

Thomas Hook



Musician, songwriter, historian, Tom Hook hails from the Midwest. Growing up in the hills of Clay County, Missouri, he spent much of his childhood watching the Missouri River make its sweeping turn past Kansas City heading northwest across the Great Plains towards the Rockies. Everyday journeys took him across the Lewis and Clark trail and through the boyhood haunts of Frank and Jesse James.

Consequently, at an early age he developed a deep passion for American history. Coupled with that was a consuming love for music. Beginning the piano at age three, he studied classically throughout his boyhood, eventually attending the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. However, his true passion has always been for American folk music. As a

child, his mother's family would gather into the "old home place" every Sunday for dinner and an afternoon session of old-time picking. It was then, learning songs from generations past, that Tom discovered the link that music offers to times long forgotten.

As a young man, Tom began working aboard the steamboats that plied the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, all the while absorbing the wealth of history and music from America's heartland. Later employment with the Walt Disney Company gave Tom access to even more resources. Through his studies and travels, he has developed a deep interest in American history and simultaneously, the music that personifies it. He is an ardent student of American popular and folk music in its many forms: the "war" music of the American Revolution, the Civil War, both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam. The "country" music of Appalachia, the Ozarks, the Far West, and the Delta South. The "urban" music of Ragtime, Jazz, Blues, Swing, Broadway, Rock and Roll. Railroad songs, Cowboy songs, Steamboat songs, Sharecroppers songs, Pop hits... the list is as endless and varied as America herself. Simply put, Tom Hook is a student of American music.

Notes from the Composer:

I would like to begin by expressing my elation for being involved with another John Tiller project. The opportunity to incorporate historically authentic music into a military strategy game has a great appeal for me. As a music historian, I am often appalled by the "Hollywood" penchant for slapping music, seemingly at random, into a film score regardless of its actual relationship to the subject matter. Film is an incredibly powerful medium, and as a result, the

average audience member will accept it as an absolute. I believe that military game players are very serious about their subject matter, so I have tried to avoid the “Hollywood” syndrome. Without exception, the tunes in this game are based on the actual fife and drum literature of the British and Continental Armies (my fondest thanks to Pat Doyle of Walt Disney World Entertainment, and John Tiller for providing me with a wealth of authentic literature). In each instance where embellishment has been used, it has been done utilizing the appropriate tambour for instruments of the period. For example, fife, drum, keyed bugle, oboe, clarinet, harpsichord, pianoforte, organ, guitar, fiddle, bass, and accordion are in ample supply. Tabla, sitar, cymbal, and bagpipe, burrain, and Celtic flute make an appearance. I’ve even managed to work in a little glass armonica on “Over the Hills and Far Away” (Armonica was the synthesizer of the late 18th century; a system of rotating crystal discs that one played with moist fingertips It was a favorite passion of Thomas Jefferson, invented by Benjamin Franklin)

I have in many instances created a little scenario in my mind and tried to recreate musically what might have happened on any given day during the War of 1812. A fifer and drummer might strike up an impromptu duet with a couple of privates on their guitars, accordions, concertinas, whatever. I’ve regimental fife and drum commands intermingled with popular tunes of the day. I have tried to present the music as it might have been played in the parlor, at the campfire, or on the parade ground. I have also tried to keep the playing styles consistent with what was happening in the music world in the early 1800’s.

I have tried to include a balance of music from some of the different national elements involved in the conflict:

Songs like “**Rule Britannia, Duke of York, and British Grenadier**” are obviously British. “**Johnny Has Gone For a Soldier**” is Irish in origin, and could appeal to either side fighting in the war. “**Some Distance From Prussia**” is dedicated to the Hessian mercenaries of the Revolutionary War. A new wrinkle for me was adding the Oriental variations to the “**Turkish March**”, heralding the addition of Janissary music with its attendant cymbals and rhythms to the British Military lexicon.

(It appears to have become very popular in the British army of the early 19th century. There are records that when the 104th New Brunswick regiment could not find Turkish musicians, they substituted soldiers of African ancestry, in Turkish dress, to play the part.)

On the American side, I have placed” **Hull’s Victory**, and of course “**Yankee Doodle**”. So much of the other material presented could really belong to either army. Tunes like “**Soldier’s Joy**” and “**Captain Macintosh**” were as popular in Britain as they were in the United States. Indeed, songs like “**Over the Hills and Far Away**” (1706) and “**The Girl I left Behind Me**” (1758) were popular with the British soldiers fighting Napoleon.

The inclusion of “**MacPherson’s Lament**” as the “draw” selection for this game features one of the most poignant melodies in all of British/American literature. Appealing to the Hibernian ancestry of so many of the combatants, its winsome

refrain implies the futility of a drawn combat, when so much is sacrificed for so little gain.

I hope that you, the game player, will feel the “link” with the past that these tunes provide. I hope it will open a “musical window” to a time when the fledgling American nation once again faced the steel of the mighty British Empire.

Tom Hook

For more information, contact:
Thomas Hook at THook88295@aol.com.