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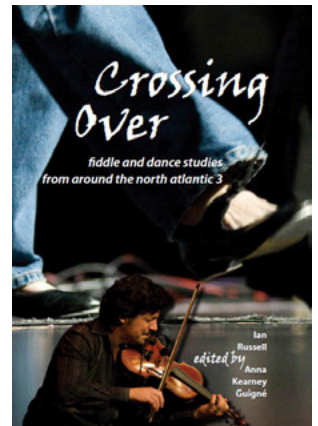
Crossing Over

Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 3

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About the author:

Mats Melin, Swedish born traditional dancer, choreographer and researcher (MA Ethnochoreology) has worked professionally with dance in Scotland since 1995, and in Ireland since 2005. He is a Lecturer in Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. He is currently conducting PhD research on Cape Breton step dancing.

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‘Putting the dirt back in’: an investigation of step dancing in Scotland

MATS MELIN

In 2005, I undertook an investigation into percussive step dancing in Scotland. As this is a relatively recent style of dance on the Scottish traditional dance scene, I wondered whether the current ‘revival’, as it was labelled, was linked to a revival of an indigenous Scottish dance form or not.¹ I concluded that percussive step dancing was in fact a revival of a particular form of Scottishness or ‘essence’ recognised in step dancing in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, a region of Canada which contains a substantial Scottish population. In recent years, the Cape Breton percussive dance form has attracted a certain sector of the Scottish-based dance community, who were aiming to re-introduce it to Scotland. Characteristically it is a dance form free from association-based rules and regulations, and a form that, it was felt, had not been refined and watered down. Simplistically, it was seen at the time in Scotland as a dance form that could have been part of the current dance traditions, if it had not been pushed into the background by other forms of dance that the Scottish social context came to favour. In short the dirt was being put back into the dancing again and the dance form was labelled ‘Scottish’ step dancing.

This paper will concentrate on a few of the aspects of why Cape Breton step dancing was introduced to a modern Scottish dance audience in the 1990s and if, or to what level, it has impacted on today’s Scottish dance traditions.

A brief overview of Scottish and Cape Breton traditional dance traditions

In 1990, traditional dancing in Scotland encompassed two main forms: Highland dancing (athletic solo and group dances), governed by organisations, taught mainly through dancing schools, and seen in public, usually at competitive events organised by the national dance organisations and Scottish country dancing (social figure dances). The main division was in the specific performance location: that is, either as part of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society’s events, or else at independently-run dance events. The primary distinction between Highland dancing and Scottish country dancing is how much attention is paid to the ‘correct’ performance of steps and figures. Some of the key aesthetic criteria for these two dance forms are lightness, flow, elegance, and a particular level of technical excellence. Furthermore,

the vernacular dance scene consists of 'old time' dancing or 'ceilidh' dancing, as it is also called, depending on context, geographical area, and age range of the dancers. Stylistic and music preferences, for these mainly couple and group dances, differ from one part of the country to another. At the periphery of this dance landscape, other styles exist; for example, 'Hebridean' dancing in the Western Isles, and dances particular to the Orkney and Shetland Isles. In the main, the dance traditions are kept alive in village halls and other larger venues, such as hotels, town halls and community centres.

In the first half of the eighteenth century some twenty thousand, predominantly Gaelic-speaking, Catholic Scottish Highlanders settled in Cape Breton Island. They were displaced owing to the British economic depression, the declining kelp industry, and the clearances in which a large number of the crofting population of the Scottish Highlands and Islands were removed from their lands. In Cape Breton they settled alongside the indigenous population and descendants of earlier French and English settlers. Because of the absence of large estates or plantations on the island and the wide availability of land, the Scots immigrants settled in straggling lines of dispersed farms and for the most part these farm communities were isolated. Moreover, immigrant family and kinship groups settled together.²

Distance, forest, rough terrain, and a lack of roads hindered communication and prevented the intermingling of settlers that was common on many frontiers. There was little pressure on the French-speaking Acadians and the Gaelic-speaking Scots to conform to the Standard English of the Loyalists. A good deal of orally transmitted folk culture was maintained.³

By 1871, the population of Cape Breton was seventy-five thousand of which fifty thousand were of Scottish origin, thus 'outnumbering by two to one the descendants of Acadian, Irish, and Loyalist families who had settled in Cape Breton before 1800. In large part, Cape Breton had become a Scottish island.⁴

In Cape Breton, the vernacular dance tradition lives predominantly in the village halls. Here square sets, locally transformed versions of quadrilles introduced from mainland Canada and the USA, are the only form of social dancing, often interspersed with performances of solo step dancing. Many halls also have an outdoor dancing area for summer time dancing. Solo step dancing, Scotch Fours (Reels), and square sets all feature at local indoor and outdoor festivals and concerts, where they often co-exist with displays of Highland and Scottish country dancing. The latter two dance forms now exist around the Island, but are not the predominant forms of dancing, and their aesthetic appearance is the same as in Scotland. The vernacular square sets and step dancing are aesthetically more grounded and good percussive dancers are said to be 'close-to-the-floor', 'neat', 'light', and 'musical.' Step dancing is passed on both informally in the home as well as taught in public classes in the community. Square sets are mainly learnt in village halls as they are being danced. As in Scotland, Highland and Scottish country dancing is learnt through

dancing schools and dance clubs, and, according to Frank Rhodes, both types were introduced to the island about 1939.⁵ Many of the dances and dance forms, described by Rhodes as observed and remembered by descendants of Scottish settlers in 1957, are no longer practised.⁶

While this investigation focused on the step dancing which originated in the communities of Cape Breton Island, which have predominantly, but not exclusively, Scottish heritage as their influence, there was an awareness that other styles of step dancing occur elsewhere in North America. Margaret Bennett, for example, discusses in detail step dancing in a Scots Gaelic community in Codroy Valley, Newfoundland, and mentions step dancing in other parts of Canada.⁷ Dancer Hugh Bigney refers to step dancing traditions on mainland Nova Scotia as part of his Scottish heritage,⁸ and Johanne Devlin Trew notes that the Scots in Ottawa Valley in Ontario had their own dance traditions, which were separate from the predominantly Irish-influenced step dance tradition of the area.⁹ There are also Scottish and French-Acadian-influenced step dance traditions in, for example, Prince Edward Island.¹⁰

Although this investigation did not examine the level of possible Irish or French dance influence on the step dance tradition of Cape Breton, Colin Quigley's research into step dancing of the Irish tradition found in Newfoundland describes similar aesthetics to those of Cape Breton Island.¹¹

The (re-)appearance of step dancing in Scotland

In the early 1990s, some Scottish dancers and musicians initially 'discovered' Cape Breton style step dancing either when visiting (primarily) Cape Breton Island in Maritime east-coast Canada, or when attending workshops in Scotland where Cape Breton musicians and dancers had been invited to share their tradition. A relatively small number of individuals living in Scotland subsequently took a great interest in the Cape Breton style of step dancing and music from that point in time. Selected historical and cultural links between Cape Breton and the Scottish Highlands were explored and advocated from the very beginning of this process by those involved in reviving step dancing and popularising the Cape Breton style of playing music.

The interaction between Cape Breton and Scottish music is discussed and analysed by Liz Doherty,¹² and in particular the interest in Cape Breton musical style shown by Scottish musicians, though also the strong feelings within the Scottish music community towards the Cape Breton style dance. Doherty discusses the many phases of Cape Breton musicians visiting Scotland, as well as the interaction between the Cape Breton and Scottish musicians during the same research period I investigated for step dancing. Similar to my own findings, Doherty observes that Cape Breton music and dance tradition has, in its own context, had a different development from Scottish tradition. Other contributions have been made to it, a fact that was largely overlooked or not emphasised by the Scottish interest group.

In 1994 I conducted a case study of Cape Breton step dancer, Harvey Beaton. This research provided a platform for illustrating the Cape Breton dance context. It highlighted both the relationship between Cape Breton dancing and dancing in

Scotland, but it also revealed the differences in context. As the study also showed, the Scottish 'revival' emphasised certain aspects of the Cape Breton tradition, whereas others were paid less attention.¹³ Based on this work, in 2005, I queried whether the interest in this style of percussive step dancing was a revival. For my research I examined the process in terms of the theory for music revivals presented by Tamara E. Livingston.¹⁴ Livingston's article presents a model for a descriptive framework for music revivals. As the awareness of step dancing is closely interlinked with what is argued as a revival of 'Cape Breton' (Cape Breton here equates to 'older') style fiddle and bagpipe playing for step dancing in Scotland, I felt the model was suitable for analysing this process. The processes described by Livingston for music revivals closely mirror those I saw happening in the dance field, although other aspects she presents seem not to apply to the step dance revival in question. In summary, Livingston's general descriptive framework attempts to illustrate:

a coming together, a convergence of various circumstances and personal motivations centring on the fascination and emulation of a music culturally and historically distanced from the present. Music revivals are a product of both specific historical circumstances as well as general intellectual and social trends.¹⁵

Livingston sees revivals as existing in a continuum, where some endure for long periods of time while others never come through the planning stage. She discusses the causes of a revival's breakdown and the fact that the revival often serves as a catalyst for other cultural expressions 'stimulating new sounds, new textures, and new repertoires'.¹⁶ Furthermore, Livingston discusses the tendency of revivals to react against modernity (where mass culture is considered a hallmark), while at the same time being a product of it – 'they partake in the discourse of modernity even as they set themselves in opposition to certain manifestations of modernity'.¹⁷

The vernacular form of step dancing I investigated is, as a tradition, 'a work-in-progress' as Spalding and Woodside defined it,¹⁸ or is 'transforming' as, for example, Rosenberg, Atkinson, Handler and Linnekin, Nilsson, and Feintuch describe.¹⁹ The dance traditions in each cultural context (Scotland and Cape Breton) had evolved and were influenced differently; thus they underwent divergent transformations to each other. By extension, the transformation of Cape Breton step dancing has continued since being promoted in Scotland.

I concluded that what was actually being revived by this interest group was the Scottish 'essence of a tradition'. By taking the transformed 'Cape Breton' style of step dancing and bringing it back to Scotland, this 'essence' of the form came to represent what scattered memories recalled of some form of percussive step dance tradition in Scotland. To my knowledge, no step dancing of an extemporary nature found or remembered in Scotland has been restored to current use.²⁰ I would argue

that all manifestations of step dancing current in Scotland use only Cape Breton motifs as their core material.

With the 'Cape Breton' steps, however, come all those influences of maritime Canadian culture that had transformed the step dance tradition there over the past 200 years, and this fact has to be recognised.

'An essence of Scottishness'

So, what constitutes this *essence* that was recognised? The revival of step dancing in Scotland is closely linked to the 'discovery' of the Cape Breton style of fiddle playing and piping in the 1980s when two respected Scots musicians, fiddler Alasdair Fraser and piper Hamish Moore, both independently fell in love with the music of Cape Breton.

I interviewed Alasdair Fraser in January 2005 when he discussed growing up in a Scotland where his mother tongue, Scots, was discouraged, where the cultural self esteem – his own and the country's – was low in his opinion. Playing his fiddle around Scotland in many different venues, he started questioning why the fiddle music was played in certain ways, and was it the right way. He felt disillusioned by what he saw as a lack of general interest in finding the roots of Scottish music and dance. He tried to find his musical heroes in Scotland as he felt the only 'way to learn a traditional art form is to identify your heroes and corner them, copy them and then develop your own style out of that'.²¹ His frustration with the lack of fluidity in the traditional music scene in the late 1970s was apparent. In the Highlands, he said, the scene was not healthy at all and there were only a handful of indigenous fiddlers around, for example Angus Grant Senior and Farquhar MacCreath. Against this backdrop Alasdair Fraser travelled to Cape Breton in 1981 and 'found the fluency in the culture of Cape Breton that I wanted in my own culture'.²² He found people whom he felt expressed joy in their own traditions and had a depth of cultural awareness.²³

Hamish Moore's discovery of Cape Breton music is similar in many ways to Alasdair Fraser's story. Hamish shunned the competitive piping scene and experimented with jazz as he looked for something that would resonate 'in his heart and soul'.²⁴ Hamish Moore's musical epiphany occurred after hearing for the first time Buddy MacMaster and Maybelle Chisholm playing Cape Breton fiddle tunes in Philadelphia in 1987 – many of which were old Highland pipe tunes, but not easily recognisable. He began collecting fiddle tapes and visited Cape Breton in the early 1990s. There he met old-time piper Alec Currie, who played tunes on the pipes with the same step-dance rhythm that fiddlers like Buddy played on the fiddle. Hamish immediately saw the importance of Cape Breton as a link to the old Highland music that he felt had been changed beyond recognition in Scotland due to political circumstances and external (European) influences, something he said Cape Breton was spared. He became a passionate promoter of this new 'old' style of music, both in Scotland and in Cape Breton, where he was hired during the summer to teach at St Ann's Gaelic College.²⁵

Thus the music of Cape Breton, they felt, had more fluidity and drive. They perceived at the time that it had more 'dirt' in it than Scottish music had. From their perspective, Scottish music and dance had been refined, and the traditions had been restrained by outside forces such as associations and governing bodies.²⁶ According to their view, the Scots had lost a certain part of the pride and interest in the roots of the traditions.²⁷

In the early 1990s, both Fraser and Moore became important as facilitators of access to Cape Breton music and step dance in Scotland. Alasdair Fraser invited Cape Breton fiddler Buddy MacMaster and step dancer Harvey Beaton to teach at his Summer School held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College in the Isle of Skye.²⁸ In the mid 1990s, Hamish Moore established a summer school, Ceòlas, which provided and continues to provide a place to learn and share music (piping and fiddling), Gaelic song, and step dance in the Gaelic speaking environment of South Uist, with a significant involvement of Cape Breton musicians and dancers, for example, Willie Fraser, Mary Janet MacDonald, Alexander MacDonnell, Mairi Rankin, Kinnon Beaton, and Joe Peter MacLean.

Fraser and Moore were not the first to carry out such exchanges. As Doherty's research shows, Cape Breton musicians have been coming to Scotland since World War II and, in the 1960s and 1970s, several of them toured, performing their music around the country. The BBC also recorded and broadcasted their music.²⁹

Moreover, Fraser and Moore's 'discovery' of Cape Breton culture in the late 1980s was not entirely accidental at this point in time. The broader arena in which thoughts regarding Scottish identities are negotiated is summarised by, for example, Jonathan Dembling.³⁰ The key points were the failure of the 1979 referendum on home rule, and the following eighteen years of Conservative Party government from Westminster, which led to an increased nationalistic slant, or at least a more self-conscious shaping of the arts and culture in Scotland. In the period leading up to Devolution and the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 'a great deal of thinking and discussion about what it means to be Scottish in the twenty-first century' ensued.³¹

As Doherty has however pointed out based on her study of Cape Bretoners and their music, 'there is an ongoing pride in their ancestry, in their Scottish roots, but now Cape Breton is their land'.³² While Scottish fiddlers such as Fraser and Moore may perceive of the Cape Breton tradition as a 'window' on the Scottish music and dance tradition of the past for historical reasons, Cape Breton fiddling is its own entity:

Tempo, ornamentation, differing attitudes to 'correctness' and the 'flavour', the loss of high bass, bowing styles, expanding technical prowess, all of these are aspects of the fiddle tradition which have been subjected to change certainly since the 1920s if not before. When Alasdair Fraser, Hamish Moore, Mairi Campbell, and others saw in Cape Breton something of Scotland past they were not wrong. When Hector MacAndrew told Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald that his

fiddle playing was 'very close to the truth' neither was he wrong. However, the typical Cape Breton fiddler at the beginning of the twenty-first century cannot be held up as simply an uncontaminated replica of the eighteenth-century Scottish fiddler. Rather the Cape Breton contribution to that tradition should be recognised and celebrated for what it is.³³

As Doherty illustrates, both the context for fiddling and the ethnic mix in Cape Breton, has resulted in a transformation that is separate from Scottish fiddling. Looking specifically at the dance, it was felt by the Scottish enthusiasts that the step dancing represented something of an older Scottish dance form. This is exemplified by dancer Maggie Moore (then wife of piper Hamish Moore), who commented: 'Perhaps also there is a feeling deep in many of us that this dancing actually belongs here, and that we belong to it!'.³⁴ This sums up the desire at the time to find similarities and to authenticate the dance form as a Scottish one. While analysing the data of my investigation it became clear that this sentiment was not only as a result of a few individuals' journey of discovery, but it was set in the wider context of issues of Scottish identity and the lack of confidence in themselves, as discussed by Carol Craig.³⁵

The identity issue in Scotland was reflected from the outset of step dancing appearing on the Scottish dance scene, in the debates on the origin of this vernacular dance form, its level of Scottishness, and whether it should be referred to as 'Scottish', 'Cape Breton', or just 'step dancing'. As percussive step dance was fairly unfamiliar as part of Scottish dancing in the 1990s many dancers equated the style with Irish dancing, when first seeing it, often relating it to *Riverdance*. In doing so they reflected the thoughts put forward by Cape Breton scholar Sheldon MacInnes;³⁶ whereas others, notably Margaret Bennett and James MacDonald-Reid argued for Scottish roots, claiming step dancing never died out in Scotland.³⁷ The term 'Scottish' step dancing was introduced at this point and is still used to some extent. It is the counter-flow of music and step dance style from what is seen as the Scottish diaspora to Scotland that makes this process both interesting and problematical. It was at this point that several of those involved in the process began using the word 'revival'.³⁸

The impact of step dancing on the Scottish dance scene

My investigation showed that only a handful of those who initially attended the step dance workshops in Scotland were aware of a percussive dance tradition of some description in the Scottish past. Most were dancers who were curious to try something new. Only a handful of these people took in the totality of the introduced tradition by travelling to Cape Breton to experience the dance scene there.

Some, maybe most, were fascinated by the percussive and improvisational nature of the dance form on Cape Breton. As they discovered, it is at odds with the current established structured and regulated existing dance forms in Scotland, which allow for little or no improvisation or musical interpretation. To most practitioners, the Cape Breton percussive dance tradition became just another fun hobby. A few

dancers, including myself, alongside Frank McConnell, Caroline Reagh, and Sandra Robertson as well as others, began teaching it professionally.

The historical link between the music and dance, and between the Highland-Cape Breton connection and the Gaelic language, (plus the fact that the two main summer schools were both situated in the Gaelic speaking environments of South Uist and the Gaelic College in Skye), slanted the cultural link more towards the Highlands than any other part of Scotland. Scots who settled in Cape Breton came from many parts of Scotland but predominantly they were Gaelic speaking Highlanders.³⁹ An interesting observation is, therefore, that many of the individuals, who were the driving forces behind the revival, were themselves neither from the Highlands nor Gaelic speakers, including myself, Alasdair Fraser, and Hamish Moore.

Since the early 1990s, Fèisean nan Gàidheal has played a key role in promoting step dancing in Scotland. This primarily Highland-based organisation mainly promotes music, song, and dance with a strong emphasis on the Gaelic traditions.⁴⁰ Within this context, the perceived connection between the Gaelic language and step dancing has therefore been emphasised. As a result, youngsters growing up within the Fèisean environment see Cape Breton style step dancing as part of their culture, and when older, will in turn teach it to the next generation. Fèisean nan Gàidheal is the only organisation presently promoting the teaching of step dancing around Scotland. Although other organisations such as the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, and local councils and community music and dance groups, have run series of classes and workshops in step dance over the years, most projects have been of short duration.⁴¹

Performing groups such as the Scottish Step Dance Company and Dannsa emerged in 1998 and 2000 respectively, and performed their interpretation of the tradition. They have taught workshops for a number of years, gathering a small following of enthusiasts. Dannsa is still active to some extent but concentrates more on facilitating workshops and short projects. This organization sometimes invites Cape Breton musicians and dancers to collaborate on projects around Scotland. An annual dance festival, Strathspé Away, was established by Dannsa in 2003 to celebrate many dance forms. Step dancing is very much at its core, and this is still running.

The situation in 2008 is that a few small groups of enthusiasts around Scotland meet regularly to step dance in a class or informally in the house. By my estimations they number less than a hundred people. None of these initiatives have had any greater impact on the general perception of what is the Scottish dance tradition. The established organisations for Scottish country dancing and competitive Highland dancing⁴² have largely ignored or dismissed the idea that Cape Breton based step dancing forms part of the Scottish dance tradition, even though individual members of these organisations have taken an interest in the dance form.⁴³

At least two attempts have been made by the governing Highland dance associations to write down the steps, standardise and publish the dance form, so as

to make it conform to medal test syllabi. Neither of these efforts seems to have been successful in gaining any greater interest in the dance form.⁴⁴ One can speculate that the reason for the lack of uptake by the practitioners of these organisations is possibly the inherent improvisational nature of step dancing. Improvisation is very much in opposition to the other structured or set order forms of dance promoted by the organisations. In short, the musicality and dance skill involved in step dancing is very different to that encouraged by these regulating organisations.

As step dancing is a percussive dance form, a common view of the public is that it must be Irish. Even though my own research indicates memories of some sort of percussive step dancing around the whole of Scotland,⁴⁵ it has, on the whole, been forgotten in favour of ceilidh or 'old time' couple dancing, Scottish country and Highland dancing.

As of 2008, step dancing in Scotland, lives marginalised at grass roots level on the Scottish dance scene. No performing groups are currently touring and only summer schools and scattered workshops at festivals and wintertime lessons organised by a few community-based groups keep the dance form going. It seems that the fundamental difference in social context between Cape Breton and Scotland, and the difference in musical connectivity with dance in each place, are two of the main factors in this lack of engagement in the dance form. There is also a general apprehension by the public in engaging with anything that is not instantly familiar to them and which also looks complicated. There are glimmers of engagement, as when seven Cape Breton Square Sets took to the floor during the 2008 Ceòlas summer school in South Uist to the fiddle music of Glenn Graham accompanied by Harvey Beaton on the piano (both from Cape Breton Island). However, these are isolated and consciously constructed occasions, rather than naturally happening dance activities. To my knowledge, these kinds of occasions have only happened at events where Cape Bretoners have been present.

Some positive results of step dancing entering the Scottish dance scene

Some of the positive outcomes in relation to step dancing in Scotland that have emerged since the 1990s are increased funding opportunities, greater awareness of music, song, and dance connectivity, interest in dance research, and cultural exchanges between Scotland and Cape Breton Island.

In a ten year period from the mid 1990s the Scottish Arts Council and other arts funding became available for traditional dancing and in particular step dancing.⁴⁶ Most of the local council-based 'Traditional Dance Artist in Residence' schemes set up during this period, involved step dancing to some extent.⁴⁷ It seems that the improvisational nature of the dance form and its potential to engage with other dance and art forms attracted the funding bodies. Moreover, it provided at the same time a link with traditional dance. That many of the step dancers involved are also prominent contemporary dancers was probably a contributing factor too. Performance groups such as Dannsa were awarded a number of grants to explore the links between Gaelic song and dance, and to develop new ways of performing and

combining traditional dance forms. The connecting tissue in all these projects was step dancing. At present, however, very little funding seems forthcoming toward traditional dance of any form in Scotland.⁴⁸

At an early stage the link between Gaelic *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) singing and step dancing was explored.⁴⁹ It often required an adjustment to the way the singers sang their *puirts* to accommodate the flow of the dance and many singers learnt to dance to understand the connection better. Many dancers took up an instrument, mainly fiddle, to better understand the music to which they were dancing. For them, this resulted in an increased engagement in the interconnection between music, song, and dance.

Another aspect of the increased awareness of percussive step dance among the core group of dancers was that some individuals started questioning the interpretation of some of the source material, particularly regarding some of the light soft-shoe solo dances regulated by the established organisations for Scottish country and Highland dancing. Alternative interpretations, giving the dances a more percussive nature than previously advocated, was, and still is being explored for sources such as Peacock, Hill, and Dancie Reid.⁵⁰ These re-interpretations may so far have had a minimal impact on the traditional dance scene as a whole, but it is important to note their existence.

Increased interest in the cultures of both sides of the Atlantic has resulted in many Scots and Cape Bretoners travelling to experience each others' culture. In 2008 the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association toured Scotland and a good number of Scots attended the Scots Gaelic Research Conference in Antigonish in July of the same year.

So when Alasdair Fraser talks about 'putting the dirt back in' the music, he no doubt also sums up what a lot of step dancers feel when they are dancing:

When you have the dirt in there – grace notes, connective tissue between notes, ways of entering and leaving notes, like emotional buttons – and play in a rhythmic way, it goes deeper [...] a swingly thing going on and it is scary good.⁵¹

In 2005, I perceived the challenge for the future of step dancing in Scotland to be how to make 'the dirt' enter and become accepted on the Scottish social dance scene. In 2008, it is still no nearer becoming a generally recognised part of the Scottish dance scene. Whether the Cape Breton connection will become more widely known still remains to be seen, and regardless of what it is being labelled, it continues to be nurtured among a fairly small group of enthusiasts, but I believe it is there to stay.

Notes

¹ Mats Melin, ' "Putting the dirt back in": An Investigation of Step Dancing in Scotland' (unpublished master's dissertation, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, 2005). The term 'dirt' is used by Cape Breton fiddlers when they refer to the bowing and fingering style of Cape Breton island; see Burt Feintuch, 'The Conditions for Cape Breton

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Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Landscape', *Ethnomusicology*, 48, no. 1 (2004), 75–104 (p. 76). Both Hamish Moore and Alasdair Fraser used this term when talking about the musical sound of Cape Breton Island (personal conversations with both in 1998 and 2005 respectively).

² S. J. Hornsby, *Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton: A Historical Geography* (Montreal, London: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), pp. 31–47.

³ Hornsby, p. 24.

⁴ Hornsby, p. 31.

⁵ Frank Rhodes, 'Dancing in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia', in *Traditional Dancing in Scotland*, ed. by J. F. Flett and T. M. Flett (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1964; repr. 1985), pp. 267–85; repr.edn (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1996), pp. 185–211.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See Margaret Bennett, *The Last Stronghold. The Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Newfoundland: Breakwater Books, 1989); Margaret Bennett, 'Step–Dancing: Why We Must Learn from Past Mistakes', *West Highland Free Press*, 14 October 1994; Margaret Bennett, *Oatmeal and Catechism: Scottish Gaelic Settlers in Quebec* (Edinburgh: John Donald; Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1998; revd edn, 2003).

⁸ Hugh Bigney, email correspondence, 16 April 2005.

⁹ Johanne Devlin Trew, personal communication, University of Limerick, 24 February 2005; Johanne Devlin Trew, 'Music, Place and Community: Culture and Irish Heritage in the Ottawa Valley' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Limerick, 2000).

¹⁰ Mylene Ouellette and Brent Chiasson, personal communication, Limerick, 29 April 2005. Ouellette and Chiasson are musicians and dancers from Prince Edward Island.

¹¹ Colin Quigley, *Close to the Floor: Folk Dance in Newfoundland* (St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1985).

¹² See Elizabeth Anne Doherty, 'The Paradox of the Periphery: Evolution of the Cape Breton Fiddle Tradition c.1928–1995' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Limerick, 1996); Liz Doherty, 'Bringing It All Back Home? Issues Surrounding Cape Breton Fiddle Music in Scotland', in *Play It Like It Is: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic*, ed. by Ian Russell and Mary Anne Alburger, Occasional Publications 5 (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2006), pp. 102–109.

¹³ Harvey Beaton, 'My Thoughts on Step–Dancing', ed. by Mats Melin (Dartmouth, NS, Canada, 1994).

¹⁴ Tamara E. Livingston, 'Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory', *Ethnomusicology*, 43 (1999), 66–85.

¹⁵ Livingston, p. 81.

¹⁶ Livingston, p. 81.

¹⁷ Livingston, p. 81. For a fuller discussion, see Melin (2005), pp. 9–10.

¹⁸ Susan Eike Spalding, and Jane Harris Woodside, eds, *Communities in Motion: Dance, Community, and Tradition in America's Southeast and Beyond* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 249.

¹⁹ Neil V. Rosenberg, ed., *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 1–25 and 194–202; David Atkinson, 'Revival: Genuine or Spurious?', in *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re–Creation*, ed. by Ian Russell and David Atkinson, Occasional Publications 3 (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004), pp. 144–62; Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, 'Tradition, Genuine or

Spurious', *Journal of American Folklore*, 97, no. 385 (1984), 273–90; Mats Nilsson, 'Den Tidlösa Traditionen', in *Brottningar Med Begrepp*, ed. by Birgitta Skarin–Frykman and Helene Brembeck (Gothenburg: Etnologiska Föreningen i Sverige, 1997); Burt Feintuch, 'Musical Revival as Musical Transformation', in *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*, ed. by Neil V. Rosenberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 183–93. See also Burt Feintuch, 'The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape', *Ethnomusicology*, 48 (2004), 73–104. See also Melin (2005), pp. 48–49.

²⁰ Nobody is referring to steps as having been danced by, for example, Sheila Mackay from Fife, but origins of steps are always referred to as being from Cape Breton sources, hence 'Donald Angus Beaton's step', 'a Jean MacNeil step', and so forth. Some of these same steps when they are being passed on by Scottish teachers are becoming known by the Scottish teachers' names. The original link with the source can thus become forgotten.

²¹ Alasdair Fraser, interview by the author, Glasgow, 16 January 2005.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See Melin (2005), p. 30.

²⁴ Melin (2005), p. 32.

²⁵ Hamish Moore, 'In Tune with Tradition', *Am Braighe*, Queensville, Nova Scotia, Fall, p. 10; Margaret Bennett, 'Step-dancing: Why we must learn from past mistakes' *West Highland Free Press*, Broadford, Isle of Skye, 14 October 1994; reproduced at www.siliconglen.com/Scotland/10_3.html [accessed 10 May 2010].

²⁶ Melin (2005), pp. 17–21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ For Buddy MacMaster, see Alistair MacGillivray, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (Cape Breton: Sea-cape Music, 1997), pp. 150–51. For Harvey Beaton, see Alistair MacGillivray, *A Cape Breton Ceilidh* (Cape Breton: Sea-cape Music, 1988), pp. 32–34.

²⁹ Doherty, 'Bringing It All Back Home?', p. 104; Allister MacGillivray, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (Marion Bridge, Cape Breton Island: College of Cape Breton Press, 1981).

³⁰ Jonathan Dembling, 'You Play It as You Would Sing It: Cape Breton Scottishness and the Means of Cultural Production', in *Transatlantic Scots*, ed. by Celeste R. Ray (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

³¹ Dembling, 'You Play It as You Would Sing It', p. 183.

³² Doherty, 'Bringing It All Back Home?', p. 103.

³³ Doherty, 'Bringing It All Back Home?', p. 108.

³⁴ Margaret Moore, 'Scotland's Dances: Cape Breton Step Dance', in *1994 Conference on the Diversity of the Scottish Traditions of Dance* (Stirling: Scottish Arts Council, 1994), p. 21.

³⁵ Carol Craig, *The Scots' Crisis of Confidence* (Edinburgh: Big Thinking, 2004).

³⁶ Sheldon Macinnes, *Cape Breton Step-dance: An Irish or Scottish Tradition* (Cork, NS: Cork Cape Breton Festival, 1994); reproduced at www.siliconglen.com/celtfaq/3_2.html [accessed 10 May 2010].

³⁷ Bennett, 'Step-dancing'; and James MacDonald–Reid, 'Stepdancing did not die out in Scotland', *West Highland Free Press*, Broadford, Isle of Skye, 20 July 1994.

³⁸ Moore, 'Scotland's Dances', pp. 17–21; Bennett, 'Step-Dancing'; Frances MacEachen, 'Hamish Moore: In Tune with Tradition', *Am Braighe* (2002), p. 10.

³⁹ J. L. MacDougall, *History of Inverness County, Nova Scotia* (privately printed, 1922); George S. Emmerson, *A Social History of Scottish Dance: Ane Celestial Recreation* (Montreal and London: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1972), pp. 158–59, 224; W. Stanford Reid, *The Scottish*

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Tradition in Canada: A History of Canada's Peoples (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), pp. 106–107; Stephen Hornsby, *Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton: A Historical Geography* (Montreal, Buffalo: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), pp. 30–47; Rhodes, 'Dancing in Cape Breton Island'; Lucille H. Campey, *Ater the Hector: The Scottish Pioneers o Nova Scotia and Cape Breton 1773–1852* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2004).

⁴⁰ See Fèisean nan Gàidheal website www.feisean.org [accessed 1 March 2010].

⁴¹ An exception is the Scottish Culture and Traditions Association in Aberdeen (SC&T), which has held step dancing classes for over ten years.

⁴² These are the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society www.rscds.org; the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing www.sobhd.net; and the Scottish Official Highland Dancing Association www.sohda.org.uk [all accessed 1 March 2010].

⁴³ Gareth and Deryck Mitchelson, see www.celticspiritdance.com [accessed 10 May 2010]. ⁴⁴ Melin (2005), p. 38. For example, see United Kingdom Alliance of Professional Teachers of Dancing (UKAPTD) and British Association of Teachers of Dancing (BATD).

⁴⁵ Throughout my fifteen years as a professional dancer and researcher in Scotland, I came across a number of people who could directly or indirectly remember some form of percussive dancing being done in different parts of Scotland. For example, dance teacher Sheila MacKay in Fife, Jock Gordon in Kinaldie, Angus, and Fearchar Macneil in Isle of Barra, could all step dance at one point in time, and A. K. Robertson could remember seeing Shetland dancers 'scruffle'. A good number of people I encountered had heard stories of people 'step-dancing' but their image of what it was varied a great deal. Some sources in the Western Isles, who had relatives in Canada for example, drew parallels of what they saw there, when visiting, to what their parents generation either did or talked about being the dance tradition at the time. A more thorough outline of my recollections is in the process of being written.

⁴⁶ Scottish Arts Council, 'Annual Report and Accounts' www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/annualreportsandplans.aspx [accessed 1 March 2010].

⁴⁷ The 'Traditional Dance Artist in Residence' reports for the local councils of Shetland, Sutherland and Inverness (both Highland Region), Angus, Perth and Kinross, Western Isles, and Fife in the period 1995–2004 all state that step-dancing was part of each of these projects. I was personally involved in all these projects.

⁴⁸ By 2005 Scottish Local Councils and the Scottish Arts Council offered little assistance for any traditional dance projects involving step dance or any other kinds of traditional dancing, as funding criteria were changing at the time.

⁴⁹ See Mats Melin, 'Step Dancing Seminar and Workshop, Dingwall, 5–6 April 1997' (Dingwall: Highland Council, Inverness, 1997); Mats Melin, 'Step Dance Teacher Training Weekend, Kingussie, 20–22 March 1998' (Kingussie: Highland Council, Inverness, 1998).

⁵⁰ Francis Peacock, *Sketches Relative to the History and Theory but More Especially to the Practice and Art of Dancing* (Aberdeen: Angus, 1805); Frederick Hill, 'Frederick Hill's Book of Quadrilles & Country Dance &C &C, March 22nd, 1841', manuscript privately owned (1841); John Reid, 'Solo Dances', MS (1935), in 'Papers relating to Bobby Watson (1914–1997), Highland and Scottish Country Dancing Teacher, Adjudicator', University of Aberdeen, Special Libraries and Archives, MS 3650.

⁵¹ Alasdair Fraser, interview by author, Glasgow, 16 January 2005.