

Foreign Elements in Irish 18th-century Dance Music

Joan Rimmer

In 18th-century Ireland, four distinct kinds of society existed. These were 1) the exclusively Irish-speaking communities of the rugged west and a few enclaves elsewhere; 2) the primarily Irish-speaking peasantry and farmers, many of whom were to some extent bilingual, in the rest of the countryside; 3) the 'big house' society, often simply called 'the quality', upon which the second category was largely dependant; and 4) the urban and comparatively cosmopolitan society of Dublin and, to a lesser extent, of the few provincial cities. The last two categories were almost entirely English-speaking¹. Dance practice, however, is not constrained by language difference to the same extent as song practice and there is evidence of many dance styles in 18th-century repertory in Ireland.

Leaving aside collections specifically for English or English-style Country dance², the chief surviving source of this repertory is in notations in anthologies which also include many other kinds of music. They contain a large amount of material gathered chiefly in the second half of the 18th century and early 19th century, either anonymously for printers, or notated by literate musicians from live performance. Most of the performers involved were harpers, a small number being other kinds of instrumentalist or singers. While the printers' sources are in most cases untracable now, the notations from performers must represent some part of an actual repertory, whether always used functionally for dancing or not. Some pieces were of anonymous creation, some were attributed to known practitioners. Most were presented as 'Irish' in then understood but undefined senses and many were considered to be 'very ancient'. In fact, this repertory contains a considerable amount of unidentified but recognisable non-Irish dance — recognisable, that is, if most of the adapters' or arrangers' packaging is peeled off. The following notations, therefore, are of tunes only.

In 1600, Fynes Moryson, secretary to Lord Mountjoy during his period in Ireland, had written that the native Irish 'Delight much in dancing, using no artes of slowe measures or lofty galliards, but only country dances...' (that is, rural dances in the real sense, not the later English Country Dances created by urban dancing masters). Fifty years later, the Irish aristocracy, if not the peasantry, were apparently acquainted with both. The harper Thomas Conallon, thought to have been born in Cloonmahon, Co. Sligo, in 1640, seems to have settled in Edinburgh about 1690 and was perhaps made a Burgess of that city in 1717³. Several items attributed to him were still in Irish harpers repertory at the end of the 18th century and they include pieces in galliard and almain style. Curt Sachs and many dance historians have discussed galliard as if it were a single dance which merely underwent some changes in style and tempo over a period. In practice, the term seems to have covered a number of different dance structures. Conallon's galliards are of two different kinds. One is the well known triple-galliard, with paired bars and stress on the first beat of every second bar (see notation 1 opposite). The other is a duple-time galliard with units of five and three⁴. It belongs to a large category of galliards in which these units could be deployed in different sequences (see notation 2 opposite).

According to Bunting, who gave no authority, it was composed in 1660 for Sarah, wife of the 1st Viscount Iveagh⁵; since she died in 1644, this seems unlikely. If it was indeed by Conallon, it must have been composed for the wife of the 5th and last Viscount, in 1689 or 1690. She married in 1689, left Ireland with her husband after his

attainder by William of Orange in 1691, returned after his death in 1692, remarried and died in 1744. (A non-galliard form, titled 'Miss Crofton', was attributed to Carolan 'on stylistic grounds'⁶). It seems unlikely that anyone was actually dancing this kind of galliard in Ireland in the late 18th century, when the tunes were notated from live performance, but one cannot be certain. Netherlandish galliards of the same type, but with step- and tune-units in different order, were still in use in the later part of that century; they appeared in theatrical collections of the 1770s, a century after they had been in ordinary social repertory⁷.

Bunting got both galliards from the Co. Tyrone harper, Arthur O'Neill (1734-1818). The piece in almain style (which starts with the same melodic formula as 'Lady Iveagh') is known in two versions, from the playing of O'Neill and of Charles Byrne, born in Co. Leitrim c 1710. Both have two 8-bar units, with a different final phrase from each player. Byrne's form is less decorated and has touches of dotted almain rhythm (see notation 3 opposite). Bunting claimed that this had been composed in 1650, which is unlikely in view of Conallon's birth date. An almain taken from the Co. Cavan harper Charles Fanning (born 1736) and attributed to Carolan seems, however, fairly closely datable, since it appears to have been for the wife of the seventh Viscount Dillon, a lady who perished in Limerick in 1691⁸. Carolan (1670-1738) became blind in his middle teens and was then apprenticed to a harper for a few years. This almain, whether an original creation or an arrangement of a pre-existing one, must therefore be one of the earliest productions with which he was later credited. It is a three-unit piece, the third unit extended to twelve bars by a 4-bar echo in the middle (see notation 4 opposite).

Anonymous two-unit almains came from the repertory of Daniel Black, a Co. Derry harper (c 1715-1796) though in a setting attributed to his contemporary Dominic Mungan (c 1715-?), from a Co. Mayo harper and from the singing of an old woman in Sligo.

The tempo of almain has been much disputed between musicologists and reconstructors of earlier dance. The latter tend to the view that very slow tempi are physically incompatible with what is known of almain steps from Arbeau onwards. Bunting's tempo indication was ♩ = 100 in $\frac{3}{4}$ for all but two (Mungan's setting was given ♩ = 120 while Carolan's almain, appearing only in Bunting's earlier publications without Maelzel or pendulum figures, was **largo and slowly and gracefully**). Did this represent a slowed-down tempo for listening or Bunting's mistaking ♩ for ♪? The latter would give a tempo compatible with dancing and with other dance-functional almain tunes.

As with galliards, some of the dances called **corrente-coranto-courante** which flourished on the continent had asymmetrical units. There is less trace of these in Great Britain and those that survive here in musical notation are generally of simpler structure. Two types in notated Irish repertory, however, are close to some European forms. One somewhat ungainly tune, taken down by Bunting in the 1790s, lacks the characteristic courante rhythmic tag, but the structure of its two units (of seven bars and nine) is identical with two of the three in Netherlandish galliard⁹, though in different order, as was the case with Conallon's galliard for Lady Iveagh. Bunting's indication **largo** — presumably the tempo of the performance

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1. LOVE IN SECRET (galliard)

Thomas Conallon (C.1640-post 1717)

Moderato [♩ = 92 ?] in E. Bunting Ancient Irish Music (Dublin, 1796)

Two divisions

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for 'Love in Secret'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The tempo is marked 'Moderato' with a note value of 92. The second staff continues the melody and includes a '3' above a triplet of notes and a box labeled 'TWO DIVISIONS' at the end.

2. LADY IVEAGH (galliard)

Thomas Conallon (1689-90)

Quick and spirited ♩ = 160 in E. Bunting The Ancient Music of Ireland (Dublin, 1840) ~ a tone lower in 1792 ms.

etc.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for 'Lady Iveagh'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Quick and spirited' with a note value of 160. The second staff includes a '3' above a triplet of notes and ends with 'etc.'.

3. CELIA CONALLON (almain)

Thomas Conallon

Rather Slow ♩ = 100 [for ♩ = 100 ?] in Bunting AMI (1840)

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for 'Celia Conallon'. It consists of four staves of music in D minor (two flats) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Rather Slow' with a note value of 100. The music is written in a single treble clef throughout.

4. ROSE DILLON (almain)

C. 1690-91 Carolan (1670-1738)

Largo in Bunting AIM (1796); slowly and gracefully in Bunting Ancient Music of Ireland (London 1809)

tr etc.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for 'Rose Dillon'. It consists of two staves of music in D minor (two flats) and common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Largo'. The second staff includes a trill ('tr') and ends with 'etc.'.

he heard — seems appropriate to 17th-century French-style courante, which dancing masters described as very solemn and grave (see notation 5 opposite)

There are several examples of the other type, which has four 5-bar units (one has an extra bar at the beginning of the last). The internal structure is that of the first section of a certain kind of courante (and also of several duple-time dances) which, in Netherlandish collections at least, sometimes had a Spanish name¹⁰ (see notation 6 opposite).

It may well be that this had become Irish-aculturated long before Bunting, and later Thomas Broadwood and Patrick Joyce notated examples of it. By the late 18th century, its tune idioms were patently Irish and in certain cases they were allied to Irish texts. Some were performed slowly. Others were done at a fairly quick tempo, perhaps preserving that of the old 'swift coranto'. This genre of tune survived in Ireland into the present century, not for social dances but for a set dance, with complicated steps, for a single dancer. "It is one of a number of so called 'irregular' tune-types which, as *Brendán Breathnach* has remarked in connection with those in structural units of 6 or 7 bars, "point to the existence of dances now lost"¹².

There is not enough music for these and a few other dances of 16th- and 17th-century European origin to provide solid evidence as to how they got to Ireland and when, how much they were danced there and the extent to which they were still danced in the 18th century. There is less dubiety about another, much larger category of non-Irish dance forms for which Scotland, England and the northern Netherlands, in various combinations, were the sources, and the late 17th and early 18th centuries the time of introduction.

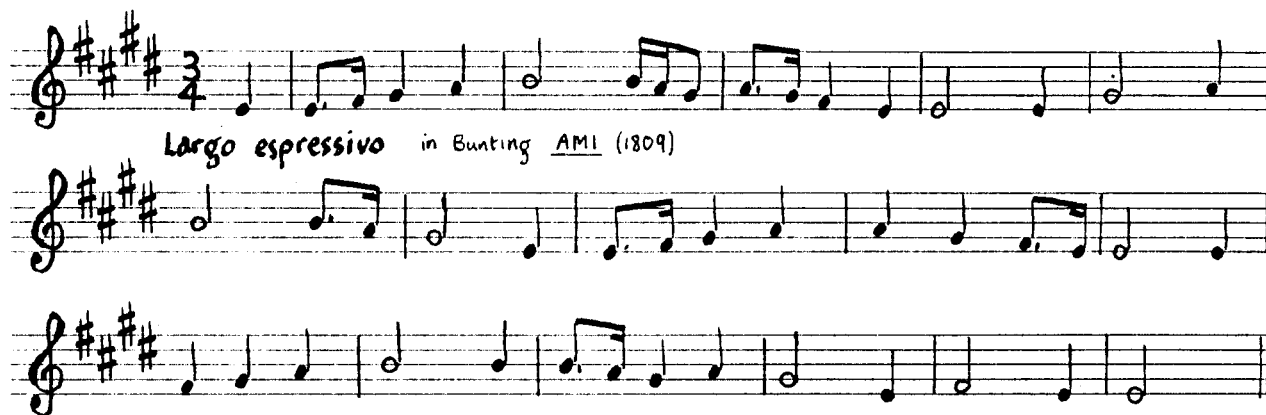
The formula known in Britain as Scottish Measure was in fact common on both sides of the North Sea. An early notation of a tune in this rhythm, titled *Ain Netherlandisch Runden Dantz*, is in Hans Judenkünig's lute book printed in Vienna in 1523¹³. It is the *boeren plof* of Netherlandish rustic dance, and it was characteristic of many of the so-called Jacky Tar hornpipes of the 18th century and some English popular song as well as much Scotch vocal and instrumental music. It occurs in a number of pieces in Irish repertory. For example, Carolan's salon piece titled *Thomas O'Burk* (a patron not identified with certainty) is largely in Scottish measure rhythm and short phrases entirely in that rhythm form the first part of several anonymous pieces in various styles.

Two among a number of reels attributed to Carolan may have been made from pre-existing tunes. The first two units of that used at the wedding of Henry, son of Carolan's chief patron (*MacDermott Roe* of Alderford) to *Anne O'Donell*, together form a circular reel tune. The third unit sits on a different tonal centre, is stylistically different and less well-contrived, with little motor impulse. This unit may have been Carolan's addition (see notation 7 opposite).

Bunting got this piece from the Co. Meath harper *Rose Mooney* (1730-post 1800). *Charles Byrne* was the source for a reel (and a jig) which Carolan made for Colonel John

5. THE VICTORIOUS TREE (slow courante)

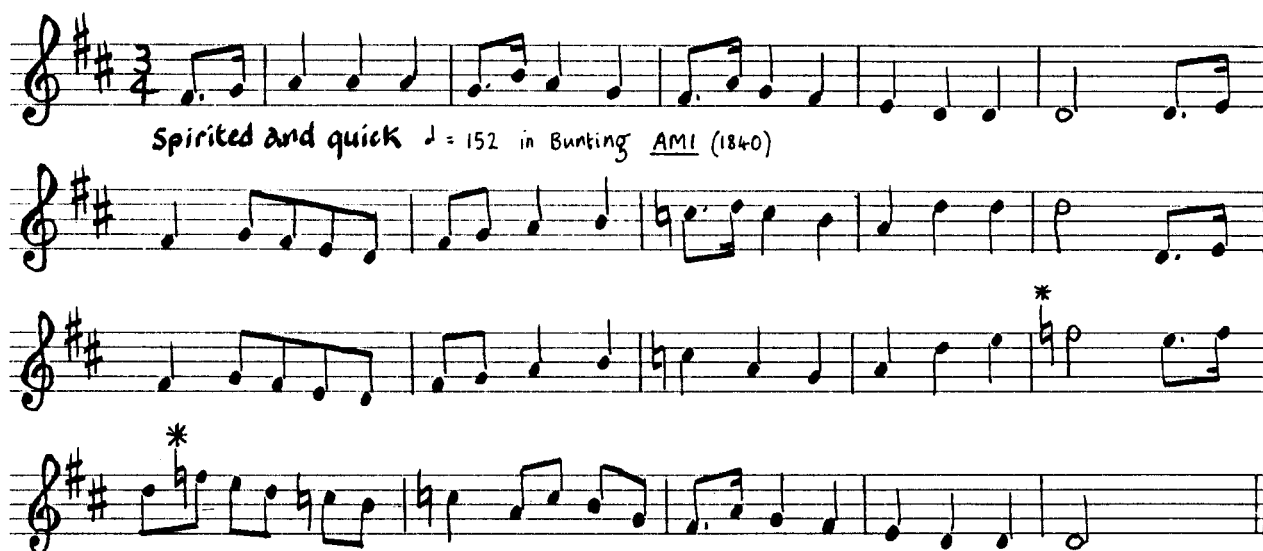
anon



Largo espressivo in Bunting AMI (1809)

6. THE PRETTY RED GIRL (quick courante)

anon



Spirited and quick ♩ = 152 in Bunting AMI (1840)

* not in 1792 ms.

7. NANNY McDERMOT ROE (reel)

Carolan

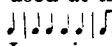
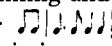


Vivace in Bunting AIM (1796)

Irwin of Tanrego House, Co.Sligo, of an English family given land under the Cromwellian settlements. The reel is in rant style¹⁴ and the first four of its sixteen bars appear to be a bellows-pipe tune. Though printed by Bunting a tone lower and with the non-tempered notes of the pipe scale suggested by accidentals, it sits exactly in the scale and compass of Lowland or Border pipes¹⁵. It also has the rhythmic and melodic character found in many Border reels, including the repeated notes playable only on bellows-blown pipes. The second four bars go two notes higher than the first four, into the upper octave, and this is indeed possible on Lowland pipes by pinching on the thumbhole. But that phrase and the entire second unit of eight bars are less tightly co-ordinated, and there is also a downward extension of compass by two notes which would be impossible on Lowland pipes. These twelve bars were perhaps of Carolan's own making (see notation 8 opposite).

There seems to be a similar situation with a hornpipe made probably for the wife or daughter-in-law of John Fallon of Runnimead, Co. Roscommon, who had been a captain in the army of James II. The first four bars of the first unit form a neat fiddle-style hornpipe tune; the next four bars and the whole of the second unit, which are more diffused and have much less motor impulse, may have been Carolan's own.

The social use of march tunes for promenades etc. on formal dance occasions, and for processions at weddings and so on, is well documented in Europe, as is their use on occasion for actual dances, where rhythmic impulse and unit structure were compatible with existing dance forms.¹⁶ Carolan's marches made for patrons of high social level included several in ceremonial trumpet-and-drum style and a couple of reel-as-march. Particularly interesting in the social sense, however, is that known as **Planxty Sudley** or **Carolan's Dowry**. His daughter Siobhán married one Captain Sudley, an English army officer, and according to Carolan's Irish text associated with this tune, he did not much approve of the match. This piece is an ordinary military fife-and-drum style march, its initial two bars being one of the many floating fragments that crop up in various contexts; for example, they also form the beginning of the Netherlandish dance tune **Oud Haerlem** and of the American march **I wish I was in Dixie**. Presumably Captain Sudley was attached to an infantry regiment. One may nevertheless speculate as to whether the provision of a plain functional march for his wedding piece was a compliment or not (see notation 9 opposite).

There was a grander association with another kind of march which, in default of a pre-existing term, I have called military bourrée¹⁷. Briefly, it was a specific variety of one of several rhythmic styles employed both in social and theatrical dance and military march. Its characteristic formula, generally used at the beginning and sometimes all through, was $\frac{4}{4}$  or  or a very close variant. Its primary association seems to have been with royalty and high aristocratic and/or military persons. It was wrapped in different melodic idioms in different times and places, ranging from an early example associated with Elizabeth, daughter of James VI of Scotland and I of England, through many connected with Netherlandish grandees and military leaders and Handel's **Music for the Royal Fireworks**, to late English popular use as in **The Lass of Richmond Hill**, satirically about Mrs Fitzherbert, mistress of the Prince Regent. Carolan made two, both for high Protestant patrons. One for Sir Charles Coote of Coote Hall, Co. Roscommon¹⁸ (of somewhat savage English family settled in Ireland since the early 17th century) is a smooth, English fife-and-drum style tune (see notation 10 opposite).

8. COLONEL IRWIN (hornpipe)

Carolan

Allegro in Bunting AMI (1809)

9. PLANXTY SUDLEY (fife and drum march)

Carolan

Allegro in Bunting AMI (1809)

* - - - - * an octave lower in Bunting's pianoforte arrangement. etc.

10. PLANGSTY CHARLES COOTE (military bourrée, fife and drum)

Carolan

very quick and sprightly $\text{♩} = 108$ in Bunting AMI (1840)

* - - - - * an octave lower in Bunting's pianoforte arrangement.

The other was made for the wife of Thomas Judge of Grangebeg, Co. Westmeath, who at various times in the second decade of the 18th century was High Sheriff of Westmeath and of Leitrim. This is an altogether different piece, wide-ranging in the Lowland fashion and with a certain amount of strathspey-dotted infill. This and the march for Sir Charles Coote were both in Rose Mooney's repertory; but Bunting got the first part of the piece for Mrs Judge (who became Mrs Judge in 1707) from Daniel Black, the much younger contemporary of Carolan. This first 8-bar segment has the well-organised character of a possibly pre-existing tune. It may be significant that whereas Rose Mooney, the Co. Meath harper, had Carolan's 32-bar piece, Daniel Black, from the more Scotticised Co. Derry had the self-contained first unit only (see notation 11 opposite).

There is a strong stylistic resemblance between this and the only vestige of military bourrée to survive in modern Ireland, i.e. that musical tabernacle of the Orange Order, **King William crossing Boyne Water**. The tune is certainly of Scotch origin and the earliest printed form of the Williamite text is in a song-text book produced in Edinburgh in 1766. But that text is probably of Ulster or near-Ulster composition and closer to the actual date of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690¹⁹. It fits reasonably well the magnificent 18th-century form of the tune which Bunting titled **The Cavalcade of the Boyne** (See notation 12 opposite).

William's musical monument is in distinguished company. The first part of the parade march of the army and air force of the Netherlands, used on occasion as an alternative to the national anthem **Wilhelmus**, is a military bourrée rhythm, of the same smooth, undotted kind as Carolan's for Sir Charles Coote. It is the march associated with Johan Willem Friso, Prince of Oranje-Nassau born in 1687, great-great-great-great-grandfather of the present Queen of the Netherlands and younger cousin of William of Orange who crossed Boyne Water in July 1690.

Notes:

1. The content of this paragraph is taken from 'Irish traditional music: sources and uses', Mellon Lecture delivered by Frank Harrison in the University of Pittsburgh, November 1981.
2. Country Dance is not a music category and tunes for this genre of dance were taken from many sources. In Ireland, some were Irish or pastiche-Irish and some were not.
3. C. O'Baoill, 'Some Irish harpers in Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol XLVII, pp 153-8.
4. Bunting's printed form of the second part of this tune does not conform exactly with his manuscript notation of 1792. See D. O'Sullivan, *Bunting's Ancient Music of Ireland... original manuscripts* (Cork, 1983) pp 2-3. This gives the manuscript notations of all items in Bunting *AMI* (Dublin, 1840). But note that texts later associated with some of these tunes were not necessarily contemporary with the original form of the music. In other cases of variation (whether in pitch, rhythmic detail, melodic contour or decoration) between Bunting's field notations and his printed forms arranged for piano-forte, the differences are not structurally significant in dance terms.
5. E. Bunting *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin 1840) p 91.

6. See D. O'Sullivan, *Carolan* (London, 1958) Vol II, pp 19-20. Carolan had no single 'style' and there seems little reason for attributing this piece to him.
7. e.g. Galjaarde Lantaerne and Galjaarde Vierkant in *Oude en Nieuwe Hollantse Boerenliedjes en Contredansen* (Amsterdam c 1700-1716, reprint 1972) and in *De Nieuwe Hollandsche Schouwburg* (Amsterdam c 1770). The titles imply dance structure and functions different from those of the triple-time couples' dance. The first may have been a processional, perhaps used in the lantern processions customary on St Martin's Day, and the second was obviously a squared form for four or eight dancers.
8. In D. O'Sullivan (see note 6) Vol II p 24, it was stated that Rose, wife of the 7th Viscount Dillon, could not have been the dedicatee and the name must be incorrectly attached. However, both the date of her death and the style of the piece in relation to Carolan's own age, training and later musical development suggest that it was indeed for her.
9. Courante B.R. in *Oude en Nieuwe Hollantse Boerenliedjes...* (see note 7). This has an additional 4-bar unit at the end.
10. See J. Rimmer 'Some Irish-Netherlandish musical connections' *Journal of Irish Folk Music Studies* IV (in the press).
11. J. O'Keefe and A. O'Brien, *A textbook of Irish Dances* (Dublin 1954) p 11.
12. B. Breathnach, *Folk music and dances of Ireland* (Dublin 1971) p 65.
13. A. Koczirz, *Denmäler der Tonkunst in Osterreich* XVIII, Jg. II, 37, p 11.
14. See G. S. Emmerson *Rantin' pipe and tremblin' string* (London 1971) pp 130-139.
15. A. Baines, *Bagpipes* (Oxford 1960), p 117 and pl X, 29.
16. See J. Rimmer *Two dance collections from Friesland and their Scotch, English and continental connections* (Groningen, 1978).
17. Discussed with many examples in J. Rimmer 'Some Irish-Netherlandish musical connections' (see note 10). But note that in France, distinction between music for rigaudon and bourrée became somewhat blurred and a number of bourrée tunes, military and other, were titled rigaudon.
18. The 4th baronet who died in 1709, or the 5th who died in 1715.
19. H. Shields, 'New dates for old tunes', *Long Room* (Dublin, nd) pp 34-5.

11. ABIGAIL JUDGE (Scotch military bourrée) after 1707

after 1707 Carolan

Majestic in Bunting AIM (1796); Maestoso in AMI (1809)

etc.

12. THE CAVALCADE OF THE BOYNE (Scotch military bourrée) c.1690?

anon

Ju- ly the first in old Bridge Town, There ought to be a pat- tern, As 'tis re- cor- ded
 in each church book, Throughout - all the Na- tion. Let us all kneel down and pray
 Now and e- ver af- ter - Ne- ver to for- get the day That King Wil- liam crossd the wa- ter

Maestoso in Bunting AMI (1809)