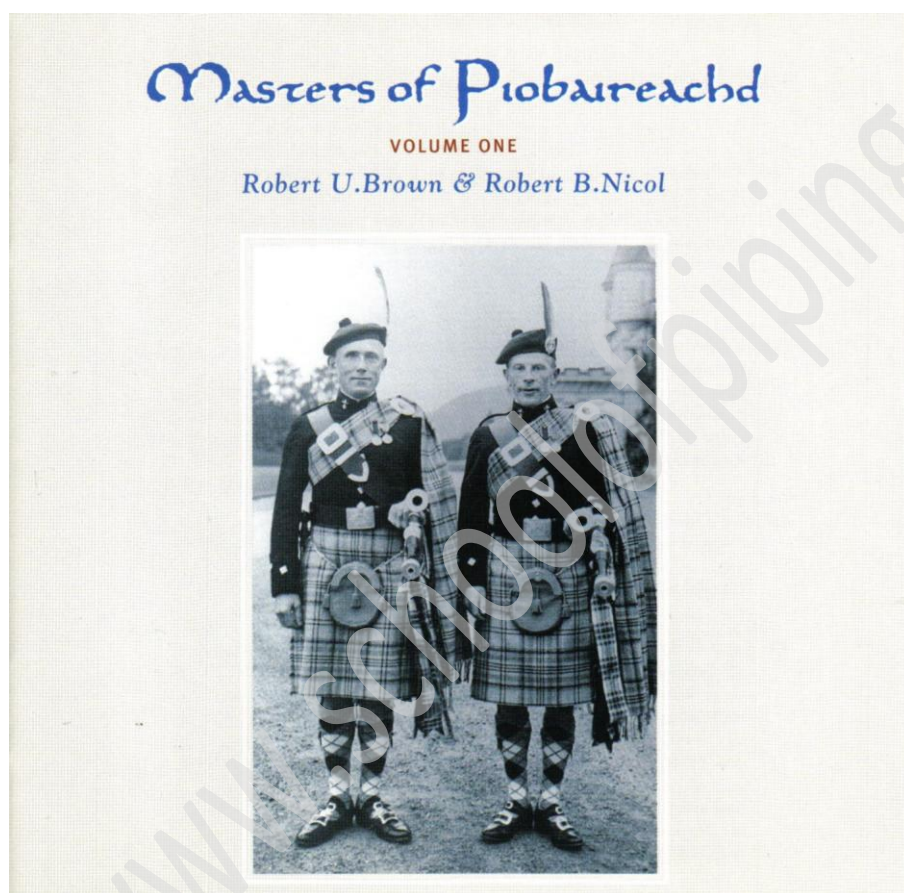


MASTERS OF PIOBAIREACHD SERIES – REVIEW

The “Masters of Piobaireachd” Volume 10 has now been released. This is the last in a 10 CD series of Piobaireachd Tuition, which has been compiled from recordings of Robert Brown and Robert Nicol. These two great pipers were employed on the Balmoral estate as ghillies and pipers and have become known as the “Bob’s of Balmoral”.

The two Bobs were sent to John MacDonald of Inverness, one of the best Piobaireachd authorities of his time to hone their skills. It is often during discussions on these recordings that you will hear them refer to “Old John”. Recordings of John MacDonald playing can be heard at www.schoolofpiping.com.

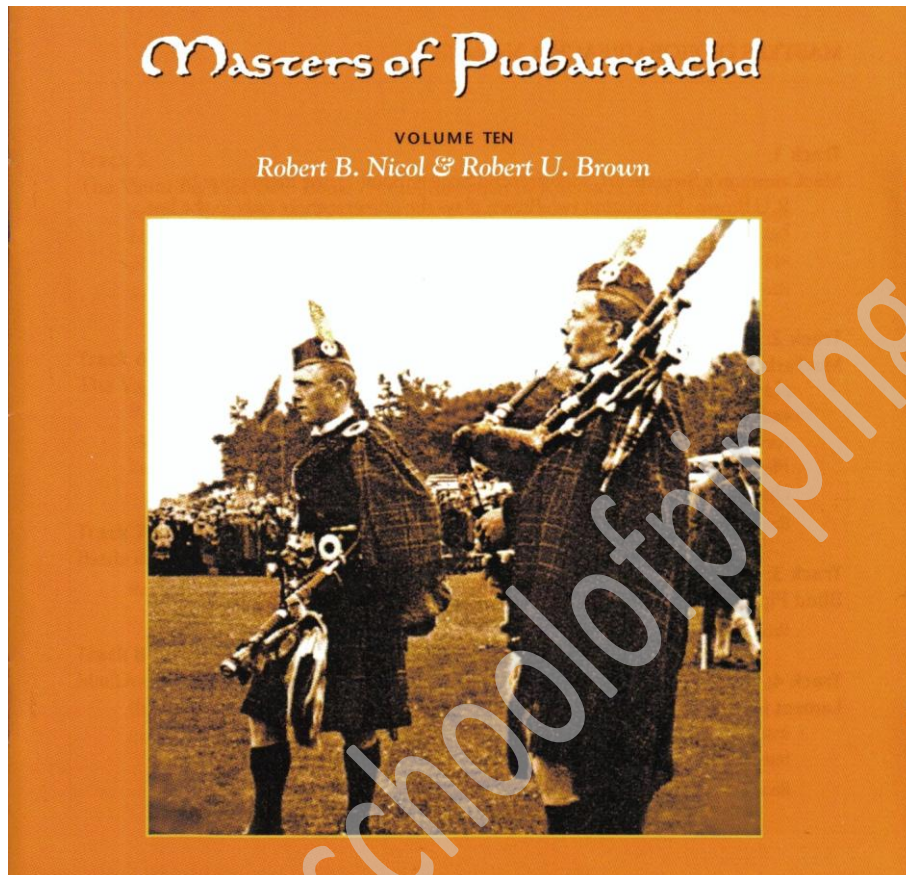


The series has both aural versions of the tunes and then a recording of either of the Bobs playing up on pipes. There are some good general discussions about Piobaireachd playing on a number of the discs. Some tunes are only ground and limited variations, and some have no playing reference at all. Not that this is a negative. I find it unfortunate that a couple of tunes in the series have limited or no aural presentation at all.

To the uninitiated, the recordings are very dated. They have been cleaned up and are pleasant to listen to, but nothing like the quality of modern recordings. On a negative, I have heard better recordings of both players on some of the tunes. Perhaps, given that these were radio broadcasts or rare recordings they probably would not have been available to the compilers.

Many of the pipers of today tend to play safe with Piobaireachd and play some of the music “straight through” with little variation given to nuances in the music. Many of these nuances are expressed brilliant by Brown and Nicol and should be studied by the avid student of Piobaireachd.

Even as a novice the discussions on playing and the inclusion of simpler tunes are a resource that should not be overlooked.



In all a total of 80 piobaireachd are presented in the series. Ranging from tuition in Nicol’s home, where his clock can be heard in the background through to the 1972 Seminars that Brown ran here in Adelaide. This is an historical treasure trove that I would urge anyone even remotely interested in piobaireachd to invest in. I hope it has been a success for the producers and a resource that we will see on the shelves for a long time to come. I am only sad the series has come to an end. The last volume does not disappoint with such great tunes (among others) as MacCrimmon’s Sweetheart, The Vaunting and MacDougall’s Gathering presented.

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