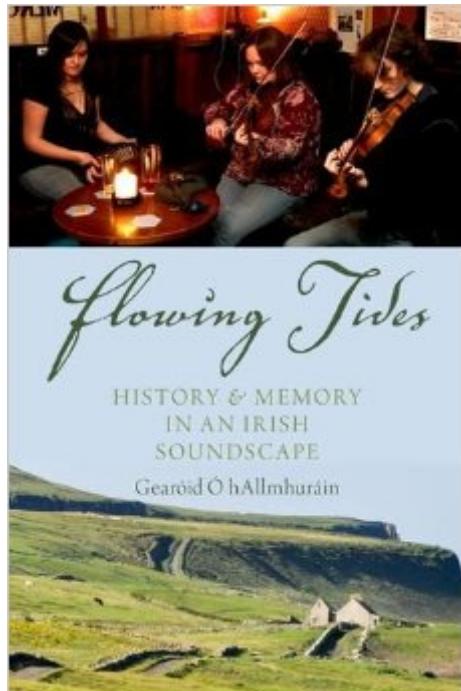


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Flowing Tides: History And Memory In An Irish Soundscape



Synopsis

Despite its isolation on the western edge of Europe, Ireland occupies vast amounts of space on the music maps of the world. Although deeply rooted in time and place, Irish songs, dances and instrumental traditions have a history of global travel that span the centuries. Whether carried by exiles, or distributed by commercial networks, Irish traditional music is one of the most popular World Music genres, while Clare, on Ireland's Atlantic seaboard, enjoys unrivaled status as a "Home of the Music," a mecca for tourists and aficionados eager to enjoy the authentic sounds of Ireland. For the first time, this remarkable soundscape is explored by an insider-a fourth generation Clare concertina player, uilleann piper and an internationally recognized authority on Irish traditional music. Entrusted with the testimonies, tune lore, and historic field recordings of Clare performers, Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin reveals why this ancient place is a site of musical pilgrimage and how it absorbed the impact of global cultural flows for centuries. These flows brought musical change inwards, while simultaneously facilitating outflows of musical change to the world beyond - in more recent times, through the music of Clare stars like Martin Hayes and the Kilfenora Céilí Band. Placing the testimony of music and music makers at the center of Irish cultural history and working from a palette of disciplines, Flowing Tides explores an Irish soundscape undergoing radical change in the period from the Napoleonic Wars to the Great Famine, from the birth of the nation state to the meteoric rise-and fall-of the Celtic Tiger. It is essential reading for all interested in Irish/Celtic music and culture.

Book Information

Hardcover: 344 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 8, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199380082

ISBN-13: 978-0199380084

Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 1.1 x 6.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #373,951 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #66 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > International #117 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Ethnomusicology #171 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Folk & Traditional

Customer Reviews

Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin is an Irish-music polymath. He is a scholar, a gifted teacher, an academic musicologist, a linguist, an entertaining raconteur and a master of several instruments (not to mention, a Clare native) – in other words, he possesses every qualification you could ask for in a guide through the musical landscape (the soundscape, as Gearóid would have it) of storied Co. Clare. The beginning of the book may be a bit of a slog because of the academic groundwork that uses a lot of big difficult words. But it soon settles down into a multi-dimensional narrative covering the history, geography, social milieu and, most importantly, the personalities underlying the music in Clare. For an art-form that came perilously close to extinction, the vitality and global reach of the dance music that Gearóid documents is heartening [for those with an understanding of Irish, the punning Che Do Bheatha Musical Festival is a clever linking of Clare and Latin America] but it also is a sad reminder of the lost native ("as Gaeilge") song treasure that he also chronicles. Just as the found was nearly lost, what has been lost could have been fairly easily found if Pearse's words at Donovan Rossa's graveside ("not free merely, but Gaelic as well") had been given anything more than hypocritical lip service. Indeed, as the book details, what was saved wasn't thanks to the governing organs of state or church. If anything, as evidenced by the Dance Hall Act of 1935, these puritanical and grasping bodies were the music's enemies rather than friends.

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