



THE LEINSTER  
SCHOOL OF  
MUSIC &  
DRAMA

Est. 1904

THE ONLINE TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC  
PERFORMANCE SYLLABUS

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## History of the Leinster School of Music & Drama

The Leinster School of Music & Drama was established in 1904 by Samuel Myerscough, an acclaimed musician, teacher and examiner. The aim of the LSMD was to uphold an Irish music institution that was inclusive of everyone. For over 113 years of experience as a national examining body in Ireland, the LSMD has a long tradition of promoting Irish culture and music heritage. Among the teaching staff of the LSMD were May Cosgrave and Joan Burke, who were sisters to William T. Cosgrave.

Following the War of Independence the two sisters: - May Cosgrave and Joan Burke, became the musical directors of the Leinster School of Music in 1921. Under the official directorship of Cosgrave and Burke the school coined the emblem '*Gan Ceol, Gan Tír*' (without music, without country) in 1922 echoing the words of the fallen hero Padraig Pearse '*Tír Gan Teanga, Tír Gan Anam*' (a country without a language, a country without a name). Under the directorship of the sisters, the Leinster School of Music aimed to become a music institution that promoted the traditional past of the country of Ireland.

The LSMD was situated on Harcourt Street until 1982 when the premises moved to Upper Stephen Street. A major step forward took place in 1998 when the school became a constituent of Griffith College. The college campus is immersed in Irish history, once being the location of the Arthur Griffith Barracks during war years in Ireland.

As a national examining body, the LSMD offers graded examinations in both music and drama subjects. Since 2004 an annual celebration of excellence is held at the school. As part of our Excellence Awards, students are selected to compete for prestigious awards on their performance at the annual examinations. The finalists perform at a grand finale held in Griffith College Dublin each November.

To encourage continued professional development for teachers, the LSMD offers music and drama teacher training courses. In keeping with the original aims of the LSMD, teacher training and education continues to develop with the recognition of the LSMD's Associate and Licentiate Diplomas for both music and drama as

Level 8 courses on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland. These courses provide a natural progression for many students who wish to pursue a career in music and drama pedagogy and performance.

Further developments to our teacher education programmes come with the development of the Higher Diploma in Arts in Music Education and Higher Diploma in Drama Education, all being validated by QQI at a Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland.

### **Vision Statement**

*Inspiring life-long, creative and fulfilling participation in music.*

## Rationale for the Syllabus

Traditional Irish music has always enjoyed a particular position in the cultural and social life of Ireland; and more recently international success and recognition with its distinctive sound being recognized across the world. In particular, interest in traditional Irish music has grown exponentially amongst young people, with more and more learning to play in formal and informal settings. Although the contexts for learning Irish traditional music vary considerably, and often differ greatly from more formalised instrumental education, the outstanding artistic outcomes are evident in the ever increasing virtuosity and creativity in the discipline.

In designing a syllabus for Irish traditional music, it is most important to recognize its uniqueness, and to ensure a curriculum that is broad in scope to facilitate freedom for teachers and learners coming from different settings and environments. Among the reasons for providing assessment in education are:- accreditation, accountability and motivation.

Wherever traditional Irish musicians gather, enjoyment and fun are always evident, and the motivation for learning is often intrinsic. In Irish traditional music there are many opportunities for performance, both solo and in groups, not least through competitions and *feiseanna*. While competitions provide motivation for the pursuit of excellence, they do not provide general accreditation for all participants. It is important for talented and hard-working young traditional musicians to be able to attain accreditation which equals that in other areas of music education.

In designing the syllabus, the particular nature of traditional music learning was taken into account and this is reflected in the structure. It was recognized that learners may wish to dip in and out of this syllabus to attain accreditation at different stages and it is not designed on the model of a 'grade per year'. Taking the key levels of learning that are recognized in primary, second level and further education (Levels 1-5), it was decided to correspond to these levels of competence, knowledge, and skills from beginner to advanced level. Consequently the syllabus has five levels; a student completing Level 5 should have the musical requirements for entry into third level education.

In designing the syllabus, the particular cognate skills of the traditional musician are taken into account; these include memory, aural, technique, interpretation, contextual and finally reading skills. While all traditional musicians do not read music, a certain competence is advantageous at the higher levels, for transcription, collaboration with others, or for academic progression. In the higher levels, the learner is expected to provide a written submission underpinning their performance, developing their understanding of the culture and context of traditional Irish music, and encouraging curiosity and exploration of the field.

A wide element of choice is facilitated; learners can select from a broad suggested repertoire, or perform a tune/set of their own choice of equal standard. The social contexts of learning are recognized, with the facility to present the choice piece in a group (*please see examination guidelines for details*). Although traditional musicians play from memory, it is recognized that learners may come from other genres; consequently, some notation may be used in the earlier levels, although most of the repertoire should be performed from memory.

# **Level 1 to Level 5 Exam Layout**

## Exam Layout

Schedule of maximum marks for all grades:

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>MARKS</b>
<b>Piece 1</b>	30
<b>Piece 2</b>	30
<b>Piece 3</b>	30
<b>Technical Ability, Interpretation and Choice of Programme</b>	10
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>100</u></b>

The grade examinations are marked out of 100. Candidates must secure:-

<b>AWARD</b>	<b>MARK</b>
<b>First Class Honours</b>	87 - 100
<b>Pass with Honours</b>	80 - 86
<b>Pass with Merit</b>	75 – 79
<b>Pass</b>	65 - 74

### Programme Choice

The choice of programme is the responsibility of the candidate and should reflect the minimum standard required. Candidates may select from the current syllabus but are encouraged to explore a broader base than that set for the grades.



# **Level 1 Foundation**

## Level 1 Foundation

### Aims

- 1) To introduce students to the performance of Irish traditional music at foundation level;
- 2) To enable the student to play simple but original traditional tunes, learnt by ear or by notation;
- 3) To develop related skills including: - aural skills, memory technique and recall;
- 4) To explore the style and structure of the chosen dance tunes at an introductory level on their chosen instrument.

### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this level the student should be able to: -

- a) Perform pieces in tune with a strong sense of tempo and rhythm;
- b) Understand the form and time signature of the pieces that they are playing;
- c) Identify the key signature of the tunes they play;
- d) Listen to and recognize the rhythmic patterns of the dance tunes they perform eg. Polkas and marches etc.;
- e) Perform three tunes, two Polkas and one of either March or Waltz, at level 1 standard (*please refer to performance guidelines below*);
- f) Play at least two of the tunes from memory

## Course Content

The Level 1 examination will consist of the performance only and will be judged in accordance with performance standards. Marks will be awarded for choice of programme, technical ability, and interpretation of works performed, general presentation and stage presence.

## Repertoire

- Performance of three tunes, at least **two** of which must be from memory and at the candidates own choice. The third piece may also be may be the candidate's **own choice** which must be of at least equal standard to the pieces. (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).
- The student may present in a group situation for the third piece (*please refer to guidelines for group performance*).
- Performance guidelines: at this level the student should demonstrate a strong sense of rhythm and tempo. The melody should be concise and flowing, with no ornamentation required. Intonation, breathing and phrasing will be taken into account. (*For an example of a piece performed at Level 1, please refer to the MP3 tracks available on [www.griffith.ie](http://www.griffith.ie)* ).

## Choice Piece

Students may pick a **third tune** not on the repertoire list, but ensure that it is of equal standard. It is acceptable for a candidate to choose a tune with a higher degree of difficulty (*eg. A slide, jig or any traditional dance tune forms*) for performance at Level 1. Other tunes of a similar nature will also be deemed appropriate for the choice piece. The tunes may be transposed to suit the instrument if required.

## List of Recommended Pieces:

Bog Down in the Valley

Garryowen Polka

## **Level 2 Junior**

## Level 2 Junior

### Aims

This level builds on the foundations set at Level 1 and aims to provide the candidate with a broader knowledge of the Irish music tradition, through increased repertoire and exposure to difference dance tune types. This will be achieved through: -

- 1) A stronger emphasis on performance, expanding the range and types of tunes to be performed;
- 2) Further development of memory and aural skills;
- 3) Exploring and identifying the musical features of the expanded repertoire;
- 4) Encouraging a curiosity with regards to the context of the Irish music repertoire on the candidates chosen instrument.

### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this level the student should be able to: -

- a) Perform four dance tunes to be selected from the following dance types: - Polka, March, Air, Waltz, Jig or Slip Jig.
- b) Perform in tune with a strong sense of tempo and rhythm, and with good intonation.
- c) Understand the musical features such as structure and time signature of the tunes they are playing.
- d) Listen to and recognize the rhythmic patterns of the dance tunes they perform eg. Polkas and marches etc.
- e) Play at least three or more of the pieces from memory

## Course Content

The Level 2 examination will consist of the performance only and will be judged in accordance with performance standards. Marks will be awarded for choice of programme, technical ability, and interpretation of works performed, general presentation and stage presence.

## Repertoire

- Performance of four tunes, at least **three** of which must be from memory and at the candidates own choice. The candidate must play a jig or slip jig, and three different tune types should be selected from polkas, marches, waltzes and airs. The fourth may also be of the candidate's *own choice* which must be of at least equal standard to the pieces. (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).
- The student may present in a group situation for the fourth piece (*please refer to guidelines for group performance*).
- Performance guidelines: at this level the student should demonstrate a strong sense of rhythm and tempo. The melody should be concise and flowing, with no ornamentation required at this level. Intonation, breathing and phrasing will be taken into account. The primary change between Level 1 and Level 2 is the breadth and range of the repertoire performed. (*For an example of a piece performed at Level 2, please refer to the MP3 tracks available on [www.griffith.ie](http://www.griffith.ie)*).

## Choice Piece

*Please refer to the guidelines referring to the choice piece.*

## List of Recommended Pieces

Maggie in the Woods

Planxty Fanny Power

## **Level 3 Intermediate Level**

### Level 3 Intermediate Level

#### Aims

This level is aimed primarily at demonstrating Irish traditional music performance at an intermediate level, indicating greater technical skill and understanding of the nuances of the tradition, to a level where students can participate in groups or slow sessions. This should include a broad repertoire range, incorporating different dance tunes, sets, and airs and including some use of ornamentation, rhythmic and melodic variation. Strong emphasis is placed on performance skills and encouraging musical independence through developing memory, aural, and sight-reading skills, and a greater sense of stylistic playing.

#### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this level the student should be able to: -

- a) Play from memory a broad range of tune types to include reels, hornpipes, jigs, polkas, slides, airs and waltzes.
- b) Play a set of tunes.
- c) Perform in tune with a steady tempo and rhythm without technical errors.
- d) Understand the structure and form of the tunes that they are playing.
- e) Introduce some ornamentation (cuts and rolls) into their playing (*please refer to the recording of Level 3 performances as an example*).
- f) Listen to and recognize the rhythmic patterns of the dance tunes they perform eg. Reels, hornpipes, jigs etc.
- g) Perform in both a solo and a group environment.



## Course Content

The Level 3 examination will consist of the performance only and will be judged in accordance with performance standards. Marks will be awarded for choice of programme, technical ability, and interpretation of works performed, general presentation and stage presence.

## Repertoire

- Students present **two tunes and two sets**, all of which should be different tune types, and must include reels and hornpipes. At the exam candidates will play the two selected tunes, and one set chosen by the examiner. The tunes and sets should be selected from the prescribed list, although candidates may add a different second tune for the sets if they consider it an appropriate choice. One selection (*tune or set*) may be of the candidate's own choice, but must be of equal standard to the pieces on the prescribed list (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).
- The student may present in a group situation for one of the tunes or sets (*please refer to guidelines for group performance*).
- Performance guidelines: at this level the student should be able to play in tune, demonstrating a strong sense of rhythm and tempo. The melody should be accurate and flowing, with some ornamentation required. Intonation, breathing, phrasing and articulation will be taken into account.

## Choice Piece

*Please refer to the guidelines referring to the choice piece.*

## **Level 3 Repertoire List**

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**Jigs**

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Double Jigs: (two, and three part jigs)*

*Slip Jigs: (two, and three part jigs)*

*The Kesh Jig*

*The Hag's Purse*

*Blarney Pilgrim*

*The Merry Blacksmith*

*The Swallowtail Jig*

*Tobin's Favourite*

*The Hag at the Churn*

*I Buried My Wife and Danced on her Grave*

*The Carraroe Jig*

*The Bride's Favourite*

*Saddle the Pony*

*Rambling Pitchfork*

*The Geese in the Bog (Key of C or D)*

*The Liling Banshee*

*The Mist Covered Meadow (Junior Crehan Tune)*

*Strike the Gay Harp*

*Trip it Upstairs*

*The Butterfly*

*Éilish Kelly's Delight*

*Drops of Brandy*

*The Foxhunter's*

*Deirdre's Fancy*

*Fig for a Kiss*

*The Snowy Path (Altan)*

*Drops of Spring Water*

## Hornpipes

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Hornpipes: (two part tunes)*

*Napoleon Crossing the Alps*

*The Harvest Home*

*Murphys*

*The Boys of Bluehill*

*The Homeruler*

*The Pride of Petravore*

*Cornin's*

*The Galway Hornpipe*

*Off to Chicago*

*The Harvest Home*

## Slides

*Slides (Two and three Parts)*

*The Brosna Slides 1&2*

*Dan O'Keefes*

*The Kerry Slide*

*Merrily Kiss the Quaker*

## Reels

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Reels: (two part reels)*

*The Raven's Wing*

*The Maid Behind the Bar*

*Miss Monaghan*

*The Silver Spear*

*The Abbey Reel*

*Castle Kelly*

*The Crooked Rd to Dublin*

*The Earl's Chair*

*The Silver Spear*

*The Merry Blacksmith*

*The Morning Star*

*Martin Wynne's No 1*

*Paddy Fahy's No 1*

*Fr. Kelly's*

*The Banshee*

*Other tunes of a similar nature will also be deemed appropriate. The tunes may be transposed to suit the instrument if required. It is also acceptable if a candidate chooses a tune with a higher degree of difficulty*

### Recommended Sources

*Tom Morley*

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

*Waltons*

*Ireland's Best Polkas & Slides*

*Waltons*

*110 Slow Airs (Waltons)*

*O' Neill's 1001*

*Dance Tunes of Ireland*

*The Session Website*

[www.thesession.org](http://www.thesession.org)

## **Level 4 Senior Level**

## Level 4 Senior Level

### Aims

This level is aimed primarily at demonstrating Irish traditional music at a sophisticated level of performance, indicating a clear sense of individual style and musical independence; and the ability to join in and/or lead a group or session. The performance should include the use of ornamentation, rhythmic and melodic variation, enhancing the tune and demonstrating a higher level of understanding involved in the subtleties and characteristics of Irish Music. The candidate should demonstrate a knowledge of the nuances of regional styles; and a knowledge of the styles of the primary exponents of traditional Irish music on their chosen instrument. Candidates should demonstrate familiarity with a broader repertoire of tunes of varying difficulty, in order to present a varied repertoire of choice to the candidate/examiner. Candidates are encouraged to explore musical possibilities through composing or adapting an original tune in the style of one of the dance forms.

### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this level the student should be able to: -

- a) Perform from memory a broad repertoire of traditional tunes in all tune types, with ornamentation and variation appropriate for the instrument.
- b) Perform in both solo and group (session) environments.
- c) Listen and recognize the rhythmic patterns of the dance tunes that they perform; i.e. polkas, marches, jigs, reels, hornpipes etc.
- d) To present an original tune in any dance form if they wish to do so.
- e) Demonstrate and understanding of regional styles.
- f) Demonstrate a knowledge of the music styles and recordings of the principal exponents of their chosen instrument.



## Course Content

The Level 4 examination will consist of the performance only and will be judged in accordance with performance standards. Marks will be awarded for choice of programme, technical ability, and interpretation of works performed, general presentation and stage presence.

## Repertoire

- Candidates present **six tunes and three sets**, which should include a wide range of tune types. At the exam candidates will play the two tunes and two sets chosen by the examiner. The tunes and sets should be selected from the prescribed list, although candidates may add a different second tune in the sets if they consider this an appropriate choice. One selection (*tune or set*) may be of the candidate's own choice, but must be of equal standard to the pieces on the prescribed list (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).
- The student may present in a group situation for one of the tunes or sets (*please refer to guidelines for group performance*).
- Performance guidelines: at this level the student should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the tradition, being able to communicate with the audience and demonstrating an emerging individual style of playing. They should demonstrate an ability to embed ornamentation and variation in the performance, and demonstrate creativity and spontaneity in their playing.
- The student may present in a group situation for the third piece (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).

## **Level 4 Repertoire List**

## Jigs

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Double Jigs: (two, and three part jigs)*

*Slip Jigs: (two and three part ones)*

*The Kesh Jig*

*The Hag's Purse*

*Blarney Pilgrim*

*Tobin's Favourite*

*The Hag at the Churn*

*I Buried My Wife and Danced on her Grave*

*The Carraroe Jig*

*The Bride's Favorite*

*Saddle the Pony*

*Rambling Pitchfork*

*The Geese in the Bog (Key of C or D)*

*The Liling Banshee*

*The Mist Covered Meadow (Junior Crehan tune)*

*Strike the Gay Harp*

*Trip it Upstairs*

*The Butterfly*

*Eilish Kelly's Delight*

*Drops of Brandy*

*The Foxhunter's*

*Deirdre's Fancy*

*Fig for a Kiss*

*The Snowy Path (Altan)*

*Drops of Spring Water*

## Hornpipes

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Hornpipes: (two part tunes)*

*Napoleon Crossing the Alps*

*The Harvest Home*

*Murphy's*

*The Boys of Bluehill*

*The Homeruler*

*The Pride of Petravore*

*Cornin's*

*The Galway Hornpipe*

*Off to Chicago*

*The Harvest Home*

## Slides

*Slides (Two and three Parts)*

*The Brosna Slides 1&2*

*Dan O'Keefes*

*The Kerry Slide*

*Merrily Kiss the Quaker*

## Reels

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*The Ravens Wing*

*The Maid behind the Bar*

*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

*Miss Monaghan*

*The Silver Spear*

*The Abbey Reel*

*Crowley's Reel*

*Dunmore Lasses*

*Castle Kelly*

*Reels: (two part reels)*

*The Crooked Rd to Dublin*

*The Earl's Chair*

*The Silver Spear*

*The Merry Blacksmith*

*The Morning Star*

*Martin Wynne's No 1*

*Paddy Fahy's No 1*

*Fr. Kelly's*

*The Banshee*

*Other tunes of a similar nature will also be deemed appropriate. The tunes may be transposed to suit the instrument if required. It is also acceptable if a candidate chooses a tune with a higher degree of difficulty*

## Recommended Sources

*Tom Morley*

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

*Waltons*

*Ireland's Best Polkas & Slides*

*Waltons*

*110 Slow Airs (Waltons)*

*O' Neill's 1001*

*Dance Tunes of Ireland*

*The Session Website*

[www.thesession.org](http://www.thesession.org)

## **Level 5 Advanced Level**

## Level 5 Advanced Level

### Aims

This level is aimed at developing Irish traditional music skills to an advanced level, demonstrating a mastery of technique and a deep understanding and application of the nuances of the tradition. Performance should include the use of ornamentation, rhythmic and melodic variation enhancing the tune and demonstrating an advanced level of understanding involved in the subtleties and characteristics of Irish music.

### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this level the student should be able to: -

- a) Perform a wide range of traditional Irish music, indicating a breadth of knowledge of tunes and repertoire, to perform solo or at sessions.
- b) Demonstrate a deep understanding of the technical and creative aspects of performing Irish traditional music.
- c) Demonstrate originality of music interpretation in their playing, through ornamentation and variation.
- d) Listen and recognize the rhythmic patterns of the dance tunes that they perform; i.e. polkas, marches, jigs reels etc.
- e) To submit an original composition in any dance form if they wish to do so.
- f) To be able to perform in both a solo and group environment.



## Course Content

The Level 5 examination will consist of the performance only and will be judged in accordance with performance standards. Marks will be awarded for choice of programme, technical ability, and interpretation of works performed, general presentation and stage presence.

## Repertoire

- Candidates present **six tunes and three sets**, which should include a wide range of tune types. At the exam candidates will play the two tunes and two sets chosen by the examiner. The tunes and sets should be selected from the prescribed list, although candidates may add a different second tune in the sets if they consider this an appropriate choice. One set may be of the candidate's own choice, but must be of equal standard to the pieces on the prescribed list (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).
- The candidate may present in a group situation for one of the tunes or sets (*please refer to guidelines for group performance*).
- Performance guidelines: at this level the student should demonstrate an intuitive understanding of the tradition, being able to communicate with the audience and demonstrating an individual style of playing. They should demonstrate an ability to embed ornamentation and variation in the performance, and demonstrate creativity, spontaneity and spontaneity in their playing.
- The student may present in a group situation for the third *piece* (*please refer to guidelines on selecting a choice piece*).

## **Level 5 Repertoire List**

## Jigs

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Double Jigs: (two, and three part jigs)*

*Slip Jigs: (two and three part ones)*

*Blarney Pilgrim*

*The Pipe on the Hob*

*The Hag at the Churn*

*I Buried My Wife and Danced on her Grave*

*The Carraroe Jig*

*Tell Her I am*

*The Wheels of the World*

*The Cook in the Kitchen*

*The Knocknagow*

*The Humours of Ennistymon*

*Banish Misfortune*

*Connie O'Connells Jig*

*The Monaghan Jig*

*The Bride's Favourite*

*The Luckpenny*

*The Gold Ring (fiddling one or the piping one)*

*Hardiman the Fiddler*

*Gusty's Frolics*

*The Butterfly*

*Eilish Kelly's Delight*

*Drops of Brandy*

*The Kid on the Mountain*

## Hornpipes

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Hornpipes: (two part tunes)*

*The Stage*

*The Boys of Bluehill*

*The Homeruler*

*The Pride of Petravore*

*Cornin's*

*The Galway Hornpipe*

*Off to Chicago*

*The Harvest Home*

## Slides

*Slides (Two and three Parts)*

*The Brosna Slides 1&2*

*Dan O'Keefes*

*The Kerry Slide*

*Merrily Kiss the Quaker*

## Reels

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

(Tom Morley)

*Reels: (two, three, four and five part reels)*

*Castle Kelly*

*The Maid behind the Bar*

*The Silver Spear*

*Crowley's Reel*

*Dunmore Lasses*

*The Cup of Tea*

*The Crooked Rd to Dublin*

*The Boys of Ballisodare*

*Christmas Eve*

*The Earl's Chair*

*The Silver Spire*

*The Bucks Of Oranmore*

*The Bunch of Keys*

*The Dublin Reel*

*The Jug of Punch*

**Note: Candidates can make their own tunes sets up also.**

*Other tunes of a similar nature will also be deemed appropriate. The tunes may be transposed to suit the instrument if required. It is also acceptable if a candidate chooses a tune with a higher degree of difficulty*

### Recommended Sources

*Tom Morley*

*Learn to Play Irish Trad Fiddle*

*Waltons*

*Ireland's Best Polkas & Slides*

*Waltons*

*110 Slow Airs (Waltons)*

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