

# Irish Music Collectors | Sample answer

Irish music was traditionally passed through generations without being written down. Few realised that it was in danger of becoming extinct. Some people began to collect and record music which had survived orally for thousands of years. The decrease in Irish music can be accounted for through the famine, and the English speaking tradition, growing in Ireland.

The most well-known collector of Irish music was Edward Bunting. Bunting was born in Armagh in 1773. At eleven he was a substitute organist in Belfast. He first interacted with Irish music when he was commissioned at 19 to notate all of the pieces played at the Belfast Harp Festival in 1792. He then set out to collect as much Irish music as possible, as he realised that it was on the brink of extinction. He published "The Ancient Music of Ireland" in three volumes; 66 air heard at the Belfast Harp Festival (published 1796, 17 airs, collected in Munster and Connaught (1809) and 143 further airs (1840).

Another well known collector of Irish music was George Petrie. Petrie was born in Dublin in 1789. He worked on the Ordnance Survey which took him all over the country. He had a grá for Irish music and from an early age collected and wrote down tunes he heard from the country people. In 1851 he was instrumental in founding the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the melodies in Ireland, which issued his Ancient Music of Ireland in 1888 and contains 147 airs and copious notes, both historical and analytical.

Petrie's collection contains spinning tunes, lullabies, plough tunes, song airs, dance tunes and harp compositions. He died in 1860 and 3 volumes of his work were published after. Petrie's daughter entrusted Sir Charles Stanford with three bound manuscripts of her father's work, which Stanford produced his complete Petrie Collection of 1582 tunes from 1901.

Captain Francis O'Neill is regarded as one of the foremost collectors of traditional music and song. He was chief of Police in Chicago and also a flute player, and recruited traditional musicians into the police force. He published "O'Neill's Music of Ireland" in 1903 containing 1850 airs, jigs, reels and hornpipes. He also published Volumes in 1907, 1915, 1922. In 1913 he published a biography of musicians entitled "Irish Minstrels and

Musicians.” In 1910 he published “Irish Folk Music - a Fascinating Hobby”. Through this work he contributed greatly to the preservation of Irish Music.

William Forde was a collector of Irish Music who made his headquarters in Cork. He gave lectures in Irish music and collected tunes from around Munster, but also toured Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, Roscommon and Mayo, and brought back beautiful melodies. He noted hundreds of unpublished airs from a fiddler in Ballinamore. He applied for subscribers so that he could publish his work but failed to get 250 so it was never published in his lifetime.

It is these composers who are responsible for keeping Irish Music alive and preserving it in order to prevent its extinction.