

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS FG 3551

THE DONEGAL PIPER

IRISH BAGPIPE TUNES

Played on the Irish Bagpipes by

NEIL A. DUDDY



SIDE I
Band 1: IRISH ON THE MARCH
Garryowen, Donegal; Larry O'Gaffé
Band 2: DARK ROSALEEN
Easter Week 1916; Rising of the Moon;
Let Erin Remember
Band 3: OLD IRISH AIRS
Men of the West; The Dawning of the Day;
King Brian Boru

Band 4: DANCES
The Blackbird, Hills and Dales of Cork
Band 5: POLKA AND SLIP JIG
Asche's Irish Polka; Drops of Brandy
Band 6: LOVE SONGS
Beside the Anner, Believe Me If All Those
Endearing Young Charms

SIDE II
Band 1: QUICKSTEPS
Clare's Dragons; The White Cockade;
Rakes of Mallow
Band 2: JIGS
Kelly's Rambles; Father O'Flynn; Nora Creanan
Band 3: HORN PIPE
Harvest Home Hornpipe (6 Steps)

Band 4: ONE LIGHT AND ONE LIGHTER
Paddy McGinty's Goat; Phil the Fluter's Ball
Band 5: OLD SCOTLAND
Comin' Through the Rye; Will Ye No Come Back Again
Band 6: AMERICANA
Old Rustic Bridge; Swanee River, Little Toe

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

IRISH BAGPIPE TUNES Played on the Irish Bagpipes by NEIL A. DUDDY

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I was born July 4, 1905, in Clydebanks, Scotland, of Irish parents; they came from Donegal, Ireland. At the age of twelve I took up the study of bagpipes with a band sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians -- "The King Brian Boru Irish Warpipe Band." The teacher was Peter McNicol, a famous Scottish Piper. Before coming to the United States in 1930, I became teacher and Pipe-Major of the same band.

In 1935, I joined the Donegal Pipers Band of New York City as Pipe-Major and instructor; I continued in this position until 1952. During my stay with The Donegal Pipers, I developed a style suitable to folksong playing, and after leaving the band in 1952, I concentrated in that style, hoping to introduce it to American youth interested in the bagpipe. The bagpipe, being one of the oldest wind instruments known and not changed much from its original form, is particularly suited to folk style music, having been born when folk music was the only music known.

Concerning the bagpipe: The instrument has traveled all over the world in many forms and has played the world's music wherever it has traveled. It has even been played in churches in its time. The bagpipe has been known by many names and in various forms. Each country has had its own conception of the instrument and its uses, but Scotland gave it its best known form and, in addition, applied it to the honor of a dress or uniform.

Thus, today, one associates the bagpipe with kilts, and you dress to play the bagpipe.

Another important thing about bagpipes is its fingering. It has the most beautiful and distinctive fingering of any instrument known to man. When playing a march, the fingers march; dance and the finger dance; a lament and the fingers do likewise, and so on. No other instrument has this capacity.

The Bagpipe — Music on the March



LEFT, James A. Roche, RIGHT, Neil Duddy. Note that the pipes may be held either over the right or over the left shoulder. Right-handed individuals usually choose the left-shoulder method, with the left hand held above the right for fingering.

In the preparation of this article, I had the advantage of discussions with several well-known bagpipers. The bagpipe's especial notation and aspects of the instrument's history and technique were described by Neil Duddy, Edmund Tucker, James A. Roche and Ross Gorman (of the Band of America). All were most generous of their time and knowledge.

THE BAGPIPE is a peculiar instrument. It needs the open air, with preferably a few mountains thrown in, for a sounding board, yet it has but an innocent nine notes of range. It has no "harmony" yet it is the basis of an inexplicable (by the rules) aspect of harmony—the pedal point. Scottish regulations (Edinburgh competition, 1785) decree it shall be played in "the proper Highland habit"—the only instrument so set apart—yet in the Middle Ages it was an instrument of beggars, hangers-on, ne'er-do-wells. It is blown by the mouth, but the mouth has nothing to do with the quality of its tone. It "talks" in a literal sense (take the word of the Scotch and the Irish) but its words cannot be translated into English. Finally, though the Scotch have taken it as their national instrument, they are frank in recognizing its limitations. They admit it is not suitable as chamber music; that it shouldn't be played with a piano to which it is not tuned; that it doesn't serve for lullabies; that it would be of doubtful value in the neurological wards of a hospital; that it can't interpret "blues" numbers; that it shouldn't be practiced in a city apartment. At the same time they staunchly advocate its use for picnics, parades, open-air festivals, field-day events, pier and train farewells, and at-the-grave laments.

They will also proudly relate to you its distinguished history. Back in old Roman days players on the simple pipes used to burst blood vessels trying to reach the far corners of the Colosseum. Sometimes two pipes were played

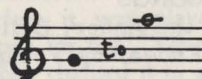
by one player—one mouthpiece, that is, and two tubes. The resulting casualties impressed some bright intellect with the advisability of channeling or reserving the air so that the lungs could take an occasional rest.

The first bagpipe was just an elongated tube with an inflatable portion midway down its length. Later the bag was increased in size and held under the player's arm so that the elbow could deal out the air. Ancient Rome had these bagpipes. (There on old coins you see its citizens, puffing away!) Persia 100 years before the Christian Era, Turkey, ancient Israel knew them.

The Great Highland Bagpipe, the one you see on parades, has grown from this simple bag-plus-tube affair into—but let's examine it part by part.

The part you blow into is called, reasonably enough, the blow pipe. It is a twelve-inch channel without side apertures and without reeds. It has one gadget, though. It is equipped with a valve at the far end, this to prevent air from being sucked back and allow the player to breathe in as well as out.

The blow pipe sends air into the bag, a mellow-shaped affair about twenty by nine inches, and made, in America at least, of elk's skin. For this one entrance there are four exits: a melody pipe called the "chanter" and three single-note pipes called "drones." The chanter has eight holes, seven in front for fingers and one at the top behind for the thumb. The notes sounded via these holes range from:



The chanter pipe—like the other pipes—is fitted into the bag by means of a "stock," a sort of base band, within which is the chanter's reed, shaped roughly like the reed of an oboe: two edges of cane tied together and vibrating against each other. The tone is also oboe-like.

The three other exits, namely the drone pipes, have no side holes. They don't need them. Each sounds but a single note, and sounds that continuously. The two shorter drones (each about twenty inches long) sound a note one octave below the chanter's lower A. The long drone (it's about three feet from bag to outlet) sounds an A one octave below *that*. The reeds of the drones are fashioned more on the clarinet order, that is, by splitting a round length of cane in such a way that the loose part vibrates like the "squeaker" a child forms from a blade of grass. The current of air issuing from the bag sets this loose part in vibration.

When deflated, the bag, with its three drone pipes, the chanter pipe and the blow pipe, has a sort of octopus look. But in playing position—big drone on left shoulder, smaller drones suspended by ribbons fan-wise from the long drone, bag under arm, elbow gently regulating air outlet, blow-pipe to lips, chanter held in the fingers, player preferably walking back and forth briskly in the open air—it looks both efficient and imposing.

Now for its music: The chanter's eight holes allow for nine notes, counting the one sounded when all eight holes are stopped:

semblance to excited speech—to battle cries, exhortations, lamentations, incitations. Just as the human wail, its sob, its pleading, its complaining is what we hear in saxophone music, so the heartier, more strident, martial inflections of the human voice are represented by the bagpipe. The scientist Baron von Kempelen, after long research, came to the conclusion that the music of the chanter reed was the nearest approach to the human voice to be found among musical instruments.

Talking in Tones

Early Celts were convinced of this fact. Pipe music, they maintained, was an actual language conveying messages with the explicitness of the spoken word—broadcasting warnings to distant friends, relaying battle declarations to foes miles away. One story goes that a bagpiper imprisoned by a hostile clan in a castle beside the sea asked his captors, as a boat piloted by his kinsman Collins and filled with his brother clansmen came into the bay, to be allowed to play from the castle parapet. This is what he “played”:

“Coll, O my dear, dinna come near;
Dinna come near, dinna come near;
Coll, O my dear, dinna come near,
I’m prisoner here, I’m prisoner here.”

So of course the boat sailed on past. However, a piper in the enemy clan understood the pipe music, too, and the roof-top piper was therefore condemned to have his fingers cut off to prevent further impromptu broadcastings.

So thoroughly convinced were early Celts of the talk-ability of bagpipes, that, in training other pipers, they “spoke” the notes. Before a pupil was allowed a pipe in his hands he was taught to chant words which stood, each, for a note with its grace note. “Hirrin,” for instance, is three notes sounded by the little finger stopping a hole on the chanter in a special way. “Hinbandre” would be written, in our modern notation, so:



It went this way: the nine notes of the chanter were represented by vowel sounds, in conjunction with certain consonants. Grace notes added consonants (sometimes vowels) to these sounds. Each syllable formed stood for a group of grace notes plus the main note. Syllables were joined to form words in much the same way that notes are tied in a staff. A familiar Scotch tune in syllabic “notation”—“*I hin-do, ho-dro, hin-do, ho-dro, hin-do, ho-dro, hin-dra, ho-dra, hin-do, ho-dro, hin-da, chin-drine*”—was so specific that pipers reading it in widely separated regions got the same tune from it. Thus music was handed down, at first orally, then in written syllables, from generation to generation. Pibroch—the Highlanders’ wild martial tunes—were thus transmitted.



Scottish Bagpiper
(British Travel Association Photograph)

I would be writing this with my tongue in my cheek if I had not heard such syllable chanting by an old Irish piper. (Incidentally the Irish have quite as good a claim to the Highland Bagpipe as the Scotch. It was played in Ireland, probably, before it was played in Scotland.) When he piped for me, “Yonder I Planted My Cabbages,” then chanted it in syllables, I had an eerie sense of hearing the same thing twice and identically performed. I could not doubt that an expert piper, hearing the vocal sounds, could immediately reproduce them, grace notes and all, on the chanter.

Split-Second Timing

This system of music transference is the more remarkable when one realizes that pipe bands—often with dozens of members—play in exact unison. All those hopping notes, those skirls and twists, are done simultaneously by all the members of a well-trained band. One can understand how it is that a real piper must study for seven years to master his art.

Those bands, at least one of which is to be found in most of our larger cities, recruited, curiously enough, quite as often from Irish as from Scottish members of the community, consist of pipers and drummers in a ratio of about three to one. The bass drum sets the rhythm. The pipe major chooses the program, sets the general tempo, has charge of the band. There is no harmonizing. The bagpipes speak as one.

It’s a brave sight and a brave sound they make. It’s a sound we would not like to hear diminish in the corridors of time. For there is no sound like it on the face of the earth. And, given its peculiar method of production, there will probably be no sound developed like it ever again.

—Hope Stoddard.