

BARRA BOYDELL AND KERRY HOUSTON (EDS), *MUSIC, IRELAND AND THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*, Irish Musical Studies, 10 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), ISBN 978-1-84682-140-0, 211pp, €55 (hardback)

My first reaction on picking up this book was to wonder how Barra Boydell and Kerry Houston had managed to put together a collection of essays running to more than 200 pages on a subject that barely seemed to exist. After all, the earliest Irish collection of traditional tunes (as opposed to tunes in English and Scottish sources that may or may not be Irish) is *A Collection of the most Celebrated Irish Tunes*, published by John and William Neale in Dublin in 1724,¹ though a single song was published with its tune in 1714.² Things are not much more promising in what W. H. Grattan Flood and others have called ‘Anglo-Irish music’—that is, the genres of composed and written-down music emanating from England and cultivated largely in Dublin. The only written musical source that appears to have originated in seventeenth-century Ireland is an organ book now in Durham Cathedral Library copied after the Restoration mostly by Richard Hosier (d.1677), a member of both of the cathedral choirs in Dublin,³ though there is also some instrumental music by Thomas Tollet and other Dublin musicians surviving in English sources.⁴

For this reason, as Boydell and Houston explain in the introduction, the book has the carefully worded title *Music, Ireland and the Seventeenth Century* rather than the more obvious ‘Music in Seventeenth-Century Ireland’. This enables them to include a study of the Irish harp ‘in non-Irish contexts’ (John Cunningham); two accounts of music in the households of Englishmen who happened to be landowners in Ireland, Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork (Barra Boydell) and Lord Edward Conway (Boydell and Máire Egan-Buffer); a paper on the theoretical works written by an Irishman, John Birchensha, in Restoration London (Christopher Field); a study of the musical activities and writings of an English clergyman, Narcissus Marsh, who is not known to have been involved in practical music-making once he settled in Dublin in 1679, though most of his music collection is preserved in Marsh’s Library (Andrew Robin-

¹ There is a facsimile edition with an introduction by Nicholas Carolan (Dublin: Folk Music Society of Ireland, 1986).

² Breandán Breathnach, ‘The First Irish Song Published’, *Ceol*, 5/1 (1981), 2–3.

³ Brian Crosby, ‘An Early Restoration Liturgical Music Manuscript’, *Music & Letters*, 55 (1974), 458–464; Barra Boydell, ‘“Now that the Lord hath readvanc’d the crown”: Richard Hosier, Durham MS B.1 and Early Anthem Repertoire at the Dublin Cathedrals’, *Early Music*, 28 (2000), 238–51.

⁴ Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540–1690*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 321–2.

son); a survey of the repertory of the Dublin cathedrals during the Restoration period, mostly imported from England (Kerry Houston); a parallel survey of music activity in Church of Ireland parish churches, again similar to, and seemingly reflecting, English practice (Denise Neary); and a study of a piece, Purcell's Trinity College ode, written in England by an Englishman for performance in Ireland (Martin Adams). Thus only the first three chapters, the introduction (Boydell and Houston), a survey of 'Seventeenth-century Irish music and its cultural context' (Raymond Gillespie) and another entitled 'Irish traditional music and the seventeenth century' (Adrian Scahill), can be said to deal with music written or performed in Ireland by Irishmen. Seeking explanations for this state of affairs leads us into complex problems of history and historiography. Gillespie points out that the modern literature on music in Ireland in the seventeenth century is largely concerned with the study of what he calls 'the supply of music, and in particular the sort of institutions that made music making possible' (26). Gillespie does not actually say so, but this is presumably because of a lack of musical sources, either lost in the upheavals of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, or never written down in a largely oral culture.

Scahill prints a list of 'Irish tunes documented in the seventeenth century and also found in later collections', derived from Aloys Fleischmann's *Sources of Irish Traditional Music*.⁵ Two things strike me as interesting about this list. One is, as Scahill points out, that the seventeenth-century sources of the tunes are English or Scottish. To judge from surviving manuscripts and prints, English popular music had already begun to be transmitted in written rather than oral form in the sixteenth century,⁶ while a number of sources suggest that the same transition was made in lowland Scotland around 1700.⁷ In Ireland the transition does not seem to have been made until the late eighteenth century; indeed, it could be that the Neale collection of Irish tunes was partially or wholly collected by Lorenzo Bocchi, an Italian cellist with an interest in the

⁵ Aloys Fleischmann (ed.), *Sources of Irish Traditional Music, c.1600–1855*, 2 vols (New York: Garland, 1998).

⁶ For sources, see in particular John M. Ward, 'Sprightly & Cheerful Musick: Notes on the Cittern, Gittern and Guitar in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England', *The Lute Society Journal*, 21 (1979–81); the same writer's *Music for Elizabethan Lutes*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); and Virginia Brookes, *British Keyboard Music to c.1600: Sources and Thematic Index* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁷ For sources, see David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), especially 209–10; Evelyn Stell, *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music 1603–1707*, 2 vols (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1999); and Warwick Edwards, 'Seventeenth-Century Scotland: The Musical Sources', in James Porter (ed.), *Defining Strains: The Musical Life of Scots in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 47–71.

vernacular music of the British Isles.⁸ Bocchi certainly seems to have been responsible for bringing to Dublin the material for a sister publication, *A Colection of the most Celebrated Scotch Tunes*, also published by the Neales in 1724, and the first piece in the collection of Irish tunes is 'Plea Rarkeh na Rourkough or y^e Irish Weding improved with diferent divisions after y^e Italian maner with A bass and Chorus by Sig^r: LORENZO BOCCHI'; the title-page states that the piece was '*As performed at the Subscription Consort by / Senior Loranzo Bocchi*'.

The other question is whether the tunes in Scahill's list are actually Irish. He is clearly aware of the problem, quoting Fleischmann: 'a tune transmitted from one country to another is liable to take on the characteristics of its new environment' (53–4) and judging a tune as Irish means 'judging it by criteria derived from the idiom which crystallised in the eighteenth century' (54); 'too few [seventeenth-century] tunes have as yet been assembled to allow new stylistic criteria to be established' (54). However, there are a number of obvious contenders in English manuscripts missing from the list, such as 'Callino Casturame', thought to be an English corruption of a Gaelic title,⁹ and pieces entitled 'The Irish Dance', 'The Irish Dump', 'The Irish Hay', 'The Irish Ho-Hoane' and 'An Irish Toy'.¹⁰ Also, what Scahill misses is that several of the tunes on the list, 'Greene sleeves', 'Sedauny, or Dargason' and 'Trenchmore', are actually descants to chord sequences: 'Greensleeves' is based on the Italian chord sequence *La Romanesca*, which came into England in the mid sixteenth century, while 'Dargason' is one of those tunes—'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?' is another—that fits over a rocking 'double tonic'. This may not help us find Irish tunes, but it does help with dating: in the English popular repertory descants over chord sequences began to give way to tunes with more complex harmonic implications during the Restoration period; tunes that imply textbook modulations to the dominant and other keys are likely to be from the eighteenth century or later. John Ward began to draw our attention to the importance of chord sequences in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

⁸ Peter Holman, 'A Little Light on Lorenzo Bocchi: An Italian in Edinburgh and Dublin', in Rachel Cowgill and Peter Holman (eds), *Music in the British Provinces, 1690–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 61–86.

⁹ Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 79–80.

¹⁰ Brookes, 186–7.

popular music nearly sixty years ago,¹¹ and it is depressing that his insights have yet to filter through to scholars working on traditional or vernacular music.

I must declare an interest in John Cunningham's paper on the Irish harp: he is a former research student of mine (his thesis was on the consort music of William Lawes),¹² and I explored the use of the Irish harp in seventeenth-century England in an article published in 1987.¹³ I suggested that the harp parts of William Lawes's harp consorts were not intended for the gut-strung triple harp, as had been assumed, but for a chromatic version of the wire-strung Irish harp, known to have been played by successive Irish musicians in the section of the royal music in which Lawes also worked. Cunningham developed the arguments much further in his thesis and in a subsequent article,¹⁴ and here he includes fascinating material showing how the Irish harp was assimilated into English literate musical culture, how Irish harpers reached Denmark, Poland and Portugal, and how their instrument's decline as a chromatic consort instrument in the 1640s was connected with developing English suspicion of Irish culture and its emerging national identity.

The paper by Barra Boydell on music in the household of Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork (1566–1643)—the scientist Richard Boyle of 'Boyle's Law' was his youngest son—deals with a form of musical colonialism: Boyle was an Englishman with estates in Ireland (his principal seat was at Lismore, Co. Waterford), and seems mainly to have patronized English music and musicians, though he also owned Irish harps and paid harpists on occasion. Boydell also collaborates with Máire Egan-Buffet in a study of music in the household of another Anglo-Irish landlord, Lord Edward Conway (1602–55). Conway's principal seat was at Lisnagarvey in Ulster, and the paper is

¹¹ See in particular the following writings by John M. Ward: 'The "Dolfull Dumps"', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 4 (1951), 111–21; 'Music for A Handefull of Pleasant Delites', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 10 (1957), 151–80; 'Apropos The British Broadside Ballad and its Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 20 (1967), 28–86; 'Curious Tunes for Strange Histories', in Laurence Berman (ed.), *Words and Music: The Scholar's View* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 339–58; 'The Hunt's Up', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 106 (1979–80), 1–25; 'The English Measure', *Early Music*, 14 (1986), 15–21; 'And who but Ladie Green-sleeues?', in John Caldwell, Edward Olleson and Susan Wollenberg (eds), *The Well Enchanting Skill: Essays in Honour of Frederick W. Sternfeld* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 181–211.

¹² John Cunningham, *Music for the Privy Chamber: Studies in the Consort Music of William Lawes (1602–1645)*, 2 vols (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2007).

¹³ Peter Holman, 'The Harp in Stuart England', *Early Music*, 15 (1987), 188–203.

¹⁴ John Cunningham, "'Some Consorts of Instruments are Sweeter than Others": Further Light on the Harp of William Lawes's Harp Consorts', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 61 (2008), 147–76.

concerned with the books on music in a catalogue that seems to have been compiled at Lisnagarvey between 1639 and 1641; it is now in the Public Library of Armagh. What is remarkable here is the range of the material, going back to *L'art et l'instruction de bien danser* (Paris, 1488), a collection of *basse danse* melodies and their choreographies, and including sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century treatises and music collections published in France, the Spanish Netherlands, the United Provinces, Spain, Germany and Italy as well as England. There are more treatises than music collections, though the list includes madrigals by Gesualdo, chansons by Lassus, Emanuel Adriansen's *Novum pratum musicum* (Antwerp, 1592), one of the finest late-sixteenth-century collections of lute music, and a reprint of Henderick Speuy's set of keyboard *bicinia* on Dutch metrical psalms (Dordrecht, 1620). Whether Conway acquired the last for religious reasons or just as part of 'the magpie interests of a compulsive bibliophile', as Boydell and Egan-Buffet put it, is a nice question. Another paper concerned with a seventeenth-century collection of English music in Ireland, Andrew Robinson's account of Narcissus Marsh and his music collection, does not add much to earlier scholarship,¹⁵ though it is useful for its material on Marsh's scientific interests.

Christopher Field's paper on the composition treatises of John Birchensha justifies its place in this collection because their author seems to have been an Irishman: Anthony Wood wrote that he was 'descended of a good family' and 'lived when young with the earl of Kildare in the city of Dublin'. Wood went on to say that he settled in London at the beginning of the Civil War, 'instructed gentlemen on the viol and composed things of several parts'; he is best known today for teaching Samuel Pepys in the 1660s. Field's account of Birchensha is extremely thorough, and acts as an introduction to an edition of the treatises, just published.¹⁶ He makes a good case for taking him and them seriously, though whether Birchensha could practice what he preached is open to question. Field provides a specimen two-part dance in his paper which is competent enough, though a more ambitious piece, the four-part 'Threnodia' (a multi-section bell imitation in the manner of John Jenkins's 'Lady Katherine Audley's Bells') in a recently recovered Hamburg manuscript, is rather clumsily com-

¹⁵ Richard Charteris, 'Consort Music Manuscripts in Archbishop Marsh's Library, Dublin', *R.M.A. Research Chronicle*, 13 (1976), 27–57; the same writer's *A Catalogue of the Printed Books on Music, Printed Music and Music Manuscripts in Archbishop Marsh's Library, Dublin* (Clifden: Boethius Press, 1982); and Robert Thompson, 'A Further Look at the Consort Manuscripts in Archbishop Marsh's Library, Dublin', *Chelys*, 24 (1995), 3–18.

¹⁶ Christopher D. S. Field and Benjamin Wardaugh (eds), *John Birchensha: Writings on Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

posed and contains several consecutive octaves and fifths.¹⁷ To be fair, I am judging it from only three of its parts; the fourth, probably a tenor, is lost.

Two papers deal with church music. Kerry Houston's is an extremely thorough account of the repertory of the two Dublin cathedrals during the Restoration period, using the Hosier organ book and a word-book of anthem texts printed in Dublin in 1662 as principal sources. He shows that in terms of their repertory the choirs of the Dublin cathedrals were similar to those of English provincial cathedrals: they mostly sang a mixture of pre-Civil War anthems, those by Locke, Blow, Purcell and other English court composers, and works by local composers. The one distinctive feature seems to have been the use of string players at Christ Church during the reign of Charles II, probably, as Houston suggests, because at that time it fulfilled 'the function of a Chapel Royal in Dublin'. He makes the point that the Hosier organ book includes some symphony anthems by Humfrey and other Chapel Royal composers, but does not tell us which ones and in which form; if the manuscript documents the performance of anthems with string parts, as he seems to imply, then parts for them in the manuscript should presumably be in the form of continuo parts rather than organ reductions of the string parts—which were used when strings were not available. Denise Neary's account of music in Church of Ireland parishes tells a similar story, though it is based entirely on documents: from her silence on the matter I gather that no musical sources survive. It would therefore have been helpful to have more references to English practice and musical sources. A small point: could the John Walter Beck who is recorded as a Dublin organist in 1686 and 1688 be related to, or the same as, the John Beck who worked in Edinburgh as a musician in the 1690s and contributed many pieces to the Balcarres lute manuscript?¹⁸

The volume ends with a fine paper by Martin Adams about one of Henry Purcell's least studied, performed and understood extended works, the ode *Great parent, hail*, Z327, written for the centenary in 1694 of the foundation of Trinity College, Dublin; appropriately, Adams is a senior lecturer in music and a fellow of Trinity College. He makes the interesting suggestion that what he calls the work's 'rhetorical restraint' can be accounted by the position of James, Duke of Ormonde, as mediator between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland; Ormonde was chancellor of Trinity College from

¹⁷ I am grateful to John Cunningham for providing me with a transcription. For the manuscript, see Richard Charteris, 'A Rediscovered Manuscript Source with some previously Unknown Works by John Jenkins, William Lawes & Benjamin Rogers', *Chelys*, 22 (1993), 3–29.

¹⁸ For the Edinburgh John Beck, see Matthew Spring, 'The Balcarres Lute Book', *Lute News*, 87 (October 2008), 7–14.

1645 until his death in 1688, when he was succeeded by his son, also James. Thus Nahum Tate's text avoids the triumphalism of Purcell's other odes (Adams compares it fruitfully with Purcell's *Yorkshire Feast Song*, Z333, of 1690), and, in addition, *Great parent, hail* is 'the only large work that Purcell wrote for musicians he did not know – or few of whom he knew. There is a definite sense in the vocal and instrumental writing of playing a bit safe' (194). Adams makes a good case for the work, though he eventually admits that 'Many [Purcell] works considerably better than *Great parent, hail* are at least as obscure and likely to remain so' (200).

All in all, this book is a considerable achievement: it throws important new light on a number of aspects of music and seventeenth-century Ireland, and it is well edited and produced. My one recurring reservation is that there is often a reluctance to look beyond Ireland to provide its musical practices with the necessary context. Only by relating Ireland's musical life as fully and richly as possible to similar circumstances in England, Scotland and further afield will we be able to understand fully its scanty seventeenth-century musical remains.

Peter Holman

University of Leeds