

The Cuckoo

Traditional, arr. P. Tutty (SOCAN)

Paddy tells us that she learned this song more than 20 years ago from the singing of English folk singer Anne Briggs, who says on her album notes that this is an Irish variant of the song. She notes, "It has always been a favorite of mine." I might add

that, as well as having a haunting melody in the mixolydian mode, it's a bit more ornithologically accurate than the common American versions! Paddy's version is on *In the Greenwood*. Don't worry about the time signature; sing it freely. [JL & GWL]

Oh, the cuc - koo's a pret-ty bird, she sings as she flies. She brings us glad
tid - ings, tells us no lies. She sucks the lit-tle birds' eggsto keep her voice
clear. And when she sings cuc-koo the sum - mer draws near. D.C.

Oh, the cuckoo's a pretty bird, she sings as she flies
She brings us glad tidings, tells us no lies
She sucks the little birds' eggs to keep her voice clear
And when she sings "Cuckoo" the summer draws near.

As I walked out by the side of a bush
I heard two birds whistling, the blackbird and the thrush.
I asked them the reason why merry they be
And the answer they gave me: "We are single, we are free."

A-walking, a-talking, a-walking was I
To meet my true lover, he'll come by and by.
To meet him in the meadow is all my delight
A-walking, a-talking from morning till night.

And a-meeting is pleasure, but parting is a grief,
And an inconstant lover is worse than a thief.
A thief he will rob me and take all I have,
But an inconstant lover sends me to the grave.

And the grave it will rot me and bring me to dust.
An inconstant lover no maiden can trust.
He'll court you and kiss you and vow he'll be true
And the very next moment he'll bid you adieu.

The cuckoo's a pretty bird, she sings as she flies.
She brings us glad tidings, tells us no lies.
And when her time is come, in a voice sweet and clear,
And where she goes, we do not know, until another year.



Some Cape Breton fiddlers have raised the point ... that the loss of Gaelic [language] will have its effect on the fiddle style, and the real blas or taste of Gaelic music will be lost.... The goal, I think, for those interested in the continuity of Scottish culture here is to try to maintain the entire culture all the way from long folk tales through fiddle music to step dancing, and to show that this is just as relevant in its twentieth century context here as it has always been to Scottish communities everywhere.