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MUSICAL WORLD:

Exploring Music for Primary Schools - Traditional Irish Music

Student and Parent/Teacher
Information and Suggested
Activities





Welcome to this edition of *Musical World*, a guide for primary school children to explore music from around the world!

In this packet we start at home, with the focus on learning through Traditional Irish music.

We hope you enjoy the activities, links, and images, and get inspired to make some music of your own!

NCH Learning & Participation Team



Irish Traditional music (also known as trad music) is a genre of music related to the island of Ireland. It is an oral tradition, and its rich and colourful nature has captured the attention of listeners worldwide.

What makes Irish music unique? In general we play in groups or ensembles with all melody instruments (like flute, fiddle, banjo, accordion and concertina) playing in unison, rather than in harmony. Ornamentation is used to keep the music fun and engaging.

How old is Irish Music? Its origins can be traced back to almost 2000 years ago, when the Celts first arrived in Ireland. It has evolved over the years, and has been influenced by different styles of music like Jazz, American and European folk music, particularly in the 1970s. All of this has lead to the Irish folk music we hear and play today.

1. Learn an Irish Song

There are so many fantastic Irish songs. Have you learned one in school? Have your parents remembered one they learned in school? Here are a few familiar favourites you can learn together at home. Try singing along using the lyrics below!

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwM8pCAynbM>

Báidín Fheilimí
 https://youtu.be/iWS2h_CmdOY

Beidh Aonach Amárach
 <https://youtu.be/dfGIJNNOZNE>



Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

Anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh.

‘Sé do bheatha, a bhean ba léanmhar
Do bé ár gcreach tú bheith i ngéibhinn
Do dhúiche bhrefá i seilbh meirleach

‘S tú díolta leis na Gallaibh.

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

Anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh.

Tá Gráinne Mhaol ag teacht thar sáile
óglaigneach armtha léi mar gharda,
Gaeil iad féin is ní Gaillná Spáinnigh
‘S cuirfidh siad ruaig ar Ghallaibh.

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile
óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

Anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh.

Tá Gráinne Mhaol ag teacht thar sáile,
Is Fianna Fáil ‘na mbuidhin...



Báidín Fheilimí

Báidín Fheilimí, d'imigh go Gabhla,
Báidín Fheilimí. 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín Fheilimí, d'imigh go Gabhla
Báidín Fheilimí, 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín bídeach, báidín beosach, báidín boidheach, báidín Fheilimí,
Báidín direach, báidín deontach, báidín Fheilimí 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín Fheilimí, d'imigh go Toraigh,
Báidín Fheilimí, 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín Fheilimí, d'imigh go Trocaigh,
Báidín Fheilimí, 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín bídeach, báidín beosach, báidín boidheach, báidín Fheilimí,
Báidín direach, báidín deontach, báidín Fheilimí 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín Fheilimí, briseadh i dToraigh,
Báidín Fheilimí, 's Feilimi ann.

Báidín Fheilimí, briseadh i dToraigh,
Báidín Fheilimí, 's Feilimi ann.

Báidín bídeach, báidín beosach, báidín boidheach, báidín Fheilimí,
Báidín direach, báidín deontach, báidín Fheilimí 's Feilimí ann.

Báidín bídeach, báidín beosach, báidín boidheach, báidín Fheilimí,
Báidín direach, báidín deontach, báidín Fheilimí 's Feilimí ann.



Beidh Aonach Amárach

Beidh Aonach Amárach i gContae an Chláir
Beidh Aonach Amárach i gContae an Chláir
Beidh Aonach Amárach i gContae an Chláir
Cé Mhaith Dom É Ní Bheidh Mé Ann

‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mhuirnín Ó Ná Héiligh É

Níl Tú A Deich Nó A Haon Déag Fós
Níl Tú A Deich Nó A Haon Déag Fós
Níl Tú A Deich Nó A Haon Déag Fós
Nuair A Bheidh Tú Trí Déag Beidh Tú Mór

‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mhuirnín Ó Ná Héiligh É

B’fhearr Liom Féin Mo Ghréasaí Bróg
B’fhearr Liom Féin Mo Ghréasaí Bróg
B’fhearr Liom Féin Mo Ghréasaí Bróg
Ná Oifigeach Airm Faoi Lásai Ór

‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mhuirnín Ó Ná Héiligh É

‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mháithrín An Ligfidh Tú Chun Aonaigh Mé?
‘S A Mhuirnín Ó Ná Héiligh É



Fiddle



Tin Whistle



Flute



Bodhrán



Button Accordion



Concertina



Banjo



Uilleann Pipes

2. Meet the Instruments

Some of the most frequently used instruments in Irish music are: **Fiddle** (violin), **Flute**, **Whistle** (tin/wood), **Uilleann Pipes**, **Banjo**, **Accordion**, **Concertina**, **Bodhran**, **Guitar**, **Bozouki** and **Harp**.

Activity:

Have a listen to each of these instruments at the links below, and see if you can answer a few questions about each (a Google search can help you if you're stuck!):

1. What instrument family does it belong to?
2. How does it make sound?
3. What does it sound like? How would you describe its sound?

Fiddle:

- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brSnn5ynJ-0>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1_-bx-RagA



Flute:

- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mumkJUoAyZI>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40d6wTnIXqA>



Tin Whistle:

- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdJYbOkbetQ>

Low Whistle:

- (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccpFzbm_PQs



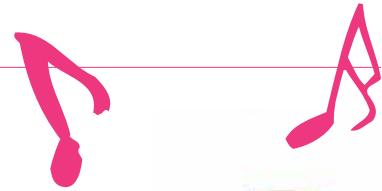
Uilleann Pipes:

- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8blbyNHgpO8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JzkjUYBURc>



Accordion and Concertina:

- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xBdo2uYTal>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvTnpbERuOg&list=PL214CCE764F3645CD&index=5>



Banjo:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91HrZhM9kYM>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gk_9Uo2elpo

Bodhrán:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhpybB6lfcc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HaF2cIReik>



Instrument Families:

Did you learn about the above instruments? Here are the different instrument families, and how they can be played—see how many you figured out!



- **Strings** – Can be bowed (like the fiddle) or plucked (like the banjo / harp).
- **Wind** – These instruments need air from your body to make sound. You blow into the mouthpiece (whistles); or across the mouthpiece (flute); play with bag, bellows and pipes (uilleann pipes), or bellows and reeds (accordion / concertina)
- **Percussion** – You tap or beat the instrument to make sound. Above we featured a frame drum with a single stick (bodhrán).

Activity:

Once you have listened to each instrument separately, test yourself! See if you close your eyes while listening to a trad band, can you tell which instrument is which?

Take a listen to The Wild Turkeys Ireland. Close your eyes and listen - what instruments do you hear in their band?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Q0G7QUpiKw>



3. Common Dances in Irish Music

Although dancing has been part of our culture since the Celts invaded Ireland in 500 BC, it was not until the 18th century that Irish dancing became more disciplined and the styles and formations we know today evolved. Instrumental music and dance go hand in hand in the Irish tradition.

Although we often play the dance tunes without dancing, it is rare that you would see the dancing without instrumental music. For years, young people all over Ireland learned Irish dancing in school, but it wasn't until *Riverdance* was released in 1995 that Irish dancing really became a worldwide phenomenon.

Four of the most common dances/tunes played:

- **Jig** - a dance commonly played. It is usually in 6/8 (or with a feel of 2 in every bar).
- **Reel** - A fast rhythmical dance in 4/4 (also having a fast two feel)
- **Slip Jigs** are in 9/8 time (a feel of three in a bar)
- **Polkas** are usually in 2/4 (with a feel of 1 in a bar) and are played very fast



Now have a look at some videos of the dances to go along with the tunes, and why not have a dance yourself?



Jig (featuring softshoe Irish dancing):
<https://youtu.be/ROynama9rxc>



Reel (danced sean-nós style):
<https://youtu.be/iCNNx5hT46U>



Slip Jig (from Riverdance):
<https://youtu.be/xofvqnLCB2Q>



Polka (a performance drawing from Irish step dance, set dance, and céilí dancing):
<https://youtu.be/9LxVDTI-TMg>



4. Jigs and Reels

Do you think you can tell the difference between a jig and a reel? The main difference between the jig and the reel is there are more notes in a reel! It's really that simple. If you tap your foot along with the music, find the natural beat of the music, then count how many notes in between taps. If you can tap 3 it is a Jig, and if you can tap 4 it is a reel. Therefore a reel will always feel faster than a jig.

To get a little more technical, both a jig and a reel have a simple formula. That formula consists of 8 bars of music which you play twice, and then another 8 bars of music which you also play twice. You play AABB with each section having 8 bars. If you are playing a jig, it will have 6 quaver beats in every single bar, however if you are playing a reel you will have 8 quaver beats in a bar. You will tap your foot naturally in the middle of every bar, meaning every bar has two big beats, with a jig having 3 quavers in each beat and a reel having 4 quavers in each beat.

Activity: Make Your Own Percussion Instrument

Make your own Drums

Take a lunchbox or a Tupperware container and two pencils/pens (these are your drum sticks). Place the lid on the container and use the non-sharpened sides of the pencils to bang a rhythm on your container. You can decorate the side of the container by wrapping it in paper and colouring it with designs. Now you have your own drum kit.



Make your own Shaker

Fill a cylindrical container (a water bottle, an empty toilet roll/paper roll tube, or a jam jar) and fill it with some dry beans or rice. Make sure that both ends are sealed fully (with a lid or with masking tape) so that the contents don't escape when you shake it. You can decorate your shaker whatever way you like to make it colourful and bright. This will then become your shaker that you can play along with lots of different recordings online.



Once you have made your own percussion instrument, why not play along with some recordings? Firstly, see if you can identify if it is a **reel** or a **jig**? You can do this by testing your rhythms below.

Jigs: Tap/shake the rhythm
“Beautiful Butterfly” (6 quaver beats)

Reels: Tap or shake the rhythm
“Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola” (8 quavers)



This below recording starts with a jig and moves to a reel – do you hear where that happens?

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuXMz5GOgjc&feature=youtu.be>

5. Write your own Jig:

Now that you have listened to a jig and played along with your percussion instruments, how about making a stab at writing your own jig? All you need to do is make sure that you have 6 quaver beats in every bar. A **bar** looks like this:



Below in Step 3, you can see we have started your jig for you. There are 8 bars which get played twice and then another 8 bars which also get played twice (AABB form).

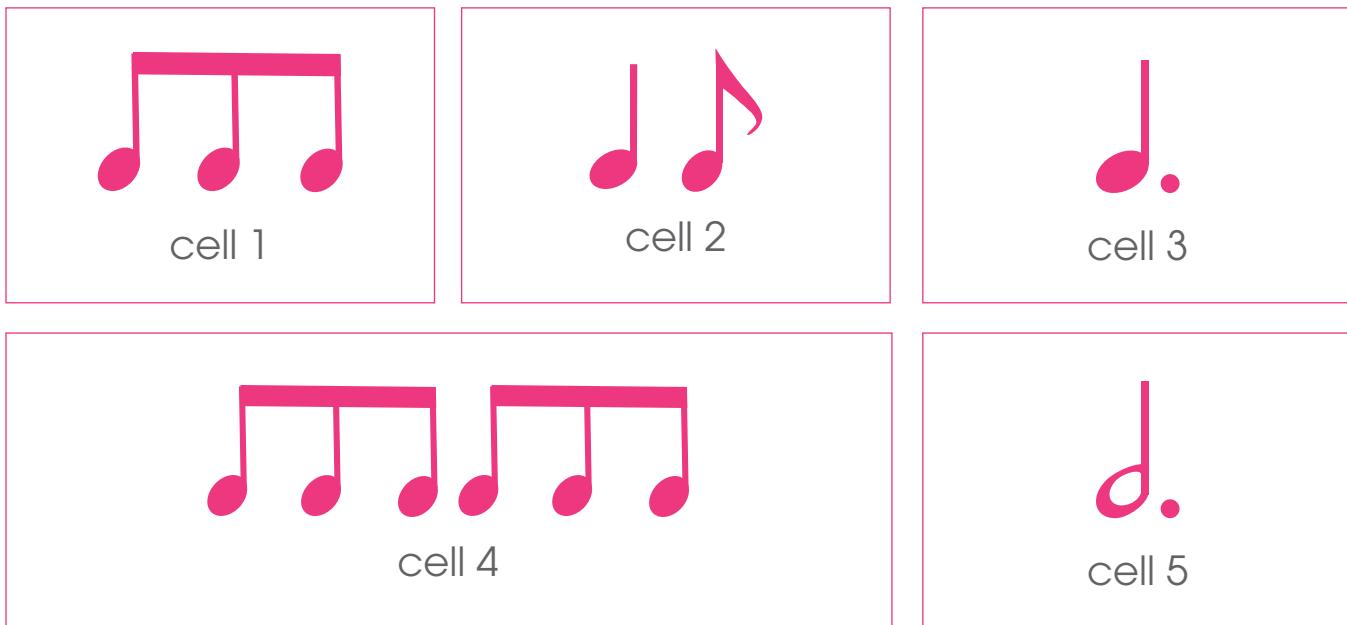
Here's a simple step by step of what you need to do:
You can watch this video to help you with each step!

 <https://youtu.be/Xb0YzeEcwZs>

Step 1.

Choose a cell from the rhythm bank. Cell number 1,2 and 3 are only worth half a bar (3 quavers each) so you must put two of these together to make up one whole bar. Cell number 4 and 5 are worth 6 quaver beats so this would be your entire bar. Remember, only 6 quaver beats go in each bar.

Rhythm Bank:



Step 2:

Note Bank:

A musical staff in treble clef and 2-sharp key signature. It contains 16 notes, each consisting of a vertical stem with a small horizontal tick at its midpoint. The notes start on the fourth line from the bottom and move sequentially upwards through the remaining lines and spaces of the staff.

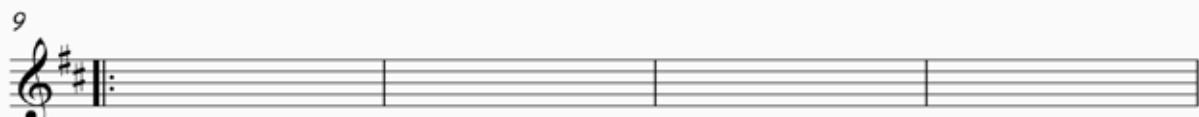
See how each note falls either on a line, or between a line? Make sure to draw their location clearly when you write your jig. Draw a circle on or between the lines first, and then you add the stem to the note. The stem can go up to the top of the page or down to the bottom, you can check from the note bank above which way your stem needs to go on each note. (Don't worry if your line/stem goes the wrong way, this really doesn't make any difference once the circle is in the right place!)

Now that you have chosen your notes, you must combine them with your rhythm cells. This is easy! Here are a few examples:



Step 3.

Finish the jig by inserting your notes into the empty bars!



Once you have written your jig, why not try to play it on any instrument? Or get a family member or friend to try it for you, so you can see what it sounds like. Don't forget to name your jig!

6. Famous Musicians & Further Listening:

Martin Hayes:

Fiddler Martin Hayes is considered one of Ireland's most innovative and influential musicians. He was raised in a famous musical family in rural Maghera, Feakle, East County Clare where the music he learned from his late father, P. Joe Hayes, the legendary leader of the long-lived Tulla Ceili Band, profoundly influenced his musical accent and ideas. By age 19 Martin had won six All-Ireland fiddle championships. Hayes has drawn inspiration from sources as diverse as Estonian composer Arvo Pärt and jazz genius Myles Davis and early Music icon Jordi Savall, but remains grounded in the music he grew up with in East Clare.



 Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQNlye4BbAQ>

The Bothy Band:

This band was formed by Donal Lunny in 1975 after he left the group Planxty to set up his own record label. Joined by uilleann piper Paddy Keenan, flute and whistle player Matt Molloy, fiddler Paddy Glackin, accordion player Tony MacMahon , and brother/sister duo Mícheál Ó Domhnaill on acoustic guitar and Tríona Ní Dhomhnaill on clavinet and vocals, the Bothy Band quickly gained a reputation as one of the most influential bands playing Irish traditional music. Their enthusiasm and musical virtuosity had a significant influence on the Irish traditional music movement that continued well after they disbanded in 1979.



 Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6YJAFbJPrA>

Sharon Shannon:

A widely respected and deeply talented Irish musician, Sharon Shannon became known for broadening the horizons of traditional music in the 1980s and '90s. Growing up in North County Clare and thoroughly versed in Irish music, she has not been afraid to mix her playing on accordion and fiddle with all manner of different styles -- from reggae to country. Although best known for her work with the button accordion and for her fiddle techniques, she also plays tin whistle and melodeon. Her self-titled debut album in 1991 was the best-selling album of traditional Irish music ever released.



Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bWqZQ-Ebw8