

CHAPTER 19: ORNAMENTATION THROUGH MELODIC VARIATION

As I wrote in the Introduction to Ornamentation, when I speak of ornamentation I am referring to ways of altering or embellishing small pieces or *cells* of a melody that are between one and three eighth-note beats long. Melodic variation often occurs over much longer spans than this. But in this chapter I will address only short duration melodic variations that can be thought of and can function as ornaments.

STEPWISE NOTES FROM BELOW

Often a traditional player will alter a melodic cell by introducing a stepwise note from below. There are many ways of using this technique, but a couple of examples should suffice to make my meaning clear and to spur your imagination. Once you understand this technique you will hear it cropping up all over the place.

In Figures 19-1 and 19-2 below, the opening bars of *The Glen Allen Reel*, the melodic cells in question are G quarter notes.

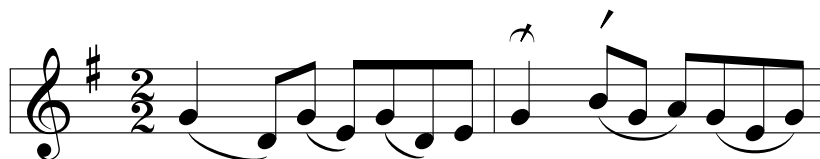


Figure 19-1. A typical way of playing the first two bars of *The Glen Allen Reel*.
(For a complete version of the tune see p. 350.)



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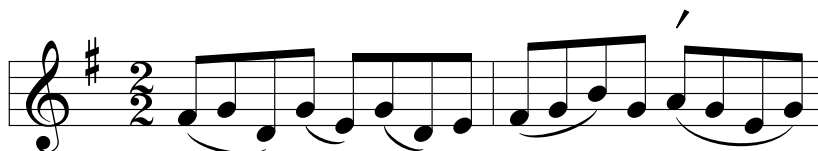


Figure 19-2. Another way to play the first two bars of *The Glen Allen Reel*
using the melodic variation of stepwise notes from below.



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The G quarter note in the first bar of Figure 19-1 is changed in Figure 19-2 to an F-sharp eighth note followed by a G eighth note. The same is true in the second bar of the example.

Note that, in this second case, the melodic ornament replaces the short roll on G shown in Figure 19-1. Melodic ornaments can often take the place of rolls and cranns, as you will see in other examples in this chapter.

Note also that, in Figure 19-2, you could cut the F-sharp or the G in either instance of this melodic variation. This way of beginning the tune can be added to the variants that are shown in Figure 12-4, which appears again here as Figure 19-3.

1. Played with a quarter note.

2. Played with a mid-note cut on a quarter note.

3. Played with a short roll.

Exploded view of above.

4. Played with a condensed long roll.

Exploded view of above.

Figure 19-3. Four different ways to play the beginning of *The Glen Allen Reel*.

Another example of this technique has already been discussed on p. 192 in connection with the *ascending roll*. The excerpt from Mary Bergin's version of *Old Joe's Jig* that is shown in Figures 11-19 through 11-22 (see pp. 191-192) illustrates this.

You can see that the gesture of sliding up into a note from below can be looked upon as a more subtle version of this same melodic variant.

By the way, this melodic variation would be called an *appoggiatura* by baroque musicians.

OTHER MELODIC ALTERNATIVES TO ROLLS AND CRANNS

A roll or crann can be used where there is a melodic cell, centering on a single pitch, that lasts for two or three eighth-note beats. Traditional players often make use of small melodic variations in these same situations. (For the moment let's ignore one beat rolls and cranns.)

One of the most common and specific examples of this is the melodic alternative to a long crann on low D that is illustrated in Figure 19-5 below.

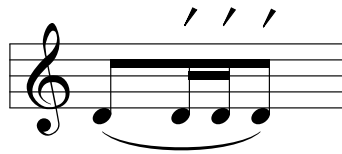


Figure 19-4. A long crann on D.



Figure 19-5. A melodic alternative to a long crann on D.

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This is one of those ornaments that is usually, and mistakenly, called a triplet.

An example of how this can be used in a tune is shown at the start of the jig *Scotsman Over the Border* in Figure 19-6 below.

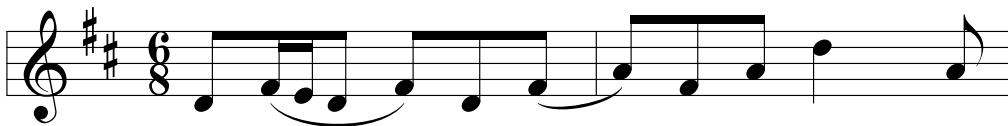


Figure 19-6. The first two bars of the jig *Scotsman Over the Border*.
(For a complete version of the tune see p. 343.)

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A long crann could be played in the same place as the first four notes of this example. Though this example occurs in a jig, this variant can be used in reels, hornpipes, etc.

A similar variant can be used in place of a short crann.



Figure 19-7. A short crann on D.



Figure 19-8. A melodic alternative to a short crann on low D.

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This same variant can be used, played an octave higher, to take the place of a short crann on high D.

Another variant on high D short crann is shown on the following page.



Figure 19-9. A melodic alternative to a short crann on high D.

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Of course others are possible as well.

An example of how all of these variants can be used to take the place of short and long cranns is shown in the following setting of the jig *Garrett Barry* in Figure 19-10 below. Compare this setting carefully with that given as Figure 16-11 on p. 237.

The image shows a musical score for the jig 'Garrett Barry' in G major (one sharp). It is divided into two parts, A and B. Part A consists of three staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'A Part' and contains the first line of the melody. The second and third staves continue the melody, with a first ending and a second ending indicated by bracketed lines and the numbers '1.' and '2.'. Part B also consists of three staves. The first staff is labeled 'B Part' and contains the first line of the melody. The second and third staves continue the melody, also with a first ending and a second ending indicated by bracketed lines and the numbers '1.' and '2.'. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), a common time signature (C), and various note values, rests, and ornaments.

Figure 19-10. A setting of the jig *Garrett Barry* showing how the melodic variants shown above can be used to replace short and long cranns.

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Now let's look at some melodic variations that can take the place of rolls. Figure 19-11 shows four variants on the long G roll in the first bar of the reel *The Shaskeen*.

Original

Variant 1.

Variant 2.

Variant 3.

Variant 4.

Figure 19-11. Four melodic variants on the long G roll found in the first bar of the reel *The Shaskeen*. (For a complete version of the tune see p. 354.)

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The first variant begins on G, moves to a *neighbor tone* and then returns to G. A neighbor tone is a note in the mode of the tune that is either one step above or one step below the principal note. This is a very commonly used melodic ornament.

The second variant is similar to the first in that it starts and ends on the principal note of G. It moves to and from B instead, a note that is more distant from G, but one that, along with the G, belongs to a chord that could be played along with the melody at this point, namely a G-major chord. This is another very common type of melodic variation, one which implies a plausible underlying harmony.

The third variant again begins and ends on G but introduces more rhythmic interest. It could be seen as an elaboration on the first variant.

The fourth variant is more adventurous, changing the nature of the original melody a bit more. Here we are starting to go beyond the realm of melodic ornamentation and into an interpretive recasting of the melody.

There are numerous other melodic variants that would be stylistically acceptable, and all of them could be further enhanced with cuts and various approaches to tonguing and slurring.

WHAT TO DO WITH C-NATURAL AND C-SHARP

A sensible time to use such melodic ornaments is when a roll or crann is difficult or impractical.

As you know, the notes C and C-sharp are problematic ones for rolls. One can simulate rolls on these notes but many players, myself included, often find it more interesting and musical to do other things with these notes. Most traditional players make very little use, if any, of these simulated C and C-sharp roll techniques. There are some additional C and C-sharp ornaments that are possible only on the Boehm-system flute. For more information on this, see Appendix B.

A good opportunity to try out some of these melodic ornaments is in the fourth part of the reel *The Gravel Walk*.

Even though this part of the tune seems to be in C Ionian, the tune as a whole is in A Dorian, hence the mode signature of one sharp. If one were to use an F as part of a variation in this part of the tune it would probably be an F-sharp, in keeping with the overall mode of the tune.

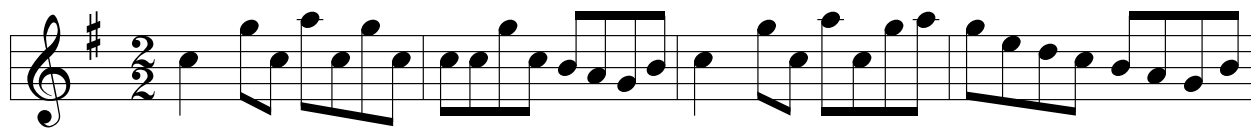


Figure 19-12. A simplified version of the first four bars of the fourth part of the reel *The Gravel Walk*. (For a complete version of the tune see p. 351.)

There seems to be a perfect opportunity for a long roll on C starting on the last note of the first bar. You can certainly play one, using the simulated C roll fingerings given in the Chapter 10. Two-beat cells centering on C also appear, at the start of the first and third bars. Some alternative ways to ornament all of these cells of C are shown below in Figure 19-13. Compare them carefully to Figure 19-12.

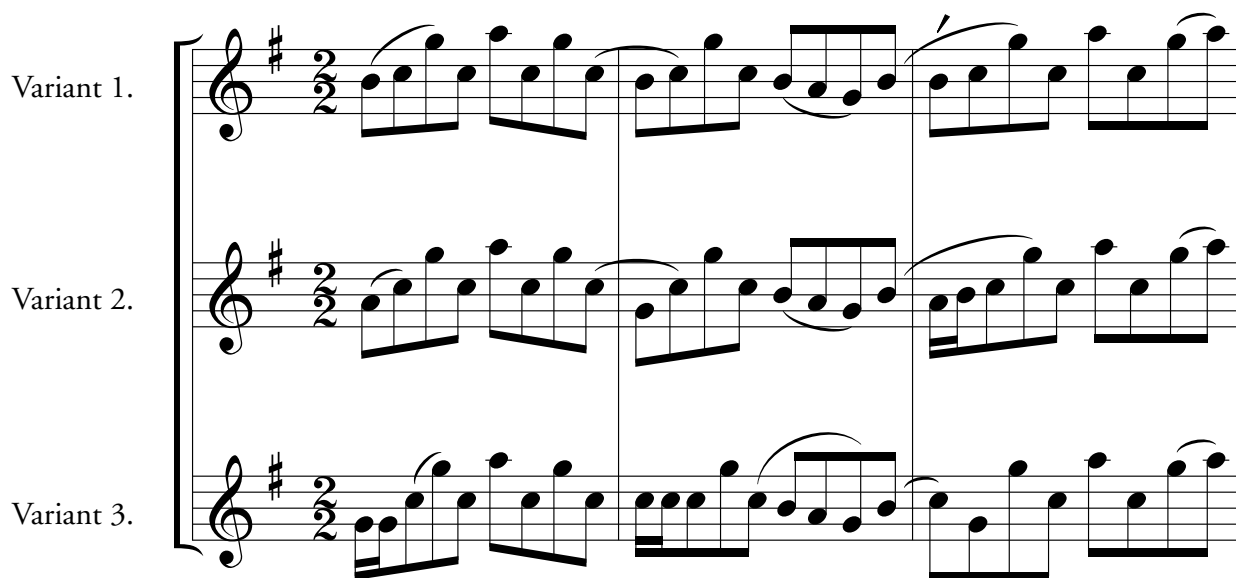


Figure 19-13. Three melodic variants of the beginning of fourth part of the reel *The Gravel Walk* showing various ways to ornament melodic cells centered on C-natural.



Track 98—Includes Figure 19-13 and Figure 19-15