

British Folk Music

The melody:

- Folk melodies are often based on the pentatonic scale or a mode. However, lots of folk music uses regular major keys
- Compound rhythms (give the music a skipping feel) are used a lot in folk tunes. The folk example on your CD is compound duple time.
- No modulation (change of home note) within a verse, but sometimes there may be a key change between verses.
- A narrow range of notes is used. The music doesn't go from very low to very high.
- There are not a lot of huge leaps or complicated running passages.
- Each line or phrase often begins on an anacrusis.

The structure:

- Songs are strophic (in verses, often no choruses, each verse has the same tune).
- Verses are often 4 lines long

The context:

- Folk music is an oral tradition – verses all the same and based on a small amount of material makes the music easier to remember
- Folk music was meant for everyone to participate in, so the tunes weren't all that difficult to perform and music wasn't written for large groups of performers. Also instruments were relatively inexpensive and easy to carry eg. accordion, mouth organ, violin, bagpipes and (in the old days) pipe & tabor (a recorder and drum played at the same time).
- Folk music is traditionally heard informally at outdoor gatherings like a fair or in a pub or at folk festivals. In the old days folk music replaced telly and radio for entertainment.
- Folk songs tell stories or record events.

Different voice types: soprano (high lady); alto (low lady); tenor (high man); baritone or bass (low man).