
Some Perspectives on Scottish Fiddling



Scottish Fiddle Club of Colorado

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Some Perspectives on Scottish Fiddling

Introduction

Thanks go out to **Alan Watson** of The Scottish Fiddle Society in Scotland (www.thescottishfiddlesociety.org.uk/), as well as Scots fiddler **Sarah-Jane Summers** (www.sarah-janesummers.com), for their help in developing this document.

Scottish fiddling, even to untrained ears, can be distinguished from other Celtic and Folk fiddling styles by its particular precision of execution and energetic delivery. The style has a very large repertoire consisting of a great variation of rhythms and keys, arguably more than in related styles such as Irish fiddle music. There is also a strong link to traditional Scottish bagpiping.

About the Volume and Development of Scottish Fiddle and Folk Music

The number of published Scottish fiddle tunes runs into the thousands. The **Charles Gore Index**, which covers collections of the 18th, 19th and a few in the early part of the 20th century, contains **over 12,000** published tunes. This does not even cover Scots and Gaelic vocal melodies, pipe or Irish music, and of course tunes in the traditional style are continually being composed. One of Charles Gore's other books, **Echoes of a Golden Age**, is a good introduction to this subject.

Fiddle **competitions** in America are usually **unaccompanied** due to the music's having progressed through more of an aural transmission route and possibly also due to the influences of other national musical traditions in the American "melting pot." In Britain, the "Folk revival" movement of the 1950s and 1960s failed to acknowledge how that tradition evolved and this has given rise to a great deal of misunderstanding. In Scotland they are dealing with a national/traditional genre with some classical influences; an early fusion or cross-over and not simple naïve Folk music as implied by the revivalists.

In Scotland the music evolved in the late 17th century to serve the recreational pursuits of the upper classes who, like their English counterparts, had adopted the then fashionable French contra dances, and the musicians would have been professionals. Native idioms in dance steps and music would have been incorporated to make the dances "their own" but just how much was ever strictly Folk or dance music is questionable. Most traditional songs were too short for dance purposes and it was easier to write new material in a traditional style rather than adapt earlier pieces. This became a lucrative business for fiddle players and composers in the later 18th century and, with the leisured classes often taking subsidiary roles in classical orchestral performances, there was a ready market for printed material among these wealthier amateur players. This is how there came to be so much of this music and why so many dedicatees feature in the titles.

Much of the music was printed with **cello basses** as the fiddle and cello combination had become the typical "band" and it would also suit home performance on the harpsichord or early pianos. In the 19th century the piano began to take over as the preferred accompaniment. The first **Reel and Strathspey Society**, formed to preserve the music, was founded in **Edinburgh in 1881**. It was ultra conservative and stuck to fiddles and basses right up to the late 1940s before adding a piano. By the time the music crossed the Atlantic it would have percolated down through society and became something folksier in its transmission. This never-ending circular process explains why it is little wonder why music scholars wrestle with definitions of what is National, Traditional, Folk, etc., Scottish music. There are therefore different approaches in presentation.

Some General Observations

Due to migration from rural Scotland to the industrial areas and the rest of the world, many players have returned again over time with certain traditions intact and some evolved through the melding of various styles. This is very apparent in the "central belt" region of Scotland, where two fifths of the population resides. There is a significant influence in this area from immigration from Ireland and the rural areas of Scotland coinciding with the rise of industry. Top fiddlers from Scotland today include

- Aly Bain
- Duncan Chisholm
- Alasdair Fraser
- Catherine Fraser (now residing and performing in Australia)
- Galen Fraser
- Allan Henderson
- Ewan Henderson
- Kevin Henderson
- and many more, including a large number of fine young players!
- Megan Henderson
- Douglas Lawrence
- Lauren MacColl
- Catriona MacDonald
- Iain MacFarlane
- Bruce MacGregor
- Calum MacKinnon
- John Martin
- John McCusker
- Charlie McKerron
- Sarah Naylor
- Jenna Reid
- Laura Risk
- Aidan O'Rourke
- Eilidh Shaw
- Eilidh Steel
- Chris Stout
- Sarah-Jane Summers
- Alasdair White

With migration the Scottish fiddling tradition has been carried with emigrants and "**Scottish Trad**" is now played around the world. In the United States, understandably, the style has undoubtedly been influenced by the Western, Country and Irish styles. A few of the key players performing in the United States for example include

- Patty Adler (Colorado)
- Elke Baker
- Hanneke Cassel
- Melinda Crawford
- Colyn Fischer
- Brittany Haas
- Jerry Holland
- and many more, including a large number of fine young players!
- Jeremy Kittel
- Ryan McKasson
- Jenna Moynihan
- Arlene Patterson (Colorado)
- Ed Pearlman
- Bonnie Rideout
- Laura Risk
- Jan Tappan
- Loretta Thompson (Colorado)
- John Turner

Regional Styles

The Shetland Islands Style

A bouncy and lively style with a Norwegian influence, the Shetland Islands style employs ringing open strings above and below the melody line. There is also some amount of Irish musical influence due to migrant workers and seafarers (fishing and merchant), which led to influences from Shetland and the rest of Scotland cross-pollinating back to Ireland. Particularly to the Donegal fiddle tradition (see this section) which is more characteristically Scottish in style. This is particularly due to the county's geographic location and rural isolation to the rest of Ireland as well as its Scottish influence. NOTE: Some of the tunes are in the tuning AEAE.

Some of the players who exemplify this style include

- Maggie Adamson
- Tom Anderson
- Aly Bain
- Ross Couper
- Fiddlers' Bid (group)
- Kevin Henderson
- Willie Hunter
- Jenna Reid
- Chris Stout

The North East Region Styles

An elegant and classically influenced style with roots in the **bothy** (a small modest home or shelter) tradition, the North East region of Scotland frequently features the **strathspey**, which originated in the Strathspey area of the Highlands. The strathspey is a type of dance tune in 4/4 time. It is similar to any of several dance forms played and danced to in Britain and elsewhere from the late 17th century on, but is more elegant and statelier, and contains many dot-cut 'snaps.' Highland strathspeys can be much more spirited however. These tunes are played with much staccato and use of the Scots snap, as well as the arrow stroke (also known as the driven bow). The **Scots snap** is simply the sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note figure. In Scottish country dances the Scots snap is a prominent feature of the strathspey. The **arrow stroke**, or **driven bow**, is a unique bowing technique used in Scottish fiddling. *Please see the section about this technique at the end of this document.*

Some of the players who exemplify this style include

- Paul Anderson
- Robert Mackintosh
- William Marshall
- James Scott Skinner
- Daniel Thorpe

More About the Fiddling Traditions of North East Scotland

There are basically three main areas, actually villages, in North East Scotland that harbor significant fiddling traditions:

- Banchory
- Fochabers
- Tarland

These three locations are home to a lively fiddle tradition and each has a historical connection with a well-known fiddler who was also a composer. The fiddle is commonly played throughout the North East which consists of the counties of Moray and Aberdeenshire. Many notable fiddlers have emerged from these areas.

Banchory

The town of Banchory is situated on the River Dee, eighteen miles from Aberdeen. Historically, it is the birthplace of the famous Scottish fiddler, James Scott Skinner, who has a square named after him there. It is also the home of the Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society which was formed in 1932. The Society has a large membership, and some of its members, past and present, have won prizes for their solo fiddle playing in competitions such as the Glenfiddich Championships. A traditional music festival is held annually in Banchory in May.

Following is a basic list of Banchory musicians from the surrounding area.

- Sandy Cooper
- Jane Davidson
- Claire Gullan
- Pat MacAndrew
- James Scott Skinner

Fochabers

The village of Fochabers lies on the banks of the River Spey about three miles from the coast in the county of Moray. Historically, it is home to the famous Scots fiddler, William Marshall (1748-1833), and, at the present day, to fiddlers such as James Alexander. Around forty local youngsters play in a group called The Fochabers Fiddlers which began in the 1980s, and an annual "Pan-Celtic" music festival called "Speyfest" attracts audiences of many hundreds to the village each summer.

Following is a basic list of Fochabers musicians from the surrounding area.

- Will Anderson
- James Alexander and The Fochabers Fiddlers
- Charlie Armour
- Colin Campbell
- Ian Grigor
- William Marshall
- George Murdoch

Tarland

The village of Tarland lies about six miles from Aboyne in Deeside, and has a colorful history according to the following account relating to the eighteenth century:

"An almost invariable accompaniment of certain of the fairs was the occurrence of party fights, or personal encounters between rustic athletes fond of testing their physical prowess. These encounters, which ordinarily took place about the close of the fair, were sufficiently brutal in character, the combatants often mercilessly belabouring each other with cudgels. In no quarter perhaps were they so formidable or so systematically kept up as in the district of Cromar, where the periodical onsets between 'the rough tykes of Tarland,' and 'the Leochel men' seem to have been as regular in their occurrence as the fairs in which the two parishes were interested; the fight being understood always to end in one or other of the sides being driven off the field vanquished."

Tarland is home historically to the composer Peter Milne (1824-1908) and has a reputation as a musical place. Sandy Milne (a former conductor of the Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society who was brought up in Tarland) claims that around the early 1900s, "almost every household in Tarland had at least one fiddler and a lot of them very good fiddlers who played the real old style of Scots traditional fiddling." Tarland has strong musical links with Banchory, as fiddlers from the village in the past and at the present have often been members of the Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society.

Following is a basic list of Tarland musicians from the surrounding area.

- Paul Anderson
- Angela MacEachern
- Peter Milne
- Stuart Robertson

The Highlands, West Coast, and Gaelic Regional Styles

These styles also include the geographical areas of the **Inner and Outer Hebrides** (the two large groups of islands on the West Coast of Scotland) and **Argyllshire** (that area of South West mainland Scotland). This regional set of styles holds plenty of bagpiping influences in its playing. As a result of this piping influence, there is a very high value placed on the 2/4 pipe march. The **Cape Breton** (the northeastern island of Nova Scotia, Canada) style of music is related to the Highland styles, the Cape Bretoners having come from the Highlands to Nova Scotia.

The classic Strathspey form comes from the Strathspey area of the Highlands and is very popular there. Note that North East region strathspeys and Highland strathspeys are *noticeably different*, with the Highland ones being much lighter, dancier and airier, and the North East ones being heavier and more dramatic. Strathspeys may originally have been called "strathspey reels." The 'reel' was eventually dropped from the end, thus leaving the tune simply known as a 'strathspey.' This could explain why, traditionally, strathspeys tend to lead directly into reels.

The West Coast style is heavily influence by the bagpipe, even more so than the Highland style. This might be due to the fact that fiddles were burnt in the West Coast by the church establishment in the 1800s, due to the belief that the fiddle represented the devil. This may have led to more bagpiping. This leads (as you say) to the 2/4 pipe march being extremely popular in the West Coast style. The strathspey is not as popular in the West Coast as in the Highland style and North East style.

A Word About “Tradition” ...

It's important to consider the notion that the whole concept of 'tradition' as used in relation to Scottish folk music is ever evolving and organic. The music has always been flexible, with consideration being given to individual musical personalities and needs. This is a good thing!

Characteristics of the West Coast Fiddle and Highland Fiddle Styles

The following characteristics of West Coast and Highland fiddle music could include

- The playing is generally smoother and less accented than the playing of fiddlers from the North East.
- The strathspeys are played with less double dotted spiky rhythm and many tunes relate to the rhythm of the language as sung in **puirt-a-beul (mouth music) style**: meaningful lyrics, and non-sensical vocables, sung to the melody of a fiddle or pipe tune.
- In slow air playing, as in Gaelic song airs, the timing *can be* free.
- There is use of **drones** and **ornamentation** in imitation of the bagpipe and Gaelic singing. The grace notes are played fast and in a fiddle imitation of bagpipe grace notes. Many of the tunes use only the notes of the 'bagpipe scale.' The notes in that scale are G, A, B, C sharp, D, E, F sharp, G, A (**Mixolydian mode**). A type of tune commonly associated with the Highland style is the 2/4 pipe march.
- There is slight stretching of the dotted eighth beat and cutting the sixteenth note in the playing of 6/8 marches.

- The basic bowing pattern is for a down bow at the beginning of the bar, but more advanced players will always play about with emphasis, meaning that they may choose to use an up bow for a different effect or emphasis.
- Playing in **octaves** is used, although it is actually more of a Cape Breton influence. It is used to 'beef out' the sound when playing for dancing, in particular when there was no amplification. Playing in octaves is easy due to the fact that the 'bagpipe scale' (A Mixolydian mode) has a G as its bottom note; the lowest note of the fiddle in normal tuning is G, meaning bagpipe tunes are easily played an octave lower.
- Highland fiddle tunes in the key of A major often have a flattened seventh (G natural), meaning that the tune is in the A Mixolydian mode, commonly referred to as the 'bagpipe scale.' Highland fiddle tunes in major keys often have the flattened seventh note which is related to the modal 'bagpipe scale.' The bagpipes can, of course, also play in other keys, but A mixolydian is the key commonly referred to as 'the bagpipe scale'.

Some of the players who exemplify these styles include

Highland

- Duncan Chisholm
- Lauren MacColl
- Bruce MacGregor
- Ruaridh MacMillan
- Donald Riddell
- Sarah-Jane Summers

West Coast

- Angus Grant
- Allan Henderson
- Iain MacFarlane
- Archie McAllister
- Eilidh Shaw
- Eilidh Steel
- Alasdair White

The Perthshire Style

Legendary fiddlers Nathaniel and Niel Gow exemplify the Perthshire style. Niel Gow was born at Strathbraan (some say Inver), which is within Highland Perthshire. His family then moved to Inver. This style could perhaps be considered part of the Highland style and is very likely influenced by the North East style. Pete Clark is a great contemporary practitioner of the Perthshire style, and Ruairidh Campbell, from Aberfoyle, could also be described as a Perthshire player.

The Borders Region Styles

In this set of styles, a lot of the tunes are of varied rhythmical emphasis and use much **double-stopping** (that is, playing two notes/strings together). Often these compositions are composed or rearranged to incorporate two or more fiddlers.

Musicologist Fred Freeman has identified two Border styles, influenced by leading Borders players and their role in the dance tradition.

- The 'heavy' style uses chords that provide a drone and allow the fiddle to accompany itself and create a big sound that will fill a dance setting.
- The 'light' style is more delicate, and suited to a more intimate setting or the playing of airs. Characteristics include **triplet runs** and the sounding of two notes/strings (**double-stopping**).

(Note: Triplet rhythms are sometimes not played as written and it is necessary to listen to a good native player familiar with the style you're playing.)

Some of the players who exemplify this style include

- Borders Fiddle (group)
- Carly Blain
- Rachel Cross
- Tom Hughes
- Lillias Kinsman-Blake
- Shona Mooney
- Reel Time (group)
- Riddell Fiddles (group)
- Lori Watson
- Innes Watson

The Donegal Style

Another fiddling style is that of the County Donegal, The Republic of Ireland area which is in the north of Ireland on the West Coast. This is not strictly Scots, *but it has Scottish roots*. The historical connection between the West Coast of Scotland and Donegal is an ancient one. There are many shared names as can be heard in the volume of strathspeys, schottisches (a partnered country dance form), marches, and Donegal's own Highland piping tradition. And, like some Scottish fiddlers (who tend to use a short bow and play in a more straight-ahead fashion), some Donegal fiddlers work at imitating the sound of the Highland pipes.

Scotland has influenced Donegal fiddling in various ways. Workers from Donegal would go to Scotland in the summer and bring back Scottish tunes with them. Donegal fiddlers have found tunes in Scottish books and learned from recordings of Scottish fiddlers like J. Scott Skinner and Mackenzie Murdoch. Fishermen from Donegal have returned from Shetland fisheries with Shetland tunes.

Some of the players whose music has been popular in Donegal include

- Captain Simon Fraser
- Nathaniel Gow
- Niel Gow
- J. Murdoch Henderson
- Robert Mackintosh
- William Marshall
- James Oswald

The Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada, Style

Cape Breton Island is the most northern part of Nova Scotia (New Scotland). Cape Breton musicians promote their music as a style of Scottish music, though some purists argue that Cape Breton is located in Canada, not Scotland, and therefore the style shouldn't be given the same treatments as the others. Regardless, the Scottish people on the island came there from Scotland. This music is often accompanied by a piano and has a very apparent dance rhythm, often being complimented with **step dancing** (any of a variety of dances where the footwork is the prominent feature, as opposed to the feet and arms). Irish, and even French, immigration to the island has also had some influence on Cape Breton music.

Cape Breton fiddling is a regional violin style which falls within the Celtic music idiom. Cape Breton Island's fiddle music was brought to North America by Scottish immigrants during the Highland Clearances in the 1700s and 1800s. These Scottish immigrants were primarily from Gaelic-speaking regions in the Scottish Highlands and the Outer Hebrides. Although fiddling styles have changed considerably since this time in Scotland, it is thought by many that **the traditions of Scottish fiddle music may have been better preserved in Cape Breton** because the population was so isolated on the island for a long time.

Dance styles associated with the music are Cape Breton step dancing, Cape Breton square dancing (Iona style and Inverness style), and Highland dancing.

In 2005, as a tribute to the area's traditional music, the construction of a tourism center (and **the world's largest fiddle and bow**; see photo below) was completed on the Sydney waterfront.



The Playing Style

Cape Breton playing is highly accented, characterized by driven up-bowing. The tunes of other music origins (Irish, Canadian, French-Canadian, etc.) sound quite different when performed by Cape Breton players. The strong downbeat pulse is driven by the fiddler's heel into the floor. The pattern tends to be heel-and-toe on reels, the heel on strathspeys. Timing is a notable trait of Cape Breton music because good timing brings dancing alive.

Cape Breton fiddle music is strongly influenced by the intonations of the Scottish Gaelic language, especially the **puirt-a-beul (mouth music)** technique, and strathspeys. The ornaments are adapted from those used on the Great Highland bagpipe. The ornamentation (cuts also known as trebles, drones and doubling) brings out the strong feeling of Cape Breton fiddle.

The Repertoire

The types of tunes commonly associated with Cape Breton fiddling are the same as with the other styles: jigs, reels, marches, strathspeys, and slow airs. Many of the tunes associated with Cape Breton fiddle music are also commonly performed on other instruments, especially bagpipes, piano and guitar. It is not unheard of for the music to be performed on harmonica, tin whistle, mandolin or even banjo.

Modern Cape Breton players draw on a large body of music from the Scottish and Irish traditions, and from modern compositions. Several older books of tune collections have been particularly popular sources:

- Fraser, Simon (1874), *Simon Fraser Collection*
- MacDonald, Keith Norman (1887), *The Skye Collection*
- MacQuarrie, Gordon F. (1940), *The Cape Breton Collection*
- O'Neill, Francis (1903), *O'Neill's Music of Ireland*
- Robertson, James Stewart (1884), *The Athole Collection*
- Skinner, James Scott, *The Scottish Violinist*
- Skinner, James Scott, *The Harp and Claymore*

A number of recent publications also document a substantial amount of the modern Cape Breton repertoire:

- Beaton, Kinnon (2000), *The Beaton Collection (compositions of Kinnon, Donald Angus, and Andrea Beaton)*
- Cameron, John Donald (2000), *The Heather Hill Collection (compositions of Dan R. MacDonald)*
- Cameron, John Donald (1994), *The Trip To Windsor Collection (compositions of Dan R. MacDonald, volume 2)*
- Cranford, Paul (2007), *The Cape Breton Fiddlers Collection*
- Cranford, Paul (1997), *Winston Fitzgerald: A Collection of Fiddle Tunes*
- Dunlay, Kate, and David Greenberg (1996), *The Dungreen Collection: Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*
- Holland, Jerry (1988, several revised editions), *Jerry Holland's Collection of Fiddle Tunes*
- Holland, Jerry (2000), *Jerry Holland: The Second Collection*
- MacEachern, Dan Hugh (1975), *MacEachern's Collection*
- Ruckert, George (2009), *John Campbell: A Cape Breton Legacy*
- Stubbert, Brenda (1994), *Brenda Stubbert's Collection of Fiddle Tunes*
- Stubbert, Brenda (2007), *Brenda Stubbert: The Second Collection*

The Composers

Scottish composers whose music is popular in Cape Breton include

- Nathaniel Gow
- Niel Gow
- William Marshall
- James Scott Skinner

Well known Cape Breton composers include

- Donald Angus Beaton
- Kinnon Beaton
- Angus Chisholm
- Jerry Holland
- Dan R. MacDonald
- John MacDougall
- Dan Hughie MacEachern
- Brenda Stubbert

Some of the players who exemplify this style include

Cape Breton fiddle music has received international recognition through the careers of

- Ashley MacIsaac
- Natalie MacMaster
- The Rankin Family

Others include

- The Barra MacNeils
- Andrea Beaton
- Donald Angus Beaton
- Kinnon Beaton
- John Campbell
- Winnie Chafe
- Stan Chapman
- Angus Chisholm
- Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald
- Kimberley Fraser
- Glenn Graham
- Stephanie Hardy
- Jerry Holland
- Bill Lamey
- Dan R. MacDonald
- Howie MacDonald
- Rodney MacDonald
- Troy MacGillivray
- Sandy MacIntyre
- Dave MacIsaac
- Wendy MacIsaac
- Carl MacKenzie
- Buddy MacMaster
- John Morris Rankin
- Mairi Rankin
- Slainte Mhath (group)
- Brenda Stubbert

The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in Cape Breton

The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in Cape Breton (see photo below) offers instruction in fiddle as well as all other traditional music, and the Gaelic language. The Gaelic College was founded in 1938 by Presbyterian Minister, the Reverend A.W.R. MacKenzie, having opened in a one-room log building on land in St. Ann's which had been owned in the 1800s by the Reverend Norman McLeod, another Presbyterian minister who had lived on the site for 30 years and who migrated in the 1850s with 800 settlers from surrounding communities to Waipu, New Zealand.

The Gaelic College has evolved into a beautiful modern campus overlooking St. Ann's Harbour.



Scottish Fiddle Playing in Australia and New Zealand

We don't want to forget the Scottish-style fiddle players in Australia. For example, **Catherine Fraser** is an excellent player who performs with pianist **Duncan Smith**. She is originally from Scotland however. Visit her Web site at www.catherinefraser.com. Catherine also started [The Southern Hemisphere International School of Scottish Fiddle \(SHISSF\)](http://www.shissf.com) in 2004. It convenes in late April or early May at Camp Kaitoke, Upper Hutt, New Zealand. The program is for fiddlers of all levels. Visit the Web site at www.shissf.com.



Other Australian/New Zealand exponents of the Scottish style include

- Malcolm Bushby
- Lachlan Green
- Nigel MacLean
- Emma Nixon
- Linda Rankin
- Chris Stone

About the Arrow Stroke or Driven Bow Technique

Arlene Patterson describes this technique in brief: "In the arrow stroke, or driven-bow technique, the first stroke is taken smartly down, leaving the up-bow to take the remaining three notes. Thus the complete movement consists of 1 down-bow followed by 3 up-bow pulses. Extra bow pressure is put on the **third note** of the phrase to re-emphasize the rhythm, hence the "driven" nature of the stroke. The last note, the 16th note is played staccato. So, one fast down bow, then take the next 3 beats or notes on the up-bow. It feels as if the up bow notes float or rebound from the strong "driven" down bow."

Sarah-Jane Summers examines the technique in greater detail in her instructional and demonstration book and DVD, *Highland Strathspeys for Fiddle*.

In brief, she says that, "With traditional music, it is difficult to learn it from a text description. You will eventually need to watch someone and copy them. The arrow stroke or driven bow is four notes, short long long short (that is, double-cut sixteenth, followed by two double-dotted eighth notes, and finally one double-cut sixteenth). The first note is down, the other 3 up. The down bow takes you all the way to the tip (despite being so short). The 3rd note (the 2nd up bow) is really emphasized, as that is beat 2 (or 4) of the bar. It's emphasized so much that you 'drive' the bow so as to make it leave the string. The final note, also up, is a tiny little staccato note, a bit like a wee sharp bump at the heel of the bow."

To purchase this product, visit www.sarah-janesummers.com.



Ms. Summers can be reached at sarah-janesummers@hotmail.co.uk

Additional information about this technique can be found on the Alastair Hardie Web site: www.hardiepress.co.uk.

How Scottish Fiddle and Folk Music Have Influenced Classical Music

Although Scotland is probably not as well known for its classical music as it is for its rich Folk music traditions, it nevertheless has a wonderful repertoire of classical music and many excellent and well-known composers and performers. Perhaps more significantly, Scottish fiddle and Folk music have influenced classical composers of other countries and this influence is often generally referred to as the ‘**Schottische**’ style. The strongest single characteristic of the Schottische style is the ‘**Scots snap**’ rhythm mentioned earlier in this document.

One of the noticeable trademarks of Scottish classical music as compared to European practices is the tendency to give works and sections titles such as *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow*, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Sister Helen*, *Pibroch* or *Twelfth Night*, instead of standard terms such as *Symphony*, *Sonata*, etc. or tempo terms such as *Allegro*, *Adagio*, etc.

A couple of European classical composers who have been influenced by Scottish folk music styles include

- Felix Mendelssohn (*The Hebrides Overture – Fingal’s Cave*; and *Scottish – Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op.56*)
- Malcolm Arnold (*Scottish Dances Op. 59*)

Just a few Scottish classical composers include

- Alexander Mackenzie (1847—1935)
- William Wallace (the composer, not the soldier) (1860—1940)
- Hamish MacCunn (1868—1916)
- John Blackwood McEwen (1868—1948)

These composers are members of the so-called Scottish Romantics tradition.

Others include

- Robert Carver (1485—1570)
- William McGibbon (1695—1756)
- Sir Hugh Robertson (1874—1952)
- Muir Matheson (1911—1973)
- Cedric Thorpe Davie (1913—1983)
- Marcus Dods (1918—1984)
- Iain Ellis Hamilton (1922—2000)
- Buxton Orr (1924—1997)
- Thea Musgrave (1928—)
- James MacMillan (1959—)

All of their works are well worth listening to in order to gain a broader understanding of Scottish music. Scotland has symphony orchestras, operas, chamber music groups, classical pianists and very fine classical violinists just like other countries do. The main focus of this document however is Scottish fiddle music and its practitioners. **Aye!**

What You Can Do to Learn More

Most of the fiddlers listed in this document have their own Web sites, or can be found on the Web in one form or another. Please seek these out and learn more about the artists and Scottish fiddling. Some of the Web sites you will encounter sell CDs and various types of books. Simply scanning the Web for terms like 'Scottish fiddling', 'Scots fiddlers', 'Scottish music' etc. will direct you to great sources of information. **Amazon.com** searches are always fruitful. There is a bunch of good stuff on **YouTube.com**.

Following are just a few recommended Web sites:

The Scottish Fiddle Society (in Scotland)	www.thescottishfiddlesociety.org.uk/index.php
The Hardie Press	www.hardiepress.co.uk
Heart o' Scotland (Scottish Fiddle Sheet Music)	www.heartoscotland.com/Products/fiddle-sheet-music.htm
Greentrax Recordings	www.greentrax.com
Linn Records	www.linnrecords.com
Foot Stompin' Records	www.footstompin.com
Music In Scotland	www.musicinscotland.com
Play Scottish Music	www.playscottishmusic.com
Taigh na Teud	www.scotlandsmusic.com/fiddle.htm
Scottish Fiddle Orchestra	www.sfo.org.uk

Also inquire at your **local music stores** about Scottish fiddling materials. The proprietors have sources they can consult to see what is available from their suppliers.

Keep your eyes and ears open for local and visiting Scottish fiddle artists performing in the area.

Lighten Up: Violin and Fiddle Playing Is Only Part of Life!

- What's the difference between a violin and a fiddle? *A fiddle is fun to listen to!*
- What's the difference between a fiddle and a violin? *No-one minds if you spill beer on a fiddle!*
- What's the difference between a violin and a viola? *There is no difference. The violin just looks smaller because the violinist's head is so much bigger!*
- Why are viola jokes so short? *So violinists can understand them.*
- How do you keep your violin from getting stolen? *Put it in a viola case.*
- How do you tell the difference between a violinist and a dog? *The dog knows when to stop scratching.*
- What do a violin and a lawsuit have in common? *Everyone is happy when the case is closed.*
- Why do violinists put a cloth between their chin and their instrument? *Violins don't have spit valves.*
- How is a violin like a vampire? *They both sleep in cases and leave marks on your neck.*
- What's the difference between a violin and a fiddle? *The more I don't practice my violin, the more it sounds like a fiddle!*



Scottish Fiddling Glossary

Term	Definition
Air	Slow tunes sometimes played in a free style with less rhythmic strickness.
Argyllshire area	South West Coast of Scotland that is part of the West Coast fiddling style set.
Arrow stroke or driven bow	A unique bowing technique used in Scottish fiddling consisting of four notes, short long long short (that is, double-cut sixteenth, followed by two double-dotted eighth notes, and finally one double-cut sixteenth). The first note is down, the other 3 up. The down bow takes you all the way to the tip (despite being so short). The 3 rd note (the 2 nd up bow) is really emphasized, as that is beat 2 (or 4) of the bar. It's emphasized so much that you 'drive' the bow so as to make it leave the string. The final note, also up, is a tiny little staccato note, a bit like a small sharp bump at the heel of the bow.
Banchory area	Town in Scotland situated on the River Dee, eighteen miles from Aberdeen. Home to the famous Scottish fiddler, James Scott Skinner, and home to a North East Region fiddle style.
Borders Region style	<p>At least two Border styles, influenced by leading Borders players and their role in the dance tradition, can be identified:</p> <p>The 'heavy' style uses chords that provide a drone and allow the fiddle to accompany itself and create a big sound that will fill a dance setting.</p> <p>The 'light' style is more delicate, and suited to a more intimate setting or the playing of airs. Characteristics include triplet runs and the sounding of two notes/strings (double-stopping).</p>
Bothy tradition	A bothy is a small modest home or shelter. This tradition is part of the North East Region style which is elegant and classically influenced.
Cape Breton square dancing, Inverness style	Specific dance style associated with the music of Cape Breton step dancing, square dancing, and Highland dancing.
Cape Breton square dancing, Iona style	Specific dance style associated with the music of Cape Breton step dancing, square dancing, and Highland dancing.
Cape Breton style	A compound style characterized by highly accented and driven up-bowing. The style is influenced by the area dance styles and the Gaelic language characteristics.
Donegal style	An Irish style influenced by Scottish fiddle traditions.
Dot-cut snap	The sixteenth-dotted eighth note rhythm. Also called the Scottish snap or Scotch snap rhythm.
Double-stopping	Playing two notes/strings together.

Term	Definition
Driven bow or arrow stroke	A unique bowing technique used in Scottish fiddling consisting of four notes, short long long short (that is, double-cut sixteenth, followed by two double-dotted eighth notes, and finally one double-cut sixteenth). The first note is down, the other 3 up. The down bow takes you all the way to the tip (despite being so short). The 3 rd note (the 2 nd up bow) is really emphasized, as that is beat 2 (or 4) of the bar. It's emphasized so much that you 'drive' the bow so as to make it leave the string. The final note, also up, is a tiny little staccato note, a bit like a small sharp bump at the heel of the bow.
Drone	A musical effect that can be achieved through use of a sustained sound or the repetition of a note.
Fochabers	Village in Scotland that lies on the banks of the River Spey about three miles from the coast in the county of Moray. Home to the famous Scottish fiddler William Marshall, and home to a North East Region fiddle style.
Gaelic language	The Celtic language of Scotland, now mainly spoken in the Scottish Highlands and islands.
Gaelic style	The speaking and singing styles of the Gaelic language, such as puirt-a-beul or mouth music, have influenced the Scottish fiddling styles.
Highland Region style	The style contains strong bagpiping influences including the pipe march, and a smooth less accented style.
Inner and Outer Hebrides	The two large groups of islands on the West Coast of Scotland.
Jig	A general term applied to Scottish and Irish and other folk dance styles. Jigs are up-tempo lively tunes and dances in 6/8 time.
Mixolydian mode	A major scale with a lowered (minor) 7 th scale degree.
Mouth music (puirt-a-beul)	Meaningful lyrics, and non-sensical vocables, sung to the melody of a fiddle or pipe tune.
North East region style	An elegant and classically influenced style featuring the strathspey, which originated in the Strathspey area of the East Highlands.
Ornamentation	Single or multiple decorative (grace) notes.
Perthshire style	A style that could be considered part of the Highland style, and is very likely influenced by the North East style.
Pibroch style	A bagpiping style largely unmeasured and played in a flowing manner.
Pipe march	Standard bagpiping march sometimes emulated by fiddlers.
Puirt-a-beul (mouth music)	Meaningful lyrics, and non-sensical vocables, sung to the melody of a fiddle or pipe tune.
Rant	A lively tune, suitable for dancing.

Term	Definition
Reel	A type of Scottish country folk dance and tune usually written in 4/4 meter but performed in 2/2 or cut-time.
Schottische	A partnered country dance made up of two short runs and a hop followed by four turning hop steps, similar to a polka. The Scottish Highland Schottische is a combination of the common schottische and the old reel.
Scottish Country dancing	Group folk dancing.
Scottish Highland dancing	Largely solo dancing typified by the Highland fling.
Scots/Scottish snap; dot-cut snap	The sixteenth-dotted eighth note rhythm. Also called the Scotch snap rhythm.
Shetland Islands style	A bouncy and lively style with a Norwegian influence. This style employs ringing open strings above and below the melody line. Some of the tunes are in the tuning AEAE.
Step dancing	Any of a variety of dances where the footwork is the prominent feature, as opposed to the feet and arms.
Strathspey	A dance tune in 4/4 meter often performed in an elegant and stately manner and containing many characteristic Scottish snaps/dot-cut snaps. <i>Highland</i> strathspeys can be much more spirited however.
Tarland area	Village in Scotland that lies about six miles from Aboyne in Deeside. Home to composer Peter Milne, a fiddling stronghold, and home to a North East Region fiddle style.
Triplets	Triplet rhythms are sometimes not played as written and it is necessary to listen to a good native player familiar with the style you're playing.
West Coast Region style	There are multiple characteristics that identify this fiddling style. Some of them include smoother and less accented styles, imitation of the bagpipe and Gaelic singing tunes, and tunes in major keys often have the flattened seventh note which is related to the modal 'bagpipe scale.'



NOTES

Some Perspectives on Scottish Fiddling



Scottish Fiddle Club of Colorado