

first encounter with the instrument. The novice would be wise to take plenty of time to work on these and other rudiments of playing before venturing too deeply into the rest of the book.

Throughout the book I describe techniques and fingerings in terms of how they are played on the Irish, or simple-system flute and the tin whistle, which share the same basic fingerings. Most of what I present can be applied directly to the modern flute, but some techniques require different fingerings or other special adaptations. As they work their way through the book, Boehm-system flute players may wish to refer to Appendix B, which gives information on such fingerings and adaptations. Whenever I use the word *flute* by itself, I am referring to the Irish or simple-system flute. (For clarification on these terms, see Chapter 3.)

Take your time with this book. It will serve as a thorough reference, regardless of your current level of playing ability.

CONCISE VERSION OF THIS BOOK FOR TIN WHISTLE ONLY: *THE ESSENTIAL TIN WHISTLE TOOLBOX*

I have written a shorter, more concise version of this book specifically for beginning and intermediate players of the tin whistle. It is entitled *The Essential Tin Whistle Toolbox* and it is also published by Mel Bay Publications.

READING MUSIC

There is a great deal of music notation in this book. As mentioned above, if you do not read music you can still use the book quite well because I play most of the notated exercises and figures on the companion CDs.

I encourage everyone to learn to read music. It is an extremely useful skill, even for the traditional musician. However, it is very important to avoid becoming dependent upon written music. If you already are, then you need to begin to wean yourself from the notation. As you learn tunes, you should immediately start to internalize them. For much more on this subject, see Chapter 1.

The companion CDs can be very useful in that regard. You can learn to play a musical example or a complete tune solely by listening to it over and over on the CD. Once you have learned it, you may check yourself with the music notation in the book.

ANALYTICAL LEARNING AND IMMERSION LEARNING

You certainly do not need to use this or any book in order to learn to play Irish flute or tin whistle. These traditions have thrived and evolved for centuries with very little help from books. In Ireland, and in Irish communities outside Ireland, many musicians learn their music largely by immersion, the way that we all master our native languages. Most musicians who learn this way are not very self-examining about how they do what they do.

Analytical resources like this book can and should never supplant aural learning, but they can supplement it in important ways. This book supplies much-needed information for people who live far away from a thriving Irish music community. Even those who live in such communities will find plenty of new ideas, insights, and opinions here. I believe it is a very good thing for a musician to become aware of aspects of her playing that she may have been unconscious of for years. So I hope this will be a valuable reference book for all players, regardless of their background and learning experiences.

Although traditional musicians, on the whole, tend to learn intuitively, it is interesting to note that music reading is more prevalent in the Irish music tradition than it is in many others. Instruction books and tune collections have played a part in the propagation of traditional Irish music since the 18th century. The tune collections of Captain Francis O'Neillⁱ and Breandán Breathnachⁱⁱ can be found on the bookshelves of many traditional Irish musicians.