

# Scottish Fiddling for Viola: Unveiling the Enchanting Melodies with Eric Galm



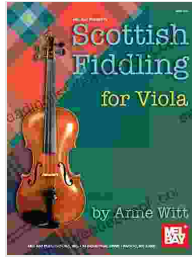
The captivating melodies of Scottish fiddle music have enthralled audiences for centuries, evoking the spirit of the Highlands and transporting listeners to a realm of tradition and artistry. While the fiddle has long been the instrument of choice for this genre, the viola, with its rich and resonant sound, offers a unique and alluring alternative. In this comprehensive guide, we delve into the world of Scottish fiddling for viola, exploring its history, techniques, and repertoire with the guidance of renowned violist Eric Galm.

**Scottish Fiddling for Viola** by Eric A. Galm

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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## **The History of Scottish Fiddling**

Scottish fiddling traces its origins to the 17th century, influenced by a blend of Celtic and European musical traditions. Street musicians and traveling minstrels played a pivotal role in popularizing the music, which evolved into a vibrant and expressive art form at ceilidhs and gatherings. The fiddle became an integral part of Scottish culture, showcasing the joy, sorrows, and stories of the people.

## **The Viola: A Unique Voice in Scottish Music**

Traditionally played on the violin, Scottish fiddle music has witnessed a resurgence of interest on the viola in recent years. With its larger size and deeper, more mellow tone, the viola offers a distinctive interpretation of these timeless melodies. Its resonant low notes lend a sense of depth and richness, while the lyrical quality of its higher register captures the haunting melodies and intricate ornamentation.

## **Eric Galm: A Master of Scottish Fiddling**

Eric Galm, a world-renowned violist and teacher, is a pioneer in the art of Scottish fiddling on viola. His virtuosic playing, deep understanding of the tradition, and passion for sharing his knowledge have made him a highly

respected figure in the music world. He has performed extensively throughout North America and Europe, captivating audiences with his expressive interpretations and masterful technique.

## **Techniques for Scottish Fiddling on Viola**

Embracing the nuances of Scottish fiddling on viola requires a combination of technical proficiency and an understanding of the genre's unique characteristics. Eric Galm emphasizes the importance of strong finger placement, precise bowing, and the ability to play with both grace and rhythmic drive.

**Ornamentation:** Scottish fiddle music is renowned for its intricate ornamentation, which adds a layer of embellishment and expressiveness to the melodies. Common ornaments include rolls, cuts, and triplets, which can be executed with finesse on the viola's smooth fingerboard.

**Bowing:** Mastering the art of bowing is essential for capturing the dynamic range and rhythmic vitality of Scottish fiddle music. Long, flowing strokes in the Highland style contrast with the shorter, more percussive bowing in the Shetland style, each requiring a distinct approach.

**Double Stops:** Double stops, where two strings are played simultaneously, add depth and resonance to the music. Skilled violists can execute these techniques with precision and control, enhancing the melodic complexity.

## **Repertoire for Viola**

The repertoire for Scottish fiddling on viola is vast and varied, encompassing traditional tunes, classical compositions, and contemporary works inspired by the genre. Eric Galm's extensive collection of

arrangements and original compositions offers a diverse range of pieces tailored to the viola's unique characteristics.

**Traditional Tunes:** From the lively jigs of "The De'il Among the Tailors" to the haunting melodies of "The Rowan Tree," traditional Scottish tunes form the backbone of the repertoire. Galm's arrangements preserve the authenticity of these melodies while showcasing their beauty on the viola.

**Classical Influences:** The influence of classical music is evident in many Scottish fiddle tunes, particularly in the use of harmonies and melodic structures. Galm's arrangements of works by Bach, Vivaldi, and other classical composers seamlessly blend these two worlds.

**Contemporary Compositions:** Contemporary composers such as David Heath and Alasdair Fraser have expanded the repertoire for Scottish fiddling on viola with innovative works that push the boundaries of the genre. These pieces incorporate elements of jazz, folk, and world music, offering a fresh and captivating take on traditional styles.

## **Exploring the Viola's Potential**

In the hands of a skilled musician, the viola becomes a versatile instrument that can convey the full spectrum of emotions and narratives found in Scottish fiddle music. Through his performances, workshops, and recordings, Eric Galm showcases the viola's ability to capture the rhythmic drive, lyrical melodies, and evocative ornamentation that define this genre.

**The Highland Sound:** With its broad, soaring melodies and powerful rhythms, the Highland style of Scottish fiddling is particularly well-suited to the viola's resonant sound. Galm's playing captures the essence of this

tradition, evoking the rugged landscapes and proud spirit of the Scottish Highlands.

**The Shetland Style:** In contrast to the Highland style, Shetland fiddle music is characterized by shorter, faster tunes played with a more percussive bowing technique. The viola's agility and clarity lend themselves beautifully to this style, allowing players to execute the intricate bowing patterns with precision.

**Exploring New Horizons:** Galm's artistry extends beyond traditional boundaries, as he seamlessly incorporates elements of jazz, folk, and Celtic music into his performances and compositions. His innovative approach expands the possibilities for Scottish fiddling on viola, creating a vibrant and evolving genre.

Scottish fiddling on viola is a captivating and expressive art form that combines tradition, virtuosity, and innovation. Guided by the expertise of Eric Galm, we have explored the history, techniques, and repertoire of this genre, showcasing the viola's unique ability to convey the beauty and depth of Scottish fiddle music.

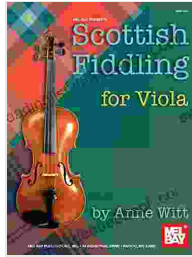
Whether performed in the intimate setting of a ceilidh or on the grand stage of a concert hall, Scottish fiddling on viola continues to inspire and enchant audiences worldwide. As Eric Galm and other skilled musicians continue to push the boundaries of this genre, its captivating melodies and timeless stories will continue to resonate for generations to come.

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