The Musical Turn: A New Dramaturgy for Stage Instruments and Actor-Musicianship in Twentieth-Century Irish Drama

By

Scott McKenna Campbell

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:
Mary Trotter, Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
Mike Vanden Heuvel, Professor, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
Tom DuBois, Professor, Comparative Literature & Folklore Studies
Margaret Butler, Associate Professor, Musicology

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To my father who read me stories

To my mother who sang me songs

To everyone who waited, patiently.

Abstract

Reading and viewing twentieth-century Irish drama means repeatedly encountering Irish songs and traditional musical instruments. While music is an element in most theatre performance, Irish Traditional Music (ITM) figures centrally in much Irish theatre, signaling the cultural and ideological weight of ITM and its production in Irish cultural expression onstage. This dissertation posits that understanding the cultural matrices, traditional music trends, and theatrical tropes that intersected at specific moments in Ireland's twentieth century will necessarily enrich both the scholarly analysis and embodied performance of Irish dramatic texts that feature musical instruments.

To analyze such intersections, the project isolates and examines three periods during which multiple playwrights used traditional musical instruments as onstage icons, properties, and discursive tools. Following the material turn in both theatre and music histories, the paper urges the reading of musical instruments in Irish plays as essential theatrical objects carrying discrete and evolving meanings from the cottages, Céilís, and pubs in which they socially functioned onto dramatic stages. The dissertation thus reads what meanings musical instruments carried into original playhouses in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of both how plays work on their original terms and how dramaturgs may approach past texts with an eye towards respecting and recreating their original resonances.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Musical Irish Stage

Reading and viewing twentieth-century Irish drama means repeatedly encountering Irish songs and musical instruments. From Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory's earliest experiments with remedying stage-Irishmen's buffoonery in colonial texts, to Enda Walsh's scathing interrogations of late twentieth-century Irishness, popular playwriting from Ireland has seldom diverged from the presentation and representation of traditional music and its instruments. While particularly musical playwrights of the Irish Revival like Synge, O'Casey, and Yeats are consistently discussed for musical themes and characters, no decade passed in the long twentieth century without providing robust examples of Irish music within Irish plays.

The repeated appearance of vocalists and instrumentalists on twentieth-century Irish dramatic stages contradicts the valuation that many theatre theorists have imagined music enjoying in dramatic presentation. Hierarchical understandings of Western drama's component parts routinely place music either below dramatic theatre's other priorities or wholly outside of its concern. Aristotle's *Poetics*, for example, imagines "song composition" as less important than plot, character, thought or verbal expression. That work calls song composition a "sensuous attraction" only narrowly more essential to drama than visual adornment (Clayton & Hunt 100).[1]

Music certainly held a sensuous attraction for playwrights and audiences alike within Irish drama of the twentieth century, but its importance to every other part of that country's dramatic tradition resists simple hierarchization. Far from extraneous or coincidental to mimetic

[1] This is not to say that music was unimportant to the theatre experience itself in either Greek theatre or subsequent dramatic traditions: this has certainly not been the case. Aristotle, however, apparently viewed music as contributing to the risk that sensual attractions posed towards cerebral experiences of the theatre. While Aristotle's theoretical perspective on theatre relegated music to outskirts, no evidence exists to imply that audiences were similarly skeptical of it.

performance, music is an essential element in modern Irish drama. This importance may be observed in the ways that vocal and instrumental performances influence and intersect with ostensibly non-musical elements of Irish drama. Twentieth-century Irish plays repeatedly blur the lines separating music and song composition from spoken drama within plots dominated by instrumentalists and ballad singers. The character George in Brian Friel's *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) "speaks" through quotative songs and riffs played on a piano accordion. George's accordion performance throughout that play collapses any conventional distinction between song composition and verbal expression. Musician character Brennan O' the Moor likewise communicates through concertina performance and snippets of folk ballads in Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me* (1943). The fact that Brennan shares a name with a popular outlaw ballad from Ireland's vocal music tradition begs the question of whether the character can be wholly separated from the song tradition to which his name alludes. Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* (1907) introduces a central character named simply "Tramp Fiddler" whose title and work stand in for an onstage name. Disentangling these characters' musical performance from their verbal expression or character is an exercise akin to slaying the mythological Hydra: explain or excuse the centrality of music to character, plot, or thought development in one Irish drama and two more examples emerge intertwining music with the nation's dramatic theatre.

Traditional music performance is paradoxically conspicuous in the pages of a broad swathe of Irish drama while also consistently overlooked in academic criticism and circumvented in live performance. Despite music and musicians' central role in many Irish dramas, theatre historians and critics often assume music and vocal song are extraneous to textual drama's concerns. Even when music is specifically recorded in either character dialogue or stage directions, it is often imagined as mere decoration to the plot. When these plays are performed,

appearances of specific musical instruments are viewed as auxiliary production elements, leading practitioners to either adapt rare or challenging instruments in favor of more conveniently available ones, excise instrumental performances entirely, or employ creative-workarounds for unplayable music.[2] Understandable though these decisions are in light of the performer limitations and budget restrictions that most directors and designers face, the consistent disregard of scripted instrumental performances contributes to an incomplete picture of dramatic performance within—and beyond—Irish theatre. In this dissertation, I argue that modern Irish drama's persistent use of meaningful onstage musical instruments provides a test case arguing for how a closer attention to onstage instruments can enrich an academic and embodied connections to how plays worked in their original performances and today.

By focusing particularly on the onstage appearances of Irish Traditional Musical instruments, this dissertation redresses those instruments' long-held marginalization in both performance and scholarship. This argument is especially timely given contemporary focus on objects as evidence and archive within the fields of theatre history, folklore studies and musicology. Bovermann et all's 2018 *Musical Instruments in the 21st Century: Identities, Configurations, Practices*, and recent translations of Pierre Schaeffer's *Treatise on Musical Object: Essays Across Disciplines* centralize music-making objects as fecund fields for cultural and material analysis. In theatre studies, monographs like Andrew Sofer's *The Stage Life of Props* (2003) have promised to "restore to certain props the performance dimensions that literary critics are trained not to see, then to show that these props are not just accessories, but time machines of the theater" (forward). Sofer's text draws attention to theatrical properties as objects

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2 The third chapter of this project unpacks an early twentieth-century tendency towards presenting Irish fiddles played by non-fiddling actors. That trend persists to this day as exemplified by the Abbey Theatre's 2018 production of *On Raftery's Hill*.

whose persistent "there-ness" has been consistently ignored within text-centric dramatic literature studies. Few objects have been more central to Irish drama than the fiddles, flutes, accordions, and harps that populate the country's twentieth-century canon.

Following the material turn in both theatre and music historiography, this dissertation urges the reading of musical instruments in Irish plays as "time machines," carrying discrete and evolving meanings from the cottages, Céilís, and pubs in which they socially functioned onto dramatic stages in every decade of the twentieth century. Considering the important and—most essentially—*specific* meanings that discrete musical instruments held for original audiences both onstage and off can only enrich a literary and historical conversation about Irish theatre. Equally important, parsing the cultural freight that musical instruments carried for original theatre audiences provides insight for contemporary audiences who are either experiencing plays outside of Ireland, or unfamiliar with Irish cultural traditions. Musical instruments on Irish dramatic stages are carriers of complex semiotic meanings. My study is designed to help readers, scholars, and producers to better understand and produce Irish plays, while also creating a model for examining music's semiotic, cultural and ideological influence in other theatre traditions.

An Under-Explored Convention

Despite music's centrality in the Irish theatre tradition, few scholarly texts have engaged with music's role in the Irish dramatic movement in significant depth.[3] I contend that both a

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[3] Elizabeth Hale Winkler opines that this dearth of comprehensive work on Irish music in drama may stem from the interconnectivity of Irish culture and music. She writes that, "Both song and theater are communal and societal forms of cultural expression, and any study designed to include the Irish component would have to also include an analysis of Irish cultural understanding of music that far exceeds the scope of this work" (14). Three decades after Winkler made this statement, this gap in Irish theatre scholarship remains.

vastness of examples and a false sense of familiarity have slowed rigorous analysis of the topic. The fact that musical instruments and songs appear in many Irish plays does not diminish the specific and meaningful functions that a single instrument serves within a single play. The consistency with which fiddles, flutes and other Irish Traditional Music (ITM) instruments populate Irish plays risks inviting the assumption that such musical objects have always been part of Ireland's indigenous mimetic performance history. It is easier to overlook instruments when one imagines them to be tropes inherent to a theatrical genre. A reader inundated with examples may reasonably assume that each example is itself echoing or recycling those instances which preceded it. Musical instruments do appear repeatedly in twentieth-century Irish drama, but it is an error to imagine that each instrument serves the same purposes that other instruments did. More specifically, the same traditional instrument necessarily generated vastly different meanings when presented onstage at distinct moments in the century. Overlooking traditional instruments' specific uses and resonances in Irish dramatic texts and performances hollows out an essential aesthetic and intellectual engine that drove playwriting across the twentieth century in and beyond Ireland.

Beyond the staggering number of examples of traditional musical instruments on Irish stages, the imagined familiarity that scholars and theatre-makers feel towards objects like fiddles and flutes also hinders inquiry. It is a mistake to imagine that a familiarity with Irish music and its instruments outside of playhouses diminishes the need for rigorous analysis of how the same instruments work on dramatic stages. To paraphrase and combine two cornerstone arguments from theatre semiotics laid out by theorist Keir Elam in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*: no object appears on stage without both making meaning for audience members and being radically transformed itself by its dramatic presentation. Fiddles and flutes likely escape critical notice in

Irish plays because the imagined familiarity the objects hold in everyday life makes their onstage presentation feel familiar and easily discernible. Ironically, the study of musical instruments on Western dramatic stages has garnered considerable attention within theatre traditions whose instruments are neither as persistently present nor as universally understood as those of twentieth century Ireland.[4] While musical instruments function differently across mimetic traditions, scholars and practitioners researching William Shakespeare's works present a useful model for the insights to be gleaned by examining the material and cultural meanings of music within a dramatic canon.

Music and instrumentation in William Shakespeare's plays has seen increased academic and performance scholarship in recent years with the popular success of monographs like Ross W. Duffin's *Shakespeare's Songbook* (2004) and Bill Barclay and David Lindley's co-edited *Shakespeare, Music and Performance* (2017). Practitioners in contemporary Original Practices (OP) Shakespeare companies have invested capital, time, and scholarly ink in investigating how hautboys and viols made meaning for original audiences as a means of accessing otherwise unavailable meanings and resonances in modern presentations of Shakespeare's plays. Like those of early modern London playing, Ireland's twentieth-century contributions to Anglophone drama have yielded canonical texts that enjoy persistent analysis and performance. Increased interest in, and methodologies for, analyzing material meaning-making have not, however, bled over to substantial investigation of music in Irish theatre. I posit that the persistent visibility of non-theatrical fiddles and flutes—contrasted with the relatively small popular understanding of viols

[4] William Shakespeare's canon has attracted particular attention by practitioners seeking to replicate and understand the Original Practices that shaped that playwright's work. Elizabethan London playing is not unique in this renewed attention as theatre texts from London's Restoration drama and continental works from Spanish Golden Age drama have also inspired modern performances of—and academic inquiry into—those movements' music traditions.

or hautboys— may explain a scholarly hesitation to rigorously examine musical instruments on Irish dramatic stages. The viol or hautboy invites scholarly attention and definition because of their apparent strangeness, Irish Traditional Musical instruments, by contrast, have seen increasing international attention across the long twentieth century.

If Original Practices experiments with Shakespeare promise the discovery—or recovery—of that which has been lost, the extant and growing worldwide visibility of Irish Traditional Musical instruments may undercut those instruments' apparent complexity within plays. In this way, instruments like fiddles and harps escape scrupulous analysis because of the dual misconceptions that they are both essential to Irish culture, and unchanging in their socio-cultural meanings. Dismissing staged instruments because of an imagined understanding of stable connections between traditional music and national identity is, however, a profound oversight committed by theatre scholars and practitioners alike. Musical instruments are contingent objects that carried shifting semiotic freight into different playhouses with each new decade of the twentieth century. To ignore the specific meanings that instruments made and the functions that they served in specific decades simply because versions of those same instruments are played today is unsound reasoning: instruments whose performance persists outside of dramatic texts are at least as worthy of rigorous analysis as those whose meanings must be exhumed from dead or dwindling musical traditions. Specific ITM instruments appeared in theatrical texts because they were important in the past; they continue to appear within and outside of playhouses now because they are part of a living tradition today. It would be an error to misidentify traditional musical instruments' enduring and evolving contexts as sufficiently mapped territory.

Objectives and Methods

By focusing on how specific musical instruments appeared across twentieth-century theatre, I wish to reframe otherwise overlooked and hitherto infrequently connected works as component parts of *instrumental repertories*. By reimagining dramatic texts in repertory with one another because of the shared traditional musical instruments that they present, the project seeks to both deconstruct hierarchical theorizations of theatre that undervalue onstage music performance and to reimagine an Irish dramatic tradition that is often partitioned according to the county in which a playwright was born, the theatre for which a play was written, or the historical moment at which the work was first consumed. Drawing these new connections will enrich the scholarly conversation surrounding—and the performed staging of—Irish dramatic texts that feature musical instruments. The project seeks to address questions of musical instruments on dramatic stages in ways that may benefit scholars and historians of Irish drama, practitioners eager to more effectively stage moments of scripted instrument performances in their works, and ITM instrumentalists that may be unaware of the rich connections between Ireland's twentieth-century music revival and the Irish dramatic tradition.

The project's body chapters are arranged chronologically in order to examine how musical instruments appeared on dramatic stages in different decades of the twentieth century. This choice does not, however, equate the passage of time with cultural or artistic progress. The widespread dramatic use of fiddles in 1900s peasant plays and of radios ninety years later should not be read as playwrights progressing towards a more profound understanding of how musical instruments work on stage. Plays like Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) and Paul Laverty's stage adaptation of *Jimmy's Hall* (2018) have included traditional Irish fiddling in scripts written well into the twenty-first century. Radios likewise appeared in Irish drama well before the Celtic

Tiger years. Instead, I focus on instruments appearing within specific windows of time in order to contextualize uses of ITM instruments in drama within the cultural matrices, traditional music trends, and theatrical tropes that intersected at specific moments in Ireland's last century.

I have isolated historical moments at which multiple playwrights used musical instruments as onstage icons, properties, and discursive tools, but have intentionally drawn examples from diverse corners of Irish playwriting within those moments. Doing so allows for a more encompassing examination of musical instruments as onstage objects and diminishes the tendency to group together plays from single producing-theatres or geographic origins. Chapters thus place plays written by agnostic Dublin playwrights alongside ones composed by Ulster Protestants. In an extreme case, Irish dramatic icon Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) is placed into direct conversation with *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996) by Londoner Martin McDonagh, whose status as an "Irish playwright" remains a subject of unresolved debate. Both plays use onstage radios to mechanically reproduce Irish Traditional Music and reading the texts according to this shared convention rather than the playwrights' obvious differences invites new understandings of each work. I have attempted to situate play origins whenever possible but assert that this magpie-like approach to play selection is the result of intentional methodology rather than a lack of care or awareness.

I am particularly concerned with stage directions that describe instrument manipulation and performance, since such directions appearing in rehearsal scripts or published texts indicate moments at which playwrights, stage managers, or publishers considered the ways by which musical instruments were moved or played on stage to be essential to reader or performer understanding. Stage directions provide imperfect but valuable access to understanding the physical appearances and onstage manipulation of musical instruments within irrecoverable

dramatic performances. The project thus uses an interdisciplinary methodology which relies heavily upon the interpretive reading of published and—when possible—archival stage directions in order to trace stage action by objects that do not speak or leave dialogic traces. Stage directions are a particularly useful fount of information when dealing with musical instruments, since they give words to movements and spatial relationships of objects whose inability to speak dialogue frequently eludes textual preservation in character-centric drama.[5] I combine study of archival documents, diary entries, and subsequent criticism from the plays' first performances to supplement my own close readings of stage directions and dialogue, thus constructing the fullest possible image of how musical instruments were played, presented, and perceived on stages within an admittedly irrecoverable past.

Each chapter of the work puts Irish plays into conversation with one another because of the musical instruments that those plays share, analyzing the stage instrument through three intersecting contextual frames: the historical-cultural moment, the practical music performed on that instrument, and the broader question about musical objects on dramatic stages that that instrument invites. Chapter Three considers the fiddle and Ireland's mythic past in 1900s Irish plays in order to question how musical instruments can carry signifying power even when they are not manipulated by a play's narrative musicians. Chapter Four explores the use of flutes and fifes in the 1900s-1920s in order to examine how the country's woodwind instruments combined

[5] Close reading stage directions is an appropriate methodological lens for recovering the work that overlooked objects perform in scholarship and performance. This project, however, acknowledges that published stage directions may not have been performed as such in either first or subsequent productions of the plays. Lauren Gunderson's 2018 Twitter assertion that "action, gesture, and visual storytelling are as vital as dialogue*"* successfully articulates how stage directions—even when editorial or retro-scribed—frequently reflect the interests of the playwrights or companies producing work with a seriousness matching that of character dialogue.

with folkloric beliefs to shape the presentation of the supernatural onstage. Taken together, the three plays in Chapter Four invite broader theoretical questions about how the ways that human breath is an essential but overlooked element of woodwind instrument performance in supernatural plays. By centralizing the importance of how musical instruments are physically operated onstage, the chapter presents a new perspective for thinking about stage instruments within any dramatic tradition in terms of the specific interface and interaction between performer and object. Chapter Five reads the emergence of onstage radios and tape recorders to discuss a perceived hollowing out of authenticity in Celtic Tiger era Ireland. This chapter asks how the apparent ease and perfection of musical instruments of mechanical reproduction (MIMRs) fails characters whose own experiences do not match the 'brand Ireland' experience that the country exported to global markets with increasing frequency in the 1990s. The chapters connect specific instruments to historical moments at which they appeared in multiple texts to allow for contextual analysis, but do not contend that those instruments were exclusive to particular moments in Ireland's drama: fiddles appear in plays throughout the century but studying how they appeared at a specific moment helps to show their function within Irish playmaking during one decade.

My research suggests a transferable methodology for examining musical instruments as stage objects not only shaped by the cultural meanings that they carry outside of theatres, but also capable of shaping our understanding of the dramatic traditions in which they occur. A clearer understanding of the specific semiotic meaning that musical instruments make in drama affords scholars new inroads for analyzing plays whose musical performances have either eluded understanding or failed to inspire academic scrutiny. The dissertation thus uses highly specific Irish examples to advance a broader methodology for reading musical instruments in dramatic

plays. Ireland's national theatre movement, for example, developed in the context of a deeply politically conscious postcolonial national identity. Ignoring the socio-cultural conditions in which dramatic plays were conceived and received would inaccurately imagine musical instruments as semiotic objects free from subjective interpretation. Cultural specificity in this project is a methodological means to the end of proposing both insight into Irish performance specifically and transferable readings and tactics for approaching musical objects, instruments, and performances in dramatic theatre.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two tracks the developing contexts of Irish Traditional Music (ITM) across the twentieth century. In it, I propose a set of definitions and qualifications that guide how this dissertation discusses Irish Traditional Music and the instruments that play it. The chapter outlines some of the developments that shifted the context of Irish Traditional Music performance from a private, dance-enabling art form to an acceptably independent performance practice that became increasingly intertwined with dramatic theatre across the twentieth century. The chapter concludes by noting how the developments in ITM across the century facilitated an easy incorporation of the music into Ireland's burgeoning dramatic theatre culture.

Chapter Three explores how the Irish fiddle functioned in five plays written in the years spanning 1902-1920. The chapter's control texts include Douglas Hyde's *An Pósadh* (1902), Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Five* (1903), Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* (1906), Padraic Colum's *The Fiddler's House* (1907), and Richard Hayward & Abram Rish's *The Jew's Fiddle* (1920). The four earliest texts are peasant plays whose narratives consider the social importance of the fiddle within rural Irish communities. In their own way, each play advances a sympathetic

reading of fiddling and fiddlers. *The Jew's Fiddle,* by contrast, is an urban play written for the Ulster Literary Theatre that interrogates the purity and national spirit of fiddling seen in earlier plays. The play presents the object as out of tune, commercialized, urbanized, and attached to an Othered Jewish character. What began as urban playwrights presenting onstage representations of country dancing to make visible the fiddle's ties to Ireland's early twentieth-century agrarian West quickly led to a situation in which the onstage fiddle was more dramatically important for its symbolic resonances than for its actual onstage performance.

In order to focus on the fiddle's treatment within a cluster of temporally close texts that emerged in the earliest years of the Irish Literary Revival, the chapter begins with a brief history of the fiddle's cultural and artistic place in Irish Traditional Music. The chapter then positions the five plays within Ireland's nation-building project and performs a close reading of stage directions across the plays. Despite composition by playwrights from widely varied geographic locations, religions, and cultural loyalties, the plays often include stage directions specifically calling for narrative characters to play the fiddle on stage—even when actors performing in those plays could not play the fiddle. The chapter thus explores the apparent lengths to which playwrights and directors went in staging fiddle performance by non-fiddle-playing actors as an indication of both a desire to use the instrument's symbolic freight and of the dearth of trained traditional musicians on urban stages.

Stage directions from the five fiddle plays invite an argument that the fiddle carried iconic value as a semiotic object for presentation on dramatic stages, despite apparent difficulties finding urban performers able to play the instrument proficiently. The chapter explores a repeated friction played out in stage directions that show playwright desire to use the fiddle's semiotic connections to Ireland's unblemished mythic past but acknowledge the pragmatic

difficulties with effectively staging an instrument out of vogue in Ireland's urban centers. This chapter's reading of *The Jew's Fiddle* introduces concerns about the blurry distinctions between props and musical instruments on dramatic stages, since that play makes frequent reference to an onstage fiddle that is manipulated by characters but never makes any scripted sound in either the play's performance or its narrative world. My argument concludes by querying whether onstage manipulation is necessary when presenting on onstage musical instruments, or whether instruments that are not played onstage can generate the same meanings and resonances as those that are.

Chapter Four considers a cluster of three infrequently analyzed plays from the years 1907-1927 that use woodwind flutes to explore Ireland's folkloric heritages. The chapter organizes itself around plays that each include supernatural elements and onstage flute or fife performance. The chapter's texts include W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory's *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1907), George Fitzmaurice's *The Dandy Dolls* (1912), and T.C. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* (1927). Yeats, Gregory, Fitzmaurice, and Murray all chose to play out conflicts between mundane characters and Ireland's supernatural or folkloric belief systems through characters' interactions with musical instruments. While Yeats and Gregory provide the greatest name recognition among this sampling of playwrights, none of the three plays analyzed in the section has attracted significant scholarly attention. The lack of discourse around these three "flute" plays likely contributes to an under-acknowledgement of the flute as a semantic field of cultural and artistic meanings on twentieth-century Irish stages.

The chapter explores the socio-religious conditions that led playwrights to use flutes alongside mythical figures and spirits in order to contextualize the plays' diverse positions regarding flutes. Analyzing the cultural moment into which *The Unicorn from the Stars, The*

Dandy Dolls, and *The Pipe in the Fields* were conceived explains the plays' thematic concerns with both the supernatural and the power ascribed to human breath in each text. Playwrights' choices to stage wooden instruments operated by human breath in their dramas about supernatural or invisible forces were neither coincidental nor without precedent. Rather, magical flutes played on Irish dramatic stages both reflected upon and responded to the appearances of similarly supernatural flutes in folktales and ballads outside of the dramatic canon. After situating flutes within their cultural moment, I examine how the playwrights' shared staging of woodwind instruments necessarily highlights the importance of breath in onstage musical performance.

Onstage flutes made specific meanings for Irish audiences between 1907-1927, but those specific meanings can be extrapolated to address broader questions about musical instruments in dramatic performances. The chapter thus concludes by turning outward to apply questions of breath and manipulation to broader theorization on how woodwind instruments complicate the relationships and boundaries between stage properties and living actors on dramatic stages. Taking up theoretical questions about whether an ability to speak written text defines character-hood on stage, the chapter queries whether the mechanics of human breath, transformed into sound through vibration across a foreign object should be read as discrete from, or analogous to, the production of human voices created by breath pushed through organic tissue. The chapter examines extant theories on the distinctions between props and characters to argue that the requirement of invisible actor breath in flute performance is an essential element in understanding the plays' discussion of the supernatural. Finally, my argument theorizes that flutes in supernatural Irish plays encourage readers and practitioners to consider instruments in terms of the means by which they *are played* rather than strictly in terms of their material

appearance. Woodwind instruments in Irish plays from the period may have entered the dramatic stage as an extension of balladic and folkloric traditions in the moment, but their onstage operation by invisible human breath shows that the means by which any musical instrument is manipulated can be the most meaningful element of that object's onstage performance.

Chapter Five jumps forward in time to explore technologically mediated traditional music in dramatic texts written in the years spanning the 1990s and early 2000s. The era, variously termed the Celtic Tiger, or "The Boom," saw Ireland enjoying an economic renaissance spurred by unprecedented foreign investment. The period of economic growth coincided with forces of cultural and artistic globalization for the nation. Ireland joined the European Union in 1973 and ushered in shared European currency in the late 1990s with the introduction of the Euro. The end of the century thus unsurprisingly saw Irish playwrights confronting questions of nation and culture amid the nation's continued and growing immersion in pan-European economic and cultural matrices.

Ireland's musical traditions presented more an example of than an exemption to 1990s economic and cultural globalization. The increasing visual and aural presence of "Celtic" music outside of Ireland furthered a "growing trend since the late 1980s to transform elements of the Irish tradition into marketable, modern, syncretic forms" (Hast & Scott 125). It is thus important to explore how playwrights during the end of the century—like their predecessors in previous decades—played out debates over Irish national identity through the representation of music and musical instruments within plays that were themselves promoting specific notions of Ireland for increasingly global audiences.

This chapter examines the physical objects that brought traditional music to stages in a cluster of texts spanning the beginning, zenith, and end of the Celtic Tiger era. Brian Friel's

Dancing at Lughnasa (1990), Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), and Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Face* (2007) all explicitly call for Irish Traditional Music in their stage directions and character dialogue. Breaking from past plays, however, these texts each stage traditional music as mediated by recording and/or broadcasting technology. By staging wireless radios and tape recorders—which I term Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction (MIMRs)— the three plays complicate the direct relationship between performer, instrument, and audience that characterized previous musical objects on Irish dramatic stages. The chapter thus considers how MIMRs appear in plays written for Celtic Tiger stages in order to question how technologically mediated Irish Traditional Music reflects the artistic and cultural moments at which those plays were written and originally staged.

All three of these Celtic Tiger plays use onstage MIMRs to bring Traditional Music from the playwrights' increasingly globalized worlds to their narrative ones. Friel's text calls for the radio to play the Irish reel "The Mason's Apron" with stage directions describing how the reel should sound (21). McDonagh's play demands that the radio play unnamed music from traditional Irish band "The Chieftains" (424), and Walsh's stage tape recorder repeatedly plays unification song "A Nation Once Again" as *"sung by Paddy Reilly"* (33). MIMRs in these plays show how technological mediation makes musical performance perfectly reproducible across vast distances, infinitely repeatable, and accessible to any untrained musician at the press of a button. Despite the promised ease and perfection of mechanically reproduced traditional music, onstage characters from the era frequently struggle to control instruments' behavior and often find themselves controlled by the instruments they imagine themselves playing. The chapter analyzes musical stage directions to parse how the texts reflect a hollowing out of traditional culture through globalization. Reading through theatre theorist Walter Benjamin's "The Work of

Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," the chapter unpacks how playwrights used technologically mediated music to reflect late century globalization.

Chapter Five concludes by exploring how characters from Celtic Tiger era plays violently respond to MIMRs whose performances do not match those characters' expectations or desires. The repeated appearance of instruments intentionally scripted to "fail" in their assigned tasks shows the dramatic potential of ostensibly perfect musical objects that distort the music that they play. In a nod towards Posthumanist readings of Benjamin, I explore how MIMRs on the Celtic Tiger stage show the anxiety of the instrument operators who are themselves forced to reproduce behaviors and presentations of Irishness by the very instruments that promise those characters perfectly reproduced music. By analyzing how radios and tape recorders that play traditional music function in relation to traditional musical instruments, the chapter considers whether instruments that mechanically reproduce traditional music share the same stage-function as acoustic instruments on which music is produced or if they should be read as different categories of stage objects altogether.

Chapter Six concludes the project with a two-fold call to action. First, by situating the need for critical reevaluation of musical instruments on dramatic stages within the rise of instrumental music performed in large and small-scale productions on both sides of the Atlantic, the project argues that all manner of musical instruments currently appear with increased frequency on professional theatre stages and that current dramaturgical and analytical lenses for understanding such works have not kept pace with trends in performance. Confronted with an ongoing trend towards more instrumental music performances appearing in dramatic scripts and on dramatic stages, scholars and makers in both the theatre and music fields must develop new lenses and questions to parse this exciting development in theatrical practice.

Second, this project calls for scholars to consider the use of the same musical instruments in varied texts as a new system by which to group and analyze plays. Grouping plays as performing within "instrument-repertories," centralizes the often-marginalized musical instruments that are so frequently overlooked in theatre histories. Irish plays in particular can benefit from a redrawing of lines separating and connecting texts to one another according to playwrights, organizational affiliations, religions, or regional origins. Identical instruments populated widely differently plays from across that nation's eventful twentieth century: putting those apparently unlike plays into conversation in terms of the instruments that play in repertory between different works stands to inform criticism and performance of both well-thumbed and under-analyzed works.

A Personal Note

Many of the early twentieth-century plays that this project examines tell stories of young men whose exposure to Irish Traditional Music performance turned them off the path of righteousness and left them ruined men of wasted potential in the eyes of family members and broader communities. Their stories deeply resonated with me. Like young Robbie John discovering his passion for fiddling in Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road*, or Peter Keville obsessing over his flute in T.C. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields*, I heard my first live traditional Irish music in 2002 at the age of sixteen and wouldn't be satisfied until I had acquired a mandolin to try my hand at learning the tunes. Faced with a new world in which like-minded people gathered in public houses to share tunes and songs from a centuries-old living tradition, I decided that more conventional career goals could take a backseat to the work of learning that music. Like Andrew Herne in *The Unicorn from the Stars*, who asks "What did I want with a

trade? I got a sight of the fairy gold one time in the mountains" I fell into the same pit dramatized in *The Turn of the Road* and *The Pipe in the Fields* as a young man infatuated in the hold of traditional music (277).

The following eighteen years have seen me play the tunes in pub sessions, small bars, and grange halls across the United States and in Canada and Ireland. My storehouse of tunes has grown over the years, alongside the collection of instruments on which I play those tunes. As a custodian to—and sometime player of—fiddles, whistles, button accordions, tenor banjos, concertinas, mandolins, guitars and bouzoukis, I have had occasion to develop increasingly acute questions about the physical objects that allow perfect strangers to assemble in dimly lit bars and play a shared repertoire of historically-situated tunes. Neither is the concern for interrogating, coveting, and discussing musical instruments an uncommon quality of Irish session performance. Famous and exceptional players are frequently connected to the brand or make of instrument that they choose to play. Sharon Shannon's signature Castagnari button accordion or the late Alec Finn's esoteric trichordo bouzouki, for example, are as much a part of those performers' signature sound and appearance as their own voices or bodies. Sit in a bar session circle long enough and you'll likely ask and be asked about the provenance of a musical instrument.

Onstage, the musical instrument is essential to the construction of whatever character is playing it. I entered the classical theatre world as an onstage musician and sometimes-actor before I was ever aware that actor-musicianship was a field deserving and requiring its own scholarship and theorization. My years in professional theatre and music performance have increasingly afforded me opportunities for musical direction and composition in collaborative new works and in new productions of Shakespeare plays. My master's work completed at the famously musical American Shakespeare Center/ Mary Baldwin University program pushed me

to consider how Original Practices and historical staging conditions might inflect modern scholarly understandings and productions of old works. Eight years of earning degrees in Shakespeare and Performance and Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies combined with a broadening resume composing, music-directing, and performing new compositions and traditional music for theatre on acoustic instruments led me to persistently question what work musical instruments do when pressed into the presentation of a dramatic text. The repeated use of Irish Traditional Music within twentieth-century Irish drama has proven a fecund site for considering these questions.

It has become something of a vogue to hyphenate the multiple perspectives that one brings to bare on artistic or academic theatre projects. Actor-scholars, actor-musicians and performance-as-researchers promise new understandings of old plays by donning mantles that blur or transcend the ways that theatre research and performance often describes its practitioners. Taking this trend to another level of abstraction, I approach this project as both an actor-musician-designer in the American professional theatre and as a researcher-composer-multi-instrumentalist in the Irish Traditional Music sphere. While such hyphenation may lead to sections of the work that do not cleanly align with the conventions of any single discipline, my interdisciplinary approach aims to serve at least three distinct audiences. First, I seek to provide a useful resource for traditional music players and scholars seeking to explore how instruments playing Irish Traditional Music generated meaning at specific moments in the long twentieth century. Second, I attempt to outline how musical instruments are essential and specific objects used intentionally within dramatic scripts in the hopes that modern companies producing plays that feature traditional music might have some clear models about how to treat those objects in performance. Finally, I aim to advance a methodology by which scholars can analyze drama and

performance with a clear eye towards the physical objects of the musical instruments that populate dramatic texts and stages but often escape theatre criticism.

Combining current scholarship on theatre history, music history, and cultural history provides a clearer image of the social matrices in which plays were originally conceived and performed. By teasing out previously under-discussed conditions of reception, production, and performance for which plays were intended, I advance a reading of the meanings that instruments may have made for their first audiences. It is my hope that by reading what meanings musical instruments carried into original playhouses, the project will lead to a deeper understanding of both how plays worked on their original terms and how theatre-makers, scholars, and general readers may approach past texts with an eye towards their original resonances.

CHAPTER TWO: Irish Music on National and Global Twentieth-Century Stages

The twentieth century was an eventful one for Irish Traditional Music (ITM) as that once hyper-local art form encountered and incorporated new obstacles, contexts, technologies, and audiences. Even as the music expanded its reach from rural cottages and fireside visitations to urban pub sessions and globalized technological recordings, clear definitions delineating what made Ireland's traditional music either uniquely Irish or singularly traditional came under increased pressure. While there can be no single unified story of ITM's journey across the twentieth century, this project proposes that a gradual movement towards new performance contexts, an incorporation of instruments and technologies from around the world, and a transition of that music from localized practices to globalized commodities characterized ITM's changes across the long twentieth century. This chapter briefly explores a few important events within an eventful century as a means of situating non-expert readers within a broader field of ITM that future chapters will reference. Defining and unpacking how this project reads ITM's cultural redefinition across the century will specify the project's scope for musicologist readers and provide context for theatre generalists and practitioners seeking to engage with the dissertation.

While the late twentieth-century boom in the production, exportation, and commodification of Ireland's indigenous music traditions has brought increased scholarly attention to Ireland's traditional music over the past four decades, that field remains a fecund site for ongoing analysis.[6] Rather than presenting a picture of ITM across history, this dissertation

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[6] Articles like Fintan Vallely's "Authenticity to Classicisation: The Course of Revival in Irish Traditional Music" and Hazel Fairbairn's "Changing Contexts for Traditional Dance Music in Ireland: The Rise of Group Performance Practice" chart social and practical developments in Irish Traditional Music across the century. Full length monographs like Harry White's *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* place twentieth-century

starts with traditional music's appearance in plays at the advent of the early twentieth-century Irish literary revival. The turn of the twentieth century is a useful place to start considering Ireland's traditional musical instruments on theatre stages since both traditional music and dramatic theatre experienced paradigmatic shifts in that era. Ireland was undergoing dramatic cultural reevaluation at the turn of the twentieth century and the nation's indigenous music felt those shifts acutely as the music increasingly moved from communal contexts to more public performances.

Prior to 1900, Irish music served essential social functions and was particularly sought after to accompany dancing in social gatherings. In his overview of Irish music in the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, Will Shields writes how:

> Music and dance were highly valued social practices in rural Ireland during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when traditional instrumental music was usually played to accompany dancing. Contexts included crossroads dances, at which professional or semi-professional itinerant musicians, usually a piper or fiddler, played outdoors for local residents, who danced and socialized, and the céilí, where friends and neighbors gathered to drink, sing, dance, tell stories, and play music for one another.

Nineteenth-century traditional instrumental performance and dancing frequently joined together to provide social recreation for communities. Itinerant professionals and local amateur musicians underscored dances and shared their music in céilí—social visiting—gatherings. Long

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developments in a broader historical context. These entries, in combination with tireless work by performers, music-historians, and scholars like Martin Dowling, have begun to flesh out a scholarly understanding of twentieth-century ITM built on the seminal nineteenth-century work of prolific musicologist and historian William Henry Gratton Flood.

established performance contexts, however, would not remain exclusively social long into the twentieth century.

Historically important folk practices like traditional dance and music caught the attention of artists and thought leaders seeking living forms of Irish cultural production distinct from those of English colonists. Neither did music's potential for instilling pride in Irish culture elude the country's Nationalist elements. The turn of the century saw the Gaelic League institute Feis Ceoil—festivals of music—which featured concerts showcasing tin whistle, violin and bagpipe recitals performed by "professional and semi-professional performers whose expertise in traditional music and dance were not in demand in music halls or metropolitan theatres" (McMahon 173).[7] Harry White posits that the championing of traditional music in Feis Ceoil contexts was part of a larger movement by which ethnic music grew increasingly aligned with nationalism in ways that it had previously been attached primarily to rural identities (104). Irish music and dance thus received an infusion of urban interest as social performances became increasingly meaningful expressions of performable Irishness.

Beyond enjoying increasing urban visibility, traditional music performance provided opportunities for increasingly overt political performances of cultural identity during the early twentieth century.[8] Mary Trotter reads the act of "dancing Irish dances [and] singing Irish songs" as a means by which members of Ireland's Gaelic League "embodied their ideology in easily readable ways" (5). The domestic activity of self-entertaining during social evenings or enabling

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[7] The Gaelic League's efforts to incorporate traditional music within their Irish language revival project are discussed at greater length in the next chapter on the Irish fiddle in peasant drama from this era.

[8] This is not to imply that traditional music performance is ever free of politics, but rather that the self-conscious politicization of Ireland's traditional music took on new purposes and increased visibility within the early twentieth-century nation-making process.

dancing in local gatherings thus gave way to new performance contexts as traditional music became increasingly intertwined with performances of Irish Nationalism. The decades following the Gaelic League's championing of traditional music in Feis Ceoil performances saw the development of two parallel but oft-intersecting strains of ITM performance as the music was increasingly brought into public spaces and international consciousness. First, the music was increasingly used as a political touchstone by those eager to present and embody a specific sort of Irish identity. Second, the music emerged as both a social practice and commercial product with its own artistic merit.

Public Feis performances and recitals shifted the performance of ITM music away from dance-based accompaniment and ushered it into a marketable standalone commodity. The Gaelic League's public recitals showed traditional music to be an important cultural practice even when it was no longer used to accompany communal dancing. While the 1920s and 1930s saw a vogue for Céilí bands playing organized concerts to accompany dancing in local halls, the music continued to grow increasingly disassociated from its earlier function of accompanying dancing from the 1930s through the 1970s.[9] Divorced from its long-held connection to dance, instrumental music has flourished in subsequent decades principally within performing ensembles and informal session gatherings (Fairburn 572).

No decade passed in Ireland's twentieth century that did not shape the cultural and aesthetic underpinnings of the nation's traditional music, but a close reading of a few particular

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[9] The rise of dance organizations in the 1970s helped pull Irish dancing back into public consciousness, but the performance of live Irish Traditional Music can no longer be argued as being inherently tied to traditional social dancing. Both activities now enjoy their own discrete and evolving contexts. While these contexts continue to overlap in productive ways, recording technology has replaced musicians for many varieties of dance, and new contexts have appeared that spread and change musical performance without involving dance at all.

developments in the 1950s-1960s may best explain the music's trajectory once independent of dance music. The year 1951 saw representatives of the Thomas Street Pipers' Club join with traditional music enthusiasts from County Westmeath to found an organization dedicated to promoting ITM. That organization would formally become Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (or Comhaltas for short) on January 6th, 1952 and would shape the performance and appreciation of Irish traditional music across Ireland and abroad to this day. Nearly a decade later, composer Seán Ó Riada's Ceoltóirí Chualann project brought ensemble performances of traditional melodies to concert halls across the country between 1961 and 1969. Ó Riada's work reimagined Irish melodies that had traditionally been performed by either soloists or ensembles playing melodies in unison as a starting place for nuanced arrangements of melody, countermelody and chorded harmony. Ceoltóirí Chualann thus opened the door for ensemble performances of ITM in ways that expanded the musical horizon for players and audiences accustomed to Céilí bands whose musicians played in unison over the rhythmic backing of snare drums or pianos (Fairburn 579).[10] Ceoltóirí Chualann may have inspired dancing in performance, but the music was presented as an artistic product unto itself. Although Ó Riada's contributions to ITM have been variously criticized and lionized in subsequent decades, his ensemble arrangement methods must be credited with displaying the potential of Ireland's instrumental music to stand on its own as an artistic product and commercial commodity.

Roughly concurrent with Ó Riada's experiments with ITM arrangement, the rise of pub sessions (or seisiún in Irish) in the 1950s-60s introduced a new tradition of informal collective

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[10] Ó Riada's work is not without its detractors. Traditional purists express concern with his interventions. He is often credited with bringing the Irish bodhran—a quite ancient-looking, but not traditional, frame drum—into ITM performances despite little evidence of that instrument having been used for ITM at any previous time in history.

playing that continues to this day. At sessions, instrumentalists gather at regular weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly intervals in bars, restaurants, and public houses to socialize, play, and share traditional tunes and occasional songs. The Irish session has become an international phenomenon in the decades since the 1950s and session musicians meet weekly for informal gatherings in cities and towns across the world. Sessions can appear wholly informal and open but are guided by unspoken and unwritten practices and expectations that differentiate them from either jam sessions or concert performances.[11] Perhaps most important among these distinctions, is the fact that a majority of session music is made by and for the enjoyment of the musicians, with listening patrons serving as a coincidental second audience. Hazel Fairbairn helpfully explains that:

> The fact that communication in sessions is not a matter of musicians directing their efforts toward an audience, but is contained within the musical circle, means that the session can only really be experienced and observed from a playing seat. The musical process is integrated into a social and drinking environment, and interactive detail is often obscured to all but the participants themselves. (568)

Unlike performances in which Ceoltóirí Chualann and subsequent ITM ensembles face forward to direct their music outward towards ticket-buying audiences, session playing's circular inward-facing orientation unapologetically eschews the recognizable tactics by which performers make themselves visible and audible to paying audiences. The completely closed circle in which session players orient themselves means that it is only the player themself that can participate

[11] The twenty-first century democratization of publishing through internet websites has led to an increasing number of "authoritative" entries on session etiquette and desirable behaviors. While these written guidelines can prove helpful to the novice hoping to avoid *faux pas*, each session holds its own expectations, traditions, and priorities for preserving and sharing the music.

aurally and visually in the music-making without obstruction. So, while Céilí bands generally played to enable dancing (and Ó Riada consciously arranged tunes for audience enjoyment and edification) Irish sessions' musician-centered orientation and general exclusion of set dancing centralized ITM as a practice undertaken by players for their own benefit (Shields 422). Session play in the mid-twentieth century provided a popular and sustainable context in which ITM could survive, spread, and develop: discrete from the dancing that it formerly accompanied.

Irish Traditional Music may have begun the twentieth century as a largely communal enterprise meant to accompany social dancing, but it enjoyed multiple other overlapping purposes during Ireland's turbulent century. By the 1950s, Sean Ó Riada's experiments with ensemble performances and the rise of public session gatherings concretized two new contexts in which ITM instruments and music were intentionally presented for public consumption and interpretation. Beyond its new contexts for live performance, ITM was profoundly and repeatedly reshaped across the century by the affordances and constraints of new technologies for disseminating music across time and space. As Chapter Five of this project explores, objects of mechanical reproduction like record players, radios, tape recorders, and internet streaming platforms shifted many qualities of the music that they helped to spread as musicians accounted for the containers that brought their music to new audiences. Television programs like *Come West Along the Road*, for example, helped to shape tastes and performance styles for RTÉ viewers interested in filmed ITM performances captured between the 1960s and 1980s. The twentieth century brought ongoing reinvention to ITM as that once insular social music expanded to new contexts, embraced new audiences, and performed increasingly politicized work for a culture establishing and defining its national identity. Within this fluid landscape,

ITM’s instruments and musical repertory entered into ongoing negotiations between tradition and innovation across the century.

Irish Traditional Music: Terms, Repertoire, and Instrumentation

This project explores instruments on which Irish Traditional Music was played during the long twentieth century, but those instruments cannot be discussed without some explanation of key terms and trends from ITM’s twentieth-century history. Ireland’s indigenous music has garnered significant attention at distinct moments both at home and—notably from the 1970s onward—abroad. As a result, the average international listener will likely have some notion of what Irish music sounds like, as well as a collection of cultural assumptions attached to that music. Those assumptions, however, may reflect neither the meanings that music made for its original audiences nor the contexts for which that music was intended. As Londoner Haley reflects when listening to “An Irish Lullaby” in Enda Walsh’s *The Walworth Farce* (2008): “That sounds nice. Quite old fashioned but I quite like that. (*Slight pause. Closes her eyes.*) Green grass. Stone walls. A little thatched cottage by the river. Little girl with red hair in ringlets sat on a donkey” (46). Hayley’s exposure to what she imagines to be Irish Traditional Music conjures a collection of clichés from popular representations of rural Ireland.[12] Walsh’s depiction of an English outsider describing Irish music that is not actually traditional or derived from Ireland is comical both within the plot of his dark farce and as a standalone assessment of how

[12] Hayley’s reflection on the “quite old fashioned” song about Ireland comes under further—and almost certainly intentional—strain since “An Irish Lullaby” was written by James Royce Shannon, an Irish American Tin Pan Alley performer from Missouri. While this particular moment receives greater attention later in the project, Hayley’s misapplication of Irish cliché does illustrate the sweeping impact of “brand Ireland” imagery at the turn of the twenty-first century.

the world (mis)perceives Ireland's cultural exports. Despite a desire to unequivocally dispel the clichés attached to ITM performance, this project must acknowledge the ambiguity present when defining the terms, styles, or conventions of musical tradition that remained in flux across the twentieth century. This chapter does, however, assay some definitional work on the musical styles and instrumentation common to ITM in order to set a groundwork for describing how the appearance of ITM instruments in drama represents a convergence of two distinct performance forms possessing discrete norms, codes, and expectations.

The Irish Traditional Music canon is conventionally understood as containing both *songs*: vocal melodies sung with or without accompaniment with words in English or Irish, and *tunes* (or airs): instrumental melodies originally intended to accompany dancing.[13] Of the two forms, Irish songs are likely the better understood by a non-expert Global audience. The 1950s folk revival in America brought many of Ireland's sung melodies to the attention of audiences within and beyond the United States. In that decade, outfits like the Clancy Brothers in New York City or the Dubliners in Dublin injected a new energy into the Irish ballad tradition that was formerly defined by a specific brand of stage-Irish performance. As Pete Hamill remarks of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, "they were not playing stage Irishmen; there was nothing to suggest leprechauns or clay pipes; they did not sing "Danny Boy" or "Galway Bay," and this at first puzzled some of their Irish-American auditors" (iv). The emergence of harmony singing, guitar strumming, Irish ballad acts like the Clancy Brothers sharing the same New York City venues and television appearances as Bob Dylan afforded Irish ballad singing a particular

[13] Even this distinction may be overly ambitious as tunes and songs overlap in composition and performance. Yeats, for example, published the poem "Down by the Sally Gardens" in 1889 which was subsequently set to the melody of the popular instrumental air the Moorlough Shore. When combined with Yeats' lyrics, the existing air transcended its identity as an instrumental tune to become both a tune and a song.

familiarity abroad. Ireland was enjoying its own folk revival in those years as singers and musicians laboring in England returned to Ireland with influences and ideas from England's folk revival scene. Due in large part to the influence of these folk revivals from the 1950s and 1960s, familiar ballads, rebel refrains, drinking songs, and 'come-all-ye's' continue to be performed in Irish pubs and St. Patrick's day celebrations across the US and abroad.[14] Irish songs and singing traditions remain popular recording and touring commodities within Ireland and Irish diaspora.

The second, less commonly understood, component of Irish Traditional Music encompasses the playing of *tunes*: specific melodies played for social or festive occasions and generally transmitted through aural learning. Tunes span various time signatures and styles with particular counties and regions often enjoying connections to particular tune repertoire or ornamental tendencies.[15] Reels in 4/4 and 6/8 double jigs have experienced enduring popularity in recorded music from 1900 to today, though specific geographic regions have favored other tune types both historically and now (Ng "Rhythm History"). Polkas in 2/4 time signature, for example, remain popular in the repertoire of players from Cork and Kerry. Other consistently performed dance tune styles include slow airs, bouncy hornpipes, 9/8 slip jigs, waltzes in 3/4, and multiple other styles that have entered Irish traditions through cultural cross-pollination or performer innovation. *Sets* are generally understood as groups of two or three tunes that are

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[14] A second, older, vein of highly ornamented, Irish-language singing known as sean-nós is still practiced in Irish speaking Gaeltacht communities. Sean-nós singing carries its own fascinating array of regionally specific performance variations and expectations, but falls outside of the concerns of this study since such singing is generally performed without instrumental accompaniment.

[15] The specificity of tunes 'belonging' to a specific county or region came—and continues to come—under persistent pressure as modern technology has allowed for easy travel of musicians and music across county lines and borders. A current crop of top ITM players have lived their entire lives in a world of YouTube and other digital platforms allow for oral learning and incorporation of stylistic flourishes across county—and country—lines.

played together in order to create a more nuanced experience of the music.[16] The Kesh Jig, for example, is a commonly played *tune* that is also part of a commonly played *set* when strung together with Jerry's Beaver Hat and The Rambling Pitchfork. All three tunes within a set traditionally maintain the same time signature and tempo in order to allow for unbroken transitions but need not be performed in the same key signature as shifting key signatures provides a welcome lift to set playing. While ITM tune players self-identify across a spectrum ranging from original practices recreation of historical tunes to a full embrace of novelty and experimentation, Irish tunes are still frequently played in a specific set of key signatures that are most friendly for a majority of ITM instruments. Individual tunes generally have particular key signatures in which they are played as a combined result of their original composers' instrumentation, the popularity of specific recordings, and as a means of increasing the ease of performance for local session players.

Twentieth-Century ITM Instruments: Preservation, Innovation, and Technology

Since this dissertation explores the sound and presence of Irish Traditional Instruments on theatre stages, it would be convenient to share a consensus agreement of what is—and isn't—a sufficiently traditional Irish musical instrument. Defining what constitutes an acceptably traditional instrument on which to play ITM is, however, a vexing question that is routinely contested in periodicals and session circles worldwide. The harp, uilleann pipes, and (versions of

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[16] While set-playing is among the most universal practices of modern ITM, one corner of musical scholarship in the field argues that set-playing only replaced the playing of single melodies as a result of the desire for musical novelty on professional recordings. The line of thinking argues that the same melody would have been happily enjoyed for many repetitions by dancers using the music for its rhythm, but that a listening audience would have required the excitement of melodic medleys for deeper enjoyment.

the) fiddle hold deep historical roots within Ireland's indigenous music traditions. Blackwood flutes, whistles, concertinas and button accordions enjoy largely unquestioned acceptance as suitably "Irish" instruments on which to play traditional music. Despite its historical roots, however, the performance of Irish dance music has amassed multiple new and global instruments across the twentieth century. Melody instruments like the tenor banjo, mandolin, and harmonica have entered the tradition with increasing frequency, due, at least in part, to their ease in adopting and reproducing melodies originally composed for fiddles and accordions.[17] The rise of ensemble playing and singing in the mid-twentieth century also invited the polarizing introduction of rhythmic, chordal, and counter-melodic instruments into a tradition long dominated by solo or unison melody performance. It is increasingly rare to hear ITM music that does not include rhythmic guitar, percussive bodhran, counter-melodic Irish bouzouki, or some combination of all three playing together in sessions or recording studios. While some argue that widening the field of instruments on which ITM music can be played has added welcome texture and variety to the melodic tradition, the additions are not for all tastes. Instrumentalist Johnny Moynihan—who is consistently credited with introducing the bouzouki to Irish music—for example, noted in 2007 that he was "currently driven berserk because he [couldn't] hear Irish music without some fucker playing the bouzouki" (Folk Hibernia).

Much could be—and has been—written in favor of limiting the field of instruments playing ITM as a means of preserving and celebrating the traditional sounds, styles, and dialects with which the music was originally imbued. This project, however, takes a more liberal view

[17] The mandolin and Irish tenor banjo each tune their strings in fifth intervals, allowing the same fingering used on fiddles to be played on these plectrum instruments. Harmonica's feature the same blowing patterns as one-row button accordions. This allows for similar transfer of tunes from relatively expensive accordions to easily accessible harmonicas.

when defining Irish Traditional Musical instruments. I treat any instrument on which Ireland's indigenous dance music is played regularly and within traditional contexts as being an ITM instrument. As celebrated flutist and fourth-generation ITM player Matt Molloy explained in a 1977 interview, "It doesn't matter what instrument you play the music on if you've got the right feel. If you've got the right approach—mentality—to the music you can play it on, ah, anything…if the feel is there for the music it's going to come out no matter what instrument is played" (Thompte & Horne). While this project's first two body chapters discuss the fiddle and the flute, the inclusion of two of Ireland's most iconic and universally accepted instruments in the work does not intentionally imply their primacy within the tradition. The substantial attention that the project pays to two iconic instruments is the result of those instruments' popularity early in the century rather than my hierarchical appraisal of their value. The exclusion of relatively recent or novel ITM arrivals like the cello or guitar are no more intentional than the absence of more established ITM instruments like the uilleann pipes and harp: all four instruments appear in Irish dramatic texts from the century and deserve ongoing attention in future work.

In addition to live performances on acoustic instruments, this project also explores the use of radios and tape recorders as musical instruments playing ITM. While the analysis of what I term Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction (MIMRs) alongside acoustic instruments may trouble purists, their inclusion is warranted by the functions that radios and tape recorders served in Celtic Tiger drama. To ignore onstage radios and tape recorders would be to overlook instruments of mechanical reproduction that enabled the traffic of hyperlocal tunes back and forth across the Atlantic from the 1920s forward, the folk Revival's boom of recorded ensemble playing in the 1960s, and the 1990s Celtic Tiger successes of 'brand Ireland' artists worldwide. If onstage MIMRs appear as an unusual inclusion in a discussion of musical

instruments in Irish drama, it is likely because their ubiquity has inured them to notice. Studying instruments of mechanical reproduction alongside two of ITM's most iconic acoustic instruments deepens an understanding of how the objects on which Ireland's traditional music is played have appeared onstage across the long twentieth century.

Reimagining ITM Instruments within Irish Plays

Beyond the Céilí, the public house, the concert hall, or the recording studio, ITM music found a hospitable home in another significant Irish cultural venue throughout the century: the dramatic stage. If ITM instrumental performance ended the nineteenth century primarily accompanying social dancing in domestic and communal settings, that performance's disentanglement from communal art forms made it particularly ripe for presentation on public dramatic stages. While each of the contexts in which an instrument appears influences audience perception of that instrument, the dramatic theatre challenges an audience's understanding both of what instruments *are* and what they *do*.

The codes and priorities of mimetic performance mean that even dramatic representations of traditional art forms become challenged or subverted when placed within drama. Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Fiv*e calls for the performance of dancing within a local home by an onstage fiddler to send off a couple emigrating from the country. The play may present a recognizable context for traditional music performance—a local fiddler playing at a cottage dance for his neighbors' entertainment—but doing so within a dramatic framework transforms instrumental performance from a strictly social act to a politically meaningful gesture of intrinsically Irish performance. Is the fiddle played onstage in that text a fiddle, or is it merely pretending to be one? Does it matter that the same tunes may have been played on the same evening as *Twenty-*

Five's first performances on a similar instrument at a rural dance in Galway? The same fiddle may appear in a cottage, a public house, a bandstand, or a proscenium stage, but its purposes and meanings must be considered as contingent on performance context and audience reception. ITM is often considered in terms of its social and commercial functions, but the theatrical application of Irish music is an unexplored third rail deserving greater attention.

When played on dramatic stages, ITM instruments generated—and continue to generate—novel and specific meanings for playgoing audiences. While distinct from those of offstage fiddles, the meanings that instruments produce in plays cannot be wholly divorced from the meanings that they produced in social and performative contexts during the socio-historical moments from which they emerged. Indeed, I argue that twentieth-century dramatic representations of Irish music shaped the expectations and conventions governing both traditional music performance and Irish drama from the era.

Traditional tunes and instruments in the era proved adept at performing multiple functions in dramatic scripts. Although Douglas Hyde's *Casadh an Tsugain* (1901) and *An Pósadh* (1902) used traditional music onstage in order to dramatically represent—or aim to realistically replicate—the social dance contexts popular in Ireland outside of the country's playhouses, subsequent years increasingly showed traditional musical instrument performance in plays that showed little or no interest in the music's dance-based performance outside of playhouses. Traditional musical instruments like fiddles may have initially appeared in Irish peasant plays as one of the component elements used to represent rural Irish social dancing, but those instruments would outlast the onstage representation of social dancing as playwrights found new and exciting uses for traditional instruments in their dramas. In the decades following Hyde's experiments with communal music and dance onstage, plays like George Fitzmaurice's

The Dandy Dolls (1908) or Rutherford Mayne's *Phantoms* (1923) would join dozens of other works in which musical instruments appeared wholly divorced from either communal contexts or dancing accompaniment.

Traditional music and its performance created new opportunities to present, interrogate, and complicate ideas of political, spiritual, and cultural identities to Irish audiences. We should not, however, read the development as a one-way exchange in which traditional music shaped drama. Even as playwrights drew upon cultural knowledge of Irish music's previous performance contexts, their plays created new spaces in which audiences could encounter and consume that music. As it moved to the stage, music that was once communal and dance-centered was increasingly made public and accessible for audiences to hear and appreciate without any expectation of active participation. It cannot be understated how profoundly the normalizing of this way of engaging with traditional music diverged from the previous contexts in which a majority of listeners would have encountered that music as an accessory to social participation in dance or song. Drama's presentation of arranged traditional music designed and arranged for public urban audiences across the first half of the twentieth century thus opened pathways for potential new contexts for ITS performance and reception that continue today.

The traffic between commercial and traditional Irish music and drama has left obvious marks on both traditions. Vocal music and ballads that were either composed for plays, or transferred into them from social, ritual, or literary contexts populate plays from across the twentieth century. Playwrights have historically exploited thematic resonances in their works by including popular ITM in their dramas while also creating new songs that may themselves take on life beyond the plays for which they were written. Brendan Behan included his own ballad "The Auld Triangle" within his play—*The Quare Fellow* (1954). The song is now performed

considerably more frequently in pubs and concert halls than onstage in the play for which it was written.[18]

Irish Traditional Music enjoyed shifting instrumentation, social meanings and performance venues across Ireland's turbulent twentieth century. It is thus no surprise that ITM instruments and songs should have appeared in myriad ways on that century's theatre stages. As Ciara Fleming writes of music in Irish theatre, "the power of music to evoke feeling in an audience is something that dramatists have long made use of. Music allows dramatists to further explore ideas of identity, be they national, post-colonial, gendered or individual" (743). Whether borrowing or lending tunes and songs, music served as a method by which Irish playwrights accessed and shaped Irish cultural identity across the century: examining the specific uses to which particular instruments were put during shared decades allows for a better understanding of both theatre and musical performance from the century.

[18] As recently as 2019, however, the song reappeared in a new dramatic context in the pre-show to the National US tour of Enda Walsh's *Once: The Musical.*

CHAPTER THREE: "Played by Uncertain but Unmistakably Professional Hands" Onstage Fiddles, Stage Fiddlers, and De-Anglicizing Irish Drama

In July 2018, Dublin's Abbey Theatre opened a theatrical adaptation of Paul Laverty's 2014 film *Jimmy's Hall*. Under Graham McLaren's direction, the production featured live traditional jigs and reels played by actor-musicians wielding fiddles, flutes, and guitars. When not being played, many of the musicians' instruments hung on the walls of the dance-hall set, providing a constant reminder of music's central place in the play's broader story of a rural Irish village recovering and re-constructing its identity. The instruments were both visual and aural markers of identity. Multi-instrumentalist tradition-bearer Aindrias de Staic played Doherty, a character that frequently fiddles within both the play's narrative plot and the production's presentation of the text. In that role, the actor played music in real time throughout the production.

Conversely, a different tactic for presenting music on stage appeared in that same Abbey theater season in Caitríona McLaughlin's revival production of Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000). For this play, the production team cast actor Peter Coonan as a character who plays the fiddle onstage, despite that actor's inability to actually play the fiddle. Unlike de Staic's sprawling musical performances in Jimmy's Hall, which reached into every corner of the stage, Coonan's fiddling in *On Raftery's Hill* was confined to one dimly-lit quadrant upstage right of the main action. Far from coincidence, this blocking appeared to be a conscious attempt to obscure an actor bowing a prop instrument that was neither making actual music nor consistently synched to the play's sound design. Both Abbey productions demonstrate a living concern over representations of Irish Traditional Music—and the fiddle in particular—as a recognizable and stageable expression of national character. Although the fiddle meaningfully invokes or challenges nostalgic images of rural Ireland in both plays, it is only *actually played* onstage in

Jimmy's Hall. Despite presenting the same instrument on stage, the plays' discreet approaches show how the same fiddle can be used to do vastly different symbolic and actual work in performance.

Much of the current state of musical instrument performance within Irish drama may be attributed to a particular set of interlocking historical, political, and aesthetic circumstances that converged during the first years of the twentieth century. Understanding how early twentieth-century playwrights used traditional musical instruments on stage to symbolize Irish identity—even when doing so required extraordinary staging measures—enables more nuanced readings of why instruments appeared on stages then and why they persist on them now. This chapter reads the fiddle as an object whose appearances in Irish drama from that period grew inextricably entangled with notions of de-Anglicized Irish nationhood. As a result, the fiddle became an increasingly meaningful icon of Irish identity in the early 1900s, and the Irish stage exploited that symbolic gravitas whenever a fiddle was seen—whether or not it was heard—on stage.

Douglas Hyde's *An Pósadh* (1902), Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Five* (1903), Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* (1906), and Padraic Colum's *The Fiddler's House* (1907) were all written and staged in the early years of the Celtic revival. Each of the plays gives stage directions indicating one of three tactics for presenting live fiddle playing within their narrative worlds. Hyde, Gregory, Column, and Mayne wrote works in which fiddles were either 1) Seen and simultaneously heard played onstage; 2) Seen onstage and later heard played from offstage; or 3) Seen onstage but never heard played either onstage or off. In the final tactic described above, fiddles are not *heard* onstage or off, but are rather *heard about* in onstage character dialogue. Both Hyde's *An Pósadh* and Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Five* provide examples of the first method by which fiddles are both seen and heard onstage. The plays show a clear prerogative for

presenting actual fiddle performances in early dramatic experiments as each play concludes with extended onstage fiddling and dancing. The second tactic by which fiddles are visibly presented onstage without making any music appears in Padraic Colum's *The Fiddler's House* and Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road*. Both plays feature narrative fiddler characters within a script that never asks that fiddler to actually play their instrument onstage. Taken together, these four plays show ways that traditional musical instruments *embodied profound notions about culture and identity* on early twentieth-century Irish stages, and that the fiddle in particular invoked particular notions about Irish identity when it appeared on the Celtic Revival's stages. The third tactic, by which a fiddle is presented for visual inspection but never used for any sort of music appears clearly in Richard Hayward and Abram Rish's Ulster play *The Jew's Fiddle* (1920). That play stages the fiddle as a semiotically important National object that is never actually used to make sound, but rather gets its identity through the ways that it is described by onstage characters. In *The Jew's Fiddle*, the fiddle is never played onstage or off, but rather examined and discussed by urban characters who appear to come from a different world than that of the fiddlers that populated turn of the century Irish peasant plays. By understanding onstage fiddles in terms of whether they were seen and heard onstage, seen onstage then heard offstage, or seen onstage and never heard at all, we can observe a pattern of behavior in which playwrights from the era universally valued the visible appearance of the fiddle as an onstage object that drew upon and reenforced archetypes of rural, pristine, de-Anglicized Ireland even when the instrument did not perform any audible musical function.

Early twentieth-century Irish peasant plays staged rural fiddler characters for consumption by urban audiences, despite employing both actors unable to play the fiddle, and fiddlers unable to act. When fiddles are played on stage in these early dramas, it is to exploit and

re-enforce the fiddle's semiotic connection to Irish culture discrete from English rule. The fiddle was a desirable symbol of de-Anglicized Ireland, but a scarcity of actors who could also fiddle with any skill presented playwrights and producers with practical staging issues. Stage directions from the era show multiple methods that theatre producers devised in order to access the fiddle's meaning for companies that did not employ fiddle playing actors.

1902-1903: The Peasant Play, Actual Fiddlers, and Closing Jigs

Early twentieth-century audiences were aware of the Irish fiddler's symbolic power within the art and iconography of the Celtic Revival, so it is no surprise that diverse playwrights of the period listed fiddlers among their casts of characters. From the Gaelic League Feisiana to Irish National Theatre Society productions, audiences came to connect traditional music to national identity. Founders of both movements used print media, speeches, and exhibitions to stress the importance of both presenting and archiving Ireland's "pure" vocal and instrumental music in order to "keep alive whatever other Irish characteristics are good and likely to distinguish in an interesting manner our country from the rest of the world" (Martyn 449-451). On dramatic stages, traditional music was one essential element of the typical Irish peasant play.[19] A December 3, 1903 journal entry by Irish-theatre-going legend Joseph Holloway shows how closely the fiddle had become entwined with notions of Ireland and its peasant values. In his brief review of Padraic Colum's *Broken Soil*,[20] he calls the piece "very slender in plot, but strong

[19] Other essential qualities included small cast size, a single set, and a romanticized representation of rural Irish life and character.

[20] Colum would later rework *Broken Soil* (1903) into *The Fiddler's House*. Unfortunately, no script of *Broken Soil* survives for analysis. In light of this absence, I read Holloway's comments as applying to the plot and characters of *The Fiddler's House* which Colum wrote as an expansion *Broken Soil*.

in character, and quite Irish in sentiment." He particularly commends the image of Conn Hourican, who "with his fiddle under his coat might have stepped in off the road in any country town in Ireland" (Holloway qtd. in Hogan 30). As early as 1903, the fiddle represented a particular matrix of de-Anglicized, nationalist, agrarian and Irish language values shared by Irish playwrights and playgoers. By equating Irish sentiment and authentic country characters with Conn Hourican's "fiddle under his coat," Holloway's comment shows how Irish peasant plays—and the fiddles they carried onto dramatic stages—were thought to reflect a desirable Irish character for artists seeking to establish a de-Anglicized Irish identity.

The combined focus on rural peasant subject matter and the accompanying staging practices associated with peasant plays drove theoretical and practical playmaking choices for playwrights seeking to de-Anglicize Irish culture. Douglas Hyde, founder of the Gaelic League, famously called for the cultivation of "everything that [was] most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish…", and proceeded to describe how "dress, Christian names and surnames, music, ideas—all had to be national again, but it was most important to restore Irish as a living language" (Hyde qtd. in Zimmerman 321). Hyde in particular would follow through on this mission by composing multiple one-act plays written in Irish language.[21] Whether writing in Irish or English, Hyde and his contemporaries turned to the Irish peasant as an example of the Irishman least evidently impacted by cultural imperialism. For Hyde, a new national identity meant a return to an idealized sense of both Ireland's past and the rural villages whose Gaelic-language cultures formed an apparent connection to a pre-Anglicized Ireland. The theatrical turn

[21] These works were met with varying levels of welcome by primarily Anglophonic Irish audiences. While the works were originally performed in the Irish language, Lady Gregory translated Hyde's work to English in publications that broadened their readership in Ireland and abroad.

towards representations of rural—often western—Irish culture led to repeated instances of plays featuring country fiddlers as archetypical 'folk.'

Hyde's *An Pósadh* —translated *The Marriage*—was first produced at the Feis Chúige Chonnacht (Connacht Feis) in August of 1902.[22] Its plot details newlywed Irish couple Mary and Martin's meager marriage dinner that is interrupted by a blind fiddler who is alternately referred to as "The Blind Man" and "Fiddler" in the text. The play—which follows a short, one-act structure—is very much a peasant play in both form and message.[23] The cast list in Gregory's translation features three named speaking characters and a host of small roles blanketed by the term "neighbors." The setting calls for the action to take place in a recognizably rural "cottage kitchen." Hyde's plot is efficiently slender, with a laser focus on one character's impact on a small community. The Blind Man—originally played by Hyde himself—puts on a musical performance intended to raise money for the poor newlyweds from otherwise tight-fisted neighbors. In the play's final moments, The Fiddler finally reveals himself to be the famous traveling poet Raftery.[24]

Hyde's play advances traditional fiddling as a profitable and communally valuable Irish enterprise. The itinerant musician's fiddling reminds Mary and Martin's neighbors of their responsibilities to both the young couple and the community at large. The Fiddler also calls for

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[22] As Hyde's original play was produced in the Irish language, this project references the text via Lady Gregory's widely-accepted English translation from *Poets and Dreamers* (1903).

[23] Timothy G. McMahon has usefully described Hyde's most consistent tactics in *An Pósadh* and other peasant plays, noting how the playwright "set the action of his plays in familiar crowd setting (such as a kitchen or a schoolroom), so that they included many participants but only a limited number of principal (speaking) performers" (174).

[24] There is much to be written about Anthony Raftery's (1784-1835) long-shadow cast on Ireland's literary revival. The character's appearances in stage plays are consistently fascinating. Hyde, Yeats, and Gregory all translated, dramatized, or referenced the musician's work in the revival's early years.

neighbors to contribute wedding gifts in exchange for dance music. By trading his music for needed items for the newlyweds like bacon, meal, money, and potatoes, The Fiddler presents musical performance as a valuable commodity appreciated by—and necessary for—self-sufficient rural communities. Mary and Martin are rewarded with a considerable return on their investment because they provide shelter and nourishment to the itinerant musician. Fiddling is shown as worthwhile work in the play's narrative and an extended onstage fiddle performance at the play's conclusion solidifies this positive message.

Stage directions in *An Pósadh* indicate that the performer playing The Fiddler was meant to perform instrumental music onstage, using the instrument to produce actual music for audiences in both the play's cottage and the theatre venue. After The Fiddler hears newlywed Mary and Martin's hard-luck story, he decides to draw the passing neighbors to the house. In that scene *"Mary opens the door again.* [The Fiddler] *takes up the fiddle and begins to play on it"* (89). Stage directions again call for onstage fiddling in the final moments of the play when the *"*BLIND MAN *plays on the fiddle. They all stand up and dance...When they have danced for a minute or two,* BLIND MAN *stops fiddling and stands up"* (103). Hyde's text thus calls for two distinct instances of onstage fiddle performance, one of which was originally meant to span an extended "minute or two."

The explicit requirement for an extended musical performance occurring onstage implies a pragmatic concern for the *actual performance* of the music, rather than a detached literary interest in music happening in the moment. No one-act play allots a "minute or two" of stage time to a bit of stage business about which it is ambivalently interested. The fiddling scene that closes *An Pósadh* presents a musical event celebrating Irish culture within a larger play thematically doing the same work. A modern reader may see the extended celebration of Irish

Traditional Music at the play's conclusion as troubling both the production's realistic drama style and its streamlined narrative plot, but neither appears to have irked an original Feis audience. *The Irish Monthly* contributor H.F. states that "from the very first one could feel the realness of the thing. Here was life to the very life enacted…"(Russell 464).[25] Hyde's own lack of fiddling expertise while playing the role of the fiddler, however, complicates both the observed "realness of the thing" and the celebration of live fiddle music at the play's close.

With his two "fiddle" stage directions, Hyde the playwright paradoxically called for musical performance that he knew that Hyde the actor could not perform. Despite having originated the fictive fiddler role in the play, Hyde does not appear to have been an accomplished fiddler, or indeed, a musician of any sort. Gareth W. Dunleavy and Janet E. Dunleavy's encompassing biography *Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland* never mentions any instrumental musicianship in Hyde's youth or adulthood, despite exhaustively recounting the playwright's early preoccupations with language, folklore, and sport. While Hyde's rhetoric throughout the early twentieth century repeatedly equated traditional Irish music with the modern Irish condition, he appears to have been unable to participate in Irish traditional instrumental music at a practical performance level. *An Pósadh's* text thus demanded live instrumental performance in an early Irish peasant play even when a suitably musical actor would not originate the role. The play's original performances within festivals celebrating Ireland's

[25] Not for nothing, H.F. may be critiqued as a critic since they admit themselves to have no understanding of the Irish language in which the play was written and performed. It is, however, a testament to the power that both Irish language and Irish fiddle exerted on the Irish imagination at the time that the reviewer should have connected the elements of the play most foreign to his own experience and understanding as being the most real or lifelike.

traditional music heritage, however, would allow Hyde to play the part of the Fiddler without needing to fiddle himself.[26]

Dramaturgically, the fiddle in *An Pósadh* must be played beautifully in order to warrant the neighbors' accepting its music in exchange for valuable goods. In its first performances, proficient music would have been especially important to audiences attending an event specifically meant to champion Irish Traditional Music. Feis attendees listening to competition level musicians would not have appreciated seeing the musical icon Raftery (played by cultural hero Hyde) scratching inexpertly at the fiddle. Hyde and the company must have used a music double. Since *An Pósadh* premiered at a Feis celebrating traditional music and language, Hyde could easily have secured a second fiddler's presence at the event and arranged for that player to play either onstage behind the ensemble of "neighbors" or from an obscured offstage position. H.F.'s 1903 account of "A Feis" clarifies the ready availability of musicians when they note, "after the play we had an exhibition performance by the prize winners" from the various music competitions (465). The resource of a Feis fiddler—whether onstage or waiting in the wings—would have obviated the need for Hyde to play the instrument himself and would have produced actual fiddle music while actor Hyde mimed bowing the instrument. *An Pósadh's* logistical workaround for staging a narrative fiddler character played by a non-fiddling actor appears to have been acceptably received, as reviews do not express any specific concern with the tactic. The play thus appears to have accomplished suitably enjoyable fiddle music, even if that music was not actually played by the fiddler promised within the play's fictive reality.

[26] Hyde's own well-documented attempts to reconstruct and preserve Raftery's work would have added resonances to his own performance as Raftery for the play's first audiences in 1902. As a cultural celebrity playing the role of a traditional icon, Hyde may have enjoyed welcome leeway in the audience's reception of his theatrical version of fiddling.

Hyde's play delivered both lengthy traditional fiddle performance and a positive valuation of fiddlers as part of a Cultural Revival project that intersected the Irish National Theatre Society's own calls to build up a Celtic and Irish body of dramatic literature reflecting the nation's ancient idealism. Lady Gregory's long-neglected *Twenty-Five*, particularly, shows the fiddle as a socially valuable element of de-Anglicized Irish culture in a play written specifically for presentation to Dublin audiences. Despite not appearing at musical festivals, *Twenty-Five* mirrors *An Pósadh's* concern for presenting actual onstage fiddle performance within a peasant play framework.

Gregory first published *Twenty-Five* in the American journal *The Gael* in 1902 under the title *A Losing Game*, and the play premiered in Dublin's Molesworth Hall on March 14th 1903: just seven months after Hyde's *An Pósadh* received its first performance.[27] Both works share similar plots in which destitute couples receive unexpected windfalls from mysterious benefactors. In Gregory's one-act, spouses Michael and Kate Ford begin the play on the eve of an auction which will sell their Galway cottage to service debts owed. As the couple prepare for the auction, the audience learns that Michael and Kate's debt will force them not only from their home, but also from Ireland as their finances push them to emigrate to better working prospects in Manchester. Backdropped by this precarious situation, Kate's former love-interest Christie Henderson returns from Boston with a small fortune and the hope of marrying Kate. While the audience may expect Christie to try to win Kate back with promises of wealth and an improved

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[27] The play would not be published again in any form prior to the 1970 publication of *Lost Plays of the Irish Renaissance,* edited by Robert Hogan and James Kilroy. Its 70-year-absence in print marks one explanation for consistent oversight of Lady Gregory's considerable hand in shaping the appearance of traditional musical instruments on Irish stages. The fourth chapter of this project explores Gregory's significant contributions to the inclusion of Irish woodwind instruments on dramatic stages.

situation, Christie instead accepts Kate's marriage to over-jealous Michael and hatches a plan to save the couple from destitution. By play's end, Christie convinces a group of neighbors that he is a rich man from abroad. The ruse allows Christie to trick Michael into playing a card game that Christie intentionally loses to help repay Kate and Michael's debt. As in *An Pósadh*, *Twenty-Five* thus shows a young rural couple in financial straits being saved by an altruistic stranger that turns out to be more than he appears.

The play's published stage directions mirror Hyde's own peasant play tropes with a nearly verbatim accuracy. *Twenty-Five* calls for three named characters and various unnamed neighbors to occupy "*A kitchen in a farmer's cottage, neat, well-furnished, and set out for company*" (51). In another formal overlap, both plays conclude with extended dance sequences during which characters celebrate averted crises as mysterious saviors slip offstage. As in Hyde's play, Gregory's demands that a fiddle be played on stage. Unlike Hyde, however, Gregory's script provides a way to increase the likelihood of actual onstage fiddling by including a narrative fiddler in the work. She writes "A Fiddler" specifically into the play's cast as distinct from the "Other Neighbors" that come to visit the Ford's house (51).

Within *Twenty-Five's* slender plot, "A Fiddler" is both discussed by named characters and called to appear onstage, despite being played by a performer whose name does not appear in the original cast list. Though played by a performer who is not credited in the play's premier, the fiddler character features prominently in the text, and his arrival is eagerly anticipated by other characters. Michael invites Christie (whose true identity he never learns) to share the couple's last festive evening in their community by saying, "Well, stop the evening with us and welcome. We'll be having a dance by and by when the fiddler comes…" (57). The eventful evening before Michael and Kate leave Galway is to be underscored communal dancing to

fiddle-music. *Twenty-Five* thus mirrors *An Pósadh's* presentation of the fiddler as an essential and valuable contributor to rural community life. Christie eventually affirms the fiddler's value by paying him the last of the money that he has not "lost" to Michael. In his penultimate spoken line in the text he exclaims, "Here Fiddler, here's gold for you, and give us a reel" (63). Despite having worked for four years in America to make his fortune, Christie is content to give up the last of his savings in order to dance with Kate one final time. In a gesture that mirrored the Gaelic League's advocacy for Irish community, altruism and interdependence, Christie is shown to sacrifice his own wealth not only for the woman he loves but also for her community and, most specifically, the fiddler that enables Irish traditions like communal dancing. Traditional music performance in *Twenty-Five* is communally appreciated, distinctly Irish, and economically valuable in ways that mirror the viewpoint presented in Hyde's Irish language play from the year prior.

The fiddle appears to have been actively played by someone onstage in *Twenty-Five's* original performance, even if the performer that played that music is not evident in the play's surviving paramaterial. After Christie calls for a reel,[28] stage directions instruct that "*He throws the little handkerchief to the fiddler who strikes up. Christie takes Kate's hands, dances for a minute, stops, kisses her and flings over to the door"* (63). The stage direction implies an essential bit of physical business to happen during the fiddle performance, making it impractical to the plot's conclusion for any production not to perform the musical interlude. Even the language of the fiddler striking up his music to accompany a dance that lasts "for a minute"

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[28] The specificity of calling for a reel in particular shows the playwright's concern—or at least familiarity—with actual and specific dance music. Rather than calling for "music" or "a tune," the play clearly demands dance music in a 4/4 time signature that would have had particular steps and formations attached to its performance.

points to an instance of extended music and dance onstage nearly identical to that demanded by Hyde's direction that characters dance "*for a minute or two*" (103).[29] Unlike Hyde's performance playing the Blind Man and likely faking his fiddle performance, however, "A Fiddler" in *Twenty-Five* never speaks a word in character, making it likely that the role was conceived for, and performed by, an actual fiddler—rather than an actor playing a fiddler—purposefully recruited onto the project.

Two of the earliest peasant plays scripted for a de-Anglicized Irish stage called for the fiddle to be positively represented as socially important and economically valuable to rural Irish communities. The fiddler in each play is essential to communal celebrations and compensated by community members in ways that affirm traditional music's value. Both *Twenty-Five* and *An Pósadh* helped shape of the dramaturgy of onstage music on the Celtic Revival stage. Yet despite their similarities, the plays divide the *fiddler as a character* from the *fiddler producing actual music* in discrete ways. Hyde appears to have played an onstage fiddler by miming musical instrument performance with an unsounding fiddle; Lady Gregory, meanwhile, scripted a non-speaking fiddler character into her play with the singular function of performing for the play's final dance between Christie and Kate.

Two facts about onstage fiddle performance emerge from reading *Twenty-Five* and *An Pósadh* together. First: actual traditional fiddle music was important enough to each playwright to script lengthy dance sequences at the conclusion of plays that could have resolved without them. Second: the performance of fiddle music within each play need not have come from major

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[29] The repeated instances of fiddle music and company dancing so near to the conclusion of otherwise unmusical plays feels reminiscent of early modern English companies concluding plays with a company "Jig" regardless of the genre of scripted drama being presented. While the two conventions clearly have their own traditions and values, productive research could yet be done on the Jig-like conclusions of early twentieth-century Irish peasant plays.

characters, nor even from the actor body that the plot claimed was playing. Implicit in the distinct means by which Hyde scripted an actor who could not fiddle, and Gregory a fiddler who need not act, is the apparent desire for fiddle music to occur *onstage* even if actor-fiddlers were not available to play it. Hyde and Gregory intentionally scripted fiddles and fiddle music in their plays using tropes that foreshadow issues and solutions for putting the instrument on subsequent dramatic stages.

The Fiddle as an Icon for Non-Irish Speakers

The desire to present fiddle music onstage likely developed from traditional music's ability to express Ireland's de-Anglicized culture for audiences unable to either speak or understand Irish language. Vernacular Irish language speaking within Ireland declined across the nineteenth century. Emigration, famine, shifts in educational priorities, and various socio-economic factors combined to relegate Irish language to largely rural pockets of coastal regions. Hyde understood the dearth of language speakers in urban centers at the turn of the twentieth century, which explains why a playwright who knew his own lack of musicianship would write such a specific and essential fiddle performance into his script.

Despite Douglas Hyde's best efforts with the Gaelic League, the Irish language—long the cornerstone of the League's formation of de-Anglicized Irish identity—proved a challenging cultural inheritance to effectively stage. McMahon asserts that, "for those activists hoping to create a viable native alternative to existing popular entertainments, the one-act plays and short dramas that were a common feature at aeriochtai [Irish language performance festivals] proved to be a chastening reminder how far the movement still had to go" (174). The paradox of Irish language as a central component of de-Anglicized Irish art and identity that could not be

effectively staged in narrative drama appears clearly in audience member H.F.'s impressions of *An Pósadh's* Galway Feis premiere. That viewer explains their experience at a play whose language they could not follow, writing, "Arrived at the entrance, it was to me like landing in a foreign country. One heard only Irish. I was out of it—utterly out of it! A stranger in my own country! I could not talk her language." They assert that "the play was not very well staged, but we did not look for Lyceum or Haymarket standard in that respect" (464). Although H.F. writes positively of their experience at *An Pósadh*, they also articulate a central paradox in staging Irish language in early twentieth-century Irish drama: the endangered Irish tongue of the agrarian west was revered for its symbolic power but unintelligible to a vast majority of Irish spectators and theatre-makers.

It would be unsurprising that the acting at the Galway Feis should fall short of professional standards. The company's players were principally amateur performers cast for their ability to speak Irish, rather than any professional acting credentials. Dublin's urban theatres, meanwhile, boasted actors and audiences more accustomed to the nuances of theatrical performance, but largely unable to produce or consume Irish language drama. Faced with an inability to stage Irish language for Anglophonic urban audiences, playwrights then turned to the fiddle as an equally native—but more stageable—symbol of Irish culture to represent the ideologically pristine Irish west in their peasant plays. Plays written to champion native Irish character for audiences that could not understand Irish language could do so by using a visual iconography and aural soundtrack that did not require language fluency.

The Irish fiddle and its performance repertoire presented one accessible element of the national character that Hyde and others championed on and off of dramatic stages. Harry C. White unpacks an entrenched connection between nationalist sentiment and traditional music at

the time, as "old alignments of class and music tradition…shifted in favor of new affiliations, as between ethnic music and nationalism on one side and a middle-class consensus for art music on the other" (104). The ongoing interest in the fiddle between 1902 and 1907 by multiple playwrights points to the fiddle as a particularly potent icon of Irish character. Traditional music joined Irish language—and Irish language drama—as pillars of a de-Anglicizing Celtic revival project. The popularity and accessibility that traditional music enjoyed in contrast with that of the flagging Irish language revival at the start of the twentieth century explains playwrights' pragmatic choice for staging an object that—played or not—would have carried considerable symbolic freight on dramatic stages.

While the harp has presented a persistently important symbolic instrument throughout Ireland's history, the fiddle emerged to at least rival that instrument as a centrally important cultural instrument by the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ríonach Uí Ógáin sees the instrument as likely having entered traditional Irish music in the mid-1500s and enjoyed widespread popularity by the eighteenth century (197). June Skinner Sawyers asserts that "the instrument of choice in both the Old and New Worlds during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the fiddle. In fact, as early as the latter decades of the seventeenth century, the fiddle had replaced other stringed and bowed instruments as the people's favorite" (66).[30]

The fiddle was apparently particularly popular among populist listeners in the nineteenth century. W. Carleton's article "The Irish Fiddler" from an 1840 edition of *The Irish Penny Journal* asserts that "The harper, in fact, belonged to the gentry, and to the gentry they were willing to leave him…The fiddle, however, is the instrument of all others most essential to the

[30] Sawyers' reading risks overgeneralization of subjective preference, but primary documents from the nineteenth century certainly show a popular disposition towards the fiddle.

enjoyment of an Irishman" (53). Carleton additionally claims that the fiddle ought to be Ireland's national instrument. He describes a scene of a local house party in which, "The house is immediately thronged with the neighbors, and a preliminary dance is taken…Several times in the course of the night a plate it brought round, and a collection made for the fiddler" (55). Carleton's opinion piece is notable for multiple reasons, not least of which being his connection to the fiddle as a popular instrument more accessible to non-gentry enjoyment than the harp. He affirms a class dichotomy in which common folk gravitated to the fiddle with his description of a communal house dance of the sort that Gregory and Hyde reenact in their plays. To Carleton, the fiddle was specifically connected to Ireland's nineteenth-century populace in ways that the harp was not. Playwrights at the turn of the twentieth century appear to have acknowledged and exploited the fiddle's popularity with the non-gentry rural populace and used that accepted popularity to stage representations of de-Anglicized Ireland.

The fiddle's popularity outside of the playhouse made the inclusion of onstage fiddling a popular trope within early revival dramatic experiments. The repeated inclusion of fiddle music within peasant plays should not, however, be read as a simple attempt to capitalize on that instrument's popularity outside of plays. Instead, the fiddle's popularity made it an immediately recognizable—and thus, stageable—icon of Nationalist values that permeated Dublin playmaking at the time.

Martin Dowling gives a useful model for unpacking the allure of dramatizing traditional fiddle. In "'Thought-Tormented Music': Joyce and the Music of the Irish Revival," Dowling notes how, historically, "pipers" and "country fiddlers" were deeply identified with Irish cultural production and also nearer to high culture than the equally Irish "Irish Speakers" and "Peasantry"

(438).[31] Pipers and Country Fiddlers thus presented tempting avatars for showing a pristine, authentic Irishness since they were simultaneously located far from the influence of foreign culture and nearer to the divide between high and low culture than the equally native "Irish Speakers" and "Peasantry." Reading *An Pósadh* as a text conceived by the same Douglas Hyde that advocated a postcolonial Irish identity as far divorced from English culture as possible thus reveals the fiddle's symbolic potential on early century Irish stages.[32] The fiddle provided a concrete, stageable symbol of the pristine Irish West as imagined by non-musician urban playwrights. Pipers and country fiddlers were just as free from Anglicizing influence as Irish-speaking peasantry, but musicians could be displayed onstage for popular consumption much more easily than Irish language speakers.

Pipers and Country Fiddlers could be represented for consumption by early 1900s Irish audiences in ways that the "equally pristine" Irish-speaking peasantry could not. A fiddle's music is as recognizably Irish and smacking of the soil as spoken Irish language is, but that music does not need to be academically understood by theatre-goers trying to follow a dramatic plot: urban audiences can tap their feet to a rural jig but will have a harder time following dialogue in a language that they do not have. Beyond being easily comprehensible, traditional music could be shoe-horned into productions without dismantling the drama surrounding the music's performance. *Twenty-Five* shows the relative ease of enlisting a fiddle player to appear in a non-speaking role within a production. "A Fiddler's" part in that play is wholly self-

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[31] Dowling convincingly situates fiddles, pipers and Irish language speakers as carriers of pristine un-Anglicized Irish culture by situating them within his own version of Pierre Bourdieu's matrix of cultural production.

[32] Douglas Hyde's 1892 lecture "On the Necessity of De-Anglicizing the Irish Nation" remains a cornerstone document for understanding and interpreting artistic revival that both coincided and shaped Ireland's nation building project.

contained and hardly mimetic. The actor in the part need not speak any text or interact at any length with other characters. Irish language performance was not nearly so easily incorporated into a developing Irish dramatic tradition.

Fiddles solidly represented an abstract ideal of de-Anglicized rural Irishness on early twentieth-century Irish dramatic stages: they showed a desired pristine Irishness for audiences unable to effectively engage with Irish language plays. Because of its repeated appearances in peasant plays, the physical instrument of the fiddle rapidly gained acceptance as a concrete, quickly-recognizable, signifier of Irish national cultural production, which—metonymically—came to stand in for the idealized pristine Irish west within the peasant play genre. Keir Elam's *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* helps explain how the fiddle likely acquired mimetic meanings on Irish dramatic stages very different from those that it enjoyed as a social and commercial instrument within rural communities. Elam cites Petr Bogatrev's early writing on folk theatre which posited that, "the stage radically transforms all object and bodies defined within it, bestowing upon them an overriding signifying power which they lack…in their normal function" so that on theatre stages an object's signification transcends its utility (7). When played in its original social and recreational context, the Irish fiddle carried multiple practical, social, and political meanings. The same instrument, however, played on Irish dramatic stages obtained an "overriding signifying power" to represent authenticity and untainted rural Irishness for urban writers and audiences. The fiddle was the first of many ITM instruments to enter into the vocabulary of a new Irish dramatic tradition. Hyde and Gregory may have set out to showcase Irish cultural production when presenting fiddle music within their plays, but the act of bringing fiddles onto dramatic stages invited new meanings to be mapped onto the instrument. Plays following *Twenty-Five* and *An Pósadh* display the difficulties and possibilities that emerged in

staging fiddles that had been radically transformed to carry overriding nationalist signifying power onto new dramatic stages.

1906-1907 *The Fiddler's House, The Turn of the Road* and An Instrument Turned Icon

While Hyde and Gregory's plays *showed* onstage traditional music performance, subsequent works often turned their attention towards debates about the fiddler's role in Irish society. Works by Rutherford Mayne and Padraic Colum show onstage *conversation about* the fiddle as a representation of Irishness, without necessarily presenting onstage *performances of* the instrument. The fiddle is a physical object that instigates character debates over properly Irish behavior and priorities in Colum's *The Fiddler's House* (1907) and Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* (1906). Both plays confirm the value of fiddling as cultural practice by introducing protagonists who ultimately choose itinerant fiddling in order to either chase a desired future or recapture a longed-after past. Stage directions and character dialogue from the plays indicate that the playwrights asked non-fiddling actors to either hide their characters' fiddle performances from audiences' sight or to displace onstage fiddling to specifically enlisted onstage musicians. Mayne and Colum went to some length to present Irish fiddle music while staging narrative fiddler characters that need not have played the instrument at all.

The notion that the fiddle could be made to concretely stand-in for a pristine and otherwise inaccessible Irishness represents a central thematic concern within Padraic Colum's wistfully nostalgic *The Fiddler's House* (1907). The peasant play interrogates the fiddle's position in a society that privileges the economic and social stability of agricultural life over economic and social uncertainty of the itinerant musician. Based on Colum's own shorter play entitled *Broken Soil* (1903), *The Fiddler's House* was first produced for Dublin audiences by The

Theatre of Ireland at the Rotunda in 1907. The play fits neatly into the peasant play genre of the early Irish Dramatic Movement, since Colum explains how he conceived the play for "a small, barely furnished stage in a small theatre...for an audience that was tremendously interested in every expression of *national character* [Emphasis added]" (Sternlicht 22). Colum's concern with expressions of national character appears most clearly in the play's extended debate over the fiddle's place within a community inhospitable to the fiddling lifestyle.

The Fiddler's House follows elderly farmer Conn Hourican's difficulties leaving behind his itinerant youth as one of the "country fiddlers" that Dowling sees straddling high and low Irish culture. Hourican's soul-searching plays out against a secondary plotline in which his daughters Maire and Anne navigate prospective marriages and the management of a family farm. Questions of proper behavior dominate the plot as characters around Conn persuade him to leave behind fiddling and focus exclusively on more profitable farm work. Conn himself acknowledges that the fiddle's popularity seems to be waning around him. He recounts how, once, he "could make more playing at one fair than working a whole season in this bit of a place" (7) and later laments how "none of the oul' people go to the like, and the young don't understand me nor my ways" (36). Despite continuous reminders that his fiddling days are behind him, Conn obsesses over the instrument. He repeatedly neglects his farming duties and borrows money from those closest to him whenever presented with an opportunity to revisit the musical lifestyle that he so misses. In the end, Conn returns to the road alongside his daughter Maire. In the play's final moments, "*He goes to dresser, takes the fiddle and wraps it up"* exclaiming "Well, here's Conn Hourican the fiddler going on his travels again…I'm leaving the land behind me, too: but what's land after all against the music…" (148). He exits the stage for the last time

to the sound of offstage fiddling as "*The fiddle is heard again. Conn Hourican goes to door"* (148).[33]

With its conclusion showing an old fiddler returning to the road alongside his young daughter, *The Fiddler's House* presents the fiddle as both a relic of past days, and also a promise of future performances. The fiddle is, however, *never played onstage* at any point in the play. Instead, multiple instances of offstage fiddling—like the example underscoring Conn's final exit—recur throughout the play's stage directions. If the fiddling life described as belonging to a past just beyond Conn's reach, it also belongs in the theatre's wings, just beyond the audience's view. A dearth of onstage fiddle performance in the play demands closer attention to Conn's "fiddling" as a symbolic element of the national character essential to Colum's work. Fiddle playing in the play's dialogue appears to be imperiled by new cultural priorities, while onstage it is missing entirely.

Despite *The Fiddler's House's* title, stage directions call for little fiddle performance, and no fiddling at all on stage. Stage directions, rather, call for the instrument to be put onto a table (15, 28), taken from a dresser (20), wrapped up for travel (24), left back on a dresser (46, 59), and carried around the stage by both Conn and Maire, but never actually played within the audience's sight. Conn comes closest to onstage fiddle performance in Act 1, when he "*...goes into the room right; soon after the fiddle is heard"* (11). After a brief conversation, stage directions read "*the fiddle has ceased. As Maire goes towards the room, Conn Hourican comes down, the fiddle in his hand"* (14). While the scene clearly implies that Conn has taken the

[33] The fiddle being "heard again" as Conn holds the wrapped up fiddle in his hands makes clear the existence of a second offstage fiddle in the play's final moments. This second fiddle becomes important when considering how the onstage fiddle works in the play and whether Conn's own instrument is ever used as a musical instrument or simply an iconic visual property.

instrument into the next room to play, that character never produces a single note on the fiddle within the audience's view. This combination of preparation for music by an onstage character followed shortly thereafter by the phenomenological performance of actual music by another body is a familiar one to twenty-first century consumers of television and film. Viewers of those media are likely accustomed to shots of onscreen actors sitting behind pianos before cameras rapidly cut to close-up shots isolating hands and wrists playing actual keys. The fact that this staging convention is both accepted and predictable now does not preclude it from having been meaningful then.

The total absence of fiddling onstage implies that Colum wrote a play about fiddle performance into which he built contingency plans that accounted for performers who could not fiddle. The playwright was interested in expressions of national character, even if presenting those expressions exceeded the resources at his theatre company's disposal. Like Hyde's premiere of *An Pósadh,* Colum's play staged a fiddler characters using a non-fiddling actor. *The Fiddler's House* premiered in 1907 with actor Joseph Goggin in the titular fiddler. After analyzing stage directions, the reader must conclude that Goggin was not a strong enough fiddler to actually play the instrument on stage. Whether Goggin was the exception as an actor unable to play the fiddle or—more likely—the rule, *The Fiddler's House*'s 1907 premier production featured a titular fiddler character who is never asked by the dramatic text to actually play the instrument on stage. But, like all practical choices made by playwrights and theatre companies, the choice inadvertently makes thematic meaning anyway.

Unlike *An Pósadh* or *Twenty-Five, The Fiddler's House* gives stage directions that imply an acceptance that fiddles need not make sound onstage to create onstage meaning. The dearth of onstage fiddle performance in the play re-enforces Colum's thematic questioning of Ireland's

cultural future. Throughout the text, Conn discusses his fiddling past with a nostalgic longing indicative of his desire to give up stability in favor of itinerant performance. Ranting about the changed reception his fiddle playing now garners, he laments, “God knows will I ever play again. That thought is often with me of late, and it makes me very lonesome” (36). Conn’s regret at the disappearance of his preferred livelihood appears wholly warranted throughout the text, as friends and relations variously remind him that he is “not the rambling fiddler any more” (17) since he “settled down and lost [his] art” (22). For every character but Conn, the fiddle operates within *The Fiddler’s House* as a past tense object that has been silenced by agricultural respectability and modernity. A toast for Conn in the play’s second act explicitly articulates this pastness by wishing, “Here’s to the fiddler, first of all. May it be again like in the days of Ireland’s glory, when the men of art had their rights and their dues” (47). The speech may signal that the good times might return someday, but it also places the fiddle firmly within a rapidly retreating Irish past. The play’s nostalgic backwards reaching reifies the fiddler, and by extension the fiddle, through its one-to-one link to a past Irish glory whose return appears both desirable and unlikely.

The fiddle is carried between cottage locations within the play but divorced from its practical function just as Conn feels impotent when not allowed to pursue the cultural work that once brought him renown. At the play’s end, Conn finds happiness by leaving his family and returning to the itinerant musicianship—and by extension—the glorious past for which he longs throughout the text. Conn’s attempts to re-access a prosperous past mirror his country’s grasping towards a pre-Anglicized past as a pathway towards un-diluted Irish identity at the time of the play’s composition. As a concrete symbol of traditional Irish music associated with the country’s agrarian west, the fiddle provided an ideal symbol for the backward reaching of both Conn and

the nation. Fintan Valleley supports the equating of authentic traditional music with non-English culture when it recites how,

> A second view of 'authentic' is the idea of relic, something not changed at all—the original stuff. This view is assumed by many in Irish music, where the search in the revival years was implicitly for living fossils of authentic music forms. This is like an early apprehension of Darwinism—in which primitive people were seen to represent earlier, more pure stages in cultural evolution… (56).

Valleley recaps Ireland's traditional music's equation to authenticity, and his reference to "fossils of authentic music forms" explains the emergence of symbolic but un-played fiddles in revival plays. The late 1890s and early 1900s witnessed pervasive rhetoric equating native music with an emerging national project. Douglas Hyde's call for "everything…most Irish" manifested in discourse within and beyond Dublin's artistic communities on Irish music's authenticating place in the country's cultural identity.[34] Vallely's argument that traditional music's perceived authenticity presents a potential link with an imagined pristine past explains traditional instruments' persistent appearances in theatre from the Irish literary revival. His reference to fossils of authentic music forms proves equally useful for its implication of traditional music's imperiled existence. *The Fiddler's House* presents character dialogue that bemoans the demise of Ireland's pre-Anglicized music traditions even as its stage directions prove the importance of showing the iconic fiddle through any staging means necessary.

The fiddle in *The Fiddler's House* should thus be read not primarily as a musical instrument, but rather as a physically available symbol of national character within Colum's

[34] Gaelic League co-founder and traditional music advocate T. O'Neill Russell, for example, proved an especially fierce champion of traditional music as both authentic and distinct from the English, prolifically generating both articles and speeches on the matter (Nicholsen 141).

play. The fiddle is intentionally referenced and presented within the work, even though so doing fails to use the instrument's original aural purpose. The instrument's dramatic power in the play stems from its physical appearance and the metonymic connections to folk culture that it carried for its Dublin audiences, rather than from the traditional work that such an instrument performed outside of the playhouse.

Rutherford Mayne's 1906 *The Turn of the Road* shows a second play from the same historical moment exploring the narrative fiddler archetype. Parallels between the two texts' handling of narrative fiddler characters that do not fiddle onstage point towards a cementing of the fiddle's semiotic value in early century plays, as well as an alternative approach to practically staging fiddle music by non-fiddling actors.

The Turn of the Road: **Dispersing Live Onstage Fiddling Across Onstage Bodies**

The Turn of the Road and *The Fiddler's House* both show the influence of Colum's *Broken Soil* (1903) since all three plays enact the drama of a fiddle player torn between a peripatetic musician's life and a stable agricultural one.[35] Wolfgang Zach lists Colum among Mayne's influences in writing *The Turn of the Road*, and Mayne's treatment of the fiddle shows thematic and cultural concerns shared by both playwrights. Mayne wrote the play for an Ulster Literary Theatre (ULT) whose scripts and performances have been interpreted as "more satiric than poetic" because of W.B. Reynolds' November 1904 editorial in the first edition of *Ulad*

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[35] Wolfgang Zach explains Colum's influence on Mayne, stating that, "the play owes most to Mayne's imagination and to literary influence, especially to the realistic peasant plays written by Lewis Purcell and Padraic Colum" (xii). One cannot read *The Turn of the Road* alongside *The Fiddler's House* without seeing their shared use of both the fiddle and the fiddler as a battleground for questions of proper behavior, familial responsibility, and Ireland's cultural destiny.

(Bell 7). Rather than a satire of the work happening in Dublin, however, Mayne's play should be considered part of a ULT identity-building project analogous to that undertaken by Hyde, Gregory, and Colum. In a less-frequently cited explanation of the company's work, Reynold's promised that the ULT sought "something unique in Ulster, smacking of the soil, the winds on the uplands, the north coast, the sun and the rain, and the long winter evenings" which are all qualities clearly driving *The Turn of the Road* (Bell 8). Eugene McNulty captures this parallel between Northern and Southern dramatic objectives succinctly, stating, "In response…to the fixation on images of the West's peasantry, canonically associated with Synge and Lady Gregory, Rutherford Mayne's contributions to the Ulster Literary Theatre addressed the lack of Northern dimension to this search for an Irish rural authenticity" (10). If the Ulster Literary Theatre began more satiric than its poetic Dublin precursor, it did so while seeking to establish its own connection to an untapped cultural soil.

It should be little surprise that Mayne's search for a rural Ulster authenticity also entailed dramatic representations of fiddle music. *The Turn of the Road* uses many of the same realistic peasant play conventions found in Colum's text and gives directions indicating stagecraft workarounds to obviate the need for a leading man that could both act and play fiddle. Unlike Colum, Hyde, or Gregory, Mayne *does* call for live onstage fiddle performance by introducing a second—authentic—fiddler that both plays fiddle and speaks lines of dialogue onstage alongside the drama's (non-fiddling) fiddler protagonist.

Mayne's play was first produced December 4, 1906 at Queen's University, Belfast by the Ulster Literary Theatre with a cast that featured the playwright in the leading role. Within Mayne's story, amateur musician Robbie John tries, against his family's wishes, to hone his fiddle playing craft while reluctantly fulfilling his duties on the family farm. Robbie James is

opposed in his musical wishes by various family members and neighbors that doubt the instrument's respectability: prospective father-in-law John Graeme refuses to let his daughter match with a fiddler. Local Machiavel Samuel James seeks to benefit from Robbie's descent into fiddling disgrace. Opposition to fiddling comes to a head when family patriarch William John brings an impoverished tramp fiddler into the cottage as a cautionary warning to his son. Robbie John finally succumbs to his family's anti-musical insistences, and Mayne ends the first act when "ROBBIE JOHN *hesitates, then, with bowed head, he goes forward to place [his fiddle] on the fire"* (16).[36] The second act, however, opens with the image of a fiddle displayed prominently on the wall and the revelation that the tramp fiddler from the first act had died of exposure and left his own instrument to Robbie John.[37] After various temptations and near misses, the plot resolves when love interest Jane convinces Robbie James to leave his family and pursue music. The play concludes ambivalently with the young man leaving and his family members lamenting the boy's decision.

Fiddle performance is variously characterized by Robbie John's critics as unprofitable, unrespectable, and archaic. His father William John and Grandfather provide the harshest criticisms of fiddle performance as an unfavorable alternative to agricultural work. William John explains his dislike of Robbie John's fiddling by explaining how practicing music "makes you negleck [sic] your work. It makes you think of things you shouldn't think of. It makes you lose

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[36] The image of a young man forced to burn his cherished instrument proved a potent one in Irish drama from the period. T.C. Murray would present a remarkably similar tableau in which a young musician's parents pretend to burn his fife in *The Pipe in The Fields* written nearly two decades later. While neither play uses real fire to damage the instrument onstage, both generate drama from the destruction of an object that was both symbolically and monetarily valuable.
[37] At no point in the play do both fiddles appear on stage at the same time. As such, the same fiddle was likely used to "play" the part of two different instruments. The notion of a single instrument representing multiple discrete fiddles onstage is worth ongoing scholarly consideration.

sleep of nights sitting up and playing, and then you can't rise in the morning" (15). John Graeme echoes William John's sentiment when he exclaims, "If your son is to marry my daughter, I'll have none of his music. It's all very well for quality and the like to go strumming on instruments, but it's not meant for a sensible farmer" (28). Running counter to the asserted popularity of rural fiddling in Carleton's 1840 "The Irish Fiddler," the middle-aged men in Mayne's text express their anxiety over the fiddle as a disrespectable pursuit altogether. To William John and John Graeme, the fiddle may be culturally important, but concern over such importance is the privilege of those with means and comfort beyond their own.

Robbie John's fiddle playing inspires lively debate throughout Mayne's text, but stage directions indicate that the character never need *actually play* the instrument onstage. Like Colum's *The Fiddler's House*, *The Turn of the Road* uses recognizable devices to introduce fiddle music without demanding that the instrument be physically played onstage. Robbie John's first entrance in the play is preceded by a stage direction reminiscent of Conn Hourican's offstage fiddling, demanding that *"the strains of a quaint folk-air played on a violin sound faintly from the inner room.*" (3) The offstage music continues until, *"the fiddle ceases suddenly and he* [Robbie John] *comes and stands with it in his hand at the door"* (4). The offstage sounds of fiddling and the onstage appearance of a character holding a fiddle combine, once again, to signify that Robbie John must have been the source of the offstage music. Mayne's two early stage directions set the precedent for the remainder of a play in which Robbie John is repeatedly called a fine musician and connected to the fiddling lifestyle, without ever actually producing instrumental sound onstage. While the decision to keep the protagonist's fiddling offstage could have been a thematic one, or an allusion to Padraic Colum's inspirational work, the choice was almost certainly pragmatic.

Since Mayne was writing for a relatively young Ulster Literary Theatre and its insular Northern players, his knowledge of available company actors would have compelled him to create workarounds that allowed for live fiddle performance without needing to cast a lead actor adept at fiddling. Like Goggin's Conn Hourican in *The Fiddler's House*, Robbie John was created for an ensemble of known performers whose lack of fiddling prowess required Mayne to write stagecraft that compensated for a dearth of actual onstage fiddle play. Stage directions show Mayne accomplished this feat by marrying onstage instrument visibility and audible offstage fiddling. Mayne apparently acknowledges the unlikelihood that the actor playing Robbie John onstage would also perform the offstage fiddle music with his stage-direction preceding the Tramp Fiddler's first entrance onto the stage. Those directions read, "*The strains of a fiddle played by uncertain but unmistakably professional hands sound without"* (7). The explicit description of "uncertain but unmistakably professional hands" playing offstage music provides an apt explanation for how playwrights created the perception of characters like Conn Hourican and Robbie John as talented fiddlers despite those characters never actually playing onstage. In each case, the uncertain—and unseen—professional musician's offstage performance combines with the phenomenal actor's body to create the audience understanding of a stage fiddler.

Unlike the hidden professional hands that played Conn Hourican's fiddle music for him when that actor stepped offstage, Mayne's text reveals its professional fiddling hands in the form of a second minor character. Like "The Fiddler" Gregory's *Twenty-Five*, Mayne's "Tramp Fiddler" character brings fiddle playing—and very little else—to the play in which he appears. Unlike Colum's text which consciously tries to erase the offstage aural fiddler to authenticate the onstage visual one, Mayne's play displays a genuine fiddler alongside its non-fiddling fiddler protagonist. *The Turn of the Road* thus calls for onstage fiddle music performance by what were

almost certainly professional hands, even if those hands did not belong to the character implied in the text's narrative reality.

Stage directions call for the fiddle to be manipulated into making sound in front of the audience's eyes twice in *The Turn of the Road*, but only played once—by the Tramp Fiddler—with any level of nuance. Despite having no explicitly mentioned musical training or aptitude, Robbie John's love interest Jane Granahan one-ups Robbie John as she inexpertly produces onstage sound from the strings of the fiddle. Late in the second act, she "takes down the fiddle, seats herself, and draws the bow across it as it lies in her lap" (30). This sound creation would not have demanded fiddling virtuosity, however, and should not be considered as full cultural production of traditional music. Aside from Jane's experimental plunking, the fiddle is only played onstage when Robbie John's father William John leads the Tramp Fiddler on-stage revealing a "*ragged-looking bearded tramp with an old fiddle tucked under his arm."* The Tramp Fiddler proceeds to accompany a tipsy William John through a full musical number:

> *WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN starts singing two verses of a folk song, the tramp accompanying meanwhile with fiddle, always putting in an extra flourish. The rest all join, even the grandfather beats time with a stick…All suddenly cease singing except the tramp, who goes on playing* (8).

The extended musical number is reminiscent of the lengthy fiddle dances at the end of *An Pósadh* and *Twenty-Five*. As in those plays, Mayne's text demands a performer that can actively play—or convincingly mime—onstage musical performance. While one would expect the music to come from Robbie John, whose fiddling has been commented upon throughout the play's dialogue, it is actually the nameless Tramp Fiddler who plays the tunes. James Story—who

originated the role—was almost-certainly cast from outside of the Ulster Literary Theatre's normal actor stable specifically for his ability to play fiddle in the work.[38]

As with the Fiddler character in *Twenty-Five* the introduction of actual onstage fiddle music in *The Turn of the Road* comes from a character largely external to the plot, played by a performer who need not have had any great acting talent. The Tramp Fiddler role asks its performer to speak on only eight occasions, all within a brief scene in Act 1. The part could thus have been performed by a novice actor because of the role's minimal stagecraft and line memorization demands. Casting a fiddler rather than an actor to play the Tramp Fiddler in his single scene onstage would also allow fiddler James Story to play all of the preceding and subsequent offstage fiddle music that the text's dramatic world attributes to Robbie John. Robbie is never scripted to play his own fiddle while the Tramp Fiddler is on the stage, meaning that the latter character could be relied upon to be available to supply all of Robbie John's fiddle cues. The Ulster Literary Theatre apparently used casting to solve the logistical question of how to create stories using fiddlers without actually needing principal actors adept at playing the instrument.

Robbie John and Conn Hourican carry fiddles onstage. They talk passionately about the instruments, and ultimately choose to give up both stable lifestyles and attachment to fertile land in order to pursue lives of traveling fiddle performance. Neither character, however, is ever scripted to play the instrument onstage, even in plays that feature extended sequences of onstage fiddle performance. The fiddle appears to be an essential element of the national character that Colum and Mayne sought to explore, and one that each play's protagonist interrogates on a

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[38] Multiple facts point to this conclusion as Irish Playography.com records no other work by the performer, in Ulster theatre or elsewhere. It is possible that James Story was a stage name, but if so that stage name was not attached to any other play scripts from the era.

symbolic—rather than musical—level. Incorporating unseen offstage events within a play's fictive world is neither a novelty of this period nor shoddy stagecraft. Countless theatre traditions have enjoyed the expediencies of describing offstage events whose scale, grotesquerie, or grandeur made onstage presentations impossible. Offstage fiddle performance in *The Fiddler's House* and *The Turn of the Road* is perhaps, however, peculiar among these examples, since an actual silent fiddle does appear onstage in these plays, while actual fiddling happens offstage. When galloping horses are described offstage in early modern playmaking it is because they cannot be brought onstage, and no production would consider bringing horse puppets onstage to the sound of live stallions actually galloping in the wings.[39]

The fiddle need not have actually been played on stage to carry its iconic signifying power, so long as offstage fiddle music accompanied onstage fiddle visuals. *The Fiddler's House* and *The Turn of the Road* present texts whose characters debate the loss of the fiddle as an emblem of an imagined pure Irish cultural past even as the texts' stage directions imply discrete staging tactics for overcoming a scarcity of urban actors capable of playing traditional Irish fiddle. Each of the plays addressed in this chapter makes use of the onstage instrument as a physical icon carrying semiotic meanings to be interpreted by theatre audiences. The plays mime, obscure, or disperse the instrument's musical function out of the hands of their narrative fiddlers. They do, however, all demand that fiddle music actually accompany the fiddle that is visibly presented onstage. By 1920, however, the fiddle's iconicity was strong enough for the instrument to function as an effective onstage symbol without making any sound at all.

[39] Except, perhaps, a production staged by spectacle-monger Sir Herbert Beerhohm Tree whose production excesses resonate across theatre history.

A Silent Symbol: The Un-played Instrument in *The Jew's Fiddle*

Richard Hayward and Abram Rish's little-known one act *The Jew's Fiddle* (1920) displays inheritances of the fiddle experiments of early century Irish playwrights. *The Jew's Fiddle* was first produced by the Ulster Theatre during a brief repertory run at the Gaiety Theatre on December 18th 1920.[40] In its closing Saturday performance, it played in a "triple bill" matinee that also included Mayne's *The Turn of the Road.*[41] The play resituates the fiddle narrative more than a decade after peasant plays like *The Fiddler's House* by using the same instrument to address a set of complex intersectional questions befitting the 1920 Ulster for which it was written. While each of the plays previously addressed in this chapter considers ways that the fiddle served as both a stage instrument and a semiotic icon of contested meaning, *The Jew's Fiddle* scripts an instrument that no character even pretends to play onstage: the fiddle produces no sound, onstage or off, in the play.

Written for Belfast audiences, Hayward and Rish's tenement play shows characters using the fiddle as a metaphor to discuss a rapidly shifting, increasingly heterogenous Irish identity. The idea that a Northern-situated company should productively complicate earlier uses of the Irish fiddle seen in Dublin's dramatic movement re-enforces Eugene McNulty's thesis in *The*

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[40] While early texts of the play and reviews credit both Hayward and Rish with writing the play, Abram Rish is an otherwise mysterious figure in Irish playwriting. He is not credited with any other dramatic or literary publication in the era, leading to questions of how this collaboration actually worked. Although it is beyond the aims of this project, a deeper investigation into Abram Rish and appraisal of any of his other theatrical contributions may be particularly timely in light of the deserved attention currently paid to Jewish theatre practice and production in Ireland.

[41] Described above as a fiddle play composed in Ulster, but one which more closely mirrored the work of Abbey playwrights than it does *The Jew's Fiddle*.

Ulster Literary Theatre and the Northern Revival. McNulty posits that re-evaluating Northern work within its original context shows that Ulster writers:

> challenged the hegemonic desires of the Abbey's hierarchy but also sought to perform a new 'horizon of expectation' for Irish nationalism. In their work we can discern a process of 'writing back', with many of their plays responding with powerful and eloquent incisiveness to what they perceived as occlusions and tensions at the hearts of the Abbey's attempts to stage revival. (10)

With their attempts to amplify silenced or occluded elements of Irish life and character that did not fit the narrow national image dramatized by the Abbey's leadership, works by the ULT demand critical re-examination of dramatic conventions and tactics that would otherwise appear intrinsic to Irish theatre in the era. The wholly un-played fiddle of Hayward's text, for example, shows Hayward and Rish interrogating the convention of the Irish stage fiddle as a dramatic object increasingly valued for its symbolic—rather than musical—potential.

Hayward and Rish's play hinges on Mary Connor's attempt to maintain her chaste reputation on the eve of her jealous husband John's return from sea. Mary's planned reunion with John goes awry when her spurned lover Tom Fallon arrives at her door and tries to seduce her before his imminent emigration to Canada. Compounding this issue, Mary reveals an onstage fiddle that she has secretly purchased on installment from local Jewish merchant Isaac Perlemann as a surprise gift for her husband, John. When Perlemann arrives to collect his payment, Mary hides Tom in her bedroom in order to avoid potential gossip. John returns unexpectedly early from his term at sea, so Mary hides Perlemann in the bedroom with Tom to save both her own reputation and Perleman's life from a husband with an apparent history of violent jealousness and intolerance of Jews. The play's conflict grows from Mary's increasingly

desperate attempts to juggle her jealous husband's early arrival home to a two-room tenement apartment also occupied by two characters he would potentially harm.

By 1920 the fiddle had proven itself a fecund site for nationalist ideas of de-Anglicized Irish identity, and audiences would have been accustomed to seeing fiddles crop up on Dublin's professional stages, theatrical and not. Hayward and Rish's treatment of the fiddle, however, shows an object whose social meaning is neither as clear, nor as optimistic, as the metaphor for pristine de-Anglicized Irishness which it enjoyed in the earliest Irish literary revival. The *Jew's Fiddle* diverges from previous fiddle plays both by troubling the instrument's connections to pristine rural performance, and by turning the musical instrument into an un-played symbol. While earlier plays from the century equated the fiddle with de-Anglicized Irish performance and fiscal promise, *The Jew's Fiddle* undercuts these connections through a reappraisal of the fiddle's location, its material value, and its means of transmission. Reading Hayward and Rish's play against Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* allows for a direct comparison of how two Northern Irish plays conceived fourteen years apart presented the object of the fiddle on stage.

The Jew's Fiddle uses an urban setting to disrupt a connection between the instrument and rural Irish character seen in previous fiddle plays. As a result of this metropolitan context, the play also reflects the diversity of urban Belfast through its presentation of an onstage Jewish character whose stage appearance invites examination into is and is not wholly Irish.[42] While *The*

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[42] While not the primary subject of this project, questions of religious representation and anti-Semitism deserve greater attention in scholarship surrounding *The Jew's Fiddle.* Regardless of how Jewish peddler Isaac Perlemann was originally presented onstage, the character risks falling into particular stereotypes because of the business he operates and his relationships to Christian characters. Further, reading the play today shifts the threat Perlemann faces from John's appearance onstage from the realm of farce to that of a very real threat. Characters reference John Connor's history of religiously-grounded dislike for the peddler, so while the play's

Turn of the Road sets its action in "A farm kitchen of the present day…in the County of Down, " for example, *The Jew's Fiddle* happens in "The living-room of Mrs. Connor's tenement on the third floor" likely situated in either Dublin or Belfast.[43] The shift to an urban locale in Hayward and Rish's play destabilizes the mythic correlation between fiddle music and de-Anglicized rural Irish character that had solidified itself through multiple iterations in earlier fiddle plays. Both playwrights also explore the concept of the fiddle as an object defined by economic value or the potential to generate wealth. The fiddle in *The Turn of the Road* is eventually discovered to be "very valuable one and worth fifty poun' or more may be" (42). In that play, the instrument gains value in the eyes of music deniers because of the wealth that it could generate at sale. In *The Jew's Fiddle*, however, Mary questions the worth and quality of the fiddle she is buying from Perlemann by asking whether the instrument needs routine maintenance because of its inexpensive strings. She asks, "I wonder what's wrong with [the strings]—are they too cheap?" (15) Where the fiddle presents an unexpected windfall in the earlier play, it appears to be a questionable investment in the later one. Finally, the transactional transmission of the violin in

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comedic premise hinges on the stakes of what might happen if Perlemann were discovered by John, very little of this comedy can be read as harmless or funny. *The Jew's Fiddle* may ultimately complicate outright representations of anti-Semitism through John's apology to Perlemann at the play's conclusion, but the text still participates in expectations of interactions between Jewish and Christian characters in order to reach that turn-around. Regardless, the play invites questions about the belonging (and lack thereof) of non-Christian characters in drama from an Ireland concerned with recovering and championing "everything most Irish." It is fortunate that these questions are receiving greater attention in the study of Irish drama, and *The Jew's Fiddle* presents a fecund field for considering questions of belonging and identity in Ireland's dramatic and literary canon.

[43] The play never states the tenement's location, but neighbor Mrs. O'Rorke invites Mary to join her at "the pictures" or the music hall, since there was "a good show at the Hippodrome this week" (7). She may be referring here to the Royal Hippodrome Theatre constructed in Belfast in 1907. This attribution is complicated by the existence of the Theatre Royal Hippodrome that operated on Hawkins Street in Dublin prior to its demolition in 1934. Regardless of which Hippodrome is referenced, the play is evidently situated in an urban landscape.

The Jew's Fiddle complicates the romantic—and homogenously Irish—impression of the instrument shown in earlier plays. Robbie John inherits the instrument as a last request of the tramp fiddler to whom he had previously shown kindness in *The Turn of the Road*. Mary, meanwhile, purchases her fiddle on installment from Perlemann, a Jewish peddler. As a Jewish figure narratively ostracized by the play's Christian characters, Perlemann controls the transaction of the fiddle in a way that destabilizes any illusion of the fiddle as an intrinsically rural instrument linked to a homogenous Gaelic past.[44] Where earlier plays by Colum, Gregory, Mayne and Hyde perpetuate the cultural nationalist idea of the fiddle as rural, indigenous, and unexpectedly valuable, *The Jew's Fiddle* shows that the same object may in fact be urban, multi-cultural, and financially unsound.

The fiddle purchased by Mary lends the play its title but leaves questions about whether that un-played instrument *is* a specifically Irish fiddle or a broadly European violin. Mary's neighbor Mrs. O'Rorke calls John "a fine man on the fiddle. Sure even *my* old bones wants to dance when he plays them jigs" (10). The instrument's application in doing Irish cultural work—playing "them jigs"—within the story defines the stage property as a fiddle. Perlemann, however, never calls the instrument a fiddle, instead referring to the instrument as a violin both times that he references it. Stage directions from the play appear to agree with Perlemann and *always call it a violin* rather than a fiddle. When Mary introduces the instrument, stage directions read, "*She goes into the bedroom and returns with a violin case. She opens it and shows the violin inside…"* (9) before "*She lays the case on the table and takes out the violin"* (10). In the

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[44] The play's title itself divorces the fiddle as an instrument from its unambiguous connection to the Irish West and that region's popular Catholic faith. While various cultures across the world hold their own fiddling traditions and regional repertoires, the idea that a fiddle should belong first to a Jewish character is a novel turn for an instrument connected in earlier texts to rural—ostensibly Christian or Catholic—characters.

same sequence she can be seen "*polishing the violin*" and replacing it in its case on the table (10). The violin is moved, taken from its case, examined, and variously manipulated by multiple characters in the leadup to the play's conclusion, but is *never* referred to as a fiddle in the stage directions and *never* used to produce onstage music.

The instrument in *The Jew's Fiddle* being persistently called a "violin" in stage directions may be attributed to the fact that it is never played at all onstage. A fiddle and a violin differ from one another, primarily, in the repertoire that each plays and the stylistic ornamentations that those repertoire demand rather than because of any physical difference between the instruments. Writing on Ireland's Traditional Music for Grove Music Online, Nicholas Carolan explains that although the Irish fiddle "is identical to the modern violin" musicians generally prefer the term fiddle as a signal towards the music that they choose to play. He proceeds to explain fiddle playing as discrete from violin performance because the fiddle is:

> played with a relaxed left-hand grip on the neck of the instrument. Bow strokes are generally short and light, producing a quiet mellow tone. Local styles range from the northern Donegal style (usually quick, with little ornamentation and a different bow stroke for most notes) to the more relaxed and ornamented southern styles such as those of Counties Sligo and Clare (where several notes can be sounded with each movement of the bow). Many contemporary players develop their own personal styles. Special techniques include double stopping and bowed triplets.

If it is only in the stylistic choices of the musician playing the fiddle or violin that the instrument becomes manifestly one or the other, then Mary's un-played fiddle (or violin) contains the potential to be *either* instrument, since it is only through performance that the object becomes

one instrument or the other.[45] The instrument's loose nomenclature and lack of onstage performance point to an object that has lost the music-generating purpose that initially defined it. Instead, the Jew's "fiddle" serves an exclusively symbolic role in the play: it is talked about, but never voiced itself.

Since it is never played onstage, the fiddle serves exclusively symbolic and metaphorical purposes in the play. The instrument invites such musings as Perlemann claiming, "It's the same with everything; with violin strings and with the great strings of the world. In these days the heart-strings of humanity are broken—the music of the world is out of tune" (16). He explicitly likens the fiddle to a world out of harmony in 1920 in the play's most explicit metaphor, but Mary and Mrs. O'Rorke map their own meanings onto an un-played instrument when talking about the fiddle playing "them jigs." Nearly two decades after Hyde's *An Pósadh* and Gregory's *Twenty-Five* scripted lengthy fiddle performances into the conclusions of one-act plays for which such live music seemed auxiliary to plot, Hayward and Rish presented an explicitly silent fiddle—or violin—as a vehicle for plot advancement and extended metaphor. The silent instrument in the play holds the potential to be either a fiddle or violin, but ultimately becomes a stage property. Disconnected from the music it plays, the object is a plot vehicle—undervalued, misunderstood, and silent.

[45] Some performers and scholars will dispute this claim, focusing on the lower bridge heights, fine-tuning machines, and drone string tunings that many fiddlers favor on their instruments. There is, however, no hard and fast distinction for physically distinguishing physically distinguishing the fiddle from the violin.

Conclusions and Echoes

While playwrights may have shared an understanding of the fiddle's mythic connection to Ireland's national character, the early twentieth century saw discrete approaches to putting that instrument onstage. It would be an error to assume that these approaches progressed towards a more perfect onstage representation of the fiddle, but one can read the appearance of fiddles in early texts and productions as informing the instrument's appearance in later plays that recycled or reimagined fiddler characters and fiddling tropes. Stage directions from *An Pósadh* and *Twenty-Five* call for extended fiddling scenes that consciously present live, onstage fiddle performance in two of the Celtic revival's earliest dramatic experiments. Onstage fiddle performances in those plays approximate social dances in homes and halls in ways that celebrated and re-enforced of Ireland's unique cultural performances. *The Fiddler's House* and *The Turn of the Road* share an interest in showing the fiddle as an expression of national character but do so without demanding that the fiddle be performed by narrative fiddlers on stage. Those fiddles make music within the plays but do so primarily offstage and almost certainly in the hands of different players than their narratives imply. While the fiddle's music does appear in both plays, the corporeal object of the fiddle is less important as a musical instrument than it is as a *symbolic icon* that encourages characters to discuss values and priorities commonly attached to the un-colonized Irish fiddlers conventionally thought to have played the instrument across Ireland's past. As a wholly symbolic object, the fiddle in *The Jew's Fiddle* is extensively discussed in metaphorical terms, but un-played both on and offstage. The instrument's conspicuous silence invites consideration of how—or whether—un-played instruments differ from other stage properties.

The five plays discussed in this chapter represent a curated corner of a particular moment in a specific nation's emergent theatre. Despite their esotericism, they invite broader questions and practical applications for unpacking how musical instruments can work—and have historically worked—in dramatic performance. As objects presented onstage, musical instruments cannot escape semiotic interpretation by audiences conditioned to consider every element of production as essential to an overall purpose or message. Instruments adhere to Bogatrev's assertion that "the stage radically transforms all object and bodies defined within it, bestowing upon them an overriding signifying power which they lack…in their normal function" (ibid). Dublin theatre devotee and critic Joseph Holloway's remarks that a country fiddler was "Irish in sentiment" and that such an instrument would be useful for a playwright desiring to show "everything most Irish" to an audience that was "tremendously interested in every expression of national character" reflects the general awareness within the Irish Dramatic Movement that the fiddle could—and did—carry impactful signifying power within a new national theatre movement (Sternlicht 22).

The story of the Irish fiddle on dramatic stages between 1902 and 1920 is one of playwrights—consciously or not—negotiating and deploying the fiddle's overwhelming onstage signifying power in ways that either supplemented or replaced the instrument's original musical function. While Hyde and Gregory's experiments attempted to replicate the sort of dances that Carleton saw occurring at nineteenth century house parties, the placement of those dances in plays about imperiled peasant protagonists added new meanings and significance to the dramatic fiddle that the non-dramatic fiddle may never have carried. By the writing of *The Jew's Fiddle* in 1920, the particular significances attached to the Irish fiddle both on and beyond dramatic stages

appear to have been sufficiently robust to buoy and center a plot that never shows the fiddle actually being played.

A lesson to practitioners emerges from reading the fiddle across plays that appear to have been in conversation with one another: the traditional musical instrument brought onto a dramatic stage not only joins a semiotic conversation with that instrument's offstage functions, but also necessarily participates in a repertory with every other dramatic iteration of the instrument in plays that preceded it. This was likely literally true when *The Jew's Fiddle* premiered in Dublin in a 1920 repertory alongside *The Turn of the Road* during a touring visit by the Ulster Theatre. In that repertory run, the same physical fiddle would likely have been played as an instrument in Mayne's play and carried around as a property in Hayward and Rish's offering. Audience members attending both plays would have seen a single instrument discussed as a fiddle and also heard "played" by Robbie John offstage in *The Turn of the Road* before seeing the instrument actually played onstage by that play's Tramp Fiddler. They would have then seen the same instrument presented onstage but never voiced at all in *The Jews Fiddle*. Was an audience member's experience hearing what appears to have been the same onstage fiddle played in one play enough to mask the silence of the instrument in the other? Or did the proximity of the two performances pull meaningful focus towards the fiddle's silence in *The Jew's Fiddle?* Even when un-played, the instrument presented within a dramatic play carries the signifying power that instrument held in previous dramatic performance for any audience member familiar with either the repertoire of other plays using that instrument or the social contexts in which the instrument is normally performed. Instrumental repertories cannot be ignored by scholars and theatre-makers seeking to parse the meanings that historical texts made for their original audiences.

Focusing on how a single object drives stage directions within a cluster of plays allows for a clearer picture of how staging choices reflect the priorities of a largely literary Irish theatre. No less important, a laser focus on a single instrument exhorts both scholars and theatre-makers to more consciously attend to those material objects that frequently fall victim to design interventions or resource shortages. The fiddle *meant* onstage for early twentieth-century Irish playwrights in both Dublin and Belfast: it meant profoundly enough to be repeatedly placed onstage as a physical representation of values that those theatre movements espoused. A production that substitutes a guitar for the fiddle played at the conclusion of *Twenty-Five* or that leaves an empty fiddle case in place of an actual instrument in *The Jew's Fiddle* may contend that it has met the brief demanded by the playwright. The choice would be understandable as theatre companies must negotiate budgetary restriction and casting difficulties in any production. These substitutions, however, threaten to flatten out the signifying systems of the original productions by mistakenly equating highly specific music and musical instruments with the more general idea of traditional music—or broader still—music. With increased attention to the details of traditional musical instruments onstage comes a more nuanced ability to consider what is lost or compromised in an absent fiddle, and whether that object is not more valuable to the story told than previously understood.

The two 2018 Abbey Theatre productions with which this chapter began both demonstrate inheritances from the plays that staged the fiddle for consumption by early twentieth-century Irish audiences. Graham McLaren's *Jimmy's Hall* adaptation scripts traditional music performance with a similar aim to that of the experiments of Hyde, Gregory, and Mayne's earlier plays: using onstage fiddle performance to situate the play within an experience of pristine Irishness by dramatizing a replication of cultural performance that normally occurs

outside of the playhouse. The lively musical performances in that production help to transport modern Dublin audiences to County Leitrim during a specific moment in Ireland's twentieth-century in a practice not unlike the earliest twentieth-century experiments immersing Dublin audiences within rural dance culture from Ireland's West. By combining the performance of culturally important traditional music with a modern re-imagining or events from Ireland's history, McLaren's production buttresses the play's political ideology through interwoven live fiddle music that is both unimpeachably Irish and culturally specific.

Actor Peter Coonan's mimed fiddling in Caitríona McLaughlin's *On Raftery's Hill* production displays clear signs of the same dramaturgical needs that drove non-fiddler fiddle performance in Colum's *The Fiddler's House*. Carr's dark take on the Irish peasant play genre would not meet genre expectations if it did not hold up the fiddle as a symbol of rural Irish character—even if that rural Irish character demands re-evaluation by play's end. By casting a non-musician actor in the fiddler role, McLaughlin's production perpetuates a second, vestigial, inheritance from early twentieth-century Irish play-making: the symbolic stage-fiddler that need not actually fiddle at all. Like *The Jew's Fiddle* from nearly a century earlier, McLaughlin's production of *On Raftery's Hill* challenges a notion of pristine or monolithic Irishness, giving voice to oft-silenced elements of Irish life while also silencing an instrument embedded in nationalist drama of the early twentieth-century.

Played or not, the Irish fiddle was a symbolic instrument when it appeared on dramatic stages one-hundred years ago. It continues to be one now. Performances like Coonan's and texts like *The Jew's Fiddle* leave a nagging question with which to contend: is a fiddle truly an instrument if it is never played? Is it a stage property? Whether symbol, instrument, prop, or a combination thereof, the fiddle continues to symbolically haunt twenty-first century Irish drama.

The next chapter addresses how traditional Irish instruments can be seen troubling the ease with which scholars and practitioners define stage properties by turning its attention to woodwind instruments in early twentieth-century drama.

CHAPTER FOUR: Wooden Flutes and Animating Breath: Constructing the Supernatural and Presenting the Invisible in Dublin Drama

In the 1904 *Journal of the Irish Folk Song* Society, E.J. McKean reviewed "Broadsheets and Ballads: An Orange Broadsheet" with a particular focus on the now famous ballad "The Ould Orange Flute." In that review, McKean describes "The Ould Orange Flute" as warranting "inclusion in some collection of ballads" (14). The song relates the story of a flute that refuses to play along with a Protestant owner who converts to Catholicism. Instead, the flute appears to develop a mind of its own from having been played for years by Orangeman Bob Williamson (Cooper 70). When Williamson changes his religion, the flute does not. Comedy ensues when Bob takes the flute to play in the Catholic choir. The ballad lyrics describe how:

> He went with his old flute to play for the Mass,
>
> And the instrument shivered, and sighed: "Oh, alas!"
>
> And blow as he would, though it made a great noise,
>
> The flute would play only 'The Protestant Boys.[46]

In this stanza, the flute gains the ability to speak and play music of its own choosing. It uses its newfound agency to confound its human owner. From the moment the instrument shivers and sighs into life, it behaves like a human character rather than a musical instrument. McKean's review assumes a measure of humanity in the instruments as the writer praises the "indominable courage of the old flute, its outspoken rebuke of its master, its firm endurance of persecution" in language that describes the flute's qualities as if they belonged to a living person (14). The ballad's political satire and "comedy of a droll and whimsical order" have made it an enduringly

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[46] These lyrics are taken from *Irish Street Ballads* compiled and published by Colm O'Lochlainn in 1939. O'Lochlainn's text alters the title's spelling to become "The Old Orange Flute" but otherwise provides a stable text for analysis of how the lyrics likely appeared at the turn of the twentieth century. All subsequent quotations of the ballad also use O'Lochlainn's version.

popular performance piece for both Catholic and Protestant performers. The supernatural miracle by which an inanimate flute suddenly comes to life in the hands of its player is, surprisingly, never scrutinized in this early review of the ballad: the ballad and its reviewers take for granted that a flute might assume sentience at any moment. Reviewers and balladeers choose instead to focus on the events that follow the instrument's animation, particularly dwelling on its unwillingness to play "papish music." The ballad concludes with a final stanza describing a fitting end for a supernatural flute:

> So the old flute was doomed and its fate was pathetic,
> 'Twas fastened and burned at the stake as heretic,
> While the flames roared around it they heard a strange noise-
> 'Twas the old flute still whistling 'The Protestant Boys. (101)

In the end, the flute is burned at the stake in a comical tableau parodying inquisitional witch trials that punished supernatural or heretical beliefs.[47] While there is much to be made of the ballad's satirical lyrics and ongoing performance tradition across political lines, this project considers how "The Ould Orange Flute" both reflects and informs an unexamined trend in how breath-operated musical instruments have appeared within Irish drama. The idea that a woodwind instrument might become mysteriously animated after being played by a human musician represents a central pathway to understanding how onstage ITM instruments make and reflect cultural meanings from outside of playhouses. Spiritual plays from early twentieth-century Ireland repeatedly dramatize characters breathing into lifeless wooden flutes in ways that endow those instruments with unexplainable life or magic.

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[47] Queen Mary I of England may provide further inspiration for this satire as that ruler famously burned over three-hundred predominantly Protestant religious dissenters during the Marian persecutions of the 1550s.

The mysteriously animated flute's appearance in a popular supernatural ballad from the turn of the twentieth century coincides its emergence in drama from the era. Early plays of the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey often sought to present the supernatural and invisible in performance. The flute provided a welcome staging technique for resource-limited theatre companies seeking to present supernatural and invisible elements onstage. Multiple plays presenting onstage flute performance emerged alongside the cluster of mythic-national fiddle plays that populated early twentieth-century Dublin stages: W.B. Yeats & Lady Gregory's *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1907), George Fitzmaurice's *The Dandy Dolls* (1908), and T.C. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* (1927) were each conceived in the decades between 1907 and 1927. Multiple Irish playwrights near the beginning of the twentieth century explored the flute's thematic resonances and dramatic possibilities within both Irish culture and the plays of its emerging national drama.

In the summer of 1907, Lady Gregory handwrote the appearance of an Irish flute into a revision on which she had been collaborating with W.B. Yeats. Starting from Lady Gregory's intervention in the process that turned *Where there is Nothing* (1902) into *The Unicorn from the Stars*, woodwind instruments provided a tool for representing the sacred and the supernatural on Dublin stages for decades to come. The flute, as a concretely stageable object, came to both present and construct supernatural themes and characters when performed within plays. Whether musically underscoring discussions of magic or helping to make supernatural characters visible to audiences, flutes contributed to the stageability of spirits and apparitions on Irish stages.

Irish Woodwind Instruments

Flutes were deeply intertwined with the supernatural on and off dramatic stages in early twentieth-century Ireland. Understanding the meanings that woodwind instruments created on

theatre stages requires attention to the instruments' culturally specific uses in non-dramatic contexts, their uniquely wooden materiality, and their breath-based operation. The convergence of the instrument's importance in narrative and ritual tradition, combined with the specific phenomenological properties of woodwind instruments, made those objects persistent tools for representing the otherwise invisible on early century Dublin stages.

Due to its concern with Irish Traditional Music (ITM) instruments on dramatic stages, this chapter confines itself to a select and specific notion both of the woodwind family in general and of the flute in particular. While woodwind instruments and flutes enjoy popularity in amateur and professional orchestral performances, the flute with which this chapter deals is likely a less familiar object to a non-Irish audience. Like orchestral flutes, those played in ITM are "hand-held aerophones of long, thin, tubular design…held transversely [horizontally]…and blown across the embouchure-hole, with the lower lip resting on the lip-plate" (Johnston 36). Unlike more recognizable concert flutes, however, the flute played in ITM is generally constructed from Irish blackwood rather than from any sort of metal. The instrument is also generally un-keyed, making it less mechanically complex than the metal Boehm flute commonly played in orchestral music.[48] The Irish blackwood flute developed into a recognizable version of its current self in the end of the seventeenth century, and enjoyed popularity throughout the twentieth-century ITM revival.

The fife, which is referenced with some regularity in the plays under consideration, is a second form of transverse flute that was commonly played in Ireland during the era in which this

[48] This rule is proved by its exceptions as contemporary ITM players have increasingly chosen to adapt instruments to fit the demands of new key signatures and ranges of notes within the living musical tradition. These adaptations include the addition of metal keys whose materiality narrows the gap distinguishing metal Boehm flutes from wooden flutes.

chapter's plays emerged. While the fife is constructed of the same materials as the blackwood flute, it is considerably shorter in length, higher in pitch, and more frequently used in processions and military bands than in dance music accompaniment. Both the blackwood fife and the blackwood flute were commercially attainable in the leadup to the Irish dramatic revival, though Ríonach Uí Ógáin notes that small blackwood flutes "largely replaced the fife in the course of the nineteenth century" (135). The fife was not, however, wholly superseded by the blackwood flute, but remained popular at "football matches, meetings and fairs" in the south and west of Ireland into the 1930s (Johnston 37). The tin whistle or penny whistle is a third type of mouth-blown woodwind instrument connected to ITM. Although whistles remain recognizable fixtures of ITM performance, they fall outside of this chapter's concerns because of their metallic materiality and sparse appearances in plays from the era.[49] When this chapter discusses "woodwind instruments" or "woodwinds," it refers to flutes and fifes constructed from Irish wood and played transversely by invisible human breath passed across an embouchure hole.

Traditional woodwind instrumental performance held literary, ritualistic, and folkloric connections to magic and the supernatural in and beyond Ireland prior to the flute's turn on that nation's early twentieth-century dramatic stages. The flute had famously represented both magic and confrontations between incompatible belief systems in stories crafted for the stage and the street in the century leading up to the vogue in Irish flute plays. London's Elizabethan stage repeatedly referenced onstage flute performance. Shakespeare references pipes and pipers playing windblown instruments onstage in *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) and *Othello* (1604) as well as a stage direction in which "*Ariel plays the tune on a tabour*

[49] Whistles belong to the fipple flute family—played by passing air through the mouthpiece of a tubular aerophone that is held straight in front of the performer (like a recorder)—and are generally constructed of metal rather than hardwood.

and pipe" in *The Tempest* (III.2.121). The only Shakespearean stage direction calling for a woodwind instrument to be played by a named characters comes fittingly comes from Ariel: *The Tempest's* mysterious spirit character. Neither was the tradition of playing woodwind music in supernatural plays unique to English-speaking stages. In 1791, Mozart premiered *The Magic Flute*: an opera which was widely read as representing conflict between Roman Catholicism and Mozart's own Masonic beliefs. In that play, a supernatural flute grants the protagonist power to create joy, and in one instance, summon animals around him. Irish audiences would have been well aware of the magical flute as a recognizable narrative trope in ballads like "The Ould Orange Flute" during Dublin's dramatic revival and would have had little trouble seeing examples of woodwind performances connected with spirituality in other canonical drama.[50]

The cultural understanding of a flute as a supernatural or religious object was not only confined to the narratives that people *consumed* during the early years of Ireland's twentieth century, but also appeared in the rituals and celebrations that many *practiced* in the era. Flutes, fifes and pipes contributed to ritual performances that straddled belief systems for centuries prior to their appearance on dramatic stages. Festival celebrations in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland frequently used traditional instrument performance in practices that blended Catholic and pre-Catholic traditions. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin asserts that traditional music-making in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ireland followed the agricultural year's calendar, as "patron days were celebrated with music and dancing as well as by various religious rituals and superstitions" (25). Flute performance specifically comprised one essential element of ritual

[50] While "The Ould Orange Flute" may have begun as an Orange song, it was apparently also popular in the Republic by 1925, when a review of H. Richard Hayward's *Ulster Songs and Ballads* appeared in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*. The song's ability to poke fun at both sides of Ireland's cultural, religious, and political divides is frequently credited for the ballad's enduring popularity.

practice within the matrices of belief for rural communities. Ríonach Uí Ógáin contributes an example of how woodwind instruments have specifically factored into the calendar of sacred and supernatural rituals by explaining how, “Fifes and small flutes are also associated with aspects of calendar customs such as the tradition of the Wren Boys' procession in Dingle in county Kerry, an occasion when fife and drum bands march around this small town for several hours” (135). Whether accompanying dancing, marching, or other festive events, woodwind instruments accompanied ritual practices outside of playhouses in ways with which early century playwrights and their audiences would have been familiar. The flute or fife was thus an available tool for underscoring magic and the unexplainable on early twentieth century stages since communal practices outside of the playhouse already used woodwind instruments to accompany rituals and celebrations linked to the supernatural or unknowable.

The Wooden Flute: Materiality and Folklore

The wooden materiality of ITM woodwind instruments provides a clear explanation for those instruments’ popularity in practices and stories connected to the supernatural. The Irish blackwood flute, specifically, carries a particular connection to Irish spiritual or supernatural belief at least partially because of the materials from which it is constructed. Irish woodwind instruments live hospitably in supernatural stories both because of what the instrument are *made from* and, particularly, because of what they are *made without*. In contrast with the Boehm orchestral flute, the cross-blown wooden flute traditionally used in ITM is comprised of almost no metal. Though modern builders and players have retrofitted padded metal keys to produce additional sharp and flat notes, early twentieth-century versions of the instrument consisted of three wooden sections that fitted together to form the instrument (Shields). The dearth of metal in

flute construction is essential to its use in supernatural stories since Irish folk stories recite how metals and other fabricated mineral materials are anathema to spirits. Henry Glassie notes how, in Ireland, “Iron and steel, it is said, defend people against fairies and ghosts. When traveling at night, men once stuck steel straight pins in their lapels to protect themselves” (333). Wooden flutes are thus logical musical instruments to appear in twentieth-century plays presenting the spiritual or supernatural onstage since those instruments possess few or no metal parts in comparison with highly metallic ITM instruments like tin whistles, or accordions.

Beyond their visible lack of metal parts, blackwood flutes’ conspicuously wooden materiality connects them to a tradition of objects potentially harvested from magical earth. Irish wood frequently appears as an interface between mortal and supernatural characters in folktales. Glassie’s *The Stars of Ballymenone* chronicles several examples of living folk belief collected from storytellers living during the decades that this chapter’s flute plays were first conceived. In that work, storyteller Hugh Nolan explains how locals were careful never to build on land considered to be fairy pads or pathways. Glassie relates how, “Mrs. Cutler’s great-uncle was warned [not to build on magical land], but he built anyway, and the wreckage of his house made a convincing trace” (306). Neither was ruin confined to using fairy land itself, as ill fortune attended the use of any wood that grew from fairy pads or mounds. Storyteller Ellen Cutler relates how,

> Mr. and Mrs. Owens told him that no one should cut a lone fairy bush or a tree of the forth. When Billy Cutler was butchering a pig for the market, he needed a stick to spread the carcass for draining. Ellen warned him not to cut the stick from the forth, but he did, and when he put the stick in the pig, its hams split. The ruined hams, a sign to him, were

> confirmation for her, and the event became the firm foundation for Mrs. Cutler's belief. (306)

In this example, the wood from the fairy pad possesses unexpected qualities that ruin Billy Cutler's ham. Peter Flannigan caps the collections of tales about humans trespassing on fairy land with the clear injunction: "You weren't supposed to touch a tree or a branch in the fourth [a known fairy pad]."

Wood harvested from fairy properties holds unexpected and unpredictable qualities in *The Stars of Ballymenone*, but a connection to specific fairy pads is only one of many connections linking wood to the supernatural in folk beliefs within and beyond Ireland. Writing on material performance, Claudia Orenstein notes how multiple cultures view all manner of material as "providing sites for hosting a world of passing beings: divine, demonic, or the spirits of the deceased" in ways that collapse dichotomies between the living and the dead (3). In Glassie's collected stories, wood appears as a particularly potent site for hosting the world of passing beings that Orenstein proposes, since something of the fairies themselves appears imbued in the material wood that grows from their land. The repeated appearance of wooden flutes in twentieth-century plays about the supernatural invites a reading of wooden instruments as potential hosts for unexpected spirits—or animation—dispersed through human actors' breath.

Anima, Animation and Breath

On a richly musical Irish national stage, woodwind flutes and fifes came to represent narrative spirits and animation even as their phenomenological operation by human breath set them apart from other musical instruments and properties used in plays. *The Unicorn from the Stars, The Dandy Dolls,* and *The Pipe in the Fields* share a broad swathe of formal qualities and

thematic concerns, among them a concern with spirits and the supernatural. This is not to say that they are all ghost stories. Rather, each of the plays grapples with the notion of the "spirit" as defined in the OED to mean "The animating or vital principle in man (and animals); that which gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements; the breath of life." Flutes are thus intrinsically 'spiritual' instruments because of their animation by the invisible breath of a living performer. Not coincidentally, flutes and woodwind instruments persistently populate stories, songs, plays, and rituals dealing with the spiritual, supernatural, and invisible elements of life.

The same flutes—written into stage directions and character dialogue— that once represented the unseeable on early twentieth-century Irish stages now provide modern scholars with thought-provoking examples of stage objects with which performers interact *primarily through their breath rather than their hands.*[51] Woodwind instruments' breath-based performance demands a reconsideration of how to study stage objects according to *how they are physically operated* rather than in terms of how they are culturally situated outside of dramatic performance. While this project's first chapter addressed fiddles as instruments that need not have been played to carry signifying power for audiences, Irish woodwind instruments appearing in early twentieth-century plays make meaning precisely because of the way that they are played upon by human breath.

[51] Virtuosic woodwind performance requires the use of hands and fingers to create distinct notes, but a performer can make sound—and even music—using breath alone. Conversely, no flute or fife can consistently make noise without being blown.

The Unicorn from the Stars: A Borrowed Convention to Show the Invisible

Despite its widespread use in broadside, opera, and festival contexts, the natively Irish flute did not clearly signal the supernatural on Ireland's twentieth-century dramatic stages until Lady Gregory's hand-written revision of an early work by W.B. Yeats, Douglas Hyde, and herself. Based on a sprawling five-act text entitled *Where There is Nothing, The Unicorn from the Stars* (1907) sheds much of the original play's episodic plot in favor of a tight three-act structure.[52] While Yeats still enjoys prominent—if not exclusive—recognition as the play's author, he himself termed the work "a play almost wholly [Gregory's] in handiwork, in which I can yet read… an artistic aim which seems a part of my world" (Worth 37). The preface to Yeats's *Plays* (1922) further clarifies the division of the two playwrights' collaborative labor by noting, "To the best of my belief, "The Unicorn from the Stars," but for the fable and chief character, is wholly her work" (vii).[53] In consideration of these facts, the remainder of this chapter attributes *Unicorn* to Gregory alone.

In Gregory's adaptation of *Unicorn,* coachbuilder Martin Hearne becomes an unlikely revolutionary after experiencing a series of inexplicable religious images during fainting spells. Martin's bouts of falling sickness wholly incapacitate his physical body, causing him to experience visions that encourage him to build a glorious coach of gold. In the play's first act,

[52] That adaptive process has been exhaustively-chronicled in both Katharine Worth's 1987 edition of both plays for Catholic University Press and Wim Van Mierlo's *Where There is Nothing and The Unicorn from the Stars Manuscript Materials* (2012) for Cornell University Press. Both editions trace how Gregory initially took dictation for Yeats's revised plot before eventually assuming a primary artistic role and writing the bulk of the new play herself.
[53] It is jarring, though perhaps unsurprising in light of the playwrights' respective attitudes towards publication, that Yeats continues to receive shared billing or exclusive credit for the composition of *The Unicorn from the Stars*. It is my hope that the re-evaluation of Lady Gregory's major role in *Unicorn* may help to move scholarship to a more complete appreciation of her impact on early plays of the Irish Literary theatre and the Abbey.

Martin wakes from a trance determined to leave his livelihood in his father's coachbuilding workshop. He is immediately met by Johnny Bocach and a crew of beggars who rob him. Rather than demanding his money back, Martin invites the robbers to a dinner. When they arrive, drunk, from the offstage dinner, the beggars convince themselves that Martin must be revolutionary leader Johnny Gibbons returned from "over the sea" (142). In the following scene, the audience learns that the entire parish has been set to rioting and drunkenness at the suggestion of Johnny Bocach and Martin's uncle Andrew. Martin concludes the second act by burning down his family's home and workshop. The third act uses character dialogue to explain how the offstage chaos of the previous night led to Martin's apparent death. His new friends and followers grieve a body that they do not realize is entranced rather than dead. Martin eventually awakens but is apprehended and shot to death by constables sent to put down the riots of the previous night.

A highly spiritual play, *Unicorn* contemplates the place of the soul or spirit within the earthly realm. The play takes the position that the visions Martin experiences in his trances are heaven-sent messages rather than conventional dreams. Traveling priest Father John mourns at Martin's death that "we can never know where that vision came from…the wise Bishops would have known" (163). Martin's mysterious visions are variously validated and discredited by his father Thomas, and his uncle Andrew. Thomas presents an overly pragmatic strawman to Martin's anarchic passions throughout the play, as he dismisses Martin's fits as medical maladies rather than supernatural events. Martin's trances centralize the importance of the invisible and unknowable within the play. The nature of these fits and the visions that Martin experiences when his spirit has left his body places the play firmly within the world of supernaturally inflected realism that often populated Dublin stages at the time.

Lady Gregory addresses questions of faith and belief through a complex interplay of Thomas's agnostic pragmatism, Father John's Catholicism, and Martin's spirituality. Adding to these matrices of belief, Martin's uncle Andrew introduces Ireland's spiritual inheritance into the text through his onstage flute performance. Andrew supports Martin throughout the play because both characters follow belief systems that transcend their workaday reality. Important for this study, both men associate the unseen worlds of their invisible beliefs in terms of the music accompanying those beliefs. When Martin bemoans that his father Thomas has "never heard the laughter and the music beyond," Andrew responds, "He has not, nor the music of my own *little flute* [Emphasis Mine]. I have it hidden in the thatch outside" (352). Martin reveals the heavenly space his disembodied soul visited "beyond" as one full of music, and Andrew immediately counters by introducing his own flute music. Although Andrew's equating of the celestial music Martin heard with that of his own flute-playing feels jarring in their first conversation, the connection pays off late in the second act, when the play's stage directions explicitly link Andrew's flute to Ireland's heritage of supernatural belief.

Unicorn proposes belief in Ireland's invisible pre-Christian spirituality as an alternative to everyday life in an argument that is underscored by woodwind music performance The play shows Irish folk belief in a positive light, then links such supernatural belief with Andrew Hearne's flute performances. During a heated confrontation with his brother Thomas, Andrew asks:

> What did I want with a trade? I got a sight of the fairy gold one time in the mountains. I would have found it again and brought riches from it but for you keeping me so close to work…You never had respect for the ancient ways. It is after mother you take it, that was too soft and too lumpish, having too much English in her blood. (277)

For Andrew, the invisible world of fairies and Ireland's "ancient ways" is every bit as real as religious visions are to Martin. The flute is not coincidental to Andrew's belief in the fairies, but rather appears onstage whenever he is asserting the importance of Ireland's supernatural fairy traditions. The play calls for Andrew to cap his diatribe against Thomas with the stage direction "*He begins to play his flute*" (277). The blackwood flute emerges physically on stage for the first time in the climactic moment at which Andrew asserts his belief in Ireland's folk spirituality. Equally important, Andrew is scripted to actually *play* his little flute onstage in the moment, creating an aural layering of woodwind music that augments his testimony affirming Ireland's pre-Anglicized folk belief. The fact that the supernatural world enters the play's narrative fiction in the same moment that the stage direction calls for the first onstage flute performance within the work could be taken as coincidental if the play were not so invested in connections between invisible forces, the supernatural, and woodwind musical performance.

Woodwind instruments appeared repeatedly in folklore from Ireland's non-Christian heritages well into the twentieth century, and the flute specifically factored into multiple supernatural stories that Gregory collected herself. Stories published in Gregory's *Visions & Beliefs in the West of Ireland* specifically connect Ireland's spirits and ghost stories with flute performance in ways that explain the playwright's marginal addition of the flute to *The Unicorn from the Stars*. In the "Appearances" section of *Visions & Beliefs*, Gregory recounts a tale told by a "half-crazed" man who claimed to "hear [Sidhe] singing and making music all the time, and one of them's after bringing out *a little flute* [Emphasis Mine], and it's on it he's playing" (111).[54] In this tale, fairies are directly linked to flute performance as they would eventually be in

[54] Though *Visions & Beliefs* was first published in 1920, the story would have been collected much earlier in Gregory's folklore work, and almost certainly before working on *Unicorn*. Gregory prefaces this story by explaining that, "when I had begun my search for folklore, the

Andrew's story in *Unicorn from the Stars*. The description of Andrew's "little flute" in *Unicorn* appears a verbatim borrowing and dramatization of the "little flute" played by the Sidhe in the collected oral story. In the tale, it is a fairy rather than the spectator that plays the instrument, but the overlap in language drawing together fairies and flutes remains. Having pulled language and convention from stories that people were telling outside of the playhouse, Lady Gregory could rely on the flute conjuring images of the supernatural or invisible on stage because it already did so offstage.

Borrowed from Ireland's folk and fairy tales, the flute provided a desirable convention for staging the invisible, since early-century playwrights' imagination for supernatural and miraculous themes from the nation's past persistently outstripped the theatre's ability to stage such scenes. Joyce Flynn explains how, to make the invisible seen onstage, playwrights "employed one method of suggesting the invisible world, the *less than satisfactory* [Emphasis Mine] method of making a member of that world visible on the stage" (259). Presenting the unseen or un-seeable onstage was evidently a priority for playwrights mining Ireland's folk and religious inheritances for a new and distinctly Irish theatre form. Pragmatic questions of how to present the invisible for visual consumption on resource-limited stages vexed early Abbey playmakers. Flynn notes that that practical concerns faced those playwrights who sought to stage the invisible, since:

> The actual stage presentation of the occult or of invisible forces proved somewhat problematical to Yeats and Gregory in their early efforts: though such nineteenth-century stage devices as the scruto and transparent gauze might provide satisfactory gliding

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first to tell me he himself had seen the Sidhe was an old, perhaps half-crazed man I will call Michael Barrett."

> motion and indistinctness respectively for apparitions by otherworldly beings, aesthetic, financial and spatial considerations precluded the playwrights of the Irish Literary Theatre and later the Abbey from reliance on such devices. (251)

Faced with “aesthetic, financial and spatial” restrictions to visually presenting figures from invisible other worlds, Gregory turned away from strictly visual representations of the un-seeable in favor of a layered aural-visual presentation of the supernatural. Whether an intentional intervention into past experiments, or a fortunate biproduct of her folklore collections, the addition of the stage flute to *The Unicorn from the Stars*, provided a model for layering aural and visual elements to create more theatrically interesting stage versions of invisible or supernatural characters and events.

Gregory’s addition of the flute to primarily visual representations of the supernatural helped to expand the imaginative capacity of a Dublin theatrical movement whose peasant-play designs frequently favored scrupulous reproductions of domestic settings. Recent scholarship in actor-musicianship affirms musical instruments’ ability to heighten audience experiences of dramatic performances. As Jeremy Harrison explains, the addition of musical instrument performances to dramatic texts provides “a way of reinforcing meaning in the moment, of creating a further layer of meaning” (Musgrave 237). Practitioners today alternately use language of “heightening” text or movement through music that specifically counterpoints or reinforces visual design. In what may now seem an obvious leap to anyone accustomed to consuming films from horror or suspense genres, onstage instrumental sound appears to have struck Lady Gregory as a tool for heightening the impact of otherworldly elements when visual representation alone failed to capture their wonder of strangeness.

The flute in Gregory's play borrows from folkloric sources to present the invisible world of traditional folk belief by using the instrument's aural and visual signifying power.[55] Andrew's encounter with the fairies is defined in terms of the music from his flute, just as Martin's celestial visions center around the music from beyond. The layered representation of the invisible—the aural music and the visual actor playing it—sets off the supernatural from the rest of the text of *Unicorn* since musical instrument performances only occur during moments of spiritual or supernatural intervention in the play. Andrew references the flute in discussing the mysteries that his brother Thomas cannot see, while the actor playing Andrew is instructed to play the flute to heighten the supernatural reference to fairies that the stage could not depict visually. With the marginal addition of Andrew's flute to *Unicorn*, Gregory transplanted a convention observed in her folklore collecting to Dublin stages in a way that obviated many issues with visibly displaying the spectacular and otherworldly for theatre audiences. This particular tactic likely worked for Gregory because a common understanding linking flutes to the supernatural existed for both the playwright and her audience.

The stage flute in *Unicorn* reflects a state of play in which musical instrument performance underscored Irish rituals and folk belief outside the playhouse. Lady Gregory introduced the flute into *Unicorn* in an apparent attempt to create a hybridized aural and visual presentation of the invisible within the play. Far from the last word on flutes on Irish dramatic stages, *The Unicorn from the Stars* set a precedent for Irish traditional woodwind music accompanying supernatural events on stage that other playwrights would apply within their own

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[55] This observation on musical instruments and ritual spirituality in theatre draws on a wealth of such analysis outside of the theatre. Much useful work exists elaborating on music's connection to religion, superstition, and ritual across Ireland's history. Breandán Ó Madagáin, for examples, calls the use of song or music to communicate with the supernatural one of "the universals of ethnomusicology."

works. George Fitzmaurice's unheralded masterpiece *The Dandy Dolls*, for example, would use the flute to similar effect scant months after *Unicorn's* premier.

The Dandy Dolls: Constructing the Supernatural with Wooden Flutes

Perhaps inspired by Gregory's play, avid Dublin theatregoer and playwright George Fitzmaurice used an onstage flute to similar effect in his play, *The Dandy Dolls*. Fitzmaurice's use of the onstage flute shows the instrument growing increasingly intertwined with ideas of the supernatural and spiritual on twentieth-century Irish dramatic stages.

George Fitzmaurice was a Kerry writer whose focus on the supernatural manifested in performances of onstage flute music. The playwright briefly joined the ranks of notable Dublin playwrights before suffering a series of poorly received plays and an apparent blackballing by Abbey leadership lasting from 1923 until his death in 1963.[56] Fitzmaurice came from a mixed-religion Church of Ireland family with roots residing in primarily-Catholic Kerry (McGuiness 70). A product of a Catholic mother and Church of Ireland father, he grew up in a region known for its adherence to indigenous Irish customs and language. These contributing factors shaped his dramatic concerns by allowing him "to consider the pagan and Christian elements of life in an unromantic way" (Brennan 17). While Fitzmaurice's work received renewed attention in the wake of his death, his catalogue remains relatively obscure in academic and performance circles.

Characters in Fitzmaurice's plays consistently grapple with questions of belief in (and persecution by) rural Ireland's competing religious and supernatural forces. Although Fitzmaurice wrote across genre lines, his description of his plays as dealing intimately with life

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[56] Fiona Brennan's singularly researched monograph *George Fitzmaurice: "Wild in His Own Way"* does much work in proposing new readings of both Fitzmaurice's relationship with the Abbey playwrights and the long-accepted narrative of his family as dispossessed Kerry gentry.

in the Irish countryside is apt. Carol Gelderman breaks down several of the sub-conventions permeating Fitzmaurice's catalogue, noting that, "His "heroes" are peasants whose lives are constricted by fear of priest, neighbor, and the supernatural" (19) and that, within his plays, "The peasant-idealist is opposed by members of his own family, by the power of the church, and by superstitions of his native culture—the enemy within" (125).[57] Building on these conventions, Arthur E. McGuiness asserts that Fitzmaurice's folk plays are defined by five qualities: their "supernaturalism, lyricism, sympathy, grotesquerie, and violence" (29).

Fitzmaurice's signature lyricism, grotesquerie and violence come to the forefront in *The Dandy Dolls*. In the play, Kerryman Roger Carmody navigates opposition from an unsympathetic church, a judgmental community, and malevolent supernatural opponents. The play opens with Roger's distressed wife Cauth complaining to the mysterious Grey Man about the suffering she has endured since Roger's dandy doll crafting has deranged his normal personality and habits. She opines that "Woful [sic] suffering is all the benefit he has from his trumpery of dandy dolls" (185). The Grey Man reveals himself to be Martin Counihan, one of three apparently supernatural men of the Isle of Doon whose family makes baubles for Spanish royalty. He explains that the Hag of Barna's son has been stealing windpipes from Roger's dandy dolls and trying to collect the prizes that the King and Queen offer for such "home-made trumperies" (187). As a result he has brought an enormous black bottle—ostensibly full of poison—that Roger will be forced to drink if the Hag's son steals the windpipe from the newest dandy doll. Roger returns home gloating over the completion of his most perfect doll and receives the Grey Man's unwelcome warning. Local Priest Father James and his boy Keerby

[57] The peasant musician opposed by family, church, and superstitions echoes concerns raised by fiddle plays earlier in the century. Brennan notes that Fitzmaurice may himself have been an audience member for such fiddle plays as Colum's *Broken Soil* and Gregory's *Twenty Five* (36).

arrive to accuse Roger (accurately) of poaching Church geese. They threaten to have him "reported to Rome" and excommunicated for his theft (195). Father James has heard of the battle to be fought over the doll and baptizes it in the hope that doing so might stop Roger's poaching. Act two opens with the Hag's son Jackeen, and rival Timmeen Fayley preparing to battle over the doll. Roger, Cauth, Father James and Keerby join in a frantic onstage battle before the Hag herself enters. The Hag's son eventually wins the doll, the Grey Man forces Roger to drink the strange bottle, and the play ends with the dollmaker being spirited offstage with the stage direction "*Dim figures of* GREY MAN, ROGER, HAG, *and* HAG'S SON *seen going out,* ROGER *being dragged along"* as Roger is taken away "for ever and ever, to their woful [sic] den in the Barna Hills" (203). The play's plot is complex as Fitzmaurice juggles mundane conflicts over marriage, finances, and petty theft alongside fantastical characters bent on protecting, destroying, or stealing Roger's newest doll.

ITM woodwind performance is directly linked to the supernatural within *The Dandy Dolls*. In the play, the instrument is repeatedly connected with the Hag of Barna, who uses the instrument as both a source of music and a stage-weapon. After the character first enters the stage, "*playing a flute…*" she proceeds to use the instrument for both artistic and martial purposes, alternately playing music and attacking human characters with the instrument:

> THE HAG (*taking flute from mouth*). Ha-ha! Is it flaming my little boy you are? (*Hits CAUTH with flute.*) Take that, old snotty nose! Go wash your rotten rags and grease your creaking bones!
>
> CAUTH. I'm kilt!
>
> THE HAG (*hitting priest)*. Ha-ha, shiny green coat, I have slaughtered a flay on the nape of your neck! (*Hits him again*). (201)

In this stage business, the Hag enters playing the flute, takes the instrument from her mouth, and repeatedly hits Cauth and Father James with it. While Andrew Hearne in *Unicorn* plays music on his flute when referencing the offstage magic of his invisible time with the fairies, The Hag's onstage performance explicitly connects the woodwind instrument to the supernatural by putting its performance directly into supernatural hands. Whether used as an instrument or as a weapon, the flute belongs to the Hag alone within the text, with no other character playing any woodwind instrument in the play.

By confining musical instrument performance to the play's supernatural characters, Fitzmaurice sets up a world in which woodwind music is explicitly aligned with normally invisible folk-belief. This reading bears out in Father James' reaction to being hit by the flute, since the priest responds to the musical assault by "*itching himself*" and exclaiming "Botheration! In the name of the Father!" (201). Despite clear indications that Father James is a priest more pragmatically self-interested in guarding his own lands from poaching than in protecting the souls of his congregation,[58] the priest's inexplicable itching when hit with the flute strengthens the connection between the instrument and the supernatural while also setting the instrument in opposition to Catholicism. If, as McGuiness argues, North Kerry is a region known for supernaturalism that, "expresses itself most frequently in the conflict between Christianity and the older traditional folklore," then the flute in the play appears to manifest this conflict physically as a tool used by characters from traditional folklore against Christian agents (14). The play's flute belongs to the supernatural realm because the supernatural hag carries and plays it onstage.

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[58] Priest figures appear frequently—and often negatively—across Fitzmaurice's canon. Accusations that the playwright caricatured the Church and its flock followed the playwright throughout his career.

Beyond being *used by* the play's supernatural character, flute performance appears *intrinsic to* the onstage creation of The Hag of Barna. The Hag's use of the instrument makes the character recognizably supernatural to both onstage characters and offstage audiences. The use of the flute to construct The Hag's supernatural qualities represents an important twist of Gregory's earlier work in which the flute performance implied *belief* in the supernatural when played by mortal characters. In *Dandy Dolls*, the flute does not accompany reference to the supernatural, but rather helps to audibly and visibly construct the Hag as an otherworldly figure.

Instrumental music from offstage precedes The Hag's initial stage entrance and allows onstage characters to introduce her as supernatural for the audience's benefit. When Father James, Cauth, and the Hag's son spar over the fate of his newest dandy doll, a stage direction calls for "*sound of a lively jig being played on a fife outside.*" Cauth responds, "(*in terror*) The Hag! The Hag herself! The Hag of Barna" (201). Cauth can identify the supernatural Hag having only heard the aural cue of woodwind music performance. Anyone reading a sampling of twentieth-century Irish drama will perceive the persistent convention of character entrances from offstage being preceded by those characters singing traditional airs or music hall melodies. I term the convention of Irish playwrights introducing characters through their offstage vocal performances as the "Irish entrance." Fitzmaurice's twist on the Irish entrance introduces the Hag by the use of a surrogate, prosthetic, voice created by passing air across the flute rather than by her own singing. The first information that an audience receives about the Hag's identity comes from neither her physical presence nor her voice, but from the sound of a lively woodwind jig and Cauth's interpretation of that music. For Cauth, a flute jig can only mean The Hag's approach. Both the woodwind music and Cauth's interpretation of it would have been

essential in constructing The Hag as a supernatural character written for a theatre contending with difficulties visibly staging the supernatural.

As in *The Unicorn from the Stars*, onstage flute performance in *The Dandy Dolls* accompanies the supernatural onto the stage. Fitzmaurice's play, however, goes beyond using the flute to make the supernatural visible and instead uses the flute to make a character supernatural. Woodwind instrument performance is intrinsic to the construction of a supernatural character by a human actor. Fitzmaurice does not go to any length to describe physical staging or costuming elements intended to distinguish The Hag from human characters. The Hag's flute performance lets narrative characters understand her as otherworldly, and to subsequently introduce her to audiences as such. His choice to script the aural flute performance—but not any costuming, visual design, or staging choices that make The Hag recognizable as supernatural—shows Fitzmaurice using the flute's considerable signifying power to construct a layered representation of Ireland's invisible folk belief on stage. Nearly two decades after *The Dandy Dolls* was written—but before it was performed—T.C. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* would also use onstage flute performance to confront questions of breath, the supernatural, and the negotiable divisions between objects, humans, and instruments.

The Pipe in the Fields: Birthing Spirits and Life-Giving Wind

T.C. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* uses flute performance in character dialogue and stage directions to address questions of the invisible and the ineffable. The play's central conflict develops from characters' contradicting interpretations of one boy's mysteriously virtuosic woodwind performance. Murray introduces Peter Keville as a boy whose life changed profoundly when he traded his life savings to a wandering musician in exchange for the

vagrant's flute. Peter's mother Nora explains a mystical change that she has observed in her now-musical son Peter. She tells him, "You're not the same. You've never known quiet since you got that fife from the stranger" (15). The Keville's neighbor Oona Carolan brings Nora news of "strange music they're all talking about everywhere" in the town, asserting that she "didn't believe in spirits or enchantment" until she heard the music herself the previous night (18). Nora diverts the conversation away from the mysterious music as Oona departs and Nora's husband Martin returns with news that he has sent for the priest, Father Moore, to help the Keville family sort out Peter's strange behavior. The remainder of *The Pipe in the Field's* plot follows Peter's increasingly desperate attempts to defend his musicianship—and spiritual awakening—from conservative parents concerned that fife-performance has cost their son his sanity, his soul, and his social prospects. A theological debate, a mystical woodwind performance, and a cruel trick in which Peter's parents pretend to burn his flute eventually convince Father Moore to side with Peter and encourage him to continue playing his music.[59]

Murray's play resembles earlier Irish peasant plays from the century in its presentation of traditional music as intrinsic to rural Irish character. Unlike peasant plays from earlier in the century that used the fiddle as an icon of pristine Western sentiment, *The Pipe* uses the wind-blown flute to address and present invisible and supernatural forces for its audience. Nora Keville explicitly links flute music to the supernatural when, in the play's first scene, she describes mysterious music the villagers have been hearing: "Strange music it was—coming seemingly out of another world…I didn't believe in spirits or enchantment till that hour…" (18).

[59] Murray's decision to have Peter's parents pretend to burn their son's fife may entered a conversation with both the popular image of a burning flute in "The Auld Orange Flute" and the burning fiddle in Rutherford Mayne's 1906 play *The Turn of the Road*.

The music of Peter's fife is introduced as "strange" and connected to otherworldly spirits and enchantment before it is ever presented onstage.

Characters speculate about the apparent magic of Peter's fife playing throughout the play, but that does not diminish the importance of actual onstage woodwind performance in the work. The fife is repeatedly played on stage with a specificity and clarity of desired effect that show the playwright's concern with actual, rather than symbolic, music.[60] Father Moore's conversation with Nora is interrupted when "*The mellow note of a flute in the fields comes through the open window. The mood is tender, suggesting with delicate charm the pensive beauty of the night*" (189). Later, Peter "*takes the flute and begins to play a rhapsody, an invocation to the spirit of Spring*" that culminates in an extended dance-based fantasy scene. Unique within plays from the period, Murray's play is consistently descriptive in how the instrument should sound in production. The instrument is heard from offstage, discussed, moved, and played onstage with a specificity of textual direction that indicates that the fife's onstage performance is of specific importance to Murray's play.

Woodwind music accompanies and makes visible what Richard Allan Cave has deemed a "close proximity" between the substantial and the spiritual worlds of Murray's plays.[61] As in

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[60] Murray's specificity starkly contrasts other plays explored in the chapter which consistently call for music to happen, without alluding to how it might specifically sound. An extreme example of a symbolic rather than actual care for flute music appears in Yeats' contemporary play *The Only Jealousy of Emer.* Stage directions in that play demand that three onstage musicians *"[mark] the movements with drum and flute perhaps*" (33).

[61] Cave's introduction to *Selected Plays: T.C. Murray* from the Irish Drama Selections collections explains how, "*The Pipe in the Fields* (1927) explores with neat discrimination the dividing line between the *daemonic* and the *demonic,* and utilizes what for Murray the new elements of music and dance to depict the growth of a youth's artistic temperament" (XX). He further posits that the play tracks Murray's own exploration of "the close proximity of the spiritual with the 'real' world and of the spiritual and imaginative dimensions of a man's consciousness" (XXI).

Unicorn and *The Dandy Dolls*, *The Pipe* draws clear connections between woodwind performance and the supernatural. Late in the play, Peter's music makes visible for the audience the otherwise hidden spiritual world that the boy describes in connection to his music throughout the play. When Peter plays his fife for Father Moore:

> *A faint shadowy light like the green radiance of a wood pervades the room. A spirit dimly revealed is seen through the open door through which the boy is gazing. It moves at first in a slow dance, but gradually rises to a swifter, wilder movement. The sound of muted strings mingling with the music, and the dance appears to come from the air.* (193)

Although the spirit manifested by Peter's fife is more docile than The Hag whose appearance accompanies flute music in *Dandy Dolls*, the simultaneous presentation of woodwind music and supernatural spirits dominates the climax of each play. From the shadowy light to the stylized dancing and the addition of muted string accompaniment, the musical set-piece of Peter's fife performance uses multiple design elements to distinguish the heightened supernatural elements of Peter's musical performance from the conventional peasant play realism that dominates the rest of the play. As in *Unicorn*, the woodwind instrument and its music aurally heighten the atmosphere of the mundane peasant play, making visible the normally unseen spiritual world for appraisal by a theatre viewership.

Regardless of how the multiple overlapping design elements scripted in the stage directions contributed to the illusion of the supernatural, it is essential to read Peter's fife performance as the action that both invites the "spirit" into the play's narrative and constructs the spirit as otherworldly for audience consumption. Instrumental performance and the spirit's dancing set the apparition apart from the mundane characters—and human audiences—observing the dance in production. In a scene that features three phenomenological onstage actor bodies—

Peter, Father Moore, and a spirit[62] —the use of fife music bringing the spirit onto the stage creates a clear but artificial distinction between two mortal characters and one supernatural apparition.

The popularity of texts combining the human actor body with woodwind musical performance to stage nonhuman character bodies implies that the practice was sufficiently well-understood by both playmakers and audiences to be theatrically effective. This performance trope shows an acute concern for ways by which theatres could efficiently present inhuman entities using human actor bodies. Gregory, Fitzmaurice, and Murray all wrote woodwind instruments into plays whose plots required audiences to engage with questions of belief in the supernatural and invisible. While Gregory's *Unicorn* used the flute's prevalence in extant folklore from the era to make the instrument's music stand in for belief in the unseen, Murray and Fitzmaurice went further by showing supernatural characters playing or dancing to woodwind instruments to distinguish themselves from mortal characters. Though flutes may function differently in each play, each work's inclusion of woodwind music should be viewed as a pragmatic response to the challenges of staging the invisible supernatural with strictly visual design solutions.

Interchangeable Instruments with Shared Performance Mechanisms

The choice by twentieth-century Irish playwrights to script either flutes or fifes onstage does not mean that those writers possessed a nuanced understanding of—or concern with—

[62] IrishPlayography.com lists "A Dancer" played by Ginette Waddell in the first 1927 Abbey Production. This dancer was almost certainly the spirit described on stage. A longer version of this paper would catalogue the contributions of the multiple traditional musicians and dancers that populate the stages of Irish scripted dramas from the century.

woodwind instruments' distinguishing sonic qualities or performance contexts. Playwright interest in the entire woodwind family of instruments, rather than in any specific member of it, reveals itself in moments at which plays betray *a lack of specificity or nuance* in scripted instrument performances. The supernatural Hag of Barna wields and plays a woodwind instrument in her single climactic onstage appearance. Fitzmaurice, however, is consistently inconsistent in describing what instrument the character manipulates, as he uses the terms "fife" and "flute" interchangeably in the play's stage directions. Near the play's climactic battle, a single page calls for the "*Sound of a lively jig being played on a fife* [Emphasis mine] *outside*" scant lines before the direction: "*Enter HAG playing a flute* [Emphasis mine]" (201). Flutes and fifes are not identical instruments, and the oversight in treating the discrete woodwind instruments interchangeably would appear careless if it were not meaningful and common slippage for playwrights of the era.

Like Fitzmaurice, T.C. Murray also interchanges the terms flute and fife in his play. Stage directions in *The Pipe* are remarkably clear as to how the instrument should *sound*, but they are ambiguous as to what the instrument should *be*. During the scene in which he conjures the apparition onstage, Peter "*takes the flute and begins to play a rhapsody"* (30) shortly before "*The notes of a fife are heard*" from offstage (40). Even the play's title was subject to slippery verbiage describing instruments, as the work was initially titled *The Flute in the Fields* prior to its eventual publication in *The Dublin Magazine* (DeGiacomo 106). While readers may understand the term flute in each play to reference the blackwood flute similar to the small flute present in *Unicorn,* references to "fife" increase the challenge of ascertaining the instrument's meaning within the plays. The term fife could be used as a stand-in for "flute" or "pipe" by those outside of traditional music circles, but would more likely have referenced the culturally-specific

subcategory of transverse flutes that carried distinctly sectarian meanings during the early twentieth century.

Rather than focusing on the troubling lack of concern with specific instrumentation within these texts, scholars and practitioners should note the consistency playwrights show in exclusively using woodwind family ITM instruments even within plays that flip those instruments' names. By including woodwind instruments in their works, playwrights consistently scripted the only Irish traditional instruments defined according to their operation by human breath. Practitioners and scholars today can benefit from interpreting the ambiguity in the instrument naming as an indication that the breath-operated quality that *woodwind instruments shared* was the essential quality that the playwrights sought to produce onstage. Even if the flute entered *Unicorn* as an inheritance from the prevalent body of flutes in folklore, the instrument iteratively reappeared on dramatic stages because of its operation by invisible human breath in plays concerned with the distinctions between the seen and unseen, the mundane and the spiritual, the logical and the supernatural. Plays by Gregory, Fitzmaurice, and Murray show an awareness of breath as an invisible arbiter of animation by putting woodwind instruments onstage alongside dolls, corpses, and images of dead trees whose liveness or lack thereof is determined in relation to breath. By understanding the importance of breath within the plays' central conflicts and imagery, scholars and practitioners may more fully locate woodwind instruments' import in them.

The Mechanics and the Metaphor of Breath-Operated Instruments Onstage

Human breath is an invisible currency that transfers life and unexplainable power in supernatural Irish plays from the early twentieth century. When a musical tramp character in

Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* exclaims that his "soul has gone into" his instrument, he is speaking more literally than figuratively. Breath is not only the mechanism by which a flute is played, but also the anima which gives life to the inanimate. If the tramp has blown his breath into the flute across a lifetime, is it so farfetched to consider that his "soul" or some other element of himself should have gone into the instrument? *The Ould Orange Flute* ballad certainly indicates that musical instruments might take on some form of life and sentience after having been played by human operators. Breath appears able to animate otherwise lifeless matter within *The Pipe in the Fields* in a way that troubles clear delineation between inanimate and animate onstage matter.

While *The Pipe in the Fields* explicitly explores how the flute could achieve life or spiritual animation by receiving a performer's breath, the flute is far from the only object in the era's drama whose liveness or sentience is defined by breath's availability or removal. Questions of whether life is confined to the human body, or part of invisible forces beyond human perception permeate *Unicorn*. Father John posits that Martin's soul—or spirit—leaves his body during his death-like trances, but that this lack of a soul is merely a temporary condition. He states:

> FATHER JOHN. Nothing but prayer can reach a soul that is so far beyond the world as his soul is at this moment.
>
> THOMAS. You are not saying that the life is gone out of him!
>
> FATHER JOHN. No, no, His life is in no danger. But where *he himself, the spirit, the soul* [Emphasis Mine], is gone, I cannot say" (234).

The language of the *spirit* or *soul* as Martin's actual self that is invisible and discrete from his physical body articulates a clear divide between the natural world in which characters operate and the visions that Martin experiences during his trances. Martin's life is apparently in no danger during his trances—although his spirit or soul has left him—because his invisible spirit is safe elsewhere.

The play's last scene bookends this first conversation as Martin is once again presented onstage in a seemingly lifeless trance. This time, however, his body is mourned by his revolutionary comrades who take Martin's lack of breath (or spirit) to indicate that he is dead. When Father John says it can't be true that Martin has died, Johnny B responds, "The *spirit* [emphasis mine] went from him about the middle hour of the night. We brought him here to this sheltered place" (25). In a neat bit of dramatic irony, the audience knows from the first scene that Martin's soul leaves him to travel beyond the world during his trances, but Johnny B assumes that Martin is not in a trance but actually dead. When Johnny B talks about Martin's spirit leaving him, he means the physical incarnation of spirit—the breath—as well as the metaphysical spirit.

The actor playing Martin's entranced body troubles the boundary between living and dead matter on stage. The same body that speaks and acts within the story is subject to being perceived as dead when the spirit or breath leaves it, only to return to life—and eventually be killed "for real" onstage—as the soul (breath) returns to the body. With its vacillation between apparent life and death, Martin Hearn's corpse/body shows how breath serves as an invisible and inconsistent animating force discrete from the physical body. Characters interpret Martin's life or vitality in terms of his breath, but the supernatural nature of his trances leads his friends to term

his living body a lifeless corpse. *Unicorn* is not, however, unique in challenging the distinction between breathless dead things and living breathing ones on Irish stages of that era.

Fitzmaurice's *Dandy Dolls* uses both flutes and dolls to explore how invisible breath blurs the line between living actors and inanimate properties on stage. The play equates breath with life in both character dialogue and stage directions in ways that show the playwright considering the singularity of woodwind instruments as objects that use human breath to make inorganic matter sing. Fitzmaurice's use of the apparently lifeless flute as an extension of the living—or at least humanly portrayed—Hag of Barna buttresses a larger project by which the playwright blurs the line between the living and the lifeless, or the breathing and breathless, in the stage properties and characters that populate his dramatic world.

Fitzmaurice challenges clear distinctions between breath and spirit, and the animate and the inanimate, throughout *Dandy* Dolls. The playwright introduces this blurriness by showing how his characters perceive unexpected liveliness in the play's various objects: most notably in the dolls themselves. During their respective first appearances on stage, Father James and The Hag's Son each interact with Roger's newest dandy doll as if it were a living person, sharing a misapprehension of life in the doll through how they choose either to save or to kill it. Father James demands that Cauth bring him the doll, since he plans "to baptize it a good Catholic by the grace of God!" (197). He then baptizes the doll before exclaiming, "There, now, she's sanctified and sacramental sound, a match for all the hags and hags' sons from Barna to Kanturk" (197). Father James proves incorrect about the protection that baptism bestows on the doll, despite

appearing insistent on treating the doll as a human, going as far as to ask Cauth what name he should give to the doll.[63]

Father James' baptizing of the doll shows a blurriness in the line distinguishing characters from properties: Priests should baptize living infants, not lifeless toys. He is not alone in apprehending life in the dolls. The supernatural characters in the play likewise endow the dandy dolls with unexpected life by introducing an unexpected logic detailing how to "kill" them. For these characters, dolls can only be destroyed or killed by removing their ability to breathe, despite common sense suggesting that the dolls should not be able to breathe in the first place. Both the Grey Man and the Hag's Son agree that the dolls can only be destroyed through actions that imply that the dolls live and—most significantly—breathe. During a lengthy exposition sequence early in the play, the Grey Man explains how the Hag's Son mockingly captures each completed doll before, "flinging the windpipes of Roger's dolls down into the sea" (187).[64] The Grey Man later gives Roger a bottle to drink from in case "the Hag's Son whips the squeak from your new dandy doll" (192). By referencing removal of the dolls' windpipes, or "squeaks," as the consistent means by which the Hag's Son destroys Roger's creations, Fitzmaurice draws attention to a direct correlation between life and breath within the play. The removal of a windpipe means the destruction of life, even in dolls that possess no obvious animation prior to their destruction.

For the characters in *The Dandy Dolls*, life equals breath, or more specifically, an inability to breathe equals death. The removal of windpipes from the dolls is the only means of

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[63] Roger ultimately asks that the doll be named after his aunt Jug: both a common household object and the name of a character in Fitzmaurice's play *The Magic Glasses*. Roger's naming allusion further muddies the waters distinguishing the human from the object.
[64] Windpipes are not, however, reserved for inanimate dolls in the text, since Roger rages that "the rasp in [Cauth's] old windpipe would frighten a horse from its oats"

destroying them ever mentioned in the text. This common knowledge amongst the play's characters begs the question of why Roger adds windpipes to the Dolls at all.[65] While never answered directly, windpipes appear essential to Roger's work in a way that precludes the possibility that he would complete a doll without one.

The canny reader will already have clocked the etymological slippage between the biological organ named the "windpipe" and the literal idea of a flute as a "pipe" operated by "wind" or air. Consciously or not, Fitzmaurice equates the doll's throat, or windpipe, with a musical instrument in a final, highly stylized stage direction concluding the play's battle between the supernatural and mundane characters. After several exchanges of insults and physical attacks, the Hag's son finally "*captures* [the] *doll"* and "*pulls out windpipe and blows through it"* (202). By pulling out the windpipe, the Hag's son unmakes the doll, closing the point of contention that drove the play's conflict. It is critical within this strange stage direction to consider why Fitzmaurice's stage business demands that the Hag's son should blow through the doll's disembodied windpipe.

The play never explains why the Hag or her son should have any reason to blow through the dandy doll's windpipe after pulling it out before that action occurs onstage. The action, however, collapses the distance between living and lifeless matter in the text as the windpipe through which the doll gained life for the characters becomes a vehicle for outside breath as the doll becomes a woodwind instrument. The operation of a flute by living breath appears onstage when the Hag of Barna enters playing her flute. The equation of breath to life shows in Roger's concern with adding apparently purposeless windpipes to his dandy dolls, in the play's treatment

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[65] Jochen Achilles asserts it is the perfection of Roger's creation that drives the Hag and her son to rip out the windpipes "because the production of likenesses of men is too godlike an ability to be accepted by supernatural beings without jealousy" (153).

of the dolls as deserving human religious rites, and in the logical agreement that removing a dolls windpipe must destroy it as so doing would kill a living, breathing, human. Finally, the Hag's son blowing through the ruined doll's windpipe collapses the dichotomy between the living and the non-living by turning what had been treated as human into a musical instrument. The windpipe that enables breath (and life) becomes a pipe operated by the wind of an outside manipulator. The doll once treated as character is turned into a lifeless object, but does the object's use as a vehicle for breath make it an instrument?

It is to be expected that Martin Hearne's body in *Unicorn* is perceived as living or dead based on its breath. That play, however, confounds conventional logic by displaying a human body that lives despite a lack of breath or spirit. Roger's dandy doll, in contrast, apparently lives despite its being a constructed object because of its ability to breathe. In each case, characters imagine life and vitality in terms of a supernatural absence or presence of anima. Murray's *The Pipe in the Fields* shows how supernatural interpretations of breath further muddy distinctions between life and death. The play introduces both a wooden flute that retains life from the breath of a previous owner and a "wooden soul" brought to life by air.

Like *Dandy Dolls*, *The Pipe* focuses on connections between breath, air, and life with a frequency that belies coincidence. Murray's play repeatedly uses terms like breath and wind when dealing with both fife performance and character vitality. Woodwind instruments need human air for their operation; Murray, however, compounds the flute's literal need for air with a metaphorical discussion of human breath as an invisible but tangible representation of life's animating principals. Neither flutes nor characters can function without breath, and the play's characters treat breath as a life-giving currency that can pass animation between living and lifeless matter.

The equation of breath to life appears explicitly in Nora Keville's explanation of how Peter purchased the fife from the traveling tramp. In her story, with which this section began, Nora recounts that Peter offered all the money he had in exchange for the instrument, to which the tramp replied, "My *soul has gone into that instrument* [Emphasis mine], boy…but the hunger has beaten me dead, and you can have it" (189). The tramp's phrasing in his reluctance to part with the instrument betrays both how the flute is operated, and what that operation might mean about the instrument as a stage property. The claim that the tramp's "soul" has "gone into that instrument," risks a simple vernacular gloss equating a soul with something like extreme effort. This interpretation, however, levels out the more interesting—and more literal—reading that the tramp has put his actual soul, or animating spirit into the instrument through the breath that he has passed into the fife itself. As early as 1533, to "animate" meant "to breathe life into, to endow with life, give life to or sustain life; to quicken, vivify."[66] The narrative tramp character has inarguably put his soul into Peter's fife, since playing the instrument would have meant literally animating the object by putting human breath into it. Murray's play thus emphasizes the potential of breath to animate or give life. The fact that the fife in the play has enjoyed the tramp's animating breath, and ultimately survives its former owner while giving Peter unexpected musicianship implies that something of the dead Tramp lives on in the instrument itself even as the wanderer's corporeal body has decayed.

The wooden fife that one would assume to be lifeless demands reevaluation when Peter likens his own soul to another lifeless wooden object that gets invigorated by air. In an impassioned attempt to explain his musical awakening to Father Moore, Peter explains that:

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[66] "Animate" *Oxford English Dictionary*

> I saw my own soul once. You wouldn't believe that? Don't laugh, Father…Out of tune I saw it. A naked tree it was—bare an' dry as a bone against the sky. A little wind came—a kind wind—and in a breath it put out leaves—leaves that fluttered an' danced like butterflies in the sun." (192)

In his explanation, Peter likens his soul to a leafless and out of tune tree with a metaphor of organic lifelessness alongside one of musical dissonance. His soul is imagined as a naked tree: an object, like the blackwood flute, comprised of dead or dying wood.[67] Peter's descriptions of "a little wind…a kind wind" giving the tree life show his understanding of his soul as a dead piece of wood with the potential to be animated and given life by intentioned air. Equally important is the phrasing that "in a breath" the once dead "bare an' dry" tree put out leaves (a sign of newly attained life).[68] Peter's parable imagines life as being contagious—or at least transmissible between living and lifeless organisms—through the movement of a kind wind. Within a play overtly concerned with faith, the supernatural, and existential concerns, Murray's choice of the naked tree waiting for life-giving wind and sprouting new life "in a breath" begs the question of what other ostensibly lifeless objects might be invigorated or animated by exposure to a kind wind.

Peter's fife in the play presents an object that must be viewed as straddling the division between unliving property and animated character, particularly in light of the overlap between his description of his own soul as analogous to the instrument that he plays. Murray stresses the instrument's wooden composition since much of the play's final conflict revolves around Mrs.

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[67] Deepening this connection, Peter describes his soul as "out of tune" in a turn of phrase confined almost exclusively to the description of musical instruments.

[68] "In a breath" could be read as measuring the immediacy of the wind's impact, it might just as easily be construed as saying that the tree took a breath and displayed its life in the form of leaves.

Keville pretending to burn the flute in the fireplace. Peter's soul metaphor implicitly explains the enervating power of breath by explicitly describing the soul as a dead piece of wood that can be awakened by a kindly wind. The parallel descriptions of Peter's soul and the wooden fife that Peter plays onstage may be read as following a consistent logic by which:

A Lifeless Thing	*Receives*	*Causing it to*	*Showing apparent* Life
A Naked Tree	A Kind Wind	Put out New Leaves	
A Wooden Fife	Human breath	Conjure Green Radiance/ A Spirit	

Flute plays from earlier in the century function in the opposite direction as in *Unicorn* and *Dandy Dolls*:

A Living Thing	*Loses*	*Causing it to*	*Lacking apparent* Life
Martin's Body	Spirit/Breath	Enter a Trance	
A Dandy Doll	Its windpipe	Become an instrument	

Whether human bodies, musical instruments, dandy dolls, or wooden souls, stage objects presented and discussed in supernatural Irish plays from the era thrive or wane from moment to moment according to the invisible breath that they either enjoy or lack. Playwrights from the period may not be consistent in whether their characters play flutes or fifes, but they do consistently call for the performance of woodwind instruments defined by their need for human breath. Scholars and practitioners seeking to analyze or stage these plays can benefit from focusing on the woodwind musical instruments' centrality in plays presenting breath or anima as a currency that allows or denies life in unexpected ways.

Applications for Scholars and Designers

Flutes and fifes were essential—rather than coincidental—instruments in supernatural scripts by Gregory, Fitzmaurice, and Murray because of the need for human breath that distinguishes those instruments from other objects appearing on dramatic stages. Fortunately, there have been few better moments during which to assess the centrality of a particular object appearing on historical stages since early twenty-first century theatre scholarship has done much to reassert the importance of physical objects within text-based theatre traditions.

Andrew Sofer's 2003 *The Stage Life of Props* pushes back against the OED definition of the stage property as "any portable object, as an article of costume or furniture used in acting a play." Sofer instead defines a property as "a discrete, material, inanimate object that is *visibly manipulated* [Emphasis mine] by an actor in the course of performance" (11). Sofer later revised his earlier work, in an article entitled "Take Up the Bodies" which explores the boundaries between animate actor bodies and inanimate properties. Discussing the performance of stage infants, he explains how "It is…up to the actors to "*animate*" [Emphasis mine] the doll prop" (137). Sofer's language of animation references how actors give the appearance of life to an unliving thing through visible manipulation: a fact that he is careful not to confuse with the act of giving an object literal life. He writes, "Stage props are "motivated"—literally put into play—by actors but are not themselves animate, although they are often said to "animate" the plot…" (20). Sofer's point is important: flutes should not be considered to have human sentience simply because a human actor body has breathed into them. This distinction, however, should not undermine the unique transaction of invisible breath between animate performer and inanimate object that occurs in any flute performance.

Even if woodwind instruments are not *animate* when played, they are—by definition—*animated* in the moment that they receive human breath. In contrast with the conventional understanding of properties as objects "visibly manipulated by an actor," the flute centralizes the invisible interactions that breath enables between bodies and objects onstage. The repercussions of this reframing are both specifically important to presenting plays about flutes and broadly edifying for anyone considering how to pragmatically present or substitute musical instruments written into dramatic scripts.

Gregory, Fitzmaurice, and Murray wrote plays exploring spirits, animation, and the unexplainable. All three playwrights scripted performances of woodwind ITM instruments activated by anima—or breath—in plays that centralize breath as both a currency of vitality and a way of producing music. Flute performance should not be considered coincidental to plays about the supernatural, but rather essential to them. While invisible things definitionally resist onstage presentation, it is their very lack of presentability that makes them worth interrogation. Flutes make sound when invisible air passes across their mouthpieces, but it is only through the instrument's material body that the unseen becomes aurally perceptible.

Theatre practitioners and sound designers staging these works today may be tempted to fake onstage flute performance in order to cast non-musicians in the play's pivotal musician roles. Indeed, the relatively small motions of flute and fife performance make the instruments easier to pantomime playing than the more robust physicality required by pretending to play the fiddle or bagpipes. Though simple to accomplish, miming flute performance to the accompaniment of a recorded sound-track removes human breath from the performance entirely and nullifies the essential thematic connection of breath to life which twentieth-century Irish playwrights used the instrument to explore.

For early twentieth-century Irish plays about the supernatural, the flute was most important because of *how it was played*, rather than because of what it physically *was*. The inconsistency with which playwrights named the instrument reinforces this point, as those writers repeatedly interchange names of woodwind instruments, but never substitute a fretted instrument by mistake.[69] Re-imagining musical instruments appearing in drama according to the ways by which they are operated provides new avenues for scholars seeking to parse the motivations behind otherwise confounding onstage instrument appearances. Scholars attuned to the use of flutes in plays from the period are better positioned to recognize and analyze other breath-operated objects—like dandy dolls and metaphorical trees—within play texts.

Equally importantly, directors and designers can benefit from analyzing and reproducing instruments on stage in terms of how their physical operation reinforces dramatic plots. Even if the cultural understanding of an instrument has changed irrecoverably over time, the way by which the instrument is played may hold more universal signifying power. International audiences today may not possess the same shared cultural links between fairies and flutes that *Unicorn* originally enjoyed in 1900s Ireland, but the flute's operation by invisible human breath persists today.

Much work remains to be done to maximize the care and nuance with which practitioners present musical instruments on dramatic stages but analyzing instruments in terms of the enduring ways by which they are played can only close the distance between the signifying power that instruments held in their original performances and that which they can wield in

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[69] Rutherford Mayne's *Phantoms* actually does make this error by calling a character's instrument both a "flute" and a "lute" in its first publication. This inconsistency, however, should be read as a typographical oversight, rather than an authorial choice since the instruments are so vastly different from one another in their shape, playing requirements, and performance histories.

subsequent productions. This project asserts that musical instruments in modern Irish drama have suffered from a lack of scholarly attention, so precedent for the importance of maintaining the modes by which instruments are operated must look outside of the Irish dramatic canon. The recent vogue for anthologizing and staging plays by Shakespeare's early modern playwriting contemporaries provides one clear example of how understanding and replicating the ways by which an instrument was originally performed can reinforce a play's original meanings for modern audiences.

Protagonist Moll Frith performs an onstage song while accompanying herself on viola da gamba in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611). Raphael Seligmann writes about the character's performance on the now-uncommon instrument, noting that the instrument "could be held across the lap, a mode considered decorous for women but musically ineffective, or between the legs in a style that could lead to the "indecent shaking of the instrument"" (206). Dekker and Middleton's text demands that Moll play the instrument in the indecorous position described above, providing a visual metaphor of a phallic instrument played suggestively between a young woman's legs. The manner by which Moll plays the viol in the drama gave essential information about Moll's transgressive 'roaring' character to its original audience. A twenty-first century audience likely lacks the context for codes of decorous music performance in early modern England, but will understand much of the archaic instrument's original effect if it is played between the female actor-body's legs. Instruments are important not only for how they are understood within specific cultural contexts, but also for the enduring qualities of how they are played.

Far from an exclusively academic perspective, decisions about how to substitute or modernize musical instruments factor into any new production of an old play. Viola da gambas

are rather thin on the ground in most modern theatre companies, so the company wishing to stage *The Roaring Girl* will likely either remove the instrument entirely—and in so doing disserve the scene—or substitute the rare and unknown instrument with one more common and obtainable. Substituting Moll's viola da gamba with a guitar would match the tonal range of the original instrument, but would wholly sacrifice the bowing between the legs by which the original instrument is played. Taking these factors into account, a production would be wise to use a cello in the scene since that instrument—while different from the one scripted— approximates how the viola da gamba is manipulated.

As this dissertation's chapter on fiddles as nationalist icons posited, musical instruments necessarily carry semiotic meanings onto dramatic stages. While that chapter considered some ways that specific instruments could maximize the effect of musical instruments originally played in productions, instruments' original cultural contexts grow increasingly remote when subjected to time and translation. Examples like *The Roaring Girl's* viola da gamba show ways that the enduring mechanics by which instruments are played can outlast semiotic meanings that audiences may no longer be able to access. Modern companies staging *The Pipe in the Fields* would be hard pressed to leave Peter's titular flute out of that play, but the woodwind instruments in *The Dandy Dolls* and *The Unicorn from the Stars* risk substitution or excision since those instruments appear onstage only once and are not frequently mentioned in character dialogue. Despite their potential frivolity within plots, the instruments reinforce larger questions of life, breath and the invisible that each play interrogates. Andrew Hearne *could* play a fiddle by changing one word of spoken dialogue and The Hag of Barna *could* enter playing an accordion with which she beats Father James.[70] Making these substitutions only minutely changes the play

[70] Doing so would certainly add a comic touch to the scene.

on the page, but any temptation to make such changes shows a lack of attention to the invisible breath that drives supernatural plays from the era.

Reading the flute and other woodwind instruments across plays invites forward-looking, broadly applicable questions about what phenomenological and semiotic work occurs when woodwind instruments appear on dramatic stages. Most important among these questions is the consideration of whether the flute's physical operation by human breath should trouble an assumption that musical instruments function as stage properties. Flutes and fifes are invisibly animated where stage properties are visibly manipulated: parsing the importance of breath in Irish drama using woodwind instruments demands nothing short of a life and death distinction.

CHAPTER FIVE: Traditional Music, Mechanical Reproduction, and Social Critique in Celtic Tiger Drama

At the turn of the 20th century, the music in Irish drama, like the dramaturgy of the plays themselves, took a radically distancing turn. The organic spectacle of human bodies playing and manipulating acoustic musical instruments was often replaced by hands fumbling with unreliable media players. The assumption of control over the production of music was increasingly undermined as Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction (MIMRs) like radios and tape recorders repeatedly stymied their would-be manipulators. Enda Walsh's *Misterman* from 1999, for example, demands that a single living actor perform the play through the scripted manipulation of a collection of tape recorders and reel-to-reel players that provide everything from background noise to character dialogue and brief musical interludes.[71] Although the human actor in *Misterman* relies on tape recorders and reel-to-reel players to access and share his past, the character's relationship to instruments of sound reproduction is fraught with missed connections and violent confrontations. Early in the play, Thomas grows frustrated with a tape recorder that will not stop playing. In response, he

> *walks back towards the tape recorder holding a hammer. He smashes it down on the tape recorder. The song skips back to the very start and remains intact.* Thomas *petulantly screams with frustration. He covers his ears but can still hear it*. (7)

Later, Thomas *"turns on another reel-to-reel. The sound of birds twittering and the outside. He adjusts the volume but it goes too loud. He blocks his ears and hammers the top of the machine"*

[71] The play, while novel in its treatment of tape recorders, shows a clear inheritance from Samuel Beckett's one-act *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) in its reliance on a single character in dialogue with a mechanical scene partner.

(23). All of Thomas' hammer-swinging comes to nothing, as each stage direction ends with the frustrated character covering his ears to block out sound that he can't escape.

Stage directions from *Misterman* show a character simultaneously empowered and vexed by modern instruments that promise him the ability to perfectly reproduce the past. Susan Bennett explains that the advent of modern recording technologies meant that "for the first time, it would be possible to preserve, and later hear, events from the past and, more significantly, voices beyond the grave" (88). Counter to the promise of collapsing the distance separating characters from an irretrievable past, the tape recorders in *Misterman* repeatedly malfunction and derail Thomas' ability to access and retell his story. The malfunctions lead Thomas to attack the instruments whenever they refuse to behave as expected.

Written during the heart of Ireland's Celtic Tiger years, *Misterman*'s concern with objects that misremember a cultural past reflects a central concern that Irish playwrights faced when staging Ireland on increasingly globalized dramatic stages. Recorded and repeatable versions of Irish music that could be easily created, consumed and traded made them effective metaphors for the neoliberalism and nostalgia of Celtic Tiger years during which Ireland became simultaneously intertwined with international investment and concerned with exporting a specific "brand Ireland" version of its past to global markets. The unprecedented influx of business investment and immigration that Ireland faced at the end of the twentieth century left many feeling a nostalgia for Irish identities endangered by globalization; this same nostalgic image would, ironically, become packaged for export outside of Ireland as one of Ireland's greatest cultural exports in the era. Using MIMRs, playwrights like participated in Irish drama's historical penchant for presenting Irish music in the theatre, but did so through a medium that interrogated the repercussions of using new technologies to recover and sell an irretrievable past.

Onstage, Thomas' violence towards MIMRs in *Misterman* exemplifies a specific trend in the use of onstage tape recorders and radios in Celtic Tiger plays. Not only do MIMRs increasingly appear in plays dealing with Ireland's cultural past, but characters in those plays repeatedly fail to exert control over misbehaving MIMRs and resort to violence when operating them. Failure in the plays is thus bi-directional between dramatic characters and the musical objects that they seek to control: musical instruments fail to perform with expected fidelity and onstage characters fail to control the instruments' performances. In this scripted failure—both of objects to perform their anticipated functions and of characters to exert control over those objects—Celtic Tiger plays display how, as Sara Jane Bailes outlines in *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure,* "strategies of failure in the realm of performance can be understood as generative, prolific even" since "failure *produces,* and does so in a roguish manner" (3). An analysis of radios and tape recorders scripted into Celtic Tiger drama shows objects of mechanical sound reproduction repeatedly appearing, misbehaving, and productively subverting expected power relationships with the Irish characters that ostensibly control them. The appearance of misbehaving or failing MIMRs is not coincidental to Irish theatre, as the emergence of globalized mechanical objects of sound reproduction mirrors the globalizing export of Irish culture occurring during that country's Celtic Tiger years.[72]

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[72] The Celtic Tiger era was not, of course, the first time that mechanical objects meaningfully reproduced music in Irish drama. The gramophone in Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, for instance, reflected commercialism within that text. The recording devices in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* show an engagement with how such objects can perform individual and cultural memory on stage. Record players in *The Gigli Concert* and *Philadelphia, Here I Come* reflect a transcendent space outside of characters' everyday lives. MIMRs hold varied and productive purposes across modern Irish drama, making it all the more notable that Celtic Tiger plays should have taken the myriad conventions established in earlier decades and crystalized those appearances into a set vocabulary of dissatisfaction and violence.

Celtic Tiger Context

The early 1990s brought rapid economic development and cultural redefinition to an Ireland that had endured particularly severe fiscal stagnation and population loss through the 1980s. After seeing more than 130,000 citizens emigrate and national debt balloon between 1983 and 1988, Ireland's economic growth from 1990-2005 signaled such a profound reversal in economic fortunes and emigration that Fearghal McGarry termed the transformation as morphing Ireland "from banana republic to Celtic Tiger" (131). Ireland's influx of foreign investment and embrace of economic deregulation likewise transformed long-standing social institutions like Catholicism, as the nation's newly deregulated media and increasingly liberalized populace interrogated treatment of its most vulnerable citizens (McGarry 135). The Celtic Tiger roared social and economic change in the last decade of Ireland's twentieth century: playwriting and performance from the era echoed and interrogated those changes in ways that contradicted dramatic traditions in place for decades prior.

Attempts at periodization in theatre and performance scholarship invariably oversimplify chronologies, but it would be careless to imagine that significant political and social changes would not create parallel shifts in the nation's artistic output. Vic Merriman presents one telling example of how Ireland's drama and the nation's emergence within the late twentieth-century global market fed off of one another. He notes how, in 1990, "one year after [President Mary Robinson] issued her invitation 'come dance with me in Ireland,' Brian Friel… [offered] a new play [*Dancing at Lughnasa*] to the Abbey Theatre." *Dancing at Lughnasa* would go on to a Broadway run in the United States, presenting a specific version of Irishness to non-Irish audiences. Even as Ireland was opening its doors to welcome an influx of outside investment and

global thought, it was also exporting a curated version of its own cultural properties and traditions into a global marketplace.

Celtic Tiger prosperity led Ireland to enjoy both increased global investment from multi-national companies, and a national reinvestment in presenting the country's cultural exports for international markets. Laura Farrell-Wortman explains how the period saw "a global export of "brand Ireland" performance" which presented "an imagined space in which Irish identity is essentialized and available for purchasing, with a particular focus on marketing inclusion in this identity to Irish-Americans" (12). Artistic performances of song, dance, and drama were not immune to "brand Ireland" export, as "Irish theatre of the Celtic Tiger period…was generally less self-consciously concerned with Irish identity and more concerned with Ireland's place in a globalized world than its predecessors" (Farrell-Wortman 11). Perhaps best exemplified by the rise of *Riverdance* from 1994 Eurovision interlude to global touring sensation, "brand Ireland" performances treated audiences to a particular impression of Irish culture that collapsed Irish Traditional Music with images of step-dancing, idyllic scenography, monoliths stones, and—yes—red-haired girls with ringlets. "Brand Ireland" formulae developed during *Riverdance's* ongoing success can be seen permeating other Irish touring stage shows like *Celtic Woman* (2004), *Celtic Thunder* (2007), and *The High Kings* (2008) which all emerged during Tiger years.

The systemic cultural globalization and liberalization that accompanied Ireland's Celtic Tiger decades demand consideration into how the on-stage deployment and cultural meanings of traditional Irish music and musical instruments may have shifted when marketed towards an increasingly transnational theatre viewership. In exploring the meanings of Irish instruments played on dramatic stages, this chapter analyzes how Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990),

Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), and Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce* (2006) present Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction like radios and tape recorders that play Irish Traditional Music on stage. Onstage MIMRs hold the potential to reproduce the traditional music that fiddles, flutes, and other acoustic traditional instruments performed in Irish plays from earlier in the century. In reality, however, the radios and tape recorders that replaced acoustic instruments in Celtic Tiger plays did not serve the same functions as their predecessors, but rather contributed a profoundly effective way by which late Celtic Tiger playwrights formally addressed Irish self-representation within a dramatic movement confronting different concerns from those of the previous century's national drama. A critical examination of the rise of MIMRs on "brand Ireland" Celtic Tiger stages promises both a better understanding of how traditional music functioned in plays from the era and a needed discussion of how onstage representations of modern sound technology complicate how scholars and practitioners reckon with those objects in performance.

Mechanically Reproductive Objects as Stage Instruments

This chapter tracks the brief stage lives of two technological instruments synonymous with twentieth-century modernity and globalized media: the stand-alone radio and the tape recorder. While digital innovations have increasingly decentralized radios and tape recorders within twenty-first century life, both instruments enjoyed a vogue in Irish dramatic theatre during the decades spanning the turn of the millennium. The radio's popularity in plays from the era was likely not coincidental, as the instrument's history reflected similar globalizing qualities to those confronting 1990s Ireland. Writing on *Theatre and Globalization* in Ireland, Patrick Lonergan cites the radio as part of "a process of technology-driven global compression…

underway since the middle of the 19th century" that facilitated the spread of mass-mediated forms of culture (18-19). Lonergan's work explains how cultural practices—including music—become homogenized when mediated across new technologies for consumption by global audiences. Not coincidentally, radios and tape recorders frequently appear onstage in Celtic Tiger plays performing music that perpetuates and spreads a vision of Ireland and Irishness to which Irish characters can no longer relate.

Celtic Tiger playwrights experimented with MIMRs in ways that show both the potential benefits and challenges of surrendering the performance of traditional music to mechanically reproducing instruments. Ongoing theoretical conversation around Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935) helps to contextualize the multivalent uses of, and reactions to, musical instruments of mechanical reproduction on Celtic Tiger stages. Benjamin's work provides useful language for separating radios and tape recorder performances from acoustic instrumental ones in Celtic Tiger plays. Locally produced live fiddle music falls into a category of performance that Benjamin deems "inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition" in which the "tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (6). The reproduced sound of that same fiddle music played from a radio broadcast or taped recording, however, "detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" in order to "put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach of the original itself"(4). Detached from traditional, hyperlocal contexts, Celtic Tiger MIMRs reproduce music for intended export to global audiences, leaving Irish listeners as a small—often coincidental—audience for music that traditionally held ritual cult importance.[73]

[73] Benjamin's definition of "cult" importance should be understood in terms of cultural situatedness, rather than as having any sort of occult or magical connotation. While the latter

In the decades since its composition, "The Work of Art" has yielded Marxist, nostalgic, and Posthumanist readings of art pieces that have been divorced from the fabric of tradition in which they normally exist. A Marxist view celebrates the disentangling of the art from its aura as a positive and emancipatory development that allows a work to reach new audiences and contexts, while a nostalgic reading of Benjamin's writing fetishizes the aura that an art object loses during the process of mechanical reproduction. MIMRs certainly make traditional music accessible, transportable, and reproduceable for both dramatic characters and theatre practitioners, but Celtic Tiger plays also use modern static and distortion to show a nostalgic longing for musical experiences unmoderated by mechanization. The period's drama also notably explores Posthumanist anxiety over the unpredictable purposes to which mechanically produced music might be put. By balancing all three readings of "Art in the Age," one develops a clearer understanding of why MIMRs must be considered musical instruments in Celtic Tiger plays, how MIMRs' mediated performances encapsulate Irish cultural properties in the era, and why characters in Celtic Tiger plays so consistently attack their mechanical music-players.

Marxist Performance & Emancipatory Qualities of MIMRs

The promised accessibility, perfection, and mobility of mechanically reproduced represents a net gain in both Marxist readings of Benjamin and in the opinion of many characters in Celtic Tiger plays. Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* shows the rural Mundy family appreciating the wireless radio that brings music to their lives from hundreds of miles away. Narrator Michael opens the play with an astonished reflection on the impact of a wireless on his

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definition is a tempting one for considering the power that mechanically reproduced objects exert over characters in dramatic plays, that reading does not hold with Benjamin's larger project.

rural family. While itself a play that has attracted unwarranted nostalgic readings because of its cottage setting, *Dancing* never shies away from the danger and threat of rural Irish cultural practices nor does it shortchange the promise that technologically-mediated music from the newly arrived wireless radio affords the Mundy sisters. For Friel's characters, the radio's mechanically reproduced music represents a reprieve from the challenges of an agrarian life through the songs that the radio lets them enjoy at the press of a button. In keeping with a Marxist interpretation of Benjamin's work, the disentangling of the music from its original contexts and aura does not overly trouble the Mundy sisters as their daily lives benefit from access to music that would otherwise be inaccessible to a family devoid of either musicians or the material means to attend the communal dances mentioned in the text.

Nostalgic Performance & Overwhelming Static Noise

Despite the technological promises of MIMR performance, a nostalgic view of the aura lost in mechanical reproduction appears within Celtic Tiger drama from the 1990 forward. Celtic Tiger plays can call for specific recordings of music from Ireland's past because the technological affordances of MIMRs. Radio and tape recorders do not, however, deliver the perfectly *durational*, *dispersible*, and *fixed* musical performances that the instruments' mechanization promises. The Irish music reproduced by Dinny's tape recorder in Walsh's *The Walworth Farce* crackles with static and blares with volume that distorts the promised music in a way never scripted in performances of pristinely de-Anglicized fiddle music that appeared in Irish drama from the early twentieth century. The promise of instant access to voices past—or even dead—reveals itself as a fantasy as distorting static shows the impossibility of actually accessing an irrecoverable past.

Just as Dinny is nostalgic for the life that he has left behind, the presence of his music-distorting MIMR inspires a nostalgic longing for a moment in which music was neither mediated nor obscured by mechanical reproduction. Plays from the period frequently script static 'noise' that is unique to global modernity in order to disrupt the expected 'signal' of traditional Irish music. The repeated appearance of static and distortion within sound cues is thus an intentional choice used to present a troubling version of mediated Irish music to characters and audiences.

Posthumanist Performance and Chaotic, Limiting, Controlling Performance

Benjamin's "Art in the Age" views the mechanical reproduction of art as both doable and valuable but does not account for how the relationships between art, its creators, and its consumers might change over time. A Posthumanist perspective on Benjamin proves especially useful in considering the limitations and unpredictability that accompany onstage MIMR performances of historically-situated traditional music for modern Irish characters. Such a reading exposes how radios and tape recorders trouble the ways that relationships of agency and control between characters and stage objects conventionally play out on stage. It is thus important to note that, in Celtic Tiger plays, it is often the MIMR operator themself that is 'reproduced'—or forced to reproduce a particular rendition of Irishness—by the use of instruments that promise artistic reproduction.

Given the ease and exactness of performance that broadcast technologies promise, it is unexpected that such technologies should be repeatedly scripted to fail or misbehave in their assigned work. Terms like failing or misbehaving, however, describe an instrument's performance according to a dramatic character's—and an audience's—perspective, rather than from that of either the playwright or designers. The Marconi in *Dancing* is intentionally scripted

to play at unexpected moments and for unexpected durations throughout Friel's dialogue, but achieving that effect requires technicians and designers to craft sound cues that carefully approximate mechanical failure. By cultivating failed performances of traditional music within Irish drama, Celtic Tiger plays interrogate the conventional presence of traditional Irish music in Irish dramatic plays by shining unignorable light on a motif whose ubiquity had hidden it from interrogation in earlier decades. Sara Jane Bailes has written how "A poetics of failure speaks to the value of attending to brokenness as a structural motif" (22). Misbehaving MIMRs draw attention to traditional music as a persistent convention that shaped twentieth-century playwriting, while also introducing failure itself as a motif for dramatically portraying a globalized Ireland. So, when this chapter discusses instrument failure, it does so with the understanding that unexpected behavior by broadcast instruments was a desirable feature rather than an unavoidable bug for Celtic Tiger playwrights seeking to subvert expected conventions of Irish playmaking.

Despite their unique qualities, radios and tape recorders function as de facto musical instruments when presented on Celtic Tiger dramatic stages. Stage directions governing radios and tape recorders in plays from the era frequently mirror those governing acoustic instruments in earlier plays. Plays from the period frequently describe the operation of MIMR instruments as characters *playing* them. In the opening to *The Walworth Farce,"* [Dinny] *presses the button of an old tape recorder. 'An Irish Lullaby' begins to play* [Emphasis mine]*"*(5). Walsh's *The New Electric Ballroom* (2008) features another tape recorder performance in which "*Sounds of dance floor and music played louder by* ADA [Emphasis mine]" (103). Celtic Tiger plays frequently emphasize the act of hitting a *Play* button as the act of *playing* music. As with more familiar

traditional musical instruments, instruments of mechanical reproduction are *played* by characters, even if the action of playing has been reduced to the press of a button.

Technological instruments may be *played* on dramatic stages, but that does not mean that they function identically to—or hold the same cultural situatedness as—traditional acoustic instruments. Contrasted with the socially ameliorative views on fiddle performance that appeared in early twentieth-century peasant plays, characters in Irish plays bridging the millennium hold varying degrees of gratitude and distrust towards mechanically reproduced music. Beyond the ambivalent reception by onstage characters, three essential qualities distinguish MIMR performances from acoustic instrumental ones. Onstage traditional music may work differently between plays, but it is always *dispersible, durational,* and *fixed* in performance.[74] This is to say, MIMR performances on dramatic stages are *dispersible* across various actor bodies, *durational* rather than bound to ongoing human performance, and *fixed* in the finite tunes and songs that they can bring onto dramatic stages. The dispersible and durational performance of fixed music produced for mass consumption represents a stark contrast to the highly localized acoustic music from earlier-century plays. A brief elaboration on how each of the unique qualities of MIMR performance appear in Celtic Tiger plays shows playwrights invested in exploring the technical and thematic potential of mass-produced, electronically operated, global instruments.

1) Dispersible Across Characters

Unlike playing a flute or a fiddle, playing a radio or tape recorder demands less expert skill and musicianship of any single performer. In *Dancing at Lughnasa,* Chris Mundy appears to

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[74] These terms dispersible, durational, and fixed, as well as the term Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction, are my own theorizations. While much work remains to be done in applying and parsing these ideas within and beyond Irish drama, I hope that this new vocabulary may contribute to the discourse surrounding musical instruments on dramatic stages.

be the most capable of coaxing sound out of the Marconi, but Gerry Evans also manages to turn it on when called upon. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* Maureen Folan controls the radio throughout most of the play, but Ray Dooley has no trouble controlling the same instrument in that play's final scene. Specific characters may show an affinity for playing the radio, but the ability to play music on it is not gleaned through any specific virtuosity. The ease with which multiple characters operate the radio in Celtic Tiger plays stands in stark contrast with earlier twentieth-century plays in which specific characters performed music as their essential function within the play.

2) Durational at the Push of a Button

Beyond allowing for use by multiple performers, the "button-press" operation of radios and tape recorders disrupts the one-to-one relationship between musician action and sound production that defines onstage acoustic instrumental performance. Believably performing fiddles and flutes on stage demands that performers make (or at least pantomime) recognizable gestures such as bowing, blowing, or fingering for audience interpretation. As long—and only as long— as the performer continues to make those gestures, music is expected to continue. The smallness of gesture required in *playing* a radio and recorder at the press of a button, however, risks rupturing an audience's ability to visually connect the gesture made by the stage character to the accompanying sound.

Even when audiences can observe the small gestures needed to turn on broadcast instruments, those instruments' *durational* or ongoing performance after a single actor button-press troubles the expected connection between performer action and music that previously defined instrumental performances in Irish drama. Unlike acoustic instruments, radios and tape recorders create *durational* sound that does not rely on continued human action for continued

music-making. Once initiated by human actors, radios and recorders will continue playing music until their operation is either physically halted or curtailed by malfunction. Maureen exposes the potential inconvenience of durational performance in *Beauty Queen,* when she returns home with Pato to find that Mag never turned off the radio. She says, "Look at this. The radio left on too, the daft oul bitch" (382). Characters within plays are aware that their physical participation is required to start and stop musical performance, but that the performance does not require their continued attention in ways that acoustic instruments would. The possibility of music from radios and tape recorders appearing without ongoing character operation demands a re-evaluation of the expected relationship by which a subject (the human performer) operates an instrument (non-human object) observed in earlier Irish plays.

3) Fixed in its Reproductions of Finite Recordings

A third essential quality of traditional music performed by MIMRs is that the music performed is necessarily *reproduced* from previous recordings even as it *produces* new meanings for its audiences. Instances in which stage directions call for specific recordings played by onstage radios and recorders may thus be considered *fixed* musical performances in which relatively little variability exists between the sound of music in any number of productions following the same scripted stage directions. Earlier century playwrights frequently demanded more *open* music performances, which left acoustic music choices largely up to companies producing those works. For an example of this distinction, consider Padraic Colum's *The Fiddler's House*, in which fiddler Conn *"goes into the room right; soon after the fiddle is heard*" (11) as an invitation for open musical performance by the onstage actor. Music is meant to occur on stage, but the specific tone, quality, and duration of the music itself remains largely up to the production's discretion. The musician responsible for playing music is guided by the stage

directions, but will ultimately play the sound cue differently—intentionally or not—with each iterative performance. Broadcasted sound cues, by contrast, promise the precise and infinitely repeatable performance of specific, ostensibly controllable, sound.[75]

Enabled by the promise of technology, Celtic Tiger plays using mechanically reproduced music prove prescriptive in the specific recordings that their scripts demand. McDonagh's *Beauty Queen* makes frequent reference to Delia Murphy's recording of "The Spinning Wheel." *The Walworth Farce* repeatedly uses Paddy Reilly's version of "A Nation Once Again" to spur characters to action. Each recording presents a culturally laden musical performance that would have been recognizable for audiences entering Irish playhouse. Playwrights from the era demanded specific musical recordings within their dramatic action in order to play upon the expectations of audiences accustomed to seeing rural Irish backdrops and traditional music underscoring dialogue-driven Irish plays. Using technology to instantly access and infinitely recreate highly specific songs on dramatic stages, late twentieth-century playwrights turned to the radio to quote highly specific recordings of Irish Traditional Music (ITM) within texts created for a very different Ireland than that of the quoted songs.

The intuitive perfection and ease promised by MIMRs face considerable and intentional strain in late-century Irish plays. Radios and tape recorder performances may be *dispersible* and *durational*, but the technologies that make them so also make them chaotic and uncontrollable for onstage characters manipulating them. Fixed reproductions of traditional tunes and songs are eminently playable at the press of a button, but persistently provide ironic or parodic underscores in scripts that show a globalized Ireland far removed from the one for which such songs were

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[75] This paper, however, argues that the infinite and iterative perfection promised by MIMRs ironically makes them productive sites for scripting failure in ways that less controllable acoustic instruments are not.

composed. It is unsurprising that radios and tape recorders have so consistently found their way into the 'black pastoral' plays that Nicholas Greene sees as self-consciously inverting "the earlier idealizations of life in the west of Ireland by presenting it as brutal and unidyllic"(Greene qtd. in Richards 10). Clocking the repeated, scripted failure of design elements misplaying their parts—alongside the misbehaving modern characters similarly fumbling through imagined rural landscapes in which they seem not to belong—provides an inroad to exploring broadcast instruments as inheritors and troublers of traditional musical instruments' conventional roles in the well-made Irish play.

Finally, the MIMR may allow present-day Irish characters to access voices from the past, but the past that they access repeatedly traps those characters in patterns and behaviors that they may not wish to perform. This reproduction takes multiple shapes in Celtic Tiger drama with examples ranging from Sean and Blake's mechanical reactions to the aural cues of their father's tape recorder in *Walworth* to the lifeless body of Mag Folan rocking to the sound of "The Spinning Wheel" played from a radio in *Beauty Queen*. While these are particularly literal instances of mechanically reproduced music controlling the actions of characters that ostensibly operate the MIMRs, Celtic Tiger drama repeatedly uses character interactions with onstage radios and recorded music to show characters, tropes, and cultural values being forcibly reproduced by instruments whose fixed performances cannot respond to changing contexts. The lack of control that MIMR operators exert over their instruments manifests itself in the chaotic performances and limiting of cultural horizons shown by mechanically reproduced ITM in Celtic Tiger plays.

Dancing at Lughnasa: The Marconi, Black Pastoral, and Disobedient Objects

Dancing at Lughnasa was first produced at the Abbey Theatre on April 24 1990 and was the first play by Brian Friel to be staged following his longtime collaboration with Field Day Theatre Company.[76] The critically-acclaimed memory play features an adult narrator named Michael reliving and commenting upon a childhood summer in 1936 spent with his mother and four aunts in the fictional village of Ballybeg, Donegal. *Dancing's* plot revolves around Michael's mother Chris Mundy's abortive near-reunion with past lover Gerry Evans, and the convalescence of her uncle, Father Jack, after his Malaria-induced return from Catholic missionary work in Uganda. Each of Michael's aunts follows her own—variously doomed—arc within the play. Intellectually disabled Rose falls victim to the questionable advances of a married man. Homemaking sister Maggie struggles with jealousy towards a childhood friend turned successful émigré who returns to Ballybeg with experiences that Maggie has missed by staying in her hometown. Local schoolteacher Kate contends with Father Jack's disheartening loss of faith while factory-worker Agnes grapples with a loss of work. Complete with Catholic priests, 'fallen' women, emigration woes and familial crises, *Dancing*'s rural Irish cottage setting and concerns with tradition, religion, immigration, and proper communal behavior ticks many generic boxes of the Irish peasant play, but does so with a black pastoral bleakness that does not consistently appear in productions of the work.

Although the play's production history—particularly in revival and abroad—has led to a misapprehension of *Dancing* as a nostalgic play about Ireland's pristine agrarian past, closer

[76] This production information was sourced from the *Dancing at Lughnasa* entry of IrishPlayography.com. While this database is a perpetual work in progress, it is an invaluable resource for tracking convergences and overlaps between individuals writing and producing modern Irish drama.

examination shows the play commenting on Irish culture at a particular 1930s historical moment from a 1990s global position, rather than unironically championing it. *Dancing's* fictional Ballybeg is both more global and more steeped in local danger than a nostalgic reading allows. Father Jack's return from Africa brings an influx of foreign ideas and unexpected sexual liberality to the Mundy home, while Gerry Evans' travel to fight in Spain shows a permeability to the ostensibly insular rural community. Ballybeg is neither so isolated from the world around it as a nostalgic reading of the play allows, nor is it safe from its own traditional menaces. The play's title may allude to the sister's vigorous dances around the wireless radio, but equally likely references the crowds of young villagers whose ritual dancing and sacrifice around a bonfire celebrating the pre-Christian festival of Lughnasa backdrops the play with a sense of unease. The audience learns early in the play that the youths' dancing has left offstage character Young Sweeney near death from severe burns throughout the play. Kate may claim that the community's "pagan practices… are no concern of [the Mundy sisters]" but the young peoples' botched Lughnasa celebration mirrors the sisters' own subversions of expected tropes from rural Irish drama (29). Ballybeg's characters dance both on and offstage in ways that subvert conventional understandings of how rural Irish characters should behave.

While much of the darkest action in *Dancing* appears offstage, the play's characters fail to perform—and often actively subvert—pristine and optimistic Irish peasant play conventions in ways that push *Dancing* towards the black pastoral genre. Chris and Gerry never fully reconcile their love affair into a socially condoned marriage; Father Jack's recovery from malaria does not prompt him to return to practicing his Catholic faith; Rose and Agnes die destitute in England. No amount of cultural performance, familial affection, or Irish industriousness gives the Mundy sisters the optimistic resolutions that many of the fiddler-laden peasant plays from Chapter Three

of this dissertation promise. No mysterious stranger arrives with the money that the Mundy sisters need; the community does not band together to lighten the family's load. Michael's ability to step into and out of the play's events via memory and commentary lets the playwright juxtapose the expected snapshots of rural life popular in Irish playmaking alongside the grim end of each sister's story. The resulting effect is that of an Irish west very different from the pristine one imagined—and later exported abroad—in 'brand Ireland' performance.[77]

Complementing the cast of characters whose behavior keeps *Dancing* from reaching a clear pastoral conclusion is an onstage wireless radio that immerses the play in curated music and spectacular dance sequences, but refuses to perform like acoustic instruments in earlier peasant plays. Critics have written on the wireless in *Dancing* as an effective addition to Friel's dialogue-centric style. Robert F. Garratt observes how the play's music and dance "creates a sense of the spectacular, but also shows Friel's willingness to offer music and dance as part of his theatrical aesthetic" (83). Beyond providing spectacle that balances discourse, *Dancing's* wireless radio plays music that parodies its own characters, its plot and its generic conventions. To bring music onstage, *Dancing* introduces the wireless radio as a complex onstage musical instrument enabling the work's iconic—often ironic—dance sequences. Friel's interrogation of the peasant play genre can be most clearly felt in his use of the radio as a misbehaving vehicle for traditional music.

The Marconi's onstage uses and misbehaviors display the affordances and complications of onstage MIMR performances in Celtic Tiger plays. The instrument is *played* by multiple

[77] Productions of *Dancing* from its first American tour forward have been criticized for sentimentalizing the play's sharp edges in a way that actually perpetuates "brand Ireland" ideas of the Irish West. This treatment is most evident in Director Pat O'Connor's 1998 film version of the play which was adapted by Frank McGuiness and starred Meryl Streep.

characters, making its use apparently *dispersible* across performer bodies. Its performances of *fixed* songs from outside of the playhouse is ostensibly *durational* across entire scenes once characters have turned the wireless on. The wireless promises easy operation and reproduceable music for the Mundy sisters. Just as Friel's characters fail to conclude the arcs of romantic reconciliation, faith restoration, or economic resurgence that should follow their struggle in a conventional peasant play, however, the Marconi's performances likewise fail to meet the Mundy sisters' expectations for mechanically reproduced music.

Despite the promise of ease that the wireless offers its 1936 operators, the Marconi repeatedly fails to bring traditional music to the Mundy family. Even when the instrument does play, it ruptures the expectation that *durational* music should continue playing from the press of an on button to the moment it is turned off. In the play's first scene Rose *"goes to the set and switches it on. There is a sudden, loud three-second blast of 'The British Grenadiers'… She is about to launch into a dance—and the music suddenly dies"* (11). The machine halts abruptly and of its own accord rather than being switched off by any specific character, leading Rose to the prosaic assessment that the sisters echo in paraphrase throughout the work: "That aul set's useless."

Beyond turning itself off and preventing durational performance, the Marconi repeatedly fails to work at the press of a button, making the instrument's performance much less dispersible than promised. Chris sums up the inherent helplessness of dealing with an instrument whose mechanical complexity makes it uncontrollable when she claims, "The connections seem to be alright…Maybe a valve has gone—if I knew what a valve looked like" (23). The sisters' frustration with the Marconi grows from the unwelcome complexity of an instrument that promises ease, but eludes control. A modern MIMR promises the sisters durational, fixed, music

that anyone can perform at the press of a button, but the reality of the Marconi's performance shows the loss of control that the Mundy family actually suffers when relying on mechanically reproduced sound performance.

Worse than failing to work when expected, the Marconi performs at unwelcome moments without any character manipulation at all. The wireless provides quotative underscoring regardless of character desire and consent. After the sisters fail to make the Marconi work earlier in the scene, the wireless gives Chris an unexpected soundtrack to rekindle her disastrous entanglement with Gerry. Midway through the former lovers' conversation, "*'Dancing in the Dark'* [plays] *Softly from the radio."* The unexpected music aids an impromptu dance between Chris and Gerry. Chris's eavesdropping sisters congratulate one another for getting the machine to work, before realizing that it has actually started on its own:

MAGGIE: Good for you. What did you do to it?

AGNES: I didn't touch it.

KATE: Turn that thing off, Aggie, would you? (32)

The unpredictable wireless pushes Gerry and Chris together by giving them music to which they can share the dancing that once united them. A similarly unprompted song accompanies a later scene in which Father Jack describes the polygamous, un-Catholic practices of the Ugandan community in which he formerly lived. Midway through his recollection, a stage direction reads "*Music of 'Anything Goes' very softly on the radio*" as Jack's descriptions of his past life increasingly startle his onstage audience (62). The radio's performance affects the Irish characters onstage, but is not *for* them. The songs it plays are instead presented onstage—regardless of character protestation—in order to re-enforce and comment upon the moments' meanings for the theatre audience. Through these unexpected moments of musical underscoring,

characters become unwilling subjects of outside interpretation rather than agents selecting the music that would serve their own needs.

The Marconi's apparent mind of its own exposes doubt over what—if any—control characters actually exert over the radio in the play. Chris sums up the sisters' plight in the play's final pages when she concludes, "possessed that thing [the wireless] is, if you ask me" (69). The assertion of a radio as possessed—controlled or inhabited by inexplicable forces—provides a productive inroad to understanding the radio as a stage instrument that transmits *fixed* sound selected and curated by outside forces beyond the listener's control. The promised ease of durational performance at the press of a button gives way to anxiety over an instrument that provides its own underscore to the events of the sisters' lives. Musical moments like the unexpected performance of "Dancing in the Dark" beg the question of whether the Marconi is simply *uncontrollable*, or whether it is also *in control of* the characters that fail to tame it.

The technology that the Mundy sisters cannot control appears to manipulate or puppet them. *Dancing at Lughnasa's* best-known scene features the sisters dancing to a broadcast of The Chieftain's recording of the traditional reel "The Mason's Apron" in their kitchen.[78] In this scene, the sisters appear to lose themselves wholly by surrendering to the Marconi's music. After an extended dance:

> *The music stops abruptly in mid-phrase. But because of the noise they are making the sisters do not notice and continue dancing for a few seconds. Then* KATE *notices—and*

[78] In the 1999 production, the sisters did not actually dance to the "The Mason's Apron" since the production team did not believe that it had the feel that the scene wanted in performance. While this may seem like a disservice to Friel, it is worth noting that the stage direction calling for this particular recording is itself anachronistic since The Chieftains would not have formed until decades after the events of the play. This timeline oversight—and others within the play—can be explained by the work's memory play structure and framing.

> *stops. Then* AGNES. *Then* CHRIS *and* MAGGIE. *Now only* ROSE *is dancing her graceless dance by herself. Then finally, she, too notices and stops. Silence*. (22)

The sisters are driven to dance by the Marconi's music and appear so consumed by their dance that they do not recognize that the music has stopped. The duration of the dance is dictated by the lifeless wireless rather than by the living characters. Unlike the expected arrangement by which an acoustic instrument only plays when—and as long as—the human operator manipulates it, the Mundy sisters must play catch-up and take their cue from a mechanical scene partner with its own inscrutable agenda.

If analysis of stage directions shows the Marconi insidiously controlling character action throughout the play, Friel also explicitly hints at this inversion of control through his narrator's commentary. In the play's opening monologue, Michael narrates how he "witnessed Marconi's voodoo derange those kind, sensible women and transform them into shrieking strangers" (2). Despite the simplistic nature of Michael's understanding of "voodoo" beliefs, the narrator's description of his dancing aunts accurately describes the unexpected control that lifeless musical instruments of mechanical reproduction exert on stage characters. In earlier Irish plays featuring Irish Traditional Musical instruments, manipulation was ostensibly unilateral as subject actors manipulated object instruments to make sound that was subsequently enjoyed by audiences. This relationship might be considered in terms of the following logic:

	Manipulates		*To Produce*		*That is interpreted by*	
Actor	→	Instrument	→	Music	→	Audience & Characters

The Marconi's role in *Dancing* complicates this paradigm by reversing the relationship of control between living actors and stage objects. In this version of stage logic:

	Plays/Fails to Play		*That drives*		*That is interpreted by*	
An MIMR	→	Music	→	Character Action	→	Audience

In this second model, MIMRs motivate character action for consideration by audiences, regardless of whether characters want to perform those actions or not. This is a particularly fitting arrangement for plays addressing Irish identity within a "brand Ireland" era, since that movement's exportation of Irish culture increasingly decentralized traditional music and dance's local ritual functions and shifted their concerns to how outside audiences would consume those performances.

The misbehaving Marconi in Friel's late-century subversion of the peasant play illustrates how instruments of musical reproduction trouble expectations of character control and agency on globalized post-national Irish stages. The Marconi subverts the functions previously served by acoustic instruments in pre-national and national peasant plays within a play that itself subverts formal peasant play tropes. Friel's 1990 play is especially important as an example of the many ways by which uncontrollable broadcast technologies can decentralize the live performer's pre-eminent position in a tradition of Irish drama long-characterized by argument and plot.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane: **Rocking Chairs, Radios, and Modern Noise**

Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was an unlikely candidate to rise to prominence in either Irish drama or international performance when it was staged in 1996 as a

joint venture by the Druid and Royal Court Theatres. The play's events transpire in the fictional town of Leenane in Connemara with a 1989 setting that was effectively contemporary with the moment at which McDonagh wrote the work. Variously deemed innovative or formulaic, *Beauty Queen* drew upon Irish peasant play conventions while also showing a close affinity with British 'in yer face' drama of the 1990s and the work of film auteurs like Quentin Tarantino (Wallace & Pilný 48). Garry Hynes describes the paradox in discovering and producing McDonagh's first work in the midst of Celtic Tiger prosperity with the candid reflection:

> This is Ireland now, in 1996, we're just beginning to get really up on ourselves, and we're just beginning to think we're absolutely great. And we've left all that fifties stuff behind us. And this guy comes along with a play that's set in Connemara, and it's about an old woman who has a terribly contentious relationship with her forty-year-old daughter. (89)

Hynes' observation is apt: McDonagh's first produced play does display formal and generic inheritances from an Irish dramatic tradition potentially out of step with a rapidly-globalizing nation. Romantic pastoral obsession with the pristine Irish West was certainly a hallmark of the early twentieth-century Literary Revival. *Beauty Queen,* however, troubles a notion of a pristine rural Ireland with a black pastoral plot in which "the cult of Connemara and the culture of weepy Irish nostalgia…[are] treated to a sardonic iconoclasm" as McDonagh addresses questions of onstage Irish self-representation and misrepresentation (Grene 301).

Beauty Queen's plot centers around middle-aged Maureen Folan's turbulent relationship with her aging mother Mag with whom she shares a cottage in fictionalized Leenane. Mag and Maureen spar over food choices, hygiene, and household chores with a contempt bred of extreme familiarity. Conflict escalates between the two characters when Maureen briefly rekindles a past

courtship with emigrant laborer Pato Dooley who apparently offers to bring Maureen with him to Boston. Pato's brother Ray circles in and out of the action as a reluctant message-carrier more interested in watching international soccer matches on the Folan's television than in the complex familial and romantic machinations that the other characters perform upon one another. Mag's reliance on Maureen and Maureen's competing desire to escape Mag lead to revelations of Maureen's history of violence and institutionalization that set up the play's murderous conclusion.

Unlike Ireland's unquestionably globalized position in 1996, McDonagh's fictitious version of Leenane appears both ideologically conservative and isolated from the world around it. Village characters hold grudges for decades at a time and cagily maneuver around one another's wants within a dreary kitchen setting whose *mise-en-scene*—according to John McDonagh—immerses the work in "the world of generalized Irish misery" bereft of modern conveniences (234). Set in the rural west and complete with missed romantic entanglements, interfamilial squabbling, persistent reference to Catholic priest Father Welsh, and Pato's emigration, *Beauty Queen* holds many of the formal qualities one would anticipate encountering in an early twentieth-century peasant play. Like its companion pieces in McDonagh's Aran Islands Trilogy,[79] however, *Beauty Queen* provides clear instances of the black pastoral genre reframing the Irish west and its institutions as "sexually unfulfilled, depleted and demoralized" rather than morally pristine and culturally admirable (Grene 306). *Beauty Queen* is thus situated

[79] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997), and *The Lonesome West* (1999) all take place in a shared fictional Irish landscape. Characters in one play appear familiar with persons and events from other texts, as the notoriously forgettable alcoholic priest Father Welsh is referenced in *Beauty Queen* and appears onstage in *The Lonesome West.* The plays were produced in Ireland, London, and America to critical appreciation in their early years and have since enjoyed robust translation and performance efforts in multiple languages and countries.

in a completely recognizable cottage setting, but also within a morally unhinged version of rural Ireland in which, as Leenane native Ray Dooley states, "It'd be hard to find a priest who hasn't had a babby with a Yank" (372).

Even as *Beauty Queen* and its characters subvert generic expectations of plays about the Irish west, the radio in the play uses modern *noise* frequently seen in avant-garde and Postdramatic theatre experiments to present intentionally misbehaving onstage music. Beyond distorting traditional music with the noise of modernity, the radio's performances decentralize the performing human body from its privileged position in drama by exerting control over characters' movements. Both of these qualities contribute to a dramatic logic in which traditional music played on MIMRs no longer reflects the lived experiences of the Irish characters whose narratives that music supposedly represents.

Unexpected Radio Static: "A biteen loud, is it?"

As in *Dancing*, *Beauty Queen* features a wireless radio that gives *durational* performances of recognizably *fixed* traditional music recordings. The radio within the play can be 'played' by any character, but—like the rest of the objects in the Dolan house—is most frequently handled by Maureen. Also like the Marconi in *Dancing*, the Folan's wireless in *Beauty Queen* defies expectation throughout the play by failing to deliver on the promised ease of modern sound reproduction.

The radio in *Beauty Queen* plays fixed recordings of traditional music, but repeatedly interjects static noise into its performances. When, in Scene One, Mag asks a flustered Maureen: "Will we have the radio on for ourselves?" Maureen starts the wireless, which "*comes on loudly, through static—a nasally male voice singing in Gaelic*" (365). Music that appears *loudly and*

through static demonstrates an apparent failure of the musical instrument to perform the function expected of it. McDonagh affirms the unpleasantness of the radio's loud, static-laced, performance later in Scene One:

MAG. Is the radio a biteen loud there, Maureen?

MAUREEN. A biteen loud, is it? (366)

The promised ease of mechanically reproduced music fails the Folans as the radio's high volume and static distortion add chaotic noise to the play's soundscape and vex onstage characters. The specific and repeated references to static in *Beauty Queen* contribute a decidedly modern soundtrack of noise to the stage presentation of the play, even when the radio fails to perform its intended role for characters within the story.

Scripted static distortion proves especially important as a soundtrack to *Beauty Queen's* bleakest indictments of life in the Irish West. McDonagh, for example, calls for radio static to both obscure actor voices and foreshadow violence in the play's climactic confrontation between Mag and Maureen. After Pato has apparently abandoned Maureen and gone to Boston alone, Scene Seven opens with the direction "*Night.* MAG *is in her rocking chair,* MAUREEN *at the table, reading. The radio is on low, tuned to a request show. The reception is quite poor, wavering and crackling with static*" (406). The radio remains on—"wavering and crackling with static"—throughout the scene as Maureen learns that Mag has destroyed Pato's letter inviting Maureen to join him in Boston. The revelation threatens to doom Maureen to a loveless life caring for Mag. After the characters' argument hits a boiling point, Maureen begins heating the heavily foreshadowed oil on the stove in preparation to scald Mag. In this pivotal moment, Maureen performs her most intentional interaction with the radio, but does so with no regard for that object's normal function of reproducing musical performances. The stage directions read:

"*Pause. The oil has started boiling.* MAUREEN *rises, turns the radio up, stares at* MAG *as she passes her, takes the pan off the boil and turns the gas off, and returns to* MAG *with it*" (411). Maureen turns up the radio's volume in spite of its "quite poor" reception in order to underscore the play's most extreme onstage violence. The poor quality of reception may obscure the music that radios are supposed to reproduce, but the loud static instead plays a technological simulation of the sound of boiling oil. The radio's failure *produces* within the scene even if the product is an unexpected one.

McDonagh's use of increasingly loud static as Maureen assaults Mag exposes the production of *noise* overwhelming *sound* and *signal* as a central function of the radio within *Beauty Queen.* Here, the radio's misbehavior has less to do with whether or not the MIMR plays, and more to do with how noise distorts the radio's intended sound. In *The Origin of Language: Biology, Information Theory, & Thermodynamics*, Michel Serres delineates *noise* from discourse by volunteering that we should consider, "*noise* the set of…phenomena of interference that become obstacles to communication" (66). He asserts that we might consider such interference as a "third man" seeking to interrupt the pathway between assertion and reception of signal (67). Working from a similar position, Lynne Kendrick's *Theatre Aurality* defines seemingly meaningless noise as a meaningful "Politics of Sound." She rehearses a helpful distinction between *sound* as comprised of intentional signals carrying decipherable meaning to audiences in contrast with *noise* as a "that which exceeds our understanding" (104). She explains,

> The advent of modernity and the onset of our technological age sparked a resurgence of noise; it re-emerged as a manufactured entity that interfered in transmission and interrupted reception. Noise became produced and productive, whether we liked it or not,

> and as a consequence, it has become a highly complex basis for the partitioning of sounds and the delineation of meaning (105).

McDonagh uses *noise*—as defined by both Serres and Kendrick—as manufactured interference in transmission of understandable meaning. If one imagines that the purpose of the radio within the drama is to play perfectly clear traditional music, then the static noise interrupts reception of that signal. The radio static in the play, however, is an example of specifically engineered failure that is both intentionally produced and viscerally productive in impacting audience members viewing *Beauty Queen*.

The increasingly noisy sound of radio static *acts on* the audience by providing an apparently meaningless but un-ignorable counterbalance to the dialogic drama appearing onstage. Serres posits that the human vagosympathetic system encountering background noise that seems to have no signal, can still "perceive the signals that we subsume under two broad categories of pleasure and pain" (78). In other words, the body's sympathetic nervous system may involuntarily respond to perceived stresses or dangers present in noise despite the absence of a clear signal indicating imminent danger. By scripting increasingly loud static into his climactic scene of violence and miscommunication, McDonagh shows technological noise acting on character and audience senses. The crackling reception within the scene audibly foreshadows the crackling sound of heating oil for audience members. Maureen embraces the instrument's uncontrollability in the play's violent climax, turning up the static noise as she commits a near-matricide that interrupts a "brand Ireland" notion of the rural Irish West.

Spinning Wheels and Subverted Control: "They don't write songs like that anymore"

Even when the Folan's radio fulfills the music-playing function expected of it, *Beauty Queen* leaves doubt as to whether those performances feature characters that play the radio, or a radio that plays its operators. The play's repeated performances of the ballad "The Spinning Wheel" by Delia Murphy invite speculation into how much control characters can exert over the MIMRs that promise to perfectly tell their cultural stories.[80] Murphy's rendition of "The Spinning Wheel" was recorded in 1939 and tells the story of young Eileen spinning at her wheel by moonlight when her lover approaches. Eileen's happiness is prevented by her blind grandmother who she eventually tricks by covering a clandestine rendezvous with her love with the sound of the wheel spinning slowly in her absence. While *Beauty Queen* shows multiple overlaps and subversions of the ballad's lyrics within its plot, the radio's *durational*—human-free—performance in McDonagh's play mirrors the song's central trick by which a spinning wheel continues spinning after Eileen has escaped her grandmother's watch.

It is a short distance that separates objects that operate without human manipulation from objects whose operation manipulates humans. Scene Eight displays the rupture in expectations of objects that conventionally need human momentum to function. That scene begins:

> *Same night. The only light in the room emanates from the orange coals through the grill of the range, just illuminating the dark shape of* MAG, *sitting in her rocking chair, which rocks back and forth of its own volition, her body unmoving…* (414)

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[80] Christina Hunt Mahoney's "Memory and Belonging: Irish Writers, Radio, and the Nation" (2001) specifically discusses the song in the play within a comprehensive backdrop on radio's thematic place in prominent works of Irish literature and drama across the twentieth century.

The audience observing the play likely considers the dimly lit form of Mag to be alive and rocking her chair. The stage direction, however, explicitly contrasts the motion of the chair that rocks "of its own volition" with the stillness of Mag's "unmoving" actor body. Mag is, in fact, dead, which the audience fully appreciates when, after Maureen finishes recounting her imagined reunion with Pato, "*the rocking chair has stopped its motions.* MAG *starts to lean forward at the waist until she finally topples over and falls heavily to the floor, dead*" (415). It can be tempting to read a dead body propelling a rocking chair as an illogical gap in an otherwise realistic play.[81] Lilian Chambers and Eamonn Jordan, however, explain that in McDonagh's works, "The idea of realism seems to come under enormous pressure, especially when the relationship between cause and effect breaks down, when time is elastic, or where props, symbols, characters, myths and metaphors are manipulated, amplified or foregrounded through staging or dramatic structure" (9). The chair that rocks Mag's lifeless body troubles the play's realism by undermining the eminence human actors hold over lifeless objects on dramatic stages, and the wireless radio builds upon this work at the play's conclusion.

Beauty Queen's final scene proves its most formally interesting as McDonagh uses the radio's performance of "The Spinning Wheel" to trouble the logic by which the rest of the realistic play functions. Patrick Lonergan observes the radio's behavior in the scene as part of the playwright's larger project in which, "The material objects in the set—the poker, the crucifix, the radio, the kettle, the stove—are all shown to function in ways that will surprise and unsettle the audience" ("Theatre and Films" 18). In the case of the radio, Lonergan is referencing the same radio covering up both Maureen's abortive tryst with Pato and her brutal scalding of her mother.

[81] Critics of McDonagh's plotting tendencies pan his reliance on twist endings and grotesqueries as mechanisms for engineering drama. These qualities in his work have not, however, stopped the playwright from generating a critically productive career and loyal audience following.

The radio and rocking chair also unsettle audience expectations by replacing human performer bodies and voices with inanimate objects and mechanically reproduced music in the play's final moments. With the promised ease of durational music that performs without human operation comes the eerie promise of performance that will run to completion without needing a performer at all. In the play's final stage direction:

> '*The Spinning Wheel' by Delia Murphy is played.* MAUREEN *gently rocks in the chair until about the middle of the fourth verse, when she quietly gets up…and looks back at the empty rocking chair a while. It is still rocking gently. Slight pause, then* MAUREEN *exits into the hall, closing its door behind her as she goes. We listen to the song on the radio to the end, as the chair gradually stops rocking and the lights, very slowly, fade to black*" (425)

As a *durational* instrument, the radio does not need ongoing human operation to make music, a fact that McDonagh exploits with a final stage direction that removes human actors entirely from performance. Neither the radio nor the rocking chair need Maureen or Mag after all, as the play fittingly ends with familiar design elements from Irish drama—traditional music and a rustic cottage—finally free from the misfit characters whose misbehaviors steer the work from peasant play expectations to those of the black pastoral. With the radio playing a finally static free rendition of "The Spinning Wheel" to an empty stage, McDonagh uses the MIMR to highlight the characters' inessential role in drama driven by objects that no longer require their manipulation.

As one of the most popular and critically-important dramatic exports from the Celtic Tiger years, McDonagh's black pastoral play presents a version of the Irish West that upends formal and narrative expectations of Ireland and Irish playmaking on a global stage. Within that

project, the static noise of modernity interrupts the ability of both characters and audiences to consume or interpret traditional Irish music played through the play's onstage radio.

The Walworth Farce: (Im)perfect Reproductions and Manipulated Characters

Approximately one decade after McDonagh's *Beauty Queen,* Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce* premiered at the Druid in March, 2006. The work played for audiences experiencing dramatic social and economic shifts within and beyond the playhouse. Justine Nekase and Róisín Stack explain the late 2000s end of Celtic Tiger prosperity as "a rocky year for Irish theater. It was a rocky year for Ireland in general" since "The Celtic Tiger was declared dead in 2008. Property values plummeted, jobs were lost, and government spending was slashed" (124). Appearing as a bookend to Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa's* premier at the onset of Celtic Tiger prosperity, *The Walworth Farce* was a critically successful play from the final years of Ireland's star turn on the world stage. The play does not use the radio to project traditional music into the playing space, but instead uses an "old tape recorder" as an MIMR that mechanically reproduces two notable Irish ballads within the stage action (5). The play's tape recorder functions similarly to the radio's use in earlier Celtic Tiger plays, but shows a further development away from the acoustic traditional musical instrument conventions presented in Ireland's drama from the previous century.

The tape recorder's twenty-first century obsolescence may seem to make it an unusual stage property to appear within a play written for Irish audiences in 2006, but that datedness serves Walsh's play well. An intentional past-ness accompanies the tape recorder in *Walworth* as part of a setting in which, "The décor is at best drab. Everything worn and colourless and stuck in the 1970s" (5). Walsh's connection between tape recorders and characters' attempts to access

lost pasts is not confined to *Walworth.* The idea of the tape recorder as an object that represents stasis reappears obviously in *Walworth's* companion piece, *The New Electric Ballroom*.[82] In that memory play, sisters Clara, Breda and Ada use the tape recorder to provide a *"foley soundtrack roughly pasted together to accompany the story*" (99). Walsh's earlier work *Misterman*, with which this chapter began, clearly shows Walsh thinking about character interactions with MIMRs as a means of revisiting or retelling past events. In each play, characters use tape recorders to help them access and recreate remembered events from pasts that may or may not have actually happened. None of these plays concludes optimistically, as characters remain trapped within infinitely repetitive behavioral patterns that mirror the recordings they use to tell their stories

The Walworth Farce uses the distorted sounds of mechanically reproduced Irish music to motivate characters who are themselves mechanically forced to reproduce fictionalized events from their shared pasts. In the play, Dinny forces his grown sons Sean and Blake to repeatedly reenact a comically idealized fiction of the violent day that saw him exiled from Cork City and into the London council flat that he now refuses to vacate. The daily performance takes on a frantic, competitive element as Dinny promises an acting trophy—which he reliably wins by playing his past self—to the best performance of the day. Dinny's adult sons Sean and Blake perform the various characters (including their younger selves) that round out Dinny's story. Dinny's ritualized farce begins to unravel when local Tesco clerk Hayley follows Sean home to bring him the bag of edible props that he purchases daily for the family's reenactment, but accidentally left at the checkout counter that morning. The play's second act descends into chaos, kidnapping, and interfamilial murder as characters discover the depths to which Dinny will sink

[82] *The New Electric Ballroom* was first produced two years after *The Walworth Farce* in 2008.

to maintain and reproduce his imagined justification for the family's current circumstances. Neither Dinny nor Blake survive to the play's end, as Sean is left alone onstage compulsively replaying a new farce of his own. The malfunctioning tape recorder that should deliver perfect and infinitely reproduceable traditional music is a fitting instrument within Walsh's play about the imperfection and mutability of memory and narrative.

In reproducing the events of his own imagined past, Dinny's tape recorder *cues* his sons to action using two songs: "An Irish Lullaby" and "A Nation Once Again." Unlike the radio (an instrument allowing a near-infinite number of *fixed* song combinations to theoretically underscore the play's dramatic events), or an acoustic instrument (on which an infinite variety of sounds could be made), the tape recorder is an instrument limited to playing those songs which have been captured for reproduction on a cassette tape. The audience may reasonably infer that Dinny's tape holds only two songs and that those two songs have been intentionally selected to support the version of events that Dinny wishes to replay. So, beyond being *durational* in the songs that it performs, and *dispersible* in its button-press operation by multiple characters, the tape recorder is particularly *fixed* and *quotative* in so far as it can only reproduce pre-recorded music that has been specifically curated for inclusion on a single tape.

The recorder's finite repertoire of playable songs serves Dinny's purposes well since he claims to demand exact reproduction by humans and objects performing in the daily play. After Sean fails to bring back the sliced bread from Tesco to make the sandwiches that appear in the story, Dinny rages,

> The story doesn't work if we don't have the facts and Ryvitas aren't the facts…they're not close to the facts. A batched loaf is close to the facts, a bread roll is closer still but a

Ryvita?...A Ryvita's just taking the piss, Sean. A Ryvita's a great leap of the imagination. (13)

Dinny insists that using crackers to stand in for bread in the story's prop sandwiches would destroy 'the facts' of the reenactment. The character's fixation on perfect sandwiches appears increasingly ironic as Sean catches his father inserting a brand new line into the farce within moments of his Ryvita rant. Dinny's fetishization of authenticity crumbles completely in the second act as Sean and Blake reveal how the entire play is a construction of Dinny's mind rather than a reconstruction of lived events.

Dinny's tape recorder can only play the two 'Irish' melodies about individual and national homecomings that he has intentionally selected for repeated performance. The static-laced, high volume performances by the tape recorder, however, shows the instrument's failure to accurately reproduce music from a glorious past with either fidelity or clarity. As a MIMR, the tape recorder allows Dinny to re-contextualize Irish unity anthem "A Nation Once Again," but also distorts sound in ways that acoustic instruments would not. Even though very few events in the play's meta-enactment have not been performed many times before, Dinny's tape recorder continuously startles characters through the overwhelming volume and unexpected suddenness of its mechanically reproduced performances. When the tape recorder first plays "A Nation Once Again," the stage direction reads that, "*suddenly the tape recorder blasts out the Irish traditional song "A Nation Once again." The two of them are startled"* (7). The music is scripted to "suddenly" occurs onstage, with an identical description to a moment later in the play when the characters *"suddenly hear 'A Nation Once Again'...blasting from the tape recorder*" (34). The recorded music startles characters throughout *Walworth*, frequently through an abruptness that defies expectation and—by extension—control. Ease of musical performance at the press of a

button does not help Sean or Blake in the story, but instead subjects them to unanticipated sound that shock them into action.

Even if Sean and Blake could expect the sound of Dinny's tape recorder, the *noise* that the MIMR makes repeatedly overwhelms them. The tape recorder blasts "A Nation Once Again," with a volume that startles Blake and Sean. When the tape recorder is not blasting, it is loudly blaring. In the play's second act, "*BLAKE hits the play button on the tape recorder and 'A nation once again' blares loudly out"(*61). By repeatedly emphasizing the volume and surprise of the MIMR's performance, Walsh's stage directions decentralize the thematically optimistic, melodic song that the tape recorder reproduces and instead describe the startling/overwhelming noise that the instrument produces. The focus on affective sound over meaningful signal is perhaps most present in the potent stage direction closing Act 1. In that moment, "*Loud guttural rhythmic music fades up and fills the stage and auditorium"* (41). Here, music is no longer important for its intended signal, but rather for how it is presented and what visceral impact it exerts on its audience. It does not matter what the music is, as long as it is loud and guttural—or noisy. Whether played through the tape recorder or piped into the audience, music in *Walworth* acts on the bodies of actors and audiences alike. Like in McDonagh's scripting of volume and static manipulation in *Beauty Queen*, modern MIMRs in *Walworth* enable the manipulation of theatrical sound. These moments point towards a re-valuation of ostensibly unwelcome *noise* as productive for the ways that it subverts how characters and audiences encounter music from an Irish past that no longer matches those characters' lived experiences.

Beyond performing music whose noise and distortion undermines its *fixed* qualities, the tape recorder's music also controls character actions throughout the play. Like the Mundy sisters dancing to a broadcasted recording of "The Mason's Apron" in *Dancing,* Sean and Blake are

marionetted by mechanically reproduced traditional music from Ireland's past. Unlike the Mundy sisters, however, Sean and Blake are keenly aware that they are being *played by* the instrument. Sean's awareness of the tape recorder's power appears in the second act, when, "*DINNY puts on the tape recorder and "An Irish Lullaby' begins to play. SEAN tenses up. It can mean only one thing*" (46). Sean's physical response seems an incongruous reaction to the songs lilting first bars, but his tensing up reveals the near-Pavlovian response that repeated exposure to the melody has taught him. The song, for Sean, can "mean only one thing." The "one thing" has nothing to do with the song's lyrics, music, or performance contexts outside of the Walworth apartment, however, as Sean can only perceive the music as a cue for the next action he must perform within the farce. Transformed from an instrument re-playing recorded songs to one playing distorted 'cues' for unwilling performers, the tape recorder empties out the expected signal of the traditional music it performs and takes on a new cueing role that overwrites the original purpose of the song.

Walsh's language of sudden, loud, guttural music shows the playwright's interest in ways that onstage music—stripped of its original musical qualities and contexts—can drive dramatic action. Distorted by the blaring medium of Dinny's tape recorder, "A Nation Once Again" loses its thematic meaning as a call for Irish national unification, instead becoming a cue that Sean, Blake, and the play's audience recognize as prompting the farce's frenetic action. To paraphrase Walsh's stage direction, the song *can mean only one thing* when mechanically reproduced by Dinny's tape recorder: but the one thing it means on stage empties out the song's meanings outside of the playhouse as the song loses its original purpose and message. *Walworth*'s MIMR reflects the play's themes and structure as both the instrument of mechanical reproduction and the dramatic characters must repeat fixed and increasingly decontextualized performances to the

point of exhaustion. The farce's violent conclusion also reflects a broader trend in Celtic Tiger plays in which frustrated Irish characters use acts of physical violence to wrest back control from recorded performances that no longer serve or represent them.

Conclusions: "Brand Ireland," Lost Control, Violent Responses

Musical Instruments of Mechanical Reproduction promised increasingly easy, endlessly reproduceable Irish music performances in both Celtic Tiger Ireland and the plays that that era produced. Paradoxically, the MIMRs that should be *dispersible, durational* and *fixed* repeatedly elude control by onstage characters in plays from the era. Onstage radios and tape recorders in Celtic Tiger drama repeatedly end up controlling the characters that imagine themselves controlling the instruments. Far from coincidence, this state of affairs in bleak Celtic Tiger plays shows playwrights confronting what Ireland and its drama risked *losing* when severing localized connections to acoustic traditional music performance and eschewing locally produced songs in favor of modern reproductions of that music. When characters onstage stop *playing* music for themselves, they are increasingly *played by* a version of "their" music that no longer fits their lives and may never have done so in the first place.

Broadcast instruments that perform music in new contexts and spaces empty the original meanings and contexts out of traditional music. Stripped of their localized cultural or ritual purposes, traditional songs and melodies packaged for global consumption repeatedly fail to represent the black pastoral denizens of Celtic Tiger stages. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Benjamin's "The Work of Art" explains how "technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself" (4). While mechanical reproduction extends the reach of Irish music to otherwise impossible distances, it

also leaves that music inaccessible to a changing Ireland whose recorded music could not keep up with its shifting priorities and identities. Celtic Tiger playwrights from Friel forward stress the foreignness or distance that separates recorded Irish Traditional Music from the lived experience of stage characters. *Dancing* begins with Michael's first monologue remembering "the kitchen throbbing with the beat of Irish dance music beamed to us *all the way from Athlone* [Emphasis mine]" in phrasing that emphasizes the physical distance that the music has traveled in order to reach the family's rural kitchen (2). A similar distance between character experience and traditional music performance appears in *Beauty Queen*, as characters find the radio's music less relatable and enjoyable because of the temporal distance that separates globalized modern characters from older Irish songs. Maureen and Pato agree that "The Spinning Wheel" sounds 'creepy.' Mag pans the performance of Gaelic language songs on the radio as unintelligible. In each case, music is performed *for* Irish characters *by* offstage Irish musicians from the past and mediated by mechanically reproducing technologies controlled by outside agents many miles away. As a result, characters show little affinity for—and no clear resemblance to—the music. The physical distance that reproduced sound travels in radio performance combines with the age of the recordings to highlight a disconnect between stage characters' lives and the songs that ostensibly represent Ireland for global export. This interpretive distance between producers and consumers represents a stark contrast with early century plays like Lady Gregory's *Twenty Five* or Hyde's *An Pósadh,* in which local fiddle players—often neighbors of plays' protagonists—appeared in peasant cottages to provide hyper-local music performances that helped to resolve plots.

Radio broadcasts of Irish music distance onstage characters from both the past moments at which that music was recorded and the urban centers that curate which versions of Irish

culture should be disseminated. As Benjamin points out when discussing film actors, a performance ossified and reproduced by mechanical reproduction “lacks the opportunity… to adjust to the audience during [a] performance, since [it] does not present [its] performance to the audience in person” (10). Within a rapidly globalizing Ireland, the distinctions between the lives that dramatic characters live and the mechanically reproduced representations of Ireland grew increasingly distant from one another. As Pato avers when hearing “The Spinning Wheel” in *Beauty Queen,* “They don’t write songs like that anymore. Thank Christ” (386). Radios promise easier and more reliable performances than ever before to characters in Irish drama, but the fixed music that MIMRs reproduce cannot adjust to meet the lived experiences and needs of its audiences in ways that hyperlocal acoustic performance did in past decades.

The tape recorder only amplifies the distance between Irish music and its interpreters by encouraging global transport and reproduction of Irish music in spaces beyond national borders. Free from reliance on proximity to radio stations, the tape recorder lets mechanically reproduced music perform at any distance from Ireland with infinite repeatability. *Walworth* highlights the transition of Irish music from a hyperlocal to globalized art form by using Hayley—a Black Londoner—as the play’s primary interpreter of Irish music. When Hayley first hears “An Irish Lullaby” on the tape recorder, she closes her eyes and free-associates about the music with a wistful string of Irish stereotypes:

> That sounds nice. Quite old fashioned but I quite like that. (*Slight pause. Closes her eyes*.) Green grass. Stone walls. A little thatched cottage by the river. Little girl with red hair in ringlets sat on a donkey. (*Opening her eyes.*) Does it remind you of back home in Ireland? (46)

Sean replies to Hayley's final question with a monosyllabic indictment: "No." The music does not remind him of Ireland. Despite never having been to that country, Hayley interprets the song within a framework of rustic Irish images recognizable in many versions of globally-distributed "brand Ireland" iconography. Hayley enjoys an imagined image of an Ireland that does not exist—and does not reflect Sean's memory of the country—because of her engagement with a mechanically reproduced simulacra of music that once served local communities and their specific performance needs. While Hayley's reaction to the "quite old fashioned" Irish lullaby and the images that she connects with the music may at first appear to show a series of problematic stereotypes devised by a Londoner misinterpreting Ireland, Hayley should not be faulted for reciting intentionally curated images exported as part of "brand Ireland" culture. The movement of onstage music from live performance for and by individual communities to technologically reproduced simulacra intended for global consumption naturally leads Hayley to imagine an Ireland unrecognizable to Irish native Sean.

The repurposing of cultural properties for global markets ultimately leads to violent acts by frustrated Irish characters contending with instruments that fail to play culturally important music on Celtic Tiger stages. Irish characters in Celtic Tiger plays respond to mechanically reproduced music that they cannot control—and with which they cannot identify—through a vocabulary of violence. Faced with objects that do not tell their stories properly, frustrated characters *play* the misbehaving broadcast instruments with ferocity unseen in plays presenting acoustic instruments. In *Dancing*, characters physically slap the Marconi on multiple occasions: Chris "*turns it off—and slaps it"* (22), later Maggie, "*goes to the set, slaps it, turns it off*" (34). Slapping the wireless to either make or halt music shows a departure from earlier plays featuring acoustic instruments, since those plays staged violence against flutes and fiddles as actions

reserved for anti-musical antagonists with which characters are not meant to identify. In *Beauty Queen,* Mag asks a flustered Maureen: "Will we have the radio on for ourselves?" In response, Maureen *"bangs an angry finger on the radio's 'on' switch. It takes a couple of swipes before it comes on loudly, through static"* (365). The violence of the action and Maureen's failure to turn the radio on at first attempt both draw attention to the radio as an instrument operated by violence. Even Dinny—who uses the tape recorder to orchestrate his sons' performances—is not above hitting the instrument. After Hayley describes her interpretation of "An Irish Lullaby," stage directions state "*Suddenly* DINNY *slams the tape recorder off*" (46). Slapping, banging, swiping and slamming all contribute to a shared vocabulary of physical violence by which characters stop the performance of Irish music that plays versions of Irishness towards which they are obligated either to capitulate or to rebel.

Future Directions

In the height of Celtic Tiger globalization and economic growth, playwrights from Ireland and its diaspora repeatedly scripted performances of culturally important music on instruments of mechanical reproduction that intentionally misbehaved and failed to meet the expectations of Irish stage characters. Faced with instruments that they cannot control—and which frequently control them—characters resort to violence when trying to regain control over copies of copies of the cultural properties that no longer describe their own lives. Irish theatre scholars should read the appearance of broadcast instruments in black pastoral Celtic Tiger plays as an indictment of the (mis)representations that globalizing cultures export to outside audiences. Instruments whose performance is *dispersible*, *durational*, and *fixed* are easy to play, and theoretically perfect in their performances, but cannot change or adapt to new contexts. Over

time, such musical performances grow increasingly removed from the lived experience of those whose culture those performances ostensibly reflect. MIMRs are thus meaningful stage objects that deserve increased attention in Celtic Tiger dramas, as radios and tape recorders subvert their promised functions as surely as those plays' inhabitants fail to fit the generic expectations of the plays into which they have been dropped.

Theatre-makers producing plays that script MIMRs to appear onstage must not overlook the intentional failure of diegetic onstage radios and tape recorders. While it might be tempting to treat onstage MIMRs like any other incidental music cue that conventionally originates from offstage speakers in dramatic plays, separating the two discrete sources of sound origin is essential to highlighting the thematic distinctions between two types of sound that have been designed for wholly different purposes. Diegetic sound played on MIMRs by and for characters within the play should ideally come from an onstage sound source discrete from the speakers and soundboard that frequently provide broadcasted sound cues in plays. Using practical sound sources for onstage MIMRs creates its own challenges as even instruments that misbehave in characters' minds must be scripted to work predictably and consistently from performance to performance. Further, a single onstage tape-recorder may not be expected to make appropriately "blaring" music to fill a large proscenium playing space. If, however, designers do not clearly distinguish diegetic and non-diegetic sound within these Celtic Tiger plays by either discrete sources, volumes, or tonality, then the misbehaving qualities that define those plays' radios and tape recorders on the page disappear in presentation on the stage.

There is no single solution for perfectly sound-designing failing onstage MIMRs across productions. A designer staging the scenes from Walsh's *Misterman* cannot rely on a single diegetic tape recorder to *actually* continue playing music after Thomas smashes it with a

hammer. It is, however, essential to the experience of an audience member that the music Thomas hears should have appeared to come from that tape recorder, or at least from a source discrete from the uninterrogated non-diegetic incidental music which audiences are trained to either ignore or interpret as part of a presentation. Within *Misterman,* Thomas is engaged in an ongoing and contentious dialogue with a recorded version of events that do not match his needs or expectations. In order to facilitate this failing dialogue between the living character and the misbehaving MIMR, the quality of sound produced by onstage MIMRs should reflect the descriptions laid out in texts, since static crackling, blaring, and blasting are features of failing instruments to be elevated within those plays, rather than bugs to be fixed.

Despite a temptation to deliver aesthetically pleasing sound for audiences, designers that ‘clean-up’ scripted sound cues deprive plays of the posthuman influences that motivate characters to hit, slap, or hammer the misbehaving instruments that threaten to control them. To do so would be a considerable misstep since misbehaving radios and tape-recorders are presented onstage *in order to* intentionally fail or control their operators. The action of violently hitting MIMRs is the vocabulary by which actors control or *play* those instruments onstage, even if that motion defies expectations of how musical performance traditionally appears.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions

You can tell a great deal about a theatre tradition's aesthetics and values by clocking where it places different types of performers. Musical instruments and their players are no exception to this rule, and discrete performance styles have evolved their own methods for presenting or obscuring theatre musicians. Noh drama's *hayashi-kata* traditionally leaves players visible along the stage's backdrop; galleries in early modern English playhouses seem to have put them closest to the heavens. Richard Wagner's Bayreuth *Festspielhouse*, conversely, banished its orchestral musicians to an unseen pit where they have remained in a majority of mainstream western musicals and operas since. The pit orchestra has proved an enduring spatial phenomenon with lasting academic repercussions, as theatre instrumentalists have spent much of the twentieth-century out of both audiences' sight and scholars' minds.

The years 2019-2021 were an interesting time to be writing about humans playing musical instruments on dramatic stages.[83] One hundred and forty-four years after Wagner's opera house gave birth to the pit orchestra, the rise of actor-musicianship in experimental work and Broadway blockbusters alike showed signs of theatre musicians attaining onstage visibility with increasing frequency. The 2010s saw a rise in projects that conceptually pushed back against musician's invisibility as productions took theatrical warhorses that conventionally used pit instrumentalists, and restaged them with highly visible onstage actor-musicians. Whether these productions brought the orchestra onstage as supernumeraries (Michael Longhurst's 2018 *Amadeus* with the Southbank Sinfonia for the National Theatre) or collapsed onstage characters and musicians into single performer tracks (Alan Mendes' 2014 *Cabaret* with Roundabout

[83] Or, rather, it *was* an interesting time until March, 2020, at which point Covid-19 precautions banished nearly all American theatre performers from their work.

Theatre Company), they troubled long understood boundaries between musicians and actors on dramatic stages. With these high-profile productions, established canon has been getting a second look as theatre-makers reevaluate whether instruments should be seen, or simply heard, in production.

Nor are revival productions the only recent works showing the potential for reimagining the power of visible musical instruments and musicians within theatre. International successes like Enda Walsh's *Once* (2011), David Greig and Wils Wilson's *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2011), and Dave Molloy's *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812* (2012) all boast actor-musicianship built into their performance texts in ways that make those plays impractical to imagine without the use of onstage instrumentalists. In America, the 2000s have seen a rise in the revival of jukebox musicals demanding that actor-musicians play guitar, piano, and various rock'n'roll instruments in populist touring productions like Alan Janes' *Buddy—The Buddy Holly Story* (1989) or Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux's *Million Dollar Quartet* (2006) The theatre-goer attending a play in pre-Pandemic 2020 would be more likely to see a musician playing an instrument in a theatre production's main playing space than at any other time in recent memory. With the rise in musical instruments and instrumentalists featuring prominently in well-received plays comes the need to better understand—and better question—how musical instruments work in drama. This is particularly important in light of theatre's capacity to dramatically transform the semiotic meanings that culturally specific objects possess when appearing on stage. As more and more instrument-heavy plays populate highly visible theatre stages, a corresponding rise in discourse on musical instruments must follow.

This dissertation has focused specifically on instances at which instruments have been explicitly scripted into Irish drama. Each chapter, however, has also introduced broader

questions about how musical instruments can make meaning in any sort of drama. Taken together, early twentieth-century Irish plays *An Pósadh, Twenty-Five, The Fiddler's House*, *The Turn of the Road*, and *The Jew's Fiddle* show fiddles that carried important cultural meaning onstage, even when un-played. Supernatural dramas like *The Unicorn from the Stars, The Dandy Dolls*, and *The Pipe in the Fields* prove that the ways by which a musical instrument *is played* can make more profound meaning for audiences than what that instruments *is*. Nearly a century later, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Walworth Farce*, and *Misterman* show characters using musical instruments of mechanical reproduction (MIMRs) to play ossified representations of inaccessible Irish identities with which characters interact and physically attack. In their own ways, fiddles, flutes, radios, and tape recorders all make meanings for audiences when presented on dramatic stages: meanings that often have little or nothing to do with the music that those instruments play outside of playhouses.

This dissertation has explored examples from Irish drama to respond to a need for more robust conversation about how dramatic stages transform musical instruments, but its specificity in confining itself to Irish examples is a logical one in light of the historical and enduring connections between Irish drama and that nation's music. The ubiquity of traditional musical instruments in plays from Ireland's twentieth century is a clear, but astoundingly under-examined, feature of a dramatic canon that has itself attracted considerable scholarly attention. Fiddles and flutes are unsurprising presences on Irish dramatic stages for anyone attuned to the instruments' importance in either Irish Traditional Music, or Ireland's twentieth-century cultural revival. As Eugene McNulty writes, "a major element of any cultural-nationalist project is the (re)discovery of narratives and/or spaces that may be deemed exceptional, exclusive, or indeed, 'sacred' (13). Dramatists seeking pre-Anglicized, de-Anglicizing art forms would have found

musical instruments to be exceptional Irish stage objects that could bring both culturally valuable social histories and predisposed audiences to their new dramatic contexts.

The story of twentieth-century ITM is too complicated a narrative to encompass within a project about theatre productions, but studying traditional music and instruments appearing in plays can help scholars to more completely tell that story. Theatrical representations of traditional music rely upon resonances created by musical instruments' cultural lives outside of playhouses. Understanding traditional musical instruments in Irish drama as part of a gradual move from the private and hyperlocal gatherings to public and global performances helps to situate the ways that ITM came to be understood both at home and abroad during the century. Since moving into more public contexts, ITM has seen multiple cultural and technological shifts that pushed the music from a social-dancing accompaniment to its own performance tradition. Events like the rise of radio in the 1930s, the folk music revival in the 1970s and the emergence of Riverdance and other Celtic Tiger stage acts in the 1990s all made music available to increasingly broad—eventually global—audiences. The emergence of ensemble playing discrete from dancing in concert halls and pub sessions in the 1950s-1960s likewise profoundly shaped the potential applications Irish music as its own art that could thrive without connections to social dance in the latter end of the century. As musical instruments grew increasingly discrete from dance performance, they also enjoyed increasingly exciting application within Ireland's dramatic playhouses.

This project has aimed for thoroughness, but leaves clear and considerable space for continued analysis. There are many more traditional musical instruments that could have inspired chapters in this work, as well as entire decades of Irish playmaking in which certain instruments were especially prevalent. In order to provide a broad picture of musical performance on

twentieth-century Irish stages while still meeting its time and space constraints, the project has focused on decades that opened and closed the long twentieth-century, while only briefly visiting examples from the intervening decades. The beginning and end of a century may seem arbitrary starting and finishing lines for a project, but both periods represented moments of social/artistic upheavals within Ireland, its music and its theatre. This does not diminish the importance of musical plays from the decades between those that I consider. Irish drama of the mid-twentieth century, for example, is not represented at length in this project, but saw traditional instruments used in an array of ways within a variety of dramatic works. Brennan's melodeon in Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses For Me* (1943), the piano in Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* (1958), the bodhran in John B. Keane's *Sive* (1959), and the harp in Joseph O'Conor's *The Iron Harp* (1955) are just a few examples of dramaturgically important ITM instruments whose particular dramatic functions reflect the socio-historical moments of their plays first productions. These instruments and plays deserve ongoing scholarly consideration and more robust performance traditions. It is my hope that ideas developed in this study can help future scholars and producers approach these works with an expanded tool kit for handling their ingrained instrumental performances.

It is one thing to observe how and why musical instruments appeared in specific clusters of plays at specific historical moments; it is another thing to define the forward applicability of these observations. I see this project's ongoing relevance to Irish Studies and Theatre/Performance scholarship emerging from two veins of continued study that it invites. First, I want to push scholars and practitioners to reconsider how they might group and differentiate works of drama (Irish and otherwise) and, second: I hope to encourage a reexamination of plays that have not historically enjoyed scholarly attention or consistent staging.

As this project has shown, specific musical instruments enjoyed moments of increased popularity that were grounded in the zeitgeist of the socio-historical moments during which they were written. Plays that choose to narratively highlight the same stage instruments are frequently concerned with similar thematic or narrative concerns as one another, but they need not share anything beyond the use of a single music instrument in order to enjoy productive—often overlooked—theatrical resonances. Rutherford Mayne's *The Turn of the Road* and Padraic Colum's *The Fiddler's House* are conspicuously linked to one another in their similar narrative structures, discursive arguments over the role of fiddle music in Irish society, and peasant play *mise-en-scenes*. Leaving these conventional measures for connecting dramatic texts aside, I posit that Mayne and Colum's shared use of the onstage fiddle is itself a sufficiently meaningful through-line for grouping the texts together in both scholarship and performance. In other words, the shared use of the fiddle as a singularly important stage property invites modern scholars to reconsider the plays as bound together within a 'fiddle play' repertory.

The idea of reading plays as belonging in 'repertory' with one another because of the recurring instruments that populate different texts is a new means of examining and writing about onstage musical instruments, but not wholly novel in addressing stage properties. As Andrew Sofer explains in *The Stage Life of Props*, as objects "move from play to play and from period to period, [they] accrue intertextual resonance as they absorb and embody the theatrical past" (2). Re-drawing links between Irish plays in terms of their use of specific musical instruments can help scholars to consider well-studied texts in terms of their accrued intertextual resonances.

Connecting texts according to the musical instruments that they employ allows scholars and playmakers freedom to transcend linguistic, geographical, or political distinctions that might

otherwise prevent intertextual analysis of plays that share onstage instrument use. Hyde's *An Pósadh* and Gregory's *Twenty-Five* are contemporary to one another and display remarkably similar messages, but are very seldom categorized together in large part because of the language barrier that distinguishes one from the other.[84] Coming from further afield, Richard Hayward & Abram Rish's *The Jew's Fiddle* appears to resist categorization alongside plays written by either of the Abbey's core dramatists, since it was written for the Belfast-based Ulster Theatre. Reading the three plays as part of a single intertextual—and inter-performative—conversation among playwrights concerned with onstage fiddles, however, creates a new repertory through-line that can trouble the entrenched lines segregating work written for and within different corners of Ireland.

Re-categorizing Irish dramatic texts in terms of the onstage instruments that they share promises a second benefit by inviting re-examination of playwrights and texts that have been occluded from—or eclipsed within—the twentieth-century narrative of Irish theatre history. While the long twentieth century was never short of household-name playwrights whose works and biographies fill anthologies and theatre marquees, the era has also produced a remarkable body of viable work demanding greater attention. For every Yeats, O'Casey, Friel, and McDonagh enjoying ongoing international production, translation, and publication triumphs, is a similarly innovative Fitzmaurice, Murray, and Reid awaiting the attention that often follows canonization.[85] The process of theatrical canonization has never been an objective meritocracy,

[84] This is especially surprising since Gregory translated the first English publication of Hyde's Irish language play.

[85] Even these examples undersell the point since these playwrights have themselves enjoyed publication, production, and critical appraisal of varying levels at moments in the twentieth century. It is this paper's hope that a new method for intertextually grouping and evaluating plays could unearth still more obscure works.

as Mary Trotter outlines how the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey's primacy in Irish drama discourse largely came from those companies' leaders leaving "a broad paper trail for contemporary critics and audiences and, later, for theater historians" (XV). Partially in answer to my own dissatisfaction with canon and its associated biases against those elements of theatrical performance that resist textuality, this dissertation has lifted up obscure texts like *The Dandy Dolls*, and *The Pipe in the Fields* in order to consider how the sum of the texts read together through the lens of an instrument in performance may be more artistically interesting or academically meaningful than any one example read alone. By shifting focus to the use of a common instrument in performance—and away from grouping plays according to a single playwright, producing institution, geographic center, or genre—this project intentionally pulls forward plays from the margins of Ireland's dramatic traditions. A 'repertory reading' style that privileges the importance of objects traveling across plays may prove particularly fruitful in reclaiming texts that have fallen by the wayside in the story of Ireland's dramatic traditions. Within such a repertory reading style, musical instruments are particularly useful objects to track because of the cultural specificity and the unique performance vocabularies that this dissertation has explored at some length.

Now is the time for dramaturgical re-evaluation of play-texts according to their use of onstage musical instruments. Neither is the call for re-imagining Irish canon a strictly academic one. With the rise in actor-musicianship and onstage instrumental performance permeating twenty-first century American and European theatre, artists and audiences are more prepared than ever to produce and consume theatre productions that incorporate live instrumental performance. Revisiting Irish dramatic history in terms of its onstage instrumental performances during such a friendly moment for actor-musicianship promises an opportunity to revise the

evaluations of past canon-shapers and create a broader image of twentieth-century Irish drama that better serves today's audiences.

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