

# *Musical Ancestries: Scotland Script*

## MUSICAL ANCESTRIES™ – SCOTLAND

NARR: Scotland – a land of diverse beauty from craggy highlands to rolling hills of heather to lowland fields... and dotting the countryside, the shimmering lakes – or lochs, as they're called.

Anabel and Gavin had always wanted to visit that wonderful country where their Dad was born. They'd heard about Scotland, talked about it, read about it, dreamed about it...but it seemed like their wish to go there would never come true... until the day their Mom came home from work and called them into the living room.

Mom: I have a HUGE surprise for you.

Together: What? What is it?

Mom: Remember how your Dad loved to tell you stories about growing up in Scotland with your Uncle Fergus?

Together: Yep. Uh-huh...

Mom: Well, Uncle Fergus called today. He wants to know if you'd like to come visit him in Scotland...

Gavin: Seriously?

Anabel: You've gotta' be kidding! Really??

Mom:           *(laughing)* Seriously. He felt a trip would be a great change of pace for you, and that you could learn a lot. He even wants to take you to a Tattoo.

Gavin:         A Tattoo – like the big music festival in Edinburg?

Mom:         Exactly.

Gavin:         WOW!

Anabel:        Unbelievable!

Mom:         So I can take that as a yes?

Together:     YES! YEEESSS!!!!

Mom:         OK. Just checking! We'll call him in the morning – it's too late right now. It's bedtime there – they're 6 hours ahead of us. Hungry? How about some dinner?

Narr:         Over their meal they laughed, planned and retold some of Dad's favorite stories about Uncle Fergus as a boy. He must have been a mischievous kid – they wondered if he was still that way. They sure hoped so! In the next few weeks, Anabel and Gavin researched Scotland online, visited the library, found great information, and checked out some beautiful books. Gavin started with history, while Anabel dug into geography, language, and culture. As they studied, they listened to Scottish music, which they both loved.

Narr:         Scotland's history is fascinating. Inhabited since the **Stone Age**, there are six **World Heritage Sites** where people can see remains that date back 5,000 years. Over the centuries, many peoples came to Scotland, but the most significant were **the Celts**.

By **275 BC**, they were such a presence that even today the Celtic culture and language is part of all the British Isles. In **124 AD**, the **Romans** arrived in Scotland – *they* called it Caledonia. Never able to conquer the **Caledonians** and the **Picts**, the Romans finally left. In **800**, the **Vikings** arrived from Norway and Denmark to trade and settle in the **West of Scotland**. Meanwhile, the **Picts** established the **Kingdom of Alba**.

That's when the kids' history research flowed into their love of theatre.

Gavin: Anabel! Remember when we saw Shakespeare's *Macbeth*?

Anabel: Yeah.

Gavin: He wasn't just a character in a play – **Macbeth** really lived! He was **King of Alba** – from 1040 till he died in battle 17 years later! I also found **William Wallace**, the warrior. Remember that movie *Braveheart*? And **Robert the Bruce**, too – crowned **king in 1306**! Maybe we knew more about Scotland than we thought!

Anabel: Isn't it fun to learn all this?

Gavin: Yeah! Dad would be proud!

Narr: Exploring on through the **Renaissance**, Gavin learned about **Mary, Queen of Scots** and her son, **James VI** who became the **King of both Scotland AND England** – an era known as the **Union of the Crowns**. In the **Age of Enlightenment**, Scotland was renowned for its philosophers and writers – among them, **Sir Walter Scott** and **Robert Burns**.

In the **1800s**, Scotland's cities grew larger and more **industrial**, and by the **1900s**, her foundries, steel works, and shipyards helped win both World Wars. In the **1990s**, Scotland's musicians and writers

once again became famous worldwide, like **J.K. Rowling** with her first books about **Harry Potter**.

Anabel: I've been reading about the geography, culture and language, and found out they're all very deeply connected. There are **four basic languages or dialects** in Scotland – Gaelic (“Gallic”) from the Celts, Scots, Doric and English. There are also **two distinct geographical regions** in Scotland – the **Highlands** and the **Lowlands** – and their two **cultures** are also different from each other.

Narr: The mountainous **Scottish Highlands** are in the **north and west** areas of the country. For over a hundred years it's been the **Scottish Gaelic** speaking area of Scotland. Notice, it's pronounced “**Gallic**”, not “**Gaylic**”. **Highland English** is also spoken here.

The other region is the **Lowlands**. There they speak Scots, sometimes called **Lowland Scots** or **Broad Scots** and English. But up in Aberdeen and surrounding areas in the **north east** of Scotland, there is fourth Scottish language or dialect spoken, **Doric**. It is quite distinct in comparison to ‘Lowland Scots’.

Anabel and Gavin's “team learning” proved helpful when they arrived in Scotland. Once they got through customs, they immediately heard a hearty voice calling them.

Fergus: Hello, Anabel and Gavin! What a bonnie lass and strapping lad! Welcome to Edinburgh! I'm your Uncle Fergus! Remember me? Oh, no – of course not – you were wee little ones of four and two – and now ten years later, you're so grown up! It's great to have you here! Let's get your bags and get home to a nice meal.

Narr: Uncle Fergus was still every bit the character their Dad had described. As he wheeled through the streets of Edinburgh (on the left side of the road, which felt a little scary at first), he gave them a brief outline of their plans.

Fergus: We'll be hearing lots of music, folk songs and dances, learning about traditional instruments, taking a short trip to the Highlands for a day, and finishing up with the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. We start tomorrow – we're going to a **Ceilidh** social...a wee gathering. Ah, here we are! Home. Let's get a good meal in you and you can rest up from your long trip.

Narr: The next morning when the kids woke up, Uncle Fergus told them about Scotland's famous poet and songwriter, **Robert Burns**.

Fergus: Some call him *Scotland's Bard*, others the *Ploughman Poet*, but Robert Burns is Scotland's pride. He was born on **January 25<sup>th</sup> in 1759** in the village of Alloway, the oldest of 7 children. His father was a tenant farmer. Even though they didn't have much money, his parents saw to it that he and his brothers got a good education. Robert also farmed, but because the area had poor soil, he lived in near-poverty most of his life. He worked long, hard days, and read by a single candle at night. But he wrote beautiful poems and songs, loved all around the word. They were very popular in your own USA. Both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas were inspired by them, and both men considered his writings to be among the most valuable in their collections. You know one of them... **Auld Lang Syne**. The tune we use today isn't *his* tune, but it *is* an old Scottish tune.

Narr: Rabbie, as the Scots call him, wrote **some poems in English**, but his truest voice was in his everyday speech, **the Scots language**. His first book of poems helped him financially. His second expanded edition was an even better success, but unfortunately, he sold the copyright and he didn't make any more money from it.

Finally giving up farming, he moved to town & supported his family working as a public servant. He died in **1796** at the age of **37**...on the same day that his wife gave birth to their 9<sup>th</sup> child. Burns' poems were

enormous contributions to Scotland's literary heritage, and his songs are some of the most beloved in a land that simply cherishes its songs.

Fergus: Listen to this lovely Robert Burns song called ***Green Grow the Rashes***, played and sung by **Little Fire** and recorded in the **Burns home**. (The interpretation is a bit more modern, but its beauty is timeless.)

Fergus: Rabbie had deep insights into the human spirit and a gift for putting himself into others' shoes to express *their* feelings. He could write the most **tender love songs**...then turn and poke fun at pompous people like he did in "***Address to a Haggis***".

Gavin: Uncle Fergus, what's a haggis?

Fergus: Well, Gavin, a **haggis** is made from some of the organs of the sheep which are cooked, then chopped up very fine and mixed with oatmeal, onion and spices. Then, *traditionally*, it's put in the sheep's stomach and boiled – although these days most people use artificial casing. We'll try some. You'll like it.

Anabel: Eew – I dunno'...

Gavin: Me either.

Fergus: (*Amused & holding back a laugh*) Back to Rabbie. Every year on his birthday – **the 25<sup>th</sup> of January** or close to it – people hold ***Burns Suppers*** which feature the main dish – haggis. A piper plays as it's brought in – big ceremony! Then the host grandly recites "***Address to a Haggis***". They cut it up with a sword and serve it with potatoes and vegetables. After the meal and some speeches, there might be some music, but the evening always ends with everyone singing *Auld Lang Syne*.

Anabel: I've heard about the **Burns Suppers**. One day I'll get to go to one.

Fergus: Ah, indeed you will, my dear. You both will.

Narr: Late that afternoon, they went to the **Ceilidh**, a big gathering of people who were ready to party...and dance! Uncle Fergus explained that **Ceilidhs** are all about **dancing**! Because everyone's been doing these dances since they were children in PE class, they're comfortable. And nobody feels like they have to be an expert.

Gavin: I *really* like this, don't you Anabel?

Anabel: Yeah, at first I thought it would be hard to figure out the steps, but everyone just sort of brings you right along with them.

Gavin: We've gotta' teach our friends how to do this.

Anabel: Yeah!!

Fergus: There IS another, much more formal version of line and formation dancing, called **Scottish Country Dance**. There's a **Royal Scottish Country Dance Society** that trains the dancers and callers. You'll see them at the Tattoo.

Anabel: Ooo! That'll be great – and we'll actually *know* what's going on.

Gavin: That'll be the first time!

Anabel: Speak for yourself, little brother!

Gavin: Taller than you!

Fergus:        Alright you two, the next dance is starting – you want to talk or dance?

Both:            Dance!

Narr:            After several more dances, they returned home from the ***Ceilidh***, tired but energized. The next day they went to see some **Step Dancing**.

Narr:            **Step Dancing**, or **Cape Breton Dancing** has a style and sound all its own, but the footwork is the main feature – which you might guess from its name. It's often **accompanied by instruments** – like fiddles and keyboards – but if there are no instruments available, **singers become the accompaniment**. There's even a special name for this type of singing called ***Puirt a Beul***, which means “**tones from a mouth**”.

This traditional form of song, native to Scotland, sets **Gaelic lyrics** to *instrumental* tunes. The **words themselves enhance the rhythm** for the dancers, and sometimes there is **an improvised nonsense syllable – like scat singing** – that has a percussive effect.

Uncle Fergus was a very good singer, and loved to talk about traditional Scottish songs.

Fergus:        We have such a lovely way with melody here in Scotland. Yesterday we talked about **Robert Burns** and his poems and songs. Did I mention he also liked to **collect Scottish folk songs**? He loved that **oral tradition**. Among all these many fine songs, one of the most beautiful is ***Loch Lomond***. It is an adaptation of a song where a man is dying in service to his king, and thinking of his true love at home. He'll take the “Low Road” of death home to Scotland.

Anabel:        That's just gorgeous, Uncle Fergus.



Fergus: Yes, it is...hauntingly beautiful. You know there are also many songs that were created to make work go more quickly. Most cultures have them – they're called work songs.

Fergus: Here in Scotland, we're known for our **sheep and the wool** they produce. One of the more repetitive tasks in getting that wool ready to go to market was what we call **waulking the wool or the tweed**. Long ago, several women sat at a table or on the ground and worked the fabric by pounding and slapping it with their hands and/or feet, so it became softer. **Singing together in rhythm** with that motion kept the energy up and the task lighter. You'd also hear a leader sing the **call and then the response** came from the rest of the group.

Gavin: It seems that people make music with or without instruments here – it's just part of life – like breathing. I like that.

Fergus: That's an interesting observation, Gavin. Let's talk about a couple of **Scottish instruments**. Like other cultures, we use **fiddles** and **accordions** – in ensembles and as solo instruments. And we also have a **Scottish harp**, called the **lever harp** or the **Clarsach**. Listen to how lovely it sounds.

Narr: The next day they drove to **Inverness**, the principal city of the **Highlands**. The 3 ½ hour drive was breathtaking, with craggy mountains and beautiful scenery. As they went, they talked about one other Scottish instrument that was the most obvious of all – **bagpipes!** They learned that the Highland pipes are different from the Lowland ones!

Fergus: **Highland pipes** are quite a bit bigger and *much* louder than the **Border pipes** from the lowlands. Designed to be used **outside**, most often in military applications, Highland pipes need to be heard. (Think of the lone piper on the wall of a fortress.) **Highland pipes** are used for **military pipe and drum corps**, because they can

be heard better by the troops who are marching with them. The **drummers** use **specialized techniques**, so they're as much fun to watch as they are to hear.

Narr: Highland pipes are also used for special events like **weddings and funerals**. This particular piece, ***Flowers of the Forest***, is considered to be so reverent, pipers won't practice it in public. It's only played at a funeral. It was played at the funeral of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Fergus: One of my main reasons for bringing you to the Highlands was to give you a taste of the **Highland Games**, one of the most popular events in the country. Between May and September, there are always **Games** going on in some city in Scotland, and these are enormous gatherings of people. There are games and other activities, plus **dancing competitions!** I wanted you to see a **Highland Fling** being performed where it originated.

Narr: After the **Fling** and a great dinner, they spent the night in **Inverness** and drove back home to **Edinburgh** the next morning. That afternoon they went to the **Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo**. There was **art and food, theatre and dance!** The **Royal Scottish Dance Society** performed with jaw-dropping precision, and the evening's events featured **pipes and drums**, plus **military marching bands**. There were even times when they all played together. It was fabulous!

Anabel: Uncle Fergus, this is the most amazing thing ever! I can't believe it's already dark! Thank you sooo much!

Gavin: Yeah! This has been the best thing ever! How do we thank you for this?

Fergus: You just did! When your Dad went to heaven, I promised myself (and him) I'd bring you to Scotland, so you could experience

his homeland. And here you are. I feel like he's here with us right now, and I know he's incredibly proud of you both.

Narr:           He gave them both a hug, and just at that moment, a lone piper started to play. Fireworks lit up the sky. All three of them got goosebumps and teared up. The musicians were all gathered on the field and the emcee began to speak...