

# Neil Gow's Wife

Daniel McLaren

Am Em Am Em

4 1. Am Em Am 2. Am Em Am C

7 G C Am

10 Em D Am G Am Em

13 Am G Am

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"Niel Gow's Wife" is also known as "Athole Brose", "Loch Erroch Side", "Mr. MacDonald of Staffa's Strathspey", "Niel Gow's Second Wife" and "The Watchmaker" is a Scottish strathspey in G Minor or A Minor. The parts are played AB, AAB or AA'BB.

Under the title "Mr. MacDonald of Staffa's Strathspey" the tune is earliest credited to Daniel McLaren of Edinburgh, a native of Taymouth, Perthshire, who published it in 1794 (unfortunately, little is known of him). Gow and sons published the tune as "Niel Gow's Wife" in their **Complete Repository, Book 2** (1802) with composer credits to Inver, Perthshire, fiddler-composer Niel Gow (1727-1807). Still later, in MacDonald's **The Skye Collection** (1887), it is credited to Duncan MacIntyre. The title has been altered to insert the word "Second" to "Niel Gow's Wife" to accommodate the apocryphal story of his fiddle being the famous fiddler-composer's 'second wife' in his affections. Niel did, however, have two wives, the first of whom, Margaret Wiseman, bore him five sons; his second, Margaret Urquhart, had no children. The association of instrument and intimate bond has been made with other fiddlers as well and stems from the old saying that the minstrel's 'second wife' was his harp. Donal Hickey, in his 1999 book on *Sliabh Luachra* musicians **Stone Mad for Music**, writes: "Pádraig (O'Keeffe) {1887-1963} remained single and he used to call the fiddle 'the missus', declaring that it gave no bit of trouble at all. He would say 'Just one stroke across the belly and she purrs'."

It was printed by Gow's **Complete Repository, Book 2** (1802), Surenne's **Dance Music of Scotland** (1852), Kerr's **Merry Melodies, vol. 1** (c. 1875), Ryan's **Mammoth Collection** (1883), James Stewart-Robertson's **The Athole Collection** (1884), MacDonald's **The Skye Collection** (1887), Honeyman's Strathspey, **Reel and Hornpipe Tutor** (1898), Cole's **1000 Fiddle Tunes** (1940), Williamson's **English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Fiddle Tunes** (1976), Feldman & O'Doherty's **Northern Fiddler** (1979), Carlin's **The Gow Collection** (1986).

It was recorded by Alasdair Fraser, Natalie Haas, Danny O'Donnell, Oisín McAuley, Patrick Street and others.