

Theory and Application



Ornamentation on the Whistle 2

Double Grace Notes

A *double grace note* is what I call the ornament known in Ireland as a “casadh”. It’s similar to the starting note, but you begin and end with the proper note. Just like the starting grace note, it requires inserting a momentary higher note after the initial note and before returning to the initial note. Like other decorative techniques, you’re not attempting to play an accurate note, but it’s the effect we’re looking for: a brief “blip” if you like. In the

examples, the higher note used is the top hole (the C note), but it works equally well with any hole momentarily exposed.

Double grace notes

(D C) D (E C) E (F# C) F# (G C) G (A C) A (B C) B

Rolls

The *roll* is a logical extension of the double grace note, and again it is used to separate two notes. You can think about a roll as a combination of a *double grace note* and a *tap* (see the *Ornamentation 1* hand-out sheet). In

its simplest form, you play the proper note, the note above, the proper note again, the note below, and end with the proper note. Again, in the examples, the higher note used is the top hole (the C note), but it works equally well with any higher hole momentarily exposed.

Rolls

(E C E D E) E (F# C F# E) F# (G C G F#) G (A C A G) A (B C B A) B

I have heard of different types of rolls: long rolls, short rolls, single-cut rolls, double-cut rolls and cheese rolls, but as I neither know what they are nor use them in my playing, I’ll leave it to you to find out.

Triplets

There are generally two types of triplet. The first is when the three notes are the same, where you use use use tonguing to separate the notes. The way I do it is to move the tongue within the mouth as if you were saying “tuh-kuh-tuh” (see Fig.1 below). This is sometimes called a *treble*.

The other kind is called a *rising triplet* or *falling triplet*, when a triplet is used to “fill in” notes in a tune. As an example, look at the

1 tuh-kuh-tuh-tuh tuh-kuh-tuh-tuh
GGGG GGGG B G B D G D B G

notes in Fig.2a: the second and fourth pairs of notes go down two notes at a time; the triplets add a note in between, but are played for the same length of time.

In Fig.3a we have a quarter note lead-in; it can be effective to insert a triplet here.

2a G A B G C A B G G A B A G C A B A G
2b
3
3a A D E F# D E
3b A B C D E F# E D E

...and Finally

There are other considerations when it comes to ornamentation and articulation: staccato and legato, trills, crans, etc. Don’t try to do everything at once. It can sound forced and

unnatural, not to say amateurish if not done well. Ornaments should enhance tunes, but subtly. If ornamentation detracts from the tune, it’s not being done properly.