

Classical Pipe Music

- Scotland's
Hidden
Treasure



*A recital
promoted by the
Piobaireachd
Society*





*The Pìobaireachd Society present a
concert of ceòl mòr*

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St Cecilia's Hall,
Edinburgh,
August 21, 2022

The Concert

In tonight's concert you will hear a wide variety of piobaireachd (pronounced approximately 'pee-broch'), the classical music of the great Highland bagpipe, Scotland's national instrument. The musicians are all leading exponents of this music. The tunes will be played in continuous fashion so that the end of one will be followed by the start of the next, giving a unique musical experience.

Some understanding of the make-up of the instrument may help the novice. The melody is played on the chanter; it has only nine notes. On the piper's shoulder are three drones tuned in two octaves below the chanter's tonic, a note pipers call 'low A', though it is actually pitched higher than concert Bb. The seventh of the octave is flattened considerably. Most piobaireachd are composed using pentatonic scales or variations thereof, so although the pipe has a limited number of notes, a wide variety of tonal mood is possible as you will hear this evening.

Introduction:

Robert Wallace, President of the Piobaireachd Society

MacLeod's Salute Finlay Johnston

Melbank's Salute..... Tom Peterkin

Salute on the Birth of Rory Mòr MacLeod..... Nick Hudson

The Battle of Strome..... John Dew

Interval

Lord Lovat's Lament Nick Hudson

Beloved Scotland..... John Dew

Sir James MacDonald of the Isles' Lament Tom Peterkin

Nameless, Cherede Darièvea Finlay Johnston

The Pipers



Finlay first began learning piping at age eight during a summer spent at his home on the island of Tiree. His tutor was his grandfather Alastair Sinclair. He began receiving lessons from Ronnie McShannon shortly thereafter, and has continued to do so since. His mother, Anne Johnston, was the first woman to win the Silver Medal. Some of Finlay's solo piping results include the Gold Medals at the Argyllshire Gathering and the Northern Meeting and the Gold Clasp.



Tom Peterkin had childhood lessons at the Army School of Piping, Edinburgh Castle. As a teenager, his tutor was James McGregor, Gold Medallist and a Royal Piper at Balmoral. For the last 14 years he has studied piobaireachd with another Gold Medallist, Tom Speirs. An Edinburgh University graduate, Tom P was a newspaper journalist for many years. This year Tom won the Piobaireachd Society's Archie Kenneth Quach for amateur pipers for the fifth time.



Nick Hudson teaches piping at St Thomas' Episcopal School in Houston, Texas, and plays with their Alumni Pipe Band in Grade 1. He received a BFA in Music Performance at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, when under Jimmy McIntosh and Alasdair Gillies. Performance highlights include the Braemar Gold Medal, the Silver Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering, and the 'B' MSR at the Northern Meeting at Inverness.



John Dew, 24, is from Crieff, Perthshire, and was taught by Anne Spalding. As a junior he won both the U18 ceòl mòr and ceòl beag at Cowal Gathering. John continues to compete in the adult ranks and has since won the Kemble Star for Marches at the Skye Gathering, the Duncan Johnstone Memorial, the overall 'B' grade at the Northern Meeting and was the overall Champion Piper at the 2019 Royal National Mod. John is also making a name for himself as a composer and arranger.

The Piobaireachd Society

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

When the musicians of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland adopted the bagpipe, perhaps some eight hundred years ago, what emerged was the instrument we know today as the great Highland bagpipe - and a classical form of music, piobaireachd, which is unique to the instrument. Nothing resembling this music has been discovered in any other country in the world and, to the ear of the devotee, only the great pipe can reproduce piobaireachd satisfactorily.

A piobaireachd consists of a theme and variations and these vary in number and complexity. The theme is often slow, and the general effect of the whole piece of music is slow, slowness being a characteristic of non-dance Highland music. It is very stylised, yet there is freedom in the theme or 'ground' to express joy, sadness, or sometimes, in the 'gathering' tunes, a peremptory warning or call to arms.

The Piobaireachd Society was formed in 1903 to encourage the study and playing of this music. The Society has collected most of the available piobaireachd manuscripts and published several books which have promoted the music worldwide.

In addition, the Society has now developed a comprehensive website with sound files, manuscripts, new music, photographs and other information all designed to encourage the understanding and playing of piobaireachd.

The Society sponsors important piping competitions held annually in Glasgow, London, Oban and Inverness. It is active in teaching, sponsoring a bursary scheme for young pipers, running a Summer School and carrying out an online beginners' class.

The Society believes tonight's concert provides an opportunity for music enthusiasts to hear ceòl mòr, some for the first time. The wonderful setting of St Cecilia's Hall and the expert pipers performing for you tonight will, we hope, enhance everyone's enjoyment of Scotland's hidden treasure of classical pipe music.

The Music

MacLeod's Salute, also known as MacLeod's Rowing Tune, is one of a suite of three pieces composed by Donald Mòr MacCrimmon at the time of an attempted reconciliation between the MacLeod and MacDonald clans (1602), when Donald Gorm was invited by Rory Mòr MacLeod to banquet in Dunvegan Castle. A powerful lower hand tune, it contains several instances of the 'Donald Mòr run-down'. This musical device was not exclusive to the composer but was a favourite of his. There are various ways of playing it – listeners will hear the piper's fingers run down fairly briskly on the chanter to dwell on low G – the lowest note on the chanter. The clash between this note and the notes of the drones (tuned to the note low A) is one of the outstanding features of this tune. The other almost unique feature of the tune is an attractive and unusual triplet movement on E (chevea) which occurs in Variation 1 only. The conflict between these two clans was prolonged, and it would be hard to pin down one bad turn against another, as the clans battled, raided, and disagreed over several centuries. Two events have been suggested as being of major importance to this tune. In 1577 the MacLeods murdered almost the entire MacDonald population of Eigg, who had taken refuge in cave. The method of murder, by lighting a fire in the cave mouth and suffocating them – 400 men, women and children – has made this true story an enduring tale told for centuries thereafter. The macabre cave then remained untouched for some centuries until, during Victorian times, the bones were collected and buried in the island graveyard. In 1600 Margaret, sister of Rory Mòr, married Donald Gorm Mòr MacDonald the son of the MacDonald chief. However, a male heir was not produced during the first year of marriage. Following the ancient custom of 'hand fasting' Margaret could now be returned "unwanted" to the MacLeod clan. During this year Margaret had lost the sight in one eye, so the MacDonalds decided to send her home sitting backwards on a one-eyed horse, accompanied by a one-eyed servant and a one-eyed dog. After this insult a series of bloody battles ensued and the islanders became almost destitute and starving as a result of the conflict, until the dreadful Battle of Cuillin led to the reconciliation, described above, in 1602.

Melbank's Salute may have been composed for Kenneth Mackenzie of Millbank, Ross-shire, or possibly his relative Sir Alexander Mackenzie of Gairloch. Alexander MacKenzie was a noted sponsor of pipers. Apparently, he paid for the advanced training of John Bàn MacKenzie, whom he sent to John MacKay on Raasay, and probably also supported Donald and his brother Sandy Cameron. These individuals then went on to teach many pipers of the 20th century including piobaireachd

scholar Archibald Campbell of Kilberry. This shows how piping traditions are passed on (in some detail) from one generation to another. The composer was Angus MacKay's father, the aforementioned John MacKay. This is a tune that listeners will hear tonight, which ends with a crunluath fosgailte variation. The Battle of Strome has the same type of final variation. 'Fosgailte' means 'open' and the listener may detect a different sound in this dazzling variation, as more fingers are off the chanter than in the usual crunluath.

Salute on the Birth of Rory Mor MacLeod: One legend has it that this tune was composed by Patrick Og MacCrimmon in 1715. However there was only one famous Rory Mòr, 15th Chief of Clan MacLeod who was knighted in 1613 by James VI, and died in 1626. Rory Mòr was a brave and clever chief who had a remarkable life. He went to Ireland with 500 of his clan to assist Hugh Roe O'Donnell's war against the English. Upon his return he became involved in a feud with his brother-in-law Donald Gorm Og MacDonald, who was chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat – whom he had previously fought alongside while in Ireland. This feud is described above in the notes on The MacLeod's Salute. He was also adept at navigating the financial instruments of his time. After punitive demands for title deeds in Scotland were forced on the highland chieftains, Rory Mòr was able to persuade James VI to remit to the Chief his lands of Harris, Dunvegan and Glenelg. Angus MacKay translates the name as "Are you merry-making?" and another authority gives the Gaelic name as "An Ann Air Mhire Tha Sibh", suggesting the tune signified a transport of rage, fury, ardour or vehemence. He concluded that the excitement of a very joyful occasion might well call forth the title.

The Battle of Strome: This tune presumably refers to the struggle between the MacKenzies and the MacDonalds of Glengarry (Angus Og, and his son Donald of Laggan) in 1602, for the possession of the Castle of Strome on Lochcarron. Angus Og was killed in a ship battle there, and MacKenzie destroyed the castle with gunpowder. It was as a reprisal for this, when the men from Glengarry burned the church of Kilchrist and its congregation (the story behind another famous piobaireachd, Glengarry's March). After the events above the MacDonalds of Glengarry retreated to Invergarry Castle in the Great Glen, a striking keep on Raven's Rock, overlooking Loch Oich, (the fine ruins of this castle can be visited to this day). Glengarry's son, Donald of Laggan, went on to live a much more peaceful later life and died at the age of 102.

Lord Lovat's Lament: Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat (c. 1667 – 9 April 1747), nicknamed 'the Fox', was a Scottish Jacobite and Chief of Clan Fraser of Lovat, known for his feuding and changes of allegiance. In 1715, he had been a supporter of the House of Hanover, but in 1745 he changed sides and supported the Stuarts. Defeated at Culloden and convicted of treason he was sentenced to death and subsequently beheaded.

Simon was an intelligent man being fluent in English, French, Latin and Gaelic, and fulfilled an important role of a highland chief, that of military leader. He was certainly brave and resolute, and remained sanguine in the days leading up to the execution, even exhibiting a sense of humour. The day of his execution saw many spectators arrive at Tower Hill, and an overcrowded timber stand collapsed, leaving nine spectators dead, to Lovat's wry amusement. His laughter at this incident, even as he was executed, is said to be the origin of the phrase 'to laugh one's head off'. Among his last words was a line of Horace: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* - It is sweet and seemly to die for one's country. He died, in his own eyes, as a Scottish patriot. There have been numerous attempts to revise the tune from the somewhat confused manuscript versions, and listeners may hear various settings including the (popular) one by Archibald Campbell of Kilberry, from his Kilberry Book and now published in the new edition of the Society's Book 9.

Beloved Scotland: Nothing is known with any certainty about the historical background or date of composition of this lovely tune. In the notes to David Glen's Ancient Piobaireachd, there is the following: 'Beloved Scotland, thee I am leaving ... This fine Pibroch is said to have been the favourite March of Sir Donald MacDonald of Slate [sic] when marching to the Battle of Sheriffmuir (1715). Donald was the son of Sir James MacDonald of the Isles, described in the note below. Confusingly this tale refers to a completely different tune, later published as Cheerful Scotland and later still as The Battle of Sheriffmuir. The tune you will hear today does not date from 1715 but is instead a relatively recent composition – possibly 19th century. The tune starts with a simple two-bar theme which is then repeated in a different 'key'. The tune goes on to use all the nine notes of the chanter rising slowly to the top note. The use of all the notes is an unusual occurrence in a piobaireachd; most other tunes use a pentatonic scale that they stay in throughout.

Sir James MacDonald of the Isles' Lament: The 'Sir James' in the title has been identified as one of a number of possible MacDonald lairds, most probably the 9th chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat, who accepted that they could use the title 'of the Isles' since MacDonald of Sleat had always been styled in Gaelic, MacDhonnail na'n Eilean. Like his father, who served under Charles I of England, Sir James initially fought as a Royalist in support of Charles II's claim to the British throne, including at the Battle of Worcester in 1651 where the royalists were defeated. MacDonald negotiated a truce with the government, a fact that probably saved his life in those turbulent times. Retiring to the clan seat of Duntulm Castle in Skye, MacDonald concentrated on public service and dismissed calls by allies to commit to further battle. On his death, the chieftaincy of the clan (and baronetcy of Nova Scotia) was inherited by his eldest son Donald, an ardent supporter of King James II and VII. This tune, like Beloved Scotland, has a final 'crunluath breabach' variation.

Translating the term ‘breabach’ is not a big help to the listener as it literally means ‘kicking’, but the variation has a rolling character which is most attractive.

Nameless, Cherede Darievea: In 1909 Philip Bartholomew of the Piobaireachd Society visited an Anne Campbell in Oban to buy a set of pipes – and while there she offered him two manuscript books which were ‘something to do with piping’. These were the first two volumes of Canntaireachd written by her grandfather Colin Campbell between 1790 and 1816. The manuscripts describe the singing of a piper to his pupil, and many of the tunes had never been heard of or published before, including this Nameless tune. The Nameless tunes have (since then) been described by their first phrase in the Canntaireachd “language” – in this case Cherede Darievea. Where these programme notes refer to musical phrases, they will sometimes use this language which is a useful shorthand. The tune starts with a majestic Ground, after which there is a variation sometimes called “Shiubhal” which approximately means “travelling” or “moving” – certainly this variation is often played in a lively manner, at the performer’s discretion. At this point the shape of the tune is obvious to the listener, but for the piper there are more challenges to come, as the long melody leads to over 350 taorluath or crunluath movements being required, more than any tune in the Piobaireachd Society Collection. So, what is the subject of this tune: a majestic Salute or a powerful Lament? We will never know. In 1925 Campbell of Kilberry edited the tune for the first time and described it as a ‘remarkable piece of music’ but it was his successor as editor, Archie Kenneth, who first called it the ‘Big Nameless’ tune, reflecting the challenges that it poses for the player.

Dr Peter McCalister



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