

# Bass Culture in Printed Scottish Fiddle Music Sources, 1750–1850: Harmonisation, Urbanisation and Romanticisation

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From 2012 to 2015, I was the Principal Investigator on the AHRC-funded project ‘Bass Culture in Scottish musical traditions’. One of its aims was to develop an understanding of what goes on underneath the top musical layer in early sources of Scottish music, both in the given basslines, and in the harmonic structures that they imply.

Over eighteen months, Karen McAulay and I travelled to libraries to look at printed sources of fiddle music in Scotland, and examined over 300 substantial items. We took the decision not to attempt to examine manuscript sources, which give a more personalised picture both of musical practice and of music education, for mostly practical reasons; by concentrating on printed sources it was possible to survey and catalogue all of the available material in the time allocated. What had been conceived as rather arbitrary boundary dates of 1750 and 1850 made good sense when we found that the publication history of Robert Bremner’s *A Collection of Scots Reels* began in 1757, and that this was the first book to make use of the simple, four-beat repetitive basses that predominate in the sources for over a hundred years. By the second half of the nineteenth century, many sources simply anthologised and adapted material that had already appeared, and indeed a fair number of post-1850 volumes, such as those of James Scott Skinner and James Kerr, remain in print today. We have compiled a database of all the sources seen, available at [www.hms.scot](http://www.hms.scot), along with digitised images and metadata from a selection.<sup>1</sup>

This article describes the diversity of content and context that is to be found in the printed sources, before going on to analyse some of the musical transformations and interpretations that take place there. In particular, it discusses the effect of the printed basslines on the character of the tune ‘Invercald’s Rant’ in early sources, and on the music in publications by Niel Gow and William Marshall.

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<sup>1</sup> Gore 1994 is a valuable initial guide to the sources, although it does not seek to be a comprehensive catalogue, and has many omissions. There is discussion of selected sources in Alburger 1983, Emmerson 1971 and Emmerson 1972.

### Types of publication: insiders' and outsiders' perspectives

While it would be unhelpful to assign every book a simple descriptive label, it is useful to establish some distinction in purpose amongst the many volumes.

First, books produced by professional musicians and dancing masters give an insider's perspective on the repertoire, but often also with an insider's professional agenda, along the lines of 'these are my tunes, or the tunes that my band will play if you hire us'. Often crowdfunded by means of a subscribers' list of local gentry and merchants, and then published in Edinburgh, which was the centre of the Scottish music trade, these publications could serve as a means of professional advancement, as well as providing some income from sales.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, volumes prepared by collectors or publishers can be more culturally than professionally motivated (and in anthropological terms, *etic* rather than *emic*), aiming to preserve musical material from supposed extinction, or to present it to a wider public than it would otherwise have reached.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, some of these also appear to be purely commercial in intent, where a publisher collected music that was already popular, and packaged it in a format that would maximise its sales.<sup>4</sup>

John Bowie of Perth's *Collection of Strathspey Reels & Country Dances*<sup>5</sup> is unusual in that, although it was produced by a working musician, and it has a subscribers' list populated with an unusually high number of musicians, including both Niel and Nathaniel Gow, it contains alongside its dance music a self-consciously historical selection of 'Ancient Music', supposedly passed down from the harper Rory Dall.

Alongside the substantial volumes selling for several shillings (around a week's wages for a skilled worker),<sup>6</sup> there were also shorter publications, usually on single sheets of paper. Nathaniel Gow's examples were particularly effective, in which a big 'hit' tune on page 1 was supplemented with a few excerpts from his band's current repertoire, which could serve as souvenirs of a recent ball or other social event where Gow had played.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Mackintosh had the idea of printing a price on each individual page of his third book of tunes, so that these pages could be sold separately for

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<sup>2</sup> For example, musicians Thomas Calvert (Kelso), John Morison (Peterhead), and Malcolm MacDonald (Dunkeld) all had their tune books published in Edinburgh. See Calvert 1799; Morison 1801; and MacDonald 1788.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of these include Fraser 1816 and Thompson *et al.* 1790.

<sup>4</sup> The tune books produced by Glasgow publisher James Aird seem to have been a particularly successful example. See Aird 1782.

<sup>5</sup> Bowie 1789.

<sup>6</sup> 'As a yardstick we can take the normal earnings of the artisan mason, weaver, or carpenter – 6d. per day in 1750 and 1s. by 1790'. Emmerson 1971, p. 110. Unfortunately, Emmerson does not give his source for this information.

<sup>7</sup> The most famous of these is Gow 1800a.

fourpence:<sup>8</sup> this was a shrewd way to generate income from those customers who would otherwise have paid a music shop's copyist to write out a section of the book instead. Music copying was one of the many skills necessary for a working musician in a small town, and it was even possible to advertise that the latest sheet music would soon be coming into stock, not to be sold, but to be copied from:

J.M. [John Morison, of Peterhead] likewise Copies Music accurately, and in the neatest manner, on moderate terms; and as he receives all the New and Fashionable Ball music, soon after being published, he can serve any person with copies who wants them. He expects to hand, in a few days, Mr Gow's Favourite Dances for 1815.<sup>9</sup>

Besides this manuscript copying, there is widespread evidence of borrowing and adaptation between publications across the repertoire, and this is almost always uncredited, as in Example 7 discussed below.

### **Types of repertoire**

In the late eighteenth century, the emphasis in Scottish music publications was very much on reels, strathspey reels, and jigs,<sup>10</sup> but after 1800, the repertoire broadened to include more diverse dances such as waltzes and quadrilles, especially after the battle of Waterloo and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. To the present-day reader or musician, the French quadrilles published by Nathaniel Gow in 1817 might seem like a self-conscious import rather than an integral part of the repertoire,<sup>11</sup> but James Scott Skinner was still playing French quadrilles for dancing in Forres in the 1880s,<sup>12</sup> so they were hardly a passing fad. This diversity of style led us to question our assumptions about what constitutes or constituted Scottish fiddle music, and to reconsider our habit of privileging certain types of dance form over others, according to whether they survive in today's Scottish performing traditions: the boundaries of musical traditions inevitably change over time, as does their musical content.

### **Evolution of nomenclature: strathspey reels, and strathspeys**

The distinction between strathspeys and reels gradually becomes clear in the sources from the early 1800s, but it can be evident in earlier books. In Joshua Campbell's pocketbook, *A Collection of the Newest & best Reels and Minuets* (Glasgow, 1788), 'The New Town of Edinburgh' appears as a reel, derived from the

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<sup>8</sup> Mackintosh 1796.

<sup>9</sup> *Aberdeen Journal* 1815.

<sup>10</sup> These categories were not yet firm, and to add to the potential for confusion, what we now know as jigs were often called reels.

<sup>11</sup> Gow 1817.

<sup>12</sup> Emmerson 1971, p. 112.

version in Robert Bremner's *Reels*, but in Campbell's more handsome volume, *A Collection of New Reels & Highland Strathspeys* (Edinburgh, c.1786?), it is a strathspey, characterised not only by the expected dotted and back-dotted rhythms, but also by a more ornate melodic line.<sup>13</sup> It is not entirely clear which of these books was published first, so it is impossible to be sure whether the smaller book of reels was a reaction to the commercial failure of the larger one, or whether a greater cultural cachet for strathspeys led Campbell to publish these in a more lavish form. Bremner had pointed out in his *A Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances* that 'the Strathspey Reels are play'd much slower than the others',<sup>14</sup> and his example 'The Fir Tree' has a similar combination of unequal rhythms and semiquaver passages. So, playing a reel as a 'Strathspey reel' could involve more than simply changing the rhythm and the bowing: there was an opportunity to fit in more notes as well.

*A Fourth Collection of Strathspey Reels &c.* by Niel Gow was unequivocal in its use of the old nomenclature in 1800, but by the time Robert Purdie printed his copies from the same plates, he felt the need to add an 's' and a comma to the title-page's plate, so that it now read *A Fourth Collection of Strathspeys, Reels &c.* (see Example 1)<sup>15</sup> The harp has also been prominently added to the list of instruments: the harp was still something of an exclusive novelty in Edinburgh at the turn of the century, but demand increased in the second decade, and Erard pedal harps were available for sale in the mid-1820s.<sup>16</sup>

### Geographical spread

In Scotland, the bulk of the music publishing industry was concentrated in Edinburgh for the whole of the period under consideration, although books were also published in Aberdeen, Perth, and Glasgow, and Scottish material appeared in volumes from Newcastle, London, Liverpool, and Dublin. The musicians' places of business were predominantly, but not exclusively, English-speaking: Aberdeenshire, the Borders, Ayrshire, Perthshire, Strathspey and, across the border, Newcastle are all well represented, with only a single island example; Alexander Mackay of Islay published his *A Collection of Reels Strathspeys and Slow Tunes* in Glasgow in 1822.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell 1788.

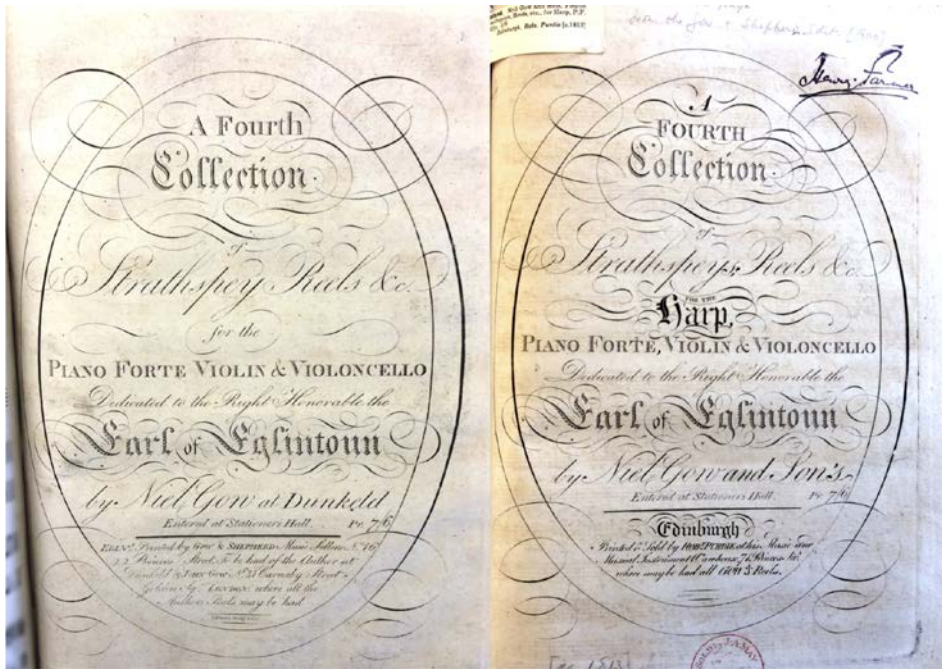
<sup>14</sup> Bremner 1757, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Gow 1800b. This echoes a similar change made to the title of Cumming 1780, for which 'A Collection of Strathspey or old Highland Reels by Angus Cumming at Grantown in Strathspey' became 'A Collection of Strathspeys or old Highland Reels' in its Glasgow 1782 edition.

<sup>16</sup> Cranmer 1991, pp. 168, 308.

<sup>17</sup> Mackay 1822.

*Example 1* Gow 1800, title-page; later printing, c.1813, by Robert Purdie, title-page. All images reproduced by kind permission of Local and Family History, AK Bell Library, Perth, and University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.



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### Apparent variations in musical quality

The speed with which past commentators have leapt to criticise the work of many Scottish composers makes one reluctant to formulate early value judgments. Music that looks confident and assured when reading it in the library can turn out to be much less thrilling when played, and conversely some apparent displays of ineptitude on the page can be captivating when performed with conviction.<sup>18</sup> We have, therefore, been very wary of jumping to conclusions about the relative skill or musicianship of the composers and collectors of the music in the sources.

Another issue to be borne in mind is that dance music can look insubstantial because the many repeats of a tune that are necessary for dancing are not immediately apparent on the page. Where dance figures appear in the sources,

<sup>18</sup> For example, the piano left-hand figuration in 'The Downshire Camperdown Quick Step' (Calvert 1799, p. 20) might look unidiomatic and barely competent at first sight, but in performance it supports the tune with subtle variations in tension and a well-judged degree of harmonic variety.

they are given only for one tune at a time,<sup>19</sup> suggesting that single tunes were repeated as necessary, rather than following the present-day practice where Scottish dance bands play a set of tunes in succession for a single dance. Philip Tagg has described the 'extended present', where one harmonic idea is repeated over time, as employing 'harmonic function ... not just as harmonic travelling – "somewhere worth going" – but also as harmonic *being* – "somewhere worth *staying*".<sup>20</sup> This approach is common in many popular musics, but when notated it can seem trite or simplistic to those who are used to reading music which has a more obviously extended structure.

Another reason for caution on our part in making aesthetic judgments about this repertoire is that there was considerable negotiation taking place between musical languages and idioms: it is not always clear whether an apparent confusion is in fact a meeting or juxtaposition of at least two styles, co-existing within a musical framework. For example, the 1844 versions of William Marshall's tunes given below at Examples 14 and 15 may seem unconvincing to modern ears simply because Marshall's strathspey style and the stock pianistic figurations underneath it are both removed enough from us culturally for it to seem impossible to reconcile them musically. When both were current in the culture, their combination would not necessarily have seemed so strange.

### **Evidence from bass culture: Types of bassline**

The 1750s saw the emergence of a distinctive style of bassline that was more idiomatic for dance music than the Italianate continuo-style basses that had appeared in earlier eighteenth-century publications of Scottish airs. The first printed source to use this straightforward 'four on the floor' style of repeated crotchets extensively is Robert Bremner's *A Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances*, which was published in instalments from the late 1750s.<sup>21</sup> These books were the source material for many other publications in later decades, and the no-nonsense basses may well represent a simple performance practice that was already well established. Bremner points out on the title-page that a harpsichord player may need to adapt the basses to make them sound effectively on a keyboard instrument; this could also be a warning to the player not to indulge in the conventional *basso continuo* practice of adding chords to the bass, but rather to preserve the characteristic two-part texture:

<sup>19</sup> Examples include Bremner 1761 and Bowie 1789.

<sup>20</sup> Tagg describes this as a manifestation of *intensional* aesthetics, as opposed to the *extensional* way in which a longer-term narrative is played out musically, as it is in most European classical music. Tagg 2009, pp. 161–2.

<sup>21</sup> Bremner 1757. According to Andrew Wighton's MS notes on the GB-DU copy, advertisements in *The Scots Magazine* show that the 12 eight-page numbers appeared between 1757 and 1761; a further two numbers were published in 1761 as *A Second Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances*, with a dance figure printed underneath each tune.

In playing these Basses on the Harpsichord, their Octaves may be also struck, as represented by small Notes in the Fyket. page 6th.<sup>22</sup>

Example 2 Bremner 1757, p. 6



A.K. Bell Library, Perth

The move towards simplicity of basses can be seen in the two editions of *A Collection of Scots Reels* by John Riddell (or Riddle) of Ayr.<sup>23</sup> The first edition of c.1766 uses slightly awkward but 'grammatical' harmonic language to progress its basses from one tonal centre to another, but in the 1782 'greatly improved' edition this fussiness has been carefully removed, in favour of a simpler expression of the harmonic structure of the tunes, breaking the rules of baroque harmony along the way. This shows a deliberate intention to avoid 'correctness', rather than a lack of compositional skill, and it is evidence of a growing confidence in the stylistic coherence of the repertoire: the music no longer needs to be done up in Italianate harmonic dress to be presentable in print. In one extreme example, the bassline for 'The Highway to Coilsfield' from the first edition has been razed to the ground completely and replaced with a single note drone (Example 3).

While this simplicity of style is found in many books, including those of celebrated dance band leader, Alexander 'King' McGlashan, the level of invention within these simple four-beat basslines varies from the rudimentary but highly effective, as in Bremner's books above, to the fresh and imaginative, as in the work of Robert Mackintosh. In addition, some examples show an entertaining paucity of imagination, such as John Clark's *A Collection of New Strathspey Reels* published (and beautifully engraved) in 1795 at Anderson's Music Shop in Perth.<sup>24</sup> A surprisingly large number of these reels have an almost identical bassline for the four bars of the first strain, as though it was Clark's (or his cellist's) stock pattern for a certain kind of reel: a bar-and-a-half of the tonic, two

<sup>22</sup> Bremner 1757, title-page.

<sup>23</sup> Riddle 1766 and Riddell 1782.

<sup>24</sup> Clark 1795.

beats of the note above, then a walking bass and a perfect cadence. It works quite well: in each example here, the walking bass adds contrast to the repetition in bar 3 of the tune of the opening bar (Example 4).<sup>25</sup>

Example 3 Riddell 1782, p. 16



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Example 4 Clark 1795, pp. 2, 7, 10

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for three pieces. Each piece is written in a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bass line is written in the bass clef. The pieces are: "M<sup>rs</sup> Greig of Quebec", "Miss Jean Robertson's Reel", and "Anderson's Music Shop." Each piece features a walking bass pattern in the bass line. The pieces are separated by blank lines. The page concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

University of Glasgow Library

<sup>25</sup> Of the thirteen examples of this bass formula appearing in Clark's collection, the third bar repeats the first bar of the tune in eight cases.



The piano began to appear in the instrument lists of Edinburgh music shops from around 1784,<sup>26</sup> and by the turn of the nineteenth century the type of accompaniments found in fiddle books reflected this change, in a move from single-note basslines to triads, broken chords or octaves more suited to the pianist's left hand, and usually impossible to play on the cello as printed. The 'Piano Forte' also becomes a firm fixture on title-pages, taking over from the long-familiar formula of 'with a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsichord'. The piano's purpose is not prescribed merely as an accompanying bass, but instead the instrument is usually promoted to principal status (as eventually is the harp). This most likely reflects a developing fashion for amateurs playing the tunes at home for pleasure, rather than for dancing.

As well as pianistic basslines for tunes, there was a growing trend for piano music that was more loosely based on Scottish material, and with a wide spectrum of technical difficulty. Robert Mackintosh's piano music, some of it with violin accompaniment, can be challenging to play, whereas Nathaniel Gow knew that his sales would be much higher if he catered for the keen amateur of limited accomplishment.<sup>27</sup>

Some basslines freely intersperse sections apparently intended for cello with writing including impractical octaves or close triads, much better suited for piano, or perhaps harp. Some are quite baffling in their combination of keyboard and string idioms, such as Example 5 which is taken from a single sheet by Robert Mackintosh:<sup>28</sup> it includes both keyboard left-hand chords and the marking 'pizzicato':

### Harmonisations of 'Invercald's Rant', 1761–96

In a *Festschrift* for Kenneth Elliott,<sup>29</sup> I described some features of Alexander McGlashan's bassline for 'Invercald's Rant',<sup>30</sup> which demonstrates a subtle understanding (or interpretation) of the tonal structure of the tune. One of Nathaniel Gow's earliest musical jobs in Edinburgh was playing cello in 'King' McGlashan's dance band,<sup>31</sup> so lines like that illustrated in Example 6 may have been a part of his repertoire.

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<sup>26</sup> Cranmer 1991, p. 262.

<sup>27</sup> An exception to Gow's tendency towards simpler piano writing is Gow 1823, which includes some material which is technically demanding. Similarly, some of the piano music based on Scottish tunes by cellist-composer J. G. Christoph Schetky (1737–1824) is positively virtuosic, one example being Schetky n.d.. Peter Bowie included some attempts at idiomatically Scottish piano ornamentation in Bowie 1800, but with limited musical success.

<sup>28</sup> Mackintosh n.d..

<sup>29</sup> McGuinness 2005, pp. 221–9.

<sup>30</sup> McGlashan 1778.

<sup>31</sup> Glen 1895, p. x.

## Example 5 Mackintosh n.d., p. 1



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## Example 6 McGlashan 1778, p. 26



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McGlashan took this bass from Neil Stewart's *A Collection of the Newest and best Reels or Country Dances* (Edinburgh, 1761),<sup>32</sup> but altered the cadence at the end of each strain so that the bass would finish on A, establishing a tonic, rather than on Stewart's D which moved the implied tonality of the tune towards G major. He also, less convincingly perhaps, removed the key signature of one sharp, to make the tune appear as though it might be in A minor.

In 1780, Angus Cumming simply copied Stewart's tune and bassline exactly, but rather than remaining one of 'the newest and Best Reels', in under 20 years it had become one of *A Collection of Strathspey or old Highland Reels* (Example 7).<sup>33</sup> Invented traditions were clearly alive and well in eighteenth-century Scotland.

<sup>32</sup> Stewart 1761.

<sup>33</sup> Cumming 1780. See also a Glasgow edition of c.1782.

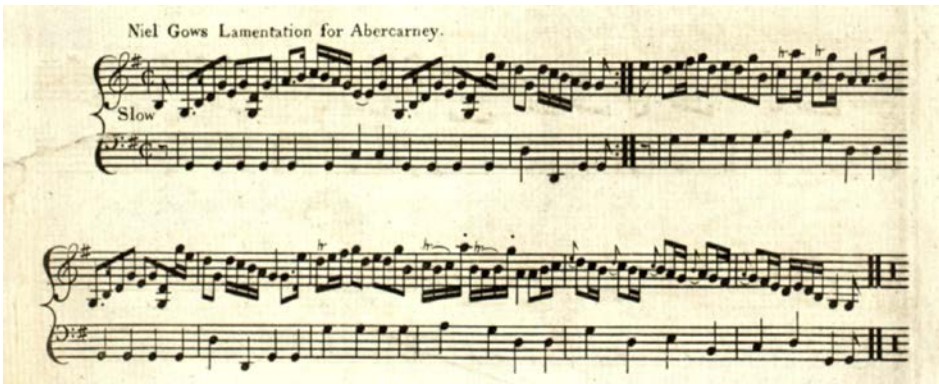
## Example 7 Cumming 1780, p. 10



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'Invercauld's Reel' had acquired a quite different harmonic dress on its later appearance in Robert Petrie's *A Second Collection of Strathspey Reels* (Edinburgh, 1796).<sup>34</sup> According to John Glen in 1891, Robert Petrie was associated with playing at balls and weddings with his cellist John Fleming, and 'from his personal habits and propensities [he] has been described as a "ne'er-dae-weel!"'.<sup>35</sup> Another Perthshire musician, Robert Mackintosh, seems to have had a hand in Petrie's publications, as early versions of some of Mackintosh's own music appeared there (not always credited) before he published them himself.<sup>36</sup>

## Example 8 Petrie 1796, p. 24



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The first strain of the tune has been translated unequivocally into the tonality of G major, with piano left-hand octaves hammering the point home, and a D-major triad at the cadence, which raises the musical eyebrows effectively (Example 8).

<sup>34</sup> Petrie 1796.

<sup>35</sup> Glen 1891, p. xiii.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Petrie's first *Collection of Strathspey Reels* of 1790 opens with variations on 'Mrs. Farquharson of Monaltrie's Delight' by Mackintosh; these appeared again with more pianistic variations and a 'Violin accompt.' added, in Mackintosh's own *Sixty eight New Reels* of 1793.

But the tune's entire character has been changed: the C in the second bar merely reinforces the harmonic scheme of the previous bar rather than breaking out of the A tonality, and the move to a G-major harmony in the third bar is no longer a progression, but another familiar repetition. Other than at the eyebrow-raising D-major chord, the first strain has been left rather bland. But then, at the second strain the single note bassline makes a comeback, and at the end the tune is led, unexpectedly, to a cadence on A. The character and the patterns of tension and resolution in the tune have been transformed by this new harmonic dress, pianistic and anachronistic as it may be (in part at least).

### Urbanisation in Niel Gow's music, 1784–1819

#### Example 9 Gow 1801, p. 3



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Niel Gow's 'Lamentation for James Moray of Abercarney' [now Abercairney], as it appears in the 1801 second edition of *First Book of Niel Gow's Reels* (Example 9),<sup>37</sup> was soon established as one of Gow's most famous tunes. His son, Nathaniel, chose it to appear as the first piece in the posthumous collection, *The Beauties of Niel Gow*, in 1819.<sup>38</sup> By then, the tune's opening anacrusis had finally acquired its now familiar grace note and dotted rhythm, the ornamentation had been adjusted, and the elegant functional bassline made a little more flowing (Example 10).

<sup>37</sup> Gow 1801.

<sup>38</sup> Gow 1819.

## Example 10 Gow 1819, p. 1

Niel Gow's Lamentation for Ja<sup>s</sup> Moray Esq<sup>r</sup> of Abercarney.\*

SLOW  
&  
PATHETIC

\* Mr Moray was the early and kind patron of the Author. The loss which Society sustained in the Death of that Gentleman was the cause of the production of this truly pathetic and beautiful Air.

Engraved & Printed by Walker & Anderson, Edin<sup>g</sup>.

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The differences between these two versions are relatively subtle, and perhaps the kind of alterations one might expect an experienced player of either fiddle or piano to make on the spur of the moment. However, the 1801 version is itself the result of a substantial revision, as the book's prefatory letter 'To the Public' from Niel Gow himself makes clear:

The first Edition of this Book being the Authors first communication to the Public, he found upon practical trial to require Correction. This is not only the purpose of this New Edition, But it will be found to contain many Valuable additions.

The Plates of the first Book have been broken down with the view that the public might not be troubled with further productions from it. \_\_\_ But the Author is sorry to observe that Copies have been taken and lately published at EDINBURGH and LONDON &c. with all its imperfections by persons unconnected with the family \_\_\_ None are genuine but such as bear the Signature of NATHANIEL GOW the Authors Son.

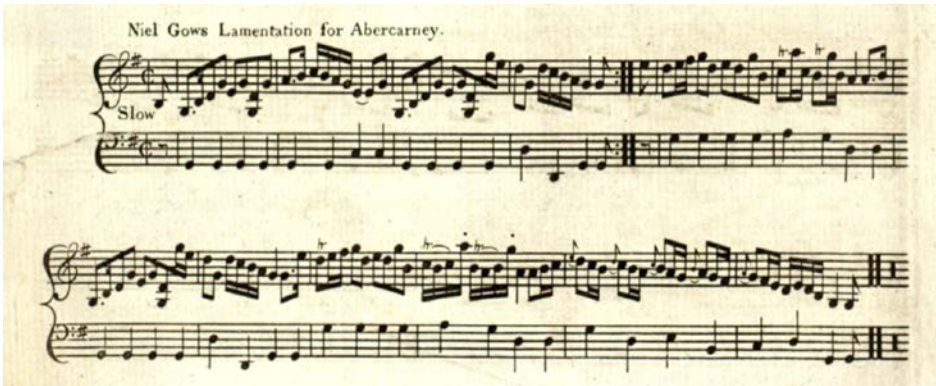
Inver near Dunkeld Septr. 21 \_1801

Niel Gow.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Gow 1801, title-page.

Besides renewing the copyright in the contents for another 14 years, this letter carefully asserted the musical and commercial authority of the Gow family's productions over the pirated copies that were in circulation. But what was the 'practical trial' that found the book to require 'correction'? To investigate this, we will need to compare the second edition with the first (Example 11).<sup>40</sup>

*Example 11 Gow 1784, p. 3*



*University of Glasgow Library*

At first sight, this appears to be a completely different, and much sparser piece of music. The tune is presented with less ornamentation (and no turns at all), less articulation, and no dynamics. The penultimate bar is notated not with semiquavers but with appoggiaturas, which may have admitted a more flexible rhythmic treatment, and there are open G drones, which have been removed from the revised 1801 version.

Even more striking than this, the elegant 'functional' bass from the second edition, with its flow and sense of direction, is entirely absent. In its place there is a simple drone with some occasional shifts of harmony, and clear cadences. Only the final two bars admit some pace to the harmonic rhythm.

The stark and uncompromising effect of this makes the later versions seem sentimental by comparison, making their emotional impact with a more studied artifice. It also may imply that the piece could be performed more quickly than the later versions might suggest. One particularly dramatic feature is the beginning of the second bar, where the A keens against the drone G in the bass: does this feel more like a lament than the smooth progression in the 1801 print?

More general 'corrections' throughout the second edition of the book include the adding of dynamic markings, additional composer attributions to Neil and

<sup>40</sup> Gow 1784.

Nathaniel Gow, some standardising of the English spelling of titles, and – surprisingly – a fair number of strathspey rhythms are evened out into equal quavers, although there are also some rhythmic adjustments in the opposite direction, as in ‘Major Graham’ (see Example 12).

Example 12 Gow 1784, p. 6; Gow 1801, p. 5

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The kinds of change made to the bassline are familiar from the Lament, with an added sense of direction in the line, hints of chromaticism, and some triads and broken chords. The *A-E* cello fifths from the first edition have not survived, and the similar fifths in the violin part have been replaced with thirds, to produce a complete tertial triadic harmony with the bass.

But why do this, other than to reflect a general shift of aesthetic over the two decades? ‘Kelravock’s Strathspey’ provides the answer. In the first edition, it appeared in *scordatura*, with plenty of notated drones, whereas the 1801 version presented the tune at sounding pitch (Example 13).

The rationale for this is stated explicitly underneath the bass stave: ‘This Tune cannot be played upon the Piano Forte as it stands in the first Edition’. In other words, the first edition would fail a ‘practical trial’ as piano music. This is quite understandable, given that at the time of its original publication, pianos were only just beginning to appear for sale in Edinburgh, and the music was laid out ‘With a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsichord’, most clearly with a view to performance with the former.

## Example 13 Gow 1784, p. 29; Gow 1801, p. 26

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system is titled 'Kilrack's Strathspey.' and consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The second system is titled 'Kilravock's Strathspey, very Old Time.' and also consists of two staves with the same key signature and time signature. Below the second system, there is a note: 'This Tune cannot be played upon the Piano Forte as it stands in the first Edition.' The music features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines characteristic of Scottish fiddle tunes.

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There may have been some motivation to modernise the music for artistic reasons, but there was clearly a commercial imperative to provide music that could be pianistically convincing. The owner of an expensive piano was far more likely to be able to afford a substantial music book than was the owner of a fiddle, so for sales to be optimised, the music had to be suitable for its new constituency of users in a New Town house (for performance on piano with or without violin), rather than for playing in the Assembly Rooms or even an Inver cottage (performed on violin(s) and cello).

Once the music had become part of print culture, it had to change to accommodate the different market and audience for the print version. The simple direction in the original ('slow') acquired the added description 'pathetick', a term more commonly associated with operatic arias.<sup>41</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the second edition represents Nathaniel Gow's Edinburgh versions of the music, rather than his father Niel's originals from Dunkeld or Inver.

<sup>41</sup> In his 1770 musical dictionary, John Hoyle defined the pathetic thus: 'this term is used for something very moving, expressive, or passionate and is capable of exciting pity, compassion, anger, etc.'. Hoyle 1770, p. 74. Thanks to Brianna Robertson-Kirkland for drawing this to my attention.



Despite the considerable quantity of pianistic writing in the printed sources around 1800, the piano was not to become a customary dance band instrument for another century. The Glasgow Caledonian Strathspey and Reel Society first added a pianist to their cellos and side drum only in 1912,<sup>42</sup> around the same time that Irish ceilidh bands were also adopting the piano.<sup>43</sup>

### **Romanticisation of William Marshall's music, 1822–44**

We can see the influence of the piano being taken even further in a comparison of the two editions of William Marshall's *Scottish Airs*.<sup>44</sup> The first includes basslines contributed by Rev. George Gordon of Dufftown,<sup>45</sup> which mix single-note lines with occasional pianistic chords. In 'The Marchioness of Huntly's Strathspey' (Example 14), the text between the staves suggests that for dancing, when the tune will be played faster, the easier key of *A* might be a wise precaution for the fiddler.

The second edition (which is undated, but refers to the forthcoming publication of 'the whole of the remainder of Mr Marshall's compositions') used the same plates, but they were substantially altered throughout the book.<sup>46</sup> As can be seen in Example 14, the tune and ornamentation survive unscathed, but the accompaniments have been made more unashamedly pianistic: the left-hand part at the beginning of the second strain seems to show a deliberate attempt to neutralise the strathspey rhythms of the tune! The harmonic content is mostly the same, other than an added brief modulation three bars from the end, and another by means of a flat 7th in the third bar, but almost all trace of the music's origin for violin and cello has been successfully obscured.

'Mrs Hamilton of Wishaw's Strathspey' (Example 15) undergoes a similar transformation: in this case the simple and direct tonic-dominant harmony of the opening bar has been 'coloured in' with a sharp 6th and a dominant 7th, entirely changing the character of the repeated opening back-dotted figure. Both of these examples give the impression of an attempt to recompose Marshall's strathspeys in a different genre, that of simple 1840s piano music.

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<sup>42</sup> Lockhart 1998, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> Scahill 2004, pp. 244–5.

<sup>44</sup> Marshall 1822; Marshall 1844.

<sup>45</sup> Bulloch 1933, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> The 'forthcoming publication' was Marshall 1845.

Example 14 Marshall 1822, p. 1; Marshall 1844, p. 1



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Example 15 Marshall 1822, p. 19; Marshall 1844, p. 19

The image displays two pages of musical notation for the piece "Mrs Hamilton of Wishaw's Strathspey". The top page, labeled "19", shows the original 1822 version. It features a fiddle part in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staves. The tempo is marked "SLOW when not DANCED". The bottom page, also labeled "19", shows the 1844 version. This version includes a more complex piano accompaniment with dense chordal textures. Both versions are marked "Mrs HAMILTON OF WISHAW'S STRATHSPEY." and "SLOW when not DANCED".

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## Conclusion

To understand the music recorded in the multitude of printed fiddle sources requires some delicacy of interpretation: the books display a range of motivation for their contents, and were intended for a variety of users and audiences. Nonetheless, they allow us to trace changes that the music underwent in transmission, in the relatively early stages of what was to become a long-lasting tradition.

In the basslines, we can see the establishment (or the reflection) of a performance style particularly suited to the cello and to playing for dancing, but which could also be applied to slower music. However, in time, the growing popularity of the piano among the purchasers of printed music led to an increasing proportion of settings that employ idioms and a harmonic language influenced strongly by pianistic practices.

In these sources we can see a diversity of approach and of practice, we can watch styles coming in and falling out of fashion, witness the new being celebrated and the old being revered, and note that authenticity was only sometimes seen as an issue worthy of consideration. All of these provide a stimulating filter through which to view today's Scottish musical traditions.

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