

Slow Airs - For solo or ensemble playing on melodic and accompanying instruments, selected and arranged with chord indications and embellishments - **by J. S. Clark**. (Volumes 1 and 2 published in 2018)

The "Slow Air" has its roots in the unaccompanied singing of songs in the Gaelic language. A visitor to Gaelic speaking parts of Ireland may still today encounter something of this in an evening at a local pub: in between the whirling of jigs and reels played by a multitude of instruments there may come a quiet moment when some individual will begin the slow heartfelt singing of such a "Slow Air," and time stands still and you dare not break the spell by speaking - or even sipping your pint ... until the reels and jigs start up again.

John Clark's recent publications "Irish Traditional Slow Airs" present fifty-nine such melodies in a very accessible and practical printed form. (A further thirty-one melodies are promised with Volume 3.) Each melody is printed three times as follows:

1. The melody on its own
2. The embellished melody with chord symbols above
3. The unembellished melody with chord symbols above and the chords notated underneath - on the same staff to complete a triad with the melody note.

This arrangement allows the player to easily concentrate on the melody itself, the ornamentation, the chord symbols, the notated triads - all separately, or in any combination. Importantly, it also facilitates the playing together of players with mixed abilities (i.e. beginners through advanced.)

I've had the good fortune to test many of these tunes with lyre ensembles in Australia, China and Ireland and am pleased to confirm: they are great! For groups with different ability and experience levels they are perfect, there really is something for everyone. Well done, Mr. Clark!

As for the melodies themselves: they are a veritable treasure trove. Most of the fifty nine melodies (ninety when Volume 3 appears) are freely accessible to anyone who searches but the searching is actually quite a lot of work and John, with some assistance, has done that work.

As well as enjoying the collection as described, in ensemble playing, I am finding a lot of inspiration personally in getting to know these tunes and have begun taking some of them as a starting point for my own arrangements - thanks a million, John!

To summarize: *Irish Traditional Slow Airs* is a gift to the lyre world!

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