

“Mumming Meets Drumming: Re-contextualizing Performance for Peace in Northern Ireland”

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the recent merging of two Irish traditional performances, the house-visiting tradition of mumming and the competitive tradition of Lambeg drumming, in the Shared Education Program in Northern Ireland. While the traditional tunes and rhymes performed by the professional mummies, the Armagh Rhymers, tend to be associated with Irish Catholic culture, the Lambeg drum is typically associated with Protestantism and particularly with the private fraternal Orange Order. I use participant observation and draw on several performance studies articles to argue that the process of folklorization made it possible for the Armagh Rhymers to perform in the unprecedentedly political setting of an Orange Lodge. By establishing themselves as a professional and international performance group, rather than amateur local actors as mummies traditionally are, the group was invited by the county council to take part in its initiative of developing children’s cross-community education with a focus on honoring Orange Order heritage. The emphasis on Orange heritage in this year’s project encouraged the Portadown Orange Lodge to open their doors to the Armagh Rhymers and Lambeg drum educator, Billy Hill to engage children of local Catholic and Protestant schools in 6 weeks of ritual drama involving the Lambeg drum. I draw on studies that discuss narrative in ritual drama and mythic storytelling, as well as in soothing social tensions in a political context. I examine the formal similarities in the rhyming and drumming traditions, and consider the project’s effectiveness in building friendly relations between the children, adults, and communities involved.

As Henry Glassie eloquently concludes in *The Stars of Ballymenone*, “The way to raise the political issue in public is to make an artful reference to the past, to paint a portrait on the wall that needs no label, to march with beautiful banners commemorating and old victory, to sing a song of martyrdom that can be taken as entertainment or taken as political comment” (Glassie, 403-404). The latest Shared Education Programme project organized by the Tourism, Arts and Culture Department of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is based on the same principle: artfully de-stigmatizing the Northern Irish political differences through artistic representations of underlying unity as participants in artistic traditions. David Weir, the director of the shared education program, was requested by the Council to design a project to participate in the “2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage, a European wide program celebrating Cultural Heritage” (Weir). David was made responsible for organizing a project involving the Orange Order, as the event had to be themed around “Built Heritage, Linen, Literature and Orange Order Heritage” (Weir). David explains that, having had no expertise in creating a project like this, he “was aware that [the Armagh Rhymers] were a creative force who kept alive Irish music, rhyming and mumming traditions.”

Anne Hart, director of the Armagh Rhymers, described this project as a milestone for the group, as it demonstrates their flexibility and boldness, confidence in themselves as performers whose work aims to heal what the artistic director, Dara Vallely, refers to as the “old wound,” the sectarian religious and political divide. The Armagh Rhymers are the world’s only full-time professional mummies, who practice the ancient masking and house-visiting tradition traditionally performed during seasonal festivals like Halloween or St. Steven’s Day.

Through processes of colonialism and cultural cleansing that limited contact of Irish Catholics with the Lambeg drum, Lambeg drumming became associated with state power and the Orange Order, while mumming was associated with grassroots resistance to politics, history, and imposed religious power.

The Armagh Rhymers were the first group of performers in Northern Ireland to start cross-community performances for school children in the 1980s. Dara is the only member of the Armagh Rhymers who performed with the founding members, and he recalls that there was strong resistance their efforts to bring together children from communities so violently divided at that time. This was the first opportunity for many teachers and schoolchildren to interact with those of a different religion, despite living in the same town their entire lives. Because the mumming tradition is pre-modern, it can appeal to audiences on both sides of Northern Ireland's political divisions. Ireland's high kings are buried in Armagh, or *Ard Mhaca* in Irish, the heights of the horse goddess Macha. Armagh was the most powerful in the Celtic world, with the burial mounds and former king's palace *Emain Macha* drawn on Ptolemy's maps as the center of power in the Celtic world. While the grave of Ireland's last high king, Brian Boru, is marked outside of the Protestant cathedral in the center of Armagh, the rest of the kings are buried unnamed. The Armagh Rhymers, while not explicitly practicing Paganism, bring attention back to the ancient people and power of the region's pre-Christian origins.

The earliest members of the Armagh Rhymers persisted in their mission to bring communities together through ritual drama and cross-community education. The Armagh Rhymers' acceptance of the challenge to perform in the politically controversial setting of the Orange Order shows confidence in their skills and their success as world class performers of a tradition performed by amateurs within their own community. I argue that the process of folklorization, the commodification of folklore for mass consumption, has given the Armagh Rhymers the authority to enter establishments like the Orange Order as equals in cultural significance and power. Mumming has historically been a form of resistance to Protestant rule, particularly regarding Protestant land ownership, and has been a source of power for the disenfranchised. It's difficult to imagine a group of masked performers coordinating with Orange Order drummers for the purpose of peace making, without the decades of expertise and reputation the Rhymers have made for themselves. Mumming in its original context, applied to a performance in an Orange Lodge, would seem confrontational without this new context of cross community education supported by the Council. Likewise, the Lambeg drum has been likened more to a weapon than an instrument, being associated with incitations of violence and calls to war, more than as a cause for peaceful performance.

In "Rethinking Folklorization in Ecuador: Multivocality in the Expressive Contact Zone, McDowell explains" the process of folklorization as, "remov[ing] traditional expressive culture from an original point of production and relocate it in a distanced setting of consumption... something prettified and staged." Rather than marketing to a "foreign" audience, as recordings of indigenous music for tourist consumption, the Armagh Rhymers market a Fenian / Catholic tradition that was dwindling in the 1950s due to modernity, with the modern community on both sides becoming "foreign" consumers. In a sense the foreignness of the ritual's content is not due to physical distance but temporary distance—performing stories of places within driving distance that are set in the mythic past or ancient times.

Besides the Armagh Rhymers, David Weir involved Billy Hill, an experienced teacher of the Lambeg drum, who likewise engages in a process of folklorization that highlights the musicality of the Lambeg drum rather than its political history, in the project. Billy gives presentations on the drum and its history at school events throughout Northern Ireland on a regular basis. Just like the Rhymers, his dynamic personality invited the kids' full attention and participation in the lesson on drumming. He was surprised that the kids didn't know that drums were made with goat skin. Unlike the adults who entered the performance intent on "recontextualizing" the Lambeg drum, the children had little previous context with which to understand the drum at all. For Billy Hill, the Armagh Rhymers, David Weir, and others involved in the Shared Education Programme, every adult shares the same desire for the children to feel that places and traditions in their home region are safe and approachable environments. The emergent qualities of performance open the possibility for a future where traditions on both sides of the sectarian divide could be performed as a matter of regional pride that unifies the population, regardless of religion, ethnic background, or any political identity.

The ritual is based around the legend of Knock many Hill, a nearby site that features in the mythic teleology of the unique landscapes in the north of Ireland. For many students in both schools, this might be their only exposure to local legends, to Lambeg drums, to children from a school of a different faith, and to interactive play and performance. Many children from the Protestant school might not have much exposure to Irish traditional music that the Rhymers perform, let alone to the less common practice of mumming. Through the ritual, children of diverse backgrounds are invited to hold hands, play pretend, sing, dance, chant, rhyme, and play Lambeg drums and various instruments and objects associated with mumming and mythology. While mumming plays might traditionally poke fun at politics and contemporary political figures, this ritual only references characters of the legends and myths, who might not feature in a traditional mumming play. The different context for mumming requires different content. By bringing children into highly politicized adult contexts, the children's participation invites a suspension of adult expectations. Through folklorization, the tradition becomes representative of all of the traditions associated with the place, the people, and the performance. The group consists of virtuosic performers, such their Riverdancer Caora, expert Irish speaker and established musician, Cormac O'Briain, actor and musician Adam Costa, life-long educator and the group's director, Anne Hart, and the group's multi-talented artistic director, Dara Vallely.

Dara highlights that Lambeg drum has only come to be associated with Protestantism as opposed to Catholicism because of the cultural cleansing of Fenian Ireland over a hundred years ago. The Lambeg drum is no longer found in collective memory as part of the Fenian tradition. However, the drum was used in the north of Ireland centuries before the first Orange Parade. It used to be a method of communication between parishes and towns. The sound of the drum carries several miles, making it the second largest drum in the world, and the loudest. It is the largest carried drum in the world. Lambeg drum competitions are about endurance more than musicality. The drums are played in parades as well as competitions between boys and men that stretch on for up to a half hour of constant drumming, with the winner being the man who can play accurately for the longest time. The Lambeg drum is typically carried in the July 12th Parades commemorating the Battle of the Boyne, King William of Orange's victory for England over the north of Ireland in the 1600s.

Narrative and Ritual: Shaping Reality through Sound

The Orange Order was founded on principles of strict exclusion of Catholics. With such a loaded history, an Orange Lodge is not a setting that many Catholics would ever expect to find themselves. The spontaneous invitation to attend an event in an Orange Lodge was novel for myself and the Armagh Rhymers. Anne had been inside of an Orange Lodge only once before decades ago. Because this was such an unprecedented social gathering, the greetings and anecdotes that the organizers exchanged formed around our commonality rather than our more obvious demographic differences. In "The Poetic Rites of Conversation," McDowell studies a spontaneous group dialogue that functioned as a "mending ritual," smoothing over what was a tense uncertainty of social relationships between a host and an unexpected and initially unrecognized guest (McDowell, 124). McDowell explains that the host, Kate, "makes conciliatory gestures in the guise of co-performance" (McDowell, 125). A similar conversational "mending ritual" occurred during the set-up of the performance in the Orange Lodge, between the Anne and Dara and one of the Lodge's leaders, Bill Partidge.

While the July 12th Parades are typically associated only with Protestant drummers, Bill shared an anecdote about the drum breaking due to the stress on the goat skin, only to be repaired by Catholic neighbors. The Catholic neighbors were Lambeg drummers in the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and they readily took apart one of their own Lambeg drums to donate a fresh goat skin to keep the parade going. Dara encouraged me to record this anecdote, and I approached Bill expecting him to recount the brief tale to me, not expecting much more background information. However, when I interviewed Bill, he re-counted his understanding of the region's 400-year history before coming to the anecdote of the broken drum. While the history of the entire nation and its drumming tradition appeared at first to me as rather impersonal narratives, they are intimately important topics of conversation for those immersed in the complex social and political history of the North. In "Personal Narrative and Experiential Meaning," Donald Braid explains that, "an event is an abstraction from a narrative." The event recounted in the anecdote is a brief abstraction of a story centuries old.

All personal experiences are interpreted through understanding's of one's political and historical setting, and the narratives shape reality itself. Braid explores "narrative coherence from a phenomenological view of experience and suggest[s that] coherent narratives may be accurate representations of the 'real world' because they reflect the lived, and therefore interpreted, experience of the world for the narrator" (Braid, 13). The anecdote Bill shared helps shape a reality that allows for peace and friendship in the support of musical traditions.

McDowell argues that, "On the figurative plane, we can detect a movement away from the world of immediate experience, that is, from the situation at hand, to a world based on immanent reality principles... ..a transcendental vision of reality is momentarily sustained" (McDowell, 130). This transcendence away from the immediate setting diffused social tensions and validated everyone's purpose in enduring any personal social awkwardness for a greater social good. "The group relaxes as the main issue is briefly diffused through a discussion of a related, but less threatening matter..." (McDowell, 125). In fact, in this anecdote, the main issue was not only proven to be less threatening, but actually highlighted that there is no threat in musicians coming together. It provided meta-commentary on the situation that smoothed over the social fact that mummers don't traditionally belong in the Orange Lodge, which would be too complex to confront directly.

Even though the ritual in the Orange Lodge began with a presentation on the history, musical properties, and function of the Lambeg drum, Billy Hill engaged the children in such a lively and humorous way that it set a similar tone as the mumming ritual. The performance involved joking, teasing, and opportunities for the children to interact with the drum, which transitioned into the playful and interactive style of the mumming ritual immediately following. This presentation on the Lambeg drum was briefer than the mythic narrative directed by the Rhymers, but it provided the rhymes and rhythms that the children were to perform in the ritual. The drumming rhymes served almost as a sonic glue that tied together separate performance traditions, as well as elements of the plot in the mythic narrative. The same tune was used for singing different lines of the story, and the same rhythms were used to signal the performers into narrative action.

The children learned two drumming rhymes and were instructed to clap the rhythm on their knees. The rhymes are mnemonic in the sense that they are repetitive and help the speaker remember, but also synesthetic, in that they connect more than one sense together, touch and sound. The first rhyme was, "I think I can drum. I think I can drum. I think I can drum but I really cannot." The second rhyme was, "Hickory Dickory Dock. Hickory Dickory Dock. Jonny Malone." Each syllable of the rhyme and the length of the vowels' pronunciation determines the rhythm. While the children only learned to perform these two, they were taught that the lambed drummers know hundreds of these rhymes and play the drum for a full half hour without pause through knowledge of these rhymes. The words give the drummers a way to keep time without becoming distracted. There are countless other rhymes used in playing both the Lambeg drum and in keeping time / performing mumming rhymes on the bodhrán. The rhymes that Billy taught the children are perhaps ideal for their age group as they reference a familiar nursery rhyme and they make light of the idea that they need to be good at drumming in order to try. Some rhymes, one of which Dara taught me, mention the drum specifically but follow a similar pattern. "There's a pub. There's a pub. There's a pub on the Lambeg Road. Jimmy ma do, Jimmy ma do, Jimmy ma do" (Dara). The rhymes are predominantly nonsensical phrases that have an ironic or unexpected punch line or ending that makes them memorable to signal the length of the musical phrase. For example, with "Hickory Dickory dock," the traditional nursery rhyme is interrupted with a name from a totally different context which signals the end of that phrase.

In Michael Brown's "The role of words in Aguarana hunting magic," Brown analyzes the song genre, *anen*, which differs from original songs in that their lyrics "draw upon an esoteric vocabulary that is rich in onomatopoeia, mythical allusions, and borrowings from other Jivaroan languages" (548). Just as drumming rhymes are taught in private practices between male teachers and students in the Orange Order, Aguarana hunting songs are passed on between teacher and pupil through private sacred rituals. The primary purpose of hunting songs is to attract prey, whereas the drumming rhymes serve as private encouragement for drummers to maintain a seamless performance while in competition with drummers from other Orange Lodges. While the drumming rhymes are not thought of as having magical efficacy, like the Aguarana conceptualizations of speech and figurative language, "Language can be used to project the will from the narrow confines of, 'personal space' to the wider world of social relations and objects" (Brown, 548).

Lambeg drummers also use rhymes to project their will into the wider world of social relationships and objects, even though their will is simply to endure the longest and win prestige on behalf of their community and family.

When war becomes play, play with words wins.

In “Running Again, Roasting Again, Touching Again: On Repetition, Heightened Affective Expressivity, and the Utility of the Notion of Linguaculture in Navajo and Beyond,” Webster discusses the role of genre framing in through repetition and parallelism. The narrative of the ritual was keyed with the repetition of the phrase, “Long Ago, Long Ago!” in the Irish language, “*Fadó, Fadó!*” The ritual narrative begins with a call and response between the Rhymers and the children. This is part of what Webster refers to as a linguaculture (Webster, 444-445). While Rhymers performed in English with a predominantly English-speaking audience, the repetition of this Irish word keys the performance as beginning in another world. The following lines repeat with varied enactments of characters: “It wasn’t in my time. It wasn’t in your time. It wasn’t in your mommy’s time, it wasn’t in your belly’s time, it wasn’t in your grandma’s time, and it wasn’t in your grandad’s time!” Similar to the Navajo use of the use of the word *jini*, which is repeated to indicate social distance, “Not firsthand information but rather the ‘voice of tradition’” (Webster, 448).

Just as parallelism is not exact repetition in Navajo mythic storytelling, in the ritual storytelling of Finn MacCool, the children’s voices imitate the adult’s words, but with different acoustic qualities, so that it produces an alternating pattern of lower pitch with fewer voices (only 1-5 adults speaking), to higher pitched with the volume of over 30 ten year olds shouting. The words are accompanied with ritual gestures. Bright argues in “‘With One Lip, with Two Lips’: Parallelism in Nahuatl,” “in many Nahuatl texts, lines are characterized not merely by participation in grammatically and lexically defined couplets, but more specifically by patterns of binary and embedded parallelism” (Bright, 450). The difference in pitch and volume between the adults’ and childrens’ voices creates “patterns of binary” in the narrative structure. This structure repeats throughout the ritual, as all of the children’s lines are group repetitions of one or more adults, some of which are printed on a banner that the children recite as a whole, while others are lines used only by the children performing at that specific time.

While adults were surprised by the children’s lack of knowledge about drums, likewise children were surprised by the adult’s encouragement to misbehave in the ritual’s components. The first ritual involves the children lining up, “Alphabetically and according to size,” with “belly out, head up,” which Dara says is a mockery of military comportment. The children pose with exaggerated posture, and absurdly careful attention is given to lining them up in height order. Dara asked to see a child’s hands. He pretended that they were disgustingly dirty and needed to be cleaned. He asked the classes how people in ancient times used to wash their hands and hair. Then he made a noise and mimed spitting into his palms to clean them, and pretended to rub the spit through his hair. The children laughed and were asked to do this themselves.

Besides being punctuated with drumbeats, the play involves guttural sounds instead of words. In “The Intersection of Music and Language in Kuna Discourse,” Sherzer explains that, “some performers cough or produce a cough like noise between verses. There is considerable line verse syntactic and semantic parallelism. Musically, curing and magical chanting is characterized by line parallelism, descent in pitch and volume, slowing of temp at the ends of lines, and lengthening of line and verse final vowels” (Sherzer 153). While the mumming ritual is not intended to “cure” participants individually, it likewise has a curing purpose, albeit on a communal scale. The guttural noises that appear throughout the ritual are imitations of spitting that take place in the second and second to last plot sequence of the ritual. In the second to last sequence, a child is asked to play music with a “bucket on its head” (which is how one would translate literally “upside-down bucket” from Irish”). The child is also instructed to pretend to spit into the air and turn the bucket right side up to catch the spit, which is made visible through guttural sounds that accompany the actions. After this, more children are brought forward to play out the last tune with the bucket choreography while the rest of the students are given bells, tambourines, and other small percussive instruments that creates a cacophony of disorganized, sound, unified through its disarray. Compared to the beginning of the ritual, the last several minutes of joyful and chaotic sounds of children making music. The ritual, designed by adults, dissolving into the designs of children.

In *Portraits of the Whiteman: Linguistic Play and Cultural Symbols Among the Western Apache*, Keith Basso explains that Apache use joking to “stretch... social relationships, a playful device for testing and affirming solidarity by ostensibly denying it” (Basso, 69). The cross community project allows children to stretch their social relationships with adults, playing and making fun of behavior considered normal in contemporary and ancient times, elite and military comportment and the behaviors of uncivilized, ancient “wild men.” In this sense, the intimacy between the performers and the audience is strengthened by allowing a playful alternative to times and places outside of this experience. They deny the connection between themselves and the wider community, testing the boundaries of acceptable adult behavior. Joking about acceptable human behavior is, like Apache people jokingly imitating the “white man,” “... ultimately grounded in conflicting assumptions of what it means to be a person and the kinds of actions that can discredit a person’s worth in public situation” (Basso, 64), such as nose picking or cleaning oneself with spit.

Lining up the children by height order in the second ritual of the play served a practical function as well, as the next task is to face your partner and look into their eyes while chanting “Watch yourself!” and pointing your finger in their face. While the whole group sings along the story line with Adam, “Finn and Oonagh were a happy pair, a happy pair. Finn and Oonagh were a happy pair, long, long agooo.” This is repeated at an increasingly faster tempo until all the children are giggling. New children were drawn from random rows in the audience, and over the course of the ritual, every child was giving an opportunity to perform at least once.

While the drumming rhymes and the ritual phrases were fascinating in themselves, it’s important to note that the project aims to incorporate the sound of drums into the narrative itself, with each beat equivalent to a collective voice. The final iteration of the project will be a silent recording of the performance, with only the sound of the drum. In “The Intersection of Music and Language in Kuna Discourse,” Sherzer explains that, “...especially in more formal and ritual styles, lines are marked by extensive syntactic and semantic parallelism. This parallelism is organized in terms of line structure and, in turn, contributes to this structure” (Sherzer, 149). Mirroring the start of the ritual, it concludes with a version of Pete Seeger’s “If we could consider each other a neighbor, a friend or a brother, it could be a wonderful, wonderful world; it could be a wonderful world, yo ho!” Everyone stands, waves their arms in unison, and jumps up twice for the last line. This brings the ritual to a close and the performers back to the present. While the drama begins with the Irish, “*Fadó*,” it ends with the possibility of a peaceful future.

The second practice of the ritual that I attended took place in the Catholic school, St. John the Baptist’s College in Drumcree. It didn’t incorporate the Lambeg drum, but went through the ritual choreography again. Near the end of the ritual, Dara used a riddle with a student based on a mummer’s play’s traditionally central dramatic action, death and resurrection. He asked, “Have you ever died?” There was some laughter and the answer was, “No,” so Dara elaborated, “but have you ever died laughing?” The boy confirmed that he had indeed died laughing, and this transitioned into the performance where he has to use a bucket as a musical instrument. The riddle toys with conceptual categories of life and death (Hamnett, 379), framing the ritual as a space to re-think other conceptual categories.

There is a paradox in asking a living person if they’ve died, because the answer is either a lie, or our entire conceptual category of time and mortality are incorrect. When he asks, “But have you died laughing,” the child is the butt of the joke, not thinking outside of the literal meaning of the word. The shift in focus onto the figurative meaning for death, “to die laughing,” invites memories of play and laughter. To die laughing means to have been left physically breathless from the tension revealed in a joke or humorous situation. In “Accounting for Jokes: Jocular Performance in a Critical Age,” Fine and Wood argue that, “laughter is a physical, emotional, and seemingly uncontrolled depiction of consensus. Often orgasmic, laughter is difficult to fake, and so its presence signifies true belief and, once given, suggests that whatever caused the laughter is worthy of repetition” (Fine and Wood, 310). Fine and Wood continue this explanation of group consensus in joke telling, adding that, “Joking is immediate, [and] demand[s] audience involvement” (Fine and Wood, 306). Dara’s jokes with the child who volunteered to perform involves the entire audience in what is otherwise an interaction with only two people. The jokes and teasing throughout the ritual keep all of the children actively engaged, whether or not they are enacting the narrative in front of their peers.

Conclusion: Play, Peace, and Progress

According to Bauman and Briggs, “Pursuit of a particular interactive focus (teaching, exhorting, befriending, confronting, ect.) generally involves negotiated changes of genre in which features of one genre are embedded within a token of another” (Bauman and Briggs, 64). The Shared Education Programme involves negotiated changes of genre in order to unlock the potential for friendship, healthy self-esteem, and positive world-view which emerge through performance. The ritual practices take place in diverse political locations, never at either class’s home institution, but rather in an array of spaces that gives the sense of a neutral world in which play is possible. The physical distance between the students and their schools, despite sometimes being in gymnasiums and halls of different schools, allows for students to distance themselves from their usual student roles. The teachers noted that a highlight of the ritual’s emergent qualities was the participation of a student who, under normal contexts, never participates in class. Because of the play frame in the ritual, this student felt encouraged to take on a new social role.

Role distancing is another factor in joke-telling discussed in Fine and Wood’s article that appears in this performance. The performance persona of the Armagh Rhymers as musicians, characters, and also tricksters alternate throughout the ritual. At times they are unmasked, playfully riddling and joking with the children in order to guide them into ritual action. Their role as musicians signifies fundamentally that they are entertainers, not teachers, even though they frequently assign rules for the group, such as asking them to stand up, sit, repeat words and phrases, evaluating and selecting students to perform in front of the class much like school teachers. The joking and the music signals that this standard behavior is not meant to be taken too seriously, even though, like school, this play activity has an actual goal: ultimately to perform for the camera. The masks transform the Rhymers into characters, no longer themselves but rather mythic beings like the giant Fionn Mac Cumhaill and his wife Oonagh, or the giant Scotsman. When the Rhymers are in character, the children know that they are expected to perform in character as well— imitating various animals, humans, and other beings as the narrative unfolds. While for the Rhymers, masks indicate their performance persona, for the children, affective miming and choreography key their performance persona. Rather than disguise themselves through costume, they become ducks, dogs, bumble bees, and druids through bodily comportment. While this is fun for the children, it references traditional rituals found in Irish wakes.

An unintended accomplishment of the ritual is brining together students of different ethnic backgrounds, supporting positive relationships between children of different races and national backgrounds. Complicating the notion of segregation between Catholics and Protestants in the North, the Catholic school was composed mostly of second generation immigrant children, many whose families came from Portugal and West Africa. The ritual ensures that first generation immigrant children have familiarity with local narratives and performance traditions, and likewise gives native Protestant and Catholic children positive memories and encounters with children of different national backgrounds and faiths. While schools in the North are typically either Catholic or Protestant, the school populations on both sides include a number of students who don’t identify with the school’s founding faith. The two teachers, Mr. Taggerty of the Protestant school, and Mr. Fox of the Catholic school, both spoke with me about the success of this first-time performance. I noticed that, compared to the Orange Lodge staff and the Armagh Rhymers, the two teachers were less talkative with each other. Part of this is due to their responsibilities in looking after the children, and also their familiarity with each other after years of co-participation in other cross-community curriculum projects. However, I sensed that the emphasis on Lambeg drumming and the context of the Orange Lodge might have been uncomfortable subject matter for Mr. Fox, who didn’t acknowledge them in our conversation. Mr. Taggerty was eager to discuss the Lambeg drum, and was enthusiastic about its presence in the ritual. Despite the efforts to re-contextualize the Lambeg drumming traditions for children, it remains a sensitive topic for Catholics and Protestants alike, even in a new context.

Dara emphasized that this project is truly a ritual, not a performance, even though it will ultimately be recorded as a performance. When I asked what made the difference, he explained that a ritual is something ongoing that you enter. He highlighted the significance of the preperformance context, which is not a blank slate on which people act. The children walked into an unfamiliar world which was already functioning without their gaze. This is significant in that the audience is brought into something ongoing and private.

Dara pointed out that, when the children arrive to the Orange Lodge, they are standing in the doorway, observing the unfamiliar ornate, political banners that line the walls. They see adults in the corner having tea and playing music, actively engaged in something private and ongoing that they are instructed to participate in specific ways.

Both teachers, and the Rhymers as well, notice that the students in the North have a low self-esteem and often lack confidence. After the performance in the *Gael Scoil*, an all Irishspeaking elementary school, Anne asked me if I recognized any major difference in the children's behavior. In the North, the children were extremely disciplined, participating fully but with some reservation at times. Perhaps this had to do with being integrated with another school rather than their everyday peers. In the Republic, the children were eager to play with all the props, step out of line, and play roughly after the event, which could indicate that they feel freer and safer to express themselves in the South and in the international city of Dublin where society is more diverse and integrated.

While the folklorization of the mumming tradition has made it possible to re-contextualize performance spaces and communities, this study highlights that personal narratives and the ritual performance of mythic narratives play a significant role in mending cross-community relationships. This project could be expanded by describing the history of the Lambeg drum and the mumming tradition in greater depth, and it will be interesting to consider the final video of the performance into a future analysis of the project. The mumming rhymes draw from traditional local hunting songs, which could be interesting to consider in relation to other hunting song traditions and the magical efficacy of language in music. This could highlight the mystical relationships between humans and animals, which is a central feature of the masking tradition and the mythology, which involve metamorphosis between animals and humans. This study can apply to peace making projects, children's education, and studies of the relationship between language and music in performance and ritual traditions in various contexts.

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