



Figure 4-5. Not quite a complete set of whistles by Michael Copeland. From top to bottom: D, C, B-flat, A, G, and low D. Note that this particular B-flat whistle has a seventh hole which gives it a low note of A-flat.

It is prudent for many to start off with an inexpensive instrument. But if you decide to make a commitment to more serious playing, you owe it to yourself to get a good handmade instrument, one that plays well in tune and will respond well and quickly to the subtleties of your playing. While these instruments cost quite a bit more than the mass-produced ones, they are still a bargain compared to other high-quality musical instruments.

THE ACCESSIBLE MODES

The tin whistle, and keyless flute, are somewhat limited outside of their natural scales and several closely related modes. (For information on modes, see Chapter 1.) One can obtain chromatic notes by the half-covering of tone holes and by using cross-fingerings, but these techniques are impractical for some musical situations. This is one reason why whistles in keys other than D can come in very handy. For instance, one can play D Dorian tunes by playing them as if they were in E Dorian on a tin whistle in the key of C. (For more on this subject, see Chapter 1.)

On a D whistle, one can easily play, without half-hole fingerings, in the following modes that are commonly used in Irish music:

- D Ionian (major) and D Mixolydian
- E Dorian and E Aeolian (natural minor)
- G Ionian (major)
- A Mixolydian and A Dorian
- B Aeolian (natural minor)

TIN WHISTLES ARE SIMPLE-SYSTEM INSTRUMENTS

As stated in the previous chapter and elsewhere, the tin whistle and simple-system flute share the same fingering system, one which is almost the same as that of the uilleann pipes. As a result, fingering techniques on the flute and whistle are nearly identical, and both are very closely related to those of the uilleann pipes.

ⁱ L. E. McCullough, *The Complete Tin Whistle Tutor* (New York: Oak Publications, 1987), pp. 6–8.

ⁱⁱ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Traditional Irish Music* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1998), p. 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music & Dances of Ireland* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1971), p.5.

^{iv} McCullough, p. 8.

^v O'Farrell (first name unknown), *O'Farrell's Collection of National Irish Music for the Union Pipes* (London: John Gow, 1804). Compiled, edited and reconstructed by Patrick Sky (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Grassblade Music, 1995).

^{vi} McCullough, p. 6.