

Song Notes

1. Ae Fond Kiss - ** This tune is also called "*Rory Dall's Port*," which was first printed in 1792. This song characterizes the relationship Burns had with Mrs MacLehose. She was separated from her husband and then sailed to Jamaica. Her husband refused to give up his mistress and go with her, so in her dismay came back home. She outlives Burns and writes of him in her journal: "Oh may we meet in heaven!"

2. A Man's a Man for a' That - ** This tune was published anonymously in The Glasgow Magazine in 1795, with the original title called "*For a' That and a' That*". Later another fifth verse was added:

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden grey, and a' that:
Gie fools their silk and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.
For a ' that and a' that,
their tinsel shew and a' that;
An honest man, tho' ne'er sae poor,
Is Chief o' men for a' that.

While there is no mention that the song was published under his name it is certain to have caused some problems, since Burns' was employed by the Excise. His superiors never took any action against him, but Burns feared there might be imprisonment because of the debt he owed for his Dumfries Volunteers uniform. The many variant texts are ample proof that Burns considered this one of his best songs. In the introduction to Marshak's *Robert Burns in Translation*, Moscow 1957: "He was able to describe the finest and most truly human feelings and experiences of the simple people...not as a critic, but as a brother and friend".

3. A Rosebud By My Early Walk - ** This song was first published in 1788. The "rosebud" of this song was Miss Janet or Jeany Cruickshank, the daughter of Mr. William Cruickshank, who was the classics teacher at Edinburgh High School. Burns describes Jeany as his "dear little Jeany", and "sweet little rose-bud".

4. Auld Lang Syne - ** This tune is also called "*Can Ye Labour Lea*", first published in 1796. When it was printed after Burns died, it was signed with a "Z", to indicated he had altered the words. Burns tells Mrs. Dunlop that he took the words down from an old man singing this song. Ironically, as the poet's best known song, it was not published in his lifetime.

5. Bonnie Jean - ** This song is also called "*There was a Lass*," first printed in 1800. The heroine of this song is Jean McMurdoch. *** This was already an old song before Burns' time. The tune of Bonnie Jean appears in the Craig's Collection of Old Scottish

Airs from 1730. Burns' says of Jean, "that I not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager."

6. Comin' Thro' the Rye - * This tune "The Miller's Wedding" was first printed in 1796. Burns reworked the lyrics. ** It is taken from a folk song in Thomas Mansfield's collection begun in 1770. A more crude version exists in the "*Merry Muses*."

7. Corn Rigs are Bonnie - ** This song is also called "*The Rigs o Barley*" or "It Was Upon a Lammas Night", first printed in 1786. This love song refers to John Rankine's daughter, Annie.

*** The tune Corn Rigs is mentioned in Playfords' Choice Airs of 1631 as a "northern song". Corn rigs refers to a strip of land planted with corn.

8. Flow Gently Sweet Afton - ** This song is also known as "*Afton Water*" first printed in 1792. In a letter dated 1789 to Mrs Dunlop, Burns remarks: "There is a small river, Afton that falls into the Nith, near New Cumnock, which has some charming, wild romantic scenery on its banks. The spot which Burns refers appears to be Glen Afton, near New Cumnock. *** Burns' was a bit embarrassed with gratitude towards Mrs. Stewart of Acton in Ayrshire, who was the first person of a "high station" to recognize his poetic gift. The song (from 1786) was dedicated to Mrs. Stewart, but more likely for his beloved "Highland Mary".

9. Green Grow the Rashes O - * This tune has been a popular one since the early part of the seventeenth century. Included in Volume I of the Scots Musical Museum (1787), it is one of the first of Burns' songs to appear with music. ** The first printing of this song is in 1787. This song is a fine example of the poet's early skill, developed by his tutor, John Murdoch, in writing out lines of poetry from his own prose. Burns' states: "I shall set down the following fragment which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the classes I belong to".

10. Hey Ca' Thro' - * The lyrics name four fishing villages on the south coast of Fife. Burns passed through the area near the end of his 600 mile Highland Tour of 1787. Whether he collected the verses or created them is not known. The melody is typical Scottish Border small-pipes tune; the use of 9/8 time is very characteristic. Burns sent this song to James Johnson for inclusion in The Scots Musical Museum. It had not appeared in any other collection previously.

11. Highland Lad my Love was Born - *** This song appears in Thomson's Scottish Song of 1818. They were written to the air of "O! And Ye were Deid, Guidman" and were also used in the cantata, "The Jolly Beggars" in 1785.

12. I Hae a Wife O' My Ain - *** This song was written for Burns' bride, Bonnie Jean in 1788.

13. I'm Owre Young to Marry Yet - ** This tune was first printed in 1788. It is a traditional song reworked by Burns. He kept the original chorus and added new verses. The lyric plays on the subjects of virginity with the promise that some summer, the young lass will let her suitor have his way. The female voices of these songs are constantly frank and honest about their sexual desires.

14. John Anderson, My Jo - * Robert D. Thornton (1966) commented: the phrase "John Anderson, my Jo" begins a sixteenth century song and the tune is in the Skene MS of 1630. The Merry Muses of Caledonia contains the bawdy version, which was the beginning for Burn's song.

15. My Heart's in the Highlands - ** This tune is also called "Failte na Miosg" and was first printed in 1790. The chorus of this song is taken from a broadside called "*The Strong Walls of Derry*", which narrates the forlorn love of a Highlander emigrating to Ireland to find his true love has married another. The remainder of the lyrics are by Burns.

16. My Love is Like a Red Red Rose - *** The original song may have been written by a Lieutenant Hinchey. Burns introduced parts of another type of "farewell" song into this piece. Although the poem was sung to the air "*Major Graham*" and later to "*Queen Mary's Lament*", it is nowadays closer to the version of "*Low Down in the Broom*".

17. My Tocher's The Jewel - * In an interleaved copy of *The Scots Musical Museum*, Burns wrote: "This tune is claimed by Nathaniel Gow. It is notoriously taken from "The Muckin o' Georgie's byre." It is also to be found, long prior to Nathaniel Gow's era, in Aird's Selection of Airs and Marches, the first edition, under the name of "*The Highway to Edinburgh*." Burns has drawn freely upon a variety of folk phrases and verses, molding this kind of material to the needs of the melody. ** This is another example of the skeptical, tough-minded women's voices in these songs. *** This song examines the greedy side of human nature with some bitter sweet humor.

18. My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing - * In November 1792, the lyrics were sent to George Thomson. ** They were written for Thomson's Select Collection, but the editor meddled with the lyrics and eventually printed a version in 1824 with only a few lines from Burns. Burns states "I made extempore...I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink" (Letter 514)

19. O Lassie Art Ye Sleepin' Yet? - **** This song is also known as "O Let Me in This Ae Nicht". The air is a very old song and appeared in a virginal book where it is called "The Newe Gowne Made". This was re-written and has a fourth verse added by Burns.

20. O' This Is No My Ain Lassie - ** The original tune for this song is "*This is No My Ain House*", printed in 1799. This song was sent to Thomson in 1795. Burns had known the melody for a few years and planned to write lyrics for it.

21. O Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut - ** This song was first printed in 1790. The music to this drinking song by Allan Masterton one of the poet's Edinburgh friends, who with Burns is alluded to in the first stanza. The brewer of this song, Willie, is William Nicol, the Latin teacher at Edinburgh High School. The song celebrated an evening with three friends.

22. Scots Wha Hae - This song is regarded as the Scottish National Anthem. Burns was inspired to write these verses in 1793 about the battle and victory of Bannockburn., where Robert the Bruce defeated King Edward II of England, and the bravery of William Wallace. The tune "Hey Tutti Tutti" was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn.

23. She's Fair and Fause - ** The original title of this song was called "*The Lads of Leith*". This song was written about Alexander Cunningham's mistress Anna, who jilted him. The song was re-written by Burns

24. The Deil's Awa' wi' the Exciseman - * This tune appeared in Playford's Dancing Master (1651) entitled "The London Gentlewoman" or "The Hemp-dresser." The words reflect Burn's own experience with the job of Exciseman. The original lyrics were penned on a piece of excise paper, ruled on the back with red lines. Burns thought with this job that the exposure to all different kinds of people would help him with his poetry. ** It is also thought that this is an original work by Burns, as expressed through a letter to John Leven (letter 500).

25. There Was A Lad Was Born In Kyle - * The tune is a Scots classic, the lyrics a self portrait. On his manuscript, against "Janwar' win", Burns wrote, "the date of my Bardship's vital existence." This tune is also known as "Dainty Davie."

26. To Dauton Me - * The tune appears in the Atkinson MS (1694) and in many collections thereafter. The lyrics are based on an old Jacobite song. In making his new lyrics about the timeless theme of the young girl versus the old rich man, Burns noted on his manuscript for Johnson: "The chorus is set to the first part of the tune, which just suits it, when once played or sung over."

27. To The Weaver's Gin Ye Go - ** Burn's states: "The chorus of this song is old, the rest of it is mine. Here, once for all, let me apologize for many silly compositions of mine in this work (*The Scots Musical Museum*). Many beautiful airs wanted words; in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together anything near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass. He must be an excellent poet indeed, whose every performance is excellent" *Interleaved Museum*

28. Wandering Willie - * This tune appeared in many collections available to Burns, including the first volume of *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787). Burns sent his own lyrics to the editor in 1793, who made changes in them. Burns was able to restore some of his original phrases in the version he later sent to Miss Graham of Fintry.

29. What Can a Young Lassi Do Wi' an Auld Man? - * Burns chose the melody for this song from his favorite collection: *Oswald's Caledonian Pocket Companion* (1754). Though the theme of the verses is highly traditional, the actual words are an original Burns creation.

30. Whistle o'er the Lave o' t - ** This song was first printed in 1790. The lyrics were re-written by Burn from an old bawdy song from the David Herd collection (1796).

31. The White Cockade - ** This song was first printed in 1790. This song is a reworked version of a song in the David Herd collection called "*The Ranting Roving Lad.*" The white rose (cockade) is the flower and emblem of the Jacobites.

32. Ye Banks and Braes - ** The title to this song is also called "*The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*", which was first printed in 1792. The other version of this song is called "*Ye Flowery Banks o' Bonnie Doon*" set to different lyrics(also called Cambdelmore)

Resources:

* [The Robert Burns Song Book Volume I](#) by Serge Hovey'

** [The Canongate Burns book, The Complete Poems and Songs of Robert Burns](#)
edited by Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg

*** [The Scottish Songs of Robert Burns](#) by John Loesberg

**** [Traditional Folksongs & Ballads of Scotland](#) by John Loesberg