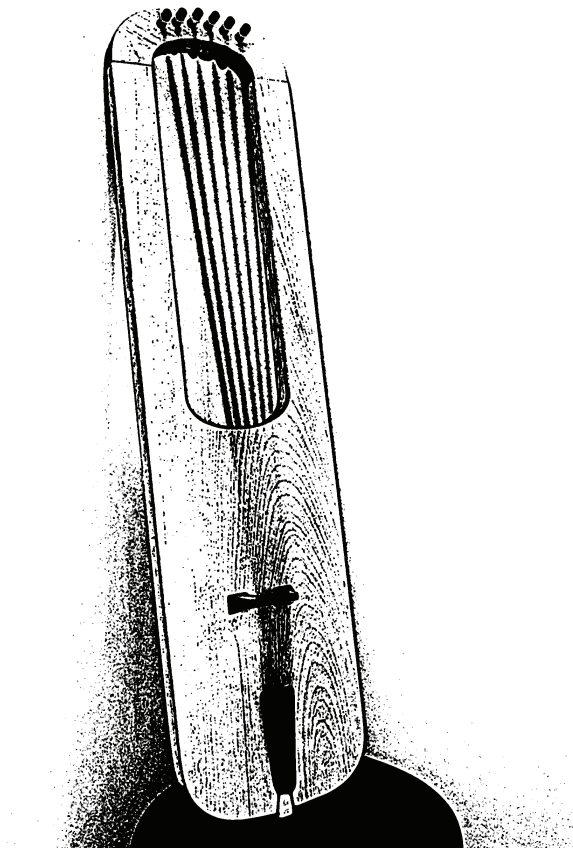


The Celtic Lyre

**A Collection of Gaelic Songs
Compiled by Fionn (Henry Whyte)**

(Parts 1-4)



**Editor: Trueman Matheson
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Roimh-Ràdh—Preface

When Trueman Matheson, the editor of Siol Cultural Enterprises, approached me to musically edit *The Celtic Lyre*, I was rather skeptical. I was currently in the throes of writing my Ph.D. dissertation on the medieval musical performance practices of the narrative songs concerning Fionn Mac Cumhail and found little value in re-setting Gaelic music that had been published during the late Victorian Age; I felt surely that the music would have been significantly altered to conform to English and mainland attitudes of propriety and musical form. I was mistaken.

Although I found the music engraved¹ rather casually and nineteenth-century notation sensibilities concerning musical time and key signatures followed, I noticed an effort had been made to render the music truthfully and not drastically alter it to make it seem more like Western European art music. This effort had been hidden behind a façade of publishing norms that the facility of modern computer applications² easily dispelled. Therefore, this current version of *The Celtic Lyre* is presented with those publishing policies removed, with the result that the music looks much different on the printed page than the original version. Specifically, there were changes made to orthography, metre, and key signatures.

Two contrary perspectives motivated the form of the musical notation of this collection. At one extreme, there is an understanding that musical notation began and was used as only a rough memory-aid and is inherently imprecise; on the other extreme, there is an understanding that many people seem to desire to perform music notation precisely as written. Yet, the musical rhythm is extremely flexible in one case and rigid in the other, respectively. Whyte's musical notation followed the art music conventions of his day; it is a straightforward process to remove those hand-engraving conventions. The question then presents itself: should the music stay as Whyte wrote it with an appreciation that the reader would then know not to perform it as written, or should the music be rendered more exactly, according to the way that it was actually performed? If the music is placed more accurately, then there is an additional danger that people will consider this collection to be an authoritative and singular dictate and then perform the songs precisely as written.

I have taken the position that while following the written notation meticulously can alter the music from how it would normally be performed, it is preferable to having the songs performed as Whyte inexactly presented them. While the music notation presented in this collection might make the music seem precise, it is definitely not so. There is a tremendous amount of “wobble-room” in the music, both in intonation and rhythm. One must not lose sight of this when attempting to realize the music of *The Celtic Lyre*.

There are three areas that were identified and brought closer to actual practice in this present collection: orthography, metre, and pitch placement on the musical staff. Concerning orthography, the Gaelic spelling notation conventions of Nova Scotia, Canada were followed. These conventions are more precise; therefore, they assist singers in

¹ Sheet music was engraved, not printed during Whyte's time. Copper plates were etched to form the template for the printed music. Therefore, creating musical notation was much more of an art than typesetting.

² Although Finale® is a robust computer application, Sibelius® was used in this edition principally because there is a sol-fa plug-in available (written by James Larcombe and Neil Sands). Formatting generally followed North American norms; however, lyric spacing took precedence over note spacing to help Gaelic learners.

achieving clearer pronunciation and also assist in translation. Concerning metre, the notated rhythmic conventions of the original editions of *The Celtic Lyre* followed accepted practices of the time. Those conventions can be contrary to Gaelic musical performance since conventional musical rhythms matched the rhythmic patterns of the Italian or English language. In his collection, Whyte first presented staff notation at the top of the page, under that sol-fa, under that Gaelic, and under that English translations. The musical rhythms placed on the staff seem to be a compromise designed to approximate both the English and Gaelic languages' rhythmic patterns; the rhythms do not exactly match Gaelic language patterns, recordings of these songs at archives, or as they are sung in Gaelic culture today.

As mentioned above, many people seem to have the desire to perform music precisely as written. Because of Whyte's probable rhythmical compromise, Gaelic songs from his collection are now beginning to be sung ostensibly to an English language rhythm. To prevent this, an understanding of the characteristics of the Gaelic language that strongly influence the rhythm of the music should be discussed. The most important is that the Gaelic language has an underlying triplet structure. This lends the associated music to being expressing in compound (having a sub-structure composed of triplets: 6/8, 9/8, 12/8) or 3/8 time. 6/8 time consists two groups of triplets (each triplet is composed of three eighth notes,³ stress is on the first note of the first group); 9/8 time is comprised of three groups of triplets (stress on the first note of the first group); 12/8 contains four groups of triplets (stress on first and third groups; stress is stronger on the first group than on the third group). Unfortunately, in the past, art musicians often proscribed compound time.⁴ It was also more difficult to engrave and harder to read.

Secondly, the Gaelic language might be seen to consist of two contrasting groups of vowels (excluding palatal and non-palatal distinctions); one group consists of long vowels (indicated by length markings on the vowels), the other of short ones. Vowel placement in a sentence often alternates between these two groups, giving the language rhythm a lilting, skipping quality. This is in contrast to the English language, which, while possessing some distinctly long and short vowels, does not possess such a marked vowel-length dichotomy.

Whyte's musical notation often made use of quarter notes (see Figure 1, below). This was not a reflection of how the music was and is performed in Gaelic, but often matched the rhythm of the translated English verses. The vowel pattern of Gaelic is often long-short; if so, it should be performed as in Figure 2 (below). Therefore, the music in this version was slightly adjusted to match the actual sung pattern of Gaelic. Native Gaelic singers would intuitively know to perform Figure 1 as Figure 2:



Figure 1

becomes:



Figure 2

Normally, musical notation only reflected the chorus/refrain (*séisd*) or first verse. Particularly in Gaelic music, musical rhythm changed from verse to verse as the lyrics dictated. For example, a syllable/vowel of one verse placed on a particular note may be

³ Since it is thought that most editions of this volume will be sold in North America, the terms eighth, quarter, and half note will be used in place of quaver, crotchet, and minim, respectively; also, "measure" replaces "bar."

⁴ For example, Händel's song "Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion" from his *Messiah* was originally written in 12/8 time. Händel was persuaded to change it to common (4/4) time.

long whereas the next verse's syllable/vowel placed on that same note may be short. It may be that the first verse was performed as is annotated in Figure 2, above, but the second verse may have a vowel pattern that was not long-short in the second half of the measure, but short-long. In such a case, the music would be performed as in Figure 3 (below):



Figure 3

As an example of this shifting, consider “*Tha mo rùn air a’ ghille.*” In the original version, the music was written as the chorus (*séisid*) is presented in this collection. Henry Whyte made a footnote that the rhythms should shift between the chorus and the verses, but did not write out those notational changes. Since the two rhythms were so different, I believed that it would be far too confusing for the singer to see a particular rhythm but sing it differently; therefore, the verses were made separate from the chorus, showing a different rhythm. Yet, this was not enough. In the second-to-last measure of the verses, the first verse has a long vowel on the last syllable (*a’ chùil*), but the second verse has a long vowel on the second-to-last syllable (*còt-a*). I annotated this in an *ossia* (a small, explanatory measure), but this would be extremely laborious to do for every verse. If the singer does not shift the rhythm as needed to match the pattern of the spoken word, the singer is performing the act of “flattening out.” This practice is most evident in waulking songs. Because the requirement for a strong work rhythm is paramount in these songs, simple, everyday, rhythmically-free songs were metamorphosed into a repetitive rhythm. This had the effect of transporting unstressed syllables to positions of musical rhythmic stress. Although waulking songs have the disadvantage of changing the pronunciation of a song’s lyrics, they have had the benefit of preserving songs that would have otherwise perished.

Thirdly, there is another feature of Gaelic music called the “Scots’ Snap,”⁵ where a stressed initial beat is made short. This trait ran counter to notational practices of Whyte’s time. The Scots’ Snap is rather difficult to realize in notation and also difficult for the singer to actualize by looking at the notation. It would look something like Figure 4 (below):



Figure 4

Because of these difficulties, I presented this feature as in Figure 3. It is the responsibility of the singer to determine when this practice is appropriate.

Lastly, since these songs were never intended to be accompanied, there is no reason to establish and rigidly adhere to unequivocal rhythmical precision. In the Gaelic song tradition, strict metre was never kept within a measure, between two concurrent measures, or even between two verses. Indeed, the very concept of having measure bar lines is foreign to the tradition. For example, again consider the song, “*Tha mo rùn air a’ ghille.*” At the end of the sixth measure of the verses, the final few eighth notes should not be performed so as to keep a rigid, steady pulse from the sixth to seventh measures. The second-to-last eighth note was placed roughly at the end of the measure; the following

⁵ The term “Scotch” is a mis-spelling of the genitive plural “Scots’,” so it is also known as the “Scotch Snap.”

eighth note acts as a pick-up beat, with a clear rhythmical break preceding it. I used a symbol that suggests this practice of slightly slowing down (*ritardando*): \wedge

With the exception of “*Mo nighean donn, bhòidheach*,”⁶ every song in this collection was placed in compound (or 3/8) time. If there were two stresses per line of poetry, the music was placed in 6/8 time. If there were three stresses per line of poetry, the music was placed in 9/8 time. If there were four stresses per line, I placed the music in 12/8 time. This last form can be confusing. So, if the music was performed to a strong rhythm or quickly, I placed it in 6/8 time for ease of reading. However, this presents problems. One significant problem is that a syllable that is only lightly stressed and occurring in the middle of a sentence might now be placed on the first beat of a measure. This improperly implies that the syllable should then be strongly stressed and/or that there would be a slight lift (pause) preceding it. By placing the song in 12/8 time, there is no bar line, and the singer is not subconsciously impelled to strongly stress a mildly stressed syllable.

The other component that has been changed in this collection from the original, slightly, is the pitch notation. The tunes have not been changed in any way, only the way that they are presented on the page. By adjusting where the music sits on the staff, the structure of the music can be seen more clearly. This difference is transparent, but the reader may notice that the accidentals in the key signatures have been removed and small notes in parenthesis added. There are a number of reasons why this was done, but a full explanation of this might prove to be somewhat esoteric. So, briefly, the rationale is as follows:

Firstly, the original purpose of an accidental was to facilitate moving the pitch range of a song by roughly half an octave so that any song/chant in any mode could be sung by the same group of people. The symbol used on the mainland for this purpose was B \flat ⁷ (perhaps moving the key from C Major to F Major), but in insular Britain, F \sharp was used⁸ (perhaps moving the key from C Major to G Major). So, when transcribing Gaelic music, F \sharp might be seen as a preferred choice to fulfill this function. Secondly, transcribers often heard a song being sung and sounded out the approximate notes on a nearby piano. They then wrote this down and transferred any accidentals to the key signature, adding or subtracting accidentals so that the final note matched the name of the key.⁹ Therefore, there was little value placed upon the key signature chosen; it was as variable as the starting pitch the singer randomly chose. Thirdly, before equal temperament, different keys had different “colours.” A traditional tune might be ascribed to a key signature based upon the pathos of the lyrics, not because the actual intonation of that tune matched a certain key. Fourthly,

⁶ To be more rhythmically precise, rhythms were extrapolated from Whyte’s notation and then checked against recordings found at archives. I used the oldest recordings made from the eldest informants possible. This was the only song where I could not find lyric audio examples. All songs but this one were sung melodically, lyrically, in compound time, and without a strong rhythm. Interestingly, all songs were also sung without ornamentation. This implies that ornamentation in these songs is a modern development.

⁷ This synthetic, manufactured note was considered so important that, even though it was not in the diatonic, Pythagorean-tuned scale, it was considered *musica vera* and not *musica ficta*.

⁸ This is discussed by Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland: An Edition Comprising the Three Collections by Edward Bunting Originally Published in 1796, 1809 and 1840* (Dublin: Waltons’ Piano and Musical Instrument Galleries, 1969).

⁹ Often, a pentatonic tune with a final note of G, which might be described as Mixolydian, will have a non-existent note of F \sharp added to the key signature (the note never appears in the tune); this makes the tune appear to be in G Major (Ionian). This satisfies art music norms.

there was, and is, a great deal of bigotry against Gaelic culture which can be directed at the culture's music. To defend against this and to be judged favourably when compared with European art music, the music was often made to seem more complicated than it actually was; this was often accomplished by adding an array of flat symbols to the key signatures.

Various music collectors and publishers¹⁰ have espoused quite an assortment of modal systems to describe Gaelic music. I believe the most robust and comprehensive has been annotated in Francis Collinson's *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland*.¹¹ Using this as a model, the music in *The Celtic Lyre* was moved up or down on the staff so that the "missing" notes were placed on F (F₄) and B (B₄) (see below, Figure 5), or the inversion, B (B₄) and F (F₅) (see below, Figure 6). The "x" symbol indicates where notes were missing:

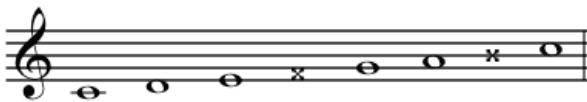


Figure 5

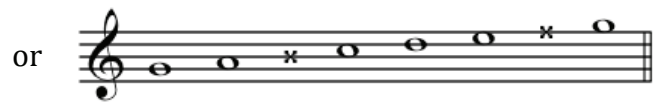


Figure 6

Gaelic music generally seems to lack one or two half step intervals; therefore, since the ecclesiastical modes are defined by the placement of two half steps within an octave, they might be seen to be inappropriate to describe Gaelic music. The absence of half steps is so incongruous to the diatonic scale that most trained musicians are unaware that pentatonic (five notes per octave) tunes which lack half steps can be moved up and down the staff from tonic to subdominant or dominant (up or down a perfect fourth or fifth) without changing the key signature. Without Collinson's constraint of placing missing notes in a fixed location, each of these shifts might make a pentatonic tune appear to be in a different mode depending upon the variable mechanism by which the transcriber set the tune.¹²

In order to minimize confusion, I attempted to follow Collinson's approach for the pentatonic tunes in this collection. Furthermore, following Collinson's additional instructions for hexatonic (six notes per octave) tunes, I then placed those tunes' missing a note on either F or B. While doing this, I saw a pattern of triads that was unmistakable. I then moved those tunes up or down a perfect fourth or fifth (and occasionally a third or sixth). There was no mistaking the results: the natural scale leapt off the page.

What is the natural scale?¹³ It is a series of notes played by natural instruments. Typical natural instruments include bugles, valveless trumpets (such as the common, wooden *lur*) and horns, early hornpipes, and willow flutes.¹⁴ The latter was so important that Eivind Groven in his *Naturskalaen*¹⁵ has suggested that Norwegian folk music's intonation is based

¹⁰ Tolmie, Kennedy-Fraser, Reichenbach, Dauneay, MacFarlane, Bodley, etc.

¹¹ Francis Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

¹² Mode attributions are often determined by the pitch of the final note of a tune. With Collinson's method supplemented by my own, the tunes in this collection have ending pitches as follows: C: 54%, G: 21%, D: 13%, A: 12%. Tunes ending on C and G comprise 75% of the songs. In the past, tunes ending on G have been ascribed by transcribers as being either Ionian or Mixolydian because of the indeterminate pitch of the 7th degree of the scale. The early Christian church banned songs ending in C (Ionian-Major) and A (Aeolian-Minor) because they were thought to be "lascivious." Possibly, this was an attempt to proscribe folk music.

¹³ This pattern of notes is also called the "harmonic series."

¹⁴ Many people familiar with English traditional instruments would be aware that the tabor pipe, although possessing three holes, uses the natural scale/harmonic series.

¹⁵ Eivind Groven, *Naturskalaen; Tonale Lover I Norsk Folkemusikk Bundne Til Seljefløyta* (Skien: Norsk folkekulturs forlag, 1927).

on the *seljefløyta*. Willow flutes are made from bark pulled from a cut willow tree branch; this is facilitated when there is a layer of sap between the wood and the bark, which occurs in the springtime. A fipple notch is cut near the large end, like a recorder. Extant medieval bone and wooden duct flutes similar to willow flutes have been discovered in Ireland.¹⁶

It should also be noted that a bagpipe's chanter is tuned using the just intonation principle,¹⁷ which is a method of tuning that uses the drones' pitches as nodal markers for the chanter's individual pitches. The pitch of a note played on a chanter is moved up or down in pitch by using wax, tree sap, or cellophane tape in the finger hole openings until the pitch "locks in" to the drones.¹⁸ This process creates pitches that match the idealized harmonics of the natural scale; chanters are generally not tuned in a mean tone, equal temperament, or Pythagorean manner.

The inclination to create in-tune triadic harmony for fixed-pitched instruments, and hence an equally tempered scale in mainland Europe, came about due to the existence of natural instruments. Major thirds played on Pythagorean-tuned, fixed-pitch instruments are considered dissonant (twenty-three cents sharp); natural instruments play thirds in-tune. Therefore, it may be the natural scale that influences Gaelic music to be, as Ó Ríada put it, like "the serpent with its tail in its mouth."¹⁹ The staple of European art music, the unequally-spaced diatonic scale, forces a melody to move between whole and half steps. This progression is the cause of why art music, which is based on the diatonic scale and associated harmonies, constantly shifts between harmonic dissonance and consonance. Gaelic music, which seems to use the natural scale, is smooth and consistent from one note to the next; it just does not look that way on a staff system developed for the diatonic scale.

After noticing what appeared to be the natural scale in the music of this collection, I then adjusted the music so that reader could see the natural scale if desired. This process also moved the scale higher on the staff so that it is a good distance away from the sol-fa notation; this improves legibility. Slightly adjusting Collinson's structure to accommodate the natural scale resolves many of the issues that his musical framework does not address, such as: why is the Gaelic/folk music scale often described as being "gapped?" Why is almost all of the music thought to be either pentatonic (not merely five notes per octave, but devoid of half-steps) or hexatonic? Why does the music's intonation not match the equally tempered scale? Why do Irish musicians have a special expression, "F-flat," to describe the leading tone in music which is ostensibly in G Major?

It should be noted that some of the pitches of the natural scale do not perfectly match the notes of the diatonic scale; some of those notes are the 7th, 11th, 13th, and 14th partials (whole number of waves that can fit in a tube or on a string), which are considered out-of-tune with instruments tuned in an equally tempered manner (how a piano is tuned today).²⁰ The 7th partial is between A (A₄) and B \flat (B \flat ₄),²¹ the 11th partial is halfway

¹⁶ Ann Buckley, "Music and Musicians in Medieval Irish Society," *Early Music* 2 (2000), 165-92: 173.

¹⁷ The best resource I have found to explain various tuning systems, although rather complex for the general reader, is Cristiano Forster, *Musical Mathematics: On the Art and Science of Acoustic Instruments* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010).

¹⁸ In fact, the chanter's pitch is actually matching an overtone of the drone.

¹⁹ Seán Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage*. Mountrath (Ireland: The Dolmen Press, 1982), 22.

²⁰ Equal temperament is a tuning system where the distance between notes of the diatonic scale are adjusted so that all whole steps are perceived to be of an equal distance. Half steps are all tuned to be half the span of a whole step. Therefore, all keys sound the same when equal temperament is done exactly.

between F (F₅) and F# (F#₅),²² the 13th partial is between A \flat (A \flat ₅) and A (A₅),²³ and the 14th partial is between A (A₅) and B \flat (B \flat ₅).²⁴ Here is the natural scale written in staff notation with significantly divergent notes from equal temperament made bold (see Figure 7, below). Arrows point in the direction that the natural scale note sounds in comparison to the written staff notation.

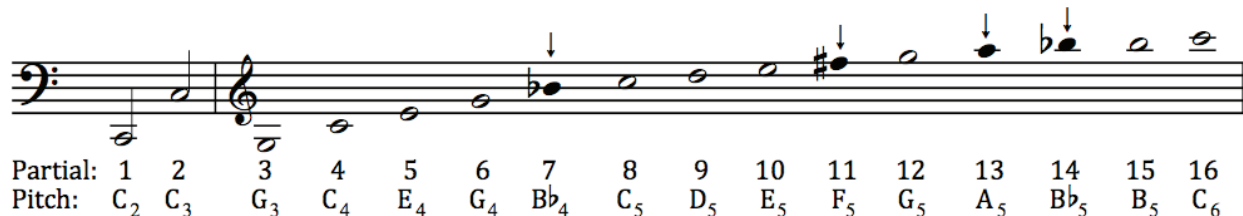


Figure 7

I had noticed the natural scale in Gaelic music when I first went to Cape Breton Island ten years ago and heard older fiddlers playing at *céilidhs*. Fiddlers played “between the cracks” (of the piano). The 11th partial was especially apparent. Unfortunately, it is difficult to show this note using staff notation. Attempting to accurately annotate the natural scale using a system that was conceived to represent the diatonic scale is extremely difficult; moreover, viewing the natural scale on a staff impels the reader who might be trained in the structure of art music to see possible harmonies and melodic relationships that, in fact, do not exist in music based on the natural scale.

There are some problems in representing the natural scale on a staff that was created to represent the diatonic scale. Firstly, the 7th partial is often written as B \flat but is actually between A and B \flat . If a music transcriber listens to a Gaelic song beginning and ending on C, and hears a pitch sounding between G and C, the transcriber would not think to write B \flat since B \flat is not in C Major. The pitch would sound much closer to A than B \flat .²⁵ Therefore a transcriber would have a tendency to write A for the 7th partial. Secondly, the 11th partial is written as F#; it could also be written as F since it is almost exactly halfway between the two. Also, you may have observed that there is a D₄ in the diatonic scale shown in Collinson’s system (Figure 5) that is not in the natural scale. This note disappears when the tune is transposed by a perfect fourth or fifth.

When the natural scale’s representation on the diatonic staff is adjusted with these concerns in mind, the following results (see Figure 8, below):

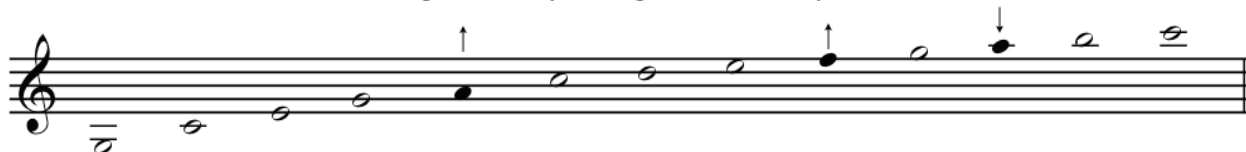


Figure 8

²¹ The 7th partial is 69 cents sharper than an equally tempered A and 31 cents flatter than an equally tempered B \flat . There are 100 cents in an equally tempered half step interval.

²² The 11th partial is 51 cents sharper than an equally tempered F and 49 cents flatter than an equally tempered F#. The quarter-tone (diesis) symbol that approximates this is F \sharp .

²³ The 13th partial is 59 cents flatter than an equally tempered A.

²⁴ The 14th partial is 31 cents flatter than an equally tempered B \flat .

²⁵ On a scale of 100, between A than B \flat , the 7th partial would fall on 35; therefore, it is closer to A than B \flat .

It should be noted that the first and second partials have been omitted from this figure as they are very difficult to play and do not appear in any of the songs of this collection. The black notes in the above figure might be transcribed variously up or down a half step. Some of the variations I have seen are displayed in Figures 9 and 10, below:



Figure 9



Figure 10

Trained art musicians are taught to think in terms of octave equivalency, where there are an equal number of notes within any octave. For example, the expressions “pentatonic” and “hexatonic” are octave-based equivalency terms. When analyzing a Gaelic/folk tune, a musician will look for any missing note. If one is missing, the analyst will then search to see if that note exists in the next higher/lower octave. If the note is missing in all octaves, the song is tentatively designated “hexatonic.” The analyst will then look to find another missing note. If such a note is found missing in a lower octave, but present in a higher octave, the tune does not meet the octave-equivalency constraints required for the tune to be “pentatonic.” In contrast to the octave-equivalent diatonic scale, the natural scale does not have F_4 and B_4 , but does have $F/F\sharp_5$ (perhaps more accurately written $F\sharp_5$). Therefore, if the natural scale is the basis of Gaelic music (and European folk music in general), one should be able to look at some tunes placed in Collinson’s system which art musicians would normally describe as hexatonic and find an absent F_4 but an existing $F/F\sharp_5$. Significantly, this condition was found to occur in the first song: “*Muile nam Mór-Bheann*.”

In this collection of sixty-eight tunes, 46% can be played by novice (natural) trumpet players (ten to twelve year-old/primary school students). 51% require some skill and can be played by secondary school students.²⁶ The remaining 3% of the songs require a good deal of skill to play on a natural instrument, although not that much, as I can play them. The 3% consists of the two songs, “*Fuadach nan Gàidheal*” and “*Am fonn*.” Both were possibly created on a bagpipe.²⁷ Although the pitches of the bagpipe chanter are tuned using the just intonation method, the instrument is not limited to the lower notes of the harmonic series. A natural instrument must be played rather high in its range in order to match the consecutive notes of the pipes. Playing a natural instrument diatonically in a high register (called the “clarino register” by trumpeters in the Baroque musical era) is physically demanding.

Is the natural scale the genesis of the Gaelic musical scale? In the end, Occam’s razor holds: the simplest theory that explains the most tends to be more correct. Which is simpler? Was the Gaelic musical scale formed by a shepherd mulling over stacked tetrachords and tuning a lyre based upon such mathematical constructs, or did he just pull

²⁶ As a young man, I was playing a sonata by Torelli on a valved D trumpet for my teacher, Peter Voisin (son of Roger). The pitches that I was looking at appeared as the pitches do in this collection. Unfortunately, I was missing notes as I played the piece. Peter said that there was no excuse for this. He then took his $B\flat$ trumpet, pulled out the slides to their maximum extension, pushed all three valves down and, using only his embouchure (lips), played the music.

²⁷ The song, “*A’ ghruagach bhanaill*” which uses the tune, “*Bithibh aotrom ’s togaibh fonn*,” also seems to be a pipe tune, as it has limited range and is diatonic; however, it is easy to play on a natural instrument.

the bark off a willow branch, cut a notch in it and start playing a tune? Maybe he took a fallen two metre-long branch, split it open, hollowed it out, bound it back together again with tree sap and bark (the basic construction of the Norwegian *lur* as it is still made today) and puffed away. No one will ever know for certain. However, current investigation into the performance practices of medieval *dán díreach* poetry is beginning to suggest that music played at a Gaelic chieftain's court employed instruments that played a variety of intonations. Bagpipes were tuned using just intonation principles; trumpets and flutes played the natural scale; harps were tuned using something similar to Pythagorean tuning.²⁸ Yet, each instrumental group found ways of playing that allowed them to work together. For example, in Cape Breton today, fiddlers play in one intonation system, the accompanying piano plays in another. Since the piano players utilize open harmonies of fifths and octaves, there is no conflict with the intonation of the melodic fiddle. The two systems work together without effort. No one system is better than another. Much like languages, each intonation system has advantages and disadvantages. There is no need to champion one over the other. Each one is verdant and lush in its own way.

The songs in this collection were also found to be essentially syllabic; that is, for every syllable, there existed only one pitch. In a syllabic song, there may be numerous syllables on the same pitch, but no more than one pitch for the same syllable. If one syllable is sung on two separate pitches, the condition is termed neumatic. If there are many pitches to one syllable, it is called melismatic. Only with melismas are the notes' rhythmic values prescribed to be identical from one pitch to the next. Contrastingly, with syllabic music, the length of a note is often made long or short to match the way it is spoken.

In general, most Gaelic and other European folk songs seem to have been originally syllabic. A singer might sing a pitch on one syllable and then move to a different syllable on a pitch perhaps a third, fourth, or fifth away. The singer, over many years, then might begin to slide between the two pitches, and an intermediate pitch might form (a neum). This would not be a discrete pitch but a malleable one. As a possible example of this process, consider the pickup measure to the first measure of "*Allt-an-t-Siùcair*." The first syllable is *A'* on G₄. The next syllable is *dol* on E₄. An intermediate pitch perhaps formed between the two pitches as the singer began to slide between the two. A transcriber might hear what seemed to be a discrete note between the two syllables and might have possibly written a neum (two pitches to the same syllable) in the music. The note would be quick and not particularly discrete, but the transcriber might have guessed where the pitch was. In this example, there is an intermediate pitch of F₄ in the diatonic scale; there is no such pitch in the natural scale. The transcriber might thereby add an F₄ to the notation of a Gaelic song without being aware that his knowledge of the diatonic scale would be directing his transcription. Therefore, the placements of transcribed notes in a neumatic condition are unreliable.

²⁸ Harps were tuned to produce a diatonic scale. In creating G Mixolydian (called "high bass" or the "flatt key"), harps were tuned from G to F_b using fifths, octaves, and two fourths. In creating G Ionian (called the "sharp key" or the "natural key"), harps were tuned from G to F_# using fifths, octaves, and one fourth. This shifting between F_b and F_# could be due to the presence of natural instruments pitched in C playing the 11th partial, or bagpipes tuned justly and pitched in G, to match their leading tone. Additionally, the translated expression "natural key," might not refer to the natural major of G, but to the tuning used to match natural instruments. The harp string of F_b/F_# is referred to as *téad an leithghléis* (the string of the mid-tuning).

There is another similar mechanism at work that seems to be slowly changing melodies over time. In this case, there are two stressed syllables separated by an unstressed syllable. The two stressed syllables may be apart in pitch by about a third or more. In comparing audio recordings at archives, I have often found that the unstressed syllable between the two stressed ones is generally placed on the same pitch as the first stressed syllable. The pitch of the unstressed syllable can be imperfectly transcribed since it is sung imprecisely. For example, consider the song, “*Dùthaich nan craobh.*” Much like the song, of “*Allt-an-t-Siùcair,*” consider the pickup measure to the first measure. The first syllable is *A* on E_4 . The next stressed syllable is *fàg* (of *fàgail*) on G_4 . There is an unstressed word, *bhi*, between the two. Over time, the singer perhaps slid between the stressed syllables, causing an intermediate pitch to develop on the unstressed syllable between the notes of the stressed syllables. The transcriber with knowledge of the diatonic scale may have subconsciously heard an intermediate note and wrote a note of the diatonic scale between the two stressed syllables.

Almost all of the suggested notes in this collection (placed in parenthesis; this allowed the tune to conform to the natural scale) originated from the above-stated conditions. There were only a few instances when a suggested note fell on a stressed syllable. Generally, this occurred when the end of a phrase moved to the final note. As an example, consider “*Moladh na Landaidh.*” On the final word *Landaidh*, the transcriber placed the syllable *Lan* on a note one full step above the ending note for *-daigh*; this placed the note for *Lan* outside the natural scale. This occurrence seemed to happen in groups; that is, I noticed a few songs where this process happened repetitively and then stopped. This suggests that there was one particular transcriber who had a penchant to end musical phrases in this particular manner, not that the songs were actually sung that way.

All of the above comments were made for those interested in the underlying root of the form that I used in this new musical setting of *The Celtic Lyre*. To the average reader, this form is transparent, as it should be. The tunes have been updated in making their rhythms reflect the Gaelic language without regard to English; the rhythms now approximate the way that people actually sang them and still sing them in Gaelic society today. The melodies were not changed, but just set on the staff simply, so that they are easier to read. The spelling has been updated so that it is consistent and aids in translation and pronunciation.

In conclusion, it is my sincerest desire that the format of the work presented here will be taken as a possible template for performance and not a prescriptive mandate. There is a great deal of beauty in these songs, as they describe the yearnings and depth of feeling of the universal human condition. Yet, they were created in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and their intent flows from the condition of the people rooted there. It is my fervent wish that the words and melodies in this collection flow from every reader’s mouth with the momentum of Gaelic culture and tradition.

Aindrias Hirt
Am Baile Mór (Antaiginis), Alba Nuadh

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1. Muile nam Mór-bheann

Donnachadh “nam Blàr” Mac-a-Leith,
á Crogan, Muile

Seann fhonn
Ath-sgrìobhadh: Aindrias Hirt

Gu socrach




'S e Doh C | s | d' :- .d' :l | s :- :s | m' :- :m' | m' :r'

Séis: Bho 'n tha mi gun sunnd, 's gur dùth dhomh mul - ad,
1. Am Muil - e nan craobh tha 'mhaigh - dean bhan - ail,
2. Do shlios mar an fhaoil - ean, taobh na mar - a,



| m' | r' :d' :l | d' :- :m' | r' :- :d' | l :s

Cha tog mi mo shùil ri sùgr - adh tuill - e;
D' an tug mi mo ghaol 's mi faoin 'am bhar - ail;
Do ghruaidh mar an caor - ann, sgaoilt' air mhean - gan;



| m | s :l :s | m' :- :f' | s' :- :m' | r' :d'

Cha téid mi le mùirn gu cùirt nan cruinn - eag.
'S ma chaidh e fo sgaoil 's nach faod mi 'faigh - inn
Sùil ghorm is glan aoidh, fo chaoin - ros g tan - a



| r' | m' :r' :d' | l :d' :l | s :- :- | s :-

'S mo rùn_____ am Muil - e nam mór - bheann.
Cha taobh_____ mi cail - eag - an Chòmh - ail.
'S tu 'n òigh_____ a mheall - adh gach òig - ear.

3. Tha smuaine no dhà an dràs' air m' aire;
Chan innis mi 'chàch ceann-fàth mo ghalair;
Ged laidheas mi tràth, cha tàmh dhomh cadal,
'S do ghràdh 'gam sgaradh an còmhnuidh.

4. Do chùl mar an lìon 'na mhìle camag,
Nach greannach fo chìr, is sìod' 'ga cheangal;
Do dheud mar na dìsnean, dìonach, daingeann;
Beul binn a ghabhail nan òran.

*Although better suited to 12/8 time (four groups of three eighth notes per measure), 6/8 is used here since it is probably more familiar to the reader. The next song, “*Ghruagach dhonn*,” is in the same metre but is placed in 12/8 time. The lack of a bar line helps to make the realization more *parlando* (speech-like). Extra bar lines are added here to ease the transition to 12/8 time. 6/8 time is used in lieu of 12/8 time throughout this collection whenever the scansion proved difficult.


†This is about half the length of a *fermata*; it is somewhat analogous to *rubato*, but the time is not stolen from another measure.

2. 'Ghruagach dhonn

Gun urra


Seann fhonn
Ath-sgrìobhadh: Aindrias Hirt

Luath




'S e Doh C | l :- :l | d' :- :d' | s :- :m | s :- :-

1. 'Ghruag - ach dhonn a' bhroill - ich bhàin,
2. 'Ghruag - ach dhonn gun ghò, gun fhoill,
3. Rinn mi coinn - eamh riut glé òg,




| d' :- :t | l :- :l | d' :- :r' | m' :- :-

Chum do chòdh - ail rium Di - Màirt,
Chum a' choinn - eamh rium an raoir,
Ann an coill - e dhlùth nan cnò,



| s' :- :m' | r' :- :d' | r' :- :m' | s :- :-

'Ghrua - gach dhonn a' bhroill - ich bhàin,
Bha mi còmh - radh riut 's a' choill',
Bhith - inn 'g éisd - eachd ri do cheòl,



| l :- :d' | f' :- :d' | r' :- :d' | l :- :-

Gu - ma slàn a chì mi thu.
Sinn an caoimh - neas dìomh - air - each.
'S bha do phòg mar fhìg - is leam.


4. Gun robh ise fallain, slàn,
Chum a' chòdhail rium Di-Màirt,
Iarguin m' aigne 's m' airsneal phràmh,
'S mo chion-gràidh da-rìreadh thu.


8. Tha mo rùn air a' ghille


Catrìona Munn,
Muile


Seann fhonn
Ath-sgrìobhadh: Aindrias Hirt


Gu mall

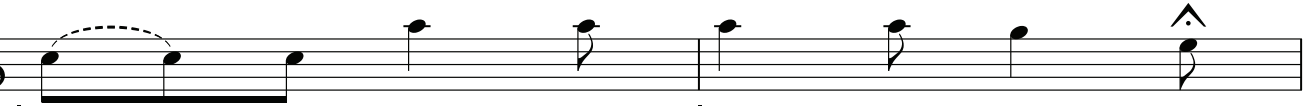

 'S e Doh C | d' :- :r' | m' :- :- | s' :- :m' | r' :d' :-
 Séisd: Tha mo rùn air a' ghill - e,


 | d' :- :d' | l' :- :- | l' :- :l' | s' :m' :-
 'S e mo dhùr - achd gun tig thu.


 | s' :- :l | d' :- :r' | m' :- :r' | m' :s'
 'S mi gun siùbh - ladh leat am fir - each,


 | s' | l' :- :- | s' :- :l' | r' :- :- | d' :- :-
 Fo shil - eadh nam fuar - bheann.


 | d' :- :r' | m' :- :m' | s' :- :m' | r' :- :d'
 1. Oidhch - e Shamh - raidh dhomh 's mi 'm òn - ar
 2. O, gur e mo cheist an t-òig - ear,
 3. Ged tha blàth na bric 'ad aod - ann,

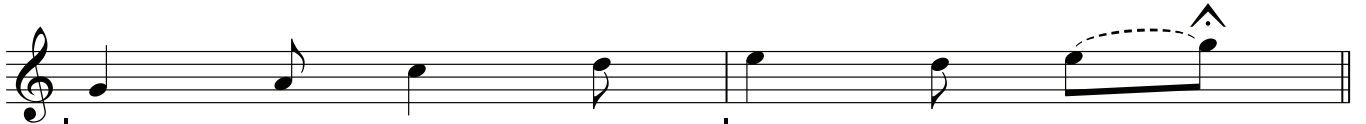

 | d' :- :d' :d' | l' :- :l' | l' :- :l' | s' :- :m'
 Nam b' urr - ainn dhomh gun dèan - ainn òr - an,
 Fear _____ chùil dhuinn 's an lead - ain bhòidh - ich,
 Cha _____ do lugh - daich siud mo ghaol ort;

Note by Fionn: The song will be found complete in *An t-Òranaiche*.

*A more appropriate time signature would be 12/8, but it is difficult to read.

The Celtic Lyre

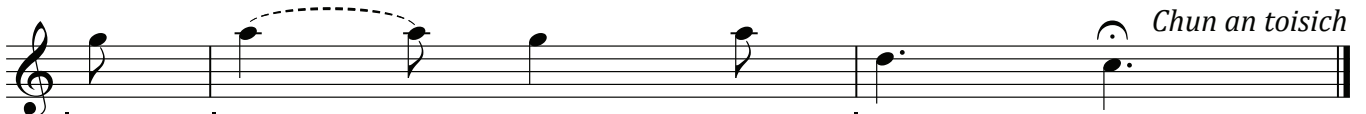
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| s :- :l | d' :- :r' | m' :- :r' | m' :s'
 'S truagh a Rìgh nach robh mi pòsd - a
 'S mi gun siùbh - ladh leat thar m' eòl - ais,
 'S mi gun siùbh - ladh leat an saogh - al,



òig - ear a' chùil



| s' | l' :- :l' | s' :- :l' | r' :- :- | d' :- :-
 Air òig - ear a' chùil dual - aich!
 Ged tha an còt - a ruadh ort.
 Nan saoil - - inn do bhuan - achd.

Chun an toisich

4. Tha an Nollaig 'tigh'nn as ùr oirnn'
 Ged a tha gur beag mo shùrd rith';
 'M fear nach fàgadh anns a' chùil mi,
 Air chùl nan tonn uaine!

5. 'S beag a shaoil mi-fhìn an uiridh,
 Gun tréigeadh tu mi cho buileach;
 Mar gun tilgeadh craobh a duilleach,
 Dh'fhàs thu umam suarach.

Although the above notation can be played on natural instruments, the simplified notation below suggests that this tune may be very old.



24. An Gàidheal 's a leannan

Uilleam MacCoinnich,
Inbhir Nis

Seann fhonn
Ath-sgrìobhadh: Aindrias Hirt

Gu socrach

'Se Doh C | d' :- :- | m :s :- | l :- :s | s :- :- | m' :- :- | r' :m' :-
Séisd: Théid i 's gun téid i leam, Leam - sa gun

| s' :- :f' | m' :r' :- | d' :- :- | m :s :- | l :- :s | s :- :-
téid mo leann - an, Théid i 's gun téid i leam.

| d :- :r | s :- :s | m' :- :f' | s' :- :l'
1. Théid i leam á tìr nam fraoch - bheann,
2. Seòl - aidh sinn á tìr ar dùth - chais,
3. Théid i leam a - null thar sàil - e,

| s' :- :m' | r' :- :t | d' :- :r' | m' :r' :-
O 'n tha daoin' air dol á fas - an.
'Cur ar cùl - aobh ris na beann - aibh.
Far an dèan an Gàidh - eal beairt - eas.

4. 'S ged a bhiodh gach là 'na Shamhradh,
'Chaidh bidh tìr nam beann air m' aire,

5. Is mun càirear anns an ùir sinn,
'S e mo dhùrachd tilleadh dhachaidh.

6. Chum 's gun tòrrar mise 's m' annsachd,
'N tìr nam beann nan gleann 's nan gaisgeach.

Note by Fionn: Gaelic words and music from the "Celtic Magazine."

*A more appropriate time signature would be 12/8, but it is difficult to read.

The Celtic Lyre


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68. An t-òigear uallach


Seumas Rothach

Seann fhonn
Ath-sgrìobhadh: Aindrias Hirt


Glé mhall




*
'Se Doh C | s :s :l | d' :- :r' | m' :s :- .s | l :s :m
1. 'S e 'n t-òig - ear uall - ach a sheòl thar chu - an uainn
2. Ged thig an Samh - radh le thrusg - an greann - mhor
3. Cha b' ion - ann m' àbh - aist an uair bu ghnàth___ leam



| r :m :s | m' :- :r' | m' :s' :- .m' | r' :- :-
Rinn m' fhàg - ail truagh dheth, 's a luaisg mo chridh';
A sgead - ach 'ghleann ag - us bheann le lith.
Bhi 'n glaic mo ghràdh - aich air sgàth na frìth!



| d' :r' :m' | s :- :l .s | m :r :m | s :- :l
A fhleasg - aich ua - sail___ an lead - ain dual - aich,
Cha tog e fonn air___ mo chridh - e trom - sa;
An duill - each uain - e___ 'na sgàil mun cuairt dhuinn,



| d' :r' :- .r' | m' :- :r' | d' :l :- .s | s :- :-
Tha mi fo ghruaim o 'n a dh'fhàg thu 'n 'tìr.
Tha 'n saogh - al lom leam 's mo shonn 'am' dhith.
'S a thrusg - an snuadh - mhor mu bhruaich a' ghlinn.

4. An coireal ceòlmhor air feadh nan cròc-mheur,
'S an t-eas, gu bòidheach, a' dòrtadh still;
An crodh air àilean, 's an teas 'gan sàrach,
'S na laoi gh le àilleas ri àbhachd dhuinn.

5. An t-òigear dualach, 's a cheann an cluain rium,
A' gabhail dhanag á 'chuanal binn;
Treis eil' air brìodal gu milis mìogach,
'S mo chneas dlùth-fhillte 'na mhìn-ghlaic ghrinn.

6. An sin b' e m' àilleas a' choill' 's na blàithean,
'S bhi 'tathaich fàsaich is sgàil na frìth
Le m' òigear àluinn, do 'n d' thug mi 'n gràdh sin
A dhùisg mo chràdh o 'n a dh'fhàg e 'n tìr.

*A more appropriate time signature would be 12/8, but it is difficult to read.