



Some performance ideas

These Irish folk songs are within the technical capabilities of players in the early stages of flute tuition. However - as is often the way with, deceptively, simple folk music - more advanced musicians can return to them, again and again, each time finding fresh beauty and interest.

Written music is just a rough sketch, a memory aid, for performance. In many cases, the articulation and dynamics were not added by the original composer. This is certainly true of folk music, so we can feel free to explore the effects of combining changes in these two aspects of performance.

(Most folk-songs are written out with slurs added only to show where a syllable in the lyric lasts for 2 or more notes. The singer cannot add or remove slurs but we flute-players are free to explore and highlight other aspects of the melody.)

Playing with rubato means that our tempo is flexible, allowing us to linger on some notes of a phrase and to push on, with a little more urgency, in other places. Whole books have been written on the subject of rubato and no two artists would use it in exactly the same way, in any particular piece. Often, for very good reasons, teachers are wary of rubato, in the early stages, insisting that pupils play a piece in strict time before using it. However, some music just cries out for the rubato treatment and slow folk airs are robbed of much of their expression without it. These pieces are a good opportunity to explore this important idea.

More advanced players could also try playing bars 1-18 of "The Quiet Land of Erin" an octave lower (substituting a low D for the A in bar 13). It is good practice, as it is quite challenging to get the appropriate expression and tone quality in the lowest register.

Have fun!

Audrey Podmore, 2001