

Unst Bridal March

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"Unst Bridal March", also known as "Bridal March from Unst" or "Unst Wedding March" is a march from Shetland in G Major or A Major. The parts are played AAB.

This is the tune with which the fiddler led the wedding couple from the church to the bride's house for the party, accompanied in the lead by a 'gunman' who shot a rifle at intervals to frighten evil spirits and insure luck to the gathering. Pat Shuldham-Shaw remarks: "This tune was used to accompany the procession from the Kirk after the marriage service. From almost every house passed on the way there would come a fiddler onto the doorstep who would play this tune as the procession passed". Wedding marches were a common Scandinavian practice, imported to the Shetlands during the Scandinavian colonization period, and Christine Martin (2002) says the march is sometimes still played in Norway. Pat Shuldham-Shaw points out this tune, however, "is really a slowed down version of 'A Rock and a Wee Pickle Tow', a well-known Scottish dance and song tune".

One of the earlier transcriptions is of the playing of John Stickle, Baltasound, Unst, July, 1946 by Pat Shuldham-Shaw.

It was printed in Anderson's **Haand Me Doon da Fiddle** (1979), Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), Martin's **Traditional Scottish Fiddling** (2002), Shuldham-Shaw's 'Folk Music and Dance in Shetland', **Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society** (1947).

It was recorded by John McCutcheon on **Barefoot Boy with Boots On** (1981) (Learned from fiddler Aly Bain), Rodney Miller & David Surette on **New Leaf** (2000), Anderson and Bain on **The Silver Bow**, The Boys of the Lough on **Boys of the Lough** (1973) and Aly Bain and Ale Möller on **Fully Rigged**.