

FOLK TUNES FROM THE WOMEN

Introduction

At the beginning of 2021, I received an email from a friend asking if I had any of my tunes written out. She was looking for female-composed material to teach to her fiddle group, having realised that everything on her 'possibles' list was written by men.

I immediately contacted a few of my female tune-writing friends to ask if they knew of any collections of tunes by women composers. They all said "no... but there absolutely should be such a thing." Some of them also suggested that in addition to a tune book, there should also be a website... and a series of podcasts... and we all got very excited.

So here it is! A tune book like no other! A book of contemporary folk tunes from 100 female composers based in Britain and Ireland, all from different areas, traditions and backgrounds. Some are successful professional musicians with lots of compositions to their name, others may have only written one tune. All of these composers answered my call to submit material for this *Folk Tunes from the Women* book. We all felt passionately that there was a real need for the book to exist, not only to make our own tunes more visible and accessible, but also to make it easier to learn and champion tunes from other women tune-writers.

This book is a collaborative, co-operative effort. All profits will be pooled and used to set up an ongoing resource to promote female folk composers. I am very grateful to the 'Tunebook Team' of extraordinary women, from different musical traditions, who played through the hundreds of submissions on their various instruments and helped to whittle the amazingly, gratifyingly (and dauntingly) huge number of tunes down to those you now have in your hands.

Although this material is presented collectively, I hope you will get a sense of the individuals involved and the processes and motivations behind our music. Some of these tunes were written in the darkest depths of grief, others are expressions of pure joy. There are stress-relievers, protests, distractions, memorials and meditations. Many tunes were written in gratitude - for life, for health, for friends and family. Some are professional commissions, others were given freely as gifts. Some are for dancing, some for listening. They are for births, deaths and everything between and beyond.

Notes on how to use this book:

Chords

To make the book a more useful tool for teachers and players we wanted as many tunes as possible to have chords to go with them. Some were submitted by the composers and there are a wide range of approaches, ranging from the simplest options to sophisticated chord progressions. Others were added by the 'Tunebook Team', who opted for fairly straightforward chords that should work on a variety of instruments. But these are just a suggestion. Feel free to experiment with your own chord choices! Where the composer feels strongly about the chords, or where the chords suit a particular instrument, we have tried to make this clear.

- Chords in brackets can be missed out if you prefer a simpler arrangement.
- Where there are two chords written e.g. C/E the first is the chord choice, and the second is the bass note (so this would be a C major chord, with an E at the bottom).

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STEVE FISHER'S LAMENT

Composed by Mel Biggs

I found this tune in an old squeezebox that I inherited through The Morris. Steve Fisher was a musician for North Wales Morris sides. I never knew Steve but felt a connection to him through my custodianship of his instrument. I had it restored and was rewarded with this melody.

[illegible]

MARRAM

Composed by Margaret Watchorn

I wrote 'Marram' for my husband Andy after a winter walk on the coast at Embleton, where marram grass binds the dunes together and the skies and sea are ever-changing. A/E drones are all the tune needs to complete it.

Slow air
A/E drones

Part 1

Part 2

7

13

1.

2.

19

25

31

1.

2.

The musical score is written for two parts, Part 1 and Part 2, in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31 indicated at the start of each system. The music is a slow air, characterized by long, sustained notes and a gentle, flowing melody. The drone accompaniment consists of a continuous, low-pitched line that provides a harmonic foundation for the melody. The score includes first and second endings, marked with '1.' and '2.' respectively. The first ending leads back to an earlier section, while the second ending provides a final resolution. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative, reflecting the natural setting described in the text.