

The rhythmic dimension in fiddle-playing as the music moves to newer performing and learning contexts

Matt Cranitch

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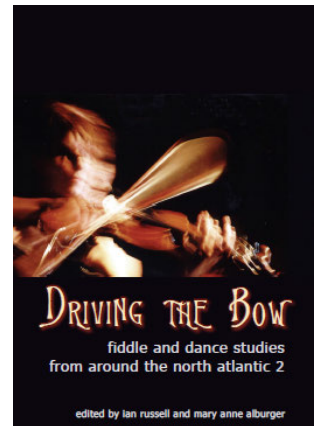
Driving the Bow

Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 2

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The rhythmic dimension in fiddle-playing as the music moves to newer performing and learning contexts

MATT CRANITCH

Introduction¹

It is almost certainly the case nowadays that many young Irish traditional fiddle-players seldom if ever play for dancers, despite the fact that their primary repertoire is predominantly dance music. The situation may well be the same in this regard for their teachers and mentors. Therefore, as the music is being transmitted from one generation to another, and into newer performance contexts, it must be asked if the rhythmic dimension and related aspects of the music are being overlooked in this process. From my own perspective, especially within the milieu of presenting workshops and master-classes at home in Ireland as well as abroad, I sense an increasing lack of awareness of such central features. The imperative for many seems to concentrate on ‘learning more tunes’, with less emphasis being placed on ‘the how’ of the playing. The notes of a tune, in terms of pitch considerations primarily, are somehow seen as constituting the tune. Other factors relating to the playing, many of them hidden from sight, at least overtly, are frequently ignored.

Dance tunes which are played for dancing have an obvious rhythmic aspect. I suggest that, when such tunes are played for listening, they still should have a very real rhythmic impetus, even if it is not the same. The true character of each tune-type, be it reel, jig, hornpipe, polka, slide, or other, depends on its own particular idiomatic dynamic enunciation. In the absence of such, the individual rhythmic identities of the tunes tend to be submerged, something which often leads to the situation, for example, where a hornpipe can sound like a reel. In this respect, for example, well-known hornpipes like ‘Kitty’s Wedding’ and ‘The Boys of Bluehill’ are frequently played in this manner. Indeed I have even heard a hornpipe being included in a set of reels, with no distinction being made between it and the actual reels played before and after – it was as if there was no difference between these individual dance metres. The way the tunes were played made them sound the same in almost all respects except with regard to the notes of the melodies.

Bowing²

Central to imparting the characteristic rhythm and appropriate articulation to the type of tune being played is the bowing, a point echoed by Tomás Ó Canainn,

saying that 'the whole character of the music depends on bowing more than on any other single item',³ and by Earl Spielman when he states that bowing 'accounts for a tremendous part of what we refer to as performance style'.⁴ Bowing is taken in the widest sense in this discussion, and includes such specific aspects as bowing sequences and patterns, as well as rhythmic articulation and accentuation. However, detailed consideration of such fundamental features of fiddle-playing is often not considered to be a high priority, and is often ignored in favour of the acquisition of increased repertoire. The situation as to the suggested 'rhythmic deficit' can even be more acute in the case of what may be termed 'minority' tunes, such a description referring to their lower 'rate of occurrence' within the wider general tradition. Examples are the polkas and slides of the Sliabh Luachra tradition.⁵ In relation to the respective rhythmic characteristics of these particular tune-types, there may not be in general circulation a great deal of information with which the performing process might be informed.

The role of the bow is all the more remarkable when it is realised that the actual contact area between the bow-hairs and the fiddle-string is so small. Yet all the expressive qualities of the bowing-hand, in terms of its sensitivity and power, are applied to the fiddle through the bow, by means of this tiny fragile link: at this point of contact and intersection, so much depends on so little. This is not at all to say that the left hand, the fingering hand, has little to contribute – far from it! However, it may very well be said that the bowing contributes so much more than merely 'playing the notes', and thereby making the sound: indeed it plays an essential role in giving the music its full meaning. It is with the bow that we get to the heart of the music, or as Batt Scanlon said, 'The bow may be termed the soul of the instrument to which it is applied'.⁶

Rhythmic articulation

Among the many diverse facets of bowing are those which are more overtly obvious and at times even visible, such as the very making of the sound, whether notes are slurred or played separately, and in relation to bow direction. Less clearly noticeable perhaps are the ways in which the various sequences and patterns of notes are articulated by the bow, alternately up and down with appropriate accentuation and timing, thereby generating the particular rhythms of the different tune-types. In other words, the bow not only makes the notes, but also plays a central role in imparting to each tune its identifiable rhythmic personality. As Tony DeMarco and Miles Krassen point out, 'Bow control is responsible not only for tone but also for good timing and the distinctive rhythm that characterizes jigs, reels, and hornpipes'.⁷ From a more general perspective, Hollis Taylor considers that 'music is really dance', and goes on to talk about 'everything the bow can do to impart rhythm and dance and groove'.⁸ Furthermore, in an overall sense, the manner in which each individual player expresses the music, especially its rhythmic dimension, by means of their own way of bowing, contributes significantly to creating personal styles of playing. With reference to the question of regional styles of playing, particular traits and

identities that are manifest in this wider context are also very much associated with bowing.

In addition to the process of bowing note sequences and patterns in different particular ways, by means of slurring and/or individual bows, it is also the case that certain notes in each bar are accentuated appropriately for the tune-type in question, and the bow plays a crucial part. The manner in which the rhythmic identity of the tune is expressed owes a great deal to the combination of the bowing sequences and the way in which both the notes and bow-strokes are articulated, as well as how the various different kinds of ornamentation are integrated into this process.

Even though the accentuation patterns for the individual tune-types vary significantly, it may sometimes be implied that somehow they are 'all the same', perhaps anecdotally, and through the usage in a general sense of the term 'Irish Style' of fiddle-playing. This seems to suggest that there is a single way of playing Irish fiddle tunes, as distinct from, say, Appalachian ones. However, this misses the point that Irish style embraces an 'Irish' way of playing reels, an 'Irish' way of playing jigs, and similarly of playing the various other kinds of tunes. Each of these has certain articulatory features that are present in all tunes of that class, so transcending the playing of the individual musician. At the same time, it is the case that each player exhibits a particular way of playing all the tunes in their repertoire, thereby constituting their personal playing style, perhaps what Sheila Randles means when she says that 'It is not unusual for fiddle-players to develop an idiosyncratic style of phrasing and articulation and thus apply it to what they play'.⁹

Looked at in another way, player A differs from player B in the way that they play jigs, for example. However, there are certain features common to how both play this kind of tune, but which at the same time are different from those found in the playing of reels, for instance. Similarly, certain commonalities are evident in how each of them plays across all the tune-types, despite the fact that there are significant differences in the detail of how these are played. Perhaps the relationship between these variables can be represented by a matrix, as is shown in Figure 1, with the columns denoting the characteristics of the different tune-types, and the rows corresponding to the individual's style of playing. Throughout each column and each row, respectively, certain features are common. The cell at the intersection of a tune-type with a particular player corresponds to how that class of tune is played by that player. For example, the highlighted cell refers to how a reel is played by player C.

	Tune-type characteristics				
	Polka	Reel	Hornpipe	Jig	Slide
Style of player A					
Style of player B					
Style of player C					
Style of player N					

Figure 1 Matrix representing tune-type characteristics versus individual style of playing

Polka rhythm

To elaborate on the point that each tune-type has its own unique characteristic rhythmic features, the polka, as played within the Sliabh Luachra tradition, will now be considered in detail. While it may be true that, in many cases, the ‘notes’ of a polka can be sounded without too much difficulty, I suggest that it is an entirely different matter to articulate them with the relevant rhythmic impulse. Indeed I often feel that, in a certain sense, the relative ease with which the notes themselves can be played may somehow be inversely proportional to the difficulty involved in creating the appropriate rhythm and ‘swing’. And, unless the tune is imbued with these characteristics, then much of its real essence is missing, at least within the context of the Sliabh Luachra tradition. In marked contrast, polkas take on their full meaning in the hands of players who understand this music, people like ‘The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master’, Pádraig O’Keeffe (1887–1963), and his pupils such as Denis Murphy (1910–1974), Julia Clifford (1914–1997), and Johnny O’Leary (1923–2004). With particular regard to Johnny’s playing, Terry Moylan considers his polkas to be as ‘complex and interesting’ as reels might be when played by another musician. He also alludes to the gamut of rhythmic possibilities which can feature in the playing of polkas, and, in so doing, is surely underscoring the importance of the rhythmic dimension with regard to articulating and expressing the music:

A bar typically consists of two quaver doublets. Each quaver may be divided into two or more sub-units, or two or more quavers may be combined to make a longer note. The choice of which of the four to divide or combine, along with the range of possible sub-divisions and the effects of juxtaposition with similarly varied bars within the musical phrase, makes available a large range of rhythmic devices. Johnny uses these judiciously in his polkas, to such effect that polkas in his hands can sound as complex and interesting as reels in the hands of somebody else. For someone used to the pedestrian way that polkas are treated by so many players, Johnny’s playing of them always comes as quite a surprise.¹⁰

In my personal experience of teaching people to play the various different tune-types on the fiddle, I have found that, even though the polka’s melodic features

may often be considered uncomplicated, its rhythmic articulation is very often what those from outside the Sliabh Luachra tradition find most difficult to realise in their playing, and also to retain. This particular rhythmic identity can be so elusive for those who do not have the apposite performance contexts relating to both the music and dance of the area. Johnny McCarthy, who finds that the polka's 'simplicity is an attraction',¹¹ also notes, 'It is in the performance that the subtle complexity which lies within the polka is portrayed'.¹² He goes on to refer to the significant insight that the musicians of the area have of their own music, something which is evident in how they play, particularly when compared to those from outside the tradition. He suggests further that the very features which are most strongly identified with this particular tune-type are also those which may be thought of by some as being the less important:

Due to deep understanding of the form, the local musicians can capture the nuances and swing of the tunes, a feature often missed or misinterpreted by musicians from outside the area. However it is exactly these features that some musicians regard as being inferior – simplicity, rhythm, phrasing, for example – on which the strength of the form can be established.¹³

While the melodic aspects of a polka, as well as various other features, all contribute to creating the 'whole' tune in its entirety, there is no doubt that it is the way in which it is played that truly makes it what it is. Fundamental to this is the characteristic rhythm, in which 'the second and fourth quaver in each bar are emphasised slightly'.¹⁴ Because there are four quavers in each bar, with the beat occurring on quavers one and three, the stress is placed on the 'off beat', as illustrated in part I of the well-known polka 'The Top of Maol', shown in Figure 2.¹⁵ However, the kind of emphasis which is idiomatic to this music is not the kind of accent which may be encountered in other musics, where it may sometimes be quite abrupt, but is rather like a swelling effect on the notes in question, and, 'is achieved by pressing slightly on the bow with the first finger, and at the same time moving it a little faster'.¹⁶ It is often more noticeable on a crotchet, where it occurs on the second half of the note, and therefore on the second half of the bow-stroke: the same may be true if two quavers are slurred together in one bow, as frequently happens in this style of music. I suggest that this may well be what Seán Ó Riada had in mind when he spoke of the 'West Limerick–North Kerry' style of bowing as being 'cross-single-bowing. That is, the accent frequently falls on the second of a couple of slurred notes'.¹⁷ With regard to his designation of this composite region as a stylistic area, perhaps he intended it to incorporate Sliabh Luachra, particularly given his great admiration for, and friendship with Denis Murphy, from whom, presumably, he acquired a great deal of knowledge about this music.

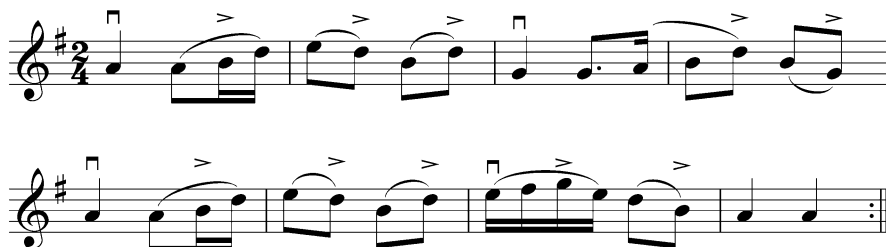


Figure 2 Part 1 of the polka 'The Top of Maol', illustrating the 'off-beat' accent.¹⁸

At times, the off-beat emphasis is accompanied very effectively by a form of double-stopping or droning which involves playing the 'drone note', not continuously, but rather in a somewhat pulsed manner to coincide with the melody notes of rhythmic importance. This has the effect of imparting additional emphasis to these accented notes, thereby underlining and perhaps reinforcing the characteristic off-beat articulation. The drone is usually on an adjacent open string, generally below but possibly above, and at times may be fingered. This form of droning can often sound as if it is occurring almost incidentally rather than being played intentionally. Also, there may appear to be a certain randomness and unpredictability about it, almost as if the drone string is being played accidentally. However this is not at all the case, although it may often appear to be so. These stylistic features are also described by Johnny McCarthy, when in relation to accentuation, he says, 'In the fiddle technique, this is very often achieved by leaning on the down-bow which frequently results in striking the adjoining string thus giving the impression of double stopping'.¹⁹

A further insight may be gained by considering in more detail the actual bowing process involved. When the bow is positioned in order to play on a particular string, the 'clearance' between the bow-hairs and the adjacent strings is very little. By adjusting the horizontal orientation of the bow very slightly, it is possible to continue playing on that one string, but simultaneously to have the bow almost touching the neighbouring string, but not quite. With the bow thus positioned, any downward increase in pressure, applied in order to accentuate a particular note, also results in the bow touching the adjacent string, and thereby causing it to sound. If such action continues over the duration of a number of accented notes, then the pulse-like droning effect becomes apparent. The overall result is to enhance the way in which the inherent rhythmic dynamic is expressed.

The degree to which the particular kind of off-beat stress under consideration is used can vary noticeably throughout a tune – it is not at all uniform with regard to both extent and intensity. In effect, it is being modulated continuously by the player to create the appropriate rhythmic drive, and at the same time maintain musical interest. The fact that it is not predictable adds greatly to the vitality of the music, especially in the hands of the great players. Furthermore its use varies from one musician to the next: in the case of some players, it can be quite obvious and overt, while in the playing of others it is more subtle and understated, perhaps almost to

the point of seeming to be not present, but not quite. Either way, it is an integral part of how a polka is played: without such rhythmic expression, the tune would sound ‘flat’ and lifeless. However, this is not something which Sliabh Luachra musicians themselves think about consciously, or indeed talk about, but rather is it a part of the way in which they play.

This kind of rhythmic enunciation is clearly to be heard in Pádraig O’Keeffe’s music, with the off-beat emphasis being very much variable in extent and intensity, but nonetheless a key feature. This effect is audible throughout his playing, for example in his performance of ‘O’Sullivan’s Polka’.²⁰ Specifically, it can be heard that, in bars 3 and 4 for instance, two quavers or their equivalent are slurred in each bow, with the idiomatic accentuation occurring on quavers two and four, in the second half of the bow-stroke. The characteristic slurring sequence of two quavers per bow, with two bows per bar, which may perhaps be referred to as a ‘2-2’ bowing pattern, is to be seen in many of his manuscripts. However, the extent of the usage of this kind of bowing varies, as the slurred note patterns are, at times, interspersed with single-note bows. Such may be seen in the untitled ‘Polka’ shown in Figure 3 (a), which is written in his own notation method, with a transcription in standard notation given in Figure 3 (b).²¹

Polka

(a)

(b)

Figure 3 Untitled ‘Polka’:²² (a) Pádraig’s notation²³ (b) Transcription in standard notation²⁴

The over-riding feeling produced by the kind of rhythmic articulation being discussed here is one of on-going rhythmic pulsation, perhaps as described by Dorothea E. Hast and Stanley Scott when they state: 'Sliabh Luachra players tend to use distinctive ostinato²⁵ rhythms in their bowing'.²⁶ The effect is to give a continuous impetus and flow to the music, as it moves forward with respect to time. Such was also observed by Breandán Breathnach when he said, with specific reference to the accordion playing of Johnny O'Leary, that 'the sustained pulse and forward thrust which are noticeable in his dance music makes dancing compulsive for his listeners'.²⁷ The characteristic rhythmic 'swing', that becomes an intrinsic part of the polka as a result of how it is played, 'simultaneously provides the beat required by the dancers, while weaving a trance-like dimension into the texture of the music'.²⁸ This mantra-like attribute of the music, arising from the way it is played, is also alluded to by Johnny McCarthy in saying, 'The effect is one of pulsive [pulsing] monotony. The recurrent stress on the off-beat produces this pulse, which continues throughout the entire piece. This, together with melodic simplicity, often creates a performance of hypnotic effect'.²⁹ Such qualities of the rhythmic drive are also implied by Fintan Vallely when he talks of 'pulsing, mantric [sic] polkas',³⁰ albeit in reference to the playing by Máire O'Keeffe, Johnny McCarthy and myself of 'Din Tarrant's Polka / John Keane's Polka / John McGovern's Polka'.³¹

Dynamic accentuation

The concept of dynamics is one that is not generally thought of in the context of traditional music, probably because of the perception that overall volume levels remain relatively constant, such as may be considered, for example, as applying to 'Baroque music [...] [where] level planes of volume are often implied'.³² However, if the term 'dynamics' is taken as referring to 'the aspect of musical expression resulting from variation in the volume of the sound',³³ then it is surely also applicable to traditional music, but in a particular way. While it may be largely the case that, in this music, volume *per se* does not change dramatically, as happens in other genres, nonetheless there is an ongoing variation in this parameter, but on a different time scale. The issue relates not so much to the idea of volume as in 'loud' and 'soft', but rather to its temporal (that is 'time') aspects. Any changes that are manifest in this variable quantity correspond to the rate of rhythmic articulation being expressed in the tune itself.

I would now like briefly to consider the question of accentuation from the alternative perspective of audio-frequency signal analysis, in the realm of which, a time-domain waveform is a plot of signal amplitude versus time – that is a graph of the ongoing level or magnitude of the sound with respect to time. Normally, the horizontal axis represents time, with the vertical axis indicating signal amplitude, in relation to which, the greater the displacement of the signal from the centre line, the louder it sounds. The waveform for Pádraig O'Keeffe's playing of bars 1 to 4 of 'O'Sullivan's Polka',³⁴ to which reference has already been made, on the repeat of the

tune at about 31 sec on the track, is shown in Figure 4 (a), with the five vertical lines delineating the four bars. The corresponding notation is given in Figure 4 (b).

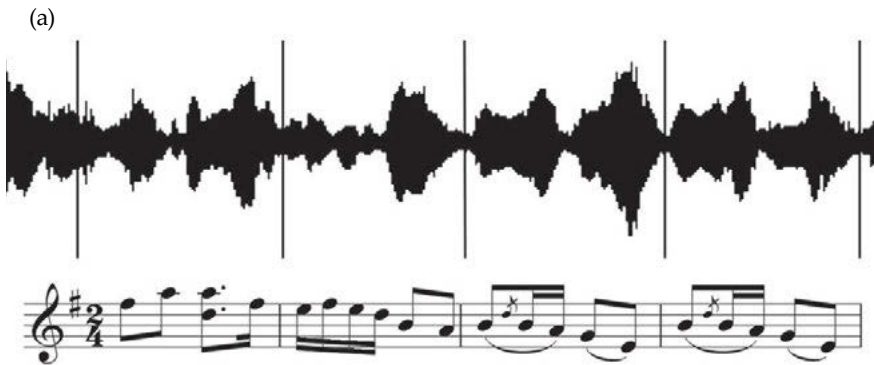


Figure 4 Bars 1 to 4 of 'O'Sullivan's Polka', as played by Pádraig O'Keefe:

(a) Time-domain waveform (b) Standard notation³⁵

As may be seen, the amplitude³⁶ is not constant throughout, but rather is changing continually with time, the fluctuations providing a visual representation of the articulation of the tune. To a certain extent, these relate to the parameters of loud *f* and soft *p*, but more so to the accentuation and emphasis of individual notes, particularly those adjacent to each other. It is in the latter sense that an increase in amplitude, that is a swelling effect, is discernable on the waveform plot. However, it is not so noticeable in the bar which features the semiquaver note grouping. Nonetheless, the points of relative emphasis on the waveform coincide with the off-beat quavers, thereby manifesting the polka's characteristic accentuation.

Furthermore, another 'hidden' phenomenon is taking place simultaneously which contributes to the effect created by the kind of bowing that is idiomatic of the style. When a fiddle-string is bowed, the extent to which harmonics (partials or overtones) are generated, and, hence the resulting timbre, depends on the bow pressure and on the actual position of the bow on the string. By playing louder, that is leaning on the bow and perhaps moving it faster, the amplitude of the waveform increases, as has been seen, but also the higher harmonics are 'excited' to a greater degree, or perhaps, as may be expressed in lay terms, the more apparent and significant do the higher harmonics become, and hence the more intense the sound. In other words, the action of playing louder, not only increases the signal level in itself, but also it alters the timbre, or sound quality, in such a way as to contribute to an increased perception of loudness. These various matters are addressed in an un-credited website essay dealing with many aspects of the violin, including bowing technique and the physics of the instrument:

The violin produces louder notes when the player either moves the bow faster or pushes down harder on the string. The two methods are not equivalent,

because they produce different timbres; pressing down on the string tends to produce a harsher, more intense sound. The location where the bow intersects the string also influences timbre. Playing close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*) gives a more intense sound than usual, emphasizing the higher harmonics; and playing with the bow over the end of the fingerboard (*sul tasto*) makes for a delicate, ethereal sound, emphasizing the fundamental frequency.³⁷

While the presence of the appropriate accentuation is a pre-requisite for creating the rhythmic identities of the various different tune-types, it is equally the case, as stated earlier, that continuous variability of this effect, as well as a certain unpredictability in how it is enunciated, is very much an overall part of the music, particularly in the hands of the better players. Metronomic uniformity and regularity are an anathema to such musical expression. In addition to the idea of on-going modulation of the rhythmic impulse, the accent may, at times, appear to be shifted in time because of particular bowing sequences and consequent phrasing. Also, in specific instances, this may intentionally be done by actually placing the stress on the 'wrong' note. These features can add greatly to the overall vitality and beauty of the music.

Rhythmic imperative

An examination of the various other tune-types, along parallel lines to that undertaken here in the case of the polka, would yield a corresponding set of findings. Each tune has its own distinctive idiomatic personality in terms of rhythmic enunciation, and, in the case of fiddle-playing, bowing plays a major part in this. The notes of the tune are only a part of the complete picture, and therefore need to be interpreted and expressed in the manner appropriate to the particular type of tune involved. Without such, the tune can scarcely be considered that which it purports to be – surely, the rhythmic imperative is a *sine qua non*.

In former times, for example from about 1920 to 1963 when Pádraig O'Keeffe was teaching music throughout the Sliabh Luachra area, the situation with regard to gaining the relevant knowledge was different from today. Because people lived in a society and within a context where traditional music was perhaps the dominant form of music, and where little other music was heard, compared to the present day, a great deal of information about the music, and about how it should sound, was acquired subconsciously by those who were learning to play. Such latent 'folk knowledge' guided them in creating their own music, and in knowing when their efforts sounded 'right'. As Paddy Jones has observed:

In Pádraig's generation, I mean, this was the pop music. This was the music that they heard when they went to a party at night, a wedding, a dance, whatever. These were the tunes that were being played. So they were a living thing. But now it's not the case.³⁸

The position which pertained at that time contrasts greatly with that of today, in that many of those learning music live in an environment where little or none of

the particular genre of music being studied, including traditional music, is heard or played, and where the dominant aural input to their lives is 'pop' music. In such circumstances, a milieu for playing their chosen music is unlikely to be present, and so it is difficult for them to gain an appreciation and understanding of the contexts and aesthetics of that which they are trying to perform, and in particular the rhythmic dimension. It almost goes without saying that most never have the opportunity to play for dancers, or even to witness such events. In certain respects, it may not be too much to say that they are endeavouring to learn this music 'outside the tradition'.³⁹

The situation regarding the lack of rhythmic expression can be exacerbated, in my opinion, by the almost ever-present guitar and/or bouzouki accompaniment. The use of such accompanying instruments has by now become much more prevalent and indeed integral. Paradoxically, rhythmically-based accompaniment not only often clashes with the rhythmic impetus inherent in the tune being played, but frequently can lead to having its subtleties in this respect diminished. There is no doubt that these instruments have now found a niche in Irish traditional music. Since this has happened in a relatively short period of time, there is little history of how they should integrate musically, and across the repertoire range found in this music. Both the guitar and bouzouki are wonderful instruments when played well, and especially with stylistic accommodation to what is being accompanied. However, the playing, at times, reflects the aesthetics and 'codes of practice' of other musical genres. It is also the case that these instruments are relatively easy to play at the basic level of three chords. When this degree of achievement is coupled to a less than satisfactory knowledge or perhaps no knowledge at all, about that which is being accompanied, then the result is surely likely to do a great disservice to the music.

Furthermore, and with direct reference to the suggested lack of rhythmic articulation frequently found in the music of inexperienced players, if the accompanying instruments are played such as to try to provide all the rhythmic impetus, then the result is far from a good performance. Both sets of instruments, namely 'melody' and accompaniment, miss the point completely, with neither being played to its potential. Perhaps worse, to try to compensate for this lack in the music, other instruments, such as bodhrán, may be added. However, it seems to me that the result is often somehow inversely proportional to the number of instruments added.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to highlight a perceived diminution of the rhythmic dimension in the music as it moves to newer learning and performance contexts. As has been stated, the immediacy of acquiring new tunes, or at least their notes, frequently seems to take precedence over developing the more expressive and 'hidden' aspects of the music. And of course, for many young people who are learning to play this music, a stimulating and informative aural/oral environment

does not exist in what, paradoxically and perhaps contradictorily, is termed the 'information age'.

With regard to overcoming this problem, a more concerted effort, perhaps with novel approaches, may be necessary on the part of those who teach this music, in which respect I take the term 'teaching' to have a wider rather than a narrower meaning. Regarding the education of future music teachers, I think that a case can be made for topics such as I have addressed here being featured in the curricula of courses in tertiary education. I think that those who are being educated and trained to teach music, including the playing of traditional instruments, particularly the fiddle, should be aware of the difficulties outlined herein. Even those courses which deal primarily with traditional music performance should, I feel, also incorporate such material. Whether or not it is generally realised, many of those who graduate from these courses do teach, at least to some extent.

Notes

¹ In the course of presenting this paper at NAFCo 2006, I demonstrated a number of relevant points by means of recorded examples and by my own fiddle-playing.

² Various issues addressed here, such as bowing and rhythmic articulation, are examined more extensively, and in greater depth, in Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe and the Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Tradition' (PhD dissertation, University of Limerick, 2006), from which some extracts and illustrations are included.

³ Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 102.

⁴ Earl V. Spielman, 'Traditional North American Fiddling: A Methodology for the Historical and Comparative Analytical Style Study of Instrumental Musical Traditions' (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1975), p. 301.

⁵ See Matt Cranitch, 'The Sliabh Luachra "Code"', *Irish Musical Studies, Volume 4: Selected Proceedings from the Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995*, eds P. Devine & H. White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 343–53. 'Sliabh Luachra (The Mountain of Rushes) is situated on the Cork/Kerry border along the upper reaches of the River Blackwater. With undefined boundaries, it extends over areas in east Kerry, north-west Cork and south-west Limerick. [...] The area] is renowned for music and dancing. [...] the dance-music is lively, exuberant and very rhythmic.' Further and more detailed information is available in Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe', pp. 14–22.

⁶ Batt Scanlon, *The Violin Made Easy and Attractive* (San Francisco: self-published, 1923), p. 11.

⁷ Tony De Marco and Miles Krassen, *A Trip to Sligo: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Irish Fiddling Sligo Style* (Pittsburgh: Silver Spear Publications, 1978), p. 17.

⁸ Hollis Taylor, 'From Concertos to Fiddle Tunes to Jazz to Fences: Playing it All', interview by Peter Anick, *Fiddler Magazine*, Vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 2003/2004), 14.

⁹ Sheila Randles, 'The Fiddle Music of Connie O'Connell' (MA thesis, University of Limerick, 1998), p. 124.

¹⁰ Terry Moylan, 'Introduction', in *Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra*, ed. by Terry Moylan (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1994), p. x.

¹¹ Johnny (John A.) McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City: Myth and Music in Sliabh Luachra' (MA thesis, University of Limerick, 1999), p. 60.

¹² Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', pp. 60–61.

¹³ Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 66.

¹⁴ Matt Cranitch, *The Irish Fiddle Book* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1988), p. 66.

¹⁵ A wonderful performance of this polka is to be heard on track 1 of the classic recording of Sliabh Luachra music: Pádraig O'Keeffe, Denis Murphy and Julia Clifford, *Kerry Fiddles: Music from Sliabh Luachra*, Vol. 1, LP, 12T309, Topic Records, London, 1977; CD, OSSCD 10, Ossian Publications, Cork, 1993.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Seán Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage*, ed. by Thomas Kinsella and Tomás Ó Canainn (Mountrath, Portlaoise, Ireland: Fundúireacht an Riadaigh i gcomhar Le Dolmen Press, 1982), p. 54. This book was compiled from the radio programme series, *Our Musical Heritage*, presented by Seán Ó Riada on Radio Éireann, 7 July to 13 October 1962.

¹⁸ Although the conventional 'accent' sign is being used here, its implementation in the performance of this music does not accord to a 'standard' interpretation of this symbol, but rather to the idiomatic manner of playing described herein.

¹⁹ Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 37.

²⁰ This polka is played by Pádraig O'Keeffe on track 4 of *The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master*, RTÉ CD 174, Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin, 1993.

²¹ Pádraig's notation systems particularly that used for the fiddle are examined and explained in detail in my study, Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe', pp. 238–295.

²² This tune is played by Pádraig and Denis Murphy on track 13 of the recording, Denis Murphy, *Music from Sliabh Luachra*, RTÉ CD 183, Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin, 1994. It is the first in a set of three polkas, collectively 'known under the name 'Green Cottage' or sometimes 'Glen' or 'Glin Cottage Polkas', according to Peter Browne in the sleeve notes. This tune is also well known in the Sliabh Luachra repertoire of the present day.

²³ This manuscript copy was generously given to me by Noreen Lucey, Gneeveguilla, Killarney, Co. Kerry. An example of Pádraig's occasional use of non-standard bar lengths is to be seen at the end of the second line of the tune.

²⁴ The last note of part 1 is missing in the manuscript, but I have added a final E in the transcription to standard notation. This is how the tune is played by Pádraig and Denis Murphy in the recording mentioned above.

²⁵ 'Ostinato' is defined as 'a term used to refer to the repetition of a musical pattern many times in succession', with the three forms identified being 'melodic', 'harmonic' and 'rhythmic', in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 587.

²⁶ Dorothea E. Hast and Stanley Scott, *Music in Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 76.

²⁷ Breandán Breathnach, 'The Man and his Music: Johnny O'Leary', *Ceol*, 5, no. 1 (1981), 14–18 (p. 14).

²⁸ Pat Ahern, record sleeve notes, *The County Bounds*, OSS CD 113 (Cork: Ossian Publications, 1999), p. 3.

²⁹ Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 37.

³⁰ Fintan Vallely, 'The Bowed String: Fiddle Styles and Repertoire', *The Guide to Irish Traditional Music: CD Compilation*, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~fidil/guideCDstrings.html> (accessed 19 May 2008).

³¹ Our performance of these polkas was recorded at the 1998 *Seán Ó Riada Conference* which took place in Cork, and which had as its theme 'Music and Song from the Cork-Kerry

Border'. They are featured on track 3 of the CD of live recordings from the conference and associated concerts: Matt Cranitch, Máire O'Keeffe, and Johnny McCarthy, 'Din Tarrant's Polka / John Keane's Polka / John McGovern's Polka' in *The County Bounds*, OSS CD 113, Ossian Publications, Cork, 1999.

³² Sadie, *Grove*, p. 241.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ As noted earlier, this polka is played on track 4 of Pádraig O'Keeffe, *The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master*.

³⁵ This polka is notated with a key signature of G, as the note C does not occur in the melody. Also it is to be observed that Pádraig plays the 'high' part first, with the 'low' part second.

³⁶ The term 'amplitude' is used in this context rather than either of the terms 'intensity' or 'loudness'. 'Intensity' has distinctly different and specific meanings in the discipline of music on the one hand, and in the disciplines of acoustics and signal analysis on the other hand. Therefore its use herein could lead to some confusion and misunderstanding. With regard to the term 'loudness', this means more than purely the magnitude of a signal – rather it pertains to how loud the listener perceives a sound to be. Factors other than signal amplitude solely are involved, including spectral content, and thereby 'timbral' quality. For example, if a sine wave and a square wave of equal amplitude are listened to, the latter is likely to be perceived as being louder. The reason for this is that the square wave has significant spectral content, consisting of the fundamental frequency and harmonics, unlike the sine wave which has only one discrete frequency component, namely the fundamental.

³⁷ 'Bowing Techniques', *About the Violin*, <http://www.theviolinsite.com/history.html> (accessed 19 May 2008).

³⁸ Paddy Jones was one of the last pupils that Pádraig had, perhaps even the last, and probably the youngest at the time. His comments quoted here were made in the course of a video interview I conducted with him in Tralee, Co. Kerry, 1 June 1999.

³⁹ Aspects of this issue were considered to a greater extent in my presentation at *Crosbhealach an Cheoil 2003: The Crossroads Conference*, which took place at University of Ulster, Derry, 25-27 April 2003. This paper awaits publication as follows: Matt Cranitch, 'Learning and Teaching "Outside the Tradition"', in *Proceedings of Crosbhealach an Cheoil 2003: The Crossroads Conference*, ed. by Fintan Vallely (awaiting publication).