

# **Unveiling the Music in Irish Poetry**

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## **Abstract**

Irish music is a breathing and living organism, a unique bearer of national heritage. There is a long and rich relationship between music and poetry in Ireland. The oldest records indicate that the performance of poetry in Gaelic Ireland was normally accompanied by music. Much like poetry, music is a point of continuity with past tradition that can strengthen a sense of community in the present. As a matter of fact, poets from the eighteenth century onwards find a perceived authenticity and a connection with an older tradition in music. It appears that both music and poetry are a form of artistic expressions which are interrelated to the other.

The thesis aims to present a concise picture of how Irish literature moved from an oral tradition to contemporary musicians while keeping the strong interest in the music, the song, and the musicality of the language. The connection between music and poetry is incredibly solid, given the distinct musicality in Irish speech to rhyme, rhythm and stress pattern. In fact, writing poetry is not writing words about music but a form of musical writing itself. Poetry's manipulation of musical effect is shown in our contemporary context as modern poets continue to see the importance of music in their verse. The composition of music and lyric poetry are both an attempt at making analogies between what happens within the world of sound and language itself. This project briefly considers works from the eighteenth century onwards. It includes textual analysis with references to the impact of their work in creating the bond between music and poetry. Close relations will be drawn upon the significance of music in the Irish context. The final chapter and analysis focuses on how contemporary singers take on board the words of poets.

## **Reflection**

Ireland has an incredibly rich musical heritage consisting of thousands of airs. Irish music and literature reveals a huge part of Ireland's storied past. Music and literature are not always viewed together closely, at least not as much as they should be. The decisive sonic qualities in writing can sometimes be overlooked. The instance of the range of musical presence in Irish literature had never been so striking and clear to me until this project came along. I was introduced to a whole other spectrum of musical world where musicians take on board words of a bygone era in a seamless and beautiful manner. I was awakened to a tangible connection between Irish music and poetry. The subject of the project made me consider the extent of influence that Irish traditional music and poetry has on each other, and how far back it went.