

Ronn McFarlane  
The Celtic Lute



- 1 **Carolan's Welcome** *Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738)* 1:50
- 2 **Banish Misfortune** *Traditional (Irish)* 1:46
  
- 3 **The Battle of Harlaw** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:51
- 4 **Pipe on the Hob** *Traditional (Irish)* 1:53
- 5 **Cliffs of Moher** *Traditional (Irish)* 1:13
- 6 **Hey My Nanny & Guzzle Together** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:57
  
- 7 **Carolan's Dream** *O'Carolan* 3:31
- 8 **Sheebeg and Sheemore** *O'Carolan* 2:55
  
- 9 **The Flowers of Edinburgh** *James Oswald (c.1711-1769)* 3:27
- 10 **Miss Noble** *O'Carolan* 1:59
- 11 **Fanny Power** *O'Carolan* 2:28
- 12 **The Flaggon** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:47
- 13 **The Stool of Repentance** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:21

- 14 **The Lone Vale** *Traditional (Scottish)* 2:01
- 15 **Flee Over the Water** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:28
- 16 **Hoop Her and Gird Her** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:45
- 17 **If I Had a Bonny Lass** *Traditional (Scottish)* 1:11
  
- 18 **Lady Atherny** *O'Carolan* 2:29
- 19 **The Seas are Deep** *O'Carolan* 1:39
- 20 **Tune Without Title (#172)** *O'Carolan* 2:36
  
- 21 **The Monaghan Jig** *Traditional (Irish)* 2:31
- 22 **The Kid on the Mountain** *Traditional (Irish)* 2:24
  
- 23 **Blind Mary** *O'Carolan* 3:18
- 24 **George Brabazon** *O'Carolan* 1:27
- 25 **Separation of the Body and Soul** *O'Carolan* 2:53
- 26 **The Butterfly** *Traditional (Irish)* 2:32

total time 55:59

There are Celtic Music specialty radio shows and on-demand audio channels. Celtic Music CDs are sold in health food and yoga stores. We know it when we hear it. Right?

So, what is it? There's a loose definition (or maybe tacit agreement) that Celtic Music is found in those European cultures where the Celtic tribes invaded. Aside from Ireland and Scotland, Wales qualifies, as does Brittany, the Galician part of Spain, the Isle of Man. If we focus just on the Gaelic language group and fine tune it to just Scotland and Ireland, we really know what we are hearing, right?

Do we? While there is plentiful cross-pollination between these two nations and an ancient shared heritage, they are not the same place, and their music is not a single common recipe using slightly different ingredients. Irish stew is not haggis.

There are differences grand and small, subtle and great. Distinct nations with different histories will evolve different artistic natures, and this is played out in a joyful noise in our Celtic lands.

Ronn McFarlane's heritage and lifelong interest in Scottish music allows us to walk first (as Neil Munro put it) "song-haunted over the Moors."

We think of Scotland so often through the battles that reinforced or threatened independence: William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, the Wars of Independence, the losses at Flodden Fields, the noble cause when Bonnie Prince Charlie and his allies were finally defeated at Culloden, the terrible driving of peoples from the Highlands with The Clearances that followed. There were internecine battles galore—Harlaw being a perfect example (more of which anon)—and the Solitary Piper played

for fallen Scotsmen in countless wars to this very day. Music was inspired by all of these.

But even if you consider threats to an unbroken history of independence with Malcolm recognizing Cnut as King in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, or the Anglo-Norman reforms of the so-called Davidian Revolution of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, or the short time under Cromwell—Scotland holds a people of "unconquerable will" and a fiery free spirit—we need only recall the 2016 vote concerning Great Britain separating from the European Union.

Did the fierce Scots will and escape from domination allow for the greater preservation of distinctive music in Scotland? One can argue yes, and between Culloden with the dispersed Jacobites and those who fled the Clearances, Scotland, its people and its music, spread far and

wide. To this we might add the incalculable offerings to arts and industry from the Enlightenment era, and in the Great Man theory of history, Robert Burns.

Burns did not invent the Romantic era (let's give Goethe the nod for formulating the premise of it all), and Macpherson with the Ossian epics and Sir Walter Scott's hugely popular romances spread the desire to see this land across Europe. But for collecting and adding to the song heritage of his native land, Bobby Burns is our hero. Aside from his own publishing (and embellishing) of songs of his native land, he gave many to the publisher George Thomson, who then commissioned performing editions from Haydn and Beethoven. Scottish music thus entered the drawing rooms of Europe.

In a short time every poet and composer made the journey to Fingal's Cave and Ben Nevis,

and we went from Dr. Johnson's famous tour of Scotland, where he was typically irritated by "rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood," to Dorothy Wordsworth's rapture upon first seeing the mountain pass at Glencoe: "'I cannot attempt to describe the mountains. I can only say that I thought those.... were the grandest I had ever seen."

So, Scottish music is often described as characterized by the things you can imitate: the Scotch snap (short accented note followed by a longer note); the five-tone pentatonic scale (think Ancient Greece, most world folk music; fun test from music school: how far can you sing "Loch Lomond" before you leave the pentatonic scale?); the laments, the dances, and ever and always, the pipes.

The great Scottish fiddler Bonnie Rideout suggests that the more percussive speech pattern of Scottish Gaelic may inform the music; she will play a tune that is both in Scottish and Irish manuscripts and illustrate the difference that the Scottish "snappiness" imparts.

Bonnie also created the recording that looked into the history of a terrible summer's day in 1411 when cousins fought until the fields ran red with blood near the royal town of Inverurie. This was the cruel Battle of Harlaw. With the historian (and author of "Scotland's Music") John Purser, you can trace how the accrued musical memory of half a millennium is alive in the Scottish soul. Ronn has made his own lute transcription of the Harlaw Battle song for this recording.

The rest of the Scottish tunes come from the Perthshire fiddler Neil Gow, born in 1727 and living

on 80 years, gifting the world with scores of dances and songs we still sing and play. This is Ronn McFarlane's world, and he lives in it well.

Being Irish, as Oscar Wilde put it with appropriate dryness, is quite another thing. About the tragic history of Ireland, the centuries of repression and despair, the failed rebellions and the unimaginable sorrow of the Great Famine, one may study and one may know, but never comes to grips with. That the humor, fey sensibility, and unvarnished joy of the Irish people and their art is what we take to heart, is one of the great miracles of world civilization.

The sorrowful epic of Ireland may help explain why so few sources of early Irish music survive, but sheds great light to those collectors who persevered and those amazing tunes we have. Why Irish music at this stage in Ronn's life?:

*"I've always loved this music. In the early 1980's I began performing and recording Scottish music, since there is a written repertory of Scottish tunes written out for the lute in a number of manuscripts dating from the 17th century. But alas, there is no repertory of Irish lute music. Yet there is an obvious sympathy between the music of Ireland and Scotland, so I undertook to make arrangements of some of my favorite Irish and Scottish tunes that had never quite made it into the historical lute repertory. (An oversight, I'm sure.)*

*The harp music of Turlough O'Carolan often fits the lute amazingly well; and the traditional Scottish and Irish dance music can also be a good fit, though one needs to choose the tunes with care. The arrangements of Scottish*





*music found in the Balcarres Lute Book (compiled around 1700) make a great example of how to arrange popular melodies and dances for the lute. I used that as my model when I started out on this project."*

The first Irish model comes to us from the brilliant blind harper of County Meath, Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738). Traveling the land, writing "planxtys" for his genial hosts, he left a body of more than 200 works in his rich career. Since the Irish-revivalist Seán Ó Riada with his Ceoltóirí Chualann ensemble first recorded O'Carolan in the 1960s, hundreds of recordings have followed.

The second source is from the County Cork-born Chicago cop and eventually Police Captain (!) Francis O'Neill. A musician at heart, he began publishing Irish tunes and dance music in the early 1900s, bringing many

thousands of dances and songs back into the households filled with the Irish and Irish-at-heart.

I don't think we can summarize any differences between the music of these two lands by citing the old fiddlers who claimed "Irish music is Scottish music with the corsets off!" But it is all surely music of the heart and soul. Perhaps William Butler Yeats should have the last word. He observed about the Celts that "everyone is a visionary, if you scratch him deep enough. But the Celt, unlike any other, is a visionary without scratching."

—Robert Aubry Davis



## RONN McFARLANE

GRAMMY-nominated lutenist, Ronn McFarlane brings the lute—the most popular instrument of the Renaissance—into today's musical mainstream, making it accessible to a wider audience.

Since taking up the lute in 1978, Ronn has made his mark in music as the founder of Ayreheart, a founding member of the Baltimore Consort, touring 49 of the 50 United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Netherlands, Germany and Austria, and as a guest artist with Apollo's Fire, The Bach Sinfonia, The Catacoustic Consort, The Folger Consort, Houston Grand Opera, The Oregon Symphony, The Portland Baroque Orchestra, and The Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra.

Born in West Virginia, Ronn grew up in Maryland. At thirteen, upon hearing "Wipeout" by the Surfaris, he fell madly in love

with music and taught himself to play on a "cranky sixteen-dollar steel string guitar." Ronn kept at it, playing blues and rock music on the electric guitar while studying classical guitar. He graduated with honors from Shenandoah Conservatory and continued guitar studies at Peabody Conservatory before turning his full attention and energy to the lute in 1978. The next year, Mr. McFarlane began to perform solo recitals on the lute and became a member of the Baltimore Consort. Since then, he has toured throughout the United States, Canada and Europe with the Baltimore Consort and as a soloist.

McFarlane was a faculty member of the Peabody Conservatory from 1984 to 1995, teaching lute and lute-related subjects. In 1996, Mr. McFarlane was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Music from Shenandoah Conservatory for his achievements in bringing the lute and its music to the world. He has over 35 recordings on the Dorian/Sono Luminus label, including solo albums, lute duets, flute & lute duets, lute songs, the complete lute music of Vivaldi, a collection of Elizabethan lute music and poetry, and recordings with the Baltimore Consort.

Ronn has composed new music for the lute, building on the tradition of the lutenist/composers of past centuries. His original compositions are the focus of his solo CD, *Indigo Road*, which received a GRAMMY Award Nomination for Best Classical Crossover Album of 2009.

In 2010 Ronn founded Ayreheart, an ensemble brought together to perform new compositions as well as early music. Ayreheart's first CD release, *One Morning*, consists of all-original music by Ronn McFarlane. Ayreheart's 2016 release, *Barley Moon*, blends folk music and art music from Renaissance and Medieval England, Scotland and Wales.

[ronnmcfarlane.com](http://ronnmcfarlane.com)

## RONN McFARLANE THE CELTIC LUTE

DSL-92225

**PRODUCER:** Dan Merceruio

**RECORDING, MIXING & MASTERING ENGINEER:** Daniel Shores

**RECORDING TECHNICIAN:** Allison Noah

**EDITING ENGINEERS:** Dan Merceruio, Daniel Shores

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** James F Carr, Allison Noah (p. 6)

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Caleb Nei

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Collin J. Rae

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[sonoluminusstudios.com](http://sonoluminusstudios.com)

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[legacyaudio.com](http://legacyaudio.com)

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