



# Eriskay Love Lilt

GRADH GEAL MO CHRIDH

Hugh S. Robertson  
(1874-1952)

**Sir Hugh Stevenson Robertson** (1874–1952) was born in Glasgow, Scotland, son of a Funeral Undertaker and Carriage Hirer, and served as an assistant in the family enterprise, eventually becoming manager. He first established his musical career as conductor of the Toynbee House Choir in Glasgow. He took leadership of the Toynbee Musical Association and transformed it, founding the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. He was director of the Orpheus choir for almost fifty years, leading it to national and international recognition. The Orpheus Choir had no equal in Britain and toured widely. He is recognized as one of the most significant British coral directors in history. He was also active as teacher, composer, adjudicator, critic, poet, playwright, essayist, and lecturer. He died at his home in Cathcart, Glasgow. His son was the Australian politician and diplomat Hugh Robertson. His compositions include a significant number of part-songs, especially settings of Scottish folk songs.

Eriskay is a small island of the Outer Hebrides, from the Old Norse for “Eric’s Isle.”

#### PROGRAM

It is the rime of the new moon, and the time, too, when love-thoughts are ripest, and the brown eyes of Morag are gazing seaward over the murmurous lapping waters.

Aye, and is it not true that at such a time strange beautiful sounds may be heard, and that whenever a voice is singing in one’s heart, that voice one may hear borne magically on the bosom of the waters?

It is thus that Morag hears her lover’s “Bheir mi ò.”

And out of the fullness of her joy she answers with tender passion in the love-words he would speak to her on the quiet hillside. (“When I’m lonely,” etc.)

And as her song dies on the night air, the faithful waves bring back the burden of it to her ears, till out of the passion of her soul she pours forth anew her rapture in his words—“Harp of joy, harp of my heart.”

So singing, so hearkening, she stands. The new moon creeps behind a cloud. It is the black night.

But the voice of her lover is in her ears, and in her heart is eternal dayspring.

H. S. R.

*Bheir mi òro bhan o* \*\*

*Bheir mi òro bhan i;*

*Bheir mi òru o ho*

Sad am I, without thee.

When I’m lonely, dear white heart,

Black the night or wild the sea,

By love’s light, my foot finds

The old pathway to thee.

Thou’rt the music of my heart;

Harp of joy, o *Cruitmochruidh*; °°

Moon of guidance by night;

Strength and light thou’rt to me.

In the morning, when I go

To the white and shining sea,

In the calling of the seals

Thy soft calling to me.

From *Songs of the Hebrides*

Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857–1930)

\*\*Sources indicate these are “lilting” words—no particular meaning, just sounds.

IPA approximation:

ver mi oro van o

ver mi oro van i

ver mi oru o ho

°°Often spelled elsewhere as three words or “cruith mo cruit” = harp of my heart

IPA approximation:

krutʃ mo kri

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Hugh S. Robertson

Softly and lingeringly, but rhythmical ♩ = 44

S  
+Hm  
(The new moon and the lapping water)

A  
+Hm

T  
+Hm  
Softly and with suggestion of "distance"  
(Her lover sings)

B

Bheir mi ò - ro bhan o Bheir mi ò - ro bhan i; Bheir mi

S

A

T

B

ò - ru o ho Sad am I, with - out

+Hum softly with open lips.



## Eriskay Love Lilt

*with tender passion*  
*mf*

9

S When I'm lone - ly, dear white heart, Black the

A When I'm lone - ly, dear white heart, Black the

T When I'm lone - ly, dear white heart, Black the

B thee. When I'm lone - ly, dear white heart, Black the

12

S night or wild the sea, By love's light, my foot

A night or wild the sea, By love's light, my foot

T night or wild the sea, By love's light, my foot

B night or wild the sea, By love's light, my foot

15

S finds The old path - way to thee.

A finds The old path - way to thee.

T finds The old path - way to thee.

B finds The old path - way to thee. Bheir mi

*Softly and but "nearer."*  
(Her lover sings)

# Eriskay Love Lilt

18 (The new moon and the lapping water)

S +Hm

A +Hm

T +Hm

B

ò - ro bhan o Bheir mi ò - ro bhan i; Bheir mi

22

S

A

T

B

ò - ru o ho Sad am I, with - out

25 *f* rapturously, lovingly

S Thou'rt the mu - sic of my heart; Harp of

A Thou'rt the mu - sic of my heart; Harp of

T Thou'rt the mu - sic of my heart; Harp of

B thee. Thou'rt the mu - sic of my heart; Harp of

## Eriskay Love Lilt

28

S joy, o Cruit - mo - chruidh; Moon of guid - ance by

A joy, o Cruit - mo - chruidh; Moon of guid - ance by

T joy, o Cruit - mo - chruidh; Moon of guid - ance by

B joy, o Cruit - mo - chruidh; Moon of guid - ance by

31

S night; Strength and light thou'rt to me.

A night; Strength and light thou'rt to me.

T night; Strength and light thou'rt to me. *Soft and very "distant."*

B night; Strength and light thou'rt to me. *p* (Her lover sings) Bheir mi

34

S *p* +Hm

A *p* +Hm

T *p* +Hm

B ò - ro bhan o Bheir mi ò - ro bhan i; Bheir mi

# Eriskay Love Lilt

38

(The moon creeps behind a cloud.)

*Slower* *pp* *ppp* *morendo*

*Slower* *pp* *ppp* *morendo*

*Slower* *pp* *ppp* *morendo*

*Slower* (It is the black of night) *pp* *ppp* *morendo*

Soprano: *ppp* *morendo*

Alto: *ppp* *morendo*

Tenor: *ppp* *morendo*

Bass: *ppp* *morendo*

Lyrics: ò - ru o ho Sad am I, without thee. +Hm

J. Curwen & Sons  
(1915)

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