



The Omaha Pipes and Drums
www.omahapipesanddrums.com

2010
Competition Season



May 15
Illinois Highland Games
and Celtic Festival
Chatham, IL



June 19
Chicago Highland Games
Oak Brook, IL



August 14-15
Rocky Mountain Games
Highlands Ranch, CO



September 25
McPherson Games
McPherson, KS

And don't miss us at...



June 12
Kansas City Games
Kansas City, KS



September 18
Greeley Irish Festival
Greeley, NE

Check our website for
additional details



The Evolution of the Great Highland Bagpipe

Scotland's national instrument, the Bagpipe or in Gaelic "piob-mhor" (the great pipe) is not, contrary to popular belief, an instrument which has its origins in and has diffused from Scotland. The bagpipe is an instrument of great antiquity, an instrument which has its origins in the Middle East and traveled through and evolved in Europe alongside the diffusion of early civilization.

The "Oxford History of Music" makes mention of the first documented bagpipe being found on a Hittite slab at Eyuk. This sculptured bagpipe has been dated to 1,000 B.C. Biblical mention is made of the bagpipe in Genesis and in the third Chapter of Daniel where the "symphonia" in Nebuchadnezzar's band is believed to have been a bagpipe. These early pipes or "Pan" pipes, without the bag or reservoir, were probably the second musical instrument to evolve. Musical history dictates that pipers have to take a back seat to percussion instruments in this case. These early pipes used materials with a natural bore (hollow reeds, corn stalks, bamboos, etc.)

The Roman bagpipes or "tibia utricularis" represented a major innovation, the addition of the reservoir. Historians have noted that Roman coins depict Nero playing the bagpipe, not the fiddle.

The early "Dudel-Sack" gave rise to a number of European, Asian and African folk bagpipes, namely, the Volynka (U.S.S.R.), the Bock (German), the Zukra (North Africa), the Gaita (Portugal and Spain), the Zampogna (Italy), the Cornemuse (France), the Moshug (India), the Zumarah (Egypt), and Flemish, Polish, Greek and Hungarian examples. An extensive and thoroughly documented collection of these instruments can be found in the Musical Instrument section of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. In addition, examples of early folk bagpipes can be found in the paintings of Breughel, Teniers, Jordaens and Durer.

The French Musette can be seen as a logical explanation for the evolution or refinement of the instrument into a number of examples of chamber pipes (i.e. those that operate via the use of bellows rather than the tradition bags as a reservoir).

Examples of different forms of such chamber pipes can be found throughout Ireland, France and England. The Northumbrian region of England has been a "hotbed" for bagpipe evolution. It has not only witnessed the emergence of its indigenous shuttle pipes, but also its own small pipes, half longs and great war-gathering pipes.



Northumbrian Pipes



Uilleann Pipes

Likewise, Ireland has experienced the evolution of its own Uilleann (chamber/bellows pipe) and war pipe (Brian Boru). The evidence exists to substantiate the belief that pipes may have been common throughout the remainder of Britain prior to their emergence upon the Scottish landscape.

Nevertheless, there is no question that the Bagpipe was very popular throughout England. Middle Ages Pre-Reformation churches reveal carvings of bagpipes. Chaucer refers to the Miller playing pipes in "The Miller's Tale," *"A bagpipe well couthe he blowe and sown."*

Documents from the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland (1498 and 1506) refer to payments to the English piper. Shakespeare's "Henry IV" refers to the "Drone of a Lincolnshire Bagpipe". The Irish are believed to have played pipes for Edward I at Calais in 1297 and at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298. In fact, both Henry VII and Henry VIII are believed to have enjoyed pipers.

Questions remain as to when and where the first, second and third drones were added to the "piob-mhor" along with the questions as to when and where the bagpipe entered Scotland. However, the fact remains that this is an instrument whose growth and movement parallel civilizations and early history. It is a musical instrument which not only reflects Scotland's early history, but also the evolution of culture through history.

When they arrived to Scotland, they quickly became a part of Scottish life. Every town would hire a bagpiper, usually out of special taxes from the wealthy families in the area, who would pipe for townspeople on all occasions. In some places the piper would play in churches in place of an organ. As time went on, the bagpipes in the British Isles evolved and various types of pipes and piping were developed. Marches, strathspeys, hornpipes, and reels were perfected and played on the Highland Bagpipes, the Lowland Bagpipes, the Northumbrian pipes, and the Irish Union pipes.

The Scottish people have made the bagpipes one of the outstanding parts of their culture. In some many songs, stories, and poems, the Scots have celebrated their pipes, and unlike many other cultures they have kept the pipes alive as part of their musical tradition. But still, if you don't have a great Uncle Fergus from Ayr who played the Lowland pipes, you might have an Uncle Garcia from Madrid who played the Gaita.

Until next month...

Sláinte