

Irish Rhapsody (1927)

Edward Joseph Collins, composer

Notes by Erik Eriksson (1940-2008), the composer's biographer

This is likely the first of several orchestral and piano solo variations on the Irish[-American] "potato famine" folksong, *O! The 'Taters they are small over here!*

On 21 May 1927, Collins's entry in his journal reads, "Only ten more days to complete the 'Irish Rhapsody.' The college orchestra will have a difficult time learning the piece by the 20th of June (Commencement date)."

Students of the Chicago Musical College performed the premiere, conducted by Collins, then a member of the college's faculty.

Collins begins with bassoon voicing the melody over strings. An oboe provides a counter line and the score offers a choice between harp and piano as an addition to the orchestral texture. Much of the shimmering timbre evident in *Hibernia* and *Variations on an Irish Folksong*, the composer's other two "Irish works," is present here, but Collins perhaps felt a little constrained by the occasion; fuller realizations of his intentions would come later.