

BAGPIPE TUTORIALS

A FREE BAGPIPE TUTORIAL

Brought to you by Pipe Major Bill Robertson of
www.Bagpipe-Tutorials.com

STRATHSPEYS

The Marquis of Huntly
The Shepherd's Crook

BILLS SUGGESTIONS:

- ⇒ Print the music sheet and read it.

- ⇒ Listen to the audio files and watch the video files, before starting to practice. Become familiar with some of the movements.

- ⇒ All the files are numbered in the order that I suggest that you listen to or preview them
- ⇒

- ⇒ If you have any queries please contact Bill via his [CONTACT](#) page at Bagpipe Tutorials.

- ⇒ Enjoy the tutorial and happy playing.

All the media in this download are from Bill's tutorials. For more information about Bill's tutorials please see www.bagpipe-tutorials.com

STRATHSPEY TUTORIALS

1. Strathspeys are a form of highland dancing written in Common 4/4 time with four pulses to the bar.

2. The Rhythm needs much lift or spring akin to the dance. This kind of snap is achieved by marked contrast between the long and short notes without being too jerky.

The longer notes (dotted eighth notes) are longer than written, and the shorter notes (sixteenth notes) much shorter, although not hacked. Where sixteenth notes follow one another a slight relaxation is necessary on the first of these to assist clarity like we had in the 2/4 marches. A similar relaxation should be considered when the short note is of a single interval and needs that touch extra clarity on such a weak interval, yet not seemingly at the expense of the long note.

3. The regular timing of four pulses in the bar must be maintained throughout strathspeys with a degree of accent particularly on the first pulse of each bar. Even pipers of note some times fail to maintain the controlled regular four pulses to the bar by occasionally dropping off longer notes a shade too soon on to the next pulse. That is why when beating time to keep beating four to the bar. Beating time with a spring-like, or bouncing, action akin to the dance on downbeats provides a natural element of lift and control.

The following extract is from the first part The Marquis of Huntly a basic lighter strathspey. The tune is in full in the Extra Tunes. Apply the principles in above and in what follows in this section in all strathspeys, the lighter ones and the heavier ones. Tempos might vary.

In this extract play slowly for some time at first about 60 BPM (later tempo would be about 120BPM).

Endeavour to maintain the strathspey rhythm, observing and playing dotted notes longer than written and the shorter notes shorter, yet clearly without being too jerky. The single quarter notes provide a natural accent when playing the full value of the pulse each time.

The theoretical rhythm of strathspeys is “strong, weak, medium, weak” every four pulse bar, although I tend to think that “strong, medium, medium, medium” might be more appropriate, so I will use the latter – S, M, M, M as a guide in the extract because the “medium” on the fourth pulse indicates better control, as some pipers tend to neglect that pulse. Listen to that on CD/DVD audio, follow and disregard the S, W, M, W, if you wish and replace with that above. The sign * is a reminder of slight relaxation on the “E” leading to the triplet in the fourth bar. See triplets at foot of page. After that triplet low “A”• good duration in that fourth bar make sure the “D”# has its full pulse value before the full strike doubling spot on the next pulsed “D”. Other parts in Extra tunes.

S M M M * . #

Triplets or triplings

1, 2, 3- 1, 2, 3-
U U

Refer audio.

All three notes of the triplet must be sounded clearly. Count of 1, 2, 3-, third note longest, “Up” enough before next pulse.

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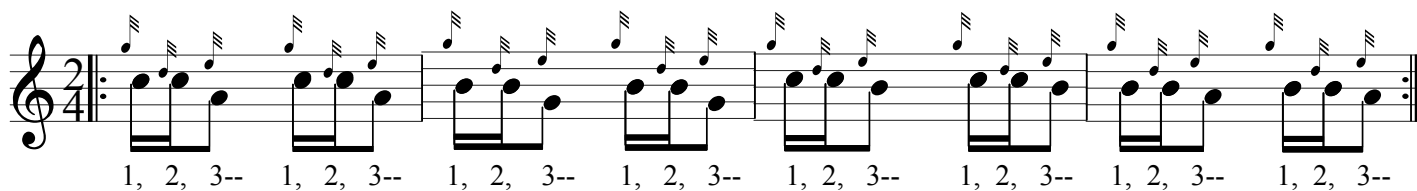
Strathspey exercises

The following bottom hand movements occur often in strathspeys, more often in the heavier ones.

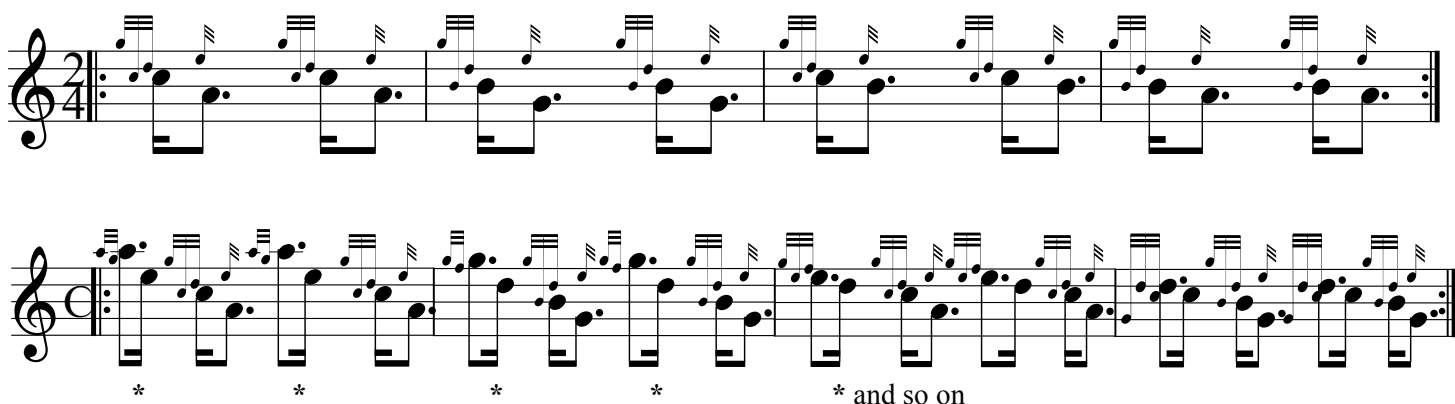


Illustration only

The movement must have the element of a very distinct doubling. At first the doubling must be played well separated on the first of the two melody notes which is quite short and off to the longer lower second note with an “E” grace note on it. You can see that the doubling in exercise below that doublings are **written in the “open” fashion with a count of 1, 2, 3--**, sounding like an open tripling. **Tempo at about 36 BPM for now.** Repeat in that fashion really often to instil in to the brain. **Increase tempo slightly later.** Even accomplished pipers can benefit from periodic similar practice of this, or more like the quicker next step, to preserve good execution. **Listen to links relevant on all this to find out.**



The next two steps below are to play the movement a bit faster, yet retaining the open doubling style, and shorter first note (not clipped) to longer lower dotted note - Tempo about 60 BPM. Play the 2/4 line at first with relaxed first sixteenth notes for good clarity of doublings. *Progressively in that line, play with shorter first notes, while retaining the openness/clarity of the doubling for a fast 1, 2, 3-- pulsed rhythm to longer dotted lower note at about 96 BPM.* In the second C line *although dwelling well on the first dotted notes endeavour to relax very slightly on the leading-in sixteenth note* to the movement, and retain openness of the doublings when executing more rapidly at 96 BPM. The dotted low “As” and low “Gs” must have their full relative duration.* Refer audio link and video clip.



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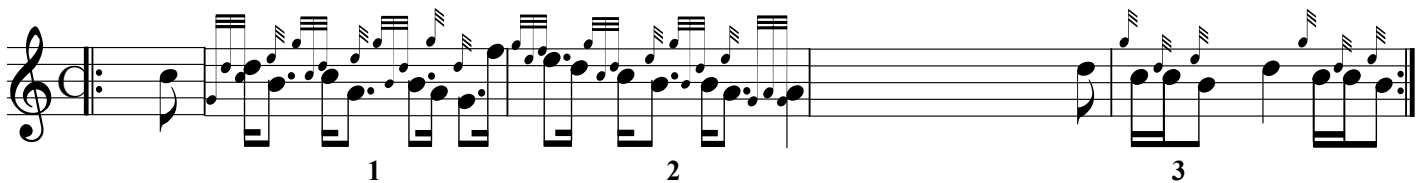


* *
*Later Pipe Majors A. MacDonald & R. Kilgour
Scots Guards pipers in strathspey step of Argyll broadswords dance.

The heavier strathspey

These strathspeys are of four or more parts are more demanding usually, and played at a slightly steadier tempo than lighter strathspeys. Again, always remember the basic controlled four pulses to the bar.

Before attempting the tune “The Shepherd’s Crook”, exercises from extracts of the tune should be helpful as follows:



1. First bar only from the upbeat leading in note “C” play a reasonably strong throw on “D” akin to the double sound required for “C” etc., then release smartly from that “D” to the longer “B” with “E” grace note, methodically at first and quicken.

On the third pulse, normal doubling on long duration “B”, then execute a clear “G” grace note on the short (not too clipped) low “A” to next pulse low “G” with its “D” grace note as for a clean tachum, and hold. **Repeat** as necessary each regular four pulses steadily, and quicken later. **Refer audio link as usual for all these.**

2. Second bar only practise for some time methodically a proper clear doubling on strong first pulse “E” from “F”. The doubling from the very slightly relaxed “D” to “C” must have a clear “G” grace note on the “C” before playing the “D” grace note. Practise that doubling deliberately as in **3** above, then quicken still with the good double sound. Make sure of the longer duration in second and third pulses on the dotted “B and low “A” without carelessness. The birl must be spot on its pulse, not soon. You may combine these first two bars later - the last two bars of 1st part.

The first part of The Shepherd’s Crook



Suggested tempos are about 84 BPM at first, then 116 to 120 BPM. Please attend to the strong accents and certain medium ones such as dotted notes and birl in the fourth bar. What else? – Good correct execution/technique.

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The Shepherd's Crook continued

The second part follows as a test. After playing through a few times as musically and technically as you can, record your own playing, or try to recollect how you played, to find out how well you did in comparison with the CD/DVD audio demonstrations. Beat time. Please avoid reading the script under the music until after this exercise.

Answers

In the above the “Es” and high “As” should sing out. The second time through with the variation last two bars should have the spring of the dance really well on the dotted high “As” (good doublings between) in the second last bar until it “hurts”. The last three pulses from the dotted “F” should have slightly relaxed short “E”* and “C”* with a really solid grip to “E” for clarity and rhythmical effect. Full pulse high “A”• leading to the third part to follow.

Third and fourth parts Shepherd's Crook

Strathspey

Similar principles apply to these two parts as for the first and second parts. Remember good value on all dotted low “As”, quarter note low “As”, and feel on the triplet “D” in the second last bar of the third part. Did you really have all those high “As” stretched out/controlled, especially on grips? **Maintain momentum and spirit of the dance.**

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