Abstracts from the 1998 Conference

Friday evening, October 30

Richard Burleson: "The Pen and the Voice: Approaches to Aboriginal Music in the Academic Setting"

Jim Hiscott: "Discovering Métis and Inuit Dance Music"

Saturday, October 31

Judith Cohen: "Re-created Music and Re-created Identities in Imagined Iberian Jewish Communities"

Over the past decades, a phenomenon of "discovering" hidden Jewish communities in Spain and Portugal has developed, leading to functioning Jewish communities in some cases, and festivals promoting imagined Jewish communities in others; in still others there is an overlap between these developments, so that actual religious services, with their music, become part of a tourist-office supported festival.

This paper will touch on some wider issues of authenticity and anthropological tourism, but will focus on the use of music as an identity marker in these activities. Different origins of the music will be examined: it may be a defining aspect of the culture, and/or it may be shared with other regional groups; or it may be adopted from outside, whether actively sought out or received with little or no initiative on the group's part. Another issue which will be explored is that of the criteria used for introducing or accepting certain repertoires, for example late 19th-century Ottoman Judeo-Spanish songs presented in the context of re-creations of supposed medieval Jewish Iberian festivals.

Anne-Marie Desdouits: "Histoire populaire par les chansons"

La chanson a toujours été un mode d'expression culturel, remplissant diverses fonctions. Cette communication propose de montrer les liens entre le peuple québécois—ou canadien français—et son histoire. Histoire "nationale" dûment répertoriée, étudiée et enseignée, mais aussi et surtout histoire événementielle, sociale et culturelle, vécue par une communauté qui en communique sa perception dans des textes chantés, autrefois transmis le plus souvent par l'oral, maintenant généralement au moyen de disques, cassettes, vidéo, et via les médias.

Cory W. Thorne: "Nativism, Nationalism, and Revitalisation in Newfoundland Music"

In recent years the music and culture of Newfoundland have been studied by numerous folklorists, because of its unique identity and continued emphasis on traditional practices. Since Confederation with Canada, in 1949, there have been many changes in the culture, through increasing urbanization, industrialization, and communication with the rest of Canada and the United States. This, combined with high rates of emigration and the development of Newfoundland communities in other areas of Canada, has resulted in a renewal of interest by Newfoundlanders in their folklore and folk music. The folk music revival includes not only traditional Newfoundland and Irish styles, but also the development of Newfoundland country and rock musics.

These styles of music have been embraced by Newfoundlanders everywhere and can be found throughout the island in bars, folk festivals, and the mass media. For many, there is little difference between the traditional and the contemporary, for they share many elements, especially in textural content.

Newfoundlanders have embraced certain aspects of their music and created new ones in an attempt to maintain their unique identity, despite the ever increasing presence of music from outside. In this paper I will attempt to better define what Newfoundland music is, demonstrating its different perceptions by various groups of people. I will be looking at musical and textural changes, such as the retention of traditional instruments in combination with non-traditional ones, and the mixing of older texts and songs with newer ones containing commentaries on the current economic and political climate in Newfoundland. The information and arguments presented here are based primarily on field research which I have conducted over the past two years, in several different areas of Newfoundland. They are the result of interviews with many Newfoundland musicians, folk festival organizers, recording producers, and patrons of Newfoundland music, combined with personal observation on the musical and non-musical climate.

Sherry Johnson: "Multiple Meanings of Tradition and the Construction of Identity in the Music of Mary Jane Lamond"

Tradition has emerged as a key concept in the most recent wave of popularisation of Celtic music, over the past ten years or so. It is also a concept that plays an important role in the disciplines of anthropology, ethnomusicology, and folklore (Coplan 1991, 36). There is an abundance of literature about traditions, but there is little analysis of "the common ground and elements of tradition" (Shils 1981, vii), or "what difference tradition makes in human life" (Shils 1981, vii). This paper contributes to lessening the gap identified by Shils by exploring the multiple meanings ascribed to tradition by Mary Jane Lamond, a Gaelic singer from Cape Breton.

Based on an interview, ethnohistorical descriptions of three concerts, and repertoire analysis, this inductive study examines the use of tradition in Mary Jane's words and practice. While her initial definition references oral transmission and performance practice, her less conscious use of the term takes on a greater variety of meanings, including canon, context, identity, and culture. For Mary Jane, the concept of tradition has clear boundaries; however, she struggles with and against this fixed concept of tradition as she discusses the process that took her from her first album to her most recent, and through performing.

The second part of the paper examines how Mary Jane positions herself in relation to some of these meanings and uses them in establishing her identity in relation to Cape Breton Gaelic music. I focus this discussion on two issues of identity that emerged from our interview, insider/outsider status and exploiter/protector of tradition, and support my observations with audio examples.

I conclude with some reflections on how my own meanings of tradition have been shaped and changed through the process
of researching and writing this paper.

Works Cited

Yves Le Guevel: "Les modes d’acquisition du savoir-faire des fabricants d’accordeons diatoniques québécois"

L’accordeon diatonique est avec le violon l’instrument du prédilection des musiciens traditionnels au Québec. Il a acquis, à travers ce siècle, ses lettres de noblesses sous les doigts de musiciens réputés, tels qu’Alfred Montmarquette, Gérard Lajoie, Marcel Messervier, Philippe Bruneau, pour ne citer qu’eux. Apparu au Québec une quinzaine d’années après son invention à Vienne, en 1829, par le facteur d’orgue Cyrill Demian, l’accordeon s’est propagé dans la province québécoise par l’intermédiaire surtout des catalogues de vente par correspondance qui ont favorisé l’implantation du modèle diatonique allemand, dit mélodéon, à une rangée de dix boutons, vers la fin du XIXe siècle. Ce modèle d’accordeon allait de fait inspirer Odilon Gagné, menuisier et également musicien de la ville de Québec, qui est le premier à fabriquer un accordéon diatonique en 1895. Ses descendants assureront le monopole de la fabrication d’accordeons québécois de marque «Gagné» jusqu’aux années 1950, époque qui voit l’apparition de l’entreprise familiale Messervier dont les accordéons demeurent encore aujourd’hui des instruments de référence. Les années 1970 établissant l’époque du renouveau de la musique traditionnelle de par le monde, des musiciens accordéonistes québécois tels que Gilles Paré, Robert Boutet, Clément Breton, suivent les traces du maître Messervier et se mettent à leur tour à fabriquer, de manière artisanale, des accordéons. À la différence des fabricants de violon dont nombre puissent leur savoir-faire au sein d’institutions comme les écoles de lutherie, les facteurs d’accordeons n’ont pas à leur disposition de telles institutions.

Issue de cette constatation, notre problématique est alors de savoir quels sont les référents identitaires favorisant la vocation de fabricant d’accordeons et quels sont les facteurs composant le processus d’acquisition du savoir-faire. Par référents identitaires, nous entendons un ensemble de prérequis ou conditions préalables puissés dans l’univers culturel, social, professionnel ou autres, du fabricant, permettant à celui-ci d’envisager une carrière de facteur d’accordeon. Armé de ces atouts, le fabricant devrait alors être en mesure de procéder à l’acquisition de son savoir-faire par un mécanisme de communication multiple qui peut être visuelle, gestuelle, musicale ou écrite, &c.

Heather Sparling: "‘Turn that Bagpipe Up to 11,’ Or What Happens to Ritual After 100 Decibels"

As Cape Breton Celtic music has become increasingly popularized with performers such as The Rankin Family and Ashley MacIsaac, an animated debate has risen. While some Capers embrace Cape Breton Celtic pop, others angrily denounce the changes these performers have made to traditional music.

What has caused this outcry against Cape Breton Celtic pop? One might say that these reactionaries are ignorant fuddy-duddies stuck in the past. But I don’t think it’s that simple. Based on field research conducted this past summer, I assume a Cape Bretoner’s perspective. I explore Schechner’s and Turner’s concepts of ritual and drama and apply them to Cape Breton traditional music performances and Celtic pop performances, respectively.

The Cape Breton music ritual is characterized by continuity: the music is generally orally transmitted over several generations. Even new compositions are created in a style consistent with older tunes. Music is performed for and by community members, the process itself creating community. Local musicians are paid little, if anything. On the other hand, Celtic pop performances are characterized by innovation. The Celtic pop performer’s star status and spatial separation from his/her audience reduces a collective experience. The pop musician makes a conscious decision to perform outside of his/her local community and receives financial recompense.

If many Cape Bretoners experience their music ritually, then it is no surprise that they should react against its desacralization in pop music. The point is not to judge either type of music; I simply cannot accept that some Cape Bretoners’ angry responses can be reduced to old-fashionedness or fear of change. This paper offers one possible perspective.

Leslie Hall: "Latin Dance and Dance Music in Toronto"

Latin dance and dance music are vital components of Toronto’s multicultural milieu. Toronto’s Latin community more than doubled between 1981 and 1996, from approximately 70,000 to over 185,000. Many of the talented musicians and dancers within the Latin community have moved beyond their individual cultures to a much broader audience.

Originally, small clubs and community gatherings provided the only opportunities for Latin dance and music. However, in the past ten years a number of clubs that cater to non-Latins or a mixed clientele have opened. Some of these clubs are in Latin areas of the city; others are in the “tony” areas such as Yorkville or the Entertainment District. Toronto also has several Latin festivals which cater to a large audience, such as the Harbourfront Latin week-end and the Fiesta, held along a 10-block stretch of St. Clair Avenue in July 1998, which hosted over 30 bands.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Latin dance in Toronto is the large number of non-Latins who are enrolled in dance classes, either at one of the clubs or at private studios or through Board of Education night courses. Popular dances include the salsa, merengue and samba, all couple dances which require a good sense of rhythm and coordination.

This paper examines selected dances, musicians, and students. In addition to interviews, two groups of students are surveyed, identifying their initial reasons for studying Latin dance, their age range, goals and cultural background. A surprisingly high number of dance students are from the Far East and Southeast Asia. Some students from private studios go on to compete at provincial and national championships. At the competitive level, styling and virtuosity become extremely im-
Josephine Kaczmarek: "The Dream Dance of the Ojibwe"

Many historians tend to dismiss aboriginal religious symbols, beliefs and practices as simply derivative of European religions. Has the impact of European influence on aboriginal belief systems been overestimated? An examination of the origin, symbolism and practice of the Dream Dance suggests this is a strong possibility.

The Dream Dance was a religious movement which emerged in the last half of the nineteenth century among the Minnesota Siouxs, and through a prescribed ritual, was transmitted to neighbouring Ojibwe. By the end of the century, it had become a significant ceremony among Ojibwe in the States west and south of Lake Michigan, and subsequently in Manitoba. An analysis of the more salient features of the Dream Dance demonstrates a strong affiliation with long-established aboriginal tradition, rather than a reliance on, or an adaptation of, European religion.

Rachel Anderson: "Traditional Folk Music in the Context of German Fascism"


American folk song collector and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax lived and worked in Europe for eight years during 1950-58. Although he travelled extensively to Spain, Italy, Ireland and other European countries, Lomax made London his base during this period. These were the years when the post-war folk song revival in England was gathering steam, and Lomax became a personal friend of many of the people involved in the revival, including Ewan MacColl, Bert Lloyd, Peter Kennedy, John Hasted and Shirley Collins. Lomax himself must be reckoned a key player in the English revival, and the aim of this paper is to explain how and why that was so. It discusses the project that initially brought Lomax to Europe: the multi-LP series titled The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music. It analyses Lomax's collaboration with the leading English folk song collector, Peter Kennedy, that eventually resulted in the LP series, The Folk Songs of Britain. It examines the more than one dozen radio and television programs that Lomax made while in England, mainly for the BBC, including such pioneering productions as The Gaelic West and Folk Music of Canada.

And it surveys Lomax's career in England as a musician, filmmaker and producer, focusing in particular on the influence of his skiffle group, The Ramblers, that included among its members Ewan MacColl, Shirley Collins, and jazz musician Bruce Turner. In conclusion, the paper evaluates the ways in which Lomax's presence in London made a difference: how his influence altered, for better and for worse, the development of the revival in England, and how his collecting work with Peter Kennedy created a permanent legacy of recordings that have yet to be explored and utilized fully.

Allan Kirby: "The Fieldwork of Edith Fowke in Rural Ontario"

Edith Fowke was a significant collector of Ontario folk songs, but her interest in folk music was national. Edith produced more than thirty books and dozens of articles dealing with Canadian folk songs and folklore. She exposed thousands of people to folk music and story through her radio broadcasts and university lectures. Edith was associated with events such as the Mariposa Folk Festival and was also involved in the commercial recording industry.

In the autumn of 1956, Edith Fowke travelled to Peterborough County in Southern Ontario to begin the song collecting aspect of her career. She was extremely successful from the beginning. The reason for her initial success can be attributed, in part, to the character of the people that she was dealing with. Her informants became her friends, and they provided essential information for her to follow up on.

In this paper, I will speak about Peterborough County, where Edith began her collecting. I have been there and spoken to many who remember her. I will show photos of the villages where she gathered her songs, and I will play brief excerpts from some of those first field recordings which ended up on vinyl record albums. The areas where she collected and her unique collecting techniques will be discussed, along with the significance of the publications, essays, and commercial recordings, which resulted directly from her initial fieldwork.

Edith Fowke collected all types of songs, and she did not censor her collecting. She collected lumbering songs, district songs, bawdy songs, murder songs, and work songs, most of which she found in the townships of Peterborough County and surrounding area, as well as in parts of the Ottawa Valley. The possible reasons why these specific parts of Ontario are so rich in folk song will be presented and will provide a good basis for discussion. Edith Fowke's career was diversified, and other portions of it will be touched upon in order to provide a perspective on her song collecting.

Edith Fowke did the majority of her rural song collecting in Ontario between 1956 and 1964. There is little evidence that she did much serious collecting after that. Edith's rural collecting coincided with her urban collecting of folk and children's song in Toronto. Her urban and rural techniques will be compared. Overall, the proposed paper will focus on a relatively brief, yet important, period in the long career of Edith Fowke.

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When songs were all learned orally people sometimes learned them under strange circumstances. For instance I had an illiterate singer whose uncle taught her all twenty verses of the ballad of Johnie Scot by giving her a verse at a time over many weeks. Dr. [W. Roy] Mackenzie had one who got her songs as gratuity for plucking out her father's unwelcome grey hairs. Every time the job had to be done he would sing one of her favorites.

Helen Creighton CFMS Newsletter Bulletin 2.1&2 (July 1967)