

Figure 4-2. Anonymous 19th-century flageolet, from the Dayton C. Miller flute collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The instrument was made in two sections. The upper section has the mouthpiece and fipple, a C-natural key, and a two-part sponge chamber (for absorbing breath condensation). The lower section has E-flat and F-natural keys and ivory finger studs. Made of boxwood with silver keys and ivory ferrules, finger studs, and mouthpiece.

At present, the earliest known evidence of the flageolet's use in traditional Irish music seems to be the reference to the "flagelet" in the subtitle of the 1804 uilleann pipe tutor and tunebook O'Farrell's *Collection of National Irish Music for the Union Pipes*.<sup>v</sup> The subtitle reads:

Comprising a Variety of the Most Favorite Slow & Sprightly Tunes, set in proper Stile & Taste, with Variations and Adapted Likewise for the German Flute, Violin, Flagelet, Piano & Harp, with a Selection of Favorite Scotch Tunes, Also a Treatise with the most Perfect Instructions ever yet Published for the Pipes.

## MANUFACTURED TIN WHISTLES

Inexpensive manufactured tin whistles became available in Ireland certainly no later than the mid-1840s with the introduction of instruments such as the English-made Clarke tin whistle. Unlike the flageolet, which was made of wood turned on a lathe, these whistles were made out of sheet tin rolled around a mandrel and could be produced, and purchased, at very small expense, hence the name pennywhistle. This name may also have come from street musicians who would play tunes on the whistle in exchange for the pennies of passersby.

The tradition of Irish people making their own whistles has persisted even into our time. L. E. McCullough writes that

. . . uilleann pipemaker Patrick Hennelly of Chicago recalled that as a young lad in Mayo, he often made musical instruments from ripe oat straws simply by pushing out the pith and then fashioning the lip and fingerholes with a penknife, and, indeed, the basic structural principles of such instruments must have been discovered fairly early and by many people.<sup>vi</sup>

## HIGHER REGARD FOR THE TIN WHISTLE

It appears that, until the 1960s, the tin whistle was not taken very seriously by most people in Ireland, being seen more as an introductory instrument for aspiring pipers and flute players and a good starting instrument for children. The Irish music revival of the 1960s and 70s, however, brought to light such masterful whistle players as Seán Potts, Mary Bergin, Paddy Maloney, Micho Russell, and Donncha Ó Bráin, who showed the world how highly developed and expressive tin whistle playing could be.

In response, there has been a tremendous flowering of innovation in tin whistle making, especially since the 1980s, resulting in a standard of quality never seen before. Now it is possible to buy fine hand-crafted whistles made of metal, wood, or plastic that are capable of responding to the finest nuances of a masterful player. Inexpensive whistles also abound in a wider variety than ever before.

