



Classroom Ways with Irish Music

Teacher Notes and Resources

Part One: The Pure Drop

Part Two: Fusions

Listening assignments

Literacy and numeracy strategies

The Professional Development Service for Teachers

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Part One: The Pure Drop.

The living tradition and the pure drop.

Activity One:

Performing:

Teach the melody of *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir* in short sections. Treat this as an aural game, lengthening the phrases gradually. Play or sing the song slowly, thoughtfully, listening to and being aware of the notes used. Try not to move on to a new section until each two-bar segment is perfect. Create a very simple arrangement with phrase 1 for all, for example, and phrase 2 with various soloists.

Further discussions:

- Ireland's unique position regarding transmission by ear and on paper.
- The merits of the various modes of transmission.
- The nature of the song *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir*, a very popular song and part of living tradition. The title is known variously as *John Dwyer of the Glen* and *Sally Maguire*.

Activity Two:

Arranging by Ear:

Now create a very simple arrangement of *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir* encouraging the students to see the score in their heads.

1. Add the simple bass line notes dotted minims in any octave/voice. The first six bars only will also work as a repeated ostinato if 12 bars taxes memories.
2. Add melodic ostinati: e.g. bars 1 & 2, or bars 6, 7 & 8. Be careful not to crowd out the texture. Less is more so think about playing one ostinato at a time.
3. Add rhythm: (a) variations in 3/4, (b) possible cross rhythms 6/8.

Listening:

A Liam Ó Maonlaí performance of *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir*. You are advised to only do this when you have performed and arranged the song.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDv8zQm8TTQ

See Listening Resource 1.

Activity Three: Learning with Standard Notation *Tha Mi Sgith*

Discussing:

Now a piece arranged by composer *James Ross* (current composer in residence with the Galway Youth Orchestras). *James Ross* has identified some tips to help students and teachers to become better arrangers of Irish music in the classroom.

His tips are:

1. Unaccompanied is good to start with.
2. For simple traditional arrangements with harmony, use the bass note (not necessarily the root) and one other incorporating intervals of a 4th or 5th. This is more atmospheric and remains true to the modal tradition.
3. The Dorian mode starting on D uses only the white notes on the keyboard-this helps students to improvise or compose their own tune. As long as it is a white note, it works.

Performing:

James Ross' arrangement of *Tha Mi Sgith*. *Tha Mi Sgith* is reportedly a fairy song. The literal translation is I am tired. The song is also known by another title, *Buain na Rainich* which means Cutting the Bracken.

There are many variations of the story relating to this song, but one version says that the song was originally sung by a fairy who caught sight of a beautiful girl when he was cutting bracken and that they fell in love. When her family learned of the love, they stopped the girl from seeing the fairy and they locked her away. His song mourns the situation. The tune of this song is very old and it is often used as a lullaby

1. Read and play the melody.
2. Add the simple harmonisation in any voice/one note at a time.
3. Play the Dorian scale: DEFGABCD.
4. Now encourage some exploration/improvisation/two bars at a time.
5. Call and answer style. Have fun and accept all ideas- improvisation is never wrong. Incorporate improvised sections e.g. the opening 8 bars as written followed by 8 bars improvised, dividing them up in 2- or 4-bar chunks for different players. The second 8 bars as written.

Listening:

Compare the following two versions of *Tha Mi Sgith*.

See Listening Resource Two.

1. *Savina Yannatou*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HrOEvhnceA>

2. *The Gathering of Celtic Women*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqfKigp99cY>

Activity Four: Performing and Arranging with ABC Notation

Performing traditional polka *Britches Full of Stitches*.

Explain the significance of the performing details in this version. This 'ABC' notation is primarily a memory aid involving melodic accuracy only.

1. In the 2/4 time signature here, each letter is one quaver long
2. The dash after the note is ambiguous, sometimes signifying a dotted quaver and sometimes a crotchet. Listen to confirm.
3. Both key and key signature always indicated at the beginning of the tune

Performance

Teachers can use the standard score attached to help with teaching and learning.

1. Play each line slowly (or in 2-bar sections).
2. Gradually pick up the tempo.
3. Harmonise with punctuated chords I V IV and vi. An energetic approach is vital.
4. Use lots of rests and remember not to crowd the accompaniment.
5. Add a pedal point either straight or syncopated.
6. Re-voice the tonic pedal e.g. with split octaves.
7. Add a new riff.
8. Organise a final performance of the waltz, the march and the polka in the style of a Baroque Suite

Britches Full of Stitches:

ABC notation

Polka in A major- three sharps F# C# & G#, time signature 2/4.

A - B C' A | B A C' A | A- B C' A | B A F'-|

A - B C' A | B A C' E' | A- B A F | F E E-:||

E'-F' E'C'|B A B C' |E'- F' E'C' | B A F-|

E'-F'E'C'|B A B C' | A-B A F | F E E-:||

Chords:

Use any combination of Chords I V IV and vi.

Let the students choose eg:

A -|--|F#m-|--|A- |A/C#|D D| E E:||

New Riff (Bass)

A A C C|B B E-|A A C C|B B E-|

A A B B|C C D D|E E E -E E:||

Part Two: Fusions

Activity One:

A warm up to get everyone singing and introduced to the idea of fusion.

Jamaican Farewell/Kerry (Egan's) Polka/Oro the Rattlin' Bog Mash up!

1. Teach the *Jamaica Farewell*.
2. Teach the reel by first clapping the segments then if possible with instruments and or voice. Point to note, it's not the entire polka – rather nuggets of it used in such a way so as to harmonically fit in with this arrangement.
3. Teach the various nuggets of the song '*Oró the Rathlin Bog*' .
4. Put the elements of the score together to create a simple fusion song – *Jamaica meets Kerry in the Bog!*
5. Get students to compose a simple rhythmic ostinato that could be used to accompany the fusion focusing on the Jamaican 8/8 rhythmic feel with a 1,2,3-1,2,3-1,2 feel to it.
6. In the printable resources folder of the CD, there is a copy of the three-part fusion with blank chord boxes. This can be used as a harmony assignment. Develop or 'fuse' further by now adding the 7ths to all the chords. D now becomes Dmaj7, G now becomes Gmaj7, Em now becomes Em7. We now have added some simple jazz harmonies.

See classroom assignments in printable music folder for further activities.

Activity Two:

Double Jig: *April's Fool*

Source: *Jack Talty* in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, Limerick. He is a founder member of *Ensemble Ériu*.

The Jig was written by (living) composer *Jimmy Keane* for *Liz Carroll* in response to a prank she played on him.

Performing:

Learn to play the 1st part of the double jig, *April's Fool*.

Work slowly, in 2-bar sections, pointing out repeats within the melody. Don't worry if all don't have fluency. The stronger players will lead.

Add the ornaments (cuts) and point out how the intervals in the cuts vary.

Arranging:

Composers Approach: Experimenting with the tension that is created between simple and compound time!

Start by adding a strong first beat in every bar by clapping or on bass drum/ bodhrán.

Add the four chord ostinato: G/B, C/E, G/D, D7/C.

Before adding the other melodic lines, first work 2 against 3

Use two separate teams.

Learn the short 4-bar clarinet (or violin) riff from Jack's score.

Tip: Alternating single or double bars of 3/4 and 6/8 may be easier to manage than longer phrases.

Use this riff as an introduction, a coda, a play out or superimposed on the jig melody (as in the ensemble's arrangement).

Don't worry about fast tempo/ the light 2-part texture is more important- let the stronger players lead

Listening: *April's Fool*.

Track 1 (In audio folder) *Jack Talty* solo.

The full arrangement by *Ensemble Ériu* can be downloaded from :
<https://itunes.apple.com/ie/album/april/id697914547?i=697914591>

See Listening Resource Three: Most of the prompt questions here are higher-order questions and more open-ended than the other listening resources. You will need the full arrangement version for listening assignment.

Activity Two:

Reels: *The Humours of Tulla/The Tempest*

Discussion: Examine the opening page of *The Tempest* arrangement. Focus on taking ideas from this arrangement by *Neil O'Loughlen*, a trad flute player/professional jazz double bass with co-founders of *Ensemble Ériu*, *Jack Talty* and *Louis Stewart*.

Listen to *The Tempest*. TG4 YouTube link is:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQdI6PeD_y8

Use Listening Resource Four to help.

Performing the *Humours of Tulla*.

Now learn the *The Humours of Tulla* in the usual manner.

Awareness of repeated melodic figures will speed up the learning/reading.



Arranging *The Humours of Tulla*.

Use all or any combination of these ideas:

1. Play 1st part with easier melody.
2. Play 2nd part with repeated note dominant pedal (treble riff).
3. Build up the texture with ascending scale in the bass (cello part).
4. Punctuate in 2-bar sections with rhythm improvisation.
5. Add ideas from any other arrangements.

Activity Three:

Rapping It Up!

1. Start with Body Percussion a 4/4 pattern.
2. Add drum machine body percussion or the real drum-kit with a 4/4 pop back-beat.
3. Isolate 4-bar and 2-bar melodic fragments for the melodic riff, incorporating any short easy ideas from the whole work shop e.g. 1st two bars of *Kerry (Egan's)* polka, 2nd part of *Britches full of Stitches*, 1st 2 bars of *Ta Mi Sgith*.

Verse I

Well we started with a waltz, nothing false

But a sweet three beats-on our seats

Working here with our ears

Improvisation, then notation

In an ode with a code?

No a mode - the Dorian!

Refrain:

Nothin' but TRAD, are we mad? Just a little bit

Crashin' on the fashion we're a mean mean team

Yeah nothin' but TRAD, are we mad? Just a little bit

Crashin' on the fashion we're the Mean team, Green team!

Trad Riff x 2

Verse 2

Building up the pace with the polkas, cool cats!

Rig a double jig; April's Fool, What us, US?

Lectures on texture reel deals what a rumpus!

Moving to Jamaica seeing Tullagh have a Tempest

Refrain +Trad Riffs in any combination.

Mash up of lines from refrain with melodic riffs.



Listening Resource One: *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir*.

This is a performance of the song *Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir* by *Liam Ó Maonlaí*. It is a live performance. Listen to the recording and after each playing, work with your partner or group to agree on responses to the following questions.

1st Listening:

- (a) Lightly tap your foot along to the music. Is the pulse based on:
- 2 beats in a bar 3 beats in a bar 4 beats in a bar
- (b) Identify the accompanying instrument which joins in during the song:

2nd Listening:

Write about the music played by the piano in this extract under the following headings:

The music played during the introduction:	
A traditional feature in the bass (left hand) during much of the song:	
The music played between the verses and between phrases:	
Non-traditional features of the piano part.	

3rd Listening:

Comment briefly on the vocal style. Are there any traditional or non-traditional features in the performance?

Listening Resource Two – *Tha Mi Sgith*.

This activity works best if students work in pairs or groups.

1. Compare the following two versions of *Tha Mi Sgith*.

Version	1. <i>Savina Yannatou</i>	2. <i>The Gathering of Celtic Women</i>
Is the arrangement the same all of the way through? How is interest maintained? Refer to musical features.		
Is the performance 'traditional' in your opinion?		

2. Can you identify any musical characteristics in this Scottish melody which are also found in Irish music?

3. Go to:

www.bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam/beag_air_bheag/songs/song_02/index.shtml

Listen to another version of the song on this link. You can also learn to pronounce the words of the scots gaelic lyrics if you want!

In what way is this performance different to the two you have already heard?

Listening Resource Three – *April's Fool*

This activity works best if students work in pairs or groups but can also work as a general class discussion leading to a written description of the music using musical features.

1. Arrangers of all musical styles often try to layer/ build-up their arrangements. In what way does this arrangement of the tune *April's Fool* build up?
2. Why it is difficult to identify the groove / number of beats in a bar until the melody starts?
3. How does this arrangement end? Why is this effective as an ending?
4. What 'trick' does *Jimmy Keane* play on our ears in this arrangement? Hint: Try to feel different pulses (2, 3, 4 etc) during the performance. Quote from the composer/ arranger: "The 3/4 approach in the introduction served to mask the underlying 6/8 that leads to the emergence of the jig."
5. Identify some of the instruments used in this arrangement.
6. Identify some traditional features of the melody and of the arrangement.
7. Identify some non-traditional features of the arrangement.

Listening Resource Four: The Tempest

1. Place the following events in the correct order by rewriting the descriptions in the right-hand column.

Marimba ostinato starts	1
Concertina, fiddle and 'brushed' cymbals play	2
Clarinet plays repeated notes	3
Guitar and double bass play for the first time	4

2. In the visual arts and music, minimalism is a style that uses pared-down design elements. Minimalism in music often features repetition.

Identify three features of this music which make it minimalist in concept:

3. Comment briefly on the instrumentation. Is it unusual in any way? What is traditional or non-traditional about this performance?

Literacy and numeracy ideas

Numeracy

1. Ask students to number bars in musical scores. Including the repeats, how many bars long will each section be, how many bars long will the whole piece be. What fraction or percentage would the A section (without repeats) be of the entire piece and so on.
2. Always ask students to explain the top and bottom numbers in time signatures encountered. Visually, it would help to use a rhythmic value chart encompassing whole notes all the way down to eighth notes in music in a similar way to how fractions are presented in diagrams. This could be done as either a rectangular box or a circle.
3. Relate triplets to the notion of ratio in Maths – seek out examples of triplet rhythms in this music and make the connection between 3:2 and triplet quavers.
4. Review roman numerals in a number of quick exercises a number of lessons ahead of mentioning them in relation to harmony and backing chords.
5. Ask quick questions about the score of The Humours of Tulla or any musical score. What note is the 2nd note in the 2nd stave of the first system?
6. How many instruments were added? How many bars before the flute starts to play? How many different chords in the ostinato?

Literacy

1. Create a bulletin board or word wall with key words relating to the material being performed – reel, polka, mash-up, repeated last note, ornamentation etc.
2. Have students make their own vocabulary and definition lists to review each evening after class.
3. Using a flashcards free app such as *Quizlet*. Get students to input their vocabulary and definitions. They can test each other in pairs or as a class group they can go 'head-to-head' with their class to see who knows their vocab the best – they love this!
4. Correct one commonly encountered spelling each week, for example, in this material you might decide to get as many students as possible to spell 'rhythm' correctly.
5. Have students write a brief (200 word) description of one of the pieces of music. Use examples of music journalism to help get the style right. Encourage students to use the questions on the listening resource sheets as a starting point. Encourage a first draft/ peer assessment/ teacher amendment and final typed version which is displayed.

6. Correct one spelling or one grammar point on each written response to the listening resource questions.
7. Write a one sentence description of the opening bars of some of the music performed or heard today. Ask students to match the descriptions with the titles. This will obviously only work if the students are familiar with the music.