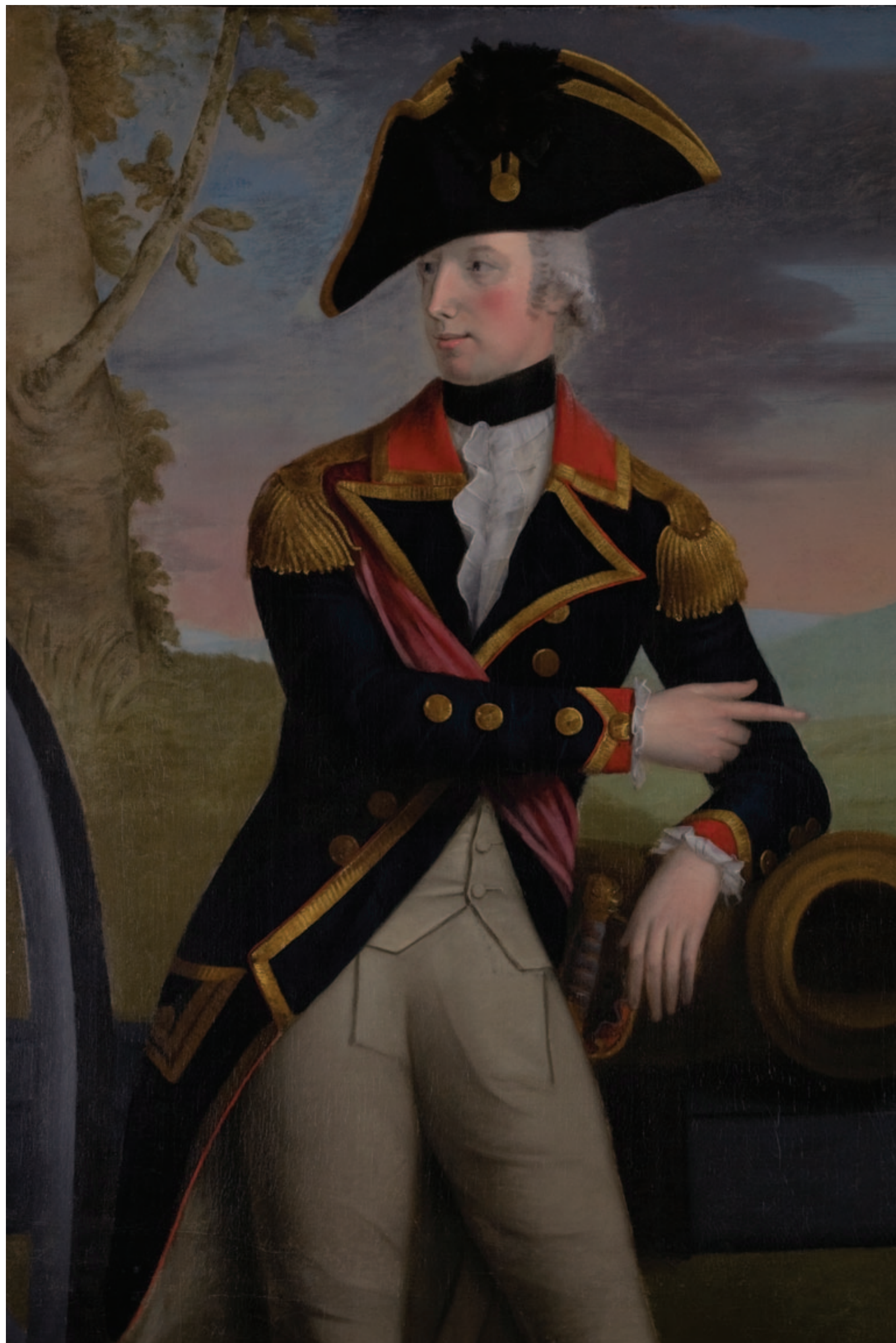


‘Spacious and splendid’: music, dancing and social life at Glin Castle, 1781-1854

KAROL MULLANEY-DIGNAM

This article draws on recent research conducted as part of the ‘Music in the Irish Country House’ project at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, funded for 2010-12 by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). Using selected country houses as case studies, this project employs music and dancing as a means of exploring the homes, lives and possessions of the Irish landed elite between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries. One of the first houses to be investigated as part of this research project was Glin Castle, which stands today on a 500 acre demesne about fifty kilometres west of Limerick city on the southern banks of the River Shannon. Glin Castle is of particular significance being one of the few great Irish country houses still in the ownership of the original family, the FitzGeralds, knights of Glin – a branch of the Norman house of FitzGerald whose lineage in Ireland dates to the twelfth century.[1]

Although the origin of the hereditary knighthood of Glin remains obscure, documented use of the title dates to the fifteenth century. From that time the knights of Glin possessed many tower houses in the present-day county of Limerick, but the village of Glin remained their primary base.[2] The current Glin Castle succeeds a previous manifestation of that name; until the seventeenth century the family occupied a nearby fortified castle complex, the ruins of which can still be seen in the village. Within the defensive walls of that complex were a tower house and banqueting hall where hospitality and entertainments were provided.[3] Despite the seizure of Glin Castle and the forfeiture of almost half of their lands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the FitzGeralds were in possession of about 15,000 acres at the beginning of the eighteenth century, having managed to legally evade the Williamite land confiscations of the 1690s.[4] By this time, the

1 – Joseph Wilson, John Bateman FitzGerald, 23rd Knight of Glin
1782, oil on canvas (Glin Castle Collection; courtesy Glin Historical Society)

2 – Glin Castle, Glin, county Limerick
(courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

family had relocated from the old castle complex to Glin Hall, a modest unfortified house built around 1675. Glin Hall was, by all accounts, a haven of social activity and artistic patronage where musicians and Irish-language poets extolled the illustrious ancestry and munificence of their hosts. Joseph O'Keeffe, a poet who benefited from the patronage of the 19th knight in the 1730s, depicted the house as a creative space for 'poets composing poetry tirelessly, and reciting it correctly to the accompaniment of harps'.[5] This patronage continued for much of the eighteenth century, notwithstanding the Penal Laws (punitive legislation aimed at reinforcing the Protestant Ascendancy by undermining the social, economic and political power of Roman Catholics) and the conformity of the knights of Glin to the established church in order to secure the entirety and inheritance of their estate.

Although a fire in 1740 caused it to be rebuilt in a somewhat grander fashion, Glin Hall remained the home of the knights of Glin until the early 1790s, when it was incorporated by the 23rd Knight of Glin (Plate 1) into a much larger dwelling known as Glin House. By the 1830s, Glin House was known as Glin Castle after the 24th Knight had the exterior embellished with castellations and other Gothic revival features that remain part of the building's present form (Plate 2). Glin Castle manifested what Thomas J. Byrne has termed the 'gentrification' of the FitzGeralds of Glin by the early nineteenth century.[6] This article considers the role of music and dancing in that process by tracing the mea-

sure and range of these activities in the social lives of the 23rd and 24th knights of Glin. It must be said that any consideration of social life at Glin Castle, in its present or previous manifestations, owes a great deal to the scholarship of Byrne, among others (including Thomas F. Culhane, Pádraig de Brún, Tom Donovan and J. Anthony Gaughan), and to the unrelenting efforts of the late Desmond FitzGerald, 29th Knight of Glin. *The knights of Glin: seven centuries of change*, a compendium edited by Tom Donovan and published in 2009, is as much a chronicle of the assiduous labours of these scholars as it is a worthy narrative of the FitzGerald family at Glin. Although country house historians, and specialists in the fields of architecture, art and material culture, are perpetually indebted to the research undertaken by local historians and other scholars, this is particularly true in the case of Glin Castle where many of the early family and estate papers were destroyed in the 1860s.

MUSIC, DANCING AND LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY

DESPITE THE LONGEVITY OF THE FITZGERALDS AT GLIN, THEN, IT IS ONLY FROM THE time of John Bateman FitzGerald (*c*.1756-1803) that any significant evidence of music and dancing survives. As a child living in the vibrant cultural environment of Glin Hall, John B. appears to have received musical instruction from an Irish-speaking poet and musician named Seán Bán Aerach Ó Flanagáin (John Flanagan).[7] Such instruction enabled a young gentleman, like the 23rd Knight of Glin, to engage with music and related activities outside the home. While professional performers were considered socially inferior, performance being their primary source of income, it became acceptable in the eighteenth century for propertied men to practice as musicians, singers and actors in an amateur capacity, particularly for charitable purposes. The promotion of musical events, to raise funds for hospitals and other charitable institutions, was then an integral aspect of the social life generally enjoyed by the Irish nobility and landed gentry, both in Dublin and in provincial towns such as Limerick. Patronage of these concerts tended to be motivated by philanthropy rather than enthusiasm for music, and patrons, as much ‘on display’ as the players on stage, often chatted or played cards during performances.[8] Participation by gentlemen amateurs, on the other hand, seems to have been motivated by the inherent gratification of music-making and a genuine interest in performance. This is supported by the fact that many of these men also participated in amateur theatricals. As early as 1779, John B. FitzGerald was actively involved in theatricals organised by Vere Hunt (1761-1818), 1st Baronet of Curragh Chase, county Limerick.[9] Many prominent landed families, like the Brownlows of county Armagh, the Conollys and the FitzGeralds (dukes of Leinster) of county Kildare, and the O’Neills of county Antrim, involved themselves, their friends and their servants in domiciliary productions.[10] Few, however, were as enterprising as Hunt, who went on to manage a professional travelling theatre company.[11]

Music, singing and dancing had long been aspects of theatre production, professional and amateur, in Ireland, and contemporary newspaper advertisements indicate that the majority of plays staged in the eighteenth century were more or less musical in type. While some simply featured interpolated songs or musical after-pieces, others were farces or spoof operas with satirical lyrics written to the tunes of popular songs; hence, it was necessary for stage actors to be able to sing. Theatre orchestras, which offered the principal employment for professional musicians, were central to the musical activity generally available at this time and often provided the music for events in venues other than the playhouse.[12] It is not known how regularly the 23rd Knight of Glin performed in Hunt's theatricals, or if these were ever put on at Glin. Nevertheless, his singing ability was noted in a 1785 production of two popular comic operas – R.B. Sheridan's *The Governess* (1777) and John O'Keeffe's *The Poor Soldier* (1783).[13] In February of that year, the *Limerick Chronicle* reported that 'the K—t of G—n made the most of Bagatelle', one of the main characters in *The Poor Soldier*, adding that 'a pretty occasional song, we believe of his composition, sung very well and quite in character, was received with merited applause'.[14]

As well as instruction in music, it is likely that John B. received dancing lessons before he succeeded his father as the 23rd Knight of Glin in 1781. It is difficult to overstate the significance of social dancing in the eighteenth century: although enjoyed by all social classes, it was regarded as a particularly necessary accomplishment among the Irish nobility and gentry. Dancing was a proactive form of ritualised social interaction, centred on performance rather than recreation, and was such a popular aspect of sociability that it became fashionable for the nobility and gentry to facilitate social dancing in their own houses. Being a display of acquired social behaviour, dancing was a significant measure of breeding and grace which indicated investment in a child's social refinement.[15] Thus, dancing-masters, who provided lessons in social courtesy and deportment as well as the requisite dance steps, were employed for children as young as six or seven years of age.[16] For adults, exposure to the latest fashions in dancing tended to occur in non-domiciliary contexts at the vice-regal court at Dublin Castle and at assembly rooms. Assembly rooms were found in most large towns by the end of the eighteenth century and were sometimes connected with a prominent building, such as a town hall. They usually comprised a set of rooms with different social functions, including dancing, dining and card-playing, and were capable of facilitating large numbers of people.[17]

In Limerick city, the largest social centre closest to Glin, a purpose-built 'public assembly house' was opened on Charlotte's Quay in 1770 by twenty prominent gentlemen who shared equally the cost of its erection and maintenance.[18] Apart from theatres, assembly rooms were the only other non-domiciliary venues of entertainment open to both sexes. As a young, unmarried, landowning gentleman, John B. attended a variety of assembly-room events in order to socialise with peers in the wider social circle and to dance with potential marriage partners. Not confining himself to Limerick, he was reported in attendance at a 'grand fancy ball' held in Tralee for the benefit of the Kerry

3 – Abraham or Joseph Daniel, MARGARETTA MARIA FITZGERALD (NÉE FRAUNCEIS), WIFE OF THE 23RD KNIGHT OF GLIN
late 1780s, miniature
(courtesy Glin Historical Society)

Infirmary in 1780.[19] Fancy-dress fundraisers for hospitals and charities were very popular from the late eighteenth century, and like concerts in other venues, the names of the chief lady-patronesses were printed in newspaper advertisements to attract company of quality.[20] John B. also attended these kinds of events in England, particularly at the fashionable spa resort town of Bath, which boasted some of the largest assembly rooms outside of London. This was where, as Desmond FitzGerald put it, 'many young Irishmen sought out English ladies with good dowries'.[21] The 23rd Knight was no exception, for although he had an income of £4,000 per annum from the rental of around 12,000 acres, he had inherited considerable debts and encumbrances. Fortunately, he met Margaretta Maria Frannceis Gwyn (d.1801), a wealthy young English heiress whom he married in 1789 (Plate 3).[22]

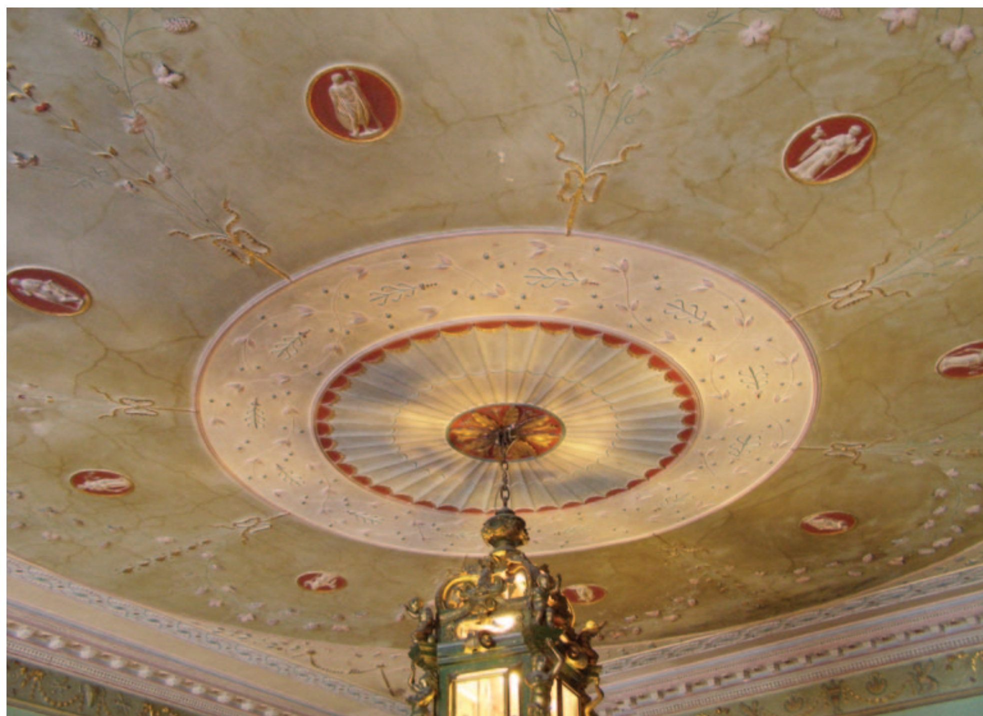
DOMICILIARY SOCIABILITY

GIVEN THAT THE FORMS OF SOCIABILITY WHICH OCCURRED AT ASSEMBLY ROOMS, THEatres and at the vice-regal court are typically better documented, particularly in contemporary newspapers, it is easy for the historian to overlook or understate the extent and significance of that which occurred in the home.[23] Nevertheless, family and estate papers suggest that hosting and attending social gatherings in the town or the

country house was the primary form of sociability for the Irish nobility and landed gentry in the eighteenth century.[24] While the country house may have been a place of retreat from the demands of urban social life in the late Georgian period, it was not, as Toby Barnard has shown, a place of seclusion or economy.[25] In rural Ireland, 'visiting' was a fundamental and important aspect of life, and most evenings were spent chatting, drinking, dining, playing cards, or even dancing, with relatives, friends, local landowners and clergymen. The majority of occasions for music and dancing in the Irish country house in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then, were associated with the entertainment of visitors. Music typically functioned to facilitate singing or social dancing, and featured less frequently as an entertainment in its own right. Some social dance occasions, or balls, took place in an impromptu manner, with music provided by a family member for a small number of dancers. Others were larger and more lavish events for which invitations were issued and a band of musicians was hired.[26]

Most architectural historians agree that as the eighteenth century progressed, there was a general shift from formality towards sociability in the design of the country house plan, both in Ireland and in England.[27] However, entertaining in the country was also becoming a sophisticated, sometimes competitive endeavour by the nineteenth century.[28] Improved transport networks allowed for greater social mobility and facilitated the transfer of ideas and information, which in turn had a bearing on the form of the country house. Contemporary sources, such as diaries, memoirs and personal correspondence, reveal that opinions about Irish country houses and their owners were generally informed by the reception and entertainment spaces expected and encountered therein. As Mark Girouard has convincingly argued, the architecture of non-domiciliary venues in social centres like London and Bath was reflecting changes in social patterns and a trend towards social informality by the late eighteenth century. Assembly rooms and 'public' gardens represented what Girouard has termed 'a breakthrough' in the entertainment experience, simply because they provided 'a little of everything'. As these venues grew increasing popular with the property-owning elite, they also grew increasingly elaborate and sophisticated. Consequently, it appears that the nobility and landed gentry were now designing new houses with a more informal sociability in mind, attempting, perhaps, to emulate assembly-room sociability in terms of the scale and simultaneity of activities. Even in older houses where there existed an original enfilade of reception rooms reflecting the formal, hierarchical and processional nature of early eighteenth-century sociability, modifications were made to facilitate a more informal circuit of comfortable and communal entertainment spaces.[29]

This is not to imply that access to the country house, and to the various spaces therein, did not continue to be carefully controlled. As Benjamin Heller has argued in relation to the town house, admission continued to be largely by invitation only, and many families still retreated to particular rooms for more intimate gatherings of select company.[30] Nevertheless, the distribution of recreational possessions across a number of equally decorative rooms allowed for the circulation of large numbers of invited guests



4 – Ceiling plasterwork of the entrance hall at Glin Castle
(photo by Conor Lucey, 2006)

on the basis of diversion as opposed to procession on the basis of rank. This may well have been a consideration for John B. in the design and building of Glin House in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Although he did not necessarily require his residence to be a manifestation of power – he was neither particularly wealthy nor a Member of Parliament – he was highly regarded as a local power-broker. During his lifetime, he served as a deputy lieutenant, a justice of the peace and a member of the Grand Jury for the county of Limerick, the other members of which formed part of his social circle.[31] He was undoubtedly acquainted with the aesthetics of an array of domiciliary and non-domiciliary entertainment spaces. Moreover, his wife Margaretta Maria had grown up in the sumptuously decorated environs of Forde Abbey in Devon (and previously at Combe Florey in Somerset), and probably brought with her to Ireland 'a sophisticated taste in building and decoration'.[32]

The existing house, Glin Hall, built in the late seventeenth century, seems to have been relatively unremarkable; it had certainly elicited no comment from the agriculturalist Arthur Young on his travels around Ireland in the late 1770s.[33] However, the arrival at Glin of Margaretta Maria, and, crucially, her dowry, enabled the building of an impressive mansion in the early 1790s. Although there is little evidence of her hand in the decoration of interior spaces within the new Glin House, the arms of her family, the Frauncei

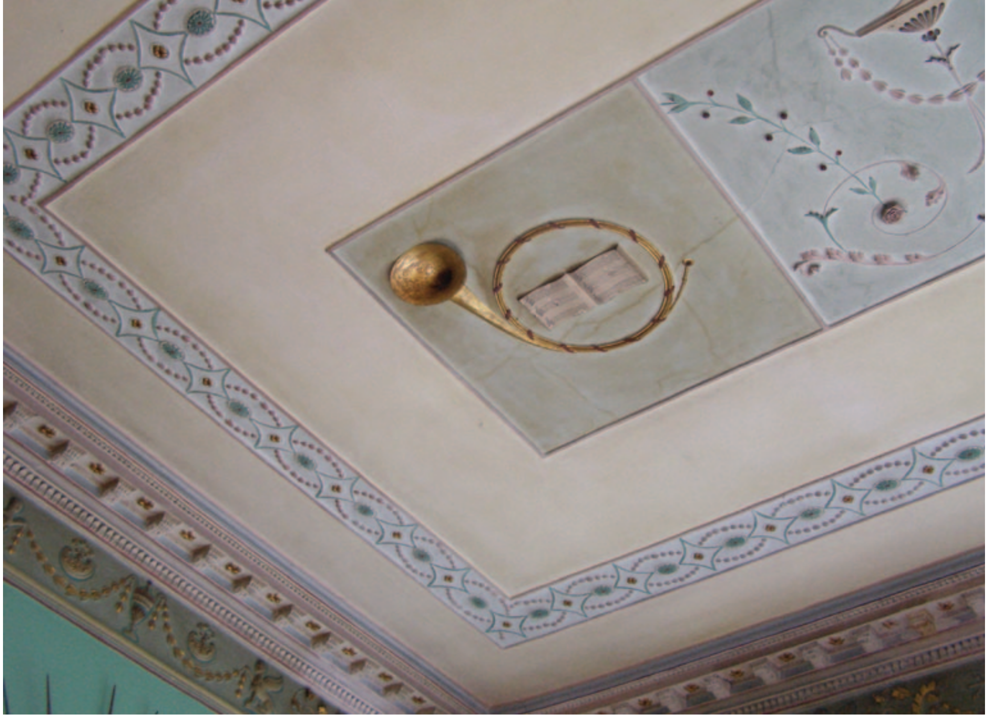
Gwyns, are prominent, and still visible today in the ceiling plasterwork of the entrance hall.[34] Positioned around this large, spacious hall are rooms designated for social function and entertainment, such as the dining room, drawing room and library. Regardless of the different forms that circulatory rooms took within individual country houses, the various entertainment spaces therein were furnished to accommodate guests but decorated to reflect the pedigree and preoccupations of the family (Plate 4).

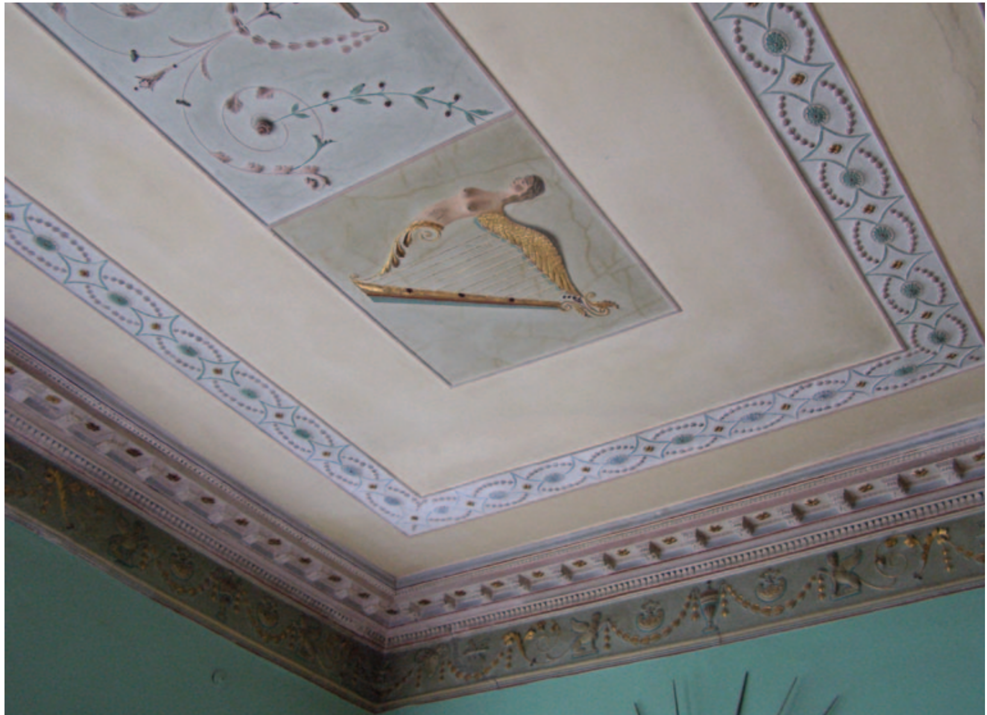
MUSICAL ICONOGRAPHY AND MILITARY BANDS

MUSICAL ICONOGRAPHY FEATURES IN THE CEILING PLASTERWORK OF THE ENTRANCE hall at Glin Castle and takes the form of a horn encircling an open music book with blank treble clef staves and a 'winged-maiden' harp.[35] While this iconography suggests an association with music, it is more likely to represent other interests of the 23rd Knight of Glin. The horn depicted is a rudimentary 'natural' horn consisting of a long coiled brass tube with a mouthpiece on one end and a flared opening or bell on the other (Plate 5). It is not a representation of the modern instrument commonly known as the French horn because it does not depict the valve system, introduced in the nineteenth century, which allowed for a greater range of sounds by routing air into additional tubing. The pitch and timbre of the natural horn was controlled by modulating the passage of air through the lips at the mouthpiece and by partially muting the bell with the right hand, but because there was only one length of tubing, the range of harmonic sounds available to the player was restricted. Hence, these instruments were originally used as hunting horns by mounted horse-riders to sound a recheat, or hunting call, to assemble hounds on the hunt.[36]

Fox-hunting with hounds and horses was particularly popular in the Irish countryside and generally occurred during the months of November to April. Hunts were usually hosted in rotation among landowners in a particular area, and the attendant entertainments of music, dancing and dining could last for days on end. It is quite probable, then, that the horn depicted at Glin is a reference to the hunting activities of John B. FitzGerald.[37] The significance of the music book placed within the spiral form of the hunting horn is inconclusive yet intriguing; it is unclear if it was intentionally left blank, and if there is meaning in that, or if it was simply unfinished with the intention of adding in some music at a later date. It is tempting to consider that this might have been a hunting song pertaining to Glin, particularly in view of the fact that John B.'s son also had a very keen interest in the sport. The depiction of the 'winged maiden' harp with the fore pillar formed from the figure of a naked, winged female, and the harmonic curve derived from her wings, is less ambiguous (Plate 6). This image, which became the dominant

5, 6 – Musical iconography at Glin Castle: hunting horn encircling an open music book (above) and 'winged-maiden' harp (below) *(photos by Conor Lucey, 2006)*





visual representation of Ireland under British rule in the nineteenth century, was characteristic of Volunteer iconography in the late eighteenth century.[38] The Volunteers were an armed civilian force organised into small corps, raised by local initiative, and commanded and paid for by prominent members of the landed gentry. They were brought into being in the late 1770s when the withdrawal of regular government troops from Ireland (to bolster the British war effort in North America) and the declaration of a French alliance with the colonies in 1778 ignited a threat of foreign invasion.

Limerick was a particularly active county for the raising of Volunteers owing to the depletion of the garrison in Limerick city. For his part, John B. commanded the Royal Glin Volunteers, a company raised by his father in 1779. It was customary for an infantry company to be accompanied by two young non-combatant musicians, usually a drummer (who assisted in maintaining formation and rhythm while marching) and a fifer (who provided military signals and played tunes to entertain the men). When the various companies of a regiment were gathered together, the fifes and drums were often assembled into a 'band'. However, some Volunteer units had more substantial bands comprising skilled players of woodwind and brass instruments who provided music for ceremonial and other purposes.[39] The Munster Volunteer Registry for 1782 indicates that the Glin Volunteers had a band of ten musicians. Given that there were only sixty rank-and-file members in the company (which would only have required one fifer and one drummer), this band must have consisted of other types of musicians.[40] While the exact composition of the Glin Volunteer band is not known, it is doubtful that it included a horn as depicted in the ceiling plasterwork at Glin House; by the mid-eighteenth century the horns used by military bands were equipped with tube additions that functioned as early versions of the valve system.[41]

Although evidence of the band's activities in the 1780s is as sparse as that of the Volunteer company itself, military bands, colourful parades and choreographed reviews were part of the cultural milieu. Indeed, although the Volunteers declined after the end of the war in America in 1783 to be replaced in turn by government militias after 1793, a martial presence continued to be felt in Irish social life. Military bands grew in such popularity that they began to be utilised in a variety of social contexts, for as well as marching music, their repertory included arrangements of the popular theatre and dance music of the day. While the militia act of 1793 permitted a drum corps of only two per company – typically a drummer and fife- or bugle-player – regimental commanders were permitted to form regimental bands at their own expense.[42] Indeed, it would appear that there was competition among members of the landed gentry who sought to raise the musical standards and prestige of their regimental bands; accomplished bandmasters were employed to instruct and even compose music for these bands.[43] Regardless of its composition, the keeping of any band of musicians was an extravagant undertaking for the likes of the 23rd Knight of Glin, who would have been responsible for the provision of uniforms, musical instruments and musical instruction.[44] This type of extravagance probably contributed to the bankruptcy of the FitzGeralds of Glin at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

'THE ELEGANCE, EASE, AND AFFABILITY ... OF THE ANCIENT HOUSE OF GLIN'

In 1801 part of the Glin estate was forcibly put up for sale by a private Act of Parliament to pay off vast debts and encumbrances. While some of these arrears were almost certainly inherited, others were incurred by a lavish standard of living, improvements on the estate, and, of course, the construction of Glin House, which cost somewhere in the region of £6,000.[45] The death of John B. in 1803 occasioned the sale of various house contents, including furniture, curtains, china, beds, carpets and books.[46]

John Fraunceis FitzGerald (1791-1854) was still a minor when he succeeded his father as 24th Knight of Glin (Plate 7). He was brought up by his mother's family at Forde Abbey in Devon, and did not return to Glin until after his marriage. Having no siblings to support, his long minority allowed for an accumulation of income from the rental of his estate which was managed by his relatives, the Plummers of Mount Plummer in county Limerick.[47] In 1812 he married Bridgetta Eyre (1789-1867), the prosperous daughter of a propertied clergyman of Reading in Berkshire.[48] After she bore his eldest son and heir in 1813, the family relocated permanently to Glin, where John F. began the process of transforming Glin House into Glin Castle. As well as the Gothic embellishments to the house still in evidence today, the estate was planted and several lodges were built on the demesne.[49] Even if sociability had not been the principal consideration in the design and building of Glin House in the early 1790s, this was certainly a key function of the house in the first half of the nineteenth century.

John F. led a very active social life after his marriage, fraternising with tenants and military men as easily as he did with peers at Dublin Castle or with relatives in England. As well as fox-hunting and horse-racing, he was involved in sailing, yacht-racing and regattas on the Shannon; the FitzGeralds had long been involved in these activities and owned a variety of vessels over the years.[50] One of the earliest newspaper reports of a social event at the residence of the 24th Knight was an account of a 'public dinner' given in June 1814 to 'his tenantry and corps of yeomen, cavalry and infantry' in order to celebrate his twenty-third birthday. Earlier that year he had become commander of the Glin yeomanry and cavalry corps, and lieutenant-colonel of the Royal Limerick County Militia, and on his birthday, the infantry, which assembled on the lawn in front of the house, 'fired a *feu de joie*, in celebration of the day'.[51]

Throughout the nineteenth century, military bands were regularly used to provide musical entertainment at the country houses of their commanders, and Glin House was no exception. It was reported that as part of the 1814 birthday celebrations, 'several national toasts were drank, with appropriate airs, played in good style by the late Knight of Glin's band, new revived by his worthy son and successor'.[52] The use of the entrance hall as an entertainment space is also evidenced by newspaper reports in 1814:

About 5 o'clock, the company were introduced into the spacious and splendid hall

7 – Joseph Haverty, JOHN FRAUNCEIS FITZGERALD, 24TH KNIGHT OF GLIN
c.1825, oil on canvas (Glin Castle Collection; courtesy Glin Historical Society)

of Glin House, where they partook of a sumptuous entertainment, composed of the choicest delicacies of the season, and conducted with all the elegance, ease, and affability, so characteristic of the present esteemed representative of the ancient House of Glin.[53]

That the hall functioned in this way until the end of the period in question is verified by numerous entries in the correspondence and diaries of Caroline Wyndham-Quin (1789-1870), the 2nd Countess of Dunraven. Her diaries are particularly useful for exploring the relationships between Glin Castle and other country houses in west Limerick, and for constructing a narrative (as Desmond FitzGerald has done elsewhere) of social life in that area.[54] In November 1826, for instance, Caroline wrote of a visit to Glin: 'we had some military men and other additions to our party in the evening. We danced in the hall and were very merry.' [55] Given the Knight's military offices, it is not surprising to find 'military men' among those socialising at Glin as the house was well situated for interaction with naval traffic on the Shannon. Being among the most prominent local gentry, the family and friends of the Knight of Glin were often invited to accept the hospitality of officers anchored at Tarbert, where, according to J.A. Gaughan, a British naval artillery detachment frequently exercised.[56] While reciprocation of this hospitality regularly occurred at Glin Castle, it seems that by the 1830s the FitzGeralds were also using a thirty-ton yacht, known as *Rienvilla*, to entertain guests.[57] The Knight's band usually provided the musical entertainment on board, while mounted cannon guns supplied celebratory gunfire. John F. was also a strong advocate of temperance, and both his yacht and his band participated in teetotal demonstrations in the county during the early 1840s.[58]

John F. was, like his father, involved in local government and in the administration of law and order in the county of Limerick. As early as 1813 he used a town house on George's Street in Limerick city while attending to business there.[59] He was very tolerant of Catholicism, and among the guests in attendance at his public dinner in 1814 were both 'the Protestant and Catholic clergymen of Glin'.[60] He supported Catholic emancipation as espoused by Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), and was reported in attendance at a 'Grand Munster Provincial Meeting' at St Michael's Chapel in Limerick city in October 1825 at which O'Connell was honoured.[61] Later that evening both O'Connell and the Knight were among the three hundred 'noblemen and gentlemen' who sat down to a 'most magnificent and sumptuous' dinner at the assembly rooms on Charlotte's Quay.[62] During his lifetime, John F. also attended formal functions at Dublin Castle, where, in April 1829, he attended a 'levee' and a 'drawing-room' hosted by the Viceroy or Lord Lieutenant, Hugh Percy (1785-1847), the 3rd Duke of Northumberland.[63] The following year he was in attendance at a royal levee at St James's Palace in London, where in his new role as High Sheriff of the county of Limerick, he presented a congratulatory address to the new king William IV.[64] He also appears to have harboured some political ambitions, publicly supporting candidates for election to Parliament between the 1830s and the 1850s, and in 1841 mounting his own electoral campaign in the county of Limerick. (This proved so unsuccessful that he withdrew from the contest.)

From the 1840s, the Knight of Glin's name appears among the lists of invited guests at major social events in the southern counties, and particularly at 'grand fancy and full dress' balls organised for various charitable purposes by the Freemasons. Although John F. does not appear to have been a member of this fraternal organisation, he did sup-

port their charitable activities. In February 1840, for example, he was among '500 of the *haut ton* and *beau monde*' who attended a fancy-dress ball held at the Clarence Rooms in Cork city in aid of the Masonic Female Orphan Asylum. The *Nenagh Guardian* reported that 'never did we witness a more brilliant assembly of rank, fashion and beauty', and among the guests were the Duke of Leinster and the Earl and Countess of Listowel. The ballroom was 'brilliantly illuminated, and tastefully decorated with transparencies and Masonic banners'.[65] As the years went by, John F. attended many similar events, and cannot but have been impressed by the décor of the ballrooms and the regalia of members of the brotherhood and their guests. One ball given in Limerick in 1842 featured a twenty-foot replica of a Masonic temple, 'entirely covered in crimson velvet and fringed with gold embroidery', as well as 'several costly oil paintings' and 'transparent full-length likenesses' of Queen Victoria and the prince consort.[66]

QUADRILLES, POLKAS, GALOPS AND WALTZES

WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE IF THE OPULENCE OBSERVED AT VARIOUS BALLrooms influenced the interior decoration of Glin Castle in the nineteenth century, it can be said with some certainty that the music and dancing did. Music was typically supplied by some type of combined orchestra comprising the members of one or more regimental bands as well as a band of civilian musicians. Apart from anthems such as 'God save the Queen' and 'St Patrick's Day', the music played on these occasions was mostly for dancing. Dancing usually began at around 10pm and opened with a formal exhibition dance. In the eighteenth century, the exhibition dance of choice had been the minuet, the performance of which, as Derek Carew has noted, was 'predetermined in accordance with a protocol of precedence', which applied to the pairing of the couples and the order in which they appeared on the floor.[67] Thus, this stately dance was commenced by the male and female of highest social distinction present, and followed in turn by other couples in order of social rank. The minuet was supplanted in the early nineteenth century by the quadrille, a livelier dance performed by four couples of high social distinction in square formation. The quadrilles were usually followed by more informal dances, such as polkas, galops, waltzes and country dances, the figures of which allowed for a greater variety of pairings, performance and pace.

A number of authorities on the history of music in Ireland have highlighted the popularity of quadrille dancing after the Napoleonic wars by citing, without substantiation, that 'the knight of Glin gave orders that all dancing-masters within his territory should teach the new dance, as it was performed in France and Portugal'.[68] That this dance was actually in vogue at Glin Castle is evidenced by the extant music document collection, which features two miniature volumes of dances entitled *Selection of favorite* [sic] *quadrilles or fashionable French dances*. The other popular dances of the time are also represented in the music documents at Glin, the majority of which belonged to a daugh-

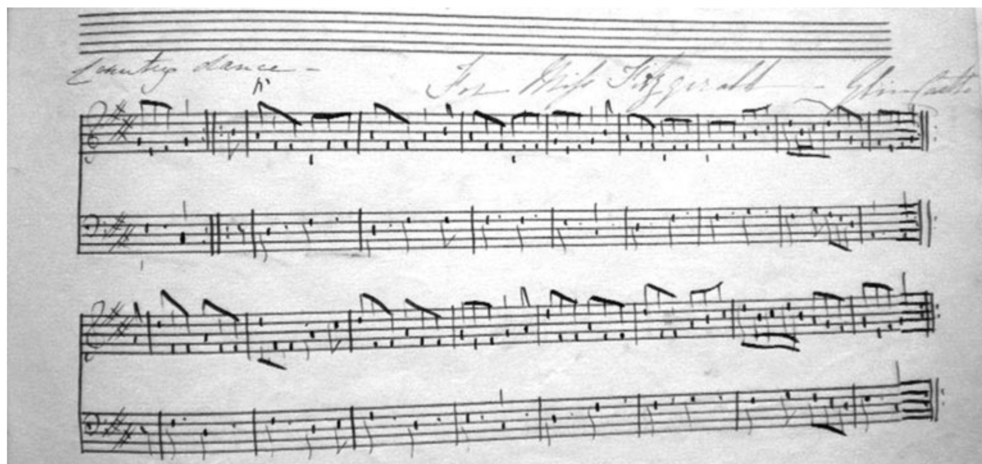
8 – Joseph Haverty,
BRIDGETTA FITZGERALD (NÉE EYRE), WIFE OF THE 24TH KNIGHT OF GLIN AND MOTHER OF MARGARETTA SOPHIA
c.1830 (detail)
(Glin Castle Collection; courtesy Glin Historical Society)

ter of the 24th Knight, Margaretta Sophia FitzGerald (fl.1838-72). Curiously, for all the information that has been retrieved about the knights of Glin, comparatively little is known about their wives and daughters. This is partly due to a lack of extant source materials such as diaries or letters – an outcome, perhaps, of the unbridled infidelity of successive knights. The wives of the 23rd and 24th knights both separated from their husbands and probably took with them pertinent personal effects. Furthermore, because women at this level of society did not typically inherit property or participate publicly in politics and business, many were relegated to historical obscurity, with those unmarried or childless often being omitted altogether from authoritative lists of the landed gentry. Thus, it is by means of her music collection that information about Margaretta Sophia has been recovered.

The majority of this collection consists of bound volumes of music – five of printed music and six of manuscript (handwritten) music. The printed music comprises *A selec-*

tion of Irish melodies with symphonies and accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson, Mus. Doc., and characteristic words by Thomas Moore, Esqr (two volumes), *Coomb's Divine Amusement for the use of churches, chapels, schools and private families* (one volume) and selections of piano music (two volumes). The inscriptions on the two volumes of *Moore's melodies* indicate that they originally belonged to Margaretta Sophia's mother Bridgetta, while the volumes of devotional music, arranged for the voice, organ or pianoforte by J.M. Coombs, was acquired by Margaretta Sophia herself in 1861 (Plate 8). One of the two volumes of piano selections bears the inscription 'Margaretta Sophia FitzGerald, Glin Castle, Dec. 24th 1837', and consists of music for both solo piano and piano duets (two performers on one piano). The inscription 'E.U.M.FG, Dec. 1837', also found on this volume, suggests that Margaretta Sophia's duet partner was her brother Edward Urmston McLeod (1820-1881). Most of the music they played consisted of dances, airs with variations, and popular songs arranged for piano. The second volume of piano selections, comprising exercises and scales, bears the inscription 'Margaretta Sophia FitzGerald, Glin Castle, August 30th 1838'. It is not known how exactly Margaretta Sophia acquired this printed music. Some of it was certainly purchased in Limerick, some in Dublin, and the rest further afield, perhaps by her father, the 24th Knight, who undertook 'an extensive tour through England and Scotland' in 1839.[69] That this music was actually used is indicated by a variety of pencil markings and annotations which reveal Margaretta Sophia to have been a proficient amateur musician.

While domestic music-making was largely considered to be a perfunctory female diversion, it was, nonetheless, an effective agent of cultural transfer, particularly between Irish country houses in the nineteenth century.[70] Many women copied tunes from printed music sheets into ruled manuscript music books like those at Glin Castle, while music-masters and friends often jotted down music of their own composition. Thus, the extant manuscript music books, dated 1836, 1839, 1844 (two volumes), 1845 and 1848, contain pieces of music written in black ink by more than one hand. Many of these were transcribed from printed sources for piano, and comprise popular overtures and marches, dance tunes such as quadrilles, polkas, galops and waltzes, and occasional songs with words in English. The majority of the manuscript music books pertain to Margaretta Sophia's life before her marriage in 1847 to William Massy Blennerhassett (c.1818-1904), an inspector in the Royal Irish Constabulary whose extant journals show that she continued to play the piano for many years.[71] The pieces in her manuscript music books can be taken as a good indication of the music to which Margaretta Sophia was exposed, either at Glin Castle itself or in her social milieu. The popular instrumental repertoire of the 1840s is represented by transcriptions of dance music by three prolific 'light music' composers of the era – Louis Jullien (1812-1860), Charles d'Albert (1809-1896) and Charles Coote (1809-1880).[72] There are waltzes attributed to the Austrian masters W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) and Johann Strauss (1804-1849), and works by Lord Otho FitzGerald (1827-1882) of Carton, county Kildare, a son of the 3rd Duke of Leinster. There are also numerous untitled works, save for the designation 'waltz' or 'quadrille', and one guitar



9 – 'Country dance – for Miss FitzGerald – Glin Castle'
(courtesy Glin Castle music collection)

accompaniment to a song entitled 'Oh come back to me'. A regimental band influence can be detected in pieces like 'My Valentine Galop with vocal chorus – performed by the band of the 81st regiment' and 'Waltz by an officer of the 48th regiment'. Polkas also appear to have written in by bandmasters of the 74th and 52nd light infantry, who may have been visiting at Glin. Other transcriptions of note include 'The Clara waltz' composed by a W.P. O'Donoghue and dedicated to 'Miss Blennerhassett' (presumably Margaretta Sophia's future sister-in-law Clara), and 'Country dance – for Miss FitzGerald – Glin Castle' (presumably Margaretta Sophia or her sister Geraldine Anne) by an unknown composer (Plate 9).

CONCLUSION

Historians of the Irish country house have tended to underestimate the extent and significance of domiciliary hospitality, entertainments and education, even though the scholarly examination of these aspects of country-house life provides a useful framework for investigating the homes, lives and possessions of the landed elite. It also offers new perspectives on the design and decoration of country houses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The available evidence, sparse and fragmented as it is, suggests that music and dancing functioned as agents of sociability at Glin Hall (afterwards Glin House and Glin Castle) in the period from 1781 to 1854. The great entrance hall was used for entertaining guests, while the family yacht occasionally functioned in this regard as an extension of the house.

The military band had a very strong presence at Glin, more so than at many other

houses, owing much, perhaps, to the social interaction with 'military men' at Tarbert. This draws attention to the unique location of the house beside the Shannon, which was heavy with traffic and conducive to social activity in the nineteenth century. It also underlines the influence of the social milieu of the knights of Glin on social life at their residence: entertainments experienced at non-domiciliary venues such as assembly rooms and theatres had a significant bearing on the music and dancing practised in the home. Music and dancing were, thus, important aspects of social education. The study of musical activity also helps to retrieve women, like Margaretta Sophia (née FitzGerald) Blennerhassett, from historical obscurity, restoring them to the narrative of the Irish country house and creating a more rounded perspective of life therein.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the generosity of the late Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin, and his wife Olda, who facilitated my research at Glin Castle and allowed me access to the extant music collection there. I am grateful to them, the Glin Historical Society and the Irish Architectural Archive for permission to use the images displayed here. I also gratefully acknowledge the IRCHSS funding of my research.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

FJ	*The Freeman's Journal*
Gaughan	J.A. Gaughan, *The Knights of Glin: a Geraldine family* (Dublin, 1978)
Donovan	Tom Donovan (ed.), *The Knights of Glin: seven centuries of change* (Glin, 2009)

1 Gaughan, 13-21.
2 Kenneth Nicholls and Paul MacCotter, 'Feudal warlords: the knights of Glencorbry', in Donovan, 48-79.
3 Anthony McCormack, 'The knights of Glin in the long sixteenth century', in Donovan, 89-91.
4 Gaughan, 22-59.
5 Gaughan, 139-142. See also Pádraig de Brún, 'The Glin family and Irish poetry', in Donovan, 282-94.
6 Thomas J. Byrne, 'From Gaelicised chieftains to Protestant gentry', in Donovan, 139.
7 David Cooper (ed.), *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (Cork, 2002) 59-60. Ó Flanagáin (often given as Ó Seanacháin) is believed to have composed the words of the song 'An buachaill caol dubh' or 'The dark slender boy', to an old air known today by the same title. The tune featured on a 1971 compilation recording issued by Claddagh Records entitled *The Drones and the Chanters: Irish Pipering*, and was performed by the piper Dan Dowd.
8 Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700-1850', in T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland, IV: 18th-century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986) 570, 579-80, 583-84.
9 Limerick City Archives, Hunt and De Vere family papers, P22/46, John FitzGerald to Vere Hunt, letter dated 5th February 1779.

[10] *The private theatre of Kilkenny with introductory observations on other private theatres before it was opened* (privately published, 1825) 1-5.

[11] Limerick City Archives, 'Hunt and De Vere family of Currahchase, County Limerick', description of collection list P22, 2. See also Gaughan, 84, and Byrne, 'From Gaelicised chieftains', 172.

[12] Boydell, 'Music, 1700-1850', 586-87.

[13] The governess was a version of Sheridan's *The Duenna*, first produced at Covent Garden, London, in 1775. O'Keeffe's *The Poor Soldier* was set in a 'country village' named Carton in county Kildare, which was also the name of the seat of the FitzGeralds, dukes of Leinster.

[14] *Limerick Chronicle*, 7th February 1785.

[15] Frances Rust, *Dance in Society* (London, 1969) 59-60.

[16] Stephen Philpot, *An essay on the advantage of a polite education joined with a learned one* (London, 1746) 27-28, 88-115.

[17] Constantia Maxwell, *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges* (revised ed., Dundalk, 1949) 251.

[18] Maurice Lenihan, *Limerick: its history and antiquities, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, from the earliest ages* (Dublin, 1866) 358-59.

[19] *Hibernian Chronicle*, 14th February 1780, cited in Byrne, 'From Gaelicised chieftains', 164-65.

[20] See, for example, *FJ*, 6th May 1777.

[21] Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin, 'Candle in the wind: a precarious and volatile existence, from the 1780s to the present', in Donovan, 234.

[22] *ibid*., 231-34.

[23] This is termed 'domiciliary sociability' by Gillian Russell in her *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge, 2007), 11, and is more useful than the terms 'private', which was more fluid in the eighteenth century than it is today, or 'domestic', which tends to carry connotations of a separate, feminine sphere.

[24] Domiciliary entertainments even impacted on fundraising activities at the most popular assembly rooms in Dublin. A notice published in *FJ* on 6th May 1777 in advance of a charity ball at the Rotunda expressed the hope that 'that none of the nobility or gentry will injure the charity by any private ball'.

[25] Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004) 345.

[26] For examples see Karol Mullaney-Dignam, *Music and Dancing at Castletown, Co. Kildare, 1759-1821* (Dublin, 2011).

[27] See, for example, Mark Girouard, *Life in an English Country House: a social and architectural history* (New Haven, 1978) 158-94; Dana Arnold, *The Georgian Country House: architecture, landscape and society* (Stroud, 1998) 87-89; Richard Wilson and Alan Mackey, *The Building of the English Country House* (London, 2000) 54-55; Patricia McCarthy, 'The planning and use of space in Irish houses, 1730-1830', unpublished PhD thesis (Trinity College Dublin, 2009) *passim*.

[28] Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester and New York, 2003) 274-301.

[29] Girouard, *Life in an English Country House*, 183-94. See also *idem*, 'The country house and the country town', in Gervase Jackson-Stops et al (eds), *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House* (Washington, 1989) 305-08; McCarthy, 'The planning and use of space', 140-42.

[30] Benjamin Heller, 'Leisure and the use of domestic space in Georgian London', in *The Historical Journal*, LIII, 3, 2010, 623-45.

[31] Byrne, 'From Gaelicised chieftains', 165-71.

[32] FitzGerald, 'Candle in the wind', 238.

33 Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland, 1776-1779*, ed. A.W. Hutton, 2 vols (Shannon, 1970).

34 Mark Girouard gives a description of the plaster decoration at Glin in his 'Glin Castle, Co. Limerick', in *Country Life*, 27th February 1964, 504-05. This plasterwork had previously been attributed to the Dublin stuccodore Michael Stapleton (1747-1801), but is now thought to be by a Cork stuccodore in the Wyatt style (See FitzGerald, 'Candle in the wind', 231-32). For details of Stapleton's work see Conor Lucey, *The Stapleton Collection: designs for the Irish neoclassical interior* (Tralee, 2007).

35 Musical iconography features prominently in the wall and ceiling decorations of many town and country houses, including those attributed to Stapleton. See C.P. Curran, *Dublin Decorative Plasterwork of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1967).

36 Renato Meucci and Gabriele Rocchetti, 'Horn', in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13353 (accessed 6th April 2011).

37 An indication of the extent of these activities is given in Byrne, 'Gaelicised chieftains to Protestant gentry', 170-71.

38 Mary Louise O'Donnell, 'A driving image of revolution: the Irish harp and its utopian space in the eighteenth century', in *Utopian Studies*, XXI, 2, 2010, 252-73; Barra Boydell, 'The iconography of the Irish harp as a national symbol', in Patrick Devine and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies, V: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995, Selected Proceedings, Part Two* (Dublin, 1996) 131-45.

39 Kieran Kennedy, 'Limerick Volunteers, 1776-1793', in *Old Limerick Journal* (1999) 21-26.

40 A Volunteer of C.L.R.D., The Munster Volunteer Registry (Dublin, 1782) 51.

41 Meucci and Rocchetti, 'Horn', in Grove Music Online.

42 Henry W.W. McAnally, *The Irish Militia 1793-1816: a social and military study* (Dublin, 1949) 65-66.

43 See Pat O'Connell, 'A wind-band in Cork in the first decade of the 1800s', in Brian Carty, Pat O'Connell and Barbara Strahan (eds), *Maynooth Musicology*, II, 2009, 102-18.

44 Stephen O'Connor, 'Colonel John FitzGerald, the Volunteers and the military at Glin in the late eighteenth century', in Donovan, 317-18.

45 FitzGerald, 'Candle in the wind', 238-39.

46 Advertisement for the auction, *Limerick Chronicle*, 23rd July 1803. This, along with other later sales, may account for the fact that while there is a considerable collection of musical documents, there are no original musical instruments in the house today.

47 Tom Donovan, 'From devotion to ambivalence: a study of four eclectic knights', in Donovan, 181-83.

48 *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 8th August 1812.

49 *FJ*, 8th November 1833; Gaughan, 188-90.

50 Donovan, 'From devotion to ambivalence', 191-92; Gaughan, 99, 107, 158-59.

51 *FJ*, 16th July 1814.

52 *Limerick Evening Post*, 16th July 1814.

53 *ibid*.

54 'Glimpses of social life in west Limerick in the nineteenth century', in Gaughan, 151-174 (Appendix IV, Part 1).

55 University of Limerick Special Collections, Dunraven papers, D/3196/E/2/29, Diary of Caroline, countess of Dunraven, 3rd April 1826 to 7th January 1827.

56 Gaughan, 158.

57 Gaughan, 107, 157-8.

58 See *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), 28th March 1840; *FJ*, 14th October 1841 and 7th October

1842; *Limerick Reporter*, 4th October 1842.

59 *FJ*, 19th October 1813.

60 *Limerick Evening Post*, 16th July 1814.

61 *FJ*, 27th October 1825.

62 *FJ*, 31st October 1825.

63 *FJ*, 9th April 1829 and 10th April 1829.

64 *The Times* (London), 28th Oct 1830.

65 *Nenagh Guardian*, 26th Feb 1840.

66 *Limerick Chronicle*, 2nd April 1842.

67 Derek Carew, 'The consumption of music', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2002) 252.

68 See Breandán Breathnach, *Dancing in Ireland* (Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare, 1983) 28, and Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* (Dublin, 1998) 86.

69 *FJ*, 19th July 1839.

70 Playing or listening to music, and singing, had long been considered appropriate female pursuits, not only for amusement but for occupying the mind and keeping in good spirits. This, in turn, was believed to have positive effects on the body. See, for example, J. Pemberton, *A mechanical essay on singing, musick and dancing* (London, 1727).

71 University of Limerick Special Collections, Glin papers, P1/22-25, four (of twelve) personal diaries of William Massy Blennerhassett, January 1861 to September 1878.

72 Jullien and d'Albert were both French émigré composers active in mid-nineteenth century London. Jullien, whose extensive tours included concerts in Ireland, was particularly popular, and his flamboyant apparel and conducting style prompted numerous caricatures

———