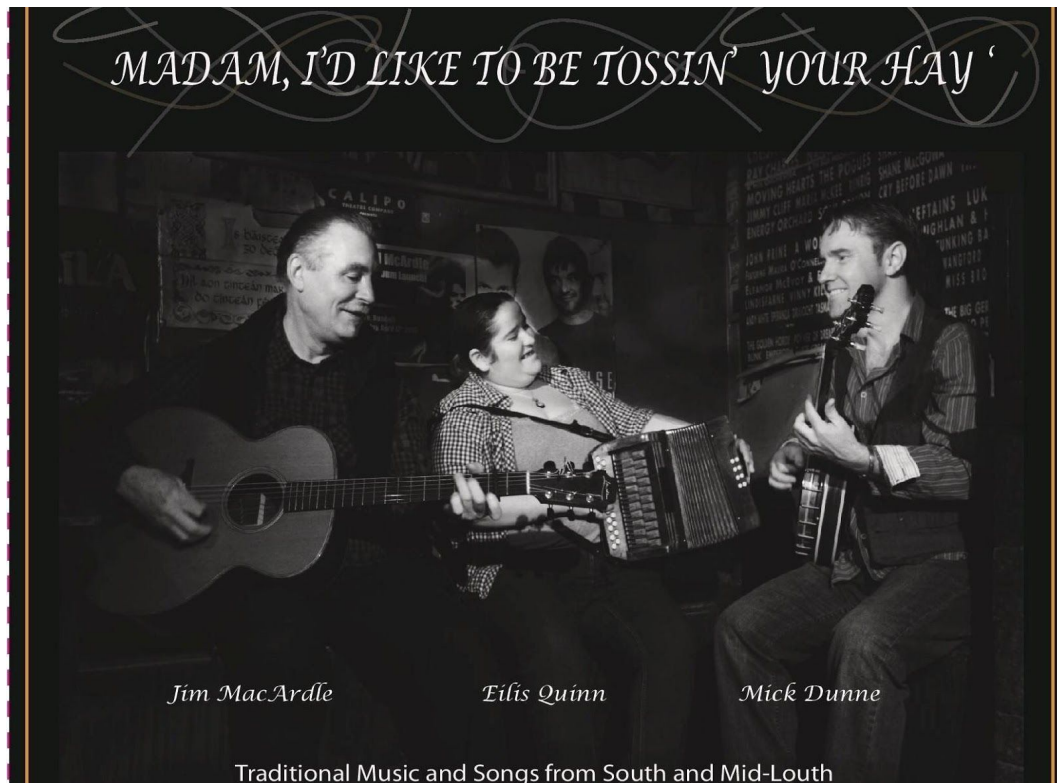


Madam I'd Like to be Tossin' Your Hay



The Music

The music is unusual and unique in that it is composed mainly of tunes which are not part of the general repertoire of Irish Music (Reels and Jigs), but has Quadrilles, Single Jigs, Flings, Polkas, mostly tunes which were played for the set. The choice of keys for the tunes is unusual, mostly influenced by Mary Ann Carolan's playing. She played the 'German' Concertina – a two-row double-reeded instrument in the keys C and G. She played in the 'up and down' style with a small bit of ornamentation and some 'doubling' of notes. Because of the set up of her instrument, she played many of her tunes in the key of C, an unusual key for traditional tunes, which, combined with her unusual repertoire, gave her music a distinctive sound. She never played at sessions, but had a vivid memory of her father's playing and singing.

Mary Ann was originally from Tenure, near Collon and lived in the Hill of Rath with her husband Nicky, not far out of Drogheda off the Collon Road. Her father Pat was the subject of one of Ciaran McMathuna's *Job of Journeywork* Radio Eireann programmes in 1962 – playing concertina and singing at the age of 93. I came to know Pap (her brother) and her cousin Petie Curran and recall vividly some magical Sundays, visiting Mary Ann in the afternoon, having tay and her wonderful home-made bread before retiring down to the 'room' for tunes and songs and, after a few hours there, heading off with Mary Ann to her former home in Tenure where Pap, a fine fiddler and singer lived, and the music and songs continued until late in the evening. Pap in his time played with the Emerald Ceili Band and with the Dominic Maguire Ceili Band from Drogheda, whose pianist was Caitlin Ni Chairbre.

I first met Tommy McArdle in Jimmy Kennedy's pub in Stabannon in the early 80's, a mecca for traditional music on a Wednesday nights and not far from his home in Tallanstown. Joe Ryan , often recalled how he used to drive into Drogheda on Wednesday nights for a quiet drink, but as soon as he crossed the bridge over the Boyne, he would lose control of the car and it would end up in Stabannon !. In any case, the welcome from owners Jim and Maureen in the heyday of the magical Wednesday nights made it more difficult to get out of than into!. Tommy was born and lived in Tallanstown and I spent

many weekends with him in the pubs around his home village, Mullacrew and Louth Village. Tommy was pre-deceased by his more well-known brother Peter, a fine fiddler and accordion player. Tommy had a fine repertoire of Tall Tales, Songs and old-time Tunes and was ever-willing to share his music and repartee.

The Musicians:

Eilis Quinn: Eilis' family have roots in Carricknaganna, near Mullaghbawn and Clogherhead. We have been playing together for a quite few years now and have developed our repertoire based on local tunes and we both have had the privilege of playing with the legendary Wally Murphy in Carberry's, the Nep and other local venues where our type of music is tolerated.

Mick Dunne: Mick is an excellent musician, Drogheda born and bred like myself and educated in Carberry's. His tasteful playing on mandolin and tenor banjo provides a nice dynamic contrast with the Accordeon and Concertina.

Gerry Cullen : I have known Gerry Cullen since were both chaps.

Notes on the tunes.

1. Bobby Casey's/Madam I'd like to be Tossin' your Hay.

The first tune comes from the renowned Clare fiddler Bobby Casey, given to me by Joe Ryan. The second was learned from the late Tommy McArdle from Tallanstown who described it thus: *'It's about this farmer who has a notion of this widda woman and he sang - Madam I'd like to be Tossin' your Hay, Tossin' your Hay Tossin' your Hay, Madam I'd like to be Tossin' your Hay down on the Country Farm !'*

2. The Drogheda Lasses/ The Templehouse Reel.

The late fiddler John Gray, originally from near the Aughavas/Carrigallen area in Co Leitrim, lived in Drogheda for many years was the source of the first reel while Pap Usher played the second.

3. Young Bob Ridley/ Gerdy Commannes' Polka

The song is from Mary Ann Carolan and the original was written in 1840s by American composer Charles Farrar as a 'blackface' Minstrel song with a first verse *'Now white folks I's goin' to sing you a ditty'* and on its journey to Tenure seems to have taken a few turns along the way. Bob seems to have lived out his later years in the Cork area as he is a type of old codger in versions collected there. Gerdy Commane, from Kilnamona, outside Milltown Malbay was one of Clare's greatest concertina players and a great friend of Joe Ryan, who taught us this tune, which was from Gerdy's father.

4. The Tintown Reels.

Jim Mooney, a resident of Laytown and noted bon-viveur tells me that Tintown was the name that the posh people in Corballis (across the Nanny river from Laytown) called Laytown due to its inordinate number of 'summer' dwellings. Whether this is true or not, it's a good story and a good name for these tunes which are played in the keys of C/Dm

5. The Pile of Bricks/ The Yellow Door.

These are two tunes which came to me by some kind of osmosis and remind me of Mary Ann Carolan's style of playing. They commemorate a time when the pile of bricks were carried through the yellow door and a magical time was had by those who know what this is all about.

6. The Laugh and Half Daft.

A song from Mary Ann Carolan's extensive repertoire. Laugh and Half Daft appears to be a corruption of the Welsh placename Llandaff.

7. Mary Anns' Five Reels

The Heathy Breeze, The Ladies Pantaloon, The Hill of Rath, The Wind that Shakes the Barley, Bonnie Kate. These five reels were played regularly by Mary Ann Carolan and remind me of many magical Sunday afternoons spent in her home in the Hill of Rath when we had t'ay in the kitchen and then retired down to the Room for a few tunes and songs.

8. The Lass of Gowrie/Mary Ann's/Try and help him if you can (Polkas)

These polkas are played at a leisurely pace which appears to reflect their original song settings and come from the playing of Mary Ann Carolan.

9. T it stands for Tommy I suppose (Song)

This is an Ardee version of the well known song, collected from Mrs Callan, who lived in Sliabh Breagh, Ardee.

10. Peter McArdle's.

This selection of set tunes come from Tommy McArdle, who played them as set tunes with his brother Peter.

11. Mary Ann's Quadrilles (Quadrilles)

These two selections of tunes were typical of tunes played for the sets – a combination of old tunes and song airs and played at lively pace.

12. Here's to Clogherhead (Song)

This is a song about God's own country – taking the road out of Clogherhead down to Togher, Port, and Annagassan. The verses were written with the obvious pride which local poets take in their own surroundings, possibly by Nicholas Sharkey from Clogherhead, and the Chorus is from a song called '*The Thirty Two Counties*' – reputedly written by T.D. Sullivan. I learned the song from Paul Duffy of Walshestown – not far from Murray's Cross where the 'famous handball' was tossed

13. Mick Clifford's Tune.

Mick was a fiddler who spent some time in the British Army who played in O'Neills and the Tollstone (known by us illiterate musicians as the Toadstool) in Duleek. He composed this old-time fling.

14. Fabio's Reel/ The Bee Minor Reel

The first reel was composed to commemorate the Drogs' exploits over the last few years. Declan 'Fabio' O'Brien is the Drogs' legendary striker whose second half lob over Mick Devine's head ensured the Club's first trophy in Senior Football in 2005 after forty years of trying. The second tune does what is says on the tin – a reel in Bm.

15. The Girls of our Town/ Scotch Mary (Flings)

These two tunes are better known as reels and come from the playing of Tommy McArdle. Tommy was a fiddler and stone mason, very generous with his time, with a great repertoire of old style tunes, and on the rare occasions when the notion took him, gave us a glimpse of his wonderful singing voice.

16. In Sweet Tyrone lived Tom Malone / The Rollicking Boys around Tandaragee.

I learnt this song from Petie Curran, who had it from Pat Usher. Petie specialised in 'comic' songs like this, generally about marriages which didn't work, and there were plenty of them.. I learnt the second tune from the late Tommy McCarthy from Milltown Malbay, Co Clare, a wonderful concertina player.

17. A Tune for Joe (Air)

I have been extremely fortunate to have known the great Joe Ryan as both a friend and fellow-musician for the last thirty years. With musicians Kathleen Smith, Caroline O'Rourke, Hughie Grogan, Peter Farrell, Paddy Allen, Colm O'Mealoid etc etc, in attendance, Joe presided at the Thursday night session in the Becks pub outside Duleek for many years and is sadly missed. Joe and I travelled up and down to his native Clare and to many other parts of the country many times, and each journey was carefully planned. To Joe, the journey was always as important as the destination. This tune was composed in his memory.