

Playing for Céilí Dances - a Musician's Guide *by Sean Quinn (Trasna Céilí Band)*

Dances are listed in order from the 'Popular Céilí Dances' CDs. Apart from those dances which require special music, tunes are usually made up in sets of three and each set may be played up to twice or three times as required by the length of the dance. Each tune is usually played twice, but tunes which are played *singly i.e. 1st part once, 2nd part once* may be played three times. When making up sets of tunes it is best to arrange a key change between each tune e.g. D>G>Am or Em>G>D etc. You can also have D>G>D or G>D>G but this means there will be no key change when you go back to the first tune. All dances require an 8-bar introduction i.e. the first part of the first tune is played 3 times to start. The band needs to watch for the ending movement, or a sign from the caller to finish at the right time.

The Walls of Limerick: (2 facing 2) Reels, double or single. Progressive dance, means you play for no fixed time – depends on how many dancers, figure is repeated. Play at least three reels, twice each. End movement: couples swing around each other (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

The Siege of Ennis: (4 facing 4). Min 3 Double Jigs. Progressive dance. End movement: foursomes go through to next foursome.

The Sweets of May: Fixed dance for 4 couples. Original tune (3 parts). Intro can be last 8 bars of 3rd part. Play the tune through 4 times and then the first part twice to finish. End movement: all couples circle same as start (16 bars).

The Harvest-time Jig: Progressive dance in threes (3 facing 3, gent and two ladies). Play at least three double jigs, twice each. End movement: dancers go through to face next three.

The Waves of Tory: Long dance to marches and jigs. Jig part lasts for 48 bars. Start with the jig incl 8-bar intro. When top couple swings or does 'sevens' change to march. Length of march depends on number of dancers. Top couple should get all the way down the line at least once. Do the march part 3 times. End with jig part and everyone can swing their partner to finish.

The Siege of Carrick: Progressive jig dance (2 facing 2) danced to '*Haste to the Wedding*'. End movement: couple swings out and around to meet next couple.

The Humours of Bandon: A fixed dance for 2 couples danced to the original tune. End movement: lead around, same as at start (16 bars).

The Haymakers Jig: A fixed dance for 5 couples danced to double jigs. The dance is done 5 times with a new 'top couple' each time. The whole dance ends when the original top couple is back at the top again. Length is roughly a set of 3 tunes played through twice and back to first tune again.

The Three Tunes: A fixed dance done to three specific tunes: *Haste to the Wedding* jig, *Leslie's Hornpipe* and the *German Beau* reel. The three tunes are played through twice, singly. Finish at the end of the third tune, second time around.

Trip to the Cottage: A fixed dance done to jigs, starting with the original tune. End movement: cross-over and lead around, same as start (32 bars).

Rakes of Mallow: A progressive dance for threes, done to the original tune and other single reels of your choice. End movement: threes form a ring and swing out and around to meet next three.

8-Hand Jig: A fixed dance done to double jigs. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc. (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

4-Hand Reel: A fixed dance done to double reels. End movement: lead around, same as at start (16 bars).

8-Hand Reel: A fixed dance done to double reels. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc. (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

The Morris Reel: A fixed dance done to double reels. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc. (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

The Fairy Reel: A progressive dance for threes done to double reels. End movement: each threesome goes through to meet the next threesome.

The Gates of Derry: A jig dance for four couples done to the original tune (The Quaker's Wife – a single jig). Dance is done three times. End movement: advance and retire and go through arch (16 bars).

The Antrim Reel: A progressive dance for couples done to reels. End movement: couples swing out and around to meet next couple (8 bars).

An Rince Mór: A big circle dance for any number of couples, danced to reels. 40-bar sequence repeated. End movement: 6-bar lead around and form big circle again.

St. Patrick's Day: A fixed dance done to the original tune in jig time. First part is played FOUR times to start. End movement: 16 bars lead around (swing around for the last 4 bars).

The High Cauled Cap: A fixed dance for 4 couples, danced to reels. Quite long, suggest use a set of six tunes. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

The Sixteen-Hand Reel: A fixed circle reel dance for 8 couples. Also quite long. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc. (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

Haste to the Wedding: A progressive long dance done to the original tune and any other double jigs. End movement: couples swing around each other to meet next couple.

The Duke's Reel: A round dance for three couples, danced to reels. End movement: partners take crossed hands and swing around to right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

Lannigan's Ball: A round dance for six couples done to original tune. End movement: circle to the left and back, as at start (16 bars).

The Bridge of Athlone: A long dance done to jigs and marches like the Waves of Tory. Commence with jig (40 bars+8 bar intro) then the march until the gent passes under the 'bridge' and all couples drop hands to dance the jig part again. Repeat as required ending with the march after the gent has passed under the bridge.

The Cross Reel: A round dance for four couples. End movement: everyone takes hands in a circle. In and out etc. (32 bars); partners take crossed hands and swing around to the right (or else swing in place), 8 bars.

Rince Fada: A progressive long dance done to double jigs. End movement: couples swing around to meet next couple.

The Glencar Reel: A fixed dance for 6 people done to double reels. End movement: all dancers dance around, changing hands in a chain.

The Bonfire Dance: A circle dance done to single reels. End movement: partners bow to each other and bow to neighbouring partner and all dancers take hands in a big ring to finish (normally done twice through).

The Four 2-hand dances: A set of short dances for any number of couples done one after the other. No fixed length, but not more than three times through each tune, dances being repeated until musicians or caller decide to stop at the end movement (promenade around).

- **The Stack of Barley** – a fast hornpipe to the original tune, played once or twice only. End movement: couples promenade around, side by side (8 bars).
- **2-Hand Reel** – a double reel played twice or three times. End movement: couples promenade around (8 bars).
- **2-Hand Hornpipe:** Slower, any hornpipe played two or three times. End movement: couples promenade around (4 bars).
- **2-Hand Jig:** actually danced in fours to a double jig played twice or three times. End movement: promenade around (8 bars).

THE MOST COMMON CÉILÍ DANCES

The Walls of Limerick

The Waves of Tory

The Siege of Ennis

The Sweets of May

The Harvest-time Jig

The Haymaker's Jig

The Four 2-hand Dances

The High Cauleed Cap

The Fairy Reel

The 16-hand Reel

The Siege of Carrick

The Three Tunes

LESS COMMON CÉILÍ DANCES

The Humours of Bandon

The Gates of Derry

The 4-Hand Reel

The Morris Reel

The Antrim Reel

St. Patrick's Day

The Bridge of Athlone

Trip to the Cottage

The Bonfire Dance

The Rakes of Mallow

8-Hand Jig

8-Hand Reel

An Rince Mór

Lannigan's Ball

Haste to the Wedding

The Duke's Reel

The Cross Reel

An Rince Fada

The Glencar Reel

N.B. Some of the 'less common' dances are done by dancing schools who may perform them for exhibition pieces at a céilí. However, they often bring their own music on CD or iPod. Learn the jig tunes *Trip to the Cottage* and *Lannigan's Ball* anyway, to complete your repertoire. Most of the 'less common' dances have been done at the Cultúrlann céilí in Belfast at some time, as the adult dancers may have learned them when young or at céilí classes in the city.

The official dancing instructions for all the above can be found in the book *Ár Rinci Fóirne* (Our Team Dances) published by the Irish Dancing Commission, and well-known to all Irish Dancing teachers. The *Popular Céilí Dances* CDs have music for all the dances on 3 CDs and are available from www.glensmusic.com.

(dancing notes checked and authenticated by Máire Bean Uí Bruadair TCRG, Belfast)