



Irish Music & Dance Association

Tune of the Month by Amy Shaw

I missed the Kevin Burke concert at the Celtic Junction last fall, but my friends were raving about it. One of them put me onto *Across the Black River*, Kevin's CD with guitarist Cal Scott. That album includes Reel of Rio, a tune that is occasionally played in sessions around here and one that I really should finish learning. Now's my chance, I guess.

Reel of Rio has been widely recorded and it appears in many printed collections, usually unattributed. Not until now did I realize it's actually a composition of the Co. Tipperary fiddler Seán Ryan (1919-1985). A number of Seán's 250 tunes have become such standards of the traditional repertoire that people don't even associate them with their composer. The winner of several All-Irelands, Seán frequently appeared on radio and television broadcasts. Many of our readers will be aware that our own Paddy O'Brien made his first trip to America in 1968 while touring out east with Seán and his wife Kathleen, who played the piano.

This reel has a curious title. One explanation is that it was "so named by Rev. John Quinn for its samba-style feel" (*The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 2nd edition). *The Fiddler's Companion* adds, "According to Seán's son Brian the tune suggested a Latin beat, hence the title's reference to the Brazilian city, although the title is also a pun on the name of the grain (rye). Seán Ryan's nickname was 'Rio' (pronounced 'rye-o'), and thus another layer of word-play in the title."

Usual disclaimers: Any transcription errors are my own. The notation here is not meant to be a substitute for listening. It is simply an aid to learning the tune.

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IMDA Board Meetings are open to the membership. The Board meets regularly on the First Tuesday of each month at 6 pm at Perkins in HarMar. Members are encouraged to verify the time and location shortly before, as meeting times and locations can change.

Contact Information

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Newsletter Submissions

We welcome our readers to submit articles of interest, news, and notices of events to be published in the newsletter. The deadline is the 20th of the preceding month. Send to: editor@irishmusicanddanceassociation.org

The Reel of Rio

Variation

On final repeat:

Rhythm: Reel

Source: Kevin Burke and Cal Scott, *Across the Black River* (2007), track 5