



Mr. & Mrs. Jamieson, a Waltz

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The musical score is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It consists of seven staves. The first six staves contain the main melody and accompaniment. The seventh staff is a double bar line with "D.C." below it. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, slurs, and ornaments.

The melodeon in this photograph was purchased in Inverness, in 1923 by Mrs. Helen Jamieson, for about \$8.00. Mrs. Jamieson's son Alec was raising hay for the Canadian Pacific Railroad on a farm near Lethbridge, Alberta, and she bought the melodeon to send to him. Alec played this accordion at country dances in southern Alberta, accompanied by his wife on piano.

After Alec died, the melodion went up into the attic for years, until younger brother John and his wife Evelyn came by for a visit during the early eighties, and John remembered it. He took it home, had it repaired, and played it himself. John was modest about his own abilities. In the old days, almost everyone played a bit on something. John himself learned by watching, listening, and trying. His model was their father, whose playing he always admired. "Oh, he could play far better than me; he could play the real fast ones!"

John picked up some of his repertoire from his father's stock of marches and pipe tunes. He added to it some sentimental tunes from before his own childhood, such as "Daisy, Daisy," Scottish folk songs like "The Muckin' O' Geordie's Byre," and stage-ethnic numbers from the British Isles, such as "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." The Jamiesons had a fairly extensive record collection, mostly popular Scottish performers like Jimmy Shand, and John spoke of adding more tunes from that source to his repertoire. But he didn't practice much. "It's a job, you see, to get started," he would say.

Until he inherited Alec's instrument, John never had his own accordion. In Scotland, he had access to his father's, but he could not afford to buy his own. "When I started working, I only made ten shillings -- two dollars -- a week, working sixty-six hours!" After wartime adventures, including capture by Rommel, and a few postwar jobs, John emigrated to Canada. Having worked here six years, he returned to Inverness and married Evelyn in 1957. She also came from a musical family. "My mother was a singer. We all sang. But we've kind of gotten away from it here because New Year's Eve isn't the same in Canada."

Evelyn used to tease John when I'd come down for a visit and some tunes. "He doesn't practice enough, George."

"No, I haven't practiced since -- since you were here! I'm always after him to practice. He does play well."

He did play well. John was one of many people I've encountered who don't practice enough, who never perform, but from whom the music fairly flows. I rather suspect that most people have this much music in them. I don't believe that I do John a disservice by speaking of him as one among equals. I'm not sure I could offer anyone a greater praise.

John died from cancer in 1990.

"Mr. & Mrs. Jamieson" is a pretty basic little tune, especially the B part, but it allows for a fair amount of variation, some of which I've found myself already. Play this tune with more dignity than foofaraw; that's the kind of man John Jamieson was, the kind of woman Evelyn is.

George W. Lyon



photo by George W. Lyon