

And The Piper Will Lead Us To Reason
by
Matthew Lescault-Wood

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I understand that the inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant, asthmatic pig under his arm. Unfortunately, the man-made object never equaled the purity of sound achieved by the pig.

- Alfred Hitchcock (*Instrument*)

There has been no other instrument that has had an effect on the world such as that of the bagpipe. It has developed alongside the human race from our beginnings, starting us down the path of musical wind instruments. It has been present at some of humanity's greatest triumphs, and at some of humanity's darkest times. Holding a title that not even the bugle or drums can claim to have, bagpipes have been officially declared an "instrument of warfare" (Kinnie Jr.) and "remains the one primal element in modern warfare" (*Instrument*). Besides their use in warfare, the bagpipes have had a large impact on world culture, whether it be their music, or their use in modern movies. Although the bagpipe's use in warfare is unprecedented and legendary, they have also had a significant cultural influence as well.

The bagpipe's greatest use in warfare is undoubtedly its use as a morale booster for any army that uses it. One basic military strategy is that "morale is one of the most important factors in war" (*Instrument*). One particular bagpipe, the Scottish bagpipe Piob Mhor, certainly has had the greatest effect on warfare morale than any other.

Utilized on the front line during the trench warfare in World War I, the bagpipe's use in the battlefield was hailed by many soldiers and army commanders alike. "When the men heard the pipes, they would lose control of themselves, an' in eagerness to get forward would be apt to rush into their own barrage" (qtd. in Cannon 120). Soldiers that fought alongside the pipers said, "when they played the bagpipes, I felt like I could get through anything" (*Instrument*), and the pipers of the Great War have even said that the pipes "lifts everybody out of themselves, and makes them want to do well. It makes men feel brave" (*Instrument*).

If hearing the bagpipes makes men feel brave, then the bagpiper himself must be the bravest of all. Since the bagpipe was used in war itself, there was a necessity for pipers to fight in the army as well. "When Highland soldiers begun to be recruited into the armies, whether Scottish or English, pro-government or rebel, pipers came with them" (Cannon 119). The bagpiper as a soldier has been considered a valuable, if not a necessary element to any Highland regiment. One particular function for the bagpipers is the fact they are of great use for maintaining order in a regiment. Military commanders said that they use the pipers because "[they are] essential, if Highland soldiers [are] to be brought under military discipline" (Cannon 119). Bagpipes are used to keep the beat while marching in the Highland regiments. While some other regiments use just the drums, the pipes can be heard from a great distance, and most importantly in battle. Bagpipes are the one instrument that can be heard over the sounds of war, such as gunfire, mortar shells, and explosions. If fighting on the battlefield with a weapon is a frightening enough thought, imagine having to stand in the midst of a battlefield while playing a loud instrument. It was this act that elevated the

bagpiper to an almost legendary status. The ferocity of the pipers on the battlefield led German soldiers to give the name "Ladies from Hell", in reference to their kilts (*Ladies*). Bagpipers became well known on the warfront, as their instrument signaled the arrival or departure of whatever army's flag they were playing under at the time. "The heroism of the pipes during the [Great] war became legendary. One piper saved the front line from collapse, earning him a Victoria Cross" (*Instrument*). Events such as that brought the pipers and their instrument into the spotlight of war, and proceeded to promote the usage of the piper in war. But even victory has its price, as over 1000 pipers fell during the Great War (*Instrument*). Those numbers were similar to that in World War II, and lead to the consideration that pipers and the bagpipes themselves made specific turning points in battles and wars themselves.

The use of the pipes has been said, "to be worth 100 guns, and its ammunition a music so potent, it inspires men to valor, and terror into the enemy" (*Instrument*). Anything described as such an asset to fighting must be an important and potentially deadly tool. If the math comes out properly, a regiment of 50 pipers is equivalent to 5,000 guns in battle. With statistics like that, it's no wonder bagpipes are considered such a valuable advantage. Many armies have taken advantage of the bagpipes in war, due to the fact that "during this century alone, the pipes have signaled the approach of a hostile army to the Germans, Italians, Turks, Japanese, Chinese, Boers, Iraqis, Argentineans, Russians and various others" (*Ladies*). Pipes have been present in some of the world's most historic wars, from "Culloden Moor, Waterloo...even up to the Falklands war and Desert Storm" (*Ladies*). Surely, anything that has been present at, and fully participating in, some of the world's most historic wars must be of some

strategic use. Even in America's own history, the pipes have played an important role. The pipes were first heard "in anger as the Black Watch Regiment stormed Ft. Ticonderoga in 1758" (*Instrument*). This was a decisive battle for the territorial rights to continent of North America between the British and the French. The British Black Watch Highland Regiment used the pipes to help capture the fort from the French, and "saved the day, helping secure the Continent for the British Crown" (*Instrument*). If not for the support of the bagpipes at this historical battle, this paper would probably be written in French.

War is not the only thing that pipes have had an effect on. In affecting war, the bagpipe has also affected the culture that arises out of and around warfare. In the early days of Scottish history, the clan system had a strong reliance on the local bagpiper. He would play a certain song to wake the village up, a certain song in the evening, and even a certain song to call the men to battle. "In clan warfare, the piper played a key figure. He played on the actual field of battle...earlier accounts tell of the individual piper supporting the men in the actual fighting" (Cannon 119). The whole clan system seemed to revolve around the piper, and around that, the Scottish way of life for hundreds of years. When the British tried to put a stop to the Highlander way of life in the 1700's, one of the first things to go was the playing of the bagpipe. The British feared that the pipes would be used to rally against them so much, that the courts issued the decree that "no Highland regiment ever marched without a piper, and therefore his bagpipe, in the eyes of the law, was an instrument of war" (Kinnie Jr.). The Highlander way of life almost went out of existence, until the British decided to allow the playing of the bagpipe only in the armed forces. That decision lead to the

creation of the kilted Highlander Division of the Royal British Army, a Division that would have warfare ramifications to the modern day.

The pipes have also had their effect on historical figures and events. Some figures have used the pipes for what is arguably history's darker times. Going all the way back to the times of the Roman Empire, The Emperor Nero played a pipe "with the armpit, a bag being thrown under it" (qtd. in Cannon 4). This being known, it is believed that while Rome was burning, Nero did not play the fiddle as popular belief has it, but instead played a bagpipe. Another emperor who used the pipes was the original Dracula, Vlad the Impaler, who "impaled 20,000 to the sound of the bagpipes." (*Instrument*). At the time of Vlad, the bagpipes had built a reputation as being "associated with the devil" (*Instrument*). With past associations like that, it's no wonder the bagpipe had a reputation of that magnitude. The bagpipe's reputation exceeded itself so much, that Oliver Cromwell himself issued a proclamation that "anybody found playing the pipes would be banished to Barbados" (*Instrument*). But the pipes have also had their positive effect in their influence of historical events. In a historical scene often portrayed in motion pictures, "[at] the siege of the Alamo, a piper was present, inspiring it's defenders. The record states that the legendary Davy Crockett and others...were heartened by the music of piper John McGregor" (*Instrument*). No matter whether a positive or a negative influence, there is no denying that the bagpipe has had an effect on the history of warfare itself. But the pipes have also had an impact on the culture that warfare has not influenced.

Culture has existed as long as human society. The bagpipes have existed in one form or another for over 5,000 years (*Instrument*) in human society, and have therefore

had an affect on the culture that exists in society. Evidence of the bagpipe in early human culture has been found all over the ancient world. The discovery of an actual bagpipe dating to 1000 BC in Egypt, the Chinese discovery of the principle of the pipe in 2585 BC, and the tradition of the shepherds playing the bagpipe at the Nativity (Collinson 159) are all prime examples of the spread and diversity of the bagpipe in ancient human culture. Their influence is evident in some of the artwork of the time. Being found on a Hittite slab dated at 1000 BC, a terra cotta piper dated around 250 BC at Tarsus and a Roman sculpted bronze discovered in England (Collinson 159-60), the bagpipe seems to have had an impact on the various developing human cultures. As one of the oldest types of instruments in the world, second only to the percussion instrument according to the *Oxford History of Music* (Worall), the bagpipe has gone through as many evolutions as human culture has. From its beginnings as a simple hollow reed to the Great Highland War Pipe of today, the pipes have been used by numerous cultures for numerous reasons and occasions. The first official historical records of it's use begin in the Middle Ages with payments to bagpipers who played at the king's court (Cannon 7). The use of the bagpipe as a source of entertainment began around this time, and started to impact the European culture. Around the 13th century, the bagpipe was at its height of popularity and was distributed over most of the continent of Europe (Cannon 1). During this period, the Plague was ravaging the European community, and the peasant life was anything but good. The bagpipe helped bring community life together in those hard times, and was truly considered the instrument of the people. Nothing can show this as well as the use of the bagpipe in literature.

Literature has made many references to the pipes throughout history, the oldest known reference being in the Bible itself. "Biblical mention is made of the bagpipe in Genesis and in the third chapter of Daniel where the 'symphonia' in Nebuchadnezzar's band is believed to be a bagpipe" (Worrall). This may not have any religious overtones, but implies that the bagpipe was either present during the occasion, or that it was popular when those particular passages were written. The bagpipe was probably called a "bagpipe" for many years, but was never mentioned as one for centuries. That was probably due to various common vernacular terms coming in conflict with one another over the years. The bagpipe was not actually referred to as a bagpipe until c.1386 when Chaucer wrote his "Canterbury Tales". In it he referred to "a bagpipe well couth he blowe and sown" (Worrall). From that point on, the common name for the bagpipe would actually be "bagpipe". If books were the entertainment of old, then the cinema is surely the next step for the bagpipes to take.

With the relatively recent advent of the motion picture, the bagpipe has made its presence known in by making choice appearances in various movies of critical acclaim. As they have been used for so much in history, movies have been made about the use of pipes in the field of war. In the movie *The Buccaneer*, a story about the Jean Lafitte and the Battle of New Orleans, the bagpipes were portrayed in an almost demonic way. "...But they soon hear the pipes, which slowly get closer, and closer, instilling fear into their listeners". A line of dialogue in the movie describes the use of pipes in warfare perfectly. As the American soldiers lay in wait, one of them mentions the pipes "sends shivers down your spine", to which an officer replies, "they're supposed to" (Williams). The title *Tunes of Glory* refers to the music of the bagpipe in war, as the movie is about

a Highland Regiment going to war with the pipes accompanying them (Williams). But as previously stated, the use of the bagpipes goes beyond that of just warfare. Comedy has proven time and time again to be a sign of the times. In the Steve Martin comedy, *L.A. Story*, a billboard that acts as a spiritual guide to Martin's character stated that it was a bagpipe in a previous life, while in the classic comedy *Casino Royale*, various characters were seen playing the bagpipes at various times. Even in the wildly popular television series *The Simpsons*, the character of Groundskeeper Willy has been shown playing the bagpipes on several episodes (Williams), thus showing that the bagpipes have still remained popular in the use of modern arts as opposed to the use of warfare. Even popular music has utilized the music of the bagpipe.

The use of bagpipes in modern popular music has been as widespread and diverse as the bagpipe itself. The classic hard-rock group AC/DC used the bagpipe in their song "Long Way To The Top" (AC/DC), and one of the most noted uses in the latest music scene has been the hard-rock group Korn. Utilizing the bagpipes in numerous songs, such as "Shoots and Ladders" and "Dead" (Korn), their use of the bagpipe is not in a so traditional way, but has been accepted on the popular music scene. On the independent scene, a Boston band by the name of The Dropkick Murphys have been utilizing the bagpipe on nearly every song that they produce, especially on their latest album "Sing Loud, Sing Proud" (Dropkick). Bagpipes seem to be finding their way into the popular music scene, but there is one music genre that has only one bagpiper in it. The jazz musician Rufus Harley is known as "The Pied Piper of Jazz", due to his unique use of the bagpipe in jazz jams. Starting in the 60's, Harley recorded a number of bagpipe jazz songs that have become cult classics, and

Rolling Stone magazine has said "that while instrument choice might have been a little wacky, the music he made on it was hardly a novelty" (Moon). If these bands and their music are any indication, the use of bagpipes in the popular music scene looks like its just beginning, and may have a brighter future ahead of itself.

Bagpipes have proven to be a versatile instrument. From being used in Ancient Rome to making appearances in the Christian Bible, to being used in the British Army to being used in popular rock music, the bagpipes have put their influence on both the world of war, and the world at large. All throughout it's history with culture, the bagpipe "[has been] an instrument whose growth and movement parallel civilizations and early history. It is a musical instrument which not only reflects our early history, but also the evolution of culture through history" (Worrall). That sums up the whole history of the bagpipe in that statement. Bagpipes have been at the side of humanity since it had enough time for leisure to create a musical instrument. Being present during some of humanity's darkest times, such as war, and also being used for some of the greatest creations man has produced, such as music, the bagpipe shall surely endeavor well into the future. As long as humans survive, there shall surely be a bagpipe at his side in some for or another. Whether it be used for good or evil, the bagpipe will always have an effect on the culture that it surrounds, weather it be in times of war or peace. "For 1,000 of years, as the sun would set nightly, the valley would echo with the ancient pipe, in peace and in war" (*Instrument*).

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