The Feast of Saint Patrick, commonly referred to in the U.S. as Saint Patrick's Day, is a cultural and religious celebration occurring annually on March 17, which is the date that Ireland’s most commonly recognized patron saint, Saint Patrick, died. However, Saint Patrick was not Irish himself, but he was actually a British missionary who worked in Ireland in the fifth century, long before Christians divided into Catholics and Protestants.

Saint Patrick's Day was made an official Christian feast day in the early 17th century and is observed by the Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion (especially the Church of Ireland), the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Lutheran Church. The day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, in addition to celebrating the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. Celebrations generally involve public parades and festivals, céilithe (pronounced KAY-lee), and the wearing of green attire or shamrocks (In recent times, Protestants have taken to wearing orange on St. Patrick’s Day as a celebration of the Protestant King William of Orange's defeat of the Catholic King James II at Boyne near Dublin in 1690.). Christians also attend church services, and the Lenten restrictions on eating and drinking alcohol are lifted for the day, which has encouraged and propagated the holiday's tradition of alcohol consumption.

Saint Patrick's Day is a public holiday in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Newfoundland, and Labrador and Montserrat. It is also widely celebrated by the Irish diaspora around the world, particularly in Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand.

Irish music has had a deep and lasting impact on music in America, particularly here in North Carolina, where the influences of Irish dance tunes and African music joined together in old time music, and later bluegrass.

Reels, jigs, and hornpipes are three dance forms associated with traditional Irish music.

A reel is the first dance form taught to any beginner student learning Irish dances. Reels are influenced by the dances of Scotland, and they are the most common tunes played and most common dances formed in traditional Irish music

There are different types of jigs, including: heavy jig, light jig, hop jig, slip jig, and triple jig. The fastest of them all is the light jig. Slip jig is unique and expresses power and grace; it is considered the ballet of Irish dance.

The word “jig” originated from French word “gigue,” which meant “small fiddle.” A jig is a step dance that is danced by two, three, four, or eight couples. The couples arrange themselves on the sides of a square. When the dance proceeds, the couples arrange into figures. (Irish dancing also influenced American square dancing.)

Both jigs and reels are known as “doubles;” tunes with two parts. The time signature for a reel is 4/4, and the time signature for a jig is 6/8. In a reel, each bar has four beats 1-2-3-4 I 1-2-3-4 I. The emphasis is on the first and third beat like **dum**-dum-**dum**-dum I **dum**-dum-**dum**-dum I. There are 6 beats to every bar in a jig, 1-2-3-4-5-6 I 1-2-3-4-5-6 I. The words pronounced or the tune heard is divided into three parts like syllables: jig-i-ty I jig-i-ty I. The main emphasis is on the first and fourth beats.

There are two basic types of common-time hornpipe: those like the "Sailors' Hornpipe," moving in even notes, sometimes notated in 2/2, moving a little slower than a reel, and those like "The Harvest Home," moving in dotted notes.

The form survives in Northumberland and Ireland. One example, "Mad Moll," or "The Peacock Follows the Hen," has remained current since at least 1698, when it appeared in *The Dancing Master*, a dancing manual containing the music and instructions for English Country Dances. Such tunes are usually referred to nowadays by the Irish name slip jig.

The hornpipe is an English country dance that was particularly popular among sailors. Hornpipes share some similarities to jigs, but were traditionally danced to music played on a hornpipe (a woodwind instrument with a mouthpiece made of horn, a reed, and a bell made of horn). Hornpipe dancers wear hard shoes, which are used to help track how the dancers keep time. There are two variations of the hornpipe dance: fast and slow. Usually, more experienced dancers will do the slow hornpipe, but younger dancers will start out with the fast hornpipe and switch in later years. There is a change of tempo in the music but not the dancing between these two speeds. The differences in the dancing between the fast and slow steps are the dances that the competitor does and the rhythm/sound of their steps. Executed well, the rhythm for both fast and slow hornpipes is very even.

**Barleycorn & Rye** is a Durham-based band that has been performing Irish and Americana music all across North Carolina since early 2012. Their debut record, The Rowdy Sessions, released in 2013, features a collection of up-tempo ballads that provide a window into the historical and cultural landscape of Ireland’s past. The band performs a wide variety of Irish songs as well as traditional jigs, reels, and hornpipes that are the essence of Irish dance and the pub social scene. The band’s line-up includes Dan Ouimet on Irish bouzouki, Chris Mankoff on fiddle, Jef Walter on guitar, and Sean Gargan on bodhron.

**Further Reading**

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