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A Parcel of Rogues
Writer/presenter: John Purser
Producer: David McGuinness

Trad: Why Should I be Sad on my Wedding Day
Ronald Leith, carillon
CD Scotland's Music
Linn CKD 008 CD 1 Track 21

John Purser voiceover: This tune is called Why Should I be Sad On My Wedding Day? and on the day the Act and Treaty of Union came into force on the first of May 1707, it was reputedly played on the carillon of St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh as an expression of public contempt.

In order to play a carillon, the carilloner has to wear leather gloves and beat his fists on the keys that operate the levers and wires and the clappers that strike the bells hung above him in a tower. The carilloner of St Giles, I have no doubt, was beating his fists with particular feeling on that day three hundred years ago; and this is Ronald Leith playing Why Should I be Sad On My Wedding Day? equally feelingly. Well 300 years on from that day when the Union of the Parliaments came into force, are we ready for an amicable separation?

Why Should I be Sad On My Wedding Day? Here's why.

Robert Burns: Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation
Ewan MacColl & Peggy Seeger
LP The Jacobite Rebellions
Topic 12T79 Side 1 Track 2

JP: Ewan MacColl singing Robert Burns's incomparable lyrics, accusing the Parcel of Rogues in a Nation not just of greed, but of treason.

When the Act and Treaty of Union between the Scottish and English Parliaments came into force on the 1st of May 1707 it was greeted with dismay by the majority of the people. This being the 300th anniversary, however, we might be far enough away from it to decide whether those who signed it were indeed a parcel of rogues and, in a minute or two, we'll hear music composed by one of those who did sign it.

Some people have put it about that Scotland only came into its own after the Union of the Parliaments. Now, musically speaking, that is utter rubbish. The Union of the Crowns had already robbed us of our Court music and musicians, and the likes of Tobias Hume had also gone south; later John Abell went south, and the Union of the Parliaments drew much of the remaining patronage south also. James Oswald went south, Robert Bremner went south, the Earl of Kellie mostly went south, and this pattern continued through the centuries: Alexander Campbell MacKenzie went south, John Blackwood McEwen went south, Hamish MacCunn went south, William Wallace went south, Erik Chisholm went very south, Iain Hamilton went south, Thea Musgrave went south and, with the exception of Donald Francis Tovey, mostly lesser men came north to run our show: but even though the money and patronage had largely

gone south, Scotland was never left entirely without musical resources, as the lutenist Rob MacKillop points out:

Rob MacKillop: The Scottish lute repertoire stems a period of this hundred years between losing the crown and losing the parliament: a period when we fell back on our own resources. The court had had the influence from abroad from various countries: had musicians coming from abroad and performing at the court and Scottish musicians hearing these people and being influenced by them and later on we had the Italian invasion in the 18th century, and it's in between this period where we started looking at ourselves – and really what is this beautiful music we hear around us and let's write it down and arrange it. There are no other collections of manuscripts where you see this development of self-consciousness about what Scottish music is better than in the lute manuscripts.

JP: Around 1695, shortly before the Union of the Parliaments, a large and fascinating lute manuscript was put together in Scotland. It's called the Balcarres manuscript and it shows that re-engaging with Scotland's native musical idioms didn't leave us looking backwards, but led to experiment and innovation.

Rob MacKillop: With Balcarres we're moving into the baroque and early classical period where the bass line throughout Europe was the fashion: it had a very independent bass line which had a functional purpose. It was there to outline harmonies and so on. In Balcarres we see an incredible development of the bass line, experimental. People were doing very strange things in that manuscript.

Trad (Balcarres Lute Book, c.1700) arr MacKillop:
I Love My Love in Secret
Rob MacKillop, lute
CD The Healing
Greentrax CDTRAX227 Track 3

Rob McKillop voiceover: We have, I Love My Love In Secret – one of my favourite pieces from that manuscript. It starts off with the bass on the 5th note of the chord, rising to the flattened 7th which is unheard of and then dropping all the way down to the root. Now you'll never find a more Scottish bass line than that. It it's just incredible – I've never seen a bass line like that in any pieces from that period.

JP: I Love My Love in Secret from the Balcarres manuscript of 1695. Just a couple of years later, the Scots were trying to expand their trade by setting up a colony on the Panama isthmus – the Darien colony. It ended up being a terrible and costly failure and partly led to the accepting of the Union of the Parliaments.

JP Voice-over: But this next music was composed before the collapse and the Union and, like the Balcarres manuscript, it too is a remarkable experiment, though of a very different sort.

John Clerk of Penicuik: Leo Scotiae Irritatus
Catherine Bott, soprano, Concerto Caledonia
CD The Lion of Scotland
Hyperion CDA 67007 Track 2

JP voiceover: This is Leo Scotiae Irritatus – the Lion of Scotland angered, and its anger is against the English and Spanish who were helping to wreck Scotland's infant colony in Darien on the Panama isthmus. History's a funny thing. The composer of this music, ranting against the English and Spanish and against Fortune herself for thwarting the Scots, ended up being a signatory to the Act and Treaty of Union. His name was John Clerk of Penicuik, but what this cantata tells you, is that Clerk was no Unionist at heart, and no doubt, at heart he too was sad, if not quite furious, on that wedding day . . . .

JP: This is an extraordinary piece of music. When I was putting together an edition of it, I was checking the number of bars in the score with the number of bars in the parts. I thought I must have missed a bar out here and there, because the whole first section was in multiples of eleven bars. This is almost unheard of in music. But no, it was all in multiples of eleven.

It turned out that this was symbolic. The Scots were like the children of Israel. Twelve tribes, twelve clans, headed for the Promised Land of Darien. So why not twelve-bar units, huh? Hah-ha – because only eleven tribes were given land. The twelfth tribe was the priestly tribe, and the priests were distributed amongst the others.

The next section takes all this symbolism even further. The singer protests to Fortune that the Scots are going to bring righteousness, law, religion, justice and equity to the Promised Land, the New World. Our composer, Clerk, was a lawyer. So he places all this justice, law and equity in the perfect cube of the Holy of Holies which housed the laws of Moses.

How? Simple. The section is twenty-seven bars long – three by three by three – a perfect cube. Unfortunately, you can hear Fortune's fickle wheel going round and round underneath all this, repeating itself in the bass line. We hadn't a hope in hell . . .

John Clerk of Penicuik: Leo Scotiae Irritatus
Catherine Bott, soprano, Concerto Caledonia
CD The Lion of Scotland
Hyperion CDA 67007 Track 2

JP: Catherine Bott and Concerto Caledonia, bemoaning the troubles of the Scots colony in Darien in Panama. Scotland lost Darien in 1700, but, in a manner of speaking, we got it back. Here's how. We got it back in 1904 with the help of the USA and President Teddy Roosevelt, who famously boasted "I took Panama". It was more than a joke. He'd secured the rights to build and control the Panama Canal connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific. The Scottish Darien scheme had much the same ambition in attempting to take control of part of the Panama isthmus so that the Scots could trade between the Atlantic and Pacific. But the Scots' Darien scheme failed, the colony was abandoned and many were lost in shipwreck as they left for Scotland.

One who survived, however, was the Reverend Stobo, and Teddy Roosevelt was a direct descendant of Stobo's - and knew it. I spoke to Teddy Roosevelt's great-grandson, who said that his great-grandfather was indeed fully aware of his Scottish ancestry and specifically of the Reverend Stobo, and was proud of the connection. So, albeit in a tenuous way, a thread of Scottish pride, tenacity and ambition finally won through! With whom are we united? The United Kingdom or The United States? Hm?

Trad: The Lament for The Union
Jack Lee, pipes
BBC recording

JP Voice-over: This is the Lament for the Union. We don't know who wrote it, but there's really only one Union it can be lamenting and that's the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments in 1707.

JP: Part of the Lament for the Union, played by Jack Lee. Of course economic and colonial mismanagement were not peculiar to Scotland. The song For Our Lang Biding Here is the lament of two Scots who've lost all their money in the 1720 South Sea Bubble scandal – a financial disgrace on the London Stock market of a sort from which we are not yet exempt…

Trad: For Our Lang Biding Here
Archie Fisher
LP The Fisher Family
Topic 12T137 Side 1 Track 5

JP: Archie Fisher. The Act and Treaty of Union haunt us still, but for some reason quite beyond my comprehension, there are those who wish to equate independence with separation - two totally different concepts. Dick Gaughan has as good a proposal as you'll get. It's sung here by Mary Black:

"Let the love of our land's sacred rights
To the love of our people succeed
Let friendship and honour unite
And flourish on both sides the Tweed."

I leave you with that and the Reverend Jack Drummond.

Dick Gaughan: Both Sides the Tweed
Mary Black
CD Mary Black Collected
DARA CD010 Track 6

Burns: Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation
Rev. Jack Drummond
CD Bill Drummond - The Man
Creation CRECD014 Track 11