Introduction

Welcome! I hope you'll enjoy this collection of 34 folk, popular and classical songs and tunes arranged for tin whistle or Irish flute. (Tin whistles are also known as pennywhistles.)

These pieces represent numerous countries and cultures. Most of these melodies will be familiar to many English speakers. A few of them—cherished favorites from non-English speaking cultures—may be less familiar. If any are new to you, I hope you'll come to appreciate their time-tested beauty.

This book provides whistle and flute players with easy-to-play arrangements of these tunes. 32 of them are songs, with lyrics in a variety of languages, while two are instrumental classical pieces. Songs tend to translate beautifully to the whistle and flute because wind players breathe and phrase much the way singers do.

What Makes These Tunes Easy?

- They are played in the lower two octaves of the whistle and flute's range, ascending no higher than B in the second octave. (Notes above this can be challenging to play on the whistle, and they sound too loud and shrill to many people.)
- They are in easy whistle and flute keys or modes, such as D major, G major, E minor and B minor.
- They use only the eight **primary notes** of the D whistle and Irish flute. Using the widely accepted symbol for "sharp" (♯), and progressing from the lowest note upward, step by step, these notes are:

$$D, E, F\sharp, G, A, B, C \text{ and } C\sharp$$

There are four *non-primary* notes as well — E-flat (E♭), F-natural (F♮), G-sharp (G♯) and B-flat (B♭) — but they are not easily played on the D whistle or keyless Irish flute in D as they require techniques called "half-holing" or "cross-fingering." The tunes in this book don't use those notes.

Which Whistle or Flute Should You Use With This Book?

The tin whistle in D is widely considered to be the standard one, and I recommend using it with this book. You can also use the standard Irish flute. It's in D as well, and uses the exact same fingerings as the D whistle. You can also play these tunes on the modern, Boehm-system flute and piccolo, as well as soprano and tenor recorders.

The D whistle comes in two forms: the **small D**, which measures about 12 inches in length (or about 29 centimeters), and the **low D**, which is twice as long and plays one octave lower. You can use either one, though some find the low D more challenging to play. You'll hear a small D whistle used on the online recordings accompanying this book.

You can, however, also use a non-D whistle. Whistles that are longer and lower than the small D have mellower voices and can be very satisfying to play. If your hands are very small, however, or compromised in some way, and you find it difficult to manage the small D whistle, you might want to use one that is shorter, such as a whistle in E-flat (E♭), E, F, F-sharp (F♯) or G.

When using a non-D whistle and reading the tunes in this book, pretend you are fingering the notes on a D whistle. You may want to refer to the fingering chart for D whistle and Irish flute on p. 5. If you use a whistle that is pitched lower than the small D, the tunes will sound lower than written. If you use one that plays higher than the small D, the tunes will sound higher than written.

To play along with the audio files using a non-D whistle, you'll want to use a device or software application to raise or lower the pitch of these files to match the pitch level of the whistle you're playing.

Audio Recordings Included

At www.melbay.com/30789MEB you can access audio recordings in which I play all 34 melodies on a small D whistle and on an Irish flute.

Chords are included with the notation and recording of each tune. On the recordings the chords are played on guitar or piano, but they can be played on other instruments as well. Recordings of each tune are provided in several configurations: whistle alone, Irish flute alone, guitar or piano alone, whistle with guitar or piano, and Irish flute with guitar or piano.

If You Need Help With Tin Whistle or Irish Flute Playing

If you are new to the tin whistle, have questions about it or need help with your playing, I recommend you consult my book *First Lessons Tin Whistle*. It offers valuable insights as well as thorough instruction for beginners. If you are new to the Irish flute, I recommend working with my book *The Essential Guide to Irish Flute and Tin Whistle*.

Two Forms of Notation

This book uses standard music notation. If you don't read music I encourage you to learn how, as it is a rich and useful notation system. There are many books and online resources that explain how it works.

However, if you don't read music, don't worry — you can still make good use of this book, as each tune is also notated in tin whistle and Irish flute **tablature**. Tablature is an instrument-specific system that graphically illustrates a fingering for each note. Tablature systems exist for many instruments and have been in use at least since the 1300s. Below I explain how tin whistle and Irish flute tablature works. (This tablature system does not work for the modern Boehm-system flute and piccolo, or for soprano and tenor recorders, because their fingerings differ from those of the Irish flute and tin whistle.)

Tin Whistle and Irish Flute Tablature

This form of tin whistle and Irish flute tablature uses a **staff** — a set of parallel horizontal lines. You may encounter others which do not, such as those that use a picture of a whistle for each note.

Have a look at the tablature, below, for the beginning of "When the Saints Go Marching In." The tablature staff appears above the music notation staff.

This tablature system features five elements:
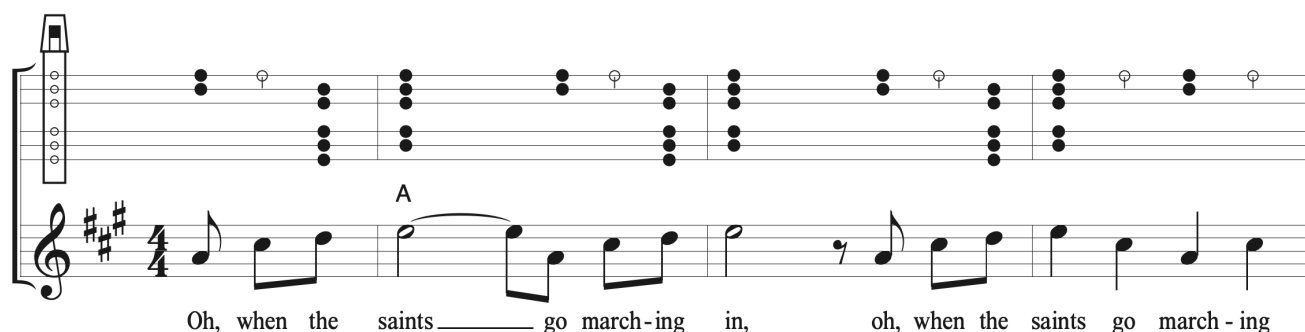
1. A tin whistle icon, or **clef**, at the left edge of the tablature staff. Its six small circles represent the six finger holes of the whistle or Irish flute. The presence of this clef identifies the staff as a whistle or Irish flute tablature staff.

2. Six horizontal, parallel staff lines extending through and to the right of the clef. Notice that each staff line goes through a finger hole circle on the clef. Each staff line therefore represents one of the six finger holes of the whistle or Irish flute. The top group of three staff lines corresponds to the top-hand finger holes while the bottom group of three lines corresponds to the bottom-hand finger holes.

3. Solid black dots. For each note (with the exception of C♯) you'll see one or more solid black circles, or dots, centered upon the staff lines and vertically aligned with each other. (These dots are never placed between, above or below the staff lines.) Each dot indicates a closed finger hole. For example, the tune's first note, low A, has dots upon each of the top two staff lines. This shows that you finger low A by closing the top two finger holes and leaving the rest of the holes open.

4. A special fingering symbol — ♀ — **for the note C♯.** Since we finger C♯ by opening all six finger holes, I use this special symbol for that note, and that note only. This symbol appears five times in the example shown above. Its open circle indicates an open finger hole, while its small descending line suggests that open holes extend all the way down the whistle or flute.

5. Barlines. These are vertical lines that cut through the six-line staff and divide the music, as it flows from left to right, into time segments which are typically of equal duration. These segments of time are referred to as **measures** or **bars**. (The pickup measure that begins this tune, however, is a partial measure; it has fewer beats than do the other measures, even though they all share the same time signature.)

Tablature does not tell you much about the rhythm of the music. If you don't read music and are unfamiliar with the rhythms of a tune, you'll need to learn those rhythms by listening to the recording.

A Fingering Chart for the D Tin Whistle and Irish Flute

The following chart shows the primary notes of the D whistle and Irish flute, along with their fingerings. (Note that the small D whistle sounds one octave higher than written.) Uppercase letters indicate low-register notes, while lowercase letters indicate high-register notes. This manner of using upper and lowercase letters is also a feature of *abc notation*, a music notation system widely used on the internet at the time of this writing.

Low Register   High Register
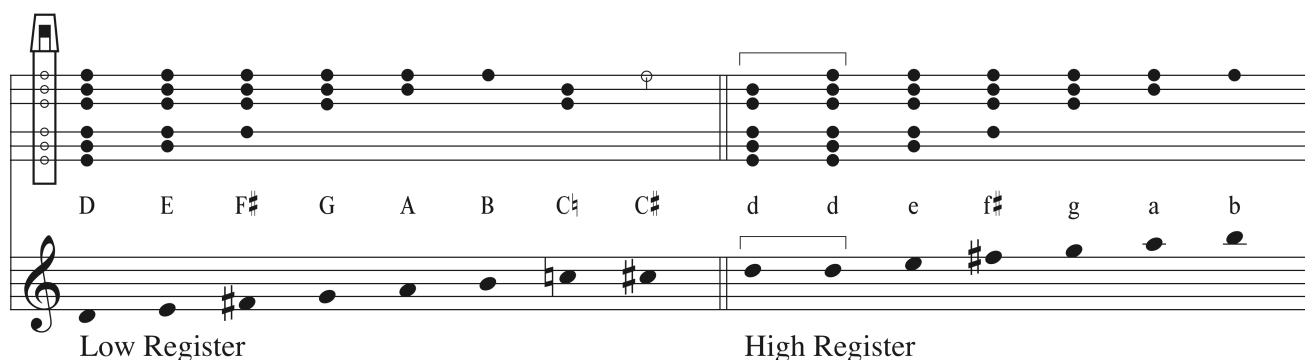
This chart shows two fingerings for high D, joined under a bracket. I use only the first of these fingerings in the tablature throughout this book. (It's often called the "vented" D fingering, because the top hole is open, or vented.) I generally prefer this fingering for its clarity of tone and because you cannot play low D by mistake when using it. However, you may sometimes want to use the other fingering (which is the same as the fingering for low D) to reduce the number and complexity of your finger movements. (There is more information on these high D fingering options in *First Lessons Tin Whistle*.)

Lyrics

Lyrics are provided for the initial verse of each song, and for the refrain when there is one. For many of these songs there are multiple variants or versions of the lyrics, and it's often hard to know which one, if any, to consider definitive. To find other versions, as well as the lyrics to subsequent verses, you can search online or consult other sources.

Slurs and Phrasing

The slurs you see in the following pages conform to the way the lyrics underlay the melodies. As a whistle or flute player, you need not be bound by such lyric-based phrasing. Use slurring, tonguing and phrasing in any way that appeals to you. On the recordings you'll hear me do just that. I also use vibrato from time to time.

Breathing

You'll find rests in all the tunes. They provide excellent breathing places. However, you'll probably need more places to breathe than those supplied by the rests. Create additional breathing places by shortening notes as needed. You'll hear me do this on the recordings.

More About the Chords

Some of these melodies have been around for centuries, and musicians have devised many ways to harmonize and accompany them. Cindy Kallet and I have crafted chordal arrangements for guitar or piano that appeal to us; feel free to change them to suit your musical taste. You may be playing a different accompaniment instrument which has idiomatic capabilities that differ from those of the guitar or piano.

The chords in the following pages are mainly shown in root position (i.e., the root of the chord is its lowest note). However, on the recordings you'll hear the guitar or piano occasionally play the third or fifth of the chord as the lowest note. This helps to create pleasing bass lines when moving from chord to chord. Feel free to use bass notes that appeal to you.

Also, if you're playing a fretted string instrument, such as a guitar, you may at times want to use a capo to simplify your chord fingerings.

Playing the Tunes in Other Keys

14 of these pieces can be played in two different keys (for example, D major and G major), using just the primary notes of the whistle and Irish flute. Seven of them can be played in three keys (in D, G and A major or in E, A and B minor). In this book each melody is presented in only one key, but you can download versions notated in other keys (along with corresponding audio files) at greylarsen.com/ef.

Whistle or Flute Duets

It's great fun to play these tunes with another whistle or flute player when one of you plays a harmony part. In this book I provide three such duets, which you'll find on pp. 48—53. You might also enjoy playing the harmony part while someone sings the song.

With each duet, the melody part appears on the left-facing page and the harmony part on the right. Audio for these three duets is included in the downloads that accompany this book, in several variants: each whistle or flute part alone, both whistles or flute parts together, and each of those with and without guitar or piano accompaniment.

These duets can also work very well when played by other melodic instruments.

The duet harmony parts are designed to work with the chords that are shown. If you change the chords, be aware that the harmony part may need to be adjusted accordingly.

A Book of Easy Christmas Favorites for Tin Whistle or Irish Flute

You might enjoy *Easy Christmas Favorites for Tin Whistle or Irish Flute*, another book of easy tune arrangements, this one featuring a variety of Christmas carol melodies. Like this book, it comes with music notation, chords, and tablature for tin whistle and Irish flute. It also comes with audio files featuring tin whistle and Irish flute, with and without guitar, and guitar-only recordings to accompany you as you play the tunes.

For a list of my other Irish flute and tin whistle repertoire and instruction books, please see p. 54.

Further Online Resources

You'll find the following at greylarsen.com/ef:

- 21 of this book's 34 tunes notated in alternate keys, along with corresponding audio files
- Exercises for tin whistle and Irish flute finger coordination, with audio files
- Blank templates for notating your own tin whistle and Irish flute tablature
- Excerpts from my other books
- Links to tin whistle and Irish flute videos

Now, on to the tunes!