



The MacCrimmon Legend: The Madness of Angus MacKay

Alistair Campsie

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This book, which hit the world of piping like the H-bomb, stamped a final R.I.P. notice on one of the great legends of musical history. The MacCrimmons, who lived on the Isle of Skye, had long been considered the gods of pipers – their famed piping college at Borreraig was where they supposedly invented pibroch, the classical music of the bagpipes known as the Great Music, because of its intellectual status and intricacy.

In this spell-binding musical investigation, the author exposed it as nothing but a hoax, giving us an insight into the endemic treachery between the Highland clans and an intriguing portrayal of a bloody Scotland only later to be romanticised by the Victorian writers. Campsie revealed the damning truth that almost all the so-called “MacCrimmon” pibrochs had earlier and different names, indicating they had been stolen and renamed to buttress the contrived legend, whose theme song had not even been composed until 1818 by Walter Scott, when he spelled the phantom family name MacKrimmon,. Simply the “ancient” legend had not been properly invented by that time.

The book’s theme centred on the detailed and professional dissection of the book of 1838 bearing Angus MacKay’s name as author. Angus, Queen Victoria’s first piper, did more than anyone to build up and perpetuate the myth of the MacCrimmons, a myth Mr Campsie’s research effectively demolished... MacCrimmon No More... even their anthem was stolen from the victims of The Clearances, who sang We Shall Return No More, standing ankle-deep in the sea awaiting the emigrant boats. But not Angus...

The propagandists concealed the truth that he was certified insane in Bedlam in 1854, when he insisted he was also married to Queen Victoria, the Royal children were his, and he was going to murder Prince Albert for “defrauding him of his marital rights”, i.e. by having sex with Angus’s delusionary wife. Now all this revelatory material was unique and the product of original research, no matter how inconvenient, so what provoked the BBC’s aberrant behaviour? For it then broadcast around thirty full-length-programmes on TV and radio, plus making innumerable obsessive mentions of the MacCrimmons, proving by its way of it, that the utterly discredited legend was as” authentic” as ever, but never once did it give the author the right of reply, in an arrogant defiance of its Royal Charter, by which it was forbidden from taking sides in any controversy, although by its outrageous actions, it had turned the MacCrimmon book into the most controversial Scottish book of the century.

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