Player Interviews: Tony Eyers, Don Meade, Joel Andersson, James Conway, Donald Black, Brendan Power, Mick Kinsella, and Rick Epping.

To learn more about how today's masters of Celtic harmonica play traditional tunes, I interviewed eight leading players via email about their technique. Their replies to my questions are below and reveal a wide range of approaches. Hopefully, these interviews will help you evolve your own playing style.

The musicians are listed in the order in which I received their responses. Their comments have been lightly edited. I thank them all for their contributions.

-Glenn Weiser

1. Artist. Tony Eyers. "Born in 1958, Adelaide, Australia. In addition to harmonica, I play baroque recorder, button accordion and guitar. I started playing at age 20, inspired by harmonica player Jim Fitting [Fitting fronted the band Treat Her Right-GW], who I met as an undergrad in the US. I came to traditional Irish music through bluegrass, Irish sessions in Australia, and the recordings of Brendan Power."

Harmonicas played. "I play Major Cross tuned harmonicas by Seydel. This is a tuning I developed in the '90s for playing traditional tunes, and in 2017 Seydel released a Tony Eyers Major Cross version of their Session Steel harmonica."

Embouchure. Pucker, octave splits.

Method for hole skips. "I just leap over the intervals for Drowsy Maggie drone type passages."

Articulations. "I use my tongue for most articulation. A triplet would be 'ta-ka-te.'"

Ornamentation. "I don't use ornaments very much, an occasional trill, usually done with a wrist flick. My variations come from articulation and tone changes. My background as a baroque recorder player (I play in a professional ensemble) influences my approach to harmonica articulation."

Note bending. "Rarely. The whole idea of the Major Cross tuning which I use is that few if any bends are needed. The same idea applies for Paddy Richter tuning."

Website. Harmonicatunes.com
CDs- *Black Mountain Harmonica* (2003). *O'Carolan's Harmonica* (2021)

2. Artist. Don Meade. "I was born in 1954 at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia to parents from Boston (my father was in the Air Force at the time). We moved around a bit, but I was mostly raised in Torrance, California. As a youngster, I played trumpet in a marching band and picked up the recorder, harmonica, guitar, and mandolin on my own. I was drawn to Irish music by the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, but only encountered traditional instrumentalists when I moved to NYC in 1976. I then took up the tin whistle, tenor banjo, chromatic harmonica, and fiddle to play Irish airs and dance tunes."

Harmonicas played. "I started on stock Marine Band models but now mostly use Hohner Chromonicas customized to replace the bottom reed plates to create F#/G, C#/D and G#/A tunings. For C-based tunes, I can use a standard B Chromonica with the slide reversed. When I started playing in this way, inspired by Eddie Clarke's recordings, I played standard Chromonicas with the slide reversed, but that meant playing half a step sharp. I also used to play Hering chromatics but they are no longer available. I really like the Suzuki chromatics but it's more difficult to alter them to my tunings, as the notes for the two scales are not on separate reed plates. On the Chromonicas, I use Brendan Power's 3D-printed plastic combs in place of the original wooden ones. I preferred the old 10-hole Chromonica 260 (and still have a couple) but Hohner no longer makes them, so I have to use 12-hole 270 models when getting new instruments.

"In recent years, I have been playing solo-tuned diatonics. Hering used to make a great C "Master Soloist" that was really good. I have a Suzuki ProMaster converted to D solo tuning by Brendan Power (and since maintained by Burke Trieschmann). I have several Marine Bands converted to solo tuning by Andre Coelho. Brendan Power's Easttop Lucky 13 solo-tuned models are great session harmonicas - they're loud, have a big range and stay in tune very well."

Embouchure. "I use puckering to play single notes, opening my lips as required to play chords. I love using chords, and that's the main reason I play chromatics in different keys. For major-scale melodies in first position, solo tuning gives you the I and IV chords. When playing in the Dorian mode (third position), you have the only chords you really need, e.g., Am and G when playing on a G harmonica. For Mixolydian (second position) melodies, only one chord is useful, for example the C chord on a G harmonica when playing in D Mixolydian."

Method for hole skips, and corner switching. "I have found that tonguing the higher notes makes it a lot easier to play these hops but can also just adjust my breath pressure to emphasize the higher notes and suppress the unwanted in-between ones. I don't use corner switching-I hop back and forth with puckered lips."

Articulations used, and when. "I sometimes use my tongue or close the back of my throat to separate repeated notes. I also use a grace note to do this - inserting a note in the same breath direction from the adjacent higher hole between the two repeated notes. That grace note can be tongued for greater emphasis, or not for a more subtle effect. I can play trumpet-style tongued single-note triplets but rarely do that. Instead, I use two-note triplets as described below."

Ornamentation. "For triplets, I have three methods: 1) a quick switch to the next higher hole in the same breath direction and back. Can be used on any harmonica. This is the usual Irish traditional mouth organ technique as played by the Murphy brothers, Noel Battle, and others. 2) a quick switch to an adjacent higher or lower hole but changing the breath direction on the middle note. This produces a more staccato triplet and is especially useful when playing hornpipes. 3) On my customized chromatics, I can use a quick flick of the slide to go down a half step and back. I copied Eddie Clarke on this. But he didn't have re-tuned harmonicas, just held the slide in with his thumb and released it quickly to play the triplets. His usual approach was to play in second position, so he'd play G major tunes in G# on a C Chromonica. You can do this

with less stress on the hand by disassembling the slide mechanism and re-assembling it with the slide flipped over.

“I also play full five-note "rolls." On the customized chromatics, this involves playing the note being ornamented, followed by a switch to the next higher hole in the same breath direction, a return to play the note being ornamented, then a flick of the slide to go down half a step and back. This is a button accordion technique adapted to the harmonica. A diatonic version of this roll is also possible. Instead of using the slide to get the lowest note of the roll, you go down a hole in the same breath direction and back. That is an old-time melodeon (one-row button accordion) technique. I have never heard any other harmonica player do this, but I can't guarantee that I'm unique [I’ve done this with jigs-G.W.].”

Note bending. “Chromatics don't really allow this - a mere choke is all you can get because of the wind-saving valves. But on solo-tuned diatonics, I have the reed plates half-valved, which allows for a lot of bending. I have never learned the modern "overblow" technique pioneered by Howard Levy. It is extremely difficult to play fast melodies cleanly and accurately that way and I prefer to imitate the sound of button accordion or concertina with occasional bends for harmonica flavor.”

Website. “blarneystar.com. There is a lengthy article on Irish harmonica available there.”

CDs. “I have never made a proper recording. I find the whole recording process stressful, and I'm never satisfied with the results. I need to get over this and produce something.”

3. Artist. Joel Andersson. “I was born in 1991 in Piteå, a small town 200 km south of the Arctic Circle in the north of Sweden. I got my first harmonica at the age of 2 and began playing professionally at the age of 13. Growing up with a father who listened to a lot of Irish music, and as someone who has always played a variety of instruments, I’ve always had music around me. My dad listened to a wide variety of music (mainly folk music) but the Irish music was the style that touched me the most. It wasn't until the age 12 when I heard Rick Epping play an Irish jig on the harmonica that I set out to learn and play traditional Irish music.

“I didn’t pass music in school, and I have no musical education, I just listened a lot to Irish trad and tried to imitate what other instruments were doing. I do play a little bit of C#/D accordion and melodeon-the tuning is very similar to the harmonica so it’s easy to go back and forth between the instruments.”

Harmonicas and tunings. “I use a wide variety of harmonicas but all of them are diatonic. Marine Bands, XB-40, Octave harmonicas and recently a lot of Chromatic but with a diatonic tuning. And the tuning that I use 80% of the time is the Easy Third tuning, where holes 2 and 3 draw are re-tuned to the same notes as holes 5 and 6 draw, which means holes 1, 2, and 3 become the same as holes 4, 5, and 6.”

Embouchure. “I play 100% tongue blocking and I use chords, drones, octaves in all tune types.”

Corner switching. "Yes, although I refer to it as tongue switching. Tongue switching means moving your tongue from side to side allowing you to play notes on both sides of the mouth, but I also move my jaw. I find this to be more efficient as if I only were to move my tongue then I have to move it a very long distance from side to side, but with the help of my jaw I can shorten that distance by approximately half."

Method for hole skips. "For an interval like that [drone note passages-GW] I would use tongue switching."

Articulations used and when. "No, I use my diaphragm to play repeated notes, I find that I get a bigger tone/sound when using the diaphragm. I very rarely use my tongue when playing trad tunes. For triplets, I just kind of fake them. A triplet should be the same note played three times, but I play blow, draw, blow (or vice versa). It is so fast that you can't really hear that there are two different notes in there. Again, I get a bigger sound when using the breathing and diaphragm."

Ornamentation. "Most of the time I would not play triplets, I would go from let's say hole 4 blow to 5-blow back to 4-blow in 16th note rhythm, and sometimes repeat the 4 blow again."

Note bending. "I don't use any bends at all, sometimes I might start a note just ever so slightly flat to end up on the desired note, but I would not call that a bend. This is the same kind of thing that a fiddle would do sometimes."

Tongue blocking techniques. "Most of the time when I play, I use octaves, drones, and chords to get a very full sound. So I would keep a drone in the left side of my mouth while playing the melody in the right, and because we don't have the same note on blow and draw on the harmonica the drone will be altering notes. And with a constantly changing drone, sometimes it could be on hole 1 for a while, then continuing with a few octaves, and then the drone could appear again on hole 5 while I play up in the top octave, or on hole 6 depending on the tune. The Easy Third tuning is great for these kinds of intervals. This is played on an Easy Third tuned harmonica, in the beginning here you can hear some of those: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df3Vh57UW7s"

Website. www.jaharmonicas.com & www.irishharmonica.com

CDs-*The Irish Harmonica.*

4. Artist: James Conway. "Born in Chicago, 1968. I play guitar, bodhran, tin whistle. My Irish parents got me started on whistle and drum at age 6. I took lessons from an Irish teacher, Noel Rice from County Offaly."

Harmonicas played. "Diatonic and chromatic harmonicas."

Embouchure. "Tongue blocking all the time."

Tongue blocking chords. "I will tongue block and use rhythmic chording for all types of Irish tunes, jigs, reels, Hornpipes, etc., in positions 1-3. [First position is the major scale, second position is the Mixolydian mode, and third position is the Dorian mode-GW]. I will use the minor blow chord in 4th position [the Aeolian mode] on a paddy-Richter tuned harp.

Corner switching. "Yes, I use a lot of corner switching, and "Drowsy Maggie" is an excellent example [of a tune with drone passages where corner switching can be used].

Method for hole skips- "I will corner switch for this."

Articulations used and when. "I use a 'Pah' sound with my lips. I don't really do same note triplets, but if I need to I use the 'Pah' sound."

Ornamentation. "I'll use grace/accent notes which is basically playing a hint of the higher adjacent note. I'll use a fast, jerky motion either with my head or my hands. I'll also switch back and forth from single note playing to octave playing for a variety of sounds. While playing octaves I'll often use a left-right tongue flutter/trill."

Note bending. "Yes. I'll bend notes for both expression and accidental notes. Occasionally I'll overblow or overdraw for some Irish tunes."

Website. www.jamesconway.net, Email harp3333@hotmail.com

CD. *The Mouth Box* (It's on iTunes).

5. Artist: Donald Black. "Born in Lanark, Scotland in 1946. I play no other instruments. I was exposed to west Scotland bagpipe and Gaelic music from my infancy - a good lot of it initially from my mother. Mainly from Scottish accordion players - NOT other harmonica players!"

Harmonicas played. "I mainly play Hohner tremolo double-sided Echo Harps of different sizes and keys (now unavailable on the market but I have a stock to last me till I can't play anymore). I use them for both very slow and up-tempo melodies. For slow airs I also play 10-hole diatonic in first position, with third note in from the bottom re-tuned down a semitone."

Embouchure. "Pucker."

Note bending. "I very rarely play in second position - really all in first position. So VERY RARELY do I have to bend notes."

Corner switching. "I never use corner switching or hand tremolo."

Method for hole skips. "Just play them straight out - NO Problem!" [Here Donald means quick unarticulated hole jumps. -GW]

Articulations used, and when. "No articulations."

Ornamentation. “Simply add them in - no problem!”

Further comments. “The tunes (rather than the instrument) are my main interest. If I could get a tune out of a banana, I would be quite satisfied!”

There is a full-length video about Donald Black entitled *My Moothie and Me* at-
https://vimeo.com/831247426/d0d0d063f2?share=copy

Website. donald-black.com

CDs. *Bho m’Chridhe (From my Heart)* (2017), *Dreams & Dances* (2013), *Keil Road* (2008), *Close to Home* (2000).

6. Artist: Brendan Power. “Born 1956, Mombasa Kenya. Grew up in New Zealand from the age of 9. No musical training as a child, started playing harmonica by ear at age 20 after hearing Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee live while at university in Christchurch, NZ. After learning harmonica for a few years, I picked up the mandolin, but haven’t played it for about 20 years. I play so many different types and tunings of harmonica, they are almost like different instruments!

“My grandfather is from Waterford, Ireland, and went out to South Africa to teach as a young man. My Dad, although he grew up in South Africa and had never been to Ireland, must have got exposed to the music via his father, because he sang a few Irish songs, and we had some Irish traditional EPs and LPs at home. Notably one by the fiddler Sean Maguire, which I loved listening to! After I’d been playing blues harmonica for a few years I wondered if I could try and play some of the Irish tunes I’d heard as a kid on record. I bought some more albums (mostly by the Chieftains) and, learning some tunes, ended up playing in one of Christchurch’s Bush Bands – fairly loud and raucous Irish music for barn dances.”

Harmonicas played. “Initially 10-hole diatonics, then also chromatic harmonicas. After a while I modified both types in various ways to work better for Irish music.

“In about 1980 I invented half-valving and adopted it for all my diatonics and chromatics since then. Half-valving means that half the reeds in the harmonica (the lower pitched ones, mostly blow notes) become isolated reeds via valving, and the higher notes (mostly draws) are un-valved and remain in the same airstream as the blow reeds, to enable interactive reed bending. This works well for Irish music because most of the tunes are in positions where blow notes are prominent (eg. 1st Position, 4th position); the valves help the blow notes come out stronger, and enable expression such as vibrato etc. I explain it here in relation to Irish music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FEPdp3o1Uw&t=238s

“To get around Irish melodies in the bottom octave of diatonic harps I invented Paddy Richter tuning in 1993, which I used extensively on my 1994 album New Irish Harmonica. Later I developed it to Paddy-Solo, where the low octave is Paddy-Richter but the top two octaves are in Solo Tuning. This is what I have had on all my diatonics and chromatics for many years. explain

it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1-BTe5oHhQ

“Sometime in the 1980s I invented the Slide-Diatonic for Irish music. This is a chromatic (in Solo or Paddy-Solo Tuning) where all the slide-in notes are tuned up to the next note of the home scale. Since 90% of Irish music is essentially modal, this means that the slider decorations come out in the same mode as the tune. It sounds more in keeping with traditional Irish music than the semitone-up slide notes of a normal chromatic harmonica, which can sound a bit jarring. The Slide-Diatonic gives you triplets and cuts like those used by flute, fiddle and whistle players. I explain and demonstrate it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGkbVG1sBXQ

“Later I invented the AsiaBend, which is an all-draw harmonica focused on expressive wide bends. Though I created it to play Chinese folk music, I found it also sounds great on Irish slow airs! Here’s an example:

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/brvP1n7zvVA

“I’m now using the DM48X MIDI harmonica for a lot of my Irish playing. As well as having a huge new range of sounds, I find it can allow me to play decorations that are impossible on normal diatonic or chromatic harmonicas (more details in the ornamentation section below).”

Embouchure. “I just use puckering, plus the occasional octave split.”

Corner switching. “Instead of using corner-switching, I alter the harmonica. The retuned scale of the Slide-Diatonic, as well as giving in-key decorations, also brings high and low notes closer together on the harmonica. Thus a 5th or 6th interval can often be found on adjacent holes. This makes fast big jumps in tunes like ‘Drowsy Maggie’ much easier. On the DM48X the top buttons can be tuned to wide intervals like a fifth or octave, to enable playing of tunes like 'The Gravel Walks' without breaking the flow or missing out any notes.”

Articulations used. “I tongue some melody notes selectively for emphasis. For same-note triplets, “I say ‘diddle-duh’ in my mouth as I play.”

Ornamentation. “I use mouth decorations like tongue triplets, cuts and jaw flicks and, on my Slide-Diatonics, add slider triplets and cuts. On the DM48X MIDI harmonica you have extra buttons on the top of the instrument that can be operated with your left fingers. They can be tuned to play whatever note you wish. In my case, I normally lower the top buttons 1 or 2 semitones. If I coordinate with the right slider finger, this enables me to play 4 note Short Rolls and 5 note Long Rolls: the same as used by fiddle, flute and whistle players. The Long Roll is home note/note above/home note/note below/home note. These are impossible on normal harmonicas at the speed of a typical reel or jig.”

Note bending. “Yes. Either quick slides up to notes or, on my AsiaBend harmonica, big bends everywhere! ”WEBSITE: www.brendan-power.com

EMAIL: enquiries@brendan-power.com
YOUTUBE: https://www.youtube.com/BrendanPowerMusic

7. Artist: Mick Kinsella. "Born 1956 in Tullow, County Carlow, Ireland. I began playing snare drum around twelve years of age in a marching band. From then I went on to play full kit in an assortment of bands such as rock, blues, and jazz. Even did a stint playing in showbands. I heard Rick Epping playing with Pumpkin Head in the mid-seventies in Dublin while working there, and I was mightily impressed. Next day I bought a blues harp but didn't have a clue how to play it. Continued to play drums until the late eighties when I had a period of eye trouble. I could not lift anything heavy, so I dropped the drums and took up the harmonica seriously.

"I listened to lots of great blues players at the time, but I think Charley McCoy was a big early influence on me. His playing made me concentrate on hitting the bent notes right on tune. Though I listened to traditional Irish music, I had no real interest in playing it until I heard a chromatic player called Eddie Clarke. It took a while to understand how he was getting the ornamentation and how he could play so fast. Plus, he was playing in flat keys like Eb and Ab. Someone later told me that Eddie played a C chromatic exclusively while holding in the Slide which was a truly chromatic approach. He released the Slide for ornamentation. However, it meant that he could only play at Eb sessions, which were few and far between. I pursued this style for a while using a B chromatic with the Slide reversed to be able to play at normal sessions."

Harmonicas played. "Years later I met Brendan Power and took his advice to use G and D chromatics which did make it easier to play the tunes. I now use a D/C# and a G/F# to play at sessions which just about covers any of the tunes that come up at sessions. These days I'm using Hohner CX 12's that I tune myself, as I think they are reliable and loud for session playing…. I probably favour the chromatic harmonica for sessions as it has the speed and the chromaticism that I need for those tunes with accidentals that tend to crop up at sessions."

Embouchure. "I use pucker embouchure while playing chromatic and a combination of pucker and octave splits on the diatonic."

Method for hole skips. "Regarding jumping intervals without sounding the note or notes in between, I just lift my mouth and land on the appropriate note."

Articulations used, and when. "Instead of using 'taw' or 'ka' on the diatonic I use breath change triplets. I don't use corner switching. I also use ten-hole octave tuned harmonicas in Solo tuning that Rick taught me how to build. They are extra loud, and all the ornamentation is done with breath changes."

Ornamentation. "Most of my triplet ornamentation is done using the slide, although I also use my diaphragm for quick breath change rolls. I never play triplets on the same note as most other instruments play adjacent notes to attain this effect."

Note bending. "Note bending is not really used in traditional music, but if you are playing a slow air, you could use a bend or two for effect."

Advice. “My advice for anyone playing traditional Irish music on the harmonica is to choose the right instrument, and then find a fiddle player or accordion player that plays sessions. That way you will get an insight into the sort of tunes to learn, which ones to avoid, the right rhythm, and how to pair tunes for sets.”

Website. Mick currently has no website but maintains a presence on Facebook. -GW

CDs. *Harmonica* (2007).

8. Artist. Rick Epping- “I was born in Santa Monica, California in 1949 and started playing the harmonica at age 4. I also play English concertina, 5-string banjo, and jaw harp. My earliest musical influences were my father, who played classical and traditional jazz piano, and my older brother, who played guitar and 5-string banjo. My earliest exposure to Irish traditional music was a 78 record of ’Irish Suite’ by Leroy Anderson which I loved to listen to as a young child. By the early ‘60s I was listening to recordings of American folk songs and fiddle tunes, and from there found Irish music by the mid ‘60s, both on record and with Irish musicians living in Southern California and in San Francisco. I first visited Ireland in 1969, where I heard and played with numerous traditional musicians. I have been living in Ireland on and off for 50 years.

Harmonicas played. In sessions with other instruments, I mostly play an octave harmonica of my own design that I build using either Auto-Valve reed plates or chromatic reed plates re-tuned to octaves, mounted on a Chromonica 260 comb and mouthpiece, minus the slide assembly. I sometimes will also play XB-40s in sessions, onstage or solo. Tunings are mostly standard Richter and Easy Thirds. For solo playing or onstage and amplified, I will often play 10-hole, single-reed models. For slow airs or songs, I will often use a Major 7 tuned harp, with both the 5-draw and 9-draw reeds raised a semitone. For tunes with key changes, such as The Kid on the Mountain, Bunker Hill or The Bank of Ireland, I will sometimes fast switch between two or three harps if playing hand-held.”

Embouchure. “I use both tongue-blocking and puckering. For dance tunes like jigs and reels I use mostly tongue-block, incorporating vamping with chords and octaves. I use puckering on single reed diatonics when bending to obtain missing notes. For single-reed diatonics tuned to Easy Thirds I will usually valve the inside of hole 4 so I can bend the 4-blow down a semitone to obtain the missing 7th in the first octave.”

Corner switching. “I play a lot in octaves, which precludes corner switching. I will often incorporate vamped chords into skipped-hole passages, ie. hops, such as found in ‘Drowsy Maggie.’” [Rick here refers to tongue-blocking chords under the melody line, which is one way to handle drone-note passages. -G.W.]

Articulations. “I hardly ever play triplets on the same note, but when I do, I use a throat choke. My triplets are usually tongue-blocked, played between two adjacent holes in one breath direction, or by using a throat choke with bi-directional airflow.”

Hole jumps. “I might incorporate a vamped chord within the passage, or sometimes just play

staccato tongue-blocking to avoid the unwanted note."

Note bends. "Except for slight slurs, bends are not available on the octave models I play, because both reeds share a single mouthpiece hole. When playing single reed diatonics I will bend to obtain a missing note, but I'm very careful when bending for a slur, or expression on a note, not to overdo the bend and end up sounding like a blues harp. The degree of bend in this case is minimal - no more than, say, a fiddle might slur a note."

Ornamentation. "I use tongue-blocked triplets on adjacent holes, doubled notes using throat chokes, one-directional rolls using adjacent holes and tongue-blocking, tongue-blocked cuts from the hole above the melody note, slurs, octaves and vamping."

Hand tremolo/vibrato. "Most of my playing is on a rack while playing concertina. When playing songs or slow airs on a handheld harp I will occasionally use a hand tremolo."

CDs-Selected Discography-
Pay Day (2018, The Unwanted) Whirling Discs WHRL019
Stone Walls and Street Lights (2016, New Road) Whirling Discs WHRL018
Abocurragh (2010, Andy Irvine) AK3
Music from the Atlantic Fringe (2009, The Unwanted) Whirling Discs WHRL013
Jiggin' the Blues (2008, Frankie Gavin, Rick Epping & Tim Edey) Greentrax G2CD7011
The Irish Scattering (2008, Sean Keane) Circín Rua Teo CR007CD
The Full Score (2008, Frankie Gavin & Hibernian Rhapsody) Tara CD4020
Travelling Show (2007, Dervish) Whirling Discs WHRL011
You Got Gold (2006, Sean Keane) Circín Rua Teo CR006CD
Rainy Sundays... Windy Dreams (1980, Andy Irvine) Tara 4TA3002
A Kiss in the Morning Early (1976, Mick Hanly) Mulligan LUN006
Pumpkin Head (1975, Pumpkin Head) Mulligan LUN001
Shepherd and Son (1973, Pumpkin Head) Polydor 2078-040

Lastly, I include my own information.

Artist. Glenn Weiser (author). My mother was born in County Down in Northern Ireland. In 1926, when my mother was just a baby, my grandfather emigrated to America with his family to escape the sectarian violence then roiling Ulster. I was born in 1952 in Glen Rock, New Jersey, a town in Bergen County about 15 miles from Manhattan. I grew up singing in church and got some early musical experience that way. At 13, I took up guitar, and at 15, harmonica. Sonny Terry was an early influence, and at first, I mostly played blues harp, and in 1990 I got some valuable pointers on blues playing from Jerry Portnoy, who had played with Muddy Waters. I also studied classical guitar throughout high school, and then switched to steel string fingerstyle playing in 1970.

Due to an undiagnosed case of Reiter's Syndrome, in the early 1980s I developed tendinitis in my left hand, which curtailed my guitar playing. Turning lemons into lemonade, I learned how to

play fiddle tunes on harmonica, which led to the publication of my first book, *Irish and American Fiddle Tunes for Harmonica*. In 2017 my book *Bluegrass and Old Time Fiddle Tunes for Harmonica* was published (both are put out by Centerstream). This collection completes the trilogy. I have also written several books on fingerstyle guitar, including four volumes of Celtic arrangements (see my *Celtic Guitar Encyclopedia*, published by Mel Bay). From 1989-2013 I wrote instructional columns on folk and blues harmonica styles for *Sing Out!* magazine. I am on the harmonica.com 100 Top Musicians list (I'm only #84, but who said life was fair?). I have taught guitar, banjo, harmonica, mandolin, electric bass, ukulele and fiddle since 1973. I now teach online lessons via Skype/Zoom through my website (see below).

Harmonicas played. I play 10-hole Marine Bands and Seydel Paddy Richters.

Embouchure. Puckering, tongue blocking, and mixed embouchure.

Techniques used. In pucker position, I articulate as detailed in the preface for hole jumps and triplets. I can also use corner switching. I do bend notes, an old blues harp skill. I don't use much ornamentation, although I have experimented with rolls in jigs, My style is based on the New England fiddling style-clean single note melodies. I also use tongue blocking on some tunes and add chords below them. I use octaves, hand tremolo, and vibrato as well as other techniques borrowed from blues harp.

Website. www.celticguitarmusic.com (Y'all come!).

CDs. ***Brian*** *Boru's March* (Celtic fingerstyle guitar).
My Old Kentucky Home (19th century American songs for fingerstyle guitar and harmonica.)

Conclusions. As no two players surveyed for this book use the same palette of techniques, we can see that there are several playing styles here. For example, James Conway and Joel Andersson use tongue blocking, and Brendan Power, Tony Eyers, Donald Black, Don Meade, and Mick Kinsella are pucker players. Rick Epping, Winslow Yerxa, and I are dual/mixed embouchure players, using both tongue-blocking and puckering at different times, as well as within the same tune. Of the pucker players, Don Meade uses articulations as I do for hole jumps, and the others use quick breath cuts. Tony Eyers plays drone passages in reels in pucker position, while the tongue blockers, James Conway and Joel Andersson, use corner switching for both drone passages and some hole jumps. And so on.

It bears repeating that there is no standard technique for playing Celtic music on harmonica. Like your grandmother told you, there's more than one way to skin a cat. The technical preface in Volume One and these interviews are only intended to explain what your options are. Now, start your metronome and practice, practice, practice. When you show up at your first Celtic session, tell them I sent you.