

SECTION 8: GREAT PERFORMANCES

TRANSCRIBED

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS FROM IMPORTANT FLUTE AND TIN WHISTLE PLAYERS, 1925—2001.

In this section, I present my transcriptions of 27 flute and tin whistle performances of traditional Irish tunes which have been released on commercial recordings dating from 1925 to 2001. Twenty-two players are included here, representing a wide variety of playing styles. Using my notation innovations, these very detailed transcriptions give us a new way to look deeply into such performances. While transcribing, I have used digital technology to slow the recordings down so that I could more easily discern the details of the music.

The transcriptions are presented in chronological order according to the year of recording. I have departed from this scheme in order to group pairs of transcriptions together when they are by the same player, and in one case to present side by side two different players' versions of the same tune.

This collection is not meant to be an exhaustive survey, but instead a representative sampling of a wide variety of flute and whistle players and their music. There are so many fine players to choose from that, by necessity, many of them are not represented here. Some are not included because it was not possible to obtain the necessary permissions. It has been difficult to narrow the choice of players down to a number that is manageable for this book. I hope to issue more such collections in the future. (You may refer to my website, <www.greylarsen.com>, for information on such future projects.)

Introducing each transcription, I give some brief biographical information and make some comments and observations on the player's style as shown in that particular performance.

Remember that there are many important aspects of performance that are not possible to notate, such as the various elements that make up *swing* or *lilt* (for more on this see Chapter 1). There are other aspects of playing that I have chosen not to notate, such as multiple tonguing and tonguing vs. throating (some players use one, some use both). In a few cases, I will indicate the use of finger vibrato and breath vibrato. Since transcriptions can never show every nuance, listening to the recordings of these performances while referring to the transcriptions will give you the fullest possible understanding. It is my hope that in the future I can facilitate the issuing of a CD compilation of the recordings transcribed here. As of this writing, however, it is proving very difficult to obtain the necessary permissions. (Check my website for updates.) For now, I strongly encourage you to seek out each artist's recording of these performances. (You will find the needed information in the Discography.)

It is important to realize that I use slurs in a very specific way in these transcriptions. A slurred group of notes is played using an uninterrupted, continuous stream of air. Only the first note of a slurred group is articulated by the use of tonguing or throating. All notes that are *not* within a slur *are* articulated with tonguing or throating.

Some flute players, such as Josie McDermott, use a relatively gentle breath pulsing technique to play repeated notes on one pitch which are nevertheless connected in one continuous breath. In such cases, these repeated notes appear under a slur to show that the notes are separate but that the airstream is not interrupted. (For an example of this, see the transcription of Josie McDermott's rendition of *The Pigeon on the Gate* on pp. 390-391.) One could also describe this technique as a type of very rhythmic, distinct, breath vibrato. When listening to recordings, it is sometimes difficult or impossible to tell whether a player is using this kind of breath pulsing or a subtle kind of throating.

In addition to the ornamentation symbols explained in earlier chapters, I use the commonly used sign for staccato, or very short notes (a dot above a notehead), and the breath sign (a comma) above rests to show where the player takes a breath.

A number of the players in this section make occasional use of a C note that in pitch is in between the equal-tempered C and C-sharp. This is often called a "neutral C," or a "piping C" as Breandán Breathnach refers to it in his book, *Folk Music & Dances of Ireland*.¹ The pitch may be altered with embouchure and/or by fingering, for example