

# Soft May Morn

*Ma dainn chiuin cheitein*



A Collection of Highland Airs performed on the Fiddle  
by

**Bonnie Rideout**  
U.S. Scottish Fiddle Champion

The Right Honorable **James Ramsay MacDonald** once wrote:

The magic of Highland story of ghost or  
fairy, battle or adventure, chivalry or pillage  
is not in the tale itself but in the way it is told.

The fiddle music on this recording tells many a tale; the titles of many of these songs portray the difficult lives of the Scottish people. The harsh island life, the long dark winter days and nights, and the tragic history of the highlands all weave a portrait of hardship. Other tunes such as "A doo-adee-adoo I went," "Ha da-lolal-O," and "Och o ro u" were used as work songs while washing and carding the wool, or sung as walking songs while enduring long treks over the rugged landscape to cottages many miles distant.

The inspiration for this album occurred in 1987 when Bonnie Rideout was residing in Scotland at Armadale Castle on the Isle of Skye. Located on the Sleat Peninsula, the castle is the site of the Clan Donald Centre. The Centre's library contains a music book dated 1781 by Patrick McDonald, Minister of Kilmore and Argyleshire. This collection of music was first notated by Joseph McDonald, but completed and greatly enhanced by his brother Patrick after the premature death of Joseph in the late eighteenth century. The manuscript is the only known second edition to be printed. Many of the tunes date back centuries,

although some may have been edited or altered by Mr. McDonald when he wrote:

A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs.  
Never hitherto published.

To which are added a few of the most lively  
Country Dances or Reels of the  
North Highlands & Western Isles.

And Some Specimens of Bagpipe Music.  
Dedicated to John McGregor of McGregor.

Several of the tunes in Patrick McDonald's collection were never titled. This is the case with six songs on this recording, which Rideout has named for purposes of identification. The last lament is an eight-minute bagpipe solo which is unmistakable even when played on the strings of a fiddle.

This album is unusual, as the theme and selections are from a single source. The tunes recorded here are some of the most haunting of the air and lament collection, although several of the "most lively" reels and strathspeys have also been included. Very few of the songs on this album have been previously recorded. The arrangements are not intended to be musicological period pieces, but simply an expression of the unique style Bonnie Rideout brings to her music. In the tradition of Robert Burns, any poet or songwriter is always invited to add new lyrics to these lovely ancient melodies.

1. Saoileagan Sgarba — A Scarba Air — The Seagulls of Scarba  
Sud mar chuir mi'n geamhradh tharum — That was how I passed the winter  
Posadh piuthar In bhain — The wedding of fair John's sister  
Tha giullan agam shin — A St. Kilda song and dance — I have a boy of my own
2. O. is mis' a tha leònta — Oh 'tis me that is wounded  
Bhliadhna dh'eirich an iomairt — Lament for Clan Ranald
3. Ghoid iad mo bhean uam an raoir — They stole my wife from me last night
4. Tha mulad, tha mulad, tha mulad air m'inntinn — Sad, sad, sad is my soul  
A do-ade-a do dh'shalbh mi — A doo-a-dee-a-doo I went  
Chaidh mi là do'n Bhadràileach — I went one day to the battery rock  
\*Allt Dearg Beag — The little red brook
5. Gur trom leam mo cheum — My step is heavy  
Latha suibhail sleibhe dhomh — One day as I travelled the moor
6. Dàn Dheirg Dargo — A very ancient air
7. Madainn chiuin chéitein — Soft May Morn  
Shuib hail mi Ile's Ceann-tìre — I travelled through Islay and Kintyre  
Moch madainn chéitein — Early on a May morning
8. Gur eutrom an t aiseag — Light (or joyful) is the ferry (or crossing)  
Sud chuir m' aigne fo ghruaim — This casts a gloom upon my soul  
Och o ro u
9. Keapach 'na fhàsach — The vale of Keppoch is become desolate  
North Highland Reel  
\*Port à Chreadh — Clay Port (House of the Black Pot)

10. Mac Aidh Chanasain — Lord Reay  
Ha-d-lolal-O  
\*Carn à Ghille — The lad's cairn  
\*Glaisrig — (A hobgoblin)  
\*Gruagach — (A longhaired damsel with demonic propensities)
11. 'S mi air creagan na sgorra — I am on the rocks of the peak  
Tha gruagach san Aodan — The maid of Edin
12. 'S fluich an oidhche nochd, 'sgur fuari — Wet is the night and cold  
'Slionar eubh' agus iolach — Many are the shrieks and cries of woe  
Sleeps the Noon in the Deep Blue Sky (Originally untitled, number 115 in this collection)
13. \*Fear à Choire — The Man of Corrie  
Tha mo ghaols' air Dònal — My love is fixed on Donald
14. 'S smeorach le Clann dònail mi — I am a thrush of Clan Donald  
Nochd gur suain mo chadal domh — Tonight my sleep is sound
15. Nighean donn nan gabhar — Brown haired maiden of the goats  
An tur a bhithinn urad — The tower which I match in size  
A phiùrag ghaolach — Beloved little sister  
Cha d'theid mi gu Loch Bhraoin no Ghearrloch — Neither shall I go to Loch Broom nor Gareloch
16. Camna Mhic an Toisich — McIntosh's Lament

\*Newly titled

## **Musicians**

### **Bonnie Rideout, violin** **U.S. Scottish Fiddle Champion**

Bonnie Elisabeth Rideout was born in Saline, Michigan, U.S.A. Inspired by two musical parents, she began studying classical violin at the age of eight, continuing her training at the University of Michigan School of Music, from which she graduated in 1985. She is also an accomplished fine artist, selling her drawings and paintings to customers around the globe.

Her Scottish heritage and keen interest in traditional music brought her to the world of Scottish Fiddling. She has studied and performed extensively throughout North America and the British Isles. She began winning competitions at the age of seventeen when she won the Great Lakes Fiddle Competition at Alma, Michigan. Bonnie is the 1988 and 1989 U.S. fiddle champion, as well as the winner of numerous other regional championships in both the U.S. and Scotland.

### **Betty Rideout, piano**

Betty Rideout, Bonnie's mother, is an established piano instructor in Michigan, where she has been teaching for the past twenty one years. Her creativity and expertise in Scottish traditional music has added an important dimension to Bonnie's fiddle music through original arrangements, as exemplified on this album.

### **Charlie Wilkie, guitar**

Charlie Wilkie is a well known guitarist in the Detroit area. Born in Michigan, he has spent his life brightening the shadowy corners of pubs, performing in folk festivals, and being eccentric. His unique tunings and arrangements have added tremendously to the mood of this album.

## **Credits**

Producer - Evelyn M. E. Murray  
Piano arrangements - Betty Rideout  
Musical research,  
arrangements, and selection - Bonnie Rideout  
Photograph of Bonnie Rideout - Eric DeBolt  
Photograph of Armadale Castle - Permission  
to reproduce from Rob McDonald Parker, Director, Clan Donald Centre  
Gaelic Translations - John MacDonald  
Cover design - Lyril C. Ahern

Recorded at Solid Sound, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.—Sound Engineer - Will  
Spencer

© 1990 by E. M. E. Murray  
The Atholl Brose  
37 Blanchard Rd., Cambridge, MA  
02138-1010, USA

Copyright subsists in all Atholl Brose recordings. Any unauthorized broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording is prohibited. Applications for public performance licenses should be addressed to Phonographic Performance Ltd., 14-22 Ganton St., London W1V-1LB.