

## Richard Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* – A Flying Hebridean in Disguise?

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**ABSTRACT.** Several scholars have drawn attention both to the many Scottish references in Richard Wagner's initial sketches of *The Flying Dutchman* and to the close links between the opera and the composer's own disastrous Nordic sea journey, but discussions tend to centre on the opera's libretto. What appear to be musical reminiscences of Hebridean songs in the opera's core thematic material have not been alluded to since Marjory Kennedy-Fraser pointed them out at the beginning of the twentieth century. Having a long-standing interest in Wagner's *œuvre*, she associated various themes and tunes she had collected in the Outer Hebrides with the German composer, and among her extant field recordings – now at Edinburgh University Library – there are indeed snippets of music that closely resemble Wagnerian *leitmotifs* and airs, in particular Senta's ballad in *Der fliegende Holländer*. Drawing on a paper Kennedy-Fraser read to the Musical Association in London in 1918, various scattered references, and letters from Sir Granville Bantock and John Lorne Campbell, my article discusses the potential links between Hebridean songs and, in particular, Senta's ballad.

As suggested vaguely by the title, the purpose of my paper\* is to explore any plausible links between Richard Wagner's opera *Der fliegende Holländer* and the musical idiom of the Scottish Hebrides. Several scholars have already drawn attention to the many Scottish references in the German composer's initial sketches of the opera more generally, and the pivotal importance of his disastrous Nordic sea journey has been frequently discussed. Still, what appear to be musical reminiscences of Hebridean songs in the opera's core thematic material have not been alluded to since Marjory Kennedy-Fraser pointed them out at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before turning to any musicological details, however, I will begin by providing a brief outline of Wagner's earlier life and career, followed by a discussion on Kennedy-Fraser's gradually deepening interest in Wagnerian matters and how she came to promote the composer's *œuvre* in Scotland.

Born in Leipzig, Richard Wagner (1813–83) grew up in Dresden, in the proximity of the theatre; interested mainly in literature, he dreamt of becoming a poet. After hearing Beethoven's *Egmont* music, however, he changed his mind and decided instead to devote himself to music. He returned with his family to Leipzig in 1828, and in 1829 he attended a performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, where Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient<sup>1</sup> sang Leonore's part. In raptures over the music and Schröder-Devrient's interpretation, he wrote to the singer that she had given his life a meaning, and Madame Schröder-Devrient, who was apparently flattered, kept the letter, remembering it when she met with him in 1842 to create the leading soprano parts in *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer*.

Various music positions in Würzburg and Magdeburg led Wagner via Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) to Riga in 1837, where he had been appointed conductor at the theatre. Having a great talent for running into debt, he would usually choose to run away when the creditors became too many and too persistent, but this time they tracked him down, both from Magdeburg and Königsberg, and with new debts incurred in Riga, the Russian authorities decided to confiscate his passport. Clearly, it was time to escape again; in July 1839, while on tour with the theatre to Mitau, closer to Prussia than Riga, Richard Wagner quietly sneaked away. Together with his wife Minna Planer, whom he had married in 1836 – 'his young and pretty but somewhat silly and at last discontented wife',<sup>2</sup> according to Marjory Kennedy-

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Fraser – and their huge Newfoundland dog Robber, he crossed the Russo-Prussian frontier illegally and arrived in Königsberg two days later. At the Prussian port of Pillau the three of them boarded the *Thetis*, a small merchant vessel with a crew of seven, bound for London. Most unfortunately, however, a violent storm off the Danish coast forced the captain to seek refuge, landing in Sandvika at Borøya, near the small town of Tvedestrand<sup>3</sup> on the southern coast of Norway. Two days later the *Thetis* set sail again, only to narrowly escape being splintered after striking a submerged rock. After a day of further recovery back in Sandvika, they all finally managed to cross over to England, surviving yet another furious storm. Eventually, more than three weeks after setting out from Pillau, the company arrived in London, having by then certainly discovered what it meant to be at the mercy of the forces of nature (Evensen).

During the extended voyage, Wagner had many opportunities to listen to the sailors singing their songs; furthermore, he was brought face to face with the antagonism of a superstitious crew who believed that a crime committed by someone on board a ship might cause its destruction and put their own lives at risk. This is a widespread belief in the Gaelic world;<sup>4</sup> the well-known ballad ‘William Glen’<sup>5</sup> tells of a how a sea captain who had once committed a murder is thrown overboard at sea by his crew during a dreadful storm, when the ship is about to be wrecked. According to Richard Wagner’s ‘*Autobiographische Skizze*’, the sailors also told him stories of the Flying Dutchman, though this may not have actually taken place (Grey 2000: 17, 178–79, 201 n 3). In any case, all these dramatic events – the sea voyage, the shipwreck, the shanties, the superstition, the stories, and the dramatic Norwegian coastline – made a deep impression on him. The experience was still fresh in his mind many years later, when he wrote in *A Communication to my Friends*: ‘The figure of the “Flying Dutchman” is a mythical creation [*Gedicht*] of the people: it gives emotionally compelling expression to a timeless feature of human nature. This feature, in its most general sense, is the longing for peace from the storms of life.’<sup>6</sup>

In the years that followed, living in Paris, Wagner wrote a first sketch of the Flying Dutchman material in French, which he sent to the famous librettist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) for versification in May 1840, but most disappointingly, nothing came of the effort. He subsequently reworked the story and made his own versification, hoping for a commission from the Paris Opéra, but as the illustrious institution preferred another composer, Wagner, in financial difficulties as usual, sold his Flying Dutchman scenario for five hundred francs to the Opéra in 1841. The ensuing result was *Le Vaisseau fantôme* by Pierre-Louis Dietsch (1808–65), which opera quietly sank into oblivion after a few years. The sale of the scenario in Paris did not preclude Wagner from performing his own version elsewhere though, and in those years, anyway, copyright was not high on the agenda. His own versification being already completed, he quickly set to work on a new prose sketch – this time in German – as well as on composing the music, and on 2 January 1843, *Der fliegende Holländer* was premièred in Dresden, with Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient interpreting Senta’s part.

The new opera was no particular success in Dresden, however, and it closed after only four nights. Wagner was more satisfied with the staging in Berlin the following year, where, in January 1844, he himself conducted the first two evenings of the run. In February, in the remaining two performances, Schröder-Devrient returned to sing the rôle of Senta. In between the Dresden and Berlin productions, the *Holländer* had been well received in Kassel, and also in Riga, where the theatre management and audience obviously did not bear any hard feelings towards the composer, in spite of the fact that he, deeply in debt, had run away from them only four years earlier. Today there is still a street named after him in central Riga, the ‘Riharda Vāgnera iela’ (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The Richard Wagner street in central Riga, Latvia. (© Per G.L. Ahlander)

Although *Der fliegende Holländer* did not enter the standard repertoire until well into the twentieth century, it was to be the first of Wagner's operas that reached London, where – as *L'Olandese dannato* – it was given in Italian at Drury Lane in July 1870, with Sir Charles Santley (1834–1922) in the title rôle. Somewhat surprisingly, Senta's part was sung by Ilma de Murska (Ema Pukšec, 1834–89), the Croatian nightingale, who was famous for her brilliant *coloratura*, a skill that might not have been so very useful for this particular part. Nevertheless, despite the obvious need for a slightly heavier type of voice, when the opera was first performed at Covent Garden in 1877, the rôle was created by Emma Albani (Emma Lajeunesse, 1847–1930), another *coloratura diva* of the period. It was still sung in Italian, this time under the title of *Il Vascello fantasma*, which is the opera's Italian name, and not until 1882 was there a London production in the original German. *Der fliegende Holländer* was not performed at Bayreuth until 1901. As was the case with other famous operas, various piano arrangements were soon available on the market, a phenomenon that was instrumental in popularising larger musical works in the pre-recording era. Franz Liszt (1811–86), Richard Wagner's father-in-law, was among those producing such arrangements, but he apparently saw his own virtuoso Wagner transcriptions merely as 'a modest propaganda on the inadequate piano for the sublime genius of Wagner!'<sup>7</sup>

There were several Scottish connections inherent in the sources Wagner might have used, the most significant of which was Heinrich Heine's pseudo-autobiographical *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*, published in *Der Salon* in 1833. In this story, the fictitious von Schnabelewopski describes a play that he once saw in Amsterdam, on the subject of the Flying Dutchman. Heine lets the reader follow the plot until the Dutchman meets with Katharina, the daughter of a Scots sea captain. Then, von Schnabelewopski leaves the theatre with 'a girl of breathtaking beauty' (Millington 26) who was in the audience, only to return in time to witness Katharina throwing herself into the sea, redeeming the Dutchman's soul from the grip of Satan. The play is treated ironically by Heine, and his 'cynicism is encapsulated in the final moral: that women should beware of marrying a Flying Dutchman, while men should take care that they are not ruined by women' (Millington 2000: 26). Notwithstanding his slightly mocking approach, it was Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) who introduced the motif of redemption into the legend, a theme Wagner would repeatedly return to: man redeemed through the unselfish sacrifice of a completely devoted woman; Elisabeth, Sieglinde, Brünnhilde, Isolde, and Kundry – that is how the story ends for all of them.

In his first sketch in 1840, Wagner placed the action geographically somewhere along the Scottish coast. Entitled *Le Hollandais volant (nom d'un fantôme de mer)* [The Flying Dutchman (name of a sea phantom)], it reads in the very first paragraph: '*De son sombre vaisseau, dont les voiles d'un rouge sanguin et l'équipage de spectres sont l'effroi des marins dans les eaux étrangères, il descend aujourd'hui sur une des côtes de l'Ecosse.*'<sup>8</sup> (Laroche 1993: 69–71) [From his dark ship, whose blood-red sails and crew of ghosts are the terror of sailors in foreign waters, he goes ashore today on one of the coasts of Scotland.] In the completed opera, the action still took place in Scotland, more specifically in the fictitious village of 'Holystrand', and it was only while preparing for the Dresden première in January 1843 that he moved it to 'Sandwike' in Norway, recalling the name of the fishing-village where the *Thetis* had sought respite from the North Sea storms in 1839. Hugh Macdonald

gives two reasons for this change: that Scottish subjects by then had become somewhat *démodé* and that Wagner wanted to make the links clearer to his own North Sea experience. Consequently, Daland's line in Act I, scene 3, '*Gastfreundschaft kennt der Schotte*', was changed to '*Gastfreundschaft kennt der Seemann*' (Wagner 1909: 50). (Macdonald 2005: 277–78; see also Grey 2000: 2–3) 'Any speculation that the opera might have been called *The Flying Scotsman*, though', Macdonald continues, 'is dashed by the fact that the legend always concerned a Dutchman, and probably an actual Dutchman of the seventeenth century' (Macdonald 2005: 279).

By the 1880s, Richard Wagner, together with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, had become a cult figure; both his music and his ideas of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the *Zukunftsmusik* were fervently admired far beyond the German-speaking parts of Europe. Scottish singer David Kennedy (1825–86), Marjory Kennedy-Fraser's father, was among the early enthusiasts, and while on holiday in London in June 1882, he attended the first performances in Britain of both *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at Drury Lane, 'enjoying it as a rare feast. [...] There was a "bigness", a wild grandeur about it, which quite moved him.'<sup>9</sup> Presumably, his daughter Marjory was there as well, having by then returned from her student years in Milan (Ahlander 2008: 52–54). It has always been the desire of every true Wagnerian to go on a pilgrimage to Bayreuth and its Festspielhaus *auf dem Grünen Hügel*, and many individuals of the British avant-garde circles travelled there in the 1890s, primarily for performances of *Parsifal*, which opera was to be heard nowhere else. Edinburgh-based Irish artist Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852–1936), piano professor Tobias Matthay (1858–1945) and his wife Jessie (Marjory Kennedy-Fraser's youngest sister), and journalist and author Elizabeth A. Sharp (1856–1932, married to William Sharp, a.k.a. Fiona MacLeod)<sup>10</sup> had already been in Bayreuth when Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857–1930) and her sister Margaret made their journey in 1899 (Cumming 2005: 64; Kennedy-Fraser 1929: 99; Matthay 1945: 32). By then, however, Mrs Kennedy-Fraser was already well versed in Wagner's music, having included works by him on several occasions in the recitals she produced for Patrick Geddes's Edinburgh Summer Meetings in 1892–96. In the fourth and final recital in 1892, entitled 'Modern Composers of all Nationalities', her brother John Kennedy sang 'O Star of Eve' from *Tannhäuser*.<sup>11</sup> In 1894, in a programme called 'German Song Writers of the Nineteenth Century', her sister Margaret Kennedy interpreted '*Träume*', the last of Wagner's five *Wesendonck Lieder*.<sup>12</sup>

In the lecture-recitals Mrs Kennedy-Fraser presented in Edinburgh in 1903–07, she made Wagner's music the topic of some of her programmes, and over the years to come, in lectures and articles, she would frequently return to both his music and writings. She took a particular interest in *Parsifal* and *Der fliegende Holländer*, in the latter, however, not so much for the music itself. In 1906, she said in one of her lectures:

"The Flying Dutchman" is not a very important musical composition – there is more of tempest and storm and the feelings which these conjure up in [the] 1st movement of Beethoven's D minor sonata than in this whole music – but the composition of it marks a turning point of vital importance in Wagner's artistic development whilst the story itself is so interwoven with the tissue of his life at the time that the title forms a convenient text for reflections on the master and the composition of the work [–] a salient point to and from which to study the great music drama composer's evolution.<sup>13</sup>

Marjory Kennedy-Fraser's Wagner concert on 20 January 1906 was a considerably larger production than her usual lecture-recitals: 'This Recital will have special reference to Messrs Paterson & Sons' Choral Orchestral Concert Recital of "The Flying Dutchman", and

will, in the course of a sketch of the Composer's life, have a special bearing on that work.' Margaret Kennedy opened with 'Träume', and after Kennedy-Fraser's 'Sketch of Wagner's Life' there followed excerpts from all three acts of the opera with four soloists<sup>14</sup> and '50 Members of Mr Kirkhope's Choir'. Mr John Kirkhope conducted, and Mrs Kennedy-Fraser and Mr R.W. Pentland presided at the piano.<sup>15</sup> In her talk, *The Scotsman* reported, '[s]he condensed and focused the chief events of the composer's life, and tracing the influence of character and environment on his works. [...] The large audience appreciated alike the lecture and the illustrations.'<sup>16</sup> Paterson & Sons' choral-orchestral concert performance with soloists, Mr Kirkhope's Choir and the Scottish Orchestra, which followed on 5 February in the McEwan Hall,<sup>17</sup> was apparently not entirely successful, however. *The Scotsman* commented that 'it may be doubted if the experiment of presenting a "romantic opera in three acts", with the leading singers in orthodox evening dress and the chorus massed behind in the style suitable to oratorio, will be repeated'. The choir did perform 'with a degree of accuracy and finish which could never be looked for from the chorus singers of a travelling provincial company' and the Scottish Orchestra left 'the theatre orchestra far behind. But these two advantages could not atone for the incongruity of having a music-drama which is peculiarly dependent upon pure spectacle presented upon the comparatively cold and formal platform of the concert-room.'<sup>18</sup>

In the spring that same year, Mrs Kennedy-Fraser was one of the two lecturers featured at the Incorporated Society of Musicians' Fourth Annual Scottish Sectional Conference, held at the Royal Hotel in Edinburgh. On that occasion, she brought forth a second Wagner concert, a shortened version of her 'Flying Dutchman' programme performed in January, with two soloists instead of four and without Mr Kirkhope's Choir.<sup>19</sup> A few years later, while working over some of the musical material she had collected in the Hebrides, Mrs Kennedy-Fraser came across tunes and themes that she associated with Richard Wagner. Among her extant field recordings, now held by Edinburgh University Library, there are indeed some snippets of songs that bear a close resemblance to leitmotifs and airs from Wagner's *œuvre*, in particular to Senta's ballad in *Der fliegende Holländer*. In February 1910, Kennedy-Fraser touched upon her recent findings when discussing the 'reviving interest in Scots national music' in her lecture on 'Scots Songs – Highland and Lowland' in the Goold Hall, St Andrew Square, Edinburgh, 'under the auspices of the local centre of the Scottish National Song Society'. In this lecture, she noted that 'all Europe and America had been gradually awakening to a realisation of the value and importance of folk-music':

The art value of such racially individualised music had of recent years been acknowledged by the greatest composers. Wagner, who had put it on record that "the folk are the vital force conditioning art", was himself influenced at an early stage in his career (as a tone-poet indeed influenced for life) by his experience of the northern folk-lore and song gained on a memorable voyage in the North Sea, an experience which took artistic shape in his dramatic ballad "The Flying Dutchman".<sup>20</sup>

'We know by a study of his music-dramas', she maintained further, 'that he must have heard from the sailors just such songs as those we have collected in the Hebrides.'<sup>21</sup>

Senta's ballad in the second act of *Der fliegende Holländer* is the core of the opera, and it was one of the 'numbers' Wagner composed in Paris back in 1840, when he still cherished hopes of a commission from the Opéra. '*Diese [vorab komponierten Teile] waren: Die Ballade der Senta, das Lied der norwegischen Matrosen und der Spuk-Gesang der Mannschaft des "Fliegenden Holländers"*.'<sup>22</sup> [These (sections composed in advance) were: Senta's ballad, the Norwegian sailors' song and the 'Flying Dutchman' crew's ghost song.]

Over the years, Wagner made various alterations to the score, and he even seems to have contemplated altering the ballad; 'on 17 October 1878 Cosima [Wagner] noted that he was still "thinking of revising Senta's Ballad, the beginning of which he finds quite like a folk-song, but not characteristic of *Der fliegende Holländer*"'<sup>23</sup>. If he ever created a revised version, however, it never found its way into the completed opera.

Senta. (im Großvaterstuhl.)  
 Jo - ho - hoe! Jo - ho - ho - hoe! Ho - ho - hoe! Jo - hoe! Traft  
 Str. u. Holzbläs.  
 \*

Figure 2: *Der fliegende Holländer* – Senta's ballad, beginning. (Wagner: 110)

The ballad, 'Jo-ho-hoe! Jo-ho-ho-hoe!', opens with the Dutchman motif (Figure 2), which is the first of the opera's two main motifs. With Senta 'rending asunder the veil that separates fiction and reality, and opening up a window for the numinous Dutchman to penetrate the confines of her ordinary and unfulfilled existence' (Grey 2000: 75), it ends with an abruptly introduced coda, 'Ich sei's, die dich durch ihre Treu' erlöse!' (Figure 3). The coda – *Allegro con fuoco* – begins with a transformation of the opera's second main motif, the Redemption motif, also referred to as the motif of human love. Kennedy-Fraser called it 'the beautiful little scrap of melody in Senta which expresses a prayer for the Dutchman's redemption'.<sup>24</sup>

Senta (von plötzlicher Begeisterung hingerissen, springt vom Stuhle auf.)  
 Allegro con fuoco. ♩ = so.  
 Ich sei's, die dich durch ihre Treu' erlöse!  
 Viol.  
 Str. Orch.  
 Holzbl. u. Hörn.  
 \*

Figure 3: *Der fliegende Holländer* – Senta's ballad, coda. (Wagner: 118)

Both these motifs are first introduced in the Overture, which begins with the Dutchman motif (Figure 4: *molto marcato*, bars 2–5), followed sixty bars later by the Redemption motif in its ground form (Figure 5: *Andante*, bars 65–68). The latter starts with a falling scale of three

notes and ends *ritardando* with the motif of the second. Recurring throughout the entire opera, the very idea of these three notes on their falling scale is generally believed to have been conceived by Wagner during his tempestuous North Sea voyage in 1839.

## Der fliegende Holländer

von

**Richard Wagner.**

### Ouverture.

Allegro con brio.  $\text{♩} = 72$ .

Figure 4: *Der fliegende Holländer* – Overture, bars 1–7. (Wagner: 3)

Figure 5: *Der fliegende Holländer* – Overture, bars 61–76. (Wagner: 5)

In 'Songs of the Hebrides', a paper Marjory Kennedy-Fraser read in London to the Musical Association on 5 November 1918, with musical illustrations by herself, her daughter Patuffa Kennedy-Fraser, and her sister Margaret Kennedy<sup>25</sup> (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 1; 'The Musical Association. Report' 1919–20: xi), she discussed what it is that colours Hebridean songs such as 'Kishmul's Galley'<sup>26</sup>. 'It may be Norse or may derive from a far-flung sea-faring idiom persisting still in remote sea-faring places from the days when the sea, as a convenient high-way, *united*, not divided peoples.' (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 8) 'This [Figure 6] was sung into my phonograph by a woman from the rocky isle of Minguly (so inaccessible that it is since deserted)', Mrs Kennedy-Fraser continued, 'and in our first volume [of *Songs of the Hebrides* (Kennedy-Fraser & Macleod 1909)] it will be found with the verses varied exactly as sung by her' (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 9).



Figure 6: 'Kishmul's Galley'. (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 9)

'Returning to Wagner's presumed indebtedness to this sea-faring music, his *Senta's Ballad* might have been lifted from it.'

In my earliest collecting in Barra I got so many airs on the phonograph that I misconstrued at first the occasional presence of vocalized *introductory* bars. These appeared sporadically, so to speak, on the phonograph, and I, having concentrated attention on the regularly recurring air, had regarded them as accidental. I now know by experience that they are essential (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 9).



Figure 7: Vocalised introductory bars. (Kennedy-Fraser 1918–19: 9)



When comparing the vocalised introductory bars as shown by Mrs Kennedy-Fraser (Figure 7), it will indeed be noted that the motif is close to identical with the first phrase of Senta's ballad (Figure 2), albeit appearing in a different key. Playing through one of Kennedy-Fraser's many piano arrangements of songs, *Songs of the Hebrides: Popular Selection of Seven Airs*<sup>27</sup> (Kennedy-Fraser 1923), I was immediately struck by the similarity between her introduction (Figure 8) and Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer* music, an observation that ties in well with what she said herself at the Forum Club in London on 10 February 1922.

[Wagner], among that Northern song-singing sea-faring people, caught up and retained (Geniuses retains and uses everything) the strong melodic motives that he heard and they later crop up all the time in his work altho the most immediate outcome of it was of course "The Flying Dutchman" which he wrote on his arrival in Paris. So musically are these motives now attributed to him. In some of the songs I publish, I have to add a note to the effect that certain themes are not borrowed from Wagner!!!<sup>28</sup>

In a broader perspective, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser equally attributed other Wagnerian traits to the composer's exposure to the North Sea culture, including the descending pentatonic passage he used in the music surrounding Brünhilde in *Die Walküre* and the recurring high note – indeed a characteristic of Senta's ballad – that can be found in many old Scots airs.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 8: *Songs of the Hebrides: Popular Selection of Seven Airs* – Introduction. (Kennedy-Fraser 1923: 2)

British composer and music professor Sir Granville Bantock (1868–1946), Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's ardent supporter and friend, had made similar observations, and on 5 September 1915, he wrote to her:

What a curious resemblance to the bird's motive in "Siegfried" there is in the West Wind song in A major! Have you also noticed the similar idiom of "Senta's Ballad" from the "Flying Dutchman" with the "Hebridean Sea-Reiver's Song"? Wagner must have heard some of these sea-songs on his eventful voyage across the North Sea.<sup>30</sup>

These resemblances were not always truly acknowledged, however. In 1979, when John Lorne Campbell had come across one such reference, he apparently found the idea ridiculous

and wrote to his musical collaborator Frank M. Collinson: 'What rubbish that Wagner reference of Mrs K.F. It shows that there is no limit to the drivel that devotees of the Celtic Twilight can and could talk.'<sup>31</sup> At that time though, Professor Bantock's concordant views could not possibly have been known to him; the letter referred to above was still buried in the uncatalogued Kennedy-Fraser Collection.

The similarities between Hebridean and Wagnerian musical traits and leitmotifs are indeed striking, but without any more tangible proofs, the connection must remain a hypothesis. The political, commercial and cultural links between Scotland and Scandinavia have been significant for more than a millennium, however, and large numbers of Scots – of both Gaelic and Lowland extraction – have lived for long periods of time in the Scandinavian countries, working mainly either in trade and shipping or in the armed forces as mercenary officers and soldiers. The Scottish connections with the seaports along the Norwegian coast were particularly close, especially with the city of Bergen.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) – Bergen's famous son – was of Scottish extraction; his great-grandfather was a Scot named Greig (Kennedy 1996: 304–05). An exchange of customs and ideas would thus appear natural, including the transmission of songs, tunes and stories. Although diversity of language usually makes the transfer of traditional material more complicated, it 'is not a serious obstacle to the spread of the music of songs and ballads from one people to another', Malcolm MacFarlane, Elderslie, observed in December 1908. 'For all people can apprehend, memorise, and utter the language of music with some degree of proficiency' (MacFarlane 1915: 55). In her autobiography, *A Life of Song*, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser offered some reflections upon these close links, wondering what effect they had had on the respective countries' traditional music:

The natives of Barra have always been famed as sea-faring folk. Did they get from sea-faring men of the northern seas some Scandinavian ways of music-thinking, or did the Norse rather, in their traffic with the Isles, borrow themes and motives from the Gaels? Wagner, anyhow, seems to have borrowed some of his themes and *motifs* showing kinship with Hebridean melody from the sea-faring songs of the Norse sailors, with whom he came in contact in his young manhood on a stormy voyage of three weeks in the Northern seas (Kennedy-Fraser 1929: 133–34).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804–60). German soprano. Operatic début in Vienna in 1821 (as Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*), where she sang Leonore in *Fidelio* in the presence of Beethoven the following year. Sang in Dresden 1823–47, and in Paris and London. Created three of Wagner's leading soprano rôles: Adriano in *Rienzi*, Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*, and Venus in *Tannhäuser*. Robert Schumann's song '*Ich grolle nicht*' was dedicated to her. (Kennedy 1996: 650).

<sup>2</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, 'Wagner and Handel', lecture, [n.d., but 12 January 1907], EUL Gen. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Tvedestrand is situated on Norway's southern coast, about sixty miles north of Kristiansand.

<sup>4</sup> The theme is an international folktale (ATU 973) and is listed in its various forms in the Motif Index of Folk Literature as N271.10; D1318.10.1; N134.1.5; S264.1. It is strong in the

British Isles but also occurs in Nova Scotia, presumably mainly within the Scottish communities. A story recorded in Broad Cove, Cape Breton, in 1975 by Dr John Shaw, tells of an emigrant ship captain who summoned all the passengers on board during a tremendous storm, in order to identify the one guilty of a crime –possibly a murder – back in Scotland. Both ship and culprit were eventually saved by the blessings of a bishop who happened to be among the passengers crossing over to Canada. I am grateful to Dr John Shaw both for the references to the international tale type and Motif Index and for kindly sharing the transcript of his 1975 recording with me.

<sup>5</sup> For a version of the ‘William Glen’ ballad, see ‘Folk and Traditional Song Lyrics: William Glen’ [online], available at: <[http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/William\\_Glen.htm](http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/William_Glen.htm)> [accessed 5 December 2012]. I am grateful to Dr John Shaw for the reference to the ‘William Glen’ ballad.

<sup>6</sup> Quotation from Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 10 vols (Leipzig, 1887ff), vol. 4: 265. (Grey: 1). Marjory Kennedy-Fraser quoted the same passage, albeit in a different translation: ‘The figure of the “Flying Dutchman” is a mythical creation of the folk: a primal trait of human nature speaks out from it with heart-enthraling force. This trait is the longing after rest from amid the storms of life.’ (Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, ‘Wagner’, lecture, [n.d., but 20 January 1906, reworked 27 April 1906], EUL Gen. 285).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, ‘Liszt’, lecture, [n.d., but 16 December 1905], EUL Gen. 285.

<sup>8</sup> The manuscript Richard Wagner sent to Eugène Scribe on 6 May 1840 later surfaced in Scribe’s literary remains; now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (NAF 22552, f267). (Laroche : 28, 207).

<sup>9</sup> Mr W. Henderson, London, [to Marjory? Kennedy], [n.d., but 1886–87], Kennedy 1887: 78; see also Kennedy 1996: 469, 747.

<sup>10</sup> William Sharp, Paris, to Thomas A. Janvier, New York, 23 April 1892, Sharp 1910: 197.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Summer Meeting, Edinburgh, August 1892: Musical & Literary Recitals’, recital programme, SUA T-GED 12/2/44/1.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Summer Meeting, Edinburgh, August 1894: Musical Recitals’, recital programme, SUA T-GED 12/2/44/3.

<sup>13</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, ‘Wagner’, lecture, [n.d., but 20 January 1906, reworked 27 April 1906], EUL Gen. 285. Thomas Grey corroborates Kennedy-Fraser’s opinion: ‘No one has ever questioned Wagner’s assessment of *Der fliegende Holländer* as a crucial turning point in his career as composer and dramatist.’ (Grey 2000: 3).

<sup>14</sup> The soloists were Miss J. Black Thomson, Mr George A. Campbell, Mr H. Tyhurst, and Mr Alfred C. Young.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Mrs Kennedy Fraser’s Last Lecture Recital: Freemasons’ Hall, Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1906, at three o’clock. Subject – Wagner’, recital programme, EUL Gen. 285.

- <sup>16</sup> 'Lecture on Wagner', *The Scotsman*, 22 January 1906: 6.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Paterson & Sons' Subscription Orchestral concerts', *The Scotsman*, 5 February 1906: 1. The soloists were Miss Gleeson White, Miss T. Gabrowsky, Mr Lloyd Chandos, Mr Arthur Winckworth and Mr Lewys James; the conductor was Dr Frederic Cowen.
- <sup>18</sup> 'Paterson's Orchestral Concerts. Mr Kirkhope's Choir in "The Flying Dutchman"', *The Scotsman*, 6 February 1906: 8.
- <sup>19</sup> 'The Incorporated Society of Musicians – Fourth Annual Scottish Sectional Conference, Edinburgh, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April 1906', conference programme, EUL Gen. 285. The soloists were Miss J. Black Thomson and Mr George A. Campbell. Mr Alfred C. Young did appear in the printed programme but was possibly indisposed, as George Campbell, who sang Daland's 'Wilt thou, my Child' ('*Mögst du, mein Kind*'), also gave the Flying Dutchman's 'Engulphed in Ocean's deepest Wave' ('*Die Frist ist um*'). The soloists Mrs Kennedy-Fraser had engaged for her two concerts were thus not those who performed at Paterson's Orchestral Concert in the McEwan Hall.
- <sup>20</sup> 'Scots Songs – Highland and Lowland', *The Scotsman*, 21 February 1910: 6.
- <sup>21</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, lecture fragment, [n.d., but 19 February 1910], EUL Gen. 284.
- <sup>22</sup> Quotation from Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*, edited by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Mainz, 1983): 212. (Laroche 1993: 30).
- <sup>23</sup> Quotation from Cosima Wagner, *Diaries*, edited by M. Gregor-Dellin and D. Mack, translated by Geoffrey Skelton, 2 vols (New York & London, 1978: 1980). (Grey 2000: 23).
- <sup>24</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, 'Wagner', lecture, [n.d., but 20 January 1906, reworked 27 April 1906], EUL Gen. 285.
- <sup>25</sup> Charles Harford Lloyd, Mus.Doc. and vice-president, was in the chair.
- <sup>26</sup> 'Kishmul's Galley' / 'A' *Bhirlinn Bharrach*. 'Words from Mrs Maclean, Barra. Air from the singing of Mary Macdonald, Mingulay. With English adaptation and pianoforte accomp. by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser.' (Kennedy-Fraser & Macleod 1909: 80–83).
- <sup>27</sup> The seven airs are 'The Birlinn of Clanranald', 'Island Sheiling Song', 'Hebridean Sea Reivers' Song', 'An Eriskay Love Lilt', 'The Cockle Gatherer', 'A Fairy Love Song', and 'The Road to the Isles'.
- <sup>28</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, 'Songs of the Hebrides', lecture, dated 10 February 1922, EUL Gen. 284.
- <sup>29</sup> Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, notes, [n.d.], EUL Gen. 284; see also Kennedy-Fraser 1929: 133–34.
- <sup>30</sup> Granville Bantock to Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, 5 September 1915, EUL Gen. 519.

<sup>31</sup> John Lorne Campbell to Francis M. Collinson, 24 September 1979, NLS Acc. 8985/20.

<sup>32</sup> Dr Steve Murdoch, 'Scotland and the Baltic: An Early Modern Gaelic Perspective', lecture given as part of 'Scotland and Her Neighbours', the 2006–07 annual lecture series of the Research Institute for the Culture, History and Ethnology of Scotland (RICHES), University of Edinburgh, on 18 April 2007.

### Abbreviations

EUL           Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh  
SUA           Strathclyde University Archives, Glasgow

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