



Teaching about Scotland

This is one of a series of units for teaching about Scotland in German Secondary schools. All the materials were created by very motivated students in my Area Studies Scotland class, some with experience of teaching in a "Gymnasium". The materials can be tried out as they are, or altered as desired. They can also be combined. One basic idea behind them all is that both the teacher and the learners can develop the materials themselves, according to their own interests, and then even offer them to another class. For some of these units printed information material is needed, for example ferry timetables, but if you don't have this, it is no problem to print it out from the Internet. Useful websites are given.

Scottish Music

This is not actually a unit ready for use in school, but an excellent introduction for German Secondary school teachers to Scottish traditional music, complete with tips on what to teach and how.

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Course: Area Studies Scotland

Introduction

Asked what they associate with Scotland, most people would probably mention traditional music. Many people outside Scotland think of a "typical" Scot as somebody who wears a kilt, drinks whisky and plays the bagpipes. When I gathered information on Scottish traditional music, I discovered that there is a lot more than this stereotype. Music seems to play a very important part in Scotland. There are plenty of occasions where music is made. Traditional music seems to play an essential role wherever and whenever

people in Scotland gather, no matter whether it is an "official" or an informal occasion.

Furthermore, by looking at the many different types of Scottish music, one can learn a lot not only about the music itself, but also about Scottish history and culture.

I tried to include several perspectives in this paper. As soon as I started to take a closer look at traditional music in Scotland, I realised in how many respects one can benefit from it. The main perspectives from which I am going to look at the topic are:

- The musician

As a musician, I am particularly interested in the history, the forms and the instruments of traditional music in Scotland; many European composers were inspired by Scotland and/or Scottish music (folk song arrangements by Beethoven, Haydn, Weber; Mendelssohn's "Scottish" symphony and his overture "The Hebrides"; baroque music inspired by the bagpipes e.g. Händel), so the only time I had dealt with Scottish music was in versions "filtered" by composers. That's why it's particularly interesting for me to have a look at the "original".

- The future music teacher

For someone who teaches music, Scottish music can be very helpful. It can be used to teach students the things I mentioned above, but it is also very suitable for music theory, ear training, singing and many other purposes. Another very interesting field for music teachers is Scottish group dances which can also enrich music lessons.

- The future English teacher

As I mentioned above, by looking at Scottish music, one can learn a lot about Scottish culture and history. Including Scottish music in English lessons can therefore be a good way to get one's students interested in Scottish history and culture. They'll not only learn about the music, but also about things like festivals throughout the year.

Part (1)

An outline of the occasions at which traditional music is made

The different types of songs

The instruments that are typically used (including their history).

Occasions for Traditional Music

Throughout the year, there are many occasions in Scotland where music is made. In order to deal with a wide range of Scottish music, one therefore simply has to look at what happens in Scotland during the course of a year.

Traditional music may be heard at a variety of events ranging from the most intimate and informal to the most highly organised and public.

(from: "Scotland" in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians)

In the following, I would like to have a look at a selection of events and occasions where traditional music plays an important role.

- Hogmanay (New Year)

Hogmanay is the main point in the calendar year at which traditional music is indispensable. This includes music at home during first footing and, starting in the 1990s, outdoor amplified music at large urban street parties to bring in the New Year. At these events, traditional musicians are placed in a physical context originally designed for rock musicians.

(from: "Scotland". In: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians)

Here we can see the wide range of different ways of making music: from the amplified performances in the streets to music at home.

The former I find interesting because the fact that traditional music is played at a location where so many people of all age groups come together and that they play at venues that are normally used by rock musicians shows the extent of its popularity.

The latter makes me as a musician happy because it shows that the tradition of "Hausmusik" that is unfortunately no longer present in large parts of society in Germany seems to be very much alive in Scotland.

- Burns Suppers

Burns Suppers, held in January to celebrate the life of the poet, song collector and editor Robert Burns, include piping to accompany the ritual entrance of the haggis, singing Burns's songs, and music for dancing. All of the above events, i.e. Hogmanay and Burns Suppers, usually end with community singing and dancing of Auld Lang Syne.

(from: "Scotland". In: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians).

The fact I find most interesting in this description is that the songs written by Robert Burns appear to be something that all people in Scotland share as a cultural heritage. This is what the younger generation in particular in Germany is lacking. They often don't have songs memorised which they can sing together spontaneously. This is, of course, part of the general debate on German "national identity, which is closely related to the country's history.

I also like the fact that singing and dancing together seems to be much more common and "natural" than it is in Germany where things like folk dances are only limited to a small part of the population.

- Ceilidhs (pronounced like German keh-li)

The two occasions mentioned so far are examples of music connected to scheduled events. Nevertheless, music is often made at informal events called "Ceilidhs". This means that people come together to sing, dance and have fun. I really like the idea of meeting informally and spontaneously to make music, dance and sing. I can't imagine this kind of party in Germany, probably for the reasons I mentioned above.

Gatherings like ceilidhs are probably the best way to keep a culture "alive".

- Events in Family Life

Pipers are in demand at rituals associated with the life-cycle, especially weddings and funerals. Wedding parties also include traditional dancing

usually with live music, as do parties celebrating significant wedding anniversaries.

(from: "Scotland" in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians).

Apparently, traditional music seems to accompany people in Scotland throughout their lives. It is not only present at public events, but also at family celebrations.

There is a wide range of other occasions for traditional music in Scotland like:

Parades

The Edinburgh Military Tattoo

Concerts

Folk Festivals

Highland Games

Psalm singing in the churches of the Gaels

So traditional music seems to be a very important part of life in Scotland.

Different Types of Songs

By looking at Scottish songs, one can learn a great deal about Scotland and its history and culture. There are, for example, songs in all three languages (English, Scots and Gaelic), which tells us that there are, basically, two "cultures" in Scotland that are divided by the 'Highland line': the northern and western part that is predominantly Gaelic and the southern and eastern part where the main language is Scots/Scottish English. This division originated in the past when the Highlands were difficult to reach and cultural exchange with other areas was not possible. In the 20th century, the situation changed, but "Gaelic continues to be culturally important in the Western Isles and the Highlands" ("New Grove" article).

Both "cultures" have their own songs which can be subdivided by the occasions they are sung at.

The best-known genre of songs in Scots and English are the Ballads, but there are also songs associated with seasonal customs (e.g. Auld Lang Syne; see above), children's songs and occupational songs (mainly the so-called bothy songs that deal with the life of farm labourers).

Songs in Gaelic can be subdivided into two major categories: the Gaelic (secular) song and the Gaelic psalms. Among the Gaelic songs, there are Heroic Ballads, songs in praise of the Highland chiefs, fairy songs (about supernatural creatures) and labour songs.

The labour songs are a particularly interesting field. They are characterized by a regular stress and rhythm and are therefore intended to help with rhythmical movements like rowing or walking. As to their function, they can be compared to English sailor songs (sea shanties).

The Gaelic psalms are the only representation of traditional music in church. They are unaccompanied Gaelic versions of the psalms of David and include lots of ornamentation. Nevertheless, there is no point in describing what they sound like; the sound is so special, one actually has to listen to it.

From a musicologist's point of view, Scottish traditional music is special in another respect. While in other cultures, folk songs are normally passed on orally from one generation to the next, folk songs in Scotland have had a written and an oral tradition from as early as the 17th/18th century. This means for example that the authors of many of these tunes are actually known, which is not typical of folk music.

Instrumental Music in Scottish Traditional Music

The Highland Bagpipes, the fiddle and harp are conventionally regarded as the national instruments of Scotland. In addition to this triumvirate, a number of other instruments, notably the accordion, have had an important role in traditional music-making.

(from: "Scotland" in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians).

- **Bagpipes**

Of the different kinds of bagpipes that exist, the Highland bagpipe is the best-known and most frequently used.

There are several theories on how it came to Scotland. Nowadays, the most popular one is that the bagpipe is a further developed form of an instrument that the Romans brought to Scotland (from AD 43). This instrument was a mouth-blown pipe without the characteristic bag. There is evidence that bags were already used in the 12th century; what happened between the time of the Romans and that time is unknown.

Bagpipes were originally used for military purposes. It is for example mentioned in sources that there were pipers at the famous Battle of Bannockburn where Robert the Bruce fought against the English king Edward II. As a part of Gaelic culture, bagpipes were banned in 1746 after the Jacobite Rebellions.

The bag allows a continuous flow of air. Because the release of the air is independent of the inflating of the bag, players can breathe whenever they want while still producing a sound. This fact, that breathing and phrasing are not synchronized, is unique among all wind instruments.

Nowadays, bagpipes are often played in so-called pipe bands that consist of several pipers and drummers. Forms of pipe bands can be seen at parades and at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

A characteristic feature of the sound of a bagpipe is the continuous sound produced by the pipes called "drones" whose pitches cannot be altered by the player. Together, these pitches form a fifth (five-step interval). This was often imitated by European composers, especially during the Baroque era (e.g. movements from works by Bach and Händel called "Hornpipe" or "Musette" also have the underlying fifth).

- **Fiddle**

The instrument used by fiddle players basically does not differ from that used by classical violinists. It is popular throughout Scotland and used in both "cultures" of Scottish traditional music (the Scots culture and the Gaelic culture).

The genre in which fiddlers are involved most is dance music, but the repertoire of Scottish fiddlers also consists of slower tunes, mainly song airs (after Scots and Gaelic songs).

What I also found interesting was the fact that there are many celebrated virtuoso fiddlers who have also composed and published tunes.

- Clarsach

The Scottish harp (Clarsach) is the most ancient of the three "classical" Scottish instruments. It is depicted on stone carvings that date back to as early as the 9th century. Although little is known about the repertoire of the early harp players, it is very likely that it was mainly used to accompany songs.

As the clarsach is also a Gaelic instrument, it suffered the same fate as the bagpipes and was banned in 1746.

- Accordion

The use of accordions in Scottish folk music did not start until the 20th century. It was first introduced by Jimmy Shand (born 1908) who originally was a miner, then turned accordion salesman and after that professional musician.

The rise of the accordion in dance music coincided with the decline of the fiddle. The fact that one can harmonise tunes and play chords on the accordion is part of the reason for its popularity.

Part (2)

Some suggestions for using Scottish music in Music and English lessons.

- A Scottish Country Dance

In teaching music, dancing is considered an important part of music lessons. Through dancing, students learn, among other skills, to keep steady rhythms, count, connect movements with music, co-ordination, social skills.

Among other types of Scottish dances, there are the so called ceilidh dances. These are danced at ceilidhs and are fairly easy and suitable for large groups. This makes them ideal for dancing with a whole class. I found instructions for several ceilidh dances at

www.scottishdance.net/ceilidh/dances.html.

The Circassian Circle

(I like this particular dance because it is easy to learn and because it can be performed with an unlimited number of dancers.)

Formation: Large circle round the room, ladies on the right of their partner.
Music: 32 bar Reels

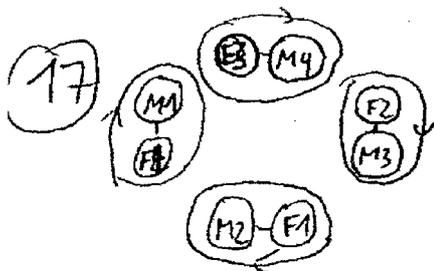
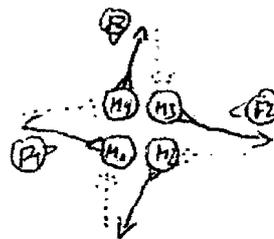
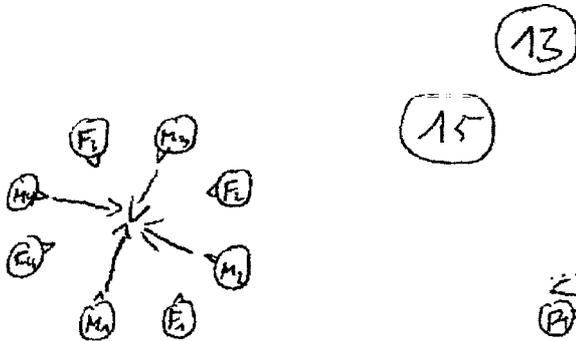
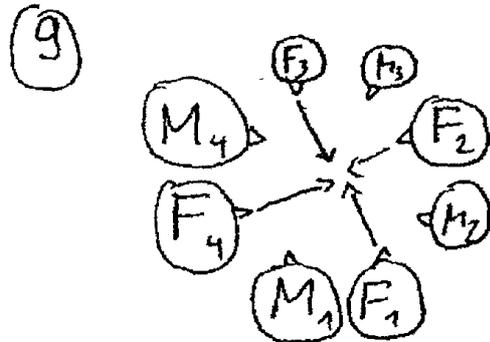
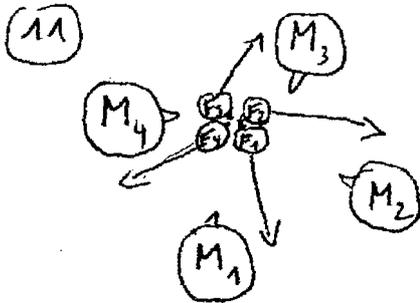
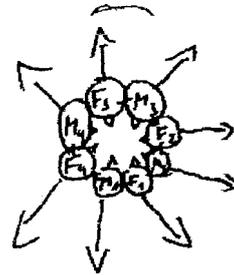
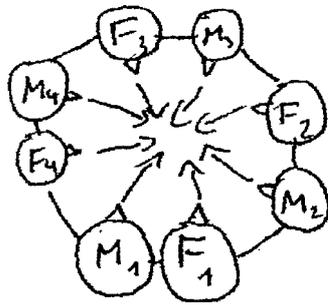
Bars: Description:

1-4	Hands joined in a circle, all advance for four steps, retire for four steps.
5-8	Repeat.
9-12	Drop hands, ladies advance and retire
13-16	Men advance, turn round and walk out to the next lady CW [clockwise], the one who was on their left; the one who is now to the right of their partner as they view.
17-24	All spin with new partners
25-32	Hands crossed in front (right to right and left to left), ladies on the outside, promenade ACW [anti-clockwise] around the room. Repeat ad lib.

However, as I always find verbal descriptions of dances rather complicated and confusing, and as I personally prefer learning visually, the following drawings help me more than a written text does.

Although "learning by doing" is most effective, the text and the drawings can help the students remember the steps.

1



33 = 1

(F= female, M = male; the "noses" show the directions the dancers are looking in; for reasons of simplification, I used only 8 dancers)

- A Puzzle

This puzzle could be used at the end of a unit on Scottish music.

1)	C	L	A	R	S	A	C	H
2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

- 1) The name of the Scottish harp
- 2) People at ceilidhs play, sing and...
- 3) This instrument is popular in Trossingen (Hohner :-)) and in Scottish Folk music
- 4) Scotland's national poet
- 5) The three major languages in Scotland are English, Scots and ...
- 6) the wind instrument typically used in Scottish Folk Music
- 7) The north-western, hilly (mountainous) part of Scotland is called the ...
- 8) What is the violin called in Scottish Folk music?

- Scottish Music in Ear Training

Scottish tunes can also be used in ear training. I would like to give an example of how a Scottish tune can be very useful for presenting certain aspects of music theory.

In an internet article on Scottish music, I found the following information:

“Non-Tonal Endings

Many Scots tunes have a habit of ending up on a note other than the stated tonic. This must not be confused with the idea of a tune's `being in a mode'. The usual final notes of such tunes are the second, third, fifth, and sixth degrees of the scale.“

(From: www.standingstones.com/scotl8th.html)

This means that these tunes end in a note that is not recognised as an ending, or is even considered a "wrong" note, by listeners who are used to regular European tonality. For this reason, composers came up with different ways of dealing with this "problem" when they adapted the tunes. Some of them even composed new endings.

As getting a feeling for tonal contexts is one of the major aims in basic ear training, Scottish tunes with non-tonal endings can be very useful. The teacher could play a Scottish tune and ask the students what strikes them. There will probably be answers like "you stopped in the middle" or "you

played a wrong note at the end". The class could then try and write down the music. By analysing, they would find out that the final note is not the first degree of the scale.

Further steps could then be to play several tunes and get the listeners to say whether the endings are tonal or non-tonal, or to compose/improvise a postlude with a tonal ending.

This way, the students can profit from the Scottish tunes in several ways. They learn about the folk tunes, train their listening and analysing skills and have opportunities to be creative.

For me, Scottish folk tunes are an ideal subject to study.

PS: Anyone interested in more can take a look at the Bibliography for the Area Studies Scotland class, also available at FindYourFeet, under Course Materials.

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