

A Personal Muse Mission
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A Collection of Tunes By: Gordon Taylor Operation Golden Chair
Published by the author, 37 pages, 59 tunes

The second book of music from Gordon Taylor of Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a self-published effort, with 59 compositions included within its serlocks bound covers. While Operation Golden Chair is no threat to upstage Donald MacLeod's Book 4, there are certainly numerous merits to be discovered by the pipe band searching for original new material.

The book runs the gamut of time signatures and tune types - and then some. Taylor is clearly adept at exploring new rhythms and introducing new concepts to Highland bagpipe music. For example, for the first time ever (as far as we know, anyway), a rumba graces the pages of a pipe tune collection. While "King's Head Rhumba" [sic] (and its accompanying harmony and counterpoint) is interesting, it, like most of the music in the collection lacks a strong and simple melodic line, essential for a tune to withstand the test of time.

The strongest section is the reels, and Taylor has an affinity for two-parters that flow off the fingers. "We're Nae Sailors" and "Vanessa's Rejection" are particularly good tunes that would fit well into many medleys. His translation of jigs to reels, in this case "The Kesh Jig" and "Am Breamatin Tobhain Dubh," are well put together, and could be knitted nicely with their originals. (Incidentally, the translation of the latter tune's Gaelic title is literally, "The Farting of the Black Ass" a practical joke by Toronto's John Wilson, who needed a title for the traditional, nameless jig and got one from his friend Neil Angus MacDonald.)

Full credit also to Taylor who courageously tackles strathspey composition. Many of today's collections don't even try to attempt the difficult idiom, and "The Psychotic Slag," complete with C naturals, is melodically strong and clever.

There are a few very good pieces for the band or soloist with a penchant for the stage. "St Mary's Cinderella" is an excellent waltz, "The Khgerstyning" is a clever 9/8 + 12/8 jig, and the hornpipe "Dewdney Drugs" works well.

There are several bright spots to Operation Golden Chair, and that's several more than many collections churned out of late. A few of today's most highly regarded composers first published their works themselves on a small budget. Gordon Taylor could well be the latest young writer on whom we should keep an eye.