

Tune of the Month By Amy Shaw

I saw the photograph of the old melodeon player and I just had to have it. The photo was part of Danny Diamond's art show, "Ireland: Music and Landscape," on display at the Celtic Junction back in 2011. Danny had gone back to Ireland by the time I bought the photo, so I e-mailed him to ask about Eddie O'Gara, the melodeon player. Danny replied, "Eddie O'Gara's an amazing character. He was born [in 1926] and raised near Glencolmcille, a very remote and beautiful Gaeltacht area in southwest Co. Donegal, but spent most of his adult life in Australia. He married there and had a family... Eddie eventually moved back closer to home after his wife passed away and settled in Brighton, a seaside resort town near London. He hadn't played melodeon since his youth but he started bringing it along on trips back to Donegal to visit his family around five years ago; he was brought out to sessions by [his son] Brendan and Ronan Galvin [another fiddler]...and the musical community up there really warmed to him -- he's a very quirky character, fond of philosophical conversations and surreal jokes and very sharp-witted. Also, because he hadn't played and hadn't absorbed other musical influences since his youth he preserved the musical style and repertoire of southwest Donegal in the 1940s. He plays many tunes that had been previously considered lost and is passing them on to our generation."

One of these tunes is this lovely waltz recently recorded by Fidil, the traditional Irish fiddle trio comprised of Ciarán O'Maonaigh, Aidan O'Donnell, and Damien McGeehan. It was composed by John "Mhosaf" McGinley, a renowned figure in the Donegal fiddle tradition who was born near Glencolmcille during the famine. Besides composing many tunes, McGinley had a wealth of rare old Glencolmcille tunes which he passed down to fiddlers in southwest Donegal. The tune became known as Eddie O'Gara's when Eddie reintroduced it into the Donegal repertoire. According to Fidil, "He learned this tune from his father Paddy, who was taught directly by John Mhosaf himself." Fidil plays a beautiful all-fiddle arrangement of it, and they swing the eighth notes a little bit.

Danny Diamond's photo is posted on his Flickr site. If you'd like to see Eddie in action, there is a YouTube video of him leading a session in the Highlands Hotel in Glenties, Co. Donegal. "Amazing character" is right!

Eddie O'Gara's Waltz

John Mhosaf Mac Fhionnghaile (McGinley)

The musical score for "Eddie O'Gara's Waltz" is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of nine staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. It includes a repeat sign with a first ending bracket and a fermata. The second staff has a fermata and a double bar line with the instruction "**See var.". The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff has a fermata. The fifth staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The sixth and seventh staves continue the melody with fermatas. The eighth staff has a first ending bracket with two endings, the second ending marked "D.S.", and a fermata. The ninth staff is labeled "**Variation" and shows a short melodic fragment.

Source: Fidil, *The Old Wheel of Fortune* (2011), track 10. From the playing of Eddie O'Gara, melodeon.