

The Boatman

(Fhir A Bhata)

Traditional Celtic/Rhonda Larson

Notes

No one knows for sure when or where this traditional melody first appeared, but it seems that the earliest historical record of it comes from Scotland, from the late 18th Century.

The original lyrics tell the story of a woman longing for her absent betrothed, a fisherman who has gone out to sea with his promise of return. "But oh! I fear for his remembrance", she sings. She asks passing boatmen if they have seen her lover: "They never tell me, I'm only chided and told my heart has been sore misguided...When shall I see thee? Today? Tomorrow? O do not leave me in lonely sorrow!" (Translation by Lachlan MacBean).

The lyrics are beautiful enough, but the real power of the music lies in its exquisite melody, perfectly capturing at once the longing, sorrow, and loving hopefulness of *The Boatman's* return.

I play the piece on a D crystal flute (recorded on my *Distant Mirrors* CD), which lends itself well, with its six simple holes, to the celtic idiom and the inherent mood of the piece. It can also be played beautifully on the Boehm system flute, keeping mindful that *The Boatman* is originally a celtic vocal song, which reminds us of which style to play the melody.

--Rhonda Larson
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You can hear *The Boatman* on Rhonda's **Distant Mirrors** CD, **Live from China** CD, and in a live performance with Rhonda in a medieval festival in Italy on YouTube

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