



# **Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting from the Enlightenment to the Romantic Era (Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain)**

*Karen McAulay*

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One of the earliest documented Scottish song collectors actually to go 'into the field' to gather his specimens, was the Highlander Joseph Macdonald. Macdonald emigrated in 1760 - contemporaneously with the start of James Macpherson's famous but much disputed Ossian project - and it fell to the Revd. Patrick Macdonald to finish and subsequently publish his younger brother's collection. Karen McAulay traces the complex history of Scottish song collecting, and the publication of major Highland and Lowland collections, over the ensuing 130 years. Looking at sources, authenticity, collecting methodology and format, McAulay places these collections in their cultural context and traces links with contemporary attitudes towards such wide-ranging topics as the embryonic tourism and travel industry; cultural nationalism; fakery and forgery; literary and musical creativity; and the move from antiquarianism and dilettantism towards an increasingly scholarly and didactic tone in the mid-to-late Victorian collections. Attention is given to some of the performance issues raised, either in correspondence or in the paratexts of published collections; and the narrative is interlaced with references to contemporary literary, social and even political history as it affected the collectors themselves. Most significantly, this study demonstrates a resurgence of cultural nationalism in the late nineteenth century.

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