



Companion to Irish Traditional Music

Fintan Vallely

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The Companion to Irish Traditional Music is a landmark, easy to use A-Z format for studying, exploring and researching one of Ireland's most universally recognisable cultural expressions.

Among the existing publications on Irish traditional music there are works of monumental initiative and deservedly enduring status. But the radical development in this music scene since the 1960s mark it now as an established part of Irish cultural life and demand new kinds of information. The commercial side of the music has evolved and consolidated, generating a new set of standards, popular music dynamics and significant music tourism. The music's expanding profile within the academic system too has created fresh approaches to playing and study, with a growth of academic research interest, and many major studies published or presently under way. In relevant and accessible ways The Companion uniquely draws together the oldness and newness in all of this: the practice and the study, the aesthetics and the analysis, the competing interests and diverse ideals.

The editor Fintan Vallely is himself an accomplished musician and music writer. He has harnessed the expertise of some 200 specialists from all aspects of traditional music, who in more than half a million words and 300 images present the most comprehensive image of Irish traditional music ever assembled. This detailed mosaic is coloured by history, ideology, scholarship, virtuosity, romance, satisfaction, pride and internationalism, all appropriately flagged by the cover's use of Maclise's fabulously energetic Snap Apple Night.

This second edition is not only revised but also greatly expanded, and has much new information, including material never before printed and unavailable elsewhere. In 1,750 individual articles and as many more sub-sections The Companion gives A-Z coverage of song, dance, instruments, bands, storytelling, technology, tunes and style, composition, organisations and promotion, education and transmission, collectors and archives, revival, broadcasting and recording, English, Scottish and Welsh music and song, and music in all Irish counties, Europe and the USA. This commentary and analysis is linked to an historical timeline which spans three millennia, and a publications listing that covers three centuries. Six hundred biographies detail the human endeavour of the field, documenting significant musicians, commentators, historians, promoters and composers, and extended entries cover major themes such as song, dance, education and the elements of style.

The Companion to Irish Traditional Music is a key reference for the interested enthusiast, session player and professional performer. It is also a profoundly comprehensive, one-stop resource for every library, school and home with an interest in the distinctive rituals, qualities and history of Irish culture. And it is a vital resource for all levels in education, particularly valuable at third level as both textbook and research

resource. The book is uniquely backed by the provision of a parallel website – www.companion.ie - which guides structured exploration of the text and fully integrates it with the existing vast and magnificent range of traditional music internet resources.

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Kim Nielsen:

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