



The **Omaha Pipes and Drums**
www.omahapipesanddrums.com
a Celtic tradition since 1970

Sheet music is a handwritten or printed form of music notation that uses modern musical symbols. **Score** is a common alternative (and more generic) term for sheet music.

The medium of sheet music typically is paper (or, in earlier times, parchment), although the access to musical notation in recent years also includes presentation on computer screens. Use of the term "sheet" is intended to differentiate written music from an audio presentation, as in a sound recording, broadcast or live performance, which may involve video as well. In everyday use, "sheet music" (or simply "music") can refer to the print publication of commercial music in conjunction with the release of a new film, show, record album, or other special or popular event which involves music.

Comprehending sheet music requires a special form of literacy: the ability to read music notation. Nevertheless, an ability to read or write music is not a requirement to compose music. Many composers have been capable of producing music in printed form without the capacity themselves to read or write in musical notation. Examples include the blind 18th-century composer John Stanley and the 20th-century composers and lyricists Lionel Bart, Irving Berlin and Paul McCartney.



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Play me a tune

In music, a **song** is a composition for voice or voices, performed by singing. A choral or vocal song may be accompanied by musical instruments, or it may be unaccompanied, as in the case of a cappella songs. A **melody**, or **tune**, is a linear succession of musical tones that the listener perceives as a single entity.

A **part** is the music played by an individual instrument or voice (or group of identical instruments or voices) within a larger work, such as a melody. It also refers to the printed copy of the music for each instrument, as distinct from the score, which holds the music for all instruments in an ensemble. For example in a string ensemble you would have separate parts for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola and Cello, even though there might be several of each instrument (and therefore several copies of each part).

Parts may be an **outer part**, the two on the top and bottom, or **inner part**, those in between. Part-writing is the composition of parts in consideration of harmony and counterpoint. Melody can be distinguished from harmony from the fact that Melody can be described as "Notes Over Time" whereas Harmony can be described as "Notes At One Time". A part in great Highland Bagpipe music is a musical sentence. Usually each part consists of four phrases, either one or two bars long. Several sentences combine to produce a paragraph or complete work or tune.

So where is this all leading? When someone asks a piper to play them a song, the response is typically, "*I can play you a tune.*"

There are various types of tunes played for competition and entertainment. The most common include...

MARCHES

A march, as a musical genre, is a piece of music with a strong regular rhythm which in origin was expressly written for marching to.



Marches can be written in any time signature and they range in tempo from slow to quick. Marches weren't notated until the late 16th century; until then, time was generally kept by percussion alone, often with improvised fife embellishment. With the extensive development of brass instruments, especially in the 19th century, marches became widely popular and were often elaborately orchestrated. The march tempo of 120 beats or steps per minute was adapted by Napoleon Bonaparte so that his army could move faster. Since he planned to occupy the territory he conquered, instead of his soldiers carrying all of their provisions with them, they would live off the land and march faster. The French march tempo is faster than the traditional tempo of British marches; the British call marches in the French tempo *quick marches*. Traditional American marches use the French or quick march tempo. A Retreat March is a form of departing music. It is believed that the term comes from the French *Retraite* meaning retire or return to bed in the evening.

REELS

The reel is a folk dance type as well as the accompanying dance tune type. It is one of the four dances which comprise Scottish country dancing, the others being the jig, the strathspey and the waltz. It is very rhythmic and very quick tempo. It is believed that the reel was originated from an old Irish dance called the *Hey* in the mid 1500's. Today many Irish reels are supplemented with new compositions and by tunes from other traditions which are easily adapted as reels. It is the most popular tune-type within the Irish dance music tradition.



Reels are generally written in a 4/4 or 2/4 time and have the same structure, consisting largely of a quaver movement with an accent on the first and third beats of the bar. Most reels have two parts (AABB) which are repeated. Each part (A or B) has eight bars, which again are divided into four and then into two. These are called phrases. The structure obeys to a scheme of question-answer where A is the "question" and B is the "answer" to A. The group of thirty-two bars (AABB) is repeated three or

four times before a second reel is introduced. The grouping of two tunes or more in this manner is typical in all dance tunes.

HORNPIPES

The term hornpipe refers to one of several dance forms played and danced in Britain and elsewhere from the late 17th century until the present day. It is said that hornpipe as a dance began around the 16th century on English sailing vessels. Movements were those familiar to sailors of that time: "looking out to sea" with the right hand to the forehead, then the left, lurching as in heavy weather, and giving the occasional rhythmic tug to their breeches both fore and aft.

The most common use of the term nowadays refers to tunes in 2/4 or 4/4 time. It is danced wearing a hard shoe. This type of hornpipe is generally thought of as a sailors' dance, and perhaps the best known example is the *Sailors' Hornpipe*.



The Sailors Hornpipe dates back from the Tudor period but became popular when Captain Cook proclaimed the Hornpipe as the typical recreation for the Sailor when the ship is becalmed. It was left to an actor of the same name to establish and standardize a "set" Hornpipe. T. P Cook, a leading actor of the day was often called upon to play naval parts and in the old dramas the hero often danced a hornpipe to celebrate his return to his native village.

T.P Cook made a special point of visiting ships when they were in port at any of the naval bases where he happened to be performing and many evenings after the show he would join his Jack Tar friends at the local inn. As they indulged in the light fantastic he made notes of their many steps and descriptive movement and thus found that in all sea ports, the hornpipe steps were very much the same. Having acquired all these steps, he set them in a sensible routine as near the original as possible and presented this complete hornpipe in the next naval drama in which he appeared. This brought the dance into popularity and it has remained in similar form since that time. Today, the Sailors Hornpipe is the national dance of England and it is consistent with the characteristics of a maritime nation that the dance should centre round the life and work of a typical sailor in the British Navy in the days of the Sailing Ships.

STRATHSPEYS

Strathspey refers both to the type of tune, and to the type of dance usually done to it (although strathspeys are also frequently danced to slow airs). It is named after the Strathspey region of Scotland, in Moray and Badenoch and Strathspey. A strathspey is a dance tune generally in 4/4 time (usually set to quavers or eighth notes). It is similar to a hornpipe but slower and more stately, and containing many snaps. A so-called *Scots snap* is a short note before a dotted note (cut-dot).

These days there are at least four, some would say seven, varieties: the bouncy schottische, the strong strathspey, the song or air strathspey, all three of which can be enjoyed for dancing, and the Competition

strathspey for the bagpipe, primarily intended as a display of virtuosity.



JIGS

The Jig is a form of lively folk dance in compound meter, as well as the accompanying dance tune. It developed in 16th century England, and was quickly adopted on the Continent where it eventually became the final movement of the mature Baroque dance suite (the French gigue; Italian and Spanish giga). Today it is most associated with Irish dance music and Scottish country dance music.

The "**Irish Jig**" is a popular tune-type within the traditions of Irish dance music, second only to the reel, and popular but somewhat less common in Scottish country dance music. As mentioned, it is transcribed in compound meter. "**Double jigs**" are always transcribed in 6/8; "slip jigs" are always written in 9/8. "**Single jigs**" are most commonly transcribed in 6/8, but sometimes also in 12/8. "**Slides**" are transcribed in both 12/8 and 6/8.

SLOW AIRS

Slow airs can be either instrumental tunes in their own right, or melodies borrowed from songs. Slow airs can be played on many instruments and are particularly suited to the fiddle with its sustained bowed sound. There are no special rhythms associated with the slow air; they are simply slow melodies.



The 18th-century Perthshire fiddler Niel Gow wrote a beautiful slow air which we know as 'Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of his Second Wife', although the 'wife' was actually Niel's fiddle.

When bands and solo musicians are making music that is not for dancing to, they often put together 'sets' of tunes of different types. In bagpipe music, a common combination is a march, strathspey and reel, and sets often also start out with a slow air before embarking on the livelier dance tunes, usually building up in speed to an energetic finish.

And then there is the classical Piobaireachd – see the *July 2010 issue of OPD*.

Until next month...

Sláinte