

“Pre-Review” —
Les Délices: The Highland Lassie

by Daniel Hathaway



Just in time for Robbie Burns Day (January 25), Les Délices will release its latest concert series episode, “[The Highland Lassie](#),” for on-demand viewing on Vimeo beginning on Thursday, January 20.

Robert Burns (1759-1796), Scotland’s national bard, played a major role in the preservation of Scottish traditional music, joining a group of collectors who were mainly interested in capturing the texts of ballads passed down orally and thus subject to subconscious or intentional changes as they moved from host to host — not unlike viruses, as we now know all too well.

That process created the families of related songs most famously codified in five volumes published from 1882-1898 by Harvard professor Francis James Child. On

this program, one of the best-known families provides soprano Elena Mullins with the material for a sensitive rendition of *Barbara Allen*.



Elsewhere, Mullins gives a lovely performance of Burns' *A Red, Red Rose* — alleged by the poet to be a “simple old Scots song which I had picked up in the country.”

Instrumental music includes charming dance tunes from a variety of sources and a fascinating trio sonata, *The last time I came o'er the moor*. Composer Francesco Geminiani based the piece on Scots tunes and appended it to his 1749 *Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*. He seems to have found the fusion of Scots and Italian styles to be “so much the more entertaining.”

The instrumental band — Debra Nagy, Baroque oboe and recorders, Julie Andrijeski and Allison Monroe, violins, Rebecca Reed, cello, Daniel Swenberg, archlute and English and Baroque guitars, and Mark Edwards, harpsichord — play with the stylish precision and wide emotional range expected of modern period instrument musicians who can let their hair down on occasion.

The concert was recorded in the barn at Cleveland's Dunham Tavern Museum, next to an 1824 home on Euclid Avenue that served as a stagecoach stop on the Buffalo-Cleveland-Detroit post road. Built in the 1840s, the barn was rebuilt in 2000 after a fire destroyed the original structure in 1963. Lovingly restored, it makes a fine venue for Les Délices' Scottish program — even if it lacks such sensory stimuli as

the smoke of a peat fire, the aroma (ahem!) of haggis, and the snarl of a bagpipe (an outdoor instrument, after all, and largely invented to frighten invaders).

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