CHAPTER ONE

STYLE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

It [Irish traditional music] has been here, in round figures, for 9,000 years, for as long as there’s been human habitation here. In the context of 9,000 years the 300 years that I spoke about a moment ago is nothing: 3%. And yet that 3% of Irish time has been a period long enough to almost entirely create Irish traditional music as we know it [...].

This study is located in the field of style in Irish traditional instrumental music: a term that includes both slow airs and dance music but weighs heavily in favour of the latter. Being an oral tradition, much of what is known of style is transmitted by listening, watching and replicating. More significantly, this process occurs without recourse to terminology and consequently, it is referred to as implicit knowledge, which is characterised as knowledge that is difficult to identify and communicate verbally. Therefore, it is true to state that much of what is transmitted as style in Irish traditional instrumental music has not yet been identified and categorised. In contrast to implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge can be known, communicated using terminology, organised and shared. This study aims to establish a framework, which I have termed the musical catalyst framework (MCF) by which the ratio of implicit to explicit knowledge can be significantly altered in respect of the latter.

Stylistic data is the term used here to describe explicit aspects of style and single examples of this stylistic data are referred to as stylistic elements. In developing and testing the MCF, the aim is to investigate the possibility of creating an archive of explicit stylistic data. This would allow aspects of style to be presented in a systematic manner that not only allows the material to be accessed easily but also shared. A further function is that in writing down what is known to exist, it is easier to identify gaps in

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2 See Section 1.2.3 for an explanation of how the term ‘implicit knowledge’ relates to ‘tacit knowledge’.
the knowledge, a trait that would allow its contents to grow. As well as providing a language and reference point for analyses, it could also serve as a useful model for stylistic studies on similar ‘Celtic’ genres.

Having created this archive of stylistic data, the next stage is to observe and record seven high-level musicians who are briefed regarding how to use it in a musical sense. This practical application of the explicit stylistic data is termed the musical catalyst approach (MCA). The results of these demonstrations are audible on seven CDs (found in Appendix D), which are critically discussed in Chapter Ten. It is hoped that this study will help to ascertain how useful the MCF and MCA might be as a solution to issues that are outlined in this chapter.

1.1 Historiographical Overview and Literature Review

The discussion of the texts that follows is intended to determine both what aspects of style have been described and how authors have conceptualised the notion of ‘style’. From this, the areas of style to be explored in this study have been located within the literature that exists. Also, how style is conceptualised in this study can be understood in relation to how it has been dealt with in the past. While the idea of style is most pervasive from the latter part of the twentieth century, it was not entirely absent from much earlier texts.

The earliest publication to suggest a specifically Irish music was Neal’s *A Collection of the most Celebrated Irish Tunes* (1724).\(^3\) While the music contained therein is quite different in its form, structure and rhythmic characteristics from the instrumental music that now comprises the genre, it acts as a source of information on ornamentation that has relevance to the music of today.\(^4\) Joseph Cooper Walker’s *The Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (1786), is widely regarded as the first text, which deals specifically

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3 Neal, John; Neal, William: *A Collection of the most Celebrated Irish Tunes: proper for the violin, German flute or hautboy*, (Dublin: John and William Neal, 1724).

4 See: Neal, John; Neal, William: *A Collection of the most Celebrated Irish Tunes*, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Carolan, (Dublin: Irish Traditional Music Archive, 2010), 33. Drawing an analogy with historical and Irish-language classification systems, Nicholas Carolan describes the music found in the collection as ‘Early Modern Irish Music’ and as such, it may almost be regarded as a separate genre.
with Irish music. Walker (1761–1810) was an Anglo-Irish antiquarian and member of the Protestant ascendancy who attempted to restore the harp music of the Bards as part of a wider societal objective to create a noble and ‘ancient’ cultural identity. The *Historical Memoirs* is in effect a summary of earlier references that date from the observations of the Welsh scholar Giraldus Cambrensis whose twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica* references tempo, rhythm and polyphony in relation to harp music. While also primarily focused on harp music, Walker engages in a very comprehensive description of historically popular instruments, which gives an idea of the timbres that would have characterised the music of this time. He classifies different types of music, but as later noted by Aloys Fleischmann, since the criteria for distinguishing tune-types ‘did not emerge until they were named by the dancing masters towards the end of the eighteenth century, it seems unwarranted to define such terms before the time they were established in the tradition, c.1775’. The modes are briefly described, and interestingly also, a reference is made to intonation or temperament, an area that is still not fully understood. Quoting Professor

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11. Cooper Walker: ‘Appendix’, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, 17. This description comes from a letter written to Walker in 1785 by Edward Ledwich, whose own work will be briefly discussed later.

12. *Ibid.*, 248-249. Presently, the only known study of temperaments and microtonality in Irish traditional music in-depth can be found in: Molloy, Ryan: *Microinterval Modality in Irish Music*, (PhD Diss., Queen’s University Belfast, 2013), 39-87. Still however, the only full publication dedicated to this topic is: Hennebry, Richard: *Irish Music: Being an Examination of the Matter of Scales, Modes, and Keys, with Practical Instructions and Examples for Players*, (Dublin: An Cló Cumann, Straid Mór na Trága, 1903).
Patrick McDonald, Walker alludes to both ornamentation and melodic variation with the statement that ‘such of them as were men of abilities, attempted to adorn them with graces and variations, or to produce what were called good sets [settings] of them’. Interestingly also, the various emotional qualities of the music are described – a trait that is characteristic of nineteenth-century scholarship but which almost entirely disappears in twentieth-century descriptions.

O’Farrell’s Collection of National Irish Music for the Union Pipes was published in 1804 and followed by four ‘Pocket Companions’ that were published in 1805, 1806, 1808, and 1810 respectively. While neither the dates of publication nor the author’s first name is known for certain, it is the first tutor for any ‘Irish traditional’ instrument and hence, it contains the first detailed and specific description of style. It is most notable for its description of ornamentation, but also includes a commentary on the various metres used, which the author poetically terms ‘time moods’.

Of the publications of Edward Bunting (1773–1843), A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music (1796), consists solely of harp music while A General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland (1809) and The Ancient Music of Ireland (1840), also include music from both uilleann pipers and singers. Since their publication, the works mentioned have often been heavily criticised for the unreliability of their transcriptions, specifically in relation to their author’s treatment of tonality. It is worth noting that it has recently been found by Dr Colette Moloney that much of the music in

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16 For a more detailed exploration on who O’Farrell might have been, see: http://www.pipers.ie/imco/OFPCNotes.htm (Accessed 15 February 2013)
18 Ibid., 327 – 330.
the collection consists of English hymn-tunes and military marches.\textsuperscript{23} From a style perspective, the two potentially significant characteristics of these works are: 1. The ornamentation, albeit sparse, found in the transcriptions of the tunes in all three collections and particularly the table of harping ornaments given in his 1840 volume, and 2. The description of style detailed below, found in the introduction to this last volume.\textsuperscript{24}

In addition to his systematic table of ‘graces’,\textsuperscript{25} Bunting also offers a basic commentary on structural tones, articulation, emotion/moods, ornaments and tempo.\textsuperscript{26} In a margin note in one of his manuscripts, Moloney observes that while Bunting ‘indicates various harp scales from different centuries […]. He does not, however, state the source of these scales’.\textsuperscript{27} Similarly to Walker, Bunting anticipates the idea of tune-types but Fleischmann’s warning is still best heeded in this regard.\textsuperscript{28} Finally, in his discussion of the music of the harpers recorded at the 1792 Belfast Harp festival, he describes ornamentation, the styles of striking chords and tempo.\textsuperscript{29} In relation to the last of these, Bunting’s 1840 collection breaks from the style of his first two collections by providing precise tempo markings that specify, in inches, the length at which a pendulum is to be swung. This approach is adopted in later texts by authors such as George Petrie and Patrick Weston Joyce.\textsuperscript{30}

Adapted from a series of lectures he delivered in 1842, Michael Conran (1814–1860), published \textit{The National Music of Ireland}, in 1850.\textsuperscript{31} The influence of Bunting and

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 49-50.
\textsuperscript{24} Bunting: \textit{The Ancient Music of Ireland}, (1840), 24-27.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., This is an old term for ‘ornaments’.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 14-28.
\textsuperscript{27} See: Moloney: \textit{The Irish Music Manuscripts of Edward Bunting (1773–1843): An Introduction and Catalogue}, 69,70. Moloney notes that these scales may be found in MS12/1, appear as marginalia and do not appear in any of Bunting’s published editions.
\textsuperscript{28} Bunting: \textit{The Ancient Music of Ireland}, (1840), 18.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 24-29.
\textsuperscript{30} Petrie, George: ‘How to Find the Time in which each Air is to be Played’, \textit{The Ancient Music of Ireland}, Vol. 1, (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1855), n.p. Also see: Joyce, Patrick Weston: \textit{Ancient Irish Music} (Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1873), v-vi. It is also worth noting that in his edition of Petrie’s collection, David Cooper presents a mathematical formula that can be used to translate the tempo figures produced by Petrie into the metronome markings that are familiar today. See: Cooper, David: \textit{The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland}, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 22
\textsuperscript{31} Conran, Michael: \textit{The National Music of Ireland}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., (London: John Johnson, 30 High Holborn; Thomas Johnson, Manchester, 1850).
Walker is very evident in the topics covered but his discussion on modality is interesting for the time. He provides a table to explain what he incorrectly terms the four authentic modes: Dorian, Phrygian, Æolian, and Ionic [Ionian], which are actually Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian. In this table, he also includes the Mixolydian mode. Conran’s views on the significance of the various scale degrees mirror those of Bunting, who was himself correctly refuted by George Petrie in his *Ancient Music of Ireland* 1855. Conran, typical of writers of this period, appears to go to lengths to prove the worth of the music, evident when he states that ‘it may also be seen that there [is] no want of a complete scale’, later noting that ‘the hypothesis of omissions [in the notes of the scale] is of little moment, as these form but a minor feature in our airs, and do not prove the want of a perfect diatonic scale, as already shown’. Similarly to Walker and Bunting, Conran also discusses and reprints what is known in the early literature as ‘bardic’ terminology.

The collector George Petrie (1790–1866) was a renowned antiquarian whose first collection, *The Ancient Music of Ireland* was published in 1855. However, early parts of it were published in forty-page selections from 1853. His second volume, also entitled *The Ancient Music of Ireland* was incomplete upon his death and was published posthumously in 1882. In the introduction to his first volume, Petrie observes melodic variation in the context of geographical location and in doing so, captures the essence of the concept of regional style that would be popularised a century later by Seán Ó Riada. The idea is introduced in response to Bunting’s comment that ‘a strain of music, once

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32 See: Conran: *The National Music of Ireland*, v, where in his preface Conran himself attests to Bunting’s influence.
34 Ibid., 58.
35 Ibid., 64. Petrie states that Bunting’s transcriptions are ‘without any musical expressions of their value with regard either to key, time, accent, phrase, or section […]’. See: Petrie: *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, Vol. 1, x.
37 Ibid., 65.
38 Ibid., 86-90.
39 These selections were brought to light by Dr Jimmy O’Brien Moran and have been substantiated by the Irish Traditional Music Archive. See: http://www.itma.ie/digitallibrary/print-collection/petries-ancient-music-of-ireland/ (Accessed 3 February 2013)
impressed on the popular ear, never varies’. \(^{41}\) Petrie counters this by stating: ‘I rarely, if ever, obtained two settings of an unpublished air that were strictly the same; though, in some instances, I have gotten as many as fifty notations of the one melody’. \(^{42}\) This thread is taken up later in the volume in relation to his introduction to the air ‘An Buachaill Caol Dubh’ where he writes:

Of an air so extensively disseminated, and - as usual in such cases - sung to words differing in character in the various localities where it is known, it should naturally be expected that there would be a great diversity in the forms which it would assume, and such I have found to be the fact. So great indeed are those varieties, in common that the native of one province would probably find it difficult to recognise this popular melody in the form which it has assumed as sung by the native of another. In such instances, therefore, it will be often difficult to determine which version of a melody is the most correct one; for, though a knowledge of the structure of Irish tunes and an acquaintance with the words sung to them will determine the true rhythm and accents, still their general sentiment, and the choice of their less important notes, can be determined only by the taste and judgement, and hence the set of a tune which to one will seem the best, will not be deemed so by another.\(^{43}\)

He also speaks of structure, rhythm and accents,\(^{44}\) topics that, as will be seen below, were frequently discussed by later writers on the subject. While, as previously stated, the idea of tune-types\(^ {45}\) had not been established at that time, a related idea, namely the ‘classification of airs’ was current and was utilised by Petrie. This differs from tune-types, which is only concerned with instrumental music, in that it also takes into consideration the melodies or ‘airs’ from the various types of song. Both of Petrie’s volumes demonstrate a very detailed understanding of different ‘classes of airs’, which not only can be seen from both the contents page and the notes on each of the tunes but which is explicitly stated in the introduction.\(^ {46}\) Unlike the tune-types idea, the classes of tunes are not always organised according to musical principles, but sometimes, by the function they serve. For example, neither ‘plough tunes’ nor ‘spinning tunes’

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\(^{41}\) Bunting: _The Ancient Music of Ireland_, (1840), 1. Interestingly, Bunting accepts that variation does occur in songs. It will also be noted that this opinion contradicts earlier observations of variation such as that found in the writing of Walker. For the argument in context, see: Cooper: _The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland_, 16.

\(^{42}\) Petrie: _The Ancient Music of Ireland_, Vol. 1, xv.

\(^{43}\) Petrie: _The Ancient Music of Ireland_, Vol. 1, xv. He also discusses regional variation in p. xviii

\(^{44}\) _Ibid._, xvi-xvii. Here he discusses structure, rhythm and accents in the context of the narrative air.

\(^{45}\) The term ‘tune-types’ refers to the approach of categorising instrumental music, usually in relation to various dance-types. For a definition see Chapter Two, 52 and Chapter Three, 70-71.

\(^{46}\) Petrie: _The Ancient Music of Ireland_, Vol. 1, 26, 82-84.
necessarily have any distinguishing features but rather, they are simply associated with those activities. On this note, it is in his first volume that Petrie coins the term ‘narrative air’ to describe a class of slow air that is in 3/4 and is characterised by an anacrusis of three quavers, the presence of longer rhythmic values such as a crotchet or dotted-quaver value on the second beat of each bar, and an otherwise quaver-based rhythm overall.47

It was around the mid-nineteenth century that the focus in terms of the material being collected began to shift from song-derived airs to include an increasing number of dance tunes. Notable examples from this period include the James Goodman collection48 and the first collection devoted exclusively to Irish dance music, Richard Michael Levey’s The Dance Music of Ireland, which was published in two volumes (1858 and 1873).49 From these collections, a clear trajectory can be seen leading to Francis O’Neill’s The Dance Music of Ireland (1907), which seems to establish both the dance music and the tune-type concept firmly in the mainstream of the discourse on traditional music.50

Volume One of Eugene O’Curry’s (1794–1862) Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish (1873),51 deals with musical culture in Ireland, which the author elects to discuss in terms of: ‘1. Musical instruments and 2. The nature of the music played upon them’.52 Again, this work is similar to others of the period with tonality (and particularly the pentatonic scale), intonation and temperament being the main points of discussion.53 In speaking of harmony and texture (although not specifically using the latter term), he decries the demise in the ability of the public to recognise these idiosyncrasies of the genre and the ‘inevitable death of Irish homophonic music’.54

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47 Ibid., xvii.
52 Ibid., ccclxxxiv.
53 Ibid., dcxix ff.
54 Ibid., dci ff.
Also published in 1873, Patrick Weston Joyce’s (1827–1914) *Ancient Irish Music* offers the first detailed taxonomic-like description of tune-types that does not differ much from the modern day understanding.\(^{55}\) In reference to Bunting’s editions, his critique of the use of the raised seventh in minor tunes is a point that was to be taken up by later commentators.\(^{56}\)

The aesthetics of style during this period were marked by the fact that the writers were often also antiquarians. As ‘musical archaeologists’ their ideas and methodologies are in contrast with those of later scholars who, in the simplest sense, have approached the music from a specifically musical perspective.\(^{57}\) The antiquarians viewed tunes almost as sacrosanct cultural ‘artefacts’ or as noted by Bunting: ‘[t]he Editor’s chief aim throughout has been to guard the primitive air with religious veneration’.\(^{58}\) Other than the views of Bunting, melodic variation appears to have been accepted at the time. However, the instrumentalist was viewed with suspicion – even by Petrie – which implies that their concept of variation and style was seen as something that compromised the tunes and hence, their preservation.\(^{59}\) As noted by Fleischmann in relation to Petrie, ‘there is an assumption that the changes produced by the passage of a tune through an oral tradition must always be for the worst’.\(^{60}\)

From the end of the nineteenth century, this tune-centred approach begins to give way to some of the first discussions of style, among the earliest of which I would consider to be Frederick St. John Lacy’s (1862–1935) 1890 paper which was presented to the Musical Association and is entitled ‘Notes on Irish Music’.\(^{61}\) In a similar manner to O’Curry,\(^{62}\) Lacy begins his paper by looking at tonality and proposes a ‘theoretical’

\(^{55}\) Joyce: *Ancient Irish Music*, v.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., iv.

\(^{57}\) See: O’Curry: *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, dcxi. Here can be found a characteristic example of the usage of the description, ‘musical archaeologist’.

\(^{58}\) Bunting: *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, (1840), 6.


\(^{62}\) O’Curry: *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, dlxii.
system to explain how modality supposedly evolved from pentatonic to hexatonic and diatonic modes. However, it is worth noting that there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. Following along the lines laid down by Bunting and Conran, Lacy discusses some aspects of ‘bardic’ terminology and in a similar vein to Petrie he advances the idea that ‘many of the jigs and planxties were originally written as march tunes […]’. His discussion of melodic structure is impressive for the time, particularly in that his assertions are well supported by examples.

On 13 April 1897, Annie W. Patterson (1868–1934) presented a paper to the Musical Association entitled ‘The Characteristic Traits of Irish Music’. It is recorded in the notes of the discussion following her presentation that the subject matter of the paper was similar to that given by Lacy a number of years earlier. The characteristics covered include temperament and the reiteration of the key-note at the end of a tune. It also appears to contain the first mention of ‘unending tunes’, or what is now described as circularity, which describes a tune’s avoidance of ending on its home-note to propel it into a repeat ad infinitum; a concept that would be discussed later by Breandán Breathnach, Seán Ó Riada and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin.

Temperament is alluded to in the texts of the nineteenth century but in a sporadic manner. It became a subject of a publication in its own right in 1903 when the Rev. Dr Richard Henebry (1863–1916) published Irish Music: being an examination of the matter of scales, modes, and keys, with practical instructions and examples for players.

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65 Lacy: ‘Notes on Irish Music’, 195. For a thorough historical exploration of the planxty, see:
68 See Ibid., 108-109 where it is stated: ‘The Chairman.-[...] You will remember, doubtless, that six or seven years ago we had an interesting paper on this same subject from one of our own members, Mr. F. St. John Lacy. Dr Annie Patterson has followed very much on the same lines then laid down’.
70 Henebry: Irish Music: Being an Examination of the Matter of Scales, Modes, and Keys, with Practical Instructions and Examples for Players. For an interesting biographical account of Henebry’s life, see:
Prof. Heinrich Bewerunge’s ‘Examination of the Modes of Irish Music’, which had been published in the New Ireland Review only four months previously. In his description of the characteristics of intonation prior to the influence of equal temperament, his thesis is that the increasing adoption of equal temperament in Irish music is at the expense of the genre’s original temperaments. Henebry states that:

All those collectors used the modern staff notation unchanged and subjected their tunes to the whole modern economy of playing. In reality what they did was to report the Irish interval accurately where it chanced to coincide with the modern, and where it did not substitute the nearest modern interval. The result was a string of notes altogether out of tune with the rules of modern composition on the one hand and totally unknown to Irish music on the other. And the whole has been labelled Irish music, and in all seriousness and good faith played and sung and studied as such. For, as will be shown below, the great body of our music is constructed on a scale whereof four of the intervals differ from the modern scale and three coincide with it. And a numerous class of tunes and they the most important, are composed on a scale having but two interval coincidences with the modern and five differences.

While there is indeed a case for arguing for a distinct temperament system or series of temperament colours for traditional music, there is no traceable basis for Henebry’s observations. He also argues for a greater understanding of phrasing (through accents and lyrics) in Irish traditional music although does not get around to describing it in depth.

In 1938, The Musical Quarterly published a paper written by James Travis (1911–1994) entitled ‘Irish National Music’. In addition to addressing the well-worn paths of tonality and melodic characteristics, his work is characterised by a very detailed focus


Henebry notes the influences of Bewerunge himself in: Ibid., 10, 11. Also see: Bewerunge, Heinrich: ‘Examination of the Modes of Irish Music’, The New Ireland Review, Vol. XIX, (Dublin: The New Ireland Review Office, June 1903), 227-235. Bewerunge was the first professor of plain chant and organ in St. Patrick’s College Maynooth, which in 1997 became incorporated into the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. This information was taken from an abstract written by Darina McCarthy and published in the Society for Musicology in Ireland Conference booklet, 2011.


Molloy: Microinterval Modality in Irish Music, 42-47. This is probably the most in-depth analysis of Henebry’s writings, of which Molloy subtracts the substantial ideas from the often overly zealous style of writing.

Ibid., 12-13.

on structure, rhythm and harmony. In terms of structure, while Travis’s work appears to build on ideas laid down by Lacy, he advances the study of structure by being the first to adopt such a systematic approach and gives numerous examples of what he terms ‘the variety within the general forms’. He proceeds to describe more unusual compositional structures that consist of more than four phrases. His description of rhythm is notable for its inclusion of unusual metres such as 5/4 and 6/4 and its omission of 4/4 and 2/2, which are now the two most common time signatures. In addition to asserting the as yet commonly-held belief that the slip jig, which is in 9/8, is ‘peculiarly Irish’, he also describes beat-patterns, the use of upbeats and accents, specifically in relation to the narrative air, and albeit briefly, manages to draw a connection between the tune’s harmonic structure and its phrasing structure.

Furthermore, he talks about tonality, which he states ‘has been the subject of much tortured theorizing and of one profitable analysis. A loose use of the terms scale and mode has confused the question’. To support his idea, he notes historical evidence of the harp being capable of chromaticism and that many of the instruments used in the past were quite capable of a variety of scales, concluding that ‘it would be absurd to fancy them confined’. Travis also discusses temperament, styles of harmony, and possibly for the first time, accompaniment rhythms and modal modulation. While a number of earlier writers had discussed emotion/ mood in music, from the research I have undertaken, Travis’s paper appears to be the last piece of writing to describe emotion as a stylistic characteristic.

76 See: Ibid., 452-463 for structure; 463-465 for rhythm; and 474-479 for harmony.
77 Ibid., 452.
78 Ibid., 456 - 463.
79 Ibid., 463.
80 Ibid. Indeed, Petrie held the same belief. See: Petrie: The Ancient Music of Ireland, Vol. 1, 19, 53.
81 Ibid., 464.
82 Ibid., 467.
83 Ibid., 467.
84 Ibid., 476.
86 See: Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál: Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts, (PhD Diss., Queen’s University Belfast, 1987), 248-275 where Ó Súilleabháin argues that Pott’s use of chromaticism to alternate between various modes within a tune is a means of expressing what he terms ‘emotive meaning’. Also see: Hynes, Jacqelyn: Style Analysis, (MA Diss., University of
Lacy, Patterson and Travis mark a turning point between the tune-centred nineteenth-century authors and the more style-centred authors of the twentieth century. In part this may be explained by the fact that it was not until the twentieth century that two particular cultural developments brought the idea of style to an increasingly central area of discourse. The first development concerned the emergence of commercial recordings, particularly those of the Sligo fiddler Michael Coleman (1891–1945). The second development concerned the major changes to Irish society and culture that began to occur in the 1960s and 1970s which saw the emergence of a more liberal approach to music making and hence allowed a greater individualism to occur. It is from this point that ideas on style begin to emerge in writings on Irish traditional music.

With the exception of O’Farrell’s tutor and Leo Rowsome’s (1903–1970) Tutor for Uilleann Pipes (1936), the composer Seán Ó Riada, (1931–1971), the piper Tomás Ó Canainn (1930–2013) and the collector and piper Breandán Breathnach (1912–1985) form the first group of authors to publish books that have a substantial, but not solely stylistic, component. Although these authors come from within the tradition on which they are writing, their adaptation of concepts from music theory and ideas from the wider discourse on style are often underdeveloped. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that their books were written as introductions to Irish traditional music.

Seán Ó Riada is regarded as a central figure in the folk music revival of the mid-twentieth century. In 1963, he presented a series for Raidió Éireann entitled Our Musical Heritage, the contents of which were edited by Tomás Ó Canainn and Thomas Kinsella and published under the same title some nineteen years later. Melodic variation is one of the key points emphasised in the work of Ó Riada who frames it as the ‘variation principle’ and which rests on the idea that ‘it is not permissible’ for

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87 Limerick, 2010). Interestingly, emotion as a stylistic parameter reappears under the term ‘Feel’.
89 See: Ó Canainn, Tomás: Seán Ó Riada: His Life and Work, (Cork: Collins, 2003) for a detailed biography and overview of his contribution to the revival.
89 Ó Riada, Seán: Our Musical Heritage, eds. Tomás Ó Canainn; Thomas Kinsella, (Mountrath: Dolmen Press, 1982).
performers not to vary the melody. However, it is his description of regional styles that is undoubtedly one of the most enduring concepts in the discourse on style.

This idea was anticipated by George Petrie in 1855 in his observation of different versions of the same air in different parts of the country, and closer to Ó Riada’s time, it had appeared in the sleeve notes to the 1956 album ‘Irish Jigs, Reels and Hornpipes’ featuring Willie Clancy (1918–1973) and Michael Gorman (1895–1970). In its most basic sense, the idea of regional styles served as an attempt to create a more nuanced picture of style in Irish traditional music, which before the 1950s ‘was presented as a pan-Irish means of expression [...]’. Ó Riada’s concept of regional styles postulated pockets of stylistic homogeneity in different Irish counties, occasionally, in such cases as East Clare and West Clare, with the county divided in two. However, as Ó Riada acknowledged, in practice ‘the distinctions are not entirely valid or stable’.

One flaw in Ó Riada’s argument is that he only referenced the fiddle and flute, and consequently, neglected any potential regional variation in accordion, concertina, whistle, and banjo styles. He did note, however, that the concept did not apply to uilleann pipe playing. A second weakness is that Ó Riada selected one or two musicians as archetypes of a particular regional style without any evidence of having

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90 See: Ibid., 24. Indeed, Ó Riada’s variation principle is the earliest and most persuasive argument towards this now commonly accepted stylistic characteristic. This point is further emphasised by the piper Tomás Ó Canainn. See: Ó Canainn, Tomás: Traditional Music in Ireland, 2nd ed., (Cork: Ossian, 1993), 41-42.

91 See: Meek, Bill (1971) May 24 ‘Fiddler’s All’ The Irish Times. This is possibly the first article on regional style in the Irish Times.

92 See: Petrie: The Ancient Music of Ireland, Vol. 1, xviii, 20. Interestingly, while region-specific tune-types, repertoire or versions of tunes is now regarded as a defining characteristic of regional style, Ó Riada does not make any mention of this aspect.

93 See: Clancy, Willie; Gorman, Michael: Irish Jigs, Reels and Hornpipes, (New York: Folkways Records & Service Corp, 1956). The sleeve notes written by Henry Cowell state that ‘Gorman soon became a notable fiddler in the County Sligo style, a style which (unlike that of Donegal) eschews heavy down-bowing and achieves its effects by highly elaborate fingering.


95 Ó Riada: Our Musical Heritage, 56.

96 Ibid., 51-53. Ó Riada’s famous definition is: ‘like sean-nós singing, but unlike piping, fiddle styles vary from place to place; there is no definite standard style. I doubt if there is a county in Ireland that has not got its own quota if fiddle-players and its own tradition – thirty-two counties and, you might say, thirty-two styles’.

97 Ibid. 52-53.

98 Ibid., 51.
conducted a thorough survey of the styles of the main musicians in these regions. Moreover, in larger counties such as Donegal, it is not possible to assume that one or two exponents are representative of the style of the entire region and indeed, recently a move has been made to draw a distinction between the styles of north and south Donegal. While the regional style idea has become increasingly meaningful over time and is now a central feature of the discussion on style, it is important to note that the concept has not yet been demonstrated in a systematic manner and that a high degree of ambiguity is always at play.

Breandán Breathnach was an Irish music collector and uilleann piper. Writing in the introduction to his *Ceol Rince na hÉireann 1* (1963), Breathnach offers the first known table of recommended tempi for particular tune-types, but it is his *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, first published in 1971 and revised in 1977, that is of most interest regarding musical style. In this work, Breathnach covers variation, modality, musical structure and phrasing, tune-types, swing and accentuation, ornamentation, and what is symptomatic of writers from this period, the idea that the use of dynamics ‘betrays the non-native’. Later in 1982, his article ‘Between the Jigs and Reels’, describes his approach to navigating his collection of 5,000 tunes and as will be discussed in Chapter Six, has important implications for the understanding of structural tones and motivic relationships.

99 While the objective of *Cairdeas na bhFidiléirí* is to promote the ‘Donegal tradition of fiddle playing’, their focus is primarily directed towards the fiddle music of south-west Donegal. The Inishowen music project emphasises the stylistic and contextual difference between their style, associated with north Donegal, from that of the south-west Donegal style. See: http://www.donegalfiddlemusic.ie/ and http://www.inishowenmusic.ie/ respectively. (Accessed Jan 31 2013)

100 Breathnach, Breandán: *Ceol Rince na hÉireann 1*, (Dublin: An Gúm, 1963), vii.


102 See: *Ibid.*, 98-99 for variation; 9-14 for modality; 15 for musical structure and phrasing; 43-47 for tune-types; 88-89 for swing and accentuation; 94-98 for ornamentation;

103 *Ibid.*, 89-90 Excluding the sean-nós tradition of west Munster, it would appear that Ó Riada was of the same opinion, see: Ó Riada: *Our Musical Heritage*, 38. Writing in relation to sean-nós singing, he does however note that ‘apart from the glottal stop, two other methods of variation are employed, involving dynamics and tone production’.

In addition to addressing many of the topics of his contemporaries, in his *Irish Traditional Music* Tomás Ó Canainn introduces the idea of ‘note frequency’ which is concerned with the description of occurrences of specific notes within a melody and their position within the tune’s range, or their placement within a bar. Furthermore, while Breathnach notes that chromatic inflection does occur, Ó Canainn proposes a set of rules for understanding this process.

It seems that the first author who specifically set out to describe style in Irish traditional instrumental music is the American writer, composer and performer Lawrence E. McCullough (1952–). In addition to considering individual, regional and the Irish traditional style, his approach is augmented by its inclusion of the components of style. Specifically, he discusses style in terms of four ‘variables’, which comprise ‘ornamentation, variation in melodic and rhythmic patterns, phrasing, and articulation’. He then states that:

> These variables can be viewed as stylistic universals for this idiom in that their occurrence or non-occurrence characterizes every performance and serves as the basic evaluative standards by which an individual’s performance is judged by other musicians.

While McCullough may have chosen four of the more obvious variables, they are by no means the only stylistic features through which a musician’s style can be characterised; a fact perhaps betrayed by his subsequent discussion of stylistic characteristics other than the four aforementioned ‘variables’. In a similar vein to the earlier authors, McCullough uses a discursive style interspersed with musical examples. Unlike the work of previous authors, however, his approach is much more systematic and establishes the idea of understanding style based on its individual components or stylistic elements.

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109 He does state that: ‘In addition to the variables cited above, each instrument has variables peculiar to itself’. See: *Ibid.*, 91. These include articulation on p. 89, and tone quality on p. 91.
A decade later sees Micheál Ó Súilleabháin’s doctoral thesis *Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts* (1987). Ó Súilleabháin adopts an approach to analysis, which is yet again built on the parameter principle and he confines his discussion to ‘phrasing, rhythm, melody and structure’. His concept of ‘set accented tones’ illuminates the extent of melodic variation, which is understood relative to the tune’s structural tones. While this idea is unique in terms of traditional music, it may be seen to have at least a degree of resonance with Tomás Ó Canainn’s ‘note frequency’ idea, Breandán Breathnach’s indexing system, and also aspects of twentieth-century music analysis, specifically the idea of reducing a piece of music to its structural, or most important notes.

Aloys Fleischmann’s *Sources of Irish Traditional Music* contains material dating from c.1600–1855. It began in the 1950s as a project undertaken by one of his postgraduate students, Annette de Foubert and was finally published in two volumes in 1998. Aside from the monumental collection of tunes, his analysis of the style of this material is highly significant. Despite the fact that much of its content does not correspond to the tune-types of today and that many of today’s tune-types were not current in the period his study concerns, his categorisation of the material is the most comprehensive to date. On the topic of structure, Fleischmann goes further than any previous author by giving a total of 103 possible structural permutations based on one to four-phrase structures and covers unary to tripartite possibilities. While studies by earlier authors had discussed tonality in terms of the modes, together with pentatonic and hexatonic options, Fleischmann’s list, which he produced from analysing the tunes in the collection, is by far the largest, identifying forty-one possibilities. His discussion on

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110 Ó Súilleabháin, Micheál: *Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts*, (PhD Diss., Queen’s University Belfast, 1987).
'tune evolution and variation’ provides firm empirical evidence to demonstrate that variation is an important characteristic of the music.\textsuperscript{120}

Niall Keegan is one of the most significant authors on style today. Aside from his construction of ‘five general classifications within which style is understood to exist in Irish traditional music’\textsuperscript{121} and which will be explored later,\textsuperscript{122} in his MA thesis \textit{The Words of Traditional Flute Style} (1992), it is significant that Keegan found that in attempting to define regional styles, he ‘ran into a brick wall of contradiction’.\textsuperscript{123} His 2010 article \textit{The Parameters of Style in Traditional Irish Music} is as of yet the most recent publication to be specifically focused on style.\textsuperscript{124} From conversation with Keegan, I discovered that this was produced as an aid for his students and is limited in its scope by this very objective. However, to date, this paper contains the most comprehensive list of parameters, each of which is discussed in a very clear, systematic manner. His thirteen parameters are:

- Ornamentation
- Phrasing
- Articulation
- Variation
- Intonation
- Tone
- Dynamics
- Repertoire
- Duration
- Emphasis
- Speed
- Instrumentation
- Instrument Specific Techniques

In terms of this study, aside from the literature, audio recordings are a primary source of information that will be used for analyses where there is a dearth of published examples. While this source can provide knowledge that has not previously been described, in comparison to the 300-year period covered by the literature, this source of stylistic data

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., xxix-xxvi.
\textsuperscript{121} Keegan, Niall: \textit{The Words of Traditional Flute Style}, (MA Diss., University College Cork, 1992), 15.
\textsuperscript{122} See page 25-27.
\end{footnotesize}
has a relatively limited scope, both chronologically and geographically. Of the earliest recorded sources, Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin states that:

With the exception of wax cylindrical recordings made by pipers Patsy Touhey and Billy Hannafin, the earliest recordings of Irish traditional music to enjoy widespread circulation in the United States came from Charles D’Almaine, Joseph Samuels, John Witzmann and Leopold Moeslein, all of whom were non-Irish studio violinists. They played bland un-ornamented versions of Irish dance tunes, taken directly from published transcriptions.\(^\text{125}\)

In terms of recording in Ireland, it is commonly held that the wax cylinder recorded in 1899 featuring the Kerry piper Micí ‘Cumba’ Ó Súilleabháin (1835–1916) playing ‘Gol na mBan san Ár’ and a fragment of ‘Allistrum’s March’ is the earliest example extant.\(^\text{126}\) From here, the recordings of the fiddle-players Michael Coleman, James Morrison (1893–1947), and Paddy Killoran (1904–1974) made in New York between the 1920s and 1940s established this new media.

In terms of accessing this source, the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA) is the single largest resource available. To get an idea of the frequency of commercial releases of Irish traditional music, a graph may be found at Figure 1.1 below that is based on figures obtained from the ITMA covering a period dating from the 1890s to the 2000s.\(^\text{127}\) It is worth noting that the ITMA employs a very loose definition of Irish traditional music and so some of its contents might be considered ‘untraditional’ by some. Nevertheless, the figures can be regarded as being generally indicative of the frequencies of the recordings that exist.\(^\text{128}\) It can be seen that the 1990s has seen the greatest level of activity although this may be because the material from the 2000s has not yet been catalogued at the ITMA in its entirety.


\(^{126}\) See: Ó Súilleabháin, Micí ‘Cumba’: Gol na mBan san Ár, (Dublin: Na Píobairí Uilleann, [n.d.]).

\(^{127}\) On visiting the ITMA, it is possible to search for recordings by decade, which results in a breakdown of the total number of recordings held.

\(^{128}\) A similar graph exists, albeit with a slightly different contour that details the age distribution of recordings of individual tunes. While material published on the Internet should be approached with caution, this site appears to be the one of the more reliable encountered. See: http://www.irishtune.info/recordings-decade.htm (Accessed 1 September 2012).
Fig. 1.1 Frequency of Irish music album releases per decade.

Aside from commercial releases, which have tended to present a very polished and consequently, sometimes unrepresentative quota of the music that exists, field recordings made for radio broadcast have in some way helped to bridge this gap as they generally represent the amateur musicians who comprise the majority of practitioners. While – against the backdrop of commercial recordings – field recordings may provide a more realistic source of information; they are often fragmentary in terms of both historical content and regional representation. Moreover, they are often difficult to locate and too personal to publish which makes them largely unsuitable to hold up as verifiable evidence in an academic context. Consequently, in as much as is possible, commercial recordings are to be used in this study, with field recordings – made for either private or public consumption – used only when there is not a more accessible alternative.

\[129\] See: Kearney, David: *Towards a Regional Understanding of Irish Traditional Music*, (PhD Diss., University College Cork, 2009), 214.
1.2.1 Definitions of Style

The word *style* derives from the Latin *stilus* meaning the ‘shaper and conditioner of the outward form of a message’. The term’s use in a musical context dates from the seventeenth century where it was used in the acknowledgement of difference: between old and new styles and various national genres. From this original meaning, two main approaches to understanding style appear to have evolved: the more common focuses on abstracting features of interest for specific inspection, whereas the second is concerned with the context in which elements exist as musical choices. Both are explored here.

The use of analysis to abstract and conceptualise aspects of style, and which often uses parameters such as dynamics, tonality, compass/range etc., may be referred to as the ‘structuralist’ approach. The idea is that this approach allows for aspects of style to be considered in isolation. Robert Pascall states that:

Style, a style or styles (or all three) may be seen in any conceptual unit in the realm of music, from the largest to the smallest; music itself is a style of art, and a single note may have stylistic implications according to its instrumentation, pitch and duration. Style, a style or styles may be seen as present in a chord, phrase, section, movement, work, group of works, genre, life’s work, period (of any size) and culture. Style manifests itself in characteristic usages of form, texture, harmony, melody, rhythm and ethos; and it is presented by creative personalities, conditioned by historical social and geographical factors, performing resources and conventions.

Another approach to understanding style can be found in the work of American theorist Leonard B. Meyer and is outlined in his *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (1989). The critic Joseph P. Swain states that in this work, the author ‘dares, as he has

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131 The earliest literature on the topic and the distinctions mentioned are generally accepted as beginning in the preface to Claudio Monteverdi’s eighth book of madrigals, published in 1638. This is described in more detail in Pascall’s article.


always dared, to attack the structuralist’s premise of the objective abstraction, and to include aspects of musical learning and cultural background that are more subjective and more “real”. Meyer’s thinking can perhaps be located in the Behaviourist school of thought in that he proposes that style be understood as a series of choices. Specifically, Meyer writes that ‘style is a replication of patterning whether in human behaviour or in the artefacts produced by human behaviour, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints’. In practical terms, an example might be that within the constraint of possible keys in which a tune could be played, a choice must be made of one of the twelve options that are possible. Since the choices made by the performer contribute to characterise their individual style, much can be determined through utilising Meyer’s approach. When stylistic elements are considered, not just in isolation, but within the context of a series of mutually-exclusive possibilities, the creative scope becomes more apparent. Speaking of style as a series of choices, Meyer writes:

An individual’s style of speaking or writing, for instance, results in large part from lexical, grammatical, and syntactic choices made within the constraints of the language and dialect he has learned to use but does not himself create. And so it is in music, painting, and the other arts. More generally, few of the constraints that limit choice are newly invented or devised by those who employ them. Rather they are learned and adopted as part of the historical/ cultural circumstances of individuals or groups.

Meyer goes on to point out that, ‘[...] as soon as human choice plays a part in the resulting patterning, style is possible [...]’. He notes that ‘the word choice tends to suggest conscious awareness and deliberate intent’. However, ‘were each act dependent upon conscious choice, an inordinate amount of time and psychic energy would be expended in considering alternatives, envisaging their possible outcomes, and deciding among such possibilities’. Meyer adds that:

‘[...] deliberate, conscious choice does take place when we are acquiring some skill: learning to talk, play the violin, or drive a car. Then (particularly if we are learning the skill at an advanced age) we are aware of our own behavior – of the act of choosing’.

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137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 4.
139 Ibid., 5.
He goes on to elaborate that ‘choice becomes conscious only when the situation becomes problematic in some way’ and gives a host of examples of such situations. Indeed, it is this distinction between the typical performance context and the situation where an aspect of style is ‘problematic’ or requires conscious engagement, which gives rise to the idea of the MCA (which will be described in the following chapter). This distinction between conscious and unconscious choices has parallels with explicit and implicit knowledge, and further resonates with the idea of cultivating a difference between practice and performance contexts. Meyer’s approach might be well summed up in the axiom, probably originating from the jazz musician Charlie Parker (1920–1955) who said:

You’ve got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail.

Meyer’s approach is interesting in that in postulating a series of choices, it forces the question of which information is known and which is not known. Consequently, the effectiveness of this approach in relation to Irish traditional music is dependent on the availability of explicit stylistic data, and hence the ability to codify implicit knowledge.

The approaches to understanding style presented here are seen to be complimentary. The idea of style as a marker of difference is important throughout this study but regarding the structuralist approach, as will be seen from Chapters Three to Nine, observation alone is not always sufficient or possible; for instance it is simply impossible to analyse every phrasing option from all available audio recordings. After

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140 Such examples include: ‘(a) when important issues hang on subtle distinctions (as in the writing of a law, which requires that we choose our words carefully, consider alternatives, envisage possible interpretations by others, and so on); (b) when the called-for behavior is out of the ordinary (in performing a particularly difficult passage from a violin sonata, we think about alternative fingerings and bowings); or (c) when possible alternatives have different advantages (as when one route to a destination is scenic but long and tortuous, while the other involves taking a shorter but tedious superhighway). In such situations we will probably weigh the relative merits of the alternatives and our choice will be conscious and reasoned.’

the stylistic data has been found, some form of thematic cohesion is required for its organisation. Furthermore, through employing context, implicit knowledge may be identified more easily. How it is intended that these approaches to understanding style can be combined and used in this context will be fully outlined in Chapter Two.

1.2.2 Concepts of Style in Irish Traditional Music

As is evident from the literature review, in more recent times the structuralist approach to understanding style has been used in a traditional music context. However, independent of mainstream definitions, understandings have evolved within the tradition itself. Interestingly, the various concepts that have been found are significantly more focused towards thoughts on the nature of style and how it is to be approached as opposed to how it may be analysed in the conventional sense. This being the case, the following discussion establishes an understanding of style from which this study can proceed.

While the idea of a tune’s melodic fluidity had been noted in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century saw an increased aesthetic importance being attached to the concept of individual interpretation. As noted in Section 1.1, rather than being thought of as an opportunity to explore cultural richness, both melodic and stylistic variation appear to have to been viewed as a challenge to collecting the oldest and most authentic settings of a tune. Tomás Ó Canainn makes this point in his *Traditional Music in Ireland* where he states that:

> The irony of the situation is that in the past collectors generally aimed to note what they regarded as the basic tune, and would calmly ignore all the decorations and variations so carefully and lovingly put there by the performer. [...] Style in this context was not something to which collectors paid much attention: they were more worried about getting the tune down correctly not realising that the musician had no such concept of a unique set of notes constituting the tune.\(^{142}\)

Even so, while an acknowledgement of the value of stylistic change is one thing, Micheál Ó Súilleabháin observes that:

\(^{142}\) Ó Canainn: *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 44.
Most studies in Irish traditional music tend to focus on product rather than process (Breathnach, 1971; O’Boyle, 1976; Ó Canainn, 1978; are representative examples). While there have been some attempts to look at systems of performance technique (Bodley, 1973; Shields, 1975; McCullough, 1977), the difficulty of tackling such issues as improvisation and the creative process in general in a music which offers little in the way of theoretical terminology and verbalised concepts has tended to encourage historical and documentary studies rather than studies of the music as a form of creative expression.\(^{143}\)

I would concur that one of the key reasons for this lack of study into stylistic processes is as Ó Súilleabháin states, ‘a lack of theoretical terminology and verbalised concepts’. It is interesting to note however that this comment comes at a time when the ideas of tacit and implicit knowledge were first being explored as a discipline in their own right. In light of over twenty years of research since, this connection will be explored in Section 1.2.3 below.

Nevertheless, as noted, the study of individual style is just one of a number of approaches that have emerged over the course of the past century. In the introduction to his MA thesis in 1992, Niall Keegan framed what he terms ‘five general classifications within which style is understood to exist in Irish traditional dance music’.\(^{144}\) These are:

1. The style which is the Irish musical tradition
2. The style associated with a particular instrument
3. The style of any one of the musical dialects which are characterised by different levels of predominance of certain techniques, methods and repertoire
4. The style of an individual musician
5. The style of an individual performance.

It is important to note that Keegan’s study was focused solely on flute styles in Irish traditional music. However, in the context of this research, two additional classifications and one amendment is required.

The first addition is at the micro level and concerns the components of style, which offer a detailed analytical language with which to appreciate music. As argued earlier, while the concept of regional styles (which Keegan terms ‘musical dialects’) is meaningful to an extent, there is also much confusion surrounding this idea, which


\(^{144}\) Keegan: *The Words of Traditional Flute Style*, 14.
results in a somewhat hazy picture. Individual styles, on the other hand, serve discussion particularly well in a comparative context and point to a more nuanced understanding than can be achieved by simply discussing regional styles. Similarly then, the components of style can be used to facilitate a detailed discussion that might otherwise be missing and concerns the ornaments, phrasing style, harmonic structures etc. that are possible. In reality, these areas are interwoven but they are helpful in locating any study of style.

The second addition is at the macro level and is prompted in a paper by Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, entitled ‘Irish Music Defined’. In it, Ó Súilleabháin proposes understanding Irish traditional music as being part of ‘a larger system of music in Europe and elsewhere’. While Ó Súilleabháin also includes Scandinavia in his assessment, this concept of a larger system has in many respects been refined into that which is now termed and understood as Celtic music. Despite being commonly thought of nowadays as a marketing term (and to a certain extent it is), it seems to have been first used by composer Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) in the late-nineteenth century who reportedly said that ‘there were two distinct schools, the Saxon and the Celtic; and four distinct styles - English, Welsh, Scotch, and Irish’. In its simplest sense, it can be understood to mean various national styles of a common musical system, which around the time of the seventeenth century and even up until the 1970s in Ireland, was known as ‘country dance music’. Presently, Celtic music festivals are quite common and very often feature a variety of related national music styles such as: Scottish, Welsh, English, Breton, Shetland, Galician and Asturian music. As Scottish and Irish styles migrated across the Atlantic, they created the basis for the musical traditions of Nova Scotia, Appalachia and Newfoundland, and there has been much cross-fertilisation of musical ideas over the years.

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146 Ibid., 83.
147 Lacy: ‘Notes on Irish Music’, 171-172. As previously noted, later, this quotation and the paper from which it arose was printed in: Villiers Stanford: *Studies and Memories*, 55.
148 This term is used, possibly inadvertently by John Doherty (1900–1980) in the documentary ‘Fiddler on the Road’ Ulster Television, 1972. This term can also be seen in the index of sources used by Aloys Fleischmann for his *Sources of Irish Traditional Music*.
149 Galicia and Asturia are in the northwest of Spain.
150 This appears to be featured in the Scottish festival ‘Celtic Connections’ and in its associated television
A minor addition to Keegan’s original framework concerns his fourth point, ‘the style of an individual musician’. Here, I would venture to add that performance styles that have become institutionalised should also be included; such is the case with the ‘céilí band’ or ‘supergroup’. With these additions and amendments included, what I have termed the ‘seven degree framework’ is as follows:

1. The Celtic music genre
2. The style considered to be the Irish musical tradition
3. The style associated with a particular instrument
4. The style of any one of the musical dialects (regional styles), which are characterised by different levels of predominance of certain techniques, methods and repertoire
5. The style of an individual musician or ensemble format, which has become institutionalised in its own right
6. The style of an individual performance
7. The components of style.

Relating to the style of an individual performer and the style that is Irish traditional music, it is evident that the musician will know only a fraction of the stylistic knowledge that is held within the tradition. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that it is possible to know the sum of a musician’s stylistic knowledge. This points to an enormous body of information and so the question occurs as to how it might be possible for it to be documented. To this extent, since regional styles have yet to be properly identified in terms of their musical characteristics, and since analyses of individual performers and instrument-styles are limited by their nature, I deemed that a thorough study of the components of style would be most fruitful.

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151 While the term ‘supergroup’ originated in the 1960s in relation to rock music, it is understood as a group in which the performers are notable musicians in their own right. This is in contrast with the céilí band where the members are generally not as well-known as the members of the supergroup. Furthermore, the supergroup in Irish traditional music has developed its own sound, perhaps defined by its strong backing section and well-polished arrangements.
1.2.3 The Accessibility of the Components of Style: Explicit versus Implicit Knowledge

The issue with analysing the components of style is that for the most part, there is a deficit of terminology attached to the various stylistic phenomena that occur, and this makes the knowledge difficult to describe and capture. Indeed, this is one of the characteristics of an oral tradition in that knowledge is transmitted largely without recourse to terminology, simply by listening, watching and replicating. This type of knowledge is not unique to Irish traditional music or even to music, but is actually a field of study in its own right and is dealt with under the discipline of knowledge management. In her MA thesis *The Stickiness of Tacit Knowledge Transfer*, Alison Murray notes that:

> During the 1990’s the primary focus of knowledge management was on explicit knowledge, that which can be articulated easily, but as time has passed the focus has moved onto the more complex, and arguably more valuable tacit knowledge, that which either cannot or is greatly difficult to articulate.\(^{152}\)

The meaning of the term ‘tacit knowledge’ is still contested. On introducing the term, one of the pioneers of the area, Michael Polanyi stated, ‘we know more than we can tell’\(^{153}\). Another author, Philippe Baumard, defined it as ‘something that we know but cannot express’\(^{154}\). This could otherwise be understood as the inability or difficulty (as will be explained below, the correct word here is debatable) in constructing an adequate verbal description of non-verbal phenomena. The standard example of tacit knowledge is the ability to ride a bicycle: it cannot be learned from reading a set of written instructions but rather through watching, replicating and much practice.

From the argument as to what ‘tacit knowledge’ entails, two main definitions, one ‘strict’ and the other ‘loose’ have arisen. Alison Murray explains both:

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152 Murray, Alison: *An Investigation into the ‘Stickiness’ of Knowledge Transfer*, (MA Diss., Dublin Institute of Technology, 2009), 4.
The strict definition recognises the difference between implicit and tacit knowledge in that tacit knowledge is defined as personal, intuitive knowledge not accessible to conscious knowledge which cannot be articulated or codified and cannot be explicated fully even by an expert. It can be transferred from one person to another only through a long process. According to the strict definition, implicit knowledge is that which is currently tacit but that can be articulated, codified and explicated, (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 1962).\textsuperscript{155}

Essentially, the strict view regards tacit knowledge as something that is either impossible to codify or is not easily translated into explicit terms whilst, on the other hand it is possible to codify implicit knowledge.\textsuperscript{156} The loose definition regards knowledge that is truly tacit, and knowledge that is truly implicit as being difficult to differentiate.\textsuperscript{157}

In the context of this project, it is only through attempting to codify each area of style that it will become evident as to whether an area is truly tacit or truly implicit. However, in order for stylistic data to be included in this thesis, it must be possible to make it explicit, and consequently, it can be said that this thesis deals with the codification of implicit knowledge.

A further complication of making a distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge is context-based. Bertil Rolf states that:

\begin{quote}
There are serious objections against classifications of items of knowledge into tacit (implicit) and focal (explicit). The classification is dependent on time and person. I cannot now articulate the grammar of my mother tongue, although it governs my linguistic performance. But a linguist could formulate large portions. If I became a linguist, I could do it with myself as an informant.\textsuperscript{158}
\end{quote}

Therefore, in the context of this thesis, information that is explicit will be largely

\textsuperscript{155} Murray: An Investigation into the ‘Stickiness’ of Knowledge Transfer, 18.
\textsuperscript{156} The term codification implies the process of translating tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and thus making it storable.
\textsuperscript{157} The term ‘true tacit knowledge’ was introduced by Alison Murray in: Murray: An Investigation into the ‘Stickiness’ of Knowledge Transfer, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{158} Rolf, Bertil: Two Theories of Tacit and Implicit Knowledge, 1. Published online at: philosophyandinformatics.org/cms/images/.../soi_rolf.pdf (Accessed 31 March 2013).
implicit for the new reader. However, it is intended that much of the information held in the style-archive between Chapters Three and Nine will be aspects of style that have been codified into explicit knowledge for the first time.

It is important to note that not all areas of knowledge that are required for an authentic performance are implicit. In order for style to exist, repertoire and technique must also be present, not to mention the creative individual behind their manipulation. In the context of this thesis, this is understood as a tripartite relationship: while all three areas (style, repertoire and technique) interact in a musical performance, some contain more explicit or implicit information than do others. For instance, tunes are explicitly learned. Therefore, if a tune is known, it can be requested by its title and reproduced. Even tunes that do not have titles can be written down and so repertoire contains a high explicit to implicit ratio. Technique, or the ability to create sounds that are desired, has a more evenly balanced explicit to implicit ratio. While technique is primarily learned by watching and replicating, verbal explanation occurs, particularly when specific phrases do not sound correct.

Given the range of stylistic diversity that has been commented upon in both the texts on the subject along with informal conversation, it is significant that style manuals do not exist while tune-collections and tutor-books are quite popular. As has become apparent, style can be transmitted through listening to and learning tunes and additionally, can occur as the by-product of certain techniques. However, aside from a small handful of examples, namely ornamentation, it lacks a developed terminology for its own explicit transmission. The following statement from the renowned Clare fiddle-player Martin Hayes (1962–), provides a personal but typical sense of how this process plays out in practice.

It all started as learning tunes. I learned from my father and the form was quite simple, he would just sit down in front of me and play a section of a tune and I would just imitate visually and auditorily. He didn’t engage in any kind of analysis like hold the bow this way or hold the fiddle that way. There was no discussion at all on how we would do it although I did end up holding the bow and fiddle quite differently from him. So it was all observing and imitating, there was no technical discussion whatsoever. Later on in my time I did begin to examine that myself but it was pretty much kind of a melding of concepts, you know, trying to figure out how to make
things happen. It wasn’t so much how to learn techniques as to make certain things happen. So you begin to figure out what you need to do to make that happen so that way the technique gradually evolved but it was pretty much driven by the tune and driven by the desire to make the tune go a certain way or do certain things. The techniques were pulled forward by the melodies and the attempt to get the melody to do something.\textsuperscript{159}

Indeed, in an interview conducted by Kari Veblen, Micheál Ó Súilleabháin states that when Irish traditional musicians describe their learning process, most would simply state that they had ‘picked it up along the way’.\textsuperscript{160} References to this type of implicit learning are not uncommon in the literature and are even plentiful in anecdotal accounts and in conversation. However, as noted, the most implicit aspect of the learning process must certainly be in relation to style.

Consequently, the first aim of this study is to collect, from sources described in the following chapter, as many existing examples of explicit stylistic data and to use these as a point of departure for finding stylistic knowledge that may not have previously been described. Once sufficient material exists, the aim is to assess how high-level traditional musicians interact with the transmission of explicit stylistic data.

1.3 Research Rationale

The two main reasons for attending to this field of study are that:

1. The question of style has become of important aesthetic value; yet this cultural shift has not been mirrored or supported in any significant way by scholarly research.

2. There are issues surrounding the facilitation of stylistic development in the


relatively new environment of third-level education that make the creation of an explicit archive of stylistic data desirable. Even outside of the third-level environment, there is no other approach to musical development aside from the pattern of learning tunes – an activity which remains relatively constant from the time that a musician begins learning. That this procedure is still used in the third-level context suggests that no other approach has yet been found. Additionally, as the avenues through which style is transmitted evolve, an explicit archive of stylistic data could even be thought of as a logical next step.

1.3.1 Cultural Contexts

It is difficult to construct an adequate picture of style in Irish traditional music in the nineteenth century because all of what is known comes from printed media, the reliability of which has often been questioned. Owing to the absence of audio recordings, little is known of the variety of individual styles that would have existed; of the transcriptions that do exist, there is not enough detail to form an understanding that is likely to mirror reality. Similarly, Niall Keegan notes that it tends to be assumed that regional styles were richer and more solid before the recording era ushered in a wave of stylistic homogenisation, but again, there is no reliable evidence to support this idea. Little else is known of style during this period other than what is communicated by a small group of collectors and scholars whose aesthetic empathy with the tradition-bearers is somewhat questionable. Their concept of style it seems was based on the idea of legitimising a distinctively Irish genre, which could potentially be corrupted by regional and individual styles. It seems almost unwarranted to say that this would

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162 See: Shields: Tunes of the Munster Pipers: Irish Traditional Music from the James Goodman Manuscripts. The collector and piper James Goodman is noted for transcribing his music from individual pipers although it is not known which pipers contributed which versions.
163 The reference to regional styles can be found in: Keegan: The Words of Traditional Flute Style, 1.
165 Cooper: The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland, 16.
have been at odds with the more natural everyday practice of traditional musicians who had no such agenda.

It is probable that the recordings of the celebrated fiddle master Michael Coleman, made in New York between 1921 and 1945 were responsible for the first major wave of public discussion on individual style.\textsuperscript{166} As noted by Sally Sommers-Smith this discussion is characterised by the idea that, somewhat ironically, his recordings are said to have produced the first wave of stylistic homogenisation.\textsuperscript{167} Specifically, these were seen as detrimental to regional and individual styles other than those associated with Co. Sligo.\textsuperscript{168} It is from this point onwards that individuals became celebrated on a national level as stylists in their own right.\textsuperscript{169} The early-twentieth century also saw the birth of the céilí band style. While this style was highly popular, in stark contrast to the diversity shown by recording musicians such as Coleman, it was homogenous and provided the position against which the innovators of the mid to late-twentieth century would define themselves.

Founded in 1951, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) began to both institutionalise and champion the idea of a national style.\textsuperscript{170} Meanwhile, major changes to Irish society and culture, which began in the 1960s and 1970s, saw a departure from more conservative values to one that gradually featured a more liberal and individualistic expression.\textsuperscript{171} This probably began with the ballad boom of the 1960s, which brought the concept of Irish music to the popular stage in a way that can still be strongly felt.\textsuperscript{172} While this new

\textsuperscript{166} For an overview of the stylistic implications of this era, see: Ó hAllmhuráin: \textit{A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music}, 99-100, 104-109.
\textsuperscript{172} From a ballad point of view, many ‘Irish bars’ still have the repertoire of the Irish ballad boom as their stock-style of performance as a night time walk around Dublin’s Temple Bar area will attest!
profile mostly pertained to the vocal music of bands such as The Dubliners and Clancy Brothers amongst others, Irish traditional instrumental music was also experiencing an increasing profile in tandem with a broadening of stylistic possibility from innovators such as Seán Ó Riada, Donal Lunny (1947–) and Steve Cooney (1953–). On the other hand, more ‘traditional’ music that would have hitherto been relatively unknown was gaining exposure due to the collecting and broadcasting work of Séamus Ennis (1919–1982) and Ciarán Mac Mathúna (1925–2009) amongst others. Effectively, this was a period where the amount of recorded material and the numbers playing began to increase dramatically.

One of the major stylistic advances of this period is the musical experiments of Seán Ó Riada. These are perhaps best viewed in opposition to the homogenous cèilí band sound and featured an ensemble approach that was geared more towards bringing out the structure and colours of the tunes by contrasting solo with tutti sections. It is difficult not to see this as a contrast of social values between the Church-endorsed cèilí band movement, which flourished following the introduction of the Dance Halls Act of 1935, and the more bohemian, intellectual ethos of Ó Riada who valued the

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173 It is important to note that the very mention of these musician’s names would be contested by purists since these people do not come from traditional music backgrounds and were mainly accompanists rather than tune-players. Nonetheless, their impact on stylistic diversity is phenomenal, particularly in the areas of ensemble playing, arrangement/orchestration and album production.

174 Purists would agree more with these musician’s names but at the same time, it is difficult to know if ‘purist’ recordings would have reached the same audience without the general popularity as bolstered by the innovators of this period. For a superb overview of both Ennis and MacMathúna’s collecting and broadcasting work, see: Kearney: *Towards a Regional Understanding of Irish Traditional Music*, 215-219.

175 See Fig. 1.1 on page 20 for a breakdown of recording releases which support this point. Despite attempts, it was difficult to get information on the increase in numbers competing throughout the years at CCE competitions, however, the general point is supported on one official website: http://www.comhaltasletterkenny.com/aboutus.html (Accessed 15 June 2012).

176 This is a point made most evident in his famous likening of the cèilí band sound to the ‘buzzing of a bluebottle in an upturned jam jar’. For more context and reaction (not overly positive) to this comment, see: Ó hAllmhuráin: *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*, 127.

showcasing of individual expression. His concept of an orchestrated ensemble that was Ceoltóirí Chualann served as the blueprint for what was later developed into the band The Chieftains. Meanwhile, Donal Lunny’s involvement with rock, pop and folk bands found cohesion in Planxty and The Bothy Band.

These radical innovations led to the use of unusual instruments such as the harpsichord by Ó Riada himself, and the introduction of the bodhrán, bouzouki and backing-section ideas that effectively created a new style that was individual and distinct for the period. Almost simultaneously, the aforementioned authors such as Breathnach, Ó Riada, McCullough and Ó Canainn were beginning to explore and elucidate their ideas on aspects of style in Irish traditional music, most notably, regional styles. At the same time, the institution of CCÉ was attracting increasing numbers and began to establish and evolve its own views on style. These were largely disseminated through their network of regional branches, their magazine Treoir, and perhaps most effectively through the assessment criteria found on their competition adjudication sheets. Although conflict between the aesthetics of purists and innovators is nothing new in musical history, the conservative nature of CCÉ and the more liberal attitude associated with the 1960s seems to have intensified the debate. While this had occurred to a degree in relation to the recordings of Coleman and a century earlier, in relation to Bunting and

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178 A perusal of the Treoir magazines of this period shows many pictures of céilí bands flagged by the local priest in a very formal and strict pose. For evidence that the bohemian descriptor is not unreasonable, see: Ó Canainn: Seán Ó Riada: his life and work.
179 A recently surfaced piece of archival footage of Seán Ó Sé with Ceoltóirí Chualann is remarkably similar to the Chieftain’s live style of playing. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEi_bqIADZQ (Accessed 15 June 2012).
180 For an overview of Lunny’s background and musical projects, see: Wallis, Geoff; Wilson, Sue: The Rough Guide to Irish Music, (London: Rough Guides, 2001), 382-384.
181 See: Unsigned author, (1960) September 2 ‘Musician’s Play to have first Production’, The Irish Times which contains the first mention of the bodhrán in the notices section of the said paper. It reads that in additional to the 29 year old musical director Ó Riada, there will be ‘performers on the Kerry goatskin drum, the bodhrán, which was introduced to Dublin audiences in “Sive.”. Note that ‘Sive’ is the name of a 1959 play by the Irish playwright John B. Keane. The introduction of the bouzouki is credited to Johnny Moynihan but its development into the Irish bouzouki is credited to Donal Lunny.
182 CCÉ was founded in 1951 with the aim of promoting and preserving Irish traditional music. For more information, see: http://comhaltas.ie/about/goals/ (Accessed 20 March 2013).
183 For a typical example with brief discussion that might be said to be indicative of the organisation’s views, see: Keegan: ‘The Parameters of Style in Irish Traditional Music’, 93.
Moore, the consequence of this is that it attributed value to the concept of style. This debate between purism and innovation reached a high point in 1996 (and later in 2003) with The Crossroads Conference at which both viewpoints were sometimes fiercely debated.

Also in the 1990s, the dance show Riverdance, whilst not considered Irish traditional music in itself, brought the genre to a global audience, and in tandem with the rise in popularity of the ‘supergroups’, an increased market for the music saw a proliferation of professional musicians. The third-level sector responded to this cultural context with the Irish World Music Centre (renamed the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in 1999) being founded in 1994 at the University of Limerick as a postgraduate research centre and to a situation where:

Music is provided in eight out of the island’s nine universities, [with] all except TCD incorporating traditional music and its performance at undergraduate level. It is provided for in just five of the state’s fourteen Institutes of Technology.

Eventually, a point was reached where the fear of the music dying out began to slowly subside and so the question naturally turned towards navigating and discussing the stylistic richness of the genre. In performance terms, this can mean a general shift in importance from playing tunes for the purpose of ‘keeping the tradition alive’ to playing tunes as an expression of stylistic identity.

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185 Various Authors: Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music, eds. Fintan Vallely, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, Liz Doherty, (Dublin: Whinstone Music, 1999). However, the debate on The Late Late Show is possibly the most memorable event, if not for the passion with which opinions were maintained. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThxECxTDLVA&feature=youtu.be (Accessed 1 February 2013).
186 Although the margin of professional musicians remains at only a fraction of those playing.
188 One story relates how when the Chieftains played in the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1975, some of the members cried as the reception signified to them that Irish traditional music was finally revived and in no fear of extinction.
Presently, recordings are cheaper to produce than ever before and owing to the work of CCÉ, there are more young musicians now who are playing to increasingly high standards. The consequence of this is that there is a greater diversity of styles to appreciate, to work with, and to be positioned within, and bolstered by developments in media and communications, a wider range of styles is progressively accessible. With the increase in recorded output and online tune collections sometimes containing as many as ten-thousand entries,\textsuperscript{189} at this point, the music’s survival is not in question whilst the style in which it is played is possibly the single biggest point of both conversation and contention.\textsuperscript{190} When the implicit nature of the field of style as outlined in Section 1.2.3 is contrasted with an increasing sense of the aesthetic value of style that is evident in this section, a substantial discrepancy is evident. Consequently, there is a greater need than before to address this imbalance of attention and to be able to understand, and command the genre’s stylistic language.

1.3.2 Transmission

Just as the aesthetic importance of style has evolved, so too have the various avenues through which it is transmitted. Interestingly also, they do not appear to have been studied. As will be discussed, critics of the transmission process have outlined valid points in relation to creativity versus stylistic homogeneity, and issues surrounding stylistic development and assessment. Yet, without a fundamental understanding of the basic avenues of transmission, it is difficult to understand these critiques in a contextualised manner: rather, it would appear that certain arguments are truer for some avenues of transmission than others.

\textsuperscript{189} At the time of writing, the website thesession.org contains 10,738 tunes (Accessed 11 June 2012).
\textsuperscript{190} The flawed argument against stylistic homogenisation in favour of the promotion of regional styles takes up considerable space in the Irish Times traditional music reviews by Siobhan Long, whilst the Crossroads Conferences of both 1996 and 2003 focused on the tradition vs innovation debate is a prime example of this new stylistic conversation. See: Various Authors: ‘Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music’. Furthermore, the following is a great example of the debate on the national stage on RTÉ’s \textit{The Late Late Show}, albeit from one side: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThxEcTDLVA (Accessed 15 June 2012).
In this section I propose seven avenues of transmission relevant to Irish traditional instrumental music. These have been observed from personal experience of the tradition. While further study may provide a more nuanced picture, the seven points raised here suffice to contextualise the criticisms that have been articulated to date.

While there has been a clear evolution in the importance of style, the various avenues of transmission still rely mainly on what can be described as a master – apprentice structure. Fundamentally, this implies learning through observation and repetition, and as will be seen, it is particularly acknowledged as a means through which implicit knowledge is transmitted. The term ‘master – apprentice model’ was used by Liz Doherty in her 2002 report entitled ‘A Needs Analysis of the Training and Transmission of Traditional Music in University and Professional Level Education Throughout Europe’.191 The report, which draws on the experiences of educators from Ireland and Europe will be discussed in detail in Section 1.3.2.2.192 The usage of this term is rare in typical discourse but Doherty states that: ‘One of the principles maintained by the majority of institutes teaching traditional music is the oral, face-to-face, master-apprentice situation’.193 This involves ‘observation and demonstration, absorption and immersion opportunities’ and is noted as being regarded as a method for maintaining ‘the oral identity of their traditional music’.194

Since the term is not defined in the report or in any material concerning Irish traditional music, a definition from the social anthropologist Professor Jean Lave in useful. Lave is regarded as a pioneer in the study of apprenticeship and situated learning and can be seen to inform some of the first studies on apprenticeship.195 In one of these early publications entitled, Cognitive Apprenticeship: Teaching the Craft of Reading, Writing,
and Mathematics the following definition, based on Lave’s work may be found.

First and foremost, apprenticeship highlights methods for carrying out tasks in a domain. Apprentices learn these methods through a combination of what Lave calls observation, coaching, and practice, or what we, from the teacher’s point of view, call modelling, coaching, and fading. In this sequence of activities, the apprentice repeatedly observes the master executing (or modelling) the target process, which usually involves a number of different but interrelated subskills. The apprentice then attempts to execute the process with guidance and help from the master (coaching). A key aspect of coaching is the provision of scaffolding, which is the support, in the form of reminders and help, that the apprentice requires to approximate the execution of the entire composite of skills. Once the learner has a grasp of the target skill, the master reduces his participation (fades), providing only limited hints, refinements, and feedback to the learner, who practices by successively approximating smooth execution of the whole skill.\footnote{Ibid., 2-3.}

How this process relates to tacit, or in the case of this study, implicit knowledge is described by Philippe Baumard as follows:

An individual can acquire tacit knowledge directly from another without the use of language. Artisans live with their masters from whom they learn their art not through language but through observation, imitation, and practice. In the organization, on-the-job training follows the same principle. Tacit knowledge conversion is based on the sharing of experience.\footnote{Baumard: Tacit Knowledge in Organizations, 26.}

Having seen how implicit knowledge and its transmission is understood in a more general sense, it is pertinent to address how this process occurs in Irish traditional instrumental music. Owing to the lack of study in this area, as stated, the following avenues of transmission have arisen from my own experience within the tradition. Below, they are discussed critically in terms of both stylistic homogeneity/creativity and the development and assessment of style.

1.3.2.1 Avenues of Transmission

1. The Informal ‘Self Taught’ Approach
In The Ancient Music of Ireland (1840), Edward Bunting praises the ‘wonderful mass of musical acquirements in an apparently self-taught community’ and even still, it is not
unusual to hear of musicians who describe themselves in such terms.\textsuperscript{198} The description ‘self-taught’ is in many respects an oversimplification because the stylistic language of a genre must come from \textit{somewhere}. From observation, this means that musicians who consider themselves to be self-taught are not subject to a formal music-learning environment and instead use a variety of sources that are available to them. Indeed, given the nature of the master-apprentice model and Baumard’s description, it is not difficult to imagine musicians who learn solely by watching, listening and trying to replicate tunes from other musicians.

It is possible that before receiving more formal instruction, and indeed before formal classes became as popular as they now are, beginner musicians would attempt to play familiar tunes on an instrument that is available to them, perhaps in the home environment. The melodeon player Johnny Connolly (1944–) recalls how when he was nine or ten years old, his parents felt that music was unsuitable for him and so initially, he learned to play when his parents were not at home.\textsuperscript{199} A similar story, found on the website of \textit{Cairdeas na bhFidiléiri} (trans. Friendship of the Fiddlers) relates to the Donegal fiddlers Vincent (1938–) and Jimmy Campbell (1937–):

Vincent and Jimmy were keen to learn the fiddle when they were young boys. When both parents would be out of the house, they would take turns at playing their father’s fiddle while the other kept watch. This was a risky business as there were strict orders in the house that no one was to play around with the father’s fiddle. Money was very scarce in those days and if you had a fiddle (which not every fiddle player had!) it would be well looked after as it would not be easily replaced if it was broken.\textsuperscript{200}

In most cases, it appears that music is in the immediate family environment, often with local musicians visiting the household and so this provides the avenue of transmission for both repertoire and aspects of style. Rather than regular lessons with a specifically-assigned teacher, immersion and occasional help perhaps from a family member or local musician suffices to impart repertoire, technique and style. From this point onwards, constant practice and exposure to sessions also provides a means for informal learning.

\textsuperscript{198} Bunting: \textit{The Ancient Music of Ireland}, (1840), 29. Also see Chapter Ten, Section 10.2.7, 478-479.
\textsuperscript{199} This point was raised in \textit{Sé mo Laoch}, a documentary produced for and transmitted by TG4 on 19 October 2008.
\textsuperscript{200} \url{http://www.donegalfiddlemusic.ie/campbells.htm} (Accessed 16 June 2012).
where musicians simply pick up tunes from interacting with their peers. Musicians who learn in this way are the least likely to have knowledge of music theory and terminology. A potential advantage of this avenue of transmission is that the learner may develop a more individual style as they are not being formally instructed how to play. A disadvantage would be the lack of a structured environment and an experienced teacher.

2. The Formal ‘One to One’ Approach
In the case of the formal ‘one to one’ approach, there is a time set aside for the learning experience to occur. In many cases, this is a weekly lesson following the academic calendar but more sporadic approaches are not uncommon either. These classes are usually one hour in length and often take place in the locality. This avenue applies when there is one clear stylistic influence on the learner, the result of which is that it would be likely for the learner’s style to resemble that of their teacher.

Such is the experience of the master fiddler Dinny Mc Laughlin (1935–) who occasionally called to the local fiddler Pat Mulhearne’s (1900–1997) house to learn the instrument.\(^\text{201}\) As a result of being primarily exposed to one influence, Dinny considers his style to have been heavily influenced by Mulhearne’s playing.\(^\text{202}\) The impact of this type of approach on learning would have been felt more strongly in the past when the methods of dissemination were not being as advanced as they are today. More recently, the formal ‘one to one’ approach is used within the third-level context where the student generally has a weekly lesson with a master performer. A drawback of this approach is that through learning from one teacher only, stylistic homogenisation may create a challenge to the development of a personal style. However, supporters of regional styles are likely to interpret this as something of value in that it reinforces the sense of a local stylistic identity.


\(^{202}\) Ibid. Although implied in Doherty’s book, this information comes from informal conversation with Dinny.
3. Regular Formal Group Class Approach

With the promotion of Irish traditional music by CCÉ and the consequent growth of practitioners, group lessons have become an increasingly popular and more economical means of satisfying demand. Classes may or may not be organised in terms of instrumentation and so it is not unusual for a multi-instrumentalist to teach a number of instruments, even including those on which they are not overly proficient.

Such was the case in my own experience where my teacher, John Lee (1948–) – a flute player, fiddler and button-accordionist – also had piano-accordion students. While this might seem less than ideal from a technical perspective, it created a situation where replicating another piano-accordionist was not a possibility for me. I would argue that this meant a relative avoidance of stylistic homogeneity on my part.

While the advantages to this approach might include exposure to different instrumental styles and peer-to-peer learning, there are also disadvantages such as a slower or unequal pace of learning due to different levels of ability within a particular class.

4. Workshop or Irregular formal Group Class Approach

The workshop model is relatively new to the tradition and probably owes its existence to the emergence and gradual popularity of specialised traditional music festivals, particularly those run by CCÉ. This approach is also very much a part of some third-level institutes that bring in master performers for irregular formal group ‘master-classes’. During festivals, the workshops are generally divided into beginner, intermediate and master-class stages and cater to variety of traditional instrument types. However, the actual levels are of course relative and therefore variable.

Due to the large numbers attending these festivals,203 there is a tendency for workshops to be instrument-specific and to employ recognised master musicians as teachers.

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Perhaps the best-known examples of this type of class are *Scoil Éigse* run by CCÉ and the workshops held at the Willie Clancy Summer School. At festivals, workshops can be held over the course of a weekend or a five-day week. In a university context however, they generally last between two and four hours (although this can be extended up to the length of a typical working day), but being at a higher-level, they are also more intensive. This type of approach is advantageous because it provides an intensive stylistic influence, which would not usually be easily accessible. Furthermore, students tend to travel greater distances to attend workshops and so in addition to the influence of the tutor, this enables an uncommon degree of peer-to-peer influence, thus facilitating a greater diffusion of styles, techniques and repertoire.

In my experience as a young accordionist from Donegal, I first met other young musicians from Dublin at *Scoil Éigse* where I was exposed to a completely different repertoire, style and technical level. Using a tape recorder, I recorded the sessions and by the following year, I had absorbed most of the Dublin musicians’ repertoire, aspects of style and technique. This transfer of knowledge would not have occurred had I stayed in Donegal. While these workshops, for the most part, function as supplements to a more regular avenue of transmission, it would surely be disadvantageous were they to be a sole source of exposure.

5. The Disembodied Master Approach

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin states that: ‘Traditional music has to come out of an actual meeting of bodies in space [...]’. He is referring here to the fact that musicians must meet physically in order for transmission to occur. While for the most part this is still the case, for many musicians, it is increasingly unnecessary to meet another musician in order for transmission to happen. The reason for this is that with the advent of

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206 See: Kitchenham, Andrew: *Blended Learning across Disciplines: models for implementation*, (PA: Information Science Reference, 2011), xiii-xvii where in the forward, Dr David Parsons credits Paul Myers of the BBC College of Journalism for inventing the term in 2000. Kitchenham states that ‘with varying permutations, blended learning is defined as combining face-to-face (f2f) teaching with
commercially available recordings from the 1920s onwards and particularly their widespread distribution, since the latter half of the twentieth century, recordings provide the possibility of transmitting stylistic knowledge without the necessity of meeting the ‘master’ performer.

As stated, the first major instance of this within Irish traditional music may be seen in connection with the master fiddlers Michael Coleman, James Morrison and Paddy Killoran who became so revered that what became known as the Sligo style permeated many parts of Ireland, resulting in a case of stylistic homogenisation, which is still frequently referenced.\textsuperscript{207}

In terms of button-accordion playing, the influence of Joe Burke (1939–) may be considered to have had a homogenising effect on button-accordionists. Similarly, Karen Tweed (1963–) and Alan Kelly (1972–) have informed the playing styles of many piano-accordionists. As the ‘supergroups’ began to become popular from the 1970s onwards, the recordings of the Bothy Band who were formed in 1974 have influenced many subsequent bands in their arrangement styles.

Although there can be a powerful homogenising effect exerted by the recordings of the master musicians, the irony is that there is also an advantage to the increased availability of high-quality recordings of musicians, who represent an array of styles not just pertaining to Irish traditional music but also to other related ‘Celtic’ music types. Another advantage is that the learning musician has more ability to access knowledge in the areas of style, repertoire and sometimes technique in cases where the master musician is deceased, lives too far away to meet or does not teach. Indeed this would also include cases where tuition is unaffordable. While this approach is suitable for an advanced musician, in the case of someone less experienced, the lack of another musician to explain new tunes (perhaps difficult passages), or the stylistic and technical features that they display, is a disadvantage.

In addition to commercially-available recordings, tuition DVDs also exist and over the years, musicians have often made private recordings of master musicians on anything from dictaphones in the 1980s and 1990s to the ‘smartphones’ that are popular nowadays. More recently, the internet has become an ubiquitous avenue of transmission where live performances, old recordings that are now out of copyright and online tutorials are often freely accessible.208 Moreover, these audio or audio-visual files can be replayed and easily shared, allowing a level of detailed study that would not be possible within the non-virtual context.

6. The Multiple-Master Approach
The multiple-master approach describes an increasingly common model where the student is subject to a number of teachers or stylistic influences. The effect of this avenue is most obvious in cases where due to the distinctiveness of a musician’s style, it is difficult to identify any one clear influence.

An example of this type of development process is Mairéad Ni Mhaonaigh (1959–) from the band Altan. Mairéad was initially taught the fiddle by her father Prionsais Ó Maonaigh (1922–2006) but as recordings show, their styles are noticeably different.209 Evidently, they have a shared repertoire, to which Mairéad often alludes, but another of her influences, Dinny Mc Laughlin would appear to have inspired her very clear style of metrical accentuation.210 On the other hand, her bow grip and double-stopping technique appears to suggest the influence of American fiddle styles.

The multiplicity of master influence contrasts significantly with the one-to-one formal approach. Access to a greater number of master influences is evidently helpful in the development of a more creative and unique stylistic approach. A disadvantage might be

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209 At present, there is no commercially released recording of Francie Mooney. The best overview of his music for the purposes of comparison is in the TG4 documentary ‘Áit i mo Chroí’, the first part of which can be seen here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDJtcJ8Glto (Accessed 30 January 2013).
that in a formal environment, multiple masters cannot track a single musician’s progress in any cohesive way.211

7. The Pan-Stylistic Approach
It is widely accepted that Irish traditional music has assimilated a wide range of stylistic influences from other genres.212 In order for this to happen, stylistic transmission must occur between those outside and those inside of the genre and indeed in the context of musicians who play more than one genre.

Indeed it is increasingly possible to find musicians who are proficient in more than one genre, usually Western art music and Irish traditional music. Noteworthy examples include Seán Ó Riada, Máire Bhreathnach (1956–), and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin. All of these musicians came to traditional music with prior training in classical music. Musicians who come from a rock and blues background include the Australian guitarist Steve Cooney and the English bouzouki player Alec Finn (1944–). It is more unusual for musicians to be fluent in both jazz and traditional backgrounds but the accordionist Peter Browne (1972–) is one exception whilst the guitarist Dave Flynn (1977–) is fluent in jazz, classical and traditional genres.

Musicians from a pan-stylistic background are sometimes criticised for not understanding the stylistic idiosyncrasies of Irish traditional music well enough but there are also examples such as those listed who have exerted a highly significant influence on the genre. If this approach is relevant, then by definition, at least one of the six other avenues of transmission must be relevant also. Therefore, while the advantage of this avenue is the possibility of adapting components of the styles of other genres to Irish traditional music, the disadvantage concerns the challenge of cultivating a certain authenticity while doing so.

211 A point made in: Doherty: A Needs Analysis of the Training and Transmission of Traditional Music in University and Professional Level Education Throughout Europe, 11.
212 Ó Riada: Our Musical Heritage, 19-20. Here, Ó Riada famously uses the metaphor of ‘foreign bodies in a river of sound’ to describe the assimilation process. This is further discussed in: O’Shea: The Making of Irish Traditional Music, 1.
1.3.2.2 Critique of Transmission in Irish Traditional Instrumental Music

In tandem with the increasingly central place of style in the discussion of Irish traditional dance music, the avenues of transmission have naturally diversified to feature a wider range of stylistic influences, brought about by developments in communications and media technology. As a result it is probable that these latter avenues of transmission are likely to be more common today.

The possibility of studying Irish traditional music at undergraduate and postgraduate levels brought to the fore the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of Irish traditional music in a formal environment. However, given that the third-level institutes have adopted avenues of transmission that are already found within the genre (particularly the formal one-to-one, the regular formal group class, and the irregular formal group class approaches), these criticisms, at least with regard to stylistic development, can be said to apply to the learning methods in the tradition at large. The only source of criticism found is in the Doherty report. Although it focuses on the Folk Music Department at Sibelius Academy, Finland; the Department of Traditional and Popular Music, T.E.I. of Epirus, Greece; CESMD-CEFEDEM Musique, Poitiers, France, and the Irish World Music Centre, University of Limerick, Ireland, there are many shared experiences that are highly applicable to the Irish scene in general. As stated earlier, the main avenue of transmission used in the third level environment is the one-to-one (also referred to as the ‘face-to-face’) approach. At the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, this regular, formal one-to-one approach is supplemented by workshops given by visiting musicians. Although the report is over a decade old, as will be discussed, it is still a valid assessment of continuing issues: that of the conflict between stylistic individuality and homogeneity and the need for assessing musical development.

213 Now renamed the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance.
When reading the report, it is important to note that the related concepts of stylistic homogeneity versus stylistic creativity/individuality are best not viewed as polarities, but rather, as two points of a spectrum, between which there are various combinations of both. As expressed in the report:

One of the key questions for the traditional music community concerns the effect of the institutional environment on aspects of the music tradition such as transmission, individuality, stylistic creativity etc. A collective concern is that homogeneity and uniformity will replace individualism as the main characteristics of the music.²¹⁴

The question of whether one constant teacher, who can monitor a student’s progress from beginning to end of the studies, or a variety of teachers representing different styles is preferable has also been raised: “If you’re constantly getting guidance from one person … there’s the danger that the institution starts dictating the sort of style … it could get a little bit dangerous” (Student, Ireland).²¹⁵

At face value, the solution would seem to be to move from one major stylistic influence, which evidently has its limitations, towards ‘a variety of teachers representing different styles’. However, this creates a problem in the area of assessment; a factor which is generally associated with the academic environment but which is also important for anyone wishing to learn and for a teacher to monitor development. The report summarises some of these issues:

Traditional methodologies for the transmission of traditional music are based on imitation and repetition. Educators are presently concerned with finding ways to balance traditional practices with alternative pedagogical approaches that highlight the creative potential of the student.²¹⁶

One of the questions frequently raised by educators concerns the teaching of creative aspects of traditional music, for example improvisation and variation. Opinions are divided with regard to approaches that might be taken in this particular area of teaching.²¹⁷

One attitude is that new methods are required to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of these principles. An alternative approach favours equipping students with appropriate knowledge and fostering the independence and confidence required to increase their skill in this area.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Doherty: A Needs Analysis of the Training and Transmission of Traditional Music in University and Professional Level Education Throughout Europe, 18.
²¹⁵ Ibid., 11.
²¹⁶ Ibid.
²¹⁷ Ibid., 13.
²¹⁸ Ibid., 14.
Finally, the report states that ‘in particular the challenge of developing a successful mechanism for measuring targets and results is one that many course directors are addressing’, adding that, ‘appropriate mechanisms need to be developed that will allow oral transmission methodologies to be properly assessed and evaluated’. Having been in correspondence with Dr Liz Doherty, since the publication of the report, she stated that she is unsure if its findings have been followed up in any way. It would appear that although further discussion on the issues highlighted was advised at the time, the trail appears to have since dried up.

In effect, when the report’s criticisms are considered against the avenues of transmission as explored here, in addition to the vastness of stylistic diversity that exists, it is apparent that with regard to creativity versus homogeneity, a relatively small fraction of what is known is being communicated. While it is likely that musicians make use of most or all of the avenues of transmission as identified above, the same fundamental argument remains: because style is mostly transmitted as implicit knowledge, what is actually learned is difficult to quantify and assess.

Furthermore, since there is as yet no established method to determining a musician’s level of stylistic development, by which it is meant a quantifiable measure of what is known, it is difficult to assess how much is learned within a particular period of development. Ultimately, it is problematic that most stylistic knowledge is held as implicit knowledge.

An exploration of the avenues of transmission has shown an increasing tendency towards a greater variety of stylistic influences, so much so that it would seem to be a natural progression to begin to make this body of knowledge explicit. Despite the often-limited nature of the literature as has been outlined, it has also shown an increasing tendency towards the description of stylistic phenomena. Furthermore, it simply feels like a lost opportunity that something of such value as style is largely implicit.

219 Ibid., 10.
220 Ibid., 10.
221 See Chapter Two where the criteria for assessing stylistic development are outlined.
The solution it would seem, is to acknowledge the value of style in Irish traditional music by translating its implicit stylistic information into an explicit archive of stylistic data that can be organised, shared and used in practice. In doing so, it is feasible that information can be transmitted independently of master musicians. Furthermore, it should be possible to identify what is known or not known by the learning musician, and hence monitor and assess stylistic development. Since change is a fundamental characteristic of style in Irish traditional dance music, a larger stylistic potential and an ability to adapt this knowledge to changing contexts is here argued as an ideal position to which to aspire.

The task of constructing an archive of explicit stylistic data and determining how this can be used as a creative tool within the tradition will now be investigated. This objective is concentrated through one primary research question that will be addressed between Chapters Three to Nine, and is then followed by a practice-based inquiry that will be explored in Chapter Ten. Specifically this will entail:

1. An investigation into the process of developing an approach through which stylistic data can be codified and archived in a systematic manner.

2. An exploration into how this explicit stylistic data can be used in practice.

Potentially, a study such as this is a lifetime’s work and so while there are two areas of enquiry, the emphasis is placed on the creation of an archive of explicit stylistic data since without this, the practice-based element would not be possible. The following chapter will set out the methodology used to address both questions.