Hearing Heritage
Selected essays on Scotland’s music from Musica Scotica conferences

Edited by M. J. Grant

Published by the Musica Scotica Trust, 2020
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Gordon Munro is Director of Music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and General Editor of Musica Scotica. His PhD thesis, ‘Scottish Church Music and Musicians, 1500–1700’ was completed under the supervision of the late Kenneth Elliott at the University of Glasgow. He has contributed articles to various publications including the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

John Purser is a composer, poet, and author of *Erik Chisholm, Scottish Modernist* and the award-winning *Scotland’s Music*, a third edition of which is in preparation. He has won awards as an archaeomusicologist and, with Dr. Graeme Lawson, has written up the discovery of a c. 500 BCE bridge for a stringed instrument found on Skye, to be published by Oxbow as part of the whole site report. In 2007 he received the Scottish Traditional Music Association Award for Services to Industry. In 2009 the University of Aberdeen conferred on him the Degree of Doctor Honoris Causa, and in 2011 he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies. With Dr. Meg Bateman, Purser has co-authored *Window to the West – Culture and Environment in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd*, recently published by Clò Ostaig. Purser lives and crofts on the Isle of Skye.

Marie Saunders came to postgraduate music studies in later life, after a teaching career in sociology and the humanities, spanning over thirty years. She obtained both a Diploma in Music and an M.A. in Music with the Open University. In 2019 Marie obtained an MPhil in Music at City University London. She has presented papers at conferences in Britain including Glasgow University, Newcastle University, City University London, the Institute for Musical Research in London and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.
She uses her membership of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and the Royal Musical Association to keep informed about developments in music research. Her particular interests are in the field of music and identity, diaspora and music, and neuroscience and music.

**Hélène Witcher** grew up by Loch Lomond and studied at Stirling University before becoming a primary teacher. Work with bilingual children and with Travellers took her back to Stirling to research issues of equality in Scottish education. Thereafter, her career focused on promoting diversity across Scottish schools and colleges. Eventual retirement and interest in family history prompted Hélène's research into the life of Héloïse Russell-Fergusson, an aunt she had met only once. Her biography, *Madame Scotia, Madam Scrap*, was shortlisted for the Scottish Book Trust's New Writers Award in 2016 and published in 2017 by The Islands Book Trust. In 2019, Hélène commissioned digitisation of Héloïse's four EPs from the 1960s and their production on a CD entitled *Out There*. Sharing Héloïse's life and music at festivals, book groups and local history groups is now a valued part of Hélène's life.
Introduction

Gordon Munro and M. J. Grant

Musica Scotica was founded under the general editorship of the late Dr Kenneth Elliott in 1996. The first publications (both by Elliott) were The Complete Works of Robert Carver and a pamphlet study of ‘The Paisley Abbey Fragments’. The decades since have witnessed a blossoming of academic research into the musical cultures of Scotland, and the conferences organised by the Musica Scotica Trust over the past fifteen years have witnessed and – we hope – contributed to this trend. The Musica Scotica Trust itself has published seven further volumes of scholarly editions of Scottish music, two further historical studies of Scottish music, and several miscellaneous pieces.

The conferences have formed an essential part of the Trust’s mission to promote scholarship on all aspects of music in and from Scotland. Attended by leading scholars and early career researchers alike, Musica Scotica conferences provide an accessible academic environment for the presentation of research and work in progress – truly to hear (to listen to, learn about and investigate) Scotland’s musical heritage.

The present volume, which gathers together a selection of essays whose origins lie in past Musica Scotica conferences, testifies both to the range and quality of research currently being done but the essays also indicate, not least in their assessment of the shortcomings of earlier research, just how much work remains. Hugh Cheape’s investigation of the Baroque roots of Scotland’s piping traditions, for example, takes aim at the ahistorical mythology that suggests some kind of primeval connection between the Highlands and the pipes: this essay builds on his previous and pioneering essays into the material culture of piping in Scotland, and demonstrates the importance of dedicating more institutional resources to the reassessment of Scotland’s musical heritage.

Joshua Dickson, meanwhile, addresses the legacy of piping from a different angle, exploring the links between pibroch and Gaelic song and providing further evidence for the thesis that many characteristic features of Highland piping have their basis in song.

The pipes are not the only instrument to be featured in this volume. Elizabeth Ford’s contribution links iconography and organology in her project to investigate whether a strange, bell-ended flute depicted on a ceiling at Crathes Castle is simply an artistic anomaly or whether it could, in fact, have been based on a real instrument. The clarsach, too, features through Stuart Eydmann and Hélène Witcher’s discussion of the influential twentieth-century harpist Héloïse Russell-Fergusson, whose musicianship helped inspire the revival of traditions not only in Scotland but also in other Celtic regions such as Brittany.
Collectors and publishers of music, especially traditional music and song, have always featured prominently in understanding Scotland’s musical heritage and the present volume is no exception. John Purser here addresses the possible Highland provenance of many tunes in the collections of the highly influential eighteenth-century publisher James Oswald. The strong Highland theme running through many of the essays in the volume also continues in Per Ahlander’s contribution on the opera *The Seal Woman* by Granville Bantock and Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, an opera that drew directly on Kennedy-Fraser’s famous collections of Hebridean song.

This volume’s chronological scope is somewhat smaller than the ‘800 years of Scottish music’ proclaimed in the title of a previous collection of Musica Scotica conference proceedings (Elliott et. al. eds., 2008). A mere four hundred years or so are featured here, yet this period covers the formation not only of modern ‘Scottish’ identity but also of our understandings, sometimes skewed, of Scotland’s musical identity – and again, this is addressed directly in several of the essays. What, then, does Scotland’s musical heritage mean for Scots today? Marie Saunders’ research on Scots living in London in the twenty-first century forms, in this regard, a fitting conclusion to the volume, emphasising the important but complex relationship between music and identity especially for Scots living outwith the nation of their birth.

This volume has been many years in the making. We thank the contributors for their patience and for providing such significant stimulus to the debate on Scotland’s musical heritage. Special thanks are due to Musica Scotica board members Richard McGregor, Margaret MacKay and Greta-Mary Hair for their assistance in reviewing and proof-reading the texts. An additional vote of thanks goes to Graham Hair, Jane Mallinson and Karen McAulay, without whose hard graft many of the recent conferences, and thus, many of these papers, would never have been realised.

References


Raising the tone: the bagpipe and the Baroque

Hugh Cheape

The bagpipe has been readily identified as part of the trappings of a Scottish national identity, sometimes making Scotland’s love-affair with the instrument a cause of amusement to the world beyond. A less happy facet of such attitudes has been that the ‘national instrument’ was denied much critical attention or close scrutiny at an academic level outside a modern sociology discourse (see, for example, McCrone 2001, 2017). Scholarly attempts to place the instrument in some sort of wider musical or cultural context such as Anthony Baines’ Oxford Pitt-Rivers monograph Bagpipes (1960, revised edition 1973) seemed to be unknown or studiously ignored in Scotland itself. Here the bagpipe never seemed to merit any deeper contextual evaluation beyond a shallow historiography that had emerged from an essentially teleological view of its history, with the instrument as an autonomous element of Scottish culture. Conventional accounts of the bagpipe at home had narrowed to the Great Highland Bagpipe, whose origins were predicated on concepts of antiquity and continuity (see, for example, Collinson 1975; MacNeill and Richardson 1987).

This paper sets out an antithesis based on the realisation that an ancient Great Highland Bagpipe is difficult to trace in the material culture or ‘organology’. By contrast, the surviving material culture of the bagpipe in Scotland, as well as in Ireland and Britain as a whole, offers a startlingly different message, clearly coloured by variety and strong links to European ‘ecotypes’ and the Baroque era. Variety can best be characterised by the relative wealth of bagpipes, other than types of Highland bagpipe, in museum and conservatoire collections, amounting to an organology that has been neglected until recently. This can now be more comprehensively explored with a better understanding of so-called ‘Pastoral’ and ‘Union’ bagpipes as new instruments emerging and developing arguably under Baroque and Neo-Baroque influence, thriving in what amounted to a Western European Neo-Baroque piping tradition in the eighteenth century and giving way to a narrower militarised and national-romantic tradition in the nineteenth century. The Great Highland Bagpipe as we know it has been the exclusive legacy of this later shift. These contentions are built on the evidence of a ‘national collection of a national instrument’ in the public domain and a collecting policy instigated by the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland about 1976 and re-formulated following amalgamation with the Royal Scottish Museum in 1985, to be adopted by the new National Museums Scotland thereafter (Cheape 2008b). Locating the bagpipe in the European Baroque has potential to raise the tone of any debate.
Meanwhile, beyond the confines of specialist research, the field of pipes and piping as part of the creative and performing arts in Scotland is thriving in ways unimaginable, say, fifty years ago; unimaginable, for example, in that performance and composition have been drawing on a wider range of music and on genres of instruments virtually unknown – or lost to sight – for most of the twentieth century. This trend and the ‘Scottish Music’ degree courses in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland call for underpinning by an intellectual infrastructure and fresh musicology that supply an appropriate rigour. A generation earlier, circa 1960, piping was a rather isolated and esoteric pastime, entirely consumed in its apparently unique musical styles and highly formalised processes of competitions and pipe bands, owing nothing, seemingly, to anyone furth of Scotland and claiming an autonomous evolution from a heroic Scottish past. Such a generalisation takes a long view and does no justice to recent publications such as the exemplary *The Highland Bagpipe and its Music* by Roderick Cannon (Cannon 1988), or *When Piping Was Strong* by Joshua Dickson (Dickson 2006), and the magisterial and inclusive survey of Scotland’s music by John Purser (Purser 1992, 2007).

**The ‘national instrument’**

The tone of this modern construct for the bagpipe had been set as early as 1819 by Donald MacDonald, Skyeman, soldier and bagpipe-maker in Edinburgh’s Castlehill. In the Preface to his collection of Highland bagpipe music, the first of its type in print, *A Collection of the Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia called Pìobaireachd*, he laid the claim, probably with other editorial input, for the bagpipe being ‘the national instrument’. Such a claim is intelligible perhaps in the context of the Napoleonic Wars, earlier wars of empire and the widely celebrated feats of arms of the Highland regiments, out of all proportion it might be added to the numbers involved. The claim is also intelligible in the wake of destruction and decline visited on the Gaels in the eighteenth century and a need to overcome the trauma of a post-Culloden nadir:

Strangers may sneer at the pains taken to preserve this wild instrument, because their ears have only been accustomed to the gay measures of the violin and ‘lascivious pleasing of the lute’; but it has claims and recommendations that may silence even their prejudices. The Bag-pipe is, perhaps, the only national instrument in Europe. Every other is peculiar to many countries, but the Bag-pipe to Scotland alone. There in the banquet-hall and in the house of mourning it has alike prevailed. It has animated her warrior in battle, and welcomed them back after their toils, to the homes of their love, and the hills of their nativity. Its strains were the first sounded on the ears of infancy, and they are the last to be forgotten in the wanderings of age (MacDonald 1974, 4).

An orthodoxy emerged from these modest origins in the first half of the nineteenth century and was elaborated by repetition and speculation in the second. Other brief and largely unsupported statements about the origins of the Highland bagpipe such as by Angus Mackay in his *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd or Highland Pipe Music* (Mackay
1838) and *The Piper’s Assistant* (Mackay 1843) seemed to have had a compelling appeal and are repeated verbatim in later publications (see Cannon 1980). The portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery of the celebrated young virtuosistic performer, Angus Mackay (1812–1859), by Alexander Johnston dated 1840, then offers an early version of what has undoubtedly emerged as a stereotype image and an image that infers that the so-called Great Highland Bagpipe had established itself as a, or the, ‘national instrument’. From the contemporary point of view of the art or craft of the bagpipe, this was not a folk instrument but a form of high status instrument and performer, and from the effective re-writing of a cultural history characterised as the ‘invention of tradition’ of the ‘Romantic’ era, the bagpipe was basking in the glow of aristocratic and royal patronage (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Queen Victoria appointed Angus Mackay as her Royal Piper in 1843. He was succeeded by Royal Appointment in 1854 by Pipe Major William Ross, a figure familiar to us from the set of portraits by Kenneth Macleay commissioned by the Queen of her Highland servants. William Ross as Piper to Queen Victoria, shown on the Terrace at Windsor Castle about 1869, represents in portraiture and detailing the apotheosis of the Great Highland Bagpipe (Fig. 1). At the same time, a

Figure 1: William Ross, Piper to Queen Victoria, 1854–1891, in the lithograph portrait by Kenneth Macleay in *Highlanders of Scotland* (Macleay 1870).
situation was emerging that, as William Donaldson has defined in his closely argued study, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society, 1750–1950*, the performers on the Great Highland Bagpipe were reduced to a servile status by the new class of patrons by whom they were manipulated. His argument proposes that the patronage of the nineteenth century effectively rewrote the music of the Highland bagpipe and cut the pipers off from their Gaelic roots (Donaldson 2000, *passim* and 3, 197, 209, 241, 325, 423).

Filtered through such imagery, the received history of the Great Highland Bagpipe reflects in too many respects a triumph of sentiment over fact and we as a nation have been disinclined to revisit or rewrite this history. How this ‘tradition’ might be summed up is available in many texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. About 1885, for example, Rev Dr Norman MacLeod, the Queen’s Chaplain, wrote an essay on ‘The Bagpipe and its Music’, for William Ross’ *Collection of Pipe Music*, in what were undoubtedly intended to be stirring as well as elegiac terms:

> The Music of the Highlands is the Pibroch of the Great War Pipe, with its fluttering pennons, fingered by a genuine Celt, in full Highland Dress, as he slowly paces a Baronial Hall, or amidst the wild scenery of his native mountains. The Bagpipe is the instrument best adapted for summoning the Clans from the far-off Glens to rally round the standard of their Chiefs […] The Pibroch is also constructed to express a welcome to the chief on his return to his Clan; and to wail out a lament for him as he is borne by his people to the old burial place in the Glen, or in the sainted Isle of Graves. (NMS [National Museums Scotland] K.2007.58.1; see also Ross 1869)

The author, one of the famous MacLeod clerical dynasty, must have believed these words which effectively create a potent cultural touchstone, and this image and message is still believed, or half-believed, by many. More seriously for the history of the instrument, Scotland’s service industries, tourism and even the national economy in such sensitive contexts as the ‘Year of Homecoming’ (2014), ‘Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology’ (2017) and in the marking of anniversaries have a vested interest in such a parody. No trans-Atlantic filmmaker could resist it.

The urge to formulate a narrative for the history of Highland piping was not an ignoble one, indeed it was undertaken in the conviction that the tradition was then in decline and that a written history would reinforce it. Much the same scholarly syndrome and critique is evident in the *Carmina Gadelica* Gaelic folklore enterprise (Campbell 1978, 2-3, 12-14). But out of a narrower historiography a bagpipe achieved an apotheosis as the ‘Great Highland Bagpipe’. Its possible deeper origins remain unclear and are not visible in the organology, beyond a modest and low-caste European ‘great pipe’ type of instrument. If we valued the bagpipe highly, we have been remarkably careless

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1 References marked “NMS” give an identifying number for the relevant item in the collections of the National Museums Scotland. Full information on each item can be obtained by entering this number into the NMS Collections Information System at https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/search-our-collections
about its history. There were few Highland bagpipes in museum and conservatoire collections and the documentation of old instruments was poor to non-existent, betraying a lack of any specialised knowledge and even the same age-old condescending attitude and thin commentary on provenance. A simple but all too typical example can be cited from the National Museums’ collections: this was the French musette, a sophisticated chamber bagpipe probably perfected in the Paris workshops of instrument makers such as Hotteterre, but designated as belonging to Bonnie Prince Charlie and described as ‘old Irish bagpipe’, a label applied uncritically and seemingly without further investigation to any bellows bagpipe (NMS H.LT 6). Of course, this may also be a pale reflection of an eighteenth-century usage. The musette de cour was the first bagpipe acquired by the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1872, in the same year coincidentally that the ‘Special Exhibition of Ancient Musical Instruments’ was staged in the then new South Kensington Museum. This laid the foundations for the scholarly study of musical instruments, but Scotland’s criteria for acquisition of such an item as the musette ignored musicology in favour of person and event in a national history, a trend shaped by the antiquarian tradition out of which the National Museum had grown (Cheape 2008b, 10-11).

The available literature, sustained by an unassailable conventional wisdom, offered a history of piping narrowly and disingenuously wedded to national divisions with a Scottish bagpipe – the Great Highland Bagpipe – an Irish bagpipe and an English bagpipe, playing to respective national conceits. The deeper history of a generic ‘great pipe’ instrument transcends linguistic or racial markers although it seems to have richly served different cultural strains of music and song evolving in different cultural communities. In this respect the achievement of the Highland bagpipe, with its powerful sound and complex acoustic properties, is huge. In the course of time, this tonal dynamic has created a very strong sense of ownership which began to be expressed so fulsomely in the nineteenth century. Conventional accounts of the instrument at home have always led with the Great Highland Bagpipe whose origins, as we have said, are predicated on concepts of antiquity and continuity and a sense of an autonomous development within Scotland; this has been maintained in the face of a paucity of organological evidence for such an instrument before about 1800 or the late eighteenth century (see Cheape 2013, 34-40). We seem to look in vain for a precursor or native ‘ecotype’ or much the same sort of instrument in the hands of home-grown musicians of, say, the sixteenth century. Indeed, it is difficult to make assumptions about the details of an instrument as referred to in the sixteenth century without evidence of the material culture. A court case brought in Stirling in 1574 against a Highland piper called Edmond Broun whose dog had savaged one of the burgesses offers an example in which we could not in reality and with any confidence attempt to describe his bagpipe (Sanger 2010, 18). The surviving material culture of the bagpipe in the British Isles offers a startlingly different message, clearly coloured by variety and strong links to European ‘ecotypes’.

Elementary questions about bagpipe origins were typically received in the National Museum as corollary to a collecting policy for bagpipes and could only be tentatively answered. In suggesting that the bagpipe becomes firmly established in the six-
teenth and early seventeenth century Highlands (or earlier), this is not to say that it was unknown before then, only that this was the era when its status became established, expanded and grew. In terms of a Gàidhealtachd extending from Port of Ness to Cape Clear, there is some shared linguistic evidence although, by contrast with Ireland, there does not seem to be such early linguistic evidence for the instrument in Scotland. Here, stringed instruments such as harp and clàrsach held sway and clearly enjoyed high prestige. The early history of the Great Highland Bagpipe is closely associated with the name ‘MacCrimmon’ or ‘MacCriomhthain’. This family name is rooted more clearly in Ireland and we seem to see the members of an emerging professional piping dynasty aligning themselves with the high-status learned orders shared between Ireland and Scotland, bringing us back of course to the cultural well-spring of Ireland (Cheape 2000, 5-12). In the same context, it is the ‘differences’ between Ireland and Scotland, and their Gaeltachts, as teased out by Kenneth Nicholls (Nicholls 1972) and Wilson McLeod (McLeod 2004), that could help to explain phenomena such as the classic form of Ceòl Mòr and a Highland bagpipe as elements of autonomous development.

Reassessment of such a quintessentially Scottish musical instrument as the bagpipe working from the premise of the evidence of the material culture, of the ‘organo-logy’, in other words, of the instruments themselves, has not been done before. At the point when the serious study of musical instruments began, with the large international exhibition of musical instruments in London in 1872, a small and apparently random selection of bagpipes was offered to tell the story of piping in Scotland. ‘The Special Exhibition of Ancient Musical Instruments’ was staged in the new South Kensington Museum – the embryonic Victoria and Albert Museum – and seems to mark the beginnings in the United Kingdom of the systematic study of historic musical instruments, the ‘material culture’ of music and the systematic collection of musical instruments for museum display and for teaching purposes. The beginnings of this class of museum work is documented in the magnificent catalogue published from the 1872 exhibition, edited by the German scholar Carl Engel (1818–1882). The exhibition also formed the basis of the extensive musical instrument collection still in the V&A. Since then, comprehensive collections of musical instruments have been formed elsewhere, such as the Dolmetsch Collection, now in the Horniman Museum, the Bate Collection in Oxford, and the large collection of ethnic musical instruments in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, whose bagpipe collection instigated by Henry Balfour formed the core of the remarkable Oxford monograph Bagpipes by Anthony Baines of 1960 (Baines 1973). Other important collections for the history of the bagpipe are the Edinburgh University Musical Instrument Collection and specialist collections overseas in Brussels, Paris, Vienna, Nuremberg, New York and Washington. Bagpipes, having been the poor relation in musicology, form the core of the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle which displays the Northumbrian small-pipes and their music in Morpeth, and collections in the (former) College of Piping and National Piping Centre in Glasgow. Bagpipes are significantly evident in a few notable collections overseas such as the Crosby Brown Collection in the New York Metropolitan Museum (see Libin 1977), the Musical Instrument Museum in New York (with an important bagpipe collection instigated by Hubert Boone), in Spain in the Museo de las Gaitas, in France, in the Czech Republic.
under the determined and patriotic drive of Josef Reszny, and in the Budapest Museum of Ethnography in Hungary (whose collection was formed under the influence of Béla Bartok and Zoltan Kodály). It is a matter of observation throughout all these museums and collections that their respective examples of the Great Highland Bagpipe are generally what might be described as ‘modern instruments’, that is, the products of named makers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and of little musicological merit for the accumulation of deeper historical data.

Reviewing the literature of the subject is part of the research process and the contention here is that this has not had substance. In the circumstances of dearth, it is evident that one or two books have been routinely quoted, such as the 400-page *Highland Bagpipe* by the Caithness-born Glasgow journalist, W. L. Manson (Manson 1901), and W. H. Grattan Flood’s *The Story of the Bagpipe* (Flood 1911). These two books had laid the basis of a secondary literature for the history of piping in the British Isles and Ireland. They included some exploration of instruments but no evaluation or critique; notoriously, for example, the supposedly fifteenth-century Highland bagpipe, exhibited as such in the London 1872 exhibition, was duly illustrated by Manson, using a plate from the Society of Antiquaries and from the paper by Robert Glen of the Edinburgh firm of bagpipe and musical instrument makers on ‘Notes on the ancient musical instruments of Scotland’ in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* in 1879 (Glen 1879, 121). This image was consistently offered as the oldest surviving Highland bagpipe, and it was not until 1970 that this piece was revealed as a fake and peremptorily removed from display in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (Bryan 1971, 240-241).

Organology presupposes interdisciplinary methodologies. Processes of research in areas of the arts and humanities have been qualitatively different from research in the sciences, though material evidence is highly susceptible to scientific methods, for example, in the measurement of organic materials and sound and acoustic properties of, say, wind instruments. Quantitative data has been less common in advancing knowledge and understanding of bagpipes, and the researcher in the arts and humanities is more likely to be working as an individual rather than as part of a research team. The concept of the research community has not been common in musicology before the digital age, and without institutional support it has been difficult to make research outputs widely available. If the research community in musicology is small and scattered, the review process and quality control of outputs can fall short. For bagpipes, there was little or no peer review so that, for example, when John Donald published a study of *piobaireachd* in 1987 which was manifestly flawed, the publishing business would not contemplate more on pipes and piping for many years (MacNeill and Richardson 1987; Cheape 1990, 201-207). With no obvious outlet for initial results into bagpipe research, for example, the securing of one of the earliest complete surviving Great Highland Bagpipes for the collections of the National Museums in 2003 remained relatively obscure beyond a few aficionados (NMS K.2003.939). In the digital age, the communication of basic information is improving; the National Museums Scotland copied their collections information on pipes and piping into CD-ROM form which, at the very least, advertises the collection of data on which future organological research may be based.
Piping’s Baroque revolution

If a key to the unlocking of bagpipe history in Scotland is the Baroque, where do we start? ‘Baroque’, of course, has to be used cautiously but we may take the term to describe the music of the same period as well as the lavish architectural style of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The musical shift towards the Baroque followed the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, marked by the removal of the ban on the theatre and a fresh emphasis on the social skills of making music, singing and dancing after the blight on these pastimes during the Commonwealth. Scotland’s cultural circumstances were different, with no court culture since 1603 and a prevailing Covenanting theology and Presbyterian discipline bred in the Civil Wars and encoded in the Revolution Settlement of 1690. A comparatively slow start is evident for the Baroque in Scotland compared to the quickening in England following the Restoration, although a cultural deficit is perhaps too readily suggested for Scotland (cf. Stell 1999; Johnson 2000, vii). Given that an interest in the music of Scotland was at the heart of the Baroque in the United Kingdom, this can be measured perhaps by quotas of Scottish tunes to be heard in London and pervading the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Cheape 2008a, 291, 294-296). These were largely songs and ballads, readily identified as ‘Scotch’ and widely imitated, but not at first evoking a strong sense of a national tradition. Perception of contemporary Scottish music performance was based on keyboards and strings, rather than a bagpipe, in the same way that a well-schooled nation in Scotland might have regarded the national language as Latin rather than Scots or Gaelic. An early touchstone of a national tradition might be the Saint Cecilia’s Day concerts in Edinburgh and, from the perspective of the time, this offers vital evidence of the environment of music-making. This can be gauged from ‘The Order of the Instrumental Music for the Feast of St Cecilia, 22 November 1695,’ later published by William Tytler, together with a ‘Dissertation on the Scottish Music’, in the 1792 volume of the Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Cheape 2008b, 92-94).

If the role of the music of Scotland is significant in the Baroque, in the same context ‘Neo-Baroque’ might be used to describe home-grown reactions against over-elaborate styles of French and Italianate music, taking the form of versions of folk songs and ballads which were currently then well-known and popular and which asserted the character and the virtue of the native tradition. In Britain, the ‘Scotch song’ as a generic song-form as well as bagpipe music of the post-Restoration period provided a quantity of Neo-Baroque music which achieved huge popularity and inspired imitation, not only in Britain but also in France and Germany (Fiske 1983, ix, 11).

Post-Restoration musical life therefore holds a key to aspects of bagpipe music and the piping tradition of today, together with names such as Henry Purcell and John Playford, whose English Dancing Master first appeared in 1651, in the time of the Commonwealth, and continued to be published in new editions into the 1720s. It included ‘Scotch’ tunes, the first song to appear being ‘The Broom of Cowdenknowes’, and the Scottish music and song element increased in subsequent editions through the years. This music book became a best seller and a source book for other musical publishers such as William Thomson for his Orpheus Caledonius and John Geoghegan (see below).
A Neo-Baroque drift of fashion can be measured in Henry Playford's *Collection of Original Scotch Tunes, full of the Highland Humours*, printed in London in 1700 and 1701.

Changes in music, music performance and musical instruments are all axiomatic in any consideration of the Baroque and should be introduced in the reassessment of bagpipes, and without drawing any demarcation between art or ‘classical’ music and ‘folk’ music, concepts then not yet meaningful or applied (see Gelbart 2007). It is significant that instruments used today in ‘folk music’ performance derive from archetypes perceived as ‘classical’, examples being the *vielle* or hurdy-gurdy deriving from the thirteenth-century *organistrum*, the Italian *zampogna* deriving from Renaissance wind instruments in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the Irish *Uilleann* pipe growing from Baroque instrumentation of the eighteenth century. The folk/classical dichotomy of the modern mindset makes it more difficult to discern how, historically, instruments might be adapted for new sound or changing aesthetic, the very process that swept Baroque Europe in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With forms of music changing in the Baroque era, for example, with the invention of opera and cantata, instruments were freely adopted and discarded. Musical instruments were never left as they were and it should be emphasised that fixity of form of musical instruments was never the paradigm of European instrumentation. This acts as useful corrective to notions of antiquity and continuity as touchstones for the bagpipe in Scotland. New bagpipes of the *musette* small pipe-type and ‘Pastoral’ bagpipes were then created for performing the ‘pastorale’ as exemplified in operas by Lully and Rameau and for inclusion in orchestras and consorts for courtly and aristocratic performance. The popularity of the *musette* is also reflected in the two contemporary published works of repertoire or part-repertoire for the chamber bagpipe, those of Borjon (1672) and Hotteterre (1737) (Cheape 2008a, 286).

The influence of the Baroque (or the Neo-Baroque) in Britain and Ireland can be defined for us in bagpipe terms by the intriguing evidence of the ‘Pastoral’ and ‘Union’ bagpipes, and also by the collateral evidence of an extraordinary wealth of published Scottish fiddle music. The finesse of the Pastoral and Union pipes in terms of a re-invention of European woodwind is a manifestation of this that had not attracted notice. The ‘light music’ of the bagpipe in Scotland may also owe more to the Baroque and Neo-Baroque than has hitherto been defined, as is certainly the case with Scottish fiddle music. The fiddle tradition was carried forward in an explosion of print culture and it is estimated that around 14,000 fiddle tunes were printed and published in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (see Gore ed. 1994). The late David Johnson concluded in his seminal study published as long ago as 1972, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, that:

Most people do not realise how far Scottish folk fiddle-music was influenced by classical music; it is usually thought of as an indigenous growth, untouched by civilisation, transmitted by illiterate farm-workers and vagrant players. But in fact folk-fiddle playing, as it exists in Scotland today, was almost entirely an eighteenth-century creation; and it was developed by educated musicians,
most of whom were at home in the classical music culture (Johnson 1972, 111).

Although the evidence for change and a chronology of bagpipe-making is sparse, there are one or two high points such as surviving instruments in museum collections, especially a number of diagnostic instruments in the National Museums which carry labels such as ‘Pastoral’ and ‘Union’. Symbolic of this perhaps is a ‘Pastoral’ chanter, also known as a ‘long’ or ‘flat’ chanter at 20 ¼ inches long (e.g. NMS H.LT 67). Typically with no maker’s name or mark, this was made possibly in London and seems more closely related in style of turning and configuration to Baroque woodwind such as shawm or oboe (Fig. 2). Tentatively, its acoustic shape or form may derive from the Baroque oboe with its narrower bore and smaller tone-holes. The oboe itself in this period was developed from the early woodwind shawm. A further symbolic and complementary item is a set of drones in ivory, anonymous but possibly from a Pastoral Pipe by Hugh Robertson of Edinburgh, with lotus-top profiled drones, with bass in return section, baritone and tenor (NMS K.2003.706).

The Pastoral pipe is one of the more intriguing topics to emerge from the material record of piping in Scotland, intriguing because of the number of instruments or part-instruments that survive, and because of their high quality and finish. But the instrument has been entirely absent from the written histories of the bagpipe in Scotland. This class of material might now be summarised as a creation of the eighteenth century and of professional wind-instrument makers or turners (that is, skilled lathe-workers); the chanter made in sections, or ‘joints’ like other woodwind instruments such as flute or oboe, with long narrow conical, but not necessarily straight-sided bore. Drone configuration includes folded or returned bass drone with four joints, the length of the bass proportionate to the sounding lengths of the other drone or drones, and to the length of the chanter with its low pitch. The construction of the instrument in its different components suggests that its sound, soft and low-pitch, was designed for indoor playing and playing with other instruments, and to blend as much as to stand out. This ‘chamber
bagpipe’ seems to have been designed to make bagpipe music appeal to sophisticated and discriminating audiences and to fit with a social and musical context of violin, piano or harpsichord, flute and oboe, for art music and light opera performance (Cheape 2008a, 285-304). Fashion high-points may have been Gay’s Beggar’s Opera after 1728 and fin-de-siècle Ossian librettos for which the Pastoral and Union pipes were the favoured instruments in the 1790s.

The anonymity of these instruments in Scotland is leavened to an extent by the existence of John Geoghegan’s Tutor (c. 1743), titled The Compleat Tutor for the Pastoral or New Bagpipe (NMS A.1947.129).2 This is the first book of bagpipe music printed in Britain and Ireland and is a remarkable document, opening a window onto a particular stage of the evolution of the bagpipe in Europe – the Baroque and Neo-Baroque. ‘Pastoral’ relates it to contemporary musical fashion and to Baroque woodwind. The tone is set in an engraved plate facing the title page, with a carefully drawn scene showing the player in a great-coat and tricorn hat standing on a terrace in a classical and sylvan setting (Fig. 3). He is playing the ‘Pastoral or New Bagpipe’ of the book’s title, an instrument with a long chanter and two drones lying across the player’s arm, and the bagpipe is being inflated with bellows. The pipes are ‘improved’ to bring them into line with the

Figure 3: ‘Gentleman Piper’ with bellows bagpipe in a classical setting, in the Plate facing the title page in John Geoghegan, The Compleat Tutor for the Pastoral or New Bagpipe (London c.1743; NMS A.1947.129). Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of National Museums Scotland.

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2 The copy held by NMS and referenced here also contains an eleven-page MS section bound in at the end with music for fifteen pipe tunes.
flute and oboe, and finger charts project a scale from Middle C to Top D, that is, two octaves and a note. A conspicuous characteristic of the 28-page booklet is the use of a printing type with cursive letter-forms imitative of handwriting, a style achieving informality without compromising legibility, and possibly copying the style of Hotterterre’s 1738 treatise on the *musette*. It includes a ‘tutor’ and nineteen pages of forty tunes which might be summarised as a song and dance-tune selection then popular in London, drawing on Playford’s and Oswald’s publications and ‘borrowing’ fashionably on the vernacular of Scotland and Ireland. Its author, John Geoghegan, could be linked speculatively with Ulster or Leinster, but, more significantly, belongs contemporaneously in the context of an Irish migration to London including such ‘stars’ as Edmund Burke and Oliver Goldsmith. This was as important for Scotland but scarcely admitted in any cultural or musicological account of the eighteenth century. Scottish ‘stars’ include James Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, and Tobias Smollett. Another ‘star’ was James Oswald, who moved from Edinburgh to London in 1741 and began the publication of his *Caledonian Pocket Companion* about 1745 (Johnson ed., 2000, x).

Symbolic perhaps of an ensuing stage of evolution of a Baroque bagpipe is a ‘Union’ pipe in the National Museums by Hugh Robertson of Edinburgh, reflecting significant changes in the instrument in the second half of the eighteenth century (NMS K.2003.705). This is a bellows-blown chamber instrument and this type of bagpipe survives today as the versatile Irish *Uilleann* pipe (Fig. 4). Diagnostic features include the shorter chanter set at a higher pitch, with addition of key or keys enabling the player to move beyond the eight or nine notes of the conventional chanter. It plays in a Neo-

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**Figure 4:** Union Pipe by Hugh Robertson of Edinburgh, c. 1790, boxwood, ivory, with bass drone, tenor drone and two regulators (NMS K.2003.705). Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of National Museums Scotland
Baroque fiddle style and avoids the destabilising of tone which came with the technique of over-blowing by which the player moved up the scale into a second octave by increasing the pressure on the reeds. Modern perception of the Union Pipe has defined it in terms of Ireland’s culture and the Uilleann bagpipe of today. It has conventionally been described as an instrument native to Ireland, with an autonomous development in Ireland and descendent of an earlier Irish bagpipe (Flood 1911). By contrast, the instrument’s surviving ‘material culture’ suggests that the Union Pipe has been a shared Baroque tradition and that an integrity has been ignored or laid aside in sustaining modern perceptions. The material culture of the instrument – the ‘organology’ – is more dispersed with instruments and parts of instruments from the period approximately from 1760 to 1860 made not only in Ireland but also in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, London and Newcastle.

Symbolic of the later Pastoral and Union bagpipe era is a set in the National Museums with long chanter and foot joint, bass, tenor and baritone drones, and a single five-key regulator (NMS A.1947.106). With little known of its provenance, this might possibly be a theatre instrument and used for entr’acte performance. Surviving instruments suggest that the ‘Pastoral’ pipe continued to be made through the Union pipe era although the latter has been seen as refinement and successor of the former. In the interest of a more comprehensive organology, it seems that north-east Scotland played a notable part in this tradition; this is a special enclave of the history of the Pastoral and Union pipe, with a complex background which must be treated sensitively, with its ‘distinctive blend of humanism, a conservative background of Episcopacy, the two music schools of St Nicholas’ and St Machar’s, an inheritance of a big house “court culture”, and a rural hinterland which has boasted the richest ballad tradition in Scotland and beyond’ (Cheape 2008b, 95). Aberdeen was the source of the first published secular music in Scotland with the Forbes Cantus of 1662, whose Preface claimed the city as ‘the Sanctuary of the Sciences, the Manse of the Muses, and the Nursery of all the Arts’. Tendentious perhaps, but they were talking about contemporary Europe, and Aberdeen’s music culture included names such as Naughtan, Sharp, Davidson and Massie who were making Pastoral and Union bagpipes. For the performer community, we have evidence for a player of distinction such as Robert Millar (Cheape 2008b, 121-122). A Union pipe music manuscript of Millar’s from 1830 includes 383 tunes exquisitely written out, with reels, jigs, hornpipes, quicksteps, song-airs, minuets, waltzes and quadrilles, reflecting the taste in popular music in Scotland in the early nineteenth century, not exclusively Scottish, but drawing on a wide selection of British, Irish and European popular light classical music of the post-Napoleonic era and Continental dance-forms of the time (NMS H.LT 116.2).

‘Raising the tone’ argues for the significance of organology in understanding how Scottish music in its broadest sense has evolved and for the importance of an organology for any account of the bagpipe in Scottish or British and Irish musicology. To improve and enhance understanding of a complex international subject which has been, and still perhaps is, characterised or even governed by a number of spurious assumptions, we require the construction of a new ‘history’ which in this instance is built on a museum collection. The museum task of assembling an organology allows a challenge to
orthodoxy, depending for its effectiveness on the significance of that collection and on the collecting and research role of the museum. In the case of National Museums Scotland, their role is to build collections for the nation, to communicate the significance of these collections, to make the collections accessible to the widest possible audience, and to generate a broad appeal as well as satisfying the interests of the specialist and practitioner. There was no 'national collection of the national instrument', but a collection has now been amassed in the public domain and critical comment offered on it within National Museums Scotland. Such a collection of the bagpipes of Scotland and other countries is unashamedly built on a Scottish perspective, in other words, on the perspective of a country that has indeed made the bagpipe very much her own; this perspective, too, promotes the uniqueness and importance of the bagpipe in all its formats, past and present, and all its musical manifestations between the Highlands and Baroque Europe.

An Dùbhachd 2016

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A response to ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’:  
Further evidence of the pibroch echo beat’s basis in Gaelic song  
Joshua Dickson  

Background  

The courtly, ceremonial music of the Scottish Highland bagpipe is called in Gaelic ceòl mòr (‘big music’), but is today more often referred to as piobaireachd (‘piping’), which in turn is often anglicised as pibroch. This genre of piping has its origins in the Gaelic aristocratic social strata of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its precursor being the clarsach, and its repertoire a window to the panegyric functions of the singers, poets, historiographers and musicians that comprised the clan chief’s typical retinue in the generations that prevailed until the dissolution of the clan system in the long post-Culloden era.  

Pibroch has survived; whether it has flourished, however, has been the stuff of debate for over a century. In one sense it indisputably has: there are today more exponents of pibroch around the world than has likely ever been the case, and performing at a higher standard of sound production. But while printed and oral historical evidence suggests that pibroch was once open to considerable individual idiosyncrasies amongst a highly skilled class of musicians (as befits any complex and mature form of art music patronised by an aristocracy), performance style became much more standardised over the course of the twentieth century, a natural consequence of the rise of competitions as pibroch’s primary social setting and mechanism for conservation and perpetuation. So although its best exponents have remained very highly skilled tradition-bearers and interpreters, the traditional parameters within which stylistic variation amongst individuals is permitted have become extremely narrow.  

The celebrated piper, composer and scholar Allan MacDonald examined this narrowing of traditional variability in pibroch interpretation in his 1995 postgraduate thesis on the relationship between pibroch and Gaelic song (MacDonald 1995). These two idioms were intimately related in the cultural and social milieu of the Gaelic Highlands and Islands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the premise that song style and interpretation has been much more faithfully preserved than that of pibroch since earlier times, MacDonald argued that a more idiomatic knowledge of Gaelic song rhythms can enrich our understanding of how pibroch was once performed in a largely monoglot Gaelic world. He identified a range of rhythmic and ornamental motifs characteristic of the pibroch ùrlar (the theme upon which variations are then layered in a single piece) and showed how their interpretation through the lens of cognate motifs in
Gaelic song can produce a much wider stylistic palette to today’s exponent of pibroch. On the whole, his thesis argued for shifting the performer’s basis of interpretation away from early twentieth century scores – and the body of orally transmitted teaching that has accumulated around them in that time – to the rhythms, scansion and tempi of a range of Gaelic songs traditionally associated with the pibroch repertoire in question (often referred to as òrain phìobraicheachd or ‘pibroch songs’). This, MacDonald argued, would enable a more historically and culturally informed approach to pibroch as the evidence suggests it was performed prior to the impact of competition and standardisation.

The echo beat

One of MacDonald’s cornerstone case studies related to a rhythmic motif that divides a note into three distinct pulses, known as the ‘double echo’ or ‘echo beat.’ This motif today is always performed in the same fixed manner, without regard to tune and indeed with very little regard to the motif’s immediate surrounding rhythmic context: a short-long-short approach in which the first pulse is rapid, followed effectively in the same moment by a strike on the same note that is then drawn out much longer, followed by a shorter third pulse; the second and third pulse being divided by a grace note that takes up appreciable time in the scansion. Thus the opening phrases of the well-known pibroch ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’ that feature the echo beat on E in characteristic fashion, shown in bars 2 and 4 (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Echo beats on E as exemplified in the opening phrases of ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’ (MacKay 1838, 84)

A very different approach to the echo beat seems to have held sway in mid-eighteenth century Sutherland, however. Piper and Durness native Joseph MacDonald (1739–1762), in his Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe (c. 1760, but first published in 1803), portrayed the scansion as emphasising the first of the three pulses, rather than the second, and no appreciable duration to the grace note between second and third pulses (Cannon ed. 1994, 27). He referred to the echo beat motif as crathanan (pronounced craa’ - hin - in), ‘shakes’ or ‘shakings’, which suggests the rapidity with which the latter two pulses were likely articulated in his time (Figure 2).

In Allan MacDonald’s analysis, cognate contemporary song evidence and the earliest staff-notated manuscript collections suggest that early echo beat performance style favoured the ‘shake’, as illustrated in Figure 2, or loosely recitative variations on it that depended far more than at present on rubato and the motif’s surrounding rhythmic context.
He has applied this widely in his own professional performance practice, including in his rendition of the above-noted ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’ at the 2004 John MacFadyen Memorial Trust Lecture Recital at Stirling Castle. Having been the featured lecturer the previous year, I returned as an audience-member in 2004 and listened intently as MacDonald stripped the appoggiaturas from the tune to reveal a more straightforward, albeit elastic, compound metre, achieving a starkly different musical statement of this tune than is represented in Figure 1, above. Performed in the surrounding context of a radically re-calibrated rhythmic scansion throughout, MacDonald interpreted the echo beats on E and G in a distinctly even, recitative manner, as Figure 3 attempts to illustrate.

Figure 3: Allan MacDonald’s performance of ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’ at the John MacFadyen Memorial Trust Lecture Recital at Stirling Castle, 2004 (author’s transcription).

MacDonald’s scansion of the echo beats in this tune (and similar treatment in others, such as his 1999 Edinburgh Festival performance of the ‘Nameless Lament’ as found in the MacArthur-MacGregor Manuscript, or his rendition of ‘Lament for Red Hector of the Battles’ on his 2007 album Dastirum) represents a significant departure from orthodoxy amongst exponents of pibroch in the modern era. However, in Scottish piping
terms his postgraduate research was considered groundbreaking in its synthesis of contemporary and archival evidence, historical ethnomusicology and the artistic practice of a master Gaelic musician. It can be argued therefore that MacDonald’s stylistic approach was a direct, applied outcome of his case studies in relation to the echo beat’s basis in traditional Gaelic song rhythms: tunes such as ‘MacIntosh’s Lament’, ‘The Carles with the Breeks’ and ‘Corrienessan’s Lament’ (MacDonald 1995, 122, 163 and 229 respectively).

Listening to ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’, the piper in me was struck by two things: the plaintive tension – like a held breath, or a stone skipping over water – and chant-like freedom with which the echo beats were articulated, in direct opposition to current orthodoxy; and the way in which two such echo beats in succession, on the same note, provide such a correspondingly greater opportunity to express rubato and elasticity in pibroch. I felt this was a salient and topical issue in the timeless debate surrounding performance style: the successive echo beat on E features prominently, after all, in a number of tunes in the pibroch repertoire, such as ‘MacDougall’s Gathering’ and ‘Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon’, whilst successive echo beats on other notes, such as the low A, are a hallmark of many more tunes, from ‘The Piper’s Warning to His Master’ to ‘MacNeill of Barra’s March’ and ‘The Red Hand of Clan Donald’s Arms’.

Since then I have explored further the interaction of the bagpipe and the voice in traditional transmission and performance settings, mainly by constructing and analysing variora of canntaireachd by women and men in the southern Outer Hebrides from the 1950s to the 1980s (Dickson 2013a and 2013b). Through the course of this research I have encountered a number of songs that, I argue, serve to broaden the evidence base supporting the validity of MacDonald’s interpretation of the successive double echo beat motif on E in the performance noted above.

**Columba’s Quern**

Though MacDonald was primarily concerned with song repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a rhythmic precursor to pibroch’s successive echo beat on E can be traced back in song possibly a great deal earlier. One indication of this is an example of a Gaelic quern song, one of a class of worksongs used to accompany the rhythm of grinding corn using a stone mill in the Highlands and Western Isles. The song is traditional, both functionally and in the sense that it cannot be ascribed to a specific origin in time, place or authorship; but quern songs are generally accepted as being amongst the earliest known examples of Scottish Gaelic music (Purser 1992, 34). Peter Morrison of North Uist was recorded in 1970 singing ‘S i Mo Bhrà Fhin as Fheàrr – ‘My Own Quern is Best’ – in whose third phrase (cha bhi ’n t-acras air mo chloinn, or ‘my children shall not go hungry’) there features a series of monotonic beats on the fifth interval. This note corresponds to the E when transposed to the bagpipe scale as Figure 4 illustrates (the C naturals and lower E in the second part notwithstanding) and, in Morrison’s rendition, produces precisely the recitative and chant-like effect associated with the spoken-word rhythms of medieval Gaelic narrative singing and articulated more recently by Allan MacDonald in the context of pibroch’s successive echo beat.
Parenthetically, music historians such as Wesseling (1988, 46) and Purser (1992, 34-5) have referred to the oral tradition that Columba, the sixth-century evangelist and saint, composed his famous abecedarian hymn *Altus Prosator* whilst penitentially grinding on a quern on Iona. Based on the setting found in the Inchcolm Antiphoner, the manuscript of Latin plainchant dedicated to Columba by the twelfth-century Augustinian monks of Inchcolm Abbey, Purser found the hymn’s octosyllabic structure so similar to that of quern song rhythms that he arranged for it to be sung to the tune of ’*S i Mo Bhrà Fhin as Fheàrr*, by Colin Heggie, for the album *The Kilmartin Sessions*: it matched almost perfectly (Kilmartin House Trust 1997). Again we see and hear the plaintively repeating strain in the third phrase (Figure 5’s *absque origine*, or ‘without source or beginning’) that presages MacDonald’s recitative approach to successive echo beats in pibroch.

Figure 4: ’*S i Mo Bhrà Fhin as Fheàrr* (‘My Own Quern is Best’) as sung by Peter Morrison (School of Scottish Studies Sound Archives, SA 1970.065). Link to audio

Parenthetically, music historians such as Wesseling (1988, 46) and Purser (1992, 34-5) have referred to the oral tradition that Columba, the sixth-century evangelist and saint, composed his famous abecedarian hymn *Altus Prosator* whilst penitentially grinding on a quern on Iona. Based on the setting found in the Inchcolm Antiphoner, the manuscript of Latin plainchant dedicated to Columba by the twelfth-century Augustinian monks of Inchcolm Abbey, Purser found the hymn’s octosyllabic structure so similar to that of quern song rhythms that he arranged for it to be sung to the tune of ’*S i Mo Bhrà Fhin as Fheàrr*, by Colin Heggie, for the album *The Kilmartin Sessions*: it matched almost perfectly (Kilmartin House Trust 1997). Again we see and hear the plaintively repeating strain in the third phrase (Figure 5’s *absque origine*, or ‘without source or beginning’) that presages MacDonald’s recitative approach to successive echo beats in pibroch.

Figure 5: *Altus Prosator* from the Inchcolm Antiphoner, c. 1340 (based on Purser 1992, 35).
Deirdre's Dream

On 16 March 1867, Barra crofter John MacNeill, known as Iain Donn (‘Brown-haired John’) was paid a visit at his home in the township of Buailie-nam-Bodach by folklorist Alexander Carmichael in search of songs, poems, incantations, prayers and proverbs native to the island. Carmichael had been travelling intermittently throughout the Gaelic-speaking regions of Scotland since 1860 to record and collect a wide variety of vernacular Gaelic lore and would carry on doing so until 1909; he edited and published the first two volumes of his resulting landmark anthology, Carmina Gadelica, in 1900.

MacNeill, by 1867 a man of 83 years, recited from memory the well-known Gaelic tale Deirdre, which formed part of the Scoto-Irish, pre-Christian Ulster cycle of Ossianic narrative believed to stem from the first century AD. As a Celtic precursor to Romeo and Juliet in some ways, Deirdre told the story of the protagonist’s doomed love for the young warrior Naoise, leading ultimately to the death of them both. Carmichael transcribed the tale at MacNeill’s dictation, including a vignette entitled Bruadal Dheirdire, or ‘Deirdre’s Dream’, in which the young woman recounts a prophetic and nightmarish vision to her placating lover:

Chunnas na tri calmana geala
Leis na tri balgama meala nam beul
’S o Naoise mhic Uisne
Sorchair thusa dhomh dubhar mo sgeul.

’Am bheil ann ach bruaillean pramh
’S lionn-dubh mnà, a Dheirdire.’

Chunnas na tri seabhaga duairc
Leis na tri braona fàla, fuar-fluil nan trean
’S o Naoise mhic Uisne
Sorchair thusa dhomh dubhar mo sgeul.

’Am bheil ann ach bruaillean pramh
’S lionn-dubh mnà, a Dheirdire.’

Chunnas na tri fitheacha dubha
Leis na tri duilleaga dubhach crann-iubhar an eig
’S o Naoise mhic Uisne
Sorchair thusa dhomh turus mo sgeul.

’Am bheil ann ach bruaillean pramh
’S lionn-dubh mnà, a Dheirdire.’

Nearly a century later, Deirdre's Dream was still being uttered – and sung – by Barra’s tradition-bearers. One such exponent was Calum Johnston, or Calum Aonghais Chaluim (‘Malcolm, son of Angus, son of Calum’), born in 1891 in a township near Castlebay. Johnston was celebrated in his lifetime for his piping and singing, having been invited by Hamish Henderson to perform at the Edinburgh People’s Festival Ceilidhs of 1951 and 1952. He went on to record a wealth of folklore, songs, canntaireachd and pipe tunes,
predominantly pibroch, for the Sound Archives of Edinburgh University’s School of Scottish Studies. He died suddenly in Barra in 1972 whilst piping at the funeral of author Sir Compton Mackenzie.

In 1964, in the School’s then state-of-the-art basement recording studio, Johnston sang three short verses to a group of researchers led by the Rev. William Matheson, who went on to refer to it as Chunnacas na trì, na Tri (‘There Appeared Three’ or ‘Three Were Seen’) but also acknowledged it as a variant of Bruadal Dheirdire:

In 1867, Carmichael did not transcribe in his notes any melody to the verses dictated by Iain Dorn, but it is possible that he sang rather than recited them. However, in 1964, Johnston doubted that these verses and their refrain were sung traditionally in early times: he and the researchers rather proposed that the verses had been put to music locally some time during or following the popularisation of Ossianic literature in the latter eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries (Johnston, Matheson and Lorimer, 1964). Whatever the case, there is no known earlier example of the melody to this lay-in-miniature on record prior to Johnston’s first recording of it in conversation with researcher Dr John MacInnes in 1953. He had learned the words and melody from his sister Annie Johnston (Annag Aonghais Chaluim) who in her turn had learned them from a neighbour, Bean Aonghais Mhóir (‘The Wife of Big Angus’).
Johnston’s melody to these verses is transposed to the bagpipe scale and idiomatic ‘cuttings’ and other pipe ornamentation introduced in Figure 6, highlighting the by now familiar motif of six repeated monotonic beats at the higher end of the scale.

Figure 6: The opening verse and refrain to Bruadal Dheirdire, transcribed from the singing of Calum Johnston (SA 1964.146) and set to bagpipe scale and ornamentation.

Differences in text apparent between Johnston’s version and that recited by MacNeill in 1867 may be explained firstly by the natural process of bifurcation associated with oral tradition; by the assertion in Carmichael’s introduction to his publication of the Deirdre tale that the elderly MacNeill was reckoned, by his brother, to have been ‘an imperfect bearer’ (Carmichael 1914, 2); and, most pertinently, by the possibility that in the natural course of aural transmission in Barra the melody took on a form influenced by the island’s vibrant piping tradition. This is attested to by the repetition for musical effect – the echoing, as it were – of the words na trì, geala, meala, dubhailc and dubha compared to the 1867 text, and the fact that whereas MacNeill ended each refrain simply with a Dheirdire, Johnston’s ended with a Dheirdire mo ghaoil, the latter meaning ‘my love’ as a term of endearment in the vocative tense. Johnston’s melody, illustrated above, suggests that adding mo ghaoil was a device for ensuring that the last word in each refrain was anchored in pitch to the fifth interval in the scale – the E in piping – which maintains the note’s dominance in the melody, first established by the plaintive and onomatopoeic na trì.

This dominance of the E serves no harmonic function for the unaccompanied singer, but the E note is an aural icon of the piping idiom on account of its signature harmonic consonance with the drones. The dominance of the fifth in Johnston’s Bruadal Dheirdire gives us a glimpse into the influence of the piping idiom on aural transmission amongst singers in Barra up to Johnston’s generation. So much in fact did Johnston’s rendition reflect the melodic and rhythmic hallmarks of the bagpipe idiom that in the
Sound Archives’ Chronological Register of Recorded Items for 1964, Rev. Matheson classified it as a pibroch song – one of that class of Gaelic songs bearing melodic, structural and historical links to pibroch, either in the abstract or to specific cognate tunes in the pibroch repertoire.

In addition to the anchoring of each verse and refrain to the fifth interval, the strongest melodic hallmark of the song’s links to pibroch is the series of six repeated monotone beats on E in the first and second lines in Figure 6, in alignment with the number of syllables in the phrases (*cal*[a]*mana geala* and *bal*[a]*gama meala*); the series of three beats on high G in line 3 (*sor*[a]*chair*); and the series of three beats on the low A which opens the final phrase, featured in line 4 (*Chan eil ann*). These motifs in *Bruadal Dheirdire* exemplify the recitative rhythms of Gaelic narrative singing, and in them we see an antecedent to pibroch’s echo beat patterns in both single (three pulses) and successive (six pulses) contexts.

*Bruadal Dheirdire* also gives a current, living insight into the erstwhile variability of the pibroch echo beat’s rhythmic scansion. Johnston sang the phrases *cal*[a]*mana geala* and *bal*[a]*gama meala* in a distinctly even pattern (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: An excerpt from Calum Johnston’s singing of *Bruadal Dheirdire*](image1)

We may compare Johnston’s scansion with that of Gaelic singer Margaret Callan, who more recently sang *Bruadal Dheirdire* for the University of Bangor’s symposium *Voicing the Verse: Experiments in Performing Vernacular Bardic Poetry* (Callan 2010). Callan based her rendition on Johnston’s 1953 recording, but her scansion of the phrase *cal*[a]*mana geala* was more rhythmically dynamic than Johnston’s (Figure 8).

![Figure 8: An excerpt from Margaret Callan’s singing of *Bruadal Dheirdire*](image2)

There is even something of the orthodox, short-long-short echo-beat rhythm recognisable to today’s pipers in Callan’s rendition. The above comparison suggests that just as rhythmic scansion across phrases is naturally at the discretion of the singer (albeit within the bounds of traditional and textual accuracy), the pibroch echo beat, single or successive, is likely also to have been articulated at the idiosyncratic discretion of the piper.

A final way of demonstrating how *Bruadal Dheirdire* illustrates the basis of the pibroch echo beat motif in the syllabic rhythms of Gaelic song is to consider a reverse engineering of Allan MacDonald’s own case study performance process. In other words, just as MacDonald began with a pibroch in its conventional competitive style and stripped it of its latter-day ornamental accoutrements to reveal more clearly its melodic
and rhythmic relationship with cognate songs, it may be revealing to imagine what *Bruadal Dheirdire* would sound like if a cognate pibroch had existed, and this in turn had survived the transgenerational process of adaptation and arrangement to feature in today’s conventional canon. It is a conjectural exercise, but by demonstrating how the song could have existed as a pibroch *ùrlar*, or initial theme, it becomes clearer how the song’s monotonic patterns lend themselves effortlessly to the echo beat motif as it is understood and performed today. Such a tune could have borne a striking resemblance to ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’ in its structure, melodic contour and the placing of its echo beats (Figure 9).

Figure 9: An arrangement of *Bruadal Dheirdire* in the form of a conventional pibroch *ùrlar* in the present competition idiom.

![Figure 9: An arrangement of *Bruadal Dheirdire* in the form of a conventional pibroch *ùrlar* in the present competition idiom.](image)

**Conclusion**

This paper was intended to broaden, albeit in limited but important ways, the published evidence base for Allan MacDonald’s thesis proposing links between early pibroch performance style and interpretation to syllabic rhythms in traditional Gaelic song. In particular, whilst it is problematic to consider a musical motif in isolation from its wider rhythmic contexts, the echo beat remains one of the characteristics of MacDonald’s pibroch style that is most frequently and immediately recognised as unorthodox (and exciting) by learner and professional pipers alike. It is hoped therefore that this paper’s analysis of *’S i Mo Bhrà Fhin as Fheàrr* and *Bruadal Dheirdire* lends further weight to the central tenet of MacDonald’s thesis: that pibroch’s echo beat motif has clear antecedents in the syllabic rhythms of cognate Gaelic songs and that it was traditionally performed, prior to the age of standardised texts and teachings, with what we would regard today as rubato, calibrated in relation to its immediate rhythmic surroundings and at the discretion of the performer. This in turn provides further historical, cultural and musical context and support to the validity of MacDonald’s own application of his findings in various notable performances – particularly his recitative and chant-like approach to the successive echo beat on E in ‘MacLeod’s Controversy’.
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The Crathes Castle flute: Artistic license or historical anomaly?¹

Elizabeth C. Ford

Crathes Castle, located in Banchory, Aberdeenshire, was built between 1553 and 1596 by the Burnett of Leys family who commissioned master masons from the Bell family, who built other castles in the neighbourhood including Craigievar and Fraser. The castle is in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. The castle is known for its painted ceilings, which occur in five of the chambers. The ceilings were painted in the 1590s, and commissioned by Alexander Burnett of Leys and his wife, Katherine Gordon, the first members of the family to live in the castle. The artist is unknown. The ceiling of the Muses’ Chamber (Figure 1) depicts the nine muses arranged in a consort with instru-

Figure 1: The Muses’ Ceiling, Crathes Castle, the National Trust for Scotland. Reproduced with permission.

¹ This article is based on a presentation given at the 2015 Musica Scotica conference. Funding towards the project has since been awarded by the Friends of St Cecilia’s Hall, the Royal Musical Association, and the Hope Scott Trust, which has gone towards a Renaissance flute by Martin Wenner and 3-D printed versions of the Crathes flute by Donald W. G. Lindsay. Research is ongoing, and more copies will be made, funding permitting.
ments or other representations of what each symbolises in mythology,\(^2\) as well as the seven virtues. While none of the instruments is an exact representation of its intended model, the flute is especially noteworthy. It is held transverse, to Euterpe’s left side, and the end flares into a large bell. This flute is unique in the western world, and has been very little studied by music and art historians. It is the second-oldest iconographical evidence for the transverse flute in Scotland: the first is the fountain at Linlithgow Palace.\(^3\) The ceiling was painted in 1599, restored in 1876, and removed for conservation and put back in place in 1961 (Hargreaves 1989, 373).

Clio, Erato and Urania are not shown with instruments. Thalia, Melpomene, Euterpe, Terpsichore, Caliope and Polyhymnia are shown with fiddle, viol, flute, lute, harp and ‘monochordis’. The text tells the viewer what each muse has in case it is not obvious.

3 The fountain at Linlithgow Palace depicts a satyr playing a long cylindrical flute, typical of the sixteenth century.

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\(^2\) Clio, Erato and Urania are not shown with instruments. Thalia, Melpomene, Euterpe, Terpsichore, Caliope and Polyhymnia are shown with fiddle, viol, flute, lute, harp and ‘monochordis’. The text tells the viewer what each muse has in case it is not obvious.

\(^3\) The fountain at Linlithgow Palace depicts a satyr playing a long cylindrical flute, typical of the sixteenth century.
Verses are painted on the ceiling beams between the panels of paintings. The one nearest the flute player reads ‘Euterpe, I am this arte did found/To playe on quhissile first devysit. All melodie and plesand sound, Be me they be better prysit.’ This gives no insight at all into the bell on her flute, and the term quhissile should be considered synonymous with flute, as prior to the middle of the eighteenth century the word flute could and did refer to a variety of non-reed woodwind instruments.

The bell-ended flute raises a number of questions:

(1) Was there an original for the flute?
(2) What is the function of the bell?
(3) How does the bell affect the sound?
(4) How does the flute sound in relation to standard flutes from the sixteenth century?
(5) How does the flute sound with the other instruments depicted on the ceiling?
(6) Does the presence of the bell have implications for the bore of the flute?

Because of the ongoing and mostly speculative nature of this project, many of these questions cannot be answered at this stage.

The likelihood of an original for the flute painted on the ceiling seems slim: all contemporary images of flutes are straight, cylindrical instruments with six finger holes, in a variety of sizes, as are surviving instruments. No descriptions of flutes with flared ends exist, in art or in writings on music. Many paintings of flute players from the sixteenth century survive, and all have straight flutes. Michael Praetorius, in Syntagma Musicum (1618), and Marin Mersenne, in Harmonie Universelle (1636), described many wind instruments with flared ends, but all are end-blown.

**Figure 3:** Female musicians depicted by the Master of Female Half-_lengths. Public domain.
The instrument on the ceiling has the body and playing position of a flute and the end of a recorder. It is, however, also improbable that the artist had never seen a flute. The other instruments are well-represented, but for a few missing tuning pegs, and all fit well within the confines of the ceiling panels which sometimes distort the perspective.

The possible explanations for the flute are that it was a unique instrument that the artist had seen or had heard about; that he did not know what a flute looked like; that it was a common instrument in Aberdeenshire though no originals or other depictions survived. All the possibilities are seemingly implausible, and the remaining questions regarding the Crathes flute are best addressed hypothetically: what would the instrument have sounded like if it had existed?

In an effort to address that question, two reconstructions of the Crathes flute have been made. The first was created by flute-maker Rod Cameron in his workshop in Mendocino, California; it was made in one piece out of a cherry bedpost from 1820. To design the flute, he first took a picture of me holding my flute after J. Denner in playing position, and then put it against the Crathes picture, reversing the image of the painting so that the flute would go to the right for ease of modern playing.

Figure 4: Crathes flute reconstruction prototypes with the bedpost that became the final flute, Rod Cameron’s workshop; permission pending.

4 This was the longest piece of wood he had that could be turned and have a good tone.
5 The original for this flute was made about 1720. My copy was made by John Gallagher in 2007.
This helped him to judge the length and the position of the finger holes. Cameron was skeptical as to whether or not a flute with a flared end would play; he was especially concerned that continuing the flare into the bell would result in a useless instrument, and he very much wanted to make a working instrument. To that end, instead of modelling the bore on a cylindrical flute, he used a bore based on a one-keyed flute by C. A. Grenser from about 1750, which has a conical bore.

Figure 5: Reconstruction of the Crathes Flute, Rod Cameron’s workshop; permission pending.

This model went through several phases of design, and the result is the one-piece wooden instrument. The bore of the flute ends before the flare begins, and the effect is essentially that of a megaphone. The instrument sounds like a loud eighteenth-century flute in that major sharp key signatures are favoured, without the chromatic notes offered by the D-sharp key, the innovation that changed flute playing in the late seventeenth century.

3-D printing is a new innovation for instrument-making, and ideally suited to speculative reconstructions such as the Crathes Castle flute. Because plastic is used, it is cheaper and less wasteful than wood in the event of a mistake, and because most of the designing is done using software, more models can be tested before a final instrument is produced. Glasgow-based pipe maker Donald W. G. Lindsay developed the Lindsay

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6 C. A. Grenser was active in Dresden in the second half of the eighteenth century. His instruments are widely copied (Waterhouse 1993, 145-6).
System Chanter using two 3-D printers and his experience as a piper and instrument maker. He now solves common issues in instrument making that would historically have taken too much of the maker’s time and energy to effectively and efficiently solve.7

The model of the Crathes flute printed by Lindsay (pictured here on the right) is made of plastic in seven sections with reinforced threaded rods of brass on the joints and walls three millimetres thick. It is the longest and heaviest instrument he has made. The bell is removable, with the result being the low D turns into an E-flat. The bore flares before the removable bell, so the options are either a large and prominent or slightly more discreet bell at the end. During the design process, Lindsay speculated that the bell may have been there to optimize the lower register to better capture the air column and filter the sound. He said that it reminded him of a pipe drone without the resonator. The painting was treated as a reliable source,8 and used as a scale model against a sixteenth-century flute made by Martin Wenner. The Wenner flute informed how the

Figure 6: Reconstructed Crathes Flute by Rod Cameron; photography by the author.

Figure 7: Reconstructed Crathes Flute by Donald Lindsay; photography by the author.

7 See his website for more details: http://lindstruments.com/pages/about-us.
8 In this Lindsay differs from Cameron, who has repeatedly argued that the source should not be trusted. Personal communication.
finger holes were placed, and the flutes are the same length until the bell. While the outside of the instrument is smooth, the inside is slightly rough, like wood. The flute plays much more like the Wenner flute with a slightly more powerful lower register. Lengths of the flutes were measured on a grid against the Crathes ceiling, and possibly the measurements are slightly inaccurate due to the perspective of the painting: Euterpe and her flute are tucked between the ceiling beams, so her arms and her flute may not be held quite properly.

Lindsay said that, as a maker, the biggest question he had was regarding what benefits the bell offered. Beyond speculating that the bell boosts the lower register, that question remains unanswered at this stage of research, though future experimentations with design may address the issue. He used Audio Spectrum Analysis software to isolate the effects of changes in design in the bore of the flute, and we have a future plan to use audio spectrum analysis to pinpoint other effects of the bell’s size, flare, and placement on the overall sound.

Some preliminary questions about the possibilities of the flute were addressed by Murray Campbell, who has not seen either reconstruction. He suggested that any effect of the bell would be noticed only with most of the holes covered, as little energy radiates from the bell when several holes are uncovered, and this is dependent on the placing of the holes. Additionally, the bore shape can affect the overall resonance. Bells are, he says, common on reed instruments but not flutes because the air column and sound radiate from the embouchure hole, so the boosting of radiation from the terminal end is less critical than in a reed instrument.

Future paths for study will be to measure the resonances of the reconstructed flutes, and determine what effect, if any, the bell and the bore shapes have on the sound. Research into the possibilities of the bell-ended flute is ongoing, and at this stage no firm conclusion is possible. The potential conclusions are that the flute existed and this is the only surviving record; that the artist started painting an instrument such as a recorder and changed it; or that the artist did not know what a flute of the time looked like. Further investigation is required.

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10 Personal communication


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James Oswald (1710–1769) and Highland music: Context and legacy

John Purser

James Oswald’s later books from the *Caledonian Pocket Companion* contain a number of items which are clearly of Highland provenance, both in title and style. Amongst these is the first appearance in publication or manuscript of the tune for a Hebridean waulking song, and early examples of music drawn from the clàrsach and bagpipe repertoires. Oswald is also credited with settings of passages from James MacPherson’s *Selma*, which survive in a unique copy in the Wighton Collection, Dundee, in which it is claimed that Oswald took them down from MacPherson’s own singing.

This chapter explores potential routes of transmission for such material, and considers the significance of these examples within the context of post-Jacobean cultural sensitivities. Many of the prevailing attitudes to such ‘exotic’ repertoire are reflected in evolving images of relevant musicians. This evolution – from Hogarth to Runciman, de Loutherbourg, and Ingres to choose but four – will be seen to parallel an evolution in the acceptability of the musical material.

The early context of Oswald’s publications was one in which the dominance of the Italians, not to forget Handel, was both happily endorsed and also felt to be something which had to be negotiated. The popular music of the day was not necessarily popular with all classes, hence Hogarth’s *Enraged Musician* of 1741; though Hogarth knew well that the Scots were ‘civilised’ performers, as shown in his c.1731 engraving of musicians in Edinburgh in ‘Mary’s Chappel: Five at Night’ (Barlow 2005, 202, 5). This latter, however, does not look like a setting for piobaireachd or even clàrsach, and Gaelic might well have proved somewhat imponderable. The status of traditional versus classical music in eighteenth-century Scotland has been extensively discussed elsewhere, particularly with respect to The Society of the Temple of Apollo, founded by Oswald (Purser 2007, 199-227). But it is from Oswald’s *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, published over about a decade from the 1750s to perhaps the very early 1760s, that we find the evidence for a gradual change of emphasis in which Highland and specifically Gaelic-related material finds an increasing place.

The frontispiece of James Oswald’s *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (Figure 1) makes no nationalist statement, either in terms of dress or surroundings. It was not a Scottish or a Highland or a Gaelic companion: nor was it a North British companion. It
was also, being a companion, open to including some non-Scottish favourites. It contains some 555 tunes, many with variations, and the gentleman flautist, in his large Palladian household, perhaps designed by one of the Adams, is not advertising anything from the Gàidhealtachd.

However, Highland aristocrats of the time were well versed in the classics, and the leading Gaelic-speaking philosopher and reputed founder of modern sociology, Adhamh MacFhearghuis (1723–1816) – Adam Ferguson, as he is known to non-Gaels – supported James MacPherson’s desire to publish some of the original sources of his Ossianic works, using the Greek alphabet, as it would be more accurate, and therefore more comprehensible to a Gael than transcribing Gaelic using the English alphabet (Small 1864, 65-66).

Clearly Oswald was sympathetic to Highland music, but this is not to be taken for granted, for he is credited with the first harmonisation of ‘God Save the King’ with its anti-Scots sentiments. On the other hand, in London he had published a tune for Smollett’s ‘Tears of Scotland’, the verses for which were so anti-government that they
were verging on the seditious (Purser 2007b, 17-18). Oswald might also have had in mind that ‘God Save the King’ was originally a Jacobite song (Pittock 1994, 63-64). It may well be that Oswald was himself confused by events, especially as his musical loyalties were wide-spread. Nor should we forget that Adam Ferguson fought with the Hanoverians, as did the composer John Reid. The 1745 Rising was a civil war, not a Highlands versus Lowlands war.

There are, however, examples of pieces in the Caledonian Pocket Companion of undoubted Highland origin, and it is interesting to note that they mostly occur in the later volumes. These are classified below under the headings of Clàrsach, Piobaireachd, and Òran Luaidh (Waulking Song).

But where did the London-based and upwardly mobile James Oswald get a hold of such material? Did he always have it under his fingers and in his ears from his early days playing and teaching in the big houses of Fife and neighbouring Perthshire? Did he pick them up in Edinburgh, or did he get them from the likes of David Young, whose compilation for Walter McFarlane, commenced and possibly completed in 1740, contains a number of Highland pieces for fiddle, including piobaireachd with Gaelic titles? There are close connections between Oswald and the McFarlane manuscripts (NLS MSS 2084 and 2085), which latter occasionally acknowledge Oswald as the composer. 1740 is the year of Oswald’s first publication, 1731 the year of his earliest known manuscript, when he was but 20 years of age. We should, then, consider the very real possibility that the McFarlane title page date is merely the date of commencement. For example, ‘The Banks of Forth’, which is claimed for Oswald in The Caledonian Pocket Companion, and which he had published earlier in 1740, also appears in the McFarlane manuscript 1740 III No. 247. Although the McFarlane manuscript does not acknowledge Oswald as the composer, it is identical in all respects except for an additional trill or two. It is also placed beside ‘The Master Mason’s Music’ and this has undoubtedly been copied from Oswald 1740 because it has been transposed up a tone, but the transcriber has forgotten to transpose the last two bars. There are other instances, such as Oswald’s ‘Bonny Mary’ which is also in McFarlane, volume III – but what is the date of the contents of Volume III? There are too many examples to list here, but they can be found by searching for McFarlane in the notes to the present author’s edition of the Caledonian Pocket Companion (Purser 2007b).

Clàrsach repertoire in Oswald

Although the Gàidhealtachd is primarily associated with the bagpipes, it used to be the clàrsach that was regarded as the characteristic instrument – as mentioned, for example, by the Gaelic-speaking George Buchanan, who was one of Europe’s most outstanding scholars, and the first to identify the Celtic languages as a group. Oswald’s Caledonian Pocket Companion is a particularly significant source for clàrsach repertoire. It includes the first appearance in print or manuscript of ‘Rory Dall’s Port’ (Book VIII), ‘Lord Antrim’s Delight’ (Book XII), ‘Lude’s Lament’ (Book IX), and ‘Lude’s Supper’ (Book X), and the first publication of ‘The Royal Lament’ (Book VIII). This latter is also in McFarlane, but who got it from whom? The McFarlane and Oswald versions are very similar,
but the later Angus Fraser manuscript has a version which seems more obviously in touch with the clàrsach repertoire and which also provides variations (Collinson 1966, 238). Amongst clàrsach tunes one might also include ‘Lady Barnard’s Lament’ (Book VII) which appears only in Oswald, but, with its two variations, strikes one as a classic from the clàrsach repertoire. It is almost entirely pentatonic, and has some similarities to versions of ‘Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard’ in Bronson, but the Oswald version is not referred to by Bronson, who did not have a copy of the Caledonian Pocket Companion (Bronson 1962, 267-315).

‘Rory Dall’s Port’ was very probably composed by Oswald, who had already published it around 1740 as ‘A Highland Port by Rory Dall’, with figured bass, in A Collection of 43 Scot’s [sic] Tunes, dedicated to the Earl of Bute. The only copies of which the present author has knowledge were published by J. Bland and are assigned to the 1790s. It seems natural to assume that these were reprints, but the initial date still eludes us. In any event, it was this tune that was used by Burns for ‘Ae Fond Kiss’. This is not the same as ‘Port Rorie Dall’ in the Straloch manuscript (named ‘Port Ballangowne’ in the Skene ms), but in ascribing it to Rory Dall, Oswald implies that it is a harp tune. Sanger and Kinnaird analyse the structure as typical of harp tunes related to the old clan marches (Sanger and Kinnaird 1992, 185). Johnson thinks the melody is probably by Oswald himself, rather than by either Rory Dall O’Cathain or Rory Dall Morrison (Johnson 2005, 64). There are six variations, virtually certainly by Oswald, but these too are in a style suggestive of the harp rather than the fiddle, with double stops of a kind he rarely uses elsewhere, though the octave ‘doublings’ may simply be alternatives for the flute.

According to John Gunn’s An Historical Enquiry respecting the Performance on the Harp in the Highlands written in 1807, ‘The Royal Lament’ was composed by John Garbh MacLean of Coll and refers to the execution of Charles I in 1649. The MacLeans of Coll had a long association with the clàrsach (Sanger and Kinnaird 1992, 123-124). However, Oswald was clearly aware of music from the Gàidhealtachd from early on: for example, ‘Failtene Moisq’ (‘Failte na miosq’) appears in Book I of The Caledonian Pocket Companion and also in two of Oswald’s earlier publications of 1740 and 1743. It is also in the McFarlane manuscript III 108 as ‘Failte na miosq’.

Burns made this favourite of Sir Walter Scott’s even more popular with his famous lyrics of which the chorus starts ‘My heart’s in the Highlands my heart is not here’. The title ‘Port More’ is given to it in NLS ms. 2254, p. 54 and is of interest in that the word ‘Port’ normally implies a harp tune – but this title has yet to be found with the actual music. The Gaelic is usually translated as ‘The Musket’s Salute’, but could also mean ‘Salute to Drunkenness’. A copy in Perth Public Library of the Caledonian Pocket Companion has a pencil note beside it which reads ‘Burk Thumoth 1742’, which must refer to Burk Thumoth’s publications of c.1745. However the present author has been unable to match any of the Irish or Scottish tunes in Thumoth to this one. The tune is distinctly Irish in character, including its single variation, and was probably originally a harp tune, but Patrick MacDonald’s notes in the Mclean-Clephane manuscript of 1816 (p. 24) claim that the tune is ‘originally Scottish but suited to the Harp by O’Kane’. Oswald’s A Curious Collection of Scots tunes has it under the heading ‘The following Scots Tunes for
a Violin or German flute, so presumably he thought of it as Scottish in origin (Oswald 1740, 35).

*Piobaireachd in Oswald’s Caledonian Pocket Companion*

Moving on to *piobaireachd*, it is worth noticing that the ‘Cumha Easbuig Earaghaidheal’ (The Lament for the Bishop of Argyll) appears in McFarlane, but not in Oswald. It may have its origins as a clàrsach piece, for it has no parallel in the bagpipe repertoire. On the other hand, ‘Piobairachd mhic Dhonuil’ in Oswald’s Book XII is undoubtedly found in the bagpipe repertoire, and Oswald’s spelling of the title indicates at least some awareness of the Gaelic language itself. Although this is a fiddle *piobaireachd*, the words of the associated *piobaireachd* song could certainly be sung to the opening sections (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Oswald, *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, ‘Piobairachd mhic Dhonuil’, Book XII. Attribution as before.
The same is true of the very beautiful ‘Marsail Lochinalie’, in Book XI, from c.1759, the basis of which is the melody of ‘Cro Chinn t-Saile’. Again, one could sing the Gaelic to the opening phrases of the piobaireachd (Figure 3).

Moving from clàrsach and piobaireachd, to òran luaidh (waulking song), one shifts from a rich bagpipe-influenced field in Oswald to one with a single example: but the mere fact of it is quite extraordinary. These waulking songs never had an instrumental context. They were work songs, built up, quite often, from fragments of ancient Fenian lays, but also improvised on the spot. The chances of finding one in a collection such as The Caledonian Pocket Companion were tiny, but it is there in Book XII. When sung down
the phone to the leading Gaelic singer, the late Flora MacNeil, she immediately declared it to be an old one because of the character of the vocables which clearly mirror the first phrase of the tune. So, somehow, someone sang this to Oswald, with the right vocables, and he took it down accurately and then added variations. There is nothing like this until Patrick MacDonald’s collection of 1784. Oswald was far ahead, but because his was an instrumental collection, the tune is still seeking the words which would have followed the opening vocables (Figure 4).

These later books, notably Books XI and XII, of Oswald’s *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, show an increased interest in Highland music, and it may well be that he had a Highland musician informing him. If so, who? One possibility is Adam Ferguson who was one of the earliest persons to comment upon the authenticity or otherwise of MacPherson’s work, and also one of the few truly qualified so to do, having himself heard Ossianic material sung in the Highlands (Donaldson 2000, 11). Ferguson had become tutor to the Earl of Bute’s sons some time before January 1758 (Small 1864, 6).

Figure 4: Oswald, *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, ‘Hi ri ri ri ho’, Book XII. Attribution as before.
Oswald's *A Collection of 43 Scot's Tunes*... was dedicated to the Earl of Bute and, although we do not have a secure date of publication (see above), a publication date of around the late 1750s would make sense as the Earl of Bute was closely associated with the Prince of Wales and especially with the Prince's widow, the Prince having died in 1751. It is very likely that it was Lord Bute who helped secure Oswald's appointment as 'Chamber composer to His Majesty' on the 31st of January 1761, following the accession to the throne of George the Third. There is good reason, then, to suppose that Ferguson as tutor to two of the Earl's sons, would have had a chance to meet a man patronised by his own employer, and as celebrated as Oswald was in his day.

The connection with the Prince of Wales dated back several years. Oswald's *A Collection of Curious Scots Tunes* is usually given the date of 1743 but, in the light of the advertisement, possibly earlier; and *A Second Collection of Curious Scots Tunes* is normally assigned to 1744. Both publications were dedicated to Frederick Prince of Wales, and this tells us something about Oswald's situation in London. The dedication was a highly prestigious one, but necessarily controversial in that the Prince was at loggerheads with his own parents and the two sides had divided into rival cultural camps. The Prince's camp was more closely associated with a revival of British culture and this, no doubt, was intended to include Scotland.

In claiming that Oswald was celebrated, one can draw attention not only to his appointment as Chamber Composer to the King, but also to the intimacy of his relationship with the Lytton family, which led to his marriage to Lytton's widow, Leonora, who had the life rent of Knebworth House (to this day one of England's great stately homes). Leonora may possibly be referred to in three tunes which appear in *The Caledonian Pocket Companion* – 'Norea's Scots Measure', 'Norea's Wish' and 'Norea's Lost to me', the first two from Book V, and the last from Book XI. Norea is a contraction of Leonora. The marriage was probably kept secret, but when Leonora died in 1790 her own will was in the name of Leonora Robinson Lytton Oswald, and two of Oswald's granddaughters were named Leonora after their step-mother. When Oswald died, he named her as his sole executrix.

In addition to patronage and love, one may also refer to Benjamin Franklin's letter of the 2nd of June 1765, to Lord Kames, on the subject of the superiority of traditional Scottish melody, in which Franklin wrote:

> Whoever has heard James Oswald play them on his violoncello, will be less inclined to dispute this with me. I have more than once seen tears of pleasure in the eyes of his auditors, and, yes, I think, even his playing those tunes would please more, if he gave them less modern ornamentation (Labaree ed. 1966, 164).

Franklin's letter to Lord Kames, never mind subsequent references to Oswald by such as Simon Fraser in his Appendix (p. 95) to his *Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland* of 1816, indicate the extent of his reputation both during and after his lifetime, including the fact that Robert Burns wrote from Ellisland to James Johnson in 1791, 'I was so lucky lately to pick up an entire copy of Oswald's Scots music and I think I shall
make glorious work of it. Burns kept and annotated a copy of Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*.

**Oswald’s settings of MacPherson’s Ossian**

There is one other musical connection between Oswald and the Highlands and this is what are claimed to be Oswald’s settings of MacPherson’s *Songs of Selma*.

The two settings published in *The Scots Musical Museum* come from a larger group which appears at the end of the Wighton Collection’s unique copy of *The Pocket Companion for the Guittar* which declares that ‘The following Airs have been handed down since the time of OSSIAN. The Musick taken from Mr. McPherson’s singing by Mr. Oswald.’ There are nine such airs set down as though to be accompanied by the so-called ‘English’ guitar, some being apparently too high-pitched for a normal voice but in fact intended to be transposed from C to G. Oswald had two guitars, one in C and one in G, but did not bother to transpose the music for the G guitar as the fingerings were the same. For instance, the tessitura of the first song would be absurdly high if not transposed (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Oswald, *The Pocket Companion for the Guittar*, Ossian Song 1, ‘It is night’.

The Wighton Library, Dundee holds the unique copy with Location 32001. The Wighton classification is *misc. vocal music with accomp.* By kind permission of David Kett.
The MacPherson craze, which was a world-wide phenomenon, is by no means to be ridiculed or underrated, but that is a separate and on-going discussion. Suffice it to say here that Adhamh MacFhearghuis (Adam Ferguson) never accused MacPherson of either deception or wrong-doing, but supported him throughout. Dr Johnson, ignorant of the entire matter on every conceivable count, should not even be in the picture. More revealing is Sir Joshua Reynolds’s portrait of MacPherson which portrays a sharp-minded, intelligent, engaging personality.

As for Oswald, he and MacPherson were both in London at the same time, so it is entirely possible that they met, but further support for the assertion that Oswald took down the tunes from MacPherson’s singing has yet to be found, and it is clear that some of the melodies have been culled from Oswald’s own collections rather than from time immemorial. Likewise, the texts for the songs have been put together from different parts of MacPherson’s writings. This MacPherson and/or Oswald might well have done for themselves, but it is also possible that these songs were put together by some third party. The Wighton Collection states that the publication is by James Oswald, but that is a claim which also requires verification. These provisos made, the evidence of the musical sources offered below makes Oswald himself the likely composer and the claim that he took the music down from MacPherson’s singing hints at a collaboration between the two men. Stenhouse in his Notes to the *Scots Musical Museum* variously describes the provenance of two of these songs as ‘said to be the composition of Oswald’ (Stenhouse 1853, 118-119) and ‘was composed by Oswald’ (Stenhouse 1853, 241). The songs are definitely not traditional in either words or music, although imitating aspects of the tradition, on occasion amounting almost to quotation, as in No. 6, which leans heavily on the opening phrases of the two halves of ‘Colonel Gardiner’s Lament’ from *The Caledonian Pocket Companion* Book X.

In all probability the title of this tune refers to the same Colonel Gardiner for whom Sir Gilbert Elliot (1722–1777) composed ‘“Twas at the hour of dark midnight’, subsequently set to the tune of ‘Sawney’s Pipe’. If so, it is a measure of the respect in which Gardiner was held, for he was ‘cut down by a Highlander armed with a scythe-blade, after his soldiers had basely deserted him’ at the Battle of Prestonpans, fighting against the Jacobites (Wilson 1876, I, 207). Prestonpans was a notable Jacobite victory and Gardiner must be about the only man on the Hanoverian side to come out of it with any credit. ‘Johnny Cope’ gives the more usual satirical account of the rout of the Hanoverians. Oswald’s lament makes emotive use of pointed articulation followed by silence, and bears all the hallmarks of his instrumental style. It was Sir Gilbert’s father (also Sir Gilbert, 1693/4–1766) who was credited with introducing the German transverse flute to Scotland in 1725 and, though this is now clearly discounted by Elizabeth Ford (Ford 2016, 9 et seq.), the association remains significant, and it may well be that this piece was intended for flute. The younger Sir Gilbert became an MP and therefore came to London for part of the year in 1754, which is about the time that this particular section of *The Caledonian Pocket Companion* was being planned.

Another of Oswald’s Ossian settings with roots in the ‘tradition’ is No. 7, ‘In the Hall I lay in Night’ (Figure 6).
This starts off with the same tune traditionally used for ‘Johnnie Armstrong’, but ‘Johnnie Armstrong’ has no earlier provenance than Oswald, in the form of ‘Kennet’s Dream’ which, with its variations is a beauty and is almost certainly part of the much searched-for original of the tune Robert Burns used for his famous song ‘Ye Banks and Braes o’ Bonnie Doon’. The tune as used by Burns has a different opening phrase, but the identification with the rest of the melody is inescapable. However, the word setting of ‘In the Hall I lay in Night’ is awkward and strongly implies that existing music was pressed into service to supply an Ossianic need.

‘Kennet’s Dream’ however is almost certainly by Oswald himself. It appears first in his *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (London 1750s) – Burns had a copy of this work and was himself a fiddler. A further clue to its being by Oswald is the tune’s title, which refers to Alexander Bruce of Kennet House in Clackmannanshire. It was common for a land or house owner to be named after his or her property. ‘Kennet’s Dream’ uses *scordatura*, in this instance the violin being re-tuned to A-E-a-e. This allows for the introduction of drone effects, as well as increasing the resonance of the instrument in its preferred key of
A. In Book X (c.1758) of *The Caledonian Pocket Companion*, there are several pieces in *scordatura*. Some of these are named after subscribers to Oswald’s first publication – *A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (Edinburgh 1740). Alexander Bruce was one of those subscribers, and Oswald had not forgotten their early patronage.

Whatever one may think of this music in terms of the tradition either in Scots or in Gaelic, these songs offer an intriguing insight into the cross-over from Highland to Lowland, Lowland to Highland. And here we come to the change in the visual realisation of the ideal musical world, for now it is dominated by the bard, not the Italian or German composer. A classic example is Alexander Runciman’s image of Ossian, but the harp strings in his image go straight up and down from the tuning pins to the forepillar, which means that they would produce very little sound, as they miss the soundbox.

Why has Runciman made this mistake? Probably because he thinks all such strings go straight up and down as on a classical lyre: so there is still a classical influence on the iconography, but an ignorant one. But with his fine image of blind Ossian and his amazing and sadly destroyed Ossian ceiling for Penicuik House, Runciman was only the start of it, for the image of the bard had taken off, as in that of a Welsh bard by de Loutherbourg for Edward Jones’s 1794 publication, now freed of its classical absurdities and wholly romanticised, and not badly observed at all (Figure 7).


The image is taken from the author’s personal copy. The address of sale – Mount Street – has been struck out and replaced with an address in Grosvenor Square by hand in brown ink in 1795.
Sadly, such standards of observation were rarely sustained. Even Ingres omits the fore-pillar in *Ossian’s Dream*, never mind that a true *clàrsach* has a curved, not a straight fore-pillar. So finally we reach the *Scots Musical Museum*. The Greek Muses are still there: the Homeric dream still being dreamt (Figure 8).

Figure 8: James Johnson, *The Scots Musical Museum*, Volume III, title page. Various copies extant. The point being made in relation to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (dedicatees from Vol. III on), and the use of the word ‘Museum’ in the title, has more force if seen applied to a later edition which encompasses all 6 volumes.
It is easy enough to enter *The Scots Musical Museum* into a list of dramatic rescues, but we should not forget that the word ‘museum’ in those days referred more directly to the Muses than it does today, and would have been understood as such by the dedicatees of the collection – The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, which noble body is certainly no more antiquated than its English counterpart. These classical echoes of muses and the like had been ever-present, sometimes expressed with wit as in Burns’ *The Jolly Beggars* with its ‘wee Apollo’ playing with ‘allegretto glee’. But they came out of a stable of reverence for the classics, the widespread knowledge of which was assumed.

The following list gives the sources for the lyrics in the Wighton Collection publication referred to above. The page numbers for *Fingal* and *Temora* are those of the Dublin editions of 1763.

**Airs sung by MacPherson to Oswald**

1. ‘It is night, I am alone’, sung by Colma (*Songs of Selma* in Macpherson 1763a, 204)
2. ‘On the harp arose the white hand of Colna’ (*Oina-Morul*, in Macpherson 1763b, 274. Note: wrong name in score)
3. ‘Ullin Carril and Ryno’ (*Macpherson 1763b, Book 7, 202)
4. ‘Morning pours from the east’ (*Macpherson 1763b, Book 7, 201)
5. ‘Thou dweller between the shields that hang on high’ (*Macpherson 1763b, Book 5, 141)
6. ‘Son of Alpin strike the string’ (*Macpherson 1763b, Book 7, 201. Note: this is also given in original Gaelic)
7. ‘In the Hall I lay in Night’ (*Oina Morul* in Macpherson 1763b, 274 – ‘In the hall I lay by night, Mine eyes were half closed in sleep. Soft music came to mine ear, it was the maid of “Selma”’).  
   (*Colna Dona* in Macpherson 1763b, 280 – ‘Behind it heaved the breast of a maid, white as the bosom of a swan, rising on swift-rolling waves’. Note: not exactly the same text).
   (*Oina Morul* in Macpherson 1763b, 274 – ‘She raised the mighty song, for she knew that my soul was a stream that flowed at the pleasant sounds’).
   (*Colna Dona* in Macpherson 1763b, 280 – She came on his troubled soul like a beam to the dark-heaving ocean when it bursts from a cloud, and brightens the foamy side of a wave).
   (*Death of Cuchullin* in Macpherson 1763a, 141. Caril accompanied his voice, The music was like the memory of joys that are past; pleasant and mournful to the soul).
8. ‘Many a King of Heroes and Hero of Iron Shields’ (*Cath Loda Duan II* in Macpherson 1763b, 263. Note: slight changes in text)
9. Sad and slow, retired Sulmalla (Macpherson 1763b, Book 7, 201)


The lyrics for ‘The Maid of Selma – In the hall I lay in night’ are gathered from different sections of MacPherson as shown above.

References


Fraser, Simon (1816) The Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and The Isles, Communicated in an Original Pleasing & Familiar Style Having The Lively Airs Introduced As Medleys to form a sequence to each slower movement; with an admired plain harmony for the Piano Forte, Harp, Organ or Violoncello Intended rather to preserve Simplicity than load with Embellishment (Edinburgh: Walker & Anderson).


Macpherson, James (1763a) Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem. In six books: together with several other poems, composed by Ossian the son of Fingal (Dublin: Printed for Richard Fitzsimons).

— (1763b) Temora: An Ancient Epic Poem. In eight books: Together with several other poems, composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal (Dublin: Printed for A. Leathly and P. Wilson).
Oswald, James (no date) *The Pocket Companion for the Guittar* (London: n. publ.).

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The Seal Woman: A Celtic Folk Opera by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Granville Bantock

Per Ahlander

Having heard Marjory Kennedy-Fraser perform Hebridean songs at a house party in 1907, English composer Rutland Boughton brought her work to the attention of his friend Granville Bantock. In 1913, Professor Bantock met Mrs Kennedy-Fraser, and from 1917, they worked intermittently on their ‘Gaelic Folk-Opera’, The Seal Woman, which eventually premièred at Barry Jackson’s Birmingham Repertory Theatre in September 1924, conducted by Adrian Boult. Despite some hesitant press reviews, the fourteen performances were well attended, and in 1927, the original cast, including Kennedy-Fraser, reunited for a live radio broadcast of the opera. Since then, there have been but a few revivals, but The Seal Woman is nevertheless frequently mentioned in works dealing with the emergence and development of a British national opera.

Although Granville Bantock is usually regarded as the opera’s composer, his letters to Marjory Kennedy-Fraser reveal that her participation in the creative process was not restricted to the libretto. Instead, they discussed every aspect of the opera extensively, often disagreeing about dramaturgical as well as musical details, and innumerable revisions of text and orchestration were required before they were both satisfied.

Following some brief biographical information about Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Granville Bantock, my essay offers an outline of The Seal Woman and the inaugural Birmingham production and discusses the creative process behind the opera, drawing on recently unearthed letters from Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser.¹

Born in Perth in 1857, Marjory Kennedy grew up in Edinburgh and London, when not travelling the world as part of her father David Kennedy’s concert troupe. She made her public début as a pianist in 1870 as his accompanist, a position she held until his death in Canada in 1886. In 1879–80, she studied singing in Milan, and in 1881, she continued her studies in Paris with the world-famous singing teacher Mathilde Marchesi. In 1887, she married Alexander (Alec) Yule Fraser, a mathematician and science master in Edinburgh, and moved with him to Glasgow when he was appointed headmaster of Allan Glen’s Technical School. Sadly, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s married bliss lasted less

¹ The whereabouts of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s letters to Granville Bantock is unknown.
than four years, until her husband’s untimely death from pulmonary tuberculosis in November 1890. Back in Edinburgh, she read music at the University of Edinburgh under Professor Frederick Niecks in the 1890s – as one of the University’s very first women students – and established herself as a teacher of piano and singing in Edinburgh and Glasgow. She worked as a music critic for the Edinburgh Evening News, ran her own successful art song recital series, lectured on various musical subjects, performed regularly as a pianist, and was in charge of the music section at Patrick Geddes’ Edinburgh Summer Meetings. Her first visit to the Isle of Eriskay in 1905 – at the instigation of painter John Duncan – marked the start of a second career for her, as a collector, arranger and performer of Hebridean songs. In collaboration with Kenneth Macleod, she published the well-known Songs of the Hebrides volumes for voice and piano, but her œuvre also includes a large number of other arrangements, and several articles and pamphlets on music. She was made a CBE in 1924 and awarded an honorary Music Doctorate by the University of Edinburgh in 1928. She died in Edinburgh in 1930, where she was given a grand funeral at St Giles’ Cathedral; the interment took place two years later in Iona, when a recumbent stone memorial by John Duncan was duly dedicated. Her autobiography, A Life of Song, published by Oxford University Press in 1929 (Kennedy-Fraser 1929), had been out of print since the 1930s, but in 2011, it was reissued by The Islands Book Trust (Kennedy-Fraser 2011), for which publication I had the pleasure of contributing an extensive introduction (Ahlander 2011; the information in this paragraph is drawn from Ahlander 2009).

Granville Bantock was born in London in 1868, son of George Granville Bantock, a Scottish gynaecologist from Golspie, Sutherland (an Edinburgh graduate, mainly remembered for his unaltering opposition to Lister’s use of antiseptics). George’s father, English-born Benjamin Bantock – Granville Bantock’s paternal grandfather – had been head gamekeeper to Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland and owner of Dunrobin Castle, and through his paternal grandmother, Janet Munro of the Munro clan, Granville Bantock could claim Scottish ancestry. Originally educated for the Indian Civil Service, Bantock eventually entered the Royal Academy of Music in 1888. He founded the New Quarterly Musical Review (Kitson 2003) and toured extensively as a theatrical conductor, including a world tour with George Edwardes’ production of A Gaiety Girl in 1894–95. He was successful as music director of The Tower, New Brighton by Liverpool, but in 1898, his musical comedy The A.B.C. Girl or Flossie the Frivolous closed after a brief, unsuccessful tour (Gänzl 1986, 682, 687). That year, he married Helen(a) von Schweitzer, who henceforth would supply many of the texts he set to music. An ardent promoter of contemporary British music, he was also among the first in Britain to champion Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, who dedicated his Third Symphony to him. He became the first principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music in 1900, recommended by Edward Elgar, whom he succeeded as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham in 1908. Retiring in 1934, he became chairman

2 The information in this paragraph is drawn from Banfield 1985, 96-102.
of Corporation of Trinity College of Music and settled in London. Bantock was a prolific composer, strongly influenced by Wagner, Liszt and Richard Strauss, as well as an excellent linguist – allegedly a fluent reader of French, German, Latin, Persian and Arabic literature, even if recent scholars have hinted at his ability to convey an acumen and knowledge beyond what they really were. He was, however, ‘subject to sudden, all-consuming enthusiasms’ (Hurd 1991, 3) and obsessed by pseudo-eastern subjects; but despite extensive travelling in Asia, ‘the subtlety and restraint of oriental thought escaped him’ (Pirie and Brock 2001, 670). Not surprisingly, H. Orsmond Anderton, Bantock’s old friend and fervent admirer, was far more positive: ‘On Bantock’s bias for Oriental colouring and ways of thought is hardly necessary to dwell much; this aspect of his genius is already a commonplace’ (Anderton 1915, 3-4). Other passions of his were Greek, Imperial Roman and Napoleonic subjects, Scottish folk music and Celtic legends; by 1915, mainly inspired by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s work, ‘[he] was immersed in all things Hebridean’ (Bray 1973, 31). This turned out a most profitable influence, since his own melodies matched well the Hebridean themes upon which he based several of his works, including the Hebridean Symphony (1913, first performed in 1916), The Sea Reivers (1917, first performed in 1920), and the Celtic Symphony (1940, first performed in 1942), ‘the glory of his last years’ (Budd 2000). He was awarded an honorary Music Doctorate by the University of Edinburgh in 1920, and knighted in 1930. He died in London in 1946 (Banfield 1985, 96-102).

From the late 1930s onwards, both Bantock’s and Kennedy-Fraser’s music was beginning to fall out of fashion, the only difference being that Bantock was still alive while it happened. These days, we do not hear his music performed in concerts very often, but there are signs of a revival. There are some modern recordings available (see e.g. Sir Granville Bantock (1868–1946): Hebridean & Celtic Symphonies, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 1991); and in 2013, music by Bantock was once again featured at the Promenade Concerts in London, after many years of absence (Budd 2013, 329).

In August 1912, Professor Granville Bantock wrote to Marjory Kennedy-Fraser:

I have derived much interest and pleasure from your volume of the ‘Songs of the Hebrides’, and I am now writing to ask if you will give me permission to arrange for a chorus of unaccompanied voices and to publish as a separate Choral piece, the song entitled “The Death Croon” from this collection. I

3 ‘The Death Croon’/‘An Cronan Bais’. Arranged by Granville Bantock for contralto and unaccompanied chorus, published by Curwen in 1913. In 1918, Herbert Antcliffe wrote of the setting as ‘a remarkable example of how much variety may be given to a monotonous tune without loss of its characteristic form and colour. […] The effect is weird, extremely weird, but it is wonderfully beautiful and pathetic’ (Antcliffe 1918, 337).
should of course acknowledge my indebtedness to you for the permission to use both melody and text, if so favoured.4

By that time, he was already familiar with her Hebridean work. In the autumn of 1907, his friend, English composer Rutland Boughton, just back from a house party in Scotland where he had met with Kennedy-Fraser, raved about the fascinating tunes she had sung to him. Boughton himself went on to suggest basing an opera or a music drama on Mrs Kennedy-Fraser’s Hebridean material, but the idea did not appeal to her. Instead, he turned to Fiona MacLeod’s writings, which eventually led to the creation of The Immortal Hour (Kennedy-Fraser 1929, 138), a work inspired by – and largely founded on – Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth Macleod’s first volume of Hebridean songs.

In the summer of 1913, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser met with the Bantocks for the first time, during one of their family holidays in Scotland. That autumn, Professor Bantock asked her for permission to provide a choral setting of ‘The Seal-Woman’s Croon’,5 to be published as a companion to ‘The Death Croon’.6 Permission was duly given,7 and the arrangement was published the following year. In 1914, although not mentioned in the correspondence, Bantock also published an arrangement of ‘A Raasay Lament’,8 and it ought to have been these three pieces that Marjory Kennedy-Fraser had heard performed for the first time when she wrote to Granville Bantock in the late autumn, to which letter he replied:

I am delighted if the arrangement satisfied you, though one must give all the credit to friend Roberton and his wonderful choir for their singing. I wonder if any other body of singers could approach them here, or in any other way.9

Here, he was referring to Hugh Roberton, the founder of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir.

Granville Bantock went on to arrange several Kennedy-Fraser songs, some of which were performed by dramatic tenor Frank Mullings. Mullings, who had been a successful Tristan under Thomas Beecham in Birmingham, preferred to sing with or-

4 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 26 August 1912. All the letters from Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser cited here are located in Box Gen. 519 in Coll-1036: ‘Papers of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’, at the Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Library. For an overview of the collection, see the Handlist I compiled for EUL-CRC in 2011: https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/21088/H1036.pdf.
6 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 26 November 1913.
7 ‘It is very kind of you to allow me to set your “Seal-Woman” in a similar way to the “Death Croon”, and I will see to it that the melody as well as the text render me indebted to you.’ Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 20 January 1914.
8 ‘Raasay Lament’/’Cumha Mhic ’ille Chalum’. Arranged by Granville Bantock for unaccompanied chorus, published by Curwen in 1914. By 1914, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser had not yet published this song herself.
9 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 16 December 1914.
The completed scores were sent to Boosey & Co. in London, presuming they would prepare the orchestral parts as well as the transposed edition at their own expense, since Granville Bantock thought that the publisher of the songs would be interested in also hiring out the orchestral versions. However, when Marjory was charged three pounds for the copying, Granville was ‘much annoyed’ and considered withdrawing the scores: ‘[Boosey] cannot be allowed to eat and keep his porridge at the same time.’

The songs went magnificently: Mullings was in great form and everyone was electrified’, Bantock and Anderton reported to Marjory Kennedy-Fraser from Birmingham after the first performance of the three orchestrated songs – ‘We were all so sorry that you were not with us this evening.’

It has been said of Bantock that in the matter of orchestral wizardry, he proved to be the equal of both Richard Strauss and Leoš Janáček (Hurd 1991, 3-4, 6-7). His Hebridean Symphony, which is based on three of Kennedy-Fraser’s Songs of the Hebrides – ‘The Seagull of the Land-under-Waves’, ‘Kishmul’s Galley’ and ‘A Harris Love Lament’ – and on the ‘Pibroch o’ Donuil Dhubh’, a Highland pipe tune (Roberton 1916; see also Walker 1952, 342), ‘made an immediate impression and was among the first batch of British works to be published in full score by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust’ (Hurd 1991, 6-7; see also Bantock 1972, 100).

In January 1917, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser travelled to Birmingham for a weekend with the Bantocks; ‘[w]e will have a grand talk about the Gaelic Folk-Opera’, Granville Bantock had written to her the week before. The idea was to create a series of ‘Folk-Dramas’ and ‘print and publish [them] in a cheap and accessible form, as soon as they

10 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 5 December 1914. The three songs were ‘A Hebridean Sea Reiver’s Song’/’Na Reubairean’ (transposed to G minor), ‘An Eriskay Love Lilt’/’Gradh Geal mo chridh’ and ‘Kishmul’s Galley’/’A’ Bhirlinn Bharrach’ (transposed to A major). Bantock also suggested preparing ‘a transposed edition in the original keys so that the songs could be available for [Robert] Burnett as well as for Mullings, or any one else, who wanted to sing them with Orchestra’; Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 16 December 1914.

11 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 5 December 1914.

12 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 27 February 1915.

13 Bantock and Anderton to Kennedy-Fraser, 22 March 1915.

14 In 1917, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser wrote that ‘[t]he themes developed in the four movements of the Symphony are mainly from our first volume. They are “The Sea-gull of the Land-under-Waves”, “Kishmul’s Galley”, “Harris Love Lament”, “Sea-Reiver’s Song”, “Love-Wandering”, “Hebrid Seas”, and “Sea Tangle” (Kennedy-Fraser and Macleod 1917, xx).

15 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 9 January 1917.
are ready, [...] much as Lady Gregory did with her Irish Folk Plays'. Starting out with *The Seal Woman*, he thought, *The Love Wandering of Grania* should follow next.

From a later letter can be gathered that their initial intention had been to create a spoken drama interspersed with music – a sort of melodrama (*mélodrame*). What the final product would have been like, more exactly, is difficult to know, but some ideas might be gleaned from an extant synopsis sketch, ‘The Loom of Fate: A Hebridean Song Drama by M. Kennedy-Fraser’, where five singers were to perform selected pieces from the *Songs of the Hebrides*, interwoven by a loose plot. Slowly, however, both Bantock and Kennedy-Fraser gravitated towards the operatic format. ‘I am interested to hear of your conversion to Opera’, he wrote to her in April 1917, and had he not been deterred by the ‘wretchedly cold weather, and expense’, he would have paid a quick visit to Edinburgh to discuss the matter further with her:

One cannot get away from the spectacular effect upon the mind, in spite of the many conventions and absurdities. [...] What do you say to making a simple Folk Opera of the “Seal-Woman”? I feel that I could do more in this way than if you should decide to make it a Folk-Drama. I fear you will not be in sympathy with the idea. If so, please say so at once, and I will dismiss it from my mind. [...] I would be able to weave in the Songs with the rest of the material. The use of the speaking-voice in Opera tends to break the spell and to give an affect of Pot-pourri. [...] it would lay the foundation for sometime in the way of real national Folk Opera at last. Think it well over, and let me know your view quite frankly.

Almost to his surprise, she was ‘willing to make the experiment’.

The story of the seal woman, possibly of Scandinavian origin (Craigie 1896, 231-33), is a well-known example of a water-being legend, which are legion in European folklore. Depending on their habitat, the creatures may differ in appearance, but the general theme is usually the same, and there is thus an obvious parallel between Kennedy-Fraser and Bantock’s Seal-Woman character and Rusalka, the water sprite in Antonín Dvořák’s much-loved opera *Rusalka* from 1900.

In July 1917, Bantock was still busy with the score – ‘I have got to work on the “Seal-Woman”, and am now wrestling with the Cailleach [...] in her opening mono-

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16 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 13 February 1917.
17 EUL, Gen. 520. The five singers included are Fate (mezzo-contralto), Mairi (mezzo-soprano), Mor (contralto), Eoghan og (tenor) and Tormod Rua (baritone).
18 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 10 April 1917.
19 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 19 April 1917.
20 For an analysis of Dvořák’s *Rusalka*, including a discussion on similarities to Celtic legends, see Ahlander 2002.
logue’ – but thereafter, the project lost momentum; ‘[d]uring the last 6 or 7 weeks I have not been able to touch the “Seal-Woman”,’ he wrote to her in November that year. Writing again in December, thanking her for having ‘enclosed with [her] Xmas blessings so generous and so welcome a gift’, he hoped he would be able to find some time to work on The Seal Woman, ‘looking forward to a quiet spell of two or three weeks after Xmas’. There was some progress, and in July 1918, he could write to ‘Dear Marsailidh nan Oran’ (Dear Marjory of the Songs) that ‘the vocal score […] now reaches 48 pages and includes over 700 bars.’

At their two London recitals at the Aeolian Hall in June 1919, Marjory and her daughter, Patuffa Kennedy-Fraser, gave the first readings in public of The Seal Woman (Anon. 1919a; 1919b). Marjory’s ‘kind Xmas gift’ that year ‘enabled [Bantock] to acquire the longed for copy of The Book of Kells,’ but The Seal Woman project had not progressed any further. The Bantocks’ finances were still precarious – in August 1920, Granville wrote to thank Marjory for her ‘delightful letter of July 30th from Stornoway’, as well as for ‘the delightful roll of Lewes [sic] Tweed with its fragrant reminder of the Western Isles’ that she had sent him. Moreover, he asked her which two Hebridean songs she wished to have orchestrated for Douglas Marshall and ‘the keys likely to suit him best’. ‘Here is the Orchestral arrangement of “In Hebrid Seas”, which I hope will meet with your approvals’, he wrote to her two months later.

In 1923, Professor Granville Bantock ‘took the summer term off’ (Budd 2000) to tour in Canada and the USA. Before leaving at the end of March, he wrote to Marjory that he was ‘still waiting to hear from Barry Jackson of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in regard to “The Seal-Woman”’ and that ‘it seems as if the Opera must await my return in the autumn. I shall however take the M. S. with me, and work at it whenever an opportunity arises’, adding: ‘I shall make an effort to see you before I go to Canada where I hope I may prove myself worthy as one of your devoted disciples.’ ‘I am glad to be able to tell you that the vocal score of “The Seal-Woman” is ready for publication, and we ought to be able to get it performed next spring’, he wrote her at the end of August, from on board the Canadian Pacific’s Montcalm while bound for England. ‘I think it a great advantage that there is no chorus, which is rarely effective on a stage, and is apt to become absurdly conventional.’

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21 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 12 July 1917.
22 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 8 November 1917.
23 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 20 December 1917. Presumably, Kennedy-Fraser had sent him a cheque for Christmas.
24 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 17 July 1918.
25 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 29 December 1919.
26 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 13 August 1920. Granville Bantock signed this letter as ‘Granville Mor’.
27 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 5 October 1920.
28 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 3 January 1923.
29 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 25 August 1923.
'I left your libretto and the M. S. vocal score with him which he said he would go through himself,' Bantock could tell Kennedy-Fraser in October 1923, after meeting with influential music publisher Leslie Boosey in London. 'At any rate, he has not yet declined it, and I gained the impression rather that if he could see his way to publish it at the firm's expense, he would do so.' In January 1924, both Leslie Boosey and Barry Jackson had more or less committed themselves to printing and producing the opera. Paul Shelving was to be the stage designer, and Bantock hoped he would have the orchestral score ready 'before the end of the summer.'

When Adrian Boult, who was appointed conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1924, was asked to conduct The Seal Woman at the Repertory Theatre is not clear, but knowing that he was coming to Edinburgh in January that year, Kennedy-Fraser wrote to him:

I am vexed that I shall be singing in the West on Thursday and so shall not be here to attend the concert you are conducting for Professor Tovey. I am so sorry. I should have liked to at least have shaken hands with you.

After having gone through the manuscript vocal score, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser now began to express some divergent views as to Granville Bantock's work. 'Personality enters into all art, and I do hope you will give me credit for approaching your work in a spirit of respect and reverence,' he wrote to her in January 1924, addressing his letters thenceforth to 'Mrs. Fraser,' which may give an indication as to the unknown content of her letter to him. 'I want to feel above all, however, that you and I are in agreement,' he wrote to her three days later in a long letter, after discussing one by one the items on the list of comments she had sent him. 'It is very possible that you may have some personal objection to some of the music that I have written. But this is my responsibility; and the fault would be mine, not yours.' In the main, she seems to have objected to his harmonies, and in 'The Fate Croon,' in the second act, he did indeed concede her point: 'I will restore your original form of accompaniment and keep to the drone bass, discarding the harmonies which unfortunately give you the expression of whining.' Wishing to meet her 'wishes in every way,' his 'adoption of 4 out of the 6 debatable points' 'would indicate my appreciation of your kind and helpful criticisms.' Compared to his earlier letters, the tone is markedly different, concluding the letter: 'I hope to feel that I can start right ahead with the orchestral score, and if you would let me have your reply within the next few days, I would be greatly obliged.'

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30 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 8 October 1923.
31 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 12 January 1924.
33 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 15 January 1924.
34 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 18 January 1924.
35 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 20 January 1924.
that a reintroduction of the chorus would mean ‘an additional £50 per week to the running expenses of the Opera’, wondering if ‘the assistance of the birds of the air [could] be invoked, such as a Trio of 3 white swans, who have broken their flight by a short halt on this islet’.36 ‘Do please give your serious consideration to the enclosed synopsis of a scene for Three Wild Swans based upon the Wild Swan Song in Vol II, which could be worked out very effectively as a thematic basis,’ he wrote ten days later. ‘This would preserve the mystical atmosphere, and dispense with the economic problem of dragging in a Chorus, which is not really wanted. […] there is nothing so absurdly conventional as an Operatic Chorus. The Druids ruin [Boughton’s] “the Immortal Hour”’,37 Kennedy-Fraser did approve of the idea and Bantock wrote how glad he was to ‘find [her] in sympathy with the idea of the Swan Maidens’. As to the casting, he wrote: ‘I am glad to hear how pleased you are with Hugh Mackay. He ought certainly to be The Islesman, if this is your opinion, and I will support the proposal.’38 Right before – or possibly, after – Mackay auditioned for the part, Bantock was still supportive of him: ‘I hope Hugh Mackay will confirm your high expectations. I agree with you that our characters must have the right conviction, and the sea-blood in “their” veins and Hugh Mackay sounds very promising for the Islesman.’39 On 16 March, he thanked her ‘for the “Swan Maidens” text which is beautifully expressed. I am so glad you have brought in the words “Uvil[“]! Would it be appropriate to refer to the “Uvil” figure in Sea-Tangle?’40

Apart from being a practical way of avoiding an expensive and cumbersome opera chorus, the introduction of the Swan Maidens probably also appealed to Bantock’s late-Romantic psyche. ‘The symbol of the swan is a very potent one, and the myth of the swan maiden is one of the oldest and most captivating legends there is,’ said Artistic Director and Lead Principal Dancer of the English National Ballet, Tamara Rojo, discussing Swan Lake:

Swans have the most powerful myth-generating potential. The intermediate beings, in almost all world myths and fairy tales, the beings that can move between the forests and the upper air are more magical and more powerful. And watery birds can attract even more, because they can dive. (Tamara Rojo in Best 2014)

Nonetheless, whether the appearance of a trio of myth-generating Swan Maidens was ideal in the context of The Seal Woman may be somewhat uncertain.

Judging by an undated letter from Elizabeth A. Sharp, the widow of William Sharp (a.k.a. Fiona MacLeod), a representation of The Seal Woman – apparently semi-staged –

36 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 16 February 1924.
37 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 26 February 1924.
38 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 29 February 1924.
39 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 21 April 1924.
40 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 16 March 1924.
was given in London by Marjory and Patuffa Kennedy-Fraser and Margaret Kennedy, Marjory’s sister, in May 1924, but no particulars about the event are known. ‘I want to say I was deeply interested in “The Seal-Woman” and liked the scheme of it greatly’, Sharp wrote to Kennedy-Fraser afterwards. ‘It filled my mind and eyes with the sounds and moonlight moving dreamily.’ Nonetheless, she did find the second part a little long and repetitive.\(^{41}\)

The vocal score of The Seal Woman was published by Boosey & Co. in 1924 (Figure 1).\(^{42}\) Marjory Kennedy-Fraser is generally referred to as the librettist and Granville Bantock as the composer of the opera, but it was in fact a true collaboration, which is clearly indicated in the vocal score (Kennedy-Fraser and Bantock 1924). Although Kennedy-Fraser was mainly responsible for the text, Bantock contributed many ideas and suggested several modifications. The orchestration was wholly Bantock’s work, though; but ranging from near note-for-note transcriptions of several of Mrs Kennedy-Fraser’s song

Figure 1: Vocal score, The Seal Woman (Kennedy-Fraser and Bantock 1924).

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41 Sharp to Kennedy-Fraser, Whit Sunday (n.d.), EUL, Gen. 278.

42 Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s own copy of the vocal score, with annotations pertaining to her creating of the Cailleach’s part in the Birmingham production, is in EUL Gen. 278.
accompaniments to typically Bantockian orchestral interludes, the resulting potpourri of divergent compositional ideas is far from unified enough to be satisfying.

Anne-Marie H. Forbes, in her analysis, listed ‘the nineteen tunes used in the opera’ (Forbes 1990, 110-11), noting that ‘[t]he two composers of The Seal Woman – for neither can be seen as the sole composer – designated their work a “Folk Opera”, offering a concession to its genesis and perhaps an excuse for its dramatic shortcomings’ (Forbes 1990, 115). Somewhat confusingly, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser wrote in her autobiography that ‘there are sixteen Hebridean songs incorporated in the work’ (Kennedy-Fraser 1929, 184). According to my own analysis, at least eighteen of the Songs of the Hebrides were included in the opera.

The week of the première, in September 1924, the Birmingham Post published a detailed article on the new opera, stressing Kennedy-Fraser’s seminal part in its creation: ‘There is Scottish blood in Bantock, and it was natural that as volume after volume of Mrs. Kennedy Fraser’s wonderful collection of Hebridean songs came from the press he should fall under their influence.’ Bantock’s extensive use of Kennedy-Fraser’s settings was by no means overlooked:

In general, Professor Bantock has adhered to the harmonies of Mrs. Fraser’s arrangements for piano, with their peculiar fitness to the line of the melody, but he has orchestrated the songs, and with skill and sympathy for the task it will doubtless be found that he has orchestrated them fitly (Anon. 1924a).

On 27 September 1924, The Seal-Woman, produced by Barry Jackson, opened at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Stage design and costumes were by Paul Shelving (Figure 2). ‘If the costumes of the seal women were meant to suggest that they had been swept up from the ocean bed they were successful’ noted the Morning Post (Anon. 1924f). Conducted by Adrian Boult, the orchestra of sixteen players consisted of one flute, English horn, clarinet, horn, harp, timpani, four violins, two violas, two cellos and two basses. On the stage, there were ten soloists and one figurante: The Cailleach – An old Crone (Contralto), The Seal-Woman (Mezzo-Soprano), The Seal-Sister (Soprano), The Islesman (Tenor), First Fisher (Baritone), Second Fisher (Bass), The Water-Kelpie (Bass), Three Swan-Maidens (Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano and Contralto) and Morag – Child of the Seal-Woman (Figurante). The Oyster Catcher’s part, created by a dancer in the Birmingham production, is not mentioned in the vocal score (Kennedy-Fraser and Bantock 1924, iii). The two-act opera is just under two hours long.
Synopsis by George Hall (quoted from Allenby 2004, 33)\textsuperscript{43}

[Act One:] An old crone or ‘Cailleach’ sings of local legends of seals that turn into mortal women. The voices of a Seal-Woman and her Seal-Sister are heard. Fishermen approach the island. The Isleman recalls a Seal-Woman he has seen before, and when she and her sister appear he keeps hold of their sea-robes – without which they cannot reassume their marine form – and will only return those of the sister. He declares his love for the Seal-Woman, and she agrees to go with him.

[Act Two:] Seven years later, the Seal-Woman has borne his child, Morag. The Cailleach visits them, and while she sleeps three prophetic swans arrive and predict that the Seal-Woman will be free only when her daughter discovers the sea-robe hidden in a peat stack. Morag finds it and brings it to her mother. As the Isleman returns he watches as his wife flings herself from the cliff into the sea. He and his daughter listen to the Seal-Woman singing as she swims away.

\textsuperscript{43} I am indebted to Boosey & Hawkes for presenting me with a copy of their extensive opera catalogue.
The first performance was well covered by the press – there are extensive reviews from no less than eight larger British newspapers in Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s own scrapbook.\textsuperscript{44} Although appreciative of the initiative \textit{per se}, the critics do express doubts as to the viability of the opera, and, furthermore, comment on the various shortcomings of the performance. Even if opinions are expressed differently, there is considerable consensus among the reviewers. The general impression conveyed is that the music was good, well-orchestrated and well played. The idea of basing the opera musically on ‘three seal-airs and a mermaid’s song […] and] about a dozen other songs of the Hebrides’ was apparently successful; using ‘the love-wandering theme […] throughout as the love-motive’ resulted in ‘Wagnerism combined with the seal-songs of the Hebrides, which, after all, is not more remote from Wagner than the dragon in Siegfried’.

Professor Bantock was hailed as ‘[a]n orchestral expert, he handles small forces with magistral skill. […] Everywhere is the other-worldly atmosphere of fairyland; exquisite effects are obtained by multiple combinations’ (Anon. 1924b). Furthermore, the songs’ ‘accompaniments in the orchestra keep very faithfully to the admirable originals provided for piano by Mrs Kennedy-Fraser. The effect is nearly always excellent’. Some of the linking music, however, apparently sounded as if it ‘had slipped in from some other score written to a more ordinary operatic theme’ (Anon. 1924c).

As a composer, Bantock was strongly influenced by Wagner, Liszt and Richard Strauss (Banfield 1985, 96; Pirie and Brock 2001, 670), and there are certainly reminiscences of both Wagner and Strauss throughout the opera. In the constant modulations and unusual chords that Bantock made frequent use of – in particular between the various Hebridean songs – I hear Wagner, and, more specifically, echoes from his \textit{Ring Cycle}. Speculating upon where Wagner’s melodic ideas originated is certainly far beyond the scope of this essay, but in a recent publication, I discussed possible links between Senta’s Ballad in Wagner’s \textit{Der fliegende Holländer} and Hebridean melodic fragments (Ahlander 2013).

If \textit{The Seal Woman} music was well received, the libretto was not, and the plot was considered dramaturgically deficient. ‘The Seal-Woman legend is quaint rather than moving and could never serve to inspire an opera of gripping force or intensity’ (Anon. 1924d). ‘It would have been miraculous if Mrs Kennedy-Fraser had shown all the skill of an experienced dramatist in preparing this story for the stage’, but nonetheless, ‘the play is still a disappointment in several places’ (Anon. 1924c); ‘dreams within dreams hardly make a play’ (Anon. 1924e).

The Cailleach character is a portrait of Scottish poet Mary MacLeod. Kennedy-Fraser sang her part in all the fourteen consecutive performances, as well as in a later live broadcast, and her début as an opera artist was a success, in contrast to her rather ineffective forays into the world of librettos (Figure 3). ‘Her beautiful speaking of the opening lines provided one of the most enjoyable parts of the performance. Her singing, like her speech, was full of colour and meaning. Her whole performance had atmosphere’ wrote the \textit{Glasgow Herald} (Anon. 1924c). Only \textit{The Times} was less positive about Kennedy-

\textsuperscript{44} Reviews in the \textit{Birmingham Gazette}, \textit{Birmingham Mail}, \textit{Birmingham Post}, \textit{Daily Mail}, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, \textit{Glasgow Herald}, \textit{Morning Post} and \textit{The Times}, MKF Scrapbook, EUL, Gen. 279.
Fraser’s performance on the stage: ‘She is discovered mumbling her dreams on a rocky coast. We did not always hear what they were; we were not always certain whether she was singing or speaking them’ (Anon. 1924e). ‘Of the cast, with the exception of the Cailleach, none was outstandingly good, though all were efficient singers’ (Anon. 1924f) was the general opinion of the principals – in ‘a performance that was far from being altogether good’ (Anon. 1924d) and where ‘some of the singing had rough edges’ (Anon. 1924g).

At a closer look, the casting of the opera is puzzling. That Marjory Kennedy-Fraser was to impersonate Mary MacLeod, singing the part of the Cailleach, must have been beyond any discussion, but that Hugh Mackay – whom Kennedy-Fraser had wanted to sing the role of the Islesman – was not in the production is surprising, particularly since Bantock had found him ‘very promising for the Islesman’ five months earlier. If his audition was unsuccessful, if he was not to the liking of the producer or if Geoffrey Dams was a ‘local hero’ to be promoted is not known.

The Seal-Woman mezzo-soprano role ought to have been ideal for Patuffa Kennedy-Fraser – it may indeed have been written with her voice in mind – and she had already sung sections of the part at various recitals. It is well possible that family reasons made it too large a commitment for her to undertake, but the choice of Denne Parker is nonetheless surprising. She was not exactly hailed by the music critics after the première, and, according to Myrrha Bantock’s blunt comments, ‘[s]he certainly did not

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45 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 21 April 1924.
have the right figure for a “seal-woman”, and her voice could not be heard above the orchestra’ (Bantock 1972, 147). Granville Bantock’s daughter Myrrha was biased, however, since Miss Denne Parker was her father’s mistress, even if their intimate relationship appears to have ended by then (Budd 2013, 283). Parker was born in Edinburgh and, like Granville Bantock, a graduate of the RAM in London. Their affair had begun in the aftermath of World War I, when his friend Donald Tovey, Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh University and Denne Parker’s musical mentor after her crashed marriage, introduced him to this beautiful singer. […] She had a good, though not outstanding, voice and a very sound musical education, and her appearance was most striking’ (Bantock 1972, 142). Rather intense an affair while it lasted, their love child appears to have been conceived at Oban, where Bantock spent some time in the winter of 1922, seeking inspiration while working on the score of The Seal Woman. Their son, Micheal John, was born in Canada in 1923, where Parker accompanied Bantock as a singer on his six-month tour of the USA and Canada, presumably to avoid a scandal at home (Budd 2013, 281). Helen Bantock was devastated when it dawned upon her what was happening, and when Granville Bantock and Parker returned from their tour of Canada in September 1923, H. Orsmond Anderton, Granville’s friend, secretary and factotum, who had been living with the Bantocks since 1907, had moved out, indignant with his friend (Bantock 1972, 143, 148). If that was de facto the end of a previous ménage à trois, we simply do not know. Marjory Kennedy-Fraser was acquainted with Denne Parker, at least since the Corporation of Edinburgh’s large reception in the Usher Hall on 24 July 1914, when ‘[t]he vocalist was Miss Denne Parker, who delighted the audience with her charming contributions, which included […] songs of the Hebrides, arranged by Mrs Kennedy-Fraser’ (Anon. 1914). Furthermore, sailing from Canada in August 1923, Granville wrote to Marjory, ‘Your Hebridean Songs were greatly appreciated at Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Boston where they were sung by Denne Parker with rare enthusiasm.’ Seeing the matter in that light, the rehearsals and run of The Seal Woman must have taken place in the midst of an emotional turmoil. And to make things worse, Marjory was unwell with influenza (Kennedy-Fraser 1929, 183). This love story was virtually unknown until 2013, when Bantock’s amorous letters from the late 1930s to a Mrs Muriel Mann of Charleston, South Carolina, were published (Werner 2013), together with an extensive afterword by Vincent Budd, shedding light also on the Denne Parker affair about two decades earlier (Budd 2013).

The Seal Woman played for two weeks at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre – ‘to packed houses’ (Forbes 1990, 97). Three years later, on 8 November 1927, a shortened version of the ‘Celtic folk opera by Miss Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Mr. Granville Bantock’ was broadcast from Daventry, sung by the original Birmingham cast (except for the trio of Swan-Maidens) from 1924. This time, they performed together with the Birmingham Studio Augmented Orchestra and the Birmingham Studio Chorus, the latter presumably singing the parts of the three Swan-Maidens (Anon. 1927).47 Later

46 Bantock to Kennedy-Fraser, 25 August 1923.

47 To fit the seventy-five-minute broadcast (7.45–10 pm), the one hundred and thirteen-minute long opera had been shortened by a third.
revivals of the opera include a series of performances by the Liverpool Repertory Opera in 1928, a run at the Midland Institute in Birmingham in 1936 and, more recently, a few performances in Fulham Town Hall in 1975, under the baton of Joseph Vandernoot (Bray 1975). So far, there have been no commercial recordings made of the opera, but the 1975 London production in Fulham Town Hall was broadcast by the BBC.48

Although not performed much, the opera is frequently referred to in works dealing with the emergence and development of a British national opera. In 1990, Anne-Marie H. Forbes published an analysis of The Seal Woman, comparing it with Cyril Rootham’s The Two Sisters from 1921 (Forbes 1990). Similar to the press reviews after the first performance in 1924, Forbes referred to the libretto as ‘a patchwork of Hebridean legends and folklore’ (Forbes 1990, 100), which ‘seems to include as many Hebridean folk-songs as possible, occasionally on the slenderest of dramatic pretexts’ (Forbes 1990, 103). However, she concluded, ‘[i]ts acceptance by the British public testifies that it was by no means a failure, even if it was not really opera in the generally accepted sense, and its succession of tableaux makes it possibly more suitable for concert performance’ (Forbes 1990, 115).

The Seal Woman might not be an operatic highlight, but it would nevertheless merit both a revival and a commercial recording. Considering the relatively limited scope of the opera, regarding both number of singers and orchestral players, as well as the manageable degree of vocal difficulty, both smaller professional opera companies and ambitious amateur groups may find it of interest.49

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48 I am indebted to Mr Andrew H. King, University of Birmingham, for letting me know about the BBC broadcast.
49 The conference paper on which this essay is based was kindly supported by a bursary from the Celtic Research Trust, Isle of Man.

Anon. (1919a) ‘Æolian Hall: Celtic Songs to the Celtic Harp. Two Recitals […] Wednesday Afternoon, 4th June […] Wednesday Evening, 11th June [1919]’, leaflet, EUL, Gen. 274 & 283.


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Seeking Héloïse Russell-Fergusson

Stuart Eydmann and Hélène Witcher

Preamble

This paper comprises an updated version of the reading draft from the joint presentation given at the Musica Scotica conference in 2015. In addition to sharing their early insights into the musician in question, the authors sought to demonstrate the validity and benefits of collaboration between the academic and the family historian in the study of Scotland’s modern popular and traditional music.

Since its initial presentation there have been several significant steps towards better understanding and appreciation of both this previously obscure individual and the contextual history of the harp in Scotland. Reference is made to these within the text and in a postscript.

Stuart Eydmann:

I first came across the name Héloïse Russell-Fergusson in the early 1970s when, in my late teens, I was a student at the Glasgow School of Art. During lunch times, I would escape to Cuthbertson’s, a music shop in Cambridge Street, where I would pass the time browsing and reading the sleeve notes of their range of traditional music records. Among the racks of long-play discs on display were a couple of quirkily packaged, extended-play singles bearing the musician’s double-barrelled name (c. 1968). I did not give this much thought until some years later when I was performing with the Whistlebinkies at the Festival Interceltique at Lorient in Brittany, and was having a chat with some Breton musicians about the twentieth-century revivals of our respective musics. One of the Bretons said to me: ‘Of course, there would have been no harp in Brittany, and no Alan Stivell, without the influence of your great Scottish heroine, Héloïse Russell-Fergusson.’ Yes, the name was vaguely familiar to me but I was ashamed to admit I knew little more than about those records. More recently, while researching modern musical links between Scotland and Brittany (Eydmann 2018a) and while working on a modern history of the clarsach in Scotland (Eydmann 2017), things started to fall into place. I began to seek out all that I could find out about her and her music and was soon intrigued by her role as a woman working professionally within Scottish traditional music, her position as an ‘outsider’ relative to the Scottish musical establishment (Eydmann 2018b), her scholarship on the history of the harp, and the music she created – particularly on those little EP records.
I consulted musicians from the clarsach-playing world but was disappointed that, while they knew of Héloïse, most dismissed her and her music. I visited the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, to examine the material she deposited there (Russell-Fergusson, n.d) and pulled my notes together to present a public research seminar on my findings at the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. This led to a few new leads. At that time, however, I was unaware that there was someone else on the trail of this fascinating musician.

Hélène Witcher:
Héloïse Russell-Fergusson was my aunt. I encountered her only once, in June 1969 in Crianlarich, where my mum and I had met her for lunch. She was 72 and I was 18. I found Héloïse to be warm, inquisitive and endearingly eccentric. We stood outside by the cars afterwards, she heading back to Oban, mum and me to Rowardennan. As she opened the car door I did a double take to see tiny plant pots along the top of the dashboard and in the ashtray of her car. ‘I’ve never had a house or garden,’ she laughed, ‘this has to do.’

My aunt was born in Glasgow in 1896, the first of four children, her father William Ferguson, a Glaswegian, and her mother, Hélène Russell, from Bute. Her father was a Director of Barclay Curle shipbuilders and the family were part of the comfortable middle classes that were settling the west end of the city at the time. Her parents employed a nurse, Rebecca Mathieson, from Kilmonivaig in Inverness-shire and the housemaid Mary MacVicar from Spean. Both were native Gaelic speakers and I speculate that Héloïse would probably have spent hours with these young women, hearing more Gaelic than English during her early years.

From around 1903, the family also rented a house in Port Appin, close to Lismore, and although my grandfather would have stayed mainly in Glasgow, I suspect much of Héloïse’s childhood was spent in Argyll. In 1914, the family finally bought the rural house and its surrounding land and my grandmother settled there permanently.

Nothing is known of Héloïse’s schooling but I have found that in 1914 she enrolled at the Royal Academy of Music in London where she studied piano, singing and harmony. She graduated in 1916, aged 20. That year, she had at least one composition published in London and which is part of a collection from the period held in the British Library (Russell-Fergusson, 1916). At home, I have another published composition from 1917 and one from 1918 (Russell-Fergusson 1917, 1918). She gave recitals in London and Glasgow but didn’t seem able to settle. In 1923 she went to Washington DC to teach piano in a girls’ school and it was while there that she found and bought a second-hand, American-made Celtic harp, produced for the expatriate Irish market. She recalled a kind of epiphany that soon led her to learn the instrument and devote her life to it:

Playing in my studio alone one night, one single chord on the piano made me suddenly pause. I do not know why. I was swept thousands of miles back to where the seabirds shrilled above the gale as they did centuries ago. The
Hebridean people’s songs! I lost all sense of time. I was spinning with them; milking. I was waulking the cloth although I HAD NEVER SEEN THIS DONE. I keened tragically on the shore with the rest when the lads failed to return. That had happened so often. I was quite, quite familiar with these islands although I HAD NEVER BEEN THERE! (Russell-Fergusson, 1938)

Of course, she had been there, at least through the stories and songs of Rebecca and Mary. The clarsach seems to have triggered deep, early memories in a very visceral way. In *Musicophilia*, Oliver Sacks remarks on the extraordinary tenacity of musical memory, speculating that ‘so much of what is heard during one’s early years may be “engraved” on the brain for the rest of one’s life’ (Sacks 2007, xii).

In the United States she was greatly encouraged by the celebrated concert harpist Mildred Dilling (1894–1982) and she returned almost at once to Scotland, heading straight to the Hebrides anxious to learn more about Gaelic music. Mildred came to the UK in 1928 and gave concerts with Héloïse in London and in Glasgow that also featured a cellist. The programmes mixed classical harp pieces, Gaelic songs and clarsach and ensemble playing. Perhaps still not entirely confident that she could make a living with the clarsach, she continued to give occasional piano recitals including one in 1929 with John Barbirolli conducting the Guild String Orchestra (Guild of Singers and Players, 1929). The programme for that performance announced her next piano concert where she was to be accompanied by Marie Dare (1902–1976) on cello and the baritone Sinclair Logan. This musical link with fellow Scot Dare was to develop over the following decades.

*Stuart:*

By the early 1930s Héloïse was giving regular recitals of clarsach music and songs, broadcasting on BBC radio (Anon. 1932) and recording for the Beltona label (1933).¹ Her early gramophone recordings suggest a style and repertory very much in the mould of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857–1930) and her daughter Patuffa (1889–1967) and I would suggest that she consciously exploited the market for Hebridean music previously developed by that partnership.

While in the Hebrides she met Kenneth Macleod (1871–1955) who had been Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s Gaelic collaborator. They subsequently developed a musical relationship and we know from her papers in the Mitchell Library that she gained some unusual and unique songs from him. The content of these manuscripts and of private recordings Héloïse made of the material they contain remains largely unexplored and unheard. In 1931 Kenneth Macleod went to London to ‘tell legends of the isles’ at a concert at the Aeolian Hall where Héloïse played clarsach along with Marie Dare and concert harpist Julia Wolf. While I accept that many Gaels are uncomfortable with Macleod and do not trust the authenticity of his music, I hold that he did give us some

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¹ See the Discography at the end of this chapter. Extracts were included in the audio collage *A Soundtrack to the Celtic Revival in Scotland* compiled by Stuart Eydmann to accompany the art exhibition *A Wide Kingdom* held at the Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, in April and May 2014.
beautiful material, irrespective of whether it was collected or invented within the tradition, and it is easy to see how Héloïse would be attracted to his work.

Héloïse’ emergence as a professional clarsach player/singer was happening before the founding of the Clarsach Society, which subsequently led the popular revival of the instrument in Scotland. Although she was present at the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1931, she was never a member nor very closely associated with the organisation. Some suggest that this was because, as a professional player, she was excluded from what was then a strictly amateur society, but I’m sure it was more to do with her distinct personality type. Struggling to find words to encapsulate this I was delighted to find and adopt the following description of her fictitious contemporary Jean Brodie given by Muriel Spark:

There were legions of her kind during the nineteen-thirties, women from the age of thirty and upward, who crowded their war-bereaved spinsterhood with voyages of discovery into new ideas and energetic practices in art or social welfare, education or religion. [...] the vigorous daughters of dead or enfeebled merchants, of ministers of religion, University professors, doctors, big warehouse owners of the past, or the owners of fisheries who had endowed these daughters with shrewd wits, high-coloured cheeks, constitutions like horses, logical education, hearty spirits and private means. [...] They were not, however, committee women. (Spark, 1965, 42-43)

There are records of her playing in Europe, including the Netherlands in 1930 and Paris in 1931. In the latter, we find her working again with the formula of clarsach, concert harp and cello, in this case using local professional musicians. From a digest of events in the city, we see that Marie Dare was also playing in Paris that same week (Anon. 1931).2 Had they arranged their gigs and travelled together? In 1934 Héloïse was invited to participate in an eisteddfod-type event at Roscoff in Brittany along with the naturalist, writer and piper Seton Gordon, representatives of The Scotsman, An Comunn Gaidhealach and the recently formed Scottish National Party. She was already moving in that circle, having played at the unveiling of the MacCrimmon Memorials on Skye in August 1933.3

Her contribution to the druidic rituals (including giving an address in French) and recitals at Roscoff, Morlaix, Quimper and Saint-Brieuc went down a storm and she was crowned Bardess of the Gorsedd, a title she adopted as her stage name. In 1935 she was back in Brittany, at Rennes, providing a musical prelude to the premiere of Jean Epstein’s film Chanson D’Ar Mor. The cultural significance of this collaboration cannot be overstated. This was the first ever film with Breton dialogue and is like an impressionistic, visual representation of a traditional Celtic folk-tale. While in Brittany, her Celtic

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2 Marie Dare studied in Paris with the virtuoso cellist, poet and composer Paul Bazelaire (1886–1958).

3 There is a fine portrait of Héloïse, undated but probably painted between 1926 and 1935, by the celebrated portraitist Cathleen Mann in the musician’s collection at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
harp was studied and measured leading to the making of prototype instruments that contributed to the revival of the instrument there. Soon afterwards she set off with her harp, or ‘Harlet’ as she called it, to travel the world.

_Hélène:_

Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s she had travelled widely with her clarsach in Europe; she had returned briefly to perform in the USA and in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa; but in 1936 she set off for New Zealand on a tour that would last for two years and cover many other countries. This adventure is recorded in her letters to her sister, in a diary and in a series of six articles entitled ‘I Go Adventuring’ that she wrote for the _People’s Journal_ in 1938–1939 (Russell-Fergusson, 1938; 1939a–1939e) She adored New Zealand and interspersed concerts and radio broadcasts with long treks on horseback and on foot in the Otago District where she slept in shepherds’ huts, washed in burns and cooked over an open fire. In Bali she entertained mainly English-speaking Dutch audiences and was enchanted herself by gamelan music and the Kecak Monkey Dance, recognising the links between the music, drama and dance. As in Europe, everywhere she went she explored and collected information, and photographs if possible, about indigenous music. She wrote to her sister-in-law about playing in Java:

> My first concert in Java was a great thrill. It was wonderful to sing once more to Dutch people. The Hebridean songs did their work thoroughly and several hundred people listened with unconcealed curiosity. Few had any idea of the ancient culture of Scotland. No one had seen a clarsach before. ‘Does everyone in those islands play that little instrument?’ asked an earnest listener. I had to assure him that they did not, as yet, though perhaps, some day – I explained each song in Dutch although this was not absolutely necessary owing to the people’s good command of English. It was thrilling to read in the press next morning, ‘If this art could be understood by all today, there would be no more war’. Surely the old Highland songs could gain no finer tribute than that. (Russell-Fergusson, 1937a)

From Indonesia she travelled to Singapore, Korea, Shanghai and Japan before returning to Australia. She had been away for nearly two years, on the go all the time, but she was very upbeat in her letter from Melbourne:

> I’ve been very busy with daily broadcasting and one day I did it twice, morning and evening, the first time in my career. It was a hectic day and as I went to a lecture on Egypt by a friend in the afternoon, I had only two minutes to get there. Alas, I rounded the corner into the building, felt myself slipping in all directions and fell down into the liquid rubber solution as new lino was being spread. You never saw such a mess and as I was taken away by the workmen the wretched stuff started to solidify. I would have bounced anywhere!

> I’ve met a brilliant pupil of Schnabel’s who seems not to mind my rusty playing and we spend hours doing it. This morning a man rushed in waving a
book of Aboriginal songs. 'Madame Scotia, I think you’ll be interested in these as you can sing them as well as the Hebridean stuff!' I begin concerts in Adelaide the day after I get there, at a Boys College and love these occasions. The boys are so interested and easy to hold and the masters always so surprised and no one realises I know all that is going on and the struggle the Head had with himself before engaging me as they always fight shy of female entertainers, saying they cannot hold the boys. (Russell-Fergusson, 1937b)

Her return journey was via Egypt where she stopped for ten days. There she met Hans Hickmann, German musicologist, who was living there and she subsequently devoted a whole volume to Egyptian harps in her world survey of the instrument held in the Mitchell Library. In that album she inscribed a quotation from the fifth century vizier, Ptahhotep, that, I think, echoed her own outlook on the world:

Do not let your heart become proud because of what you know;
Learn from the ignorant as well as from the learned man;
There are no limits that have been decreed for art;
There is no artist who attains entire excellence.

Her travels clearly informed her music – in many ways she was a pioneer of what we have come to call ‘world music’.

She got back to London in late 1938.

Stuart:

Back in Scotland we find her performing at the Glasgow Empire Exhibition in 1938 and it is interesting to note that she played in the festival concert hall while members of the strictly amateur Clarsach Society performed in the less formal setting of the exhibition’s ‘clachan’ complex. She continued to give formal recitals in conjunction with harp and cello and engaged the services of outstanding musicians such as leading concert harpists Maria Korchinska (1895–1979) and Sanchia Pielou (1915–1993). Her association with Marie Dare continued and we read, for example, of a recital by the pair at MacLellan Galleries, Glasgow, in 1947; fortunately, we have a private recording of the two musicians from around that time playing material that was included in the programme. Their arrangement and playing of Dunvegan Bridal Procession (1947) is highly sensitive and shows the same understanding of tradition we would expect from young musicians of the current phase of the revival.

Hélène:

After her return from her two years away, she continued to experiment with her professional name, calling herself Scotia, Bardess Scotia or Madame Scotia. During the war she returned to Port Appin where she threw herself into the effort to gather scrap metal and paper. Such was her success that she soon gained a new local name – Madam Scrap. Her father had died in the late 1920s, and in the mid-1930s, as she was touring, her mother moved to a farm in southern Rhodesia, claiming the weather was better there
than in Scotland. The Port Appin house was sold although Héloïse lived for a while in a nearby cottage. She then became increasingly itinerant, living sometimes in hotels, lodgings, with friends or in borrowed empty houses. In the late 1940s or shortly afterwards she dropped her first name entirely and asked friends to call her Jane instead. The reason for this remains obscure, but I have met several people who knew her in the 1960s and recall her using that name. Professionally, she called herself simply Russell-Fergusson.

In the years after the war, she started generating what she called 'song-tales': performances that consisted of a series of songs linked together to form a narrative. The first, *Tir-nan-Og*, was based on the traditional Scottish folktale. It was performed at Bolton’s Theatre Club in London in 1949 with Héloïse playing clarsach, Marie Dare on cello and Allan McClelland playing the part of the islander. The following year, in 1950, she put it on at the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe, to mixed reviews. Marie Dare was involved again and Andrew Faulds played the islander. 'Why the dim, religious light?' asked *The Scotsman* (Anon 1950b). *The Glasgow Herald* found that an unseen cello and harp was 'unusually effective and creates an atmosphere' (Anon. 1950a) and *The Scotsman* concluded that Héloïse was at her best 'in the gay working songs of which she catches the lilt' (Anon 1950b). The reviewer felt that the music and folklore of the Hebrides should appeal to an international audience because it was so 'intensely national', although, in that context, they were a little nonplussed that 'a herding song sung by Miss Russell-Fergusson […] was reminiscent with its “tom-tom” accompaniment, of Africa' (Anon 1950b). I have since discovered that this was a waulking song that she had learned directly from the tradition-bearer Annie Johnston on Barra, and conclude that the 'tom-tom' was her own interpretation of the percussive rhythm of the waulking process. A surviving private recording of this piece, *Deer Herding Chant* (c. 1950), shows that she played percussive accompaniment by hand on the sound box of her harp, a technique since used by more recent clarsach players and with parallels in flamenco guitar music.

Another song-tale, *Hailing the Highlander*, that included an audio-visual presentation, was staged in 1951 at Pitlochry Theatre as part of the Festival of Britain. There were associated performances at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh as part of the Living Traditions exhibition.

*Stuart:*

In the 1950s her profile faded although there are notices of her giving performances for the Dunedin Association alongside leading Scottish poets and composers. Also, it was during this period that she was pulling together and organising her excellent collection of organographic material on the harp that was subsequently gifted to the Mitchell Library.

*Hélène:*

According to a set of storyboards and tapes she deposited with the Mitchell Library, it would appear that Héloïse had worked on a kind of serial programme on Highland life
and music for broadcast or performance that she called *Hebridean Song* and *STORY – The Young Piper*. In a letter to Mr Black, the City Librarian, when donating her material she wrote:

Dear Mr Black

We have today posted to you this series of 23 items on tape...

As you know, I worked out this series with two small battery tape recorders, and much of the work was done in my car as I have no facilities in an hotel.

I haven’t delegated any of the original songs to another singer, but sing them in the character which Kenneth Macleod noted. The chanter playing is mine, and this has helped to build up the Series.

The 4 tapes in small grey envelopes are the Original series. I expect you may want to reserve them, as future copies can always be made from them.

I am very glad to present these to the Mitchell Library and wonder if I could suggest that the items if borrowed for public use – be kept in their own completeness, – and not have narrative divorced from them. (Russell-Fergusson, 1969)

Stuart and I have been working with Gaelic song experts and the library to progress the digitisation and preservation of the material and to make sense of what this gift comprises.

*Stuart:*

These tapes appear to include music recorded in the field as well as songs she had collected in the Highlands and those obtained from Kenneth Macleod. The intended audience for her project is unknown, but there are clear parallels with the contemporary audio documentary and broadcasting work of Alan Lomax and Ewan MacColl, although without their political edge (Moran 2014). Our early hopes that the songs on the tape and in manuscript might be of interest have been justified.

The tapes were deposited with the library in 1969 and Héloïse died the following year. Héloïse missed, by only a few years, the modern renaissance of the clarsach at the hands of musicians such as Alison Kinnaird, Savourna Stevenson and Eddie McGuire. Ironically, this modern revival was partly influenced, or perhaps ‘re-infected’, by the music of Alan Stivell and others from Brittany that she had helped to stimulate.

However, between 1964 and 1969, the ageing and latterly perhaps ailing Héloïse also made, at her own expense, those four small EP records mentioned at the outset. Listening to them now we hear something quite innovative and almost prophetic, pre-figuring developments of the folk music revival and in modern popular music. Multi-track layering, minimalism, fusion with other world musics, improvisation and technological manipulation are all in there. In these regards she was ahead of her time, leading to her dismissal at that point by those of the traditional music and clarsach establishments.
Helène:
No wonder that the late Martyn Bennett came to sample one of her pieces ‘Dance of the Drops’ from the record *Am Treisamh* (c. 1968) for inclusion in the track ‘Wedding’ on his celebrated work *Grit* (2003). In this recording she plays clarsach and mbira and we like to think that, at last, Héloïse had found at least one other kindred spirit who recognised her place in the history of Scotland’s music.

Postscript
Since the presentation of this paper, interest in Héloïse Russell-Fergusson has been growing. The authors gave an illustrated talk on Héloïse at the April 2017 Edinburgh International Harp Festival and Epstein’s *Chanson D’Ar Mor* was screened at the Edinburgh Folk Film Gathering in May 2017, preceded by a clarsach and Gaelic song recital by the young musician Rachel Newton as a ‘replication’ of Héloïse’s performance at the film’s premiere. The showing was followed by a discussion on the musician and the links between Breton and Scottish traditional music in the twentieth century. Héloïse’s commercial records and private recordings have been digitised as have her open reel tapes held at the Mitchell Library. A book by Hélène on the life of the musician has been published (Witcher, 2018) and the artistic and cultural significance of this legacy is now attracting overdue attention as demonstrated in the event held as part of the *Aye Write* festival in Glasgow on 24 March 2018 involving Hélène, Kenna Campbell, Ishbel T. MacDonald and Anni Donaldson.

Discography for Héloïse Russell-Fergusson

*A Chruneag Leach / Iona Boat Song & Strusaidh Mi na Coilleagan.* 78 rpm, Beltona BL. 2035,1933. Republished online at https://raretunes.org/heloise-russell-fergusson/ [accessed 16 November 2020].


*Ceol Clarsaich,* EP, Clarsach Records CR01, c. 1968.


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Bennett, Martyn (2003), Grit, Real World Records RW114.


— (1918) ‘March’ Printed score, publisher unknown. Hélène Witcher personal collection.


We’re all global citizens now, and yet …

Marie Saunders

This paper is based on a small ethnographic study among diasporic Scots in London which I carried out in 2010. The purpose of the study was to find out if a Scottish identity was important to members of the Scottish diaspora living in London and to investigate the extent to which Scottish music contributed to the construction and negotiation of their Scottish identity. In addition, an exploration of musical affect was contained in the study by noting participants’ responses to hearing a recording of John Cameron’s song, ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’. The paper is presented in four sections: preliminary thoughts; a brief outline of the context and theoretical research framework; the findings of my ethnographic study, including an analysis of the Gaelic song used in the study; and conclusions.

Preliminary thoughts

One of the consequences of modernity is that a high degree of geographical mobility, including transnational migration, has become a feature of life in the twenty-first century. Diasporic communities have stimulated interest from anthropologists, musicologists and historians alike. Diaspora raises questions of ethnicity and identity. The experience of belonging to a diasporic community varies according to specific contexts. Some case studies have been primarily concerned with political circumstances which place the diasporic community under discussion at a disadvantage. By way of contrast, my investigation focuses on an exploration of the significance Scottish music may have for the Scottish diaspora. The underlying rationale for the research is the property music seems to have of unlocking memory, and the assumption that Scots-born people, living in London, would value their Scottishness highly. It seems reasonable to suggest that Scottish music would be very important to members of the Scottish diaspora as it could reinforce their Scottish identity. Drawing upon works by Stokes (1994a, 1994b) and Basu (2007), my research attempts to investigate the contribution Scottish tunes make towards the construction, maintenance and expression of a Scottish identity for diasporic Scots in London. A musical example is included to illustrate how the structure of the Scottish tunes works to produce particular affect.
The context and theoretical research framework

The key questions underpinning this research revolve around diaspora, identity, ‘Scottishness’ and Scottish music, including its affect. A useful framework for discussing these key issues can be seen in the two phrases ‘At the moment’ and ‘In the moment’.

‘At the moment’

‘At the moment’ refers to writing now, in this particular historical period, towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This specific context is significant for four reasons. Firstly, in the realm of academic discourse, there is an ever-growing fluidity between the boundaries of academic disciplines. Explorations into greater interdisciplinary collaboration to promote further understanding of music research questions is not unusual, as evidenced by Clayton’s paper regarding ethnomusicology and music psychology which outlines the value of using entrainment as an organising principle (2009, 77). In this context, the entrainment Clayton refers to is, ‘the temporal co-ordination of Indian musicians’ (ibid.). He points out that his article about his ethnomusicological research on entrainment had been accepted for publication in a scientific journal. Clayton suggests that this is because he had framed his article in terms of a recognised theory in psychological literature, “attending theory”, which he had adapted and used in an ethnomusicological context (Riess Jones, 1989). I have chosen to highlight this example specifically because the phenomenon of entrainment in music is complex and investigations into how entrainment works benefit from and indeed require a multi-disciplinary approach. Willingness for such collaboration is demonstrated by positive responses to his paper (Clayton 2009, 75-77). Other music researchers have gone one step further, with some American academics, originally trained in music, having retrained in neuroscience to assist their pursuit of understanding music (Huron 2010; Janata 2010). It is against this background that an interdisciplinary approach has been taken for this research, as a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Scottish music in maintaining a Scottish identity for diasporic Scots may be gained through contributions from varied disciplines which cross the borders between science and the humanities.

Secondly, the physical dispersal of peoples across the world in diasporic situations is a feature of the times in which we live. High levels of geographical mobility, including transnational migration and rapidly developing means of communication, have facilitated globalisation. As will be demonstrated, diasporic peoples have a unique circumstance when it comes to questions of identity, since they are physically separate from ‘home’.

Thirdly, it could be argued that unlike our predecessors, our lives are played out against a backdrop of a range of potentially destabilising factors. If the nineteenth century was the century of the grand narrative, manifested in its literary forms by the novel, in its musical forms by the symphonies and by its structural theories like positivism and Marxism, the second half of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century to date are characterised by deconstruction and fragmentation. With the collapse of the grand
narrative there has emerged a kaleidoscope of competing, some might argue equally valid moralities, identity choices, and discourses, among which contemporary people strive to negotiate their way through life. The experience of living in an advanced, post-industrialised society, like postmodern Britain, has become increasingly complicated, particularly so when the degree of geographical and social mobility is considered. This complexity has ramifications for questions of identity for contemporary people.

Fourthly, for many, the complexity is further compounded by the fact that if they are members of a diaspora, they are living in a different geographical and cultural space from home, the country of their birth, their homeland. Peter Berger’s ‘pluralization of the lifeworld’ succinctly describes this complex experience of life at the tail end of modernity (quoted in Basu 2007, 159). With so much choice, Berger suggests we experience ‘the metaphysical loss of home’ (ibid., 199). He argues that contemporary people lean toward the past with a de-modernising impulse. This impulse is a response to the dialectic between the freedom of individuality and the loss of security of belonging to a larger community. This explains the nostalgia we currently see in television programmes like Who Do You Think You Are?, the ‘find your ancestry’ websites and the roots tourism which plays a significant part in the Scottish tourist industry. Indeed, one of the main sources used to inform my research, Basu’s Highland Homecomings (2007), deals with the phenomenon of ‘roots tourism’, following developments from the latter decades of the twentieth century. It would seem that there is an increasing, popular concern with questions of identity and its attendant myths in the daily lived experience of people.

‘In the moment’

‘In the moment’ refers to music’s ability to transcend boundaries of time and place: a piece of music can place us ‘in the moment’. Examples of this ability of music are evident in DeNora’s research about music in everyday life (DeNora 2000). She notes that people can metaphysically relive experiences from the past because the music they are listening to in the present was there at the time of those past experiences and is intrinsically connected with them. Stokes argues that music enables people to relocate themselves to a different geographical place from where they actually are situated (Stokes 1994a, 4). I would argue that music has the potential to play a substantial role in identity maintenance and negotiation, both at individual and collective levels, particularly in the existential circumstances of living in diaspora. This property of music underpins the research because it is reasonable to expect that Scottish music will have the potential to play a very significant role in the maintenance of a cultural identity for members of the Scottish diaspora. This supposition is supported by research into music’s role for people in other diasporic situations, e.g. Bohlman’s research on the role of ‘Hausmusik’ for East German Jews who moved to Israel in the 1940s (Bohlman 1989, 211-219).

Discussing identity at the individual level, Bruner (1990a) notes our need to have an autobiographical narrative. He explains that we construct ourselves and our identities through what we tell others about ourselves. This is why we have a subjective sense of a core identity, a relatively stable and consistent sense of self that has a history. Indeed, in mainstream psychology, one of the symptoms of a grave psychological problem is a lack
of a clear sense of self. However, writers like Frith (1996), Hall (1996), DeNora (2000) and Hargreaves et. al. (2002) refer to a more fluid concept of self. They follow the symbolic interaction tradition of Mead (1934), Cooley (1902) and Goffman (1959), and their approach conceptualises identity as an ongoing process, being in a state of becoming. Frith goes as far as to claim that ‘Our experience of music, of music making and listening is best understood as an experience of this self-in-process’ (Frith 1996, 110). Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald argue that one of the three functions of music for individuals ‘lies in establishing and developing an individual’s sense of identity’ (2002, 5). Recent research by Caldwell in Glasgow indicates that individuals used music to make sense of who they were. He concludes that music is seen as a timeline through their life journeys and is inextricably bound up with their subjective individual and group experiences (Caldwell 2014). The identities of his participants were negotiated in the light of these subjective experiences and music. Bohlman’s article on the ontologies of music touches on this specific aspect when he refers to the use of the term ‘my music’ (Bohlman 2001, 19-20).

The social constructionist view of identity suggests that people have many identities. As a person journeys through life, identities are adjusted in the light of experience. The characteristic features of identity from this perspective are plurality, re-negotiation, reconstruction and development through interaction with others. However, there is an unresolved tension between these two approaches which is neatly described by Jorgensen’s definition: ‘The notion of identity is itself an imaginary construction, an ambiguous, fuzzy, and complex notion that is subjective and objective, individual and collective, normative and descriptive, malleable and committed, dynamic and static’ (Jorgensen 2003, 31). She points out the ambiguous aspects of the concept of identity, aspects which are also commented on by Clayton when he considers music and identity in his entrainment research. He observes that individual subjective engagement with music is at one and the same time individual and social (Clayton, Sager and Will 2005, 9).

Smith (2010) offers a useful conceptual tool for pulling together the complex elements involved in identity construction: his key concepts include ‘Snowball Self’, ‘meta-identities’, ‘principal meta-identity’ and ‘contextual identities’. He suggests how this sense of a coherent personal identity might be achieved. In his conceptualisation of the ‘Snowball Self’, he manages to integrate the multiple identities MacDonald refers to into a coherent whole, while allowing for the dynamics and process of ongoing development. Smith classifies certain aspects of the self as ‘meta-identities’, the aspects of self of most importance to the individual, those where the individual feels most comfortable. If the individual were a singer for example, ‘singer’ would be one of the ‘meta-identities’; ‘mother’ might be another. He suggests that at various times in a person’s life,

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1 Bruner (1990b) explains how we use narrative to create an autobiography which constructs a coherent Self. He discusses the complexity around the autobiography (possible autobiographies) and notes that the narrative is culturally situated. In a later article, Bruner offers a detailed ten-point scheme of narrativity, explaining how we make sense of our place in the world (Bruner 1991).
a ‘meta-identity’ can take on the mantle of ‘principal meta-identity’, i.e. be given priority over others, for a while. The ‘meta-identities’ are significantly more important than a much larger range of ‘contextual identities’ which, by comparison, relate more closely to the many and varied roles an individual may have in everyday life. Smith argues that as an individual journeys through life, different ‘meta-identities’ may rotate in terms of importance to the individual.\(^2\) This reflects Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald’s description of an identity being made up of a hierarchy of overarching constructs (Hargreaves et al. 2002, 2). As will be shown, it was clear from the responses given by participants in my ethnographic study that ‘being Scottish’ had the status of ‘meta-identity’; for some, it was a ‘principal meta-identity’. The metaphor of the ‘Snowball Self’ enfolding a few ‘meta-identities’, some of which may rotate into position of ‘principal meta-identities’ and many ‘contextual identities’, effectively integrates the individual identity in its complexity.

Turning to collective identity, Barth’s analysis is helpful. In his article about the persistence of ethnic groups, Barth (1969) is concerned to explore and describe the processes involved in the construction of boundaries and boundary maintenance. Arguing that ethnicity is so important a component of a person’s identity that it constrains all their social interactions, Barth refers to ethnicity as having a ‘superordinate status’ (ibid., 17). His terminology finds an echo in Smith’s term ‘principal meta-identity’. Barth’s perception is that ethnicity is understood in terms of an ascribed social status which actors adopt for themselves. Statements from participants in Basu’s research and my ethnographic study illustrate that their Scottishness is perceived as ascriptive, but there is no sense of a choice being made about it. The key point is that although it can be argued that ethnicity is an ascribed social status which actors adopt, it is perceived and experienced by them in essentialist terms. The following observations are relevant to add to this discussion as they support Barth’s analysis: ‘The Scottish Celt is an ethnological fiction and system of symbolic appropriation’ (McCrone quoted in Hague 2005, 139); Hague continues that it is a fiction ‘which is widely assumed to be self-evident and historically accurate’ (ibid).

Barth’s argument about the ascriptive status of identity is further supported by evidence from Basu’s research with groups drawn from descendants of Scots who had migrated to America, Canada and Australia (Basu 2007). He records how these descendants lay claim to their Scottishness using embodied language. Examples are references to their Scottish identity being ‘in the blood’, ‘in the marrow of my bones’; ‘For me, being Scottish is not a choice, it’s in the blood. It is something which has no name, but yet lingers there within me’ (Basu 2007, 161). Explicit statements about their Scottish identity from Basu’s respondents exemplify what Barth means by ‘ascribed social status’ but not his perception ‘which actors give themselves’, as the respondents do not recognise their own agency and choice in the matter of identifying their Scottishness.

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\(^2\) G.D. Smith, ‘I drum therefore I am? Thoughts on an integrated model of identity and learning: preliminary findings from ongoing research by a doctoral student’. Poster presented at the Music, Identity and Social Interaction Conference at Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, 2-3 February 2010. This research was developed and subsequently published (Smith 2013).
Sommer suggests that their statements indicate ‘ethnic identifications’ which they have chosen, rather than ‘ethnic identities’ (Sommer 2009, 10).

**Findings on ‘Scottishness’ from my ethnographic study**

The interviews for the study were carried out over a period of two weeks from 25 May–7 June 2010. I found six diasporic Scots who agreed to take part. Three were neighbours living on the same street as myself, one was a former work colleague and my cousin and his wife completed the small sample. All six participants were aged between 56–65 years and had left Scotland for London when they were young adults. They had lived in London for a greater number of years than they had lived in Scotland by 2010. There were four females and two males. The participants’ names in the text are fictitious to protect the anonymity of each person.

Participants expressed emphatically their Scottish identity. Karen, on being asked what her sense of Scottishness meant to her, said ‘I sort of think it’s in your blood, and it resonates, every time, when you go back, or when you hear something or watch something that’s Scottish, it resonates, there’s a resonance…’ This embodied language echoes that of diasporic Scots quoted in Basu (2007, 91, 161).

Calum expressed, ‘a sense of not belonging where I am’. This feeling of alienation echoes Rushdie’s description of a person in diasporic circumstances (in Basu, 2007, 65). There was evidence of a deep emotional pull, and their responses articulated a perception of a Scottish essence which they experienced on a subjective level – a quintessential and identifiable Scottishness, a core identity, if you will. Here are two examples from the interviews which illustrate this point: Calum, on being asked what his sense of Scottishness meant to him, said, ‘It means everything to me, being Scottish’; Martin, meanwhile, said, ‘On any definition that I would care to use, I’m Scottish’. Calum’s response on being asked if he considered Scotland his homeland was as follows: ‘I do, very much so and I’d like to be buried in Scotland, I know that’. Other responses to this question about the homeland elicited responses which were articulated with emotion and in some cases were accompanied by a catch in the voice. In the case of one participant, her eyes filled with tears and a few questions later, I had to stop recording. The interview was resumed, at the participant’s insistence, after a short break. Not every participant showed emotion at this specific point in the interview, but all had a catch in the voice at some point during their individual interview. These responses demonstrated that a deeply felt emotion was invested in a Scottish identity.

On the other hand, two of those interviewed, Janet and Polly, talked about having a dual identity, Scottish and British. However, it can be inferred from other answers that they felt mainly Scottish. This same response was expressed in large-scale research about national identity carried out in Scotland where respondents, while acknowledging a dual identity, privileged their Scottish identity over British identity (McCrone and Bechhofer 2008, 81-104). For example, Polly’s answer to the question ‘Do you think of yourself as Scottish?’ was, ‘Oh, absolutely, yes, I do’. Her reference to having a dual national identity came later as an additional comment, volunteered after the interview questions were over, when offered the opportunity to add anything else she felt relevant.
Janet’s reference to a dual identity was her answer to the question about thinking of herself as Scottish. However, her Scottishness was clearly expressed elsewhere by her articulating a strong sense of belonging to a Scottish cultural group in that she would often approach a person unknown to her in London if they were wearing a kilt, thus making contact with a fellow Scot. Also, in her sitting room at home there was a large picture above the fireplace of a Scottish scene familiar from her childhood. Laura, another participant, said that she was definitely Scottish, although she experienced a ‘blip’ in that feeling following the terrorist attacks in London on July 7th, 2005. At that moment, and only then, she felt English, ‘a Londoner, whose space was being invaded’. She went on to comment on how curious she felt the experience of temporarily departing from her Scottish identity for the first time in her life had been. Her comment illustrates the strength of feeling about national identity noted by Thompson (2001, 23).

Other aspects linked with the participants’ sense of their Scottish identity were a strong sense of pride in belonging to a distinct community with such history and tradition, even unhealthy ones like the whisky, and expressive language. They mentioned the high regard for Scotland and Scottish people they had encountered on their travels. It was clear that icons of tartan and shortbread were not seen as very problematic by my participants, but some reservation about the belittling effects of commercialisation was expressed by Karen. For the most part, tartan was seen in a positive light, associated with Scottish history and being an effective tourist brand. There was some acknowledgement of Sir Walter Scott’s influence and also an affectionate regard for the whole tartanry scenario: ‘I call it tartan tomfoolery’, as Polly put it. None of the participants had tartan soft furnishings in their homes. This suggests an inner sense of Scottishness, similar to that expressed by one diasporic Scot in Basu’s research who described his Scottishness in terms of a ‘spirit, culture and belief system worth preserving’ which did not require kilts and thistles (Basu 2007, 43). Be that as it may, conspicuous use of tartan is often associated with people of Scottish descent in the United States of America and in Canada, as illustrated by Janet. She had sent bolts of tartan cloth out to her diasporic relatives in Montana who had never been to Scotland. However, something of the need to articulate Scottishness externally was described by Polly and Laura. Both declared that they felt more Scottish in London than in Scotland and that they had only started attending and hosting Burns Suppers after moving to London. This brings to mind the observation made in research on national identity by Folkestad (2002, 155).

**Findings on Scottish music from my ethnographic study**

It was clear from the responses that Scottish music was highly important to all the participants. Martin went so far as to say that it was vital. When asked to explain, the response was ‘It’s part of who I am’. When prompted further he added, ‘Because it evokes memories of who, where I came from’. A less ambiguous statement about the role of Scottish music in maintaining a Scottish identity would be hard to find. His response illustrates exactly views recorded in the policy documents of the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland which state: ‘Scotland’s internationally recognised traditional music and song heritage provides the core around which its people express our
identity as individuals, as communities and as a nation’ (2010). This theme is evident throughout Scotland’s Music (Purser 1992) and also in the assertive statements from singers and musicians who refer to themselves, their music and who they are in BBC Scotland’s series Scotland’s Music (2007).

My participants mentioned three types of Scottish music: bagpipes, folk, and popular Burns songs. They also discussed The White Heather Club, Jimmy Shand’s dance band and humorous Scottish figures Sir Harry Lauder and Billy Connolly. Traditional songs learned at primary school were clearly important for most participants and this was an unexpected finding. Their comments, shown below, suggest that learning these songs in their early formative years made a significant contribution to the formation of their Scottish identity. Polly explained, ‘Even though I can’t sing, I do sing and it cheers me up and I like the fact that I remember the words, you know, because they’re absolutely soaked into me’. When commenting on ‘Mairi’s Wedding’, the Scottish song she responds to most, Polly emphasises that it’s the social history in the words she responds to – e.g. ‘Plenty fish tae fill her creel’ – as well as the cheerful quality of the tune. Janet, discussing the Scottish song ‘Over the Sea to Skye,’ said that it took her back to primary school. She continued, ‘The thing about Scottish music is we did a lot of it at primary school. We did Scottish country dancing…so there was music in the background; we had quite a lot of music’. Karen mentioned learning Burns ‘Ca’ the Yowes’. These comments suggest that Scottish music made an important contribution in the early lives of the participants which has remained with them to this day, lasting over decades of their lives.

Calum had been inspired to learn how to play the drums by both the Boys Brigade and pipe bands. He discussed a particular drum technique called the shuffle beat which has the rhythm ‘ti-tat-tat-ti-teefa’ and he mentioned that this drumbeat swings. Calum recalled that, when in a recording studio for the first time, the record producer, a professional of many years standing, said to him, ‘Nobody plays a shuffle beat like a Scotsman’. The record producer went on to say to Calum, ‘It must come from playing pipe band music because it swings’. I wonder if this comment indicates a synchronisation of rhythm, absorbed through socialisation, exposure to the rhythm over years, absorbed but not on a conscious level. The record producer’s remarks about the swing in pipe band music are supported by Collinson and Duesenberry (2010, 6).

All the participants had traditional Scottish music in their homes except one. Their chosen Scottish music collections covered a wide range and showed that they were open to innovation. Bands mentioned were the Red Hot Chilli Pipers, Capercaillie and Runrig. It was unequivocally evident that Scottish music drew a strong emotional response from all the participants. The most frequently mentioned reason for this was that the music evoked associations with people and places connected with their childhood and growing up. Karen, on why Scottish music was important to her, explained, ‘Well, I think it’s connections, isn’t it? Connections to places of solace, connections with people; connections with important times in your life, as with all music, music takes you to places and times in your life’. This statement is a clear affirmation of music’s ability to ‘place us in the moment’ and it reflects the evidence from psychological research by
Gabrielsson and Juslin which indicates that nostalgia is the most common emotion elicited by music (2005, 13). Three additional examples from my findings demonstrate participants’ emotional responses to Scottish music. According to Calum,

Every time I hear Scottish music, it evokes some kind of spiritual genetic thing, I don’t know what it is, I don’t actually know what it is but I’m immediately absorbed by it. It stirs very strong emotions in me, because I was brought up with it, I suppose and being sensitive, it works for me. I can get very high from it, I can get very low from it but the low, it’s a beautiful low, it’s plaintive, calm. I feel a very calm sense, a sense of calm with laments.

The experience Calum has when listening to laments is explained by evidence from research in neuroscience about the effects of listening to sad music (Huron 2010). The auditory signals from the music trick the brain into a false psychic pain; something bad is happening. This triggers a physiological response, a release of prolactin which brings our system into a state of homeostasis. That is why we feel calm when listening to music like a lament. Laura, commenting on Roy Williamson’s song ‘Flower of Scotland’, feels ‘Pride, it gives me a lump in my throat, just thinking about it takes me right back to Scotland, an instant effect, because it gets inside the Scottish guts, right into the part that’s important’. Martin states, ’But there’s something about it, just it’s Scottish…Now that has got the sound, the sound of the pipes has just got that something, for whatever reason, can make my hair stand …whether slow or fast’.

These responses indicate that an embodied sense of Scottishness is experienced by the participants, integrally connected with Scottish music. Perhaps this is not surprising: as Kodály pointed out, ‘A person can only have one mother tongue, musically too (as quoted in Folkestad 2002, 157). My participants’ words suggest that their Scottish identity has core identity status for them. Following Smith, it could be described as a principal meta-identity, but constant.

I gained the impression that only half of the participants listened to Scottish music regularly. The significant point, however, is that Scottish music is highly important to them when they do listen to it: the effect it has is extremely potent emotionally and it reinforces their Scottish identity. In part, this is related to the fact that they are living in London, not Scotland, their homeland. Stokes writes that ‘For many migrant communities, music evokes place, i.e. their homeland, with an intensity unmatched in any other aspect of their lives’ (Stokes 1994b, 113-14). Although the Scottish diaspora are widely dispersed across London and not a migrant community concentrated in a specific location, Stokes’ observation can be applied to their experiences as recorded in my research. In addition, Stokes suggests that ‘Music can be used to transcend the constraints of the specific physical and/or social placement in which people find themselves’ (1994a, 4). Scottish music has been shown to have that function for my participants.
Findings about musical affect from my ethnographic study

The Gaelic song ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’ by John Cameron was chosen as a musical example in an attempt to explore affect, and I played it to each participant towards the end of their interview. Before discussing participants’ responses to hearing a fragment of the song, it is worth considering the structural features which produce its musical affect. This song illustrates four characteristics shared by many Scottish songs. Often transposed diatonically for the piano for singing purposes, it sounds modal in flavour, and if picked out on the piano, it looks, at first, as if it is in the Dorian mode. In the chorus of the song two modal cells are clear to see and hear in its structure (see Figure 1). Actually, it does not fit the Dorian mode, nor its plagal version the Hypodorian exactly, as the range of notes in the melody goes from the A below middle C to the C above, so its melody range is almost within the octave D to D but it goes to the A, one fourth below.

It does work, transposed up to G with a B flat and a flattened F natural. It is difficult to categorise: like many Scottish tunes, it would appear to fall between traditional classifications. This may indicate, as Purser suggests, that perhaps traditional modal theory needs further study (Purser 1992, 17). However, many Scottish folk songs fall into ambiguous categories, almost pentatonic but not quite.

Figure 1: The chorus of ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’ by John Cameron, transposed and arranged by the author from Moffat 1907.

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\begin{align*}
\text{DA} &= \text{Dorian modal cell 3} \\
\text{DCA} &= \text{Dorian modal cell 1 (reversed)} \\
&\quad \text{(Taylor 1991, 240)}
\end{align*}
\]
Another feature common to Scottish songs is that the second phrase is set one tone below the first phrase (Fiske 1983). Fiske refers to this feature as the double tonic, and Purser also refers to the double tonic. However, in Purser’s case, he observes that perhaps tunes manifesting the double tonic have originated in bagpipe tunes which have a much earlier modal structure (Purser 1992, 17). His observation is supported by Elliott, who points out that the definition of the double tonic is a fallacy. He explains that what appears to be the double tonic is simply the seventh and eighth notes of the same mode, revealing an old modal structure (2008, x-xi).

The lilting rhythmic pattern, created by dotted minims and crotchets followed by quavers, is also characteristic of Scottish songs. The haunting aesthetic affect of the melody is achieved by the positioning of particular intervals. The first two phrases of the chorus melody end with descending minor third intervals. As the melody leads to its climactic point in the third phrase, an ascending diminished sixth interval is employed. This is swiftly followed by a descending diminished sixth interval which leads into the closing sequence of a step-by-step descent from the dominant through the minor third back down to the tonic. The juxtaposition of these intervals and notes together with the slow tempo of the song are crucial for the creation of colour and expression in delivery of this piece of music. Played on the bagpipe, it is extremely moving and it is sometimes used at funerals. ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’ was chosen by the late Jacqueline Kennedy to be played at the funeral of her first husband, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (Lorne Gillies 2005, 290). These expressive features in the structure are found in many Scottish ballads, and Scottish music has been described as plaintive and melancholic from as early as the seventeenth century (Purser 1992, 16). This particular song is interesting because the affect of the music is certainly melancholic. As far as we know, John Cameron, the Highland bard who wrote the words, is expressing his longing to see the mist-covered mountains of home. However, the words are actually very happy because soon he will see them (Lorne Gillies 2010, 290).

The responses to hearing a fragment of ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’ sung were very mixed. There was evidence that association can override the affect of a piece of music: as MacDonald suggests, ‘Music can have intense subjective meanings; these may not relate to the structural aspects of the music’ (MacDonald 2010). For example, Laura was reminded of a holiday on the Isle of Harris. She was singing to the seals to the strains of ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna’ playing on the car CD player. She was familiar with the song, in its later setting, used as a lullaby, ‘Hush, Hush’. Janet thought it lovely to listen to; it reminded her of watching the Mòd on television with her father. It also made her think of the Highlands. Martin thought it lovely to listen to and it made him think of the Highlands. Both of these responses were ambiguous, as I was unsure whether it was the sound of the music or the Gaelic language which prompted thoughts of the Highlands. When I asked about this, Martin affirmed it was the music because he had been taught that music which sounded like that came from the Highlands. Janet’s answer remains ambiguous because she could not remember why she made the comment about the Highlands.
Karen was reminded of her grandmother and music sung at home. It also reminded her of an aunt from Skye who had the Gaelic. She thought it lovely and thought it might be a work song. Polly thought it lovely, reminding her of the streak of melancholy in Scottish music. It made her think of all the Scots who had emigrated. This was a most interesting response in terms of expressivity and affect, as the song is expressing John Cameron’s longing to see the mist-covered mountains of home, having been away on active service in the Crimean War. I had to ask if Polly knew what the song was about. When I asked, she had no idea what the words meant, but said that the sound of the music had prompted thoughts of Scots in exile. Calum was moved by the harmonic progression, recognising it as a traditional progression, but he was not as moved as he had expected to be. It made him think of the sea, of crofts, of space, of unclutteredness. He then went on to explain that the main reason he liked to go fishing was to reach a state of unclutteredness, calm, emptying his mind of all the garbage he’d had to deal with in the week; this piece of music took him to that calm, uncluttered place.

It is not clear what this mixed set of responses demonstrates about affect, but I think the following suggestions are worth considering. There is clear evidence that individuals engage with music in different ways and on different levels (MacDonald 2010). The findings demonstrate that what the listener brings to the music is very important and affects what the music signifies. The responses do not show evidence of this piece of music inducing emotion, as noted by Juslin (2005). It is possible, however, that if heard in different circumstances, i.e. not in an interview situation (no matter how comfortable), the music may have induced an emotional response from one or more of the participants. On the other hand, there are some indications of this piece of music communicating expression of an emotion. These are in the responses that mention the melancholic streak, all the Scots in exile from Scotland, space, calm, unclutteredness, crofts and the Highlands.

Conclusions

The results suggest that Scottish music is integral to Scottish identity and that for diasporic Scots, Scottish music maintains and reinforces their core sense of Scottishness. The impact of learning national traditional songs while at primary school and the affection with which these songs are still regarded is striking after so many years. Much of the evidence about the ongoing social construction of a plurality of identities through negotiated social interaction is persuasive but not totally so. I am convinced that the inner autobiographical narrative which gives us coherence is a formidable tool. My research findings support the idea that my participants experience the existence of some core element of personal identity which remains constant in the midst of all the negotiations and re-negotiations. The Scottish identity, for example, after forty years living in London, remains a deeply embedded part of each of the participants in my ethnographic study. In those cases where reference is made to a dual identity, a Scottish identity is privileged over a British and over a regional identity of Londoner. Suggestions that globalisation is eroding national identities are challenged by the testimonies given in my
ethnographic study where participants are clearly negotiating their Scottish identities on both individual and collective levels.

The findings demonstrate the benefits which an interdisciplinary approach brings to music research questions. The information gained from my study prompts further questions about representativeness, musical affect, dual identity, entrainment and the role of music in schools. The study generated rich qualitative data. Key variables may have affected the findings, particularly age, as the participants were aged between fifty-five and sixty-five and had been resident in London longer than they had lived in Scotland. All had spent their formative years in Scotland. There were six participants. A much larger data base would be of interest and could be used to check both the validity and reliability of the research methodology. It would be interesting to do the same research with a different age group. Perhaps an intergenerational investigation might demonstrate whether the sons and daughters of diasporic Scottish parents would share any identification with Scottishness and Scottish music.

There remain many unanswered questions around issues of affect which require further investigation. The limited information about the Highland bard John Cameron in this research has stimulated my curiosity. It would be a most satisfying project to research his life, the music he would have heard while growing up, which other songs he wrote, how the music and the words were put together, how far he travelled and whether he had any connection with Ireland. If an Irish link with John Cameron were to emerge from further investigation, it might throw light on how and where he heard the tune to which he subsequently set the words of ‘Chi mi na mor-bheanna.’ I think this may be possible as Purser points out that Scotland and Ireland share a common musical tradition (1992, 19). The significance of the contribution of music to the school curriculum invites further investigation, particularly in the early years of education.

To sum up, the clear conclusion shown by my research can be succinctly expressed in the words of Shlomo Sand, ‘At the end of the twentieth century [...] economic, political and cultural globalisation has not done away with the basic need for identity and alternative collective associations’ (Sand 2009, 309). I suggest that the integral role of music in this process is aptly articulated by Frith: 'Music constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives’ (Frith 2002, 273). In this way, music could be said to act like an anchor, in our postmodern times, linking people to their core identities.

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Marie Saunders

We’re all global citizens now ...


The White Heather Club, B.B.C. Television, 1958–68

