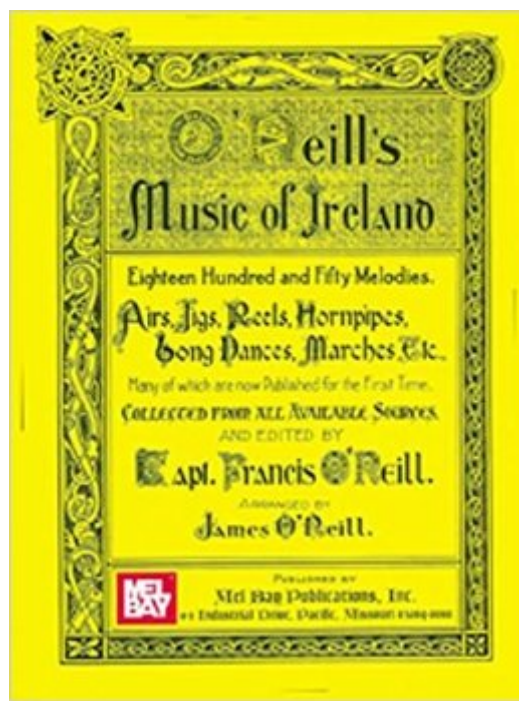


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# Mel Bay O'Neill's Music Of Ireland



## Synopsis

A beautiful facsimile edition containing the original collection of 1,850 melodies consisting of airs, jigs, reels, hornpipes, marches, and more for fiddle.

## Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (22 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I was in a small pub in Baltimore for the ceili beginner's nights they have, and was asking some of the advanced regulars about good books with Irish music. They showed me a copy of this book and told me it was "the Bible of Irish music," and that's just what it is. With about 240 pages of more than 1000 jigs, reels, slip jigs, hornpipes, set dances, and Carolan's compositions, this book has it all. This is the real stuff too, because many of the songs from the book can be found on various Chieftains recordings, so it gives you the ability to play the music of the greats. Among others, there are versions of "Toss the Feathers," "Soldier's Joy," "The Wind that Shakes the Barley," "The Job of Journeywork," and the list goes on. This is a fiddle book, but the music can be played and sight read by any person of any instrument. I am a flutist and love this book. I highly recommend this book for anyone looking for a thorough compilation of quality Irish music.

You really can't not have this book, if you're going to get very deep into Irish traditional music. I think most Irish musicians would agree with me on that, too. (I teach Irish traditional fiddle.) There is another version, edited by Miles Krassen, that I do not recommend (Krassen "updated" the settings in idiosyncratic and often not particularly helpful ways). But I do recommend the other "big"

O'Neill's--"1001 Gems." The latter and "Music of Ireland" are *\*not\** the same book, although they have considerable overlapping content, many tunes are in one but not the other. Basically, while as a teacher and player I don't recommend actually *\*learning\** tunes from tunebooks like this, this great tome is extremely useful for purposes of reminding yourself how tunes go, for acquainting yourself with tunes, for getting ideas about good settings, for practicing sight-reading, etc.

Look no further. Of all the Irish tune books, this is the one to get. It goes by many names, "O'Neill's", the "big O'Neill's", the "1850", and the "yellow book". Like the Fiddler's Fakebook, I am on my second "yellow book", having worn out the first till the pages came out. This collection contains most if not all of the Irish tunes you will hear being played, and many hundreds more you will want to play. I find it indispensable for several reasons - It's a reference - when I hear an Irish tune that I like on an album or in concert or a jam session, I look it up in the "yellow book" to determine the canonical version. I'll probably end up playing it my way anyway, or the way I hear it played, but I like to at least see the "official" version. It's a collection - most of the Irish tunes I have come to love and learned to play are here collected in one volume. It's an exercise book - the "1850" serves as a seeming endless supply of sight reading material, after I have practiced scales and tunes I know. It's a diamond mine - there are gems in there, just waiting to be learned. Amazing and uncommon tunes lying between the pages waiting for the curious musician to breath life into them. Grab a tune, take it to a session, set it free. Get a copy of O'Neill's Music of Ireland, and the Fiddler's Fakebook. There are many other wonderful tune books, but these two are essential.

The compilers did the best they could at the time, but they were classically trained and a bit removed from the Irish music tradition when they arranged this music. Therefore, and because of the change of time in the past hundred-plus years, it's a bit different from how Irish tunes are played now. The most striking difference is the keys used: Eb, for example, is common, rather than the usual A and D. Musicians looking to play music closer to the current Irish tradition will need to supplement this book with more common understandings of the tunes -- through interacting with other musicians, listening to recordings, and seeking out written versions on websites such as [thesession.org](http://thesession.org). That being said, Mel Bay's version is a faithful rendering and if you're looking for the historical book, this is an excellent version. Plus, true Irish music geeks will love just flipping through the pages and taking it all in. In the age of electronic metronomes and easy-access ABC notation, there is something fantastic about the tactile sheet music, so tightly wedged in to fit in all the tunes.

I purchased this for my father, who is a mountain dulcimer enthusiast. It's a nice thick book with soft cover, bound with the cheapness typical of most music publications. It's too big to sit easily on a music stand, so I imagine it's intended as a sort of Irish folk music dictionary. In this capacity, it is excellent. There are nearly two-thousand tunes, indexed by title. These are short- the vast majority only a couple of lines long. A tune consists of melody on a treble-clef staff (if you need tablature, this isn't a good place to start), embellished by 19th-century style ornaments. Each is given both its conventional Irish (Gaelic) and English names and the composer to whom it is attributed. There are no notes about the scholarship behind the collection or how these tunes might be approached in performance. The engraving is nice (done around the turn of the century), and fairly easy on the eyes.

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