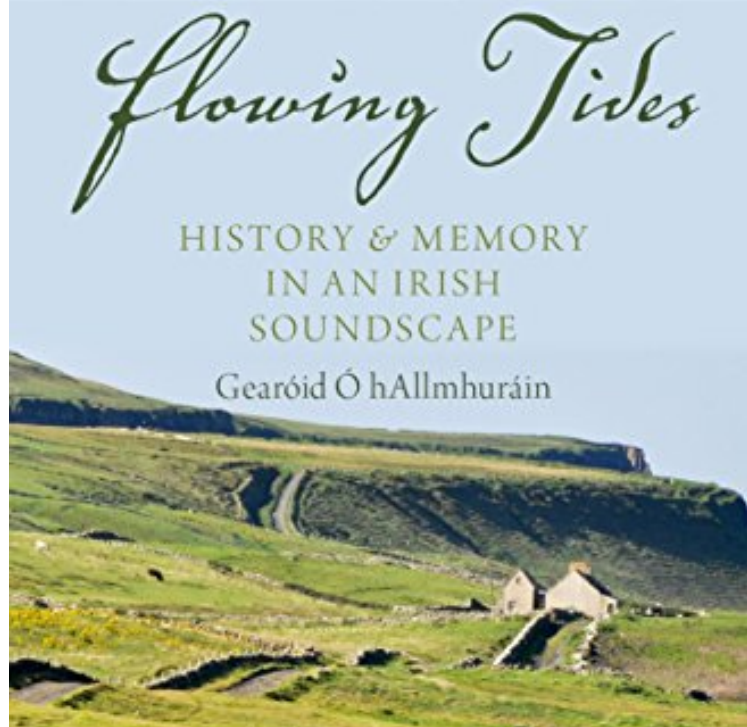


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Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape

Gearoid O hAllmhurain

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Gearoid O hAllmhurain : *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape* before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape*:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A guided trip through musical Co. Clare from a deeply knowledgeable guide. By Leacute;itheoirGearoacute;id Oacute; hAllmhuraacute;in 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) ndash; in other words, he possesses every qualification you could ask for

in a guide through the musical landscape (the soundscape, as Gearoid 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 Gearoid 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 Gaelic") 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. Instead the job was left to ordinary country folk, who were looked down on for it, and to a few outsiders such as Seamus Ennis (fortuitously, a namesake of the county town) and Cian MacMathúna. It may seem strange that someplace as isolated as Clare — "a periphery on the edge of a periphery" and a place where, as a Cromwellian once put it, "there was not enough wood to hang a man, enough water to drown a man, or enough earth to bury a man" — would become a "seminal and absolutely central conduit of musical experience on both sides of the Atlantic." But once upon a time, just as beer was safer to drink than disease-laden water, roads were so bad that water routes were the highways of the day. In Clare, to paraphrase the Dubliners musical group, it was a case of "thank God we're [almost] surrounded by water" — the county being a virtual peninsula with the Atlantic to the west and the Shannon to the south and east. It may be that Clare was accessible enough to get the music and isolated enough to keep it. As it puts it so nicely, the "book explores music roots and music routes in Clare through a century of austere colonialism and an equally strained century of postcolonialism, both of which exposed the region to intense musical traffic." I read the book in a pre-publication Kindle edition on an iPad which took me a lot longer to read than a paper version would have — not because there is anything particularly difficult with an ebook but because I found myself continually wandering over the immediately available internet following up on ideas that Gearoid brings up in the text and in extensive notes. I would read something provocative or just interesting that would send me off on, maybe, hourlong trips down exploratory byways before returning to drink some more at the well. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Flowing Tides describes plenty of great characters along with some wonderful photos. By Customer For anyone who enjoys Irish traditional music and is interested in the rich heritage of Clare music and musicians, this is one book not to be missed. Being a musician himself Gearoid writes from the heart with an authentic voice. Flowing Tides describes plenty of great characters along with some wonderful photos. ~Vincent Keehan.

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, Gearoid Ó hAllmhúráin 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.

"With deft strokes, Gearoid Ó hAllmhúraín connects the small place to the big picture, creating an intimate and intricately detailed history of the renowned musical tradition of County Clare. Flowing Tides will become a monument of Irish ethnomusicology."