FOLLOWING THE BASS: A NEW DIGITISATION PROJECT FOR SCOTTISH FIDDLE TUNE RESOURCES

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English Abstract

The contemporary librarian is more than ever before a conduit for making historical material available to scholars and performers alike. The challenge in today's world is not only to augment the crucial early manuscripts and publications with appropriate electronic versions, but to provide added value by enriching them with contextual and interpretative information.

The 3-year AHRC-funded project, Bass Culture in Scottish Musical Traditions, seeks to address this set of issues in Scottish bagpipe and fiddle music. Involving the Universities of Glasgow and Cambridge and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, it will provide a substantial web resource of sources and their interpretation, engaging with musicians working in a number of traditions to develop historically-informed practices. The aim is to enable musicians to have an understanding of the structures underpinning Scottish fiddle and pipe music, enriching the traditions with a deeper, more widespread appreciation of the diversity of their roots.

French Abstract

Le bibliothécaire contemporain est plus que jamais un passeur qui rend le matériel historique accessible aux chercheurs ainsi qu'aux interprètes. Le défi dans le monde d'aujourd'hui n'est pas seulement de rendre disponibles sous forme électronique les plus importants manuscrits et imprimés anciens, mais aussi d'enrichir ces versions électroniques en y ajoutant des informations contextuelles et interprétatives.

Le projet de 3 ans intitulé « Culture de la basse dans les traditions musicales écossaises » et financé par l'Arts & Humanities Research Council vise à répondre à cet ensemble de questions en ce qui concerne les musiques pour cornemuse et pour violon écossaises. Grâce à la collaboration des universités de Glasgow et de Cambridge ainsi que du Conservatoire royal d'Écosse, il constituera une importante ressource Web sur les sources et leur interprétation, permettant aux musiciens qui travaillent dans un certain nombre de traditions de développer des pratiques historiquement informées. L'objectif est de permettre aux musiciens d'avoir une compréhension des structures qui sous-tendent les musiques de violon et de cornemuse écossaises, tout en contribuant à l'enrichissement des traditions grâce à une appréciation plus profonde et plus généralisée de la diversité de leurs origines.

German Abstract

Heutige Bibliothekare sind mehr denn je Vermittler, die historische Bestände für Wissenschaft und Praxis gleichermaßen verfügbar zu machen. Die derzeitige Herausforderung besteht nicht nur darin, die Nutzbarkeit maßgeblicher früher Handschriften und Publikationen mit entsprechenden

elektronischen Versionen zu erweitern, sondern diesen durch Informationen zu Kontext und Interpretation einen Mehrwert hinzuzufügen.

Das auf drei Jahre angelegte und vom Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) finanzierte Projekt Bass Culture in Scottish Musical Traditions strebt an, diese Ziele für die schottische Dudelsack- und Fiddle-Musik umzusetzen. Mit den Universitäten Glasgow und Cambridge und dem Royal Conservatoire of Scotland als Projektpartnern wird ein grundlegendes Internetportal mit Quellen und deren Interpretation erarbeitet. Dies geschieht in Zusammenarbeit mit Musikern aus verschiedenen musikalischen Traditionen um historisch-informierte Praxisanleitungen zu entwickeln. Dabei ist es das Ziel, Musikern ein Verständnis für die der schottischen Dudelsack- und Fiddle-Musik zugrunde liegenden Strukturen zu geben und deren Traditionen mit einem tieferen und breiteren Verständnis der Vielfalt ihrer Wurzeln zu erweitern.

The Tunes

The popular conception of a Scottish fiddle tune is something almost timeless, 'traditional,' and changing very little over the years. Certainly, favourite tunes recur in many collections,[2] with only small differences in melody or ornamentation. Thus, many twentieth-century Scottish country dancing books contain tunes that have been around for centuries. Not surprisingly, the focus has generally been on the tunes themselves, with the accompaniments often taken for granted, or sometimes ignored altogether in modern reprints.

The impetus for the Bass Culture research project, however, was the realisation that, in addition to any changes in the tunes over the years, the nature of the accompaniments, and, indeed, the harmonic structures, also changed noticeably. Elegant baroque harmonies in some of the very early collections gave way to elementary, rhythmic marking of the beat and a sparser harmonic palette: a raw, functional line for cello or bass to accompany the fiddle for dancing. At the most basic, we find some basslines that literally move between two pitches, or adopt formulaic patterns repeated not only in both halves of a tune, but in multiple tunes in a single book. Later on, mass adoption of the piano was reflected in a more pianistic, decorative accompaniment, making it very plain that the compilers of such books no longer expected performance to be on fiddle and cello or bass. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrates the changes made to 'The Marchioness of Huntly's Strathspey', in the 1822 and 1845 editions of William Marshall's *Scottish Airs, Melodies, Strathspeys, Reels, &c*. Even the earlier edition has a much more advanced setting than some of those in the late eighteenth century, but note how the accompaniment metamorphoses from a comparatively bare bassline–sometimes resulting in open octaves or fifths, and with only a few dyads or triads–to a full pianistic setting with full chords involving the right hand as much as the left; and oscillating quavers and semiquavers for additional texture.

What's more, the frequent occurrence of the word 'new' in collection titles often belies the idea of 'age-old tradition' that we've taken for granted, and it becomes clear that the strathspey-dancing public certainly had a hunger for the very latest repertoire, alongside the regularly repeated old favourites.

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2. In FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records), collections are 'manifestations'; in MEI (Music Encoding Initiative), they are 'sources'.

FIGURE 1 'The Marchioness of Huntly's Strathspey', in William Marshall's 1822 *Scottish Airs, Melodies, Strathspeys, Reels, &c.*

FIGURE 2 'The Marchioness of Huntly's Strathspey', in William Marshall's 1845 *Scottish Airs, Melodies, Strathspeys, Reels, &c.*

The Project

The Bass Culture project, funded by the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), has as its primary aim an investigation into these changes in the bass-lines and accompaniments in general, and as a parallel strand, an investigation into harmonic structures in a number of early bagpipe sources. The name of the project, 'Bass Culture', is a tongue-in-cheek allusion to the greater importance of 'bass culture' in music of other traditions, such as in Caribbean music.

The funding is for three years, from October 2012 to September 2015. The Principal Investigator is Dr David McGuinness, a senior music lecturer at the University of Glasgow. A keyboardist, he plays early and other Scottish repertoire with his ensemble, Concerto Caledonia, which has released a number of recordings.[3] Doctoral student, piper, and clarsach player Barnaby Brown is researching the bagpipe sources under the supervision of Susan Rankin at the University of Cambridge. Meanwhile, I am seconded for two days a week from my regular job as Music and Academic Services Librarian at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Acting as postdoctoral researcher on this project gives me a unique opportunity to study the popular dance collections contemporary with my own research interests in historic Scottish song collections. Along with my research background, I also bring my bibliographical skills, so I stand with a foot in both camps, musicology and librarianship, and both facets are employed in equal measure. I am also ideally placed to liaise with the library staff in the various libraries we have consulted. All three researchers are Scottish music specialists, and the project has focused on sources in Scotland. No attempt has been made to document early fiddle collections globally, which would have required far greater financial and human resources.

The project also required the services of a systems developer; the initial stages of the project were served by Neil McDermott, Glasgow's Resource Development officer in the Music Department, and Zoltán Komives began working with us in the second year of the project. Zoltán comes with extensive background in computing, knowledge of MEI (Music Encoding Initiative), and also graduated in viola from the Conservatoire of Scotland. He is designing the functionality of our website, which will be the major output of the project.
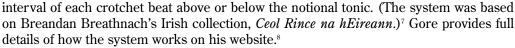
The present paper will focus on the fiddle tune collections, since my work is in this area.

The Problem

There is little point in an extensive research project into Scottish dance tunes–the most sociable and democratic of genres–unless the findings, and the collections themselves, are made widely available. If the collections themselves aren't digitised, then they should at least be easily identified and located. This prerequisite alone determined the starting point of our research.

There are already some invaluable indices to help identify tunes and tune-book locations, and *The Scottish Music Index*,[4] an online version of Charles Gore's earlier *Scottish Fiddle Music Index*,[5] was our first reference tool when we were identifying the collections that we needed to examine. Gore lists key library locations; however, he unfortunately did not include any RISM codes, although the RISM series A/I: *Einzeldrucke vor 1800* did actually include a number of these titles.[6] Gore's musical theme coding in these resources is based on the opening two (or four) bars of each tune, and entails calculating the melodic

3. Concerto Caledonia. Available at: <http://concal.org/>. All weblinks cited here were accessed 30 July 2014.

4. Charles Gore, *The Scottish Music Index–Scottish Fiddle Tunes of the 18th and 19th Centuries*. Available at: http://www.scottishmusicindex.org/

5. Charles Gore, *The Scottish Fiddle Music Index : Tune Titles from the 18th & 19th Century Printed Instrumental Music Collections, List of Indexed and Related Collections and Where to Find Them, Index to Numerical Musical Theme Codes* (Musselburgh: Amaising Publishing House, 1994)

6. Joint Committee for the Publication of the International Inventory of Musical Sources, *Einzeldrücke vor 1800*, Vols.A.1.1–15 (Kassel ; London: Bärenreiter, 1971–2012)

interval of each crotchet beat above or below the notional tonic. (The system was based on Breandan Breathnach's Irish collection, *Ceol Rince na hEireann*.)[7] Gore provides full details of how the system works on his website.[8]

Whilst *The Scottish Music Index* endeavours to cover the entire printed repertoire (excluding single-sheet music), Dundee Central Library's Wighton Collection has an invaluable database indexing one Victorian music-lover's herculean efforts to collect the entire printed Scottish music repertoire. Andrew Wighton bequeathed his collection to the City of Dundee in the mid-nineteenth century.[9] In the twentieth century, it was bound, catalogued, and microfilmed. In the early years of the present century, a new facility was built with the dual purpose of housing the collection and for use as a small venue for concerts and local history talks, and at this stage the collection was thoroughly indexed online. The original online index did include RISM codes; although the online database is no longer available through the Library service, the Friends of Wighton have recently rectified this to some extent with an online search facility and abbreviated retrieval, with the ambition to do further work on it in future. It is to be hoped that the RISM codes will then be visible again.[10] An Excel spreadsheet of the Wighton catalogue also survives; and Google retrieves details of some tune-books.

Widening the scope somewhat, two further useful online resources are *EASMES (Early American Secular Music and its European Sources, 1589–1839)*, made available by the Colonial Music Institute, based in Annapolis, Maryland, US, which is, by no means, restricted to Scottish fiddle tune repertoire, but is an extensive index of tunes and tune-books; and Nigel Gatherer's traditional music website, based in Crieff, Scotland, UK.[11] Additionally, the Ceolas Celtic Music Archive's *Fiddler's Companion,* from Wappingers Falls, New York, USA, is another tune archive worth visiting.[12] It contains a wealth of historical information about the tunes and their sources, tracing their appearance and any significant changes in later compilations.

There are also, of course, various sources of digitised scores, with the National Library of Scotland's Digital gallery a great place to start, offering a large number of fully digitised volumes of 18th and 19th century music from the Glen and Inglis Collections. Other digitised score are available online via the Petrucci Music Library (IMSLP), the Internet Archive, and the Gale subscription service, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.[13] Random digitised copies of books from this repertoire are also available in odd places around the web.[14]

7. Breandan Breathnach, and Jackie Small, *Ceol rince na hEireann*, (Baile Atha Cliath: An Gum, 1963)

8. <http:// http://www.scottishmusicindex.org/about.asp>

9. Central Library, The Wellgate, Dundee, DD1 1DB

10. The Friends of Wighton is a support group run by volunteers. They organise events and short courses in the Wighton Centre, to help raise awareness of the resource. Friends of Wighton, Wighton Database Search. Available at: <http://www.johnbagnall.info/allwighton.html>

11. Colonial Music Institute & R. M. Keller, 2002. Early American Secular Music and its European Sources, 1589–1839: an Index. Available at: <http://www.colonialdancing.org/Easmes/index.html> and Nigel Gatherer's Traditional Music, available at: http://www.nigelgatherer.com/

12. Ceolas Celtic Music Archive–Fiddler's Companion, available at: <http://www.ceolas.org/tunes/fc/>

13. *IMSLP & Petrucci Music Library*: Free Public Domain Sheet Music. Available at: <http://imslp.org/wiki /Main_Page>, and *Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine*. Available at: <https://archive.org/> ; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* is a Gale Cengage Learning product available at: < http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>

14. Can you give an example or two?

These factors combine to produce a somewhat patchy digital representation of the repertoire, with no single resource meeting all the needs of either performers or researchers. It has never been our intention to create such an all-embracing resource, that would be beyond the resources of a 3-year research project in which two individuals are devoting only two days a week to it, with the software analyst joining the team for similar hours halfway through the project. Travel to visit Scottish locations and time spent researching and logging holdings occupied more than the first year; moreover, although the digitisation of the sources takes comparatively little time once embarked upon, associated costs, negotiations with other libraries, and the time required to transcribe incipits and enter metadata into the system, all serve to limit the ultimate size of the project database. Nonetheless, we feel that our model might be capable of being extended to afford greater coverage in future, if further funding were to be secured.

Locations

The first imperative when we embarked upon the Bass Culture project was to revise the library locations listed in Gore's database. This enabled us to include locations that had come to light since Gore began his project single-handedly in the pre-digital era. Notwithstanding the invaluable UK's COPAC Union Catalogue for academic and national libraries, and a few other online resources including the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), there will, without a doubt, be many more copies extant in public library collections.[15] Meanwhile, although exploration of WorldCat would undeniably be fruitful, the task of worldwide searching and logging of locations is too great for the present project. From our point of view, tracing copies was the means to an end, rather an end in itself.

Cross-referencing with an Excel spreadsheet of the Dundee Wighton Collection index, I identified RISM codes for the majority of Gore's initial 200+ tune collections, and we were able to add to our list not only more editions but also a few more collections, and a few single folios that were in Gore's list. Brief biographical information about the composer, compiler, and publisher, was collated wherever possible, but no attempt was made to undertake new research in this regard. A few particularly interesting collections did, however, prompt further investigation into their context and background.

Existing digitised copies were identified, and then we physically examined each collection for which no digital representation could be found, noting salient features. The end result was a staggeringly large spreadsheet literally stuffed with interesting data.

Outputs

Plainly, there are far too many tune-books, and insufficient AHRC funds, to digitise each book, but we will be making all our data available on the project website, which will be at HMS.scot (Historical Music of Scotland), and which will be available by October 2015. That means there will be full bibliographical information about each collection, and links to any existing digital material. Twenty-two tune-books are being digitised, mainly from the University of Glasgow and the AK Bell Library in Perth;[16] it is intended that the data-

15. Copac National, Academic and Specialist Library Catalogue. Available at: <http://copac.ac.uk/>; Vaughan Williams Memorial Library catalogue available at < http://catalogue.efdss.org/>

16. The AK Bell Library is the main public library in Perth, Perthshire, Scotland, UK.

base will be capable of retrieving items by dedicatee or other personal name, and by named places, wherever possible. We also aim to provide both incipits and cadential bars for the tunes in these digitised collections, although it remains to be seen how many tune-books can be captured in their entirety in such depth. Lastly, we are hoping to make visual comparisons between first and second editions of certain key collections, such as the William Marshall illustrations shown above, where the passage of time influenced the nature of the accompaniment, making them more pianistic, and sometimes also changing the harmonies. Further pages about other interesting aspects of historic Scottish music could possibly be added at a later date.

One of my own contributions to the study of popular Scottish song-and tune-books of this period has been the close examination of the paratexts:, all the introductory material and any indexes or extra material at the end of the collections. Some of the fiddle books that we've examined have offered interesting source-matter in this regard, telling us about the circumstances under which certain books were compiled, and also, in a couple of instances, enabling us to gather more definite information about the use of Scottish dance-tunes in fashionable London and spa-town society. From this, it is clear that Scottish dances were by no means restricted to what Scots would describe as (i.e., the Scottish border), and were on occasions custom-composed in many different places around the UK in a Scottish style. Since so many collections include these kinds of intriguing nuggets of information, it is intended that the database will also include pertinent commentary where appropriate.

The final year of the project will involve the MEI encoding of the data we've gathered, initially by transferring it from the Excel spreadsheet to a newly designed proforma, checking bibliographical details where necessary, and further online searching for any digitised sources added by other individuals or groups since we began the project; excerpts will be transcribed into Sibelius, and we will have to thoroughly test the web access to the information. Besides inputting the data, and transcribing incipits and end-of-section cadences from our digitised tune-books, we will also be determining how the project would be carried forward. Without doubt, much more could be done if more resources were available, and, as always, that means time, as much as funding.

Project Social Media

As with any research project, the team-members have given papers, tweeted under the identity of @BassyCulture and blogged about our activities,[17] and worked with under-graduates at the three institutions we represent. We are encouraging people to follow our progress, and more importantly, to feel free to contact the Bass Culture team, via email or Twitter At the present moment, while we're still designing the database, we're keen to know how our prospective audiences of performers and scholars might make use of the resource; what they would hope to find; and we, in turn, hope that it will become a valued repository and first port of call for musicians involved in any way in this uniquely Scottish repertoire. Already, our networking has led us to establish new links with other researchers in the field, both in academia and beyond it–our most unexpected networking being the discovery of an 83-year old accordion-playing entomologist named Mick Bacchus who is something of an expert on the Gow family's fiddle music output, and has

17. University of Glasgow, Bass Culture in Scottish musical traditions | A blog for the AHRC funded project. Available at: <http://bassculture.info/>

worked on updating the Ruggles-Brise Scottish music catalogue at Perth's A.K. Bell Library (Perthshire, in Scotland.).

Equally importantly, of course, has been the enthusiastic cooperation of Scottish libraries holding significant collections of early printed Scottish dance music, enabling us to forge links and help spread the word about the riches of their collections. For example, Glasgow's renowned Mitchell Library holds a wonderful resource in the Kidson Collection of Scottish music largely from the 18th and 19th centuries, and deposited there after Kidson's death in 1926. The collection's entire contents are not yet available online, but are all listed in a dedicated card catalogue; furthermore, the Mitchell Library is an archive partner of the English Folk Dance and Song Society's "The Full English" digital archive, although it is would appear that only manuscript materials have been included in the searchable database, rather than the printed resources on which the Bass Culture project has focused. There may well be other little-known public library collections elsewhere in the United Kingdom or beyond, with similar hidden treasures. We would like to find out about any other collections, even if we can't do more than note their existence in the present project.

Since this paper is about a work in progress, it has been more about aims, methodologies, and projected outcomes, than a discussion of findings or results. We believe that it demonstrates an effective coming together of musicology and music librarianship, and look forward to the launching of the hms.scot website.

Questions and comments would be welcomed, and the author may be contacted either via email or Twitter.

- Dr Karen McAulay–K.McAulay@rcs.ac.uk, tweeting @karenmca
- The project tweets @bassyculture
- The project blog: BassCulture.info/

APPENDIX: LIST OF FIELDS IN BASS CULTURE DATABASE

Header ID
Work ID
Work Short Title
People Responsible for the Work (Name, and Role)
Work Description (Physical)
Work Description (Musical)
Work Links (Label, and Link URL)
RISM Code
Gore Code
Source ID
Source Title
People Responsible for the Source (Name, and Role)
Edition
Physical Description (Pagination, Dimensions)
Date
Publication Place
Publisher Person
Publisher Company

Printer Person
Printer Company
Sold (Place, By Person, By Company)
Primary Source Library (Name, Sigla, Shelfmark)
Further Items (Library Name, Sigla, Shelfmark, Item Notes)
Source Notes/ Commentary (Physical Description, Musical Details)
There will also be links to biographical information beyond the main database.