

# ROBERT EDWARDS' COMMONPLACE BOOK AND SCOTS MUSICAL HISTORY

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Robert Edwards' Commonplace-book contains 129 items of vocal and instrumental part-music, 14 only of which occur in complete transcription. There are in fact 241 separate entries of individual parts, comprising 131 cantus, 38 altus, 34 tenor, 25 bassus and 13 quintus parts, several of them recorded more than once. It is a varied collection of vocal and instrumental, sacred and secular, Scots, English and foreign music, as these tables show:

	items		items
songs . . . .	80	Scots (and possibly Scots) . . . .	77
psalms . . . .	37	English (and possibly English) . . . .	31
motets . . . .	3	French . . . . .	6
consorts. . . .	9	Italian . . . . .	15

Robert Edwards' manuscript presents a complete cross-section of the Scottish repertory of part-song. Early sixteenth-century songs à 3 in the English tradition are represented by *Alas that same sueit face* (MB 34)<sup>1</sup> whose only two surviving parts are recorded here. Traces of other songs from the same period and in the same tradition can be seen in *In sommer simliest and faire* (No. 78)<sup>2</sup> and *In pryll alon* (No. 83), both of which appear to be descant parts from three-voice polyphonic settings. More in the Josquin motet-like chanson form à 4 is *Lantron of lowe* (No. 82), also unique to this manuscript, whose text is preserved in the Bannatyne Manuscript, ascribed to Steill. Slightly later examples of the Claudin type of chanson, which seems to have been cultivated in Scotland, include *Support your servand* (MB 39), *Richt soir opprest* (MB 40) and a cantus part, unknown elsewhere, entitled *My loue his leafte me comfortles* (No. 60). The style and structure of this last piece suggest that it is related to the others: it begins with the characteristic rhythmic figure on a

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repeated note and the second and fifth of its five short, clearly-defined phrases are identical. Part-songs of the mid-century are well represented. *O Ladie Wenus heire complaine* (No. 33) is probably the title of the original song to whose music (MB 42)

### IN SOMMER SIMLIEST AND FAIRE

(No. 78)



The last D in bar 8 is a crotchet in the manuscript.

### IN PRYLL ALON

(No. 83)



the words of Scott's "Lament of the Master of Erskine" (MB 42) were later fitted: this form of address is common in love poetry of earlier sixteenth-century Scotland and the words of this incipit certainly fit the music better than do those of Scott's poem. The setting of another poem by Scott, *Hence hairt [with] heir [that] most depairt* (No. 32), resembles the preceding song in

form and style, but it survives only in its cantus part: it appears to be a part-song, possibly of the mid-sixteenth century, composed in the rhythm of a galliard. Another song, *Intil a may morninge* (No. 15), is very similar in style and structure to

## LANTRON OF LOWE

(No. 82)

The musical score for 'Lantron of Lowe' (No. 82) is presented in eight staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes bar numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50. The music features a variety of note values and rests, with some notes tied across bar lines. There are several accidentals, including sharps and flats, throughout the piece.

The D in bar 9 is a minim in the manuscript. The tied Cs in bars 44-45 are rhythmically unusual but seem to be indicated. The manuscript has simply a dotted minim.

*Woe worth the tyme* (MB 33), which it precedes in the manuscript, and a version of its text was included in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* (c. 1550): the simple part-music is perhaps contemporary with that publication.

Late sixteenth-century part-songs such as *What mightie motion* (MB 56), and polyphonic "chansons" such as *In throu the windoes of myn ees* (MB 53), are also recorded: one of the former, whose tenor part is unique to Edwards' manuscript, is *Evin dead behold I breathe* (MB 55). Lute-songs include *Since that my siches* (MB 58), which is found only in this source. In style it seems to date from the early seventeenth century and is strongly reminiscent of Campian in his simplest vein. Another lute-song, possibly Scots, is found here with the title of the metrical version of Psalm 51, *O Lord consider my destres* (No. 35). The music, in the rhythm of a galliard, appears with a bassus part in Lady Anne Ker's Music-Book of about 1625: there it is matched with another text, "Slepe not in syne my deare my undifilde".

Broadsides and ballad-tunes are represented by cantus and tenor parts of what are very likely Scottish settings, for they are found only in Scottish sources. *Come Love, let's walk* (MB 64) is one, *Come sueit lowe leat sorowes ceass* (Nos. 56 and 95), the English ballad-tune known as "Barafostus Dream", is another. This latter appears to have had two different settings current in Scottish sources: one of the compilers who made the later additions to Thomas Wode's part-books recorded one à 4; Robert Edwards appears to have drawn on another, possibly à 3, for the tenor part that he engrossed in his manuscript. *Sir Lamuel* (No. 34) is possibly another such ballad-tune, and it is unique to the manuscript.

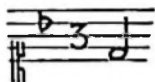
The English songs in the manuscript are almost as varied as the Scottish: the earliest one, Henry VIII's *Passe tyme uithe good companie* (No. 80), is not such a curious choice in the light of the taste for old music that Edwards and other seventeenth-century Scottish musical amateurs display in their anthologies. Later Tudor part-songs include *My song is lowe* (Nos. [126] and [127]), dating from about the third quarter of the century and only found in this and one other Scottish source. There are, surprisingly, no madrigals in the manuscript, either English or Italian. Two of Byrd's accompanied solo songs, some Dowland ayres, Jones and Campian lute-songs and a couple of Ravenscroft pieces complete the English repertory.

French chansons include Claudin's *Maudite soit* and *D'où vient cela*. Here, however, they go under the titles of *Onlie to you in world that I loued best* (No. 17) and *For loue of one* (Nos. 84 and 89), as popular French chansons were frequently matched with Scots lyrics and were known by their new titles. The original tenor of Lupi's *Susanne un jour* appears as No. 112, and the

cantus of Lasso's re-setting of it as No. 90, *Susanna faire*, presumably copied from *Musica Transalpina* of 1588. Italian songs are represented by Gastoldi's balletto *Viver lieto*, here described merely as "Ane Italian songe" (No. 79), and thirteen anonymous *villanelle à 3* without title or text, one of which, *Fuggit' amore* by G. D. da Nola, first appeared in a Venetian publication of 1567.

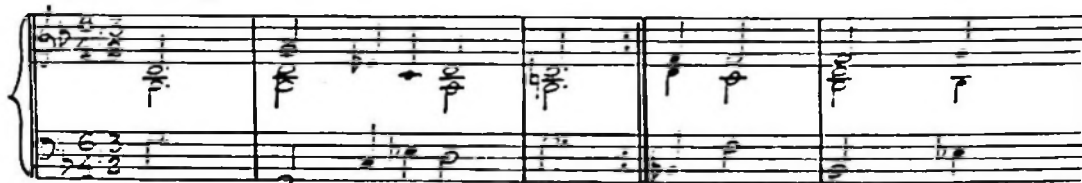
## SIR LAMUEL

(No. 34)



[Hare man-teles were — of grene — fel - wet Y-  
-bor-dur'd with gold,—ryght well— y- sette, I- pe - lur'd with grys and gro.

(Lute or Harp)



5



Hare hed-dys were—dyght well—with - alle :  
Ev'r-ych hadde oon a jol - yf co - ro - nall With six-ty—gemm's and — mo. ]



Repetition of bars 1-3 is indicated in the manuscript; bars 4-6 are repeated by analogy. A stanza of the English Romance of Sir Launfal (*Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale, New York 1930) is underlaid and an instrumental accompaniment has been reconstructed by the present writer.

Bassus parts of thirteen psalm-settings (ff. 35-38) and one psalm tune (No. 52) can be traced to the 1635 Scottish Psalter. Nos. 1-12, 38-50 and the parts on ff. 63-68, however, supply the cantus (i.e. the psalm tunes), quintus and altus parts of twelve settings of the Common Tunes that are unique to this manuscript. The only other group of Scottish psalm-settings that places the tune in the soprano register is the now fragmentary set of "The Common toones in 5 parts" noted some

time after 1633 at the end of Thomas Wode's part-books. Very likely the parts in Edwards' manuscript are taken from a similar set of Common Tunes arranged for five voices.

The nine consorts are probably all Scottish: they consist of a pavan by the court composer and envoy James Lauder (No. 68: MB 83), precisely dated 1584 in another manuscript<sup>3</sup>, and a fantasy (No. 75) by John Black (*c.* 1520-87) of the Aberdeen song-school; a pavan and galliard (No. 65), possibly by Lauder, dedicated to Sir William Keith—very likely the fourth Earl Marischal of that name who died in 1581<sup>4</sup>; three pieces recorded only in Scottish manuscripts, comprising a short dance-like piece entitled *Wilson's fantasy* (Nos. 30 and 99: MB 85) and two settings of *Ut re mi* (Nos. [93a] and 100); and what appear to be re-workings found only in Scottish sources of Dowland's "Captain Piper" pavan and galliard (Nos. 61 and 62).

In addition to this part-music there are 21 items of cittern music and 20 of keyboard music, making a total of 170 musical items in the whole manuscript. Of the cittern pieces, 13 are Scottish and 8 English, and of the keyboard pieces, 11 are Scottish and 9 are English, although in both groups the Scottish pieces tend to be arrangements of native airs or folk-songs, and the English lute-songs, continuo-songs and ballad-tunes.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the collection is the incidence of the extant Scottish repertory of part-music that it reveals. In the following table the songs can be seen to form relatively the most representative group in this category. Now the contents as a whole show a higher proportion of Scottish part-songs than do those of any other similar source. In this respect the only comparable collection is Forbes' *Songs and Fancies* (Aberdeen, 1662-82). Robert Edwards' *Commonplace-book*, however, supplies more unique parts and the 29 items recorded in it represent practically all the best songs in the repertory. These facts alone would make it one of the most important documents of early Scottish music.

	No. in extant repertory	No. in RE	unique to RE (or supplying unique parts)
Songs . . .	83	29	10
Psalm-settings .	<i>c.</i> 200	37	13
Motets . . .	22	2	—
Consorts . . .	39	9	4

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The MB references are to the item number in *Music of Scotland 1500-1700* (Musica Britannica 15). London 1957.
- <sup>2</sup> The No. references are to the item in the manuscript itself.
- <sup>3</sup> The cantus (second copy) of Thomas Wode's part-books. This copy is in Edinburgh University Library, MS. Dk. 5. 14, p. 179.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Sir J. Balfour Paul (ed.), *The Scots Peerage* 6 (Edinburgh 1909) 46.