

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

The Aesthetics of Solo  
Bagpipe Music at  
The Glengarry Highland  
Games

by

Sarah Loten

Presented to the Faculty of Arts  
partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of M. Music



Sarah Loten, Ottawa, Canada, 1995



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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the aesthetics of solo bagpipe music at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario, in order to understand how people perceive and receive their world. My ethnography of aesthetics of solo bagpipe music has involved a selected group of musicians that has participated in the *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag* contests at these games. *Piobaireachd* is the classical tradition of the Great Highland bagpipe, and *ceol beag* is the "light" music which consists of dance songs or marches.

The first chapter explores the "arrangements" of power in this community. By "arrangements" of power, I refer to the informal understandings between people about the hierarchies, prestige and power in bagpipe activities of their community. The second chapter examines the various traditions in the aesthetics of solo piping. I problematize the notion of "tradition" by examining it as a human construction that is continuously reinterpreted as it is passed down from generation to generation. The third chapter explores the local knowledge of some of the pipers taking part in the competitions. By "local knowledge", I mean the body of knowledge that is formed collectively, over time, and comes to represent the main ideas and expectations the pipers have about their music.

Since Maxville, with the Glengarry Highland Games, is considered, according to the pipers, to be the "spiritual

center" of piping, this choice of location has been ideal for understanding sound structures, behaviours, practices, and attitudes that are inherent in this cultural activity.

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### Introduction

During the course of my research, many people asked about the subject of my thesis. When they learned that I was conducting a study of the aesthetics of solo bagpipe performance, reactions ranged from the incredulous to the ridiculous. This attitude was typical both in academic circles and with the public at large. This research topic has been largely ignored by academia, and most people find the concept of a serious study of bagpipe performance either quite funny or highly improbable.

This situation presents an interesting paradox, since many of the people who react so negatively to the idea of conducting a serious study of solo piping, nevertheless feel a considerable fondness for the music of the bagpipe. They express an enthusiasm for the sounds and traditions associated with bagpipe performance, yet they know almost nothing about the individual pipers or the specific music being played. This is particularly true within the National Capital Region, where few realise that Glengarry county, a mere 45 minutes east of Ottawa, is home to many of the worlds most successful pipers. The Glengarry Highland Games, held annually at Maxville, Ontario, attract nearly 20,000 participants from around the world. Few cultural activities, either "high art" or "popular", can claim such attendance, yet this event, though within easy travelling distance of two major universities, has never been the subject of an academic study. I was intrigued

by the discrepancy between the lack of knowledge and intellectual endeavour shown by both academia and the public, and the large value that these games hold for so many people. To me, a serious study of the music performed at this event seemed not only natural, but long overdue.

### The Ethnographic Setting

Scottish Canadian piping has, in general, been covered in the following four ways: (a) small portions of larger manuals; (b) small articles in newsletters or periodicals; (c) articles or manuals devoted to the techniques or sounds of piping; and (d) collected editions of the pieces used for piping with short, general introductions. For my own research into Canadian Scottish piping, I decided to depart from this type of documentation and, instead, to examine the aesthetics of the solo piping repertoire by focusing on a group of musicians from a specific region and within a specific time period.

When I decided to write my thesis on the aesthetics of solo bagpipe music at the Glengarry Highland Games, I felt I had to examine closely the meaning of the word "aesthetics". This was a difficult task, not only due to the vague and elusive nature of the various definitions of the word, but also because discussions of aesthetics can concentrate on everything from a very specific set of judgement criteria, to

an underlying assumption about a given object or certain issues within a culture. I was actually less interested in seeking a textbook definition of the word aesthetics than trying to understand what it really meant to a group of people in a practical, everyday sense of the word. Their discussions dwelt largely on traditional Western art forms and the beauty that is inherent in certain types of art. These authors view art as transcendant, above everything else, and believe that art should exist for its own sake.

Aesthetic theories were developed in antiquity by philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato and Longinus. However, the view of aesthetics which have had the greatest influence in the twentieth century came to prominence in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with German philosophers, such as Edouard Hanslick (1986), and Immanuel Kant (1952). These authors developed a separate branch of philosophy which focused solely on the arts. "Art" was considered to be supernatural and above the relative and subjective questions of history and sociology. Art was considered a field that had developed autonomously, with its own inherent rules and structures. Authors from this branch of aesthetics studies focused on issues such as aesthetic judgement, the essential nature of art, and the aesthetic experience. Their discussions have mainly dwelt on traditional Western art forms and the beauty that is supposedly inherent in certain types of art. These authors view art as transcendant, above everything else,

and believe that art should exist for its own sake.

This view of aesthetics was gradually challenged. Authors such as Richard Wallhiem (1970) and Raymond Williams (1981) began to trace the relationships between art and the other historical and political activities of mankind. Their works served to illustrate that art cannot be viewed as a separate field from the rest of human activity. It cannot be viewed as transcendant, or a type of beauty that exists for its own sake.

More recently, authors such as Janet Wolff (1989) have used the theories of postmodernism to examine the question of aesthetics. They have attempted to deconstruct notions of hierarchy between "high art" and popular culture. Their goal has been to problematize many traditional concepts of aesthetics and to replace them with a view that relativizes and contextualizes art within social, historical and political parameters. Janet Wolff succinctly describes this view in the introduction to her book The Social Production of Art:

Art is a social product. This book attempts to show systematically the various ways in which the arts can adequately be understood only in a sociological perspective. It argues against the romantic and mystical notion of art as the creation of "genius", transcending existence, society and time, and argues that is rather the complex construction of a number of real, historical factors. (1989: 1)

Janet Wolff's conception of aesthetics typifies the view that I wish to take in discussing the aesthetics of solo bagpipe music at the Glengarry Highland Games. The more traditional view of aesthetics would have been indeed most

problematic for the music culture which I have been studying. For one thing, although the music performed at the Glengarry Highland Games is a Western Art form, it is not one of the highly respected sets of art forms that have traditionally been discussed in aesthetic studies. Secondly, I felt that the importance of bagpipe music is precisely its connections with the culture of which it is a part. In fact, these connections are so strong that, for the pipers, the words "music" and "culture" are inseparable, in other words, one and the same.

My view of aesthetics has been further inspired by ethnomusicologists such as Thomas Turino (1984), Steven Feld (1988), Christopher Waterman (1990), and David Coplan (1988), who believe, essentially, that a study of aesthetics involves a more all-encompassing view of the world. These authors are interested in how people perceive and conceive their own world and how their worldview is interconnected with the many activities they conduct in everyday life.

It is from such a perspective that one can conclude that the aesthetics of music is a form of knowledge which allows an understanding not only of the sound structures, but also of the behaviours, practices, and attitudes that are inherent in any cultural activity. Aesthetics, then, refers to what people feel, enjoy, value, and to the cultures in which they live.

Music is not only a reflection of social and cultural realities. Music is also part of the continual process of the creation and production of social experience, as many authors

have argued (Manuel 1980; George 1993; Shapiro 1991). In his article "Communication, Music, and Speech About Music", Steven Feld states that "music has a fundamentally social life" (1984:1), and describes how music as communication consists not only of process and activity but also involves various social, cultural and political meanings and interpretations.

In this thesis, I want to show how cultural performances constitute an inextricable link with the traditions and history of a people. They can act as symbols, present ideologies, and be representative of both past and present activities, values and ideas (Geertz 1982; Manuel 1980; Feld 1984). Cultural activities often serve as a means of communication among the members of a community from one generation to the next. They give meaning and a sense of connection through the various stages in the history of a community.

Music, then, is a collective body of knowledge which involves a shared understanding of ideas amongst a specific group of people. As a result, the ethnographer must view music within the community from multiple angles: as a process, an activity, a construction, a symbol, a mode of behaviour and a collection of sounds. Approaching music on so many levels allows one to examine in all its complexity the process of the production of meanings in music, its aesthetics, as understood in a given community.

More specifically, the goal of this study is to

understand how pipers who participate in the solo bagpipe competitions at the Glengarry Highland Games perceive and conceive part of their worldview through their music. In other words, I want to show how the pipers' unique ways of viewing their music and their association with music influence their construction of the world.

The community I have chosen to study involves a selected group of musicians that have participated in the solo piping contests at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario (see Figure 0-1). These games, which are one of the largest in North America, take place in the month of August and attract many pipers from all over Canada and the United States. It is the home of the North American Pipe Band Championship with between forty and fifty bands competing for the championship title. There are also many solo piping contests with competition in the classical tradition called *piobaireachd* (pronounced Pee-brock) and in *ceol beag* (or "light music") which consist mainly of dance songs or marches (see Plate 2-1).

*Piobaireachd*, referred to by the players as the "heavier" classical music, is conceived as the more prestigious genre for the bagpipe. It is a highly structured art form with a characteristic structure and style. Only the more advanced players participate in the *piobaireachd* contests, as the music is considered artistically more demanding to play than "light" music. The *piobaireachd* repertoire is very specific and the

arrangements are usually only drawn from one of two series of books: The Piobaireachd Society Books (1985) or the Killberry Book of Ceol Mor (1948). The participants are not as numerous as in other competitions (see Plate 2-2).

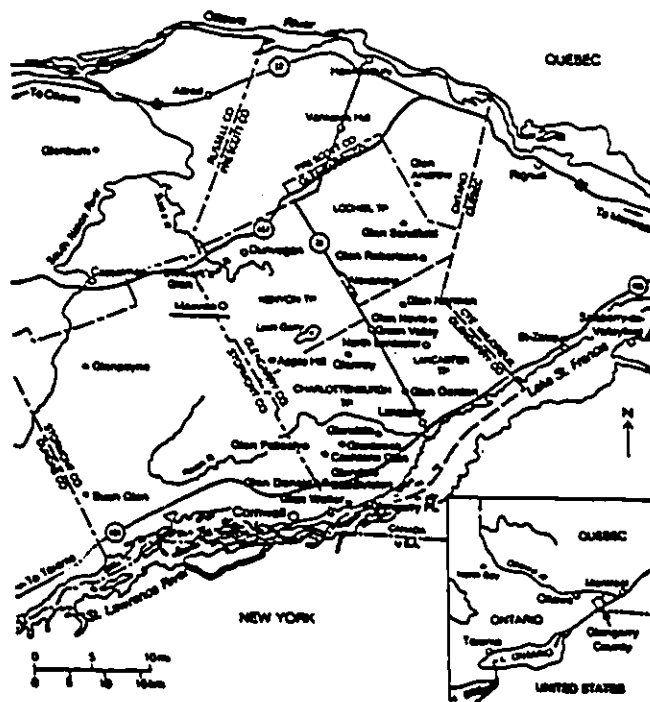


Figure 0-1: Map of Glengarry County (McRae 1986:

The solo "light" competitions, on the other hand, involve the majority of the solo participants in the games. The repertoire contains a greater variety of compositions and arrangements, usually including *strathspeys*, reels, marches, jigs and hornpipes (see Plate 2-3). Both repertoires have contests at the professional level and at the amateur level. Professional contests have cash prizes and represent the highest standard of competitive piping. At the amateur level, *ceol beag*, has contests graded from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest), and the *piobaireachd* contests are divided into group A and B (higher) and (lower) (see Plate 2-4).

The games are always held on the first weekend of August, outdoors, at the fairground of the Kenyon Agricultural Society. Since 1948, the games have been attracting crowds of between twenty and fifty thousand people creating a wonderful fair-like atmosphere (see Illustration 0-1). Overnight, a small "town" of tents is erected on the grounds, which creates space for food vendors, music stores, Scottish and kilt shops, heritage societies and various other goods (see Plate 2-5). Contests in piping, dancing and sport are run simultaneously on the fairgrounds. Kilts are everywhere as pipers, dancers, athletes and many Scottish enthusiasts pursue many activities (see Plate 2-6).

The games begin with a pre-game concert on the Friday evening with entertainers such as singers, Celtic groups and non-competitive performances of dancing and piping. The next

morning the pipers must be up early for the solo contests

## Skirl of pipes draws 20,000 to Maxville

By Catherine Thompson  
Ottawa staff writer

From a distance, the forest of wooden pipes resembled the mythic walking forest of Macbeth.

Tumult whirled, kilts swayed to the military beat, and the air was filled with the triumphant strains of *The Road to the Isles* as the fairgrounds in Maxville, Ont., filled with hundreds of pipers Saturday.

The lines of pipers in the massed bands at the 34th Glengarry Highland Games marched in unison across the field, crossing and re-crossing in disciplined patterns.

The pageantry of the opening ceremonies, with over 50 bands this year, is always a drawing card with the crowds. All 2,000 of the opening ceremonies' reserved bandstand seats were sold out by Friday, and the hills around the field were covered with spectators.

"It's amazing that you can get 20,000 people together, and it's not to make money, it's not a football, baseball or hockey game," said Tammy Rolfe of Ottawa. "Everyone's here just to have fun."

Her stepfather, John Duff, came up from New Brunswick to see the games. He started highland games in his maritime home, for love of the music and all things Scottish.

He beamed as he recognized song after song. "When you hear the pipes for three days afterwards, you know you've been to a good highland game."

Rolfe, like many in the crowd, doesn't have a drop of Scottish blood in her veins. But she loves the massed bands, and the bagpipes, and has been to

several highland celebrations.

Duff said the appeal of the games is clear: "There's only two kinds of people, they say. Scots and those that want to be Scots."

People of all ages from across the country flock to the games in this little village of about 900, about 60 kilometres southeast of Ottawa. More than 20,000 attended this year. The games proclaim themselves "the world's biggest", and are certainly one of the largest on the continent.

Piper Dick Trott came up from Maine to participate in the games with his pipe band. He said the large numbers of pipers made Maxville a great place to pick up pointers and observe expert pipers at work. "There are a lot of Grade 1 (the highest amateur grade) bands here. A lot of them go to Scotland to play, and that's supposed to be state-of-the-art piping."

There's more than just music at the games. Many come to admire the exploits of the athletes in the Canadian Scottish Games Heavyweight Championships.

Twelve men from Canada and the U.S. competed for the championship, long held by Dave Harrington of Old Chelsea, Que., who retired last year.

Kath Tice of Clovis, Calif., was the crowd favorite, and later won the overall championship. The top Canadian athlete was Harvey Barkauskas, of London, Ont., who said he trained with weights all winter.

A number of weights, from 10 up to 26 kilograms, are tossed for height or distance. Tice heaved a 16-pound bag stuffed with hay, called a sheal, 22 feet



— Bruce Schenberger, Chron

Some members of 50 massed pipe bands perform

into the air with a pitchfork.

The huge men, some weighing more than 300 pounds, creased their faces in concentration, and grunted as they labored under the hot summer sun.

The most dramatic event is the caber toss, when competitors try to flip a 21-foot, 70 kilogram log end over end. Third-place finisher Dan Marcovic of Toronto was the only athlete able to flip the full caber. Two feet had to be cut from the log before other competitors were able to turn it.

At the other end of the field, girls were involved in the more delicate pursuits of highland dancing. In their velvet vests, wool kilts and lacy blouses, the dancers leapt before the judges, arching their arms gracefully above their heads.

The two-day festival began Friday with a tattoo and dance. Employment and Immigration Minister Fiera MacDonald, sporting a kilt in her family tartan, opened the games officially at 1 p.m. Saturday.

Illustration 0-1: An Overview of The Glengarry Highland Games (Thompson 1985: B3).

begin at 8:30 a.m. They continue until noon when the pipe bands begin to gather together to get ready for the official opening at 12:45 p.m. (see Plate 2-7). The opening ceremonies consist of speeches by celebrities (two prime-ministers have opened the games) and officials who have organized the Games, and of performances by the so-called "duty" band. The afternoon brings the band contests with competition at all levels. At this point, the bands all compete for the prestigious title of North American Pipe Band.

Throughout the morning and the afternoon, competitions in dance, drumming and athletics take place as well. At the end of the day, there is a prize-giving ceremony and a final parade of the massed bands. The final event of these ceremonies, the massed bands, is the highlight of the day for most spectators. Bands parade onto the field in sections and once all the bands are in the field (approximately fifty in total), they parade around the central field of the grounds (see Plate 2-8). As can be imagined, this creates a spectacular display of sound, colour and pageantry.

The large and successful Glengarry Highland Games take place, as mentioned above, in the very small town of Maxville (population 700 inhabitants) (see Plate 2-9). People often question how such a small town has managed to create and produce these games. The answer lies in the cultural background of these people and their drive to maintain their Scottish identity. In Glengarry County, the social networks of

the community provide a very supportive environment for piping. The cultural background of this community, rich in Scottish history and heritage, provides a natural environment for bagpipe activity. The Glengarry Highland Games is used by the Glengarry people as one of the most vivid means of expression of the social and cultural meanings their heritage has for them.

The people of Glengarry show their pride in their ancestry in many other ways. For instance, a Hall of Fame was erected three years ago to commemorate all the people who distinguish themselves at various events during the games. The Hall is a great source of information on many people who have been involved in these games. It holds file folders on all the inductees, newspaper clippings about the games dating back to 1948 when the games were first held in Maxville, articles of interest and various other pieces of memorabilia.

Two other piping institutions help to cultivate their pride in Scottish traditions in the small community: the Glengarry School of Piping and Drumming and the Glengarry Pipe Bands. They both provide a place for pipers to play, learn and enjoy the music. The objectives of the school are "to perpetuate and promote piping and drumming music in the area[,]. . .to train students in the art of piping and drumming and thereby insure that there would be experienced members in the future to play in the band" (Danskin 1975: 52). There are three bands in Glengarry, each providing a social and

educational setting for different levels of piping. The levels of these bands range from a non-competitive band just starting to learn the pipes, to a Grade Two band, which is Glengarry's top competitive band.

### The Fieldwork Setting

In order to prepare for my fieldwork, I wanted to examine anything I felt was pertinent to the aesthetics of solo bagpipe music. I read everything on the subject from all the publications I could lay my hands on: books, periodicals, journals, newspapers, and record jackets. I wanted to research as wide a range of written material as possible. To do so, I conducted computer scans, sent away for documents located at English, Scottish and North American Universities, and subscribed to various piping journals. As well, I exhausted local resources at libraries and information centres, and perhaps, most usefully, I was able to acquire many documents from the private collections of individual pipers and judges.

Initially, I decided to place a particular emphasis on the documents pertaining to the Canadian bagpipe scene. I was somewhat disappointed by the lack of material specifically devoted to Canadian piping, but I did not hesitate to expand my sphere of research to include any study which could throw light on the Canadian piping scene as part of a larger

cultural milieu.

To situate the bagpipe tradition in Canada, I first had to delve into books on Scottish social and political history such as the well-known books Culloden (1961) and The Highland Clearances (1963) by John Prebble. I then narrowed my reading to discussions of the Scottish Canadian tradition. Two of the more useful books on this topic were The Last Stronghold by Margaret Bennett and an anthology edited by Stanford Reid call The Scottish Tradition in Canada (1988).

I subsequently consulted several books and articles which discussed the technical intricacies of piping and gave me a better understanding of the two solo repertoires of *Ceol Beag* and *Piobaireachd*. One of the most comprehensive books on this subject was John Cannon's The Highland Bagpipe and Its Music (1988). This book provided an accessible overview of the piping scene in Scotland by covering its history, the main venues for piping, and technical details about the music. Another useful book containing more specific information about repertoire was Seamus MacNeill's Piobaireachd (1968). This book was tremendously helpful when I was first trying to understand the intricacies of form and musical expression found in *Piobaireachd* music.

Another area of literature I examined was the collected editions and tutors (studies) of the two solo repertoires. The collected editions usually consisted of a group of *Ceol Beag* or *Piobaireachd* tunes with an introduction written by the

collector and/or composer of the book. These tunes were useful for musical analysis and often the introductions contained valuable historical and technical information on the performance requirements of the given tunes. The tutors were written primarily for educational purposes, to be used by pipers who were learning to play the instrument. Such books were useful because they enabled me, in the beginning, to understand some of the basic principles of piping, and as I progressed, to further understand the value system and underlying assumptions of performance bagpipe practice.

The final source of piping documentation that I explored was articles found in newsletters, journals, periodicals, and newspapers relating to the Canadian piping scene. The most valuable source of information in this category came from the Piper and Pipe Band Society of Ontario's monthly periodical: The Piper and Drummer. This publication, which is the main voice for pipers across Ontario, gave me many valuable insights. I also found articles in various local newspapers such as The Citizen and The Chesterville Record, as well as periodicals such as Canadian Geographic, Atlantic Advocate, and Ottawa Magazine.

At the beginning of May, 1992, I began a series of interviews examining the social, cultural and political meanings of bagpipe music for the community involved in the Glengarry Highland Games. For sake of clarity and focus, I concentrated on pipers who had participated in the games

during the past ten years. Participants in the games here refers to at least one of the following three categories: (1) pipers who were involved in competition performance; (2) pipers who adjudicated; (3) pipers who were active in administering the events.

I then attended the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario, during the summer of 1992. I observed many of the events held at the games, but focused on the solo bagpipe competitions. I attended these events with an experienced piper who explained the proceedings as they occurred and revealed the criteria used to evaluate the musical performances. I made sound recordings, and video taped several solo contests which I later used for reference. I also created a short documentary video about the solo contests held at the Games during the summer of 1992.

Interviews continued after the Games into the fall of 1992 and the winter of 1993. Before and after the Games, I observed the lessons and rehearsals of the individual pipers who had performed. I also took bagpipe lessons myself for six months to become familiar with the instrument. My main goal throughout this period was to examine how musical values were transmitted and to determine the criteria used to evaluate a performance. The reason for this schedule was to be able to compare various statements obtained before and after the games. I interviewed many pipers more than once and certain key people many times. This strategy created a "back and

forth" relationship with the pipers and enabled me to understand the aesthetics of solo piping in greater depth, while allowing me to interpret and reinterpret the data I had collected.

I conducted interviews with the teachers and Pipe Majors who were preparing pipers for the solo contests. I also interviewed judges who had adjudicated solo contests during the past ten years. I then met with officials who had an important role in organizing the solo bagpipe contests. For example, I interviewed a member of the 1992 organizing committee and several members of the Ontario Society for Pipers who have been actively involved in organizing solo contests for the society over the past ten years. These people were a valuable source of information on the history of these solo contests. Statistics on the number of participants, and subsequent changes made in the choice of criteria used to judge the contests were some of many issues that were discussed.

Finally, I interviewed pipers who were either participating in the solo contests at the Games during the summer of 1992 or who had participated in the Games at some point over the previous ten years. I interviewed a number of pipers, both men and women, from a variety of backgrounds and ages in order to include a broad spectrum of opinions. For example, I interviewed some pipers who were quite well-known and, naturally, much important data came from the experiences

of these people; however, I also felt it was important to interview lesser-known pipers as they gave me a perspective that differed from those at the top of the competition ladder.

### The Interpretive Setting

The interviews I conducted throughout this research provided a valuable opportunity to examine the "local knowledge" which guides the pipers' playing. My understanding of the term "local knowledge" was inspired by Clifford Geertz's book, Local Knowledge: Essays in Interpretative Anthropology (1982). In the midst of these interviews, I found that, while many of the questions I had planned to ask were indeed useful, many key points arose from the comments of the pipers themselves. Since I began this project with the intention of discerning the "world-view" or "aesthetics" of these pipers, I felt it was critical to develop an understanding of the issues that seemed most important to the participants themselves. The issues that they raised became the focus of my study.

The three chapters of this thesis mark an attempt to represent three instances of how bagpipe players draw much of their worldview, in terms of history, sociopolitical and cultural values, from their musical practices.

The first chapter explores the "arrangements" of power in

the Glengarry community. By "arrangements" I refer to the informal understanding between people about hierarchies, prestige, and power in relation to the bagpipe activities within the community. The second chapter examines the traditions involved in the aesthetics of solo piping. Here, I problematize the notion of "tradition" by exploring it as a human construction that is continuously reinterpreted as it is passed down from generation to generation (Hobsbawm 1983). The third chapter examines the local knowledge of the interviewed pipers, that is, the body of knowledge that has been formed collectively, over time, and that has come to represent the main ideas and expectations that these pipers have about their music (Geertz 1982).

It is important for me to know what the pipers of the Glengarry Games value, why they do what they do, and what draws them to participate in solo bagpipe activities. I am interested in these questions because I want to understand why people value certain cultural activities in their lives. I want to examine what aspects of piping activities make the lives of these people "tick", what propels them to be excited about these activities. Since piping cannot exist in isolation from other cultural activities, I am also interested in the nature of historical and social connections within solo piping. In the process, I am hoping to gain insight into the complex and shifting nature of human activity in Scottish communities outside of Scotland. At the same time, I want to

focus on Glengarry in order to show how every community takes an active part and is influenced by the various forces embodied in larger world trends. In the conflux of activities and ideas that represent the modern world, a smaller community can give ethnographers the possibility of understanding processes and tendencies that are observed in other communities around Canada, North America, and elsewhere.

Many pipers testify that, beyond the informal knowledge that is part of pipers' experience, few publications exist which represent and acknowledge the Canadian pipers experience. Glengarry is one of the major strongholds of Scottish activities in Canada, and Maxville, with the Glengarry Highland Games, is considered to be the "spiritual centre" of this region. This choice of location is therefore ideal for a study on the musical aesthetics of solo piping tradition.

Chapter 1 Music and Power:  
Arrangements of Power in the Piping Community of Solo  
Competition at the Glengarry Highland Games

Music is inseparable from the everyday concerns of social hierarchy, divisions and conflicts. It reflects and influences an extremely complex and wide range of human situations in society. Shapiro states that music is "one of the most effective ways of expressing some aspect of the way of life for an individual or group" (Shapiro 1991: 8).

One of the most intriguing aspects of social interactions in a community is the interplay of power and authority. In my title, I deliberately use the term "arrangements" to describe what I perceive to be the standard relations of power in this community. The Webster's dictionary defines "arrangement" as being "the state or act of being arranged . . . an informal, proper and suitable relationship or adjustment on personal, social or political matters" (1988: 25). The term arrangement is normally used to describe understandings which are informally fixed, but have the possibility of change or flexibility. Arrangements are context dependent - they are not laws or steadfast regulations. They can shift or be made more complex depending on the situation. Arrangements are often highly respected understandings between individuals or groups of people and, as such, carry a significant amount of weight in relations between people.

Music supports, symbolizes and, at times, aims to challenge power arrangements. Performances, their contexts, and surroundings, give much insight into the power arrangements of a group of people (Shapiro 1991: 8). A close examination of the dynamics in a group, which takes into account the role of music-making, can show, how hierarchies of prestige and authority are produced or subverted (George 1993: 2). Arrangements of power occur on many different levels and in many different aspects of a musical community. As Shapiro wrote, "The entire social complex surrounding the music must be considered: male and female, private and public music, elite and popular musics, performers and audience, composers and consumers, and the business and middleman involved in purveying the music" (1991: 2).

In the piping community that participates in the solo contests at the Glengarry Highland Games, power and authority are inextricably intertwined in musical activity. The musical life of the players is organized around a complex interplay of power. Arrangements of power in bagpipe playing and competition can be observed on many levels: the constructed division of prestige in the solo genres, the construction of the traditions themselves, the notions of what Britain, Scotland and England represent within the political and social networks of bagpipe institutions and, finally, gender relations. In this chapter, I will examine these issues of power, not with the idea of supporting grand narratives of

power and music (Giroux 1992), but rather to gain insight into the multiple, complex and shifting rules of power in this piping community.

### Dynamics of Prestige and Power in the Aesthetics of *Ceol*

#### *Beag and Ceol Mor*

In the piping community of Glengarry County (as in many other piping communities around the world), there exists a 'great divide' between the two solo repertoires of the Great Highland bagpipe. *Piobaireachd* or *ceol mor* (the terms can be used interchangeably) is referred to by the players as the "heavier" classical music of the bagpipe. It is considered more prestigious by the players and presumably involves more mastery and intellect to perform. As Ed Neigh, one of Canada's foremost pipers said, "I think *piobaireachd* is everything. I don't think that I would have played bagpipes past my middle twenties had I not become a *piobaireachd* player. *Piobaireachd* is an intellectual as well as musical challenge" (Berthoff 1992: 23). *Ceol beag*, on the other hand, is considered the "light music" of the solo bagpipe. For the players, it is considered accessible, "toe-tapping" music which anyone with a certain amount of preparation can perform adequately. The *ceol beag* repertoire contains a large variety of musical compositions and arrangements, which usually consists of dance

songs or tune airs such as marches, reels, jigs and *strathspeys*.

How has this great divide come into existence? What has motivated this opposition? Why does an aura of power and prestige surround *piobaireachd*, whereas *ceol beag*, which is actually more popular, is considered lesser music? Many pipers feel *piobaireachd* is significant since it is the most highly organized and extended form of Scottish music, comparable to other art forms of Western European music (personal interviews with Brian Williamson, 20 July, 1992 and John-Hugh MacDonald, 3 June, 1992). As Seumus MacNeill (one of the world's famous pipers) wrote in his book *Piobaireachd*: "It is very highly developed . . . with a rigidity of form and structure which seems to increase in complexity the more it is studied" (MacNeill 1968: 17). In other words, what is suggested here is that *piobaireachd* music can only be well understood and performed through many years of study. As a result, pipers highly respect the composers who over the past 400 years have composed these pieces. They are considered to be very gifted and highly trained. Their music is believed to be the result of a long tradition of pipers and schools. At a masterclass for pipers, Colin MacLellan (a Maxville piper who holds several world titles) said: "What is interesting is that 200 years before Bach was even heard of, there was a large body of these compositions . . . The beauty and perfection of the ground (the theme on which all the variations of a *Piobairachd*

are built) of *piobaireachd* is incredible . . . comparable to any melody of classical music" (masterclass, 22 July, 1992).

Historically, *ceol beag* was considered by the master pipers to be inferior music, not worthy of their respect, whereas *piobaireachd* was considered the 'real' music of the pipes and was the main focus of attention. The divide between *ceol mor* and *ceol beag*, then, has been in existence for a long time. The piping schools of the Highlands, which were run by prestigious pipers who inherited their positions within family clans, promoted these concepts from about 1500 to the late 1700s. In fact, the terms associated with the two musical repertoires literally reflect these concepts: the words *ceol mor* mean in Gaelic "big music," and *ceol beag* means "small music."

Today, this attitude of derision towards the lighter music has generally been replaced by enthusiasm by a great number of pipers. Whereas *piobaireachd* has an aura of prestige, *ceol beag* has its own form of power. The participation of pipers in *ceol beag* competitions far outnumbers that of the *piobaireachd* classes. *Ceol beag* is more popular with the performers and the audience alike, and has also been more accessible through compact discs and tapes. One could conclude that the weight of popular support is definitely behind *ceol beag*, which gives the pipers of this repertoire more power in the area of financing, wider exposure and greater performance opportunities.

The arrangement of power between the two repertoires provides a classical example of the "Great Divide," which is often observed between so-called "high art musics" and the "musics of popular culture" (Huyssen 1986: viii). *Piobaireachd* carries the label of the prestigious, classical high art genre and, in terms of artistic mastery, achievement and academic research. On the other hand, *ceol beag* retains more popular authority with wider support and greater commercial value. It has often been suggested that such a divide should be broken down because it is seen not only as unnecessary but also unhealthy for both genres. This view is reflected by authors of postmodern ideas such as Lawrence Levine (1988), and Henry Giroux (1992). They believe that it is better to deconstruct categories that artificially impose hierarchies that divide and subvert certain elements of culture and society. The pipers, as well, felt that by artificially dividing *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag*, both genres suffer. *Ceol beag* is not treated with sufficient respect and *piobaireachd* is so elevated that many pipers feel that it is not accessible to the average piper. In fact, several interviewed pipers suggested that *piobaireachd* was not really technically more difficult or musically more complicated than *ceol beag*: in their view, they were only "different." They felt that much of the aura built up around the two repertoires had been constructed over time by musicians, and that it was important for younger pipers entering competitions to recognize this

situation and not feel threatened by the aura of prestige in *piobaireachd*.

### Authority in the Constructed Tradition of the Great Highland Bagpipe

Tradition has enormous authority in the musical activities of the Great Highland bagpipe. Pipers pay tremendous respect, almost reverence to tradition. One of the world's leading pipers, Colin MacLellan of Maxville, said that "the main value of winning the Silver Chanter (a top competition prize) [is] the historical connections [it creates] - one plays in the same room as where the McCrimmons used to compose the *piobaireachd*" (master class, 22 July 1992). MacLellan's sentiments are echoed at almost any gathering of pipers in Glengarry or elsewhere in Canada. Generally there is always a lot of bantering about the stories and the legends, about specific names, places and events of piping history. The Great Highland bagpipe tradition is built around a world full of heroes and heroic places.

Every performance, every musical event is guided by what is viewed as "tradition" by the pipers. This tradition, like all other traditions, is a constructed view of the past (Hobsbawm 1983). The powerful meaning behind the pipers' conceptions of traditions is best described in a letter

written by Walter Stewart in 1979, former President of the  
Glengarry Pipe Band Association:

The Scottish Highland tradition is a very strong one in Canada, one of which descendants of the Scottish clans are very proud. Every descendant clings to and supports the grand traditions which are embodied in the music and dance of the Highlands. This is particularly true in Glengarry County and neighbouring Stormont where these traditions have been a way of life for over 200 years. This pride in culture is reflected each year in the Glengarry Highland Games, the largest annual Highland gathering of pipers, drummers and dancers in the world (Stewart, personal letter, 1979).

In other words, tradition has enormous authority and impact on the activities of the solo piping community at the Glengarry Highland Games.

The importance of tradition in the lives of pipers is quite complex and goes back to the 18th century. In this chapter, I am not going to describe how tradition is constructed in the Glengarry Highland Games competitions since I will do that in greater detail in the second chapter. I would like to discuss the arrangements of power in traditional Scotland because they have strong implications for both past and present piping activities.

Generally, the Scottish people feel they have been faced with many difficulties since the early 1700s. They have dealt with many problems through civil unrest in Scotland, immigration to Canada and the hardships of settling a new land. It is in response to these adversities that a particularly strong protectionist attitude towards their symbolic, mythical and historical past has been cultivated for

over two centuries.

In the performance of solo bagpipe music, many things are dictated by tradition. Pipers look to the authority of tradition for just about everything: the choice of style in performance, the choice of music, fingerings, dress, teaching techniques and so on. For instance, when I asked about style decisions in performance, many pipers referred to the old recordings of Willie Ross (a famous piper of Scotland from the beginning of the century) as the example of how the music should be played. When pressed to state why they felt these recordings were significant, most pipers said that they were older and therefore closer to the early master pipers. The emphasis seemed to be on the age of the recordings rather than on appreciation of performance quality. In fact, many pipers questioned the tempos and rhythmic interpretation in some of the pieces of the old recordings.

Another example of the power of tradition involves the piping lineage of pipers' background. A piper is said to have a good pedigree if he can make a direct link with one of the old masters (that is one of the MacCrimmons) of piping, by having been taught by a teacher who was taught by a famous old master. Pipers with a good pedigree gain much respect even when that respect outweighs their playing ability, because they are considered carriers of tradition. Tradition unquestionably dictates most of the conceptions and perceptions that pipers have about piping. Even technical

details such as the choice of fingering is governed by tradition. Certain fingerings must indeed be adhered to, not necessarily because they are better than others, but because they are "traditional."

It is hard for the pipers to make changes. Innovation is usually not seen as desirable since tradition is conceived as the ultimate authority in the solo repertoires of the Great Highland bagpipe. Changes do occur, but they are incorporated in the repertoire only very slowly. Many "traditionalists" resist change of any sort if it goes against the authority of tradition. This authority is perceived as being at its highest level when it comes from Scotland.

The authority that Scottish pipers have over Canadian pipers is quite profound. Canadian pipers revere the ideas, practices and contests of Scotland even though, in many cases, the standard of piping is higher in Canada as demonstrated by Canadian successes at major international contests. Teachers and performers from Scotland are lauded when they come to this country and are perceived as messengers of the "traditional art of piping". This situation is particularly ironic when one considers that Canada has produced some of the top pipers in the world (see illustration on the following page).

As English-Canada's colonial attachments with Scotland and Britain are becoming part of a distant past, many pipers are questioning the power relations between pipers of Canada and pipers of Scotland. Canadians have been enormously

successful at international competitions, and some of the best pipers in the world are actively performing and teaching in Glengarry. As the Canadian piping scene has become established

## Toronto pipe band beats Scots at their own game

By D'Arcy McGovern Toronto Star

Hoot mon, a clan of Canucks has proved to be more Scottish than the Scots.

Pipe bands from Toronto and Vancouver have placed first and second in the world championship pipe-band competition in Glasgow, Scotland, and they're a wee bit proud of it.

The victory by Toronto's 78th Fraser Highlanders marks the first time in the history of the com-

petition that a band from outside Scotland has won.

The Canadian group's celebration last night at the University of Glasgow was the payoff to a five-year effort during which the band snuck up on the seemingly unbeatable home-town favorites, the Strathclyde Police Band.

But this year, Strathclyde was buried in third place under an avalanche of Canadians — the Fraser Highlanders in first and British

Columbia's Simon Fraser University Band in second.

"It was a one-two punch for Canada," said pipe major Bill Livingston in a telephone interview from Glasgow. "This is history."

Their hosts, said Livingston, were magnanimous in defeat.

"As far as I can tell the Scots are very happy for us, and they've been very supportive. It's a major step forward for pipe bands now that the prize has left Scotland; it's

a truly international competition now."

Livingston said the 78th Highlanders have taught the Scots a thing or two.

"We've done everything the Scottish bands have done, but we've added a little musical finesse that they don't have. We've gone off the traditional path and played with a little more enthusiasm."

The 78th Highlanders return home today.

*Illustration 1-1: Article which illustrates the relationship between the Canadians and the Scottish pipers (McGovern 1987: 16)*

with a strong international reputation, there is a greater desire for Canadian pipers to promote their own abilities and authority in the piping world. In an article called "Ontario's Maturation," a piper writes: "are we not ignoring what we have in our own backyard and are we still looking to Scotland to show us how it is done . . . Piping and drumming in Ontario needs to come of age" (anon. 1991: 5).

#### Behind the Scenes: Issues of Power in the Competition of Solo Piping at the Glengarry Highland Games

When the solo *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag* competitions take place on August 1st at the Glengarry Highland Games, certain attitudes and ideas play a significant role in the activities. Political and social networks are developed for and around the games which involve many canons of power. The games represent a complex cultural event and I would like to outline some demonstrations of power and authority which inform this event. So far, I have examined the important role of tradition and the hierarchical positions of the two main solo repertoires. In this section, I will describe how the main political body, the Piper and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, governs piping activities within Ontario. The actions of this organization have enormous implications for most solo piping events. First, I will introduce the structure of this

organization and examine how such a structure is perceived by the pipers. Secondly, I will explore two areas which are commonly discussed by the pipers, that is, the status of solo piping and the quality of adjudication at the Glengarry Highland Games.

#### The Piper and Pipe Band Association of Ontario

The Piper and Pipe Band Association of Ontario (PPBSO) is the main and most powerful administrative body in Ontario. It runs almost all the piping activities at the Glengarry Highland Games and almost all solo piping events across the province (with the exception of the gold medal *piobaireachd* contest at Cambridge, Ontario). The Games Committee, the central organizing body of the Glengarry Highland Games, is not allowed to have much to do with the piping contests at the games (even though it successfully organizes everything else at the Games), because all piping activities must, by the authority of the PPBSO, be organized under the direction of the PPBSO.

The status of power that PPBSO holds is a strong point of contention for many pipers. Some pipers interpret the situation as being a stifling monopoly with little flexibility and possibility of improvements. According to one piper, who prefers to remain anonymous:

They [the administration of the PPBSO] are afraid to give up their monopoly to the games committees even to the point of doing small improvements like setting up platforms. They are worried they will lose control. That is the way they've always done things so that is the way it will always be done. (personal interview, 11 November, 1992)

Others feel that, even though this type of problem exists, the organization in general does a worthwhile and efficient job. As one piper indicated "The benefits of this all-encompassing structure are numerous. I feel that our competitions are well organized, for the order of play and playing times are adhered to." (Neigh 1977: 11).

Such an organization cannot but present advantages and disadvantages. The organization is quite powerful, and if a member does have a grievance, he or she has no alternative but to turn to the organization for any changes to take place. Moreover, since there are no competitions or activities organized by outside associations, the PPBSO ends up working with many of the same people year after year. As a result, administrative influence can be quite limiting with a very tight political control. According to many pipers, fresh ideas and changes do not come quickly within the PPBSO and much is governed by tradition. For example, since the traditions of the Glengarry Highland Games were established in 1948, very little has changed in the annual presentation of this event. The scheduling of contests, the venues, and the nature of the various activities are essentially unchanged from the beginning.

For some pipers, the advantages provided by the Pipe and Pipe Band Society of Ontario outnumber its shortcomings. In their view, the PPBSO operates very efficiently. As the piping activities in Ontario have an excellent international reputation, the organization is seen as quite successful since it occupies a powerful position in these activities. Several pipers argue that the PPBSO really is, in many ways, less monolithic than it appears. It is run in a democratic fashion with many local chapters and general meetings. It publishes a widely-read newsletter, The Piper and Drummer. The people who do most of the organizational work are entirely volunteers and most pipers are grateful for the time that these volunteers give to organizing their activities. As one piper wrote in The Piper and Drummer:

It's easy to succumb to arguing about relatively petty issues. We have nurtured a competitive atmosphere where members have become hypersensitive to rules and equality. We doubt very much that Grace MacKay Edgar and the other founders of the PPBSO in 1946 envisioned the competition machine of 1991. The original purpose of the Society was to foster the Highland Art through competition and performance. It was not invented to make the lives of well-meaning volunteers a misery. (Anon. 1991: 5)

### The Status of Solo Piping

One area where the networks of power within the PPBSO has a profound effect on the pipers involves the status of solo

piping. Within the piping organization, the players are concerned with this political issue. The problem is that they do not have much power or status compared to the participants of band contests. This is due, in part, to the fact that the solo piping events do not attract big crowds and do not produce large revenues. Solo piping is considered by many authorities in the PPBSO to be a necessary but boring aspect of the piping scene. As a result, it is often relegated to the worse times in the day. It takes place in poor conditions and has a general lack of support. The solo events take place outdoors in areas sectioned off by the PPBSO, in conditions seen by many players as inadequate, to the point of undermining the quality of performance. As Jim McGillvray (a prominent Ontario piper) stated "Events and players are crammed so close together that tuning is often impossible. Concentration is improbable as spectators wander between the judge and the competitor." (McGuillvray 1991:5).

The prize money for professional contests is embarrassingly low, and therefore provides little incentive and prestige for the player.

Many pipers interpret the actions or, perhaps more specifically, the lack of action within the PPBSO, as being responsible for these problems. According to Ed Neigh, "The PPBSO is principally interested in running a pipe band competition. Soloists are not a big money drawing card that brings the audience in" (Neigh 1992:22). Seamus McNeill of

Scotland further explains:

when I judged at the Maxville games, I was judging the professional *piobaireachd* and at one o'clock everything stopped for this gigantic monster coming in: the massed bands. Then somewhere about seven o'clock in the evening I found myself finishing the professional *piobaireachd* competition in the car parks, sitting on the steps of somebody's trailer while the piper squatted up and down between the other cars. (Neigh 1977: 21)

In Scotland, the conditions for solo piping are different. Soloists have much more power and, as a community of players, they have contests designed specifically for solo competitions. There are several prestigious contests (such as The Northern Meeting and The Argyllshire Gathering) where solo pipers are treated with enormous respect and the winners as heroes. The power and prestige allocated to solo piping means that solo piping events receive considerable financial support through private individuals and corporate sponsorship. This in turn gives pipers a voice of authority to institute and perform in contests which are highly meaningful for the solo piper.

#### Adjudication

The second area where networks of power within the PPBSO can be seen to have a profound effect on the pipers is the manner in which the PPBSO established adjudication for solo contests. In the past, the PPBSO allowed pipers to become

judges if they had reached a certain level of playing ability and wished to devote time to adjudicating events. The attributions of such an authority were quite flexible since, most of the time, there was an informal understanding of what constituted a good level of playing and, by examining the adjudicator candidate's background, the PPBSO was able to determine if the player was suitable to act as a judge. However, problems did arise when that understanding was not shared by many people in the PPBSO or when the adjudicator consistently judged unfairly good players. Adjudicators carry enormous power and responsibility, for adjudication is at the core of the competitive nature of solo piping in Ontario. Their decisions have enormous power in the quality and nature of the performance of *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag*. As can be seen by Figures 1-1 and 1-2, the adjudication sheets are very specific.

In an attempt to ensure that the adjudicators become fair and well-qualified, the PPBSO recently set up seminars and examinations to qualify potential judges. Generally, the Ontario piping community seems to resist changes and, like any newly instituted regulation, the exams and seminars have become a topic of much discussion and controversy. Some pipers welcome the exams: "Future solo judges will have to prove in writing, as well as on the boards [in piping contests], that they are authorities on piping, and this is fair" (anon. 1992:5). Others argue that it is problematic if highly

# The Pipers' & Pipe Band Society of Ontario

## Solo Piping SCORE SHEET

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contest: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Competitor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Tune(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Fig. 1-1 Adjudicator's Score Sheet for Ceol Beag Contests

# The Pipers' & Pipe Band Society of Ontario

## Piobaireachd SCORE SHEET

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contest: \_\_\_\_\_

Competitor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Tune: \_\_\_\_\_

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Fig. 1-2 Adjudicator's Score Sheet for Piobaireachd Contests

qualified players are forced to sit the exams: "Winners of a silver star or silver chanter [prestigious awards] should be on our adjudication panels for the good of the competition scene, regardless of whether or not they have passed an exam" (anon. 1992: 5). It is clear that the qualifying exams for judges have been quite controversial within the piping community. The very nature of authority in judging competitions, the fact that it must be suitable and informal, that it can shift, that it is context dependent, means that different people with different interests within a community will view demonstrations of power differently.

The picture of solo piping is far from bleak. Standards are very high and there is a vibrant piping community. However, many pipers are afraid that, if conditions do not improve, quality will begin to drop as the solo piping experience in Ontario becomes less and less meaningful for players:

Improved conditions and more money at a few games would be better than the raucous assembly line we have now. The players would get excited again. Spectators to play for! Real prize money! The standard would rise and young amateurs would once again have a dignified target for which to shoot. (McGuillvray 1991: 5)

#### Gender Issues in Solo Contests

In his article "Music-Making, Ritual and Gender in a

Southeast Asian Hill Society", George states that questions of gender:

have to do with the role music-making plays in producing or subverting gender-based hierarchies of prestige and authority: Does music support or threaten predominant ideas about gender? Who performs, who listens, who is silenced . . . are important factors in this exercise of social and symbolic power. (1993: 1)

These questions are most pertinent in the piping community of the solo contests at the Glengarry Highland games, and they are crucial issues to address in a paper dealing with issues of power.

The examination of how gender is represented at the solo contests on the day of the games is, in fact, most revealing. In 1992, when I attended the games, the participants were predominantly men. In the piobaireachd contests that I observed, there were no woman participants, whereas in the *ceol beag* contests there were some women but mostly younger girls and at the lower levels of the contests (ie. Grades 4-2). There were a few individual females who participated in the higher echelons of the *ceol beag* contest, and these specific women achieved a high standard, although they did not win any contests. In this particular year, all the adjudicators were male (and this seems to be the case in other years as well). It should be noted that there are quite a number of women involved in the band contests (there are even a few all-women bands), but since this is not the focus of this essay, I will concentrate specifically on gender

representation in the solo contests.

After my initial observations, I began to explore the dynamics of gender representation with some of the prominent pipers in the Glengarry Highland Games. These pipers, of course, were primarily men, but they did include one woman, Connie Blaney, who had an outstanding reputation as a "lady piper" (a term used by the pipers) in her younger years. It would seem that my observations on 1 August 1992 were a fairly accurate representation of the gender situation in solo piping at the present time. Most pipers confirmed that the solo contests involve predominantly male pipers who are thirty years old or above, although there were a few good female pipers who were part of the competition scene (see illustration 1-2). My informants also pointed out to me that amongst the younger pipers, particularly those who are under twenty, there is a much larger representation of girls. Some pipers said there are now almost as many girls as boys who compete each year - an opinion, however, that did not seem to be shared by everybody.

The distribution of power definitely involves more men than women. Men tend to be more numerous and occupy the higher positions of authority such as adjudication, administration, and they participate in the advanced solo contests. What is important here is not to proclaim judgement values on the situation, but to try to understand the main factors that have led to this kind of gender representation and power relations.

After many hours of discussion with pipers from different generations, I have come to the conclusion that the gendered relations of power in solo piping have been deeply influenced by the context in which pipers have been most active, that is, the context of military piping. This is not to say that the male-oriented nature of solo piping is derived entirely from this one context for, I am sure, many other factors could be invoked to explain this situation. However, in my opinion, the military milieu provides one strong explanation for the gendered arrangements of power in solo piping.

The military and the Great Highland bagpipe have been historically connected for a long time. The Scots used the pipes to inspire and encourage men in battle and, until 1854, when pipe bands were first recognized by the military, the pipes were always played by a solo male piper. Throughout this century, the military has therefore been a strong source of patronage for piping. Pipers were also used by Canadians in both world wars and, immediately after World War II, several dozen servicemen were paid by the Canadian army to study with famous pipers at the Edinburgh Castle.

## Ottawa bagpiper breaks tradition to qualify for prestigious recital

By Anne Tolson  
 Caren staff writer

Scottish heads will turn when Amy Garson plays her bagpipes in Blair Atholl castle this fall.

The Ottawa lawyer is the first woman to qualify for the world's most prestigious bagpipe recital — an all-male preserve which has been held annually for more than 100 years. What's more, Garson isn't a Scot.

"Piping is largely a man's field by tradition. So I am breaking new ground in that sense," says the 29-year-old. "But you don't have to be Scottish to play any more."

Garson is one of 12 selected to attend the exclusive two-day competition this October. Competitors include pipers from Australia, France, South Africa and the U.S.

The selection committee invited Garson after she won an important competition in Maryland last May. It was the third time she won first place in the event, which included \$650 in prize money.

Now Garson seizes every opportunity to practise for what has been called the Olympics of bagpiping.

"There'll be a lot of stress working up to the contest," she said during a break at Maxville's agricultural fair Sunday, where she was accompanying highland dancers. Practise sessions last up to two hours each day, and often take place in an office at the University of Ottawa where her husband is a student.

Garson's interest in the pipes grew over several years of highland dance competition as a youngster. Following her brother's example, she learned



Amy Garson  
 First woman qualifier

how to play at the Rockcliffe Air Base.

Fifteen years ago, she met her current coach, James McIntosh, a Scotsman who has himself won the Blair Atholl event.

"I never intended to play bagpipes," says Garson, who has a law degree from Queens University and now investigates companies for tax evasion at Revenue Canada. "But it's kind of a nice contrast to work."

*Illustration 1-2: On the unusual position of a highly successful Canadian woman in the solo contests of piping (Tolson 1989: Annex E).*

Today the military still acts as the main patron to pipers. One can train for the trade of musician in the army and there are no less than ten positions for Pipe Majors. These positions are exciting for pipers since they consist of full-time employment with the prestige and responsibility of training and leading a group of proficient pipers. Numerous pipers in Canada also play part-time with the militia. Military pipe bands have become a colourful symbol at many military tattoos and other public events across the country. So what does all this have to do with gendered arrangements of power in solo piping?

The military openly supports a male-dominated hierarchy and the social, political and cultural milieu of the military is definitely male-oriented. Since many pipers have learned to pipe through the military and consequently taught other pipers to play, the military has had a huge impact on attitudes in piping. Since the Great Highland bagpipe has for a long time been considered an instrument of war and since women have generally not been expected to partake in war or in war-like events, few women were led to take up piping. It is only as the military influences of World War II fade, that a new generation of young pipers (consisting of both girls and boys) have not been as affected by military attitudes.

These military attitudes, however, are still present and are surprisingly strong, despite the huge numbers of civilian pipers participating in events such as the Glengarry Highland

Games. Female players are certainly welcome to participate in the contests, but whether or not a woman chooses to play the Great Highland bagpipe has a great deal to do with general expectations. Many players are interested in piping because of the sociable environment piping provides. Since this milieu and, consequently, its social environment is male dominated, women often do not feel that they "fit in" socially in the piping activities. As a result, women do not enjoy the same social benefits that men derive from piping.

Traditionally, Highland dancing has been the enclave of women interested in the Scottish arts. There is much support for young girls to pursue dance and they often achieve high levels of performance in this field. This situation, in fact, helps to divert female attention from the activity of piping. Other factors which affect female participation in piping mirror gender issues found in many other activities: issues of financial support, gender expectations and politicization. Choice in piping activities and its relationship to gender and power is a complex issue and involves many social, historical and political factors, some of which I have outlined here.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to gain insight into the multiple, complex and shifting rules of power in the piping

community involved in the solo contests of the Glengarry Highland Games. To do this, I examined the arrangements of power in the various networks that play a significant in the solo competitions.

The phrase "arrangements of power" was used deliberately to articulate the way power is usually constructed in a community. Power relations in this context can be seen as an unofficial agreement. It is an understanding which is highly respected and informally enforced by the members of a community. However, since "arrangements" are by definition context dependent, they are regularly subject to change and under the flexibility of human construction.

The views, ideas and activities of a musical community provide a case par excellence to examine notions of power, since music can simultaneously support, and symbolize, but also challenge hierarchies of prestige and authority. As George wrote, "because they [symbolic power and hierarchy] are always immersed in human situations, music also bears the sound and signature of symbolic power and social hierarchy" (George 1993:1).

## Chapter 2

Constructed Tradition in the Aesthetics of Solo Bagpipe  
Music

Music is inextricably linked with the traditions and history of a people. It can act as a symbol, as a guardian of legend, and as a representative of both past and present activities, values and ideas. Music, however, can act not only as a symbol of tradition and culture for a community, but also as a process through which individuals or groups continuously assert their own identity. Music, then, not only reflects culture but also influences the process of culture. As Coplan states in his article "Ethnomusicology and the Meaning of Tradition": "Music itself, therefore, is crucial to the reapplication of memory and the creation and re-creation of the emotional qualities of experience in the maintenance of a living tradition" (1991: 45)

The solo repertoires of the Great Highland bagpipe and the aesthetic values they embody are deeply entrenched within tradition and history. The question is how has the notion of tradition within the Glengarry Games been defined, by whom and in whose and for which interests? Many authors have attempted to define tradition as a constructed element of a given society. Shils defines tradition as "anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present . . .

The decisive criterion is that, having been created through human actions, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next. . . " (1981:12). Rabinow states that "ultimately, it is not necessary that a tradition be a genuine historical relic, only that it appear to be so . . ." (1975: 1). Coplan writes that tradition is "the reification of cultural patterns as invariant group identifiers for political purposes" (1991: 37) and, finally, Hobsbawm proposes the notion of invented traditions which he defines as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (1983:1).

Hobsbawm also goes on to argue a more controversial point, namely, that there is a difference between a constructed reified tradition and a spontaneous older custom which is defined according to the degree of conscious planning that is part of the construction of a particular tradition.

I have taken the time to quote various authors in order to give the reader an overview of current trends in the conceptualization of tradition. In what follows, I offer a critical overview at these various points of view and propose a framework from which to examine how tradition has been defined in the context of the solo bagpipe music of the Great Highland bagpipe.

In this chapter, I want to argue that tradition is a construct of the mind and that it involves patterns and processes which are continually being invented and developed. The people who construct tradition draw on chosen, significant and meaningful details from their history to create links with the past. To do so, a community relies on repetition and ritualization to establish patterns which define the tradition. As a result, symbolization becomes vital as a means to establish "signposts" in an invented tradition. Generally, traditions will be more rapidly developed and intensely emphasized in communities which are undergoing significant changes or difficulties within their milieu. For instance, traditions are often invented in response to a new situation in the lives of a people who have migrated or gone through changing social circumstances or rapid technological changes. Traditions, in these cases, are invoked to give the assurance of an unchanging, solid element in an otherwise unstable or challenging environment. For this reason, the symbolic and ritualistic nature of these practices referred to as "traditional" are very important since they seemingly create an environment of continuity.

In some writings, invented or constructed traditions are discussed in opposition to so-called "custom" or "older tradition". I do not believe that the notion of tradition can be divided into the two categories of older custom and newly invented tradition. Those who write about older tradition

(Trevor-Roper 1983; Coplan 1991; Hobsbawm 1983; Ranger 1983) sometimes infer that such a tradition is part of the unconscious or semi-conscious and represent a practice that is more established and therefore more credible. In opposition, new or invented tradition can be discussed in terms of strategic moves based on ulterior motives which conveniently use the past to promote present political issues in a community.

The binary opposition that can develop from discussing old versus invented traditions, is not appropriate. I want to argue that all traditions are invented. Some traditions may be so old that we can't pinpoint when they began to be constructed. All traditions were initiated at some point by individuals within a community for multiple reasons and meanings. The word "invented" is not synonymous with "false" or "fabricated" or "new". All traditions are in a continuous process of construction - some develop more slowly than others, whereas still others can shift so quickly that a newer tradition develops rapidly out of the older tradition. I also do not feel that links are made with the past solely to lend credibility to the present tradition. Instead, I believe that significant, vibrant meanings are derived from these links with the past and that these "ancient materials" (Hobsbawm 1983: 1) are chosen specifically for the weight of meaning they infer for the people of a given community.

In his book Imagined Communities (1983), Anderson talks

of tradition in terms of hybridization: elements that are mixed and flow in and out of each other. Rabinow says that tradition is a "moving image of the past" (1975: 1). It is an ongoing process whereby people construct meaningful images of their past and present, linking them through symbols and patterns of ritualization. This is the image of tradition that I want to portray in this chapter.

The solo bagpipe contests at the Glengarry Highland Games are drawn from a larger historical context. The two solo bagpipe repertoires come from a series of traditions that date back as far as 500 years. The piping heard in Glengarry has been originally an "imported" tradition (a tradition that was originally transplanted from elsewhere) and, like many imported cultures, the people have clung tenaciously to certain old ideas and traditions. Many pipers stated that when they teach, they are not really teaching but "passing on" the ideas. "The establishment of a tradition depends on the act of transmission far more than the actual passage of time" (Shils 1981:15). The concept of linking the past with the present by passing on old ideas is vitally important to these people. However, this does not imply that the repertoires and the practices which the pipers chose to pass on are static, neither does it signify that the Canadian traditions form an unbroken chain with the ancient past. Changes do happen and are made part of the repertoire. Nevertheless, enormous respect is paid to tradition and the pipers' perception of

that tradition greatly influences their performance and teaching practice. This is important to take into account in order to understand the aesthetics of these solo repertoires and to comprehend the process and influence of history and tradition in the piping community of Glengarry County.

#### The Use of Ancient Materials: the Foundation of a Constructed Tradition

Traditions and history play very important roles in the aesthetic views of the piper. Much of the pleasure and values derived from piping gatherings comes from a feeling of community, of "deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983: 7) which is drawn from a continual reassertion of tradition and culture through the music. But the question is: what is the background to all this vibrant activity? If this is an invented tradition, then what are the "ancient materials" upon which this symbolization and ritualization is drawn (Hobsbawm 1983: 6)? To understand these key elements of the Glengarry piping scene (which is a typical example of Canadian piping community), one must go back to Scotland prior to the 1700s.

Before the 1700s, the Highlands of Scotland were made up of a series of clans, each with their own form of dress, governmental hierarchy and social habits. Most of the clans had their own pipers who were placed high in the clan

hierarchy. The main piping positions were hereditary and so a certain family within each clan had most of the influence on piping activities. The honoured families often set up colleges or schools to teach bagpipe playing. The most famous of these were the MacCrimmons who were hereditary pipers to the MacLeods of Dunvegan, and they maintained a college which flourished for over 200 years. The teachings and methods of these pipers have been passed down to the present day, and, despite the uprisings in the first half of the 18th century (which were partially responsible for destroying the concurrent way of life), oral and written traditions have transmitted this knowledge through the centuries.

As late as the twentieth century, certain pipers form a direct link with the famous pipers of these schools. In fact, some of the pipers I talked to were able to make a direct link with these schools since they had been taught by teachers who were themselves taught by a piper of the MacCrimmon line. As explained earlier, a piper is said to have a good "pedigree" if he can make these historical connections (see Table 2-1).

The Scottish have a long history of trying to preserve and defend their identity against English strength. Two important clashes which occurred between these two groups were the Jacobite Rising of 1715 and a second rising in 1745. Patriotic sentiment and anger against the English was strong in the Highlands to such an extent that a group of people called the Jacobites organized the first campaign to bring

## The MacCrimmon Legacy: Our Musical Heritage

By J.H. MacDonald

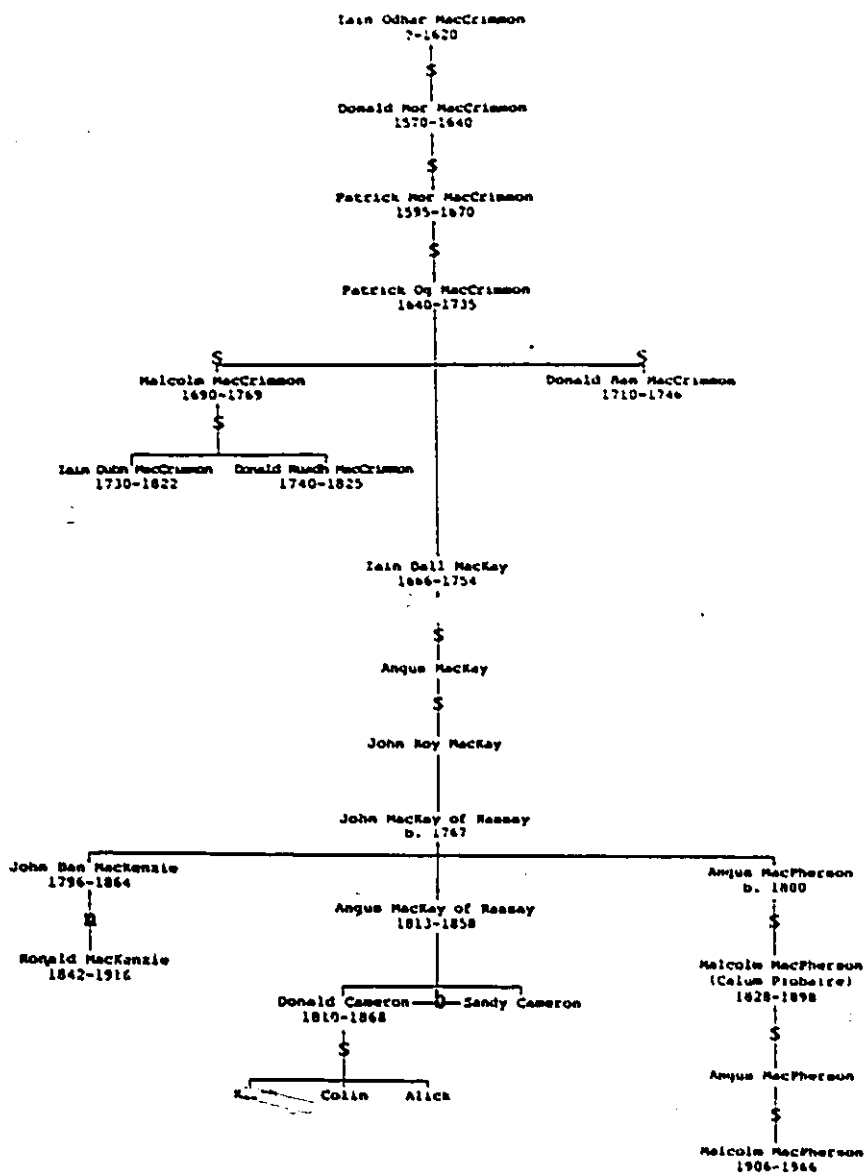


Table 2-1 "The MacCrimmon Legacy" (Macdonald 1989:5-17):

back the House of Stuart (an exiled monarchy that the Scottish people felt would be sympathetic to their claims). The rebellion was crushed and an extremely restrictive Disarming Act was imposed by the English. However the spirit of the Scottish people was not destroyed, and they responded by clinging tenaciously to the traditions and symbols of their identity. A second Jacobite Rising was organised in 1745, which was to change the course of Scottish history and with it the function and symbolic meanings of Scottish piping. Most Scottish people wanted to bring back Prince Charles Edward Stuart (fondly called "Bonnie Prince Charlie" by his people). He was considered to be the rightful King of Scotland. He arrived in Scotland in 1745 in secret, hidden away in a French warship. He raised an army and established a court in Holyrood, Edinburgh. There were several decisive victories for the Stuarts, but ultimately they could not beat the English in battle and were defeated at Culloden Moor, in April 1746.

In the wake of this defeat at the hands of the Duke of Cumberland, the Hanoverian/English Court sought revenge and many atrocities were committed against the Highland people. When the Disarming Act was proscribed, the series of prohibitions were particularly crushing. All aspects of Highland culture were considered acts of rebellion and certain elements were completely outlawed:

And this is further enacted that from and after the 1st of August 1747, no man or boy within Scotland

other than such as shall be employed as officers and soldiers in the king's force, shall on any pretence whatsoever, wear or put on the clothes commonly called Highland clothes, that is to say, the plaid, philebeg or little kilt, trowse, shoulder belt; and that no tartan or parti-coloured plaids or stuff shall be used . . . every such person offending, being convicted thereof . . . shall suffer imprisonment, without bail, during six months or longer; and being convicted of a second offence shall be liable to be transported to any of His Majesty's plantations beyond the sea, for seven years. (Prebble 1961: 311)

The Act did not specifically ban piping but, in the British court of law, a judgement was passed on a piper called James Reid. The jury declared that his pipes were an instrument of war and he was therefore guilty of treason:

No regiment ever marched without musical instruments, such as drums, trumpets and the like; and that a Highland Regiment never marched without a piper, and therefore his bagpipe, in the eyes of the law, is an instrument of war. (Prebble 1961: 274)

After Reid's hanging in 1746, few pipers dared to play the pipes. Since all the cultural activities and the social networks that supported piping were threatened, piping in the Highlands received a severe blow during this period. Piping was able to survive through two channels, namely, through a few persevering individuals who went into hiding and, ironically, through pipers who played for Highland Regiments loyal to the crown (thus the reason the pipers have such a strong military tradition in the British army).

This is part of the old history upon which the invented tradition is built. It was because of these defeats and the ensuring humiliation of the Scottish that certain attitudes

have developed which reach as far as Canadian communities like Glengarry. In his book The Scots (1988), Ian Finlayson suggests that there exists a national inferiority complex amongst the Scots. Since the Scottish were defeated and humiliated by the English, there is a sense of wanting retribution and of proving their worth, as Scots, to other people. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, music can act not only as a symbol of tradition and culture but also as a process through which individuals or groups continuously assert their own identity. One of the ways by which the Highlanders have been able to do this has been through the ceremony and symbolization of the tartans, the traditional arts such as piping and through military (and pseudo-military) ritual. Competitions and games such as the Glengarry Highland Games have provided a forum for this process. Competition, in particular, has been considered a valued element in Scottish culture for a long time. It is considered important for its ability to establish a hierarchy or reward system in a society which strongly values discipline, hard work, skill and perseverance. Competition is seen as a way of establishing the all important "character" within every individual. It is viewed as a concrete and specific way to measure the worth and the value of a person. This mentality, it could be argued, has developed in response to both internal and external pressures on the Scottish people.

Traditionally, Scottish society has been based on a strong hierarchy of age, family, gender and clan. There are typical Scottish sayings such as "I ken [know] your father" or "Don't be too big for your boots" which reflect the impetus of this society to designate people's social station and position. On an external level, there have been many pressures from the English (through the highland clearances and the political speeches and clashes) and through the external pressures that immigration creates.

External pressures from the English and then later immigration have led to the coveting of these values as a means of coping with the difficulties of their environment. This response has been labelled as the "siege" or "survival mentality" by author Ian Finlayson and by several pipers I interviewed. Competition has therefore been perceived as a means for people to establish value and self-worth and identity in an acceptable manner (Finlayson 1988 and personal interviews with J.H.MacDonald 10 January 1993; B.Williamson 20 July 1992). It provides a unique forum where men can compete on a relatively equal basis regardless of their situation socially.

The first bagpipe competition, not long after the Disarming Act, was held in Falkirk in 1781. It was sponsored by the Highland Society in London, a group of individuals who felt that the culture of the Highlands would be lost if not cultivated through various activities. Part of their agenda as

an organization was also to repeal the Disarming Act. The competition took place alongside a cattle sale and was repeated annually for three years. The competition involved only *piobaireachd* and, in 1781, it lasted three days, even though there were only thirteen competitors (quite a test of endurance!). The highest prize was the "prize pipe" (today, a common tradition which was established at this competition), which was a beautiful set of bagpipes worthy of only the best performance.

Between 1784 (after the repeal of the Disarming Act) and 1844, the Highland Society held various competitions in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 1844, The Northern Meeting was started and in 1875 The Argyllshire Gathering followed with the same type of competition. Both these competitions still operate today and are considered to be the most prestigious contests for solo bagpipe. In Canada, solo bagpipe competitions became a part of the "games" tradition, that is, they are performed at highland games throughout the country and are part of a series of activities performed at these gatherings. The Glengarry Highland Games is a prime example and, like many others, was started in the post-World War II period. This tradition will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. To reconstitute the unfolding of the Scots history, it is necessary at this point to discuss waves of immigration that followed the Highland Clearances.

### An Imported Musical Tradition

Invented traditions can be a response to new and destabilizing situations. In the face of extraordinary changes such as immigration, people cling tenaciously to old traditions, formalizing and structuring them to provide a secure environment amidst the turmoil of their new lives. Returning to the late 1700s and early 1800s in the Highlands of Scotland, one sees increasingly severe conditions causing many Highlanders to immigrate to southern Scotland, North America and various other places. To quote John Prebble:

Once the chiefs lost their powers [after the Disarming Act of 1745], many of them lost also any parental interest in their clansmen. During the next hundred years they continued the works of Cumberland's battalions. So that they might lease their glens and braes to sheep farmers from the Lowlands and England, they cleared the crofts of men, women and children, using police and soldiers where necessary . . . [this is] how the Highlanders were deserted and then betrayed. (Prebble 1963: 8)

Thus began the first wave of immigration into Canada, which ultimately brought the pipers to communities such as Glengarry.

For the settlers in Glengarry and elsewhere, the pipes have been more than just a musical instrument: they have been a symbol that linked them with the "old country" and have been used as a representative of both past and present activities, values and ideas. The pipes have also served as a means of inspiration as well of entertainment. "Wherever the Scot settled, he has brought his pipes along, partly as a solace in

his loneliness and partly as a means of expressing an exuberant pride of race" (MacKinnon 1932: 233). Piping has also used as a political tool. Already in 1759, the pipes were used to inspire the soldiers of Wolfe's Highlanders in Quebec, and they were used regularly by the Hudsons Bay Company accompanying officers on trips into Native territory (see Plate 2-10).

Since the beginning of settlement in Canada, piping has developed through three distinct venues: civilian life (also called at times "homegrown piping"), the military, and the post-World War II influx of pipers from Scotland. Each of these venues has had its own ritualistic and symbolic character and has promoted specific values and modes of behaviour. Piping in communities such as Glengarry is made up of a combination of all three elements, many of the pipers having benefitted from one or more of these lines of influence.

#### Civilian Life: The Construction of "Homegrown Piping"

The civilian or "homegrown" context was the primary milieu for piping from the time of the first settlements to the World War II. For people in smaller, isolated communities such as Glengarry, piping was a part of the homegrown entertainment of social and family events. According to most

interviewed pipers and written documents, the standard was not necessarily high, but it was highly valued as an integral part of social fabric in these communities. In a description



Illustration of a water boat in the possession of the Hudson's Bay Company.

*Plate 2-1: "Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, on a tour of inspection in 1828, accompanied by his piper" (MacKinnon 1932: 233).*

pertaining to Codroy Valley (a Scottish settlement in Newfoundland) but equally applicable to Glengarry, Margaret Bennett states:

Our people could view the coming winter with few or no forebodings . . . Their minds were free to dwell on things imaginative and ideal--- things pertaining to a higher plane than the mere vegetating bread - earning machine can aspire. To this then must be ascribed the idealist, the romance, the chivalry, and the poetry of the Scottish Highlands. In circumstances such as these only could such an institution as the "ceilidh" [social gathering] become possible: and the ceilidh became a school in which not only was information acquired and were ideas formed, but in which character and conduct were moulded. (Bennett 1989: 56)

One must take notice of the importance of educating the community, a characteristic of the ceilidh which was particularly valued especially in relation to the younger generation. Passing on the knowledge to the younger ones was considered crucial to the maintenance and development of the culture and community. Certain members of the community were considered "tradition bearers," and given the responsibility of establishing the "links in the chain which carried those traditions to the next generation" (Bennett 1989: 57). The role of pipers was considered most important in social gatherings. "The bagpipes were always thought of as being a good instrument for 'getting in the mood,' setting the right atmosphere, or in some instances were a good-natured method of shutting some people up!" (Bennett 1989: 75).

Until the 1940s the standard of 'homegrown piping' was apparently not particularly high. The finely-honed competitive

player of today was not really necessary for the goals and functions of piping activity; piping was almost exclusively used as an instrument for social events. The standard of playing was also low because many Scottish communities were small and isolated from one another and from Scotland. There were certain individuals who reached a high degree of proficiency, but the highly-tuned competitive standard of today was not at all part of the pre-World War II piping scene in Canada.

#### Piping in the Military

The military was another milieu for piping in Canada. Actually, pipes and the military have been historically connected for a long time. The Scots used the pipes to inspire and encourage men in battle, and Canadians followed the example. Up until 1854, when pipe bands were first recognized by the military, the pipes had always been played by a solo player. During World War I, the bagpipe was the only instrument taken to the front lines of battle. At that time, Canada equipped and sent overseas between 25 to 30 pipe bands (MacKinnon 1932: 233), and several pipers were awarded the Victoria Cross for their bravery (personal interview with J.H. MacDonald 1 March 1993).

The military has been a strong source of patronage for

piping in Canada. During and after World War II, several dozen servicemen went to Edinburgh Castle to study with the famous piper Willie Ross under the sponsorship of the Canadian army. Today, the military still acts as patron to pipers. One can train for the trade of musician in the army, and there are ten positions for Pipe Majors. Since there are so few positions, many would-be Pipe Majors go into other careers in the army such as the infantry and the military pipe bands. When a Pipe Major job becomes available, the highly trained players are eligible to apply.

Military piping in the late half of the twentieth century has played a largely symbolic function. The code of behaviour and of ritual and symbolic activity, which is part of military pipe bands, has become a well-known characteristic of Canada's image of "law and order". The pipers have become as important during times of war but also of peace for inspiring and symbolizing the ideals of patriotism, strength, character, law and order.

#### The Process of Re-Thinking: Post-World War II Piping

One of the typical characteristics of the construction of tradition is that invented traditions tend to "occur more frequently when rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys social patterns" (Hobsbawm 1983: 4-5). Profound

changes occurred for the Scots, of course, at the time of their immigration to Canada, but also following World War II during which the rapid changes in society (shifting boundaries within communities and nations, the increased use of technology and the disintegration and the re-construction of traditional units within society) have transformed the lives of many people. The insecurity which has resulted from these pressures has pushed people to seek security within their own cultural background.

The piping scene in Canada reflects the fascination the Scots have always had with their own roots. At no other time, except the present, has piping undergone such an explosion of activity. The number of pipers involved at all levels of activity has grown at a tremendous rate. The era following World War II has been a significant influence on the quality of piping in Glengarry and other communities across Canada leading to a new set of traditions with its inherent activities, values and ideas. The standards in Canada have acquired the reputation of being extremely high, and the level of playing is often seen as being the best in the world:

In the summer of 1987, Scotsmen were dismayed to see most of the prizes in the premier competitions for Highland bagpipe playing go to solo players and pipe bands from overseas, especially from Canada. At the Argyllshire gathering, for example, the winner of the gold medal competition for *piobaireachd* was a New Zealander, while the 2nd, 3rd and 4th places went to Canadians. At the Northern Meetings, Inverness, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places in the Gold Clasp *piobaireachd* competition, and the 1st and 2nd places in the March, Stathspey and Reel competition for former winners, all went

to Canada. (Waterhouse 1990: 307)

Modern piping in Canada arose because of a certain set of conditions and due to a number of influential people. In the late 1940s there were several well-established military pipe bands throughout the country. There were also the well-established homegrown piping circles, all of which created fertile ground from which a successful piping scene could develop. During the same period, another wave of immigration arrived and provided fresh knowledge and experience. Amongst these people, a few key individuals such as John Wilson, George Duncan, David Martin, Donald MacMillan and several others created a competitive and vibrant piping community in southern Ontario. John Wilson, in particular, was well known for his enthusiastic (if somewhat caustic!) influence on the art of piping. He judged, competed, taught, and generally worked extremely hard on behalf of the piping community to establish high standards of playing for several generations of players to come.

There were also other factors that led to a gradual increase in standards in the quality of piping performance. As mentioned earlier, the War itself had a positive effect on Canadian piping, for several pipers had been trained by the military in Scotland. Technology, as well, lent assistance to the effort of improving the quality of piping by "shrinking" the world through increased travel opportunities, and offering the possibilities of the tape recorder and recordings.

Practically overnight, members of small communities such as Glengarry found themselves no longer isolated from the rest of the Scottish world. They could learn from recordings and travel to learn from other players. A type of competition circuit was created, so that every summer players were able to be in contact with each other. As a result, organizations such as the Glengarry Highland Games were able to thrive in such an atmosphere.

#### The Glengarry Tradition

The Glengarry Highland Games and the community of Maxville provide, with enormous success, a centre for modern piping in Canada. Throughout this chapter constant reference has been made to Glengarry because it is representative of many piping activities, values and ideas in this country. It is important, at this point, to focus on this community in order to illustrate many of the theoretical issues that involve the concept of tradition.

Glengarry was largely settled by the Scottish and the French. Scottish settlers came to Glengarry as early as 1786. Most of them were victims of the Highland Clearances in Scotland and had been brutally forced off their farms so their rich landlords could raise more sheep. Maxville, where the Glengarry Highland Games take place, was so named because of

the number of people with names bearing the prefix 'Mac' (i.e., Macs-ville). The following quotation describes the cultural milieu in Glengarry at the time of settlement:

MacDonald (or MacDonell or McDonnell) blood runs in the veins of almost everyone in the county. Once there were more MacDonalds in Glengarry than there were in Scotland, more than 3000 in the 1852 census...Vestiges of Gaelic remain in place names and although its rarely spoken in Glengarry any more, even the French knew the old Scots tongue in the old days - 'Do you think the Scots and the French would have spoken English to make themselves understood in the early 1800's?' huffs Harriet MacKinnon, bookseller and informal historian in Glengarry. 'They shared an important feeling' she says, 'a dislike of the English!'" (McRae 1986: 68)

The social life of these settlers was filled with examples of what was discussed earlier as 'civilian piping' (or homegrown piping). Prior to the twentieth century, there were no official bands or piping organizations in Maxville. There were only a few pipers to entertain the community. They learned to play the bagpipes from each other and from parent to child within certain families. Musical knowledge from the "Old Country" was at a premium because it was seen as embodying both past and present activities, values and ideas. Some individual pipers became recognized as "local characters" (and, sometimes, even as heroes), and stories about their activities abound in the community.

Pipers were much in demand for entertainment at weddings, socials and work "bees" (an event at which people gathered

together to accomplish a specific task such as a quilting bee, husking bee or a barn raising). "Gaelic songs had an important part in every gathering along with local musicians, whose pipes or fiddles would cause the toes to sparkle and arms to swing" (Danskin 1975: 8). Travel was difficult in those days, so people rarely ventured far from their home community, thereby making these social events important focal points for the community. For these settlers, the pipes were a symbol of pride and nationality. They provided a practical function of entertainment, but they represented, for the Scottish immigrants, a significant link with the homeland they left behind. Piping was a process through which they could continue to assert their own unique identity.

The mainstay of homegrown or civilian piping belonged primarily to the nineteenth Century. The use of amateur piping purely for entertainment at social events was most prominent during that period. That is not to say that today the pipes are no longer used at weddings or other ceremonies. However, generally the highly organized and competitive machine of modern piping has channelled the use of the instrument into very specific venues:

The Scottish settlers lacked the organization and training of pipers today. Playing by ear would be the mainstay of most pipers for the first decades of the Eighteenth Century, but would eventually change to learning by note. The impromptu piping at Highland gatherings, Orange walks and weddings would also be modified as people's attitudes to piping changed with time. The era of piping merely for personal enjoyment was to disappear in the not-too-distant future, as pipers emerged in organized

fashion in the 20th Century. (Danskin 1975: 128)

The early twentieth century in Glengarry saw the rise of organized methods of transmission. A hall was built where settlers could meet and it also provided a venue for piping. Several teachers moved into the area and began to teach lessons. This meant that lessons could be learned in an organized "one-lesson-per-week" basis, so a teacher could pass on the information to more people. Piping knowledge was no longer restricted to families of musicians or at the hands of a piper from the Old Country. Also, piping was not just learned through oral transmission. Pipers learned to read music. This combination of assets in the community created an important change for they enabled a broader spectrum of people to learn the pipes.

Small groups of pipers, often all from the same family, formed a nucleus of piping in Maxville and the surrounding area. They did not form complete bands, but nevertheless represented a type of predecessor to larger military and community bands. They generally entertained at fairs, socials, weddings and concerts.

The first pipe band was formed in Glengarry with the 59th regiment in 1902. Some of the piping family groups formed the bulk of this band. This was the first introduction Glengarry had to military style of pipe band. When the First World War became imminent, the band spent much time playing to recruit soldiers at the hall in Maxville.

During the period around World War I, piping was not a prominent activity in the area. As in all times of war, interests and energies were directed elsewhere. Several pipers from the region joined pipe bands to serve overseas and one piper received an award for bravery.

Piping competitions in Canada were rare in those days, but one did occur in Alexandria (about 10 kilometres away from Maxville) during the First World War. Apparently the controversy that permeates many modern piping competitions was already in evidence in those days since several disputes between the audience and the adjudicators arose and the resulting adjudications were subject to much debate. This competition was a pioneering event at the time in this community, and today it can be seen as a direct precursor to the Glengarry Highland Games.

The Period between 1914 and 1945 represents a strong era of the modern military pipe band. Military traditions that are followed today were established or strengthened during this period. There had always been a military bagpipe tradition, but much of the symbolism and ceremony we see today was constructed around this time. Hobsbawm's definition which states that invented tradition consists of "overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour" (1983: 1) applies very much to this time period. Pipe bands were used to present images of law and order, to establish discipline and

to develop a type of military comraderie amongst young men. The resulting presentation of tartans, uniforms, military choreography and regimented skill was highly valued by the Scots of Glengarry during this period.

Between the two Wars, three area pipe bands, all associated with the military, were formed: the band of the 59th regiment, the band of the 154th regiment, and with the reorganization of the militia came the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (SD&G) Highlanders. The SD&G Highlanders band gathered the best players and was the pride of the community. In times of peace, the three bands played an active role in military and civilian social events and ceremonies. When the Second World War began, the SD&G Highlanders represented the community overseas in the battles of the south of France.

#### The Glengarry Highland Games

The post-War period gave rise to yet another era of piping in Glengarry. As mentioned earlier, this period was a time when a new wave of immigration flowed into the country bringing fresh ideas from the Old Country. During that same period, returning servicemen wanted to be actively involved in civilian life again. New technology, travel and learning possibilities were developing at a rapid pace and influencing many aspects of life, including the world of the bagpipe. It

was during this period that the Glengarry Highland Games were created. These games are a classic example of how a new tradition was then invented.

In 1947, Peter MacInnes of Maxville was attending another Highland games in southern Ontario and was inspired to start a similar tradition in Glengarry, particularly since Glengarry had such a strong Scottish heritage. He believed that the community could offer a successful venue for piping and other Scottish activities and, in turn, Glengarrians would benefit by having their Scottish heritage perpetuated through the annual presentation of the games.

In 1948, the first games opened. The games were hosted by eight pipe bands which, when massed, provided a spectacular and unusual display at the time. The original organizers were surprised to see 20,000 spectators descend on the small village of Maxville. Unprepared for the huge crowds, the food vendors ran out of provisions and water by mid-morning! Since this first year, the games have always maintained a crowd of 20,000 or more spectators and have attracted participants from all over the world.

Why are these games so successful? What makes them draw such huge crowds and maintain the competitive spirit of the many participants? Many people have wondered why the games have always been so successful and, in my fieldwork, I asked these questions repeatedly. There was a variety of answers but in most of them, "tradition" was invoked as being the single

most important factor in the success of the games. Hobsbawm says that invented tradition is governed by rituals of a symbolic nature and that these imply a continuity with the past (1983: 1). Many symbolic actions are repeatedly observed at the games. In fact, what attracts most people is the colour and pageantry of the pipe bands, the solo pipers, the tartans, the dances and the heritage sports (such as caber toss, sheaf toss and others). When a spectator who had been attending the games since 1950 was asked why he was such a faithful observer, he said: "I can't put my finger on it exactly. It is the atmosphere, the feel, the taste, the colour of the fairgrounds on this day. There is a certain excitement in the air which touches everyone here." (Anonymous Spectator, personal interview 1 August, 1992)

Certain elements and characteristics of the games are religiously repeated each year. For instance, there is always the spectacular display of the massed bands. The games are always opened by a celebrity such as a high-ranking politician -- several prime ministers over the years have enjoyed this role. Glengarry has always provided a duty band to play at the ceremonies. Every year, the games are on the Saturday of the holiday weekend at the beginning of August. The official opening is always at noon, even though the games are half over by this time (fooling all those lesser mortals who have only been to the games for the first time!) A games "Main Street" forms between the Piping Society's building and the main gates

of the Games with small stores flanking each side. There is always a pre-games, non-competitive concert on the Friday evening before the games, which displays the talents of Scottish entertainers and games participants. In fact, the entire structure and schedule of the day has remained unchanged since the creation of the Games in 1948. Solo piping and dancing is scheduled in the morning, the massed bands at noon and bands competitions in the afternoon. The sports are carried throughout most of the day.

The continuous repetition of all these elements creates a safe haven on which all Scottish enthusiasts can count. Another spectator commented that "it [is] like coming home every year" (Anonymous Spectator, personal interview, 1 Aug, 1993). Hobsbawm states that invented traditions are responses to "the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of the social life within it as unchanging and invariant" (1983: 2). In part, the games owe their success to this very sense of security, and the fact that they allow people to assert their own identity and to promote their heritage. Music is the central activity at the Games and the Great Highland bagpipe offers both an oral and visual symbol.

Last but not least, these games provide a link with the past, an element which is highly valued by both Scottish and non-Scottish alike. In the rapid changes of the post-World War II world, many people feel a need to cling to some

cultural roots. The Scottish-Canadian heritage provides a cultural background for many English-speaking Canadians. Due to their large numbers, the Scots played a part in almost all areas of Canadian settlement. As a result, they have contributed enormously to the definition of English Canada and much of English Canada can look back on the Scottish-Canadian heritage as part of their own. For the Scots that are more recent immigrants, the traditions seen at these games are, naturally, a link with the country they left behind.

Hobsbawm argues that this reference to the past has to do with "the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes" (1983: 1). The Glengarry Highland games draw on three different histories: the history of Scottish-Canadian settlement, the history of Scotland and the history of the games themselves. All three of these traditions have been discussed in this chapter as being a vital and exciting part of the aesthetics of solo bagpipe competitions at the Glengarry Highland Games.



Plate 2-1  
A piper warms-up.



Plate 2-2  
Judge and  
competitor during  
a Piobaireachd  
contest.

Plate 2-3  
Ceol beag contest.



Plate 2-4  
Solo piping  
contest.





Plate 2-5  
The main  
street at  
the Games.



Plate 2-6  
A young fan.



Plate 2-7  
A drum major.

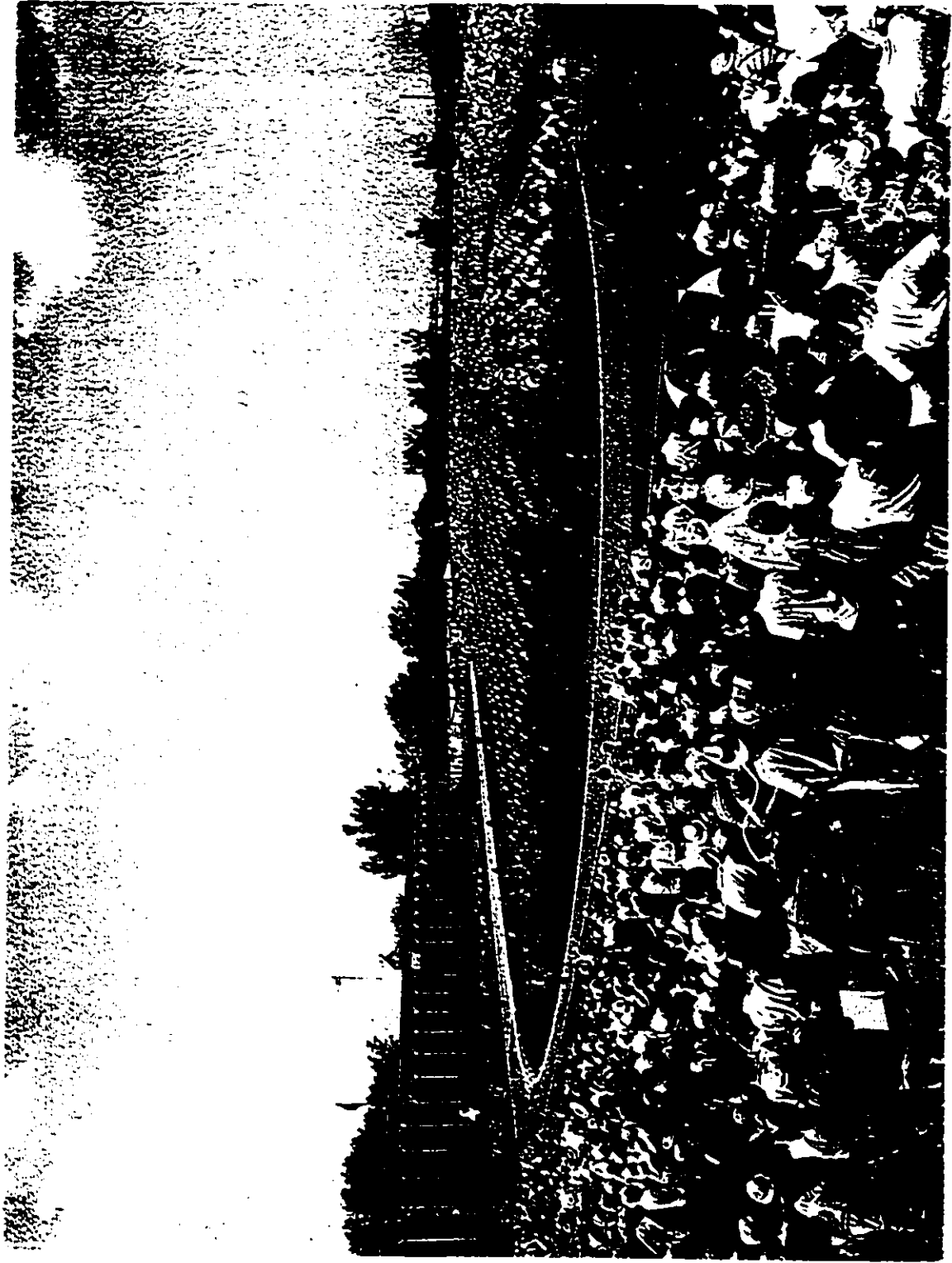


Plate 2-8  
The massed bands.

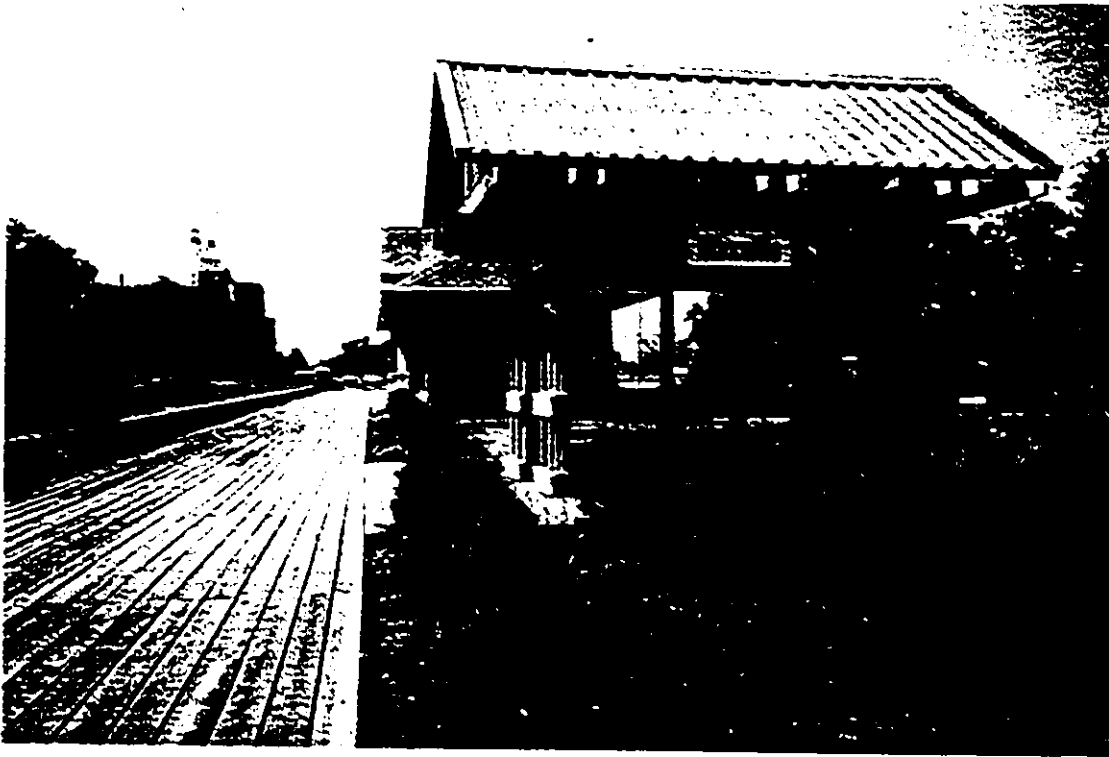


Plate 2-9  
The train station.

### Chapter 3 The Value of Sound

#### Exploring the Local Knowledge of Piobaireachd and Ceol Beag

Music is much more than just sounds captured on a tape recorder. Music is an intention to make something called music as opposed to other kinds of sounds. It is an ability to formulate strings of sounds accepted by members of a given society as music. Music is the construction and use of sound producing instruments. It is the use of the body to produce and accompany the sounds. Music is an emotion that accompanies the production of, the appreciation of, and the participation in a performance. Music is also, of course, the sounds themselves after they are produced. (Seeger 1987: xiv)

This thesis has examined the social and historical contexts of Great Highland bagpipe music and introduced some of the many meanings piping music has for the participants in the solo classes of the Glengarry Highland Games. I now want to turn to the music itself in order to examine the musical values that define piping music and that are prescribed and expected by the pipers.

In his book Local Knowledge, Clifford Geertz states "that to study an art form is to explore a sensibility, that such a sensibility is essentially a collective formation, and that the foundations of such a formation are as wide as social existence and as deep" (1983: 99). In this quotation, Geertz is describing how we, ethnographers, must explore what is known as "local knowledge", this body of knowledge that is

rich and complex, formed through the collective efforts of a group of people. Cultural performances form an integral part of this type of local knowledge and involve a shared understanding of the realities for a community of people. Part of local knowledge is based on people's perceptions and conceptions of their music, formulated in terms of their culture and history. Shepherd also states that musical processes "arise from the human construction of reality, in particular historical and social circumstances" (1993: 48).

In order to understand the pipers' aesthetics, I will explore the local knowledge of the pipers who perform *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag* at the Glengarry Highland Games. The local knowledge in this context has developed through the traditions from Scotland and the North American piping scene. It has come through the constant influence of competition, and the networking and debates that always take place at the games. The local knowledge developed around the solo repertoires and competitions has emerged from the influence of certain prominent pipers and through common understandings. The local knowledge about piping has also been moulded by practical considerations such as instrumental limitations and the competitive environment. These are some of the significant elements that go into the making of the local knowledge. Whereas some elements of the performance practice of *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag* are universal to Scottish piping around the world, others are unique to Canada, Ontario or to

Glengarry itself. These various elements make up the local knowledge about piping which guides one to know how the solo bagpipe repertoires should be played at the specific occasion of the Glengarry Highland Games. The aim of this chapter is to examine the pipers' perceptions and conceptions of their music as formulated in the context of the Glengarry Highland Games.

This chapter will discuss specifically the musical practices of *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag*. As Seeger describes in the opening quotation of this chapter, music is the conglomeration of many components; it is therefore important to explore several facets of this music. This chapter will not only introduce the sounds themselves, but also what Keil has labelled as the "participatory discrepancies", that is, what makes people move, the music between the lines, the feeling that makes the music exciting, the groove -- elements which are of utmost value for the pipers (1987: 275). Using available documentation and interviews to determine the key musical concepts valued by the pipers of this region, this chapter will present some of the notions involved in the two great Highland Bagpipe repertoires.

### The *Piobaireachd* Repertoire

The word "*piobaireachd*" means literally "piping" in

Gaelic. However, in more recent times, it generally refers to the more prestigious, classical genre of the bagpipe. *Piobaireachd* compositions are seen in the piping world as "great music", ambitious pieces for both piper and composer alike. They consist of a theme ("urlar" or "ground"), followed by variations which become progressively more complex. The piece reaches its climax in the technical display of the final variation named "crunluath", after which the mood changes to a more reflective one, with the repetition of the theme.

#### Historical Significance and Context

The names of the pieces played today reflect the old Highland way of life: clan gatherings, salutes for chiefs, commemorations of battles and personal laments (Cairns 1988: 42). Generally, the pipers who play *piobaireachd* classify their music into three categories: (1) Salute, (2) Gathering and (3) Lament. To this day *piobaireachd* is used for certain practical reasons, such as playing laments for funerals or for commemorating certain events. In 1991, a piper from Glengarry, Colin MacLellan, composed and performed a *piobaireachd* for the anniversary of the death of Canada's first Prime Minister John A. MacDonald (see Ex. 3-1).

## Salute to Sir John A. Macdonald

Canada's First Prime Minister

PIOBÀIREACHD  
I URLAR

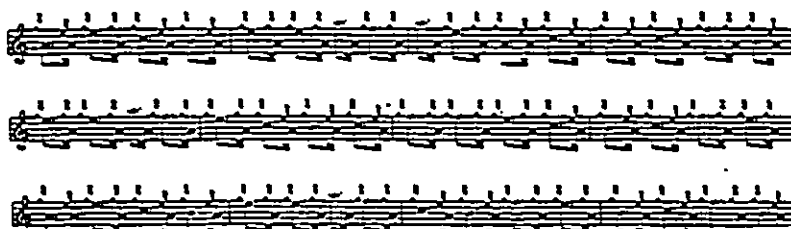
Colin R. MacLellan



II. VARIATION I



III. DITHIS

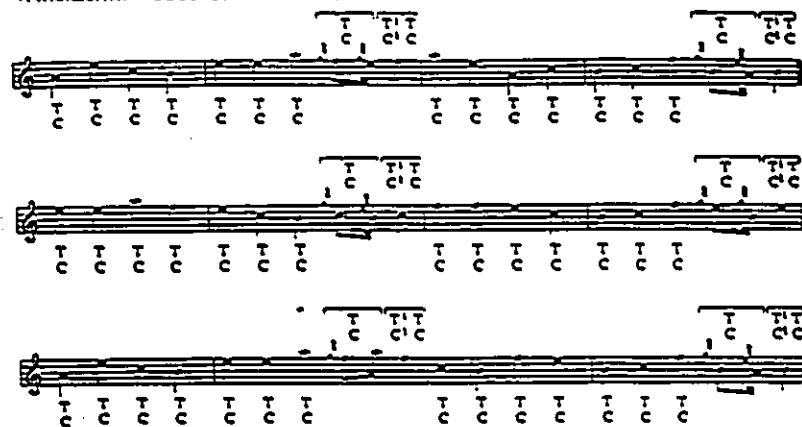


IV. DITHIS DOUBLING



etc. The rest may be taken from Dithis.

V. TAORLUATH VI. DOUBLING VII. CRUNLUATH VIII. DOUBLING



Example 3-1: Piobaireachd - A Salute to Sir John A. Macdonald by Colin MacLellan (MacLellan 1991: 24-25)

The practice of *piobaireachd* and *canntaireachd* (a form of ancient notation for *piobaireachd* music which will be discussed later) according to oral history is linked with specific clans and families. The job of piper for the Highland chief was hereditary, creating unbroken family lines of pipers and composers from approximately 1570 to 1825 (see "The MacCrimon Legacy" in chapter 2). In essence, each clan had its own pipers, and some of the more prosperous and famous clans set up piping colleges where the master pipers of the clan could teach and compose. Pipers from all over the Highlands would come to the more prominent colleges to learn with the reputed masters. Certain musicians and entire families within this "college system" excelled as performers and teachers, and enjoyed a notoriety that was equivalent to that received by musicians in Western art music such as Mozart, Beethoven or Bach. Their compositions became famous, and many of them still exist today. Two families in particular were famous for their piping and for the schools they created. The MacCrimmons, who were hereditary pipers to the MacCleods of Skye, were by far the most famous of these families. As well, there existed a MacArthur school and traditions of piping which rivalled the MacCrimmons in the 18th century.

These schools had an enormous impact on the musical status of the Scottish Highland Bagpipe. Until that point, the pipers generally used to play tunes, airs and marches. But, through the development of *piobaireachd*, a complex art

form became available to challenge both composer and player. As one Glengarry piper stated, *piobaireachd* is "another world that forces the piper to create artistically as he plays the music" (personal interview with Colin MacLellan, 11 November 1992).

In keeping with the discussion of "invented tradition" in the second chapter, the pipers' deference to tradition and history is crucial to an understanding of the playing of *piobaireachd*. Since most information about the piping colleges has been transmitted through oral tradition, many of the facts cannot be verified. In all accounts, *piobaireachd* is said to have maintained at all times its status and popularity in the piping community, partly it is argued, because of the historical aura this particular genre enjoys. To quote from an article about the famous piper, Seamus MacNeill:

Recognizing early that piping, like all art forms, needs a folk tradition to be taken seriously, he [Seamus MacNeill] advanced the lore and the legend of *piobaireachd* to become an integral aspect of our idiom. No player hasn't at least heard of the MacCrimmons (Berthoff 1991: 19).

The history of these families is not only important to all pipers as a body of lore and knowledge, but it has a direct impact on the traditions and styles of playing of all pipers today. Two main styles of playing are often discussed amongst pipers in Glengarry: The Cameron and the MacPherson styles. Both these styles are said to have descended from the MacCrimmon school of piping through the famous pipers Donald

Cameron and Calum MacPherson. They taught pupils who taught other pupils, thus passing on the traditions of *piobaireachd* through many generations. The word "style" refers here to both the "settings" (the arrangements of the tunes), and how the music is interpreted. Today there is much overlapping of styles, and deference to one style or another is not so crucial. Nevertheless, certain elements of both styles of playing are still very important in performance at the Glengarry Highland Games, and the pipers do adhere to those elements of style that they feel are valuable. They do not always label their playing as the 'Cameron' or the 'MacPherson' style, (even though a generation ago that would have been important), but they do draw on these styles and tend to lean towards the use of one style or another. These different styles of playing will be discussed in more detail later; however, for now, it is important to know that modern performance practice is based on concepts which have been communicated from one generation to the next and therefore provides a continuity of ideas and activities within the bagpipe culture.

#### Notation for *Piobaireachd*

The notation of bagpipe music is a much debated issue amongst pipers, because the *piobaireachd* tradition (and to a

certain degree the *ceol beag* tradition) encompasses elements of both oral and written transmission. Two types of notation exist for the bagpipe, both of which are derived largely from oral tradition. One is the ancient *canntaireachd* system, and the other involves modern notation. An examination of some of the issues involved in the notation of *piobaireachd* gives important insights into the pipers' system of aesthetics, since both notational systems require much interpretation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth Century, the Highland Society of London began to encourage pipers to write down *piobaireachd* music for many pipers were worried about 'losing' their tradition. In 1822, the first collection of *piobaireachd* was published. However, even though the musicians felt that a written record was important, they recognized the problems inherent in writing down music which, until that point, had been transmitted orally. To this day, these problems are an issue among pipers and researchers of Scottish bagpipe music.

The main dilemma involves the problem of transcription: Western notation cannot reflect some of the more fundamental principles of piping, let alone some of the more subtle nuances. For example, pipers rarely refer to accidentals when they refer to the notes they play on their instrument since they are not seen as what really constitutes bagpipe music. In the first treatise published on bagpipe music (1760), Joseph McDonald writes: "there is no natural C or F in the

bagpipe scale, nor has it any flats or sharps, as neither compass of this instrument, nor the nature of its compositions will admit any" (MacDonald 1971: 3). Pipers see their use of a key signature or accidentals as a concession to mainstream Western European musicians. Amongst themselves, they only find it necessary to refer to the note as "the C" or "the F", and consequently many scores are written in an open key with no key signature.

Another example of the discrepancies between the notated version and the music that is actually played involves the interpretation of the embellishments. Embellishments are actually played much faster and often with an entirely different rhythm from that which is written. Essentially, the written version is just a "code" that signifies what is to be performed, and is not designed to be an actual representation of the music. These discrepancies can be easily demonstrated by comparing an excerpt of the notated version of the opening of the Glengarry's march with the performed versions of the same march seen in Example 3-2.

Therefore, most pipers feel that interpretation of the notation is an essential skill in reading bagpipe music. Elements such as rhythm, embellishments and even notes have been usually transmitted orally. The basic ideas and the subtle nuances are explained through certain words and images such as "cutting", "hanging", "pointing", "round", and through vocables such as *canntaireachd* or vocables devised



Example 3-2: *Glengarry's March* (Cannon 1988: 86-87): two performed versions of the same march.

individually or locally and, perhaps most importantly, through imitation, from one bagpipe to another. Cannon says that band pipers confess how they learn the notes from a book but, in fact, they must "relearn" the music from an established player. He discusses how pipers use terms such as "putting the song into tune" and "like lines of poetry" or describe the rhythm as "lights and shades" (Cannon 1988: 84). Oral transmission relays the participatory discrepancies in the music and is a crucial element of the tradition even today.

*Canntaireachd* is an ancient vocable system which was used extensively for the transmission of *piobaireachd* in the piping

colleges of Scotland prior to the early nineteenth century (see Ex. 3-3).



Example 3-3: *Canntaireachd* for excerpt of *Glengarry's March* (Cannon 1988: 87)

Pipers believe that there were three *canntaireachd* systems in use: MacCrimmon's, MacArthurs's and the Nether Lorn of the Campbell piper. Until the mid-1800s pipers who were adherents of the schools rarely used staff notation. Today there are three main attitudes towards *canntaireachd* (Cooke 1981: 26-27). The first one is based on the belief that *canntaireachd* is absolutely the best way to transmit pipe music, that it is the purest method descending directly from the great masters of piping. Naturally, the people who adhere to this method were taught entirely by *canntaireachd* themselves. The second category of pipers view *canntaireachd* as a valuable teaching tool, partly because of its association with the masters, and partly because of its usefulness for

reflecting the sounds being reproduced. The third category of piper views *canntaireachd* as a complete waste of time as a teaching tool, but still recognizes its historical value. These pipers feel that their own playing examples and the notation are sufficient for the transmission of knowledge. Pipers who compete at the Glengarry Highland Games usually adopt the second and third viewpoints, although many of them endorse the third attitude. Few pipers today in Canada have been taught by *canntaireachd*, and almost none have been taught *piobaireachd* exclusively by *canntaireachd*. This explains the lack of practical interest in *canntaireachd*, although some pipers find it useful to use it as an aid and many value its historical connections.

Although *canntaireachd* has lost much of its importance as a practical tool (in Canada and elsewhere), the *Piobaireachd* Society has attempted to "preserve" the Nether Lorn system (one of the three systems mentioned above) by writing down the syllables for many pieces in the Society books (see Ex. 3-4). In spite of these efforts, most pipers recognize that a transcription of the vocables preserves only some of the syllables which the society has managed to record, and none of the accompanying accents and inflections which are an intrinsic part of the system are indicated.

The pipers' interest in *canntaireachd* (despite its lack of usefulness as an everyday tool in modern times) demonstrates how much memory and oral transmission are still

## 3. The scale with a D gracenote.

		Written	Pronounced
Sing	C	do	doh
from	B	to	toe
low G	low A	dan	dan
upwards	low G	dam	dam

## 4. The scale with an E gracenote.

		Written	Pronounced
Sing	D	ea	yah
from	C	eo	yoh
low G	B	eo	yoh
upwards	low A	en	en
	low G	em	em

## 5.

	Written	Pronounced
Leumluath (grip)	bare	mbray
Taorluath	darid	darit
Crunluath	bandre	mbidderay

## 6. Throws.

Throw on D	tra	tra
Throw on E		
from note lower than E	dre	dray
from note higher than E	edre	idray

*Example 3-4: Excerpt of Nether Lorn Canntaireachd  
(MacNeill 1990: 95)*

valued in this tradition. Collinson quotes pipers stating that it is important to them to "keep the music a part of you which you can then pass on" (Collinson 1970: 175). Although many pipers learn today from scores, one would never use a score at a performance or competition. This oral tradition of playing from memory is still the preferred tradition:

The master piper's of the old days used to have a boy attendant or gillie whose duty it was to carry the pipes for him. When the player came to the end of a *piobaireachd*, he used, according to Pipe Major William MacLean (last piper in the MacCrimmon line of pipers who died in the earlier parts of this century), to throw the pipes disdainfully away from him --- generally over his shoulder --- as if showing that the music lay in the soul and fingers of the piper rather than the instrument. (Collinson 1970:195)

#### Characteristics of the Music of *Piobaireachd*

This section will describe how the music of *piobaireachd* is viewed today by pipers that attend the Glengarry Highland Games. It is by no means a static tradition, and the perceptions and conceptions of pipers are constantly undergoing revision. However, certain general aesthetic principles are prominent in piping, and it is these principles that will be discussed.

#### Form

The *piobaireachd* piece is conceived as an air with

variations. The movements begin with an air and, subsequently, variations based on the air feature increasingly intricate and technically difficult patterns. The *piobaireachd* generally has eight or nine movements and each play a specific role in the piece. A typical list of movements would be the *urlar*, variation on the *urlar*, *dithis*, *dithis* doubling, *taorluath*, *taorluath* doubling, *crunluath*, *crunluath* doubling, *crunluath* a march and return of the *urlar*.

The air is called the *urlar*, which is usually played in a slow and dignified manner. "It possesses a breadth of architectural line which is quite unlike even the most dignified slow song-air. The Highland bagpipe is capable of rising to it with a nobility which few can have expected" (Gooder 1988: 41). The *dithis* variation has the primary role of breaking up the long notes of the *adagio* and increasing the tempo. The *taorluath* and the *crunluath* movements each follow with their own forms, characterized by an increase in the complexity of the piece, both technically and expressively (see Ex. 3-5). The doublings of these movements are all variations on the movements that preceded them. For instance, the *dithis* doubling is a variation on the *dithis*. Finally there is a return to the *urlar*, which challenges the player to perform with expressive simplicity and hence complete the long and arduous tasks of performing a *piobaireachd*.

In the performance of a *piobaireachd*, several aesthetic principles emerge. Elements such as technical display

contrasts with the expressivity and simplicity of the air. The intricacies of the variations, attention to details and making each variation original and exciting are all part of the piper's aesthetic. These principles can be seen by examining what the pipers consider to be the three main components of *piobaireachd* music: expression, execution, tone and tuning.

### Expression

When Glengarry pipers talk about *piobaireachd*, the word "expression" invariably comes up very early in the discussion. The use of expression is a key characteristic of *piobaireachd* and is generally what seems to separate the good players from the less proficient players. When pipers were asked to define what they meant by "expression," many had difficulty articulating in words what was at stake in playing "expressively." The usual first answer was "in the right style." When pressed to explain further, many pipers had trouble responding to my inquiries. This is probably due, in part, to the difficulty in articulating how expression is evoked through music. It may also be the case that pipers were reluctant to acknowledge the musical activity beyond the rigid parameters defined by style. Some pipers, however, did give

## THE MACLEOD'S SALUTE

[ Adagio ]

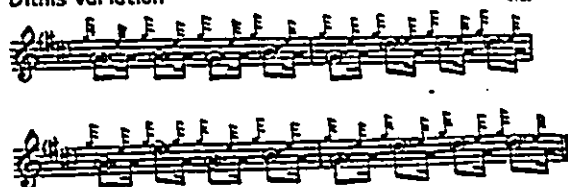
by Donald Mor MacCrimmon



## THE MACLEOD'S SALUTE

Dithis variation

etc.



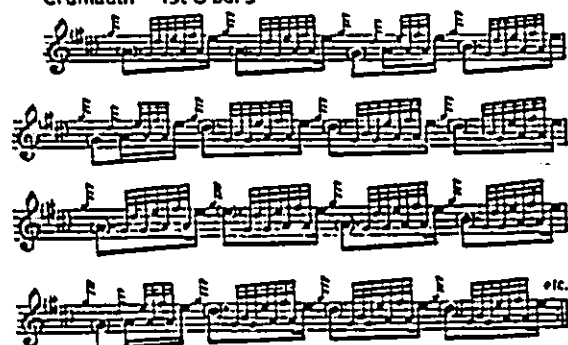
## THE MACLEOD'S SALUTE

Taorluath - 1st 8 bars



## THE MACLEOD'S SALUTE

Crunluath - 1st 8 bars



Example 3-5: Opening bars of the urlar, the dithis variation, taorluath variation and crunluath variation of "MacLeod's Salute" (Collinson 1970: 176-180)

a technical definition of what they meant by expression:

Expression means pointing - holding and cutting - with the melody notes. (personal interview with J.H. MacDonald, 4 July 1992)

Feeling something as opposed to knowing; the teacher is key for [demonstrating] oral expression. (personal interview with J.T. MacKenzie, 21 July 1992)

Expression is mainly timing, hold long notes, cut some notes, put yourself into it but pretty rigid parameters - can't just run through it (personal interview with A. Morrison, 23 July 1992).

It is a truism to say that expression requires a certain amount of interpretation by the performers. However, when asked whether performers were allowed to develop their own interpretation, the answer was a unanimous "no". Pipers seem to associate the word "interpretation" with having the authority, freedom and choice to develop musical ideas. They believe that pipers must prove themselves in the accepted, mainstream styles, as passed down from generation to generation and only when the players are proven to be masters of *piobaireachd* can they begin to develop their own personal style.

In order to understand expression in *piobaireachd*, it is necessary to examine the elements to which the performer must adhere and those from which he can depart. The two primary areas where the pipers emphasize the use of expression are in the stylistic approach to phrasing and in the manipulation of time.

## Phrasing

Most *piobaireachd* melodies consist of a specific phrase structure which can vary from piece to piece but are quite consistent once they are established in the first movement, which is called the *urlar* and is the foundation of the entire piece. The tune construction of the *urlar* is based on three elements: (1) the number of bars per phrase or line (when a *Piobaireachd* is published, the music is usually organized so that the phrases begin and end on a specific line); (2) how the musical elements, particularly rhythmic and melodic patterns, are organized in each of the lines; and (3) the number of lines in the *urlar*. The musical value assigned to phrasing is based largely on reoccurring melodic patterns, rather than on an emphasis of strong and weak beats as practised in mainstream Western art music. As Cooke explains, "The particular nature of Gaelic music . . . from the point of view of time and metre, is not the mathematically organized scheme of stressed and unstressed note values" (1972:44). For example, the *urlar* of a Primary *piobaireachd* (a category of *piobaireachd* - categories are defined by tune construction) is divided into three lines of 6+6+4 bars each, and these lines are defined by the repetition of certain figures such as grace notes or rhythmic figures within the bars. Certain key notes and figures are stressed or as the pipers say, they 'hang' or 'cut' these notes; however, the notes are not organized

systematically in relation to the stressed and unstressed beats of the duple or compound time as in other genres. To a non-piper, this might seem very tedious but for the enthusiast of *piobaireachd*, this is seen as producing a pleasant hypnotic effect. As Seumus MacNeill wrote: "there is no doubt that, in some tunes, the deliberate, insistent drumming of the phrases is meant to cause us to suspend reason and float away in an emotional daze" (1968: 44).

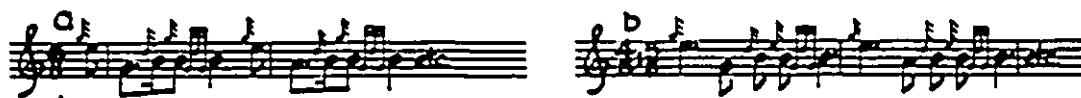
#### Time

The use of time is considered a most important element in *piobaireachd*, and pipers focus much of their attention on its expressive interpretation as passed down from the master pipers. As mentioned earlier, rhythm characterizes the phrasing, and it is also an important aspect of the form. Several Glengarry pipers stated that the main purpose of the *dithis* variation is to transform the melody of the *urlar* into a regular rhythmic figure upon which the patterns of the *taorluath* and *crunluath* variations may be created.

Although most pipers would agree that rhythm plays an important role in the structure of *piobaireachd*, it is in the interpretation of time that the different aesthetic viewpoints become most apparent. The pipers' conception of tempo at the Glengarry Highland games seems to encompass several different

styles or approaches to the playing of *piobaireachd*. As mentioned earlier, there have been two traditional main schools of thought known as the Cameron and the MacPherson styles. The stylistic differences in these styles revolve mainly around the timing of certain grace notes in relation to an approximate sense of meter. The term "meter" here is not quite accurate (see Ex. 3-6 and 3-7) for pipers actually attempt to give the piece a meterless quality particularly in the *urlar* movement. The difference in style has, in fact, more to do with the general flow of the notes, the rhythmic 'feel' that the piper tries to create (see Ex. 3-6 and 3-7).

Traditionally, these styles have had their own following of pipers. The adherents of the Cameron school describe their style as "smooth and flowing" ("round and featureless"



Example 3-6: Cameron Style, Example 3-7: MacPherson style  
Excerpt from *Glengarry's March* (Cannon 1988: 87)

according to their opponents), whereas the MacPherson pipers feel that they play with "boldness" and "emphasis" ("choppy" or "un-Gaelic" according to the Cameron pipers) (Cannon 1988: 87).

These two different styles provide a good example of the differences that exist among the approaches used to play *piobaireachd*; however, it would be misleading to suggest that all pipers are stylistically camp or another. In fact, there is now such a blurring of styles due to travel, recordings and exposure at games that pipers do not tend to label their playing after any one particular style or master piper. It is nevertheless perceived as important that a piper learn and perform pieces in what is called one of the "mainstream styles" which has been learned from a reputable teacher. Each style introduces specific features and raises particular expectations. At one time, different styles used to delineate pipers quite dramatically, to the point where the bias of judges in competition favoured one player over another purely on the basis of style. Now, at games such as the Glengarry Highland Games, judges tend to be more open to stylistic variations, so that pipers can perform any mainstream style without fear of discrimination.

Over time, the notion of rhythm and tempo has changed in the *piobaireachd* tradition, particularly in the opening *urlar* section which establishes the basis for the other movements. Despite their stylistic differences, pipers today generally

approach rhythm more freely than they did in past centuries. In Joseph MacDonald's treatise in 1760 (one of the earliest written discussions of playing the great Highland bagpipe), the discussions of rhythm were very specific, with much detail explaining the exact manner in which rhythms had to be played. Today, pipers strive to eliminate a sense of regular pulse (although the pieces are characterized by a sense of style as discussed above), particularly in the *urlar* section of the *piobaireachd*. As part of this modern conception of the music, it is seen as desirable to have a very slow tempo in order to create a free and timeless quality to the music. Cooke states that the *urlar* has a "quasi-rhapsodic nature where only three musical elements are employed: namely, relative duration of a non-metrical kind, melodic tension between successive notes and, lastly, harmonic tension between melody notes and drone notes" (Cooke 1972: 43).

### Execution

Execution is a term used by pipers to refer to the technical side of performing. Cairns defines execution as "finger technique in producing the melody and the embellishments cleanly and accurately" (1988: 42). Another piper at the Glengarry Highland Games described it as "fingering, making grace notes, doublings clear; no crossing

noises when moving from left hand to right hand; sheer technique" (personal interview with A. Morrison, 10 July 1992).

When a piper first begins to learn the pipes, much time is spent on technical exercises in order to build a good foundation for the pieces that will only be learned after the technical exercises are mastered. At the core of the piper's technique is the execution of embellishments or ornaments. When non-pipers first look at pipe music, they are usually surprised to see the vast number and variety of ornaments (called "embellishments" or "grace-noting" by the pipers) which are part of the piper's music. In *piobaireachd* (as well as *ceol beag*), these embellishments play a vital role in the production and expression of the music.

The role of embellishments in *piobaireachd* and other pipe music is unique. For the piper, embellishments are not just seen as an extra feature alongside the principal notes; instead, they are considered as playing a fundamental role in the musical structure and its expression.

The great emphasis on embellishments in piping is related to two main physical limitations of the Great Highland bagpipe. One has to do with the continuous flow of sound, and the other is the problem of variation in volume. Since there must constantly be air in the bag in order to create a constant flow of sounds emanating from the reed, the piper must find some means of punctuating phrase endings or musical

statements. Pipers use embellishments to separate sounds from one another, to form phrases, to lengthen or shorten a particular note. This allows the piper to "interpret" the music, or, as mentioned before, to "hang" or "cut" the notes of the rhythm.

The control of loudness and softness is not possible in the Great Highland bagpipe as the sound emanates from reeds which are not directly controlled by the player. As a result, producing strong and weak accents or emphasizing certain notes for expressive purposes represents a technical challenge. The piper gets around this problem by using many different types of embellishments to his advantage. Certain embellishments produce stronger or weaker effects in the mind of the piper, and are therefore used to accentuate specific notes. Generally, notes that need more accentuation are given more complex or lengthy embellishments, whereas notes that do not call for as much attention are played with only simple embellishments. There is a wide range of embellishments which allows the piper to "light" or to "shade" the music in order to create tension and excitement in the piece.

The following table (see Table 3-1) illustrates the different types of embellishments and includes explanations on the specific role and function of each of them in the music. This material was collected primarily through discussions with piper John-Hugh MacDonald (personal interview, 4 July 1992).

Table 3-1: Embellishments in Solo Piping

<b>Table 3-1: Embellishments in Solo Piping</b>	
1) Grace Note	Within the range of grace notes, some are perceived as being stronger or weaker to the mind of the piper. Gracenotes are also used to form cadences.
2) Cadences	In <i>piobaireachd</i> , cadences do not necessarily mean the end of a phrase; they are just a musical feature which punctuates a phrase at any point.
3) Strikes	Strikes are usually part of syncopation. Strikes produce more accent than a grace note giving more depth and clarity to that note.
4) Throws	Throws are similar to strikes. However, they are more complex and carry more weight to the music.
5) a: Doublings b: 1/2 Doublings	These embellishments all occur between two notes with increasing complexity and sophistication. As the variations of a <i>piobaireachd</i> progress, these embellishments are added with increasing frequency and complexity, driving the piece forward with a type of excitement and tension. These embellishments are also found in <i>ceol beag</i> (light music), which will be discussed later. They appear in the music with much the same function as that found in <i>piobaireachd</i> but not with the same degree of sophistication and complexity.
6) Birl	
7) Grip	
8) Torluath	
9) Tripling	

## Tuning and Tone

A discussion of the aesthetics of tuning and tone in the Great Highland bagpipe must examine the various physical aspects of the instrument. One of the most common complaints heard by non-pipers about the Great Highland bagpipe is that it is always out of tune and that it is too loud (see Illustration 3-1). It is a loud instrument as it was designed to be played outside and, originally, only as a solo instrument. As for the complaint about tuning, there are good and bad players on any instrument, and tuning is certainly a common way to evaluate the relative competence of a player in Western musical traditions and piping is no exception. In the solo piping traditions, most pipers spend a considerable amount of time tuning in both *piobaireachd* and *ceol beag* repertoires, and are quite proficient at tuning their instrument as they become more experienced players. When performing *piobaireachd* in particular, the players must tune their instrument extremely well so that the instrument remains in tune throughout the long performance of the *piobaireachd* piece. In fact, the complaint about tuning has to do with the physical properties of the bagpipe, the scale, the drones, the acoustics of the instrument and, ultimately, the aesthetic views of the pipers who manipulate these instrumental qualities.

# Love them or hate them — there's no in between

By MARK BLANCHARD  
Valley Bureau

WINDSOR — Like it or not, bagpipers and their suspiciously-unmusical instruments are here to stay.

In 1745, when Scotland's rulers banned them, Scots had a love-hate relationship with "pipers."

Even today, the sound of bagpipes at Nova Scotia's summer festivals will attract tourists by the hundreds, but drive others away with their hands over their ears.

To say the least, the beauty of the bagpipes is in the ears of the listener. What one person considers to be comforting music is, for another, just a loud, nagging hum and some offensive high-pitched whining.

"You either love them or hate them. There's no in between," says Pipe Major Willie Cochrane, who, apart from being one of the best players in the world, is the "Dewar Highlander" pictured on labels of Dewar's whiskey.

## 'Ready to do jig'

He thinks some people just have a "built in" dislike for bagpipe music, something he blames on the truly bad-sounding bagpipers the public hears. "They've probably heard so many bad bagpipers, it's put them right off forever," he reasons.

So, how are you supposed to recognize a good piper?

The major says a good player's music should sound "musical ... with his pipes in tune. Mostly, you should be tapping your foot and ready to do a jig."

Bagpipers have a unique sound, explains Canada's top piper, 30-year-old Colin MacLellan of Ottawa. That, he says, turns a lot of people off bagpipe music. "But it should interest you and, depending on the type of music being played, it should be a soothing effect."

(Bagpipe music is divided into two categories: Cool Peag, the "light music" of marches and the more complex tunes of Cool Mor or classical "big music.")

## The Bagpipe Scale

The scale of the bagpipe is unusual to Western Europe, as it does not consist of the natural or tempered tuning. It is sometimes described as similar to a Mixolydian scale on A with an extra g natural below the A. This, however, does not do justice to the scale used, because the scale of the bagpipe is made up of intervals that are of different sizes and which can vary from instrument to instrument. Thus, for the piper, it is not considered important for the intervals to be of standard size for two main reasons. First, the "harmonizing" of pitches is not an issue because the bagpipe is considered a unison or solo instrument. Secondly, different intervals are considered an advantage by pipers since they feel that each pitch has its own special flavour and characteristic quality. Some of the intervals resemble Western tempered tuning, resulting in an aesthetic appreciation (which is reflected in the musical compositions) of the intervals of a major 3rd or 6th; however, there is no appreciation of the perfect 4th or 5th, since these intervals cannot be produced within the scale of the bagpipe.

In his book Bagpipes and Tunings, Theodor Podnos states that "because of its intense national representation, the Scotch Highland Bagpipe has maintained its rigid neutral tunings with great persistence" (Podnos 1974: 37). In his opinion, the aesthetic for tuning was probably derived during

medieval times, from a modal origin, based on the scales used by the Romans, Moors or Crusaders. It is interesting that other pressures from the many milieus in which pipers perform may eventually change this notion of the scale. For instance, Podnos stated that some pipers have been known to put masking tape over the holes to alter the tuning so that it conforms with the tempered tuning of other instruments.

#### The Drones and Chanter of the Great Highland bagpipe

Cairns best summarized the function of the chanter and drones in the great Highland Bagpipe in the excerpt that follows:

The great Highland Bagpipe has four reeds sounding simultaneously, one in the chanter (melody pipe), one in the bass drone, and one in each of the two tenor drones. The wooden components are hardwood, usually of African black wood or corcus wood and these parts are embellished with real or imitation ivory, nickel or sterling silver mountings. Eleven different notes can be produced, nine by the chanter plus the bass and tenor, encompassing three octaves from the lowest note (bass drone) to the highest (top A on the chanter). The tenor drones are pitched an octave below the Tonic A of the chanter and the bass drone two octaves below (Cairns 1988: 42).

The use of drones is an important element in the players conception of piping. To most non-pipers, the drones would seem louder than the melody line and therefore create an unbalanced effect. However, for the piper, the drones form an integral part of the music, as can be seen by the prominent

characteristics of no less than three drones. It should be noted that the use of three drones includes the largest, also called the great drone, which gives this bagpipe the name of Great Highland. As Seamus MacNeill explains:

The strong harmonics of the drones help greatly in the tuning of the pipes . . . The blend of notes which results is most pleasing to bagpipe enthusiasts, but it has other effects too . . . The perpetual pedal of the drones induces a philosophic calm in lovers of the bagpipe and completely unnerves the haters. (1968: 25)

This appreciation for the drones was not always part of the aesthetic of bagpipe music. In 1760, Joseph MacDonald wrote in his treatise A Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipes that pipers were avoiding the use of the three drones, and that J. MacDonald felt that their overpowering effect could be lessened by avoiding the use of the great drone. Nevertheless, according to MacDonald and most pipers of today, the use of three drones "add vastly to [the] grandeur [of the bagpipe] both in sound and show" (1971: 27).

#### Acoustic Studies of the Bagpipe

Perhaps as a response to the criticism from non-pipers, many pipers have been driven to examine and promote the unique aspects of the bagpipe. Many studies have been done on the acoustics of the instrument and have focused, in particular, on the Great Highland bagpipe scale. As early as 1885, A.J. Ellis explained his conception of the scale by indicating that

the low 'G' should be considered an extra note, and the two types of steps in the scale should be regarded as a full tone and a 3/4 tone (Podnos 1974: 40).

Between 1885 and 1934 many attempts were made to measure the scale in relation to the Western European system but with widely varying results due to changing conditions and the different pipers examined in the studies. In 1961 and 1964 J.M.A. Lenihan (physicist) and Seamus MacNeill (piper) did a study using an oscellograph and a tuning fork (Podnos 1974: 42). However, even with accurate measurements, the two researchers could only confirm the lack of conformity among the scales used by the pipers consulted. Since then various other research projects have aimed to assess the acoustics of the bagpipe with varying degrees of success.

In terms of aesthetics, what is interesting is not necessarily the results of these tests, but the fact that the pipers have had such a strong need to look at their scale in relation to other scales, particularly as theirs relate to the Western European tonal system. Perhaps because their system is unique within a larger Western music context, they have felt the pressure of being "outsiders" to Western concepts. It is indeed quite common for musicians of other Western classical instruments to criticize the tone and tuning of the pipes. Despite these pressures, many pipers feel that their system need not be compared to others in order to gain a better understanding of its concepts. As Francis Collinson

argues in his book The Traditional and National Music of Scotland: "It is quite incorrect to say that because the pipe interval varies from the natural scale, it is out of tune. It is in tune in its own right" (1966: 166).

### Tuning for Contests

An intriguing question for a non-piper is how pipers deal with tuning and tone quality in a competitive performance situation such as the Glengarry Highland Games. Prior to the performance of a piece, the competitor tunes for several minutes in order to blend all four reads together so they are in tune with each other. Since the reed of the chanter is fixed once the piper starts playing, the piper must adjust the reeds of the other drones individually to adjust them to the chanter. To tune his instrument, the piper slides the tuning ring on the drones up and down until he achieves the desired pitch. All this is done in front of the adjudicator and, when tuning is completed, that is, when the sound is steady and the drones blend together, the piper immediately starts to play without a break.

The pipers say that there is a real "black art" (a difficult art) to tuning and producing a good tone quality with the instrument. Long before the pipes are pulled out for a performance, reeds have to be made or adjusted, the

sheepskin has to be regularly "seasoned" with oil to keep it pliable and air tight, and the hemp on the reeds has to be adjusted accordingly. About one third of the marks in competition goes for tuning and tone quality, while another third goes for expression and yet another third for execution. Tone quality can be labelled by an adjudicator with the following characteristics:

"Rough": the instrument needs new drone reeds; the sound bounces around, instead of steady sound.

"Thin": the chanter is getting towards the end of its life

"Bright": good, well-tuned and well-maintained bagpipe

"Dull": one of the drone reeds is starting to wear and does not have enough resonance

"Full": There is good resonance and a bright sound coming out of the pipes.

In conclusion, for all performances of the great Highland Bagpipe, tuning and tone quality are crucial aspects of the piper's aesthetics. Since most performances take place outdoors, the pipers can experience some difficulties, particularly in damp weather when the natural materials of the pipes' response is unpredictable. *Piobaireachd* music, in particular, can suffer under these circumstances since a given performance can last for up to fifteen minutes -- a period long enough to allow the pipes plenty of time to go out of

tune. This is all part of the challenge of *piobaireachd* or as one piper said, "the black art of keeping the pipes up to peak!" (personal interview with Colin MacLellan, 11 November 1992).

### The Ceol Beag Repertoire

Traditionally, *ceol beag* was considered by the master pipers to be inferior music not worthy of their respect. *Piobaireachd* was considered the "real" music of the pipes and was the main focus of their attention. This attitude was the official view of the great piping schools; however, one suspects that many pipers were not beneath enjoying a light air or two. In fact, there are a few accounts of master pipers performing these tunes simply for their own enjoyment.

Today, this attitude of derision towards the lighter music has generally been replaced by enthusiasm from a great number of pipers. In fact, the participation of pipers in *ceol beag* competitions far outnumbers that of the *piobaireachd* classes and often good *piobaireachd* players are equally recognized for their gifted performances of the light music. However, the *piobaireachd* tradition is still viewed as the superior genre, and pipers refer to *piobaireachd* as the 'heavier', more 'serious' art form. Academic research reflects this attitude. The emphasis is placed on *piobaireachd*, while only small sections of larger documents are devoted to the discussion of

*ceol beag*.

*Ceol beag* is transmitted orally or can be learned from published collections of anonymous and autographed tunes. The repertoire is continuously expanding through the addition of newly composed tunes and the adaptation of music originally written for other instruments. However, most pipers feel that the anonymous tunes are the "real" repertoire of *ceol beag* due to their "traditional" appeal. The published scores are written in staff notation and must be interpreted similar to the manner in which pipers have to interpret the staff notation of *piobaireachd*. However, the differences between the notation and the actual performance are not quite as pronounced. In oral transmission, the pipers often use a type of unofficial and variable vocable system. Based upon this system, the titles of many pieces give the piper his opening rhythm and sense of phrasing. However, no formal tradition such as *canntaireachd* exists for *ceol beag*.

At the Glengarry Highland Games, *ceol beag* shares a similar type of adjudication with that of *piobaireachd*. However, according to the pipers, there is less emphasis placed on expression and more importance placed simply on the execution of the performance. Ed Neigh, a well-known adjudicator at the games remarks:

One of the problems in solo light music is the fact that you have all these measurable things which you can judge on. If you miss a grace note, or your drones are out of tune, or your F is sharp, that's a matter of fact, not subjectivity. It's much easier for a judge to say 'You missed a grace note, you don't get a prize, than to say

that was a completely flat performance from beginning to end, you don't get a prize', because... then you're in controversy. Judging by technical things is an easy way out for my way of thinking, and, too often adjudicators tend to judge that way (Berthoff 1992: 23)

*Ceol beag* and *piobaireachd* share many similar elements in the adjudication, execution, tone and tuning, but the musical goals and expression set them apart. This does not mean that one genre is inferior to another but that the nuances of *piobaireachd* are considered more complex by the pipers. To quote from a piper who performs at the Glengarry Highland Games: "It is easier to play light music because it is not as subtle. *Piobaireachd* takes more maturity than light music, [is] more subtle, [and has a] more restricted appeal to the young piper; light music, on the other hand, is more toe-tapping, something for people to be impressed by" (personal interview with Brian Williamson, 20 July 1992).

This thesis has examined the genre of *piobaireachd* at great length. Rather than re-iterating many features and creating unnecessary repetition through a study of the two genres, I want to look at the different types of light music that are regularly performed at the Glengarry Highland Games and examine how the pipers approach these different genres. It is hoped that the reader, by now, will have a sense of the fundamentals of pipe music as seen through the perceptions and conceptions of the Glengarry pipers. Using these tools then, the remainder of this chapter examines the *ceol beag*

repertoire performed at the games. The *ceol beag* repertoire consists of *strathspeys* and reels, jigs, marches and hornpipes. In the following sections, each genre will be treated separately, in order to address the main issues pertinent to that genre.

### The *Strathspey*

In a competition setting like the Glengarry Highland Games, the *strathspey* (see Ex. 3-8) is always played in conjunction with the reel. This method of coupling pieces presents a challenge in itself, because the piper must make what is called a "clean break." The "breaks" between each tune must be "clean" which means that, within the transition, the rhythm must be secure, there has to be a sense of musical style and that all rough or extra noises in the chanter must be avoided. In general, the piper must interpret the last notes of the *strathspey* so that they can flow into the new notes of the reel.

The *strathspey* is a fairly recent addition to the bagpipe repertoire and has only been found in collections since 1828. *Strathspeys* are always in common time and sound particularly dance-like because, as the pipers say, "you are counting for the bar" or, in other words, the main pulse is felt on the

A:

STRATHSPEY DELVINSIDE

B:

C:

D:

The image displays a musical score for a Strathspey titled "Delvinside". The score is organized into four systems, labeled A, B, C, and D. Each system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplets. The first system (A) is marked with "STRATHSPEY" and "DELVINSIDE". The second system (B) continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system (C) includes a "poco" marking in the bass staff. The fourth system (D) concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Example 3-8: "Delvinside", A Strathspey (Traditional);  
transcribed by J.H. Macdonald 1992

first beat. Embellishments and unequal timings are considered important elements of the music and are said to characterize and define the individual performance. These elements have become increasingly elaborate over time, as pipers demonstrate through them their technique and expressive abilities.

The main element which characterizes this genre today is the Scotch snap (♩♩). In the past, however, the pipers were often given the option of playing the eighth note couplets "round," that is, with the first note getting approximately two thirds of the time and the second note with one third of the time. Even today, when the Scotch snap is played on the bagpipe, it is not nearly as pointed as the rhythms found in the *strathspeys* of other instruments, partly due to instrumental limitations and probably also because of different views towards this rhythmic figure.

The Scotch snaps are emphasized through grace notes. For example, as in the fourth part or section "D" of the example (see Ex. 3-8), the piper is supposed to emphasize the first and the third beat of the bar. However, a grace note is added to the third beat, which gives the music a feeling of being thrown off balance. This effect is perceived as adding a flavour of excitement in the composition.

The *strathspey* has become an extended form which developed far beyond the simple dance tune. The competition *strathspey* is usually in four parts with eight bars per part (see Ex. 3-8). Several pipers described the four parts of the genre as

follows: the first part ("A") tells you what the piece is; the second part ("B") answers to the first part or is an extension of the first part; the third part ("C") is considered the most interesting one to play, because it presents a contrasting section with a different flavour; and the fourth part ("D") is very similar to the second part. This type of four-part composition can be observed in some marches, reels, jigs and hornpipes.

*Strathspeys* are very under-represented in piping collections, so there is only a very small number of pieces for pipers to choose from. For the piper, this genre is considered one of the most difficult of the light music repertoire to perform on the bagpipe, partly because of its rhythmic intricacies and partly also because it is in a slow air style and needs a more reflective type of expression. One piper said that the "best way to learn the piece is to take it to a good fiddler and have him teach you" (personal interview with Brian Williamson, 20 July 1992). Another piper said that the best way to teach this genre (or any other, in order to transmit the "feel of the music") was to take one phrase at a time and have the student learn the music by ear (personal interview with A. Morrison, 23 July 1992). As in much pipe music, the staff notation is only a very first step to learn the pieces. The student piper must have most of the information transmitted orally from the teacher. For example, in the strathspey and other genres, the embellishments are

played much faster than what is written.

### The Reel

Reels were the mainstay of piping music for a long time. Perhaps because they were considered easier to play, they were originally the most common tunes found in written collections. The elements that define a reel for the piper are the cut time (2/2 time signature), the four-bar strains and, most importantly, the forceful driving rhythm (see Ex. 3-9). To create the latter quality pipers often use a rapid tempo, repeat the short phrases, and frequently play simple grace notes or dotted rhythms reminiscent of grace notes which gives the music a feeling of pushing onward.

Embellishments are considered important elements in the performance of the reel. Pipers often place particular emphasis on the upbeats and heavily ornament the downbeats. This provides the necessary interruption of flow of air between the various parts (at each double barline), and creates the desired expression. This expressive emphasis is important to the overall effect and character of the piece.

Reels have always been used to demonstrate technique and flair. In 1760, Joseph MacDonald describes certain reels as belonging to the "wild reel," meaning that they were designed to present a challenge and provide a display. The trend today

is to compose reels that are very elaborate, and to extend the tunes. For example, the tune of "MacAllister's Dirk" contains six parts (competition reels have to have at least four parts) with the theme being introduced in the first eight bars of the first part. Embellishments have become increasingly complicated with detailed figures in order to create a dramatic technical effect.

Two different styles of performing the rhythms are now in use. The first, which is played in an older style, is very fast and pointed. In the second style, the rhythm is performed in a more rounded style. As one piper said, "it is like the Irish reels: [the reel is performed] in a dead round style, [it] goes on endlessly with no ending sound" (personal interview with Brian Williamson, 20 July 1992).

Reels are seen as an important part of the competition set. The strathspey and reel are usually played as a set to which sometimes a march is added. The three dances as a set are used to demonstrate the players' ability of execution and expression.

### Marches

There are two categories of marches used in bagpipe music: the slow and the quick march. The quick march is generally used in military events or ceremonial occasions and can be

M<sup>c</sup>ALLISTER'S DIRK

The image displays a musical score for a traditional reel titled "McAllister's Dirk". The score is arranged in two systems, each containing five staves. The first system (staves 1-5) begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is written in a rhythmic style characteristic of a reel, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system (staves 6-10) continues the piece, maintaining the same notation and style. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, with some notes marked with an 'f' for fortissimo. The overall layout is clean and professional, typical of a transcribed musical manuscript.

Example 3-9: "McAllister's Dirk", A Reel (Traditional;  
transcribed by J.H Macdonald 1992)

divided into two types: first, the general quick march, which is in duple or quadruple meter (that is, 2/4, 4/4, 12/8, or 6/8) and, secondly, the retreat march which is in triple meter (9/8 or 3/4). The slow march is the type of march usually used in competition (see Example 3-10).

The competition march has a very extended form with a minimum of four repeated parts with eight bars per part (thus a minimum of sixty-four bars in length). It is not altogether uncommon to have up to six parts in length. The form of the marches are generally based on one ABA form in each part. In many tunes, one frequently sees variations at the first and second endings of parts two, three and four.

Competition style marches are performed at a very slow tempo (the tempo hovers usually between 72 and 84 to the quarter note), and, they are highly embellished. Marches tend to use the full range of ornaments (see Table 3-1) for phrasing, and place great emphasis on certain notes. These notes are noticeable in the compositions because they are preceded by long and elaborate embellishments (see Ex. 3-10). The rhythm is played with very sharp "pointing," since the piper sees the execution of "crisp" rhythm (the first note in a couplet of notes is much longer and receives more emphasis than the second) and the execution of embellishments as a way of increasing expressive possibilities. Many pipers do not find that marches have retained their martial quality due to the slow tempo; however, a type of choreographed march

## 311. THE ABERCAIRNEY HIGHLANDERS

Musical score for 'The Abercairney Highlanders', consisting of seven staves of music. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The music is arranged in a multi-staff format, likely for a band or orchestra.

## THE ABERCAIRNEY HIGHLANDERS (cont.)

Continuation of the musical score for 'The Abercairney Highlanders', consisting of seven staves of music. The score continues the complex, rhythmic melody from the previous section, maintaining the 2/4 time signature and multi-staff arrangement.

Example 3-10: "The Abercairney Highlanders", A Competition March (Mackay)

is used by the pipers to accompany their performances.

Marches have largely resisted the elaborate extensions and changes that have taken place over time in the strathspeys and reels. Musically, most pipers do not consider the marches as exciting as the strathspey and reel, probably due to their length and tempo. As Cannon states, "there are probably more competition marches on record than strathspeys and reels together, but it must be admitted that many are extremely dull" (1987: 141). Generally, though, pipers agree on the pieces that are the best marches, and these are performed most frequently.

### Jigs and Hornpipes

Jigs and hornpipes are sometimes played as a set together at the Glengarry Highland Games, and more often than not the jigs are played alone. Jigs are all in 6/8 or 9/8 with a minimum of four parts (most of them have six parts) and normally use the form ABAC in each part. The style of playing can be pointed or round -- an approach which is attributed to the Irish way of playing which makes the rhythm even faster. Composition styles also vary. Some have a more rhythmic and regular style (emphasis on the evenness and strength of the repeated rhythmic patterns), which is considered the traditional style (the tune "Archie Beag" is in this style),

while others contain more syncopation and rhythmic variety. Over the past ten years, a new style has emerged under the hands of well-known piper Michael Gray who has been using a regular type of rhythm, but in his own personal style, which is a departure from the traditional style and involves more repetition. Good pipers are capable of performing a mixture of all three styles.

Jigs are a good example of the development of *ceol beag* under the influence of competition (see Ex. 3-11). As with the *strathspey* and reel, jigs have undergone enormous elaboration from the original traditional tunes. This, has come through the pressures of competition, which require performers to play pieces which allow them to demonstrate technique and flair. The jig meets these demands with its quick tempo, complex extended form, and its "heavy" embellishments. Light music, however, did not start out this way. The traditional tunes were used mostly for dancing and elaborate embellishments. Techniques or extended forms were not seen as appropriate in such a context since the piper's role was primarily to accompany the dancers, not to display his technique. The first competition for light music was not held until 1874, and it was with mixed feelings that pipers participated in it, for they felt that this music was too simple and not worthy of their efforts. This attitude has changed over time, and the nature of the compositions have also changed in response to the increasing demands related to

the competition contest.

742 ARCHIE BEAG

PIPE MAJOR D. MORRISON  
Athenry Co. Pipe

Example 3-11: "Archie Beag", A Jig (Morrison)

The hornpipe is less common in competition and, when performed, is played in conjunction with the jig, much the same way the strathspey and reel are played as a set. The example "Calum Beag" is a typical extended form in four parts

with each part being divided into ABCD (see Ex. 3-12).

### Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to examine the local knowledge of the pipers who participate in the solo repertoires of the Glengarry Highland Games. I was particularly interested in how these pipers viewed the sound structures and characteristics of their music and how these elements are intertwined with certain attitudes and behaviours which are part of their musical activities.

*Piobaireachd*, like all established art forms, has certain expected characteristics. These characteristics are acknowledged and understood by pipers who perform *piobaireachd*. Several sections of this chapter were devoted to discussions of expression, execution, phrasing and time. I have demonstrated how this local knowledge of *piobaireachd* is very much intertwined with views on the history and traditions of this repertoire.

Even though pipers revere traditional ways of playing, the local knowledge is not static in the repertoire of *piobaireachd*. I demonstrated, how, in many areas, the pressure and influence of time and "outside" concepts continuously alter and change the way the music is played. I examined this situation by comparing a piping treatise which was written by

772 CALUM BEAG

Parts 2, 3 and 4 composed by  
PETER MAJOR DONALD MACLEOD, MSB  
3rd and 4th Highland and Queen's Own Highland

The first system of musical notation for 'Calum Beag' consists of two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a single line with various note values including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The bottom staff continues the melody with similar notation.

772 CALUM BEAG (cont.)

The continuation of 'Calum Beag' is presented in seven staves. The notation continues from the previous system, maintaining the same musical style and notation. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the seventh staff.

Example 3-12: "Calum Beag", A Hornpipe

John MacDonald in 1760 with more contemporary methods of playing.

Tone and tuning was also discussed with reference to misunderstandings and confusion that the "outside world" often has about this aspect of piping. I felt it was important to make an issue out of this problem which is a source of frustration for many pipers. The Great Highland bagpipe has often been denigrated by non-pipers who have little understanding of how tuning and tone are produced and perfected on the pipes.

The last section of this chapter was a discussion of the "light music" repertoire called *ceol beag*. For lovers of the pipes, this is the most commonly heard and accepted music of the Great Highland bagpipe. Again, as with *piobaireachd*, I examined how this repertoire had undergone many changes. Not only has the structure and performance of these pieces changed over time, particularly with the influence of competition, but also, views on the status of this music have changed with its increasing popularity amongst pipers and non-pipers. Nevertheless, many pipers still believe that *piobaireachd* is the more important and substantial music of the two repertoires. Therefore, both repertoires represent different sound structures, attitudes and behaviours which provide an interesting discussion about two different conceptions of solo bagpipe activity.

### Revisiting Traditions

Music means many things to many people. It is not just one item to be analyzed in a long list of cultural activities, but a medium for the researcher to acquire knowledge about the diverse and complex nature of a given community. The analysis of music has always to do with an imagined or constructed past, present and future. It has always to do with issues of representation, of influences, values, identities and aesthetics. A piece of music can indeed be taken as a symbol of "border crossing" (Giroux 1992), which means that it can represent a variety of elements that belong to different time spans, political, social and personal agendas. As Giroux explained:

In effect . . . [there should be] a general attempt to transgress the borders sealed by modernism, to proclaim the arbitrariness of all boundaries, and to call attention to the sphere of culture as a shifting social and historical construction (Giroux 1992: 55).

The basis of this statement can be understood within postmodern discourse, a body of theory which has had a significant impact of the social sciences within the last decade. It is in this context that it became vital for me to discuss topics in relation to three main areas: questions of power and gender, the use of constructed tradition and how sound is valued and understood within a collective body of knowledge.

In the first chapter, I began with a discussion of the

dynamics of prestige and power in the aesthetics of *ceol mor* and *ceol beag*. I acknowledged the "great divide" between these two genres, as these genres have embodied profoundly contrasting degrees of power and prestige. I showed how this division between the genres has nothing to do with the inherent qualities of the music. Instead, I explored how such a divide between two musical genres has been constructed that way by a specific group of people within a community at a particular time and space, and how such an "invented" tradition still persists today.

Theoretically, my analysis aimed to deconstruct the hierarchies of prestige and power within the repertoires. Here, I established that these piping traditions have been constructed, invented, and, subsequently, I analyzed the degree of power that these traditions have had. I concluded that "tradition" cannot be viewed as an anonymous or an independent body which imposes its ideals and activities on pipers. Rather, it is a collective body of symbols, ideas, and activities which has been manipulated by pipers for generations. This manipulation of symbols is part of the human search for meaning and identity and, as I have shown, has enormous power on those who are adherents of that given tradition.

This, I realize, poses both a threat and a positive opportunity for pipers and enthusiasts of this music. It is threatening because there is much value and meaning behind the

desire to maintain the aura of prestige in *piobaireachd*. To deconstruct the prestige of *piobaireachd* means, in fact, to deconstruct the atmosphere and myths which surround this genre. Certain pipers have spent a lifetime promoting what they see as the beautiful, mythical and artistically challenging *piobaireachd* genre. While *ceol beag*, on the other hand, has been very popular, it has never received the same type of promotion. My analysis has outlined the genesis of this divide. It has allowed me to understand the major forces that play a role in the competition arena and to examine the criteria under which judgements are made in the solo contests.

The arrangements of power can be observed on a very practical level in the solo piping community of the Glengarry Highland Games. Power is part of human agency. It allows people to exert, influence and control activities that are meaningful to them. As a result, I felt that it was important to explore issues of power in the areas that touch on the everyday lives of the pipers. The issues on which I focused were those that were often discussed amongst the piping community. They included the Piper and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, the status of solo piping, and the quality of adjudication. Throughout my thesis, I placed as much emphasis on the nature of the political activity as the actual activity itself. For me, the "political" has to do with the complex and shifting nature of human interaction particularly between those with power and those without. The Glengarry Games has

proven to be an ideal site to examine the contested terrain of power.

The final area of analysis of this first chapter was an examination of gender issues within the piping community. A discussion of gender issues was critical to the integrity of the research, particularly since it is an area which has so often been ignored in ethnomusicological studies. My study began with an examination of the gendered environment of solo piping contests, which then raised a number of issues. The gender issues of a given community represent indeed a highly sensitive territory due to their complex nature and high degree of integration with many other factors in society. By questioning issues of gender, the ethnographer is, therefore, often challenging basic tenets of a society. What I have tried to do is to identify the main factors that have played a significant role in the gendering of piping. The statements made here are far from conclusive and only attempt to outline ideas which, I believe, could be useful for further research projects.

In the second chapter I examined the process through which tradition in piping has developed. I emphasized the "invented" nature of the piping traditions. Traditions such as those of the Great Highland bagpipe have long been considered to be unchanging music from the past. There has been strong attempts to preserve the Scottish heritage in a specific form that is designated as "traditional," the way one would preserve an

object in a museum. In this way of thinking, there is an assumption that a given tradition is handed down from one generation to the next as an inherited object or as an unchanging commodity. In this chapter, I have argued that traditions are developed and transformed through human behaviour and interactions over time and space.

This concept poses a challenge to the usual way of thinking, since it implies that traditions can be of any age, that they are not reliant on the inheritance of many generations and that any one person or group of people can modify, change and develop "traditions" to suit their needs. This view of tradition can give one a sense of rootlessness or, perhaps gives the feeling that meanings usually associated with the notion of tradition have been lost. This does not have to be necessarily the case. People use traditions to conjure up meaningful images of the past to create roots that secure them in the present. Symbols, rituals, and other signifiers allow people to make important links between the past, present and future. It is by examining people's allocation of values and meanings that researchers of human activity and behaviour will find the most interest.

This view of tradition opens up many exciting possibilities for researchers interested in tradition. It allows us to look beyond the behaviour seen on the surface of those active in a given tradition. Researchers can examine the meanings derived from these "traditional" activities by exploring the use of

ancient materials, the meaningful links that are made through these materials and, subsequently, the new appropriations that are continuously developed. Music is a field, par excellence, where the complex layers of traditional rituals, symbols and behaviour can begin to be unravelled.

In the first two chapters, I explored the many facets of music which I understood to mean behaviours, practices, social and political ideas as well as issues of musical sound. In the third chapter, I focused on the sound itself in the two solo bagpipe repertoires. In doing research in the field of ethnomusicology, I felt a certain sense of responsibility to discuss musical sound or sound structures in significant detail. Ethnomusicologists can contribute to research in the social sciences by bringing their views as musicians to the forefront of their research activity. Our background as participants in a musical culture lends itself to a different approach to research. Specifically, in the area of sound structures, we have an advantageous point of entry into other musical languages since we already have a strong understanding of the structures of one particular musical language.

The examination of the musical structures of solo bagpipe music taught me that it is important not to analyze musical sound in isolation from other elements of music. In the presentation of a *piobaireachd* or *ceol beag* tune, I learned that contextualization and qualification, from as many different perspectives as possible, was a key requisite of

analytical methodology. This meant that all my analytical moves had to be relational. They had to qualify and contextualize the complex relationships that surround the music itself. In order to do this the analysis could not be heard from the perspective of only one voice but had to be heard from a multiplicity of voices, from those who participate in the expression and experience of these musics. In this chapter, I tried, therefore, to explore the many aspects of musical sound through the views of a number of different pipers. Where possible, I quoted directly from interviews so that the reader would see how the piper described musical structures, tuning, expression and execution in his own words.

This thesis was an examination of aesthetics. Aesthetics is a huge and general word but, for me, the essential meaning has to do with how people perceive and conceive their world and how that world is articulated through music. By taking the meaning of the word "aesthetics" literally, I felt that I really had to understand the main issues that emerged from the pipers' ideas, concerns and values. I wanted to understand what the pipers talked about amongst themselves, what made them worry before they climbed onto "the boards" to perform and what excited them about their playing. Moreover, I wanted to know how piping as a cultural activity related to their identity within the rest of their life. This final chapter, then, was a culmination of what I tried to examine in the

entire thesis: to understand the combined ingredients that made up the pipers' aesthetic. It was a discussion of sound structures but a discussion which could only be understood within the context explored in the first two chapters. Ultimately, the three chapters together represent the main goal of my research: to understand what is at "the heart" of solo piping activity at the Glengarry Highland Games.

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