

## A WORD TO THE PLAYER

IN the "Concluding Remarks" in his work "*Ceol Mor*," General Thomason gives some very excellent advice to players of Piobaireachd. He says:—"Avoid dawdling and monotony" and "Play a Lament as a Lament, a Salute as a Salute, a Lullaby as a Lullaby, and so on." To-day the tendency is rather to play all Piobaireachd as Laments. The player should first form his estimate of what a tune is meant to be and render it accordingly. He should therefore study the historical side of Piobaireachd. He should strive to rhythmic timing, avoiding very strict and mathematical correctness in doing so. In short, he must find and give expression without losing the rhythmic swing of the tune. What causes, above all, loss of rhythm in these days is the overdwelling on the E of the GED cadence and the rushing of the double beat on A.

It should be remembered that the GED cadence is, in almost every case, merely an introductory run to the themal note, and the E is not, in itself, themal. Therefore, though the E should be distinctly heard, it must not detract from the themal note to which it is an introduction, and should not in any case override it or upset the rhythm.

The double beat on A should be played as written herein and should not on any account be rushed as some modern publications would indicate. This rushing of the beat is often due to overdwelling on the E of the GED cadence often preceding it. Therefore, when seeking for the rhythmic swing of a tune, find the rhythm of the double beat on A by the omission of the cadence. It will be found the three A's must be distinctly heard to complete the rhythm and the insertion, later, of a correctly played cadence before the beat will not upset it.

It should be observed that where the double beat on A is followed by a long A to complete the bar, the rhythm of a tune will generally demand the longest accent on the *first* A of the double beat, rather than on the *last*. This view is confirmed by Joseph Macdonald in his Treatise on the "Scots Highland Bagpipe." Indeed, a similar accent is generally necessary in the case of the other double beats followed by the same note to complete the bar. This results in the last note of the double beat being shortened, the last beating note being given more time.

Regarding Creanludh beats, were the player to observe the axiom that the doubling of the E is based on the *second* note of the beat, whatever that may happen to be, he would not be likely to go far wrong. In the ordinary closed form the second note of the beat is A (in spite of recent endeavours to proclaim it a "redundant" note), consequently the doubling of the E is based on A. Where the beat is to low G (not uncommon in certain tunes), the second note being G, the E is doubled on that note. In Breabach beats the same principle of course applies, and it will be found the first *extra* note of the "Breabach" is A where the beat is to A, and G where the beat is to low G. In short, the Breabach beat is played, all through, from the second note to the first "extra" note, on that second note. In Fosgailte beats the principle again applies, the E being doubled on the second themal note of the beat. Players should realise, therefore, that the "closed" form of this beat is a modern innovation and the beat should be played "open" as its very name implies. In Mach beats the axiom is, of course, recognised, and helps to prove the soundness of the rule. In short, the natural and correct way of doubling the E in the various beats is the easiest. This rule, thoroughly understood, is a strong argument against those who proclaim the middle note as a "redundant" one! It is also a tribute to the great genius of the MacCrimmons.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

In some tunes, where space will not permit a beat being written in full, a simple form of abbreviation is adopted. This consists of the initial note of the beat with an extended "tail" at right angles to the stem. It represents either the Taobhludh beat or the Creanludh one, as the heading to the Variation may indicate. Where, in addition to the note, a square mark on the G line is found, it indicates the beat is to be played to low G. In the case of Creanludh beats to low G the E is, of course, doubled on the low G, as already pointed out. In some cases, Taobhludh and Creanludh Variations may be given in skeleton form, space not allowing the beats to be written in full with their grace notes. In other cases abbreviations may be explained on the same page. It is anticipated that no real difficulty will be experienced by anyone knowing anything at all of Piobaireachd.