

Masonic Song in Scotland: Folk Tunes and Community

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The Masonic song tradition of Scotland gives an opportunity to explore the vital role of oral tradition, particularly as carried by communal performance. Issues surrounding folk tunes and community will be explored in turn in this article, first by looking at the songs of Freemasonry against the backdrop of folksong culture and then by viewing the songs as central to the Masonic community and also more broadly to the community at large. This study builds on the general theoretical points made by Anne Dhu McLucas in the American context in her book, *The Musical Ear: Oral Tradition in the USA*. McLucas highlights the many musical contexts in which oral tradition plays a vital role, with the proposition that these contexts do “not depend on the use of musical notation to make their power felt” (2010:1). Of course, this does not mean that musical notation is not present, and McLucas recognizes that while “the oral/aural is present everywhere,” it “mixes freely with the written” (4).

One of the main differences between oral societies and literate ones is that the oral, by definition, involves a group activity; one can read a story in a book alone and in silence, but a performer-audience dynamic must always be present in the oral environment. The importance of this communal context is discussed by McLucas (2010:132-33), who notes that the act of singing together forms strong bonds with fellow performers and brings the group closer together. Her examples include patriotic or nationalistic song, and she makes the following observations about a contemporary Rotary club in Oregon in which the singing is an adjunct to the overall activities of the group (129):

A group of middle-aged members of the Eugene Downtown chapter of Rotary International, male and female, gather every week for lunch at a local hotel. Part of the opening ceremony for this weekly luncheon is the singing of a national song—either the official anthem, which, though notoriously hard to sing, still comes up occasionally, or “America” or “God Bless America,” the perennially favourite substitutes. With the help of a piano, they make a lusty sound, with harmonies—both accidental and intentional—occasionally appearing. Because it is part of their ritual, and because the group is meant to be participatory and collegial, all seem to take part.

The ritual nature of the event and the elements of participation and collegiality are also key to Masonic gatherings. This group context has more in common with the Masonic environment than McLucas’s following example: that of song circles who meet with the express purpose of singing, where solo performance is heard in the main and where those assembled are expected to

join in on the chorus. But all such groups involving singers have the face-to-face quality that gives scope for that difficult-to-define lift that has been called “presence.” James Porter (2009:7-8) discusses this quality in the context of Scottish ballads, noting that the shared experience of a performance in a live situation is totally different from listening to a ballad through a mass-mediated channel (such as television, radio, or the Internet).

The community elements of folk music are much stronger than in the art music tradition. Take, for example, the classic definition of folk music, given by the International Folk Music Council in 1954 (Bohlman 1988:xiii):

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: 1) continuity which links the present with the past; 2) variation which springs from the creative individual or the group; and 3) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music, and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the re-fashioning and re-creation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character.

The word “community” is mentioned in each paragraph, sometimes more than once. The community is connected with the selection and preservation of material, with housing it in its “unwritten living tradition,” and with re-creating it in terms of variation. In Anthony Seeger’s study (1987) of the Suyá Indians of Brazil, music in combination with ritual is at the heart of community life, being used to mark out particular points in the day as well as in the calendar: in other words, music and community life are totally intertwined and are co-dependent.

In an oral culture, the music of a community is strongly linked with the concept of transmission. As Bruno Nettl observes (1982:3): “The way in which a tradition is passed on is called *transmission*, and the two terms are sometimes used, informally and perhaps colloquially, to emphasize two sides of the character of a culture or indeed of a music—its stability on the one hand, its tendency to change on the other.”

The transmission of music includes both product and process. Bohlman refers to this combination in the context of oral tradition (1988:25):

The dialectic of oral tradition consists of both products and the processes by which these products are derived. For folk music, the product is the discrete entity—the song, the record of a single performance, a version of the unit of transmission—whereas the process is the continuation of transmission.

When transmission is discussed, it is more often associated with a group than with individuals in the case of an oral tradition (Bohlman 1988:71), but of course there are always individuals engaged in the process of passing things on as they make their own distinctive contributions. In

the production of song, it is necessary to distinguish the two elements of words and music that may either keep together or take their separate ways. An important factor in transmission is the practice of *contrafactum*—the use of different words for an existing tune. The Latin word, meaning imitation or forgery, and used in relation to song since before the Middle Ages, is more familiar in a classical music context, but it is equally applicable to folk song. According to Grove's Dictionary, the practice “virtually disappeared in 19th- and 20th-century art music. This can be attributed to the premium placed on originality and the belief in the uniqueness of the individual work of art that has prevailed since the 19th century” (Falck and Picker 2012). The *contrafactum* principle has always been central to folk tradition where the use of the same tune over and over again is vital to its continuation—there is no premium placed on originality.

Tunes transmitted aurally are easily able to permeate cultures, to accompany song texts in different languages, to cross from folk song to other musical genres, and to cross from one socio-economic context to another. Song has an especial importance in Scottish culture, and the relative simplicity of this musical form, coupled with the use of pre-existing tunes, has meant that there has been a continual outpouring of feelings by members of the community at large who had no technical musical skills. Typically, no need existed for song composers to develop new melodic material since there was so much fine music already “in the air” (as we know from the rich records we have from the seventeenth century onwards; see, for example, Stell 2008- and Johnson and Burns 1787-1803), and, equally typically, there has been no sense that the melodies as received were sacrosanct. The situation was indeed that of an aural culture as regards the music in the sense of the “taking in by ear of sounds” (McLucas 2010:1; see also Finnegan 1992:16), and the composers who received the music by ear accompanied by particular words transmitted it by mouth by singing fresh words to what would have been regarded as “the same” music that would always have been subject to modification in the light of the different words and the composer's skills and preferences. These musical vehicles were open to Masons in Scotland as well as to the community as a whole.

Masonic Tunes

It is often the case that the creation of a group's identity is achieved partly through its songs. This was certainly true for the Masons, where song played an important role from the time of the Craft's formalization in the early eighteenth century, and song was also likely involved even in the informal freemasonry that is known to have taken place earlier in Scotland within taverns and the like and in the convivial activities that accompanied proceedings. In general, two types of song can be observed: formal songs dealing with the history of Freemasonry, its principles, and so on, sometimes of an anthem-like nature, and more informal material of a drinking song variety.

While these two types of Masonic song might be thought of as examples of art song on the one hand and of folk song on the other, Matthew Gelbart cautions against this response, and demonstrates that it was only in the late eighteenth century that the categories of folk and art music actually emerged or, to use his term, were “invented,” due to the “transfer of emphasis from function to origin” (2007:15). Thinking of function here, we have different kinds of

material for the formal and informal points in the Masonic ceremony, with the former being more dependent on musical literacy and musical training than the latter.

Although Scotland played an important part in the foundation of Freemasonry (Stevenson 1988), its formal organization began in England and a central text, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, was published in London in 1723. The work was by James Anderson (1679-1739), who was born in Aberdeen and was the son of the former secretary of the Lodge of Aberdeen (Stevenson 1987:39). The *Constitutions* includes four songs. The first three of these are of the formal type: "The Master's Song: Or, the History of Masonry," "The Warden's Song: Or, Another History of Masonry," and "The Fellow-Crafts Song." The fourth, "The Enter'd Prentice's Song," is of the informal type that relates to folk song. To show the extent of the contrast between types, the tunes of two of the three formal songs are considered here (the tune of the "Fellow-Crafts Song" is not included in Anderson 1723) and then compared to "The Enter'd Prentice's Song."

In the first edition, "The Master's Song" is a long and formal affair with 28 eight-line verses with a four-line chorus to be sung at the behest of the Master, and pauses at the ends of Parts 1-4 in order to drink firstly the present grand-master's health, then to drink to the health of the "Master and Wardens of this particular Lodge," then "to drink to the glorious Memory of Emperors, Kings, Princes, Nobles, Gentry, Clergy, and learned Scholars, that ever propagated the Art," and finally "to drink to the happy Memory of all the Revivers of the ancient Augustan Style" (Anderson 1723:75-78). In the revised edition of 1738, however, the song has been reduced to six verses with chorus and carries the explanatory note: "In the first Book it is in 5 Parts, comprehending the History of Masonry; but being too long, the 3d Part is only printed here" (Anderson 1738:200). It seems likely that this contraction of the text came from the response of the performers of the song, emphasizing the difference between a song in print and its transformation into a song in performance. Since music does not appear in the 1738 volume, the 1723 illustration of "One Verse of the Third Part of the Master's Song, with the Chorus, set to Music, by a Brother" is given here (Anderson 1723:85-86):

(85)

One Verse of the Third Part of the Master's Song, with the Chorus, set to Music, by a Brother.

(86)

CHORUS.

Fig. 1: "The Master's Song." Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <http://www.jisc-content.ac.uk/collections/eighteenth-century-collections-online-ecco>.

Thus mighty Eastern Kings,
and some Of Abram's Race, and Monarchs good,
Of Egypt, Syria, Greece, and Rome,
True Architecture understood.
No wonder then if Masons join
To celebrate those Mason-Kings,
With solemn Note and flowing Wine,
Whilst ev'ry Brother jointly sings.

Chorus

Who can unfold the Royal Art?
or sing its Secrets in a Song?
They're safely kept in Masons Heart,
And to the ancient Lodge belong.

Regarding the tune, we may well be seeing the Masonic significance of the number three since the song is in three parts, demarcated by double bar-lines reflecting the eight-line verse (itself in two parts) and the four-line chorus. The eight-line text is split into two different pieces, melodically speaking, so that we have an ABC structure overall (including the chorus). A bass

line is given for the verse, but then the music for the chorus is a three-part treatment, harmonically speaking, with the melody, a harmony line, and a bass line being given. The key signature of the tune is F major, but the tune modulates at various points to encompass C major and briefly G minor; three keys can thus be detected. The first two parts are in 3/4 time. Part 1 of the tune is 16 bars in length but Part 2 has 15 bars, an unusual feature possibly linked to the Masonic significance of the numbers three and five (Mackey 1929). Within Part 2, the first phrase is only seven bars in length up to the word “Kings,” and then the second phrase occupies eight bars. The seven bar phrase can be accounted for by the unexpected treatment of “celebrate those Mason-Kings,” which one would expect to occupy four bars but here occupies only three. Part 3—the chorus—is in 2/4 time and is 16 bars in length. The chorus is concentrated in the higher tonal register, but the melody of the tune overall has a wide range from middle C up to G directly above the staff of the treble clef—an octave and a fifth—which would have been sung an octave lower by male voices.

In the case of “The Warden’s Song,” we again see striking textual contraction. The note to it in the 1738 edition appears to show a flexible responsiveness to performance of this rather stiff and lengthy piece with its elaborate chorus. “In the first Book [that is, the 1723 edition] it was of 13 Verses, too long: But this last Verse and Chorus is thought enough to be sung” (Anderson 1738:202). The last verse and chorus mirror what is presented with the music in the 1723 edition, and the first two pages of this earlier edition’s music are reproduced here along with the corresponding text (Anderson 1723:87-90):

(87)

The last Verse of the Wardens Song, with the Chorus, set to Music;
by a Brother

(88)

Fig. 2: “The Warden’s Song,” (Anderson 1723:87-88). Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <http://www.jisc-content.ac.uk/collections/eighteenth-century-collections-online-ecco>.

From henceforth ever sing
 The Craftsman and the King,
 With Poetry and Musick sweet
 Resound their Harmony
 Resound their Harmony compleat;
 And with Geometry in skilful Hand,
 Due Homage Pay, Without Delay,
 To Wharton's noble Duke our Master Grand;¹
 He rules the Freeborn Sons of Art,
 By Love and Friendship, By Love and Friendship,
 by Love and Friendship, Hand and Heart.

Chorus

Who can rehearse the Praise
 In soft Poetick Lays,
 Or solid Prose, of Masons true,
 Whose Art transcends the common View?
 Their Secrets, ne'er to Strangers yet expos'd,
 Preserv'd shall be Preserv'd shall be, by Masons Free,
 And only to the ancient Lodge disclos'd;
 Because they're kept in Mason's Heart, because they're kept in Mason's Heart
 by Brethren of the Royal Art.

In terms of the tune of "The Warden's Song," we have a similar pattern of a three-part melody (ABC). We have 15 bars in Part 1, and then Part 2 in 3/4 time has 25 bars. In Part 2 the tune is marked a "Little slower" at "To Wharton's noble Duke our Master Grand," then "Faster" at "He rules the Freeborn Sons of Art, By Love and Friendship . . ." when the song resumes, this change in tempo presumably being made in order to honor the Grand Master. The chorus in 2/2 time has a two-beat anacrusis, then five bars followed by a double bar-line, and then a further nine bars to finish. This arrangement may well again relate to the importance of the numbers five and three. The chorus splits into two parts with a bass line (three lines in total). We have the musical device of canon in the chorus (1723:89), where the harmony part starts a little later than the melody but with the same words. The overall key of the piece is G major, but three keys can be detected: G major, D major, and brief movement to E minor. The range is an octave and a fifth.

"The Enter'd Prentice's Song" is a much simpler affair by comparison. It is eight bars in length in the key of C major with a 6/4 time signature, and it can be broken down into two simple phrases, each of four bars in length. There is no harmonization or bass line and the melody is simple. The song is short and easily memorable, especially compared to the two pieces just discussed, and the tune has the range of a ninth (Anderson 1723:84 [lyrics], 90 [music]):

¹ The name Wharton is brought up-to-date by replacement with "Caernarvon" in the 1738 edition.



Fig. 3: "The Enter'd Prentice's Song."

1) Come let us prepare
we Brothers that are met
together on merry Occasion,
Let's Drink Laugh and Sing,
our Wine has a Spring,
'tis a Health to an Accepted Mason.²

2) The World is in pain
Our Secrets to gain,
And still let them wonder and gaze on;
They ne'er can divine
The Word or the Sign
Of a Free and an Accepted Mason.

3) 'Tis This, and 'tis That,
They cannot tell What,
Why so many Great Men of the Nation
Should Aprons put on,
To make themselves one
With a Free and an Accepted Mason.

4) Great Kings, Dukes and Lords,
Have laid by their Swords,
Our Myst'ry to put a good Grace on,
And ne'er been asham'd
To hear themselves nam'd
With a Free and an Accepted Mason.

5) Antiquity's Pride
We have on our side,

² The text of the first verse is given here as it appears with the music. On p. 84, where the whole text is given, the words differ slightly, namely "are Assembled" for "are met together" and "Here's" for "'tis" in the last line.

And it maketh Men just in their Station:
 There's nought but what's good
 To be understood
 By a Free and an Accepted Mason.

6) Then join Hand in Hand,
 T'each other firm stand,
 Let's be merry, and put a bright Face on:
 What Mortal can boast
 So Noble a Toast,
 As a Free and an Accepted Mason?

Overall, this is a more relaxed piece as reflected in the indication regarding its performance; it is to be “sung when all grave Business is over, and with the Master’s Leave” (Anderson 1723:84). The last verse indicates a toast. The tune is said to have been composed by Brother Matthew Birkhead (90), yet a version of it appeared earlier in *Pills to Purge Melancholy* in 1719 (Chappell 1855-59:ii, 663). Although it is possible that Birkhead did write the tune since he was a singer, composer, and actor at Drury Lane Theatre in London (Denslow and Truman 1957:i, 97), Birkhead had died by the time of Anderson’s publication, and it is equally possible that the tune to which his words are set was in fact drawn from earlier tradition.

It was only after a song’s composition that a tune could potentially be considered to have Masonic links and thus take on extra-musical associations when used with other sets of words. Later in the eighteenth century, Robert Burns used with good effect the tune of “The Enter’d Prentice’s Song,” setting his “No Churchman Am I for to Rail and to Write” to it in 1782. He entitled the tune “Prepare, my dear Brethren, to the tavern let’s fly,” suggesting that there was perhaps a comic Freemason drinking song known to him that went to this same tune. Burns’s song, in fact, is little more than a drinking song with its emphasis in the last line of each verse on a bottle of wine. The last verse, “A Stanza added in a Mason Lodge,” runs (Kinsley 1968:i, 39):

Then fill up a bumper and make it o’erflow,
 And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
 May ev’ry true Brother of th’ Compass and Square
 Have a big-belly’d bottle when harass’d with care.

Andrews (2004:280) makes the point that drunkenness was not actually tolerated, with Masons being fined if they became intoxicated, but that conviviality was an important part of gatherings.

Similarly, Burns’s “Farewell to the Brethren of St. James Lodge, Tarbolton” uses the folk tune of “Guid Nicht and Joy be Wi you Aa’,” the traditional parting song of Scotland before “Auld Lang Syne.” Here he builds on the idea that everyone knew that this was a song of parting, and he personalizes it to make it into his own leaving song, using the first person (“Tho I to foreign lands must hie”). He also peppers it with language typically found in Masonic songs, such as “hieroglyphic bright,” “grand design,” “Architect Divine,” “Order,” and “Masonry”: the song thus operates on many levels and is more like the formal type of Masonic anthem, rather

than being a drinking ditty. Although Burns only wrote a few Masonic songs, being drawn more toward the idea of comradeship on a grander scale later on in his life (Andrews 2004:304), the concept of the anthem is one that permeates a number of his songs, the most famous of which are “Auld Lang Syne” and “A Man’s a Man for aa That.” These are songs that are still sung today, the former uniting peoples of the world at the turn from the old year to the new one. The opening of his song of brotherhood to the earlier tune of “Guid Nicht and Joy” runs as follows (Dick 1903:214-15):

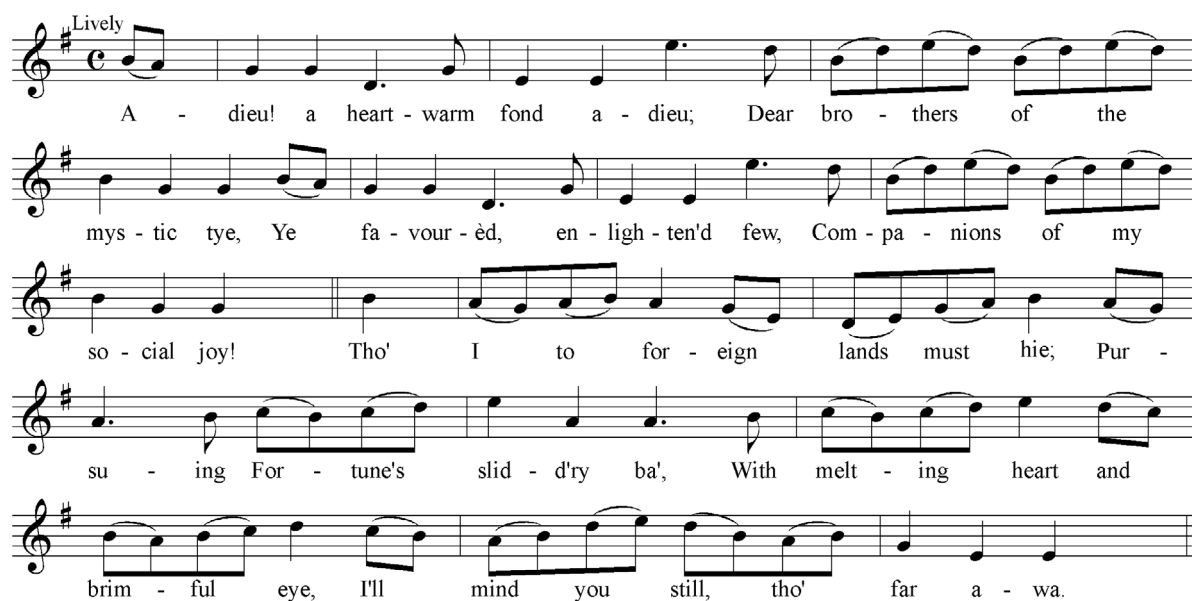


Fig. 4: “Farewell to the Brethren at St. James Lodge, Tarbolton.”

1) Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu;

Dear brothers of the mystic tye,

Ye favoured, enlighten'd few,

Companions of my social joy!

Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,

Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba';

With melting heart and brimful eye,

I'll mind you still, tho' far awa.

2) Oft have I met your social band,

And spent the cheerful, festive night;

Oft, honour'd with supreme command,

Presided o'er the sons of light:

And by that hieroglyphic bright,

Which none but craftsmen ever saw!

Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write

Those happy scenes, when far awa!³

³ The song has four verses in total.

The tune of “Guid Nicht and Joy” seems to have become associated with being a Masonic tune after Burns’s use of it. A song called “Come, All Ye Freemasons” was written down by the fiddler and collector, George Riddell of Rosehearty (1853-1942), who was Right Worshipful Master of Lodge Forbes in his village. He states that the song “was known only to ‘brothers of the mystic tie’” (making reference to Burns’s song lyric) and continues (Riddell 1906-11:118):

I have heard it sung with great applause on high and memorable occasions; but my recollection of the words is of the haziest description. The very few who knew it have long since ascended to the Grand Lodge above, and it is only after infinite trouble that I have managed to give the first verse. Indeed, the seventh line is an interpolation of my own, done for the purpose of showing the run of the melody. The song, although of interest to members of the craft, was of no poetic merit; but I think the melody worthy of preservation.



Fig. 5: “Come All Ye Freemasons” (Riddell 1906-11:118).

Come, all ye freemasons, where'er ye be,
That e'er the Royal Arch did view,
By these few lines ye will understand
That some gey steps I hae gane through.
When first a pilgrim I became,
Intending for the Holy Land,
I wander'd forth in simple faith,
My sandals on and staff in hand.

Although not identical to the tune of “Guid Night,” this song can certainly be considered a variant of it. It is of the same length (16 bars) and is in two parts. It opens in a very similar fashion and closes in an almost identical way. When the opening phrase is repeated again beginning in bar 4, we see the same pattern in Riddell’s tune. The opening of the second part in

“Guid Night” (B A G A B) is similar to the equivalent point in Riddell’s tune (G A A B D). Riddell’s tune differs in form to that of “Guid Night” (A Av B Av instead of A Av B C),⁴ but this variance can perhaps be linked to the general traits of the folk process, where repetition is key and where more complex musical phrases (that is, “C”) tend to get simplified.

Folk tunes that we can be fairly certain had no particular Masonic connection were also adopted for the songs. There are examples in *The Musical Mason or Free Mason’s Pocket Companion* (c. 1764-78) where tunes are given in staff notation or the melodies are named at the top of the page. These songs include “Some folks have with curious impertinence” (set to “Greensleeves”), “King Solomon that wise Protector” (to “Come Fy Let Us aa to the wedding”), “How happy a mason whose bosom still flows” (to the jig “the Miller of Mansfield”), and “With Cordial Hearts let’s drink a Health” (to “the Wark o the weavers”). The use of folk tunes would have made the songs accessible to people, whether or not they could read staff music notation. To people already familiar with the tunes in an oral context, this method offered the chance for immediate performance.

We also have examples of Masonic songs in the books where no tune title is given, and this again is a hallmark traditionally of the printing of folksong in Scotland. In these instances the implication is either that everyone knew what the tune was and did not need to be told its title or more likely, I think, that people could simply draw on any tune they knew that fitted the words. An example here is “While Yet as a Cowan”⁵ from *St Cecilia; or, the British Songster*, published in Edinburgh in 1782, a song that has a distinctive stanza pattern that suggests knowledge of the well-known “A’body’s Like to be Marriet but me” (Greig-Duncan 1374).⁶ The Masonic song gives a humorous treatment of the transition from the outside world where Freemasonry could be regarded as devil’s work⁷ to incorporation into the first stage of the Masons’ world (tune: Greig-Duncan 1374C;⁸ text: *St Cecilia* 1782:no. 3):

⁴ In this notation, “v” indicates a variant in the musical phrase.

⁵ A cowan is an unskilled laborer.

⁶ Greig-Duncan references are taken from Shuldham-Shaw et al. 1981-2002.

⁷ Roeck (1995) has explored this theme in Belgium and the Netherlands.

⁸ The tonic has been lowered here from D to C.

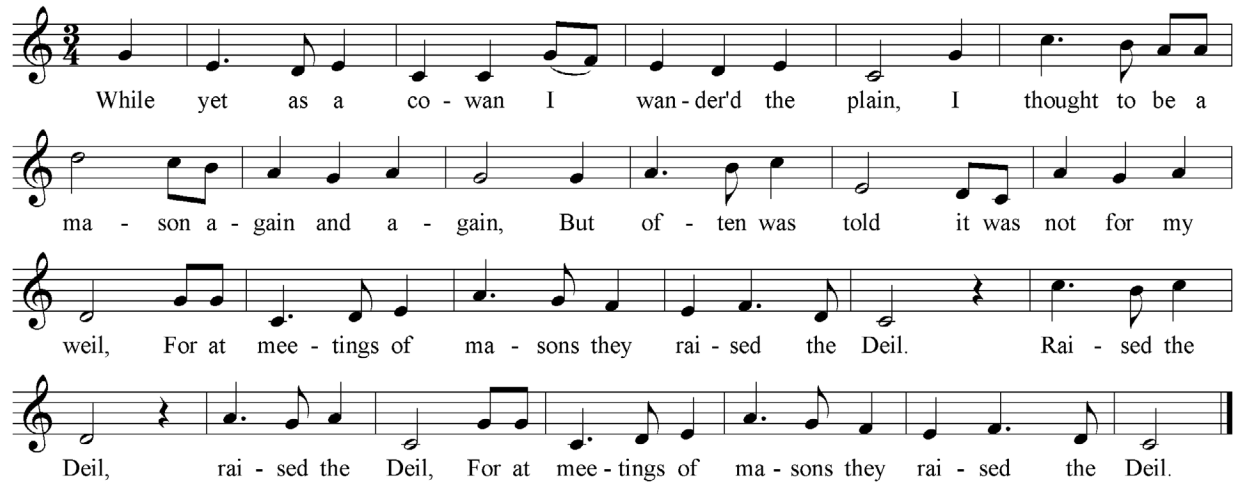


Fig. 6: "While Yet as a Cowan."

While yet as a cowan I wander'd the plain,
I thought to be a mason again and again,
But often was told it was not for my weil,
For at meetings of masons they raised the Deil.
raised the Deil, &c.

I thither repair'd, being resolv'd in my mind,
When to my surprise a good friend I did find,
And bade me prepare, for so hearty I'd feel,
What still was now strange when I thought on the Deil.
thought on the Deil, &c.

We knock'd, but was stopp'd; when we enter'd the door,
They said, Who bring you here whom we ne'er saw before;
I told them I thought to be admitted fu' weil,
As I freely came here to shake hands wi' the Deil.
shake hands wi' the Deil, &c.

By leave from the chair then admittance we found,
But like one that's blind I gropp'd all the way round;
'Till something I felt made me stagger and reel,
Which rais'd my old thought, I'd meet wi' the Deil.
meet with the Deil, &c.

At last to my joy I found all things go right
And began by degrees to discover the light;
The master advis'd me to swallow a pill,
Which he said would purge me from all fears of the Deil.
fears of the Deil, &c.

By leave from the chair I did join the glad throng,
 And partook of their joys o'er a glass and a song,
 Ye cowans, remember the masons are leel,
 And beware of yourselves when you speak of the Deil.

Speak of the Deil, &c.

Two other Masonic items are found in *St Cecilia*, one set to the tune of "God Save the King." It is clear that such material circulated freely and was not limited to books of Masonic song *per se*. Indeed, the songs seem to have enjoyed wide popularity, and there was a market for them. This last point is borne out by the appearance of Masonic songs on broadsides—cheap, ephemeral, one-sheet publications that were common throughout Britain. An example is "The Sons of Levi," which emanated from the Poet's Box in Glasgow (see further McNaughtan 1990:173-75) and was published in 1874. This song also occurs in the *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, made in the early twentieth century by Gavin Greig and James Bruce Duncan in the Northeast of Scotland, that contains several other Masonic songs, some in different versions. One simply called "Freemasons' Song," which was contributed by James Angus, a cooper from Peterhead, opens with the following verse (Greig-Duncan 466):

Behold in a Lodge we dear brethren are met,
 And in proper order together are set;
 Our secrets to none but ourselves shall be known,
 Our actions to none but Freemasons be shown,
 Derry down down, down derry down.

This song stresses the concept of a secret world, and Greig alluded to these recondite activities when he published the material: "Not being myself a member of the craft I am not in a position to remark on the songs submitted" (Greig 1963:Ob. 155).⁹ However, the songs themselves were in many cases an open secret. As well as being freely published, they must have been heard sung by Masons either in private or on public occasions. Although women were excluded from the Masonic brotherhood, two Masonic items in the Greig-Duncan collection provide evidence that songs did cross the gender division. "The Plumb and Level" (472) and "The Freemason King" (467) were contributed by Mrs. Johnstone of Bogie near Huntly who recalled them from the singing of her father who was a Mason. Clearly, this singing must have taken place outside a Masonic lodge in order for her to recall the material. It is possible that these types of songs were in women's passive repertoires rather than their active ones (see Russell 1986), and it was perhaps seen as inappropriate for women to sing these songs to an audience. At any rate, this kind of transmission seems to fall into the general category of material sung in the home being absorbed by women, even though they were not necessarily the performers.

The tunes of the Masonic songs in Greig-Duncan are either tunes specifically associated with Freemasonry or folk tunes. In the case of the "Sons of Levi" (470), Greig makes the

⁹ "Ob." relates to the series of articles originally published in *The Buchan Observer* given in the 1963 volume.

interesting comment that the tune is called “The Mason’s Word—Keep your mouth shut” (Greig 1963:Ob. 155). The tune itself is not given in Greig-Duncan, but it does occur in the contemporary collection of Cecil Sharp from England, and that tune has been used here with minor modifications (Karpeles 1974:ii, 489):

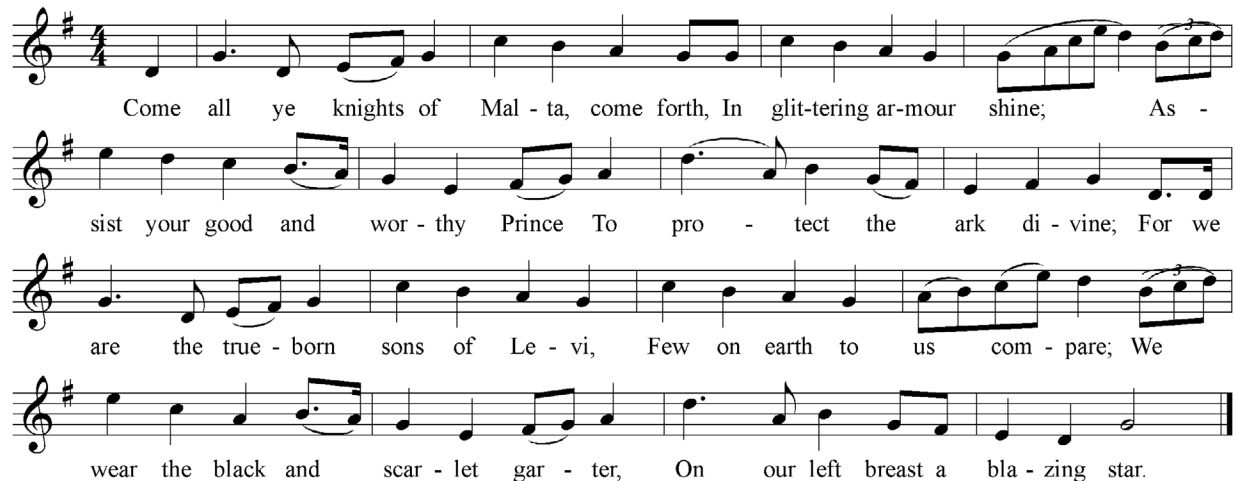


Fig. 7: “Sons of Levi.”

1) Come all ye knights of Malta, come forth,
In glittering armour shine;
Assist your good and worthy Prince
To protect the ark divine;
For we are the true-born sons of Levi,
Few on earth to us compare;
We wear the black and scarlet garter
On our left breast a blazing star.

2) With trembling steps I slow advanced,
Sometimes I knocked both loud and shrill,
Until a knight in armour bright
Demanded me what was my will.

Sharp’s version was collected from the singing of James Beale (aged 72) at Warehorne in Kent in 1908 (Karpeles 1974:ii, 489).

“The Freemason King” (467) uses a folk tune that appears in variants under a number of titles, including “Allan MacLean” (1403) and “Donald’s Return to Glencoe” (1044). William Christie notes that this same tune—which he calls “The Rose of Dundee” (1876-81:ii, 274)—was used in Morayshire for this song that he refers to as “a long masonic ballad, ‘The building of Solomon’s Temple’.” The tune of “Wi the Apron On” was recorded by George Riddell of Rosehearty (Greig-Duncan 471D) as one used for the annual Masonic procession there (see below). Riddell’s tune is given in Figure 8. The four tunes for this song in Greig-Duncan closely resemble one another, all being in 6/8 time, with some having a simplification of the second part

presented in Riddell's tune, or simply a repetition of the first part for the refrain. The close melodic correspondence overall tells us that only one tune was being used for this song. The tune bears similarities to that of Greig-Duncan 1088, "Irish Mally O," and thus seems to have been used for a range of songs, one of them being this Masonic one.



Fig. 8: "Wi the Apron On" (Greig-Duncan 471D).

Masonic Song and Community

Within the Lodges, the Masons had the expectation of singing songs at regular meetings with each other in a ritualized face-to-face community, in an all-male environment. The songs included choruses where everyone could join in, and these often contained the plural "we" in their lyrics, as in "We are the true born sons of Levi." The songs helped to pledge allegiance to the group. Clark believes that the production of Masonic songbooks resulted in "a kind of musical *lingua franca*, [which] facilitated the participation of visitors at lodge meetings" (2000:326). The Masons were further surrounded by objects in the Lodges that could be understood on two levels: the concrete in the case of operative masonry and the symbolic in the case of speculative freemasonry. (See further MacNulty 1991.)

Instrumental music was also sometimes heard and was held in high regard; indeed some Lodges had a specific place—the Musicians' Gallery (sometimes called the "Fiddlers' Gallery")—for this. An example can be seen in Fig. 9, a photograph from Lodge St. Ebbe¹⁰ in the fishing port of Eyemouth, not far from the

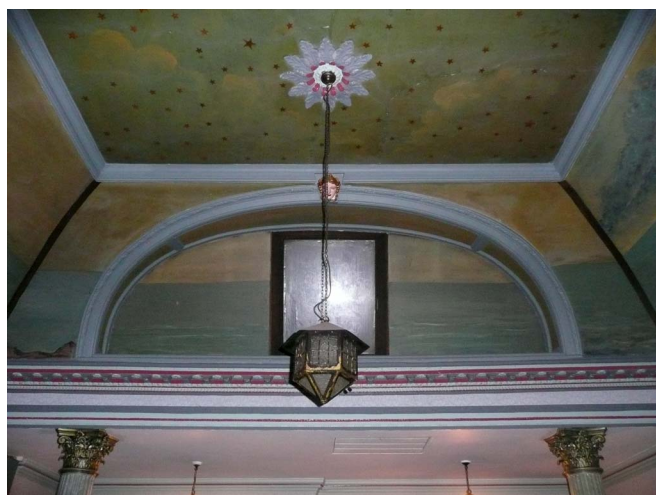


Fig. 9: Fiddlers' Gallery, Eyemouth.

¹⁰ I would like to thank the late Mrs. Jean Hutchings, a Ph.D. student at Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, for introducing me to Mr. Jack Willox of Lodge St. Ebbe who kindly supplied this photograph of the Lodge interior.

border between Scotland and England. The Gallery is above the place where meetings were held and was accessed by a ladder.

Masons did venture outside the ritualized space of the Lodge and into the wider community on special occasions and at certain, specific times of year, and here again music was central. The engraving by David Octavius Hill (Fig. 10) of the St. James's Masonic Lodge march of 1840, for



Fig. 10: Masonic procession (Wilson and Chambers 1840:66).

example, shows a band of music-makers. Particular times for gathering were Sts. John Days, as Jones notes (1956:339): “Many ancient lodges had their summer festival on St John the Baptist’s Day [June 24] and their winter festival on St John the Evangelist’s Day, December 27.” Wade’s history of Melrose speaks of a procession held at the winter festival time (1861:145-47):

Immediately after the election of office-bearers for the year ensuing, the brethren walk in procession three times round the Cross, and afterwards dine together, under the presidency of the newly elected Grand Master. About six in the evening the members again turn out, and form into line two abreast, each bearing a lighted flambeau, and decorated with their peculiar emblems and insignia. Headed by the heraldic banners of the lodge, the procession follows the same route, three times round the Cross, and then proceeds to the Abbey. On these occasions the crowded streets present a scene of the most animated description. The joyous strains of a well-conducted band, the waving torches, and incessant showers of fireworks make the scene a carnival. But at this time, the venerable Abbey is the chief point of attraction and resort, and as the mystic torch-bearers thread their way through its mouldering aisles, and round its massive pillars, the outlines of its gorgeous ruins become singularly illuminated, and brought into bold and striking relief. . . . The whole extent of the Abbey is, with “measured step and slow,” gone three times round. But when, near the “finale,” the whole masonic body gather to the chancel, and forming one grand semicircle around it, where the heart of King Robert the Bruce lies deposited near the High Altar, and the band strikes up the patriotic air,

“Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,
Scots wham Bruce has often led,”

the effect produced by the associations of the music and the scene is sublime and overpowering. Midst showers of rockets and the glare of blue lights, the scene closes.

“Scots Wha Hae” (Low 1993:no. 246) was central to the closing sequence of the proceedings and would have been a tune (and song) that was known to everyone in the community as part of their cultural memory. It continues to have such impact and indeed was put forward as one of the tunes that might be adopted as the Scottish national anthem following the inauguration of the Scottish Parliament in recent times.

A representation of a recent Masonic procession in Melrose is captured in a DVD produced by Moffat (2008). Here a pipe band provides the music, and an extended version of the “Ho Ro the Merry Masons” tune (discussed below) is used at the start and played repeatedly. This tune is a variant of “The Enter’d Prentice’s Song,” although inevitably it is given in a different form than that which appears in Anderson. Its range of a ninth—the same as that of the Highland bagpipe—makes the tune eminently suited to that instrument. The repeated use of the melodic motif “G A^b G F B^b” corresponding to the words “as we march along” is particularly noticeable. Other tunes used for the march include favorites such as “Scotland the Brave” and “The Rowan Tree.” A soloist is heard singing “Scots Wha Hae” in the Abbey itself. A lone piper plays “Flowers of the Forest,” the solemn tune used for funeral processions in Scotland. Then group singing of “Auld Lang Syne,” not accompanied by pipes, is heard.

A Masonic procession, or “Walk,” also takes place in the coastal village of Rosehearty in Northeast Scotland (Campbell 2008b) during the afternoon on the second day of January. It lasts around two and a half hours and involves the Masons processing along the streets of the village in their regalia, cheered by onlookers. Newly initiated Masons carry the flags of Lodge Forbes, and two Masons hold up rods—one at either side of the road—as the group processes round a corner. The Walk has been running continuously since the eighteenth century and is central to life in the village, with the second day of January taking on more importance in terms of the calendar

than New Year's Day and acting as a time in which village "ex-pats" typically return to be with family and friends.

We know that both traditional melodies of Scotland and ones with a Masonic connection were used in the nineteenth century to accompany the procession. George Riddell of Rosehearty noted the following down from Auld Jeck, otherwise known as John Ritchie, a fife player who led the procession: "Colonel Hay," "Duke Willie," "The Lass o Glenshee," "Supple Sandy," "Drumdelgie," and "I Kissed my Love wi' his Apron On" (Campbell 2008a), the last being the Masonic tune given above (see Fig. 8). As time has gone on, however, specific Masonic tunes have fallen out of the repertoire, and the single fife player has been replaced by a pipe band. The tunes played nowadays by the band are classics within the repertoire of Scottish traditional music and readily recognizable to many, and a good number are also songs, for instance, "Rowan Tree" and "Bonnie Gallowa." If we think of the procession as having an aural dimension in addition to a visual one, we get the idea not only of significant sights but also of significant sounds within the procession, of which these tunes are clearly a part. Such tunes give the onlookers (and Masons, for that matter) an opportunity to participate in the songs, even if the words are simply going on in their minds as they hear the tunes. Inherent in the procession is the idea of a "soundscape" (Shelemay 2006) in addition to a landscape. The community and the Masons expect to hear significant sounds within the ritual. This point has been highlighted by Russell (2002-03) in his work on the processions of neighboring fishing villages in the Northeast of Scotland, which have their roots in the Temperance movement rather than in Freemasonry. Here a mixture of sacred and secular material is played by the community, and a particularly significant aural (and visual) aspect is when one of the community members "taks a stannin beat" on the big bass drum outside the home of someone who is housebound or elderly. This is a way of paying tribute aurally to a member of the community.

Nowadays, one of the tunes played by the pipe band to finish off proceedings is "Highland Cathedral." This is a popular slow air that, although modern, encapsulates for many a national sentiment, as does "Scots Wha Hae." The idea of an anthem as something that can unify is discussed by McLucas (2010:129), and here we see it as something that brings the Masons and the whole community together. The tune formerly used for this part of the ceremony was "Ho Ro The Merry Masons." In 2007, I collected this tune (see Fig. 11) from Mr. Crawford, a senior member of the Lodge. He told me that the tune used to be played by the pipe band, but that with the passage of time and generational shift, it was not known to people in the group and consequently dropped out of the repertory. This change is in contrast to the practice at Melrose, where it is very much still part of the ceremony.

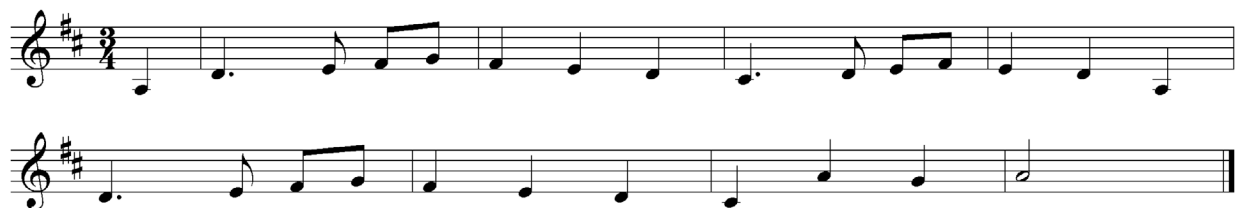


Fig. 11: "Ho Ro The Merry Masons."

James C. Dick tells us that this tune was known to have been sung by children in the streets in the West of Scotland in the nineteenth century to the following words (Dick 1903:441):

Hey the merry Masons, and ho the merry Masons
Hey the merry Masons goes marching along.

It will be of no surprise to scholars of oral tradition to find that the Roseheartly tune is a variant of the tune we first hear about in the Masonic context in 1723, namely “The Enter’d Prentice’s Song.” Although the connections between the two tunes may not be immediately apparent, particularly as far as the rhythm is concerned, when one looks at the overall contour¹¹ of the two melodies, one sees that the opening two bars are almost identical, with the bold “soh-doh” leap at the beginning being prominent.

The Masonic song tradition can be seen as one where gender division eventually dissipated in the case of some of the material to incorporate a broader, mixed community, and where some of the songs of the Masons made it out of their specific repertory and into the community at large, serving to bind the community together on particular occasions. The specific catalyst for this shift was the oral/aural tradition that allowed others to hear and experience the songs outside of the Lodges. The tunes that have survived in this context are particularly those folk tunes that are easily remembered, assimilated, and sung.

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¹¹ Contour analysis is a technique used and discussed by Shapiro (1985:404-17).

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