

A song to sweeten Ireland's wrong: music education and the Celtic Revival

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When there was talk amongst the people that the Government was going to found schools to teach them under their own rule, he understood instantly that treachery and evil were going to be practised against them and he advised the people not to touch them at all.¹

At varying levels and in various guises, three traditions of musical life were reflected in the National system of education from its inception in Ireland in 1831. Put simply, these were music of the Western art tradition, Anglo-Irish music and music in the oral Irish tradition.² The purpose in this essay is twofold – to explore the extent to which policy and comment on music in school navigated through these currents; and to show how the Gaelic League was a reflection of the growing tide in one direction.

Set up in the early part of the nineteenth century, the National system of education was established during a period when Britain promoted administrative efficiency, economic growth and the physical and educational welfare of the Irish population. Within this context, the National system of education's role was to reform the poor of Ireland by providing a non-denominational education that emphasized numeracy and literacy.³ It has been argued elsewhere that the aim of this was to serve the expanding administrative needs of the imperial British state rather than the improvement of the local agrarian economy.⁴ The

1 Douglas Hyde, *Songs ascribed to Raftery* (Shannon: Irish UP, 1973) p. 21. The introduction of the national system of education to Ireland was in the hands of the National Board. Membership of the Board was comprised of commissioners. For an account of the members, see Donald Akenson, *The Irish education experiment: the national system of education in the nineteenth century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp 124–7. Davis described those on the Board as 'dry, ungenial men, ignorant of our history, in love with English literature and character, imperialists to the core' in 'Popular education' in Thomas Davis, *Essays and poems with a centenary memoir 1845–1945* (Dublin: Gill, 1945), p. 79. See also Thomas Durcan, *History of Irish education from 1800 with special reference to manual instruction* (Bala, North Wales: Dragon, 1972). 2 For a comment on earlier documentary evidence for music education practices in Ireland, see Fergal McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland* (Dublin: Special Publications, 1979), pp 224–33. 3 For a survey of the background, see Gearoid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine, 1798–1848* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), pp 97–108. 4 See John Hutchinson, *The dynamics of cultural nationalism, The Gaelic League and the creation of the Irish nation state* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 264; and Oliver MacDonagh, 'The economy and society 1830–1845', in W.E.

agency for this educational implementation was the Board of National Education. In the case of music, the Commissioners sent representatives to Battersea College in London to study the method of instruction in use in the English system of education.⁵ The Wilhem-Hullah method arose from the adaptation by John Hullah of the 'method of instruction in vocal music invented and applied by M. Wilhem of Paris introduced by the Government into all the schools, of whatever description, in France.'⁶

The importation of the Wilhem-Hullah method unaltered had implications for the flavour of music education in Ireland. Insofar as the method centred on the development of music literacy, music education became equated with a skills-based practice, with an emphasis on vocal music. In supporting the Wilhem-Hullah method, the British Committee of Council on Education would have read the account by Hullah of the effects of singing:

One of the chief means of diffusing through the people national sentiments is afforded by songs which ... preserve for the peasant the traditions of his country's triumphs, and inspire him with confidence in her greatness and strength ... The national legends, frequently embodied in songs are the peasant's chief source of that national feeling which other ranks derive from a more extensive acquaintance with history.⁷

The case for the presence of music in school was strengthened by the view that:

if vocal music were generally taught in the National schools, the songs learned would supercede those that the humbler classes now generally sing, which are for the most part vicious trash, hawked about by itinerant ballad singers: in times of political excitement often seditious and frequently obscene and demoralizing.⁸

Traditionally, in Ireland, the hedge school master had contributed to this corpus of ballads, on themes described by Crofton Croker as treasonable, amatory and laudatory,⁹ and those songs served a function 'both as an expression of the singers' and listeners' feelings or opinions but also a form of propaganda'.¹⁰

Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland, Ireland under the Union*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), pp 232-41. ⁵ For an account of the Battersea institution, see Bernarr Rainbow, *Music in educational thought and practice, a survey from 800 B.C.* (Aberystwyth: Boethius, 1989), pp 185-97; and, Bernarr Rainbow, *The land without music* (London: Novello, 1967). ⁶ 'Prefatory Minute of the Committee of Council on Education (i) Singing School for Schoolmasters in Exeter-Hall', in John Hullah, *Wilhem's method of teaching singing, adapted to English use* (London: Parker, 1841), p. i. ⁷ John Hullah, *Wilhem's method*, p. 4. ⁸ Stated by Inspector Newell in: *Twentieth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland* (1853), p. 113. ⁹ Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the south of Ireland* (London, 1824), p. 329. See also Graves et al. (eds), *Thomas Davis, Selections from his prose and poetry* (Dublin: Talbot, n.d.), pp 209-31. ¹⁰ Georges-Denis Zimmermann, *Songs of Irish rebellion. Political street ballads and rebel songs, 1780-1900* (Dublin: Allen

In adapting the method to the English system, Hullah had been careful that:

the spirit of the method should be preserved but that, while this was effected, it should acquire a national character ... and [observed that] this has been attempted by the introduction of many of the best specimens of those old English melodies which deserve to be restored to popular use.¹¹

Because the National system was founded on the desire to ensure literacy, the oral transmission of songs was overshadowed by the cultivation of songs, which were notated. This, coupled with the absence in the syllabus of tunes from the 'great heritage in the national music which had every excellence and every variety',¹² resulted in the principles and practices of music education becoming less reflective of the lives of the people. Music education became more a monument to the ideals of the reforming state. Furthermore, Hullah outlined the process by which he combined words and music:

in order that the restoration of this national music may be facilitated, words have been adapted to it, intended to associate it with the customs of the people, and with healthy, moral and religious sentiments, which may be intelligible and congenial to the minds of the children who are to sing them.¹³

When importing this system to Ireland, it is evident that the National Board overlooked this practice of underlining the national character. While the Hullah manual contained songs which arguably were suited to the national character of England, the content and sentiment were less relevant to the Irish setting, as exemplified by the inclusion in the manual of Hullah's setting of 'The English Child'.¹⁴

In addition to prescribing the syllabus, the National Board introduced a training scheme and while this served to improve the standard of teaching, by now perceived to be 'inferior in point of competency' by the Commissioners,¹⁵ it also

Figgis; repr. Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), p. 12. **11** Ibid. **12** Graves et al. (eds) *Thomas Davis*, p. 228. **13** Ibid., p. ii. **14** Ibid., pp 33–4. Described in the manual as a song which contained 'no interval greater than a fourth, nor any note shorter than a crotchet,' the value of the melody as a pedagogical aid clearly outweighed any consideration of the effect the sentiment expressed in the text might have in the Irish setting. The text is reads: 'I thank the goodness and the grace/ That on my birth have smiled/ And made me in these Christian days/ A happy English child./ I was not born as thousands are/ Where God was never known:/ And taught to pray a useless prayer/ To blocks of wood and stone./ My God, I thank Thee who hast planned/ A better lot for me/ And place me in this happy land/ Where I may hear of Thee.' **15** As evidenced in the exchange between the Revd Carlile, a Scottish presbyterian minister (resident commissioner, 3 Mar. 1837) and the lord president. Responding to the question as to the quality and calibre of the teachers in Ireland posed by the lord president as follows: 'What is your opinion of the teachers in respect of their competency and moral character?', Carlile states: 'I

ensured that the teaching community would become controlled and exclusive. It ensured too that those ballads and songs, which were widely circulated on broadsheets, were discouraged.¹⁶ In the past, the hedge school master occupied a prominent position in the parish. He was next to the landlord and the priest, and his level of knowledge afforded him legitimacy in the community. His popularity ensured his continuance in employment. Under the new centralized system, however, his position was less certain and was contingent upon satisfying the requirements of the Board.¹⁷

In a framework such as this, knowledge is seen as external to teachers (at least initially) and becomes embodied in textbook and syllabus. Teachers become more readily interchangeable, members of a homogenous community, sharing a common practice bias. In the context of music in the National system, the content from the outset elevated the status of notated music and so defined music as product-led, where the process of music-making was secondary.¹⁸ The teacher may be seen as conduit of an 'alien' culture to a group of people thought ready to assimilate it and appreciate it, namely the pupils. Inspector Keenan recognized that Hullah's manual 'contains tunes that are not of a class which recommends themselves to the ears of Irish children. They are tunes that were prepared entirely for English schools and in the whole book there is not a single Irish air.'¹⁹ It

think upon the whole their moral character is respectable: in point of competency many of them are very inferior. We have had no opportunity yet of training teachers: we have been obliged to take the masters already to be found in the Country, trained or not trained, and they are upon the whole a very inferior class of teachers. This arises I believe, chiefly from their extreme poverty.' *Report from the select committee (of the House of Commons) on foundation schools and education in Ireland*, Part 1. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee, p. 19. **16** See Maura Murphy, 'The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad in nineteenth-century Ireland: Dublin Castle's View', *Ulster Folklife*, 25 (1979), pp 79–102. **17** The system of training began with the establishment of the Board of National Education. After some three months a certificate of competence were issued to those teachers who had mastered the skills necessary to implement the prescribed syllabus. Initially criticized, the initiation process became more elaborately organized as the century progressed. See Dowling, *A history of Ireland: A study in conflicting loyalties*, pp 116–27. **18** That music literacy was to become the basis for music education was endorsed by the Powis Commission (1868–70) in John Coolahan, *Irish education, history and structure* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration 1981), pp 24–30. The system whereby the role and practice of the teacher was constrained by national prescription was supported by the Payment by Results scheme, introduced by Robert Lowe in Britain some decades earlier. For a comprehensive account of how it impacted upon education in Ireland, see Durcan, *History of Irish education*, pp 42–3. A revised program was introduced in 1899. It came about from the Belmore Commission. See Coolahan, *Irish education*, p. 34; and Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, *Irish educational documents, a selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Church of Ireland, 1987), pp 142–8. In the revised program, the status of music literacy was reaffirmed, and the role of vocal music endorsed by the Commissioners who held that it had a 'cheering effect' in schools. See Appendix to Sixty-seventh Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (1900), p. 76; and Appendix 11 in Durcan, *History of Irish education*, pp 247–9, for 'Programme in singing for the national schools' in 1900. **19** *Royal*

was felt too, under this policy that the technical aspects of music were accorded more attention than the aesthetic and artistic: 'The introduction of Hullah's system into the country brought into use a series of melodies, constructed with no idea as to melodic excellence but to illustrate the intervals, sharps, flats scales, marks of expression etc. to be met with in music.'²⁰ Furthermore, the policy of importing songs did nothing to cultivate the relationship between popular and learned cultures. As Zimmermann notes, in the case of the oral tradition, the song becomes 'more than a text and a melody which can be recorded or printed, examined and criticised'.²¹ By the end of the century, policy and practice were out of step with each other. While the policy had succeeded in mirroring 'what is prescribed in the programmes of elementary schools throughout the whole civilised world',²² the practice of music in schools in Ireland was cause for concern. It was practically an unknown art, especially 'in remote areas that were outside the towns',²³ with singing taught 'only in one school in every seven, and this in a country which has some of the best Celtic melodies in the world'.²⁴

That the Irish language had suffered a similar fate under the national system was lamented by Hyde. Believing the National Board to be responsible for the decline in the language, he stated:

This board, evidently activated by a false sense of imperialism, and by an overmasterly desire to centralize and being itself appointed by government chiefly from a class of Irishmen who have been steadily hostile to the natives, and being perfectly ignorant of the language and literature of the Irish from the first with unvarying pertinacity the great aim of utterly exterminating this fine Aryan language.²⁵

With the emphasis by the Celtic Revival on regeneration, music in education came to be perceived as a prime source for linking the past with future nationalistic aspirations.²⁶ In so doing, music both reflected and defined the notion of

commission of inquiry, primary education, Ireland, vol. III (1870), p. 88. Patrick Keenan was appointed as resident commissioner in 1871 and was a keen advocate of the system of Payment by Results. ²⁰ Appendix to *Twenty-second report of the commissioners of national education in Ireland* (1855), p. 73. ²¹ Zimmermann in *Songs of Irish rebellion*, p. 12. ²² Reported by Inspector Goodman in: *Sixty-eighth report of the commissioners of national education in Ireland* (1901), p. 147. ²³ *Seventy-first report of the commissioners of national education in Ireland* (1904) p. 4. ²⁴ Graham Balfour, *Educational systems in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), p. xxix. ²⁵ Douglas Hyde, *A literary history of Ireland from earliest times to the present day* (London: Ernst Benn, new edition 1967, originally published 1899), p. 630. Other critics of the previous system of education included Pearse who held that 'had the education of the country been sane and national for the last hundred years, there would never have been a necessity for the language movement' in 'The Education Question' *An Claidheamh Soluis* 13.8 (1904), p. 6. ²⁶ This point is developed in Marie McCarthy, 'Music education and the quest for cultural identity in Ireland, 1831-1989' (unpublished PhD, 1990), p. 212.

polarization and revival.²⁷ For its part, the Gaelic League 'was not opposed to the appreciation of the music of the great masters ... but it insists upon our national treasures getting the due attention that would be paid to them were they possessed by any other nation of the world'.²⁸ There was a perception that music in the oral tradition did not receive the attention it merited, as implied in this contemporary account of two music traditions, side by side in a locality:

the one performed in a school hall festooned with evergreens and the walls bedecked with tissue paper of various colours ... with a platform ... erected at one end and thereon ... a polished mahogany piano, the other in an obscure smoky hovel, ... with a woman of seventy Nellie Dhubh, sitting on a stool by the little turf fire that is just kindling into flame.²⁹

In the same account, the reporter describes that the difference in the repertoire was also considerable:

In the first, the performance included two songs by Moore, being respectable and arranged for the piano, in English words of course. The remainder of the songs are English sentimental ditties, dreamy love songs with a roaring English sea song in praise of Jack Tar thrown in. The second performer speaks a barbarous patois of broken English, at which her neighbours jeer. But she also speaks Irish, and speaks it well and fluently. And she sings too, or did sing, before her voice became so thin and trebly. She can still give [the reporter] some faint idea of the exquisite old Irish airs that were the common property of the countryside sixty years ago.

He outlines the difficulties facing the collector of songs in the oral tradition:

She has the songs yet – the words I mean. I have time to write down three of them and I find them exquisite Irish poetry, the most tuneful

²⁷ Harry White draws on the paradigm of cultural polarization to explain the particular case of the history of music thus; '[f]irstly it identifies the function of music in Ascendancy thought as a dislocated articulation of two cultures: secondly it explains the fundamental preoccupation with music as a resource in the development of Irish political consciousness: thirdly it confronts the advancement of the native musical repertory as a symbol of renescent Irish civilisation' in Harry White, *The keeper's recital: music and cultural history in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork UP, 1998), p. 6. ²⁸ Denis Moonan, 'The spirit of the Gaelic League', *Gaelic League pamphlets*, no. 33 (Dublin: Gaelic League, n.d.), p. 7. ²⁹ Reported by P.T. Mac G. in 'Derryflat and Derryard', *An Claidheamh Soluis* 3.2 (1900), p. 744. The extent to which this account is distilled in a nationalism both cultural and political can be seen by placing it in the context outlined in D.G. Boyce, *Nineteenth century Ireland: the search for stability* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), pp 154–84.

songs in the world. And yet the elite of the district who patronised the English songs and were satisfied, consider her little better than a barbarian. A few short years and she will pass away and even this feeble reminder of what they have lost shall no longer disturb the generation of the National schools, and the piano and the English songs. Even the Gaelic League, active as its members are, cannot secure all the treasures of this sort of writing, and there are very few to write the music.³⁰

The Gaelic League saw the connection between preserving the customs and practices of the locality and the celebration of national character. This concern to stem the tide of loss was shared by Hyde who recognized the urgency of preserving or reviving the status of music, noting that 'if Ireland loses her music she loses what is, after her Gaelic language and literature, her most valuable and most characteristic possession. And she is rapidly losing it.'³¹ The difficulty was that access to it was denied to those without Irish. '[A]ll these traditions are so inextricably bound up with the tongue in which they are preserved.'³² Hyde's hope was that the Gaelic League would bring about:

... the revival of our Irish music hand in hand with the revival of Irish ideas and Celtic modes of thought so that the people may be brought to love the purity of Siubhail Siubhail or the fun of the Moddereen Ruadh in preference to 'Get your Hair cut' or Over the Garden Wall' or even if it is not asking too much, of 'Ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay'.³³

In addressing the wealth of songs and stories in every locality, he advocated that 'whoever will take the pains to examine them will find them remarkable for a generosity of sentiment and an absence of vulgarity, which have done much to leave their impress upon the character of our nation'.³⁴ In effect, he called for a review of the practice of propagating those songs introduced by the National Board which served as a reminder of imported ideals. In a move to bring about the revival of 'our Irish music', the Gaelic League supported a culture of performance, in the form of two festivals, the Feis Ceoil and the Oireachtas³⁵

³⁰ Ibid. Compare these circumstances with those encountered by Petrie in 'George Petrie as a musician and amongst his friends' in A.P. Graves, *Irish literary and musical studies* (New York: Books for Libraries, 1914) pp 232–3. ³¹ Douglas Hyde, 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland', in Breandán Ó Conaire (ed.), *Language, lore and lyrics* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press) p. 167. ³² Douglas Hyde, 'The unpublished songs of Ireland' in Ó Conaire (ed.), *Language, lore and lyrics*, p. 72. ³³ Douglas Hyde, 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland', p. 168. ³⁴ For an account of Hyde's definition of songs, see his 'Gaelic folk songs', in Ó Conaire (ed.) *Language, lore and lyrics*, pp 104–21. ³⁵ These festivals were modelled on the Welsh Eisteddfod. See Marie McCarthy, 'Music education', pp 190–1. The Feis Ceoil aimed to promote the study and cultivation of Irish music, to promote the general cultivation of music in Ireland, to hold an annual musical festival or Feis Ceoil and to collect and preserve by publication the

Although both events originated from a fervent commitment to promote Irish music, differences emerged in how they realized their aims. One difference lay in the manner in which the term 'Irish music' was understood and interpreted by each group. For the Feis Ceoil, it referred to 'all music which is characteristically Irish, whether of the remotest antiquity or of today, whether the simplest tune or the elaborate work of the artist, whether Irish from intrinsic peculiarities or from the instrument on which it is meant to be played'.³⁶ For the Oireachtas, however, it meant 'the old songs sung by the old people in the old way'.³⁷ When it came to choosing pieces for inclusion in its syllabus, the differences became obvious. In defining its role in two ways, namely 'to preserve and often to restore to its medieval purity our own incomparable old music ... while at the same time fostering a modern school of Irish music',³⁸ the Feis Ceoil made no distinction between high art and national art. Since there was a dearth of this variety of music available that was of a sufficiently high standard and the notion of having 'our exquisite folk music harmonized and blared out on orchestras'³⁹ was resisted, the Feis Ceoil Committee took to the practice of setting pieces from abroad. Criticism was levelled at this policy of offering prizes in musical styles 'rather more representative of Florence or the Fatherland than of Ireland'.⁴⁰ Edward Martyn defended the policy. He argued that allegiance to the process and the product in music involved attending to the art of making music as well as to the act of preserving it: '[O]ur musicians ... will never be able to compose choral and orchestral music if they are not made familiar with the world's masterworks of unaccompanied choir singing and orchestral symphony. For before people can create an art they must know what art is.'⁴¹ This sentiment was echoed by George O'Neill, who lamented the fact that there were no composers to write music that was both high art and national art. O'Neill asserted that: 'Irish musicians ... are not such fools as to trouble about writing music (Irish music anyhow) for orchestra. Why? Because there are in Ireland no orchestras.'⁴² In contending that it was necessary to move away from

old airs of Ireland (as stated by the editor in 'The Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 27.4 (1899), p. 166); while the Oireachtas acted as the nucleus around which the language movement with all its phases and developments collected itself and included among its aims the maintenance of their social traditions; the folktale, the folksong, the old traditional style of singing, the fine old dances, the harper, the piper – all those elements which go to make up the cultured social life of Irish speaking Ireland', as noted by the editor in 'The Oireachtas: Work for the Branches', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 24.2 (1900) p. 792. **36** George O'Neill, 'The work of the Feis Ceoil Association: A history and an appeal', in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 4th series, 8 (June–Sept. 1900), p. 347. **37** As noted by the editor in 'The Oireachtas', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 3.3 (1900), p. 808. **38** Attributed to Edward Martyn in 'The Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 27.5 (1899) p. 166. **39** Stated by Edward Martyn in 'The Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis* 4.5 (1901) p. 123. **40** Edward Martyn, 'The Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 27.5 (1899), p. 166. **41** Stated by Edward Martyn in 'The Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis* 4.5 (1901), p. 123. **42** George O'Neill, 'The work of the Feis Ceoil', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 25.5 (1901), p. 170. For

the existing repertoire and develop the new, he argued that it should be possible to be both a member of Conradh and an inheritor of the art treasures of the human race:

We should still remain (many of us) musicians, capable of being delighted and elevated by the creations of a Beethoven, a Brahms or a Gounod, and of fifty others, to whose works we find nothing analogous in our own country. Do you tell us we must shut our ears to these? You might just as reasonably insist upon our shutting our eyes to Raphael and Titian, and bid us throw into the fire Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.⁴³

The Oireachtas Committee made no such compromise and insisted on the exclusive use of Irish language songs, directing that all set pieces in the singing competitions be Irish language songs. There were few publications of songs in the Irish language, and in an effort to make them available, the committee organized the publication in *An Claidheamh Soluis* of 'Irish songs with music in Tonic Sol-fa notation'.⁴⁴ Although it was an effort by the committee to preserve 'the old songs sung by the old people in the old way',⁴⁵ their project inevitably became embroiled in the problem and found itself the object of criticism. In those songs published by *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the emphasis was on the language, and words were put to melodies adapted from tunes of old collections. The emphasis on the written word, while lending itself to songs in the Irish language, meant a concomitant lack of attention to other aspects of music. Furthermore, the shortcomings inherent in the practice of committing songs in the oral tradition to notation were known to the Gaelic League: 'We recognise the value of the tonic sol-fa system, and encourage it as a means of popularizing Irish music, but the last thing in the world we desire is to see the tonic sol-fa system, or any other system, interfering with the traditional style of singing common throughout the Irish-speaking parts of Ireland.'⁴⁶ Since the traditional style of singing relied for its authenticity on the style and interpretation of the individual singer, subtleties and nuances were not likely to be captured in notated versions, nor were they easily replicated in schools. Cultural national-

a more optimistic account, see Aloys Fleischmann, 'Music and society, 1850-1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, pp 517-18. ⁴³ Ibid. ⁴⁴ As reported by the editor in: 'Irish songs and music', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 30.12 (1899), p. 664. Publication began with 'Banchnuic Eireann O' and 'Is trua gan peata an mhaoir agam', being the songs prescribed respectively for boys' and girls' choral singing at the Leinster Feis. The songs were arranged by Brendan Rogers and presented in tonic sol-fa, characteristic of the Curwen method, as opposed to staff notation introduced in the Hullah manual earlier. Coldrey describes how the Christian Brothers appear to have supported the feiseanna right from their inception in the late 1890s in: Barry Coldrey, *Faith and fatherland: the Christian Brothers and development of Irish nationalism, 1838-1921* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), pp 189-207. ⁴⁵ See note 37 above. ⁴⁶ Ibid.

ists who sought to compile Irish music for use in schools balanced their collections between Irish language songs and Anglo-Irish ballads and songs. Examples include Goodman's 'The Irish Minstrel'⁴⁷ and Breathnach's publications.⁴⁸ That this union of written and oral traditions would compromise the music was expressed by Richard Henebry⁴⁹ who believed that the collections of music contain outlines and much would be left to the interpretation by the performer. Arguing against the practice of 'filling in' the tune from the score, which was the practice in those collections intended for school use, Henebry stated:

in a more complicated tune, say a reel, I fear that neither I nor anybody else could restore the whole score from the printed skeleton. Because neither the exact phrasing, not the minute accentuation, nor the tonality on which the original phrasing of the tune was constructed, nor its general carriage is there adequately represented.⁵⁰

He was similarly opposed to arrangements of melodies for forces other than those for which they were originally intended. He believed that 'the loss between a phonographic reproduction of one of those melodies and, say, a rendering by a modern violinist or flute player from a skeleton score, such as is used in making our "collections" of printed music, is so great as to constitute a change in identity'.⁵¹ Classes in singing⁵² were subjected to the same disdain. When Henebry commented that 'this habit of English has a physical effect on the speaking organs, and destroys the full, soft, and mellow Irish voice so necessary for singing',⁵³ he may well have been witnessing the effects of the 'common modern teachers in towns ... [where he found that] the colour was completely gone from the voice, and the power glide and the complicated graces so dear to music'.⁵⁴ The interest in promoting the language was such that these considerations went largely unheeded in the education policy under the newly formed Irish Free State: 'In the administration of Irish education, it is the intention of the new government to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and tradition of Ireland their natural place in the life of Irish schools.'⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Peter Goodman, *The Irish minstrel: a collection of songs for use in Irish schools* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1907). It was sanctioned by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland and included airs from Petrie, Joyce and Horncastle as well as songs in the Irish language and some of Moore's melodies. Its exclusive focus on Irish songs and airs may be interpreted as a response to the demands of cultural nationalists. ⁴⁸ Most notably: Padruig Breathnach, *Ceol ar Sinsear* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1913); and Padruig Breathnach, *Songs of the Gaels; a collection of Anglo-Irish songs and ballads* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1922). Both collections presented the songs in tonic sol-fa. ⁴⁹ Henebry was a member of the Irish folk music society and professor of Irish in University College Cork. ⁵⁰ Richard Henebry, *A handbook of Irish music* (Cork UP, 1908), p. 49. ⁵¹ *Ibid.* ⁵² Including those organized by the Gaelic League; see Annie Patterson, 'The interpretation of Irish music', *Journal of the Ivernian Society* (Sept. 1901), pp 31-42. ⁵³ Richard Henebry, *A handbook of Irish music*, p. 57. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵⁵ From 'Minutes of the pro-

O'Neill's plea to 'make the average Irish man a better musician'⁵⁶ was not taken up by the new government, which appeared to be more intent on making the Irish man a better nationalist. Eoin MacNeill, a founding member of the Gaelic League, strengthened this resolve when he asserted that 'the chief function of Irish educational policy is to conserve and develop Irish nationality'.⁵⁷

It can reasonably be concluded then, that the music was given priority not for educational or aesthetic reasons but for nationalistic ones. The zeal with which this was embraced by teachers in the schools led to the proposal that in some schools, singing was to be taught solely through the medium of Irish and all songs were to be in the Irish language.⁵⁸ Music in school would become the servant of language, be used as a means to progress the Irish language, and lead to the formulation of a motto such as 'to our language through our music'.⁵⁹ To an extent, this legacy has survived in Ireland to the present day where the challenge in contemporary practice is towards recognizing the value of vocal music both as an art form of an intrinsically expressive nature and as an act of expressing the extra-musical.⁶⁰

In summary, the template imported from England set in motion the construction of nationhood. It was a template where the child was seen as being inducted into a standardized culture based on the norms and requirements of the political centre. Arguably, this induction would imply a consequential estrangement from the informal languages, from the dialects, beliefs, and customs of his kindred and locality. In short, it would produce an alienation of the young from the traditions of their parents and locality⁶¹ In lamenting this 'anglicisation', and suggesting that we are a nation of imitators, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to secondhand assimilation,⁶² Hyde might well have been describing the very foundation of music education in Ireland where

ceedings of the commissioners of national education at their special meeting on Tuesday, the 31st January, 1922', pp 2-3. Ó Broilchain's statement was typical of the strength of feeling with which the sentiments of the Gaelic League were expressed in the newly formed Irish free state. **56** George O'Neill, 'The work of the Feis Ceoil', p. 170. **57** Eoin MacNeill, 'Irish educational policy - II', *Irish Statesman*, 24.10 (1925), p. 200. **58** As expressed at their conference in 1921 by members of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) in *National programme conference, national programme of primary instruction* (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, 1922), p. 4. See also T.J. O Connell, *History of the INTO, 1868-1968* (Dublin, privately printed, n.d.) p. 344. **59** Appearing as a caption in *The teachers' work*, 18 (Nov. 1927), p. 119. **60** See Government of Ireland, *Primary school curriculum, music* (Dublin Stationery Office, 1999), pp 5-6. **61** See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), pp 98-105. Also, in emphatically censuring the National Board for 'the painful skill with which they have cut from every work in their schools the recognition of the literature, antiquities and state of Ireland', Davis held that their policy of developing literacy meant, in the Irish context that 'the materials and books provided, though models of general information and literary finish, are empty of Irish statistics, history and hopes'; see Thomas Davis, *Essays and poems*, pp 79-80. **62** Douglas Hyde, 'The necessity for de-anglicizing Ireland', in Ó Conaire (ed.), *Language, lore and lyrics*, p. 169.

'a French method of music teaching designed for use in a monitorial system was imported via an English adaptation into Ireland'.⁶³ Practices introduced under the National system of education served to further the ideals of the reforming state and enjoyed an uneasy relationship with the existing practices. This led to a compromise where aspects of an imported system were grafted onto the traditional landscape. The ideals of the Gaelic League regarding revival of music became concerned less with the problem of losing the national treasures than with the manner in which they would be restored. Until the relationship between music and cultural identity is resolved in the field of education, music in Ireland will continue to struggle. The struggle involves both the advancement of artistic and educative aims and the perception of music as an art form that is at once a process and a product.

⁶³ Marie McCarthy, 'Music education', p. 82.