

**“WALKING WITH OUR ANCESTORS”: MUSIC AND CONSTRUCTIONS  
OF IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITIES AT CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENTS**

by

Kaitlyn Elizabeth Myers

Bachelor of Arts in Music, Kenyon College, 2010

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Music

University of Pittsburgh

2013

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Music

This thesis was presented

by

Kaitlyn Elizabeth Myers

It was defended on

16 April 2013

and approved by

Dr. Adriana Helbig, Assistant Professor, Music

Dr. Andrew Weintraub, Professor, Music

Thesis Director: Dr. Deane Root, Professor, Music

**“WALKING WITH OUR ANCESTORS”: MUSIC AND CONSTRUCTIONS  
OF IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITIES AT CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENTS**

Kaitlyn Elizabeth Myers, M.A.

University of Pittsburgh, 2013

Copyright © by Kaitlyn Elizabeth Myers

2013

## **“WALKING WITH OUR ANCESTORS”: MUSIC AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITIES AT CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENTS**

Kaitlyn Elizabeth Myers, MA

University of Pittsburgh, 2013

Civil War re-enactors are individuals so inspired by the events of the American Civil War that they don period costume to act out battles or serve in an encampment in a civilian wartime role. Re-enactments allow participants to listen to or participate in the music associated with the war, both the ballad traditions sung around the campfire and the brass regimental band repertoire. These re-enactors “experience” war and its associated music, while simultaneously using music to share their knowledge of the war.

Since Ireland’s economic boom in the 1990s, identifying as Irish has become popular on an international scale, inspiring recent musical re-enactors to portray the Irish-American experience during the Civil War. Many of these musical re-enactors derive a sense of satisfaction at both experiencing and sharing a story of Irish-Americans at a critical point in United States history. Before 1861, the dominant Anglo-Protestant population regarded the Irish-American working class as a lesser ethnic group, characterized by stereotypical traits of laziness and alcoholism, but the years following 1865 saw positive changes for this image. Musical media presented the concept of a male Irish-American citizen loyal to the country that he fought to hold together, in

the hope that he might eventually become a respected citizen. Music helped many Irish-Americans to become a part of the nation that had previously viewed the group as a threat, to become assimilated not only into a higher class but also into a white race.

Many re-enactors view music as particularly relevant to sharing an Irish-American experience, in part because of the longstanding concept of musicality as an identifier of Irishness and a belief in the significance of music to a Civil War experience. This study traces the ways in which the Civil War re-enactment community and the community of those who identify as Irish-American came to view music as an authenticating process, a means of conveying stylistic traits that help to define their communities. It then traces how these processes overlap in the production of an Irish-American Civil War heritage, constructing an interpretation of the past through musical performance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION: MUSIC IN WAR.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 CIVIL WAR MUSIC AND THE IRISH IMMIGRANT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 IRISH-AMERICAN MUSICAL RE-ENACTORS: SEEKING AN AUTHENTIC HERITAGE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.2.1 David Kincaid.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.2.2 The Gallant Sons of Erin.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.2.3 The Armory Band.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.0 “GETTING IT RIGHT”: HISTORY AND HIERARCHY .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1 CONSTRUCTING AN AUTHENTIC HISTORY .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.2 COLLECTIVELY REMEMBERING THE CONSTRUCTED PAST .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.3 HIERARCHY OF KNOWLEDGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.0 THE MUSICAL IRISH-AMERICAN SOLDIER .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.1 IRISHNESS AS MUSICALITY.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3.2 “WALK WITH OUR ANCESTORS”: THE PERSONAL LINK .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>4.0 INTERSECTIONS: IRISHNESS, RE-ENACTMENT AND MEMORIALIZATION.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>68</b>

## **PREFACE**

I would like to dedicate this to my mom, for her seemingly endless supply of encouragement; my dad, for his passion for history that started me on this crazy adventure; Aaron, for his love and support; and Seth, for the strength to see this through to the end.

Many thanks to the members of my committee for being willing to meet with me, providing advice, and suggesting new sources and directions of thought. Thanks as well to the musical re-enactors David Kincaid, The Gallant Sons of Erin, and the 69<sup>th</sup> New York Regimental band for their time and insight.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION: MUSIC IN WAR

The time of my writing this thesis falls at a particularly significant moment in American history, 150 years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln's famous declaration stated that the federal government considered all African-American people still enslaved in areas of rebellion to be free, yet he made this decision for a variety of political reasons rather than solely with the welfare of slaves in mind.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, while slavery played a substantial role in the political and ideological division between North and South, it was a tension that had arguably been building since the nation was founded (Woodworth 2011, xvi). Slavery was not the sole factor leading to the climax of growing difference—the South's secession and the outbreak of war in 1861—nor was the issue so readily explained as a matter of Northern abolitionists versus Southern slaveholders. Women and men standing on both sides of the war represented a broad spectrum of ethnic backgrounds, with a diverse range of opinions on issues of slavery, political independence, loyalty to one's nation and state, and the definition of being American; all of these contributed to the socio-cultural conflicts that led to Civil War.

Many of these issues related to the concerns of newly arrived immigrant communities, struggling to find work and acceptance in a nation growing increasingly xenophobic as greater

---

<sup>1</sup> Historian Steven O'Brien notes that this decision was made, at least in part, to prevent Great Britain from siding with the South. Its timing was also motivated by political gain; announced following what was interpreted as a Union victory at Antietam, the document gave the impression that Lincoln was certain of future success (O'Brien 2011, 126).



numbers of “outsiders” arrived on their shores. The largest numbers of emigrants in the mid-nineteenth century were those traveling from famine-beleaguered Ireland. Due to the conditions in their native nation, over 780,000 Irish arrived in America between 1841 and 1850 (Saffle 2004, 169). This massive influx of Irish men and women led to a significant change in the makeup of the American working class, particularly for women working in the domestic sphere. Beginning in the late 1840s, Irish women effectively cornered the market in domestic housekeeping, leading many American girls to refuse the job because it “bore the Irish label and as such was something no ‘American’ girl would touch if she could avoid it” (Diner 1983, 92). Irish men, growing in numbers in the work force but aware of the religious and ethnic discrimination they faced, became a political, and occasionally violent, force to be reckoned with (Ignatiev 1995, 187). Yet for the newly arrived Irish man, fighting in the Civil War offered an opportunity to shift his position in terms of both class and race. Yet while both Irish-Americans and African-Americans came from similar socio-economic circumstances at the start of the war, competing for the same jobs, living in the same rough parts of cities, and fighting in the bloodiest battles because white Protestant superiors deemed these soldiers to be largely expendable, it was Irish-Americans who rose to become perceived as socially and racially equal to their previously supposed superiors once the war was over.

In this thesis I consider the degree to which the complexity of this transition translates to the present day, exploring what continues to draw countless scholars, tourists, and others to the landmarks where Irish-American soldiers fought and immigrants sought to determine how they would fit into the society of their newfound nation. For approximately the past twenty years, Americans have been bringing to life the stories of the Irish-American experience during the

Civil War through paintings, films, and a wide-ranging spectrum of fictional and non-fictional texts.

Growing up with my self-proclaimed “Civil War buff” father, the events of 1861 to 1865 were very much a part of my life from my earliest memories. I walked the battlefields of Gettysburg on fieldtrips where my dad had more to contribute than the tour guide and lost myself in the massive, intricate paintings by Dale Gallon and Mort Kunstler of the Irish Brigade in various Civil War battles that always adorned my father’s office. I even remember a period of several years where I effectively idolized Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and his fictional Irish comrade Buster Kilrain in the movie *Gettysburg* (Maxwell and Sharra, 1993), as the epitomes of human flexibility and capacity: a professor turned brilliant military leader by necessity and his wise, steadfast Irish companion who gave his life for the Union’s cause.

That music intricately wove its way through the biographical stories my father shared with me was apparent from the start. Road trips with my dad often involved listening to any number of albums featuring nineteenth-century ballads that would have been sung around the campfire and lyrics adapted from previously popular tunes to suit the political issues of the day, many featuring the occasional Irish-American themed song. Civil War film soundtracks featured similar ballads arranged for regimental brass bands, and on the few occasions I attended Civil War re-enactments as a spectator I always enjoyed the musical demonstrations of various period instruments. The music of the Civil War, in effect, became one of its defining features for me. It provided a very visceral, “real” experience of the nineteenth-century stories I grew up hearing.

In recent years, specifically following the events of 9/11 and the awareness that comes with an adult’s sense of responsibility to understand current events, I have found myself drawn to publications considering the effects of the use of music by American soldiers presently serving in

the military. For example, Jonathan Pieslak's work *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War* explores how, for soldiers in Iraq, music serves as inspiration for combat, becomes a tool for psychological strategy, and provides an outlet for expressing feelings regarding "patriotism, grief over the loss of a friend, and the realities of daily soldier existence" (Pieslak 2009, 9). Pieslak attempts to consider the musical experiences of those women and men who lived, or continue to serve, in the Iraq war. Steve Waksman offers a more external perspective in his chapter, "War Is Heavy Metal: Soundtracking the US War in Iraq." His essay discusses the use of music by both filmmakers attempting to portray fictional accounts of the war, and filmmakers who explicitly address the use of music in documentary style films. In effect, Waksman's work considers the creation of a history of music in the Iraq war, a process well underway even ten years after the events of 9/11.

Both of these issues, the musical experience of war and music's role in the creation of the history surrounding that war, are vital in the construction of a musical culture within the Civil War re-enactment community. Civil War re-enactors are individuals so inspired by the events of the war that they take their involvement beyond merely reading about those events; they instead choose to attempt to re-live them. Such people are frequently referred to as members of the "Living History" movement, taking weekends out of their modern lives to participate in the re-enactment of specific battles or contemporary settlements. These soldiers don period costume to fight as an imagined soldier or ancestor, or serve in an encampment in some other wartime role. Yet re-enactment battles often extend beyond the strategy and performed fighting, allowing participants to listen to or participate in regimental brass bands, and to bond with the other members of their recreated regiment or brigade around an evening campfire for a dinner of a

Civil War soldier's rations, lively tales of the day's events, and a round of the rousing, well-known ballads associated with the war.

By participating in these events, re-enactors "live" or "experience" war and its associated music, while simultaneously using music to present their concept of the war and their knowledge of historical events to spectators who linger nearby. Musical re-enactors will also frequently participate in educational performances, stepping out of the historical space created in the re-enactment battlefield or camp and onto the modern-day stage, while still maintaining the character of an American Civil War soldier. Thus both on the battlefield and off, musical re-enactors both experience the history of the Civil War and simultaneously create it, a story told, or perhaps retold, for themselves and others. The resources they use to find information about the war, how they choose to convey the information, and the individual perspective they choose to portray through their performance, all contribute to the development of their unique interpretation of historical events.

## **1.1 CIVIL WAR MUSIC AND THE IRISH IMMIGRANT**

Given the drastic numbers of Irish who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, drastically shifting the American socio-political landscape, it is of little surprise that the primary media of the day reflected the thoughts and opinions of many Americans regarding these changes. One of the forms of media used to share information about the Irish immigrant in America during the mid-nineteenth-century was the broadside ballad. In the early 1800s these mass-produced, metered texts became popular, growing to a full-fledged craze by the 1850s. Much of the interest

in a single sheet of song lyrics came from the broadsides' connection to socio-cultural issues of the day. Edwin Wolf writes that broadside ballads were "expected to fill the emotional needs of people during times of tenseness: patriotic songs to march to, ballads of battle to boast of, sentimental songs to while away hours around campfires or bring tears to Victorian eyes, comic songs to fetch a laugh, bitter satirical songs to relieve feelings, and old favorites just because people liked ... to sing them" (Wolf 1963, iii). Understandably there was a great deal of "tenseness" for these ballads and other popular varieties of song to describe, exploit, and relieve during the twenty years between 1850 through to 1870, as the people of the United States had to deal with the divisiveness of a war between North and South, as well as the growing divide between native-born citizen and newly arrived emigrant.

The tremendous change in the ethnic makeup of the nation inspired a substantial amount of music regarding the new Irish arrivals. Broadside ballads constructed, and were in turn influenced by, nineteenth-century concepts of Irishness. Edwin Wolf noted this phenomenon when he wrote about, "the tremendous influence of the Irish upon American songs and ballads during the period" (Wolf 1963, y). He describes many of the broadsides included within the Collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia, elaborating briefly on the ballads within the collection whose *lyrics* described Irish working conditions, Irish bravery during the Civil War, Irish sentimental ballads, and those songs that described "Paddy" in a more humorous light because of his purported tendency to fight, drink, or speak with a particular dialect.

Yet despite this perpetuation of stereotypes through much of the music that dealt with concepts of Irishness, many musical re-enactors choose to portray Irish-American soldiers. They are careful in selecting songs with particular Irish-American themes from the period, largely picking those that place the Irishmen in a positive or nostalgic light and avoiding those that rely

on racist tropes. Their choices stem in part from their fascination with how the war served as a catalyst for positive change for members of the Irish-American working class, a story of bravery and loyalty that allows some contemporary Irish-Americans to look on their past with a deep sense of pride. Before 1861, the dominant Anglo-Protestant population of the United States regarded the Irish-American working class as a lesser ethnic group, allegedly limited in mental capacity and characterized by stereotypical traits of laziness and alcoholism (Williams 1996, 156). The bulk of these negative sentiments stemmed from the influx of Irish immigrants in the 1840s at the height of the Great Famine, who arrived with limited skills suited for urban living, yet lacked funding to travel to the more rural regions that had agricultural jobs they were trained to do (Smyth 2009, 52). Urban areas held the community structure most similar to what immigrants would have been accustomed to in Ireland, with the option of visiting neighbors, remaining involved with the local parish, and seeking aid from relief organizations. As a result, newly arrived Irish began to take whatever jobs they could acquire, and this association with the lowest of jobs meant that Irish were often viewed as “valueless compared to native-born white and even slave labor” and were frequently referred to as “white slaves” (Ural Bruce 2006, 31).

The chance to serve in the war was, for many Irish-American men, a chance to improve one’s lot economically. Susannah Ural Bruce describes how a working class Irishman could earn \$272 annually in 1850s only if he managed to piece together steady employment for at least six days a week, whereas enlisted personnel in the U.S. Army ranged from \$132 to \$252 and “recruiters reminded Irishmen that their work in the military was steady, not sporadic as with many jobs available in the cities. More importantly, supplements included housing, regular meals, clothing, and free medical care by trained professionals” (Ural Bruce 2006, 33). Others joined out of a sense of loyalty to their new nation. Altogether, nearly 190,000 Irishmen fought

during the Civil War, approximately 160,000 of them for the Union. Many of these soldiers fought in the famed Irish Brigade, a unit described by Civil War historian Joseph Bilby as always to be “found wherever the fighting was thickest” (Bilby 1998, liner notes). The Brigade initially formed from the 69<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia (NYSM), which established its reputation as a firmly Irish group a year before the war when its Colonel, Irish nationalist Michael Corcoran, refused to parade the 69<sup>th</sup> NYSM before the Prince of Wales during his visit to America in 1860. The 69<sup>th</sup> NYSM further established themselves through their efforts at the battle of Bull Run, where Corcoran was wounded and captured (Bilby 1995, 15). Brigadier General Thomas F. Meagher formed the Irish Brigade from the veterans of the 69<sup>th</sup> NYSM, initially adding 63<sup>rd</sup>, 69<sup>th</sup>, and 88<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry, and later the 28<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry and the 116<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry (Bilby 1995, ix). Over the course of the war, the Brigade would lose nearly 4000 men. “By their sacrifice,” Bilby writes, “They had largely [put to rest] to the anti-Irish sentiments of the pre-war period and, in a sense, had won two wars at once” (Bilby 1998, liner notes).

While there was no dramatic, immediate change after the war, the years following 1865 saw some positive changes in the image of Irish-American immigrants, in no small part because of their involvement in the war and musical portrayal of that involvement.<sup>2</sup> Broadside ballads and other musical media spread the message of Irish courage in the war at battles such as Fredericksburg, a fateful battle in 1862 that saw the “tragic irony” of the Union’s Irish Brigade “clash with Irish Confederates” and has subsequently been mythologized by literature and film

---

<sup>2</sup> Thus far my research has led me to believe that the Irish-American woman was largely overlooked in the ballads that described Irish-American experience in the war. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that female Irish immigrants began to move to slightly higher-paying factory positions during the war, an opportunity that placed them on equal footing with many working class men in terms of bringing home a steady pay check (O’Connor 1997, 238).

(Warren 2001, 47). Popular songs such as Stephen Foster's 1862 "Was my Brother in the Battle?"<sup>3</sup> presented the concept of an Irish-American citizen fighting boldly for his new home, loyal to the country that he fought to hold together, in the hope that he might eventually become a respected citizen. They helped the Irish-American to become a part of the nation that had previously viewed him as a threat and to become assimilated not only into a higher class but also, as described by Noel Ignatiev in his famous book *How the Irish Became White*, into the white race.

Musical re-enactors seem drawn to these issues for varying reasons, be it their own personal background, a desire to educate, or a sense of satisfaction at both experiencing and sharing the story of the Irish-American at this critical point in history. Whatever their inspiration, each of these re-enactors contributes to the continuation, and inevitable adaptation, of these stories. One aspect that I believe merits further consideration is that of the *musical re-enactor seeking to portray an Irish-American experience during the Civil War*.

## **1.2 IRISH-AMERICAN MUSICAL RE-ENACTORS: SEEKING AN AUTHENTIC HERITAGE**

I intend to use this thesis as a space for exploring the intersections of the significance of music in both the American Civil War re-enactment community and Irish-American identities in

---

<sup>3</sup> The start of the third verse reads, "Was my brother in the battle when the flag of Erin came / To the rescue of our banner and protection of our fame" (Foster 1862).



the 21st century. As described earlier, individuals seeking to understand and effectively portray events of the Civil War—and indeed, nearly any war fought by Americans since—are often familiar with the important role of music in the war. Similarly, concepts of identifying as Irish-American—acting in such a way as to portray oneself as Irish-American and simultaneously be perceived by others as Irish-American—are deeply entwined with acting in such a way as to prove one’s knowledge of a distinctly Irish musical performance. The Irish-American musical re-enactor is thus performing two branches of his *heritage* with each re-enactment or stage performance, two branches indelibly intertwined through the significance of one to the other, and both closely defined through their connection with music. This performance is thoroughly entrenched in the ideals of *authenticity*: there are set rules to be followed if one is going to accurately portray an Irish-American soldier from the Civil War.

Yet as Regina Bendix discussed in her seminal work *In Search of Authenticity*, the “crucial questions to be answered” in projects such as this “are not ‘what is authenticity?’ but ‘who needs authenticity and why?’ and ‘how has authenticity been used?’” (Bendix 1997, 21). These questions are not meant to imply that an authentic version of any cultural act or object actually exists, but instead that unpacking the methods used by different groups attempting to achieve the standards of an authentic ideal can prove helpful in understanding the groups’ motivations. Given that these musical re-enactors invoke authentic benchmarks in order to construct and share an Irish-American heritage, I believe that a thorough examination of musical performance in re-enactment settings, as well as a deconstruction of how Irish-American re-enactors came to believe in the importance of music, will offer answers to similar questions about Irish-American heritage: Why are these markers of heritage important to re-enactors of

Irish-American units? How have the re-enactors used this heritage and participated in the display of heritage?

In an effort to take multiple perspectives into consideration, I have interviewed musical re-enactors involved with three different Irish-American Civil War re-enactment groups, using their perspectives to help in my analysis of video footage of their live performances, and consideration of their albums (when available). They represent three distinct approaches to the musical portrayal of the Irish-American experience in the Civil War as played by Americans,<sup>4</sup> and through their efforts have contributed to the construction of a connection to the past through the performative acts in the present. These re-enactors do not, of course, represent all perspectives. Notably missing in this narrative are the stories of women re-enactors and re-enactors of color, who if fewer in number than the dominant white, male contingent of re-enactment culture nevertheless contribute to the community in substantial ways. One re-enactor, Todd Bryda, noted that the women in *The Gallant Sons of Erin* included a doctor of archaeology, an early childhood development specialist, and a paralegal, all of whom greatly contributed to group's research efforts.

My selections were made not out of any desire to exclude these important voices, but a difficulty of long-distance research. In reaching out to these artists by email and phone alone, I was directed to the self-identified leaders of each musical organization, who all happened to be white and male. Given more time or more opportunities for in-person attendance at re-enactments, I would gladly have expanded my research to include these individuals. That said, I

---

<sup>4</sup> Another “big name” in the genre of Irish-American Civil War music is Irish native Derek Warfield. His albums focus on the Fenian cause and Confederate Irish soldiers. As I am focusing on American takes on re-enactment music, and due to Warfield's reluctance to be interviewed, I have elected not to use his albums for this paper.

recognize up front that this document touches on issues related to African-Americans only with regard to their role in the history of Irish-Americans in minstrelsy. I have also largely glossed over issues relating to women in re-enactment in the war. I regret that my choice not to focus on this information could in turn contribute to these voices being “written out” of the history and heritage produced by texts that guide the musical re-enactment culture, as arguably they largely already have.

It is also important to note that I am coming to this project not as a participant-observer, but instead as a re-enactment spectator. My present schedule and the expense of period costume and registration fees proved prohibitive in that regard. Should I continue with this project in the future, I believe that it would be important for me to join a musical re-enactment group for a better understanding of the physical experience. However, it is also important to note that even if I had been able to join an organization, my gender would very likely have prohibited me from taking on the role of the soldier musician that I largely focus on in this essay. Some re-enactment organizations are far more “family friendly” than others, implying that they are more inclusive of “camp civilians” who generally include women re-enactors and children and, in the case of the 69<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia, incorporate youth education and musical training programs. Nevertheless, the issue of women cross-dressing and participating as soldiers, as opposed to wearing women’s period garb as nurses in the camp or performing as vocalists with musical groups, remains a contentious one.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> For further historical information on women soldiers in the American Civil War, see Blanton and Cook’s *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the Civil War*. For information on the issue of women participating as soldiers in Civil War re-enactments, see Cullen’s *The Civil War in Popular Culture*.

### 1.2.1 David Kincaid

The man whose name is first to appear if one does an internet search on Irish-American music of the Civil War, past roots-rocker and present-day historian David Kincaid has accumulated over thirty years of professional experience as a recording engineer and singer-songwriter. His initial venture into performance was with New York City band The Brandos. Since their founding in 1985, The Brandos have produced ten albums, receiving the most recognition for their first single and video “Gettysburg.” Kincaid attributes the inspiration for this song to his interest in his family’s involvement in the war; an Irish-American great-great grandfather, Corporal James McCormick Kincaid, fought in the Union’s Army of the Potomac for the majority of the war.

By 1988, Kincaid’s fascination with the Civil War led him to join the “living history” movement as a member of Company I, the 116<sup>th</sup> Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, a collection of Civil War re-enactors who chose to portray members of a regiment in the Union Army’s famed “Irish Brigade.” Following day-long portrayals of particular Civil War battles, Kincaid and other members of his regiment would enjoy musical sessions back at the camp, during which Kincaid recognized a distinct lack of songs specifically relating the stories of the Irish-Americans who fought in the war and began to seek them out in order to resolve this issue.

Approximately nine years after joining his re-enactment organization, Kincaid felt that he had amassed enough information to release his first album *The Irish Volunteer: Songs of the Irish Union Soldier 1861-1865*. This album featured Kincaid on the vocals, with well-known performers in the Irish traditional music scene such as fiddler Liz Knowles, previously heard in the extremely popular *Riverdance* tour; internationally renowned piper Jerry O’Sullivan; and seven-time All-Ireland champion accordionist John Whelan. Recognition from the success of the

album has certainly garnered David Kincaid a tremendous amount of respect as a musician in the Irish-American community, but has also served to place him as the foremost historian of Irish-American Civil War music. Indeed he has been called upon as musical director for several Civil War documentaries as well as serving as the primary consultant for the Hollywood Civil War film *Gods and Generals* (Maxwell and Sharra, 2003).

### 1.2.2 The Gallant Sons of Erin

A second Irish-American re-enactment group, The Gallant Sons of Erin, played in a style similar to Kincaid's, performing ballads in a style appropriate for performance around a campfire. They stopped playing together about three years ago, but in the roughly nine years they performed as a group they released one album and did many educational gigs. The leaders of this group, Mark DeAngelis and Todd Bryda, both work as professors—of law and history respectively—in Connecticut. They have both been involved with the 28<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer regiment for nearly twenty years, rising to command positions in the organization. The actual 28<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, much like the 116<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, also joined the Irish Brigade during the war (Cornish 2011).

Initially DeAngelis and Bryda only played music informally during re-enactments. Mr. DeAngelis shared that:

It started out as sort of an evening pastime, you know, after spectators have left, sort of for our own enjoyment ... And then once we realized we were pretty good at it, and enjoyed it, and became much more knowledgeable about it, we would play during the day too, when spectators were around. You know if we had down time, Todd and I especially, cause I had a little guitar and he just had the *bodhran* [an Irish frame drum], we'd just sit under a tree in the shade and sing and play and families would gather round and everyone would get into it and everyone would be interested. Those were the best times (Mark DeAngelis, pers. comm.)

Eventually they considered making an album and formed a group:

We decided that we would try to be a little more formal than just sitting around the campfire singing what we enjoyed and would try to portray some of the Irish-American soldier's culture through music, by recording the CD and then taking the chance to promote it. So we added my brother to the band; he was a banjo player and singer who was not really in the re-enactment group. All of the rest of us came from reenacting first, he came from music first. He used to do sheet music of the nineteenth-century (DeAngelis, pers. comm.)

Thus the Gallant Sons of Erin chose to focus on ballads from the nineteenth century that dealt with the Irish-American condition, creating a narrative that traced the Irish-American's experiences traveling overseas, fighting during the war, and dealing with the political issues associated with the nativist policies of the Know Nothing Party (Ignatiev 1995, 187). They included a substantial set of liner notes with their album, explaining the historical significance of each song, in an effort to make their album a useful educational tool.

### **1.2.3 The Armory Band**

Members of the third group I spoke with performed the other two varieties of music that would have been a part of the Irish-American soldier's musical experience during the Civil War: martial field music, specifically fife and drum, and also regimental band repertoire, played predominantly for entertainment. This brass band entertainment music could be used to boost morale at camp, but was also used for officers' balls and special events. Members of the 69<sup>th</sup> New York Regimental Band, an organization based in Southern California, endeavor to re-create the repertoire of the actual Irish Brigade band as it might have sounded in 1864, and have played in both contexts (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.).

Bruce Carver founded the group after realizing that the 69<sup>th</sup> New York lacked a musical ensemble. Carver told me that despite an occasional instance of seeing small music groups performing informally under a tree at a re-enactment, he never saw any bands. He told me that in order to rectify this, “I decided I was going to start my own group and find instructors and find people and form some kind of school so that people like me and my kids could learn music while they were waiting to be old enough to be a soldier if that’s what they wanted to do” (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.).

After its formation the organization expanded dramatically, leading to the eventual formation of two separate groups. Another musician from the group, Steve Andy, described them as:

“The Armory Band” (TAB) and the “Volunteer Cornet Band” (VCB). Both groups portray American Civil War-era brass bands, but TAB is more of a high-caliber music group of musicians wearing period uniforms, while VCB is oriented towards living history presentations and is primarily re-enactors first, musicians second. Bruce formed both bands and is the driving force and visionary leader in everything they do. VCB, augmented by some “ringer” TAB musicians, portrays the 69<sup>th</sup> New York State Volunteers regimental [brass] band, at many So. California CW re-enactments (Steve Andy, pers. comm.)

In contrast to the previous performers, these ensembles have only recently started delving into the Irish connection associated with the 69<sup>th</sup> New York, and have, in the past, been quite flexible with what unit they portray, occasionally adapting their uniform for special events to represent a regiment from another state, or even a Confederate group. While they have not yet released an album at the time of this writing, the group had recently been featured in an independent film entitled *Saving Lincoln* and hoped to release a collection of recordings from this project in the near future.

## **2.0 “GETTING IT RIGHT”: HISTORY AND HIERARCHY**

Despite the distinctions between the type of music they perform and the contexts in which they share their music, David Kincaid, the Gallant Sons of Erin, and the bands associated with the New York 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment all expressed two core ideas during our discussions. The first of these was that if they were going to represent the Irish-American experience during the Civil War, music was a necessary component of that portrayal. The second issue, intertwined with the first, was that if these men were going to portray the Irish-American musical experience, they needed to “get it right” (David Kincaid, pers. comm.).

Reinforcing both of these ideas for many, though not all, of the re-enactors I spoke with, was an actual ancestral link to this moment in history. Some of the men noted actual Irish-American relatives involved in the Civil War, while others connected to a broader concept of the struggle of working class Irish, as part of their inspiration for taking on the tremendous efforts of research and practice involved in the creation of what they deemed to be an acceptably accurate portrayal of the music of the time.

The concept of historical accuracy is vital to most re-enactors. Re-enactments often extend beyond the acted combat, allowing participants to eat, converse, and sleep in war camps designed to mimic nineteenth-century design. Re-enacting soldiers bond with the other members of their organization’s regiment or company around an evening campfire for a dinner of a Civil



War soldier's rations, they share lively tales of the day's events, and of course they join in a round of the rousing, well-known ballads associated with the war.

American historian Jim Cullen writes, "The object of [re-enactment] practitioners is to perform impressions for themselves and others that are meant to recreate vanished experiences or ways of life" (Cullen 1995, 177). One part of recreating these experiences revolves around the incorporation of "authentic" visual objects into the re-enactment experience. Living history participants deliberately try to surround themselves with specific objects of wartime significance, doing a great deal of research into the design and materials used to make a specific uniform or weapon, removing all modern accouterments like watches, cell phones, and lighters. In the case of Irish-American re-enactors, many will add a small sprig of green to their caps in recognition of the Battle of Fredericksburg, where Irish-American soldiers, fully aware that the odds of survival were against them in the battle ahead, added this marker to their uniform so that their bodies might be recognized as part of the Irish Brigade after the battle.

Many of the men I spoke with suggested a sense of hierarchy formed by the varying levels of involvement and dedication attributed to their fellow re-enactors. While different re-enactors provided distinctive terms to describe these categories, every individual I interviewed noted the existence of some form of classification, all based on the degree to which a re-enactor attempted to truly immerse himself in the experience, while still striving for historical accuracy. Thus one might seek out the most dedicated or "hardcore" re-enactor by examining not only the amount of money spent on his attire and gear, but also the amount of time he has spent on his research. The re-enactors, while always quick to inform me of how long they had been involved with the community, also generally stressed the sources they used to make choices for how they would participate in that community.

After inquiring about my re-enactment experience—the lack of which immediately placed me in another category, that of the spectator—Bruce Carver of The Armory Band felt it quite important for me to understand the distinction between the varieties of re-enactor I might encounter in my research efforts. He based these categories on his own discoveries amidst his personal transition from spectator to living historian:

What I couldn't see as a spectator looking *from the outside*, and what it took me really more than a year to comprehend, was [that there are] maybe three categories or maybe three focal points that people in these Civil War events operate within. You've got *participants* like the kids were when they were younger, they're out there to have fun ... They get to go camping, you know, and eat camping food and pretend to be soldiers.

Carver almost describes being a spectator as a nascent stage, and certainly a space apart from the re-enactors. By placing me within this category, it is automatically assumed that I lack certain participatory knowledge, including the knowledge of the existence of the categories themselves. Carver continues by describing the categories, which include those individuals with insider knowledge:

Then there are the two other categories: there are *re-enactors* and there are *living historians*. Now everybody's re-enacting, but the re-enactors tend to learn and know and are able to recite the reenactment history, not necessarily *history* history. While they might be able to say when the battle of Gettysburg was and that the unit they're affiliated with served in Gettysburg from the second day or something, often times you can find some of the information they bring forward really is the way the re-enactors have been doing it for the last twenty years and not necessarily that it came from the history book or any documented evidence. *They're just one step deeper from the participants.* (Bruce Carver, pers. comm., emphasis mine.)

This further divide between re-enactors, those who know the history of their re-enactment organization but lack knowledge of historical texts or documentation, and living historians, who are aware of all of this, creates another hierarchical structure within the community.

The third one is the living history, the guys that really dig into history and that go to such an extreme; have you heard of the authentic campaigners, yet? Alright, so these guys are

awesome. They demand such a high standard of authenticity: they're just amazing. They're the ones that will, if you don't have a persona to deliver you basically you keep your mouth shut when spectators are around. They want everything to be dialed in just right, extraordinary human beings, just wonderful knowledge, and their collections and everything they have is pitched in exactly the same way it was back then. (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.)

By describing the living historians, or “authentic campaigners,” as re-enactors who endeavor to create a world in which everything is “exactly the same way it was,” Carver establishes this significance of a purported “authentic” past. However, the lines between these three categories seem somewhat diffuse, as Carver never officially claimed the “authentic campaigner” title, and yet by sharing countless anecdotes of events from the actual war and offering at least seven books that I might use for further research, he obviously takes great pride in his extensive knowledge of what he calls “the *history* history.”

But what defines the form of history that Carver wished to help me to successfully parse from the re-enactment history? I argue that there remains an underlying sense of “authenticity” that the present-day living historian strives for in his re-enactment presentation. David Kincaid noted this when he described the struggle for a transition to more historically accurate uniforms in the 1970s. He told me:

It's just... even within re-enactment there's a reluctance to accept change some times. There are guys who started reenacting in the '60s and they said initially guys would come out in janitor uniforms, blue ones and grey ones, and they would have these plastic belts and plastic guns and they'd be re-enacting and then there'd be guys who ... would go out and re-enact with original [Civil War surplus] stuff, they'd get a waist belt and they'd re-enact with it for a number of years 'til it fell apart, throw it out, and then they'd get another one.

But they, when they did that, they were reviled. [Older re-enactors] were, “Oh you guys take this too far.” And of course they were, “Too far? You're not going far enough! This is as far as this has to go. We're trying to look right, and do it right.” ...And not only in terms of uniform and gear and equipment, but the drill! They actually got the manuals

that were available and these other guys didn't want to do that either. (David Kincaid, pers. comm.)<sup>6</sup>

This reluctance to change was noted in musical aspects of re-enactment as well. Carver shared with me how his re-enactment group struggled to transition to using different bugle calls after one music scholar uncovered a historical document with calls from the mid-nineteenth century:

There are certain calls that bugles and fifes and drums do during the day. And re-enactors over the course of time—because there weren't very many musicians and they didn't come to every event, they weren't regular—they just made stuff up. And eventually, somebody finds out that there's a call that looks like it's the wake up call. Nobody looks it up and they do it for 10 or 15 years, and one day somebody shows up and they say well that's not here in the book. And they say, well this is the way we've always done it so we shouldn't change it cause people might get confused. So that's what I'm talking about people who've learned the history of re-enacting as opposed to the *history*. And pretty much what they know is what re-enactors do at their local events that they go to every year. (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.)

For Kincaid, Carver, and others, there would seem to exist a single, objective, authentic history of what actually happened during the war. Yet Carver admitted that despite their efforts, this history was never truly attainable via re-enactment when he said, “Of course authenticity is... we delude ourselves, right? ... I mean everything that we do is a replica and although we do have some horns and things from the era it's almost impossible to get everybody outfitted with actual items that came from the Civil War.” Instead, for these re-enactors, a history deemed to be authentic serves as the standard for what re-enactors should try to attain in their efforts.

Cullen seems to expand upon this interaction with a single, objective history when he argues “that most re-enactors are first and foremost serious students of history... they want to go

---

<sup>6</sup> Although I did not have the opportunity to confirm this with Kincaid, he may have been referring to the United States War Department's *Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861*, which includes set musical signals for “To go for fuel,” “To go for water,” “For fatigue party,” “Adjutant's call,” “First sergeant's call,” “Sergeant's Call,” “For the drummers,” and one new addition from the 1857 version, “Corporal's call.” (39)

one step further. They want to *feel* what happened” (2005, 181). In order to come as close as they can to actually experiencing this authentic history, re-enactors choose to suffer under the hot mid-summer sun in a wool uniform, or force themselves to curl up with a fellow re-enacting soldier at night in order to stay warm, as vital aspects of understanding how the war actually felt. These shared experiences in turn form connections between those who share such experiences together, and build a sense of community amongst the movement of men who are, indeed, *living* this singular history, experiencing a replica of a purportedly factual past (Ibid., 188).

Yet for many re-enactors, striving for this accurate, sensory experience of history absolutely requires music. Carver, after personally agreeing with my opinion that music played a key role in the experience of the Irish-American Civil War soldier, again looked to the history itself to back up our claim. Carver asserted, “It’s stated matter of factly by Grant and Lee and Longstreet and Sheridan and the list goes on; I think Lee’s words were, ‘We could not have fought this war without music.’” Following the precedent set by other aspects of the living historians of re-enactment, if Lee’s war could not have been fought without music, certainly the re-enacted war requires music as well, and music done “right.”

One example of seeking this accurate music is the use of historically authentic instruments. David Kincaid’s choice to use a parlor guitar in performance mirrors the significance of authentic objects in the Civil War re-enactment community, and again notes that the change—from what one might consider re-enactment history to something seemingly more accurate—was met with some reluctance at first:

It was initially a bit difficult to find what the real stuff would be and I looked around and saw that the guitars were smaller, they were gut stringed; steel strings were just being talked about—even for banjos. And in the 1860s there were people just experimenting not only with steel strings for banjo but even with frets.

You know there was actually a big debate over it, ... and the purists were like “That’s wrong!” You know how it is, any time there’s a change, people react badly to it. Such was the case with the instruments as well! People didn’t like anything being changed. But initially I took some time to look into it and figure out okay, that’s what would have been there. And, as you say, re-enactors will get everything right but these instruments were all wrong, and I was, “Why can’t that be correct as well?”

So I would eventually get an original parlor guitar, which I’m still finding are playable—I own three of ‘em. I have two now, and they were playable when I got ‘em, they needed some work, but you could play ‘em. And so you get that, period banjo, and then there are some guys that make reproductions that are really good. Now that’s much more prevalent than it was in 1988 when I started. (David Kincaid, pers. comm.)

Kincaid notes that he had to look around, to do the research, in order to determine how he might do things “right” or come closest to how guitars looked and sounded in the mid-nineteenth century. His words also hint at the action of playing a guitar, either from the period or a replica, which would have weighed much less than a modern guitar and with strings that would have been gentler to the touch. Kincaid seeks the *feeling* of a factual, musical history as a means of connecting with the experiences of the past. In her article on early music performers, Kay Shelemay notes that the use of period, or period-production, instruments helped early music artists to create a sense of connection to the past as they are either touching an instrument once played at the time, or are having a similar physical experience (Shelemay 2001, 12-13). For Kincaid and the other musical re-enactors, such instruments allow an auditory and physical performative experience that helps them approach the ideal, an authentic musical experience of the past, connecting them to a grand sense of history.

Yet the existence of a single, factual chronological history to serve as a source of inspiration has been challenged by countless scholars over the years. For example, in her book *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews*, Kay Shelemay describes the sharing of Syrian narrative songs as a combination of “both documented historical memory and modern experience” which “replicates a process widely shared cross-culturally, where

collective memories themselves mediate historical events and are then further transformed to articulate new values and ideas” (Shelemay 1998, 25-26). Similarly, the histories of re-enactment described above—the history associated with the re-enactment organization and the history written down in textbooks—are both part of a single cultural process, a process of historical creation.

Primary sources serve as a type of documented memory: if the broadside ballad or songster can be proven to be a part of the mid-nineteenth-century literature, it offers insight into the past. Yet these sources are mediated. They are mediated by textbooks written by present-day authors who look to primary sources and assert their claims about them based on the work of other legitimated historians, creating a sort of collective memory of the past agreed upon by academicians. A re-enactor may base his performance on what he reads in these textbooks of history, but his performance is thus based on the values and ideas presented by the authors of the Civil War text.

Arguably the past is also mediated in the moment of performance: a re-enactor records a song based on music and lyrics from a nineteenth-century ballad sheet, yet he cannot sing *in the nineteenth century*. Musicologist Richard Taruskin discusses this impossibility in his critique of the so called “historical performance movement” of early music, performers dedicated to precisely reproducing the sound of early Western classical music through the use of period instruments and performance techniques, for trying to achieve the impossible. Taruskin argues that the so-called “historical performance” movement, so thoroughly entrenched in the effort to re-create an irreplaceable, authentic past, is in fact the true representative of “modern performance” (Taruskin 1988, 166). Taruskin traces the beginnings of this need to hold firmly to the past to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, claiming that no artists from the nineteenth century or earlier

ever felt cause to do anything but let the music speak for itself through a performance based on their own interpretation.

Taruskin describes the twentieth-century shift as a modern “rage against flux and impermanence ... refuge in fixity and necessity, the ... fear of melting into air” (Ibid., 166). The artists engaged in this movement were driven not by true artistry, he claimed, but instead by the pushes and pulls of the modern world. They cite the authentic, aged object, he claims, and confuse its purportedly pure sound for the subjective values of a musical performance. This blatant and naïve form of positivism, Taruskin argues, takes “the instrument for the player and even for the composer” (Ibid., 151) and indulges in “Wellsian time-travel fantasies” (Ibid., 141). For Taruskin, the efforts at genuinely recreating a musical past were simultaneously efforts to avoid a “confrontation with a perplexing reality” of modernity (Berman 1982, 89), a refusal to see that the sacralized experiences of the past were not fixed and could not accurately be brought into existence in the present.

The musical re-enactors I spoke with seemed well aware that their efforts occasionally received this sort of dismissal, that the time they spent working to connect with the past was viewed by some as ridiculous fantasy. One re-enactor who preferred not to be quoted directly cited a past experience where his words were misused to make him appear the part of “foolish” re-enactor. Kincaid even noted that, “You know, this whole thing with re-enactment it gets a bad rap, you know, in a lot of corners make fun of it” (pers. comm.). However, I argue that the purpose of Irish-American re-enactment music is not to be found in the musician’s degree of success in connecting with the past, but the reasons they make their efforts in the first place and the meanings that performers and listeners derive from the music.



Gary Tomlinson posits a similar argument, noting the value to be found in the historical performance movement's search for authentic *meaning*. He claims that the authentic meaning of a musical work is "the meaning that we, in the course of interpretative historical acts of various sorts, come to believe its creators and audience invested in it" (Tomlinson 1988, 115). By specifically drawing a connection to the importance of the interpreter, Tomlinson shifts his focus from Taruskin's heavy criticism and highlights the act of the *construction* of authentic, historical meanings.

Tomlinson then emphasizes that because meaning is also largely contextual, our understanding deepens as we broaden our awareness of the context in which we perceive meaning. He suggests that the goal of the music scholar in her search for authentic meaning should be rooted in "the mysterious and fundamentally human act of pondering the past," a creation of a conversation between the historian and agents of the past (Ibid., 121). He claims that all meanings, authentic or not, arise from the personal ways in which individuals, performers and audience, incorporate the work in their own signifying contexts (Ibid., 123). Our construction of the authentic meanings of a work are those developed from how we connect the work to an array of things outside itself, which we believe gave it meaning in its original context.

Musical re-enactors offer a curious variation on Tomlinson's suggestion of creating "conversations" between past and present. As skilled musicians knowledgeable of, and in the case of Kincaid rooted in, the Irish-American musical tradition, and also as representatives of "living history," re-enactors become the musicians of the past whom Tomlinson asks us to engage. They become, in the eyes of certain listeners, experts through involvement, making great efforts to approach the ideal of the authentic past, and in this rare situation of the past reformed,

we can genuinely can sit down with them and hold a conversation not only about his knowledge of the music of the past, but their experiences within the past.

Jonathan Shull, an early-music performer at Indiana University, describes the culture created by these experiences in a recreated past. In his article, he promotes the idea that music scholars should shift their focus from the concerns of authenticity and instead look at early-music performance as a creative living tradition rather than as an “inevitably imperfect mirror of lost cultures” (Shull 2006, 88). He argues that in the cases of musical performers who have no direct lineage of teacher to student back to the practice they are trying to re-create, they will often look at living oral traditions as sonic, as well as technical, resources for the (re)establishment of new “old” practices.

“Regardless of actual validity,” Shull writes, their efforts are “rooted in historicist predilections and values and [are] heavily influenced by ethical as well as pragmatic concerns for the listener and the music itself” (Ibid., 93). Shull also emphasizes that the extent to which these performers engage with the music they study in an effort to best interpret it, if not necessarily creating something that is authentic in reference to a perfect reconstruction of the past, still at the very least “involves a complex engagement with information extending far beyond the text itself” (Ibid.). The work of the Irish-American musical re-enactors reflects this concept; while they do rely on texts, they also bring substantial knowledge as actors and musicians into their work. Shull claims that re-created music is authentic not in its relation to any sense of the past, but instead in that it stands alone as a new musical culture in its own right, developed “ethically” in that the developers have made their choices based on extensive research using validated sources. Perhaps we can look at re-enactment music in a similar way. Having thus explained the significance of an authentic *construction* of historical music, I turn back to the music of the Irish-

American Civil War re-enactors to examine how they have constructed their own authentic history and performed a sense of Irish-American heritage.

## 2.1 CONSTRUCTING AN AUTHENTIC HISTORY

How is heritage constructed? Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett offers five methods of considering this process in her article, “Theorizing Heritage.” I argue that four of these five components are particularly significant for trying to understand the process of constructing heritage that occurs during Irish-American musical Civil War re-enactment. By analyzing examples of performances by each of the three groups I interacted with, I will consider how, for these re-enactors, heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past; is a “value added” industry; creates a problematic relationship of its objects to its instruments; and is strongly affected by virtuality, whether in the presence or the absence of actualities (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 369).

First of all, performance of Irish-American Civil War musical heritage *is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past*. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that heritage, “not only gives buildings, precincts, and ways of life that are no longer viable for one reason or another a second life as exhibits of themselves; it also produces something new” (Ibid., 370). Thus heritage presentations are inventing and creating, even though they firmly rely on the past and attempt to faithfully reproduce the past. In an actual re-enactment, we see this creation of a “second life” in the mid-nineteenth century, not just for the re-enactors themselves, but also for the spectators who wander through the bubble of the past created by the re-enactment set-up.

One such space of cultural production that connects to the past took place when The Armory Band performed “Star of the County Down” at Huntington Beach Re-enactment, an annual event in Huntington Beach, California that has been ongoing for the past nineteen years, often including nearly one thousand re-enactors (Huntington Beach Historical Society, 2010). The performance was staged in the middle of the re-enactment camp, with approximately fifteen male band members playing while seated, dressed in Union uniform. They attracted the attention of both spectators and other re-enactors; visitors dressed in modern attire stood and sat nearby, watching, listening, some even recording video footage.

Bruce Carver, band leader, described this piece as one of the selections he picked based on its Irishness, noting that it was particularly important because of “tradition.” In his description of the piece, he informed me that “Star of the County Down” was “a really old song and they’ve traced the melody back to—of course, it pre-exists this—but back in the late 1700s that song first appears and gets recorded by somebody who lays claim to it” (Bruce Carver, pers. comm). While certainly a melody that has been around for centuries, “Star of the County Down” is also part of what one might call the international Irish canon, covered by folk-rock bands and Celtic “new age” singers alike. The band is correct in saying that the tune existed at the time of the war, but perhaps more significant is how it serves as a signifier of Irishness to those who hear it, and thus produces a moment of distinctly modern Irish-American culture. This connection to Irish-American culture is inspired in part by the prevalence of such contemporary star artists as the Pogues and Loreena McKinnett who have recorded well-known covers of the song. Thus a mid-nineteenth-century work, performed in the deliberately constructed historical moment of the re-enactment camp, is simultaneously a modern-day expression of Irishness, a “production in the present that has recourse to the past.”

Irish-American Civil War musical heritage is also a “*value added*” industry. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that, “Heritage organizations ensure that places and practices in danger of disappearing because they are no longer occupied or functioning or valued will survive. It does this by adding the value of pastness, exhibition, difference, and where possible indigeneity” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 370). She specifically notes that these values are applied to a sense of otherness, a place different from where one previously existed, a place where new things can be experienced that you wouldn’t have experienced at home:

Thanks to the heritage industry, “the past is a foreign country” (Hartley 1953). Interfaces like historic villages and re-enactments are time machines, a term coined by H. G. Wells in his 1895 science fiction story, *The Time Machine*. They transport tourists from a now that signifies hereness to a then that signifies thereness. The attribution of pastness creates distance that can be traveled. The notion of time travel is explicit in invitations to “take a trip through history” (Taranaki Heritage Trail) or “walk down memory lane” (Howick Historical Village) in New Zealand (Ibid., 371).

Unlike Taruskin, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the supposed “time-traveling” aspects of attempting to recreate the past are actually a benefit, and that they gain value by virtue of offering a new opportunity to learn from an important moment in the past. And indeed, the Civil War is unequivocally viewed as a particularly important moment by the re-enactors, a moment that needs to be learned from and shared. For example, when talking about the broadside ballads that served as the sources on their album *No Irish Need Apply*, Mark DeAngelis shared his opinion of the value inherent to the music of the past:

“You know, reading these broadsides is not necessarily the expression of the most popular ideas at the time, but the expression of *somebody’s* ideas at the time. And we should know and learn and think about the way people thought about the world in the past, to understand about how people think about the world today.” (Mark DeAngelis, pers. comm.)

Based on the sense of value derived from the ideas shared by music of the Civil War, historians and re-enactors have banded together to host conferences specifically dedicated to the

subject. One such gathering, the Annual Civil War Heritage Music Gathering and Encampment in Windham, New York, has been held for the past sixteen years. The Gallant Sons of Erin performed on stage at the 2003 event, playing several songs specifically geared towards sharing the narrative of the Irish-American experience before and during the Civil War to a seated audience filled with guests dressed in period attire and modern wear. DeAngelis introduced his group with one such tale, noting before their opening song “Ten Thousand Miles Away” that “The history of Irish emigration is entwined with the story of transportation of prisoners by the British government to Australia and Tasmania. This song is the lament of a young man who loses his lover as he is transported by the government. It was a popular song in Dublin in the 1840s and 50s.”

In performance, the ballad shared a little bit of Irish history while also serving as a source of entertainment, in a place to which interested individuals deliberately traveled in order to see an exhibition of this valuable music from the past. Yet it is also worth noting here that during the performance, the value of pastness was simultaneously extended to another commodification of history: before beginning to sing, DeAngelis noted that the music the audience was about to hear could be heard on their CD. The relationship of the past to the modern technology on which its replica has been recorded merits further consideration.

More generally, Civil War musical heritage events can *create a problematic relationship of its objects to its instruments*; the instruments, the performers, play an obvious role in this process heritage creation, and these instruments generally “proclaim the foreignness of objects to their contexts of presentation” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 374). One Irish-American musical Civil War performance where this was particularly apparent was that of David Kincaid at the 2012 Irish Pittsburgh Festival. Kincaid’s performance took place on one of several performance

stages at the large, riverfront festival, but was the only musical act to focus specifically on music of the past. His Union soldier uniform and small, acoustic, gut-stringed parlor guitar set him apart from the crowd of eighty spectators who sat in white folding chairs spread out around the stage, with other guests milling around the periphery, or glancing over as they continued their walk to the nearby food tent. My video footage from the event even has a silver sports utility vehicle behind Kincaid's stage throughout the entirety of his performance, and the distorted sounds of a female-fronted Irish rock band can be heard from the main stage, performing simultaneously in another part of the park, at one point forcing Kincaid to ask for his vocal microphone to be amped up.

Kincaid is not unfamiliar with being a cultural "other" at such festivals. He informed me that many of the attendees at Irish festivals have no idea why a Civil War re-enactor is performing at the event, saying, "My experience with this is, I'll do Irish festivals I've been doing this since 98 with my first album's release, and people like that lady will come up to me in my uniform like, 'What are you doing? Why are you here?' And I'll say, 'Stick around for the concert and you'll find out.' And she did and she was like, 'Wow! I didn't know that.' And that's why I do this" (David Kincaid, pers. comm).

It is important to Kincaid that he shares the experience of the Irish during the Civil War with those people who are not as familiar with the role of the Irish in the events of the nineteenth century, requiring his attendance at places like Irish festivals. Yet by placing the period music and attire within the confines of a single stage, Kincaid's performance here is vastly different than it would be if he were singing within a re-enactment, where the entire space of the re-enactment has been transformed to attempt to recreate another place in another time. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that spaces like those of the re-enactment, the spaces where the

stage disappears in an effort to conceal the present and envelop the participant in the past, require yet more careful analysis. She writes that:

The call for “realness” requires that the interface, the means by which the representation is staged, be muted or concealed. Demands for “ethno-graphic” realism are thus politically fraught. The kind of authenticity that requires the recession of the frame represses what is at stake for those whose heritage is exhibited. The feeling that you are there and nothing is between you and it is like photographs that conceal the camera or photographer that made them. These are illusions with a price. The interface—folk festivals, museum exhibitions, historical villages, concert parties, postcards—are cultural forms in their own right and powerful engines of meaning. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 375)

I will later discuss how this “realness” of the musical Irish-American Civil War re-enactor’s performance in both re-enactment camp and on stage must begin by considering how re-enactors draw others into the moment of the musical performance, inviting spectators and audience members to participate in the virtual illusion themselves.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes that a final key to heritage production, like that in musical Civil War re-enactment, *is its virtuality, whether in the presence or the absence of actualities.*

She writes that:

The production of hereness, in the absence of actualities, depends increasingly on virtualities. The frenzy of memory in downtown Milwaukee requires the instruments of historic walks, plaques, historical societies, museums, tours, and exhibitions because Old Milwaukee is a phantom... The very proliferation of “spaces of memory”—what Pierre Nora calls *lieux de memoire*—in the form of memorials, archives, museums, heritage precincts, and commemorative events are, in his view, an indication of a crisis of memory (1989). Memory requires its prostheses, and never have they been as numerous or as inventive as in our own time. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 376)

In each of the examples described above, music could be argued to serve as one such “prosthesis,” a marker of memory regardless of whether the re-created past is presented on a festival stage, during a heritage conference, or within a re-enactment camp. Even for those few re-enactments held on the actual field of the battle the re-enactors seek to re-create, the distance created by time necessitates something to effectively trigger the link to this virtual past. By



listening, singing, and dancing, the participants in musical Civil War re-enactment find a solution to the crisis of memory, creating a virtual space that permits re-enactor and listener alike to participate in the act of remembering what, as explained above, is a construction in the present with a connection to the past. The value re-enactors ascribe to the moments of the past they endeavor to recreate encourages spectators and audience members to listen, despite the inherent contrast of past music and Civil War period instrumentation being played in modern settings by modern musicians.

## **2.2 COLLECTIVELY REMEMBERING THE CONSTRUCTED PAST**

I attribute the significance of music in this process of Irish-American heritage construction to its capacity to serve simultaneously as the historical object, a valued (if constructed) marker of stories and experiences from the past, and a method of collective participation. This participation can be physical if listeners choose to join in by clapping their hands, stomping their feet, and singing along, or mental if listeners join in simply by listening and interpreting what they hear. I would also argue that the ways in which music fulfills this role creates a means of remembering a perceived collective past, linking both re-enactors and observers to an interpretation of history via constructed tales of “what was.” Presentations of re-enactment music invite both the performers and listeners to engage in experiences of joy and loss that they themselves have never felt. This establishes a collective cultural memory of the heroic events of the constructed past, building upon the lessons about the Civil War shared in history classrooms and Civil War stories told through film, theater, and literature. Certain groups of

Americans are raised to remain aware of the tremendous impact of the actual war itself, and so it remains in their cultural memory, perpetuated through these sources.

Kincaid referenced the sheer presence of the war in our “collective subconscious” in describing his efforts to explain the war to a European colleague. He said:

The Civil War is difficult to explain. I work in Europe a lot with my other part of my career and you know it’s hard to explain to outsiders *the mystique that surrounds the Civil War* and it really has one. Especially *for us as Americans it’s really deep in our collective subconscious this conflict and what it meant. It’s really kind of sacred* actually and it’s difficult to define.

I remember [the movie *Glory*] came out, and Matthew Broderick was interviewed during the promotional campaign for the movie. And the interviews always come up in the talk shows ... And they’re all, “What was it like portraying Colonel Shaw, Colonel of one of the first black regiments?” And he said, “You know my friends told me when I took this role, they said be very careful with this, because *you’re taking something down from the altar, the altar of the American consciousness,*” and that’s really true. And he went into it with that kind of sense of what that meant, that this is something very meaningful, that it’s not to be treated lightly. (David Kincaid, pers. comm.; emphasis mine)

That Kincaid described it as collective “*American consciousness*” suggests that he believes that the memories of the war are so important and mystical as to seem sacred, and that he believes many Americans feel a connection to the events of the war. Kincaid’s description of the conflict suggests that from his perspective, the war is something many Americans connect to at a visceral level, as something that affected individuals some Americans claim as ancestors, and that continues to affect today’s socio-political landscape.

The songs performed at re-enactments can connect participants to that purportedly American sense of national, collective identity. Benedict Anderson described a similar sense of connectedness in the moment of group participation in national anthems. He wrote:

Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda,

and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community. ... How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound. Yet such choruses are joinable in time. If I am a Lett, my daughter may be an Australian. The son of an Italian immigrant to New York will find ancestors in the Pilgrim Fathers. If nationalness has about it an aura of fatality, it is nonetheless a fatality embedded in *history*. (Anderson 1983, 149)

The reference to an established and unquestioned history, the possibility of joining in on or at least collectively listening to songs that are known, the performance of what has been defined as valuable and historical *American* music, all bring people together in the sense of what Anderson described an “imagined community,” the sense that there is a group of like-minded, like-cultured individuals to which one belongs. Anderson links this imagined community to the power of the state, claiming that the government influences these imaginings, or thoughts, through such devices as national anthems.

In one sense, the state still holds a degree of sway in relation to the musical re-enactors. Civil War music groups will often perform at state-funded events such as Veteran’s day ceremonies or memorials for famous individuals from the Civil War. In this way they contribute to state-devised ideologies of the nation, using their music to add to the concept of the nation-state, as emphasized by the remembrance of critical moments in that nation-state’s past, or the remembrance of those who fought and died for the nation-state.

Yet the term “imaginary” references the mental processes used to describe the community to which one belongs. As Anderson writes, “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, *yet in the minds of each* lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1983, 6). When

I first used this term with Kincaid he insisted that there was absolutely nothing “imaginary” about the re-enactment community. The Irish soldiers whom he and fellow re-enactors memorialized were once living, breathing individuals bravely serving in battle during the American Civil War. He further emphasized the tremendous influence of the living-history movement, noting that the re-enactment community had existed for over half a century, and were a well-established group of both scholars and amateur enthusiasts. After speaking with other Irish-American musical re-enactors, and better familiarizing myself with their experiences, I began to realize that Kincaid was correct: there was nothing fictive about the experiences of the men—and in some rare cases, women—involved in the musical re-enactment and re-creation of the experiences of the Irish-American soldiers in the American Civil War. The musical re-enactors genuinely created and *felt* a connection to these past moments of Irish-American history.

I turn to Partha Chatterjee’s critiques of Benedict Anderson’s work to further explain this contrast, specifically his argument that Anderson provides limited options or models of communal—more specifically, national—identity that every group supposedly “imagines” in the same way. Chatterjee noted that in the case of previously colonized groups, two aspects affected the construction of the concept of a communal, national identity: “the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the ‘outside,’ of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology... The spiritual, on the other hand, was an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity” (1991, 522). This inner domain, enforced by the history of the culture, “overwhelms” the purportedly “autonomous forms of imagination of the community” which are the predominantly political connections of the nation-state. I argue that a similar emphasis on an “inner domain” and cultural identity is evident amongst the Irish-American musical re-enactors.

The music and ethnicity that they perform, and often identify with, are entrenched in a sense of affect that is extremely “real” in so much as it connects them collectively, as a group, to a mutual sense of the past, which they in turn attempt to revitalize and share through their art.

By using the term, I had inadvertently denigrated the efforts made by those who participate in the creation of live musical re-enactment performances by claiming that the connections they formed through that participation were “imaginary.” The performers and listeners do share a moment of collective experience, creating substantial connections amongst those who participate both through the mutual connection to a shared collective history, but also by learning the songs at one performance and passing them on at other events. Kincaid told me that:

Some of the songs I did have kind of become standard. I hear other groups doing ‘em and it’s kind of cool. Yeah they’ve kind of made their way into the vernacular, so to speak, of what standard songs were. When I started to do it you’d hear “Dixie” and “Battle Cry of Freedom,” the songs that were the standards, and Irish stuff was not to be had, and now almost everybody does some version of “The Irish Volunteer” “We’ll Fight for Uncle Sam” and “Free and Green” which I wrote, which is not a period tune and I almost didn’t put it on the album because of that. (Kincaid, pers. comm.)

Even for the lesser-known Gallant Sons of Erin, their music has reappeared in the re-enactment community. DeAngelis mentioned that, “It is kind of funny setting up for re-enactments, typically people drive in with their vehicles or their trucks, and they’ll have music playing. A couple events we’ve heard our CD playing, blasting across the field as people were setting up their tents” (pers. comm.). Thus this music is shared, both in actual performances and through the purchase and spread of recordings, creating links between the members of the Irish-American Civil War community and even expanding beyond.

There is also the sense of sameness created through the act of participation in group musical events that Turino describes in his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*:

I get a deep sense of oneness with the people I am playing with. I think that what happens during a good performance is that the multiple differences among us are forgotten and we are fully focused on an activity that emphasizes our *sameness*—of time sense, of musical sensibility, of musical habits and knowledge, of patterns of thought and action, of spirit of common goals—as well as our direction interaction. Within the bounded and concentrated frame of musical performance *that sameness* is all that matters, and for those moments when the performance is focused and in synch, that deep identification is *felt* as total. This experience is akin to what anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) calls *communitas*, a possible collective state achieved through rituals where all personal differences of class, status, age, gender, and other personal distinctions are stripped away allowing people to temporarily merge through their basic humanity. For me, good music making or dancing is a realization of ideal—*possible*—human relationships where the identification with others is so direct and so intense that we feel, for those best moments, as if our selves had merged. (Turino 2008, 18-19)

Often times the Irish-American music offers this chance to create a sense of sameness among those who are there. For the performers playing as a group, there is a creation of collectivity amongst them when they are all in sync, and they have the capacity to extend this to those who are nearby. At the Gallant Sons of Erin's 2003 performance, Mark DeAngelis encouraged people to stop being so reserved, commenting on how quiet and polite they had been in previous performances. He instead suggested that they join in. The footage of the event reveals that many of the audience members took this to heart, clapping and swaying in their seats to the rhythm. More and more members of the audience progressively picked up the catchy chorus of "Ten Thousand Miles Away" with each repeat as they remembered it or perhaps learned it for the first time. A similar sort of "joining in" occurred at the re-enactment performance by The Armory Band, where a man dressed in Civil War period civilian attire scooped up a little girl, also dressed in period costume, and began waltzing with her to the music, moving in time to the triple

meter solidly established by the lower brass. These moments of connection through the music bring the community closer together and indeed, forge a connection between re-enactors and spectators, negating the invented temporal distinction and bringing the modern listener into the “past” in the moment of participatory expression.

Finally there are virtual communities established around the two musical groups that continue to perform today. The Armory Band has a Facebook page featuring many photos, videos, and information about upcoming events. David Kincaid also hosts a website via his production company, Haunted Field Music, with links to recordings, several photos of him in performance, and historical information related to individual tracks on his albums.

Thus the music of re-enactors fulfills several roles in establishing the collective memory of the Civil War. The songs themselves carry valuable memories of the past, the moment of live, group performance establishes a sense of collectivity, and digital contexts maintain the community outside of re-enactments and heritage events. This community, linked in part through the music to both their heritage as Irish-Americans and Americans living in a present affected by the Civil War, nevertheless maintains a sense of structure through concepts of authenticity. I believe these connections resemble what Shelemay describes when she writes that:

Recollections of *pizmon* performances, the memories embedded in song texts and tunes, and the rich social networks reinforced through song dedications and performances assume heightened significance as first-hand memories of the historical Syrian homeland recede. For Syrian Jews, and probably for many other diaspora communities as well, transmitting oral memories and embedding them within historical narratives also becomes a priority and duty lest their history be lost.” (Shelemay 2006, 32)

In the case of re-enactment, the singers and musicians are not separated from their historical “homeland” by miles but years, inventing themselves as a diasporic community out of time rather than out of place. Yet their goals are similar to actual diasporic communities, a sense of

duty to preserve the music that otherwise might be lost, and to memorialize the people who made that music. As Kincaid explained in describing why his project was so important:

The music was really buried, it was really obscure, and I realized I was compiling things that hadn't been done in the modern age, and most of it had not been heard... There've been several [albums] since I did mine, which is natural and that's a good thing. That means that the interest in it is raised and there's an awareness of it, you know? Cause it really was forgotten. (Kincaid, pers. comm.)

For Kincaid and the other musical re-enactors, the significance of an Irish-American component within the bigger picture of Civil War history merits their substantial efforts to bring this knowledge into general public awareness. This dedication leads some of the musical re-enactors to devote a substantial amount of their time to research and participation in many re-enactment events.

### **2.3 HIERARCHY OF KNOWLEDGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY**

The research and time required to obtain historical knowledge, and thus successfully preserve the past, seems to strongly influence the informal hierarchy created between members of individual musical Civil War re-enactment groups and also between different organizations. When speaking with different members of individual groups, some re-enactors did not consider themselves to be “a historian” or as “involved with the history.” These re-enactors often tried to refer me to other members who they felt were more qualified to answer my questions as “historians.”

One re-enactor from The 69<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia regimental band specifically told me that he “joined the hobby more for the music than for the re-enacting experience. ... I'm not a historian and I don't have any formal education in music” (Steve Andy, pers. comm.). Even



during our brief interview, he suggested on several occasions that I speak with other members of the band with greater knowledge of the music or subject history. With the Gallant Sons of Erin, I again was met with a similar re-directing tactic when I enquired about the research that was done for the construction of their album. One member felt like he had largely participated for fun, was “a teacher not a historian” and thus should not speak to the historical aspects of his ensemble’s efforts. He also placed himself within a comparative hierarchy with David Kincaid, claiming that he was an amateur, while David Kincaid was “the Elvis of Irish-American Civil War music.”

This hierarchy was reinforced when I spoke to the musical re-enactors who had been recommended for their ability to provide historical knowledge. Throughout our conversations DeAngelis, Kincaid, and Carver all cited specific primary and secondary sources that they had used to locate their material and back up their musical choices. Kincaid and Carver sporadically tried to determine the extent of my own knowledge, both as it related to Irish-American Civil War history, and musical skill. As an outsider, I was asked what I knew of the “canon” of historical documentation: did I know about the massive brass-band performances of Irish-American conductor Patrick Gilmore? Had I browsed through the famous collections of Chicago policeman Francis O’Neill? These questions placed us both within the structures of historical knowledge; their knowledge arguably “set the classes and class fractions in a clear hierarchy,” if one considers a spectator or less-dedicated re-enactor to be of a lower “class” or tier than the living historian (Bourdieu 1980, 227).

It is important to note the source of this value and consider how the re-enactors use the knowledge once it is acquired. One way to consider this knowledge is through Sarah Thornton's description of "subcultural capital" in her work *Club Cultures*.<sup>7</sup> Thornton writes that:

Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder. ... *Subcultural capital can be objectified or embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collection... Just as cultural capital is personified in "good" manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being "in the know," using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles. (1996, 11)

The subcultural capital amongst the re-enactors appears in both objectified and embodied forms. As described earlier, instrumentation and attire both play an important role as objectified subcultural capital. Many of the most dedicated musical re-enactors have gone to great lengths to acquire period instruments, or seek out luthiers to create models based on actual instruments from the period. These highly respected musical re-enactors also seemed to have a substantial personal library from which they drew their information regarding the history of the Irish and performance practice. During my interviews, both Carver and DeAngelis referenced their libraries, double-checking to make sure that I had read certain texts or knew of certain compilations of broadside ballads, while readily suggesting several others that they deemed to be more obscure but equally important.

---

<sup>7</sup> I use Thornton's "subcultural capital" in this project rather than solely using Bourdieu's original concept of "cultural capital" in reference to the re-enactors deliberate attempt to set themselves apart from present-day mainstream culture through their use of specific objects and actions from the past, and the re-enactors' awareness of how mainstream culture often views them in a negative light. However, I acknowledge that this re-enactment "subculture" is still influenced by, and very much a part of, mainstream American culture, rather than a truly separate community.

These artists also embodied various forms of subcultural capital during their performances, both on and off the re-enactment “stage.” Kincaid often used specific vocal inflections during performances to convey a sense of being Irish-American, while the members of the 69<sup>th</sup> Regimental band would use phrases from the nineteenth century to start and conclude their emails, as though the digital texts were messages sent via letter. This use of particular phrases and phrasing, as well as the ability to recite information from the texts described earlier, served a purpose. It established certain men as holding greater amounts of subcultural capital than others, it provided an indication that these men were “in the know,” to use Thornton’s phrase. These musical re-enactors, unlike some of their fellow musicians, had gone to the libraries, memorized important verbal and factual aspects of the “*history history*,” and acquired appropriate texts and instruments.

Yet the significance of this subcultural capital amongst musical re-enactors holds value outside of establishing the sense of hierarchy between participants, re-enactors, and authentic campaigners. There is also an economic benefit to obtaining this recognition within the community. As Thornton writes, “It has been argued that what ultimately defines cultural capital as capital is its ‘convertibility’ into economic capital. While subcultural capital may not convert into economic capital with the same ease or financial reward as cultural capital, a variety of occupations and incomes can be gained as a result of ‘hipness’” (1996, 11). For example, when one of the re-enactors described David Kincaid as the “Elvis of re-enactment,” it made a great deal of sense. Kincaid is widely recognized amongst Civil War singer-songwriters as someone who has successfully completed the research on the Irish-American musical experience and made it into a career. Filmmakers have acknowledged his dedication to the subject, and in effect acknowledge that he has a tremendous amount of the subcultural capital described above. He has

been asked to assist as both consultant and performer for several Civil War documentaries, and also the Hollywood release *Gods and Generals* (Haunted Field Music). This recognition in turn helps Kincaid in his efforts to sell his albums. A similar plan is presently in process for the members of The Armory Band, who recently contributed several tracks for the independent film *Saving Lincoln* after being recognized for their knowledge and efforts to convey an authentic interpretation of the past in several re-enactments. Bruce Carver shared that he hoped his group would be able to garner enough press from their role in the movie to successfully finish and sell their own album.

Another way in which musical re-enactors reveal their subcultural capital, both for economic gain and as a means of educating others and garnering interest, is via the use of websites and social media. Thornton notes in her introduction that “the media are a primary factor governing the circulation” of subcultural capital (1996, 13), and the subcultural capital of the musical re-enactors seems to mirror this idea quite closely. David Kincaid’s website, Haunted Field Music, includes links to pages that describe the history behind several of the songs on Kincaid’s albums. He also writes about where he found the documentation for many of the songs, listing specific sources and describing the effort it took to find certain melodies or broadside ballads. Thus Kincaid’s website shares his subcultural capital with anyone who seeks him out online, and earns the respect of fellow re-enactors in the community.

The Armory Band’s Facebook page, in contrast, uses social media to connect with other members of the re-enactment community. Their photos and video give evidence of their object-based subcultural capital: nearly every image depicts re-enactors in uniform, playing replicas of nineteenth-century brass, with only a few photos of individuals in “modern civilian” clothing to show time and energy spent at rehearsal or the recording studio. The Armory Band’s Facebook

wall includes links to upcoming events, including their performances in *Saving Lincoln*, re-enactments, and other memorials. Bruce Carver also occasionally lists moments in history that include small pieces of relevant musical information. For example, on 14 December 2012, he wrote, “Thinking what it would be like for the soldiers of the Irish Brigade waking up this morning 150 years ago today. I walked the ground at Fredericksburg, Virginia last year and stood where they fought bravely and fell in great numbers, sprigs of boxwood in their caps. What courage to face this horror. We know the band played the lively ‘Garryowen’ and ‘Upon the Heights of Alma’ in the days before. What did they play this day? Erin go Bragh!”<sup>8</sup> Here Carver’s connection to nearly three hundred followers of the page reveals his knowledge of the significance of the battle of Fredericksburg to the Irish Brigade, that he is aware of important details of the battle, and that he has done research about the music which the band had played in previous battles. Though perhaps only intended as a passing thought, this post nevertheless works to establish his subcultural capital in the community, and thus his credibility as bandleader for a group seeking eventually to sell an album.

Yet it is important to note, that while the subcultural capital of musical re-enactment groups could be converted into economic capital, subcultural capital did not necessarily indicate the day-to-day socio-economic class or profession of the re-enactor. Thornton writes, “Although it converts into economic capital, subcultural capital is not as class-bound as cultural capital” (1996, 12). The re-enactors I spoke with are all middle-aged white men, but come from three relatively different backgrounds. The Gallant Sons of Erin were led by professors who self-identified as coming from working class roots, Bruce Carver proudly noted that he was retired

---

<sup>8</sup> Anglicization of “Éirinn go Brách.”

military, and David Kincaid was previously a rocker with a roots-rock group. While it could be argued that each of their backgrounds supports the respect they have garnered within the community via access to academic materials, military experience, or musical knowledge, it is instead their focus on authentic objects and actions that serve as subcultural capital which garners certain re-enactors a particular degree of respect.

In considering the substantial role of subcultural capital in the musical re-enactment community, what becomes apparent is that so much of this capital is entrenched in academic knowledge and the application of that knowledge. Individuals with the greatest amount of subcultural capital and respect are those who have read textbooks, dug through the archives, and both successfully acquired the “correct” instruments and applied the ideas gained from respected sources to their performance on those instruments. In this sense, the source of subcultural capital, and the source of what drives the re-enactment community in a certain direction, initially stems from academia. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recognized this issue in her article on the production of heritage, when she wrote that:

As academics and public folklorists and ethnomusicologists, we are actively ‘producing’ heritage, in the sense argued here. Whereas we have tended to focus on that which counts as heritage, much remains to be done on the instruments for producing heritage. In attending to these issues, we are forced to rethink our disciplinary subjects and practices. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 379)

In this sense, given that academics and public folklorists are, in many ways, creating the information that re-enactors use as subcultural capital, academics and public folklorists become responsible for what information is passed on to the public through these re-enactments and living-history presentations. The boundaries we create, and the information we select versus what we omit, become historical reality in the musical entertainment that is far more likely to remain in the minds of those who hear it than any lengthy lecture or dense text.

### **3.0 THE MUSICAL IRISH-AMERICAN SOLDIER**

In her work “Foreign Bodies in the River of Sound: Seeking Identity and Irish Traditional Music” Helen O’Shea describes the ways in which a stereotype of authentic Irishness has been constructed around the imagery and art associated with Ireland’s West coast. She writes how one of the important markers of this authentic Irishness is its music, and the “continuity of an organic oral tradition that is one of the enduring myths of Irish traditional music” (O’Shea 2005, 235). This next section explores the significance of this trope of music as a key marker of authentic Irish identity, the importance of playing Irish music “authentically” in order to convey that identity, and the extent to which this stereotype has been adapted by re-enactors involved in portraying Irish-American regiments.

The musical re-enactors portraying Irish regiments had varying reasons for why they initially chose to become involved with their particular re-enactment organization. Some cited a desire to have a place to use their musical talents, others chose an organization based on whether or not it would allow their children to participate and learn alongside their parents. However, once they did become involved with their respective organizations, and subsequently learned of the group’s association with a predominantly Irish membership, many began to wonder about a distinct lack of music.

David Kincaid described his frustration with the lack of appropriate music, and the lack of interest from other re-enactors to try to resolve the problem despite so much attention to detail in other matters:

I started re-enacting in '88 and when I began I didn't see real period instruments... There was a couple guys who would play period banjo and do a minstrel show, a black-face minstrel show and they would do it very well. But they didn't do anything else, they didn't know any of the parlor music, the Irish stuff, in fact one of those guys who was very good at period minstrelsy as they call it, was playing the banjo and I said ... and this is when I first got in... I asked him, "What about Irish songs during the Civil War?" And he said, "Oh, you won't find those." And I went, "*I'm Irish. I know better.*"

So of course that was ridiculous. It was absurd. *This guy clearly didn't know what he was talking about. He wasn't Irish.* And of course there were hundreds of [songs]. You know, I just had to find them and then try to figure out how they may have been played. (Kincaid, pers. comm.)

I have italicized certain portions of his comments to focus on an important aspect of Kincaid's assertion. He believed that the Irish-American population during the Civil War must have had songs of their own, largely by noting that he identifies as Irish while the other artist, a non-Irishman, would not have this important knowledge.

Kincaid arguably has the experience to support an assertion of this kind. He noted in both our personal communication and on his public website that his Irish-American heritage influenced his musical upbringing, familiarizing him with particular musical characteristics associated with traditional Irish sessions and vocal performance style.

However, Kincaid is also quite familiar with the general history of the Irish people and Irish-American soldiers through personal experience and research. Another telling of the same tale revealed a different aspect of Kincaid's recognition of the dearth of Irish music in the re-enacting community when he first joined:

In the re-enacting community there is a wealth of colorfully talented and knowledgeable people. From the beginning I heard songs of the period being sung all over the camps of both sides, and I began to learn some of these and sing them with the boys in my unit. When I



asked “Where are the songs of the Irish Brigade?” the answer was that there were only a couple that anyone knew of, and that I probably wouldn't find any more. Needless to say, that answer just didn't sit well, as *the oral tradition of Irish music and verse is known to have existed for a few thousand years, and the written history is the oldest in western civilization. It seemed unlikely, impossible actually, that the Irish would go through a conflict like this and not leave behind a wealth of verse and song.* More than 160,000 Irishmen fought for the Union, no small amount, and the songs had to be there. (Haunted Field Music 2012; emphasis mine.)

Here Kincaid's concern seems to harken back to a matter of pride in his heritage. If the Irish gave their lives to a cause, there must be music describing their experiences. In his opinion, the Irish had always made music that depicted their past before the nineteenth century, creating what was in Kincaid's estimation a vast collection of art to commemorate their experiences, and there was no reason they would not do so again in America, during such a decisive moment in the history of a people seeking employment and acceptance through their willingness to fight.

I would eventually realize that the other groups connected to this concept of Irish musicality in different ways. For the men involved with the 69<sup>th</sup> New York regimental band, finding appropriate music served as something of a tribute to the significance of music in Irish lives. For example, although bandmaster Bruce Carver did feel that he identified as Irish-American, he did not specifically use this aspect of his identity to justify his efforts in bringing music to his re-enactment organization. Instead, our discussion focused on historical documentation of Irish efforts to keep music present in the daily lives of their soldiers. Carver informed me that:

In 1862 General Order 91 came into effect that said that the volunteer regiments were not funded for a regimental band. So, you think, “Well, okay, so there were no more regimental bands.” ... But the Irish, for so many of their regiments, valued their music, and they kept it with them however they could manage. And so they would raise money to pay the musicians to play. They would assign infantrymen from their regiments to be musicians to play. So they found a way around the lack of funding, to keep their bands alive. (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.)

Although his urge to add music to his re-enactment organization was largely spurred from personal interest, Carver did seem to feel that music was inherently important to the Irish soldier's experience, and so, much like Kincaid, he took great pains both to discover what music existed and subsequently to uncover the most historically accurate ways of performing the recovered pieces on the battlefield.

In contrast to the other musicians, Mark DeAngelis noted that while he did feel that music was a particularly appropriate means of expressing the Irish-American story, he didn't want to take the generalization too far. He told me that, "I can't say music was important to all Irish immigrants, it was to some, it wasn't to others," but nevertheless he reiterated that music played a vital role in expressing the feelings of the public during the mid-nineteenth century, and thus was critical for understanding Irish-American thoughts and experiences:

You know of the passage to America and the assimilation into American society? There's one of the songs "We'll Fight for Uncle Sam" that almost reads like a road map of advice to the Irish emigrant on how to become an American, you know? So that's, these were the prominent cultural issues for these folks at that time. "How do we fit in?" That's what we're trying to tell. (Mark DeAngelis, pers. comm.)

These three perspectives seem to suggest that the re-enactors of Irish-American units generally agree that music was important to many Irish, either as means of sharing their story, a marker of ethnic identity, or eventually as a part of assimilation into a white, American culture. With this in mind, the re-enactors have endeavored to incorporate the music into the way they live the history.

### 3.1 IRISHNESS AS MUSICALITY

The question remains: how did this concept of music defining a sense of Irishness (applied differently to the Irish as to the Irish-American, but nevertheless significant for both) develop? That music is significant to many interpretations of Irish culture is a point proven through years of documentation, beginning with “the ancient image of the Irish as entertainers” (Foster 2008, 149). This image was enforced in part by the national balladry of Thomas Moore, an Irish member of the upper-middle class who had studied at the predominantly Anglo-Protestant Trinity College (Tessier 1981, 2). In 1846 Moore published a collection of song arrangements based on transcriptions from the 1792 Gaelic revival harp festival in Belfast. Thus many Irish interpreted these songs to have a direct link with an imagined pre-colonial Ireland (O’Shea 2008, 9).

This image of a national Irish identity defined by musicality traveled across the Atlantic with those who fled during the 1840s and 1850s. Yet this image, historian R.F. Foster writes, would become “fashionable on a level unknown since the cultural renaissance at the turn of the twentieth century.” Much of this cult status concerned (as it did a hundred years before) the theory that the Irish had access to “special reserves of soul” (Foster 2008, 150). This stemmed in no small part to the role of Irish entertainers in blackface minstrelsy performance; the first performance of Irish-American Protestant Dan Emmett and his Virginia Minstrels in 1843 is often considered to be “the birth of the commercialized blackface minstrelsy show” (Greaves 2012, 85), and a significant number of other Irish-Americans followed suit. Where earlier depictions of minstrelsy have been described as not only a surrogation of blackness but a surrogation of whiteness “in so far as [minstrelsy] represented an image of life lived in heroic relation to the regimes of labor discipline, whether that life was figured as pre or posturban,

trickster or outlaw, buffoon or sentimental spectacle” (Nyong’o 2009, 109), the commercialized minstrelsy post-1843 “took a turn for the conservative, from noise to representation, and from social real to the commercial deception” (Ibid., 116). The minstrelsy performance that arguably had served a subversive, carnivalesque purpose became an image of a perceived truth, almost precisely before most Irish who were fleeing the Famine arrived in America.

Noel Ignatiev gives succinct reasoning for their subsequent association with the genre, writing, “It is surely no coincidence that so many of the pioneers of blackface minstrelsy were of Irish descent, for the Irish came disproportionately in contact with the people whose speech, music, and dance furnished the basis, however distorted, for the minstrel’s art” (1995, 42). The connection via minstrel performance also furthered the link between African-Americans and Irish-Americans in the minds of Anglo-Protestant whites, leading to similar visual depictions on broadside ballads and assumptions regarding both black and Irish-American character. Indeed, prejudice against the large numbers of Irish arriving in the nation further weakened the genre’s destabilizing power: Nyong’o writes that the critical reversals of carnival, and carnivalesque performance, “did not possess a place in a nation for which even the conventional theater could be morally suspect, and which during the post-famine, post-1848 years increasingly associated alcoholic revelry with the abominable customs of immigrant Irish Catholics ... streaming in from the Old World, polluting the New Eden” (2009, 195). The topsy-turvy replacement of the norm in the theater that once served as a critique began instead simply to emphasize the perceived ethical faults of Irish-Catholics.

Historian Gerry Smyth has noted that the application of stereotypes about the Irish musical identity are similar to those associated with black culture. Smyth coins the mocking phrases “Paddy Sad” and “Paddy Mad” in order to establish a sort of emotional binary in which

most listeners perceive the possible range of Irish musicality. Smyth then cites a list of terms once used by nineteenth-century music critic Eduard Hanslick to describe individuals likely to be inclined towards an emotional response to music: “loosen, weakness, vanquished, unreasoning, undirected, purposeless, elemental, morbid excitability, crudeness of mind and character, savage.” Smyth draws a comparison between these terms and those which non-Irish have applied to Irish identities since the nineteenth-century, noting that the Irishmen’s emotional attachment to music makes sense in this light, for they are perceived to be driven by the physical and the material, lacking refinement and seeking immediate gratification. “In such a discourse,” Smyth writes, “the Irish are represented as being too caught up in the noise and the rhythm to worry about the music, too excited by the body to be concerned with the mind” (Smyth 2009, 63). There is evidence that this idea of Irish musicality was present during the war, fostered in primary documentation regarding the music of the Irish Brigade. In his work, *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns*, chaplain David Power Conyngham who traveled with the Brigade during the war, wrote that even during times of somber reflection, “the lively tones of Johnny O’Flaherty’s fiddle, and the noisy squeaks of his father’s bagpipes, soon called forth the joyous, frolicsome nature of the Celt” (Conyngham 1869, 79).

Yet for many Irish-Americans, their concept of the significance of music exists in stark contrast with this negative portrayal of Irish musicality. Music serves as an object of pride, and the capacity to participate in music making, either as musician or knowledgeable listener, has come to serve as an important, positive marker of being Irish (Smyth 2009, 4). Most sources cite the late nineteenth-century nationalist movement in Ireland as the catalyst for the association of music as a primary marker of Irishness. After the Famine years the themes of Irish music turned back to the political scene, as nationalists and loyalists, swiftly dividing along sectarian lines,

composed in the fervor of nationalism and the growing spirit of rebellion (McCarthy 1999, 65). Nationalist Irish formed the Gaelic League in 1893, with the intention of reconstructing a purely Gaelic past, building a national identity, and maintaining Irish as the language spoken in Ireland. The Gaelic Leaguers believed that these “remnants” were to be found in the “rural, pristine culture still practiced in peasant communities” (Ibid. 70). Yet despite the fact that Douglas Hyde, president of the Gaelic League, argued that traditional music had “become Anglicized to an alarming extent” (Ibid. 73), other nationalists such as author Thomas Davis of the nationalist newspaper *The Nation* promoted “The lyrics of Moore,” the “songs of the Irish-speaking people” and “ballads.” He believed that all three of these song types remained significant provided that they served their purpose, bringing “courage and patriotism to every heart” (White 2001, 263).

Dr. Annie Patterson, an avid reformer, presented the Gaelic League with a plan for a revival of the ancient Gaelic festivals or *feiseanna*. They founded *Feis Ceoil*, or the Musical Festival Association, in 1895 and the first *feis* was held in Dublin in May 1897. The goals of this festival were as follows: to promote study and cultivation of Irish music, to hold an annual Feis Ceoil consisting of prize competitions and concerts, and to collect and preserve by publication the old airs and songs of Ireland (Feis Ceoil Association). Such festivals and contests continue to the present day, annually confirming the importance of musicality as an ideal expression of Irish history and identity.

In the twentieth century, artists established Irish musical identity on the international stage. This founding began on a smaller scale in the 1960s, when many Irish artists turned to song as a way of expressing themselves while dealing with the new decade of political unrest in Ireland. Much of this music was inspired by external influences, and the words and stylistic tendencies of rock, the folk revival, blues and an assortment of other new combinations appealed

to a nation dealing with continued bloodshed and violence, but also appealed to an international market (O'Connor 2001, 73). One of many examples of these new stylistic mergers can be seen when a group of Irish, ballad-singing siblings known as the Clancy Brothers toured the United States. Their subsequent popularity served to establish something of a canon for Irish-American ballads. After touring America, the Clancy Brothers returned to Ireland with new influences from some of the folk-revival musicians they had worked with (Ibid., 108).

Of contemporary songwriters, Sean Williams writes:

They number in the hundreds. Many, however, have drawn their initial inspiration from some of the originals in folk and rock from abroad: Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters, and many others. Songwriters that became household names include Rory Gallagher, Van Morrison, Philip Lynott (of Thin Lizzy), and Bono (of U2). A few singer-songwriters who started out as solo artists ended up in the Irish supergroups like Planxty, the Bothy Band, Sweeneys Men and others. (Williams 2010, 205-206)

As for the character of contemporary songwriting, Williams also states that many (though not all) of the songs tend to focus less on historical issues and more on people's feelings, concerns, and contemporary interests. These aspects provide a greater international appeal for their songs, and thus further the connection of an Irish musicality (Williams 2010, 208).

Ireland's economic boom of the 1990s helped to build upon this growing interest in Irish music, and the subsequent association of Irish identity with musicality. Helen O'Shea writes, "The 1990s also saw Irishness become internationally 'cool'—that is, marketable—in a confluence of tourism promotion, celebratory media coverage of Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economy, *Riverdance* and similar stage shows, ... and the success of Irish bands in the rock, pop and world music marketing categories" (2005, 140). Many of these musical experiences conveyed a concept of Irishness through the experiences of emigrant musicians, in the form of theatrical plots, reissues of early recordings of Irish traditional music, and television programs that described the spread of Irish culture—and a musical notion of Irishness—as a triumph

(Bishop 1999, 8). This narrative of the Irish emigrant experience provided a “compelling—and eminently marketable—view of Irish people, particularly musicians, and the spiritual and creative essence that sustains them through the experience of emigration” (O’Shea 2005, 94) and powers that be in the Irish arts took advantage of this.

After their initial success, the creators of *Riverdance* were further inspired to continue the economic gain and created the full-length show. By the time the touring company arrived in New York City in 1995, the 98-minute film version had sold over 1.5 million copies in Ireland and Great Britain (Hast and Scott, 126). *Riverdance* subsequently latched on to a growing tendency in the 1980s and 1990s for Americans to seek personal identification with Irishness and an Irish past.<sup>9</sup> Anthropologist Adam Kaul writes, “spectacles like *Riverdance* which tapped into this growing nostalgia are a starting point for many individuals who then become tourists attempting to seek out the ‘real thing’ in Ireland itself, or even go on to learn how to play traditional Irish music” (Kaul 2012, 197). A wave of North Americans seeking heritage tours and the chance to learn “authentic” Irish music followed *Riverdance*’s arrival in the states, further strengthening the economic boom and the idea that to be Irish was to be musical, and vice versa. As Gerry Smyth wrote, “If music became an important measure of Irish identity at some point during the nineteenth century,” and indeed, as I have shown, continued to be viewed as such to the present

---

<sup>9</sup> “An approximate nine-to-one ratio has been noted between people who claim Irish ethnicity and recorded immigration to America. In the 1980 census, 40 million people, or around 18 per cent of the population of the United States, indicated that they were native-born Irish Americans, despite the fact that the number of immigrants from Ireland has been calculated as only 4.7-4.8 million in total (around 400,000 were resident in the United States before 1820, 4.1 million arrived between 1820 and 1920 and 200,000-300,000 since 1920). This strongly intimates, as Hout and Goldstein have noted, that individuals whose ancestors had intermarried with other ethnic groups (particularly the Germans and the British, the largest white ethnic groups) have *selected* Irish identity, presumably either because of its positive social or cultural status, or conversely because of the negative associations of the other affiliation” (Cooper, 138).



day, “then, by a reciprocal manoeuvre (and as part of the much wider project of cultural nationalism), Irishness soon became a measure of music” (2009, 4).

### **3.2 “WALK WITH OUR ANCESTORS”: THE PERSONAL LINK**

For many of the re-enactors I spoke with, a personal connection with Irish-American identity inspired their participation in musical re-enactment in some way. For some there exists a more literal connection to the past than that created by their performance of period-appropriate music. David Kincaid noted that he initially became interested in Civil War re-enactment because of his Irish-American great-great grandfather, Corporal James McCormick Kincaid, who fought in the Union’s Army of the Potomac for the majority of the war. This ancestral connection inspired him to get involved, but it was his Irish-American identity that encouraged him to seek out Irish songs in the first place, and his experiences with traditional Irish music from childhood that inspired many of his choices in instrumentation and arrangement.

Kincaid’s Irish-American heritage seems to have influenced his musical upbringing, familiarizing him with particular musical characteristics associated with traditional Irish sessions. What few changes he makes to the music never touch the important aspects of form; the ballads included within the album are strophic as an Irish listener would expect, consisting of standard four-line stanzas with an alternating rhyme scheme in the lyrics (Williams 2010, 188-190). Accompanying instrumentation for almost all of the ballads is largely heterophonic, an important nod to the way these instruments are often played in an Irish instrumental session. Most of the ballads include a brief introduction based on portions of the first and last lines of the

tune's melody. Subsequently, instruments play quietly along with the vocal melody, sporadically dropping out so that the otherwise muffled guitar can be heard with the voice. Finally, Kincaid will also occasionally lilt with the instrumental lines, a distinctly Irish practice of singing improvised nonsense vocables to a tune's melody (Ibid., 210). With all of this in mind, Kincaid further authenticates his own rootedness in the music of his two albums. As Redhead describes, he has successfully perpetuated the idea that the "sounds and style of the music should continue to resemble the source from which it sprang" (Redhead, 180).

In comparison to Kincaid, Bruce Carver of The Armory Band actually discovered his familial connection after a year of participating in re-enactments. Nevertheless, Carver felt it important to mention this aspect of his connection to the Civil War, writing:

My great grand father, on my mother's side, was in the Civil War, and a musician, in an Irish unit, C Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ohio! (This is the moment where hair stands up on my neck). I joined C Company of the 69<sup>th</sup> Irish, as near a miss as possible with no Ohio units in So California... Many, many re-enactors find these family connections. Another in my band is connected to a [Civil War] musician also. Others to generals and privates, or famous statesmen. In a way we get to take walks with our ancestors. (Bruce Carver, e-mail message to author, 5 November 2012)

In my later discussion with Carver, I tried to learn more about his personal connection to the Irish-American experience in the war. He admitted that he identified as Irish-American, but that it was one ethnicity among many he claimed. Indeed, Carver had no experience with Irish-American music growing up; his primary musical experience was playing horn from fourth grade through college, and then he did not pick it up again until he began re-enacting. It was only when Carver discovered the familial link that he began to learn more about the Irish involved in the 69<sup>th</sup> New York, and Irish music in general:

Once I found out about my great-grandfather, it was locked in that Irish was gonna be a piece of it. So many bands bring different parts of the history together, so many others are totally generic... At the end of the day when we show up, the 69<sup>th</sup> is our first and home

band name, and everything else that we do sort of operates out of that, and we've dug to get the music that supports it, and we've dug to look at uniforms and in fact we're even in the process of adding green sashes which is a reference to the 69<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia and their Company K who wore green sashes. So we're beginning to move even farther into the Irish experience as we progress over the years. (Bruce Carver, pers. comm.)

Thus for Carver, his knowledge about and connection with an Irish-American identity has grown because of his association with musical re-enactment. In turn, his group has begun to incorporate more of this sense of Irishness into their performances, as a means of strengthening an authentic connection to the militia they represent.

From the Gallant Sons of Erin, Todd Bryda told me that while he did not know of any specific Irish-American ancestors who fought in the war, he did identify with the Irish-American Civil War soldier's cause. Bryda noted that he came from working class, Catholic roots and although his life had involved working hard for an education in order to change his lot in life, he recognized a similar struggle by the Irish-Americans who fought during the war, and eventually earned recognition for their courage and efforts. For him, these songs were crucial because they explained "the evolution of a people" through of their trials at home and in America. Bryda felt that he could relate to how, despite a rough welcome, the Irish made a life for themselves.

At the 2003 conference, the event's host introduced the Gallant Sons of Erin with a quip that he was amazed that "such wonderful Irish music could come from a group, the majority of whom are named DeAngelis!" Indeed, Mark DeAngelis notes that he is not Irish-American, but Italian-American, yet felt that he had been drawn to the Irish-American experience in a way, and that playing the music had probably influenced his sense of identity:

Not only did I as a soldier and [my wife] as a civilian with the children get to portray a civil war soldier, but we also got to portray an Irish immigrant family. ... I am the son of an Italian immigrant. And, you know, I was always interested in the immigrant experience, the American immigrant experience. And you know, I can't do the Italian

immigrant, I don't know that language, that wouldn't work. But the Irish immigrant experience gave me the opportunity to explore that as well as the Civil War period. ...

I feel more knowledgeable about the immigrant experience, you know, and about my father's experience coming here as a child. Now, I've been in re-enactment for 20 years. Throughout those 20 years just talking to my dad and looking at family history would I have gained that same knowledge? I don't know. But I certainly feel satisfaction and confidence in my own heritage as a result of having gotten to explore the Irish-American immigrant experience. (Mark DeAngelis, pers. comm.)

I believe that their connections to Irish-American ancestry, albeit in varying ways, helped to re-affirm the identities of each re-enactment performer and inspire them to achieve a common goal: to seek out and re-create Irish-American music from the Civil War, and to do it correctly, or authentically. Although, as noted earlier, some of the most famous primary sources these men may have drawn from in their research efforts emphasize musicality as an innate portion of an Irish identity, they mediate this concept by applying their unique experiences as Irish-American-identified or Irish-immigrant-identified individuals to this belief. Also, as noted earlier, there is a strong belief amongst Irish-Americans that ones can only claim Irish heritage if they accurately understand the music they play or hear. This may contribute to the drive amongst Irish-American re-enactors to accurately convey and describe the music that they perform during re-enactments, and influences their decisions regarding other forms of musical outreach such as albums and educational performances.

#### 4.0 INTERSECTIONS: IRISHNESS, RE-ENACTMENT AND MEMORIALIZATION

I always say, *this is a memorial at the end of the day*. And I've had people say, well if you'd ever seen a real battle you'd never do this. That's nonsense. There's a lot of young fellows in it now, coming back from Iraq, and doing this is kind of the way that they deal with it, cope, because they're having a hard time. ... I've known a lot of them who are re-enactors. It's not that they like to do this or have fun with it, it's that they *need* to do this. And they love the fact that it's being remembered. Every veteran I've ever met says it's so great that you do this, none of them have ever cocked an attitude about it, said that this is silly, stupid, "Who do you think you are?"

I had one guy who was a Colonel in the [actual] 69<sup>th</sup> he makes some crack, "Well, have you ever served in the military?"

I said, "No, I don't think I'd really have been cut out for that." I said, "*I think I serve better by making sure that men like you are not forgotten.*" That shut him up, he just went "Oh well, uh, thank you." It's like I'm not going to have this belittled in any way, we do it to make sure that veterans, all veterans, are remembered ... *My music, it's all part of that memorial. Certainly, it's a memorial to the Irish-Americans who fought during the Civil War and their great contribution is brought back to life to a lot of Irish-Americans who were otherwise ignorant to it.* (David Kincaid, pers. comm.; emphasis mine.)

When David Kincaid states that his efforts in live performance and the creation of multiple albums of Irish-American Civil War music serve as a memorial, one might compare this effort to a physical memorial, even a monument, built so that those who look at it and read the inscription upon the stone face will learn about the people it represents and remember their contributions to a cause. These performances, recorded and live, on battlefields, in re-enactment camps, and on festival stages, are intended as similar form of education. For those groups who have already produced albums, the inclusion of substantial liner notes is vital for this purpose. Historical information, supported by hours of research by those viewed as the most dedicated

amongst the musical re-enactors, or in Kincaid's case partially written by a renowned scholar of Irish-American Civil War history texts, gives the background of the songs included on the CD. While the music is entertaining, inspiring people to participate by singing along, dancing, or simply being an involved listener, it is also a tool for education, a means of preserving the story of the Irish-American experience before, during, and after the war. It raises awareness of this part of an Irish-American tale, giving a sense of pride to the growing body of Americans who identify with the Irish-American community. Neither Kincaid nor DeAngelis felt that many non-scholars know about the Irish-American contributions in the war. Thus the re-enactors' musical work is intended to move the conversation outside of the ivory tower of academia and to connect with anyone willing to listen.

In the previous sections I have attempted to suggest various ways in which these forms of music function: connecting Irish-Americans to a portion of their heritage, creating an interpretation of Irish-American Civil War heritage, celebrating the acts of Irish-American veterans and promoting the Irish-American's soldier's cause, predominantly as one that preserved the Union and subsequently assisted in his quest to become a respected member of white, American society. As discussed previously, Civil War re-enactors believe that music plays a vital role in these goals, connecting re-enactors to the past they seek to experience and share with others. Many also view music to be a vital part of the Irish-American experience, having become intricately linked to Irish-American identity through hundreds of years of established associations. Those who carry the knowledge of and actively perform what community members deem to be authentic music, through the use of appropriate instrumentation, costume, and knowledge of Irish-American "lore" from the Civil War and beyond, are those who most

successfully link the two groups, those who garner the most subcultural capital and respect, those most likely to successfully memorialize the story.

Yet it is important to consider where these concepts of authenticity originate and the perspective portrayed by the story that the music authenticates. While there is a distinct preservationist slant to the goals of the musical re-enactors discussed here, their music conveys one story amongst many, shares one significant group of voices, but arguably neglects others. Yes, the musical contributions of the women performers involved with these groups are substantial and respected. The Armory Band often performs with several operatic sopranos, Liz Knowles is acknowledged as a world-renowned fiddler on Kincaid's album, and Caitlin DeAngelis provided the tin whistle and occasional vocals for the Gallant Sons of Erin. Yet the question remains as to why so few women become involved with musical re-enactment, why there are no songs that share their stories, and that even amongst the larger non-musical re-enactment scene, men predominate.

I wish to be clear that I did not ask this question of the re-enactors I spoke with, and so I am posing questions for further research, not suggesting that the following necessarily represents the views of the men mentioned earlier in my essay. In his chapter, "The Regendered Civil War," Will Kaufman notes that the present treatment of women who wish to get involved in re-enactment precludes the war's challenges to the nineteenth-century "cult of true womanhood" (Kaufman 2006, 94). He notes how the war gave women the opportunity to involve themselves in spaces outside of the domestic sphere, engaging in espionage, writing political literature, and even cross-dressing in order to fight as soldiers and play as musicians on the battlefield. Yet even in looking at the website for the upcoming re-enactment on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gettysburg, the following impression standards still remain in place for women. The site reads, "Hundreds, if

not thousands, of women passed themselves off as men in order to serve as soldiers during the war—on both sides, and we will never know exactly how many did so because their disguises were so good. Honor them. If any Army or event volunteer (as above) determines the female gender at not less than 15 feet, that individual will be asked to leave the field/ranks” (Gettysburg Anniversary Committee). While one could potentially argue that this is in support of the ever-important authenticity of a living history event, I tend to agree with Stephen Cushman, who notes:

To women who claim that these nineteenth-century precedents give them the right to perform as re-enactors, many men respond that if a woman can pass as a man without detection, as women in the ranks did during the war, then she is truly authentic and can re-enact. But if she cannot pass, then she is not authentic and should be excluded from an activity founded on the principle of authenticity. In response to this argument, a woman can always retort that neither army had many middle-aged TBGs, a re-enactor abbreviation for “Tubby Bearded Guys,” in it either. (Cushman 1999, 60–61)

Certainly this also raises the question as to whether or not a *cross-dressed* woman in uniform could successfully join a musical re-enactment group and still be considered authentic performer, or would re-enactors view her presence as an obstacle, despite past precedents. Indeed, if more women could become involved as soldiers in re-enactment, might more women engage in similar processes of research and compilation like the musical re-enactors described above? Yes, regarding musical *selections*, I acknowledge that the ballads that offer a female perspective during the war beyond narratives mentioning the widow or the wife “left behind” are few and far between. Yet there are certainly broadsides with lyrics written by women, and creative possibilities for the use of other forms of primary documents written by women who lived the war. That these documents go largely unused is a choice in how the memory of the Civil War is constructed, and one that merits more consideration than I have space to include.



Issues of race seem somewhat more likely to be mentioned by musical re-enactors, as the matter of male African-Americans serving in the war came up in my conversations with both Kincaid and the leaders of the Gallant Sons of Erin, and the liner notes for both touch on Irish-American and African-American interaction before the war. Todd Bryda even suggested Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* as a very important read for my understanding of the scope of the war's significance for Irish-Americans.

This is an important addition to the groups' respective albums, as the songs themselves largely valorize the Irish-American, explaining his triumph over the hardships of his new life, mocking those who would oppress him, mourning those lost or left behind, and praising his bravery in battle. The liner notes provide nuance where the songs provide nostalgia, a nostalgia for a sense of community with other Irish-Americans, a nostalgia which, without the extra information, might gloss over the fact that where Irish-Americans were slowly but surely assimilated into white American culture beginning with their triumphs in the war, the African-Americans whose ancestors also fought and died for the nation have to deal with continuing prejudice.

It is important to note that these stories may not be fully shared by the musical re-enactors' efforts, yet the story that the men do share is still a valid representation of Irish-American heritage. Through the use of signifiers of authentic Irish-American and Civil War musicality, these musicians give audiences the opportunity to "walk with their ancestors" for awhile, connecting to the past through a participatory sonic experience that links ethnic identity with historical identifiers. Whether this brief union is formed through a veteran hearing her own voice in the ballad of a soldier fighting for a vital cause, or an immigrant reconciling his experiences with the proud brass anthems of another immigrant community's musical tradition,

musical re-enactors create a space in which a community's history is formed and shared, and personal histories are remembered.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Berman, Marshall. 1982. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Verso.
- Bilby, Joseph. 1995. *The Irish Brigade in the Civil War: The 69<sup>th</sup> New York and Other Irish Regiments of the Army of the Potomac*. Conshohocken, Pennsylvania: Combined Publishing.
- 1998. Liner Notes. *The Irish Volunteer: Songs of the Irish Union Soldier 1861-1865*. David Kincaid, Liz Knowles, Jerry O'Sullivan and John Whelan. 1998, Haunted Field Music. Compact disc.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Richard Nice. 1980. "The Aristocracy of Culture." *Media, Culture and Society* 2: 225-254.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1991. "Whose Imagined Community?" *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 20: 521-525).
- Cornish, Rory. 2011. "IRISH BRIGADE." *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History*. Credo Reference. Accessed 9 Apr. 2013. [http://www.credoreference.com/entry/abcacw/irish\\_brigade](http://www.credoreference.com/entry/abcacw/irish_brigade).
- Cullen, Jim. 1995. *The Civil War in Popular Culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Cushman, Stephen. 1999. *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- Conyngham, David Power. 1869. *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns: With Some Account of the Corcoran Legion, and Sketches of the Principal Officers*. Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson.

- Cooper, David. 2009. *The Musical Traditions of Northern Ireland and its Diaspora*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Diner, Hasia A. 1983. *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Feis Ceoil Association. 2013. "Feis Ceoil: About." Accessed 20 January 2013.  
<http://www.feisceoil.ie/about/default.asp>.
- Foster, R.F. 2008. *Luck and the Irish: A Brief History of Change from 1970*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Foster, Stephen. 1862. "Was My Brother in the Battle?" In *Foster's Melodies, No. 10*. New York: Horace Waters.
- Gettysburg Anniversary Committee. 2012. "Impression Standards." Accessed 27 March 2013.  
<http://www.gettysburgreenactment.com/reenactors/impression-standards/>
- Greaves, Margaret. 2012. "Slave Ships and Coffin Ships: Transatlantic Exchanges in Irish-American Blackface Minstrelsy." *Comparative American Studies* 10 (1): 78-94.
- Hast, Dorothea and Stanley Scott. 2004. *Music in Ireland*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haunted Field Music. "David Kincaid: Biography." Accessed February 25, 2012.  
<http://www.hauntedfieldmusic.com/BioPage.html>
- Heaps, Willard and Porter. 1960. *The Singing Sixties: The Spirit of Civil War Days Drawn from the Music of the Times*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Huntington Beach Historical Society. 2010. "The Reenactment." Accessed March 15, 2013.  
<http://hbcivilwar.webs.com/thereenactment.htm>
- Ignatiev, Noel. 1995. *How the Irish Became White*. New York: Routledge.
- Kaufman, Will. *The Civil War in American Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kaul, Adam. 2012. *Turning the Tune: Traditional Music, Tourism, and Social Change in an Irish Village*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1995. "Theorizing Heritage." *Ethnomusicology* 39 (3): 367-380.
- McCarthy, Marie. 1999. *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press.

- McWhirter, Christian. 2012. *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Nyong'o, Tavia. *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- O'Brien, Steven G. 2011. "Lincoln, Abraham." In *American Civil War: The Essential Reference Guide*, edited by James R. Arnold and Roberta Wiener. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO LLC.
- O'Connor, Nuala. 2001. *Bringing It All Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music at Home and Overseas*. Dublin: Merlin Publishing.
- O'Connor, Thomas. 1997. *Civil War Boston: Homefront and Battlefield*. Holliston, MA: Northeastern.
- Olson, Kenneth. 1981. *Music and Musket: Bands and Bandsmen of the American Civil War*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- O'Shea, Helen. 2005. "Foreign Bodies in the River of Sound: Seeking Identity and Irish Traditional Music." PhD Dissertation: Victoria University of Technology.
- 2008. *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*. Cork: Cork University Press.
- Pieslak, Jonathan. 2009. *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Redhead, Steve and John Street. 1989. "Have I the Right? Legitimacy, Authenticity, and Community in Folk's Politics." *Popular Music* 8, 2 (May): 177-184.
- Saffle, Michael. 2004. "Across a Great Divide: Irish American Music and Musicians of the Civil War Era." In *Bugle Resounding: Music and Musicians of the Civil War*, Edited by Bruce C. Kelley and Mark A. Snell, 169-201. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press.
- Shelemay, Kay. 1998. *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 2001. "Toward and Ethnomusicology of the Early Music Movement: Thoughts on Bridging Disciplines and Musical Worlds." *Ethnomusicology* 45(1): 1-29.
- 2006. "Music, Memory and History." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15(1): 17-37.
- Shull, Jonathan. 2006. "Locating the past in the Present: Living Traditions and the Performance of Early music." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15(1): 87-111.

- Smyth, Gerry. 2009. *Music in Irish Cultural History*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- Taruskin, Richard. 1988. "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past." In *Authenticity and Early Music*. Ed. Nicholas Kenyon. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tessier, Therese. 1981. *The Bard of Erin: A Study of Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies (1808-1834)*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.
- Thornton, Sarah. 1996. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Tomlinson, Gary. 1988. "The Historian, the Performer, and Authentic Meaning in Music." In *Authenticity and Early music*. Ed. Nicholas Kenyon. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- United States War Department. 1862. *Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & CO, Publishers. Accessed 9 April 2013. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/AGY4285.0001.001/39?rgn=subject;view=image;q1=United+States.+--+Army+--+Regulations>
- Ural Bruce, Susannah J. 2006. *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Waksman, Steve. 2011. "War is Heavy Metal: Soundtracking the US War in Iraq." In *The Politics of Post-9/11 Music: Sound, Trama, and the Music Industry*. Edited by Joseph P. Fisher and Brian Flota. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing.
- Warren, Craig A. 2001. "'Oh, God, What a Pity!': The Irish Brigade at Fredericksburg and the Creation of Myth." *Civil War History* 47 (3): 193-221.
- Williams, William H. A. 1996. *Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Williams, Sean. 2010. Williams, Sean. *Focus: Irish Traditional Music*. New York: Routledge.
- Wolf, Edwin. 1963. *American Song Sheets, Slip Ballads, and Poetical Broad-sides, 1850-1870*. Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia.

Woodworth, Steven E. 2011. "Causes of the American Civil War." In *American Civil War: The Essential Reference Guide*, edited by James R. Arnold and Roberta Wiener. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO LLC.

### **Discography**

Kincaid, David. *The Irish Volunteer: Songs of the Irish Union Soldier 1861-1865*. With Liz Knowles, Jerry O'Sullivan and John Whelan. 1998, by Haunted Field Music. Compact disc.

Kincaid, David. *The Irish-American's Song: Songs of the Union and Confederate Irish Soldiers, 1861-1865*. With Liz Knowles, Jerry O'Sullivan and John Whelan. 2003, by Haunted Field Music. Compact disc.

Maxwell, Ronald F. and Jeff Sharra. 2003. *Gods and Generals*. DVD. Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video.

Maxwell, Ronald F. and Michael Sharra. 1993. *Gettysburg*. VHS. Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell. Los Angeles, CA: Turner Home Entertainment.

The Gallant Sons of Erin. *No Irish Need Apply*. With Todd Bryda, Mark DeAngelis, etc. 2003 by Gallant Sons of Erin, LLC. Compact disc.

### **Interviews**

Andy, Steve. Interview by author. MP3 recording of phone interview. Pittsburgh, PA. November 17, 2012

Bryda, Todd. Interview by author. Notes from phone interview. Pittsburgh, PA. October 26, 2012

Carver, Bruce. Interview by author. MP3 recording of phone interview. Pittsburgh, PA. November 19, 2012

DeAngelis, Mark. Interview by author. MP3 recording of phone interview. Pittsburgh, PA. November 15, 2012

Kincaid, David. Interview by author. MP3 recording. Pittsburgh, PA. September 8, 2012.