

Manx Notes 160 (2013)

“THE HARP OF MONA SHOULD BE HEARD”

THE ADVERTISEMENT FROM *MONA MELODIES* (1820)

ADVERTISEMENT

In offering to the Public, a Selection of Original Manks Airs, newly arranged, with appropriate Symphonies and Accompaniments, it appears necessary that the Authors should premise a few observations, explanatory of the motives if their undertaking, and of the difficulties attending its execution. They are well aware of the unfavorable circumstances, under which production appears, that is modelled upon the Lyrical effusions of a Bard, whose genius has conferred immortality upon the once forgotten melodies of his native country. But, however hazardous the adventure they have embarked in, they beg to plead in their defence, firstly;—the Illustrious and Noble Patronage which has been so literally extended to them;—particularly by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, to whom they have the honor of dedicating the result of their labors;—and secondly,—a multitude of precedents. Not to mention India and Hindostan,* even Ireland, Scotland and Wales have successively charmed the Public by the pathos and simplicity of their National Airs, and it is at least but fair, that the harp of mona should be heard at the same tribunal. It has lain indeed, long neglected among the wild recesses of her mountains; and, if we may believe the romantic traditions of her peasantry, none but “Fairy” hands have woke the music of its strings: it has vibrated only amongst her rocky solitudes! It is hoped therefore, that an attempt to rescue from oblivion, and to introduce to public acquaintance, these Ancient Melodies, may meet with pardon on the score of its design, and with encouragement on account of its novelty. With respect to the difficulties which the Authors have had to encounter in preparing these Airs for Publication, they have certainly been many, and after all, will form perhaps, their best claim upon general indulgence.

It has been observed, that the Manks Dialect can scarcely be considered a written language; the observation is still more applicable to the Insular Music. Written notes are a species of fetters, with which so wild and unpolished a Muse appears to have been altogether unacquainted. It has been matter of considerable labor therefore, and discrimination, to transcribe, in the first place these oral Melodies, (if we may be allowed the term;) and afterwards to harmonize them. The authors were greatly assisted in their researches, the fruits of which are respectfully submitted to the Public, by one or two Gentleman of the Island; whose active zeal, as amateurs, furnished them with the Airs of some of these Melodies; and who are requested to accept the Authors, thanks for their valuable services. In conclusion, it is perhaps

* See the “Hebrew” and the “Indian” Melodies.

unnecessary to add, that the words, adapted to the original airs, are entirely new; as the subjects of the Manks Ballads were not esteemed to be of sufficient general interest to warrant their translation.

The Authors are at a loss how to return their adequate acknowledgements to their numerous Illustrious, Noble and Distinguished Subscribers, but they are entirely sensible of the unmerited support which they have thus received from all their patrons and friends and beg leave most gratefully to express their thanks.

London 30th May 1820.

Source: John Barrow, “Advertisement,” *The Mona Melodies* (London: Mitchell’s Musical Library & Instrument Warehouses, n.d. [but 1820]) 2.



The prospectus for *Mona Melodies* mentioned that “The “Mona Melodies’ will be published in the same manner, and of the same size as the Irish Melodies, in one Volume [...].”¹ The “Irish Melodies” is Thomas Moore’s *The Songs of Ireland*, first published in 1801.² Barrow’s “Advertisement” mentioned Barrow’s reason for publishing his *Mona Melodies*:

Not to mention India and Hindostan,* even Ireland, Scotland and Wales have successively charmed the Public by the pathos and simplicity of their National Airs, and it is at least but fair, that the harp of MONA should be heard at the same tribunal.³

The footnote * reads: “See the ‘Hebrew’ and the ‘Indian’ Melodies.” These two are George Gordon Byron’s *Hebrew Melodies* (1815),⁴ and, earlier, Charles Edward Horn’s *Indian Melodies* (1813).⁵ The reference to “Hindostan” likely refers to William Hamilton Bird’s *The Oriental Miscellany: Being a Collection of the Most Favorite Airs*

¹ Anon, “Proposals for publishing by Subscription [...] The Mona Melodies,” *The Manks Advertiser* 27 January 1820. For further on *Mona Melodies*, Stephen Miller, “The *Mona Melodies* are now published and ready for delivery: A Bibliographical Note on *Mona Melodies* (1820),” *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* xi.4 (2007 [for 2003–05]).

² Thomas Moore, *The Songs of Ireland, including the Most Favourite of Moore’s Irish Melodies* (London: Boosey, 1801).

³ John Barrow, “Advertisement,” *The Mona Melodies* (London: Mitchell’s Musical Library & Instrument Warehouses, n.d. [but 1820]).

⁴ George Gordon Byron, *Hebrew Melodies* (London: John Murray, 1815).

⁵ Charles Edward Horn, *Indian Melodies: Arranged for the Voice and Piano Forte as Songs, Duets & Glee*s (London: J. Power, 1813).

of *Hindustan* (circa 1805).⁶ It is clear that *Mona Melodies* was one of many other similar publications, destined for the parlour and exploiting the vogue for National Airs—“cultural transnationalism” in the words of Karen Tongson.⁷

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⁶ William Hamilton Bird, *The Oriental Miscellany: Being a Collection of the Most Favorite Airs of Hindostan* (Edinburgh: Gow & Shepherd, n.d. [circa 1805]).

⁷ Karen Tongson, “The Cultural Transnationalism of Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies*,” *repercussions* Spring (2001).