2015

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2/4 MARCHES

A Workshop Guide to Playing the Competitive March

Atlanta Workshops - 2015

Effectively Playing a 2/4 March

The 2/4 March is atop the "March food chain" for pipers. These 4 parted tunes are used to display a piper's proficiency and dexterity in competition. As John MacLellan once stated in the International Piper Magazine, the 2/4 march was created by the piper for his own listening enjoyment. For this reason, you see very few used in pipe band sets for street parades. Their tempo is somewhat slower and the rhythms are far superior and more difficult to master than those of the 4/4 or 3/4 march. As a result, many players, unless they are considering competition just never get to the 2/4 march. This is a shame as they are missing lovely melodies and rhythms. The RSPBA (Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association) a few years ago realized that the quality of pipe band March playing was not improving. Consequently, they instituted a means of rectifying the situation by having all lower grade bands play a medley of 2/4 marches. Progress for most bands wasn't instantaneous, but it did come after a couple of seasons in the program (called the Music Appreciation Program or MAP).

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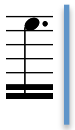
For the piper to master a 2/4 march, several skills are important:

- **A working knowledge of arpeggios**
- **An understanding of pulsing and phrasing**
- **Rhythmic execution of all embellishments**

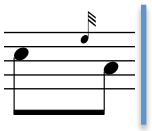
There are some rules that might help. Using pulse lines (as in the example to follow), place a pulse line after:

- **Each dotted note**

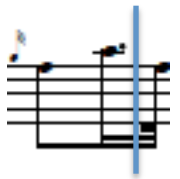


- **Each ¼ note**

- **Each pair of even 1/8th notes**



- **For three note beat groupings, pulse to the dotted note**



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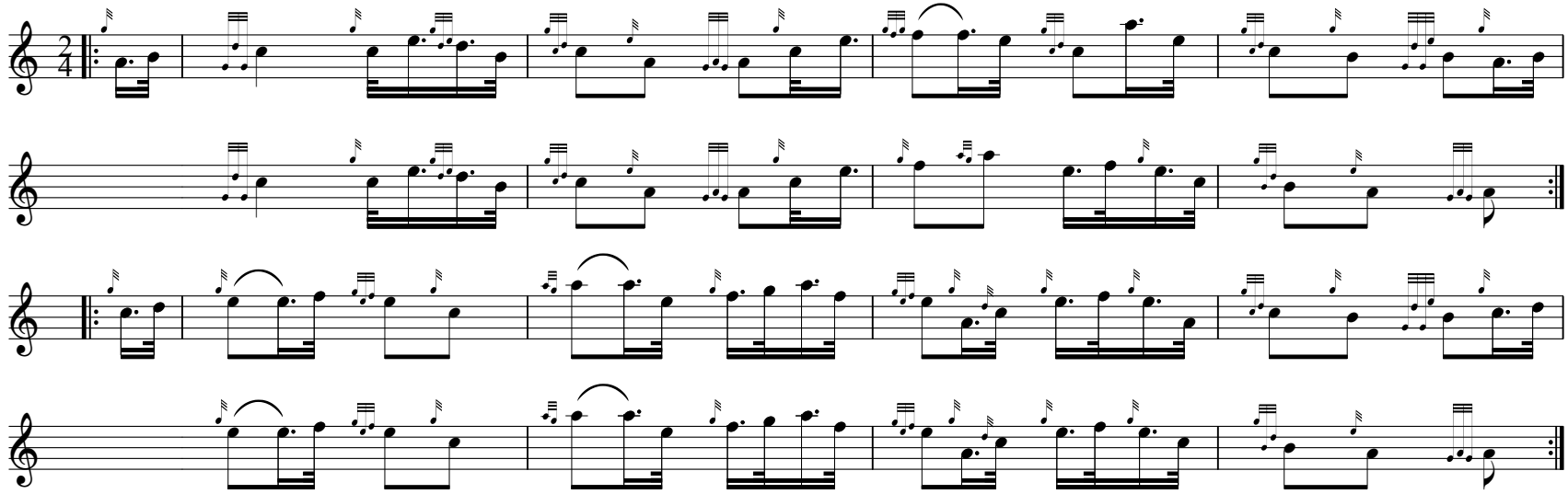
The Atholl and Breadalbane Gathering

March

Wm Fergusson
As played by Alasdair Gillies



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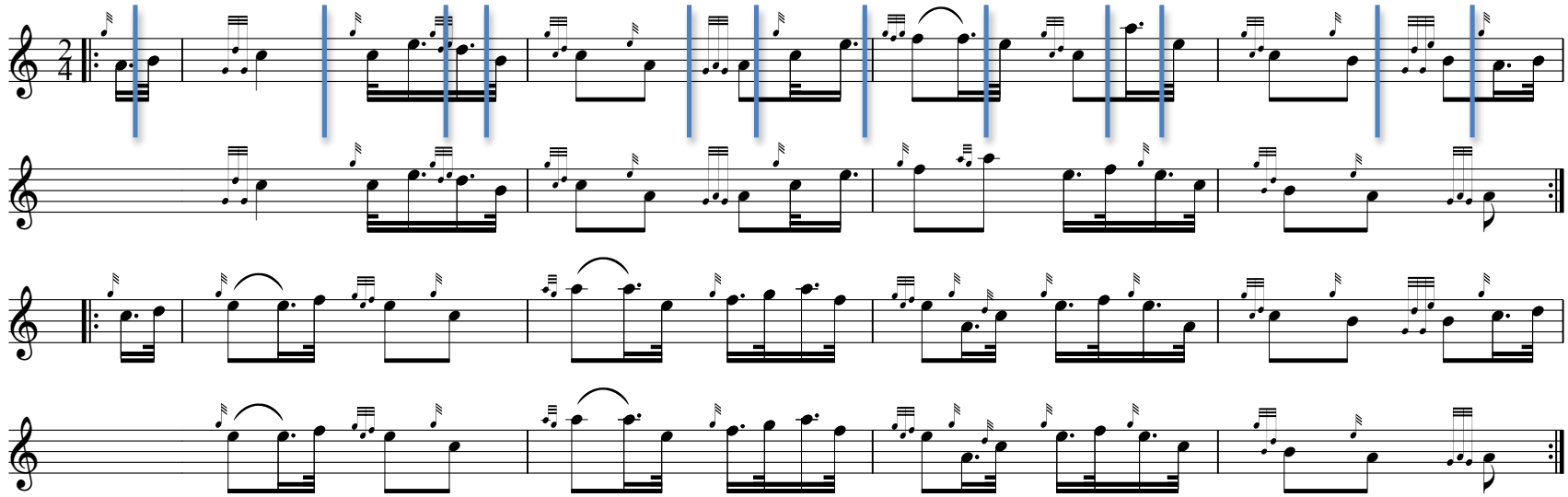

Two bar phrasing is essential in all 2/4 Marches

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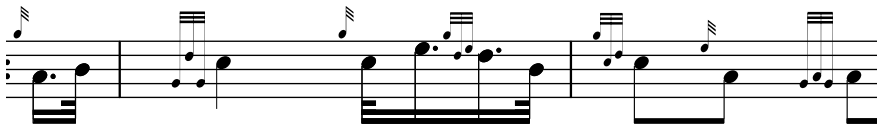
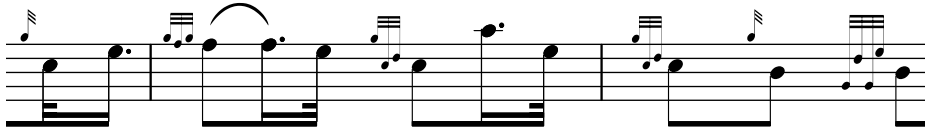
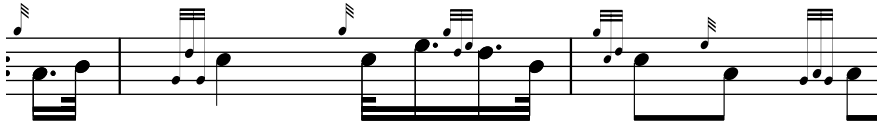


A



B



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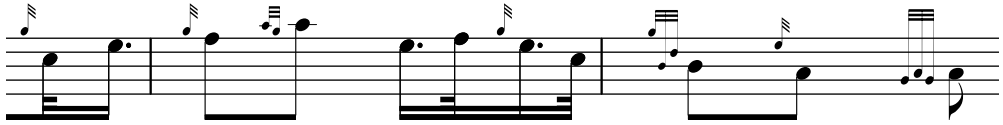


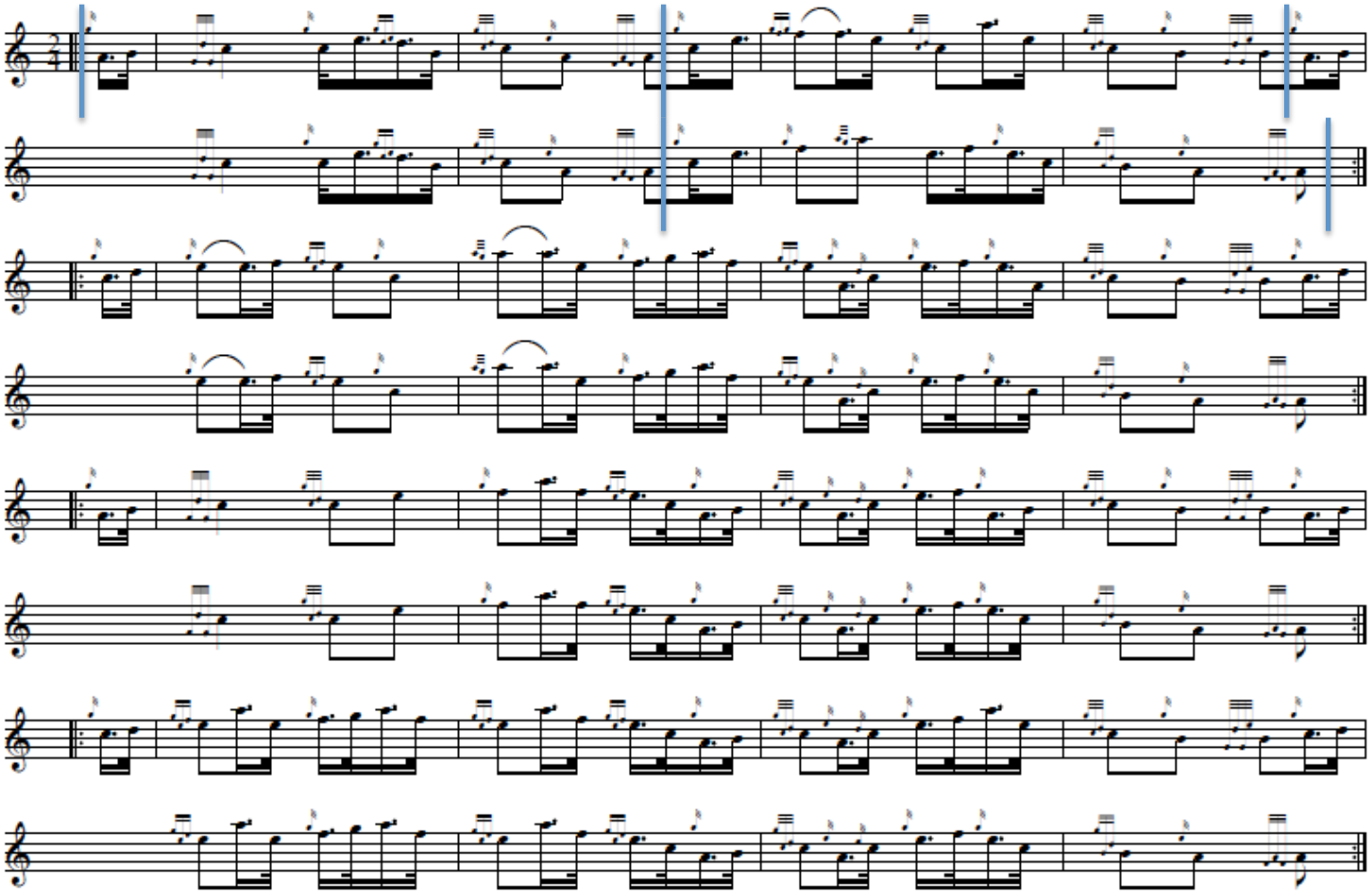
ENDING or Summary Phrase

And now for the complete score followed by a new tune from Willie McCallum, Bearsden, Scotland and another match played by the Shotts and Dykehead from the pen of Dr. Bruce Thomson.

The Atholl and Breadalbane Gathering

March

Wm Fergusson
As played by Alasdair Gillies



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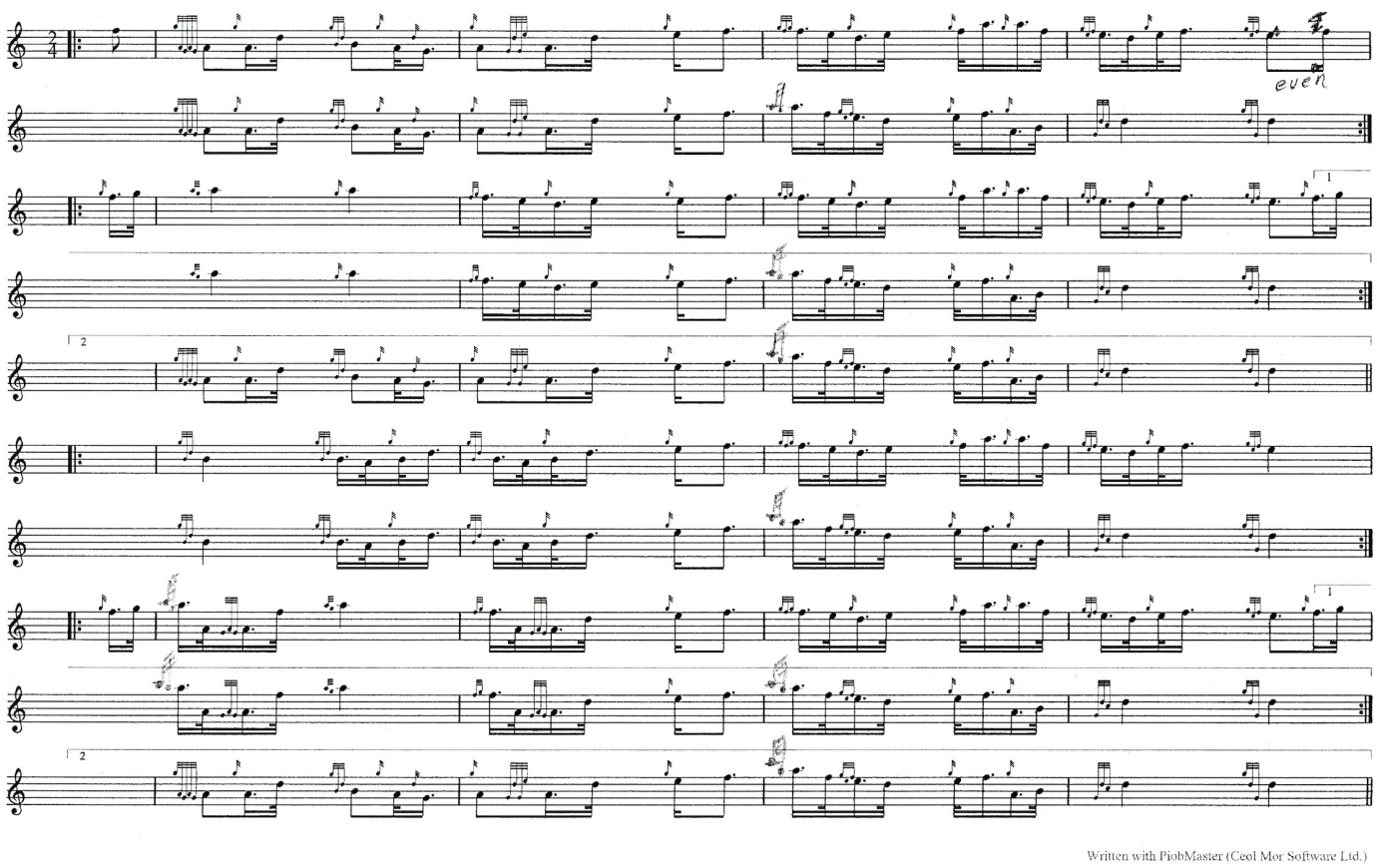
Willie McCallum Senior's March

March

Willie McCallum Jnr



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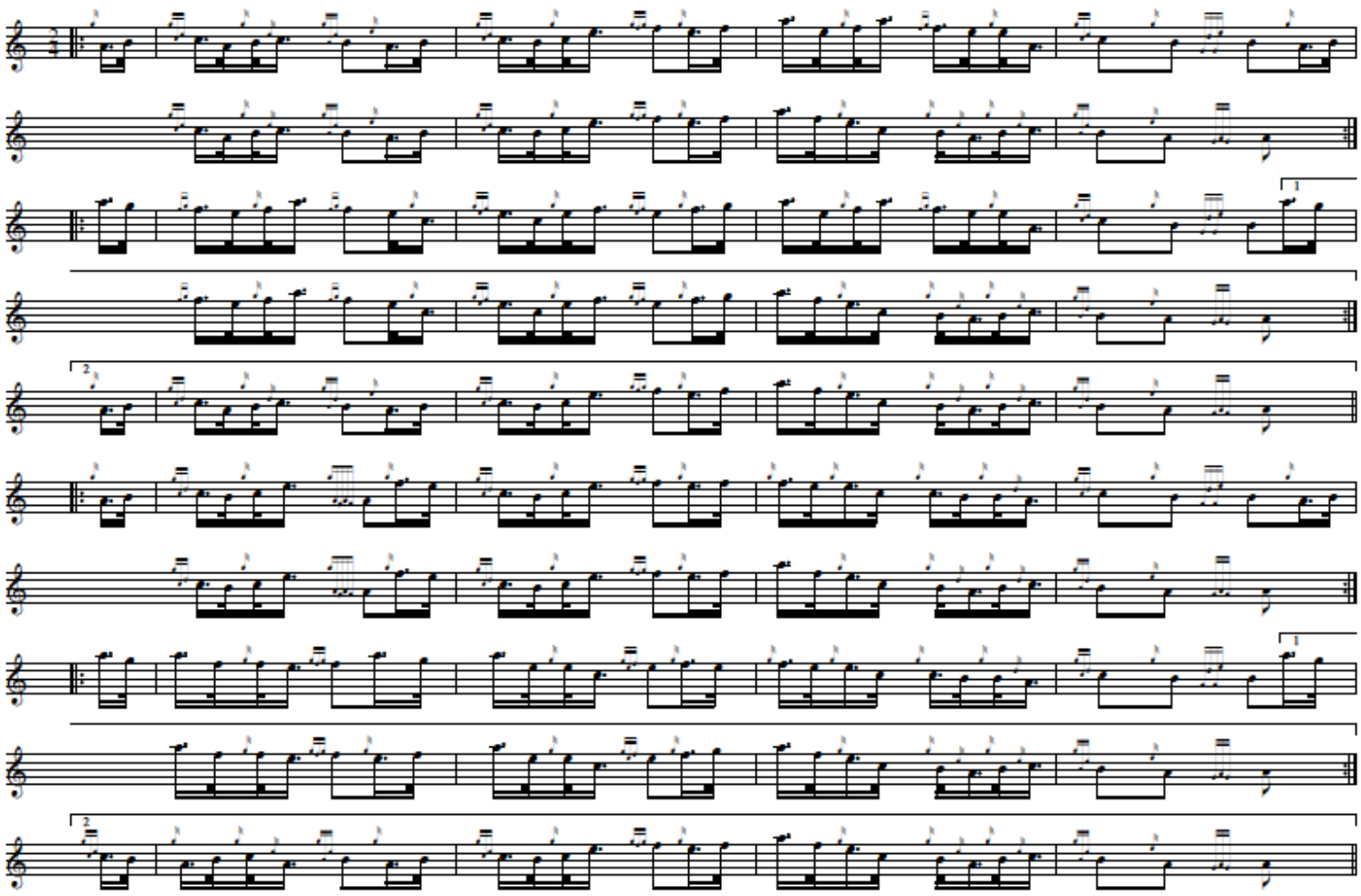
Tommy MacDonald of Barguillean

March.

Dr. Bruce E. Thomson.
As played by Alasdair Gillies.



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