

SchoolTime Study Guide



Altan

Friday, March 19, 2010 at 11 a.m.
Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley

Welcome to *SchoolTime*!

On **Friday, March 19, 2010**, at **11 am**, your class will attend a performance by **Altan**, the award-winning traditional Irish band.

Dubbed “the hottest group in the Celtic realm these days” by the *Boston Globe*, no Irish band has had a wider impact on music lovers than Altan. With a repertoire that ranges from tender and moving Irish folk songs to hard-hitting reels and jigs, Altan delights fans with heartwarming live performances and award-winning recordings. The members of Altan believe that Irish traditional music is a modern music in every sense, and the band’s growing influence and popularity have proved them right.

Using This Study Guide

You can prepare your students for their Cal Performances field trip with the materials in this study guide. Prior to the performance, we encourage you to:

- **Copy** the student resource sheet on **pages 2 & 3** and hand it out to your students several days before the performance.
- **Discuss** the information About the Performance & Artists on **pages 4-6** with your students.
- **Read** to your students from About the Art Form on **page 7** and About Ireland on **page 10**.
- **Engage** your students in two or more of the activities on **pages 14-15**.
- **Reflect** with your students by asking them guiding questions, found on **pages 2,4,7 & 10**.
- **Immerse** students further into the art form by using the glossary and resource sections on **pages 14 & 17**.

At the performance:

Students can actively participate during the performance by:

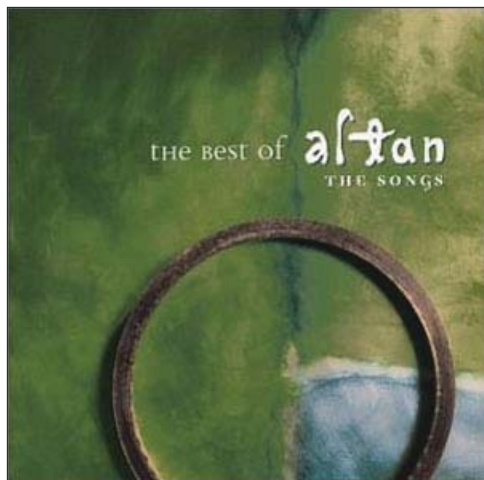
- LISTENING CAREFULLY to the melodies, harmonies and rhythms
- OBSERVING how the musicians and singers work together, sometimes playing in solos, duets, trios and as an ensemble
- THINKING ABOUT the culture, history, ideas and emotions expressed through the music
- MARVELING at the skill of the musicians
- REFLECTING on the sounds and sights experienced at the theater

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

Laura Abrams
Director, Education & Community Programs

Rica Anderson
Education Programs Administrator

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1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early.

Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet.

The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show appreciation by applauding.

Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action onstage.

Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers.

These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

Please note:

Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags are provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.



2 Student Resource Sheet

Altan

Questions to Think About:

- What has influenced Altan's music?
- Describe some of the events that shaped Irish traditional music.
- What happened during Ireland's potato famine?



What You'll See

The Irish band, Altan adds a contemporary flavor to traditional Irish melodies. At the *SchoolTime* performance they will perform heart-stirring ballads and folk songs and dance-inspired reels and jigs. The ensemble includes **Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh**, lead fiddler and singer, **Ciarán Tourish** on fiddle and tin whistles, **Dáithí Sproule** on guitar, **Ciarán Curran** playing bouzouki (Greek lute) and **Dermot Byrne** on accordion.

About Altan

Now in its 25th year, Altan is one of the most respected Irish bands on the world stage. Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh and the late Frankie Kennedy started the band while teaching school in North County Dublin. As children, both learned to play the fiddle from older Irish performers who taught them the distinctive music of County Donegal (located in the Northwest coast of Ireland), which is known for upholding its Irish culture, language and traditions. This legacy shaped Altan's music as it grew from a

duo (two musicians) to a quintet (five musicians). Altan has won numerous international awards and gained gold and platinum status in Ireland with their record sales.

As Irish cultural ambassadors, Altan has accompanied Irish President Mary McAleese on State visits to Greece, Korea and Japan and performed at the White House in the United States. The Irish government has also honored them with a postage stamp.

About Irish Music

Most "traditional" Irish music is relatively recent. While under English rule in the mid-17th century, Ireland's language, stories, songs, dances and traditions were suppressed by English colonizers who also ordered a mass destruction of the Irish harp (Ireland's chief musical instrument). However, in the 18th century, Irish musicians learned different instruments, musical techniques and performing styles, breathing new life into Irish music.

Because music was mostly performed at country dances and celebrations (get-togethers known as céilis), traditional Irish music is made up of dance tunes and song airs like folk music and ballads, which are slower than dance tunes.

Dance tunes include:

- **The Jig:** The oldest form of Irish dance music, it is usually played at a fairly quick tempo, but can be sped up or slowed down depending on the mood or type of jig a dancer is performing.
- Thought to have originated in Scotland around the mid-18th century, the **Reel** is a tune in 4/4 time (four beats to a measure).
- **The Hornpipe:** Originating from England, the hornpipe, like the reel, is in 4/4 time, but tends to be slower with a more heavily marked rhythm.

Song airs

Like most folk-music, Irish songs focus on love and were traditionally sung in Gaelic (a language that includes the speech of ancient Ireland and Scotland) or English. Many songs and ballads were brought to Ireland from England and Scotland.

Instruments & Music Revival

In the 1950s and '60s, Sean Ó'Riada, an Irish composer and music scholar made it his mission to revive traditional Irish music. His band, Ceoltoiri Chualann, established a model for the types of instruments played in a traditional band, including the fiddle, wood flute, tin whistle (a kind of flute with a tin body), guitar, the uilleann pipe (a small bagpipe), accordions and ancient instruments, including the Irish harp or *clàrsach* and *bodhrán*, a hand-held frame drum made of wood and goatskin. Today, performers from many different cultures exchange influences with Irish musicians and Irish music is played all over the world.

About Ireland

About the size of the state of Indiana, Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic near the United Kingdom (UK), also known as Britain. Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK, occupies the



Photograph by William Manning/CORBIS

northeast corner. The Republic of Ireland makes up the majority of the island. Although Irish is the country's official language and is taught in schools, most people speak English.

Often called the "Emerald Isle" because of its lush, green landscape, Ireland was first inhabited by tribes of Europeans, called Celts, in the 6th century, B.C. In A.D. 432, St. Patrick began converting the Irish to Christianity, resulting eventually in a majority Catholic population. English invasions began in the 12th century and Ireland struggled against English rule for the next seven centuries.

During the 1840s, heavy rains destroyed Ireland's main food staple, the potato, and millions starved. In the following years many left Ireland for the United States and Canada seeking a better life.

In 1922, twenty-six counties in which the majority of people were Catholic won their independence. This territory later became the Republic of Ireland. Six counties in Northern Ireland, where the majority population was Protestant, stayed under British control. Since then, forces for and against uniting the island have claimed thousands of lives. In 1998, Ireland gave up its claim to Northern Ireland, and in 2006, the Irish and British governments built on this agreement with a new peace treaty. Today, Irish governments are working together towards a more peaceful, united Ireland.

3 About the Performance & Artists

Altan

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ How did Altan develop as a band?
- ♦ Which instruments do the members of Altan play?
- ♦ What role does Altan play on the world stage?



For 25 years the band Altan has delighted audiences from Donegal, Ireland to Tokyo to Seattle with their mastery of traditional Irish music. From stirring ballads, to poignant folk songs to the exciting dance-inspired rhythms of reels and jigs, Altan gracefully blends beautiful old melodies with compelling contemporary sounds creating a rich musical experience.

A band of virtuosos, Altan is led by co-founder Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, a superb fiddler and a singer with a sweet, expressive soprano voice. Fellow fiddler Ciarán Tourish partners on most of the melodies while the stellar guitar work and gentle vocals of Dáithí Sproule and the percussive bouzouki (Greek lute) of Ciarán Curran and intricate accordion playing of Dermot Byrne weave together to form a seamless musical tapestry.

About Altan

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, Altan has established itself as one of the most important traditional bands of Ireland and on the world stage.

Founding members, the late Frankie Kennedy and his partner Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, lead singer and fiddler, began their musical careers while teaching in a school in Malahide in North County Dublin. They were influenced by older musicians from the Donegal tradition, including Mairéad's father Francie. The seeds of the band lie in the music and fun of gatherings and sessions in kitchens and pubs in Donegal. By the mid-eighties the duo had grown into a quintet. As the group built their repertoire, Altan (the name was taken from a deep and mysterious lake behind Errigal Mountain in Donegal)

continued to redefine and reinvigorate their sound, and has played a central role in the continuing evolution of Irish music.

The musicians of Altan have been important cultural ambassadors as well, and have accompanied Irish President, Mary McAleese on state visits to Greece, Korea and Japan. They performed at the White House twice for President Bill Clinton and played again for him when he visited Ireland. In 2006, the Irish government honored the band by putting them on an official Irish postage stamp.

Altan has performed in some of the most prestigious venues in the world. They have recorded with The Chieftains, Dolly Parton, Bonnie Raitt, Alison Krauss, and Ricky Skaggs and other star performers. The band has consistently gained gold and platinum status in Ireland with their record sales. They have won numerous awards as one of the most beloved bands internationally playing traditional folk and world music.

In recent years Altan has explored and developed orchestral arrangements for their most popular pieces, which have been performed with the Ulster Orchestra, The RTÉ Concert Orchestra and with the Royal Scottish Opera Orchestra.

Altan Artist Bios

Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (Vocals / Fiddle)



was born and raised in a district of County Donegal, Ireland. Her first language was Irish, and from her earliest years she was surrounded by music and song. She learned to play fiddle from her father Francie, as well as fiddler Dinny McLaughlin.

Today she is a leading performer of Donegal fiddle music, as well as a captivating singer. In addition to her work with Altan, Mairéad has presented traditional music programs on the classic radio show, "The Long Note" and the television series, "The Pure Drop."

Dermot Byrne (Accordion), also a native of



Donegal, joined the band in 1994. Like Mairéad, Dermot learned music from his father, Tomás O Beirn. A renowned accordion player before he reached his teens, Dermot has played and recorded extensively, including a solo recording.

Ciarán Tourish (Fiddle / Whistles) is from



Buncrana, in east Donegal. In addition to his mastery of dance music, Ciarán's quick ear and a love of harmony and counterpoint keep him in demand as a valued collaborator on projects with musicians and singers from a wide range of musical styles.

Ciarán Curran (Bouzouki) is a native of



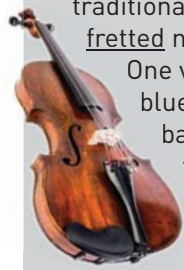
Kinawleyin Ireland's County Fermanagh. He brings his family's strong musical tradition to bear on an instrument relatively new to Irish traditional music, the bouzouki (Greek lute).

Dáithí Sproule (Guitar) was born and



raised in Derry, Ireland but he has lived for many years in Minnesota. Daithi first came to the US to record and tour with James Kelly and accordion player, Paddy O'Brien, and since has recorded and performed with many wonderful musicians.

Altan's Instruments



Fiddle The fiddle is the mainstay of most Scottish and Irish music. While it is basically a violin, traditional music used the word “fiddle” to refer to any bowed or stringed instrument with a fretted neck. Like the violin, the fiddle has 4 strings, but comes in a variety of shapes and sizes.

One very slight difference between “fiddles” and ordinary violins may be seen in American bluegrass or old-time music fiddling: in these styles, the top of the bridge (the small arch or bar at a right angle to the strings) may be cut so that it is slightly less curved. This reduces the range of right-arm motion required for the rapid string-crossings found in some styles.

Bodhrán Pronounced BOW-rawn (rhymes with “cow”). An Irish frame drum made of bent wood and goatskin and ranging from 10” to 26” in diameter and 3½” to 8” deep sides. Goatskin is tacked to one side, the other side is open ended for one hand to be placed against the inside of the drum head to control the pitch and timbre. There may be one or two crossbars inside the frame. The bodhrán is also played with a double-headed stick called a cipín, tipper, or beater.



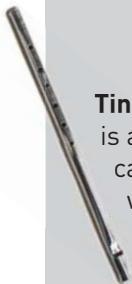
Bouzouki A long-necked lute used in Greek popular music. Developed from a Turkish instrument early in the 20th century, it has a pear-shaped body and a fretted fingerboard. The modern instrument usually has four courses of strings, typically plucked in a quick and vigorous style. Irish musicians adopted the bouzouki in the late 1960s and today it is commonly played in Irish traditional bands.



Accordion Frequently used in folk music, the accordion consists of rectangular bellows which are expanded and contracted between the hands. Players operate the buttons or keys to open valves, allowing air to enter or to escape. The air sets in motion free reeds, which are usually made of metal. The length, density, shape, and elasticity of the reeds determine the pitch. The first accordions were made in 1822 by Friedrich Buschmann in Berlin. Bouton added a keyboard 30 years later in Paris, producing a piano accordion.



Tin Whistle Also called the Irish whistle because it is closely associated with Celtic music, this is a simple six-holed woodwind instrument. An end-blown flute, the tin whistle is in the same category as the recorder and other woodwinds. A tin whistle player is called a tin whistler or whistler.



Guitar A guitar has six strings, each of which correspond to a musical note. Players create different chords by pressing down on the strings at the neck, or fret, of the guitar and strumming the strings at the center.



4 About the Art Form

Traditional Irish Music

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What challenges did Irish music face during its history?
- ♦ Describe three types of Irish traditional music.
- ♦ How has Irish music become popular in the last few decades?

Most traditional Irish music is, in fact, quite recent – dating from around the 18th century or later. The ancient system of bardic colleges, where young men learned oral histories, songs, and music, was abolished in the mid-17th century. During Oliver Cromwell's rule (1599-1658), Ireland came under increasing pressure from the English colonizers to abandon Gaelic (a language that includes the speech of ancient Ireland and Scotland) and speak only English. Lost were traditional Irish stories, songs and tunes.

The chief instrument of early Irish music, the harp, was also widely destroyed. Before this cultural persecution, Irish harpers enjoyed a status almost equal to that of kings, and according to tradition, were masters of the mystical moods of music. However, Irish musicians worked around these losses and in the years to follow adopted new and different instruments, musical techniques, and performing styles.

Melodic Structure

Irish dance tunes and songs may sound familiar because they correspond to either the major or minor scale of Western classical music. Two other scales, which a Western musician would probably refer to as modal, are found in traditional Irish music, but they are rare.



Form

Most traditional Irish music is made up of dance tunes and song airs. There are certain other forms – some marches, and music originally composed for solo instruments, but most of what people identify as Irish music are dance tunes, such as:

- **The Jig** – The oldest surviving form of Irish dance music is characterized by a tune in 6/8 time (the number of beats in a bar and the beat value for each note). The word “jig” comes from the Italian “giga” or French “gigue,” both of which refer to music in 6/8 time. The Irish jig is usually played at a fairly quick tempo, but can be sped up or slowed down depending on the mood, whether there is a dancer and what type of jig the dancer is performing. The phrases in a jig melody are generally comprised of eight measures of music.

- **The Slip-Jig** – A piece of music in 9/8 time, which gives this form a lilting feel, as if the music never quite settles. Rhythmic differences in the note-groupings between this and the jig that suggests that the slip jig was created with particular dance steps in mind. Slip-jigs often lead directly into other dance tunes instead of ending on what would sound like an uneven beat.

- **The Reel** – A tune in 4/4 time that has probably only been around since the mid-18th century. Like the jig, the melody of a reel is generally grouped in phrases of eight bars each. The reel being is likely Scottish import to Ireland.

- **The Hornpipe** – Like the reel, the hornpipe is in 4/4 time, but tends to be slower with a more heavily marked rhythm. The first and third beats of each measure are particularly accented. The hornpipe originated in England, and changed from its original form (in 3/2 time) to the current form around 1760.



Song Airs

Song airs do not adhere to any particular form. They can have any time signature, and are generally slower than dance tunes. As in most folk-music, Irish songs are commonly about love. Traditional Irish songs can be in Gaelic, English, or both. Some of the English songs were imported from England and Scotland while others were composed by English-speaking Irish. In cultures where songs are not copyrighted, much literary and musical material is borrowed or changed to make new material.

Performance

Traditionally, the Irish played music at country dances (which were very popular in the 17th century) and on other occasions where people gathered for relaxation and entertainment. These get-togethers were known as céilís, however, current usage of the word *céilí* can refer to everything from a party to an Irish step dance competition.

Instruments

While instruments vary relatively little from ensemble to ensemble, Irish musicians create an astonishing array of sounds. Fiddles, wood flutes, tin whistles and squeezeboxes are commonly used, enhanced by guitars and by the bouzouki, a Greek lute that has become very popular.

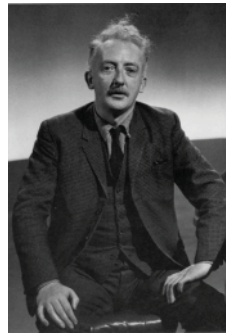
The *bodhrán*, a hand-held goatskin wooden frame drum, marks the time. Sometimes the plaintively reedy sound of the *uilleann* (elbow) pipes, a small bagpipe peculiar to Ireland, embellishes the tune. The pipes are an important solo instrument, especially for slow airs, which are among the oldest surviving types of Irish music. The *clàrsach* (Irish harp) has made a strong come-back from near-obscurity and is once again a living symbol of Ireland.



Modern *clàrsach* player

Revival of Irish Music

In the 1950s and '60s, composer-arranger-musicologist Seán Ó Riada, then musical director of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, embarked upon a grass-roots Celtic revival and in so doing sparked a major renaissance of traditional Irish music. Ó'Raida introduced the Irish harp and the bodhrán into general use. His own ensemble was called Ceoltoiri Chualann, from which came Ireland's best-known modern traditional music group, The Chieftains. Thanks to their



Seán Ó Riada

example, the uilleann pipes, tin whistle, fiddle and accordion became popular as never before. Today, musicians from many different cultures exchange influences with native-born Irish and Irish music is increasingly popular on the world stage.

5 About Ireland

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What are Ireland's two different territories?
- ♦ What happened to Ireland under English rule?
- ♦ What makes County Donegal so distinctive?

Geography & Language

The Republic of Ireland occupies most of the territory on an island ("Emerald Isle") in the North Atlantic adjacent to the United Kingdom (also known as Britain), except the northeast corner, Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK. **Éire** (AIR-uh) is the Irish name for the Republic of Ireland. Irish is the country's first official language and is taught in schools, but few native speakers remain. English is the second official language and is more commonly spoken.

History

The "Emerald Isle" has been inhabited for 7,000 years, but has been subject to invasion throughout its history. Tribes of Celts (people now represented chiefly by the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and Bretons) from Europe came in the sixth century B.C. In A.D. 432, St. Patrick began converting the Irish to Christianity, resulting eventually in a majority Catholic population. English invasions began in the 12th century, setting off more than seven centuries of Anglo-Irish struggle marked by fierce rebellions and harsh repressions. Although England seized much of the land, many areas remained in Irish hands until the 16th century when the rulers of England's Tudor Dynasty confiscated property owned by Catholics.

In the 19th century Ireland's population was ever more dependent on the potato crop for food. However, the large amount of rain that fell year after year in the 1840s caused blight and rotted the potato harvest, leading to widespread starvation. Death and emigration—with the majority of emigrants settling in the United States—reduced the population from eight to six million by 1856. The population decreased even more through the last century. Today Ireland has about 5.9 million residents (4.2 million in the Republic of Ireland).



Ireland

Irish Independence

In 1916, a failed “Easter Monday Rebellion” was the start of years of guerrilla warfare. In 1922, twenty six Irish Catholic counties won independence, while the six counties of mostly Protestant Northern Ireland remained under British control. Since independence, forces for and against uniting the island have claimed thousands of lives.

Ireland officially became a republic and withdrew from the British Commonwealth in 1949. It joined the European Community in 1973. In 1998 the Good Friday Agreement for peace was signed by the Northern Ireland parties, Britain, and Ireland—with Ireland giving up its territorial claim to Northern Ireland. In 2006, the Irish and British governments developed a new treaty, the St. Andrews Agreement, building on the 1998 agreement. Since then, Irish governments have sought the peaceful unification of Ireland and have cooperated with Britain against terrorist groups. A peace settlement for Northern Ireland is gradually being implemented.

Literature

For a comparatively small country, Ireland has made a large contribution to world literature, mostly in the English language. Ireland produced four winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature in the last century; George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. And although James Joyce never won the Nobel Prize, he is widely considered one of the most significant writers of the 20th century.

The Irish language has the third oldest literature in Europe (after Greek and Latin), the most substantial body of written literature of any Celtic language, as well as a strong oral tradition of legends and poetry. Irish is also represents the oldest vernacular (everyday language of a people) poetry in Europe.

Celtic

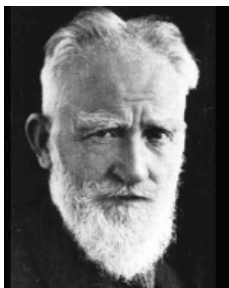
The term “Celtic” (KELL-tik) can refer to several things, including:

- The **Celtic Nations**—territories in North-West Europe in which that area’s own languages and cultural traits have survived. The term “nation” describes a group of people associated with a territory and who share a common identity, language or culture. The six territories recognized as Celtic nations are Brittany (Breizh), Cornwall (Kernow), Ireland (Éire), Isle of Man (Mannin), Scotland (Alba), and Wales (Cymru).

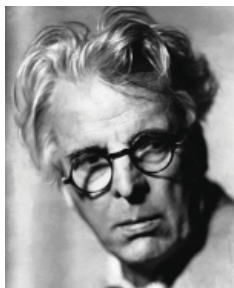
- The **Celts** of antiquity— a European people who came to reside in the areas noted above.

- The **Celtic** languages— the original languages spoken by people from the Celtic nations.

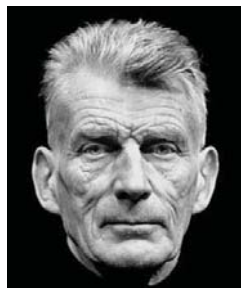
- The “modern **Celts**”— people from the Celtic nations who are maintaining or reclaiming their Celtic language, culture and heritage.



George Bernard Shaw



William Butler Yeats



Samuel Beckett



Seamus Heaney



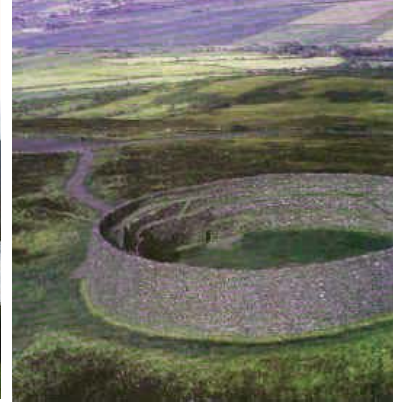
James Joyce



Donegal Castle



Glenveagh National Park



Grianan of Aileach

County Donegal

Several members of Altan are from Ireland's County Donegal, so it is a delight for the band to share the traditional music of Donegal fiddlers and singers with contemporary audiences.

Located on Ireland's northwest tip within the Province of Ulster and part of the Republic of Ireland, Donegal (or in Irish Dún na nGall, meaning "Fort of the Foreigners") is the largest county in Ulster and the fourth largest in all of Ireland. Uniquely, County Donegal shares a border with only one other county in the Republic of Ireland, County Leitrim. The majority of its land border is shared with Northern Ireland. This relative isolation has led people in Donegal to maintain a distinct cultural identity and the county is seen as a bastion of Irish culture and the Irish language.

County Donegal attracts many tourists with its sandy beaches, unspoilt boglands (soft, wet lands) and friendly communities. One of its treasures is Glenveagh National Park, a nature reserve offering spectacular scenery of mountains, lakes and woodlands. At its heart is Glenveagh Castle, a beautiful late Victorian, originally built as a summer residence. Other popular spots include Donegal Castle, a fifteenth century castle considered one of the finest in Ireland and the stone fortress Grianan of Aileach, which was a historical center of culture and politics for ancient Irish chieftains (c. 800 B.C.E.-1200 C.E.).



Ireland Fun Facts

- Population: 4,125,000
- Capitol City: Dublin
- Area: The island of Ireland is 32,599 square miles, about the size of the state of Indiana.
- Languages: English and Irish
- Religion: Roman Catholic
- Currency: Euro
- Life Expectancy: 77
- Literacy: 99 per cent

6 Glossary

accent—point of particular stress; emphasis

arrangement—the manner in which different sounds are organized based on a musical composition.

bagpipe— an instrument that uses enclosed reeds fed from a constant reservoir of air in the form of a bag

ballad— a song that is meant to tell a story using poetic lyrics and instruments

band— a group of musicians

bar— a vertical line that divides up measures and indicates that the strong beat falls on the note right after the line

bardic— relating to ancient Celtic poetry

beat— the rhythm of how musical measures are divided

chord— a harmony of two or more tones

compose— to write music for voices or instruments

counterpoint— a composition with two or more simultaneous melodies

duo— performance for two voices or two instruments

embellish— adding notes that are not necessary but give extra style to the music

ensemble— a group of musicians who work together to create a concert

fingerboard— a thin, long strip of wood that is attached to the front of the neck of an instrument and above which the strings run. In playing, a musician presses the strings down towards the fingerboard in order to change their vibrating lengths, causing changes in pitch.

folk songs— a song of the people, tinged by the musical particularities of the nation, usually song in simple ballad form

fret— raised portion on the neck of a stringed instrument that extends generally across the full width of the neck

harmony— the simultaneous sounding of two or more tones, especially when it sounds pleasing to the hear

jig— a type of dance with many steps and gestures that moves in a quick tempo

major scale— a musical scale consisting of 2 major seconds, 1 minor second, 3 major seconds, and 1 minor second in this order

march— a composition of strongly marked rhythm, much like the tempo of a person walking.

measure— the notes and moments of rest between 2 bars; one unit in creating a composition

melody— arrangement of musical notes to create a distinct sound

minor scale— a type of key or scale that has a differentiating sound from the major scale

modal— a type of scale that is different from the major and minor scales, typically has an “exotic” sound

musicologist— a person who studies music

note— a sign used to mark the time of a held tone

oral history— sharing one’s history by word of mouth; speaking instead of writing

percussive— makes sound by being struck

phrase— half of an 8 measure period

pitch—the frequency of a sound

quintet—a group of 5 musicians

reel— a lively dance from Scotland and Ireland for 2 couples

repertoire— list of all known works that a group performs

rhythm— the pattern of regular or irregular pulses caused in music by the occurrence of strong and weak melodic and harmonic beats

scale— the series of tones that create types of major and minor notes

solo— a composition for one musician; or when one person performs

song air— Irish folk songs

soprano— the highest class of notes reached by the human voice, usually female

squeezebox— also known as an accordion

timbre— the quality of a musical note or sound or tone that distinguishes different types of sound production, such as voices or musical instruments

time signature— a numerical or other indication at the beginning of a piece showing the meter.

tune— short, simple pieces of melodies

7 Learning Activities

Music (Grades K-8)

Family Folk Songs

For homework, ask students to interview family members about folk songs they learned when they were younger. (If family members don't remember any folk songs, students should ask about lullabies they know – many lullabies come from traditional music.) Students might ask or think about:

Who did they learn the song from and why did they learn it?

What kind of emotion does the song seem to have, how does it make the listener feel?

- Students should write down the words to the song, listen to the song several times, and sing along until they know the tune and the lyrics.
- Ask students to bring the lyrics to class the next day. (You may want to photocopy these lyrics for each student or write them up on the board or on a transparency.)
- Ask students to sing some of their songs and have class members join in.

Extension:

- Have students do online research on the origins of their song and share it with the class.

Literacy and Language Arts (Grades 2-8)

Letter from Ireland

Excerpt from a letter written by Hannah Curtis in Mountmellick, Queen's County, Ireland to her brother John Curtis in Belleville, Illinois.

Mountmellick November the 24, 1845
Dear brother John
I received your letter on the 14th of Nov which gave us great pleasure to hear from you that you are so well since you left home I was often surprisd you did not write to me before now.
Dear brother it is most dreadful the state the potatoes are in in Ireland and all over the world they are all tainted in the ground. It is the opinion of every one there will be no potatoes We are greatly affraid there will be a famine this year if the Lord does not do something for the people

- Ask your students to read the excerpt from Hannah Curtis' letter to her brother. (The entire letter can be found at: <http://www.hsp.org/files/curtisletter1.pdf>)
- Have them research primary and secondary sources on Ireland's potato famine.
- Ask students to imagine life in Ireland during this difficult time:
 - How is the famine affecting their community, their family?*
 - What might they do to ease this hardship, or put it behind them?*
- Invite students to write a letter to a friend or family member describing their (imagined) experience and asking for support or guidance.

History / Social Studies (Grades 3-12)

Personalized Historical Ballad

Irish ballads are often inspired by legends – actual historical events, told in story form and passed down over generations. For example, several Irish ballads focus on the Irish struggle against English oppression. Have students listen to some ballads.

If possible give students the lyrics so they can follow along to the song’s “story.” For access to ballads and lyric sheets, see the resource section.

- Brainstorm together:

What is the ballad’s story?

Who is telling the story in the ballad?

How does the narrator feel about the event?

What emotions is the ballad trying to evoke?

- Ask students to think of some historical events they’ve learned about.
- Invite them choose a specific historical event, then ask them to consider:

What is the story of this event? They should trace the narrative structure – work out the beginning, middle and end of the story. (They might also storyboard this.)

Which character do they want to choose to tell this story? For example, if they’re telling about the sinking of the Titanic, are they a survivor, one of the shipbuilders, or a family member awaiting the arrival of a loved one on the ship?

- Ask them to describe the emotions their character feels when telling this story.

What language and vocabulary does their character use to tell their story? Do they tell the story simply, or use descriptive language and metaphor?
- Have them write this story down in their character’s voice.

Extension:

- Ask students to craft a poem or lyrics from their descriptive writing.
- Have students find a melody (either an existing one, or one they may make up) to accompany their lyrics/poem.

Additional Resources

Altan

<http://www.altan.ie/>

Websites about Ireland and Traditional Irish Music

- www.stresscafe.com/music/kennedycenter.html
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Ireland



Irish Ballads

- <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~irelandlist/lyrics.html>
- www.thebards.net/music

Digital Book

An illustrated history of Ireland: from the earliest period By Mary Francis Cusack

- <http://books.google.com/books?id=ZSEvAAAAMAAJ&dq>

Videos

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpKkBe8kZ00>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJDTQW87w-s>

Images

flickr.com

images.google.com

Local performing venues featuring Irish music:

Freight & Salvage Coffee House

- www.thefreight.org
- (510) 548-1761

Starry Plough Pub

- www.starryploughpub.com
- (510) 841-2082

8 California State Standards

Music Grades K-12

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Music

Students read, notate, listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music

Students apply vocal and instrumental musical skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They compose and arrange music and improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments, using digital/electronic technology when appropriate.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

Role of Music

3.1 Describe the social functions of a variety of musical forms from various cultures and time periods (e.g., folk songs, dances).

Diversity of Music

3.2 Identify different or similar uses of musical element in music from diverse cultures.

3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, Analyzing and Making Judgments about Works of Music

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human response.



About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.

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This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Rica Anderson and Nicole Anthony with material adapted from Leah K. Davis with the Anchorage Concert Association and Christiana Roden with the National Geographic World Music.

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