

AULD REIKIE

Poems of Robert Fergusson

For Medium Low Voice and Piano

by
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NOTES

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) was born in Edinburgh and educated at St. Andrew's University, Scotland, at a time when the Scots dialect was held in little regard by poets. Fergusson took his native dialect and fashioned it into a vibrant literary language, demonstrating that colloquial Scots could be turned into a powerful poetic medium. Combining his University learning with his knowledge of common life, Fergusson wrote verse in which a Latin phrase could fit comfortably with homely Scottish expressions. Fergusson's work had a profound influence on Robert Burns.

Fergusson's verse is full of keen, and sometimes critical, observations of 18th century Edinburgh, from his disgust at the drunken parties that were held on the very spot of public executions to his wry bemusement with the simple vanity of mankind. Fergusson's major work is an unfinished poem entitled "Auld Reikie" whose title is an old playful nickname for Edinburgh. The present collection of settings bring together five short poems of Fergusson which all comment upon life in Fergusson's city, "Auld Reikie."

The Horace Ode ("Toot aff Your Horn") is Fergusson's very Scottish version of the "carpe diem" poem wherein he urges us to enjoy life while we may. The full title of "On the Music Bells Playing" is "On the Music Bells Playing Yesterday Forenoon, Prior to Brown and Wilson's Execution, on the Deacons Being Presented to Council" and refers to the public execution of two murderers. Fergusson's poem is more cynical than contemporary newspaper reports of the same execution which noted that the two condemned men, who had tried repeatedly to escape from prison, were at the last brought to pious repentance by the good work of the deacons and even made a short, moving speech before they were hanged. Fergusson's poem focuses more on the celebrating crowd that attended these public spectacles.

"The Lee-Rigg", though only a fragment, shows Fergusson's familiarity and love of Scottish folksong. "The Author's Life" is striking in its introspection for so young a poet.

The lady painting herself, in the poem of that title, is of course busily applying make-up to her own face.

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GLOSSARY

1. *Ne'er fash your thumb*, not be put out

weird, fate

cantrup, magic spell, trick

kittle, tricky, difficult, uncertain

spier, ask

lippen, trust, expect

dowy, gloomy, sad

mair, more

canker'd, ill-tempered

weel, well

geyzen'd, dried out

waas, walls

couthy, snug, cosy

blaws, draughts, drinks of liquor

lat, let

owrgang, outrun

eild, old age

thraldom, bondage, care

gash, bright

toot aff your horn, drain the cup

yae, one

strae, straw

2. *roast*, poetic form of roost

3. *gang owr*, go over to

lee-rigg, grassy ridge

ain, own

sae, so

thornie-dike, hawthorn hedge

birken-tree, birch tree

daff, make merry, be silly

scug ill een, hide evil eyes

frae, from

nae, no

herds, herdsman, shepherd

kent, shepherd's staff

colly, sheep-dog

fear ye, scare you

lav'rocks, larks

world's gear, worldly goods, possessions

1. Toot aff Your Horn

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774)

Bruce Trinkley

After Horace, Ode XI. Lib I

Allegro grazioso ♩ = 138

poco accel. *poco rit.*

Piano

mf *f*

a tempo *mf vigorously* *vigorously*

Ne'er fash your thumb what gods de - cree To be the weird o' you or me,

Nor deal in can - trup's kit - tle cun - ning To spier how fast your days are run - ning.

cresc. *cresc.*

f *mf* *rit. e dim.* *p ten.*

But pa-tient lip - pen for the best Nor be in dow - y thought op - prest,

f sonore *mf* *rit. e dim.* *p ten.*

6 a tempo

15 *mf* rit. e dim.

Wheth - er we see mair win - ters come Than this that spits wi can - ker'd foam.

8va -----

15 a tempo

mf rit. e dim.

19 *mp* a tempo

Now mois - ten weel your gey - zen'd waas Wi couth - y friends and heart - y blaws;

19 a tempo

mp

Slower

23 *cresc. poco a poco* *mf* poco rit. *mp* cresc. legato ed espressivo

Ne'er lat your hope owr - gang your days, For eild and thraikdom nev - er stays; The day looks gash, toot

23 *cresc. poco a poco* *mf* poco rit. *mp* cresc.

28 *f*, *mf* *dim.* *rit.* *p* a tempo

aff your horn, Nor care yae strae a - bout the morn.

28 *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

f *mf* *mp* *p*

2. On the Music Bells Playing

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774)

Bruce Trinkley

Slow and inexorable ♩ = 50

Piano

f *sonore* *mp* *con pedale*

5 *mf* *f*

Hap - py the folks that rule the roast! Our coun - cil men are cheer-ful; _____ To

5 *mf*

9 *ff*

mirth they now de - vote each toast, And bells fill ev - 'ry ear full. _____ When

9 *f*

13 *f*

man's con-demn'd to suf - fer death For his un - li - cens'd crimes, In -

13 *ff*

18 *dim.* *mp* *fading away*

stead of psalms they quit their breath To mer - ry - mak - ing chimes, To mer - ry - mak - ing

18 *dim. poco a poco* *fading away*

23

chimes.

23 *lunga*

3. The Lee-Rigg

Robert Fergusson (1750 - 1774)

Bruce Trinkley

Gracefully $\text{♩} = 48$

Piano *mp* *sempre legato*

con pedale

3 *p molto legato*

Will ye gang ower the lee - rigg, My ain kind dear - y O!_____

3 *p*

7 *pp* *mp*

And cud - dle there sae kind - ly Wi' me, my kind dear - y O?_____ At

7 *pp*

11

thorn - ie-dike and bir - ken-tree We'll daff, and ne'er be wear - y O; They'll

mp

f

15

scug ill een frae you and me, Mine ain kind dear - y O. _____

dim. *poco rit.* *mp* *a tempo*

f *dim.* *poco rit.* *a tempo*

19

Nae herds wi kent or col - ly there, Shall e'er come to fear ye O; _____

p

p

23 *mp* *mf*

But lav-'rocks, whist - ling in the air, Shall woo, like me, their dear-y O! _____ While

23 *mp*

27 *smoothly* *poco rit. pp*

oth - ers herd their lambs and ewes, And toil for ___ world's gear, my jo, Up -

27 *mf* *smoothly* *poco rit. pp*

31 *a tempo* *poco rit.* *allarg.*

on the lee my pleas - ure grows, Wi' you, my kind dear - y O!

31 *a tempo* *poco rit.* *allarg.*

4. The Author's Life

Robert Fergusson (1750 - 1774)

Bruce Trinkley

Adagio espressivo $\text{♩} = 52$

Piano

f *p* *mf*

5 *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

My life is like the flow - ing stream That glides where sum - mer's beau - ties teem,

5 *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

9 *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

Meets all the rich - es of the gale__ That on its wa - try bos-om sail,__

9 *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

13 *f* *mp*

And wan-ders 'midst E - ly-sian groves____ Thro' all the haunts that fan-cy loves.____ May

13 *f* *sonore*

17 *ten.* *p*

I, when droop - ing days de - cline, And 'gainst those ge - nial streams com-bine, The

17 *ten.*

21 **Slower** $\text{♩} = 44$ *pp*

win - ter's sad de - cay for-sake, And cen - ter in my par - ent lake._____

21 *p* *pp*

25

25 *fading away*

5. On Seeing a Lady Paint Herself

Robert Fergusson (1750 - 1774)

Bruce Trinkley

Allegro di gusto $\text{♩} = 96$ *mf*

Voice

When, by some mis - ad - ven - ture crost, The bank - er hath his

Piano

f *mf*

con pedale

6 for - tunes lost, Cred - it his in - stant need sup - plies, And for a mo - ment blinds our eyes:

6 *f* *8va*

11 *ff*

Cred - it his in - stant need sup - plies, And for a mo - ment blinds our eyes:

11 *ff* *(8va)*

15 *mp*

(8va) So De - lia, when her beau - ty's flown,

15 *mp* *mf* *mp*

20 *cresc.* *mf*

Trades on a bot - tom not her own, And la - bours to es - cape de - tec - tion By

20 *cresc.* *mf* *f*

25 *ff*

put - ting on a false com - plex - ion. La - bours to es - cape de - tec - tion By

25 *mf* *ff* *f*

30

put - ting on a false com - plex - ion.

30 (8va) *non ritard.*