The Upward Spiral: Access and Identity in Uilleann Piping

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Abstract

This research applies Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) framework of cultural, social and economic capital to explore mechanisms for entry into the global community of musical practice (Kenny 2016) of uilleann pipers. It focuses on the processes through which these forms of capital become mutually interchangeable in the interrelationships between pipemakers, professional, and non-professional pipers across a variety of social and institutional contexts. These interrelationships engender specific sound identities (Powell 2012) which shape pathways for entry into the community of practice and serve as a filter through which forms of capital become fungible across a spectrum of institutionalized and informal contexts.

Keywords: uilleann piping, sound identity, community of practice, professionalization

This paper explores the interrelationships of cultural, social and economic capital (Bourdieu 1984, 1986) in the community of musical practice (Kenny 2016) of those who play the uilleann pipes. It focuses on the processes through which these forms of capital become mutually interchangeable in the context of the symbiotic relationships between pipemakers, professional and non-professional pipers. These interrelationships are constitutive of "sound identities" (Powell 2012) which define a spectrum of practice in the piping community and serve as a filter through which forms of cultural, social and economic capital are evaluated and become fungible across a range of institutionalized and informal contexts. I argue that this interchange plays a foundational role in shaping access to the practice of uilleann piping, enabling and shaping participatory pathways for non-professional enthusiasts, aspiring or practicing professional performers, and for pipemakers who seek to establish themselves in this niche, artisan market.

Uilleann piping has undergone a renaissance since the explosion of global interest in Irish traditional music since the 1970s, with access to this instrumental tradition expanding through the entry of new pipemakers into the market, the growth of local piping clubs and the proliferation of new forms of online access to information, tuition and forms of community. The proliferation of local, dispersed communities of practice and more globalized forms of virtual community have greatly facilitated access to and participation in uilleann piping through the creation of an international "affinity interculture" (Slobin 1993) of dedicated practitioners, which is both informed by and in turn shapes a shared uilleann sound identity. Powell's concept of sound identities focuses on the somatic experience of sound, both instrumental and ambient, as a "bearer of cultural expression" in which "social relations are embedded in sonic relations" and evoke a "sonic figured world" that is both context-specific and yet broadly shared across a variety of locales (2012: 102).

In this paper, I seek to broaden Powell's concept of sound identities to encompass the musical practices and social relations within the uilleann piping community of practice (and the larger community of Irish traditional music with which it is articulated) in a way that incorporates Bourdieu's framework of habitus, capitals and fields. Analogous to habitus, uilleann sound identities can be seen as a form of socialized subjectivity that shapes individuals' positions within a field, thereby enabling, shaping or constraining musical practices which "are the consequences of their habitus and cultural capital interacting within the context of a given field" (Edgerton and Roberts 2014: 195). Uilleann sound identities are thus comprised of a set of interacting dispositions and practices which express forms of embodied cultural and social capital such as sources of musical enculturation, technical abilities, reputation, interpersonal relationships, performative context, aesthetic choices, access to tuition and instruments. Forms of capital are mobilized and made convertible through processes of what Bourdieu refers to as transubstantiation (1986: 242), referring to the mutual convertibility of forms of interested (economic) and seemingly disinterested forms of social and cultural capital. The focus here is on two processes through which capitals are transubstantiated, impacting individuals' positions within the field: the affective economies of exchange (Ahmed 2004) which shape the dispositions and sound identities embraced by uilleann pipers, and evolving practices of professionalization

among professional and semi-professional pipers. I argue that the practices associated with professionalization play a significant role in shaping the evaluation and transubstantiation of forms of capital, recursively shaping uilleann sound identities in this community of musical practice. The meaning and valence of these forms of capital are far from fixed or stable, but rather are fluid, evolving and contested, as the exigencies of professional practice in turn impacts conceptions of 'traditional' uilleann piping sound identities across a spectrum of professional and non-professional musical practice. In what follows I explore the ways in which these processes are interwoven with social relations within the field, through the interactions of enthusiasts, professional pipers and pipemakers, generating improved access to instruments, tuition, and modes of enculturation.

This account is grounded in ethnographic research conducted in Ireland and the U.S., consisting of interviews and participant observation, as well in two decades of autoethnographic observation based on my own experiences as an uilleann piper and organizer for a local piping club in the 'trad desert' of the Intermountain West region of the United States, where I began playing the uilleann pipes in 2003 as an adult learner. My trajectory as an outsider seeking entry into the uilleann piping community of practice has enabled me to gradually discern its contours at a variety of spatial scales. This is paralleled by my status as a cultural anthropologist whose fieldwork practice is constrained by institutional, ethical and methodological strictures that seek to protect the anonymity of research collaborators[1] which are at odds with the convention of disclosure of interview partners in the field of ethnomusicology. While the combination of formal interviews and field notes derived from long-term relationships and participation in the field blur the neatly delineated distinction between open-ended participant-observation and non-research contexts (Lederman 2006), the potential risks of unintended disclosure are heightened by the fact that the globalized uilleann community of musical practice is a highly networked community. While eschewing the use of pseudonyms, I have attempted to blur identities and contextual details, given the potential for reputational risks and the sometimes fraught nature of conversations about authenticity, identity, and the business side of professional performance and pipemaking in the uilleann community of musical practice. Semi-structured interviews were conducted both in Ireland and the U.S. in 2016 and 2017 with six professional or semi-professional pipers, three other traditional music instrumentalists in Ireland and the U.S., three pipemakers, and three individuals (traditional musicians themselves) with roles in organizations supporting traditional music. In addition, my analysis is based on participant observation derived from experiences as a piping student and attendee at tionóil at five different locations in the U.S., attendance at festivals / teaching weeks in the U.S. and Ireland, as well as my role as organizer of numerous tionóil (pipers' gatherings), public performances and piping outreach events (including International Uilleann Piping Day) from 2004 to the present.[2]

Locating the Field of Musical Practice

The field of uilleann piping can be conceptualized as a materially, temporally and spatially constructed space in which cultural and social capitals are mutually shaped and expressed through a balancing act in which practitioners must continually negotiate uilleann pipe sound identities. An exploration of identities within this field is complicated by the spectrum of practices and often interchangeable roles as practitioners move from peripheral to more central roles. The fluidity of music careers within Irish traditional music generally renders the discerning of professional practice problematic, as non-professional musicians can and do perform and teach, while professional musicians often derive income from part-time employment ancillary to or outside of the music sector. For purposes of this study, I distinguish three categories of uilleann piping practitioners. Professionals, per Ireland's Arts Council definition (2004: Section 1.2), "derive all or most of their earnings from their artistic practice" and I include both performers and pipemakers among their ranks. Semi-professionals are those who are not primarily reliant on music-derived income but who commit significant time and resources to their piping practice as performers, educators, or volunteers in ancillary organizations, and whose cultural and social capital as accomplished performers or experts in "lore" (Kenny 2016: 109) is acknowledged and celebrated in the field. The third category consists of non-professional pipers, whom Francis O'Neill referred to as enthusiasts, whose musical practice encompasses a range of activities, from informal private performance and session playing to occasional public performance and

teaching (particularly in localities where more experienced players are not at hand), and/or as volunteers in various piping-related activities or organizations such as piper's clubs or festivals (1910).

While used here as a descriptive heuristic, in particular the distinction between these last two categories is problematic, for a variety of reasons. Both semi-professionals and enthusiasts engage in a wide spectrum of music-related practices which can be considered economic in nature (such as performance and teaching), activities which are also based in and generative of forms of cultural and social capital. While the Arts Council eschews the term amateur as "derogatory" and "irrelevant", given that only a small percentage of those in the traditional arts are professionals in the economic sense, their 2004 report points out that nearly all activity in the traditional arts is "voluntary", which includes many of "the most exceptional and influential practitioners" (Section 1.2.6) who should not therefore be excluded from supports in policy terms. As opposed to broader descriptors such as "community" or "tradition bearers", however, I argue that acknowledging degrees of distinction between professional, semi-professional and enthusiasts' practices enables greater understanding of context-specific forms of interaction and the ways in which they are generative of interlinked forms of social, cultural and economic capital in the field.

The application of Lave and Wenger's framework of situated learning to communities of practice is a well-established heuristic for understanding how communities of practitioners of Irish traditional music come together and cohere around implicitly or explicitly understood norms within a "culture of practice" (Cawley 2021: 4; Kenny 2016: 11-18; Lave and Wenger 1991). Noting conceptual overlap between the two, Kenny reconciles Bourdieu's notion of fields with Lave and Wenger's community of practice to develop the concept of a community of musical practice (CoMP), in which an apprentice model of situated learning enables the acquisition of habitus, "a set of beliefs, dispositions, attitudes and practices" which are "developed, negotiated and sustained through participation" in the shared pursuit of a musical tradition (2016: 14). While an exploration of their interrelations and points of divergence is beyond the scope of this paper, the contemporary uillean CoMP is in turn embedded within but not completely congruous with the larger field that encompasses the practice of Irish traditional music more broadly. As an instrumental tradition, it is characterized by a partially distinct historical corpus of musical repertoire, performative contexts and the cultivation of attendant sound identities through the tradition of instrument-specific gatherings and groups since the late nineteenth century.

For purposes of this study, the focus is on the shared characteristics of these interlocking fields that are of particular import for those engaged in professional or semi-professional practice as they strategically position themselves (Fligstein and McAdam 2012) along a continuum of musical practice relative to forms of capital that are both embodied within and extrinsic to the field of uilleann piping. Embodied forms of capital in uilleann piping emerge from the complex interaction of aesthetic norms of musical practice, knowledge of and immersion in the performative practices of "classic" pipers and their role within the wider tradition, as well as mastery of the material challenges posed by the instrument itself, including gaining access to playable instruments and the vicissitudes of reed maintenance. Forms of capital extrinsic to the field emerge from the socio-economic forces shaping contemporary independent musical practice more generally, incorporating new performative contexts, resources and social media that expand possibilities for access and participation. The interaction between these embodied and extrinsic forms of capital plays a significant role in shaping the musical practice particularly for professional pipers, who must strategically curate their sound identities as they constantly shape and redefine their positionality within the field along a continuum of performative roles and aesthetic choices in recording and performance that define their own musical practice. Shaped by the extrinsic demands of market appeal, practices of self-curation facilitate the transubstantiation of capitals, while also recursively shaping the aesthetic norms and habitus embodied in the field insofar as they in turn serve as a reference point which influences newcomers, for whom professionals' performances and recordings are often their first exposure to the uilleann piping tradition.

Embodied Capital and Uilleann Sound Identities

Historic representations of male uilleann pipers continue to influence the spectrum of professional practice and sound identities of contemporary pipers in terms of the choice of

instrument, repertoire, and performative context. Traditionally a solo instrument, the sound of the uilleann pipes came to embody the lost material and sonic worlds of pre-Famine Ireland, with uilleann piping portrayed in the nineteenth century as the sonic signifier of a highly gendered, spatially and temporally constructed national patrimony. By the 1950s the instrument was at a low ebb, with only a handful of pipemakers still active and less than 200 players world-wide. The founding in 1968 of an organization dedicated to fostering the revitalization of the instrument, Na Píobairí Uilleann (NPU), and the globalization of Irish music helped bring about a gradual reversal of this long decline. NPU estimates there are currently from 5-6,000 pipers spread across 40 countries, with piping organizations from Japan to Argentina fostering a new global community of practice showcased in NPU's annual observance of International Uilleann Piping Day, designed to promote awareness of and access to uilleann piping.

The representation of a largely masculine uilleann piping tradition as a uniquely Irish embodiment of national patrimony emerged during the late nineteenth century nationalist cultural revival (Dowling 2014: 151-207), and the gendered nature of the uilleann piping tradition is evident throughout historical narratives and representations of the instrument, with the small number of noted late nineteenth and early twentieth century female pipers remaining a marked exception (Slominski 2020: 50-58). As the global community of uilleann pipers has grown in recent decades, anecdotally there is a noticeable increase in gender diversity among the ranks of younger players taking up the instrument as well as the increased visibility of female players featured in competitions, workshops and festivals. Although explicit mention of gender is elusive in its official documents, NPU has made visible efforts in the past decade to address the gender imbalance in uilleann piping which preceded the current revival, including the inclusion of women pipers as board members and featured performers. NPU's mission to increase the pipeline of new players, teachers, and instruments seems to have had an impact on the overall gender imbalance among the ranks of uilleann pipers, although it is difficult to quantify. While the number of women working as professional and semi-professional pipers has increased, the number of women who have become established as pipemakers remains extremely limited.[3]

For enthusiasts and professionals alike, forms of embodied capital within the uilleann community of musical practice are largely based on the inculcation of a shared set of aesthetic dispositions that make up an uilleann sound identity. Fundamental to the formation of cultural capital are modes of enculturation, described by Kenny as an "apprenticeship model of learning" (2016: 17). Recent work by Cawley has comprehensively explored the pathways through which learners enter the broader traditional music community of practice (2021). Particularly for those pursuing professional or semi-professional pathways, there is an inherent tension between the informal, community-based contexts of enculturation and attendant cultural norms that preclude self-promotion, and the need to explicitly claim, foreground and make legible certain forms of cultural and social capital in the pursuit of professional opportunities. These sources of community enculturation in turn become narrativized as sources of cultural capital in professional musicians' bios, applications for funding, awards, and in opening the door to invitations to participate in collaborative musical projects. These include coming from a well-known "musical family", mentoring from musical elders and tradition-bearers, access to institutionalized forms of cultural capital, such as participation in a local piping club or Comhaltas branch, awards from fleadh competitions, and/or the acquisition of credentials earned from performance-oriented academic programs. The biographical and career summaries thus generated in association with professional pipers' income-generating activities as private tutors, teachers at festivals and workshops, and/or as performers are generative of forms of capital which can in turn be claimed by piping students and enthusiasts for whom social interaction with and learning from well-known players is both formative and rewarding.

The forms of social and cultural capital which enthusiasts derive from such interaction is acquired both in in-person and online contexts. For those within the global uilleann piping community who lack direct access to opportunities for apprenticeship with musical elders or tradition bearers, important sources of cultural and social capital include in-person tuition at festivals and workshops, as well as immersion in piping lore, history, and the seminal recordings of master players. These forms of capital are particularly important to geographically dispersed enthusiasts who, lacking direct access to other pipers, enter the piping community of practice in relative isolation. Such individuals must often rely more heavily on vicarious forms of online

participation for piping tuition, sometimes supplemented by participation in a local traditional music session scene. For example, Kenny's work on the Online Academy of Irish Music highlights the organizers' emphasis on online pedagogy which incorporates "attention to dialogue", "relationship-building and 'room for talk'" to foster a sense of community and belonging among their globally dispersed students (2016: 95). As Spencer points out, the affordances of online communities have served to de-emphasize the importance of geography as generative of authenticity by expanding access to a "system of contextualization" which enables "personal negotiation of the traditional and authentic" through participation in a communal experience of traditional music, through exchanges of knowledge, anecdotes and personal encounters (2009: 67-68).

Another key category of musical habitus relevant to uilleann sound identities consists of what can be broadly described as aesthetic dispositions, i.e. musical value judgements which underly what is considered to be good piping. Within the uilleann community of musical practice, valorization of the classical piping tradition generates a preference for unaccompanied solo performance, as well playing techniques embodied by such descriptive terms such as "pure drop" or "tasteful" piping. This entails aesthetic preferences along a variety of dimensions. Melodically, these markers of aesthetic distinction involve things such as repertoire selection, use of ornamentation, and melodic variation which demonstrate the familiarity with canonical recordings of master pipers or with the lesser-known repertoire derived from republished manuscript collections from eighteenth and nineteenth century music collectors.[4] The choice of either concert pitch or lower-pitched, nineteenth century style flat sets of pipes in live performance or recordings, as well as the choice of solo piping versus the use of other instrumental accompaniment, are all fetishized as expressions of cultural and social capital within the piping community.

Objectified Capital: Supply-Side Pipenomics

The uilleann pipes evolved as a solo instrument, and its lower volume favors indoor, acoustically bright settings. The louder concert pitch uilleann pipes evolved in the context of immigrant dance halls and the vaudeville stage in the U.S. in the late nineteenth century and are the go-to instruments for contemporary sessions and group performance. Pitched in lower keys, flat sets are much quieter and more conducive to acoustically intimate, solo playing. Their mellow sound is particularly prized by pipers who attend to the nineteenth century piping canon, the narrow bore chanter design lending itself to the expressive coloring of notes and the staccato passages associated with older playing styles. Performance on flat pitch pipes is thus often relegated to smaller, more intimate performance venues or designated sessions at pipers' gatherings for instruments pitched in C, B or B♭. Such moments are indexical of nineteenth and early twentieth century sound identities favored by discerning pipers who valorize the somatic experience of tradition as acoustic intimacy and unaccompanied piping.

In sessions and workshops, the first question routinely asked of an uilleann piper is, "who made your pipes?" The intrinsic forms of capital in the practice of uilleann piping derive in large part from the material qualities of the instrument itself. Based on the status of the pipemaker, their design and aesthetics, the lineage of historic sets, and not least, their sonic qualities, a piper's instrument can thus be seen as what Bourdieu describes as cultural capital in its objectified state, i.e. material objects that "can be appropriated both materially—which presupposes economic capital—and symbolically—which presupposes cultural capital" (1986: 2). Access to quality instruments, and the discernment of their material, sonic and historical properties, are sources of legitimized cultural capital which shapes identities and status within the uilleann CoMP. As an expression of objectified cultural capital, connoisseurship of uillean pipes within the uilleann CoMP is comprised of knowledge about and aesthetic appreciation of instruments for their provenance, aesthetic and sonic qualities. The fetishization of antique instruments extends to the gentle teasing to which pipers are subjected in online discussions for polishing the metal work on newer sets of pipes, rather than letting them acquire a patina of age so that they resemble older sets. Such factors as the choice of flat vs. concert pitch, materials, historical lineage of design and, above all, the reputation of the pipemaker, present a process of discernment which in itself is a signifier of a piper's cultural, economic and social capital.

On piping recordings, attribution of the instruments played is routinely noted, which suggests that the pipes' provenance and distinctive sonic qualities are seen by professionals as a

significant element of the piper's sound identity. In a conversation with an American professional piper and a pipemaker at a tionól in the US, the former described to me the reasons for his recent acquisition of a used concert pitch set from a particular maker known for the big sonic presence of his instruments, which he felt better suited both the venues and style of his performances. The pipemaker present in turn compared these pipes to those of another pipemaker, known for their quieter tone, as "the difference between chalk and cheese" in terms of their different sonic profile, suited to different performative needs and desires. For performing pipers, the ability to make and adjust reeds to respond to variable climatic conditions is considered by many an indispensable skill, however many pipers remain dependent on their pipemakers or nearby, more proficient peers to diagnose reed problems or supply them with new reeds. For all but the most proficient reed-makers, many professional pipers develop a close working relationship, if not friendship, with their pipemaker of choice, and calling in on one's pipemaker for reeds and maintenance is both a social and material exchange.

The globalization of the uilleann piping community, the increasing number of pipemakers and the advent of information technology have fundamentally altered the market for uilleann pipes, with expanding demand triggered in part by traditional music revival bands such as Planxty and The Bothy Band in the 1970s, and by the later representation of the pipes in films such as *Titanic* and *Braveheart*. Nonetheless, as noted by NPU CEO Gay McKeon, the greatest barrier to access for aspiring entrants to the field of uilleann piping is access to affordable, playable instruments, which is often considered an "almost unattainable goal for young emerging musicians" (McKeon 2017). Pipemakers with a reputation for quality quickly develop large backorders and years-long waiting lists. The feat of getting on the list in the first place can depend on the varied composition of social and cultural capital accrued by the aspiring musician. Entrants to the field must learn to temper their consumerist expectations to discern the social relations and politics of acquisition entailed in obtaining instruments. Possession of cultural or social capital by professional performers, noted scions of prominent tradition bearers, or talented, emerging young players sometimes enables greater ease of access to sought-after instruments, with one pipemaker telling me of a "shadow (wait) list" for such individuals. In Ireland, access to instruments for practicing or emerging professionals is further enhanced on a limited scale by various public funding sources.[5] In online forums, newcomers' expectations of quickly acquiring pipes from top makers are tempered by more advanced peers, while getting on the waitlist is regarded as a rite of passage along with the proverbial seven years learning, seven years practising, and seven years playing, to become a piper.

To secure the future supply of instruments, Na Píobairí Uilleann has established a training course in partnership with Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Dublin for aspiring pipemakers (Byrne 2020). However, the pursuit of pipemaking remains a byword for precarity, and the number of new entrants who pursue the vocation full-time is limited. The resistance of uilleann pipemaking to commodification or mass production is embedded in the multiple processes of enskilment (Gowlland 2018) involved in becoming a quality pipemaker. These require fluency with metal, wood, and reed-making as well as tool-making skills. Despite the complexities of production, most workshops are solo operations, with pipemakers being reluctant to take on paid apprentices due to limited production volumes. Nonetheless, the passing on of hard-won knowledge between established and aspiring pipemakers in informal models of apprenticeship is a commonly acknowledged aspect of the affective economy of exchange embedded in the field.

Pipemakers thus serve a locus of exchange in the transubstantiation of capitals within the uilleann community of musical practice, the composition and valorisation of which is in part intertwined with the pipers who play their instruments. Pipemakers are understandably concerned that their limited output of instruments should go to active musicians who are going to play pipes, rather than to collectors who, as one pipemaker put it, are going to "store them under the bed". While the embodied skills of the craft are transubstantiated into objectified forms of symbolic, cultural and economic capital essential to making a living in a niche market, the resultant reputation enjoyed by a pipemaker, and forms of social and affective exchange with musicians (particularly well-known professionals) is, in turn, mutually generative of forms of capital which shapes the position of pipers within the field.

Extrinsic Capital and the Traditional Arts Sector

In conjunction with broader trends in Irish traditional music, the increasing number of uilleann pipers seeking entry into professional or semi-professional practice has generated novel forms of cultural and social capital which are recognized, acquired and assigned both tangible and intangible value. For professionals, the entrepreneurialism needed to survive in the contemporary traditional arts sector are generative of new skills and forms of capital which interact with uilleann sound identities in ways that can have implications for enthusiasts' access to tuition, instruments and sonic role models. Uilleann pipes sound identities are not just passively enculturated or handed on, but actively appropriated, shaped and negotiated by each generation of musicians who ground their musical practice in both the historical antecedents and contemporary expressions of the uilleann piping tradition. This in turn is reflected in practices of "self-curation" that highlight the role of strategic agency in determining access to forms of social and cultural capital as practitioners position themselves within a field (Márquez, Lanzeni and Masanet 2023). Highlighted by the role of social media, practices of self-curation can be seen as a foregrounded expression of social and cultural capital, something which is particularly vital for those pursuing independent music careers as they are called upon to make explicit aesthetic and performative choices in the process of managing their professional identities.

One source of tension for professional pipers based in Ireland particularly derives from the expectations laid out in applying for financial supports for touring, recording or other projects from funding bodies such as the Arts Council.[6] These expectations necessitate working within the parameters of traditional sound identities within the piping tradition while simultaneously adapting to varied performative contexts and models of grant funding predicated on the demonstration of individual creativity, innovation, or cross-genre collaboration. The landmark Trad Ireland report *Navigating the Traditional Arts Sector in Ireland*, based on interviews conducted before the pandemic, makes clear the "stark anxiety communicated by a cross-section of our most revered artists and cultural ambassadors" (Talty 2020: 179) as it unpacks the myriad pressures converging to make professional careers based on traditional music in Ireland unsustainable, including financial challenges and the need to navigate the complexities of career entrepreneurship in a highly competitive environment. The report notes the criticism that emerged from interviews with musicians that the "evaluation criteria and artistic objectives of the Arts Council's traditional arts funding awards are somewhat prescriptive, rather than responsive to the traditional arts community", with applications becoming a formulaic exercise in box-ticking (ibid.: 152). The report further notes a perception that "evaluation criteria and artistic objectives of traditional awards do not fully reflect the practices of the wider traditional arts community", as well as the "perceived expectation that proposed projects involve innovation and collaboration with other artforms of genres of music" (ibid.: 152).

For musical practitioners who do wish to pursue grant-funded opportunities to stretch the creative parameters of the instrument through collaborative projects that transcend the boundaries of traditional music, film, theater, poetry, or orchestral works, there is sometimes concern about anticipating the reaction within the uilleann community of musical practice. One Ireland-based piper involved in a variety of cross-genre projects related his response, when asked by a radio presenter about the potential reaction of traditional musicians to such work: "my first answer was, well I really don't care what, how they see it. I mean they're probably not going to listen to it anyway, and they're probably very happy with what I do with traditional music so, because I do this does that change that? And I don't think it should change it".

In common with other independent musicians, professional pipers have faced increased pressure to engage in arts entrepreneurialism to patch together a portfolio of financial support opportunities, incentivizing musicians to curate their own sound identities to adapt to the contingent arts employment landscape. Traditional musicians find themselves spending increased amounts of time and effort applying for grants funded by the public sector or non-profit foundations to support touring, recording, or in some cases found their own ancillary, music-related organizations, recording labels or festivals.[7] One professional piper, who left his previous career to pursue full-time music, told me he invested significant amounts of time in applying for five grants in a two-year period for a variety of innovative collaborations, composition commissions, and the founding of a new regional music festival. The project management and planning skills demanded by such activities requires attending to new bureaucratic temporalities,

which overlay an already crowded annual calendar of submissions and applications in advance of festivals, workshops, and the long-term booking cycles of venue promoters. A sentiment expressed several times by the professional and semi-professional interviewees in the Trad Ireland report is that such skills confer an unfair advantage on those with tertiary degrees, particularly for graduates of performance-oriented music degree programs which include managerial skills in their curriculum, lending them familiarity with funding body "buzzwords" that can have the effect of enhancing the fungibility of cultural capital (2020).

The notion of fungibility may seem offensive to traditional music practitioners, implying the commodification of a communal art form, but is meant here to describe the deployment of skills and aesthetic dispositions that enable the translation and recontextualization of traditional music practice into viable careers in the traditional arts sector. In addition to traditional sound identities, aspiring professionals must also embrace a very different habitus, acquiring another, extrinsic set of capitals and ancillary skills involving management, reflexive awareness of their positionality within the field, and practices of self-curation. The exercise of this kind of strategic agency can be seen by some within the community of musical practice as antithetical to cultural norms of reticence in putting oneself forward, generating expressions of resentment that are broadly labeled and contested as "begrudgery", but professional musicians must nonetheless learn to make explicit and claim cultural capitals inherent in the traditional arts community as a matter of professional necessity.

As Cawley notes, professionalization, as well as the proliferation of performance-oriented degree programs, has led to an expectation that "the ability to perform on stage is an increasingly important musical skill" (Cawley 2021: 132) in Irish traditional music, both for aspiring professionals and for learners in contexts where public performance, from youth céilí groups to the "piper's chair" at weekend workshops, is deployed as a pedagogical tool. For professional and semi-professional pipers, the aesthetic choices necessitated by performance contexts highlights tensions within uilleann piping sound identities, chief among them choices involving the format of musical performance. These forces are also generative of tensions between more traditionally oriented uilleann sound identities and the spectrum of performance opportunities available. Listening audiences of enthusiasts and traditional music aficionados represents an ideal, but one only sometimes realized for those who choose a professional path. As one Irish uilleann piper who performs with a touring band I encountered at a festival in the U.S. told me, he greatly enjoyed "the guilty pleasure of playing piper's jigs" in session with the locals, implying a welcome respite from the complex arrangements required in his band's performances.

Attitudes among pipers towards performance contexts are as varied as the spectrum of performance opportunities themselves. At one end of the spectrum, I've spoken with several professional and semi-professional pipers who express disinterest or disdain for the compromises required for group performance and touring, or even playing with much accompaniment. In an interview with a Dublin-based flute player and piper, he maintained that "because traditional Irish music is at its best in the solo form, … if it stands up to scrutiny in solo form, that's when you're going to get the most from it … and the band thing, or the duet thing, or the trio thing is, by its definition … a compromise".

In another interview, a Dublin-based semi-professional piper who works in arts administration expressed the view that "I don't want to be in that situation, or that I have to play with people I don't want to play with or with audiences I don't want to play for" in what he referred to as "sub-Riverdance kind of stuff". Similarly, a U.S.- based professional piper echoed this sentiment about playing in a band, stating he had "no interest in that world whatsoever" in part because "it's all been done and I don't see innovation in what people do with groups". While this disposition towards performance contexts marked as nontraditional may be indexical of aesthetic dispositions toward solo performance valorized in uilleann sound identities, pipers across the spectrum of professional practice nonetheless do participate in a wide range of performative opportunities either from necessity or desire, from studio recording, orchestral collaborations or playing at Disneyland to touring with Riverdance-like productions, playing local gigs in Celtic rock groups or traditional music ensembles.

While a full exploration of the contemporary range of performative contexts for uilleann piping is beyond the scope of this discussion, this brief sketch of selected elements of uilleann piping habitus illustrates the key tension which professional pipers must resolve in navigating the space

between the aesthetic and performative expectations within the uilleann CoMP itself, the institutional pressures shaping access to professional practice within the wider traditional arts sector, and the economic necessities of touring and catering to wider audiences of non-enthusiasts.

The Upward Spiral: Localization of Capitals

While the complex relationship between nationalism, ethnicity, notions of authenticity and Irish traditional music have been explored at length elsewhere (cf. Dowling 2014, 2016; O'Shea 2008; Slominski 2020; White 2016), I follow Slominski in arguing that attention to "transnational or global" connections are crucial to understanding Irish traditional music as a "transnational network of local, face-to-face scenes" which is "multiply reinforced" through shared connections that are both travel-based and virtual (2020: 16). Such a "network of scenes" is particularly characteristic of the uilleann piping community of musical practice, as advanced local pipers, pipemakers, and/or piping clubs become anchors for localized communities of practice. In what follows, I turn to the ways the symbiotic exchange of forms of capital in uilleann piping communities of practice are shaped by localized forms of social distribution and physical proximity. Whether uilleann pipers pursue their practice in isolation or as part of a local, face-to-face context, their musical practice is typically articulated with or nested within larger fields of Irish traditional music practice in the form of local session scenes. For some pipers, this replays some of the tensions experienced by professionals around the choice of performative context, with some avidly embracing session playing and others avoiding it as, in the words of one professional, "the death of good piping" due to faster tempos and the simplification of technique needed to conform to the most common denominator versions of tunes.[8] Many pipers also mingle other instruments in their repertoire which lend themselves more to session playing in certain contexts, often flutes or whistles.

The spatial-geographic specificity of local piping scenes is itself generative of capitals in the forms of local status hierarchies of playing ability. Unlike other instruments in Irish traditional music, there are typically few (at times, no) uilleann pipers in some locales, which makes being the only piper in town itself a source of cultural, social or, sometimes, economic capital. One US-based professional piper related the story of his relocation to a major metropolitan center where another piper was already established as a piping instructor for the local Comhaltas branch, enjoying a kind of first-mover advantage, and leading the former to carve out a teaching practice based largely through a local piping club and online. Being one of a handful of uilleann pipers in the vicinity can also frequently lead to performance and/or recording opportunities which in other locales are reserved for more proficient, professional musicians. Within the uilleann CoMP, pipemakers play a key role in the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the production and maintenance of a challenging instrument. Aspiring pipers are frequently advised to select a pipemaker within geographic reach, given the challenges of producing playable reeds in variable climates. Shaped by spatial and social proximity, the affective economy of exchange between professional pipers, enthusiasts, and pipemakers creates what one pipemaker refers to as the "upward spiral" of increased access and excellence, with increasingly accomplished players raising the bar of pipemaking standards and expectations regarding aesthetics, tuning and playability. As piping clubs and prominent pipers become established in underserved localities, sometimes in proximity to a pipemaker who can supply practice sets to learners, they produce accomplished students who in turn become known through social media. Such areas have increasingly become loci of emergent local piping traditions (particularly in urban centers such as Dublin, Cork or Boston), and it is widely observed that more young people are playing the uilleann pipes at a higher standard of proficiency than ever before, providing a pipeline of potential performers and teachers who will ensure the future of the tradition.

In Ireland, the emergence of spatially localized, symbiotic relationships between pipemakers, learners and professional pipers is explicitly promulgated in what NPU CEO Gay McKeon has described as the "Portlaoise model" (2017). In pursuing its mission "to share the sound of Ireland", NPU has contributed to the pipeline of professional and semi-professional pipers through a strategy of localization in the creation of new regional loci for piping communities of practice, primarily within Ireland. With the aid of a pipes-on-loan scheme, he describes the success of the 2012 Portlaoise model in attracting over thirty local students, several of whom became instructors

themselves, as well as the establishment of two pipemakers in the area: “from no obvious demand, to a thriving art form embedded in the local community, generating local enterprise and exports, all in less than six years” (ibid.: 5).[9] In NPU’s *2017 Annual Report*, McKeon refers to this model as a multi-pronged strategy consisting of localized tuition in partnership with the National Music Education Program Music Generation, training of advanced pipers to teach, commissioning practice sets for pipes on loan schemes that have been made available in every county in Ireland and nine different countries,[10] and training local pipemakers who can provide ongoing support (ibid.: 5). This program has established access to tuition in over 15 locations within Ireland, as well as hosting “Try the Pipes” outreach sessions throughout the country.

The growth in opportunities for professionalization in uilleann piping is thus in part contingent on the emergence of a piping infrastructure which broadly mirrors developments across the Irish traditional music scene, including the entrepreneurial expansion of a traditional arts infrastructure, funding, teaching and performance opportunities. While the growth of professionalization in traditional music is regarded in some ways as coming at the expense of the broader traditional arts community in terms of access and opportunities for non-professional participation, these controversies have focused primarily on issues of copyright, the commercialization of musical formats and subsequent emphasis on staged performance, as well as diminishing access to or commodification of public venues for participatory music making (Kaul 2007; McCann 2012). Talty (2020: 9) raises this latter concern in the Trad Ireland Report, being careful to not to conflate “the traditional arts community” as a whole with the “professional traditional arts sector”. While the interviews conducted for the report also emphasize points of potential cross-over and competition with non-professionals in terms of teaching and performance, he nevertheless emphasizes the degree to which professional musical practice is embedded in the wider traditional music community and the importance of social capital that is at the heart of this musical practice: "Most, if not all traditional artists, including this author, view informal performance with friends and peers as being among the most enjoyable and significant aspects of Irish traditional, music, and song" (ibid.: 142). In a video released as part of the launch of the Trad Ireland report, Talty responds to the interviewer’s question about the potential friction between the communal, intergenerational transmission of traditional arts in a "grassroots system of culture, transmission and exchange" and "seeing words like sector and artist rather than what we're used to hearing" (Trad Ireland 2021: https://youtu.be/dQM2pSATX9c).

The entrepreneurial activities of professional uilleann pipers trying to make a living at traditional music thus generate a broader spectrum of performative possibilities and sound identities available to learners and enthusiasts, modeling new forms of access and participation beyond settings such as sessions that are seen as more “traditional” yet can also be marked by dynamics of exclusion as well as inclusion (O’Shea: 2008). Insofar as many of these forms of broader access are generated by the entrepreneurial activities of professionals, the symbiotic nature of the exchange of capitals between professionals and enthusiasts becomes clearer. The growth of professionalization has enabled access to wider opportunities for broad, non-professional participation, including expansion of access to innovative formats for tuition, access to instruments of a higher quality than previously available, the expansion of participatory venues such as festivals and workshops and increased levels of funding for expanded participation through initiatives such as the partnership between Na Píobairí Uilleann and Music Generation.[11]

Although difficult to quantify, the community of piping enthusiasts in turn comprises a key source of community, reputation and income for professional pipers. Opportunities for teaching, piping workshops and related performances comprise a significant source of music-related employment for professional and semi-professional pipers. The increasingly diverse community of piping enthusiasts serve as a primary market for recordings, performances, teaching workshops and regular lessons either in person or online. More recently, crowdfunding platforms such as GoFundMe have facilitated the collaborative support of enthusiasts in underwriting recording and production costs for piping recordings. For professional pipers, recordings are the calling card through which demand is generated for invitations to teach at piping workshops. This demand is amplified by means of social media, which provide modalities of vicarious participation in piping events for enthusiasts around the world through crowd-sourced Instagram, YouTube and Facebook updates of photos and videos, or live-streaming platforms.

The affective exchange between professional pipers and enthusiasts is nowhere more evident than in the practice of teaching, which entangles the tropes of the handing on of tradition with the flexible labor markets that typify professional musical practice. Given the difficulties associated with beginning on the uilleann pipes and the relative scarcity of pipers in traditional music communities around the world, the moral economy of tradition entails a sense of obligation. As one American professional piper put it, "I teach about twentyish students, that's a part of me making money. But it's also your job as a piper… If you are to a certain point, you're obligated to teach people who can't find somebody in their area". Teaching comprises a considerable portion of the revenue stream for most professional pipers. Apart from teaching conducted in conjunction with annual workshops or festivals, the ability to fill out one's schedule with face to face or online teaching comprises one of the few predictable revenue streams for musicians. Teaching also takes place in the context of local cultural or traditional music organizations such as Na Píobairí Uillean, a piper's club, or a local chapter of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. Increasingly, localized forms of tuition as an income support are supplemented by remote teaching via online platforms. Other, more formalized online teaching initiatives such as Scoiltrad or the Online Academy of Irish Music have offered online teaching opportunities primarily for Ireland-based professionals, although fee-based online models have been challenged by the explosion of piping-related content on YouTube, Vimeo and other streaming platforms.

Piping clubs have come to comprise important nodes in networks connecting professional pipers with enthusiasts and aspiring pipers, with many clubs hosting an annual weekend workshop or tionól featuring daytime classes for the pipes and sometimes other instruments, evening performances and sessions. There has been a global proliferation of uilleann piping clubs in traditional diaspora countries and beyond since the 1970s revival period, in part accelerated by the internet and the growth of online discussion forums since the 1990s, enabling isolated enthusiasts to find one another locally.[12] These organizations provide opportunities for otherwise geographically isolated groups of pipers to find one another, provide mutual technical support and tuition, and bring in professional or semi-professional pipers as guest tutors and performers. A key feature of local gatherings is the informal curriculum of session playing, sociality, and the sharing of genre lore specific to a musical community of practice: storytelling, conviviality and gossip through which the professional and semi-professional pipers engage in a kind of reciprocal exchange between host and guest. The development of a reputation for "good craic" highlights the importance of this kind of performative sociality for bringing a sense of community and belonging to the scenes of Irish music around the world. These encounters are productive of reciprocal value in the mutual production of social, cultural and economic capital.

Piping from the Parlour: Online Community

The impact of the pandemic severely restricted possibilities for the physically proximate exchange and validation of cultural and social capital. This served to paradoxically heighten the importance of affective exchange through the rapid proliferation of virtual formats, providing new forms of de-territorialized access into the kinds of performative sociability that underpin the affective economy of uilleann piping sound identities. With touring and live performance a near impossibility during the pandemic, the most readily available and consistent source of support for musicians was the traditional music community of practice, as performance audiences and students.

As Kenny illustrates in her work on the Online Academy of Irish Music, online communities of musical practice can create new forms of social proximity, access and inclusion, reframing "how communities organise and express boundaries and relationships, which changes the dynamics of participation, peripherality and legitimacy" (Kenny 2016: 13). The first and most apparent response to the pandemic in the traditional arts sector was an increased reliance on existing online communication tools and an explosion of novel formats, not only for performance and teaching, but also for virtual recreation of forms of social proximity such as online sessions. Existing platforms for online teaching and performance were augmented by Covid-era innovations aimed at providing some compensatory substitution for the loss of income-generation, such as Tune Supply–virtual sessions and an accompanying YouTube channel featuring rotating casts of musical hosts, which invited donations to provide some limited funding for musicians in the face of massive income loss (Tune Supply, n.d.: https://tune.supply/).

Specific to uilleann piping, novel virtual formats created new and arguably more accessible opportunities for affective and informational exchange among a broader spectrum of professionals, semi-professionals and enthusiasts than existed in pre-pandemic times. The storied "Piping Heaven/Piping Hell" session hosted in Ennis by piper Blackie O'Connell, normally a draw for any visiting pipers in the region, was reinvented during the pandemic as a weekly live Facebook event, featuring guest pipers for music and chat, enabling vicarious participation and donations from viewers around the world. Other innovations included virtual tionóil, NPU's Piping from the Parlour series (2020: https://pipers.ie/new-online-performance-series-piping-from-the-parlour/) featuring a wide array of pipers from around the globe, and the Piper Sunday Zoom Seminar series of the Southern California Uilleann Pipers Club (n.d.: http://www.socalpipers.com/piper_sunday.html), which enabled the kind of mix of musical performance and sustained, interactive conversations about the music and the piping tradition that are rarely accessible outside of fleeting, in-person encounters at a tionól or festival.

Conclusion: Affect and Intangible Heritage

In this paper, I've outlined the symbiotic processes of capital generation, valorisation and exchange between professionals, semi-professionals and enthusiasts that shape the dynamics of access and participation in the uilleann piping community of musical practice. This exchange is embedded in and shaped by the globalized community of Irish traditional music as well as the labour market dynamics of professional musical practice. Ultimately, the uilleann piping community is grounded in what UNESCO describes as an "intangible cultural heritage [that] can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it–without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage" (n.d.: https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003).

Notions of tradition, authenticity and belonging within uilleann piping sound identities provide a lens of recognition through which forms of social and cultural capital that inhere in specific forms of musical practice are rendered legible and fungible. These sound identities in turn evolve through the interaction and tension between forms of capital both embodied within and extrinsic to the uilleann community of musical practice. The musical practice of enthusiasts, semi-professional or professional pipers takes place along a spectrum of contexts that locate notions of "good piping" in the creative tensions between solo and ensemble performance, traditional repertoire and innovation, fidelity to the piping styles of past masters and deployment of the instrument in novel musical contexts. The perceived value of such musical practices in the field, i.e. the forms of cultural, social or economic capital that are derived from each, is not pre-determined but rather arises from the idiosyncratic mix of attributes and practices which defines an individual's position within the field. These attributes are further shaped and constrained by the context-specific affordances of the modalities for musical practice available to musicians: the materiality of the instrument, performative context, modes of enculturation, the degree and type of access to tuition, geographic and financial barriers to participation, the availability of mentorship in a local music scene, etc.

As with any human endeavor, the meaning and importance of these musical practices is also defined by relationships, a sense of belonging, and personal meaning–in short, the affective dimensions of a community devoted to an instrumental tradition that requires a significant degree of passionate commitment and motivation. As a niche instrument embedded within the larger Irish traditional music community of practice, these dynamics are thus embodied in a largely unspoken affective economy of social and material exchange which define relationships between enthusiasts, semi-professionals and professionals. As Ahmed notes, "(i)n such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments", working "in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (2004: 119). The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the centrality of the forms of relational, affective exchange in the uilleann community of musical practice described above both through the disruption of its physically proximate forms, and in the attempts made to recreate or maintain these relationships virtually.

At the same time, access to and participation in the uilleann community of musical practice arguably faces more hard limits than other instrumental traditions: namely the necessity of some degree of face-to-face access to other practitioners due to the unique material constraints posed by the instrument itself, particularly when newcomers struggle with reed and maintenance issues. While access barriers to tuition and enculturation into the lore and the performative norms of piping can be overcome virtually, access to and maintenance of playable instruments is still a significant constraining factor, entailing the need for local, hands-on expertise within the network of local scenes that characterizes this globalized instrumental tradition.

Toner Quinn, traditional musician and music journalist, notes that while "Irish cultural exports" such as traditional music are seen as a key component in the revitalization of the Irish economy and local economic development, the vibrant local "cultural ecosystems" that emerge around traditional music are often taken for granted in policy circles (2020: https://journalofmusic.com/opinion/silencing-spideal-why-catherine-martin-needs-set-out-new-vision-arts).Given the relative rarity of uilleann pipes even within traditional music communities, attention to such an ecosystem of informal and institutional supports has been essential for promoting and supporting greater access to and participation in the playing of the uilleann pipes, consisting of a mix of arts funding, both in Ireland and in the piping diaspora, coupled with the organizational work of Na Píobairí Uilleann as well as the global network of piping clubs and events. This network of funding and support is particularly crucial for professional musicians, who can be seen along with key tradition bearers and musical elders as critical nodes in the relational networks of global uilleann piping scenes, both physical and virtual, within which a "global negotiation" constantly redefines and negotiates authenticity and criteria for belonging (Spencer 2009: 62).

The growing accessibility of the uilleann piping tradition is thus also a result of the necessary entrepreneurialism of professionals and semi-professionals in the creation and sustenance of an infrastructure of music programs, festivals, workshops, instruments on loan schemes, and novel tuition formats. The transmission of cultural and social capital to a wider audience of learners and enthusiasts via online formats intensified during Covid, heightening the importance of online communities in decoupling enculturation and transmission of cultural capital from spatial constraints, expanding access to insider knowledge, and shaping the aesthetic dispositions of enthusiasts as learners and a potential client base of professionals. These practices point the way towards a broadening of access and participation in uilleann piping, embedded in both face-to-face and virtual relationships, which in turn enable viable career pathways that combine the deeply meaningful affective exchange at the heart of a communal music form with the economically precarious lifestyle of an independent musician.

Endnotes

[1] Weber State University Institutional Review Board approval for this project (Approval Number 16-SS-118) was granted on 11 May 2016 and subsequently renewed annually through 2020, the period covered by formal interviews, on the condition that anonymity and confidentiality of research subjects were appropriately addressed.

[2] The following is a list of tionóil and festivals attended between 2003 and 2017: Catskills Irish Arts Week, East Durham, NY, East Coast Tionól, Chapel Hill, NC, Northeast Tionól, East Durham, NY, Salt Lake City Tionól, San Francisco West Coast Tionól, Scoil Acla Summer School, Achill Island, Co. Mayo, Seattle West Coast Tionól, Southern California Spring Tionól, St. Louis Tionól, MO, Willie Clancy Week, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare.

[3] Gay McKeon, Na Píobairí Uilleann CEO, personal communication, 2022. NPU's Pipecraft training program, designed to impart skills related to pipemaking, has seen a total of 157 participating in long and shorter, modular courses, 17 of whom were women.

[4] Representative in this regard are the two volumes of the James Goodman (1828-1896) manuscripts, first published as *Tunes of the Munster Pipers Volumes 1-2* by the Irish Traditional Music Archive, which also hosts online interactive online versions of both volumes (http://port.itma.ie/) as well as online access to the original manuscript volumes (https://goodman.itma.ie/). Similarly, recordings by pipers have featured repertoire gleaned from such collections, including Mick O'Brien, Emer Mayock and Aoife Ní Bhriain, *Tunes from the Goodman Manuscripts* (Is Mise Records, 2013) [CD] and Jerry O'Sullivan, *O'Sullivan Meets O'Farrell* (Jerry O'Sullivan Music Inc., 2005) [CD].

[5] These include the Music Capital Scheme, funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and administered by Music Network, which provides funds to purchase instruments for

"established professional performing musicians" and "emerging professional performing musicians" (https://www.musicnetwork.ie/instrument-hub/music-capital-scheme). The Arts Council of Northern Ireland administers a similar funding scheme for anyone "who is working as a high-level performer in a solo capacity or as part of a small group / chamber ensemble in any musical genre" (http://artscouncil-ni.org/funding/scheme/musical-instruments-for-individuals).

[6] The full range of Arts Council funding supports can be viewed at https://www.artscouncil.ie/available-funding/ which covers a wide spectrum of supports for the visual and performing arts, including several specifically designated for traditional arts, such as the Deis Recording and Publication Award, and the Liam O'Flynn Award.

[7] See, for example, Trad Ireland / Traid Éireann, a traditional arts advocacy organization created by Oisín Mac Diarmada and Tristan Rosenstock (https://www.trad-ireland.com/about) or Raelach Records, founded by musician Jack Talty (https://www.raelachrecords.com/about).

[8] Similarly, O'Shea (2008: 132) observes that many high-status musicians avoid the "musical brawl" of public sessions or see it as "weakening the tradition of solo performance", noting that "novice or improving players" have the most to gain from sessions and playing along with more proficient players.

[9] McKeon describes similar outcomes that followed in "Gaoth Dobhair, Letterkenny, and Derry. Enniskillen, Sligo Town, Gurteen, Dundalk, Drogheda and Wexford Town" (2017: 5).

[10] Gay McKeon, Na Píobairí Uilleann CEO, personal communication, 2022.

[11] The role of festivals and workshops as sites of musical enculturation is comprehensively documented by Cawley (2021: 103-135).

[12] While there is no one single listing of uilleann piping clubs worldwide, the sites listed as hosting events for International Uilleann Piping Day on NPU's Facebook page (set up specifically for the event), gives some indication of the global extent of piping groups (Na Píobairí Uilleann, 'International Uillean Piping Day' [website], https://www.facebook.com/uilleannpipingday/, accessed 15 January 2024). The advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, online discussion forums for traditional music such as thesession.org (https://thesession.org/), the Chiff & Fipple Forums (http://forums.chiffandfipple.com/), both established in 2001, and more recently Facebook groups such as the Uillean Piping group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/5418883237), have facilitated the formation of more localized, face-to-face piping groups such as the Salt Lake Piping Club (established in 2003).

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