

TSDL1506

IRISH TRADITIONAL
CONCERTINA STYLES



TSDL1506

Irish
Traditional
Concertina
Styles

02

1 reel	King of the Clans	Sonny Murray	10 reel	The Morning Dew	Sonny Murray
2 set tune	No Title/ Behind the Bush in Parkhanna	Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer	11 reel	Spike Island Lasses	Sean O'Dwyer
3 jig	Kit O'Mahoney's	Paddy Murphy	12 jigs	Jigs incl. Jenny's Beaver Hat	Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer
4 reel	The Mountain Road	Gerald Haugh	13 reels	Toss the Feathers /Drowsy Maggie	Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer
5	Reels	Solus Lillis/ Tom Carey	14 reel	The Mason's Apron	Paddy Murphy
6 slow air	The Fairy Child	Michael MacAogain	15 flings	Sean O'Dwyer's Fling/The Kerry Hornpipe	Sean O'Dwyer
7 set dance	The Argrume Set	Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer	16 jig	Kesh Jig	Gerald Haugh
8 barn dance	The Barn Dance	Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer	17 jig	The Clare Jig (Stack's Favourite)	Solus Lillis/ Tom Carey
9 reels	Chancy Cheory/ West along the Road	Sonny Murray	18 air	Air from Thomas Moor	Solus Lillis
			19 horn- pipe	The Fairy Hornpipe	Michael MacAogain

TSDL1506

20 March

Mrs Ellen
O'Dwyer

SONNY MURRAY (Ennis, Co. Clare)

MRS ELLEN O'DWYER (Dublin)

21 set **Mrs O'Dwyer's**
dance **Fancy**

Mrs Ellen
O'Dwyer

PADDY MURPHY (Co. Clare)

GERALD HAUGH (Lisseycasey, Co. Clare)

22 jigs **Apples in Winter**

Solus Lillis/
Tom Carey

SOLUS LILLIS (Cooraclare, Co. Clare)

TOM CAREY (Cooraclare, Co. Clare)

MICHAEL MacAOGAIN (Dublin)

SEAN O'DWYER (Dublin)

Irish
Traditional
Concertina
Styles

03

First published by Topic 1977

Recorded in Dublin and Co. Clare, January
1974, by John Tams and Neil Wayne

Produced by John Tams, Neil Wayne and
Tony Engle

Photography by Valerie Wilmer

Sleeve design by Tony Engle

Notes by Neil Wayne

TSDL1506

INTRODUCTION

In this, the sixth Topic/Free Reed release, we present a sample of the playing of eight musicians from various parts of Ireland who play the Anglo concertina.

Today, the richest store of traditional concertina playing is to be found in County Clare, and indeed five of these musicians live and work in that county. However, the instrument's popularity has been more widespread and Mrs. O'Dwyer, who learnt to play in County Limerick as a young girl, tells of many players in that county.

Also, the instrument is regaining popularity amongst the newer generation of musicians, and we feature on the recording items from two younger Dublin concertina players.

This record, then, surveys the Irish traditional concertina styles that can be heard in and around County Clare today, and includes selections from younger musicians, as well as some of the finest traditional players of the concertina in Ireland.

THE MUSICIANS

Sonny Murray, who lives now in Ennis, County Clare, originally hails from Kilmihil, in the west of the county. One of his major influences was the great old player "Stack" Ryan, with whom he often played at

dances. Dance accompaniment is always considered valuable experience by concertina players, and Sonny's style of playing reels shows his experience to the full - relatively undecorated playing, with "long notes" enhanced with occasional octave playing, as in **King of the Clans**. Reels are his favourite, and in **Chancy Cheery/West along the Road and Morning Dew**, he generates a remarkable intensity and excitement in the music - good long sets too, always the mark of dance playing. Sonny Murray still plays in the Ennis area, often with Peadar O'Loughlin (flute) and Paddy Murphy (concertina) and has played in the USA for the Irish Cultural Commission.

We have two items from Paddy Murphy, regarded by many as the greatest concertina player in Clare. The late Willie Clancy regarded him highly, and Paddy Murphy was a member of a couple of the early ceilidh bands in Clare in the 1930s. He's always been shy of recording and publicity and mainly plays around Ennis and Kilmaley with Peadar O'Loughlin. Paddy learnt much from his musical parents, and from a fine old fiddler named Doohan. Like a number of musicians in the area, he used old 78s as source for tunes and speaks highly of the old Mullaly records, now very rare, which were perhaps the first traditional concertina recordings.

TSDL1506

Here he gives us **Kit O'Mahoney's Jig**, tastefully played, with lots of octave work, marked "double noting" and triplets, and **The Mason's Apron**, embellished with nice clusters of decoration

One of the delights of my trip to Ireland was meeting Mrs. Ellen O'Dwyer at her son's home in Dublin. She plays an old German-made double-reeded concertina, a "House Brand", with terrific vitality and drive. She hails from Limerick, and it's in the Limerick style that she plays, with lots of staccato, using the "bounce" in the bellows to drive the tunes along, as in **Toss the Feathers/ Drowsy Maggie**.

In the set which includes **Behind the Bush in Parkhanna**, and in the set of jigs including **Jenny's Beaver Hat**, her playing uses the pipers' trick of shutting off the drones (in this case the left-hand bass accompaniment) to emphasise a passage, while the **Argrume Set Dance** from her native Limerick is a fine example of Mrs. O'Dwyer's dance-oriented style. As with much of her music, **The Barn Dance** is one of the old tunes that were played for types of dances that aren't popular now, and thus heard rarely. **Mrs. O'Dwyer's Fancy**, a polka-ish set dance with almost an English feel to it, is played throughout "double-handed", that is, in octaves by left and right hands.

Mrs. O'Dwyer's family includes her son Finbar, the noted button accordion player, and his brother Sean O'Dwyer, an authority on Irish traditional music, in particular that of the concertina. Sean is one of the new generation of concertina players, perhaps somewhat influenced by the large button accordions that unfortunately dominate much Irish music these days, but still with an impeccably accurate, even jaunty, style marked by tasteful use of left-hand chords. He got the tune we call **Sean O'Dwyer's Fling** from his brother Finbar as a reel, and while playing it turned it into a fling played for polka sets which he teams up with **The Kerry Hornpipe**. Sean O'Dwyer's version of **The Spike Island Lasses** is a masterpiece of modern style - crisp, accurate, and subtly decorated. He has it from his uncle.

Solus Lillis is a blacksmith from Kilmihil, in the heart of West Clare. He has an unusual style, great for dancing, with bellows shakes, and double-handed playing. He too was in the early Clare ceilidh bands and must know every musician in County Clare. He plays in duet with his ex-neighbour, retired blacksmith Tom Carey who now lives in Clanredden and together they give a busy, driving feel to the set of reels included here on tracks 1, 4, 5, 9,10 and 11, which reminds one of the Russell Brothers playing

TSDL1506

together (see Topic 12TS251 'The Russell Family'). **The Clare Jig** is always called "Stack's Favourite" amongst Clare concertina players. Both players knew Stack Ryan and, for a full account of his life and influence on Clare's musicians, see Muiris O'Rochain's notes on Topic/Free Reed 12TFRS505 'Bernard O'Sullivan and Tommy MacMahon'. Slow airs are rarely played by traditional concertina players, but here Solus Lillis gives us the unusual **Air from Thomas Moor**.

Michael MacAogain is a younger Dublin-based player originally from County Sligo who, though slightly influenced by the newer styles developed by button accordion players, knows many of the older musicians well. His slow air **The Fairy Child** ('An Leanbh Si') is rarely played - he and Sean O'Dwyer have it from Seamus Ennis and Pakie Russell; likewise, his second piece **The Fairy Hornpipe** is also quite rare.

Gerald Haugh, a farmer from Lisseycasey, was 1976 Senior All-Ireland Concertina Champion, an accolade well-earned after years of playing. He's a great collector of tunes and played us well over one hundred during an afternoon's recording. He cites Paddy Murphy as his major influence, and you can hear elements of Paddy's style in Gerald's version of

The Kesh Jig. His style is generally less decorated than most players of his age, as in the noted Michael Gorman tune **The Mountain Road**.

Here then is a survey of the styles of eight players of traditional Irish music on the Anglo concertina - mainly from Clare, but with contributions from Limerick, Sligo and beyond.

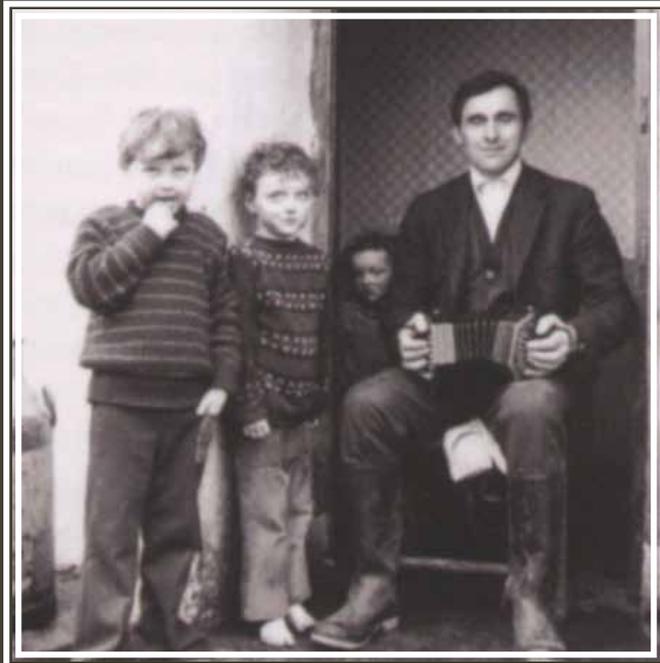
I would like to thank Muiris O'Rochain of Miltown Malbay for his help in compiling these notes, and Tony Engle for his patience in awaiting them.

Neil Wayne, January 1977

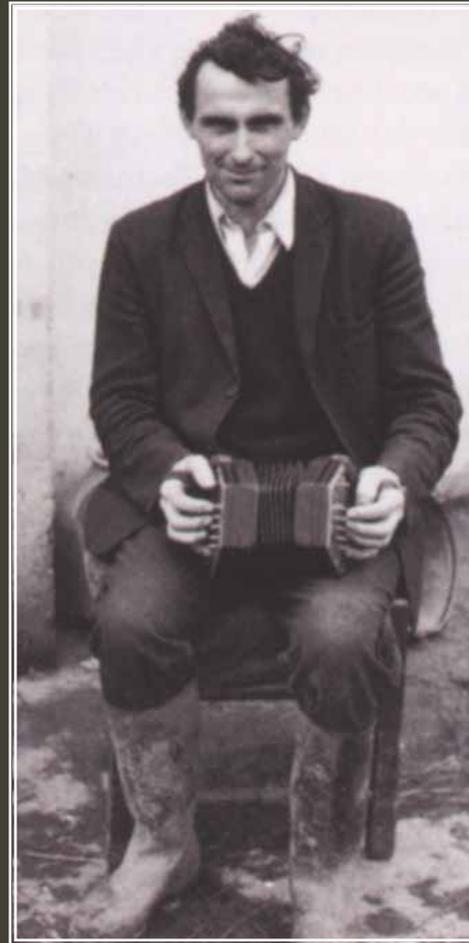
TSDL1506

Irish
Traditional
Concertina
Styles

07



Gerald Haugh & Family



Gerald Haugh



Mrs Ellen O'Dwyer

TSDL1506

Irish
Traditional
Concertina
Styles

08



Tom Carey



Solus Lillis



Solus Lillis and Tom Carey

TSDL1506

Irish
Traditional
Concertina
Styles

09



Paddy Murphy

Digital remaster © 2015 Topic Records Ltd.
© 2015 Topic Records Ltd.
The copyright in this sound recording and
digital artwork is owned by Topic Records Ltd.
All rights reserved.



TOPIC TSDL1506
www.topicrecords.co.uk