

Irish flute and whistle players quite easily and directly adopted the pipers' finger articulations as their own, even though they *do* have the ability to interrupt the flow of air by using their tongue, glottis, and abdominal muscles. These finger articulations go by various names, but are most commonly referred to as *cuts* and *strikes* by players of the flute, whistle, and uilleann pipes. I address cuts and strikes in depth in Chapters 7 and 8.

THE UILLEANN PIPES' ABILITY TO INTERRUPT THE AIR FLOW

The developing uilleann pipes dispensed with the footjoint of the pastoral pipes, giving its chanter a low note of D. When the player placed the bottom of the chanter on the leg *and* covered all of the finger holes, air could not flow through the chanter and it fell silent. Thus was born the distinctive ability of the uilleann pipes to play separated notes as well as connected notes: *staccato* as well as *legato*. (For definitions of these terms see Chapter 20, pp. 274-275.) This gave the instrument expressive possibilities that many believe made its music the most highly developed form of piping in the world.

AN INHERITED LEGATO AESTHETIC

Still, uilleann piping was deeply affected by the pastoral bagpipe and *piob mór* traditions. It inherited a fundamental and deeply held aesthetic from these ancestral bagpipe traditions, and combined it with its staccato capability to create a new synthesis, one that is also shared by the Irish flute and tin whistle: **The music, in all its variety, springs forth from an underlying foundation of legato playing. The appropriate use of staccato playing exists in relation to that foundation, and takes on its meaning in contrast to it.**

This legato aesthetic is essentially different from that of modern classical music. The classical wind player is taught that all notes are to be tongued unless there is an indication in the notated music, such as a slur, to do otherwise. Most Irish players use tonguing and throating intuitively as an expressive device *against a general backdrop of slurring*. Classically trained musicians who wish to learn to play traditional Irish music must come to understand this critical distinction.

Tonguing in fact is used extensively in both classical and Irish traditions, but in each it is thought of in a completely different way. Much of the tonguing and throating used in Irish flute and tin whistle playing goes unnoticed, because on the whole traditional players use a very connected kind of tonguing and throating that does not take the music away from its fundamentally legato nature.

It seems to me that the traditional Irish musician has much more variety of articulation available to her than does the classical wind player. In classical wind instrument playing, notes are *either* articulated *or* slurred. In Irish traditional music notes can be both articulated *and* slurred, because of its fingered articulations: the cut and the strike. Classical wind players do not have a common practice of fingered articulations.

I explore these subjects in depth in Chapter 20, *Tonguing, Multiple Tonguing, and Throating*.

WHERE DO YOU BREATHE?

The flute and whistle are the only instruments of traditional Irish music that are not suited to non-stop playing. They share a vast repertoire of tunes with the fiddle, pipes, accordion, banjo, concertina, etc., and the tunes have no built-in breathing places. We must create our own by leaving out notes or shortening longer notes. I address this subject in depth in Chapter 21, *Musical Breathing*.

LILT, OR SWING

Irish dance music is rarely if ever played in an absolutely even rhythmic fashion, i.e. with all eighth notes being exactly identical in duration. This is true of many varieties of folk, ethnic, and popular musics. Classical players, who are generally used to playing fairly straight, tend to notice this uneven quality right away. Musicians who are used to playing unevenly sometimes are not aware that they are not playing straight.

This pattern of variance is often referred to as the *lilt* or *swing* (or sometimes *sway*) in a player's style. Each player has her own quality and degree of lilt and it varies with the speed of playing, mood, whom she is playing with, whether or not she is playing for dancers, and other factors.