

Scottish Partnership for Arts and Education
FORMS IN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

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Hornpipe: The hornpipe was a primitive double-reed wind instrument dating from around the 13th century. The dance and its related music came to have its maritime associations around the middle of the 18th century. As many ships' companies carried a resident fiddler, music was readily available for dancing, thus providing a much needed form of daily exercise.

Much of the even-rhythmed passage-work co-incides with the style of the reel, but the dotted rhythms, characteristic of so many hornpipes, were a later mid-19th century innovation. There is a marked differentiation in tempo between even and uneven-rhythmed hornpipes: - the former are generally played at quarter note = 104-112, whereas the latter tend to the more relaxed quarter note = 69-76.

Jig: *Giga, Gigue and Geige* are all titles for the "fidil", the modern violin's ancestor of twelve to fifteen hundred years ago. The jig probably derives its name from the sort of music played on these instruments. Although mainly associated with the music of Ireland, the jig occupies an honourable place in Scottish traditional music. It is cast in compound time, either duple (6/8) or triple (9/8) and can be played from a moderate tempo of dotted quarter note = 116-120 to a sprightly tempo of dotted quarter note = 126-138.

Lament: Usually cast in the pastoral or slow air genre, this is a composition to commemorate a person's death.

March: Imbued with the spirit of the Scottish fighting man, the march is normally written in common time and played at a tempo of quarter note = 92-100. Playing pipe marches on the fiddle is an important part of the repertoire and these are written in 2/4 or 6/8 time.

Pastoral: Like the slow air and slow strathspey, this is music for listening to and was not designed for dance purposes. Played in a slow or moderate tempo (quarter note = 52-56), this was a form particularly cultivated by J. Scott Skinner.

Polka: Originating in Bohemia around the 1830's, the polka is usually written in 2/4 time and played at a tempo of quarter note = 76-84. It is often associated with display-music of a rather virtuoso nature.

Rant: The word is of Germanic origin meaning to *frollic* or *romp* and denotes a lively reel or strathspey-type tune often characterized by a use of the rhythm – 2 sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note. Many tunes, familiar today as *strathspeys*, appeared originally as *rants*. The tempo is similar to that of the strathspey, i.e., quarter note = 132-138.

Reel: This is a form common to Scotland, Ireland and England and today implies a sprightly, even-rhythmed tune in fast tempo. Many of the reels in J. Scott Skinner's *The Scottish Violinist* are marked to be played at quarter note = 136 and in our own day Aly Bain and Bill Hardie will take such pieces as *Mrs. Forbes Leith* and *Speed the Plough* in the region of quarter note = 120-128. Most reels, however, will benefit from the less breathless tempo of quarter note = c. 108-116.

As to the style of reel-playing, one can do no better than quote Skinner's words from *A Guide to Bowing*:- "The reel should be played crisp and birly like a weel-gaun wheelie." [birly = whirling; weel-gaun = well gone but is probably a pun because gaun has many meanings ranging from crazy to buttery; wheelie = wheel or, as a pun, a willow warbler]

Schottische: A strathspey-like tune accented in a way which implies more of a 2/2 metre than the strathspey's common time; correspondingly the tempo can be rather faster than that of the average strathspey.

Scots Measure: This made its first appearance in print around 1700. It is distinguished by a use of *anacrusis* and a stressing of the first three quarter notes of the bar and tempi which can vary from a leisurely quarter note – 100-108 to a lively quarter note = c. 120. The rhythmic structure of the *Scots measure* often hints at the hornpipe of over a century later.

Slow Air: A form of solo-music giving the player a chance to display beauty of tone and phrase at a relaxed tempo (quarter note = c. 56).

Slow Strathspey: Here the form, rhythms and bowing technique of the dance-strathspey is applied to music of a slower tempo (quarter note = 60-69). By traditional standards, the choice of keys is often more adventurous, B flat and E flat being particular favourites. Skinner applied the title "solo strathspey" to this form.

Song Air: These compositions, usually of the slow air genre, were once the melodies of songs and wedded to a text.

Strathspey: The earliest examples of this form emerged around 1749 and were known as "strathspey reels". Its structure hinges upon the rhythms – dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth and a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note and undoubtedly provides our music's greatest challenge to bowing-technique. The dance-strathspey, moulded from the character of the fiddle itself, has developed into the most important form of Scottish traditional music. The tempo can vary from quarter note = 126 to quarter note = 138.