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Irish Music in Wellington:  
A Study of a Local  
Music Community.

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Irish session is a musical, social and cultural experience that has emerged from international popularisation and globalisation. In New Zealand today, communities of Irish music enthusiasts maintain links to an international arena, and the session is valued as a context for musical enjoyment and the affirmation of Irish identity. Throughout my research I immersed myself in Wellington's vibrant Irish music scene with fieldwork techniques that included participant observation, sound recordings, and performance. The major part of this study took place in two local Wellington pubs - Molly Malone's and Kitty O'Shea's – but I also observed sessions in other New Zealand cities and in Ireland. The similarities and differences between the two Wellington sessions were examined in detail and my research included extensive interviews with the participants. In addition to exploring Irish sessions in the context of two Wellington pubs, this thesis explores session instrumentation and repertoire, and aspects of cultural identity that include the participant's experiences with Irish music. This thesis also examines how individual session members actively contribute and link their musical training and background to a transnational Irish music community. By studying the individual and musical identities of those actively involved in the community, this thesis reveals that Irish music in Wellington is an active and dynamic scene made up of enthusiasts with a variety of musical and cultural backgrounds. With music as its heart, the Wellington session community, is simultaneously localised in New Zealand but extends outward and connects with Irish communities globally.

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