

James Tytler

Fiddle Tune History

By Andrew Kuntz

Vive La! (Part One)

In 1798 one Hugh Woolaghan of the Newtown Mountkennedy yeomanry, an Irish loyalist militia unit, entered a private house accompanied by some companions. He was in a rage and bent on murder. The object of his wrath was the Dogherty family of Delgany, County Wicklow, whose father (a shoemaker) and older sons had been active in the rebellion and who had fought against the crown forces at the battle of Dunboyne. In fact, the eldest son, Thomas, had been captured and incarcerated on board a prison ship in the river, where he took sick. The commander of the British forces in Ireland, Lord Cornwallis (the same man who had surrendered to the French and Americans at the Battle of Yorktown in 1782), released him to a navy hospital, after which Thomas had been allowed to return home to recover. Despite that there was some official knowledge of Thomas's position, the fact that he had been allowed to return home infuriated Woolaghan and his comrades, who determined to raid the Dogherty household and slay the male inhabitants.

Only Thomas, his mother, sister, and a young brother were at home when the militiamen stormed in. Finding Thomas abed, they confronted him, and demanded to know if the young man was one of the rebels—though they knew the answer already. Thomas saw their intent and reasonably insisted on being brought before the local magistrate for trial; for if the men thought he was guilty, he pointed out, the law would exact just punishment. Woolaghan was unmoved, and perhaps not wanting to take the chance that Dogherty would escape, he turned to shoot the man, upon which Thomas's frantic mother pleaded for her son's life.

Woolaghan called her an ugly name, and pulled the trigger—nothing happened; he tried again, and once more the pistol misfired. It was not until he procured a third weapon that he finally shot Thomas, although Mrs. Dogherty deflected his aim so that it only wounded her son in the arm. Woolaghan left the room, but it was not over. The yeoman returned some minutes later and said, "Is not the dog dead yet?", and shot Thomas once again, fatally, as he lay in his mother's arms.

Woolaghan was required to stand trial for his crime, before a military tribunal on a charge of murder. Mrs. Dogherty gave her eyewitness account and denied that her son was a rebel, but her powerful testimony was impeached by an unfortunate incident. Mrs. Dogherty had attended the coroner's inquest, prerequisite to her obtaining her son's body for burial, and, as she stood in the churchyard at Delgany, something dropped from her pocket; a paper. It was retrieved by a member of the militia, who thought that it might have been a banknote. It wasn't. Although the militiaman could not read, he handed it to the commander of the Newtown yeomanry, who knew exactly what it was. It was a song-sheet, on which was printed "Vive La, The French are Coming: A Song of the United Irishmen":

*Rouse, Hibernians, from your slumbers,
See the moment just at hand,
Imperious tyrants for to tumble,
Our French Bretheren are at hand.*

*(Chorus) Vive la, united heroes,
Triumphant always may they be;
Vive la, our gallant bretheren,
That have come to set us free!*

*Erin's sons, be not faint-hearted,
Welcome, sing then Ça Ira!
From Killalla they are marching
To the tune of Vive la.*

(Chorus)

*To arms quickly, and be steady,
Join the ranks, and never flee;
Determined, stand by one another,
And from tyrants you'll soon be free.*

Mrs. Dogherty denied she had possessed the tract, nor had ever seen it, but the damage was done. In the eyes of the tribunal she and her family were proved rebels and traitors, and were to be accorded no protection under the law. Woolaghan's "sentence" was pronounced:

The Court having taken into consideration the evidence adduced on the trial of Hugh Woolaghan, of the Newtown Mountkennedy yeomanry, find, that he did shoot and kill Thomas Dogherty as a Rebel; but do acquit him of any malicious, or willful intention of Murder.¹

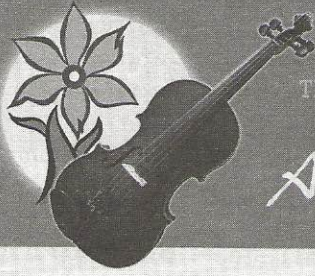
How could a song so contravene justice? Part of the answer lies in the panic that the French Revolution produced in England, whose aristocracy and institutions were aghast at the bloodbath in France, whose "Reign of Terror" (1793-94) was a recent memory when the United Irishmen rebelled against their English oppressors in 1798. In fact, the "Vive La" song refers directly to the

French Revolution when it invites people to sing “Ça Ira!”, one of the popular anthems of the rebellion (“Ça Ira!” was the musical ancestor of “Downfall of Paris,” which in turn was the tune the American old time reel “Mississippi Sawyer” was derived from). It mentions that “French Bretheren” [sic] are at hand—referencing the hopes (or fears, depending on which side you were on) that the French would send troops to aid the Irish. The French did just that, in fact, although with too few troops, and too late; but the small invasion terrified the British. “Vive La” is but one of any number of “righteous cause” songs written and sung to consolidate and focus individuals in the service of a goal. As one member of the Woolaghan tribunal intoned: “By means of songs the passions of the multitude were very much excited.” It was not the song that acquitted Woolaghan; rather, it was the fear that, lest something be done, England and Ireland would be caught in the same revolutionary vortex as had so recently consumed the Continent.

Songs are more than words, of course, and even the most well-crafted of lyrics will cease to inspire without a suitable melody, often referred to as the “vehicle” of the song, as it propels the lyric in the mind. This being a “tune” history column, it is the tune, the air, that concerns us. So, to what melody did the Doghertys sing “Vive La”—for there’s little doubt that they were ardent Republicans. First and foremost, it was a relatively simple and easy to sing two-part melody, well within the range of the average voice. It was also pleasing to the ear and musically interesting. It also turns out that the “vehicle” for “Vive La” was not a new melody, but was one that had been used before for a number of songs. Far from being new, it was familiar and comfortable—it was a popular tune that many people would know by ear. It is also a tune that had acquired quite a bit of history already, and for that we turn our attention to Scotland (before returning again to more modern times in Ireland).

Many tunes have identifiable ancestors, and the air to “Vive La” is one. In 1757 Scots fiddler-composer Robert Bremner (c. 1720-1789) issued his *Collection of Scots Reels*, a volume that is filled with a number of excellent tunes, many of which are still played today in Scotland and Cape Breton. The long-lived Bremner was one of the first and most successful of the Scottish musician-composers in the 18th century who followed the pattern of establishing themselves first as performers and music teachers, earning enough money to open a shop, selling instruments and music along with their lessons, and finally publishing music to sell. Bremner did this so well that he was able to sublet his Edinburgh shop, and move his primary business to London, the capital. In 1762 he opened a second shop at the sign of the Harp and Hautboy (i.e. oboe), opposite Somerset House in the Strand.

One of those excellent tunes in his 1757 collection bore the name “I’m Over Young to Marry Yet,” a sprightly reel. The musical interest in Bremner’s tune is in the first strain; the second strain suffices to carry the tune along, but it lacks the character and charm of the first. The first strain has two rising passages that descend a bit from the peak, and end in cadences with a distinctive octave leap. Bremner’s title was taken from an old song, “I’m o’er young to marry”; and, in fact, the theme of the song (in which a young lass—perhaps too young, it is suggested—is courted) can be traced to a popular French song of the 15th century, which



Nevada State Fiddle Contest
Thursday, Friday & Saturday,
June 13-15
Art in the Park
Saturday, June 15
WELLS, NEVADA

Nevada State Fiddle Contest and Art In The Park

- Thursday, June 13th: 7pm
Concert: An Evening Round the Campfire with Dan Levenson
Old Time Fiddle, Clawhammer Banjo, Songs and Stories of the Road
Welcome Station RV Park, just west of town, 180 exit 343
6pm-Hamburgers & Hot Dogs with all the fixin's.
Donation suggested
- Friday, June 14th: 6pm
Hot Fiddle Contest, Jam Sessions and Dinner
Wells Propane Building
- Saturday, June 15th
Nevada State Fiddle Contest
8am Registration / 9am Contest
Wells City Park
- Saturday, June 15th: 9am
Art in the Park with Lunch Time Bluegrass Concert
Wells City Park

Workshops: Thursday/Friday, June 13th/14th

- Thursday, June 13th
Private Lessons for Fiddle or Clawhammer Banjo
Available All Day Thursday, June 13th
Available Friday, June 14th in the morning - \$60/hr lesson
- Thursday, June 13th: 7pm
Concert: An Evening with Dan Levenson; Old Time Fiddle, Clawhammer Banjo, Songs and Stories of the Road
Wells Propane Building
- Friday, June 14th: 1-3pm
Fiddle Workshop, \$40
- Friday, June 14th: 1-3pm
Guitar Workshop with Greg Gendall, \$40



Laura Smith

To register for a Lesson from Dan or Greg contact clawdan1@gmail.com

For information on Dan's Workshops, Fiddle and Banjo Books and CD's www.clawdan.com

Complete information, agenda and registration information is online at www.nvfiddlecontest.org

You can also contact the Wells Chamber of Commerce at:
P.O. Box 615
Wells, Nevada 89835
(775) 752-3540
Email: wellschamber@wellsnevada.com

begins: “Je suis trop jeune, pour faire un amy...”²). Northumbrian musician William Vickers included a version in his 1770 music manuscript collection under the title “A Bonny Lad to Marry Me,” a title that retains the theme of youthful marriage. The old song was reworked by Scots poet Robert Burns who retained the chorus, but who wrote new verses (to make it more acceptable, for it sometimes had bawdy verses—), and printed it in the *Scots Musical Museum* (vol. 2, 1788, No. 107) as “I am my mammy’s ae bairn.” The chorus goes:

*I’m o’er young, I’m o’er young,
I’m o’er young to marry yet,
I’m o’er young, ’twad be a sin
To tak’ me frae my mammie yet*

Already one can see Bremner’s tune developing along two lines: an instrumental version and a song version. But, as I said, this is the ancestor—the parental tune—and it is the next iteration of the melody that leads to “Vive La” and beyond.

“I’m o’er young to marry” is said to have been the inspiration for Niel Gow’s popular slow strathspey “Loch Erroch Side” which resembles the older tune in the first strain. Some writers, following the lead of antiquarian Stenhouse, believe that Gow developed his piece directly from “I’m o’er young to marry,” but others (like the contemporary musicologist Mary Ann Alburger) are of the opinion that “it is likely Gow was unconsciously influenced by that earlier piece, but no more than that.” Nevertheless, the older tune is often mentioned in conjunction with “Loch Erroch Side,” which Gow played for Robert Burns during the only meeting of the two famous men, in Dunkeld, Perthshire, in October, 1787. Their meeting was described by Peter Stewart, who accompanied Gow during the Burns visit³:

Arriving at Dunkeld, [Burns]... put up at the principal inn... [He] was fortunate in making the acquaintance of Dr. Stewart, an enthusiastic amateur violin player. At the dinner table he quoted to his guests the well-known local ditty-

I’m Over Young to Marry

Musical notation for the instrumental version of "I'm Over Young to Marry". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, 6/8 time. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4. The second staff contains measures 5 through 9. The third staff contains measures 10 through 14. The melody is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a final cadence in measure 14.

Loch Erroch Side

Musical notation for the instrumental version of "Loch Erroch Side". It consists of four staves of music in treble clef, 6/8 time. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8. The third staff contains measures 9 through 13. The fourth staff contains measures 14 through 18. The melody features a similar rhythmic pattern to the first piece, with a final cadence in measure 18.

*Dunkeld it is a little toon,
An' lies intil a howe;
An' if ye want a fiddler loon,
Spier ye for Niel Gow.*

Burns expressed much delight at the proposal... a visit was at once agreed to.

The greeting was a cordial one on both sides, and the meeting of Burns and Gow—both geniuses of the first order in their respective lines—was mutually worthy of each other. The magician of the bow gave them a selection of north-country airs mostly of his own spirited composition. The first tune was “Loch Erroch Side” which greatly delighted the poet, who long afterwards wrote for the same melody his touching lyric “Oh, stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay!”

At Burns’s request, Niel next gave them his pathetic “Lament for Abercairney” and afterwards one of the best-known compositions in the Highlands, “McIntosh’s Lament.” “Tullochgorum” was also duly honoured, after which the whole party adjourned to the little old-fashioned inn at Inver, where there was a famous *deoch*, or friendly parting drink.

Perhaps Burns—who was quite knowledgeable about Scottish music—noticed the similarity between “Loch Erroch Side” and “I’m o’er young to marry.” He even wrote a song to the tune of “Loch Erroch Side,” although later in life the poet did not support Gow’s claim to the tune. Gow was not even the first to publish “Loch Erroch Side,” for it appeared in the 1786 collection of the flashy Edinburgh musician, bandleader, and music publisher Alexander “King” McGlashan. This in itself is no proof that “Loch Erroch Side” is not Gow’s composition, as good tunes often circulated before they were published, and copyright laws were quite different than they are today. When Gow did publish it, in his *Second Collection of Niel Gow’s Reels* (1788), “Loch Erroch Side” appeared without composer credit (as it had in McGlashan’s collection), and it was not until the second edition of *Second Collection*, issued by his son Nathaniel in 1803, that the melody was attributed to “Niel Gow & his 2nd Wife.” The “2nd Wife” was the musician’s spouse, Margaret Urquhart, a stepmother whom Nathaniel held in esteem.

James Johnson also printed “Loch Erroch Side” as a song in the *Scots Musical Museum* (vol. 2, 1788), with a lyric by the same title, set to Gow’s tune (note that Gow’s slow strathspey had been adapted as an air for singing as quickly as it was published), named for Loch Erroch or Ericht, a large lake in Perthshire. The words were attributed by Johnson to the “D___ of G___,” meaning Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon, the “Cock o’ the North,” a most famous aristocrat. The lyric begins:

*As I came by Loch Eroch side,
The lofty hills surveying,
The water clear, the heather blooms,
Their fragrance sweet conveying;
I met, unsought, my lovely maid,
I found her like May morning;
With graces sweet, and charms so rare,
Her person all adorning.*

AUGUSTA HERITAGE CENTER

of Davis & Elkins College located in scenic Elkins, WV

WEEK-LONG FIDDLE CLASSES

DAVE BING - Old-Time & October Old-Time
MEGAN LYNCH CHOWNING - Bluegrass
ERYNN MARSHALL - Oct. Old-Time
TRACY SCHWARZ - Early Country
PAUL ANASTASIO - Blues/Swing
CHARLIE WALDEN - Old-Time
COURTNEY GRANGER - Cajun
ADAM HAYNES - Bluegrass
BRITTANY HAAS - Bluegrass
PATRICK OURCEAU - Irish
TONY DEMARCO - Irish
JESSE MILNES - Old-Time
JOEL SAVOY - Cajun
DAVID GREELY - Cajun
MICHELLE KAMINSKY - Cajun
SCOTT PROUTY - Oct. Old-Time

Take a LEARNING VACATION

Summer Classes - 7/7-8/11

Early Country - 7/7-12
Cajun/Creole - 7/7-12
Blues/Swing - 7/14-19
Irish/Celtic - 7/21-26
Bluegrass - 7/28-8/2
Old-Time - 8/4-11
Dance - 8/4-11
Vocal - 8/4-11

Concerts

8pm each Tues. & Thurs.

Nightly Dances

Sun.-Friday, 7/7-8/9

Augusta Festival - 8/9-11

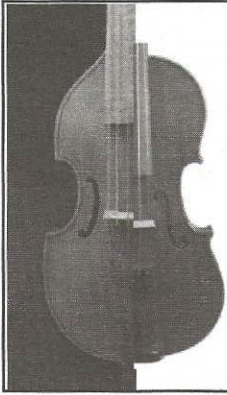
Juried craft fair, music, dancing,
food, kids' tent, outdoor concert,
dance, & so much more.

October Old-Time Week & Fiddlers' Reunion

10/27 - 11/3

304-637-1209

www.AugustaHeritageCenter.org



Golden Musical Instrument Co.,Ltd

Specialists in fine
violin, viola, cello,
double bass and viola da gamba

No.252 Tanggong East Road,Luoyang,471002,China

Tel: 86-379-60102877 Fax: 86-379-65277921

Email: info@jinqi-instrument.com

Web: www.jinqi-instrument.com

*[Tytler]... was... a scholar,
journalist, poet, songwriter,
musician, balloonist, pharma-
cist, surgeon, and printer.*

The attribution was in error however; the duke, although a musical and literary man (he was strathspey composer William Marshall's patron and employer), had nothing to do with it. Instead, the lyric proved to be the work of an Edinburgh scribe named James Tytler (1745-1804), a man who was at one and the same time an intellect with an inquisitive and organized mind; and a hapless, luckless, inept individual whose excesses ultimately eclipsed any hope of success he may have had. Unquestionably Tytler, the son of a Presbyterian minister in Forfarshire, was born with a fertile mind and possessed many talents. He was at one time or another a scholar, journalist, poet, songwriter, musician, balloonist, pharmacist, surgeon, and printer. He learned Greek and Latin, wrote pointed political and religious criticism, and is best remembered as an outstanding encyclopedist whose editorship of the second edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was a triumph.

Unfortunately, Tytler was his own worst enemy. He studied theology and became a preacher, while studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Although apprenticed to be a ship's surgeon, he never practiced but instead he opened a pharmacy in Leith, one of many ventures that ended in failure. He married and had children, but soon mounting debt forced him to flee to northern England, where he again tried to make a living as an apothecary. This too failed, as did his first marriage, and he moved back to Edinburgh where he began work on the encyclopedia, taking in hack work as well for low pay. A few of his songs were published, three of which boasted some popular (if not critical) success. He moved from place to place in northern England and Scotland, one step ahead of his creditors, and took a common law wife, by whom he had two more children. His troubles may also have stemmed from festering problems with alcohol, which he perhaps used to compensate for social awkwardness and personality problems.

In the 1780s Tytler became fascinated with hot-air balloons, which had recently been seen on the Continent. With his background in chemistry, Tytler began experimenting, and, after several attempts he managed some success in manned flight. In August 1784, his balloon, with himself as passenger, rose from Comely Gardens, Edinburgh, to a height of 350 feet and flew for half a mile—the first such ascent in Scotland. He became, for a brief period, the toast of the town, earning the nickname “Balloon Tytler.” Unfortunately, subsequent attempts at flight were less than spectacular. In one humiliating experience, his balloon only rose significantly

after he descended from the attached basket, disappointing the crowd and even leading to charges of cowardice. Tytler was ridiculed in public and in the press, and he was soon overshadowed by the more spectacular balloon ascents of the dashing Vincenzo Lunardi, the handsome and entrepreneurial Italian “Daredevil Aeronaut.” Now, there was a hero for the public! His success inspired ladies' fashions in skirts and hats (the “Lunardi bonnet” is mentioned in the poem “To a Louse” by Robert Burns—the poet did get around!).

Tytler became increasingly radical in his views. Following the French Revolution of 1789, he publicly expressed admiration, and urged his countrymen not to pay taxes; he denounced public officials. In the previous decade he had joined a radical Christian sect, the Glasites, which he left, and denounced all organized churches. Never a social success [coincidentally, his portrait looks disturbingly like the scheming octogenarian character “Mr. Burns” in “The Simpsons” TV show], Tytler became increasingly isolated. In 1793 he was outlawed in Scotland and forced to flee to Belfast, Ireland, where he stayed a brief time before finally emigrating to America, where he presumably thought his political and religious views would receive a more sympathetic audience.

The unhappy man settled in Salem, Massachusetts, where he sold medicines and did some editing work. He left his house, drunk, one winter day in 1804 and was not seen for days. His body was discovered on the seashore soon afterwards.

[Stay tuned! Part two of this article will appear in the Fall 2013 issue.]

¹ *The Genuine Trial of Hugh Woolaghan, Yeoman, by a General Court-Martial* (Dublin, 1798) [Google books]

² *The Songs of Robert Burns*, by Robert Burns, James C. Dick 1903, p. 410. Notes to No. 175.

³ *The Fiddle in Scotland* (n.d.), by Alexander G. Murdoch,

[Andrew Kuntz is the author of a book of old time songs and tunes called Ragged But Right (1987) as well as the on-line tune encyclopedia “The Fiddlers’ Companion” (www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers). When not researching tunes, he enjoys playing in Irish music sessions.]