

Ornamentation:

There are a number of types of ornament used in Irish music. The most common types are cuts (or grace notes), triplets and rolls. Naturally ornaments vary from instrument to instrument and not all are easily adapted to the harp. Here I will try to explain how the most common types can be used on the harp. Other ornaments are also included in some of the pieces, which don't fit easily into a general category. This section consists of my personal descriptions of ornaments widely used by harp players in Ireland today. It should not be taken as the only way to do things!

For details on ornamentation in general, see the following:

Breathnach, Brendan, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, Mercier Press, 1971

O'Canainn, Tomás, *Traditional Music of Ireland*, London, 1978

Vallely, Fintan (ed.), *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, Cork, 1999

'Triplet'

This refers to filling in a gap of a 3rd. For example, if the melody is D E G, you might play D EF# G instead (*Aoibhneas Éilis Ui Cheallaigh*, p12, bar 6). Or you could play F#G A F# instead of F# A F# (*Gallagher's Frolics*, p18, bar 7). This generally has nothing to do with triplet rhythm, although in hornpipes melodic triplets do correspond to triplet rhythm (*Nellie Your Favour I'm Afraid I'll Not Gain*, p14, bars 1, 5 etc).

'Cut' or 'Grace Note'

This ornament is usually used on strong beats or between repeated notes. The cut itself is usually done with the thumb (1) and the main melody note is played by the index finger (2). The emphasis should be on the 2, which is played on the beat, with the cut being played lightly just before the beat. In general, you cut from above, either the note directly above or a 3rd above depending on the context. For example, in the key of D, I prefer to cut from D - B than from C# - B. However, in the key of G, C natural - B is fine. Which note you cut from also depends on what is happening in the melody both before and after the note you want to ornament (e.g. *The Walls of Lisscarroll*, p10, b 5).

'Roll'

The 4 or 5 note roll as played on other instruments such as flute and fiddle is difficult to do effectively on the harp, and in general is best avoided. However, I sometimes use a version of this (crossed with a triplet), as in *Sailing Into Walpole's Marsh* (p42, bar 3, 7 etc)

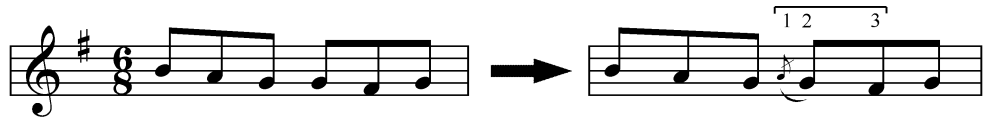
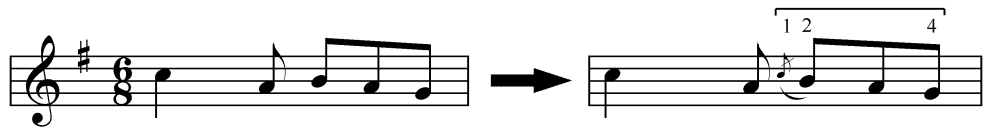
'Treble' [∞]

It is possible to achieve an effect similar to a roll on other instruments by repeating the same string e.g. GggG, fingering 2/3--4-3-2. The closest to this on another instrument would be the bow triplet used by fiddle players, an ornament which is now also being imitated on the accordion and piano. This ornament, which is particularly associated with the Northern style of fiddling, is sometimes referred to as a 'treble' or trebling (see O'Canainn, p94 or Vallely, p405). There are different ways of fingering this ornament, depending on the context. I find 4-3-2 to be the most useful, although I also use 1-2-1 and 3-2-1 at times. These alternatives are especially useful in the upper register, or in a situation where the preceding and following notes are lower than the one being ornamented (e.g. *The Ravelled Hank of Yarn*, p17, bar 2 or *Martin Hardiman's*, p29, bar 21 - to ornament the high A).

Some Examples

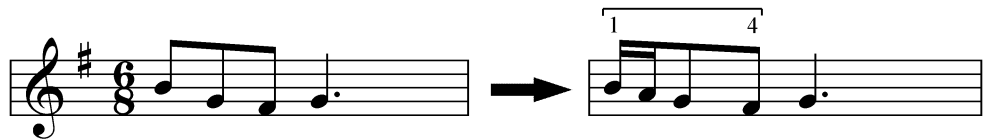
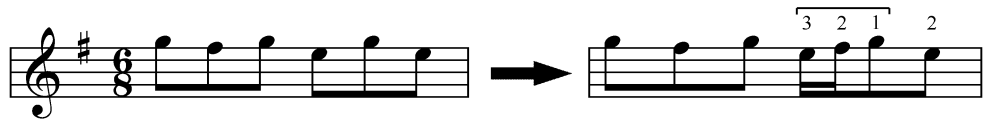
'Cut' or 'Grace Note':

Used on strong beats or between repeated notes.



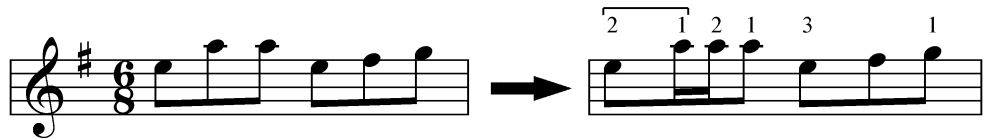
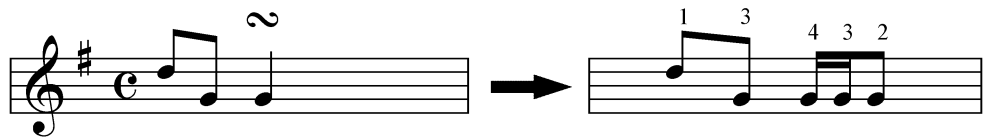
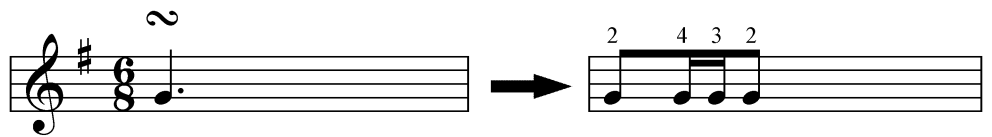
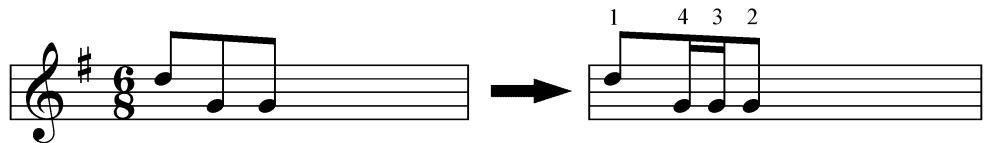
'Triplet':

Used to fill in an interval of a 3rd.



'Treble':

Used to ornament long notes or repeated notes.
See page 11 for some tips on how to play this ornament.



'Double Grace Notes':

Used to ornament long notes.

