



(LYRCD 7327)

THE BAGPIPE

IRELAND – SCOTLAND – BRITTANY – GALICIA – CANADA

The bagpipe (or cornemuse) is a reed instrument with several pipes (from 2 to 4) whose distinctive feature is a bag, which serves as a reservoir for air, furnished either by the breath (through the blowpipe) or a small bellows which is tied to the player's right arm. This permits an uninterrupted inward flow of air to the pipes, resulting in a continuous sound. The majority of European bagpipes have one or more drones without finger holes, which produce a single, continuous note. Some models may have several pipes with keys, which permit the playing of simple chords. For the melody there are one or two chanters (played with separate hands) with finger holes that are closed either with the fingertips or the middle finger-joint.

The bagpipe is still a common European instrument even though it is to be found only in certain definite and isolated areas, but during the Middle Ages it played a very prominent musical role (together with other drone instruments whose ritual functions are now obsolete but which remain as "folk" instruments – such as the zither and the hurdy-gurdy). The principal areas in which various types of bagpipes are in actual use are: Ireland (Uilleann or Union pipes); Scotland (Highland pipes; Northumberland (Northumberland small-pipes); Brittany (biniau); Galicia, Asturias and northern Portugal (gaita); Maiorca (xirimia); Auvergne (cabrette); southern Italy and Sicily (zampogna); Istria (piva and mih); the Balkans, Aegean Islands, Poland, Ukraine (pajda, cimpoi, duda, etc.).

The present recording is dedicated to bagpipes recorded in Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Galicia and Canada. The bagpipes used in these countries are all characterized by a single chanter with a conical bore and double reed (like the oboe) for the melody, and one or more drones with a single vibrating reed (like a clarinet). With the exception of the Irish Union pipes, air is fed by the breath, the number of drones various from one (gaita and biniou) to three (Highland pipes), to three plus three “regulators”. In a certain sense we can consider these four bagpipe types as typical of the “Celtic” areas. In the four areas covered in this recording the bagpipe is considered to be more or less the national instrument and thus maintains an important place in the social life of the people, and not only on the “folk” level. For this reason the instrument has continued to be perfected and has developed into an “art” of highly sophisticated technique and with a specialized repertoire. In Scotland, Ireland and, though to a lesser degree in Brittany, this repertoire is rich, complex and clearly defined on more than one level. In Galicia it is a more popular instrument with less ample possibilities and functions.

Within the limit of time we attempt to document the musical highlights of the bagpipe in the four “Celtic” areas by the way of in-the-field recordings. Also included along with the instrumental pieces are two vocal numbers, one from Brittany and the other from Scotland, which illustrate the existing rapport in both countries between instrumental bagpipe and vocal music.

IRELAND – The Union pipes (or Uilleann pipes)

One separate chanter with conical bore, chromatic keys, three drones and three “regulators.” The six accompanying pipes are all held together in one large stock and lie in a bunch across the right thigh. Air is provided by a bellows.

Intonation: Chanter and drone 1. Drones 2 and 3.

The “regulators” are three harmony pipes with double reeds, their lower ends closed by a stopper. The pipes will sound no note until one of the closed keys on it is pressed. In this way the continuous sound of the chanter and the three drones can produce a simple chord, which can accompany a reel or jig. The keys are pressed with the inside of the right wrist. This extraordinary instrument dates back in its present form to the 18th century.

Previous to the modern model, an earlier type existed, simpler in design, with a chanter with finger holes, three drones and no “regulator,” but a bellows provided air. The first “regulator” appeared around 1800. The success of the Union pipes played a decisive role in the eventual disappearance of other traditional instruments in Ireland, particularly the Irish harp.

There still prevails some doubt as to whether the correct name of this bagpipe should be “Uilleann” or “Union” pipe. Uilleann is a Gaelic word meaning “elbow.” In this case the name refers to the bellows which functions by the player’s right elbow. According to others, the correct name

Should be “Union,” in reference to the three drones and the three “regulators” which are

all held in one large stock, or, by another hypothesis, because the bagpipes took their final form at the time of the “Union of the Parliaments.” Actually, the players and instrument makers simply call their Bagpipes “the pipes” and show a tendency towards the other term “Uilleann.”

The Irish bagpipe is undoubtedly the most complex and sophisticated of the bagpipes in existence today from the point of view of its construction, its technical difficulties and the results produced. Only two other bagpipes of the 18th century – the French musette and the Neapolitan surdelina – were similarly complex, but were not “folk” instruments and had ritual functions.

The repertoire of this instrument reflects its characteristics of “indoor playing” – i.e., of moderate volume, more suitable for playing seated under a roof rather than outdoors. These considerations exclude playing in parades and limit the repertoire to “airs” and dances (reels, jigs, hornpipes), solos, or in ensemble with other instruments. Not unusual are performances of classical pieces such as the composition included in this collection by the blind harpist Turlough Carolan, who was an important Irish musical figure in the 18th century.

BRITTANY – The Biniou

One chanter (levraid) with a conical bore, seven finger holes, one drone (korn-boud).

The biniou is played together with the bombarde, a “popular” oboe tuned an octave lower than the biniou chanter. Groups can be found in Brittany consisting of several bombardes, binious and drums called kevrenn or bagadou. About forty years ago the Scottish cornemuse (Highland pipe), with its richer and louder sound, was introduced to Brittany, but since this instrument lays in the same octave as the bombarde, the traditional duet sound between the biniou-bombarde is lost.

The actual repertoire of the biniou-bombard players consists of marches (played at weddings, processions and holidays), dances and slow-airs. These latter pieces constitute, as in Scotland and Ireland, the most important art of their repertoire and require players of exceptional capacities. The slow airs, in fact, develop musically by the way of continuous variations and terminate (as the example included in this recording does) as a dance. The dances are usually composed in a sequence of three, the composition varying according to location. In Lower Cornwall, for instance, the sequence is usually gavotte-bals-jabadao.

By the end of World War II biniou and bombarde players had been reduced to a very few, but in recent years, under the stimulus of a new national awareness, their number has greatly increased. Many young men have taken up the instruments and have also revived many themes, which had fallen into disuse. The repertoire has been greatly enriched and continues to grow together with the new compositions, which are composed in the traditional style.

The tralalaleno is a vocal form found in the mountains of Brittany, which imitates the rapport between the biniou and the bombard. This manner of interpreting the aubad is called kan-diskan (song-discant) and illustrates the influence of instrumental on vocal music. The tralalaleno is usually composed in three parts: tamm kenta (gavotte), tamm kreiw (varied contra-dance) and tamm diweza (gavotte).

GALICIA –Gaita

One chanter punterio) with conical bore, seven finger holes, one thumbhole and one or two separate drones (ronco and ronquillo). The chanter has a double reed and the two drone single reeds.

The gaita normal seldom has a second drone (ronquillo); when it does exist it plays a fifth above the tonic (G) or the tonic in the first octave of the nunterio.

B) gaita tumbal or roucador (B-flat): punterio ronquillo

c) naita grileria or grillera (in D):

Punterio, ronco

The gaita is frequently accompanied by several percussion instruments: the snare drum, the cassa or bombo and the tamburello or pandereta. It is played during fiestas, the repertoire usually consisting of various dances (especially the muineire which is the “national” Galician dance). For a more detailed account of the gaita and the music of Spanish Galicia, please refer to Alvatros VPA 8111, Folidas das Risas Baixias. The miuneria included in this recording is played by the gairta Arileria.

SCOTLAND – The Highland Bagpipe

The Scotland Highland bagpipes are the most famous in the world, made popular by the scots military bands. About forty years ago Ireland also adopted a modified version of the same bagpipes (usually tuned in B-flat and the two drones at an octave). The Highland bagpipe in its actual form is a relatively recent instrument which was developed during the 17th and the 18th centuries, and eventually replaced the more archaic primitive bagpipes previously in use.

The Highland bagpipe repertoire is divided into so-called “classical” or great music” (Ceol Mor) and “little music” (Ceol Aotrom). “Great music” includes the iborch, very difficult pieces requiring particular dexterity and technique, composed in honor of some celebrity or to commemorate a special event or the illustrious dead. They are developed by way of the introductory theme of Urlar after which follow two groups of variations, the first called Taoluath and the second Crunluath, and which terminate with the repetition of the Urlar. “Little music” includes marches and dances that are more or less internationally known. Today there are literally thousands of players of “little music,” but very few are capable of playing the “Pilbroch.”

One chanter with conical bore, 8 fingerholes and three separate drones – Intonation: chanter, drones.

The scale utilized is almost always the mixolydian (with a flatted seventh) or a combination of the diatonic major and mixolydian modes (especially in the Hebrides).

The “pilbroch” included in this recording is played by Calum Johnston on the Island of Barra. Calum Johnston is without any doubt one of the three or four most important interpreters of “great music” in all of Scotland. Alex Steward, a tinker by trade from the Perth area, plays a march and dance on this recording, and is a well-known bagpipe player and member of a famous family of tinker musicians and singers.

The canntaireachd is a vocal form, which developed as an auxiliary aid in the teaching of the bagpipe, before the introduction of written music. The syllables indicate the position and the note values and which ornamentations to use. This singing style has almost completely disappeared today.

CANADA

The last feature in this CD is the Triumph of Street Pipe Band. Triumph Street is renowned throughout North America for its very unique sound; brightness of tone, musicality of arrangement and innovative drumming which have become its trademark.

TRACKS AND TIMING

ULLIAN PIPERS OF IRELAND:

1. Jig - 1:17
2. Compositio Di Turlough Carolan - 2:04
3. Larks Song - 2:50 –

BRETON PIPERS

4. Marcial Perle Zozze Nuptial March - 1:17
5. Melodiae Ballo - 9:14
6. Tralalalaleno - 3:34
7. Noel - 2:47
8. Ballo - 1:22

GALICIAN PIPERS

9. Muinera - 4:38

HIGHLAND PIPERS OF SCOTLAND

10. Marcia (Cock of the North) 1 Reel - 2:30
11. Mackintosh Lament (Pilbroch) - 9:13
12. Cannataireachd - 1:53
13. Tre Arie (Three Airs) - 4:16

THE TRIUMPH STREET BAND OF CANADA

14. 6/6 Marches: Bonawe Highlanders/Caverhill/Braemar Gathering - 4:13

15. Medley: Nameless/The Mermaid/The Watering Hole/Smith's a Gallant Firmea - 6:13
16. March, Strathspey and Reel: Hugh Kennedy/Islay Ball/Doctor MacPhail - 3:20
17. 3/4 Marches: Green Hills of Tyrol/Dream Valley of Glendarvel/Loch Maree - 3:11
18. 2/4 Marches: Duncan McInnes/Auchmountains Bonnie Glen/The Drunken Piper - 4:17
19. Medley: Kilworth Hills/The Rakes of Kildare/Newmarket House/The Day We were at Arran, The Maids of the Black Glen, Mackenzie of Garrynahine, Sleepie Maggie, The Pigeon on the Gate, Keltan's Reel - 6:11

CREDITS

Cover & back design, Duy Ngo

Mastering, DMS Digital Mastering Studios, NYC

An original ALBATROS – ITALY RECORDING



Lyrichord Discs Inc.

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.