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On the Cover: PM Gordon Walker in action on the floor of the Metro Cup. Image and rendering by Vince Janoski.

A Rare Mix

CLASSICAL BAGPIPE MUSIC, NEW AND OLD

*Dwight Chapel, Yale University
March 30, 2007*

Reviewed by Robin McClellan

A rare thing in piping these days, a piobaireachd recital at Yale University blended an unusual set of elements. With Matthew Welch (a Simon Fraser University Pipe Band alum) as guest soloist on the Highland pipes, the concert featured piobaireachd alongside contemporary classical music inspired by piobaireachd: an organ piece I composed and a lively work for string quartet written by Matt Welch. To fill out the program, Welch offered a few light music standards along with some of his own new compositions for the pipes.

In Yale's Dwight Chapel, a smallish Gothic-style chapel with high ceilings that was once the university's library, Welch used the space freely. For the light music he marched back and forth in front of the audience, and for the piobaireachd he paced slowly around the chapel, circling the audience and filling the space with the commanding sound of the pipes. Having good weather that day, we left the doors open to invite more light, fresh air, and audience members. And we were happy to have quite an audience—after the 100 printed programs disappeared, people kept streaming in until there was standing room only

around the sides of the chapel. People sat, stood, or strolled freely around the space in various states of enrapturement and curiosity.

The audience was a mixture of New Haven-area pipers and piping enthusiasts as well as students and faculty from the university. With such a diversity of musical offerings, I believe everyone there got something unexpected. Piping veterans who came for the piobaireachd heard new music for organ and string quartet along with a foot-stomping MSR set ("John MacDonald of Glencoe," "The Piper's Bonnet," and "Fiona Macleod"). Those who had never heard piobaireachd before were treated to a fine introduction to the genre with Welch's masterful performances of "The Clan Campbell's Gathering" and "The Battle of the Pass of Crieff."

Meanwhile, Welch's new pipe compositions were probably a bit of a shock for all present. Having studied Balinese gamelan music, he combined its compositional techniques with his deep knowledge of the piping repertory. Welch describes one of these pieces, "Gorgamor the Giant Gecko," as "bordering on the forms of a highland hornpipe and Balinese kotekan, this tune is for the foot-long gecko that shared my bathroom in Bali..." Closing the piping half of the program with a

medley of two of his pipe compositions, "Traversing Mad-Hatten" and "Blues for Seraut," Welch left the audience breathless: like one continuous crunluath a mach movement, the interlocking arpeggios became faster and faster until it was difficult to distinguish one note from another. In the resonant acoustics of the chapel, Welch built shimmering chords that made the pipes sound like a whole new instrument.

Two classical works closed the concert: first, organist Alistair Nelson gave a beautiful rendition my "Organ Mass"—a theme-and-variations setting of the Catholic mass ordinary, based on the piobaireachd "The Fingerlock"—providing a meditative counterpoint to Welch's rousing pipe playing. Unfortunately we were not able to include all seven movements of Welch's string quartet, "Siubhal Turnlar," but the two movements on offer, ably performed by Yale School of Music students, captured the same intensity and forward driving rhythms that make Welch's pipe compositions so exciting (his CD includes the work and can be ordered at Matt's webpage www.myspace.com/matthewtobinwelch).

I invited Welch to perform at Yale with two goals in mind. First, I wanted to raise awareness of piobaireachd as an art form and to promote the idea



ROBIN MACLELLAN

of piobaireachd recitals. I admire the way competitions keep the art form alive, but I feel that they do not do enough to attract wider public interest in piobaireachd. This concert joins a growing trend in Europe in which enthusiastic audiences have turned out in the hundreds for piobaireachd recitals—and seeks to spread that trend in this country. Second, as a composer I have drawn a great deal of inspiration from piobaireachd, and I want to promote the idea of composers—and musicians in general—looking to piobaireachd as a creative resource for music in other genres. Since Welch is not only a piper but also a composer with a creative interest in piobaireachd, he was the perfect choice for this concert. I very much hope to see more piobaireachd recitals in the future, and more piobaireachd-inspired new music beyond the pipes. Videos and audio clips of the event can be found at www.robinsonmcclellan.com/pibrochrecitals.htm.

EUSPBA Education Committee

Up'ing the ante.

by June Hanley

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE of the EUSPBA was formed October 15, 2006, at the Executive Committee meeting with June Hanley named as chair. This committee was born out of some intense discussion at the EC meeting about the nature of how events were and are financed, and the need: to provide more educational opportunities for beginning and intermediate players; and to provide opportunities to our advanced and professional players to perfect their playing and push our art. Volunteers at this time include Kenton Adler, Rogers Branson, Maureen Connor, Ed Krintz and Winter Taylor.

LAUNCH

Since that EC meeting, several activities have been launched.

In late January, 2007, the Music Board, with June Hanley as liaison to the Executive Committee and Education Committee, combined a piobaireachd seminar and the graduate exam. The piobaireachd seminar, chaired by Donald Lindsay, was given to candidates who are already on the judges' panel and wanted to gain their piobaireachd certification.

The graduate exam was offered to all professional players who are not currently on the judges' panel, as well as to the top fifteen Amateur Grade 1 players. The graduate exam is currently the most advanced of EUSPBA certifications, and one must be invited to take it. Once invitations went out, a few other people who are no longer playing competitively heard about it and asked if they could participate. The Music Board (with me) decided that since they could either pass or fail it, they would be allowed to participate. There were

ten people who actually sat the exam. The weekend was considered to be a resounding success by all who participated and the candidates asked that more seminars like this be offered.

In terms of planning and logistics, this would be considered a large-scale educational activity. Rogers Branson and I worked together to provide a spring workshop in Columbia, South Carolina in March. Rogers acted as primary organizer and point people in Columbia were Billy DuBose and Richard Hodgkiss. This workshop was geared toward members of the Southern branch as attendees, but the hope is that something of this type, or perhaps a little bigger or a little smaller, could occur in every branch, with a member of the education committee as liaison. This first one was organized quickly and did not break even financially; however, in terms of education, its value was priceless.

People who initially indicated they would come did not all make it, and it was perhaps priced a bit low for the quality and amount of instruction. However, the Hammond School was a first-class venue, and all who attended came away raving about it and planning to come back next year. So we learn from our mistakes. While workshops need to break even so that we can continue to offer them, it was invaluable that this workshop occurred and from an educational point of view, it was an outstanding success. It will be on the calendar very soon for next February, so there will be plenty of notice, and the first year is always the hardest. This would be also considered a large-scale educational activity; however, a smaller version could also be valuable.

ENCLAVE

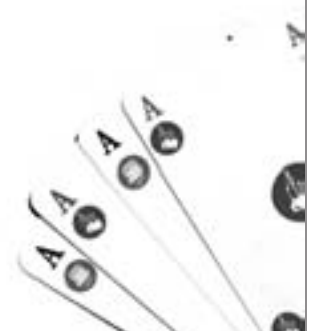
A "Piobaireachd Enclave" will occur on the Sunday after the Loch Norman games on the games field. This will be a combination of short talks by Donald Lindsay, June Hanley, and some other advanced players, along with playing by beginning, intermediate, and advanced players. The idea is to encourage the playing of, and talking about, piobaireachd in a nurturing, non-competitive way. There is immense excitement about this idea, and several people ranging from young beginners through professional players will be participating. In terms of planning and logistics, this would be considered a small-scale educational activity.

Tom Peters, in his book *In Search of Excellence* describes a planning process known as "Ready, Fire, Aim." This may sound facetious on the surface, but for any groundbreaking new process, if you wait until you are sure that every last kink is worked out, and there are no risks, it takes an extraordinarily long time to do anything. He advocates thinking through what you want to achieve, mapping it out as best you can, but then being prepared to adjust the plan once you see what happens. I believe this is the most successful process to get new initiatives launched.

ANTE UP

The Education Committee will not be a "committee" of people who sit back and wait for other people to do things and pass judgment on them. Currently, the committee has volunteers who are committed and enthusiastic. In order to be on this committee, you have to

- be a mover and a shaker



Deport Yourself

Become the well-prepared, well-behaved competitor.

by Chris Hamilton

WITH THE 2007 competition season upon us, many of you will be returning to the boards for another go. Some of you may be just embarking on your solo career, perhaps even competing for the first time this year. Fear, anxiety, and dread may occupy your thoughts when you contemplate stepping in front of a judge and an audience to put your musical talents on the line. Issues of good “deportment” might not even enter your mind.

As talked about in “The Competition 12-Step Program” (Spring 2006), there are specific things you can do “on the day” that will help put you in the right frame of mind for competition, ease your nerves, and be better prepared.

But competition does not have to be a nerve-racking experience and focusing a bit on good deportment—how you present yourself as a competitor and a piper (or drummer)—can be a good way to put things in your favor.

“Deportment” simply means how you behave toward other people. It is your personal conduct. Deportment in the piping domain has definite military overtones and usually involves shined shoes and pressed pleats and good military-style presentation. But good deportment isn’t just about what you do on games day or what you do in front of a judge, it begins long before, in the off-season. How you present yourself—how you behave well before, during, and after competition—goes a long way toward making sure the right attitude is projected for the judge and that you’re in the right frame of mind to get the most out of your competition experience.

PRELIMINARIES

A logical starting point is to make sure that you are a member of the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association, if you live in the eastern U.S., or another association depending on the region in which you will be competing. If you plan to compete in the eastern U.S., you will need membership with an association that has a reciprocal agreement with the EUSPBA. You need to join before you can compete. You may enter contests without being a member, but you cannot actually play in the event until you have joined. EUSPBA personnel are available at each venue so that you can pay your membership fee and actually join up on the day of the event. However, this applies only to EUSPBA – other associations may not have this arrangement, and it may save a lot of grief by checking in advance and making proper arrangements before you travel.

Once your membership is up-to-date, you should determine which contests you will attend, and obtain the relevant entry forms well in advance of any deadlines. Unlike some associations (such as the PPBSO), the EUSPBA does not organize or run piping competitions. Rather, they leave that up to the individual festivals and highland games organizations. If the contests are run under EUSPBA rules and utilizing official EUSPBA judges, scoresheets, and grading, then it will likely be sanctioned by the EUSPBA. Sanctioned contests contribute to your overall point standings and are used to determine or review your grade ranking for each season.

If you are new to solo competition, you will likely be starting out



in Grade 4 (either Senior or Junior, depending on your age). This can be considered the “entry level” grade. If you are a member of a reciprocal organization (such as those in the Association of North American Pipe Band Associations, or ANAPBA) that use the same grading structure, you will be expected to compete in the same grade as your home organization. If you are a very experienced piper but have no solo competition history but objectively feel that you may be playing above a Grade 4 level, you should contact the EUSPBA and see what arrangements can be made to play in a higher grade.

PREPARATION

If you plan to compete at a given contest, make sure you send in your entry forms in plenty of time. Deadlines are deadlines, and though you might be able to finagle your way in as a late entry, don’t ever count on it. The EUSPBA website has links and lists all sanctioned events (euspba.org/calendar2007q2.htm). The information you need is readily available well in advance so don’t wait until the last minute!

Some folks like to compete in solo contests only at games at which their band is competing, making the trip more cost-effective. Some like to compete only where the band is not competing, to avoid juggling events and adding additional stress. Sometimes it’s fun to travel to an event with just solo responsibilities for a change, or an all-new venue at which you’ve never

The 15 Stages of a Reed

Uncovering the dark arts of chanter reed making.

by Chris Apps

IN 1991, I WAS BETWEEN JOBS and decided to embark on a quest for the perfect chanter reed and in so doing, make a living out of my passion for bagpipes. This journey has at times been very rewarding and at other times very frustrating but, the pleasure I have derived from playing my own reed and hearing others play them with success (winning the Clasp and several major pipe band championships, to name a few) far outweighs any problems I've had along the way.

The reed making industry, being the secretive business that it is, offered no help or advice when I was starting

out. Whenever I visited my favorite reed maker, the blankets would be over all of the machines before I walked through the door, thus preserving the mystery of the "dark arts" of reed making.

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Affordable travel and internet communications have removed the blankets so to speak, and taken away some of the mystery that surrounds reed making. Unfortunately, this communicating has also propagated some rather dubious myths along the way. I have always strived to shed light on all matters of reed making and manipulation and in this spirit, the following should give some insight into the work that goes into the manufacture of every reed produced by Chris Apps Reeds.

THE 15 STAGES

1. Cut cane to length
2. Split cane into slips
3. Pre-gouge
4. Tail
5. Gouge
6. Cut off shell
7. Profile
8. Mark for binding
9. Feather tails
10. Mark for fold
11. Fold
12. Bind to staple
13. Tune
14. Rest
15. Tune and rest again



Stage 1: Tube cane cut to length.



Stage 2: Cane split into slips.

Reed slips at various stages



Split cane



Pre-gouged slip



Slip that has been tailed (cut to diamond shape)



Gouged slip



Slip with shell removed



A profiled slip



Binding line marked and tails feathered



Slip ready to wrap

PIPEHACKER

Pipers have ever been a handy bunch. We have devised all sorts of methods for instrument self-sufficiency. Whether it is making our own bags or reeds, brewing our own seasoning, or some other creation to improve the playing experience, the instinct to create would seem to be a prerequisite for a Highland piper. Pipers of all stripes will eventually dabble in a DIY project or two. In modern parlance, just as computer hackers "hack" software code and remodel it to their needs, these pipers' projects are a "hack" as well. Thus, we are all "pipehackers."

The Drone Throne

What piper hasn't searched for a secure, safe spot to rest their instrument in-between sets? The wrong spot can place undue stress on the tuning pins or chip and mar your precious ivory, not to mention the danger of clumsy folks around you. Maybe you have one of the lovely commercial "bagpipe stands" that certainly can add to your home decor? The enterprising pipehacker knows that pampering one's instrument is as important as building the proper gear. So why not build your stand of drones the throne they deserve! Here is a purely indulgent pipehack that provides your prize pipe with a safe and secure resting place. Easily assembled and disassembled for convenient portage, the "drone throne" can go anywhere you and your pipes go.

WHAT YOU NEED

Length of 1-inch PVC (10 feet)
1-inch PVC connectors (see below)
Mitre saw or coping saw

11 x 43-inch sheet of sturdy fabric
(upholstery vinyl shown)
Scissors

Deburring tool
Sandpaper
Paint (optional)

MAKING THE THRONE



1. Assemble your tools and materials.
2. Cut your lengths of PVC using your mitre saw. You will need (A) two 18-inch pieces; (B) seven 8-inch pieces; (C) two 4-inch pieces; (D) four 3-11/16-inch pieces; (a) four "T" connectors; (b) one 45° elbow connector; (c) eight 90° elbow connectors. Deburr and sand rough edges after cutting your pieces.
3. Assemble your pieces for the first "side" as shown. Repeat for the second side and stand your frame.

