

The Blackbird

The musical score for "The Blackbird" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a G chord and a boxed letter 'A'. The melody starts with a quarter note G, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note A. The second measure contains a D chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The third measure contains an Am7 chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The fourth measure contains a D chord and a quarter note G. The fifth staff starts at measure 4 and continues with a D chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The sixth staff starts at measure 8 and contains a first and second ending bracket. The seventh staff starts at measure 12 and contains a G chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The eighth staff starts at measure 15 and contains an Am7 chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The ninth staff starts at measure 18 and contains a D chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The tenth staff starts at measure 22 and contains a D chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B). The eleventh staff contains a first and second ending bracket. The twelfth staff contains a D chord and a triplet of eighth notes (G, A, B).

Chords: G, D, Am7, G, D, D, Am7, D, G, D, D, A, D, Am7, D, Am7, D, D, Am7, D.

Ornaments: Trills on G and A notes in measures 15, 18, and 22.

Boxed letters: A (measure 1), B (measure 8).

Triplet markings: 3 (measures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24).

First and Second Endings: 1. (measures 8-11), 2. (measures 22-24).

"The Blackbird", in Gaelic "*An Londubh*", also known as "Once on a Morning of Sweet Recreation", "The Bonny Lass of Aberdeen" is an Irish and English slow air or set dance in 4/4 time (Hornpipe) and D Major (Allan, O'Neill/1850) or D Major/Mixolydian (Cranitch, Moylan, Mulvihill, O'Neill/1001) or D Mixolydian (Breathnach, Johnson, Kennedy, Kerr, O'Neill/1915 & Krassen, Raven, & Roche).

The parts are played AB (Moylan) or AAB (Johnson, Kennedy, Raven, Roche) or AABB (Allan, Breathnach, Cranitch, Mulvihill, O'Farrell, O'Neill {4 editions}) or AABCBC (Roche).

"Napoleon Crossing the Rhine" is an American version of the same tune.

The original song from which the instrumental versions take the title was written c. 1707 in praise of the Old Pretender (James Francis Edward Stuart, son of James I), according to Grattan Flood (1906), who found reference to it as early as 1709 and who noted its printing by Allan Ramsay in 1724 in his **Tea Table Miscellany** (Ramsey records that he took the song down from an Irish participant who took part in the 1715 revolt). Other sources date the words from the war of 1688–90.

The blackbird is a harbinger of joy in Irish folklore, unlike the raven, crow, rook or jackdaw, which are all associated with death and misfortune.

The 'Blackbird' name was applied after the Old Pretender, in the 19th century, to Charles Stewart Parnell.

Traditional set dances are done in the faster tempos ("fast jig", "fast hornpipe"). There are five traditional sets: "St. Patrick's Day" (treble jig), "The Blackbird" (hornpipe), "Job of Journeywork" (hornpipe), "The Garden of Daisies" (hornpipe), and "King of the Fairies" (hornpipe). These dances are "set" in the choreography, meaning no teacher can change the choreography, though each school will perform the dance slightly different than the others.

It was printed in Breathnach's **CRÉ 1** (1963), Cotter's **Traditional Irish Tin Whistle Tutor** (1989), Cowdery's **The Melodic Tradition of Ireland** (1990), Cranitch's **Irish Fiddle Book** (1996), Hardebeck's **A Collection of Jigs and Reels, vol. 2** (1921), Harker's **300 Tunes from Mike Rafferty** (2005), Johnson's **Kitchen Musician No. 5; Mostly Irish Airs** (1985), Kennedy's **Fiddlers Tune-Book, vol. 2** (1954), Kerr's **Merry Melodies, vol. 1** (early 1880's), Mallinson's **100 Enduring** (1995), McDermott's **Allan's Irish Fiddler** (c. 1920's), Moylan's **Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra** (1994), Mulvihill's **1st Collection** (1986), O'Farrell's **Pocket Companion, vol. 2** (c. 1806), O'Neill's **O'Neill's Irish Music** (1915), O'Neill's **Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies** (1903), O'Neill's **Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems** (1907). Raven's **English Country Dance Tunes** (1984), Roche's **Collection of Traditional Irish Music, vol. 1** (1912) and Roche's **Collection of Traditional Irish Music, vol. 2** (1912).

It was recorded by James Byrne on **The Road to Glenlough**, John Doherty on **Pedlar's Pack**, Joe Burke, Andy McGann & Felix Dolan on **A Tribute to Michael Coleman**, Michael Coleman on **The Heyday of Michael Coleman** (1973), Martin Byrnes on **Dance Across the Sea: Dances and Airs from the Celtic Highlands** (1990), The Chieftains on **The Celtic Harp** (1993), Cathal McConnell & Len Graham on **For the Sake of Old Decency** (1993), Denis Murphy on **The Star Above the Garter**, Duck Baker on **Irish Reels, Jigs, Airs and Hornpipes** (1990), Paddy Glackin & Robbie Hannan on **The Whirlwind** (1995), Andy McGann, Joe Burke & Felix Dolan on **A Tribute to Michael Coleman** (1966) and others.