

## Notes on 'The Sally Gardens' (reel) - and on bellows technique

The Sally Gardens is a straightforward reel which shouldn't cause you any difficulties. Learning to play it fast, to accompany dancers, is something worth doing; it's very often used for dancers, and for that you need to be able to fly at it!

But it also gives you a good opportunity to try out other things, for which (at first) you should play it slowly. In particular, it gives an opportunity to work at bellows technique. What *is* bellows technique? Well, you know that you obtain the note you want by pressing in a selected button and either pulling or pushing the bellows. So: sounding a note or notes is not simply about using the 'right' button; it's also about thinking about how you move the bellows in and out - and indeed about whether you always lift your finger between notes.

It's worthwhile to spend some time just playing a note - any note - while fiddling about with how you move the bellows. Try out playing with a stop-start movement of the bellows, which you'll find (over time) gives you a pleasing 'vibrato' effect: instead of playing just G (C5), for example, you'll find that using the bellows you can get a very rapid G-G-G-G-G vibrato. Done delicately, that can give you a nice effect at times, particularly if playing a slow air or a slow jig, say. See my notes on the slow jig, 'Hole In The Hedge'.

You won't be trying to play that vibrato effect when playing The Sally Gardens, or indeed when playing almost any reels - reels just go too fast for that kind of thing. **But here are a few things you *can* do in The Sally Gardens, and it's related to that vibrato effect:** it involves, for example:

1. When you have two notes the same as one another in succession, playing these **not by lifting the finger to play the two notes, but holding the finger down and stop-starting the bellows instead, to obtain those two notes**. For example, look at Line 4, Bar 2: the notes are D' G' G' F'. You might play this sequence by lifting the RH index finger (G' or G6) in-between playing those repeated G' notes. **But** you can get those two repeated G' notes just the same, **by holding the finger down on the G6 button, and pausing the bellows press-in movement**. So, to play those two G' notes, you press your RH index finger on G6, and then you push in the bellows thus: press-pause-press.
2. In places where you have a triplet specified (any of them, really), it can be pleasing to play two notes rather than the three notes you would play for a triplet. For example, in line 1, the first notes are: B A G\*. Instead of playing that triplet (admittedly a very easy one to play), you could *instead* just play two G notes: G-G. To do this, you would use the self-same bellows technique as described in (1) above. In fact, sometimes when playing reels you obtain a more 'driving' effect by playing two identical notes rather than playing three notes as in a triplet. I recommend trying that with the G\* in the last bar of Line 2. But you can try it with most of the other triplets specified (though I wouldn't use it on the A\* triplet in Line 5 - I would play that as a triplet, with the middle note of the triplet C', played with your RH 4th finger).
3. You already know that in Irish music it isn't necessary to play the *exact* notes as given on the sheet music - in fact, introducing small variations in the melody adds interest. Look again at Line 2 (the second-last bar), and notice the sequence G E D E. Try playing this instead as G **G** D E. You'll play those two repeated G notes (C5) by pausing the bellows as in (1) above. If you try this in conjunction with suggestion (2) - playing two G notes rather than the three-note G8 triplet which immediately follows that G E D E (or G G D E, as I'm suggesting here) - I think you'll begin to notice that that combination *does* give you a different, and perhaps more 'driving' effect<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This is something I borrowed from Mirella Murray of Cherish The Ladies, who plays piano accordion. I thought it sounded good when she played that way, and I found it can sound good on concertina too - especially when used when playing certain reels.

I've put in chords to end both parts - in both cases, the useful G-D chord (technically, it's a half-chord, but you could make it a full chord if you wanted, by sounding G' [G6] as well). You can find opportunities for other chords, too. Pushing or pulling the C6 and C7 buttons works well and easily in many cases; and you can and should build in such chords all over the place, in many tunes. Try this in bar 2 of Line 2: the first two notes are D' B. Play D' as normal (pull C7). But when you come to play the next note, B (pull C6), **keep that C7 pressed in as you play the C6**. You'll be playing the notes D'B simultaneously, and that gives you a nice chord-like effect.

In loads of tunes, you'll find opportunities to make a chord-like sound by using the C6 and C7 (or C6 and C7 buttons at the same time. It's really easy and it will become second nature.

Finally, as a bit of variation, when playing the second-last note in the tune (B), try playing F# (G2) instead. It means you're hopping *down* to F# with the melody, rather than *up* to B. Again, there are lots of places in tunes where you can vary the melody by going down instead of up, or up instead of down.