**[1]** Amateur Music-Making and Scottish National Identity: Publishing Music in Scotland, 1880-1950 [aim for 7.5’]

**[2. Two identities]** My doctoral research and two postdoctoral grant opportunities concerned Scottish music from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the subsequent direction of my research was influenced by my dual identity as a librarian and researcher. Music librarians receive donations with alarming regularity. I’ve waded through hundredweights of dusty bags in my time, with Scottish music quite often included in their contents.

**[3. Some names]** A handful of Scottish publishers’ names, and even particular titles emerged from those carrier bags again and again. Late Victorian, industrial Glasgow was witnessing a population explosion, and the music trade was buoyant. Songbooks and dance-tune collections varied from lavish volumes suitable for gifts, to cheap, mass-produced paper-covered books affordable for people from all walks of life; this continued well into the twentieth century.

**[4. 50 Selected Songs of Burns.]** For example, this one, in 1951, cost the rough equivalent of two McDonald’s Happy Meals today.

I wondered who the people were, that published this material. What led them to start producing it in such vast quantities? And as for the purchasers – even if some were professional musicians or music teachers, the vast majority would have been amateurs. The contents give insights about amateur music-making in that era, and of the social history around popular entertainment and leisure activities. With these questions in mind, I began to explore some of the key collections, and the people behind them.

**[5. BNA Advert & Allan’s Ballroom Guide]** I’ve made extensive use of the British Newspaper Archive and JSTOR; dallied in Ancestry; searched Jisc Library Hub Discover and WorldCat with a diligence that any Honours student would gape at; and read the print off the covers, and any introductory material or adverts that the books themselves contained. The pandemic can be blamed for my eBay acquisitions of anything I needed to see, when I was working entirely from home.

I’ve successfully pitched a book proposal with Routledge, in the same series as my first monograph; I signed the contract about a month ago. I look first at two of the cheaper publishers – James S. Kerr, and Mozart Allan. In fact, Mozart Allan’s father, a dancing-teacher, named three sons after classical composers! Mozart’s name, and his dancing background, were to stand him in good stead as a music publisher. Meanwhile, Kerr had been a master piano-builder before launching into selling pianos and publishing music.

**[6. Map showing shop location – Merry Melodies 1-4]** Kerr’s shop at no.314 Paisley Road in Glasgow was a close neighbour to a hall that was used for social dancing and dancing classes. There were eventually four books of Kerr’s now-famous Merry Melodies, the latter two published after James himself had died; his collections of reels and strathspeys were also popular. These show us exactly what people were dancing to, but also reflect other kinds of musical entertainments. If you’ve heard of the nineteenth century Christy’s Minstrels – thought at the time to have been a higher class of entertainment than music-hall – then you’ll understand how deeply unacceptable a small section of Kerr’s second book is today. The history of Blackface minstrelsy reveals the racist side of popular musical entertainment. Without finding these pages – and occasional advertisements for other such publications – I would not have had the opportunity to educate myself about something that I had never encountered before, and neither would I have begun to understand some differences in approach to the matter on either side of the Atlantic.

**[7. Plantation]** Having learned more about what “plantation melodies” actually meant, I’ve discovered a small but significant seam of this material, with a few titles also appearing in Mozart Allan’s output, and again in a couple of highly popular student song-books published by Bayley and Ferguson. It’s not a high proportion – but we have to acknowledge its presence. Late Victorian universities were almost exclusively white, and male, as the student song books themselves attest.

**[8. Insights into instruments and repertoires]** However, the books document more than this. We can note the preferred instruments of the day; and the fact that social dancing entailed not only reels, strathspeys and jigs for dancing, but also, waltzes from popular operas. There’s also a batch of publications containing music to entertain children. Kerr’s Guild of Play hints at a social movement that a modern musician would be completely unaware of: I believe the title may have been influenced by a charitable organisation that originated in Bermondsey.

I’ve been looking at other publishers’ interest in educating schoolchildren in their national song heritage; and beginning to understand why the more serious classical composers tended to submit their work to the bigger, more mainstream English publishers.

**[9. Tartan]** The most outstanding feature of the Scottish publishers’ output was, undeniably their Scottish repertoire. Many of the titles are – confusingly - very similar. As I mentioned, they fell into different price-brackets. Tartan-bound books would be advertised as ideal gifts at Christmas and New Year. Purchasers sometimes had the option of choosing a silk tartan of their chosen clan; other cheaper books would have board or paper covers, still featuring tartan.

**[10. Imagery]** Books were often gilt-embossed and edged, and all the predictable symbolism would be extravagantly combined into covers: thistles, harps, Celtic knots, and the lion rampant of the Scottish royal crest. Similarly, there were many representations of Robert Burns, the national bard, his centenary in 1896 prompting new publications.

**[11. Performers]** Sometimes there would be pictures of famous performers of Scottish songs, and in the twentieth century, recorded celebrities were naturally emblazoned on book covers. Scottish song and dance music is very much seen as cultural capital in Scotland –part of Scotland’s national heritage and identity. The surge in emigration, whether to America, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, created a demand around the diaspora for songs that would remind the emigrants of their roots.

**[12. Emigrants Laments]** Late Victorian and Edwardian Scottish and Irish songbooks contain quite a few songs of the ‘emigrant’s lament’ genre. The realities of some emigration voyages were grim, to say the least, and a homesick emigrant, who had migrated out of economic necessity, often had no chance of returning.

The fact that the repertoire reflects the social history of its era, not to mention changing styles in the musical settings themselves, does unfortunately mean that much of this type of music is not going to be performed today, although songs by **[13. Burns]** Robert Burns, and a few other popular favourites will, of course be perennial.

Reels and strathspeys will always be popular – but not necessarily all the tunes in older publications. However, the value of these books is as much in their reflection of amateur music-making and socialising, national pride, and an emigrant’s links with their homeland, as in their musical content. The earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century repertoire is well-documented. Now it is the turn of this later material. Mid-twentieth century scholars dismissed it all as sentimental Scottish kitsch – the musical equivalent to “kailyard” novels. To a certain extent, I can see what they mean – but it still has its place in history, or there will be a gap when future generations try to make sense of Scotland’s musical heritage. Hopefully my monograph will contribute to filling that gap.