

Auld Lang Syne - the Words and Practices.

I make no apology for including this information on the web site. It is my view that there is a general lack of knowledge regarding the words and practices surrounding the performance of Auld Lang Syne at the end of an evening.

Apart from the experience of standing beside a fellow dancer at the end of a dance to overhear a tuneless mouthing of wrong words I have also come across web sites from expatriot Scots providing incorrect information.

There are also a number of individuals who take a very superior attitude to anyone admitting that they do not know the words, and/or their order, for Auld Lang Syne and who are very quick to attempt to make a fool of anyone who makes such an admission. Trust me - most people in Scotland know the procedures but many find the order of the words a bit tricky!

I also composed the article to speak on behalf of, and in defence of, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who was terribly wronged recently on a Channel 5 television show entitled '100 Greatest Cock-ups' where, as best I can recall, the top 100 public gaffes by prominent personalities throughout the previous year were selected and screened by Channel 5. The Queen was shown to be at an apparent loss about what to do when Auld Lang Syne was performed at the end of a right royal European occasion, which included all the European Heads of State including our Tony (Blair), regarding the holding of hands. The Queen wanted to join nearer hands at the beginning of the rendition of Auld Lang Syne when all others at the event wanted to cross hands. Her attempt to 'get it right' was met with howls of derision from the television programme commentator and production team who clearly thought that this was another example of how 'out of touch' H.M. was with respect to the common people.

However Brenda was correct - ALL the others were wrong!

The first time I saw the show I just noted Channel 5's error but on the second showing of this programme some weeks later on the same channel I was driven to email Channel 5 pointing out the only 'cock-up' in this case was their Channel 5 'cock-up'! Three weeks passed without the courtesy of a reply so I copied the email to the Buckingham Palace website! Three days later, much to my surprise and amusement, I received a full apology from Channel 5 for their tardiness and an acknowledgement of their error!

All sources of information are provided - I take no credit for anything other than attempting to establish 'common practice' based on my own experience and on the best information sources I can find.

At an Evening's End - after a Ball or a formal or special evening of dance - the company will form a circle and join hands to sing/perform Auld Lang Syne. If the room cannot accommodate one large circle, two circles, one inside the other, can be formed).

On most occasions only two of the five verses are sung (full versions are available via the links below).

The Words

Verse 1

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?

Chorus

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

Verse 5

And there's a hand my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.

Chorus

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

The Practices

The custom is as follows:-

All those present form one large circle round the dance floor and with nearer hands joined, swinging right hand forward and left hand backwards alternately, sing verse 1 followed by the chorus as shown above

then all cross hands to sing verse 5 (verses 2,3 and 4 are normally omitted) whilst moving arms rhythmically up and down to the beat of the music

then with arms still crossed everyone sings the final chorus and during the last two lines of the final chorus all advance and retire twice into centre of hall and back out

(on the last two bars of music many people will pull back their right shoulders turning under their own arms to face out).

Source Information Details.

The most accurate and informative source I have come across is Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auld_Lang_Syne

Alasdair Graham sent me this link - try the karaoke option!!

Don't bother signing in - just click on 'Auld Lang Syne karaoke' in the centre of the page.

<http://www.hogmanay.net/history/karaokeauldlangsyne>

Derek Petrie

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