

15. **Mary Bergin** (tin whistle)—Reel: *Bean Uí Chroidheáin (Mrs. Crehan's Reel)*. From her 1979 debut release, *Feadóga Stáin.*, Gael-Linn CEFCD 071, Shanachie 79006. This is a single reel, the first in a medley that also includes *Gearóid Ó Comáin (Gerry Commané's)* and *An Lá Báistí (The Rainy Day)*. Mode: G Ionian (major).

Mary Bergin was born in 1949 in Shankill, which is now a suburb of Dublin but was in the countryside at that time.^{xix} She and her sisters, among them the renowned traditional harper Antoinette McKenna, grew up in a musical household, their mother playing both classical violin and traditional fiddle and their father playing melodeon. Mary took up the whistle at age nine and plays the instrument left-handed. Many musicians would visit the house such as Paddy Hill, Elizabeth Crotty, and Kathleen Harrington. Bergin was also much influenced by the whistle playing of Willie Clancy (see transcription #5, of Clancy's recording of the reel *Woman of the House*) as well as many other older musicians such as flute player Packie Duignan. Bergin began to frequent nearby sessions and her exemplary playing soon made her a leader in the active Dublin music scene. She took part in Comhaltas tours of the United Kingdom and the United States with musicians such as Matt Molloy, Seamus Begley, and James Kelly. In the 1990s, she expanded the scope of her tin whistle playing by exploring baroque music with her group Dordán. At the time of this writing she lives in western Co. Galway. An active whistle teacher, she has been a role model for countless whistle players since the 1970s, myself included.

Bergin has a beautifully lean, pure, and economical style that allows her to play with great agility, drive, and speed, all with apparent ease. This is due in part to the fact that she makes little use of condensed ornaments or cranns, none in this tune. She plays short rolls where other players might use condensed long rolls. Precise, clean, short rolls are harder to play than condensed long rolls and their use is a key element of her elegant, streamlined style.

Bergin shows a mastery of smooth, conjunct, double tonguing in this reel, an approach to multiple-tongue articulation very different from the pointed, staccato style used by whistle player Josie McDermott in his rendition of *The Keadue Polka* (see transcription #10 on pp. 392-394). Her tonguing does not draw attention to itself but is a means for interpreting and bringing out the natural shapes in the melody and for accommodating quick leaps up and down across the register break. For examples see m. 1, 3, 5, 7, 12, and 15. Her judicious use of staccato notes is extremely effective, adding rhythmic spark to the otherwise smooth drive of her music. Many times she chooses to cut and tongue notes at the same time (see examples in m. 2, 6, 11, 12, 13, and 16), giving those notes a special quality and emphasis.

Bergin uses two different fingerings for C-natural in this reel. When approaching C from the B below, she chooses to half-hole the C, sometimes taking the opportunity to play a slide up to the C (see m. 4, 8, and 15). When approaching C from a note above, in m. 12 and 15, she uses the normal cross-fingering, presumably covering T2 and T3. These two ways of fingering C produce very different tonal and pitch qualities. In m. 9 and 10 you can hear the common practice of using C-sharp when playing a quick passing note between B and D.

Her variations here are subtle ones that arise from small changes in phrasing, breathing, ornamentation, and articulation.



Mary Bergin