



## ***The Celtic Legacy of the Gaita in Galician Music***

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### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on the traditional music of Galicia with special emphasis on the *gaita*, or bagpipe, its persistence throughout the centuries as a symbol for the region, and its strong similarities with the instruments of Celtic regions such as Scotland, Brittany and Ireland. Samples of musical melodies from Galicia are included and compared to these areas, and their similarities are discussed.

### **Keywords**

Galician music, bagpipe, *gaita*, percussion instruments, musical genres, Celticity.

## **1. Introduction**

The musical culture of the Celtic towns began in the *castros*, oval or circular hill-forts with one or more concentric stone walls, preceded generally by a ditch, and situated at the top of a hill or a mountain. The so-called *airas* of the *castros* are thought to have been the sites of festive types of dances and gatherings. The melody "Danza da aira do castro" (Dance of the aira of the *castro*), from the book *Músicas do Caurel* (Music from O Caurel), by Xosé Lois Foxo (Figure 1), is a good example (1998).

The *castros* culture, a phenomenon of the second half of the Iron Age, appears in different zones around the Iberian Peninsula, but the north-western *castro* culture exhibits characteristics that clearly differentiate it from the rest of the peninsular *castro* zones. The *citánias* of Portugal were a type of late Iron Age fortified enclosure similar to the *castros* but larger in size.

The heart of the *castro* distribution zone was in what is Galicia today, extending east

towards the Navia River and south towards the Duero River, including the Portuguese regions of the Minho and Tras-os-Montes Rivers. One of the main challenges for archaeologists is dating the *castros* culture, since the late Iron Age dating does not apply equally to all zones at the same time and excavations and analyses were not all conducted with the necessary scientific rigor until relatively recently. Radiocarbon dating has provided dates between 520 BC and 570 AD for this culture complex, and excavations have confirmed the presence of settlement before the cultural introduction of iron and the Celtic culture elements associated with the new technology. While some indigenous cultures did not survive the Roman conquest, others seem to have continued for many centuries under Roman dominion while retaining their own traditions. Among these traditions were a distinctive form of musical expression and a characteristic set of instruments.

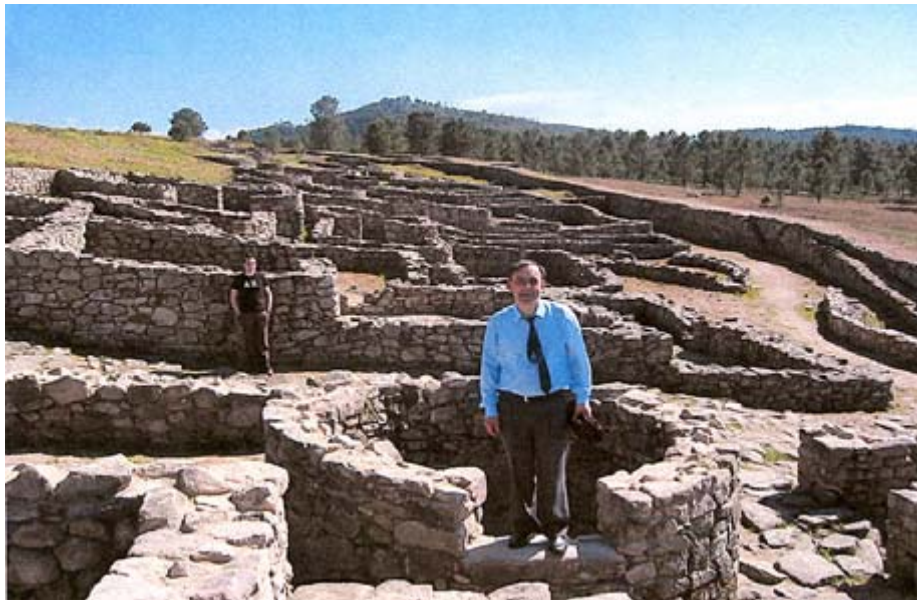


Figure 1. The author photographed among the foundations of a Galician *castro*.

## 2. The Bagpipe as a Symbol of Brotherhood among Celtic Regions

The bagpipe is doubtless one of the most ancient instruments in use today. We have references to the bagpipe from the Old Testament up to the present day, with many bagpipe forms found in the various Celtic regions, in different cultures and different eras. The historic and literary references to bagpipes in all of the Celtic countries bear witness to the universality of the bagpipe since the Middle Ages.

The primitive bagpipe, as it appears in the miniatures of the *Cantigas* of King Alfonso X "el Sabio", did not have drone pipes (*odrecillo*), which first appear with polyphonic music. The

miniature that corresponds to the Cantiga 350, in which we see a large bagpipe with drone pipes towards the back of the bagpiper, is a good example (Figure 2). Although still primitive in form, the modern bagpipe has not escaped the laws of evolution; the illustrations of Latin manuscripts (*Angers Psalter*, mid-eighth century) and ancient sculptures and carvings that represent bagpipes clearly show that these instruments are different from those used today. One example of this mutability is the Highland bagpipe, a Scottish bagpipe that until the nineteenth century had two drone pipes (nowadays there are three), although it has retained a scale different from the proper pitch.



Figure 2. Miniature from the Codex of popular folk songs of Alfonso X "El Sabio".

The Galician bagpipe or *gaita* has been subject to continuous change through time. The adoption of the proper pitch scale occurred relatively late, toward the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The mutations of the *gaita* are morphological as well as technical based on the interpretative sources available to us. Thus, we know that beginning in the twentieth century the bagpipe used strike notes, or strikes, as almost the primary method of repeating notes, while today there is a tendency to apply the grace notes system or even to incorporate other interpretative forms of the Celtic cultures related to Galicia.

Also significant are the changes in the morphology of the bagpipe over time, from the *odrecillo* or little bagpipe, shown in the *Cantigas* of Alfonso X "el Sabio" in the thirteenth century, through all the extremely varied sculptural iconography in Romanesque and Gothic

contexts of that era, consisting solely of blowpipe, bag and chanter, up to the sophisticated instrument formed by blowpipe, bag, chanter and three drone pipes still used today.

We must emphasize the fact that the bagpipe did not always develop in a positive way. The introduction of rubber bags and drone pipe falls are good examples. Diverse carvings from the eighteenth century show bagpipers with highly ornate bagpipes with one or several bass drones. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, drone pipes appear on the shoulder and a small drone pipe can be seen on the front part of the instrument. Some bagpipes of this period have mechanical fans. Subsequently, in the later twentieth century, a bagpipe was introduced in Galicia with a drone pipe parallel to the ground, with or without a small drone pipe. Most recently, thanks to the labors of artisan specialists, experimental improvements have focused on trying to gain more perfect tone, tuning, and so on.

In this article we will focus on the martial bagpipe with three drone pipes on the shoulder, a bagpipe with an aesthetic and appearance common to others found in the arc formed by the different countries of the Celtic world. This is the bagpipe used today in the Celtic type of Galician bagpipe band (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Royal Galician Bagpipe Band Ourense Deputation at Pambre Castle (A Coruña).

### 3. The Origin of the Galician Bagpipe

Much could be written about the origin of the Galician bagpipe or *gaita Galega*, though it would be more or less hypothetical because its use leads back to ancient times and cultures that



are hard to analyse. On the most basic level the bagpipe is a melodic tube to which a piece of skin has been joined (*fol*), inspired by the ancient technique of continuous insufflation, or circular respiration, to manage a continuous sound, a method also used in playing the *launeddas* (Figure 4), one of the most ancient polyphonic instruments of the Mediterranean region.

During the third millennium BC, the flute was one of the most common instruments in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. The very first evidence we have for the existence of a bagpipe is in Greece ca. 400 BC, in the form of a bagpipe with the *fol* made out of dog skin. It is interesting to note that a dog skin *fol* is still used on the islands of Malta. The bagpipe is known as *askaulos* in Greek. The double flute *aulos* turns into *askaulos* when a *fol* made of skin, or *ask*, is attached as an air repository to ease the piper's fatigue. The Romans referred to the bagpipe as *tibia utricularis*. The common Latin word for many centuries was *chorus*.



Figure 4. Reconstruction of the *Or* flute, or *Launeddas*, used in Greece and southern Italy.

The medieval term *cornamusa* (bagpipe), a generic term for the bagpipes, is universally accepted as deriving from the Latin *cornu-us* (horn) and *musa-ae* (muse), a derivation that first appears in the thirteenth century literature. The term does not appear in dictionaries to describe an instrument that has an air deposit, the *fol*, until the sixteenth century. The bagpipe is still used in the Hellenic world today. The most primitive bagpipe form, made up only of the bag, blowpipe and the chanter, spread all round the area that was under Hellenic influence. In some parts of Europe the drone is not used.

According to the Roman historian Suetonius, writing in the first and second centuries AD, the bagpipe appears on a coin dating back to the Emperor Nero's time, who was known to have been able to play the instrument. After Suetonius and his contemporaries, we have no references to the bagpipe until six centuries later, possibly due to the antipathy of the church towards musical instruments. In this context we must underline the saying of Saint Juan Crisóstomo: "Where the flute players are, Jesus is not" (de Santiago 1964). For such early priests, musical instruments were identified with profane practices. Fortunately, these attitudes

began to weaken over time, and bagpipe-related iconography reappears at the end of the tenth century, particularly in religious contexts, where it eventually achieved great prestige as a liturgical instrument.

Arab writers refer to a pipe with a bag in the thirteenth century. During this time there are many references to the bagpipe in western Europe as well, where a great variety of types of bagpipes were in use with a harmonic complement formed by one or more drones. The bagpipe became more popular outside Europe around the same period of time. At the end of the twelfth century, the concept of the "pipe bag" became popular all over Europe, especially among shepherds. Galicia in the Early Middle Ages was Europe's most important piping center and through the *Camino de Santiago* (Pilgrimage Route to Santiago) the influence of the bagpipe spread to many other European countries.

#### 4. Iconography

Iconography is an important source in our research into the bagpipe in the past. From the second half of the thirteenth century on, representations of crowned bagpipers, especially on the main façades of European cathedrals, deserve special attention in any study of the history of the instrument. We commend the sculptural precision and the detailed realism of the sculptors of this era, which is unfortunately not the case for other representations in later centuries.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, many wood carvings of bagpipes and bagpipers, specifically the *misericordia* carved on choir furniture, often present luxurious images. The richest European piping iconography, both sacred and secular, can be found in Galicia in palaces and religious sites.

Paintings also show us representations of bagpipers. The collection of miniatures in the codex of the popular folk songs of Alfonso X "El Sabio", particularly Songs 27, 28 and 32, include beautiful representations of bagpipers. Each figure shows us a different type of bagpipe, with carved stocks, giving the instrument great artistic value (Figure 5). Significantly, the bag cover of one of



Figure 5. Miniature from the Codex of popular folk songs of Alfonso X "El Sabio".

the bagpipers that appears in one of these miniatures is decorated with coloured squares. This has led experts to suggest a certain affinity between the *gaita* and the Scottish plaid. There is no doubt that the thirteenth century was a golden age for the bagpipe, and had major repercussions in the European musical environment. This is well illustrated by the thirteenth century volume *Fueros del Reino de Aragón* (Figure 6).

In particular, Christmas iconography, with the bagpiper in the background, has been a constant for the past four centuries. The Portuguese School of Barristas in the seventeenth century is a very important reference when it comes to studying bagpipers' instruments and clothes in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula.

Therefore, the history of the bagpipe in Galicia must be built with the help of the extremely rich iconographic source material, which is why we plan to produce a publication in the future that will gather iconographic material throughout the northeastern Peninsula and along the routes to Santiago de Compostela.

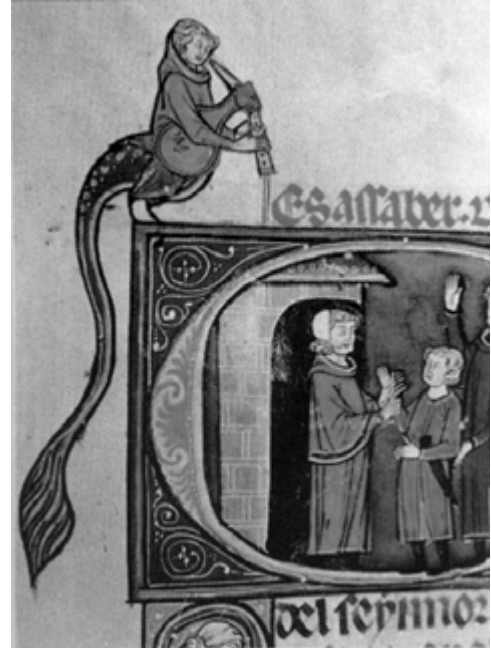


Figure 6. Miniature from the thirteenth century volume "*Fueros del Reino de Aragón*".

## **5. Classification of the Bagpipes in Western Europe**

1. The French country bagpipe, with an almost conical chanter and a cylindrical drone. This category includes the Iberian bagpipes outside Galicia.
2. Typical western bagpipes with a conical chanter and one or more drones, normally with independent outlets from the bag, found in Celtic and Atlantic areas: Galicia, Asturias, the British Islands and Brittany.
3. The Irish bagpipe, also known as the Irish Union pipe or the *uilleann* pipe, has an almost conical chanter as well as a group of drones that extend from a common body.
4. The old Baroque *mussette* has a cylindrical chanter and a group of drones with double cane reeds extending from the same body. This category includes the Northumbrian small pipe, with the difference that it uses a simple cane drone reed.

## **6. Classification of Bagpipes in Eastern Europe**

Shepherds were traditionally bagpipers in these countries. Normally, the pipes had a cylindrical or almost cylindrical chanter with a single reed instead of a double reed.

1. Bagpipes with a double chanter do not have a drone; the sound originates from two small single reeds, usually played without a bag. These pipes are found along the Adriatic coast from Istria to Montenegro and the interior, including Bosnia-Herzegovina.
2. Bagpipes with a double chanter and drone in which each chanter is enlarged by a sole are found from Slovenia, northern Serbia and southern Banat up to southern Poland and northern Ukraine.
3. Bagpipes with a simple chanter and drone (Western type) have a massive sole both on the drone and the chanter. These can be found in Bohemia, Moravia, Poland and White Russia.
4. Bagpipes with a simple chanter (Southern type). We include here the Bulgarian bagpipes, without a sole or with a rudimentary version. These are found throughout Macedonia, Bulgaria and in the lowland zones of eastern Romania.
5. Bagpipes with a simple chanter and drone (Northern type) are found in Sweden and Estonia, and have a certain affinity with the Western bagpipes.

## 7. Etymology of the Word *Gaita*

This is one of the few words preserved in the Galician language that does not have a Latin root. Etymologically it comes from Gothic, specifically the Swabian *gaits*, meaning *cabuxa* (goat). Since the *fol* (bag) of the bagpipe was traditionally made out of goatskin, it is not strange that its name was derived from that material. It is likely that the Goths and the Swabians of the northern Peninsula retained in their memory the ancient word from their national language. By phonetic evolution it is logical that the feminine word *gaits*, with sonant phonetic properties, developed into the Romance language form *gaita*, also feminine and phonologically vocalized, thereby adapting itself to the phonetic habits of the inhabitants of the northeastern Peninsula.

Although an apocryphal letter from Saint Jerome to Darden, possibly dating from the tenth century, describes the bagpipe as a *chorus*, the most common terms used from the thirteenth century on are *gayta* or *cornamusa*. In modern times we can verify the use of the word *gaita* based on its variants in the Slavic countries, alternating this term with others from the cultural regions where the instrument is found.

We cannot establish a specific time period for the introduction of the *gaita* in Galicia, but



we can be sure that its tradition there is very ancient, being transmitted most commonly from father to son as a hereditary profession. The *gaita* resisted the strong influences and idioms that, throughout the centuries, challenged its existence. Today we can assert that it is the most studied instrument in Galicia, and its permanence is assured as long as the social support it currently enjoys continues.

## 8. Historical Review

Producing even a brief chronicle of the *gaiteiros* (bagpipers) in Galicia is no easy task. The sources of information from past periods are limited, and many have been lost throughout the years. Centuries ago there were *gaiteiros* whose fame was transmitted from generation to generation. Though most of their names may have been forgotten, their memory and work remain in each and every town and village of Galicia as a timeless testimony of past cultural traditions. There is no parish in Galicia that has not had, in living memory, a *gaiteiro* (bagpiper). This is the reason why we have to say that the personages referred to below are just one indication of the continuing life and social significance of the bagpipe in Galicia.

The Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula had a high appreciation for the *gaita*. Fernando III el Santo (1201-1252) supported and protected the troubadours and minstrels in his kingdom. In this context we can establish a relationship between Alfonso X el Sabio (1221-1284) and the medieval tradition of Allariz, which the king visited during his childhood and where thirty *gaiteiros* (Galician bagpipers) would gather to play during the annual celebration of the *Festa do Boi*. This can be seen as setting a precedent for the later Galician bagpipe bands. To elaborate further on the idea of the instrument's vitality in royal society, we reproduce a verse of Alfonso XI (1311-1350) below:

La gaita que es sutil  
con que todos placer han.

(The fine bagpipe is  
everybody's delight)

## 9. Union and Guild Galician Bagpipers

There are references to *gaiteiros* in numerous old documents, some of which are discussed below, especially those that illustrate the role of the *gaiteiros* in these societies. For example, in 1374 the Galician bagpiper Johan Gonçalves acted as a witness to a property sale contract for the Abbey of Monfero. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Galician

bagpiper was a professional musician, often hired for life; for example, in Ourense in 1458, the *gaiteiro* Gomes Mouro was hired for life before a public notary.

The governor of Tuy on December 13, 1418 refers to *Constança Gayteyra moller que foi de Martin Gayteyro morador que foi ena vila de Ponte Lima do Reino de Portugal* (The bagpiper Constança, wife of the bagpiper Martin, resident in the village of Ponte Lima of the Kingdom of Portugal). The same governor, on June 7, 1497 refers to the *gaiteiro* Rodrigo Eans.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *gaiteiros* and *tamborileiros* (tenor drum players) in the patron saint and sacramental ceremonies were hired by public contract. In 1579, Juan de Recarei (*tamborileiro*), was hired by the Saint Nicolas Guild of Noia to play with the guild's titular *gaiteiro* for the rest of his days. In 1579 and 1597, the council of O Caramiñal hired Juan de Tourís (*gaiteiro*) and Juan de Tourís "el Viejo" (*tamborileiro*) to play at the Corpus ceremonies.

In 1587, Juan Pérez, *gaiteiro* of Ribadulla, was hired for three years by the Council of Villa O Caramiñal to play at the Corpus fairs. In 1597, Antonio Gonzalez de Loiro (*tamborileiro*) was hired for life to play in the guild's ceremonies and dances during Corpus Cristi and Pascua de Flores, as well as to assist in the dance rehearsals in Ourense.

In 1618, Pedro das Casas (named *tamborileiro* of Vilanova dos Infantes) was hired to play at the guild's dance on Corpus Cristi and at the dance rehearsals in Villa Bentraces (Ourense). In 1628, the Guild of Saint Michael gave a similar contract to Bartolomé González of Sobrado do Vispo. On October 20, 1658, at Saint Miguel de Tabagón, boys and girls got together to dance in a procession to the sound of the Galician bagpipes to celebrate the return of the Santísimo's statue that had been carried away by a Portuguese soldier during the recently concluded war with that country. There was a similar situation on May 8, 1661, when the *tamborileiro* Pedro González from Santa Cristina de Vilariño was hired. In 1609, Bartolomé Germade (a famous *gaiteiro*) was hired at Portonovo to play at important celebrations throughout the year. In 1627, the *gaiteiro* Juan García agreed that he and the *gaiteiro* Domingo Cobas (Cacheiras), a guild brother, would play free at the guild's ceremonies. In 1631, Juan Conde (*gaiteiro* of Vilaboa) was hired along with the *tamborileiro* to play before and during the day of the Corpus at Bouzas's village, receiving in exchange 34 *reales* as well as food and drink. In 1725, in a protocol document from O Carballiño in the Provincial Historical Files of Ourense, Alexandre Álvarez was referred to as *músico de gayta Gallega* (Galician bagpipe musician).

There are interesting references to the salaries of the *gaiteiros* as well. On December 17, 1458 a yearlong contract was signed before a notary for the amount of eighteen *maravedíes* between the *gaiteiro* Gomes Mouro and the council of Ourense to play at the San Martiño fairs for the rest of his life. Also, in 1700 a *gaiteiro* received eleven *reales* for his performance at the festivity of Nuestra Señora de Tebra (Tomiño). At Santa María de Chaín (Gondomar), in 1711, a *gaiteiro* received six *reales*. In 1726, at Santiago de Malvas (Tuy), a *gaiteiro* received eight *reales*.

The profession of *gaiteiro* during this period enjoyed high social prestige, as demonstrated in the historical documents. There were, however, regional variations within Galicia regarding the manner in which the *gaiteiro* was contracted. For example, at Ribadeo, an open committee chose the *gaiteiro* on the first day of the year, and the contract could be transferred from father to son, creating long dynasties of *gaiteiros* in this area.

## **10. The *Gaita* as a Symbol of Galicia**

Since 1700, the *gaita* has changed from a simple accompaniment for ritual dances to an instrument accompanying secular dances, as can be seen in the rich pictorial manifestations after this time, which depict loose and noisy dances of a playful nature.

During the dark centuries of Galician culture, the shepherd-*gaiteiro* appears playing to the infant Jesus, with the *Maestros de Capilla* (Chapel Masters) of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries producing wonderful Christmas carols inspired by the *gaiteiros'* music. A good example of this is Melchor López, master at the Cathedral of Compostela (1759-1822), conveyer of the wonderful melody "A Nosa Gaita". Moreover, we must emphasize the grand contribution of the *Maestros de Capilla* of the Catedral de Mondoñedo (Chapel Masters of the Cathedral from Mondoñedo), the birthplace of Pascual Veiga, who was the most outstanding Galician composer of the nineteenth century.

During the long "stone night" of the Galician culture from the fifteenth century until the nineteenth century's *Rexurdimento* (revival) in Galicia, the *gaita* survived thanks to its popular appeal. In France, by contrast, the *Musette de Cour* was mainly appreciated at the French Court. In 1738, Hotteterre would write the first didactic treatise on how to play this instrument. In fact, the bagpipe bellows were created for the first time at the French Court in order to prevent female musicians from distorting their faces by blowing into the instrument. In a fable from Samaniego (1745-1801) there is a reference to the Galician bagpipe, which means that the *gaita* was already

established as a typical Galician instrument by that time.

In the early 1800s, coinciding with the *Rexurdimento* (revival) of Galician culture, Galician popular poets and singers such as Pastor Díaz, Xoán Manoel Pintos, Rosalía de Castro, Curros Enríquez, Cabanillas, among others, dedicated poems and made many references to the figure of the *gaiteiro*, with the Galician bagpipe and the Galician flag both used as symbols of the Galician cultural revival. In the nineteenth century, the *gaita* was not only the muse and main theme of the earliest manifestations of Galician literature, but in the popular tradition many *gaiteiros* were mythologized as well. To travel to America was the dream of all famous *gaiteiros* towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, and many managed to get there, including the *gaiteiro* of Ventosela, D. Perfecto Feijóo with his choir "Aires da Terra"; the *gaiteiros* of Soutelo de Montes, and many others. The same dream came true for the famous *gaiteiro* of Liberdón (Asturias). All of them were very successful in America, where they played in the best theatres.

### Compositions for the *Gaita*

The *gaiteiril* (Galician piping) repertoire today consists of an enormous collection of melodies that are a clear reflection of the Galician bagpipe's life in the past and present. There have been many Galician bagpipe composers since the eighteenth century. The *gaiteiros* themselves wrote many of their own melodies, but there were excellent musicians who dedicated themselves to writing fabulous bagpipe compositions as well. From the time of Manuel Rey (1867), composer of the well-studied *Muñeira de Monterrei*, to the present day, many composers have written songs for the Galician bagpipe. Moreover, we must emphasize the important contribution of the song book tradition in preserving the *gaiteiros's* repertoire, within which the following must be highlighted: J. Inzenga's *Song Book* (1888), *The Galician Song Book* of Jesus y Gay and Eduardo M. Torner (1973), the popular *Song Book* of Daniel Rodríguez González (1963), the *Musical Song Book of Galicia* by C. Sampedro (1942), as well as many private collections and Galician bagpipe methods.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, well known Galician musicians composed and gathered an important collection of musical pieces to be played on the *gaita*, particularly musicians such as Marcial de Adalid (1826-1881), Canuto Berea (1836-1891), Xohán Montes (1840-1899), Pascual Veiga (1842-1906), Ricardo Courtier (1865-1922), Gustavo

Freire (1885-1948), among others.

## Publications

Important monographs include *A Gaita Gallega* (a review of research on the *gaita*) by V. Cobas Pazos (1955), followed by the *Método completo de Gaita* by Rodrigo A. de Santiago (1964), which can be considered the first systematically presented manual on method for the Galician bagpipe, including an extensive treatise on the history of the Galician bagpipe as well as technical, theoretical and musical examples using the rescale for writing music for the *gaita*. Moreover, other more recent publications have contributed significantly to the didactics of the Galician bagpipe, such as *Leccións de Gaita* by Enrique Otero (1978), *O que di a Gaita* by Xosé Casal (1981) and *A Gaita no eido da Música* by Xaime Estévez (1987). Likewise, we must emphasize the publication *Aires da Terra* by José Luis Calle (1993), in which there is a recompilation of an important selection of musical themes for the *gaita* initially collected by D. Perfecto Feijóo and preserved in the Museum of Pontevedra, as well as the collection of sheet music *Doce polainas enteiras*.

After the foundation of the choir *Aires da Terra* in 1883 by the *gaiteiro* Perfecto Feijóo, subsequent choirs followed the Feijóo model in being established by *gaiteiros*: Manuel Lorenzo Barxa (1878-1959) established the "Real Coro Toxos e Froles" of Ferrol; Virxilio Fernández (1893-1978) established the "Coral de Ruada" of Ourense, among many others. Therefore, it is clear that *gaiteiros* have played the primary role in the transmission of Galician music over the generations.

Because of their close cultural affinity with Galicia, we also must make a reference to several interesting publications on learning how to play the Asturian bagpipe, including *Método de Gaita* by Xuacu Amieva (1998), *La Gaita Asturiana, método para su aprendizaje*, *El libro de la Gaita* by Manolo Quirós (1993) and *Método de Gaita Asturiana* by José Fernández "Guti" (2002).

## Galician Bagpipers

Throughout Galicia the names of many *gaiteiros* came to symbolize their hometowns, a topic that deserves a monograph in its own right. There are some personages for whom we are lucky enough to have significant records, including details of their musical contribution to the

world of the *gaita*. Both famous and less well-known *gaiteiros* were responsible for keeping the sacred fire of Galician culture alive; thus, we must mention some of those who are especially known for transmitting important melodies that enrich our present day repertoire (Figure 7).



Figure 7. *The Muiñeira* by Dionisio Fierros (1827-1894).

A special mention, for his meritorious achievements, must be made of the famous *gaiteiro* of Penalta, Manuel Castro González (1832) who was referred to by the secretary of the Registry Office of Celanova as being "The *Gaiteiro*-Master"; Sr. Manuel de Poio of Pontevedra; the famous "Choqueiros de Arnoia" of Ourense and Cangas (Pontevedra); as well as many others. It is necessary, in this context, to refer to the famous *gaiteiro* of Lugo, not as a specific personage but as a popular expression that reflects the *gaiteiros'* proliferation and significance in this province.

## 11. Description of the *Gaita*

### The Morphology of the Galician Bagpipe

Since the second half of the thirteenth century there is clear evidence of the morphological evolution of the *gaita* in the northeastern peninsula. The first sculptural representations of the instrument show the *gaita* without a drone, that is, it consisted of only the *fol* (bag), the *punteiro* (chanter), and the *soprete* (mouthpiece). This appears to be the origin of the concept of the Galician bagpipe, with few variations.

At the same time as the development of polyphony, seen also in other instruments, the



drones were added to the Galician bagpipe as an important harmonic source. In the second half of the thirteenth century and the fourteenth century, the Galician bagpipe would appear both with and without a drone, though the use of the drone gradually predominated over the centuries, initially trumpet-shaped and later in the shape of a long-stemmed glass.

Although the typical Galician bagpipe of the northeastern Iberian Peninsula only had one drone, occasionally we find a second drone used beside the principal one. Some *gaiteiros* of the second half of the nineteenth century used the soprano drone to support the chanter, placed next to it. Later, well into the twentieth century, a tenor drone was placed at the front of the instrument that was small compared to the second drone found in the Galician bagpipe in previous centuries.

Nowadays there are several different versions of the instrument:

1. The common-traditional *gaita*: this consists of the bag, the chanter, the bass drone and the mouthpiece (Figure 8).
2. The *gaita* with tenor drone: a small tenor drone is added to the front of the parts listed above (Figure 9).
3. The *gaita* with tenor and soprano drones: a small soprano drone is added at the front of the instrument.
4. The Galician band or martial bagpipe: this includes a bass, a tenor and a soprano drone that rests on the *gaiteiro's* shoulder, in addition to the other original parts of the common-traditional Galician bagpipe. This type of *gaita* is usually tuned in B flat (Figure 10).
5. The *gaita* with bellows: this type has the same parts as the common Galician bagpipe, but with the drone pipes resting over the shoulder. The bellow is added as a pump (Figure 11).

### Parts of the *Gaita*

1. *Punteiro* (chanter);
2. *Fol* (bag);
3. *Ronco* or *Roncón* (bass drone); a) *Copa* (top section); b) *Segunda* (middle section); c) *Prima* (lower section);
4. *Ronqueta* (tenor drone);
5. *Chillón*, *Chión* or *Pión* (soprano drone);
6. *Soprete* (mouthpiece);



Figure 8. The common-traditional *gaita*.

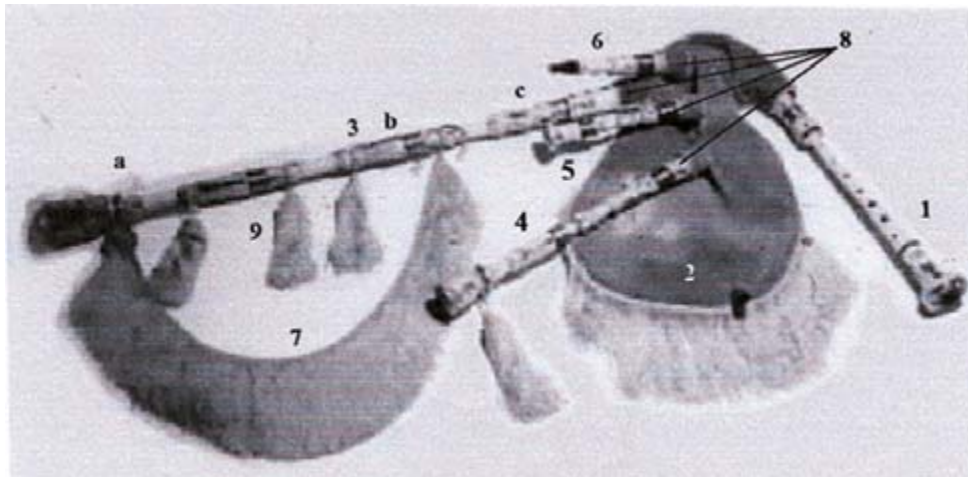


Figure 9. The *gaita* with ronqueta and frontal chillón.

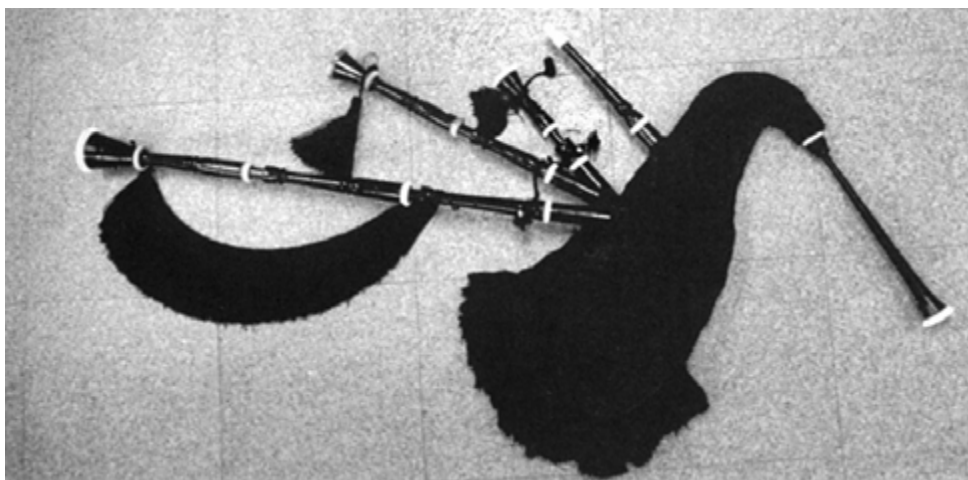


Figure 10. The band or martial *gaita*.

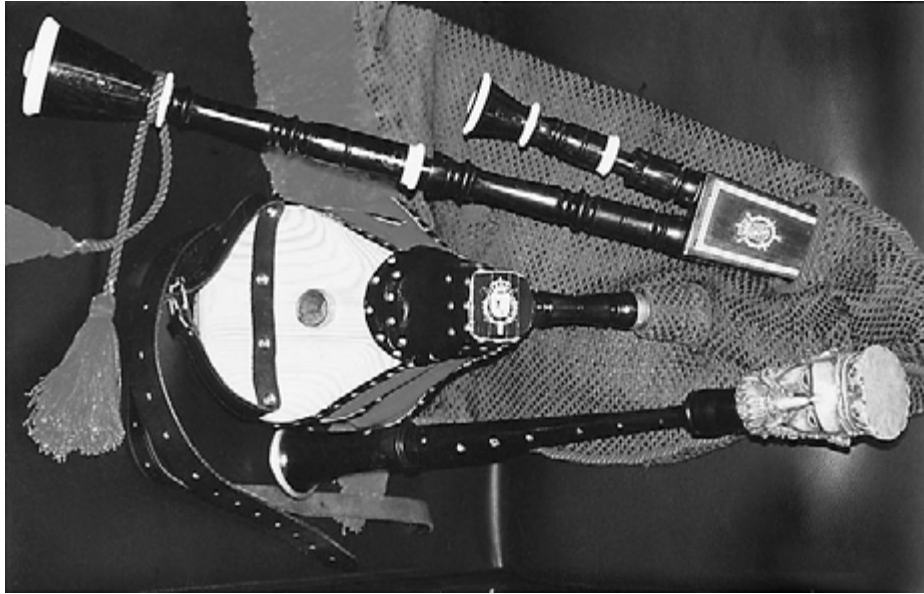


Figure 11. The *gaita* with bellows used by the "Real Banda".

7. *Farrapos* (fringe);
8. *Buxas* (stocks); and
9. *Borlas* (tassels).

### The *Punteiro* (Chanter)(Figure 12)

#### The three sonority holes

The right hand thumb is not numbered, because it does not cover any hole; it is used to keep the chanter steady. Neither do we number the little finger of the left hand, because it is not used either. We use the number eight for the back hole used by the left hand thumb. The three sonority holes give the chanter its full tone richness.

#### Right hand

1. Little finger
2. Ring finger
3. Middle finger
4. Index finger

#### Left hand

5. Ring finger
6. Middle finger
7. Index finger
8. Thumb

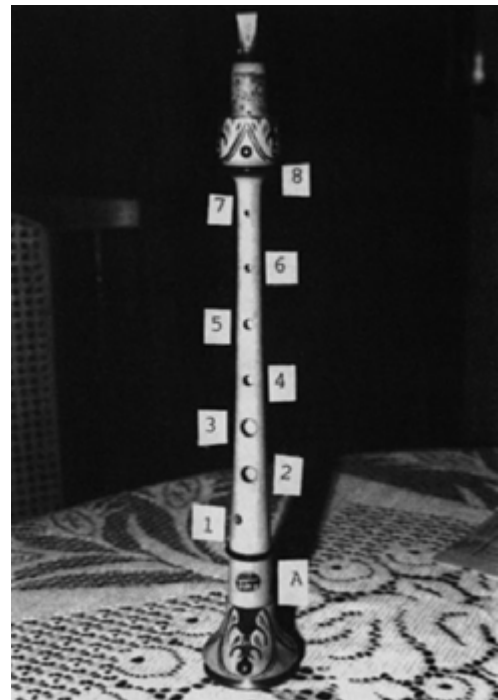


Figure 12. The *Punteiro* (Chanter)

### About the *Punteiro*

This is an elemental part of the *gaita*; with the *punteiro* we achieve the different melodic

sounds of the instrument. It is a conical tube, with different dimensions according to its tonality: longer for low tonalities and shorter for high tonalities.

It has eight melodic holes used for playing the different notes, as well as the three sounds. The top part, which is inserted into the bagpipe's stock, is called *espigo*. This is made from fine woods, such as high quality boxwood, trumpetwood, rosewood, *lignum vitae* (wood of life), ebony, etc. Ivory has also sometimes been used, and nowadays the use of synthetic materials is becoming more widespread.

### Care and Protection of the *Punteiro*

This is one of the most delicate parts of the *gaita*, so constant care and treatment must be carried out regularly, as follows:

1. Do not let the *punteiro* absorb water.
2. Avoid exposure to high temperatures, such as direct sunlight.
3. When it is necessary to remove the *punteiro* from the bagpipe, it should be held at the top, the thickest part near the stock of the bagpipe, to avoid breaking it. When removing it, turning the *punteiro* to the right, so as not to break the cork or the *espigo's* thread. If it cannot be removed using this method, then proceed as follows: while firmly holding the thick part at the top, oscillate again and again until the *punteiro* comes out. If it still cannot be removed, then leave it to dry before trying again.

### Keys on the *Punteiro*

To acquire more notes, many *gaiteiros* added keys to the chanter, although this was not considered entirely desirable because it made the *gaita* sound unnatural. This negative response is reflected in the following comment made by the *gaiteiro* of Choumín de Céltigos when describing the *gaiteiro* of Ventosela, who used keys on his chanter:

Ventosela, Ventosela  
moita chavería na canaveira.

(Ventosela, Ventosela  
many keys on the canaveira)

### The *Palleta* (Chanter Reed)(Figure 13)

The reed consists of two cane blades joined to a metal tube called a *caurel*. When air passes through these blades they vibrate, producing the sound that is modulated by the fingers on

the chanter. The parts of the reed are as follows: 1) the cane blades; 2) the yoke; 3) the string winding; and 4) the metal tube.

The yoke is at the top of the tube, at the bottom of the cane blades, and controls the blade's opening range. When tightened in the middle the blades will close and open toward their edges. The great secret for a rich, full and easy tone depends on the way the two reed blades touch each other. Their edges should touch perfectly. If the edges touch too much, there is no clean vibration, even if there is a good separation between the blades. We cannot overemphasize the importance of the reed in producing the full richness of the tone, the sonority and the tuning of the *punteiro*.



Figure 13. The reed.

The reed's dimensions change according to the *punteiro's* tuning: larger reeds for low tonalities and smaller for high tonalities. The reed's most important quality is its stability, which depends on the type of cane used, on the way it has been made, and on the way it has been treated. For a reed to be stable it is very important for the cane to be as thick as possible but not too hard, so that it can be handled easily. It must be collected on the last moon of January. A good reed, out of the *punteiro*, will have an aphonic and powerful sound. The height and proportion of the *punteiro's* notes depend on the sound produced by the reed.

### **Enemies of the *Palleta***

1. Rubbing.
2. Too much humidity.
3. Changes from wet to dry.
4. Leaving it out of the bagpipe for too long.
5. High temperatures.
6. Temperature changes.

### **Care and Protection of the *Palleta***

1. Always keep the reed at the same level of humidity.
2. When it becomes too wet, blow strongly through the tube.
3. Be extremely careful when inserting and removing the reed from the wooden top of the bagpipe, taking care not to rub the blades.
4. Avoid excessive humidity.
5. Although former *gaiteiros* recommended wetting the reed, even with hard liquor, we consider it harmful to wet it directly. Do not wet the reed with the mouth, as is often seen. If the reed is wet, the tuning immediately changes and the blades will separate at the edges and will never go back to their original position. However, a minimum state of humidity is recommended for the optimal vibration of the blade.

### Why the *Palleta* Might not Produce Sound

1. Broken blades \*
2. Blades separated at the corners
3. Blades separated near the yoke
4. Blades too far apart
5. Closed blades
6. Bits inside the reed

\* When the reed has been dented, or even if it just appears to be dented, it loses power, which makes it harder to produce sound. The blades must be completely closed at the sides from the corner to the joint; otherwise the reed will hardly make a sound. This can be checked by blowing down the reed while protecting the sides with the lips or introducing the reed completely into the mouth; the difference will be noticeable. Initially this will stop the side loss and the reed will produce sound more easily, but if you do not touch the blades it will be harder to produce sound. Similarly, if it is harder to play with the wooden top on the chanter than when blowing directly between the lips, the *palleta* is losing air at the sides.

### The *Buxas* (Stocks)

The *buxas* (stocks) are the tubes that join the bag to the various sound and blowing elements of the instrument. The word *buxas* comes from *boj* or boxwood, which was the traditional material used to make bagpipes in Galicia.

As their mission is to transport the air as directly as possible into the instrument, it is essential that the *buxas* are kept completely clean and clear, which is why we do not want them to narrow towards the bag. This obstructs the strength of the air flowing onto the reed, which damages the sound. The various *buxas* connecting different elements of the *gaita* are as follows:

1. The *punteiro buxa*
2. The *soprete buxa*
3. The *ronco buxa*
4. The *ronqueta* and the *chillón buxas*

### The *Fol* (Bag)(Figure 14)

This is the essential distinguishing characteristic of the *gaita* as an instrument. We can say that it is the soul of the bagpipe and the main mystery of all the *gaiteiro's* secrets.

From a semantic point of view also it is the bag, or *gaits*, that gives the instrument its shape and distinguishes it as such. Moreover, it makes no sense that an instrument that does not have a bag should be called a bagpipe. The great secret of a good *gaiteiro* is to be able to get the precise and proper pitch out of the bag. This is well demonstrated when different *gaiteiros* play



the same bagpipe. In addition to influencing the general sound of the bagpipe, the proper pitch depends directly on the precise tuning of the notes and pedals of drone, tenor drone and soprano drone, especially the altered notes, which will be discussed further below.

The role of the bag must be considered as important as that of the fingers, because these alone modulate and administer the air flowing into the instrument. Moreover, it is necessary to have enough pressure in the bag to obtain as many vibrations as possible, producing the distinctive sonority of the bagpipe. We place great emphasis in our classes on the need for

*gaiteiros* to listen to themselves playing the Galician bagpipe in order to truly appreciate the delicate task of being a *gaiteiro*. It is necessary to have a well-developed musical sensitivity.

### **Materials Used for Making the *Fol***

Traditionally in Galicia the *fol* was made out of goatskin, and if this was not available, sheepskin, kidskin or even dog skin were used. Toward the end of the twentieth century rubber was commonly employed, which turned out not to be such a good idea; later, the sewed skin came into fashion, which saved the tradition of the kidskin *fol*.

Nowadays, goretex is the material used most often for the *fol* because it maintains an equal balance of humidity in its interior. The *fol* continues to be made out of sewed skin and kidskin, however. As has been mentioned already, the stability, tuning and conservation of the reed's adaptation of the *gaita* depends on the *fol*. It is very important to install a tube from the *soprete* (mouthpiece) down to the bottom of the *fol* to stop breath moisture from reaching the *palleta* (reed) directly, which would change its tuning. If this tube is not installed, the drones must be tuned constantly due to the changes in the *palleta*. Numerous experiments aimed at keeping humidity away from the *fol* have been carried out with good results.



Figure 14. The piper Henrique Ambite shows a *fol* made out of goat skin.

## **Mending a Leather *Fol***

Kidskin or sheepskin can be used, but the first is fresher and longer lasting.

### **Sun drying or seasoning the skin**

1. Enrique Ambite's slaked lime method:

This method consists of mixing the calcium oxide with ten liters of water. Insert the skin in the mixture and leave it to soak for four or five days, then fill the skin with straw and leave it to dry.

It would be desirable to leave the skin exposed to the north wind until it is hard. Let it dry for a month. It can be used as soon as there is no longer any moisture in it. To preserve the skin, grease it with linseed oil or horse fat and be sure to let it dry after being played.

2. Enrique Ambite's bran and milk method:

Submerge the skin in a container with two liters, or more, of the milk and bran mixture, cover, and let it soak for at least four days. Wash carefully and then dry as described above.

If you are using kidskin, the animal must be no more than six or seven months old; if sheepskin is used, it is recommended that the animal be over a year old.

The cover must adapt to the *fol* perfectly, making sure it is a little smaller to keep its dimensions under control.

Use the same procedure to season the skins or the patches used for the drums.

3. Xosé Seivane's sun drying method:

Skin a six or seven month old kid by removing the hide from the back legs and pulling it towards the front legs.

About four fingers of skin will be left on each leg. At the head, the skin must be cut under the ears, which will be used for the *punteiro*. Make a soft mass from a liter of milk and bran.

Add a little salt to the mixture, as if preparing a dinner, being careful not to mix in any flesh; spread the mixture over the skin. Leave the *fol* in dung for six days to loosen the hair, which can then be removed by scratching it with a stick. Submerge the skin in another container filled with salted water for 24 hours.

After stitching the legs and belly closed, kept it blown up for fifteen days, until it is brown. The jacket or cover must be covered inside. The *fol* must not be washed with water, or it will tear when inflated.

### **Preparing the anti-condenser and pore filler**

Heat 150 ml of water (a glassful); when the temperature rises to about 60°, mix in 100 g of ground fish-tail (spine), stirring constantly until it has dissolved completely. At the same time, in another pot, heat 1 Kg of glycerine (glycerol)  $C_3H_8O_3$  – molecular weight 92.09 at 60°, stirring constantly. When the fish-tail mixture has dissolved completely it must be poured into the pot with the glycerine, stirring the mixture until it is fluid.

### **Salicylic acid**

As the fish-tail is mixed in, half a teaspoon of salicylic acid or a small amount of another fungicide with additives against bacteria, yeasts, mold, etc. that might flourish inside the *fol* must be added to the glycerine. For the *gaitas* with a mechanical bellows (*barquín*), there is no need to add a fungicide.

### **Applying the mixture to the *fol***

First seal the *buxas* (stocks) tightly with corks, leaving the opening for the *soprete* (mouthpiece) open into which the liquid will be poured into the *fol* through a funnel once it is at about 60°. About 200 ml of the mixture (a full glass) should be enough to coat the inside of the *fol*. After pouring the liquid into the *fol*, the *soprete* is attached to inflate it strongly, and then the *fol* is quickly shaken until the interior is completely coated with the liquid.

Immediately, before the liquid gets cold, carefully remove the cork from the *buxa* where the *punteiro* will eventually be placed, in order to pour off the residual liquid, which can be kept for further applications. It is very important that the liquid be drained well and that the insides of the *buxas* are cleaned. The *gaiteiro* who uses this type of *fol* (normally sewed leather) must keep a sharp eye on its condition, making sure that it does not leak. To test the *fol* for leaks, air is introduced into it continuously until it cannot take any more. If the *fol* continues to take in air, this means that air is leaking out somewhere and it is necessary to apply more liquid. Natural honey can be used to cover the inside of the *fol* by heating in the same way and at the same temperature as described for the fish-tail/glycerine mixture, adding a little water to make it a little more fluid.

### **The tube inside the *fol***

As previously indicated above, the mixture used to cover the inside of the *fol* keeps out

moisture by sealing the pores of the skin. Nevertheless, because of the cane's moisture sensitivity, to ensure that the *gaita* is kept in tune it is necessary to insert a tube from the *soprete's buxa* down to the bottom of the *fol*; thus, both the *palletas* (chanter reeds) and *pallóns* (drone reeds) can be kept tuned with hardly any variation. This is, without a doubt, a great relief for the *gaiteiro* who often finds unexpected changes in the *gaita's* tuning.

### **Greasing of the woods of the *gaita***

It is surprising how easily the *gaita* loses sonority or even loudness or tone quality. This happens mainly with those made of porous wood, which therefore must be greased with linseed or almond oil. The inside of the *punteiro* must be brushed well, then covered and left to dry before use. Obviously, this procedure will not be necessary for a *punteiro* made of glass or any other non-porous material, although this type of *punteiro* is not very common among Galician artisans. The owner of the *gaita* must find out whether the instrument has been coated with oil or not, because if it has, the process must be repeated at least once a year.

### **The *Ronco* or *Roncón* (Bass Drone)**

The *ronco* is a principal part of the *gaita*. Its sound is two octaves lower than the *punteiro*, thus it is just like a sauce for the melody played on the *punteiro*, producing a sweet and polyphonic sound. The *ronco* is a long wooden tube made up of three sections:

1. The *prima*, the lower section, which is the nearest to the *fol* and in which the *pallón* (drone reed) is inserted.
2. The *segunda*, the middle section, which is the central part of the *ronco*.
3. The *copa*, the top section, which is the back part of the *ronco*.

The *ronco* is adorned with *farrapos* or *flecos* (fringe) traditionally made of silk or of different color wools. Between one and three *borlas* or *pingóns* (tassels), may make up the ornamental elements of the *gaita*.

### **The *Ronqueta* (Tenor Drone)**

It is said that the *ronqueta* has the same morphological properties as the *ronco*, apart from having only two sections: the *prima* and *copa*. The *pallón* is inserted into the lower section, the *prima* is inserted in the same way as in the *ronco*. The sound is one octave lower than the *punteiro*. It is also decorated with *farrapos*: *flecos* or a *borla* (a fringe or tassels).

### The *Chillón*, *Chión* or *Pión* (Soprano Drone)

A *chillón* has two sections: the *prima* and *copa*. As with the *ronco* and the *ronqueta* it can have a small *pallón* (drone reed), although a *palleta* (chanter reed), as on a *punteiro*, also can be used. If a *chillón* is used with a *pallón*, its sound is in the same octave as the *punteiro*. If it is used with a *palleta*, its sound will be a fifth above the *punteiro*.

### The *Soprete* (Blowpipe)

As the name indicates, the *soprete* is used to blow air into the *fol*. If it is made out of wood, it is necessary to attach a piece of resistant material around it, to protect it from the friction against the teeth. The end that is inserted inside the *buxa* (stock), has a *zapón* or *tapafolgos* that stops the air, stored in the *fol*, from escaping.

### The *Pallón* (Drone Reed) (Figure 15)

The *pallón* is the piece that generates the sound of the drones. A traditional *pallón* made out of cane or a *pallón* with a metal or plastic blade consists of the following parts:

1. A case or shell
2. A metal or plastic blade
3. The blade's wound string
4. The top

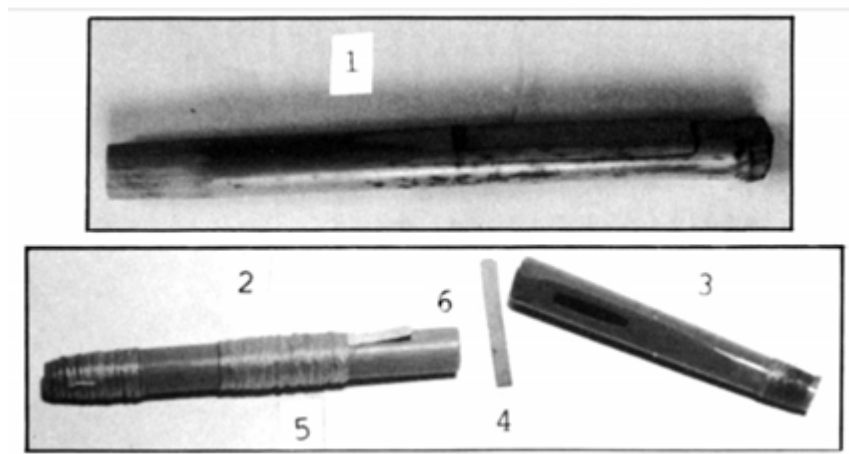


Figure 15. The *Pallón* (Drone Reed).

### The cane *pallón*

This is the *pallón* traditionally used by *gaiteiros*. It is made from a thin piece of cane.

Both the cob *pallón* and the wooden *pallón* with a plastic blade are still used today.

The cane *pallón* is very sensitive to moisture, which can not only affect the quality of the sound but may result in complete loss of sound, so it must be very well looked after. One way to avoid such problems is to rub the *pallón* between the hands in a rotating way; a hair or fine cotton thread can be put under the blade to help the vibration. To balance the blade, a drop of wax can be poured on it; this will make it more stable.

Although the cane *pallón* is being replaced by other, more reliable materials today, the traditional *pallón* has a differential tone which makes it more suitable for *gaita* soloists and Galician bagpipe groups.

### The drone reed with a metal blade

The metal blade helps to resolve the sound balance problem of the drones. Conscious of the problems the *gaiteiros* have with the unsteadiness of the sound of the *ronco*, and after many hours of experimentation inspired by the old drone reeds with a thick blade made of a metal bullet cap, I managed to add my little contribution, which in this case took the form of the *pallón* with a metal blade.

This is a tube that is normally made of plastic, but any other material that is not sensitive to moisture can be used. The flat surface on which the blade will go must be perfectly polished but not levelled, with a slight inclination towards the lid, so that the blade is kept away from the slot, with no need to force it, and to enable the ideal separation from the lid.

The secret of its high sonority and stability lies in the thickness of the blade. Important to note here is that the most highly recommended metal alloy up to now has been stainless steel with silver. The thickness of the blade at its end is approximately 0.06 mm.

The metal blade is not influenced by humidity, which ensures a certain security for a stable tuning of the *ronco*, *ronqueta* and *chillón*. If it is perfectly made, it should last the *gaita's* and the *gaiteiro's* lifetime. Another important property of the *pallón* with a metal blade is that it needs very little air to function properly.

### The *Gaiteiro's* Tools

Knowing how to prepare and maintain the *gaita* is one of the *gaiteiro's* most important tasks. In this sense, it can be said that most *gaiteiros* have more knowledge of how to play their



instrument than how to tune it. To get to know the *gaita* is an art. It takes a considerable amount of experience to tune the *palletas* and *pallóns* properly. A well-prepared *gaita* helps an average *gaiteiro*, but if the *gaita* is not properly tuned, the quality of the *gaiteiro's* performance is lessened.

For the *gaiteiro*, it is of great interest, and very useful, to know how to make the *palletas* and *pallóns*. A *gaita* expert needs a specially designed box with separate compartments for the *palletas*, *pallóns*, blades, and *tapafolgos*, as well as for different tools such as a sharp pocket knife, cotton, a piece of hard wood resistant to cuts, so that it can be used to blunt the *palletas*, and tweezers, which are extremely useful to equalize the space between the two blades of the *palleta*.

## 12. Tonalities

### The *Gaita* Category

#### Transposed and Non-Transposed

The Galician bagpipe category, as with other categories of wind instruments, consists of various types with different size tubes. The same hole produces a different pitch in each type of *gaita*, from the *ronco* (bass drone), to the *ronqueta* (tenor drone) and the *chillón* (soprano drone).

For practical interpretational reasons, it is convenient to keep the same note name for each hole of the *punteiro* (chanter) on all the *gaitas* whatever their different tunings and tonalities. Therefore, the *gaita* in D is the only tonality that is not considered transposed, because the names of the notes generally correspond to the real sound established in the musical references. Therefore, among the *gaita* categories the remaining tonalities are considered transposed.

#### Tuning Tone

The tuning tone corresponds to the real sound of the *gaita* when the D note is played; therefore, when such note is played, and it sounds in C, it is said that the *gaita* is tuned in C (always using the piano as a reference); if the sound is Bb according to the piano, it is understood that the *gaita* is tuned in Bb, etc.

#### Written Tone

The written tone is represented in the musical notation. Although other scales can be used to write *gaita* music, the D scale is usually chosen because it was the first to be used (Ricardo Courtier, *Os Trinta de Trives* [1890]; Perfecto Feijóo [1900] and Rodrigo de Santiago [1964]).

### Effect Tone

The effect tone is the tone that actually sounds when the written notes are played.

### Written and effect tone of the different tunings or tonalities of the *gaitas*

Note that the sequence of tones and semitones is the same between the degrees of each tonality. The tonality of each *gaita* is provided by the D position; the leading note C sharp is considered an additional position, because it is a semitone away. Consequently, the tonality of each *gaita* is the true sound obtained at the D position.

Equivalence between the two writing systems "C" and "D"

### Tonalities that can be obtained from different *gaitas*

#### GAITA IN D

D M. = 2 sharp  
B m.

G M. = 1 sharp  
E m.

C M. (no alt.)  
A m.

F M. = 1 flat  
D m.

#### GAITA IN C

C M. = (no alt.)  
A m.

F M. = 1 flat  
D m.

B flat M. = 2 flat  
G m.

E flat M. = 3 flat  
C m.

#### GAITA IN B

B M. = 5 Sharp  
G sharp m.

E M. = 4 sharp  
C sharp m.

A M. = 3 sharp  
F sharp m.

D M. = 2 sharp  
B m.

#### GAITA IN B FLAT

B flat M. = 2 flat  
G m.

E flat M. = flat  
C m.

A flat M. = flat  
F m.

D flat M. = flat  
B flat m.

#### GAITA IN A

A M. = 3 sharp  
F sharp m.

D M. = 2 sharp  
B m.

G M. = 1 sharp  
E m.

C M. = (no alt.)  
A m.

#### GAITA IN A FLAT

A flat M. = 4 flat  
F m.

D flat M. = 5 flat  
B flat m.

G flat M. = 6 flat  
E flat m.

C flat M. = 7 flat  
A flat m.

#### GAITA IN G

G M. = 1 sharp  
E m.

C M. = (no alt.)  
A m.

F M. = 1 flat  
D m.

B flat M. = 2 flat  
G m.

#### GAITA IN F

F M. = 1 flat  
D m.

B flat M. = 2 flat  
G m.

E flat M. = 3 flat  
C m.

A flat M. = 4 flat  
F m.

#### GAITA IN E FLAT

E flat M. = 3 flat  
C m.

A flat M. = 4 flat  
F m.

D flat M. = 5 flat  
B flat m.

G flat M. = 6 flat  
E flat m.

### 13. Generalities

#### The Metronome

The metronome is a device that oscillates like a pendulum, so that each beat corresponds to a fraction of the meter.

It is very useful, particularly for musical novices, because it helps with measuring and maintaining tempo.

#### The Metronome's indicators


1. The musical symbol that should correspond to the pendulum's oscillation.
2. The number that expresses the speed the oscillations should have.
3. The equal sign between the two.

Allegro    ♩ = 120    ♪ = 80    ♫ = 60

Harmony: Harmony is the technical aspect of music dedicated to what is referred to as the simultaneity of sounds.

Chord: A chord is a group of notes that are played together.

Rhythmic pattern: In the same way that words are grouped in syllables, we group the musical symbols into elemental rhythmic patterns that already have sense by themselves. One of the most illustrative traditional rhythmic patterns of *gaita* music can be found in one of the *muiñeira*:

 = Tátara

Intone or height: The intone is the depth or height of the sounds.

Timbre or quality of tone: The timbre is the quality of the sound.

*Tempero* or skill: The *tempero* is the manual ability required to obtain adequate pressure of the *fol*.

### The Stance of the *Gaiteiro*

The *gaita*, even more than most other instruments, lends itself to adopting multiple shapes when played. Although the way the *gaita* is positioned by the *gaiteiro* does not influence the sound, it certainly plays an important role in the *gaiteiro's* image. Most of the negative habits are picked up early, including puffing out the cheeks, putting the *soprete* (mouthpiece) on the side of the mouth, bending the head down or to the side (in this case one must make sure that the length of the *soprete* is appropriate), bending the *punteiro* (chanter) excessively to either side, or poor position of the *fol* (bag) under the arm. The instrument must be carried in a comfortable and natural way, hence, we suggest practising in front of a mirror.



Figure 16. Avelino Cachafeiro, piper of Soutelo de Montes (1898-1972).

The *gaiteiro* should keep his, or her, head high with an expression of nobility and dignity natural to the *gaiteiro's* profession. The impression made by the *gaiteiro* depends mainly on the way the *fol* is placed, which plays a decisive role in the distribution of the sound tubes of the instrument. The *ronco* (bass drone) of the *gaita* should never be completely parallel to the ground, although this is the way it has recently appeared in general as a consequence of the format of the *gaita*. The angle of the *ronco* with respect to the player's shoulder depends on the *gaiteiro's* taste, although it should not exceed 10° deviation from vertical.

### Galician pipebands

The *gaita* in a band appears in a more differentiated context than when played by a solo

*gaiteiro* or in a smaller group. The *gaiteiro* in a band must achieve a pose that is consistent with the other band members, inspired by the disciplined image of a military unit. Therefore, any individual movements are considered inappropriate. All movements should be well coordinated to produce a harmonic image of the band. The marching step of a band requires a special technique as well.

The feet must be placed firmly and at the right moment. Step twice to the 2/4 and 6/8 beats, three times for the 3/4 beat and four times for the 4/4 beat.

When marching, the movements must be completely natural. A Galician pipeband should never march in a military way, but in an easy way, simulating a normal walk.

The beat of the march should be around 80 or 90 steps per minute. A *gaiteiro* should not walk in a jerking or rigid way, bend the knees, or stamp on the floor. It is especially important to find a natural and comfortable stepping technique.

### How to blow properly: The diaphragm technique

First of all, the lungs must be ready to receive the maximum amount of air. For this the chest must be straight and the shoulders back. The second important step is to breathe in using the diaphragm instead of the chest muscles. Our chest muscles are much weaker than the other body muscles, so the stomach muscles should be used to introduce the air into the *fol*. It is very important to acquire the correct habit for feeding air into wind instruments, especially for those with high air pressure.

If the *gaiteiro* has acquired the correct habits, the stomach should exhibit a noticeable back and forth motion during breathing. To achieve the blowing technique using the diaphragm, the great secret is to constantly maintain the chest high and squeeze out the air with the abdomen. There are different ways of achieving this. The first is to fill the lungs completely and blow out all the air as fast as possible through the mouth, without dropping the shoulders, while putting a hand on the waist to feel the muscle contraction. Another exercise used to achieve such a technique is to breathe strongly through the mouth using only the stomach muscles. Another way to learn this breathing technique is to put the ribs close up to the wall, with the shoulders high, breathing very fast using only the stomach like the panting of a dog. For this exercise normally two complete breaths per second are needed.

These exercises must be practiced every day, privately and undisturbed. As an example, it

can be said that the breathing technique using the diaphragm is the same as emptying a tube of toothpaste: squeezing from the bottom so it comes out at the top. It is understood that this blowing technique is very important, especially for the *gaiteiros* who use powerful and therefore stiff *gaitas*.

### Tuning the *gaita*

Tuning is certainly one of the most important tasks when it comes to playing this instrument, and is one of the tasks every *gaiteiro* must master. Unfortunately, there are no rules determining the process of correctly tuning the *gaita* apart from having a well-trained ear. In our classes we always insist on the importance of tuning the *gaita*, since without a precisely tuned *gaita* all the *gaiteiro's* playing will have no worth whatsoever.

Nowadays, there are tuners that help a great deal in achieving the correct tuning of the *gaita*, especially of the instrument's drone pipes, the *ronco*, *ronqueta* and *chillón*; but such devices do not exempt the *gaiteiro* from ear training. The *gaiteiro* must pay constant attention to the sound of the instrument, concentrating especially on tuning their own *gaita* as well as on its sound in relation to the other *gaitas* in the band. Proper pitch is the starting point for precise tuning.

### Tuning the drone pipes

The drone pipes are the three characteristic low-pitched voices of the Galician bagpipe: *ronco*, *ronqueta* and *chillón*. The sound of the three drone pipes is constant. The sound of the *ronco* or bass drone pipes is two octaves below the *punteiro* (D-position of the first octave). The sound of the *ronqueta* or tenor drone pipe is one octave below the *punteiro*, and the sound of the *chillón* or soprano drone pipe is at the height of the tonic position of the *punteiro*.

Note that neither the tenor nor the soprano drone pipes are part of the typical Galician bagpipe or found in the traditional *gaita* in its original form. Tenor and soprano drone pipes were therefore not accepted in the *gaita* competitions in the late nineteenth century, which is why the height of its sound was not clearly defined. Both the *ronqueta* and the *chillón*, in principle, were used to sound a fifth over the tonic of the *punteiro*, using the *chillón* with *palleta*. This drags, in many cases, because of the lack of fit between these and the *ronco*. However, we have the option today, based on the acoustic laws of physics and logically on the sound results, of making the



three drone pipes dimensionally proportional to the height of sound that they should emit.

When all three drone pipes are used together, it is advisable for the *palleta* of the *punteiro* (chanter reed) to be hard; otherwise, a slight pressure on the *fol* produces a higher oscillation of the *palleta*.

### How to tune the drone pipes of the *gaita* with the *punteiro*

First of all, the notes on the *punteiro* must sound at the right height and proportionally among themselves. The tuning of the Galician *punteiro* does not coincide a hundred percent with the scale at the proper pitch, but it is meant to correspond to the drone pipes of the instrument. Concretely, the major third of the *punteiro's* scale (F sharp) will be a little lower compared with the scale at the proper pitch; all this, as indicated, for better internal tuning of the instrument itself. The tuning of the drone pipes of the *gaita* should be checked especially in the degrees of major consonance, concretely at the D-positions of both of the octaves, A and F sharp. A good ear will seek the proportion among the rest of the notes with the *punteiro* that, even without consonance, will produce a proportional tuning of the *gaita*.

If the drone pipes are put closer together or the *pallóns* (drone reeds) are inserted further into the *espigos* the sound will be higher; doing the opposite, will produce a lower sound. In conclusion of this most important paragraph about the tuning of the *gaita*, it must be said that a well-tuned Galician bagpipe, with the three drone pipes in perfect harmony, handled by a master *gaiteiro*, is one of the most evocative instruments of civilization.

### How to check if we have to close (join) or open (separate) the *ronco*

Naturally, it is not easy for beginners to tune in the *ronco* (bass drone), *ronqueta* (tenor drone), *chillón* (soprano drone) and *punteiro* (chanter). To make this task easier we should proceed in the following way:

First make the drone pipes sound separately with the *punteiro* in A position. Listening to both sounds, slide the middle finger of the left hand very slowly upwards, gradually opening the superior hole. If the conjunction (tuning) is obtained, the *ronco* will be higher than the *punteiro*, so the pieces of the drone pipe will need to be separated or opened accordingly. If by doing this we do not manage to obtain the conjunction of sounds, we must proceed to do the opposite, thus: slide the ring finger of the left hand down to cover the inferior hole on the *punteiro*. If the

approximation of sounds is managed in this way, it should be understood that the *ronco* is low in relation to the *punteiro*, so we shall proceed to add, proportionally, the pieces of the drone pipe until the desired point is achieved. The same process shall be carried out to find the correct tuning in the D position.

If by this process we do not manage to get the correct tuning, it is possible that the *pallón* is not the right one, or that the tonality of the *punteiro* does not correspond to that of the drone pipe. It is important to make sure that the pieces of the drone pipe are not too far apart, or are losing air; in which case, the tendency will be to over tune. The best practice is to follow the *gaiteiro's* constant curiosity for experimenting and studying the characteristics of the *gaita*.

### Tuning of the *punteiro* (chanter)

As already indicated, it is no use trying to tune in the *ronco* if the notes on the *punteiro* are not played perfectly intoned. There is no better way of knowing the proportion of the notes of the *punteiro* than when it is tuned in with the *ronco*. If the *punteiro* is tuned in with the *ronco* in D, then it shall tune in with the rest of the notes in which we shall test the tuning of the *gaita*, otherwise, it will be indicating the incorrect tuning of its notes.

The notes on the *punteiro* may sound out of tune for many reasons:

1. It has been badly made.
2. The blades of the *palleta* are too far apart.
3. The *palleta* projects too far out of the *espigo* of the *punteiro*.
4. The *palleta* is broken, rotten or soaked.
5. Irregular *tempero* due to weak air pressure in the *palleta*.
6. The blades of the *palleta* have been too highly polished.
7. There is not enough air pressure.

### Group tuning of the *gaitas*

The first rule to be established for proper tuning in a bagpipe group is to regulate the *tempero* of the *fol* (bag) while listening to the sound of all the *gaitas* together. If the *gaita* is low compared to the rest, the pressure in the *fol* must increase, but decrease if the opposite is true.

To tune the *punteiros* (chanters) among themselves, we must proceed to introduce or pull out the *palletas* (reeds) little by little in the *espigo* of the *punteiro*. The further you insert the *palleta*, the higher the sound of the *punteiro*, and the further you pull it out, the lower the sound. In this delicate labour experience plays a very important role and, obviously, a good ear is needed.

## Notes for maintaining proper tuning of a group

1. The *gaita* is very sensitive to temperature changes or oscillations in the environmental humidity so the tuning can change in only a few minutes.
2. If the *palleta* is new or too dry, its tone will change when it becomes damp. If it is exposed to air for some time it will become deformed and will only regain its original position with difficulty. If using a leather *fol* (bag), it is advisable to rehearse every day to keep the *palleta* stable.
3. To ensure that the *palleta* does not get too damp the *gaiteiro* must monitor it constantly to prevent its becoming wet while blowing.
4. The *tempero* is the secret of all good *gaiteiros*. It is considered to be of great artistic merit to start with the pedals of the *gaita* together (*ronco*, *ronqueta* and *chillón*) before starting to sound the *punteiro*, as long as the sound of the *punteiro* is the same from the beginning and is in the same intonation, staying steady during the melody. This way of tuning was common among early performers of the *gaita*, and represented a prelude promising a performance of high aesthetic value. If this method is not used, it is best to start with the drones and chanters at the same time.
5. To help keep the *gaita* in tune, never dampen the *palleta*. This is the main reason we consider it to be a great error to wet the *palleta* for it to play more softly. Dampness is the worst enemy for keeping the *gaita* in tune. To check the *punteiro*'s tuning it must be introduced into the *gaita* while avoiding blowing directly on the *palleta*. The *punteiro* of the *gaita* should not be used for practice unless it is connected to the *fol* or the *gaita* will not be stable and the *palletas* will not last long.
6. Maintaining the precise distance between the blades of the *palleta* is the key to the proportion between notes.
7. When the D of the second octave is too high, the blades of the *palleta* must be polished close to the yoke; if it is too low, they must be trimmed with care.

## 14. Percussion Instruments in Galician Folk Music

### Percussion in *gaita* music

The mission of percussion instruments is to keep the beat of the melody, embellishing the rhythm and making the song memorable. Because the *gaita* maintains its sound at a constant intensity, the percussion instruments have the important role of laying emphasis on the melodic passages.

The percussive instrumental assemblage consists of a great variety of instruments that were traditionally used in accompanying popular Galician music, but these instruments are not

Always used to play the rhythm. One of the most curious rhythmic accompaniments is the one produced with the hands. This accompaniment consists in slapping the back of one hand with the fingers of the other hand, alternating middle finger and thumb (Figure 17).



Figure 17. The hands used as percussion instruments.

### The *Terrañolas*

This percussive instrument consists of two little thin wooden blocks which, when placed between the fingers, sound when the hand is shaken, thus producing the rhythm. The name comes from the first type used, which was made from pieces of tile or flat stones. Nowadays, they are usually made of fine wood.



Figure 18. The *Terrañolas*.



Figure 19. Wooden spoons.

The *terrañolas* or *tixoletas* eventually seem to have been replaced by the *castañuelas*, which are also used in certain Galician dances. In some regions, the *terrañolas* are also called *castañuelas* (Figure 18). In Galicia, joined wooden spoons are also used as a percussive instrument (Figure 19).

### The *Pandeiro*

The *pandeiro* has a square wooden frame, which comes in different sizes. The frame is completely covered with goatskin. Some *pandeiros* are carved along the sides on the inside, where the little bells are fitted. The bells can also be set in lines inside, which are joined by a gut-string. To make it sound, it must be hit with a closed hand or with the soft part of the fingertips, while it hangs upon the chest.

The four-handed *pandeiro* must be played by two people, placed at the height of the

stomach and in front of the players. It is much bigger than the common *pandeiro* (Figure 20).

This four-handed *pandeiro* was discovered in the *pallozas do Piornedo*, where the instrument seems to have had a magical use in averting storms. Originally, it seems, it was reserved for women, being used mainly for *pandeiro* chants. It was also used by the guides of blind musicians to accompany their melodies and songs, as well as by itinerant musicians who played the violin and the hurdy-gurdy. Nowadays, it is the preferred instrument to accompany the *pandeirada* and popular folksongs.



Figure 20. The four handed *Pandeiro*.

### The *Redobrante* (Figure 21)

The *redobrante* is considered one of the most essential Galician percussive instruments for *gaita* music. In many old recordings, the *gaiteiro* is accompanied by a *tamborileiro* or drummer. The traditional *redobrante* (high drum) has leather patches and uses strings to tighten these. It is essential that the sound of the *redobrante* and the *ronco* of the *gaita* are well matched. Traditionally, the *redobrante* used to be held by the wrist in a way that is still used by worthy *tamborileiros*.



Figure 21. The *Redobrante*.

Nowadays, another type of *redobrante*, a snare drum under high tension, is used to accompany pipebands along with the tenor drums and the bass drum. High-tension percussion should not be used when accompanying small Galician bagpipe groups, solo *gaiteiros* or folk-dance groups, however.

### The *Bombo* (Figure 22)

The *bombo* (bass drum) was introduced into *gaita* music at more or less at the same time

as the Galician bagpipe groups with clarinet or *requinto*. The group "Gaiteiro de Ventosela" (1847-1912) can be considered pioneers of this style, consisting of a *gaita*, a clarinet, a *redobrante* and a *bombo*. In the past, typical percussion formations used big *redobrantes* and *bombos*, which were played with two beaters, as in the case of the traditional *treboadas*. In certain regions this type of instrument was also called *miragriño*.

Figure 22. The *Bombo*.

### The *Charrasco* (Figure 23)

The *charrasco* is another percussive instrument recently introduced for accompanying the Galician bagpipe. It sounds similar to the *pandeireta*. It consists mainly of a long wooden stick, at the end of which are attached some lines of *ferreñas* (little tin plates) which sound when a string attached to the wooden stick and the frame where the *ferreñas* hang is hit by another stick. To produce its particular sound, the stick must be beaten alternately on the floor and by the stick.

Figure 23. The *Charrasco*.

### The *Cunchas* (Figure 24)

The *cunchas* or *vieiras* (scallop shells) have a privileged rank among the percussive instruments of popular Galician folk music. There is no need for many rules to be able to master and play them; all that is needed is a lot of practice. Place one in each hand, back to back, to obtain sharp sounds by rubbing the tips together; to obtain low sounds, rub the ends together. Another way to obtain different sound effects is to open and close your hands while rubbing the scallop shells together.

Figure 24. The *Cunchas*.

### The *Pandeireta* (Figure 25)

The *pandeireta* consists of a wooden ring covered with sheepskin with *ferreñas* or *ferriñas* (little tin plates) hanging around the edges. The holes for the *ferreñas* can be situated in alternating or parallel rows. This instrument was played almost exclusively by women. Traditional groups of *pandeireteiras* were used to entertain at *ruadas*, *faideiros* or popular fiestas. Nowadays, many groups of *pandeireteiras* prefer to maintain this tradition.



Figure 25. The *Pandeireta*.



Figure 26. Pandeireteiras de Mens (Barcelona, 19.05.1984).

The photo of the "Pandeireteiras de Mens" illustrates the traditional manner of playing the *pandeireta*, which is always struck with a closed fist (Figure 26).

According to Maestro Polo, the *pandeireta* is held in the right hand, moving as if on an imaginary axis. The base of the axis is the right hand's pulse, which moves the *pandeireta* while it is held. The left hand is used as a reference point, moving only the fingers. The *repenique* (movement of the left hand around or across the patch, that makes the instrument vibrate, giving a particular sound) is produced with all the fingers of the hand when convenient.

### The *Pandeira* (Figure 27)

The origin of the *pandeira* derives from the *peneiras* (sieves) used to separate flour from bran. Similar to the *pandeireta*, it consists of a wooden ring covered with sheepskin. The only difference between the *pandeireta* and the *pandeira* is that the latter does not have *ferreñas* (little thin tin plates) attached to it.

Traditionally, the *pandeira* was made by the *peneireiros* or by the musicians themselves; fortunately, nowadays there are professionals dedicated to such tasks.

Because it is considerably bigger than the *pandeireta*, it was also called the "round *pandeiro*". It was played only by the popular *pandeireteiras*, while singing and accompanying the dance.

## 15. Galician Music Genres

Genres or denominatives make up the different varieties of distinctive rhythms found in Galician music. Galician villagers found a unique way of expressing their music, creating music to celebrate the seasons and the labor of the human populations throughout the year. Therefore, there are many different kinds of popular Galician folk songs and melodies that were influenced by everyday labor in the fields, on the roads, in the *fiadeiro* and elsewhere.

In popular colloquial terminology, a designation does not always coincide with a certain type of melody or distinctive rhythm; for example, the *maneo* is not a particular musical genre, it is a designation that can be applied to any rhythm.



Figure 27. The *Pandeira*.

### *Alborada*

The term *Alborada* brings to mind two well-differentiated concepts. On one hand, the image of the traditional *pasarrúas* (parades) that the *gaiteros* perform during the popular festivals early in the morning, also known as "*andala alborada*" (to walk the dawn). *Gaiteros* are well received in every household and are invited in by the housewife or owner of the home. On the other hand the *Alborada* is a musical genre written in a 2/4 beat that apparently derives from a chant to the sun, common among the ancient Celts. The most important musical pieces written for the *gaita* are the *alboradas*, with a representative example included here. One of the best known is the "Alborada de Veiga", the musical piece for which Pascual Veiga won first prize at the Juegos Florales de Pontevedra in 1880. In fact, the piece was composed of fragments of traditional, popular *alboradas* of the *gaiteril* (Galician piping) tradition, as well as a passage of the carol "*Un fato de labradores*" by the conductor of the Mondoñedo cathedral, Anxo Santavaya (1782-1803). This *alborada* is known to many people as the musical symbol of



Galicia, something that certainly honours the image of the *gaiteiro* as the mainstay and leader of the Galician music through the centuries.

I also must make a reference to the "Alborada de Rosalía de Castro", which we assume was composed by Murguía in 1863. It is known that Rosalía encountered difficulties in trying to arrange lyrics to the music for this piece, particularly because the *alboradas* were not sung, but were *toccatas* for the *gaita*. According to Perfecto Feijóo, this *alborada* was picked up by Rosalía, the *gaiteiro* of Iria Flavia, Clemente Eiras. In contrast, "Casto Sampedro" offers a different version that also comes from the *gaiteiro* so named. We believe that many more versions exist, considering the difficulties of the traditional method of conveying the melodies only by ear.

Example: [Alborada de Rosalia de Castro](#) (mp3, 2.5mb download from the Internet)

### *Muiñeira*

It can be said that the *muiñeira* is the most common musical genre of Galician folk music, with a characteristic 6/8 beat. It has been a defining element of Galician music throughout the centuries. Although the first evidence for it that I know of is a Christmas carol from 1786 by Melchor López, the conductor of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, I am sure that its history can be traced back to the development of the *gaita* in Galicia.

The difference between the *muiñeira* "Vella" and the *muiñeira* "Nova" can be outlined as follows. The *muiñeira vella* is always sung; it was also called the *pandeiretada*, because it was normally accompanied by a *pandeireta*. A *pandeiretada* is any melody that is accompanied by a *pandeireta*. The *muiñeira vella*, like the *pandeirada*, has no tempo restraints typical of academic music. The *muiñeira nova*, on the other hand, as it is known today, originated in a more cultured milieu, with all the peculiarities of traditional Galician folk music. The typical *muiñeira* has an instrumental nature, and is normally played with an opening introduction.

Due to the successful introduction of the *muiñeira* in Galician music, different variations of it can be found in the various regions of Galicia, such as the *Ribeirana*, the *Golpe*, the *Carballeza*, the *Redonda* and the *Contrapaso*. These all vary in different ways, but mainly in terms of choreographic type and rhythmic movement rather than in terms of musical structure.

The *muiñeira* can be composed of two or more parts; the older ones typically have two parts, while the newer ones or those that can be attributed to a specific author normally have

more than two.

The couplet, or *copla*, reproduced below illustrates the characteristic features of the women's dance:

*A moza que é bailadora,  
a moza que baila ben,  
canto máis baixo mira,  
máis amores ten.*

The young lady that is a dancer,  
the young lady that dances well,  
the lower down she looks,  
more lovers she has

Example: [Muiñeiras da Valiña da Osa e Veiga de Forcas](#) (mp3, 2.8mb download from the Internet)

### *Pandeirada*

Although the *pandeirada* has similarities to the *muiñeira*, there are important differences in the rhythmic accompaniment. Its proper beat is 5/4. Its name is derived from the instruments with which its rhythm is played: the *pandeiro* and the *pandeireta*. It is also called *canto de pandeiro*. There are not many purely instrumental *pandeiradas*, because it is more common for them to be sung, very like the *muiñeira vella*.

Because of the archaic nature of many of the *pandeiradas* still preserved today, with a persistent underlying rhythmic structure facilitating the dancers' improvisation, it can be supposed that the *pandeirada* is one of the most ancient styles of traditional Galician folk music, and probably the origin of the *muiñeira*. Although the melody normally has a binary beat, the rhythm of the accompaniment has a ternary beat.

### *Carballesa*

The music of the *carballesa* appears to have been generally composed to serve as dance music. It is normally played more vividly than the *muiñeira*. It is written in a 2/4 or 6/8 beat. There is not much musical literature on this variant of the *muiñeira*.

### *Pasodobre Galego*

Although the origin of the *Pasodobre Galego* is not precisely Galician, there are many rich *pasodoble* pieces for the *gaita*. Considering that the *gaiteiro* was the main entertainer of the Galician *romerías*, it is logical that his repertoire had to contain all the *toccatas* needed for such performances. The *Pasodobre Galego* has a 2/4 beat, retaining all the features characteristic of the typical Spanish *pasodoble*.

### *Polka*

Even though the *polka* comes from Poland, it is played all over Europe. Its period of greatest expansion began in 1830. Lately it has been booming in Galician music, though traditionally this genre was not often used by *gaiteiros*. Its characteristic beat is 2/4. The *mazurka* follows a similar trajectory; it also comes from Poland, it has a ternary beat and an analogous position in the *gaiteiro's* repertoire as the polka. Nowadays, due to the great cross-fertilization resulting from the so-called Celtic music genre, *gaiteiros* are introducing into their repertoire jigs, reels and other genres common to other Celtic countries. Another genre used for slow-dances and adopted by *gaiteiros* is the rumba, a dance that originated in Cuba and became popular around 1930. It has a 2/4 beat.

### *Jota Galega*

Despite the fact that the tradition of the *jota* is shared with many regions around the Iberian Peninsula, it has deep roots in Galicia. Even though it is very similar to the *jota Aragonesa*, or Jota from Aragón, it is played more slowly. From the point of view of the dance, it is not danced as energetically as the *jota* from Aragón. The beat is always ternary. There are a great variety of *jotas* in the *gaiteiro* repertoire.

The *fandango* can be considered as a minor variation of the Galician *jota*. The *fandango* is played considerably more slowly than the *jota*. This dance is considered an extremely noble dance.

### *Pasacorredoras/Marchas* (Parades/Marches)

As the name indicates, the *pasacorredoiras* and marches are the typical *toccatas* played while walking. Their characteristic beat is 2/4. There are many *pasacorredoiras* and marches in the Galician bagpipe repertoire.

Example: [Marcha de Penalonga](#) (mp3, 3.1mb download from the Internet)

### *Foliada*

The *foliada* is a variant of the *jota*, with a 3/4 beat. As already mentioned, in colloquial popular language the *foliada* can be any type of musical piece played during festivals. There is a lot of production in *foliada* style of songs accompanied by *gaita*. The *foliada* was the favourite

genre of Galician choirs, which had a varied repertoire of *foliadas* of great tradition and popular flavour.

## Processional Marches

The grandeur and magnificence of the processional march remains an evocative reflection of the glorious past of the *gaita* and the *gaiteiro*. The partnership between a *gaiteiro* and a *redobran*te (high-drum), with a life-time contract signed by the Council of the Kingdom, the regional Councils, Guilds or other individuals with status, is undoubtedly an excellent example of the great nexus between the *gaita* and the processional-liturgical context (Figure 28).

The traditional processional Galician march is especially well suited to the *gaita*. Of special note in the substantial repertoire are the "Marcha do Corpus de Pontevedra"

(March of the Corpus of Pontevedra) and the "Himno do Antergo Reino de Galicia" (Hymn of the Ancient Kingdom of Galicia), also known as the "Marcha dos Peregríns" (Pilgrim's March). I should emphasize that all of these have a majestic and slow beat.

## *Alalá*

The *alalá* is considered to be most elemental and primitive chant in Galicia. Its melodic essence seems to have a religious spirit, but its real origin and provenance have not been determined. Normally it is simply sung, without any type of instrumental accompaniment, and with a free beat. The finest *alalás* can be found in the Galician highlands. In popular speech, this term does not exist, hence it is believed to be an academic type of denomination.

Example: [Alalá do Caurel / a Aguillada](#) (mp3, 2.4mb download from the Internet)

## *Cantos de Berce* or *Arrolo* (Lullabies)



Figure 28. Titular piper and drummer, typical musicians at the Cathedral of Compostela.

As the name indicates, the *Cantos de Berce* or *Arrolo* (cradle songs) are associated with the cradle. Their beat changes from one to another; they can even have a free beat and no lyrics, being hummed rather than sung.

### *Enchoiadas*

The *enchoiadas* are, like the *regueifas*, based on a poetical quarrel between two young men or between a young couple, and they are typical at gatherings at *filandóns* and other similar events. They keep the structure of the *regueifa*, starting the *copla* with part of the previous one.

### *Os Canteiros*

Needless to say, quarrying stone as an occupation has great importance in Galicia, with many wonderful songs referring to such labor. The lyrics are written in quarrymen's slang, also called *verbo dos Arxinas*.

*Verbo xido, mina júrria*  
*Queitervas por areona*  
*Que che hei de aldrabar os zurros*  
*E máis mornarche a morrona.*

### *Espadeladas*

The *espadeladas* could be heard while hackling (*espadelar*) flax. This labor used to start at dusk and could last all night. It was typical to do such work in rotation, with the neighbours coming to help the family who was working. I must point out that it was very common to sing while working if permitted, or when carrying out social labors, like the *tasca* (beating) of the flax, without the existence of any particular accompanying musical genre.

### *Cantigas de Arrieiro*

Galician music contains a diverse repertoire of *Cantigas de Arrieiro* (popular muleteer folk songs), which closely resemble the *alalás* or ballads.

### *Cantigas de Seitura*

These popular harvest folk songs are related to the most significant labor associated with Galician country life, harvesting crops. These songs are slow, free style, with a modulated type of melody. It was typical in some regions of Galicia, such as the Sierra de Queixa, to hire a

*seitura* (harvest) singer to make the work of the harvesters a little more pleasant.

Example: [Cantar da Seitura de Manzaneda](#) (mp3, 4.4mb download from the Internet)

### *Cantar de Reis* and *Panxoliñas* (Christmas Carols)

Another important element of Galician musical heritage are the *Cantares de Reis* and *Panxoliñas de Nadal*, or Christmas carols. The first group of these is dedicated to the three Wise Men (or Three Kings) while the second group is dedicated to the birth of Christ. The *gaita* appears as a melodic reference in many Galician Christmas carols. The *Reis* (Kings) were sung in all Galician villages.

### Romances

The romance was the favorite genre of the blind singers. They used to sing them accompanied by the hurdy-gurdy or the violin, and sometimes accompanied by the *pandeireta* that was played by their guide. Stories, crimes and misfortunes were the favorite topics for the romances. Others were intended to motivate the listeners to give alms.

Blind men would stand at the entrances of churches, attend fairs and travel from door to door. Most of the romances do not have a distinct music of their own, since that varied by the district where the music was sung. The music has a strong archaic flavor. A good example is a romance collected by Concha Luis Seoane from O Cañizo (Ourense) and published in Volume I of *Cantares da Terra das Frieiras* (2003).

Example: [Romances tradicionais](#) (mp3, 5.3mb download from the Internet)

### *Regueifa*

Another traditional cultural practice specific to Galicia is the singing of *regueifas*, a type of wheat bagel that was already common by the fifteenth century. When a wedding was celebrated, it was typical for the young men to gather around the couple's door, to improvise *coplas* and claim *regueifa* as a reward (Figure 29). On certain occasions the best and most original *regueifeiro* (the person who sang or performed the *regueifa*) was chosen by the audience, with the owner of the *regueifa* distributing it among all the *regueifeiros* or the people present. This traditional, festive singing at weddings was called *brindo* in the districts of *Caurel* and *Cebreiro*, and is analysed in more detail in our publications of the *Músicas do Caurel* (Music from Caurel) (Foxo 1998). Sometimes the *regueifa* was disputed in the dance, which is the origin of the

*regueifa* dance or *molete*.



Figure 29. Historic photo of *Regueifa* or "wedding bread" dance.

## *Maios*

The origin and the antiquity of the manifestations of the *maios*, or May Day songs, have been the focus of many discussions by anthropologists and historians who have sought their origins in the Palaeolithic era or have identified them as having Celtic roots. Their non-Christian nature seems indisputable, partly due to the fact that the church very early insisted on eradicating all manifestation of the *maios* and the Carnival.

One of the traditional ceremonies during the *maios* was to run across the fields spreading the sparks that fell from the *fachos* (torches), so as to keep the witches away, with the purpose of ensuring a good and plentiful crop. The popular lyrics have an important literal content, in the form of satirical *copla* in the context of the *maios*:

<i>Lume ao pan,</i>	Fire to the bread,
<i>lume ao pan:</i>	fire to the bread:
<i>cada espiga o seu toledán</i>	each spike to its <i>toledán</i> (7.5 Kg grain)

## *Copla*

The *copla* is a poem formed of three or four verses of different metrics, without a fixed rhythm. This simple structure was, for a long time, the most common genre in popular Galician

folk singing. The *copla* was sung spontaneously in the *fiadeiros* or in any *foliada*. The lyric can be adapted to any music, using a *muiñeira* or any other rhythm.

### *Aturuxo*

The *aturuxo* is an autochthonous yell. It is screamed out on the way back home from the festivities or to encourage the dancers; it is normally loud, sharp and long lasting. The art of *aturuxar* is a skill that is considered of great artistic value.

## **16. Similarities among the Traditional Melodies of Galicia, Brittany, Scotland, and Ireland**

Over time a collection of melodies has been preserved that are similar among the different Celtic cultures and represent evidence of musical cohesion. We have selected six melodies that are especially good examples of this musical unity and evidence for ongoing interaction.

### Galicia-Scotland

The tune "Marcha do entrenzado de Allariz" is strongly linked to the medieval tradition of Allariz, (Ourense) where, since the Middle Ages thirty *gaiteiros* have gathered to play in the celebration "Festa do Boi" while walking the streets of this village.

At the same time, in the highlands of Scotland a melody known as the "Atholl Highlanders" exists that strongly brings to mind the "Marcha do Entrelazado de Allariz". This provokes the following question: How is it possible for two melodies practically identical in structure and in their melodic scope to have been preserved at such a distance from one another? We offer both pieces here as interpreted by a Galician bagpipe tuned in Bb.

Any listener or musicologist can appreciate this miracle of the auditory tradition of both regions, musical siblings that provide us with treasure of incalculable worth as testimony of the value of studying the links between the Celtic cultures through the centuries.

A comparative analysis results in the following observations: both themes have a practically identical scope typical of an instrument with equal resources. What seems odd is that most melodic intervals in both fragments are successions in thirds elaborated as arpeggios of triads with a scope not superior to a fifth, specially those that start with the first grade of the scale



o tonic note. Continuing from these perfectly defined cells, phrases are set up to resolve on the tonic note.

Examples:  *Marcha do entrenzado de Allariz* (mp3)  "Atholl Highlanders" (mp3)



The similarity between the two melodies is evident, both from the melodic point of view and from the rhythmic configuration of the melody where the rhythmic cell is composed by an 8th note with dot followed by a 32nd note and an 8th note forms the rhythmic *ostinato*, characteristic of musical pieces associated with the Galician and Scottish cultural temper.

## Brittany-Galicia

Next we proceed to compare two melodies, one from Galicia and the other from Brittany.

## Breton Waltz

In this case the melodic similarity is even more evident because the melodic phrases coincide almost 100%, not only because of the cadences of the half-phrases, but also because of the configuration of the rhythmic cells in 8th notes, the scope of both and the similar harmonic structure, finishing both periods on the tonic note. Here the musical idea of both pieces is curiously similar.



Examples:  *Ruada* (mp3)  *Bals Breton* (mp3)

## Ireland-Galicia

Continuing with the parallelisms among melodies from Celtic countries, we compare the Irish piece called "Courtney's Favourite" and the following Galician melody from Ribeira.

## *Ribeirana*

This piece was obtained from the Feijoo files compiled by J.L.Calle (1993). We can compare the beginning of these two melodies. The rhythmic cells coincide in melodic intention and scope. In these examples there is an initial jump of a 5th followed by a 6th and finishing this motif with a 7th in one case and in a 6th in the other, making the melodic similarity and the rhythmic configurations evident by the identical succession of the three superior notes. The rest of the pieces are organised in relation to these motifs.

Examples:  Courtney's Favourite (mp3)  Ribeirana Clip (mp3)

## **17. Conclusions**

In view of the comparisons presented above, it seems that the traditional music of Galicia and adjacent regions of Spain and Portugal shows clear similarities with that of other Celtic countries and regions such as Scotland, Brittany and Ireland. The persistence throughout the centuries of the bagpipe as an extremely popular instrument could also indicate the existence of an archaic and common background for all the countries involved.

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