

# ‘Foreign Sonnets Bear the Gree’

## Music and Cultural Identity in Scottish Enlightenment Society

In the wake of the 1707 Acts of Union, people in Scotland faced a crisis of identity. New questions emerged about which country, language, and history they should identify with and promote. In this paper I summarise some of the central issues surrounding national identity, draw on existing literary scholarship to identify how various Scottish writers responded to issues of Scottishness and Britishness, and then place various instances of Edinburgh-based music in the last quarter of the eighteenth century within that literary framework. In doing so I lay a foundation for future analysis on how the aesthetic ideals of the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment can be applied to musical performance.

For Scots, 1707 marked the loss of a country. While nominally equally yoked with England, dire economic conditions—especially marked by the failure of the Darien Scheme and seven years of famine from 1696<sup>1</sup>—combined with the continuation of Parliament in London, not Edinburgh, to give English culture and language more allure.<sup>2</sup> ‘[T]he long sweep of English history’ could explain the socioeconomic reality in which eighteenth-century Scots found themselves in ways that Scottish history could not,<sup>3</sup> and attempts to cultivate a shared sense of British patriotism and identity were hindered by being much less historically rooted than the existing pride in its constituent kingdoms.

Scottish reaction to this new order varied. Especially among the well-educated, many Scots attempted to imitate the English. London society was seen as most desirable, so upwardly mobile Scots sought a place within it. While this is broadly true regarding English attitudes towards philosophy, history, and culture, the use of language provides a good case study in preparation for a discussion of music. Among culturally famous Scots, David Hume was famously self-conscious about his Scottish accent and turns of phrase, going so far as to publish a list of ‘Scotticisms’ he sought to avoid.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Adam Smith—who spent part of his youth living in England—was praised for being more able to imitate an English accent.<sup>5</sup> Hume’s philosophical rival James Beattie imitated him in creating his own book of Scotticisms,<sup>6</sup> and elsewhere endorsed the language of ‘learned and polite persons in London, and the neighbouring Universities of Oxford and Cambridge’ as ‘the standard of the English tongue’.<sup>7</sup> There were regular classes in Edinburgh on English pronunciation, and Scotland was marked by a more urgent sense of language reform and normalisation than England,<sup>8</sup> even producing two of the English language’s greatest eighteenth century reformers: James Elphinston (who proposed a radical phonetic spelling overhaul) and James Buchanan.<sup>9</sup>

However, Scottish literati were more than blind followers of English fashion. Scottish history had a much deeper connection to Continental Europe, and so Scots were more likely than the

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1. David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 3–5.

2. Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

3. Kidd, p. 209.

4. Marina Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 2005), p. 65.

5. Charles Jones, *A Language Suppressed: The Pronunciation of the Scots Language in the 18th Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1995).

6. James Beattie, *Scotticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improperities of Speech and*

**N**OTICE iz here guivven to' Ladies,  
 az wel az Gentelmen, (hoo ar indeed equally in-  
 terested) dhat dhe gratuitous Lectures on  
*PROPRIETY ascertained in her Picture ;*  
 Or, *English Speech and Spelling rendered mutual Guides ;* with  
*a digest ov Scotticism and moddern Anglicism,*  
 Wil be rezumed in St. Jons Lodge, Cannongate, at two'  
 o' cloc to-morrow dhe twenty-fourth instant, and continued  
 at dhe fame place and our, (az uzual) on dhe three following  
 days ;  
 BY JAMES ELPHINSTON :

**Figure 1:** An advertisement for James Elphinston's English class (demonstrating his proposed spelling reform), printed in *The Caledonian Mercury* on 23 July, 1787.

English to draw on previous alliances, their own travels to the Continent—especially for education—and other cultural exchanges to appreciate European culture.<sup>10</sup> Scots like David Hume tempered English exceptionalism with a more Continental perspective,<sup>11</sup> ultimately serving as ‘a “quality control” check’ to the ‘English history [which was] the basis of British identity’.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the above criticism of the Scots language<sup>13</sup>, actual opinions on and use of it varied widely. James Beattie pled for tolerance regarding varying accents that were the result merely of different taste and the accident of being born in difference places<sup>14</sup> and commemorated Allan Ramsay's death in Scots verse.<sup>15</sup> James Boswell was ‘the epitome of the Scot striving to gain access to London society’ and yet thought it was improper for Scottish people to sound purely English and even considered founding an Edinburgh-based newspaper in the Scots language.<sup>16</sup> Hugh Blair spurned the English pastorals of Pope and Philip while praising Allan Ramsay's ballad opera in Scots *The Gentle Shepherd*,<sup>17</sup> while Allan Ramsay himself wrote a book of Scots poetry a few years earlier which he prefaced with the admission that his use of ‘Scotticisms’ could offend the polite listener.<sup>18</sup> However, far from being contradictory, this attitude merely illustrates the emergence of distinct registers suitable for Scots usage.

Ramsay provides a good example. His comic work (*The Gentle Shepherd*, satires, farces) is

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*Writing* (Edinburgh: For the Bookseller, 1797).

7. James Beattie, *A Theory of Language in Two Parts* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1788), p. 92.

8. Manfred Görlach, *A Textual History of Scots* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2002), p. 170.

9. Jones, *A Language Suppressed: The Pronunciation of the Scots Language in the 18th Century*.

10. F. W. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), pp. 17–18.

11. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, p. 211.

12. Kidd, p. 212.

13. In the eighteenth century, as today, there was a continuum between what is now Scottish Standard English and Scots, not a sharp delineation. For this paper, ‘Scots’ refers to most of the spectrum: either pure Scots or a Scots/English hybrid.

14. Beattie, *A Theory of Language in Two Parts*, pp. 91–92.

15. Görlach, *A Textual History of Scots*, pp. 172–173.

16. Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary*, p. 72.

17. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 7.

18. Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary*, p. 91; Allan Ramsay, *Poems* (Edinburgh: Thomas Ruddiman, for the Author, 1721).

in Scots but more serious output is in English.<sup>19</sup> In effect, he distances himself from Scots, not claiming it as his own native language but rather as ‘a provincial vernacular for the amusement of the educated’.<sup>20</sup> This attitude continued throughout the eighteenth century, with some of Scots’s fiercest critics—David Hume, Adam Smith, James Beattie, Hugh Blair, and many others—endorsing it for pastoral poetry from an antiquarian viewpoint.<sup>21</sup> The living language of Scots was seen as uneducated and provincial, but when distanced by the passage of time it was exactly this provinciality that gave it a special cachet in the Scottish Enlightenment craze for the rustic. The exotic was only valued when sufficiently insulated from polite society by time or space.

No such grace towards Scots was shown by Roxburghshire-born poet James Thomson, known for writing Augustan poetry entirely in English. Gerard Carruthers suggests that Thomson’s rejection of Scots was less for its own qualities but rather to distance himself from the anti-Unionist political implications associated with the language.<sup>22</sup> Though Thomson expressed Scottish patriotism through the elevation of his native landscapes in the Borders, it was clear that he saw the cultural future as British. Into this same Anglo-British<sup>23</sup> bucket we can place the playwright John Home and most people associated with the Scottish Enlightenment: Hume, Smith, Francis Hutcheson, and so forth.

Into this scene entered Robert Fergusson. Educated at St Andrews, he was familiar both with classical antiquity and with the Scots makar tradition of Gavin Douglas and William Drummond, and he made a splash in Edinburgh with the publication of his Scots poetry in the early 1770s. Rather than relegating his use of Scots to the rustic, he sought to continue the makar tradition—as Douglas translated the *Aeneid* into Scots so Fergusson planned to translate the *Georgics*.<sup>24</sup> But the Scots he wrote was a thoroughly modern one, following the Augustan style of Swift and Pope in its form and content,<sup>25</sup> writing about the city of now instead of the timeless countryside, and as Janet Sorensen argues, writing with a sense of physicality and corporeality that flew in the face of the dominant Enlightenment ideals of disembodied rationality.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the Scottish Vernacular Revival at large and Robert Fergusson in particular were products of the Scottish Humanist<sup>27</sup> movement, which recognised and valued continuous historic traditions (especially in the House of Stuart and in the apostolic succession of the church) and derided the harsh utilitarianism dominant in British thought.<sup>28</sup> Scottish Humanists were more aligned with Europe than with Britain and thought that Scotland deserved a place at the European table, valuing diversity by resisting the homogenising trends sweeping through Britain and celebrating that diversity by supporting a Scottish language (Scots) and Scotland’s historic cultural highlights (such as the makars). This again contrasted with what Kidd calls the sociological whiggism<sup>29</sup> prevalent among the literati, who saw a ‘missionary role for the English in world history. . . as exporters of protestantism [and] parliamentary democracy’ and—as we have seen—prescriptive language.<sup>30</sup>

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19. Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary*.

20. Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience*, p. 25.

21. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 7.

22. Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh Critical Guides (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 83–84.

23. Also known as ‘North British’; here I follow Colin Kidd’s usage.

24. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 25.

25. Susan Manning, “Robert Fergusson and Eighteenth-Century Poetry,” in *‘Heaven-Taught Fergusson’: Robert Burns’s Favourite Scottish Poet*, ed. Robert Crawford (East Lothian, UK: Tuckwell Press, Ltd., 2003), 87–111.

26. Janet Sorensen, “‘Wow’ and other Cries in the Night: Fergusson’s Vernacular, Scots Talking Heads, and Unruly Bodies,” in *‘Heaven-Taught Fergusson’: Robert Burns’s Favourite Scottish Poet*, ed. Robert Crawford (East Lothian, UK: Tuckwell Press, Ltd., 2003), 117–131.

27. Despite Freeman’s use of ‘Scots Humanist’, I use ‘Scottish’ to follow modern usage and also to disambiguate it from both the Scots language and Scottish people.

28. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise*.

29. As per Kidd’s usage, whiggism here is broadly conceived and not necessarily political.

30. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, p.6.

Into this varied response to negotiating a Scottish, British, or European identity I introduce music. To limit scope, this paper specifically focuses on music in Edinburgh in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that was used for entertaining polite society<sup>31</sup>. This last qualifier was chosen to encompass events like concerts, dances, theatrical performances, magic shows, and circus acts done both in public and in private, but exclude both the more functional music of the church, military, street vendors, and so forth and also the more vernacular music of beggars, ferry fiddlers, tavern musicians, ‘scrapers’;<sup>32</sup> labouring class hobbyists, and the like. The excluded music almost certainly accounts for the numerical majority of players,<sup>33</sup> but this paper is intended to explore the admittedly-elite group of fashion setters.

As an aside, the choice of ‘vernacular’ above deliberately echoes earlier discussion of vernacular language and also references the Scottish architectural distinction between ‘polite’ and ‘vernacular’ building styles<sup>34</sup>. What is meant by ‘vernacular music’ is the music available to and commonly produced by people regardless of social class or formal education. This is a descriptive label applied to the real musical activity of groups of people in a particular place and time (in our case Scotland, usually Edinburgh, and the eighteenth century, usually its last quarter) and unlike most definitions of ‘folk music’ or ‘traditional music’ makes no prescriptive claims about how the music should be devised, transmitted, or performed.

Perhaps the primary musical organisation in question is the Edinburgh Musical Society (EMS), formally founded in 1728<sup>35</sup> and at its creative peak around 1775<sup>36</sup> before succumbing to financial problems and eventually closing in 1798.<sup>37</sup> This timeline lines up well with the Scottish Enlightenment at large (Adam Smith, for example, published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759 and *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 before dying in 1790). But what did they play?

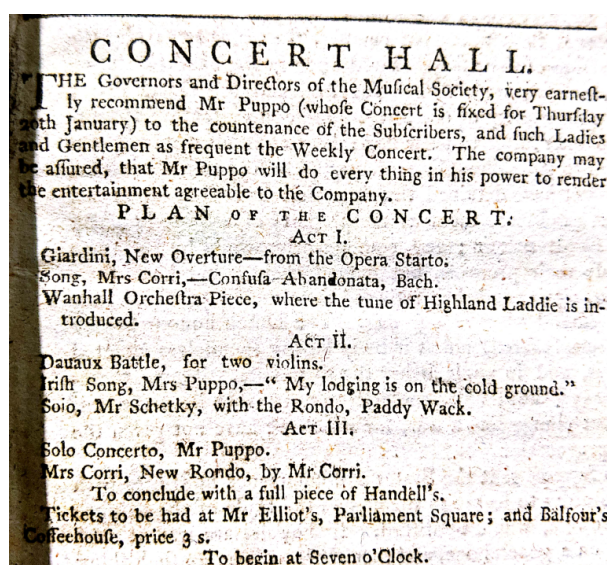


Figure 2: The EMS’s advertisement for a concert on 20 January, 1780.

The plan for a concert on 20 January, 1780 (advertised in *The Caledonian Mercury* on 15

31. The same literati we have already discussed, people with the social standing to be invited to society balls, and people with the financial means to afford the expensive tickets and accoutrements required.

32. Baroness Carolina Oliphant Nairne, *Life and Songs of the Baroness Nairne*, 2nd, ed. Charles Rogers (London: Charles Griffin & Co, 1872), p. 22.

33. Hugh Macdonald, “Scotch Myths and a Theory of Icebergs: Some Thoughts on our National Music,” *Stretto: Journal of the Scottish Music Information Centre Spring* (1986): 6–10.

34. Stuart Eydmann, in discussion with the author, October 27, 2021

35. David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 33.

36. Johnson, pp. 65, 199.

37. Johnson, p. 41.

and 19 January) is typical. It features an Italian opera overture, a song by Johann Christian Bach, a symphony piece by Vienna-based Czech composer Johann Baptist Wanhal ‘where the [Scottish] tune of Highland Laddie is introduced’, a piece by Handel, a violin concerto (played and presumably composed by the Italian immigrant Giuseppe Puppo, the EMS’s concertmaster), an Irish song performed by Puppo’s wife Rebecca, an obscure but almost certainly French piece for two violins, and another new piece (probably a song) by other Italian immigrants to Edinburgh: the Corris. The programme thus directly mirrors the sociological whiggism described by Colin Kidd. Namely, it follows London fashion (with the content from London residents—albeit not London natives—Bach and Handel) and it tempers it with Continental preferences in the form of the Italian, French, and Czech/Viennese works.

The introduction of Highland Laddie merits further thought. Based on Wanhal’s surviving work, it seems likely that Highland Laddie was introduced post facto by someone in Scotland, in all likelihood Puppo himself. If we accept that the EMS was following the whiggism of the time, the implication is that envelopment in a Continental symphony was a suitable register for what would otherwise be an overly provincial native melody. Dressing Highland Laddie up for the concert hall was an amusement for the educated elite (who were in on the joke), a proto-Romantic separation between the timeless rural past and the urban life of the day. In other words, it was not an elevation of vernacular Scottish art as a serious contribution to modern culture. The attitude of Boswell, Blair, and others towards the Scots language comes to mind.

Stepping away from the concert hall, the same attitude is at work in music publication. In the decade of the 1780s, for example, the majority of music sold in Edinburgh was either keyboard variations on a frequently-Scottish air (as in Thomas Butler’s rondo form of Lewie Gordon, advertised many times including on 29 December, 1780<sup>38</sup>); imported Continental music (such as Haydn sonatas, 24 November, 1780); English catches, glees, and other songs (19 December, 1780); or the very occasional book of dance music for the violin (discussed below)<sup>39</sup>. Of particular note is that nearly everyone of musical importance here—Thomas Butler, the Puppos, Girolamo Stabilini (Giuseppe Puppo’s successor at the EMS), the Corris, the Reinagles—were not Scottish.

Butler’s setting of Lewie Gordon was apparently hugely popular for at least two decades—David Johnson found nine editions of it, the last from 1800. And like Wanhal’s symphony with Highland Laddie, it seems to treat its Scottish source material as a rustic curio. The air itself is often lost in a cascade of keyboard pyrotechnics: dashing demisemiquaver runs and arpeggiations, hand-crossing, a single trill lasting for nine bars, staccato passages, and more. Further separating it from a unique connection to Scottish (as opposed to Anglo-British) culture, it was reprinted in London for the enjoyment of an English audience, and it was one of many similar arrangements for the harpsichord or piano published in Edinburgh and London in the final two decades of the eighteenth century. While Scottish tunes were very popular subjects, other themes include ‘A Favorite Irish Air’ (set by Domenico Corri), ‘The German Spa: A Favorite Country Dance’ (George Barron, likely English), ‘Amo Amas’ (Corri), ‘Lira, Lira, La’ (Thomas Thompson, an organist in Newcastle), and so forth<sup>40</sup>.

David Johnson calls the development of this form ‘disastrous’ and a ‘blind alley’ as it relates to the ‘European development of the sonata’.<sup>41</sup> A blind alley it may have been (indeed, it died out around 1800), but contributing to European developments was not a priority for the Anglo-British society that was producing it. He also considers it to be an upper class expression of Scottish nationalism,<sup>42</sup> but this is difficult to reconcile with the form’s invention in London by J. C. Bach in 1777 and its development by and popularity with various people who were neither from nor resident in Scotland. Englishman Thomas Thompson, for example, devised variations

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38. Described as ‘effective trash... in the style of early-Beethoven-and-syrup’ in Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 66.

39. This is based on my complete reading of the musical content in *The Caledonian Mercury* from 1780-89.

40. These particular examples are all from the same ca. 1800 bound book in my private collection.

41. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 196.

42. Johnson, p. 197.



Figure 3: Three excerpts from Thomas Butler's setting of Lewie Gordon.

for 'Lady Cunningham's Strathspey: A favorite Scots Tune'. While undoubtedly some of the source tunes for these keyboard arrangements were transmitted orally, it is likely that this particular tune was introduced to Thompson in print: various aspects of his ornamentation and bass line suggest it came directly from Niel Gow's *Second Collection of Strathspey Reels*. After a 'Moderato' statement of the base tune (echoing Gow's 'Slow' indication), Thompson proceeds in a style similar to Butler's (discussed above), with increasingly athletic runs of demisemiquavers and arpeggiations over the tune. The strathspey as a form may have its roots in Gaelic work songs and Highland dancing,<sup>43</sup> but in Thompson's hands Lady Cunningham's Strathspey has been thoroughly anglicised—without even a Scotch snap remaining—and converted from dance music to listening music.<sup>44</sup> In short, some of the musical content may have vernacular Scottish sources, but there is no reason to think that it was performed with elements of a vernacular Scottish style.

Returning to our representative EMS concert, we now turn to its Continental content. There is a substantial history of Continental—especially Italian—influence on Scottish music in the eighteenth century. Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676–1755) studied with the great violinist Arcangelo Corelli in Rome<sup>45</sup> and Robert Bremner studied with Corelli's pupil Francesco Geminiani.<sup>46</sup> Skilled Italian musicians such as Lorenzo Bocchi, Francesco Barsanti, Nicolo Pasquali,

43. William Lamb, "Reeling in the Strathspey: The Origins of Scotland's National Music," *Scottish Studies* 36 (June 2013): 66–102.

44. For a discussion of the eighteenth-century Scottish shift from dancing to listening, see Ronnie Gibson, "The Status of the Master Fiddler in Eighteenth-Century Scotland," in *Òn gCos go Cluas: From Dancing to Listening*, ed. Liz Doherty and Fintan Vallely (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 2019), 86–91.

45. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 59.

46. Robert Bremner, "Some Thoughts on the Performance of Concert Music," (London), 1777,

and eventually the Corris, Puppo, and Stabilini all emigrated to Edinburgh<sup>47</sup> and Italianate guides to aspects of musical style were popular.<sup>48</sup> Wealthy Scots tended to travel to Europe as part of their education (the Grand Tour), and Italian musicians were for the most part welcomed to Edinburgh with open arms. Freeman and Kidd both refer to Scotland as having a historically closer connection to the Continent than England did and discuss the European sympathies of both Scottish Humanism and Scottish Whiggism leading up to and including the eighteenth century. The rich history of Scottish-Continental musical interactions before the eighteenth century is out of scope for this paper, but the point remains that eighteenth-century Scots were intellectually predisposed to welcome Continental ideas and Continental people, and—as it relates to music—in fact they did. In conclusion, musicians in Scotland had both the inclination and the training to play Italian music in an Italian way.

It is tempting to identify a xenophobic backlash to this Italian dominance. Allan Ramsay, speaking as Patie Birnie, mocks castrati and Italy's 'fozie springs'<sup>49</sup> in his 'Elegy on Patie Birnie' (1724). Nearly fifty years later, Robert Fergusson lamented how 'foreign sonnets bear the gree, / And crabbit queer variety / Of sound fresh sprung frae Italy, / A bastard breed'<sup>50</sup> in his 'Elegy on the Death of Scots Music' and called on fiddlers to 'banish vile Italian tricks / frae out [their] quorum'<sup>51</sup> in 'The Daft Days'.<sup>52</sup> Rev John Skinner joined the fun in his denunciation of 'dringing dull Italian lays' in his song 'Tullochgorum', and in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' Robert Burns wrote that 'Italian trills are tame'.

A few things stand out. First, two of the examples are elegies in the Standard Habbie stanza, identifying them per Scots literary convention as mock-elegies not to be taken literally.<sup>53</sup> Second, all five examples have an explicit comparison to native music, the first four to some variety of vernacular song or dance music and Burns' to a farming family singing the psalms. Most critically, all four poets were key members of the Scottish Vernacular Revival and the earlier three were (at least nominally) Episcopalian. Therefore per Freeman we can align them with the Scottish Humanist movement that gave great value to being European. Since contemporary European thought valued local languages and a heterogeneous mix of cultures, their pride in being European was expressed through the use of Scots and through their pride in being Scottish and valuing Scottish culture. As Freeman has paraphrased Paul Hazard: 'in their provincial activities they were... very European indeed'.<sup>54</sup> Put another way, in comparing Italian and Scottish music the goal was not to denigrate the one, but to elevate the other. The poems stand as 'tokens in the construction of a self-sufficient Scotland, independent in mind if not in actuality'.<sup>55</sup> The proof is in their lived actions—Ramsay collaborated with Italian cellist Lorenzo Bocchi<sup>56</sup> and Fergusson was good friends with the famous Italian castrato Giusto Tenducci, going so far as to write lyrics for Tenducci to sing in the opera *Artaxerxes*.<sup>57</sup> Even Ramsay's son (the painter Allan Ramsay) sent a letter to *The Caledonian Mercury* for 23 February, 1782 praising

47. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 54–55, 58, 191 ff.

48. To name a few: Nicolo Pasquali, *Thorough-Bass Made Easy: or, Practical Rules for Finding and Applying its Various Chords with Little Trouble* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Author & R[obert] Bremner, 1757); Bremner, "Some Thoughts on the Performance of Concert Music"; John Brown, *Letters upon the Poetry and Music of the Italian Opera* (Edinburgh: Printed for Bell, 1789).

49. Dull, insipid dance tunes. This and ensuing translations of Scots depend on Mairi Robinson, ed., *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985).

50. Foreign [sonatas] won first place / And bad-tempered queer variety / Of sounds freshly sprung from Italy / A bastard breed!

51. ... from their gathering of friends; note that 'quorum' is a Latin loanword.

52. Robert Fergusson, *Selected Poems*, ed. James Robertson (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000).

53. Kenneth Simpson, "Poetic Genre and National Identity: Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 30, no. 1 (1998): 31–42.

54. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 17.

55. W. N. Herbert, "Fergusson and the Bycultural Canon," in *'Heaven-Taught Fergusson': Robert Burns's Favourite Scottish Poet*, ed. Robert Crawford (East Lothian, UK: Tuckwell Press, Ltd., 2003), p. 209.

56. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 191.

57. Fergusson, *Selected Poems*, p. 11.

the EMS as among the most ‘genteel or liberal’ institutions in Europe and urging his compatriots to support Puppo in his upcoming benefit concert.

This Scottish Humanist elevation of local art, so clear in Scots poetry (especially that of Fergusson), is less obvious and perhaps less common among music. I have already discussed how Scottish tunes were exoticised and whiggishly removed from vernacular practise among the literati, and it was exactly these literati who provided the financial support necessary to encourage music composition. The most promising candidate for a Scottish Humanist musician at the end of the eighteenth century is violinist, pianist, and composer Robert Mackintosh. Mackintosh was born in Perthshire around 1743, must have received quality training on the violin and in composition from an early age<sup>58</sup>, and moved to Edinburgh by 1772, where he is credited with editing Charles McLean’s posthumous *Collection of Favourite Scots Tunes* and—per the handwritten composer attributions in the National Library of Scotland’s copy—writing six of its variation sonatas.<sup>59</sup>

The image displays a musical score for Robert Mackintosh's arrangement of the Scottish air 'Gilder Roy'. The score is organized into three systems. The first system contains the 'Introductory tune' in C major and common time, followed by three variations: 'SLOW' (marked 'SLOW'), 'Var. 1', 'Var. 2', and 'Var. 3'. The second system is a 'Minuet' in 3/4 time. The third system is a 'Gigue' in 12/8 time. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, trills (tr), and ornaments, which are noted as original in the caption.

**Figure 4:** The first phrase of each variation and movement in Mackintosh’s arrangement of Gilder Roy. The transcription and variation indicators are mine, but all slurs, ornaments, and other marks are original.

The variation sonata is a form unique to eighteenth-century Scotland, consisting of a single Scottish air that goes through a series of transformations to resemble various Continental dance forms. Each dance type is then treated as a movement of the sonata, much like the *sonata da camera* developed in Germany and Italy, and in Mackintosh’s case fashionable compositional or violinistic devices are also introduced (Johnson mentions flying up-bow staccato and transpo-

58. The main proof is in the quality of his compositions and his success as a performer, but he himself recognised the importance of early musical education in a *Caledonian Mercury* ad on 1 November, 1780.

59. Timothy S. Macdonald, “Robert Mackintosh of Tulliemet: A Statistical and Sociocultural Analysis” (*Musica Scotica*, 2017), p. 11; Ch[arle]s McLean, *A Collection of Favourite Scots Tunes with Variations for the Violin &c. And a Bass for the Violoncello & Harpsichord*, ed. [Robert Mackintosh] (Edinburgh: N[eil] Stewart, [1772]); David Johnson, *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century: A Music Collection and Historical Study*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2005).



sition to flat keys, a list that can be supplemented with imitative bass lines, double stopping, syncopation, and shifting out of first position). Figure 4 shows excerpts of Mackintosh’s setting of Gilder Roy. The first movement states the base tune simply (albeit with ornamentation and a lush bass line), then takes it through three very violinistic variations. The second movement recasts the tune as a minuet (albeit with no further development), and the third as an Italianate giga<sup>60</sup>. The parallels between Mackintosh’s variation sonatas and Fergusson’s Scots poetry are striking, as both draw on: previous high points in Scottish culture (the makars and the old airs), appropriate Continental forms, formal training in the art, and contemporary fashion. It is also notable that both Fergusson’s first published poetry and McLean’s collection were published in Edinburgh in the same year, 1772. Very little is known of Mackintosh’s personal life and views, but he did spend the end of his life in London where he attended an Anglican church—St James, Piccadilly—which suggests but does not prove that while in Edinburgh he may have been an Episcopalian like Fergusson.<sup>61</sup>

Fergusson’s literary developments were abruptly cut short by his illness and death in 1774 at the age of 24, and his poetical successors (such as Burns, Sir Walter Scott, and James Hogg) moved the art in different aesthetic directions. Mackintosh continued working in Edinburgh, but started to adapt his style, if for no other reason than his continued professional success: he played in the EMS but by the end of the decade had not risen to the prominence or pay band he hoped for.<sup>62</sup> In 1783<sup>63</sup> he released an original collection under his own name which mostly consists of purely Italian- or French-styled pieces that were well out of date on the Continent by the 1780s (minuets, gavottes, gigas, and even a three-movement sonata with aspects reminiscent of Boccherini, Corelli, and Locatelli) but also has sixteen reels. While not as obvious a nationalistic move as his variation sonatas, there is still something of Scottish Humanism in the collection. Rather than blending Scottish and Continental elements into a single output, it juxtaposes them (for a final comparison with Fergusson, one is reminded of his decision to write poetry in both Scots and English towards the end of his life). French and Scottish dance forms are given equal prominence in Mackintosh’s title (*Airs, Minuets, Gavotts and Reels*), he tips his cap to Italy by calling the book his ‘Opera 1st’ (other collections use ‘book’ instead of ‘opera’), and the reels—while definitionally Scottish reels—are presented in a cosmopolitan way. They feature a range of keys (from three flats to two sharps), contrapuntal bass lines, clever chromaticism and syncopation, rhythmic variety, and written-out ornamentation. Notably, they do not involve features associated with many vernacular reels, such as the use of modes other than Ionian and Aeolian, penta- or hexatonicism, I–bVII–I chord progressions, and final notes not on the tonic<sup>64</sup>. The resulting impression is that as of 1783 Mackintosh believed Scottish dance music to be a worthy peer to French gavottes and Italian gigas on the European stage, even if he was only able to publish and play it in Scotland.

As alluded to above, Mackintosh was of course not the only one to publish reels in Edinburgh around this time. According to advertisements in *The Caledonian Mercury*, published collections of Scottish dance music in the 1780s include Alexander McGlashan’s (15 March, 1780), Angus Cumming’s (18 March, 1780), Robert Ross’s (12 April, 1780), William Marshall’s (21 April, 1781), another of Alexander McGlashan’s (5 September, 1781), Mackintosh’s (13 December, 1783), Patrick MacDonald’s (3 May, 1784), Niel (and Nathaniel) Gow’s (5 June, 1784), Andrew Shirrefs’s (16 August, 1787), and another by the Gows (1788, though apparently not advertised in the *Mercury*).

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60. Each excerpt is the first half of the tune’s A part; the full sonata has the second half and also the corresponding B part.

61. Macdonald, “Robert Mackintosh of Tulliemet: A Statistical and Sociocultural Analysis.”

62. Mary Anne Alburger, *Scottish Fiddlers and their Music*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: The Hardie Press, 1996), p. 67.

63. See his publication announcement in *The Caledonian Mercury* on 13 December, 1783.

64. Speaking as a violinist, Mackintosh’s reels are also consistently among the most difficult of the period to play.



**Figure 5:** One of Mackintosh's reels, published in 1783. Note the Italianate run in the first bar and the syncopation in the last bar of the first line and third-from-last bar of the second line.

It is striking that several of them were published in Edinburgh but strongly linked with the Highlands and Islands. MacDonald's is the most notable example, being of *Highland Vocal Airs... [and] Country Dances or Reels of the North Highlands, & Western Isles* and (in the preface) explicitly cast as a work of proto-ethnomusicology to collect and preserve the music of a foreign, Highland culture.<sup>65</sup> Other Highland examples include Cumming's (of *Strathspey or Old Highland Reels*, mentioning that he lives in Granton in Strathspey) and even Gow's (of *Strathspey Reels*—note the use of 'strathspey' as an adjective denoting Gaelic-speaking origin<sup>66</sup>—and mentioning that he lives in Dunkeld). MacDonald's is clearly of antiquarian interest,<sup>67</sup> and Cumming's advertisement also emphasises that the collection is of *old* reels that have been 'preserved in the greatest purity'. Gow's book unfortunately comes without further commentary, but it was financially supported by a set of subscribers who were predominantly urban, of high social standing, and not Highlanders: apart from many members of the gentry, it includes the former Lord Provost of Edinburgh and several Writers to the Signet. Like so much Scottish literature—and like the newly instituted bagpipe competitions put on by the Highland Society of London, which required 'Highland Dress' to enter<sup>68</sup>—a vernacular product was made more acceptable to polite society by being exoticised, or as Murray Pittock elegantly summarised the late eighteenth century fad for the exotic, '[b]eing primitive was a new hobby for the sophisticated'.<sup>69</sup> Unlike Mackintosh's reels, those composed or collected by MacDonald, Cumming, and Gow are full of melodic and harmonic devices out of place in Continental concert music and now strongly associated with Scottish reels (see Figure 6). Gow's title page claims *a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsichord*. The I-bVII progression in Figure 6 (in this case from G to F) would, when played on a harpsichord, sound out of place to ears accustomed to lush Italian harmonies, but to Gow's harpsichord-playing and -listening customers the perceived primitiveness of the harmony was exactly the point.

In conclusion, competing views of Scottish cultural and national identities—as well as the literati's navigation of literature written with vernacular elements—provide an interesting lens

65. Patrick M[a]cDonald, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs, Never Hitherto Published, to which are Added a Few of the Most Lively Country Dances or Reels of the North Highlands, & Western Isles: And Some Specimens of Bagpipe Music* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Publisher, [1783]).

66. William Lamb, "Grafting Culture: On the Development and Diffusion of the Strathspey in Scottish Music," *Scottish Studies* 37 (February 2017): 94–104.

67. Karen McAulay, *Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting from the Enlightenment to the Romantic Era* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013), p. 25 ff.

68. c.f. the 6 September, 1783 issue of *The Caledonian Mercury*, and similar ads at the end of subsequent summers.

69. Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.40.



**Figure 6:** The first line of a reel from Niel Gow’s first collection. In addition to the harmony, note the use of gapped scales and relative simplicity—especially in the bass line—compared to Mackintosh’s reel above.

through which to view Enlightenment-era music in Edinburgh. Simple binaries (‘folk’ vs ‘classical’, ‘urban’ vs ‘rural’, ‘local’ vs ‘foreign’) fail to adequately explain the reception of different musics among polite society or the motivations of music performers and composers in producing them. Since I have aligned music with different intellectual movements in this paper, I can do future work on the interactions between these movements’ aesthetic ideals and music.

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