

CASE STUDY 5CHOLLA MO RUN

(THE PIPER'S WARNING TO HIS MASTER.)

SOURCESPipe

Donald MacDonald [DMcD] Ms. c1806-1826 no.10 p.98

'MacDonald's Warning: Cholle mo Run'

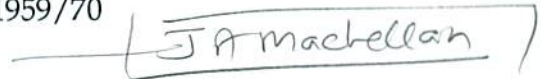
Angus MacKay Coll. [AMcK] 1838 p.125.

'Caismeachd a phiobaire da Mhaighsteir na Piobaireachd Dhunaomhaig.
'The Piper's Warning to his Master or Piobaireachd of Dunyveg '

Audio recording.

Mary Morrison Barra.

SA/1959/70


Song texts.with Music.

Folksongs and Folklore from South Uist.[FFSU] 1955: 130

Donald Campbell's Treatise [?] Dc? 1862: 124-125.

Abbreviations.

Subscript letters are used to represent low Gs and low As and superscript letters are used to represent high Gs and As. These appear before the themal note which is represented by a capital letter. A small *e* in front of the letter for the note signifies a cadence E.

Description.

This pibroch is in ABAC form in the first four phrases. These four phrases are repeated and developed into a nineteen-phrase tune in DMcD. It is useful to consider the tune as consisting of three sections: the first four phrases which are repeated to give eight phrases (sections one) followed by six phrases (ph.9-14: section two) then five phrases. (ph.15-19: section three) This is shown in Example 1.

The form of the song version is unusual in that it has five line stanzas, or five melodic phrases. The song air is very similar to the first four pibroch phrases, but with an extra phrase occurring between the third and fourth one of the pibroch, ie. before the phrase which consists of the two *hiharin* motifs. This 'extra phrase' in the song has the unusual line eg. in stanza one, '*seachainn an caol, tha mi*' (avoid the narrow(s) I am). The most important area which concerns this study is the first, four-phrase, section of the pibroch which contains the whole of the MM version of the song melody

The two phrases which follow, nine and ten, move up several tones, which is a common characteristic of song verse in relation to its refrain. [ie. from [GAE to [GA¹A] In the eleventh phrase, the pibroch unexpectedly repeats the second phrase of the tune. [BBAD BBAB]¹ and then repeats the ninth and tenth resolving it with the familiar two *hiharin* motifs, as at the end of the first four-phrase section.

The last section (phrases fourteen to nineteen) represents a repeat of phrases nine to eleven and finishes by returning to the third and fourth phrases, which are equivalent to the third and fifth line of the song. This can be seen in the transcription of DMcD's setting with the song words [MM] underneath.

The above description and the DMcD setting set out in Ex. 1 below, demonstrate how four melodic phrases, whether or not they are based on a song text of ABAC form, can be reworked to give rise to a fairly substantial pibroch of nineteen phrases. This tune may have been very popular at one time, suggested by the existence of a number of different versions which have been orally transmitted. The first four pibroch phrases, however, are of greatest relevance here. The rhythmic scheme for the whole tune can be identified from them.

¹ This seems unusual. However, when one is familiar with the eight-phrase pibroch form which frequently has a fifth phrase representing a 'composite' of earlier phrases or a reintroduction of one of these, its occurrence here is not so surprising. This particular type of phrase seems to be an important pivotal stage in the development of the pibroch to its final conclusion. In many cases they represent a 'break' from the previous melodic characteristics which have already been stated in the tune. Examples of these required here. This is a very important feature of pibroch composition. However, it is the performance style which is the subject of analysis here and not the structure of the tune. (But see also p. 183) Alba BL.

Ex. 1

Section 1: Phrases 1 - 8.

A Cholla mo Rùn DMcD Ms. B

A2 C

Section 2: phrases 9 - 14

D E

F - First time only

2nd time: E(2) Phrase 14.

Section 3: phrases 15 - 19

Phrases D, E, F followed by A(2) and C to finish.

Sung Recording.

q1

O Cholla mo ghaoil², seachainn an caol,
 Seachainn an caol, seachainn an caol,
 O Cholla mo ghaoil, seachainn an caol,
 Seachainn an caol,- tha mi,
 Tha mise làimh, tha mise làimh.

(quatrain sung twice)

(O Colla my love, avoid the narrows/I am caught)

verse

² She sings 'rùn' on the first occasion. However, this rhymes with Dùn in other versions. She does sing 'rùn' with 'caol' though in the same performance.

Discussion

Example 2. shows the four phrases of the pibroch with the MM song version underneath.

Ex.2.

DMcD

MM

O Cholla mo ruin, seach-ainn an caol, seach-ainn an caol, seach-ainn an ca - ol.

DMcD

MM

Colla mo ruin seach-ainn an caol, seach-ainn an caol tha mi, tha mis - e là - imh tha mis - e làimh.

The melodic link is very obvious, especially in the first phrase of the song.

The most striking feature of the song concerns the rhythmical and the animated performance style of the singer. Both these features are lacking in the modern pibroch performance style of this tune. The 'extra' phrase of the song occurs in the fourth line, where MM sings '*seachainn an caol tha mi*'. Her final line '*tha mise làimh, tha mise làimh*' melodically moves down to the low A and can be identified with the *hiharins* of the pibroch version.

The close correlation between DMcD's low G and low A starting the tune and the beginning of the song, are clear in the music. The three demisemiquaver cadence to the low G could be regarded as an anacrusis, equivalent to the vocable 'O' which begins the song. This would have to be short and played as a 'run' in order to fit into the rhythmic context of the song air. This running cadence contrasts with the presence of long introductory E's in the modern pibroch version despite there being no hint of an introductory cadence in the song version. For example, present day pibroch players are likely to play the first phrase in the following manner:

Ex.3.

Ex. 3. J.A. MacLellan.



Source?

This cannot be rhythmically correlated with either the song or Donald MacDonald's text.

When the corresponding words are placed underneath the pibroch text, one can see that the disparities which exist between the song rhythm and the pibroch rhythm are, for the most part, due to the existence of cadences and other conventions of pibroch notation. If the themal notes only of the pibroch are compared with the song, the rhythm of the song can easily be applied to the pibroch setting given. The choice of tempo and rhythm, using DMcD's score as a guide, is one which represents a compromise between the song's language rhythm and the pibroch as notated. The grips in bars three and four would also have to be played in a shortened form, as shown, in order to retain a strong rhythmic presence as one can hear in the song.

As packed
entire
intro.

It would seem, however, from the manner of notation adopted, that the tune was played fairly slowly in comparison with the song performance being considered here. For example, if the tune is played above a certain tempo the grips in the third and fourth bars, aforementioned, seem to make the tune over ornamented and tend to slow down the natural rhythmic flow of the piece. These notational features are not so noticeable when the tune is played fairly slowly and their existence on the staff may partly explain why pibroch became to be played in such a slow pedestrian manner. There was probably a two-way influence here between notation and tempo.

One can be fairly certain that the manner of playing the DMcD cadences with longer Es and their frequency throughout the tunes had the effect of slowing the tune down. This probably became more prevalent following the publication of AMcK's setting in 1838.

is a style which...

ANGUS MACKAY'S SETTING.

AMcK's version has the *ùrlar* reduced to a similarly 'unorthodox' (PS Series³) form of fifteen phrases. The first eleven phrases, however, have words underneath the melody. Eight of these eleven phrases are in the form of a repeated quatrain. This is followed by a three-phrase section which, like DMcD's version, moves up several tones. [low AAE to low GA high G] This section is textually like a quatrain with the third line missing. It is for this reason that a line is left blank in the AMcK example below although no hint of editing potential is suggested here.

The song text as follows has a guide to the notes used on the right hand side. These can be explained as follows. What I consider to be the main melodic features of the tune are on the right hand side. The small letters represent cadences and the capital letters represent the themal notes. ~~The Gs have a subscript or superscript 1 before the note, according to whether they be low or high.~~ The asterixes represent what one might expect to be a line of song beginning 'A Cholla...because of the form of the first quatrain.⁴

The song text as follows has a guide to the notes used - what I consider the main melodic features of the tune - on the right hand side.

~ Insert AMcK tune with words here (facsimile)

ACholle mo rùnn tionndaidh am bàt,	eAAAAE eDBAD;
na'm fhios dhut mar tha chad thigeadh du'm chòir,	eBBBBD eBAGB
Cholle mo rùnn seachainn an dùn,	eAAAAE eDBAB;
tha mise'n laimh, tha mise'n laimh.	eAAAAA eAAAAA

(Quatrain repeated)

this is followed by:

³ The Piobaireachd Society editorials, in their published series, regard tunes which fall outwith their classification system, which is founded on the number of bars in a tune, as unorthodox. (But see Introduction for more discussion on this.)

⁴ Any suggestions on pibroch form are made solely in relation to the melodic scansion of the song and its appearance within the pibroch *ùrlar*. This pibroch has been subject to fairly extensive debate on its form, but usually in terms of the relative numbers of bars which have been recorded by different notators. Some comparative studies or discussion can be found in eg Thomason (1900), G.F.Ross (1926), Campbell(1948) Haddow (1982)

Replace high Gs with X
on high as with X. 221

Cholle mo ghaoil seachainn a'n caol
s'na creaganan caol, 'thoir orst a mhaol,

tha mise'n laimh, tha mise'n laimh.

eG₁A¹GFEDF
EBBE eDBAB

eAAAA eAAAA

The tune finishes without words in the following manner:

eG₁A¹GFEDF

EBBE eDBAB

eAFE eDBAB

eAAAA eAAAA

Although AMcK has inserted one version of the words underneath the music, there is no evidence in the song tradition of the tune going up from the refrain to high G as in the pibroch here. It may be that the words were inserted as a rhythmic guide, or to give the impression of a legitimate musical text or both of these. Unfortunately, although AMcK's text has the words inserted, they provide little assistance to (either the Gaelic or the non Gaelic reading) pibroch player who wants to find an affinity between ^{them and} the melodic text, ^{be able to infer} and the song words. A native Gaelic speaker should acquire the rhythmical characteristics which are implied quite easily. This has not been the case, however, and it is clear that these particular rhythms which should be so obvious to the Gaelic speaker have been ignored for the mainstream pibroch style. The nature of the words, when compared with the pibroch score, entail^s making the cadences extremely short almost to the point that they sound like the gracenoting which one finds in light music. This would represent a dramatic departure from our present-day understanding of the cadence. It is quite possible that on occasions the cadences may have been played particularly short as shown in the introductory section of this thesis⁷ with particular reference to Cameron's Gathering. When the words are compared with the conventions of pibroch notation, they clearly do not match. ||

The implications of the rhythmic characteristics of the song on the pibroch melody are quite obvious. If ^{the} these rhythms are overlaid on the pibroch score one might play something like the following:

- Audio reinterpretation.

One could attempt to notate this music in a ^{form} ~~manner~~ which sets out to describe the manner in which to play. The notation falls far short of adequately recommending a style ^{of playing} ~~in which to play~~ and one realises that the DMcD score itself is quite sufficient, providing one knows the idiom within which one is working.

For example, one could attempt to notate it as follows:



The note values will vary however on each performance even though there appears to be regular stress. This reminds us that pibroch performance is like Gaelic song where, as Cooke (1972) stated

'even those in regular stress are traditionally sung with a very flexible beat which is stretched and contracted for poetic and musical purposes.'

CONCLUSIONS.

The attempts to demonstrate a valid relationship between a song and a pibroch in Angus MacKay's collection, other than through title and historical association are seen to have been ineffective at least in preserving a rhythmic style which was probably once common to both. This particular example shows once again how, by overlaying the rhythm of the song on the pibroch and by playing the cadences as short decorations to the melodic line, a similar melodic and rhythmic scansion can be detected between the song and the pibroch, which places the latter more firmly into its historical context once again.