

# J. C. BACH'S SCOTCH SONG ARRANGEMENTS

John Christian Bach (1735-82), youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, lived in London for the last twenty years of his life. At this period Scotch Song arrangements were especially popular, and were often sung at the concerts Bach gave in London, which were put on in the seventies. Bach even based movements on these songs in his famous set of piano concertos (Op. 13, 1777); the slow one in No. 2 uses 'The Yellow-hair'd Lad', 'The Yellow-hair'd Father', and the Finale of No. 4 uses 'The Yellow-hair'd Lad'. None of these survive, all apparently in unique copies; there may be others. All were published two or three years after Bach's death, and none have been republished since.

Three of these arrangements are like the original simple and melancholy, and in having accompaniments for flutes, violins, and cello. The first, a two-page describing it as 'A Favourite Scotch Song', is 'The Yellow-hair'd Lad', 'The Yellow-hair'd Father', 'The Instrumental Parts by Mr. Bach, from the Original by Mr. Abel's Concert. The fourth, *The Brass of Ballandine*, must have been written on a quite different occasion. The tune is rather rambling but the instrumental sections between the verses are astonishing, with their passionate first and second endings. The music can be found in William Shield's *Rudiments of Music*. The title-page of the book does not mention either the arranger's name or even the title, and the original title-page of the book, which I have acquired the original publication, Shield's score is not mentioned in any reference book. The title-page states that 'The first Part of this Song was sung by Mr. Tenucci 'at the Festino Rooms in Hanover Square, London, on the 15th of August 1771, and was performed on the Piano Forte by Mr Bach, Hautboy Mr. G. Cramer, Violoncello Mr. G. Cramer, and the most eminent London virtuosi of their day.

The probable origin of this arrangement is suggested in Mrs Papendiek's *Reminiscences* (Vol. 1, p. 65 ff.). While Bach was teaching the young princesses in Kew Palace and spending a good deal of time in Richmond, he had a piano moved into the King's Arms there so that he could have weekly chamber music evenings with Fischer, Cramer and Abel (who played the viola da gamba). He and Abel took it in turns to compose a new piece for each meeting. There is evidence that a viola player was sometimes present, and Tenucci may well have been lured down on occasions. It seems certain that Bach made this arrangement for one of these meetings, testing his friends' technique to the full while limiting his own part on the piano to simple arpeggios; he was never much of an executant. When later they decided to perform the music in public, Abel, who was becoming unreliable, was replaced by Crossdill.

*The Broom of Covenknows*. 'The Broom, the bonny Broom' in Playford's *The Dancing Master* (1651) may possibly be an early version of the tune. More recognisably it was first published in *Orpheus Caledonius* (1st ed. 1726), and it is Air 18 in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). The tune was then only eight bars long (sometimes with a varied repeat) and ended in the 'wrong' key. Geminiani once said he had been trying to find an ending for it half his life, but without success. Not everyone felt it needed an ending. Bach may have been the first to get it back into the tonic with an echo of the first two bars. Allan Ramsay printed two sets of words for it in his *Table Miscellany* (1724); those Bach used were signed 'S.R.'.

*I'll never leave thee*. The words, by Ramsay's friend Robert Burns, were first in the *Table Miscellany*; and with the tune in *Orpheus Caledonius*. Burns said it was 'an absurdity to join such names as Adonis and the Broom'.

*Lochaber*. Bunting, recently supported by Donnchadh Ó Súilleabháin, first set this tune as Irish, calling it 'Limerick's Lamentation' (MS. 1891). It was James's March to Ireland'. After Bach's day Burns and Ramsay set it to a ballad associated with the ballad 'Lord Ronald' ('Lord Randal'). In the 18th century it was as famous as a Scots song because of Ramsay's words in *The Broom of Covenknows* about a soldier leaving his loved ones in Lochaber (the name of a river in the Western Highlands) during the Marlborough Wars. After 1745, when Robert Burns fled away from the Western Highlands for ever, he was often thought to refer to him. When Tenucci was singing Bach's *Concerto in G major* for the exiled Prince, exiled in Rome, used to end his musical evenings which he found solace with this very tune, playing it himself on the harpsichord.

*The Broom of Covenknows*. I have taken the words from James Oswald's *Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (1735). He was the first to set it to words, though he never claimed it as his. He got the tune from the *Table Miscellany* and wrote words for it. These, which make no sense, are of the same type as those in *The Broom of Covenknows* (Perth and Dundee), can be found in his *Curious Collection*. No other words are known. I have preferred the name of the place to many alternatives; also his punctuation.

Following editions are in brackets except for added slurs, which have a horizontal stroke. *Suppurgatura* slurs are editorial. *The Braes of Ballandine* as originally published were engraved in full without repeats; where slurs are given in only one or two places I have added them in the others without comment. In the other three songs which provided no viola part but assumed, as did all composers of the time, that viola players, if any, would play from a bass part, putting the notes up an octave where necessary. A viola part on these lines is provided with the set. The string parts in these three songs have been set out so that they can be played as piano accompaniments. The bracketed tempo marks have been taken from different arrangements of them in Corri's *Select Collection* Vol. 3 (c.1779).

# THE BROOM OF COWDENKNOWS

Edited by Roger Fiske

Arr. J. C. Bach

[Larghetto]

Flutes 1 & 2

Voice

Violins 1 & 2

Bass

5

1. He had been Morn to see My  
nei - ther was I Ewe nor Lamb, When his

2nd Vln.

9

Flute 1 at o'er the Hill. He leap'd the Brook and flew to me; I  
round me lay; He gath - er'd in my Sheep at Night, And

2nd Vln.

Bar 3, Bass 3rd beat: F sharp.

Bar 4, Vln. 1, 1st beat:

Bar 8, Voice, 1st beat even quavers.

Bar 10, Bass: 3rd beat B, which might be right.

Bar 11, Fl. 2: nothing on 1st beat.

met cheer'd him with me all the good will the Day. O the Broom, the bon-ny, bon-ny Broom, The

Broom of the Cow - den-knows; I sh I zore my dear Swain, With

his the Broom, the bon-ny bon-ny, Broom.

Bar 20, Bass 4th beat: E.

Bar 21: Singers may prefer to put 'Pipe' on the 1st beat. But Bach's underlying agrees with other versions of the time.

Bar 22, Vln. 2: slur covers first 5 notes.

Bar 23, Fl. 2: Minim D; nothing in second half of bar.

Bar 26, Fl. 1 & 2: 4th beat blank; crotchet rest editorial.