



School of Piping

“Cullen Bay”

Pipe Tune Reference Book



Introduction: We are introducing a new series of learning for anyone interested in improving as a musician. This series will focus on learning tunes from the ground up.

We begin with a nice 5/4 march "Cullen Bay" which can be an essential part of any piper's repertoire. Welcome to your new start to piping.

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Cullen Bay

MARCH 5/4

I. Duncan - Shotts

The image displays a musical score for the march "Cullen Bay" in 5/4 time. The score is written on two staves in treble clef. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 16 measures of music. The second staff contains 16 measures of music, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The key signature is one flat (B-flat).

Pulse and Phrasing

Let's discuss the notion of pulsing. If pulses form the words of our music, then phrases become the sentences and the part is the paragraph. Thus, each part of music will be based on putting the pulses into phrases in a rhythmic fashion to make sense of the story being told in every tune. The object here is simple – with a solid knowledge of pulsing you will be able to play a tune rhythmically, with the added advantage of highlighting the true underlining meaning of a tune hidden in the phrasing.

The Concept. The “sentences” of a tune are in the phrases and all marches, regardless of time signature can be subdivided into 1 or 2 bar phrases. If we give these phrases alphabetic symbols **A**, **B**, etc, then the traditional structure of a common march looks like:

| A | | B | | A | | C |

The **A** phrase often repeats itself. Some refer to this structure as being “question and answer”. Where the **A** phrase is the question with the **B** and **C** phrases being the answers. Often the **C** phrase is referred to as the “summary” phrase in the part. Its importance cannot be overlooked as it is most likely repeated at the end of every part throughout the tune.

Let's pulse and phrase parts 1 and 2 of our march.

Cullen Bay

MARCH 5/4 I. Duncan - Shotts

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the march 'Cullen Bay' in 5/4 time. The first staff is annotated with red brackets and green vertical lines. The brackets are labeled 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'A' from left to right. The green lines are placed at the beginning of each phrase. The second staff is also annotated with red brackets labeled 'A', 'B', 'A', and 'C' from left to right.

Notice the “*phrase braces*” I have inserted. In addition, “*pulse lines*” have been inserted in the first line only to give you a feel for the tune. You'll need to put the phrase braces and pulse lines in part 2 above.

Steps:

- 1) Play the first phrase or | **A** | phrase over and over again until you can take your eyes off the music.
- 2) Proceed to the second or | **B** | phrase and do likewise.
- 3) When comfortable, play both phrases from memory.
- 4) Proceed to the second or | **C** | phrase.
- 5) When comfortable, play all three phrases from memory.
- 6) Repeat this process with the remaining parts.

ALAP / ASAP / Pulsing

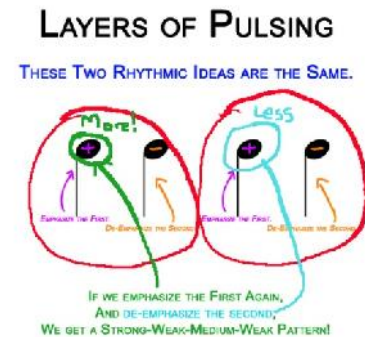
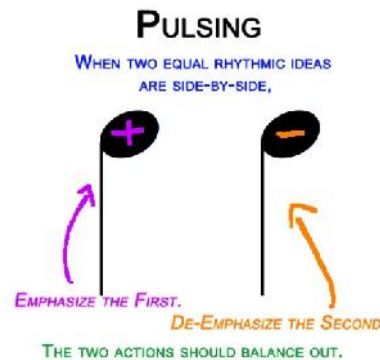
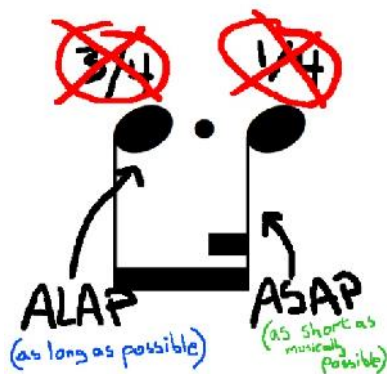
“As-Long-As-Possible” / “As-Short-As-Possible” Basics. This idea deals specifically with the "dot-cut" rhythm that we frequently find in bagpipe music. Bagpipers, will not *proportionally divide* a dot-cut rhythm. Instead, a good piper will stretch the dotted note as long as musically possible, and resultantly the cut note will be played as short as musically possible. That, of course, is where the acronyms of "ALAP" and "ASAP" come from. This stretching of the rules simulates an increased volume on the dotted note, thus providing an increased dynamic range to the rhythm.

Fusing ASAP Notes to Embellishments. When you look closely, the "ASAP" concept is also important in playing good embellishments. A good embellishment will contain a certain set of steps played accurately and evenly. But, in order for the embellishment to fit into the tune that you're playing, these even steps will have to be played quickly and efficiently. Just how quick should the steps be? In the vast majority of embellishments, the steps should be played as short as musically possible.

So, let's say we have a cut (ASAP) note leading into a doubling. That will mean that the cut note and the steps of the embellishment will all be the same length, and they will generate a "fused" effect. It's an easy enough concept to understand, but it is tricky to execute.

Pulsing - Expression and Phrasing on a Larger Scale. *Expand and contract the length of beats to enhance the dynamic quality of bars and phrases.* Pulsing focuses on building dynamic flavor *across* two or more beats. In order to produce expressive phrases, pipers will often literally extend the length of certain beats, and condense others. This *simulation of volume changes* is what provides that dynamic flavor to our music. Pulsing and the degree of pulsing, is open-ended, and completely up to the performer.

Pulsing deals with the idea that somehow we need to dynamically show the important beats within a phrase. It's going to deal with the skill of bending and stretching the expectations of rhythm to simulate a diverse dynamic range during a phrase. In fact, the idea of pulsing is exactly what generates the idea of the "heavy left foot," and the idea of "Strong, Weak, Medium, Weak."



Embellishments

Embellishments. Embellishments are played distinctly and with considerable conviction. They should be consistent, both technically and musically and should always be played in context with the music.

Think About and Play Each Embellishment in Steps.

Each embellishment has a set list of steps (usually two or three) that, when executed properly, produce the desired sound and effect.

Always Obey the Two Cardinal Rules of All Embellishments:

1. Each step must be played accurately.
2. Each step must be played the same length (with few exceptions).

Let's get started...

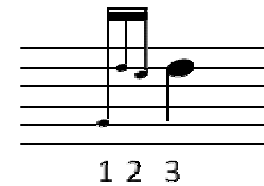
1. "Throw on D" or "D Throw": It is important to note that there are two different methods of playing the D Throw. I teach the "light" method to new students as I generally find it more musical and less complicated for a beginner.

The squabble. Everyone has their opinion. Heavy or light? "I play this", "I was taught that", "this is better" etc.. Unless you are competing, (where unison is paramount) it is just not a big deal. A good piper will be able to play the D Throw either way, and will utilize whichever method he or she finds to be the most musical, in any situation. Other than this... walk away from anyone willing to argue D Throws.

"Light" D Throw: Is most often played in piobaireachd and light music (strathspey, etc.).

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

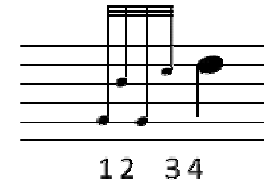
- 1) Play Low G
- 2) Open to D
- 3) Grace note D (tap your index finger)
- 4) Open the chanter to D



"Heavy" D Throw : Produces a very different and "heavy" sounding D-Throw which is played in most of the music we play.

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

- 1) Play LG
- 2) Play D Gracenote on LG
- 3) Play C
- 4) Play D



Embellishments

2. Doublings: Doublings are the most common type of embellishment. A doubling produces two rapid sounds (**TEE-DEE**). To create these sounds, doublings each have two steps. (Downbeat/Accent goes on: Step 1)

B Doublings

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

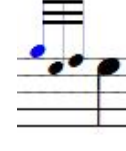
1. Play G Gracenote to B.
2. Play D Gracenote on B.



E Doublings

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

1. Play HG Gracenote to E.
2. Play F Gracenote on E.



C Doublings

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

1. Play HG Gracenote to C.
2. Play D Gracenote on C.



High A Doublings

Steps: Start on (come from) any note.

1. Play HA.
2. Play HG strike on HA.



Note: Half Doublings. Something to realize about Doublings when the note you are starting on (coming from) is High G or High A. Notice that you will not be able to play a High G Gracenote. This tune has two half doublings.

You can initially find them in the 3rd Measure of Part 1 (High A to E).

Half Doubling on E

Steps: Start on High A.

1. Play E.
2. Play G Gracenote on E.



Pulsing/Rhythm: 1-2 or TEE-DEE . Play it over and over until this rhythm becomes natural and you're able to duplicate it consistently.

3. Birls: The Birl (Low A and G Gracenote) has three steps, and thus produces three sounds (1-2-3-). If starting from Low A the birl becomes a two step embellishment (1-2). For the purpose of this tune, we are coming from an Low A and will produce two sounds. Downbeat/Accent goes on: Step 1.

Steps: Start on Low A.

- 1) Play Low G Strike to Low A.
- 2) Play Low G Strike on Low A.



Pulsing/Rhythm: 1-2 . Play it over and over until this rhythm becomes natural and you're able to duplicate it consistently.

Areas of Attention

Part 1

1st Measure

Fuse the B into the C Doubling
ALAP on all dotted notes

2nd Measure

Fuse the D into the E Doubling
Triplet
Do not over cut the D (8th note)
F is on the upbeat

3rd Measure

Easy on the 8th notes – do not rush
Triplet
Do not over cut the D (8th note)
ALAP E is on the upbeat
Fuse the D into the C Doubling

4th Measure

Fuse the B into the C Doubling
ALAP on all dotted notes

Part 2

1st Measure

Easy on the 8th notes – do not rush
Triplet
Do not clip the 8th notes
Dotted notes are on the upbeat

2nd Measure

Easy on the 8th notes – do not rush
Triplets
Do not clip the 8th notes
Dotted notes are on the upbeat

3rd Measure

Easy on the 8th notes – do not rush
Triplets
Do not clip the 8th notes
Dotted notes are on the upbeat

4th Measure

Fuse the B into the C Doubling
ALAP on all dotted notes

Tune killers:



1. Crossing Noise = poor scale technique (Amateur)
2. Lacks Expression = poor ALAP / ASAP; poor control



Watch out for Crossing Noise!



Practice and Prepare

What do you need to do....

Identify the beats. Grab a pencil and draw an arrow pointing to the exact note that is played on each beat (Hint, they are already in blue). Individual Gracenotes are played on the beat, as is the first Gracenote of each doubling. The low G of a D-throw will be played on the beat for this tune as well.

Tap and sing. After reading the music, marking the beats, and identifying the phrases, try to tap and/or sing the tune. This can help uncover the melodic and rhythmic line of the tune - and helps get the tune in your head before you try it on the chanter.

Slow to start. When learning a tune, play slowly and maintain control. Use a metronome. Control first, then speed. The perfect tempo is where you play every note accurately, have crisp clean transitions, correct technique and play rhythms accurately. Tempo must be consistent.

Maximize the dot and cut notes. Hold dotted notes As-Long-As-Possible (ALAP) and the cut notes As-Short-As-Possible (ASAP). Brilliant march playing requires you to maximize the contrast between the dot and cut notes. An otherwise a tune will sound boring and sloppy. Push it, to emphasize a particular note, hold it longer. As a general rule, you will want to emphasize the first note of each two bar phrase - that means hold the note longer. (If the first note of a phrase is a short note, emphasize the first long note of the phrase.)

The Big Doubling. The trick is to make doublings bigger (i.e., separate the two Gracenotes). This emphasizes the note without actually holding it.

Yes, you have to march. Marching is an important part of any well-presented performance. Simply walk as you would normally, keeping time with your playing tempo. Use longer steps when playing slower tempos; shorter steps for faster tempos. Walk normal. Don't stomp.

Challenge yourself. Keep it controlled, steady, and smooth. No chokes, no mistakes, no changes in tempo, no extreme variations in your style of expression.

The last detail. Practice the hard stuff. Every tune has easier/difficult parts. If you stumble at the same difficult spot each time you play, grab your pencil and circle it. Identify areas for more focused practice. Don't just play the tune over and over. Make a list of your biggest weaknesses in the tune (e.g., birds from B, E doublings) and review exercises to improve on them. You will never improve on something by avoiding it.

Only regular practice will lead you to gradually improve your consistency and control. Consistency builds confidence. Finally, know when to stop talking about piping and start piping.