

1. **John McKenna** (flute)—Reel: *The Corry Boys*. This is transcribed from John McKenna's 78-rpm release, which was issued in America in 1925 on the O'Byrne DeWitt Label, and reissued by the John McKenna Traditional Society on their compilation cassette *John McKenna, His Original Recordings*. This tune is the second in a medley of two reels, the first one being *The Sailor on the Rock*. Mode: G Ionian (major).

John McKenna was one of the most influential flute players of the 20th century. He was born in 1880 near the village of Tarmon in Co. Leitrim and died in 1947 in New York.ⁱⁱ After working for some years in the Arigna coal mines, in 1911 he emigrated to New York City and worked at first as a fireman. His first records, recorded in 1921, list him in fact as "Fire Patrolman McKenna." Through the thirty 78-rpm recordings that he made between 1921 and 1936, McKenna had a great deal to do with establishing the flute as a prominent instrument in Irish music. These recordings also brought a number of Leitrim tunes into the common repertoire. His duet recordings with fiddler James Morrison are especially cherished by traditional musicians.

This Leitrim single reel is fascinating in itself because of its irregular phrase length in the A part, which I have notated using measures in 3/2 time. Such "crooked" tunes are rarely heard in Irish music today, though I think this way of playing must have been much more common in older times. Another crooked tune can be seen in the transcription of my whistle performance of Michael J. Kennedy's setting of the hornpipe, "The Cuckoo's Nest" (see transcription #27 later in this section). Perhaps the crooked phrasing of some of these older Irish tunes has been preserved and integrated into local musical traditions in places such as Québec and America.

In this tune, McKenna seems to use no tonguing and very little in the way of throating articulation. Some exceptions can be found, but only on repeated notes, as seen in m. 1, fourth time; m. 5, first, second, third, and fifth times; and m. 9, fourth time. However, he does make frequent use of breath pulsing to add rhythmic drive to the music.

McKenna's ornamentation is fairly spare. In other recordings he can be heard using a wider variety of ornaments, such as condensed rolls. As mentioned in Chapter 16, his recording of *The Five Mile Chase* is the earliest recording I have found of cranning on the flute or whistle.

Even though he plays this tune six times through, you can see that he introduces very little in the way of variation. As Jackie Small writes in the liner notes to *John McKenna, His Original Recordings*,ⁱⁱⁱ McKenna's music was ". . . primarily for dancing, hearty music with a fine 'lift' imparted by his rhythmic, breathy style." But the variations he does employ are very interesting. Perhaps the most adventurous one comes in the very first measure of the first time through the tune. Another similar melodic variation occurs in m. 6 of the first time through. The alternative to the long G roll that he uses in m. 1, fourth time, and m. 5, first, second, and third times, is reminiscent of the bow treble of the fiddle, or the staccato "triplet" of the pipes, though McKenna does not play them staccato. The use of the single trill in m. 5, fifth time, is a slight variation on this. This particular kind of ornamentation is rarely heard in the music of more modern flute and whistle players.