

The Minstrel Boy

March

Traditional

The image displays a musical score for the march "The Minstrel Boy". The score is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and has a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains the first eight measures. The second staff continues with measures 9 through 16. The third staff contains measures 17 through 24. A bracket above the final two measures of the third staff indicates a first ending (labeled '1') and a second ending (labeled '2'). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests.

The Minstrel Boy

"The Minstrel Boy" is an Irish patriotic song written by Thomas Moore (1779-1852) who set it to the melody of The Moreen, an old Irish air. It is widely believed that Moore composed the song in remembrance of a number of his friends, whom he met while studying at Trinity College, Dublin and who had participated in (and were killed during) the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

However, the song gained widespread popularity and became a favourite of many Irishmen who fought during the United States Civil War and gained even more popularity after World War I. The song is notably associated with organizations that historically had a heavy representation of Irish-Americans, in particular the police and fire departments of New York, Boston and Chicago and those of various other major US metropolitan areas, even after those organizations have ceased to have a substantial over-representation of personnel of Irish ancestry. The melody is frequently played at funerals of members and/or officers of such organisations who have died or been killed in service, typically on bagpipes. Unsurprisingly, given its lyrics, it is also associated with the Irish Army and with traditionally Irish regiments in the British and other armies.

Lyrics

*The minstrel boy to the war is gone,
In the ranks of death ye will find him;
His father's sword he hath girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him;
"Land of Song!" said the warrior bard,
"Tho' all the world betray thee,
One sword, at least, thy rights shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee!"*

*The Minstrel fell! But the foeman's chain
Could not bring his proud soul under;
The harp he lov'd ne'er spoke again,
For he tore its chords asunder;
And said "No chains shall sully thee,
Thou soul of love and brav'ry!
Thy songs were made for the pure and free
They shall never sound in slavery!"*