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Celtic Australia: Bush Bands, Irish Music, Folk Music, and the New Nationalism

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A higher proportion of the Australian population can claim Irish ancestry than in any other nation outside of the island of Ireland, with about 25 percent of the nineteenth-century settlers coming from Ireland, and Ireland resuming as a source of migrants in the second half of the twentieth century. In general and despite sectarian tensions, the history of Irish Australia has been one of social accommodation. In comparison with the United States, in particular, Irish emigration was relatively more ordered, prosperous, and better resourced and there was little significant cultural or socioeconomic division between Irish Australians and the rest of the population (MacDonagh 1987, 121–37). Irishness became one of the components out of which settler Australians constructed a distinctive national identity, and an identification with Irish history and culture has remained an important component of the politics of settler Australian identity formation. With its ability to move between Australian, Irish, and global perspectives, Irish music has been part of this, its sounds and meanings co-opted in negotiations of the shifting relationships among the claims on national identity by the original nineteenth-century settlers and their descendants, the postwar migrants, and the indigenous inhabitants.

This chapter describes two recent major moments in this process. The first is the development in the 1970s of a folk-rock bush band musical style, which embedded Irish traditional dance music into musical narratives of Australian national identity. The second is the popularization of the use of the Aboriginal *didjeridu* in Irish traditional dance music within a suprahistorical model of Celticity. In

both these cases, Irish music has been a potent symbolic resource within the contemporary discourses of settler nationalism. In the first, it contributed to the imagination of a distinctive Australian national character and type. In the second, in a political climate full of doubts about the unitary basis of settler national identity, Irish music, along with its national and historical references, moved toward a protean Celticity, that allowed settler Australians to place themselves both in relation to the experiences of postwar non-British migration and to indigenous political claims.

THE BUSH BAND, NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND THE AUSTRALIAN LEGEND

During the 1970s a style of folk-rock referred to generically as the "bush band" developed and became widely popular. It drew explicitly on Irish musical identification, positioning it firmly within the contemporary politics of nation and identity. Bush bands combine a song repertoire of Australian vernacular ballads, the core song repertoire consisting of about thirty ballads popularized in the Australian folk revival, with Irish-style dance music, mostly Irish jigs and reels, supplemented by occasional tunes of similar style collected in Australia. They began in the pub rock scene, but acquired more general popularity through the staging of bush dances, where a caller would lead participants through various folk-style dances, drawn from the English folk dance movement, Irish *ceili* dances, Scottish country dances, and social dances from rural Australia. The format allowed a wide range of social uses, from riotous rock dances to cross-generational social occasions such as wedding receptions or fund-raising events. Whether as accompaniment for dancing or as music for listening to in sociable surroundings, bush bands promoted an image of lively Australianness. During the 1980s, a large number of such bands sprang up in response to public demand.

The instrumentation of the bush band is similar to the Irish-style group, with at least one melody instrument such as fiddle or accordion, with rhythm guitar accompaniment. Compared with most Irish traditional music groups that developed in the 1970s and 1980s, a more substantial "bottom end" is used, with electric bass and drum kits. The earliest versions of bush bands used improvised instruments such as tea chest bass, and an emblematic local invention known as a "lagerphone," though only the second of these survived the development of the band. It is an upright percussion instrument set with bottle tops struck and shaken, humorously projecting the improvisatory skills of the bushman that the bands celebrated (Smith 1994, 190–91). The musical format is fairly standardized, and to an ear used to Irish playing, some of the instrumental performance had more exuberance than finesse.

In creating its musical sound and in projecting this as distinctively Australian in the political and cultural circumstances of the 1970s, the bush band drew on a range of Irish musical resources spanning the history of Australian European settlement. Aspects of Irishness were evoked in the song repertoire, the tune repertoire, and in the performance style. The first of these to consider is the song repertoire. The nineteenth-century vernacular songs that make up the core of the bush band's song repertoire were collected and constructed into a canon by a radical nationalist intellectual movement in the 1940s and 1950s. In this period, inspired by similar movements in Britain and the United States, the left intelligentsia, the labor movement, and the Australian Communist Party were vigorously promoting a distinctively Australian radical culture centered on the concept of folk (Smith 1985). In 1958, historian Russel Ward published a book called *The Australian Legend* in which he argued that the distinctive Australian character was naturally democratic, socialist, and anti-authoritarian, and that this type had been created by the collectivist ethos of rural workers in the nineteenth century. Ward used vernacular song texts as part of the evidence for his argument (see Ward 1966).

For the purposes of this chapter, what is crucial is that this national type carried an image of Irishness. From the Irish convicts, some of whom were political exiles, to the gold rush adventurers and post-famine immigrants, to the bushrangers with Irish names, nineteenth-century Irish immigrants were identified as the source of the anti-authoritarianism, republicanism, and informality of manners associated with the distinctive Australian type, as well as with a determination to create a distinctive, independent Australian culture, free from deference to British models. Catholicism was ignored in this construction of Irishness, as was any residual identification with Ireland as a home place (Ward 1966, 46–57, 165–68). And while some of the songs that made up the canon were influenced by Irish song-making styles, most prominently a few songs from convict poets and

broadside balladeers, together with the bushranger ballads, these were valued for their role in the construction of a national heritage and a distinctive Australian national type. When the bush bands performed these vernacular nineteenth-century songs they were thus performing a particular version of Australianness to which the nineteenth-century Irish immigrants were seen as having made a distinctive contribution.

By the 1960s the canon was being widely performed in the coffee lounges and folk clubs of the folk boom, generally by solo performers within the conventional singer-guitarist folk singer format who invested it with a "folk" sound. The performers in the early bush bands came from this context, but they modified the folk club format's insistence on the audience's attentive intellectual engagement with the music. Bush bands organized their relationship with and took control of their audience in quite different ways. They used powerful amplification, incorporated a strong rhythmic drive into performance, and encouraged dancing. They were thus able to break out of the folk clubs into a broader public arena. As the folk movement retreated into a cultish niche, the bush band went public, brash and popular. In this move they drew on a second Irish musical resource, the postwar virtuosic Irish instrumental music, which created the musical buzz of the bush band and seized the attention of the audience. In comparison with previous folk acts, bush bands greatly extended the theatricality of performance. Dobe Newton, the percussionist with the influential band The Bushwackers, said that before he started exploiting its possibilities, the lagerphone was "a sort of overgrown tambourine given to a vocalist if he or she couldn't play guitar." He turned it into a powerful, varied, and subtle percussion instrument, as well as a stage prop for dramatic rock-style stage antics.[1]

Any musical innovation depends upon establishing the right of the performer to command the audience's attention, and successful performers develop a range of strategies to achieve this. The inclusion of Irish instrumental music was crucial to establishing the musical credentials of the bush band. This was despite the fact, as has often been noted, that the musical style and certainly the dance repertoire characteristic of the bush band bore little resemblance to any preceding Australian style and so was blatantly at odds with its claims to historical representation (see, for example, Andrews 1988, Meredith 1986). The bush bands wrought a contemporary common-

sense understanding of Australian folk music with the sound of Irish music as an integral part, and, as is common with such constructions, the sound was more a product of current circumstances than the past it purported to represent. As well, the Irishness that it incorporated and represented was itself a complex combination of past and recent histories and ideologies, both in Australia and Ireland. Crucial to this were the musical resources of a new wave of Irish immigrants to Australia who came as part of the massive migration program on which Australia embarked in the aftermath of World War II.

In general, these new Irish immigrants had little in common with established Irish Australia whose connections with Ireland were for the most part generations old and for whom Irish music played a marginal emblematic role among small groups of cultural enthusiasts. The new immigrants instituted new contexts for performance of Irish music, particularly Irish dance music, as the growing first-generation immigrant community staged Irish dances and sports events, re-creating in Australia the entertainment styles of rural Ireland. Initially they drew on the musical life of the provincial Ireland they had left and its forms of national identification. Later, they incorporated developments from the Irish musical rejuvenation movement of the 1960s, a movement that was also attracting the attention of young musicians in the folk movement (Smith 1990).

Mick Moloney has argued that this Irish musical movement had three major strands. The first was *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann* (the Irish Musicians Association), which, in the early 1950s, began to build a populist rural musical movement around dance music. The second was in the 1960s when composer Sean O Riada gave some genres of Irish music an aesthetically respectable concert format. The third was the ballad revival started by the Clancy brothers reforming of Irish popular national and regional song into the popular folk format of the ballad band style (Moloney 1982, 94–6). The Dubliners' extension of the Clancy Brothers' style then combined the hitherto irredeemably "cultchie"[2] instrumental dance music with proletarian sounding urban Dublin street ballads and rebel songs. For many young Australians on the folk scene, the Dubliners' reconstructed Irish music, shorn of sentimental and nostalgic songs, had the ring of authenticity. It seemed a true folk music, springing from a creative and unified lower class, and it was consonant with the image of the legendary Australian rural worker, the

supposed originator of Australian folk music. Contemporary Irish models of performance were thus particularly attractive to Australian folk revival performers, and in the 1960s and 1970s, as LPs became increasingly available, performers in many styles and genres began to imitate and develop these models. In Australia, the impact of Irish traditional music was greatly enhanced by the growing community of Irish immigrants and their interaction with the local folk music movement.

As is often the case in contact between folk revival movements and musical styles that they admire, there were social differences to direct and inflect the terms of musical negotiation between the immigrants and the folk movement enthusiasts. Contrasting socioeconomic backgrounds set them apart, as did their family and community-centered social networks. Where the typical folk enthusiast was an Australian-born, tertiary-educated, white-collar employee, with politically radical views and little interest in religion, players from the Irish community were generally working class, employed in manual labor, socially conservative, and by Australian standards devoutly religious.

Crucial in bringing the two groups together was the local branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann* formed in Melbourne in 1970. It was immediately successful among the Irish community, organizing regular *ceili* dances and concert evenings. Branches were also formed in Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth over the next decade. Because *Comhaltas* was a formal, open organization, in contrast to the domestic and semiprivate settings in which many immigrant traditional musicians mainly played, enthusiastic young Anglo-Australian musicians were able to listen and play in sessions with the most highly skilled players of Irish traditional music. To the relatively unsophisticated instrumentalists of the folk revival the highly developed musical techniques of some of the immigrant Irish traditional dance players were conspicuously brilliant. A group of folk movement players began to learn Irish dance music, and thus the music entered the bush band style. As well, the exposure to highly skilled instrumental players reinforced a growing interest in other kinds of instrumental music.

While both Anglo-Australian performers and Irish immigrants saw their preferred genres within a folk ideology, they had very different takes on what this might signify. For the Irish immigrant it was most often a project of conservative cultural maintenance that

had little in common with the romantic radicalism of the folk movement and its search for a viable contemporary form of performance. There were, however, a few Irish immigrants influenced by the burgeoning Irish music movement of the 1960s who were able to move between both groups and these were important in establishing initial contacts. Declan Affley, an Irish immigrant singer, formed the Sydney-based band The Wild Colonial Boys, which was the first band to attempt the stylistic fusion of the bush band. In Melbourne, second-generation instrumental players such as Louis MacManus and Anthony O'Neill became important bush band players, sewing Irish dance music into the fabric of the bush band repertoire. Typically, these were children of musically dedicated postwar Irish immigrant families whose skill had been fostered in childhood in family and community organizations.

The Irish sound of the bush band as it emerged in the 1970s was the result of interaction between the postwar Irish immigrant community and the Anglo-Australian folk movement, rather than from continuing or revived historical Australian music practice. If this is the musical story behind the development of the style, why did it attract audiences? For this we need to look at the social and political context. The popularity of the bush band rode on a revival of Australian nationalism in the context of the political turmoil associated with Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The Australian antiwar movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s revisited the radical nationalism of the old left, with a significant section linking this to a vocal nationalist opposition to the threat of U.S. imperialism to Australian economic and political sovereignty (Frankel 1992, 60–63). Although bush bands and their repertoire espoused a relatively diffuse populism, their stance could accommodate political positions ranging from hard-line Maoists to internationalist workerists to Labor Party republicans and the nostalgic nationalist romantics who probably made up the bulk of the audience. Bush bands created an imaginative world in which this resuscitated radical nationalism could be enacted in the popular culture and politics of 1970s radicalism. Irishness became the theatrical vehicle for this politics of cultural independence, reinforced through the dynamic power of traditional dance music within the bush band mix.

The radical nationalists of the 1950s had been formed within the populism of the popular front. This inspired the energy of the early folk revival, and, for some, nationalism provided a way out of

Stalinism in the wake of the mid-1950s crises of international communism. For the most part, the articulation of Australian settler radical nationalism was based on a narrative of the formation of a people out of and against the social structures of the British colonial past. Within this, Irishness provided fertile ground for the articulation of Australian distinctiveness from various "English" characteristics. It was the musical core around which the whole cluster of supposedly distinctively Australian characteristics identified with the Australian legend could be grouped: anti-authoritarianism, conviviality, communalism, resourcefulness, steadfastness through adversity, and loyalty to one's mates.

Yet this was an integrative and monolithic nationality, inherently exclusionary and bounded, and the demographic changes consequent on Australia's postwar migration program, together with changes in the political status of indigenous Australians were rendering it increasingly unstable. During the 1970s, under the impact both of the rise of the new social movements and of new historiography, the Australian type identified by Ward with the naturally democratic, anti-authoritarian outback worker was increasingly read as male, white, and racist. The new-left revisionist attack was lead by Humphrey McQueen's stylish Marxist polemic *A New Britannia*, and carried on by numerous feminist historians from the 1980s onward (see, for example, McQueen 1970; Dixson 1976). The general questioning of the Australian legend's democratic credentials increased with the growth of the Aboriginal land rights movement and a new Aboriginal historiography (Reynolds 1982). This challenged the existing white nation-building histories, radical as well as conservative, with histories, from the perspective of the indigenous inhabitants, of invasion, massacres, and dispossession.

Linked with these historical critiques was the development of multiculturalism as a national cultural model during the late 1970s and 1980s. This was a response to the enormous demographic changes brought about by postwar migration from continental Europe and Asia and it implied a far-reaching rethinking of the character and basis of Australian identity (Castles et al. 1992). For much of the contemporary population issues to do with Australia's difference from Britain were increasingly irrelevant, and fewer had any links with the historical experiences of the nineteenth-century settlers on which the Australian legend was based. Sharon Frost, of the central New South Wales band Home Rule, described the dilemmas

such changes posed for Australian folk music: "In the 1950s, in the days before multicultural carnivales, when the Bush Music Club was formed, 'Australian' folk music seemed to have a straightforward character and identity. Now the folk movement in general is necessarily more self-conscious about what 'Australian' folk music might mean" (1992, 77).

The Irishness that was an important part of arguments about the creation of an Australian nation gained its symbolic value from its opposition to British identity. It was this that drew it into the bush bands' recreation of an Australian musical past. However, as musicians started to reposition the group performance of Australian folk music to accommodate the more complex politics of national identity associated with multiculturalism, Irish music ceased to be projected as the powerful core of Australian folk. Irish music was still played, but increasingly it was presented as the music of one of the ethnic streams that made up the rich tapestry of multicultural Australia rather than as the expression of a unified national character.

THE SECOND MOMENT: THE DIDJERIDU AND CELTICIZATION

The second moment of interaction between Irish music and Australian constructions of nation and identity that I explore is the incorporation over the past decade of the *didjeridu* into Irish traditional instrumentarium and a generalized conception of Celtic music. On the face of it, the mix might be seen as merely another decontextualized exoticism, whether commercially inspired by world music market operatives or musically driven by talented musicians, confident in their skill and pleased to experiment with overlays of other sounds. However, while many such innovations have proved ephemeral and inconsequential, the use of the *didjeridu* in Irish traditional music has achieved more lasting significance. In Australia, in Ireland, and in the world generally, the sociomusical implications and connotative meanings of the musical sounds have amplified and consolidated the significance of the mix.

The *didjeridu* is a wide-bore wooden trumpet played by Aborigines in northern Australia. It is fashioned from a branch of a eucalyptus that has been hollowed by termites. The bore is cleaned out, and a broad mouthpiece and a slightly belled end shaped or enhanced.

Most instruments are about 1.2 m long with a bore of around 5 cm. It is played with a loose lip buzzing and continuous circular breathing, and produces a pulsing drone at around CC to FF, interspersed with an upper partial approximately a tenth above, and vocalized humming and articulated sounds. It has virtually no pitch variation, but produces a subtle range of rhythmic, timbral, and phasing-like effects. Some musicians may use improvised instruments, sometimes no more than a piece of PVC piping that can be cut to any desired pitch. In the societies where it is traditional, it is mainly used to accompany a relatively open public song repertoire. Archaeological evidence suggests a relatively recent (by Aboriginal standards) adoption took place sometime within the last thousand years (Yunupingu 1997; Barwick 1997).

In recent times it has been taken up by many other Aborigines as a symbol of pan-aboriginality and by settler Australians and musicians from around the world. Such non-Aboriginal users in particular have adapted it to many genres from personal alternative healing techniques to avant-garde and popular music creation (Neuenfeldt 1997; Homan 1997; Smith and Neuenfeldt 1998). A bewildering range of social and musical connotations are attributed to it, often raising issues of exploitation and appropriation along with cultural reconciliation and sharing.

The idea of placing the *didjeridu* under Irish tunes emerged in the late 1970s, first in Australia and soon after in Ireland. In most cases the instrument can be made to provide a continuous drone on the low D, which can be articulated with rhythmic patterns. Such an accompaniment was musically relatively simple, and, notwithstanding the striking exoticism of the instrument, it has gained a degree of acceptance among many traditional musicians on musical grounds. The *didjeridu* mimics the drone of the pipes, which many regard as the only fully legitimate accompaniment to the monophonic solo melody of Irish traditional dance musics. Drones and drone-based accompaniment style for Irish traditional music are increasingly valorized by current trends, particularly the open tuning guitar styles based on DADGAD tuning, commonly referred to as "Celtic guitar" and the bouzouki accompaniment techniques popularized and promoted by Donal Lunny's playing and record production. The syncopated rhythmic articulation of these styles is frequently imitated by *didjeridu* players. Such modern forms of accompaniment gain their power from the implied contrast with the

piano vamping of the conservative *ceili* band tradition and similar chordal guitar styles. The rhythmic patterns generated by the *didjeridu*'s overtone in conjunction with vocalized sounds constitute the primary technique of *didjeridu* playing in traditional Aboriginal usage as well as in modern adaptations and developments, and these can mimic the accompaniment patterns used in bodhran playing.

However, as well as the musical properties that enable its incorporation into Irish traditional music-playing styles, the *didjeridu* carries a large symbolic freight, which gives this incorporation a range of meanings for various groups of users and listeners. The potency of these meanings is enhanced by the convergence of the political and social history and symbolic structure of non-Aboriginal Australian *didjeridu* playing with the recent Celticization of Irish music. The growth of indigenous political demands in the 1970s has already been mentioned. While the idea of Australia as a multicultural nation of immigrants was reasonably adequate to incorporate the social and cultural differences of Australia's diverse range of ethnic groups, it was quite inadequate to deal politically with the issues of indigenous Australia, and as well left many of the descendants of the nineteenth-century settler Australians feeling uncomfortably disconnected from their land and historical experience. The histories of the pioneering frontier were increasingly seen as a protracted war of occupation against the legitimate holders of the land, undermining the popular celebratory histories of pioneering and outback Australia. As well, increasing environmental consciousness was exposing the damage two centuries of European agriculture had inflicted on delicate Australian ecosystems. For many urban Australians the history of white rural past no longer provided an affective route to a grounded sense of national belonging.

Such issues increasingly confront musicians attempting to represent a national experience. Jan Wositzky, the "bush character" front man of the Bushwackers band, recalled a gig on an outback tour that included the Kimberley region in the remote northwest of Australia.

> We played for 400 blacks and they looked at us curious, a bit of polite clapping and the more we thundered away the quieter they became. The only conclusion I could draw from the crowd's response was the Bushwackers, calling ourselves "the real sound of Australia," was alien to this crowd. It was obvious to me that we didn't know the other side of the frontier. In white bush music, blacks had been written out apart from a few derogatory songs. (Quoted in Elliot 1998, 24)

Wositzky found the encounter between his fictional "real Australians" and the Aboriginal audience so unsettling that he subsequently abandoned the bush band project.

The first vigorous expressions of aboriginality in Australian popular music emerged in the late 1970s with Aboriginal rock bands, generally employing reggae and country-rock styles. Some commentators began to see such bands as promising a new, more authentic musical expression of national identity. Yet although bands such as No Fixed Address, Coloured Stone, and the Warumpi Band gained enthusiastic support from urban liberal intellectuals, they remained essentially Aboriginal bands, their music read as an expression of Aboriginal experience and so not available for the expression of a more shared national identity (Breen 1989; Castles 1992).

Their existence did, however, amplify the challenge to settler musicians to create music with an appropriate acknowledgment of indigenous settler relations. Some, like Paul Kelly and Ted Egan, used singer-songwriter styles to comment on indigenous history and politics. Others started to use the *didjeridu* within a number of musical genres, from progressive rock– and jazz-influenced performance to New Age music. Aboriginal rock groups, most of whom were outside the relatively small area of northern Australia from which the instrument comes, adopted it as an icon for pan-aboriginality; and it was adopted by settler musicians who were consciously seeking ways to ground their music in the landscape. At the same time, the *didjeridu* was achieving popularity as a meditational aid and in alternative therapy and semireligious personal experiments. A movement extending from amateur enthusiasts to professional musicians developed that was initially spontaneous and disparately individual, but during the 1990s more formal networks and organizations developed (Smith and Neuenfeldt 1998, 93–95). It was from this larger musical and social movement that the *didjeridu* moved into traditional Irish music.

The *didjeridu* was first used with Irish-style music in Australia by Stephen Cooney in Melbourne around 1980. Playing with the Melbourne-based group Poteen, Cooney started to use *didjeridu* as a backing for reels and jigs. Poteen had a shifting membership that usually included several Irish immigrants, one Scot, and several second-generation Irish Australian players. It based its sound on the model of Planxty and The Bothy Band. Cooney, already well established in Melbourne's inner suburban alternative rock scene, had

heard the *didjeridu* in the Northern Territory where he became strongly attached to Aboriginal culture, making contact with and learning from well-known Aboriginal artist and player David Blanassi (*Meithal: Cooney and Begley*, 1988). Around the same time, he had heard the new Irish group sound associated with Planxty and found this, as well as the sociomusical ambience of the Irish music session scene, powerfully attractive. A number of other convergences of Aboriginal and Irish musicians around this period, such as the association of prominent Irish Australian fiddle player Louis MacManus with the Aboriginal rock group No Fixed Address, also aided the *didjeridu*'s crossover into Irish music.

Cooney moved to Ireland in the 1980s, where he established himself as a sought-after arranger, producer, and performer of Irish music. Working with the band Stockton's Wing, he introduced the *didjeridu* to Irish music in Ireland and the sound was picked up by other Irish groups to become an accepted inclusion in Irish music arrangements. Cooney understands his musical formation in terms of felt cultural affinities between Irish and Aboriginal groundedness. He reflects that he understands Aboriginal society better after being in Kerry, "because this is an Aboriginal society and a lot of the value systems are similar" (Moroney 1998). Such a statement resonates with the strong connection to place often felt to be part of Irish music.

As I have argued elsewhere, *didjeridu* playing by white players in Australia is implicated in claims to an unmediated relationship between the land and the individual. Such connectedness generally claims more than simple conventional associations with a localized musical symbol. The spiritual connotations of the instrument and its sound are linked to the very act of playing and its associated somatic experience, particularly the abdominal sensation of the resonant drone and the potential for psychotropic effects in the sustained circular breathing. The sound of the *didjeridu* becomes the sonic representation of the characteristic Australian landscape, and in producing this the player can feel directly connected with the earth (Smith and Neuenfeldt 1998, 55).

Such claims are not without their problems. Many Aboriginal players are wary that such claims to cultural access by settler Australians undermine their own politics of indigenous rights. However well intentioned, white uses or appropriations of Aboriginal culture are of little use to Aborigines. Others ask merely for acknowledgment and deference to Aboriginal cultural priority. But whether the

playing is imagined as linked to Aboriginal culture, or to the land from which it has arisen, it circumvents traditional representations of the nation-state and its claims to organize the relationships of individuals to larger social structures and historical narratives. Similarly, though a historical link between the *didjeridu* and Irish music cannot be imagined, the convergence can be justified in terms of the ideals of identification of a music with a culture that predates modern nation making.

The meaning of the *didjeridu*'s incorporation into Irish music is amplified for Australians by the historic place of Irishness in the construction of settler identity, as was discussed earlier. As multiculturalism has elevated ethnicity to a primary category of social difference, then Irish or Irish Australian ethnicity is provisionally tried on by groups of Anglo-Australians who are otherwise excluded from claiming an ethnic identity. For them, the musical blending of Aboriginal and Irish musical traditions holds the promise of new grounds for racial and political reconciliation, as well as allowing them to imagine a history in which both the premodern Irish and the contemporary Aborigines participate in a generic tribalism. As each musical element is given a new context, its more disruptive and uncomfortable symbolic associations are removed. The association of Irish traditional music with modern, postindependence, Catholic Ireland has little appeal to the audience for Irish music in Australia. A general Celtic tribalism is far more appealing. Conversely, the Irish *didjeridu* deflates Aboriginal claims to unique cultural ownership of the instrument and allows settler Australians new grounds of identification with the instrument and through it with the land. The Australian landscape can become musically Celticized, the *didjeridu* offering settler Australian musicians the possibility of an authentic identification and personal grounding in the sounds of their land.

In Ireland, the *didjeridu*'s position in Irish music has been consolidated in a parallel process by its proposed analogy with the Bronze Age trumpets, and in fact the use of these as instruments was inspired by *didjeridu* playing. These bronze horns are striking archaeological artifacts of pre-Christian Ireland. Up to 1.5 m in length, with wide conical bore and an end or a side mouthpiece aperture, they have been found in various sites in Ireland. Usually dated from around 1000 B.C., many have been found in sites in Ireland, often apparently as votive offerings. Similar instruments have also been

found throughout contemporary northern Europe. The Irish instruments are high status, perhaps ceremonial instruments of an aristocratic culture. In the mid-1970s, archaeologist Peter Holmes discovered that these instruments could be played using the *didjeridu* technique (Holmes 1979), and in the mid-1980s Irish musician Simon O'Dwyer incorporated them in live playing and recording. Beginning as a *bodhran* player, O'Dwyer started to play *didjeridu* around 1986, after hearing Steve Cooney's playing with Stocktons Wing, and subsequently traveled to Australia to develop his technique (Hummingbird 1998). Soon after he shifted his attention to the Bronze Age horns and incorporated them in the band Reconciliation, which also included Australian performer Phil Conyngham. The band traveled to Australia and established contact with noted Aboriginal player Alan Dargin (Macgowan 1997, 177–79). O'Dwyer manufactures his horns from historic models and emphasizes their decorative spikes to enhance the suggestion of primitive and fierce power (Hummingbird 1998).

Although the horn's position in Irish music was modeled on the *didjeridu*, once incorporated it invoked a deep imaginative and affective history for Irish traditional music. O'Dwyer claims that "Irish traditional music is receptive to the horns, not just because they are one of the very few native Irish instruments, but additionally because they add something to the music by way of sound and rhythm," (quoted in Casey 1994, 59) and because they make a direct appeal to "an element of the Irish psyche which still relates to its past." As O'Dwyer's comments indicate, Irish performers tend to believe that through their sounds, both the *didjeridu* and the Bronze Age horns directly address a collective and ethnic subconscious, and that this is felt too in the reactions of audiences (Casey 1994, 57–59). The perceived affinity between Irish traditional music and Aboriginal music thus contributes to the construction of a deep history for Irish music.

Currently this deep history takes the form of the recontextualization of Irish music as "Celtic," which involves a reformulation of the social and historical meaning of the music, as well as of the points of player and audience access. Typical of this recontextualization is the way the Afro-Celt Sound System formulates and presents their musical fusion of Irish traditional music with popular West-African styles (Afro-Celt Sound System, Real World, 1996). It relies on the construction of a deep Celtic musical identity to ground and explain its musical mixing. Here techno-dance producer Simon Emmerson

further embroidered the fanciful "Atlantean" thesis of filmmaker and writer Bob Quinn of a North-African connection to *sean-nós* singing (Vallely 1999, 344). Emmerson suggested that his musical inspiration derived from the deep, in fact neolithic, connections imagined between Irish and African music, as he mixed Malian drumming with techno-beats and Irish traditional dance tunes. The promotional explanations that accompanied the release invoked stone monuments, trade routes, Celts and Africans in evocative but vague combination (Smith 1997; Vallely 1998, 37–38). Just as the music is given a non-Western and exotic genealogy, so the Celticity as a category of identification is constructed, neither race, nor culture, nor heritage, nor nation; but a direction for identification in which many Europeans, and most anglophone ones, can find some personal point of entry should they wish.

It is common to claim that musical sounds communicate in a direct way with the listener's consciousness. However, whenever such claims are made of *didjeridu*, bronze horn, and other Celticized musics, they are situated within historical, cultural, and social narratives that reach back beyond the modern era to invoke an earlier, premodern and more fundamental level of consciousness and experience. The constructions of society, time, and place that they evoke are all defined in contrast to the modern nation-state, whether Irish or Australian, and the claims that it makes over ethnicity and cultural identity. Just as the *didjeridu*'s drone contradicts the *ceili* piano and its representation of provincial Irish cultural nationalism, and the bronze horn reaches back beyond the legacy of European Judeo-Christian history, so the settler Australian *didjeridu* speaks of new universalist possibilities of relating directly to the land unhindered by differences of race or the history of the European invasion.

CONCLUSION

The two moments of interaction between Irish music and national identity in Australia discussed here emerged at different stages in the development of both Australian settler nationalism and Irish traditional music. In the first, the bush band was involved in constructing an Australian national identity drawing in part on Irish musical resources. Bush bands had little impact outside Australia, though within, they established themselves firmly within a narrative of national distinctiveness. The second moment of the *didjeridu* has had much greater resonance in the wider world of listeners and players of Irish music, paralleling similar reimaginings of the relationship between Irish music and both national and local cultures. In Ireland, as in Australia and elsewhere abroad, Irish traditional music has become part of a global popular music self-consciously playing with origins and identities. The previous terms of cultural identification for Irish traditional music within the geographical and social space of the nation are neither attractive nor adequate for this; thus ways are sought to reimagine Irish music free of and beyond Irish national experience. This broad process of creating an extranational mythopeoia for the music can be called Celticization, and the incorporation of the *didjeridu* contributes to its claims. Whether the *didjeridu* will continue to have a place in Irish music and thus generate more layers of musical and social meaning remains to be seen, but its entry into Irish music was the result of the parallel ways in which individuals in Ireland and Australia have been reimagining their relation to society, history, and the state in an increasingly globalized world.

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NOTES

1. Interview with the author, 10 February 1991.
2. *Cultchie* is a pejorative Hiberno-English term for a rural buffoon, which provided a cultural image of traditional Irish dance music for many urban or middle-class Irish people.

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