

# The Atholl Highlanders

The musical score for "The Atholl Highlanders" is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of four sections, A, B, C, and D, each with a specific guitar chord progression. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some dotted rhythms. Section A starts with a repeat sign and a double bar line. Section B also begins with a repeat sign. Section C and D are shorter phrases. The score uses a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

**Section A:** A E7 A E7 A

**Section B:** A D A E7 A

**Section C:** A E7 A

**Section D:** A E7 A E7

Chord progressions for the remaining lines of each section:

- Line 2 of A: E7 A D E7 A
- Line 2 of B: D A D E7 A
- Line 2 of C: D A D E7 A
- Line 2 of D: D E7 A

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"The Atholl Highlanders", also known as "Athol Highlanders Jig", "Duke of Atholl's March", "Highland Fabrick", "Lord Athlone's March" and "The Three Sisters" (Shetland) is a Scottish (originally) and Irish pipe march (in 6/8 time) or jig in A Mixolydian (Brody, Hinds, Martin, Neil, Oss, Songer, Sweet) or G Major (Kerr). The parts are played AABB (Kerr), AABB' (Neil), AABBCDD (Brody, Hinds, Martin, Songer), ABCD (Sweet) or AABB'CCDD'EEFF (Ross). The name Athole (or Atholl) derives from the Gaelic "ath Fodla", generally translated as New Ireland and stems from the first invasion of the northern land by the Irish tribe the Scots in the 7th century. The tune, described sometimes as a Scottish warpipes melody, is dedicated to the private army of the Duke of Atholl, the last private army still legally existing (albeit on a token level) in the British Isles. When pipers were introduced in 1881 they recollected their Perthshire origins and chose to play "The Atholl Highlanders" (also known in pipe literature as "The Gathering of the Grahams"). The tune is associated in modern times with the dance called "The Duke of Gordon's Reel", so much so that Scottish dance musicians will sometimes call "Atholl Highlanders" by the name "Duke of Gordon's Reel" (despite the fact that "Atholl Highlanders" is a jig, but referring to 6/8 time tunes as 'reels' is an old convention in Scotland). An early printing of the tune in Jane Morison's **Highland Airs and Quicksteps, vol. 1** (No. 19), where it appears as "Duke of Atholl's March". A still earlier version of the melody appears as "Highland Fabrick" in Henry Colclough's tutor for the uilleann pipes (c. 1830). In Shetland the tune is called by the title "The Three Sisters". Susan Songer notes that when played for contra dances once through the tune is twice through a dance. It was printed in Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), Hinds/Hebert's **Grumbling Old Woman** (1981) (appears as "Athol Highlanders Jig"), Kerr's **Merry Melodies, vol. 3** (c. 1880's), Martin's **Ceol na Fidhle, vol. 1** (1991), Neil's **The Scots Fiddle** (1991), William Ross's **Ross's Collection of Pipe Music** (1869), Songer's **Portland Collection** (1997) and Sweet's **Fifer's Delight** (1964). It was recorded by Graham Townsend on **Graham Townsend, Champion Folk Fiddler**, Mairead Ní Mhaonaigh & Frankie Kennedy on **Ceol Aduaidh** (1983/1994), Ciaran Tourish et al. on **Fiddle Sticks: Irish Traditional Music from Donegal** (1991), Boys of the Lough on **Piper's Broken Finger** (1976), Dave Swarbrick on **Swarbrick 2** and Bob Smith's Ideal Band on **Better Than an Orchestra** (1977).