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Éire-Ireland, Volume 54, Numbers 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2019, pp. 17-45 (Article)

Published by Irish-American Cultural Institute
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2019.0005

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In this article I explore the interrelationship between the introduction of the long-playing record (or LP) into Ireland, the impact of the traditional and folk revival, and the emergence of the concept of a musical work within traditional music. The invention of long-playing records in the 1950s affected how record labels, musicians, and consumers conceptualized different musical styles, and it shaped the structure of recorded music (Montgomery 3; Keightley, "Long Play" 380). The LP came to be associated with serious music of artistic worth that was aimed at an adult market. In the same decade the first long-playing records of Irish traditional or folk music were issued during the first phase of the revival. Irish revivalist musicians and activists of the 1950s and 1960s had a number of broad aims that included, but were not limited to, ensuring that this music was appreciated as serious and artistic by a wider audience in Ireland, making high-quality recordings of the music, and presenting the music in a professional and more artistic manner. There was therefore a synergy between what the LP represented in the wider musical field and the processes of recontextualization that were embedded in the revival (Hill and Bithell 15–19). The result of the confluence and force of these stimuli was a new type of creative activity in folk and traditional music in which musicians and singers deliberately grouped together tunes and songs on commercial sound recordings of extended duration, familiarly called albums.

A new emphasis was subsequently placed on the album as a musical product (as opposed to the process of live performance); it became the focus of critical attention and began to be conceived as a type of musical work. The concept of "musical work" resists simple definition and will be discussed later in this essay. However, much

of the writing on musical work draws on Lydia Goehr's book *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (1992). Her sense of the musical work is rooted in the Western European classical-music tradition, and Goehr states that we commonly understand musical works to be

> objectified expressions of composers that prior to compositional activity did not exist. We do not treat works as objects just made or put together, like tables and chairs, but as original, unique products of a special, creative activity. We assume further that the tonal, rhythmic, and instrumental properties of works are constitutive of structurally integrated wholes that are symbolically represented by composers in scores. Once created, we treat works as existing after their creators have died, and whether or not they are performed or listened to at any given time. (2)

Given that this article is primarily concerned with an oral tradition and sound recordings, and not with printed scores, I am using musical work in a similar manner to that proposed by Theodore Gracyk, who contends that a recording is a distinct type of "work for playback" that is "recovered by the audience by playing tapes, LPs, and compact discs" (21). In a broad sense musical works are discrete, reproducible or repeatable, and attributable (Talbot 3–5; Bartel 349). The album, which in a popular-music context Keir Keightley defines as "a work of popular music of extended duration" ("Album" 612), can be considered then to be a particular type of musical work.

The traditional- or folk-music album of the 1950s onward was situated within two intersecting recording fields (Turino 66): the global field of high-fidelity album production, and, in this case, the local field of the recording of Irish traditional music. Within the former, the term album was initially used to refer to a folder to hold 78 rpm records, and later was used by record companies to refer to sets of 78 rpm discs (Osborne 88). While the term LP has become conflated with the album, its original use simply indicated a format of longer duration. Richard Osborne notes that the invention of the pre-LP album, which was designed to allow the issuing of classical pieces of music, shows how the 78 rpm form was manipulated to allow for the recording of a preexisting work. Popular-music albums of jazz and musicals were also released, and in enough volume to warrant the establishment of a Billboard album chart in the United States in 1945

(92). Thus, from an early stage the term album has been associated with works, in the classical-music sense, or with collections of music, which were grouped together under a single title.

Examples of pre-LP albums of Irish music are relatively rare and appear to be limited to those made in the United States from the 1930s.[1] Where found, these releases run the gamut of Irish American popular music, including albums by popular American singers such as Bing Crosby and Frank Luther, vaudeville specialists the McNulty Family, and a mix of more traditional solo material and Irish American dance-band music by the tin-whistle player Myles O'Malley and his orchestra. The most notable is the album *Irish Jigs and Reels* (1941), which contains three 78 rpms recorded by the famous Sligo fiddler Michael Coleman, including "Tarbolton/Longford Collector/ The Sailor's Bonnet," one of his most influential reel sets. This album is distinguished from the standalone 78 rpm recording by having a title or metatitle, which as Umberto Fiori and Dave Laing note, helps to "identify a work, designate its content, and emphasize its value" (666). The album has a cover image that features a stereotypical American stage-Irish couple dancing on the image of a shamrock; aspects of the man's dress (shillelagh, top hat, buckles) are very similar to that featured in "The Stage Irishman" (1870). Coleman's album also has a booklet with a full track listing and sleeve notes written by Les Lieber and Hal Davis (not the famous songwriter), who acted together as press agents ("Agency" 6) and wrote notes for several other Decca albums. Despite these features, the collections of 78 rpm records grouped together in these albums were not conceived as coherent entities: the Coleman, O'Malley, and McNulty albums included selections of 78 rpm records taken from different recording sessions made a year or more apart, with different accompanists and personnel (Spottswood 2747, 2820, 2841). Indeed, a Decca advertisement for Irish records published in *Billboard* in 1949 emphasizes that single 78 rpms from these albums could be purchased individually, intimating that these albums were not intended by musicians or by labels as discrete objects or texts. This was typical of the popular-

1. I am grateful to Frank Dalton, Devon Flaherty, Barry Taylor, and other members of the Facebook group "Irish Traditional Music at 78 rpms" for sharing album covers, sleeve notes, and discographical information, and for their valuable discussion on this topic.

music 78 rpm album set, which tended to be a repackaging of older singles (Keightley, "Album" 612). Thus, while classical-music pre-LP albums presented coherent preexisting musical works, the idea of the album as comprising new recordings designed to be heard together occurred only rarely before the mid-1940s, and only really became established in the 1950s through the new format of the long-playing record in Irish traditional music.

The LP was introduced by the record company Columbia in 1948, and although it faced competition from rival company RCA's 45 rpm format during the "war of speeds," by 1950 it had become a standard format across the industry, helped by a growing desire for high-fidelity sound reproduction (Gronow and Saunio 113; Osborne 92). A confluence of factors—the cost of equipment and records, a focus on classical music, and an association with audiophiles and an adult audience—meant that the LP obtained a high level of cultural prestige in the 1950s that became only gradually eroded through the later encroachment of popular music. Keightley gives ample evidence for how, within the "white mainstream" of the United States, a division of "adult/album vs. teen/single" operated throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s ("Long Play" 377–78). This was not strictly along genre lines, as adult music ("good music") included jazz and adult pop as well as European art music, and Keightley claims that adult pop can be thought of as a form of "bourgeois high art" (378). Because the Irish traditional-music LP emerged during this formational period, the broader conception of the album as being the vehicle for aesthetically "good" or artistic music had an impact on the album's gestation and reception in Ireland.

The Long-Playing Record in Ireland

LP records first appeared for sale in Ireland in the 1950s. For instance, an *Irish Press* business report of 1950 mentions the forthcoming introduction of the new long-playing record ("Decca Is a Speculation"). By 1955 the *Evening Herald* could report that "Louis Solomon . . . brought the first long-playing records into the Republic just five years ago when he represented the Decca Record Company. What strides have been made since then. About 100 LPs were sold in the first year, and now the sales are numbered in tens of thousands"

("Strictly off the Record"). An advertisement from 1952 for Decca replicates wider trends outside of Ireland in focusing entirely on the classical and light-opera repertoire, noting that 473 of these records were now available (Decca Advertisement).

The number of LP releases was sufficiently large by 1953 to warrant the introduction of a new column in the *Irish Times*, "On the Record," written by "Stylus" for "discophiles." It was designed to guide the casual listener by way of short reviews and notices. Surprisingly, the first column noted that no 45 rpm recordings had been released in Ireland over the past two months. This underlines how the Irish market was slow to move away from the 78 rpm format (Vallely et al. 566), although some contemporaneous commentary suggests otherwise: R. J., writing in the *Irish Press*, stated that "there are few people now who do not realise that for recordings of works of any size, the old short-playing record died a natural death with the advent of long playing" ("Music: Long-Playing Records"). A second column, "Needle Point," appeared in the *Irish Times Pictorial* the following year in response to the increasing popularity of records, improved recording techniques and sound, and the "terrifyingly vast" range available to the neophyte consumer. These columns and others, such as "Strictly off the Record" in the *Evening Herald*, reveal the existence of a listenership newly concerned with high fidelity and indicate the continuing prestige of classical music while giving equal emphasis and space to jazz and other more adult forms of popular music.

However, these columns make scant reference to recordings of Irish artists and repertoire of any genre. There are two reasons for this absence. Firstly, it reflects a low level of recording activity in Ireland at this time across both popular (Smyth 13) and classical music (O'Donnell 7). Secondly, the scarcity of references to folk or traditional music is symptomatic of its neglect in Ireland and mirrored the situation in Britain, where there was also an almost total disregard of folk music by major labels at this time (Brocken 59). Thus, while the LP became established in Ireland in the first half of the 1950s as the recording format that had the most cultural prestige, this prestige did not yet extend to locally produced music or folk and traditional music. This would soon change through the combination of cultural and societal advances that accompanied the folk- and traditional-music revival.

The Revival Context

As well as being the main locus for these transformations in recording formats, the 1950s were also the years most commonly depicted as the starting point of the various strands of revival in Irish traditional and folk music (Ó hAllmhuráin, *History* 137–59). It should be noted that the term "revival" has been resisted by musicians and scholars (Livingston 63), and while this is true of some Irish commentators and musicians with respect to the mid-twentieth century, the term is in common use. More broadly, it was during the latter half of the 1950s in Ireland that the prevailing conservative, isolated, and protectionist culture began to open up through the influence of economic growth, developments in communications and an easing of censorship and control (Daly 1–12; Brown, *Ireland* 241–66; Ó Gráda 16–17). An important aspect of this change was the emergence of a local commercialized youth culture that drew on and adapted aspects of its international cognate (Holohan 389–405).

Irish youth culture intersected with the two main strands of the revival: the traditional-music revival, emanating from local grassroots activism and associated with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ, founded in 1951) and other later organizations; and a folk-music revival that took its lead from the U.K. and U.S. folk-music revivals of the same period. The sometimes fractious relationship that existed between the rural traditional musician and the more urbane and urban-based folk cadre (Curran 59–62) masked the similarities in the transformation of their music. Ethnomusicologists Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell summarize a number of processes that they deem inherent to music revivals: professionalization, institutionalization, commercialization and commodification (15). The act of making a recording, and more specifically an album, is clearly one of these forms of recontextualization and is a specific example of what Hill and Bithell describe as a transformation from participatory to presentational performance, and from communal performance to transaction (18).

Thus, while a goal of the traditional-music revival was to engage with the past (or music that had connections to the past), and to authentically interpret or reinterpret this music, the recordings that helped to circulate the music of the revival projected this authenticity for the most part through the new format of the LP. As the nature of

the revival required that music be taken seriously, this resonated with the idea that the LP was a medium for serious music that had artistic merit. The confluence of these ideas is most clearly seen in the activities of two record labels established in this period: Gael-Linn (1956) and Claddagh Records (1959).[2] These, along with labels outside Ireland such as Topic and Folkways, were ideologically driven and idealistic, valuing the music for cultural-revivalist reasons (Hamilton 187–90; Carolan, *Discography* 7). Gael-Linn, a cultural organization founded in 1953 to promote the Irish language, began to issue recordings in 1957, a year after the record company was founded (Nic Fhinn 25; Vallely, "Gael Linn" 293). That it chose to release a series of 78 rpm records rather than LPs would seem to conflict with the emerging movement toward adopting the latter. But these recordings were lauded by Charles Acton as being "technically flawless" with "first-class" production ("Irish Music"), and the decision to release them on 78 rpm was governed by a belief that the older technology would be more prevalent among rural audiences, in particular along the western seaboard (Carolan, *Seoltaí Séidte* 16). In their original format the juxtaposition of a singer on one side with an instrumentalist on the other replicated the individualization of the "side" as a unit that pertained throughout the 78 rpm era; no thematic or musical material connected the two. Claddagh Records, established by Garech Browne and Ivor Browne in 1959, had the more explicit aim of releasing "high-quality LPs by leading traditional performers" (Bradshaw 198). Early publicity material drew attention to this by identifying "a real need for a series of high-quality long-playing records of Irish music with full introductory commentaries, equal to the best anywhere" (qtd. in Ó Boyle 75).

A similar emphasis on sound quality and originality is evident in a *Billboard* advertisement of 1958 for some early Dublin Records releases that describe the Tulla Céilí Band's new record as "a brand-new long-playing high-fidelity recording" (14). Dublin Records was a label set up in New York by Clare emigrant musicians John and James O'Neill and Sligo fiddle player Paddy Killoran, and made a

2. According to their own website, the Gael-Linn record label was established in 1956 and made its first commercial recordings (78 rpm) in 1957. Short-lived acetate discs were recorded prior to this for radio (Nic Fhinn). Their first LP was issued in 1958.

small number of recordings, mostly of dance bands (Ó hAllmhuráin, *Flowing* 24). Another important label that regularly issued LPs was the English-based Topic Records. In the 1930s Topic was part of the Workers' Music Association, but was transformed in the 1950s through the influence of Bill Leader and A. L. Lloyd. From that time it focused on revivalist and traditional folk music (Brocken 55–66). Because most of these record companies were so closely linked to the revival, the motivation for the recording of LPs in this decade often originated with the record label. Claddagh deliberately chose "outstanding exponents in their individual artistic fields" (Bradshaw 199), and Gael-Linn aimed "to record every outstanding musician 'in the old style' in the country, solo and unaccompanied" (Carolan, *Seoltaí Séidte* 16).

Folk and traditional musicians thus faced the same issues as those in the popular-music field: how would the new long-playing format affect the presentation of their music? It seems that in this space there is an overlap between Keightley's assessment of the LP as a medium for adult, serious listeners ("Long Play" 377) interested in music that had value and artistic merit, and the notion that the revival engendered "new conditions of awareness" and "fresh sets of values," thus allowing the tradition to "explore, develop, and assert itself, promoting virtuosity and scholarship in the manner in fact of a 'classical' music" (Vallely, "Authenticity" 53). Helen O'Shea also posits that the ability to make recordings "brought the aspirations of rural farmer-musicians into the same imaginative narrative as those of bourgeois artists who had adopted the aesthetic and values of Romanticism and lived for their art, and whose ambitions focused on individual virtuosity rather than an interaction with dancers and listeners" (29–30). Classicization, the treatment of traditional music as art, leads to a conception of the album as a type of musical work in traditional music. To address this, I return to the recording field of Irish traditional music and to some of the implications of the act of recording.

Recording Irish Traditional Music, and the Idea of the Musical Work

Within the more local and specific context of recording Irish traditional music, it has been argued that commercial recording transforms,

impoverishes, or distorts it in different ways. Fintan Vallely notes how recordings turn music into a product to be consumed (Vallely et al. 568), Anthony McCann's work focuses on how the music industry commodifies and encloses the commons of traditional music (97), and Sally Sommers Smith discusses the distrust by some musicians of the commercial aspect of recording, proposing that for some, commercialization "represents a devaluation of Ireland and its heritage" (118). Even within his discography of Irish traditional music, Nicholas Carolan asserts that recordings are deficient and not adequate substitutes for a live performance: "social, historical, and other aspects escape the recording machine" (*Discography* 7). All echo the sense of loss associated with reproduction that philosopher Walter Benjamin explored in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In Mark Katz's reading of Benjamin's work the process of reproduction embedded in recording leads to the loss of aura, authenticity, community, and tradition, and the depreciation of the artwork (14). This resonates with McCann's concern that bringing traditional music into the marketplace interferes with the "noncommodity aspect of Irish musical practice," which is "the lifeblood, the 'cultural glue' that holds the whole system together" (91).

This is one of two broad ways of considering recordings, according to Gabriel Solis: one view entails "a nativist, often Luddite approach that can see recordings only as fallen, sullied, secondary objects in comparison with authentic performances" (337); the other approach fetishizes and elevates recordings as the focus of collecting and critical attention. A good example of the latter is how commercial recordings from the 1920s continue to shape and influence musicians' approaches to music. Labels like Viva Voce and Oldtime Records, Reg Hall's compilations for Topic, social-media groups such as Facebook's Irish Traditional Music at 78 rpms, and musicians and bands such as Paul Brock, Frankie Gavin's Roaring Twenties, and At the Racket have continued to engage with, reissue, and rework American recordings of Irish traditional music from the 1920s and 1930s. In the revival context traditional and folk albums began to be regularly reviewed in journals such as *Ceol*, far outnumbering reviews of live performances. But taking a neutral stance on the effect of recording allows for a recognition that its introduction facilitated

the development of a concept of a musical work within traditional and folk music, and more specifically, the conceptualization of the album as a particular type of work. Even though the term work is not generally used within traditional music, the "ideas and implications contained in it" are present, as David Horn comments with respect to the broader field of popular music (16).

The appearance of a "work-concept" in traditional and folk music is not surprising or unique, as Goehr argues that today "no form of musical production is excluded a priori from being packaged in terms of works" (244). She labels the extension of the work-concept into other domains as "conceptual imperialism," which operates in two ways: it influences people (including this author) to describe any music in the world "by means of a work-based interpretation" (249). Secondly, Goehr comments that "*Werktreue* beliefs have increasingly been adopted by musicians involved in the production of many different kinds of music" (250).[3] This resonates with Vallely's notion of a revivalist classicization process ("Authenticity" 53), and with O'Shea's image of the rural musician transformed into an artist (29–30). These developments suggest that the emergence of a sense of "work" in traditional music is embedded in the revival and is not simply an abstract concept or a simple appropriation from classical music. To adapt the approach of John Butt, it is the interaction between new ways of thinking about traditional music, new revivalist practices, and new recording technologies that produces a new notion of a musical work within traditional and folk music (4).

This mention of recording technology is a reminder that technological determinism has also been implicated in the identification of a work. Kenneth Goldstein, writing about the British folk revival, has hypothesized that "each major technological advance in mass communication media helped to produce a folksong revival," and "each new medium or technology has further enhanced the transmission of musical information" (3–4). For instance, it has been argued that in the first stage of the recording of Irish traditional music, the unit of the single tune expanded through commodification into fixed sets (medleys) of tunes (Dowling 12). In some ways traditional music is

3. *Werktreue* is commonly glossed as "fidelity to the work" or "fidelity to the musical work."

still in thrall to the constrictions of the 78 rpm record, as indeed are many popular forms of music, as most individual tracks tend to be between three and five minutes in length (Katz 37–40; Hamilton 258). By contrast, the long-playing record allowed for lengthier pieces of music to be recorded, and "its accompanying booklet of biographical notes, photographs, texts, and bibliographical, discographical, and comparative references has become the *major* source of primary data for scholarly study" (Goldstein 12; italics in original). The covers of the new LP albums also helped to create coherency, unity, and a discrete identity or character (Montgomery 175). Others would argue that records are also the primary focus of musicians. Eliot Grasso identifies a tendency for leading musicians to recommend that younger players should develop their technique and creativity by listening to older recordings. This suggests that certain recordings have a primacy over actual practitioners, and that a sense of *Werktreue* permeates the contemporary tradition, resulting in a "recording-generated aesthetic conservatism" (129–31).

Both Goldstein and Grasso thus identify the recording as being a focus of critical attention, which is a recurring theme in other conceptions of the record as the location of the musical work. Philosopher Andrew Kania holds that "a work of art is an art object that . . . is *a primary focus of critical attention* in a given art form or tradition, and . . . is a persisting object" (413, italics added). A similar emphasis on the notion of "critical attention" is made by Gracyk in arguing that the recorded track is the musical work in rock music (21). For Gracyk, when "music is conceived as a recording and not merely as a performance that happens to be recorded," the usual work/performance relationship of Western art music is not useful, as there is no score or abstract structure that is instantiated (19). He distinguishes between a song in rock music, which is an ontologically thin structure (a rock song can be performed and interpreted in an infinite number of ways), and a recording, which is ontologically thick (a recording is a sound structure including exact timbres, dynamics, and articulation as well as other musical elements). Because of this distinction, "when rock music is discussed, the relevant musical work is not simply the song being performed. To employ terminology currently in vogue, we can say that recordings are the 'primary texts' of this music," and that the musical work, or "work for playback," is "recovered

by the audience by playing tapes, LPs, and compact discs" (21). Both Gracyk and Lee Brown advocate that this characterization can be applied to other forms of music (Brown, "Phonography" 367), so in a similar way a traditional tune or song is an ontologically thin structure, whereas a recording is a thick structure that we can only experience or know through its playback.

Drawing together some of the threads in this section, I do not suggest a hierarchy in which the album constitutes a superior or more complete type of work than a 78 rpm recording, or that a recording is more deserving of "work" status than a performance. While this question is worthy of further attention, I am swayed by the views expressed by Dan Burkett in a recent article on pluralism in rock ontology, wherein he claims that where there is a problem identifying a predominant type of work within a musical tradition, it is reasonable to accept that there may be many types of musical work, rather than stating that there is no definite work concept. Burkett proposes that a song (which he considers as a musical work within rock) is manifested in two other forms of work, the track and the performance. He argues that "a pluralist ontology of rock . . . uniquely recognizes that our critical attention is focused on rock songs *and* rock tracks *and* rock performances, as opposed to only one of these" (no pag.). Following Burkett's lead, I propose that in folk and traditional music critical attention can be directed across a continuum of tune, song, set, performance, track, and album.

Finally, Carys Wyn Jones's study of the rock canon is of particular help in determining what qualities the album has over and above the track. She contends that in rock, the album is best able "to satisfy the criteria of the work" (42). It does this through a range of qualities that are "potentially located in these albums," including discreteness, reproducibility, status, originality, aura, scale, complexity, organicity, unity, completeness, truth, and self-expression. Jones also pays special attention to the concept album as demonstrating a particular type of "cohesive whole" through a range of strategies, including unity and uniformity, having a theme or "underlying musical motif," and use of artwork (42).

Similarly, Marianne Tatom Letts's recent review of the literature defining the concept album identifies these characteristics as including a unifying central theme or idea, a narrative, links between the

individual song lyrics, the use of recurring musical ideas or motifs, or a sense of coherence across the music, art, production, and notes (14). Letts adds that the concept may not necessarily be intended by the artist, and instead producers, record companies, and listeners themselves can contribute to the construction and perception of a concept. When the conceptualization of the album as a unified artwork began is a topic of considerable debate. Some identify the album *Rubber Soul* (1965) by The Beatles as being the first to be conceived in such a way (Marshall 15). Others have argued that Frank Sinatra's work from as far back as the 1940s deserves to be recognized for its coherency and unity; certainly, he was one of the first to recognize its potential, and it has been stated that he was "thinking in terms of the 10-inch, 15-minute record, and he conceives of it as a disk" (Montgomery 108). David Montgomery also singles out Woodie Guthrie's *Ballads of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1960) as being designed by producer Moses Asch to capitalize on the new LP format (84–89). Thus, although the term "concept album" was not in use during this period and can only be applied retrospectively, the idea of creating an album that was not just a collection of individual sets or tracks had precedents in wider popular- and folk-music culture. In fact, the examples discussed below provide further evidence of the creation of concept albums earlier than popular-music models.

Revival-Period Albums as Musical Works

The second part of this article considers a selection of albums from the revival period and draws together the following three strands: how musicians utilized the new LP format, how these albums can be considered as new forms of musical works within traditional music, and how they draw on or articulate the tropes of the revival. Many of the albums released in the 1950s and early 1960s are rare, with some not even held in the Irish Traditional Music Archive; my selection of examples here was sometimes influenced by this constraint.

It is difficult to identify with certainty the earliest albums or LPs of traditional music because of the lack of dates on records, the scarcity of copies, and the multiple releases and versions of some records. Hammy Hamilton takes a broad view of the term traditional music in highlighting recordings made by Cork poet and singer Patrick Galvin,

David Curry's Irish Band, and Margaret Barry in the late 1950s (564). Four of Galvin's albums—*Irish Drinking Songs*, *Irish Love Songs*, *Irish Street Songs*, and *Irish Humour Songs*—were made in 1956 for Riverside Records, a New York label that focused on jazz and folk recordings. Barry also recorded *Songs of an Irish Tinker Lady* for Riverside in 1956 and made two other albums with Michael Gorman for Topic, *Street Songs and Fiddle Tunes of Ireland* (1957) and *Her Mantle So Green* (1958). Other recordings from this period include Mary O'Hara's first LP, *Songs of Erin* (1957), *Sorcha Ní Ghuairim Sings Traditional Irish Songs* (1957), and Folkways' recording of Willie Clancy and Gorman, issued under the name *Irish Jigs, Reels & Hornpipes* (1956). Preceding all of these was Columbia's *Irish Folk Songs from the Western Counties of Éire* (1955), collected and edited by Alan Lomax and Seamus Ennis. More recently, Nicholas Carolan and Treasa Harkin of the Irish Traditional Music Archive have compiled an extremely useful gallery of traditional and folk albums published in the 1950s, commenting on how the covers aimed to attract customers through creating "favourable associations" for the music ("LP Sleeves").

Rather than proceeding chronologically, I begin with an album frequently claimed as the first commercial LP of Irish traditional music, *All-Ireland Champions—Violin: Meet Paddy Canny and P. J. Hayes* (1960). This remains one of the best regarded of early LPs and was marked as such by being retitled for its 2001 CD rerelease as *An Historic Recording of Irish Traditional Music from County Clare and East Galway*. (In fact, a third title was used for a second LP version and a more recent CD reissue: *Meet Paddy Canny: All-Ireland Champion—Violin*). It was hastily recorded in Dublin for Dublin Records (Vallely and Piggott 56) and featured the flute playing of Peadar O'Loughlin and the piano accompaniment of Bridie Lafferty as well as Hayes and Canny on fiddle. Despite the hurried recording, the flutes and fiddle are remarkable in the tightness of the ensemble, while Lafferty's jaunty vamping adds to the marvelous lift of the music. In one sense Lafferty's piano is the sonic foundation of the album, connecting together the fiddle duets (mostly placed on side A) and fiddle-and-flute sets (on the flipside). In its chordal introductions (edited out from later CD reissues) and channeling of the melodic basslines of the Kincora Céilidh Band pianist Kathleen O'Connor, the piano forms a link back to the prerevival sound world of the céilí band.

On the other hand, the emphasis placed on "All-Ireland Champions" in the title is indicative of the influence already wielded by the Fleadh Cheoil, the competition initiated by CCÉ and a seminal development of the early revival period. The laudatory title was included for its potential commercial benefit, a practice employed by Dublin Records and other labels since then. The emphasis on the success of these musicians can be related to the more general idea of the LP having a worth and a cultural value: identifying the musicians as champions and as having a recognized status within the traditional community is a way to guarantee these artistic qualities. Other aspects of the LP work against this same concept: there is a distinct lack of information on the album, which only includes the names of tracks and some advertisements for other Dublin Records LPs. Additionally, because the cover, like many from this period, is unconnected with the music, the album lacks coherency between title, cover, sleeve notes, and music. However, the choice of the cover, a photograph of Glendalough supplied by the Irish Tourist Office in New York, is culturally significant in itself owing to the site's importance as a tourist destination in the 1950s when its stunning panoramic vista appealed to the tourist gaze (Zuelow 147). The use of this image connects the music to a particular vision of Ireland that accentuates the natural beauty of the landscape, the nation's spiritual and scholarly heritage, and its ancient and distinctive cultural inheritance. By reinscribing the music with tropes of Irish national identity, the image also simultaneously robs it of its local character.

Turning to the music of the album, O'Shea has suggested that Canny in particular aimed to create an individual style that, in typical revival fashion, drew on the past and on the local while engaging with a broader palette of contemporary traditional music, although the claim that these include blues and jazz is less plausible (36–40). The approach resulted in an original and distinctive album, representing the modernity of the revival and articulating a strong and defined musical identity. An important facet of this musical identity is region, a concept that has attracted much critical attention in modern scholarship on traditional music (e.g., Smith and Ó Súilleabháin; Kearney; Collins). Albums are intended or perceived to establish the authenticity or worth of a particular region's music. In these cases a sort of circularity operates: the album is authenticated through its

articulation of a regional voice; at the same time the articulation of that region helps to establish and create that region itself. O'Shea has drawn attention to how the concept of an east Clare regional style was only widely adopted after the release of a number of important albums in the 1990s. The reissue of *All-Ireland Champions* in 2001 contained references in the sleeve notes to its being "the definitive recording of the east Clare style of music," and its title was altered to refer to Clare and east Galway (62). Indeed, Don Meade's review in *Musical Traditions* noted how the reference to "east Galway" surprised many who considered this to be a "pure drop of predominantly east Clare music," although Martin Hayes's comments in the liner notes drew attention to the similarity of playing styles across the east Clare and east Galway region. As noted above, there were no verbal or pictorial indicators of region on the original recording. This transformation of what O'Shea argues is a "symbol of modernity" (37) and a representation of a national music into something local and historic demonstrates how place is used to help promote music to potential consumers of recordings (63). And in terms of the underlying concept of the album, the reissuing label (Shanachie) has, through this act of historical revisionism, created a new and more coherent concept for the reissue. The original concept of the album as representing musicians whose status as champions guarantees their value, their artistic worth, and perhaps their permanence has been transformed into a coherent, historical, already canonized recording of the music of a particular region, unified by a constructed regional style.

Barry and Gorman's *Street Songs and Fiddle Tunes of Ireland* on Topic (1957) might also be considered as articulating a particular sense of place. The sleeve notes describe a rundown, industrial, yet cosmopolitan area of London, Camden Town, with pubs rich in Irish traditional music. The cover art, by designer Gloria Leader (who was then married to Topic's record producer Bill Leader), depicts Barry and Gorman playing in the street, painted in rough, gritty brown shades. This admixture of image, text, and title conveys a rough working-class authenticity; Mike Brocken similarly remarks how Topic endeavored "to preserve folk music and to represent it authentically," even if, paradoxically, this was to be an always mediated music—a "folk music simulation" deliberately constructed to fit those looking for a particular image and affect (65). As with the east

Clare examples, this and other Topic releases constructed identity and authenticity just as much as they reflected it.

A different sort of evocation of place is the aim of *Favourite Irish Dances* (1959) by Brendan Hogan and the Ballinakill Céilí Band, one of a number of early céilí-band LPs made in this period. The cover photograph of a musician and dancers performing in a field overlooking the sea, credited to the British Travel Association, is consonant with the exoticism and touristic text presented by the record's sleeve: "Catch a leprechaun by the coat-tails, don't let go, and he'll have to give you his purse full of gold. Catch this record on a spindle and another kind of treasure will be yours—the lively sounds and melodies of the friendly Irish people having a fling in Dublin's most typically Irish night-spot." However, the album is not entirely an exercise in stereotyping by a British record company, as the notes state that the Irish Club in Parnell Square is popular owing to the "current revival" of Irish music. As this is a live recording, it captures the sound of a more participatory revival performance, including the MC's calls and announcements, the shouts and whoops of the dancers, and other ambient noise. Still, the authenticity captured and articulated by the sound recording is tactlessly disrupted by the staged and stereotyped cover and notes.

The question of the construction and perception of authenticity is also pertinent to a very different ensemble recording, David Curry's *Traditional Irish Rhythms* (1956). This album aimed to transform "the rough and ready performances of the little *ceili* [*sic*] bands" into "sparkling orchestrations," so that "even the most conservative of purists had to agree that Curry's arrangements brought new life, vigor, and a much-needed professionalism into native Irish music" (Robinson). Perhaps its artistic aims relate back to the progressivism that was a hallmark of the Gaelic Revival, when musicians and composers expressed a desire to consciously develop and improve traditional and folk music by transforming it into art music (Costello 79–97). Such ideals are rarely universally held, and indeed Ruth Stanley's research on Curry's music and radio broadcasts demonstrates that it sometimes provoked strongly negative reactions from contemporaneous listeners (108–10). Taking a broader view, however, both the overt progressivism of the Gaelic Revivalist and the later transformations of the midcentury revival are consonant with Hill and Bithell's view-

point that "new converts inevitably adapt the music they discover to their own stylistic preferences and performance conventions, at times unconsciously" (15). *Traditional Irish Rhythms* adapts traditional music to Curry's musical background as a conductor and classical musician, producing an album of artistic traditional music suitable for the serious adult listener.

Curry's album is undoubtedly an example of an artist creating an original work. Other albums might also be thought of as recordings that help to establish the musicians as tradition-bearers who embody their music, and the album format here allows for the presentation of the self as a work of art. This is distinct from the type of persona-fashioning that marks the work of rock musicians such as David Bowie, in that these appear to be examples of the unmediated authenticity categorized by Allan Moore as "first-person authenticity" (211). However, O'Shea reminds us that there is also a constructed nature to this authenticity from the time of the 1950s revival, which these records helped to inform by emphasizing different forms of otherness, distancing these musicians from urban consumers (72–73). This echoes Vallely's defense of the proliferation of albums in recent decades, a response to claims of market saturation in traditional music, and criticisms of the "spurious production of albums for albums' sake" ("Banners" no pag.). He comments that all albums are "significant markers of personal artistic achievement"—a work of art by another name, perhaps. Developing his idea, Vallely posits that "each work is an ethnography of its own artistic and class space. . . . Each production therefore is an ethnographic tale of the process of traditionality, whether told by word or music—or both. . . . All are worth telling in the hearing, even if they only get one spin on the turntable." The idea that the album is a personal utterance that represents the truth, is sincere in its self-expression, and is a mirror of the musician's soul is one of the criteria that Jones argues transforms the album into a work (42).

Interweaving both self and concept, Dominic Behan's *Songs of the Irish Republican Army* (1957) was the first album of many released by the Dublin-born author and singer. In gathering together a mix of traditional and recently composed republican songs (including his most famous ballad "The Patriot Game"), Behan created an exemplary unified, thematic album that was recorded well before exam-

ples from the popular-music world. The songs are grouped according to historical period ("War of Independence"; "The Black and Tan War"; "The Civil War"), and the grittiness of the theme is reinforced through the cover, which shows an empty cobbled street, filtered to appear orange to match the green and white lettering. The coherency of the album is strengthened through Behan's writing of his own detailed and stirring notes. Combined with authenticity of experience and thematic concept is a sense of didacticism and scholarship of the type described by Goldstein—with sources, composers, and variants of the songs listed. While it may not be recognized as such today, this album contains all the elements of the concept album as a particular type of recorded musical work.

The final stage in the development of the revival-period album came with the development of the new traditional and folk ensembles around the turn of the 1960s. Tracing the discursive grooves of Irish music at this time almost inevitably leads to the output of the musician and composer Seán Ó Riada. His career was very much intertwined with the Irish-language organization Gael-Linn from its formation in 1953 (Nic Fhinn 52–53), and it was at Riobard Mac Góráin's request that he appeared on Gael-Linn's very first LP record *Ceolta Éireann* (1958) as the arranger and accompanist of eight songs in Irish sung by the baritone Tomás Ó Súilleabháin (56). The other side of this LP featured orchestral arrangements of Irish airs by a number of composers, including Ó Riada's own setting of "Slán le Máigh" (Ó Canainn 35). In his work with Ceoltóirí Chualann, the revolutionary traditional group that Ó Riada founded around 1960, there is a confluence of a new, deliberately artistic form of ensemble traditional music and a calculated approach to the shaping of the medium of the LP to articulate this artistic vision. The former innovation, a "new type of céilí band" in response to the "Clandillon type," as Charles Acton described it ("Festival Opens"), was initially brought together for the Abbey Theatre and became established through radio broadcasts and live performances (Ó Canainn 43–44; Ó Riada 74; MacAnna 75; Nic Fhinn 62). However, listeners since then have encountered Ceoltóirí Chualann's music through a number of recordings made for Gael-Linn in the 1960s that were issued on LP, with the exception of a number of 45 rpm releases, the best-known of these being "An Poc ar Buile" (ca. 1962). The group's first

album retained the same title as Ó Riada's radio show, *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh*, and reproduced its style of presentation by including spoken verses and introductions by Ó Riada. Its originality, and Ó Riada's success in developing an ensemble that fully allowed the musicians to demonstrate their individual expertise, allowed the album to cohere as an organic whole. While *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* does not have a strongly defined theme, Peadar Ó Riada has claimed that all of Ceoltóirí Chualann's albums can be considered as concept albums for their musical innovation, recovery of the music of the past, and exploration and evocation of the "Náisiún Gaelach," or "Great Gaelic World" (P. Ó Riada).

Released after Ó Riada's first LP recordings, the Chieftains' first recording (eponymous but often now referred to as *Chieftains 1*) is a landmark album, as it was made at the request of Garech Browne for Claddagh Records. Uilleann piper Paddy Moloney, already a member of Ceoltóirí Chualann, was asked to put together a group for what was intended to be a one-off album for the label (Glatt 54–55). And although Nic Fhinn implies that Ceoltóirí Chualann were predominantly thought of as a recording band ("banna taifeadta"), they did perform regularly through the 1960s, often as a way of promoting sales (62–64). On the other hand, *Chieftains 1* was, in the classic sense of Gracyk's term, created in the studio as a "work for playback" (21). Unlike the other albums discussed here, and others from this time, there was no intention that the music on it would be performed live (nor was it worked out in live concerts before being recorded). Thus the album is not just hugely effective as a unit but establishes a form of artistic creation within traditional music that was not dependent on live performance. This is not to say that individual members never played these tunes in other contexts, or that the recording was not live, but that *Chieftains 1* was inseparable as a work from the LP. Reinforcing this, Paddy Moloney has spoken of his strong belief that the album was paramount, initially refusing to release singles and "preferring to craft each album as a complete, coherent body of work, akin to a seventy-two-minute-long painting" (qtd. in O'Brien Bernini, 189).

A similar type of completeness and coherency allows Ceoltóirí Chualann's *Ceol na nUasal* (1967) to stand out from other albums of the period. Released in the same year as *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts*

Club Band, it has many of the characteristics of a concept album, as it was designed to articulate Ó Riada's cultural-nationalist reconstruction of a high-art Irish musical culture. The music on the album was chosen to be representative of what Seán Mac Réamoinn, in the sleeve notes, called the culture of the "uasalaicme" (nobles, élites). The album enshrines Turlough Carolan as the center of the Irish harp tradition, grouping three of his most famous pieces together on the first side, and reinforcing this pictorially through the image of his harp on the cover as well as through Mac Réamoinn's notes. Although at this stage in the 1960s the long-playing album was losing its original connotations as an adult format, here it functions as the vehicle for a reimagining of a Gaelic art music as a high point of the classicization of the revival period.

Conclusion

Since the 1950s the album has swiftly become, and remains, the predominant (and generally sole) recorded artistic output of traditional musicians and groups; the Irish Traditional Music Archive's "Recent Publications and Acquisitions, March 2018" lists forty new CD albums and only one single. The number of recordings released has greatly increased over this period. After the era of the LP, Nicholas Carolan wrote in 1987 that the previous thirty years had "without question been the most fruitful for the recording of Irish folk music" (*Discography* 5). This ramped up even more following the introduction of the CD and more accessible recording technology, which heralded a "wonderful and unprecedented surge of publication" and some 5,000 recordings issued between 1985 and 2000 (Carolan et al. 137). Has such a vast body of recorded work tipped the focus within the tradition from performance and process to work and product? While there is plenty of scope for more work in this area, there are those who think so. Grasso has also drawn on Goehr's work to argue that within traditional music an imagined canon has been formed through a combination of aural memory, sound recordings, and live performances: "musical repertoire is not simply a body of tunes such as one might find in a book, but a collection of recordings that have been widely disseminated" (124). Grasso also posits that "recording technology contributes to aesthetic conservatism" (143), restricts

musicians' choices, reifies performance techniques and styles, and encourages musicians to emulate and imitate "paradigmatic performance exemplars" (131). There are close parallels to this in Andrew Killick's recent exploration of the work concept in the Korean instrumental genre *sanjo*, which exists within a system where "traditional modes of musical creativity, such as improvisation and the reworking of existing pieces, have largely been lost as musical creation has come to mean the composition of original works" (3). He argues that "traditional *sanjo* no longer seems to function as it once did—as a medium in which an experienced musician can create a personal style that expresses his or her individual taste and character, while situating that style in relation to a lineage and a shared aesthetic" (21). While I would partly agree with Grasso's viewpoint, I doubt that the tradition has moved to a place similar to Killick's description above: the course of the revival in Ireland has not eradicated the processes of reworking and variation within either the vocal or instrumental tradition. Even writing "the course of the revival" is to admit that a much broader panoply of forces has shaped musicians' approaches (including, but not limited to, instrumental teaching, summer schools, competitions, examinations, and performance degrees). Thus, while the notion of a work has definitely become more common since the revival, and musicians very frequently contextualize their own performances and recordings by reference to other albums, the album has not come to dominate and override other aspects of the tradition. A pluralist tradition, balanced between performances, tunes, sets, and albums, allows musicians the freedom to explore any or all of its facets.

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