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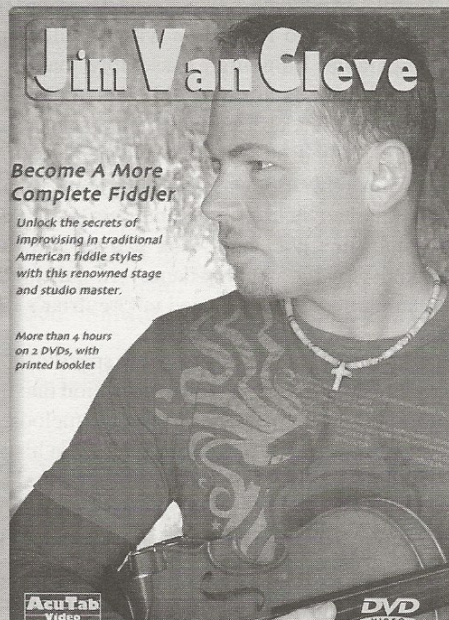


Jim covers many things on these 2 DVDs, but they really break into three sections. After some discussion about early learning experiences, Jim looks at improvising and building solos on a number of popular bluegrass standards. Two songs, *Banks Of The Ohio* and *Pretty Polly*, are played and demonstrated in 3 different keys.

Before going over the tunes, Jim breaks down the scale and common positions for each key in turn. He shows where to find the melody, and where adjacent double stops are located, as well as licks and phrases that suit each song. Attention is given to both playing a melody-based solo and what a fiddle can do to assist the band sound in accompaniment.

He also carefully teaches four songs he has recorded - three of his own (*Nature Of The Beast*, *Devil's Courthouse* and *#6 Barn Dance*) - plus Bill Monroe's classic *Wheel Hoss*. After being slowly demonstrated lick-by-lick, they are each shown (fast and slow) in a split screen orientation.

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## Fiddle Tune History

By Andrew Kuntz

### Lord(s) a-Leaping: The Cross-over Journeys of the Duke of Gordon's Reel

In the year 1786 a volume of music was published by Neil Stewart, a former dancing master who at the time was an Edinburgh music publisher and musical instrument seller. Stewart had issued one of his own collections, but was known for publishing the works of others, including Donald Dow, and early editions of the Gows' and Marshall's works. The volume entitled *A Second Collection of Strathspeys, Athole Reels &c. with a Bass for the Violincello or Harpsichord*, which he sold from his shop in Parliament Square, was neither theirs nor his own, however. Rather, Stewart published it and two preceding collections for another musician, composer, and teacher of the city, Alexander McGlashan (c. 1740-1797), nicknamed (not unkindly, we presume) "King" McGlashan for his tall, stately demeanor and his habit of dressing as well as he could afford — in more successful times he could even be showy. Although long resident of the Scottish capital, McGlashan moved several times as his circumstances improved, but by the time Stewart published his collection, he had settled in "Skinner's Close, first turnpike, third door right hand down the Close," where he remained until his death. The first collection of strathspeys and reels had been published in 1780 with the note, "The Publisher humbly hopes that this Collection, so much wanted

will be acceptable to the Public, as he flatters himself that upon comparing it with others of the kind it will be found preferable to any yet printed," which sounds panderingly hopeful to us today, although that was the language of the times for such first ventures. Another of McGlashan's collections soon followed, in 1781, although it pointedly did not contain strathspeys or reels, but rather the "occasional" dances: Scots measures, jigs, hornpipes, cotillions and country dances, which may have been more to the taste of a Lowland audience influenced by court fashion. His third collection (the 1786 volume) returned to strathspeys and reels — the mainstay of Scottish music. It was sold by subscription, a kind of advance order, and when it was finally off the press a public announcement informed: "Subscribers will please send for their copies to any of the Music Shops or to the Publisher's house in Skinner's Close Edinburgh." The subscription was a measure of McGlashan's success after a long career, for he had developed an audience, a following, which allowed him to guarantee the cost of publication by prior sales. His music was in popular demand.

In fact, McGlashan was king. He was one of the foremost Scottish musicians (on violin and cello) of his time in Edinburgh, and was in the habit of giving fashionable concerts at St. Cecilia's Hall, near the Cowgate. As a teacher he was said to have given lessons to Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831), to improve his technique and sound production. Nathaniel was the third son of the famous fiddler-composer Niel Gow (1727-1807, an older contemporary of McGlashan's), and one might imagine Niel sending his son to Edinburgh to be tutored among the Scottish musical elite of the time to polish his style, and directing him to seek out McGlashan.

Nathaniel, proficient on several instruments (including the trumpet), played cello for a time with McGlashan's dance band, the incomparable Edinburgh Assembly band; which must have been in the 1780s, for by 1788 Nathaniel was well on his way to establishing himself as a music publisher in his own right. When "the King" died in May 1797, leadership of the assembly band (now an orchestra) was awarded to Nathaniel's older brother, William, who held tenure until his own death in April 1791, at which time Nathaniel took it over and presided through the remainder of the country-dance era. Alexander McGlashan and William Gow are both buried in Greyfriar's Churchyard.

McGlashan did not attach his name specifically to any of the works in his collections, and gave no indication that he was the composer of the contents of his volumes, yet the melodies contained in them are attributed to him. One such melody in his second collection of *Strathspey Reels* (1786) is the subject of this article. "The Duke of Gordon's Rant," a strathspey, was written as a three-part tune (parts ABC, without repeats) in the key of D major, although the third part is really a combination of the beginning of the second strain with the ending of the first strain, for a phrase structure of aa'bb'ba'. Also missing is the "Scottish snap" so characteristic of the classic strathspey form. In McGlashan's printed manuscript the dotted rhythms are invariably dotted-eighth followed by sixteenth notes, making for a somewhat rhythmically repetitive piece, although, of course, the Scottish snap could still have been employed in practice (and probably was). He withholds tempo indications as well. Rants are generally thought of as fast reels, although the name "rant" has a rather variable meaning in musical

terminology. Strathspeys are generally played at a moderate tempo, unless indicated "slow," but we don't know exactly how fast the piece was intended to be played.

The composer dedicated his strathspey to an aristocratic contemporary, Alexander, the 4th Duke of Gordon (1743-1827), head of a powerful Highland family, resident of Gordon Castle, Fochabers, and British peer. Not without reason, for the Duke was an enthusiastic patron of Scottish music, who employed as his butler and later factor (overseer) the great strathspey composer William Marshall, who wrote numerous pieces dedicated to the Duke and his family. In fact, nearly all the best Scottish fiddler-composers of the era wrote tunes in the Duke's honor, including various members of the Gow family, Robert MacIntosh, Joshua Campbell, and others. Alexander enjoyed his hunting and sporting, and was often to be found at Gordon Castle, but his family, particularly his first wife, the celebrated beauty Jane Maxwell, and the couple's comely daughters, preferred the delights of Edinburgh society. At the time McGlashan's second *Strathspey Reels* volume was published, the Duchess was at the social pinnacle of the Tory party in the city, frequently estranged from her husband, who retired to his estate. McGlashan undoubtedly played in her presence at various functions in his capacity as concertizer and leader of the dance orchestra.

It is difficult to determine the popularity of the tune in Scotland, for it does not appear in other collections of the era, as was usual with well-received melodies. It was relatively common for a good tune to be appropriated by one publisher or another, and re-titled

## The Duke of Gordon's Rant

The musical score for "The Duke of Gordon's Rant" is presented in six staves of music. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The notation consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The piece is a strathspey, characterized by its rhythmic patterns of dotted eighth notes followed by sixteenth notes. The score is divided into three parts: Part A (measures 1-8), Part B (measures 9-16), and Part C (measures 17-24). Part C is a combination of the beginning of Part B and the ending of Part A.

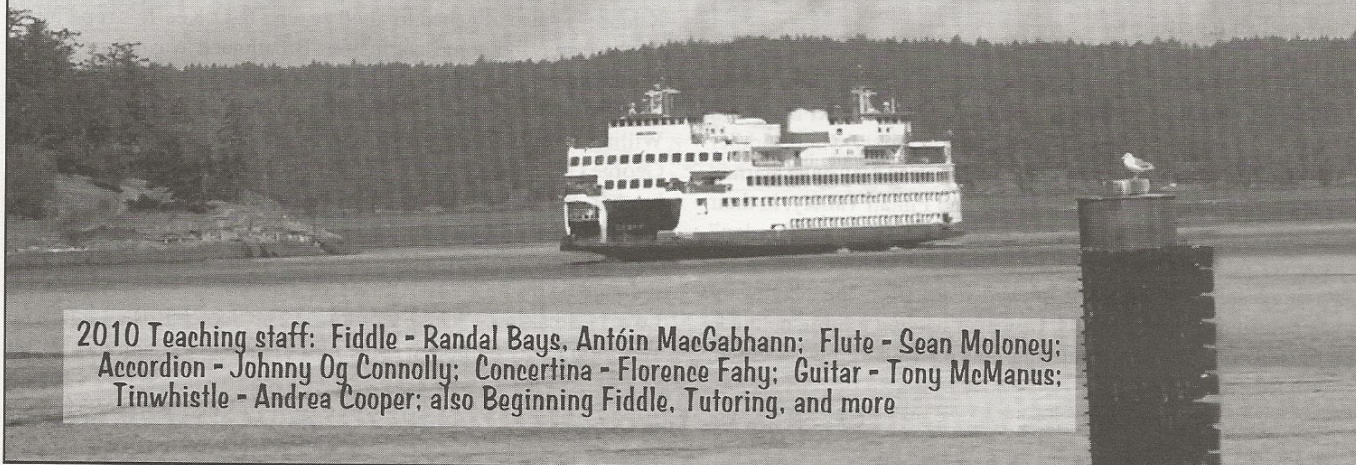
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or rededicated to another patron, but this does not seem to be the case with “The Duke of Gordon’s Rant.” In fact, the very next published appearance of the melody appears to have been in America, where a version of it was included by George P. Knauff in volume III of his *Virginia Reels*, published in Baltimore in 1839, some fifty years after McGlashan’s original. Where Knauff might have obtained the reel is unknown, but the tune’s title was significantly changed, appearing as “Scott’s Favorite.” Not only the name, but the music had been considerably altered as well, so much so that it is only with difficulty that one discerns the resemblance between the two. The structure of the tune has been altered to a two-part format (AABB), but the phrase structure is similar (aa’ba’), with the end of the second part echoing the first strain. The strathspey timing is abandoned in Knauff’s publication, as it is clear that it is meant to be played as a reel.

An American version of the tune much more faithful to McGlashan’s original appears in *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection* under the title “Scotch Patriot’s Reel.” It is in two parts (AABB), with the same phrase structure as Knauff’s tune (aa’ba’). The title must have attracted Cape Breton fiddlers trolling through the collection (and its direct successor, Cole’s *1000 Fiddle Tunes*), who undoubtedly associated it with the island’s dominant culture and many of their own Scottish ancestries. However, when it was first produced on a sound recording (78 RPM) by Cape Breton fiddlers Angus Allan Gillis and Dan J. Campbell in 1936, the title was changed to “A Taste of Gaelic.” Modern Cape Breton fiddlers know it by that title or by the Gaelic translation “Blasad Ghaidhlig,” which comes from Mary MacDonald via pianist Doug MacPhee. Producer

Mark Wilson of Rounder Records believes the title is a reference to the Cape Breton saying that a skilled traditional musician has “Gaelic in their blood,” which then “flavors” their music. “A Taste of Gaelic” was popularized through the recording of fiddler Buddy MacMaster (on the album *Judique Flyer*), and its inclusion in the late Jerry Holland’s *Second Collection* (2000). The music of the Cape Breton versions has remained relatively faithful to the *Ryan’s Mammoth* version, and retains the reel setting and phrase form aa’ba’.

It is in Irish traditional music, however, that the tune’s reputation as one of the premier melodies in fiddle repertory is cemented. Curiously, Irish traditional musicians may have picked it up from American sources, for *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection* (1883) contains another version of the melody as “Lord Gordon’s Reel,” quite similar to “The Scottish Patriot’s Reel,” likewise in two strains with the aa’ba’ phrase form. Significantly, the first time the title “Lord Gordon” appears in print is in Ryan’s collection. “Lord Gordon’s” next surfaces in Capt. Francis O’Neill’s bedrock *Music of Ireland* (1903), in our now familiar aa’ba’ form. O’Neill borrowed many tunes from *Ryan’s Mammoth*, sometimes note-for-note, although his “Lord Gordon’s,” while quite similar, contains the unmistakable reworkings of a melody that has been collected from traditional playing, although O’Neill gives no source for it. Giveaways to traditional Irish playing are the triplets that have been substituted for the arpeggiated chords in the first measure of the A part, and the grace-note-triplet of the first measure of the second part. It may be that O’Neill collected it from the general playing of Irish musicians in Chicago, who were not unaware of

Ryan's collection. The next Irish appearance of "Lord Gordon" in print, in Limerick native Frank Roches' first volume (1912), continues the trend of inserting Irish ornamentation while retaining the basic melody and form. There are more triplet groups — four each in the first three measures of both strains, and a double triplet in the next to last measure of the second strain. P.J. Giblin printed a version of the tune in his *Collection of Traditional Irish Dance Music* (1928). Roche, from southern Ireland, and Giblin, from western Ireland, both began collecting some twenty years prior to publication of their collections. This would lead one to surmise that "Lord Gordon" had been quickly picked up by traditional musicians from the O'Neill's collection, although it may have independently entered Irish tradition under that title from another source (perhaps from Donegal fiddlers, who were more familiar with Scottish repertoire).

However the tune came to Irish musicians, it was indelibly etched into the core repertoire when it was recorded on 78 RPM record in New York by an émigré from Killavil, County Sligo, fiddler Michael Coleman (1891-1946). Where Coleman may have learned it is unknown. Authors Charlie Piggott and Fintan Vallely, in their book *Blooming Meadows* (1992) maintain that "Lord Gordon" was never part of County Sligo traditional repertoire, and it has been suggested that Coleman picked it up from the playing of musicians in the United States. However it came to him, he made it unmistakably his own, rendering it as a five-part tour-de-force.

His recording was much admired and widely aspired to, making "Lord Gordon's" one of the tunes by which the skill of a fiddler is judged. The great Montréal fiddler Jean Carignan thought Coleman's version enough of a challenge to master and record. It is included no less than three times (as "Lord Gordon's" or the Irish "An Tiarna Gordon") in *Ceol Rince na hEireann* volumes (a series begun by Brendan Breathnach and completed by Jackie Small), collected from Dublin fiddler Tommy Potts (1912-1988), Sliabh Luachra fiddler Pádraig O'Keeffe (1887-1963), and Dublin piper Séamus Ennis (1919-1982). Potts played his version of Coleman's setting, while Ennis had the tune from his father, who learned it from the famous piper and reed-maker, Pat Ward of the Black Bill, Drogheda. Pádraig O'Keeffe called his version "The Pride of Kildare," according to Breathnach, although "Pride of Kildare" is also attached to another tune in O'Keeffe's repertoire, so there may be some confusion. Breathnach was aware of the Scottish origins of the tune, but in his notes attributes it to a "John Marshall, factor of the Duke of Gordon," evidently meaning William Marshall. He perhaps confused it with Marshall's "Lord George Gordon," a reel composed in honor of Alexander Gordon's brother. Breathnach gives several other alternate titles or related tunes in Irish tradition, including "The Rocks of Antiluce" (referring to the province of Andalucia, the southern end of the Iberian peninsula), "The Rakes of Drumlish," "My Heart with Love is Breaking," "Duke Gordon," "The Scotch Rose," and "The Waterloo Reel," although some of these are as yet untraceable by

## Scott's Favorite

Musical notation for "Scott's Favorite" in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first strain, starting with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff contains the second strain, which includes a double triplet in the final measure. The third staff contains the final measure of the piece, which is a double triplet.

## Scotch Patriot's Reel

Musical notation for "Scotch Patriot's Reel" in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first strain, which ends with a fermata. The second staff contains the second strain, which includes two first endings marked with '1' and '2'. The third staff contains the final measure of the piece, which is a double triplet.

me. It is worth noting that "Lord Gordon" or "Duke Gordon" has become a popular tune in uilleann piping repertoire, popularized by Ennis, Néillidh Mulligan, and others.

[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](http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers)). When not researching tunes, he enjoys playing in Irish music sessions.]

**Correction, Fall 2009 issue's Fiddle Tune History column:** Harvey Sampson's tuning on "Old Sledge" was incorrectly identified as DGDG; it should have been (low to high) GDGD.

## Lord Gordon

Transcribed from the playing of master New York fiddler and teacher Brian Conway, an All-Ireland champion. Brian is a prominent heir of the Sligo style in New York, by way of his association with the late Andy McGann, who learned in part from Michael Coleman. This tune is thus a product of generations of Sligo-style fiddlers in the city.

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