

***O caitè 'm bheil u rhuin (Oh where are you my love?)* a tune from the Elizabeth Ross
Manuscript Arranged for Wire-Strung Clarsach by *Karen Marshalsay***

The manuscript now belongs to the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh University, and is available onlineⁱ, both as a scan of the original manuscript and in a version edited by Peter Cooke, Morag Macleod and Colm Ó Baoill, which also includes notes on the tunes, texts of the airs where available and translations.

With over 150 items, mainly song airs, but also including instrumental pieces and pibrochs, this collection is a unique insight into the repertoire of Gaelic speaking inhabitants of Raasay. It was compiled around 1812 by Elizabeth Jane Ross, niece of Macleod of Raasay, in Raasay House and is the earliest unpublished collection of Highland vocal music. Elizabeth, was 23 years old when she transcribed the tunes for her own use on the piano. She did also play harpⁱⁱ, and there are later watercolours by her husband Sir Charles D'Oyly, of her playing pedal harp in India in 1824. The introduction to the annotated edition of the manuscript notes:

Like many of the young ladies in Highland homes, Elizabeth, known to her family and friends as Eliza, probably took a lively part in domestic music-making. Angus MacKay, Queen Victoria's piper and son of John MacKay (Macleod of Raasay's piper), reported that "Her musical taste was remarkably good, and she was so fond of Pìobaireachd, that she acquired many of the longest pieces from the performance of the family piper and was accustomed to play them on the piano with much effect".

The manuscript was left in Raasay House when Eliza and her sister sailed out to India in 1813 in the care of her cousin, Lady Loudon. Apparently the sisters travelled out with their wedding trousseaus already packed, to find suitable husbands among the young army officers and members of the East India Company. The manuscript was found in an Edinburgh bookseller's by Francis Collinson who purchased it in 1954 for the School of Scottish Studies.

I chose several pieces from the manuscript to teach at the 2013 Edinburgh International Harp Festival. I wanted to keep the tunes in the original key, to have several that would work as a set, and also if possible, to choose pieces which the students were unlikely to already know. As the class was an elementary/intermediate one, I also wanted to be able to spend some time making sure everyone knew and could play the techniques required for the pieces, and understood the phrasing and arrangements. In the end the class began by looking at all the techniques needed for my arrangements, by way of a short "Technique Exercise of the Week!" which I created for the class.

Here are three versions of the one the tunes we looked at. The first one is a simple version, easier to play than either of the other two so good for less experienced players, but it is also a good start to a performance arrangement before moving onto either the small or larger harp versions. The small harp version is based on a 19 string harp with G below middle C as the lowest string. Have fun with them, adding in more ornamentation as you repeat the tune.

ⁱ <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/celtic-scottish-studies/research-publications/publications/staff-pubs>

ⁱⁱ Elizabeth was educated at Mary Erskine School in Edinburgh where she would have received a good musical education. It is also likely that she would have been taught by Ann Young, later to become Mrs John Gunn, John Gunn being the author of the Highland Society of Scotland 1807 harp report. Ann Young also taught the MacLean-Clephane sisters. [information from Keith Sanger].

TECHNIQUES

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK! (EIHf 2013)

Karen Marshalsay

The Bee's Plait
(plethiad y wanwynen)

The Short Plait
(y plethiad byr)

The Thumb Choke
(taked y fawd)

The Forked Choke
(takiad fforchog)

The Beat

The Half Scratch
(haner krafriad)

The Thumb Slide

the thumb slides from the higher string, sounding that note and lands on the adjacent string below, damping it

In wire-harp music there are several conventions which might seem rather strange - when the music is on one staff then notes with their stems up are played by the treble or melody hand, while those with downward stems are played by the bass hand. Stemless x noteheads indicate that a note has to be damped, and the fingering in brackets tells you which finger does the damping. For clarity in the music the x appears slightly to the right of the note which is played at the same time that the previous note (indicated by the x) is damped. Abbreviations in boxes are used to tell you which techniques should be used, these will need to be memorised.

Remember that the beat, the short plait and the forked choke can be played over various intervals, and that these techniques, also known as gestures, can be used for gracenotes, tune notes and a combination of both. The bee's plait can be extended by playing 4321. The gestures can be performed by either hand.

These gestures have Welsh names as they come from the Robert ap Huw manuscript, compiled c. 1613 by the Welsh harper by whose name it is now known.

For more information on these & other techniques see Karen Marshalsay *Key Techniques for Harp* (Marsharp Music 2012) which uses exercises, studies & tunes to help students learn the gestures and incorporate them into their playing.

Small harp version

O c'aite 'm bheil u rhúin

[O càite a bheil thu, rùin?] Oh where are you, my love?

From the Elizabeth Ross MS

Arr. Karen Marshalsay 2013

Very slow

[no Bbs needed]

The musical score is written in 2/4 time and consists of four staves of music. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The score includes various ornaments and fingerings:

- Staff 1 (Measures 1-4):** Starts with a treble clef and a Bb. Fingerings: 1, 4, 2(3), 1. Ornaments: SP (Small Harp) above the 4th measure, SP (Small Harp) above the 3rd measure. Fingering 1(2) is below the 3rd measure.
- Staff 2 (Measures 5-8):** Fingerings: 3(1), 2(3), 3, 1, 3(1), 2, 1. Ornaments: BP (Bottle Pick) above the 5th measure, SP (Small Harp) above the 6th measure, TC (Tongue Cut) above the 7th measure, HS (Harp Stroke) above the 8th measure. Fingering 1(3) is below the 7th measure.
- Staff 3 (Measures 9-12):** Fingerings: 2(1), 1, 4, 2, 3(2), 2(3), 1(2), 2(3), 1, 1. Ornaments: TC (Tongue Cut) above the 10th measure, SP (Small Harp) above the 11th measure, SP (Small Harp) above the 12th measure. Fingering 1(2) is below the 12th measure.
- Staff 4 (Measures 13-16):** Fingerings: 3, 1, 4, 2, 3(2), 2(3), 3, 1, 3(1), 2, 1, 3(2), 3(2), 1(3). Ornaments: TC (Tongue Cut) above the 14th measure, TC (Tongue Cut) above the 15th measure. Fingering 1(3) is below the 15th measure.

It would be good to add more decoration on the repeat of the tune, for example by using beats on the 2nd F in bar 1, the 2nd C in bar 3, and so on.

4 Larger harp version
 NB standard stem direction
 used unless specified,
 as two staves are used.

O c'aite 'm bheil u rhúin

[O càite a bheil thu, rùin?] Oh where are you, my love?

From the Elizabeth Ross MS
 Arr. Karen Marshalsay 2013

Very slow

[no Bbs needed]

play A with the thumb then move
 it up to damp the C - this is a back hop ↗

1 ↘
 B.H.
 anchor 4
 on lower F

Beats could be added as decoration on the repeat of the tune, for example on the 2nd F in bar 1, the 2nd C in bar 3 and so on.