

## The Piper's Corner

*by PVSFC Board Member Peter Walker*

In our last several columns, we discussed emphatic ornaments; that is, ornaments that either occur on a beat, or begin on them, such as the shake or doubling, or most occurrences of the simple grace note. But in our discussion of birls, we came across a version of that ornament that, rather than beginning on the beat, ended on it.

We call these ornaments “anticipatory”, and they make up a major part of the bagpiper’s repertoire.

### Get a Grip

In light music (aka, marches, dance tunes, and slow airs, as opposed to piobaireachds), the fundamental family of ornaments of this type is called a “grip”. It is so named, presumably, because to execute them, the piper “grips” the chanter, closing all the holes and going down to low G, and then executes one or more gracenotes while on low G, before returning to the next melody note. Figure 10 shows the most basic forms of grip.

The first example gives a grip from B to C. This form, called a leumluath, consists of a D grace note bisecting two low Gs; the total length of the grip being approximately a sixteenth note, each low G in isolation must then be approximately a thirty-second note in length. The second example is of a grip from high A to high A, formed similarly. Both of these would be examples of a very “open” grip. In reality, they would be played tighter; the low Gs shrinking, and the preceding melody note expanding to fill the time.

Some contexts require an even smaller grip. Bar three of figure 10 shows a grip occurring in a run up to a melody note. This figure is quite common in simple time marches, like Leaving of Liverpool. In this case, the grip is stealing its time from a sixteenth note B. So in actual execution, the B must become approximately a thirty-second note to make room for the grip, and each of the Gs in the grip will become a sixty-fourth note. When a grip is this closed, it begins to sound like a ripple.

How is the grip to be interpreted? In the first two bars, the grip is essentially substituting for a melody note around a sixteenth note in length. I tend to interpret grips of this form in this way on fiddle, and play an adjacent melody note in place of the grips. For example, in bar 1, I might try an A in place of the grip; in bar 2, a high B. Though one loses the double-pulse ripple effect of the grip simply playing a single melody note, its melodic function is preserved. If one wanted to be more literal, one could subdivide the note with a tap. In the third bar, the grip has taken on a purely ornamental function; it is creating an emphasis on the following melody note. In this instance, I would play a hammer-on to the following melody note in place of the grip, or possibly a hammer-on followed by a tap, to achieve an equivalent effect on fiddle.

The first bar of figure 11 shows the simplest variation on a grip. Grips can occur from any note to any other note, but their form changes in certain instances. For example, there is no grip from low A to low A in light music. Furthermore, when executing a grip from D or C to low A, or from D to E or higher, an alternate form is used. In this alternate form, often called a “rodin”, a B grace note is used to separate the two low Gs in the grip rather than a D grace note, but the ornament is otherwise executed identically. I tend to interpret the rodin the same way I would a leumluath in the same place. A more interesting variation is the “darado”, a triple-pulse grip that occurs from D or C to B, shown in the last bar of figure 11. The darado is sometimes used, not as an anticipatory ornament, but as the equivalent of a birl on B.

When a grip is performed to D, the form is known as a D-throw, illustrated in the first bar of figure 12. The more elaborate form, known as a heavy D-throw, is essentially a leumluath to C, which then serves as a hammer-on to D. The “light” form of the D-throw, which may well be the more historical form, omits the second low G in the grip. The D-throw is usually played very closed, as a ripple, and is almost never played as a substitution for a melody note. In either case, the “light” form is what is usually written, regardless of what is played. As a fiddler, I tend to translate the d-throw as a hammer-on from C-sharp to D.

Grips can also come from low G. Since the first note of the grip is already on low G, it is skipped, and only the last portion of the ornament is played, as shown in the last bar of figure 12.

The term leumluath refers to the name of the variation in piobaireachd where this ornament, plus a connective note, separates the theme notes. Both the rodin and darado are comparatively rare ornaments in light music, and their names are

from the canntaireachd (sung form of piobaireachd) for these ornaments. Throws, in the piobaireachd idiom, are a family of ornaments unto themselves – more on that later!

#### Bagpipe Gracing 4

Fig 10: Leumluaths Written Played Fiddle Written Played Fiddle Written Played Fiddle

Fig 11: Rodins & Darados Written Played Fiddle Written Played

Fig 12: Throws and half-grips D-throw played 'light', or 'heavy' Fiddle Half-grip: Written Played

#### Taorluath – (Almost the) Biggest Ornament

In previous sections, we have discussed anticipatory ornaments, like the 2-pulse burl, and the family of grips and Leumluaths. The final common ornament in the “light music” portion of the Bagpipe repertoire is called the Taorluath, shown in figure 11. Possibly a corrupted form of the Gaelic for “twice quickly”, this ornament is closely related to the Leumluath but uses an E grace note to transition between the second low G in the ornament and the next melody note. The second E grace note gives this ornament a more chirpy, distinct sound than the leumluath, but the distinction is subtle. Because of the E grace note, a Taorluath can not go to a note higher than D, although in practice, Taorluaths only go to melody notes below C, though they may start from any melody note. In the singular case of a Taorluath from D to low A, a B grace note, rather than the usual D grace note, is used to bisect the low G in the Taorluath. It is also possible to play a half-Taorluath from low G, as with a leumluath or grip from low G.

The Taorluath is generally used emphatically, though it can be often interpreted in a semi-melodic capacity, especially in compound time tunes. This ornament is also used frequently to separate two notes of the same pitch. And it’s a very

common ornament in piobaireachd, with whole variations named after this ornament.

There is another ornament, called the Crunluath, and high hand throws, that are used almost exclusively in piobaireachd, and we will visit them another day. For now we have all our pieces to play light music. Next time, we'll look at a bagpipe tune and put it all together!

**Bagpipe Gracing 5**

Fig 11: Taorluaths

The image shows musical notation for 'Bagpipe Gracing 5'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Fig 11: Taorluaths' and 'C'. It is divided into three sections: 'Written' (a sequence of eighth notes with a grace note), 'Played' (a sequence of eighth notes with a grace note and a dotted quarter note), and 'Fiddle' (a sequence of eighth notes with a grace note). The bottom staff is divided into two sections: 'Half-Taorluath' (a sequence of eighth notes with a grace note) and 'Taorluath from D to A' (a sequence of eighth notes with a grace note and a dotted quarter note).

### Putting it All Together

For the last several columns, we've discussed the range of bagpipe ornaments, contrasting how they're written with how they're played; but until we put them into context, it's all squiggly lines on a page. So it's time to start looking at a few bagpipe tunes. Starting next fall, each column will start with a basic tune, beginning with 4/4 marches, and break down the usage of ornamentation. But I thought I'd send you off for the season with something fun. The tune I've chosen to look at is a hornpipe called *Rathven Market*, by Iain Duncan of Pitlochry. It's been included as an insert to the newsletter; on one side the pipe version as published, and on the back, the literal interpretation of the rhythms and a fiddler's interpretation.

The tune was written in 2/4, but I've changed it to cut time to make it easier on the eyes. Note that the swing is all literally expressed – that's because pipers have two forms of hornpipe; what they call a "round hornpipe" is what we fiddlers would call a double reel. So to distinguish the two, the traditional hornpipe is written with swing. I personally prefer this tune in the slower Newcastle style of hornpipe playing. It's unusual for a bagpipe tune in that it is in A major; avoiding

all G notes except for as passing tones, and a single excursion into a G-chord at the end.

So let's look at the first part; most of the noteworthy ornamentation in this part, especially its end phrases, are repeated throughout the tune. In bar 1, we see a jig shake on a quarter note C. As we will recall, a jig shake divides a note into three parts; so this ornament is to be interpreted as either a triplet or a birl on that C. The rest of the bar contains single grace notes; these can be included or omitted as the fiddler prefers as taps on the note change or beat – though a sharp bow attack is all that's needed to imply the chirp of a single grace note. In the second and fourth bars, we see doublings on a quarter note B. As a fiddler, I tend to approach those as a delayed tap on B; executing the note change, and a brief time later, tapping the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger on the string.

The 4<sup>th</sup> bar also contains a grip from a quarter note C to a dotted eighth note. The prevailing rhythm in a dotted hornpipe is dotted eighth-sixteenth-dotted eighth-sixteenth. Since the grip is an anticipatory ornament that takes its time from the previous note, one might suspect that it's simply filling in the role of a missing 16<sup>th</sup> note. And that's the best interpretation, I think; I would render this passage as a dotted eighth C, sixteenth D, to the dotted eighth E.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> bars begin similarly, and bar 7 contains a grip identical in context to that in bar 4, and I interpret it identically.

But what about the beast of an ornament at the end of bar 7? That's a darodo, a unique member of the grip family. Not only does the darodo have three pulses (rather than the usual two), in many contexts, it straddles the beat. Here, the beat occurs on the D grace note; leaving one semi-melodic G before the beat, and two semi-melodic Gs after. The first G takes its time from the sixteenth note C before; both effectively becoming thirty-second notes. After the beat, then, there are two thirty-second note Gs before the B, which must now (because of the time it's lost to the Gs in the darodo) must become a dotted eighth note. What does a fiddler make of this? I would tend to interpret that figure, starting from the E before it, as a dotted eighth E, a run of two 32<sup>nd</sup> notes from C to B, and then a tight birl on B.

This brings us to the 8<sup>th</sup> bar of the tune: a doubling on C followed by two As separated by a two pulse birl. The doubling I again render as a delayed tap, while the two pulse birl, being anticipatory, I recast as a dotted eighth A, a sixteenth A, leading to the quarter note A.

And that's most of the tune right there; since last two bars of the first two lines are repeated in almost every part, except for the fancy ending. Because of this recycling, there are only a couple more noteworthy moments in the tune for ornamentation. Note all the sixteenth note high-As in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part (and their reprise for the fancy ending of the 4<sup>th</sup> part). These are an example of the "disappearing high A effect", where a sequence of very short high-A notes effectively blend into the drones, and seem somewhat inaudible. This creates the illusion of rests. As a fiddler I might play the sixteenth note high As quietly (maybe not at all sometimes!), and emphasize the dotted eighth melody notes.

In the third part, we see in bars 25 & 26 doublings on C, which I would render as a delayed tap; and in bar 26, a d-throw, which I would interpret as a hammer-on from C to D.

And that's pretty much it. Again, treat as many or as few of the single grace notes as you like as either sharp bow attacks or simple taps on the note change, and happy hornpiping!

Rathven Market - Pipe Version

John Dwanor, Fiddle

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of 48 numbered measures, arranged in 12 rows of four measures each. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several instances of grace notes (indicated by a small 's' above the note) and slurs. The piece begins with a repeat sign at measure 1 and ends with a double bar line at measure 48.

Rathven Market - Literal Transcription of Pipe Version

John Duncan, Fiddlehead

A musical score for a pipe version of the tune 'Rathven Market'. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The music consists of 48 measures, organized into 12 staves of four measures each. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several fermatas (indicated by a horizontal line with a downward-pointing curve) placed over measures 9, 11, 16, 26, 33, 36, 40, and 44. Measure numbers 1 through 48 are printed below the corresponding notes in the score.

Rathven Market - Fiddle Version

John Dwanor, Fiddle

T = tap on the bow change, D = delayed tap

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of 48 measures, organized into 12 rows of four measures each. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Above the notes, letters 'T' and 'D' indicate specific bowing techniques: 'T' for a tap on the bow change and 'D' for a delayed tap. Some measures also feature a fermata over a note. The measures are numbered sequentially from 1 to 48. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the final measure.