

Notes for Singers and Accompanyists

The first 4 verses of all songs have been aligned under the music, and any further verses have been placed as text after it. The melody line relates to the words of the first verse, and minor alterations may be needed to make the music fit the words of subsequent verses. For example, it may be necessary on occasions to replace a minim by two crotchets at the same pitch. Such adjustments will be easier to make if the tune is learnt thoroughly before the song is sung. Where space allowed in verses 2, 3 and 4 we have recommended, by the use of dots in the text lines, how syllables that stretch over more than one note might be sung. Where there was enough room, we have inserted similar dots in the text lines of the first verses to support the musical ties in the melody lines above them. We have also indicated how the songs might be performed ("Steadily", "Joyfully", "Boldly", etc.), but these recommendations may be ignored by those with different preferences.

Over the years various opinions have been expressed on whether and how folk songs should be accompanied. In the Preface to English County Songs (1893) Lucy Broadwood and JA Fuller Maitland argued that the presentation of unaccompanied tunes was "the most scientific method." However, since this idea was "practically useless to educated singers", they gave piano settings. These were supposedly kept "as simple as possible", but, for two of the songs, they thought it appropriate to adopt the styles of Schubert and Chopin.

In One Hundred English Folk Songs (1916) Cecil Sharp came down against the "purist." He advocated accompaniments since "we live in a harmonic age." The style was "a matter of individual taste", but he personally disliked the use of modern harmonies and of modulation.

R Vaughan Williams and AL Lloyd in The Penguin Book of English Folk Song (1959) held a different view: "The ideal way to sing an English folk song is unaccompanied." There was, however, "no harm in adding a few supporting chords" provided that they were in the same mode as the melody.

Frank Pursloe, in Marrow Bones (1965), thought that folk songs should be accompanied "as simply as possible, or not at all" and that "in every case 'fancy' chords should be avoided." Finally, by 1975, Pat Shaw, in The Crystal Spring, was passing no opinion at all. He merely suggested chords "for those who want to accompany the songs."

That is the approach adopted here. The majority of the chords are based on Reynardson's piano accompaniments of 1889. They sound good to us, but they are only suggestions and you

are, of course, free to alter them. In a number of songs you may feel that an overgenerous number of chords has been inserted. Please omit any of these that you do not like, or find cumbersome. Several songs are not well suited to harmonisation, for example 'Lord Bateman' (number 16) and 'Drink Old England Dry' (number 25).

Since the guitar is now the most common accompanying instrument the original piano settings have been omitted. For some of the tunes in remote keys alternative chords with capo positions have been provided for those who prefer simpler or more familiar fingerings.