

# Skye Waulking Song

## By Capercaillie

### Instruments/ensembles/types of instrument

#### Western popular music instruments:

Synth, drum kit, shaker, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, electric piano/Wurlitzer organ

#### Traditional folk instruments:

Fiddle, whistle, accordion, bouzouki, uilleann pipes, bongos, congas

#### Vocals:

Main female vocalist singing in Scots Gaelic, with layers of multi-tracked backing vocals

### Melodic/Musical Devices:

**Counter melody** (accordion in verse 5)

**Solos** in fiddle and uilleann pipes in **heterophonic texture** (both playing basically the same melody but one is adding more ornaments/decoration)

**Fade-out**—at the end

#### Rhythmic Devices:

**Polyrhythmic**—many different rhythms played at the same time

**Cross rhythms**—the hi-hat is playing a 3/4 based rhythm against the rest of the band's 12/8 in the first section

### Purpose and Musical Style

**Waulking** is a process for making tweed fabric more flexible. Waulking songs help keep the workers (usually women) in time and make their work more enjoyable. One singer leads the song whilst everyone else joined in with nonsense syllables.

This song is a new composition by Capercaillie that is a fusion of a traditional folk song style called a **lament** (with a slow tempo, minor key, sad mood) and more modern popular music. It would probably not be used now as a work song. You can tell this because:

The opening section doesn't have a strong 12/8 feel to keep the workers in time, there are modern instruments and the recording has modern production techniques e.g. reverb  
The folk-song elements are: some of the instruments used (name them!), the use of the pentatonic scale in the melody and the compound time-signature (common in work songs and dances)

### Structure

In two main sections:

**First Section (E minor)** —traditional, calm feel, focus is on the vocals, uses only 2 chords **Em and G**

**Second Section (G major)** —full rhythm section play (including full drum kit) to give it more rhythmic drive. Generally louder, uses chord sequence **C, G, Em, G**

Includes instrumental section.

However, a more detailed structure is:

**First Section:** Intro, Verse 1, break, Verses 2-3

**Second Section:** Verses 4-6, Instrumental, Verse 7-8, Outro

### Tonality/Harmony (i.e. chords used)

First section—**E minor** (chords of Em & G)

Second section—**G major** (chords C, G, Em, G) except for Verse 7 (which has a new chord pattern) and the outro which alternates between C and G

Vocal melody is based on an **E minor pentatonic** scale.

**Make sure you can name the notes in each chord:**

Em = EGB

G = GBD

C = CEG

### Three musical points about this song that I like/don't like:

**Justify your points and use musical vocabulary**

### How are elements used?

#### Structure

7 verses with an intro, instrumental and outro (**strophic** = many verses, no chorus).

2 main sections to the song—1st is more traditional-sounding, 2nd has a more driving rhythm with full drum kit used

#### Tonality & Harmony

1st section in E minor, 2nd section in G major

1st section alternates between chords of Em and G  
2nd section use chord progression C, G, Em, G through most verses (except verse 7)

#### Timbre and Texture

Overall, the texture is mainly homophonic (or 'melody with accompaniment')

Mix of traditional folk instruments and more modern instruments (give examples). Much reverb added in the production stage.

Texture builds through the 1st section of the song but the last line of this section is sung unaccompanied linking the 1st and 2nd sections.

Use of heterophonic texture in the instrumental between fiddle and pipes.

Layers drop in and out, or change how they are playing, from verse to verse to create contrast.

#### Melody & Pitch

Vocal melody uses pentatonic scale

The instruments generally play around their middle ranges and the vocal melody is in the mid-high range.

#### Dynamics

Softer dynamics at the start, 2nd section is generally louder

#### Tempo & Rhythm

12/8 time signature although time signature is ambiguous in the intro and verse 1. Slow tempo.

#### Instrumental Effects

**Tremelo** in fiddle (violin) at start = rapid repetition of one note

**Modulation effect** on synth at begin (creates a wobbly/swirling sound) *the word 'modulation' can also mean a change of key in music.*