

SAVOURNA STEVENSON

Tickled Pink



MUSIC ON THE CELTIC HARP

with Aly Bain and Frank Usher



SAVOURNA STEVENSON was born south of Edinburgh in West Linton and now lives nearby in Peebles. She has been playing the Scottish small harp or clarsach since she was a child and has long been regarded as one of its leading exponents.

Her use of the clarsach as a strong virtuoso lead instrument has won her wide acclaim and she had already played and recorded with the Boys of the Lough, Dave Swarbrick, Sean O'Rourke and the Whistle Binkies before making this, her first solo album, in 1985.

Here she plays traditional tunes from Ireland, England, Scotland and Shetland and also includes several of her own new compositions for clarsach. Two of these – **Tickled Pink** and **Jalan** show the potential of the instrument beyond traditional music.

Since then Savourna has recorded more than half a dozen albums – several with rock and jazz musicians – and, while identifying strongly with her Scottish roots, she continues to break through stylistic barriers between traditional, world music, blues, jazz and classical.

Savourna plays clarsach on all tracks and is joined on selected tracks by Aly Bain on fiddle and by Frank Usher on acoustic guitar.

1. THE TRIP WE TOOK OVER THE MOUNTAINS

Aly Bain joins Savourna on fiddle for this lilting arrangement of a traditional Irish tune in waltz time. The tune is from the repertoire of the famous Irish Uilleann piper Willie Clancy of Miltown Malbay, County Clare.

2. PARTHENIA

This old English tune comes from a volume entitled *Maggot Pie* – a compilation of old English dance tunes reprinted from various early collections and published in 1932. Savourna is joined by Frank Usher on acoustic guitar.

3. MONAGHAN JIG

An Irish three part jig with a new fourth part added by Savourna. The piece has been double tracked to create a harp duet.

4. THE AULD NOOST/ DA AALD NOOST

A striking slow air composed by Ronald Jamieson from Shetland. Noost is the Shetland word for a rocky creek where boats can be pulled up.

5. JALAN

Composed for clarsach by Savourna. *Jalan* is the Indonesian word for motion: the effect of the piece is intended to represent the changing rhythmic patterns of a moving train.

6. THE HAG WITH THE MONEY/ SLEEPY MAGGIE

A jig and a reel. The first is Irish while the second is claimed by both Scotland and Ireland.

7. LAMENT FOR A BLIND HARPER

While working on a programme of stories and music with the story teller Barbara McDermitt, Savourna was inspired by the poem *Lament for Blind Lachlan* by the West Highland writer Sileas na Ceopaich. The slow air evolved as the musical centre-piece for a story based on the theme of a blind harper. Aly is again featured on fiddle.

8. THE DOWIE DENS O YARROW

Savourna's arrangement of one of several fine tunes for this ancient murder ballad whose title describes the valley of the Yarrow river in the Scottish borders.

9. TICKLED PINK

A marvellously evocative piece composed by Savourna who is accompanied here by Frank Usher on acoustic rhythm guitar.

10. LOGAN WATER

A beautiful Scottish slow air named after a river

in Dumfriesshire. The tune was already considered old when Robert Burns and his contemporary John Mayne the Dumfries poet both put words to it in the late 1700s. Aly's spirited playing gives great strength to the piece and Savourna adds her own free variations as a middle section.

11. THE SOUTH WIND

This fine tune is from the Northumbrian Pipers' Second Tune Book. Known also as a song it is however probably Irish.

12. MOLLY MacALPIN/ PLANXTY IRWIN

Molly MacAlpin is sometimes known as *Carolan's Dream* and often wrongly attributed to O'Carolan the famous Irish harper of the 17th century. The composer was William Connellan one of Carolan's predecessors born in 1645, and Carolan is known to have said he would rather have been the author of *Molly MacAlpin* than any melody he himself had ever composed. The second tune, *Planxty Irwin*, was however composed by Carolan for his patron Colonel John Irwin of Tanrego House, County Sligo.

13. SOUTH UIST SET: TILL AN CROADH, FAIGH AN CRODH/ CHA BHI MI 'GAD THALADH

Two tunes from Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*. The first, translated as *Turn the cattle, fetch the cattle*, is a milking song. The second, *A Tired Mother's Lullaby*, portrays an exhausted mother falling to sleep as she sings to her child. The final verse is played entirely on harmonics, and sections of both pieces are double tracked.

14. THE HIGH ROAD TO LINTON/ THE CHANTER'S TUNE

The first tune is a well known reel associated with the village of West Linton where Savourna was born. It is also a piece of Hebridean mouth music

or puit-a-beul. The second tune, given under its Irish title, was at one time used as a practice tune for the chanter. In Scotland it is usually known as *Follow my Highland Soldier*. The set finishes with Aly joining Savourna on a return trip down The High Road to Linton.

15. THE TRIP WE TOOK OVER THE MOUNTAINS

This extended version of Savourna and Aly's magnificent journey over the mountains has been extracted from the original 1985 Sony Betamax PCM F1 digital recordings.

Thanks to Margaret Shaw Campbell of Canna for permission to use tunes from her South Uist collection; to Professor William Gillies of the Department of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh for source material; to Colin Hood, Mark Liebschner and Roger Marriot for information and assistance, and to Peter and Juliet Norris for the coffee and cakes at Craigerne. Thanks also to the Scottish Arts Council and Basic Space Dance Theatre for commissioning the two works *Jalan* and *Tickled Pink*. Savourna's clarsach was made by her husband Mark of Mark Norris Harps, Peebles.

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Production: **Peter Shephard**
Photography: **Robin Gillanders**
Sleeve notes by **Savourna Stevenson** and **Peter Shephard**

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Savourna Stevenson

Tickled Pink

1. THE TRIP WE TOOK OVER THE MOUNTAINS 3.10
2. PARTHENIA 2.35
3. MONAGHAN JIG 2.22
4. THE AULD NOOST 2.22
5. JALAN 4.22
6. THE HAG WITH THE MONEY/ SLEEPY MAGGIE 1.56
7. LAMENT FOR A BLIND HARPER 3.40
- 8: THE DOWIE DENS O YARROW 2.46
9. TICKLED PINK 3.57
10. LOGAN WATER 4.10
11. THE SOUTH WIND 2.23
12. MOLLY MacALPIN/ PLANXTY IRWIN 3.36
13. SOUTH UIST SET 4.00
- TILL AN CROADH, FAIGH AN CRODH/
CHA BHI MI 'GAD THALADH
14. THE HIGH ROAD TO LINTON/ THE CHANTER'S TUNE 3.12
- 15: THE TRIP WE TOOK OVER THE MOUNTAINS 6.07

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