

ABOUT THE MUSIC OF THE DEMERITS

While we describe our music as Irish and American Roots, we have never felt constrained by that category. Our sound also includes bits of blues, rock, bluegrass, spirituals, with some influences of art music.

We prefer to record "live" as opposed to "multi-track". That means that for the most part, the music happened just as you hear it. (It is common in popular music to record each part separately and combine them on a computer. Aside from being no fun, this method can lose spontaneity.) Most of these tunes were recorded in the Mortensen kitchen during the weekend of February 6-8, 2009. We just sat in a circle and played.

BUFFALO GALS

Buffalo Gals is not a cowboy song! It's an old vaudeville tune, and traveling musicians used to change the name to fit the locale in which they were performing (Saginaw Gals, Cedarville Gals, Louisville Gals). For some reason the version from Buffalo, NY, became the standard. However, after we sing the opening line of that tune, we go into *Bonaparte's Retreat*, which is an Irish and American tune. It was used by Aaron Copland in his ballet *Rodeo* and also in a beef commercial. Next comes *The Musical Priest*, an Irish reel, and finally the full version of *Buffalo Gals*. We end with a quick recap of *Bonaparte*.

HIPPO SOUP

This is a set of three reels: *Boys of Malin*, *The Salamanca Reel*, and *Hippo Soup*. The first two are Irish and the third composed by John.

GUACAMOLE

Again, this set is a blending of traditional and new composition. The first tune is the great old jig *Banish Misfortune*, followed by *Guacamole*, a tune by John in 7/8 time, and closing with *Blarney Pilgrim*. Little bodhran and jawharp interludes join the tunes together.

UNLUCKY COMBINATION

We got a mandolin in the fall of 2008 and it makes its debut on this CD. *Unlucky Combination* is a mish-mash of blues rock together with polyphony from the time of Bach.

DOWN TO THE RIVER

This is an old spiritual, lightly accompanied by banjo and accordion.

THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY

The Wind that Shakes the Barley is an Irish reel, and is followed by *Reel with the Birl*, another tune from the same land. These two are often played in sessions as the last music of the evening.

HEY HOW YOO BEE DOIN?

This tune, alas, does not fit neatly in a category. John wrote it after hearing his kids taunting each other with the title while using odd voices. As an exception to our "live" recording rule, we had to do the percussion separately because it is too loud to be in the same room with anyone else.

JIGGY WHISTLES

Four jigs, with a percussion break in the middle. We like to play high whistles together because their sound is neat. Notice that the fiddles often play in 2/4 time rather than 6/8. The tunes are *The Lilting Banshee*, *The Calliope House*, *Geese in the Bog*, and *The Connaughtman's Rambles*.

BRANDY AND PESTO

Three jigs for you: *Lots of Drops of Brandy* (which is actually a slip jig in 9/8 time), *The Humours of Donnybrook*, and John's composition *The Pesto Jig*, celebrating homemade pesto with basil right from our garden.

MUNKETY PUG

These are reels, the first of which is called *Boys of Ballisodare*. Then the tempo picks up with *The Boyne Hunt*, and we finish with John's tune *Munkety Pug*, which is the way one of his young sons tried to pronounce Mumbly Peg.

SONG OF THE CHANTER

Just for fun, here is a traditional Irish march, played on Uilleann pipes with the sound of a drum corps.

WADING DEEP WATERS

This simple song is a spiritual. It is one of our favorites.

MORGAN'S BIG DAY

This set starts off with the reel *Frosty Morning*, followed by *The Nine Points of Roguery*. The closing tune is John's piece *Morgan's Big Day*.

