5. Willie Clancy (tin whistle)—Reel: ***Woman of the House.*** This is from a 1967 field recording, originally issued in 1969 on Topic Records, later reissued on *The Breeze from Erin,* Ossian OSS-26. This is the second reel in a medley of two reels, the first being "The Morning Dew." Mode: G Ionian (major).

Willie Clancy (1918–1973), the renowned and beloved uilleann piper, was born just outside of Milltown Malbay in west Co. Clare. Both his parents were singers and concertina players and his father was a fine flutist who had learned a great deal from the blind piper Garret Barry (d. 1900). Willie took up the whistle at age five, and, not long after, the flute, which he played until he lost his teeth. He also played fiddle, was a step dancer, and was a great *sean nós* singer. It was not until he was 18 that he first saw and heard the uilleann pipes, in the hands of Johnny Doran. At the age of 20 he managed to procure a set and within ten years he had established himself as one of the greatest pipers of his time.[ix]

Clancy was a carpenter by trade. Following work, he moved to Dublin in 1951 and to London in 1953 where he renewed an acquaintance with Séamus Ennis. Upon the death of his father in 1957 he returned to and remained in Milltown Malbay. There he planned to become a maker of uilleann pipes, and had acquired the necessary tools and equipment just at the time of his death.

Pat Mitchell writes that "although Willie's approach to acquiring music and the background to it was very serious, his performance of that music was always gay and lively..."[x] This fact comes through loud and clear in this rendition of the well-known reel "The Woman of the House." Here Clancy shows his deep knowledge and inventive genius, tossing off a brilliant, playful, and constantly changing set of variations on this tune.

The piper and whistler Bill Ochs pointed out to me two elements in the tin whistle music of Willie Clancy, and other players of his time and before, that seem to have disappeared from modern tin whistle playing. The first is breath pulsing. Clear examples of this occur with the first note of m. 26, first time, where a repeated D which is articulated only with a breath pulse, and in m. 13, second time, where the second roll is begun with a breath pulse (note that this roll is under a slur).

The second was a technique previously unknown to me in the Irish tradition, one which I was astonished to hear in this recording, a "buzzing throat" or humming technique that creates a kind of growling effect. I have indicated such buzzing in this transcription with a wavy line over the music in m. 1, 6, 9, and 30. This is truly remarkable and must be heard to be appreciated. Séamus Ennis' use of this same technique is shown in the preceding transcription.

Clancy's ornamentation repertoire is very broad. Some of the more unusual ornaments, in addition to the buzzing throat, are true trills and a crann on E, both of which are used more by pipers than whistle and flute players. These trills, in m. 2 and 6, are full, five note trills. He also uses the more common single trill technique in m. 20 and 31. The crann on E appears in m. 14.

Long and short rolls abound. His combinations or chains of rolls are particularly nice in m. 1, second time, m. 5, both times, and m. 13 both times. In m. 9, both times, where one would normally play a long roll on B, Clancy instead plays the note sequence B–C–B, sliding up to a half-hole fingering for the C-natural, then sliding back down again to B. He uses the same kind of sliding and half-holing technique in m. 28, both times, sliding down from A to G-sharp and back up again to A.

His melodic variations are plentiful, rich, and inventive. The most unusual ones are some of those involving the addition of sixteenth-notes as seen in m. 6, second time, m. 14, first time and m. 27, first time, and his use of high C-sharp in m. 27, both times. These and other melodic variations abound, streaming out in a free flow of improvisation.

Like others of the earlier high-energy players, such as Tom Morrison, (see the transcription of Morrison's "Sweet Flowers of Milltown"), Clancy is fond of using register jumping to spice up the music. He does this especially at phrase endings, such as in m. 3, 7, 14, and 15, but also at the start or within a phrase, such as in m. 7, 15, and 31–32. The first E in m. 8 begins in the low register but ends in the high, though it is notated only as a high E.

In this tune, Clancy shows a mastery of multiple tonguing. By listening closely, especially at half-speed, you can clearly hear that most, if not all, of his successively tongued notes have the differing qualities of articulation that multiple tonguing provides. These notes could hardly be tongued so nimbly at this fast tempo by using single tonguing. Examples occur in m. 6–7, 12, 15, 27, 32, and others.