



# DRIVING THE BOW

fiddle and dance studies  
from around the north atlantic 2

edited by ian russell and mary anne alburger

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# The Elphinstone Institute

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to study, conserve, and promote the culture of North-East and Northern Scotland.

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## Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 2

Edited by

Ian Russell and Mary Anne Alburger

The Elphinstone Institute  
University of Aberdeen  
2008

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## Connecting cultures

IAN RUSSELL and MARY ANNE ALBURGER

This volume represents what has become a fascinating journey, and one that may prove to have lasting qualities. In 2001 and 2006 the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) was held in Aberdeen, Scotland. A third convention takes place this year in St. John's, Newfoundland, with two further conventions planned for 2010 and 2012. The current volume, the second in the series, is the direct result of the 2006 convention, its theme being 'Connecting Cultures', the fundamental vision behind the conception of NAFCo. Of course, the cultures that were connected were not simply those of nationality, ethnicity, or community, but also those of academia and performance. How often at a scholarly gathering dedicated to folk, ethnic, or traditional music, have the participants burst out of their academic straitjackets, deserted their ivory towers, and shared with others, late into the night, the music that has encouraged them to pursue a lifetime of study? And how often at a folk or world music festival have participants debated into the small hours the merits and demerits of a particularly innovatory act in terms of authenticity and traditionality? This thinking helped to forge the idea behind NAFCo, thereby bringing together two sides of the same coin, those who practise fiddle music, and those who preach it. In every way this has proved to be a successful formula in terms of all aspects of cultural and intellectual exchange, not the least of which has been the emergence and recognition of the performer-scholars and the important contributions that they have made to our understanding of the subject's complexities.

The 2006 keynote speaker, Alan Jabbour, whose finely crafted lecture is presented here, exemplifies the stance of the performer-scholar. He persuasively argues for a conception of North American fiddle music, using his case study of the Upper South, that places it in historical terms as 'a cousin to', rather than 'a descendant of', related fiddle traditions in the Old World. Exploring stylistic markers of form (tune contour) and style (syncopation), he discusses the cultural connections that he believes have been responsible. Cultural complexity is not an area that daunts our second performer-scholar, Gaila Kirdienė, whose thorough examination of two West Lithuanian traditions not only brings out stylistic connections with maritime traditions, including Scandinavian, but also shows the eastern European continental



influences that spread, for example, from Poland. Her study assesses the impact of ensembles and amateur groups, as well as more classical semi-professional string orchestras, in the development of the two traditions.

From historical perspectives of fiddle cultures, our next three studies detail the contributions of three notable players, together with the social milieus of which they were a part. Katherine Campbell's account of George Riddell (1853–1942), a shoemaker from a small North-East Scottish coastal town and a keen song and tune collector, shows how traditional music permeated formalised community groups (here Freemasonry), and moved between musical contexts, specifically the local fife band and its marching music. Undoubtedly less formal, but equally significant in terms of fraternities, is the institution of morris dancing, in the context of the English South-West Midlands, where fruit grower Sam Bennett (1865–1951) played for the Ilmington Morris Men, as well as performing social dance music. Elaine Bradtke approaches her study through Bennett's playing, with information given by folk music collectors (in notation and in field recordings), and in comparison with two other contemporary morris dance musicians. Eoghan Neff is able to draw more extensively on field recordings for his study of the remarkable fiddler, John Doherty (1895–1986), who was a (Gypsy) Traveller, and an itinerant whitesmith, from Donegal in the north of Ireland. Neff's analysis of Doherty's stylistic creativity in crossing the boundaries of melodic structure causes him to question the rigidity of current Irish musicians' interpretations of the received aesthetic conventions.

The questioning of revivalist, post-revivalist, and re-constructionists' representations of the musical traditions they endeavour to promote is a theme taken up by Karin Eriksson in a Swedish context. Her subject is the neglect shown to the dance/musical form known as *engelska* ('English'), generally thought to relate to the English country dance of the seventeenth century, with eighteenth-century French influences, danced to music that connects to the Scottish and English reel. Mats Nilsson also takes up the theme of *engelska* in contemporary Swedish folk dance, which he situates alongside the whirling *polska*, and the nineteenth century couple dances, the polka and the waltz. His conclusions point towards the inappropriateness of national or political boundaries in categorising folk dance.

Catherine A. Shoupe's exploration of Scottish dance music examines in depth a concern voiced elsewhere in this volume, the dichotomy between dance music played for dancing and dance music played for listening, in terms of choreometrics, dynamics, and fitness for the purpose, and considers how this divide is being bridged. Faced with a similar dilemma, performer-scholar Matt Cranitch turns his attention to contemporary Irish folk music, where he detects a diminution of rhythmic distinctiveness, resulting from young fiddlers (and their teachers) never having had the experience of playing for dancing. In a detailed discussion he identifies an insatiable appetite for new repertoire, and inadequate articulation with the bow, to be the root of the problem. Pat Ballantyne similarly reflects on a dichotomy, between old-style and new-style Cape Breton step dancing. She identifies innovations in the dance in response to changing aesthetics, both in terms of fiddle

playing and audience expectations, that exist alongside a fundamental respect for the more rooted 'close to the floor' style.

The strong identification with the 'old' and mixed feelings for the 'new' in fiddle traditions is a theme taken up by George Ruckert in his sensitive step into the world of the remarkable septuagenarian Cape Breton fiddler and tune writer John Campbell. The reader is given an insight into the profound changes that have taken place in Cape Breton fiddle music, particularly through the introduction of amplification and the development of complex piano accompaniments. Of one thing John is certain, however, that, when it comes to the dance, 'You've got to drive 'er', hence the title for this collection. This affectionate portrait is followed by a younger man's perspective on the thorny question of authenticity in Cape Breton fiddle style. Gregory J. Dorchak argues that a dynamic notion of authenticity that responds to the performer and audience community's evolving aesthetics is preferable to one that restricts evolution through the imposition of rigid standards.

It is appropriate that the volume concludes with two studies of contemporary fiddling from contrasting Canadian environments. The first, by Sherry Johnson, explores the competitive scene in Ontario, both as an insider, as a former competitor, and judge, and as outsider researcher, assessing how creativity and individuality is manifested in tags, intros, ornamentation, bowing, and melodic variation. Elisa Sereno-Janz's article, set in Calgary, portrays a constructed world of fiddle playing that is neither competitive nor judgemental, where players from different backgrounds, of varying abilities, and across the generations, perform together, in an informal string orchestra, playing arrangements of folk music alongside baroque favourites by Bach, Corelli, and Telemann. Such experiments in ensemble playing are clearly designed to break down real and imagined musical and social barriers.

All of our contributors demonstrate the great value of informed debate that connects performers and scholars across national, regional, and local cultures. Questions of cultural politics and authenticity have been discussed, alongside those of aesthetics in both fiddle music and dance. The individual performer's creativity has been recognised and analysed, and the contesting forces of continuity and change debated in the arena of musical tradition. If rhythm is acknowledged as the defining feature of different fiddle styles around the North Atlantic, then it is appropriate that the significance of the bow is brought into focus, for, as Matt Cranitch observes, bowing is not merely about sounding the notes correctly, rather it articulates with sensitivity and power the essential function and meaning of the music.

*We would like to thank the authors for their contributions; participants in the 2006 North Atlantic Fiddle Convention for providing a forum for the ideas developed in the book; Thomas A. McKean for the typesetting and cover artwork; the peer reviewers for their thoughtful comments; Frances Wilkins for help with the bibliography; and the Elphinstone Institute and the University of Aberdeen for giving the volume an imprint.*

## Fiddle tunes of the old frontier

ALAN JABBOUR

Professor Holger Nygard's ballad seminar at Duke University in 1963<sup>1</sup> inspired me to launch a project two years later to document and study traditional fiddling in the American Upper South (North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia). Over several years I made field recordings of older traditional fiddlers, transcribed their tunes and bowing patterns, and poured over comparative data in the form of manuscripts, print publications, and published and archival sound recordings from the United States and the British Isles. I had been trained classically on the violin as a youth, so I not only collected recordings but also apprenticed myself with my new masters. In short, I became both a student of fiddling and a fiddler.

My original quest was to document the fiddling of the Upper South, and in my comparative studies I sought to uncover the history and derivation of the tradition I encountered. The region of my work stretched from the North Carolina Piedmont westward and north-westward into the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and Virginia, the Alleghany Mountains of western Virginia, and the Alleghany Plateau of West Virginia. Within this larger region I found many tunes and tune forms that could also be encountered in the northern United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland. But I also encountered a large and vigorous repertory that seemed to be born in and confined to the region where I was working, as well as an array of stylistic elements that seemed distinctive. The distinctive repertory and style suggested what I might have guessed anyway: that the Upper South is a distinctive cultural region in the world of fiddling. This repertory and style seemed concentrated in the Piedmont and Appalachian regions of North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as the trans-Appalachian West. I came to think of it as associated with the old frontier of westward expansion in the Upper South of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, hence the title of this essay, 'Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier'.<sup>2</sup>

Originally my mental model to explain the history of the fiddling I encountered was much like most people's model. I assumed that fiddling originated in the British Isles and was brought to what is now the United States in the eighteenth century.

The repertory, I presumed, was imported from the Old World – though, of course, additions to the repertory were composed later in America. The style, likewise, was British and Irish, though doubtless there were later stylistic developments that bore the American brand. Essentially, I viewed the fiddling I was recording from older Southern fiddlers in the 1960s as a lineal descendant from British originals – as echoes of the Old World with a lively admixture from the New.

In time, as I documented the fiddling from the Upper South more broadly and immersed myself extensively in early publications and manuscripts of fiddle tunes, my mental model began to change. The ideas with which I had begun my quest no longer seemed adequate to explain the evidence, and a new cultural model began to emerge in my mind that better explained what I had encountered. This paper is an account of that new model. Perhaps I can explain it best by listing a series of points where the original model and the evidence were at odds with each other.

### **1. Dating of repertoire**

I had imagined that the instrumental music tradition I was exploring dated back at least to the seventeenth century in the British Isles. But the body of evidence seemed to stretch back only to the last half of eighteenth century, at which point there was a kind of cultural curtain. Beyond the curtain, instrumental folk music seemed different. To be sure, there were a few gossamer threads that dated from before the curtain – a few tunes, like ‘Greensleeves,’ that survived from the Renaissance into the modern era. But, by and large, the tunes from before the mid-eighteenth century had a different character from the tunes after that point, and hardly any of the tunes from that earlier era survived in modern tradition. By contrast, any number of tunes from the late eighteenth century are still played today – tunes like ‘Soldier’s Joy,’ ‘Fisher’s Hornpipe,’ ‘McLeod’s Reel,’ and ‘Lord McDonald’s Reel,’ that have not only survived but can be described as the very backbone of the latter-day fiddle repertory.<sup>3</sup>

The late eighteenth century turned out to be a revolutionary period for instrumental folk music, as it was revolutionary for so many other elements in our civilization. The new style of instrumental music that emerged included 6/8-time jigs and 4/4-time reels that accompanied group dances, and also a new class of 4/4-time tunes called ‘hornpipes’ that accompanied solo ‘fancy’ or exhibition step dances.<sup>4</sup> A typical tune had two parts or ‘strains,’ each of which was repeated.

The favoured instrument for this music revolution was the modern Italian-style violin, which had spread northward through Europe in the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> In the eighteenth century, a number of manufactories for making violins sprang up in Germany, France, and England,<sup>6</sup> and they had the effect of democratizing the violin, making it available not just to professional or guild musicians but to people from all walks of life. So I am inclined to attribute the revolution in instrumental music to the advent of the modern violin, as a widely diffused new instrument, combined with the general revolutionary spirit of the later eighteenth century in the British Isles and colonies.

## **2. Fiddle traditions**

I had originally imagined that fiddle music was first developed in the British Isles, and then exported to the New World. Thus we could think of the British tradition as an ancestor of the American tradition, just as the American ballad tradition derived from British balladry. But once I realized that the modern instrumental tradition dated from the last half of the eighteenth century, rather than earlier, I had to acknowledge that all the modern regional styles of instrumental music in the English-speaking world seemed with one or two exceptions to date back to the same period.<sup>7</sup> This included not only the English, Scottish, and Irish traditions, but the New World traditions as well. American tune collections in published or manuscript form date from as early as the late eighteenth century – hardly later than the British written record.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, some American instrumental tunes that can be dated as early as the end of the eighteenth century seem to have originated here in America. If there was any time lag at all between the Old World and New World flowering of this new class of fiddle tunes, it was surely no more than a generation. And though the cultural flow at first seemed to be primarily from Europe to the New World, one has to acknowledge simultaneity in the timing, as if every region of the English-speaking world within a generation embraced the same instrumental music revolution.

But each region came up with its own version of the revolution, containing its own special repertory and its own performance style. In effect, the revolution was pan-regional, but at the same time it was regionally branded. The Scottish version of the revolution led to what we now think of as the Golden Age – the period associated with the classic Scottish instrumental repertory and style. The Irish version likewise had its own tunes and styles, and the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions had their distinctive features. Rather than seeming like ancestors and descendants, these various regional traditions came to seem more like cultural cousins – differing among themselves, but all related and all born of the same generation.

The tradition of the Upper South, which had been the original object of my focus, seemed at first to present a slightly different case. In the Northern states there were always some fiddlers who could read music, but fiddlers in the Southern states were rarely music-readers. Thus the print and manuscript record was absent for most of the nineteenth century, except for publications from the minstrel stage, which contained a hard-to-sort-out mixture of Southern folk music and new popular compositions. But then I discovered a collection of tunes entitled *Virginia Reels*, published in Baltimore in 1839, before the rise in popularity of the minstrel stage.<sup>9</sup> The collection was assembled by George P. Knauff, who was then serving as a music master and proprietor of a 'Music and Fancy Store' in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Knauff clearly did not compose the tunes; rather, he compiled the collection by transcribing local fiddle tunes and adding a simple left-hand accompaniment. His young lady students on piano could thus practice piano using tunes they might already have heard locally. A good half of the tunes in this 1839 publication from Southside Virginia are tunes I recorded from older fiddlers well over a century later.

A few are of British origin or have Northern analogues, but the many tunes and titles of purely Virginia vintage suggest that there was a well established fiddle tradition in the Upper South, with its own characteristic repertory and tune contours, by the early nineteenth century. Thus I came to believe that the Upper South, too, was one of the cultural cousins of the instrumental music revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

### **3. Bowing style**

I had supposed that the repertory and style in the Upper South were originally British, and then by new composition and gradual stylistic evolution became more regionally distinctive. But as the other elements of my original model were eroded, I began to contemplate the possibility that the Southern fiddling style I was documenting in the twentieth century took shape much earlier than I had originally imagined. In particular, I reflected on the bowing patterns I had been laboriously transcribing from my fiddling mentors. Many of them used bowing patterns in which were embedded elaborate forms of syncopation. Now it should be stipulated that syncopation has many forms. Any performance that establishes one rhythmic pattern, and then superimposes a different pattern in contradistinction to the original pattern, is using syncopation. But the syncopated bowing patterns of my fiddling mentors were precisely what we all think of as 'American syncopation,' appearing in jazz and popular music and commonly presumed to be an African-American contribution to our musical heritage.

This particular syncopated pattern – the grouping of eight fast notes in a dance tune into subgroups of 3-3-2 – is the classic syncopation of American popular music. Most people assume it came from jazz, or perhaps from blues or even ragtime. But these forms are all products of the earlier twentieth century. When did the fiddlers of the Upper South begin doing these syncopated patterns? And where did they get the idea? Is it an African-American contribution?<sup>10</sup>

We can begin answering this puzzle by noting that the bowing pattern I just described occurs widely throughout the American South. What is more, it occurs in the oldest field recordings from widely separated areas of the South. My mentor Henry Reed was born in 1884 in Monroe County, West Virginia, and learned his fiddling style before the turn of the century from old men in his local area. He used this syncopated pattern constantly – so much that it can be described as embedded in his fundamental style. It is not an added feature or an ornament, but a basic feature of his playing. One might say that he could not avoid using it.<sup>11</sup> Studying early commercial and field recordings, one can find the identical pattern in the playing of older fiddlers from Virginia to Texas whose style took shape before the advent of commercial recordings and radio.<sup>12</sup> Such a broad distribution of this syncopated pattern among fiddlers who learned their art before the turn of the century can best be accounted for by supposing that the pattern spread westward with the settlement of the trans-Appalachian West during the nineteenth century.

Looking beyond the region to compare this pattern with the bowing patterns of other regional cousins, we find that Northern American fiddling styles only rarely use this bowing pattern—though in places that reflect overlapping cultural regions, one might find a trace of it. Nor is it a central feature of any of the British regional styles, though one can find it as a stylistic variant in Irish fiddling.<sup>13</sup> Only in the Upper South is it a hallmark of the regional style—a cultural indicator so constant and predictable that it could be used as a sort of cultural shibboleth.

Casting our net even wider, we may encounter the same precise syncopated pattern from Africa and the Mediterranean to musical styles as far away as India. But it seems likely that it came to be prominent in the fiddling of the Upper South through African-American influence. If one examines the historical record from the Upper South more closely, it becomes clear that the fiddle in places like Virginia was the favourite instrument of Black as well as White instrumentalists in the later eighteenth century and the pre-Civil War nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> One comparative study by banjo scholar Robert Winans of runaway slave advertisements, 'Black Musicians in Eighteenth-Century America: Evidence from Runaway Slave Advertisements',<sup>15</sup> notes that the musical instrument mentioned far more often than any other instrument in describing the capabilities of runaway slaves was the fiddle. (The fife is a distant second, and the Africa-derived banjo and the flute are roughly tied for third.) The Winans study covers advertisements from throughout early America, but its results doubtless reflect the situation in the Upper South. Fiddle and banjo continued to be central to the African-American tradition of the Upper South till the end of the nineteenth century, when piano and guitar began to replace fiddle and banjo as the most favoured African-American instruments.

So we know that whites and blacks were playing the fiddle widely in the Upper South during the period of the Early Republic. In fact, they were playing it in comparable numbers, and we also know from historical accounts that they were frequently playing it together or in each other's presence. It was a revolutionary period, and the evidence seems to me compelling that African-American fiddlers simply added this signature syncopation to the bowing patterns on the fiddle.



**Figure 1** Henry Reed, c.1967

*Photograph by Karen Singer Jabbour*

White fiddlers quickly embraced it, and it quickly moved from being an ethnic innovation to being a regional standard. The pattern could have been present as an abstract pattern in African tradition, and also (though more recessively) in European tradition.

Once it had become a regional hallmark, shared by black and white fiddlers, it spread in three ways. First, it spread directly through western migration – to a degree by blacks but, more importantly, by whites, who had incorporated the syncopated bowing patterns into their own playing and cultural values. Second, it spread into wider popular consciousness through the minstrel stage of the nineteenth century. And third, African-American musicians transferred the same patterns to other instruments, such as the guitar and piano, thus reintroducing the patterns in all the successive waves of folk-rooted popular music, including ragtime, blues, and jazz in the twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century it had become a general American pattern of syncopation, and by the later twentieth century all the world would recognize the pattern as a stylistic hallmark of American music.

#### **4. ‘Strains’**

The African-American contribution is a profound part of the regional culture of the Upper South. But there is a hint of another cultural contribution that warrants our attention as well. To explain this point I will need to return to a description of the features of a typical fiddle tune in the English-speaking world.

A typical fiddle tune has two parts or sections – we may call them ‘strains’. Each strain typically has sixteen beats – or steps, if one is dancing. The typical tune performance calls for the fiddler to repeat each strain once before going on to the other strain. I hope the reader will forgive my repeated cautionary use of the word ‘typical’. Fiddling tradition, especially in the Upper South, allows for considerable latitude in these matters, so some tunes may contain three or four parts, and some of the strains are shortened or elongated from the norm. But to summarize, a performance of a tune from beginning to end will typically consume sixty-four beats. Many dance figures in squares, longways, and solo ‘fancy’ or exhibition step dances are timed in multiples to coincide with the tune’s progress from phrase to phrase and strain to strain.

When a tune consists of two strains, there is a sort of musical calculus dictating that one of the strains should be in a lower-pitched range, and the other in a higher-pitched range. For most of the musical regions of the English-speaking world, the first strain typically is the low strain, and the second strain is the high strain. Furthermore, though ideally one might imagine that both parts of a tune are equally distinctive, in practice the lower strain tends to be the more distinctive strain, while the high strain is more likely to be a bit like a ‘filler’ or a variation.

It is not unknown in Ireland, Scotland, Canada, or the Northern United States to have a tune beginning on the high strain. But it is unusual and uncharacteristic. There is in fact only one musical region of the English-speaking world where a large class of fiddle tunes inverts the usual pattern. In the Upper South thousands



of fiddle tunes begin on the high strain and then continue to the low strain. What is more, the high strain is typically the more musically characteristic and important strain—the strain that identifies the tune. The low strain is more likely to be the ‘filler’. And the contour of the high strain is often a descending contour, giving the whole tune a feeling of descent rather than ascent. A number of these descending tunes in the Appalachian repertory are named after creeks and rivers, and it is hard to resist making the metaphorical connection between the descending tune and the creeks and rivers of the Upper South.

This high-to-low tune contour seems to date from the same period as the syncopated pattern discussed above. Several tunes in Knauff’s 1839 Virginia Reels collection follow this contour, so it was clearly well established before the explosion of the minstrel stage in the 1840s, which enthusiastically incorporated it and elaborated upon it. The pattern drifted from the fiddle to the banjo, and simultaneously it appeared in many Upper South folksongs of a lively or playful nature. By the beginning of the twentieth century it was firmly established in the musical ethos of the South, appearing even in new instrumental genres like rags and blues. It did not crowd out the low-to-high pattern that predominates in all other regions, but simply coexisted with the other pattern as a vigorous alternative. But most new tunes in the Upper South during the nineteenth century followed this new native pattern for tune contour.

So where did this high-to-low preference in the tune contour come from? One is faced with the following logical choice: either they made it up, or they got it from somewhere. But though people on rare occasion invent radically new things never before encountered, more often they get their inspiration somewhere. So we must begin by considering the options for inspiring this musical idea. It exists in British, Northern European, and Northern American tradition – but only as an occasional alternative to the customary pattern. So it is hard to account for its sudden popularity in the nineteenth-century Upper South by referring to a few vagrant British originals. Nor does Africa provide a comfortable explanation – African music seems not to favour such tune contours, particularly in tunes with a wide range.<sup>16</sup>

There remains one other major cultural tradition that had an influence on the Upper South in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. We tend to picture American Indian traditions as isolated from the new emerging society of the Upper South in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. But the evidence suggests much more sustained cultural interaction in the early South than in the West later in the nineteenth century. There was extensive intermarriage in the South between American Indians and both whites and blacks. And although we are not used to thinking about American Indian influence in the musical realm, there are many examples of American Indian cultural influence on Southern life in other realms, such as foodways and material culture.

The fact is that American Indian music of the Eastern Woodlands and Plains favours a high-to-low descending tune contour. Today’s American Indian powwows are an excellent contemporary window into the same musical tradition, and one can

hear thousands of tunes that follow the same overall melodic contour as the Upper South fiddle tunes. It is worth reminding ourselves that modern powwow tunes are dance music, and they are often sung using vocables instead of words. In effect, they are tunes of a class and function comparable to the fiddle tunes of British-American tradition. We cannot prove this cultural influence on fiddling from the world of American Indian culture, and the evidence is more tenuous here than in the case of syncopation and African-American influence. But no other cultural influence is in sight that can account for those thousands of fiddle tunes of the Upper South that, in contradistinction to all other regions of the English-speaking world, start at the top of the tune and cascade down.

The concept of syncretism is useful to invoke at this point. When two cultures come into close contact, or one is superimposed on the other, syncretism is the cultural sorting process whereby cultural traits found in both cultures are selected for survival or heightened emphasis. We should remind ourselves that the trait of a descending musical contour and the trait of 3-3-2 syncopation exist in British tradition, though they are infrequent and recessive. So, one may imagine these examples to be cases of a syncretic marriage between a recessive musical trait in a dominant culture and a dominant musical trait in a recessive culture. If so, the marriages were fruitful, and the progeny number in the thousands today.

But our flights into the realm of genetic metaphor are still flights of fancy. It seems to me that such questions of cultural history, drawn from close interpretation of the folk art itself, should be the stock in trade of folklorists. But we have done far too little to pursue large cultural questions such as these. It is astonishing that cultural traits of such prominence and distinctiveness as these traits in the fiddle tunes of the Upper South have been utterly ignored by folklorists and ethnomusicologists. I will confess to oscillating – with both the syncopation story and the descending contour story – between the triumphal sense of having identified features of great cultural importance, and the anxious sense of being the only one in the world who thinks these connections are of any consequence.

## **Conclusion**

Be that as it may, it is now time to summarize. The evidence I encountered in the old-time fiddle tunes of the Upper South, both through fieldwork and through comparative study of the extant manuscript and print record, led me gradually to modify my original assumptions. I now believe that the fiddle-tune repertoires and styles of the modern English-speaking world arose in the latter half of the eighteenth century. They constituted a revolution in instrumental folk music, and in the dances that instrumental folk music accompanies. The advent and democratization of the modern violin spurred the revolution, but the revolution also occurred during – and was probably stimulated by – a period of more widespread social and political revolution in both the British Isles and America.

The revolution occurred roughly simultaneously in all regions of the English-speaking world, so that the modern repertoires and styles might better be considered

cultural cousins than ancestors and descendants of each other, even if some of the cousins are from New World regions. But each region developed its version of the new revolution, tapping into regional and ethnic musical tastes and preferences. In the Upper South, the emergent style contained two salient features that seem to reflect the non-European ethnic components of the regional mix. Certain patterns of syncopation reflect African-American participation in the revolution, and a proclivity for starting tunes with the high strain and favouring a descending melodic contour may reflect a contribution of American Indian musical tastes. These elements developed early and were already part of the regional style when the minstrel stage began the long historical process of funnelling African-American and general Southern folk musical ideas into the larger vortex of American popular music. Thus our fiddle tunes of the old frontier may be tidy but compelling examples of the great New World synthesis of European, African, and American Indian cultural traditions into an emergent New World style.

I close this essay by invoking the American author Ralph Waldo Emerson. His 1837 Phi Beta Kappa lecture, entitled 'The American Scholar', called for a new revolutionary style and trumpeted: 'We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe'. As an alternative, Emerson counselled attention to the extraordinary buried within the ordinary:

The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride [...]. What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat [...] show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking [...] in these suburbs and extremities of nature.<sup>17</sup>

As he spoke, the fiddle tunes of the old frontier were forging a new style and a new meaning on the anvil of vernacular creativity. And although more time elapsed before folklore organized itself as a discipline, the pursuit of meaning through folklore answers well Emerson's challenge to the scholar to find 'the highest spiritual cause' in the art of ordinary people.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Holger Olof Nygard, *The Ballad of Heer Halewijn: Its Form and Variations in Western Europe* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> An earlier form of this essay was delivered as the Joseph Schick Lecture at Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA, 6 December 2001.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, 'Soldier's Joy', published in 1778 in James Aird, *A Selection of Scotch, English, Irish and Foreign Airs*, 6 vols (Glasgow: the compiler, [1778]), I, no. 109, cited in Samuel P. Bayard (ed.), *Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife: Instrumental Folk Tunes in Pennsylvania* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> See J. S. Bratton, 'Dancing a Hornpipe in Fetters', *Folk Music Journal*, 6 (1990), 65–82.

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<sup>5</sup> W. Henry Hill, *Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737): His Life and Work* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> See Walter Kolneder, *The Amadeus Book of the Violin: Construction, History, and Music* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus, [1998]); and Brian W. Harvey, *The Violin Family and Its Makers in the British Isles: An Illustrated History and Directory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> There were exceptions. For example, London's Playford family published several Scottish tunes in John Playford, *Musicks Hand-maide* (London: Playford, 1663), in John Playford, *Apollo's Banquet*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Playford, 1678), and in Henry Playford, *A Collection of Original Scotch Tunes, Full of Highland Humours, for the Violin* (London: Playford, 1700). I am grateful to Mary Anne Alburger for these references.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, 'Manuscript Collection of Dance Tunes [c. 1775–1800]', Newberry Library, Chicago; 'William O. Adams's Musick Book [1795]', Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> George P. Knauff, *Virginia Reels*, 4 vols (Baltimore: George Willig, Jr., c.1839). See Chris Goertzen and Alan Jabbour, 'George P. Knauff's Virginia Reels and Fiddling in the Antebellum South', *American Music*, 5, no. 2 (Summer 1987), 121–44.

<sup>10</sup> There is a discussion of syncopation and cross-rhythms in relation to banjo tunes in the USA in Peter van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 162–70.

<sup>11</sup> See the multi-format ethnographic field collection *Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection*, American Memory, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/reed/index.html> (accessed June 2008).

<sup>12</sup> See discography at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/reed/hrrel.html> (accessed June 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See the paper by Eoghan Neff about the Donegal fiddler John Doherty in this volume.

<sup>14</sup> Paul F. Wells, 'Fiddling as an Avenue of Black-White Musical Interchange', *Black Music Research Journal*, 23, no. 1/2 (2003), 135–47.

<sup>15</sup> Presented at the 1985 meeting of the American Folklore Society. See Robert Winans, 'Black Instrumental Music Traditions in the Ex-slave Narratives', *Black Music Research Newsletter*, 5 (Spring 1982), 2–5.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Jabbour, 'Cascading Tunes: On the Descending Contour in Appalachian Fiddle Tunes', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, 16–20 October 2002, Rochester, New York. See [http://www.alanjabbour.com/cascading\\_tunes.html](http://www.alanjabbour.com/cascading_tunes.html) (accessed June 2008).

## The folk fiddle music of Lithuania's coastal regions

GAILA KIRDIENĖ

There are five main ethnographical regions in Lithuania. Starting from the West, and going to the East and South they are the Klaipėda Region, Samogitia, Higher Lithuania, *Dzūkija*, and *Suvalkija* (or Sudovia) (see Figure 1). Two Western Lithuanian ethnographic regions are situated on the Baltic coast, with a larger, southern part belonging to the Klaipėda region (as far as the village of Nemerseta),<sup>1</sup> and a smaller northern part to the Samogitia (lit. *Žemaitija*, 'Lower Lithuania'). This article will analyse in detail the folk fiddle music (repertoire, structure and fiddling style) of the two north-western Samogitian districts of Skuodas and Plungė, including Rietavas.<sup>2</sup> I intend to define its distinguishing features and compare them with the results of my previous investigations on the folk fiddle music of *Lietuvinkai* (that is, the Lithuanians of Klaipėda region or Lithuania Minor) and their neighbouring Samogitians, who were living in the districts of Tauragė and Kretinga in the first half of twentieth century and, later, in the districts of Klaipėda and Šilutė.<sup>3</sup> Together with the present day district of Kretinga, Skuodas and Plungė are the Samogitian districts nearest to the Baltic Sea where folk fiddle music has been documented (there are no known folk fiddlers native to the coastal areas of Palanga and Šventoji).

During the last few decades in Lithuania, interest in regional styles of folk music and dancing has grown as attempts are made to resist the levelling impact of mass culture and globalisation. Although regional and other features of Lithuanian folk fiddle music have not yet been sufficiently investigated, there is a thorough scientific study on Lithuanian folk accordion music written by Albertas Baika, useful in that, since the nineteenth century, folk fiddlers and folk accordionists played together in various ensembles, and many musicians were able to play both instruments. Summarising Baika's precisely performed structural analysis of folk accordion music (of its instrumental character, articulation, build-up, harmonic, melodic, rhythmic structure, and form), the author recognised three main regional instrumental styles in Lithuania: Samogitian, Higher Lithuanian (Lith. *Aukštaitijos*), and South Lithuanian (comprising two Lithuanian ethnographical regions, *Dzūkija* and Sudovia). According to Baika, each of these regions has its typical instruments, composition of ensembles, and distinctive genre profile in repertoire and style

of playing.<sup>4</sup> During the last several years I have published some articles dealing with various problems of Lithuanian regional folk fiddle music.<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, the available folk fiddle music material (approximately 4000 audio or video music recordings dating back to 1908 and some manuscripts or manuscript notebooks dating back to 1858)<sup>6</sup> allows us to define the distinguishing features not only of Lithuanian regional styles, but in many cases also of local and individual fiddling styles.



Figure 1 Map of West Lithuania (from <http://maps.takas.lt>)

Jurga Zvonkutė, in her bachelor's thesis on south-east Samogitian fiddle music, has analysed the playing style of seven fiddlers from the districts of Kelmė, Raseiniai, and Jurbarkas. Although she has not drawn any firm conclusions on the south-east Samogitian fiddling style, it is obvious from the results of her analysis that some of the fiddlers played in an archaic polyphonic style with a typical drone of open strings, while others used a more modern melodic style, seldom using double-stops. The common bow stroke is *detaché*, with some notes being played with a slurred *legato*, although the skilled fiddler Povilas Grigalis, from the district of Kelmė, often used other bow strokes, including *staccato*. Stopped strokes as well as some chromaticism are characteristic fiddling styles of the brothers Juozas and Povilas Šidlauskas, whose practice of playing with brass bands significantly influenced their musical careers. Sections of the compositions are usually played in different keys – not only in the common G and D, but also in C, A, F and B flat. Besides the usual two-part form, some compositions are of one, or a three-part form, ABAC, with the predominant melodic ornamentations being *appoggiaturas* of one or two notes. Except for Grigalis, other fiddlers rarely performed *glissandi*, or used triplets or quintuplets. Dotted rhythms are rare, with the music tending towards a slower tempo, often with a strong *rubato*.<sup>7</sup>

In 1987 in Lithuania, beginning from the North West, specialised ethnomusicological field research was initiated, starting with questionnaires asking how the musicians learned to play, what instruments they played, whether they

used musical notation, and in what ensembles, and for what occasions, they played. Musicians were visited mainly at their homes, where they were asked to remember and perform traditional music. It was a time of the great national rising in Lithuania, and more than 100 volunteers participated in these studies with great enthusiasm. Most were students of humanitarian sciences (music, theatre, Lithuanian studies, journalism, etc.) who had little or no education in ethnomusicology, with only a few being folk music specialists on their instruments.<sup>8</sup> As a violin student at that time, this was my first encounter with authentic instrumental folk music traditions. Nevertheless, there was a notable absence of information about how this folk music was perceived and interpreted by the performers themselves. Even having performed a structural analysis of the music by using available additional material, it is still most important to have the material enriched by information from the original performers, or their relatives or successors.

### **Fiddle music of *Lietuvininkai* and their neighbouring Samogitians**

Literary sources about the *Lietuvininkai* folk fiddle date back to the second half of the sixteenth century. The data allows us to assume that the fiddle, along with the Lithuanian zither (Lith. *kanklės*), the flute or whistle, the bagpipe, the trumpet and the drum, was one of the most popular musical instruments in *Lietuvininkai*,<sup>9</sup> with an ensemble of fiddles and flutes being played at *Lietuvininkai* weddings at the end of the seventeenth century,<sup>10</sup> while a solo fiddle, or one playing in an ensemble with a dulcimer and a whistle, or with a Jew's harp, played for dances at *Lietuvininkai* weddings in the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century the fiddle became more popular than *kanklės*, and dances, as well as songs, were played on the fiddle and the folk accordion.<sup>12</sup>

Without going into much historical detail, it is important to remember that the Klaipėda region did not belong to Lithuania, but to East Prussia for some seven hundred years, until 1923. The original Prussian territory was conquered by the German Order in 1274,<sup>13</sup> and later they also conquered a part of Curonian territory, the Prussians and Curonians being western Baltic tribes.<sup>14</sup> During the Second World War and after, for a variety of reasons, many of the inhabitants of Klaipėda emigrated, mostly to other Western European countries, although some of the native inhabitants, and folk musicians, returned after the hardships of the war and the post-war period, and stayed.<sup>15</sup>

As in Lithuania and many other European countries, in the Klaipėda region (and all Lithuania Minor) instrumental folk music was long regarded as a less original and valuable part of the culture than the songs. The instrumental music of the *Lietuvininkai* was first recorded in the second half of the twentieth century, and before that time there were no known musical transcriptions.<sup>16</sup> From the limited data now available to us we are able to determine that in the twentieth century the *Lietuvininkai* used to play one, two, or three fiddles in various ensembles with zither and accordion but without any bass instruments. In the Lithuanian archives there are only thirty-seven music recordings, performed by two folk musicians from

*Lietuvininkai*: twenty-five pieces by mandolinist Martynas Kavolis were recorded in 1960,<sup>17</sup> and twelve pieces by the fiddler, mouth organ, and brass instrument player Martynas Dauskartas,<sup>18</sup> were recorded in 2000. At that time Dauskartas was very ill and was not fully able to play. All these conditions greatly restricted the investigation of fiddle music features and, especially, fiddling styles.

From written sources we find that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Samogitian folk fiddle was used at weddings and other feasts, either just a single fiddler, or as part of an ensemble consisting of two or more fiddles, and occasionally a small drum, mainly playing music for dancing (other genres were not recognised).<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the eighteenth century, fiddle music was well-liked on the estates where some landlords had violins at home,<sup>20</sup> and folk fiddlers were welcome to perform at the estates on Shrove Tuesday in the district of Kretinga and other places.<sup>21</sup>

The recordings of Samogitian fiddle music make up the greatest part of the recordings of Lithuanian folk fiddle music, but few of them were made in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> My investigation of the folk fiddle repertoire and music features of Samogitian districts neighbouring with Klaipėda region was based on the materials, collected from forty-three fiddlers (one born at the end of nineteenth century, twenty-two born at the beginning of twentieth century and twenty in the 1920s and 1930s).<sup>23</sup> Twenty-one of these fiddlers recorded more than 150 sets of tunes, twenty of which were transcribed in detail. In the first half of the twentieth century some Samogitian districts were especially famous for fiddle ensembles or stringed orchestras consisting of one to four fiddles and a highly characteristic folk double bass (called *basetla*, *basedla*), or a drum. Samogitians bordering with *Lietuvininkai* in today's district of Šilutė, used to play in string ensembles consisting of two fiddles or of a fiddle, viola and two folk double basses (one like a violoncello, another like a contrabass), but the most popular were ensembles of one or two fiddles and a bandonion (or concertina) and sometimes a folk double bass, a drum, or guitars were added. Unfortunately, few music recordings of ensembles, especially string ensembles, have been made. Since the second half of the nineteenth century the brass band tradition was very strong in West Lithuania, and frequently fiddlers also played a melodic brass or wind instrument such as a clarinet or a cornet. From this tradition orchestras evolved that consisted of one or two fiddles and a brass band.

The repertoire of fiddlers of *Lietuvininkai* consisted mostly of marches (see Figure 2) and slower dances: waltzes and foxtrots, and other dances such as *Suktinis*, a turning around dance, *Reilenderis*, similar to the German *Rheinländer*, and 'O, *Zuzana*' ('Hey, Susan'), a dance also known in Samogitia as 'Leilinderis'. Polkas were less popular in Klaipėda, and only a few country dances from *Lietuvininkai* have been documented since the middle of nineteenth century: some quadrilles, and one dance with a German title, 'Lott ist tot' was played for a dance known in Samogitia as *Lakišius*, or *Lapesdui* and other variants. A far greater number of polkas and other traditional dances as well as country dances by Samogitians born at the end of the nineteenth century or in the beginning of twentieth century, were recorded. Waltzes



were preferred more in districts bordering on the Klaipėda region than in other Samogitian districts. Traditionally, the Samogitian fiddlers sometimes accompanied songs, psalms (like the *Lietuvininkai*), and roundelays (which *Lietuvininkai* did not perform), or played their melodies without a vocal part. The tradition of including a folk song tune in the waltz or march is known across Lithuania, but in the west of Lithuania the forms of such arrangements were more complicated, consisting of two to four parts.



**Figure 2** Wedding march, ‘*Suk suk ratelį*’ (MFA D 17/25), played by M. Dauskartas, recorded in 2000 by A. Kirda and G. Kirdienė. (This and other examples, except No. 5, transcribed by G. Kirdienė.)

Besides Lithuanian dances, known throughout the country (e.g. ‘*Suktinis*’, ‘*Ant kalno karklai*’ (‘There swayed the willows on a hill’), ‘*Noriu miego*’ (‘I want to sleep’), only a few old dances typical of both regions were documented: ‘*Kepurinė*’ (‘Hat dance’) and ‘*Skepetinė*’ (‘Kerchief dance’). In Minor Lithuania, according to the writers of the second half of the nineteenth century, these were danced either by the men or by the young women, and resembled country dances.

The *Lietuvininkai* of Klaipėda, unusually, rarely played tunes of Slavonic origin (dances of Polish origin would be more popular in the southern part of Minor Lithuania), although many were found in the repertoires of Samogitian fiddlers. Thus the fiddle music of *Lietuvininkai* shows noticeable Western European influences, and from the Samogitians, Eastern European influences. This was determined by both geographical and historical political factors. In 1569 the state of Lithuania came together with Samogitia, which had a long confederation with Poland, to form what was known as the Republic of Both Nations. In 1795 the biggest part of present day Lithuania was annexed by Russia,<sup>24</sup> with an independent Lithuanian state reconstituted in 1918 and again in 1991.

Similarities in the fiddle music of *Lietuvininkai* and the neighbouring Samogitians are shown in regular long structures, compositions with a form of two or more parts, the use of major modes, diatonic scales with close intervals, and, very rarely, chromaticisms. Tunes with occasional leaps, the so-called ‘trumpet melodies’, are characteristic of country dances, polkas, waltzes and foxtrots, while the tendency to slower tempi and longer rhythmic values are more typical of the fiddle and dance music of *Lietuvininkai* than that of the Samogitians. The different regional traditions

manifest themselves firstly in style, with: the fiddle music of *Lietuvininkai* being monophonic and light, and that of the Samogitians more homophonic and richer. Many Samogitian fiddlers living in districts near Klaipėda, played without open string drones. That musical feature, as well as the aesthetics of the *Lietuvininkai* can be associated with Protestantism, and, to some extent, with a stronger Western European impact. Similar differences are also characteristic of the vocal traditions: the *Lietuvininkai* sing monophonically, in one part, the Samogitians in two, three, or more parts.<sup>25</sup>

### **Music of the Skuodas and Plungė districts**

In these two districts researchers found forty-nine folk fiddlers, one of whom was a woman, twenty-seven in the district of Plungė and twenty-one in the district of Skuodas, between 1975 and 1991. Thirty-two of these fiddlers were born at the beginning of the twentieth century, four at the end of the nineteenth, twelve in the 1920s and one was born later, in 1931. Music was recorded from twenty-five of them, seventeen living in Plungė and eight in Skuodas.

The recordings of some 160 sets of melodies are kept in four Lithuanian State Archives. These are mostly audio recordings, with the exception of a few video recordings of the musicians born in the 1920s.<sup>26</sup> Only a limited number of items were recorded from each player: in the Skuodas district from as few as 2 items to 8 from Rimkus or 13 from Bičkus; and similarly in the Plungė district from as few as 2 items to 16 from Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė, 18 from Vasiliauskas, and 27 from J. Platakis. Most fiddlers recorded around 6 to 10 sets of tunes. Performances by J. Platakis and Bičkus were recorded three times over several years, with music played by Citavičius, Rubavičius, Vasiliauskas twice, and of the other musicians only once.

In all of Lithuania we know of only a few folk fiddlers (that is, mainly self-taught fiddlers with traditional repertoires and fiddling styles) born in the 1930s, during the Second World War and later, but there are many skilled folk fiddlers born in the 1920s. The evidence of an earlier decline in the number of folk fiddlers observed in the districts of Skuodas and Plungė is significant also in other North Lithuanian districts up to the Biržai, in Higher Lithuania. Most melodies in the districts of Plungė and Skuodas were performed by fiddlers born at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the repertoire of younger fiddlers was significantly more restricted. Thus we may assume that the folk fiddling traditions in the districts of Skuodas and Plungė started to vanish earlier than in the neighbouring eastern Samogitian districts, especially in the districts of Telšiai and Kelmė, being the greatest former centres of folk fiddling in Lithuania. This pattern also occurred in the districts bordering the Klaipėda region, although there were some fiddlers who had migrated from other Lithuanian regions.

Thanks to the music historians' interest in the famous orchestras of the Plungė and Rietavas estates, we have unique published material dealing with the interactions between professional (institutional) music culture and folk music in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

At a specialised music school, established in 1874 in Rietavas by Duke Bogdanas Oginskis, gifted children of Samogitian families from villages and towns were able to learn music together with children from the then districts of Vilnius, Kaunas, and neighbouring districts. As had been the practice with older institutional traditions, they were first taught to play the violin, and organ, and, later a wind instrument. For half of the day the pupils played the fiddle, the other half, the wind instrument. The school's first symphony orchestra was set up in 1883, and the school had a popular brass band. Throughout their training, the young musicians were encouraged to write their own compositions.<sup>27</sup> Duke Mykolas Mikalojus Oginskis (a brother of B. Oginskis) established a similar school and orchestras in 1873, on his estate at Plungė.<sup>28</sup> Polonaises and mazurkas composed by Mykolas Kliopas Oginskis (1765–1833) had a special place in the repertoire of the Plungė orchestra, and from 1889–1893 the great Lithuanian composer and artist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis studied at the school and played in the orchestra.

The Rietavas orchestra never played for dancing, as its patron did not like dance music, but, besides various classical compositions, it used to play many marches, and when the orchestra played outside, local people could listen to the music. However, it was strictly forbidden for the orchestral musicians to have any contact with, much less to talk to, folk musicians, though some may have been quite professional, former players in Tsarist military wind bands. Once B. Oginskis heard a folk music ensemble playing a very familiar march at a wedding and was upset, since their members seemed to play much better than the professionally-taught musicians of his own orchestra.<sup>29</sup>

After the death of both patrons at the beginning of the twentieth century, the schools and orchestras were closed, and some of the musicians educated there returned to the status of folk musicians and organised their own schools and ensembles, although some had done that even earlier.<sup>30</sup> Some orchestral musicians had their first musical experiences in local folk music ensembles, consisting of strings and brass. Interestingly, a guild-like system has been discovered, in connection with one such leader, the famous folk musician, and blacksmith, Petras Jankauskas (died Plungė c.1914/1915), who had played many string and wind instruments. His notebooks show that he composed polkas and waltzes, taught his pupils, and hired workers, both for his blacksmith's shop, and for playing fiddle and/or a wind instrument. His ensemble performed polkas, waltzes, and other dances such as the polonaise, and marches, at the estates. From about 1886–1887, his ensemble was taught by a former musician, a violinist and clarinettist from the Rietavas orchestra, who used to perform with them at weeklong weddings. On his own, Jankauskas encouraged young men who went on to establish more than seven brass bands in areas of Plungė and Rietavas.<sup>31</sup> A part of the same nineteenth-century repertoire with the same names of compositions (e.g. the waltz 'Danube Waves') was preserved by the folk musicians of the twentieth century.

During our field research we met a folk fiddler from the Rietavas rural district, who had learned to play from his father, a former double bassist with the Rietavas

orchestra, although the son's playing was not recorded.<sup>32</sup> Another musician, who lived in what is now the district of Šilutė, also had a father who had played in the Rietavas orchestra. Although she was not able to play anymore, she still sang instrumental melodies which were more complicated than those traditionally performed, particularly dances, among them a minuet.<sup>33</sup> Waltzes similar to a minuet (some of them known as 'Mineta') appeared only in West Samogitia, and in the districts of Plungė and Skuodas where they were mainly played by folk accordionists. In South West Samogitia, in the district of Šilalė a folk musician and fiddler had a manuscript notebook with polkas, waltzes, marches, foxtrots, tangos, and some older traditional Lithuanian folk dances (although not country dances), including some composed in Rietavas in 1905.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of the close relationship between the instrumental profession and the folk music cultures, the folk traditions of the districts of Skuodas and Plungė, including the small string ensembles, were preserved. Two fiddles and a folk double bass were very popular, although three fiddles in a similar ensemble were rare. Also popular throughout Lithuania, were ensembles consisting of one or two fiddles (or clarinet) and a folk accordion – a bandonion or concertina, and, later on, an accordion. In the rural district of Ylakai, in Skuodas, a guitar, mandolin, or balalaika was added to such ensembles. In North Lithuania these instruments, together with fiddles, usually belonged to the so-called string orchestras, and a folk double bass and a drum were sometimes added to these types of ensembles. In some areas of the Skuodas district, ensembles were occasionally found composed of a brass band and a fiddle.

Many fiddlers in districts of Skuodas and Plungė, especially those playing a brass band instrument as well, were able to play from written music, but traditional tunes were usually performed by ear. Only Jundalas, who had been taught by a former conductor of a military brass band, claimed that he was playing, exceptionally, from the notes. Citavičius, who played in a family brass band, claimed that he liked to perform classical pieces, such as Nicolò Paganini's *La Campanella*, and also had written out the notes of the beginnings of the traditional dances in staff notation in order to remember them.

### **Repertoire of the Skuodas and Plungė districts**

When I first went to investigate the folk fiddle music of Plungė and Skuodas districts, I tried to look at all the available material there about their fiddle music (and folk accordion, and wind instruments), and analysed some 100 fiddle music performances from audio or video recordings, played by sixteen fiddlers, including Petras Liatukas from Rietavas (see Figure 3).<sup>35</sup> I and a student, Kazimieras Šermukšnis, made twenty detailed studies and some broad-brush transcriptions.<sup>36</sup>

Seeking to systematise the large amount of material, and to reveal the tendencies of changes – which melodies were most popular in a particular period – I used a method that I created in 2003.<sup>37</sup> According to the musician's age group, the data about each repertoire was put into a scheme that divided the tunes into the

main groups of genres: 1) various traditional dances; 2) country dances; 3) foxtrots and foxtrot-like dances; 4) polkas; 5) waltzes; 6) games and roundelays; 7) marches; 8) songs (and hymns).



**Figure 3** Petras Liatukas and a bandonion player playing for a feast in 1960 (EIA).

Although some Samogitian fiddlers were also good singers, the songs and roundelays made up just a small part of their repertoires, as the musicians were usually glad to relax during the breaks, when the people started to sing. Only two songs were recorded by the folk fiddlers from Plungė district: a song about young love, '*Oi Juzi, Juzeli*' (*Juzi* is a Samogitian male name) (see Figure 4) and '*Rekrūtų daina*' ('Song of the new conscripts').<sup>38</sup> The district of Plungė is noted for a large group of dances, the music of which is based on traditional young love or wedding songs, '*Oi Juzi, Juzeli*' being one of them. However, they were not played by fiddlers, but by accordionists. In the Skuodas district a song with obscene lyrics was recorded from the fiddler Šarva, which begins like a traditional matchmaking song, '*Tumsi naktis mėneseina*' ('It's a dark moonlit night'). This fiddler had a good voice and had, interestingly, adjusted his fiddle to his own voice range by tuning it to D D<sup>1</sup> A<sup>1</sup> E<sup>2</sup>.<sup>39</sup>

♩ = 100 (?)

Tuning:  $\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$

Foot: x x x

rit.

a tempo

rubato

**Figure 4** Song, '*Oi Juzi, Juzeli*' (MFA KF 6448/45), played by K. Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė, recorded in 1975 by R. Gaidamavičiūtė and R. Astrauskas.

Only one recording by a fiddler of a younger generation, Bičkus, of the widespread roundelay, '*Šiaudiniai batai, Šakaliniai padai*' ('Straw shoes, stick soles') was made (see Figure 5). The duple-time metre and the regular two-part form of such roundelays coincides with the form and metre of many traditional Samogitian dances which make up the main part of the fiddler's repertoire. Fiddlers were capable of dancing these dances as well, although, traditionally, they did not teach the dances to others.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 5** Roundelay '*Šiaudiniai batai, Šakaliniai padai*' (MFA KF 7136/40), played by L. Bičkus, recorded in 1979 by R. Sakalaitė and R. Kabelis.

In the district of Plungė, the fiddlers born in the nineteenth century had played mainly polkas, waltzes, and marches as in the Klaipėda region. In the district of Skuodas, researchers were able to find only one fiddler of this generation and his repertoire consisted mainly of various traditional dances, although by then he no longer played. In both districts the fiddlers born at the beginning of the twentieth century remembered many traditional dances, including country dances, and those from Plungė also played many polkas and marches, but waltzes and foxtrots seemed to be less popular. This compares with the district of Skuodas where the fiddlers born in the 1920s have retained various traditional dances. The folk fiddlers of these districts (especially of Plungė) in the second half of the twentieth century were not involved in the activities of the folklore ensembles, which usually endeavoured to preserve and popularise traditional dances.

Among various traditional dances of Lithuanian origin played by fiddlers, some are spread throughout the country: '*Ant kalno karklai*', '*Mudu du broliukai*' ('We, two brothers'), '*Noriu miego*', and '*Suktinis*'. Other dances, such as '*Kadagys*' ('Juniper'), for example, were only known in certain areas, in this case, Samogitia. A few musicians mentioned some older dances such as '*Obelėlė*' ('Apple Tree'), '*Oželis*' ('Goat'), '*Blezdینگėlė*' ('Swallow') and '*Avietelė*' ('Raspberry'), and this tune may also have been used for a polka with the same title.

The dance '*Suwartukas*' (a derivation of the word *verstis*, 'to tumble'), according to a fiddler born in rural-district Rietavas,<sup>41</sup> was played only on a fiddle, and never on any other instrument. Among these dances a common one from *Lietuvininkai* was '*Kepurinė*' ('Hat dance'). '*Blezdینگėlė*' was also danced in the district of Kretinga.

Some other dances related to Latvian traditions are found mainly in North Lithuania, like '*Gailītis*' (a derivation of a Latvian word meaning a cock), '*Malūnēlis*'

(‘Mill’), and ‘*Skruodelis*’ (a derivation of a Latvian word meaning a tailor). The tune of the dance ‘*Pliauškutis*’ (a dance with a hand clap) is also known in Estonia.<sup>42</sup>

As in all Lithuania, the fiddlers in Plungė and Skuodas played many dances popular in other European countries: ‘*Aleksandrovas*’, ‘*Gricinelė*’, ‘*Karobuška*’, ‘*Krakoviakas*’, ‘*Mazurkas*’, ‘*Pačtaljons*’, ‘*Padispanas*’, ‘*Gražiokelis*’ (a type of finger polka), ‘*Kreicpolkis*’ (a type of seven step dance), ‘*Lapesdui*’, ‘*Leilinderis*’, ‘*Pampaljonis*’, ‘*Subota*’, and ‘*Vengierka*’ (a type of Hungarian dance). Some are of Eastern European origin, some of them are of Western European origin, and some are dances that would be best described as pan-European.

Usually Lithuanian ethnographic regions, and even districts, have characteristic country dances. In the district of Skuodas such a dance type with many variations is ‘*Jonkelis*’, a title perhaps related to the man’s name Jonas,<sup>43</sup> with fewer examples recorded in the district of Plungė (and Kretinga, Mažeikiai).<sup>44</sup> This four or eight couple dance lasted for an hour or longer and only those who paid extra for the musicians were allowed to dance. Although there are some suggestions that the music for the ‘*Jonkelis*’ might have just one part, recorded instrumental versions consist of two, and sometimes three, parts (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6** ‘*Kertinis jonkelis*’ (LTR 2075/1), played by Ferdinandas Valantinas, born in 1902, lived in Skuodas district, Mosėdis rural-district.

Beside ‘*Jonkelis*’ in these districts, quadrilles were popular, usually consisting of two to six music sections in duple or triple time.<sup>45</sup> A quadrille played by Liatukas differs through the unusual jig-like (not waltz or minuet) character of its first and third parts (see Figure 7). Liatukas was 84, and nearing death, when his music was recorded, but a very similar quadrille was played by Kaulius (born 1898), an older musician who was living not far away, although his fiddling manner is softer. Similar parts (just with duplets among triplets) are characteristic only of some Samogitian quadrilles, with further examples having been recorded in the districts of Telšiai and Šiauliai,<sup>46</sup> an exception being a quadrille recorded in the district of Prienai (South-East Lithuania),<sup>47</sup> situated on the biggest Lithuanian river *Nemunas*, flowing into the Baltic sea, which for many centuries was the main shipping route.<sup>48</sup> Lithuanian folk musicians had not given any names to these parts of quadrilles, but a dance jig ‘*Džigus, Žigus, Žvigus jeb Engelits*’ (‘Jig or English dance’) was notated traditionally in Latvian folk music only as a duplet rhythm.<sup>49</sup> ‘English dances’ (‘*Anglėzas*’ and ‘*Angelčikas*’) have also been documented in Lithuania.

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**Figure 7** Quadrille: the first part (MFA KLF 921/81), played by P. Liatukas, recorded in 1987 by R. Apanavičius and E. Virbašius.

Having identified ‘Nordic’ melodies in north-west Samogitian dance music,<sup>50</sup> and despite other possible influences, we can assume that the tradition has been exposed to Northern European influences, probably via the maritime contacts. Since the earliest times (sixth to fifth centuries BC), almost all the territory of present-day Lithuania and a part of the Latvian Baltic coast were settled by Curonians, famous for their seamanship, with Curonian and Scandinavian interaction being traced back to the earliest centuries of the current era. The trade, marriage, or military contacts across the Baltic were bilateral.<sup>51</sup> Being pushed by the German Order, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Curonians became assimilated by the Samogitians. Archaeologists and linguists claim a great Curonian contribution to North-West Samogitian culture and linguistic dialect,<sup>52</sup> and the same might also be supposed in folk music.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, and later, Curonians/Samogitians and *Lietuvininkai* sailed on ships belonging to traders from Klaipėda. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they also sailed on the trade ships of the Curonian duke (*Kurzeme* or Curonia is a region in Latvia), who controlled a strip of the Lithuanian Baltic coast from Šventoji to Būtingė. As well as other destinations, these ships reached Great Britain and Ireland. And, moreover, from the sixteenth



to the eighteenth century English and Scottish merchants had trading posts, or, for various reasons, lived in Klaipėda, Šilutė, Šventoji, and other places in Lithuania such as Kėdainiai and Biržai.<sup>53</sup>

### **Styles of the Skuodas and Plungė districts**

Due to the considerable amount of untranscribed and unanalysed material, I needed to restrict some of the stylistic and structural aspects of this music and decided to consider: 1) the way the sound was produced, including, articulation and typical bow strokes; 2) the vertical or linear structure of the music; 3) melodic ornamentations; 4) the main character of the modal structure; 5) typical rhythmic patterns; 6) typical cadences; 7) the form of the melodies, and the tempo.

Most Lithuanian folk fiddlers born in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries produce a very intensive and rich, sometimes even forced, sound, while fiddlers of a younger generation produce a typically softer and more melodious sound. In the districts of Skuodas and Plungė this was observed in the playing of the fiddlers born at the beginning of twentieth century. However, even fiddlers born later in the district of Plungė used a narrow vibrato but only on sustained notes. Some fiddlers from the Skuodas district used intense vibrato when playing waltzes or marches on the A string in the upper register. A similar playing technique is characteristic of Lithuanian folk fiddlers when they play in ensembles with one or more accordions, since they want to be heard more clearly.

Sustained notes are sometimes played with crescendos as in southern districts, but they are not as distinctive as in the district of Telšiai, where such notes are usually performed using the unison produced by a stopped and an open string.

The powerful accents of full on-string bow strokes are typical of the fiddling styles used by musicians of an older generation. Kaulius played almost entirely in this way, rarely lifting his bow or playing legato. The accents made by fiddlers of a younger generation, beginning with those born in 1906, are usually much softer. This is sometimes related to playing with the upper half of the bow. Other fiddlers across the generations used many different bow strokes, mostly more or less accentuated stops on-string and lifted bow strokes. The lifting, sometimes with heavy bow strokes might be treated as being characteristic of the fiddle music of the Plungė district. Some fiddlers from the Skuodas district also often performed lifted but lighter, spiccato-like bow strokes.

Fiddlers from both districts rarely played legato and only slurred up to two series of two to three notes, except for the fiddlers who also played in brass bands, and these played up to four series slurring up to four or even six notes at once. On occasions all fiddlers used cross-bowling, when the first note of the slur begins on the offbeat in the middle of a bar, or when slurring pitches across the bars. Such fiddling techniques are much more frequent in Southern Lithuanian fiddling.

A constant drone of one or two of the lower open strings, and sometimes an upper string, is predominantly found in the fiddling style of the Skuodas and

Plungė districts. Some fiddlers of the older generation preferred to play only open strings, whereas younger fiddlers used the drone only occasionally. In all cases the drone rhythmically coincides with the main melodic voice. Many fiddlers played chords of three or four strings. Some fiddlers often played double-stopped thirds, sixths, and octaves, single finger stopped fifths, and also fourths and unisons with open strings A or E. The fiddlers of older generations usually played thirds and sometimes fifths or octaves in parallels, although the younger fiddlers preferred parallel sixths, sometimes in long successions. However, there are some fiddlers of all generations who played double-stops only rarely, or did not play them at all.

Typical melodic ornamentations, besides one or two appoggiaturas, sometimes of three notes, are glissandi, sometimes long, ascending and descending. The termination in one pitch is rare. Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė described a custom related to a special glissando, repeated several times up and down the D string. In this way, with an element of humour, the fiddlers were asking for money when they performed, since they usually collected their honorarium. Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė also played a dance called '*Suktinis*', traditionally played as the first or last dance in Lithuanian dance evenings, which used the same effect at the end.<sup>54</sup> A semantic connection with this 'intonation of appeal' might also be drawn in the long slide downwards of a foxtrot-like polka, 'If You Want to Get a Man' played by Varpiotas. Some fiddlers of the younger generation preferred glissandi, whereas other fiddlers preferred motifs or trills to other categories of ornamentation.

The tunes have a wide melodic range. Some fiddlers of the older generation played just up to B natural on the E-string, but many fiddlers of all generations played up to D, E, or F sharp on the E-string. Fiddle music played by Kaulius and Liatukas is distinguished by its special modal structure, which could be thought of as archaic. It seems that Kaulius fully uses all five sounds (notes on one string in first position) of a string before he turns to another one. Liatukas combines G and D scales, playing not only long structures, but also parts of them. He also likes leaps from the E-string to the D and G strings.

Besides the common keys of G and D, some musicians also played in C (again, those who had played in brass bands), while Citavičius also played in the key of F. Not only did J. Platakis play in D, G, C, but also in A and G-minor. Bičkus played in the same keys, but used D for the minor mode, while Jukis played a minor piece in b. Major-like modes predominate, with minor modes used in only a few pieces (or their parts) by the three musicians: the waltz '*It's Hard to Live*', a foxtrot-like dance '*Dirižablis*', and the first part of a foxtrot by J. Platakis, part of '*Karobuška*' by Jukis, and '*Aleksandrova*' by Bičkus, the latter two dances being of Russian origin. In the music of the older Samogitian fiddlers one can see some minor intonations played on open A and E strings with a flat third.<sup>55</sup> More common are major-like modes with a sharpened or sharp fourth; the flat seventh rarely occurs. Occasional transitional chromaticisms with a tendency towards the microtonic are distinctive markers for the fiddle music of Skuodas and Plungė districts, and are used by many fiddlers.

The rhythm of the music that has been analysed is rather plain. Besides the longer rhythmical values, only quavers, and up to four successive semiquavers, are used. Sometimes repetition of notes or even tremolo occurs. Only a few musicians performed up to eight or nine semiquavers in succession, like an obligato or motif.<sup>56</sup> Quite often triplets of small rhythmical values, such as semiquavers and demisemiquavers, are played, but rarely quavers. Occasional dotted and double-dotted rhythmical patterns, or a tendency to a dotted rhythm, from crotchets to semiquavers is typical of the music in both districts, and of all generations of fiddlers. Retrograde phrases occur occasionally, and Jundalas, for example, liked to end the music using a rhythmical pattern of semiquavers and dotted quavers.

Syncopation, sometimes in complicated rhythmical patterns, is common in the fiddle music of both districts, and is considered to be a distinguishing feature of North Lithuanian folk music, especially of *sutartinės*, a special polyphonic genre of Higher Lithuanian vocal and instrumental folk music. When the fiddlers use cross-bowing and slur two bars with the same note, syncopation often emerges as well. Occasional short rests at the beginning of a bar can also give the impression of syncopation.

Rhythmically and metrically expanded cadences, often performed *ritenuto*, are commonly used by fiddlers of the older generation, although cadences with semiquavers do sometimes occur. In the context of all Lithuanian folk fiddle music the cadence of a song played by Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė is particularly interesting (see Figure 4). Most fiddlers of the younger generation have adopted traditional cadences, but with some obvious changes. Performances often finish with a chord, not of a third, but of a sixth. Rimkus liked to finish downwards with a triad of the keynote. Dotted or syncopated rhythms only occur in cadences by fiddlers of the younger generation.

A simple two-part form of a piece is the most common throughout Lithuanian fiddle music, although fiddlers of all generations from the districts of Plungė and Skuodas used to play pieces in a simple three-part form ABC, with no compositions having a one-part form. The impact of professional music, and the brass band playing tradition is obvious in the complex three-part form ABAC(A) of some marches and polkas (see Figure 8), sometimes with strict metrically and rhythmically organised 'three chords' at the beginning, and a special insertion before the third trio-like part. Polkas 'with laughter' have a regular two-bar introduction before the first part. The parts are performed in different keys, which are sometimes introduced by a modulation of one or two notes. In other Samogitian districts a one-part form is typical for the dance '*Leilinderis*', but Citavičius had even played it in a four-part form (ABCD BC). A tendency to a free four-part form of 'usual' long (eight bars long, in duple time) and shorter structures was observed in the last part of a quadrille, a gallop played by Liatukas (A A<sup>1</sup> b C d A<sup>2</sup> A<sup>3</sup>).

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The image shows a musical score for a Polka in 2/4 time. It begins with a 'Tuning' section consisting of two measures of chords. The main melody starts at a tempo of 116 bpm. The score is written on a single staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several tempo markings: 116 bpm at the beginning, 120 bpm in the middle, and 126 bpm towards the end. The piece concludes with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking and a final chord.

Figure 8 Polka (MFA KF 6972/10, pat. J. Platakis), recorded in 1978 by R. Astrauskas and J. Baltramiejūnaitė.

Besides the tradition of playing parts of dances, country dances and marches in different tempi, there is also a tendency to quicken the tempo towards the end. The tempi of the dances is rather moderate 96–112 beats per minute (bpm), slightly quicker for the country dances, 106–120 bpm, and polkas, 108–120 bpm. Due to the concert convention, musicians of the younger generation, as elsewhere in Samogitia and Lithuania, preferred rubato and faster tempi (e.g. 126 bpm for a polka and 135 bpm for a dance). Due to the sharper fiddle tunings and faster tempi of recorded music, it is clear that some recordings need to be restored to their original speed and pitch.

The use of tempo rubato and the sharper fourth are characteristic of all Samogitian folk singing, and dotted rhythms, syncopations, and sliding up to a note are common to folk singing in the districts of Skuodas, Plungė, and Telšiai,<sup>57</sup> and thus can be considered as distinguishing features of the local music traditions.

### **Conclusion**

The folk fiddling tradition in the North-West Samogitian districts of Skuodas and Plungė existed side by side with professional (institutional) orchestras and traditional brass bands. The ties with these music traditions in folk fiddle music are evidenced by the softer fiddle sounds, as well as by special bow strokes (e.g. tremolo, spiccato), a fairly wide variation of keys, a large melodic range, frequent chromaticisms, and a complex three-part form of some marches and polkas, as well as the predominant many part form. Small ensembles with one or two fiddles remained the most popular in the folk fiddling tradition and many fiddlers maintained the distinguishing features of their older regional and local styles. They share an intense and rich sound as well as the powerful articulated full on-string (and sometimes also lifted) bow strokes, open string drones, appoggiaturas, and glissandi as typical melodic ornamentations, and, in some cases, retain archaic modal structures. As in all West Lithuania the folk fiddlers (and other musicians) in the districts of Skuodas and Plungė preferred slower tempi, longer rhythmical values and rather plain rhythms, alongside distinctive dotted and syncopated rhythms.

Among older regional dances documented were some shared with other north-west Samogitian districts (e.g. 'Blezdینگėlė', 'Jonkelis') and one dance in common with the Klaipėda region ('Kepurinė'). Many of the dances show considerable Western or Eastern European influences, with a number of dances related to the Latvian folk music tradition. The jig-like tunes of the parts of quadrilles, as well as some features of fiddling styles, could be considered a musical heritage resulting from old maritime connections between Lithuanians and other Northern European people.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Klaipėda region is a part of Lithuania Minor, a northern part of the former East Prussia.

<sup>2</sup> In 2000 a new Lithuanian territorial administrative division, the Rietavas district was also established.

<sup>3</sup> Gaila Kirdienė, 'Smuiko muzika: lietuvininkai ir žemaičiai' [Fiddle Music: Lietuvininkai and Samogitians], in *Lietuviai ir lietuvininkai. Etninė kultūra* [The Lithuanians and Lietuvininkai. Ethnic Culture], no. 24, an appendix *Mokslo darbai* [Scientific Studies] of *Tiltai* [The Bridges], vol. 3, ed. Stasys Vaitekūnas, Rimantas Balsys (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universitetas, 2004), 115–137; Gaila Kirdienė, 'Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių smuiko repertuaras' [The Fiddle Repertoire of Lietuvininkai and Samogitians], in *Liaudies kultūra* [Folk Culture], 4 (Vilnius, 2005), 14–30.

<sup>4</sup> Albertas Baika, *Kaimo armonikos* [Countryside Accordions] (Vilnius: Pradai, 1994), pp. 85–159, based on the author's doctoral thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Gaila Kirdienė, 'Aukštaitiškos ir žemaitiškos tradicijų sampyna Ciprijono Niauros smuiko muzikoje' [Fusion of the Eastern and Western Lithuanian Traditions in Ciprijonas Niaura's Fiddle Music], in *Tautosakos darbai* [Folklore studies], 22 (29) (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros

ir tautosakos institutas, 2005), 135–53. Gaila Kirdienė, 'A Polka 'In Minor Mode: Fiddle Music Style of West Lithuania (District Telšiai)', in *Programme and Abstracts of International Council for Traditional Music, Study Group on Folk Musical Instruments, 16th International Meeting* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2006), pp. 12–13. Gaila Kirdienė, 'Suvalkiečių tradicinio smuikavimo ypatybės' [Features of South-West Lithuanian Fiddling], in *Sūduvos krašto tradicinis muzikavimas ir senieji instrumentai. Seminaro medžiaga* [Traditional Music Making and Old Music Instruments in Sudovia. Materials of the Seminar] (Marijampolė: Marijampolės kolegija, 2006, in CDR format), track 4. Gaila Kirdienė, 'Aukštaičių instrumentinis šokių repertuaras' [Instrumental Dance Repertoire of Higher Lithuanians], in *Aukštaičių tapatumo paieškos* [Searching Identity of Higher Lithuanians] (Kaunas: Žiemgala, 2006), pp. 150–60. See also Kirdienė (2004) and *Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių* (2005).

<sup>6</sup> The first sound recordings of Lithuanian folk music (vocal and instrumental, including fiddle music from Higher Lithuania) were made in 1908–1909 by Eduard Volter. Some of these previously unpublished recordings are kept at the Lithuanian Institute of Literature and Folklore (Vilnius), Berlin Phonogramme Archive (Germany), and others in St Petersburg (Russia). The first Lithuanian folk instrumental (probably fiddle) tune, from an area near Anykščiai, in Higher Lithuania, was notated in 1858 by Antanas Baranauskas.

<sup>7</sup> Jurga Zvonkutė, *Instrumentinė muzika pietryčių Žemaitijos smuikininkų repertuare* [Instrumental Music in the Repertoire of the South-East Samogitian fiddlers] (Vilnius: Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy, Department of Ethnomusicology, 2005), pp. 36–53.

<sup>8</sup> These questionnaires were compiled by Antanas Auškalnis (Vilnius, 1987) and Arūnas Lunys (Vilnius, 1989), and the field research has subsequently continued for a week each summer. The finished questionnaires, pictures, and the music recorded since 1993 are kept at Lithuanian Folk Culture Centre (Vilnius), archival code EIA.

<sup>9</sup> *Biblia tatai esti Wissas Schwentas Raschtas Lietúwizskai pergalditas per Jana Bretkūna Lietuvos klebona Karaliaucziúje* [Bible that is All Sacred Text Translated into the Lithuanian by Janas Bretkūnas, Lithuanian Provost in Karaliauczius], 6 (1580), 135.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Lepner, *Der Preusche Littauer, oder Vorstellung der Namens-Herleitung, Kind-Tauffen, Hochzeit...* (Danzig: bey J. Heinrich Ruedigern, 1744), pp. 35, 94.

<sup>11</sup> Kristijonas Donelaitis, 'Metai', in *Metai ir pasakėčios* [Poem *Metai* and Fables] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1994), pp. 77, 78, 140.

<sup>12</sup> Otto Glagau, 'Lietuvininkų kalba ir poezija' [The Language and Poetry of *Lietuvininkai*], in *Lietuvininkai*, ed. Vacys Milius (Vilnius: Vaga, 1970), p. 275; Franz Oscar and Helen Tetzner, 'Dainos: Litauische Volksgesänge' (Leipzig: Reclam, 1897), p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> Alfredas Bumblauskas, *Senosios Lietuvos istorija* [History of Old Lithuania] (Vilnius: R. Paknio leidykla, 2005), pp. 240–241.

<sup>14</sup> Vladas Žulkus, 'Kuršiai Baltijos jūros erdvėje' [Curonians in the Region of the Baltic] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2004), p. 213.

<sup>15</sup> Nastazija Kairiūkštytė, 'Klaipėdos krašto kaimo vietovių apgyvendinimas pokario metais' [The Countryside Settlement of Klaipėda Region during the Post-War Period], in *Lietuvininkų kraštas* [Lietuvininkai Land], ed. Norbertas Vėlius et al. (Kaunas: Litterae universitatis, 1995), pp. 339–371. Kirdienė, *Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių* (2005), p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Kirdienė, *Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių* (2005), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Martynas Kavolis, 1901–1978, born in the Klaipėda district, Priekulė rural-district, Dėgliai village, lived in Veiveriškieiai village, in the Klaipėda district; LTR F 152/13–38 (Phonogram Archive at Department of Folklore, Lithuanian Institute of Literature and Folklore, Vilnius).

<sup>18</sup> Martynas Dauskantas, 1919–2003, born in the Šilutė district, Kintai rural-district, Prycmai village, lived in the Šilutė district, Jonaičiai rural-district, Laučiai village; MFA D 17/1–50 (DAT, Digital Phonogram Archive at Department of Ethnomusicology, Institute of Musicology, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Vilnius).

<sup>19</sup> Stasys Skrodenis, 'Žemaičių buitį Jurgio Pabrėžos pamokluose' [Samogitian Everyday Life according to Jurgis Pabrėža's Sermons], in *Jurgis Pabrėža (1771–1849)* (Vilnius, 1972), pp. 68–74. Simonas Daukantas, *Būdas senovės lietuvių, kalnėnų ir žemaičių* [A Temper of Ancient Lithuanians, Highlanders and Samogitians] (Vilnius: Ethnos '91, 1993), pp. 54–55, 59, 66. Michal Gadon, *Opisanie powiatu Telsziewskiego* [Description of District Telšiai] (1846), pp. 117–18. See also Gaila Kirdienė, *Smuikas ir smuikavimas lietuvių etninėje kultūroje* [Fiddle and Fiddling in Lithuanian Ethnic Culture] (Vilnius: Kronta, 2000), pp. 11–13, 39–40, 138, 150, 152.

<sup>20</sup> Elmantas Meilus, *Žemaitijos kunigaikštystės miesteliai XVII a. II pusėje–XVIII amžiuje (raida, gyventojai, amatai, prekyba)* [The Villages and Towns in Duchy of Samogitia in the Second Half of seventeenth century and eighteenth century] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 1997), p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Meilus (1997), pp. 79, 92.

<sup>22</sup> Some music examples by two ensembles, one consisting of fiddle and *kanklės* and the second of fiddle, folk accordion, and folk double bass from district of Raseiniai are published in *Žemaitijos dainos ir muzika. 1935–1941 metų fonografo įrašai / Songs and Music from Žemaitija. Phonograph records of 1935–1941, sudarė ir parengė / ed. Austė Nakienė, Rūta Žarskienė* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2005), nos 16, 17, 26, 29, 30, 33.

<sup>23</sup> The birth dates of the other seven fiddlers were not documented.

<sup>24</sup> Bumblauskas (2005), pp. 256, 420.

<sup>25</sup> Kirdienė (2004), pp. 118–30, 135–37.

<sup>26</sup> Phonogram Archive at Department of Ethnomusicology, Institute of Musicology, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Vilnius (hereinafter the codes MFA KF, MFA KLF); Phonogram Archive at Department of Folklore, Lithuanian Institute of Literature and Folklore, Vilnius (hereinafter the code LTR F); Video Archive of Lithuanian Folk Culture Centre (hereinafter the code LKA V), Phonogram Archive of Lithuanian State Radio.

<sup>27</sup> Vytautas Lukauskas, 'Bagdono Oginskio orkestre' [In the Bagdonas Oginskis' Orchestra], in *Muzika ir teatras* [Music and Theatre], compiled by Vytautas Jurkštas (Vilnius, 1975), pp. 167–73.

<sup>28</sup> Vytautas Jurkštas, 'Plungės orkestras Palangoje' [Plungė Orchestra in Palanga], in *Vasara, Tarybinės Klaipėdos kurortinis priedas* [Summer, a resort supplement in the newspaper *Soviet Klaipėda*], (Klaipėda, 1989, gegužės 12–18), p. 6; (continuation, 1989 gegužės 26–birželio 1 d.), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Lukauskas (1975), p. 172

<sup>30</sup> Lukauskas (1975), p. 165; Jurkštas (1989), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Lukauskas (1975), pp. 164–65.

<sup>32</sup> EIA, respondent Bronius Gira, born in 1913 in Rietavas, lived in Plungė district, Rietavas rural district, Budričiai village.

<sup>33</sup> EIA, respondent Antanina Kurlenkienė-Vaičiulytė, born in the Tauragė district, Vainutas rural district, Bikavėnai village, lived in the same village (Šilutė district, Vainutas rural district).

<sup>34</sup> See Kirdienė, *Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių* (2005), pp. 23–24.

<sup>35</sup> Fiddlers from the Plungė district: Juozapas Platakis, born in 1898, in Alsėdis rural-district, Raišaičiai village, lived in Alsėdis village (music recordings MFA KF 6457/1–2, MFA KLF 402/6–13, MFA KLF 918/42–49); Pranciškus Platakis, born in the end of nineteenth century, lived in the Plungė district, Alsėdis village (music recordings MFA KF 6457/1–2); Kostas Kaulius, born in 1898, born in Tverai village, lived in Rupšiai village (MFA KF 6455/10–12, 15); Kazimiera Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė, born in 1902, lived in Kuliai village (MFA KF 6455/10–12, 15); Petras Liatukas, born in 1903, lived in Rietavas town (MFA KF 921/78–93); Vincas Varpjotas, born in 1908, lived in the Plungė rural-district, Klepščiai village (MFA KF 6971/1–10); Jonas Rubavičius, born in 1911 in Rietavas, lived in Rietavas rural-district, Norbutiškių village (MFA KLF 924/41–44); Kazimieras Citavičius, born in 1920 in the Plungė rural-district, Judrėnai village, lived in Plungė (MFA KLF 928/54–56, LKA V 65); Justinas Vasiliauskas, born in 1920 in the Plungė rural-district, Klepščiai village, lived in Plungė (MFA KLF 928/80–82, 84–86, 88, 89, LKAV 65, 109, LNR K6747); Adomas Jundalas, born in 1921, was born and lived in Plungė rural-district, Varkaliai village (MFA KLF 928/34–41). Fiddlers from the Skuodas district: Mykolas Šarva, born in 1903, lived in Skuodas rural-district, Paluknė village (MFA KLF 497/28, 28a); Ignas Jukis, born in 1906 in the Mosėdis rural-district, lived in Kretinga (MFA KLF 928/28–33); Juozas Šakys, born in 1910 in Mažeikiai district, Ketūnai village, lived in the Skuodas district, Pašilė rural-district, Gricaičiai village (MFA KLF 924/54–56); Antanas Rimkus, 1917–1992, born in the Ylakai rural-district, Junduliai village, lived in Notėnai rural-district, Prevaga village (MFA KLF 925/66–74); Leonas Bičkus, born in 1923, in the rural-district Ylakai, village Gailaičiai, lived in Ylakai village (MFA KF 7136/40, 42–45, 7137/1–2, 11, EIA, MFA KLF 923/31–34).

<sup>36</sup> Transcriptions: by P. Platakis (MFA KF 6457/2), by J. Platakis (MFA KF 6972/10, MFA KLF 918/44, 48), by Kaulius (MFA KF 6455/15), by Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė (LMA KF 6448/38, 45), by Rimkus (MFA KLF 925/67, 69, 71), by Jukis (MFA KLF 928/28), by Varpjotas (MFA KLF 697/4), by Liatukas (MFA KLF 921/81, 92), by Šakys (MFA KLF 924/54), by Bičkus (MFA KF 7136/42), by Citavičius (LKA V 65/ 1, 2, 5), by Vasiliauskas (LKA V 109/6). All the transcriptions are by the author except for three made by Kazimieras Šermukšnis.

<sup>37</sup> Gaile Kirdienė, 'Jārjēpidevūs ja muutused leedu rahvapārases viiulimuusikas isas ja poja Baltruaitise māngitūd muusika nāitel' [Continuity and Changes of Lithuanian Folk Fiddle Music. Music by the Baltrušaitis – Father and Son], in *Pārimusmuusika muutuvas ūhiskonnmas. Tōid etnomusikoloogia allat, 2*, ed. Ingrid Rūūtel (Tallin, 2004), 47–63.

<sup>38</sup> MFA KF 6448/45, played by Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė; MFA KLF 923/92, played by J. Jucius (fiddle), A. Bumblauskas (fiddle), K. Kungys (a folk accordion and a drum).

<sup>39</sup> There is one more reference from this area suggesting that fiddles were tuned not in fifths. Antanas Pušinskas (born in 1916 in Rietavas, lived in Kuliai, claimed he had a fiddle with 'the strings in G D<sup>1</sup> C<sup>2</sup> F<sup>2</sup>', documented in 1987 by Diana Dainytė, Nida Visockaitė, and Tuule Kann).

<sup>40</sup> The fiddler Julius Akllys (born in 1915 in Skuodas district, Mosėdis rural-district) claimed he was capable of both playing and dancing more than 160 dances, but at the time of the interview, he no longer played. Liatukas was able to remember the music for a dance as soon as he remembered its movements.

<sup>41</sup> EIA, musician Apolinaras Matieka, born in 1911.

<sup>42</sup> Põlmae, R. and Tampere, H., *Valimik eesti rahvatantse* (Tartu: Tampere, 1938), p. 117.

<sup>43</sup> MFA KLF 925/70, played by Rimkus; MFA KLF 925/70, MFA KLF 923/31, MFA KF 7136/42, played by Bičkus.



- <sup>44</sup> MFA KF 6448/38, played by K. Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė. See also Gaila Siaurukaitė(-Kirdienė), 'Lietuvių liaudies priešpriešos šokiai' [Lithuanian Folk Country-dances] diploma thesis (Lietuvos muzikos akademija, Etnomuzikologijos katedra, Vilnius, 1992), pp. 83–86.
- <sup>45</sup> MFA KLF 928/28, MFA KF 6455/15, EIA, MFA KLF 924/43, EIA, MFA KLF 921/81.
- <sup>46</sup> MFA KF 6102/9, MFA KLF 678/7.
- <sup>47</sup> MFA KF 6087/80.
- <sup>48</sup> Bumblauskas (2005), p. 326.
- <sup>49</sup> *Latvju tautas muzikas materiali*, Peektā gramata, Dejas [Latvian Folk Music Materials, vol. 5, Dances], Jurjanu Andreja sakartotas [collected and ed. by Jurjanu, Andreja] (Riga: Latv. Kulturas fonda izdevums, 1921), nos 55–57.
- <sup>50</sup> Margaret Dean-Smith, 'Jig', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 13, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn, 118–119.
- <sup>51</sup> Vladas Žulkus (2004), pp. 40, 52, 123–44, 210, 213.
- <sup>52</sup> Zigmąs Zinkevičius, 'Iki pirmųjų raštų' [Till the First Texts], vol. 2 of *Lietuvių kalbos istorija* [History of Lithuanian Language] (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1987), 18–24.
- <sup>53</sup> See Johannes Sembritzki, *Memel im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 of *Die Geschichte Memels* (Memel: F.W. Siebert, 1902); Johannes Sembritzki, *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen See- und Handelsstadt Memel* (Memel: F.W. Siebert, 1926); Zigmąntas Kiaupa, 'Šventosios uostas Palangos seniūnijoje' [Šventoji Port in District of Palanga], in *Palangos istorija* [History of Palanga], ed. V. Žulkus (Klaipėda: Libra Memelensis, 1999), pp. 147–165; Jakštas, Petras, *Senoji Šilutė: medžiaga Šilutės istorijai* [The old Šilutė] (Šilutė, 1994).
- <sup>54</sup> MFA KF 6448/42a, 44.
- <sup>55</sup> By J. Platakis (march MFA KF 6972/18, first part; polka MFA KLF 918/49), Liatukas (waltz MFA KLF 921/84, first and third parts; dance *Klumpakojis* MFA KLF 921/87).
- <sup>56</sup> Domarkienė-Rupeikaitė, P. Platakis, Citavičius and Bičkus.
- <sup>57</sup> Loreta Mukaitė, 'Kvintos intonacijos sklaida žemaičių liaudies dainose' [Intonation of a Fifth in Samogitian Folk Songs], master's thesis (Lietuvos muzikos ir teatro akademija, Vilnius, 2001), pp. 13–15, 20, 45–46.

## George Riddell of Rosehearty: fiddler and collector

KATHERINE CAMPBELL

George Riddell was a gifted fiddler who saw some of the material he collected making its way into print during his lifetime, and who also contributed a substantial number of tunes to Gavin Greig, which have now been published across the eight volumes of *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1981-2002). Riddell had many aspects to his musical life, as highlighted in Mary Anne Alburger's article about him, where he is paired with James Scott Skinner.<sup>2</sup> Alburger notes that Riddell arranged two tunes for James Scott Skinner's publication, *The Harp and Claymore*,<sup>3</sup> and

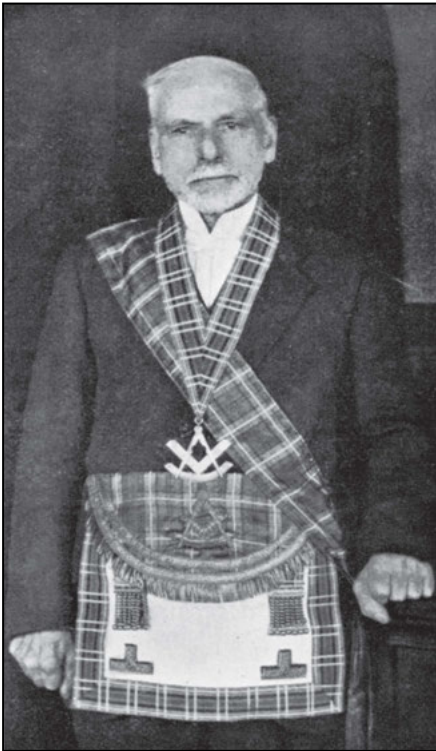


Figure 1 George Riddell<sup>1</sup>

his obituary states: 'In 1890 he was successful in setting a song of Professor Blackie's to music out of 170 competitors. He composed the melody and piano accompaniment'.<sup>4</sup> Alburger believes that he may also have been the author of an article on 'Cremona Violins and Violin Makers' that appeared in the *People's Friend* in 1890.<sup>5</sup> Despite his many musical achievements, he does not appear to have had a formal training in music, since his obituary shows that as a 'shepherd lad' he 'spent hours lying on the grass trying to discover for himself which notes formed the many tunes he knew by ear'.<sup>6</sup>

In this article I will focus on Riddell's collecting from tradition, taking as my base his two manuscript books entitled 'Old Airs'<sup>7</sup> and the series of articles published in the *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*,<sup>8</sup> supplemented by material from the script of his lecture on 'Folk-Song' which has remained in manuscript.<sup>9</sup> In so doing, I hope to give a sense of the kinds of tunes he collected and

his responses to them, of his sources, and of his total output as it is currently known.<sup>10</sup> In the Appendix, I give the titles of all the tunes in 'Old Airs', plus corresponding and additional items in Greig-Duncan and *Rymour*.<sup>11</sup>

Riddell lived in the burgh of Rosehearty which lies just west of the town of Fraserburgh on the Moray Firth coastline of North-East Scotland. He was born in Pitsligo parish on 9 January 1853, and died in Rosehearty in 1942 at the age of 89. Married to Margaret Lorimer, the couple had a daughter, Christian, and a son, Scott.<sup>12</sup> Like his father, also George, he was a shoemaker, and was one of the seven boot and shoe makers found in Rosehearty at a time when a wide array of trades existed to support the thriving fishing industry, which fell into decline in 1884 as a result of the 'devastating results of the herring fishing [...] that turned Rosehearty into a ghost town overnight'.<sup>13</sup> It is striking that none of the people from whom Riddell heard or collected songs, so far as he identifies them, had any connection with fishing, with the exception of 'Auld Jeck', a cooper, and possibly also his unidentified source for 'The New-Tarr'd Yoll'.<sup>14</sup> The repertoire Riddell draws on is that of the rural community, and the changes that he has witnessed in this society form a strong theme in his writings.

Riddell's two manuscript books of 'Old Airs' begun in 1903 and now held in the National Library of Scotland,<sup>15</sup> contain an impressive 108 tunes, of which seventy-one appear in *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*. Sixty-four of them were sent to Greig in 1905 and the rest in 1907 and 1908.<sup>16</sup> Greig mentions Riddell and his collection in his letter to Duncan of 11 November 1905:

Mr Geo. Riddell, Rosehearty, has sent me his MS. Collection to copy – 64 airs in all. He has not done any hunting as yet. Things have come to him he says without searching. Riddell is a very good musician – fiddler & theorist, and can compose *wonderfully* well. He knows what he is about, and his versions of tunes can be trusted. Some of his tunes are old friends – with as usual somewhat new faces. Some are new to me; and some like 'House o' Airlie' and 'Dowie Dens o' Yarrow' are interesting versions of well-known melodies. Unfortunately for us he has not secured the words along with the airs. (In one or two cases he gives a verse to show how the words fit the notes).<sup>17</sup>

In terms of his focus on the tunes as opposed to the words, Riddell links with the collecting efforts of Dean William Christie.<sup>18</sup> But it is interesting that nowhere among his writings does he mention Christie: one must conclude that either he did not have access to Christie's volumes, which were expensive in their day, or perhaps that he did not value the work that Christie had undertaken.

Riddell was of the belief that previous collectors had not paid nearly enough attention to the tunes, saying:

It is matter for regret that, at the same time when much was being done to gather in the old ballads, no similar effort was made to preserve the airs to which they were sung. As a consequence of this neglect, many gems of melody must have

perished. In country districts, where alone they continued to linger, the airs gradually got separated from the original words, and became associated with others whose only claim to consideration consists in their having been the means of preserving melodies that would otherwise have been lost.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his close connection with Greig, Riddell was scornful of the words of some of the songs that Greig was collecting, and argued for the need for words that matched the quality of the tunes.

Mr. Greig says that it is unfair to judge words and music separately, that a song is to be judged only by hearing it sung. Well, my own idea is that the union of words and music is like marriage. If there be not a certain affinity between the two, the union is incongruous and ought never to have taken place. When music and poetry are joined, the one should form the complement of the other, and each when taken alone should have something to recommend it. Even the very finest music will fail to hallow ribaldry, dignify doggerel, or give substance to inanity.<sup>20</sup>

His views on the 'marriage' of words and tunes are interesting, and link with the need for a fusion of music and words to be present in a successful song.<sup>21</sup>

Although Riddell gives relatively few words from his own memory, the material he does supply includes a few interesting scraps that show him being aware of very local song traditions. One of these is the title of no. 31 'From the Seatown to the Newtown'. This song, Greig-Duncan 463 'The Masons', generally includes wording like 'From the city to the new toon' but the wording of Riddell's title refers to the perceived division in Rosehearty between the fishertown and the other part of it. In 'Folk-Song', Riddell speaks of localised songs and gives two brief instances which refer to places in his neighbourhood.<sup>22</sup> The first can be related to Greig-Duncan 84 'The Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie', and the second bears some resemblance to Greig-Duncan 85 'The Brisk Young Rover'. It is interesting to find that a verse of Greig-Duncan 84 that is given along with the music by John Mowat of New Pitsligo (version S) has the place-names 'Aberdour', 'Boyndlie', and 'Tyrie' like Riddell's verse:

[P]atriotism in its wide sense finds no expression, the folk-songist's sentiments in this respect being intensely local, and usually inspired by love incidents connected with particular localities. For instance:

'Green grows the girse at bonnie Aiberdour  
An' low lies the bonnie lands o' Boyndlie.  
How I will sigh an' say when I'm mony miles away –  
"I ance had a sweetheart in Tyrie".'

And again –

'The tears they fall and blind me,

When I look back to bonnie Bodychell,  
And the bonnie lassie I left behind me.'

'Bodychell', an area outside Memsie, a few miles inland from Rosehearty and Fraserburgh, occurs also in the only piece of family tradition that Riddell mentions. He comments on 'Johnnie Sangster':

The air to which Johnnie Sangster is sung is an old reel tune known as 'Johnnie Lad'. A respected ancestor of my own I understand, used the same tune to a song of which this is one verse:—

'They tied her mou' intil a rape,  
Her neck intil a cell,  
An' ye wid'a' heard the groans o' her,  
At th' dams o' Bodychell.'

I have failed to recover any more of the song or to find out what it refers to.<sup>23</sup>

Riddell gives few sources for his material in 'Old Airs', most probably because many of the tunes were held in his own memory, but he does name three people. No. 100 is an 'Air contributed by A. Murison, Rosehearty' who is likely to be Alexander Murison, author of the book *Rosehearty Rhymes and other Pieces*,<sup>24</sup> and no. 103, 'Old Highland Air', was communicated by James Watt Duthie. No. 107 'Loch Lomond', has a 'refrain' which is 'given as it was played by J. Scott Skinner. Its origin is uncertain.' It seems likely that some light can be shed on the matter of the refrain's origin, since the note to 'Loch Lomond' 1528C in Greig-Duncan states: 'A second strain communicated by Mr J. Scott Skinner as got from Mr McHardy "Laird o' Drumblair"<sup>25</sup> who says he got it from a farmer in the Auchterless district.' The refrain in Greig-Duncan is similar to the one given here.

Loch Lomond.

By ye bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond, where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond, where we and my true love were wont to goe, on the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond. O, ye'll tak' the high road an' I'll tak' the low road, an' I'll be in Scot-land a - fore ye; tak' me an' my true love will never meet a - gain, on the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

Figure 2 'Loch Lomond' from 'Old Airs'<sup>26</sup>

Besides these named individuals, Riddell identifies another source in 'Old Airs' saying that no. 86, 'O, Wha's for Scotland and Charlie?', was 'taken down from the singing of a travelling book(?) deliverer who had been a precentor in his day'. Another song that has a link with a precentor is no. 11, 'Mossie and his mare'. Riddell comments: 'the tune is a dainty strathspey in the Dorian mode, finely adapted for bringing out the humour of the song', which, he says, was very popular when he was young and was a special favourite of 'a precentor of Pitsligo church well on to a hundred years ago'.<sup>27</sup> Riddell gives this kind of reference on a number of occasions, and this enables us to build up a picture of the contexts in which he heard the music that he made a note of, sometimes at a much later date.

### ***Rymour* Articles**

Riddell contributed a series of five brief articles to *Rymour*, containing twenty-two tunes, and had a close relationship with the society: 'In Edinburgh [...] there is a society called The Rymour Club – of which I have the honour to be a corresponding member – which numbers among its objects the collecting and printing of Folksong, both words and music'.<sup>28</sup> I have numbered the articles from 1–5 for convenience.

#### **1. 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with an Introduction and Notes'**

After sending the first 64 tunes in 'Old Airs' to Greig, Riddell then used the next six tunes for his first article. His first tune is 'The Rigs o' Rye', and he notes that this song has another air 'a copy of which I have supplied for another work'. This is no. 1054J in Greig-Duncan, and he comments that it 'consists of four phrases only, and is in other respects inferior to that here given'. The tune in *Rymour* is different from that commonly used for the song, and is included here as Figure 3.



Figure 3 'The Rigs o' Rye'<sup>29</sup>

His second tune, 'If She will Gang wi' Ye', is 'a quaint and beautiful example of the Dorian mode, and has more real pathos in it than dozens of latter-day "compositions"'. Concerning his collecting of it, Riddell says:

The individual to whom I am indebted for it knew nothing of the words beyond the title here given. Although the air has only recently been recovered by me, I have a distinct recollection of hearing it in my youth, sung to words with this burden –

She's aye been my ruin,  
And my sad downfall,  
She's my heart enclosed  
Like a stone in lime wall.<sup>30</sup>

The refrain Riddell remembered is that of the song that occurs in the Greig-Duncan collection as 1216 'Stone and Lime', and the majority of the tunes given there resemble this one.

About 'Donald and his Lowland Bride' he notes that 'I have never met with a copy of the melody, and have known only one person who sang it, and he has long since passed into the silent land. The air is quite modern, and might be made much of by an effective singer'.<sup>31</sup> He continues with a discussion of 'The New-Tarr'd Yoll (Yawl)', stating that it was:

common in its own district [Buchanhaven, a fishing village near Peterhead] between 40 and 50 years ago. I can well recall the enthusiasm with which the air was regarded by a musical and literary friend whose voice will be heard no more.<sup>32</sup>

This is an interesting song, since his obituary states that, under the influence of his musical friend, who was Sir Harold Boulton, he wrote 'new words for the old folk song "The Tarrin' o' the Yoll"'.<sup>33</sup> These words do not appear in *Rymour* or in 'Old Airs', however, where the following traditional ones are given:

There's nae a yoll like oor yoll, oor yoll, oor yoll;  
There's nae a yoll like oor yoll, in a' oor toon:  
Dadee eedin ood dood, ood dood, ood dood;  
Dadee eedin ood dood, the new tarr'd yoll!<sup>34</sup>

There is a pastoral emphasis in connection with his final two tunes, 'Irish Molly, O' and 'O, Laddie, are ye Waiting?'. Riddell notes that both were 'favourites in the country districts of Buchan when I was young, and to me they will ever be reminiscent of sweet-scented fields in the summer gloaming, and rosy-cheeked maidens that carry the milking-pail'.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with Notes'

In his second article, Riddell gives four tunes (76, 78, 79, 81) from 'Old Airs' as well as two that do not appear in the manuscript. The first, 'The Braes o' Strathdon', he notes 'is one of the finest of our folk-tunes. Although abounding in bold intervals, it is somewhat plaintive in character, a feature it owes to the pentatonic scale. Its cadences are striking, and the arrangement of its two lines of melody certainly makes the most of very slender material.'<sup>36</sup> His next example is the only instance given in *Rymour* of collecting from a fiddler, but it is a striking one:

'Bonnie Mary Jamieson' is never heard nowadays, although it was popular in rural districts fifty years ago. I have vivid recollections of a fiddler with whom it was a great favourite. His wife bore the same name as the heroine of the song, and in the courting days, when he wished to make his presence known, he usually did so by whistling a few bars of 'Mary Jamieson'. As a fiddler, Forbes, as he was called, was more noted for vigour than artistic excellence. In early life he had the misfortune to lose part of one of the fingers of his left hand; but this, instead of damping his ardour for violin-playing, only added to his conceit. When wonder was expressed how he managed to play, the invariable reply was, 'Ow, I jist need t' apply th' bow gey weel!'<sup>37</sup>

A similar story is found in connection with James Scott Skinner's father, who reversed the way in which he played the fiddle following an injury to his left hand.

Riddell notes that his third tune, 'The Band o' Shearers', was picked up in his youth and from his comment we have a sense that he can actually visualise the singer:

Of one harvest song in particular, I have very pleasant recollections. It used to be sung by the finest singer of folk-songs I have ever heard, and at times even yet, I can almost imagine I hear his full round voice as he rolled out the cheery refrain –

Bonnie lassie will ye gang  
And shear wi' me the hale day lang?  
And love will cheer us as we gang  
To join yon band o' shearers.<sup>38</sup>

Riddell adds in *Rymour* 'With the coming of the reaping machine, I am afraid the last vestige of romance has disappeared from the harvest-field.' He mentions changes in society also in connection with no. 5, 'To Gang Awa' A-wooin'', which was one of his 'recent acquisitions': 'It was taken down from the singing of one who, in days gone by, used to delight his compeers around the farm kitchen fire with his rendering of rural folk-song. Such a thing is scarcely to be heard nowadays. Our peasantry don't sing; and more is the pity'.<sup>39</sup> Riddell continues: 'My singer rendered it approx in 2-4 time; but after full consideration, and for reasons which need not be specified,



I have written it in 6-8.' Riddell clearly had a high level of musical ability, and was able to transcribe melodies and adapt them if necessary; but this is an exceptional case since he is generally aiming at authenticity in his notation of tunes. About no. 6, 'A Nameless Air', he writes: 'To this air I am not able to give even a name. Long ago I have heard it sung to a ballad regarding which a highwayman, a little boy, and a cow are mixed together in my memory. I have tried hard, without success, to recover a verse of the ballad'.<sup>40</sup> This song takes the generic title of 'The Yorkshire Farmer' in Greig-Duncan (266), with the title often given by singers as 'The Boy and the Cow'. The remaining item in this article, no. 4, 'Come, All Ye Freemasons', is discussed below.

### 3. 'Two Ancient Highland Airs'

Riddell here drew on a tune from 'Old Airs', no. 7, 'The Fisherman Boy', plus an air that he did not include in that manuscript: 'When I am on the Sea Sailing'. He writes:

'The Fisherman Boy' has an individuality of its own, and is undoubtedly one of the finest of our folk melodies. Time was when its pleasing strains might have been heard about any farm-toun; but now, unfortunately, the old-time minstrelsy, with its deep pathos and marvellous sincerity, has given place to the banalities of the music-hall.

Its words run:

High in the Hielands a poor boy did wander,  
And low in the Lowlands a poor boy did roam.  
'Oh, here am I a stranger expos'd to ev'ry danger,  
A poor little wee fisherman boy so far away from home.'<sup>41</sup>

'When I am on the Sea Sailing' was one of the three tunes he employed to illustrate modes in his lecture. He notes that this tune 'exemplifies the pathos and tender beauty of many of these old Dorians'. He gave as another instance of the Dorian mode in sol-fa notation, an unnamed air that he collected directly from an informant and was unable 'to associate with words of any sort'. He says: 'It was picked up by a Fraserburgh man in the lower Buchan district more than twenty years ago, and taken down by me from his singing. I look on it as a marvel of quaintness and vague tonality.'<sup>42</sup> He was later able to identify this tune, however: no. 21 in 'Old Airs' originally had the statement 'Name unknown' above it, but this was scored out and the title 'Glasgow Peggy' inserted along with a verse of the words.

His third illustration was an Aeolian example, 'O, Charlie, O, Charlie come ower fae Pitgair'. This was not in the true Aeolian mode, however, since the sixth note of the scale is not present.<sup>43</sup> Like other scholars of that period – including Greig and Duncan and many of those involved in the English folk song revival – Riddell was interested in assigning a mode to a folk tune, and it may be noted that Duncan

also included illustrations of modes in the lecture he gave to the Aberdeen Wagner Society.<sup>44</sup> In Duncan's case the illustrations were sung, but Riddell had the airs played 'without accompaniment';<sup>45</sup> most likely by himself on the fiddle.

#### 4. 'Three Unpublished Airs'

Here he selected the very first two tunes in 'Old Airs', 'The Foggy Dew' and 'Pretty Peggy', plus no. 74 'I Will Put my Ship in Order'. It is likely that, not having had these early tunes published by Greig as he expected, he took the decision to publish them in *Rymour*. He reflects on their choice:

It is now a good many years since I first committed to writing 'The Foggy Dew' and 'Pretty Peggy'. For a long time both were, and indeed to some extent still are, popular in northern rural districts. Both may be classed as love-songs, although neither is exactly of the kind considered suitable for a drawing-room. The music, however, might be sung in church without any offence to the feelings of the most devout worshipper. It will be observed that both airs have a second strain – not a very common thing in folk-melodies.<sup>46</sup>

About 'I Will Put my Ship in Order', he notes:

To those unacquainted with the peculiarities of the mixolydian mode, [...] [the song] may appear a marvel of quaintness; but probably on this very account that mode seems to have a peculiar attraction for the singer of folk-songs. He alone seems to be able to do it full justice. The example here given was learned long ago from the singing of a servant-girl belonging to Banffshire. She believed that the crooning of this particular air acted as a powerful charm in making the cows yield their milk. The present writer asks no reward for making this information public.<sup>47</sup>

#### 5. 'Five Old Airs, with Notes'

In his final article he includes three tunes from 'Old Airs' (58, 59, 62), which were used for the Masons' Walk (discussed below), plus two tunes that appear near the beginning of 'Old Airs' (8, 12), which are treated here. He notes that the air of 'Hame, Dearie, Hame' has a delightful "lilt" about it, and was for long very popular in the North', continuing:

A year ago the present writer, for the purpose of illustrating a lecture on folk-song, arranged it and one or two others as vocal quartets, when the reception accorded to this one especially, proved that the auld sangs – 'the sangs our mothers sang' – when properly rendered, had not lost their power to charm.<sup>48</sup>

This song and no. 4, 'The Gloamin' Star', were sung as quartets in illustration of his 'Folk-Song' lecture. Riddell had eventually managed to locate the words of 'The Gloamin' Star', the tune of which had been a favourite of his for many years:

The song is inseparably associated in my mind with a certain Yule Nicht, when I, a very small boy, listened to its being sung by a fresh female voice, for the delectation of a company met to celebrate the time honoured festival of Sowens Nicht. It was the first occasion on which I had heard the song and I do not suppose that at the time my critical faculties had been very highly developed. At any rate, I listened with very great delight.<sup>49</sup>

About 'A Sailor and his True Love' Riddell writes:

No songs are more popular with the folk-singer than those relating to sailors or the sea, though such songs do not bulk largely in his repertoire. The present one, with its fine jocund melody, I have heard lilted in the farm kitchen, sung at the harvest feast, and whistled behind the plough; but that was in days gone by!<sup>50</sup>

### **The Masons' Walk**

In Riddell's final article in *Rymour*, three tunes are given from an informant about whom we know a fair amount: 'Auld Jeck' of Rosehearty, whose real name was John Ritchie. Ritchie was a cooper in Rosehearty, who was born in 1809.<sup>51</sup> He married Catherine Scott, and the couple had a son, Alexander, and a daughter, Mary. He died in 1878 aged 69.<sup>52</sup> Riddell was particularly taken with him, and points to the fact that much of his material is not found in print. His note states:

'Duke Willie', 'Colonel Hay', and 'Drumdelgie' are given here just as they used to be performed by a remarkable old fife-player named John Ritchie, who belonged to Rosehearty, and died there many years ago. Few of his tunes are to be found in printed collections, and those given here, although written from memory, may be accepted as faithful reproductions. His playing of these and other tunes had a snap and verve which I have rarely heard equalled.<sup>53</sup>

He does not mention the context of the performance of this material in *Rymour*, but a note in Greig's music manuscript describes it and provides a further four tunes. The note to the tunes from Ritchie states:

The following airs were learned by the writer in early youth, from the playing of an old man, who rendered them with great spirit on the fife. For many years 'Auld Jeck' supplied music for what has always been the greatest pageant in the world to the youth of this district – The Rosehearty Mason's Walk, which from time immemorial has taken place at Auld Yule.<sup>54</sup> The writer has never happened to see any of the airs in print and has reproduced them exactly as they were played by 'Auld Jeck'.<sup>55</sup>

Riddell mentions Jeck in another a letter he wrote to Duncan on 23 November 1914:

It was only on these occasions that I or any one else have heard him play. The night previous to the 'walk' he used to take down his fife from the shelf where it had lain the whole year, and having oiled it, laid it down in readiness for the morrow, without playing a note. The 'walk' was the only occasion on which he played. I picked up the tunes from him when I was a boy.<sup>56</sup>

If Riddell had been a boy of about twelve when he heard Auld Jeck, this would have been c. 1865, when Jeck would have been around fifty-six, suggesting that he looked older than he actually was.

The airs that have been reproduced here are taken from *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* where the music is given in facsimile.<sup>57</sup> I have followed the order in which they appear in Greig's manuscript, with the exception of the last two where the order has been reversed, and have included any notes given by Riddell. The tunes are significant for several reasons:

1. They were used to accompany this important local ritual which still exists at the present day but is now accompanied by a pipe band.
2. They allow us to access part of the repertoire of an individual tradition bearer (about whom we now know a considerable amount).
3. They are closely connected to Freemasonry, which is particularly strong in Scotland, and often employed traditional music and song in social evenings and other customary events. This is a theme I plan to explore in detail elsewhere.

Where possible, I have included a comparison of Ritchie's tunes with the others found in Greig-Duncan. I have given a verse (or more) of words in the case of all the tunes to illustrate the point that Riddell was operating in a shared musical environment and that his collecting of instrumental tunes was inextricably linked with his collecting of song. Riddell only includes words in the case of 'Duke Willie' and 'Drumdelgie'.

The first two tunes have military connections, and it is unsurprising to find them being used for a march or procession.



Figure 4 'Colonel Hay'

I can say nothing regarding the origin of 'Colonel Hay.' It is certainly reminiscent of 'Miss Forbes' Farewell to Banff,' but is, to my mind, the better air of the two.<sup>58</sup>

For Colonel Hay's a nice young man  
He walks the streets both neat and clean;  
And gin ye gang wi' Colonel Hay,  
Ye're sure to go wi' a gentleman.<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 5** 'Duke Willie'

O mony a day hae I followed Duke Willie  
And mony a day hae I followed the drum;  
.....  
.....  
I've followed Duke Willie and lost all my money,  
And now when I want it I canna win hame.<sup>60</sup>

The dotted rhythms in bars 1 and 3 reflect the word 'mony' in the text. The tune and a fragment of the words to 'Duke Willie' were also noted from P. R. Gordon by Greig, with the comment, 'Often sung in fairs and feeing markets,'<sup>61</sup> providing us with further information about the circumstances in which the item would have been heard. This was a folksong common to the public domain, possibly sold in broadside ballad form by ballad singers at markets. Gordon's tune differs somewhat from Riddell's and does not contain the Scots snaps.



**Figure 6** 'The Lass o' Glenshee'

This is a very well-known song, and thirteen versions of it appear in Greig-Duncan. It is probable that the Masons would have had the words of the song going on in their minds when involved in the procession, as would the bystanders. The version from Mrs Clark, collected by Greig, begins:

Ae bonnie day when the heather was bloomin'  
The silent hill humming wi' the sair laden bee  
I spied a fair maid as I homeward was riding  
A-herding the sheep on the Hill o' Glenshee.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 7 'Supple Sandy'

There are no further versions of this song in Greig-Duncan, but words were recorded for the tune in Shetland by Peter Cooke, where H. Cumming recalled the following:

For the note it was wrought [?]  
And the guinea it was [sent?]  
So I'd rather have the guinea than the one pound note.<sup>63</sup>



Figure 8 'Drumdelgie'

'Drumdelgie' is one of the best known bothy ballads of North-East Scotland, and John Ritchie supplies the two-part tune that is most commonly sung nowadays to it.<sup>64</sup> He is unique in this respect in terms of the others found in the Greig-Duncan

collection.<sup>65</sup> Riddell writes in *Rymour*: 'After considering a number of points which need not be set down here, I am of the opinion that both 'Duke Willie' and 'Drumdelgie' have always had *two* strains as here given, although the folk-singer has, as usual, found *one* to be quite enough for his purpose'.<sup>66</sup> 'Strains' refer to parts of tunes – the first normally starting off in the lower register and the second moving to a higher one, as we would typically expect in an instrumental tune. This comment has associations with the work of Dean William Christie who felt that one strain alone was not enough, and frequently added a second one in his song collection *Traditional Ballad Airs*.

Linking with his statement above, Riddell gave words for only the first part of the tune.

O ken ye o' Drumdelgie's toon,  
Where a' the crack lads go?  
Stra'bogie braw, in a' her boun's,  
A bigger canna show etc.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 9** 'Hey Jenny, Come Down to Jock'

This is the only version in the Greig-Duncan collection; but there is a version in the *Scots Musical Museum*, with the lyrics:

Jocky he came here to woo,  
On ae feast-day when we were fu;  
And Jenny pat on her best array;  
When she heard that Jocky was come that way.<sup>68</sup>

The tune is different from Riddell's, although there are similarities in the second strain in terms of the running quavers.

CAMPBELL *George Riddell of Rosehearty: fiddler and collector*



**Figure 10** 'I Kissed my Love wi' his Apron On'<sup>69</sup>

It is not surprising to find a tune linked to Freemasonry being used for the Masons' Walk. The words of the version collected by Gavin Greig from Maggie Watt, are:

When Adam in the Garden went along with his companion Eve,  
A' the time of their innocence we cannot say how long they did live,  
In the cool of the day he to her did say, Why did you break the great command?  
She was never ashamed nor could she be blamed to kiss her love wi' her apron on.  
Right fal-a-di-di, tal-al-a-di-di,  
Right fal-al-fal-al-dil-iri.

Did you not hear the mason word? 'Twas whispered round the other night.  
Silly toys doth us annoy, and puts us in the least affright.  
The serpent in Eve as you may say with their black tricks and curious plans  
They soon made Adam his folly to see. 'Twas then he clappit his apron on.

It's brethren dear I beg your leave till I do end this simple song,  
Five hundred and two both just and true to this Mason Lodge it does belong.  
There is five steps that you must learn before the jewels you do put on,  
Our Master dear sits in his chair, bless him and his apron on.<sup>70</sup>

Riddell's tune is one of four in the collection for this song, which is set in the Garden of Eden and relates to the story of the breaking of the great command by eating the forbidden fruit. Another Masonic song appeared in *Rymour* with the following note:

'Come, All Ye Freemasons.' This is a song which was known only to 'brothers of the mystic tie,' and to few even of them. I have heard it sung with great applause on high and memorable occasions; but my recollection of the words is of the haziest description. The very few who knew it have long since ascended to the Grand Lodge above, and it is only after infinite trouble that I have managed to give the first verse. Indeed, the seventh line is an interpolation of my own, done for the purpose of showing the run of the melody. The song, although of interest to members of the craft, was of no poetic merit; but I think the melody worthy of preservation.<sup>71</sup>



The text runs:

Come, all ye freemasons where'er ye be,  
That e'er the Royal Arch did view,  
By these few lines ye will understand  
That some gey steps I hae gane through.  
When first a pilgrim I became,  
Intending for the Holy Land,  
I wander'd forth in simple faith,  
My sandals on and staff in hand.<sup>72</sup>

Riddell has thus added in his own approximation of the text in the second-last line in order that he can present the tune in its entirety, and as we have already seen, tune preservation was central to him.

### **Conclusion**

Riddell uses a romantic construct to describe his type of collecting, including lines from Wordsworth's 'Solitary Reaper' in his comment:

During my life I have had special opportunities of hearing these airs sung under the most favourable natural conditions, and can truly say that

The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more,

with the result that I have carefully and lovingly gathered and written down a great many airs.<sup>73</sup>

He is passionate about the material he is working with, and regrets the impact that societal and cultural changes occurring in the North-East at that time are having on the conditions for song singing that he recalled from the past. Riddell is also particularly concerned about the encroachment of the music and song from the music hall. He was an advocate of the performance of the material he collected. Like Greig and Duncan, he knew that audiences of that period expected to hear the songs performed with harmony, and to that end he arranged the songs 'Hame, Dearie, Hame' and 'The Gloamin' Star' in order to illustrate his lecture.

In Riddell's final paragraph in 'Folk-Song' we can see his dedication to collecting. He makes an appeal for further tunes, believing that they are rapidly dying out:

For a long while now – in fact since before the subject had begun to attract attention – I have interested myself in the collecting and recording of these airs, and I have been the means of having a good many of them preserved in so far as print can do it. But this after all is merely a sort of embalm-ment. It will never lead to their being sung. The time for collecting them however is nearly

past. We live in strenuous and changeable times, and whether it be for good or evil, those who once delighted in them, have almost ceased to sing them. [...] And this brings me to the purpose of these concluding remarks. If any of you or your friends happen to be acquainted with any of the old airs, I should esteem it a great favour if you would kindly let me know; and then we might make arrangements for having them written down. A few more years and it will be too late.<sup>74</sup>

Riddell has given us a localised community repertoire drawn from the Rosehearty district and has supplied us with a good deal of the context surrounding it, as in the case of the Masons' Walk. It is now up to modern-day fiddlers, instrumentalists, and singers with an interest in the past to bring this repertoire alive.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> George Riddell, *The Rise and Progress of Forbes Lodge of Freemasons, No. 67, Rosehearty, Aberdeenshire* (London: for the Lodge, printed by Roberts and Newton, [c.1929]), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle, et al (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 8 vols (Aberdeen and Edinburgh: Aberdeen University Press/Mercat Press for the University of Aberdeen in association with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1981–2002). Songs from this collection are given the prefix GD.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscript copies of these can be found on the University of Aberdeen's *The Music of James Scott Skinner* website, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/scottskinner/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

<sup>4</sup> 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell' (clipping from an unidentified newspaper affixed to front cover of 'Old Airs'), book I, NLS MS 3042, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Anne Alburger, 'J. Scott Skinner and George Riddell', in Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle, and Katherine Campbell (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 588–89 (p. 589).

<sup>6</sup> 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell'.

<sup>7</sup> George Riddell, 'Old Airs', books I and II, NLS MS3042 and MS3043, (n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> George Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with an Introduction and Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66; 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21; 'Two Ancient Highland Airs', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 36–37; 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63; 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92.

<sup>9</sup> University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives, MS 3088/22. I am grateful for permission to quote from Riddell's 'Folk-Song' manuscript.

<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank Dr Emily Lyle, University of Edinburgh, for her kind assistance with this article. I am also grateful to Dr Mary Anne Alburger, University of Aberdeen, for her encouragement.

<sup>11</sup> The titles in 'Old Airs' are as given in the body of manuscript, rather than in the index.

<sup>12</sup> OPR 1853/233/3; census record, 1901/223/002; and death record, 1942/233/28. He died on 22 May 1942 at 19 the Square, Rosehearty.

<sup>13</sup> James Taylor, and Liz Taylor, *Aul Rosehearty Toon* (Fraserburgh: Visual Image Production, 1993), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 190.

<sup>15</sup> National Library of Scotland, MS 3042 and MS 3043.

- <sup>16</sup> Emily Lyle, 'The Formation of the Collection', in Shuldham-Shaw, Lyle and Campbell (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 465–529 (pp. 465–66).
- <sup>17</sup> University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives, MS 998/13/9. I am grateful for permission to quote from Greig's letter to Duncan, 11 November 1905.
- <sup>18</sup> William Christie, *Traditional Ballad Airs*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1876 and 1881).
- <sup>19</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 61).
- <sup>20</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 7.
- <sup>21</sup> See Henry Tompkins Kirby-Smith, *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music through the Ages* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
- <sup>22</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 20–21.
- <sup>23</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 29a.
- <sup>24</sup> Alexander Murison, *Rosehearted Rhymes and Other Pieces* (Banff, 1925).
- <sup>25</sup> This was William McHardy, a benefactor of Skinner's. See Alburger, 'Skinner and Riddell', p. 601.
- <sup>26</sup> I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to reproduce this tune.
- <sup>27</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 36.
- <sup>28</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 4–5.
- <sup>29</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 62).
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 64).
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell'.
- <sup>34</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 64).
- <sup>35</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 66).
- <sup>36</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 116).
- <sup>37</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 117).
- <sup>38</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 26–27.
- <sup>39</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 119).
- <sup>40</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 120).
- <sup>41</sup> Riddell, 'Two Ancient Highland Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 36–37 (p. 36).
- <sup>42</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 11.
- <sup>43</sup> Compare versions in Greig-Duncan 401 'Pitgair', where the mode is almost exclusively Aeolian/Dorian.
- <sup>44</sup> Patrick Shuldham-Shaw and Emily Lyle, 'Folk-Song in the North-East: J. B. Duncan's Lecture to the Aberdeen Wagner Society, 1908', *Scottish Studies*, 18 (1974), 1–37.
- <sup>45</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 12.
- <sup>46</sup> Riddell, 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63 (p. 62).
- <sup>47</sup> Riddell, 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63 (p. 63).
- <sup>48</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 118).
- <sup>49</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 39. Riddell sent a copy of the words to Greig who published them; see Gavin Greig, *Folk-Song in Buchan and Folk-Song of the North-East by Gavin Greig*, with a foreword by Kenneth S. Goldstein and Arthur Argo (Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, 1963), Ob.82.
- <sup>50</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 189).
- <sup>51</sup> OPR 1809/233/2; see <http://www.scotlandpeople.gov.uk/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Death record, 1878/233/18; see <http://www.scotlandspople.gov.uk/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 190).

<sup>54</sup> See Ian Russell, 'Flute Bands and their Annual Walks in North-East Scotland: Music, Tradition, and Community', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 15 (2002–3), 99–111, for a discussion of the annual yule walks held in the nearby settlements of Inverallochy, Cairnbulg, and St Combs which are accompanied by flute bands.

<sup>55</sup> 'Auld Jeck' is mentioned in the notes to song 471D in Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1987), III, 649. For a discussion of the Rosehearty Walk, see Katherine Campbell, 'The Masons' Walk at Rosehearty', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 20 (2008), 127–32.

<sup>56</sup> Lucy Broadwood, 'Songs from Scotland and the North Country', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 5.2, no. 19 (1915), 104–121 (p. 105).

<sup>57</sup> I am grateful to the University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives for permission to reproduce these musical examples.

<sup>58</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 191).

<sup>59</sup> GD 75A, verse 1, collected from Mrs Greig by Duncan. See note to this song on the identity of 'Colonel Hay', Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1981), I, 515.

<sup>60</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 192).

<sup>61</sup> See GD 1763B note, in Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 407.

<sup>62</sup> GD 953A, verse 1.

<sup>63</sup> University of Edinburgh, School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1970/257. See Peter Cooke, *The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 143. I am grateful to Dr Peter Cooke for drawing my attention to this text at the NAFCo Conference in Aberdeen, 27–29 July 2006.

<sup>64</sup> See Katherine Campbell, 'Exploring Christie's Musical Choices in *Traditional Ballad Airs*', in Proceedings of the 35th International Ballad Commission Conference, Kiev, Ukraine (forthcoming).

<sup>65</sup> See GD 384.

<sup>66</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 191).

<sup>67</sup> Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 192).

<sup>68</sup> James Johnson and Robert Burns, *The Scots Musical Museum 1787–1803*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: James Johnson); repr. edn in 2 vols, ed. by Donald A. Low (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), no. 167.

<sup>69</sup> GD 471D.

<sup>70</sup> GD 471A.

<sup>71</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 118).

<sup>72</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 119).

<sup>73</sup> Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 61).

<sup>74</sup> University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 47–48.

**Appendix 1** Tunes Riddell collected

'No.' refers to Riddell's number in 'Old Airs' (book 2 begins at tune 85); *Rymour* refers to volume and page number in the *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club* (see note 8).

No.	Title	GD number	<i>Rymour</i>
1	The Foggy Dew	1495H	2.62
2	Pretty Peggy	1490H	2.63
3	Bold Brannen On The Muir	258C	
4	The Gloamin' Star	880Ca	
5	The Rigs o' Rye	1054J	
6	Lang Johnnie Moir	246C	
7	The Wee Fisherman Boy	961F	2.36
8	A Sailor and his True Love	64I	2.189
9	When the Wars Are All O'er	1742	
10	He Wadna Lie In Barn	274F	
11	Mossy An's Mear	677C	
12	Home Dearie Home	1057F	2.188
13	Rolling in the Dew mak's the Milkmaids fair	812A	
14	In Forglen you know	1547L	
15	Plains o' Waterloo	152F	
16	Once more for Greenland we are bound	10L	
17	Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (first set)	215G	
18	Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (second set)	215Y	
19	Two Brothers in the Army	1056F	
20	There cam' a laddie frae the North	975C	
21	Glasgow Peggy	850H	
22	The Braes o' Balquhither	862B	
23	Barley Rigs Were Rakin'	1154F	
24	Three years a 'Prentice	54F	
25	The Beggar Man	274F	
26	Cross the Raging Sea	1741	
27	The Auld Gair'ner's Wife	1262H	
28	To the beggin' I will go	488H	
29	I will put my ship in order	792La	
30	The fish may fly and the seas gang dry	1541F	
31	Frae the Seatown to the Newtown	463E	
32	Tell me dear lassie th' wye for to woo	909	
33	I mean to tak' a man	1333H (Addenda)	
34	Jean Findlater's Loon	662	
35	Davie an' his kye thegither	1281D	
36	Farewell my dearest Polly	998F	
37	The Laird o' Drum	835J	
38	Young Allan	326J	
39	The Ploughboy	170G	

CAMPBELL *George Riddell of Roseheart: fiddler and collector*

No.	Title	GD number	Rymour
40	Erin-go-Bragh	236D	
41	The Ploo, or Sally Monroe	448B	
42	Gweed Ale Comes	593B	
43	In Forfar I was born and bred	69K	
44	Josey Watt	1426B	
45	Patie cam' doun the Glen	616C	
46	Oh, Gin My Bonnie Babe was Born	1169E	
47	The Banks of Inverurie	1263C	
48	Come O'er fae Pitgair	401E	
49	Bonnie Hoose o' Airlie	233D	
50	Oh hey, and waes me	979D	
51	The Plains of America	1469F	
52	The Wee Toon-Clerk	317K	
53	Oh mak' my Bed Easy	209C	
54	Whistling at the Ploo	922	
55	The Trooper and Fair Maid	1470A	
56	For You my Johnnie Lad	755E	
57	Donald Blue	581J	
58	Colonel Hay	75C	2.191
59	Duke Willie	1763A	2.190
60	The Lass o' Glenshee	953G	
61	Supple Sandy	1712	
62	Drumdelgie	384J	2.192
63	I kissed my love wi' his apron on	471D	
64	Hey Jenny, come down to Jock	1737	
65	Rigs o' Rye (2nd version)		1.62
66	If she will gang wi' ye, she will gang bare		1.63
67	Donald and his Lowland Bride		1.63
68	Bonnie Buchanhaven, or The New-Tarr'd Yoll		1.64
69	Irish Mally, O		1.65
70	Oh, Laddie are ye waiting yer fortune to advance?		1.65
71	Come all ye Freemasons where'er ye be		1.119
72	Kind Johnnie Jiggamy	1412B	
73	In Forfar I was born and bred (or The Forfar Spout) (second set)	69G	
74	I will put my ship in order (second set)	792Lb	2.63
75	Cauld blows the wind o'er the high Rocks o' Pennan	1121E	
76	Bonnie Mary Jamieson		1.117
77	The High Rocks o' Pennan (note states 'Twice written by mistake')		
78	The Band o' Shearers		1.118
79	The Braes o' Strathdon		1.116

*Driving the Bow: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 2*

No.	Title	GD number	Rymour
80	The Ball o' Kirriemuir – and many others		
81	Fortune turns the Wheel		
82	The Bonnie Banks o' Ugie, O	1314E	
83	The Road to Peterhead	613A	
84	Mary the Maid o' the Don		
85	Donald of Glencoe		
86	O, Wha's for Scotland and Charlie?		
87	Maybe I'll be mairret yet		
88	Ratcliffe Highway		
89	The Lawyer's Bonnie Peggy		
	Fortune Turns the Wheel (note states 'Mistake, twice written')		
90	Mormond Braes		
91	Caledonia (1st version)		
92	Caledonia (2nd version)		
93	The Proud King of France		
94	Erin's Lovely Home		
95	Three Miles Below Langside		
96	Van Dieman's Land		
97	The Winnin o' my Goon		
98	Mossie And His Mare (2nd version)		
99	The Barnyards o' Delgaty		
100	Air Contributed by A. Murison, Roseheartly		
101	The Tinklers' Waddin'		
102	As Lang's My Apron Wis Hingin' Doon		
103	Old Highland Air		
104	Highland Lament		
105	Maybe I'll be mairret yet		
106	A' the Lads o' oor Toon		
107	Loch Lomond		
108	Ye Shall Be My Dearie		
		The Gloamin' Star at E'en 880Cb	
			To Gang Awa' A- wooin', 1.120
			A Nameless Air, 1.121
			When I am on the Sea Sailing, 2.37

## Sam Bennett: a case study in the English fiddle tradition from James Madison Carpenter's ethnographic field collection

ELAINE BRADTKE

### Introduction

James Madison Carpenter (1888–1984) was a Harvard-trained collector who, between 1928 and 1935, amassed a vast hoard of British songs, stories, tunes and customs (see Figure 1). He was one of the few field workers active in Britain during this period, and his collection is notable for its breadth and diversity. Carpenter's collection was bought by the Library of Congress in 1972, at the instigation of Alan Jabbour, then Director of the American Folklife Center, where it is now held as collection AFC1972001. Shortly after acquisition, the material was removed from the mail sacks, boxes, and packets in which it arrived. The manuscripts were microfilmed and the disc recordings were copied onto tape, but the collection was not catalogued. However, a recent and ongoing international project, of which I am a part, has produced an in-depth on line finding aid<sup>1</sup> and, in doing so, has brought this vast multi-media collection to the attention of a wider audience, and facilitated its use. The long term goal of this project is to fulfil Carpenter's wish to publish his collection by issuing a critical edition of its contents, and to this end we have transcribed many tracks from Carpenter's sound recordings.



**Figure 1** James Madison Carpenter Sitting in an Austin Roadster  
The James Madison Carpenter Collection, Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001 Photo 101



During his visits to Britain, Carpenter met and recorded several performers of English traditional dance music, primarily fiddle players. Chief among these was Samuel Bennett (1865–1951), from Ilmington in Warwickshire. Carpenter collected an unusually large number of items from Bennett, including recordings of him singing ballads, and other traditional songs, and playing morris and social dance music on the fiddle. There are also several photographs of Bennett performing alone, and with other dancers.

From the sheer bulk of Bennett's material in the collection, it is tempting to conclude that he was an extraordinary tradition bearer, and a treasure trove for the fieldworker. In order to better understand Sam Bennett I shall look at two other informants who were contemporaries and acquaintances of his: William 'Merry' Kimber (1862–1971), a concertina player and morris dancer from Headington in Oxfordshire, and William Nathan 'Jinky' Wells (1868–1953), a fiddle player and morris dancer from Bampton in Oxfordshire. In addition to placing these men in their local contexts, this paper will examine lists of each man's collected repertoire for similarities and differences, and analyze transcriptions of their performances of a particular tune for information on individual playing styles. Carpenter collected more material from Bennett than he did from Wells and Kimber combined. What was the reason for this? Was it because the Ilmington tradition was more extensive, or were there other factors at work?

## **The musicians**

### *Sam Bennett*

Born in Ilmington on 5 November 1865, to James and Martha Bennett, Samuel was the sixth of twelve children (see Figure 2), and lived and worked in his native village until the age of eighty-five. The son of a farmer, Bennett was a fruit grower and blackberry merchant by trade, who diversified into related work such as building ladders, and haulage. Bennett served his village and district as councillor and churchman in addition to his activities in music and dance. Small, slight, and bow-legged, he was nevertheless vigorous throughout his life, and famous locally for winning a mowing competition at the age of seventy-five. He demonstrated his continued robust health by dancing a jig at his eighty-third birthday party, which coincidentally also revived the local harvest home celebration.<sup>2</sup>

Bennett began his lengthy tenure as a fiddle player whilst a boy, when his father gave him a second-hand instrument. Thomas B. Arthur (1802–1890), the village pipe and tabor player, taught him the Ilmington morris tunes by singing them, because he had lost too many teeth to play the pipe.<sup>3</sup> Bennett learned the Bampton tunes from Edward Butler (1822–1891), an Oxfordshire fiddle player. Butler occasionally played for Bampton's morris dancers and performed at fairs, including one in Blackwell, Warwickshire, held annually on 23 June.<sup>4</sup> Bennett later took on a similar role as a guest musician for some of the Bampton morris dancers from 1926, following an internal conflict resulting in William Wells starting a

rival group.<sup>5</sup> (It was said that Bennett could not read music, but had an excellent memory.)<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2** Sam Bennett, Ilmington Morris Fiddler. The James Madison Carpenter Collection, Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001 Photo 036

Bennett became involved in the revival of the Ilmington morris dances in the 1880s and continued to be active for many decades. During his long life he played the fiddle, sang, danced, assumed the role of the hobby horse, taught traditional dancing locally as well as in Wales, Devon, and London, and occasionally taught in schools.<sup>7</sup> He took part in several radio broadcasts, and the BBC made a programme about him.<sup>8</sup> As part of his infectious enthusiasm for traditional music and dance, he instructed groups of local children in maypole, social, and morris dancing, and led social dances at events such as the Ilmington Empire Day celebrations in 1933.<sup>9</sup>

Bennett was a tireless promoter of the local traditional culture, and was a consummate performer who was happy to share the music and dance that was close to his heart. But more than that, he wanted to ensure that these traditional arts were continued by future generations, and understood the motives of others who wished to preserve and publicize these materials. Accordingly, he was an eager supplier of material for Mary Neal and the *Espérance Girls' Club*.<sup>10</sup> In addition to Carpenter, his tunes and dances were collected by Percy Grainger, R. Kenworthy Schofield, Clive Carey, Alfred Williams, Peter Kennedy, and by Cecil Sharp – although Sharp did not consider him adequately 'traditional'.<sup>11</sup>

Bennett, in his own way, was also a collector, gathering local songs, tunes, and dances and then redistributing them by teaching them to others and performing them wherever he could find an audience. Curiously, it was precisely these habits of collection and dissemination that Sharp found so distasteful,<sup>12</sup> although he

himself was doing the same thing on a much larger scale – and for many of the same reasons.

*William Kimber*

William ‘Merry’ Kimber, born in Headington Quarry near Oxford in 1872, has been called ‘the best-known English traditional musician of the twentieth century’<sup>13</sup> (see Figure 3). His father, also named William (1849–1931), was a builder. Young Kimber followed him into the building trade, working as a bricklayer. The elder Kimber played concertina, fiddle, and tin whistle and led the local team of morris dancers. Several generations of Kimber men had been and continue to be (Merry Kimber’s grandson dances with them now), members of the Headington Quarry morris side, young William being no exception. William Senior taught his son from an early age to play the Anglo-German concertina (a diatonic, single-action, free-reed instrument – i.e. one that gives two different notes from the same button, depending whether the bellows are pushed or pulled).<sup>14</sup> In enlightened self-interest, these music lessons were focused especially on the Headington morris dance repertoire, since the tradition of morris dancing was in decline in the latter years of the nineteenth century, and it was often difficult for the dancers to find a suitable musician.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 3** William Kimber, Courtesy of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

From 1887 William Kimber the younger was an active morris dancer who became a musician for morris and social dancing. He also participated in the Headington mummers, rang handbells, and was a member of a local concertina club.

He followed in his father's footsteps, taking over the leadership of the Headington side, and taught the traditional dances to others outside the village, including a group of Oxford policemen.

On an eventful Boxing Day in 1899, William Kimber and the Headington morris dancers met Cecil Sharp, who was visiting the area, for the first time. The twentieth century revival of morris dancing may never have happened were it not for this chance encounter. Once Sharp began to collect and publish the morris dances and tunes in earnest, Kimber was not only a valued informant, but an active collaborator in Sharp's propagation work. During a typical lecture, Sharp would speak and play the piano, and Kimber would perform on the concertina and demonstrate the dance steps. Kimber was also an important resource for Mary Neal and the Espérance Girls' club, on several occasions travelling up to London to teach them, and he also provided material to Peter Kennedy and Christopher Chaundy, in addition to Sharp and Carpenter.



**Figure 4** William Wells, Courtesy of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

#### *William Wells*

William Nathan 'Jinky' Wells (1868–1953) was born in Bampton, the son of a footman (see Figure 4). At first, he followed his father into domestic service, worked a few years in London, and, on returning to Bampton, made his living at odd jobs, and sold household goods from a hand cart. He was part of an active morris dancing family, and at least one of his predecessors played the pipe and tabor for the

Bampton dancers.<sup>16</sup> Wells learned to play on a homemade fiddle that he built from a rifle stock and an old corned-beef tin. In 1885 he bought a second hand violin on a trip to London.<sup>17</sup> As a young man he heard both Edward Butler and his son Richard (1856 – c.1905) play for the Bampton dancers, and most likely learned the tunes from them. Wells began as a dancer and fool for the Bampton morris team in 1887, and started playing the fiddle for them in 1899, taking over from the younger Butler. He became a moving force behind the continuance of the tradition as both instructor and musician.<sup>18</sup> Following a dispute over who should lead the side, Wells started up a second group of younger dancers.<sup>19</sup> He was a significant source of dances and tunes for Cecil Sharp, and was invited to London on several occasions to perform.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps more of a private person than Kimber and Bennett, Wells refused to be filmed. He felt that to do so would be selling out the morris.<sup>21</sup> As he grew older, Wells lost his sight and his hearing, and developed arthritis; disabilities which seriously curtailed his musical activities. Nevertheless, many of his tunes and a few songs were collected by Carpenter, Sharp, Mary Neal, and Peter Kennedy.

### **The recordings**

James Madison Carpenter travelled the length and breadth of Britain, recording songs, plays, tunes, and customs wherever he went. Evidence from his collection shows that he spent some time in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Warwickshire in 1933. We know from the slip of paper accompanying cylinder 105 that he was in Ilmington in the spring of 1933.<sup>22</sup> There are also photographs of the Ilmington Empire Day celebration (24 May 1933),<sup>23</sup> although, since most of these photographs were taken by a professional photographer, they do not prove that Carpenter was present on the day. Despite the lack of information, it is likely that he recorded the more than forty items from the repertoire of Sam Bennett around this time. Another slip of paper<sup>24</sup> listing Wells's repertoire with 'Bampton Whit Monday 1933' scribbled on it shows that he also met Wells that year. As Headington is close to Bampton (24 km as the crow flies), it is likely that Carpenter and Kimber also met in the spring or summer of 1933. There are only seventeen items in the collection recorded from Wells, and sadly, no recordings from Kimber. Carpenter did however collect four song texts, a mummer's play and a list of Kimber's repertoire.<sup>25</sup>

Carpenter recorded onto wax cylinders using a Dictaphone machine. Unlike the Edison Phonograph, which used a large horn, the Dictaphone used a mouthpiece connected to a tube. Though it worked well enough for singers, making a Dictaphone recording of instrumental music proved to be more complicated. To record a clear sound from a fiddle, the mouthpiece would have needed to be held near the *f* holes, but without obstructing the movement of the bow. The recording of a double-ended instrument such as the Anglo concertina, where the sounds come from widely separated openings in the endplates under the player's hands, was probably beyond the technical capabilities of the machine. This would explain the lack of recordings in the Carpenter Collection of Kimber. There is an undated

recording of an English concertina (a chromatic, double-action, instrument – i.e. one that produces the same notes in both bellows directions) in the collection, but the sound is extremely faint.<sup>26</sup> Later, after returning to the United States, Carpenter copied many of the cylinder tracks onto discs. These disc recordings, but not the original cylinders, were duplicated onto open reel tape by the Library of Congress in order to provide preservation and listening copies. The cylinder tracks that were not copied onto discs remained unheard until the completion of a recent digitization project that included all of the recordings.

While there is indeed buried treasure in Carpenter's collection, digging it out of the cylinders is hard work. In order to catalogue and transcribe his recordings for the critical edition we have had to clear several obstacles. Carpenter sometimes altered the speed of the recording machine in order to squeeze more music onto a cylinder. By slowing down the rotation of the cylinder, the stylus cuts fewer grooves per minute than it would ordinarily. During the digitization process the cylinders were played back at a standard speed, without adjustment. The resulting audio files include impossibly fast dance tunes and comically high-pitched, squeaky-voiced singers. Furthermore, unlike Percy Grainger, Carpenter gave no pitch reference on his recordings, so we cannot accurately adjust the playback to reproduce the original pitches. However, with the fiddle tunes it is possible to hear the open strings, and extrapolate the notes as fingered, if not the exact pitches. We know from more recent recordings that Wells and Bennett did not tune to standard pitch; therefore my transcriptions represent the notes as fingered, not as sounded. Another barrier encountered by the listener is the high noise to signal ratio, since Dictaphone cylinders were never intended for high fidelity sound reproduction. Also, Carpenter played many of the cylinders repeatedly before copying them and they further deteriorated over time as they fell prey to cracks and mould. Even with the use of computer software to adjust the speed and reduce some of the noise, these factors have made transcription a slow and sometimes painful process. On the positive side, disc copies exist for some cylinders that were lost or badly damaged, and the sound quality on the copies is sometimes clearer than that on the original. Thanks to further funding from the British Academy, the team has recently catalogued the discs and linked them to the source tracks on the cylinders and related material in the manuscripts..

### **Repertoire**

By comparing Carpenter's material with that of other collections we are able to fill in some of the gaps in the repertoire. Transcribing the dance music in the Carpenter collection has been a useful exercise, as tune titles alone can be misleading. Most other sources of information on the repertoire includes notation of the music, and these transcriptions make comparisons possible (see Appendix 1 and 2 for lists of performers and their tunes). In the case of instrumental music, a given title may have several versions associated with it, or indeed the same title may be used for more than one very different tune. Some tunes are named after the dances they

accompany, and sometimes the opposite applies. Melodies which are known as distinct entities with their own titles may share common phrases. For example, Sam Bennett knew at least two distinct versions of 'Maid of the Mill', while the melody he uses for 'Bumpus o' Stretton' bears a strong resemblance to Kimber's 'Quaker's Wife'.

Sam Bennett's collected repertoire covers a wide spectrum – not only the expected morris dance tunes, but country dance music, ballads, and quite a number of humorous songs. Many of his songs were based on dance tunes, and, even in the case of the ballads, he played the fiddle before, after, or even during singing. In addition to the Ilmington tunes, he knew enough of the Bampton tunes to be able to accompany the morris dancers. Bennett has by far the largest collected repertoire of the three men. Going strictly by numbers, he simply knew more music. But these higher numbers could also be because he was approached by more collectors, each one looking for gems that the others overlooked.

William Kimber learned his morris tunes from his father, and it is this music that forms the bulk of his collected repertoire. Considering all his other musical activities, it seems odd that there is not both a larger quantity and wider variety. He did play social dance music, and it seems likely that he read music, though no tune books have been discovered with his name on them, so that what we have, in Kimber's case, is an incomplete record.

William Wells left a legacy of numerous morris tunes in the Bampton tradition, and Carpenter also collected the texts of several songs from him. There were a few social dance tunes in his repertoire as well, but for some reason, he was not as thoroughly recorded as Bennett.

Chandler speaks of a core set of tunes in the morris genre that are found throughout the South Midlands,<sup>27</sup> due in part to the mobility of the dance musicians themselves. The better musicians were often sought after by several groups of dancers, and hired especially for their performances. These musicians brought not only new tunes but often the steps to go with them, thus spreading both music and dance innovations.<sup>28</sup>

Much of this core repertoire shows up in the list of tunes for our three musicians (see Appendix 1). Of the combined collected repertoire of 132 tunes and songs, Bennett knew 66, Kimber 40, and Wells 26 of which 50, 32, and 15 respectively were unique to each performer. Four tunes are known by all three men: 'Constant Billy', 'Green Sleeves', 'Old Molly (Mother) Oxford' and 'Shepherds' Hey', and these melodies are widespread throughout the morris dance genre. Kimber and Wells had no other tunes in common. Bennett however, shared seven other morris tunes with Wells (probably due to his playing for the Bampton dancers) and four tunes with Kimber, one of which was the social dance tune 'Pop Goes the Weasel'.

#### *'Constant Billy'*

'Constant Billy', one of the most widely known morris dance tunes, is among the melodies all three men had in common. The earliest printed example of the tune

is found on a song sheet in the British Library (c.1725).<sup>29</sup> The title of this version is 'Charming Billy' and the text begins 'When the hills and lofty mountains'. The tune was published in Playford's *English Dancing Master*, vol. 3 (1727), and is used in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, Act II, Air no. 37 (1728), as well as being the basis for the song 'How Shall We Abstain from Whiskey' by John MacMurdo of Kintail. 'Constant Billy' also bears a strong resemblance to the tune associated with the broadside 'The Death of Parker'. This lilting 6/8 tune has been collected from many morris dance musicians, including those from Adderbury, Bucknell, Eynsham, Field Town (Leafield), Headington, Longborough, Oddington, Sherborne, and Wheatley, in addition to the three presented below,<sup>30</sup> and is also found in Ireland and North America. The versions of this melody in the Carpenter collection vary slightly from the renditions by the same performers that have been collected and published elsewhere.

### Playing style

By looking at transcriptions of performances of 'Constant Billy' by Bennett, Kimber, and Wells, it becomes apparent that there is a divergence in the melody line and the playing styles of each performer, especially in the second half of the tune. For ease of comparison the three melody lines have been laid out in parallel (see Figure 5, overleaf). Broadly speaking, the renditions of the tune bear a strong resemblance to each other, although the dances differ in choreography.

The transcription of Bennett's performance of 'Constant Billy' shows that his fiddle style was energetic, rough and ready. It is typical of Chandler's description of the southern English fiddle sound, where 'rhythm was accentuated, often at the expense of tonal purity', and 'pacing and rhythmic accentuation are completely at odds with the classical playing style'.<sup>31</sup> Bennett used short bow strokes, few slurs (to balance out the up and down bows), and made ample use of drones and open strings, whether or not they suited conventional notions of harmony. He also sang or hummed along with his playing, and sometimes accompanied a song with his fiddle. Sam Bennett's fiddle playing was not necessarily pretty, but – and this is the important thing – it had all the hallmarks of good dance music, with a sense of lift and drive to his playing that is not easy to illustrate with printed notation.

The sound of William Kimber's concertina playing was light, and lilting. According to Worrall, Kimber's tempo was 'brisk and the music unerringly rhythmic'.<sup>32</sup> His technique was somewhat dependent on the strengths and limitations of the Anglo concertina and his morris tunes had a particular sound, due to his father's strong musical influence. Worrall wrote: 'To Kimber, rigidity appeared to apply only to the melodies and overall style of the morris tunes learned from his father.'<sup>33</sup> The Kimbers developed a unique form of accompaniment, with staccato chords produced by the left hand while the melody was played with the right (see Figure 6), although the chords were often more dissonant than one would expect, due in part to the layout of the buttons. Because of this, Kimber's playing had a distinctive sound, what some musicians call 'punchy'. This is in effect, the concertina



analogue to the fiddler's double stops and drones. In Kimber's rendition of 'Constant Billy' (see Figure 6), both techniques are employed to give a feeling of bounce to the tune and to emphasize the rhythm. For Kimber and Bennett, the added accent and lift from the extra notes over-rode any desire for 'sweet' harmony.

**Figure 5** Parallel notation of 'Constant Billy'

William Wells had a more elegant fiddle style than Sam Bennett had. According to Chandler, 'His playing is rhythmically rather smooth, and most often has a purity of tone which is at odds with many other of the recorded traditional musicians who played for morris dancing at other locations.'<sup>34</sup> Unlike Kimber and Bennett, Wells included ornamentation in his music, such as anticipatory notes and decorative runs (see Figure 5). Like Bennett, he used drones, and open strings. He also made use of double stops, and seems to have had more of an ear for conventional harmonic structure. Many of his distinctive traits would lead one to suspect that he had formal musical training, although there is no evidence to support this theory. Wells also sang as he played, and tuned his fiddle down to suit his vocal range.<sup>35</sup> Most striking in this particular example is William Wells's repetition of the last note at the end of each phrase, a feature that has been ignored or glossed over in the published versions of the Bampton variant of the tune. This strong note tacked on the end

would have meant something to the dancers, an extra step or flourish perhaps. In a discussion of this dance Wells claimed that ‘They used to do it three different ways’ incorporating different steps and jumps into the choreography<sup>36</sup> although this is not noted in Sharp’s published dance notations.<sup>37</sup> It would seem then that the version that Carpenter recorded is one of the alternative ways of performing this dance.

The image displays a musical score for a fiddle piece, consisting of six staves. The first two staves are labeled 'Right' and 'Left' respectively. The right hand part is a melody in treble clef, and the left hand part consists of chords in bass clef. The music is in 6/8 time and G major. The score is divided into three systems of two staves each. The first system shows the initial measures, the second system continues the melody and chords, and the third system concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Based on a transcription by Dan Worrall from a 1957 recording made by Christopher Chaundy in Oxford and published on Absolutely Classic EFDSS CD 03.

**Figure 6** Kimber’s use of right hand melody and left hand chords.

## Summary

### *Commonalities*

All three men were both dancers and musicians who displayed expertise in their local tradition by performing solo jigs, teaching other dancers and leading dances. They exemplified the belief among morris dancers that the best musicians are also dancers. The old adage that ‘the music will tell you what to do’ is based on the fact that an experienced musician knows what to make the music say in the first place. In the case of these men, it meant that they were proficient in the dances as well as the tunes.

All three men had wide reaching and extensive networks within their local area and beyond. Kimber belonged to several musical and dance organizations, and was widely known outside of Oxfordshire due to Sharp’s lectures, and subsequent performances for the Morris Ring and the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). Wells, as a salesman of household necessities and odd-jobs man, was well known to all and sundry in the Bampton area. His trips to London and association with the EFDSS and the Morris Ring further expanded his horizons. Bennett was a musical butterfly, or what some morris dancers refer to as a ‘tart’. As the photographic

record shows, he appeared everywhere there was a chance to perform, with or without the Ilmington morris dancers.

All three men also had employment that allowed them free time to practice, perform, and to travel. In Kimber's case, it often meant quitting a job to work for a stretch assisting Sharp in his lectures. But, as a skilled bricklayer, he rarely lacked work. Bennett's business selling fruit meant he had his own vehicle which was large enough to carry the whole Ilmington side when needed. This mobility enabled him to regularly appear in Bampton and Stratford-upon-Avon, while Wells, being self-employed, had the freedom to travel with his fellow morris dancers down to London or to neighbouring towns.

### *Differences*

The differences between these three men become most apparent when their repertoire is taken into account. All three performed a selection of social dance tunes, but there was very little overlap between them. They all knew their own local morris tunes, but Bennett alone made a point of learning dance tunes from outside of Ilmington, specifically those of Bampton. Kimber, with his membership of the concertina club and hand bell ringers, was exposed to a wide array of music. Wells's performing repertoire appears to be restricted in comparison to the other two, but that could be an artefact of his shorter playing career. Bennett was the only one of the three who also performed an extensive and varied range of songs above and beyond the short ditties associated with morris dances.

### **Assessing the Carpenter collection**

How accurately does the Carpenter collection reflect what is known of Bennett's extensive repertoire, and that of his contemporaries? Collections such as his act as a snapshot of a performer in a given time and place. Carpenter approached his collecting without the preconceived notions to which Sharp was prone, and therefore came away with a greater range of material. There are precious few of Sam Bennett's songs and tunes found in other collections that Carpenter missed, although there are some blank areas in the overall picture, especially with William Kimber's repertoire. It is also important to note that the main item that Carpenter collected from Kimber was a mummers play, something that Sharp, in his search for songs and dances failed to uncover. Given the limitations of the technology he was using, Carpenter did a fairly thorough job, especially in Bennett's case.

### **Conclusions**

Setting Carpenter's material from Bennett alongside the gleanings of other collectors leaves us with more questions than it answers. For instance, where did he learn the Playford tune 'Gathering Peascods' which only appears in Carpenter's collection? Surely not a common tune in the arsenal of your average 'country bumpkin' as Sharp called him.<sup>38</sup> Yet he must have had a use for it – perhaps for the maypole dancers? And why did Carpenter not collect 'Maid of the Mill' from Bennett? It was

Ilmington's signature morris dance, and its distinctive use of linked handkerchiefs was documented in two extant photographs. From the evidence of other collections we know that Bennett knew two different versions of the melody, and no doubt also knew words to sing to it. But, try as one might, no collector is able to capture the entire repertoire of any one informant. There are always new tunes to learn, old ones to forget and the occasional unintentional merging and transformation of half remembered melodies.

Was Sam Bennett a paragon or an anomaly? All things considered, he was a little of both. He was certainly visited by more collectors than Wells or Kimber, so there must have been some attraction. In content, Sam Bennett's repertoire was in many ways similar to other musicians of his day. In quantity however, he far outnumbered Kimber and Wells and also knew a much wider variety of music, not the least being a large number of humorous songs and ballads. Sharp described him as an 'inaccurate collector',<sup>39</sup> but, in truth, Bennett was something of a magpie, picking up bright shiny songs and tunes wherever he went. His unusually acquisitive nature led him to develop a greater breadth of knowledge than his contemporaries, his repertoire being the product of his undying love of traditional music and dance, while his gregarious nature and talent for self-promotion attracted the attention of the many collectors who recorded it for posterity. To the collector of traditional music and song, Sam Bennett had more to give and was more than willing to give it.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> 'How Folk Dance 'King' Kept his Eighty-Third Birthday', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 12 November 1948 (reprint in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML), Library Collection AL Bennett).

<sup>3</sup> Sam Bennett, letter to Douglas Kennedy, 28 January 1948, VWML Library Collection AL Bennett.

<sup>4</sup> Sam Bennett, letter to Douglas Kennedy, 22 November 1949, VWML Library Collection AL Bennett.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Chandler, '150 Years of Fiddle Players and Morris Dancing at Bampton, Oxfordshire' *Musical Traditions*, 10 (1992), 22.

<sup>6</sup> John H. Bird, *Sam Bennett the Ilmington Fiddler: Memoir of a Cotswold Character* (Stratford upon Avon; no publisher, 1952), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Sam Bennett, letter to Douglas Kennedy, 22 Nov 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Bird, pp. 23–24.

<sup>9</sup> Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, The James Madison Carpenter Collection, AFC 1972/001, Photo 063 Empire Day 1933, with Sam Bennett and Girls Holding Maypole Ribbons, Ilmington and Photo 064 Empire Day 1933, with Sam Bennett and Dancers, Ilmington.

<sup>10</sup> A London based charitable organization for working girls, whose enrichment programme included learning, performing, and in some instances teaching English traditional songs and dances.

<sup>11</sup> Cecil Sharp, letter to Miss Mayne, 3 Nov 1910, VWML Library Collection AL Bennett.

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- <sup>12</sup> Douglas Kennedy, 'Sam Bennett of Ilmington', *English Dance and Song*, 15, no. 6 (May 1951), p.185.
- <sup>13</sup> *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*, Liner notes, ed. Derek Schofield, EFDSS CD 03, p. 2.
- <sup>14</sup> Dan M. Worrall, *The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber* (London: EFDSS, 2005), p. 9.
- <sup>15</sup> Keith Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles: The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660–1900*, Tradition 1, (London: Hisarlik Press on behalf of the Folklore Society, 1993), p. 179.
- <sup>16</sup> *Absolutely Classic*, p. 14.
- <sup>17</sup> Chandler, 'Bampton', p. 22.
- <sup>18</sup> William Wells, 'William Wells and the Bampton Morris: An Interview', *Country Dance and Song*, 4 (1971), 9.
- <sup>19</sup> Douglas Kennedy, 'Billy Wells', *English Dance and Song*, 18, no. 4 (February/March 1954), 115.
- <sup>20</sup> Chandler, 'Bampton', p. 22.
- <sup>21</sup> William Wells, 'William Wells 1868–1953: Morris Dancer, Fiddler and Fool', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8, no. 1 (December 1956), 11.
- <sup>22</sup> Wells, p. 10.
- <sup>23</sup> AFC 1972/001, p. 13501.
- <sup>24</sup> AFC 1972/001, Photos 61–64, and 67.
- <sup>25</sup> This item is not in the collection at the Library of Congress, but is currently in the possession of Julia Bishop, Research Fellow, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen.
- <sup>26</sup> AFC1972/001, p. 09716.
- <sup>27</sup> AFC 1972/001, Cylinder 029 03:56.
- <sup>28</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons*, p. 173.
- <sup>29</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons*, pp. 182–83.
- <sup>30</sup> British Library H.1601 [523] (c.1725).
- <sup>31</sup> Lionel Bacon, *A Handbook of Morris Dances* ([Winchester]: The Morris Ring, 1974).
- <sup>32</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons*, pp.179–80.
- <sup>33</sup> Worrall, p. 11.
- <sup>34</sup> Worrall, p. viii.
- <sup>35</sup> Chandler, 'Bampton', p. 20.
- <sup>36</sup> Kennedy, 'Billy Wells', p. 116.
- <sup>37</sup> Wells, p. 5.
- <sup>38</sup> Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book*, Part III, 2nd edn (London: Novello, 1924), p. 49.
- <sup>39</sup> Sharp, letter to Miss Mayne.

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**Appendix 1** Unique Repertoire

Bennett  
50

Kimber  
32

Wells  
15

Title	Bennett	Kimber	Wells
[Unidentified fiddle tune]	X		
Admiral Benbow /Ben Bolt	X		
All Among the Hay	X		
Baffled Knight, The / Blow Away the Morning Dew	X		
Baliff's Daughter of Islington, The	X		
Banbury Bill			X
Barbara Allen	X		
Billy Boy	X		
Black Joke / Joe	X		
Blue Eyed stranger		X	
Bobbing Around / Bobbing Joe			X
Bold Hussar / Fool's Dance		X	
Bonnets o' Blue		X	
Bride's Murder, The	X		
Brighton Camp / The Girl I Left Behind			X
Buffoon	X		
Bumpus of Stretton	X		
Buttercup Joe	X		
Cock of the Walk	X		
Country Gardens		X	
Cuckoo's Nest	X		
Dear Old Home			X
Derbyshire Morris Processional		X	
Double Lead Through		X	
Double Set Back		X	
Dumb Wife, The			X
Foggy Dew, The	X		
Fool's Dance			X
Gathering Peascods	X		
Getting Upstairs		X	
Gipsie's Glee, The	X		
Gloryshears			X
Haste to the Wedding		X	
Highland Mary			X
Hilly-Go Filly-Go		X	
Hornpipe: Cliff		X	
Hunting the Squirrel		X	
I Love the Gal with the Blue Frock On		X	
I Never Take No Notice / In and Out the Windows	X		
Jenny Pluck Pears	X		

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Jim Crow's Sister Went to the Ball			X
Jimmie the Carter Lad	X		
Joe Muggins / I Don't Care if I Do	X		
Johnny's so Long at the Fair			X
Keeper, The / To the Green O	X		
Laudnum bunches		X	
Ledbury Parson / Clergyman	X		
Little Polly		X	
Lively Jig	X		
Lord Bateman	X		
Lord Lovel	X		
Lost Lady Found	X		
Magpie Says Come in, The	X		
Mayblossom Waltz		X	
Moonlight Schottische		X	
Morris Off		X	
Morris On		X	
Mowing the Barley	X		
My old Grandmother Died Last Night / Buffalo Girls	X		
Nancy Whiskey			X
Old Adam was a Gentleman	X		
Old Bumbledon Nose	X		
Old King Cole			X
Old True Blue/ Although I'm Seventy Two	X		
Old Woman to Market, The	X		
Our Goodman	X		
Over the Hills to Glory		X	
Oyster Girl /Jubilee Dance	X		
Paddy's Wedding /Flail dance	X		
Poor Old Horse	X		
Proud Tailors Went Prancing Away, The	X		
Quaker			X
Quaker's Wife		X	
Ribbon Dance		X	
Rigs of Marlow		X	
Rodney		X	
Rose Tree			X
Schottische		X	
Seventeen Come Sunday/ Bonny Lassie , The	X		
Soldier's Joy/ Morris Reel		X	
Spring Glee, The	X		
Sweet Mossy Banks, The	X		

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Thornymore Woods	X		
Trunkles		X	
Turmot Hoer	X		
Twenty-ninth of May		X	
Two Old Women Tied Up to an Apple Tree		X	
Up with the Lark in the Morning		X	
We Won't Go Home Til Morning	X		
When I Took Our Nance To Church	X		
Willow tree		X	
Wonder, The		X	
Yubberton Maums, The	X		
Totals:	Bennett	Kimber	Wells
	49	31	15

**Appendix 2** Shared Repertoire

<i>Total Repertoire</i>	Bennett	Kimber	Wells
	66	40	26
<i>Overlapping Repertoire</i>			
All Three	4		
Bennett/Kimber	5		
Bennett/Wells	7		
<i>Shared Repertoire: All Three</i>			
Title	Bennett	Kimber	Wells
Constant Billy	X	X	X
Green Sleeves / Bacca Pipes)	X	X	X
Old Molly/ Mother Oxford	X	X	X
Shepherd's Hey	X	X	X
<i>Shared Repertoire: Two</i>			
Bean Setting	X	X	
Bonny Green Garters	X		X
Flowers of Edinburgh	X		X
How Do You Do Sir?	X	X	
Jockey/Jogging to the Fair	X		X
Lumps of Plum Pudding	X		X
Maid of the Mill	X X		X
A Nutting We will Go / The Nutting Girl	X		X
Old Woman Tossed Up in a Blanket	X	X	
Pop Goes the Weasel	X	X	
Princess Royal / Nelson's Pride	X		X
Step and Fetch Her / Triumph	X	X	



## The fiddle in a tune: John Doherty and the Donegal fiddle tradition

EOGHAN NEFF

**I**t is the fiddle's propensity for musical mischief that can instil an abiding concern. For some, the fiddle is a symbol of traditional conformity, while at the same time it is an icon of individual expression. The Donegal tradition encapsulates this dualism, being most persuasively realised during the era of John Doherty (1895–1980) and the travelling fiddlers. This paper initially introduces the fiddle as an instrument that defines Irish traditional music, before outlining a post-revival idealism often at odds with its design. The resulting conflict is explored by means of an ergonomically-based examination of the Donegal fiddle tradition. A considered look at the fiddler's sound aesthetics precedes a detailed analysis of Donegal fiddle music at both a micro- and macro-structural level, revealing an exciting subversion of the established canon.

### **The fiddle**

As the acclaimed Irish music collector, Captain Francis O'Neill observed in 1913, though 'seemingly simple and uniform in construction, fiddles possess marked individuality'.<sup>1</sup> It is this individuality that is poised to erupt into a plethora of distinctive sounds within a traditional milieu; and for this very reason, it seems, the fiddle has adopted a rather confusing role for many in what Hammy Hamilton refers to as the post-revival years of Irish traditional music.<sup>2</sup>

Tomás Ó Canainn elaborates: 'the fiddle gives the performer the possibility of straying from the tradition and, consequently, its greater flexibility might be considered a disadvantage'.<sup>3</sup> However, as Ó Canainn states quite clearly in his opening chapter, the fiddle, together with the pipes, can be considered the two most important instruments in the tradition today.<sup>4</sup> More significantly, Ó Canainn makes the following assertion: 'it is easier to play traditional music on a traditional instrument than on a non-traditional one and, furthermore, players of traditional instruments have a built-in protection against straying outside the tradition. Their best guide is the traditional instrument itself'.<sup>5</sup>

Despite Carson's very clear declaration that 'there is no such thing as a traditional instrument',<sup>6</sup> the fact that the fiddle has long been an integral part of traditional music in Ireland secures its position within any definition of that tradition.

One may therefore only assume that the 'best guide' is an instrument unequivocally involved with the tradition that can rely on its own possibilities to hold it within that tradition. This invokes debate on the extent to which one may acquiesce in their instrumental virtuosity within a musical tradition that demonstrates an increasingly rigorous re-imagined set of aesthetics. Though such a subject requires lengthy discussion beyond the scope available here, an attempt will be made nevertheless to provide an introductory argument encompassing a musical ideology – that of Donegal fiddling – at odds with the emergence of an idealized Irish music.

### **The ideal**

Focusing resolutely on the fiddle, this paper will outline the idealized concept as it relates more specifically to this instrument. The fiddling of the legendary Michael Coleman (1891–1945) is widely credited for displacing the regional, and individual, styles of Ireland with his recordings beginning in the 1920s, and it is this legacy that now seems to serve as one of the central manifestos of standardization. A brief look at Coleman's style, and place in time, reveals why this is so. His is the earliest easily available sampling of what traditional music was; something which already denotes value within a regressive musical environment, that is, one obsessed by its own past.<sup>7</sup> Further inspection uncovers the stylistic attributes that invite the concept of a Coleman ideal. As fiddler Martin Wynne suggested, concerning Coleman's style: 'I think when Michael went to New York, he got influenced by other players and took on what you might call a classical style. There was class in his music and he played with such abandon'.<sup>8</sup>

The paradox of this 'classicism' is that with Coleman it gave him a remarkable ability to take off on virtuosic flights with 'abandon'; however with those inclined toward standardization, it lent itself to a peculiar reproductive quality inherent in classical music. His rhythm, intonation, dynamics, tempo, and drive were all fairly regular, and once mastered by others could subsequently be fabricated. His embellishments were also reducible to a 'catalogue of rolls, cranns, triplets',<sup>9</sup> so as to form manageable portions to be administered rather than conceived; giving them a permissible recyclability in an effort to manufacture more 'traditional' pieces.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the fiddle's endless variety of tones and timbres remain elusive to exact documentation, for the advocates of standardization, the only way of adhering to 'correct' traditional tone is by emulating, or, perhaps cleaning up, Coleman's brilliant tone even further. We now veer from classicism toward 'classicalism'.<sup>11</sup> To become great as a traditional performer of the fiddle one is encouraged to tamper with the 'distinguishing mark' of the Irish fiddler by learning precise and brilliant classical tone.<sup>12</sup>

### **Ergonomics**

#### *Sound*

The fiddling community in Donegal showed an enthusiastic interest in the varieties of timbral manipulations, most obviously in programmatic pieces. John Doherty's

performance of *Tuaim na Farraige* (or 'The Swell of the Sea'), composed by Anthony Helferty, imitates the sound of waves on the shore, where a steady tempo becomes secondary to the motion of the natural sounds. His brother, Mickey, performs an incredible interpretation of 'The Hounds after the Hare',<sup>13</sup> where the hunt's every sound is mimicked and the manipulation of tone in the fiddle is a very natural device for the musician to produce this effect in every detail. To be 'guided by one's instrument' again requires that the fiddle amplify its creative palette in ways only instinctive to its constructs.

This also allows the Donegal fiddle tradition to be influenced by both the *Uilleann* and Highland pipe traditions, where droning techniques that utilize alternative tunings, combine with ornamental designs (such as the *craim*) that are more familiar to piping.<sup>14</sup> There is also evidence of influence from an old harping tradition, with John Doherty attributing his use of complicated chordal plucking techniques juxtaposed with regular fiddle bowings to these.<sup>15</sup> Here the fiddle steps outside its more comfortable methodology to mimic other instruments from its own tradition, and yet this is in itself unique to its design. Neilidh Boyle speaks almost arrogantly of the fiddle as a 'perfect instrument', rendering it a superior music tool owing to this very mimicking capability.<sup>16</sup>

In Donegal, the instrument was often adjusted, whereby material additions, such as teaspoons, altered the timbral quality enormously. Neilidh Boyle's complex arrangement of three clothes-pegs on his bridge during certain slow-air performances exemplifies such extremes of timbral manipulations.<sup>17</sup> Many of the Donegal fiddlers doubled as whitesmiths and crafted many metal fiddles with distinctive muted tones.

It is important to note here the peculiarities of the fiddle when compared with that of the violin.<sup>18</sup> A flatter bridge with the strings much closer to the fingerboard of the instrument greatly enhances the traditional musician's ability to perform across the range of first position at the rapid tempos demanded by the music genre. The ignorance of many fiddlers today of these subtle adjustments to their instrument puts them at a disadvantage. As craftsmen, the fiddlers of Donegal were in a privileged position to tweak the fiddle so as to further enrich its musical possibilities, becoming thus intimately acquainted with their preferred instrument.

Indeed the range of tune-types found in the repertoire of the Donegal fiddler is seldom elsewhere reciprocated; a proficiency which derives from an encompassing attitude to sounds emanating from places outside of the island of Ireland. Influences from the western art tradition were adopted and transformed freely in Donegal, but it is perhaps of most vital importance that Donegal kept close links with Scotland which not only operated as a resource for work but as a source of music. Both music genres were mutually accessible. The Scotch-snap style of bowing was implemented in Donegal (though somewhat softened during the process of transmission), as well as a healthy repertoire of tune types exclusive now to the Donegal tradition within an Irish context (e.g. the 'highland' and 'strathspey'). John Doherty sums

up this emphatic alertness in capturing sounds emanating from the musician's environment:

The old musicians in them days, they would take music from anything. They would take music from the sound of the sea, or they would go alongside of the river at the time of the flood and they would take music from that. They would take music from the chase of the hound and the hare. They would take music from several things.<sup>19</sup>

*Micro-structural design*

It has often been noted that the Donegal fiddlers used very little by way of left-hand finger ornamentation.<sup>20</sup> Though this is somewhat inaccurate, with such demanding tunes, such ornamentation was unnecessary in many cases. Often the melodic contour would shape ergonomically suited patterns that impressed sufficiently upon the listener. The Donegal tradition has been noted for the speed and dexterity of its music. This is made possible through the design (or adaptation) of a tune's melody whereby notable Donegal fiddlers accommodate the instrument thus accentuating its more impressive capabilities. A transcription of John Doherty's performance of the reel 'The Boyne Hunt' (see Figure 1) may help demonstrate the facility of the musician's fingers during particularly quick tempos.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 1** 'The Boyne Hunt', John Doherty

The finger patterns involved in the performance of this tune, for instance, though often requiring a certain amount of dexterity, more often follow routes that lie comfortably within reach. The opening passage involves an interchange between the first and third fingers, as can be seen by the numbers above the notes indicating the

relevant finger-stops. The necessary crossing of the strings in this repeating pattern is dynamically suited to an aggressive fast-moving bow, and in his performance, Doherty lets his bow bounce across the two strings thus further impressing upon the listener. He also allows a rather lazy crossing of the strings exposing the concordant sound of the minor-third and perfect-fifth. Doherty incorporates *cuts* and  *triplets*, lending an extra heir of virtuosity to this rendition.<sup>22</sup> Here the bow does most of the work. The exchange between the first finger (which holds its position on both strings at once) and third finger is deceptively infrequent, as is the latter half of the second bar where the second finger also simply rests on both strings at once.

A similar exchange between the open string and the second finger may also be observed as an ergonomically simple manoeuvre on the fiddle and is briefly illustrated during the opening of bars ten and fourteen. Also of note is the descending scale from the third-finger to the open string on the top string (occurring at bars 13–14) with the second string (or A-string) consistently intervening. Again, this is a feature relatively easily achieved on the instrument. Such leaps can be rendered comfortably on few other instruments and delight listeners when heard on the fiddle, thus serving a purpose similar to that of more ‘conventional’ traditional ornamentation; the fiddle highlighting the tune’s motives in ways only made possible by its very design. What becomes noticeable is Doherty’s reliance on, or cooperation with, his instrument in producing stimulating effects on the ear.

This performance also demonstrates the extremely wide register quite common among fiddle-tunes in Donegal (stretching two octaves and covering all four strings). The melody follows the more accessible pathways for the fingers, strategically positioned to also facilitate such speedy excursions within a relatively short time-span. ‘The Boyne Hunt’ can be heard in alternative keys, and within a more confined register, when performed on other instruments. Michael Coleman also performs this tune in what can be regarded as D major, where the bottom note reaches the open D-string (thus denying the two-octave register), as opposed to the low-A note that Doherty maintains. Doherty’s rendition – in fact being more inline with its Scottish source from late-eighteenth-century Perthshire – is therefore meant exclusively for the fiddle, and thus the instrument lends a defining touch to the Irish traditional repertoire.

The solitude of the soloist may have encouraged this manipulation of a wide register among Donegal players so as to maintain a more impressive texture capable of filling out the sonic spectrum available to them. To note the general absence of wide registers in the Donegal  *sean-nós* (or old-style solo song) tradition would imply a fostering of an exclusive instrumental tradition that explores the ergonomic potential of the fiddle. The music is undoubtedly that of the Irish tradition, though ultimately the instrument informs this tradition just as the tradition informs the particular refined use of the instrument. What emerges therefore is a fiddle music developing out of the ergonomic features of its own constructs, and despite some of the aesthetic values entertained during a post-revival present. Fiddler Neilidh Boyle – in his characteristic exuberance – demanded a great appreciation of the singing

tradition by the instrumentalist, and strived to invoke the complexity of the human voice during slow air performances. However, this seemed not to involve a denial of his fiddle's potential as his use of the instrument's register and other stylistic nuances escapes the inherent confines of the voice.

Perhaps more significantly, much of the Donegal repertoire conflicts with the associated dance tradition. It may be observed that during Doherty's return to the first part of 'The Boyne Hunt' that the usual eight bars have been disrupted by a skipping of a beat (here notated as bar 18).<sup>23</sup> This, of course, could become problematic for the dancer. However, instead of concluding that Doherty has made an error, it should be considered that it really would not matter whether the fiddler conforms consistently to the regular eight-bar pulses or not when performing a piece of listening instrumental music.<sup>24</sup> The next subsection of this paper demonstrates further inconsistencies through the addition of beats in a part; however, it is useful firstly to point out similar disruptions to the regular dance pulse within the frame of the eight-bar repeats. A wonderful example is found in Con Cassidy's performance of the jig 'The Frost is All Over' (see Figure 2).<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 2** 'The Frost is All Over', Con Cassidy – eight bar first part and variations

The customary regular dance pulse emphasises the first beat of every collection of three quavers (the one at the beginning of the bar usually even more so). However, here the melodic progression subverts this rhythmic design in the opening two bars. The final quaver B of bar one gains a rather exaggerated emphasis due to the fall from the preceding high D, as well as by the following return to the high D at the beginning of the next bar. This latter high D serves a more passive function, even though it lies at what usually is the most accented beat of the bar. It is followed by a greater drop down to the note A and, together with the former drop, implies a short sequence shown bracketed in the transcription above. This results in what could be perceived as a change in metre away from the compound one of the double-jig. The high E that immediately precedes this sequence can also claim to be added as part of this compound metre rebellion even though its emphasis also lies within the bounds of 6/8. It is, however, the strength of the B and A notes that

define this destruction of the regular pulse; the high E somehow lending support in retrospect.

Of course, Cassidy's recorded performance on the fiddle further accentuates this apathetic attitude towards the bar-lines that would normally serve to instruct the dancer. Ergonomically, the first-finger note, B, and open-string, A, are much stronger sounding than the relatively dull stoppings by the third-finger for the high Ds, especially due to the inherent descending snapping motion involved. The musician could alter this with some effort of the bow, but Cassidy chooses not to, preferring instead to indulge in the more natural dynamic of his instrument, again highlighting the cooperation between fiddle and fiddler.

The result can prove challenging even to the ear (not only to the feet) that is accustomed to the more regular pulse, and yet Cassidy demonstrates complete comfort in executing such rhythmic anomalies. Included within this transcription are these opening bars as they appear during the initial repeat of the first part of the tune, and again, their first appearance commencing the repeat of the entire tune. These illustrate Cassidy's various approaches when leading into the specific section highlighted here. The initial hearing is quite similar to the third (bars 1 and 9 respectively). However, the upbeat preceding both hearings is different: one, a rapid ascending scale, the other, a more open-sounding quaver. The second and fourth hearings are again quite similar to each other (bar 5 and bar 13), Cassidy only pausing a fraction longer on the initial high D of the first bar for the first of these. However, they are very different from the first and third hearings as they begin with a 'C#' at the first bar instead of the expected high D. This high D appears instead as the second quaver of the opening bar, giving it a rather delayed effect. It never quite fully loses all its weight and thus upsets the bar-lines even further.

The final sample (bars 33–34) presented in the transcription shows a dramatic change at the opening of the first bar. The descending figure from high G through high F# to high E brings us wonderfully back to the first part of the tune after it has been turned (i.e. the second part played through). It momentarily implies a harmonic-like shift away from the expected tonic high D (either delayed or not) that should re-introduce the tune. It is vital that one bears in mind that this shift is not harmonically conceived; my reference to the tonic is solely intent on highlighting the impact of a denial of the normative melodic contour. The facility with which Cassidy approaches this out-of-metre section is remarkable, and the demand of the dancing-beat on the 'traditional ear' must therefore be questioned as something ingrained in the instrumental performer's ear from previous generations.

#### *Macro-structural design*

As Hammy Hamilton wrote, 'variations depend for their effect on the contrast that they make with the basic tune, and it therefore follows that this basis must be well known to the listeners'.<sup>26</sup> But what is this 'basic tune', and how familiar are the Irish traditional community with its basis? I propose that we have in some unintentional way become over-familiar with what we think is the basis of this music. Ó Canainn

declares, 'there is no art where there are no constraints on the artist'.<sup>27</sup> If we accept this as truth, then what should these 'constraints' be? Should their form be represented by notation? If structure were to become the means to this end, then it does seem that there would be a certain redundancy of potential expressive tools as the form takes precedence over individual impulses.

Carson assures us: 'the same tune played by the same musician on different occasions will not be the same tune'.<sup>28</sup> But it is the same tune nonetheless. It seems that standardization of macro-structures imposes a decisive regularity by establishing a skeletal fixed frame. It implies a certain construed venture into a confined labyrinth of passageways leading to the same conclusion, that is, the loyal maintenance of the structure. True, the Irish musician, once a desire is met with ability, can decorate the contours of a traditional piece by using a multitude of crafty inflections formed by the tradition and supplied most generously for his amusement at least, or, creative fervour most hopefully. However, can we call these techniques (i.e. ornaments) the essence of individual agency?

When written, an Irish traditional tune typically subscribes to the AABB mode of repetition where each section makes up a total of eight regular bars. However, it is quite prominent, especially among Donegal fiddlers, to conceive of tunes with more than two parts contrary to the linear cyclical model. Examples include Mickey Simi Doherty's rendition of the three-part reel 'The Old Oak Tree' as follows:<sup>29</sup> AABB AABB CCAABB AABB. John Doherty manipulates the similarities of two tunes by forming the second tune as some kind of development of the first. 'McFarley's': the first tune has a pattern of AABBAABB, followed by the second tune of AABB, returning to the first tune, AABB, and finally ending with the second tune, AAB. These irregularities even within the standardized time cycle do not serve a purpose for dance. These alterations produce nothing to enhance a pulse for dancing but manufacture interesting designs for the listening ear, and indeed these are very clearly macro-structural designs.

Breathnach cites a minority of purely instrumental pieces in the tradition as we know it today,<sup>30</sup> and this in contrast to the qualities of Irish melodies of generations far removed from our own where the magical epiphanies of *goltraí*, *suantraí*, and *geantraí* were manifest.<sup>31</sup> Breathnach would find it 'wholly fanciful' to apply these terms to our music today, which is more often defined by the associated dance tradition.<sup>32</sup> This may be the case, but the suitability for dance of the melodies today should not diminish their role as devices for musicians of this more recent tradition to explore such creativity. It seems reasonable to assume that there has always existed both music for dance and music for listening. This paper does not allow for an in-depth investigation other than the present focus on the Donegal tradition; however, the issues raised are not exclusive to this particular region or time frame.

The Donegal fiddle tradition does seem quite adept at dispensing with the sole concept of the dance music 'round',<sup>33</sup> even contesting these macro-structural norms. There are numerous examples where the 'round' has been disrupted. This



is apart from the many programmatic pieces,<sup>34</sup> or the odd tune-types like the brass band marches, or even mazurkas and barn dances with acutely changing metres. It is actually manifested in ordinary dance-tune melodies. Of course, they offer the exploratory dancer some challenging alternatives, and perhaps there were (and are) *sean-nós* dancers who would include these in the more loosely constructed traditional dance form. These appear as 12, 10, 9, 8-and-a-half, or 6 bar first or second parts within a tune where the corresponding first or second part usually remains intact as the usual eight-bar repeat.

Within the community of Irish musicians today, the very implication of actually breaking the structure of the tune itself and its sixteen-bar cycle (the 'round') is problematic to say the least. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin also notes this whereby, 'the musical essence is clearly within the form rather than being the form itself'.<sup>35</sup> Why can this be so? This is in fact the first scheme inherent in the process of standardization. Ever since the creation of the skeletal tune which came about through contact with musical notation, musicians have aspired to embrace a freedom of expression – no matter how deviant – through fleshing out the frame of sixteen bars. Yet, how essential is the sixteen-bar structure? How pertinent is it to defining what a traditional piece is? It is by far the most common configuration of our melodies, due largely to our dancing tradition, but can its rigidity be alleviated for solely musical purposes?

The reel 'John Doherty's' demonstrates a nine-bar first part (see Figure 3).<sup>36</sup> The 'turn' (second part) retains the usual eight bars and thus adds further to the asymmetric form. The extra half-bar within the second bar is played twice over with the repeat to conclude as a nine-bar first part.



**Figure 3** 'John Doherty's Reel', John Doherty – first part

This extra length of a full bar appears unobtrusive to the melodic progression of the tune and is a testament to the solo fiddle tradition whereby such anomalies become fostered by an independent instrumental environment. Attention can only be called to the bar either within the domain of the dance or the ensemble. Though this could not be regarded as a popular or commonly played tune, this nine-bar-first-part reel has persisted in this form.

Possibly most disruptive to the dancer, however, are those tunes that incorporate a half-bar or extra beat, and this is what will be examined next. John Doherty performs an extra half-bar in the second part of his rendition of 'The King of the Pipers' (see Figure 4).<sup>37</sup> I have never heard this extra beat reproduced by musicians of later generations. This is a more popular double-jig, and Doherty's addition (whether originally being his or not) has not persisted. This may be in some way due to the standardizing tendency of the post-revival ideal.



**Figure 4** 'The King of the Pipers', John Doherty

The bar that stands aloof in 3/8 (marked bar 15) at first bears all the trappings of a culprit, being at fault in upsetting the potential dancer. However, this is one of many cases where the notation deceives us, and it is therefore useful to analyse this section aurally, and with the instrument. Doherty's rendition is motivated by the characteristic C-natural note that continually appears at both strong beats of the penultimate bar in every part of the tune, except the second part where it appears once. In fact, both first and third parts of the tune reserve the penultimate bar for any significant appearance of C (it serving only as a passing note elsewhere). Its presence is therefore both obvious and defining of these penultimate bars. The second part of the tune is where we find the extra beat, and also an extra bar when the C note is accented (marked bar 11). Doherty answers the opening four bars of the part with a corresponding, finalizing, four. This would be something commonly found in most tunes where two main phrases per part help define the music.<sup>38</sup> The common version of the second part of 'The King of the Pipers' (also known as '*Franc A'Phoill*'), fairly well known throughout the country today, is notated as Figure 5.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 5** 'The King of the Pipers' or '*Franc A'Phoill*' – common setting of second part

The absence of the note C-natural in any important or defining position during the penultimate bar of the second part in this version is clear. The bar made

visually prominent by the 3/8 metre in Doherty's rendition is therefore continuing what elsewhere becomes the beginning of the penultimate bar, and is therefore not relevant as something made from an addition to the part's length. Doherty responds in kind to the third bar of this second part (marked bar 11 in Figure 4) for the penultimate one. However, for him to do so, he needs to bring the melody down within reach after finishing the previous bar in an unsuitable position. It is a very significant ergonomic challenge for the fiddler to leave bar fourteen on the top string (where the second finger stops the string for the final note while positioned beside the first finger), and immediately fall two strings down to a note that requires the same second finger to stop the string at a different position on the finger-board (now lying next to the third finger). And this at the rapid tempo demanded by the double-jig in Doherty's hands.

Therefore, this 3/8 bar, which is similarly conceived as the opening of the penultimate bar during contemporary renditions, aids the fiddler in achieving his preferred rendering of the penultimate bar. Doherty is thus required to slow the melody so as to graft the tune to his musical aesthetic. The ergonomic constraints of the fiddle then inform the final execution of the piece, playing a part in the design of the music. Such a preponderance of evidence suggesting purely musical intent, often borne from the instrument itself, makes Ó hAllmhuráin's observation somewhat untenable:

The renaissance has also witnessed an increased separation between 'performance' music and 'dance' music. Older players, whose sense of rhythm was implicitly linked to set dancing, often felt isolated by younger players who abandoned the traditional dance milieu for the concert stage and television studio.<sup>40</sup>

I must stress here that I'm not intending to imply that Irish music is not dance music. I am merely gathering some evidence to suggest that it was not exclusively so, perhaps even less exclusively so than today. It is interesting to note also that 'the traditional dance milieu' was also contorted by tune arrangements in Donegal. Mickey Doherty's progression from the reel 'The Enchanted Lady' to the jig 'Tatter Jack Walsh' would not be the most typical of tune progression even by today's adventurers.<sup>41</sup> The amount of evidence indicating an extraordinary level of complacency with structure at both micro and macro levels, and its imposing potential standardization, seems indicative of familiarity beyond that which has been subsequently adopted by notions of 'requirement' in an idealized post-revival era. By illustrating the fiddle as having a central role in configuring the musical output of the traditional performer, one may view the present tendency toward standardized performances on the instrument, driven by aesthetic impositions, as something untruthful of the heritage so eagerly sought after.

## Conclusion

Often doubling as whitesmiths and handymen, many of the itinerant fiddlers in Donegal were professional musicians. Perhaps there were no concert stages and television studios, but they maintained a professional outlet and indeed a following. They were required to be masters, for it was their ambition to become recognized as musicians capable of dexterity unapproachable by the many other local enthusiasts who could turn a tune quite proficiently. The motivation to exceed mediocrity and succeed financially must have proven a heavy burden in times when people had little to spend on entertainment. The emphasis must be upon individuality. The professional fiddler needs to be recognized as someone unique and extraordinary, and this must have fed the appetite for musical adventure in this corner of Ireland.

Throughout this essay I have documented evidence which helps to confirm the illusion created by forces of standardization, which imply that the basis of the 'sixteen-bar round' is something incorruptible, together with its micro-structural symmetry and metrical unity; that there did not exist a solo instrumental listening tradition apart from the requirements of dance and song; and that this instrumental tradition did not flourish beyond the scope of the associated restrictive aesthetics concocted by well-meaning post-revival enthusiasts. In essence, the 'constraints' controlling the tradition's artists today may not have their bases in the musical past they claim to invoke.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians: The Story of Irish Music* (1917; repr. edn Cork: Mercier Press, 1987), p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Hammy Hamilton, 'Innovation, Conservatism, and the Aesthetics of Irish Traditional Music', in *Crossbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference 1996* (Cork: Ossian, 1999), pp. 82–87.

<sup>3</sup> Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (Cork: Ossian, 1993), p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> In their fiddle tutor, Ethne and Brian Vallely go so far as to suggest that the fiddle is 'the instrument of 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland', see Ethne and Brian Vallely, *Learn to Play the Fiddle with Armagh Piper's Club* (Belfast: Regency Press, [n.d]), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ó Canainn, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ciaran Carson, *Irish Traditional Music* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1986), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Though earlier recordings do exist, Coleman's remains the most easily accessible early commercial release. See *Michael Coleman: 1891–1945*, Gael-Linn / Viva Voce, CEFCD161, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Bradshaw, *Michael Coleman 1891–1945* (Ireland: Viva Voce, 1991), p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> This is a list of some of the more conventional ornaments found in Irish traditional music. The *roll* is a fingered ornament usually performed on a single and relatively long note value (or two shorter note values of the same pitch). It divides the main note pitch with a quick progression of three grace-notes: one above the main note, followed by another that returns to the main note pitch, followed by one further grace note below the main pitch, all of which is framed by the main note's beginning and end points. The *crann* is more familiar to the piping tradition and divides a similar note value by a series of descending *cut*-like fingered grace-notes (two or three) above the main pitch, while consistently referencing the main note pitch before, after, and between each grace-note. Incidentally, the plain *cut* simply divides a

main melody note pitch using a fingered grace-note above the main pitch. The *triple* is then a bowed ornament that divides a main single long note (or a series of three rapidly changing (and usually scaling) note pitches) into a rapid three-note rhythmic embellishment that either uses the more common down-up-down bow-strokes, or the less common alternative up-down-up bow-strokes. See preface to Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1986), for more detailed documentation on the most common ornaments.

<sup>11</sup> I refer here to the western art tradition of violin performance which has often provoked debate amongst the Irish traditional music community due to its varying influence on the Irish fiddle tradition.

<sup>12</sup> Breathnach, *Folk Music*, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Mickey Doherty, *The Gravel Walks*, Comhairle Béaloideas Éireann, CBE0002, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> See note 10.

<sup>15</sup> See Caoimhín MacAoidh, *Between the Jigs and the Reels: The Donegal Fiddle Tradition* (Ireland: Drumlin Publications, 1994), p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> See MacAoidh, *Between the Jigs*, for bibliographical information on some of the most important Donegal fiddlers. Neilidh Boyle was a contemporary of Doherty who embarked on a professional music career, though he was not an itinerant musician.

<sup>17</sup> See Caoimhín MacAoidh, 'The Metal Fiddle Tradition of Donegal' in *Ceol na hÉireann: Irish Music*, no. 2 (Dublin: Na Píobairí Uilleann, 1994), where this process is illustrated.

<sup>18</sup> The differences between the Irish fiddle and western art violin have been much discussed in Irish music literature as they relate to performance practice, stylisation, and overall sound output (see Carson, *Irish Traditional Music*). However, for similar discussions on the physical differences between both fiddle and violin see Linda C. Burman-Hall, 'American Traditional Fiddling: Performance Contexts and Techniques', in *Performance Practice: Ethnomusicological Perspectives*, ed. Gerard Béhague (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1984), who gives a more detailed examination of this issue as it relates to the American fiddling tradition.

<sup>19</sup> Allen Feldman and Eamonn O'Doherty, *The Northern Fiddler* (London: Oak Publications, 1985), p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> See note 10.

<sup>21</sup> This is a transcription of a complete performance of *The Boyne Hunt* by fiddler John Doherty. See discography.

<sup>22</sup> See note 3.

<sup>23</sup> Though it is often difficult to authenticate traditional terminology, I use the generally adopted terms maintained in academic writings on Irish music. One full piece of music (the *tune*) usually consists of two repeating *parts* (and if not repeated, then the divisions are represented by a double bar-line at the end of every *part*). The first *part* is referred to (rather confusingly) as the *tune*. As this makes it difficult to distinguish between an entire piece (*tune*) and the first part of a piece (also *tune*), I reserve the term *tune* exclusively for the entire piece. The second *part* of a *tune* is known as the *turn*. *Tunes* of more than two *parts* will refer to each *part* as 1<sup>st</sup> *part*, 2<sup>nd</sup> *part*, 3<sup>rd</sup> *part*, etc. It is generally accepted that there are eight bars of music per *part*; however, this paper hopefully disputes the apparent rigorous enforcement of this structure.

<sup>24</sup> See Damhnait Nic Suibhne, 'The Donegal Fiddle Tradition: An Ethnographic Perspective' in *Donegal: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. William Nolan, Liam Ronayne, and Mairead Dunlevy (Dublin: Geography Publications,

1995), concerning the definite split between music for dance and music for listening that existed in Donegal among musicians during this time.

<sup>25</sup> This is a transcription of sections from Con Cassidy's performance of 'The Frost is All Over'. The opening eight bars are represented here, together with bars 9–10, 13–14, and 33–34 respectively. See Con Cassidy, *Brass Fiddle: Traditional Fiddle Music from Donegal*, various Artists, Claddagh Records CC44CD, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Hamilton, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Ó Canainn, p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Carson, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Mickey Simi Doherty, *The Donegal Fiddle*, various artists, RTÉ Music RTECD 196.

<sup>30</sup> Breathnach, *Folk Music*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Goltraí* was the music that would make one cry, *suantraí* was the music that would put one to sleep, and *geantraí* was the music that would make one merry.

<sup>32</sup> Breathnach, *Folk Music*, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> The 'round' represents one complete performance of a single tune. As every tune is usually repeated at least once, this term also serves the function of differentiating between each subsequent hearing, i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> round, 2<sup>nd</sup> round, 3<sup>rd</sup> round, etc.

<sup>34</sup> Examples include the previously mentioned 'Hounds after the Hare', as well as 'The Hen's March over the Midden', etc.

<sup>35</sup> Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, 'Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queen's University Belfast, 1987), p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> This transcription is a skeletal notation of the first part of the tune, as it is performed by many fiddlers today. John Doherty is perhaps the earliest known source for the tune, and the common title which bears his name suggests that he at least popularised it.

<sup>37</sup> This is a transcription of a performance by John Doherty, loosely based on his first round execution only. See John Doherty, *Taisce: The Celebrated Recordings*, Gael-Linn CEFC072, 1997.

<sup>38</sup> See also Breathnach, *Folk Music*, chapter 6.

<sup>39</sup> This transcription is a skeletal notation of the second part of the tune only, as commonly performed by musicians today.

<sup>40</sup> Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>41</sup> Mickey Doherty, *The Gravel Walks*.

## *Engelska* as understood by Swedish researchers and re-constructionists<sup>1</sup>

KARIN ERIKSSON

As part of Sweden's traditional folk dance and music repertoire, the *engelska*<sup>2</sup> has been discussed many times. As is often the case in descriptions of traditional music and dance, the *engelska* is usually presented in specific contexts within specific ideological frameworks. However, compared with other traditional Swedish dances and musical forms – especially the *polska*<sup>3</sup> – the *engelska* is often unfairly treated, particularly regarding how it is described.

This paper is not about the *engelska* as a dance or musical form. The emphasis here is on locating and describing occurrences where the *engelska* is discussed by researchers and by amateurs interested in investigating traditional dance and music. The main purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of how and in what contexts the *engelska* is described, as well as studying examples of how the history of a specific traditional dance and its music is formed within the tradition. It is important to recognise that the process of forming a 'history' of traditional dance and music is always changing and evolving, which is, of course, also the case in describing cultural heritages in general. More importantly, the history formed is also 'forming' the researchers, musicians, and dancers, etc. in their work with the material. It is therefore important to study not only dance and music from an empirical point of view, but also the different kinds of texts in which the formation of their history takes place. This study is an attempt to do this.

The source materials examined in this paper include different texts and a radio series about the *engelska* as a dance and/or a musical form. The sources have been studied from the viewpoint of, for example, who is writing; in what contexts is the *engelska* presented; what history of the *engelska* is described, and so on. The selection of sources used in this study is based on an inventory of several books about Swedish folk music and folk dance, although those that have ignored the *engelska* have been excluded. Surprisingly, many texts on Swedish folk music do not include the *engelska* at all. Several surveys come no closer to describing the *engelska* than as a part of descriptions of traditional contra dances, otherwise mostly exemplified by quadrilles and minuets. Furthermore when the *engelska* is mentioned as an example of a contra dance in descriptions of traditional music, it is described as a dance, and not as a musical form.

The sources used in this study can be divided into three main groups:

1. Academic texts, often historical surveys or introductions to Swedish folk music and dance
2. Instructional books, mainly aimed at dancers
3. A series of three radio programmes about the *engelska* music broadcast in the autumn of 2005 by Swedish Radio

A closer examination of the specific texts used in this study reveals an uneven distribution within the field of music and dance, where the latter is much better represented. It is also evident that the texts are produced by researchers as well as 'amateurs'. The amateurs, in this case, are people who do not have formal positions at an academic institution or have a higher academic education. Some of them are, however, doing research about the *engelska* on the same level as the professional researchers. Such amateurs have also had an important impact on the studies done in the fields of Swedish folk dance and music research in general, especially with regard to folk dance investigations. However, unlike the professional researcher, they often have an explicit, practical goal for their investigations, that is, to reconstruct a dance and/or musical tradition of some kind. These people will henceforth be referred to as 're-constructionists', in contrast to researchers, even if this division produces a very simplified picture of the individuals concerned.

A re-constructionist can thus be loosely described as an informed person doing research in the field of folk music and/or dance, with the aim of reconstructing traditional music or dance, or a repertoire often connected to a specific geographical area. The aim is not to investigate the music or dance form as such, but to use the results of the investigations to bring it back into a 'living tradition', or to strengthen their current place in the tradition.

In some aspects the two types of researchers are very similar. For example, they are both committed to investigate and describe the history of the *engelska*, although the researchers often do this as a part of a larger project, such as a historical overview. Furthermore, they often seem to use the same source materials, as, for example, fiddlers' books and ethnological open-ended enquiries through fieldwork. It should also be mentioned that some people are almost impossible to define as either a researcher or a re-constructionist, and in these cases I have looked at the specific examples in order to define its type.

### **Who writes and what do they write?**

It is obvious from the available material, including leaflets and articles, that the people interested in dance research, dance researchers, and dance re-constructionists alike, have put more effort into investigating and writing about the *engelska* than their musical counterparts. However, for studies concerning the *engelska* as a musical form, only music researchers are represented in this study. The reason for this is that I have not been able to locate any texts from any music re-constructionists.



However it is possible that the work of musical re-constructionists can be found on commercial recordings, since this is one of the most common methods of spreading a music repertoire to a larger public and to other folk musicians. The first step in expanding this study, should therefore be to investigate the presence of *engelskas* on CDs, audio cassettes, and LPs over an extended time period.

Most of the dance researchers studying and writing about the *engelska*, work in the fields of ethnology or folklore. The dance re-constructionists, however, are often deeply involved in the folk dance movement in Sweden. This is especially true for texts produced during the folk music and dance revival in the 1970s. One of the dance re-constructionists is Henry Sjöberg, whose publications are important sources for this paper since he has in many ways presented the *engelska* in a wider perspective. I include in this study a text about the *engelska* that he published, together with other parts of his research, as well as a handbook of dance instruction.<sup>4</sup> The few music researchers cited in this material are often close to, or within, the wider field of ethnomusicology.

The *engelska* is, however, treated differently by people mainly interested in it in their roles as researchers rather than re-constructionists. The former, as mentioned above, often write about the *engelska* as part of a larger historical perspective, while the latter often describe the *engelska* in more detail. This means that texts by researchers tend to create the impression that the *engelska* constitutes a rather small part of the repertoire, and the *polska*, for example, receives much more attention.<sup>5</sup> This is not the case for dance re-constructionists.

The small amount of space reserved for the *engelska* by researchers in both the dance and music fields, is, however, a reflection of the lack of larger research projects in this area, and a theoretical framework comparable to that of the *polskas*, is, in my opinion, absent today.<sup>6</sup> Even the well-known dance and music researcher Tobias Norlind writes about the *engelskas* only in a short section sandwiched between two longer sections on the history of the *polska*.<sup>7</sup> A later example of this type of treatment is in the introduction to a general study of Swedish folk music, *Folkmusik i Sverige (Folk Music in Sweden)* by the ethnomusicologists Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag.<sup>8</sup> They describe the *engelska* as a contra dance form, stating only that:

The *engelska* has in the Swedish popular culture mainly been danced in the southern coastal counties. Quadrilles have been danced all over the country, but have survived for the longest time in south of Sweden.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to dance researchers, dance re-constructionists often describe the *engelska* from an historical perspective, sometimes providing several, named dance examples, as well as directions for the dancers. These examples usually include music notation, and frequently provide information about the tempi and the musical style of the *engelska*. Thus, paradoxically, some of the best sources of information about the *engelska* as a musical form, may be found in the texts about the *engelska* as a dance form, written by some of the dance re-constructionists. A good example of this is the

book *Gamla dansar i Skåne: Engelskor (Old Dances in Skåne. Engelskas)* by the dance re-constructionist Börje Wallin.<sup>10</sup> Here, Wallin provides instructions on how to dance the different variations and how to play the dance, including transcriptions of the melodies, indications of tempo, and so on.<sup>11</sup> An explanation for this paradox could be that dance re-constructionists often work closely with musicians, generating the need for suitable music for the dance.

The *engelska* as a musical form, was, however, thoroughly investigated in the three radio programmes produced by the music researcher, archivist, and folk musician Magnus Gustafsson and broadcast in the autumn of 2005.<sup>12</sup> His programmes discussed the early history of the *engelska* melodies, the changes they went through in Sweden, and, finally, the developments during the past thirty years. Gustafsson is the only person presented here, who discusses and presents a history of the *engelska* as a musical form. All other music researchers in the references discussed here treat the *engelska* as a dance form rather than a musical form.

One of the things Gustafsson and the dance reconstructionists have in common, is their great interest in the fact that several versions of 'The Soldiers Joy' are used all over Sweden. The texts often create the impression that this tune is the only *engelska* tune used by fiddlers. This is not the case, although it is one of the most common *engelska* tunes in Sweden.

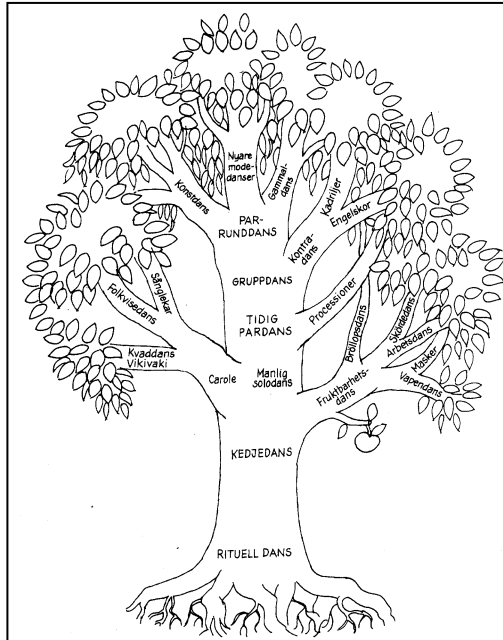
That most work in the field of the *engelska* has been undertaken and performed by dance researchers and dance re-constructionists might be the result of the important function of the *engelska* in the folk dance revival during the 1970s. Gustafsson states that the *engelska* was then seen as a social and pedagogical complement to the more complex couple dance, the *polska*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the most important folk dance re-constructionist in my material, Henry Sjöberg, was also important in that revival, especially in the southern parts of Sweden.

### **The history of the *engelska* as told in the documentation**

As mentioned above, sources of information about the *engelska* are found in the different historical accounts, and it seems that the *engelska* as a part of Swedish folk dance history is a required topic, yet it is not found in historical overviews of Swedish folk music. The historical view of dances in Sweden is closely connected to the development of dances in general. The *engelska* is presented as a part of an evolutionary dance history. It is, so to speak, presented as a step on the way. In some of the dance literature, this is illustrated with a dance tree (see Figure 1). These trees, even though they simplify dance history, in general, are good illustrations of how most writers present the history of the *engelska* since they show the authors' ideas of a dance history in which the simplest dances have evolved and developed into more complex ones.

The actual history of the *engelska*, as presented in various scholarly texts, is more or less the same regardless of the author. Furthermore, it is almost exclusively the early history of the *engelska* which states that during the middle of the seventeenth century stylistic English folk dances from the English court were promoted in

courts throughout Europe, with the English dances replacing the minuets as the most important court dances. The English dances reached the Swedish court by way of the French court – the quadrille similarly came to Sweden from France, where it had been created.



**Figure 1** Swedish dance history illustrated by a tree (from Dagmar Hellstam)<sup>14</sup>

Notably, it is the history of the *engelska* as a dance form that is described, and there is seldom any information or any theories concerning the Swedish part in its development. Only the dance re-constructionist Henry Sjöberg addresses the question of how the *engelska* dance form spread from the Swedish court and became part of popular culture. He describes an almost circular progression, moving from English folk dances, adopted and stylized by the English court, which then spread by way of the French court to the Swedish court, and from there eventually became a part of a new popular Swedish dance repertoire, often in simplified versions. Sjöberg states that, in several cases, these Swedish popular versions showed more similarities to the original English folk dances, than to the actual upper-class Swedish dance models. He argues that this could indicate that the connections between the ordinary people of both nations, through sailors, for example, was stronger than the impact of the Swedish court. He also suggests that the *engelska* was replaced in the folk repertoire by a new dance, the *schottis*, in the late nineteenth century and claims that the *engelska* melodies were transformed by the fiddlers into polka melodies, or, in some places, into walking tunes (*gånglåt*).<sup>15</sup>

The most extensive theory about the music for the *engelska* was put forward by Magnus Gustafsson in his radio series. He summarizes different stylistic musical

traits, characteristic of the *engelska* music, and traces four historical phases during which melodies and stylistic modes influenced the folk music repertoire in Sweden. These are:

1. Seventeenth century – jig melodies and a few other named tune types, often connected to the English Playford (*Dancing Master*) tradition.
2. Mid-eighteenth century – the French passion for British dance forms (country dances, longways, and, later, quadrilles), often set to French melodies.
3. 1760–1770 – reel melodies, directly from Scotland to Sweden, often straight from Scottish or English originals. Also some hornpipes.
4. First half of the nineteenth century – second wave of French melodies, stylistic, longways, in the shape of the *anglaise* and the *ecossaise*.

Gustafsson treats aspects of the development and change of the *engelska* music when it came in contact with other local music forms. He also devoted one programme to the developments from the 1970s to the present day with regard to the *engelska* as a form of music.<sup>16</sup> Besides Gustafsson and Sjöberg, however, no other authors describe the history of the *engelska* dance and/or music after it began its diffusion from the Swedish court. The establishment of the *engelska* as a part of the folk repertoire is thus largely a silent history, even though the authors' main interests are Swedish traditional folk music and dance.

### **Diffusionist theories and the geographical approaches**

In general, Swedish folk music and folk dance research can be viewed from at least two aspects: how certain features are spread, and where the feature has been documented. This means that diffusionist views of the folk music and dance are connected and intermingled with strong geographical approaches to the empirical material. The two aspects are present in texts about the *engelska* as well, regardless of author. The geographical approach is, however, most evident in texts by the dance re-constructionists.

As mentioned above, there is little interest in describing the 'life' of the *engelska* in the history as presented. The focus lies instead on describing how the English dances spread from court to court, finally reaching the Swedish court. Sjöberg's description of how the *engelska* dance moved from the Swedish court to the people, is also a classical illustration of 'das gesunkenes Kulturschaft';<sup>17</sup> in other words, the *engelska* as a dance form spread 'down' to the common class of people, where it became simpler, with fewer difficult movements.

Gustafsson's radio series was based on the idea of describing how the *engelska* music became a part of the Swedish folk repertoire, illustrated in the title of the series, *Rular, rilar och jiggår – brittisk musik på vandring österut* ('Ruls, rils and jigs – British music travelling east').<sup>18</sup> Both Sjöberg and Gustafsson mention a second possible route for the *engelska* dance and music, specifically by direct contacts between the British Isles and Sweden through their coastal shipping.

Another feature of the *engelska* is its geographical placement, important in at least two ways. Firstly, the geographical positioning of the *engelska* in the coastal areas and/or in the southern parts of Sweden. Secondly, the geographical backgrounds of the authors. The geographical view is most evident in the dance re-constructionists, who often focus on a specific region of Sweden, most frequently the one they come from themselves. The researchers, however, place the *engelska* as a dance or a music form within the Swedish national borders. For the researchers, the *engelska* is a part of a national traditional repertoire, while the dance re-constructionists present the *engelska* as a part of a local and/ or regional traditional repertoire.

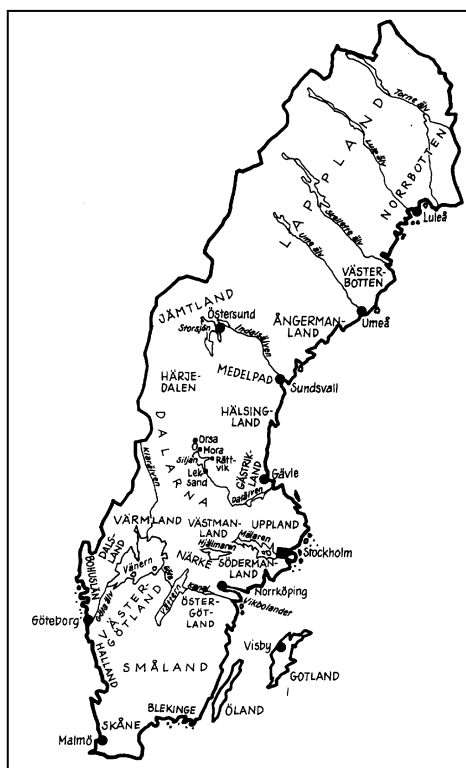


Figure 2 Swedish counties (from Dagmar Hellstam)<sup>19</sup>

The geographical placement of the *engelska* dance in the Swedish coastal areas is exemplified by the three areas with documented *engelska* dances that Sjöberg presented. He states that the *engelska* as a dance form is primarily found in the counties of Bohuslän, Skåne, and Södermanland (see Figure 2). His explanation, which I find very plausible, is the presence of interested dance collectors in these areas. He also suggested that the spread of the *engelska* in earlier times probably differs from the view created through the documentations produced by these collectors. He continues with the fact that there are also documentations of *engelska*

dances from the counties of Blekinge, Småland, and Norrbotten, and, furthermore, in the collected memories of people from Halland and Östergötland, where the *engelska* has been practised at dance occasions.<sup>20</sup>

The personal backgrounds of the authors also influence their texts. This is most obvious in regards to the choice of dance and music examples in the texts of the dance re-constructionists. However, even the radio series, which aspires to describe the *engelska* music in a national sense, is influenced in this way in the choice of music examples played in the programmes. In the three programmes, several of the examples played, originate from and/or are performed by groups and musicians from the southern parts of Sweden, with other examples from Norway.<sup>21</sup>

It should also be noted that both Gustafsson and several of the more influential dance re-constructionists are from the southern parts of Sweden. A person without prior knowledge of the Swedish traditional music and dance repertoire will therefore be exposed to *engelska* examples from these parts, especially from Småland, Södermanland, and Skåne. This is most obvious with regard to the dance descriptions. Since recordings are not included in this study, the regional dissemination of *engelskas* cannot be shown, although several such recordings exist, from Bohuslän, for example. Consequently, if such recordings were investigated thoroughly, the emphasis on southern Sweden found in texts would most likely be somewhat diminished.

### **The sources used**

A closer investigation of the kind of sources used by researchers and re-constructionists shows that they use both primary and secondary sources. The sources, and to what extent they are used by either group, is very difficult to deduce, since the primary references are almost always omitted. From the similarity of the different historical overviews, it is, however, probably fairly safe to conclude that most, if not all, researchers use the same one or two sources. This is indicated in several cases by the use of the same phrases by different authors, although references to earlier texts are not included. Presumably, one of these sources is *Dansens historia: Med särskild hänsyn till Sverige (History of the Dance: With Special Consideration to the Dance in Sweden)*, written by Tobias Norlind and published in 1941.<sup>22</sup>

The primary sources consist of two main groups. The first is contemporary documentations of occasions when the *engelska* dance (but seldom the music) has been performed. The second is older field recordings, often with the aim of documenting a cultural heritage from the 'people', and usually in written form. It is the dance re-constructionists, rather than researchers, who include such primary sources. Dance re-constructionists also tend to cite their references at a higher level than researchers. A possible explanation for this difference between dance researchers and dance re-constructionists, is that those references indicate two important features of traditional material: the geographical origin and the performer. Thus, the primary source becomes a part of placing the *engelska* dance or music documentation within a folk music and dance tradition. It could be argued, that, by providing information

about the sources used, the dance re-constructionists are able to motivate the use and revival of a specific *engelska* dance variation in the context of people interested in saving an older traditional repertoire from falling into oblivion.

### **Some concluding remarks**

Three main conclusions may be drawn from this study. The first is the observation that the *engelska* as a musical form has had trouble asserting itself against the symbolically stronger couple dance, the *polska*. This is most apparent in the texts written by the music researchers. This is unsurprising since the same phenomenon applies to other (often more modern) musical forms, such as polkas, mazurkas, etc. The second conclusion is that it seems as though the *engelska* as a dance form has a stronger position than the *engelska* as a musical form. This might be related to the position that the *engelska* has occupied, particularly with respect to the folk dance revival of the 1970s. Even though recordings are not included in this study, in my own experience, *engelska* tunes are generally not recorded to the same extent as other types of tunes. The third conclusion is that there is generally a greater emphasis on the early history of the *engelska* than on the recent developments.

This study of texts about the *engelska* as a dance and music provide a first step towards learning more about the pioneer folk dance and music scholars in this field. What have they reconstructed? What are their sources, and how have they been used? Are there any distortions regarding their presentation of the *engelska* history? Are they reliable and critical in their research, or is it necessary to be cautious and critical when using them as an introduction to the subject?

The credibility of the *engelska* texts is very hard to evaluate, particularly regarding the history. The material studied here, for instance, includes only two examples, by Gustafsson and by Sjöberg, of a critical discussion conducted about the *engelska* as a dance and/or music form. The other texts used here regard the history of the *engelska* as a given fact without any indication of a critical view towards their unreferenced sources. Consequently, since there is no information about the sources, it is extremely difficult to estimate their reliability or to know if the sources were correctly understood by the authors. Thus it is most important to approach any texts on the *engelska* with a very critical eye, especially where descriptions of the history of the dance/music are concerned.

Several of the features concerning the texts about the *engelska* described above are common to other fields of study within Swedish folk music and dance research. One feature is the emphasis on geography – where the local and/or the regional level is often more important than the national. In my own experience of studying Swedish folk music and dance, there is a general interest in describing how the dances and musical forms have spread. As encountered in the sources to this study of the *engelska*, many texts on Swedish folk music and dance contain an underlying urge to, in some way, discuss music and dance from the basis of diffusionist theories. This is the case regardless of whether the author is a researcher or a re-constructionist, although it is seldom mentioned by the authors themselves and seems to be taken

for granted as an obvious part of the research into almost all kinds of folk music and dance, as well as folk traditions.

Another outcome of this study of *engelska* texts has been to acknowledge the importance of the individual role of the researcher or re-constructionist. Knowledge of the author's identity, background, aims, and so forth, is important to our understanding both of the texts studied and their contents. I would suggest that this is also the case for other areas of folklore studies. It is my experience, however, that it is easier to see this connection between personal background and field of study with re-constructionists than with researchers.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Tobias Larsson for reading and commenting on this text.

<sup>2</sup> *Engelska* – 'the English' – is a dance form that is performed by at least three people, often more, and includes figures of different kinds. The *engelska* music is often played rather quickly, and many of the tunes are variations of tunes that have spread throughout Europe, for example, 'The Soldiers Joy'.

<sup>3</sup> *Polska* is a triple-metre folk dance and music form regarded by many as the Swedish national dance.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Sjöberg, *Dans i lustgården: Folklig dans under fyra århundraden* (Nyköping: Sörmlands museums förlag, 2005), pp. 59–72; and Henry Sjöberg, *Folkets danser* (Stockholm: Brevskolan, 1980), pp. 109–116.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag, *Folkmusik i Sverige* (Hedemora: Gidlunds förlag, 2005), p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> For further studies of the *polska*, see Märta Ramsten (ed.), *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland: Ethnomusicological Studies* (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv), 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Tobias Norlind, *Svensk folkmusik och folkdans* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1930), pp. 132, 133.

<sup>8</sup> Lundberg and Ternhag, *Folkmusik i Sverige*.

<sup>9</sup> Lundberg and Ternhag, *Folkmusik i Sverige*, p. 107. My translation; original text: 'I den svenska folkkulturen har engelskor dansats främst i de södra kustlandskapen. Kadriljer har dansats i hela landet, men har levt kvar längst i södra Sverige.'

<sup>10</sup> Börje Wallin, *Gamla dansar i Skåne: Engelskor* (Helsingborg: Sonja and Börje Wallin, 1976). Skåne is the southernmost area of Sweden.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example Wallin (1976), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> *Rular, rilar och jiggas – brittisk musik på vandring österut* (Swedish Radio, P2, 20051110, 20051117, 20051124).

<sup>13</sup> *Rular, rilar och jiggas – brittisk musik på vandring österut* (Swedish Radio, P2, 20051124).

<sup>14</sup> Dagmar Hellstam (ed.), *Folkdanser. 1 Norden* (Göteborg: Leif Stegeland Förlag AB, 1981), p. 11, used with permission.

<sup>15</sup> Sjöberg (2005), p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Rular, rilar och jiggas – brittisk musik på vandring österut* (Swedish Radio, P2, 20051110, 20051117, 20051124).

<sup>17</sup> Hans Naumann, cited in Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Rular, rilar och jiggas – brittisk musik på vandring österut* (Swedish Radio, P2, 20051110, 20051117, 20051124).



*Driving the Bow: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 2*

<sup>19</sup> Hellstam (ed.), *Folkdanser*, p. 123, used with permission.

<sup>20</sup> Sjöberg (2005), p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> Radio programme: *Rular, rilar och jigggar – brittisk musik på vandring österut* (Swedish Radio, P2, 20051110, 20051117, 20051124).

<sup>22</sup> Tobias Norlind, *Dansens historia: Med särskild hänsyn till Sverige (History of the Dance: With Special Consideration to the Dance in Sweden)* (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1941), pp. 72, 73.

## Sweden as a crossroads: some remarks concerning Swedish folk dancing

MATS NILSSON

This article is an overview of folk dancing in Sweden. The context is mainly the organised Swedish folk-dance movement, which can be divided into at least three subcultures. Each of these folk dance subcultural contexts can be said to have links to different historical periods in Europe and Scandinavia. In this article I will try to follow these links and connect them to dancing in Sweden today, in 2006.

It is helpful to know that Sweden has not been occupied since medieval times, and, uniquely for Europe, has not been involved in a war since 1814. Since the foundation of the Kingdom of Sweden in 1523, it has been a centralised state, with few political powers for the regions. This means that Sweden, or rather the 'Swedes', have not yet needed strong, expressive national emblems. Furthermore, we do not have a formal national anthem, and it was not until 1982 that a formal national day was established, finally becoming a holiday in 2005. We can say that Swedes are still in many ways creating Swedishness, partly connected to new demands arising from the growing immigration from non-European countries since the end of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

But of course there have still been nationalistic projects, especially as a part of the processes in other parts of Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. But it seems that the need for these activities has been lower in this respect in Sweden than in many other countries, at least until after Sweden joined the European Union in 1994. This process of 'Swedification' combined with a growing multiculturalism asserts itself in many different ways, including folk dance and music.

### **The map and the cultures**

Geographically, Scandinavia, including Sweden, is situated between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea in Northern Europe. Sweden is a part of Scandinavia, together with Norway and Denmark. With the addition of Finland and Iceland, this larger group is sometimes known as the Nordic Countries. All these countries are historically closely linked, and although we share many similarities, many other things are quite different. To the east we have Russia and the Baltic Countries, to

the south Poland and Germany, and to the West the British Isles and Ireland. In the middle of this map of the North we find Sweden.

These cultures, or whatever we call the things people do together, are of course influenced by all the contacts across all the political and geographical borders that we find on the map. Water unites, and in this part of the world there are, as already mentioned, at least two large and dominant bodies of water: the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, called, in Swedish, Östersjön, the East Sea, and Västerhavet, the Western Ocean.

These waters have seen warfare and commercial traffic for thousands of years, and there have been many cultural encounters and exchanges in all directions. In Sweden, in the middle of all these cultural crossroads, many cultural influences must have interacted over the centuries. After the Vikings, came the German Hanseatic League, and after that the Baltic Sea was dominated by the Swedes, Danes, Poles, and Russians, while on the North Sea the Swedes sailed alongside the Norwegians, Danish, British, Dutch, and Germans, amongst others.

My main question, then, is to find out if it is possible to trace the different influences from all these countries on what are usually called folk dances in Scandinavia, i.e. popular dances from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And, if it is possible, what of interest can be discovered about these dance forms?

### **From popular to folk**

Dancing in Scandinavia since 1500 has been almost always only for social gatherings, and there is little evidence of any form of religious rituals connected to dance and dance music. More obvious is the use of dance in military training and courtship manners.<sup>2</sup> Today, we think of the dances from around 1650 until about 1920 as 'folk dances'. Dances popular before that time are usually called 'medieval dances' or, sometimes 'historical dances', while dances popular after 1920 are often labelled 'modern dances' or sometimes 'popular dances', if they are used for recreational purposes among ordinary people and the young.

In the period before 1920 the popular dancing repertoire seems to have been dominated by couple dances like the '*polska*' (N.B. not polka), and group dances such as the quadrille and as they are called in Sweden, the '*engelska*' (English dance). Here, dancing must be seen in functional terms as something of a recreation for the dancers, who dance primarily for their own pleasure. Also, there are definitely some nationalistic, and romantic ideas which, if not found amongst people in general, can be found in parts of the bourgeoisie, the cultural elite.

The main creation of the Swedish folk dance canon occurred between 1880 and 1920, when it took off in a process that could be described as going 'from popular to folk', a process of transition where some of the popular dances – mostly group dances, such as quadrilles – move from the dance floor to the stage.<sup>3</sup> New dances were also created inside the growing folk dance movement. The recreational dimension for the dancers is the weekly rehearsal, but the audience most obviously wants to be entertained by rural culture on the bourgeois stages. The national-

romantic dimension is there, but it is has more romantic, than national, connotations. The concept of a past dimension is weak, and more like an 'other-dimension', where these others are also called 'the folk'.

Before the influx of American dances in the early years of the twentieth century, it was possible to see the dance forms popular among ordinary people in Sweden as three main types that also can be seen as three subgenres of folk dance. From around 1600 we find the *polska* exists as dance and as music. The connections here are obviously with Poland and Germany. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, dances such as quadrilles and *engelska* became popular. Culturally, these forms have obvious connections with France and Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> In the middle of the nineteenth century their popularity on the dance floor was taken over in part by the 'round dances', i.e. the waltz and the polka, and here it is possible to make cultural connections to Germany and, again, France.<sup>5</sup> If the folk dances were created between 1880 and 1920 in the dying 'old' society, then it was between 1920 and 1970, at the time when Sweden become modern in most senses, that the consolidation of the folk dance canon took place, through a process I will call standardisation and consolidation. Partly the 'folkdanceification' of these European dances was a reaction against the new, modern dances and music from the USA especially jazz, and other similar ways of moving to different music.

A folk dance should look the same every time it is danced wherever it is danced, at least where the members of the folk dance clubs are concerned. Sweden's National Folkdance Association Board decided which of the created and transformed dances should be seen as folk dances, and they also standardised the names of the dances, instead of using different local ones. This legitimised repertoire is dominated by group dances (having more than 3 dancers), such as quadrilles and some *engelskas*, and these dances are definitely recreational, at least for the dancers, even if their audiences don't always think so. There is also a national dimension in the discourse, but it is more against modern developments such as jazz music and dance, and makes moral judgements about good and bad culture – and youth.<sup>6</sup> To describe these standardised folk dances as spectacular is not really correct; it is more that the participatory and recreational part is emphasised by the folk dance association, with a weaker orientation to the past. But in Sweden, or for that case in Scandinavia, there has never been anything as close to or similar to the national or state ensembles, described by Anthony Shay as 'Choreographed Politics', that can be found in other parts of the world, not the least in eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Around 1970 in Sweden, as in some other parts of the western world, a 'back to basics' movement began, with many red and/or green political references, that again tried to take the dances 'from the folk to the popular' arena. This was a period of revitalisation of the couple dances, i.e. the *polska* and to some extent the *engelska*, for recreational use, rather than for spectacular performances, and the national dimension becomes less important than the regional or local connections. 'The past' becomes important at least in one way, in that it returns to the dances and the way of dancing before 'the canon' was created by the National Folk Dance Association.

So, in the beginning of the twenty-first century the revived couple dances became the vital form of popular dancing, again for recreational purposes, although a few still made minor attempts to create spectacular (or art) dances for audience. The national dimension is there in that the *polska*, especially, is seen as a very Swedish dance and a Swedish contribution to 'world dance'. In theory 'the past' might be important, but not in reality; it is the 'here and now' dancing that has become relevant.

Today we have the three main folk dance types, *polska*, *engelska*/quadrille, and waltz/polka, which flourish in different contexts in Sweden. But, interestingly, there are also some mixed types. Or at least, sometimes it is possible to see that the forms are not 'closed', and that the dances actually have elements and motifs that cut across whatever borders or genres that were created by dance associations, scholars, or dancers. I will now discuss some of the similarities and differences in the ways Scandinavians dance the *polska* and *engelska*. There are certain things that are the same, such as dancing in couples, but also differences, such as the metre of the music.

### *Engelska and polska*

In my part of the world, as mentioned above, we usually say that there are three main folk dance (and dance music) types: the waltz and the polka (also called Old Time dances), almost always danced in couples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the Swedish Gammaldans,<sup>8</sup> although this is not discussed here. The other two main types are the quadrille/*engelska* and *polska*.

Both the *engelska* and the *polska* are traceable back to sources from the latter part of seventeenth century. They may be older, of course, but since there are no written sources, we may never know. From the formal aspect, the Swedish *engelska* is very similar to longways reels, jigs, and square dances common in the British Isles. They are danced in couples, or rather at least two couples or more, or perhaps three persons together, trios, in any number. Music is usually played in 2/4 and 4/4 time, although there is one frequent example danced to a 3/4 beat. You dance in circles, make figures and flirt with your partner, change places with other couples and move in chains, and sometimes whirl on the spot together with your partner.<sup>9</sup>

The *polska* is nearly always a couple dance, with a few variants for two couples, danced to music in a 3/4 'rubber band', or elastic, beat. That means that even if the metre and beat is strictly on the pulse, the musician plays the notes a little too early or little too late, in order to create a musical tension. The dancer can then follow either the metre and the beat or the musicians' stretching of the music, which gives a very special feeling to the dancing. The dance motifs are dominated by walking steps with turning and whirling, and turnings around the couples' own axis. This couple turning can be on the spot, just turning around at the same place, or moving forward in what is usually called a waltz circle, around the dance floor.

In Sweden, Denmark, and Finland we also have examples where the dance is a *polska* but the music is not 3/4 *polska* music, and also where the music is a *polska*

but the dance is not. For instance in Sönderho on Fanö, western Denmark, they have a dance to music in 2/4 time that is similar to the Swedish *polska*, and in some Danish sources these are called *Engelsk Pols*.<sup>10</sup> These types of dances are also found in Sweden danced to both 3/4 and 2/4 music, under different local names,<sup>11</sup> and there are variants of the Swedish *polska* that use the same movement as 'swing your partners', in British and Irish dances, performed to 3/4 'rubber band' music.<sup>12</sup>

### **A crossroads**

In conclusion, Sweden can be seen as a crossroads, where folk music and dance is split between two, or possibly three, 'big' cultural traditions. These traditions are in some ways connected to the geographic and political areas around the waters of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, the British Isles, and the Polish/German parts of the European continent. But they are also rooted in different historical periods. The *polska* whirling couple dances of the Polish/German areas go back to at least 1650; similarly the *engelska* longways and square formation dances, which came from the British Isles, are also from the middle of the seventeenth century; while the waltz/polka dances, with ties to Germany and Central Europe, date from the nineteenth century.

However, an opposite conclusion could also be reached: that there is no pure Swedish 'folk' (or popular) dance. All of our folk dances have relatives in neighbouring countries, and if there is a cultural border, they exist as much within Sweden as they do at the country's border, a division that is primarily east-west and partly north-south. Perhaps we can say that the way we perform folk dance and music is 'Swedish' – West Swedish or East Swedish or even more local – but we use the same material, the same tunes, and the same body movements, with no basic differences.

My overall view is that there are many similarities in dance and dance music throughout Europe, perhaps even with its own particularly European way of dancing. I think that the Swedish musicologist Jan Ling's expression 'A Uniform Diversity'<sup>13</sup> expresses this very well. This statement goes in the same direction as the British historian Peter Burke, writing about popular culture in general:

In any one region this stock or repertoire was fairly limited. Its riches and variety are apparent only when the inventory is extended to the whole of Europe; when this is done, the variety is so bewildering as almost to hide the recurrence of a few basic types of artefact and performance. They are never quite the same in any two regions, but they are not all that different either: unique combinations of recurrent elements, local variations on European themes.<sup>14</sup>

My point is that these cultures around the North Sea and the Baltic Sea have been for a long time intensely involved with each other, not least in Sweden, which becomes a sort of a crossroads between the cultural streams around the northern seas. But this is not a sudden or a one-way cultural influence. Perhaps it is better to

see it as one cultural area, or rather as two large continuously intermingling cultural areas with many sub-cultures. We often emphasise geographical and political borders a little too much in connection with 'folk' cultures. The divisions (if there are any) between different cultures might perhaps fit better elsewhere.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Billy Ehn, Jonas Frykman, and Orvar Löfgren, *Försvenskningen av Sverige: Det nationellas förvandlingar* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Klein, *Om folkdans* (Stockholm: LTs förlag, 1978); Mats Rehnberg, 'Från svärdsdans till menuett', *Det glada Sverige: Våra fester och högtider genom tiderna*, Gösta I. Berg (ed.), vol. 2 (Stockholm, 1948), 133–82; Mats Rehnberg, '1700-talet dansar', *Det glada Sverige: Våra fester och högtider genom tiderna*, Gösta I. Berg (ed.), vol. 2 (Stockholm, 1948); Tobias Norlind, *Dansens historia: Med särskild hänsyn till dansen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1941); Matts Stenström, *Dansen Dess utveckling från urtiden till danspalatsens tidevarv* (Stockholm: Lars Hökerbergs förlag, 1918).

<sup>3</sup> See Mats Wahlberg (ed.), *Philochoros 1880–1980: Minnesskildringar utgivna av föreningen Philochoros* (Uppsala: Upplands Grafiska, 1980); Katarina Korsfeldt and Mats Wahlberg (eds), *Philochoros 125 år. Minneskrift utgiven av föreningen Philochoros* (Uppsala: Reklam-och katalogtryck, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See Egil Bakka (ed.), *Nordisk folkedanstypologi: En systematisk katalog over publiserte nordiske folkedanser* (Trondheim: Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning & Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> See Egil Bakka, Henry Sjöberg, and Hening Urup (eds), *Gammaldans i Norden: Rapport från ett forskningsprojekt, Komparativ analyse av ein folkeleg dansegenere i utvalde nordisk lokalsamfunn* (Trondheim: Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> See Mats Nilsson, 'Folkdjävlar – om moralisk panik', in Kerstin Gunnemark and Magnus Mörck (eds), *Vardagslivets fronter* (Göteborg: Arkipelag, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> See Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folkdance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> See Bakka (1988).

<sup>9</sup> See Bakka (1997).

<sup>10</sup> See Jens Henrik Koudal, 'Polsk and Polonaise in Denmark 1600–1860: Music, Dance and Symbol: A Riddle with Several Solutions', in *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland*, ed. Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Svenskt Visarkiv, 2003), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> See *Tretakt i Skåne*, DVD, 2005 and also *Gamla Dansar i Skåne*, VHS 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See *Svenska Folkdanser och Sällskapsdanser*, VHS, 8 vols (Stockholm: Samarbetsnämnden för folklig dans, 1992), VIII.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Ling, *A History of European Folk Music* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978; revd repr. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 116.

## The ‘problem’ with Scottish dance music: two paradigms

CATHERINE A. SHOUBE

### Introduction

Traditional Scottish dance music is a socially and politically contested category in Scottish culture: it elicits reactions ranging from enthusiastic approbation to genial tolerance, apathetic indifference, chilly condescension, and outright hostility. While a full analysis of the conflicting attitudes towards Scottish dance music needs to consider historical, social, and political circumstances,<sup>1</sup> here I want to examine one cultural dynamic that enlightens the meaning of the controversy: that is, the competing aesthetics of instrumental music played for dancing as opposed to music played for listening. The opposite reactions of delight or disdain are informed by fundamental differences between these competing aesthetics. These in turn serve wider social and cultural debates that stem from the position of dance music as an icon of cultural identity, both at home and among the many diaspora communities of expatriate Scots around the world, a point to which I will return at the end of the article. Both claim Scottish identity, but differ in their aesthetics, their political, economic, and social base, and their place in an international or world music scene.

Traditional instrumental music in Scotland is primarily dance music – reels, jigs, strathspeys, hornpipes, waltzes, schottisches, marches, two-steps, polkas. This diverse tradition has developed in two distinct streams in the twentieth century: music played for dancing and music played for listening. Judgments about the worth of dance music are radically different when informed by the perspective of dance participants as compared with other constituencies such as audiences at clubs, festivals, or concerts, or listeners who purchase CDs or download music from the internet. Dancers and listeners hear music differently. Among dancers, Scottish dance music is mostly met with enthusiasm and approval. From the perspective of the non-dancing world, however, there are various problems associated with Scottish dance music that fuel the kind of negative reactions detailed above.

In this analysis, Scottish dance music constitutes a pragmatic ‘problem’ for musicians because the requirements of social dance place constraints on musical performance in significant ways.<sup>2</sup> As dancers often say, ‘the music tells you what to do’. If the music is not played in a way that enables the message to be properly and



reliably conveyed, dancers are unable to dance ‘to the music’ and become dissatisfied with the musicians. Musicians who choose to play music for dancing recognize the constraints within which they must work, but these constraints hinder their efforts to obtain a hearing for the music beyond a dance context. Playing music for listening requires quite different strategies to attract and maintain an audience, and when dance music is played in ways that satisfy listening audiences, bands more readily gain commercial success. Thus we have two worlds of music-making – for dancing and for listening – which rarely intersect.

### **Music for Dancing**

Social dancing in Scotland is primarily partner dancing, and falls into two main categories: set dances and couple dances. Set dances are performed in ‘sets’ or groups of couples who perform a number of figures (series of steps and/or movements) in a given pattern.<sup>3</sup> Country dances of seventeenth and eighteenth century origin usually take a ‘longways set’ formation, that is, parallel lines of dancers with women on one side and men on the other, partners facing one another to start. These dances are progressive in that the couple at the top of the set has moved down one position at the end of the figures, and starts dancing the figures again in ‘second’ position. Each couple takes a turn at being top couple through the normal progress of the dance. Scottish country dances have become standardized in four-couple sets.

(top of	O	O	O	O	women
the set)	X	X	X	X	men

In the nineteenth century, square sets were introduced as quadrilles became popular. Also comprised of four couples, each pair stands on the side of a square, facing inward to start, women to the man’s right. Again, a series of figures are danced, normally by each couple in succession, though the sequence of patterns may vary somewhat.

1				
2	1		4	
3				

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century variations introduced other set patterns such as pairs, trios, and circles. These mimicked the around-the-room formation of the couple-based ballroom dances that gained popularity from this time, resulting in progressive sets for pairs or trios, and circle mixers. Both longways set country dances and other forms are danced in a variety of social contexts at the present time – at weddings and parties, and at specialized clubs and classes.

The second type, ballroom-style around-the-room couple dances, is derived from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dances such as the waltz, polka, schottische, two-step, and foxtrot. These dances produced many variants, especially

in early twentieth century 'old-time' dancing. Most of these dances are 'sequence' dances, that is, a series of figures performed in synchrony by all the dancing couples, who move counterclockwise around the dance floor. This kind of dancing has remained popular among groups of enthusiasts up to the present and forms a distinct category of social dance alongside standard international ballroom dances such as the quickstep, foxtrot, modern waltz, and various Latin-American dances.<sup>4</sup>

In order to elucidate what I characterize as the 'problem' with Scottish dance music, I shall discuss four key features associated with playing music for either type of social dancing that dancers need as a foundation for the dance kinaesthetics, and that intimately link the aesthetics of the music with the needs of the dancers. I will then examine those same features in music played for listening, showing how differences in the aesthetics have developed in response to the needs of listeners as opposed to dancers.

### **Speed**

In the twentieth century, the speed of Scottish country dance music has largely been determined by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS). The Society, founded in 1923 and gaining the title Royal in 1951 in recognition of its contributions, has been a powerful force for the preservation and revival of country dances and the internationalization of the dance style.<sup>5</sup> What began as a rescue effort in the face of a perceived encroachment by international popular dance styles in the early years of the century, grew into an enormously popular revival in the 1940s and 1950s in Scotland. At the same time, communities of expatriate Scots in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Middle East, India, and the United States took up Scottish country dancing with enthusiasm, creating an international movement that has spread to all parts of the globe. The International Summer School in St Andrews, Scotland, held annually during July and August, draws participants from Japan, the United States, and Europe as well as the Scottish diaspora, and today, Scottish dance bands are hired to play for dances all across the world.

The RSCDS encourages all musicians to adhere to its standards, and wields considerable control over bands who play for, or record, dances under the Society's auspices. Their standards also influence dancers' expectations, as they are taught in officially-sanctioned classes. The tempos set by the Scottish Country Dance Society in the 1920s were 116 bpm (beats per minute) for the quick-time, duple-meter reels (2/4) and jigs (6/8) and 84 bpm for the slower strathspeys in 4/4 meter.<sup>6</sup> Today, the quick-time speed is somewhat slower, with reels or jigs played at 108 bpm, and strathspeys at a little more than half that speed.

The Society has always emphasized that music be played at a suitable tempo for the steps required in the dance: 'The music is the stimulus of the dance'.<sup>7</sup> For dancers, the benefit of the slow speed is that it provides ample time to perform complicated steps. More emphasis in recent times on precise footwork in quick-time dance may help to explain the shift in speed. In addition, the manner of dancing

the strathspey has become slower over time, facilitating a graceful and elegant style with controlled, smooth stepping.<sup>8</sup>

Two kinds of steps are regularly used in Scottish country dances: setting steps, executed in place, and travelling steps, used to move the dancer through space. In quick-time country dances, the setting step is called the *pas de basque* and contains three steps per bar of music: leap (1), step (2), step (3), pause (4). Dancers are expected to dance on the balls of the feet, heels slightly raised off the floor. Feet are placed at a 45 degree angle, heels together. Normally the step is executed first to the right and then to the left:

leap onto R, step L in front of R instep, step back onto R, pause;  
leap onto L, step R in front of L instep, step back onto L, pause.

The travelling step is called the skip-change step and contains four even steps performed with alternate feet starting: hop, step, close, step.

hop on L, step forward on R, close L behind R heel in 3rd position, step forward on R  
swing L through and forward to start next sequence  
hop on R, step forward on L, close R behind L heel in 3rd position, step forward on L  
swing R through and forward to start sequence again

For the strathspey, both setting and travelling steps have a similar pattern, differing only in the direction of movement. The strathspey setting step moves side to side, feet kept at a 45 degree angle:

step R to right, close L to R, step R to right, hop on R while lifting L behind R calf;  
step L to left, close R to L, step L to left, hop on L while lifting R behind L calf

The strathspey travelling step moves the dancer forward in a similar pattern:

step R forward, close L behind R heel, step R forward, hop on R and swing L forward;  
step L forward, close R behind L heel, step L forward, hop on L and swing R forward

Similarly, Scottish couple dances that are based on ballroom steps such as waltzes, schottisches, and polkas require three or four steps per bar, depending on whether the meter is 3/4 or 2/4 or 4/4. Waltzes are danced in 3/4 time with an emphasis on the first step and beat, the second and third steps taking a secondary emphasis. The schottische steps are based on a 1-2-3-hop pattern, and the polka is much like the *pas de basque*, 1-2-3-pause.

Some variation in speed does occur depending on location and context. Tempos are faster in the Highlands in the north and west of Scotland than in the south and east or Lowlands, where RSCDS standards tend to prevail. Dances are faster, too, in university settings, where one might find quick-time country dances played at speeds up to 128–132 bpm. Jean Milligan also noted that children tend to

dance more quickly than adults.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, for older dancers, the speed will be slowed down a fraction. Matching the speed of the music to the needs of dancers requires that close attention be paid by band members to the dancing. Sometimes this may become unconscious, but good dance bands know how to match their playing to dancers' specific requirements.

These tempo changes affect the style of dancing: the complicated stepping of RSCDS-style is simplified as the speed increases, a fact that the guardians of 'proper' style often find worrisome. When the music speeds up, dancers can not kinaesthetically match their steps to the music, and are forced to simplify to one or two steps per bar. Reels or jigs end up being walked in two steps rather than being danced in three or four steps, and a quick waltz becomes one step on the first beat of the bar only. Changes such as these shift the emphasis in dancing from steps to whole body movement, which parallels the stylistic distinctions between the formal RSCDS style of country dancing, for example, and the more casual ceilidh, or 'village hall', style of dancing sets.<sup>10</sup> While stepping is primary in the RSCDS style, walking the figures and swinging a partner are the main features of the ceilidh and village hall styles where the music is usually played at faster speeds. Dancing to the music, then, is partly a function of speed.

### **Strict tempo**

The second feature of Scottish dance music is that the speed and rhythm must be kept steady, with a rock-solid, consistent beat – what is usually referred to as 'strict tempo' playing. The critical point here is not so much the precise speed and rhythm itself, but that the band rigorously keeps to the established tempo, without variation. Such steadiness facilitates regular and consistent execution of the steps or movements, which is an important aspect of the dance kinaesthetic.

Instructions for country dance steps reiterate that the effect must be lively but also controlled, elegant, and graceful. In her classic manual, Jean Milligan instructs teachers on the skip-change step: 'Throughout, the step must be smooth'. For the strathspey travelling step, she emphasizes that even hops should be 'low and smooth', while about the strathspey setting or common schottische step, she warns: 'The actual length of the step should not be exaggerated, for although a definite movement is essential, it must look controlled and smooth'.<sup>11</sup>

Smoothness is also an important feature of the ballroom-style dances known as 'Old Time' dances, which are performed in synchrony by couples moving in a counter-clockwise circle around the room. Steps danced close to the floor and the collective coordination of the dance figures give this kind of dancing even more visual smoothness than the country dance sets, as well as a lively, controlled gracefulness. Among dancers I work with on the east coast, where this kind of social dance is especially popular, dancers whose movements emphasize verticality rather than a smooth horizontal flow are criticized for 'loupin' like a flech' (jumping like a flea). It should be noted that regional and class differences in dance styles do

exist; some are more 'bouncy' than what I describe here, but these still require strict tempo music for good execution.<sup>12</sup>

Because dancers depend on musical cues to match their steps and movements to the music, strict tempo playing provides a solid foundation for dancers' actions. In jig time, for example, the setting step becomes slightly syncopated to match the rhythm of the music. In 6/8 time, the beats are marked **1 2 3 4 5 6** with steps danced on counts 1, 3, 4, and beat 6 taking the swing of the free foot being readied for the next step. Compared with the 2/4 or 4/4 reels where steps follow the meter as **1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4**, jigs have more 'swing' and bounce than do the smoother reels. Kinaesthetically, dancers who feel these rhythms will prefer jigs for dances that have a lot of setting steps emphasizing vertical movements, and reels for dances that have more horizontally oriented travelling steps. The steady playing of a strict tempo dance band, moreover, influences the dancers' kinaesthetic experience of energy as bound flow.<sup>13</sup> In both set dances and ballroom styles, this kind of flow both enhances the forward momentum in the dance figures and also defines the dance aesthetic. In country dancing, a dance that matches choreography and music that propels dancers through the figures is called a 'good going' dance.

### **Lift**

As a musical concept, 'lift' is difficult for musicians to verbalize in a technical manner, but they readily identify playing that exhibits it. Lift gives music life and energy, but it is not a function of speed. Rather, it is a matter of articulation, of how notes are emphasized – what one very experienced player describes as 'playing the notes, and playing the spaces between the notes'. (Or, as Sting recently commented in a television programme about his recording of the music of sixteenth-century lutenist John Dowland, the music is in the silence.) But neither is it staccato technique; it is more a matter of colouring and modulating the length of the notes. For melody instruments, lift is achieved in various ways: on the fiddle, changes in the pressure of the bow and in the bowing direction create differences in the emphasis and length of notes, while such shifts are accomplished primarily by bellows changes on accordions. Another player describes lift as 'sunlight and shadow', as if the music has to reflect the patterns of darkness and light that is so typical of Scottish weather, where clouds roll past and sunshine and shadows are constantly in play.

However it is described by musicians, lift is perceived as essential for good dancing. 'Nae lift' is one of the worst charges that dancers can levy at a band. And a band with 'nae lift' makes dancing 'hard going'. Conversely, music played with lift infuses energy into dancers, who dance without fatigue or awareness of the passage of time. 'The night flew past' dancers will say. A band with lift makes for 'a guid night' at the dancing.

Dancing to the music, or experiencing the music as carrying one through the dance, represents the kind of symbiotic relationship between the two that is highly desirable. Lift helps the dancer feel the rhythm of the steps – this is one way that the music tells the dancer what to do. Recall the two kinds of steps used in reels and jigs

– the *pas de basque* setting step (leap, step, step) and the travelling, or skip change step (hop, step, close, step). These steps are counted out as ‘and 1 2 3’ with emphasis on 1 and 3. Musicians who play with lift give the proper emphasis to the beats, helping dancers keep in step and in rhythm to the music. Playing without colour, especially during the runs that are common in reels, eliminates the aural cue that lift provides for the dancers. Jigs are thus played with dotted rhythms that give variable weight to some notes: (1 2 3 4 5 6, *jig-gity-jog-gety*), which makes them ‘dancey’ or gives the music ‘swing’, another way of describing lift.

Lift also contributes to the ability of dancers to phrase their movements within the dance by clearly signalling the rhythm of the tune. Dancers, hearing the rhythm, know how to pace their steps, so that their movements match the bars allotted in the tune. Building on the emphasis on smoothness and control cited earlier, Milligan gives this advice on phrasing:

Good phrasing is the hallmark of a good dancer. If you listen carefully to the music and get into the spirit it expresses, you should phrase easily and naturally. Phrasing means fitting in, evenly, the steps to the music. Each formation has a definite phrase of music and the dancers must begin the formation on the very first bar of the phrase and divide it up carefully so that it takes to the very last beat to carry it out. [...] Always phrase so that every step is really danced.<sup>14</sup>

Knowing the phrasing of the music helps dancers dance ‘in time’ to the tune.

Moreover, a reciprocal exchange between dancers and musicians can be set into play. The dancers’ kinaesthetic responses to the lift of the music brings the musician into a relationship with the dance, and musicians say that they play better when they see that the dancers are dancing well. An often-repeated anecdote about the late Sir Jimmy Shand, one of the greatest exponents of Scottish dance music, relates his advice to ‘watch the best dancers in the room and play for them. They’ll keep you right’. Practised musicians attest to the wisdom of this advice. Accordionist Freeland Barbour recalls this advice, given to him as a youngster by an experienced musician: ‘Airse doon, heid up, and gie it a guid dunt’<sup>15</sup> – that is, sit in your seat, watch the dancers, and give them the beat with lift.

### **Patterns of repetition**

The fourth feature I want to discuss is structural: the patterns of repetition that match the musical phrases to the choreography of the dance. Traditional dance tunes are usually 16 bars in length, and contain two phrases of 8 bars each. Each phrase is repeated, giving a pattern of A A B B to provide 32 bars for a dance. Some country dances of other lengths (40, 48, 64 bars) require other combinations of repetitions, and in set dancing, as in couple dancing, it is important that the music ‘fit’ the dance.

Country dance sets normally contain four couples, each of whom dances the figures of the dance twice – or eight repetitions of the figures. To play the same tune

eight times is considered confusing to dancers, since the music lacks aural cues to signal to the dancers that a new top couple should begin dancing the figures. It is also regarded as tedious, lacking variety. One option is to play eight different tunes for the dance, but for a band that will be playing 22 to 24 dances in an evening, that requires an enormous repertoire, between 176 and 192 different tunes. Between the two extremes, one tune or eight, are two alternatives. The first, more common today, is to play four tunes for the dance, each repeated once, thereby giving each couple their 'own' tune to dance to. When a new tune is started, the next top couple knows it is their turn to start the figures. An older technique, popularized in the 1950s by Sir Jimmy Shand, and adopted nearly universally for three decades, was to play three tunes for the dance, starting and ending with the 'original' tune (that is, the tune associated with the dance as it was published in RSCDS instruction books, often sharing the same name), and adding two other tunes to make a set. This practice gives each couple a change of tune to begin their dancing as top couple, and the repetition of the first tune for the fourth couple makes a balanced unit overall: tune 1, tune 2, tune 3, tune 1. Starting a different tune for each couple provides the necessary aural cue to the pattern of the dance; ending with the original also signals that the set is approaching closure. For other kinds of dances – couple dances that are waltzes or polkas or two-steps done to marches – tunes are frequently played in sets of two or three, depending on the length of the tune. What is universal in Scottish dance music is the inclusion of more than one tune in a dance set, carefully selected to complement the original tune and provide a pleasing whole.

The association of tunes with dances is a long-standing practice whereby the music comes to stand for the dance. A band will sometimes play the first eight bars of a familiar tune as a substitute for a verbal announcement of the dance, and dancers quickly respond by taking up their positions on the dance floor. Moreover, the connection between particular musical phrases and specific figures in the dance in the dancers' experience, makes it possible for the music to 'tell the dancer what to do' on this level too. This semiotic operates at the experiential level in both set and couple dances. In set dances, the message is clearest when eight bar phrases and figures parallel, such as in the figures 'down the middle and up' or 'set to and turn corners'. A common parallel between music and figure in the around-the-room couple dances is the final four bar waltz or polka turn, which ends the sequence of figures and signals the start of a new repetition of the choreography.

These four aspects of music for dancing – slow speed, steady or regular tempo, lift, and patterns of repetition that fit music to dances – are key features in the aesthetic as it is applied by dancers. Now I shall examine how these features fare in the context of performing for listening.

### **Music for listening**

For people who are listening, rather than dancing, to dance music, the aesthetic is different, not least because the kind of kinaesthetic connection that exists between the music and the dancer is lacking. It is the perception that dance music is tedious

to listen to that is the most telling criticism, and the strategies used to counter this perception create the alternative aesthetic.

In the first place, when dance tunes are played for a listening audience, reels and jigs will typically be speeded up. Likewise, waltzes, marches, and polkas played for listening are performed at quicker tempos than when played for social dancing. The slow tempo, so necessary for executing complicated steps, can signal either a lack of excitement in the music, or a lack of technical prowess on the part of the musicians, especially when tempo is both slow and steady. Playing music at a quicker speed conveys excitement and energy to the audience and flashy tunes that are technically simple but suggest virtuosity are selected. Dismissed as 'finger exercises' by musical purists, such tunes enjoy wide popularity among audiences who are not musicians. More complicated, musically sophisticated, and technically difficult tunes require a slower speed to be played well. When such tunes are played as fast as possible, dance musicians and dancers complain that 'there's nae music in it'. If notes are dropped, sacrificed for the sake of speed, the melodic line is compromised: dancers and dance musicians say that the tune is lost.

Playing music in shorter and more varied sets than a normal dance set also helps to maintain listener interest through novelty. When dance-band musicians play in a concert setting (at an Accordion and Fiddle Club, for example), they play more tunes in a set than they would for a dance, the sets are shorter overall, and they will play more sets. They may also unconsciously increase the tempo of their playing; conversely, bands that never play for dancing rarely play at dance speed. Problems can arise when musicians who are not accustomed to it attempt to play for dancing. Dancers may be frustrated by their incompetence, and the musicians may be equally frustrated by their inability to connect with the dancers as they do with their listening audiences.

Secondly, strict tempo playing can also lead to a perception of monotony. The unwaveringly steady tempo can give the music a kind of relentless quality, especially when one considers that a dance in reel or jig time will last for from four-and-a-half to four-and-three-quarters minutes, and a strathspey will be over eight minutes long. When dancing to the music, the time passes quickly because it is filled with active movement. But, for listeners, the steady beat can make the four or five, or worse eight, minutes seem interminable. And as far as I can tell, there is no intrinsic reward for the listener, whose kinaesthetic response is restricted to foot-tapping, and who may not know the tunes well enough to appreciate the skills of the players or to differentiate styles; rather, a perception of boredom is the common response. Other kinds of dance music are less problematic for listeners. Waltz tunes, for example, are often songs that people know and can hum or sing along to, thereby engaging with the music in another, active, manner. Polkas and marches, when played for social dancing, do not last as long as jig and reel sets, and so are also perceived as less tedious.

Performing bands have strategies to deal with these problems. One is to vary the speed of their playing, eschewing 'strict tempo' as not lively or varied enough



to keep people's interest. For examples, slow airs and songs may be played *parlando rubato* instead of waltz tempo. Within sets of similar tunes – reels or jigs for example – the tempo will be speeded up, especially towards the end. The music gets faster and faster until it finishes in a blinding fury of sound. Another strategy is to play tunes of different tempos in the same set, in order to create aural variety – a march followed by jigs, for example – which also has the effect of speeding up as the set finishes. The combination of a march or slow air, strathspey, and reel is a standard setting, especially in competition performances. So, rather than steady tempos we find variable speeds, especially increasing towards the end of a set for an exciting and dramatic finish.

The third feature is partly a function of increased speed, setting the music's momentum against its lift. This difference is a notable marker of the two styles. The locus of the energy in the music differs: the energy is located in the swing or lift in dance music, but it is in the fast speed and momentum in music for listening. Playing 'the spaces between the notes' becomes well-nigh impossible when playing very fast, but some bands do manage to achieve lift through sheer technical prowess. West coast dance bands tend to play faster than east coast ones, but are still recognized as having 'swing' by dancers and other musicians. I envision these differences spatially, with lift functioning in a vertical plane (like a bouncing ball), tied to the rhythm of the steps or marked by a tapping foot, while momentum is horizontal and temporal, like the clapping that sometimes becomes more frenetic as it tries to keep pace with the music that flies faster than the listener can translate from ear to hands. Dancers distinguish between bands that may be good to listen to as opposed to those that are good for dancing, while other audiences are more dismissive of the strict tempo dance bands.

Finally, we have the issue of repetition. As we have seen, repetition is important for dancers as it provides aural cues that 'tell you what to do' in the figures of the dance choreography. This sophisticated match of music to choreography builds on the simple pattern of repetition that characterizes traditional music in Scotland (A A B B) in the highly structured context of dance. The kind of repetition needed for dancing is, for a listening audience, simultaneously too repetitious and too complicated, since the pattern of repetition is lost on listeners who have no dance associations with which to connect it. The complexity of the repetition, coupled with the length of the sets as played for dancing and the slow and steady tempo, makes the listening experience long as well as tedious, as we have seen above. In contrast, when dancers are listening to dance music, they draw on their kinaesthetic memories of dancing to provide a context for understanding the pattern of the tunes and hearing the figures in the music.

For listening audiences, however, repetition functions in a totally different way, to signal freedom and expressiveness and to generate excitement and enthusiasm. To achieve this end, bands may play a set with only one or two tunes in it, repeated up to half a dozen times each. For audiences less familiar with the music tradition, this repetition helps listeners recognize one tune rather than overwhelm them

with too much new information. Performers realize, however, that some variety is necessary to maintain audience interest, so they vary the tempo and change the ornamentation or instrumentation during some of the repetitions of the tune. Thus repetition occurs at the micro level of the tune itself rather than as a pattern within a set of tunes. This kind of variation signals individual style and creativity that may occur within the bounds of a traditional tune. In contrast, most Scottish country dance musicians play tunes as written ('as per book' e.g. RSCDS books), or as they have learned and practiced them, with little variation which might interfere with dance cues, or cause confusion in the complicated pattern of repetition they themselves need to maintain.

A great deal of internal repetition, then, joined with variable speed, generally quicker tempos, and fast, smooth playing, constitute the aesthetic of Scottish traditional music performance style as opposed to dance-band style, which is played slower, at strict tempo, with lift, and with structured repetitions. The features that mark good music for listening are not just different from, but are in some ways diametrically opposed to, good music for dancing. Given these striking and substantial differences in style and aesthetics, it is no wonder that practitioners of each style judge and find the other's performances wanting.

### **The instruments**

While different aesthetics may help to explain the fundamental musical differences between the two styles, another difference, which carries enormous symbolic weight in contemporary socio-political discourse about identity and heritage, involves instruments. Aesthetic differences reflect different contexts for dance music; the politics of instruments reify more symbolic boundaries.

From the eighteenth century, music for social dancing was performed by fiddle and cello ensembles. While the fiddle remained the instrument of choice for dance music through the nineteenth century, by the 1930s accordion-led dance bands had become dominant, following the spread of free reed instruments throughout Europe. Enormously popular among all ages and social registers from royal to working class, these dance bands reflected the national enthusiasm, almost mania, for Scottish country dancing during the Second World War and post-war decades. The line-up standardized with fiddle and accordion (either button-key or piano key) as melody instruments, along with a second accordion, piano, bass, and drums. By the end of the century, an electric keyboard and midi bass had replaced the acoustic piano and upright bass, but the rest remains the same. The second accordion plays chords and the 'back row' instruments (piano/keyboard, bass/midi, drums) balance the melody instruments, providing the desired complete sound across the entire frequency range, and help to give the 'dunt' of rhythm that dancers need.

What changed after the mid-century involved two developments: first, the emergence of rock and roll in popular music, and second, the folksong revival. Both resulted in the marginalization of traditional social dance, removing it from the realm of common, national experience. Rock and roll, unlike earlier international

popular dance musics such as the waltz or quadrilles, failed to be naturalized in the Scottish context, and young people's dance experiences were severed from continuity with the past.<sup>16</sup> Scottish dance traditions became the purview of specialist groups rather than being a collective experience. To the youth, Scottish dancing and dance bands came to signify an old-fashioned, romantic-nationalist culture, and the popular radio and television programmes that featured dance music four or five times a week in the 1960s gradually lost their audience.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, Scottish oral traditions – ballads and folktales – were being re-discovered and valorised by the burgeoning folksong movement. Scholars, literati, and political nationalists argued that Gaelic-speaking Highlanders and Scotland's Travelling people represented the authentic stream of oral tradition, unsullied by popularization.<sup>18</sup> To these revivalists, what passed for Scottish music and dance represented the sentimental kitsch of popular invented traditions: tartan and dance bands on the one hand, and classically-trained singers and the genteel elegance of RSCDS dancers on the other. Unaccompanied ballad-singing and storytelling were preferable in every way.

However, in the 1980s, as folk singing became dominated by singer-songwriters rather than by traditional performers of ballads, songs, and stories, the folk revival took an instrumental turn. This instrumental revival aimed to reinstate the fiddle (and later, the small pipes) at the centre of the tradition as a more authentic representation of national culture. According to this view, technically sophisticated accordions had usurped the place of the homely fiddle, mouth organ, and melodeon in the tradition.<sup>19</sup> The evidence is to be found in the fact that almost never is there a Scottish country dance band without at least one accordion. Because accordions represent the decline of the instrumental tradition, the accordion-led dance band carries the baggage of being kitsch, sentimentalized, unreflective, dance music.

Proponents of the older-style dance bands and associated song traditions that derive from Burns, farm bothy, and music-hall repertoires, refer to their music as 'our kind of Scottish music', and can claim continuity with a two-hundred-year history of dance-music practice. From their perspective, it can also be argued that the British chromatic 3-row button-key accordion developed by the late Sir Jimmy Shand should be recognized as a unique invention and artistic addition to the world of free reed instruments.<sup>20</sup> These musicians and dancers, moreover, wear their nationalism on their sleeves, literally, dressed in and surrounded by tartan, which, despite being an invented tradition of a nineteenth-century British imperial monarchy, resonates with their self-image as Scots.<sup>21</sup> Proud of their Scottish heritage, their ideas about national identity are largely unionist. Contemporary nationalism, in contrast, strives to reverse the historic subordination of Scotland by England, and establish an indigenous foundation for national identity. Although folk revival musicians claim to be rediscoverers of the tradition, they are sometimes perceived as naive utopians who are out of touch with mainstream Scottish life and tradition represented by 'our kind of music'. Rather than naive romantics, the revival musicians may be better understood as imagining a nationalism that foresees an independent Scotland in

Europe, connected more with international affairs rather than those of Britain alone. They seek to ground traditional music in a Scottish experience separate from that of imperial Britain.<sup>22</sup> The competing claimants for the definition of the instrumental tradition articulate their respective versions of authenticity in musical terms which are politically loaded.

### **Conclusion**

The combined socio-political and aesthetic significance of the instrumental turn in the folk revival was that it enabled younger generations to rediscover traditional dance music.<sup>23</sup> As revival musicians began to play more instrumental music, audiences wanted to dance to it, not just listen. The flame of this new expression of traditional music in Scotland was fed by the emergence of 'Celtic' music as a category of world music. New instruments appeared and older ones reappeared: banjo, bouzouki, whistle, and small pipes. These instruments achieved international 'folk' or 'roots music' credibility, and their place in a Scottish context grew out of that association. Following the romantic ideal of free-spirited expressivism, no particular line-up of instruments was regarded as authoritative, although fiddles took centre stage.

These younger musicians, however, knew little of dance. Their aesthetic, grounded in performances for audiences at concerts, clubs, or festivals and on recordings, brought them into conflict with the older style of playing for dancers. The widespread popularity of the accordion throughout Europe stems from its being an ideal instrument to accompany dancing, combining melody and bass as it does, and capable of producing enough sound to carry through a village hall or farmer's barn. Add the supporting instruments and the dance band emerged. The folk revival instrumental bands, on the other hand, feature upper register melodic instruments, with rhythm provided by a guitar, which, while adequate for a club or concert, cannot be heard in the din of a dance hall, even with sophisticated amplification equipment. Lacking this support, bands have 'nae lift' for dancing.

It may be that we are now, with a reconvened Scottish Parliament centring people's identity in new ways, entering a new period. Younger generation dance-band musicians, who I know, cross over between the two styles because they play in more varied settings and understand the different aesthetics. The reverse is less common; the shift from playing for listening to playing for dancing requires musicians to be more structured, disciplined, and willing to be subject to external constraints defined by dance requirements in their playing, which can appear to stifle the individual expression and creativity associated with the artist in Western thinking. And the economic success and international media recognition of folk revival performers consigns dance bands to a second-class position, serving to exacerbate the historic tensions between the two groups. While aesthetics may explain the fundamental differences between the styles, politics and economics are the boundaries that must be breached.

What may eventually bring the two together is dancing – what is now called 'ceilidh dancing', which are the old social dances that have been rediscovered by

the younger generation and taken up with nationalist fervour since the mid-1990s. Accordionist and band leader Freeland Barbour, whose own experience crosses boundaries between dance and performance, revival and old style, comments:

It does seem to me that the new enthusiasms have a lot to offer and once the new dancers progress and start to appreciate the structure of the old dances and music then they will demand of their musicians a more solid approach to tempo, and to the style of the music for the dance. I think the new wave [...] will go down a few wrong roads but will get there in the end and is quite definitely the future, once it has pulled in the best of the past.<sup>24</sup>

If this indeed occurs, the 'problem' of dance music will be transformed. Instead of two aesthetics with adherents at daggers drawn in the competition for authenticity, musicians will be able to select their playing fields and adjust their styles accordingly, recognizing the legitimacy of the diversity of the traditions of Scottish music and dance.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) and J. F. and T. M. Flett, *Traditional Dancing in Scotland* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) for historical overviews.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the discussion of the relationship between Norwegian fiddling and dance in Jan Petter Blom, 'Making the Music Dance: Dance Connotations in Norwegian Fiddling', in *Play It Like It Is: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic*, eds Ian Russell and Mary Anne Alburger (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2006), pp. 75–86, for a similar tradition.

<sup>2</sup> J. F. and T. M. Flett, *Traditional Dancing in Scotland* is the standard reference. See also Evelyn Hood, *The Darling Diversion: The Story of Scottish Country Dancing* (London: William Collins Sons, 1980) for accounts of country dancing in Scotland. Publications by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society describe individual dances as well as the style of performance.

<sup>3</sup> Old time couple dances are briefly introduced in Jessie Stuart, *The Good Old Times: Favourite Old Time Dances* (Keith: Keith Printing Service, 1994) and Robbie Shepherd, *Let's Have a Ceilidh; The Essential Guide to Scottish Dancing* (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1992). For an overview of ballroom dancing in Scotland, see Elizabeth Casciani, *Oh! How We Danced! The History of Ballroom Dancing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Jean C. Milligan, *Won't You Join the Dance? The Scottish Country Dance Manual* (London: Paterson's Publications, [n.d.]) sets out the principles for the revival. George S. Emmerson's book, *A Social History of Scottish Dance: ane celestial recreatioun* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), details the history, development, and spread of the country dance. See also Peter Knight, ed., *Scottish Country Dancing*, compiled in association with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Milligan, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Milligan, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> The slower style of dancing the strathspey has been challenged by the recent introduction of the Cape Breton step dance tradition where strathspey stepping is lively and bouncy.

<sup>8</sup> Milligan, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Scottish country dancing is currently performed in several stylistic variations. RSCDS style is that which is taught by the Society, primarily through classes and the Summer School, and which is seen at Society-sponsored events such as informal dances and formal balls, and performances by RSCDS demonstration teams. Outwith RSCDS auspices, country dances are performed at local community halls, referred to as 'village hall dances', and at ceilidh dances, which constitute a late-twentieth century revival of country dances and old-time couple dances among university students and urban young adults.

<sup>10</sup> Milligan, pp. 22–24.

<sup>11</sup> While this is admittedly an overgeneralization, it may be said that west-coast style tends to be bouncier than east coast style.

<sup>12</sup> Laban Movement Analysis is based on concepts developed by Rudolf Laban. Effort, or movement dynamics, consists of the categories of Space, Weight, and Time that describe single actions of the moving body, and Flow, which describes the body's continuous movement. Flow is conceived as either bound or free. Bound Flow characterizes movement that is contained by specified choreography.

<sup>13</sup> Milligan, pp. 27–28.

<sup>14</sup> Freeland Barbour, 'Music for Dance', in *Scotland's Dances: A Review of the 1994 Conference on the Diversity of the Scottish Tradition of Dance* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 1994), pp. 39–41 (p. 39).

<sup>15</sup> While ballroom dancing could develop side by side with set dancing since both are based on the unit of the couple, rock and roll moved away from dancing as a couple to more and more individualized performance.

<sup>16</sup> BBC Scotland now schedules just one feature programme, *Take the Floor*, on Saturday evenings, and a talk-and-request show, *The Reel Blend*, on Sunday lunchtime.

<sup>17</sup> See Ailie Munro, *The Folk Music Revival in Scotland including Morag MacLeod 'Folk Revival in Gaelic Song'* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1984); revd edn, *The Democratic Muse: Folk Music Revival in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1996); Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994); and Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival, 1944–2002* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> 'Melodeon' is the term generally applied to one or two-row button-key instruments (single action, diatonic) that gained popularity especially in rural districts at the turn of the twentieth century. Accordions (double action, chromatic) have become more and more sophisticated through the century. The main types now seen in Scotland are 5-row continental style button-key and piano-key accordions. The Scottish 3-row operates on the same principle as the melodeon, each button producing two notes, one on the push and one on the draw of the bellows as opposed to the continental and the piano-key systems which produce the same note on both push and draw.

<sup>19</sup> Shand specified the requirements he was looking for in a button-key accordion to the Hohner company in Germany, and Vincenzo Morino designed an instrument to these specifications that became known as the 'Shand Morino' accordion. Dr Sandy Tulloch, a long-time friend of Jimmy Shand and fellow musician, assisted in the design. Interviews, 16 September 2002; 5 May, 12 May 2003; 21 June, 7 July, 2 August 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Trevor Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 15–42.

<sup>21</sup> Some may argue that dance music is more a 'popular' rather than 'folk' tradition. But the

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real issue at hand is whose definition of 'Scottishness' is most authentic. Recent studies on this topic include David McCrone et al., *Scotland – the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), and Carl MacDougall, *Painting the Forth Road Bridge: A Search for Scottish Identity* (London: Aurum Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> An account of this shift is found in Bob Blair, 'Scottish Ceilidh Dancing', in *Scotland's Dances*, pp. 46–48.

<sup>23</sup> Freeland Barbour, 'Music for Dance', in *Scotland's Dances*, p. 40.

## The rhythmic dimension in fiddle-playing as the music moves to newer performing and learning contexts

MATT CRANITCH

### **Introduction**<sup>1</sup>

It is almost certainly the case nowadays that many young Irish traditional fiddle-players seldom if ever play for dancers, despite the fact that their primary repertoire is predominantly dance music. The situation may well be the same in this regard for their teachers and mentors. Therefore, as the music is being transmitted from one generation to another, and into newer performance contexts, it must be asked if the rhythmic dimension and related aspects of the music are being overlooked in this process. From my own perspective, especially within the milieu of presenting workshops and master-classes at home in Ireland as well as abroad, I sense an increasing lack of awareness of such central features. The imperative for many seems to concentrate on ‘learning more tunes’, with less emphasis being placed on ‘the how’ of the playing. The notes of a tune, in terms of pitch considerations primarily, are somehow seen as constituting the tune. Other factors relating to the playing, many of them hidden from sight, at least overtly, are frequently ignored.

Dance tunes which are played for dancing have an obvious rhythmic aspect. I suggest that, when such tunes are played for listening, they still should have a very real rhythmic impetus, even if it is not the same. The true character of each tune-type, be it reel, jig, hornpipe, polka, slide, or other, depends on its own particular idiomatic dynamic enunciation. In the absence of such, the individual rhythmic identities of the tunes tend to be submerged, something which often leads to the situation, for example, where a hornpipe can sound like a reel. In this respect, for example, well-known hornpipes like ‘Kitty’s Wedding’ and ‘The Boys of Bluehill’ are frequently played in this manner. Indeed I have even heard a hornpipe being included in a set of reels, with no distinction being made between it and the actual reels played before and after – it was as if there was no difference between these individual dance metres. The way the tunes were played made them sound the same in almost all respects except with regard to the notes of the melodies.

### **Bowing**<sup>2</sup>

Central to imparting the characteristic rhythm and appropriate articulation to the type of tune being played is the bowing, a point echoed by Tomás Ó Canainn,



saying that 'the whole character of the music depends on bowing more than on any other single item',<sup>3</sup> and by Earl Spielman when he states that bowing 'accounts for a tremendous part of what we refer to as performance style'.<sup>4</sup> Bowing is taken in the widest sense in this discussion, and includes such specific aspects as bowing sequences and patterns, as well as rhythmic articulation and accentuation. However, detailed consideration of such fundamental features of fiddle-playing is often not considered to be a high priority, and is often ignored in favour of the acquisition of increased repertoire. The situation as to the suggested 'rhythmic deficit' can even be more acute in the case of what may be termed 'minority' tunes, such a description referring to their lower 'rate of occurrence' within the wider general tradition. Examples are the polkas and slides of the Sliabh Luachra tradition.<sup>5</sup> In relation to the respective rhythmic characteristics of these particular tune-types, there may not be in general circulation a great deal of information with which the performing process might be informed.

The role of the bow is all the more remarkable when it is realised that the actual contact area between the bow-hairs and the fiddle-string is so small. Yet all the expressive qualities of the bowing-hand, in terms of its sensitivity and power, are applied to the fiddle through the bow, by means of this tiny fragile link: at this point of contact and intersection, so much depends on so little. This is not at all to say that the left hand, the fingering hand, has little to contribute – far from it! However, it may very well be said that the bowing contributes so much more than merely 'playing the notes', and thereby making the sound: indeed it plays an essential role in giving the music its full meaning. It is with the bow that we get to the heart of the music, or as Batt Scanlon said, 'The bow may be termed the soul of the instrument to which it is applied'.<sup>6</sup>

### **Rhythmic articulation**

Among the many diverse facets of bowing are those which are more overtly obvious and at times even visible, such as the very making of the sound, whether notes are slurred or played separately, and in relation to bow direction. Less clearly noticeable perhaps are the ways in which the various sequences and patterns of notes are articulated by the bow, alternately up and down with appropriate accentuation and timing, thereby generating the particular rhythms of the different tune-types. In other words, the bow not only makes the notes, but also plays a central role in imparting to each tune its identifiable rhythmic personality. As Tony DeMarco and Miles Krassen point out, 'Bow control is responsible not only for tone but also for good timing and the distinctive rhythm that characterizes jigs, reels, and hornpipes'.<sup>7</sup> From a more general perspective, Hollis Taylor considers that 'music is really dance', and goes on to talk about 'everything the bow can do to impart rhythm and dance and groove'.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in an overall sense, the manner in which each individual player expresses the music, especially its rhythmic dimension, by means of their own way of bowing, contributes significantly to creating personal styles of playing. With reference to the question of regional styles of playing, particular traits and

identities that are manifest in this wider context are also very much associated with bowing.

In addition to the process of bowing note sequences and patterns in different particular ways, by means of slurring and/or individual bows, it is also the case that certain notes in each bar are accentuated appropriately for the tune-type in question, and the bow plays a crucial part. The manner in which the rhythmic identity of the tune is expressed owes a great deal to the combination of the bowing sequences and the way in which both the notes and bow-strokes are articulated, as well as how the various different kinds of ornamentation are integrated into this process.

Even though the accentuation patterns for the individual tune-types vary significantly, it may sometimes be implied that somehow they are 'all the same', perhaps anecdotally, and through the usage in a general sense of the term 'Irish Style' of fiddle-playing. This seems to suggest that there is a single way of playing Irish fiddle tunes, as distinct from, say, Appalachian ones. However, this misses the point that Irish style embraces an 'Irish' way of playing reels, an 'Irish' way of playing jigs, and similarly of playing the various other kinds of tunes. Each of these has certain articulatory features that are present in all tunes of that class, so transcending the playing of the individual musician. At the same time, it is the case that each player exhibits a particular way of playing all the tunes in their repertoire, thereby constituting their personal playing style, perhaps what Sheila Randles means when she says that 'It is not unusual for fiddle-players to develop an idiosyncratic style of phrasing and articulation and thus apply it to what they play'.<sup>9</sup>

Looked at in another way, player A differs from player B in the way that they play jigs, for example. However, there are certain features common to how both play this kind of tune, but which at the same time are different from those found in the playing of reels, for instance. Similarly, certain commonalities are evident in how each of them plays across all the tune-types, despite the fact that there are significant differences in the detail of how these are played. Perhaps the relationship between these variables can be represented by a matrix, as is shown in Figure 1, with the columns denoting the characteristics of the different tune-types, and the rows corresponding to the individual's style of playing. Throughout each column and each row, respectively, certain features are common. The cell at the intersection of a tune-type with a particular player corresponds to how that class of tune is played by that player. For example, the highlighted cell refers to how a reel is played by player C.

	Tune-type characteristics				
	Polka	Reel	Hornpipe	Jig	Slide
Style of player A					
Style of player B					
Style of player C					
Style of player N					

**Figure 1** Matrix representing tune-type characteristics versus individual style of playing

### **Polka rhythm**

To elaborate on the point that each tune-type has its own unique characteristic rhythmic features, the polka, as played within the Sliabh Luachra tradition, will now be considered in detail. While it may be true that, in many cases, the ‘notes’ of a polka can be sounded without too much difficulty, I suggest that it is an entirely different matter to articulate them with the relevant rhythmic impulse. Indeed I often feel that, in a certain sense, the relative ease with which the notes themselves can be played may somehow be inversely proportional to the difficulty involved in creating the appropriate rhythm and ‘swing’. And, unless the tune is imbued with these characteristics, then much of its real essence is missing, at least within the context of the Sliabh Luachra tradition. In marked contrast, polkas take on their full meaning in the hands of players who understand this music, people like ‘The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master’, Pádraig O’Keeffe (1887–1963), and his pupils such as Denis Murphy (1910–1974), Julia Clifford (1914–1997), and Johnny O’Leary (1923–2004). With particular regard to Johnny’s playing, Terry Moylan considers his polkas to be as ‘complex and interesting’ as reels might be when played by another musician. He also alludes to the gamut of rhythmic possibilities which can feature in the playing of polkas, and, in so doing, is surely underscoring the importance of the rhythmic dimension with regard to articulating and expressing the music:

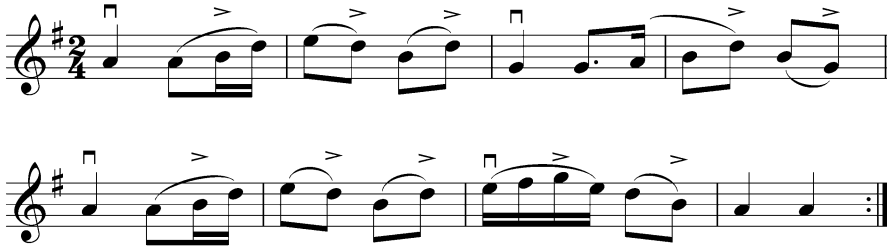
A bar typically consists of two quaver doublets. Each quaver may be divided into two or more sub-units, or two or more quavers may be combined to make a longer note. The choice of which of the four to divide or combine, along with the range of possible sub-divisions and the effects of juxtaposition with similarly varied bars within the musical phrase, makes available a large range of rhythmic devices. Johnny uses these judiciously in his polkas, to such effect that polkas in his hands can sound as complex and interesting as reels in the hands of somebody else. For someone used to the pedestrian way that polkas are treated by so many players, Johnny’s playing of them always comes as quite a surprise.<sup>10</sup>

In my personal experience of teaching people to play the various different tune-types on the fiddle, I have found that, even though the polka’s melodic features

may often be considered uncomplicated, its rhythmic articulation is very often what those from outside the Sliabh Luachra tradition find most difficult to realise in their playing, and also to retain. This particular rhythmic identity can be so elusive for those who do not have the apposite performance contexts relating to both the music and dance of the area. Johnny McCarthy, who finds that the polka's 'simplicity is an attraction',<sup>11</sup> also notes, 'It is in the performance that the subtle complexity which lies within the polka is portrayed'.<sup>12</sup> He goes on to refer to the significant insight that the musicians of the area have of their own music, something which is evident in how they play, particularly when compared to those from outside the tradition. He suggests further that the very features which are most strongly identified with this particular tune-type are also those which may be thought of by some as being the less important:

Due to deep understanding of the form, the local musicians can capture the nuances and swing of the tunes, a feature often missed or misinterpreted by musicians from outside the area. However it is exactly these features that some musicians regard as being inferior – simplicity, rhythm, phrasing, for example – on which the strength of the form can be established.<sup>13</sup>

While the melodic aspects of a polka, as well as various other features, all contribute to creating the 'whole' tune in its entirety, there is no doubt that it is the way in which it is played that truly makes it what it is. Fundamental to this is the characteristic rhythm, in which 'the second and fourth quaver in each bar are emphasised slightly'.<sup>14</sup> Because there are four quavers in each bar, with the beat occurring on quavers one and three, the stress is placed on the 'off beat', as illustrated in part I of the well-known polka 'The Top of Maol', shown in Figure 2.<sup>15</sup> However, the kind of emphasis which is idiomatic to this music is not the kind of accent which may be encountered in other musics, where it may sometimes be quite abrupt, but is rather like a swelling effect on the notes in question, and, 'is achieved by pressing slightly on the bow with the first finger, and at the same time moving it a little faster'.<sup>16</sup> It is often more noticeable on a crotchet, where it occurs on the second half of the note, and therefore on the second half of the bow-stroke: the same may be true if two quavers are slurred together in one bow, as frequently happens in this style of music. I suggest that this may well be what Seán Ó Riada had in mind when he spoke of the 'West Limerick–North Kerry' style of bowing as being 'cross-single-bowing. That is, the accent frequently falls on the second of a couple of slurred notes'.<sup>17</sup> With regard to his designation of this composite region as a stylistic area, perhaps he intended it to incorporate Sliabh Luachra, particularly given his great admiration for, and friendship with Denis Murphy, from whom, presumably, he acquired a great deal of knowledge about this music.



**Figure 2** Part 1 of the polka 'The Top of Maol', illustrating the 'off-beat' accent.<sup>18</sup>

At times, the off-beat emphasis is accompanied very effectively by a form of double-stopping or droning which involves playing the 'drone note', not continuously, but rather in a somewhat pulsed manner to coincide with the melody notes of rhythmic importance. This has the effect of imparting additional emphasis to these accented notes, thereby underlining and perhaps reinforcing the characteristic off-beat articulation. The drone is usually on an adjacent open string, generally below but possibly above, and at times may be fingered. This form of droning can often sound as if it is occurring almost incidentally rather than being played intentionally. Also, there may appear to be a certain randomness and unpredictability about it, almost as if the drone string is being played accidentally. However this is not at all the case, although it may often appear to be so. These stylistic features are also described by Johnny McCarthy, when in relation to accentuation, he says, 'In the fiddle technique, this is very often achieved by leaning on the down-bow which frequently results in striking the adjoining string thus giving the impression of double stopping'.<sup>19</sup>

A further insight may be gained by considering in more detail the actual bowing process involved. When the bow is positioned in order to play on a particular string, the 'clearance' between the bow-hairs and the adjacent strings is very little. By adjusting the horizontal orientation of the bow very slightly, it is possible to continue playing on that one string, but simultaneously to have the bow almost touching the neighbouring string, but not quite. With the bow thus positioned, any downward increase in pressure, applied in order to accentuate a particular note, also results in the bow touching the adjacent string, and thereby causing it to sound. If such action continues over the duration of a number of accented notes, then the pulse-like droning effect becomes apparent. The overall result is to enhance the way in which the inherent rhythmic dynamic is expressed.

The degree to which the particular kind of off-beat stress under consideration is used can vary noticeably throughout a tune – it is not at all uniform with regard to both extent and intensity. In effect, it is being modulated continuously by the player to create the appropriate rhythmic drive, and at the same time maintain musical interest. The fact that it is not predictable adds greatly to the vitality of the music, especially in the hands of the great players. Furthermore its use varies from one musician to the next: in the case of some players, it can be quite obvious and overt, while in the playing of others it is more subtle and understated, perhaps almost to

the point of seeming to be not present, but not quite. Either way, it is an integral part of how a polka is played: without such rhythmic expression, the tune would sound ‘flat’ and lifeless. However, this is not something which Sliabh Luachra musicians themselves think about consciously, or indeed talk about, but rather is it a part of the way in which they play.

This kind of rhythmic enunciation is clearly to be heard in Pádraig O’Keeffe’s music, with the off-beat emphasis being very much variable in extent and intensity, but nonetheless a key feature. This effect is audible throughout his playing, for example in his performance of ‘O’Sullivan’s Polka’.<sup>20</sup> Specifically, it can be heard that, in bars 3 and 4 for instance, two quavers or their equivalent are slurred in each bow, with the idiomatic accentuation occurring on quavers two and four, in the second half of the bow-stroke. The characteristic slurring sequence of two quavers per bow, with two bows per bar, which may perhaps be referred to as a ‘2-2’ bowing pattern, is to be seen in many of his manuscripts. However, the extent of the usage of this kind of bowing varies, as the slurred note patterns are, at times, interspersed with single-note bows. Such may be seen in the untitled ‘Polka’ shown in Figure 3 (a), which is written in his own notation method, with a transcription in standard notation given in Figure 3 (b).<sup>21</sup>

*Polka*

(a)

(b)

**Figure 3** Untitled ‘Polka’:<sup>22</sup> (a) Pádraig’s notation<sup>23</sup> (b) Transcription in standard notation<sup>24</sup>

The over-riding feeling produced by the kind of rhythmic articulation being discussed here is one of on-going rhythmic pulsation, perhaps as described by Dorothea E. Hast and Stanley Scott when they state: 'Sliabh Luachra players tend to use distinctive ostinato<sup>25</sup> rhythms in their bowing'.<sup>26</sup> The effect is to give a continuous impetus and flow to the music, as it moves forward with respect to time. Such was also observed by Breandán Breathnach when he said, with specific reference to the accordion playing of Johnny O'Leary, that 'the sustained pulse and forward thrust which are noticeable in his dance music makes dancing compulsive for his listeners'.<sup>27</sup> The characteristic rhythmic 'swing', that becomes an intrinsic part of the polka as a result of how it is played, 'simultaneously provides the beat required by the dancers, while weaving a trance-like dimension into the texture of the music'.<sup>28</sup> This mantra-like attribute of the music, arising from the way it is played, is also alluded to by Johnny McCarthy in saying, 'The effect is one of pulsive [pulsing] monotony. The recurrent stress on the off-beat produces this pulse, which continues throughout the entire piece. This, together with melodic simplicity, often creates a performance of hypnotic effect'.<sup>29</sup> Such qualities of the rhythmic drive are also implied by Fintan Vallely when he talks of 'pulsing, mantric [sic] polkas',<sup>30</sup> albeit in reference to the playing by Máire O'Keefe, Johnny McCarthy and myself of 'Din Tarrant's Polka / John Keane's Polka / John McGovern's Polka'.<sup>31</sup>

### **Dynamic accentuation**

The concept of dynamics is one that is not generally thought of in the context of traditional music, probably because of the perception that overall volume levels remain relatively constant, such as may be considered, for example, as applying to 'Baroque music [...] [where] level planes of volume are often implied'.<sup>32</sup> However, if the term 'dynamics' is taken as referring to 'the aspect of musical expression resulting from variation in the volume of the sound',<sup>33</sup> then it is surely also applicable to traditional music, but in a particular way. While it may be largely the case that, in this music, volume *per se* does not change dramatically, as happens in other genres, nonetheless there is an ongoing variation in this parameter, but on a different time scale. The issue relates not so much to the idea of volume as in 'loud' and 'soft', but rather to its temporal (that is 'time') aspects. Any changes that are manifest in this variable quantity correspond to the rate of rhythmic articulation being expressed in the tune itself.

I would now like briefly to consider the question of accentuation from the alternative perspective of audio-frequency signal analysis, in the realm of which, a time-domain waveform is a plot of signal amplitude versus time – that is a graph of the ongoing level or magnitude of the sound with respect to time. Normally, the horizontal axis represents time, with the vertical axis indicating signal amplitude, in relation to which, the greater the displacement of the signal from the centre line, the louder it sounds. The waveform for Pádraig O'Keefe's playing of bars 1 to 4 of 'O'Sullivan's Polka',<sup>34</sup> to which reference has already been made, on the repeat of the

tune at about 31 sec on the track, is shown in Figure 4 (a), with the five vertical lines delineating the four bars. The corresponding notation is given in Figure 4 (b).



**Figure 4** Bars 1 to 4 of 'O'Sullivan's Polka', as played by Pádraig O'Keefe:

(a) Time-domain waveform (b) Standard notation<sup>35</sup>

As may be seen, the amplitude<sup>36</sup> is not constant throughout, but rather is changing continually with time, the fluctuations providing a visual representation of the articulation of the tune. To a certain extent, these relate to the parameters of loud *f* and soft *p*, but more so to the accentuation and emphasis of individual notes, particularly those adjacent to each other. It is in the latter sense that an increase in amplitude, that is a swelling effect, is discernable on the waveform plot. However, it is not so noticeable in the bar which features the semiquaver note grouping. Nonetheless, the points of relative emphasis on the waveform coincide with the off-beat quavers, thereby manifesting the polka's characteristic accentuation.

Furthermore, another 'hidden' phenomenon is taking place simultaneously which contributes to the effect created by the kind of bowing that is idiomatic of the style. When a fiddle-string is bowed, the extent to which harmonics (partials or overtones) are generated, and, hence the resulting timbre, depends on the bow pressure and on the actual position of the bow on the string. By playing louder, that is leaning on the bow and perhaps moving it faster, the amplitude of the waveform increases, as has been seen, but also the higher harmonics are 'excited' to a greater degree, or perhaps, as may be expressed in lay terms, the more apparent and significant do the higher harmonics become, and hence the more intense the sound. In other words, the action of playing louder, not only increases the signal level in itself, but also it alters the timbre, or sound quality, in such a way as to contribute to an increased perception of loudness. These various matters are addressed in an un-credited website essay dealing with many aspects of the violin, including bowing technique and the physics of the instrument:

The violin produces louder notes when the player either moves the bow faster or pushes down harder on the string. The two methods are not equivalent,



because they produce different timbres; pressing down on the string tends to produce a harsher, more intense sound. The location where the bow intersects the string also influences timbre. Playing close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*) gives a more intense sound than usual, emphasizing the higher harmonics; and playing with the bow over the end of the fingerboard (*sul tasto*) makes for a delicate, ethereal sound, emphasizing the fundamental frequency.<sup>37</sup>

While the presence of the appropriate accentuation is a pre-requisite for creating the rhythmic identities of the various different tune-types, it is equally the case, as stated earlier, that continuous variability of this effect, as well as a certain unpredictability in how it is enunciated, is very much an overall part of the music, particularly in the hands of the better players. Metronomic uniformity and regularity are an anathema to such musical expression. In addition to the idea of on-going modulation of the rhythmic impulse, the accent may, at times, appear to be shifted in time because of particular bowing sequences and consequent phrasing. Also, in specific instances, this may intentionally be done by actually placing the stress on the ‘wrong’ note. These features can add greatly to the overall vitality and beauty of the music.

### **Rhythmic imperative**

An examination of the various other tune-types, along parallel lines to that undertaken here in the case of the polka, would yield a corresponding set of findings. Each tune has its own distinctive idiomatic personality in terms of rhythmic enunciation, and, in the case of fiddle-playing, bowing plays a major part in this. The notes of the tune are only a part of the complete picture, and therefore need to be interpreted and expressed in the manner appropriate to the particular type of tune involved. Without such, the tune can scarcely be considered that which it purports to be – surely, the rhythmic imperative is a *sine qua non*.

In former times, for example from about 1920 to 1963 when Pádraig O’Keeffe was teaching music throughout the Sliabh Luachra area, the situation with regard to gaining the relevant knowledge was different from today. Because people lived in a society and within a context where traditional music was perhaps the dominant form of music, and where little other music was heard, compared to the present day, a great deal of information about the music, and about how it should sound, was acquired subconsciously by those who were learning to play. Such latent ‘folk knowledge’ guided them in creating their own music, and in knowing when their efforts sounded ‘right’. As Paddy Jones has observed:

In Pádraig’s generation, I mean, this was the pop music. This was the music that they heard when they went to a party at night, a wedding, a dance, whatever. These were the tunes that were being played. So they were a living thing. But now it’s not the case.<sup>38</sup>

The position which pertained at that time contrasts greatly with that of today, in that many of those learning music live in an environment where little or none of

the particular genre of music being studied, including traditional music, is heard or played, and where the dominant aural input to their lives is 'pop' music. In such circumstances, a milieu for playing their chosen music is unlikely to be present, and so it is difficult for them to gain an appreciation and understanding of the contexts and aesthetics of that which they are trying to perform, and in particular the rhythmic dimension. It almost goes without saying that most never have the opportunity to play for dancers, or even to witness such events. In certain respects, it may not be too much to say that they are endeavouring to learn this music 'outside the tradition'.<sup>39</sup>

The situation regarding the lack of rhythmic expression can be exacerbated, in my opinion, by the almost ever-present guitar and/or bouzouki accompaniment. The use of such accompanying instruments has by now become much more prevalent and indeed integral. Paradoxically, rhythmically-based accompaniment not only often clashes with the rhythmic impetus inherent in the tune being played, but frequently can lead to having its subtleties in this respect diminished. There is no doubt that these instruments have now found a niche in Irish traditional music. Since this has happened in a relatively short period of time, there is little history of how they should integrate musically, and across the repertoire range found in this music. Both the guitar and bouzouki are wonderful instruments when played well, and especially with stylistic accommodation to what is being accompanied. However, the playing, at times, reflects the aesthetics and 'codes of practice' of other musical genres. It is also the case that these instruments are relatively easy to play at the basic level of three chords. When this degree of achievement is coupled to a less than satisfactory knowledge or perhaps no knowledge at all, about that which is being accompanied, then the result is surely likely to do a great disservice to the music.

Furthermore, and with direct reference to the suggested lack of rhythmic articulation frequently found in the music of inexperienced players, if the accompanying instruments are played such as to try to provide all the rhythmic impetus, then the result is far from a good performance. Both sets of instruments, namely 'melody' and accompaniment, miss the point completely, with neither being played to its potential. Perhaps worse, to try to compensate for this lack in the music, other instruments, such as bodhrán, may be added. However, it seems to me that the result is often somehow inversely proportional to the number of instruments added.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this paper has been to highlight a perceived diminution of the rhythmic dimension in the music as it moves to newer learning and performance contexts. As has been stated, the immediacy of acquiring new tunes, or at least their notes, frequently seems to take precedence over developing the more expressive and 'hidden' aspects of the music. And of course, for many young people who are learning to play this music, a stimulating and informative aural/oral environment

does not exist in what, paradoxically and perhaps contradictorily, is termed the 'information age'.

With regard to overcoming this problem, a more concerted effort, perhaps with novel approaches, may be necessary on the part of those who teach this music, in which respect I take the term 'teaching' to have a wider rather than a narrower meaning. Regarding the education of future music teachers, I think that a case can be made for topics such as I have addressed here being featured in the curricula of courses in tertiary education. I think that those who are being educated and trained to teach music, including the playing of traditional instruments, particularly the fiddle, should be aware of the difficulties outlined herein. Even those courses which deal primarily with traditional music performance should, I feel, also incorporate such material. Whether or not it is generally realised, many of those who graduate from these courses do teach, at least to some extent.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the course of presenting this paper at NAFCo 2006, I demonstrated a number of relevant points by means of recorded examples and by my own fiddle-playing.

<sup>2</sup> Various issues addressed here, such as bowing and rhythmic articulation, are examined more extensively, and in greater depth, in Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe and the Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Tradition' (PhD dissertation, University of Limerick, 2006), from which some extracts and illustrations are included.

<sup>3</sup> Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Earl V. Spielman, 'Traditional North American Fiddling: A Methodology for the Historical and Comparative Analytical Style Study of Instrumental Musical Traditions' (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1975), p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> See Matt Cranitch, 'The Sliabh Luachra "Code"', *Irish Musical Studies, Volume 4: Selected Proceedings from the Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995*, eds P. Devine & H. White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 343–53. 'Sliabh Luachra (The Mountain of Rushes) is situated on the Cork/Kerry border along the upper reaches of the River Blackwater. With undefined boundaries, it extends over areas in east Kerry, north-west Cork and south-west Limerick. [...] The area] is renowned for music and dancing. [...] the dance-music is lively, exuberant and very rhythmic.' Further and more detailed information is available in Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe', pp. 14–22.

<sup>6</sup> Batt Scanlon, *The Violin Made Easy and Attractive* (San Francisco: self-published, 1923), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Tony De Marco and Miles Krassen, *A Trip to Sligo: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Irish Fiddling Sligo Style* (Pittsburgh: Silver Spear Publications, 1978), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Hollis Taylor, 'From Concertos to Fiddle Tunes to Jazz to Fences: Playing it All', interview by Peter Anick, *Fiddler Magazine*, Vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 2003/2004), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Sheila Randles, 'The Fiddle Music of Connie O'Connell' (MA thesis, University of Limerick, 1998), p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> Terry Moylan, 'Introduction', in *Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra*, ed. by Terry Moylan (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1994), p. x.

<sup>11</sup> Johnny (John A.) McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City: Myth and Music in Sliabh Luachra' (MA thesis, University of Limerick, 1999), p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', pp. 60–61.

<sup>13</sup> Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Matt Cranitch, *The Irish Fiddle Book* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1988), p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> A wonderful performance of this polka is to be heard on track 1 of the classic recording of Sliabh Luachra music: Pádraig O'Keeffe, Denis Murphy and Julia Clifford, *Kerry Fiddles: Music from Sliabh Luachra*, Vol. 1, LP, 12T309, Topic Records, London, 1977; CD, OSSCD 10, Ossian Publications, Cork, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Seán Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage*, ed. by Thomas Kinsella and Tomás Ó Canainn (Mountrath, Portlaoise, Ireland: Fundúireacht an Riadaigh i gcomhar Le Dolmen Press, 1982), p. 54. This book was compiled from the radio programme series, *Our Musical Heritage*, presented by Seán Ó Riada on Radio Éireann, 7 July to 13 October 1962.

<sup>18</sup> Although the conventional 'accent' sign is being used here, its implementation in the performance of this music does not accord to a 'standard' interpretation of this symbol, but rather to the idiomatic manner of playing described herein.

<sup>19</sup> Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> This polka is played by Pádraig O'Keeffe on track 4 of *The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master*, RTÉ CD 174, Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Pádraig's notation systems particularly that used for the fiddle are examined and explained in detail in my study, Matt Cranitch, 'Pádraig O'Keeffe', pp. 238–295.

<sup>22</sup> This tune is played by Pádraig and Denis Murphy on track 13 of the recording, Denis Murphy, *Music from Sliabh Luachra*, RTÉ CD 183, Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin, 1994. It is the first in a set of three polkas, collectively 'known under the name 'Green Cottage' or sometimes 'Glen' or 'Glin Cottage Polkas', according to Peter Browne in the sleeve notes. This tune is also well known in the Sliabh Luachra repertoire of the present day.

<sup>23</sup> This manuscript copy was generously given to me by Noreen Lucey, Gneeveguilla, Killarney, Co. Kerry. An example of Pádraig's occasional use of non-standard bar lengths is to be seen at the end of the second line of the tune.

<sup>24</sup> The last note of part 1 is missing in the manuscript, but I have added a final E in the transcription to standard notation. This is how the tune is played by Pádraig and Denis Murphy in the recording mentioned above.

<sup>25</sup> 'Ostinato' is defined as 'a term used to refer to the repetition of a musical pattern many times in succession', with the three forms identified being 'melodic', 'harmonic' and 'rhythmic', in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 587.

<sup>26</sup> Dorothea E. Hast and Stanley Scott, *Music in Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 76.

<sup>27</sup> Breandán Breathnach, 'The Man and his Music: Johnny O'Leary', *Ceol*, 5, no. 1 (1981), 14–18 (p. 14).

<sup>28</sup> Pat Ahern, record sleeve notes, *The County Bounds*, OSS CD 113 (Cork: Ossian Publications, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Johnny McCarthy, 'A Trip to the City', p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Fintan Vallely, 'The Bowed String: Fiddle Styles and Repertoire', *The Guide to Irish Traditional Music: CD Compilation*, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~fidil/guideCDstrings.html> (accessed 19 May 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Our performance of these polkas was recorded at the 1998 *Seán Ó Riada Conference* which took place in Cork, and which had as its theme 'Music and Song from the Cork-Kerry

Border'. They are featured on track 3 of the CD of live recordings from the conference and associated concerts: Matt Cranitch, Máire O'Keeffe, and Johnny McCarthy, 'Din Tarrant's Polka / John Keane's Polka / John McGovern's Polka' in *The County Bounds*, OSS CD 113, Ossian Publications, Cork, 1999.

<sup>32</sup> Sadie, *Grove*, p. 241.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> As noted earlier, this polka is played on track 4 of Pádraig O'Keeffe, *The Sliabh Luachra Fiddle Master*.

<sup>35</sup> This polka is notated with a key signature of G, as the note C does not occur in the melody. Also it is to be observed that Pádraig plays the 'high' part first, with the 'low' part second.

<sup>36</sup> The term 'amplitude' is used in this context rather than either of the terms 'intensity' or 'loudness'. 'Intensity' has distinctly different and specific meanings in the discipline of music on the one hand, and in the disciplines of acoustics and signal analysis on the other hand. Therefore its use herein could lead to some confusion and misunderstanding. With regard to the term 'loudness', this means more than purely the magnitude of a signal – rather it pertains to how loud the listener perceives a sound to be. Factors other than signal amplitude solely are involved, including spectral content, and thereby 'timbral' quality. For example, if a sine wave and a square wave of equal amplitude are listened to, the latter is likely to be perceived as being louder. The reason for this is that the square wave has significant spectral content, consisting of the fundamental frequency and harmonics, unlike the sine wave which has only one discrete frequency component, namely the fundamental.

<sup>37</sup> 'Bowing Techniques', *About the Violin*, <http://www.theviolinsite.com/history.html> (accessed 19 May 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Paddy Jones was one of the last pupils that Pádraig had, perhaps even the last, and probably the youngest at the time. His comments quoted here were made in the course of a video interview I conducted with him in Tralee, Co. Kerry, 1 June 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Aspects of this issue were considered to a greater extent in my presentation at *Crosbhealach an Cheoil 2003: The Crossroads Conference*, which took place at University of Ulster, Derry, 25-27 April 2003. This paper awaits publication as follows: Matt Cranitch, 'Learning and Teaching "Outside the Tradition"', in *Proceedings of Crosbhealach an Cheoil 2003: The Crossroads Conference*, ed. by Fintan Vallely (awaiting publication).

## Closer to the floor: reflections on Cape Breton step dance

PAT BALLANTYNE

Why should the expression ‘close to the floor’ matter so much to a Cape Breton step dancer? Melanie MacDonald explains, ‘My own style? I would just say, close to the floor, as neat as I can be, and to try to keep it still traditional, ‘cause if I don’t, then eventually it’s going to be lost.’<sup>1</sup>

No standardisation, apart from tradition itself, is found within Cape Breton step dance, so a variety of styles and steps exist alongside each other. This is in marked contrast, for example, to the strictly standardised dance descriptions and musical directions published by the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing.<sup>2</sup> Step dancers practising older or more traditional styles of the dance perform alongside those whose interests lie in newer styles. This allows us to track the evolution of step dancing and reflect on how change can happen naturally, without the intervention of an official body. It also allows us to assess what aspects of the dance are most important to the dancers themselves.

The traditional form of step dance, which appears to be reasonably close in style to the dancing that was brought by nineteenth-century emigrants from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, is characterised by a tremendous neatness. The feet remain very close to the floor at all times; not a beat is missed. There are only a relatively small number of short, symmetrical steps, but the foot has an exact position in each. The newer forms show many influences from other styles of dance, such as Irish, tap, Acadian, and Ottawa Valley step dance.<sup>3</sup> Many of the steps are ‘offbeat’, that is, they do not fit exactly with a four or eight-bar phrase of music, and they are asymmetrical: what one foot does is not mirrored exactly by the other.

Willie Fraser (born c.1914) is one of the best-known and oldest of the old-style dancers. Born into a Gaelic-speaking family in Inverness County, he is also well known as a storyteller. He learnt his first steps from his Scottish grandmother, but the rest of his early repertoire was garnered in a novel manner: through a series of dreams he experienced as a child. In these dreams, a man appeared and taught him a different step each night, which Willie was able to reproduce the following day. He developed around fifty steps in this manner, according to his granddaughter, Melanie MacDonald.

With a great interest in his Gaelic heritage and culture, and in preserving traditions, Willie can be seen as a *seanchaidh*, or tradition bearer. Every township in the Gaelic-speaking areas of the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland had its tradition bearer, who could recite the genealogy of the inhabitants and could tell tales and stories to enthrall his listeners.<sup>4</sup> This cultural aspect of handing traditions down through the generations continually reveals itself in that, almost without exception, everyone I interviewed had learnt their first steps from a parent, or from a relative in the generation above. Dancing was a natural form of family activity. Given the Gaelic-speaking people's close connection with their own cultural traditions, it seems clear that a dancer's preoccupation with being 'close to the floor' is the result of a tradition that has been handed down through the generations. It has therefore become accepted as being the way in which this form of dance has always been performed.

I have taken Willie's style as the standard for 'old' style dancing, just as the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing's manual has become the benchmark for Highland dancing. Each of the older generation of dancers I interviewed, not all of whom are discussed in this paper, has cited Willie Fraser as being a major, if not the major influence on their dancing.

Willie taught his children and his grandchildren to dance. One granddaughter, Melanie, found him to be a strict teacher who was very specific about where she should place her feet, about how far she should – or should not – travel within a step, and who was most particular about which steps she should perform. 'You don't have to move in order to create a step. The step should happen. I mean it's only your feet moving. You don't need a large amount of floor space to dance.' This fits with her grandfather's belief that only a very specific and neat amount of travel should be used – 'a tile width' forwards, sideways or back. Every step she danced had to be performed perfectly, with beats fitting exactly to the music. Willie taught that leg and foot movements should never be too big, and that the working foot – that doing the figure – is always placed in an exact, rather than a random, position in relation to the foot which supports the body. He discouraged the creation of new steps, and the performance of steps that he himself had not taught her:

When it was just, say, myself in the kitchen with [him] and my mum, well, he would be very, very particular. 'No, you go closer to the floor. No, your heel is here. No, that's not it. You almost have it.' I heard that for years and years – 'You almost have it'.

It could indeed be argued that Willie was so strict in his teaching that he passed on a standardised form of dance, albeit without reference to written or printed materials.



**Figures 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d** Melanie MacDonald demonstrating her grandfather's style

Melanie points out that use of the heel is of vital importance in old-style step dance and that this must be given careful attention. Willie, she says, was quite rigid about this. The use of the heel is often ignored by some of the younger dancers in the pursuit of speed, as a percussive use of the heel demands a strong technique. The very quick, shuffling repetitions performed with the toe only, found in the dancing of some of the younger, new-style dancers, is quite probably an influence that has come from tap dancing.

The noted step-dance teacher, Mary Janet MacDonald of Port Hood, analyses her own style carefully. She is aware of symmetry in her dancing and she always, for example, starts off on the left foot, and teaches this. Being close to the floor, she feels, is vital. She performs regular repetitions of steps in fours and eights and counts carefully, but is fully aware that before she began teaching she did not do this. In those days, her dancing was more spontaneous and she did not feel the need to start a step on the same foot each time, nor was she concerned about commencing a step at its starting point. She was also unlikely to count the number of repetitions she might make of any given step. All this gave her dancing an asymmetric form (often found in self-taught dancers); her steps would not necessarily have fitted exactly with particular phrases in the music, and may indeed have carried on over cadential points.

I might start my first step on my left foot, like the shuffle on my left foot. I wasn't counting bars and counting the steps that I'd do four [repetitions]. I might do only three of one step and two, no one of another, then one on the other foot [...] And you'll see that in dancers who are not teachers.

Willie Fraser has always advocated the symmetry of commencing each step by stepping onto the left foot and then executing a regular number of repetitions of each step. His dancing has been a great influence on Mary Janet's own style which is very neat and close to the floor in the traditional manner.





**Figures 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d** Mary Janet MacDonald dances in her kitchen.

The following illustrations show a self-taught dancer who only developed his style after moving to mainland Canada from Cape Breton.<sup>5</sup> His dancing is highly thought of in his home territory and is compelling to watch. It is also very close to the floor, and his steps are all based on old-style steps. His dancing demonstrates Mary Janet's point about spontaneity and irregular repetitions, and illustrates her observations about her own dancing before she embarked upon a teaching career. In common with all dancers, he spontaneously performs steps that he instinctively feels fit with the music and frequently continues steps over cadences and performs irregular repetitions. This feature contradicts Willie Fraser's strict regularity and symmetrical style, but is often found in older, more traditional styles of dance, where steps are 'offbeat', and it has been adopted and extended by those performing in the newer, innovative style.



**Figures 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e** Close to the floor

Spontaneity is a feature of both old- and new-style dancing. Almost without exception, step dancers state that they do not rehearse particular routines or follow any predetermined orders of steps. The sole exception I have found so far was an older dancer, who performed frequently in her youth, but now only rarely.<sup>6</sup> When she was regularly getting up to dance, she could let the music dictate what steps to perform.

When you get older, again, and you don't dance as much, you forget a lot of your steps. I've forgotten a whole lot of my steps because I don't do them. So, there is a little pattern in there that still sort of remains with me, and if I have that little pattern, I'll sort of go by that and get through it that way. But when I was younger and dancing, I didn't have the pattern in my mind. It just went

from the rhythm of that music and whatever turn that fiddler would take to the next tune. You'd just know those steps [...] that you got to get in there because they'd just go so well. And it was easy. We were doing it all the time and it wasn't anything to think about.

Now that she rarely dances, she no longer has the repertoire to allow an instinctive choice, but instead has a routine, should she be required to dance at any time. When a step dancer is dancing and performing frequently, spontaneity is a natural result; infrequent performance demands more preparation. I have observed dancers spending a day, or even days, teaching certain steps and then, at a public performance, dancing these same steps in an apparently instinctive response to the music. This appears to illustrate the premise that although the steps are a spontaneous response to the music, the *choice* of step depends on whatever a dancer has in his or her recent memory that fits with the specific melodic and rhythmic dictates of the music.<sup>7</sup>

Moving towards a newer style of dancing, one of the younger generation of dancers, Mac Morin, describes himself as being a 'neat dancer and close to the floor'. Although he borrows motifs from contemporary dancers he has seen and admired, he insists that he would not wish to base his dancing completely around newer types of movement as he feels traditional aspects are vital. He uses a lot of quick, complicated steps to build up tension and will perform no more than two repetitions of a step at a time. He also likes to incorporate sideways movement in his performances as he feels it keeps the dance from becoming static. Although an extremely good dancer, neat, fast, and fascinating to watch, his dancing does display tendencies towards the new style, not only in his choice of step – many of which he creates – but also in a slightly higher, wider, and more visual style.



**Figures 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d** Mac Morin displays the more 'visual' style.

Many dancers practising the newer style of dance will travel quite a distance during a step. Mac describes the new style as follows:

Lots of movement – forward back, side to side – a lot of offbeat steps – those are borrowed from other styles of dancing, which are great, and I don't have anything against them. They're just not part of the old Cape Breton style. So, lots of movement side to side, offbeat rhythms, a lot of stopping.

Morin feels that stopping – where the dancer momentarily stands still, usually at cadential points in the music – impedes fluidity and that new-style dancing would work much better without such showy aspects, which are certainly not a feature of the traditional style. He refers to the longer, more complicated steps which have become a feature of the new style as being difficult for observers to follow and he feels that they have been created by dancers who adhere to routines, rather than by those who respond instinctively to the music.

You can have a nice complicated step that'll only take you as long as one of the old long steps would, as opposed to having a step take you through half a tune and then you switch to the other foot. To me that's a bunch of little steps in one, but some people consider that a whole step. It's just too long because it's hard for somebody who's watching to keep track. [...] It's hard to believe that you might only get two or three steps, or two or three and a half that are offbeat to one tune. And I find a lot of people who have danced to routines only, seem to have more of these put-together steps, as opposed to doing just a random thing that comes into your head.

Morin also suggests that step dance should be allowed to develop through the use of new-style rhythms in steps using old or traditional movements. This concept fits closely with developments in the style of musical performance in Cape Breton. The music is now played faster than it was some years ago, with even more of a dance 'drive' than it had before; the resultant sound is often rawer and harsher.<sup>8</sup> The piano accompaniment in particular is jazzier, with an increased emphasis on offbeat rhythms. This stylistic development contributes to a progression in the style of dance – new interpretations of old forms of music need new interpretations of old forms of dance to go with them. This, in turn, accentuates the advantage of retaining non-standardised forms of dance.

The final dancer, whose style is nearest to the new style, of those discussed feels that she stays 'as close to the tradition as possible.'<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is equally important to her that there should be a strong visual aspect to her dancing. As a frequent performer, well known and admired, she believes that her dancing should include, 'just something to catch the eye. [...] But you have to try to be imaginative, and if you can stay within the tradition and still be imaginative, I think that's a good thing [...] Cape Breton with a flair.'

Given that step dance was not originally considered a performance or stage art, she has a point. The largely local audience of earlier days, who knew and understood the steps, is being supplanted by a tourist market without the necessary knowledge and understanding of the dance or the music, an audience in more need

of a visual frame of reference (a requirement also identified by Mac Morin, who himself frequently performs for uninitiated audiences).



**Figures 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f** Cape Breton with a flair

Her style is compellingly visual, and technically superb. Although she incorporates many untraditional motifs such as aerial heel clicking, syncopated rhythms, twists and other movements, she still tries to remain as close to the floor as these movements will allow. One notable side effect is that she makes all her movements wider than a traditional dancer does. Very often she will kick out during a step at a forty five degree angle rather than the more conventional five or ten degrees from the line of travel. In creating her own steps, she seeks types of movement that mark out her individuality. This is a strong feature of the new style – the need to break away from tradition, whilst retaining important features, such as neatness, and closeness to the floor. Of course, many of the newer-style steps make a close-to-the-floor style, as in the old style of dancing taught by Willie Fraser or Mary Janet MacDonald, almost impossible. Using such movements as aerial heel clicks, for example, require the dancer to jump higher than is traditionally the case.

In her quest for different types of movement, she prefers to combine features from no more than two ‘new’ steps at a time, as she feels that any more will cause confusion for the audience. She deliberately attempts to create ‘completely different types of movement. I try not to put too many combinations together. I think that if you take one step and then you take another step and you try to combine the two, it’s enough’. She believes that her style fits somewhere ‘in the middle. I’m not ready to – I don’t think I’ll ever cross that boundary’.

As we have seen, Melanie MacDonald’s style, taught to her by her grandfather with great attention to detail, can be considered as a benchmark for the old style. All but the last dancer of those featured here considers themselves to be old-style dancers, and even she is reluctant to be classed as new style. Mary Janet MacDonald also dances in the old style, but her dancing differs from Willie Fraser’s strict form in that she will use newer steps and has made up many herself. The dancer in Figure 3 is also mainly old style, though his offbeat use of regular, old-style steps displays an influence of the old on the new.

The final two dancers discussed perform in the new style in that they incorporate asymmetric, offbeat steps, with a lot of movement, such as side to side, and use ankle breaks, heel clicks, and fast repetitions. This breaks with the old style

convention held by Willie Fraser that a dancer should move no more than a tile width forward, side or back. The last two dancers' highly visual style, although relatively close to the floor, is still consistently higher than that of the other dancers discussed.

Many step dancers practising today in Cape Breton wish to be seen as adhering to the old, close to the floor style, even though the new style imparts fresh aspects to the dance form. Changes in the way the music is played, and the need for dancers to have a style that appeals to the eye and incorporates 'new' ideas, creates a new style which differs quite dramatically from the old. In spite of this, the main features of the tradition – neatness and keeping the feet close to the floor – are still considered of great importance by dancers and are therefore, to an extent, maintained. Although there will always be a desire for change and new ideas, there is just as much of a desire for dancers to identify with the traditions of Cape Breton step dance and to retain what they feel are the most important and characteristic aspects of those traditions.

### **Appendix Interviews**

Interviews were recorded on cassette and transcribed for this paper; dance examples were recorded on video tape. All quotes and figures are drawn from this material, which is in my personal collection.

Melanie MacDonald, Mabou, Cape Breton, audio and video, 12 October 2005 (Figure 1).

Mary Janet MacDonald, Port Hood, Cape Breton, audio and video, 12 October 2005 (Figure 2).

Male dancer, audio and video interview, July 2006 (Figure 3).

Mac Morin, Mabou, Cape Breton, audio and video, 13 October 2005 (Figure 4).

Younger female dancer, Cape Breton, audio and video, 13 October 2005 (Figure 5).

Older female dancer, Cape Breton, audio interview, 12 October 2005.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Quotes are taken from interviews conducted with Cape Breton step dancers (see Appendix).

<sup>2</sup> *Official Textbook of the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (Glasgow: Lindsay Publications, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> These include: jumps with heel clicks, stopping at cadence points, shuffling with the toe only, and bigger, higher, and wider movements.

<sup>4</sup> For information on *seanchaidhean*, see Derick Thomson, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> This dancer wishes to remain anonymous and is referred to in the list of interviews as 'male dancer'.

<sup>6</sup> This dancer, too, wishes to remain anonymous and is referred to in the list of interviews as 'older female dancer'.

<sup>7</sup> This is clearly a parallel to the ideas of passive and active repertoires discussed by Carl von Sydow, 'On the Spread of Tradition', in *Selected Papers on Folklore. Published on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, ed. Laurits Bødker (Rosenkilde and Bagger, Copenhagen 1948), pp. 11–43, and Kenneth S. Goldstein, 'On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions

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to the Study of Repertory', *Journal of American Folklore*, 84/331, Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (1971), pp. 62–67.

<sup>8</sup> For analysis of Cape Breton fiddle style, see Glenn Graham, *The Cape Breton Fiddle: Making and Maintaining Tradition* (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2006), and K. E. Dunlay and D. L. Reich (eds.), *Traditional Celtic Fiddle Music of Cape Breton* (East Alstead, NH: Fiddlecase Books, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> This dancer also wishes to remain anonymous and is referred to in the list of interviews as 'younger female dancer'.

## John Campbell and the Cape Breton fiddle tradition

GEORGE RUCKERT

We are at a Saturday night dance in the Mabou region of Cape Breton Island in July, 2004. The fiddler, young Andrea Beaton, accompanied on piano by Mac Morin, plays a set of jigs for the noisy, sweaty, joyful dancers. The music is loud, the tempo quick, and the rushing stream of the music is a juggernaut of power: the unrelenting beats are very evenly played, the short and driving up-and-down bows are astonishing in their regularity, and their intense rhythmic vitality. Even the non-dancers tap and pound their feet on the sidelines. The L. R. Baggs pickup built into Andrea's fiddle bridge is commonly seen at dances today – perhaps necessary to keep pace with the rock 'n roll-like roar generated by Mac Morin's electric piano. The dance hall at Brook Village steams from the dancers' exertions, and, as Jerry Holland says, 'The floor joists go up and down with the feet of the synchronized dancers, pulling the walls in and out – the whole building is breathing with the music and the dance. It is just an incredible feeling.'<sup>1</sup>

I had travelled to the dance with my fiddle mentor, John Campbell, now in his mid-seventies, who regaled me with stories of the many dances he had played at this hall. ' "The Brook Village Hall" – you remember that tune? That was one of the first jigs I ever composed.<sup>2</sup> I bet she'll play that tune tonight. That's a good tune, George.' 'You bet it is', I agreed, driving ahead, desperately trying to remember how that jig went. 'You know that tune "Connor Quinn's Reel"?'<sup>3</sup> John went on, not really expecting a reply. 'Andrea Beaton played that tune for years. She came to me last summer and thanked me for it. I had composed it maybe forty years ago. I hadn't played it for years. It had no title, but I [recently] named it after my grandson Connor, [his daughter] Sharon's boy.' He paused to think about it and then said, 'You know, that tune's in the old style. You don't hear that music so much today.'

After the dance we drove home in relative silence, although John did ask me how I had liked the evening. I told him that it was fun and that I had a great time, and I was curious, too, to hear how he felt about it. He had spent his evening talking with his many old friends at the dance, for these events are often treated as big social gatherings for all ages in the community – only rarely does anyone dance every item, but instead spends the time in conversation and catching up with what's happening in the world.



**Figure 1** John Campbell with Doug Macphee

‘It wasn’t like that when I was young’, said John wistfully, referring to tonight’s programme. ‘You’ve got a lot of new faces here on Cape Breton, and they don’t know...’ he said, his voice trailing off. When he did not resume, I supplied, ‘...the dance? Yes, the dance *is* confusing.’ Since there is no dance caller at these affairs, I had to be led through the figures by my partners. By the end, I was getting better at predicting the next move. But I noticed I wasn’t the only one who was confused. John replied,

Well, yes, there’s always going to be some that are learning and some that know it [the set of dance figures known locally as ‘the Mabou set’], but it has gotten a bit out of hand. In the old days there were four couples in a set, and the dance figures could be patterned after the changes in the music. Now there’s ten-twelve couples in one set, seven in the next. How are you going to make order out of that? And the music is so loud, there’s so much whooping and hollering, some people are step dancing, and others are in some rhythmic world of their own. It has become too chaotic.

Even if John had his reservations about the new dynamics of a Cape Breton dance, I knew that he would not be too critical of Andrea Beaton’s playing. She is a distant niece of John’s, and he is quite fond of her personally, as well as respectful of her fiddling accomplishments and her musical pedigree. She is Kinnon Beaton’s daughter, and Donald Angus Beaton’s granddaughter, two names from one of the most prestigious fiddling families of the Mabou region. John’s father, the well-known fiddler Dan J. Campbell (1895-1981), was the cousin of the highly-regarded Donald Angus Beaton (1912-1982), so John was nurtured in the womb of this locally rich



musical family. Andrea's music this night had been professionally delivered, and included a mixture of the old repertoire, quite a few of John's tunes, and a mixture of her own tunes and those by other contemporary Cape Breton composers. John felt good about the evening's music, I am sure, but it did relight some of the old criticisms he feels about 'how it was and where it is'.

For those unfamiliar with the tradition of fiddling on Cape Breton Island, although the history of the Island includes Mic Mac Indians and French and Irish settlers, the musical identity of the area is bound up in the events of the Scottish Highland Clearances, especially those from the first years of the nineteenth century. People from the Hebrides and the Western Highlands were herded off to the new world, and chain immigration was often a factor. That is, this movement of peoples followed the pattern where one member of the family would find a hospitable place in the new world, and then send back to the old home for others in the family. Often whole communities would seek some semblance of togetherness as they found new homes. Cape Breton Island, in the Canadian Maritime Provinces, was a favoured destination of some documented 22,000 Scottish immigrants, and some authorities estimate up to twice that number. Many people from Lochaber, in Argyll, came to the region around Mabou in Southwest Cape Breton; people from Loch Morar found themselves in the Cape Breton town of Margaree, while many from the island of Barra found new homes around the town of Iona, and so on. A 'game' developed: 'You tell me the person's town and religion (Presbyterian or Catholic), and I'll tell you his name'. With so many families sharing last names, and a limited number of first names in use, double first names became common, since they helped to distinguish one person from another, such as fiddlers Donald Angus Beaton, Angus Allan Gillis, Dan R. MacDonald, Dan J. Campbell, and Dan Hughie MacEachern, for example.

The first to arrive in Nova Scotia had the first choices of the land, and not all the land was fit for farming. One who got excellent farmland was John 'the Bear' Campbell, the current John Campbell's great grandfather, who came to Glenora Falls, near Mabou, from Lochaber in 1816 to claim the land-grant he had earned serving in the British army. He cleared the rolling fields and raised cattle and sheep and grew the hay to feed them. Not all the settlers were as fortunate, and many had to eke out an existence on small plots of hilly, rocky farmland which provided only subsistence living. By the middle of the nineteenth century the immigration pattern began to reverse itself, with Cape Bretoners heading to inland Canada, the United States, and Australia to earn better livings. Besides farming, fishing was a major Island industry, and the mining of coal and iron were important through the middle of the twentieth century, although all these industries have been in decline for some time.<sup>4</sup>

When Cape Bretoners moved from the island they often kept together as communities, and there were a few particular locales in which they gathered in numbers, primarily Boston and Detroit in the USA, and the towns of Windsor and Toronto in Ontario. From the early part of the twentieth century, there have

been more Cape Bretoners in the West Boston area than in any city or many towns combined back on the Island. A Boston Cape Breton dance is still likely to draw people by the hundreds, but not as it might have been thirty years ago – then you had to get to the dances early if you wanted to get in at all, and there were often seven or eight dances a month.<sup>5</sup>

In 1955, Canso Causeway was built to connect nearby Nova Scotia to Cape Breton Island. Once the island was no longer isolated, social trends were accelerated. The roads and transportation improved. Television moved in. There were Elvis sightings. The young people drifted towards guitars and longer hair, and by 1972 the CBC spoke of a musical culture in peril of survival in a documentary called *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*.<sup>6</sup> Not everyone panicked, and in fact some scoffed at the alarm, but the result was that a Cape Breton Fiddler's Association was formed, with more attention paid towards training young people, and archiving and promoting the music. These programmes have paid off, and there is a lot of energy and activity in the fiddle world as well as worldwide respect for Cape Breton fiddling and step-dancing, at least partially as a result of the institutionalization of the tradition.<sup>7</sup>

An anthropological axiom states that when people travel, they tend to retain more traditional cultural aspects than those who remained at home, where the anxieties of losing the culture might not be as evident to those living in its midst. Two points arise from this. The Cape Breton musical tradition is often held up as retaining aspects of the original West Highland Scottish style for some years only vaguely recollected in the homeland; and the travelling Cape Bretoners may themselves have unconsciously preserved a strain of the more conservative style of Cape Breton fiddling. The musical production and repertoire of John Campbell can be seen to illustrate these cultural phenomena.

One of the difficulties in generalizing about any musical culture is that there are so many varieties and anomalies to be found. Fiddler Carl MacKenzie once said in a workshop that,

There are no two Cape Breton fiddlers alike. But the existence of an identifiable style that we all call Cape Breton, points to the fact that our forefathers brought something with them of an original style from the Highlands that can be found all over the Island – and this was evident long before the automobile and phonograph made it easier for Islanders to get together to share their music.<sup>8</sup>

Fiddling priest Father John Angus Rankin was of the opinion that the new freedom that the Scottish fiddlers felt in their adopted homeland imparted a fresh new spirit in their music that characterizes Cape Breton style.<sup>9</sup>

'But they're not playing that old style, and a lot of those old tunes are not being played', laments John Campbell. John had left the island in the mid 1960s to find work in Boston, where he has been a regular musical fixture in Boston, as well as on the Island, for more than forty years, organizing dances, bringing in fiddlers, and playing himself sometimes several nights a week. He said,

I always wanted to be a dance fiddler. A dance fiddler is different, you know; there have always been a lot of good fiddlers down on the Island, but you could've counted the real dance fiddlers on one hand. In our area around Mabou, there was my father (Dan J. Campbell), A. A. Gillis, Gordon MacQuarrie, Donald Angus Beaton, and maybe a few others. Then Buddy MacMaster and I came up in the fifties. But to play a dance you have to have a lot of stamina. You have to play loud, and you have to have good timing. A great fiddler like Angus Chisholm could play music for dance, but he was not really a dance fiddler, and there were a lot like him.

Listening to recordings of Angus Chisholm today,<sup>10</sup> I can hear something of what John was talking about. Chisholm played with great tone, precise bowing, and virtuosic control. He shaped his phrases dynamically with expressive bowing, and he played difficult tunes. One might refer to this as 'parlour style', as opposed to dance fiddling, but even to dance fiddlers it is not a derogatory term, as Jerry Holland has so eloquently demonstrated on his recent brilliant CD called *Parlor Music*.<sup>11</sup> In truth, Cape Breton and other fiddlers play most often in a relaxed domestic environment for their own enjoyment and practice, or with a few friends and students. When one plays with John Campbell in his home, one learns and goes over the tunes with a more subtle approach which experiments with bowing and ornamentation. But playing the same tunes with John on stage at a dance is an entirely different experience: the tempo increases, the tunes change from one to another in rapid succession, the ornaments decrease, and the incessant driving beat is all important. 'You've got to drive 'er, George, that's what fiddlin' for a dance is all about. You've got to drive 'er.'

John is quite economical with ornamentation, playing only mordents and grace notes, not with regularity in the tune and not in much profusion. 'You do that all the time, and it sounds Irish to me', he will say, to assert the separateness in the two styles. The bow cuts, the fast triplets that are quite common to Cape Breton bowing ornamentation, must also be used with some economy, according to John. 'You get fiddlers who want to put all this fussiness in the music, and to me that takes away from the tune. Sounds like they're trying to win a contest all the time. Trying to impress you.'

The piano became the chosen instrument for accompaniment in the mid 1950s, although it had been around for years before. Pump organs were also found in some dance halls, but the bellows on these old organs were often leaky, and the poor accompanist had to pump his or her feet twice as hard to maintain the sound. After a few dance figures, the exhausted accompanist had to be replaced, or, sometimes, a few teen-aged boys were brought in to pump while the organist played. But the piano could articulate rhythm more emphatically, too, so the power of the music increased. John narrates,

When I started out in the forties, 'you played solo fiddle. The dancers were much quieter – you just heard the sh-sh-sh-sh of the feet moving. There was not so much step-dancing in the sets as today. If they needed a louder sound for the bigger dances, they hired two fiddlers. We never had amplification. I first heard amplification in 1948 or 9, when Winston Fitzgerald and his Radio Entertainers came to town. Boy, that was something. Winston played a jig called 'The Canty Old Man' – you know, he was one fiddler who would play the same tune over and over if he liked' (it is more common for a fiddler to play a tune twice and then move on); 'I just left my partner in the middle of the dance floor and went to the stage and stared. Four hundred people were sent to the next level that night!

Piano accompaniment and amplification have brought about the biggest changes in the music. Older recordings of the accompanists show that originally their roles were quite reduced, both in volume and harmony. Whole tunes would be played with two chords, and the bass lines were spare and simple, in I-V or I-VII chordal patterns, while today a moving bass line with syncopated chords in the right hand is standard. An eight-count pattern in 4/4 time is often 1-/1-3/1-3/. 'How do you wish me to play?' asked an accompanist preparing to join Winston Fitzgerald. 'Play so I don't even know you are there', said Winston.<sup>12</sup> If Winston had heard Mac Morin play at tonight's dance I cannot imagine what he would have thought; there were times when it seemed that the piano was the leading instrument, playing strident bass lines that dominated the fiddle. But I hope Winston at least would have admired Mac's musicianship even if he lamented the changes in the old Cape Breton sound.

The piano is a tempered instrument that plays rhythmic and harmonic accompaniments largely from the perspective of the major-minor system. But up until the mid-nineteenth century, the traditional Scottish repertoire was characterized by tunes that are modally conceived, with Dorian, Mixolydian, and Ionian modes dominating. Piping-derived tunes, with their typical I-VII and I-II harmonic implications are also common in Cape Bretoners' playing, and as models for composition. There were very few *purely* 'minor' tunes, that is, with the IV-chord minor, in circulation until the piano came to be more at the forefront of the texture. Offhand I can think of only one example of music in a minor key, 'The Swallowtail Jig', that John regularly plays, although there are probably a few more. And this tune is nineteenth-century Irish in origin, and shows only limited use of the flat-sixth degree, which determines its 'minor-ness' (as opposed to its 'Dorian-ness'). Often John plays tunes which leave out the sixth degree altogether, producing gapped-scale tunes that are somewhat ambiguous in the major-minor system. Sometimes the tunes will be gapped at the third degree, as is the aforementioned 'Connor Quinn's Reel' that John composed, with the suggested accompaniment pattern being neither really major nor minor, a factor in 'that old-time sound' to which John often refers.

These gapped modal scales that precede the training and repertoire of a fiddler reared in piano-accompaniment styles seem also to suggest a different feeling in the tuning of the individual pitches, and sometimes it is difficult to hear whether the

major third or the minor third is intended. I've listened to John's playing of the 'Cross of Inverness' over and over, and I cannot tell whether John indeed intends a C-sharp in the second part, which is what most fiddlers play. 'That's the thing, George', John smiles when I try to nail him down; 'you can't tell, and that's the magic!' And again he goes to his idol for a precedent:

Winston would play the note C sharp the first time, and the second time through it'd be C natural. The third time it would be somewhere in between, but the thing is, it would always sound right, never out of tune. [He pauses in reverie.] He was a gifted man. A nice man. A wicked good fiddler.

Even John's own tunes display this ambiguity. In his E-minor 'Harborview Jig'<sup>13</sup> he ends each section with what seems at times to be a descending E-major chord – but when he plays, he tinkers with it, and one is hard pressed to determine whether the defining note is G sharp or G natural. It sounds good either way, or somewhere in between, but played against a piano, it sounds out of tune if not coordinated with the chord the accompanist chooses.

'Wild notes', where the player will deliberately slap his fourth finger of the left hand to play the high A or D, where the third finger would be normally used, lend a particular tonal quality to the tune: even repeated listenings to the recordings make it difficult to determine whether the fiddler wanted an A or B on the E-string, or D or E on the A-string. If you listen to the recordings of the old-timers, you come across these types of tuning anomalies regularly.<sup>14</sup> 'The Cape Breton style is rough – hillbilly', remarked one very good Scottish fiddler to me, I gathered partly in disgust, partly in admiration, and possibly partly in regret that that particular vitality of the style seemed dated to him.<sup>15</sup> The primary fiddlers of the current generation – including Buddy MacMaster, Jerry Holland, Carl MacKenzie, Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, Howie MacDonald, Brenda Stubbart, and others – seem to be much more in tune with their piano accompanists.

John Campbell shares one important quality with most modern Cape Breton fiddlers – the ability to take music from books. 'My father was into the books wicked', says John. 'He'd be up until four in the morning pouring over the tunes in his books. And this was on a farm, where you'd have to be up and doing the chores at the crack of dawn. My mother would have to yell, 'Danny, you come to bed!' Dan J. taught John to get the tunes correctly as they were in the books, and if one note was wrong, he would send his son to look up the correct version and play it that way. The books John grew up with, and heard his father playing from, were the *Gow Collections*, the *William Marshall Collection*, the *Robert MacIntosh Collection*, to be later joined by the *Kerr's Merry Melodies*, the *Skye Collection*, *Skinner's Scottish Violinist*, and the *Athole Collection*. The bulk of John's repertoire can be traced to these books. Later on came the *Cole's 1000 Fiddle Tunes (Ryan's Mammoth Collection)*, with its profusion of hornpipes and jigs. This latter volume was widely collected on the Island. It was compiled in Boston in 1887,<sup>16</sup> and has a lot of Irish tunes in it as well as tunes from minstrel and

other American sources. It was a beginning to the changes in repertoire still going on today, although the tunes therein, whatever their origin, were and are usually played in the Cape Breton style. Thus, at a dance a hornpipe might get jumbled into a set of reels, and lose the slower, dotted-note lilt of its original style.

Buddy MacMaster, Jerry Holland, and Andrea Beaton have played and recorded a repertoire heavily mixed with music by the old and the contemporary Cape Breton composers. The tunes of Dan R. MacDonald are well represented in their repertoires, and John Campbell plays a number of Dan R.'s tunes as well, noting that often they are difficult to play. Jerry Holland is one of John's favourite composers, and Andrea Beaton plays a lot of the younger composers in her recorded selections. And John's tunes are well represented by his contemporaries, too. 'The Panelmine Jig', 'The Golden Anniversary', 'Salute to the Clans', 'Paulette Bissonette's Strathspey', 'Father Francis Cameron's Reel', and 'The Highway Reel'<sup>17</sup> are played by many Cape Breton fiddlers, and several have recently turned up in a printed collection from Portland, Oregon. The lively 'Sandy MacIntyre's Trip to Boston' 'may well be the most famous Cape Breton tune ever written', according to Natalie MacMaster.<sup>18</sup>

The context of playing tunes at a dance sometimes necessitates a printed version as a backup. In the Mabou style of dancing, three sets are played before a dancer sits down. The first two sets are jigs, and the third a group of reels. Organized together by key, each tune is played twice and then is usually not played again in the evening. So a player has to have ten or so jigs in each key for each set, and, over the course of the evening, could play through as many as two hundred tunes. Remembering each tune after a short exposure would be difficult without a printed version, even though it was and is done all the time. More common is a listener's question to a player, 'What was that third jig you played in D, after "The Lads of Dunsie"?' And then, hopefully getting the title, he could go to a book for details. Winter sessions at each other's home were a good time to trade tunes and learn new ones, but playing by the book was a part of getting it right, toeing the line, learning and keeping the tradition.

The other side of John's training is represented by his admiration of Winston Fitzgerald's playing. Winston was famous for his practising of a tune so thoroughly that it became second nature for him to experiment with it. 'He was always tinkering with the tune', says John. 'Each time through, something different, a note here or there, an ornament, a different bowing – and never a break in the flow. The hardest man to learn a tune from!' John's own renderings of the old tunes often vary from printed versions, some even to the degree of adding extra measures to the sections, as he does in 'Judy's Reel' or 'Cutty Sark'.<sup>19</sup> He might comment, 'That's the way my father played it'. So much for the rigor of getting it right from the printed version!

Like so many Cape Bretoners, John Campbell loves the old tunes. This may be the bottom line, as it were: a sea of faces listening in joy to a fondly remembered ocean of tunes comes to John's mind when he plays for a dance. In expressing his regret for the passing of certain of the old ways in the tradition, John voices what

many feel – that the onslaught of the pop styles and electronic innovations of the modern world tends to make the fiddler of traditional music feel passé. It was John's wish that his repertoire of older tunes, as well as those he composed, be preserved in writing, and hence, *The Music of John Campbell: A Cape Breton Legacy*, will soon be published by MelBay Books in St Louis. The six LPs and a CD recording that John has made are now out of print, but Rounder Records have recently released (CD 2003) a compilation of John's recorded music on CD to coordinate with the book – a rich time for John to look back on a lifetime filled with music.

## Notes

The many citations from John Campbell in this paper were acquired over repeated associations with him at music sessions held in his home from 1999-2006. In taping a tune from John for later transcription, I would often let the tape run and get his commentary.

<sup>1</sup> Jerry Holland in a fiddle workshop, Randolph, VT, September 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *The Music of John Campbell: A Cape Breton Legacy* (St Louis: MelBay Publications, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> *The Music of John Campbell*.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller picture of Cape Breton immigration, see Stephen Hornsby, *Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton: A Historical Geography* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> John Campbell describes these dances as the ideal places for young people to socialize with people of their own background. At the time of writing, there are very few young people at the dances.

<sup>6</sup> See Charles Reynolds (dir.), *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler: 30 from Halifax*, narrated by Ronald MacInnis, broadcast 1 January 1972, Halifax, NS: CBC.

<sup>7</sup> See Marie Thompson, 'The Fall and Rise of the Cape Breton Fiddler, 1955-1982' (MA Thesis, St Mary's University, Halifax, NS, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Carl MacKenzie in a fiddle workshop in Cambridge, MA, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*.

<sup>10</sup> *The Early Recordings of Angus Chisolm: Legendary Performances of Traditional Scottish Fiddling*, Shanachie Records, 14001, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Jerry Holland, *Parlor Music*, Rounder Records, CD 7057, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Anecdote related by John Campbell.

<sup>13</sup> *The Music of John Campbell*.

<sup>14</sup> For a fuller discussion of 'wild notes' in the Cape Breton style, see Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg (eds), *The Violin Music of Cape Breton* (Toronto: DunGreen Music, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Remarks in confidence, July 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Patrick Sky (ed.), *Ryan's Mammoth Collection*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn Boston 1887 (Pacific, MO: MelBay Publications, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> These compositions are included in *The Music of John Campbell*.

<sup>18</sup> Natalie MacMaster, liner notes to *My Roots Are Showing*, WEA CD 22715, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> These compositions are included in *The Music of John Campbell*.

## The formation of authenticity within folk tradition: a case study of Cape Breton fiddling

GREGORY J. DORCHAK

The ability to appear 'authentic' is important within many cultures and traditions today. An Internet search for the term 'authentic Irish pub', for example, reveals that nearly every major city in North America proudly claims one. Amongst 'experts' in a tradition arguments often result over what specific stylistic standards determine actual authenticity. This paper focuses on how objective standards of cultural authenticity dictated by these 'experts' ignore the true nature of cultural practices. Boundaries of traditional community practices are determined neither through appearances, nor stylistic standards. Instead, these boundaries are actively determined by community participation.

However, to think of cultural practices only via stylistic terms can hamper the ability of a tradition to adapt to the inevitable changes that occur within a community. These changes can be, for example, demographical, economical, or sociological. If cultural practices fail to adapt to these changes, they will also lose their ability to represent the contemporary community, and eventually be phased out.

This paper will examine the cultural practice of fiddling on Cape Breton Island in order to illustrate the natural evolution of the tradition. It will show how expert dialogue that seeks to delineate the boundaries of tradition can be out of touch with the community's actual practice. It will also show how a great number of changes occurred in Cape Breton during the mid-twentieth century, changes that threatened to totally extinguish the practice of fiddling in the community. That this outcome was prevented was due to the many actions and innovations made by participating members of the community.

### **Rhetoric, style, and the public**

The idea of 'style' has long been a concern of rhetoricians. Rather than answer the question 'what is that sound?', style answers the question, 'what does that sound like?' To examine something's style is to look only at the superficial appearances of how it is expressed. All performing arts are mediums for expression, conveying messages within a culture through the use of culturally accepted standards of style. Artists draw from the stylistic material available to them in order to create their



intended performance, and in order to effectively convey this performance the artist needs an understanding of how his or her audience interprets style. All audiences have differing notions of interpreting style. In the relationship between the artist and the audience, rhetoric becomes an important factor. If the artist understands how his or her audience interprets this rhetoric, then he or she will understand the available means to express themselves to the audience. The artist's choice of expression then becomes a rhetorical choice that reflects on the stylistic requirements of that audience.

In acting as a medium of expression, art does not exist for its own sake, nor does it exist for the sake of the artist alone. Rather, performing arts acknowledge that the world contains many as opposed to one.<sup>1</sup> A cultural practice such as fiddling exemplifies this feature of art through its enactment in a public setting, for the sake of the public. In order to understand the aesthetics of the public, one must understand the stylistic standards of where and when the performance occurs.

In this, 'when' is just as important as 'where', since the make-up of a certain community naturally changes over time. While this can be observed through the various beliefs and other aesthetic factors of the community, the most obvious changes come from the new generations: children born into a community, in time, will bear newer children into the community, creating a constant cycle. Meanwhile, older members of the community leave the community through death. Despite the ever-changing individuals within the community, human interaction occurring within this cyclical community ensures relative stability. Fiddling within the Cape Breton community is an example of human interaction that allows the community to be maintained.

The importance of noting this cycle is to point out the obvious (but often overlooked) fact that newness must always enter a tradition. As more and more individuals enter a community, they make their mark upon that community's tradition, which in turn adapts to the innovations. This paper will trace how, within the Cape Breton fiddle tradition, individuals have shaped the musical style over time. Because newness constantly enters a tradition, understanding within a tradition is by necessity a retrospective one. When one examines the Cape Breton fiddle tradition, it is clear that each generation of fiddlers represents a different historical period. Individuals are subject to the norms of the tradition that they have been born into, but they also make their own mark on this tradition. Winston Fitzgerald, Dan R. MacDonald, and John Morris Rankin, are examples. They were born into a pre-existing tradition. However, in each case, Cape Breton fiddling would be remarkably different today if they had never taken part in the tradition. It is this evolution that I will discuss.

### **Cape Breton**

Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia, experienced a great influx of Scottish Highland settlers during the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth. These Highlanders brought their traditions, alongside their Scottish Gaelic language, and

their music, replicating their old way of life in a new land, with their aural traditions as their principle sources of entertainment.<sup>2</sup>

After settling in the harsh land of Cape Breton, the Scots remained largely isolated. The island itself remained separated from mainland Nova Scotia until the completion of the Canso Causeway in 1955. As well as being separated from the mainland, communities in Cape Breton, also remained separated from each other. Very few roads existed on the island, and the roads that did were often in poor condition. MacGillivray notes that 'there existed isolated pockets of music – such as Mabou, Iona, Queensville, and Margaree, and the poor conditions of early roads prevented much communication between these villages,'<sup>3</sup> and forced the locals to rely on their own music for entertainment.

The home has always been central to the traditions of Cape Breton. More than fifty of the fiddlers profiled in Allister MacGillivray's *Cape Breton Fiddler* cited some sort of family influence on their playing. Each of MacGillivray's fiddlers' profiles revealed similar stories. Either a father or an uncle had played the fiddle, and they in turn taught all of their sons and daughters, with as many as seven or eight siblings taking turns to learn on the 'family violin.' Due to the preponderance of fiddling dynasties, there is a notion that these families had fiddling 'in the blood'. Liz Doherty points out that the more likely reason that fiddling was kept alive by these families came from traditional music, 'ever-present' during the formative years of the musician's life.<sup>4</sup>

Most fiddlers learned to play their instruments not by learning to read music, but through aural transmission, the ability to listen and learn 'by ear.' Graham notes that it was not until the mid-1940s that learning by note became popular in Cape Breton.<sup>5</sup> During this time, fiddlers who had fought in World War II returned home to Cape Breton, and brought with them collections of dance tunes from Scotland. At a time when recorded music was a rarity, these collections acted like jukeboxes for Cape Breton musicians, providing them with many new tunes for performances. Despite the introduction of musical texts, learning by ear was never phased out; the written notes simply provided an aid to aural transmission.

### **Evolution and setting**

Cape Breton fiddle music is intended primarily as dance music. Since the first Scottish settlers landed in Cape Breton, step dancing and fiddling have been linked. This differentiates Cape Breton fiddling from other fiddling traditions where musicians gravitate towards session music. In Cape Breton, these musical sessions are a rarity, and the predominant setting for fiddle music is the square dances, in village halls.

There are also other settings where the music is especially important. Traditionally, one of the first settings for the music was in the home. House parties were once frequent, and lasted from the evening into the hours of dawn, although they now take place less frequently. One of the primary reasons for this probably comes from the availability of other venues, such as the weekly pub ceilidhs, as well as the many concerts, dances, and festivals that take place on the island. Pubs, like

the Red Shoe in Mabou, serve as everyday gathering places for the community and supply informal venues for the musicians. In these settings, musicians take turns performing, even though no actual event is scheduled.

### **Aural culture**

Many fiddlers from Gaelic-speaking backgrounds are praised as having a Gaelic sound in their music. Graham describes this praise best as a 'continuum between the rhythms of the spoken language and Gaelic singing and the way they are both mimicked to produce a Gaelic sound and flavour in instrumental music.'<sup>6</sup> Cape Bretoners have always been very active in performing *puirt a' beul* (literally translated as 'mouth music').<sup>7</sup> *Puirt a beul* is a type of music where the singer 'jigs' or sings the tune with the mouth, using Gaelic words, as well as nonsense syllables, to create song. Many traditional tunes are multipurpose, with some instrumental tunes having words added, or the vocal music being added to the others' repertoires, and many fiddlers originally learned their tunes from this method of 'jigging'. MacGillivray cites many fiddlers who acknowledged learning tunes from their mothers, who would rock them to sleep as babies while 'jigging' the mouth music.<sup>8</sup>

But the transmission that occurs directly between the Gaelic language and the instrument is dying out as the Gaelic language disappears from the island. However, Graham points out that this does not automatically mark the loss of the language characteristics of the music.<sup>9</sup> Recently this aural method was improved when recording devices were introduced to Cape Breton. Now, contemporary fiddlers can learn tunes from fiddlers who lived a half century ago, and, in the process, learn the stylistic elements unique to the older fiddlers. Since fiddlers mimic other fiddlers' styles, one fiddler mimicking another who had already developed a style based on certain aspects of the language, would adopt the first fiddler's style and the linguistic elements included therein.

### **Repertoire**

Cape Breton fiddlers have a certain repertoire of tunes that has evolved and grown extensively since the first settlers. This repertoire mostly contains tunes used for dances such as the jig, strathspey, and reel, alongside the march and the air. Many tunes still played today were composed in Scotland prior to the settlement of Cape Breton. The tunes played within Cape Breton created after the settlement of Scottish immigrants, have varied sources of origin. Certainly, composing tunes has always been a vibrant Cape Breton tradition, and, as Doherty points out, this tradition has been most active since the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Older composers include Dan R. MacDonald, with some 2,000 tunes to his credit, as well as Dan Hughie MacEachern, Mike MacDougall, and Donald Angus Beaton, and today Cape Breton fiddlers such as Jerry Holland, Brenda Stubbart, and Kinnon Beaton keep the tradition alive.

Cape Bretoners perform in a variety of keys, with A being the most popular. Originally, the first fiddlers on the island stuck with the simple keys of G, D, and

A, along with their relative minors. However, when Scottish tune collections from the 'Golden Age' of Scottish fiddling made their way to Cape Breton in the mid twentieth century, tunes from these collections in alternative keys, such as B<sup>b</sup> and F, became popular on the island, and soon local composers such as Dan R. MacDonald, and Dan Hughie MacEachern, began to compose in these keys.

### **Accompaniment**

Many aspects of the Cape Breton sound have evolved since the first Scottish settlers, but none have changed as much as the accompaniments to the fiddle music. Often in the nineteenth century, the scarcity of pianos and parlour reed organs ('pump organs') on the island meant that fiddlers usually played unaccompanied. Occasionally a second fiddler would join in, playing the melody an octave lower, in unison, providing a type of accompaniment. The combination of the two fiddlers also provided more volume, which they needed in order to perform in crowded dance halls.

The piano, according to Doherty, did not become the established accompaniment for the fiddle until the 1940s and 1950s, although it took some time to gain popularity.<sup>11</sup> Musicians usually used any form of accompaniment available. For example, Marie MacLellan sometimes accompanied her sister Theresa by playing a Hawaiian guitar, simply due to the lack of any other available instruments.<sup>12</sup> The guitar was also a popular instrument, with artists such as Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald arranging entire ensembles of musicians as accompaniment, with his band, including piano, bass, guitar, and drums, while percussion can also be heard on an LP recorded by the MacLellan family in the 1940s.<sup>13</sup> This variety shows that the musicians never felt stylistically constrained in what instrument they could choose for accompaniment. Today, many see the piano as the default companion to the fiddle, with the guitar usually being the secondary accompaniment instrument.

Accompanists' techniques on their instruments have also evolved. Most Cape Breton piano players had no formal training, and without a background of music theory, these pianists possessed limited techniques, usually choosing an elementary three-chord (I, IV, V) progression. This lack of knowledge also hampered the piano players in what they could add to the music, since they were limited to rhythmic variations rather than melodic or harmonic.

This simple style began to change in the mid 1950s due to contributions made by various piano players attempting to raise their skill levels. Most innovations within the Cape Breton piano style can be traced to specific individuals, such as Marie Jessie MacDonald, a piano player from New Waterford, who lived in Boston during the big band era. Here she learned jazz chords as well as a more mature technique, and Cape Bretoners recall that MacDonald was one of the first to implement a walking bass line in the left hand.<sup>14</sup> Carl MacKenzie, a fiddler from Washabuck, elaborates on these technical advances in accompaniment: 'Twenty years ago they wouldn't understand that A minor and C were relative keys and you could interchange them. They figured that as a complete no no. We had poor

accompaniment generally. Now the piano player can go about any tune.<sup>15</sup> This is a natural progression, since musicians, with time, are bound to learn more about the potential of their instruments.

### **Individual artists**

Aspects leading to the evolution of Cape Breton music can usually be traced to specific individuals. Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald is the perfect example of a fiddler who popularized advanced techniques within the Cape Breton style. A majority of Winston's contemporaries considered him as the fiddler who left the greatest impression upon them.<sup>16</sup> Winston was one of the first fiddlers to bring James Scott Skinner's tunes into prominence on Cape Breton, tunes that utilized difficult classical techniques, such as advanced position playing. Dan R. MacDonald of Mabou exposed Winston to these tunes. MacDonald was familiar with the music of many Scottish composers, and did much to introduce many of their collections into Cape Breton. He introduced Skinner's music to Winston, who perfected Skinner's more difficult tunes, and in the process also removed much of the 'dirt' from his own interpretation of the Cape Breton style, playing with a smoother and more precise style than others on the island, such as the Mabou Coal Mines style, known for its 'dirt and grittiness'.<sup>17</sup>

This smooth style was such a novelty to Cape Breton that Winston's playing left his mark on many. As Mabou fiddler John Morris Rankin described Winston's impact, he 'is like a household name around here. And he was such a slick player that who wouldn't be influenced by him? He took everything by storm'.<sup>18</sup> Winston's popularity on the square dance circuit, as well as his extensive air-play on CJCB and CJFX during the 1950s had an island-wide influence on style. Minnie MacMaster, mother of Natalie, notes how she heard Winston perform on the radio long before ever seeing him perform in Inverness County.<sup>19</sup>

Winston, and players such as Angus Chisholm and Dan Hughie MacEachern, greatly influenced the newer generation of Cape Breton fiddlers. These three men concerned themselves first and foremost with advanced technique, and relished playing difficult tunes. They also popularized a smoother approach when performing Cape Breton tunes. Most players who perform in this style today cite Winston, Angus, or Dan Hughie, as their direct influences, and today technically advanced tunes or difficult variations to tunes are no longer a rarity on the island, but rather are tackled by many fiddlers.<sup>20</sup>

### **Threats to the tradition**

Cape Breton remained relatively isolated for many years after the first Scottish settlers arrived, and hard economic times eventually forced some of Cape Breton's youth to leave the island looking for work. The Canso Causeway (1955) and improved roads allowed for more modern transportation, and quickly eroded the island's isolation. Marie Thompson notes that the changes in transportation, along with the consolidation of schools, mass media (television and radio), and the development of

an adolescent sub-culture, led to many changes within Cape Breton in a relatively short period of time.<sup>21</sup> She points out further the fact that between 1961 and 1971 the number of farms in Cape Breton dropped by two thirds. This rural population was the backbone of the island's fiddling community, but, while older fiddlers continued to fiddle, no one inspired the newer generation into taking part in the tradition.

There were large changes in the rural areas of the island with people either moving off the island, or closer to the urban area of Sydney. These changes coincided with the arrival of rock and roll in the mid 1950s, and with musicians such as Elvis Presley and the Beatles gaining in popularity with the Cape Breton youth, who once would have idolized the local fiddler. New liquor laws limiting the square dances to the older generations didn't help matters.<sup>22</sup> In limiting dances to only those old enough to drink, the youth were prevented from attending many dances. Since they were not brought along with their family to the dances, they were not as involved with the tradition. Dave MacIsaac, a fiddler and guitar player, acknowledges rock music's influence on him: 'When I was six my parents got me a little tin fiddle, but I lost interest in it when I got my first guitar at age nine. I suppose it was kind of a peer thing, none of my friends were into Scottish music, however I played with my father at parties and the like.'<sup>23</sup>

The younger generation no longer took part in traditional music with each other. Instead the music moved from the public sphere to the private sphere, relegated to a 'family only' activity. Kinnon Beaton (b. 1955), a fiddler from Mabou, points to John Morris Rankin as the only child his age playing the fiddle, and also admits that it was 'not cool' to play the fiddle: 'You'd get a lot of flak for playing the fiddle from some of the kids at school. They were into rock and I hadn't a clue what they were talking about. It was pretty well all fiddle at our house.'<sup>24</sup> Square dances lost popularity to the more inclusive round dances, which included horn bands playing tunes other than the traditional jigs and reels, and allowed for dance styles other than step dancing. These changes in the vernacular traditions of the Cape Bretoners influenced the way that the traditional music of the Scottish settlers was experienced.

This change in demography was brought to light by the 1971 CBC documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler* produced by Ron MacInnis.<sup>25</sup> This film proved to be very controversial to the people of Cape Breton, who refused to believe that the fiddler was vanishing. MacInnis did not aim to say that fiddlers were disappearing. Rather, he intended to point out that the lack of interest in the music by the youth would eventually lead to the demise of the tradition. MacInnis's documentary was so controversial because many misperceived the film as a judgment against the quality of Cape Breton fiddling in general. The overwhelming reaction was that MacInnis was wrong and that Cape Breton fiddling was alive and strong. Father John Angus Rankin, who was featured on the documentary, noted that it did not matter if every Scotch fiddler died, because both the French and the Micmac first nation tribe of the area had also picked up the music. This common sentiment overlooked the fact that while those of non-Scottish heritage had indeed picked up the fiddle, the all-

important youth had failed to do so. In Inverness County, MacInnis could only find two young people fiddling at that time, John Morris Rankin and Kinnon Beaton, both from musical families living in Mabou.

Some fiddlers from Inverness County decided to make a stand against MacInnis's claim. They responded by organizing the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association.<sup>26</sup> The original aim of this association was to create a fiddle festival that would display over 100 fiddlers on stage. This goal was met by the creation of the Glendale Festival of Scottish Fiddling. At this festival Father John Angus Rankin, from the stage, said, 'If Ron MacInnis is in the audience, I want him to know that the fiddlers are alive and well'.<sup>27</sup> There were many fiddlers who emerged from different parts of the island, most of whom had never performed outside their kitchen. This demonstrated the numbers of fiddlers, but the overall point of MacInnis's documentary proved true. There were very few young fiddlers on the stage.

While the initial aim of the Fiddlers Association was to organize a festival, their further actions made a larger mark on the development of Cape Breton fiddling. The practice of fiddling that had become a private, familial activity moved back to one held within a public setting. The association actively pressed for the recruitment of youth into its ranks, changing the transmission process – how fiddlers learned their art. The activity of encouraging the youth to play, once only prominent within homes, became a community activity. Doherty points out that in a short amount of time, formal lessons went from unheard of, to the normal environment for students to learn, even in children of musical families.<sup>28</sup> One only has to look at the list of Stan Chapman's students to note that many came from notable musical families, such as Natalie MacMaster and Jackie Dunn MacIsaac.

Had the Fiddlers Association not made this change to the method of transmission, Cape Breton fiddling probably would have continued to vanish. Instead, altering both the performing environment and learning environment from a private one to a public one opened up the fiddling community to the island's youth. One no longer needed to be from a musical family in order to learn the instrument, and therefore no longer needed to be from a musical family to take part in the musical community. Children were exposed to the community through the radio, recordings, classes and programmes on the television. This resurgence in youth interest led to a boom within the fiddling community. No longer is playing the fiddle considered 'un-cool' by the current generation of youth. In fact, to this younger generation, traditional music and pop culture co-exist without a problem. Natalie MacMaster admits that she is just as likely to have a recording of Donald Angus Beaton playing in the car, as she is to have an AC/DC album playing. The natality produced by allowing the newness to enter the community has, in fact, preserved the community. The generation of musicians taught by those such as Stan Chapman in the island's first formal classes, is now the generation passing on the tradition to newer generations allowing for a cycle to maintain itself.

### **Romanticism**

When preservation of the objective stylistic qualities within a tradition is perceived as more important than the community interaction within a tradition, these features can be quick to take on a romantic aura. One of the first big steps in the revitalization of the tradition was the establishment of the Glendale Fiddle Festival, in the early 1970s. Editorials soon appeared in the local paper, praising the fiddlers who had participated. In these editorials, it was noted that everyone who inhabited the island, including the Micmac first nation tribe and the French Acadians, had taken up the music. Some responses to these editorials, however, suggested that players of non-Scottish ancestry should not take up the fiddle. Some correspondents went on to say that fiddlers of today's generation would not stand up to the fiddlers of the past, and that the original style of the music was not being maintained.<sup>29</sup> The notion of who can play this traditional music has persisted into the present day. In the 1990s, the American David Greenberg immersed himself in the Cape Breton music and, in collaboration with his wife, Kate Dunlay, put into words every stylistic nuance of the Cape Breton sound, so that musicians might be able to read about how to perform certain embellishments.<sup>30</sup> This was such a successful undertaking that many Cape Bretoners would refer people to their book when asked to explain certain techniques. Greenberg could mimic individual musicians with great precision, and released an album, *Tunes until Dawn*, that displays this mimicry.<sup>31</sup> In a review of this album in a Cape Breton magazine, John Gibson initially challenged whether Greenberg should label his music as 'Cape Breton'. Gibson shunned Greenberg's music for having no Gaelic influences.<sup>32</sup> The reviewer then took the opportunity to denigrate Scottish composers such as James Scott Skinner and Hector MacAndrew for being 'Gaelicisable, but in essence, modern Scottish music.'<sup>33</sup> However, after lamenting the fact that Greenberg does not possess the Gaelic sound, and could never be qualified as a Cape Breton fiddler, Gibson performed a quick about-face, praising Greenberg's ability to mimic Mary MacDonald, a Cape Breton fiddler whom, he claimed, had a sound that was 'deep, rich, so Scotch, part of countless Highland lives and almost inseparable from them'.<sup>34</sup> If ever there were a fiddler on Cape Breton who would be unanimously praised for the Gaelic in her fiddle, Mary MacDonald would be that fiddler. And Gibson in turn praises Greenberg, saying that he doubts if anyone else could have mimicked her so well. Yet Greenberg, according to Gibson, could not play Gaelic music, pointing to a romanticization of the Gaelic-style fiddler.

A series of editorials written back and forth between Alexander MacDonald, of Mabou, and Seamus Taylor, of the United States, in the *Celtic Heritage* magazine in the 1990s also exhibit this romanticization.<sup>35</sup> Taylor first denounced what current musicians were doing to traditional music. In his eyes this music is not theirs to alter, but rather is the 'tribal music of our ancestry, preserved and revered for many centuries.'<sup>36</sup> He continued by stating that within the Gaelic tradition 'reliance on printed words or music is a sign of a weak mind'.<sup>37</sup> MacDonald responded that the music has always been evolving, and needs to evolve or else it might die out.<sup>38</sup> Taylor replied, in quite romantic terms, that if the music needs to change or die he



would prefer it die out.<sup>39</sup> This notion ignores the newness that must always enter the tradition. Should Taylor have his way, contemporary traditional musicians would exist as museum curators playing the same tunes over and over in the same style, rather than as involved individuals in a greater community.

However, there is a preoccupation concerning the role of Gaelic within the fiddle tradition. Hard-line Gaelic language supporters fear the loss of language, and point to the possibility that if the language disappears then the idiosyncrasies within the language of the fiddle will also disappear. John Shaw, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, pushes this claim even further, saying that the late twentieth century, 'barring a series of miraculous linguistic, cultural, and political reversals, will see the end of most, if not all orally transmitted Celtic traditions'.<sup>40</sup> Yet both Doherty and Graham note that since much fiddle music is from an aural tradition, stylistic idiosyncrasies pass down through the fiddle music, as well as the language.<sup>41</sup> Since recordings of these older players exist, their influence upon further generations will not die away as long as the youth listen to them.

As for what the Gaelicness within the fiddle sounds like, this is another aspect that has been somewhat romanticized. Doherty and MacDonald both point out the elusiveness of such definitions.<sup>42</sup> Yet this term is often thrown out as a normative distinction, praising players as having the Gaelic in their fiddle. Most often this designation is placed upon those players who emulate the Mabou Coal Mines style of fiddling. Yet fiddlers such as Buddy MacMaster and Angus Chisholm, from places like Judique and Margaree where Gaelic was also spoken, also receive praise as having 'Gaelic in their fiddle'.<sup>43</sup> These fiddlers, however, play in a much smoother, and very different, style from that of Mabou Coal Mines. The logical conclusion is that, if there is Gaelic within the fiddles, then there are different strands of Gaelic to be heard, expanding beyond the 'dirty' style of Mabou and including the smoother styles of both MacMaster and Chisholm. If this were not true, then it would seem that the use of 'Gaelic' is really an endorsement of one person's preference towards that particular style.

These opinions that emanate romanticism, when placed on a public stage, come across as expert fact rather than opinion. Magazines such as *Celtic Heritage*, and the former *Cape Breton Magazine*, as well as newspapers such as the *Inverness Oran* have a great deal of credibility. When an article or editorial is printed within these periodicals, the author gains authority, and many readers see the author's opinions as objective facts, rather than subjective opinions. A columnist who might not be an actively participating musician within the tradition still might publicly criticize the tunes of Scott Skinner for 'not being Gaelic enough'. Meanwhile, a musician who is active within the tradition might consider the Skinner tunes to be an important part of his or her repertoire. Since the columnist's subjective opinions appear as facts, and they are considered to be 'expert', the fiddler might be perceived by some as playing tunes not authentic within the culture. This presumption is made despite the fact that it is the musician, rather than the writer, who actively participates and shapes the tradition.

## Implications

Authenticity is decided by those who actively engage within the tradition, rather than by the few individuals who try to objectively define it. Within Cape Breton, the musicians, the dancers, and the audiences who attend the concerts, the dances, and the house parties on a regular basis, determine the nature of authenticity. It is the participation between the audience and the musicians that reflect the dialogue of authenticity within the tradition. Therefore, authenticity can only be determined by those actively involved within the community. Stylistic observations simply reflect a temporality of that community, rather than a constant standard. Cape Breton fiddlers are musicians first and foremost. They should not be expected to act as museum curators, guarding a mythical past. Participation, rather than a perceived style, is the only constant that can be standardized. It is this participation that ensures whether or not the tradition survives. If there is no active participation within a community, the tradition will not evolve to represent that community.

A tradition that fails to evolve to reflect its community will die as a tradition. Cape Breton shows that the music has kept itself alive by adapting to new settings, new instruments, and new players. When the community faced a large demographic change in a relatively short time, it adapted drastically to encourage more youth participation. It no longer relied on the traditional familial transmission method, but shifted to formal transmission. This change was a direct acknowledgement of the new situation. This paper has traced the evolution of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition over the last two centuries. Throughout this time the tradition has evolved extensively, ensuring its survival. This evolution has progressed despite the attempt by some to romanticize and delineate the tradition. The fact of survival through adaptation makes it apparent that individuals do not decide what belongs to the tradition, but the actions of an entire society are what construct authenticity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 175–274.

<sup>2</sup> Allister MacGillivray, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (Marion Bridge, Cape Breton Island: College of Cape Breton Press, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> MacGillivray, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Doherty, 'Paradox on the Periphery: Evolution of the Cape Breton Fiddle Tradition c.1928–1995' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Limerick, Ireland, 1996), p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn Graham, 'Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Making and Maintenance of a Tradition', unpublished master's thesis, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2004, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Graham, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Doherty, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup> MacGillivray, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Graham, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Doherty, p.185.

<sup>11</sup> Doherty, p. 258.

<sup>12</sup> MacGillivray, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> MacGillivray, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Doherty, p. 324.

<sup>15</sup> Doherty, p. 250.

<sup>16</sup> MacGillivray, pp. 86, 106, 126, 129, 153.

<sup>17</sup> Many believe that the 'dirt' in the music replicates the guttural sounds of the language. Burt Feintuch describes the music as 'full of "flavour" or "dirt" – the ornamentation that adds further complexity to the sound. "Cuts" or "cuttings" – three or four rapid notes played in the space of one beat – are very typical of the music. Bowing is vigorous, and the model is one note per bow stroke, down-bows accentuating the strong beats.' In *Cape Breton Fiddle and Piano Music: The Beaton Family of Mabou* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2004), liner notes p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Doherty, p. 301.

<sup>19</sup> Doherty, p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> Fiddlers such as Dwayne Cote, Kimberley Fraser, Dougie MacDonald, Troy MacGillivray, Ashley MacIsaac, Carl MacKenzie, Natalie MacMaster, and Kyle MacNeil (amongst others) are known for routinely playing tunes in the keys of C, F, Bb, B, Eb, as well as higher positions.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Thompson, 'The Fall and Rise of the Cape Breton Fiddler: 1955–1982' (unpublished master's thesis, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2003), p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> Doherty, p. 119.

<sup>23</sup> MacGillivray, p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> MacGillivray, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Ron MacInnis, *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler* (Halifax: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1971)

<sup>26</sup> See Thompson, pp. 131–45, where she details how Father Eugene Morris, Father John Angus Ranking, Hugh John Gillis, and Frank MacInnis conceived of the idea for the Glendale Festival and the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, p. 150. The first Glendale Festival took place 8 July 1973, and was held annually thereafter.

<sup>28</sup> Doherty, p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, p. 177.

<sup>30</sup> Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg, *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton: The DunGreen Collection* (Toronto: Dungreen Music, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> David Greenberg, *Tunes Until Dawn* (Toronto: Marquis Classics, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> John Gibson, 'Tunes until dawn recalls older fiddle styles', *Am Braighe* (Mabou, Nova Scotia, Spring 2000), p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Seamus Taylor, 'Standing up for Gaelic Culture', *Celtic Heritage*, June/July 1997, p. 5; Seamus Taylor, 'In which we learn more of Gaelic music', *Celtic Heritage*, December/January 1998, pp. 5–6, 26–28; Alexander MacDonald, 'Gaelic Music: What Is It?', *Celtic Heritage*, February/March, 1998, pp. 32–33; Alexander MacDonald, 'The Gaelic in the Fiddle: Debunking the Myths', *Celtic Heritage*, August/September 1997, pp. 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, 'Standing up for Gaelic Culture', p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, 'In which we learn more of Gaelic music', pp. 26–28.

<sup>38</sup> MacDonald, 'Gaelic Music: What Is It?', pp. 32–33.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, 'In which we learn more of Gaelic music', p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> John Shaw, 'Observations on the Cape Breton *Gàidhealtachd* and its Relevance to Present Day Celtic Studies', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies, 1986*, ed. Gordon W. MacLennan (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1988), pp. 75–87.

<sup>41</sup> Doherty, p. 304; Graham, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Doherty, p.305; MacDonald, 'The Gaelic in the Fiddle', pp. 5–6.

<sup>43</sup> Ashley MacIsaac, *Fiddling with Disaster (Clearing the Past)* (Toronto: Warwick Publishing, 2003), p. 57.

## 'I don't want to sound like just one person': individuality in competitive fiddling

SHERRY JOHNSON

Fiddle contests may be discouraged in some parts of Canada, but they are a vital, dynamic context for Canadian old-time fiddling in Ontario. Competitors, their families, and fans travel a well-developed 'circuit' throughout the province each weekend from mid-May to mid-September. While some critics refer dismissively to contest fiddlers who 'all sound the same', most Ontario contest fiddlers agree that in order to be considered seriously and to be successful in contests, one has to make the tunes one's own. As Dawson Girdwood, a fiddler in his mid-70s and occasional judge, told me:

I think one thing that any musician has to learn is that you can't copy anyone; you will spend the rest of your life being a poor copy. Rather, it's quite something to take someone's music and learn his way of playing that, and then apply your own: 'I know the tricks, now this is how *I* play this piece. I have to learn so much of his technique and then I have to play what *I* feel is what I want to do.' The few musicians, no matter what stage they're at, that excel and have something to say, are the people that are taking it to that point and then they're playing with some feeling or with some creation within themselves.<sup>1</sup>

While competitors develop individual styles to make themselves stand out in the minds of both judges and audiences, in order to win the top prize or develop a supportive fan base, I believe that their prime motivation is simply to play in a way that pleases their own personal aesthetic. Shane Cook, three-time winner of the Canadian Open Fiddle Championship held annually in Shelburne, Ontario, says: 'It's a big goal of mine to have an individual sound [...] I don't want to sound like just one person.'<sup>2</sup> Judges, too, such as Robert Wood, at the Shelburne contests in the 1970s and 1980s, like to see each fiddler's personality come through in his or her playing: 'Personality is important to old-time fiddling [...] Once we get past the technical aspects of the fiddle playing, then the fiddle player's personality, translated into the music, is what makes the difference.'<sup>3</sup>

Most of the fiddlers I spoke with emphasized the importance of individuality and creativity to fiddling;<sup>4</sup> however, there are mixed feelings about whether

individuality is becoming more or less important. Shane Cook mentioned above that he is disappointed in the 'clones' he hears at fiddle contests – fiddlers who sound exactly like their teachers. At the same time he says, 'I think recently there is more of an effort from each of these players to find their own style [...] I don't think there's any doubt that there's more of an emphasis placed on individuality, well, an individual style.'<sup>5</sup> Chad Wolfe agrees: 'When [fiddlers] reach the Open, or even the 18 and under [classes], you start to see their personalities coming out in their performances. So you get to see what turns them on.'<sup>6</sup> Dan Schryer believes that fiddlers ten or more years ago had more individual styles than fiddlers today, although he says that individuality should be easier to develop now than in previous generations because of better access to multiple influences:

Let's say one generation before me, they have one idol. They love that person's playing and so they copy that one person, and that was the only person they had available that they can idolize. When I was growing up I had, let's say, five that I could idolize. I take those five players and they all have different styles to a certain degree, so just from copying their music I learned those five styles. Those five styles are put in the blender and mixed all up and I have my own style.<sup>7</sup>

Don Reed believes that fiddlers today have styles equally as individualistic as twenty to thirty years ago when he was competing: 'I don't think [individuality] was a goal, necessarily. I think we all just sounded different naturally. Like even now, you could probably blindfold yourself and tell who the different players are, just by listening to them. And I think the same thing applied back then.'<sup>8</sup> He suggests that some people's perceptions that fiddlers are less individualistic now than in the past may be due to their degree of involvement in the circuit.

Despite the fact that everyone with whom I spoke considers individuality to be important to contest fiddling, both successful Open class fiddlers Shane Cook and Mathew Johnson agree with critics of contests that contests do inhibit individuality. As Shane told me:

This is one of my big hang-ups about contests, and I don't think I realized it until I got away from the contests and realized what else is out there in the world. There's just so many, I guess you could call it, clones [...] The students sound so much like the teacher, which I guess can be a really good thing, especially when there's an effort to preserve the style, but at least for me, that's not the point.<sup>9</sup>

And Mathew said:

I would say that doing well at contests removes individuality. As far as the contest itself, you can do whatever you want [...] As far as doing *well*, because quite often there are the same few judges who are everywhere, they prefer a

certain style of playing, so if you don't get that style of playing, then you're not going to do as well.<sup>10</sup>

I asked Mathew if and where he found any leeway in conforming to the playing style(s) necessary to win fiddle contests and being himself as a fiddler at the same time, and he replied:

If you mean conform so that you get first, there's very little leeway. If you mean conform so you're in the top five or ten in the Open class, then there's a fair amount of leeway, [since you can distinguish] each person's individual playing. So, you can stick to your own style as much as you want, and still do well, but if somebody's doing the style that the judge happens to like, and you're not, you're doing your own style, then you're not going to win.<sup>11</sup>

Mathew explains that his individuality as a fiddler is more apparent when he is doing shows or jamming, as opposed to playing in contests: 'I do a lot of things [in shows] that I would never do in a contest, like extra cuts here or there, or extra runs all over the place, or double stops, but I wouldn't do those things in a contest.'<sup>12</sup> Many fiddlers echoed Mathew's comments regarding judges. Linda Maldonado says, 'I think there should be [room for personal innovation] but, once again, depending on who's judging, personal flare sometimes rides and other times it doesn't',<sup>13</sup> and Shane Cook tells me that who is judging is 'a big factor on how much of my own style is going to come out. You really do have to play to the judges, at least to be successful, I think.'<sup>14</sup> When I ask him if he plays to the judges, he responds, 'Every contest'.<sup>15</sup> And yet contest fiddlers do not all sound the same, and particularly the most successful Ontario contest fiddlers have developed easily recognizable, unique styles, at least to those of us who hear them regularly, and they prepare the tunes they play onstage to reflect something of their own personalities.

In the remainder of this paper, I examine how fiddlers in Ontario contests express their individuality in competitive performances. My discussion is based on an analysis of 66 performances of the top three fiddlers in the Open class at the Canadian Open Fiddle Championships, spread evenly over the period from 1955 to 2003, as well as interviews with participants in the Ontario contest circuit. I focus, in particular, on two performances of the 'Red-Lion Hornpipe'. The first example was played in 2002 at the Canadian Open Fiddle Championships by Shane Cook (Appendix 1); the second example was played in 2003 at the Canadian Grand Masters Contest, in Nepean, Ontario, by Scott Woods, also a former Canadian champion (Appendix 2).

### **Tags**

The most obvious difference between the two performances of 'Red Lion Hornpipe' occurs in the ending: Shane adds a complex and technically difficult four-bar tag (Appendix 1, bars 49–52, and Figure 1), while Scott incorporates an ending into the

last four bars of the A section (Appendix 2, bars 37–40). Both tags, two-bar to four-bar endings that are ‘tagged’ onto the end of the tune, and built-in endings, are prime opportunities for fiddlers to display their personal creativity. Many tags are formulaic, consisting of ascending and descending step-wise and gapped scales, scalar patterns, and arpeggiated patterns based on I, IV, and V chords. Commonly played within the circuit, these tags are easy to transpose and to add to the end of any tune.

Some tags, however, stand out from the others for a variety of reasons: harmonies, combinations of melodic ideas, and rhythms. Fiddlers use these tags to make a final impression on the audience and the judges, just before they leave the stage. As I was talking with Shane Cook about one of his distinctive tags that begins on a diminished chord, he said to me, ‘It stood out, you heard it, and that’s the point’.<sup>16</sup> When I heard Shane’s 2002 reel tag (Figure 1), my first reaction was, ‘Wow, that’s neat’. It was only after I had transcribed it that I realized there is really nothing new in the tag. All the elements had been used before by other fiddlers at Shelburne and other contests: the repeated triplet rhythms by Michelle Lubinecki in 1991 (Figure 2) among many others; the descending series of leaps of a sixth (bar 3) by Louis Schryer in 1995 (Figure 3, bar 3); and displacing the resolution on the tonic chord to the second beat of the last bar by Ed Gyurki in 1958 (Figure 4), again among many others. What makes Shane’s tag distinct, then, is the way those elements are put together into one package. His 1998 tag (Figure 5) and Louis Schryer’s 1995 tag (Figure 3) are also appealing, just slightly different enough from commonly played tags to catch the listener’s attention.



Figure 1 Shane Cook, ‘Fern’s Reel’, 2002



Figure 2 Michelle Lubinecki, ‘Trip to Windsor’, 1991 – repeated triplet rhythms



Figure 3 Louis Schryer, ‘Fern’s Reel’, 1995



Figure 4 Ed Gyurki, ‘Snowflake Breakdown’, 1958

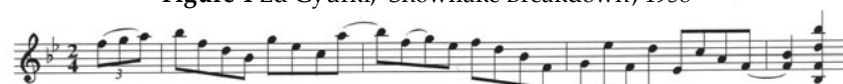


Figure 5 Shane Cook, ‘College Hornpipe’, 1998



Another interesting tag is one used by Ned Landry in 1962 (Figure 6), in which he finishes on the sixth degree of the scale. Just two years later Johnny Mooring used a tag (Figure 7) that rests momentarily on the sixth degree of the scale, but then resolves in the last bar from V to I. Don Messer was famous for the two-bar tag he added to nearly every reel he played, which ended on a vi chord; Canadian fiddlers today call it the 'Don Messer' ending (Figure 8). Since all three of these fiddlers are from the Maritimes, one might think that this is a regional influence; however, by the mid-60s, Messer was receiving enough national radio and television exposure that his influence was reaching from coast to coast. Fiddlers across Canada would have been exposed to the Messer ending, and yet according to my sample, few incorporated the distinctive vi (minor) chord into their own endings. To me, the use of the vi chord automatically implies Don Messer; it is not too surprising then that fiddlers trying to create their own identity in the contests would choose not to use this distinctive ending that is so connected to such a well-known fiddle personality.



Figure 6 Ned Landry, 'St. Anne's Reel', 1962



Figure 7 Johnny Mooring, 'Pembroke Reel', 1964



Figure 8 Typical Don Messer tag

While Scott's built-in ending (Appendix 2, bars 37–40), incorporating scalar movement and arpeggiated patterns, is not particularly attention-grabbing, it adds a nice finish to the tune, and has become a hallmark of Scott's personal style. He is well known on the contest circuit for varying the last four bars of the tune to create an ending.

### **Intros**

Introductions to tunes played in contests are strictly functional; they set the tempo for the accompanist.<sup>17</sup> While two- and four-bar intros are more common on recordings, fiddlers play the same tunes in contests with only a beat, or at most a bar, pickup. My only examples of longer reel intros are played by Sleepy Marlin in 1954 and Ed Gyurki in 1958. Sleepy, whose personality and Kentucky fiddle style made him a very popular performer the first few years of the Shelburne contest, plays the the old-time reel intro now commonly called 'four potatoes', for both his reels (Figure 9).



**Figure 9** Intro played by Sleepy Marlin, 1954

Ed Gyurki is the only Canadian fiddler also to play this intro in his second year in the contest. To me, this intro sounds stereotypically ‘old-time’, and, in fact, ‘American old-time’, because of this particular bowing pattern and open-string drone. When non-fiddlers are imitating fiddlers in jest, this is often the rhythmic pattern that they sing or hum. Before speaking with Ed, I wondered if, coming from a classical background, he played this intro because he thought it was expected at an ‘old-time’ fiddle contest, and/or if he used it strategically to attempt to counterbalance his more classical sound. Significantly, he did not use this intro again in his 21 years of playing in the contest. When I asked Ed about the intro he seemed a little embarrassed by it. He said that in his first few years at the contest he was very impressed with the professionalism of Al Cherny’s playing, particularly how he played clean beginnings and endings, without the ‘diddling around’ that many fiddlers did in front of the microphone before they got started. Ed said that the ‘four potatoes’ intro would have been one of those gestures that he was trying to move away from in emulating Al Cherny’s ‘professional’ beginnings and endings.<sup>18</sup>

There is slightly more room for creativity in the intros to the waltzes because the fiddler can play with the length of usually up to three quarter notes, divided into eighths, triplets, and dotted rhythms. The intro to ‘Shannon Waltz’<sup>19</sup> has become part of the tune; in fact, I often think of it as the ‘Shannon Waltz intro’ (Figure 10); however, it was also used for other waltzes in the 1960s and early 1970s. Alfie Myre plays a slight variation of the intro by adding two eighth notes before the triplet, making it into a four-beat intro (Figure 11). Ed Gyurki plays the only other example of a four-beat intro for ‘White Rose Waltz’ in 1966 (Figure 12).



**Figure 10** Intro to ‘Shannon Waltz’, played by Al Cherny (1958)



**Figure 11** Intro to ‘Shannon Waltz’, played by Alfie Myre (1974)



**Figure 12** Intro to ‘White Rose Waltz’, played by Ed Gyurki (1966)

It is surprising to me that there is not more use by competitive fiddlers of the obvious opportunity for personal creativity that intros could provide. Mathew Johnson suggests that in contests fiddlers want to establish the tune and the beat as quickly as possible. A complex intro may sound like nothing more than a bunch of notes until listeners know what tune is being played. Also, the three or four-minute time limits at contests may prevent fiddlers from adding anything extra to their performances.<sup>20</sup> Mathew did not dismiss the idea of creative intros outright, however; he concluded by joking that maybe he should start the fad next summer. Perhaps once tags have been pushed as far as they can go, fiddlers will turn to innovative intros to further personalize their arrangements of tunes for competition.

### **Ornamentation**

Ornamentation is another obvious way that Shane and Scott create individual renditions of the tune; however, compared to many other fiddle traditions, these fiddlers use very little ornamentation. According to the literature,<sup>21</sup> lack of complex ornamentation is a hallmark of Canadian old-time style<sup>22</sup> In fact, removing the ornaments from a tune from another tradition has been called 'Canadianizing'<sup>23</sup> the tune, and prominent Canadian fiddlers agree with the scholars. 'There are no ornamentations added in the Canadian style,<sup>24</sup> where the Irish and the Scottish do have more',<sup>25</sup> and 'I think we basically played the tunes pretty straight, as I remember. If anything, you'd put in little trills [double grace notes], nothing too out of the ordinary.'<sup>26</sup> An analysis of the 198 tunes in my sample demonstrates that, at least in competitive fiddling, there are few performances that use no ornamentation at all; rather, the amount and type of ornamentation varies according to the individual player, the tune itself, and the time period in which it is played. Some tunes, for example, 'Red Lion Hornpipe', are already very full, leaving little room for fiddlers to do much more than add a few grace or passing notes.

Shane adds a number of passing notes that become triplets, both bowed, for example in bars 8, 32 and 40, and slurred, in bars 12, 16, 19, 20, 24, 27, 28, and 44. The frequent use of triplets, which breaks up the steady, almost relentless 16<sup>th</sup> note patterns of the tune, is certainly unique in performances I have heard of this tune. Shane credits his use of triplets to the influence of Irish fiddling, but adds that he is careful not to add too many triplets, and never in conjunction with other Irish ornaments, such as the roll, so that the tune does not become more Irish-sounding than Canadian old-time. Scott also uses the slurred triplet from the dominant up to the tonic (bars 20 and 28), which is a typical ornament in Canadian old-time fiddling; he further adds just a couple of auxiliary notes in bars 2 and 37.

Although there is a tendency within my larger sample toward the increasing use of ornamentation over time, there are enough exceptions that I would hesitate to call it a trend. Ironically, Graham Townsend, quoted earlier as saying there were no ornaments in 'Canadian' fiddling, and who was well known within the circuit for his opinion that fiddling in contests was moving too far away from the old-time style, has one of the most ornamented styles of any of the fiddlers in my examples.

His version of his own 'Rocking Chair Jig' in 1964 (Appendix 3) uses single grace notes, two kinds of double grace notes, passing note triplets and auxiliary note triplets; nearly every bar has some sort of ornamentation. Personally, I feel that the ornaments overpower and take away from the melody; yet, Graham is an icon in Canadian old-time fiddling and is certainly a model for many other fiddlers. Fiddler, Dan Schryer, comments:

I remember Graham Townsend would take this one piece and add a run down; he'd just run it down to fancy it up. So you know, as a kid, you'd hear that and think, 'Wow that's neat', and you'd learn it, so the traditional pieces today have evolved to the point where they all have fancy licks and everything.<sup>27</sup>

There are several examples in my sample of a fiddler ornamenting two tunes of the set, but not the third, or vice versa. This inconsistency leads me to believe that individual decisions about ornamentation have as much to do with the tune itself as personal aesthetic preference for certain kinds of ornamentation. As I described previously, some tunes, such as 'Red Lion Hornpipe', are already very full, leaving little room for fiddlers to do much more than add a few grace notes. While one might think that tempo would have an effect on the amount of ornamentation used, this does not seem to be the case.

While ornamentation is an individual decision, depending on both the tune itself and the aesthetic preference of the fiddler, there are certain conventions or trends that do influence the type of ornamentation and where it is used. One influential trend is the increasing use of Irish ornamentation, specifically rolls and bowed triplets. Pierre Schryer is generally credited within the circuit with bringing Irish influences (ornamentation, bowing, repertoire) into Ontario fiddle contests in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Other young fiddlers, for example, Mark Sullivan, continued the trend to the present day. Of course, Pierre was not the first to be influenced by Irish fiddling. Irish fiddling is the primary influence on fiddling in the Ottawa Valley,<sup>28</sup> although it has been adapted enough in this region for it not to be called Irish-Canadian fiddling. As early as 1955, Jean Carignan played his unique Irish-influenced French-Canadian fiddling at Shelburne.<sup>29</sup> That he was placed third out of the top three is believed by some to be a direct discrimination against French-Canadian fiddling in Ontario contests;<sup>30</sup> however, the fact that he made it into the top three, from an initial field of 76 fiddlers, suggests that his style was acceptable enough to get him into the finals in the first place.

Even though Cape Breton fiddling has become quite popular since the early 1990s, there are no examples in my sample of the quintessential Cape Breton rhythmic ornament called a 'cut' (Figure 13). In fact, although 'Mason's Apron' is almost always played with the cut in the first bar of the A part, even in Canadian old-time circles, neither Wilf Mitchell nor Rudy Meeks play the cut in their Shelburne performances in 1954 and 1977. When asked to describe old-time fiddling, Tammy Yakabuskie cautions that an occasional cut may be acceptable, but not too many,

as they are considered too Scottish.<sup>31</sup> Mark Sullivan says that he would never use a cut in contest fiddling.<sup>32</sup> Mathew Johnson believes there has been little transfer of elements of Cape Breton fiddling into contest fiddling because the aesthetic of the two styles is so different. He describes Cape Breton fiddling as having more energy, and less finesse.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the most important element of Ontario contest style, arguably, is cleanliness. While some contest players do play Cape Breton tunes, including the 'cut' ornament, in campgrounds and shows and for step dancers, they are not common as contest repertoire.



**Figure 13** The Cut

Ornamentation can become the hallmark of an individual's personal style. A prime example is Scott Woods, who inserts an ascending scalar passage in many of his tunes (Figures 14–16), leading into the repeat of a section, or a change to a new section.



**Figure 14** 'Red-Haired Boy' (1995), bars 15–17



**Figure 15** 'Blackthorn Stick' (1995), bars 8–9



**Figure 16** 'Lori's Waltz' (2002), bars 15–17

Although this ornamental device is quite effective, adding some excitement going into the new section, no one else in the circuit has adopted it. There is a tacit understanding that it is Scott's special ornament and no one wants to be seen 'stealing' it.

While ornamentation can be used to individualize a tune or a style, like the melodic variation discussed below, it can also become part of the tune. A prime example occurs in the B part of 'Buttermilk Mary', where it has become conventional to add double grace notes to bars five and six of the repeated B part (bars 29 and 30 of the tune; see Figure 17).



**Figure 17** 'Buttermilk Mary', bars 29–30

Some tune collections even print the grace notes in the notation for 'Buttermilk Mary', although most ornamentation is left out of notated versions.

Reification of ornamentation also occurs on a more personal level in the versions played by particular fiddlers on stage. Most of my examples show the same ornamentation used in the same places on each repetition of the tunes, and often even on the same tune played by the same fiddler several years apart. Although ornamentation on stage is seldom varied, in less formal contexts, for example in campgrounds or in shows, fiddlers are more likely to change the ornamentation on each repetition of the tune. In group playing situations (jam sessions), ornamentation is often inspired by what one hears from other fiddlers, contributing to and feeding off of each others' creativity.

### **Bowing**

Bowing also contributes to differences in overall feel between these two performances. Shane's playing is somewhat smoother, created in part by the frequency with which he bows over the bar-line (for example bar 16 into bar 17) and the beat (bars 2, 4, and 8). Shane also uses many more 3-note slurs than does Scott. The smoothness created by this particular use of slurring, contrasting with the bowed triplets Shane uses as a pickup to the A sections, certainly catches my attention. Scott's bowing is more typical of an older Canadian old-time style: a combination of straight bowing and two- and three-note slurs, seldom over the bar-line. The result, to my ear, is a little less smoothness, and a little more drive. That Scott considers himself to be, first and foremost, a dance musician, despite the fact that he has grown up on the competition circuit and been quite successful in contests, then, is not surprising.

### **Melodic variations**

Melodic variation is a further opportunity for fiddlers to express themselves. Shane Cook cautions, though, that too much variation is not acceptable on stage in Ontario contests:

Depending on who the judge is or who the judges are, you could maybe put in some variations within the tune. You want to stay close to the melody, maybe it's just a note or two that are changed. That might be your opportunity to change something. But really beyond that I don't think there is much of an opportunity. You have to stay fairly close to the style.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, the literature on Canadian old-time fiddling states that there is minimal or no use of melodic variation,<sup>35</sup> and certainly this is true in comparison to the highly developed melodic variations typical of American contest or Texas-style fiddling. American fiddle scholar, Chris Goertzen, writes that melodic variation on early American fiddle recordings was minor, but pervasive, because the music was used primarily for dancing: too much variation was a distraction for the dancers.<sup>36</sup> As the American contest/Texas style developed, and became a style that was

listened to, rather than danced to, variation took on an increasingly important role. Since Canadian old-time fiddling, even in the competitive context, has not lost its connection with dancing, the role of variation remains minimal.

Indeed, there are only two instances of variations used in these performances. The first occurs in the last bar of each 8-bar section. Scott plays the typical broken chord pattern, while Shane begins the bar with the leap from the 7<sup>th</sup> degree of the scale to the tonic, and then fills in the chord. Shane further varies the fourth bar of the A section, playing the usual broken chord pattern on the second and fourth times through, following the triplets, but varying the pattern on the first and third times through, contrasting the descending thirds in the first beat of the bar with ascending thirds in the second beat of the bar. These are minor variations, to be sure; most listeners would not even hear the difference, since the notes outline the same chord.

Slight melodic and rhythmic variations are not just a recent phenomenon of contest fiddling; in fact, they are quite prevalent in my sample throughout the 1950s. For example, George Mitchell uses extensive variation in his 1955 'Westphalia Waltz' (Appendix 4), actually changing the melody in the last eight bars of the B section; usually the last eight bars of the B section just repeat the first eight bars. When I asked George about this variation, he said that everyone he knew played the tune that way at that time.<sup>37</sup> This is an example, then, of how some variations reify and actually become the melody, at least in some circles. Don Reed explains how a variation can catch on:

Some of the little things you might do, years later it's like a common thing that everybody's doing. [Don plays a variation on 'Big John MacNeil'.] I think Raymond was, I don't know if he's the first guy that did that, but I think I remember him doing stuff like that [...] And then somebody'll change something else.<sup>38</sup>

According to my sample, there is then a period of time during which there is less melodic variation: the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. It becomes more common again in the late 1980s. Pierre Schryer's 'Tripping up the Stairs' is a good example. In his 1988 version (Appendix 5), he plays the opening motif (bar 1) six different ways, primarily playing with the rhythm (six eighth notes or various substitutions of quarter-eighth combinations), and also varying the pitch slightly on the last repeat (bar 45). A more substantial variation occurs on the last two bars of the B section, a descending scale and then ascending arpeggio passage leading back into the return of the A section. Pierre uses similar relatively substantial variations in his 1987 version of the same tune (compare bars 27 and 28 in Figures 18 and 19 and bar 43 in Figures 20 and 21), that are now relatively common amongst fiddlers on the contest circuit.



Figure 18 Pierre Schryer, 'Tripping up the Stairs' (1988), bars 25–28



Figure 19 Pierre Schryer, 'Tripping up the Stairs' (1987), bars 25–28



Figure 20 Pierre Schryer, 'Tripping up the Stairs' (1988), bars 41–44



Figure 21 Pierre Schryer, 'Tripping up the Stairs' (1987), bars 41–44

Melodic variation is an opportunity for fiddlers to express themselves: 'I think a lot of the young kids, they seem to be trying different things in the tunes, and it's kind of fun. Because that can give you a little bit of individuality.'<sup>39</sup> As I describe at the beginning of the discussion of melodic variation, however, too much variation is not acceptable on stage in Ontario contests. And for some fiddlers, variation is disrespectful to the composer of the tune, and simply unacceptable:

But for someone like myself, [Graham Townsend] went out of favour with me because when I heard him playing certain tunes it wasn't the same, and there were a lot of things in there that didn't make it the same. Whereas hearing somebody like Ti-jean [Carignan], who never played anything in his life to change it, he always had that respect for the composer.<sup>40</sup>

So, while melodic variation is one way that contest fiddlers can display their creativity and make the tune their own, it may or may not be acceptable in a contest.

## Conclusion

While individual creativity is most apparent in more informal playing contexts, like jam sessions, I have examined how fiddlers can also express their individuality more subtly on the contest stage through tags, intros, ornamentation, bowing, and melodic variations. As I demonstrate, however, these instances of individuality operate within some rather strong boundaries of acceptable old-time repertoire and style: one can write unusual and ear-catching tags, but within certain harmonic and rhythmic limits; one can play certain ethnically-associated ornaments, but not too many, and only for certain judges; one can play some variation on the melody, but not too much. Ontario contest fiddlers walk a careful line between playing the tunes the way they have been played in the past, which is comfortable and familiar to their audience, and infusing them with their own personalities. Too far to one side, they



risk being penalized by the judges and dismissed by the audience; too far to the other, they do not make an impression on either.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dawson Girdwood, Perth, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 25 July 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Shane Cook, London, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 31 January 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Fiddles of Shelburne* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> This attitude is in direct contrast to that of many fiddlers in Norway: 'Although some of the very best fiddlers make a point of continuing to put their own creativity on the line when they perform, more and more fiddlers believe their function is to preserve faithfully their share of a precious heritage.' See Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway: Revival and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Chad Wolfe, North Bay, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 16 February 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Schryer, Bobcaygeon, Ontario, Canada, personal interview by Marcia Ostashevski, 27 July 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Don Reed, Naughton, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 9 November 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>10</sup> Mathew Johnson, Stratford, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 10 May 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson interview (2003).

<sup>12</sup> Johnson interview (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Linda Maldonado, Brampton, Ontario, Canada, 14 April 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>15</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>16</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>17</sup> Fiddlers, even in contests, do not cue their accompanists as classical musicians do. They may look over to make sure the accompanist is ready, comfortably seated, with headphones on, but then they just start and expect the accompanist to be with them. Most of the more accomplished fiddlers will have practised ahead of time with their chosen accompanist; even after he practises with his accompanist. Open class fiddler, Mathew Johnson, plays the first couple bars of each of his three tunes quietly for his accompanist, just before he steps up to the microphone, to remind her what pickups he is using and the approximate tempo.

<sup>18</sup> Ed Gyurki, Woodstock, Ontario, personal interview, Canada, 13 January 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Al Cherny is credited with introducing a 'new' arrangement of 'Shannon Waltz', transposing it from F to G for the contest circuit (Ron Reed, personal communication, 14 February 2004); perhaps this intro was part of the new arrangement.

<sup>20</sup> Mathew Johnson, personal communication, 24 February 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Anne Lederman, Special Issue on Fiddling in Canada, *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin/Bulletin de Musique Folklorique Canadienne* 19/3, pp. 18–19; Earl V. Spielman, 'Traditional North American Fiddling: A Methodology for Historical and Comparative Analytic Style Study of Instrumental Musical Traditions' (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1975), pp. 441–42; Johanne Trew, 'Music, Place, and Community: Culture and Irish Heritage in the Ottawa Valley' (University of Limerick, PhD dissertation, 2000), pp. 188–89, 198.

<sup>22</sup> Graf writes that lack of ornamentation is a characteristic of old-time style in general (presumably meaning American old-time). See Sharon Poulson Graf, 'Traditionalization at the National Oldtime Fiddlers' Contest: Politics, Power, and Authenticity' (Michigan State University, PhD dissertation, 1999), p. 170.

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<sup>23</sup> This terminology marginalizes some regional styles in Canada, such as Cape Breton and some French-Canadian styles that are heavily ornamented.

<sup>24</sup> Graham is referring to the Canadian *old-time* style; to Graham it was just 'the Canadian style', another example of how regional styles can be marginalized in the discourse of Canadian fiddling.

<sup>25</sup> Graham Townsend, interview with Martin Chapman, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio One, Grassroots, June 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Reed interview (2003).

<sup>27</sup> Schryer interview (2002).

<sup>28</sup> The Ottawa Valley is the area bordering the Ottawa River, which separates the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Carignan was principally influenced by the recordings of Sligo-style fiddler, Michael Coleman. See Richard Green and Christian Rioux, Jean Carignan, *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/jean-carignan/> (accessed 11 February 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Dawson Girdwood, Perth, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Tammy Yakabuskie, London, Ontario, Canada, personal interview, 31 January 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Sullivan, personal communication, 4 February 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Mathew Johnson, personal communication, 21 February 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Cook interview (2003).

<sup>35</sup> Lederman (1985), p. 19; George A. Proctor, 'Old-time Fiddling in Ontario', *National Museum of Canada Bulletin*, 190 (1963), 188; Spielman (1975), p. 442.

<sup>36</sup> Chris Goertzen, 'The Transformation of American Contest Fiddling', *The Journal of Musicology*, 6, no. 1 (1988), 111.

<sup>37</sup> George Mitchell, personal communication, 28 October 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Reed interview (2003).

<sup>39</sup> Reed interview (2003).

<sup>40</sup> Girdwood interview (2003).

Appendix 1 'Red Lion Hornpipe'

Arr. Shane Cook

♩ = 116

The musical score for 'Red Lion Hornpipe' is written in 3/4 time with a tempo of 116 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score consists of 11 staves of music. The first nine staves are in treble clef, and the final two staves are in bass clef. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Several measures contain triplets, indicated by a '3' below the notes. Ornaments, marked with a 'V' above the notes, are used in several measures, particularly in the later staves. The piece concludes with a final chord in the bass clef.

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Appendix 2 'Red Lion Hornpipe'

Arr. Scott Woods

$\text{♩} = 116$

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in 2/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 116. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several slurs and accents throughout the piece. The final measure of the piece is a double bar line with repeat dots.

**Appendix 3** Graham Townsend – ‘Rocking Chair Jig’ (1964)

*Graham Townsend*

♩. = 120

The musical score for 'Rocking Chair Jig' is written in 6/8 time with a tempo of 120. It begins with a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature change to 6/8. The score consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature change to 6/8. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. Chord symbols (C, F, G7, D7) are placed above the notes. There are two first and second endings marked with '1' and '2'. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

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Appendix 4 George Mitchell – 'Westphalia Waltz' (1955)

♩ = 152

C

C Dm G7

Dm G7

G7 C

1 C 2 C

C

C Dm G7

Dm G7

G7 C

C

C F

F G

G7 C

3

C

**Appendix 5** Pierre Schryer – ‘Tripping up the Stairs’ (1988)

♩. = 116

D G D A7 D A7 D G D A7 D Bm A Bm A7 D Bm A Bm A7 D D G D A7 D A7 D D G D A7 D D G D A7 D

## Bridging fiddle and classical communities in Calgary, Canada: the Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra

ELISA SERENO-JANZ

The Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra in Calgary, Alberta, Canada was created to provide a social environment where people of all ages and musical backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue music as a means of expressing creativity in their lives. I will discuss how making music in a social context is important to lasting enjoyment of musical pursuits, how an atmosphere of non-judgment and non-competitiveness leads to more satisfaction and the freedom to be expressive and, how breaking down the barriers of musical and social segregation creates a community of cooperation. I will also explain how fiddle music and baroque music are related, how the performance of these two styles support each other, and how they are the vehicles through which the primary aim of this orchestra is achieved.

### **Making music in a social context**

Many amateur and professional musicians seek out musical groups with which they can practise and perform. Socially, they have the chance to make friends with similar interests. Musically, they have something to practise for, and there are often opportunities to perform. Music is an art which can be enjoyed as a private pastime and a way of unwinding after a stressful day, yet it seems that the pleasure is magnified when there is an opportunity to make music with others.

In my twenty-five years of experience as a violin and fiddle teacher, I have found that those students who have opportunities to play with other musicians continue to enjoy music throughout their lives, whereas those who practise alone and have no social connection to music often turn to other activities. Whether in a small ensemble of two, a large group of fifty or any of the possibilities in between, I believe that the ensemble experience is essential to the continuation of the enjoyment of music. Steven Mithen, Professor of Early Prehistory and Head of the School of Human and Environmental Sciences at the University of Reading, England, notes: 'music-making is first and foremost a shared activity, not just in the modern Western world, but throughout human cultures and history.'<sup>1</sup>

It is natural to our humanity to desire to make music with others. John Holt (1923–1985), a well-known educator who wrote several insightful books about the



ways in which children learn, began cello at the age of forty. In his book *Never Too Late* he describes his journey as an adult student of music. After a couple of years of study on the flute, he stopped taking lessons and then stopped playing altogether. Among other reasons he cites, 'I did not play enough with other people ... if my teacher had done more to get me to play with other inexperienced players, I might have learned to enjoy it more.'<sup>2</sup> This supports the idea that being part of an ensemble, and making music with others is an important part of continuing the enjoyment of musical interests.

Music is recognized as a language for creative expression. The Hungarian educator and composer, Zoltan Kodály (1882–1967), believed that musical literacy was the right of every human being. As he wrote:

Without literacy today there can be no more a musical culture than there can be a literary one ... The promotion of music literacy is as pressing now as was the promotion of linguistic literacy between one and two hundred years ago. In 1690 ... [the] idea that everybody could learn to read and write his own language was at least as bold as the idea today that everybody should learn to read music. Nevertheless, this is something no less possible.<sup>2</sup>

Kodály also believed that it was important to use national folk music as a basis for music education. About using folk music he said,

Folk songs are never to be omitted ... if for no other reason, for keeping alive ... the sense of the relationship between language and music. For, after all, the most perfect relationship between language and music is to be found in the folk song.<sup>3</sup>

His vehicle for music education was the only instrument available to all: the voice. As a violin teacher, I have used many of Kodály's concepts of music education in developing my violin pedagogy, using fiddle music as a primary resource.

### **Creating a non-judgmental and non-competitive atmosphere**

For one to enjoy a lifelong pursuit of music, it must bring joy and a feeling of well-being. Many musicians, amateur and professional, are much happier when they free themselves of internal judgments, and reject competition. Benjamin Zander, a conductor and music educator, supports this view when he states, 'competition puts a strain on friendships and too often consigns students to a solitary journey'.<sup>4</sup>

Kodály and Zander also recognize that musical education and expression are possible for all people. Unfortunately, much of our musical education is judgmental and competitive. In the fiddle community in Canada, many performance opportunities come in the form of fiddle contests where participants play their selections of a waltz, a jig and a reel for a group of judges. In fiddle clubs, there are more opportunities to perform for events in concert settings, and occasionally, albeit rarely, for dancing. In Calgary in the classical music community performance opportunities are student recitals hosted by the teacher, the Kiwanis Music Festival,

and conservatory examinations. The Kiwanis Music Festival is a competition in which students and amateur musicians, ranging in age from 5 to 25 years, compete in various classes, with an adjudicator deciding the first, second and third place winners. The halls are deathly quiet and tense, so much so that it seems unnatural that music could exist in such an atmosphere. Conservatory exams offer other performing experiences, in a tense atmosphere, in front of a judge. If one pursues music to university level, there the performing exams are called 'juries', and many students have experienced only these judgmental and tense performances. This is not to say that such performances are never necessary. They are essential preparations for auditions and exams. However, if these are the only performing experiences available, it is understandable that students develop anxiety problems, because every time they perform, they feel that they are being judged not only by their colleagues, their friends and the audience, but most of all, by themselves. Zander explains this very well.

We in the music profession train young musicians with utmost care from early childhood, urging them to achieve extraordinary technical mastery and encouraging them to develop good practice habits and performance values. We support them to attend fine summer programs and travel abroad to gain firsthand experience of different cultures, and then, after all this, we throw them into a maelstrom of competition, survival, backbiting, subservience, and status seeking. And from this arena we expect them to perform the great works of the musical literature that call upon, among other things, warmth, nobility, playfulness, generosity, reverence, sensitivity, and love.<sup>5</sup>

It is possible to educate students in music, focusing on cooperation, and promoting feelings of joy and well-being rather than judgment and competition.

### **Breaking down the barriers of musical and social segregation**

The idea that music education is part of our humanity is very important to the philosophy of the Baroque & Buskin' Strings. This group is not only for the 'gifted' or the 'talented' among us, nor only the 'young,' but for all who love to play music, and want to share their passion for music. John Holt's journey as an adult beginner on cello challenges the widely-held belief that how a child is educated in the first few years of life determines what he or she is able to do as an adult. It is a common philosophy in music education, that music students must be taught from a young age for the student to experience any success. Kodály supported this, believing that 'the years between three and seven are educationally much more important than the later ones. What is spoiled or omitted at this age cannot be put right later on. In these years man's future is decided practically for his whole lifetime.'<sup>6</sup> Sinichi Suzuki (1898–1998), the creator of 'Talent Education,' commonly known as 'The Suzuki Method,' believed that 'children already five or six years old, and already trained, are judged from there on as to their ability, superior or inferior. But it is the earliest stages of infancy that are critical.'<sup>7</sup> This leads us to believe that it would be hopeless for anyone to aspire to play music with any modicum of success unless she or he has

had the most perfect education in music from infancy. Suzuki himself did not study music as a child, but rather began as a young adult, after he had finished high school and had been trained to work in his father's violin factory.<sup>8</sup> He of course went on to become one of the best-known music pedagogues of the twentieth century.

Zander further supports the idea that all students have some measure of ability and that it is the teachers' responsibility to help them realize their potential.

Michelangelo is often quoted as having said that inside every block of stone or marble dwells a beautiful statue; one need only remove the excess material to reveal the work of art within. If we were to apply this visionary concept to education, it would be pointless to compare one child to another. Instead, all the energy would be focused on chipping away at the stone, getting rid of whatever is in the way of each child's developing skills, mastery and self-expression.<sup>9</sup>

Education in the arts must be inclusive, not exclusive; individuals can realize their potential regardless of age and musical background.

Calgary, with a population of close to a million people, has a diverse musical culture. There are venues for popular music, jazz, swing, country music, folk clubs, world music, fiddle clubs, chamber music societies, and a symphony orchestra. However, despite this, there is little crossover between genres of either audiences or musicians. Personally, I feel strongly about the division between the fiddle and folk community, and the classical community. When I was performing on fiddle, if anyone discovered that I was also a classical violinist, I was no longer taken seriously as a fiddler. Historically, fiddle players in my community are either self-taught, or were taught by another fiddle player, often a family member. Therefore, if I wasn't taught to fiddle by my grandfather or uncle, I couldn't be a 'real' fiddler. My training and background became something that I felt I had to hide, in order to enjoy the company of other fiddle players. At the same time, I could not mention to my classical colleagues that I also played fiddle and folk music, because then they would not consider me to be a 'serious' musician. To help bridge this rift, I developed the Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra to provide opportunities for folk and classical musicians to come together and share their unique passions for music.

There are several ensembles in Calgary available to string students and amateur musicians. For those with classical backgrounds, there is the Civic Symphony, an orchestra consisting of amateur musicians (adults only), which performs works mostly from the standard classical symphonic repertoire. For children there are a variety of levels of orchestras available at the Mount Royal College Conservatory, from very young children up to the Calgary Youth Orchestra, whose members are students aged 18 to 24.

The folk and fiddle community in Calgary is very diverse. For those interested in folk and fiddle music, the Irish Cultural Society plays mostly Irish music with fiddles, flutes, drums, and harp. They often play in a concert setting for events at the Irish Cultural Centre, as well as for occasional ceildh dances. An Old Time Fiddle

club, the Prairie Mountain Fiddlers, featuring fiddle, guitar, and piano, is made up mostly of senior citizens who play a few concerts a year, host Fiddle Jamborees, and are members of the Alberta Society of Fiddlers. Some members of this club also form their own groups to play for square dancing, while the Foothills Bluegrass Society plays only bluegrass music. There is little crossover in either of these groups with other styles of fiddle music such as Scandinavian, or Scottish. Once a year the Scandinavian Club hosts a fiddle and dance workshop with instructors from Norway, with the workshop available to fiddlers of all ages.

For young people, the Bow Valley Fiddlers provide a venue for children from the age of five through their teens to learn folk and fiddle tunes. The teen group is the Calgary Fiddlers, who perform annually at the Calgary Stampede and tour all over the world. However, all of these groups remain isolated from each other, with little crossover of members or interaction between the different groups.

For some time I had been aware of the need for an orchestra which would be open to older beginners. The orchestras at the conservatory start with beginners around the age of six or seven, so it is not an option for teenagers or adult beginners. Since I had some students who had started violin lessons in their teens or as adults, I believed that they also needed an ensemble that would provide a social musical experience. Even though there is an increasing trend for adults here to pursue musical studies, there were no string ensembles to accommodate their musical needs, although opportunities for wind players were plentiful.

It is common for musical communities to be based on ideas of segregation: by age, ability, musical genre and instrumentation. While some specialization is necessary, many groups are exclusive rather than inclusive. Breaking down the barriers of musical and social segregation can have a positive influence on the nature of the group as well as being a model for interactions in the outside world.

### **Creating a community of cooperation**

In 1997 I taught at the Alberta Society of Fiddlers' summer camp. At this camp, classes comprised both children and adults, and were set up according to the level of playing, rather than the age of the player. It was a pleasure to see friendships grow between children and adults who shared a common love of fiddle music. Bridging generations in a social and musical context went beyond the traditional activities for mixed age groups. Before teaching at this fiddle camp I had only seen cross-generational sharing of music within families, and at church, experiences not available to everyone. It was wonderful to see a sixty-year-old man and an eight-year-old boy sitting outside at the picnic table, practising their tunes together. I realized then that an orchestra comprised of both children and adults could work well.

In addition, the whole atmosphere of the fiddle camp was friendly, helpful and non-competitive. There were four levels of classes, starting with beginners trying the fiddle for the first time, to the advanced class for more experienced players. Every evening there was a fiddle 'jam,' known in Europe as a 'session.' At this jam, everyone sat in a circle and each participant had the opportunity to choose

a tune. There were easy tunes that everyone knew and some tunes that only a few knew, but everybody played and everyone knew many more tunes by the end of the week. Everyone was included in the circle regardless of playing skill, and the better players would help those less skilled to learn the tunes. It was a very supportive atmosphere, completely lacking the competition that I was accustomed to in the classical music world.

Using the cooperative model of the fiddle camp, the Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra has no seating hierarchy as in many amateur groups where the 'good' players sit at the front of the section and the 'bad' players sit at the back. Rather, this is an orchestra where it is recognized that all members have strengths to share: strong players sit with those who are less experienced, and stand partners are chosen to compliment each other's strengths. For example, someone with very good rhythmic skills might sit with someone else who plays musically and with a good sound. In this way a helpful and supportive atmosphere is created in which there is no competition.

Collaboration between amateur and professional musicians may also take place. Often when professional musicians and amateur musicians get together to play music, the professional's role is that of the teacher, and we tend to think that the exchange is only in that direction. Certainly that is the case with sectional rehearsals, and when hired professionals assist at workshops. However, in a cooperative environment, the professionals are re-inspired by witnessing the joy of music in the hands of those with less expertise, amateur musicians who demonstrate the will to do their best. Trust in their instructors allows them to constantly challenge their limitations, and professional colleagues find it refreshing to be surrounded by that energy.

### **Fiddle music in an orchestral setting**

Training music students by exploring their own folk traditions was part of Kodály's philosophy. In string music education, fiddle music seems to be a logical choice for a folk idiom. However, fiddle music is almost always exclusively the realm of violinists. Other string players, violists and cellists, are often excluded from the traditional fiddle clubs, whereas bassists may be found in the rhythm section of a fiddling group, but always playing pizzicato, never using the bow.

Repertoire for the fiddle orchestra is limited. String orchestra material based on folk or fiddle tunes seems to appear in two kinds of arrangements: one type of music available is folk tunes that have been imported into a classical setting, the other type gives all of the melodies to the first violins while the remainder play accompaniments, and much of the vitality of the folk music is lost in the translation to a different idiom or style. The second type of arrangement uses simple bass lines and/or offbeats, imitating the chording on guitar or piano, which the second violinists, violists, and cellists find boring to play. Neither type of arrangement supported the main philosophy of this orchestra, which is that violists and cellists have the opportunity to learn the fiddle style, and finally have the chance to play the tunes. My frustration with the lack of suitable repertoire led me to write my own arrangements, paying particular attention

to giving the melody to each part in turn while keeping the folk/fiddle style. In this way I have been able to make all the parts for the various instruments interesting and fun to play. In a student orchestra it is difficult to inspire members of the orchestra to play musically and their best when their parts are dull and repetitive. Many students, stuck with playing a 'third violin' part, which is also the viola part in elementary orchestras, not only find their parts to be monotonous, but also see it as unimportant to the effect of the piece as a whole. Rather than inspiring them to play well, they are indifferent or uncaring. When students have melodic material, interesting counterpoint and innovative accompaniment figures, they are much more likely to enjoy playing and practising their parts.

The musical score for 'Sally on the Hilltop' is written for a string orchestra in 3/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The first measure features a melody in the Violin I part, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'V' above the notes. The second measure shifts the melody to the Violin II part, also marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'V' above the notes. The third measure features a melody in the Viola part, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'V' above the notes. The fourth measure features a melody in the Cello part, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'V' above the notes. The Double Bass part provides a steady accompaniment throughout, marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco) for the strings.

Figure 1 'Sally on the Hilltop', demonstrating melody distribution<sup>10</sup>

This is an example of how the melody passes through the orchestra. The first measure of the melody is in the first violins. The second measure of the tune is in the second violins. The third measure is in the viola part, and the fourth measure is given to the cello section. This encourages all parts to listen to each other. In this way they become more aware of the other parts of the orchestra and what they are playing. The accompaniment of the tune in this particular example simulates a piano or guitar, but is still interesting, which keeps the musicians thinking and actively engaged.

The musical score for 'Roslin Castle' is written for a string orchestra in 3/8 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb). The score consists of five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score begins at measure 33. The Violin I part features a melodic line with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The Violin II part provides a counterpoint to the Violin I part. The Viola, Cello, and Double Bass parts provide a steady accompaniment, also marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'V' above the notes and 'mp' dynamics.

Figure 2 'Roslin Castle', demonstrating counterpoint and accompaniment.<sup>11</sup>

This example illustrates rhythmic figures in a slow air. The melody is in the first and second violins, one octave apart. The viola part begins with a syncopation followed by eighth notes. This places emphasis on the second half of the first beat, and beat three of the measure. In the cello part, the beginning of the measure also emphasizes the second half of the first beat, but in a more sustained figure. The second half of the bar emphasizes the second half of the third beat. The bass is playing straight quarter notes on the beat, adding rhythmic stability. The violas have a counterpoint to the main melody. The viola's line complements the cello line with its rhythmic motive. The cello and bass lines are important harmonically and rhythmically, and the way in which each of the lower parts interweave and support the melody in an interesting manner helps each section to become aware of the importance of their part within the orchestra.

### **Ensemble skills for fiddle and classical musicians**

Bringing musicians with a fiddling background and musicians with a classical background together in one ensemble makes it clear how each group has strengths to share. First, it is necessary to teach musicians with a classical background how to play in an idiomatic fiddle style. In order to do this, the orchestra members are all given the melody to learn in unison. Through demonstration they learn the nuances of expression in playing airs and dance tunes.

Once the orchestra has had a chance to learn the tune, we begin the arrangement. This is the challenging part for the fiddle players. Many of them have never played in an ensemble before joining the orchestra, although those who had played in a group situation may have experience of a 'session' group where everyone plays the melody together in unison. Occasionally members played some tunes with harmony, or played 'back up' for others playing the tune. Since some of these fiddlers have had no experience in reading parts with rests, counter melody, accompaniment, and the tune all intertwined, the orchestra parts challenge them to read more fluently.

For the fiddle players in the orchestra, playing in parts develops their reading and listening skills. Since they are not always playing the tune, they must listen for it and hear how the melody weaves through the orchestra. They learn how to play accompaniment figures and counter melodies in a musical and sensitive manner, which also allows them to hear how the accompaniment figures and counter melodies enhance the tune.

All members, whether they are classically trained or primarily fiddle players, need to learn ensemble skills. These skills are developed through a variety of methods. First, it is important for members to be aware of their stand partner and their playing. They begin by watching each other's bows while they are playing, and try to move together. Next, they must expand their awareness to playing together within their own section. For this, they must be aware of body movement within the section of the orchestra. Exercises are given to teach all members to cue each other, not only the section leaders. They learn to cue each other at entries, watching their

stand partners first, and then later become more conscious of the others in their section, who are cuing as well, which promotes much better ensemble playing. If every member takes the initiative to cue entries it gives confidence to all the players around them, and when they move together, they play together.

An important part of ensemble playing is learning to play with other sections and hear how their parts interact with each other. One method of increasing awareness is to mix up the sections in the orchestra. Instead of having the first violins seated in a group, second violins in another group, etc., keeping their stand partners, we mix everyone up so that all players are surrounded by people who do not play their part. All the cellos, violas, basses, first violins, and second violins are scattered around the room, a common method used to promote better intonation and ensemble work in choral groups, although it is almost never used with instrumental ensembles. From this position, two main things occur. Firstly, it is very easy to hear the other parts when they are sitting right next to you. In fact, it is very difficult to ignore them. In this mixed up format, one can't help hearing how the parts interweave. Secondly, the musicians are listening for others playing the same part elsewhere in the room. By stretching their listening awareness, they also hear the others in between, and routinely hear parts that they have never heard before. Steven Mithen, in his book *The Singing Neanderthals*, talks about how, through making music in a group, the individual loses the sense of self and instead exhibits cooperation for the good of the group.

Those who make music together will mould their own minds and bodies into a shared emotional state, and with that will come a loss of self-identity and a concomitant increase in the ability to cooperate with others. In fact, 'cooperate' is not quite correct, because as identities are merged there is no 'other' with whom to cooperate, just one group making decisions about how to behave.<sup>12</sup>

When playing music with others, a point is reached where our awareness expands through listening, moving, and reacting musically to those around us. In this we lose our sense of self, lose our focus on the sound we are making individually, and find ourselves part of the greater whole. The music itself is what becomes most important in our consciousness.

### **Comparison of fiddle music and baroque music**

There are several reasons why this orchestra's repertoire combines fiddle and baroque music. The baroque music compliments the fiddle music because classical music was developing at the same time in history as the fiddle became popular in folk music, and there are many similarities in style, form, and structure. 'The Golden Age of the Fiddle', which produced much of the fiddle repertoire as we know it today, started around the same time as the Baroque Period in Western Europe, c. 1600–1750. At this time many composers wrote for the violin and virtuosos appeared in both the folk/fiddle world and the courts of Europe. James MacPherson, reputed



composer of the well-known ‘MacPherson’s Farewell’ was born in 1675. Niel Gow, the famous Scottish fiddler, performer and composer of one of the most comprehensive fiddle tune collections of the time lived from 1727 to 1807. In Italy, Archangelo Corelli (1653–1713), as well as being a famous virtuoso of his time, was the first composer to make his living exclusively from instrumental music. Fiddle music was the music of the common people, comprised of country dances, jigs, reels, and strathspeys as well as songs or airs. What we refer to as ‘baroque’ music was the music of the aristocracy and the church, which used stylized dance forms, and shared many aspects of style and ornamentation.

In the Baroque & Buskin’ String Orchestra, fiddle music is used as a basis for teaching the playing style of baroque music. Illustrated below are some of the fiddle dance forms with their corresponding equivalent in baroque music.

*Folk Music*      *Baroque Music*

Jig	Giga, gigue
Air, Lament	Aria, Largo, Andante, Adagio
Reel	Allegro
Waltz	Minuet
Strathspey	Schottische, <i>Scozzese</i>



**Figure 3a** Fiddle jig, ‘The Bridal Jig’, bars 1–8<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 3b** Baroque giga, Archangelo Corelli (1653–1713) *Giga*,  
Sonata Opus 5, no. 3, v, bars 1–16<sup>14</sup>

Figures 3a and 3b demonstrate how the baroque *Giga* developed from the folk dance form. Both are in compound time, although Corelli’s *Giga* is in 12/8 rather than 6/8. In the fiddle jig, the A section is a typical eight measure phrase, followed by an

eight measure B section. This form is found in the majority of fiddle and folk tunes. These fit the set dance steps perfectly and the same dances can be danced to many different jigs, as long as there are eight measures in each phrase. This is for a total of 32 measures, which are then repeated. The typical form in which it would be played for dancing is AABB, AABB.

Harmonically, 'The Bridal Jig' is fairly typical of this genre of fiddle music and employs the primary chords; the tonic G major, the subdominant C major, and the dominant D major. In the baroque example, Figure 3b, not only is the meter extended from 6/8 to 12/8, but the whole A section of the jig has been extended. The antecedent of the phrase is four measures long, and the consequence is only two measures. However, that is not the end of the statement. It is developed by a running passage of eighth notes, which continue for an extra ten measures. No longer confined to eight measure phrases, Corelli has taken the rhythm of the dance and played with our expectations of where the phrase should end and where it should repeat. The A section of the *Giga* is a total of 16 measures which is repeated, followed by the B section which is 23 measures, also repeated. Harmonically it is also more complex. Although in the key of C major, by the fourth measure there is a tonicization of G major, the dominant. The next phrase returns to the home key followed by a running eighth note passage outlining a circle of fifths progression that cadences in G major for the end of the A section.

Stylistically and structurally the jigs have certain similarities. They are both in compound time with steady eighth note figures, and both are in binary form with repeated A sections and B sections. The *Giga* by Corelli expands the fiddle tune concept with its complexity of phrase extensions and harmonic language.



**Figure 4a** Fiddle air, William McGibbon (1690–1756), 'Roslin Castle', bars 1–4<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 4b** Baroque slow movement, Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767), *Adagio*, Sonata No. 1 in G minor (Methodische Sonaten), bars 1–2<sup>16</sup>

Figures 4a and 4b illustrate the similarities of ornamentation of slow airs in fiddle music and slow movements of the baroque period. The types of ornaments are the same, the appoggiatura, the mordent, the turn, and other grace notes used as passing notes. Ornaments in both traditions are usually improvised and individual musicians are expected to improvise in his or her particular style. It would be unacceptable for either piece to be performed unornamented. In orchestral parts, the ornamentation is specified for clarity of ensemble.

The collection of *Methodische Sonaten* by Telemann (1728) is unique in that the music was written as a teaching tool for students and amateur musicians. He published this set of sonatas so that amateur players would gain an understanding of how to add ornamentation to slow movements in the appropriate style. The basic melody of the opening slow movement is presented with an ornamented version of the melody. Here both examples show a marked similarity in their ornamentation with the use of turns, and *appoggiaturas*. However, the phrase structure of Telemann's *Adagio* is more complex than that of McGibbon's 'Roslin Castle'. In 'Roslin Castle' the phrases are consistently in 4 measure phrases. In the *Adagio*, the phrases are more seamless, and avoid regular cadences. The first phrase is 7 measures long and the entire movement is 15 measures long in contrast to 'Roslin Castle', which comprises four phrases, each four measures in length, for a total of 16 measures.



**Figure 5a** Fiddle reel, 'The Swallow's Tail', bars 1-8<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 5b** Baroque music, J. S. Bach, *Allegro*, Sonata No. 2, iii, for solo violin<sup>18</sup>

In Figures 5a and 5b, one can see the similarities between the reel dance found in folk music, and the typical *Allegro* first movement found in baroque music. Both are played fast, in simple time, with quadruple division of the beat. Both employ arpeggiated figures as a primary motif.

The typical reel consists of an 8 measure A section, which is repeated, followed by an 8 measure B section, also repeated. The most common form for dancing is the same as the jig, AABB, AABB. Harmonically, traditional reels use simple chord progressions, as in 'The Swallow's Tail', in A, in the Dorian mode, harmonized with chords of A minor and G major. The melody consists largely of arpeggiated passages (bars 1,3,5,7,8) that are linked with ascending step-wise passages (bars 2,4,6).

In baroque music, the *Allegro* movement was often written in duple or quadruple time (2/4, or 4/4). Although it has the same feel as the dance music of the reel, the harmonic language and phrase structures are more complex. In Bach's *Allegro*, we notice the similarity of using the arpeggiated figures, linked by ornamented passages in step-wise motion, with the subsequent passage consisting of arpeggiated figures of sixteenth notes. In the *Allegro*, 58 measures, the A section is 24 measures repeated, and the B section is 34 measures repeated. Again, the styles are seen to be similar while the baroque music contains more extended passages.

In general, many works from the baroque period comprise stylized dances from the folk music of the time. Folk music forms such as jigs, airs, and reels form common foundations for the compositions of baroque composers. They are similar in style and ornamentation yet differ in complexity of phrase structure and harmonic language.

### **Performance of fiddle music and baroque music**

In the Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra, fiddle music is used as a basis for teaching the baroque playing style. In both fiddle and baroque music the beat is emphasized, particularly in the dance movements, with the performance style of the dances in baroque music borrowed from the fiddle dance style. The ornaments used in airs and laments in fiddle music are also found in the ornamentation of slow movements in the baroque repertoire. In both styles the ornaments are improvised. As the classical players become more fluent in the fiddle style, it is easier to transfer the vitality of the folk music to the baroque music.

Perhaps the most distinct differences in style between fiddle and baroque music are found in the bowing techniques. Emphasis on the beat in fast dance tunes is done more with the speed and length of bow, rather than with accents, which are often used in the classical style. When playing the faster tempo dance tunes, the Canadian style is to play mainly in the middle to the upper half of the bow. In baroque music, many of the faster bow strokes are performed in the middle to lower half of the bow. Bows made during the baroque period were lighter than the modern bow. The baroque style bow average weight is 50g whereas the modern bow is 59g to 64g. The baroque bow stick is smaller in diameter, and it is shorter in length. This is not to say that we never play at the tip, for long notes require that one uses all of the bow length. However, the baroque bow is very light at the tip and therefore passages of eighth notes or sixteenth notes are played more easily in the middle of the bow. The lighter baroque style bow gives a very light and transparent sound. It is also interesting to note that many fiddle players hold the bow up the stick, above the grip, which makes the bow lighter and emulates the feel of the baroque bow. It is interesting to experiment further to see what it was like to play music on the bowed string instruments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with using unwound gut strings and an eighteenth century style bow. To play with a clear, clean sound with gut strings and a baroque style bow the adjustments one has to make indicates very clearly how the music at the time was played.

In classical music today, much of the expression on bowed string instruments is achieved with the left hand, using vibrato and shifting. In fiddle music, the bow is the primary tool of expression, through use of weight of bow, length of bow and articulation. The left hand produces the pitches and the ornamentation while the bow expresses the nuances of line in the airs and the dance feel of the dance tunes. It is often difficult for classically trained musicians to play without vibrato, because in the modern technique of string playing, vibrato is used almost constantly. As they gain more expertise with using the bow expressively, they are able to slow down their vibrato and rely on it less as their main means of expression.

Ensemble playing possesses both similarities and differences between the fiddle and baroque orchestras. There is a crossover in listening skills and the ability to be aware of the other parts: who has the melody and which sections of the orchestra share the same figures. In baroque music, however, not all the ensemble parts are interesting to perform. Sometimes the melody is only in one part and the remaining parts have an accompaniment figure which is much more challenging for the student to play musically. Students must think the melody in their heads, and then phrase their accompaniment with the soloist or the section of the orchestra that has the melody. Each student is responsible for making his or her part interesting by how they engage with the music while they play, and how they phrase their line to compliment the melody.

To illustrate this point, the accompaniment parts play the section of music without the melody. They must play in an attentive manner, with energy and vitality. This brings us to what does it mean, exactly to 'play musically'? In my view, to 'phrase the music', to 'play musically', to 'play with heart or feeling' are all the same thing. Technically, it comes down to which notes are emphasized, and how those notes are articulated. Emphasis is really another name for dynamics. The notes that are brought out are louder, and those that contrast are softer. Articulation describes how the notes begin and end, whether they are smoothly connected or accented, short or long, get louder within the note or whether it decays, all achieved through bowing technique. Phrasing is not only the domain of the main melody, for accompanying parts require the same – and sometimes more – intensity of expression.

For string players, learning the fiddle style compliments the study of baroque music. Knowing the style of the fiddle dance forms transfers its vitality to the stylized dances of the baroque. Ornamentation of the fiddle airs introduces the style of ornamentation of the slow movements of baroque music. Ensemble skills learned in the fiddle orchestra transfer directly to the baroque orchestra. In these ways an ensemble of cooperation and understanding is created.

## **Conclusion**

Through the continuing development of the Baroque & Buskin' String Orchestra, an environment has evolved where making music in a social context allows members to enjoy music as a lifetime pursuit. Within a non-judgmental and non-competitive atmosphere, musicians gain a sense of joy and well-being which encourages them to

continue to use music as a creative expression in their lives. Breaking down barriers of musical and social segregation creates a positive model for other experiences in the world. Combining fiddle players and classical players in the same ensemble allows musicians to share skills across boundaries of style. Using the tradition of fiddle music as a basis for teaching baroque music, a deeper understanding of both idioms is created. This also connects musicians and audiences of the present to the rich historical traditions of our past.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Steven Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p. 205.
- <sup>2</sup> John Holt, *Never Too Late* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978; repr. 1991), p. 138.
- <sup>2</sup> Lois Choksy, *The Kodály Context* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), p. 6.
- <sup>3</sup> Choksy, p. 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000), p. 26.
- <sup>5</sup> Zander and Zander, p. 31.
- <sup>6</sup> Choksy, p. 7.
- <sup>7</sup> Sinichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love* (New York: Exposition Press, 1969; repr. 1977), p. 120.
- <sup>8</sup> Suzuki, p. 79.
- <sup>9</sup> Zander and Zander, p. 26.
- <sup>10</sup> *Sally on the Hilltop*, arr. by E. Sereno-Janzen (Calgary: Blue Arch Music, 2000), bars 77–80.
- <sup>11</sup> William McGibbon (–1736), *Roslin Castle*, arr. by E. Sereno-Janzen (Calgary: Blue Arch Music, 2007), bars 33–36.
- <sup>12</sup> Mithen, p. 215.
- <sup>13</sup> Capt. Francis O'Neill (ed.), *The Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems*, arr. by Sergt. James O'Neill (Dublin: Walton's Musical Instrument Galleries, [1907]), no. 310, 'The Bridal Jig', bars 1–8.
- <sup>14</sup> Archangelo Corelli, *Sonata a Violino e Violone o Cembalo, Opera Quinta*, Roma 1700 (Firenze: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1979), Sonata No. 3, v, bars 1–16.
- <sup>15</sup> McGibbon, *Roslin Castle*, arr. by E. Sereno-Janzen, bars 1–4.
- <sup>16</sup> Georg Philipp Telemann, *Zwölf Methodische Sonaten für Violine oder Flöte und Basso Continuo (1728)*, ed. Johannes Gerdes (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1980), Sonata No. 1 in G-minor, *Adagio*, bars 1–2.
- <sup>17</sup> O'Neill, no. 536, 'The Swallow's Tail Reel', bars 1–8.
- <sup>18</sup> J. S. Bach, *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo (1720)*, ed. Ivan Galamian (New York: International Music Company, 1971), Sonata No. 2 in A minor, *Allegro*, bars 1–8.

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# Driving the Bow

fiddle and dance studies  
from around the north atlantic 2

edited by ian russell and mary anne alburger

This volume, the second in the series, is the direct result of the 2006 North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, its theme being 'Connecting Cultures'. The cultures connected were not simply those of nationality, ethnicity, or community, but also those of academia and fiddle and dance performance. The book provides an important contribution to the study of the role of fiddle and associated dance traditions at the beginning of the twenty-first century and celebrates the contribution of performer-scholars to our understanding of the subject's complexities.

The selected essays cover a range of themes, from cultural politics and authenticity to the aesthetics of fiddle music and dance, from the performer's creativity to the contesting forces of continuity and change. Rhythm is acknowledged as the defining feature of different fiddle styles, such that bowing is not merely about sounding the notes correctly, but rather it articulates the essential meaning of the music.

The North Atlantic, in providing a unifying frame for these studies, is not conceived in terms of boundaries that separate and divide peoples, but rather as a corridor through which cultures have flowed and continue to flow in a process of exchange and communication.

This fascinating and timely collection of new insights in the field of international folk music and ethnomusicological studies represents the diversity of current research, and deserves to be read widely by scholars and enthusiasts alike.



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