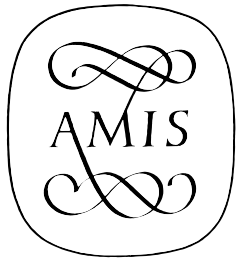
Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME XLVII • 2021



The Lambeg Drum in Northern Ireland: Drum Making and Performance

Colin Harte

The Lambeg drum is found primarily in Northern Ireland and is often associated with Unionists and Orange Order marches, most notably the Twelfth of July Orange parades. It is typically harnessed on the neck while marching and measures three feet, one inch in diameter; two feet in shell width; and weighs thirty to forty-four pounds. The goatskin drumheads are tightened by ropes and can produce in excess of 120 decibels, which is equivalent to the sonic volume created by a small engine aircraft.[1]

This article focuses on the Lambeg design, skin treatments, and shell painting, based upon multiple interviews with Robert Hobson Jr. and Andy Young of Portadown, County Armagh. My research methodology is based upon observations, interviews, video and audio documentation, musical involvement, written correspondence and archival research. Interviews were conducted with Robert Hobson Jr. and Andy Young in December 2018.

Lambeg Drum History

Traditions have suggested that the precursor to the Lambeg drum arrived in Northern Ireland with William of Orange as part of his Dutch military. According to Northern Irish Orange Order folklore, these drums were supposedly first played at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.[2] This battle was between the forces of the deposed King James II of England and Ireland, and VII of Scotland, and those of King William III who, along with his wife Queen Mary II, had acceded to the crowns of England and Scotland in 1689. The battle occurred across the River Boyne, close to the nearby town of Drogheda, in the Kingdom of Ireland

1. David Cooper, *The Musical Traditions of Northern Ireland and Its Diaspora: Community and Conflict* (London: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2009), 93.

2. Gary Hastings, *With Fife and Drum: Music, Memories and Customs of an Irish Tradition*, (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2003), 13–14.

FIGURE 1. Painted Lambeg drum shell by Andy Young commemorating the Lambeg musical traditions of Portadown, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

FIGURE 2. Orange Order parade march in Portadown, County Armagh featuring Robert Hobson Jr. (center, foreground) and two Lambeg drums. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

(modern-day Republic of Ireland) and resulted in a victory for William of Orange. Scholars, however, believe that the Lambeg drums were first played at the Battle of the Diamond on September 21, 1795.[3] It is notable that Lambeg practitioners and enthusiasts tie the origins of the drum to decisive Protestant military victories.[4]

The Orange Order, a fraternal organization formed in County Armagh after the Battle of the Diamond, drew upon secret rituals and passwords borrowed from Freemasonry. From its inception, the order had strong Protestant connotations; members consisted of Ulster peasants, landowners, and Anglo aristocracy who favored a strong allegiance with the British crown.[5] Historically, most Orange Order lodges would have had a corresponding group of Lambeg drummers and fife players for marches.

The first Orange Order lodge formed on August 21, 1796, in Portadown, County Armagh, Northern Ireland. The Portadown Orange district comprised twenty-seven private lodges. Both Freemason meetings and the British military influenced the first Orange Order rituals.[6] The order held its first Boyne Commemoration Parade in County Armagh (Portadown, Lurgan, and Waringstown) on July 12, 1796, occurring ten months after the Battle of the Diamond. Orangemen wore an assortment of regalia, including Orange ribbons, cockades, and sashes. There were approximately ninety active lodges in Northern Ireland during this time.[7]

Orange parades are ostensibly commemorative in nature, with themes that range from the fallen British Soldiers at the World War I Battle of the Somme, to the Twelfth of July, celebrating the Protestant victory at the Battle of the Boyne. The music accompanying Orange parades varies and includes flute, brass, accordion, and pipe bands, as well as fife and Lambeg drum. Among these music ensembles, repertoire is eclectic,

3. The Battle of the Diamond. fought between the Catholic Defenders and the Protestant Peep O'Day Boys, took place on September 21, 1795, near Loughgall, County Armagh, Ireland. The Peep O'Day Boys, an agrarian Protestant association, were the victors, killing some thirty Defenders, with no casualties in return. This event led to the foundation of the Orange Order. Hastings, *With Fife and Drum*, 14.

4. Ibid., 13–14.

5. Ibid., 1–2.

6. David R. Jones, James S. Kane, Robert Wallace, Douglas Sloan, and Brian Courtney, *The Orange Citadel: A History of Orangeism in Portadown District* (Armagh, Northern Ireland: Portadown Cultural Heritage Committee, 1996), 25–28.

7. Mervyn Jess, *The Orange Order* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2007), 7–9.

and Orange political tunes such as "Dolly's Brae," "The Sash My Father Wore," and "Derry's Walls" are only a portion of the music performed.[8] In particular, the booming sounds of the Lambeg drum have become synonymous with Orange marches.

Historically, the prime use of the Lambeg drum was to accompany the fife in the Twelfth of July processions. The drums were prominently featured from the formation of the Orange Order in 1795 until the repeal of the Party Processions Act[9] in 1871, in which flute and brass bands are mentioned as being part of annual July processions. Afterwards, fife and Lambeg numbers began to decline.[10] During the procession, fifers often played selections from the repertoire associated with Irish traditional music.[11] Favorite tunes included "The Blackthorn Stick," "Turkey in the Straw," "The Queen's Wedding," "Pigeon On the Gate," "The Flowers of Edinburgh," and "The Little Beggarman," among others. Reels and hornpipes in 4/4 meter and jigs in 6/8 meter were the most common tunes performed, and Lambeg drummers would accompany fifers by drumming the rhythms of the tunes.[12]

The Twelfth of July marches celebrate the Revolution of 1688 (the "Glorious Revolution") and victory of the Dutch Protestant king, William of Orange, over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne (1690), which initiated the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. British flags, bowler hats and Orange sashes, Protestant ascendancy songs such as the "The Sash My Father Wore" or "Derry's Walls," towering bonfires, and the loud pounding of Lambeg drums are common occurrences during these marches in Northern Ireland.[13] Due to the drum's military history,

8. Hastings, *With Fife and Drum*, 7.

9. The Party Processions Act of 1850 in the United Kingdom prohibited open marching, parades, and sectarian meetings in Ireland in order to ban provocative movements after the Dolly's Brae fighting of 1849. This fighting occurred during a contested procession among Orangemen, local Catholics, Ribbonmen (a nineteenth century popular movement of poor Catholics in Ireland), and the police. Jones, *The Orange Citadel*, 8–10.

10. Hastings, *With Fife and Drum*, 8.

11. Fifers and Lambeg drummers often performed Irish traditional tunes on their respective instruments. It is surprising to note that a tradition of Lambeg drumming by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians also existed in the North of Ireland but died out by the 1920s. The Hibernian drums featured Republican imagery painted on the shell. However, the Hibernian Lambeg tradition became moribund as the Lambeg grew in importance as a symbol of Orangeism. Hastings, *With Fife and Drum*, 59–60.

12. Fionnuala Scullion, "The Lambeg Drum in Ulster" (unpublished MA thesis, Belfast: Queen's University, 1982), 34.

13. Ibid., 76–77.

FIGURE 3. Painted Lambeg drum shell by Andy Young commemorating William of Orange. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

FIGURE 4. Painted Lambeg drum shell by Andy Young commemorating the Orange Lodge 121, Broomhedge, Co. Antrim. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

FIGURE 5. Orange Order Parade on 12 July 1982, featuring a Lambeg drum and Robert Hobson Sr. marching in Portadown, Armagh, Northern Ireland. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

use in Orange Order marches, and loud volume, some Northern Ireland Catholics have associated the drum with sonic intimidation, provocation, and the temporary domination of space through drumming and, more generally, with the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.[14]

Lambegs became banned in Belfast by parade organizers during processions because they were played at a slower pace than military march tempo. By 1887, the British army began shifting their musical repertoire away from the fife and towards the B-flat marching-band flute. This musical shift impacted the Orange Order music processional practices, leading to a view of the Lambeg and fife as rural and antiquated. Presently, fifing with Lambeg drum accompaniment has died out in most of Northern Ireland except for several county Orange districts around Ballymena, County Antrim.[15] Lambeg drummers still play rhythmic compositions

14. Ibid., 77–81

15. Hastings, *With Fife and Drum*, 8–9.

FIGURE 6. Robert Hobson Sr. (middle left with cap) with Robert Hobson Jr. (bottom left child) with a Lambeg drum in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, in 1961. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

based on tunes traditionally played by fifes, but now without fifes; the drummers have slightly increased the tempos at which they move in procession. Within these districts, Lambeg drumming is still an integral part of Orange Order ritual and procession.

Contrary to many Orange historical accounts, the Lambeg drum has developed over time. The first recognizable Lambeg drum of the definitive type has been attributed to the grandfather of Belfast Lambeg drum maker William Hewitt in 1871. Measuring 2'10" in diameter and 24" in width, it was created for an Orange demonstration in Lambeg, County Antrim. It is preserved by the Orange Order lodge no. 39 in Moira, County Down. Since then, the Lambeg drum type has undergone alterations. Assorted animal skins have been used for the heads, including sheepskin, donkey skin, and the preferred goatskin. Brass was occasionally used for the shell, and early beaters were rounded wooden drumsticks. In the 1920s, the Lambeg began to be played with thin, curved, hard cane (bamboo or Malacca) drumsticks, which produced a considerably greater volume.[16] As volume became more valued than tone, drums were tuned with increased tightening and played

16. Scullion, *The Lambeg Drum in Ulster*, 4; 18.

with louder, harder cane sticks. The harder drumsticks allowed players to bounce the drum sticks off the drum skin more quickly, leading to accelerated drum rhythms. The modern-day standard drum measurements and materials have resulted after years of experimentation.

Lambeg Drum Making

The Lambeg drums used in today's parades stem from a respected drum making tradition that involves trade secrets pertaining to the procurement and treatment of drum skins. Goatskins are favored and typically imported; they need to be of a fine texture, measuring around one-thousandth of an inch in thickness. Female goats are preferred for their thinner, suppler skin. Skins are soaked in a chemical wash for two days to a week, depending on climate and temperature. The hair is then removed from the goatskin, the chemical treatment is washed away, and the skin fat is removed with a wire brush and left to dry for a week. The skins are shaved paper-thin and then "doped" with a second chemical treatment, which hardens the skin and increases elasticity. The doping of skins varies among makers and is the valued trade secret of accomplished Lambeg makers.[17]

Robert Hobson (died 1986), a Lambeg drum maker and Orange Order member from Portadown, County Armagh, specialized in producing superior drum skins; making and fitting drumheads; and repairing and maintaining drum shells.[18] Robert Hobson Jr. continues the family tradition of producing Lambeg drum skins, and also repairs drum shells. He recounted that

> My father had drums and then decided to go into manufacturing his own skins. There was a man named John Mackey who came from around Ballymena [County Antrim]. He was a fair age of a man when my father started off and he gave my father the background on how to do a pair of heads and what to put on the inside of the heads to make them drum. It's the sort of thing where he started off there and then he just progressed on his own. As I say, I took on after him and that's the way things are, you know.[19]

17. Ibid., 68–69.

18. Ibid., 61.

19. Robert Hobson Jr., interview with author, December 8, 2018.

The younger Hobson's nephew, Andy Young, a talented Lambeg shell painter, drummer, and educator, further explained that his grandfather and great-grandfather made drum heads from goats of Northern Ireland, following a process of trial and error to arrive at the best method. During the 1970s to 1980s, Robert Hobson Sr. was known as one of the best drumhead makers in the country, along with David Wilkinson from Portglenone, County Antrim, and Frank Orr of Lambeg, County Antrim. The drum making tradition is typically passed down through the family. Robert Hobson Jr. continues the revered family tradition and currently makes the Hobson drum heads.[20] He explained in detail their own process of making a Lambeg drum skin:

> I would have carried on his recipe, what he [Robert Hobson Sr.] handed on to me. I would have kept it. Basically, what you need to do is get a pair of goatskins to make a drum. Drum sizes vary. You need to get a pair of goatskins and they need to be female goats and need to be big enough to suit the size of your drum. Basically, you can divide it up into three processes. The first process you get the hair off the skin and then you dip it into an ammonia solution on the inside of the skin and then fold your skin up nice and tight and let it sit overnight and then you go back to it the next day and then at that stage the hair should come off of the skin as such. So you place it on a ply board, four-foot square and then proceed to take the hair off the skin. You don't rub it. You just push it off using a piece of timber. When you get all the hair off, which takes twenty to thirty minutes, you'd tighten the skin again, put it in a bucket of water, and clean all that excess ammonia off, because you want to get all that ammonia out of the skin, the best you can. Take that off, give it a good rinse out and place it back on your board again with the hair side down and then inside part of the skin up, and what's left with there is a lot of fat and stuff and that has to be cleaned off it. You have to use a brush. I have a special brush for removing the excess fat and then a finer brush for finishing it off. So once you get it all cleaned up, that'll take you half an hour or so. So what you do then is tack it to your board, pick any excess off the outside of the skin and put it outside and let it dry. After it is outside for a day or so, your skin will be nice and dry, and then you take the nails out from the skin and take your skin off the board. You are left with a nice dry skin, and basically that's the first process.
>
> The second process is called the dry scraping which you actually turn the skin over and scrape a bit more off to the thickness that you want. What you use is a cabinet scraper's wood scrape; it's just a piece of steel six inches by four.

20. Andy Young, interview with author, December 8, 2018.

Cabinetmakers would use it for finishing, fine finishing off their furniture, and then use the sandpaper and then the finisher to get the fine nice finish of their timber. So it's the same thing you want to get the fine, nice finish, so you use the cabinet maker's wood scrape to scrape the inside of the skin so that could take a half hour to do that, once you get that done that's your skin prepared, for the final . . . lapping on, . . . what you get is a flesh hoop, which is for fitting to the size of your drum, and then you place it on the skin, and then fold the skin onto the hoop and then you cut any excess skin off round the outside. Your skin on the flesh hoop has a stamp. All the drum makers have their own stamp, so I have my own stamp which is on the outside of the skin, and then I put this concoction or potion on the inside just brush it on. The skin at this stage is still wet, and then you put your skin flat down on the ground and you raise it up on blocks a bit, about a couple inches off the ground, and let it dry. After a day or so it will dry out nice and clear, and you are ready to put it on your drum. To get a better sound, you don't want it rail thin because if you get too thin then when you attach it to the drum, it will wreck. You don't want it too heavy because you won't get the right sound of it. You want it medium and you'll get the right tone out of it. The female goat is much thinner than the male, or "puck," as it's called, it would be far too thick. They do vary in thickness and you have to use that wood scraper's tool but you get there in the end.

It would be a couple of weeks to get them done. I would get a whole batch of skins, probably fifteen or twenty of them, get them all done to that first stage I was talking about and take them off the board and peel them, and they are ready to dry them. I would put twenty to twenty-five skins in a pile and I would sort through those, first of all, size wise because a smaller skin would fit the three-foot drum, so sort them out in size and then sort them out in thickness, and then pair them up. Then, the second process of dry scraping them, and then lapping them on to your flesh hoop, and put the final finish on to your drum there, and basically that's what you're after. My father did kill goats, but I don't, the people bring me the skins, and I operate after that. As I say, if someone wants two heads, they bring me two skins and I do go through that process and sort them out after that and then give them a pair heads out of it. Going back to the time of my father, he would actually kill the goats, skin them and all, there's an art to that in it of itself, but I didn't get involved. It's a side [of drum making] I don't quite like, as you could understand. Other boys would do that for you. I could make a couple hundred [skins] in a year, so you could. It all depends; it's a job for working in the summertime in the good weather.

In the summertime, you get one of those skins on the board and set it out on a nice sunny day and it'll dry out two-three hours maybe. Whereas, this time of year, it could sit out all day, two days, and more before it might dry because

> there's not the sun or the dryness to dry the skins, so I do most of my work in the summertime. The basic process of doing the skins, no matter who the drum maker, is all the same but that final finishing off on the inside of the skin, as I was saying, that concoction you put on the inside of them, that's where you can get a really good tone out of them. Maybe others think they can get a better tone out them than I do, well everybody has their own idea of what they want out of the drum, but I just kept on the same tradition as my father. Every pair of heads I do, I do the same, but that doesn't guarantee that they are all good heads, now, you get good ones and you get poor ones, but you try your best.[21]

Hobson Jr. explained that a governing hierarchy did not formally exist in Lambeg making or in connection with the Orange Order. Instead, persons interested in making Lambegs normally began with preparing skins and repairing shells for one of the Lambeg making families in Northern Ireland (e.g., Hewitts, Sterritts, Orrs), eventually learning how to create an entire drum.[22]

The Hobson family's multigenerational tradition in Lambeg skin preparation is widely respected by drum makers and players alike in Northern Ireland. Their unique process for treating drum skins has resulted in their use in Lambeg drum making as well as some bodhrán (Irish frame drum) making, particularly by the accomplished County Derry bodhrán maker, Seamus O'Kane. The resonant sound of their drum skins due to their particular skin treatment process has garnered praise from drum makers and musicians, Catholic and Protestant alike.

Lambeg Performance

It is often espoused by Lambeg makers and drummers that Lambeg playing is an innate talent. Hobson Jr. said, "you can either drum or you can't, and I can't."[23] Andy Young, a competitive Lambeg drummer, explained his own process for learning the drum:

21. Robert Hobson Jr., interview with author, December 8, 2018.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

FIGURE 7. Robert Hobson Jr. scraping the Lambeg skins. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

FIGURE 8. Robert Hobson stamp on a Lambeg drum skin. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

> Whenever I was young, I always would go down to my granny's house after church, and I would get my dinner there. Whenever I was there around the table, my grandfather would have started drumming on the table with a knife and fork. I would have been drumming away along with him. It was just wee things like that. I had a wee small drum and I just sort of picked it up you know that way. Some people say that it's naturally in you or it's not. Some people say you can't be learnt the drum.[24]

Despite this prevailing sentiment, Young currently teaches youth community Lambeg drumming classes in Portadown, County Armagh. Nineteen students over the age of thirteen are enrolled in the classes, where they learn the basics of drumming, repertoire, and performing in groups for parade marching. For competition drumming, each drummer is encouraged to develop an individual style, suitable for the one-on-one performances.[25]

The youth classes are free in order to encourage youth involvement. Young intentionally avoided applying for Northern Ireland government funding, he reported, in order to attain greater autonomy without governmental oversight when crafting the Lambeg curriculum and the broader historical narrative concerning the drum. Young teaches along with four other teachers, who voluntarily prepare students to drum in Orange parades and to participate in drumming competitions organized by the corresponding drum associations (e.g., Ulster Drumming Association, Down Drumming Association, Armagh Drumming Association, Mid-Ulster Drumming Association, Lagan Valley Drumming Association, and Antrim Drumming Association).[26]

Aside from Orange parades, drumming competitions serve as one of the essential opportunities to demonstrate their Lambeg mastery, as well as to learn from senior drummers. Competitions are typically organized by the different aforementioned drumming associations and are held at associated Orange halls, typically every Saturday night from March to October, involving ten to twenty drummers. Larger drum competitions include the Clady Day Lambeg competitions in Markethill, County Armagh, on the last Saturday of July, where drummers from all the associations compete and three judges evaluate each drummer. The winner

24. Andy Young, interview with author, December 8, 2018.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

FIGURE 9. Andy Young and Robert Hobson Jr. holding a Lambeg drumming competition trophy, which was awarded to Andy Young. The Lambeg shell was painted by Andy Young to commemorate his grandfather, the Lambeg drum maker Robert Hobson Sr. Photo courtesy of Andy Young.

is awarded a trophy, a financial prize, and bragging rights for the year.[27] During the second half of the nineteenth century, drumming competitions grew as a means of demonstrating the strength and mastery of the drummer, as exhibited through tone, volume, and execution of traditional tune rhythms. Two drummers would compete against one another, testing each other's endurance, volume, and ability to produce traditional compositions. The drummer who stopped drumming first lost the match. Over the years, the focus of competitions has gradually shifted from endurance and volume towards the musical mastery of the drummer and tone quality of the drum.[28]

Future of The Lambeg Tradition

Presently, the Lambeg tradition maintains a tenuous position in Northern Ireland. The Orange Order has de-emphasized the drum's stigma as a loud, intimidating musical force used to sonically dominate contested spaces. Instead, the Lambeg drumming tradition is increasingly championed and continued through weekly drumming competitions. Practitioners looking to recruit younger members emphasize the local competitions, cultural heritage, and the musicality of the Lambeg. Young explains:

> I don't really know how a Roman Catholic would view the drum, they might say "oh, that's a drum that is only for Protestants and that's it." Yes, the drums have been used on the Twelfth of July at the parades obviously, so it is. In these drumming competitions it's never ever mentioned that it's here to just put fear into Catholics, if you want to use that sort of word or whatever you want to say about it. The only reason that people go to the competitions is because of the sound. They like the sound of it and they like the skill playing it and it's never mentioned as anything other than that. To cause offense to a different religion, I can understand the Catholic way, it's like everything else there's good and bad everywhere, so there is. But it's never ever mentioned so it's not, that we are going to promote this to stamp our authority of our religion, so it's not. No, it's definitely not."[29]

27. Ibid.

28. Rina Schiller, *The Lambeg and the Bodhrán: Drums of Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 2001), 44–48.

29. Andy Young, interview with author, December 8, 2018.

Robert Hobson Jr explained that:

> Lambeg drums, years ago, the only place you would have had Lambeg drums was coming out of Belfast, with the likes of William Hewitt, but now there's head makers all around the Northern Ireland, so there is. Generally, there used to be only one association, but now there's four or five in the Lambeg community. Now Andy [Young] is starting young boys to learn the art of drumming, it's certainly taken off, so it has. In the olden days, it was the older boys that played the drums and didn't want any young boys at all. But nowadays, they want the youth, which is the right way. I'd say the drumming in the pipe bands and the drumming the Lambegs might come together in some kind of way. There's no other tradition that I would know. You'd see the drums out on the Twelfth of July with the different Orange lodges, but apart from different drumming matches on a Saturday night, that's all there is. The Protestants are the ones who work at the drumming of the Lambeg, no Catholics have anything to do with that as such, but certainly with the Orange Order and the drumming associations, that's the main thing with the drums at the minute. I could see in the future that's the way it would be.[30]

Young further explained that "Now, in some places, it's going in reverse because now where a lot of Orange halls are there are built up areas with a lot of houses around them. So now there are residents who are actually given off [complaining] because they don't like the sound of them.[31] You see the competitions would start off at half eight at night. They maybe go to till half ten at night, so if the houses have young kids, they maybe go, I don't want to hear this. It has its pitfalls, so it does."[32]

The future of the Lambeg tradition in Northern Ireland is subject to speculation. In the absence of politics, the musical role of the Lambeg could be redefined: from a militarized musical weapon used to reinforce sectarian conflict, to a repurposed musical instrument used primarily in drumming competitions. As younger generations, who did not live through The Troubles,[33] begin to learn about the drum, the strong po-

30. Robert Hobson Jr., interview with author, December 8, 2018.

31. Officials from Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council hand delivered a noise abatement order to Kelley Sterritt, widow of renowned Lambeg maker Richard Sterritt of Markethill, County Armagh. She complained the noise ordinance limited her children's ability to practice the Lambeg and continue a family tradition. Brett Campbell, "Widow Blasts Lambeg Drum Order As 'Attack on Family Culture,'" *Belfast Telegraph*, August 15, 2018.

32. Andy Young, interview with author, December 8, 2018.

33. The Troubles was a Northern Ireland conflict mainly between Protestant, unionist,

larized sectarian associations with the drum and its contentious history are possibly less deeply felt than in older generations. Youth often plays a key role in the perpetuation or abandonment of traditional sectarian ideology and its associated rituals. As younger generations connect with the drum's musical possibilities through drumming competitions, rather than through past political uses, the Lambeg will likely be assigned extrapolitical, musical associations in a positive effort to integrate the drumming tradition into the present, multicultural, pluralistic milieu in Ireland.

From the 1990s onwards, the ascendancy and professionalization of Irish traditional music and dance was witnessed on a global stage, due to the popularity of the televised and touring show *Riverdance*. Separated from these traditions, the Lambeg and Ulster Protestant culture in general did not directly benefit from the globalization of Irish traditional culture.[34] Ulster Protestant culture exists in narrow political space, alienated from both Ireland and Britain; it struggles to define its role in the future. Whereas the Irish nationalist culture is focused on future gains, the Protestant culture is rooted in celebrating and memorializing a glorified past. This is evidenced by the historical paintings of famous deceased figures in Ulster Protestant culture (e.g., William of Orange) found on the shells of Lambeg drums used in Orange parades.

Due to the politicization of Ulster Protestant culture that served as propaganda for colonial and sectarian agendas, there is currently a struggle to articulate its current and future roles in contemporary Northern Ireland society. As the culture balances between the past and the future, an opportunity emerges to re-invent and re-appropriate certain Ulster Protestant traditions. As a symbol of the politicized martial music of Orange parades, the Lambeg retains a sectarian stigma that may discourage future drummers. If more drummers are to be attracted, there will likely need to be a process of de-politicizing and de-colonizing the drum so that different social groups in Northern Ireland can participate in this drumming tradition. This has already occurred in Irish traditional music, where Protestants and Catholics alike participate, indicating a possibility

loyalist forces aligned with the British crown versus Catholic, Irish nationalist, republican forces seeking a united Ireland. This bloody sectarian conflict began in 1968 and ended in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement. Kevin Toolis, *Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1998), 4–6.

34. Martin Dowling, "Confusing Culture and Politics: Ulster Scots Culture and Music," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 11/3 (Autumn 2007): 54–55.

for cross-social group participation in Lambeg drumming.

As the narrative surrounding the Lambeg begins to change, however slowly, a potential emphasis on musical inclusion within larger global percussive traditions would weaken the perspective of the drum as a politically divisive instrument. As a drum that originated in Northern Ireland, the Lambeg has historically remained separate from other Irish percussion traditions (e.g., the bodhrán) until quite recently. Despite sharing some common tune repertoire with Irish traditional music, the Lambeg has remained intentionally far afield from other Irish music traditions. The inclusion of the drum in more cosmopolitan performance contexts (e.g., stage productions, world drumming concerts, or non-martial musical performances) would distance the drum from its historical, sociopolitical stigma, and move it towards a more pluralistic understanding of the musical possibilities and roles.

Young responded to this idea, stating "Who would want to hear it, or would there be people who would want to hear it? Or is there still a stigma from a different religion saying we don't want them boys coming, because you know what I mean. Yeah, certainly if there was a demand there to spread the drums, well then certainly."[35] In a handful of examples, the Lambeg has been utilized as percussion instrument in a non-processional context. In 1991, Northern Ireland percussionist Roy Arbuckle founded the Different Drums of Ireland ensemble as a community relation project, which includes an assortment of percussion featuring the Lambeg and bodhrán. The Belfast Harp Orchestra incorporated the Lambeg drum in the piece "Symphony," played by George Holmes in 1994.[36]

The Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland was created in 1995 as a peace initiative, celebrating diversity while promoting peace and tolerance among citizens. The group, conducted by Gearoid Grand, performs popular, folk, and traditional musics of Northern and Southern Ireland, including native instruments such as the Lambeg and uilleann pipes. In October 2000, John Trotter and Willie Drennan established the Ulster-Scots Folk Orchestra to support the preservation of the traditional music and local playing styles of North Antrim, including fiddles, accordions, Scottish small pipes, Highland bagpipes, whistles, guitar, double bass, assort-

35. Andy Young, interview with author, December 8, 2018.

36. Fintan Vallely, *Tuned Out: Traditional Music and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), 76.

ed percussion, and the Lambeg drum.[37] "Black Rose," a dance choreographed in 2004 by Mark Howard for the Trinity Irish Dance Company, featured rhythm sticks, hard shoes, and percussionist Steven Rutledge playing the Lambeg.[38] In John Anderson's 2005 production of *The Eagle's Nest* (an Ulster Scots musical), the Lambeg drums were featured along with thirty singers and dancers, a three hundred-strong choir, an orchestra, pipe band and fife players.[39] The BBC commissioned Deirdre Gribbin to write a concerto for percussion and orchestra for Colin Currie. Her *Goliath* (2006), which featured a percussion solo with Lambeg drums and orchestra, opened the Belfast International Festival.[40] More recently, the University of Limerick Orchestra Summer Proms 2016 performance featured soloists on the Lambeg, fife, and bagpipe.[41] In 2021, Willie Drennan, an Ulster Scots folk musician from County Antrim and the leader of the Willie Drennan Electric Band, recorded 'Lambeg Boogie' (2021) which is a song that features a fusion of Lambeg drumming, blues rock guitar, and Irish dancing. The accompanying music video became a brief social media sensation.[42]

While multicultural performance opportunities of this sort remain sparse, local community support and Lambeg educational programs make future such events more likely. If the Lambeg has been weaponized historically as a tool for sectarian conflict, it also possesses the ability to promote healing. The effective decolonization of the drum would ensure its future role in the music life of Ireland and abroad. Through depoliticized musical events such as non-sectarian drumming competitions, cross-cultural performances, stage productions, and orchestral concerts, the Lambeg can potentially transcend its colonial past and become integrated into global percussion networks and varied musical traditions in the British Isles. However, this will take a continued concerted effort by relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland who are motivated to move past sectarian politics. The future role of the Lambeg in Northern Ireland has yet to be fully solidified.

37. Cooper, *The Musical Traditions of Northern Ireland*, 91.

38. Lauren Warnecke, "Move Over, Michael Flatley: Trinity Irish Dance Packs The House at The Auditorium in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 2019.

39. Cooper, *The Musical Traditions of Northern Ireland*, 103.

40. Gary McKeone, "An Interview with Deirdre Gribbin," *Wasifiri*, 25/2 (2010): 67.

41. Rose Rushe, "UL Orchestra Presents Summer Proms," *Limerick Post,* May 5, 2016.

42. Rory Carroll, "'Lambeg Boogie Makes You Feel All Right': Irish Drum Track Cuts Across Politics," *The Guardian*, June 25, 2021.