

S'Feayr yn Oie (Cold is the Night)

By Annie Kissack

Background:

Composed by Annie Kissack, this song was written about the shepherds for a Bunscoil Ghaelgagh Christmas nativity. She later adapted it for her Gaelic choir Caarjyn Coidjagh by incorporating two Manx folk melodies - 'Step Dance' and 'Hi Juan Jiggison' and by adding the lyrics of traditional song 'Graih my Chree' (Love of my Heart). This latter verse, which tells of lost or unrequited love, brings a more ambiguous interpretation to the theme of waiting and keeping watch...

Translation:

1. Cold is the night and me keeping watch...
and I am tired
2. Dark is the night...
and I am tired
3. Long is the night...
and I am tired
4. *choral break*
5. Love of my heart, oh! Are you with me?
Love of my heart, are you awake?
And if I'll not get my own heart's love with me,
Then I must die bereft of her.

Verse 5 above is based on the translation of 'Graih my Chree' from *Manx Ballads and Music*. See the final song in *Coraa* for another modern interpretation of the traditional song - p. 45.

CD 17 (Manx Gaelic pronunciation)

CD 18 (Song in Manx)

Lyrics only p. 60

Warm-ups and related Exercises:

- Some singers might find it difficult to accurately pitch the major 6th interval on bar 5-6. This exercise can help with the intonation:

Performance guidance:

The composer states that voices can be male or female; Voice 1 has the main melody in verse 1 and 2, but it passes to Voice 3 in verse 3.

Verse 4 provides a break from the main melody where two Manx traditional tunes are juxtaposed. You can sing any sound you like but a rounded 'aw' sound works well. The lyrics to verse 5 are optional.

The song should be performed in a relaxed style and its harmonic simplicity opens up opportunities for improvisation. The composer suggests the harmonies could be enriched further—voices 2 & 3 can move freely within the chord and swap notes, or a vocal or instrumental drone may work in some verses.

Chords:

Fact-file:

- Bob Carswell has also written a selection of Gaelic songs concerning the Nativity which are suitable for younger children. They are featured in *Arraneyn sy' Gaelg*, 1996.
- 'Step Dance' (or Poagey dy Reenaghyn—A Pocket of Pins) and 'Hi Juan Jiggison' (or Yn Unnysup) were both collected by Dr Clague from blind singer Tom Kermode in 1896.

Further reading and listening:

Manx Ballads and Music, AW Moore, ed. 1896.

CDs *Cronnane 2000*, *Carval Creneash 2004*, *Skellyn 2008* - all by Caarjyn Coidjagh.

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Voice 1,
2 & 3

1. S'feayr yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,
2. S'doo yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,

V.1.

S'feayr yn oie, as ta mee skee.
S'doo yn oie, as ta mee skee.

V.2.

S'feayr yn oie, as ta mee skee.
S'doo yn oie, as ta mee skee.

V.3.

S'feayr yn oie, as ta mee skee.
S'doo yn oie, as ta mee skee.

9 All

1. S'feayr yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,
2. S'doo yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,

13

S'feayr yn oie, as ta mee skee.
S'doo yn oie, as ta mee skee.

S'feayr yn oie, as ta mee skee.
S'doo yn oie, as ta mee skee.

17 Voice 3

3.S'liauyr yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,



21

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.



25 Voice 3

S'liauyr yn oie as mee - hene freayll arr - ey,



29

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.

S'liauyr yn oie, as ta mee skee.

33 Verse 4

V.1.

p
Aw - etc

V.2
& 3.

37

41

45

Verse 4

Note from composer: *This is not so much of a verse as a choral break . Two Manx tunes are juxtaposed.
You can sing any sound you like - a rounded 'aw' sound works well.*

49 Verse 5 (Optional)

V.1
Grah my chree, oh vel oo ma - rym?

V.2
Grah my chree, oh vel oo ma - rym?

V.3
Grah my chree, oh vel oo ma - rym?

53

Grah my chree, oh vel uss dooisht?

Grah my chree, oh vel uss dooisht?

Grah my chree, oh vel uss dooisht?

57

Man - nagh noym graih my chree ma - rym,

Man - nagh noym graih my chree ma - rym,

Man - nagh noym graih my chree ma - rym,

61

Shegin dou ged - dyn baase fe - gooish.

Shegin dou ged - dyn baase fe - gooish.

Shegin dou ged - dyn baase fe - gooish.