502)

Eneas *ruadh* O'Heffernan, of Shronehill, County Tipperary, a famous bard, was pardoned on August 6th, and on the following day pardon was extended to John O'Treacy, of Liscarrol, County Cork, *piper*, and Melaghlin O'Duane, of Clogh Kelly, *harper*. On August 30th, Donagh O'Cullinane, of Mara, County Cork, *piper*, was received into favour.

On September 24th, 1601, pardon was granted to Cathal O'Kelly, Donogh *buidhe* O'Byrne, and Donal the Piper—all three County Wicklow pipers—at the special instance of the Lord Deputy, Lord Mountjoy. From this date until May, 1602, no pardon was granted to Irish musicians, indicating clearly that the minstrels had thrown in their lot with those who had flocked to the standard of O'Neill and O'Donnell. In fact, the date of the last-mentioned pardon (September 24th) almost coincides with the landing of the Spanish troops at Kinsale.[[3]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#503)

Donal O'Killeen, of Cloghan, County Westmeath, *piper*, and Owen O'Killeen, of Ratra, Co. Roscommon, *piper*, were pardoned on May 6th 1602; and on the same day two harpers, Gillaglass and Owen O'Shalvey, both of Annaghmore, received a pardon, on a warrant by the Lord Deputy. On June 12th, John O'Moloney, of Pallas, County Longford, *harper*, was taken into favour, and on July 2nd Rory *albanach*, of Castleroe, County Westmeath, *harper*, was pardoned. This Rory *albanach* (the Scot) was the eldest brother of two celebrated harpers, John and Harry Scott—*albanach* signifying "a Scot"—of whom Bunting makes mention.

John Scott composed the "Lament for the Baron of Loughmoe" (1599), whilst Harry composed a "Lament for the Baron of Galtrim" (1603), "Kitty Scott," etc.

On July 26th, 1602, another distinguished harper was pardoned, namely, Owen MacKiernan, of Kildare; and on the same day a similar favour was extended to Tadhg O'Laffan, of Scablerstown, *harper*, and his wife, Margaret Tyrrell.

During the autumn and winter of the year 1602, Irish music was fashionable at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. Nay, more; the virgin Queen kept an Irish harper, Donal *buidhe*, in order to sooth her nerves. In the previously quoted letter from the Earl of Worcester to the Earl of Shrewsbury, dated September 19th, 1602, it is distinctly stated:—"Irish tunes are at this time most pleasing." Some of these Irish tunes are in the Fitzwilliam *Virginal Book* (a manuscript dating from the first quarter of the seventeeth century), three of which are arranged by Dr. William Byrd, one of the greatest composers that ever England produced.[[4]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#504)

On December 6th, 1602, pardon was granted to Edmund O'Gibney, of Mulrankin, County Wexford; and, on the 4th, to Shane *ballagh* M'Geough, of County Monaghan, *harper*, and to another harper, named Cormack MacGillecosgelie, of a Levitical family in the diocese of Clogher, erenachs of Derrybrusk.[[5]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#505)

Now that the war was over, severe measures were taken against the minstrels. On January 28th, 1603, a proclamation was issued by the Lord President of Munster, by the terms of which the Marshal of the Province was strictly charged "to exterminate by marshal law all manner of Bards, Harpers," etc. Within ten days after said proclamation, Queen Elizabeth herself ordered Lord Barrymore "to hang the harpers wherever found, and destroy their instruments."

The last three pardons to Irish musicians under Elizabeth were to Owen MacDermot *reagh*, of Mallow, *harper*, on February 28th, and to Donal MacDonagh *gankagh*, of County Cork, *piper*, and to Dermod O'Dugan, of Garryduff, *harper*, on March 30th.

Queen Elizabeth died on March 24th, 1603, and on the same day the great Earl of Tyrone agreed to accept the terms offered by Lord Mountjoy, being present at the proclamation in Dublin, on April 6th, of King James I., to whom he formally submitted in London on June 7th.

During the year 1604, eleven bards and five harpers were pardoned. All the bards were of one clan, namely, MacConmidhe (MacNamee or Conmee). However, before the close of that year, Sir John Harrington (whose brother was killed at the battle of the Black-water), Seneschal of County Wicklow, was ordered "to banish bards and rhymers out of his limits, and *whip* them if they did not quit after proclamation duly made." (2 James I.) Any bard who failed to leave the country of the O'Byrnes within twenty days was to be tried by court-martial and executed.[[6]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#506)

The one great harper and composer under King James's rule was Rory *dall* O'Cahan, who spent most of his life in Scotland between the years 1601 and 1650. He was a close relative of Donal O'Cahan, chief of O'Cahan's country (of which Coleraine was the principal stronghold), and, in 1602, he attended the Scottish Court of King James. In 1603, in proof of his reconciliation with Lady Eglinton, he composed "*Tabair dam do lám*" ("Oh, give me your hand"), which is also known by its Latinised title of "*Da mihi manum*." It has been printed by Bunting and Dr. Crotch.

Rory *dall* is best known as the composer of numerous *puirts*, or Ports, like "Port Gordon," "Port Athol," "Port Lennox," generally called after the persons in whose honour they were written, somewhat akin to the Planxties of O'Carolan. In fact O'Carolan retouched some of the melodies or *puirts* of the old minstrel, which have, in consequence, been included among his own works, just as Samuel Lover dressed out anew some dozens of old Irish airs, now regarded as composed by himself.

In the Straloch musical manuscript, dated 1627-1629, appears "Rory dall's Port," and it was printed in Walshe's *Country Dances*, in 1750, being subsequently used by Robert Burns for his song commencing "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever." To many concert-goers his "Port Gordon" is best known, as re-touched by O'Carolan, adapted to the Irish song, "*Máire béil ata h-Amnair*." Another air of his is known among the Gaels of Scotland as "Lady Catherine Ogle" and "Bonny Katherine Oggy," printed in 1687.[[7]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII.php#507)

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**NOTES**

[1] The English title of this tune, as printed by Playford in 1651, is "The Irish Lady, or Anniseed Water Robin." It will be found in the first edition of the *English Dancing Master*, an exceedingly scarce book.

[2] It may be necessary to explain that "Molly MacAlpin" is now best known as "Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave," being Moore's setting, in 1807, from Bunting, Mr. Alfred Moffat, in his *Minstrelsy of Ireland*, seems not to be aware that "MacAlpin" and "Halfpenny" are the same names.

[3] On May 4th, 1602, O'Daly, the rhymer, was brought before Sir George Carew, charged with bringing messages from the Irish (to induce Owen O'Sullivan, a neighbouring Milesian chief, to join them), and was committed for trial.

[4] For a good account of the Fitzwilliam *Virginal Book*, see Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

[5] The name "Gillecosgelie" is now written "Cuskelly."

[6] Sir John Harrington is best remembered as the translator of Ariosto into English. He presented copies of his English versification to the children of the Earl of Tyrone.

[7] Perhaps the most beautiful of all his compositions is "*An bacac buide*" (the lame yellow beggar)—printed in 1729.

**Irish Music in the Seventeenth Century  
1601-1650**

From *A History of Irish Music* by William H. Grattan Flood

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**Chapter XVIII.**...*concluded*

Rory O'Cahan died at the house of Lord Macdonald, leaving to that nobleman his harp and exquisite tuning key. The late William Elliot Hudson was strongly of opinion that the so-called "Lude" Harp (whose history cannot be traced further back than 1650) was really the favourite harp of Rory *dall*. Gunn, in 1807, describes it as 38 inches high, furnished with 30 strings, and it has all the characteristics of an Irish harp. Moreover, Dr. Johnson, in his *Tour in the Hebrides*, tells that in 1773 a valuable harp key, finely ornamented with gold and silver, and with a precious stone, worth eighty to a hundred guineas, was then in possession of Lord Macdonald, who presented it to Echlin O'Cahan. But the matter seems placed beyond doubt by the manuscript autobiography of Arthur O'Neill, wherein it is stated that Rory's harp and tuning-key had been left by the great Irish minstrel at the house of a Scotch nobleman, whose descendant, in 1773, presented the key to Echlin O'Cahan (incorrectly called "Ackland Kane"), who sold it in Edinburgh. Sir Walter Scott introduces Rory *dall* as the musical preceptor of Annot Lyle in his *Legend of Montrose*. Bunting prints three of his tunes, including "The Hawk of Ballyshannon," also known as "Port Athol," and retouched by O'Carolan as "O'Moore's Daughter."[[8]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#508)

From various "Relations" sent by the Irish Jesuits to Rome between the years 1608 and 1640, it appears that Irish was universally spoken throughout Ireland, and that even in Leinster it was more generally used than English.

Dr. Geoffrey Keating, the author of the "*Forar Feara ar Éirinn*," or *History of Ireland* (finished in 1634), kept a harper named Tadhg O'Coffey, whom he thus addresses in a beautiful Irish poem of nine stanzas, about the year 1615:—

"Who is the artist by whom the harp is played,  
By whom the anguish of the envenom'd spear's wound is healed,  
Through the sweet-voiced sound of the sounding-board,  
Like the sweet-strained peal of the organ."

During the first decade of the seventeenth century, or probably earlier, was composed the exquisite air, "*Ceann dub Dilir*," or "Black-headed Dearie," printed by Playford in 1713. It was known in Scotland as "The Auld Jew," and in England as "The Irish Round, or Kennington Wells."[[9]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#509) Burke Thumoth (1740) styles it "Currie koun dilich."

About the same period was composed the plaintive "*Uilleacán Dub Ó*," to which, in 1746, Donogh MacConmara (Macnamara), or *Donncad Ruad*, adapted the well-known song, "*Bán Cnuic Éireann Óg*"—"The Fair Hills of dear Eire." The air was printed by Walker in 1786.

Captain Barnaby Rich (who fought for forty years in the Irish wars, and was a voluminous pamphleteer from 1574 to 1624), in his *New Description of Ireland*, in 1610, says: "The Irish have harpers, and those are so reverenced among them that in the time of rebellion they will forbear to hurt either their persons or their goods, but are rather inclined to give to them; and they are very bountiful either to rhymers or fools." Moreover, he adds, that "every great man in the country hath his rhymer, his harper, and his known messenger to run about the country with letters."

In 1615 William FitzRobert FitzEdmond Barry, a famous blind harper, was a retainer of Lord Barrymore, and in 1620 we find Daniel MacCormac *dubh* O'Cahill as harper to Viscount Buttevant. Even the "great" Earl of Cork, one of the most unscrupulous adventurers that ever came to Ireland, kept an Irish harper in his service.

In 1616 Father Nicholas Nugent, an Irish Jesuit, was taken prisoner at the house of his relative, Lord Inchiquin, and was imprisoned in Dublin Castle for four years, During his imprisonment he solaced himself by composing Irish hymns, set to old tunes, which, as his biographers tell us, "became very popular, and were sung throughout Ireland."

Between the years 1618 and 1625 Father Robert Nugent, S.J. (who spoke Irish equally well with English), laboured in County Westmeath, a very musical county. The better to win over the native population, he cultivated the Irish harp so assiduously that he became a most proficient performer. Not content with excelling as a harper, he invented a new form of harp, minutely described by Archdeacon Lynch, author of *Cambrensis Eversus*.

Walker, writing in 1786, says: "The Irish harp received considerable improvements from the ingenuity of Robert Nugent, a Jesuit, in the fifteenth century, who resided for some time in this kingdom." Passing over the absurdity of making Jesuits exist in Ireland in the fifteenth century, it is merely necessary to mention that Father Robert Nugent laboured for forty years in Ireland, his native country. He was a cousin of Elizabeth, Countess of Kildare, who, in 1634, gave him Kilkea Castle, County Kildare, for a novitiate of the Order, of which he became Superior in 1640. His improvements mainly consisted in having a double row of strings extended along the framework of the harp, giving two strings to each sound (after the manner of a bi-chord pianoforte), which, when vibrating in unison, "produced a rich and sonorous quality of tone, also affording increased facilities for the uninterrupted progression of the passages with either hand." [[10]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#510)

Nor are we left to mere descriptions of the harp as used in Ireland in 1620. We have still preserved a splendid instrument, dated 1621, made for Sir John FitzEdmond Fitzgerald, of Cloyne. Bunting gives a long account of it in his second volume (1809), but he fails to identify the maker, whose name appears as "Donatus filius Thadei." This harp maker is none other than Donal MacTadhg O'Dermody, whose father received pardon on March 28th, 1601, as previously mentioned. The inscription proudly proclaims—"Ego sum Regina Cithararum," and, in truth, it is a queenly instrument. The name "Dalway" harp is incorrectly applied, the explanation being that the instrument was for a century in the family of Noah Dalway, of Bellahill, near Carrickfergus.

King James died March 27th, 1625, and was succeeded by Charles I., under whom there was a lull in the persecution against Irish minstrels, owing to the expectancy of the "graces," in consideration of the sum of £120,000 to be paid to the King. The Irish harp was even fashionable in England from 1626 to 1676, and there was a book of instructions published for it in London in 1630, arranged by Martin Pierson, Mus. Bac., Master of the Children of St. Paul's Cathedral—remarkable as being the first printed work in which tunes were arranged for the Irish harp.

There is a quaint letter from the Earl of Cork, Lord Justice of Ireland, dated October 14th, 1632, to his friend, Captain Price, in London, which I quote from the State Papers [[11]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#511) as follows:—

"NOBLE CAPTAIN PRICE,  
"Thank you for kindness to my son. The bearer is to give the Lord Keeper an Irish Harp, and Lady Coventry a runlet of mild Irish uskebath sent unto her ladyship by my youngest daughter Peggie, who was so much bound to her ladyship for her great goodness and care of her. ... I pray help Mr. Hunt to deliver them, and let me add that if it please his lordship next his hart (?) in the morning to drink a little of this Irish uskuebagh, as it is prepared and qualified, it will help to digest all raw humours, expel wind, and keep his inward parts warm all the day after, without any offence to his stomack."

A popular air of the period 1615-1630 was "*An Cnotad bán*," or "The White Cockade," the song of which was written by Muiris mac Daibhi mac Gerailt (Maurice FitzDavid FitzGerald), in reference to a then prevalent fashion of white-ribboned plumes worn by the ladies of Munster on festive occasions. It was one of the two airs played by the war pipers of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy on May 11th, 1745. The Scotch subsequently appropriated it, but it was not printed as a Scotch air till 1778. About the year 1730 Seaghan *Claragh* MacDonnell adapted a rousing lyric to the air of "*An Cnotad bán*," which will be found as the very first song in Father Dinneen's excellent edition of that great Irish poet.

Some years later was composed a jig-tune, "*An Cota buide*," or "The Yellow Jacket," which was printed by Playford in 1652 as "Buff-coat; or, Excuse Me," and was afterwards altered by the Scotch as "The Deuks gang o'er my daddie" in 1740. Our Irish air appeared as one of the tunes in the ballad opera of "Polly," in 1729, and Moore tells us that it was also adapted to a popular song commencing: "My husband's a journey to Portugal gone."

About the year 1635 was composed a variant of the lively Irish tune, "*Ir Cuma liom*," that is "It is indifferent to me," or "I don't care," which was printed in London in 1680. It was variously known as "The Nurses' Song," "Mad Moll," and "Yellow Stockings." Dean Swift was much enamoured of the melody, and set it to a nursery song, entitled "Hey, my Kitten, my Kitten," in 1705.

Although Dr. Geoffrey Keating—"clarum et venerabile nomen"—finished his *History of Ireland* in 1634, he did not write the *Dionbrollac* (preface or vindication) till 1635, when he was parish priest of Cappoquin and Affane, County Waterford. From this learned preface, so carefully edited by Mr. David Comyn, I quote the following passage:—

"Stanihurst finds fault with the people who play the harp in Ireland, and says they have no music in them. It is probable that he was not a judge of any music, especially of this Gaelic music of Ireland, he being unacquainted with the rules which appertain to it. ... And I am surprised that he did not read Cambrensis. . . . Likewise, it is not true for Stanihurst to assert that the greater number of Irish instrumentalists and vocalists are blind, for it is certain that when he wrote his History (1584) there was a greater number of persons with eyesight engaged in the arts of playing and singing in Ireland than of blind people, which is equally true of the present time (1635), as can be attested by all our own contemporaries."

At the period of the Confederation of Kilkenny, from 1642 to 1648, Irish minstrely was much in evidence. One of the "laments" of that epoch was composed for Maelmuire O'Reilly, popularly known as "Myles the Slasher," who was slain on the bridge of Fenagh, near Granard, in 1642, by the Scotch Covenanters, and was buried in the Franciscan Friary, Cavan. Another glorious "lament" was composed on the death of Owen Roe O'Neill, in 1649, whose body was interred in the grave of "Myles the Slasher." No monument marks the graves of these two heroes in the now dismantled Friary of Cavan, but the "laments" are still well known to students of Irish folk music.[[12]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#512)

M. Boullay le Gouz, writing in 1644, says:—"The Irish march to battle with the bagpipes, instead of fifes, but they have few drums." He adds:—"They are very fond of the harp, on which nearly all play, as the English do on the fiddle."

A splendid Irish war-march of this epoch is "Mac Alisdrum's March," the date of which is readily known from the fact that the gallant Alaster Mac Donnell, also known as Mac Alisdrum, or Colkitto, was slain at the battle of Knocknanoss (Shrub Hill), near Mallow, on November 13th, 1647. The ill-fated warrior, after having performed prodigies of valour, was basely assassinated whilst parleying with an officer. His remains were placed in the ancestral tomb of the O'Callaghans at Clonmeen, County Cork, and the Irish war-pipers who accompanied the funeral played a specially-composed death-march over all that remained of the brave soldier, described by the Papal Nuncio Rinuccini as "militem praestantissimum." [[13]](http://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/XVIII-2.php#513)

In 1648 was composed the lovely air known as "*Druimfionn donn dilir*," or "The white-backed brown Cow," a version which was Englished by the Irish actor, Thomas Dogget, and sung by him, in 1690, as "Colly, my Cow."

We are also safe in dating the ever-popular "Gramachree " as from the period of the Confederation, as it is alluded to in a pamphlet printed in 1649. Mr. Alfred Moffat could discover no earlier edition of the melody than that issued in 1746, but it was printed in Dublin in 1737, and was purloined by James Oswald in 1742, whose rendering has the Scotch title of "Will ye go to Flanders, my Molly, O?" In 1759 George Ogle wrote English words to the Irish air, namely, "As down by Banna's banks I strayed," and it was subsequently utilised by Sheridan in "The Duenna." It is almost unnecessary to add that the melody is now best known as "The Harp that once thro' Tara's Halls."

Four other airs of the same period are "Old Langolee," "'Twas down in a Meadow," or "Contented I am"; "Oonagh," or "While gazing on the Moon's light"; and "Paisthin Fionn."

Bishop Dease of Meath (1622-1650) was alike famous as a timpanist and an Irish song-writer. He made his will in 1648, and bequeathed, as a valuable heirloom, his tiompan, which solaced him during his last years. His death occurred at the Jesuits' residence in Galway, in 1651.

**END OF CHAPTER XVIII**.

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**NOTES**

[8] On March 8th, 1607, Sir John Egerton, son of the Lord Chancellor of England, wrote to Sir John Davies, Attorney-General for Ireland, reminding him of his *Irish Harp*, (*Cal. S. P*., Ireland, March 8th, 1606-7.)

[9] Moffat, in his *Minstrelsy of Ireland*, says that the air is printed in Playford's *Dancing Master*, vol. ii., 1728, but I find it in the 1713 edition, at page 146.

[10] Conran's *National Music of Ireland*, p, 187. The full Latin description will be found in *Cambrensis Eversus*.

[11] *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland*—Charles I. (1625-1632), p. 674.

[12] In February, 1653, Primate O'Reilly died at Trinity Island, and was buried in the tomb of Myles the Slasher and Owen Roe O'Neill, in Cavan Friary.

[13] Dr. Charles Smith, writing in 1750, says:—"There is a very odd kind of Irish music, well known in Munster, by the name of 'MacAlistrum's March,' being a wild rhapsody made in honour of this commander, which to this day is much esteemed by the Irish, and played at all their feasts."—(*History of Cork*.)