



Figure 21-5. The first two measures of the reel *The Trip to Durrow* with an example of inarticulate breathing.

② Track 12

In fact, this note is an essential note, even though it might at first seem to fit the description of strategy #3, above. In fact, its omission is very disruptive of the upward sweep and forward motion of the melody.

If you want to breathe somewhere in these measures, you would do better to choose one of the two options shown below in Figures 21-6 and 21-7.



Figure 21-6. An example of an articulate breathing spot in the first two measures of the reel *The Trip to Durrow*, which is created by breaking a long crann.

② Track 13

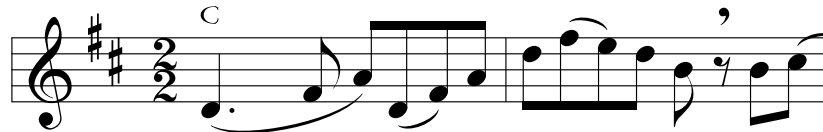


Figure 21-7. Another example of an articulate breathing spot in the first two measures of the reel *The Trip to Durrow*. This one is created by breaking a long roll.

② Track 14

**CIRCULAR BREATHING**

If you could use circular breathing you could play tunes without ever having to break the constant flow of notes. Wouldn't that be great? Well, I'm not so sure. Circular breathing is quite difficult on the flute and whistle because these instruments offer so little air resistance or "back pressure." The very few times I have heard it attempted with Irish flute or whistle the result has sounded anemic, not to mention monotonous.

It's true that the method of air supply for bagpipes is basically a mechanical equivalent of circular breathing. If you mastered circular breathing on the flute or whistle, perhaps you could sound more like a piper. It would be very challenging, though probably not impossible, to manage the mechanics of circular breathing, produce a strong and supple tone and still be completely free to use tonguing, throating, and note omission in a fully musical way.

I am not an uilleann piper, but I would think that it would be very easy for them to fall into a pattern of playing in an overly verbose, unpunctuated fashion. The use of tight or closed fingerings to produce staccato notes provides one way for them to avoid this hazard.

Traditional music very often takes a natural characteristic of an instrument, even when it seems to be a limitation, and turns it into an essential and beautiful element of the art. The implications of noncircular breathing have had a huge impact on the evolution of traditional Irish flute and tin whistle styles over many, many decades. This is a rich legacy that we have the privilege of partaking in. If you wish to explore the possibilities of circular breathing, go right ahead, but be careful not to injure the music. And remember that taking a breath is a pleasant thing in life.